The common heritage of India is an active concept expressing itself in the myriad forms of integration of diverse cultures and traditions. Change and Continuity in Indian Sufism explores this common heritage through a study of the esoteric relationship between India’s two major religious traditions, Hinduism and Islam as expressed in the Sufi tradition.

Dr. Thomas Dahnhardt focuses on the evolution of the Indian lineage of the Naqshbandiya, generally known as the Mujaddidiyya, in Indian Sufism as an example of the intense spiritual symbiosis between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Based on a field study among the Hindu and Muslim representatives of the Naqshbandiya lineage, he presents a social and historical study of the Naqshbandiya Mujaddidiyya, surveying the various masters of the tradition and taking up specifically the establishment of a new khanaqah of the Mazhariyya branch of the Mujaddidiyya in Old Delhi, one of the most important Naqshbandi centres of the tradition in the Indian subcontinent. The work goes in detail into the emergence, doctrines and methodology of the Hindu offshoot of the Mujaddidiyya Mazhariyya along with creation of regional sub-Hindu branches.

The book would be useful to scholars of inter-religious studies, Sufism and Indian religious traditions as well as general readers interested in the process of integration of traditions and communities.

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Change and Continuity
in
Indian Sūfīsm
Change and Continuity in Indian Sūfīsm
A Naqshbandi-Mujaddidī Branch in the Hindu Environment

Thomas Dahnhardt
Islamic Heritage in Cross-Cultural Perspectives


In the 1970s, as a young Indologist, I dedicated myself to the comparative study of some aspects of Hindu bhakti and Sufism. For five years I spent the months of the monsoon along the banks of the Yamunā, going to visit āśramas of the sant tradition, especially in Braj, and khānaqāhs of Čištī and Naqshbandī derivation. I had the privilege of knowing and be close to the pīr of the Naqshbandiyya, Shah Abul Hasan Zaid Faruqi, a fine intellectual with also a surprising wealth of knowledge in yogic and Vedāntic Hindu spirituality. During my stays in Delhi, I used to visit the old sufi at dawn, and I still treasure a few notebooks in which I wrote down the profound and wise teachings he offered me during our conversations. He often told me that some Hindu yogins, hailing from Uttar Pradesh and Bengal (?), used to come in pilgrimage to the tomb of his predecessor Maźhar Jān-ī-Jānān, situated right in the courtyard of the khānaqāh where he lived, honouring it with the chanting of hymns and sprinkling it with petals and water. Despite the profound tie which united me to Shah Abul Hasan and which lasted till his death, I never had the chance of meeting a Hindu devotee of the great Maźhar within the khānaqāh. The pīr himself, who remembered with prodigious memory the Mazhariyya interpretation of Śaṅkara’s Vedāntic doctrine, exhibited a curious amnesia regarding the precise whereabouts of the Bengali and U.P. yogins. None the less, destiny would subsequently bring me in contact with this peculiar sant paramparā quite a number of times. Around the end of the 1980s, my dearest Indian friend, Hazari Mull Banthia, an old Jain gentleman from Kanpur, confided to me quite casually of the existence in his town of a Hindu sampradāya following a sufi spiritual method. Few years later, I was drawn to a study of some stanzas in the Mahābhārata,
a research which led me to embark on an archaeological campaign of excavation in the Farrukhabad District. I thus discovered that I was treading along the pilgrimage paths leading to the funeral monuments of Maulana Fadl Ahmad Khan and Sri Ramchandrrji Fatehgarhi. But I had the most welcome surprise when Dr. Thomas Dahnhardt — now my colleague but in those days one among my most brilliant students — came to visit me informing me that during one of his sojourns in India he had met with Shah Abul Hasan Sahab. With him he had discussed at length about those yogins who followed the Naqshbandi method. Having gone to Kanpur, he was then able to identify their milieu and to become quite close with them. In fact, the young researcher had come to see me precisely to propose this topic as the subject of his research. It looked as if an invisible hand had been guiding his steps: indeed he was in no way aware of the antecedents, since on the matter I had been as discreet as Shah Abul Hasan. The research of Dr. Dahnhardt continued in India as well as in Europe, especially in Venice, London, and Oxford, through meetings with the living protagonists and via the analysis of the fundamental texts of both traditions, i.e., the sufi and the yogic. In this way, an important spiritual patrimony of India has been salvaged, which illustrates the intimate identity of vision on ultimate truths between a Hindu environment and a Muslim one. And this ultimately proves how love and knowledge lead to union, whereas, on the contrary, separation leads humans to reciprocal hate and ignorance. In the āśramas of Purī, Kanpur, and Mathurā as well as in the khānaqāhs of Delhi, Sirhind, and Quetta that synthesis which in vain Mogul emperors sought has truly been achieved.

This book and his author have the merit of unearthing for the benefit of scholars an important component of Indian culture, which uptil now has remained practically unknown. This book and his author have also the merit of opening up a spiritual treasure which chronicles, politics, and ideology utterly ignore.
The present study consists of an attempt to delineate the meeting of two different esoteric currents in a cross-cultural encounter between Islam and Hinduism on the Indian subcontinent from the second half of the last century down to the present. Against the background of the millenary co-habitation of these two major world-religions in that part of the world, it describes the particular outer and inner circumstances that made such an encounter possible, trying, moreover, to focus on the spiritual history of the traditions involved. Based largely on the data collected during an eight-month field research conducted in 1995-6 among the Muslim and Hindu representatives of the Indian lineage of the Naqshbandiyya generally known as the Mujaddidiyya, the book seeks to highlight through a concrete example the possibility of an intense spiritual symbiosis between India’s two main communities that contrasts sharply with the widespread idea of prevalent social and religious tension.

After ascertaining the social and historical background of the cultural components involved, viz. a lineage of the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya on one side and the contemporary heritage of the sant-tradition on the other, and furnishing a biology of single members of this peculiar initiatory chain, the research concentrates on the theoretical elaborations which, from a doctrinal point of view, stand at the base of the synthesis operated by the figures directly taking part in this process. Special attention is given to the possible parallels traceable in the symbols and metaphors traditionally employed by the respective perspectives of Sufism and Yoga in formulating their cosmo-metaphysical theories. This predominantly gnostic point of view is then integrated by a description of the
methodological aspects arising from this theoretical back-ground. The concluding part of the study is concerned with a brief description of different sub-branches within the Hindu environment which began to develop from the mainstream lineage over the last fifty years and sharing the gradual process of cultural absorption and progressive Indianisation of a corpus of teachings originally pertaining to an orthodox Sunni environment.
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Abbreviations

AIB  Aʿīn-i ʿIlm al-Bāṭin
AIO* Annali dell’Istituto Orientale di Napoli
AY  Ānanda-Yoga
EI  Encyclopedia of Islam
HdT  Hidayāt al-Ṭalibīn
IC* Islamic Culture
JAOS* Journal of the American Oriental Society
JC  Jīvan-Caritra
KmI  Kamāl-i Insānī
MnS  Manāḥij al-Sair wa Madārij al-Khair
MqM  Maqāmāt al-Maẓhariyya
MuM  Maʾmūlāt-i Maẓhariyya
MW*  Muslim World
RSO* Rivista degli Studi Orientali (Rome)
SD  Santmat Darśana
SkA  Sādhanā ke Anubhav
SkR  Sākṣātkār kā Rahasya
SI*  Studia Islamica
StI*  Studies in Islam
TP  Tattva Prabodhanī
VS  Vedānta Sāgara

* = Periodicals
Introduction

Much has been written about the relationship and the reciprocal influence Hinduism and Islam have exercised on each other over the ten centuries of their cohabitation in South Asia. The innumerable works revolving around this topic include a wide range of studies dealing with one or the other aspect of this encounter which has so decisively contributed to the formation of the present-day cultural environment of the Indian subcontinent.

Especially in the wake of recent developments such as the destruction of the Bābrī Masjid at Ayodhya in December 1992 and the constant political tension between the two newly emerged nuclear powers India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue, the present situation of that area and the division of its societies along communal lines have attracted the world’s attention. Major stress is thereby laid on the dividing factors which have led to an increasing distance between Hindus and Muslims over the last century. If these certainly represent a continuous feature in the twentieth-century history of the subcontinent, it is nevertheless equally true that this situation does not reflect the whole reality and relegates many fertile contacts between these two communities to the margin of attention.

In the wave of enthusiasm for the secular policy pursued by the Republic of India after Independence in 1947, many indigenous scholars had begun to exalt the glorious past of the India’s middle ages during which an intense symbiosis involving many charismatic personalities on both sides stimulated and produced some of the finest cultural achievements in Indian history. These ranged from the development of an Indo-Islamic architectural style and the distinctive tradition of north-Indian
classical music to widely acclaimed poetic currents and a richly blended cuisine, all of which survive in various forms till the present day and contribute much to the attractive picture of India’s exotic culture.

Less attention has been given outside academic circles to the often intense spiritual contacts between the elite representatives of both traditions, operating from the top and reaching down to the level of popular understanding, where they have largely contributed to the creation of a common basis for a peaceful cohabitation of the members of both religious groups. It was in this field too that India’s extraordinary capacity of assimilation has given rise to some extremely stimulating examples of collaboration and synthesis transcending the numerous divisions that characterise the religious, social and ethnic peculiarities of each tradition.

From the thirteenth century AD onwards, the devotionally oriented bhakti movement provides us with a series of outstanding saints, both Hindus and Muslims, who were drawn by their sincere love arising from the depths of their longing hearts to experience the immutable Divine truth and were able to bridge the gap between their respective communities by stressing that common aim all sacred traditions have described since time immemorial. Culminating in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with Kabir and Gurbē Nānak, both pertaining to the nirguṇa current that emphasises the unqualified, transcendent aspect of the Divine while openly mocking the rigid ritualism of priestly orthodoxy as narrow-minded and hypocritical, many of these sants, although hailing from the lower sections of society, were able to maintain a truly synthetic vision that goes beyond the formal barriers of institutionalised religion. Basing their teachings on the assertion of an underlying common human ground, irrespective of the religious and social background and any erudite expertise in the holy scriptures, which if cultivated in its purest aspect of love for God and the world would allow every earnest seeker to experience the presence of his Lord and thereby render meaningless any religious discrimination. Their nearness to the people was expressed in their poetry using the simple and straightforward
Introduction

style of the north-Indian vernaculars used in their poetry. They there by contributed decisively to the formation of a multi-cultural and multi-religious society long before modern secular ideas began to penetrate into the subcontinent from the Western world.

As a matter of fact, for centuries religious hatred, intolerance and communal divisions were phenomena largely unknown to Indian society. If ever, they remained mostly confined to the sporadic initiatives of zealous rulers or governors eager to promote their image as firmly orthodox Islamic potentates. It was with the beginning of the modern age introduced to India during the colonial period that many indigenous intellectuals grew up in the imported educational system of their foreign rulers started to reinterpret the teachings of many religious and spiritual leaders of the past in a key that contrasted with the traditional perspective and which was prone to promote a growing division between the two communities. Although initially this did not reach down to the hundreds of thousands of Indian villages where Hindus and Muslims had since long shared the anxieties and needs of common life, they nevertheless began to gain ground in the circles of the nascent Indian bourgeoisie. Later, during the years of struggle for political freedom and assisted by the increasingly efficient means of propaganda, these ideas gradually penetrated further down to the masses. This process of growing division led eventually to the partition of the subcontinent into two separate nations: an almost entirely Muslim Pakistan oriented along lines of religious cohesion, and a secular India whose Western styled Constitution reflects the concern of its founders to guarantee freedom of expression to its innumerable religious groups.

The rise of a nationalistic ideology with both communal and secular dimensions which accompanied India’s passage during the later nineteenth century from a feudal society for hundreds of years governed largely by Muslim dynasties to a colonial system concerned with imposing a modern European mentality, is an impressive example of the impact of this process. It demonstrates at the same time impressively the loss of influence of traditional authorities on policy and society. This applies in
particular to the Muslims most hardly hit by the disastrous consequences of the 1856-7 War. The dwindling influence of Sufi leaders on all social classes appears particularly striking in the case of the Mujaddidiyya, the dominant Indian branch of the Naqshbandiyya based on the teachings of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī (1564-1624), the ‘renewer of the second millennium of Islam’ (hence the title *Mujaddid*), whose leaders had tried hard to exercise their influence on the ruling class during the Mogul period.¹ The frequent letters addressed by Shaikh Ahmad and his successors to the emperor and members of the Court nobility inviting them to adjust their lifestyle and policies according to Islamic norms show their concern and involvement in worldly affairs beyond their immediate responsibilities in the field of spiritual education. In tune with the particular vision held by this order which desired to encourage reforms from within the tradition based mainly on the Sunna of the prophet Muḥammad, its authorities were looked at with the utmost suspicion by the British rulers as potential reactionaries against their own concept of a new order.²

As a result and reaction of the impact left by the latter, at the turn of the present century and on the wave of Muslim protest after World War I began to gain weight the interpretation among Muslim intellectuals of the image of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī and his successors as religious, social and political reformers. In a successive stage, this led to Sirhindī’s depiction, in either...
negative or in positive terms according to their authors being Pakistani or Indian, as the defender of the Muslims against the majoritarian community and thereby an indirect forerunner of the Muslim nationalism which finally resulted in the creation of Pakistan. But notwithstanding the often highly exalted political role played by the ‘renewer of the second millennium of Islam’, it has been correctly pointed out in accordance with his image in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that Sirhindī ‘was primarily a Sufi and must be assessed as such’.3

Particularly disturbing in the image drawn of Shaikh Aḥmad and his successors by some modern Indian scholars is the often repeated assumption that his behaviour was guided by an uncompromising and radical Islamic position ‘trying to disrupt the peaceful co-existence of Hindus and Muslims’.4 Such a stand is hardly tenable in view of the existing sources and appears to be itself politically motivated. It fails to take into due account the change of mentality that has occurred during the last four centuries even if it is undeniable that in more recent times some leaders affiliated to the Naqshbandiyya have been adopting what are nowadays defined as ‘fundamentalist positions’. This contrasts with the attitude assumed by those authorities of the order who consider themselves as the spiritual heirs of Sirhindī, as I have experienced during my field research. These generally refuse to pronounce themselves in public about political problems and apparently do not nourish any particular aversion or hatred towards Hindus. In keeping with the traditional attitude mentioned by Friedmann, they remain rather indifferent to both questions and prefer to concern themselves with instructing the ever-decreasing number of disciples in the spiritual sciences and keeping the Naqshbandī tradition alive.

In view of the prevailing idea of the Mujaddidīs as intolerant and rigid Sunni purists unwilling to compromise, it may therefore be surprising that it was from the descendants of Shaikh Aḥmad

Sirhindī and his renowned heir at Delhi, Mīrzā Mazhar Jān-ī Jānān (d. 1780), that contacts were established with non-Muslims which eventually led to an intense spiritual collaboration and the transmission of the țariqa’s teachings and methods into a Hindu environment. This occurred during the second half of the last century, i.e., at a time when the relations between the two communities began to be increasingly strained, and, therefore, furnishes a concrete example of behaviour that openly contradicts the above-mentioned assertions about the Mujaddidiyya. The successors of these shaikhs and gurus used to teach their particular elaboration of a joint spiritual discipline to a mixed audience of Hindus and Muslims, unperturbed by the growing unrest and turmoil that has gripped the north-Indian society over the last decades. They, thus, insert themselves in the mediaeval sant context set out by their illustrious predecessor Kabīr to whom they claim affiliation, thereby giving proof of the perpetuation of this tradition over the centuries until today.

During the eight months of field research I carried out in India from October 1995 to May 1996. I was welcomed by the members of both religious groups affiliated to the Mujaddidiyya at different places in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan and Delhi. Thanks to their generous hospitality, it was possible for me to take part at their meetings and satsaṅgs, listening to their oral teachings and participating at the performance of the techniques used in their daily practice. The natural and spontaneous openness and tolerance I witnessed among these masters, who pay regular homage in their prayers to the ancestors of the țariqa Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya include Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī, the alleged scorner of Hindus, at whose tomb they perform annually prayers and meditations, thus, convinced me of the liveliness of India’s spiritual culture and its continual ability to contradict the common stereotypes of rigidly erected mental categories.

Attentive reading of the textual sources of these Hindu Naqshbandis revealed that their teachings consist of a curious blend of elements originally pertaining to both the Islamic background of their Mujaddidi ancestors and that of the nirguṇa
sants, especially Kabīr and his successors in the panth bearing his name. It, thus, became clear that even a tendentially conservative environment like that of the Mujaddidīs reacted in different ways to the challenge of modernity, and that at least some of its leaders did not perceive any contradiction with the teachings of the Mujaddid in enlarging their spiritual wealth to members from outside the Sunni community.

The present study was encouraged by one of the great spiritual authorities of the silsila at Delhi, the late Shāh Abūl Hasan Zaid Fārūqi Mujaddidī (d.1993), who first informed me of the existence of a Hindu branch and who directed me to Kanpur to search for those people who use to come from time to time to the tomb of their revered spiritual ancestor Mīrzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān. It attempts to identify the factors that made such a cross-cultural link possible, from a religious, social and historical point of view, thereby trying to outline the perspective held by those who so bluntly disregard the formal divisions between a doctrine so deeply related to the fundamentals of the Islamic Dīn and the adherents of India’s Sanātana Dharma.
The Masters of the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya Maẓhariyya Naʿīmiyya

Shaikh Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān (1111/1701-1195/1780)

The account of this particular branch of the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya begins with the figure of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān. First of all because he played a central role in the eighteenth-century history of the ṭariqa reunifying several lines of descent derived from Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī.¹ Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān thereby successfully reverted the trend of gradual fragmentation that regularly occurs in the vacuum left in the spiritual hierarchy after the death of a charismatic leader. Through his vigorous character and intellectual acuteness Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān was capable of revitalising the spiritual and social legacy he had inherited from his illustrious ancestors in the silsila at a time when large parts of northern India’s Islamic society were facing threats of ruin and disintegration. In recognition to the important role played by him, his line of the order became afterwards known as Shamsiyya Maẓhariyya, providing evidence of the particular imprint he left on the history of the lineage.

¹. For a graphical illustration of the different lines of descent converging in the figure of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān, see W.E. Fusfeld’s study: The Shaping of Sūfī Leadership in Delhi: The Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya, 1750 to 1920, PhD thesis, Dept. of History, University of Pennsylvania, 1981, p. 127. This work provides a detailed analysis of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s double role as spiritual leader and social reformer, and provides an account of the subsequent history of his lineage at Delhi.
The second reason is that it was an initiatory chain that developed from Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân which eventually extended into a Hindu environment splitting from the main branch which from its khânaqâh at Shâhjahânâbâd provided its affiliates with spiritual leadership almost uninterruptedly till the present day. Hence, Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân constitutes the point of departure of the distinctive lineage we are concerned with and is considered by its later authorities as the forefather of their peculiar tradition.

There is a third certainly not less important reason that justifies Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân’s prominent role in the biographical frame-work provided by the present chapter. It bears a direct relation with the preceding one and consists of the fact that he was apparently the first among the accredited Mujaddidi authorities to pronounce himself openly about the Hindu tradition from an Islamic legal viewpoint. In one of his epistles, the learned Sunni scholar and authoritative Sâfî leader has provided a fairly detailed account of the basic outlines of the Hindu tradition, leading him to the conclusion that Hindus have had their share in the Divine revelation in the past and that it was delivered to humanity through prophet-like messengers (bashîr) including Râmacandra and Krṣṇa.

If the resulting availability to include Hindus among the ‘People of the Book’ (ahl-i kitâb) does not represent a radical innovation in Islamic perceptions of Hinduism, it is Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân’s practical attitude towards Hindus that constitutes a surprising aspect of this orthodox Naqshbandî shaikh. Several indications suggest that he admitted a number of Hindus to enrol among his disciples and some hints contained in his letters suggest that he provided spiritual guidance to some of them.

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The Masters of the Naqshbandiyya

without insisting on their previous conversion to Islam. Although it is impossible to infer from the few sources at our disposal to what extent those Hindu disciples were allowed access to the esoteric teachings of his silsila, their mere presence in his ḥalqa indicates that Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân had no basic objection towards granting initiation (bai‘at) to non-Muslims.³

Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân’s relevance for the present study, thus, becomes immediately evident, and it is probably more than a casual coincidence that he is held in high esteem and reverence among the order’s contemporary Hindu members, many of whom consider his tomb within the precincts of the Delhi khânaqâh an important destination on the itinerary of their ritual pilgrimage and a source of blessings and spiritual inspiration.

However, an assessment of the role played by this important eighteenth-century Sûfî leader in the specific context needs to take into account the socio-political circumstances prevailing in northern India and especially in Delhi during his lifetime.⁴ The rapid decline of Mogul imperial authority following the death of emperor Aurangzeb in AD 1707 accelerated by the emergence of non-Islamic regional forces and foreign powers (Sikhs, Jâts, Marâthâs and European colonialists) compelled India’s Muslims

³. From the sources available, it is not entirely clear whether this affiliation of Hindus was subject to any prior condition since any explicit mention of this topic has been carefully avoided in the texts at our disposal. As I was told by the present head and sajjâda nashîn of the Delhi khânaqâh, Ḥadrat Anas Abûl Naṣr Fâruqî Mujaddidi, a preliminary condition which most probably was incumbent on Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân’s Hindu disciples consisted in the pronouncement of the kâlima-i tawhîd, thus, proclaiming the unicity of the metaphysical Principle and Its projection as Creator. This does not automatically imply a conversion to Islam as a whole and would probably not have caused any embarrassment for any spiritually inclined Hindu.

⁴. For a detailed account of the socio-historical circumstances of the eighteenth century with special regard to Muslim society in the Mogul capital Delhi, see the first chapters of S.A.A. Rizvi (1980), pp. 3-203. For an appreciation of the intellectual movements within Muslim society, see also Muhammad Umar: Islam in Northern India during the eighteenth century (1993), and William Irvine: The Later Mughals (1972).
to confront an unprecedented situation in which a temporal authority guided by Islamic principles and endorsing its traditional values for the maintenance of an Islamic world-order could no longer be taken for granted. Consequently, a number of Muslim intellectuals who recognised the danger of a possible loss of Muslim identity and who witnessed the disintegration of large segments of this social structure around them struggled to provide an answer on different levels to this deep crisis, especially in the old Mogul capital Delhi where these tendencies were most strongly perceived. Renowned names like Shaikh Walī Allāh Dihlawī (1114/1703-1176/1762)5 and his son Shaikh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (1159/1746-1239/1824),6 Khwāja Muḥammad Naṣīr ‘Andalīb’ (1105/1694-1172/1759), and his son Khwāja Mīr ‘Dārd’ (1133/1721-1199/1785),7 Shaikh Kalīm Allāh Shāhjahānābādī (1060/1650-1142/1729) and his disciple Maulānā Fakhr al-Dīn Dihlawī (1126/1714-1199/1785)8 to name only a few, furnish ample proof of the intellectual vitality that characterised the capital’s Muslim society during that time.

The flourishing of a refined Persian and Urdu literary culture around the Mogul Court and its aristocracy promoted and promulgated during the frequent mushā‘ira meetings ranges among the most excellent expressions of this era of incumbing decadence, which witnessed the presence of such outstanding poets as Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Bedil’ (1054/1644-1133/1721), Mīrzā Muḥammad Rāfī ‘Saudā’ (d. 1195/1781), Mīr Taqī ‘Mīr’ (1137/1724-1225/1810) and many others.9 The steady decline of political

7. For these two, see Annemarie Schimmel: As through a Veil, and Pain and Grace (1976).
8. For these two, see Muhammad Umar (1993).
authority was, therefore, not immediately accompanied by a sudden interruption in Delhi’s cultural life. Rather, it provided the stimulus for a period of flourishing activity among Muslim intellectuals that led to a series of unique achievements in numerous cultural fields.

However, the invasions of Nādir Shāh in 1739 followed by that of Shāh Aḥmad Durrānī in 1761 gave a decisive blow to the city’s status. The simultaneous dispersal of material wealth compelled many Muslim intellectuals to migrate towards the emerging provincial centres in the periphery of the former empire, such as Awadh in the Northern Gangetic plain and Golkonda/Hyderabad in the Deccan.

The growing feeling of insecurity which began to pervade large sections of Delhi’s population led to social unrest that manifested itself in the outbreak of open factional conflicts, mainly between rival Shi’a and Sunni groups, and was further fuelled by the inconsistent religious policies of the emperors and their influential supporters at court.¹⁰ Even if these conflicts were only part of the wider context of a struggle for political power between the two predominant factions of Shi’a Iranis and Sunni Turanis of Afghan origin, the sharpness of their ideological undertone indicates the fragility of the inner equilibrium that by than characterised the local Muslim society throughout.

In such a climate many people sought refuge in the presence of spiritual and religious leaders who, from the secluded

¹⁰ The son and successor of emperor Aurangzeb, known under his title Shāh-i ‘Ālam Bahādur Shāh (r. AD 1707-12) reportedly shifted from the orthodox Sunni religious policy of his father towards a more or less open support of the Shi’a faction altering the traditional khutba read out in Delhi’s Jama Masjid. This strongly offended the feelings of the Sunni scholars estranging great parts of them from their idea of the emperor as grant of orthodoxy. On a popular level, the growing popularity of the Muharram celebrations to commemorate the martyrdom of the prophet’s grandsons Hasan and Husain, introduced to northern India from the Deccan, constitute an important example of the new self-confidence shown by the Shi’a population patronised by the newly emerging regional dynasty of Awadh.
surroundings of their *khānaqāhs* and *madrasas*, continued to represent an element of stability and continuity of the old order. Many Sufi leaders attentively observed the deepening crisis afflicting the outside world and perceived the urgency to counteract its centrifugal tendencies. Hence, they began to assume a broader role of leadership by expanding their earlier position of exclusively spiritual preceptors to a more contingent kind of moral and social tutorship with aimed at providing a safehaven for people in all sectors of society. This newly emerging pattern of behaviour accounts for the large following many of these shaikhs are reported to have attracted into their fold. They began to enrol an increasing number of affiliates into the rank of their *tariqa*, appointing innumerable deputies, delegates and spiritual successors (*khulafā*’) who were despatched to the remotest corners of the country in order to provide maximum guidance per outreach through a dense coverage of the territory. Reflecting the specific Naqshbandī tendency to exercise a corrective influence on worldly leaders, it is not difficult to understand how a prominent Sufi leader like Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān perceived it as his stringent duty to follow in the steps of his predecessors trying to prevent the process of degradation he witnessed all around.

**Mīrzā ‘Mażhar’ Jān-ī Jānān: Life and thought**

Like most prominent figures in Indian Muslim culture, Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān claimed descendance from a noble ancestry (*ashrafī*) originally hailing from outside the subcontinent. According to the shaikh’s own statements, he descended in the 28th generation from a family whose genealogy goes back through Imām Abū Ḥanīfa (*d.* 150/767) to ‘Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib, the fourth caliph of

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11. For a more elaborated description of the changing socio-political situation and shifting of leadership from the worldly to the spiritual authorities during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries until the final breakdown of the old Muslim society after 1857/8, see W.A. Fusfeld (1981), Introduction and chapter 1, pp. 1-52.
Islam. More traceable in historical sources, his paternal forefathers were members of the Afghan Qâqshâl tribe who accompanied the Mogul emperor Humâyûn on his way from Kabul to Delhi to reconquer the lost throne of Hindustan.

After Humâyûn regained power at Delhi in 1555, the two Qâqshâl brothers Amîr Majnûn Khân and Amîr Bâbâ Khân were awarded posts as jâgîrdâr at Narnaul (about 25 miles south-west of Delhi). Later in the reign of Akbar (r. AD 1556-1605) some of their descendants were assigned a jâgîr at Ghoraghat in Bengal in reward for their loyalty during a series of military campaigns. But this loyal relationship ended abruptly in 1580-1 when the Turânî nobility in those eastern regions engaged in a revolt against the imperial authority and in which Amîr Jabbârî Khân, son of Majnûn Khân, and other Qâqshâls were found to have taken active part. Once the rebellion was crushed, its leaders were disgraced.

Nothing is known about the following generations of the clan after the loss of its privileged status. The family chronicle becomes traceable again with the figure of Mîrzâ Jân, the father of ours who reportedly held a mansab in the army of Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707), which led him to accompany the emperor on his extensive military expeditions to the Deccan. There, Mîrzâ Jân apparently distinguished himself in quelling a rebellion through diplomatic ability. However, soon afterwards he decided to resign from his post and to leave the imperial camp for his native town of Akbarâbâd

12. Thanâ al-ÿaqq Amîn dedicates one chapter of his book Mîr wa Saudâ kâ daur to Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânââ (pp. 185-211) providing an extensive account of the latter’s ancestry.
14. This event refers probably to the rebellion of a Marâæhà faction guided by a certain Ràjà Ràm inside the fortress of Jinjî (dist. Arcot, Tamil Nadu) which, from a chronological and geographical point of view, corresponds to the account given by Maulawî Na’îm Allâh Bahrâîchî in his biographical work on Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân, Bashâràt-i Maÿhariyya, folio 118. Cf. ‘Abd al-Razzaq Quaraishi: Mîrzâ Mazhar Jân-i Jânân aur unkâ kalâm (1979), pp. 27-30.
Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân spent his early childhood in his father’s hometown Agra receiving an education consistent with his social status. Encouraged by his father, he underwent an intensive training in the traditional, religious, literary, martial and artistic sciences typical of his times, Mîrzâ Jân himself providing great part of the instructions until his death in 1130/1717, when the age of his son was sixteen.  

It is not clear when and in what circumstances Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân moved from Agra to Delhi, but most likely it took place

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15. According to the author of the Ma’mûlât-i Mazhariyya, Mîrzâ Jân’s wife and mother of Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân descended from the ruling family of the Bahmanikindom of Bijapur in the Deccan; if this is the case, their marriage occurred probably during Mîrzâ Jân’s stay in the following of the Mogul emperor in that area. Cf. MuM, p. 19.

16. While the place of this event is mentioned in most authoritative sources as Kalabagh, a small qaṣba in the Malwa region, there are differences regarding the exact date of birth: according to his two main disciples and biographers, Shâh Na‘îm Allâh Bahârâchî, author of the Ma’mûlât-i Mazhariyya and the Bashârât-i Mazhariyya, and Shâh Ghulâm ‘Alî Dihlawî, author of the Maqâmât-i Mazhari, his birth-date has been mentioned as 11 Ramaḍân 1111/February 1700. Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân’s own statements in this context slightly contradict each other and range from AH 1110 (cf. Ghulâm ‘Alî Azâd Bilgrâmî in Sarw-i Azâd) to AH 1113 (see Khaliq Anjum (1989), letter no. 1, p. 96-7). Cf. also ‘Abd al-Razzaq Quraishi (1989), pp. 31-2 and Maulânâ Muḥammad Ḥusain Azâd’s Ab-i Ḥayât, pp. 137-8.


during the last years of his father's life or shortly after his death. There, he continued his religious education under the guidance of Qārī ‘Abd al-Rasūl Dihlawī who taught him Qur'ānic exegesis (tafsīr) and instructed him in Qur'ānic recitation (qirā’at). He further studied ḥadīth and jurisprudence (fiqh) with Ḥājī Muḥammad Afdal Siyālkoṭī (d. 1146/1733), a grandson of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī and well-known authority in the traditional religious sciences, to whom he remained attached long after the beginning of his own spiritual career when he himself started instructing his disciples in the science of ḥadīth.

Most sources report that Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s inclination towards the Sūfī way of darweshī o faqr emerged at the age of eighteen following an unsuccessful attempt to obtain the restoration of his father’s mansab at the Court of the emperor Farrukhsiyar (r. AD 1712-19). The emperor was reportedly unable to attend the Court audience compelling Mīrzā Mazhar to leave empty-handed. The following night, the latter had a dream in which the Chishti saint Quṭb al-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī (d. 654/1256) called him towards a life dedicated to spiritual pursuits. Deeply impressed by the powerful vision, Mīrzā renounced any further thought of a worldly career and eventually became the disciple of Sayyid Nūr Muhammad Badāyūnī (d. 1135/1722), a descendant of Shaikh Sa’īf al-Dīn in the line of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī, who initiated him into the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya.

Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān remained with his spiritual preceptor for four years until the latter’s death in 1722. During that period

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19. For a detailed biographical account of this great scholar, see among others MqM, pp. 244-6, and Muhammad Umar (1993), p. 140 (notes to chapter II).
22. For biographical details of this saint whose grave is located within the precincts of the cemetery at the outskirts of the dargāh of Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā’ at New Delhi, see MqM, pp. 280-5. For his position in the spiritual genealogy of the order, see Appendix I of the quoted work.
he reportedly made rapid progress on the spiritual path qualifying for full investiture (*khilafat*) and the licence of initiating new disciples into the order (*ijazat*). After his master’s death he remained for nearly six years immersed in deep meditation next to his shaikh’s tomb until reaching the degree of ‘supreme sainthood’ (*wilayat-i ‘uliyä*), apparently through hidden guidance by his shaikh. Then, one night his preceptor appeared to him in a vision (*rü’ya*) directing him to persist in his quest for Truth and to look for a new living master.

Mîrzä Jân-i Jânän next enrolled as the disciple of Shâh Ha’fiç Sa’d Allâh (*d.*1152/1739), a renowned authority of the Mujaddidlî lineage at Delhi at that time, and of Shâh Mu’hammad Zubair (*d.* 1152/1739) a grandson of Shâh Hujjat Allâh Naqshbandî and preceptor of numerous noblemen at the imperial Court. But the master who brought to completion Mîrzä’s spiritual education was Shaikh Mu’hammad ‘Abîd

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25. For biographical details of him, see *MqM*, pp. 293-7. According to this biography, Mîrzä Mîzar was assisted by the spirit of his defunct master, a method often described by and characteristic for this order since the its earlier days headed by the Khwâjagân during the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, which include Khwâja ‘Abîd al-Khâliq al-Gujdawânî, Khwâja ‘ârif Riwgârî and Khwâja Yûsuf al-Hâmâdânî. For this pattern of spiritual transmission typical among Naqshbandî leaders, see: Hamid Algar’s article ‘A Brief History of The Naqshbandî Order’ in *Varia Turcica: Naqshbandis* (1990), pp. 6-12, and Stéphane Ruspoli’s ‘Réflexions sur la voie spirituelle des Naqshbandis’, in *supra*, pp. 95-109.

Another example of this way of spiritual transmission outside the Naqshbandî context is that of the Algerian Sûfî Amîr ‘Abîd-al Qâdir al-Djizâîrî (*d.*1867) who claimed to have been connected with his spiritual instructor Shaikh al-Akbar Ibn al-‘Arabî through ‘hidden initiation’. For a general acknowledgement of this spiritual relationship with a defunct master, see A.S. Husaini’s article ‘Uways al-Qaranî and the Uwaysî Sûfîs’ in *MW* 57 (1967), pp. 103-14.

26. For biographical details, see *MuM*, pp. 21-2.
Sunāmī ‘Gulshan’ (d. 1160/1747),\(^\text{27}\) another prominent Naqshbandī authority with a large following who had reached Delhi from Sirhind following that town’s destruction by the Sikhs.\(^\text{28}\) The shaikh initiated his disciple into the Qādirī, Chishtī and Suhrawardī silsilas, thus, bringing to perfection his spiritual career and preparing him for his role as an independent authority.

By the time of the shaikh’s death, Mīrzā Jān-ī Jānān had spent a period of about thirty years under the guidance of several prominent Naqshbandī authorities, thus, bringing together the main lines of descent that had developed from Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī through his two sons and chief successors, Muḥammad Maʿṣūm (d. 1079/1668) and Muḥammad Saʿīd (d. 1070/1659).\(^\text{29}\) Having acquired full maturity as a shaikh and endowed with a solid knowledge in both religious and spiritual matters Mīrzā Jān-ī Jānān was ready to fulfil the mission of propagating the ṭarīqa’s message reassumed in the principle of ‘solitude among the crowd’ (khilwat dar anjuman).\(^\text{30}\)

By the mid-eighteenth century, the order’s centre of activity had already moved from Sirhind, the hometown of Shaikh Aḥmad the Mujaddid. Its core areas comprehended

\(^{27}\) For biographical details, see MqM, pp. 293-7.

\(^{28}\) This former centre of the Mujaddidiyya in Punjab that developed around the tomb of Shaikh Ahmad was raided by the Sikh armies in 1710 and again in 1758 leading to an exodus of the order’s authorities to Delhi, Rampur and other places. See also Arthur F. Buehler: Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaikh (1997), pp. 170-1.

\(^{29}\) For an assessment of the life, works and role of these two prominent sons of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī, see Yohanan Friedmann’s article ‘The Naqshbandis and Aurangzeb: a reconsideration’ in Varia Turcica: Naqshbandis (1990), pp. 209-20.

\(^{30}\) For a further explanation of this fundamental principle which in a sense sums up the attitude of the Naqshbandī shaikhs, see Shāh Abūl Ḥasan’s treatise Manāhij al-Sair. . . . (Urdu version), pp. 42-4. See also Qādi Thanā Allāh Pānīpatī’s Kitāb al-najati ‘an ṭarīqi al-ghairati, a gist of which regarding the eleven fundamental principles of the order is given in MuM, pp. 70-6.
now the capital Delhi, the provincial centres of the Rohilkhand including Rampur, Muradabad and Badayun, and the Punjab. It was from Delhi that Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân began to exercise an influence that eventually reached far beyond the city’s boundaries. His importance as an all-India leader, in a way comparable to that of the Chishtî shaikhs in the early period of the Delhi Sultanate, is evidenced by the presence of his khulafa‘ and disciples all over the country, from the Punjab and Gujarat to the Deccan, although he concentrated his efforts largely on the Afghan Rohilâs who had settled in the ancient land of Katehar in the north-western Ganges plain. His spiritual influence radiated from Delhi to the various secondary centres in the periphery maintaining an intense correspondence with the deputies despatched in those places and was further enhanced by the transmission of spiritual attention (tawajjuh). This concept of action through presence notwithstanding, it appears from several of Mirzâ Mażhar’s letters that anxious about the worsening social and political circumstances in the capital he occasionally left Delhi to pay personal visits to his chief deputies and trusted friends in places with a notable presence of followers, like Sambhal, Amroha, Panipat, etc. Such a behaviour reflects the extent to which the impact of the dramatic historical events that led to an exodus of Delhi’s population towards the newly emerging provincial capitals did not spare even this charismatic leader.

31. See, for instance, the description of various lineages from Shaikh Ahmad mentioned in Badr al-Dîn Sirhindî’s Ḥadrât al-Quds and Muḥammad Hâshim Kishmî’s Zubdat al-maqâmât, both of which furnish a detailed account of the developments of the order from Shaikh Ahmad onwards to the next three generations.


33. For more details regarding this technique, see chapters 3 and 4 of the present study. For Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân’s own references regarding the transmission of tawajjuh, see letters no. 30 and no. 42 of his letter collection in Khaliq Anjum (1989), pp. 172 and 191.

34. See letters no. 40 (p. 189), no. 52 (p. 202), no. 74 (p. 235) of Khaliq Anjum’s Urdu rendering of Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân’s letter collection.
In spite of the large number of disciples, Mîrzà Jân-i Jânân reportedly remained very careful in selecting those admitted into his inner circle. In view of the responsibility involved for both master and disciple in establishing such a link, he is described as extremely reluctant in granting initiation (bai’at). Aware of the risks of degeneration implied in enlarging indiscriminately the number of adherents to the ṭalqa, he initially tried to discourage all potential novices in order to test the firmness of their determination. Once this was ascertained, he carefully tested each candidate’s suitability before proceeding to grant full spiritual assistance to the neophyte.

On the other side, it was, considered equally important for the aspirant novice to recognize a perfect master (shaikh-i kāmil) and to distinguish him from other people with apparently attractive features. Qâḏî Thanâ Allah Pānipatî, one of Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân’s main disciples and successors, very much in line with the Mujaddidî perspective, writes at this regard:

. . . the criterion while searching for a perfect spiritual guide should not remain confined to the abilities of producing extraordinary things (kharq-i ādat), being aware of the dangers and distractions afflicting the heart or the obtainment of spiritual states and emotional rapture (hâl, wajd), because many of these things can be attained also from Yogis and Brahmins; therefore, these matters alone constitute no guarantee for prosperity (dalîl-i sa‘ādat). The real proof and the distinctive sign by which a perfect master can be

35. Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân himself occasionally refers in his letters to the growing number of disciples present at the khânaqâh to whom he had to impart spiritual assistance and tawajjuh. Cf. Khaliq Anjum (1989), letters no. 27 and 57.
36. For the conventional procedure of Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân’s spiritual guide, Sayyid Nûr Muḥammad Badâyûnî, in enrolling new disciples, see MuM, p. 21.
recognised is his uprightly following of the revealed Law (\textit{sharʿ}) and his acting in perfect accordance with the Holy Scripture (\textit{al-Kitāb}) and the Tradition of the prophet (\textit{sunnat}). 38

This passage reproposes the everlasting problem faced by many earlier shaikhs, including Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī, of safe-guarding the esoteric tradition from degenerating into a sort of cheap witchcraft popular among the masses. In fact, the criterion for recognition of a genuine shaikh, which the author explains in minute detail in this text, reconfirms Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān as deeply rooted in the Mujaddidī tradition, for whom a shaikh of uppermost spiritual perfection (\textit{shaikh-i kāmil wa mukammal}) acts outwardly as a perfect follower of the Law as represented by the prophet Muḥammad (\textit{ittibāʿ al-sunnat}). All sources agree upon Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s insistence on a minute adherence to the prescriptions of the \textit{shariʿat}. He reportedly requested his disciples to point out to him any shortcoming in his own behaviour which could contradict the principles of orthodox Sunni Islam. 39

Yet another aspect emerging from the above-quoted statement which puts Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān in line with his famous predecessor from Sirhind is his attempt to purify Islam by expelling the numerous indigenous customs, popular beliefs and superstitions that had crept into many Muslim’s daily routine during the centuries of cohabitation with India’s other traditions. Although certainly more sympathetic towards the spiritual achievements of the Hindus, he

38. Cf. \textit{MuM}, p. 35.
39. Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī, reports that one day when Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān took his son to his shaikh, a Qādirī master, he (Shāh ‘Abd al-Raḥman Qādirī) happened to be so absorbed by his love for \textit{samā'} that he neglected the punctual performance of the afternoon and evening prayers. The young Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān was reportedly so impressed by this evident negligence of a Muslim’s duties that he later told his father that he would never agree to become a disciple of a master of such sinful inclinations. See \textit{MqM}, p. 262, and \textit{MuM}, p. 12. For other anecdotes exemplifying Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s strict adherence to the \textit{shariʿat} and the \textit{sunnat}, see ‘Abd al-Razzaq Quraishi (1989), pp. 114-25.
perceived the pure Sunni way represented by the attitudes and practices of the Mujaddidi family (khāndān) as the safest way for the members of his own community. Strictly adhering to the examples set by the archetypes of perfect behaviour, Muḥammad, his companions (ṣaḥāba) and early followers (tābi‘īn), he extended his missionary effort to the whole of society, including women, to whom he occasionally even granted initiation into the order.\textsuperscript{40}

But in spite of the documented evidence that Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān considered himself in many ways as heir and propagator of the pre-existing Mujaddidi tradition, one can detect in him a somewhat less austere position than that held by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī.\textsuperscript{41} Given the scarcity of available material, it is extremely difficult to draw any exhaustive conclusion about whether the reasons for this lie more in the changed historical circumstances or rather in a difference of individual attitude and character of the two leaders, or a combination of both.\textsuperscript{42} Certainly, it is possible to recognise Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s role as more cautious and, therefore, less prone to advocate radical changes, both from a spiritual


\textsuperscript{41} In contrast to many contemporary Sūfī leaders, Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān did not leave any systematic written testimony of his thoughts and teachings regarding specific problems, with the exception of his letters which, as compared those of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī, are, however, very few in number and extremely concise in their content.

\textsuperscript{42} It would be extremely interesting to compare these two characters while trying to establish whether the nature of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī was a primarily intellectual one inclined towards analytical enquiries as expressed in his numerous treatises and in his newly formulated doctrines, and the more emotional nature of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān who produced comparatively little theoretical elaborations but who was renowned for his tireless efforts in instructing disciples, a reportedly powerful \textit{tawajjūh} and an emotionally charged poetry reflecting the strength of his spiritual rapture (\textit{jadhba}). Interpreted in this way, these two personalities incorporate the two complementary aspects of \textit{sulūk} and \textit{jadhba} that characterise the Naqshbandī way.
or simply from a social point of view. The way he perceived the distribution of roles in the *pir-muridî* relationship, although not his exclusive, and articulates itself in the emphasis on bestowing spiritual attention on the subtle organs (*laṭâ'if*, pl. of *laṭîfa*) of his disciples from the very beginning of their spiritual curriculum. 43 And the focus on the subtle heart-organ (*laṭîfa-i qalb*) as the central essence of Man’s unperishable suprahuman component reveals an adaption of spiritual guidance restoring it to essentials. The moving away from the highly intellectual speculations of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindî towards a more practical oriented approach that stresses a more active participation of the spiritual perceptor towards an increasingly passive though receptive disciple, probably constitutes one of Mîrzâ Jān-i Jānâ’ī’s main contributions towards the revivification and popularity of the order perpetuated among his successors as the *Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya Mazhâriyya* and puts him in tune with the new era the dawn of which he witnessed so clearly around himself. 44

However, most attention has been given by scholars to the Sufi Mîrzâ Jān-i Jānâ’ī for his supposed tolerant and sympathetic attitude towards Hindus and Hinduism in contrast to the alleged hostility of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindî. Here again, caution is needed to avoid both overenthusiastic interpretations that favour the promotion of the modern ideal of communal harmony dear to many contemporaries, 45 and

43. This is clearly expressed in *MuM*, pp. 40-1, where the author describes his masters’ peculiar way of granting initiation.

44. This new definition of the master-disciple relationship assumes an increasing importance in all branches derived from Mîrzâ Jān-i Jānâ’ī, be it in the Hindu one described in this study, be it in the strictly orthodox Muslim branches in modern India or Pakistan. (Cf. more recent doctrinal treatises like Maulânā Shâh Abûl Ḥasan Zaid Farûqî’s *Manâhij al-Sair wa Madârij al-Khair* or Maulânâ Abû Sa’îd’s *Hidâyat al-Ṭalîbîn*.)

the dismissal of any relevant conciliatory element in the thought of this saint towards the problem.\textsuperscript{46}

As a matter of fact, one of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s few open statements at this regard consists of the already mentioned letter in which the author comments on different aspects of the Hindu tradition.\textsuperscript{47} The content of the epistle which replies to an enquiry by an anonymous petitioner regarding the legal status of Hindus from an Islamic point of view, constitutes, technically speaking, a juridic opinion (istiftā) and reflects the author’s acquaintance with the fundaments of the Hindu dharma. As implied in the question, the subtle difference between infidels (kuffār) and polytheists (mushrikīn) represents an important point in the context of the letter since it refers to two different categories of non-Muslims each being accorded a different legal status. Accordingly, the author, acknowledging the celestial origin of the Veda and the direct derivation of the six fundamental doctrines (darṣana, lit. ‘points of view’) which constitute the universal Hindu doctrine from it, reaches to the conclusion that

\ldots all classes of Hindus unanimously agree upon the Unity (tawhīd) of the Most Exalted God (khudāwand-i taʿālā), consider the world to be ephemeral (ḥādīth) and created (makhlūq), contemplate its ultimate dissolution (fanā) and believe in the physical resurrection (ḥashr-i jismānī) of the body and the reward for good actions as well as punishment for their bad actions. Their custom of worshipping idols

\textsuperscript{46} Yohanan Friedmann, for instance, after a careful examination of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s position in his article ‘Muslim Views of Indian Religions’ in \textit{JAOS} 95 (1975), pp. 117-26, comes to the conclusion that ‘the views of Jān-i Jānān \ldots really constitute, \ldots, a relapse into conventional mediaeval attitudes if compared with the thought of such thinkers as al-Birūnī and Dārā Shikoh.’ (p. 121).

(but-parastī) is not based on the attribution of a Divine rank on these, but its truth is somewhat different. . . .

Through this unequivocal statement, Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān attributes a fundamentally different position to Hindus as compared to the polytheists of ancient Arabia and, thus, discharges the former from the commonly pronounced accusation of polytheism. If this statement represents, in a sense, the reiteration of a concept already anticipated by al-Bīrūnī in the eleventh century AD, the Naqshbandī shaikh seven centuries later assumes a more radical point of view. Recognising the Divine origin of the Veda and the direct relationship the orthodox Hindu doctrines bear with it he goes a step further than his illustrious ideological ancestor by affirming that essentially all Hindus keep in view the fundamental unity and unicity of the transcendant Principle that underlies all apparent diversity and in front of which all earthly creatures are ultimately relative and contingent.

Though Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān carefully refrains from any possibly compromising statement regarding the position of Hindus from a spiritual point of view, he further elaborates on his concept of truth behind their alleged idol-worship in a subsequent passage of the same letter:

48. Cf. letter no. 14 in Khaliq Anjum (1989), p. 132. There are numerous English versions of this letter. I have, however, preferred to propose my own translation of that letter in view of its importance in the context of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s thought regarding the topic. Moreover, the last sentence quoted is missing in the original version given in the Maqāmāt-i Māzharī, and consequently all those authors who have based their translations exclusively on that version (Abdul Wali (1923) and S.A.A. Rizvi (1980)) have equally left out that part. The version cited in the Bashārāt-i Māzhariyya found in the India Office Library in London (Or. 220) includes this sentence and is reported by Friedmann (p. 218) in his above-mentioned article as well as in the Urdu translation presented by Khaliq Anjum (p. 132) who based himself on a manuscript of these letters in possession of the Maulana Azad Library of the AMU, a supposed part of an older manuscript version of the Maqāmāt-i Māzharī.
... the inherent truth (ḥaqīqat) of their idol-worship is [their belief] that there are certain angelic beings (malāʾika) who, following the Divine decree, can divert their powers towards this created and corrupt world (ʿālam-i kawn wa farad). These include the spirits of perfect beings (arwāḥ-i kāmilān) who, after the relinquishment of the relation with their physical frame, continue to exercise their influence in this contingent universe (kāʾināt). There are other living beings who, in [the Hindus’] opinion, are endowed with eternal life (zinda-yi jāvid) similar to Ḥadrat Khīḍr — peace be upon him! —. Having carved idol-statues of these, they focus their spiritual intention on them, through which, after a while, they develop an intimate relationship (rābiṭa) with the inherent power of that outer representation (šāḥib-i ān šūrat); on the base of this special relationship they are able to satisfy their needs related to this world and the hereafter (ḥawāʾij-i maʿāšī wa maʿādī).49

In this passage, the author’s acquaintance with the intellectual perceptions at the base of the Hindu way of worshipping becomes sufficiently clear and confirms his universalistic vision of the world which goes far beyond that of most Hindus and Muslims who fall short of penetrating the outer appearances. It betrays Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s metaphysical perspective that comprehends the essential aspects underlying the Hindu doctrines and indicates his capacity to reconcile the inner values of both traditions behind their sharply contrasting religious, ritual and social attitudes. He, thus continues his letter:

This practice resembles closely to the technique of rābiṭa, a method commonly used by the Sufis, which consists of concentrating interiorly on the figure of the shaikh thus obtaining the effluence of spiritual

grace irradiating (*fa'īd*) from him. The only difference [between this method and the way of worship common among Hindus] being that [the Sufis] do not build any exterior image of their shaikh. . . .

Thus, from the esoteric perspective the difference between exoteric Islam and Hinduism results further reduced and narrows the distance between the two great traditions to little more than a formal divergency. Not even the act of prostration (*sijda, dāndavat*) in front of these ‘exterior representations’ of suprahuman powers practised by Hindus induces Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân to label them as polytheists since, he underlines,

. . . this custom must be interpreted as a kind of respectful salutation rather than as an act of worship, identical to that made to elders in the place of greeting.

But however contingent the difference in Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân’s explanation may appear from an esoteric point of view, there remains a fundamental issue in the Islamic dogma that cannot be ignored by an authority of the *Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya*. After reiterating in similar if smoother terms Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindî’s idea which admits for the fact that in accordance to some Qur’anic verses (9:48, 11:78, 35:24) great and perfect prophets were sent also to such countries

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51. The method of *tašawwur-i shaikh* or inner visualisation of the spiritual preceptor which has assumed a particular importance in the history of the *tariqa*, has provoked some harsh criticism from the exoteric milieu which considers it irreconcilable with the orthodox perceptions of the Islamic law.
52. If this reflects Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân’s real position towards the question of respectful prostration, its legitimacy remains, however, confined to Hindus alone while it is still considered unlawful for Muslims. In fact, a well-known anecdote in the Mujaddidi hagiography tells us that Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindî refused to prostrate himself in front of the emperor Jahângîr and protested vehemently against this un-Islamic custom at the Mogul Court. For an interesting controversy regarding this topic, see *MnS*, pp. 47-9.
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as India whose mention can be found in the Vedas, Mīrẓā Jān-i Jānān concludes:

... after the advent of our messenger (zuhūr-i paighambar-i mā) who was the final seal of all legislators (khātim al-mursalīn), whose Law has abolished the laws of all easts and wests until the end of this world, he is now to be obeyed and followed by everyone. Therefore, from the advent of the prophet till the present day (1180/1766), whosoever does not follow the tenets of the true faith delivered by him (muʿtaqid) is an unbeliever (kāfir).

This passage sets the limit that separates the rightful believer from the infidel in the conventional terms crossing which would be equivalent to depriving Islam of one of its most fundamental pillars. Hence, notwithstanding some surprising concessions to a non-Islamic tradition, Mīrẓā Jān-i Jānān remains faithful to the orthodox line adopted by his famous predecessor at least in dialectic terms. On the other hand, Mīrẓā Jān-i Jānān’s position must be considered the closest an orthodox Muslim can come towards the recognition of another religious tradition without causing irritation among the orthodox exoterists. The difference with Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī lies hence, less in a new position vis-à-vis Hindus than in a more explicit elaboration of some particular doctrinal points which testify Mīrẓā Jān-i Jānān’s partial interest in some aspects pertaining to their holy scriptures. A great number of them had been translated into either Arabic or Persian by that time and were easily available. It is also possible that Mīrẓā Jān-i Jānān received additional oral information from his Hindu followers or other authorities.

Maulawī Naʿīm Allāh Bahrāīchī reports another interesting anecdote providing further evidence for Mīrẓā Jān-i Jānān’s acquaintance with some aspects of the Hindu doctrine. In the course of a discussion held in the presence of Ḥājī Muḥammad Afdal, Mīrẓā Jān-i Jānān’s teacher, someone present in the ḥalqā told about a dream he had of a desert engulfed by an immense fire. Inside the fire appeared

53. MnS, p. 133.
Krśṇa while at the edge of it stood Rāmacandra. Those present interpreted this dream as symbolising the fire of hell but Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān argued for a different, more sophisticated interpretation. In his opinion, it would be illicit to refer to the ancient sages of India as infidels in the absence of any concrete scriptural basis; indeed, the Qur‘ānic verse that sanctions that to every country there has been sent a warner, makes it likely that also the country of the Hindu and had witnessed the dispatch of a Divine messenger (bashirī) or prophet (nazīrī) holding the rank of a wali or nabi. Rāmacandra, who was born at the beginning of the creation of subtle beings (jinn), at a time when people were endowed with longevity (‘umrā-yī darāz) and extraordinary powers (quwwāthā-yī bisyār),54 was able to lead the people of his time on the ‘way of sulūk’ (nisbat-i sulūk). However, Krśṇa, who in the Hindu holy texts is mentioned among the last in the series of these outstanding personalities, appeared at a time when the life-span and the inherent spiritual powers of humanity had notably diminished. Consequently, argues Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān, Krśṇa instructed his contemporaries in the ‘way of Divine attraction’ (nisbat-i jadhbī), in tune with their nature and temper. The frequent indulgence of this prophet in both vocal and instrumental music (ghinā wa samā) must be considered as a proof for Krśṇa’s adherence to the way of Divine attraction.

In the context of the dream, Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān interprets the fire in the desert as an allegory for the heat of passionate love (‘ishq-o muḥabbat). Hence, Krśṇa, associated with love from which the state of spiritual rapture arises, appeared inside the fire while Rāmacandra, associated with the cool tempered way characterised by inner perception and austerity, appeared at the margin of the fire. According to Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s biographers, Ḥājī Muhammad Afḍal was

54. MnS, p.133.
extremely pleased with the interpretation (ta‘bîr) of his favourite disciple.\textsuperscript{55}

Although this story has frequently been quoted by scholars concerned with the figure of Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân, the importance attributed to it has remained restricted to the implicit recognition of Râma and Kṛṣṇa as prototypes of Indian prophets prior to the advent of the prophet of Islam. Even if Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân repeatedly insists upon the necessity of silence in this regard, the idea of his quiet approval appears plausible in consideration of the above-mentioned interpretation. However, the signifi-cance it contains shows other important elements, especially in view of the subsequent developments in the ṭariqa that developed from him. The most striking element consists perhaps in Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân’s assimilation of Râma and Kṛṣṇa to different moments in the history of humanity. Such a statement requires some awareness of the place these two Divine messengers hold in Hindu mythology. It presupposes moreover a certain familiarity with the closely connected theory of the āvatara, that contemplates the ten terrestrial descents (daśāvatāra) of the Hindu god Viṣṇu sent to mankind in order to re-establish the cosmic equilibrium put in danger by the rise of power of the asuras that represent the power of darkness and ignorance. This is then closely related to the traditional cyclical conception of time within the present manvantara or human cycle, complemented by the theory of caturyuga, the four major cosmic eras that sanction the history of the Universe, at which Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân briefly hints in his letter.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{55} Cf. Shâh Na‘īm Allâh Bahrâîchî: Bashârât-i Mazhariyya dar faḍā’il-i Ḥaḍrât-i ṭariqa-i Mujaddidiyya, OICL, Ms. Bm. Or. 220, folio 43a-43 b, and also Abdul Wali (1923), Appendix B, pp. 248-9.

\textsuperscript{56} There is general if not unanimous agreement that Râmâchandra, the semi-historical son of king Daśaratha of Ayodhyâ and hero of the Hindu epic Râmâyana by Vâlmîkî, is considered as the seventh descent of Viṣṇu. He accomplished his mission in a period corresponding to the third of the four cosmic ages or yugas, while Kṛṣṇa, eighth in the series of ten āvatāras, is supposed to have sanctioned the beginning of the actual kali-yuga which marks the final and most unstable of the four periods. It would be extremely
In addition to this, Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s interpretation of the dream associates Rāmacandra with the ‘way of sulūk’ and Kṛṣṇa with the ‘way of jadhba’. Both conceptions are closely interconnected elements of the Naqshbandī methodology and related to the idea that occasionally the ṭariqa needs to be adapted to the particular requirements of each period in order to facilitate the access to the Divine mysteries to a larger number of contemporary individuals. According to the orders authorities, this is achieved by anticipating at the very beginning of the spiritual journey what in other initiatic orders can be reached only at the end of it.57

The Naqshbandī tradition claims that it was through the intervention of al-Khiḍr, the anonymous guide of Moses mentioned in the Qur’ān,58 that many of the order’s leading authorities have received spiritual guidance and inspiration for the introduction of new methods. Among these, the gradual shift towards the jadhba element becomes interesting at this regard to analyse the content of the Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha, included as part of the Rāmāyaṇa, with that of the Bhagavad Gītā, part of the second of the great epics of Hinduism, the Mahābhārata.

57. These two complementary stages correspond to the active and passive aspects assumed by the disciple during his inner journey (sair al-baṭini), in this case either considered as sālik (he who crosses the spiritual path, sulūk, gradually as a traveller, from maqām to maqām, through his own efforts or mujāhadat) or as majdhūb, a term which in the technical context of the Naqshbandī doctrine assumes the meaning of ‘he who is attracted by the grace of God or of his shaikh towards the Goal’.

58. Cf. Qur. 18:60-82. This enigmatic figure is often included among the four immortal prophets, along with Enoch (Idrīs), Elias (Ilyās) and Jesus (‘Isā). For these, see A. Schimmel: Mystical Dimensions of Islam (1976), p. 202.

Al-Khīḍr is said to have quenched his thirst at the ‘spring of eternal life’ (chashma-i āb-i ḥayāt) and possesses particular prophetic qualities related to a special kind of knowledge. For him, see Irfan Omar: ‘Khidr in the Islamic Tradition’, in MW 83 (1993), pp. 279-91.
increasingly important with the progression of time. Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân’s letter associates al-Khîdr with the subtle power coagulated in the Hindu idol-statues.

Although these are little more than veiled hints (ishârâ) and as such must command caution in interpreting them, they betray the degree of Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân’s insight into some peculiar aspects of the Hindu doctrine suggesting not only his interest in these subjects but perhaps also the perception or his side of a subtle link established between the two esoteric traditions involved. Since the episode is said to have taken place during the lifetime of Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân’s spiritual director Ḥâji Muḥammad Afḍal (d. 1146/1733), it results that Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân’s acquaintance with these Hindu matters predates his completion of the Naqshbandî path, and it is possible that he had by that time already come into contact with some members pertaining to the sant-environment living in and around Delhi. He may have indeed acquired most of these notions during or shortly after the death of his first shaikh, Sayyid Nûr Muḥammad Badâyûnî, a period for which very little information is available. While the absence of concrete evidence must dictate caution, it is indicative that among Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân’s Hindu descendants at Kanpur, most of whom pertain to a Vaiṣṇava devotional tradition, Râmacandra and Kṛṣṇa occupy the rank of highly revered divinities, placing them in line with the sant tradition.

Interestingly, such a conciliatory position is not seen as implying a radical departure from previous Mujaddidî positions in the eyes of later authorities in the order. This appears clearly from a comment made by the contemporary head of Delhi main Naqshbandî khânâqâh, Shâh Abûl Ḥasan

59. The best known of these is probably Khwâja ‘Abd al-Khâlîq al-Gujdawânî (d. 606/1220) who is said to have been revealed the method of silent recollection (dhikr-i khaft) by al-Khîdr. For details, see ‘Abd al-Rahman Jâmi’s Nafaṣât al-Uns, Marijan Molé’s article ‘Autour du Daré Mansour: l’apparentissage mystique de Baha’ al-Din Naqshband’, in Rêvue des études islamiques 27 (1959), pp. 35-66, and Stéphane Ruspoli (1990), pp. 98-107.
Zaid Fārūqī Mujaddidi (1324/1906-1412/1993). In one of his numerous writings, he mentions his meeting with a group of Hindus who had come to visit the tomb of Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân seeking to derive spiritual benefit from it through contemplation (murâqaba). Recalling Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindî’s alleged hostility towards Hindus, this venerable Sûfî saint and orthodox heir of his spiritual line observes:

If the revered Mujaddid had felt an absolute aversion (nafrat) towards all Hindus, he would have certainly left instructions to his successors and descendants at this regard, who in their turn would have acted accordingly. Neither has he left such instructions nor did those respected ones act in such a way. . . .60

The author then describes in some detail the encounter with those Hindus and concludes with two sentences from Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindî’s Maktûbât which read:

The second group has to be concerned with love, and for some reason they are loved. . . .61

And further:

. . . it is possible that the inner truths of the infidels might in a certain way have partaken of the beloved-ness which may be the cause of the attainment of Divine attraction of theirs. . . .62

In the eyes of this contemporary Naqshbandî saint, Mîrzâ Jân-i

60. Cf. Shâh Abûl Hasan Zaid Fâruqî: Hadrat Mujaddid aur unke nâqadîn (1977), p. 223. See also Marc Gaborieau’s article covering a detailed recension of this book: ‘Les protéstations d’un soufi indien contemporain. . . .’, in Varia Turcica: Naqshbandis, pp. 237-67. It is noteworthy that the Pakistani translator of the book by Shâh Abûl Hasan, Miyan Mir, has left out the entire passage in his English version. Hence, the quoted opinion acquires even more importance in this context, since it is by no means possible to attribute any secular tendencies to our Sûfî author who, at the contrary, does not hide his critical position towards these modern interpretations.

61. Mak. III:100.

Jānān’s attitude is therefore perceived from a perspective of continuity. Concluding in this line of thought, he finally asks:

\[\ldots\text{and why than should have those who go back to [his teachings] (mutawwassilūn) have conferred spiritual initiation on Hindus?}\]

The author thus makes the point that if the authorities in Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s line themselves did and do not perceive any contradiction in this tolerant attitude towards Hindus with the traditional principles of the ṭariqa, why should it be inferred by others from outside?

On the other hand, there are numerous examples of seventeenth and eighteenth century Chishtī shaikhhs, including Shāh ‘Abd al-Raḥman Chishtī (d. 1095/1683),64 Shāh Kalīm Allāh Shāhjahānābādī (1060/1650-1142/1729)65 and Shāh Fakhir al-Dīn Dīhlawī (1126/1714-1200/1784),66 who have shown a certain readiness for similar kinds of inter-communal considerations. But while the Chishtiyya is generally credited with a ‘tolerant, open-minded and deep-rooted’ attitude of tolerance advocating a peaceful co-existence with Hindus,67 and prone to promote communal harmony without incurring into strong criticism from the orthodox, the Naqshbandiyya is generally associated with a rigidly orthodox Sunni interpretation of Islam that does not allow for any concessions towards other communities, let alone with Hindus.

According to Yohanan Friedmann, who echoes in modern

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63. *Ibidem*, p. 223.
66. For him, see Muhammad Umar (1993), pp. 66-70.
scholarly terms the opinion of the traditional shaikh at Delhi, this image became dominant only in more recent times and culminated with the appropriation and projection Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī and his teachings as the ideological forerunner of the two nation/separate Muslim homeland theory in the first decades of the present century. As such, it remains the prevailing tenet among many contemporary scholars who variously interpret this alleged position according to their own point of view.

That tolerance towards non-Muslims from above did not necessarily imply a departure from orthodox Sunni positions is amply demonstrated by Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān and many of his contemporary Sūfī authorities, who in other occasions took a decisively unfavourable stand towards Muslim adoption of Hindu rituals and customs.68 It is a rather interesting characteristic of the eighteenth century that if from an esoteric perspective we find a number of outstanding figures ready to narrow the gap between Muslims and non-Muslims, on the other side the exoteric antagonism between Sunnis and Shiʿas kept growing and was fomented by those same authorities that pronounced themselves in favour of more elasticity towards Hindus. The declared aversion of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī towards Shiʿas impressively documented in his small but influential treatise titled Radd-i Rawāfid,69 anticipates the views of his heir and successor Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān, but also of the Chishtī shaikh Shāh Kalīm Allāh Shāhjahānābādī, himself the author of a treatise bearing the same title, who pronounced himself openly

68. Cf., for instance, the waṣiyatnāma of Shāh Walī Allāh, and also MuM, pp. 41-4.

69. The term rawāfid, lit. ‘deserters’, was applied to the Shiʿas because of their alleged desertation of the son of ‘Ali ibn Husain, Zaid, when he reproached them for their speaking against the Companions of the Prophet (ṣahāba). The use of this term by the shaikh, thus, reflects the ongoing dispute between the two largest factions in Islam. The Urdu version of this treatise has been published under the title Risāla dar kawāʿif-i Shiʿa, ed. by Ghulam Mustafa Khan, Rampur, 1388/1965.
against granting initiation to Shi'a. Most plausibly, this attitude can be explained by rapidly growing influence of Shi'a culture in India under the successors of Aurangzeb. Originally dating back to the times of Akbar and Jehangir, it received a further boost from the openly declared inclination of those Moguls like Muhammad Shâh (r. 1718-44) and Ahmad Shâh (r. 1748-54) towards Shi'a doctrines and customs and led to the emergence of an influential Shi'a political class headed by leaders like Safdar Jang and Mirzâ Najaf Khân, who notably reduced the power of the Sunni Turrânî party both at the centre and in the provinces. The Rohillâ war in 1748 which opposed many influential Sunni nobles like Intizâm al-Daulat and 'Imâd al-Mulk who supporting the Rohillâ faction, to the alliance of Safdar Jang and the Marâthâ leader Sûraj Mal, certainly contributed to create an atmosphere of tension between the members of these two religious groups which reached all the way down to the popular level.

It is against this socio-political background that the position of many of Delhi's Sûfî leaders must be understood, even more so as the established Sûfî orders, though far from denying a

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70. See S.A.A. Rizvi (1980), pp. 369-70, who quotes the Maktûbât-i Kalîmî, Delhi, 1315/1897-8, compiled by Maulawî Muḥammad Kalîmî, pp. 13 and 76.

71. While the former began to encourage the recruitment of great a number of Irani officials for imperial service, it was the latter who, through his marriage with the daughter of his Iranian treasurer Ghiyâth Begh, Mihr al-Nisâ in AD 1611, sanctioned the beginning of a period of increasing influence of Iranian Shi'as at the Mogul Court and on its politics.

72. Significantly, both officials at the Mogul Court were devoted disciples of Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân, as emerges from a number of letters the latter had written to them urging them to remain faithful to the respect towards darwishes and faqîrs. See, Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân’s letters no. 60-5.

honorific rank to ‘Alî ibn Abû Ṭalîb74 and his two sons Ḥusain and Ḥusain, attributed a supreme importance and veneration to the prophet of Islam and his Companions.75 Significantly, in one of his letters, Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân, in line with his conciliatory attitude regarding many fundamental issues, while answering the question about what to think regarding the controversies between Shi‘as and Sunnis pertaining to the Companions (ṣaḥāba) and members of the Prophet’s family (ahl-i bait), carefully avoids open controversy and limits himself to affirming that this does not figure among the essentials of orthodox Islam. Although he later confirms the fault of the Shi‘as (referred to as nufus-i khabthiya, lit. the ‘corrupted souls’) in denying the outstanding role of the Companions and family members in the prophetic mission, his attempt to maintain moderation indicates the delicacy of the topic in an environment loaded with social tension and of prevailing anarchy.76 Nevertheless, the caution of Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân cannot obscure the fact that his personal convictions were determined by a strong anti-Shi‘a feeling arising out of his strict adherence to the Sunna and hostility to the infiltration Shi‘a customs imported from Iran.

In later years, Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân repeatedly hints in his letters at his worsening health and the growing difficulties encountered in pursuing his activities in Delhi. In 1183/1769 he, decides to migrate to Rohilkhand, traditional stronghold of the Mujaddidiyya and its Afghan allies. But disappointed by the lack of response encountered to his efforts, he remained

74. It is sufficient to remember that in most Sûfî genealogies ‘Alî is considered as the immediately successive link after Muḥammad. This testifies the enormous importance attributed to him in the spiritual hierarchy and in the spiritual genealogies of the Sûfî orders. Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân himself traces his ancestry back to the fourth caliph of Islam.


attached to the city where he had spent most of his life and to which he remained emotionally related through the presence of his family and intimate friends (‘azīzān wa aqārib).77 He spent the last years of his life in seclusion in his khānaqāh at Delhi, focusing his attention on the instruction of a restricted number of disciples.

His health steadily deteriorated, as results from a letter addressed to Mīr Muḥammad Muʿīn Khān, one of his disciples at Panipat, in which he remarks:

...my weakness has become such that I am constrained to impart my teachings while lying down; though no pleasure is left in my life, the life of a Sūfī is a God-sent blessing (ghanīmat), both for myself and for others. . . .78

Elsewhere he asks his disciples not to expect any more replies to their letters being too weak to write and even to reach the nearby Jama Masjid for the Friday prayer.79

During the month of Muḥarram 1195/1780, a group of Shīʿa mourners carrying some taʿziya icons in procession through the streets of Delhi, happened to pass by Mīrzā Jān-i Jānnān’s khānaqāh.80 Consistent with his temper, Mīrzā reportedly made some sarcastic remarks to his followers criticising this Shīʿa custom as a ‘vain action of heresy and unlawful innovation’. These words reached the ears of some members of the procession and soon a wave of outrage swept through their imāmbārās and maḥfils.81

In the night of 7 Muḥarram 1195/January 1781, three men appeared at Mīrzā Jān-i Jānnān’s residence pretending to have

77. Letter no. 54, p. 204.
78. Letter no. 56, p. 207.
79. Letters no. 31 (p. 175), no. 35 (p. 181) and no. 51 (p. 201).
80. For a description of other Sūfī authorities regarding the growing popularity of taʿziya processions during Muḥarram, see Shāh ‘Abd al-ʿAzīz’s Sirr Al-shaḥādatain and his Tuḥfat-i ithnāʾi ‘Ashariyya.
come to pay homage to the renowned shaikh. When they came before him, one took out a pistol and shot him in his breast. All three managed to escape without being recognised, and though none of them was ever arrested, there is little doubt that the men belonged to an extremist Shi’a faction which had vowed to revenge the shaikh’s offensive remarks.82

Although seriously wounded, Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân remained alive for another three days during which he reportedly declined any medical treatment from a European (firangî) doctor offered to him by the emperor Shâh-i ‘Âlam II (r. 1759-1802) and asked for his aggressors not to be prosecuted since he himself had forgiven them.

On the evening of the 10 Muḥarram 1195/6 January 1781, Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân eventually succumbed to his injuries and was buried a few days later in the precincts of a mansion situated in the Chitli Qabar Bazar acquired shortly before by his wife.83 That site was to become the place where his disciples under the guide of Mîrzâ’s official successor, Shâh Ghulâm ‘Alî Dihlawî (1156/1749-1240/1824), established the new khânaqâh of the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya Maḥzariyya which exists until the

82. The only reliable source that seriously questions the religious identity of the attackers is Muḥammad Ḥusain Âzîd’s Āb-i Hayât (pp. 144-5), but apart from his tadhkira styled biography written about one century after the actual event had taken place, it seems too obvious that his intention as a Shi’a is to discharge the blame for this action from the Shi’a community. Moreover, as Quraishi has shown, Âzîd’s version is mainly based on a distorted interpretation of a passage from Qudrat Allâh Qâsim’s Majmû-i Naghz (op. cit., p. 75). Even Rizvi, himself a Shi’a and certainly not suspectable of great sympathies for the leaders of the Naqshbandiyya, admits: ‘. . . he was certainly a Shi’a fanatic from Iran’, in op. cit. (1980), p. 341.

83. In his wasiyatnâma Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân expressed the desire that his burial should be accomplished according to the Sunna of the Prophet in every smallest detail. He also showed himself disgusted for the haweli acquired by his wife vividly requesting his family members not to be buried there. This testament was handed over to his khâliifa Shâh Na’îm Allâh Bahrâichî who took over the responsibility of supervising the construction of his master’s maqbara. For further details, see MqM, pp. 157-9.
present day at the same location under the name of Dargâh-i Shâh Abûl Khair.

**Shâh Na‘îm Allâh Bahrâîchî (1153/1740-1218/1803)**

The death of Mîrzâ Mazhar Jân-i Jânân left a void in the leadership of the Naqshbandiyya in Delhi at a time of increasing crisis and instability in the city's political and cultural environments. Although he had been largely successful in building up a network of deputies elsewhere,\(^84\) the staunch Sunni Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân apparently had made no arrangement for his succession at his headquarter in Delhi.\(^85\)

Apart from Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân’s biographers Shâh Ghulâm ‘Alî Dihlawî and Shâh Na‘îm Allâh Bahrâîchî, two other disciples are noteworthy among his main successors: Qâdî Thanâ Allâh Pânîpatî (1138/1725-1225/1810), a prominent scholar of fiqh and hadîth who had studied with Shâh Walî Allâh Muhadith Dihlawî before undertaking the spiritual path first under guidance of Sayyid Muhammad `Abid Sunâmî and later with Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân. After completing his spiritual education at the age of 18, he returned to his native town of Panipat while maintaining close contacts with his spiritual perceptor. Qâdî Thanâ Allâh Pânîpatî was among Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân’s most intimate and estimated disciples and was appreciated for his virtuous character and extensive knowledge. Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân himself repeatedly went to stay with him at Panipat and

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\(^84\) Shâh Ghulâm ‘Alî reports that the number of Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân’s khulafâ’ was uncountable, impossible to mention all of them. *MqM* p. 388.


\(^85\) This uncharacteristic negligence might be attributed to his ideal of following the ways and customs of the Prophet in every detail, as Sunnis believe that the Prophet did not clearly appoint any of the members of his community as his successor.
later entrusted him the care for his wife and insane son after his death.  

Another of Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân’s eminent khulafā’ was Maulawī Ghulâm Yâhîyâ ‘Azîmabâdî (d. 1186/1772), native of a small place close to modern Patna who spent most of his time at Lucknow. Initially admitted into the Qâdiriyâ by a descendant of Shâh Pîr Muḥammad Lakhnawî (d. 1085/1674), he started his discipleship in the Naqshbandiyya through Mîrzâ Mazhar, and after obtaining khilafat and ijazat returned to Lucknow to propagate his master’s teachings.

Apparently, a dispute arose in the aftermath of Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân’s death between two of his other main successors, Shâh Ghulâm ‘Alî Batâlî and Shâh Na’îm Allâh Bahrîchî, which eventually saw the former prevailing. Shâh Ghulâm ‘Alî, the author of the Maqâmât-i Mazharî, was born in 1158/1745 in the Punjabi town of Batala. He arrived at Delhi as a child accompanied by his father who sought an adequate education for his eldest son. After studying hadîth with Shâh ‘Abd al-‘Azîz, in 1180/1767 he enrolled as a disciple of Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân with whom he remained for the remaining period of latter’s life. According to the sources, the Shâh Ghulâm Alî contributed notably to the establishment and widely diffused the reputation of the Delhi khânaqâh attracting scholars from all over the country his fame reaching far beyond India. After his death in 1240/1824 he was buried

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87. A prolific author of religious works, his most famous treatise is the *Risâlat-i Kalimât-i Ḥaqq*, apparently written at the instance of Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân, which deals extensively with the problem of the *wâḥdat al-wujûd* vs. *wâḥdat al-shuhûd*, in which he strongly defends the doctrine of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindî.

88. Fusfeld mentions the existence of a manuscript written by Na’îm Allâh Bahrîchî and commented upon by Shâh Ghulâm’ Alî whose content reflects the uneasy feelings between these two leaders. This manuscript is in possession of Prof. Nizami, ex-professor in the History Department of the AMU. See Fusfeld (1981), p. 153.
next to his shaikh in the very khānaqāḥ over which he had presided for almost half a century and which under his leadership had become centre of esoteric teaching known throughout the Islamic world. While Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī took upon himself the task of establishing a permanent basis for the silsila at Delhi, it was the concern of Maulawī Shāh Naʿīm Allāh Bahrāichī to guarantee for the continuity and diffusion of the ṭariqa in Awadh.

Sayyid Maulawī Shāh Naʿīm Allāh Bahrāichī was born in 1153/1740 in the small provincial headquarter of Bahraich in a family that claims descent from the caliph ‘Alī through Ghāzī Salār Maʿsūd that gained them the title of mulk from later

89. One of his prominent disciples and deputies was the Kurdish shaikh Maulānā Khālid al-Kurdi (1193/1776-1242/1827) who introduced the Mujaddidiyya in the regions of the Ottoman empire where it gained wide acceptance and importance under the name of Khālidiyya. He spent a year from 1810-11 at the Delhi khānaqāḥ headed by Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī before returning to his native town of Sulaymaniya and later proceeding to Baghdad and Damascus where he lies buried. For his role as spiritual guide and his influence on the rise of Kurdish nationalism, see Joyce Blari’s, Butrus Abu Maneh’s and Martin van Bruinessen’s articles in Varia Turcica: Naqshbandis, pp. 289-370.

90. It is important to point out that notwithstanding the presence at Delhi of other outstanding personalities linked to the Mujaddidiyya, like Shāh Wali Allāh and his sons Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (1721-1823) and Shāh Rafi’ al Din (b. 1749) as well as Khwāja Muḥammad Naṣīr and his son Khwāja Mir Dard (1721-85), the founders of the ṭariqa-i muhammadiyya, it was the genealogic line Mīrāz Māزارī inherited through Shāh Nūr Muḥammad Bādāyūnī which was considered the silsila’s most authentic line of descent. This link was further enhanced by Mīrāz’s relation with other Naqshbandī shaikhs, all of whom descended directly from one of the Mujaddī’s sons.

91. This small centre close to the Nepali border is mainly known for the tomb and dargāḥ of Ghāzī Salār Maʿsūd (b. 405/1015), nephew and commander-in-chief of Muḥammad Ghaznawi’s army who is locally venerated for his miraculous deeds by both Hindus and Muslims. His dargāḥ is the centre of a big annual fair when thousands of devotees of both communities gather around his tomb. For more details, see Christian Troll: Muslim shrines in India: their character, history and significance (1989), pp. 24-33.
Islamic rulers. His father, Ghulām Quṭb al-Dīn ‘Ārif Kāke reportedly was a locally renowned zamīndār of high rank (ra’īs). For his traditional education, Na‘īm Allāh was at first entrusted to Muḥammad Roshan Bahrāičhī with whom he remained until 1171/1757. During that year his father took him to Lucknow, the capital of Awadh and emerging centre of learning during the time of the Nawābs between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where he received training from various religious authorities such as Maulawī Khalīl.

In 1186/1772, shortly after completing his religious curriculum, he met Muḥammad Jamīl, one of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s khulafā’ at Lucknow. On the insistence of Na‘īm Allāh, he initiated him into the ʿarʿqa providing him with the first elements of spiritual guidance. The desire to meet Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān induced him in 1189/1775 to seek his master’s permission to reach Delhi presenting himself at the service of the prominent shaikh.

The biographies tell us that when he first introduced himself to Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān with the request for spiritual initiation, the latter enquired about his name to which he replied: ‘People call me Maulawī Na‘īm Allāh’. Hearing this, Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s temper roused by the pride in the young man’s tone, and he ordered him to get out of his way, since there was no need of any Maulawī in his khānaqāh. Na‘īm Allāh though humiliated by the harsh treatment remained steadfast and decided to stay on. Some days later, Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s eyes again fell on the young scholar from Bahraich and in the same angry tone he asked him why he was still there. Na‘īm Allāh Bahrāičhī humbly inclined his head in repentance and apologised for his misbehaviour begging for the master’s pardon. As a result’ he was eventually forgiven and officially admitted into the order.

Shāh Na‘īm Allāh Bahrāichī remained with his spiritual preceptor for about four years during which he wholeheartedly dedicated himself to the spiritual discipline. His devotional rapture (jadhba) is said to have reached such a degree that he not even read the letters from home in order to avoid distractions. Under the expert guidance of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān he finally reached the highest degree of spiritual realisation (maqām-i ‘alīyā), attaining to the reception of khilāfat and ijāzat. On advice of his master, he than chose to return to his native land to provide guidance to the seekers of Truth over there. It is said that the very day he took leave, Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān blessed him with the words: ‘Today, you are returning to your country as Maulānā Na‘īm Allāh! May God bless you and enable you to enlighten the world (munawwar-i ‘ālam)’. He than presented his newly appointed khalīfa with the three volumes of the Maktūbāt-i Rabbanī, underlining the special favour this gift implied and asking him to read out these letters for the guidance of his future disciples after the afternoon-prayer (namāz-i ‘aṣr).

Back at Bahrāich, his father assigned him some land for the establishment of a small spiritual retreat (zāwiya). However, the Na‘īm Allāh soon decided to move to Lucknow where he started his missionary activity in an area called Bangālī Ėolā providing the funds for the erection of a mosque and a small attached shelter for himself and his disciples.

Praised by his followers for his patience and trust in God, Shāh Na‘īm Allāh Bahrāichī began to exercise his role as spiritual

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96. Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī reports in Maqāmāt-i Mazharī (p. 420) that Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān was so impressed by his application that he told him the progress made by him in four years was equivalent to that made by others in twelve.
98. Ibid., p. 87.
99. MQM, p. 421. In letter no. 33, Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān expresses his satisfaction about this transfer and encourages his khalīfa to remain confident of the success of granting profit to as many people as possible. Once more he insists on the necessity of following the sunnat for an eventual reward in this world and the next (pp. 177-8).
preceptor while maintaining contact with the khānaqāh at Delhi. After the death of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān, he together with Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī and Qāḍī Thanā Allāh Pānīpātī took over the responsibility for the legal and administrative transactions leading to the institution of the Delhi khānaqāh. He died in his native Bahraich in 1218/1803 where he lies buried in a small tomb (maqbara) situated at the outskirts of the modern town.

His literary heritage includes two biographies (tadhkira) of his spiritual guide Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān, the Ma’mūlāt-i Mazhariyya and the less known Bashārāt-i Mazhariyya. A hand-written copy of the Qur‘ān by Shāh Na‘īm Allāh is preserved by a spiritual descendant in his line, Shāh Manzūr Aḥmad Khān, at the latter’s residence in Bhopal. The present sajjāda-nishān at the family’s residence at Bahraich, that includes a nearby mosque and the former khānaqāh, Maulānā Aghrāẓ al-Ḥusn, still preserves part of the private library and belongings of his ancestor which include two precious relics attributed to Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān: the plain robe worn at the time of his assassination, sprinkled with his blood, and the bed-stead (cārpā́) on which he is said to have taken rest. Although it is difficult to assess the authenticity of these objects, I have been assured of their genuineness by the head of the Naqshbandī convent in Old Delhi, who continues the long


101. The first one furnishes, together with Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī’s *Maqāmāt-i Mazhari*, the most systematic, detailed and renowned biographical account of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān and its original Persian version, apart from a number of manuscripts some of which are kept in the old library in Bahraich, was first published at Kanpur in 1275/1859 under the title *Ma’mūlāt-i Mazhariyya-Maḥbūb al-‘Arifīn*, Nizami Press, Patkapur (Kanpur). Other editions followed at the turn of the century from the same town and editor.

The second text is a kind of supplementary biography-cum-malfūzāt of the founder of the Shamsiyya Mazhariyya branch of the Naqshbandiyya and exists, according to my knowledge, in three ascertained manuscript at Bahraich, Aligarh Muslim University and London (OIOC/IOL, Ms. Bm. Or. 220).
going tradition paying regular visits to Bahraich in occasion of the ‘urs of Shāh Na‘īm Allāh which is celebrated in a simple way by the order’s local affiliates.

**Shāh Murād Allāh Thānesarī Fārūqī Mujaddidī (1166/1752-1248/1833)**

Considered in most genealogies as the principal khalīfa of Shāh Na‘īm Allāh Bahrāīchi,\(^{102}\) Shāh Murād Allāh descended from a noble family of the small Punjabi town of Thanesar (now in Haryana about 120 miles north of Delhi).\(^{103}\) Claiming descent from the caliph ‘Umar Fārūq, the family bears the title Fārūqī (Fārūqī al-nasb).\(^{104}\) His father, Maulānā Qalandar Bakhsh, reportedly a person of high rank in his hometown, was a devoted disciple of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān who paid regular visits to his khānaqāh in the Mogul capital. He was later appointed khalīfa by the illustrious master\(^{105}\) and despatched to his native place to act as deputy of the ṭarīqa there.

From his childhood, Shāh Murād Allāh occasionally accompanied his father on his visits to Delhi. There, he was allowed to attend the ḥalqa of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s intimate disciples and honoured with the latter’s spiritual attention (tawajjuh). At the time of the Sikh wars against the Afghan Shāh Aḥmad Durrānī and his Rohillā allies (AD 1762-8), Thanesar like many other centres of Muslim culture in the region suffered

\(^{102}\) Apart from the genealogies produced in the various hagiographies compiled by later disciples of that particular silsila, it is noteworthy that also the later edition of the *Ma‘mūlāt-i Māzhariyya* in Persian edited from Kanpur presents a list of the masters who constitute the initiatic chain down from Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān for the following three generations, including the members mentioned in the present study. See *MuM*, pp. 158-9.

\(^{103}\) For details on him, see also *Tadhkira-i ‘ulamā‘-i Hind*, pp.490-1.

\(^{104}\) *MuM*, p. 90.

\(^{105}\) Cf. Muhammad Umar (1993), p. 82.
attacks from the invading sikh armies led by the Budha Dal, during one of which Maulānā Qalandar Bakhsh was killed.¹⁰⁶

Left as an orphan, the young Murād Allāh was forced to abandon Thanesar and to migrate to Lucknow¹⁰⁷ where he continued to receive his religious education from a number of local authorities while living with the family of his maternal grandfather.¹⁰⁸ Some sources inform us that it had been the desire of Murād Allāh’s late father that his son should receive training in the traditional medical sciences (al-tibb) that would enable him to carry out a respected profession. The boy was, thus apprenticed to a series of local doctors, but lacking the required enthusiasm he was eventually sent back home with the recommendation to his grandfather to look out for a spiritual preceptor.¹⁰⁹

But when Murād Allāh’s own desire to undertake the spiritual path grew stronger, Mîrzâ Jân-i Jânân had already passed away. Hence, he decided to make his way from Lucknow to Bahraich to meet Shâh Na‘îm Allāh with the quest of being initiated into the ṭariqa. The shaikh, however, at that time

¹⁰⁶. For a detailed account of the tumultuous events in the Punjab during that time, see among others Qâdî Nûr Muhammad’s eyewitness report, the Jang-Nàma (English translation by Ganda Singh, Amritsar, 1939) and Nûr al-Dîn Ḥusain’s Life of Najîb al-Dawla. An outline of the events in the second half of the eighteenth century is also provided by S.A.A. Rizvi (1982), pp. 9-74.

¹⁰⁷. The available sources do not furnish any information about the fate of the other family members, nor do they mention any date for the Shâh’s transfer from the Punjab to Awadh. Since we know, however, from the same sources that Shâh Murâd Allâh died in 1248/1833 at the age of 82 according to the Islamic lunar calendar, his date of birth most likely falls in the year 1166-7/1752-3, so that his age at the time of migration to Lucknow cannot have been more than 12 years. This would agree with the reports of his hagiographers who state that Murâd Allâh was still a student at that time.

¹⁰⁸. See the excerpts of a discourse held by Omkâr Nâth on Sunday, 6 July 1975 at Kanpur, typed and edited along with a series of other discourses by his disciple B.K. Singhania at Delhi (p. 270).

already lived at Lucknow forcing Murād Allāh to return there accompanied by a group of local devotees and was finally successful in enrolling as the Shāh’s disciple.110

After a total period of twelve years with his master, he was appointed as his khalīfa in Lucknow and entrusted with the correction (islāh) and guidance (hidāyat) of a number of his master’s disciples. At the time of his death in 1218/1803, Maulānā Shāh Na‘īm Allāh is said to have transferred the ‘crown of full successorship’ (tāj-i khilāfat-i khāṣṣ) to his favoured deputy advising him further to concentrate his spiritual attention on the most perfect among the sublime stations of the sulūk.111

After the death of his shaikh, Shāh Murād Allāh stayed for some years in Bahraich in order to supervise his preceptor’s disciples there. Later, however, he entrusted these to Shāh Bashārat Allāh Bahraichī, a khalīfa and son-in-law of Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī Dihlawī who had spent several years with his master at Delhi. Although it was reportedly painful for him to leave his master’s tomb, Shāh Murād Allāh finally decided to return to Lucknow for the sake of the local spiritual community of which he reportedly took care for a period of about 40 years.112

According to Maulānā Muhammad Ḥasan, the author of the Ḥālāt-i Māshaikh-i Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya, Shāh Murād Allāh was married to a girl from Ronahi (dist. Faizabad) whose nephew, a certain Shāh Wālī Allāh, became a favourite of the Shāh. Although too young to be introduced as his disciple, the pīr had him taken care of by his chief deputy, Shāh Abūl Ḥasan Naṣīrābādī, who appointed him


his official successor and caretaker at Bahrai and Lucknow before retiring himself to a life of seclusion in his hometown Nasirabad. Some sources inform us that Shāh Murād Allāh spent also some time in the former capital of Awadh, Faizabad, to which he was linked by parental ties. There he took shelter in the cell of the local patron-saint Ṭāṭ Shāh situated in the eponymous mosque in the centre of town.

According to the later, revised editions of the Ma’mūlāt-i Maẓhariyya which the Hindu sources along with the author of the Ţamīma seem to follow, the shaikh’s death occurred on Saturday, 21 Dhi’l-Qa’dā 1248/14 April 1833 in his khānaqāh in Lucknow’s Qandahari Bazar at the age of 82. His body was buried within the precincts of what was later to become the mausoleum of his successor Karīm Allāh Shāh in a popular neighbourhood in what is now a densely populated area in the centre of Lucknow. An annual festival on the occasion of his death anniversary is organised by the present sajjāda-nishīn when a number of influent Naqshbandī authorities of different local sub-branches derived from the shaikh use to meet for a two or three day mahfil.

113. The present sajjāda-nishīn at the modest tomb of Shāh Murād Allāh in Lucknow, Bashīr Fāruqī, claims to be a direct descendant of Shāh Wali Allāh in the sixth generation. The short biography of Shāh Murād Allāh, a booklet titled Gulzār-i Murād, shows that one of the author’s main aims is to establish a link between himself and the Shāh through Shāh Wali Allāh. The genealogy he produces seems authentic, but apparently the successors of Wali Allāh played no significant role in the spiritual history of the order although parts of the tradition are still preserved with the present caretaker. Significantly, Bashīr Fāruqī has received his initiation from Shāh Abūl Hasan Zaid Fāruqī, the head of the Delhi khānaqāh until 1993, a fact that indicates the survival of the ancient links to the present.

114. Along with the mausoleum of Nawāb Shuja al-Dawla (r. 1754-75), son and successor of Safdar Jang, and that of his wife Bahū Begum Shāh, this mosque with its peculiar architectural features and extremely colourful painting represents one of the most noteworthy building of that town.

115. MuM, p. 90; Gulzār-i Murād, p. 16.
Among the unspecified number of Shâh Murâd Allâh’s successors, two are mentioned unanimously in all sources: Shâh Ghulâm Rasûlnûmâ Kânûrî (d. 1318/1900) popularly known as Dâdâ Miyân whose tomb and dargâh-cum-mosque complex still contains a functioning small madrasa in the Begumpur neighbourhood of central Kanpur,116 and Maulânâ Shâh Abûl Hasan Naﬁrâbâdî, the chief khalîfa of Shâh Murâd Allâh and next link in the mainstream silsila in Awadh.117

**Sayyid Maulânâ Shâh Abûl Hasan Naﬁrâbâdî**

(1198/1784-1272/1856)

With this prominent shaikh, the spiritual centre of this lineage shifted to yet another place of emerging importance at the times of the later Nawâbs. It provides evidence for the ṭariqa’s peculiar characteristic to be active not only in those places where its presence was supported by a favourable socio-religious climate (as in Rohilkând during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries under the rule of Najib al-Dawla118) but also in those centres of Muslim power which did not provide

116. The present khâdim at the dargâh, Abûl Barakât informed me that the spiritual line of his ancestor was extinguished and passed over to other branches of the Mujaddidiyya in Awadh, mainly through disciples of Shâh Abûl Hasan Naﬁrâbâdî. He himself, as well as his brothers and forefathers, were mainly concerned with running the madrasa established by the Shâh and meant to provide basic education for children from indigent families of the area, and with the upkeeping of the dargâh. Interview on 24 January 1996.

117. *MuM*, p. 90 (Urdu version) and p. 159, *Damîma . . .*, p. 4., *Sûfî Santmat kâ Naqshbandiyya silsila* (1984), vol 2, p. 169. The *Gulzâr-i Murâd*, most probably in order to stress the legitimacy of the present line leading to the present caretaker of the maqbara and author of the biography, mentions also the name of his ancestor Shaikh Ilâhî Bakhsh Siddiqî among his khalîfâ. The author of the *tadhkira* of Shâh Murâd Allâh points out that in 1305/1887-8, Shâh Ilâhî Bakhsh appointed the author’s paternal grandfather, Shâh Hôtel Karîm Allâh, as his khalîfa providing also a khalîfatnâma at this regard (*Gulzâr-i Murâd*, p. 17). The latter lies buried next to Shâh Murâd Allâh.

118. For a detailed account of this Afghan leader, see Nur al-Dîn Husain: *A detailed history of Najib al-Dawla*, OIOC, Add. 24, 410.
such a favourable environment. The task of the order’s leading authorities there was to guarantee the integrity of Sunni orthodoxy representing a point of reference for the common local population (al-‘awāmm) while providing spiritual guidance to those qualified for entering the initiatic path (al-khawāṣṣ).

In our specific case, the developments in Awadh which saw the rise to power of the Shi‘a dynasty of the Nawābs in the first half of the eighteenth century constituted yet another symptom of the growing influence of the Iranian nobility in different parts of the subcontinent.\textsuperscript{119} The spread and growth of Safavid-style Shi‘ism challenging the long established Sunni hegemony over most parts of Muslim India was perceived as a concrete danger by the Naqshbandi leaders from as soon as the times late sixteenth century with Khwāja Bāqī Billāh (\textit{d.} 1012/1603), and was further pursued by his renowned disciple Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī. It gained renewed actuality during the reigns of the later Mogul emperors Bahādur Shāh and Shāh-i ‘Ālam II, and reached its apex with the rise to power of Mīrzā Najaf Khān \textit{AD} 1708-82 at the Mogul Court in Delhi who was a fervent Shi‘a and a staunch enemy of the Afghan Rohillās.\textsuperscript{120}

It is in this context that the despatch of one of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān’s closest \textit{khulafā‘} to Lucknow must be interpreted as part of a conscious attempt to create an influential outpost of the order in an area where the Sunni establishment was under threat from the growing influx of Iranian Shi‘as. The frequent shifting of Shāh Murād Allāh between Lucknow, Faizabad and Bahraich, all major centres of Awadhī culture at that time, also seems to have been

\begin{itemize}
  \item[119.] For a detailed analysis of the various factors leading to the rise of Shi‘a power in Awadh, see J.R.I. Cole: \textit{Roots of North Indian Shi‘ism in Iran and Iraq} (1988) and Muhammad Umar (1993), pp. 177.
  \item[120.] His alleged involvement in the assasination of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān, although never definitively established, has since formed an essential part reported by all Naqshbandī hagiographers.
\end{itemize}
motivated by the desire to maintain a foothold in these places of emerging Shi’a intellectual culture.¹²¹

It appears, therefore, more than a coincidence that the main heir of this tradition in that area and khalīfa of Shāh Murād Allāh Thānesarī hailed from the small but important qasba of Nasīrābād (dist. Rae Bareli), about 50 miles to the east of Lucknow, which flourished under the patronage of the Nawābs, in particular Aṣاف al-Dawla (r. AD 1775-97).¹²² The tolerant and generous policy of this ruler encouraged a great number of influential local Sayyids to adopt Imami Shi’ism, developing Nasīrābād into a renowned centre of Shi’a clerics, such as Sayyid Dildar ‘Alī (AD 1753-1820) and his son Sayyid Muḥammad Naṣīrābādī (AD 1785-1867), the chief mujtahid of Lucknow from 1820 to 1867 and staunch adversary of the Sunni community.¹²³

Maulānā Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan Naṣīrābādī bin Maulawī Nūr al-Ḥasan bin Maulawī Muḥammad Mahdī Ḥusain came from an influential family claiming a genealogy that goes back to ‘Alī.¹²⁴ Notwithstanding its ancestry, his family

¹²¹. Faizabad, the first capital of the Nawābs, became shortly again centre of political power in 1756 during the reign of Shuja al-Dawla (r. 1754-75), under whose rule it developed into an important intellectual centre, renowned for the scholarship of tradition physicians. Cf. Cole (1988), pp. 55-8.

¹²². Like many other places in the area, Nasīrābād along with the neighbouring town of Jais rose to prominence through the settlement of the Sayyid class of ‘Ashrafī Muslims made wealthy by generous land endowments received from earlier Islamic rulers and influential zamindārs in many parts of the Gangetic plain. The Nasīrābādī Sayyids who trace their ancestry back to the line of Sayyid Najm al-Dīn al-Sabzawārī, an alleged companion of Ghāzī Sālār Ma’sūd of Bahrāich, began to convert to Shi’ism under the Mogul emperor Bahādur Shāh, and under the patronage of the Nishapuri house of Awadh. Cf. Cole (1988), p. 77.

¹²³. Cole gives an extensive account of the role these two scholars played in the formation of a well organised Shi’a clerical class in Awadh and also mentions the sometimes rather aggressive stand the latter took towards Sunnis and Sufis. (op. cit., pp. 146-59).

did not follow the example of many local Sayyid clans of adopting the Shi‘a creed and remained faithful to their native Sunni tradition. Born in 1198/1783-4, Sayyid Abul Hasan was sent by his father to study with a series of learned authorities in Nasirabad, Salon, Rae Bareli and finally Lucknow where he completed his studies in hadith, jurisprudence and theology at the age of 18 with the highest attainments (dastār-i fadilat) from the Firangi Mahal, the one important Sunni oriented institution left in the Awadh capital at that time. It was during those years that the young Sayyid came into contact with a group of Shah Murad Allāh’s disciples who awakened his interest for the path of spiritual realisation. Notwithstanding his direct links with the family of Shah Na‘im Allāh Bahrāichi — his father Maulawi Nur al-Hasan had married one of the latter’s daughters — he was not in time to enrol as his disciple since the Shah passed away shortly afterwards in 1218/1803, not, however, without recommending his nephew to his khalifa Murad Allāh.

As a result, the young Sayyid made the vow of allegiance (bai‘at) to him and spent the following sixteen years at the feet of his shaikh in the Lucknow khānaqāh. The young disciple’s extraordinary qualification allowed him to progress so rapidly under the guidance of Shah Murad Allāh that his master urged him to confer his spiritual attention (tawajjuh) on his own disciples, the power of which was apparently of unusual intensity. Abul Hasan soon gained the highest degree of spiritual licence (ijazat-i muthlaq) taking over many of his master’s disciples and leading them to the stages of fanā wa baqā. All sources agree, moreover, on his capability to lead all those who looked at him

126. Ḍamīma . . . , p. 4.
127. These two complementary stages of the spiritual journey are fundamental to the doctrines of all Sufi orders and correspond to closely related degrees of inner realisation. Their meaning will be analysed in the next chapter including the concept of tawajjuh, which assumes a key importance in the doctrines of the later Naqshbandiyya and is an essential pillar in the master-disciple relationship.
with right determination (irādat) and firm persuasion (‘aqīdat) to their goal.\textsuperscript{128}

In keeping with the Naqshbandī tradition and on the basis of his authority as an ‘ālim, and maulawī, Shāh Abūl Ḥasan’s disciple and khalīfa, Ḥājī Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān, confirms his master’s rigorous orthodoxy and adherence to the Sunna when he metaphorically refers to him as ‘holding the Qur‘ān in one hand and the ahādīth in the other,...’.\textsuperscript{129} His biographers invariably stress his endeavour to act in strict accordance with the precepts of the revealed Law (al-Dīn) and the Traditions, expecting his disciples and followers to conform to these principles. In the initial stages of a disciple’s apprenticeship, regular morning sessions dedicated to the study of the exoteric sciences (‘ulūm al-zāhir) were as much part of his daily routine as the punctual leadership of the five canonical prayers in the mosque, each followed by a prolonged meditation session during which he used to grant his tawajjuh to a restricted number of disciples residing in his khānaqāhs at Lucknow and Nasīrābād.

The importance Shāh Abūl Ḥasan attributed to his role as authoritative leader of a Sūfī-Sunni faction is reflected in his spending most of his time in company of his numerous disciples or simple followers, including his meals and afternoon rest. He thereby enabled a great number of people to benefit passively from his presence. It can be interpreted as part of an attempt to exercise his influence on large sections of Awadh’s increasingly insecure Sunni Muslims. It is exactly in this combination of powerful spiritual authority for his ḥalqa with

\textsuperscript{128} It is important to notice that the shaikh’s spiritual attention reaches the disciple through the contact established by the means of the eyesight. Obviously this sort of contact occurs on a subtle level beyond the modalities that regulate the gross reality to which the common senses apply.

\textsuperscript{129} It might be worth to recall that also in the sources consulted for the present study, the traditional title of ‘ālim is gradually replaced by the more recent term maulawī.
that of a learned scholar for the pious ones and a centre of charitable refuge for the needy that we recognise a typical Mujaddidī attitude ever since Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān. Since very little is known about the doctrinal elaborations of the Sayyid from Nasīrābād, it is rather the increasingly extroverted attitude turned towards all sections of the surrounding world (al-khalq) which characterises the shaikhs during the early modern period and which becomes particularly evident in the earlier period of Shāh Abūl Ḥasan’s life that is most striking.\(^{130}\)

The use of *tawajjuh* as an important means both of propagating reforming efforts and of raising members of the ṭariqa to a higher degree in their spiritual quest constitutes an unequivocal sign of this tendency and will assume even greater importance with subsequent shaikhs.\(^{131}\)

This public democratisation of the order goes along with Shāh Abūl Ḥasan’s biographer’s picture of a contemplative, amicable and mild character (*jamālī*) that stands in contrast to the impulsive, hot-tempered and often awe-inspiring characters (*jalālī*) of many of his predecessors. Confident of his subtle power of persuasion, the Shāh reportedly never reprimanded openly any of his intimate disciples but preferred to take a paternal attitude by saying:

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130. That this attitude represents a gradual adaption of the role played by the shaikh rather than a radical departure from the positions held by traditional Naqshbandi authorities is, thus, noted by one of the lineages’s later Hindu masters: ‘None of the Naqshbandi masters has changed the ṭariqa till the present day, nay it is by the means of this ancient order that, having captivated the people’s hearts through their affectionate love, they continue to exercise their duty without any tie, bestowing the essential thing to the heart of all. This task involves multiple risks and dangers, this is why great care has been taken by them, and Khwāja al-Naqshband has put the entire responsibility for it on the shoulders of the pir, so that he may do most of the work for the murid . . . ’, in *Discourses . . .*, p. 288.

131. For the first time, we find numerous hints pointing towards the assumption that a single glance can bring the murid to the highest station of the path, an element that from now on will accompany the descriptions of most later authorities, especially in the Hindu context.
If my company (ṣuhbat) does not leave its effect on them, what can a mere verbal reproval (nasihat) do. The real faqir is the one who infuses his colour into the disciple's heart rendering him similar to oneself.\textsuperscript{132}

In fact, the greatest munificence (karamat) attributed to the Shâh was that whosoever took part of his company repented within a few days for all transgressions committed in the past (‘amal khilaf-i shar) complying instead with the example set by the master.\textsuperscript{133} Although this sounds like an stereotyped attempt by his hagiographers to exalt their shaikh’s virtues, in line with the Mujaddidi vision, it fits well into the general picture and reflects the prevailing anxieties of his times.

The high rank Sayyid Abül Hasan occupied in the Mujaddidi hierarchy is confirmed by the statements attributed to his shaikh, Shâh Murâd Allâh, who did not hesitate to recognise the superiority of his talented disciple.\textsuperscript{134} He used to send many of his own followers to the Sayyid accompanied by the words:

\begin{quote}
Maulawâ Abûl Hasan is pre-eminent to us in several ways: first of all, he descends from an authentic Ḥusainî Sayyid family; secondly, he excels us in the knowledge of the exoteric sciences, thirdly, he equals us in the esoteric sciences and fourthly, he never committed any major offence (gunah-i kabîra).\textsuperscript{135}
\end{quote}

As a sign of reverence, Shâh Murâd Allâh handed over the affairs of his khânaqâh at Lucknow to his successor and transmitted to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{132} Damîma . . ., p. 6.
  \item \textsuperscript{133} Ibidem, p. 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{134} Due to this central importance in the history of the Naîmiyya (the Awadhî branch of the Mujaddidiyya), he bears the title of qutb al-Zamân, denoting a very elevated position within the Sufi hierarchy. For the different degrees in the Sufi hierarchy, see M.E. Blochet: Études sur l'ésoterisme musulman (1979).
  \item \textsuperscript{135} Gulzâr-i Murâd, p. 17.
\end{itemize}
him in the most intimate way \((rū ba rū)\) the whole spiritual wealth of the silsila and the responsibility of its affairs.\(^{136}\)

During the following years, Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan Naṣīrābādī remained the silsila’s undisputed leader in Awadh. Refraining from any involvement in the political activities promoted by his fellow-citizen Sayyid Aḥmad Barelwī (AD 1786-1832),\(^{137}\) he dedicated himself entirely to the strengthening of the spiritual network in Awadh travelling to many places (Faizabad, Ghazipur, Sultanpur, etc.) in order to supervise the activities of his deputies. During the last year of his life, together with a number of selected disciples he retired to his native Nasīrābād where he immersed himself in prolonged contemplation in almost total seclusion. In those turbulent years preceding the British annexion of Awadh, he handed over the responsibility for the khānaqāh at Lucknow to the nephew of his spiritual guide, Shāh Walī Allāh, to whom he entrusted also the esoteric education of his son Miyān Ḥādī Ḥasan.\(^{138}\)

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136. This particular ritual usually takes place shortly before the death of the old pīr and marks the passage of authority to his chosen successor. During the rite, the pīr orders his khālīfa to sit in front of him while reciting the names of the authorities included in the order’s chain \((khatm-i khwājagān)\), accompanied by that of different Qur’ānic verses and other devotional formulas. Finally, the master puts his breast in front of that of the disciple taking his right hand and embracing him intimately.

Interestingly, some sources add that while accepting the spiritual leadership from his shaikh, Shāh Abūl Ḥasan passed on all material donations \((futūḥāt)\) involved to his disciple Shāh Walī Allāh, a relative of Shāh Murād Allāh. MuM, p. 92.

137. For details regarding this eccentric disciple of Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz as well as his famous contemporary, Shāh Isma‘īl Shahīd, regarding their political interpretation of the Naqshbandī doctrine and the derived inglorious jihād-movement fought mainly against the Sikhs, see S.A.A. Rizvi (1982), pp. 471-541, and Aziz Ahmad: Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment (1964). For a traditional Naqshbandī position in their regard, see also Shāh Abūl Ḥasan Zaid Fārūqī Mujaddidī: Maulānā Isma‘īl Dihlawī (1983).

138. Đamīma . . . , p. 7. Nothing precise can be gathered from the sources regarding the successive history of the khānaqāh at Lucknow, but it appears likely that it was destroyed during or shortly after the 1857-
The last great regional leader of the *Mujaddidiyya* in Awadh, though having been at the head of a tight network of deputies resched as far as Gorakhpur and extended even into Bengal, died retired from the world on Monday, 1 Sha'bān 1272/May 1856 in Nasīrābād where he is buried in a simple tomb in the ancient graveyard of this now forgotten village.\(^{139}\)

While the geographical distribution of most of his deputies tend to indicate a movement towards the eastern periphery of Awadh, Ḥājī Aḥmad ʿAlī Khān, apparently was one of the leading successors of Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan in western Awadh after the dissolution of the *khānaqāḥ* at Lucknow. He constitutes the next link in the spiritual chain examined in the present study. Remembered by his biographies as a passionate poet, to him are attributed the following verses in honour of his deceased *pīr*, engraved on the latter’s tomb-stone at Nasīrābād:

Oh Abūl Ḥasan, chief of the Naqshbandi order
to whom none of the *ťarīqa’s* other authorities could reach
when he passed away the angels of the hidden world recited:
One of the sworn ones of God, a man of Truth, has met
This Lord.

Maulawī Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan, shaikh of his time,
when, by the favour of God, he took his place in the abode of heaven
I did not count him as dead, he exchanged this world for paradise

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\(^{8}\) War and its inmates either dispersed or killed. Only very vague information was available to me at this regard from the present *sajjāda-nishān* who resides close to the tomb of Shāh Murād Allāh, Bashīr Fārūqī.

\(^{139}\) The date of death given by Cole in the footnote on p. 234 of his work as 1768, apparently based on Rahman ʿAlī’s *Tadhkira-i ʿulamā’-i Hind*, is incorrect.
where his ultimate desire was to reside; when the end of his days came closer, the repenting angels requested him: He who has changed his mansion, come home, from earth to Heaven.¹⁴⁰

Maulānā Khalīfat al-Rahman Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān Māū Rashīdābādī (d. 1307/1889)

Unlike his predecessors, Shāh Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān hailed from a humble social background in a small village close to the qaṣba of Kāimganj in Farrukhabad district. The political turmoil during the 1856-8 War had considerably diminished the position of the Mujaddidiyya in Awadh and was further aggravated by the disappearance of its most authoritative figure, Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan Naṣīrābādī, leading eventually to the order’s split into several minor branches of merely local importance in the region’s periphery.

The figure of Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān exemplifies in a way the order’s dispersal from Awadh’s major urban centres, now under direct British colonial rule, and its survival on a reduced scale in the rural areas away from the centres of political power. Interestingly, these centrifugal tendencies that took the tariqa from the cosmopolitan centres of cultural and intellectual life to small towns and villages coincide with a shift of the authoritarian leadership held by members of upper class ‘ashrafī Muslims claiming noble descent to those from a more humble, indigenous social background. Consequently, for the first time, the hagiographical sources concerned with this shaikh lack the customary eulogising accounts of the master’s ancestry.

Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān’s father Shāhāmat Khān, himself affiliated to a local Chishtī pīr claiming descent from Shāh Mīnā Lakhnāwī (d. 874/1470), reportedly led an austere and detached life earning

¹⁴⁰. *Damīma* . . ., p. 8. Reportedly, A favourite couplet often recited by Shāh Abūl Ḥasan was the following: *Dil-i man dānād o dānām-o dānād dil-i man.*
his livelihood through occasional employment. The limited resources of his family notwithstanding, Shāhāmat Khān took great care in providing an adequate education for his son. Apparently well versed in both Arabic and Persian, the young boy is said to have acquired considerable skills in the art of reciting the Qur’ān and the investigation of subtle theological problems. A passionate poet throughout his life, Aḥmad ‘Alī claims authorship of two poetry-collections and of a small volume titled Muḥāsaba-i Kābul containing a series of inshā passages in praise of the Afghan fighters against the infidels during the first Anglo-Afghan War (1839-42).

Like most Naqshbandī biographies and hagiographies, the sources underline the great importance Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān attributed to meticulous adherence to the tenets of the Islamic Law and the Sunna of the Prophet fuelled by an aversion for all illiterate Sūfīs (fuqarā-i jāhil).

An interesting anecdote informs us about the encounter that allegedly inclined him towards the spiritual path. While at Lucknow as a student, Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān frequently came through a place called Ku‘a Khaira which was attended by a faqīr who used to keep a number of dogs with him. Moved by his orthodox zeal, one day Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān approached the faqīr objecting to his habit of allowing those impure animals near him. The faqīr remained outwardly unimpressed. All of a sudden, the young Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān began to feel ashamed for his disrespectful behaviour and apologised to the saint who replied: ‘It was not

141. Only fragments of these manuscripts have survived, some of which are preserved with Shāh Manzūr Aḥmad Khān, a descendant of Shāh Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān’s khalīfa, Shāh Faḍl Ahmad Khān, at his residence in Bhopal. Moreover, a small treatise entitled Fatwā-i Aḥmadi dealing with some aspects of the importance attributed to the adherence to the Sunna from a Naqshbandī point of view have been attributed to him.

142. Damīna . . . , p. 9. Although this sounds as the usual stereotyped statement, it nevertheless acquires some importance in the socio-historical context of pre-1857 Lucknow. It also provides some clues as to the future development of the silsila.
for you to pronounce those words'. The effect of this answer on the young student was apparently devastating. Overcome by a wave of forgetfulness of himself (be-khudi), he experienced according to the notes of his disciple Faḍl Āḥmad Khān a state of delight and inner happiness (lazzat wa masarrat) and his breath kept flowing with the rhythm of the words Allāh ḥū. When he recovered from this state of spontaneous spiritual rapture (wa.jd), the young scholar apologised once again to the unknown saint only to receive the same reply that again plunged him into the previous state, now even more intense than before. The faqīr finally embraced him whispered into his ears: 'Let your breath not flow in vain', and left the scene.143

After staying for some time with a Chishtī shaikh from the Gorakhpur region a certain Amīr ‘Alī Khān Chilauli, Āḥmad ‘Alī Khān came into contact with Sayyid Miya.n Afḍal Rāʿipurī, a contemporary khalīfa of Sayyid Abūl Ḥassan Naṣīrābādī at Lucknow, who was impressed by the fervour of the young student and kept him at his service. He later recommended him to his pīr, but not yet feeling prepared for the task, the young Āḥmad ‘Alī Khān refused the offer.

Annoyed by this reluctance, Miya.n Afḍal sent him away with the warning that all pleasant states he had so far experienced would soon vanish. It happened exactly as predicted, and once again repenting his mistake. Āḥmad ‘Alī Khan sought refuge in the dargāh of Shāh Mīnā Lakhnawī. During that same night he

143. Ibidem, pp. 10-11. It is noteworthy that this key event in the life of Āḥmad ‘Alī Khān is related by his biographer using the traditional Sufī terminology we know from the previous descriptions. Yet another much later Hindu source, clearly based on the former, employs an entirely Hindu terminology to describe the same event. These substitutions, from now on a regular pattern encountered in the Hindu sources, provide an extremely useful means for further doctrinal considerations and constitute an important key for the understanding of the gradual shifting to a new cultural environment. See LVV, p. 119.
had a dream in which Shâh Mînâ\textsuperscript{144} directed him to a place where an initially unknown person kept waiting for him with the promise to restore his lost wealth. After that very dream repeated itself for three consecutive night he eventually decided to meet Sayyid Abûl Ḥasan at Naṣīrābād and ask him for discipleship.\textsuperscript{145}

While at Lucknow, Ḥ Ahmad ‘Alî Khân began to earn his live as a teacher of Arabic and Persian in different local madrasas while remaining attached to the ḥalqa of Sayyid Miyân Afdal Rā’îpurî who had been entrusted with the supervision of his master’s khânaqâh following his retreat to Naṣīrābād.\textsuperscript{146}

According to his biographer Faqîl Ahmad Khân, Shâh Ahmad ‘Alî Khân spent a period of altogether four times forty days of isolation (cilla)\textsuperscript{147} with his spiritual perceptor at Naṣīrābād during which he received intense spiritual training. Finally, his shaikh honoured him with full spiritual authority (ijâzat-i muṭlqa) outwardly marked by the handing over of the traditional headwear (dastār), dress (kurta) and rosary (tasbih).\textsuperscript{148} He was then ordered to return to his native place to start teaching and spreading the message of the tariqa on his own authority.

Ahmad ‘Alî Khân spent the remaining thirty-five years of his life at his native village of Mau Rashidabad leading a simple life as a teacher in the local madrasa and as a private tutor for

\textsuperscript{144} According to other sources, it was Shâh Abûl Ḥasan himself who appeared in this nocturnal vision to his future disciple.

\textsuperscript{145} Discourses . . . , p. 293.

\textsuperscript{146} After the death of Miyân Afdal, the khânaqâh’s trust passed to Shâh Wali Allâh Lakhnawî, the nephew of Shâh Murâd Allâh Thânesarî and khalîfa of Sayyid Abûl Ḥasan who nevertheless kept a close eye on its affairs while passing prolonged periods at the place.

\textsuperscript{147} Rather unusual in a Naqshbandî context, this may indicate an initiation to the methods of the Chishtiyya as part of the spiritual discipline imparted to Ahmad ‘Alî Khân which were since long part of the patronage of the Mujaddidi shaikhs.

\textsuperscript{148} Ḯamîma . . . , p. 11.
the offspring of the leading local families. In 1303/1886, he set out for Arabia to perform the *hajj* during which he met, among others, Shàh ‘Abd Allàh Abûl Khair Fârüqî Mujaddidî\(^{149}\) who was reportedly very impressed with his spiritual achievements.\(^{150}\) On his way back from the Hijaz in Šafar 1304/December 1886-January 1887, Ahmad ‘Alî Khân visited Sirhind where he spent a period of forty days at the tomb of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindî. During those days, he reportedly dedicated himself to contemplation at the grave of the *tariqa*’s illustrious ancestor and is said to have received blessings from the ‘lord of the tomb’ (ṣâḥib-i mazâr) and other renowned authorities of the *silsila*.\(^{151}\)

Two years later, on 9 Rabî‘ al-Awwal 1307/4 November 1889, Shàh Aḥmad ‘Alî Khân died at an advanced age in his hometown Mau Rashidàbàd. There, his grave is found inside the cemetry of the locality today called Kuberpur, just outside the ruins of the old congregational mosque.

The written sources still extant tell us very little about the activities of the Maulawî during the years after his appointment

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149. Shàh Abûl Khair Fârüqî Mujaddidî (1272/1856-1341/1923) was a descendant in the ninth generation of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindî through his nephew Sa‘îf al-Dîn and the latter’s lineage perpetuated at Rampur. His father, Shàh Aḥmad Sa‘îrî (1217/1802-1277/1860) following a period at Lucknow and Rampur, was appointed head of the Delhi *khânaqâh* in 1834, shortly before his father left India for the *hajj*, until 1858 when he was forced to migrate to the Hijaz in the aftermath of the violent events that followed the 1857 War. Along with his father Muḥammad Umar (d. 1298/1880), he grew up in the *haramain* before taking over again, in April 1889, the leadership of the Mujaddidî *khânaqâh* at Delhi until his death in 1923. He was the father of the renowned late Shàh Abûl Ḥasan Zaid Fârüqî Mujaddidî, until recently the head of the Delhi seat of the Mujaddidiyya and biographer of his father Shàh Abûl Khair, *Maqûmît al-Khair* (1409/1989 reprint).

150. The reverential attitude that shines through the mention of Shàh Abûl Khair in these sources and the weight attributed to his judgement meant to increase Maulawî Aḥmad ‘Alî Khân’s reputation suggest the recognition of the Fârüqî lineage at Delhi as the ultimate spiritual authority at that time after the extinction of the Na‘îmiyya line at Lucknow.
by Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan Naṣīrābādī, nor do we learn much about his disciples, with the exception of Shāh Faḍl Ahmad Khān through whom the silsila was to continue. The few written sources left by him, while confirming his scholarship, do not contribute any valuable information about his role as spiritual guide. A limited number of biographical anecdotes handed down by his successor Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān are too strongly hagiographical in their contents hardly containing any useful material, and also the later Hindu sources do not reveal anything substantial about the later stages of his life.  

From the few reported events, it emerges nevertheless that with the generational passage from Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan Naṣīrābādī to Shāh Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān, the lineage was reduced from a position of regional importance well connected with the overall Mujaddidī network to a rural offshoot of limited importance in the overall history of the ṭarīqa.  

This contraction reflects the devastating effects the 1857-8 War had left not only on Awadh but on the entire north of the subcontinent marking the formal end of almost seven centuries of uninterrupted Muslim rule over these areas. This turning point which sanctioned the penetration of modernity into north-Indian society considerably weakened the position of all

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151. The spiritual experiences the Maulawī went through during that time along with a collection of biographical and esoteric notes regarding Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī have been described by him in a small treatise bearing the title *Tuḥfat al-Mujaddidain*, preserved with Shāh Manẓūr Aḥmad Khān at Bhopal.  
152. Most of the described events, from the conversion of a money-lender (*sūd-khor*) who allegedly repented for his bashful behaviour of taking interests to his rescue of a local Shī‘a Imām whose ship happened to run into heavy waters during the pilgrimage-journey, are of quite ordinary nature and draw a picture of a locally respected authority typical for India’s rural environment. The Shāh entertained, however, contacts with other Naqshbandī authorities and with many local saints affiliated to other orders. See *Ḍamīma . . .*, pp. 13-14.  
153. The district of Farrukhabad, despite its strong Afghan presence, never constituted a significant centre of Naqshbandī activities.
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traditional Islamic institutions. Significantly, the Naqshbandī headquarters at Delhi and Lucknow, always looked at with suspicion by the British authorities, suffered badly from the repressions that followed the rebellion and both were abandoned, that in Lucknow permanently and that in Delhi until AD 1889, forcing their leaders into a prolonged exile.  

But notwithstanding a certain presence of authoritative leaders, Awadh unlike Delhi, Rohilkhand and parts of the Punjab, could at no time be considered a stronghold of the Mujaddidiyya. The introduction of ṭariqa in these areas goes mainly back to a number of deputies of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān, such as Ḥāji Muḥammad Yār, Mīr Ghulām Yāḥyā, Ghulām Hasan, Muḥammad Jamāl and Shāh Naʿīm Allāh Bahrāičī. Only the latter held the rank of a central authority whose influence radiated over a large surrounding area. His successors, Shāh Murād Allāh and Shāh Abūl Ḥasan, both charismatic personalities endowed with the required qualities for authoritative leadership were able to expand the order’s presence even in increasingly difficult circumstances. But after the death of the last recognised quṭb al-zamān in AD 1856, none of his successors was able to fill the void at the top of the regional Mujaddidi leadership. This eventually led the split into a number of isolated sub-branches in different parts of the region which began to develop in dependently on a local scale where they often survive until the present day.  

154. For a description of the events in and around the Delhi khānaqāh during that period and the reaction of its leaders to it, see MqK, pp. 32-85.

155. For him, see Kalimāt-i Tayyibāt, letter no. 50.

156. For him, see Muhammad Umar (1993), p. 82, MqM, pp. 416-19.


158. Bashārat-i Mazhariyya, folio 1a. It was he who first introduced Shāh Naʿīm Allāh into the āṭariqa.

159. Apart from the silsila examined in the present study, I traced three more surviving spiritual descendants of the order who claim legitimacy through different khulafāʾ of Shāh Abūl Ḥasan Naṣīrābādī, none of them, however, bearing any relation with a non-Muslim environment; two of them are found in Tanda and Jalālpur in
The khānaqāh at Lucknow that had served as the principal base of the Mujaddidiyya Maʿhariyya in the region for the past three generations was entrusted to the qutb’s closest disciples and successors, at first to Sayyid Afdal Miyan Raiapurī and later to Shāh Wali Allāh Lakhnāwī. The latter fell victim to historical circumstances, his fate remaining hidden in the darkness of the following years. Deprived of that vital point of reference, the leaders of the numerous secondary branches had to rely on their own inherent authority in their respective zones of influence, although it appears that later renewed contacts with the re-activated headquarters in Delhi provided some opportunities for re-establishing the old links.¹⁶⁰

In this context, the relation between Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan Naṣīrābādī and his khalifa Shāh Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān acquires particular importance since it contains an essential element for the further development of the lineage. This is testified through a number of letters the former has written between 1270/1853-4 and 1272/1856 to his deputy at Kāimganj containing specific spiritual instructions. Along with more general pieces of advice on doctrinal issues, these include hints at a special task entrusted to the Maulawī which certainly constitutes a so far unparalleled departure from the principles of the ṭarīqa. In one of his letters, Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan writes:

By the grace of God, through your most intimate essence a new world will be illuminated. Some from among the Hindus (ahl-i hunūd) will come to enjoy your company . . . and since they possess the qualities [required for this task], do not refuse them this incomparable treasure [of our spiritual heritage]. . . .¹⁶¹

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¹⁶⁰. See MqK, pp. 188-200.
In another letter, he adds referring to the same point:

. . . this matter will constitute the proof of your being a pole of divine instruction (quṭb al-irshād); . . . if your particular spiritual attention (tawajjuh-i khāss) will reach the infidels and the transgressors of the right path (kuffar wa fāsiq-i rāh-i mustaqīm), they will attain to the perfection of true faith (kāmil al-īmān). . . .

It thus emerges that it was the ‘Pole of Awadh’ Sayyid Abūl Hasan Naṣīrābādī who shortly before his death decided to assign a singular role to one of his successors that was to go far beyond the cautious approach initiated by Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān. This assignment was meant not only to allow non-Muslims, and specifically Hindus, significantly still defined as ‘infidels’ (kuffār), to enrol as disciples into the order and therefore to benefit passively from the spiritual influence of its masters, but included the rather explicit invitation to hand over the spiritual authority inherent in one of its legal representatives to members of another community thus enabling them to perpetuate it independently among themselves.

Though the reasons for such a decision, purportedly based on a supra-human intuition (kashf) granted to Sayyid Abūl Hasan, remain within the realms of speculation in the absence of any further explicit evidence by the author of these letters, it is noteworthy that some of the order’s contemporary Hindu leaders affirm that the Sayyid accompanied his instructions with the claim that to confer spiritual blessings (ważīfa) on Hindus


163. Significantly, not only I found the order’s contemporary authorities extremely reluctant to grant me access to the sources related to this delicate topic, but they were also unwilling to give any clear and direct answer to my questions trying to play down the significance of the event and seeking refuge in vague statements about the universal values of spiritual truths.
would mean to return a lost treasure to its original source and should therefore be considered as a natural development in the ṭarīqa’s history.164

Notwithstanding the implications such a statement could have if corroborated by further evidence, it is important to bear in mind that these instructions were directed to one among the secondary successors of the Mujaddidī tradition in Awadh and represent a so far unique example of its kind among the numerous other sub-branches that developed in that area and elsewhere at the time. For a correct assessment of this phenomenon, it is thus essential to attribute its importance not so much to any alleged general degeneration or radical overall change in the order’s established principles as such, but to the fact that one of the silsilā’s eminent authorities in the line of Mirzā Jān-i Jānān, in spite of his undisputed orthodoxy in religious matters, felt no contradiction in assigning to one of his deputies the task of introducing ‘infidels and trasgressors of the right path’ into the order, going so far as to authorise their promotion to the rank of directing authorities. It should moreover be noted that in order to reduce the risk of a possible failure of what we prefer to define as a bold experiment that could seriously jeopardise the continuity of a regular chain of initiatic transmission, the main line of descent was guaranteed through the deputyships of the Sayyid’s many khulafā’ at Lucknow and elsewhere. This clearly counters the possible objection that would deny the validity of this affair by playing down the whole event, judging it as a sign of degeneration of a minor branch at the periphery of the order’s mainstream history and therefore void of any real interest. The inherent authority of Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan as the quṭb of his time and his conscious choice of one of his intimates (though not only successor) for this purpose suggest

164. This discussion emerged during an interview held with the present leader of the silsila at Kanpur, Omkār Nāth Saksenā, in the occasion of the annual bhandārā held in memory of Mahātmā Raghubar Dayāl on Vasant Pāñcamī, 24 January 1996, and was later confirmed also by some Muslim authorities in the same line. See also the textual references in Discourses . . . , p. 158.
that neither an over-valuation of this issue for the general situation and further prospects of the *Mujaddidiyya Mazhariyya* nor an underestimation of it aimed at reducing its significance would represent a correct assessment. Our account of later developments will be helpful to further understanding of the curious example of Hindu-Muslim cultural symbiosis that was to develop here from an esoteric point of view.

However, Shāh Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān, a reputedly orthodox Sunni scholar, was not able to fulfil the directions received from his master. The *Damīma-i Ḥalāt-i Māshaikh-i Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya Mazhariyya* informs us in a strongly hagiographical tone about the Maulawī’s deputyship conferred on his disciple during the last years of his life:

> When my spiritual guide Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān bestowed the honour of his licence (*ijāzat*) and deputyship (*khilāfat*) on this humble servant [Shāh Faḍl Ahmad Khān], he put the first of these letters [written by Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan] in front of me and asking me to read it. Accordingly, this humble one read out the letter. When I had gone through it, he told me: “Faḍl Ahmad, these directions could not have been fulfilled by me!” I replied: “Now, if the Most Highest God wishes so, they will be manifested”. The Ḥaḍrat replied: “The time has come for me to reach the edge of the hereafter, only little time is left and nothing significant is going to happen anymore”. When this worthless one listened to these words, he began to weep but was interrupted by the master’s immediate reply:

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165. It is noteworthy that the last great shaikh of the *Mujaddidiyya Mazhariyya* at Delhi, Shāh Abūl Ḥasan Zaid Fārūqī who mentions the Hindu Naqshbandīs at Kanpur in one of his books and who was the first to inform me about their existence, takes a rather neutral if not very sympathetic stand towards them; the very fact that they are mentioned is highly indicative in that context of defending Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī against the alleged anti-Hindu position of this famous Indian Naqshbandī leader. Cf. *Ḥaḍrat Mujaddid aur unke nā-qadin*, p. 223.
“This is not the time for weeping”. At once, my heart turned cheerful and merry. He went on saying: “These will not remain empty words, now they will manifest themselves through yourself. . . .”

Thereafter, my revered master continued: “Until today, your role has been easy and comfortable, but from now on I will consign you a difficult and burdensome command (amr-i ‘azîm wa fakhîm), if you will cleave to it you will become famous along with the prophets and saints, otherwise you will drag this very khirqa [viz. himself, Shâh Aḥmad ‘Alî Khân] into the regions of hell. . . .”

Listening to these words, this humble one began to cry and asked for forebearance, but his master consoled him reminding him that God would make the task easy for him. He than recited some prayers for the sake of his disciple and presented him with the blessed objects (tabarrukāt) of the order’s ancestors, including some former belongings of Sayyid Abûl Ḥasan Naṣīrābādî and his letters with the words: “Every shaikh offers his tabarruk to his khalîfa. For your good fortune, you receive also the blessed ones of Sayyid Abûl Ḥasan. . . .”

The responsibility of granting Hindus access to the order’s mysteries had, thus, to wait until the next generation without having been accomplished by Shâh Aḥmad ‘Alî Khân to whom it had originally been entrusted.

Maulānā Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān Rā’īpurī (AD 1838-1907)
Maulānā Faḍl Aḥmad Khān was born in 1838 in the small village of Rā’īpur Khās, about four miles west of qašba Kāimgaṇj on the road to Kāmpilya, the ancient capital of the kingdom of Pāncāla, in Farrukhābād district. His family belonged to a clan

166. Ŵāmîna . . . , p. 11.
of Qilzāī Afghans tracing their ancestry back to Sultan Maḥmūd Ghaznawī (d. AD 1030).\(^{167}\) His father, Shāh Ghulām Ḥusain Khān, was affiliated to the khalīfa of a Chishtī shaikh called Shāh Wali al-Dīn Kashmīrī. In line with his family’s martial traditions, he had been in the service of a high-ranking Mogul military commander.\(^{168}\) His mother was a disciple of Afīdāl Miyan Rā’īpurī, the khalīfa of Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan Naṣīryabādi at Lucknow who originally belonged to the same village.

While studying at an English medium school at Kāimganj, Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān acquired his traditional Islamic education partly from his father partly from Maulawī Aḥmad ‘Ālī Khān. The biographies relate that since those early days, the Maulawī and his wife felt a deep affection for the young pupil, and after the premature death of their only son his wife reportedly was so distressed that her husband advised her to consider Faḍl Aḥmad as her adopted son.\(^{169}\) While still a toddler, Fazl Aḥmad Khān thus, established an intimate relationship with his teacher and underwent intensive training in the religious sciences under his guidance. Finally, in 1867, at the age of 29, he was initiated into the ṭariqa by the Shāh remaining at his service until the latter’s death in 1889.

During that period Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad renounced government employment as a school master and preferred to stay close to his spiritual perceptor while giving occasional lessons and living mostly on unsolicited offerings (futūḥāt) received for his services.\(^{170}\) Only after the death of Shāh Aḥmad ‘Ālī Khān he

167. For the genealogy of the family, see LVV, p. 125.
169. LVV, p. 124.
170. His financial situation was extremely tense as emerges from an anecdote related by the same Faḍl Aḥmad Khān which describes his great hardship when unemployed and the miraculous intervention of his master’s prayers to save him. Though meant to exalt the Maulawī’s miraculous powers, the story throws some light on the economic difficulties of his family in spite of its noble ancestry. See Ṭamīma . . . , p. 13.
decided to move from his native village to the district headquarters of Farrukhabad where he was offered a post as Persian and Urdu teacher at the local Mission School.\textsuperscript{171} It was there that he met his future disciple Rāmcandra Sakṣenā who was to become the first Hindu initiated by Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad and through whom the instructions of Sayyid Abūl Hasan Naṣīrābādī were eventually to become true. Gradually, an increasing number of Hindus were attracted into his sphere of influence, attending his company (\textit{suḥbat}) and enrolling as his disciples.

This unconventional behaviour soon saw the Shāh exposed to open criticism by the local Muslim authorities which began to harass him publicly. It is reported that one day he was beaten up by a group of young Muslim scholars. Other sources inform us that a Muslim mob once threw pieces of rotten meat through the window of his habitation.\textsuperscript{172}

Probably due to these difficulties, Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān decided at last to leave Farrukhabad and to return to Rā'īpur where he continued to practice as teacher and to receive his numerous disciples for spiritual instruction.\textsuperscript{173} Early in 1325/1907, his health began to deteriorate, compelling him to interrupt his daily routine for medical treatment at Kanpur. When all attempts to check an advanced cancer proved futile, he returned home to spend his last days among his dear ones. He died in the early evening of 22 Sha'bān 1325/30 November

\textsuperscript{171} Apart from the governmental employment at the school, Faḍl Aḥmad Khān used to teach Arabic and Persian in the \textit{madrasa} of the Muftī of Farrukhābād. In change, the muftī assigned him a small dwelling (\textit{koṭhī}) adjacent to the \textit{madrasa}, \textit{Mahān Sūfī Sant} . . . , p. 29.

\textsuperscript{172} \textit{LVV}, p. 125; \textit{JC}, p. 26.

\textsuperscript{173} From one of the Shāh's letters written to Rāmcandra we know that in Muḥarram 1316/May 1898 he had been at Delhi visiting the \textit{dargāh} of Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān. See \textit{JC}, p. 38.
1907 in the presence of a number of Muslim disciples and was buried at the top of a small mound just outside the village.\textsuperscript{174}

Although the present study will remain focused on the Hindu disciples of Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān, it is relevant to mention the considerable number of his Muslim khulāfā’. The biographies list a total of seventeen officially invested deputies out of which fifteen were members of the Sunni community, most of them living within or in the immediate surroundings of Farrukhabad district.\textsuperscript{175} Out of these only three are of any further relevance for the history of the lineage. However, the considerable presence of local Muslims among his deputies leads to the conclusion that in spite of the readiness to disclose the esoteric teachings of the tariqa to a limited number of Hindus, Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān was aware of the importance to guarantee the continuity and survival of the order’s original socio-cultural setting in the Islamic environment and that his Muslim affiliates were apparently ready to accept his unusual attitude in spite of the opposition from other sides.

A few days before his death, Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān reportedly invested his younger brother Wilāyat Ḥusain Khān as his main successor, thus, ensuring the continuity of the silsila in its Islamic context.\textsuperscript{176}

\textsuperscript{174} The grandson of Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān and present authority of the Muslim lineage, Maulawi Shāh Manzūr Aḥmad Khān (b.1344/1925), has in recent years ordered the construction of a mausoleum for his grandfather and other close relatives, including other attached facilities for the annual ‘urs held during the Easter days in memory of the saint.

\textsuperscript{175} From the diary of Rāmcandra, in possession of his grandson Dinesh Kumār Sakṣena at Bareilly, cf. also LVV, p. 126.

\textsuperscript{176} LVV, p. 126. The biographical sources tell us little about Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad’s family. He was married to a woman who gave birth to two sons and two daughters before she died at a relatively young age. The eldest son, Niyāz Aḥmad Khān, though too young at the moment of his father’s death to receive initiation, is said to have received the Shāh’s blessings while praying at his tomb. He later left Rā’ipur for Bhilwārā (Rajasthan) where he acquired some notoriety as wandering saint known under the name of Nabban Mīyān Jalālī, but nothing is
Together with Wilāyat Ḩusain Khān, the responsibility of perpetuating the order’s tradition than fell to Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghanī Khān (1283/1867-1374/1953) who had been granted access to the silsila by Shāh Ahmad ‘Alī Khān and was later entrusted to Shāh Faḍl ʿĀḥmad Khān for the perfection of his spiritual curriculum.

known about his spiritual affiliation. According to other sources, he was cursed by his father to lead a life of continuous unrest after buying some sweets with stolen money. He reportedly died in a forest near Ajmer. The Shāh’s younger son, Maḥmūd ʿĀḥmad Khān, born in 1316/1898, was only nine when his father died. Hence, he received his traditional education from his uncle Wilāyat Ḩusain Khān before joining his sister’s family at Gwalior where he worked in the local army’s hospital. In 1931, he obtained ijāzat and khilāfat from his father’s younger brother, but died unexpectedly three years later at Gwalior. His son, Maḥzūr ʿĀḥmad Khān (b.1344/1925) received initiation into the order through Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghanī Khān following a pilgrimage to the dargāh of Ḥadrat Muʿīn al-Dīn Chishtī at Ajmer. He is still alive (1996) and holds the rank of one of the ṭarīqa’s leading spiritual authorities maintaining intimate contacts with the order’s contemporary Hindu leaders.

Wilāyat Ḩusain Khān received instruction in Arabic and Persian first from his mother and later from Shāh Ahmad’ ‘Alī Khān who issued him with a diploma and certificate of authority with distinction (dastār-i faẓīlat) in this subject. In 1892, he passed the teacher’s training exam for Arabic, Persian and Urdu from the Punjab University at Lahore but continued to study the traditional sciences, especially fiqh, from different authorities while posted at Kanpur and Bijnor. In 1894 he was appointed teacher at the High School of Muzaffarnagar and two years later moved to Bijnor where he kept teaching until his retirement. After his investiture by his elder brother, he started propagating the ṭarīqa in that area where he is said to have had more than 500 disciples. Reportedly an authority in both exoteric and esoteric domains, he is described as a rather ascetic character with a great passion for fasting and praying. During the last years of his life he returned to Rāīpur where he died on 28 Muḥarram 1356/7 April 1937. His only son and successor, Ghaffar Ḩusain Khān, lives at present in Malerktola (Punjab) as a retired teacher, cf. Dhārmik evam sāmpradāyik ekatā ...., pp. 77-9, LVV, pp. 129-31.

‘Abd al-Ghanī Khān was the only son of Ḥajī Muḥammad Hasan Khān, a Pathān tehsildār at Kāimganj. Since his early childhood, his father sent him to ʿĀḥmad ‘Alī Khān for his religious education, but in 1883
Through these two authorities, the leadership of the *tariqa* remained, therefore, in accordance with the traditional custom, with those who were linked either through direct blood relation or through an intimate tie that provided the required conditions for a reliable guarantee for the survival of the tradition. After the death of Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān, all his Hindu disciples including Rāmcandra Saksena significantly continued to pay their respect to these two Muslim deputies. Moreover, we learn from the Hindu sources that just as Rāmcandra and his younger brother Raghubar Dayāl were admitted into the *tariqa* through the intervention of Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān, so did their younger sons turn to Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghanī Khān for their vow of spiritual allegiance receiving periodical guidance from him.

The figure of Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān emerges thus as representing another exceptional stage in the special development of this Mujaddidi branch after Mīrzā Māzhār Jān-i Jānān and Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan Naṣīrībādī. His initiative led to a new type of development in the history of the *tariqa*, for it was his unheard interpretation of the conventional attitudes of many of his predecessors that paved the way for a close association of Hindus with this allegedly conservative and puritanical Sunni order. It comes therefore as no surprise that the all Hindu hagiographies praise him as their Ḥuḍūr Mahārāj, and their leaders pay regular homage to his tomb in occasion of the ‘*urs* held every year to commemorate the anniversary of his departure from this world.

The way many Hindus connected with the *Naqshbandiyya*

through this sub-branch conceive his attitude is characteristically resumed in the following paragraph by one of the more sober biographers, Bāl Kumār Khare:

. . . possibly, Ḫudūr Mahārāj [Ṣāḥīḥ Fāḍl Aḥmad Khān] was the first Sūfī saint of the Naqshbandī silsila who has divulged the secret spiritual science (gupta ādhyātmik vidyā) pertaining to the Muslim saints without any religious discrimination. Though he himself adhered to the Islamic faith he was completely free from any religious bias. He never indulged in any kind of controversy regarding different religions nor did he ever reprimand anybody for his religious affiliation. Whenever he came across any sort of criticism of any religion, he felt extremely displeased and tried to avoid the company of such persons. He used to say that the spiritual component (ṭarz-i rūḥāniyat, ādhyātmikatā kī paddhati) is every human being is only one, while the manners of social life (ṭarz-i muʿāsharat) can be numerous. He paid equal respect to all sacred traditions and used to repeat that spiritual life is free from all institutional boundaries pronouncing himself against any exterior noise and battle. . . .

Such an attitude of religious tolerance, although not altogether unprecedented among other Sūfī authorities in the past, goes beyond the ṭarīqa’s proposed aim of preserving the Islamic ‘umma through emphasis on the prophetic principle. This becomes clear from the concluding part of the paragraph quoted above:

. . . one of his Hindu disciples had adapted the Islamic manners and way of life. . . . When this disciple reached [Ṣāḥīḥ Fāḍl Aḥmad Khān] in that habit, the Shāh reprimanded him: “Now you do not comply with my work. I will not allow any blame on my role of religious devotee.

Remain as you have been before! One should lead exterior life in accordance with the tradition inherited through birth. . . .” He did not like any religious conversion. Asserting the distinction between exterior social life and interior spiritual life, Ḥuḍūr Mahārāj often recited the following verses [of Kabīr]:

\[
\begin{align*}
jāti na pūchai sādhu kī, pūch lijiye jīnān & \\
kām karo talvār se, parī rahan do miyān & 
\end{align*}
\]

Do not ask about the caste of a sādhu, ask for his knowledge accomplish your task with the sword, leave the sheath where it is.\(^{181}\)

From other sources we learn that Shāh Faḍl Ahmad Khān’s first foremost Hindu disciple, Rāmcandra, at some stage felt ready to convert to Islam, but was strongly discouraged by his shaikh from doing so. Khare relates this anecdote in the following way:

. . . Once a fellow Muslim disciple of Lālāji Ṣāḥib [Rāmcandra] told [Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān] that no spiritual progress could be achieved on the Naqshbandī sulūk without adhering to the tenets of the Islamic law. While in the presence of Ḥuḍūr Mahārāj, the Mahātmāj replied that in this case he was ready to embrace Islam. Hearing this, the eyes of Ḥuḍūr Mahārāj turned red out of anger and he left that place immediately. After sometime, he returned and asked Lālāji Ṣāḥib: What sort of reprobate told you this? Having calmed himself, he explained to Lālāji that spiritual knowledge does not depend on any particular religious observance (madhhab), since pure spirituality lies far beyond the religious sphere.\(^{182}\)

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181 Ibidem, p. 33.
182 Ibidem, p. 33.
Such a stand clearly reflects the shift from previous positions like those held by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Mirza Jān-i Jānān towards Hindus or non-Muslims in general inasmuch as it makes a net distinction between the exoteric and esoteric aspects of the Islamic tradition. Such a view would be less surprising in exponents of the wujūdī point of view, like many Chishtī or Qādirī shaikhs than in a spiritual authority of the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya whose entire doctrinal edifice had been built since Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi on a shuhūdī position that contemplates the integration of the tenets of the Islamic Law with the inner truths (ḥaqāʾiq al-bāṭinī) of the initiatic path. The implications of such a radical change of perspective in the order's doctrinal perceptions as handed over to the Hindu disciples will require a thorough investigation in the light of the teachings handed down by the contemporary Islamic authorities as well as those transmitted by the Hindu offspring of the ṭariqa.

Whatever these may finally turn out to be, Shāh Faḍl Ahmad Khān in his way accomplished the instructions received by Shāh Ahmad ‘Alī Khān and began to share the initiatory secrets safeguarded by the masters of the Naqshbandiyya with members of the Hindu community. From that day onwards, the relations between the Muslims and Hindus of this small branch of the ṭariqa were to remain intimately linked.

Mahātmā Rāmcandrajī Mahārāj (AD 1873-1931)

With Rāmcandra Saksenā, the history of this lineage shifts decisively into a new cultural context, from its original religious embedding in the Islamic tradition to the larger framework represented by the Hindu dharma. Though lacking the intellect-ual characteristics of Brāhmaṇical orthodoxy, this environment brought about a series of interesting doctrinal and social adaptions. From that moment onwards, this extra-Islamic offshoot, though maintaining intimate contacts with the parallel Sūfi leadership, began to develop on its own lines and transmitted the secrets of Divine knowledge (brahma-vidyā) to an increasing number of Hindu disciples whose
religious and social background called for cautious doctrinal
adoption and reformulations while leaving its original integrity
intact.

This tendency becomes evident in the course of the following
generations when the degree of the ṭariqa’s success and survival
as a living exoteric tradition was to depend largely on the
intellectual capacities and the authoritative charisma of every
single member admitted into the spiritual chain to grasp its
underlying esoteric truths and to transmit them through
adequate verbal formulations without losing sight of the natural
differences of perspective involved in the two different traditions
received.

First, though, a brief biographical introduction to the
foremost masters in the order’s Hindu genealogy, selected from
the enormous amount of hagiographical material produced by
their followers, will be useful in providing the outer frame of the
picture.

Rāmcandra Saksenā was a member of a wealthy and influential
Kāyasth family whose ancestors originally belonged to the small
town of Adhaul near Delhi. During the reign of the Mogul
emperor Akbar (r. AD 1556-1605), four brothers of this clan were
reportedly endowed with a number of jāgirs in areas today
situated in the Mainpurī and Farrukhābād districts of the fertile

183. According to some traditions, the Kāyasths (the term is derived from
the Sanskrit kāya and sṭhā, literally bearing the meaning of ‘situated
in the body’, ‘incorporate’, referred to the paramātmā) originally
descend from a common ancestor sprung from the union of a ksātriya
father and śūdra mother. His name was Citragupta, the legendary
scribe at the service of the god of death, Yama, in charge of writing
down the good and bad deeds of every single human being and
presented to the judgement of his Lord at the moment of death.
Hence, derives the Kāyasths’ traditional occupation of scribes and
clerks in government service, especially during the times of the Mogul
empire, an occupation that made the acquaintance with the languages
of the ruling class, Arabic and Persian in a first moment and Urdu at
a later stage, as well as many of their customs necessary leading to
their close affinity with different aspects of Islamic culture.
Doāb between the rivers Ganges and Yamunā, and settled down in and around the town of Bhūgrām, the modern Bhogaon. The eldest of these four, known by the name of Sambharidās, apparently was granted a jāgir of 555 villages, along with a golden sword, a dress (khil’at) and the conferment of the title of ‘Caudharī’ inheritable by the future generations of his clan. One of his descendants in the twelfth generation, Caudharī Brndāvan Bābū, left his hometown Bhogāon after it suffered widespread devastation in the 1857 upheaval and settled with his wife and two sons Haribakhsh Rāy and Ulfatī Rāy in the Nitgañj neighbourhood of Farrukhābād.

Rāmcandra’s father Haribakhsh Rāy, although described as an upright character that allowed him to rise to the rank of local customs superintendent (cuṅgī), dissipated much of the family’s fortune he had inherited on his pleasures. The debts left after his death compelled his sons to sell their ancestor’s land and possessions at a forced auction at Mainpuri, reducing them to a life of relative poverty.

According to the hagiographies, the births of Rāmcandra on Vasant Pāñcamī, the 4 February 1873, and of his younger brother Raghubar Dayāl two years later were propitiated miraculously through the blessings of an unknown Muslim saint conferred after living offered a dish of cooked fish by Rāmcandra’s mother, whose pious character induced her to offer charity in the form of ‘hidden gift’ (gupta dāna). In sharp contrast with the worldly inclinations

184. This honorific title (from the Sanskrit cakra+dhārin, literally the ‘discus-bearer’) denotes usually a chief of a village, of a caste or of a particular profession and as such bears a distinctive kṣatriya connotation as a minor reflection of the cakravartin, the universal monarch in traditional Hindu conceptions. As such, the ancestry of Rāmcandra Saksenā bears some evident elements pertaining to the kṣatriya environment, although probably due to some ritual offences, this caste is nowadays considered in a social context closer to the vaiśya environment.
of her husband, she is described as deeply imbued with a spirit of devotion that led her to spend much of her time in domestic worship and the recital of Tulsidas’ Rāmacaritmānasa.\textsuperscript{187} Reportedly, she felt great veneration for Kabīr whose verses (sākhī) she used to sing to her sons in the cradle.\textsuperscript{188}

Rāmcandra and his younger brother thus spent the first years of their life in relative comfort in the devotional atmosphere of this strictly Vaiṣṇava household. Following the sudden death of their mother in 1880, the care of the two brothers was entrusted to an old Muslim servant living with the family. After the vidyārambha ritual that marks the beginning of apprenticeship for young Hindu upper caste males, Rāmcandra received his basic education in Urdu and Persian from an old Maulawī who also instructed him in the skills of poetry, a passion he would preserve for the rest of his life. Later on, at the age of ten, he entered the Mission School at Farrukhābād where he obtained his English medium degree in 1891.\textsuperscript{189}

A few months before his death in the same year, Haribakhsh Rāy arranged the marriage of his two sons. Due to the severe financial constraints missing from the adverse judgement in a lawsuit over his father’s debts Rāmcandra was compelled to give away almost all the family’s belongings and accept a minor post as clerk in the Collector’s Office at nearby Fatehgarh.\textsuperscript{190} As the family’s eldest male member, the responsibility for the maintenance of his younger brother and his cousin Krṣṇasvarūp fell on him, their life abruptly plummeting from its former comfort to a struggle for mere survival.\textsuperscript{191}

\textsuperscript{187} JC, pp. 2-3.
\textsuperscript{188} JC, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{189} JC, pp. 16-17.
\textsuperscript{190} LVV, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{191} Krṣṇasvarūp was the younger of the two sons of Haribakhsh Rāy’s brother Caudhārī Ulfatī Rāy who was the administrator of the family’s possessions. He was born in 1879 and along with his elder brother Rāmsvarūp adopted by Haribakhsh Rāy after their father’s death in 1884. Since that time, the family used to live jointly at Farrukhabad. After five years as medical officer at Ratlām (M.P.) from 1915 to 1920,
From his student years, Rāmcandra reportedly spent much time in the company of a certain Svāmī Brahmānanda, an old Hindu sage affiliated to the Kabīr-panth who lived by the Ganges near Fatehgarh. From him Rāmcandra not only received some general notions regarding the Hindu dharma but was also granted formal initiation into the Kabīr-panth, a fact of great importance for his future role as spiritual authority. Interestingly, the sources inform us, moreover, that the Svāmī used to meet regularly Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān to whom he reverentially referred as the ‘quṭb of Farrukhābād’. The latter was then living near the local madrasa.\(^{192}\)

In the same period, Rāmcandra compelled to look for his own accommodation, happened to rent a small room near the same madrasa. The episode of his first encounter with his future shaikh has been described at great length by his hagiographers, for it constitutes the point of departure of the Hindu paramparā that was to develop from him:

One day [in 1891], Mahātmā Rāmcandrajī Mahārāj was late on his way home from the office when suddenly a violent thunderstorm broke out accompanied by heavy rain. It was winter and his clothes were completely soaked. When the Mahātmājī, according to his daily habit, passed in front of the Maulawī’s residence, he respectfully conveyed his greetings trembling all over his body. The Maulawī asked him with great affection: “Where are you coming from in this storm and under this rain? Come on, change your clothes and sit with

© he became a doctor at Ajmer and Jaipur where he settled down with his family. After receiving bai’at from Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān and khilāfat from his cousin Rāmcandra in 1931, he began to spread the teachings of the order in Rajasthan where he died at Jaipur in 1958. For notices on him, see LVV pp. 164-9.

192. \(JC\), p. 18; \(JC\), p. 14; LVV, p. 143.
me. Meanwhile I will prepare the brazier”. Soon afterwards, the Mahātmājī returned to the Maulawī who covered him with a warm quilt. Then the Mahātmā all of a sudden lost his senses, and without any hesitation the Maulawī disclosed his entire [spiritual] wealth through a flight of subtle energy (śakti pat) to the heart of Rāmcandrajī, thus fulfilling the wishes of his venerable spiritual master Ḥāji Aḥmad ‘Ali Khan according to whom one day a Hindu boy would come to meet the Shāh who was to bestow this Divine knowledge on him, since this science originally belonged to the Hindus.¹⁹³

The meeting radically changed the life of Rāmcandra who from that day remained strongly attracted by the Naqshbandī saint. Quite remarkably, his hagiographers describe the nocturnal vision he experienced immediately after this first encounter in terms very similar to those that characterise the premonitory visions experienced commonly by Muslim novices prior to their affiliation to a spiritual master: the young initiate appears in an assembly of saints, all in luminous shape, in the midst of whom a radiant throne descends from above and on which is seated the shaikh immediately concerned with the initiation into the order, in this particular case Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān. The future spiritual guide gets up from the throne and introduces the new disciple to the other members present in the assembly who are in fact the order’s prominent leaders.¹⁹⁴

The sense implied in this kind of premonitory night vision (rū’ya) points to the establishment of a spiritual link (nisbat) between the master and the novice and is traditionally valued as the unfolding of the ‘spiritual seed’ implanted by the shaikh into the disciple’s heart proving that it has fallen on a fertile soil.

¹⁹³. Bhogav — atīt se vartamān, p. 79. For details, see JC, pp. 20-2.
¹⁹⁴. JC, p. 22.
From that day on, Shāh Fadl Aḥmad began to direct his spiritual energy (tawajjuh) on Rāmcandra during the latter’s regular visits. It was, however, not until four years later, on 23 January 1886, that the young Hindu received his formal initiation (bai‘at) into the Mujaddidiyya. Such a gap of time between first contact and formal enrolment is uncommon in this order. It must be attributed to the exceptional circumstances of the inter-religious passage involved in the relationship between master and disciple, particularly in view of the continuous spiritual attention (tawajjuh) Rāmcandra received from his Muslim preceptor during the span of time prior to his initiation clearly meant to prepare the inner ground of his future successor.

In his diary, Rāmcandra describes the change that occurred in his life following the encounter with the Naqsbandī shaikh:

The very first light of spiritual guidance (hidāyat) has been infused into my heart while I was still in the womb of my mother. The heat of this luminosity nourished me for seven years [until her death]. O Merciful One! Your mercy did not leave me for long without assistance, nay on one blessed day of my nineteenth year, my whole being has been delivered to Your embodied mercy, the spiritual guide of the order (hāḍī-i ṭarīqat) and sun of knowledge (shams-i ma‘rifat) [Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān]. . . .

It is noteworthy that apart from his religious education in accordance with the customs of his castle, Rāmcandra mentions no education in the sacred science of the kind expected from a twice-born Hindu. On the other hand, the eloquent Urdu style and the choice of vocabulary used in his writings betray the typical familiarity of a Kāyasth Hindu not only with the language but also with the religious background of his Islamic

195. JC., p. 30.
196. Quoted from the diaries of Rāmcandra, in possession of his nephew Dinesh Kumār Saksenā. See also JC, p. 24.
masters. His doctrinal authority and knowledge appear to have been largely derived from his spiritual affiliation to the Kabir-panth and the Naqshbandiyya. Important for an analysis of his later doctrinal elaboration, this association should be understood in the context of his social background as a member of the north-Indian Kâyasth community that for centuries had entertained close contacts with the ruling Islamic class and the connected Muslim culture much more favourable for such a link.197

Shâh Faḍl Aḥmad Khân had clearly kept observing the young Hindu for some time before choosing the moment to establish the contact that would fulfil the desire of his master. In his diary, Râmcandra writes:

The very first day, [of our encounter] my [spiritual] director whispered into my ear: “Your life has been inclined towards the way of Truth since long before, for this reason It shall be revealed to you. And you yourself shall relate the Truth to others. Relate the Truth, relate the secrets of the [Divine] principle in such a way as to make its transmission and the refuge your sword. Take the help of the shade to create your own display and do not rely on anything but the Pure Essence (dhât-i muṭlaq”).

After giving me such a hint, my director did not leave me on my own, but he himself acting like a shadow provided me for a period of sixteen years with his inner and outer attention. He ordered me to keep always apart from the outer tenets of the ṭariqat, and finally entrusted me with the task of spreading his mission to the people. . . .198

197. In fact, the social decline of Râmcandra’s family whose fortunes were closely related to those of their Muslim chiefs, coincided with the formal end of Islamic temporal power during the late nineteenth century and the contemporary loss of many acquired privileges under European colonial rule.

Rāmcandra Sakṣenā, thus, became the first Hindu disciple of Shāh Fadl Ahmad Khān, who thereby accomplished the task Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan Naṣīrābādī had entrusted to his khalīfā half a century earlier. He thereby opened the gate for the establishment, within the context of the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya, of a new tradition of Hindu-Muslim relationship that during the next century was spread over many parts of northern India.

On 11 October 1896, after only ten months of intensive training following his initiation, Shāh Fadl Ahmad Khān conferred full licence and deputyship (kullī ijāzat o khilāfat, pūrna adhikār or ācārya padavi) on his Hindu disciple, thus, laying the foundation for the perpetuation of the silsila in Rāmcandra’s predominantly Hindu environment.199

At the end of 1896 Rāmcandra was transferred from Fatehgarh to Aligarh, a village in Farrukhabad district situated on the northern bank of the Ganges, as deputy inspector (nā’īb naẓīr) of the local tax-revenue office where he remained posted until 1903.200 It was during this period that he began to put in practice the instructions imparted to him by his shaikh providing guidance to a growing number of Hindus in the area and starting to organise his spiritual sessions (satsang) as an independent authority. In accordance with the Naqshbandī principle of khilwat dar anjuman (‘solitude amidst the crowd’),201 he spent

199. JC., p. 30.

200. In spite of the shift in power from the Islamic government of the Moguls to European colonial rule, Rāmcandra and his fellow Hindu disciples, almost entirely hailing from the Kāyasth background, were able to preserve their traditional employment in the local administration, albeit on a reduced scale. The family exemplifies the effects left by these altered social patterns on this community, and the loss of prestige in their forced adaption to the new circumstances implied. For a detailed case study of the north Indian Kāyasths who migrated in search of employment to Hyderābād, see Karen Isaksen Leonard: Social History of an Indian Caste: the Kāyasths of Hyderābād (1994).

201. A similar principle in the Hindu terminology is grhaṣṭha-yogī, denoting those who exercise their role of spiritual perfectioners among
the day at his office and dedicated the evening to the instruction of his disciples.\textsuperscript{202} During these initial stages of his mission, however, he limited himself to the transmission of his inner spiritual power (tawajjuh), a technique peculiar to the Naqshbandīs that consists of the infusion of the shaikh’s subtle energy to the inner state of the disciple who has to surrender himself completely to his master in order to derive passive benefit from it. This method had gained increasing importance in the tariqa over the last three centuries as a means to facilitate the spiritual progress of the disciple during the initial stages of his initiatory itinerary and was to become the dominant feature of imparting their teachings among the Hindu authorities.\textsuperscript{203}

One of Rāmcandra’s later disciples present at the ritual conferment of khilafat during which the Saksenā master had to give evidence of his capacity as a special instructor describes the effects of his master’s tawajjuh in the following manner:

\textit{Hudūr Mahārāj} [Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān] told the Mahātmā: “My son Pattulāl, confer your tawajjuh to all these people and answer any of their questions. May God grant you success. . . .” The Mahātmā began to bestow his tawajjuh upon us. At the beginning, I began to feel a strange sort of happiness (ānanda), than gradually my mind was emptied of all thoughts; finally, nothing remained except the remembrance of the Supreme Being (paramātmā). Then, all the great masters of the silsila appeared in front of me. Slowly, luminosity began to appear until finally nothing but pure light subsisted, everything around me vanished from my

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{202} LVV, p. 147.
\textsuperscript{203} See infra chapter 2.
\end{flushright}
sight, heaven and earth, all disappeared in a unique radiant light that was accompanied by a charming sensation of love and attraction. All of us were in a state of inebriation (mast), and the echo of a very alluring sound reached my ear. Our mind became restless. I felt my body’s desire to burst and to immerse my innermost self in that source of light. . . . A little later, this condition changed and the light gradually disappeared. Neither any awareness nor any unawareness remained in that state that was beyond any possible description. . . .

This typical description of the impact left by the spiritual power of a Naqshbandī saint on the inner states of a novice is found in similar versions in many treatises by the order’s authorities and resembles very closely Rāmcandra’s own experience during his first encounter with his master. It constitutes a constant feature of the immediate effect a disciple experiences with his shaikh and follows the established Naqshbandī principle of first inducing a direct spiritual experience (ḥāl) brought about by the master’s intention before providing any sort of doctrinal preparation and intellectual elaboration of the sulūk. It is, however, significant that although Rāmcandra was licensed to transmit his tawajjuh to other disciples, it was not until many years later that he began to initiate new disciples on his own initiative. Only in 1914, that is to say seven years after his master’s death did he begin deliver instructions regarding the different stages of the spiritual path derived from the Naqshbandī doctrine but integrated with elements pertaining to the Kabīr-panthī background.

This is not the place for an account of Rāmcandra’s adaptations of traditional Naqshbandī teachings and methods from an Islamic into a Hindu context. Obviously, however, such a task required fundamental changes in doctrinal perspective.

204. LVV, pp. 146-7.
and technical applications. Deprived of the homogeneous frame of the *shari‘at* which provided both a formal code of social and ritual behaviour as well as an essential element in the esoteric vision of the Naqshbandī shaikhs, the process of spreading the ṭariqa’s teachings to a large segment of non-Muslims, without regard to their social origins and intellectual capacities, implied an increasing democratisation or wider divulgation of at least parts of its message. Faithful to his master’s recommendation that all new Hindu members should stick outwardly to the religious and social customs they had inherited by birth, the Hindu Sufi master elaborated a new code of outer discipline (*yama-niyama*) based on elements pertaining to the Vaishnava traditions of his own Kāyasth background,\(^{206}\) which included such regulations as abstaining from the consumption of wine and meat, avoid gambling and the performance of daily prayers (*sandhyā*) and ritual ablutions (*śauca*).\(^{207}\)

That this newly established relationship between a Naqshbandī shaikh and a Hindu disciple was unfavourably perceived in some conservative Muslim circles in Farrukhabad has already been mentioned. Similar objections, though not reaching the degree of intimidation faced by Shāh Faḍl Āḥmad Khān, were apparently also raised against the Kāyasth master by some of his Hindu associates, especially by some members of the priestly caste. One of those who reportedly raised strong objections against this cross-cultural relationship was a certain Māṭā Prasād, an old friend of the family and active member of the Ārya Samāj who repeatedly tried to dissuade Rāmcandra

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206. Although the Kāyasth community has been noted throughout India as a ‘heavily Islamicised one’ (K.I. Leonard (1977), p. 14), their domestic religious observances, style of life and relationship with other high caste Hindus (i.e., the Kannaujiyā brāhmaṇas) clearly indicate their integration into Hindu society.

207. *Santmat Praveśikā*, pp. 2-5. Vegetarianism and abstinence from liquor, though typical of orthodox Vaiṣṇavas, were not largely diffused among Kāyasths, who are renowned for their drinking habits and a diet including most kinds of meat.
from maintaining contacts with members of the Muslim community.\textsuperscript{208}

But the main obstacle Rāmcandra had to face during the initial period of his missionary activity consisted rather in the indifference shown by most people in his entourage towards the message he tried to deliver, as appears from some of the letters written to his shaikh in 1899.\textsuperscript{209}

The Shāh’s reply indicates his master’s attitude towards the problem:

Nowadays, the pīr-murīdī relationship is not left even by name. This is not due to the people’s shortcomings, but the result of our own failings. . . . To meet a veracious disciple (murīd-i šādīq) is as rare as meeting a phoenix, and the very same can be said about a true pīr. God forbid, there are only very few devoted and self-sacrificing people left. What shall we do? If the time does not suit you, suit yourself to it! . . . So, if you are able to, do not defame the honour of our respected spiritual ancestors and arise to treat God’s creatures with kindness, affability and comprehension. Even if people show aversion to this, pray for them, for the devil has overcome them. They deserve compassion. . . .\textsuperscript{210}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{208}]
According to an episode, the pandit once tried to force Rāmcandra to consume an intoxicating drink (bhang-tandāi) prepared on the occasion of a Hindu festivity. Later the pandit was reportedly converted to Rāmcandra’s message and even attended his satsang. Cf. Bhogāv — atīt se vartamān, p. 80.
\item[\textsuperscript{209}]
This attitude betrays Rāmcandra’s anxiety to spread the message of the tariqa entrusted to him by his master and reflects the radical departure of this particular silsila from the traditional pattern followed by previous generations of Naqshbandi masters: The cautiousness in enrolling only those disciples sufficiently qualified for their arduous spiritual task is replaced by the desire to reach out to the greatest number of people. Such an attitude indicates the process of divulgation pursued by the last authorities of the order. This typically modern development is associated with the requirements of survival of the esoteric orders.
\item[\textsuperscript{210}]
JC, p. 36.
\end{itemize}
The shaikh, thus, makes clear that in these difficult times the old principles governing the spiritual tradition can no longer be taken for granted, and so it is necessary for the directing authority to adapt to prevailing outer circumstances in order to preserve the tradition and save those who have fallen under the sway of negligence and devilish aberrations (shaitān unko maghlūb kar liya hai) from going astray.

This may appear to dismiss the basic principle through which in the past the aspirant’s spiritual qualification was carefully ascertained by the presiding authority of the order as an essential criterion for an eventual admission into the ṭariqa. It is nevertheless possible to recognise here the practical application of the vision set out by Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī and Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān which makes the effort to reform society a pivotal duty of the Mujaddidī shaikh. In this sense, the maxim ‘if time does not suit you, suit yourself to it’ assumes a central significance in this particular sub-branch and furnishes a key element in the positions assumed by its leaders in the wake of the profound changes brought about by the arrival of modernity and the connected weakening of traditional values in Indian society. The passage from Islam to Hinduism, though smoothened by the acquaintance of the Kāyasths with several cultural values, pertaining to the Islamic tradition left a deep impact on the order’s subsequent developments. But the sources justify the assertion that the seeds of such adaptations had been already sown in the original Islamic environment of the order. It may also be assumed that the contacts between Muslims and Kāyasth Hindus through the employment of the latter in the court administration of the Moguls and other local dynasties had permitted earlier contacts between Kāyasths and the Naqshbandī environment, perhaps as early as Shaikh Aḥmad’s time.

The developments of this lineage during the next fifty years also need to be considered in the context of the relative closeness of the Kāyasths to the colonial rulers. With the imposition of the colonial ideology perpetrated by the European rulers, the country’s entire civil and military administration passed under
direct British control and the Indian employees of this huge bureaucratic machine were those most directly exposed to any sort of cultural expression linked with the new mentality. Though explicit reference is not found to support the idea of Rāmcandra’s direct involvement in any of the various social and religious reform movements that flourished at the turn of this century in both Hindu and Islamic cultural environments, his strong opinions in favour of the abolition of caste barriers and of the remarriage of Hindu widows (*vidhavā-vedān*) appear to be influenced not only by his relation with a Muslim environment, but also reflect the ideas promoted by the numerous social reform movements and political parties, i.e., the Ārya Samāj and the Indian National Congress.

In 1898, Rāmcandra’s wife, Brija Rānī Saksenā, hailing from a pious though impoverished family of Kamalainpur in Shahjahanpur district, gave birth to their eldest son Jag Mohan

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211. K.I. Leonard’s work shows an increasing participation of Hyderabad Kāyasths in public activities and organisations which were to a large extent influenced by a Western or at least Westernised mentality though with slightly different aims: Urdu and Persian literary activities and the already mentioned Ārya Samāj and also particular Kāyasth associations such as the All India Kāyasth Conference (AIKC) organised in 1887 by Munshi Kālī Prasād with the purpose of unifying the Citragupta Kāyasths of northern India. See K.I. Leonard (1977), pp. 198-9 and pp. 200-2.

212. The only reported relation with a political association I have come across in the sources examined hints at the participation of Rāmcandra and some of his family members at the annual meeting of the All India Congress Session held at Kanpur in December 1925, a political movement to which the order’s current authorities and family members still adhere. Cf. *JC*, pp. 103 and 369.

213. For an account of the Ārya Samāj and other associations with similar purposes and aims, see Kenneth Jones: *Ārya Dharm*, (1976) and the somewhat outdated but still interesting account of J.N. Farquhar in his: *Modern Religious Movements in India* (1918).

214. She died in 1955 at the age of 85. For further information on her and the rest of the family, see *JC*, Appendix II.
Narāyān.215 In 1903, Rāmcandra was transferred from Aligarh to Kāimgaṇj as treasury accountant (siyāha-nawīs) allowing him to remain close to Shāh Faḍl Ahmad Khān until the latter’s death in 1907.216 Earlier that year, when the Shāh’s physical conditions worsened and he decided to go to Kanpur for medical treatment, Rāmcandra remained close to his master visiting him there every weekend by train.217 Back at Rāipur, a few days before his death, the shaikh summoned his Hindu disciple and deputy at his death-bed and advised him to regard Shāh ʿAbd al-Ghanī Khān, his khalifa-i khāṣṣ, as his future guide and point of reference in spiritual matters.218 It appears, therefore, that in spite of the authority vested in Rāmcandra after his investiture as khalifa, as a non-Muslim he still relied on the ultimate authority and expertise of a Muslim master of the ṭarīqa and could not yet claim total independence.

In 1908, shortly after his satguru’s death, Rāmcandra was transferred from Kāimgaṇj to Fatehgarh where he remained posted until his retirement in 1929 and where he lived until his

215. Jag Mohan Nārāyān, though his father’s only son, never attended any school but received education at home from his father; he was later offered several jobs by members of his father’s satsaṅg, but contented himself with running a small shop at Fatehgarh. He received his initiation into the order from Shāh ʿAbd al-Ghanī Khān, but never assumed a prominent role in its spiritual hierarchy. From his third marriage in 1923, he had two sons, Akhileś Kumār (d.1974) and Dineś Kumār. The latter lives at present with his wife and children at Bareilly where he works in the Railway department. See also LVV, pp. 208-9, JC, Appendix IV.

216. JC, pp. 44-5. During that period he reportedly covered the three miles separating Kāimgaṇj from Rāipur daily on foot to pay homage to his shaikh.

217. JC, p. 49.

218. A curious hagiographical anecdote tells the story of a Sufi master from Farrukhābād who disapproved of the Shāh’s unconventional behaviour towards Hindus and is said to have cast the evil eye on Rāmcandra depriving him temporarily of his spiritual powers, but who later repented from his wicked behaviour. This confirms that until the end, Shāh Faḍl Ahmad Khān had to face a stiff opposition from parts of the local Muslim community. Cf. JC, pp. 45-8.
death in a house spacious enough to hold the growing number of satsaṅgīs who used to gather around their master. 219 It is reported that during those first years after his master’s death, Rāmcandra paid regular visits to Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghanī Khān at Bhogāon or Mainpurī while directing his own aspirant disciples to the Shāh for initiation. But encouraged by the latter’s insistence he gained confidence and gradually began to assume the responsibility for doctrinal instruction and technical teaching. With the continuous increase in the number of those who began to consider him as a saint endowed with extraordinary capacities, he finally overcame his reluctance and in 1914, at the age of 41, began acting as an independent spiritual authority. 220

During the next fifteen years, Rāmcandra’s daily routine closely reflected that of his spiritual predecessors, including regular teaching sessions from seven to half past nine in the morning and from six to ten in the evening, interrupted by his working hours in the tax department. Occasionally, he travelled around the United Provinces providing supervision to his disciples.

After his retirement in 1929, most of the day was dedicated to the instruction of his disciples and the compilation of a series of books, treatises and articles in Urdu dealing with different aspects of the spiritual discipline. 221 These provide a precious source of information about the way this first-generation Hindu master conceived the teachings received from his Naqshbandī

219. He later bought this mansion which his family’s descendants still own. At present (1996), it is inhabited by the widow of Rāmcandra’s grandson Akhileś Kumār (d. 1974).

220. JC, pp. 59-63. It appears from the biographical notes on Rāmcandra that this very slow process of recognition after the initial distrust was accelerated by his positive influence on the bad behaviour of many local boys that aroused the curiosity of their parents and other residents.

221. In 1928, he began to publish a monthly review from Fatehgarh called ‘Farrukhsiyar’ which until his death in 1931 continued publishing articles and essays on spiritual and social problems.
shaikh and provide evidence for the degree the process of Hinduisation had already assumed during that initial period. It is important to note that since most of these writings date to the final period of Râmcandra’s life, they can be regarded as the sum of his doctrinal elaborations.222

After two years of intense activity, in May 1931 Râmcandra’s health began to worsen leaving him considerably weakened. After undergoing Āyurvedic treatment at Lucknow and Kanpur, he returned to Fatehgarh where he expired on 14 August 1931.223 The next day he received his last rites (antyeṣṭi) in accordance with Hindu custom on the banks of the Ganges at Fatehgarh where his ashes were strewn into the river after cremation.

It is difficult to establish the exact number of Râmcandra’s disciples or to assess the diffusion of his teachings calling for moral reform and spiritual emancipation among large sections of Hindu society. The lists contained in his biographies give the names of up to 65 disciples. Most of these lived either in the immediate surroundings of Fatehgarh, Farrukhabad, in the neighbouring districts, such as Etah, Shahjahanpur, Hardoi and Kanpur, or to places bearing some direct relation with his own family’s history, like Jaipur and Lucknow.224 It is significant that in spite of the expressed intention to open up the esoteric teachings to all those who felt naturally attracted to it, independent of social or religious background, his influence remained largely confined to members of his own community. By far the most common names appearing in those lists are Saksenā, Śrīvāstava, Bhaṭnāgar and Kulśreṣṭha, all of them belonging to the twelve sub-castes that constitute the north-Indian Kayasth community. They show the extent to which the social affinity continued to represent a determining factor in the contacts of Râmcandra.225 Those among his intimate disciples

222. Chapter 3 of the present study will examine their content trying to assess how far these works reflect an adherence to the original Naqshbandī doctrine he received and how and why it has been modified or adapted.


who were granted the highest degree of licence as spiritual authorities *ijāzat-i ta’amma* or *pūrṇācārya padavī*) include apart from his younger brother Raghubar Dayāl, his nephew Bṛja Mohan Lāl, Dr. Chaturbhuj Sahāy Kulśreṣṭha of Mathura, Dr. Kṛṣṇa Lāl Bhaṭṭāgar of Sikandarabad and Rāmcandra of Shahjahanpur.

**Mahātmā Paramsant Bṛja Mohan Lāl Mahārāj**  
(AD 1898-1955)

According to the hagiographical accounts, the birth of Raghubar Dayāl Saksenā's (*d*.1947) eldest son Bṛj Mohan Lāl occurred on 31 March 1898 following Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān's blessings on his wife Jaya Devī, after the young couple had long been unsuccessful in begetting a child.²²⁶ It appears also that from birth he was chosen by the Naqshbandi shaikh as the designated heir in the Hindu line of spiritual transmission. Due to the family’s lack of resources, the child’s care was entrusted to Rāmcandra who was responsible not only for his secular education at home and later at school, but who also first introduced him to the esoteric discipline.

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²²⁵. Most non-Kāyasth disciples were brāhmaṇas often influenced by modern ideas, like those promoted by Dayānand Sarasvati in his Ārya-Samāj, sharing to some extent the ideas against casteism and many Hindu social customs. A number of Rāmcandra’s disciples are said to have been former followers of the Ārya Samāj.

²²⁶. Jayadevī was convinced by her mother to perform a pilgrimage to Rāmeśvaram and pray there for a son. When she and her husband were about to leave, the Shāh allegedly offered her a cup of blessed water to drink. Ten months later, she gave birth to her first son who was to become the heir of the Hindu *paramparā* after his father.

This strongly hagiographical episode illustrates the religious attitude prevalent in the family of these Hindu saints and their Ramaite tradition, and the greater stress they laid on their new personal connection with the saints of the Naqshbandiyya. See, *Bhogāv — atit se vartamān*, p. 85 and *LVV*, p. 197.
We know that Brja Mohan Lāl shared his father’s fondness for classical Indian music and that he was a capable singer who accompanied his self-composed religious and devotional hymns on the harmonium; he often was joined by his father playing the tablā during the meetings with their disciples. But his main interest reverted around the painting (citrakalā), especially of Hindu religious motifs and divinities. He dedicated much time to this skill and worked for some time as a teacher at the Art School of Gwalior state before being offered a permanent post in 1925 as police officer in Kanpur which he was to retain until his retirement in 1951.

When Brja Mohan Lāl grew older, Rāmcandra presented him to Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghanî Khān who initiated him into the ṭarīqa and instructed him for about three years in the teachings and methods of the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya Mazhāriyya. Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghanî Khān then reportedly had a dream in which he was ordered by his master to put his cap on the head of his young Hindu disciple, the conventional metaphorical image among Sūfis for assigning the rank of 227. Bhogāv — atīt se vartamān, p. 86 and Roshan-i Chirāgh, pp. 7-8.

228. According to the hagiographies, his High school qualifications allowed him to be offered a place as police officer (thānedār) at Kanpur, but his uncle Rāmcandra wanted him to start from a more humble position so he renounced this offer but was later promoted due to his honesty and application. This hagiographical report appears doubtful in the light of his high income. See LVV, p. 200 and Roshan-i Chirāgh, p. 11.

229. No exact date is mentioned in the hagiographies, but his presentation to Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khánum’s main successor suggests that it had certainly taken place after the latter’s death in 1907. Interestingly, we are told that during the initiation rite he was given the Islamic name of Muḥammad Saʿīd. This indicates the extent to which the relation of this Kāyasth family with the Naqshbandi shaikhs superseded its preexisting Hindu traditions. In fact, one source points out that it was Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khánum’s main successor who intervened during the preparations for the pilgrimage stressing the futility of such customs, for ‘Allāh is present everywhere and unlimited in His wishes to bestow His mercy on anyone He likes at any place and at any time’. See Roshan-i Chirāgh, p. 2.
khilāfat to a disciple. This premonitory dream led, in autumn 1928, to the conferment of ijāzat o khilāfat by the Naqshbandī shaikh of Bhogaoon, followed in January and July 1929 by that of Rāmcandra and his father Raghubar Dayāl respectively. At the age of 31, Brjā Mohan Lāl had thus inherited and unified in his person the authority and responsibility of the entire Hindu lineage assuming leadership of that paramparā while his father was still alive.

An extremely interesting hint relating to the ritual conferment of khilāfat by Rāmcandra emerges from the accompanying message to him from the latter:

By the grace of the Almighty, today I have been relieved from the weight of my responsibilities. This assignment (amānat) has now been entrusted to you. From this moment, the ṭarīqa’s charge will remain on your head. . . . All the links and licences (nisbat wa ijāzat) this sinful servant has attained to in the Kabīr-panth, Nānak-panth and from various Muslim saints along with their respective skills are handed over to you. . . .

This short passage contains the only explicit reference to Rāmcandra’s link with non-Naqshbandī spiritual traditions, although their influence is reflected in numerous ideas and

230. LVV, pp. 198-9 and JC, pp. 10-12. The rapid succession with which all three contemporary shaikhs passed their authority to the order’s young leader reproduces precisely the established hierarchy from the top downwards in the leadership of this Naqshbandī sub-branch. This is even more important if considering that Brjā Mohan Lāl was the son of Raghubar Dayāl and, thus, had already supplanted his father during his lifetime.

231. This prominent position exceeding that of his father is outwardly reflected in the assumption of leadership of his father’s satsaṅg and the annual bhaṇḍāra at Fatehgarh established by Rāmcandra in 1923. In his waṣīyatnāmā, Rāmcandra also entrusted his son Jag Mohan Nārāyaṇ to the guidance of Brj Mohan Lāl for further spiritual instruction.

232. JC, p. 11 and LVV, p. 199.
references found in his works. We have already mentioned the early contacts Râmchandra reportedly maintained with Svâmî Brahmananda, the saint affiliated to the Kabir-panth who apparently entertained regular contacts Shâh Faḍl Aḥmad Khân. Although the biographers maintain silence about the nature of the relations between the Svâmî and the Naqshbandî shaikh on one side and the Svâmî with Râmchandra on the other, from the information contained in the passage quoted above it may be inferred that notwithstanding his authority in a branch of the Naqshbandiya Mujaddidiyya Mazhariyya, Shâh Faḍl Aḥmad Khân maintained regular relations with an authority pertaining to the rather ecumenical Kabîr-panth, a fact that has certainly contributed to his openness towards Hindus and the connected desire to confer to the Naqshbandî teachings a universalistic, superconfessional dimension. It may also be inferred that Râmchandra had direct access to the teachings and methods of the Kabîr-panth and Nânak-panth from a living authority of these two spiritual lineages, the only way through which a licence to further transmit the doctrine and methodology annexed to it and a regular spiritual link (nisbat) could be accomplished.

Apart from these two initiatory traditions whose adherents shared a tolerant attitude attempting to fill the gap between Hinduism and Islam stressing their common elements, it is no less important to note that the khilafat conferred by the Naqshbandî shaikhs on their Hindu disciples includes the link (nisbat) with other Sûfî orders as traditionally held by the leading authorities of the ṭariqa, including the access to some specific methods currently used by the members of these orders. In fact, there are some elements which bear evidence of an influence of Sûfî orders other than the Naqshbandiya on their teachings.

Bṛj Mohan Lâl’s first marriage was arranged while he was still a student with the daughter of a respected Kâyasth family of the town of Tirva (dist. Farrukhâbâd). After her premature death in 1927 followed by that of his daughter Suṣamâ a few month later, on his uncle’s advice he married again in 1928.
Śakuntalā Devī Saksenā of Farrukhābād remained with him for the rest of his life and later had some say in the affairs of the satsang after receiving initiation into the tariqa from Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghanī Khān besides some spiritual training from Rāmcandra.233

After receiving full investiture of the three masters of the silsila in 1928-9, Brjja Mohan Lāl assumed a leading role in the order’s spiritual affairs. All newly initiated Hindus were either delegated directly to him or were ultimately sanctioned on his explicit approval.234 The importance of his role was further enhanced after the death of Rāmcandra two years later when the centre of the Hindu branch of the Naqshbandiyya moved from Fatehgarh to Kanpur and many of his older disciples began to attend the circle of Raghubar Dayāl and his son there.235 A few months before his death, Rāmcandra summoned his designed

233. Brj Mohan Lāl attributed great importance to that marriage from a spiritual point of view since Śakuntalā Devī used to assist the female members of her husband’s satsaṅg. She and her husband had a number of children of whom Oṃkār Nāth and his younger brother Devendra Nāth are still alive. The latter at present holds the rank of the order’s foremost spiritual authority. Śakuntalā Devī died in 1974 at Kanpur. See Roshan-i Chirāgh, pp. 9-11 and JC, pp. 386-7.

234. During the great satsaṅg at Kanpur in January-February 1929, when Rāmcandra conferred his khilafat upon him, he officially handed over the responsibility of initiating new members into the tariqa, instructing his successor in the correct procedure of this important ritual. On that same occasion, Brjja Mohan Lāl admitted two new disciples into the order, Bābū Durgā Svarūp and Śrī Gaṅgā Prasād, both from Kanpur. The lengthy description the sources offer us of this event reveal that the method adopted still followed closely the original Naqshshbandī ritual. Cf. Roshan-i Chirāgh, pp. 13-18.

235. The death of Rāmcandra led to the gradual dissolution of the satsaṅg at Fatehgarh. His son Jag Mohan Nārāyan never appeared sufficiently qualified for the task of spiritual leadership, while his numerous disciples began to organise their own circles in other places, in many cases going beyond the authorisation inherent to their degree of inner realisation and often altering considerably the doctrine and methods in base of their own criteria.
successor from Jhansi to Fatehgarh to stay at his side and transmitted to him privately the last details and subtle points of the spiritual teachings and methods he himself had previously received from his shaikhh.\[^{236}\]

The activities of Brj Mohan Lâl during the next years were divided between his family’s home at Kanpur, the seat of the order’s main satsang led by his father, and his various postings at Fatehpur, Jhansi, Etah and Lucknow. The continuous transfers which coincided with his emergence as charismatic propagator of the message inherited from his predecessors, contributed to the paramparâ’s rapid expansion during the thirties and forties and resulted in an unprecedented increase in the number of adherents. On his occasional visits to Kanpur, Raghubar Dayâl presented his son with those selected disciples who qualified for formal initiation, the official rite then being performed by his son.\[^{237}\] Among these, Bábû Prasâd Dayâl ‘Peśakâr’ of Urai and Prof. Rajendra Kumâr Saksenâ of Lucknow in 1932 are regarded as Raghubar Dayâl’s closest disciples.

In 1938, after the completion of the new mansion at Ārya Nagar acquired after his appointment as police officer at Kanpur, the whole family went to live there jointly. On the insistence of Raghubar Dayâl, Brj Mohan Lâl succeeded in being transferred from Fatehpur to Kanpur where he took over the leadership of the spiritual community built-up by his father. However, the

\[^{236}\] He proceeded similarly with Dr. Krśna Lâl Bhaṭnâgar of Sikandarâbâd, one of his oldest and most intimate disciples who throughout his life maintained close contacts with Brj Mohan Lâl. These two must be regarded as the main successors of Râmcandra. See JC, pp. 410-14.

\[^{237}\] A significant change between the old Sûfî pattern and its Hindu derivative consists in its reinterpretation of an esoteric order reserved to the intellectual élite into a mass-movement with immediate appeal. This change accounts for the great number of followers able to derive some benefit from their presence in the satsaṅg without having been granted ważīfa. Only a far more restricted number of these were later recognised as qualified for effective enrolment, though this was an essential departure from former customs.
family did not stay together for long. A year later Brj Mohan Lâl decided to leave with his family for a small flat at Phûlbâgh in the centre of Kanpur where he continued to supervise his satsaãng until 1944,\textsuperscript{238} the year in which, in collaboration with Bábû Prasâd Dayâl ‘Pe÷akâr’, he began to publish a collection of his uncle Râmchandra’s letters under the title Râm Sande÷a (‘The Message of Râm’).\textsuperscript{239}

Later that year, he was transferred to Bulandshahr for about six months using the proximity of this town to the capital Delhi to organise his satsaãng at there. It was there that the first Muslim disciples began to attend his circle asking Brj Mohan Lâl for initiation into the silsila which had started its movement eastwards from Delhi two centuries earlier with the disciples of Mîrzâ Mažhar Jân-i Jânân.\textsuperscript{240}

Brj Mohan Lâl kept being transferred to different places including Hamirpur, Unnao and Fatehpur until he was finally posted at Lucknow where he was to remain posted as Police Head Officer until his retirement in 1951. In all these places, but above all at Fatehpur where he spent a total of eleven years, he attracted a large audience of devoted disciples. Only a few were part of his inner circle receiving effective training in the spiritual discipline while most were simple followers who were attracted by his charming character and appealing social

\textsuperscript{238} The break may have been caused by the jealousy of his younger brother, and is perpetuated in the continuing rivalry between their respective sons. Without any need to go into further details of this querry of which I was a direct witness during my stay at Kanpur in winter 1995-6, it may be noted that these symptoms of apparent decadence do not diminish the spiritual authority of Brj Mohan Lâl and his son and successor Òmkàr Nàth, but may throw some light on the Sufi guide of Irina Tweedie, the co-founder of the Golden Sufi centre at London who unfortunately has contributed very negatively to the image of this order in the eyes of both Indian and Western scholar.

\textsuperscript{239} Its first edition was published in 1944 from the Tandari Press, Kanpur.

\textsuperscript{240} The first among his Muslim disciples was Dr. Ùsân Ahmad ‘Abbási, a former principal of Delhi’s Tibbiya College. He left India in 1947 and spent the rest of his days in Lahore.
message, a fact that underlines how the double function inherent to the Naqshbandī shaikhs was perpetuated among its Hindu authorities.\footnote{241}{Roshan-i Chirāgh, pp. 27-8. A detailed account of his activities at Fatehpur is given in form of a hagiographical diary his close disciple Śiva Pratāp Narāyān, published and edited under the title Yādon ke ujāle (1973).}

After the death of Raghubar Dayāl in 1947, Bṛj Mohan Lāl to whom his disciples referred respectfully as Ḥuḍūrwālā, remained the undisputed authority in the order’s Hindu environment being second in the initiatic hierarchy only to Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghanī Khān Bhogāonvī who died in 1952 leaving his only son Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghaffar Khān (d.1957) as his successor.\footnote{242}{The official succession of Raghubar Dayāl by his eldest son was sanctioned officially on the thirteenth day after the former’s death, the day on which orthodox Hindus celebrate the rite of pīṇḍadān for the soul of the deceased, when following the indications received in a dream by his closest disciples, the dastārbandī or ‘making of the turban’ rite was celebrated by a number of chosen people and family members, conferring upon him the rank of fully recognised deputy. This rite is usually celebrated during the life of the predecessor and under his direct supervision. See JC, pp. 522-3.}

Although the satsaṅg at Kanpur was formally kept alive by Jaya Devī, the widow of the deceased Cācājī,\footnote{243}{She passed away in June 1950 due to injuries incurred after falling from a rickshaw (sic!). Cf. JC p. 529.} the number of its attendants gradually diminished in the absence of a central figure there while some of the closer followers began to attend the gatherings organised by Bṛj Mohan Lāl at Fatehpur. In spring 1949, the latter contracted a serious disease but recovered after being sent to the hill station of Nainital in the Kumāun region of the Himālaya.

In 1951, his wife Śakuntalā Devī fell seriously ill and was sent to Lucknow for medical treatment. By the end of that year, Bṛj Mohan Lāl retired from his government post settled down in Lucknow with his family in the house of a local devotee decided to dedicate the remaining years of his life to the instruction of his disciples, the organisation of the satsaṅg and of the annual bhanḍārā. From late 1951 to early 1955, Lucknow became thus
after again a century once after a century the centre of the Mujaddidiyya where people from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar used to flock to attend the company of the silsila’s last prominent saint. These were the years of the order’s greatest popularity during which Brj Mohan Lāl undertook numerous journeys to the many places where his followers were concentrated, assisting his appointed successors — and instructing his many followers in the basic principles of his method. The strong authority of this last outstanding figure of the Hindu lineage enabled him to check the centrifugal tendencies that had arisen after the death of the two saints of the previous generation, successfully keeping the widespread community of followers united under his authoritative leadership. The great bhaṇḍārās held in Lucknow in 1951, 1952 and 1953 held under the patronage of Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghānî Khān and his son Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghaffār Khān,244 were probably the greatest meetings ever in the history of this ṭariqa. They saw a large number of devotees, including many Muslims, attending a three-day programme which included public lectures on the Hindu epics by brāhmaṇa priests, and on the Korān and on Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī’s Mathnawī by Muslim scholars.245

In early summer 1954, after the annual bhaṇḍārā at Fatehgarh, Brjā Mohan Lāl went with about a hundred disciples to Rishikesh where they remained for nearly two weeks on a spiritual retreat. During those last days, a meeting of three or four hours was held every afternoon in the course of which he delivered to a selected audience detailed instructions about the

244. The old Shāh was at that time no longer able to attend the meeting but gave it his blessings.

245. Although the hagiographies claim that this programme was fixed according to the hidden instructions of Raghubar Dayāl, the authenticity of such claims is highly questionable and the whole thing appears rather as a contribution to the secular constitution of the newly born Republic of India to promote communal harmony among the masses in accordance with the prevailing ideology of the Congress Party in power. In fact, the meetings of 1952 and 1953 were to remain the only ones of such type.
essential principles, methods and spiritual secrets (asrār-i rūḥāniyat, ādhyātmika rahasya) of the order.246

This and the following gatherings at Lucknow and Bhogāon were to be his last important public appearances. In early January 1955, Bṛj Mohan Lal set out for what was to be his last journey that took him to Shajahanpur, Bareilly, Muradabad, Delhi247 and finally Bombay where he died from the consequences of protracted tuberculosis in the evening of the 18 January 1955 while being immersed in meditation amidst a group of local devotees. His body was brought back by train to Lucknow where he was offered the last rites (namāz-i janāza, antyeṣṭi) by a Muslim divine and than cremated according to Hindu custom.248

After his death, the leadership of the ṭarīqa passed over to Oṃkār Nāth (b. 1933), Bṛj Mohan Lāl’s eldest son and ṣāhib-i waqt at his grandfather’s residence at Kanpur till the present day. However, this posthumous decision taken by the most intimate disciples shortly after Bṛj Mohan Lāl’s death could not prevent the unfolding of the gradual process of dissolution and dispersion of this once numerous circle. The absence of a distinguished successor among the disciples and devotees of Ḫudūrwālā again left a void which inevitably led to splits further fomented by factional tensions and the individual ambitios of some disciples. A number of minor satsaṅg assemblies nevertheless has survived in different parts of the country. In the Āryā Nagar quarter of Kanpur, at Raghubar Bhavan, the former residence of Raghubar Dayāl, many of the original traditions appear to remain very much alive, and are perhaps merely awaiting for a prosperous moment for their outer resurrection.

246. Roshan-i Chirāgh, pp. 50-1.
247. On that occasion Bṛj Mohan Lal led a group of devotees to pay homage to the tombs of the Naqshbandī saints and ancestors of the silsila, including Khwāja Bāqī Billāh, Shāh Nūr Muḥammad Bādāyūnī and Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān. Ibidem, p. 53.
2

The Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya Maẓhariyya at Delhi
Continuity in the Tradition

After the death of Mīrzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān in 1195/1781, the leadership of the Maẓhariyya branch of the Mujaddidiyya fell on Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī Dihlawī (1156/1743-1240/1823)¹ who established the new khānaqāh around the sepolchre of his shaikh in the heart of Old Delhi.² Except for the period following the 1857-8 War when his later successor Shāh Aḥmad Saʿīd Fārūqī Rāmpurī (1217/1802-1277/1860) along with many other leading Muslim authorities were forced into exile seeking refuge in the holy territories of Arabia, this place has remained for the last

1. Apparently Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān did not indicate his chief khalīfa at Delhi, leaving his disciples to dispute the issue after his death. According to the biographies the position was disputed between Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī and Shāh Naʿīm Allāh Bahrāichī, with the former finally prevailing over his alleged rival. For biographical details regarding Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī, see the Ḏamīma-i Maqāmāt-i Maẓhārī by Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghanī Mujaddidī, an appendix to the famous Maqāmāt-i Maẓhārī, the Jawāhir-i ‘Alwiyya by Shāh Rauf Ahmad Rāmpurī and the Manāqib-i Aḥmadiyya wa Maqāmāt-i Saʿīdiyya by Shāh Muḥammad Maẓhār.

2. According to tradition, the foundation of this khānaqah rests on the spiritual influence (baraka) attributed to the tomb of the head of the lineage posthumously irradiating its blessings to the surrounding environment. This explains the enormous importance attached by the monastery’s inmates to reverential greetings of the founder’s sepolchre in their daily devotional routine.
two centuries one of the most important Naqshbandī centres in the Indian subcontinent.³

During the six generations from Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī to Shāh Abūl Ḥasan Zaid Fārūqī (1324/1906-1414/1993), its spiritual leaders of this ṭariqa have continued to consider themselves as legitimate representatives of the authentic Mujaddidi lineage, perpetuating the spiritual heritage handed down by their illustrious predecessors.⁴ Faithful to established Sūfī custom, many of them have compiled treatises whose topics range from the discussion of general theological and juridical questions to the explication of the most subtle points of the esoteric doctrine.⁵

These works, which provide evidence for the author’s scholarship and expertise, are usually circulated only within the restricted circle of adherents to the author’s spiritual lineage. In view of the subtle issues they deal with such restrictions applied naturally to the interior sciences (‘ulūm al-bāṭīn) of the spiritual path and its numerous stages including its methods and techniques.

Especially from the twelfth century AD onwards, the compilation of works dealing with tašawwuf gained increasing importance, and there is hardly any recognised shaikh who has

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3. Other centres of Naqshbandī presence are mainly concentrated in the urban areas of Rohilkhand, the Punjab and Sind, but most of these nowadays look to Delhi as ultimate point of reference.

4. A summary account of the ancestors of this lineage from Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī up to Shāh Abūl Khair Fārūqī Mujaddīdī (d. 1341/1923) is presented in the voluminous Maqāmāt-i Khair written by the last great Sūfī leader of the khānaqāh, the recently deceased Shāh Abūl Ḥasan Zaid Fārūqī who provides detailed accounts of the lives of his father and of himself (second Urdu edition of the original version in Persian, 1989, pp. 34-150). For a study of the institution of the khānaqāh and the role played by its earlier leaders, see W.E. Fusfeld: The Shaping of Sufi Leadership in Delhi: the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya, 1750-1920, Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1981.

5. The compilation of such range of topics covering the entire sphere of the traditional sciences serves the purpose of reconfirming the double exoteric and esoteric authority inherent in the shaikhs of this silsila. For a comprehensive list of these works, see again MqK, pp. 22-5.
not left a written testimony to his knowledge in the field of the esoteric science and the related methodology as developed in the various orders. Later on, it become equally a custom among Sufi leaders to send letters to followers unable to attend the ḥalqa of their shaikh. These letters, known as maktübât, often contain precise instructions on subtle spiritual issues and doctrinal clarifications, and their posthumously assembled editions often constitute our major source of information regarding their teachings, as the cases of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī and his sons as well as that of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān impressively demonstrate.

These letters, along with the records of oral teachings imparted by the shaikhs to their disciples known as malfūzât and the more recent ma‘mūlāt genre containing synthetic abridgements of doctrinal and technical aspects, constitute the main source available to the ‘profane’ scholar concerned with this field of investigation. Although the presence of a living master leaves open the possibility of gaining direct access to this source of knowledge, these authorities are often quite, understandably reluctant to disclose their treasure to outsiders and even if some of them are ready to reveal a certain amount of information to the academic investigator, a full grasp remains far from easy. Their essential meaning necessarily remains beyond the comprehension of the uninitiated whose

6. Interestingly, the Arabic term ṭariqa, derived from the root ṭaraqa implying the meaning of ‘to beat’, designates in the taṣawwuf context both the beaten track followed by the disciple who walks in the footsteps of his spiritual preceptor and the methods used for this purpose. It therefore comes close to the Hindu concept of yoga which describes at once the aim to be reached and the tools employed for its achievement.

7. Apart from the famous Maktübât-i Rabbānī which contain in three volumes the letters of Shaik Aḥmad Sirhindī and the 88 letters written by Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān collected by an anonymous editor under the title Kalimāt-i Tavyibāt, other important collections include the Makātib-i Ma‘ṣūmiyya, containing the letters of Shaikh Aḥmad’s eldest son and chief khaliṭa, Khwāja Muḥammad Maṣṣūm (1007/1599-1079/1668). Another collection hitherto less studied includes the Maktübât of Shāh Ghulām ‘Ali Dihlawī, edited by his disciple Shāh Rauf Aḥmad and author of his master’s malfūzāt, entitled Durr al’Ma‘ārif.
understanding remains confined to the realm of what the members of tasawwuf refer to as ‘discourse knowledge’ (‘ilm-i ḥuşūlī) if the risk of distorting their meaning is to be avoided.

After these preliminary observations, we shall now investigate to which extent the teachings of the spiritual authorities of the Maẓḥariyya at Delhi reflect the heritage of their spiritual ancestors, especially that of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī who so largely contributed to crystallising a coherent and substantially unprecedented doctrinal perspective on the ‘Divinely inspired science’ (ilm al-ladunni). Since the description of the special features of this ṭarīqa, the fundamental principles it rests on and the methods it employs as depicted by earlier authorities of the order (buzurgān-i ṭarīqat) along with the many innovative aspects elaborated by Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī in his works has already been exhaustively undertaken by a number of scholars, it would be of little interest to reiterate these once

8. The explicit reference to the Maẓḥariyya lineage within the mainstream Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya is important in so far as it distinguishes itself from the line of Shāh Wali Allāh Dihlawī (1114/1703-1176/1762), a contemporary of Mīrzā Maẓhar’s at Delhi, which was later perpetuated by his two sons Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (1159/1746-1239/1824) and Shāh Rafi’ al-Dīn (1163/1749-1233/1818) — both contemporaries of Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī — who are part of the same spiritual family (khāndān) and whose descendants are still present in Delhi.

9. Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī’s principal work at this regard, apart from the Maktābāt is a treatise entitled Mabdā o Maʿād in which the shaikh describes in great detail the various degrees of the inner path. A similar though extremely concise work is the Maʿārif-Laduniyyah, (‘The Divinely Inspired Knowledge’) whose title hints at its distinctive esoteric character.

10. Among the numerous works on this topic, we may mention Dr. Burhan Ahmad Faruqi’s The Mujaddid’s Conception of Tawḥīd (1947), a pioneering work which remains, however, limited to the explanation of the assets and implications of the doctrine of waḥdat al-shuhūd, Y. Friedmann’s Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity (1971) and J.G.J. terHaar’s Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī (1564-1624): follower and heir of the Prophet (1990), along with a series of articles dealing with aspects of Naqshbandī doctrine. See also the recent work by A.F. Buehler Sufi Heirs of The Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Shaykh (1997) for an interesting analysis of the changing role of the Shaikh in modern terms.
again in detail in the present context. The following chapter is, therefore, designed as an outline of the doctrine and the methodology of the more recent shaikhs of the Delhi khānaqāh, namely Shaikh Abū Sa'īd Fārūqī Mujaddidī (d. 1250/1835), successor of Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī, and author of the Hidāyat al-Ṭālibīn wa Marqat al-Sālikīn,11 and Shāh Abūl Hasan Zaid Fārūqī (d. 1414/1993) author of the treatise Manāhij al-Khair wa Madārij al-Khair.12 Both works were compiled with the explicit purpose of providing the order’s initiates with a detailed though easily comprehensible account of the doctrinal background, rules and methods of the ṭariqa. While the former consists of a first-hand description of the author’s experiences during his apprenticeship at Delhi which was successively corrected and approved of by his shaikh, the second work represents a compendium of the esoteric doctrine of the Mujaddidiyya, based on the author’s elaborations and integrated by passages quoted from other great authorities of the order including the instructions he himself had received from his father and spiritual guide Shāh Abūl Khair.13

11. According to its author, this work was compiled at Lucknow between 1225/1810, the year of his arrival at the khānaqāh of Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī, and 1230/1815, on the insistence of some companions of the order. I base myself on the printed bilingual edition (Persian/Urdu) of Dr. Ghulam Mustafa Khan, Karachi, 1377/1958. Some passages of it have been quoted in English translation by Mir Valiuddin in his Contemplative Disciplines in Sufism (chapter 7, pp. 109-36), unfortunately without due indication of his source.

12. This work was originally published in Persian in 1376/1957 from Qandahar (Afghanistan); however, to meet the needs of the shaikh’s numerous followers in India and Pakistan less acquainted with that language, it has been translated into Urdu by one of his disciples, Muḥammad Na‘īm Allāh Khayālī. This Urdu version was approved, edited and published from the Delhi khānaqāh under the abbreviated title Madārij al-Khair in 1404/1989. References to all passages quoted from that treatise refer to the Persian version followed by the reference to the parallel Urdu translation.

13. The works which the author lists in the preface of his book (pp. 6-7/17-18) as authoritative sources on this topic include, apart from the already mentioned works attributed to Shaikh ʿAbd Allāh Bahraiḥī, the Ma‘mūlāt-i Mazhariyya by Shāh Na‘īm Allāh Bahraiḥī, the Idāh al-Ṭariqat, the Rasāʾīl-i sab’a saiyāra and the epistles of Shāh Ghulām
The first part of the following chapter is mainly concerned with the description of the spiritual journey (al-sair) and the presumptions it is based on, i.e., the constitution of man perceived as a reflection of the Universe and includes a detailed description of the all-comprehensive ‘science of the subtle centres’ (‘ilm-i laṭā’īf). The second part will then focus on the techniques employed in order to achieve progress on the path from one stage to another. The chapter thus, tries to illustrate how the esoteric tradition of the Mujaddidiyya has been preserved in the orthodox Islamic environment of the Delhi khānaqāh after the beginning of the modern age. It is also intended as a preliminary base for the later discussion of the sādhanā developed by Rāmcandra Saksenā and his descendants and will therefore help to understand how far these have remained in accordance with parallel developments in the original Islamic setting.

**Man and his role in the universe**

The authorities of the Mujaddidiyya base the entire edifice of their esoteric doctrine, including their conceptions regarding mankind (al-insān), its nature and the position it holds in the realm of creation (al-kawn), on the subtle hints contained in the two most authoritative sources of Islam, the Koran and the prophetic Traditions (al-aḥādīth).

This topic has always occupied a fundamental position among the tenets of the ahl-i ma’rifat for it determines the point of departure for all those human beings who, in imitation of the nocturnal ascension (mi’rāj) accomplished by the archetype of perfect human behaviour, the prophet Muḥammad, wish to undertake the inner path that leads towards the restoration of the ‘perfect Man’ (al-insān al-kāmil), viz., the perfection of the human condition. For this reason, Shāh Abū Ḥasan dedicates considerable space in the opening pages of his work to this topic beginning with an extensive quotation from Maulānā Jalāl al-

® ‘Alî, the Hidāyat al-Talibīn by Shāh Abū Sa’īd, the Marātīb al-wuṣūl by Shāh Rauf Aḥmad and a work titled Anhār al’Arba’ by Shāh Aḥmad Sa’īd.
Dīn Rūmī’s *Mathnawī*,14 followed by several Koranic verses and prophetic Traditions, all meant to emphasise the essentially supra-human origin of Man, his intimate participation in the Divine nature and the eminent position he occupies among the creatures (*al-makhluq*).

The *Koran* affirms:

> Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: I am about to create man from clay: When I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in prostration unto him.

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This verse, is interpreted in the sense that, descending from its archetype Adam, mankind is endowed with a composite nature consisting of a spiritual or ‘heavenly’ (*rūḥānī*) and a physical or ‘earthen’ (*jismānī*), element. Man thereby participates in the formal creation of Allāh (*al-khalq*), represented by the clay,15 while maintaining a close link with the informal, purely

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14. Cf. *Mathnawī*, vol. IV. This passage has sometimes been interpreted in a modern fashion, emphasising its apparent agreement with the evolutionary theories of the Darwinian type, but I would rather plead for an interpretation in a key similar to that implied in the ‘knowledge of the quintuple fire’ (*pañcāgni-vidyā*) as described in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* which plays a role also in the doctrinal elaborations of the Hindu masters of the lineage.

This masterpiece of the celebrated Persian master Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī (604/1207-672/1273), along with the *Futūhāt al-Makkiyya* of the Shaikh al-Akbar Muḥy al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (560/1165-638/1240) was and still is considered a standard work in Sūfī circles, for it combines coverage of an enormous range of topics comprising the whole Sūfī doctrine from a gnostic point of view with the elegant beauty of its Persian verses. As we learn, for instance, from the *malḵūzāt* of Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī, the *Durr al-Maʿārif* (cf. note taken on 9 Rajab 1231/1816), it has been a common practice among the masters of this order too to hold regular lectures and lessons on the *Mathnawī*, and even the Hindu descendants of the order frequently cite verses from it.

15. It should be noticed that the reference to Adam’s nature in relation to the element earth does not imply his been exclusively creation from this element; rather, as we know from later Sūfī doctrines also found in other traditions, the physical component of man is imagined as being constituted of four or five basic gross elements (*‘anāšir-i*
transcendent dimension of his Creator (al-Khāliq) through the infusion of the spirit (al-rūḥ) into the physical frame. It is this essential link that confers upon Man the sublime degree of dignity that renders him superior to all other creatures, including the angels (malāʾika) who were ordered to bow down before him in token of reverence. God’s reviving Spirit is, moreover, described as having come into being instantaneously (Koran, 17:85: ‘. . . the Spirit is from the Command of my Lord.’, and also Koran, 36:82: ‘Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, “Be”, and it is!’), that is to say without any temporal succession, on a single order of the Lord (al-amr), analogous to the manifestation of light (al-nūr) and the logos at the beginning of the biblical Genesis. But this cosmological vision needs further specifications. Again the author draws from the primary source of the Islamic tradition that states:

We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof. But man undertook it. . . .

— Koran, 33:72

This verse further enhances Man’s superiority in the world since he is charged by his Cherisher with the responsibility of His deputyship (al-khilāfat), that is to say Man is entrusted with the privilege and burden of acting as a governor on behalf of his Lord. If previously Man was described as pre-eminent to all other living creatures including the inhabitants of the celestial regions,}

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16. It is interesting to notice the resemblance not only in Islam but also in circles of many other esoteric traditions between this second part of the creative act and the transmission of the spiritual influence (baraka) from master to disciple in the course of the initiatory rites.

17. Cf. also Koran, 32:9 and 15:29.

this verse summarises Man’s position as superior to the two poles of creation, symbolised respectively by Heaven and Earth. The former indicates the superior regions of the Universe populated by various groups of subtle beings, while the latter represents the realm of form down to the grossest level (al-ākhir al-farsh). These two are connected by the mountains which, though their lofty elevation, metaphorically represent the vertical axis linking these two dominions.

In order to confer upon man the dignity of bearing the task of deputyship, it is said that when God witnessed the impotence manifested by the single parts of His creation, He moulded him at last from the particles of the entire Universe symbolically represented by the clay as allegorical image of the primordial substance (al-fiṭrat), to become the most perfect of all beings containing the possibilities of the entire cosmos and therefore truthfully representing the ‘essence of all contingencies’ (khulaṣā-i mumkināt).19

Hence, derives the image of Man conceived as a microcosm (‘ālam-i ṣagḥīr) which on a minor scale reflects everything present in the complementary image of the Universe conceived as a macrocosm (‘ālam-i kabīr).20

All that exists in a distinctive and particularised manner

19. This idea is contained in the symbolism of the world-revealing cup (jâm-i jahān-numā) described as holding the essence of the Universe, an image very popular in Sūfī poetry. Cf. MnS, p.12/24:

dar justan jâm-i jam-i jahān paimūdan
rûze na nishastam wa shabe na ghanūdam
ustād chû wuf jâm-i jam bashunūdam
khūd jâm-i jahān-numā-yi jam man bûdam.

In the search of the measuring of cup of the world
I could neither find prest during the day
nor could I find sleep during the night
until I realized that my inner self (essence)
was the holder of the cup of the world.

20. Cf. Koran, 41:53: ‘Soon will We show them Our signs in the furthest regions of the earth and in their own souls . . .’.
(mufaṣṣal) in the world is found in an abridged and compendious way (mujmal) in the constitution of Man.\textsuperscript{21}

However, in addition to these there are a few qualities which pertain exclusively to the human condition. These comprehend, according to the Mujaddidī shaikh, the faculty of analysing and reasoning (nazr o istidlāl), the faculty of discrimination (tamīz),\textsuperscript{22} the variety of language (anwā’-i ḥarf) and the skill of craftsmanship (ṣana‘āt).\textsuperscript{23}

The mention of these distinctive specialisations makes it clear that Man must not be conceived as a mere conglomerate of particles bearing a distinctive existence in different parts of the Universe, but that he has been endowed, moreover, with series of specifically human qualities which enable him potentially to carry out the role of God’s vicar and to regain his pivotal position lost after the fall from paradise. Hence, man is described as ‘adorned with the crown of knowledge’ and as ‘holding in his hands the keys of the treasure-house of Divine wisdom’.\textsuperscript{24}

Other hints further qualify the relationship between God and the world. Again, these are based exclusively on quotations from the Koran and from the Traditions. They contain elements which are important in Islamic theology (kalām) as well as in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} MnS, p. 12/25.
\item \textsuperscript{22} This faculty becomes particularly relevant if contemplated from the perspective of man after his fall from paradise following his disobedience to the Divine order, which implied a reduction from a vision of primordial unity to that of duality. It is noteworthy that the Vedānta too attributes to the faculty of discrimination (viveka) a very high rank indispensable for those who want to recognise the Reality beyond things.
\item \textsuperscript{23} MnS, p.13/26.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Obviously, this sort of knowledge refers to a dominion beyond the realm of creation and hence participates in a major measure at the Divine knowledge (al-‘ilm), one of the main attributes of Allāh. This point has given rise to many discussions among the theologians who are restricted to an exclusively exoteric point of view in contrast to the Sufis who, hold the keys to the treasury of wisdom (mafāṭih-i khazān).
\end{itemize}
the elaborations of both Ibn al-`Arabî and Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindî, such as the affirmation of the absolute independence of God (kamāl-i istighnà) on one side and the absolute dependence of His creatures (fuqarà’) on their Creator on the other.25 This dogmatic sanction is of utmost importance since it creates the link with the doctrine according to which everything that exists in the world owes its existence to the theophanies of the names and attributes of God (tajalliyāt-i asmā’ o ṣifāt). The most elaborate though not the only expression of this concept is found in Ibn al-`Arabî’s doctrine of the ‘unicity of existence’ known as waḥdat al-wujūd. It develops around the concept of the quintuple planes of existence (tanazzulāt) through which the Necessary Being (wājib al-wujūd) reveals Itself in a gradually descending order of degrees of existentialisation in the realms of creation.26 One of the sources frequently cited by the adherents to this doctrine to support its validity consists in the famous ḥadīth qudsî:

I was a hidden treasure, hence I longed to be known; therefore I created the world so that I should be known.

This passionate desire of the Necessary Being (wājib al-wujūd) came to be considered as the primordial determination (ta’ayyun-i awwal) of the Divine Essence in Its undifferentiated state (dhāt-i aḥādiyat), and was hence also referred to as ‘determination of passionate longing’ (ta’aiyyun-i ḥubbî). In accordance with the doctrine expounded by the Shaikh al-Akbar, Shāh Abūl Ḥasan identifies the focal point on which this desire is directed with the ‘reality of Muḥammad’ (ḥaqīqat-i muḥammadî) or ‘spirit of Muḥammad’ (rūḥ al-muḥammādî).27 To avoid any possible

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25. Cf. Koran, 29:6: ‘. . . For Allāh is free of all needs from all creation.’ and Koran. 35:15: ‘O ye men! It is ye that have need of Allāh . . .‘. For a detailed discussion of this topic as exposed by the two renowned shaikhs, see terHaar (1990), ch. IX, pp. 117-36.

26. For an extensive discussion of this theory in base of Shaikh al-Akbar’s elucidations, see A.E. Affifi: The Mystical Philosophy of Muhid Din Ibn ul Arabî (1964) and the more recent works by the American scholar William Chittick: The Sufi Path of Knowledge (1987).

27. MnS, p.14/27-8. This focusing on the transcendent principle of creation identified with the essence of the prophet of Islam is further evidenced
confusion between this ‘Muhammadan principle’ and the historical founder of the Islamic faith, one pertaining entirely to the transcendent sphere (*tanzîha*) while the second intervenes in the immanent sphere (*tasbîha*), our Naqshbandî authors turn to another important tradition often quoted by Ibn al-‘Arabî and other great authorities:

The relation between me [Muḥammad] and Adam was that of the spirit and the body. . . .

I was a prophet when Adam was between spirit and clay. — Ibn Ḥanbal, IV, *al-Tirmidhî, manāqib* 1

and again

Verily, I was the first among the prophets to be created and the last to be deputed. — *al-Ṭabari*: *Tafsîr* XXI

The significance of such preliminary considerations consists not only in the author’s intention to prepare the contextual framework for the following discussions, but aims moreover at focusing the attention on the immediate goal that must be envisaged by the novice determined to undertake the journey of spiritual realisation.29

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28. It is obvious that in order to fulfil his role as prophet (*nabî*) and legislator (*rasûl*), Muḥammad had to bear a relation with the transcendent order too, a relation established through the archangel Gabriel (*Jibrîl*) who acts as mediator between the two spheres and hence as transmitter of the *Koran*. But on some particular occasions God is said to have spoken directly through His messenger, as transmitted in the *ḥadîth qudsî*, in spite of the fact that Islam, unlike Christianity, denies categorically the possibility of prophets having a double nature and stresses the entirely human nature of Muḥammad.

29. As far as I have been able to clear my doubts in regard during a meeting with the author of this treatise during Ramaḍân 1411/February 1991. For most other clarifications and comments on this
The whole sphere of existence comprised in the macrocosm is referred to by the Mujaddidís as ‘sphere of universal possibility’ (dā‘ira-i imkân)\(^30\) since it contains the total sum of the possibilities in the realm of creation pertaining to the past, the present and the future. This sphere is ideally divided into two parts along the equatorial axis, each representing a peculiar existential condition termed for the sake of convention as ‘world’ (‘ālam). The upper hemisphere corresponds to the ‘world of order’ (‘ālam-i amr) and has received this denomination because it was brought into existence on a single order of God (amr) without any temporal succession (muddat) as sanctioned by the verse

> Verily, when He intends a thing, His command is: “Be!” and it is.  
> — Koran, 36:82

This realm is essentially identical with the ‘world of light’ (‘ālam-i nūr) that came into being with the first determination of the ṛūḥ al-muḥammadī. It designates the supra-individual states and contains the principles (uṣūl, pl. of ṣasl) and inner realities of all those possibilities of manifestation (ḥaqā‘iq-i mumkināt) which have already appeared in their formal existence in the lower hemisphere in the past, do bear existence in the present or will bear it in the future, representing their inner imperishable core (al-bāṭīn).\(^31\) The ‘world of order’ is moreover said to

\(^{30}\) The term has often been translated as ‘sphere of contingencies’ (see terHaar (1990, p. 95) which is equally correct as it indicates the contingent nature of everything included in that dominion in respect to the Absolute Being (wujūd-i muṭlaq) of Allāh. Circle or sphere are analogous terms, for the latter is nothing but a projection of the former into the third dimension.

\(^{31}\) All those contingent beings which are still to descend into the individual manifestation (implying the passage from potentiality to
comprehend the realm of the spirits of all beings (‘ālam-i arwāḥ) prior to their descent into formal creation.

Its has been defined as ‘not positioned in space’ (lā-makāniyat), a characteristic which along with the above mentioned absence of time leaves it beyond the co-ordinates that govern the ordinary world pertaining to the realm of form. On the contrary, time and space represent the modalities that determine the lower hemisphere, termed ‘world of creation’ (‘ālam-i khalq) which, according to our author, bears this name because unlike the former it is subject to the creative process (takhliq) that involves numerous causes (asbāb) and imperfections (‘ilāl). It was brought into existence according to the laws of gradual development (nashw wa irtiqā’) as expressed in the Koranic verse:

Your Guardian Lord is Allāh, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days. . . . — Koran, 7:54

Since these two represent the limiting conditions of all individual creatures, it can be said that this hemisphere comprehends the whole dominion of individual existence further subdivided along the levels of gross (kathīf) and subtle (laṭīf) creation. Affirms Shāh Abūl Ḥasan:

The individual souls (ashkhāṣ) and the bodies (ajsām) of all contingent beings are collocated in the world of creation, the same way as the Throne of God (‘arsh), the well-preserved Tablet (lauḥ-i maḥfūz), the pen (qalam), paradise (jannat), hell (dozakh), the fix stars (kawākib), the heavens (āsmānhā), the earths (zamīnhā), the angels

© effective act) are said to correspond to the Divine archetypes (al-mithāl) and constitute, form an analytic point of view, a particular dominion within the boundaries of the ‘world of order’. These occupy an important position in the theories of the Shaikh al-Akbar and their mention by the Mujaddidi author shows the acceptance of these concepts even in the shuhūdī doctrine.

32. These days cannot be intended on a par with our human days but refer to a much vaster cycle of time, as hinted at in the verse: ‘. . . Verily a day in the sight of thy Lord is like a thousand years of our reckoning.’ (Koran, 22:47).
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(firishta), the genii (jinn), men (ins), all animals (jam’-i ār-riūnāt), plants (nabatāt), air (hawā), water (āb), fire (ātish), earth (khāk), heat (ḥarārat) and cold (baraudat) one part of it. . . .33

Hence, all categories of beings which populate the different regions of the universal share this major condition of individual existence in act. To complete the picture of this traditional cosmological concept, the ‘world of creation’ is further divided into two parts along a horizontal line: the superior dominion described as extending from the Throne of God (al-’arsh) down to the horizon of the sky (āsmān-i duniyā) comprising the lower heavenly regions is called ‘world of sovereignty’ (ālam-i malakūt) characterised by the subtle or psychical level (nafsī), while the inferior part extending from the horizon of the sky down to the shoallest parts of the earth, called ‘world of human sovereignty’ (ālam-i mulk), is characterised by the gross state that determines the physical bodies and corresponds to the world perceivable through the senses (hawāss).34

The upper limit of the ālam-al-khalq consists of the Throne of God representing the projection of the creative principle that determines the existence of the Universal Possibility in this world, while the immediately adjoining limit of the ālam-i amr consists of the subtle principle of the heart-organ (maqām-i āsl-i latīfa-i qalb) the reflection of which resides in the cavern of the heart inside the human body. The ideal line which separates and simultaneously links these two hemispheres is referred to as barzakh, a Koranic term that indicates the line which separates and unites two oceans (majma‘ al-bahrain), one

33. MnS, pp. 15/29.

34. The fact that the author attributes to both dominions the common denomination of ‘corporeal world’ (ālam-i aṣsām) indicates that the term ‘body’ is intended in a broader sense of an aggregate endowed with form, implying an entity composed of a number of parts or elements that confer a particular outer shape (ṣūrat) on the plane of existence in question. Only in this sense can one talk of a ‘body of the angels’ which implies that, though of subtle nature, their formal vehicle too consists in a combination of elements of which fire and its luminous quality is the dominant one.
containing salt water and the other sweet water. According to Shāh, Abūl Ḥasan it is the \textit{barzakh} itself as summerising these complemen-tary points of view. We derive, therefore, that according to the rigorously inverse analogy established before, what appears biggest because all-encompassing (\textit{al-muḥīṭ}) in one dominion, viz., the Throne, corresponds to the smallest of all possibilities if contemplated from its complementary perspective.

According to traditional cosmology, every creature in the realm of immanence (\textit{ālam-i khalq}) necessarily has its immediate cause or principle in the transcendent realm (\textit{ālam-i amr}), corresponding to its higher degree of reality between the dominion of contingency of the mere creature and the essen-tial one pertaining to its Creator. In an esoteric perspective, the whole Universe represents therefore the stage for the display of the irradiations of the names and attributes (\textit{jam'-i tajalliyāt-i asmā' o ṣifāt}) of the one Necessary Being, Allāh. Every contingent creature depends either directly or indirectly on the irradiation of one among the unlimited number of Divine attrib-utes. The distinction between direct and indirect dependance stressed by the authors takes us to the peculiar Mujaddidī doctrine according to which the world does not represent a real descent of the Divine Essence into an increasingly contingent realm of existence, as propounded by Ibn al-ʿArabī and the followers, of the \textit{wujūdī}

35. Cf. \textit{Koran}, 18:53. In Islamic theology this term denotes the realm where the souls of the deceased ancestors reside during the interval that occurs between death and the day of resurrection (\textit{qiyyāmat}), for it separates the two dominions of life on earth and in the Hereafter. For a discussion of the deeper implications of this term in \textit{tasawwuf}, see Titus Burckhardt’s article: ‘Concerning the \textit{Barzakh}’, in \textit{Review of Comparative Religious Studies} (1971), pp. 24-30.

36. This allows us to conclude that the Throne and the principle of the heart actually refer to one and the same reality which, according to the point of view, assumes the quality of one of these two entities. This is further corroborated by the assertion that what occupies the highest rank in the world of creation holds the lowest rank in the world of order. The \textit{barzakh}, thus, acts as a mirror-like plane of reflection which inverts the image of the presences in one dominion and their derivates in the other.
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document, but only a reflection or shadow (zill,'aks) in descending intermediate degrees of God’s absolutely transcendent Reality. This change in perspective has important implications for the way the Sufis of this tariqa describe the initiatic journey. Accordingly, Shâh Abûl Ḥasan writes:

\[\ldots\] the principles of the common creatures, because of their languor, want of capacity and lack of strength cannot bear the radiance of the irradiations of the names and attributes; they rather develop a relationship with the shadows of these attributive irradiations (tajalliyyàt-i šifatiya) reaping benefit from the lights of those reflections which confer upon them the power to fly and eventually reach the top of the veils of all radiances. \ldots\]37

This paragraph describes the situation of the vast majority of common creatures, while for those who occupy a higher rank in the hierarchy of existence things are slightly different:

\[\ldots\] as regards the principles of the pure and sacred souls of the prophets and angels — peace be upon them! — because of their purity of nature, power of lustre and height of auspiciousness, they are not in need of any assistance on account of the reflections \ldots\] nay they depend directly on the integral amount of irradiations. \ldots\]38

The innate difference between those beings who inhabit the cosmic regions is, thus, sanctioned by their relatively lesser or greater adherence to the essence of the transcendent Principle (al-Ḥaqq). It is up to the elected ones alone to undertake the difficult path which will eventually lead them back to the original state of ‘nearness to Allāh’ (qurbiyat) hinted at in the Koranic verse:

\[\ldots\] We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.

— Koran, 50:16

The constitution of the human being in the light of the science of the subtle centres

After establishing the principles that sanction the role of mankind in the universe, it is now necessary to analyse how the analogy traced between macrocosm and microcosm is reflected in the constitution of the human being. With this we enter more specifically the Mujaddidî teachings which propose an extremely elaborated picture in this regard. Although principles regarding some of the fundamental tenets of these teachings can be traced back to earlier Sûfis such as Ālā al-Dawla al-Sîmnâni (d. 736/1336),39 it is in India with Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindî and his successors in the Mujaddidî lineage that there developed in great detail what came to be known as the ‘science of the subtle centres’ (‘ilm-i laṭā‘îf).

Curiously, this important aspect of Mujaddidî doctrine has been little studied by modern scholars. Their interest has remained mostly confined to the socio-historical role of the Mujaddidî leaders and has preferred to focus rather on the position held by the waḥdat al-shuhûd vis-à-vis the purely unitarian view of the waḥdat al-wujûd.40 This appears even more surprising in view of the fundamental importance this science assumes in the Indian context with its rich indigenous spiritual tradition based on similar presumptions. Elaborated by the ‘Renewer of the second Millennium of Islam’ and his successors,41 this science has become one of the central aspects around which the ūriqa’s entire doctrinal edifice develops. While the available information does not allow any precise determination of a direct

39. This prolific Sûfî author is sometimes described as the precursor of Sirhindî’s waḥdat al-shuhûd because of his theories which stress God’s absolute transcendence, as described in his Arwaho li ahl-i khalwa. He elaborated the idea of seven subtle centres (laṭâ‘îf) which apparently bears some resemblance with that of the Mujaddid. Cf. Henry Corbin: En Islam iranien, part III, pp. 274-355.
40. One of the very few exceptions is Marcia K. Hermansen whose study of Shôh Wâli Allâh Dihlawî (d. 1176/1762) includes some attention to his version of this science.
41. For example, Mak. I:34, 58, 115, 196 and 257, Mabdî o Ma‘âd (Urdu), pp. 183-6.
influence of the Indian or the Iranian environment on the development of this science, it nevertheless constitutes a most interesting feature of the order with interesting parallels to the cakra-vidyā known in Tāntric Hinduism. Indeed, the ‘ilm-i latā’if is fundamental for the Hindu initiates of the silsila who found no difficulty in adopting it from their Muslim preceptors while integrating it into their own doctrines bearing obvious signs of the indigenous environment. Its importance for the followers of Shaikh Ahmad in India and elsewhere is reflected by the considerable space dedicated to it in most doctrinal treatises, since it is on the subtle components of the human organism described by this science that the techniques taught by the shaikhs are meant to act. The subtle centres, thus, bear an inextricable relation with the Mujaddidi sulūk.

According to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī’s grandson Shaikh ‘Abd al-Aḥad, Man’s eminent position in the world derives from his potential ability to perceive inside himself through the ‘inner vision of knowledge’ (dīdah-yi bāṭin-i mā’rifat) the subtle realities pertaining to the dominion of the Sacred, in accordance to the Tradition: ‘Who knoweth his own self knoweth his Lord!’ In the epistle titled Kahl al-Jawāhir he writes:

One should acknowledge that Man who is a microcosm (‘ālam-al-ṣaghīr) is composed of ten constituent parts whose origin lies in the macrocosm (‘ālam-i kabīr), an

42. For a mention of the seven subtle centres of the Mujaddidi doctrine outside the Indian subcontinent, see the Kitāb mustamīl ‘alā thalāth al-ṭarā’īq, ascribed to a Syrian Sūfī master close to ‘Abd al-Ghānī al-Nabulusī (d.1143/1731) who was affiliated to both the Naqshbandiyya and the Qādiriyya, see Angelo Scarabel: Il Kitāb Mustamīl ‘Ala Talāt Tarā’īq in RSo, 53 (1979), pp. 95-119.

43. Shaikh ‘Abd al-izona, nicknamed ‘Shāhgul’ (d. 1108) was the son of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī’s second son and khalīfa Khwāja Muhammad Sa’īd (1005/1596-1070/1660), a renowned spiritual authority with a considerable following in the western Punjab. The initiatory chain of Shaikh Imām ‘Alī Makānwī (1212/1797-1282/1865) of Makan-i Sharif (dist. Gurdaspur, Punjab) goes through him back to the Mujaddidī. The insertion of this letter in the malfūzat of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān suggest it was this shaikh who first gave a detailed account of the ten subtle organs which has since been accepted as the established doctrine by all the successors.
expression that designates the sum of all existing things pertaining to both the world of creation and the world of order: among these, five pertain to the world of order, the heart (qalb), the spirit (ruh), the secret (sirr), the hidden (khaft) and the most hidden (akhfa), while the other five pertain to the world of creation, viz., the soul (nafs) and the four gross elements (‘anashir-i ‘arba). . . .44

Shah Abul Hasan specifies that the five subtle organs pertaining to the ‘world of order’ constitute the inner aspect of Man (al-batin) while the five subtle organs pertaining to the ‘world of creation’ represent his outer aspect (al-zahir).45 Though from a different perspective, the science of the subtle centres, thus, reaffirms that the human being partakes of both, the individual level represented by the four gross elements that compose the gross body and the soul or psyche (nafs) contained in the ‘alam-i khalq, and of the essentially supra-individual or spiritual realm of the ‘alam-i amr.46 However, the spiritual components of the amr bear a strong relation with the individual elements directly derived from them:

When the glorious and most high Truth [=Allah] desired to confer upon the frail structure of Man the dignity of the Trust and of His viceregency, He ordered that the five components of the world of creation be enforced and ennobled through their principles which are the five subtleties of the world of order; He thus established a relationship of affection between every principle or root (asl) and its branch (far) alighting them from above the

44. Quoted from Shah Na‘im Allah Bahrachis ‘Ma’mulat-i Mazhariyya (p. 76) which relates large parts of Shah ‘Abd al-Ahad’s epistle in the chapter dedicated to the ten subtle organs (pp. 76-81); this epistle is cited also by Shah Wali Allah in his Intibah fî salasil-i awliyâ’, pp. 61-4.
45. Mns, p.17/32.
46. Shaikh Aadam in Mak. I:34 considers, against the philosophers, the faculty of reason (al-aqil) along with the psychical aggregate it governs as belonging to the realm of individuality contained in the world of creation, for it is through the five senses that it maintains a relation with the surrounding world; as such, it is defined as the nafs-i natiqa, the rational faculty, comparable to the Hindu concept of manas.
Throne and implanting each of them inside the [human] breast which is the palace of knowledge and wisdom whence irradiates the light of the true faith. . . .47

The reference to the Koran already mentioned in connection with the ‘offering of the Trust’ (cf. Koran. 33:72 and 41:53) shows that the shaikhs of the Mujaddidiyya perceive the science of the subtle centres as being directly derived from the primary source of Islamic revelation. This is corroborated by the entirely Koranic terminology used in this context. It demonstrates the close link between the subtle parts of the two dominions and sanctions the superiority of the spiritual component over the temporal and individual one and reiterates the relation between the principle and its derivate as being one of cause and effect. The nature of this relationship, exactly like that of the primordial determination of the pure Being in the realm of existence, is defined as one of love and affection (‘ishq), associated with the infusion of the Divine spirit into an earthen frame during the act of creation. The location of this spiritual treasure inside the human organism is indicated as the breast (sadhr) in further Koranic references (i.e., 29:49, 40:19, etc.) which mention the breast, or the heart-region, as the place where the signs of knowledge become manifest for the elected ones.48

The exact location of these five spiritual organs (latā‘if-i khamsa) can vary slightly in the descriptions given by the order’s authorities, but the shaikhs of the Mazhariyya branch unanimously adhere to the pattern elaborated by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī.49 Accordingly, the latīfa-i qalb is located on the left side of the breast, two fingers beneath the nipple, in

47. MnS, pp.17/32; cf. also MuM, p. 77.
48. Cf. Koran 96; this sûrah describes the opening of the breast of Muḥammad by the two archangels that sanctioned the beginning of his prophethood.
49. Interesting graphical plans of the disposition of the subtle centres in the human breast according to the old scheme introduced by Khwāja Bahā al-Dīn al-Naqshband together with the new one introduced by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī are given by the hagiographer of Maulānā Sayyid Ghaith ‘Alī Shāh Qalandarī Pānīpātī, Maulawī Shāh Gul Ḥasan Qādirī, in his Tadhkira-i Ghauthiya (pp. 146-8), which includes also a detailed description of each single latīfa (see Appendix II).
correspondence with the vital corporeal organ which the masters refer to as ‘pinecone heart’ (qalb-i sanawbari) because of its resemblance to the fruit of the pine-tree whose shape resembles to a reverse triangle turned (maqlub). The latifa-i ruh, associated with the element air (bad, hawâ) occupies the same position on the right side of the breast. The latifa-i sirr, associated with the element water (âb), is located on the left side of the breast between the heart and the exact centre of the breast. The latifa-i khafi, associated with the element fire (âtish), is on the corresponding right side, while the latifa-i akhfâ, associated with the earth (khâk), regarded as the most beautiful and perfect of all spiritual organs and nearest to the Divine presence, has been located in the very centre of the breast.

To each of these subtle organs is attributed a particular colour conventionally described as yellow for the qalb, red for the ruh, white for the sirr, black for the khafi and green for the akhfâ. Along with the subtle organ of the soul (nafs) located on the forehead between the two eyebrows and that comprising the entire physical frame (qâlib) composed of the four gross elements, these represent the seven subtle centres (latâ'if-i sab'a)

50. It is important to note that the Arabic term qalb derives from the root qalaba with the meaning of ‘to invert, to turn’, with the intrinsic implication of a sense of inversion. It is noteworthy that in other traditions too, the geometrical symbol of the heart is represented by an inverted triangle pointing towards the ground. This symbolism is closely connected with the analogy between the two main dominions of the Universe and the reflection, from amr to khalq, of the images or celestial archetypes (mithâl).


52. According to Shâh Abül Hasan, it is to these subtle organs implanted by Allâh into the human breast in order to implement His desire to create Man similar to Himself that the verse ‘On the earth there are signs for those of assured faith, as also given in your own selves: will ye not then see?’ (Koran, 51:20-1) refers.

53. According to many Sufis, the nafs is located at a distance of about two fingers below the navel, while Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindî situates it on the forehead. This apparent disaccordance led some authorities to the conclusion that while its root lies below the navel its head extends up to the forehead, thus comprising the entire intermeditate domain.
whose gradual purification enables the spiritual traveller (sālik) to traverse the stations of the initiatic path.⁵⁴ Through this process the initiate seeks to achieve the reintegration (fanā) of all seven subtle centres into their immediately superior principles that has become necessary because the five subtle organs lost their original luminosity during their descent into the world of creation caused by their link with the concupiscent soul (nafs-i ammāra) which is contaminated by its attachment to worldly objects. It, therefore, aims to restore their original situation and state of radiance in the ‘pacified soul’ (nafs-i muṭma‘īnna), a return which if interpreted from a different angle, corresponds to the re-conquest of the primordial condition of mankind’s common ancestor Adam when ‘the angels laid down their head in prostration acknowledging his excellence and eminence’.

Each of these five subtle organs is said to bear a relation with one of the degrees of sainthood (wilāyat) leading step by step to the vision of the pure Essence of Allāh (mushāhada). Simultaneously, each of these five degrees is also related to the essential nature of one of the ‘prophets of right determination’ (anbiyā‘i ulū al‘azm). During his passage through each subtle centre, the disciple is said to be guided by the prophet who governs and thereby, characterises that particular station. The initiate, thus, follows in the footsteps of these spiritual archetypes who have paved the way for those who are ready to follow them, thereby being endowed with the intimate nature of these prophets (al-mashrab).⁵⁵ Every subtle centre is, moreover, associated with a particular irradiation (tajallī), corresponding to one of the major Divine attributes which reflect different aspects of the Truth contained in God’s Essence. According to individual capacity, every disciple partakes of one or more of these degrees during his ascent (‘urūj) towards the peak that will grant him contemplation of the Divine essence (al-dhāt).

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⁵⁴. Cf. MnS, pp. 52/76.
⁵⁵. This idea of following the footsteps of those who have shown the path bears some resemblance to the Buddha in his role as tathāgata (lit., ‘he who has thus walked’), or to the Jain tīrthamkāras (lit. ‘preparer of the ford’).
The laṭīfa-i qalb, the nearest to the realm of creation and considered as the barzakh itself, is related to the irradiation of the ‘attribute of creative action’ (tajallī-yi ṣifāt-i takwīn wa fa’l), qualified as one of the additional attributes of God (ṣifāt-i ʿādāfiya) on which depends the existence of all possible beings. Whosoever acquires the perfection of this subtle centre presided by the prophet Adam and considered as the root of all the remaining centres will ultimately transcend any attachment to his own individual way of acting and instead accomplish everything in harmony with Divine action. This stage corresponds to the ‘extinction of the heart’ (fanā-i qalb) and constitutes the result of the process of spiritual realisation termed as ‘cleansing of the heart’ (tasfiya-i qalb) during which the disciple must concentrate his efforts on cutting his attachment to the transient world while focusing on God alone. The Mujaddid teachings saction that the subtle heart is intimately connected with the ‘subtlety of the soul’ (laṭīfa-i nafs) which covers with the innumerable veils created by the numerous sensual impulses received from the outside world the direct vision of the essence of the heart.

In order to correct the relationship between these two subtle centres, many later authorities have advised their disciples to consider the ‘purification of the soul’ (tadhkiya-i nafs) as an important process leading to the transmutation of the carnal

56. With due precaution, it could be argued that the principle represented by the Throne of God on a macrocosmic level in the ‘sphere of contingency’, is represented by the spiritual organ inside the human heart on a microcosmic plane; it is this sense that justifies the analogy between the cosmic mountain (jabal al-qāf, Mount Meru) with the cavern in the heart indicated, e.g., the Gospel’s mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-2, Mark 4:30-2, Luke 13:18-19) and the seed in the Upaniṣad said to be smaller than the smallest particle.

57. According to Shāh Abūl Ḥasan, the abode of the heart-principle is also referred to as ‘the greater heart’ (qalb-i kabīr), or the seat of the all-comprehensive Truth (ḥaqiqat-i jam’). Both terms hint at the heart as the symbolic centre of Being.

58. MuM, p. 77.

59. The root of nafs is nafas, literally, ‘to desire greatly, to esteem’, an indication of the state it commonly refers to.
soul (nafs-i ammāra) which is pervaded by vices and distractions into a ‘soul pervaded by peace’ (nafs-i muṭma’inna) which reflects its inner purity outwardly through virtues and laudable qualities. So, the purified soul outwardly reflects the brightness irradiating from the inner perfection of the heart. Major attention is given nowadays to these two subtle centres regarded as pivotal in the human organism. Many shaikhs maintain that the purification of these two alone is sufficient for the average disciple since it includes in principle that of the remaining subtle organs.

Such an attitude, however, seems to be the result of a simplification and reduction of the original method due to the peculiar circumstances of our epoch in which few people possess the capability to traverse the entire suluk. However, on the basis of their own achievements, all great shaikhs of the Delhi lineage of the Mujaddidiyya, while admitting for this possibility in principle, give preference to the original method as taught by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindî which embraces the complete journey through all seven subtle centres.

The laṭīfa-i rūḥ whose location in the ‘ālam-i amr lies above that of the qalb, is associated with the prophets Noah and Abraham. Its utmost perfection consists of the adherence to the irradiation of God’s affirmative attributes (tajalliyāt-i šifāt-i thubūtiya). The disciple who has reached this second level of sainthood is said to be freed from all individual limitations. He, thus, remains completely connected with the attributes of his Lord.

Similarly, the laṭīfa-i sirr which lies one step higher is related to Moses. Its inner reality bears an intimate relation with the irradiations of the essential qualities of Allāh (tajalliyāt-i shuyūnāt-i dhātiya) which are one step closer to the pure Essence of God.

The essential nature of the laṭīfa-i khafî constitutes the

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60. For a discussion of these two phases of the spiritual process, see Mir Valiuddin (1980), chapters I and II.
fourth level of sainthood and is characterised by the prophecy of Jesus. Its full reintegration establishes the contact with the irradiations of the negative attributes of the transcendent plane (tājallī-yāt-i ṣifāt-i salbiya-i tanzīha) and refers to the degree of non-existence ('adām) as complementary to that of existence (wujūd).

Finally, the fifth and most subtle among the spiritual organs, the laṭīfa-i akhfa which is the nearest to the pure Essence (dhāt-i pāk) and is situated at the exact centre of the human breast (wasaṭ-i sīna), is associated to the ‘seal of prophethood’ (khāṭm al-nubuwwat) Muhammad, considered the most perfect of all prophets. The intrinsic nature of this subtle organ is connected with the irradiation of the universal reality (tājallī-i shān-i jam‘) which the order’s authorities describe as a barzakh between the plane of absolute transcendence (martaba-i tanzihā) and that of Pure Unity (ahādiyat-i mujarrada). It represents for the Mujaddidūs the entrance gate to the degree of ‘major saint-hood’ (wilāyat-i kubrā). In the language of the wujūdūs, this corresponds to the level of union (ittiḥād) and unification (jam‘). Here the ascending ‘journey towards Allāh’ (sair ilā Allāh), comes to an end. Now the disciple will turn to the laṭīfa-i nafs, trying to rectify its corrupted state caused by the impressions left by the innumerable sensual desires and distractions, in order to achieve the definitive extinction (fanā) and permanent realisation (baqā) that will ultimately confer upon the disciple’s inner state a lasting state of peace (iṭmīnān).

Hereafter, attention will be focussed on the subtle essence

62. It must be noted that in the Mujaddidī terminology, there can be no question of identity between the Necessary Being and the contingent possibilities but only of proximity (qurbiyat) and of utmost proximity (aqrabiyyat).

63. The hierarchy, thus, sanctioned among the prophets coincides with the chronological succession of their mission, cf. Koran, 2:253: ‘Those messengers We endowed with gifts, some above others. . .’. It should also be pointed out that the association of Muhammad with the source of all realities underlines his image as source of all spiritual bliss (baraka), the main reason that all spiritual orders of Islam trace their genealogy back to him.

64. MuM, p. 39 and MnS, pp. 20/37.
of three of the four primary elements pertaining to the realm of creation, namely the elements fire, air and water. This further advancement implies a gradual return to the outer world of form until the sâlik eventually reaches the refinement of the subtle essence of the grossest of all elements, i.e., earth. His return to the world will be brought to perfection through the attainment of the prophetic perfections (kamâlât-i nubuwwa). The ultimate stage of the path will lead to the synthesis of the subtle organs of both dominions in an all-integrating subtlety (hai’at-i waḥdânî) which comprehends the entire physical frame (qālib).

This in sum is the path of gradual spiritual realisation conceived from the perspective of the science of the subtle centres as handed down by the authorities of the order till the present day. Its completion guarantees the attainment of the highest degree of perfection contemplated by the ʻtarīqa and is reached by following the instructions left by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindî to his successors. The multiplicity of tracks implied in the knowledge of the various subtle organs is said to facilitate the task of aspirant adepts taking into account the different degrees of their individual qualifications and natures. The existence of such natural hierarchy among human creatures, including saints and prophets, is corroborated by a Divine sanction found in the Koran:

To each among you have We prescribed a Law and an open way. If Allâh had so willed, He would have made you a single People, but to test you in what He hath given you. . . . — Koran, 5:48

But it is important to bear in mind that the assimilation of some major prophets to each of the quintuple degrees of sainthood cannot imply the identification of the seeker with the perfections of their essential nature, an impossibility in terms of Islamic orthodoxy which the authorities of the ʻtarīqa repeatedly stress. Such a position would be in open contradiction with the teachings of the Imâm-i Rabbânî according to whom the rank of prophethood (nubuwwa) constitutes an infinitely higher degree
of perfection as compared to the degree of sainthood (wilāya). In the shuhūdī perspective, it rather indicates the initiates participation at the shadow (ẓill) or reflection ('aks) of the prophetic perfection in question or, in other words, the murīd’s effective assimilation of one of the manifold qualities characterising that particular prophet. The qualitative difference between the two consists, according to our shaikhs, in the fact that while the nature of the prophets is in relation with and nourished by the totality of the respective Divine names and attributes, their spiritual heirs are related and nourished only by the shadows and single points on the rays of their irradiations. Hence, the individual’s inner constitution is determined by only a fraction of these attributes and only those who can participate in the reflection of the prophet of Islam (muḥammadī al-mashrab) will be capable of crossing the ‘straight royal highway’ (shāhrāh-i mustaqīm) that leads through all five subtle centres up to the degree of Unity connected with the total sum of Divine attributes, at the very source of their irradiation.

Since the essential function of the prophets and messengers is to convey a new Divinely revealed message to the world and its people, besides their innate spiritual perfections they too must participate in the elements of creation outwardly symbolised through their physical body. But only those few people endowed with exceptional spiritual insight are able to distinguish the prophets from other human beings, while most remain limited to the perception of their outer appearance altogether similar to that of common people. It is to the former that the verse ‘... They are the Party of Allāh. Truly, it is the Party of Allāh that will achieve Success’ (Koran, 58:22) refers, in a sense that may

67. In this sense, Muḥammad’s central position among the prophets and legislators is analogous to the central position held by the nafs among the elements of the khalq and that of the akhfi among the spiritual components of the amr. Cf. Ibn al-ʿArabī’s idea that every wali is a heir to the prophethood of a particular prophet.
here be compared to those who have achieved the purification of their subtle organs. After being admitted into the company of the saints (awliyā Allah), they contemplate the inner truth of all creatures through direct connection with the source of the Divine names and attributes which partakes of the radiance that illuminates the Universe as a reflection of the primordial nūr-i muḥammadiḥ.

The stages of the path in the light of the science of the subtle centres

The different stages (darjāt, marātib) of the initiatory journey described by Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī and his followers are so intimately related to the subtle organs that both must be dealt with simultaneously. This close interrelation indicates the extent to which the science of the subtle centres (‘ilm-i laæà’īf) permeates the entire doctrine of the order as the core around which everything else revolves and as the link between the ẓarīqa’s speculative (‘ilmī) and operative (‘amlī) aspects. Any attempt to describe the single stages of the inner journey, depicted as ‘spheres’ or ‘circles’ (dawā‘ir, pl. of dā‘ira), must, therefore, include some further aspects of this science from a different perspective. Hence, the subtle centres can be seen as signs of the Divine presence in the world shining through the innumerable veils of the soul which prevent man from witnessing the Divine Truth.68

The spiritual journey as conceived by the Mujaddidīs consists of two major phases. The first is ascending (‘urūj) during which the disciple accomplishes an upward ‘movement’ (ḥarkai)69 away from the apparent multiplicity of creation towards a unitarian

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68. Cf. Koran, 41:53. It is curious to note the parallel between the luminosity of the seven subtle organs and the seven colours of the rainbow which, as we know, are produced by the refractions of the colourless light of the sun, the luminous source that illuminates our world, in the intermediate space of the atmosphere.

69. In Mak. I:144, Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī stresses the fact that the terms sair and sulūk are more or less synonyms; both denote rather than a movement in space a qualitative movement from a lower stage of spiritual realisation to a series of progressively higher stages.
experience achieved through a synthesised vision. This part of the journey is called ‘journey towards Allāh’ (sa‘ir ilā Allāh). By the end of this phase any individual consciousness (anāniyyat) whence arises the idea of being separated from the principle of generation will be annihilated (fanā). Once he has reached this stage, the spiritual traveller will be in contact with the source of the determinations (ta‘ayyunāt) of all contingent creatures and will recognise the existence of the world as being a mere shadow of the names and attributes of God, the only One Necessary Being (wājib al-wujūd). This part of the initiatory process is called ‘the journey in Allāh’ (sa‘ir fī Allāh) because of the disciple’s co-presence (ma‘iyat) with God during this stage which signals the perfection of the ascending phase. At the same time it preludes to the beginning of the second, descending phase of the spiritual journey (nuzūl). That phase is referred to as ‘journey from Allāh with Allāh’ (sa‘ir ‘an Allāh bi Allāh) and implies an apparent return (rujū‘) from the Divine station towards the contingent reality of the world. It reaches its perfection when the adept, now endowed the with the innermost vision of Divine wisdom (ḥikmat-i ilāhi) penetrates the inner reality of every single object, of every single act accomplished by every single creature. This part of the path is called the ‘journey through things’ (sa‘ir dar ashiyā‘).70

The first two phases of the ascending journey lead the murīd to the realm of the ‘saints living in seclusion’ (awliyā‘-i ‘uzlat) while the last two phases of the descending journey are said to open to the traveller the gates to the realms of the ‘saints of social entertainment’ (awliyā‘-i ‘ishrat).71 These subsequent stages in the disciple’s spiritual development are closely inter-connected with the process of transmutation that uses the subtle organs as ground for action. For this reason and in virtue of the analogy between microcosm and macrocosm it is possible to

70. For a detailed description based on Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī, cf. terHaar (1990), pp. 93-4.

71. The connotations of ‘ishrat suggest analogies with the Hindu tradition important for the Kāyasth initiates of the order who consider this condition an essential ingredient of their spiritual discipline.
assimilate this interior process to a journey through the realms of the cosmos.\textsuperscript{72} It is in this sense that the return of the \textit{laṭā'īf} from the spatial extension of the cosmos towards their contraction and finally extinction in the principles of the ‘world of order’ is at first described as a ‘journey from the cardinal points’ (\textit{sair-i āfāqī}) and successively as the perfection of the ‘journey through the inner selves’ (\textit{sair-i anfusī}).\textsuperscript{73} In fact, the journey through the first of the seven spheres leads the ‘traveller’ through the ‘sphere of universal existence’ symbolically indicated by the four cardinal points which govern the spatial extension of the latter. Whenever any of the subtle centres is awakened through the use of precisely focussed techniques and thereby becomes aware of its origin, it ‘bursts out into a flame of passion and takes flight towards its heavenly principle so as to unite itself with it’.\textsuperscript{74} In the terminology of the Mujaddidīs this is called the ‘opening of the gate’ (\textit{fath-i bāb}).

The luminosity of the subtle organ continues to increase until it is perceived by the initiate as bursting out of its seat inside the body and departing in the guise of a column of light that continues to grow until it eventually reaches the world of order. The utmost perfection of the \textit{sair-i āfāqī} includes the return of the five subtle organs located in the human breast plus the \textit{nafs} to the intemporal reality of the celestial world (\textit{‘ālam-i quds}) through the central and most elevated of all five subtle centres, the \textit{latīfa-i akhfā} situated in the very centre of the breast. According to the shaikhs, this transcendence of the spiritual

\textsuperscript{72} Cf. the work and description of the alchemists in the hermetic tradition whose efforts rested on the subtle transmutation of a series of elements into a higher order; the spiritual degree of a Sūfī like Ibn al-‘Arabī was described as the station of ‘red sulphur’ (\textit{al-kibrit al-aḥmar}).

\textsuperscript{73} The mention of these two journeys derives directly from the famous verse: ‘Soon will We show them Our signs in the furthest regions of the earth (\textit{fi'l-āfāqī}) and inside their own souls (\textit{fi anfusikum}).’ (Koran, 41:53).

\textsuperscript{74} \textit{MnS}, pp. 23/49. Interestingly, this ‘extreme passion’ that develops inside the subtle organ is described as a bright flame; the disciple is said to be pervaded by a ‘strange feeling of heat’ throughout his body. Both indicate the superior and inferior aspects of the subtle state represented by the element fire.
faculties from their individual wrapping to a supra-individual state first assumes merely the degree of a provisional state (ḥāl) and only later that of a permanent station (maqām). At that moment, the individual aggregate of the initiate represented by these very subtleties and governed by the mental faculty residing in the nafs, truly reaches the degree of extinction (fanā) described by the Koran as a ‘death before death’ (mūtū qabl an tamūtū). Once this stage is attained to, only the physical body remains present in this world as an outward sign of the initiate, so that common people are unable to distinguish it from other creatures.

The representative function of the gross body (jism-i kathīf) is then said to be governed by the ‘pinecone-heart’ (qalb-i ṣanawbarī), an obvious symbolic analogy between the latīfa-i qalb as barzakh and axis of the macrocosm on a spiritual level and its vital function in the body of the microcosm, which guarantees the link between the residual elements of the physical body and the spiritual components now reunited with their heavenly principles. The prophetic tradition ‘Verily, the heart of a true believer is placed between two fingers of Allāh’ (Mishkāt al-Tirmidhī, part II, bāl al-istighfā) and many others are interpreted by Shāh Abūl Ḥasan in this sense.

In one of his letters, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī strongly rejects the opinion of Shaikh Shihāb al-Dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī (AD 1145-1234) expressed in his ‘Awārif al-ma‘ārif that the

75. In Sufī terminology, the ḥāl designates a momentarily acquired state of spiritual realisation from which it is still possible to fall back to the previous condition, while a maqām corresponds to a definitively acquired stage of realisation which cannot ever be lost.

76. Again, this case refers to the most perfect degree of extinction put in relation to the prophet Muḥammad and, hence, associated to the latīfa-i akhfā.

77. During my stay at the Mujaddidi khānqāhs at Delhi and Quetta, I was repeatedly told of the special faculty of the order’s masters to fix and capture with a single glance the inner state of those sitting in front of them thus enabling them to recognise their degree of spiritual qualification and the progress made in the discipline.

78. MnS, pp. 25/42.
supranatural inspiration (*ilhām*) descends upon the saint’s pacified soul (*nafs-i muṭma‘īnna*) concentrated in the place of the heart. He stresses instead the fundamental role played by the heart itself, citing the renowned Tradition ‘No doubt, the body of Ādam contains a lump of flesh — if it is healthy the entire body is sound, but if it is corrupted the whole body is corrupted’.

After the reintegration of the possibilities contained in the ‘sphere of contingency’ along its four horizons, the Naqshbandī doctrine teaches that the final extinction of the five subtle organs in their principles and the connected entrance into the ‘journey of the inner selves’ (*sair-i anfūs*) take the disciple to the ‘sphere of minor sainthood’ (*dā‘īra-i wilāyat-i ṣuḥrā*), defined also as the ‘abode of the manifestation of Divine unity and of the secrets of co-presence’ (*maḥal-i zāhir-i tawhīd wa asrār-i ma‘īyāt*) or as the ‘sphere of shadows’ (*dā‘īra-i ḥāl*). The journey through this realm is described by Shaikh Ṭāhir Aḥmad Sirhindī (*Mak*. II:99) as lying beyond that of the horizons and inner selves since it is only beyond them that it becomes possible to reach the shadows or reflections of the Divine names contained in the ‘selves in guise of the horizons’ (*anfūs-i āfāq*), considered as the ‘sovereign of all reflections’ (*sultān al-‘adhkār*). This means that the disciple no longer contemplates the world in its single forms and their inner realities, but through a unique Divine reflection resulting

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79. This explains the inverted position of the heart since every reflection casts an inverted image; cf. *Mak*. III:31 in which Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī defines the ‘world of the celestial archetypes’ (*‘ālam-i mithāl*) as a mirror for the beings in the formal dominion who derive their existence from the reflection of their spirits in the ‘ālam-i arwāḥ.

The term ‘horizon’, previously translated as ‘cardinal points’, evokes the idea of an imaginary line along which heaven and earth apparently meet. The etymology of the word (from the Greek *horizein* ‘to delimit’) implies a linear extension along one level and, thus, complements a vertical extension which denotes a qualitative succession; the latter is associated with the axis that leads to the higher planes of this world and finally beyond towards the future worlds.

80. *MnS*, pp. 47/71. Cf. also *HdT* whose author points out that the ‘journey along the cardinal points’ regards the reintegration through the ‘ālam-i khalq while the sair-i anfūs leads through the stages of the ‘ālam-i amr* (p. 26).
from his co-presence (ma'iyat) with its very source. The immediate principle of the shadow of the first sphere is, thus, reached and those capable of proceeding further must now focus on the original principle of those reflections, and so on. This movement of successive links (musalsal) from principle to principle until arriving at the source of all principles (‘ain-i uṣūl) determines the journey indicated by the Shaikh as one whose course begins in the sphere of minor sainthood and goes on until the attainment of the final Goal.

It is said that at this stage the disciple is pervaded by the sense of encompassing all six directions of space (shish jihāt).81 He who attains to the co-presence of the principle regains inside himself the link with that central point of the Universe which provides access to the superior states along the vertical axis passing through that centre and which is possibly identified with the maqām-i amr along which the prophets receive their heavenly communications. There, the purification of the heart (taḥfiya-i qalb) reaches such a degree that it can no longer be disturbed by any sensual perception pertaining to worldly affairs (waswasa), but remains continuously immersed in a feeling of intense longing for the sole object of its attention. In the language of the Sufis, the process leading to this inner state is hinted at as ‘cleansing the mirror of the heart from the dust and rust of forgetfulness’.

But the authorities of the Mujaddidiyya warn their followers of the dangers that can be possibly encountered in this station. The murīd ruins the risks of being overpowered by an excessive enthusiasm and state of inebriation (suṣr) caused by his confusion and inability to distinguish between the principle and its reflection. We know of many renowned Sufis who have lost control over themselves in the state of fanā often uttering senseless and apparently blasphemous sentences (shaṭṭāḥāt).82 To avoid these dangerous slips, the disciple is strongly recommended to remain prudent and attentive, in order to check the state of enrapture caused by the sudden witness of the

82.  Cf. *Mak.* I:95, 100, 152 and II:95.
dissolution of contingent existence in the shining light of the attributes of the Necessary Being. Only he who has truly achieved the extinction of his individual condition (khudâ) is really beyond any blame and reproach (malâmat), ready to join the company of the saints of Allah and qualified to be included among the mad lovers of the Lord (‘âshiqân-i majdhûb). It applies exclusively to those who have traversed the ‘sphere of minor sainthood’ and its accompanying journey through the reflections of Divine names and attributes; for all others, it is strictly forbidden to pronounce any such phrases pertaining to the degree of ‘unicity of existence’ (waḥdat al-wujûd) and Divine unity (tawhîd). This danger, liable to be further increased by devotional music-sessions (samâ’) and poetic recitals, can promote an inconvenient sense of emotional participation in these states which is described as provoking inner heat. Such descriptions reflect the typical Naqshbandi aversion for anything which might provoke an emotional imbalance in the murîd’s nature and underlines the importance attributed by the tariqa’s authorities to a sober, purely interior process of spiritual realisation.

This is, however, far from being the abode of Unity (maqâm-i tawhîd) experienced at the stage of minor sainthood at the end of the ‘journey through the details’ (sair-i tafsilî). Those who have arrived at this degree of Unity must, therefore, try hard to advance to still higher levels until they attain the point of resolution (nuqta-i ijmâli) which corresponds to the primordial determination (ta’ayyun-i awwal) of the Divine being, identified

83. MnS, pp. 49/73.
84. In very similar allegorical terms to those used in the Śaiva context of the Hindu tradition, Shâh Abûl Hasan affirms that ‘the fire of passionate love has reduced one’s individual existence to ashes and the flame of love has incinerated the existence of this world and the harvest of life’. (MnS, p.45).
85. This is why the prophets characterised by a high degree of sobriety (saḥw) invite us to the continuous contemplation of the Truth expressed in the formula of the shahâdat, Lâ ilâha illâ Allâh, with its obvious reference to a projection away from multiplicity and towards Unity.
with the ‘reality of Muḥammad’.

Rather, the ‘sphere of minor sainthood’ constitutes the beginning of the determination of all possibilities \( (mabda-i ta’ayyun-i mumkin\bar{a}) \), with the sole exception of the prophets and angels whose intimate reality is determined by a yet more essential participation in the Divine presence. Irrespective of their natural constitution, each individual receives its particular determination through a continuous effusion of Divine grace \( (fuy\ddot{d}\dot{a}) \) manifesting itself in an indefinite number of names and attributes in the contingent world, which simultaneously represents also its limit.

To illustrate this concept, Shāh Abūl Ḥasan quotes the widely known Sūfī maxim ‘The roads and paths that lead towards God are as numerous as the souls of His creatures’, which in his opinion refers to these very points of reflection. Through the extinction and permanence reached by the subtle organs at this level, the individual actions \( (af\bar{a}l) \), attributes \( (sif\bar{a}) \), essences \( (dh\dot{a}) \), negative attributes \( (sif\bar{a}-i salbiya) \) and virtues \( (akhl\dot{a}) \) of the initiate and of all other possibilities reveal themselves to the murūd as ultimately possessing no real degree of existence \( (ma’d\bar{u}b) \). They, thus, vanish from the initiate’s sight, and he perceives every action, attribute, negative attribute and virtue as manifestations and effects \( (ma\zbar{a}hir wa ath\bar{a}r) \) of the reflections and attributes of the one and unique Truth. Here the ‘journey towards Allāh’ ends and the traveller enters the ‘journey in Allāh’ \( (sair fî Allāh) \) that begins in the third of the

86. The use of a terminology identical to that of the Shaikh al-Akbar reveals the analogy of concepts behind the different doctrinal formulations with the wujūd of one maintaining a more metaphysical perspective focussed on the non-dual Principle if compared to the Mujaddidīs who deliberately contemplate the principle always in relation to its derivatives.

87. \( MnS \), pp. 50/75.

88. Following the list of al-Ghazzālī (450/1058-505/1111) in his \( Ihyā al-
\ullām al-Dīn \), the author sanctions as the most important of these hearing \( (sam\bar{a}) \), vision \( (basr\bar{a}) \), power \( (qudr\dot{a}) \), will \( (ir\dot{a}da) \) and speech \( (kal\dot{a}m) \), which correspond to the first determination of God’s essence into attributes.
seven spheres, the ‘sphere of major sainthood’ (dā‘ira-i wilāyat-i kubrā).  

While minor sainthood is associated by the Mujaddidis with the saints characterised by a state of inebriation and unification of existence (tawḥīd-i wujūd), major sainthood is said to correspond to the nature of the great prophets, characterised by a state of sobriety (ṣahw) and lucid awareness (hoshyārī): it is at this stage that prophethood was revealed to them, i.e., it is there that the prophets received their particular indivi-dualisations (ta‘ayyûnāt) in accordance with their peculiar prophetic function. Those qualified to ascend to this sphere transcend the level of reflections and, thus, come into direct contact with the Divine names, attributes and intrinsic qualities (asmā‘ o ṣifāt o shuyûnāt). Only then will the initiate attain the ‘unicity of direct vision’ (tawḥīd-i shuhūdī), because only from this stage it is possible for him to witness the difference between the reflected existence of the contingent creatures based on the sum of non-existences (‘adam) that cast their shadow into the realm of contingent existence (wujūd) through the veils of ignorance. A new sense of apparent duality (thanainiyyat) arises in the consciousness of the initiate as he becomes aware of the difference between the reflected immanent reality of contingency and the original transcendant Reality of al-Ḥaqq, summarised in the difference implicit between the stages of co-presence (ma‘iyat) and extreme closeness (aqrabiyyat).

The subtle organ most directly involved at this stage of the alchemical process is the laṭīfa-i nafs, for it is on this plane that the transmutation of the sensual soul (nafs-i ammāra) into the pacified soul (nafs-i muṭma‘inna) through the control and eventual arrest of the thought current is said to be completed. Therefore, the Mujaddidī doctrine identifies the place of descent

for the effusion of the Divine grace (mawrid-i faid) in this sphere with the latīfa-i nafs located on the forehead while the remaining subtle organs participate only passively at it. Since the superior part of the nafs is assimilated to the rational faculty located in the human brain, it is with this organ that the inner effusion of major sainthood will maintain contact until the stage is brought to conclusion. Once the nafs is permeated by a state of peace and stability, it will ascend to the abode of contentment (maqâm-i riḍā), the tenth and last of the stations of the spiritual journey. This process is referred to as ‘sitting in the royal gallery of the breast (aiwān-i ṣadr)’, because for the Mujaddidi shaikhs it indicates the highest ascent of the subtle organs in the course of the sulûk. In keeping with the descending perspective typical of the shuhūdî doctrine, however, they warn their disciples against a premature belief in perfection since the total extinction of such base qualities as lowness, mutability and arrogance depends also on the purification of the four primary elements rather than exclusively on that of the nafs and is therefore obtained only at a later stage. This assertion implies that the total purification of the nafs (tadhkiya-i nafs), the quintessence (khulāṣa) of the other four elements, still has to await further refinement. Hence, the saying attributed to Khwāja ‘Ubaid Allāh Ahrār (d. 895/1490), that it is easy to pronounce the words Anā’l-Ḥaqq, while it is extremely difficult to eradicate completely the anā or ego.


92. It is to be noted that the close affinity between the angels of the Semitic religions and the gods (devatā) of the Hindu tradition, the
These rays are described as consisting of the essential names and attributes of Allâh’s pure Being, establishing an interesting relation between the seven solar rays and these sevenfold Divine attributes and the corresponding names in classical Islamic theology which qualify God’s essence. In this sense, the source of these rays — metaphorically indicated by the sun — is identical to the pure Being, with the rays emanating from It corresponding to Its names and attributes. Gradually, these rays are said to disappear from the sight of the murîd who, attracted by the desire for the only Aim of his quest, penetrates beyond the veils of these irradiations until he reaches the ‘picture-gallery of the irradiations of the Essence’ (nîgîrkhana-yi tajalliyât-i dhât).

There, he has reached the level of the purification of the first three primary elements, viz., air, fire and water, as a result of the descent of the Divine effusion on them. The elevated states of the five spiritual organs expand from the breast to the whole body, thereby indicating the beginning of the re-descent of the elements pertaining to the world. If this apparent descent outwardly implies that the individual develops an increasingly intense relation with the attributes that characterise the human state (basharîyat), yet inwardly he is permeated by the celestial nature of the angels (malakiyat). In the metaphorical language used to describe the supra-individual states of existence, Shâh Abûl Hasan reiterates the descriptions of his predecessors when he defines the overcoming of the extreme limits of this sphere as ‘the final flight towards the Sacred abode’ achieved through ‘the strength of the two wings consisting in the manifestations of the Divine names of Huwâ al-Ţâhir (‘He is Apparent’) on one side and Huwâ al-Bâţin (‘He is concealed’) on the other.’ This ‘flight’

93. These seven names and the attributes they denote are: The Living One (al-Hâyy, with life —hayât), The Omniscient (al-‘âlim, with knowledge —ilm), The Omnipotent (al-Qâdir, with power —qudrat), The Willing One (al-Murîd, with will —irâda), The Hearing One (al-Šami, with hearing —samî), The Seeing One (al-Başîr, with seeing —başr) and The Speaker (al-Mutakallim, with the word —kalîma).

indicates the passage to the superior states of the celestial regions and takes the disciple from the irradiations of the names and attributes to those of the Essence, while the wings allude to the angels who populate those intermediate regions. The reference to the two names, ‘the Apparent’ and ‘the Concealed’, must also be understood in this context. The contemplation of the apparent, exterior aspects of the Divinity (murāqaba-i ism-i ẓāhir) which began during the preceding sphere of major sainthood, remained necessarily limited to the attributes without yet being able to penetrate beyond the remaining veils covering the Essence. The contemplation of the concealed aspect (murāqaba-i ism-i bātin), an exclusive characteristic of the ‘supreme sainthood’, takes into account the Subject relating to these attributes,95 or the divine Personality.

For example, if during the first contemplation the attribute of knowledge (‘ilm) alone is considered, without yet allowing for any relation to its inherent reality, the second contemplation of the name of ‘He who knows’ (al-‘Ālim) also reveals the essence that knows (al ‘Alªm). The same applies equally to all other names and attributes. One applies to the absolutely transcendent reality of Allàh beyond the sphere of existence while the other pertains to the ideal determinations (a’yân al-thàbita) of the pure Being and principle of existence; hence, the double names of al-Ẓâhir and al-Bātin. The extreme limit of ‘supreme sainthood’ coincides with the first of all determinations (ta’ayyun-i awwal) and sum of all names, attributes and qualities, perceived as the very source of all possible individua-lisations of the existing world.

In a letter addressed to his eldest son Muḥammad Šâdiq (1000/1591-1025/1616), Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindî explains that to distinguish the summit of this particular sphere it is necessary to transcend the stage of analytic knowledge (‘ilm-i ḥuṣūlî) and move on to that of intuitive knowledge (‘ilm-i ḥudūrî), the first being limited to the mental sphere and the corresponding senses, the second one being associated with the very source of

95. Cf. Mak. II:3 and III:11.
knowledge, in relation to the ‘faculty of inspiration’.\textsuperscript{96} The slightest reminiscence of the individual aggregate there finally disappears through the identification with the principle of all individuality. This stage is termed the ‘journey in God’ (\textit{sair fî Allāh}).

Next follows the fifth plane, called the ‘sphere of the triple perfections’ (\textit{dā’ira-i kamālāt-i thalāthā}), viz., the ‘perfections of prophecy’ (\textit{nubuwwa}), the ‘perfections of the Divine mission’ (\textit{risāla}) and the ‘perfections of the prophets of right determination’ (\textit{anbiyā’l-ulū al-azm}). Here the journey leads the murād through the everlasting irradiations of the Divine Essence (\textit{tajalliyāt-i dhāt-i dā’imī}). The adept now contemplates the pure Essence of Allāh, bare of any contingent determination and far beyond any ephemeral degree of existence. At this stage, the effusion of God’s grace descends directly from its source to the essence of the subtle organ of the element earth (\textit{laṭīfa-i khāk-i pāk}). This completes the purification and reintegration of the ten subtle organs in their differentiated aspect, and the authors of the various treatises agree that from this moment onwards these assume a new, synthesised aspect (\textit{hai’at-i waḥdānī}), whose nature is compared to that of different medical herbs each with different properties which, if mixed together, assume a new, combined property.\textsuperscript{97}

At first, one perceives the Divine presence as bearing no relation to the spatial dimension (\textit{be-jihat}) and one attains to the boon of certainty at its very root (\textit{‘ain al-yaqīn}) in front of which all previous doubts and incertitudes dissolve themselves. The Mujaddidīs assert that the perfections acquired on all previous levels of sainthood are null and void in comparison with those of a single point on the way of prophethood, since the former are considered to be mere reflections of the latter.\textsuperscript{98} We, therefore,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{96} For an interesting qualitative contrast analysis of these two types of knowledge, see Khaliq Anjum (1989), pp. 105-7.
\item \textsuperscript{97} \textit{HdT}, p. 64.
\item \textsuperscript{98} The analogy is that between the limited (\textit{mahdūd}) and the unlimited (\textit{ghair-muntahā}) which renders clearly the qualitative difference involved.
\end{itemize}
find here a direct application of the doctrinal assertion that attributes a higher degree to prophethood as compared to sainthood, and to the nabi a higher place than the wali, based on the assumption that the latter remains concentrated on Allah alone while the former combines attention on both God and the world.99

As its name suggest, the sphere of the triple perfections is connected to the source of the perfections that characterises the various prophets and their legislative mission (risālat) embracing, moreover, the perfections of the saints. It is, therefore, legitimate to affirm a certain superiority of the nabi over the wali, the former re-descending from the Sacred abode of the Divine Essence beyond creation for the sake of conveying a particular message to the created world. This return (rujū’) from the transcendent to the immanent plane includes both an inward and outward participation at the Divine perception through which the rasūl will eventually reach total universal isation identifying himself with the insān al-kāmil.100

In fact, the author of the Manāhij al-Sair informs us that in the fifth sphere of the source of prophethood and divine mission there ‘appears the existential prototype of the Perfect Man imbued with Divine virtues (auṣāf-i ilāhî), lord of his desires and of his self, none of whose actions are contrary to the pleasure of his Lord’.101

The reintegration of the ten subtle organs pertaining to the dominions of khalq and amr must be interpreted in this sense because the source of prophetic inspiration participates equally in both dominions. From this point begins the ‘journey from Allah with Allah’ (sair an Allāh bi Allāh) during which the ‘traveller’ partakes at the realities of creation through direct participation at the one Reality. This is evidenced through the knowledge of


100. The relationship of the wali and nabi, thus, bears notable similarities with that of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

the Law (shari‘at), of the mysteries of the letters of the Koran (muqatt’āt-i Koran), of things pertaining to the unseen world (al-ghaib), the tomb (al-qabr), heaven and hell (jannat wa dozakh), all of which have been revealed to humanity through the message of the prophet Muḥammad by the certitude derived from direct intuition. This condition corresponds exactly to that of ‘heir of the prophets’ and pertains to the last of the triple perfections.

It is said that while the attainment of the previous stages depended on the initiate’s active effort, entry into the sixth sphere depends entirely on the grace bestowed by Allāh upon those who pay their humble respects to Him, an expression that denotes a more passive attitude in the murīd who is now provided guidance by the interior guide awakened through the effect left by the Divine effusions. This sixth sphere is called the ‘sphere of Divine realities’ (dā‘ira-i ḥaqā‘iq-i Ilāhī) and comprehends altogether four planes: those of the celestial Ka‘ba (ḥaqiqat-i Ka‘ba-i rabbānī), of the Holy Koran (ḥaqiqat-i Koran-i karīm), of ritual prayer (ḥaqiqat-i ṣalāt) and of pure servanthood (ḥaqiqat-i ma‘būdiyat-i ṣarfa).

The realities to which the adept gains access at this stage are described by Shaikh Abū Sa‘īd and his descendants as waves if compared to the even surface of the triple perfections, an image drawn to underline the impossibility to conceive anything beyond the irradiation of the perpetual Essence which is separate from It102 and a metaphor to denote a revelation of ulterior truths pertaining to that same metaphysical Truth from which they emanate. These truths reveal the intimate relationship that subsists between the outer, substantial form (ṣūrat) of the objects of worship, e.g., the terrestrial Ka‘ba, at Mecca and the innermost transcendent reality pertaining to its celestial archetype, a symbol contained in the ‘ālam-i mithāl that assumes the role of the Throne of God and of the rūh al-muḥammadiya.

The authors of these descriptions stress that given the

102.  HdT, p. 70; MnS; pp. 76/106.
sublime spiritual nature they refer to these states can be described only through symbolic allusions (ishāra). These recall the symbolic descriptions of the polar axis (al-rukn al-qūṭubiya) connecting the celestial regions with the various realms of the immanent world and passing through the centre of the Throne. It is along this axis alone that any contact and mediation (can between these hierarchically superseding planes (maqāmāt) can be achieved. Hence, derives Shāh Abūl Ḥasan’s assertion that those who have reached this stage can now worship Allāh and prostrate to Him at every maqām.

The second level containing the truth of the Glorious Koran also partakes of the symbolism of the rukn, for it is there that there is manifested to the sālik the deeper inner meaning (bawāṭin-i kalām-i pāk) of the Divine message revealed to Muḥammad whose single letters are said to contain a ‘boundless river’ (daryā-i be-karān) reaching down to the Ka’ba. If the murīd recites the Holy Book at this stage, his tongue is said to ‘manifest the burning tree of Moses’, yet another symbolic hint at the axis, and his entire body appears ‘like a tongue’ uttering Divine truths.103 Hit by the weight of the lights reversed upon him, the ‘ārif experiences a feeling of heaviness which reveals him the meaning of the verse: ‘Soon shall We send down to thee a weighty word.’ (Koran, 73:5). Here again, we notice the reference to the polar axis as the vertical channel of communication between the realms of the transcendent and the immanent.104

The third degree included in this sphere consists of the perception of the intrinsic truth of ritual prayer (ḥaqīqat-i ṣalāt) and reflects more openly the position held by the Mujaddidi doctrine stressing the inner benefits the true believer (mu‘min) derives from adherence to this obligatory act of daily worship. Its performance, which in itself constitutes an expression of the believer’s submission and perception of servanthood to the Divinity, is described as opening to the disciple the gates of the

103. MnS, pp. 78/106.
104. The polar symbolism and connected terminology is most elaborated by the Shaikh al-Akbar and his followers, while being less explicit in the doctrines of the Mujaddidiyya.
Divine bounties. There he attains the degree of extreme proximity (intihā-yi qurb), as expressed in the well-known Prophetic saying:

The performance of the ritual prayer constitutes the ascension (mi’rāj) of the true believer.105

During the performance of the ṣalāt by those endowed with the particular knowledge contained in this sphere, their maximal closeness and ‘the beautiful vision of the face of the Object of the quest’ (matlūb) are said to bring about a wonderful feeling of inner peace which dissipates every sadness and ardent desire because there the lover (‘āshiq) has finally reached his Beloved (ma’shūq). The various phases of the ritual prayer, thus, assume a new significance for the gnostic, who displays his inner humility in front of the Divine principle after having relinquished both the worlds while perceiving the presence of the Lord inside his own self. It is said that he who performs his prayers in this manner has definitively left this world behind and has entered the realm of the Hereafter (nashāt-i āakhirwī) while still alive.106

In the combination of a persisting duality implied in the relation between the knowing humble servant and Allāh on one side and the affirmation of identity through the continuous presence of the Divine in him on the other there lies resumed the entire perspective of the Mujaddidi doctrine, which links the stage of supreme realisation with the arising of an unprecedented awareness of the diversity between the servant (al-‘abd) and his Lord (al-Rabb). Maintaining the perspective assumed during the preceding levels of this major sphere, the inner truth of the ritual prayer constitutes the link that connects

105. This famous sentence attributed to Muḥammad is calligraphically inscribed on the miḥrāb of many mosques and dargāhs. It alludes to the passage to the superior regions along that same polar axis on which the prophet of Islam ascended to the Throne through the celestial spheres during his journey in the night of ascension (lailat al-mi’rāj, cf. Koran, 17:1).

106. Shāh Abūl Ḥasan relates this to the gesture of raising both hands to the head at the beginning of each rak‘ah while pronouncing the takbīr-i taḥrīr. Cf. Mns, pp. 79/107.
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the sincere and conscious worshipper with his Creator. It, thus, again suggests the idea of the *rukn*: along its vertical extension it is possible to ascend towards the heavens traversing the regions that lead towards the apex of the celestial hierarchy up to the Principle of all principles. At the same time, it is also possible to re-descend along the same path towards the multiplicity of creation, analogous to the descent of the Koranic message that manifested the power of the Lord to the heart of the Prophet of Islam during the night of Power (*lailat al-qadr*).¹⁰⁷ According to the interpretation given by Shàh Abû Sa'îd Fârûqî Mujaddidi of the *hadîth al-qudsî* ‘He who prostrates himself to Me is close to Me’, the entire prayer ritual is summed up in the act of prostration (*sijjda*), as it is this outward sign of supreme humility and submission reflects the highest degree of inner proximity that sanctious the *murîd*’s to participation in the assembly of the sublime ones (*jalsa-i a’lā*).¹⁰⁸

The state of selflessness (*be-khudî*) attained during the time of prayer is directly connected with the fourth and last sphere of Divine realities, that of ‘pure servanthood’ (*ma’bûdiyat-i șarfa*). This stage is described as a purely visual one (*naẓari*), since it cannot possibly defined as a further step on the path of spiritual realisation. It is assimilated to that of the perfect spiritual realisation represented by Muhammad who was asked in the course of his *mi’râj* to stop at the stage of extreme closeness: ‘O Muḥammad! Stop and sit down for a while for Your Lord sends you His blessings!’

This constitutes the degree beyond which no one can set his step and where only pure vision persists. In this *maqām*, the initiate is granted access to the hidden mysteries hinted at in the formula *lā ma’būda illā Allāh* (There is no object of worship except Allâh), the truth that every kind of worship can only reach

¹⁰⁷. This also explains why these two nights are regarded as particularly beneficial for any sort of spiritual practice and supererogatory acts of devotion (*nawâfîl*) including the *tahajjud* prayer. During these two nights the heavenly gates are open for sincere devotees to reverse the celestial influences on their hearts.

¹⁰⁸. *HdT*, p. 78.
the absolute unicity of Allâh even if in the guise of His names and attributes. No possibility of unlawful association (shirk) remains as the journey of the Divine realities reaches its conclusion in the awareness of being separated from the unique Object of worship (ma’bûd). Which while pervading everything remains essentially beyond everything. There, the adept acquires the highest degree of spiritual insight into the most intimate truth of being a true and upright servant of God.

Utmost perfection represented by the last of the seven spheres termed the ‘sphere of the prophetic realities’ (dâ‘îra-i ħaqâ‘îq-i anbiyâ’) which is further divided into six minor planes corresponding to six degrees of truth.

Progress in this most elevated sphere is characterised neither by any strenuous effort of the disciple nor by the descending of Divine grace (fa‘id), but is based entirely on love (mu‘abbat), the first of all determinations of al-Ḥaq. The centre and most sublime degree within this primordial determination is called ta‘ayyun-i ḥubb where the ultimate identity or meeting between ‘belovedness’ (maḥbūbiyat) and ‘true loving’ (maḥabbiyat) occurs. It is described by the head of the Mujaddidi branch as the union of the metaphysical principle referred to as ħaqîqat-i muḥammadî and its physical determination (ta‘ayyun-i jasadî) in the shape of the historical figure of the prophet of Islam, Muḥammad.

Of a similar nature but at a slightly inferior level we find the ‘reality of Moses’ (ḥaqîqat-i mûsawî), characterised by ‘pure lovingness’ (maḥabbiyat-i šarfa), the focal point enclosed by a circumference or circle which in its symbolic implication consists of the true friendship (khullat) contained in the ‘reality of Abraham’ (ḥaqîqat-i ibrahîmî).

The relationship between the first and the last two prophetic realities is that between belovedness in view of the Divine attributes (maḥbūbiyat-i šifatî) and belovedness in view of the Divine Essence (maḥbūbiyat-i šarfa). Among these, the ‘reality of Abraham’ constitutes the first of the six levels. At this stage the disciple re-descends, turning his face towards the world while being endowed with the particular qualities of the prophet from
the source of his specific determination. In the case of Abraham, this is intimacy and sincere companionship (uns) between God and His servant as expressed in the verse

... Who submits his whole self to Allāh, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in faith?

— Koran, 4:125

Though the relationship with Truth occurs at an extremely sublime level characterised by an indissoluble bond of friendship (khullat), the passage to the second sphere containing the ‘reality of Moses’ implies a still higher degree of perfection since it is characterised by the pure loving (maḥabbiyat-i ṣarfa) of the pure Essence, that loves Itself (muḥibb) for Itself. The masters affirm that in addition to the manifestation of love the quality of independence (istighnā) and freedom from want (be-niyāzī) also appear, and the secret of some daring expressions uttered by this prophet is revealed to the initiate.109 Although the relationship between God and His creature has reached the most sublime level of love, a residual subtle veil of duality still persists between the object and the subject of this relationship.

This veil is finally lifted in the third stage of Truth, that of the ‘reality of Muḥammad’, where the distinction between ‘belovedness’ (mahbūbiyat) and ‘loving’ (mahabbiyat) does subsist only in the Essence of Allāh. This mingling with the pure Essence is, according to the Mujaddidīs, symbolically represented by the double mīm contained in the name of Muḥammad and enclosed by the letters ẖe and dal which, if joined together, form the word ḥad or ‘extreme limit’ of spiritual perfection reached by the ‘seal of prophecy’ (khatima al-anbiyāʾ). The implicit meaning of the prophet’s name could, thus, be possibly rendered in its esoteric meaning as ‘he who has reached the utmost limit of belovedness and loving’, a description that refers to the sublime degree of his spiritual realisation. No one is superior to him in these two essential attributes.

So not even the haqīqat-i muḥammadī constitutes the

ultimate degree of Truth. Such an assertion differs from the earlier doctrinal elaborations of *taṣawwuf*. Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindi describes it as a particular development of the second millennium of Islam.¹¹⁰ This stage, reached at the fourth level and referred to as the ḥaqīqat-i aḥmādī, is considered as superior even to the primordial determination of the absolute Truth in the ḥaqīqat-i muḥammādī and represents an important reformulation and adaption of the esoteric doctrine for the second millennium of the Islamic era.

This newly described ḥaqīqat occupies the absolute centre in the conceptions of the Mujaddidiya. Its display takes the adept into the footsteps of the prophet Muḥammad leading him towards the ‘abode of loneliness of the most hidden secret’ (*khilwatkhāna-yi ghaib al-ghaib*) of pure belovedness (*maḥbūbiyat-i ẓarfa*). The letter *mīm* in the name of the prophet is seen as symbol of this station in which every remaining duality between the subject and the object of love is dissolved in the metaphysical Unity indicated by the *aḥad* of Aḥmad deprived of its letter *mīm*. At the same time, it designates in a descending perspective the unicity of the prophet of Islam in intensity and sincerity, devotion and worship, adoration and belovedness as the perfect servant of God. In the opinion of the Mujaddid, this stage bears an intimate relation with the ḥaqīqat-i Kaʿba-i Rabbānī¹¹¹ as being superior even to the ‘Muḥammadan reality’ for it is the object of worship in the latter stage (*masjūd*), not on the formal and individual plane but in the ālam-i mithāl, where the greatness (*kibriyāt*) and glory (*ʿaẓmat*) of its inner Truth coincides with that of the beloved and adored, both terms applying to the prophet Muḥammad.

Both Shāh Abūl Hasan Zaid and Shāh Abū Saʿīd¹¹² list two further degrees of Truth which, strictly speaking, do not constitute a further prophetic reality but rather additional classifications of the ḥaqīqat-i aḥmādī. The fifth, denominated ‘pure love of the Divine essence’ (*hubb-i ẓarfa-i dhātiya*), evidently

refers to the essential stage also at the last level beyond the attributive stage of love which characterised the first four levels. Sublimity and non-qualification are mentioned as necessary characteristics of a stage in extreme proximity to the supreme Principle, identified with Allâh Ta‘âlã. This pure love is described as a particular station of the beloved of the Lord (mahbûb) and a primordial determination of the absolutely undetermined (lā-ta‘ayyun) based on the authority of ‘Allamã Qasţallânî and Mullã ‘Alî Qârî who have judged as authentic the hadîth-al qudsî in which Allâh addresses His beloved: ‘If it were not for you I would not have created the heavens and I would not have manifested My haughtiness’.

If we accept the authenticity of this tradition, it becomes obvious that for the masters of our tarîqa this saying refers to the cosmological principle and purely spiritual dimension of Muḥammad, the rûh al-muḥammadiyya, starting point of creation (mabdā-i khalqat) beyond the limiting co-ordinates of time and space. First his pure light came into being, and from it the Throne, the projection of the principle of creation into this world in the ‘ālam-i mithâl, and then the Pen (qalam) and the well-preserved Tablet (lauḥ al-mahfûz) from which the cosmic duality of heaven and earth, the angels, the jînn, men and all other creatures ultimately derive their existence. The prophet, thus, becomes in his most essential reality the supreme manifestation of the Divine attributes, superseding the Supreme Principle which resumes in nuce the perfections of all contingencies. It was this light only which made Adam worthy to be adored by the angels and the Ka‘ba to become the object of worship of all creatures.

113. This affirmation is enhanced by the historical figure of the prophet which acts like a terrestrial reflection of this principle endowed with a further, corporeal determination, hinted at in his saying: ‘I was already a prophet when Adam was still between spirit and body’, Muslim: Şâhîh 44, Bukhârî: Şâhîh 78, Kitâb al-Âdâb 119. A slightly different version of this Tradition substitutes the two term as of body and spirit with those of clay and water. Its authenticity has been doubted by Ibn Tayimiyya and his fellow Hanbalites. It is noteworthy that the Mujaddîdî authors chose to quote the more widely accepted version rather than the second one, often quoted by the Shaikh al-Akbar and his followers.
At his stage, the disciple has reached the degree of *insān al-kāmil*, participating at the very source of every perfection. He, thus, enters the sixth and final plane, that of the Infinite (*lāta‘ayyun*) and Absolute (*ḥadrat-i iltāq*), unlimited and unconditioned, beyond any possible definition and description, where neither foot nor sight can reach. There, the *sālik* has attained to the perfection of beatitude while abiding in the everlasting presence of his boundless Lord.

**Methods and techniques for spiritual realisation in the light of the science of the subtle centres**

We shall now turn to the methods which allow the initiate to operate on his inner constitution in order to progress on the path whose different stages have previously been described. We are, thus, concerned with the operative (‘*aml*’) aspect of the *ṭarīqa* that complements its speculative (*‘ilm*) side, both of which are necessary for an integral esoteric tradition qualified to provide its members with the means to rise towards the experience of Divine Truth (*ḥaqīqat*). These methods are designed to bring about the transmutation of the complex human aggregate. To achieve this goal, they intervene on its subtle component which constitutes the intermediate link between the gross body and man’s purely spiritual component. In the specific case of the Mujaddidiyya, these techniques are, therefore, closely connected with the subtle centres adding yet a further dimension to the *‘ilm-i latā‘if*.

Shāh Na‘īm Allāh Bahrāichī, Shāh Abū Sa‘īd Fāruqī and Shāh Abūl-Ḥasan Zaid describe three principal categories of techniques. The following section will deal with only two of these, namely *dhikr* and *murāqaba*, leaving the third, i.e., *rābiṭa*, for a subsequent sub-section in view of its close affinity to other important considerations.

An integral part of the Naqshbandi methodology is summed up in the so-called ‘eleven technical principles’ (*yāzdah kalimāt-i muṣṭalāha*). The first eight are traditionally ascribed to ‘Abd

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114. See *MuM*, pp. 82-7; *HdT*, pp. 10-18; *MnS*, pp. 40-63/46-69.
al-Khāliq al-Gujdawānī (d. AD 575/1179 or 1220) while the formulation of the remaining three has been attributed to Khwāja Bahā al-Dīn al-Naqshband (717/1318-791/1389). Since they represent the fundamental pillars on which the ṭariqā’s methodology rests, they will be introduced in the appropriate context below.

DHIKR

The term dhikr embraces numerous meanings according to the specific context in which it is used. Derived from the Arabic verbal root dhakara bearing the meaning of ‘to remember, recollect, mention’, it can be applied to everything remembered or recalled and, therefore, mentioned. In the specific religious context, this applies naturally to the sole Object of worship, i.e., Allāh. In the esoteric tradition, this term refers strictly to the perpetual remembrance of Allāh, and since for every believing Muslim the link with the Sacred is guaranteed by the Divine message as revealed to the prophet Muḥammad, it is again from the Koran and the prophetic Traditions that the Sūfis derive the notions regarding the various techniques developed in this field. The Koran states:

O ye who believe! Remember Allāh, with much remembrance; and glorify Him morning and evening.

— Koran, 33:41-2

and also:

Men who remember Allāh standing, sitting and lying down on their sides, . . .

— Koran, 3:191

Both verses hint at the importance attributed by the Islamic tradition to the constant rememberance of God in order to maintain awareness of the world’s ultimate Sovereign. The


116. For a general introduction to dhikr, see Mir Valiuddin (1980), pp. 31-50.
second verse in particular is a reminder of the continuity which must be achieved in the act of recollecting which requires perseverance in every moment and in every act of the initiate's daily routine. In extension of this concept, Shāh Abūl Hasan states that every action performed in accordance with the legal prescriptions of the Divine law (*aḥkām-i shari'at*) constitutes a form of *dhikr*, including the transactions of buying and selling, since all these acts are ultimately accomplished in accordance with the primordial Divine command.

In its primary sense *dhikr*, therefore, denotes the conscious adherence of the individual to the Law (*al-Dīn*) which governs and maintains the cosmic order. In a derived sense, *dhikr* refers to every kind of religious and ritual performance, e.g., the recital of the *Koran* or the prayers, which are apt to promote the state of remembrance. Only in a later derived sense did this term come to describe also the often elaborate techniques used by the different orders to recall Allāh through the repetitive rhythmic invocation of His names or through particular formulas with the aim of 'purifying the heart and to detach it from everything except Him'. This corresponds to what the *Khwājagan* intended by one of the eleven principles called *yād kard* (remembering) which, technically speaking, entails the removal of any forgetfulness (*ghaflat*) of God from one's heart achieved through the invocation of the 'noble formula of remembrance' (*dhikr-i sharīf*).

For the Naqshbandīs, this can be of two types: the recital of the name of the Divine Essence (*dhikr-i ism-i dhāt*), consisting of the constant repetition of the word *Allāh*, or the recital of the


Naqshbandī tradition attributes the origin of this technique to the caliph Abū Bakr al-Siddīq, first link after the prophet in the ṭarīqa's initiatic chain who was taught this technique during the flight from Mecca to Medina while hiding with Muḥammad in a cave from their Quraishi persecutors.

119. The *silsila-i khwājagan* constituted from the twelfth century AD onwards the lineage of what was later to become the Naqshbandiyya
‘formula of negation and affirmation’ (dhikr-i nafṣ wa ithbāt), i.e., lā ilāha illā Allāh, also known as the ‘formula carrying powerful blessings’ (kalima-i tayyiba). While being engaged in the use of this technique, it is extremely important that no interruption should occur in the chain of repetitions. A peculiar characteristic of the tarīqa consists in its preference of the silent, purely mental invocation hidden from the perception of others (dhikr-i qalb, dhikr-i khas) over oral recital produced with the tongue (dhikr-i zabānī, dhikr-i lisānī), because while the latter necessarily implies an interruption in the chain due to the intercurring phases of breath the former can be perpetuated continuously. Once again, the ideal example to follow is that of Muḥammad who is said to have been immersed in a state of constant dhikr in his heart, as indicated by the Tradition: ‘My eyes are at rest but my heart is alert.’ (Bukhārī).

The immediate purpose of this practice is to focus the disciple’s attention entirely on God so as to lead him towards a constant awareness (āgāh-i dawāmī) of the goal and instil in his heart a deep feeling of love and veneration that keeps him always conscious and attentive. As long as the removal of the state of forgetfulness continues to demand great efforts during the performance of dhikr, its effects remain precarious and do not take him beyond the stage of yād kard. For this reason, the order’s authorities recommend during the initial stages of this

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120. *MuM*, p.74; *MnS*, pp. 36/58.

121. This state of maximal permeation of the dhikr refers to the most advanced stage to be attained by this technique and is said to bring about many blessings and spiritual benefits. It is, therefore, called by the Naqshbandīs ‘sovereign of all invocations’ (sultān al-adhkār), though it is not to be considered in this initial stage of yād kard. For a description of the intimate nature of this invocation and its secrets said to have been revealed to Khwāja ‘Abd al-Khāliq al-Gujdawānī, cf. Stéphane Ruspoli, ‘Réflexions sur la voie spirituelle des Naqshbandis’, in *Varia Turcica, Naqshbandis* (1990), pp. 95-107.
spirtual practice the exclusive invocation of the *ism-e dhàt*, the simplest and most essential form of *dhikr*. Only once the recollection is firmly impressed in the *murîd*’s mind no longer requiring strenuous efforts, the initiate eventually accedes to the successive stage of *yàd dàsht*, lit. ‘preservation of remembrance’, which allows for the use of different formulas.

Most Naqshbandî shaikhs follow the example set by Khwája ‘Ubaid Allàh Aþràr (d. 895/1490) for whom the attainment of this advanced stage presupposed the application of two other principles, namely *bàz gasht* (post-remembrance) and *nigàh dàsht* (lit., preservation of sight).122 The first of these prescribes the repetition of the additional invocation: ‘O God! You alone and Your pleasure are my objective! Grant me Your love and Your knowledge!’, sanctioning regular intervals in the recital of the main *dhikr* and meant to confer further emphasis on the sole aim on which every thought should be concentrated.123 The second principle entails the safeguarding (*muhàfažat*) of the state of awareness and mental presence attained through the practice of *dhikr* so that no thought should enter the *dhàkir*’s mind except that of the absolute unity of Allàh (*ahadiyat-i mujarrada* intended as unqualified Principle without any considerations for His names and attributes.124 *Nigàh dàsht* refers to a fairly advanced stage of *dhikr* practice that keeps in view the comprehension of the Divine essence. Its difficulty is attested by the statements of several authorities who affirm that the perseverance of such a state for a couple of hours or for a span of time that lasts from sunrise till mid-morning (*chàsht*) constitutes a very elevated degree of perfection reserved only to a very few particularly qualified persons.

In this superior interpretation, *nigàh dàsht* is said to lead to the ‘direct witnessing’ (*mushàhada*) of the luminous

123. Most shaikhs affirm that the formula that should follow the invocation of the *dhikr-i nafî wa ithbàt* may nowadays simply be: ‘I have no object of worship except the adored God because the Adored and the Goal are the same.’ This practice is still in use among the inmates of the Delhi *khânaqàh*.
irradiations of the Divine Essence, while its more modest interpretation qualifies it as the protection of the heart from the vortex of mental consciousness and incessant current of distracting thoughts (khaṭrāt) during the recital of dhikr. The perfection of this practice leads eventually to yād dāsht, the most perfect state attainable by this technique, and corresponds to the realisation of the perpetual presence (ḥudūr-i dā‘īmī) of the unqualified Deity. Variously defined as ‘perfection of contemplation’ (kamāl-i mushāhada), as ‘presence without absence’ (ḥudūr-i be-ghaibat), or as ‘witnessing of Truth’ (shuhād-i Ḥaqq), it is said to be infused into the initiate’s heart by the love the Essence nourishes for Its servant.

These are the degrees of spiritual progress achieved through the practice of dhikr. To reach them, correct execution of the prescribed method, constant application and total dedication to its performance by the disciple under the supervision of the spiritual preceptor are necessary.

The pivotal role the dhikr plays in the methodology current among the various āuruq results immediately from the fact that the disciple’s initiation sanctioned by the vow of allegiance made to the shaikh (bai’at) is intimately connected with the transmission of the dhikr. In the course of this ritual, its subtle power is implanted like a germ into the heart of the novice who from that moment onwards must cultivate it in order to ‘let it grow into a fruit-bearing tree’. This process guarantees the establishment of his spiritual link (nisbat) with the entire

125. A chapter of Shaikh Ḥamd Sirhindī’s esoteric treatise Mabdā o Ma‘ād (minhā 30, pp. 169-71) distinguishes three levels within yād dāsht, between the outer form (ṣūrat), attained by those reaching the concentration of the heart (jam‘iyat-i qalb), and its inner truth (ḥaqiqat), obtainable only after the ‘cleansing of the soul’ and the ‘purification of the heart’ are brought to perfection; but one must still distinguish between the degree of the presence of the necessary attributes (martaba-i wujūb) which constitute the sum of attributes, and the topmost degree regards the presence of absolute Unity beyond the names, attributes and qualities. We recognise here the stages of sainthood described in the previous chapter.

series of spiritual ancestors of the lineage leading back to Abū Bakr and finally Muḥammad, generally recognised as the fountainhead of spiritual influence (baraka).\textsuperscript{127}

The dhikr constitutes, thus, the first and primacy tool the disciple receives from his shaikh. Its formula as transmitted by the masters of the Mujaddidiyya initially comprises the most essential of all names (ism-i dhāt), i.e., Allāh. At this preliminary, stage, it symbolically represents the germinal condition of the disciple’s inner part upon which the dhikr is meant to act. When the neophyte is ready to receive the bestowal of his master’s spiritual allowance (ważīfa) together with the accompanying method, he should sit down on his heels, turn his breast towards that of his master, keep his hands placed on his knees, close his eyes and mouth, press the tip of his tongue against the palate, clench his teeth and begin to invoke with utmost respect and reverence the name Allāh, following precisely the instructions received.

At the very beginning, the dhikr should be directed on the laṭīfa-i qalb while constantly bearing in mind the implicit significance of that sublime name; this process is called ‘refinement’ (pardākht).\textsuperscript{128} During the invocation, the whole attention must remain concentrated on that Essence, otherwise the danger of being overpowered by evil inspirations (waswasa) increases and the efficacy of the performance is compromised.

Apart from the additional invocations interspersed at regular intervals between the recital of the main dhikr, Khwāja Bahā al-Dīn al-Naqshband introduced yet another fundamental principle to be followed during the practice of invoking, called waqūf-i qalbī or ‘alertness of the heart’. According to Shāh Abūl Ḥasan, waqūf-i qalbī can be interpreted in various ways. In its

\textsuperscript{127} In considering the double function of Muḥammad as both historical ‘seal of prophecy’ (khātima al-‘anbiya’) and universal spirit and principle of creation, the central position attributed to him by the esoteric tradition becomes evident. But the Naqshbandis claim a parallel descent through ‘Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib, through whom the cognisance of the vocal dhikr is said to have been transmitted.

\textsuperscript{128} MnS, pp. 44/68.
primary sense it denotes the awareness of and connection with the nominated Object, viz., the heart’s alertness towards the Object invoked, also called ‘contemplative witnessing’ (shuhūd). In practical terms, it actually coincides with the stage of yād dāsht. The second meaning implies that the dhākir must revolve all his attention on the ‘pinecone-shaped heart’ (qalb-i ṣanawbari), viz., the physical organ that constitutes the seat of the subtle organ bearing the same name and preserving in its innermost core the synthesised Reality (ḥaqiqat-i jam’a) of the human creature, so that even that ‘piece of flesh’ (mudgha) may participate in the reality of the dhikr thereby acquiring its distinctive consciousness. The third meaning goes back to Khwāja Muḥammad Ma’sūm (AD 1599-1668), the third son and principal successor of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī, and reiterates what has already been said regarding yād dāsht, i.e., the necessity for the dhākir to remain watchful of his heart so that no distraction may divert its attention.129 For the fourth and last meaning, the authors quote the authority of Khwāja ‘Ubaid Allāh Aḥrār who interpreted waqūf-i qalbī as the heart’s lasting awareness of the Sacred in such a way as to erase from it all other existences except Him.130 All three authors agree, however, that this last interpretation bears no direct relation to the dhikr but refers rather to a particular spiritual state (ḥāl) attained during the ‘cleansing of the soul’ (tadhkiya-i nafs).

Yet another important Mujaddidī authority, Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī Dihlawī, has defined this indispensable principle as the strict focusing of all spiritual attention (tawajjuh) on the organ of the heart for the sake of imprinting on it the image (naqsha) of the

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129. Shaikh Aḥmad recommends those not receiving any benefit from this method to interrupt the performance for a while and try instead to focus attention on the waqūf-i qalbī until the state of awareness of the heart eventually permits to revert to the practice of dhikr. The pre-eminence given to this alertness over the dhikr emphasises the enormous importance of inner attitude as prerequisite for any success in the ṭariqa.

130. MnS, pp. 39-40/62-3; MuM, pp. 70-1; HdT, pp. 11-12. For details of the order’s eleven technical principles, see also Qāḍī Thanā Allāh Pānīpatī’s Al-Kitāb al-Nujāt ‘an ṭariqat al-Ghawāt.
ism-i dhât.\footnote{Durr al Ma‘ārif, note referring to Friday, 15 Rabī al-Awwal 1231/14 February 1816. The shaikh explains that the heart should be freed from all thoughts relating to either the past or the future but focus on the present moment alone.} For the Naqshbandīs, this spiritual attention plays exactly the same role as the ‘stroke’ (darb) in other Sufī orders where the vocal invocation is practised in order to scan a continuous sonorous rhythm, and points to the emphasis placed on the interiorised attitude by this tariqa.\footnote{For their techniques regarding the dhikr and in particular the method of beating the heart with the strokes of rhythmic invocation, see J.S. Trimingham, Sufi orders in Islam, and Mir Valiuddin (1980), pp. 51-9, with special reference to the Chishtiyya and Qādiriyya.} While being hit by the dhikr, the heart should, thus, incline all its attention towards the Sacred abode from which the effusion of God’s spiritual grace is expected, so as to create the preliminary conditions for the ultimate establishment of the spiritual link (nisbat) with the transcendent order.\footnote{Cf. Khaliq Anjum (1989), pp. 101-4.}

Once the subtle heart-organ is completely permeated by the vibration of the dhikr in tune with the primordial vibration contained in the name Allāh, the subtle invocation is focussed on the immediately following centre, the latīfa-i rūḥ, and so on through all seven subtle centres until the entire body, from the ‘tips of the hair to the nails of the feet’, reproduces the sound vibration contained in the name of the Essence. This stage, which corresponds to the ascent of the latā‘if to the ‘alam-i amr and from there to the celestial abode of the Supreme Principle, is called ‘sovereign of all invocations’ (sultān al-adhkār) for it represents the most perfect realisation of the ism-i dhât. The process of reintegration of the five spiritual components located inside the breast has reached its conclusion restoring them to their original state prior to their link with the human body and bringing about their illumination. This leads to a stage where through the established nisbat the Divine presence situated in the very hidden mystery of the pinecone heart which has now taken over the role played previously by the subtle organs becomes Itself the interior dhākir.
After the attainment of the benefits derived from this first type of invocation, in relation to the ‘purification of the heart’ (tasfiya-i qalb), the Mujaddidis instruct their disciples in the practice of the dhikr-i nafś wa ithbāt, deemed efficacious for the successive process of ‘cleansing of the soul’ (tadhkiya-i nafs). The way this second type of dhikr is performed by the adherents to the ṭariqa Mujaddidiyya is described as follows:

The disciple should be in a state of ritual purity . . . and turn his face towards the qibla, either sitting or kneeling, put his hands on his thighs, concentrate all his senses on the heart while keeping his eyes closed, arrest his breath under the navel and while pronouncing slowly and respectfully the word Lā try to pull it from below the navel up to the forehead and brain and imagine that it has flown out of him. He should than concentrate on the term ilāha, pull it upwards until it reaches the right shoulder, and finally from there hit with utmost force the pinecone heart with the charge contained in the words illā Allāh in such a way as to leave the imprint of its vibration on all five subtle organs and perceive a sensation of heat pervading all limbs. . . .¹³⁴

For the performance of this type of dhikr it is deemed auspicious to use an undefined number of invocations in odd numbers in accordance with yet another of the eleven principles, called waqūf-i ʿadādī (numerical awareness). Although it has been considered an integral part of this technique in the earlier days of the order, in the opinion of most later Mujaddidi authorities, the retention of breath (ḥabs-i nafas) is not necessary for a successful performance of the dhikr though its utility is still recognised.¹³⁵

¹³⁴. *MnS*, pp. 52/76-7; *MuM*, p. 84; *HdT*, p. 12; the first two are based on themselves on Qāḍī Thanā Allāh Pānīpatī (cf. no. 130 supra).

¹³⁵. The mental invocation of this dhikr in combination with the retention of the breath was the first teaching received by Khwāja ʿAbd al-Khāliq al-Gujdawānī from al-Khiḍr as part of the divinely inspired ʿilm al-ladunnī. According to the Naqshbandīs this dhikr brings about the revelation and comprehension of the mysteries of the sulūk. Al-Khiḍr actually instructs al-Gujdawānī to submerge himself in water while practising the dhikr-i-khaftī so as to force him to retain his breath.
It is also maintained that there is no need to engage very frequently in the performance of this invocation; however, it should always be practised in a state of full alertness in order to reap the maximal benefit. The perfect execution of the *dhikr-i naft wa ithbāt* is said to consist of 21 repetitions within one complete phase of respiration consisting of inspiration, retention and expiration, thus, scanning a rhythm of seven repetitions for each phase.\(^{136}\) The effect of this method is said to consist of the rejection and ultimate dissolution of the practitioner’s human individuality (*wujūd-i bashariyat*) while invoking the first part of the formula, viz., lā ilāha, and in the display and absorption of the effects of the totality of Divine influences on oneself during the pronunciation of its second, affirmative part comprising the words *illā Allāh*. In case of beginners (*mubtadī*), these effects are said to represent the first level of the ‘ilm al-ladunnî, communicated by God through *al-Khiyr*\(^{137}\) to the elected ones among the awliyā’ Allāh. These mysteries are said to belong to a type of knowledge the essential meaning of which cannot be grasped by the human mind. For those more advanced on the spiritual path the recital of this *dhikr* leads to the awareness that the permeation of real Unity (*aḥadiyat-i ṣaqqaqat*) reaches all degrees of cosmic multiplicity in the same way as the number

\(^{136}\) All authorities agree that if no effect is perceived on the inner sphere once the most perfect number of invocations is reached, the performance should be abandoned until later.

\(^{137}\) The mysterious figure who appears in the Koran as the spiritual guide of Moses (*Koran*, 18:60–82), although his name (lit. ‘the Green one’) is not mentioned in the Holy Book. He occupies a very important role in the spiritual development of many Sūfis as the interior guide communicating the directly inspired science from the most sublime stage of Divine wisdom (*al-talīm al Rabbāni*). He is said to be the chief of the *afrād* holding an important position in the spiritual hierarchy independent even of the seven poles (*aqāb*) who govern the cosmos. Moreover, *al-Khiyr* is closely connected to the spontaneous initiation (*nisbat al ‘uwaysi*) conferred outside the regular pattern of transmission of the spiritual influence within a regular ṭariqa. He is included also among the four immortal prophets. For him, see Hassan Elboudrari, ‘Entre le symbolisme et l’Historique: Khadir Immémorial’, in *SI* 76 (1992), pp. 25-39 and Irfan Omar, ‘Khīḍr in the Islamic Tradition’, in *MW* 83 (1993), pp. 279-91 or A.J. Wensinck, ‘Al-Khadir’ in *EI* (second edition), vol. 4, pp. 935-8.
one contains the entire series of arithmetically conceivable numbers.

A further requirement for the correct performance of this method consists of its strictly mental performance, practised in absolute discretion and privacy. The phase of expiration should correspond to the recital of the final part of the kalima-i shahāda, i.e., Muḥammad rasūl Allāh, so as to lead the disciple eventually to a descending vision revolved towards the world. The pronunciation of the negative term Lā as meant to deny and finally annihilate the initiate’s human component while all other contingent beings simultaneously appear without any real existence (nīsti). During the affirmative phase, the Creator must be envisaged as the only goal so that by the means of the dhikr. His presence can eventually penetrate into the dhākir’s heart with such vehemence that the sālik becomes oblivious of everything else around him. At this stage of advanced interiorisation of the dhikr, the number of invocations can be gradually raised from 21 to more than one thousand, and the heat and effusion that accompany it will extend to all subtle organs including those of the four gross elements. Hence, Shāh Abūl Ḥasan tells us that

since the ascendance of the heart (‘urūj al-qalb) includes the purification of all elements from haughtiness, pride, meanness and degradation . . . , they become balanced and uniformed.\textsuperscript{138}

We, thus, learn that the utility of this dhikr extends to the erasure and removal of the negative qualities and vices rooted in the individual’s nature and their gradual replacement with the Divine qualities and angelic virtues. Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī compares the recital of the negative syllable Lā to an axe which cuts mountains of attributes and ephemeral relations with the phenomenal world.\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{138.} MnS, pp. 53/67-8.

\textsuperscript{139.} During the pronunciation of the negation, the term ilāha should be replaced with that of the vice whose extinction is envisaged before continuing in the usual manner until its obliteration from the soul is achieved. This should be done one by one with all negative attitudes
It follows that this second type of dhikr, which bears a particular relation with the path of inner realisation by stages through the ten stations (maqāmāt-i ‘ashra), contributes to the gradual processes of ‘soul-cleansing’ (tadhkiya-i nafs). This constitutes its real aim, for it finally leads to the murid’s continuous cognition and consciousness of the Divine presence after reaching the stage of fanā-i nafs. So, the utility of this dhikr remains largely connected with the ascending phase of the spiritual journey which culminates on the last level of major sainthood.

In fact, as long as the disciple remains engaged in the first part of his spiritual journey, the use of dhikr combined with a sincere commitment to the legal prescriptions of the shari’at and the injunctions of the sunna represent the sole requirements. Only after the total realisation of the ‘synthesised state’ (jam‘ al-jam‘) at the apex of the ascending journey which signals the turning point in the Mujaddidi concept of the sair and in which the adept acquires knowledge of the difference between God and creation (farq ba‘d al-jam‘) and of the inner realities of Islam (islām-i ḥaqīqat) is achieved, is the practitioner advised to substitute or integrate the synthetic invocation with the performance of a series of supererogatory acts of devotion.

140. The first corresponds for the Naqshbandis and most other orders to the ‘station of repentance and penitence’ (maqām-i tawba wa inābat) in which the disciple repents honestly for all sins and negligences committed in the past and seeking refuge in the service of a qualified master thereby symbolically returning to a state of primordial purity, while the tenth and last station, that of contentment (maqām-i riḍā) is concerned with the illuminations of the Divine Essence. For the ten stations, see MnS, pp. 29-32/48-52; MuM, pp. 50-4.

141. In Mak. II:95, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī writes: ‘The invocation of the formula Lā ilāha illā Allāh with the addition of Muḥammad rasūl Allāh for at least 100 times brings about the attainment of ascension and Divine attraction (‘urūj wa jadhba); if one then proceeds to a repeated invocation of the formula Muḥammad rasūl Allāh, this will result in an ascent and descent (‘urūj wa nuzūl), and if one recites continuously the entire kalima-i tayyiba, this will bring about the total descent (jumla-i nuzūl).’
(nawâfîl). These include prayers, the study of the religious sciences (‘ulûm-i dîniya), the recital of the Koran (talâwat), the study of the Traditions, the blessing and salutation on the prophet, his family and the companions (durûd-i sharîf), the recital of the tasbîha (sulhân Allâh), the takbîr (Allâhu Akbar) and the tahmîd (al-îhamdu Allâh), etc. At this stage, no difference between sharî’at and ṭariqat, exoterism and esoterism, persists for the saint who now contemplates religious tenets, rituals and spiritual practice as different expressions of the one Truth (ḥaqîqat).

MURÂQABA

The Persian noun murâqaba is derived from the Arabic root raqaba bearing the meaning of to ‘attend, to observe, to contemplate’. Its translation as ‘visualisation, attentive observation, contemplation’ conveys fairly well the range of conceptions implied by the term in the technical vocabulary of the Mujaddidiyya.

According to a letter written by Khwâja Muḥammad Ma’ṣûm, the term reunites two slightly different but complementary meanings both derived from the same root: one from raqâbat meaning ‘protecting, guarding, preserving’, the other from ruqûbat meaning ‘expecting, waiting for, looking for’.  

In the terminology of next Sûfî orders, murâqaba designates the inner attitude assumed while fixing the attention on an outer object with the aim of emptying the mind from all emerging thoughts while trying to remain fully concentrated on Allâh. In the vocabulary of the Mujaddidiyya Maẓhariyya, the term refers to a particular technique requiring the disciple to close his eyes and to attend to the descent of the Divine grace from its source (mabdâ-i faiḍ) first on each single subtle centre and later on

142. Cf. MuM, p. 82; MnS, pp. 55/81. The closure of the eyes recommended for efficient execution of this technique is meant to facilitate the detachment of the senses from the objects of the phenomenal world and their introversion on the inner states eventually leading to the ‘inner vision of beatitude’. 
their synthesised aspect. This current of grace is initially perceived in the guise of one of the multiple aspects of the Divine (wujûh, pl. of wajh) and later on Its unqualified Essence. At first, the relation, thus, established between the visualising subject and the visualised Object must be enforced to such an extent that no distracting thought (khatra) can interfere in it, by creating a sort of psycho-mental shield around the disciple’s mind which leaves him entirely focussed on his single aim. Khwâja Muḥammad ‘Abd Allâh, the youngest son of Shaikh Aḥmad’s spiritual instructor Khwâja Bàqª Billâh (971/1563-1012/1603), provides us with the following description of murâqaba:

Murâqaba must arise out of the disregard for all spiritual states (aḥwâl) and merits (auṣâf) and one’s capacity of endurance to wait for the encounter with the Lord, eagerly longing for His beauty (jamâlihi) to manifest Itself while remaining fully absorbed in the desire and love for Him. . . .

Some sources trace the origins of this method back to the master of Shaikh Junaid al-Baghdâdî (d. 297/909) who reportedly used to compare the inner attitude required during the performance of murâqaba to a cat’s intent fully absorbed in its attentive observation and concentration on the den of a mouse while patiently waiting to catch it.

These descriptions clearly convey the double, active and passive, attitude of the practitioner engaged in this method, although the whole process must be understood as an entirely interiorised practice with the aim of removing oneself from the sensory objects of the outer world. It expresses itself in an outer immobility (comparable to that of the hunting cat) that reflects the concentration of all potentialities on the interior self in an effort to focus on the desired object and to penetrate its inner reality. Once the sâlik has reached an advanced degree of perfection in this performance of this method, he should finally be able to control, fix and eventually comprehend the quality

143. Fawâtih, quoted by Shâh Abûl Ḥasan in MnS, p. 56/81.
inherent to the contemplated object, thus, identifying himself with its essence. This state is expressed in the language of the shaikhs as ‘effusion of Divine grace’ (mawrid-i faid) through which the passive seeker is said to gain the bounty of the Lord by becoming a beneficiary of His mercy.

The term murāqaba as used by the Mujaddidīs applies, therefore, to an entirely cognitive process (fikr) progressing from the mental perception of the prefixed object to the ultimate identification with it. If brought to utmost perfection it leads the murid to participate in the Divine wisdom (ḥikmat-i ilāhi). It implies the passage from reflected knowledge (ilm) on the rational plane to spiritual inspiration (ilhām, kashf) on an exclusively intuitional plane which provides access to the supra-individual, directly inspired knowledge or gnosis (marifa). The term fikr (lit. ‘thought, mental activity’, and, by extension, ‘mental discipline’) is thereby used to qualify the whole method as complementary to that of dhikr.

At the beginning of the journey, however, the sàlik remains exclusively concerned with the more contingent aspects of universal existence and the reflections of the transcendent principles in it. Since these are by definition indefinite in number, the shaikhs point out the impossibility of exhausting the journey while trying to contemplate the multitude of adjunctive names and attributes (asmā o šifāt-i īdafiya) to which they correspond analytically. To prevent their followers from losing themselves in this endless chain of corresponding degrees of attainment (marātib-i wsul), the ancestors of the ṭariqa claim to possess the specific knowledge regarding the way that synthetically accomplishes (ba ṭariq-i ijmāli) the journey through the names and attributes and quickly reaches in the presence of the Essence.144

Here again we encounter the often repeated Mujaddidī assertion of a unique and unprecedented method that facilitates considerably the disciple’s task of gaining access to the hidden mysteries. This position is summed up in the principle of

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'including the end at the very beginning' (indirāj-i nihāyat dar bidāyat) which holds that the novice who enjoys the company of a perfect (Mujaddidi) shaikh can gain access to a preliminary experience of Divine unity during the very first steps of his inner journey.\(^\text{145}\)

This principle finds its application in the division of the spiritual path into seven sections or stages (madārij). Each stage contains one or more particular ‘visualisations’ reflecting the point of view from which the disciple looks at his objective. However, in its immediate application murāqaba aims at the attainment of the composure of the heart (iæminàn-i qalb), the granting of the inner vision of magnificence (‘atà-i kubriyà), the arrest of the thought-current (jam’iyat-i khaatrât) and the resulting attainment of inner peace (ilqā-yi sakîna). It can be practised either alone or be accompanied by the use of dhikr. The rigorous preservation of the disciple’s inner attention at each successive stage on the source of effusion of the celestial influences and its respective place of arrival in his subtle aggregate is considered of foremost importance for the successful performance of this method, for these represent the two poles between which the entire process takes place.

The first stage, concerned with the dā'ira-i imkân, contains a single murāqaba, refered as the visualisation of ‘pure unicity’ (aḥadiyat-i şarfa) since it refers to that unique principle (al-aḥad) that governs this world and which comprehends the total sum of all contingent possibilities. During this part of the journey the spiritual influence descends upon the laṭīfa-i qalb, considered to be the centre of the microcosm and seat of the spiritual principle. This interior performance in the ‘sphere of possible existence’ is said to reach its conclusion when the disciple’s mental current remains constantly focussed for about twelve hours on the ‘fountainhead of all graces’ and when the object of his meditation has been assimilated to a satisfying extent. The

\(^{145}\) For ample discussion, see, e.g., Shāh Rauf Ahmad Rāmpurī, *Durr al-Ma‘ārif* (note on 13 Sha'bān 1231/1816). A detailed account of this important aspect bearing notable relevance in the order’s Hindu sub-lineage will be given in the next chapter.
authors of our treatises report that the inner perception of lights represents an infallible sign of the attainment of this stage, during which many other marvellous things including Divine attraction (*jadhba*) and occasional spiritual accidents (*wāridāt*) may occur.\(^{146}\)

During the following stage of minor sainthood, the disciple’s visualisation consists of the *murāqaba-i ma’iyat*,\(^{147}\) the contemplation of co-presence with the principles of the determinations of all common creatures, or that aspect of the Deity in which God’s presence is felt in every single particle of the created cosmos, succinctly expressed by the formula *Huwā al-Ẓāhir* (He is Manifest).

At this stage, the disciple recognises that everything exists only because of *Allāh* Who manifests His perfections in the world. The *murīd*’s heart as receptacle of spiritual influences simultaneously experiences a feeling of expansion into the six directions of space until it is perceived as encompassing the entire Universe. This perception announces the attainment of the ‘extinction of the heart’ (*fanā-i qalb*) and represents from a microcosmic point of view the overcoming of the limiting conditions of individual existence at the same time as it denotes a reflected participation in the principle of creation from a macrocosmic perspective, rendered possible on behalf of the analogy between the two dominions. Hence, the correspondence between the physical heart (*qalb-i šanawbarī*) and the all-comprising Universal heart (*qalb-i kullī*) identified with the Throne situated at the centre of the ‘ālam-i kabīr’, which reveals to the disciple the secrets of the *waḥdat al-wujūd*.

Part of these first stages of the ascending journey is also the ‘visualisation of the five spiritual organs’ (*murāqaba-i laṭā‘if-i khamsa*), which function as landmarks against which the disciple

\(^{146}\) The Koranic reference quoted by the masters is: ‘*Allāh is with you wherever you are.*’ (*Koran*, 5:76).

\(^{147}\) Mirzā Mażhar Jān-i Jānān, for instance, expressly warns his disciples not to pay any attention to these lights as they distract the ‘traveller’ from focusing on the progress along the straight path. Cf. *MuM*, p. 82.
can check his progress. We have already described the Mujaddidī association of each of these five organs with one of the great prophets whose particular qualification is put in relation with different kinds of Divine irradiations. The procedure is very similar for each of the subtle organs and consists of the imaginary placing one’s subtle organs in front of those contained in the breast of the prophet Muhammad, invoking Allāh with the request to grant through His immediate intercessor and the chain of spiritual ancestors part of the grace of the irradiations pertaining to that particular laṭīfa. Once the boon is granted and the link established, the murid partakes of the inherent nature, temper and reality of the prophet who governs that particular plane (mashrab).

The hierarchy among the subtle organs corresponds to that of the various prophets, so as to enable the sālik to penetrate gradually the veils of the superseding irradiations, thereby enhancing the power of his spiritual vision. This whole interior process which includes both the mental and the vibrational sphere pertaining to the psychic constituents of the human individual can be defined in this context as a sort of human and cosmic alchemy aimed at transmuting the elements pertaining to the subtle state into an increasingly more sublime degree of reality the closer one gets to its principles and governing causes. Such an interpretation also accounts for the luminosity of the subtle organs which indicate their ascent to the higher regions of the intermediary world. The disciple reiterates within himself the entire cosmological process in a direction inverse to that of its gradual unfolding, from the point of maximal expansion to that of contraction (qabḍ) into the principal point whence everything originated. The Mujaddidīs call this the ‘journey through the cardinal points’ (sair-i āfāqi). It lasts for the entire duration of the journey through the realms of major sainthood when it assumes the denomination of ‘journey through the inner selves’ (sair-i anfusī). 148

148. But until arrival at the final stages of the sulūk, we are still exclusively concerned with the reflections of the names and attributes in the minor sainthood and the names and attributes in the major one, i.e., although central in respect to our world, this stage is still contingent in regard to the Essence and its essential attributes.
Major sainthood is the next stage of the spiritual journey and is described as including altogether four *murāqabāt* the most important of which is the ‘visualisation of extreme proximity’ (*murāqaba-i aqrabiyat*) that goes back to the inner meaning of the Koranic verse: ‘... We are nearer to him than his jugular vein... (Koran, 50:16). On that plane the five subtle organs attain to their maximal ascension and bring the ‘journey towards Allāh’ to conclusion. The previous stage led the *sālik* from the concentration, meditation and finally contemplation of his co-presence with Allāh culminating in the experience of union (*ittiḥād*) and, consequently, in a synthetic vision of God and the world (*tawḥīd-i wujūd*) characterised by a condition of inebriation (*sukr*). This stage leads to a state of extreme proximity, indicative of a subsisting degree of duality (*du‘ā*). Here, the initiate returns to a state of sobriety (*saḥw*) accompanied by a new vision of the world’s reality (*tawḥīd-i shuhūdī*), which allows him to perceive the entire Universe as a mirror (*a‘īna*) in which the beauty of the Beloved is reflected on a plane of minor reality. During this part of the journey, the subtle organ concerned is the *nafs*. We may, thus, partially identify it with the process referred to as ‘cleansing of the soul’, that wants to refine the vicious qualities of the disciple’s soul into virtues while conveying upon his inner self a state of peace that enables it to partake at the current of God’s mercy (*al-rahmat*).

Consequently, the perfection of this level coincides with the ‘extinction of the soul’. It is attained, however, only after having gone through the other sub-degrees comprised in the stage of ‘major sainthood’, all focussed on the ‘visualisation of love’

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149. These three degrees show a great affinity with the stages listed by Patanjali in his *Yoga-Sūtra* as *dhāraṇā*, *dyāna* and *samādhi* and define an increasing intensity in the relationship between the subject that focusses and the object focussed, eventually leading to the identification between these initially separate entities. All are implicitly comprehended in the term *murāqaba* as used by the Mujaddidis. For this reason, I have preferred to render the term with ‘visualisation’ rather than with ‘contemplation’ since only the more advanced stage of this method effectively corresponds to the latter.

Through meditation on this particular aspect of the Divine, a deep reciprocal relationship of love arises between the longing disciple who assumes the role of lover (maḥbūb) and his Beloved one (ḥabīb). The remaining three sub-levels derived from each other in a descending order apparently only mark increasing degrees of intensity of this relationship, although they do bear a degree of qualitative difference.152

This process is accompanied by a gradual penetration into the knowledge of the Divine names, attributes and qualities in the measure corresponding to the extinction and transmutation of the individual vices or imperfections into the angelic virtues of the ‘ālam-i malakūt.153 The traversing of these spheres is said to resemble a journey through the radiant circle of the sun which appears increasingly luminous the more parts of it are acquired leaving the remaining parts obscure like those of the solar disk during an eclipse. Other authors point out that the disciple begins to feel his own existence as entirely dependent on its source, the sum of Allāh’s pure Being.154

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151. Based on: ‘... When He loves them as they love Him ...’ (Koran, 5:57)

152. Maulānā Ḥāfīz Ghulām Ḥabīb, a contemporary Mujaddidi shaikh of Sindh and author of Majālis-i Ḥabīb wa musamma ba Irshād al-Mursalīn, specifies (pp. 187-9) that to each of the four degrees contained in the sphere of major sainthood corresponds a particular category of ranks.

153. It is said, for instance, that in the stage of major sainthood the mean qualities of the soul, viz., envy (ḥasad), avarice (bukhl), avidity (harṣ), rancour (kīna), pride (takabbur), vanish and their place is taken instead by the laudable attributes like patience (ṣabr), gratitude (ṣukr), reticence (war‘), pious devotion (taqwā), continence (zuhd), etc. Cf. also Majālis-i Ḥabīb, p. 189.

154. MnS, pp. 69/97. The solar symbolism here employed by the authorities to describe the transcendent source of all supra-individual knowledge finds its parallel in the Hindu tradition too where the reflected, indirectly perceived knowledge pertaining to the sphere of manas, the mental plane is assimilated to the silver radiance of the lunar light while the transcendent and direct knowledge pertaining to the superior intellect or buddhi is assimilated to the golden light of the sun.
Perfection or ‘major sainthood’ and the simultaneous entry into the ‘sphere of supreme sainthood’ are obtained when the sālik no longer perceives the Divine grace descending on his cerebral region, the seat of the latīfa-i nafs which is now perfectly balanced and permeated by a lasting feeling of absolute peace, and the individual limits set by the apex of the rational sphere are definitively transcended. After the liberation of the individual soul from the limiting summons sanctioned by the Divine decree (aḥkām-i qaḍā), the nafs ascends to the station of contentment (maqām-i riḍā), the tenth and most sublime of the maqāmāt. The disciple now contemplates the expansion and opening of his breast (sharḥ-i ṣadr), which is the receptacle for the comprehension of the Divine mysteries, having been sanctioned as the seat of man’s spiritual component by Muḥammad’s experience when the two angels Jibra’il and Mika’il opened his breast in order to extract a black clot of blood representing the corrupted human nature (cf. Koran, 96).155

Once again, the corresponding mode of procedure for this murāqaba consists of the visualisation of the idea of putting one’s breast before that of the prophet praying to God to be allowed to participate in the blessings of this station and reciting the ṣūrat al-inshārah (Koran, 94). In its uttermost perfection, this visualisation is said to reveal the secrets of the Divine promises (mawā‘id-i ilāhī) which grant access to the degree of perfect certitude (yaqīn-i kāmil) and to the inner comprehension of the sum of injunctions comprised by the shari‘at without need of further proofs. The removal of individual boundaries separating the sālik from the vision of the perpetual presence (ḫuḍūr-i dā‘īm) of the Divine law, allows him to adhere to the inner truth of Islam (ḥaqīqat-i Islām) and God’s signs in the world are sufficient for its comprehension.

The following stages are described in close association with the doctrinal perspective held by the Mujaddidīs. As such, they had not been explicitly developed by the earlier leaders of the

Naqshbandiyya but reflect the Mujaddidi’s anxiety to modify the tariqa view of the requirements of the second millennium of Islam when both the umma and the Sufis were in need of further explanations in order to strengthen their comprehension of the hidden realities contained in the Koranic message. What had previously been included in the degree of ‘major sainthood’ now required further specification, although the aim of the proposal remained unchanged. This position at the base of the entire Mujaddidi doctrinal perspective resulted in its peculiar vision of the world which contemplates the ultimate perfections of spiritual realisation as a reflection of the role of the prophets in charge of the task of conveying a Divine message (risāla) to humanity in need to be led back to the right path.  

There follows the stage of supreme sainthood (wilāyat-i ‘uliyā) said to correspond to the station of the angels and other lofty celestial beings. During this part of the celestial journey, Allāh is contemplated in His inner, non-manifest aspect (murāqaba-i ism-i bātin). It is concerned with the purification of the three elements air, water and fire, back on the plane of differentiated existence though now on a more subtle plane. The oral invocation of the tahlīl, a prolonged immersion in voluntary prayers and the punctillous observance of the sharī‘at are considered very efficacious for gaining the celestial state which is said to be reached with the help of the two wings representing Allāh’s double aspect as the Manifest and the non-manifest. By now the seeker of Truth has acquired the knowledge pertaining to both, the stage of the manifest ‘ālam-i khalq and the non-manifest ‘ālam-i amr and is, thus, ready to be accepted.

156. For some important aspects of the Mujaddid’s role in the view of himself and his followers, see Friedmann (1971), pp. 153-60 and terHaar (1990), pp. 13.

157. The tahlīl refers to the formula of the dhikr-i nafti wa ithbāt, but seen from a different perspective, tahlīl meaning literally ‘to proclaim the truth of God’.
as a member of the Sublime Assembly in the ‘ālam-i quds. Notwithstanding the prophetic perspective that culminates in the concept of the ‘pole of Divinely inspired instruction’ (qūṭb al-irshād) designed to illuminate the world (munawwar-i ālam),\footnote{158. Cf. Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī’s explanations given in \textit{Mabdā o Ma‘ād}, minhā 2 and 3, pp. 99-102.} which is obtained in the station of perfectioning (maqām-i takmil), the total realisation of the spiritual path implies the passage to the superior realms of Being symbolically indicated by the celestial spheres. There the initiate is said to encounter all sorts of angelic beings (malā‘ika), thus putting emphasis on the idea of an ascent along a vertical axis.\footnote{159. \textit{Mns}, p. 71/100.}

Indifferent of the journey’s definition as a descent (nuzūl) or as the beginning of the ascent along the vertical axis connecting the ‘ālam-i mulk and the ‘ālam-i malakūt with the ‘ālam-i mithāl and other still higher realms, from this moment onwards only the unqualified aspect of the Divinity is contemplated.\footnote{160. Many interesting parallels could be traced between these concepts and the Hindu theories regarding the contemplation of the qualified Deity, \textit{saguṇa Brahman}, and the unqualified Principle, \textit{nirguṇa Brahman}.} Whether at the stage of the triple perfections (kamālat-i thalātha), that of the Divine truths (ḥaqā‘iq-i īlāhi) or that of the prophetic realities (ḥaqā‘iq-i anbiyā‘), the sālik remains throughout inspired directly from the fountainhead of Divine wisdom pertaining to the ‘ilm al-ladūnī. After accomplishing the purification of the element earth in the sphere of the triple perfections, the effusion of spiritual influences occurs on the synthesised aspect of the ten subtle organs.

During the visualisations that are part of these last three levels of the Mujaddidi path, the initiate gains understanding of the manifold prophetic perfections, although it must be remembered that he experiences these details in the reflected guise of sainthood rather than directly participating in prophethood, since the gates of prophecy have been definitively closed with the delivery of the message of Islam. This particularised
knowledge pertaining to the celestial archetypes contained in the ‘ālam-i mithāl, like the inner realities pertaining to the celestial Ka’ba, the Holy Koran and ritual prayer, which reveal the hidden truth of the Divine secrets, is accompanied by a state of bewilderment (ḥairat) said to befall the aspirant adept when he realises his inability to comprehend the Divine Essence. It is, therefore, also referred to as the state of supreme negligence (ghaflat). The inner side of the disciple reaches with it a state of colourlessness and non-qualification (be-rangª o be-kaifª) which goes along with a perception of all the laws pertaining to the series of legislators (‘anbiyā’-i ʿulū al-azm) preceding the mission of Muḥammad.

Only minor importance attaches to the slight divergencies among the later authorities regarding the order in which these last spheres should be crossed, some giving preference to the Divine realities others to the prophetic ones. According to Shāh Abūl Ḥasan, it is the unified aspect of the initiate’s subtle aggregate that confers upon him the rank of insān al kāmil who reunites in himself not only the perfection of the human condition but also that of all other possible existences, thus, giving credit to the Tradition: ‘Allāḥ has created Man according to His own image’.161 It corresponds to the sublimest degree of spiritual perfection so that the attainment of the last realities contemplated on the sulūk seems implicit for those able to get there. Hence, it is often stressed that during those highly advanced stages of the path no further effort is required since the Divine grace alone can bestow the vision of these stations which are no longer part of the walkable journey (sair-i qadamî) but can only be visualised (sair-i naẓarî).

The techniques used during the preliminary phases now become obsolete and the disciple suddenly recognises his position of being a mere servant (murāqaba-i maʾbūdiyat-i ʻarfa) in front of Allāḥ. This transcends both perceptions, identity between the possible (mumkin) and the Necessary (wājib) and that of ‘adumbration’ (ẓilliyat) between these two. Imbued with love, the murid spontaneously adheres to the legal injunctions

prescribed by the shari‘at and exceeds them in the performance of supererogatory acts of worship and the prolonged recital of the Holy scriptures. As an example of perfect behaviour, he, thus, becomes a true heir of the prophet and shows the way to a multitude of others without being tied to the individual characteristics perceived by those whose vision is limited by numerous imperfections. This is the station of pure and infinite love (ḥubb-i ṣarfa-i dhātiya) from which the perfect adept shares his love for creation in perfect harmony with the love of his Lord in the abode of eternal transcendence.

The master-disciple relationship

The relationship between the spiritual guide and preceptor (pīr-o murshid bar Ḥaqq) on one side and the seeker of Truth (murīd, ṭālib-i Ḥaqq) on the other revests utmost importance in all esoteric traditions. Its importance derives from the essential role played by the master in transmitting the spiritual influence (baraka) into the disciple’s innermost part in the course of the initiatory rite (bai‘at, waẓifa) thus, legitimising his membership in and sanctioning his indissoluble link with the spiritual tradition in question. Through this permanent bond, the shaikh assumes the role of mediator between the effusion of Divine grace from the transcendent plane and those individuals

162. Although true in principle, practically speaking the concept of this relationship remains nowadays confined to the Eastern traditions where the esoteric part of the tradition has remained accessible and is, moreover, guaranteed through the existence of a regular chain of transmission perpetuated from master to disciple.

163. Actually, the transmission of spiritual influence may also be regularly performed by a simple khalifa possibly unqualified to impart spiritual instructions on a higher level.

164. The Islamic esoteric tradition also allows for the spiritual influence to be transmitted without the physical presence of a shaikh. This type of initiation, referred to as ‘uwaysi in memory of the Yemenite saint ‘Uways al-Qarani (d. 18/639), is significant for some of the most renowned authorities of the spiritual hierarchy in Islam, such as Ibn al-‘Arabi and many major authorities of the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya. For details on ‘Uways al-Qarani, see the article of A.S. Hussaini: “‘Uways al-Qarani and the ‘Uwaysi Sufis” in MW 57 (1967), pp. 103-13.
eager to receive it, thus, assuming the responsibility for the rebirth and inner transmutation of the disciple. Unfortunately, the indispensability of the preceptor’s presence and the necessity of absolute obedience to the master’s orders has often been misinterpreted and has raised suspicion among outer observers since it contrasts strongly with the exaltation of individual freedom so dear to the modern mentality.

The importance of the shaikh for the spiritual rebirth and growth of his protegé, continuing during the following period of apprenticeship and spiritual emancipation (tarbiyat), is invariably stressed by all Sufi orders. In some esoteric circles, especially in the Suhrawardiyya and the Kubrawiyya, the role of the shaikh has been assimilated to that of a second father and mediator of heavenly influences responsible for the inner growth (wilāda-i ma’navī) of the novice. He is concerned with the inner kernel of the disciple’s constitution (ifāda) whereas the biological father (wilāda-i sūrī) holds responsibility for the education of the nafs. The shaikh, therefore, occupies a higher rank than the physical father whose importance remains limited to a more contingent realm, and although both must be objects of the disciple’s love and respect, the love for the shaikh is considered to hold pre-eminence over that of the father.

165. This idea of a rebirth obviously implies a preceding symbolic death, i.e., the passage from a profane condition of existence that keeps the world in view only to a higher existence with access to the realm of the sacred that, from a theological perspective, keeps in view the posthumous world in the Hereafter (ākhira). This concept becomes particularly evident with high caste dvija Hindus.


167. The physical continuity from one generation to another is guaranteed through the link perpetuated between father and son and constitutes, thus, a sort of generational silsila apt to preserve the continuity of the clan and the longevity of the ancestors which play an important in most traditional cultures.

Shāh Na‘īm Allāh quotes Muḥammad Parsā as having said that the common folk aspire to reviving the body (iḥyā-i jasādī) while the élite aspire to the revival of the heart (iḥyā-i qalbī).

Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī writes that while the exterior birth leads to an existence restricted in time the inner birth is meant to lead towards immortality (ḥayāt-i abādī). Cf. MuM, p. 61.
In the history of the Naqshbandiyya, the relationship between shaikh and disciple has been developed and interpreted in its own peculiar way which distinguishes it from that of other orders in some aspects. As outlined by the Dutch scholar terHaar, two of its main features consist of the importance and frequency of the ‘uwaysî type of initiation and the connected transmission of knowledge on one hand and the necessity for a strong and intimate tie with the living shaikh on the other.168

In the context of the more recent treatises examined for this study, however, the first component is less relevant and the authors prefer to stress the importance of the presence and company (șuḥbat) of a living shaikh.169

The reason for this attitude lies in the secret nature (poshîda amr) of that part of the doctrine concerned with the hidden master. It calls for a high degree of spiritual insight and an innate disposition for receiving this sort of spontaneous guidance and transmission of knowledge which occurs directly from one spiritual component (rûḥāniyat) to another.170 It is, however, undeniable that the specific form the teachings of this order have assumed over the centuries owes much to the elaborations and ideas derived from those personalities who claim to be connected to a ‘spiritual presence’ of the ‘uwaysî type.

According to a widespread opinion in contemporary traditional circles related to the ṭariqa, the Naqshbandî way indicated in particular by Khwâjâ Bahâ al-Dîn and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindî remains nowa-days the shortest and easiest and, therefore, most


169. The extent to which the stress laid by more recent authorities on this second aspect of the pir-murîdî relationship is influenced by modern circumstances, would require a detailed analysis; we limit ourselves here to a few considerations, mostly in relation with the Hindu sub-lineage of this order.

170. According to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindî who himself was a known beneficiary of the ‘uwaysî link, it is exactly this type of knowledge that refers specifically to the ilm al-ladunnî often mentioned in the texts of the ṭariqa’s authorities.
accessible method for the achievement of spiritual realisation, the only one that can guarantee access to the esoteric mysteries for a large part of people in our times.\textsuperscript{171}

Though it is tempting to diminish the significance of such assertions in view of the sort of exclusiveness that often accompanies the vision of those who are firmly rooted in their tradition, it nevertheless represents a curious continuum in the teachings of this order, much stressed also in the Hindu sub-branch that developed from it.

As a matter of fact, the bond between disciple and living master assumes great significance for the average disciple for it is a distinctive feature of this \textit{tariqa} to charge the \textit{murshid} with an increasing responsibility and an active inner effort with regard to the disciple who has sought refuge at his feet. It is, therefore, important for the disciple to find a perfect and perfectioning master (\textit{pir-i k\={a}mil o mukammil}) suitable to his nature and ready to fulfil the task of providing him guidance on the path and assistance in every circumstance and at every station (\textit{irsh\={a}d}).\textsuperscript{172} The responsibility and acute sense of discrimination this preliminary step requires is, thus, described by one of the order’s authorities:

The method of discerning a perfect and adequate shaikh should not remain confined to his ability to display extraordinary deeds, his awareness of the distractions that can befall one’s heart or that attainment of a state of trance (\textit{wajd}) and spiritual state (\textit{\={h}\={a}l}) because many among these things can be found also among the Jogis and Brahmns; so these matters do not represent any auspicious proof, nay the sign and authentic proof for recognising a perfect shaikh consists first of all outwardly

\textsuperscript{171} Cf. \textit{MnS}, p. 28/46.
\textsuperscript{172} The station that qualifies one for leading others to perfection (\textit{maq\={a}m-i takmil}) occupies a high rank in the order’s perspective and is, therefore, accessible only to the most perfect among the spiritual masters who are far superior to those who have acquired perfection only for themselves; hence, the pre-eminence attributed in this order to the \textit{awliy\={a}}-i ishrat over the \textit{awliy\={a}}-i uzlat.
in his resolute adherence to the *sharī'at* and his acting in accordance contained in the Holy Book and the Sunnat, so that it may be possible to devote oneself eagerly to him, for Allāh has disguised sainthood in the attitude of fear of God (*taqwā*) . . . one should avoid any place where likely harm is perceived. Whoever outwardly appears pious and devout, his company should be sought for no inconvenience will derive from joining one’s hand with his . . . if ever one may derive profit or not from him; . . . if his company grants the effects recognised by both exoterists and esoterists as authentic, one should consider the company of such a man as red sulphur and a Divinely-sent boon, but if his company may provoke no effect or the respectable authorities do not recognise him, one should leave him, maintaining nevertheless a favourable judgement of him while turning to whatever place may be appropriate to provide guidance, for the only goal consists in Truth not in that particular individual. . . .

The author of this passage, identifies these positive aspects as consisting of the detachment of the heart from all worldly ties, the revival of the disciple’s dead heart, refraining from committing sins, indulgence from the desire to accomplish virtues and favourable actions (*a’māl-i ṣāliha wa ḥusnāt*), the recollection of God, etc. 174 The importance of joining the company of the appropriate shaikh, thus, represents an indispensable condition. It is a significant symptom of the sober attitudes assumed by the Mujaddidīs to stress the importance of correct outer behaviour in conformity with the *sharī'at* and the *sunna* and assign to it a preeminence over the ability to intervene on the

173. Quoted from Qādī Thānā Allāh Pānīpatī on Shāh Walī Allāh’s *Al-maqālat al-radhiya fi'il-naṣīḥā wa al waṣiyya* in *MuM*, p. 35.

174. Mīrzā Mazhar Jān-i Jānān used to test the sincerity and firmness of those who approached him by trying to dissuade them by advancing all sorts of excuses and trying to convince them to go the numerous other shaikhs than present at Delhi (*MuM*, p. 38). But this strict attitude of the masters seems to have been relaxed by the reduced number of aspirants who would nowadays meet such high standards.
subtle state and to provoke spontaneous spiritual experiences or to perform miracles.

But the shaikh too has to show his availability while selecting and accepting those seeking refuge at their service. Before reaching such a decision, the shaikh will first of all carefully scrutinise the innate qualifications of the aspirant, judging the degree of his sincerity and right determination and submitting him to one or more proofs of his resolve.

Once the shaikh has ascertained the suitability of the aspirant, the latter should entrust himself to the shaikh’s disposal who will choose the auspicious moment to grant him initiation into the spiritual family (khāndān) by asking him to pay a vow of allegiance to him and the ancestors of the lineage (bai‘at). The ritual act of spiritual initiation thus consists of the conclusion of an indissoluble treaty between master and disciple which sanctions the establishment of a lifelong bond. At the moment chosen for formal initiation into the order, the disciple is asked to kneel down before the shaikh, join his right hand with that of the master and express his regret and repent (tawba) for all sins and negligences committed in the past (istighfar). He is then asked to pronounce three times the kalima-i shahāda, followed by a vow to observe faithfully the five Islamic pillars (arkān-i khamsa) and the sunna of the prophet Muḥammad, to abstain from any unlawful innovations (bid‘āt) or associating anything to the rank of God except Allāh (shirk). In short, the novice symbolically leaves behind the slags of his

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175. Until the times of Mīrzā Mażhar Jān-i Jānān and his successors it was customary for the shaikh to ask the newly arrived seeker to look for an auspicious Divine sign, often sought from the Koran, to confirm the righteousness of the decision to join in the order (istikhāra) and than to wait for a period of about seven days until the decision had fully matured in the applicant.

176. It should be noticed that the modalities of this initiatory rite imitate the ancient Arab tribal custom according to which the vow of allegiance sworn by many newly converted Muslims during the negotiations with the Quraish at Hudaibiyah (bai‘at al-ridhwān) acts as the prototype for all successive treaties and pacts; outside the Naqshbandiyya it is found with minor alterations in almost all esoteric orders.
previous profane existence and prepares himself for his rebirth in a new life as member of the spiritual family of which the shaikh represents the nearest and most immediate link.

Soon afterwards the neophyte receives for the first time the spiritual attention (tawajjuh) of his new shaikh, combined with the instructions in the method of focusing the mind on the latifai qalb in order to prepare it for the reception of the spiritual grace (faid). The impact created on a subtle level through the transmission and infusion of the master’s tawajjuh aided by the repentant attitude of the novice creates a favourable condition for leaving an immediate imprint on the latter’s subtle heart-organ (naqshband) which opens the gates for the reception of the Divine effusion and participation at God’s mercy (abwāt-i rahmat).

The vehicle through which this spiritual attention is channelled towards the subtle heart-organ of the novice consists of the name of the Essence (dhikr-i ism-i dhāt). More precisely, the vehicle is in the subtle vibration produced by the repeated mental invocation of the word Alläh, which indicates the eminent role the dhikr plays especially during the initial stage of the spiritual career.

The enormous importance the transmission of the shaikh’s tawajjuh177 revests among the current techniques of the Mujaddidiyya is often said to date back to Khwāja Bahā al-Dīn al-Naṣḥbandī178 and must be considered as part of his wider effort to make the spiritual disciples more accessible to his contemporaries. It underlines the shift towards a growing responsibility of the preceptor in the disciple’s spiritual upbringing (tarbiyat), a tendency that can be observed throughout the past centuries till the present day. This goes far beyond the merely educational aspect (ta’līm) of transmitting

177. The term is derived from the Arabic root wajah implying the meaning of ‘to turn the face to’.

178. terHaar suggests that the emergence of tawajjuh as an essential part of the Naṣḥbandī methodology goes back to the khalīfa of Bahā al-Dīn, Khwāja Alā al-Dīn al-ʿAttār (d. 802/1400). Cf. Mediaeval Persian Sufism, p. 321.
the doctrinal knowledge, which had previously left the entire effort necessary for progress on the shoulders of the *sālik*. The importance of the spiritual attention gradually shifted more and more from the original attempt to enter into contact with the presence of a deceased person to the outright nourishing of the disciple’s inner states by the *pîr*. The shaikh came to occupy the role of a mediator (*wašîla*) between the spiritual presence of the ancestors of the lineage all the way back to Muḥammad and eventually to the unqualified Divine Essence, and the novice as last and most feable link in the spiritual chain. This concept is based on the traditional concept of a current of spiritual influence (*baraka*) that originates from Allāh passing through His messenger to the various intermediaries and members of the multiple chains spread throughout the Islamic world.

Conceived as effusion of Divine grace (*faiד*), it is the subtle energy of this spiritual current that ultimately nourishes the inner side (*al-bâṭin*) of the *murîd* and that contributes thereby to the growth of the inner guide. This idea stands at the base of the gradual elaboration of the concept of *tawajjuh* that gained increasing importance during the centuries from the *imām* of the order down to Mirzâ Jân-i Jânân, and that was to become the dominant feature in the teachings of masters of the *ṭariqa* after him, both in the Islamic and in the Hindu environment. It sanctioned an increasingly active participation of the shaikh as transmitter of these influences to the benefit of a more and more passive disciple and must be understood in the context of the growing difficulties in modern times in gaining spiritual sustenance through one’s own efforts. With this development, the relationship between *pîr* and *murîd* acquires a new dimension that helps to explain the value attributed to the submission of the ‘spiritual child’ to his mentor. For this reason, the authors we are here concerned with underline the necessity for the shaikh to follow with utmost attention every single step made by the disciple while proceeding on the path. As we have seen, this attention consists basically of imprinting the subtle vibration of the *dhikr* one by one on each of the disciple’s subtle organs beginning with the *laṭîfa-i qalb*. To achieve that goal, the shaikh must first of all fix his attention on the ancestors of the *ṭariqa*’s genealogy and seek their intercession in asking Allāh
to open the gates that grant access to the ocean of His endless bounty, called *fath-i bāb*.\(^{179}\)

Particular importance for the successful establishment of an efficient spiritual connection (*nisbat*) of this type is once again attributed by the author to Khwāja Bahā al-Dīn, the Naqshbandī, who bears the significant title of *mushkil-kushā* or ‘remover of difficulties’. He is followed by Khwāja ‘Ubaid Allāh Aḥrār, Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī and Mīrzā Mażhar Jān-i Jānān.\(^{180}\)

Once the connection is fully established, the shaikh’s *tawajjuh* now loaded with the spiritual power of the entire *silsila* hits the inner states of the disciple, thus, accelerating the process of impressing the Sacred name on the subtle organ concerned thereby facilitating the practitioner’s own efforts. While turning the attention on the subtle organs concerned, the shaikh is said to be in a position to recognise and check the extent to which the subtle vibration transmitted by the impact of this current has penetrated into the seeker’s *laṭīfa*, a capacity that allows him to decide when and how to proceed in the practice.\(^{181}\) This gift of spiritual insight and the connected ability to establish the condition of the inner states even of a complete stranger are frequently mentioned among the peculiar faculties with which the masters of this order are endowed and they constitute an important criteria for the qualification of its masters.\(^{182}\)

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180. If the disciple is physically absent, the use of a mental image in support of this technique is said to allow the master’s spiritual attention to reach its destination over great distances. The wide use of this device is reflected in numerous letters of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān, Shaikh Muḥammad Maṣūm and Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī. The duration fixed for a successful session may vary but is given as an arch of time that embraces one hundred breaths. *MnS*, pp. 87-8/116.

181. The procedure at the very beginning of the spiritual journey is also described by Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī who mentions his own first experience while joining at the service of his preceptor Khwāja Bāqī Billāh. Cf. *Maktūbāt* I, no. 290.

182. Shāh Abūl Ḥasan describes the particular faculty of his father and spiritual guide, Shāh Abūl Khair, who could focus his spiritual attention on the eyes of his disciples in order to ascertain their inner
This process lasts from the very beginning until the substitution of the outer physical master with the inner, non-human guide said to reside in the innermost part of the heart and to which corresponds the rise of virtuous faith. In its course the task of the aspirant adept is to elaborate an inner readiness for the reception of this current of grace, sometimes described as ‘emptying the vessel of the heart’. In order to achieve this goal he must concentrate on the face and outer appearance (şūrat) of his master trying to fix and preserve his image in his heart. In the technical vocabulary of the order, this method is referred to as rābīṭa, a term derived from the root rābaṭa bearing the meaning of ‘to tie, to fix, to fasten’, alternatively refused to as taṣawwur-i shaikh. More precisely, it denotes more precisely the application of the spiritual attention on the relationship between master and disciple whereas tawajjuh in its general definition can imply a manifold direction, either of the shaikh towards his disciple or the other way round or of both towards either the spiritual ancestors and the prophet or even directly towards God.

The glance (dīdār) received during the association with a perfect saint who has himself attained to the degree of direct contemplation of the Divine Being (maqām-i mushāhada) and who has, therefore, had experience of the irradiations connected to It, that can be safely chosen by the seeker of Truth for the realisation of this sort of bond with the aim of being immersed in the perpetual remembrance of Allāh. It is the company of lights, revealing the condition of their inner states. The impact of this current is described as so intense as to provoke an immediate agitation and trembling of the limbs of the person concerned. Cf. MnS, pp. 87/116.

183. The author of the Ma‘mūlāt-i Mazhariyya quotes a passage from Khwāja Bāqī Billāh’s Raka‘at in which the latter lists a series of progressive degrees of tawajjuh meant to transmute the disciple’s sins and vices caused by the lack of real faith (kufr) into beautiful virtues. MuM, p. 41.


185. MnS, pp. 41/63.
such a saint to whom the tradition attributes the prophetic saying of ‘those who are the companions of Allāh’\textsuperscript{186} which is perceived as a preliminary condition for reaching the station of those who sit next to Allāh. So, the concept of association (ṣuḥbat) with a particular saint which may be intended both as a loose relationship with a group of saints, for instance at a holy place or a mosque, and as the close and intimate relation-ship between pīr and murīd in the context of an institutionalised order, appears to bear close resemblance to the concept of satsāng known in the devotional tradition of the bhakti-movement of mediaeval and more recent Hinduism. In both cases it includes the idea behind the Sūfī concepts of tawajjūh and rābiţa for which it represents the necessary precondition, as the following sentence suggests:

\begin{quote}
yak zamāna ṣuḥbat bā awliyā’behtar az ᵃzd sālhā-yi bā-riyāz.
\end{quote}

To enjoy the company of the saints for a single moment is better than one hundred years of austerity.

The shaikhs describe the performance of this method thus:

\begin{quote}
... [the disciple] should focus his sight on a spot between the two eyebrows on the front of the spiritual perceptor’s face and imagine that nothing else exists; trying to erase one’s own self, the disciple should imbue himself with the qualities of the shaikh’s blessed existence. As long as he remains at the feet of his master, he should equally try to maintain this mental bond (rabīt-i khayālī) until the quality focussed on is fully acquired and the shaikh’s outer picture (ṣūrat) remains impressed in [the disciple’s] power of imagination (quwwat-i khayālī) even during the former’s physical absence. He should either imagine [the master’s] outer form in front of his heart or maintain his vision inside the chamber of the heart or try to project one’s own outer form into that of the shaikh. ...\textsuperscript{187}
\end{quote}
Well aware of the danger of being accused of shirk and bid‘at which have frequently been hurled against them by the exoterists and by scriptural literalists, the Naqshbandi authorities have always tried to defend their position pointing out the qualitative differences between the spiritual method of rābi‘a and tašawwur-i shaikh and profane attempts to represent the transcendent principle through outer images. However, the extremely subtle difference intercurring between the two often escapes the attention of superficial observers, and the interesting hints made by Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān regarding the Hindu way of idol-worship prove the subtle approach adopted by some Naqshbandī leaders towards this delicate problem was well grounded.
Socio-political circumstances and religious environment

The shift of this particular branch of the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya Mażhariyya from the original Islamic environment into a Hindu context occurred at a time when many parts of Indian society had begun to feel the impact of European colonial rule in numerous fields. The aggressive mentality of colonial rulers who aimed at establishing a political, material and cultural hegemony over the indigenous environment caught large segments of the traditionally educated Indian urban class unprepared and challenged its ability to react against this domination trying to provide concrete answers to the impact with modernity.

The new system and the internal tensions it caused led to the rise of a series of social and religious movements, each reflecting different shades of intellectual response to Western influence. These reactions ranged broadly from the call for profound social and religious reforms ready to sacrifice many essential aspects of the inherited tradition on the altar of rationalism typical of the vision imported by the British colonialists and mostly Protestant missionaries to an integral traditionalism rejecting any kind of innovation considered
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incompatible with the ancient indigenous values. Typical examples of the former are represented by the Brahmo-Samaj, founded in 1828 around the Bengali intellectuals Ram Mohan Ray (1772-1833) and Dwarka Nath Tagore (1794-1846) in the Hindu upper class environment of Calcutta,\(^1\) by the Arya-Samaj founded in 1875 by the Gujarati brâhmaṇa Dayananda Sarasvati (1824-83)\(^2\) and by the reform movement initiated among Muslims by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān (1817-98).\(^3\) Worth mentioning leading figures on the other side of the spectrum include Śrī Rāmākrṣṇa Paramahāṃsa (1834-86) and some regional movements including that promoted by the Śāṅkarācārya of Puri or the Gorakṣā (‘Defence of the cow’) movement initiated by Svāmī Kārpatrājā at Benares.

Significantly, most of these reform movements were promoted by high-caste Hindus who identified the cause of India’s weakness \textit{vis-à-vis} modernity in the degeneration of its sacred traditions into superstitious idol-worship and the corrupt ritualistic monopoly held by members of the orthodox priestly class. In many ways similar to their Muslim counterparts at Deoband, Delhi and other parts of northern India, they, pledged for a return to the original purity of the presumed golden age which somehow reflected the ideas predominant during and after the European Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and which lay at the base of the attitudes of the very colonial class they often so vehemently opposed.

Although the criticism of these reformers was outwardly similar to that advanced by many renowned saints and other traditional religious authorities in previous centuries, the

\(^2\) An extensive account of this major North Indian reform movement that lives on till the present day is given by J.N. Farquhar, \textit{Modern Religious Movements in India} (1918), pp. 101-26.
reaction promoted by these new leaders was itself often imbued with elements of that very modern mentality which it so vehemently denounced. The attempt to combine both religious and social reform on a scale beyond the limited context of a particular tradition or social group, involving indiscriminately all sections of Hindu society, was an unprecedented phenomenon which proved too sharply opposed to the traditional spirit of Indian culture to successful in the long term, at least beyond the restricted sphere of the high-caste Westernised bourgeoisie living in the greater urban centres.

It is on the background of this religious and social ferment characteristic for late nineteenth-century India that the passage of the esoteric heritage of the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya into a particular Hindu environment must be at least partially envisaged. An exhaustive analysis of the socio-historical background that accompanied this development is complicated by the scarcity of reliable contemporary written sources and is further rendered difficult by the reluctance of the present authorities to disclose details of the order’s history during that period. It is, however, possible to detect a series of factors favourable to this encounter of Islam and Hinduism at a time when the relations between the two communities were becoming increasingly strained as a result of the *divide et impera* policy pursued by the colonial government.

Mahâtmâ Râmcandra Saksenâ, the charismatic leader of the Hindu Naqshbandîs, as well as most of his successors in that line, were born into one of the twelve subcastes of the north-Indian Kâyasth community whose members had for centuries served in the administrative and military service of India’s ruling Muslim dynasties, especially during the Mogul era. Prolonged contacts with the Muslim aristocracy both in the courts of the important centres of power and in the countryside saw the Kâyasths acquainted not only with Persian, the official language and administrative medium till 1837 and its associated literary

4. It was during the reign of the Mogul emperor Akbar (r. 1565-1605) that his ancestors were officially rewarded for their loyal services. Cf. Bhogâv — atit se vartamân, pp. 77-9.
culture, but also acquire familiarity with the fundamental concepts of Islam.

We know that both, Rāmcandra and his brother, Raghubar Dayāl, underwent in their childhood a period of training with a Muslim scholar who instructed them in Persian and Urdu besides the fundamental skills of the art of poetry and the basic tenets of Islam. These essential requirements of a young Kāyasth under the old order prior to the imposition of European rule were integrated with an acquaintance with the customs of their caste and the associated rituals regarding domestic worship. The biographies reveal that Rāmcandra’s family was firmly embedded in the Ramaite devotional tradition prevalent in Awadh the scriptural authority of which was based on the Rāmāyaṇa and the Rāmacaritmānasā.

Notwithstanding their Hindu heritage, the young Kāyasths were, therefore, acquainted with many aspects of Islamic culture and way of life and were, thus, facilitated in the reception and assimilation of an esoteric component from the latter. Although they belonged to a formerly respected and prosperous social class thanks to their privileged relations with the local Muslim aristocracy, their ritual status in the orthodox Hindu hierarchy did not qualify them for apprenticeship in the sacred sciences, leaving them dependant for the completion of their often elaborate rituals on the services of the priestly class. The rapid decline of Muslim power which was sealed by the formal abolition of the Mogul empire in 1857 and the consequent passage of the

5. Although the Kāyasth community occupies a somewhat ambiguous position in the Hindu ritual hierarchy derived from their obscure origin, the peculiar rituals, i.e., that pertaining to the vivāha nuptial rite are extremely elaborate and require the services of a highly esteemed hotra of Kannauj brāhmaṇas.

6. The names of the two Kāyasth brothers, Rāmcandra and Raghubar Dayāl, suggest the family’s adherence to the Ramaite devotional tradition current among most Kāyasth families in the eastern Ganges plains. A shift in the clan’s devotional tradition may, however, have occurred with its migration during the sixteenth century from the Braj-deśa, heartland of the Kṛṣṇa cult, to Awadh, associated with Lord Rāma.
country’s administrative system to British control deprived many north Indian Kāyasts of their traditional social function. As a result, many of them were compelled either to migrate from their homeland Awadh and in the Doāb to one of the nominally independent princely states in the west or the south (e.g., Gujarat, Sind, Hyderabad) which still largely preserved a traditional Muslim administration,7 or to gradually adapt themselves to the circumstances under the new system while losing many of their former privileges.

The consequences the latter alternative implied are impressively documented in the case of Rāmacandra’s ancestors, who witnessed the loss of their inherited jāgīr around the town of Bhogaon in the Mainpuri and Farrukhabad districts of the United Provinces during or shortly after the 1857-8 War. This was followed by the subsequent loss of the family’s remaining privileges and belongings during the final years of the last century as a consequence of a legal dispute over the repayment of accumulated debts to the former chief of Mainpuri. The sudden lack of a guaranteed income and the contemporary change in the requirements for qualifying for a post in the colonial administration had a serious effect on the life of this once wealthy family and plays a non-indifferent role in the early history of this Hindu Sūfī lineage.

Rāmcandra Saksenā, provided only with a degree from the local English medium school, struggled to obtain a post as clerk in the town’s tax excise department which hardly allowed him to provide his family with the bare minimum of subsistence. Even more modest was the situation of his younger brother Raghubar Dayāl who could never hold a fix position anywhere forcing him and his family into a life of utmost poverty and hardship. Only from the second generation onwards, with Raghubar Dayāl’s son Brj Mohan Lāl and his nephews Omkār Nāth, Rādhe Mohan Lāl, etc.,8 it is possible to observe a gradual

7. For Kāyasth migration to Hyderabad, see Karen Leonard (1977).
8. Encouraged by his paternal uncle Rāmcandra to pursue his studies, Brj Mohan Lāl became a highly ranking officer in the Police Department of the United Provinces while his eldest son and present-
improvement in the social and economical background of this Saksenā family which reflects their successful adaption to the newly introduced standards of education and the perpetuation of the Kāyasth’s traditional role under the changed circumstances.

The question as to how far the transition from pre-colonial social patterns to the modern age is relevant to the development of the spiritual discipline these Kāyasths inherited from the Mujaddidī shaikhs is complex. It combines with the more general question as to how far the very impulse for transmitting initiation into an orthodox Sūfī order to Hindus should be understood within the historical frame during which it occurred. The first explicit sign of a departure from the strictly orthodox Mujaddidī positions that had hitherto guaranteed the continuity of the silsila’s tradition within the folds of Sunni Islam came from Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan Naṣīrābādī during the first half of the nineteenth century when he entrusted one of his disciples with the task of opening up the tariqa to Hindus. Although the available sources do not reveal details about this pivotal figure in the Na‘īmiyya lineage which would allow for definite conclusions regarding the possible grounds inducing this leader to take such an unprecedentedly bold step, it is noteworthy that it occurred at a time of radical political and cultural transformation.

The second half of the nineteenth century not only witnessed the rise of many of the above mentioned social reform movements more or less directly derived from contact with modern thought, but also saw the revival of earlier established spiritual traditions in northern India. Many of these bore close affinities with the mediaeval sant traditions that had contributed considerably to the spiritual history of northern India since the times of Kabîr and Gurū Nānak.9

The sants are known in the West more for their prevalently humble social background and their open defiance of orthodox religious authority expressed through the powerful means of fervently devotional verses, rather than for the sometimes elaborate doctrines that developed into an institutionalised body of esoteric teachings under their successors. Mostly hailing from the Vaiṣṇava background within the Hindu tradition, they appeared almost contemporarily in various regions of the subcontinent, proclaiming a simple and direct approach towards the Sacred through sincere devotion (*upāsanā*) and loving surrender to the Supreme Lord (*prem-bhakti*).10

Later, a series of outstanding figures of this current whose spiritual affiliation remains in most cases shrouded in mystery, came to be regarded by their disciples and followers as the fountainhead of a distinctive esoteric tradition each of whom developed over the next generations a peculiar doctrinal body, methodology and regular lineage for the transmission of spiritual authority (*paramparā*), generally known as *panths* (lit. ‘spiritual paths’, very similar to the Sufi concept of ʿtarīqa).

As such, the Kabir-panth in the eastern Gangetic plain and the adjacent Vindhya mountain range, the Nānak-panth in the Punjab, the Dādū-panth which developed around Dādū Dayāl (1544-1603) in Gujarat and southern Rajasthan, but also the successors of the renowned Bengali sant Mahāprabhu Śrī...
Caitanya (1485-1533) in Bengal and Orissa, and later in the Braj-Deśa around Mathurā and Vṛndāban to name only some of the best known examples, were largely successful in revitalising the appeal of India’s spiritual heritage from within while extending their message of unconditioned and unrefrained love for the Divine down to the humblest strata of Hindu society.

The call for participation of all social classes in the transcendent truths through an immediate passionate longing and total self-surrender either to the chosen divinity in the guise of its personal attributes (saguṇa) or to the unqualified abstract Supreme Being (nirguṇa), as in the case of the above-mentioned panthās continued under such later figures as Tukārām (1598-1649) in Maharashtra, Paltū Sāhib of Ayodhya (1757-1825) and Cārandās (1703-82) at Delhi.11 The latter, although originally hailing from the Mewāt region in northern Rajasthan, was a contemporary and fellow citizen of Shaikh Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān.

These figures were in time followed by other generations of sants. Amonge these, we find Tulsī Šāhib Hāthrasī (1763-1843) the sant of the Braj region. According to tradition, he was the son of a high-ranking aristocrat in the Marāṭhā empire who decided to abandon his worldly career in search of a spiritual guide finally settling down in Hathras, a small town between Agra and Aligarh, where he soon rose to the rank of a revered saint among the local population.12

As far as we can ascertain from the abundant though often heavily hagiographical literature that has developed around the leading authorities, it was through Tulsī Šāhib that Lālā Śiva Dayāl Singh (1818-78), the founder of the Rādhāsoāmī Satsang which was the last great sant paramparā to insert itself into the precedent tradition, was awakened to the message and teachings


of a living *sant*. A member of the Punjabi Khatri community\(^{13}\) whose ancestors were linked to the Nānak-Panth based on the teachings of Guru Nanak, Śiva Dayāl Singh was to establish a newly shaped devotional tradition in the second half of the nineteenth century. The instructions he began to deliver from 1861 onwards to the members of his small *satsang* at Agra were collected and posthumously edited by his successor Rāi Śaligrām (d. 1898) in a work comprising two-volume and entitled *Sār Bacan* (The essential message), written in Hindī prose and verse, which remains the most important Rādhāsoāmī scriptural authority recognised by all branches till the present day.\(^{14}\) Although soon after his death the lineage began to witness a number of schisms that led to the offspring of numerous independent and rival branches, each with its own doctrinal elaborations and peculiar methodology, the organisation and its teachings as a whole have preserved a degree of homogeneity that justifies its inclusion *in toto* in the mainstream *nirguṇa* devotional context, albeit as a more recent adaptation of its mediaeval forerunners.\(^{15}\)

13. Many members of this caste derive the term *khatrī* from the Sanskrit *kṣatriya*, thus, claiming a noble descent as warrior-aristocrats. This claim, however, contrasts with their main occupation as merchants, traders or money-lenders, reason for which they are often associated with the vaisiṣṭya or baniyā caste. Their social background, thus, resembles closely to that of the Kāyasths.


15. Regarding the historical background and the teachings of this spiritual tradition from a scholarly point of view, see M. Juergensmeyer, *Radhasoami Reality: the logic of a modern faith* (1991), and Daniel Gold (1987). Cf. also Caturvedi (1964), pp. 789-818. Rāi Śaligrām Śāhib Bahādur, a Kāyasth by birth was a government official in the Post Service and the first Indian to reach the position of Postmaster-General of the United Provinces; he is said to have turned towards spiritual life after witnessing the cruelties of the 1857-8 War. He finally recognised his master in Svāmī Mahārāj, the title attributed to Śiv Dayāl Singh by his followers, and served him until the latter’s death when he himself assumed the charismatic leadership of the order, organising and invigorating the *satsang* into
Such connections are strikingly put in evidence by Kabîr’s frequent representation as archetype of a perfect sant and alleged avatâra of a spiritual principle which manifests itself from time to time to a few extraordinary human beings, and by the close similarity encountered in several key issues of the Râdhásoämî teachings with those prevalent in the Dharmadâsî branch of the Kabîr-panth.\footnote{16} Juergensmeyer shows the resemblance in style and content of Tulsî Şâhib Háthrasî’s main work, the Ghaṭ Râmâyaṇa,\footnote{17} the reading of which is strongly recommended by many Râdhásoämî authorities, to a treatise very popular among the Dharmadâsîs, the Anurâg Sâgar (‘Ocean of Love’),\footnote{18} as well as to the poetry of Dariyâ Şâhib Bihârî (1674-1780), a poet-saint related to the Kabîr-panth who is highly revered by the Râdhásoämîs. This closeness leads him to presume a direct link between the medieval sant-tradition and what he calls ‘esoteric santism’ of more recent region, even if admittedly ‘important differences between the two remain’.\footnote{19}

There are also other elements favouring the idea of continuity between the ideals of the mediaeval sants and the more recent

\footnote{16} For a short but comprehensive description of the cosmological doctrines of this second main branch of the Kabîr-panth derived from Kabîr’s disciple Dharmadâs, see F.E. Keay, Kabîr and his followers (1995), pp. 135-49.

\footnote{17} The Hindî edition of this work has been published from the Belvedere Press, Allâhâbâd, in 1911.

\footnote{18} This work originally written in Hindi, is available also in English, tr. by R.K. Bagga and ed. by Russell Perkins under the title Introduction to the Ocean of Love: The Anurag-Sagar of Kabir (1982).

manifestations of this sort of piety. These include the stress on the possibility of gaining access to the path of Truth while outwardly remaining involved in the worldly affairs as a householder (grhausthi), even if the choice to cut all worldly ties in order to dedicate one's entire attention to devotional exercises is seldom outrightly rejected, nay sometimes openly tolerated, as in the Dharmaṣṭaṇḍ branch of the Kabir-panth. In this context, the Vaiṣṇava background of most sants is likely to play a certain role since, unlike its Śaiva counterpart, it lays a stronger emphasis on a direct involvement in worldly action that contributes to the maintenance of the cosmic order (dharmā), thereby, reflecting the role of the avatāras.

The attitude of these sants comes curiously close to that assumed by the Naqshbandīs summoned up in the formula of 'solitude amidst the crowd' (khilwat dar anjuman). This principle was first sanctioned around AD 1200 as one of the tariqa’s fundamental pillars by Khwaja 'Abd al-Khaliq al-Gujdawani who claimed, that his innovative methods had been inspired by al-Khidr, and culminates in Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi’s emphasis on the prophetic principle that found numerous imitators since the beginning of the second millennium of Islam. It reflects itself, moreover, in a number of peculiar techniques, like that of the silent invocation of the sacred name (dhikr-i khafti), which not only constitutes a distinctive of the Naqshbandiyā among the esoteric orders of Islam, but also shows some curious similarities with the ajapa-japa method of inner meditation on the name of the Supreme Principle which is current in the Kabir-panth and Dādū-panth.20

All these considerations lead us back to the Hindu grhausthis at Kānpur and Fatehgarh whose lineage reunites the esoteric heritage of both Islamic taṣawwuf through the initiatory link with the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya and the sant paramparā by means of their authority in the Kabir-panth received through Svāmi Brahmānanda. The first link of this particular lineage consists of the figure of Mahātmā Rāmcandra Saksena,

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20. For the nirguṇa use of this method, see Savitri Shukla, Sant Sāhitya kī sāmajik evam sāmkṛtik prsthabhūmi (1963), p. 281.
affectionately referred to by his followers as Lālājī Mahārāj, who holds the rank of primary authority and initiator of this new spiritual tradition. At the same time, his death constitutes the point of departure for a successive fragmentation and ramification, frequently encountered among similar lineages. Author of a number of booklets, treatises, letters and other texts which still occupy a fundamental position among the Hindu initiates of the order’s various branches, it was Rāmcandra who, on the explicit request of his Naqshbandī shaikh, began to elaborate the shape of a spiritual discipline that reunites components of both traditions into an allegedly universal message suitable to the particular circumstances prevalent in our times.

As emerges from the sources, Rāmcandra perceived this task as just one further step in a natural process that tries to counteract the gradually decreasing intellectual capacities and spiritual qualifications of humanity through a gradual but continuous externalisation of the ancient esoteric wisdom in order to guarantee its preservation for the generations to come. An important element in this general development is represented by the ‘science of the subtle centres’ (‘ilm-i laṭā‘if, cakra-vidyā), the fundamental cornerstone of the Mujaddidi tradition whose authorities consider it a major contribution of the ṭariqa’s ancestors, especially of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī.

In the introductory chapter of one of his major works that deals with various aspects of this science, Rāmcandra states:

21. This honorific title, together with that attributed by the Hindus to Shāh Faḍl Ahmad Khān (Huḍūr Mahārāj), recalls the titles of the Rādhāsoāmī masters and is probably a reverential imitation of this order, which may have acted as example in many other ways.

22. It may be recalled that Shāh Faḍl Ahmad Khān himself maintained regular contacts with the Svāmī of the Kabīr-panth.

23. It is interesting to note that even the masters of the Rādhāsoāmī Satsang mention Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī, referred to as Mujaddid Alf-i Thānī, as one of their predecessors in the sant tradition; cf. Sar Bacan: Prose (Dayal Bagh version), pp. 29-30. Other authors mention the Chishtī shaikh Mu‘īn al-Dīn Chishtī (d. AD 1236) among other Muslim authorities as manifestation of the supreme spiritual principle.
The great spiritual authorities of both [Hindu and Muslim] traditions who after careful investigations have transmitted the knowledge of this science, had long since practised its perfectioning realisation; but on one hand its transmission at that time did not require a detailed explanation regarding the colour, form, name, sound vibration and effect of each of these [subtle organs] by leaving any written testimony of it to their disciples or to those coming after them, on the other hand due to their particular virtue they did not discuss any of its related aspects through words; nay rather they taught it to their present disciples through direct experience and, wherever necessary, assisted them through subtle hints since it had been an established custom for disciples during ancient times to remain for sometime with their master in order to receive his practical instructions, as appears from the Upaniṣads. . . .

In this passage, the Rāmcandra hints at an underlying parallel in both traditions of the ancient methods of transmitting esoteric knowledge through subtle allusions and direct experience. These, it is claimed, did not yet call for an explicit description of any contingent details regarding this science due to the innate ‘particular virtues’ (khāṣṣ maṣlaḥāt se) of those concerned with it. Interestingly the author, moreover, asserts the existence of two independent traditions regarding the science of the subtle centres within both Hinduism and Islam, maintaining that its investigation had been carried out by the leading spiritual authorities of all sacred traditions (har mulk ke mahātmāon aur buzurgon ne . . .).

The means of transmission of this subtle science and, further, of the entire spiritual path were, according to the author of these lines, originally of an exclusively inner nature. Here and there they were integrated by oral explanations which did not, however,

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24. TP, pp. 23-4. This work, originally compiled in Urdu, was first published in Hindi in 1941 by Rāmcandra Saksenā’s son Jag Mohan Nārāyān and has since been republished twice in the limited number of 1,000 copies in 1964 and 1971.
require any written record. As an example of this ancient method he cites the authors of the Upaniṣad who formulated the metaphysical doctrine according to the pattern of question-and-answer passing it on from master to disciple through the generations. The sacred knowledge they contain is defined as brahma-vidyā (lit. knowledge of the Supreme) and constitutes the core of the Veda, the Vedānta, which consists of the final and spiritually most elevated part of that ancient tradition.

According to Rāmcandra, this pattern remained valid and efficacious for a very long time in history and confirms the unaltered perpetuation of this practice down to the next important stage in India's spiritual history which simultaneously provides us an indication of his own affiliation:

In the Upaniṣads, the entire transmission of knowledge occurred through subtle hints (ishāra) expressed in the form of question and answer between master and disciple. The oral teachings of Janāb Kabīr Šāhib, Nānak Šāhib, Dādū Šāhib and Tulsī Šāhib of Hathras still consist entirely of these subtle allusions. . . .25

Here the Hindu master indicates the link he perceives between the ancient Vedic tradition preserved by brāhmaṇa orthodoxy with the mediaeval sants down to the more recent examples of sants' piety. It also provides evidence for the other source from which he derives his inspiration and confirms his contacts with the Hindu environment beyond the well documented connection with authorities of the Mujaddidiyya.

According to Rāmcandra, despite the highly allusive language used by these illustrious saints, who were seldom bothered about preserving any records of their teachings, their disciples began to collect the sayings and oral instructions of their teachers in order to preserve them as authoritative guidelines for later generations.

Further on, Rāmcandra describes a third step in the

unfolding of the initiatic doctrine undertaken by later authorities:

. . . thereafter, the process of disclosing in major detail through explicit explanations the hitherto hidden secrets [of the sacred doctrine] has been undertaken by the blessed personalities of Janāb Ālīmaqām Rāī Śāhīb Śaligrām Sant, Janāb Devī Śāhib Sant Mūrādābādī and Pandit Brahmaśāṅkarjī Śāhib. . . . But the way Mahārishi Śivbratīlāl — may the paramātmā grant him the fruits of his efforts! — has taken up the challenge of unfolding [it] in an extremely detailed way presenting its sacred and hidden secrets (muqaddas o poshīda bhed) without any hindrance in front of the whole world has so far remained unmatched.26

Presumably, the series of names listed in this paragraph indicates those authorities to which the author feels most immediately indebted for authentic first-hand information regarding the late sant tradition. The first of these, Rāī Śāligrām alias Ḥuḍūr Mahārāj (1828-98), was the Kāyasth successor of Śiv Dayāl Singh (Soāmijī)27 and organiser of the Rādhāsoāmī Satsang at Agra. Credited with building up an efficient administration, he elaborated numerous rules that regulated the devotional practices of the satsang and published the recorded oral teachings of his satgurū amplified by his own comments, thus providing a solid doctrinal base for the growing numbers of the order.28 When Rāī Śāligrām passed away in 1898 Rāmcandra Saksenā was just 25. Although it is nowhere recorded in the sources available to us, a personal encounter between the two

26. TP.
28. Cf. supra, p. 276 and Juergensmeyer (1991), pp. 36-44. The first Hindī edition of this text is dated 1884, published from the Prayag Press at Allahabad where Ḥuḍūr Mahārāj was stationed before his retirement in 1887.
cannot be altogether excluded in view of the latter’s early acquaintance with Svámi Brahmánanda, the Kabír-panthí he regularly met at his hometown, and his well documented first encounter with Sháh Fadl Ahmad Khán in 1891. Both events confirm his early spiritual inclination and suggest that the young Hindu may have well looked for inspiration among the authorities of the Rádhásoámi Satsang.

However, it is more likely that Rámcandra’s contacts with the leaders of the Rádhásoámi family occurred with the third link in the satsang’s main Agra line of succession (Soámibágh), Paṇḍit Brahmaśánpkar Miśra (1861-1907), reverentially titled Maháráj Šáhib among his followers. A bráhmaṇa by birth working as a government official in his hometown Benares, he joined the satsang in 1885 and emerged as one of its leading figures thirteen years later following the death of Húdúr Maháráj.29 After having spent sometime at Karachi and Hyderábád (Sind), he assumed the leadership of the spiritual community from Alláhábád where he was posted in the local accountant-general’s office. Following his retirement, he spent the rest of his life in his hometown Benares.30

Finally, Mahársi Śivabratalál (1860-1940), to whom Rámcandra was apparently very closely linked given the great reverence expressed for him and his work, was yet another disciple of Rái Śáligrám. He established his own satsang at Gopiganj near Benares in 1922. The mahársi, a contemporary of Rámcandra considered by Caturvedí a ‘very able and intelligent person’, is said to have spared no efforts to clarify some of the complicated aspects of the spiritual doctrines by giving simple explanations of them.31 Author of numerous works published as small pamphlets or in the shape of essays that used


30. At his former residence near the Kabír-Caurá at Benares, a samádhi-sthána was erected after his death set in a beautiful garden where his affiliates use to gather on the occasion of the annual bhandárá.

to appear in periodicals such as *Sādhu, Faqīr, Sant* and *Santsamāgam*, he also wrote an extensive commentary on Kabir’s *Bijak* besides compiling a series of biographies of many renowned saints, using short tales to bring their concealed instructions closer to the common people’s reach. His works, written mostly in Urdu, have, however, not attracted much attention beyond the restricted circle of his followers and have been largely ignored by the mainstream Rādhāsoāmī authorities his works being nowhere explicitly quoted. From the available sources it appears likely that Rāmcandra drew much inspiration from these nineteenth century *sants* regarding the method of exposing his particular understanding of the inherited doctrines and methods.

The only name mentioned by Rāmcandra in relation to the last stage of open display of the spiritual doctrines who is not directly related to the Rādhāsoāmī is Bābā Devī Šāhīb Murādābādī (1841-1919) considered by Caturvedī as the first promulgator of the *santmat-satsang* adaptation of the older *sant* tradition. This enigmatic figure too seems to be in some way related to Tulsī Šāhīb Hāthrasī although, if the biographical data given for these two are correct, it is impossible that the two ever met. But, as Caturvedī asserts, many of his compositions show a close similarity to the concepts expressed in Tulsī’s *Ghaṭ Rāmāyaṇa*, to whose first published edition the Bābā wrote an extensive preface, and which also include a commentary on Gosvāmī Tulsīdās’ *Rāmacaritmānasā* entitled *The origins of the Bāla-kāṇḍa and the end of the Uttara-kāṇḍa.*

33. Daniel Gold’s *The Lord As Guru* traces the lineage of Pandit Faqīr Chand (1886-1981) of Hoshiyarpur (Punjab) back to Svāmī Śiva Dayāl Singh through Rāi Śāligrām and Mahārṣī Śivabratlāl (pp. 164-6 and p. 217). Probably the Mahārṣī’s best known disciple, his teachings differ slightly from those transmitted by the masters of the main Rādhāsoāmī Satsang.
34. For more details regarding this saint and the lineage that developed from him, see Caturvedī (1964), pp. 811-18.
35. *Ibidem*, p. 812. The first edition of this work was published from the Naval Kishore Press in Allahabad in 1896.
It is in line with the *sant* tradition that the spiritual affiliation of Bàbà Devī Śāhīb remains obscure, while the hagiographic sources somewhat ambiguously assert that he felt equal devotion towards all major *sants*. Apparently, he was the first to use the term *santmat* to describe the whole edifice of his teachings and methods and to declare its purpose of exhortation towards the devotion of God as *satsang*, a term that at any rate had already current in earlier periods among the members of the Nānak-panth. Both were later adopted by the Rādhāsōāmī masters and also by the Hindu Naqshbandīs at Fatehgarh and Kanpur.36 Quite significantly, Bàbà Devī perceived his *santmat* as open to the followers of all religions and spiritual affiliations to whom he recommended, without any need to abandon their original creed, the inner practice of his version of Kabīr’s *drṣṭī-yoga* and *sūrat-yoga*, two fundamental issues in his teachings. Among his numerous disciples, four are nominated by Caturvedī out of which Paramahamsa Menhīdās (1885- 19?), a Bihārī Kāyasth occupies a pre-eminent position not only for his role in the diffusion of his guru’s message but also for the authorship of many of Bàbà Devī’s recorded teachings which include his own additional doctrinal elucidations, especially his blend of concepts found in the ancient sacred texts with those obtained from the earlier mediaeval *sants*.37

As one can notice, the names of Rāmcandra’s four contemporaries listed in the last paragraph quoted all lead back to the

36. Though the use of these words is not unprecedented in the technical vocabulary of the *sants* — Kabīr frequently used the term *santmat* in his verses and among sādhus the term is nowadays diffusedly used to indicate the virtuous company of holy men — it is their technical connotation in this new context probably adopted from the Nānak-panthīs that constitute an innovative aspect; some masters of the Rādhāsōāmī lineage ascribe it, however, to Tulsī Śāhīb Hāthrāsī. Cf. Juergensmeyer (1991), p. 22 footnote 22.

37. On page 814 of his encyclopaedic work *Uttarī Bhārat kī Sant Paramparā*, Caturvedī presents a list of nine major works ascribed to Menhīdās out of which the first three, *Rāmacaritmānasā sār sāṭhik*, *Vinayapatrikā sār sāṭhik* and *Bhāvārth sahit Ghaṭ Rāmāyaṇa* are directly related to the works of the saint from Hāthrās, while others, such as *Veda Darśana Prakāśa*, *Gītā Yoga Prakāśa* and *Satsang Yoga* are closely concerned with the exposition of the sādhanā.
figure of Tulsí Śāhib Játhrasā whose name had appeared earlier in relation to the previous stage of doctrinal explication along with Kabir, Nānak and Dādu. This somewhat enigmatic figure, regarded as the spiritual instructor of the founder of the Rādhāsoāmī tradition, thus, appears as representing the principal nexus in the transition from the mediaeval sant tradition to its revival in the eighteenth century which reunites most of these modern sants.

Unfortunately, yet again no reliable information regarding the sources of inspiration of this sant nor any regular affiliation to one of the established panthṣ or any other sampradāya is available that would sanction the continuity in the transmission of this spiritual heritage. Also the link between the later members of this revived sant tradition whose teachings bear evident signs of a previous sant matrix, and Tulsī Śāhib or any other authority within a regular paramparā remains as mysterious as that of their early predecessors in the mediaeval period.

In this sense, the extremely scarce information one can gather from the available sources regarding Rāmcandra’s affiliation to the Kabir-panth expressed through indirect hints rather than by any univocal statement do not represent an exception but put him in line with the commonly repeated pattern that wants the sants to appear on the scene almost out of nowhere, legitimised by a sort of spontaneous initiation into the mysteries that claims to draw directly from the very source of Divine wisdom. But, as compared to other renowned sants, both in the mediaeval period and in more recent times, there is one important difference between the paramparā initiated by Rāmcandra and the many other traditions which developed along similar lines: the ascertained direct affiliation to a Śūfī silsila that not only provided its initiates a vital tie with a living spiritual heritage pertaining to Islamic esoterism, but moreover furnished its leaders with the background for the elaboration of a true spiritual synthesis between the subcontinent’s greatest and most widely diffused sacred traditions. It provides us, therefore, a tangible proof of the often supposed direct encounter between Islamic and Hindu spirituality within the folds of the sant tradition that sanctions the validity of this kind of
assimilation and which accounts for the numerous elements encountered in many sants’ teachings pleading in favour of such a theory possibly extendable also to other lineages.

This double affiliation accounts for the fact that, after delineating the process of progressive disclosure of the secret science in the Hindu environment, Rāmcandra describes a parallel development among the authorities of Islamic esoterism. Beginning with Abūl-Qāsim Junaid al-Baghdādī (d. 297/909) and Abū Yazīd al-Bištāmī (d. 261/875), two prominent Sūfis of the early period of Sufism and often considered as prototypes respectively of the ways of sulūk and jadhba, Rāmcandra includes in this first period also Shaikh Shams al-Tabrīzī (d. 639/1240), the spiritual preceptor of Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī. In his understanding this is the period it is characterised by the use of a purely allusive language expressed in metaphors not intelligible to non-initiates.

The second period includes ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jālānī (471/1079-561/1166) whose works are described as ‘extremely subtle’ and ‘containing deep secrets’ in front of whom ‘contemporary ulamā’ and faqīh had to acknowledge their impotence’. The imām of the Qādiriyya is followed by the Shaikh al-Akbar Muḥy al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (560/1165-638/1240) who ‘spared no effort in expounding the mysteries of the ‘ilm al-ilāhī in great detail discussing according to a well constructed pattern the relation that subsists between the absolute Being and the contingent Universe and its creatures’. According to Rāmcandra, the principles set out by Ibn al-ʿArabī served most later authorities as base and guideline for the description of their own spiritual experiences and teachings. Last of the renowned Sūfis mentioned for this intermediate period are Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī (604/1207-672/1273) and the author of the celebrated Iḥyāʾ iʿUlūm al-Dīn, Imām Abū Ḥamīd al-Ghazzālī (450/1058-505/1111), whose elucidations in the respective fields of tašawwuf and ethical conduct (ʿilm al-akhlāq) represent for Rāmcandra an extremely useful assistance in the quest for Truth by members of later initiatory orders (firqa o panthvāle).38
The third stage seen as representing a decisive break-through towards the elaboration of new ways of transmitting the esoteric knowledge is described thus:

Finally, the immeasurable treasure of explaining most painstakingly every single detail regarding the science of the subtle centres left behind for posterity by Ḥaḍrat Imām-i Rabbānī Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī Mujaddid Alī-i Thānī — the mercy of Allāh be upon him! — cannot possibly be expressed through words. Those who have investigated [the spiritual path] before him have not gone beyond the extent of using subtle metaphors without apparently taking any care in following any kind of logical order; but the deeply hidden mysteries disclosed by him stand yet unapproached never again to be reached by any other learned scholar or expert faqīr. The reason for which his blessed name has been decorated with the title of ‘renewer of the second millennium [of Islam]’ consists solely in the result of his new method of investigation (tahqīqat-i jādīd). The task of investigating and commenting this subtle science which had never been inquired into before has been undertaken by him in a very ample way.\(^\text{39}\)

This paragraph shows a reverence and respect for the founder of the Mujaddidiyya which does not fall short of that of any Muslim member of the tariqa and suggests its original authorship with our Hindu’s Muslim shaikh. It attributes to the ‘Divinely inspired leader’ a role very similar to that ascribed to some of the later sants and pleads in favour of the idea of a historical process traceable in the great spiritual traditions that develops naturally and independently from each other. However, the most interesting affirmation follows in the immediately subsequent paragraph:

. . . we can hence conclude that the paramātmā has granted the knowledge regarding this science of the

\(^{39}\) TP, pp. 26-7. Interestingly, also Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī figures among those great saints of the past mentioned by Śiva Dayāl Singh in Sūr Bacan.
subtle centres to those great authorities of every spiritual affiliation and distinctive sacred tradition of every culture who have appeared during the last period in the history of mankind (*zamāna-i ākhirī*). . . . 40

According to this statement, the science of the subtle centres, constitutes the latest step so far in the gradual externalisation of the way the sacred knowledge is revealed to those particularly gifted saints whose role consists of transmitting it to a sufficient number of qualified initiates in order to ensure its survival for posterity. Such a conception reflects the author’s traditional perspective which, in line with other contemporary *sant* authorities, sees the course of human history as a process in which the natural capacity of gaining deep spiritual insight among most people decreases at the same rate as the distance between them and the original source of it manifested from time to time in guise of a reviving spirit or founder of a new Divinely revealed message increases. 41

In this sense, Rāmcandra’s position agrees with the fact that the *cakra-vidyā* belongs, within the Hindu environment, to the Tāntrik doctrines of Laya-Yoga and Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga 42 which

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40. *TP*, p. 27.

41. This idea is closely connected with the cyclical conception of time expressed in the Hindu doctrine of the four cosmic eras (*caturyuga*) or the fourteen *manvantara* and the related doctrine of the *avatāras* or descents of the Divine into the world with the purpose to reestablish the cosmic order or to deliver a message. The second function comes close to the Semitic concept of prophecy according to which man beginning with Ādam is rescued from oblivion of his Divine origin by a series of prophets culminating with the prophet of Islam who delivered the final legislation to the present cycle that will be abolished only by the apocalyptic cataclysm.

42. The main conception of this variety of Yoga consists in the idea that the supreme power or *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* lies asleep in a state of latency, like a coiled snake, in the lowest of all subtle centres inside the human body the number of which is either seven, nine or more. Once this current of cosmic consciousness is awakened through the use of a series of techniques, it begins to rise step by step through a narrow channel (*suṣumnā*) connecting each of the subtle centres encountered on its way until reaching the union with its Lord and ultimate master, Śiva Parameśvara.
developed among the Buddhist siddhas and Śaiva nāths, the latter tracing their origin to Gorakṣa-Nāth (eleventh century AD) through his non-human master Matsyendra-Nāth, i.e., at a much later stage than the original Vedic tradition and the completion of its metaphysical component in the Upaniṣad. The Nāth doctrines on the other hand constitute one of the authentic sources of earlier sants like Kabīr and Nānak and hence represent the core tradition which developed in various forms over the centuries and to which ultimately also Rāmacandra apparently indebted.

Curiously, the last Sūfī leader to whom Rāmacandra attributes the rank of extraordinary authority in the field of the ‘science of the subtle centres’ does not belong to his own Mazhāhariyya sub-lineage, although he was linked to another branch of the Mujaddidiyya: Shāh Wali Allāh Dihlawī (1114/1703-1176/1762), the renowned contemporary of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān at Delhi, although being praised for the thorough investigation of aspects of this science in some of his numerous works, is nevertheless criticised for using a language and technical vocabulary (istilāḥat, paribhāṣā) too abstract and removed from common people’s understanding to be useful for infusing new vigour into the propagation of this important doctrine. As Rāmacandra argues, this renders the comprehension of his works extremely difficult if not impossible for exoteric scholars and for those less acquainted with the Islamic sciences. It appears, however, that Shāh Wali Allāh’s most important contribution to the reinterpretation of the doctrines of the Imām-i Rabbānī, in particular his revised model of the location and disposition of the subtle organs, played some role in the assimilation of the Hindu initiates into the lineage of Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān and his works were certainly available to them.

43. The work most specifically concerned with the science of the subtle centres is the Taḥżīmāt al-Ilāḥiyya; its contents are analysed in the article of the American scholar Marcia K. Hermansen bearing the title ‘Shāh Wali Allāh of Delhi’s arrangement of the Subtle Spiritual Centres (laṣṭā’if)’ in StI (1982), pp. 137-50.

44. For a general introduction to Shāh Wali Allāh, his works and his thought, see A. Bausani’s article ‘Note su Shāh Walī Allāh di Delhi’ in AIO (1961), pp. 93-147, and G. Jalbani, The teachings of Shāh Wali
After this enlightening insight into the two-fold spiritual heritage into which he inserts himself as the last link of a chain of illustrious figures operating the a continuous synthesis of transcendent unity beyond the diversity of different religious experiences, Rāmcandra begins to develop his own exposition of this science and the connected methodology. Purportedly, this is based largely on the instructions received through the ‘fortunate occasion of attending the company of my murshid’ and after a period of ‘deep going reflections on the hints’ they contained regarding the concealed mysteries and subtle points of taṣawwuf.45

The bulk of these elaborations are contained in two works, entitled Tattva-Prabodhini (‘The awakening of the essential elements’) and Kamāl-i insānī (The human perfection), both originally compiled in Urdu in the late 1920s.46 Besides these two texts which, as stated by Rāmcandra himself, remain largely focussed on aspects of the esoteric doctrine and methods taught in the Maḥāriyya Naímīyya line of the Mujaddidiya, he also composed a small treatise entitled Vedānta-Sāgara47 which sets out some of the order’s doctrinal fundamentals said to be based on the Vedantic legacy of the Upaniṣad. Yet another small but important work is the Santmat Darśana48 which delineates in

® Allah (1986).
45. TP, p. 28.
46. Later, these two works were translated into Hindi and published by his son Jag Mohan Narāyaṇ and his grandsons Akhileśa Kumār and Dineś Kumār in order to make them accessible to all those Hindu disciples who were not acquainjted with the Urdu script. The versions used for the present study are: Tattva-Prabodhani, Sri Ramcandra Publication League, Fatehgarh (U.P), 1971 (second Hindi edition) and Kamāl-i insānī, Adhyatmik Dhara Prakashan, Fatehgarh/Farrukhabad, 1973 (second Hindi edition).
47. Vedānta-Sāgara, Akhilesh Kumar Publications, Fatehgarh, 1964. This work has been translated into Hindi by a certain Thakur Karan Singh, a disciple of Rāmcandra, and its introduction has been written by his grandson, Akhileśa Kumār Saksena.
48. Santmat Darśana, Naqush Mum Ramchandra Mission, Fatehgarh, 1986. This work has been translated from Urdu into English (sie!) for the numerous disciples from areas other than the north-Indian Hindī belt, by Dr. Har Nārāyaṇ Sakenā, Fatehgarh, 1974 (third edition).
perhaps the most original way the ideas of Rāmcandra as an authoritative exponent of a twentieth-century sant doctrine. In addition to these, some notions regarding his thought and method of teaching can be obtained, here and there, in the posthumously assembled letter collection entitled Śrī Rām Sandeśa (‘The message of Lord Rām’), containing excerpts from about fifty selected letters addressed either to his shaikh or to his disciples during the period from 1922 to his death in 1931.

An attentive look at Rāmcandra’s written legacy suggests that it belongs to the final period of his life, i.e., long after his shaikh’s death in 1907 when, after a prolonged period of inner growth, absorption and elaboration of the instructions received, he finally felt ready to deliver his own guidelines for the spiritual discipline and to fix it in written records. Worried about the future of the paramparā in view of his approaching death, it was during those last years of his life that most of these works acquired their definitive shape, at a time when Rāmacandra felt the urgent need to provide his growing spiritual community with a coherent doctrinal corpus containing the essential tenets of his message.

The descriptions of Rāmcandra’s biographers and hagiographers regarding the oral teachings imparted in the


50. There are, moreover, a few minor compilations attributed to this author, such as the Bālkānda ke muta’allīq rūhānī tashrīḥ, a spiritual interpretation of the first part of the Rāmāyaṇa written in evident imitation of Tulsī Śāhīb Ḥāṭhrasī’s Ghaṭ Ramāyaṇa.

51. As mentioned earlier, it was not until 1914 that Rāmcandra, instigated by Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghanī Khān to whom he still looked as ultimate authority, began reluctantly to organise his satsang at his residence at Fategarh. In 1923, the first annual bhandārā was held there during the Easter week, an indication that by that time the satsang had acquired some consistency, both in terms of number of adherents and organisation.

course of his daily satsang reflect the image of an authoritative spiritual leader from a much earlier period. These show him to be well acquainted with the stories and teachings of the mediaeval saints as well as with the details regarding the Mujaddidī ṭarīqa. Although they lack the sort of systematic exposition useful for the uninitiated reader, these writings provide an indirect indication of the extent to which oral teachings still preserve their primary importance in the transmission of the sacred sciences. In fact, Rāmcandra and his descendants repeatedly condemn the alleged sterility of bookish knowledge and erudition, no matter how elevated their content, in the absence of the oral instructions imparted by a living master which infuse them with life.\(^53\)

This attitude reiterates the essential difference already described by Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān, between the ‘ilm-i huṣūlī and the ‘ilm-i ḥudūrī.\(^54\) It also accounts for the fact that none of the mediaeval ancestors of our Kāyasth sants, who were themselves often illiterate, ever bothered to provide a definitive frame of their teachings the shape of books and written records, in the manner more typical of their Sufi counterparts. Such a tendency begins to prevail only among much later Hindu masters and indicates an increasing anxiousness to preserve their message in an epoch of growing dispersion and increasing centrifugal tendencies.\(^55\) Rāmcandra’s writings can, therefore, rightly be

53. This genuinely traditional attitude provided the main difficulty during my research of written material since I was repeatedly reminded of the uselessness from the master’s point of view of such written records for any real comprehension of the spiritual discipline, an attitude that occasionally resulted in open refusal to allow me access to these works, which usually circulate only among a limited number of initiates.


55. As member of the Kāyasth community, Rāmcandra as well as his contemporary Mahāṛṣi Śivbrat Lāl were naturally inclined towards writing records as part of their traditional occupation since time immemorial. A striking example of this attitude is furnished by the various Rādhāśāmā masters, almost all of whom have compiled huge amounts of works, in particular Mahāṛṣi Śivbrat Lāl who has written hundreds of books and pamphlets explaining in every detail his and his masters’ teachings.

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considered as his spiritual testament, meant to be circulated among his intimate disciples after his death in absence of a living source of instruction, and as such they can be regarded as the gist of his spiritual career.

Rāmcandra’s teachings, can be roughly divided along two principal lines, thus following the classical pattern prevalent in the past. One covers the doctrinal background consisting of metaphysical and cosmological concepts which develop mainly along Hindu lines of thought, while the other is concerned with technical and methodological questions clearly recognisable as being derived from the heritage of the Mujaddidī tradition. Although these two aspects are occasionally intermingled with one another, they constitute an interesting example of an attempt to apply the methodology provided by a particular tradition to a doctrinal background belonging to another tradition, an experiment which, if successful, would justify the claims of universality advanced by this modern sant.

In the following sections, Rāmcandra’s works are, therefore, examined first for their doctrinal content and background. Thereafter, an effort is made to integrate this with the methodological aspect of his sampradāya in order to gain a comprehensive picture of this modern sant’s teachings.

The perception of metaphysical reality

The Hindu Rāmcandra turns to the sacred texts of his native tradition to set out a series of fundamental metaphysical and cosmological issues. His approach towards these fundamental doctrinal aspects largely follows the teachings of the nirguṇa sants who do not regard the Supreme Divinity as qualified by any personal attribute, although many of the concepts treated in his works betray his acquaintance with the classical texts of the Hindu tradition, mainly the Upaniṣad and the Bhagavad Gītā.

The sant doctrines are to a large extent a continuation and further adaptation of the ancient concepts expounded in the

Upaniṣad and the Vedānta-Sūtra through the Tāntrik perspective of the Nāthas.⁵⁶ Rāmcandra appears to confirm this continuity, for he starts his discussion in the Vedānta-Sāgara comment on the fundamental tenets held by the Vedānta, and hinting at the slightly diverging interpretations propounded by the founders of the different branches of the Advaita School, such as Śrī Śaṅkarācārya’s (AD 788-820) kevalādvaita, Śrī Rāmānujācārya’s (AD 1017-1137?) viśiṣṭādvaita, Madhvācārya’s (AD 1197-1276) dvaitādvaita⁵⁷ and Śrī Vālalbācārya’s (AD 1479-1535) śuddhādvaita.

It is the underlying concept of non-duality (advaita) as a negative description of the inexpressable all-transcendent metaphysical reality summarised in the Upaniṣadic formula neti-neti that constitutes for Rāmcandra the thread of continuity between the doctrines that constitute the jñāna-kāṇḍa of the śruti and its later re-elaborations in the Tāntrik environment on one side and the affirmation of absolute Divine unity (tawḥīd) as conceived by the Sūfis on the other. Elaborating on this concept of an all-transcending principle, alternatively referred to in the impersonal perspective of the nirguṇa-sants as paramātmā in the Sufi perspective as Allāh Ta‘ālā and the impossibility of describing it in positive terms without falling into the dilemma of simultaneously contradicting or limiting its underlying reality (tawḥīd kī dalīl khud radd-i tawḥīd hai),⁵⁸ Rāmcandra concludes that to comprehend the highest level of Truth one must presuppose Its reflection in every human being as a practically acknowledgeable experience (anubhava jñāna) rather than a purely speculative nation. These two entities, viz., the subject that affirm Truth and Truth by itself, appear initially separated by the veil of imaginative thought (wahm), a characteristic faculty


⁵⁷. According to the author, it is from this particular school that the elaborations of Dayānanda Sarasvatī, the founder and organiser of the Arya-Samāj, are derived.

⁵⁸. VS, p. 12.
of the human mind subject to the mental fancy of māyā, thus, providing an answer as to how the apparent duality between the subject that affirms unity and Unity in Itself came into being. In line with Kabīr who perceives the Supreme Reality as essentially impersonal and non-qualified by any contingent attribute (nirguna Brahman), Rāmcandra maintains that the Principle assumes Its imaginary qualification only when the human perception is covered by the veils of māyā, a condition that sanctions man’s peripheral position in the manifested world. According to the author of the Vedānta Sagara, this condition accounts for the initial bewilderment (udheś-bun) that befalls the mind on which this veil has fallen and which ‘revolves around the apparent existence of the universe (jagat) to his glance’.⁵⁹

These follows a discussion that asserts the ultimate futility of all speculative discourses aimed at describing the metaphysical Reality. In the typical mode of Kabīr and other sants, Rāmcandra and his followers repeatedly emphasise what they see as the deceitful vanity (mithyā) of such speculations. Stress is consequently laid primarily on the practical aspect of the spiritual discipline (sādhanā) imparted as a preliminary step towards gaining access to this Truth through an inner direct experience of the transcendent sphere which will eventually dissolve the apparent discrepancy between the viewpoint of the Vedānta and personal experience.

Like Kabīr, Rāmcandra, therefore, does not conceive an ultimately subsisting difference between the purely intellectual approach of the vedāntin, which envisages direct knowledge of the infinite nature of the Supreme (jñāna-mārga) through the thorough comprehension of the doctrine of non-duality, and the position held by the Tantra-Yoga which perceives the Supreme through a more indirect vision that takes account of the contingent position of the individual through the projection of the attributive modalities of the Supreme into the realm of contingency.

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⁵⁹. VS, p.12.
Yet another interesting hint at the link between the ancient metaphysical doctrines through those of Kabîr and his followers is provided by the author’s mention of the concept of śūnya. Rejecting the negative interpretation current among many Buddhist schools who interpret this term as a mere ‘void’, Râmchandra asserts that it is intended among sants as sun or mahâsun,\(^{60}\) i.e., the final goal beyond the realm of duality in the abode of Nirañjana or Narhari. Therefore, its implications again lie beyond any possible verbal description due to its essentially transcendent nature. Most interestingly, the author also disagrees with the Mujaddidi concept of ‘non-existence’ (‘adam), an essential tenet in Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindi’s shuhûdî doctrine, as a possible equivalent of the term śūnya, since if it is intended as an ultimate degree of achievement, it still implicates the correlative state of existence (hastî, wujûd) whereas Kabîr’s sun ultimately transcends any such residual trace of duality.

Râmchandra’s extremely synthetic account here touches on the doctrines of Śrī Râmānujācārya and Śrī Śaṅkarācārya who both acknowledge the unicity of the metaphysical Principle differing only nominally between each other due to an ultimately unreal spirit of opposition which does not subsist on the highest plane pertaining to the Supreme Identity.\(^{61}\)

Major attention is given by Râmchandra to Śrī Râmānuja’s viśiṣṭādvaita and to the doctrinal perspective of the later

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60. For śūnya in Buddhist Mādhyaṃika and Yogācāra schools, see M. Gopinatha Kaviraj’s article, ‘Śūnyavāda aur Vijñānavāda’ in Kaviraj-Pratibhā (collection of selected articles) (1984), pp. 204-14.

The term had already changed its negative connotation among the siddhas who followed the Vajrayāna current of Buddhism, from where it was presumably adopted in a gradually more positive assumption by the Nāths and later on by Kabîr for whom the term, often used in association with the term sahaja, indicates the realisation of Supreme Identity. Cf. Kabîr Granthavali, pada 154 and 164 and sâkhī 5.

The terms sun and mahâsun have acquired major importance also in the Rādhāsāmāi doctrines expounded in Śiva Dayāl Singh’s Sār Bacan where they designate, however, a lower position in the universal realms in correspondence to a state still subject to the law of birth and death. See M.G. Gupta (1994), pp. 154-6.

61 VS, p. 13.
chāyāvāda, both of which are more consonant with his own Vaiṣṇava background and certainly more compatible with the shuhūdî perspective held by the Mujaddidīs. These elements were certainly essential for the formation of his own position, which leads him finally to Rāmānanda (c. 1400-70?).

This renowned Vaiṣṇava saint who spent most of his life at Benares is traditionally considered to have been affiliated to Rāmānuja’s Śrī-sampradāya and is credited with having spread the upāsanā-mārga from his native southern India to the north. Often regarded as the wordly guru of Kabīr, he certainly played an important role in divulging the Rāma-bhakti among the humbler strata of the city’s Hindu society, as the list of his main disciples given by Nabhadās’ Bhaktamālā suggests. Rāmcandra, himself an affiliate of the Kabīr-panth, maintained the heritage of the Rām-nām as Kabīr’s favourite method of personal devotion. However, he does not hesitate to assert the ultimate superiority of Kabīr over the followers of the Śrī-sampradāya. Quoting some of the verses attributed to Kabīr, chosen from the Kabīr-Vāṇī and the Anurāg-Sāgar, he supports this alleged superiority by pointing out Kabīr’s repeated hint at the most sublime level on which Rāma is ultimately conceivable. This transcends all qualified conditions of the universal existence (triguṇa se nīyārā) beyond the secrets known to the gods in the deva-loka and constitutes the perennial metaphysical principle (nīj sār hai) that governs everything. The allusion to the fourth degree of


64. Nābhajjī, Bhaktamālā (1965).

65. The hint at the fourth plane refers to the āloka or the sphere nowhere situated in space which lies beyond the triple division of the cosmos common in Islamic esoterism and hinted at by the Hindu Gāyatri-mantra as om bhur bhuvah svah.
Rām beyond the three levels of cosmic existence points to the nirguṇa Brahman contemplated by the Vedānta:

\[
tīna lok ko sab koī dhāve, cauthe dev kā marm na pāe  
cauthā choḍ pañcam cit lāe, kahen kabīr hamre dhing āe
\]

Three realms are invoked by everyone, the fourth lies beyond the mysteries of the gods,
leaving the fourth while penetrating the fifth, this is the method of Kabīr.

The firm conviction of possessing the keys to a doctrinal vision widely diffused in the sant tradition from Kabīr to the Rādhāsāṁśis, regarded as superior to that held by the classical and post-classical schools that preceded them, leads Rāmcandra to assert that the followers of Rāmānuja’s viśiṣṭādvaita remained entangled in the comprehension of the first three levels, the stages corresponding to the qualified aspect of the Supreme (saguṇa Brahman) and its hypostasis as Lord of the manifested universe (Prajāpati or Īśvara). In reference to the dohā quoted that mentions a fifth level of intending Rāma as peculiar to the method of Kabīr, Rāmcandra declares that this fifth plane (pāda) corresponds to the satnāma, that is to say the highest aspect of Truth contained in seminal form in the Sacred Name identified with the akṣara, the unpronounc-eable syllable containing the ultimate synthesis of all sounds.

Nevertheless, even the very perception of the Name envisaged by both Kabīr-panthīs and Nānak-panthīs as oṁkāra, is

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67. VS, p. 15.
68. Rāmcandra describes the satnām as ‘the real name of the true master’, aimed at the ascent to the iṣṭapāda which can be perceived only through the guru. This name constitutes a sign of the Divine power which resounds in the innermost part of every human being. Its perception through the audible subtle sound-current is said to open the gates for a real spiritual ascent. Cf. VS, p. 16. For identification of the Brahman with the akṣara. Cf. Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, III.8.8.
regarded as representing a subtle veil between the contingent and the original uncontaminated Essence.

But the most surprising feature of Rāmcandra’s exposition is that in his opinion the Supreme Unity eventually transcends even the last possibly perceivable duality between the unqualified (nirguṇa) as in a sense still complementary to the qualified (saguṇa) along with the four planes mentioned in precedence. These planes are then assimilated to the five pādas described by the Upaniṣad in connection with the ‘knowledge of the quintuple fire’ (paṅcāgni-vidyā), a science regarding the course of the human soul after death traditionally reserved to members of the kṣatriya caste.69

Among other things, this science describes the gradual descent of the paramātmā into the sphere of contingent existence represented by the quintuple oblation to the fire. In the specific context, this descent constitutes the inverse process to that of the ascending path of spiritual realisation that has to be undertaken by the individual in order to achieve liberation (mukti), the most sublime human goal (paramārtha).70

The author’s assumption leads to numerous further assimilations and underlines impressively the intellectual acuteness at the base of the spiritual tradition represented by the grhausthī faqīrs of this paramparā. It proves, moreover, that the aim of the many hints provided in the opening pages of the Vedānta-Sāgara, none of which is discussed in explicit detail, is


70. In a later description by Rāmcandra’s grandson, Brj Mohan Lāl, the discussion returns once more to the paṅcāgni-vidyā connecting the heart as the seat of knowledge (jñāna) and experience (anubhava) of the quintuple light of the ātmā attaining to which one realises the Supreme Identity between ātmā and paramātmā. This final goal is also identified with the pure Essence (dhāt-i muṭlaq) described by the Mujaddidīs whereas the quintuple light and its corresponding name (Rāma) is associated with the quintuple planes of irradiation (tajalliyāt) introduced by the Ibn al-'Arabī mentioned also by the authorities of the Mujaddidiyya. Cf. AY, pp. 162-3. Cf. also Rūmī’s description of the different stages in the process of creation culminating in the human condition permeated by the Essence of the Divine.
to point towards the inherent unity that lies beyond the different language and forms of expression employed by various schools and traditions in the course of history. In this sense, any superiority or inferiority of these, rather than being implicit in their respective doctrinal perspectives, remains ultimately confined to the varying individual capacity of their followers to penetrate the hidden meanings they contain.

It also provides a basis for understanding how, once Rāmcandra leaves the metaphysical domain for a more contingent vision of the world, Sūfī, yogī, Kabīr-panthī and other notions are used alternatively in order to weave, in imitation of the renowned julāhā from Benares, the subtle tissue affecting a real spiritual synthesis between these different threads.

**The coming into being of the universe**

The cosmological doctrine begins for Rāmcandra exactly where the realm of metaphysics intersects with that of contingent existence or, in his own words, where ‘the veil of fanciful imagination prevents the direct perception of the transcendent Principle’. On the authority of the Upaniṣad but immediately recalling to memory a famous saying of the prophet of Islam (ḥadīth), he affirms that first there was only Truth which remained hidden to Itself.\(^71\)

At once, the veil of concealment (parda-yi ikhtifā) was cut open by the impulse of the hitherto hidden Truth manifesting itself in the guise of the ādi-puruṣa. This was the origin of Cosmic Man.\(^72\) Both traditions are invoked to show how the treasure-

\(^{71}\) This description clearly refers to the state of non-manifestation (avyakta) which, in this sense, possesses a certain degree of superiority over that of manifestation. Interestingly, the author though claiming to describe his doctrine based on notions in the Upaniṣad, uses a language that appears much closer to the Islamic context, an idea enhanced by the use of a Sūfī terminology instead of its Sanskrit correspondent used in the Upaniṣad. It hints at his primary acquaintance with the latter doctrines, only at a later stage integrated by a study of the former ones, and his own educational background more familiar with the Urdu-Persian vocabulary.

\(^{72}\) VS, p. 18. This rather enigmatic statement becomes clear if we accept
house of Supreme Truth is borne in his inmost being by mankind, earlier defined according to a purely Islamic perspective as a perfecting ‘particularisation and individualisation’ (juzwiyat wa shakhṣiyat) of the Divine Omnipotence (al-qudrat) Whose essential Reality lies beyond the limiting condition (ḥaddiyat) of the human qualities. But since the existentialisation of the Supreme Being took place as the result of Its primordial impulse to display Itself in the world, the puruṣa must from that initial moment onwards be envisaged in its cosmic projection inside the derived multiple degrees of existence, where it remains present in the guise of the individual human aggregate. It thereby assumes a specific form (rūpa) that characterises its existence in the dominion of the sensible world as a substantial determination of its new state. For the same reason it also bears a name (nāma) recalling its original state prior to manifestation,73 i.e., satpuruṣa or, alternatively, insān al-kāmil. Both are assimilated to the very principle of manifestation conceived as the externalisation of the Divine power which is the ultimate source of the Universe and therefore assimilated to the ‘Spirit of Muḥammad’ (rūḥ al-muḥammadī) of classical Sūfī doctrines.74

Such a description suggests the parallel Rāmcandra draws between the Hindu doctrines taught by the Vedānta and the Kabīr-Panth on one side and the esoteric interpretation of the Islamic concept of creation on the other. Sat-puruṣa or ‘True Man’ and insān al-kāmil or ‘Perfect Man’ represented by the ‘spirit of Muḥammad’ are considered as synonyms in their role

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6. the idea that the concept of puruṣa in this particular context translates to a fair extent the Sūfī concept of rūḥ al-muḥammadī as the primordial determination of the Necessary Being and creative principle of universal manifestation.

73. Rūpa along with nāma constitute the two co-ordinates describing the principal determinations of the individual condition, one corresponding roughly to the substantial determination and the other to its more essential one. Nāma, however, implies in its superior sense also the eternal archetype or ‘idea’ in the Platonic sense, inherent in every manifested creature, that constitutes the immediate principle of the other.

74. VS, p. 18.
of sovereigns or principles of the entire universal display; according to this perspective, they can be also associated with the Hindu concept of Īśvara, the personified principle of universal existence, or Prajāpati, the Lord of all creatures, and Allāh in his aspects of al-Bārī or al-Khāliq (the Creator), which from a more esoterical point of view can be identified with the ‘Muḥammadan spirit’.

We must be careful to avoid confusion between the double application to which these terms are liable, either from the metaphysical point of view as designating the highest stage of Ultimate Reality (the terminology of the Vedānta employs the term puruṣottama), or in relation to relative unity if intended as the cosmic principle and the multiplicity it contains. They are nevertheless analogous since both designate in their respective traditions the first step from ‘Pure Unity’ or ‘non-duality’ (ahādiyat, advaita) to its hypostasis, from pure Essence to the first Being characterised by the attribute of existence of a personal God (sagūṇa Brahman, Īśvara or Allāh in its theological interpretation).75

According to Rāmcandra, this personal God is the Creator of everything, due to Whom the entire creation (khilqat) has come into existence and on Whom everything depends, because He is the Ruler of the Universe and the axis (madār) around which the entire cosmos develops. Rāmcandra’s technical vocabulary here assumes a distinctively Islamic connotation in which we recognise the descriptions of the Naqshbandi shaikhs of Delhi: the all-powerful God to which all creatures should bow in sign of reverence and recognition of their dependence, and the concept of the Lord seated on the ‘all-encompassing Throne’ (al-‘arsh, al-muḥīṭ)76 at the centre of the Universe whence the Divine spirit descends into the realm of existence in order to

75. The validity of this double perspective is enhanced by Rāmcandra’s later observations that if on one hand He is the producer of creation, on the other He is also not that, for the meaning of sat apart from meaning ‘truth’ comprises also the second meaning of ‘essence’, embracing both ‘being’ and ‘not-being’.

76. VS, p. 18.
confer His command on the primordial indifferentiation. Even more interesting is the occasional combination of Mujaddidī and Kabir-panthī elements, as in the following passage:

All around the satpuruṣa . . . , a subtle substance circulates [inside the universe] assuming manifold aspects. Like the light of the sun that irradiates everything around its source, this rapidly flowing substance expands in every direction around the Divinity which, like the top of the thunderbolt (hīra), remains motionless and unperturbed at Its place at the centre. The rapidly flowing substance expanding from the satpuruṣa is referred to as ādimāyā, the primordial substance. It continues to revolve around its centre at every time. When the reflection of the satpuruṣa falling into this whirlpool mingles itself with this substance, It thus manifests Itself in the form of a particular kind of individuality whose nature is similar to that of our shadows (sāyā). . . .

The concept of reflection (‘aks) and shadow (sāyā, chāyā) described in this passage as emanating from the primordial source of existence is reminiscent of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī’s waḥdat al-shuhūd which maintains a rhetorical difference in the degree of reality inherent to the different realms of contingency and the principle from which they derive. Each derives its existence from the reflection of the immediately preceding stage, thus, gradually descending into a lower degree of reality. This idea is assimilated to the sant concepts of māyā and ādi-māyā which, especially in the cosmological doctrines of the Kabir-panth, bears a fundamental importance in explaining the interaction between essence and substance that gave rise to

77. Rāmcandra defines the principle as nirālamba, ‘absolutely independent’, and nirādhāra, ‘self-supporting’, two designations which although of Sanskrit origin apply very well to describe the Divine attributes in Islamic theology. They appear deliberately chosen to bring the two doctrines closer in the understanding of his Hindu followers.

78. VS, p. 19.
the universal manifest-ation. From the intercourse between these two entities are produced the various degrees of individual existence (shakhšiyat) in form of a series of shadows, hence, defined by Rāmcandra as ‘congenital’ (ham-zād).

When this congenital shadow came into existence it turned its attention towards the satpuruṣa whence it derived its peculiar existence. Recognising his supremacy, it began to affirm its own, separate existence, expressed through the formula ‘I am!’ It signals the rise of the principle of individual consciousness (ahamkāra, gharūr kā mādda) regarded as the primordial element (tattva) of universal manifestation and identified by Rāmcandra in conformity with the Kabīr-panthī doctrines with kāla or kāla-puruṣa.

This principle of individualisation is hence the final product of the primordial substance and signals the entrance into the temporal and spatial dimension of contingency through the non-acting presence and non-involved influence of the satpuruṣa, associated by Rāmcandra with the Islamic concept of the Omnipotent (al-‘Azīz).

Therefore the kāla-puruṣa represents from a macrocosmic point of view the temporal principle that governs all contingent beings subject to the conditions of time, of birth, and of death, analogous to the role of Yama, the Hindu god of death. It also shows some parallels with the distinction made in the Koran between the primordial order issued by Allāh (al-amr) and the successive process of existentialisation in the ‘ālam-i khalq spanning over a period of six days, which embraces the entire creation. This dominion ultimately is subject to the all-devouring kāla-puruṣa, the lord of birth and death.

In many respects Rāmcandra’s vision recalls the elaborate


80. In the Islamic tradition, the term ham-zād defines the jinn of the clan which appears when a child is born and which accompanies it throughout the life. Cf. John T. Platts, A Dictionary of Urdu Classical Hindi and English, 1977 (first Indian edition), p. 1234.

81. VS, p. 20.
cosmology of the later Kabir-panthīs and of the Rādhāsoāmīs which combines features of Vedānta and Sāñkhya-Yoga with additional elements of different origin. His entire doctrinal edifice rests upon the introduction of an intermediate degree between the transcendent paramātmā or para-brahma as envisaged by the Vedānta, Its hypostasis and principle of manifestation (iśvara, aparā-brahma), the attainment of and union with which is envisaged by the different schools of Yoga, and the primordial duality of puruṣa and prakṛti which ultimately determine the process of universal manifestation into multiplicity. At the same time it asserts its supremacy over other doctrines by claiming to go one step further towards the attainment of ultimate Truth.

This intermediate degree consists of the concept of kāla-puruṣa that traces its origin from the apparent duality arising the ādi-māyā and the reflection of the satpuruṣa on it. But duality is only apparent if contemplated from a contingent perspective, because this primordial substance is ultimately nothing but an irradiation of the satpuruṣa itself and essentially partakes of Its nature. As such, the kāla-puruṣa is nothing but the projection of the satpuruṣa into a lower degree of reality. Only if perceived as the separate cause of the ādi-māyā does it appear complementary to the rise of the kāla-puruṣa, as an effect of the first veil constituted by the ādi-māyā. Such a formulation appears to be the outcome of an attempt to reconcile two different points of view, held in the Islamic context by the waḥdat al-wujūd and waḥdat al-shuhūd respectively, which juxtapose the concept of reflection and of irradiation as two different connotations of the same reality.

Rāmcandra stresses that from a microcosmic perspective the dual aspect inherent man’s nature is uniquely a manifestation (izhār) of the imaginary consciousness (here termed as tawajjuh) of possessing an individual existence that confers a sense of separation from that of the principle, caused by that very shadow that has attained life through the deceitful intervention of the kāla-puruṣa. But, in reality, there was nothing in the beginning

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to declare either the existence (hastī) or non-existence (nīstī) of the Divine Being because these are two correlative terms (nisbatī kalām), whereas Truth must necessarily lie beyond relativity. To affirm such relativity even if intended as the highest of all complementaries, is possible only from the point of view of manifestation, that is to say from a degree of contingent existence.

Rāmcandra draws once more from the Upaniṣad to clarify his point: at the beginning there was only the Supreme darkness of non-manifestation in coincidence with the primordial chaos in which everything remained concealed. Nevertheless, this darkness it contained a marvellous brilliance irradiating a stream of pure light whose nature cannot be perceived by ordinary mortals.83 For convenience, Rāmcandra calls it ‘primordial impulse’ (chave mauj, mauj-i ašlī), whence both the satpuruṣa and kāla-puruṣa polarise themselves. While the former acquires luminosity and maintains his residence in the most sublime region, the latter, owing to the light irradiated from the former, assumes a separate identity as a shadow in the lower regions of contingency.

It follows that while both ultimately owe their origin to the paramātmā, the distinctive existence of the kāla-puruṣa depends on the satpuruṣa whose luminous projection on a lower plane of reflection casts a shadow onto the Divine fabric of the universe. This ray of projection is called by Rāmcandra mahā-tawajjuh. It is closely analogous to the rūḥ al-muḥammadī produced as a result of the Divine command described by the Koran, which finds its equivalent in classical Hindu doctrines in the projection of buddhi, the cosmic intelligence and first differentiation of prakṛti contemplated by the Sāṅkhya doctrine. Interestingly, Rāmcandra’s account of this luminous projection and its

83. Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad, VI.14, Kaṭha Upaniṣad, II.5.15. Cf. also Bhagavad Gītā XV:4-6. Rāmcandra remarks that this light must be intended not in a literal but in an allegorical sense since the state of the Supreme Principle cannot be possibly described as darkness or brilliance as such a distinction would imply a relapse into an underlying duality. Later, this process is compared to the light of a candle and the smoke produced by it.
reflection, which show a certain compatibility with the shuhūdī doctrine, is accompanied by a consideration of the primordial impulse co-present in this original luminosity which simultaneously expands between these two realms, thus, assuming a reflected existence or 'transmitted vibration' (naqlī ḥarkat).

These two subtle manifestations of light and sound consequently assume a primary significance in the spiritual discipline of Rāmcandra since they respectively correspond to the most elevated among the interior sensual faculties, light being associated to the sense of vision (cakṣus) and its corresponding organ, the eye, and sound to the sense of hearing (śrotra) among the five sensual faculties (jñānendriya) and to the faculty of speech (vāc) among the five faculties of action (karmendriya).84

Rāmcandra’s description of the gradual process of manifestation follows closely the account provided by the Sāṅkhya darśana: at the due moment, the kāla-puruṣa divides itself into two parts: puruṣa, the essential or spiritual (rūḥānī) component and prakṛti, the substantial (maddānī) component, through which the process of cosmic generation is gradually enacted.85 But since the degree of existence of these two entities is only that of ‘mere shadows’ (sāya-i maḥz) of the kāla-puruṣa, they lack of their own power of action, so that the initial push (tawajjuh) that leads from a state of pure potentiality to its effective enactment must directly derive from the satpuruṣa. Thereafter, prakṛti begins to originate out of herself the entire series of elements (tattva) that constitute the Universe.

The mention of the satpuruṣa’s influence on prakṛti underlines Rāmcandra’s position concerning the cosmological

84. Cf. Mānavadharmaśāstra, II.89-92. For an explanation of their role in the sādhanā, see Brj Mohan Lāl Saksenā in AY, pp. 91-3.
85. VS, p. 22. Rāmcandra compares this to the two split halves of a pea that out of themselves give gradual rise to a new generation of plants. Similarly, prakṛti is described as mūla or root of all manifestation in the Sāṅkhya-Kārikā, while Rāmcandra defines it as jar, a term bearing the same meaning of root.
process, for he never loses sight of the transcendent Principle inherent in the puruṣa as compared to its derivatives. While the Sāṅkhya describes the initial intervention on prakṛti as coming from the puruṣa conceived as correlative of prakṛti and, therefore not transcending the plane of duality between these two entities, Rāmacandra emphasises the fact that ultimately there subsists no other principle than the absolute and supreme satpuruṣa. Hence, a co-relationship of puruṣa and prakṛti is impossible unless perceived from an inferior degree pertaining to the plane of relativity.

It follows that all the different levels included under the common denomination of puruṣa hitherto described as separate entities (i.e., satpuruṣa, kāla-puruṣa and puruṣa) complementary to prakṛti ultimately exist only as fanciful products of the power of imagination inherent in the mind of the individual. The human mind perceives the world from its limited and contingent point of view subject to the power of māyā, the creative aspect of the Divine intellect, as mere reflections of the one beyond description (alakh) Reality, which are solely meant to explain the way leading to the original source. Only in this sense can puruṣa be described as analogous to the insān al-kāmil and, hence, be assimilated to the ḥaqīqat-i muḥammadiya.

Considering now only prakṛti, also referred to as pradhāna, Rāmacandra explains that the process of its self-diversification

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86 On the other hand, the Sāṅkhya whose purpose does not lie beyond that of enumerating the single steps of the cosmological process, nevertheless hints at the essentially transcendent nature of puruṣa affirming that He is not directly involved in the process of manifestation, His only contribution to it consisting in His non-active disinvolved intervention on prakṛti.

87 TP, p. 33.

88 Literally ‘pre-eminence’, ‘principal thing’, pradhāna also bears the meaning of ‘attendant of a king’, which precisely renders the double position held by prakṛti as pre-eminient in relation to distinctive manifestation on one side and its subordinate rank in front of the Sovereign (al-Mālik) on the other, viz., puruṣa. It is hence conceived as feminine in relation to the latter and masculine in relation to the former.
which gives rise to the separate existence of multiple elements is analogous if on an inferior to the generation of the kāla-puruṣa by the satpuruṣa as a part (anshā) of his own. This affirmation hints at their ultimate identity with the Principle. 89 Thus, prakṛti, the primordial and undifferentiated substance assumes the quality of vrkṛti, i.e., nature in its differentiated condition, similar to the difference described in Islamic doctrines between fitrat and tabi‘at. It contains in a state of absolute harmony and equilibrium the qualities (auṣāf, guṇa) of all elements which are contained as latent possibilities in the cosmos. But once this inner balance is shaken by the intervention of puruṣa, it is brought into motion and the process of manifestation takes its unstoppable course.

Rāmānanda specifies that this initial movement occurs in form of a concentric expansion from a central point analogous to the expansion of the sound vibration in the ether (ākāśa). In this initial movement he detects the reason why all things contained in the universal workmanship (racanā) 90 including the sun, the moon, the stars and even the satpuruṣa are perceived as circles or spheres (dā'ira), being the sphere the projection into space of the aspacious point. This image closely reminds us of the seven spheres symbolically used by the Mujaddidi authorities as images of the planes of existence and degrees of spiritual realisation and illustrates the universal value of symbolism in different traditions.

Through the intercourse with puruṣa, prakṛti, often identified with māyā, modifies its own distinctivelessness and gives origin to a manifold series of determined states of existence (ṣūrat-i tamīzī). A similar concept is found in the Tāntrik doctrines which develop around the primordial couple Śiva-Śakti, apparently separated from each other holding the rank of poles

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89. Cf. Brahma-Sūtra, II.3.43.
90. The use of the term racanā for the manifested world suits well to the underlying Hindu concept of the Divine carpenter and architect of the universal edifice, Viṣṇukarman, that represents the constructive aspect of saguṇa Brahman, similar to the function held by the insan al-kāmil in relation to creation and also to that of the universal architect conceived by Western free-masonry.
of universal existence which has to be brought together in order to gain access to the transcendent sphere.

As for the order of succession of these manifestations, Rāmcandra differs slightly from the doctrinal pattern laid out by Kapila’s Sāṅkhya-Sūtra and Sāṅkhya-Kārikā, in identifying the first determination of prakṛti as ahaṅkāra instead of buddhi, since in his view

the stages of [prakṛti’s] productions can become known only once the apprehension of individual perception (idrāk) has acquired a definitive shape.91

Hence, ahaṅkāra holds the rank of primary determination from which derive the different functions of manas, the mental faculty that governs ‘the inner cause’ (antaḥkarāna), that is to say the psychological dominion of the individual state. For Rāmcandra, it comprehends buddhi associated to the concept of ‘aql considered as the seat of the faculty of discriminative knowledge and of correct judgement, and citta, the common consciousness comprising the faculty of thought that gives rise to ideal concepts and the ability to link them.

These are the first four tattvas to which Rāmcandra adds the tawajjuh of the puruṣa as the fifth.92 The pre-eminence of this fifth tattva over the other four is supported by the assertion that these latter ones came into existence only at the moment when the kāla-puruṣa, himself a projection of the satpuruṣa, gained consciousness of himself, which was the point of departure

91 VS, p. 23.
92 If conceived from this angle, tawajjuh earlier described as a luminous irradiation of the satpuruṣa, assumes the rank of buddhi as intended by the Sāṅkhya, that is to say as the Cosmic intelligence that irradiates, like a solar ray, as colourless light from the Supreme Being onto a plane of reflection situated at the centre of the plane of Its primordial determination in puruṣa and prakṛti where it is than perpetuated as the primary impulse on prakṛti. These two levels had been mentioned earlier as mahātawajjuh and tawajjuh. This fifth tattva is recovered in this context by the affirmation that the coming into existence of the other four named tattvas coincides with that very instance of self-diversification.
of the impulse exercised on prakṛti. In distinction to the Sāṅkhya, the tawajjuh is not a production of prakṛti but of the kāla-puruṣa who stands beyond this immediate duality and collaborates in its production. Strictly speaking, puruṣa and prakṛti must therefore themselves be regarded as tattvas, including the tawajjuh that gave origin to their separate existence.

The difference between Rāmcandra’s position and the classical doctrines, thus, reduces itself to a merely formal one based on slightly different perspectives. It reflects his attempt to reconcile the different elements pertaining to the Hindu cosmological doctrines current among the sants with those expounded in the Sūfī teachings, particularly those of the Mujaddid who reiterated the absolute transcendence of the Divine essence and the impossibility of its direct involvement in the creative process by introducing the idea of shadows and reflections.

It is therefore especially in the relation the paramātmā bears with the realm of individual manifestation that a synthesis is required between the underlying formal differences in the perspectives held by the two traditions. Once this point is clarified Rāmcandra’s enumeration of the various degrees of existence and their respective order of production presents fewer difficulties and develops in conformity with the pattern set out by the Sāṅkhya without incurring into any major discrepancies.

Ahaṅkāra goes rise to śabda, the auditive quality. As the first of the quintuple series of subtle principles of the corporeal elements (tanmātra), it gives rise to the element ether (ākāśa), the first most subtle of the five corporeal elements (bhūta). These two belong respectively to the planes of subtle and of gross manifestation, and as the first and most subtle of the series they are the leading productions in their respective degrees of existence, containing the following four synthetically in their folds. From the śabda there originates the touch (sparśa) and principle of the element air (vāyu, hawā); from the sparśa there springs the rūpa (lit. ‘form’, associated with the visible quality) which goes rise to the element fire (agni, ātish); from the rūpa
there springs the *rasa*, the quality of savouring which manifests the element water (*ap, āb*); and finally, the *rasa* gives origin to *gandha*, the quality of smell that bears a relation with the element earth (*prthvī, khāk*), last and grossest in the series.\(^93\)

Although they may be referred to most living beings, these determinations of individual existence covering the subtle (*sūkṣma, laṭīf*) and the gross planes (*sthūla, kāthīf*) bear a particular relation to the human state. Man’s superiority, the sanctioning of which in the Islamic tradition has been already described, finds its analogous expression in Hindu teaching in the very designation of the term *puruṣa* that includes the Supreme Being or *satpuruṣa*, the governor of this particular world, or *kāla-puruṣa*, and finally both humanity as a whole and every single human individual.\(^94\)

In the impersonal perspective of the Vedānta adopted by the *nirguṇa* tradition, *puruṣa* stands in its highest rank as *puruṣottama* down to the single human individual for the perpetual presence of the Supreme Principle in all the degrees of existence.\(^95\) It is in this sense that the reading of the *Koran* and the prophetic Traditions according to which Allāh has infused His essence into the earthen mould of Ādam before appointing him His *khalīfa* on earth, was interpreted by many Sūfis in its gnostic dimension as expressed in such doctrines as the *waḥdat al-wujūd* and the *waḥdat al-shuhūd*. In their peculiar

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93. VS, p. 24. The Sāṅkhya further describes the production of the five faculties of sensual perception (*jñānendriya*) and the five faculties of action (*karmendriya*), co-ordinated by *manas*, the interior sense and inner governor (*antaryāmī*).

94. Though not expressly mentioned by the authorities of our *paramparā, puruṣa*, if considered in relation to a particular cycle of existence, is also designated as the Manu or legislator of that specific cycle (hence, derives its denomination as *manvantara*) which here assumes the role of archetype and legislator of that period and its respective humanity (*mānava*). Such a conception shows some analogies with the Islamic concept of mankind said to descend from Ādam, entrusted with the burden of viceregency (*bār-i amānat*), the memory of which is still preserved in the designation of every human being by the term ādamī, descendant of Ādam.

descriptions of the degrees of irradiations (tajalliyāt) and descents (tanazzulāt) of the Divine essence, they bear a close resemblance to the interpretations given by the Hindu jñānakāṇḍa.

The realms of the universe

The next step in the analysis of the cosmological teachings of this order consists of the analysis of the single planes of existence which determine the constitution of the macrocosm and their main characteristics. This will complete the picture of the composite cosmological doctrine current among the Hindu Naqsbhandis while providing further clues to the master’s teachings which, though different in outlay, remain coherent with and insert themselves into the main framework set out by the better known Hindu and Islamic doctrines.

Rāmcandra explains that at the origin of all, the satpurūṣa does not participate at the unfolding of the aforesaid tattvas, for it consists of pure consciousness (khāliṣ cetana). The participation at this consciousness, different in nature from all other tattvas, is possible through the faculty of knowledge (jñāna), which is exclusive to Man and is defined as the support (ādhāra) of everything. From a macrocosmical point of view, the abode of the satpurūṣa is the satloka or brahmaloka, equally said to be permeated by pure consciousness.97

The double mention of the satloka (the satyaloka of the classical doctrines) and the brahmaloka is important for the evaluation of Rāmcandra’s teachings since both terms apply in traditional Hindu cosmology to the most sublime among the celestial regions (devaloka). Located at the apex of the Mount Meru, the satloka extends in a region far beyond the lunar sphere (candraloka). It is said to be the dwelling-place of those souls who have attained immortality after their relinquishment from the body (videha-mukti) by following the ‘path of the gods’

96. To be precise, the term ‘nature’ does not apply to the satpurūṣa because He stands really beyond nature.

97. VS, p. 25.
The term *satloka* appears frequently with the Kabir-panthīs in a similar context. In the *Amar Mūl*, for instance, an important doctrinal work in the Chattīsgarhi branch of the *panth*, the *satloka* is said to be attained to by those who have acquired perfect knowledge of the *satnām*, once reached there, these perfect souls will be nourished by the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*). The notion of *satloka* or *satdeśa* appears later among the Rādhāsoāmīs who describe it as the highest region, consisting of pure spirit. Rāmcandra’s description fits, therefore neatly into the general Hindu concept of *satyaloka* considered as the abode of Brahmā, the Creator of the world, Who is identified in the *sant* context with the inferior aspect of the *satpuruṣa*. But once we descend into the realm of relative existence, we enter the reign of *kāla-puruṣa* said to reside in the *kāla-loka* or *kāla-deśa*. There, pure consciousness intermingles with māyā, in this context describes as an extremely subtle substance (*mādda-i laṭīf*) which provokes the production of the subtle dominion of the universe.

One further step below there extends the *māyādeśa* composed of gross substance (*mādda-i kathīf*) which constitutes the realm of the corporeal elements (*mahābhūta*) that compose the physical vehicle of the individual souls (*jīva*). To illustrate the nature of these three levels, Ramcandra quotes the following example:

Look at the flame of a candle! At the top its light is white, similar to that of the pure consciousness in the *satloka*; a little further down its light appears reddish, some way in between the pure white light and a light black — this light resembles the *kāladeśa*. Further descending, close to the wick, the flame produces black smoke — this

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98. Cf. *Chāndogya Upanisad*, IV.15:5. This path eventually leading to the identity with the Supreme, is called the ‘path of the gods’ because it crosses the successive abodes of the gods until reaching the top of the celestial hierarchy, often described as the peak of a mountain on which lies a golden shining city, Brahmapura, the citadel of Brahmā.


The satloka, defined as imperishable and non-transitory (ghair-fání), represents the immediate principle of the other two. In contrast, the existence in the kāla-loka is by definition subject to the conditions of time (kāla) and, therefore, transitory (fání), although its relative nearness to the transcendent realm guarantess it a comparatively high degree of reality and temporal extension in comparison to the following one. Due to its distance from the realm of pure consciousness, the màyaloka constitutes the most ephemeral realm and in the most affected by the limitative co-ordinates of time and space.

However, it would be erroneous to consider the immortality gained by those who have reached the satloka as the ultimate and utmost degree of spiritual ascent, for it is such only if considered in relation to the manifestation of one single world. This is why Rāmcandra affirms in connection with the multiple levels of Rāma the existence of a fourth loka which is said to be connected with the ‘ascension of the saints’ (santon kā mi’rāj) who have gone through the purest spiritual experience and are, therefore, granted a place in the everlasting ikka satyaloka (‘matchless abode of Truth’).

Rāmcandra ultimately conceives an additional fifth realm saying that ‘although possible to be pronounced by the tongue its comprehension is somewhat difficult’. This fifth plane lies beyond the appellation of nirguṇa Brahman. Whatever

101. VS, pp. 25-6.
102. VS, p. 26. The concept of loka is clearly intended in a symbolical sense since it here refers to the ‘sphere of non-manifestation’ indescribable in common terms; the Naqshbandis refer to it only in negative terms as là-makāniyat, lit. ‘not being traceable in space’, ‘having no dwelling’.
103. Rāmcandra explains in this context that the two terms ‘limited’ (maḥdúd) and ‘unlimited’ (ghair-maḥdúd) still pertain to the plane of relativity (tabaqā-i nisbatī) beyond which their use becomes ultimately inadequate. The same applies to the Arabic term ‘all-
intervenes between these sublime states and the ordinary world experienced by the common senses is ultimately due to the fancy of *mâyā* whose innumerable veils preclude the ordinary individual from a direct vision of Truth. Râmcandra’s account of *mâyā* and its veils, reflecting notions of a pan-Indian doctrine common to the Vedânta as well as to Kabîr and his followers,\(^{104}\) has seemingly adopted some of the Sûfi concepts regarding the veils (*parda*) that separate common man from the direct contemplation (*mushâhada*) of the pure Essence.

According to Râmcandra, the term *mâyā* derives from the Sanskrit *mā*, ‘measure’ (*māp*, *mātrā*), and *yā*, ‘support’, ‘means’ or ‘cause’ (*uwašila*), hence, its literal meaning as the ‘measure of something’.\(^{105}\) In cosmology, *mâyā* came to coincide with *prakr̥ti*, whose main characteristic came to be identified with its power of alteration and modification (*tabdil*). This primordial substance spreads out in space and determines through the manifold possibilities of combination of its inherent qualities the distinctive measure of every single object thereby accounting for the indefinite multiplicity present in the Universe. These qualities, perfectly balanced at the beginning in a state of undifferentiated harmony, are essentially these referred to by Râmcandra as *triguṇa*, comprising *sat*, *raj* and *tam* (Sanskrit *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*).\(^{106}\)

*Sat* corresponds to the quality that conforms to Truth and

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\(^{105}\) Cf. Latin *metiri*, ‘to measure’, *mater*, *materia* and *matter*, as indication of the function the substance bears as the measure of the universe.

\(^{106}\) VS, p. 29.
the to the pure Being (satta). It is characterised by an upward tendency that corresponds to a centripetal attraction towards the principle of manifestation: light (prakāśa), beatitude (ānanda), knowledge (jñāna), etc., are all predominantly characterised by this quality. Raj defines the quality that confers colour on things, thereby exalting their individual nature. It denotes the horizontal movement of expansion (phailāvat) of the cosmos along one particular plane and as such characterises the active and dynamic aspect of the world. Analytic thought (khayāl), engagement in mental activity (maṣrūfiyat), ardour (sar-garmā), etc., are some of the attitudes dominated by this quality. Finally, tam indicates darkness and, thus, represents the opposite of sat. It denotes a descending, centrifugal tendency towards the bottom peripheral of the inferior worlds. Dullness, apathy, ignorance, powerlessness and indolence are among the attitudes characterised predominantly by tam.

These are the principal attributes of prakṛti or māyā through which the Divinity in Its creative aspect displays Itself in the Universe. This consideration is extremely important because it confers a second, superior meaning to māyā which goes beyond its simple identification with the primordial substance. By the relation with Brahmā as the ultimate principle whence māyā and its multiple productions derive, a degree of relative reality is attributed on māyā and, by extension, on the created world. It is therefore not entirely correct to define māyā as sheer illusion or fantasy which separates us from knowing the Truth. Rather, it is our ignorance (avidyā, jahālat) that prevents us from recognising its real nature as the creative power of the Principle with whose help It made Itself known, as an effect of the lower quality of tamas that creates these veils of separation.

The remarkable acuity of Rāmacandra’s vision here goes far beyond the descriptions common in many sant texts of māyā as a deceitful bewitching woman enchanting both gods and human beings alike and preventing them from knowing Reality. Returning to the beginning of the process of self-revelation of

107. VS, p. 30.
the Supreme Being that eventually led to the coming into existence of the world, Rāmacandra states:

The reflection of the satpurusa . . . on the primordial substance (ādimāyā) brought into existence the kāla-puruṣa . . . , likewise, the reflection of the kāla-puruṣa on the causal māyā (kāraṇa māyā) generated Brahmā. 108

The concept of māyā, therefore, extends far beyond the simple notion of a primordial substance in the sense implied by the term prakṛti. It rather represents a plane of reflection of the immediately superior principle from which the corresponding inferior degree of determination derives its existence. Ramcandra’s perspective therefore in a sense combines the point of view of Rāmānujacārya’s viśiṣṭādvaita with that held by the shuhūdī doctrine of the Mujaddidūs. In mediaeval Hinduism similar ideas are also brought forward by the advocates of the doctrine referred to as chāyāvāda which differs from the purely unitarian view held by the adherents to the kevalādvaita inasmuch as it does not unequivocally reduce the origin of this plane of reflection to an essential part of the Supreme Principle.

Rāmacandra next describes the three levels on which Brahmā, intermingling with māyā, manifested Itself in the world. The first of these levels consists of hiraṇyagarbha, the golden embryo or germ described in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa as containing the seeds of all possibilities of manifestation. This is followed by avyākṛtaḥ (lit. the non-manifest, undifferentiated one) and by virāṭ, the cosmic intellect and first progeny of Brahmā. 109 In his interpretation of these three terms borrowed from classical Hindu sources, virāṭ is associated to Brahmā in the ‘state of wakening’ (jāgrta-avasthā) during which the exterior forms of the universe are generated through the sensory perception and their elaboration by the mind. It, thus, constitutes the corporeal aspect of existence referred to by the Sūfis as the ‘corporeal world’ (ālam-i ajsām). Avyākṛtaḥ, associated with Brahmā while in the ‘state of dreaming’ (svapna-avasthā), refers to the condition

108. VS, p. 31.
109. Ibid., p. 44.
in which the exterior forms are elaborated in an exclusively interior fashion from the ideas and thoughts that are part of the subtle manifestation. Finally, *hiranyagarbha*, is associated with the ‘state of deep sleep’ (*suṣupti-avasthā*) of the Creator, during which His entire workmanship is reabsorbed and condensed in Himself in a seminal state, prior to any formal elaboration.\footnote{110}{Cf. *Rgveda*, X.121.1, *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, 3-5, where these three states referring to the ātmā are termed as *vaiśvānara*, tajāsa and prājñā.}

Together, these three planes comprehend the entire macrocosm and are, therefore, assimilated to the Sūfī concept of the ‘greater world’ (*ālam-i kabīr*),\footnote{111}{See also Brj Mohan Lāl Saksenā, *AIB*, part II, pp. 17-20.} which is comprehended by the sphere of possible existence (*dā‘ira-i imkān*) and is equally divided into three major realms. It is said to be governed by the universal Intellect which characterises Brahmā (*brahmāṇḍa man*, ‘*aql-i kullî*) contained inside the cosmic egg whose principal attribute is that of being produced and extended. Through the affirmation of its individual consciousness (*aha‘kāra*) and the power of imagination (*vāsanā, quwwat-i khayāl*) that is one of its faculties, yet another faculty of the Cosmic mind, that of the ‘living souls’ (*jīva*) was successively originated.\footnote{112}{VS, p. 31. The term *vāsanā* is derived from the Sanskrit *vāsanā* meaning both ‘covering’ and ‘abiding’.} This power of imagination, analogous to the concept of ‘creative power’ (*kriyā śakti*) of the Vedānta, again received its impulse from the primordial desire of the *Brahman*, born out of its *aha‘kāra*, to expand Itself so as to become known.\footnote{113}{The resemblance to the often quoted prophetic Tradition is too striking as to be a mere coincidence.} Hence, It first divided Itself into two correlative parts, defined as masculine (*ta‘zā‘kir*) and feminine (*tānīth*) and analogous to *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, whence the multiplicity of the innumerable species populating the world was generated. All of them participate in the hidden nature of the original state (*ašliyat*) since the essential part of all creatures consists of a reflected image (*‘aksi šūrat*) of Its inner reality. On the other hand, Brahmā, Himself a projection of that...
Principle, generates their substantial and individual forms (rūpa), indicated as both subtle and gross by the terms avyākṛtaḥ and virāt. It is, therefore, possible to affirm with Rāmacandra that ‘he is the producer and immediate support of the world who contains everything’.114

To further illustrate this point, by Rāmacandra goes to the Veda where the development of the cosmos is described as the result of the self-sacrifice of the primeval Being (purūṣa-sūkta):

In the same way as man offers the oblation (āhuti) of the single materials to the sacrificial fire and these, in the guise of smoke, spread all around, He [Brahmā], offering Himself as oblation for His sacrifice (yajña), spreads out in the whole universe.115

But this description that follows the classical Vedic imagery is immediately followed by an additional consideration, derived from an altogether different background:

. . . contemplating the result of His sacrifice, [Brahmā], though satisfied with it, no longer experienced His original state of happiness for He felt the lack of something in His creation. Hence, He generated Man from the sum of His attributes in the likeness of the satpurūṣa. Watching him, He felt very pleased and from that moment, He entitled him to be the ‘most excellent among creatures’ (afdal-i makhlūq) and the ‘noblest of creation’ (‘ashraf al-khilqat), entrusting His entire creation to him.116

Although inserted into the context of the primordial sacrifice as described by the Rgveda, this latter passage clearly refers to the primordial entrustment (bār-i amānat) described by the Koran whose mention by Shāh Abūl Ḥasan has been quoted earlier. It provides an excellent example of how elements pertaining to the two traditions are inextricably interwoven in the doctrinal

114. VS, p. 30.
115. VS, p. 32. CF. Rgveda, X.90.
116. VS, pp. 32-3.
vision of this Kāyasth authority beyond the formal divergencies subsisting between the perspectives inherent in the two traditions, thus presenting his followers with a unified vision based on their possible points of contact. It is nevertheless important not to lose sight of the different perspectives to which these are liable, especially considering the Kabir-panthi adaptation of the terminology used by the Vedānta which often appears freely mixed with Sufi terms as used by the Naqshbandīs.

In the two passages quoted above, Brahmā, the Hindu god presiding universal manifestation, is assimilated to the creative aspect of Allāh (al-Khāliq). His creation in the formal dominion, identified with the inferior hemisphere of the cosmic egg (brahmāṇḍa, dā'ira-i imkān) referred to as ‘ālam-i khalq, is entrusted to mankind as being made in the likeness of the satpurusa who was earlier said to belong to a sphere far above the planes pertaining to Brahmā, kāla-puruṣa or al-Khāliq. For Rāmcandra, the satpuruṣa, therefore, can possibly designate both the unconditioned and unqualified pārabrahma contemplated by the esoteric traditions of both Hinduism and Islam as well as its lower projection as cosmic principle.

But if this is correct, what about the other unnamed plane earlier mentioned as being situated still above the satyaloka? To clarify this ambiguity which runs through the entire preceding description of the cosmological process, it is necessary to juxtapose the Mujaddidi and the Kabir-panthi perspectives. Such a matching between the doctrinal perspectives and their terminology is furnished by Brij Mohan Lal, the eldest son of Rāmcandra’s younger brother Raghubar Dayāl, in his Āīna-i ‘ilm-i bāṭin (The mirror of the esoteric science), which he states is faithfully based on the teachings of Rāmcandra.117

According to Brij Mohan Lal, the macrocosm (brahmāṇḍi man, ‘ālam-i kabīr) is composed of three planes of existence which collectively correspond to the ‘sphere of universal Possibility’ (dā’ira-i imkān) of the Mujaddidīs. It is said to contain the germs

117. AIB, Akhbar Tarjuman, Hardoi (U.P.), n.d.
of this world in a luminous shape analogous to the golden egg (hiraṇyāṇḍa) deposed by the goose hamsa on the surface of the primordial waters.

Its upper part consists of spirit (rūḥ, ātmā) and is characterised by luminosity (nūrāniyat), pure consciousness (cit) and beatitude (ānanda, sarūr). These are defined as essential qualities (auṣṭāf-i dhātª) deriving their lofty existence from their reflection on the causal substance (kāraṇa māyā). Because of the predominance of the spirit on that subtle substance, this spiritual realm, elsewhere explicitly identified with the ‘ālam-i amr containing the germs of the entire world, remains pervaded by silence and perfect peace in a state of undifferentiated equilibrium (maḥwiyat, laya-avasthā). Suddenly, through the intervention of a powerful force (zabardast quwwat), this motionless harmony is shaken and a ray of light (nūrāni jōt) begins to irradiate from there, illuminating everything around it and giving rise to a new luminous source of existence, referred to as ‘pure individual consciousness’ (šuddha ahaṅkāra, quwwat-i yazdānī). Spreading all around, it will constitute the plane of reflection on which the original brilliance of the yet unmanifested seeds (piṇḍa, bija) contained in hiraṇyagarbha will reflect themselves in the mirror of existentialisation as they acquire their various degrees of differentiated individual existence.

Brīj Mohan Lāl, thus, identifies this plane with the barzakh, known in Sūfī cosmology said to either separating or connecting the two realms of informal and formal existence through a focal point (markaz, nuqțā). As we know from the descriptions provided by the Naqshbandī shaikh at Delhi, the barzakh is assimilated to the Throne (al-‘arsh al-majīd), the storehouse of all powers (quwwaton kā bhaṇḍāra) which is characterised by unity (waḥdat).119 This unity establishes its abstract unity

118. AIB, part I, p.42.
119. Cf. Koran, 25:55: ‘He it is Who bringeth forth the two seas; one is fresh and drinkable, the other is salty and bitter; and He hath made between the two an isthmus and a closed barrier’, and also Koran, 55:19-20: ‘He bringeth forth the two seas which meet together, between them a barrier they do not overpass’.
(waḥdāniyat) as the pole of the universe, unifying in its existence (wujūdat) its two faces, one turned towards the spiritual existence (rūḥī wujūd) of the ‘world of order’, and the other turned towards the reflected individual existence of the ‘world of creation’ (‘ālam-i khalq). This is the reason why both great macrocosmic divisions are said to participate in the prosperity of the ‘glory of peerless greatness’ (shàn-i nirālī ‘aẓīmat) which attaches to Brahma in his personal aspect of īśvara or al-Khāliq.\(^\text{120}\)

As the barzakh is unequivocally defined in all Sufi doctrines as ‘not liable to spatial extension’ (lā-makāniyat), we recognise in it that very avyākṛtaḥ described by Rāmcandra in his tripartition of the cosmos as the intermediate plane. From a different angle, this is also possibly associated to the kāla-puruṣa, the all-devouring temporal principle, which limits the duration of the world below.

Therefore, we are now in a position to reassess Rāmcandra’s statement that the creation of Brahmā reproduces a perfect copy (naql) of the spiritual realm. The reflected existence of the former represents an inverted image of its original, for it is the reflection of the eternal archetypes present in a germinal state in the ‘ālam-i mithāl (which is a part of the ‘ālam-i amr) that determines universal existence by casting the image on the mirror of the barzakh. It will be recalled that according to the Mujaddidī

\(^\text{120}.\) AIB, pp. 17-19.

\(\text{®}\) These two oceans separated by a barrier bear a close resemblance with the superior and the inferior waters described by the Hindu tradition where they refer respectively to the informal and the formal states of being, reunited in the primordial substance. An interesting analogy which would require an ample study in itself consists in the theological interpretation of the barzakh as the intermediate region between this world and the next where the departed souls of the deceased ancestors attend the final dissolution of the world before being judged and accordingly addressed to their further posthumous destination. Such a concept represents also very interesting analogies with the ‘lunar realm’ (candra-loka) that governs the tides, equally described as the abode of souls who have followed the ‘path of the ancestors’ (pitrīyāna) and the place where the forms of the present world are elaborated.
Change and Continuity in Indian Sufism

cosmology, what held the highest rank in the spiritual realm occupies the lowest rank in the realm of creation and what was smallest in the realm of spirit will be the biggest in the created world. This is the reason why the innermost reality of the human heart (haqiqat-i qalb) corresponds from a macrocosmic point of view to the ‘arsh-i muḥīṭ, identified by Brj Mohan Lāl with the ‘citadel of Brahmā’ (Brahmapura).

To complete the shuhūdī point of view that clearly lies behind these descriptions, Brj Mohan Lāl informs us that the primordial unity of the luminous point in conjunction with the Islamic concept of ‘Throne’ constitutes the dimension held by the doctrine of waḥdat al wujūd which contemplates the ‘unity of existence’ in the transcendent principle resumed in the formula aham brahmāṇḍa (sic!).\textsuperscript{121} Notwithstanding this ingenious if somewhat imprecise attempt to explain the Mujaddidī position vis-à-vis this doctrine in a Hindu context, it nevertheless demonstrates the impact the Naqshbandī teachings have left on their Hindu disciples. This is true for the technical vocabulary which can vary quite unpredictably from author to author, work to work and even passage to passage, between original Sūfī language, Vedānta terminology and terms belonging to the technical vocabulary of the different panths. It also applies to some essential points of the genuine Mujaddidī doctrine encountered in the texts of the Delhi-based authorities.

In completing his description of the single planes composing the macrocosm, Brj Mohan Lāl turns to the third and lowest realm of the universe, that accounts for the individual existence contained in the ‘ālam-i khalq. This is referred to as virāṭ-deśa or māyā-deśa and is characterised by gross substance (sthūla māyā):

On a macrocosmic scale, this level characterised by gross substance represents the matrix and storehouse of all those bodies which come into existence in the guise of exterior forms (zāhūr pazīr ẓūraten): they subsist for a limited period of time until they eventually break down

\textsuperscript{121}. AIB, part II, p. 19.
like fragile earthen toys. . . . Their relationship with the gross substance corresponds to that between cause (kāraṇa) and effect (kāya).\textsuperscript{122}

This description stresses the ephemeral nature of the lowest realm of the macrocosm and establishes a relationship between cause and effect, between the immediate principle of this plane and its single derivatives. It remains faithful to the concept of the descending planes of reflection on which an initial relative degree of unity is fragmented into a reflected multiplicity, which is found in later Kabīr-panthī doctrines and the Rādhāsaōmīs and represents a further development of a shuhudī or, in Hindu terms, a visiṣṭādvaita point of view. On the other hand, it is imported to bear in mind that the realm of individual existence symbolised by bodies comprises two further subdivisions, that of subtle existence inhabited by the gods or angels corresponding to the ‘ālam-i malakūt, and that of gross existence properly speaking, composed of the gross elements and known as ‘ālam-i mulk.\textsuperscript{123}

These ideas find their parallel in Hindu cosmology according to which the gross elements (bhūta) are derived from the subtle principles or tanmātras which, although partaking of the individual nature on a subtle plane, constitute the immediate principles or causes of the former in the same way as the senses (indriya) have both subtle and gross aspects, either as distinctive faculties or as the corresponding organs.\textsuperscript{124} Rāmcandra and his followers do not expressly mention this further subdivision of the formal dominion, thereby contributing to the apparent confusion arising from the double application of the term ‘subtle substance’ (sūkṣma māyā) to the barzakh (the Kabīr-panthī kālapuruṣa) as principle of individualisation and plane of reflection between the universal and the individual, the informal and the formal, the non-manifested (nīstī, ‘adam) and the manifested (hastī, wujūd) realms of existence both included in the ‘cosmic

\textsuperscript{122.} AIB, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{123.} Cf. ch. II, pp. 191-2.

\textsuperscript{124.} Sāṅkhya-Kārikā, śloka 3. Cf. also Mānavadharmaśāstra, I.14-20.
egg’. This is why the immediately lower degree, described as being characterised by the productions of gross substance analogous to prakṛti, comprises both subtle and gross manifestation (bhū and bhuvah) notwithstanding the apparent contradiction in terminology.

Man, described by the Naqshbandīs as ‘noblest of all creatures’ (ashraf al-makhlūqāt) and by the classical Hindu doctrines ‘as descendant of Manu’ (mānava) populating the mānaVALoka, the ‘world of humanity’, participates directly in the nature of all three dominions comprised in the formula bhū, bhuvah, svaḥ which compose the universal sphere. He is, hence, described by Rāmcandra as the true reflection of the satpuruṣa. The primordial sacrifice of Brahmā sanctions that ‘Man was first and man is last’ (insān awwal thā aur insān ākhir hai), a hint at the most perfect among creatures, the insān al-kāmil, who is essentially identical with Rāmcandra’s satpuruṣa.

The constitution of man and the science of the subtle centres

A precise knowledge of the constitution of the human being covering the nature of and the interrelation between its single components and the superseeding planes of existence on which these are located is fundamental in any spiritual discipline. It constitutes one of the perogatives of every sādhanā and prepares the ground of a correct application of the different techniques meant to operate on that aggregate. The resulting process is invariably perceived by all traditions as an interior journey leading the initiate through the stages of his inner selves, the achievement of this goal requires the expertise of a true spiritual master (murshid bar Ḫaqq, satguru) well acquainted with this science, under whose guidance the disciple can safely cross the succeeding stations of the path (maqāmāt).

To illustrate this process, Rāmcandra adopts a simile used by Shāh Waḥ Allāh Dihlawī which compares the role of the master to the jungle-dweller who, due to his long experience,

125. VS, p. 33.
126. Ibid.
knows all the hidden tracks and paths leading through the thick forest and who is well acquainted with its various inhabitants and with the dangers one can possibly encounter. The path leading straight towards the goal, explains Râmendra, is, the one that requires less hardship and excludes any risk of going astray.¹²⁷

In obvious reference to the Naqshbandī tenet Râmendra affirms that this straight path rests nowadays on the ‘science of the subtle centres’ considered to be an extraordinary gift of the paramātmā bestowed by God (iśvara) on the great masters of the last age (ākhir zamāna).¹²⁸ Clearly, the reference here is to the ‘ilm-i latâ‘if handed down by the Mujaddidiyya, and to the corresponding Tàntrik cakra-vidyā, first propounded by the siddha and nàth-sampradāyas and later assimilated and adapted by the mediaeval sants. In Râmendra’s view, this science represents nowadays the only way for most people to undertake the goal of approaching the most sublime of all human goals. Using a language pertaining to the Sufi background, Râmendra asserts that the task of delivering this science to the world has been entrusted to the ‘masters endowed with great authority’ (ahl-i tamkīn), i.e., to those who by witnessing the Truth have attained to the degree of fixity allowing them to be included among the ‘real heirs of the Divine messengers’ (rusūl, avatāra), called ‘those of the fixed abode’ (ahl-i qā‘im maqām).¹²⁹

The reference here is clearly to the ‘poles’ (aqāb, pl. of quṭb), that is to say those high-ranking saints who in virtue of their extraordinary spiritual qualifications are directly connected with the axis mundi that connects this world with the superior regions and heavenly abodes reachings up to the ‘region of Truth’. Thanks to their lofty position, these ‘chosen ones’ participate directly at

¹²⁷. TP, p. 34. Cf. also Shāh Wālī Allāh: Altāf al-Quds, ch. I, p. 3.

¹²⁸. This ‘last age’ probably refers to the final part of the present cycle of mankind, the period of major decline of the spiritual values.

¹²⁹. TP, p. 34. The opening motto on the front page of this treatise indicates this importance thus: ‘The knowledge of the subtle centres constitutes the superior criterion conceded by the Supreme Being to the modern saints’.
the knowledge communicated through this channel. Only such a qualification can justify their definition as ‘heirs of the Divine messengers’ (avatārōn ke wārīth)\textsuperscript{130} since it enables them to receive and transmit to the rest of humanity the extraordinary ‘gift’ received from above. For the traditional esoteric authorities, their presence guarantees and sanctions the regularity of the science of the subtle centres and its supra-human origin within the context of both Hinduism and Islam.

We have, already looked at the description given by Rāmcandra in his Vedānta-Sāgara regarding the analogy between macrocosm and microcosm from a Hindu Tantra perspective. It is in this analogy that he perceives the possibility to link the two esoteric traditions he has inherited to each other, especially through the ‘science of the subtle centres’. Once the analogy between these two has been corroborated by a series of references encountered in both traditions,\textsuperscript{131} the author proceeds to describe the human constitution: in his view, the gross body

\textsuperscript{130} The term ‘heirs’ indicates the Islamic origin of this concept, for Islam does not allow any other human being to claim prophethood after Muḥammad. Hence, all the subsequent ‘poles’ come from within the broad category of ‘friends of God’ (awliyā’ Allāh) irrespective of the degree of their spiritual realisation.

The term avatāra hints at the master’s own Hindu background which sets out no chronological limit for the advent of Divinely inspired saints. Guided by a direct communication with the source of knowledge, these deliver a new type of spiritual wisdom to their surrounding world, although according to the theory of the daśāvatāra, only the tenth Divine descent, conceived as the knight of the white horse, the Kalki-avatāra, is left to conclude the present manvantara. A similar careful distinction had been made by Mīrāzā Mazhar Jān-i Jānān who came very close to admitting Rāma and Krśṇa as Divinely inspired messengers. In this context it would be interesting to investigate the role played by al-Khiḍr in the transmission of the ‘ilm al-ladūnī to a group of high ranking authorities in the spiritual hierarchy of Islam, and the difference that occurs in Hindu doctrines between a ‘total descent’ (pūrṇāvatāra) and a ‘partial descent’ (ārdhāvatāra) of the Divinity.

\textsuperscript{131} The reference is also to the Brahma-Sūtra that states: yathā piṇḍa tathā brahmāṇḍa (As the individual germ so the Cosmic Egg), very similar to the Süfi maxim: ‘The cosmos is like a big Man and man is like a small cosmos’. Cf. also AIB, part II, p. 12.
(sthūla śarīra, jism-i kathīf) of the human individual is analogous to virāṭ from a macrocosmic point of view. Similarly, the subtle body (sūksma śarīra), which bears a particular relation with the mind and inner governor (antaryāmī) of the various faculties, is associated with the avyākṛtah,132 while the causal body (kāraṇa śarīra) is said to bear a particular relation with the spirit. As such, it is considered antecedent and causal (kāraṇa) or primordial (ašlī) with regard to the individual aggregate consisting of the former two bodies. At the macrocosmic level it corresponds to hiranyagarbha, the golden germ that contains in nuce all possibilities relevant to this present world.133

The microcosm, with reference to its inherent potentiality, is generally termed as piṇḍa or piṇḍa śarīra134 and participates through these planes in different measures in the three tendencies (triguṇa) which qualify the realm of individual existence. If applied to the plane of universal existence in its primordial, luminous aspect, these assume the three-fold Divine aspects of the trimūrti, in which Viṣṇu represents satoguṇa, Brahmā rajoguṇa and Śiva or Maheśa tamoguṇa. Further down in the scale of existence, a multitude of gods (devatā) act as governors and presiding agents (adhiśṭhātā, muwakkil) over the different regions of the Universe, reflected on the microcosmic scale in the various individual human faculties (indriya) and their respective organs, and even in the physical elements that equally participate in those qualities in different measures.

132. This double aspect of the subtle body enhances its possible assimilation to the barzakh or sandhī both from a microcosmic and macrocosmic point of view, for it underlines its two faces, either revolved towards creation as the mind that analyses the single parts contained in the creation or as supra-rational intuition that synthesises everything into one unique principle buried at the centre of the spiritual organ that is identified with the heart. Hence, derives the double use of the term dil or qalb as referring to both, the seat of the mind and of the spirit. Cf. VS, pp. 44-5.


134. Here again applies the symbolism of the seed and the cosmic tree that develops from it since it is asserted that what is smallest on one side will be greatest on the other and vice versa.
Râmcandra lists a series of five inferior subtle centres or cakras, situated inside the human body and each presided over by a divinity of the Hindu pantheon. These five centres or subtle organs, their location inside the human organism and their corresponding celestial guardians, are named in gradually ascending order as follows:

- **gudā-cakra (maq'ad)** rectum Gañësa
- **lingendriya-cakra (ālat al-tanāsul)** organ of generation Brahmā
- **nābhi-cakra (nāf)** navel Viṣṇu
- **hṛdaya-cakra (qalb)** heart Śiva
- **kaṇṭha-cakra (galā)** throat Durgā¹³⁵

The mention of these five subtle centres, their location in the human body in relation to specific physical organs or nervous centres and their association with a particular divinity that presides over their different functions clearly reflect their origin in the Tàntrik environment of the Kabīr-panth to which Râmcandra was affiliated.¹³⁶ Although no explicit mention of the laṭā'if known to the Mujaddidī tradition appears anywhere in this context, the authors list just five instead of the usual seven or nine subtle centres commonly described in the cakra-vidyā suggest his assimilation to the five subtle organs described by some earlier Sūfī shaikhs in relation to the ‘ālam-i khalq. This idea is further corroborated by Râmcandra’s following statement which hints at the relation between this first series

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¹³⁵ VS, p. 36, _JC_ (Appendix I), pp. 541-60. For a comparison of these subtle centres with those described, for instance, in Gorakhnāth’s Siddha-Siddhānta Paddhati, see A.K. Banerjea, _Philosophy of Gorakhnāth_ (with _Gorakhşa-Vācana-Saṅgraha_).

¹³⁶ In the Tàntrik doctrines where they appear as the first five out of a total series of six, seven, or nine subtle centres, these are named as: mūlādhāra, svādhiṣṭhāna, maniṇḍra, anāhata and kaṇṭha or viśuddha; these are followed by the tālu-cakra located at the root of the palate, and the bhrū-cakra situated between the two eyebrows in correspondences to the jñāna-netra or ‘eye of wisdom’ associated with the third eye of Lord Śiva.
of subtle centres and the five gross elements (bhûta) through their subtle principles (tanmâtra):

When the wealth arising out of Brahmâ’s primordial impulse (vàsanà) came into existence, it appeared in the guise of the subtle sound vibration (śabda). From the śabda originated the ether and then from the ether, in an established order of succession, all the other elements which, having found their place in the body of Brahmâ, thus obtained their particular nature in the macrocosm. . . .

This passage describes the primordial rank attributed to the sound or śabda in relation to the subtle manifestation, and its relation to the ether as the primordial determination of the gross dominion. It also recalls the idea that the macrocosm is, in fact, identical with the body of Brahmâ itself. Such a conception further enhances the supposed analogy between the macrocosm and the human body in a way altogether similar to the famous Sûfi maxim already quoted. It leads to the conclusion that whatever man wants to know about Brahmâ can be discovered through an introspection of the human individual, for both are essentially identical in nature differing only in the degree of their measure (paimâna or mâtrâ).

Comparing the process of macrocosmic creation to the delivery of a baby from its mother’s womb, Râmcandra states that the head of Brahmâ was the first to see the light of existence following the penetration of the reflection emanating from the satpurusa into the womb of màyâ. As a result of this primordial conception, grew hiranyagarbha, the golden embryo containing the principles of both the subtle and the gross elements. In a microcosmic perspective too, it is, therefore the head which plays host to the quintessence (jauhar) of all senses (ḥawāṣ) and constituting elements (tattva). These comprehend the whole series of faculties of perception (jñânendriya), that is to say the senses of hearing (śrotra), touch (tvaca), sight (cakṣus), taste

137. VS, p. 36.
(rasanā) and smell (ghrāna). In the process of gradual unfolding, the constituent elements of the individual sphere descended into the realm of manifestation, assuming their outwardly perceptible shape (pragaṭ śūrat).

First it was the turn of the ether (ākāśa) to descend into the gross determination. Establishing its seat within the microcosmic context in the kaṇṭha-cakra it is located somewhere in the throat. Reiterating the view of the Mujaddidî shaikhs, Rāmcandra holds that it is in the nature of the way the Divine wishes to display itself in the world that what is of subtle nature has its place above and what is of gross nature has its place below. To illustrate this concept, he quotes the example of the tendency inherent to the three aspects of water as vapour, liquid or solid ice. The difference in the constitution of these three planes of universal Possibility results from the predominance of one of the three primordial qualities (guna) which permeate this entire world and characterise in their indefinite number of combinations every single degree of existence of every single creature. Rāmcandra calls this Durgā śakti, the dynamic display of Divine power that appears to the dazzled observer like an intricate puzzle (gorakhdhandhā) in the shape of the marvellous and enchanting play of multiple colours assumed by the Divine mysteries if considered under their creative aspect.

In Haṭha-Yoga doctrines, Durgā is considered mainly in her dynamic aspect of Śakti and consort of the Supreme Lord Śiva. Rāmcandra attributes her the rank of presiding divinity (adhiśṭhātā) of the ākāśa residing in the kaṇṭha-cakra. Due to her pre-eminent position in comparison to the other four subtle centres she is also referred to as ādi-śakti, the primordial power which glares in its primordial brilliance inside the throat of the cosmic Brahmā and is reflected in the human throat. When that ether was stirred by a churning movement (manthana), it generated the element air (vāyu, hawā) which took its seat inside the hṛdaya-cakra or maqām-i dil located in proximity to the ‘waving fan of the lungs’, and presiding over the ‘dominion of

139. Mānavadharmaśāstra, II.89-90.
140. VS, p. 38.
the air’ (vāyu maṇḍala). Its governor is Lord Śiva who along with his consort Durgā represents the primordial duality generated by Brahmā, i.e., puruṣa and prakṛti. Interestingly this duality is here put in direct relation with the affirmative and negative poles (ithbāt o naft) of universal existence thought by the Sūfīs to be comprised by the first part of the formula of the shahāda.\footnote{VS, p. 40. The polarisation within every single cakra into two complementary parts accounts for their tendency to rejoin each other, described in the terminology of Tantra-Yoga as the union between the male divinity and his šakti. Rāmacandra describes it in exactly the same manner. Although remaining faithful to his nirguna perspective which best combines with the integration of an Islamic spiritual discipline into the Hindu context, this is expressed as the mingling of naft and ithbāt on the plane of the ether that leads to the production of the element air on an immediately lower degree of manifestation.}

The high rank attributed to Śiva in Tantrism, in regard to both the macrocosm (brahmāṇḍa) and the microcosm (piṇḍa), is due to his role of destroyer or rather transformer (saścāra) of the Universe. If interpreted from a gnostic point of view, it comes to represent the dissolution (laya, maḥwiyyat) of the transitory existence of the formal world, implying for the initiate at the same rate the rebirth in a new, more sublime and supra-individual stage of existence (be-khudī). However, his subordination to the female goddess Durgā in this description suggests a doctrinal background that took at least partial inspiration from the Śākta environment within Tantrism.

From the union and churning of the two complementary poles in the hṛdaya-cakra was generated the principle of the element fire (agni, ātish) which took its seat inside the human microcosm in the nābhi-cakra. Its presiding divinity is Viṣṇu, the protector and cherisher of the Universe who nourishes the entire organism with heat spreading from the heels to the top of the head. From the churning movement produced by the union with his consort Lākṣmī sprang the subtle principle of water (ap, āb) which, taking its seat inside the lingendriya-cakra, assumed the characterising aspect of the element water, symbolically represented on the physical plane by the flow of corporeal liquids
from the organs of procreation. Its presiding divinity is Brahmā, the Lord of creation who generated from that very water all living creatures (*jīva-jantu*), moulding them in the fashion of a potter (*kumhāra*) from its mixture with the element earth (*prthvī, khāk*) on the revolving wheel in his celestial laboratory.\textsuperscript{142}

This extremely simplified description is illustrative of the complex theories which describe the process of cosmic unfolding and its implications for the analogous constitution of macrocosm and microcosm. Following the pattern of the Tāntrik doctrines and their *sant* offshoots, Rāmcandra here clearly intends to point out a common ground between these and the peculiar Mujaddidi doctrine of the subtle centres (*‘ilm-i laṭā’īf*) which he had inherited from his Sūfī shaikh. Such a reduced though essential illustration must not only be interpreted as a conscious attempt to present a plain and straightforward explanation of the most essential principles, underlying the different cosmological doctrines, but should also be seen as the identification of existing parallels between the two doctrinal backgrounds.

Such an assimilation, formally suggested by Rāmcandra’s frequent use of a parallel terminology drawn from both traditions, is particularly striking in the above descriptions that emphasise the compatibility between the five subtle centres situated in the lower part of the human organism and their correspondence to the single elements which, in varying proportions, represent the fundamentals of creation in both cosmologies. The five inferior subtle centres of Tantrism, whose location in the human body extends from the bottom of the trunk to the throat (representing the junction between trunk and head)\textsuperscript{143} are, therefore, associated with the five *laṭā’īf-i ‘ālam-i khalq* which include, apart from

\textsuperscript{142} VS, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{143} This symbolism goes back to the Purāṇa which describe the cosmic egg and its two halves floating on the primordial waters of the cosmic ocean. On a microcosmic plane, the head or skull as the most elevated part of the body and, thus, closest to heaven represents the celestial spheres and higher planes of Being pertaining to the universal and, therefore, supra-individual states contained in the upper shells of the *brahmāṇḍa* and the trunk represents the lower shells containing the strictly individual aggregate of the human being, while the arms
the four gross elements air, water, fire and earth ('anāšir-i arba') also the subtle psychical aggregate or empirical soul (nafs), the fifth constituent element of the 'world of creation' which complements the outer aspect (al-ẓāhir) of both man and the Universe.  

In the Mujaddidi cosmology, the first four of these subtleties compose the physical aggregate of the gross body termed qālib. ('model, frame'), to the location of which in relation to subtle organs analogous to the Hindu cakras no importance is attributed. They are conceived as the basic elements which compose the gross realm of the khalq, also referred to as the 'world of human sovereignty' ('ālam-i mulk). In contrast, the fifth of the series the latifa-i nafs, embraces the entire subtle dominion, termed on a macrocosmic scale as the 'world of angelic beings' ('ālam-i malakūt). On the microcosmic scale, it includes both the mental or rational sphere (nafs-i nāṭiqā) and the lower 'passionate soul' (nafs-i ammāra), subject to the pleasures of the senses.  

In the parallel Hindu perspective, this subtle realm corresponds to the antaryāmī or sūkṣma-śarīra which qualifies the nature of the divinities presiding over the five subtle centres. The subtle powers they personify can therefore be possibly associated to the various categories of angels known in the monothei-

and hands are simply considered as prolongations of the physical organs related to the faculty of prension (pāṇī) the same way as the legs and feet are merely the physical organs that correspond to the faculty of deambulation (pāda). These two faculties constitute, along with those of excretion (pāya), generation (upastha) and speech (vāc), the five karmendriya that enable man to intervene actively in the outside world.

144. Cf. ch. II, pp. 197-9; MuM, p. 76.

145. The Mujaddidi term nafs-i nāṭiqā applies to the 'interior governor' of the subtle aggregate and is, thus, slightly inferior to that held by the Vedānta doctrines where it refers to the very centre of being, analogous to īśvara. However, Rāmcandra gives it only the rank of citta or consciousness as a co-ordinating function of manas. Cf. also Mānavadharmaśāstra.
stic traditions (Arabic malā‘ika, Persian firishta). From a micro-
cosmic point of view, they represent the mental faculties that
govern the individual consciousness (ahaṅkāra). The subtle
domination is thus perceived as containing the immediate
principles of the gross realm rendered through the description
of the generation of the elements (bhūta) from the union of the
subtle poles or tanmātra contained in each cakra.

The only exception to this mode of generation is the ākāśa,
the primordial element and spatial principle considered to be
the seat of the ādi-śakti located in the throat, which links the
upper hemisphere represented by the head of universal Man
with the lower hemisphere represented by the trunk. Such a
symbolic description suggests a macrocosmic correspondence
between the Hindu concept of brahmāṇḍa containing the germ
of the body of Brahmā conceived as hiranyagarbha and the Sūfī
image of the ‘sphere of the universal Possibility’ (dā‘ira-i imkān)
containing the germ of the insān al-kāmil. It may, therefore, be
inferred that the head of Brahmā (or of the hiranyagarbha)
corresponds to the ‘ālam-i amr, of the Naqsbandīs both terms
referring to the non-formal states of universal existence which
includes the subtle seeds (bijā, pinda), inner truths (ḥaqā‘iq)
and principles (usūl) of all possibilities of manifestation prior to
their formal elaboration in the ‘ālam-i mithāl or candraloka and
their descent into the realm of the khalq represented by the rest
of the body.

From a Sūfī perspective, intermediate role between these
two dominions is played by the microcosmic nafs and corresponds
on the macrocosmic level to the barzakh holding the all-
embracing ‘Thorns of God’ (‘arsh al-muhīt) that comprehends
in its widest sense the entire series of possibilities contained in
both the ‘ālam-i malakūt and the ‘ālam-i mulk. It can, therefore,
be assimilated to the ākāśa in the Tāntrik perspective held by
Rāmcandra in his cosmological exposition. In the microcosmic
context too, both ākāśa and nafs denote the link between the
corporal realm of the gross and the subtle body. Such an
interpretation is further supported by the affinity of the term
nafs to another term derived from the same Arabic root, i.e.,
nafas, bearing the meaning of ‘breath’. On the other side, the
Sanskrit term *prāṇa* indicates the ‘vitalising breath’,\(^\text{146}\) and its five modalities (*vāyu*)\(^\text{147}\) during the phases of breathing, which plays an important role in connecting the two realms. The process of respiration is divided into the three major phases of inhalation, retention and exhalation, which determine the assimilation of cosmic elements sustaining the subtle and the gross body alike followed by the expulsion of individual elements into the surrounding environment. On a minor scale this process reproduces the alternating macrocosmic phases of expansion and contraction (*baṣr wa qabād*) which, like the two phases of the heartbeat, are symbolically re-enacted in the course of the alchemical process of liquefaction and coagulation that accompanies the ‘cleansing of the soul’ (*taḏḥīya-i nafs*) and the ‘purification of the heart’ (*tašfiya-i qalb*). This explains why the discipline of breath-control plays such a fundamental role in both Yoga and many Sūfī ṭuruq.\(^\text{148}\)

Moreover, we know from the orthodox Mujaddidi teachings that the ṭariqa’s spiritual practice concentrates from the very beginning of the ascending phase (‘*urūj*) of the ‘journey towards Allāh’ on the five subtle centres pertaining to the ‘ālam-i amr, since these are considered as the most subtle spiritual component or ‘Divine spark’ that descended into the ‘abode of the breast’ (*maqām-i sīna*) of the human individual. It is only after their reintegration (*fanā*) into their archetypical principles back in the realm of order that the inferior subtle organs pertaining to the domination of the *khalq* gain importance during the descending

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\(^\text{146}\) Hence the idea of *prāṇayāma*, the discipline of breath-control, as a Yogic technique meant to subjugate the senses and sensual desires. Similar though more moderate methods are used in numerous Sūfī circles including the Naqshbandiyya where these two phases of restraining and suspending the respiration is known respectively as *ḥabs-i nafas* and *ḥasr-i nafas*.

\(^\text{147}\) In Hindu dictionary this consists of: inhalation (*prāṇa*), inspiration (*apāṇa*), retention (*vyāṇa*), expiration (*udāna*) and digestion (*samāṇa*). Cf. Chāndogya *Upaniṣad*, V.19-23; *MAITRĪ Upaniṣad*, II.6.

\(^\text{148}\) The assimilation of the inner path of realisation to an alchemical process is strengthened by Rāmcandra’s allusion to the ‘touching stone’ or ‘philosopher’s stone’ (*kasaṇḍī*) apt to transmute all metals, especially lead or iron, into gold.
phase (nuzūl) of the ‘journey from Allāh’ back to the contingent world. These two complimentary phases of the spiritual path and the corresponding three degrees of sainthood (wilāyat) gradually lead the murīd through the ten major stations of his inner journey (maqāmāt-i ‘ashrah), which in this particular context are set in direct correspondence to the ten subtle organs (laṭā‘īf-i ‘ashrah).149

Inverting the conventional order followed in other Sūfī ṭuruq, this progress is referred to in the Mujaddidī terminology as sair-i jadhbi as against the previous one called sair-i sulūkī and reiterates from a new perspective the ancient maxim of the order according to which ‘the beginning of our path lies there where that of other orders ends and our path ends there where that of others begins’.150 Although both ways are ultimately equivalent for the attainment of the final goal,151 it is significant that the way of jadhba is recommended as more suitable to the conditions of the present era and is, thus, essential to the Mujaddidi’s task of facilitating access to the initiatory path, as is also underlined also by Rāmcandra at the beginning of his Tattva-Prabodhinī.

From the time of its first explicit doctrinal formulation by

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149. This assimilation is expressly mentioned in the HdT, pp. 8/9. For detailed Mujaddidī description of these ten stations, cf. MuM, pp. 50-3; MaS, pp. 29-32/48-52. It is important to remember, however, that these indicate only the major stations of the sulūk and are, thus, liable to indefinite multiplication into minor realms. Cf. also M. Molé’s article ‘Traités mineurs de Najm al-Dīn Kubbā’, treatise I: al-uṣūl al-‘ashra’ in Annales Islamologiques de l’Institut d’Études Orientales, 1965.

150 See Sirhindī, Mabdā o Ma‘ād, manhā 1, pp. 93-9 and manhā 10, pp. 110-14.

151. Sirhindī distinguishes two types of aspirants to the inner path corresponding to the two ways described here: the intellectual type (ahl-i kashf o ma’rifat) who receives from the very beginning a detailed knowledge of each single station through the unveiling of an intellectual intuition (kashf) through the sulūk, and the emotional and devotional type (arbāb-i jahl wa ṣairat), suddenly transported and rapidly attracted through the initial stages through jadhba. These two are compared to two pilgrims on their way to the Ka’ba who approach their goal differently but nevertheless eventually both reach their destination. Cf. Mabdā o Ma‘ād, manhā 10, p. 112; MuM, p. 51.
Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī about four centuries ago, this tendency to focus on the accelerated ‘way of jadhba’, which finds its practical expression in the emphasis on the immediate concentration on the spiritual components of the breast, has constantly gained in importance among the leaders of the ṭariqā especially since Mīrzā Mażhar Jān-i Jānān. It has now become the dominant mode in the order’s methodology in all its branches. This is particularly evident in the teachings of the Hindu lineage that developed from it. Its leaders again and again stress the adequacy and ease of the method propounded by their spiritual ancestors which offers a large audience the chance even in the present difficult times of undertaking the spiritual path, and which has found fertile soil in the highly devotional atmosphere of the Rām-bhakti that is widely diffused among the Kāyasths of central and eastern Uttar Pradesh.

The detailed elaboration of the subtle centres pertaining to the khalq, their origin, their specific properties and functions in the human organism and their evaluation against a Tāntrik background brought forward by Rāmcandra must hence be interpreted in two possible ways. These are closely interconnected between and complementary to each other: On one side, he integrates the Mujaddidī teachings regarding the ‘ilm-i laṭā’if in its preliminary and inferior aspects not taken in account on the Sūfī side but well elaborated in the corresponding Hindu doctrines of the Tantravāda. On the other, he leaves open the possibility of an alternative and more conventional approach of gradual advancement (tafṣīli) through each of the subtle centres of the lower part of the human organism which stretch out from the bottom of the back till the throat along the ideal vertical axis represented in the microcosm by the spinal cord (merūdaṇḍa).

The reluctance shown by Rāmcandra and his successors to

152. Cf. his interpretation of the role played by the two Hindu avatāras Rāmacandra and Krṣṇa discussed in chapter 1 in relation to the two major ways of sulūk and jadhba, and the frequent mention of the shaikh’s emotional character.

reveal anything regarding these cakras leads to the assumption that although their function as possible gate of entrance to the inner path is still acknowledged in line of principle, they bear no practical importance in their immediated concerns. They mention by Rāmcandra must be interpreted as a reminisence of the older tradition inherited through his links with branches of the Kabir- and Nānak-panth and are meant to complete the elaboration of theoretical background. His preference for the elaboration of his sādhanā remains focussed on the doctrines and methods received from the Naqshbandī masters who had long shifted to a preference of the jadhibī path that tries to exploit the devotional component in human nature rather than being too demanding from a point of view of physical and mental constraints. Nowhere in the authentic recordings of Rāmcandra’s and his successors’ oral teachings is there any further mention of these inferior cakras familiar in the Hindu context of the Kuṅḍalini- and Haṭha-Yoga, let alone any instruction regarding the methods of how to operate upon them for their reawakening.

On the contrary, a number of hints in Rāmcandra’s writings suggest his evaluation of the ‘ilm-i sīna as a superior kind of knowledge bearing a direct relation to some aspects of Rāja-Yoga, the ‘royal’ discipline and most intellectual among all Yoga doctrines which, in a similar fashion to the Naqshbandī ṭariqa claims to ‘begin where all the other kinds of Yoga end’. Interestingly, its origin is traced back by some of our Hindu authorities to the instructions received by king Janaka of Videha, the legendary father of Lord Rāmacandra’s bride Sītā, through his spiritual perceptors Yājñavalkya and Aṣṭāvakra.154

The Mujaddidi doctrine, whose practical aspect focusses on a precise knowledge of the subtle centres located in the human breast, represents the kernel of the entire sādhanā taught by the Kāyasth-faqīrs descending from Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān. Like their Muslim ancestors in the silsila, they exalt its value

as the most sublime and at the same time easiest and most accessible of all initiatory disciplines available to contemporary humanity. Hence, their main concern rests on the outline of different aspects of this science and the methods connected to it. Often, these are elaborated from the standpoint of traditional Hindu theories regarded as analogous to or at least compatible with those aspects too particular to the Islamic perspective to be readily transmitted to an audience increasingly less acquainted with the religious tenets of that tradition.

It is, therefore, important to distinguish between the purely theoretical background (ta‘lim-i ‘ilmī) and the practical aspects (ta‘lim-i ‘amli) of the ūrīqa inherited by Rāmcandra from his Naqsbhandī shaikh. The former was originally based on and derived from a doctrinal background firmly anchored in the Islamic culture and its religious and spiritual tradition, including its images, rhetoric, technical language and other formal characteristics. For this reason, it had to undergo frequent reformulations which, as we have shown, are based to a large extent on the tradition of the Upaniṣad and the doctrines that developed later among the followers of the nirguṇa-bhakti. In contrast, the practical aspect comprising methods and specific techniques was largely deemed applicable to Muslims and non-Muslims alike since they are meant to act on the common ground represented by a human constitution subject to universal laws and principles.

After establishing the pivotal role of the cakra-vidyā in Rāmcandra’s elaborations, we may now turn our attention to some specific notions regarding this science found not only in his own writings but also in several of his successors’ works. An important notion encountered repeatedly among the authorities of Rāmcandra’s lineage the pañcakośa theory expounded in detail in the Taittiṟīya Upaniṣad. It describes a series of five successive sheaths or veils (kośa) that cover the most intimate Self (ātman) located at the centre of every human being. These veils are commonly represented by five concentric circles layered at an increasing distance around a nucleus constituted by the non-

155. Taittiṟīya Upaniṣad, III.1-10, I.5.1 and II.8.1.
manifested metaphysical Self (avyākṛtaḥ ākāśa) which is said to reside in the innermost ‘secret chamber of the heart’ (guhā antarhrdaya ākāśa)\textsuperscript{156} and referred to as jīvātmā following its descent into the corporeal frame.

This concept is assimilated by Rāmcandra to the current Sūfī image which depicts the heart as covered by an indefinite number of veils (ḥijāb) preventing ordinary human beings from the opportunity of direct witness (mushāhada) of the sublime Reality hidden in its innermost space (‘ain al-qalb). According to this image, the progressive removal or penetration of these veils will eventually allow those capable of reaching the higher stages of the path through the ‘purification of the soul’ and the ‘cleansing of the heart’ to get a glimpse of this inner core. Rāmcandra, the author of the Santmat Darṣana writes:

To remove these coverings will be the correct way and represents a safe approach towards the final goal. At this [present] stage, innumerable coverings subsist around the Self. The covers which have been woven on our physical body, are in reality the samples of the outer circles of creation. The relation between them is like . . . that of the brahmāṇḍa and the piṇḍa. But the spiritual authorities . . . have tried to divide them into a series of five covers . . . in order to provide the opportunity to those who want to understand them. . . .\textsuperscript{157}

There follows a detailed description of each of these five veils largely based on the description found in the Upaniṣad:

The first and outermost veil consists the annamaya-kośa, the covering made of and nourished by food (anna). It constitutes

\textsuperscript{156}. Note the use of the term ākāśa here in reference to the transcendent principle whose seat is conventionally described as the heart considered to be the centre of the microcosm. Represented as a spaceless dot, it lies not only beyond the realm of manifestation but ultimately also beyond the informal realm of the amr, thus, identifying itself with the metaphysical Principle referred to in the Upaniṣad as paramātmā or Brahmā and analogous to the Sūfī concept of al-dhāt, the unqualified Essence of Allāh. Cf. Chāndogya Upaniṣad, VIII.3.1.

\textsuperscript{157}. SD, p. 56.
the physical body composed of the gross elements (bhūta), the most exterior of all modes of manifestation. In Rāmcandra’s interpretation, it is this gross body (sthūla śarīra) that dominates the soul to the extent of not considering itself apart from it, which is the reason why the human being characterised by ignorance (avidyā) attributes an excessive importance to the physical body.

The second cover, called prāṇamaya-kośa or the ‘sheath made of breath’, is constituted by the subtle substance (prāṇa) and its five functions, the five vāyu, which ‘are situated at various places in the body where they perform special functions’. The reflective condition of these five modalities which preside over the five physical organs and their respective faculty, i.e., the five jñānendriya and the five karmendriya, are also contained in this sheath. Rāmcandra calls them Dhana⁄jaya (lit. ‘wealth acquiring’, an epithet of Agni, the Hindu god of fire), Kūrma, (the tortoise and second avatāra of the Hindu god Viśṇu which appears into the Purāṇic episode of the churning of the milk-ocean), Nāga, (the serpentine beings which in Hindu mythology are said to have sprung from the union of the sage Kaśyapa with his wife Kadru, who populate one of the inferior regions of the Pātāla), Devadatta, (lit. the ‘Divine gift’ Khudā-dād) and Krikel.

The third covering is referred to as manomaya-kośa. It is characterised by the mental consciousness or the faculty of thought pertaining to the mind (manas), the organ which creates, elaborates and reflects the impressions received from the outside world. To explain the impact of this faculty on the human condition, Rāmcandra compares it to a silk worm that produces a thread from its own mouth, wrapping it continuously around itself until it remains protected by its newly created shield while yet remaining entangled by its own product, just like man whose mind continuously creates all sort of bindings for himself. Manas presides over the subtle state co-ordinating the impulses

158. Cf. p. 337, no. 3.
159. SD, p. 58.
160. Ibid.
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received from and sent to the ten indriyas which are its natural instruments. It is precisely through the interrelation between the mental sphere and the senses that the mind inclines itself towards the outer phenomenal world, creating apparently real yet ultimately illusory bindings for the soul. As the third of the five veils, the mental sphere occupies an intermediate position between the two outer and inner layers. In this mediating position, the mind, if brought under control through a rigorous and continuous discipline, can act as a true viceregent of the ‘(macro)-cosmic mind’ (brahmāṇḍī man; ‘aql-i kullī) and in total harmony with it.

According to Rāmcandra, the ‘curtain of the mind’ can be removed by two means. The first consists of śama, the restraint of the sensual faculties resulting in a growing indifference to the outer objects through concentration, meditation, contemplation of and eventually identification with an abstract inner object. The second is termed dam or self-command and resolute discipline, implying, in a Sūfī perspective, the transmutation of the nafs-i lawāmma into the nafs-i muṭma‘inna. The influence of Śrī Ramānujacārya on Rāmcandra, direct or indirect as that may be, becomes here quite evident.

The fourth cover termed vijñānamaya-kośa or the ‘cover of discriminating knowledge’ (vijñāna), corresponds to the human intellect, seen as a reflection of the Cosmic Intellect (buddhi). Its principal characteristic is that of taking decisions (viveka, quwwat-i tamāzī), that is to say to evaluate the pros and cons of an idea and than to reach a decision on the base of a correct assessment. The mind (manas) proposes, and the intellect

161. In these terms we recognise the four last members (aṅga) of the yogic process described by Patanjali, here integrated with a Vedāntic intellectual background typical of a Rāja-Yoga perspective.

162. For a description of the positive and negative effects of the manomaya-kośa on the rest of the organism, see AIB, pp. 9-10.

163. The other faculties listed by Śrī Rāmānujācārya in his four-fold discipline (sādhanā catuṣṭaya) leading the vedāntin to the correct enquiry into the nature of the Brahman are: viveka (discrimination), vairāgya (non-attachment) and mumukṣutva (determination to reach liberation).

164. VS, p. 46.
either confirms or rejects the proposal.\textsuperscript{165} With its help, man can catch a glimpse of Reality, though only as a brief flash comparable to a Sufi ǧâl. In Sufi terminology which reflects the religious perspective of Islam, a ǧâl refers to a spontaneous spiritual lightning said to be caused by the mercy of the Almighty as a concession to the pious and earnest seeker of Truth. In the Hindu doctrines, the vijñānamaya-kośa is said to be composed of the five subtle principles (tanmātra) of the five sensual faculties (khawāṣṣ, jñānendriya) providing at the same time the vital link between these and their principles.\textsuperscript{166} However, notwithstanding its elevated degree of subtlety, even this condition can possibly lead to deception, for ‘those who penetrate to it begin to obtain extraordinary powers’ (siddhī, kharq-i ‘adāt) of every kind, and the initiate could possibly feel so attracted by them that he misses the chance to rise back to the right stage. . . ‘\textsuperscript{167}

Enraptured by the flashes emanating from the radiance of buddhi, the disciple risks to remain allured by this light losing sight of the straight path that leads to the still distant final goal.\textsuperscript{168} The shadow or reflection of buddhi corresponds to the same ahaṅkāra whose first determination in manas represents the immediately preceding veil. The danger for those not endowed with the ability to penetrate beyond the vijñānamaya-kośa is to remain entangled in its lower reflection in the individual domain, thus falling back into the incessant rotation of the wheel of samsāra which ensnares the 840,000 species (lakh caurāsī) that populate the Universe. This and the two preceding veils constitute the subtle body (sūkṣma-śarīra, jīsm-i laṭīf) and are therefore, comprehensively included in the term nafs.

Finally the fifth cover, which includes virtually all the possibilities of manifestation, is referred to as ānandamaya-kośa, the abode of bliss and joy (ānanda). It corresponds to the degree of īśvara which entirely transcending the individual dominion.

\textsuperscript{165} SD, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{166} Mānavadharmaśāstra, I:17.
\textsuperscript{167} SD, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{168} This stands at the base of the warnings issued by many authorities in the esoteric traditions of both Islam and Hinduism, the former
Here the inner self is alone, contemplating itself free from the bonds of existence. Hence, it is defined as beatitude and characterised by inner peace (śānti, sukhān). Rāmcandra remarks that it can be considered as the knot (barzakhī) that ties up the inanimate, substantial plane (jar) with the reviving force of universal conscience (cetana) on a very subtle level, so subtle as to subsist only nominally. This fifth cover can be identified with the ‘causal body’ (kāraṇa-śarīra) since it contains the principles or causes of the former two ‘bodies’. If considered in relation to the macrocosmic planes (‘ālam-i kabīr), contemplated by the Mujaddidīs, it corresponds to the ‘ālam-i amr said to contain the non-existence (‘adam) of the five subtleties whose reflected existence has descended into the physical frame (qālib) of the human being pertaining to the ‘ālam-i khalq. From a microcosmic point of view, the ānandamaya-kośa anticipates immediately the state of sat-cit-ānanda. It preludes to the total identity of the Being as knowing subject (sat), the known object (ānanda) and the universal conscience (cit). The later is pure knowledge linking the two former in a unique entity characteristic of the pure Being that ‘knows itself through itself’, and as such corresponds exactly to what the Sūfī experiences in the ‘abode of bewilderment’ (maqām-i ʿhairat).

169 SD, pp. 61-2, VS, pp. 58-9. Obviously, the term ‘body’ is used in this context by analogy with the preceding two realms. This degree lies above the so-called realm of form (‘ālam-i ajsām), an alternative denomination of the khalq used by the Naqshbandīs, being a body by conventional definition limited by its outer form (ṣūrat or rūpa) which expands into space and whose existence lasts for a certain amount of time.

This image of the human constitution in terms of the quintuple sheaths of the Self as expounded by the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, and integrated by Rāmcandra with many Sūfī concepts, re-proposes the symbolism of the number five peculiar to the ‘ilm-i laṭṭā‘if. Five is the number of the subtle principles that govern each of the two cosmic divisions, five (plus one, since the laṭṭa‘a-i rūḥ is qualified by a double prophetic function) is the number of the prophets presiding over the subtle centres on the spiritual plane of the amr, and five is the number of the corresponding irradiations (tajalliyāt) of the essence of the Divine Reality (al-Haqq) which determine the planes of contingency,¹⁷¹ each corresponding to a degree of sainthood conceived as successive stages on the inner path.

Although few of these features so intimately related to an Islamic context appear anywhere expressly mentioned by the silsila’s Hindu authorities, the similarity between the doctrine described in the Upaniṣad and the Sūfī doctrine of Ibn al-‘Arabī in his theory of the quintuple ‘planes of existence’ (haḍrat-i khamsa) irradiating from the source of the Essence (al-dhāt),¹⁷² later absorbed and integrated into the all-comprehensive ‘science of the subtle centres’ by the Mujaddidi, is too striking to remain unnoticed. The analogy between the two doctrines becomes undeniable if related to the ‘science of the quintuple fire’ (pāṅcāgni-vidyā) described by the Chāndogya Upaniṣad and mentioned by our Hindu faqīrs in connection with the spiritual light (satprakāśa) and its irradiations. It is enhanced by the descending perspective used in both cases regarding the Principle that apparently descends step after step into the realm of manifestation clothing Itself into more and more veils. On the other hand, the Mujaddidi concept of the successive stages of sainthood describe an ascending perspective analogous to that

assumed by the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*. Both points of view are harmoniously resumed by the ‘science of the subtle centres’ whose stress lies, however, on the practical aspect of reintegration depicting the stages traversed by the disciple along the same path taken by the Divine power during the unfolding process of manifestation, but in the opposite direction.\textsuperscript{173}

Similarly, there is yet another important concept described in the *Upaniṣad* and frequently used by Rāmacandra and his successors that must be mentioned here, although it appears less immediately reconcilable with the ‘ilm-i laṭāʿīf than the preceding one. This classifies the conditions of the microcosmic *jīvātmā* into four major categories in conformity with the theory expounded in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* and reiterates the pattern of the three bodies. Proceeding from the bottom upwards, the first of these conditions is referred to as *viṣva* or Vaiśvānara (lit. Universal Man) and has its seat in the waking state (*jāgṛta-avasthā*) characterised by the sensory perception and knowledge of the external objects on the gross level experienced by the *sthūla-śarīra*.\textsuperscript{174} Accordingly, the type of beatitude (*ānanda*) experienced by man at this stage is, defined as *viṣayānanda*, the beatitude caused through the contact with the multiple objects of the senses (*viṣaya*), considered the lowest and most effimerous sort of joy. It represents the first goal at which any spiritual discipline (*sādhanā*) aims reached by checking and restraining the senses while detaching them from these external objects and turning them inwards in order to transmute the unstable and superficial state of joy (*sukha*) the provoke, always prone to turn into sorrow (*duḥkha*) into a more permanent state of beatitude.\textsuperscript{175} Hence, the waking state stands for the entanglement of the self in the coarsest degrees of manifestation while at the same time representing the starting point and base for a re-ascent towards the superior states. It is in this sense that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{173} AY, pp. 162-3.
\item \textsuperscript{174} VS, p. 44. Cf. also SD, pp. 31-2; AY, p. 64 citing *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, Śruti 3. According to this description, the Vaiśvānara has seven limbs and nineteen mouths, the latter corresponding to the ten *indriyas*, the five *prāṇas*, *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahaṅkāra* and *citta*.
\item \textsuperscript{175} AY, p. 64.
\end{itemize}
Rāmcandra reiterates the analogy used by the Vedānta between the physical body, the waking state and the virāṭ (sometimes also spelt as virāj), which is intended as the reflection of the cosmic intelligence on the gross plane where it governs the corporeal state.176

Switching over to the Sūfī imagery, the Hindu masters teach that this reflection emanates from the pure light of the Universal Intellect (‘aql-i kullī) and descends from its topmost position in the cosmos identified with the ‘arsh al-muḥīt along a vertical axis into the realm of creation. Eventually it reaches, at the very bottom of the khalq, the gross organ of the heart (qalb-i mudawwarī, lit. the ‘round-shaped heart’),177 from where it irradiates into the entire human organism. It animates that layer of the human soul revolved towards the outside world, attracted by and exposed to all kinds of sensual desires and distractions which corrupt its integrity and plunge it into the continuous ups and downs of pleasure and suffering permeated by the darkness of ĥamas.178

The second condition of the jivātmā, corresponding to the subtle body (sūkṣma-śarīra or jīsm-i laṭīf), is called taijasa.179 It

176. VS, p. 44. There is a correspondence with the first degree of sainthood in relation to Ādam, like the Vaiśvānara put in relation to the laṭīfa-i qalb. In its macrocosmic sense, the term virāj corresponds to the ‘attribute of creation’ (ṣifat-i takwîn).

177. Literally ‘circular heart’, this term underlines the peripherical position of this level as compared to that of the following stages corresponding more properly to the pivotal role the heart plays in the human organism. However, the gradual progression from this outer level towards the inner core renders the idea of a ‘purification of the heart’ (tasfiya-i qalb) achieved in the course of the post-initiatory process. It is also said to act as the base (bunyâd) and principle (aśl) of the remaining four subtle organs of the ‘ālam-i amr where it occupies the lowest rank, closest to the barzakh. Cf. MaS, p. 34.

178. SD, p. 40.

179. VS, p. 45. Cf. also Māṇḍûkya Upaniṣad, śruti 4. Taijasa, lit. ‘radiance’, ‘splendour’, but loosely rendered by Rāmcandra as ‘inconstant, unsteady’ (cañcala) because of the fickle nature of the mental consciousness that continuously produces vortexes of thoughts (citta-vṛtti) beyond our control and that has its seat in the state of dreaming.
refers to the inner states of the mind and, in comparison with 
the former states, is one step closer to the unconditioned ātman. 
While the body lies motionless in sleep, the current of life fuelled 
through the incessant exchange of information received from 
and projected towards the outer world is temporarily interrupted 
and the senses are withdrawn into the inner faculty 
(āntahkāraṇa).  

Characterised by a relatively higher degree of minuteness, 
its objects consist exclusively in mental images based on the 
elaboration of subtle forms which derive their existence from 
the mental impressions (saṃskāra) left behind by the impact 
with the external objects during the waking state. At this level, 
the mind enjoys a comparatively greater freedom than in the 
waking state and every imaginable thing or situation can 
combine and produce itself in a far larger range of possibilities 
(Rāmacandra quotes the idea of a winged elephant, the capacity 
of flying, etc.) in order to provoke a sensation of joy and sorrow 
while maintaining a degree of duality. The beatitude experi-enced 
at this level is called vāsanānanda or ‘beatitude caused by 
imagination’. Since it still preserves the possibility of re plunging 
into the opposite states of sadness, fear and affliction, its nature 
is deemed as essentially ephemeral and hence does not conform 
to the sublime degree of ānanda.  Moreover, the reliance on 
form in the ideas which govern it confirms its relation with the 
individual dominion of manifestation.

(svapna-avasthā). The term is used in reference to the luminous 
quality of the igneous element that characterises the gods when 
intended as presiding over the various subtle faculties enveloped in 
their potential state and stands for the refraction at this level into 
multiple shades and colours of the intelligible light (satprakāśa).

180. In Patañjali’s Āstāṅga Yoga doctrine, this withdrawing of the senses 
is known as pratyāhāra and constitutes an important preliminary 
stage for the attainment of ekāgratā, the concentration fixed on one 
single object which is defined by the Sūfis as yaksūī.

181. AY, p. 64. Bṛj Mohan Lāl makes an interesting note in this context 
which is worth quoting:

...yes certainly, the ability to restrain the mind and to follow the 
sādhanā wholeheartedly is not a common thing. [The mind] contains 
that serpent in form of a vortex of mental impressions pertaining to 
the ceaseless current of life (saṃsāra) which only Lord Kṛṣṇa can
This subtle state is governed by a microcosmic reflection of the golden light emanating from the hiranyagarbha, situated at the centre of that horizontal plane along which the Universe develops its indefinite number of possibilities. In the human constitution, it is identified by Rāmcandra with the qalb-i ṣanawbarī, the pinecone-shaped heart referred to in the often quoted tradition ‘you should know that, no doubt, inside the human body there is a piece of flesh — if its condition is sound the whole body is sound, but if it is spoiled the entire body is corrupt’ refers.¹⁸² In Rāmcandra’s doctrinal vision, this degree corresponds to the reproachable soul (nafs-i lawāmma) in the phase of transmutation between the blameable vices and the laudable virtues dominated by the tendencies characterised respectively by rajas and sattva.¹⁸³

The third condition of the jīvātmā is called prājña (lit. ‘integral knowledge’) and corresponds to the state of deep sleep (suṣupta avasthā) in which the individual no longer experiences any desire and dreams.¹⁸⁴ Properly speaking, in this condition the ‘living Self’ is no longer tied to the limiting conditions of human life (jīva) in the formal world, since its natural seat is the ‘causal body’ which is not really distinguished from ātman itself. As Rāmcandra remarks:

When you and I reach this state, our relations with the senses cease altogether to subsist; no sensation exists there and only the minute Self remains.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸². Related by Ibn Màja and quoted by Shāh Abūl Ḥasan in MaS, pp. 34-5.
¹⁸³. SD, p. 41.
¹⁸⁴. Màıóåkya Upaniøad, śruti 5.
¹⁸⁵. Cf. SD, p. 33; VS, p. 45.

Lord Krishna is our real satguru in this world whose sacred spiritual power puts to rights our path by the means of the subtle sound current (sūrat śabda) in subduing the power of the vāsanā. He reveals a method to be followed during the spiritual practice by which, enlarging upon us the ocean of His compassion and coadjuvated by the means of His tawajjuh, he burns and washes away the impressions and vortexes of thought from our consciousness filling our mind with real beatitude, a perception often experienced during the satsang. (p. 64)
In this state of ‘mental sleep’ (man kī nīnd), only the ātmā remains present enjoying pure beatitude in Itself.186 Free from any qualification derived from the contact with the formal world, It is beyond the feeble alteration between joy (sukha) and pain (duḥkha) and confers upon the mind a condition of absolute peace (śānti, sukūn).187

On a microcosmic scale it represents the unmanifested (avyakta) or non-existent principle (‘adam) and immediate cause (kāraṇa, hence kāraṇa-śarīra or ‘causal body’) of the stage of manifestation (vyakta) or existence (wujūd), which is situated on the level of pure spirituality. ‘All knowledge of the world, such as moral principles or worldly and spiritual issues, has been bestowed on the human being through this stage alone. Divine revelations (kashf) are received at this stage [characteri-sed by] annihilation (fanā), deep meditation (murāqaba) and contemplation (samādhi) . . . . ’188 Its centre in the human organism is described as the ‘blue lotus-heart’ (qalb-i nilofarī) corresponding to the pacified soul (nafs-i muṭma‘inna) in the state of self-effacement (maḥwiyat, istighrāq, be-khudī), dominated by sattva.189

The light that irradiates from that lotus-heart is identified by Rāmcandra with buddhi or ‘aql-i kullī on a macrocosmic plane, the super-rational faculty through which the Divine revelation is communicated directly between the transcendent principle of Being (īśvara) and the realm of immanence and which crosses and illuminates the entire dominion of the ‘ālam-i amr; its

186. Hence, the identification with the ānandamaya-koṭa and the connected state of sat-cit-ānanda.

187. In order to further exemplify the underlying concept of unity transcending all residuous traces of duality, Rāmcandra quotes a passage from the Vedānta Upaniṣad:

‘O Maitrayi, where two beings exist, one hears the other, one touches the other, one knows the other and one sees the other. Where only one exists, how will one hear, touch, know and see the other. . . . ’. Cf. VS, pp. 54-5.

188. SD, p. 41.

189. The Vedānta identifies it with the inner co-ordinator (antaryāmi) mentioned in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad; Cf. AIB, pp. 23 and 32.
original source is the ‘arsh-i muḥīṭ, analogous to īśvara in the Yoga doctrines or sarveśvara as in the Upaniṣad.190

Finally, the fourth stage corresponds to the turiya or caturtha (lit. ‘the fourth’).191 According to Rāmcandra, this fourth stage lies beyond the state of sat-cit-ānanda and characterises the pure Being. Only the most perfect saints are aware of it. In Sūfī terminology, it is assimilated to the ‘ālam-i lāhūt, the realm of Divine Ipseity (ghaib huwiyat) where the Self is altogether pure from any determination (lā-ta’ayyun) whence the fourth stage of the saints is said to begin. In the words of Rāmcandra,

if one attains or acquires the power of reaching this stage at his own will and whenever he likes during his lifetime, he will experience a sublime and unparalleled pleasure unmatched by any worldly pleasure.192

The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad describes this utmost degree of consciousness in exclusively negative terms. Unlike the preceding state of prajña that throughout implies the chance of a return to the lower stages, it is permanent and once attained cannot possibly be lost. But while Rāmcandra agrees with the position held by the Vedānta that the ultimate goal of human life (paramārtha, maqṣad) effectively consists of the attainment of beatitude (ānanda), he interprets this in accordance with his joint Mujaddidī-Vaiṣṇava perspective reflecting a devotional attitude rather than the purely gnostic perspective of Ṣūfī Ṣāṅkara- rācārya in his comments on the major Upaniṣad or, in the Sūfī context, by Ibn al-‘Arabī.

Rāmcandra remarks:

The Śāstras affirm that the aim of humanity lies in bringing to an end all affliction (duḥkha) while attaining

190. Cf. Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, śruti 6: ‘This [prajña] is the lord of all, this is the knower of all, this is the inner ordinator; this is the source of all, this is the beginning and end of beings . . .’.
191. VS, p. 56. Cf. also Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, V.14.3.
192. SD, p. 35. Elsewhere, the kind of beatitude characteristic of this stage is described as ‘Supreme Beatitude’ (paramānanda, ṣarūr-i ‘ażīm).
utmost Beatitude. This proves that the knowledge as intended by the Veda does not represent the aim on its own account but rather that the aim of that very knowledge is only the creation of toil (rāḥat) and . . . [the immersion into] Beatitude. . . . The secret lies in ānanda while the term paramānanda has been used in reference to this subtle thought. Paramānanda is identical to the great harmony (viśāl ham-aghoshī) which, in a figurative and technical context, has assumed the meaning of ‘reverential devotion’ (upāsanā). This term could no doubt be used in the sense of union (milāp) but its figurative and technical meaning is ‘labour and toil’ (‘amal o shaghl). So, it has not been used and the term upāsanā has been regarded as sufficient. This paramānanda corresponds to upāsanā at the condition that its original end is accomplished. For this reason, upāsanā is pre-eminent and superior to jñāna.193

This paragraph eloquently exemplifies the agreement possible between the descending perspective of the Mujaddidiya and its stress on the ‘merciful’ aspect of the Divinity culminating in the state of ‘pure servanthood’ (‘ubūdiyat-i șarfa). The description is coined on the ideal image of the prophet of Islam here transferred into a Vaiṣṇava context in which the prevailing tendency of selfless service and devotion that combines action (karma), knowledge (jñāna) and self-surrender in devotional love (bhakti) as taught in the Bhagavad Gītā integrates itself into the position held by Rāmānujācārya’s viśiṣṭādīvaita.

If on one hand this reflects the Mujaddidī influence on Rāmcandra’s way of interpreting and exposing the brahma-vidyā, it is also important to note how well his position agrees with many currents within the mainstream of the bhakti-movement to which he was connected. It, therefore, strengthens the idea of an affinity between these two currents in both traditions and provides a remarkable instance of the often invoked reciprocal

193. VS, p. 63.
influences between Islamic esoterism and the devotionally oriented sant-movement, part of a trend first apparent in mediaeval Hinduism and which in this case goes back in its principles to the eighteenth-century figures of Mîrzâ Mazhar Jân-i Jânân and Tulsî Sahîb Hâthrasî.

Nevertheless, many of Râmâcandra’s theoretical exposi-tions confirm the importance of the metaphorical teachings of the Upaniṣad hold in the formulation of his theories. In connection with the stages of Being explained in the Māṇḍûkya Upaniṣad, Râmâcandra repeatedly returns to the above-mentioned three levels of the human constitution, i.e., body, soul and spirit (jîsm, dil wa rûḥ) and their correspondence to the states of wakening, dreaming and deep sleep, and hints at the existence of a further, transcending degree as follows:

. . . since the faculty of comprehension of most people remains limited to these three [stages of Being] and in their utter bewilderment they do not understand even these according to their proper meaning, I have insisted on their description through and through. The ancient rishis and munis used to declare: ‘neti, neti’, that is to say ‘neither this nor that’; further beyond, whatsoever can be said consists of mere hints (ishâra-i mahz) which only a few exceptional people can comprehend. The ultimate stir and object of the heart’s desire aims neither at īśvara nor at Brahmā nor at Pârabrahma . . . this is the fourth foot of the saints, . . . for the sake of telling and listening it is called the ‘fourth’ (turiyâ) . . . .

Here, the metaphysical dimension of Râmâcandra’s sādhanā is seen to accept the impossibility of describing the undefinable in affirmative terms while at the same time rejecting the adequacy of some of the most peculiar Upaniṣad terminology regarding transcendent principles. Nevertheless, he himself repeatedly uses the term turiyâ to designate the unfathomable (agam) and invisible (alakh) highest Truth the disclosure of which ‘cannot be obtained through the means of reason and tongue’. This can
be easily explained by his adherence to the nirguna viewpoint of Kabir-panth and the Nanak-panth. It is, moreover, is perfectly coherent with the shuhadi doctrine of the Mujaddids that locates the most intimate essence of Allah at a level unattainable for the contingent creature, at least in its verbal expression, excluding the possibility of a total identity between Him and them.

Significantly, nowhere in Ramcandra’s works is the classical Sufi term al-Haqq used to describe metaphysical Reality. This accounts for his preference of the turīya (of the Upaniṣadic) which maintains the aura of the inscrutable mystery intended by this passage:

The eye sees everything except itself, the nose smells everything except itself, the ear hears everything except itself, you see everything except yourself, all this is ignorance (ajñana)! To dispel it is necessary to seek assistance of a fictitious mirror (āʿina-i maṣnūʿi). . . . Slowly, slowly, when you will behold your reflection (‘aks) in the mirror you will acquire certainty and turn silent refraining from any further discussion. . . .¹⁹⁵

Knowledge is not despised in itself. It is considered as a necessary prerequisite for the removal of the veils of ignorance, but it must not be confounded with the goal itself since for Ramcandra it still implies the residual persistence of a subtle degree of duality:

In this world, until you and I are perceived through the exterior glance, we will present the appearance of body-worship (jism-parastī); we try to depict the ātmā, brahma, rūh, etc., as bodies, although, strictly speaking, they are not. Gross, subtle and casual, all three are names for corporeal degrees: verily, nāma and rūpa, nirākāra and sākāra, nirguna and saguna still pertain to this stage, neti, neti.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵. VS, p. 65.
¹⁹⁶. Ibid., p. 66.
The recognition of non-duality as the highest degree of realisation which is maintained in the ancient formula *neti neti* as the only possible description of the ‘fourth stage’ contrasts with the author’s rejection of the terms used in the Vedānta doctrines to design the Supreme Principle. Both the ātman and Brahman are seen as qualifying only a preliminary stage of that ultimate degree. In the language of the Mujaddidīs, this is described as the ‘station of stupor’ (*maqām-i ḥairat*) and as the ‘forgetfulness (*ghaflat*) of which the inadvertent are negligent’, which is linked to the journey of return (*rujū’*) of the six subtleties (*laṭā’īf-i satta*) to the physical frame of the body (*qālib*).  

For the Mujaddidīs, it constitutes the perfection of the human condition in virtue of the reflection of the prophetic perfection attained through the total realisation of the ‘*ilm-i laṭā’īf*.

As Shāh Abūl Hasan states at the end of a chapter dealing with the subtle centres:

> Ḥaḍrat Naqshband — may Allāh bless his sepulchre! — has affirmed that he had been blessed with the disclosure of a *ṭarīqa* which can be attained with certainty and whose benefits are numerous. It implies no deprivation or any striving... His successors have further classified and enlightened this noble path... to the extent of letting there rise the sun of perfection on the horizon of right guidance. Ḥaḍrat Imām-i Rabbānī Mujaddid Alf-i Thānī Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī — may Allāh bless his sepulchre! — has illuminated a world rendering this path of glorious rank (*rāh-i ‘azīm al-martabāt*) a royal way of multiple advantages (*shāhrāh-i kathīr al manfa‘āt*) and taking it to the furthest limit. ...  

**The higher stages of spiritual realisation**

The higher stages of spiritual realisation described by Rāmcandra and his successors are too intimately related to the ‘*ilm-
i laṭāʿif or cakra-vidyā to be conceived in isolation of it. It is, therefore, appropriate to consider these two aspects of the ṭariqa or sādhanā as complementary sides of a single medal bringing together the theoretical (‘ilmī) and the practical (‘amlī) aspects of the esoteric science.

We have already seen that at the beginning of the Mujaddidī path all attention remains focussed on the five subtle organs of the spiritual sphere located in the human breast, while the five lower laṭāʿif identified with the four gross elements and the lower soul gain importance only in the more advanced stages of the initiatic process. It is, therefore, not surprising that Rāmcandra largely adopted these teachings of his Mujaddidī ancestors. In one of his major works he explains:

The human body (jism) or microcosm (piṇḍa śarīra) contains the hṛdaya-cakra which, in its turn, contains five mansions (maqāmāt) that constitute the reflections in this body of five stations of the macrocosm (‘ālam-i ḥabir, brahmāṇḍa). They are: laṭīfa-i qalb, laṭīfa-i rūḥ, laṭīfa-i sirr, laṭīfa-i khafī and laṭīfa-i akhfā.199

Basing himself partially on notions articulated by Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī (d. AD 1761) in the introductory chapter of a treatise mainly concerned with a particular elaboration of the Mujaddidī ‘ilm-i laṭāʿif,200 the author explains the differences in the natures of individuals as the result of an innate predominance of one or more subtle organs over the others. Hence, derives for him the necessity of the perfect spiritual guide (ustād-i kāmil) who can carefully scrutinise the inner states of his disciple, identify and distinguish the weak and strong components in his breast, and eventually recommend him the appropriate spiritual practice (abhyāsa) to follow. For the disciple the main stress is thereby laid on focussing primarily on those subtle organs whose natural

199. TP, pp. 40-1.
200. Cf. Shāh Walīullah of Delhi, The Sacred Knowledge of the Higher Functions of the Mind, the English translation of the work Altāf al-Quds, by Prof. G.N. Jalbani, ch. I, p. 5. This version unfortunately lacks the explanatory material necessary to the English reader for a better understanding of the complex docterinal issues involved in this treatise.
constituent is strong and more developed, while it is the shaikh's task to identify, and successively to strengthen and rectify through his spiritual attention (tawajjuh) those spiritual organs which are less developed.

Such a procedure constitutes nowadays an integral part of the teachings current among the authorities in the Mujaddidi lineage and has been adopted by the masters of the Hindu offshoot. It allows the neophyte to concentrate entirely on the immediate goal of awakening and reconducting the latent spiritual principles from their location in the breast back to their original sites in the 'world of order' without involving any major delay, while leaving most efforts and a correct supervision on the shaikh. This shift in competence and responsibility, thus, compares positively with the hitherto conventional method of gradual integration of each single laṭīfa one by one,²⁰¹ since, we are reminded by the traditional authorities, 'the human lifespan in our present time is short and chances to reach the final stage (manzil-i ākhiri) have become extremely difficult, nay rather impossible'.

Moreover, it is possible that the master may identify one particular laṭīfa which, if activated through persistent application by the disciple and further assisted by his shaikh's tawajjuh, may provoke a sort of chain reaction in the disciple's inner states thereby causing the remaining organs to awaken spontaneously. So, the first innovative steps introduced by Bahā al-Dīn al-Naṣḥband, to adapt the order's methodology to the changing requirements of difficult historical periods, were followed by the reformulation of the doctrine and the description of the 'science of the subtle centres' by Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī. From the eighteenth century onwards yet another sign of that tendency to shift more and more responsibility from the disciple to the spiritual preceptor becomes evident. Further confirming the theory previously advanced, Rāmcandra writes in his hybrid Hindu-Muslim style:

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²⁰¹. Cf. MaS, pp. 21/38-9 and HdT, pp. 10-11. Both stress the importance of the master's tawajjuh in accelerating the process.
Before [Bahā al-Dīn], our spiritual ancestors used to begin their spiritual practice (abhyāsa) from the gūḍā-cakra, but he commanded that the following generations should abandon this practice of focusing on these lower (ṣifṭī), purely human stations (maqāmāt-i nāsūṭī) and proceed instead to awaken the subtleties of the intermediate state (maqām-i malakūṭī) pertaining to the hṛdaya-cakra according to a precise order of succession, beginning with the qalb and advancing gradually upwards; once this process is completed, [the initiate] should proceed to the nuqṭa-i suwaída or prāṇa-bindu, also called nafs-i nāṭiqa. Accordingly, the ancient Naqshbandī masters prior to Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī Alf-i Thānī — the mercy of Allāh be upon him! — and those not related to [his lineage] still practise that method.

The authorities after him went on correcting it here and there and to the extent they were acquainted with this science, thought to further clarify, shorten and facilitate its practice. . . . [Shaikh Aḥmad] considered the purification of one single among the five spiritual organs of the hṛdaya, namely the latīfa-i qalb, through perfect spiritual attention as sufficient, the remaining organs being included summarily in its fold. He then sanctioned immediate progress to the nafs-i nāṭiqa in one step and with the second step directly to the lotus of one-thousand petals (sahāṣra dala-kamala) and the trikuṭi. . . .

Without naming and explaining any of them, Rāmcandra mentions the existence of twenty-one circles or stages (dawā’ir, cakras) contemplated in the ṭariqa of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī and his followers. His description contains an obvious though somewhat ambiguously formulated hint at the twenty visualisations or contemplations (murāqabāt) which are part of the seven major planes of the Mujaddidī sulūk, with the addition of one further degree, that of Supreme Identification.

202. TP, pp. 43-4.
The paragraph quoted above sums up the position assumed during the first phase of the Hindu integration of the Islamic doctrine, while also providing some clue as to the possible sources used in this process. As the integration of entire paragraphs from works by Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī had already suggested, the conciliatory position proposed by this outstanding scholar between the predominantly intellectual and metaphysical perspective of Ibn al-'Arabi’s *waḥdat al-wujūd* and the devotional and dynamic attitude that lies at the base of Shaikh Aḥmad’s doctrines has certainly exercised some influence on Rāmcandra and his successors. The re-elaboration of the ‘ilm-i laṭā‘īf or transmitted in the Mujaddidiyya and encountered, for instance, in Shāh Walī Allāh’s204 treatise *Altāf al-Quds fī ma‘rifat-i laṭā‘īf al-nafs* (The sacred knowledge of the higher functions of the mind) and the *Al-Tafhīmat al-Ilāhiyya* (The Divine Instructions),205 show some elements which either directly or indirectly through later, already Hinduised, sources hint at a possible link or source of inspiration between this renowned Mujaddidī authority and the Hindu masters of this lineage. Especially Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī’s reshaped and expanded model of the superseding and interconnected levels of spiritual organs located inside the human aggregate, which introduces the idea of an additional third series of five laṭā‘īf beyond the subtle organs contained in the *maqām-i sīna* or ḥrdaya-cakra,206 are found in a similar fashion in the teachings promoted by Rāmcandra and his successors.

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204. Very little substantial information regarding the intellectual relationship between these two contemporary leaders at Delhi is available to modern scholarship which could help to show how this process led eventually to the formation of two parallel though contrasting currents in Naqshbandī leadership under their successors. Cf. K.A. Nizami, ‘Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi: His thought and contribution’ in *IC* 54, 1980, pp. 141-53.


On the other hand, although Rāmchandra repeatedly stresses Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī’s authorship of the revised, accelerated process of focussing on one single of the five organs in the breast (preferably the latifa-i qalb) before proceeding directly to the subtle organ related to the ‘seat of the rational faculty’ (nafs-i nātiqa) and other more sublime organs, he does not name these latter ones along Sūfī lines but terms them as sahasra-dala-kamala and trikuṭī. The use of these terms as well as the term prāṇabindu for the Sūfī nafs-i nātiqa takes us once more back to the terminology of the Tantravāda and Hātha-Yoga doctrines where these terms designate three different stations inside the causal body situated in the human skull.

The prāṇabindu is put in relation with the minute point (bindu) situated at the top of the crescent that stretches act above the ājñā-cakra (lit. the subtle centre of the command — ājñā, the Sanskrit equivalent to the Arabic term amr), a spot on the forehead located between the eyebrows in correspondence of the third eye of Lord Śiva (śiva-netra). The sahasra-dala-kamala or centre of the ‘one thousand petalled lotus’ is located somewhere near the centre of the brain and is considered to be the residence of Paraśiva and location of the supreme bindu which contains the twenty-fold sound comprising the letters of the Devanāgarī alphabet. Further upwards trikuṭī (lit. ‘the three peaks’) hints at a subtle organ situated somewhere between the sahasra-dala-kamala and the brahmarandhra, the ‘crown of Brahmā’ at the apex of the head which is directly connected with the mukti-dvāra, the ‘gate of liberation’ and final link between the individual and the Universe.

Although helpful as primary model, a comparison of this pattern with the classical Hātha-Yoga doctrines alone is unsuffi-

207. Cf. Saṭacakra-nirūpaṇa, verses 32-5. In the comment on verse 32 of the English version of this treatise edited by Sir John Woodroffe alias Arthur Avalon under the title The Serpent Power adds an explanation from the Gautama Tantra: ‘The command of the guru is transmitted here [in the ājñā-cakra], hence, it is called the spot of the command. .’. Cf. The Serpent Power, p. 302.

208. Being 50 the total number of letters of the Sanskrit alphabet (also referred to as śabda-mālā, the sound-garland), 50 x 20 = 1,000.
cient for the understanding of the entire process of conciliation and assimilation attempted by Rāmcandra. Again, it is through the links of his *paramparā* with the Kabir-panth and its more recent *nirguṇa* offshoots like of the Rādhāsoāmīs, that provide further clues.

In a much later work compiled by one of the latest disciples to join Rāmcandra’s *satsang*, which is purportedly based on some posthumously discovered manuscripts of the late master, we come across a more detailed description of the ‘science of the subtle centres’. The descriptions it contains shed further light on the origin and the way this science fits into the frame of Rāmcandra’s cosmological and metaphysical considerations. The scheme developed in that work is expressly said to be based on the teachings of the *Kabir-panthis*. It develops around the three major realms of universal existence, viz., gross, subtle and causal, named respectively as *piṇḍa*, *aṇḍa* and *brahmāṇḍa*, and illustrates the succeeding steps of spiritual ascent (*ūrūj*, *utthān*). Each of these three major dominions contains six levels making a total of eighteen. These represent the stages of the gradual descent of the ātman into the contingent realm of existence, thus, being known as *jīvātmā* or ‘living self’. At the same time, they constitute the natural track that can be followed by the individual in the opposite direction when re-ascending the path leading gradually towards liberation from the conditions of existence.

Starting from below, the first series of six levels pertaining to the gross realm (*piṇḍa*) consists of the five subtle centres,

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209. Har Nārāyaṇa Sakṣenā, *Sākṣātkār kā Rahasya*. This Hindi version of the original Urdu text follows a previous English translation by the same editor published in 1986 under the title *The Secret of Realization*. However, I base myself on the Hindi version since it more faithfully reflects the technical vocabulary and style used by the authorities of this order.

210. *Sākṣātkār kā Rahasya*, pp. 25-7. In agreement with the Tantra doctrines, Har Nārāyaṇa Sakṣenā affirms that according to these saints, the aim consists raising the living self from the lower *cakras* to the topmost place where it initially entered into the human frame (identified with the seat of *parameśvara*) along the same way it had descended, thus, inverting the order of succession.
already encountered, viz., the gūḍā-cakra, the indriya-cakra, the nābhī-čakra, hrdaya-cakra and the kantaḥ-cakra situated in the throat, plus an additional sixth, the ājñā-cakra located on the forehead. In this list we recognise a reiteration of the classical Tantra Yoga pattern, although the names given to some of cakras are slightly different. But while the earlier elaborations in the Vedānta-Sāgara remained limited to the account of the lower cakras comprising the first five of this series in order to maintain the symbolic analogy with the quintuple series of laṭāʾif contemplated by the Mujaddidiyya, here the author feels less bound to adhere strictly to the pattern set out by the doctrines of his Islamic ancestors. While maintaining the idea of a quintuple series of subtle organs by inserting them into the context of the hrdaya-cakra\textsuperscript{211} and pointing out their relative importance in the process of re-ascent of the fallen self, it shows how far the process of assimilation into an increasingly Hinduised framework based on the Kabir-panthi background had gone during the very lifetime of Rāmcandra.

The ājñā-cakra, assimilated by Rāmcandra to the seat of the nafs-i nāṭīqa of the Mujaddidīs, is now related to the ‘gross mind’ (piṇḍi-man, sthūla man), viz., the physical mind responsible for the co-ordination of the corporeal functions exercised by the respective organs (indriya), and, hence, ‘contaminated’ by the impressions left by the ephemeral objects pertaining to the outer world.\textsuperscript{212} Its highest extension is said to be marked by this station, beyond which the reascending current of life (jīvan-dhārā) enters the universal realm of the brahmāṇḍī man. The link subsisting between the earlier theories of Rāmcandra and the Sufi doctrine of the Mujaddidīs, even at this level, thus, becomes evident. In what is here defined as ‘physical

\textsuperscript{211.} SkR, pp. 21 and 36-7, whose information regarding the five subtle organs is reportedly drawn from Rāmcandra’s Kamāl-i īnsānī, a work concerned mainly with methodological aspects.

\textsuperscript{212.} Explicitly mentioning Kabir as the primary source of these concepts, the author compares this ‘contaminated soul’ (an obvious reference to the Sufi nafs-i ammāra) to a black wasp (bhaunrā) in contrast to the pure, immaculate soul (nafs-i muṭamaʿīnna) which is depicted as a white crane (bag), also identified with the grey goose (haṃsa).
mind' (pindī man), we recognise that governing faculty of the formal and individual dominion also described by Rāmcandra as the lower limit of that intermediate meeting point between the two dominions, individual and universal, khalq and amr. Thus, we learn from the Sāksātkār kā rahasya:

... the five cakras below [the ājñā-cakra] are gross and physical and the process of cleansing and conquering them constitutes an aspect of Haṭha Yoga. ... The path of the sants is that of love for the paramātmā (premmārga) where insistence (haṭha) has no place; these people simply seek the love of God and never insist or indulge in haṭha ..., rather they leave everything to the will of the Supreme. They have therefore ruled out the cleansing of these lower cakras ... their teachings focus on the meditation on the ājñā-cakra alone in order to purify it, so that all the lower cakras are cleansed ... automatically.²¹³

This passage shows an apparent shift of methodology away from the original Mujaddidi teachings towards a process said to be adopted from the sants, viz., the Kabīr-panthīs and Rādhāso-āmīs, for it was a major distinctive feature of the Sūfī successors of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī to focus first of all on the lāṭīfa-i qalb, as earlier explicitly stated by Rāmcandra.

However, the author of this booklet is well aware of the practice used by the Mujaddidī shaikhs, as is illustrated by the following passage:

Yet some Sūfī saints have introduced [the method of] focussing on the purification of the heart inside the hrdaya-cakra before proceeding to the ājñā-cakra. In their perfection, the purification of the subtle heart-organ brings along that of the remaining four subtle organs as well as it facilitates the ascent along the path towards the ājñā-cakra and the stations above. Hence, the Sūfī masters have considered it necessary to start

meditation from the heart . . . and because the invisible powers do not appear by meditating on the heart . . . 214

Looking carefully at these two passages, it becomes obvious that the apparent divergence regarding the point of departure and initial stage of spiritual practice can be easily reduced to a simple change in perspective taking into account that in the Islamic tradition only four gross elements are considered in the corporeal realm, to which the Hindu tradition adds a fifth one, the ether (ākāśa). Hence, derives that, while the Sufi masters expressly define the latifa-i qalb as the microcosmic reflection of the barzakh or meeting point between the two major dominions of the Universe (dā‘ira-i imkān) it is only beyond the seat of the ether located in the kantha-cakra or viśuddha-cakra and beyond the ājñā-cakra which governs that realm that this degree is possibly contemplated by the sant doctrine based on Hindu theories. The whole divergence lies, therefore, again in the double perception of the psychic aggregate or nafs and its sometimes confusing assimilation to the ākāśa on the lower limit and the seat of manas and citta on the other hand. It is based on a somewhat oversimplified evaluation of the Mujaddidi doctrine by our Hindu authorities who do not share doctrinally the descending perspective of their Islamic masters to the same extent as they are ready to apply its social implications.

The exact starting point of the ascent to the higher regions ‘beyond the stages the hatha-yogi can reach’, and to attain which ‘it is obligatory to accept [the guidance of] a satguru’, 215 is described as the third eye of Lord Śiva (śiva-netra). Rāmcandra associates it to the nuqta-i suwaida (lit. ‘black spot’), sometimes identified by Sufis with the black clot of blood situated in the heart which is the symbolic representation of the primordial corruption of human nature after Adam’s fall from paradise. In Tāntrik doctrines, the term śiva-netra designates a precise

215. SkR, pp. 41/37. Here again the discipline is defined as a particular aspect of Rāja-Yoga. So, the hint at the satguru can also be interpreted as indicating the birth of the interior master (āntarik guru) residing in the intimate chamber of the heart.
location in correspondence to the forehead the subtle activation of which indicates transcendence of the formal dominion and definitive entrance into the realm of the higher stages of Being.\textsuperscript{216} The corresponding Šüfi term *nuqta-i suwaida* is not found in the current technical vocabulary of the Mujaddidī. Presumably, it has been adopted from the terminology of the Qādiriyya where it is used, for instance, in the works of the Mogul prince Dārā Shukoh when comparing the sacred traditions of Vedānta and *taṣawwuf*. Its description as being ‘shaped like a triangle (*trikoṇa*)’ reminds us of the description of the heart as a pinecone-shaped triangle whose natural position has been inverted while reflecting its inner reality into the ‘ālam-i khalq’.\textsuperscript{217} Converging all faculties of sensation (*jñānendriya*) on that subtle spot and assisted by the persistent use of the *satnām* conferred by the *satguru*, the ‘third eye’ is said to opened eventually, allowing the practitioner to perceive the ‘inner light conferring beatitude’ (*ānandamayaḥ āntarik prakāśa*) in a possible parallel to the Mujaddidī *sair-i anfusī*, during which the traveller is described as beginning to perceive these lights inwardly.

But in addition to these preliminary elements, our Hindu masters introduce at this stage the concept of *anhad* or *anāhat śabda*, the boundless sound-current said to have originated at the very beginning of time from the supreme source, which in different degrees pervades every single stage of manifestation. This ‘soundless sound’ is said to be produced ‘without striking’,\textsuperscript{218} and can, therefore, be related to the endless sound-current which constitutes the base for the interior process described by the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{216} This idea goes along with the descriptions of Śiva the opening of whose frontal third eye reduces the entire phenomenal world into ashes with a single glance, thus, stressing the ephemeral nature of the world of form.
  \item \textsuperscript{217} Cf. *MnS*, pp. 34/45.
  \item \textsuperscript{218} Cf. *Hatha-Yoga-Pradīpikā*, IV.82-6 and *Mahānirvāṇa-Tantra*, V.146. This is clearly related to the ancient Vedic doctrines regarding the mysterious sound *AUM* believed to contain *in nuce* the entire Veda. It constitutes, therefore, the base of the science of the sacred sound resumed in the *mantra-vidyā*.
\end{itemize}
Rādhāsoāmīs as sūrat-śabd-yoga said to lead the disciple to the state of sahaja. Their interior discipline is therefore, also referred to as sahaja-yoga, which shows some interesting analogies with the Mujaddidi technique of dhikr-i khafti, the prolonged practice of which is said to lead to the uninterrupted perpetuation of the sound-vibration produced by pronouncing the syllable Allāh, called sultān al-adhkār. These terms, which are common to several panth-sampradāyas concerned with the sound-discipline,\textsuperscript{219} occur frequently in the technical explanations of the Hindu masters and indicate their indebtedness to these currents in more recent Hinduism as well as their complementary role in Sufi teachings.

The entire dominion that extends above the śiva-netra is referred to as tārā-maṇḍala, the ‘region of the stars’, an allusion to the universal dimension of the brahmāṇḍi-man or ālam-i amr to which it refers. The way leading through this celestial region consists of a passage through an extremely subtle channel known as the ‘gateway to liberation’ (mukti-dvāra) and said to be as thin as a needle or one-tenth the size of a mustard seed.\textsuperscript{220} The use of these metaphors owes much to the teachings of Tantrism while apparently sharing little with the descriptions given by the Mujaddidi shaikhs. But the underlying concept of a successive series of subtle centres corresponding to hierarchical stages of realisation that need to be crossed by the initiate while progressing on the spiritual path is nevertheless recalled by the idea implied in the description of the seven spheres

\textsuperscript{219} For similar notions, cf. the doctrines regarding the sound current among the Nānak-panthīs described in McLeod (1968).

\textsuperscript{220} SkR, pp. 44/41. In the Upaniṣad, this passage is described as the solar gate (sūrya-dvāra) through which those who know the correct answer to the question: ‘Who are you?’ asked by a non-human (apauruṣeya) being, will gain access to the celestial worlds, thus reaching the higher, non-individual stages situated along the ‘path of the gods’ (devayāna). Cf. Chāndogya Upaniṣad, IV.15.5-6 and V.10.2; Brahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, V.10.1.

Hence, Rāmcandra affirms that the aspirant’s complete surrender to the satguru will allow him access to this world since the master, through his love, kindness and favour will assist his protegé to cross that gate by transmuting his inner states.
(dawā’ir) the sālik on the Mujaddidī path has to travel though on his way towards perfection once he has attained to the centre of the ‘sphere of universal existence’ (dā‘ira-i imkān). It recalls the very barzakh where the two oceans meet in the qalb or, on a macrocosmic scale, on the kursi and the ‘arsh, as apparent from the explications given by Shāh Abūl Hasan.221 These seven spheres compare with the seven celestial abodes and dwellings of the gods (devaloka) which make up the seven stages the yogī is said to cross on the divine path leading towards liberation (devayāna), hinted at in the Bhagavad Gītā222 and described in great detail in the Śruti.223 It also resembles to the concept of the seven or nine planetary spheres mentioned in the Koran and developed in the cosmological doctrines of Sūfism.224

Hence, there derives a possible analogy with the Mujaddidī description regarding the conclusion of the ‘journey from the cardinal points’ (sair-i āfāqī) after the completion of the ascent of the five laṭā‘if of the breast and the nafs related to the brain (nafs mujāwir-ī ḥawāṣṣ ast wa ta‘alluq ba dimāgh dārad) from their physical frame, which leads to the beginning of the ‘journey through the stages of the inner self’ (sair-i anfusī) when ‘the sālik will perceive numerous colourful lights in the ‘ālam-i mithāl and within his own breast’.225 In both cases, such a journey towards the higher states of Being is accompanied by the perception of inner lights (āntarik prakāś, nūrāniyat-i bāṭinī) which follows a journey from the periphery towards a subtle

221. Cf. Ayat al-kursī (Koran, 2:255): ‘. . . His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth. . .’. Since the projection of the Throne of God is often identified with the Ka‘ba as the symbolic centre of the earth, the Mujaddid’s metaphorical image regarding the two modes of reaching the Ka‘ba in order to explicate the validity of both jadhba and sulūk assumes its deeper meaning.

222. VIII. 23-6.


passage through a centrally located point described as being ‘thin as a needle’. The crossing of it is called by the Mujaddidīs the ‘opening of the gate’ (fatḥ-i bāb). It implies a preliminary journey along the horizontal plane of the khalq towards a centre enabling the initiate to proceed from there along the vertical axis towards the higher stages of the amr.226

In the Mujaddidī terminology, the series of these superior stages is identified with the successive degrees of sainthood (wilāyat) and prophetic perfections (kamālāt-i nubuwwat) and linked to different aspects of the Divinity and Its revelation. Similarly, the Upaniṣad describe the ascent through the celestial spheres as the ‘journey of the gods’ (devayāna) that leads through the abodes (loka) of the various gods, i.e., Soma, Varuṇa, Indra, etc., before eventually reaching the brahmaloka or satyaloka. The teachings of the sants adopted by our Hindu faqīrs, which are based on the concepts of Rāja-Yoga tell of a division of the path immediately beyond this point, from where three roads depart (trivenī). The perfect saint chooses the middle path (madhya-mārga) leading straight up towards final liberation (mokṣa, mukti) from the claws of death (mṛtyu-cakra).

The next chapter of the treatise is dedicated to the description of the six subtle organs of the cosmic dominion defined as anđa which are in ascending order named as: sahasra-dalakamala, trikuṭi, śunya, mahāśunya, bhanwar-gufā and satloka or sacakahandā.227

Again, the description of these cakras according to the pattern set out by the Kabīr-panthīs of the Dharmadāsī branch, Tulsī Śāhīb Hāthrasī and the Rādhāsoāmī masters, does not appear anywhere in Rāmcandra’s published works, although (as in the case of the paragraph quoted above) there are sporadic hints at some of these stations in his writings which indicate his acquaintance with this topic. It is likely that these higher

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226. The Upaniṣad describe the passage through the hub of a chart’s wheel (cakra) leading beyond the dominion of mutation, a description that enforces the idea of a fix axis or straight path leading towards and eventually through a central point of conversion.

levels of spiritual wisdom, being unaccessible for the ordinary devotees of his *satsang*, remained reserved to a referred circle of disciples entitled to receive particular oral teachings, a pattern common in both Sufi and Yoga circles.

Given the strictly Islamic character of the Sunni *ṭariqa*, here the original Mujaddidi description of the subsequent stages of the *sulūk* proved too inextricably linked with Islamic concepts to provide a possible structural basis for an integration into a Hindu context. It was therefore abandoned and substituted with a striking doctrinal elaboration typical for the *nirguṇa*-current within the *bhakti-sampradāyas*, which by their nature were more compatible with the anti-anthropomorphic perspective of Islam. The description of the six *cakras*, of this second series, therefore, not surprisingly adheres largely to that provided by the Kabīr-panth and includes hints at the science based on the variations of the subtle sound vibration (*sūrat-śabd-yoga*), a particularly elaborated version of which is found among the Śādhāṣaṣaṃghīs.

The *sahasra-dala-kamala*, for instance, is the seventh in the series of eighteen *cakras* and the last and highest in the Haṭha-Yoga doctrines. It is located somewhere in the back part of the skull and is said to be characterised by a profuse and dazzling luminosity irradiating from the one thousand petals of the white lotus it contains. Moreover, this *cakra* is said to be permeated by a series of tunes resembling the sound of bells and conches which attract the living self up to this stage. The reigning divinity of this region is Bhagavān Trilokanāth, also referred to as *Jyoti Niraṅjana*, an epithet usually applied to Śiva but in this context more generally referred to the luminous Supreme Being and Lord of heaven, earth and the inferior regions (*naraka*). The creatures that populate these regions are all subject to the law of transmigration (*saṃsāra*), hence, this realm is commonly denominated as kāladeśa. Bhagavān Trilokanāth is said to

228. With the necessary precautions, the region of the *sahasra-dala-kamala* can be assimilated to the *candra-loka*, which in the Hindu doctrines constitutes the place where the forms pertaining to this world are elaborated. In many respects, it therefore resembles the *ālam-i mithāl* which in Sufi doctrines constitutes the lower limit of the *ālam-i amr*. 
sustain by the means inherent to his power the three realms of the *pinḍa* through the mediation of the *ājnā-cakra*.

Such a perspective indicates the possibility that these doctrines have developed from an earlier encounter between Sufi and Yoga doctrines, for these realms are easily recognised as corresponding to the three main divisions of the *dā'ira-i imkān*, now conceived as the first of the seven principal stages of the Mujaddidi *sulūk*, analogous to the three levels known in classical Hindu doctrines as gross, subtle and causal. All the following stages situated above that sphere are included in the *aṇḍa* and therefore represent the celestial regions situated in the ‘*ālam-i, amr*, which constitutes the upper hemisphere of the *imkān* beyond the limiting conditions of time (*kāla*) and space (*ākāśa*).²²⁹

The apparent confusion that arises while comparing the two doctrines is caused by the introduction of this additional level which actually is nothing but a reflection of the previous one. It seems to be caused mainly by the adaptation of the idea of succeeding planes of reflection of decreasing degrees of reality typical for the *shuhūdī* doctrine of the Mujaddidīs and of some Hindu schools within the Vaiṣṇava current, commonly known as *pratibimbavāda* or *chāyāvāda*, and the attempt to reconcile these with the *advaita* point of view dominant in the Upaniṣad and *Brahma-Sūtra*.

The immediately following stage corresponds to the subtle centre called *trikuṭi* or *brahma-cakra*, and is characterised by a lotus of four petals irradiating a pale red light that is said to resemble that of the rising sun. The *mantra* it contains consists of the syllable *om* whose characteristic sound recalls that of the *mṛdaṅgam* accompanied by a low sound of rolling thunder, and

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²²⁹ The *sahasra-dal-kamala* is not only described as the seat of Kāla, the imprisoner of souls, but also as the highest approach of *cidākāśa*, the cosmos permeated by consciousness.

This divinity closely resembles Yama, the god of death whose dominion extends over all those beings who remain entangled in the multiplicity characteristic of the individual existence.
the elements predominant in its nature consist of water, air and fire. On the authority of Kābīr, this cakra is described as containing in its fold a minute well the shaft of which points in a downward direction, pouring out drops of sweet nectar (amṛta) which quench the thirst of the vagrants who have arrived there.

Any possible doubt about the implicit sense of the symbolism employed in this context, too self-evident to require further explanation, is removed by Rāmacandra’s statement that those who have attained to this lofty station are saved from the ‘ocean of contingent existence’ (bhāv-sāgar) while granting the treasure of universal knowledge to the sādhu who by reaching there will not be found to return but will continue to progress ‘like the rising sun’. Similar to the language employed by the Mujaddidis, here too we come across the symbolism of an opening gate used to describe the seeker’s access to the stage of trikuṭī. The latter is compared to an inaccessible fortress (dūrga) to reach which the initiate has to cross nine gates plus an additional tenth (daśam dvāra) which is usually locked and that grants access to the brahmāṇḍa or the realm of Pārabrahma.

The key that gives access to this secret of immortality lies initially with the satguru alone who concedes its vision (darśana) only to those few selected ones eligible to receive his grace (kṛpā). This grace is described as being granted in a kashfi way, by a sort of intuition linked to buddhi that is produced entirely by the master’s intervention on the disciple’s inner states without involving the latter’s active participation. Only later will the abhyāsī learn to reach this stage through his own efforts. This latter technique is referred to as the kasbī method.

230. SkR, pp. 47-52/44-8. The reference here is obviously no longer to the corporeal elements, but to their subtle principles (tanmātra), as confirmed in very similar terms by Shāh Abūl Ḥasan.


232. The nine gates correspond to the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth, the organ of reproduction and the rectum. This description is strikingly similar to Agni as Vaiśvānara described in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, which states that the soul of the deceased leaves the body through any of these nine gates, in contrast to the saint’s soul which leaves the physical aggregate through this tenth daśamdvāra.
As so often, the concepts thus expressed are too similar to the teachings of the Mujaddidi shaikhs to be explained away as merely coincidental. This is further proved by the abrupt switch between the Persianate vocabulary used for explaining concepts evidently pertaining to a Tantra and sant background and shows the extent to which elements originally belonging to two different and independent traditions are here inextricably interwoven in an interesting but coherent blend.

The opening of the tenth gate, analogous to the opening of the brahmarandhra, situated in the conventional Yoga doctrines at the apex of the head, grants the initiate access to the intelligible light of buddhi thereby connecting him with the path through the celestial regions. It, hence, represents a striking similarity with the fath-i bāb described by the Mujaddidis as occurring in relation to the eight entrance gates which provide access to the sublime region of paradise (bihisht-i barīn) and the residence of the ‘sublime assembly of contentment and of the apex of acceptance’ (ḥazīrah-yi riḍā wa auj-i qabūl) once the ascent of the five laṭīfas to the ‘world of order’ has been completed.\(^{233}\) On this subject, Shāh Abūl Ḥasan Dihlawī remarks:

\[\ldots\] since \ldots those who have reached the reintegration of all five subtle organs into their principles gradually along the path shown by the five prophets of right determination \ldots are closer to the ‘abode beyond space and time’ (lā-makāniyat). Their degree of excellence is higher [as compared to those who have reached there through just four or less laṭā‘if]. The individual determination of each human being and the peculiarity of the different tempers occurs as result of a present bestowed by God (amr-i mauhibati) [the Urdu translation uses the term wahbī frequently encountered with the Hindu masters]. The attainment of such a high station does not depend

\(^{233}\) Referring to a Tradition according to which Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq will be among the few chosen ones on whom Allāh will bestow His grace (raḥmat), so that he may be called into Paradise through all the eight gates, i.e., Abū Bakr reunites all the virtues corresponding to each of the eight gates in himself. Cf. MnS, pp. 21/37.
on individual skill and effort (kasb) of the disciple but rather on the exceeding attraction (kashish-i zā'īd-i pîr-i kāmil) of the perfect spiritual master. . . .

The intervention of the extraordinary power attributed to the satguru or pîr-i kāmil results here in some subtle way as being associated to the mediation of a supra-human attraction that lifts the passive disciple in a state of total surrender all at a sudden to this very elevated degree of spiritual insight. This force of attraction (kashish, ākarṣaṇa) recalls the Śūfi concept of jadhba. It finds a close parallel in the Hindu tradition in the figure of the avadhūṭa mentioned frequently in the Tantra-Śāstra and later by the Kabīr-panthīs, where it is closely related to the idea of the interior guide (antarik gurū) said to reside in the cavern of the heart. It is mentioned also by the Hindu Naqshbandīs, who describe it as the spiritual child that lives in the womb of the heart and that must be nourished in order to grow and develop its latent potentialities.

Just above the trikuṭī, in some Śūfi circles referred to as muthallathī (triangular-shaped) which comprises the degree of the ‘ālam-i jabarūṭī including the heavenly spheres, there is another minor station known as ‘white emptiness’ (śveta-śūnya) or ‘ocean of nectar’ (amṛta-sāgara), sometimes also referred to as mānasarovara (‘lotus pond of spiritual bliss’). Following the descriptions provided by Hindu mythology, this is the abode of the white swans or royal geese (rāja-haṃsa) who feed pearls. These swans symbolically correspond to the attainment of an extremely sublime spiritual degree. They have the capability to drink milk, absorbing its essential ingredient and releasing the water it contains. Their intrinsic significance is explained by Har Nārāyaṇ Saksenā as follows:

When abhyāsī reaches the degree of haṃsa or

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234. MnS, pp. 21/36. All agree that the path crossed by those who have chosen the way of spiritual realisation in life reiterates the journey accomplished by the soul of the deceased, at least if the degree of perfection is sufficiently elevated to determine its course to the higher station of krama-muktī, videha-muktī and jīva-muktī, beyond the solar gate.
paramahamsa, he develops the quality of discrimination (viveka) by the means of which he accepts only what pertains to Truth (yathārtha) while discarding all the rest. . . .

When the self of the disciple reaches the sublime stage, it joins the company of those who have already reached there before and is fed with nectar thus attaining to immortality. . . . He now knows about the Supreme and seeks impatiently union with It.\textsuperscript{235}

This description shows that this stage alludes to the condition of those who have attained to krama-mukti, or liberation by stages. It comprehends those potentially proceeding towards the attainment of videha-mukti, or total liberation after the relinquishment of the physical body, when the Self proceeds directly to the summit of the heavenly hierarchy represented by the brahmaloka without stopping at any of the celestial mansions situated along the devayāna. There they will remain ‘in the company of those who have already reached there’ till the end of the present cycle (pralaya, qiyāmat).

The remaining four cakras and their corresponding celestial regions, viz., śunya, mahāśunya, bhanwar gufā and sacakhaṇḍa, must, therefore, be intended as intermediary degrees on the journey of the yogī or mutasawwuf, by now unrelentlessly progressing towards the attainment of the final aim.

The immediately following station of śunya is described as a lotus of six petals the characteristic sound of which is said to resemble that of the sāraṅga. This cakra is said to radiate a colourless light (be-raṅgī prakāśa) and is associated to the Sūfī ‘ālam-i lāhūt, the ‘world of the Divinity’, which is also termed ‘void’ (khalā) in a literal Arabic rendering of the Sanskrit term śūnya. Certainly not part of the technical vocabulary used by the Naqshbandīs, the significance of this term in the present context is clarified by the author’s mention of its better-known

\textsuperscript{235} SkR, pp. 52/48. For a definition of haṁsa and paramahamsa, cf. KmI, p. 4, which associates these two types of saints with a category of sainthood contemplated by the Mujaddidīs.
equivalent ‘adam or ‘non-existence’ as complementary to wujūd or ‘existence’ and their Persian synonyms nīstī and hastī. Both terms are essential in the shuhūdī doctrine since they denote the principle and its immediate cosmic derivative. Strictly speaking, their complementarity is applicable only to two terms situated on the same level, but according to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī it is out of the pure Being of Allāh and His names and attributes reflected into the world that the ‘opposed non-existence’ (‘adam-i mutaqābila) gain a relative degree of finite existence, which nevertheless depend on the irradiations of the Divine qualities. After transcending the indefinite multiplicity of His attributes contained in the reflected forms (ṣūrat) that appear in the immanent realm of the contingent world, the ṣālik now experiences the last residue of duality subsisting after his acquired treasure of knowledge has revealed him the ultimate transitoriness (fanāiyat) of the world and himself.

The perfection of this state of fanā is reached, however, only at the successive stage called mahāśūnya or ‘great vacuity’. Described as a lotus of eight petals, it is characterised by the absolute darkness (andhakāra, zulmat) of non-existence or, according to the Hindu perspective, of non-manifestation (avyakta), comparable to the condition of primordial chaos prior to the descent of the ‘command’. This station is said to include two islands, situated respectively on the left and right side of the lotus: sahaja, having ten petals, and acinta with twelve. Although this region, ruled by the immaculate māyā (śuddha māyā), possesses no light on its own, it is illuminated by the pure souls inhabiting in it. There are said to irradiate the light of the twelve suns, in reference to the twelve āditya corresponding to the twelve solar mansions through which the sun rotates every year around the central axis of the poles. Enjoying this sublime stage, they entreat and bequest the bypassing souls on their upward journey. Their role, thus, resembles that of the karman-devatā who inhabit the superior regions above the moon who have gained their position as gods through the effects of their positive actions (karma) accomplished in a previous cycle of existence. Reaching a high degree of spiritual realisation, their journey has led them to this abode of indescribable beauty, but
having ultimately failed in their aim to reach the Supreme Goal of liberation in life (jīvan-mukti), they remain ‘imprisoned’ in this lofty though still imperfect domain. Only the satguru can provide the aspirant with the guidance necessary to progress further by merging the individual entity of his protegés into the pure Sound of the śabda. However, the attainment of this sublime state presupposes the total extinction of the disciple in his master (fanā fi’il-shaikh) and the consequent assumption of the lead by the inner guru inside the heart. This stage corresponds to the previously described state of praśna.  

The following cakra and its corresponding state, called bhanwar gufā (‘whirling cave’), constitutes the final gateway to the satyaloka or maqām-i Ḥaqq. Here, the satgurus are said to reunite for their celestial assembly (darbār, majlis-i ‘ālā). sacakhaṇḍa, the ‘land of Truth’, is permeated by a sweet fragrance and the melodies of the vīṇā. It is the abode of ultimate perfection and virtual identity with the invisible (alakha), unapproachable (agama) and undescrivable (akaha) paramātma at the very top of the Mount Merū, which is identified with Brahmapurī, the citadel of Brahmā in classical Hinduism, and the all-embracing Throne of God (‘arsh-i-muḥīṭ) in Sufism.  

According to the Kabīr-panthīs, this is the region inhabited by the satpuruṣa, the true and unique Lord of all creatures. There, the selves who have attained to krama-mukti reside in the service of their Lord, awaiting the end of the cosmic cycle for their final deliverance. Recognisable as the supreme abode depicted by Muslim saints as man’s highest fulfilment and identified by the Mujaddidīs with the state of ‘pure servanthood’ (‘ubūdiyat-i ṣarfa), this is the last and most perfect state possibly conceivable leaving the purely transcendent essence of Allāh (al-dhāt) beyond the reach of the contingent creature. In keeping with the shuhūdī perspective, according to which prophets occupy a rank superior to that of saints and which declares the imitation of the saint’s mission described in the formula ‘solitude amidst the crowd’ (khilwat dar anjuman) this is the ideal way of

behaviour for a perfect saint. The Hindu author of the treatise remarks:

The souls who alight from this place to the *mrtyu-loka* [viz., our human world subject to death] with the purpose of assisting the beings there to attain liberation themselves, are the true saints. They themselves are liberated ones and are moreover capable of leading others to liberation. Such *gurus* extend their mercy (*dayā*) and compassion (*krpā*) to their disciples thereby raising them in their special favour to this lofty stage and granting them a glimpse of the Supreme — this is called the ‘way of Divine favour’ (*wahbī-mārga*).\(^{237}\)

What lies beyond this degree of realisation is divided in the doctrinal concept of the *Kabir-panthīs*, Rādhāsoāmīs and ultimately our Hindu masters linked to the Mujaddidiyya Maḥāhariyya, into the final series of six further degrees. It regards the purely metaphysical, all-transcendent realm of identity with the Immutable Principle (*al-Ḥaqq, Allāh Ta’ālā* or *Parabrahma*), describable only in negative terms as the realm of non-duality at which the symbolic denomination of the first three levels as *alakha*, *agama* and *akaha* hints. There no divisions are possible except by analogy with the description of previous levels. It represents the ultimate aim of all those who have attained total liberation, either during the present life (*jīvan-mukti*) or immediately after the death of the physical envelope (*videha-mukti*).

There, the long journey of the *yogī* reaches its conclusion and he finally enjoys pure Beatitude (*paramānanda*) in the stage of the unconditioned *turīya*.*^{238}†* Rāmcandra reminds us of the widely diffused Sūfī concept according to which the aspirant adept has to complete each of the single stages to its full perfection before eventually proceeding onwards: ‘... every single

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237. *SkR*, pp. 57/53. Here, the similarity between the Naqshbandi ideal of a perfect saint and the Mahāyāna Buddhist concept of *bodhisattva* is particularly striking.

238. *VS*, p. 47.
spiritual station and degree along the path is divided by the respective levels of *jāgrta*, *svapna*, *suṣupti* and *turīya*,’ just as every major sphere or level of the path is subdivided into a series of minor sub-degrees. This largely accounts for the divergence in the number and denomination of the stations (*manāzil*, *maqāmāt*, *manāhij*) listed by different authorities. Such variation depends largely on the inclusion or omission of particular stations and thus does not represent an unresolveable contradiction in the doctrinal pattern.

It has emerged from the description of the subtle centres from the *ājñā-cakra* upwards that the dominant features of each subtle centre are often intimately related to each other in their symbolic implication and denote the development of one major degree into multiple smaller progressions. The total number of eighteen *cakras* should, therefore, cause no confusion or doubt about a possible compatibility of the different doctrines involved in the case of our present study. What appears far more interesting is the adoption of a three-fold level of subtle centres. This arises from the doubling of one essentially unique stage in the metaphysical realm, due to the adaption of the Mujaddidī point of view to a *nirguṇa sant* doctrine that traces its origin back to the ancient *Vedānta* and its mediaeval elaborations.

The techniques of spiritual realisation

The previous chapters have shown that on a speculative (**īlmī**) plane the transition of a Sufi *tariqa* into a Hindu environment demanded a number of formal adaptations, reformulations and attempts at assimilation, a task which in the present case was facilitated by a number of outer and inner circumstances favourable to such a development. It now remains to determine whether and to which extent a similarly intricate development was required for the corresponding operative (**āmlī**) aspect of the *sādhanā* promulgated by Rāmcandra consisting of a range of techniques that aim at transmitting the subtle states of the initiate.

Although the technical vocabulary (**iṣṭilāḥāt**) used in the

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239. *TP*, p. 44.
methodological context of each initiatory discipline naturally reflects the fundamental principles of the tradition in which it is embedded, it is legitimate to assume that the subtle human constitution on which these operative disciplines (abhyāsa) intervene constitutes a common ground untouched by any link to a specific religion and potentially suitable for any sort of cultivation. Such an assertion stands at the base of Rāmcandra's vision that wants leave open to each initiate the possibility to partake of his spiritual discipline without the need to renounce the performance of the exoteric rituals and social customs of each individual's inherited religious tradition.

It, therefore, comes as no surprise that notwithstanding some formal alterations, the core of the Mujaddidī methodology based on the fundamental concepts of the all-comprehensive ‘ilm-i laṭā‘īf appears essentially unchanged in the teachings of this Hindu master. In view of the frequent change of perspective witnessed in the theoretical outline of the 'science of the subtle centres' between the Mujaddidī ‘ilm-i laṭā‘īf and the sant elaboration of the Tāntrik cakra-vidyā, involving the use of a highly symbolic language on both sides, the question arises as to how far the use of a methodology safely embedded in its original religious environment can remain applicable if transferred to another context. This problem becomes even more pertinent in the case of a ṭarīqa which appears so intimately linked with the religious tenets set out by the sharī‘at as the Mujaddidīyya, not usually accredited with the flexibility needed for the establishment of such an intercultural link.

An oversimplification in the analysis of this process of cultural transition or, perhaps more appropriately, of gradual cultural absorption, along narrowly erected ideological categories would certainly fall short of providing an exhaustive solution to this question and, thus, risk not rendering sufficient justice to the complex factors involved. Even if the subject of the present case study might be dismissed as bearing only minor importance in the mainstream history of a great Indian Sūfī order or for the spiritual history of the sub-continent in general, it nevertheless provides in our eyes a fascinating glimpse of India's extraordinary capacity to lay bare and absorb the essential substra-
tum that underlies every truly regular tradition beyond the supplanting of formal elements that distinguish the immanent expression of the transcendent Truth among different people in successive historical periods.

The operational part of the discipline based on doctrinal fundamentals (siddhānta) consists of the use of a series of precisely focussed methods (abhyāsa). This practical aspect of the sādhanā represents the most immediate concern of the Hindu authorities of the Mujaddidiyya and reflects their anxiety to achieve concrete and lasting results in the spiritual advancement of their followers.240

The Kāyasth background of this Hindu lineage did not point directly towards an emphasis on sophisticated intellectual elaborations and theoretical discussions from a purely gnostic perspective (jñāna-mārga), more typical of a Brāhmaṇical environment. It suggested rather the development of a more practically oriented discipline based on a subtle but concrete activity (karma) and devotional self-surrender (upāsanā), in which the historical circumstances during the later half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and their impact on the Kāyasth community may have played some part by amplifying the pragmatic tendencies so characteristic for the modern period in general.

The rapid increase in the number of disciples during the

240. Often during my field-research I was confronted with a great reluctance to supply any tangible information regarding the speculative background of their sādhanā and their unwillingness to commit themselves to any theoretical excursion in the context of their daily public satsang. Although this hermetic attitude towards outsiders also extends to initiates of lower degrees, it stood in contrast to the master’s general readiness to allow me free access to the written sources diffused in the more restricted circle of intimate disciples, which often contained highly valuable material regarding the esoteric science of the order and the doctrinal expositions elaborated by the past generations of its leadership. It also differed widely from the lively debates and discussions common between master and disciples in many of the Sufi khānaqāhs I visited, where a fairly balanced combination of speculative and operative instructions governed the daily rhythm of the inmates.
formative period of the branch (c. 1920-55), which was partially a result of the accelerated ‘democratisation’ of the order ‘open to all caste and creeds’ propagated by Rāmcandra on the directions of his shaikh and further enhanced by the charismatic appeal of its leaders during that time, led to a truly heterogeneous range of affiliates. Most of them were hailing from a lower middle-class background with a relatively limited acquaintance with either Sūfī or Hindu esoteric teachings. This resulted in a successive redefinition in the way of instruction, imparted according to the individual disposition and capacity of each single member of the satsang. Notwithstanding the declared aim of being open indiscriminately to all seekers of truth, it led to the re-emergence of the natural division between those commoners who passively derived some benefit from the presence of the lineage’s leaders during the public satsang, and the more restricted number of those intimate initiates qualified to work under the guidance of the satguru for progressing in the sādhanā.

These factors must be taken into account while assessing the teachings of Rāmcandra and his successors. The apparent discrepancy between the simple style of their daily public satsang and the rather sophisticated doctrinal explanations encountered in the treatises published under their name provides some useful indication in this direction. Remarkably the written sources containing Rāmcandra’s teachings do not show the homogeneous character, both in regard to content and style, that would facilitate a coherent analysis of the underlying elements of his ‘path’. It suggests the diversity of sources at the origin of his spiritual and operational synthesis. From an attentive analysis of his works it emerges that, far from claiming any originality, Rāmcandra’s teachings represent an attempt to combine the oral directions received from his spiritual preceptors with additional notions gathered from various written sources more or less closely related to his own spiritual affiliations so as to confer a more universalistic appeal to his call for self-realisation. Rāmcandra’s own Hindu background, combining the piety of a traditional Vaiṣṇava household imbued with Rāma-bhakti with his membership of an unspecified branch of the Kabīr-panth
and possibly the Nānak-panth, inclined him and his successors to preserve many doctrinal notions, ritual attitudes and prescriptive norms of behaviour, e.g., a strictly vegetarian diet and the stress laid on strict sobriety refraining from the consumption of wine or of any other intoxicating substance.\(^{241}\)

In view of these considerations, the science of the subtle centres constitutes a fertile ground for possible assimilations between the esoteric doctrines of Islam and Hinduism. The related methodology represents therefore yet another field in which the use of a different symbolism and ritual perceptions could be overcome opening the way for an encounter between these two traditions.

The work most specifically concerned with the methodological aspects of the sādhanā significantly bears the Persian title Kamāl-i Insānī (‘The human Perfection’).\(^{242}\) More than any other of his works, it bears the distinctive mark of the Śūfi ṭariqa Rāmcandra inherited from his shaikh. The descriptions it contains are permeated with technical terms currently used by the Mujaddīdis and very little effort is made to provide a rendering more suitable for non-Muslim readers. The bulk of the treatise consists of Rāmcandra’s comments, personal considerations and clarifications of a treatise most probably compiled by Shāh Faḍl Ahmad Khān. It is, therefore, useful in tracing the first steps of the process of transition between the two generations.

In the first paragraph of his opening chapter, Rāmcandra

\(^{241}\) An outline of the preliminary duties and rules of behaviour recommended to the members of his satsang is provided in Rāmcandra’s small booklet entitled Satsangion ke kartavya (‘The duties of the members of the satsang’), Fathegarh, n.d.

\(^{242}\) The Hindi title of the first printed edition reads Mānava jīvan kī uncca śikhā (The lofty peak of human perception). The edition used here is the second one, dated 1973 and published from the small press run by Rāmcandra’s grandson at Fatehgarh, Adhyatma Dhara Prakashan, in 1,000 copies. This follows a first edition published in the early 1960s which was in turn preceded by the publication of parts of the integral text in the journal circulated by Rāmcandra in the late 1920s under the title Farrukhsiyar.
reiterates the goal of the order’s spiritual discipline reassumed in the very title of the work:

Human perfection consists of the ‘extinction in the Divine’ (fanā fī Allāh, īśvara men laya ho jānā) and culminates in the ‘permanence in the Divine’ (baqā bi Allāh). . . To reach the end of this path is called fanāiyat, characterised by co-existence (ma‘iyat, sālokyatā) and proximity (qurbat, sāmīpyatā); its upmost perfection lies in [the degrees of] conformity (baqā, sārūpyatā) and finally identification (baqā bi’l-baqā, sāyujyatā). . . .

Unconstrained by the Islamic dogma of Allāh’s absolute transcendence which imposed upon the Sūfis the need for a careful balance in their descriptions of the higher states of spiritual realisation, the Hindu master feels free to explain the ultimate degree of perfection envisaged by the classical term baqā bi’l-baqā as ‘identity’ with the Divine Principle, corresponding to the final stage reached by the yogi at the end of his intiatory process (sāyujyatā).

Later passages make it clear that the states described above in Naqshbandī terms and provided with their Sanskrit renderings, are comprehended in the author’s vision under the general term of Yoga whose final degree is named sāyujyatā, derived from the same Sanskrit root yuj and meaning ‘unification’. For Rāmcandra the first stage of Yoga is reached at the end of the ‘journey towards Allāh’ (sair ilā Allāh) with the attainment of the state of fanā or laya avasthā. For him it refers to the realisation of īśvara, the principle of universal existence contained in the dā’ira-i imkān, also denominated saguṇa Brahman. If considered from a Hindu perspective, however, the paramount perfection of the human state can only be intended as the stage of final liberation (mukti) obtained through the identification with the Supreme Brahman devoid of any positive quality (nirguṇa), equivalent to the Sūfī concept of ‘permanence in permanence’ (baqā bi’l-baqā) in the ‘Supreme Reality’ (Ḥaqq Ta‘ālā).

When considered from the perspective of a path of realisation leading the initiate gradually to the experience of union, these two objectives correspond to the aims envisaged by Haṭha-Yoga and Rāja-Yoga respectively, the latter only corresponding exactly to what according to Rāmacandra constitutes the brahma-vidyā, i.e., the metaphysical realm, and considered as the most sublime Knowledge (para-vidyā). To achieve this most sublime of all human goals, the Hindu masters have presented their distinctive form of sādhanā consisting of elements that reflect in an interesting fashion a combination of features traceable in both traditions.

In one of the written sources attributed to Rāmacandra’s nephew Brj Mohan Lāl, the following definition of the way is proposed:

The path (mārga) that leads to the attainment of beatitude is derived from tasting the rain of the nectar of immortality. We call it ‘Ānanda-Yoga’, which constitutes the subtle part of Rāja-Yoga. It represents the fruit of the object of human pursuits kept in view by the saints. Out of compassion, they have brought forth this very easy and simple way for the prosperity of the entire human species. . . . Ānanda-Yoga constitutes the path of bounty and grace (faid o faḍl, krpā aur prasād) which has included since the very beginning the grace and assistance of the Divinely inspired guide (gurudeva); that is, he continues to assist [his disciple] with his interior spiritual force of attraction (tawajjuh, ākārṣaṇa śakti) to return from his unsteady course of conduct to his original state (aṣlī ādhāra) and to get absorbed in beatitude. Since the state of consciousness of the true

244. *Kml*, pp. 1-2. In the introduction to the work containing the teachings of Brj Mohan Lāl’s, compiled by his eldest son and present head of the main *satsang* at Kanpur, Omkār Nāth Saksenā, and published in 1958 under the title *Ānanda-Yoga*, these two successive and in some way complementary stages are reassumed under the main categories of jadhba and suluk. Cf. AY, p. 22. For the implications of the term brahma-vidyā, used as a synonym of ‘ilm-i sīna (the ‘science hidden in the breast’) and ‘ilm-i ‘irfān (science of the Knowledge), see *AIB*, Part I, p. 2.
master remains constantly immersed in knowledge (jñāna), spiritual beatitude and peace (sukūn, śānti), the penetration of his glance full of subtle grace and of the spiritual current into the inner states of the disciple cause in the latter’s heart the rise of his spiritual beatitude and peace. This sanctions the beginning of the spiritual path.245

This passage underlines the crucial role assumed by the spiritual preceptor in relation to the neophyte, especially during the initial phase of the sādhanā, consisting of the former’s subtle intervention on the latter’s as yet uncultivated inner soil. The grace and spiritual munificence (faiḍ) involved during this process contribute to the establishment of a subtle link between guru and śiśya (or pīr and murīd), nourished by the spiritual attention (tawājjuh) of the master while focussing on his disciple. Eventually, it creates an intimate and indissoluble connection between the two rendering thereby effective the pact sanctioned by the preceding initiation (bai’at). Moreover, it allows the novice to derive the benefit of instantaneous subtle purification and inner rectification leading him to the state of beatitude promoted by the spiritual attraction perceived in his heart. This pulls him spontaneously towards the source of all grace and effluence with which he will finally establish an intimate relation (nisbat).

In the case of a Sūfī țariqa, this source consists first of all of the spiritual preceptor and the unimrupted chain of eminent authorities of the silsila, than in the archetypal model of human perfection represented by the prophet Muḥammad, the fountainhead of every regular spiritual lineage, and finally in Allāh, going through the entire series of venerable saints that constitute the chain of spiritual transmission.246

The establishment of such a powerful connection, although known also in other Sūfī orders, holds particular importance in the teachings of the Naqshbandiyya, where it is known under the term of rābiṭa. Under some aspects, it comes close to the

245. AY, pp. 28-9.
246. For a Hindu interpretation of the concept of silsila and nisbat, see Madhhab aur Tahqiqat, pp. 38-40.
Hindu concept of *sahaja* (lit., ease, naturalness, spontaneity) found in Kabir and other *sants* since the mediaeval period, which was most likely adopted from the teachings of Goraksha Nāth’s Nāth-sampradāya. In the *nirguna* perspective of the popularly revered Rāma-upāsakas, the term came to denote the state of spontaneous absorption into and virtual identification with the Divine principle prior to the undertaking of any path of realisation, here for the sake of analogy denominated as Rāma.

We recognise in this surprisingly intellectual perspective a reminiscence of the gnostic point of view held by the Vedānta. There is an interesting parallel with the binary Naqshbandi terminology of *jadhba* and *sulāk*. Traces of it can be detected also in the above-quoted description of one of the order’s Hindu authorities, albeit in a less explicit way. In this context, it is particularly noteworthy that similar to Śrī Rāmānujācārya, Rāmānanda and Kabir, these Kāyasth masters describe knowledge (*jñāna*) as a preliminary stage for the attainment of beatitude (*ānanda*). They characterise it as the highest degree of spiritual realisation and assimilate it to the state of bewilderment (*ḥairat*) and supreme forgetfulness (*ghaflat*) which is considered by the Mujaddidūs as the only possible description of the loftiest station (*īkmāl-i maqāmāt*) of the spiritual path. The negative implications rendered by these terms remind us of the terminology used by the Vedānta in the Upaniṣad in regard to the uneffable reality of non-duality. There are, however, several degrees of beatitude. Only the most sublime state of *paramānanda* applies truly to such a comparison, while on a more general scale *ānanda* as used by the authorities of this joint Mujaddidi-Kabir-panthī tradition, denotes the utmost perfection reached at every single stage of realisation (*maqām*).250


250. Cf. VS, p. 64.
In the course of a lengthy description aimed at defining the state of sainthood (*wilâyat*) in the introductory pages of the *Kamāl-i Insānī*, Rāmcandra associates the *wali* drawn by the force of spontaneously arising attraction (*jadhba*) to the lower realms of sainthood with the Hindu *hamṣa* and *paramahamṣa*. These latter two are included in the broader category of *sāhīb-i talwān* (lit., the people of unstable nature), i.e., those individuals who are suddenly enraptured by a state of upward attraction during which they experience in a sort of inebriation (*nāshā*) the beatitude of selflessness (*be-khudī*). Unaware of their body and unable to direct the experiences of their inner states by their own intention, they are said shiver in a sort of ongoing alteration of contraction (*qabād*) and expansion (*vastu*) until, after an indefinite span of time, they return to their previous state (all these events lying beyond their own control).

Such a description reminds of the characteristics attributed to the *majdhūb*, here associated with the Hindu concept of *avadhūta*, who is seen in contrast to the fixity of the *aṣhāb-i tamkīn* (lit. ‘those possessing a stable abode’, *shitāprajña*), who are outwardly characterised by sobriety and by a high degree of awareness (*hosh*), and who never tumble on their path of progression but maintain perfect control over every single step.

Here the Naqshbandī origin appears undeniable, and the reason advanced for associating the degrees of *hamṣa* and *paramahamṣa* with the first category of saints, unable to proceed beyond the stage of ‘minor sainthood’, is quite interesting. The *hamṣa* is perceived as being still exposed to the alternating phases of ascent and descent (*utāra-carhāv*), a definition analogous to the above-mentioned phases of contraction and expansion,

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251. This connection with the concept of *avadhūta* is highly interesting in view of the particular relation this type of initiate bears with Dattātreya, the Hindu divinity linked to a particular kind of initiation in many respects similar to *al-Khīdr* in the esoteric tradition of Islam and of the Naqshbandiyya, which apparently played an important role among the mediaeval *sants*.

252. *KmI*, pp. 3-4; *TP*, p. 34.
and is, therefore, unable to acquire a degree of lasting realisation that transcends any residual trace of duality. The \textit{paramahamsa} in contrast penetrates into the highest realm of sainthood (\textit{santgati}) where he remains permanently for the rest of his life.\footnote{ Cf. AIB, p. 26.} While \textit{jadhba} and \textit{sułık} had primarily been described as two successive degrees or attitudes assumed by the ‘spiritual traveller’, the Hindu masters, basing themselves on notions derived from the Naqshbandi doctrine, add some further details to this definition.

To complete this picture, quote the following paragraph from the text attributed to Râmcandra, which in view of its content and style, has almost certainly been adopted from a written source going back to Shâh Faḑl Ahmad Khân. It reflects very well the underlying attitude of this lineage:

\begin{quote}
Everyone has a preference for a [particular] method that suits one’s natural inclination. My personal preference lays emphasis on the \textit{sālik}’s need to turn his full resolution on getting disengaged from the obligatory statutes of the [Islamic] Law (\textit{farā’iḍ}), the religious tenets (\textit{sunnat-i mu’qūda}) and all the additional ritual ways of conduct (\textit{sunnat-i Zubā’ida}), and to concentrate all his attention on the formula of Divine Unity (\textit{kalima-i tawḥīd}) remaining firm in the stage of \textit{dhikr}, \textit{fikr} and intimacy with God (\textit{uns}) while resorting for some days to supererogatory acts of worship (\textit{nawāfil}), the recitation of the Holy Book (\textit{talāwat-i Koran}), praising God (\textit{tasbīḥ}), spiritually charged worship (\textit{waṣīfa}) and the abundance of individual prayers (\textit{du’ā-i kathrāt}) . . . . One should withdraw from the attachment to virtuous actions and try hard, day and night, to annihilate one’s own imaginary existence (\textit{hastī-i mauhūm}) . . . than there is hope that the attraction of the everlasting bounty (\textit{jadhba}, ‘\textit{ināyat-i azlī}) may drive that person away from his individual limits towards the state of \textit{fanā-i fanā}.
\end{quote}
and from there eventually to the extreme limit of baqā-i baqā where he will witness the Essence of God. . . .254

This statement leaves little doubt about the shift in attitude that had taken place in this sub-branch of the Mujaddidiyya Mażhariyya even before it reached among the Kāyasth Hindus and which prepared the ground for a definitive departure from the original religious and ritual context in which the ṭarīqa had been hitherto deeply anchored. Only such a radical change in perspective, away from the apparently inextricable connection between ritual code of behaviour sanctioned by the sharī'at and the underlying transcendent principles which confer upon them their deeper meaning which was so skilfully achieved in the doctrinal outlay of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindî, the Mujaddidî, could have made the passage of this previously orthodox and orthopractice Sunni order into a Hindu environment possible. It, thus, provides the partial answer to the question if and how the Sūfī authorities were themselves involved in this process of re-interpreting the ṭarīqa distinguishing between spiritual practice and a corpus of ritual acts and legal tenets conceived as ultimately accidental and of only secondary relevance for spiritual advancement.

Such a trend began to appear with the directions given by Sayyid Abül Hasan al-Naṣīrābādî to his successor Ahmad ‘Alî Khān following the instructions he had received in an admonitory dream, and was strongly emphasised by Shāh Faḍl Ahmad Khān, the spiritual preceptor of Rāmcandra Saksenā. Under the influence of Svāmī Brahmananda, the authority affiliated to the Kabīr-panth, the latter began to question the essential role played by the exoteric ritual code while maintaining intact the corpus of rites and methods linked to the spiritual discipline. In this attitude we recognise the unmistakable mark of the bhagats and sants like Kabīr and other nirguṇa bhaktas who preached a universal message relieving their followers of the stringent need for strict ritual observance. Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān deals as follows with this crucial question:

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Regarding the path, the Sufis used to impart their teachings in consonance with the religious tenets of those who followed Islam; they instructed their disciples in how to focus entirely on the supreme goal primarily by observing rigorously the prescribed religious duties, like the daily ritual prayer (namaz), and all those things and acts which have been enjoined by the messenger of Islam; then again, all those things and acts which have been recommended by the messenger of Allâh — peace be upon him! — . . . and then only the initiate was allowed to focus on the various aspects of the spiritual discipline. . . .

[Instead], one should give preference to those acts which have been ascertained as being useful for this purpose and avoid any shortcomings at this regard; this is the conventional practice of all communities and the Sufis of all orders agree upon this. Hence, the earnest seeker of truth (âlib) should give preference to those practices which shall lead him to the attainment of the state of be-khudi. In this matter, there is nothing exceeding [the practice of] dhikr and fikr.255

In this passage, a partial reiteration of the paragraph quoted above, the shaikh’s position appears more cautious. He himself was indeed a Muslim and a renowned local Sufi authority, whatever his convictions and attitudes regarding the spiritual discipline may have been with regard to his Hindu disciple. As a matter of fact, most of his followers and disciples were Sunni Muslims who were instructed in the tarîqa according to the conventional Mujaddidi pattern. One has therefore to remain cautious in the interpretation of his statements, available mainly through the mediated version of his Hindu disciple, for the attitude he assumed while instructing the latter has certainly differed from that imparted to the former. Rather than an outright rejection of the validity of the religious tenets, it appears that he regarded these simply as not essential for

255. KmI, pp. 7-8.
conferring efficacy to the spiritual discipline, at least to a certain degree.

At the same time, Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān stresses his preference for those activities which are prone to guarantee access to the higher degrees of realisation, resumed under the terms fanā, be-khudi and baqā al-baqā. Especially with regard to the attainment of the immediate goal, the attainment of the degree of be-khudi which among the Mujaddidīs sanctions entry into the sphere of minor sainthood, he mentions a range of methods included in the broad categories of dhikr and fikr, that is to say the invocative and the contemplative aspects of the operational discipline. As conveyed by the transposition of our Hindu author, these include japa and manana, a fairly adequate translation of these two technical categories in Sūfism into the yoga-viśiṣṭādvaita context. The former pertains to the science of subtle invocation based on the knowledge of rhythm and sound vibrations used to awaken the subtle organs in the human constitution, more or less equivalent to the Hindu mantra-vidyā. The latter relates to the mental sphere (the Arabic term fikr embraces a wide range of activities based on the mental faculty) aimed at achieving control of the mind and the fixation of the thought-current that surfaces from the vortex of consciousness (citta-vṛtti), and denotes the whole complex of techniques apt to achieve progress in checking the feeble mind until reaching the capacity of contemplating and thereby penetrating the inner reality of an object.256

Following these important premises, the rest of the work, entitled Kamāl-i insānī provides a general introduction to the methodology of the Sūfī ancestors. It consists of the presentation of a wide range of techniques gathered from various sources. Apart from the first-hand instructions received from Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān they contain notions originally ascribed to leading

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256. The significance of this lies in the technical sense these terms have assumed in their respective traditions. As the use of the terms japa and manana suggests, the Hindu masters adopt a vocabulary intimately connected to the technical language used in the various Tantra-Yoga doctrines following the classification operated by Patañjali in his Yoga-Sūtra.
authorities of other orders and of different epochs, including Abū ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Sulāmī (333/942-412/1021), the Chistī Shaikh Sayyid Mīr Muḥammad al-Ḥusainī Gisūdarāz (d. 1422) and the renowned authority of the Firdawsī order, Shaikh Sharaf al-Dīn Yāḥyā al-Manerī (d. 782/1382).

The largest section is concerned with the dhikr or japa and follows broadly the conventional Sūfī pattern that divides the dhikr into the two principal categories of vocal invocation performed with the tongue (dhikr-i zabānī) and the hidden or silent invocation performed exclusively on an inner, mental plane (dhikr-i khafī, mānasik japa). On the authority of Abū ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulāmī, Rāmcandra outlines the specific context to which these invocations are applicable. Focussing mainly on the silent dhikr which is predominantly used by the Mujaddidīs, he introduces among them the dhikr-i sirr. This peculiar invocation is closely linked with the subtle centre bearing the same name. Its regular repetition, if focussed on the particular spot in the human breast said to be the seat of this subtle organ, is said to create an impenetrable shield around the mind protecting it from being invaded by distracting thoughts (khatra). It, thus, represents an important tool in achieving the ability to focus the thought while maintaining a high level of awareness, known by the Naqsbandīs as the rise of the ‘perpetual presence’ evoked by the fixation of the mind on the one true Object (ḥudūr-i dā‘īmi).

Yet another variety of subtle invocation consists of the dhikr-i rūḥ, described as effacing every remaining trace of the sādhaka’s individual attributes to the extent of leaving him engaged in the invocation of this dhikr while being completely deprived of his self-consciousness, so that nothing remains interposed between him and the only Object (lakṣya), Allāh or paramātma. It brought to utmost perfection, the performance of this invocation is said to lead to such an intimate compenetration between the invoking subject and the invoked object that the performer’s mind perceives the very Object as the Subject invoking.

But what appears most striking is that this description,
developed entirely along an Islamic perspective, concludes with a verse from Kabîr which sums up the entire preceding description. It adds, moreover, that integrating element of a parallel tradition so spontaneously perceived by the authorities of this order:

\[ \text{jāp mithāi ajapā mithāi, anhad bhī mithāi} \]
\[ \text{surati samānī sabd main, tāhi kāl na khāi} \]

Efface the oral invocation, efface the inner invocation, efface the infinite sound.

Contain the sound current in the one sound vibration, so that time may lose its grip upon you.\(^{257}\)

Here, the author takes for granted the association between the ‘science of the \textit{dhikr}’ and the ancient Hindu \textit{mantra-vidyā}. Perpetuated from the epoch of the \textit{Ṛgveda} till the present day, the latter assumed the specific aspect of the ‘science of the sound vibration’ (\textit{śabda-yoga}) in the Tāntrik doctrines and among many \textit{sants}, especially in the Kabîr-panth and the Dādû-panth. Particularly interesting is the connection established here between the two main categories of \textit{dhikr}, the vocal and the silent invocation, with the concept of \textit{japājapa}, current among the mediaeval Rāma-
\textit{upāsaka}s but already known in previous epochs under the name \textit{vajra-japa}. To declared purpose of this technique is to disperse the numerous veils \textit{mâyā} has spun around the mind of the profane by focussing and meditating on the name and essence of God alone. Elsewhere, we learn that the ‘name of the essence’ (\textit{bija-mantra}, \textit{satnām}) used and further transmitted by Rāmcandra and his successors, consists of either the \textit{ism-i dhāt} inherited from their Muslim ancestors, recommending the formula consisting of the syllables \textit{Allāh} or \textit{Hū}, or alternatively of the invocation of the \textit{satnām} that makes use of the repeated invocation of the name \textit{rām-rām} or of the \textit{aṅkaras} — syllable \textit{om-om}, both current among the followers of Kabîr and essentially playing the same role.\(^{258}\)

\(^{257}\) \textit{Kml}, p. 10.

As the quotation of the verse cited above indicates, Rāmcandra’s ṣādhanā maintains the Kabirian perspective of the unqualified by pointing out the ultimate transcendence of the qualified state as the supreme goal envisaged by this technique encapsulated in the primordial syllable om that can be used as a substitute for the rāma-nāma at the more advanced stages of the path.

The application of the subtle sound vibration (sūrat-śabda) reproduced by the repeated invocation of these sacred syllables does not remain limited to a specific cakra or laṭīfa, but can be extended to the entire series of subtle centres following the progress made by the initiate. It is a peculiar feature of this contemporary discipline that the type of invocation or syllable used in the varying degrees of the initiatic process does not undergo any change, but rather the effect it produces while employed in the awakening of the specific organ upon which it is directed. This determines, moreover, the name given to the particular dhikr.

The most immediate result achieved by the initiate who has reached a certain perfection and interiorisation of the dhikr-i qalb or mānasik japa consists of the prolonged perception of the sound vibration characteristic for that particular subtle organ, which endures, even after the active performance of its invocation is interrupted, not only in the subtle organ most directly concerned but in various parts of the body. It is, moreover, said to extent to the sound produced by many exterior objects, like the tinkling of temple-bells, the sound of a whirling grinding-stone, the whizzing sound of the wind or the rustling of the leaves of a tree moved by a light breeze. This particular sound will initially reproduce the sound vibration evoked by the syllable chosen by the disciple according to his personal preference. But once it is thoroughly impressed on the laṭīfa-i rūḥ the different sounds produced by outer objects are said to be perceived as all pertaining to the paramātmā alone, that is to say the apparent subsistence of multiplicity will be trans-muted by the perception of their underlying unity.

Elaborating on the difference between these two degrees of
invocation, our author returns to the original Naqshbandī terminology that describes the effects provoked by the *dhikr-i qalb* as balanced between the ‘presence of the Truth’ (*ḥudūr-i Ḥaqq*), or increased awareness of the purely transcendent realm, and the ‘presence of creation’ (*ḥudūr-i khalq*), corresponding to an increased awareness of the immanent realm. However, the *dhikr-i rūḥ*, tends predominantly towards an increase of transcendent awareness dominated by the quality of *sat*. Brought to ultimate perfection with the *dhikr-i sirr*, the *abhyāsī* is left with nothing but the lasting awareness of the transcendent Principle (*iśvara*) in which the mind remains permanently immersed in itself (*ḥudūr-i dā'īmī, dhyāna*).

Progressing further, the *sādhaka* attains to the *dhikr-i khafī*, intended here not merely in its general sense as ‘hidden invocation’ but in its technical context as being focussed on the *latīfa-i khafī*. It also has a specific context indicating a stage in the spiritual progress in which the separate existence of the *dhikr* invoked and the *śabda*, now intended as the subtle, non-human (*apauruṣeya*) seed or essence said to reside in the treasurehouse of the heart-chamber, mingle with each other while getting absorbed in the subtle sound-current (*sūrat*). According to the Haṭha-Yoga and *panth*-doctrines, this current consists of a soundless sound (*anahada dhvani*) that pervades the entire universe irradiating from a source located at the exact centre of the universe.259

Notwithstanding the difference in nature that characterises the mode of *japa* and the effects it provokes on the inner states of the *abhyāsī*, which ranges between smooth and abrupt leaving some people deprived of its benefits for their entire life-span, the perfection reached at this sublime degree leads to the disappearance of the sense of duality (*duvidhā*) subsisting between the *dhākir* who invokes and the *dhikr* invoked. At that stage, the disciple is said to lose even the perception of the beatitude that had previously begun to pervade his inner self and is led directly to the final two degrees obtainable through the practice of the *japa*. These are the *dhikr-i akhfā* and the

259. *KnI*, p. 17.
dhikr-i khafî-akhfâ, which confer a progressively deeper penetrating sense of unity that gradually effaces all remaining traces of dualistic perception connected with the separate existence (ana, aham) of the spiritual traveller. Râmendra specifies that the use of the dhikr-i khafî is specific to the kañtha-cakra, while the dhikr-i khafî-akhfâ pertains to the nuqṭa-i suwaida or ājñā-cakra.

Consonant with the method taught by Shâh Faql Aḥmad Khân in the Naqshbandî tradition, Râmendra too insists on the stringent necessity to pursue in the performance of the silent invocation from the very moment of entering the spiritual discipline until reaching the most advanced spiritual states. He leaves aside the ancient Mujaddidî conventions that tend to exalt the efficacy of the dhikr while performing the night and early morning prayers, in particular once the initiate has entered into the ‘sphere of supreme sainthood’ and that of the ‘prophetic perfections’. It puts once more in evidence the shift effected by the transmission into an environment not bound by the religious duties of the sharâ’at. This results in an entirely inner discipline which, thus, fills the gap left and assumes, in the specific case of the dhikr, an even more important role in obtaining the one essential goal envisaged over and over again. In the words of Shâh Faql Aḥmad Khân this is expressed thus:

. . . in my opinion the dhikr-i khafî alone should be performed so as to keep the heart clean from any . . . heterogeneous images and focus one’s spiritual attention on the Supreme goal alone. One should strengthen the determination to maintain the heart present in the unification of the mind (yaksū’i, ekāgratā) trying to attain to a deeply intimate relation with the Truth (sat) by extinguishing oneself into It, than try to extinguish oneself in that application . . . this is the closest and most certain mean of reaching the original abode (aśl-pada). . .

There follows a long list of twenty points that outline the formal

conditions required for a correct and successful performance of the *dhikr-japa*, to be followed before, during and after its recommended daily performance. These resemble too closely the accompanying regulations set out in the original Islamic context to require any detailed description here, e.g., the maintenance of the state of ritual purity (*tahāra, sauca*), the wearing clean clothes, a pure and pleasently scented environment, etc. Interestingly, these preliminary conditions include the fundamental issue of fixing the image of the *satguru* in the heart (*tašawwur al-shaikh*) laid down as an indispensable condition for promoting the ‘divinely inspired and infallible master’ (*gurudeva*) to the rank of *ištadevatā*, i.e., the divinity chosen for personal worship to whom one must surrender. Its description certainly constitutes an expression of the greater freedom enjoyed by Hindus in formulating the essential *pîr-murîdî* relationship in unrestricted terms of selfless devotion (*upāsanā*) even if the immediate object belongs outwardly to the immanent sphere.

These descriptions are particularly striking in the explicit recommendation to refrain from the ancient practice of suspending the breath (*habs-i nafas, prâṇāyāma*). They are so explicitly derived from the Naqshbandî shaikhs that we can safely assume a substantial adherence to the principles sanctioned by the masters of this *tariqa*, which were found sufficiently compatible to leave them unaltered. An explicit mention is made in this context of the Rādhāsoāmî authorities who, according to Rāmcandra, prescribe to their disciples the habit also current among the Mujaddidîs of covering with one’s fingers the two nostrils, the cavity of the ears and both eyes. The aim of this practice is to reduce the sensual perception from the outside world through these organs while being engaged in the performance of the *japa*. It is a practice not shared by Rāmcandra but which could well provide vague indication of a Sūfī matrix at the base also of the Rādhāsoāmî teachings.

The observation of certain rules meant to sanction a precise rhythm of breath that accompanies the invocation is, however, not outrightly rejected, but even recommended in exceptional cases if undertaken under the expert guidance of an authoritative
master who regards them as suitable to the disciple’s inner nature. Two degrees or categories of practitioners are distinguished in this context both unheard of among the Mujaddidī authorities at Delhi. The first comprises those individuals less expert in refraining the breath, defined as ‘travellers’ (musāfir) since they have not yet attained to a lasting control over the discipline, who are said to be affected by a powerful wave of heat especially in the heart-region. The second embraces those more advanced in the performance of this technique, defined as ‘constant’ (muqīm), who no longer perceive neither cold nor heat and who have thereby attained to the perfection of the ajapā-japa, remaining immersed in the perpetual presence of the Sovereign (al-Mālik).

Beginners are, moreover, advised not to remain frightened by the sensible increase in blood circulation which provokes an increase in the temperature of the body, but to persist in the performance of the dhikr and strictly observe the instructions they receive, for this corresponds to a transitory period of purification that only in very exceptional circumstances brings along major risks for the inner equilibrium and health of the disciple. The possible risks involved by an indiscriminate use of the techniques connected with ḥidr-i nafas are very similar to those described by the ācāryas of many contemporary yoga-sampradāyas among whom a similar tendency away from the extremely rigid disciplines regarding the restraint of the breath can be equally recognised as no longer adequate in recent times. Caution in increasing too rapidly the rhythm of every period of conscious respiration and of raising the number of silent invocations pronounced in its course are discouraged as they invoke the risk of creating an inner unbalance and lasting mental damage. Including such apparently crude recommendations as

261. This heat is said to dissolve the layers of fat around the heart thereby contributing to its purification. Apart from its literal meaning, such a perception obviously includes also a more subtle interpretation, although the production of physical heat is certainly one of the immediately perceptible effects of these techniques, often stressed by the ācāryas of different yoga-sādhanās.

262 KnI, p. 24.
expelling the breath exclusively through the nostrils in order to avoid damaging the teeth, such advice is currently found in the treatises of numerous Hindu masters. They reflect a general tendency towards a simplification of the discipline considered as within the reach of the average modern disciple.

Notwithstanding the master’s opinion that generally discourages this practice as not strictly necessary for the average disciple, the detailed account provided by Rāmcandra regarding breath-control exceeds by far that provided by the orthodox Mujaddidīs and betrays the great importance attributed originally to this science in the general context of the japa. As confirmed by my personal observations while assisting at the satsang of his successors at Kanpur and elsewhere, however, simple and kept at a low rate, breath-control still constitutes a fundamental ingredient of the spiritual discipline practised today.

The description of the dhikr-japa is completed by a detailed list of a range of secondary applications to which this technique is liable, including the two, four and even six-stroke variety of the dhikri naifi wa ithbāt, the performance of which imitates in every detail the guidelines provided by the Sūfī authorities. Although it does not occupy among Hindus the same prominent rank which it holds among the Muslims initiates, this includes a series of dietary prescriptions that should accompany the performance of this dhikr, like recommending the consumption of milk and fruit only, clear indication of an influence originally pertaining to a Yoga discipline. For the sake of completeness, the text provides also the description of a number of minor invocations aimed at obtaining results in more contingent fields often considered as dangerous, such as obtaining telepathic capacities, communication with the spirits of the deceased, the fulfilment of worldly desires, etc., some of which can be distinguished as authentically Naqshbandī while others refer to practices current among other Sūfī orders, such as the Shaṭṭāriyya and the Qādiriyya.263

The transmission of the dhikr is normally conceived as an

263. KMI, pp. 46-59.
essential of the pact sanctioned between master and disciple, which allows the neophyte effective entrance into the spiritual discipline. Râmchandra describes the method of his shaikh regarding his Hindu disciples in particular but to some extent also including his Muslim protegés in a rather unconventional way:

. . . the method adopted by our murshid was that normally to Hindus and in some particular cases also to his Muslim disciples initiation was not conferred immediately, and for a certain period the dhikr was neither effectively transmitted nor even hinted at by subtle allusion. Only after ascertaining the disciple’s firm desire to receive initiation after his acquaintance with the method of the ṭarīqa accompanied by his firm intent to apply himself thoroughly to the inner discipline, did the Shàh proceed to the performance of this ritual. . . . Sometimes, this [intermediate] period could last for months or even years. . . .

This statement assumes great importance considering the prominent position held by the dhikr as compared to that of the murāqaba and other meditation techniques to which it is said to be ultimately preferable. It represents the most concrete tool for the initiate to participate actively through his own efforts in his spiritual progress, while its absence implies the restriction to an entirely passive attitude for those disciples whose initial duty consists exclusively of attending their master’s satsang, defined in this context as a spiritual school (ādhyātmika pāṭhasālā, rūḥānī madrasa). There emerges in unequivocal terms the particularity of the cross-cultural sādhanā adopted by our Hindu authorities. The absence of the dhikr leaves the potential initiate exposed to the grace of his satguru who, through the transmission his tawajjuh, prepares the ground in the heart

265. AY, p. 224. In this passage, the author makes a subtle distinction between the merely exterior satsang and the inner satsang which constitutes part of the so-called ‘introverted discipline’ (antarmukhī sādhanā) centred on and fixed entirely in the innermost heart.
for a future post-initiatory involvement of the disciple. In this role, the master is said to resemble the peasant who must carefully plough the soil before planting the seed that promises him an abundant harvest. Such a revised attitude, interpreted in base of the dichotomy between jadhba and suluk that compose the Naqshbandi path, finds some analogies in the Hindu disciplines included in the ancient Raja-Yoga disciplines renewed in later periods in the sahaja-yoga disciplines promoted by the nirguna sants. It underlines impressively the extreme consequences derived from the tendency of increasing simplification begun, in the specific context of the Islamic tariqa, with the innovatory methods taught to Khwaja ‘Abd al-Khaliq and Bahâ al-Dîn al-Naqshband by al-Khidr.

Once the preliminary period of trial has lapsed, the subtle invocation of a sacred syllable constitutes thus the primary means at disposition of the Hindu initiates exactly like their Muslim brethren from the very moment they are granted access to the sadhanâ through the initiatory pact. Only after the inner states of the seeker are variegated by the subtle influence produced by its vibration the sadhaka is said to be ready to receive instructions in the performance of the methods of fikr and murâqaba. However, the performance of the dhikr is never altogether abandoned. It is rather gradually sublimated into a more and more seminal state while progress is made in concentration, meditation, contemplation and finally identification, the principal steps of the mental discipline resumed under the term fikr, which are concerned primarily with the refinement of the faculty of thought.

It is noteworthy that the descriptions regarding the performance of the dhikr refer exclusively to the subtle organs contemplated by the ‘ilm-i laṭā‘if of the Mujaddidîs while no explicit reference ever appears in relation to the successive series of cakras described elsewhere on a Tântrik background. These, we assume, belong to the successive stage of the suluk. This attitude is explained by the fact that our Hindu masters regard the entire ‘ilm-i sîna, concerned with the ascent of the five subtle organs of the ‘âlam-i amr, as comprising the intermediate sphere resumed in the hridaya-cakra. They, therefore, regard the
conscious spiritual energy sent forth by the heart in relation to the degree of jadhba, which describe the journey from the heart to the ājñā-cakra situated inside the skull, as the initial field of application for these techniques.

The focus shifts at this stage from the heart, which is related intimately to the manifestation of the Divine attraction (jadhba), to the second phase consisting of the control and sublimation of the psycho-mental component of the human nature, i.e., the mind and the senses, which is comprised under the term sulūk. Brj Mohan Lāl explains as follows:

Our spiritual masters have given precedence to the jadhba over the sulūk, that is to say they have anticipated the way and discipline related to the Divine attraction integrating it, according to necessity, with elements pertaining to the way of sulūk. The different techniques employed for the control and purification of man, buddhi, citta, ahaṅkāra and the senses are referred to as sulūk, in correspondence to what the Muslims call ‘purification of the soul’ (tadhkiya-i nafs, hrdaya kī nirmalatā). Since this important modification implies the arrival of the jijnāsu and devotee permeated by love at the iṣṭapāda with the assistance of the spiritual attraction transmitted through the heart, and since it is moreover necessary to purify the interior agent (antaḥkaraṇa), the compassion and the grace (dayā aur kṛpā) of the satguru are essential till the very beginning.²⁶⁶

There derives that the immediate aim of the initiate consists of the attainment of the condition of fanā or laya-avasthā. It is reached mainly through the interior power (āntarik śakti) and spiritual love (ādhyātmik prem) of the master, further assisted by the disciple’s active involvement in the practice of the japa. Eventually, it leads to a withdrawal of the mind and the senses it governs from the objects of the outside world that eventually results in a contraction of these inner faculties into the intimate

²⁶⁶. AV, pp. 229-30.
spiritual chamber of the heart, regarded as the seat of the interior Divinity. This helps the disciple to overcome or (to remain faithful to the terminology used in this context) to realise the dissolution of the limiting conditions of his individual existence (upādhi) and return to a sort of embryonic state of involution. Once this stage, that goes along with the permanent recollection of īśvara, is reached the journey begins from the ājñā-cakra upwards along the polar axis (dhruva-pāda) towards the superior states of being.267

The various degrees crossed during that stage of vertical ascent consist of the well-known Sufi maqāmāt that correspond to Rāmāchandra’s descriptions of the cakras or lokas contained in the anda and brahmānda dealt with in the preceding chapter. The last of these ‘stations’ is defined as the ‘station of bewilderment’ (maqām-i hairat) in which the abhyāsī is said to have lost the perception of the triple time while remaining still in one place ‘like an idol-stature’, detached from the ephemeral ups and downs of the world and the impact its objects have normally on the mind and liberated from any doubt in front of the radiance of the paramātmā.268 The saint who has reached this sublime station appears outwardly involved in worldly affairs just like any ordinary man, but inwardly he has reached the degree of realisation of the avadhūta remaining untouched by happiness and grief alike while unable to explain the reason for his state.

We notice that in this description the author apparently maintains the Mujaddidī idea of witnessing the supreme Truth rather than an identification with It. He limits himself to replace the Islamic term Allāh Ta’ālā with that of paramātmā, a fact that shows the still relatively considerable adherence to many of his shaikh’s Sufi teachings, although these already begin to reflect his own Hindu heritage.

These descriptions develop along the lines of the Mujaddidī doctrine, but maintain throughout the Hindu perspective

267. AV, p. 139.
regarding the quality of this stage of realisation. Rāmcandra here distinguishes two types of ‘bewilderment’, the ‘contemptible bewilderment’ (ḥairat-i madhmūm), typical for the state of stupor when something goes beyond the comprehension of our mental capacity, which is considered negative and is found among the common folk (al-‘awāmm), and the ‘commendable bewilderment’ (ḥairat-i mamdūḥ), which is considered positive and is limited to the elite among the saints, as a sign of reaching the stage when the limits of knowledge are transcended.

Such a perspective fits well into Rāmcandra’s joint Mujad-dī-Vaiśṇava perspective and reflects the natural affinity between the point of view held by the viśiṣṭādvaita on one side and the wahdat al-shuhūd on the other. Far from rejecting the validity of knowledge (jñāna, ma’rifat) as a means of access to the higher degrees of spiritual identity, both propound a relatively dynamic concept of the ultimate Truth. They, thus, retain a certain degree of difference in union which sanctions the superiority of completely selfless devotion to and meditation on the Supreme Object of worship and service to the world over the purely contemplative attitude assumed by the kevalādvaita and the wahdat al-wujūd.
The death of Rāmcandra Saksenā in 1931, followed by that of his younger brother Raghubar Dayāl in 1947 marked the end of the first generation of Hindu authorities affiliated jointly to the Mujaddidiyya Māţhariyya and the Kābir-panth. Thereafter, the responsibility to face the numerous challenges arising from the generational passage was left to their disciples and designated successors. The main line of succession focussed around the authoritative figure of Bṛj Mohan Lāl, the eldest son of Raghubar Dayāl and his chief khalifa at Kanpur and Lucknow, and apparently proved stable enough to provide his satsang with a cohesive energy for the next decade. But it was among the early members of Rāmcandra’s satsang at Fatehgarh that the seeds of schism were sown ready to emerge after their master’s death. In contrast to the pattern followed by their predecessor, most of these newly emerged leaders did not maintain a close relationship with the contemporary Muslim authorities of the silsila but began to claim independent authority on their own. Their effort to institutionalise their satsang by expanding it into a widely recognised spiritual mission with different headquarters across India and abroad has often been accompan-ied by the increasing tendency to omit any explicit mention of the sādhanā’s Islamic origin, and to lay instead greater emphasis on the enduring strength of India’s indigenous spiritual traditions.
From the written sources left by Rāmcandra we know that he was well aware of and extremely concerned about the latent danger of the sādhanā’s fragmentation among his chief disciples after his departure from this world. In one of his writings, he complains:

. . . Sincerely, until the present day this humble one has not been able to comply fully with the methods and determination needed to fulfil the task entrusted to him, but certainly my heart acknowledges them. Unfortunately, among my friends and dear ones and all those who have accompanied me on this path there is not a single person endowed with the required determination and qualification to accept and acknowledge the importance of the tenets of this new path. . . . I consider it as my own utter failing that until now I have never presented them with any textual support [regarding the path], delivering all my teachings orally according to the circumstances. I do not know who among my intimate disciples has accepted and understood them and to what extent they have done so. . . .

Conscious of the absence of a worthy successor in the intimate circle of his disciples, Rāmcandra did not apparently appoint a chief khalīfa, but handed over responsibility for the surveill-ance and organisation of his satsang partly to his younger brother at Kanpur, partly to his only surviving son Jag Mohan Nārāyaṇ at Fatehgarh. Among other close disciples who had joined Rāmcandra’s company during the early stages of his mastership, four appear of particular importance for the ongoing history of

2. This is clearly stated in Rāmcandra’s testament (*wasiyat-nāma*), written in October 1930 and handed over to his son a few days before his death (cf. *JC*, pp. 432-5). A copy of this manuscript containing the master’s last will adorns nowadays wall of the room where the daily *satsang* of Omkār Nath takes place in a part of the fragmented Raghubar Bhavan at Kanpur, as if to legitimise outwardly his claim to successorship.
The Emergence of Regional Hindu Sub-branches

the lineage. Each of them has perpetuated the tradition inherited from their gurudeva in a particular way, and provided it with the institutional fundamentals which have turned these newly emerged satsangs or ‘missions’ into widely acclaimed spiritual centres attracting people of all ages and from different social backgrounds.

A common characteristic one can observe among these sub-lineages is the process of accentuated Hinduisation of both the doctrinal background and the methodology of the Sufi tariqa accompanied by the gradual omission of any mention of the Islamic origin of the spiritual treasure from which it has drawn so many aspects of its teachings. This tendency of gradual absorption into an indigenous background has been a typical phenomenon of Indian culture since ancient times and shows the extreme vitality of the subcontinent’s spiritual heritage which, although undergoing numerous formal adaptations, has survived in multiple facets largely unperturbed in its essential features by the influences of modernity. The present study, therefore, concludes with a brief glance at the four branches of the Hindu Naqshbandiyya which have developed from the four disciples of Râmendra just mentioned. An attempt is thereby made to describe the lines along which each of these developed, trying to single out distinctive elements and the underlying common ideological framework that have accompanied the rise of these independent branches of esoteric instruction.

Mathura: Personal cult or pathway towards liberation?

One of Râmendra’s oldest and closest disciples was Dr. Caturbhuj Sahāy who first met his master as early as 1910, reportedly on the banks of the Ganges at Fatehgarh while he was in the company of Svāmī Brahmānanda. Caturbhuj Sahāy was born on 3 November 1883 at Chamkara village in the Etah district of western Uttar Pradesh in a pious Kāyastha household. His father held the rank of superintendent of village accountants (qānūn-go) in the colonial administration of the British Raj. However, following the death of his parents that left him an orphan at the early age of fourteen, he was brought up by his
maternal grandparents at Fatehgarh. After a standard education in Arabic, Persian and English, he later pursued his higher studies in Hindi and Sanskrit before enrolling and graduating as a medical student at Agra Medical College. Initially a fervent member of the Arya Samaj, he was reportedly soon disappointed by the self-centred policy of its leaders. Turning his back on the Hindu reform movement he fully dedicated himself to exercise his profession as medical doctor in Fatehgarh, where he eventually joined the emerging satsang of Râmendra.4

In 1914, Caturbhuj Sahay received dikṣā into the lineage and after serving his master for several years, he eventually received the full licence (acarya padavi) from him in 1921 and returned to his native town of Etah, where, in the late 1920s, he began to organise his own satsang. On the occasion of Mahāśivarātrī 1930, following the example set by his guru, he celebrated the first bhandārā there in the auspicious presence of Râmendra. Several years later, in 1951, he moved from Etah to Mathura in order to be closer to his numerous followers living in the Braj region that stretches out along the Yamunā river.

The message conveyed through his teachings largely reached the public through the monthly review Sādhanā which continues to be published from the Sadhana Press at Mathura down to the present day (1996), and through a series of works dealing with different aspects of the spiritual discipline promoted by the author. On 23 September 1957, Caturbhuj Sahay died at the age of 74 at his home at Mathura leaving behind his wife, three sons and two daughters. His successors appointed to continue and consolidate his mission from the āśrama at Mathura, include his eldest son Brjendra Kumār Sahay (d.1987), and Paṇḍit Mihilāl (1901-83), a learned brāhmaṇa from Tundla, a small country town near Agra.5 At present, the satsang and the annual

3. LVV, p.172
5. For a brief biographical note on these two figures, see LVV, pp. 262-3, 264-7.
bhanḍārā at Mathura are organised by his second son Hemendra Kumār Sahāy.

**The teachings**

The spiritual discipline (sādhanā) and associated doctrinal background (siddhānta) expounded by Caturbhuj Sahāy are to a large extent explained with reference to the classical texts of the Hindu tradition. The principal sources used for this purpose are represented by the prasthāna-traya which constitute the bulk of scriptural authority of the Vedānta and consist of the major Upaniṣad, the Brahma-Sūtra including the comment (bhāṣya) of its two principal interpreters, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya and Śrī Rāmānujācārya, and finally the Bhagavad Gītā. He explains:

> From the doctrinal point of view, the santmat and their school of advaitavāda coincide with each other. Their difference lies in the practical aspect of the sādhanā. The santmat is based on the balanced equilibrium of the three components of karma, upāsanā and jñāna. Santmat does not reject any activity (karma) related to the discipline of Yoga, ritual sacrifice, acetic exercises and the method of jap, but integrates them with upāsanā and jñāna. . . . The Vedānta prescribes the performance of all those actions which conform to each individual’s nature (svābhāvika karma) and the devotion of the Unqualified (nirguṇa), and considers the devotion of identity (abheda bhakti) as utmost, while refraining from any other ritual activity.6

The methodology proposed by Chaturbhuj Sahāy inserts itself into the technical context of a Yoga-sampradāya. In its central aspects it reverts around the last five stages of the eight-membered (āstāṅga) module formulated by Patañjali in his Yoga-Sūtras and is integrated here and there with those notions derived from the teachings of the Mujaddidī authorities which were considered compatible with those of the sants and their Tāntrik forerunners.

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Compared with Rāmcandra’s apparently simple, often naïve descriptions which are based more on a genuine intuition than on thorough textual erudition, the expositions of Caturbhuj Sahāy show a much greater fluency in style and betray a closer acquaintance with the classical Hindu concepts which is derived from a systematic study of the traditional sciences. Consequently, in most cases Caturbhuj Sahāy replaces the Koranic and Persianate vocabulary used by the Mujaddidīs with that current in the Sanskrit culture, leaving the former unaltered only in explicit references to the methods taught by his master. His most exhaustive opus, comprising seven volumes, is entitled Ṣādhanā ke anubhava (‘The authority of the discipline’) and reflects in its style and content the sound erudition of an educated Hindu. Only here and there do we come across single chapters and sporadic references to the Śūfī doctrines and methods, particularly in relation to the technical aspects focusing on the ‘science of the sound’ and the dhikr. As with Rāmcandra, the theoretical and purely doctrinal background regarding cosmological and metaphysical issues has supplanted the Islamic component resorting to those Hindu concepts regarded by the author as the most suitable for his audience. Well acqua-inted with the sacred language of Hinduism, Caturbhuj Sahāy’s theoretical excursions are often interspersed with lengthy Sanskrit quotations from the sacred texts. However, occasionally a number of Persian and Urdu verses attributed to different Śūfī authorities are integrated in support of these elaborations, thus, aligning him with the pattern of exposition traced by his immediate spiritual ancestor albeit on a minor scale.

In the tradition of his lineage, the Ṣādhanā conceived by Caturbhuj Sahāy lays great emphasis on the devotional element based on the disciple’s love and unconditioned surrender (upāsanā) to the master. Ultimately, the perfection of this inner attitude is said to lead to the union with īśvara and, at a later stage, to identification with the nirguṇa Brahma. While acknowledging the validity of the triple aspects of knowledge (jñāna), selfless devotion (upāsanā) and action in conformity to

7. SkA, p. 37.
the cosmic order (dharma) as expounded in the Bhagavad Gîtā, the superior aspect of this sādhanā is defined by the author as the ‘Yoga of love’ (prem-yoga) and the ‘Yoga of surrender’ (samarpana-yoga), and is conceived as lying essentially beyond this conventional tri-partition.⁸

Through a brief excursion into the process of manifestation (srṣṭi kā pravāha) that draws inspiration from the pañcāgniṇīvidyā and pañcakośa theory described in the Upaniṣad, Caturbhuj Sahāy remains concerned with the description of the path which, if covered in the opposite direction upwards, is said to lead those desirous for knowledge (jijnāsu) back to the original source of immortality and beatitude. Though assuming a prevalently gnostic and devotional perspective in the outlay of his sādhanā, this does not by any means imply that the other traditional branches of Yoga, viz., Haṭha-Yoga, Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga, Laya-Yoga, etc., are not deemed as effective and useful for the progress of the sādhaka. These are rather seen as preliminary stages concerned with the first four sheaths or veils (āvaraṇa or kośa) described by the Maṇḍukya Upaniṣad, viz., annamaya-kośa, prāṇamaya-kośa, manomaya-kośa and vijnānamaya-kośa, all said to pertain to the sphere of the jīvātmā and corresponding respectively to the three kinds of karma-yoga, bhakti-yoga and jñāna-yoga. In an altogether similar fashion to the Ānanda-Yoga propounded by Brj Mohan Lāl Saksenā, the ultimate discipline proposed by the prem-yoga, claims to be concerned primarily with the supra-individual sphere constituted by the ānandamaya-kośa thereby providing the chance to overcome with relative ease this last intermediate stage before reaching the central core constituted by the paramātmā. In view of the great difficulties implied in the first and third type of realisation for the majority of human beings, the author recommends the upāsanā-mārga as the easiest of the traditional paths.⁹

Since this purpose is achieved through the assistance of the spiritual master who constitutes the immediate point of reference and sole object worthy of love and devotion for the disciple, the

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⁸. SkA, p. 10.
The guru–śīṣya relationship occupies with Caturbhuj Sahāy a rank of utmost importance on a par with the pīr–murīdī relationship that developed among the Sūfīs.

\[
\text{na ham hain, na īśvara hai, keval guru hai;}
\]
\[
guru īśvara hai, īśvara guru hai.
\]

Neither ‘I’ nor God, only the master alone exists; he and God are ultimately identical.\(^{10}\)

This relationship develops on three successive levels in accordance with the inner approach of discipleship (śīṣyatva) towards the master. On the first level, the disciple perceives the master in his purely human form while in the awareness that he is not an ordinary human being but endowed with numerous powers and Divine knowledge. At the intermediate level, the master is considered in the likeness of Divinity and finally, at the third stage, the adept experiences the extinction into and identification with the essence of the object of worship (sākṣātkāra) during which it appears to him that it is the Divine blessing (divya kalyāṇa) alone which has enlarged this human shape to his gurudeva. Such an interpretation leads directly to the theory of the avatāraṇa fundamental to the sant-doctrines which provides a fertile ground for the assimilation of concepts encountered both in classical Hinduism and in the prophetology of the Semitic religions hinted at by Mīrzā Maẓhār and further developed by the Hindu masters of our lineage. It explains the increasing importance attributed to the human master in these two esoteric traditions over the past centuries as he is perceived as a living symbol of the realm of the transcendent that represents the latest stage in the development of the spiritual discipline where the shaikh or satguru assumes the role of natural heir of the ancient messengers and prophets or, in a Hindu perspective, Divine descends (avatāra). In this connection Caturbhuj Sahāy affirms:

\[
\text{In past epochs, the paramātmā has enforced the dharma}
\]
\[
\text{by assuming the shape of Rāmacandra and Kṛṣṇa, thus}
\]

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\(^{10}\) SkA, p. 33.
manifesting the unseen in the human sphere. Nowadays, it provides us assistance in crossing the ocean of pain and torment assuming the shape of the guru. He is identical to It. The only difference lies in the fact that It is devoid of form (nirākāra) while he is endowed with form (sākāra) . . . .

Only after the disciple has acquired the awareness of this fundamental truth is he considered ready for official initiation into the order the formal execution of which is still described according to the Mujaddidī way. It is, therefore, not surprising that Caturbhuj Sahāy reiterates in terms very similar to those encountered among Sūfī shaikhs the importance for the aspirant disciple of determining his choice carefully and without haste, in order to avoid the risk of falling prey to the many self-styled gurus who populate every corner of the world. Even after finding the right person, said to be recognised by the infusion of a spontaneous feeling of peace in the heart, the aspirant is advised to refrain from asking immediately to be accepted as disciple, but to wait and observe the master’s habits and attitudes for a while. As in the words of Kabīr,

\[
guru miliyā tab jāniye āpa miṭāi santāp
\]

When the guru comes to you, you will know and get rid of the suffering of the self.  

12. In the chapter on initiation, the author nevertheless distinguishes three kinds of dikṣā: mantra-dikṣā, conferring the ability to handle the outer means of realisation, like the invocation (japa), techniques of ascetics (tapa), the performance of devotional hymns (kīrtana), etc., the second type, referred to as ‘spiritual initiation’ (adhyaṭma-dikṣā), corresponds to the interiorisation of the discipline performed exclusively at a subtle level and, hence, unperceptible to the outside world which implies an inward surrender to the master. The third and most elevated type of initiation, termed ācārya-dikṣā, is reserved to a very limited number of initiates said to be chosen to receive the Divine order of spreading a particular message to the people; for details, cf. SkA, vol. I, chapter 2, pp. 19-27.  
Differing from Rāmcandra and his Sūfī ancestors, Catubhuj Sahāy considers the control, purification and pacification of the mind (fikr), summarised in the Sūfī concept of *tadhkiya-i nafs*, in connection with the ascending phase of the spiritual journey (*ārdhva-gamana*) to be the most immediate priority in his sādhana. In its corrupted, uncultivated state, the mind is considered as the main adversary to the spiritual ascent since it is due to its intrinsic powers that it allures, seduces, tempts and thereby ties the most intimate part of the human being (*jīvātmā*) to the lower relams of the gross world.

... the first enounter that we have to face is that with our mind. The mind is similar to the honey-bee that ... dislikes remaining in its live but desires to run outside covetous to taste the sweet juice of the buds in the form of sensual pleasures ... at one time it is seen sitting on one flower, in another moment it reaches the next leaving the first and then catches hold of the third and so on.\(^{14}\)

These distracting impulses are presided over by the inner mental governor (*antaryāmī*) consisting of a particular type of consciousness which prevents every attempt to escape the enchanting game (*līlā*) and entangling net spun by the subtle internal current to be successful. In the perspective of the monotheistic religions, these powers are personified in the conceptual figure of the anti-divinity personified as *shaitān* or *satan* whereas the Indian doctrines describe it as *māyā* and, with the later *sants*, as *kāla-puruṣa*. As such *māyā* is analogous to the dark, *tāmasik* aspect of the qualified Brahman.

The opposed forces, characterised by *sattva*, which are apt to uplift the human being towards the subtle realms of the spiritual world, are referred to as ‘powers of mercy’ (*dayālu śakti*). Though the medium of the *satguru*, these celestial influences are said to exercise their corrective power on the inner states of the neophyte. This current of grace alone (*kṛpā-dhārā*) is considered sufficient to prepare the disciple for the initial stage

\(^{14}\) Our Yoga Sadhana, Ramashram Satsang, Mathura, n.d., p. 28.
of the discipline constituted by the first stages of the upāsanāmārga which, according to Caturbhuj Sahāy, consist of the three degrees described by Patañjāli as dhāraṇā, dhyāna and pratyāhāra.

Caturbhuj Sahāy describes the difference between this path characterised by elements of utmost devotion and the conventional Yoga disciplines as consisting mainly of the fact that while the latter expect their followers to be capable of strenuous and continuous efforts to achieve the final goal of reacquiring the proximity and finally union with their Lord, the path of devotion is based on the assumption that in reality the Lord resides in the most intimate region of the heart (hṛdaya-deśa), therefore, rendering obsolete any far-fetched research, for example, through the gradual penetration of the entire series of subtle centres located in different parts of the body. Such a position reminds us not only of the language used by the Upaniṣad in regard to the symbolism of the heart15 but recalls also the frequent reference made among Sūfis to the Koranic verse: ‘We are closer to you than your jugular vein’. Unconcerned with the extraordinary powers (siddhi) obtained through the disclosure of the divinities presiding over each of the cakras, the sādhaka who follows this path is promised to reach his Beloved straightaway recognising Him in a first moment in the guise of the exterior guru and later, as he investigates His truth with his interior eyes, in the hidden cavern of his heart.

With the assistance of the spiritual preceptor, the disciple’s aim at this stage consists of detaching himself from the sense of egoism (ahaṅkāra), technically achieved through the transmission of the guru’s flow of grace (tawajjuh) focussed on the disciple’s hṛdaya-cakra, that results in the state of effacement of his perception as a separate individual entity (be-khudī) and eventually culminates in the identification with the immediate point of reference (fanā fi’l shaikh). The familiar Sūfī terminology still used by Rāmacandra with regard to the methodology termed alternatively as fīkr or manana is here entirely replaced by the

Yoga terminology concerned with the more advanced stages of meditation, that is to say dhāraṇā, dhyāna, pratyāhāra and finally samādhi. Based on the sensory introversion and the mental concentration on the heart alone, these stages are described on the base of the elucidations made by the author of the Yoga-Sūtra as gradually leading to the fixation of the thought on the sole goal desired (dhāraṇā) before culminating in the full comprehension and identification with the object of mediation during the stages of dhyāna and nirvikalpa samādhi. 

Following Vyāsa’s comment on the Yoga-Sūtra, the author introduces the five conceptual planes of consciousness inherent to the mind (citta-bhūmi) as instable (kṣipta), obscure (murha), stable-unstable (vikṣipta), fixed on a unique point (ekāgra) and completely restrained (nirodha). While the first three are common to all human beings and result in the incessant production of waves of consciousness of obscure origin and beyond control (vāsanā), the last two states are peculiar to those engaged in the spiritual discipline. All five are put in relation to the three essential qualities that permeate the emanations of the primordial substance (prakṛti).

The primary task of the practitioner therefore consists of a sublimation of these restless and fickle mental states dominated by the two inferior guṇas, viz., tamas and rajas, into those last two planes dominated by peace and beatitude. This goal is achieved through the unification of the thought current (ekāgratā), which is characteristic of the predominance of sattva-guṇa. It is analogous to the perpetual presence (ḥudūr-i āgāhī) described by the Mujaddidī authorities. Only at the very end of every spiritual discipline, when the mind of the sādhaka is completely freed of any activity (nirodha), has the sādhanā properly speaking come to an end. The interior process will now take place entirely on the plane of knowledge. Once even this state is overcome, it will be possible to re-establish the original state of harmony inherent in the triguṇa prior to the process of

17. Ibid., p. 37; Yoga-Bhāṣya by Vyāsa, I.1.
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manifestation (trigunatita), leading back to the unconditioned state or kaivalyavastha that guarantees final liberation (moksha).

The other fundamental means at disposal of the disciple who follows the upasana-marga consist of the technique of the repeated invocation of the Divine name known as nama-japa. In the first volume of his work, Caturbhuj Sahay dedicates an entire chapter to this particular method and the different aspects it involves. Explicit reference to the methodology and terminology used by the Naqshbandi shaikh occupies hardly two out of twenty-three pages that make up this chapter. Notwithstanding the evident attempt to play down the importance of the Islamic tariqqa at the base of the major part of the technical explanations provided in the course of this chapter, his elucidations nevertheless still betray their Mujaddidi origin to those familiar with the descriptions provided by the shaikh.

As with the original teachings of both the Mujaddidiyya and most sant-sampradayas, the two major categories of invocation comprise the vocal one performed with the lips and the tongue and the silent, inaudible invocation performed exclusively on an inner, mental plane. However, the corresponding Sufi concept dhikr-i khafi is introduced only at a very late stage and is a rather marginal way, while the main focus remains centred on the ajapa-japa method current among various Hindu traditions, from the so'ham and the aham brahma smi used by the vedantins to the rama-nama used by many mediaeval north-Indian panths. In a curious contradiction to this tendency, in the midst of an entirely Hindu based exposition of the mantra-vidya, Caturbhuj Sahay distinguishes the two main groups of invocation regarded as suitable for the purpose of illuminating the heart and awakening the subtle centres as dhat and sichati, without, however, making the slightest mention regarding the origin and etymology of the two terms. The first one related to the ‘name of the essence’ (ism-i dhat), is said to consist of the sacred syllable aum as referring to the unqualified Principle of the Veda that refracts itself in innumerable attributes (sifat guna) and forms (rupa) while descending into the world. In principle, the qualified sounds (sabda) derived from it can amount to an indefinite
number. Faithful to the vision adopted in this lineage, Caturbhuj Sahāy deliberately refrains from suggesting any particular name as preferable to another leaving the choice open to every single devotee according to the personal divinity (iṣṭadevatā) adopted for his worship:

Be the name invoked dhātī or śifātī, if it is performed with the right intention (śraddhā) and fastened properly to the mind, both will be surely effective. By whatsoever name we invoke with sincere and determined intention the Lord (bhagavān), no sectarian difference should arise out of this. For the sake of a wholehearted devotion alone they are all equally qualified. . . .

The only thing that matters for the performance of the jāpa is that it regards the field of pure devotion as concerned with the innermost part of the heart and thus directed towards the very core of one’s individual existence that connects one with the superior states of Being. As such it constitutes the most efficacious tool for penetrating the intimate realm of the heart necessary for the awakening of the interior, non-human guru, to whom devotee ultimately surrenders himself. As Lord Krṣṇa says in the Bhagavad Gītā:

yajñānam japa yajño’smi

Among all sacrifices I am the one performed through invocation.

In a fashion similar to the descriptions given by various Sūfī authorities but encountered also among Hindus, the reader is then provided with the description of four different kinds of subtle invocations, the invocation of one, two, three and four syllables (ekamukhī, dvimukhī, trimukhī and caturmukhī japa), referred to by some Sūfīs as ‘strokes’ (darb). The one-syllable invocation, considered as the most preferable and easiest to perform, consists of the mental invocation of the syllable aum. The two-syllable jāpa which reproduces a rhythmical alteration of the two phases

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of breathing, viz., inspiration and expiration, consists for the vedāntin of the syllables so, corresponding to the phase of inhalation, and ham, pronounced during the phase of exhalation. However, the utility of this jāpa nowadays is strongly doubted and therefore rejected as of little use in a contemporary sādhanā.

More importance is attributed to the three-stroke jāpa, consisting according to the method adopted by Caturbhuj Sahāy of the formula aum tat sat. The description of its performance neatly imitates the method current among the Mujaddiddis with regard to the dhikr-i nañī wa ithbāt. It entails the pronunciation of the syllable aum pulling it from the navel up to the top of the head, followed by that of the syllable tat while inclining the head backward slightly in direction of the left shoulder and than impressing with all force the final syllable sat on the subtle heart-organ, located at exactly the same position as that of the lañīfa-i qalb described by the followers of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī.19 This entire process must be accomplished during one complete phase of respiration and has to be kept in rhythm with it. Its correct and prolonged performance is said to result in the illumination of the heart-chamber by the subtle light of consciousness that irradiates from the current of kuññalini-šakti, pulled up along the channel of the suñumnā by the subtle sound-vibration produced through the inner invocation of the syllable aum. Through the numerous subtle arteries (nāñī) that extend from that central organ, this subtle energy charged with the jāpa irradiates to the entire body until every single organ and member is permeated by the primordial vibration contained in the akṣara-syllable. Such a description comes too close to that given by the Naqshbandī authorities of the utmost degree of perfection reached by the technique of dhikr and referred to as sulṭān al-adhkār to be a coincidence. It can be interpreted in all likelihood as consisting simply of a formal substitution of the formula used for that purpose.20

Last but not least, mention is made of the four-faced invocation (caumukhī jāpa). This consists of the fourfold repetition of the name Rām, each corresponding to an expansion into one among the four cardinal points. Its performance, recommended while being posted in the svastikāsana and keeping the eyes shut, requires full concentration on the outer aspect of the spiritual guide while imagining that the paramātmā permeates one all around and inside. The silent invocation of the rām-nām is then directed first towards the right shoulder followed immediately by one on the left shoulder extending over the phase of inspiration. During the phase of exhalation, the jāpa should be directed first upwards to the head, then finally downwards on to the heart. Although here too the master leaves the choice of the name invoked to the preference of the individual practitioner, the rām-nām is described as the most efficacious for this type of performance, in a perpetuation of the tradition current among the Kabir-panthīs.

The Sufi origin of these methods regarding the subtle invocation appears undeniable and is reflected also in the descriptions of the outer conditions to be observed. Their performance is said to be equally efficient while following the discipline of upāsanā-yoga and serves the sole purpose of achieving the fixation of the mind on the Goal and later, through the stage of dhyāna, the encounter (sākṣātkāra) with it. The efficacy of the method is determined by the rhythmic application of the sacred syllable charged with spiritual energy on the different centres of the subtle body independent of the religious context to which the practitioner belongs. With specific reference to Rāmcandra, Caturbhuj Sahāy affirms:

Our Śrī Mahārājī used to instruct me that while practising the jāpa I should first of all preserve the memory of my guru, and than, through the power of imagination acquired by the discipline, pull the Divine radiance of paramātmā in front of me trying to consider myself like a drop in Its endless ocean, and finally with

the help of the satnām imagine to immerse my jīvātmā in the radiant current of Its light. . . .22

In conclusion, in a rare mention of the predecessors in the paramparā, Caturbhuj Sahāy reveals that the method regarded as the most useful by his spiritual perceptor is that of the four-syllable jāpa which he himself had practised for years on the advice of his master Shaikh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān. Preferably, its performance should be accompanied by a series of contingent dietary prescriptions evidently based on the niyama restrictions in the Yoga disciplines. These are meant to alleviate the danger of being affected by the wave of heat produced on the subtle level by the repeated invocation of the satnām that irradiates into the gross body from where it can possibly provoke a psychological unbalance and mental disturbances. The sophisticated techniques of breath-control and breath-suspension that in the past used to accompany both the Sūfī practices related to the dhikr and the respective techniques used by the Haṭha-Yoga are largely abandoned among the masters of this lineage in favour of an increased focus on meditation in line with their more intellectual approach characteristic for the Rāja-Yoga disciplines.

In conclusion of this brief excursion into the teachings of this spiritual authority of the second generation of Hindu Naqshbhandīs it is possible to affirm that notwithstanding the progressive transposition of the sādhanā into a background based on various aspects of the brahma-vidyā, this does not imply a departure from the principles set out by his predecessor Rāmcandra on the base of the Sūfī teachings received from his Naqshbhandī shaikh, it rather illustrates once more the existence of numerous points of contacts between the esoteric disciplines set to meet in the particular context of this study and thereby demonstrates impressively the intellectual liveliness of this contemporary sant-paramparā beyond the delicate moment of transition in the lifetime of Śrī Rāmcandra.

With regard to the adaptations operated by Catubhuj Sahāy

in regard to the ‘ilm-i dhikr, these remain essentially limited to the formal substitutions regarding the Islamic formula of invocation with those current among various Hindu traditions. The following affirmation that concludes the sober and distanced description of the Sufi invocational techniques provided by Caturbhuj Sahāy is a sufficient indication of the reason behind such an attitude:

...jāpa, kīrtana, prāṇāyāma, upavāsa, the awakening of the subtle centres, all these ritual practices can be safely defined as a mixture of elements pertaining to both the Yoga and Bhakti disciplines. They have all been derived from [the sacred traditions] of Hindustān and include their methods which too are extremely similar to those of the Hindus: however, having reflected on the contingent circumstances and their peculiar context, [the Muslim] learned authorities have adapted them to their particular requirements so as to increase the efficacy of their method.23

Shahjahanpur: A universal movement

Another major branch that developed in the course of the second generation of the Hindu lineage within the Mujaddidiyya goes back to Madhe Mohan Lāl alias Rāmcandra Shāhjahānpūrī, a close disciple of Rāmcandra’s who later assumed the same name as his illustrious spiritual preceptor. Born on 30 April 1899 at Shahjahanpur in an affluent Kāyasth zamīndārī family, his father Badrī Prasād, a locally renowned lawyer and special magistrate, was able to offer his eldest son a higher education in law. This was immediately followed in 1925 by his employment at the local Civil Court where he kept working till his early retirement in 1955.24

Rāmcandra Shāhjahānpūrī reportedly met his master for the first time at Fatehgarh in 1922. After having been accepted as his disciple, he remained for many years in close contact with

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24. LVV, p. 218.
his spiritual perceptor mainly through an intense exchange of
letters in which he used to enclose notes made in a diary
describing his inner experiences and spiritual progress. After
the death of his satguru in 1931, he claims to have received hidden
instructions and teachings from him and the spiritual ancestors
of the Mujaddidī silsila according to the nisbat-i ‘uwaysī pattern
until 1955. The spiritual discipline allegedly revealed to him
through this intimate channel of supernatural communication
is described in numerous works whose nucleus consists for the
autobiographical Ātma-kathā published in three volumes.25

In 1945, under the Uttar Pradesh Society Act, he founded
the ‘Sri Rāmcandra Mission’ at Shahjahanpur, allegedly in
memory of his master, with the declared aim of spreading the
universal message he had received from him. Reportedly on the
instructions of his hidden guide, Rāmcandra Shāhjahānpūrī set
out to imitate the example set half a century earlier by Svāmī
Vivekānanda and began to travel extensively around India to
promote his newly established mission, especially in the south.
He also undertook a series of journeys to North America, South
Africa and some European countries where he attracted a
number of Western disciples. His last journey abroad took place
in 1982 when he went to Paris to assist the members of his
satsang there. On his return to India, however, he fell seriously
ill and after a brief admission at the Vivekananda Hospital in
Lucknow followed by a prolonged stay at the All India Hospital
of Delhi, he eventually died on 19 April 1983 and received the
last rites in his native town. There, around the imposing
samādhi-sthāna erected in his honour, a huge and well organised
āśrama complex-cum-mediation centre had been developed under
his directions meant to accommodate the numerous national
and international followers of his newly proposed spiritual
discipline that came to be known under the name of sahaja
mārga.

25. This work was first published in English in 1947 under the title
The Autobiography of Rama Chandra edited in three volumes,
followed by its Hindi version three years later. The source cited in
the context of the present study is based on that English version.
The teachings

Although the sādhanā proposed by Rāmcandra Shāhjahān-pūrī remains in its principals faithful to the ṭariqa of his master, the teachings of this self-styled missionary leader collected in the abundant number of works attributed to him, show more than the texts of any of the rival branches the desire to distinguish itself through the introduction of a number of individual modifications and reformulations. The lines along which these develop reflect a distinctively scientific approach towards the topic indicative not only of the author’s educational background, but they appear to have arisen out of the urgent need to communicate the conceptions peculiar to traditional esoterism to a large international audience strongly influenced by modernity. For this purpose, unique among the authorities affiliated to this lineage, his works have been translated into most of India’s major regional languages as well as into English.

Thus, the inclination towards a self-affirmation as spiritual leader remains palpably present throughout his works. It strangely contrasts with the sometimes exaggerated tributes and homage paid to ‘our great master’ and ‘the spiritual genius’ Rāmcandra Fatehgarhī, to whom the introduction of this method of spiritual training is said to be entirely due.26 The way he describes the purpose of the mission established by him reflects the general attitude assumed by its founder throughout.

Shri Ram Chandra Mission was established at Shahjahanpur (U.P.) on 31st March 1945 in memory of this great personality [Śrī Rāmcandrajī], by me as his successor, through his grace; and slowly it is attracting the seekers of Truth from everywhere. I am happy that the Master’s grace is working in this respect and people are attracted to benefit from his grace.27

Under the new name of sahaja-mārga, Rāmcandra Shāhjahān-pūrī has formulated a spiritual discipline assertedly based on his own personal experience ‘irrespective of what Śrī

Śaṅkarācārya, Śrī Rāmānujācārya and others might have said about their own’. Its principal aim consists of providing means of spiritual self-realisation and the awakening of the ‘sleeping masses to Divine consciousness’. One of the most important outer features of this sādhanā is said to consist of the possibility to follow it in conjunction with the normal worldly life of the common man, that is to say in the grhaṇaṣṭha-aśrama while keeping in mind both factes of life, the worldly and the Divine.\(^{28}\)

To achieve successfully the primary objective consisting of the state of detachment from worldly bonds (vairāgya) and considered in the Vedāntic context of the ‘fourfold discipline’ (catuṣṭaya sādhanā) that follows the gnostic stage of discrimination (viveka),\(^{29}\) it is claimed that the ancient mechanical methods involving forced austerity and penances (tapas) must be set aside and replaced by more simple and natural means. For this purpose, the sahaja mārga is defined along the lines of Rāja-Yoga, enriched with ‘certain amendments and modifications to purge out superfluous elements from that system’.\(^{30}\)

Following the overall pattern of the lineage, the practical aspect of the sādhanā is based mainly on the master’s support meant to assist the sādāka in awakening his latent inner forces and to direct the flow of the Divine current (daivik dhāra) through his spiritual power transmitted by the yogic process of prāṇāhuti or transmission of vital energy to his herat, obviously intended as the Hindu equivalent of the Sūfī concept of tawajjuh. Thus, once more one of the most distinctive features of this discipline remains the shifting of the active task from the disciple to the master who alone bears the responsibility for starting his protegé’s inner path of realisation.

The repeated stress on Rāja-Yoga encountered here as among all authorities of the order underlines the importance of the purely interior, that is to say mental and intellectual, practice pursued in this sādhanā. It focusses on the meditative aspect of the discipline rather than attributing any major significance to

\(^{28}\) Sahaja Mārga Philosophy, p. 46.

\(^{29}\) Satya kā udaya, Shāhjahānpur, 1993, p. 98.

\(^{30}\) Sahaja Mārga Philosophy, p. 52.
outer rules and regulations since these are regarded as separative and, therefore, inappropriate for the universalistic approach envisaged by the propagators of the cultural joint-venture represented by all these lineages. Certainly, in some measure this attitude arises out of the need to propose a methodology that owes many of its ingredients to an Islamic ṭarīqa which, in order to remain applicable to a largely non-Muslim following, had to cast aside the specifically Islamic elements which could not easily be shared by those unfamiliar with this background, focussing instead on the inner aspects of the discipline that claims to transcend formal religious divisions. The nirguṇa-current represented within Hinduism by the mediaeval sants, whose approach towards the Divine realities was supposedly based on the metaphysical doctrines of the Vedānta, and the Tantravāda, furnished the ideal frame-work for such a renewed attempt of cultural symbiosis. Its actuality in modern times shows the existence of a continuous thread of thought that links the medieval sants with the heirs of Shāh Fadl Ahmad Khān and his Hindu disciple Rāmcandra Sakṣenā. Following the pattern of gradual replacement of the doctrinal background developed around cosmological and metaphysical theories set out by the first generation of Hindu Naqshbandīs, it, comes therefore, as no surprise if all successive attempts to absorb the methodology of the Mujaddidiyya into a Hindu context insert themselves quite naturally into the intellectual terrain of Rāja-Yoga, for that the ‘royal discipline’ owes much of its conceptual approach to the Vedānta in its largely intellectual approach towards the goal of union with the Divine and liberation (mokṣa) from the tedious cycle of birth and death sanctioned by the samsāra. Thus, in an attempt to shape a coherent and homogeneous body of teachings, the technical terminology employed in the formulation of Vedānta and sant doctrines are extended to the exposition of the methodological aspect of the sādhanā.

According to Rāmcandra Shāhjahānpurī, the sādhanā consists primarily of the heart-meditation, pursued with the aim of attaining to that ultimate state or central point (kendra-bindu) considered to be the seat of the ādīguru that constitutes the
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primordial cause (ādi kāraṇa) of creation in which everything will be reabsorbed after the dissolution of the universe (mahāpralaya). Meditation (dhyāna) and the gathering of thought on one single point (ekāgratā) is recommended in order to achieve the return to an embryonic and seminal condition by reversing the process of creation (sṛṣṭi) reverting to the primordial state of dissolution (laya, fana). The constant practice of this method is said to allow the abhyāsi to penetrate through the indefinite number of subtle layers that have developed through the incessant series of mental impressions (saṃskāra) in the course of each cycle of existence around the uncontaminable nucleus of the ātmā residing in the heart. Aided by the steady supervision and assistance of the satguru, this practice will lead the initiate back to the source of the primordial stirring thought (upādāna, kṣobha) that brought the present world into existence.³¹ It will eventually guarantee the attainment of sākṣātkāra (lit. what causes to be visible before one’s eyes), considered to be the final degree on the path of realisation. This term, frequently encountered among the Hindu authorities affiliated to the Mujaddidiyya, is taken from the technical vocabulary of Śrī Rāmānujācārya and compares very closely to the Mujaddidi concept of muṣāhada or ‘direct vision’. It thereby combines, at least in its technical formulation, the shuhūdi point of view inherited from the paramparā’s Muslim ancestors with that held by the viśiṣṭādvaita, which maintains even on the highest stage of realisation the ultimately unbridgeable difference between the immanent subject that contemplates and the absolutely transcendent Object contemplated.

Ranking as seventh among the eight members described by Patañjali’s asṭāṅga-yoga, dhyāna constitutes the starting point of the discipline taught in this branch while, in consonance with the Naqshbandī path, all preceding degrees are considered to fall automatically into the lap of the earnest practitioner, thus, saving him a lot of time and effort. Through this interior process, it is believed that the rightly guided initiate is directed by the

four landmarks of the Vedānta doctrine, termed discrimination and right cognition of the Truth beyond the numerous forms assumed by the veil of māyā (viveka), the detachment of the senses from and inner indifference towards everything except that one permanent and unchanging reality (vairāgya), the various degrees of concentrating and meditating on the sole desired Object (śama, dama, uprati, titikṣā, śraddhā and samādhāna), and finally the desire of a direct partaking at the supreme Truth (mumukṣa). This last step is traditionally described as the crowning of the ancient process obtained after successfully going through the three preliminary degrees of enquiry. However, the modern method (paddhati) described by Rāmacandra Shāhjahānpurī differs from this perspective. It does not consider the succeeding degrees of the eight-membered Yoga as separate from each other but includes the right positioning meant to confer stability to the body (āsana), the control of conscious breathing (prāṇāyāma) the concentration on a single object (dhāraṇā), deep meditation (dhyāna) and the condition of perfectly equiliberated enstasy (samādhi) in the practice of innermost meditation (antargata dhyāna) in its fold.32

The highest degree of realisation consists, however, in conformity with Patañjali, in the state of samādhi and ekāgratā which is divided into three stages. The first, termed ‘differentiated self-revelation’ (samprajñāta samādhi) corresponds to a state of self-effacement in which all senses and sentiments (bhāva) are dissolved in a sort of deep sleep that leaves no awareness of any object in the individual consciousness. This state is analogous to that described in Sūfī doctrine as fanā. The second stage referred to as ‘non-differentiated self-revelation’ (asamprajñāta samādhi) is described by this master as a ‘state of consciousness in unconsciousness’ in which the initiate though completely focussed on one single point (ekāgra-citta), reacquires a partial awareness of his surroundings. This second type of samādhi is described as similar to the awareness a person deeply immersed in the reflection on a particular problem maintains of the surrounding environment while walking along a busy road,

32. Satya kā udaya, p. 105.
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thus preventing him from suffering a bad accident. The third and most advanced degree of ekāgratā is termed sahaja samādhi and represents an innovative addition to the traditional teachings. At this stage the initiate remains fully aware of his actions and the mind is yet again focussed on the surrounding environment while remaining firmly present in the real object of Truth. Its lower consciousness returns to the outer world while its higher consciousness remains with the Divine. Apparently, its perceptions (pratyakṣa) are involved in the affairs of the ephemeral world, but in reality it is detached from it all, remaining permanently in a state of sublime samādhi.

This description shows evident affinities with the Mujaddidī concept of ‘supreme negligence’ (ghaflat), characteristic of the saints considered as ‘real heirs of the prophets’ who, in a vision superior to the ‘saints living in seclusion’, dedicate their attention to the rectification of their fellow human beings themselves staying on a degree that allows them to act in this world while remaining permanently connected with the superior abodes of the Divine. Such a saint is said to have penetrated to the very centre of the ‘knowledge of the quintuple fire oblation’ (pañcāgniṇīdī) described by the ancient wisdom of the Śruti.

To those who have attained to such a degree of knowledge is unfolded in a natural manner the innate wisdom (sahaja jñāna) of the distinctive knowledge of the elementary world (bhautika vijnāna), which . . . they can employ according to their desire.33

Those who are granted the privilege of attaining to such a lofty station are comparable to the ancient seers of the golden age, the ṛṣis, whose field of activity compares on a smaller scale to that of the gods and whose degree (pada) is referred to as Vasu. These ṛṣis, originally seven in number like the stars of the great bear (saptarṣi), show numerous similarities to those elevated beings who, in the hierarchy of Islamic spirituality, are described

33. Satya kā udaya, p. 107. This concepts resembles very closely to the description given by the Mujaddidis of the ‘journey through the things of the world’ (sair dar ashiyā), corresponding to the highest stage reached by the ‘perfect heir of the prophet’.
as the poles of the seven climates (tabaqāt) responsible for maintaining the cosmic order in each of these regions. Above these lies the polar abode of the dhruva inhabited by those who, classified as munis, are said to possess the knowledge of the entire brahmāṇḍa-mandala. Their field of activity is even more extensive and their duty consists of maintaining the purity of the atmosphere (vātāvaraṇa) from all impure influences liable to bring disorder into this world. This state is said to be attainable through the illumination of the innermost space or ‘hylem shadow’ (sic!) of the heart.

Further up in the spiritual hierarchy, Rāmacandra Shāhjahānpurī places the ‘Lord of the pole’ (dhruvādhipati) and director of the poles’ activities. This state is reached after acquiring control over the navel-point (nābhi-bindu). Acting again under the authority of and in harmony with the universal nature (prakṛti), their sphere of activity comprehends the entire universe (viśva) including the safeguard of its spatial extension.

One of the most sublime places in this hierarchy is held by the pārśada whose intervention into the cosmic order is said to be rendered necessary only under very particular circumstances, including devastating wars such as Lord Rāmacandra’s victory over Rāvaṇa and the battle of Kurukṣetra34 or other important events in the development of the cosmic manifestation. The pārśada co-ordinates the actions of all these subordinate governors, limiting himself to a silent presence beyond the sphere of action. The perfection of this sublime stage is related within the microcosmic context to the sahasra-dala-kamala-bindu situated at the very top of the skull.

On top of the entire spiritual hierarchy Rāmacandra Shāhjahānpurī places the mahāpārśada, a rank very rarely conceded to anyone. He is said to intervene only in those extremely uncommon cases in which violent changes are due to occur in the destiny of the world. As he who detains the supreme power, the centre of its energy lies within the microcosm slightly at the right of the occipital bone at the very top of the head.35

34. Satya kā udaya, p. 112.
35. Rāja-yoga kā divya darśana, p. 32, diagram No. 5.
The description of these spiritual degrees, again claimed to be derived from the secret doctrine of Rāja-Yoga, represents a very interesting addition to the notions already disclosed by Rāmcandra and constitute a curious parallel to the spiritual hierarchy known to Islamic esoterism, while is said to overview the destiny of the Universe.\(^\text{36}\) It constitutes one of the most stimulating contributions made by this authority towards the understanding of the spiritual position held by the masters of this spiritual lineage and evidences the depth of the traditional roots at the base of a sādhanā which claims to supplant the old arrangements with a new one granted by the Divine power (īśvariya śakti) to the present humanity in the wake of a period of destruction which will show itself in the light of striking events that are soon to come. The central theories of the path presented by this somewhat eccentric personality, thus, integrate themselves into the mainstream attitude and positions of the lineage inherited from his illustrious predecessor, although the desire for creating an individual imprint on the world vision to which his path proposes itself to respond shine through in the emphasis laid on the redemptory significance he attributes to the mission at Shahjahanpur established by him. In this sense, however, the notions regarding the final dissolution of the universe (mahāpralaya) and its relation to the movement of the polar star (dhruva tārā) lead us to the belief that notwithstanding the personal ambitions of some of these authorities, they still represent an extremely stimulating spiritual lineage concerned with some of the most delicate aspects of the sacred knowledge, that is to say the knowledge regarding the modalities that govern the cosmic cycle.

**Sikandarabad: santmat or taşawwuf?**

The headquarters of this branch in proximity to the capital Delhi was established by Dr. Kṛṣṇa Lāl Bhaṭnāgar, yet another member of the Kāyasth community who became one of the most intimate disciples of the Saksenā saints at Fatehgarh and Kanpur. Born

\(^{36}\) For a detailed account of the single degrees comprised in the spiritual hierarchy of Islam, their role and function, see M.E. Blochet’s work *Études sur l’ésotherisme musulmane* (1979).
on 9 October 1894 in the small town of Sikandarabad in the Bulandshahr district of western Uttar Pradesh as the eldest son of a public officer of the Public Works Department, Bhagawat Dayāl Bhatnāgar, he belonged to a wealthy family holding regular ties with the Rādhasāmī satsang. His paternal grandfather, Vṛṣabhānū, had been initiated by the second Rādhasāmī master, Rāy Sahib Śāligrām, a pact later renewed also with Śrī Sāwan Singhjī, establisher of the order’s Punjābī branch at Beās. Following this tradition, his parents had both made their vow of allegiance to these masters, and this contributed to the devotional atmosphere of Kṛṣṇa-bhakti in which the young Kāyasth was to grow up.

Due to his father’s posting at Fatehgarh, Kṛṣṇa Lāl spent most of his youth in that town attending the local schools for his primary education. His first encounter with Rāmacandra reportedly occurred in 1914 in the local Exchequer Office (khazānā) where his future gurudeva was employed as an officer. Some nights later, the master repeatedly appeared to him in a dream invoking the names of Allāh, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa and calling the young student to his feet. Although initially reluctant to grant immediate initiation to his newly arrived devotee, on the insistence of the latter this was eventually conceded in that same year, followed in 1915 by the license to organise his own satsang.

In 1916, Kṛṣṇa Lāl was married to one Candra Devī with whom he was to have three sons and two daughters. After a few unsuccessful attempts to earn his livelihood running a small shop and working as a clerk in a local school, in 1919 he enrolled at the Agra Medical College from where he successfully graduated three years later. During that period he was granted full license (ijāzat-i tā’amma, pūrṇa ācārya padvī) and appointed as khalīfā-i khaṣṣa with the mission to spread the lineage’s message.

After being employed for a short while in government service Kṛṣṇa Lāl resigned from that position and began to run a small clinic in his ancestral hometown of Sikandarabad,
where he was to remain for the rest of his life participating in the town’s worldly and social life as well as attracting many of his fellow-citizens to the spiritual path propagated from his satsang. In his role of medical adviser he continued to serve his master Râmcandra and, after the death of the latter, he took care of his younger brother Raghubar Dayâl alias Câcâjû. Constantly engaged in the task entrusted to him by his spiritual predecessors, he founded numerous centres of spiritual teaching around northern India, including Baksar in Bihar, Gorakhpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bareilly, Ghaziabad, Kasganj and Roorkee in western Uttar Pradesh and Alwar and Jaipur in Rajasthan, In 1951, he met Sardâr Kartâr Singh Dhîngrâ (b. 1912) appointed shortly before the master’s death as one of his successors who guides till the present day a small satsang at his residence in the Paharganj area close to the New Delhi railway station.37

From 1958 onwards, while staying at Gorakhpur, Krâsna Lâl established an intimate relationship with Dr. Akṣay Kumâr Banerjî, than principal of the local Mahârâna Pratâp Degree College and the author of a series of authoritative books on Hinduism and Tantrism. He instructed the Kâyasth master in the knowledge of the Veda and the Mîmâmsâ while accepting him as his spiritual guide.38 Among other main successors and heirs appointed by Dr. Krâsna Lâl were his son Dr. Hari Krâsna Bhatnâgar (1923-87), who took over the responsibility for his father’s satsang at Sikandarabad,39 Dr. Sewatî Prasâd Sahâwarî

37. For a short biographical introduction to this authority whose satsang I was able to attend for sometime during my sojourn at Delhi, see LVV, pp. 272-3.


39. For a biographical survey of him, see LVV, pp. 268-71. At present, the local satsang and the annual bhaṇḍârâ are organised by his eldest son Dr. Narendra Bhârati, who also runs the small family-run clinic first established by his grandfather. To him I am indebted for furnishing me much information about his grandfather’s activities and teachings during my stay there from 14-16 February 1996.
(1899-1989) at Kasganj (district Etah), Dr. Śyām Lāl Saksenā (1902-87) at Ghaziabad\(^{40}\) and Dr. Brijendra Kumār Saksenā (b. 1938) at present Professor of Physics and Engineering at Roorkee University (district Saharanpur).\(^{41}\)

Apart from a limited amount of writings concerned with his teachings, Kṛṣṇa Lāl began to publish from 1953 a monthly review under the title Rāmsandeśa (‘The message of Rāma’) containing a range of articles written by himself and by some of his intimate disciples, which was meant to serve as a public organ for the diffusion of the message propagated by the masters. In line with the prevailing custom, he began to celebrate an annual bhaṇḍārā meeting held during the Daśaharā festivities at his residence at Sikandarabad in order to provide an occasion for the members of the spiritual family to gather and meet each other for an exchange of ideas, integrated by a series of speeches delivered by the leading authorities and a series of common meditation sessions.

In 1968, Kṛṣṇa Lāl’s health began to deteriorate and his public appearances were greatly reduced until, on 18 May 1970 (12 Rabī al-awwal AH 1390), he passed away at his home in Sikandarabad.\(^{42}\) There, a commemorative chamber is still used for the daily meditations and devotional singing sessions of his local followers.

**The teachings**

What appears most striking in the teachings of Dr. Kṛṣṇa Lāl Bhaṭṭāṅgāgar is that, unlike the other authorities so far examined, the process of Hinduisation brought forward from both a

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40. For some biographical notes, see *LVV*, pp. 239-40.
42. Interestingly, the biographies of this leader stress the coincidence of this date with the date of death of the prophet Muḥammad. This may lead to the assumption that to some extent the memory of the link with a Sūfī tradition is kept very much alive among the Hindu followers of this sādhanā and reverts some importance beyond the explicit statements made by the other leading authorities in this generation.
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conceptional and a terminological point of view in the second
generation of this lineage occupies with him a far less important
role. Many of the technical terms employed by this authority
either maintain their original Sufi connotation reminiscent of
the Islamic 
, or alternatively propose a choice of both Sanskrit terms and their Arabic or Persian correspondent. This
pattern reflects outwardly the different attitude assumed this
Kajasth master who repeatedly hints at his spiritual connection
(nisbat) as going back to the messenger of Islam and
fountainhead of the spiritual lineage he had inherited from his
satguru.

Recognising the close relationship between Islamic 
and Hindu 
, Krśna Lāl and some of his close disciples
have tried to identify some of the doctrinal elements common to
both 
 and the 
, proposing a vision of the
saḍhanā that is declaredly based on the integration of both
traditions. This integrated version finds its expression in the
formulation of the seven steps (manzilät, sopān) of realis-ation
also referred to as 
 or 
. These seven
steps or degrees are identified as the following:

(1) the desire of knowing the Truth (ṭalab, jijñāsā)
(2) devotional love (‘ishq, upāsanā)
(3) knowledge (ma’rifat, jñāna)
(4) the perception of Divine unity (tawḥīd, ekabhāva)
(5) indifference (istighnā, uparām)
(6) annihilation of the ego (fanā, laya)
(7) permanence (baqā, pūrṇajīvan)

The first degree, termed ṭalab or jijñāsā, is described as similar
to the innate desire of the new-born baby to suckle milk from
his mother’s breast in order to be nourished, and crying if
prevented from reaching this goal. Provoked by this call, his
mother, in a gesture of pure love (‘ishq), offers him her breast by
which the child recognises her out of innumerable women as his

43. Dr. Krishna Svarup, 
, Ramashram Satsang Prakashan, Sikandarabad, 1959,
p. 11.
mother. This is knowledge (ma‘rifat). Sucking eagerly the milk from the mother’s nipple, both the mother that nourishes and the baby that is nourished, are so strongly attracted to each other as to become like one, inseparable from each other. This state of naturally belonging to each other without reflecting upon it is termed as tawḥīd.  

Clearly, the baby of this metaphysical image corresponds to the neophyte and the mother to the spiritual master without whose assistance it remains an extremely arduous, if not impossible task to achieve any spiritual growth. Again, the master’s vital role in guaranteeing the disciple’s progress in the sādhanā, is depicted, as a prerogative that is shared not only by the representatives of Islamic esoterism but also by those of Hindu spirituality where it found its expression in the adaptation of the devotionally oriented sants of mediaeval India whose legacy our present-time masters assert to represent. Hence, the reference to Kabīr’s message expressed in the following verses that hint at the stage described in the Sūfī doctrines as ‘self-extinction in the master’ (fanā fi‘l-shaikh):

\[
\textit{jab main thā tab guru nahīn, ab guru hain main nāya}
\]
\[
\textit{prem galī ati sānkarī, yā men do na samāya}
\]

When only I existed, there was no master, now only the master exists and I am no more

United through the narrow path of love like a small chain, oh none of us two did subsist

The second degree of realisation, reached after the search for the true master is met with success, consists of passionate and selfless love for the world and its Creator (‘ishq, upāsanā). If arising out of the knowledge that every action of God is accomplished independently and unselfishly, it ultimately leads to the selfless service (niṣkāma sevā) of every single creature.  

The source of this infinite current of love consists at first of the figure of the spiritual guide to whom the disciple must learn to

44. Faqīron kī sāt manzilen, pp. 20-1.
surrender. But on a more advanced level, once he has penetrated the veils that cover the true light of his heart, it will be the interior master through Whom the initiate, assuming the role of heir of the great Divine descents (avatāra) of the past, will be pervaded by selfless love for the surrounding creatures. He will spare no effort to let them participate at the Truth through the path which shines through them and illuminates their immediate environment.

Such a description makes once more clear how the Kāyasth authorities of this lineage integrate the Hindu perspective of the Divine avatāraṇa smoothly with the position assumed by the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya which considers its great authorities as real heirs of the last Divine messenger. In the same way these contemporary Hindu sants consider themselves as the heirs of Lord Rāma or Lord Krṣṇa who, followed by either the Buddha, Muhammad or the Christ, have concluded the cycle of godly envoys sent down to earth in order to re-establish the Cosmic dharma shaken from time to time by the state of disorder created by an imbalance between the major tendencies inherent in Divine manifestation.

The third stage listed by Krṣṇa Lāl corresponds to knowledge (‘irfān, jñāna), metaphorically considered as the fruit growing on the spiritual tree whose root corresponds to the desire to know and whose trunk is put in relation with the application to a means to acquire this wisdom. Associated with the Sūfī trilogy of shari‘at, ṭariqat and ḥaqiqat, or with the alleged Hindu equivalent described in the Bhagavad Gītā as karma, upāsanā and jñāna, knowledge is said to bear a close relation with the intellect (‘aql or buddhi) and ranks, therefore, highest among these three degrees. Its most sublime level regards of the knowledge of the Essence (‘ilm-i dhāt) that provides the answer to the fundamental question ‘Who are You?’ or ‘Who am I?’ But, it is stressed in reality, knowledge is nothing but the result of the previously achieved direct vision of the primordial origin residing in the most intimate part of the heart, beyond the states described in the Upanisad as ‘state of awareness’ (jāgrta-sthāna) and ‘state of dream’ (svapna-sthāna) and beyond the Sūfī tripartition of the Universe into jabarūṭ, malakūṭ and nāsūṭ.
Interestingly, this tripartition, already men- tioned by Râmcandra, does not constitute part of the standard Mujaddidî terminology but rather belongs to the terminology used in Qâdirî cosmology and among those orders generally associated with holding a wujûdî point of view. This appears even more noteworthy as the position held by the Kàyasth authorities of this order, although recognising the high rank of knowledge, does not regard it as the highest one obtainable. Following Śrî Râmânujâcârya, and their predecessors in the sant environment they, normally, subordinate it to the stage of pure selfless devotion (upâsanâ). In contrast, Kṛṣṇa Lâl describes knowledge as leading to certitude (yaqîn) intended as the certainty of the Oneness of Reality (tawhîd or ekatâ) which constitutes the immediately following, fourth of the seven stages of realisation, allegedly regarded as highest by the wujûdîs.

In his description of the stage of tawhîd, Kṛṣṇa Lâl asserts that the differences of perspective held by the adherents to the doctrines of dvaitâdvaita, viśîṣṭâdvaita and kevalâdvaita are all equally far from grasping the truth and that the dialectic divergencies in their respective points of view are ultimately illusory. But rather than criticising the specific perspective held by each of these schools the author’s position underlines once more the aversion felt by the masters of this lineage to any sort of purely speculative approach typical for the vedântin. This underlying assumption is equally present in the doctrinal expositions of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindî and his Sûfi heirs, thus, preparing the ground for their position resumed by the Mujaddidîs in the formula hamâ az ost. In the words of Kṛṣṇa Lâl:

. . . pure unity (tawhîd) does not and can never exist. The affirmation of the One always presupposes the persistence of duality. Until the notion of the lover (‘âshiq), that is to say the subject that affirms Unity, and its [complementary] in the shape of the beloved (ma’shûq), subsists, this residual duality will impede the [experience of] pure identity. . . this term reflects a purely theoretical notion that has nothing to do with real Unity . . . Truth (Ḥaqq) is Truth, non-Truth (na-
Haqq) is non-Truth — Divine Unity lies beyond these two. . . .

This simple statement describes in a very succinct manner the position that underlies Krṣṇa Lāl’s doctrinal version, and the unconstrained way in which the technical vocabulary pertaining to both the Mujaddidī and the sants teachings is mixed together in an apparently loose manner betrays to an extraordinary extent the synthetic vision characteristic of the entire lineage. In the specific context of various degrees implied in the notion of tawḥīd, for instance, the author lists four categories current in Sūfī teachings:

(a) tawḥīd-i shārī‘i, described as equivalent to the Hindu concept of karma-kāṇḍa, based essentially on the dogmatic acceptance of God’s unicity (waḥdat) and recognising His transcendence reality.

(b) tawḥīd-i ṭariqatī, described as equivalent to the Hindu concept of upāsanā-kāṇḍa, and further subdivided into two categories, namely tawḥīd-i ‘afālī, regarding the active aspect of the Divine that intervenes in nature, and tawḥīd-i sīfātī, that is to say the awareness that all creatures are characterised by the reflections of the divine attributes.

(c) tawḥīd-i dhātī, i.e., to consider everything as pertaining to the essence of God.

(d) tawḥīd-i ḥaqīqatī, i.e., the individual’s total identification with the Divine.

This list, which clearly betrays its origin in the Mujaddidī concept of the multiple reflections of the Divine, is then associated to the Hindu concepts of (a) sālokya, i.e., to penetrate into the Divine realm; (b) sāmīpya, i.e., proximity to God; (c) sārūpya, i.e., to participate consciously at the numerous Divine aspects; and (d) sāyujya, i.e., to penetrate into and reach identification with God’s essence.

These are identified as four successive degrees of liberation.

46. Faqīron kī sāt manzilēn, p. 60.
(mukti) gradually leading the initiate from a perspective of duality towards the experience of Identity. They can be, therefore, associated with what in the language of the Kabîr-Panthîs and Râdhâsoâmî saints is described as the degree of sun or śûnya, already mentioned in the precedent chapter in the context of Râmchandra’s concepts of the higher stages of being. Interspersed with several sometimes extensive quotations of verses ascribed to Kabîr (but more certainly to be attributed to later members of the Dharmadâsi branch of the panth), the author attributes the possibility to gain access to them as the result of the growing intensity in the guru-śisya relationship which sees the spiritual master as the immediate object of the initiate’s longing and only fix point of reference for attaining to the primary level of tawḥîd which culminates in the state of ‘self-effacement in the master’ (fanâ fîl-shaikh).

Once this primary goal is achieved, the spiritual traveller has reached the fifth of the seven stations, termed according to the vocabulary used by Islamic esoterism as istîghnâ (lit. ‘non-dependence’) and rendered in a terminology pertaining to Patañjali’s classical Yoga doctrine as nirvikalpa-samâdhi. It is said to bear a direct connection with the previous stage and is defined as a deepening of that one, hence also identified with the state of savikalpa-samâdhi. The initiate who has attained to this degree has effectively reached the identification with the Object sought for (dhyeya) and can, therefore, truly be termed as yogî or Sûfî.

In the technical vocabulary of the santmat this stage is referred to as mahâsun or ‘great emptiness’. Those who have attained to it are given the title of hamsa or even paramahamsa, since, it is asserted, only at this level the entire meaning of what the Sûfis intend with tark-i duniyâ, the detachment from any worldly tie, analogous to the Hindu concept of tyâga, is entirely achieved and the initiate, although apparently related to the world and its objects, is in reality totally independent of it (this being the literal meaning of the Arabic term istîghnâ). To further clarify the idea the underlying this notion, the author cites a beautiful Persian couplet that emphasises the nirguṇa perspective held by him and his predecessors:
A purely interior attitude is assumed by those who have explored the full depth of detachment in their hearts. It is easy to understand that the ideal tyāgī, in the view of our masters, does not comply with the conventional archetype of the Vedic ascetic living a life of hardship and penance in seclusion in a remote place somewhere in the Himālayas or the Vindhya mountains. He is rather identified with the simple and honest householder (grhasthī) who combines the common responsibilities of social life with an inner detachment from all worldly deeds resulting from his proximity to the Divine inside himself. This state of inner beatitude is referred to as sahaja samādhi since it is said to be reached without any need of undergoing painful exercises of renouncement and self-castigation as the natural result of an inner awareness reached exclusively through the surrender to the master’s benevolent flow of spiritual energy.

The next level on the seven-fold path is that termed as ‘extinction’ or ‘annihilation’ (fanā or laya) and said to bear a direct relation with the subtle centre located in the brain, referred to by contemporary sants as bhanwara gufā or the ‘whirling cave’. According to Kṛṣṇa Lāl, rather than merely pertaining to the state of non-existence or non-subsistence of the individual (nīstī) as commonly assumed, it indicates a spiritual state in correspondence to the condition of deep sleep (suṣuptī) in which the heart has returned to its primordial condition prior to its illusory implication in and limitation by the outer objects. This state is said to correspond to sat-cit-ānanda to which some sants refer also as unmanī avasthā. Its negative description as ‘non-being’ or ‘non-existence’ characterises its ineffable nature beyond description.

47. Faqiron kī sāt manzilen, p. 75.
Finally, the seventh and utmost degree contemplated in the perspective of this sādhanā is called ‘permanence’ (baqā), somewhat oddly rendered by the term pūrṇa-jīvana, (the ‘living Principle’) in reference to the ātman, since, in contrast with the previous stage related to what is in fact of a fundamentally ephemeral nature (only thus it is possible to refer to it as something subject to extinction), this stage pertains to a stable and permanent Reality, not subject to any alteration of time and space, neither to birth nor to death, everlasting (bāqī), beyond duality, beyond multiplicity, lying beyond the abodes of the gods. It is said that while It bears no names, all names are comprehended by It. It transcends the alpha and omega of the entire Universe where only Truth (al-Ḥaqq, satya) subsists. Forever hidden to the eyesight, this is the Supreme Principle; he who fully realises It becomes one with It and knows that he has never been separated from It. Birth, youth, adulthood and old age, all this reveals its fanciful truth in a Divine display of the everlasting game of creation, on the unfolding of its possibilities and their reabsorption, both on a macrocosmic and microcosmic plane, which is unreachable even by knowledge. This is the realm of the ātmā, the turīya of the Upaniṣad whose inner reflection lies at the utmost limit of the satyaloka or the dayāla-deśa of the Rādhāsoāmīs.

Delhi: Continuity in diversity

The last authority to be discussed in the context of this lineage is known as Yaś Pāl. Born on 5 December 1918 at Bulandshahr to Sohan Lāl, a head-clerk (munṣarim) at the district’s Judge’s Court, he spent the early years of his life in that town near Delhi before moving to Allahabad for his higher education. After successfully completing his studies there, he joined the P&T Department as a telegraphist and retired from the position of director in the department of telecommunications in December 1976.48

Unlike the other authorities discussed, he was not a direct disciple of Rāmcandra Fatehgarhī but belongs to a yet later

48. LVV, p. 298.
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generation of authorities grown under the leadership of Rāmcandra’s nephew Bṛj Mohal Lāl. Reportedly, Yaś Pal was first introduced to his future spiritual guide by his paternal uncle in 1942, but it was not until four years later while posted at Calcutta, after a traumatic first-hand experience of the outbreak of communal violence there in August 1946 during the events of the ‘Direct Action Day’, that he was reportedly driven towards spiritual life that could ‘rise humanity above its beastly nature’. Later, he was posted at Delhi and, on the suggestion of his younger brother Satya Pāl, began to attend Kṛṣṇa Lāl’s satsang at Sikandarabad. There, in October 1948 during the annual Daśaharā meeting, he was officially introduced to his master and in July 1949 he was granted initiation by Bṛj Mohan Lāl (dādāji), until in June 1951, after ‘merging completely with his gurudeva’, he was granted permission (ijāzat) to establish his own spiritual circle.

After the sudden death of Bṛj Mohan Lāl in January 1955, while posted at Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh), Yaś Pāl was at loss and decided to abandon every responsibility in the sādhanā, However, soon afterwards, assertedly following a dream in which his master appeared to him delivering a series of instructions, he regained confidence and decided to resume his role as spiritual leader. Two years later, he organised his master’s bhaṇḍāra at Bombay, and sometime later he started to run an organised satsang programme at Delhi culminating with an annual meeting, held since 1958 on the day of Rāma-navamī.

Considering himself ever since as the undisputed leader and heir of the entire lineage, in 1969 he laid the foundation for the ‘Akhil Bharatiya Santmat Satsang’ which was officially registered in August of the same year. With a number of smaller centres spreadout all over India, but also in Canada, the U.S.A., the Philippines and the U.A.E., the headquarters of this mission are situated at the master’s residence in New Delhi while the annual bhaṇḍāra is organised at the Anangpur āśrama in

Faridabad district of Haryana, which is spacious enough to accommodate and feed the great number of devotees gathering on that occasion. There, he has established the ‘Shri Brij Mohan School’, recognised up to the eighth standard, where young children are instructed according to the master’s humanitarian ideals.

As considered necessary for a charismatic leader of an institution that claims to promulgate an integral spiritual discipline, Yaś Pāl too claims authorship of a vast range of written works supposedly based on the teachings received from his ‘revered dādāji’, which contain the most important doctrinal guidelines and practical instructions for his followers spread over vast areas of the country. Among these we find Ānanda-Yoga, published in two volumes and available in both Hindi and English based on the instructions of Brj Mohan Lāl the quarterly periodical Sant-Sūdhā, containing various articles in both languages and numerous other booklets including a lengthy comment on the Bhagavad Gītā.

The sādhanā promoted by Yaś Pāl in the name of his guru Brj Mohan Lāl maintains the denomination attributed to it by the son of Raghubar Dayāl, viz., Ānanda-Yoga, the ‘Yoga of beatitude’. Like all the other disciplines in this lineage regarded as the subtle essence of Rāja-Yoga, Ānanda-Yoga claims to suit the needs of our days by eliminating most of the physical exercises hitherto current in most disciplines while maintaining the intellectual perspective held by the Vedānta. It leaves to the master the task of cleansing the disciple’s inner states (antahkaraṇa) from the impurities created by the mental impressions (samskāra) with the aim of taking him to the inner experience of a lasting state of beatitude.

Said to be derived from the brahma-vidyā taught by Mahārṣi Aṣṭāvakra to the enlightened king of the solar dynasty (sūryavamśa) Janaka ‘Videha’ of Maithilī, father of Lord Rāmacandra’s bride Sītā, in the pre-historical period of the dvāpara-yuga,50

50. This idea is further elaborated in Krṣṇa Lāl’s Aṣṭāvakra-Gītāmṛta, first published in two small volumes from the Akhil Bharatiya Santmat Satsang at New Delhi in 1979, which deals extensively
the science and method taught in this mission is not considered a new invention but rather a reintroduction and revival of that ancient knowledge dedicated to the people of India. Most interestingly, the merit of this task is attributed to Khwāja Bāqī Billāh, the spiritual guide of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī who introduced the Naqshbandiyya to the Indian subcontinent in the sixteenth century AD from Afghanistan and Central Asia, thus, establishing a vital link between the ancient Hindu wisdom, Islamic esoterism and the contemporary lineage of ours.

Based on the ideal of leading modern mankind, perceived as increasingly weakened by the impact and comforts of its twentieth-century lifestyle, towards the attainment of the most sublime spiritual states in consonance with the performance of their worldly duties, it proposes itself to bring about the merging of the individual soul (jīvātmā) with the immobile abode (dhruvapāda) of the satpuruṣa through the vitalisation of the spiritual plexuses or cakras.

The frequent textual references quoted in support of the elaborations made in his works apart from the usual sākhīs attributed to Kabīr, are taken largely from the Bhagavad Gītā, reflecting the background of the author’s own religious tradition oriented along the lines of the prevailing devotional current of the nearby land of Braj, the Krṣṇa-bhakti. His sādhanā referred to alternatively as sahaja-mārga, the ‘easy path’, is said to consist of a balance between the three paths described by Lord Krṣṇa in his sermon to Arjuna as the key to a successful spiritual realisation, i.e., karma, jñāna and upāsanā. It is said to lead ultimately to the attainment of the state of sahaja samādhi as the perfection of sincere and selfless devotion to the master, the spiritual ancestors and finally God.\(^5\)

This discipline, for which an intense yearning and whole-hearted devotion are the only necessary prerequisites, is based on the grace (kṛpā) and kindness of the Lord (iśvara), that

\(^5\) with and comments upon some selected verses of the Aṣṭāvakra-Gītā.

crystallises itself in the guise of the real master attracting the chosen ones towards Himself. Acting through the material support of his physical shape, the teacher’s spiritual current (ādhyātmik dhāra) is said to possess such a power of penetration that even the slightest glance conveys into the heart of the aspirant a feeling of immense joy, calmness and serenity (bhakti-bhāva). This transfusion of power is known among the Hindu masters of this lineage as sāktipat.  

The three fundamental ingredients of the discipline’s operational aspect consist of satsang, the company and service of a truly qualified saint, a concept that re-echoes the Sufi idea of suḥbat, besides satnām, the practice of invoking internally the sacred name comparable to the Sufi method of dhikr, and satguru, the affiliation and total surrender to the master, called by the Sufis shaikh or pīr-i kāmil. These three, referred to as the ‘trinity of the path’, constitute the entire edifice of the sant teachings, referred to as santmat, and are complementary to each other.

Since the ancient techniques of Laya-Yoga and Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga that keep in view the awakening of the spiritual centres from the mūlādhāra upwards along the spinal cord, require a strict discipline based on abstinence and contentment (brahma-carya) the prerequisites of which are rarely found among the human beings of the present age and rather irreconcilable with the life of a householder (grhastha), this discipline focusses entirely on the concentration and meditation on the hṛdaya-cakra, seat of the germ from which will germinate the spiritual child under the influence of the master’s current of prāṇa. Nourished and invigorated by the spiritual energy, thus, received, the sādхaka’s prāṇа is lifted spontaneously from the lower regions centred around the seat of the latent power (kuṇḍalini) in the mūlādhāra up to the subtle heart-organ, known by the Mujaddidis as latīfa-i qalb, thereby provoking the rise of a state of spiritual rapture (avadhūta or jadhba).

Only after the completion of this preliminary step, the

initiate is ready to face the challenge of putting his feet on the sulûk which is described unequivocally by Yaś Pāl as the gradual penetration behind the quintuple sheaths listed by the Upaniṣad. The description of each of these five sheaths, however, follows too closely the one given by Rāmacandra to offer any new clues for the evaluation of this method.53

Once reached at this stage, the sādhaka, now guided by the inner master, will be able to concentrate his mind on that single point (ekāgratā) at the centre of his heart from which not only the spiritual light irradiates but in whose continuous palpitation there also reverberates the name of the Supreme (japājapa or dhikr-i qalb) previously focussed on that very spot by the mind’s rhythmic invocation of the sacred syllable (mantra, dhikr-i khaft). This technique, commonly known as sūrat-śabda yoga so important among the Rādhāsoāmis, which leads to the expansion of the subtle sound vibration (āntarik śabda or udgītha)54 from the region of the heart to the entire breast (in exact correspondence to the maqām-i sīna that comprehends the five laṭā-‘if contemplated by the Mujaddidis) lifts the subtle sound vibration upwards towards the ājnā-cakra located somewhere on the forehead between the eyebrows (in correspondence to the laṭīfa-i nafs, known by the followers of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī). The diagram that illustrates the location of the central knots in the human breast reproduces exactly that given by the Mujaddidis, although Yaś Pāl does not nominate any of of these ‘centres’. Far greater importance is ultimately attributed by him


54. The latter term udgītha, as also mentioned at by the author (AnY, vol. I, p. 70), refers to Chāndogya Upaniṣad, I.1-V.5 elucidating the deeper significance of the sacred syllable AUM which introduces every single hymn of the Veda. Acoustically symbolising the Supreme Priniciple, this text recommends its use as the object of meditation of the nirākāra or formless Divinity, for it is directed towards the metaphysical essence of everything including in its fold all the multiple aspects of manifestation. There, hence, results the highly intellectual perspective that lies behind the often repetitive expositions of the masters of this lineage, which draws its ultimate inspiration from the very source of all sacred knowledge in the Hindu tradition, the Vedānta.
to the ājñā-cakra or laṭīfa-i nafs as the passage between the intermediate, individual dominion of the piṇḍa-deśa and the universal realm of the brahmāṇḍa-man.

A particular feature that distinguishes Yaś Pāl’s exposition from that of other authorities in the same lineage consists of the definition of his doctrinal perspective as iti-mārga or ‘path of addition’, said to go back to the teachings of Maharṣi Aṣṭāvakra. These are seen in contrast to the neti-mārga or ‘path of denial and renunciation’ hitherto most currently held by the vedāntin or yogī, that is outwardly manifested through the choice of the state of sādhu. Although the latter is recognised as the shortest way for obtaining the desired results as it absolves the sādhaka from all other objectives but the one, leaving him all energies for the pursuit of the spiritual quest, preference is ultimately given to the iti-mārga which, in contrast, adds to the daily responsibilities incumbent on the householder the quest for the jīvanmukti-avasthā or ‘state of liberation from any bondage while alive’. For the achievement of this objective, two things are regarded as essential: the perpetual remembrance of the Lord (smaraṇa), comparable to the condition of ḥudūr-i āgāhī or perpetual presence envisaged by the Naqshbandī through the dhikr and referred to by the sants as japa; the second, directly derived from the former, consists of the performance nīskāma karma or selfless action which leaves no residual impressions on the practitioner’s subtle state that would condition the projection of his jīva into a future existence. To illustrate this point, the author quotes the well-known verses pronounced by Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna shortly before the start of the epic battle of Kurukṣetra:

\[
\text{tyaktvā karmaphalāśaṅgam nityatrpto nirāśrayah} \\
\text{karmanyabhipravṛtttopi naiva kiñcitaroti saḥ}
\]

Having abandoned attachment for the fruits of action, ever content, dependent on none, though engaged in actions, nothing at all does he do.

— Bhagavad Gītā, IV.20
and also

\[ gatsaṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthitā cetasah \]
\[ yajñāyācaratāḥ karma samagram prāviliyate \]

Of the man whose attachment is gone, who is liberated, whose mind is established in knowledge, who acts for the sake of sacrifice, his whole action melts away.

— *Bhagavad Gītā*, IV.23

Once again one can observe how the original Sūfi methodology is integrated neatly into a Hindu doctrinal perspective without creating any friction between the respective points of view since the role of the heirs of the prophets as intended by Sahikh Aḥmad and his followers, and that of the modern sants who similarly consider themselves as heirs of the divine *avatāra* Rāma and Kṛṣṇa ultimately share the same objective of proposing a spiritual realisation that combines both the attainment of the highest abode for the practitioner while maintaining his responsibility to render selfless service to his fellow human being in communicating him the message of a path open to a large number of individuals even in the final period of the *kali-yuga*.

As it has emerged from these descriptions, the heirs of the tradition begun by Rāmcandra Saksenā and his master Shāh Faḍl Aḥmad Khān continue, each in their own peculiar way, to perpetuate a *sādhanā* that reunites elements based on a mixed Hindu-Muslim background. Faithful to the principles set out by their illustrious predecessors, they all start their elaborations from the common ground prepared by him. Although we can clearly recognise in their expositions a gradual shift towards a more indigenised conceptual background and vocabulary, the Islamic substratum of the Mujaddidi tradition can hardly remain hidden to the attentive observer and illustrates the flexibility of adopting different sacred teachings to a common purpose. This tendency can be partially accounted for by the master’s sounder theoretical acquaintance with the classical Hindu texts borne out of their expressed desire to exalt the ‘glorious spiritual heritage of Hindu India’. Such an attitude reflects to some extent
the changed attitude and the new role assumed by the educated Hindu middle-class since the beginning of the century and in particular after Independence. This is particularly marked in the Kāyasth community which, in a sense, summarises the general pattern of Hinduisation that accompanied the growing feeling of nationalism in India. It reflects the redefinition of the community’s social role over the last one-hundred years away from their loyalty to and collaboration with the Islamic rulers towards their full integration into and identification with contemporary India proud of its deep millennarian culture, claiming their place in modern society. As such, these authorities act as natural vehicles of that peculiar Indian tendency to absorb the impulses and stimuli received from outside and to synthesise them in a fashion which, though reshaping its outer form, leaves largely intact their underlying essence. All four examples, while laying emphasis on slightly different elements in their teachings, reiterate, thus, in great lines the doctrinal outlay proposed by their spiritual guide and can, therefore, rightly be considered in their own way as perpetuators of the modern sant tradition.
Conclusion

The Hindu offshoot of the Mujaddidiyya Mažhariyya which about a century ago began to spread from Fatehgarh and Kanpur across the Ganges plain and adjacent areas is still alive although on a reduced scale. Its period of major glory and force of attraction went from around 1920, when its first and foremost leader Rāmcandra Saksenā began to promote actively the sādhanā, he had inherited from his shaikh and which he further elaborated, to 1955 when Rāmcandra’s grandson Bṛj Mohan Lāl Saksenā died at Lucknow. Since then, a gradual process of fragmentation has allowed the contemporary representatives of this branch to spread the discipline and its connected message to various parts of India and abroad, while at the same time losing much of its inner force and cohesion. This development notwithstanding, some of its leaders in both the spiritual and the genetic genealogies have carried on the gradual cultural assimilation of the original Islamic ṭarīqa into a new Hindu environment in a fashion similar to that which can be observed in other modern sant traditions, such as the Rādhāsoāmī satsangs at Agra and Beas.

In general terms it is possible to affirm that, while the theoretical and doctrinal background of the original Mujaddidī teachings has been largely replaced by those current among the various sant-panths (in particular the Dharmadāsī branch of the Kabīr-panth at Chattīsgarh to which Rāmcandra was affiliated and by Rādhāsoāmī teachings), yet the methods and techniques which make up the practical aspect of the discipline have been left substantially inalterated and therefore remain essentially indential to those used by the Mujaddidīs. Very much a part of the modern twentieth-century sant tradition with its
accompanying component of social reform, Rāmānanda and his successors significantly belong like most of their renowned predecessors to the Vaiṣṇava tradition which is focussed around this divinity’s popular descents (avatāras) Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. Taking into due account the natural formal differences intercurring between the two traditions, these take the central place held by Muḥammad among the Mujaddidīs in both his historical and purely spiritual dimension. Beginning with Mīrẓā Mażhar Jān-i Jānān, some of the leading authorities of the order have cautiously hinted at the underlying parallels subsisting between the Hindu avatara doctrine and the Semitic concept of a series of prophets an law-giving messengers intervening in crucial moments of human history with the task of restoring order among those people who had forgotten their Divine origin. Hence, the major affinity between the prophetical vision of the Mujaddidīs and the Vaiṣṇava environment among Hindus in general and sants in particular.

From the point of view of self-realisation, the perspective held throughout the doctrinal elaborations of the Hindu Naqshbandīs is that of the Vedānta, the most purley metaphysical part of the Hindu doctrine which as brahma-vidyā, goes well along with the gnostic aspect of the Sūfi ‘ilm-i Ilāhī. Here again it appears more than a pure accident that the position assumed by the Mujaddidī sants to a large extent reflects the viewpoint held by Śrī Rāmānujācārya’s Vaiṣṇava viśiṣṭādvaita which agrees much better than Śrī Śaṅkārācārya’s Saiva kevalādvaita with the Sūfi doctrine developed by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī known as waḥdat al-shuhūd. It would be highly interesting to undertake a thorough comparison of the two mentioned Vedānta doctrines, one consonant with a Vaiṣṇava perspective and the other corresponding to a Śaiva perspective, with the two Sūfi doctrines, i.e Sirhindī’s waḥdat al-shuhūd and Ibn al ‘Arabī’s waḥdat al-wujūd.

However, the ‘science of the subtle centre’ or ‘ilm-i laṭā’if, peculiar to the Naqshbandīs and in many respects similar to the Hindu cakra-vidyā common to most Tāntrik doctrines, constitutes a common ground on which Rāmānanda and his successors have built a bridge to link the two traditions.
Conclusion

in both their theoretical and practical aspects. Only at a later stage is the Mujaddid methodology assimilated more clearly to the techniques used by the Yoga-darśana which is defined as Rāja-Yoga in view of its peculiar stress on a purely interiorised discipline consonant with the tendency prevailing also among their Muslim predecessors.

It may, therefore, be conclude that in spite of notable formal differences arising out of the different perspectives held by Islam and Hinduism in general and by the Mujaddidīs and Kabīr-panthīs particular, the example of the lineage of contemporary sants analysed in the present study shows that the apparently most irreconcilable positions held from an exoteric point of view and the different social and ethical circumstances, are nevertheless insufficient to prevent the development of a common spiritual terrain on which an encounter between these two great traditions offers the chance for a real synthesis from above, in the twentieth century just as it did in the fifteenth century at the time of Kabīr.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>abhyāsa</strong></td>
<td>the ‘spiritual discipline’, with emphasis on its active, technical aspect consisting of numerous exercises and inner practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>abhyāsī</strong></td>
<td>the ‘practitioner’, i.e., the initiate who is engaged in the various spiritual practices that are part of the sādhanā.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘aks</strong></td>
<td>‘reflection’, that is to say the image of a higher principle cast on one or more of the lower degrees of reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>akṣara</strong></td>
<td>the unperishable, primordial sound vibration consisting of the syllable om.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘ālam</strong></td>
<td>lit. ‘world, dominion’; in the technical context of the cosmological doctrine of the Naqshbandīs, it denotes one of a series of specific, hierarchical superseding degrees of existence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘ālam-i amr</strong></td>
<td>the ‘world of order’, so-called because it came into being instantly on the single command (amr) of Allāh: Kun! (Be!) (cf. Koran 36:82); it refers to the unmanifested world, situated beyond the ‘Throne of Allāh’ and the barzakh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘ālam-i arwāḥ</strong></td>
<td>the ‘world of spirits’, part of the ‘ālam-i amr; it is said to contain the spirits of all living beings prior to their descent into the realm of creation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **‘ālam-i kabīr** | lit. ‘the great world’, hence denoting in
Naqshbandī cosmology the macrocosm or universe, divided into two hemispheres along the equatorial axis consisting of the barzakh.

‘ālam-i khalq the ‘world of creation’; it constitutes the lower hemisphere of the ‘ālam-i kabīr or macrocosm, the upper hemisphere being constituted by the ‘ālam-i amr.

‘ālam-i malakūt the ‘world of the angels and spirits’; it refers to the subtle dominion within the greater realm of the ‘ālam-i khalq, immediately above the ‘ālam-i mulk and is divided from it by the line of the horizon (āsmān-i duniyā).

‘ālam-i mithāl the ‘world of the archetypes’, part of the ‘ālam-i amr; it contains the celestial archetypes of all those entities that are to be manifested in the course of universal existence.

‘ālam-i mulk the ‘world of dominion’; the term denotes the dominion of the physical world perceptible to the common senses, the gross aspect of creation.

‘ālam-i ṣaghār the ‘microcosm’, that is to say the human being conceived as a reflection of the universe on a minor scale, sanctioned by God’s appointment of Man as his viceregent (khalīfa) in the realm of creation.

‘aql the ‘intellect’; can denote both the universal intellect (‘aql al-kullī) and the individual, human intellect.

‘arsh al-muhīṭ the ‘all-encompassing Divine throne’, the central spot of the universe whence the entire creation came into being by expansion around it, the focal point of the Divine command following the
descent of the order that sanctions the passage from non-being to being.

avyakta

lit. ‘unmanifested’, referring to the realm of non-manifestation; in the cosmological doctrines of the Hindu Naqshbandīs, the term denotes the intermediate degree of the cosmos that constitutes the limit between the seminal or archetypical manifestation and the realm of form; as such, it is put in relation with the barzakh.

a’yān al-thābita

the ‘Divine prototypes’, denoting the images arising in the Divine Intellect prior to their taking shape in the realm of creation.

bai’at

lit., ‘the pact of allegiance’, between the shaikh and the disciple that sanctions the formal initiation into a Sufi ṭariqa.

baqāā

‘permanence’; denotes the state beyond that of the extinction of the individual attributes when the initiate fully adheres to the Divine attributes of his Creator.

barzakh

generally, the term refers to something that intervenes or lies between two entities or dominions, at the same time separating and linking the two; in Naqshbandī cosmology, it denotes the interval and link between the two hemispheres that constitute the universal ‘sphere of Possibility’, the ‘world of order’ (ālam-i āmır) and the ‘world of creation’ (ālam-i khalq); cf. Koran 18:53, where the term is put in relation with the meeting-point of the two oceans (majma’ al-bahrain).

bāṭin

‘the inner’; one of the names of Allāh,
Change and Continuity in Indian Sufism
denotes the hidden, esoteric aspect of His being, pertaining essentially to the metaphysical realm.

*bāz gasht* ‘retreat’; the sixth of the eleven spiritual principal which refers to the technique of the *dhikr*; it denotes the interval in the repeated rhythmic invocation of the *dhikr* to be observed by the initiate; during this pause, the *sālik* is advised to invoke and reflect upon a specific formula of request to God to concede His love and knowledge upon him.

*bhūta* the ‘gross element’; these are traditionally numbered as five: earth (*prthvī*), water (*ap*), fire (*tejas*), air (*vāyu*) and ether (*ākāśa*); the resemblance with the five subtleties of the ‘world of order’ is evident.

*dā'irah* lit. ‘sphere, circle’; the term denotes one major state or degree of being, containing in its fold an indefinite series of further sub-degrees.

*dhāt* the pure essence of Allāh without considering any of His attributes.

*dhikr* lit. ‘recollection, remembrance’; in the technical sense, it denotes a method common to all Sufi orders representing a powerful means of impressing the subtle vibration produced by pronouncing rhythmically the sacred syllables, usually names of God, on the subtle states of the initiate.

*dhikr-i khafig* the ‘hidden invocation’, performed exclusively on the inner, mental plane, not audible to the surrounding world.

*faiḍ* ‘grace’ (pl. *fuyūḍ*); denotes the effusion of spiritual blessings granted by Allāh
to the earnest seeker of Truth as a sign of His mercy.

**fanā**

lit. ‘extinction, dissolution’; an important step on the esoteric path that denotes the overcoming of the most immediate individual limitations in the gradual process of universalisation; the perfection of this process is often referred to as *fanā al-fanā*; an equivalent to *laya* in Yoga doctrines.

**fikr**

lit., ‘thought’; refers to the mental activity in the wider sense; in the technical context of the *tariqa*, the term represents the series of techniques that are concerned with the discipline of the mind, bringing about an increasing capacity of focussing, concentrating, meditating and contemplating a series of Divine aspects until penetrating the inner truth contained in them; as such, complementary to the *dhikr* and the various aspects to this method.

**ghaflat**

lit. ‘forgetfulness’, ‘negligence’; this term can have two connotations: in its inferior sense it refers to the condition of ignorance that characterises the uninitiated common folk unaware of the transcendent principles and inner truth of things, similar to the Sanskrit *avidyā*; in its superior sense, the Naqshbandīs intend with this term the stuphor arising out of the awareness reached in the higher stages of realisation, that man and God are two separate entities.

**ghaib**

‘hidden’, the invisible world beyond the realm of creation perceptible to the common senses.
grhasthī-avasthā  the condition of ‘householder’; the second of the four phases that characterize according to the ancient Hindu tradition human life; in the context of the present study, it denotes the way of life led by the Hindu Naqshbandīs of active participation in social life in all its aspects reflecting the ideal sanctioned by the Naqshbandī tenet of khilwat dar anjuman; contrasts strongly with the ascetic ideal that recommends the withdrawal from the world and its activities in order to reflect outwardly the inner renounce as part of the discipline.

ḥadīth a ‘Tradition’, a saying attributed to the prophet Muḥammad, distinguished from the Koran, which represents the word of God revealed to His prophet through the archangel Gabriel.

ḥāl a spiritual ‘state’, attained to spontaneously and in most cases beyond the full control of the initiate; hence, it is still liable to vanish as sudden as it has appeared.

ḥalqa ‘circle, an assembly’; the circle of intimate disciples gathering around a shaikh.

ḥaqīqat ‘truth, reality’; in the context of the esoteric doctrine, the term denotes the different degrees of insight into the essential principles and their extensions in the realm of immanence; in the highest sense, it refers to the very goal of every esoteric doctrine, the comprehension of the Divine in the aspect of al-Ḥaqq, supreme Truth.
hiranyagarbha  the ‘golden germ’, containing the potentialities of the entire manifestation in its fold, the possibilities of manifestation in their seminal state, analogous to the ‘world of order’ in Naqshbandi cosmology, corresponds to the head of Brahmā in the context of the primordial sacrifice or puruṣa-sūkta as mentioned in the Rgveda.

hosh dar dam  ‘awareness while breathing’; the first of the eleven principles that characterise the Naqshbandi path since Bahā al Dīn al-Bukhārī al-Naqshbandi; refers to the necessity to maintain a high level of awareness in every moment of life, during every single breath — hence, similar in its implications to the Yoga concept of prāṇāyāma, although later Naqshbandi practice does not call any longer for the need of restraining or even temporarily suspending the breath in the course of some spiritual exercises.

ijāzat  ‘licence’, ‘permission’; it refers to the licence conferred by the shaikh to his disciple to initiate and instruct independently new aspirants to enter the ṭariqa.

‘ilm  knowledge, science; the Arabic equivalent to the Sanskrit vidyā.

‘ilm al-ladunni  the ‘Divinely inspired science’, of non-human origin and, therefore, pertaining essentially to the transcendent realm, said to be revealed on those exceptionally qualified human beings whose role is to intervene; in most cases, related to and transmitted through the mysterious guide of the transcendent, al-Khiḍr.
‘ilm-i ḥuḍurī ‘intuitive knowledge’; refers to the spiritual knowledge acquired while proceeding on the path of esoteric realisation, regarding the inner Truth pertaining essentially to the transcendent realm, the knowledge of the spiritual principles that govern the realm of immanence.

‘ilm-i ḥuṣulī ‘discoursive knowledge’; the knowledge acquired on the rational plane though the apprehension of mental notions, hence the knowledge of the erudite and the learned scholars.

‘ilm-i lāhī the ‘Divine science’, esoteric knowledge, pertaining to the Divine mysteries, the equivalent to the Hindu brahma-vidyā.

jadhba ‘spontaneous attraction’, ‘spiritual rapture’; refers to the state which takes the initiate suddenly and abruptly from one condition to a higher state of awareness that enables him to enter into contact with the realm of transcendence, said to be produced as a result of earnest devotion and wholehearted surrender either to the shaikh, to the ancestors in the spiritual lineage, or directly to the Lord.

jam‘iyat ‘composure of the heart or mind’, analogous to the state of ekāgratā in the Yoga discipline.

jñāna ‘knowledge’, ‘wisdom’; the intuitive knowledge of the Sacred acquired through an inner comprehension of the doctrine.

jñānendriya the ‘faculties of knowledge’, corresponding to the five faculties of the senses through the mind of the individual
receives the multitude of sensual impressions from the outside world: these faculties consist of: the sense of hearing (śrotra), the sense of touch (tvaca), the sense of sight (cakṣus), the sense of taste (rasana) and the sense of smell (ghrāna).

**karāmat**

extraordinary deeds ascribed to a saint in virtue of his spiritual achievements that enable him to intervene, in an apparently miraculous manner, on various degrees of nature and its elements.

**karmendriya**

the ‘faculties of action’ through which the individual intervenes in the surrounding world; these are five, listed as: the faculty of prension (pāṇi), the faculty of deambulation (pāda), the faculty of excretion (pāya), the faculty of generation (upastha) and the faculty of speech (vāc).

**kashf**

‘opening’, ‘disclosure’; refers to the sudden revelation of a supernatural truth, based on spiritual intuition.

**khānaqāh**

‘hospice’; the seat and residence of a Sūfī shaikh including residential quarters for his disciples, a common space where the spiritual instructions take place and, usually, a mosque with the annexed facilities.

**kharq-i ‘adat**

a miracle or extraordinary deed, apparently against the natural course of things, synonym of karāmat.

**khilwat dar anjuman**

‘solitude amidst the crowd’; the fourth of the eleven principles of the Naqshbandī path that defines the attitude assumed by the Sūfīs linked to
this ṭarīqa, which sanctions their involvement in the outer affairs of the world while inwardly remaining detached from it.

\textit{laṭīfa} \quad \text{lit., ‘subtle’ (pl.: \textit{laṭā‘if}); in the technical context of the Mujaddidiyya it denotes the subtle centres or spiritual organs located inside the human body, on which the disciple is taught to focus as essential part of his spiritual practice; analogous to the \textit{cakra} in Yoga disciplines. The five subtleties of the ‘\textit{ālam-i khalq}’ are listed as: earth (\textit{khāk}), water (\textit{āb}), fire (ātish), air (hawā) and breath (nafas); the five subtleties pertaining to the ‘\textit{ālam-i amr}, located inside the human body in the heart region, are: heart (qalb), spirit (rūḥ), secret (sirr), mystery (khaṭī) and utmost mystery (akhfā).}

\textit{ma‘iyat} \quad \text{‘co-presence’; the degree reached by the initiate during the stage of ‘major sainthood’, when he conceives himself as acting in perfect harmony with the Divine will, in the continuous awareness of being in the company of his Lord.}

\textit{maqām} \quad \text{‘station’; refers to a major degree of spiritual advancement acquired on a permanent basis; by convention, these are listed as ten, but can be multiple in number.}

\textit{murāqabat} \quad \text{lit., ‘visualisation’; in the Naqshbandī context, it denotes a series of meditation exercises, the object of which varies according to the degree of advancement through the ‘spheres’ or stages of the esoteric path; the perfection of this technique implies the contemplation of}
the object sought and, finally, its full comprehension through identification with the truth inherent to it; the total number of visualisations is eighteen.

*nafs* the 'soul', the psychological aggregate pertaining to the subtle state of the individual; it stretches out between the subtle centre situated at the bottom of the back, roughly in coincidence with the *mulādhāra-cakra* known in Haṭha-Yoga doctrines, and the *laṭīfa-i naf*, situated somewhere on the forehead, in coincidence with the ājñā-cakra.

*nafs-i ammāra* the 'uncultivated soul' of the common human individual, subject to the lower human instincts and unreceptive to any unveilings from the hidden world.

*nafs-i lawamma* the 'blameworthy soul', that is to say the subtle part of the individual aggregate that is critically scrutinised by the initiate for its deficiencies and weaknesses while proceeding in the process of introspection during his spiritual career.

*nafs-i muṭama'īnna* the 'pacified soul', that is to say the purified inner states of the disciple void of its former corruption and in peace with itself while experiencing the closeness to its Creator; indicates the final degrees of the initiatic process defined by Muslim saints as 'cleansing of the soul'.

*nafs-i nāṭiqa* the 'rational soul' referring to the faculty of reason that is part of the subtle dominion.

*naḤar bar qadam* 'keeping one's eyes on one's steps'; the
second of the eleven spiritual principles that sanctions the necessity for the initiate to keep a vigilant eye on every single step forwards in the interior discipline in order to protect himself from the manifold dangerous distractions encountered on the way.

*nigāh dāsht* refers to the necessity to safeguard carefully the degree of lasting awareness acquired during the practice of *dhikr*, creating a shield of protection around one's inner states.

*nuzūl* ‘descent’; this term denotes the advanced stage of the Naqshbandī path, referred to as ‘journey from Allāh’ (*sair ‘an Allāh*), leading the initiate back from the sublime Divine abode down into the degree of contingent reality represented by the created world; also referred to as *rujū* ‘(return’).

*prakṛti* the ‘primordial substance’ in the Sāńkhya doctrine; also the feminine principle, as such complementary to *puruṣa*; the matrix of universal manifestation from which everything possessing name and form has sprung; in the context of the present study, often identified with *māyā*, the mind-alluring image of universal manifestation in its multiple facets.

*prāṇa* the ‘vitalising breath’ that animates everything; its five modalities are listed by the Upaniṣad as: inhalation (*prāṇa*), inspiration (*apāṇa*), retention (*vyāṇa*), expiration (*udāna*) and digestion (*samāṇa*), which indicate their function in the absorption of elements from the
Glossary of Technical Terms

Macrocosm into the microcosm and the expulsion of individual elements from the microcosm into the macrocosm; closely related to the nafs of the Naqshbandis which in a similar manner is conceived as being nourished by the breath (nafas), hence the importance of pranayama and habs-i nafas in the respective doctrines.

**purusa**
lit. the ‘masculine principle’ and essence; by extension universal Man and, in a less personal perspective, the underlying principle or prototype of a degree of existence; hence, in the cosmology of the Naqshbandi sants, the term can denote the supreme, unqualified principle as satpurusa, the principle of the dominion of creation as kala-purusa and purusa as the universal mankind that is the central creature in the present cycle.

**qalb**
the heart, considered as the centre of the microcosm and said to represent the nexus with the transcendent world; hence, the most important subtle organ and starting point in the Mujaddidi teachings from where the ‘way of jadhba’ is said to originate.

**qurbiyat**
‘proximity’; in the language of the Naqshbandis, the closeness to God reached by the initiate in the advanced stages of the path; in its superior interpretation equivalent to the identification with the Divine principle described by the wujudi doctrine.

**rabiţa**
‘connection’, ‘tie’; refers to the subtle connection between pir and murid that guarantees the active participation of
the shaikh in the inner progress and supervision of his pupil, mainly achieved through the transmission of spiritual energy (tawajjuh) by the murshid, focussed on the subtle organs of the heart region.

**safar dar waṭan** ‘travelling in one’s homeland’; the third of the eleven Naqshbandi principles that denotes the inner ‘journey’ leading the disciple from the purely human attributes upwards to the attainment of the virtues connected with the angelic attributes, and from there to the lofty station of the Divine attributes; this ‘journey’ consists of an entirely inner process leading through the various stages of the microcosm and requires a high degree of responsibility from the disciple.

**sa’ir** ‘walk’, ‘excursion’; the journey the initiate undertakes whilst progressing on the spiritual path.

**sa’ir-i āfāqi** the ‘journey along the cardinal points’; denotes the first part of the process of awakening the subtle organs during which the initiate contemplates the Divine truths in the spatial realm of the cosmos that extends along the co-ordinates of the cardinal points.

**sa’ir-i anfusī** the ‘journey along the inner selves’; refers to the second stage of reintegration of the subtle organs when the spiritual seeker contemplates the Divine truths along the vertical axis of his inner states departing from the focal point of the interior ‘heart-chamber’.

**sa’ir-i naḤarī** the ‘visual way’; refers to the final stage of the Naqshbandi path which, strictly
speaking, does not lead the initiate through any further degrees of progression towards the Divine, but rather implies an intensification of the vision of It.

*sair-i qadamī* the ‘walkable way’, consisting of the various stages or *maqāmāt* through which the *sālik* advances in the process of interior realisation, metaphorically indicated as foot-steps on the inner path.

*satnām* the ‘true name’, indicating the essential sound vibration reproduced while invoking mentally a specific formula containing the *bijā* or seed of that subtle sound; can also refer to the degree of utmost realisation among in some *sant* doctrines which are based on the science of the sound.

*sharī'at* lit., the ‘broad way’ following which every Muslim is secured salvation in the hereafter; it refers to the exoteric, religious Law sanctioned by the *Koran* and the *āhādith* that comprehends the guidelines to every aspect of social, legal, religious and ritual behaviour incumbent upon the members of the *umma*.

*ṣifat* ‘attribute’, usually used in the context of the innumerable attributes of Allāh that qualify the Divinity (pl. *ṣifāt*) and thus distinguished from Its pure, unqualified aspect of *al-Dhāt*; the Naqshbandīs distinguish the following major categories of attributes.

*ṣifat-i salbiyya* ‘the transcendent attribute’, pertaining to the transcendent aspect of the Divinity, hence part of Its essential aspects (*ṣifāt-i dhātiyya*).
ṣifat-i thabūtiyya ‘the affirmative attribute’; this category of Divine attributes comprehends all those that affirm positively the existence of Allāh and His creation; it is described as one step higher up in the hierarchy of the Divine attributes as compared to the ‘existential attribute’.

ṣifati-i iḍāfiyya ‘the additional attribute’; it refers to the Divine attribute that brings things into existence (ṣifat-i takwīn); the existential cause.

silsila ‘chain’; the chain of spiritual authorities of a ṭariqa, which, if uninterrupted, guarantees the link of the present-time shaikh with the ancestors of the order (buzurgān-i ṭariqa) and, eventually, with the fountainhead of all spiritual blessings, the prophet Muḥammad; analogous to the Hindu concept of paramparā.

ṣuḥbat lit. ‘company’; in the Sūfī context, it denotes the company of the spiritual master enjoyed by his disciples, whose presence alone is seen as the source of spiritual benefits; similar to the Hindu concept of satsang.

sulūk the way or path that is crossed by the initiate or spiritual traveller (sālik) while progressing through a series of gradually ascending steps or degrees.

sūrat-śabda the subtle sound current that pervades the entire universe; among many sants, it constitutes the base of their entire discipline which develops around the invocation of different names or syllables containing in seminal form an increasingly sublime degree of subtle
sound vibrations and culminating in the return to the essence contained in the primordial sound, symbolically represented by the syllable om (sūrat-śab-da-yoga).

**ta’ayyun**
‘determination’, ‘individualisation’; denotes the various degrees of dependance that limits every contingent being (al-mumkin) to its Divine principle; the latter is referred to as là ta’yyun, undetermined.

**tadhkiya-i nafs**
‘purification of the soul’; the process that leads to the attainment of the ‘pacified soul’ (nafs-i muṭama’inna) by substituting the lower, beastly individual attributes with the laudable attributes of the angels and, finally, the essential attributes of the Divinity; part of the descending path.

**tajalli**
‘irradiation’; the way through which everything that exists in the universe participates at the Divine nature; the expansion of the Supreme into the realm of contingency as a result of Its primordial desire to be known; divided along two major categories: *tajalliyāt-i dhātiya*, the essential irradiation pertaining to the higher degrees of the non-manifested world, and the *tajalliyat-i idāfiya*, pertaining to the inferior degrees manifested in the realm of creation.

**tanmātra**
the subtle principles of the gross elements described in the Sāṅkhya doctrine that lists them in correspondence to the sensible qualities as: audible (śabda), tangible (sparśa), visible (rūpa),
tasteable (rasa) and smelling (gandha); these are in a way analogous to the five subtleties said to pertain to the ‘world of order’ in the Naqshbandi doctrine.

tanzīh

the realm of the transcendent, complementary to tasbīh, referring to the immanent realm.

ṭarīqa

lit. ‘path’; the term describes the initiatic path leading the human being from its peripheral position to the comprehension of the Divine mysteries, hence the Sūfī path, that comprises both the knowledge of the doctrine and the methodology to ascend to the higher sphere of being; roughly equivalent to the Hindu concept of sampradāya.

tasbīh

the immanent realm pertaining to creation, complementary to the transcendent realm (tanzīh) of the Divine.

taṣfiya-i qalb

‘cleansing of the heart’; an integral step of every Sūfī ṭarīqa; in the Naqshbandiyya, it refers to the initial stage of the path consisting of the awakening of the five subtle organs (laṭā‘if-i khamsa) located in the heart region (maqām-i dil) and their re-unification with the principles in the ‘world of order’; part of the ascending path.

tawajjuh

the ‘spiritual attention’ of the shaikh that represents the means of transmission of the spiritual energy from his inner states to those of his disciple, thereby screening his inner states and assisting him in his inner growth.

tawḥīd

the all-transcending Unity of the Divine, the term denotes the supreme
metaphysical principle in the wujūdī tradition of taṣawwuf.

‘ubūdiyat

the state of ‘supreme servanthood’; in Mujaddidī terminology, this denotes the highest degree of realisation corresponding to the sublime awareness that man is essentially the servant of the all-transcendent God and that in the conscious acceptance of this role lies the highest degree of human perfection.

‘urūj

‘ascent’; this term is used in the Mujaddidī doctrine in reference to that part of the spiritual part conceived as an ascent towards the spheres of sainthood that are part of the ‘journey towards God’ (sair ilā Allāh) and the ‘journey in God’ (sair fī Allāh).

vāsanā

lit., ‘vortex’; indicates the incessant flow of thoughts in the uncultivated human mind distracting it from the concentration on and fixation of one particular object; in Sufī teachings, these are known as khaṭrāt.

wajd

‘rapture’, arising of an intense feeling of love and devotional self-surrender.

wājib al-wujūd

the ‘Necessary Being’, an epithet of God intended as the only essential being as compared to the possibilities (mumkināt) of his creation, whose existence is essentially contingent and dependent on Him for everything.

waqūf-i ‘adādī

‘numerical awareness’; refers to the technique of breath control while being engaged in the practice of the dhikr-i nafī o iθbāt, for which a series of uneven numbers is strongly recommended.
waqūf-i qalbī ‘awareness of the heart’; the last of the eleven principles, can possibly indicate the increasing degrees of awareness maintained while being engaged in the practice of dhikr.

waqūf-i zabānī ‘awareness of the tongue’; a particular aspect of the technique of breath-control indicating the necessity to increase gradually one’s awareness of the inner, spiritual states in connection with a partial restraint of the breath and its different phases.

waswasa ‘evil inspiration’; the term refers to any mental distraction arising out of the; in the religious perspective of Islam, this mental suggestion is said to be whispered by shaiṭān in order to distract the earnest seeker from focussing on the real goal, viz., Allāh.

wilāyat ‘sainthood’; the degree of universalisation attained to after transcending the narrow limitations of the individual existence; in the context of the Naqshbandī ṭariqa, this degree is reached after completing the journey through the sphere of universal Possibility.

wilāyat-i kubrā ‘major sainthood’; the second degree of sainthood, corresponding to the completion of the ‘journey towards Allāh’ (sair ilā Allāh) that sanctions the beginning of the ‘journey in Allāh’ (sair fī Allāh).

wilāyat-i šughrā ‘minor sainthood’; the first degree of sainthood reached after the five laṭā’if located in the human breast are awakened and have re-ascended to their original realm in the ‘world of order’.
wilāyat-i 'uliyā  ‘supreme sainthood’, reached according to the Mujaddidīs when the sālik has begun his descending journey from Allāh back towards the immanent realm of creation (sair dar ashiyā’), endowed with a high degree of awareness of the Divine mysteries that guide him in his mission of intervening for the correction of the world and its people.

yād dāsht  ‘accomplished remembrance’; the eight of the eleven principles denotes the perfection of the state of yād hard.

yād hard  ‘remembrance’ the fifth of the eleven Naqshbandī principles, implying the necessity to increase the level of subtle awareness while being engaged in the practice of invoking silently the dhikr; in fact, it is the very dhikr that acts as a tool for imprinting the remembrance of Allāh on the subtle organ of the heart thus contributing to the mind's capacity to focus increasingly, on the very aim of the discipline represented by the name invoked.

zāhir  ‘the apparent’; one of the names of Allāh, denotes the exoteric aspect of His creation and as such complementary to the inner, esoteric aspect of His essence (al-bāṭin).

zill  ‘shadow’, intended by the Naqshbandīs as the reflection of a higher degree of reality on a lower degree of existence, similar to the concept of ‘aks.'
Appendix I

Noble Genealogy (shajra-i sharīf) of the Mujaddidiyya Maẓhariyya Na′imiyya Faḍliyya

1. Ḥadrat Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 28 Ṣafar 1034/30 Nov. 1624 Sirhind)

2. Ḥadrat Shaikh Maʿsūm Sirhindī (d. 9 Rabīʿal-awwal 1079/7 Aug. 1668 Sirhind)

3. Ḥadrat Shaikh Saʿīf al-Dīn Sirhindī (d. 19 Jumāda al-awwal 1095/24 Apr. 1684 Sirhind)

4. Ḥadrat Shaikh Nūr Muḥammad Badāyūnī (d. 11 Dhīl-Qaʿda 1135/2 Aug. 1723 Delhi)

5. Ḥadrat Ḥabībullāh Mīrza MaḤhar Jān-i Jānān (d. 10 Muḥarram 1195/6 Jan. 1781 Delhi)

6. Ḥadrat Mawlānā Naʿīmullāh Bahrāichī (d. 5 Ṣafar 1218/27 May 1803 Bahrāich)

7. Ḥadrat Shāh Murādullāh Thānesarī (d. 21 Dhīl-Qaʿda 1248/11 Apr. 1833 Lucknow)

8. Ḥadrat Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan Naṣīrābādī (d. 1 Shaʿbān 1272/7 Apr. 1856 Naṣīrābād)

9. Ḥadrat Mawlānā Khalīfat al-Rahman Ahmad ʿAlī Khān (d. 9 Rabīʿal-awwal 1307/3 Nov. 1889 Kāimgaṇj)

10. Ḥadrat Fadl Ahmad Khān Rāʾīpurī (d. 22 Shʿbān 1325/1 Oct. 1907 Rāipur Khāss)

11. Mahātmā Śrī Rāmacandra Saksenā Mahārāj (d. 14 August 1931 Fatehgarh)
12. Mahātmā Caturbhuj Sahāy (d. 23 September 1957 Mathurā)
12. Mahātmā Dr. Kṛṣṇa Lāl Bhaṭnāgar (d. 18 May 1970 Sikandarābād)
12. Mahātmā Rāmacandra Shāhjahānpurī (d. 19 April 1983 Shāhjahānpur)
12. Mahātmā Śrī Raghubar Dayāl Saksenā (d. 7 June 1947 Kānpur)
13. Mahātmā Yaśa Pālji Mahārāj (b. 5 December 1918 Delhi)
13. Mahātmā Śrī Brj Mohan Lāl Saksenā (d. 18 January 1955 Bombay)
14. Mahātmā Śrī Omkārnāth Saksenā (b. 1933 Lucknow)
Appendix II

A schematic outline of the subtle centres’ (laţă’if, cakra) location in the human organisation according to the authorities of the Mujaddidiyya Maţhāriyya:¹

1. These schemes have been taken from Shāh Abūl Hasan Zaid Fāruqi: Madārij al-Khair (Urdu version), p. 32, and Mawlawī Shāhgul Qādirī: Tadhkira-i Ghawthbiyya, Allahwale ki Qawmi Dukan, Lahore, n.d., pp. 147, 151.
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