



Shāh Walī Allāh's Theory of the Subtle Spiritual Centers (Laṭā'if): A Sufi Model of Personhood and Self-Transformation

Author(s): Marcia K. Hermansen

Source: *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Jan., 1988), pp. 1-25

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](http://www.uchicago.edu)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3693678>

Accessed: 30/03/2011 21:20

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=ucpress>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The University of Chicago Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*.

SHĀH WALĪ ALLĀH'S THEORY OF THE
SUBTLE SPIRITUAL CENTERS (*LAṬĀʿIF*): A SUFI MODEL
OF PERSONHOOD AND SELF-TRANSFORMATION*

MARCIA K. HERMÅNSEN, *San Diego State University*

I. INTRODUCTION

THE human body together with its components and workings operates as a symbolic field standing in a mimetic relationship to other systems of the classification of society and knowledge. This is evidenced by the pervasive traditions of a microcosmic/macrocosmic analogy. Recent studies of culture and the history of ideas have indicated that these analogies reflect and serve to maintain other cultural assumptions such as those concerning power relationships or sexuality.¹ In certain religious traditions, models of the human body may transcend the visible or physical order to postulate parallel “subtle” or “spiritual” bodies which function to mediate between the material and the transcendent realm. The concept of a “subtle body” provides an especially flexible and malleable field for mapping concepts of the human individual and relating these to wider metaphysical and ideological systems. If the construction of the “subtle body” may be studied to indicate underlying constructs of the person, shifts in the positioning and description of bodily components within a tradition should reflect theological and cultural change within that environment.

In the following study, the detailed theory of the subtle spiritual centers of the person developed by the eighteenth-century Indian theologian and mystic Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi (d. 1762) will be considered. While a primary focus of the paper is a description of the concept of a subtle body within the Islamic tradition, a further intent is to demonstrate how Shāh Walī Allāh’s recasting of elements of the model “embodies” his position on several theological issues as well as his understanding of spiritual transformation. Shāh Walī Allāh was recognized by subsequent generations as the intellectual instigator of a movement of reform among the Indian ulema, and certain aspects of cultural change and the reformist impulse are prefigured in his description of these subtle components.

The theory of the subtle spiritual centers (*laṭāʿif*) developed by Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi reveals the underlying structure of his schema for understanding the human individual. The term *laṭīfa* (plural *laṭāʿif*) is derived from the Arabic word *laṭīf* meaning “gentle,” “sensitive,” or “subtle.” In Sufi terminology the word *laṭīfa* refers to a nonmaterial component of the person which can be influenced or “awakened” through spiritual practices. The expression *laṭīfa* may originate in the concept of a

* Commonly known words, such as ulema, are spelled in the English style throughout and are not italicized.

¹ For example, in structural and poststructural approaches to anthropology such as the work of McKim Marriott, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu.

subtle body (*jism laṭīf*), which is not Qurʾānic but seems to have arisen in the third Islamic century.² The Sufi concept of *laṭīfa* became increasingly refined and complex and was used to explain psychological and spiritual progress of the spiritual aspirant toward annihilation (*fanā*) or subsistence (*baqā*) in the Divine Essence.

Laṭīfa has been translated by “subtlety,” “tenuous body,” “subtle point,” or “subtle essence.” Since these *laṭāʾif* have been diagrammed in the works of Shāh Walī Allāh with circular shapes, I prefer to refer to them as “subtle spiritual centers,” following the usage of Annemarie Schimmel,³ although the concept of “center” is not necessarily to be understood from the term itself.

Although some of the *laṭāʾif* have names corresponding to body parts or faculties or are sometimes described as being located in specific areas of the body (liver, heart, or mind), they are not to be understood as identical with the organs located there. “Thus the distinction is clearly to be made between the physical flesh of the heart and the *laṭīfa* which is named ‘Heart’ (*qalb*). Rather, the *laṭāʾif* are taken to be local manifestations of identically named parts of a higher realm of the cosmological structure which is above the realm of created things.”⁴

Among Sufi writers, Shāh Walī Allāh gives one of the most detailed explanations of the *laṭāʾif* to which he devoted an entire book, *Alṭāf al-Quds*,⁵ as well as references in some of his other works. As the theory and practice of *laṭāʾif* represent part of the initiatory tradition in Sufism, it is somewhat difficult to find systematic discussions of these topics. As Walī Allāh himself noted, “The writings of the Sufis may well be an amazingly effective alchemy for the specially gifted, but for the masses they can be a deadly poison.” He added, however, that since fragments of this knowledge had become public before his time, he felt called upon by God to clarify and correct this information as well as to explain its place in a larger body of knowledge.⁶ In developing his system of depicting and understanding the functions of the *laṭāʾif*, Shāh Walī Allāh, to a large extent, built on models developed within the Naqshbandī Sufi tradition. Aspects of his model which are of particular interest here are his efforts to integrate it conceptually into a larger body of knowledge and to make it conform to the pattern underlying his own ontology. The reasons for those innovations which he introduces into the previous schema may be understood not only as resulting from these conceptual requirements, but also as reflecting larger patterns of cultural change.

II. GENERAL FEATURES OF SHĀH WALĪ ALLĀH’S THOUGHT

In his writings, Shāh Walī Allāh was not primarily concerned with the situation of Islam in India facing opposition from the non-Muslim majority as the Mughal Empire

² Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane* (Paris, 1968), p. 423; see also idem, *The Passion of Al-Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, vol. 3 (Princeton, 1982), p. 16.

³ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, 1978), passim.

⁴ Warren Fusfeld, “The Shaping of Sufi Leadership in Delhi: The Naqshbandiyya Mujaddiyya,

1750–1920” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1981).

⁵ Shāh Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-Quds* (Gujrānwālā, 1964), translated without explanation or footnotes as *The Sacred Knowledge* by G. H. Jalbani and edited by Donald Pendleberry (London, 1972).

⁶ Ibid., Persian text, p. 138. A collection of translated teachings of the main Indian Sufi orders on the spiritual centers and the purification of the soul

disintegrated. Rather, he was concerned with the state of Islamic intellectual and spiritual life in the entire Muslim world. He perceived that a great danger to this tradition had emerged through its fragmentation into various factions—the theologians, relying on their textual exegeses; the philosophers, relying on discursive reasoning and proof; and the Sufi mystics, relying on intuitive realization—each faction adhering to its own methodology and conclusions.⁷ He offered as his solution to this fragmentation the methodology of regarding any issue from the full range of disciplines and perspectives and striving to reconcile apparent but superficial conflicts through arriving at a comprehensive or unifying principle. This approach he termed *taṭbīq*.⁸ For this reason, a characteristic feature of his thought involves his efforts to synthesize and derive universal principles underlying diverse phenomena. For example, his master work, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha* [The conclusive proof of God], attempts this synthetic overview at metaphysical, social, and religious levels. Before describing Walī Allāh's theory of the subtle spiritual centers, a discussion of the dominant patterns in his thought is appropriate, since it is through this framework that he understands their structure and operation.

In his thought, Shāh Walī Allāh synthesizes two disparate metaphysical orientations. One could be characterized as monistic in the tradition of the emanation theory of the Hellenized Islamic philosophers and Sufis influenced by Ibn ʿArabī's (d. 1240) theory of the Unity of Existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). The other is the interpretation which maintains the Qurʾānic stance of a moral and existential distinction of good and evil, represented in Indian Sufism by the Unity of Experience (*waḥdat al-shuhūd*) of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1625). Sirhindī's philosophy notably emphasizes the struggle to overcome the negative aspects of existence or one's own evil tendencies.⁹

Shāh Walī Allāh attempts to encompass or synthesize these differing metaphysical orientations by propounding a theory which is simultaneously one of a conflict of forces, whether two or many, and of one overriding great force which is the drive of the entire universe towards its greatest perfection or most comprehensive benefit (*maṣlaḥa kullīyya*). This movement toward the one great purpose is achieved only as conflicts and imbalances at inferior stages are solved or harmonized. Thus his system strives to make conflict intelligible and to give overcoming it a religious significance.

Walī Allāh portrays the internal dynamic within spheres of experience as one of systems or levels composed of ordered parts with separate functions which may come into conflict. This conflict must be resolved or harmonized through achieving balance and harmony within the system. Once balance is achieved, the inherent perfection of the ideal form implicit in the person, species, or society is fulfilled, and this leads to the entire form or system expanding or moving up to a new, higher order.¹⁰

is Mir Waliuddin, *Contemplative Disciplines in Sufism* (London, 1980).

⁷ Shāh Walī Allāh, *al-Taḥfīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 1 (Hyderabad, 1973), pp. 110–11 (no. 33). As S. A. A. Rizvi stresses in his work *Shāh Walī Allāh and His Times* (Canberra, 1980), this synthesis did not include Shiʿa Islam.

⁸ *Taṭbīq*, from the second form of the Arabic root *t-b-q*, "to have in common, to be all-inclusive, to

make a thing conform, correspond to, or agree with another thing."

⁹ This is discussed by Fazlur Rahman in *Selected Letters of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī* (Karachi, 1968).

¹⁰ For a further discussion of this, see my "Shāh Walī Allāh's Theory of Religion with a Translation of *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*, vol. 1" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1982).

According to Shāh Walī Allāh's understanding, this movement can occur since the ideal forms of each species exist, independently from their particular instantiations, in an atemporal, transcendent realm known as the World of Images (*‘ālam al mithāl*). Any species can eventually surpass the limitations of its initial form through developing to a point where enough of its members implore Allah through the "supplication of their state" (*takaffuf ḥāl*) to emanate a new form with expanded possibilities.¹¹

This expansion of possibilities is not exactly evolutionary since the ideal form pre-exists its instantiations in the physical world and is sent down from Above. Thus it rather represents a progression through grades of being. This graduated model of spiritual progress has a long tradition in Sufi thought, for example, in Rūmī's lines:

From the moment you came into the world of being,
A ladder was placed before you that you might escape.
First you were mineral, later you turned to plant,
Then you became animal: how should this be a secret to you?

Afterwards you were made man, with knowledge, reason, faith;
Behold the body, which is a portion of the dust-pit. How perfect it has grown!
When you have travelled on from man, you will doubtless become an angel.¹²

It now remains to explain how Shāh Walī Allāh's understanding of this general principle, that at lower levels conflict must be overcome and balance attained in order for progression according to the great purpose of the universe to occur, is reflected in his theory of the subtle spiritual centers.

III. SHĀH WALĪ ALLĀH'S THEORY OF THE SUBTLE SPIRITUAL CENTERS (*LAṬĀ'IF*)

The nature of the human individual, the parts which constitute a person, and the variations among individuals, are all given a high degree of attention in Shāh Walī Allāh's thought. Shāh Walī Allāh was aware of himself as a special individual, marked for greatness from birth, and invested with renewership (*mujaddidiyya*), deputyship to the Prophet (*khilāfa*), and the role of being the opener (*fātih*) of a new era. As a Sufi leader and master, he was presumably called upon to exercise psychological and character evaluation in order to advise the individuals of varying types who came to him for spiritual instruction.¹³ In his methods for assessing and categorizing persons, Shāh Walī Allāh drew on elements from several disciplines current at the time. From these, he developed a concept of the person as composed of a system of physical components, spiritual centers, and moral predispositions.

Shāh Walī Allāh's works provide an important source for understanding how the cosmology behind a model of the spiritual components of a person may be related to special spiritual practices assigned to a particular aspirant by his instructor. In this, he synthesized elements of the Sufi tradition with contemporary medical concepts.

¹¹ See Shāh Walī Allāh, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1952-53), p. 66 (Arabic Text); idem, *Lamahāt*, (Haydarabad, 1960?), no. 43, p. 50 (*ṭalab ḥāl*).

¹² Jalāluddīn Rūmī, *Divān-i-Shams-i-Tabrīz*, trans. R. A. Nicholson (London, 1970), pp. 40-41.

¹³ In the autobiography of Shāh Walī Allāh,

Al-Juz' al-Laṭīf, p. 174, he noted that among his gifts from God was the knowledge of human souls, their (implicit) perfections, and final destiny. See M. Hidayat Husain, "The Persian Autobiography of Shāh Waliullah bin 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Dihlavi," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 14 (1912): 161-76.

It is clear from many of his writings that Shāh Walī Allāh was well acquainted with the theories of physiology of his time. In his autobiography, medicine (*ṭibb*) is mentioned as one of the subjects which he studied; in particular, he cites the work *Muʿjiz al-Qānūn*, which is an abridgement by Ibn al-Nafis (d. 1388) of Ibn Sīnā's *Qānūn*.¹⁴

This system of *ṭibb* has been developed in particular by the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, and it is still practiced there today, where it is called *yūnānī dawā*, or Greek Medicine. Since the principles of this system of physiology are those of Shāh Walī Allāh, a brief outline will be presented here.

According to this tradition, there are two categories of substance in the person, body (*jism, badan*) and soul (*nafs*). The body has members (*aʿḍā*) which are composed from the four primary elements (*arkān*): fire, earth, air, and water. These members are animated by certain faculties (*quwā*) of the soul. The science of the physical body (*ʿilm al-ṭibb*) is a different science than the science of the soul (*ʿilm al-nafs*), which considers the person from the standpoint of a soul which has a hierarchy of faculties located in and directing the members of the body.¹⁵

According to *ʿilm al-ṭibb*, inside the body food is transformed into the humors (*akhlāt*) by being digested and then separated in the liver into four parts: red blood, white phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. The most subtle portion of these humors goes into the blood, and then it is attracted to the heart, where it is mixed with the purest part of the blood in one of the heart's chambers. The denser part of the humors are transformed into bodily members (*aʿḍā*), while the subtler ones become spirits (*arwāḥ*), the *pneumata* of Greek medicine. These spirits are subtle vapors which bear the faculties of the person. Shāh Walī Allāh uses the term *nasama* to refer to the spirit formed from the most subtle humors, and this term is translated by *pneuma* due to its correspondence to that term in the Greek medical tradition.

The part of the subtle vapors which rises to the brain is divided there into ten parts and becomes the five outer senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) and the five inner senses (the *sensus communis* [*ḥiss mushtarak*], the representation of perceptions [*takhayyul*], imagination or estimation [*tawahhum*], memory [*ḥifẓ*], and understanding [*idrāk*]). These are the terms used by Shāh Walī Allāh, although some authors may vary the list slightly.¹⁶ This part of the mixture of the humors which is carried to the brain is called *al-rūḥ al-nafsānī*, the psychic spirit. The faculties flowing from it are called psychical (*nafsānī*). They include, as noted above, ones involved in the direct perception of sensible objects, the interpretation of their significance to the perceiver, and their being stored as memories.¹⁷

Besides the portion of the *pneuma* (*nasama*) which rises to the brain, there is a spirit called the natural spirit (*al-rūḥ al-ṭabʿī*), which is returned to the liver, and an animal spirit (*al-rūḥ al-ḥayawānī*), which remains in the heart. These spirits distribute the respective faculties bearing their names,¹⁸ for example, the *rūḥ al-ḥayawānī* operates in the body for reproduction, growth, and digestion, which would be "animating"

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 165.

¹⁵ David W. Beer, "The Concept of Person in the Hellenic Tradition in Islam" (M. A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1980), p. 5.

¹⁶ Shāh Walī Allāh, *Al-Budūr al-Bāzigha* (Hyderabad, 1970), p. 31.

¹⁷ Beer, "The Concept of Person," p. 31.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

faculties. The brain and the heart are subject to the liver with respect to the “natural” or *ṭabʿī* faculties, but in others the opposite is the case.¹⁹

Under the psychical faculties also come the motivating (*muḥarrika*) ones, which include the faculty of desire or concupiscence (*shawaniyya*), which expresses desire or acceptance, and the faculty of anger (*ghaḍabiyya*), which expresses aversion or anger.

Ideally, the temperament or mixture (*mizāj*) of a person, which is arrived at through the mingling of the humors, should be as balanced (*muʿtadil*) as possible for the person at that stage of development. However, no one’s temperament is believed to be absolutely balanced—“in fact, man, in order to live, must be somewhat warmer than absolute balance would permit.”²⁰ Traditionally, the temperament of a person was believed to vary with sex, age, the food eaten, and the region of the earth which he inhabited.

This concept of balanced temperament constitutes one aspect of Shāh Walī Allāh’s explanation of the human need for religion. He writes, “since the balance of the temperament of man is achieved according to what the species-based perfection bestowed, this cannot be fully realized except through those [religious] sciences which only the most perfect among them attain, and then are imitated by others, and through a divine law”²¹

The subtle spiritual centers operate on the physical workings of the body through the three lower *laṭāʿif*; the Lower soul (*nafs*), the Heart (*qalb*), and the Intelligence (*ʿaql*). These centers are described as pervading the entire body, for while they are rooted in the organs (liver, heart, and brain), they are not believed to be identical with them. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, these centers are the chief aspects of the person through which the acts required by the human specific form (*ṣūra nauʿiyya*) are fulfilled. If they do not work together in harmony, the person will be in a *daze* resulting from their jostling around and interfering with one another. This confusion will come to an end either through physical death or through “voluntary death” (to one’s desires or to indentification with the false self) as a result of spiritual exercises.²² A person who advances through harmonizing these three centers is then able to draw on influences of two higher centers, the Spirit (*rūḥ*), which is a higher level or aspect of the Heart, and the Mystery (*sirr*), the higher level or aspect of the Intelligence. Shāh Walī Allāh explains progress through these centers and beyond in his model of the *laṭāʿif*.

The Three-Tiered Model

Shāh Walī Allāh in his theory of the *laṭāʿif* further developed a system existing among the Naqshbandi Sufis, particularly the Mujaddidiyya branch, so called because they followed the teachings of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1625), who was known as the Mujaddid, or “Renewer” of the second millennium. This system was based on the idea that the human being had ten parts—five material, five immaterial. The lower level of the material parts consisted of the Lower Soul (*nafs*) and the four elements

¹⁹ Shāh Walī Allāh, *Al-Budūr al-Bāzigha*, p. 36. vol. 1, p. 47.

²⁰ Beer, “The Concept of Person,” p. 51.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 144.

²¹ Shāh Walī Allāh, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*,

(fire, air, earth, and water), while the higher level consisted of the five *laṭāʿif*, sometimes called the “five jewels” (*al-jawāhir al-khams*): the Heart (*qalb*), Spirit (*rūḥ*), Mystery (*sirr*), Arcane (*khafī*), and the Super-Arcane (*akhfā*). The two levels of this Naqshbandi system were said to correspond respectively to the distinction between the World of God's Creation (*ʿālam al-Khalq*) and the World of God's Command (*ʿālam al-ʿamr*), a distinction based on Qurʾānic terminology and having a long history in Sufi thought. For example, the Qurʾānic verse (17:85) “the Spirit is from the command of my Lord” (*al-rūḥ min amr rabbī*) is taken by the Sufis to mean that the *rūḥ*, or human spirit, comes from an immaterial timeless realm of God's command (*ʿamr*) which precedes physical manifestation.

It is interesting to note that the five-fold structure of the *laṭāʿif* according to the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya seems to parallel the model of the Islamic version of Greek medical theory (*ṭibb*) in which there are five inner and five outer senses.²³ The model of the *laṭāʿif* which appeared early in Sufism clearly developed and was refined over time. Najmuddīn al-Rāzī (d. 1256), a Kubrawiyya Sufi of Iran and author of the *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, formulated a system of five *laṭāʿif* and found a Qurʾānic basis for the terms *sirr* and *khafī*—Qurʾān 20:7, “if thou makest utterance aloud, verily He knows the secret (*sirr*) and what is more hidden (*khafī*).”²⁴ ʿAlā ad-Daula Simnānī (d. 1336), whose works influenced Sirhindī, expanded the system of Najmuddīn al-Rāzī to a seven-fold one by adding below the five *laṭāʿif* the concept of a physical frame or mold (*qalab*) and above them a further center called the *ḥaqīyya* or *anāniyya*. Sirhindī's model then expanded to represent the *laṭāʿif* as part of a distinct set of symbols and practices (see figs. 1 and 2),²⁵ and this was finally developed by Shāh Walī Allāh into a three-tiered model with a total of some fifteen components.

In arriving at a three-tiered model, Shāh Walī Allāh may have been influenced by Neo-Platonic and Sufi traditions. A tripartate model was used by Proclus, for example, who developed Aristotle's concept of the *pneuma* as a way to explain how the incorporeal, eternal soul can become attached to the body. Among the Sufis, Al-Hujwīrī (d. 1071) depicts the person as composed of three levels; Spirit (*rūḥ*), Lower Soul (*nafs*), and Physical Body (*jasad*).²⁶ Shāh Walī Allāh seems to follow this construction in his model of the *laṭāʿif*, in developing the concept of a spirit (*rūḥ*) operating at three levels. It should be noted that this usage of “spirit” should not be confused with the *laṭīfa* of the same name.

The first and lowest level of the Spirit, which is the level related to the lowest set of the *laṭāʿif* in the physical world, is called the *Pneuma* (*nasama*) or the Airy Spirit (*rūḥ hawaʿī*), both concepts borrowed from Hellenized Islamic medical theory. He explains that this spirit arises from the vapors of the elements (fire, earth, air, and water) as

²³ As described on pp. 5–6 of this paper.

²⁴ Najmuddīn al-Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, trans. by H. Algar as *The Path of God's Bondsmen: From the Origin to the Return* (Delmar, New York, 1982), p. 135. On the *laṭīfa* “*sirr*,” see Shigeru Kamada, “A Study of the Term *Sirr* (Secret) in Sufi *Latāʿif* Theories,” *Oriens* 19 (1983): 7–28.

²⁵ Figs. 1 and 2 are based on Muḥammad Dhauqī, *Sirr-i-Dilbarān* (Lahore, 1974) and Ahmad Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt-i-Imām Rabbānī* (Lahore, 1964).

²⁶ Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, trans. R. A. Nicholson (London, 1976), pp. 196–200. In another passage, al-Hujwīrī positions the heart as mediator between the Lower Soul and the Spirit (p. 277). Shāh Walī Allāh may also have been influenced by Mullā Ṣadrā's (d. 1640) thought in developing a three-tiered model. See, for example, Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany, 1975), pp. 180–85.

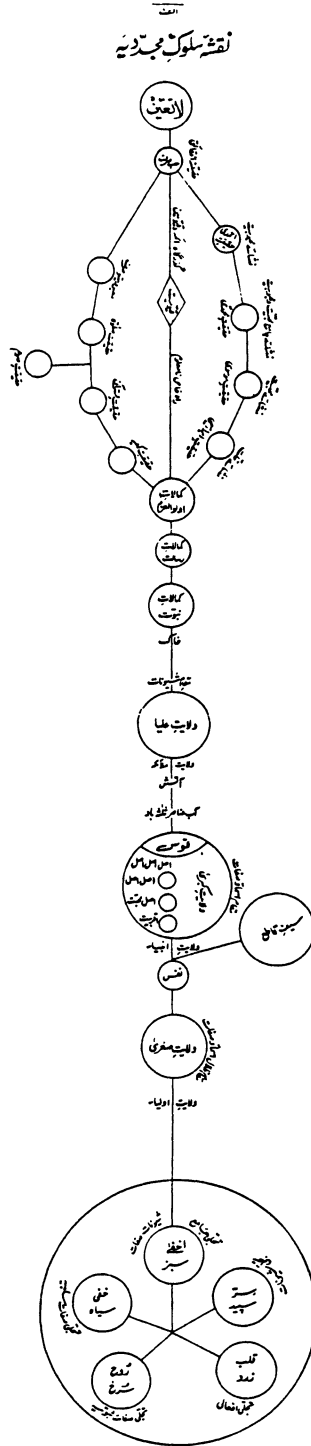


FIG. 1.—Adapted from charts in Muḥammad Dhauqī, *Sirr-i Dilbarān* (Lahore, 1974) and Aḥmad Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt-i-Imām Rabbānī* (Lahore, 1964).

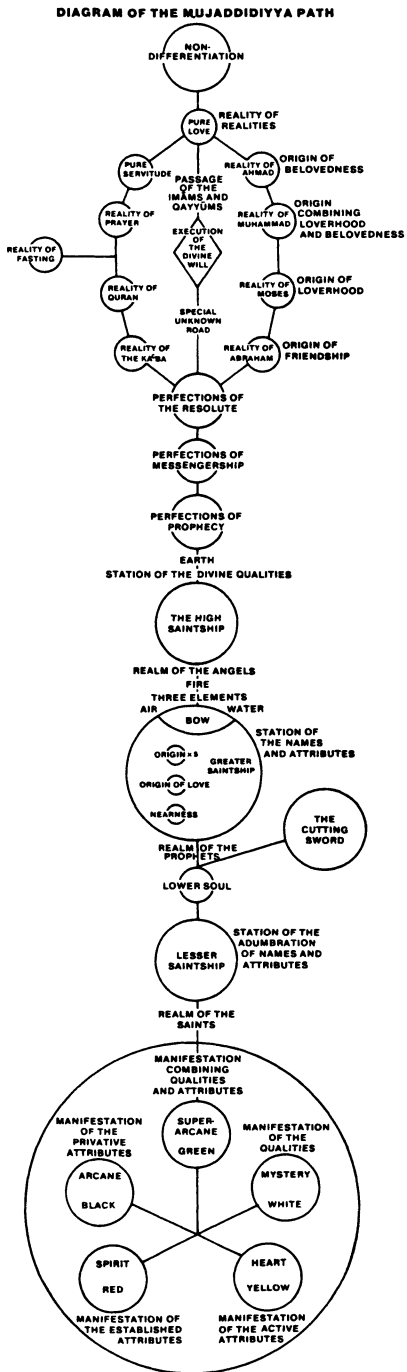


FIG. 2.—Translation of fig. 1

they are digested and transformed into humors. This spirit then flows throughout the flesh and bone of the body like “fire in a coal or the perfume in a rose.”²⁷ The *Pneuma* or airy spirit is actually the most refined distillation of these vapors, eventually being so refined as to allow the higher levels of the Spirit to attach themselves to the body.

The second level of the spirit, corresponding now to the middle circle of the manifest *laṭāʿif*, is that of the Rational Soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqā*). This level of the spirit is what bestows the individual form of a person and what makes each individual that particular individual. In a striking passage from the *Hujjat Allāh*, Walī Allāh writes, “it [the rational soul] is like a small aperture from the Realm of the Holy through which descends to the *pneuma* everything which it is ready to receive.”²⁸

Finally, the highest level of the spirit is that of the heavenly (*al-samawī*) or the Sublime (*al-ʿulwī*) Spirit. This level of the Spirit corresponds to the Concealed *Laṭāʿif* or those spiritual components marking the transition between the human and the Divine. While the *Pneuma* (*nasama*) and the Rational Soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqā*) are created temporarily at the time of the creation of the body, the heavenly spirit (*al-rūḥ al-samawī*) is created long before this. It is related to the similitudinary (*mithālī*) form of the person which precedes (“pre-exists”) him as a form in the World of Images (*ʿālam al-mithāl*). According to the later Sufis, the World of Images is an intermediary realm where predestined forms exist before their entry into physical manifestation in the material world. The idea of pre-existence, or a state before time begins, is fundamental in their understanding of destiny. The Sufis were particularly fascinated with the concept of changing or modifying destiny through having access to the forms of the World of Images as a result of spiritual attainments.²⁹

The third level of the Subtle spiritual centers was described by Walī Allāh as located in the World of Images. His understanding of personal transformation and ultimately the shaping of the destiny of the human species in history is based on the idea that the forms behind manifestation are susceptible to alteration through human actions in the physical world. Therefore for Shāh Walī Allāh, the highest level of the Spirit and the corresponding Concealed *Laṭāʿif* are associated with *Qaḍā* (God’s absolute decree) and *Qadar* (destiny as measured out and then transmitted to the world) and the angels as agents of this transmission. The direction of this movement, however, is not solely downward, for the higher level is able to receive influences from the human world, and it is the heavenly part of the soul which is affected by a person’s actions and constitutes his form in the next life.

By explaining the spirit in this three-tiered way, Shāh Walī Allāh is able to reconcile traditional theological opinions with the concepts of the philosophers influ-

²⁷ Shāh Walī Allāh, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāliḡha*, vol. 1, pp. 38–40; my translation of pp. 199–202.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁹ For a discussion of this, see Fazlur Rahman, “Dream, Imagination and the ʿĀlam al-Mithāl,” in Gustave von Grunebaum, ed., *The Dream in Human Societies* (Los Angeles, 1966). Henry Corbin has also written extensively on the ʿĀlam al-Mithāl, which he calls the “Mundus Imaginalis” in order to stress the creative or imaginal quality of this realm in contradistinction to its being merely “imaginary.”

In the Iranian tradition following Shihābuddīn Suhrawardī (d. 1191), the Master of the *Ishrāqī* school, the World of Images was described as having one region in which images subsist in their pre-existent forms and another in which spirits dwell after living on earth along with the forms of all thoughts, desires, behaviors, and works accomplished while in this world. Shāh Walī Allāh’s concept of *mithāl* and his angelology reflect this understanding of the Imaginal World.

THE SUBTLE SPIRITUAL CENTERS (LAṬĀʿIF)
SHĀH WALĪ ALLĀH'S MODEL

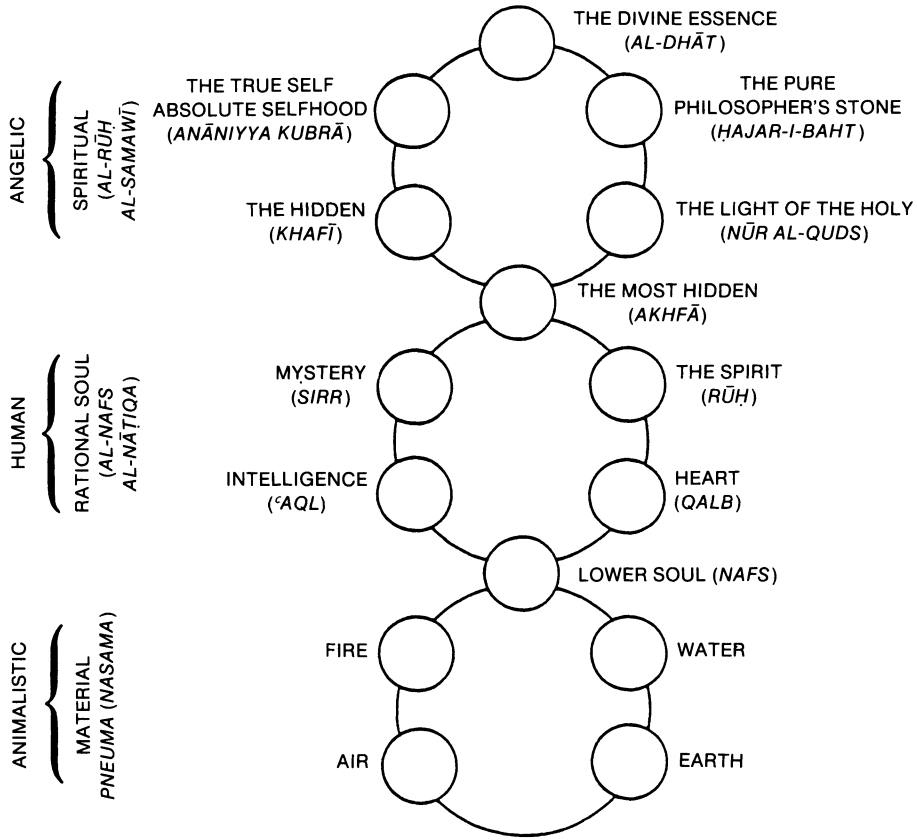


FIG. 3.—Based on diagram in Shāh Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 1, p. 244

enced by Hellenistic thought concerning the spirit (*rūḥ*). The orthodox position was generally that it was material and created in time, while the philosophers identified it with an immaterial, eternal, spiritual soul. In his description of the three levels, the lowest level of spirit, the *Pneuma*, fulfills the role of the created spirit while aspects of the rational soul and the heavenly spirit accord with the philosophers' concepts.³⁰

The Concealed Laṭāʿif (al-laṭāʿif al-kāmina)

At this point it is appropriate to discuss in more detail the three levels of the spiritual centers conceptualized by Shāh Walī Allāh. The highest level, that of the Concealed *Laṭāʿif*, is a new feature of his model. Referring to the diagram (fig. 3), one

³⁰ This was observed by J. M. S. Baljon, "Psychology as Apprehended and Applied by Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlavī," *Acta Orientalia Neerlandica* (Leiden, 1971), pp. 53–60.

sees that this circle consists of five centers below the Divine Essence; the Most Arcane (*akhfā*), the Arcane (*khafī*), the Greater Selfhood (*al-anāniyya al-kubrā*), the Light of the Holy (*nūr al-quds*), and the Philosophers' Stone (*al-ḥajar al-baht*, Persian: *ḥajar-i-baht*).³¹ It seems that Walī Allāh was influenced in his conceptualization of these centers and their functions by Ibn ʿArabī, particularly by his treatise, *al-Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya fī Iṣlāḥ al-Mamlakat al-Insāniyya*, which is among those edited by H. S. Nyberg in his *Kleinere Schriften*.³² Shāh Walī Allāh does not expound the functions of these "Hidden *Laṭāʿif*" in any great detail, but overall their operation and arrangement is integrated into his theory of progress along the two paths of Saintship and Prophecy. They represent, for the most part, a conceptual rather than a practical formulation, since the annihilation of the manifest *laṭāʿif* under the influence of the concealed *laṭāʿif* is not necessary for the entire human species but is required in the case of certain individuals.³³

The Concealed *Laṭāʿif* represent the final stages in which the mystic achieves subsistence (*baqā*) in the Divine Essence. The aspirant's progress through them is no longer expressed in terms of harmonization and conflict resolution but is rather a realization of and participation in realms beyond the person's individual identity. The understanding that a preliminary stage of conflict and harmonization in a person's development gives way to being drawn automatically to one great force is not inconsistent or even innovative in the Islamic tradition. It may be traced through a long line of Muslim moral theorists including Miskawaih (d. 1030) and al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), whose respective works which depict the acquisition of virtue through moral vigilance, self-control, and habitual good actions find an echo in Shāh Walī Allāh's discussion of virtue and happiness in *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*.³⁴ In this tradition, purification and the elimination of vice through worship and obedience to religious law are depicted as a necessary prelude to inward achievement and the emergence, naturally and spontaneously, of mystical virtues. An indication of this pattern is seen in Ghazālī's list of progressively achieved mystical stages found in *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, Book 4. These stages lead from repentance, fear, asceticism, and patience to higher levels of gratitude, trust, love, and intimacy. In this tradition, a process of struggle, which could be considered *taqwā* (fear of God, piety, moral conscience), gives way to the mystical realm of *kashf* or *maʿrifa* (disclosure, unveiling, or gnosis) at the further stages of personal development to which the struggle was a necessary prelude.³⁵

In Shāh Walī Allāh's model, the limit of the individual form or identity is represented by the *laṭīfa akhfā*, identified with the Rational Soul, marking the point of transition between the middle and the highest circle of *laṭāʿif*. In one of the more

³¹ In Arabic, *al-ḥajar al-baht*. This term has been translated by J. M. S. Baljon and Annemarie Schimmel as "The Philosopher's Stone"; literally it means "the perplexing stone." The Sufi understanding of *al-ḥajar al-baht* as transforming matter into spirit may have an alchemical connection.

³² H. S. Nyberg, *Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-ʿArabī* (Leiden, 1919).

³³ Shāh Walī Allāh, *Alāf al-Quds*, p. 134.

³⁴ Idem, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*, vol. 1 (Arabic text), pp. 105–20.

³⁵ Ira M. Lapidus, "Knowledge, Virtue, and Action: The Classical Muslim Conception of Adab and the Nature of Religious Fulfillment in Islam," in Barbara Daly Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct and Authority* (Berkeley, 1984), pp. 38–61. This is a very helpful summary of ethical theory in the Islamic tradition. Lapidus notes in this context, "A good Muslim strives for ethical self-control, but the mystical virtues flourish only by passive acceptance of God's will" (p. 49).

extensive passages concerning the workings of the Concealed Centers, Shāh Walī Allāh writes:

The characteristics of the Arcane Laṭīfa (*khafī*) which is like a covering over the Greater Selfhood (*al-anāniyya al-kubrā*), are the realization (*maʿrifa*) of the flowing of the One Reality through all existent things and what is connected to this [flowing]. The properties of the Greater Selfhood are the appearance of its subsistence (*qayyūmiyya*) in the whole universe and its viewing itself as "Self-subsistence" (*al-qiyām*) and that it is an angel in the angel and a stone in the stone and a tree in the tree, and so on in very many further instances.

The properties of the Light of the Holy (*nūr al-quds*) are the knowledge of the arguing of the Highest Host³⁶ and the [Divine] decree descending there. The properties of the Philosophers' Stone (*ḥajar-i-baht*) are fading, without (our) knowing how (*bi-lā-kaifa*), into the Greatest Theophany,³⁷ so that the nature of the person becomes one of the limbs of the Truth (God), and his Lower Soul becomes superfluous like an extra finger and nothing else

The Super Arcane (*akhfā*) is the lowest of all (of the Concealed *Laṭāʿif*). Above it on the right side is the Light of the Holy and above it the Philosophers' Stone, as if the Philosophers' Stone is the refinement of the Light of the Holy and as if it follows purification and progress. On the left side of the *Akhfā*, lying above it, is the Arcane, and above it the Greater Selfhood, as if it follows purification and progress; similar to what we mentioned concerning the Heart and [its relationship to] the Spirit, and the Intelligence and [its relationship to] the Mystery; and the Divine Essence is above all.³⁸

From reading the description of the centers located around the circumference of the circle of the Concealed *Laṭāʿif*, we understand that we are to perceive it as composed as two sides, the left and the right (see fig. 4). These sides represent for Shāh Walī Allāh the paths of Saintship and that of Prophethood, or more properly, since prophecy ended with the Prophet Muhammad, the path of Prophetic Inheritance or Transmission (*wirātha al-nubuwwa*).

Embodied in Walī Allāh's depiction of these paths is the question of the respective roles of the two spiritual types and their ranks. This topic, combined with the analysis of the meaning of annihilation (*fanā*) and subsistence (*baqā*) was hotly debated among the scholars and mystics of the Indian subcontinent. Those who held that the path of saintship, associated with the annihilation of self in the Divine Essence, was superior believed that the saint remained close to his divine origin, and they tended to support the philosophy of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, or the Unity of Existence.³⁹ Those who followed Sirhindī in emphasizing the superiority of the prophetic path on the basis that the prophet descends further into the world so that in his ascent he can perform a significant transformative function, supported the philosophy of *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, or

³⁶ These references to the arguing of the Highest angels and the Divine decree are part of the theory of *qaḍāʾ* (decree) and *qadar* (predestination). *Qaḍāʾ* refers to God's Divine decree which has ordered the arrangement of existing things. *Qadar* applies to individual destiny or God's measurement connected with things at particular moments. According to this, God's decree of what will come to be is passed down to the earth through the successive ranks of angels, or, in another version, the decree emanates from the Divine Essence and passes down through the World of Images to manifest in the physical

world. See my "Shāh Walī Allāh's Theory of Religion," pp. 17–19, for further discussion.

³⁷ The Greatest Theophany—"al-ṭajallī al-aʿzam." This refers to the original Divine emanation, or the first level of God's differentiation, without any limit or qualification.

³⁸ Shāh Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 1, p. 244.

³⁹ See the detailed discussion of Ibn ʿArabī's concept of saintship, M. Chodkiewicz, *Le Sceau des saints: Prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn ʿArabī* (Paris, 1986).

SHĀH WALĪ ALLĀH'S DEPICTION OF SPIRITUAL PATHS
IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF THE HIDDEN LAṬĀʾIF

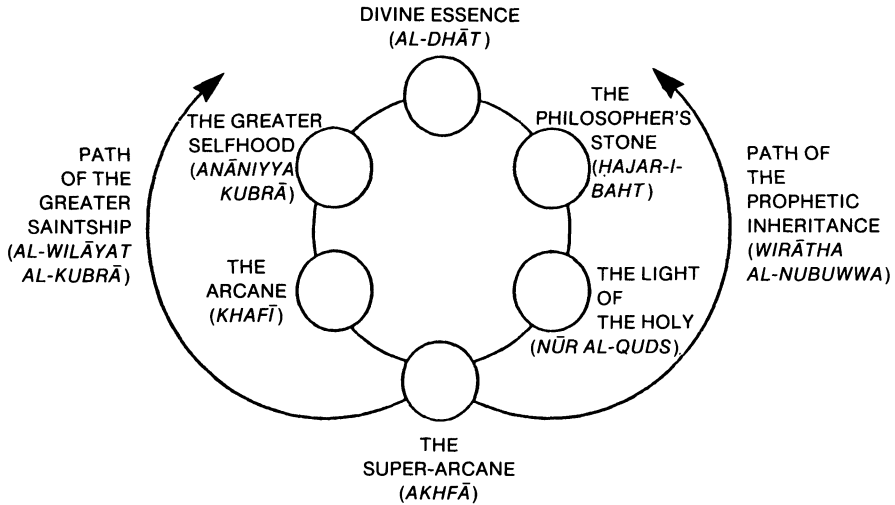


FIG. 4.—Based on the diagram in Shāh Walī-Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 1, p. 244

the Unity of Experience. This philosophy stressed the basic existential distinction of God and the world.⁴⁰ Shāh Walī Allāh tried to mediate these two approaches by affirming that their differences existed at a more superficial level and that at the most profound level the two systems were in agreement. His way of conceptualizing the spiritual paths of the Concealed Centers therefore reflects his metaphysical position on this issue. In fact, one may speculate that the models of the spiritual centers of Sirhindī and Walī Allāh are more elaborate than anything previous, in part because they are designed to map out stages of both descent and ascent. Shāh Walī Allāh, by indicating a left and right side to his model of the parts of a human person, as well as his model for the traversal of the spiritual path, graphically depicts this mediation, since he does not have to position prophecy above saintship or vice versa. Rather, each path (right and left) must be traveled, and each is situated at the same level of the hierarchy.^{40a}

According to Walī Allāh, the Philosophers' Stone and the Light of the Holy are centers connected with the path of the Prophetic Inheritance. This is the path which Shāh Walī Allāh symbolically associates with the movement of descent from the Divine Essence. Note that it is on this right side that he locates the emanation or descent of the Greatest Theophany (*al-tajallī al-aʿzam*)⁴¹ of God and the descent of

⁴⁰ See Rahman, *Selected Letters of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī*, passim.

^{40a} While the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddiyya diagram also has two sides depicted at the level of the highest circle, these are not so readily associated with the distinct paths of prophecy and saintship (see fig. 2). Rather, they represent aspects of prophecy, since

according to Naqshbandī theory, they are designated as the "divine realities," i.e., prayer, the Qurʾān, the Kaʿba, or as realities of individual prophets. A central path on the Naqshbandī diagram, that of the *qayyūm*, was reserved for the select among the order, such as Ahmad Sirhindī and his descendants.

⁴¹ See nn. 36 and 37, above.

God's decrees (*qadar*) communicated through the Highest Angels (*al-mala' al-^ᶜalā*). Further evidence in this regard concerns his description of the *laṭīfa*, "Light of the Holy." In his early work, *Hama'āt*, Walī Allāh says that this *laṭīfa* represents that aspect of the soul which receives an imprint from the highest circle of the angels. He associates the name of the center "Nūr al-Quds" with the "light" (*nūr*) of God's guidance—"a light to which he guides whom He will" (24:35)—and the "light upon light" of the Light Verse of the Qur'ān. Similar references may be traced to Ibn 'Arabī's treatise *al-Tadbīrāt*, cited above. In fact, Ibn 'Arabī's text supplies further clues to Shāh Walī Allāh's understanding of the function of this *laṭīfa*, since it mentions that the secret of destiny (*qadar*) is related to the two lights, one by which God guides and the one to which man is guided. The idea of the "two lights" and their relationship to one another is a Qur'ānic exegesis popular in Sufī thought as a metaphor for the mystical realization of Divine light which is projected to the human being and in fact needs to realize itself there. Ibn 'Arabī refers to this light imagery in an interpretation of the Light Verse of the Qur'ān, which finds an echo in Shāh Walī Allāh's understanding of the *laṭīfa* "Light of the Holy" and its connection to destiny.

Then when the light by which He guides conjoins the light to which one is guided, the person sees the realm of the heavens and the earth and he perceives the secret of destiny (*qadar*)—how it controls created things—and this is His, may He be exalted, saying: "Light upon Light" (24:35).⁴²

The Philosophers' Stone (*al-ḥajar al-baht*), a center often alluded to by Shāh Walī Allāh, particularly in the context of the Prophetic experience, is also found in Ibn 'Arabī's work. In an unpublished letter, Walī Allāh makes his source explicit by recounting that in the works of Ibn 'Arabī the name—"perplexing stone" (*ḥajar-i-baht*)—is applied to this *laṭīfa* because of its marvelous and perplexing nature. Originally, the *ḥajar-i-baht* indicated a mysterious substance which used to be presented as a gift to princes and nobles. It could not be classified as vegetable, mineral, and so on, and this *laṭīfa* similarly possesses amazing properties.⁴³ Ibn 'Arabī, in his treatise *al-Tadbīrāt*, discusses the Philosophers' Stone as one of the human "stones" (*aḥjār*), using stone in the sense of "jewel," jewels (*jawāhir*) being a term used by other Sufis to refer to the *laṭā'if*. According to Ibn 'Arabī, the Philosophers' Stone is

an essential point in the heart, equivalent to the pupil in the eye which is the locus of vision . . . ; if there is rust on the heart the existence of this stone will not be manifest. All of the spirits (*arwāḥ*) which are in the human being, such as Intelligence and others, anticipate the witnessing of this point. Thus, when the heart becomes polished through meditation, *dhikr*, and [Qur'ān] recitation then this point will become apparent. When it manifests that in it which parallels the essential presence of God, there spreads out from that point a light because of the theophany, and it flows to all corners of the physical body and perplexes the mind and more. Then the light and its rays fill this stone, dazzling them.⁴⁴

Later in the same passage, Ibn 'Arabī associates this experience with the mystical state of subsistence (*baqā*), a state which is connected with the role of the prophet,

⁴² Nyberg, *Kleinere Schriften*, p. 221. A brief *tafsīr* of the "Light Verse" is found in Shāh Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 2, pp. 63–64.

⁴³ *Maktūbātī-Dinī wa 'Ilmī*, unpublished letters

of Shāh Walī Allāh. Microfilm from Indian Institute of Islamic Studies, New Delhi.

⁴⁴ Nyberg, *Kleinere Schriften*, pp. 216–17.

again confirming Walī Allāh's association of this *laṭīfa* with the side of his model representing "Prophetic Inheritance."

It should be noted that these centers on the side of "Prophetic Inheritance" are placed along the path of the Greatest Theophany (*al-tajallī al-a^czam*)—the primal movement of descent from God into manifestation, according to the emanationist model. Here again we have prophecy associated with descent into the world, echoing a major theme of Sirhindī and his followers that the prophet descends further into the world than the saint in order to transform it.

The saint, on the other hand, is associated with the state of *fanā*, or the annihilation of identity or self-consciousness into the greater level of the Divine Presence. Shāh Walī Allāh associates the two *laṭā^ʿif*, the Greater Selfhood (*anāniyya kubrā*) and the Arcane (*khafī*), with this spiritual experience. The term *anāniyya kubrā* (Greater Selfhood) does not seem to be found in the classical tradition. *Anāniyya*, "Selfhood" or "I-ness," which seems to be interchangeable with *anā^ʿiyya* in the sense of "I-ness," is found as early as the ecstatic sayings of Bistāmī (d. 874).⁴⁵ *Anāniyya*, in modern Arabic, can have the negative connotation "selfishness" or "egotism," which is clearly not Shāh Walī Allāh's intention here. Simnānī used the term *anā^ʿiyya* in the context of his association of prophets with the various spiritual centers (*laṭā^ʿif*). In Simnānī's discussion, the Heart was associated with Prophet Abraham, while the "Seal" of the person was the "true" center or *ḥaqqiyya* which is associated with Muhammad. He called this interior seed of the heart the *anā^ʿiyya* or "true I-ness."⁴⁶ *Anāniyya* as used by Jāmī (d. 1492) implied a personal selfhood which fades into that of the Prophet and then into the Divine along the lines of the Sufi theory of progressive stages of annihilation (*fanā*) in the aspirant's guide (*shaikh*), the Prophet, and finally Allah.⁴⁷

Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā (d. 1420), a disciple of Bahāuddīn Naqshband, describes the *laṭīfa* called *anāniyya* as a uniquely human possession which mirrors the theophanies of God. According to Pārsā, the Sufi's states of annihilation (*fanā*) or subsistence (*baqa*) depend on this *laṭīfa*.⁴⁸

Shāh Walī Allāh follows a Naqshbandī teaching in explaining two types of *fanā* while mentioning the *anāniyya laṭīfa*. The two types of *fanā* are the annihilation of the tenebrous existence (*fanā al-wujūd al-zulmānī*) and the annihilation of the spiritual existence (*fanā al-wujūd al-rūḥānī*). According to Shāh Walī Allāh, the first annihilation (of the tenebrous existence) takes place when the material components of the person, then the centers Heart and Intelligence come under the control of the centers Spirit and Mystery. The higher achievement of "annihilation of the spiritual existence" occurs at the level of the hidden *laṭā^ʿif* when the Greater Selfhood (*al-anāniyya al-kubrā*) gains ascendancy over the person so that his lesser selfhood melts away. This movement upward traces the "path of saintship."⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Cited in Soheil M. Afnan, *A Philosophical Lexicon in Persian and Arabic* (Beirut, 1968), p. 14.

⁴⁶ H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien* (Paris, 1972), vol. 3, pp. 279–81; see also H. Landolt, "Deux opuscules de Semnānī sur le moi théophanique," in Seyyid Hossein Nasr, ed., *Mélanges offerts à Henry Corbin* (Tehran, 1977), pp. 279–319.

⁴⁷ Cited in Afnan, *Philosophical Lexicon*, p. 14.

⁴⁸ Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā, *Tuḥfat al-Salikin* (Delhi, n.d.), p. 363. Pārsā's works were known to

Shāh Walī Allāh, and he is cited by name in *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 1, p. 242. Shāh Walī Allāh further explains that the Greater Selfhood (*al-anāniyya al-kubrā*) at the macrocosmic level is the Universal Soul's self-knowledge while the Lesser Selfhood (*al-anāniyya al-ṣuḡhrā*) consists of self-knowledge on the part of souls possessing volition, i.e., angels, people, animals, and *jinn*. See *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 1, *Tafhīm*, no. 39, p. 139.

⁴⁹ *Al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 1, p. 304.

Both the Arcane (*khafī*) and the Greater Selfhood are associated with the path of saintship and the process of ascent and ultimate annihilation in the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kullīyya*). The concept "Universal Soul" in Walī Allāh's thought represents the Macrocosmic World Soul which receives God's first emanation. From this Universal Soul emerge the genus, species, and, finally, the individual souls like bubbles emerging from an ocean.

Shāh Walī Allāh's placing the Arcane (*khafī*) above the Super- or Most-Arcane (*akhfā*) is initially puzzling (see again fig. 4). He explains the apparent discrepancy or departure from tradition in the following passage:

If you say, "If the Super Arcane is lower than the rest of the Concealed *Laṭāʿif* then why is it called the *Super Arcane*?"

I reply that it is called the Super Arcane because the comprehensive general knowledge which is obtained from [following] the two courses [the paths of progress towards Divine Essence] together, is only achieved after the two courses. The traveller on the mystic path arrives only after completing both of them, and therefore it [the *akhfā*-being at the foot of each path] is called the "Super Arcane."⁵⁰

The Manifest Laṭāʿif (al-laṭāʿif al-bāriza)

These manifest *laṭāʿif* are the components of the middle circle which represents the place where the divine and the earthly or material aspects of the person are mediated through the development and ultimate transcendence of individuality. This middle circle represents the arena of voluntary self-transformation. Another way of expressing this is that for Shāh Walī Allāh the middle circle is understood to depict the human person in tension between the angelic or higher forces attracting him from above and the material or animalistic component of his being pulling him from below. The tension between the angelic and the animalistic forces figures prominently in Shāh Walī Allāh's theory of virtue and the attainment of happiness.⁵¹

This tension and the means for mediating it are reflected in his positioning of the three circles of *laṭāʿif* so that the level of the centers correlative to a person's individuality, his emotions (heart) and intelligence (*ʿaql*), is found between the heavenly spirit and the material circle of the four elements. A development of Shāh Walī Allāh's model, which builds on previous Sufi depictions of the *laṭāʿif*, is his elaboration of the middle circle as an area for the expression of individual intelligence, emotional sensitivity, and will so as to enable the person to successfully integrate and balance the demands of his other components.

This basic understanding of the dynamic of the human condition persists even today among Muslim communities from Morocco to Indonesia.⁵² Anthropologist Richard Kurin, in his studies among Pakistani Muslims, found that their common understanding of personhood envisioned three separate but intersecting domains: *rūḥ*, *ʿaql*, and *nafs* (spirit, reason, and body).⁵³ While angels are said to have a *rūḥ* but no

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 245.

⁵¹ Shāh Walī Allāh, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*, vol. 1, pp. 40–57; idem, *Alḥāf al-Quds*, pp. 51 ff.

⁵² Laurence Rosen, *Bargaining for Reality* (Chi-

cago, 1984), pp. 30–47.

⁵³ Richard Kurin, "Person, Family, and Kin in Two Pakistani Communities" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1981).

nafs, animals have *nafs* without a *rūḥ*.⁵⁴ Man, being the only creature with reason able to discriminate between good and evil, functions at all three levels during life in this world. Kurin suggests the following diagram of the relationship of these components in this life (fig. 5).⁵⁵

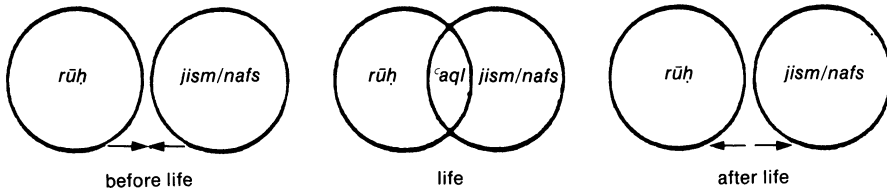


FIG. 5.—Components of personhood in the life process (after diagram by R. Kurin, in his article in B. D. Metcalf, *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* [Berkeley, 1984]).

While the Qurʾānic or theological formulation echoed in “popular” Islam stresses resolution of the tension between matter and spirit in the afterlife, the Sufis and philosophers who drew on teleological ethics in the Greek tradition (*akhlāq*) portrayed it as attainable by developed persons during the earthly phase of existence. This confidence in an ultimate resolution facilitated Shāh Walī Allāh’s reconciliation of monistic (*wujūdī*) and dualistic (*shuhūdī*) views.

Comparing Shāh Walī Allāh’s middle circle with the Naqshbandī model (see figs. 1, 2, and 3), one sees that he has modified it by adding the Intelligence (*ʿaql*) as a new center and has removed the Arcane to the topmost circle.

At the top of the middle circle Shāh Walī Allāh has placed the Super-Arcane. This center, according to his thought, corresponds to the Rational Soul, which is the source of the individuality of the person while transmitting the characteristics of the specific form. At the bottom of this circle is the Lower Soul (*nafs*) or the Bodily Mold (*qalab*). Each of these topmost and lowest centers symbolically marks a transition point in the schema of personhood—the Rational Soul, between the human and the Divine or angelic, and the Lower Soul, between the psychological (*nafsānī*) and the natural (*ṭabʿī*), material functions of the person.

The descriptions of the centers around the circumference of the middle circle indicate that, as in the case of the topmost circle, it should be perceived as composed of two sides or paths: the left and the right. On our left is placed the center, Intelligence (*ʿaql*), and above it the Mystery (*sirr*). On the right side is found the Heart (*qalb*) and above it the Spirit (*rūḥ*).⁵⁶

Shāh Walī Allāh specifies that the Mystery (*sirr*) represents a higher aspect or refinement of the Intelligence, after it has given up earthly inclinations, just as the Spirit (*rūḥ*) represents a further refinement of the qualities of the Heart (*qalb*) *laṭīfa*. Therefore, his arrangement of the *laṭīʿif* around the circle symbolizes this affinity and

⁵⁴ Idem, “Morality, Personhood, and the Exemplary Life: Personal Conceptions of Muslims in Paradise,” in Barbara Daly Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in*

South Asian Islam (Berkeley, 1984), pp. 196–220.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁵⁶ Shāh Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 1, p. 244.

hierarchy and at the same time indicates the paths which an aspirant might follow in order to progress upward towards the Divine Essence.

The Circle of the Created World (ʿālam al-khalq)

Following the description of the text, one would expect the lowest level, which is said to consist of the Mold (*qalab*), or Lower Soul (*nafs*), and the four elements, to follow the same pattern as those above. In *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya* and his other works, this circle is not depicted, and the diagram in figure 3 has been constructed on the basis of passages in several works.

This arrangement is based on sympathetic correspondences among the elements. Shāh Walī Allāh notes in a letter to his disciple Muḥammad ʿĀshiq of Phulat that his association of the elements differs from that of the Sirhindī Shaikhs (the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya).⁵⁷ In their model, the arrangement of *laṭāʿif* and elements was asymmetrical, and the Heart (*qalb*), in particular, was not associated with an element. Walī Allāh rectified this omission by associating the Heart with the element earth, the Spirit with water, the Mystery with fire,⁵⁸ and the Intelligence, as in other traditional ethno-sciences such as *ṭibb* or astrology, with air. A right/left axis is maintained in the circle, for the pairs fire/air and earth/water are elements having affinities to one another according to ethno-sciences such as *ṭibb* and astrology.

In his arrangement of the elements at the level of the physical world, Shāh Walī Allāh positions them in accordance with the themes of descent (prophecy) and ascent (sainthood) depicted at higher levels. Thus the elements fire and air are on the side of the diagram beneath the Intelligence, Mystery, and the Hidden *Laṭāʿif* of the “Path of Sainthood,” the Arcane and Greater Selfhood. Appropriately, the images of air and fire in their activities evoke the ascent motif. By comparison, earth and water, on the other side of the model, lie beneath the Heart and Spirit, as well as on the side of the highest centers of the “Path of the Prophetic Inheritance.” The images of water and earth correspond to the motif of descent rather than ascent. Likewise, the *laṭīfa* Spirit (*rūḥ*) is associated with the motif of God’s breathing His spirit into humanity (Qurʾān 15:29), again mirroring the movement of descent.

Progress through the Laṭāʿif

Shāh Walī Allāh’s model of the *laṭāʿif* includes a theory of how progress is made from one *laṭīfa* to the next. In the lower levels, this involves harmonizing and balancing the physical components through a proper cooperation of the Intelligence, Heart, and *Nafs* (Lower Soul). The Divine Law (*sharīʿa*) is designed to bring all persons into this proper state, and progress beyond this stage is not required of any person in order to achieve individual resurrection and reward in heaven, for it is recognized that only certain special persons will be drawn to the path of higher development.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ In the unpublished letters of Shāh Walī Allāh, *Maktūbāt-i-Dīnī-va-ʿIlmī* being prepared for publication by the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies, Tughlaqabad, India. Letter no. 51 to his disciple

Muḥammad ʿĀshiq.

⁵⁸ *Maktūbāt-i-Dīnī-va-ʿIlmī*, letter no. 88 to Bābā ʿUthmān.

⁵⁹ Shāh Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-Quds*, p. 134.

Beyond these initial requirements, common to all humans, is the cultivation of the *rūḥ* (Spirit) and the *sirr* (Mystery, Secret), the respective higher attunements of the Heart and Intelligence. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, the cultivation of these *laṭāʿif* was first taught by the early Sufis, such as Junayd.⁶⁰ Since the capacity to awaken the *laṭāʿif* has developed in human spiritual history, this helps to explain successive religious revelations and why Sufi teachings have continued to elaborate further the Islamic *sharīʿa*.⁶¹ In a discussion of some Sufi practices, Shāh Walī Allāh describes the way to purify the Spirit (*rūḥ*) as the observance of ritual purity at all times, Qurʾān recitation, mystical exercises, and cultivating an intuitive relationship with the souls of the saints. The Mystery (*sirr*) is awakened by contemplating God's attributes, meditating on His names and silent and wordless *dhikr* (remembrance of the divine names and attributes).⁶² It can be seen that Walī Allāh associates practices of a more "mental" nature with the *sirr*, which is, of course, related to the center *ʿaql* (Intelligence) rather than Heart (emotion).

In *Alṭāf al-Quds*, he observes that there are three ways to recognize the cultivation (*tahdhīb*) of the *laṭāʿif*:

(1) once this is achieved, the person will find delight and pleasure in the things specific to each *laṭīfa*;

(2) he may exhibit particular behavior and a developmental stage specific to a certain *laṭīfa*. Thus, the man of certainty has mastered the Intelligence, while the person of ecstasy and longing has mastered the Heart, and so on;

(3) a person may see visions (*waqīʿāt*) which demonstrate that certain *laṭāʿif* have been cultivated or purified.⁶³

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, the Seeker, after completing the journey through the spiritual centers, finally is dominated by the same *laṭīfa* which was originally strongest in his nature (*fiṭra*). Thus, one whose Heart is strong will primarily master states of ecstasy, longing, and disquietude, even though all of his *laṭāʿif* have been completely awakened.⁶⁴

The means of cultivating *laṭāʿif* beyond the *rūḥ* and *sirr* is not gone into in detail by Shāh Walī Allāh, but it apparently occurs through gnostic contemplation leading to loss of self in the universal, rather than in overcoming conflict through spiritual practices enjoined to curb animalistic tendencies. This concurs with his metaphysical explanation that conflict at lower stages is later superseded by the attraction of the one universal force or beneficial purpose (*maṣlaḥa kullīyya*).

In his description of the Sufi terms *fanā* (annihilation) and *baqā* (subsistence), as well as the states (*aḥwāl*) and the stages (*maqāmāt*), Shāh Walī Allāh incorporates his understanding of the *laṭāʿif*. He explains that if the person attends to his worship over

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 72.

⁶¹ See, for example, idem, *Alṭāf al-Quds*, p. 111; *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 168–69.

⁶² Idem, *Alṭāf al-Quds*, pp. 108–9.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 108. Some of these teachings may be drawn from the Chishti tradition of spiritual training in which Shāh Walī Allāh was an initiate. For example, in *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 1, p. 138, he mentions a Chishti cosmology of *dhikr* based on the three worlds or realms of *Malakūt*, *Jabarūt*, and

Lāhūt. The fruit of refining the *rūḥ* which is intimacy and joy represents God opening *Malakūt* to the aspirant. *Jabarūt* is opened when the influence of the Arcane overwhelms him producing the vision of God in the creation and the creation in God (*al-ḥaqq*). The level of *Lāhūt* is opened when the refinement of the Super-Arcane is achieved.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 109. A similar idea is found in al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 371.

time, each of the centers will absorb its portion of this worship, and the naturally low animalistic attributes will change to virtuous angelic ones. When these attributes become firmly established, the person's acts will continuously manifest them, and then they are called "the stages" (*maqāmāt*). On the other hand, if these attributes appear on occasion and then fade away and do not last for very long, they are called "states" (*aḥwāl*) or "moments" (*awqāt*).⁶⁵

Shāh Walī Allāh's description of the initial stages of progress and the aptitudes of spiritual aspirants based on the natural preponderance of their *laṭāʿif* follows the synthesis of Sufi manuals with Aristotelian theories of the soul. At the level of basic functioning, the Lower Soul (*nafs*) looks after physical requirements, the Heart is responsible for emotions and judgments based on its response of attraction or repulsion, and the Intellect recollects the past and plans for the future. At the moral level, if the Lower Soul or the Heart comes to dominate the Intellect this will lead to problems of character and behavior.

Integrating his theory of levels of the spirit with a further set of Sufi categories based on the Greek theory of types of souls, Walī Allāh notes that if the *Pneuma* (*nasama*) of the person becomes dominated by his physical and bodily needs, his Lower Soul (*nafs*) will become animalistic (*nafs bahimiyya*).

If it is able to free itself from this domination and respond to the brain and heart, his Lower Soul will become "human." Once the *Pneuma* comes under the influence and dominion of the two higher levels of the Spirit, the Rational Soul and the Heavenly or Angelic Spirit, the Lower Soul becomes "angelic." When this level is attained, the middle circle of the Manifest *Laṭāʿif* comes into operation.

Returning to the three lowest of the "Manifest *Laṭāʿif*"—the Lower Soul, Heart, and Intelligence—each of these centers is correlated with one of the three levels of the Spirit. Thus the Lower Soul is described as having stronger relationship with the *Pneuma*, the Intelligence with the Rational Soul, and the Heart with the Heavenly or Angelic Spirit.⁶⁶

The tension between the animalistic and the angelic components of the person figures prominently in Shāh Walī Allāh's theory of virtue and morality⁶⁷ and is implicit in his theory of the *laṭāʿif*. According to his conception, these components in each individual will tend to interact in a relationship of either cooperation (*iṣṭilāḥ*) or mutual contention (*tajādhub*). There are also further permutations of these forces, such as one being by nature stronger than the other in a given individual. For Walī Allāh the respective strengths and combinations of these factors produce types of individuals who will be susceptible to various sorts of spiritual and moral disciplines.⁶⁸

He follows traditional Sufi categories in his explanation of the terminology, based on the Qurʾān, of the Soul which either "commands to evil" (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi'l-sūʾ*) (12:52), blames (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*) (75:2), or is content and at peace (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*) (89:27). If the animalistic side dominates a person to the extreme, he may reach a point where his Lower Soul (*nafs*) "commands evil." If both of the angelic

⁶⁵ Shāh Walī Allāh, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*, vol. 2 (Delhi, 1953), p. 91.

⁶⁶ Idem, *Alṭāf al-Quds*, pp. 32, 33.

⁶⁷ See Sabih Ahmad Kamālī, "The Concept of

Human Nature in *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*" (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 1960).

⁶⁸ Described in Shāh Walī Allāh, *Hamaʿāt* (Hyderabad, 1964).

and animalistic forces are operative, he will make moral efforts to control or check his impulses, thus embodying the “blaming” quality of the Lower Soul. Finally, if the angelic component overcomes the animalistic, his Heart is transformed to the level of Spirit (*rūh*), and the Lower Soul becomes peaceful (*muṭmaʿinna*).

It has been seen previously that the idea of conflict and cooperation is central in his thought. This is repeated in his explanation of the Sufi concepts of *fanā* (annihilation) and *baqā* (subsistence). According to Shāh Walī Allāh, if a person’s *laṭāʿif* interact in a confused way so that they mingle or bond with one another, the result is intoxication or passion in the personality, leading to a spiritual state of annihilation (*fanā*), i.e., loss of self-control or self-awareness. However, if each of the *laṭāʿif* operates in its proper jurisdiction, it will remain independent but assist the others in their functions. This will ultimately lead to the spiritual state of subsistence (*baqā*) in which he subsists in sobriety and constancy.⁶⁹

The discussion of categories such as *fanā* vs. *baqā*, or intoxication vs. sobriety, was germane to a fundamental debate among the Sufi theorists concerning the relative status of the path of saintship vs. that of prophecy. In discussing the highest level of the Concealed *Laṭāʿif*, Shāh Walī Allāh does not speak of cultivating these centers through performing specific practices for their awakening, thus his depiction of the respective paths of saintship and prophecy through them serves a conceptual rather than a practical intent. He explains that a spiritual aspirant’s temperament would incline either to the path of Prophetic Inheritance or to the path of Saintship—according to whether his animalistic and angelic components interacted in a relationship of “cooperation” (*iṣṭilāh*) or “mutual contention” (*tajādhub*). He held that the path of saintship was for those of lofty soul whose two components were in conflict with each other.⁷⁰ An interpretation of his thought on this point is that the “angelic” or “saintly” type of person rejects his physical side and in doing so tends to lose his earthly identity. This accords with the interpretation of Sirhindī and his followers that the saint is one who does not care to descend so far into the physical world.

As a corollary, the type of person who is able to harmonize both aspects of his nature, and thus can function in the physical world to carry out God’s decrees on earth, is most suited to be heir to the prophetic transmission.

Consistent with his efforts to mediate between the two poles of Sufi thought, Shāh Walī Allāh favors the integration of both paths, that of prophetic inheritance (*wirātha al-nubuwwa*) and saintship (*wilāya*) to produce the “Inspired Person” (*muḥaddath*).⁷¹ In his earlier works he used the title “one who is instructed” (*mufahham*) to indicate this level of integration of both paths.⁷² In *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha* the *mufahhamūn* are models for those who correct their bestial or animalistic side but do not totally cut

⁶⁹ Idem, *Alīf al-Quds*, passim.

⁷⁰ Shāh Walī Allāh, *Hamaʿāt*, p. 113.

⁷¹ Idem, *Alīf al-Quds*, pp. 34, 35. This term is considered significant by Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Khaṭm al-Auliyaʿ* (Beirut, 1965).

⁷² Idem, *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 2, p. 146, *tafhīm* no. 122, “Being instructed (*tafhīm*) is the lot

of the Inspired One (*muḥaddath*). God the Exalted said, ‘We made Solomon understand it’ [Qurʾān 21:79] and the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, ‘There were among those before you people who were inspired without being Prophets, and if there are any in my community, it is ʿUmar.’” See also idem, *Hamaʿāt*, pp. 110–11.

it off; thus they can continue to fulfill a prophetic mission by reforming people and society in a practical way.⁷³

According to Walī Allāh, the path of Prophetic Inheritance (*wirātha al-nubuwwa*) takes place through the attraction of the highest level of the spirit from the World of Dominion (*rūḥ al-malakūtī*), and the person in this case attains annihilation (*fanā*) in the Holy Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-quds*). This path involves receiving inspirations from the Angelic Host through the Holy Spirit, which communicates to the prophets.⁷⁴

The path of Sainthood, on the other hand, passes through Minor Sainthood (*al-wilāyat al-ṣuḡhrā*), which is attained through cultivating the manifest spiritual centers, to Major or Greater Sainthood (*al-wilāyat al-kubrā*). Through the attraction of the Rational Soul, the seeker passes beyond Major Sainthood, to annihilation in the "Greater Selfhood" (*al-anāniyya al-kubrā*) and final reabsorption into the Universal Soul (*al-naḥs al-kulliyya*) underlying the cosmos.⁷⁵

The highest level of attainment, the integration of the saintly and the prophetic paths embodied in the person of the "Instructed One" (*mufahham*), or the "Inspired One" (*muḥaddath*), would be situated at the pinnacle of the highest circle, the place of one who had interiorized both paths. He combines both the saintly and the prophetic mode by communicating the formal aspects of causality represented by the Universal Soul working through the Greater Selfhood (the path of Sainthood) and the (prophetic) implementation of the divine decree revealed through the agency of the angels. This represents the meeting point of causality expressed in historical time and the awareness of its transcendent, eternal source.

Shāh Walī Allāh goes further than the previous tradition in presenting sacred history as the realization or even expansion of potentials inherent in the subtle spiritual centers. In this he correlates the development of *laṭā'if* with phases of progress in human spiritual history. Previous Sufis associated the various *laṭā'if* with specific colors and qualities, and, in time, *laṭā'if* were also linked with the succession of prophets and their spiritual attributes. Sufis who drew inspiration from a particular prophet might perform exercises of concentration on the spiritual centers connected with him. This influence was sometimes referred to as a *mashrab*, or source of inspiration; for example, the Musavī Mashrab would indicate the way of Moses.

An example of one of the more detailed associations of prophets with spiritual centers is found in Alā'uddaula Simnānī (d. 1336):

One may also recall the list developed by the Kubrawi mystic Simnānī, who connects the seven prophets with the seven *laṭā'if* or spiritual centers of man: the Adam of man's being, connected with black color, is the *qalabiyya*, the outward, formal aspect; Noah (blue color), the aspect of the *naḥs*, the Lower soul; Abraham (red color), the aspect of the heart; Moses (white color), the aspect of the *sirr*, the innermost core of the heart; David (yellow color), the spiritual (*rūḥī*) aspect; Jesus (luminous black), the innermost secret (*khafī*); and Muhammad (green color), the

⁷³ A clear statement on this is found in Baljon, "The Ethics of Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlavī (1703–1762)," in *Acts of the VIIIth Congress of Arabists and Orientalists* (Göttingen, 1976), pp. 69–70.

⁷⁴ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 379.

⁷⁵ As illustrated in his depiction of the highest circle (see fig. 4).

haqqiyya, the point connected with divine reality. According to these theories, the mystics who had reached the green after passing the luminous black is the "true Muhammadan."⁷⁶

Shāh Walī Allāh correlates the *laṭāʿif* and the series of prophets in a historically developmental way. In his mythic explanation of the progressive awakening of human spirituality in *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, he describes the relationship of the microcosmic world of man (*al-ʿālam al-saghīr*) to parallel developments at the level of the Macrocosm (*al-ʿālam al-kabīr*). According to his description, at the creation of Adam, God emanated the ideal human form with three spiritual centers, the Heart, Intelligence, and the Lower Soul, as its foundation.

As the human species progressed and man's spiritual capacity developed, Muhammad came as the seal of this (the Adamic) age and the opener of a new era—elaborating and explicating the first one. Therefore, at the time of Muhammad, "God's glance of mercy" turned to the higher *laṭāʿif*, the *rūḥ* (spirit) and *sirr* (mystery).⁷⁷ These were then awakened at the level of the ideal form of the human species.

This permitted further spiritual development which continued without a new revelation so that in the time of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) the possibility of awakening the Arcane *laṭīfa* (*Khafī*) (one of the Hidden *laṭāʿif*) was granted by God. At this time, "the People of Guidance," i.e., the Sufis, were inspired with the unity of God (*tauḥīd*) and the fading of the world into the One Reality."⁷⁸ This refers to Ibn ʿArabī's development of the philosophy of the Unity of Existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and indicates also how highly Ibn ʿArabī was ranked by Shāh Walī Allāh.

Finally, Shāh Walī Allāh himself was designated by God as the spokesman and wise man of the era in which the final centers, "the Philosopher's Stone" (*ḥajar-i-baht*) and "Selfhood" (*anāniyya*) *laṭāʿif*, might be awakened.⁷⁹

While previous Sufi theories featured an interiorization of prophetic modes and qualities, Shāh Walī Allāh reverses the direction of this process in a movement of exteriorization from the developed person, so that transformation of the one individual body in history can influence the ideal form which in turn expands the potential of all persons.⁸⁰ Although mystical in cosmology and conception, an underlying message is the capacity of individual effort to transform the world.

This is but one aspect of the theory of *laṭāʿif* which evokes a mood of reform and heightened individual responsibility. Another element which could be construed as prefiguring later reformist ideology is Walī Allāh's integration of the path of prophetic inheritance with that of sainthood, so that the key to an individual's highest spiritual fulfillment lies in following the way of the Prophet. Shāh Walī Allāh expounded the

⁷⁶ The "Holy Spirit" (*al-rūḥ al-quds*) is usually identified in Islamic tradition with the angel Gabriel and the level of Malakūt with the angelic realm.

⁷⁷ Shāh Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 167–68.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 168.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 168–69.

⁸⁰ An interesting precursor to this concept is found in earlier Sufism. According to ʿAmr b. ʿUthmān al-Makkī (d. 903–4), a person has four interior levels: body (*tan*), heart (*dīl*), spirit (*jān*), and secret

(*sirr*). Makkī mentions that "God created hearts seven thousand years before bodies; He created spirits seven thousand years before hearts; and He created secrets seven thousand years before spirits." Sufi awakening here would reverse back through the order of creation. Quoted in al-Ḥujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 309, from al-Makkī's *Kitāb al-Muḥabbat*. The article by Kamada, "Study of the Term *Sirr* (Secret)," brought this passage to my attention.

Prophet's traditions and model behaviors (*sunna*) in the *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha* and paved the way for successors, such as his grandson, Shāh Ismā'īl Shahīd, to construct a Sufi reform movement around the "Way of Muhammad" (*ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*).⁸¹ An additional aspect of the reformist impulse may be seen in Shāh Walī Allāh's formulation of a model of the spiritual body which incorporates material drawn from ethno-scientific theories of Islamic medicine. This shows a desire to encompass and bring together authoritative knowledge beyond the strictly religious sphere. This drive to encompass other branches of knowledge and integrate them within a unified *sharī'a*-based vision was to be emulated by a subsequent generation of ulema in the premodern period.⁸²

Robert Ellwood in his book *Mysticism and Religion* has suggested how a phase of gnostic, knowledge-oriented mysticism in many of the world's religions has at a later period given way to a devotional "bhakti" type phase or movement. Ellwood suggests that this phenomenon is related to a shift in the understanding of personhood in the culture emerging during these periods.⁸³ The development of Walī Allāh's model elaborating the sphere of the individual person may indicate just such a transition, for a movement of increased devotion to the Prophet Muhammad among Sufi orders in various areas of the Muslim World⁸⁴ was replacing the gnostic speculations of *wahdat al-wujūd* at about this time. Shāh Walī Allāh's creative, and to a large extent conscious, restructuring of the Sufi model of the subtle body is an illustration of his skill in building on a set of organizing principles in understanding how the world works. His need to perform this exercise in thought is also indicative of his age, a more self-conscious time when individual reform was to be translated into community action, and the abstract and personal inspirations of Sufi realizations were to be brought into line with traditionally sanctioned interpretations of revelation.

Shāh Walī Allāh's efforts to understand Islam based on the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, and *sharī'a* as a "total" system, informed by the same universal principles governing other types of knowledge, is one of his most original contributions. It is also a factor in his thought being acknowledged and invoked as a precedent by Islamic reformers of the modern period.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Shāh Ismā'īl Shahīd (d. 1831), the grandson of Shāh Walī Allāh, who, with Sayyid Aḥmad Barelvī, founded a Sufi movement called the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*. The two eventually led a *jihād* against the Sikhs in the Northwest Frontier and died in battle in Balakote in 1831. Their movement is, therefore, commonly known as the Mujāhidīn movement. Shāh Ismā'īl Shahīd wrote a mystical text, *ʿAbaqāt*, in addition to reformist tracts such as *Taqwiyat al-Imān*.

⁸² Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton, 1982), pp. 103, 191–93.

⁸³ Robert S. Ellwood, *Mysticism and Religion*

(Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1980), p. 54.

⁸⁴ John O. Voll, "Hadith Scholars and Tariqahs: An Ulema Group," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 15 (1980): 262–67. In this article, Voll cites increased devotion to the Prophet as one feature of "Neo-Sufism."

⁸⁵ Shāh Walī Allāh is invoked by Muslim Fundamentalists who stress the ideology of Islam as a total system organizing all areas of life, as well as by Modernists who appreciate his focus on the principles rather than the specific injunctions of *sharī'a* legislation.