Article

Naqshbandi Mujaddidi Mysticism in the West: The Case of Azad Rasool and His Heirs

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Abstract: The transfer of Sufism as a lived tradition to the Euro-American sphere, which first began in the early twentieth century, is a notable modern development that has been the subject of increasing academic interest in recent decades. Yet much of the literature on this topic to date has focused more on what has changed during the process of transfer, rather than on what has remained the same. It has also tended to prioritize context over mysticism. However, examining the main mystical doctrines and practices of the case study lineage of the Indian *shaykh* Azad Rasool (d. 2006), who from 1976 sought to introduce his teachings to Westerners arriving in India in search of spiritual fulfillment, in fact reveals substantial continuity with the early and pre-modern past. Such examination involved textual analysis of the primary sources of this lineage combined with multi-sited ethnography, comprised of participant observation as well as interviews, conducted primarily in Germany and the US, along with an excursion to India, among members of the two branches of this lineage between 2015 and 2020. It thus seems that shifting focus from context to mysticism itself, at least in some traditions, has the potential to also reveal much continuity in spite of changing contextual factors.

Keywords: Islamic mysticism; Sufism in the West; contemporary Sufism; neo-Sufism; New Religious Movements (NRMs); history of ideas; dynamics of religion; resonance

1. Introduction

Whether with German Romanticism around the turn of the nineteenth century or later with the New England Transcendentalists, the Theosophical Society, the Beat Generation, the larger 1960s counterculture as well as the Human Potential Movement (HPM) or even larger still with the New Age Movement (NAM), an ever-growing number of people in the West during the modern era have turned toward the "mystic East" for spiritual fulfillment. This phenomenon has been referred to, for instance, as "the 'Easternization' of Western spirituality" (Geaves et al. 2009, p. 2; Hamilton 2006, pp. 173–77; Campbell 2007; Bruce 2017). As such spiritual traditions from the "East" became increasingly commonplace in the "West", they have sometimes been studied under such rubrics as alternative spiritualities, emergent religions or New Religious Movements (NRMs) (e.g., Ellwood 1979; Clarke 2006a, 2006b; Hammer and Rothstein 2012), indicating that something new is in the making. Even without such labels, there seems to be a tendency in studies on Eastern spiritual traditions that have expanded to the West to devote more attention to change than continuity. A major case in point is the study of Sufism in the West, a field which has grown in recent decades, having been addressed in multiple edited volumes (Westerlund 2004; Malik and Hinnells 2006; van Bruinessen and Howell 2007; Geaves et al. 2009; Raudvere and Stenberg 2009; Geaves and Gabriel 2013; Sharify-Funk et al. 2017; Piraino and Sedgwick 2019; Malik and Zarrabi-Zadeh 2019; Bazzano and Hermansen 2020; Hermansen and Zarrabi-Zadeh 2022; Zarrabi-Zadeh et al. 2022), dissertations (Habibis 1985; Atay 1994; Genn 2004; Hazen 2011; Asbury 2020), monographs (Geaves 2000; Werbner 2003; Pittman 2012; Idrissi 2013; Dickson 2015; Sedgwick 2017; Sharify-Funk et al. 2017) as well as individual articles.

For just one example of the emphasis on change in such literature, in his perceptive chapter "Sufism for Westerners", Olav Hammer notes that "Yoga in London is not the

same as yoga in Varanasi", and more importantly here, he asserts that it is possible to discern two distinct trends in Sufism in the West. He calls one "Islamic Sufis" as compared with a Sufism custom-tailored for Western consumption which he has labelled "Sufism for Westerners" as well as "neo-Sufism".[1] Yet something new is created with every generation, whether or not there has been a transfer to new settings and audiences. So, it is of course important to not only consider what it is that is new, but also that which still endures and makes it warrant the label of Sufism. Of the five points Hammer presents in a chart comparing these two Sufisms, only one touches upon what we might call mysticism,[2] while his other points deal with more contextual aspects, namely: society, gender, culture and modes of dissemination (Hammer 2004, pp. 129, 139).

While a particular Sufi lineage may well seem like something new from such metrics, they may at the same time be very much in line with preceding tradition in other ways. In more recent scholarship on Sufism in the West, using the case study of Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee's non-Islamic Mujaddidi lineage, William Rory Dickson shows how a group that some scholars might classify as something new might actually be traditional from a different perspective (Dickson 2015, pp. 188–89; 2020). And in an article also published in the present Special Issue "Sufism in the Modern World", he demonstrates that shifting from the question of the relationship to Islam to the relationship to *shari'a* can reveal how different strands of Sufism in the West may follow along the lines of long-established trajectories from their earlier contexts (Dickson 2022).

To proffer another possible perspective shift here, a likely contributing factor to what seems to be an emphasis on change at the expense of acknowledging real continuity in studies on Sufism in the West may be that they often approach their subjects from a more sociological or otherwise contextual angle, sometimes only obliquely touching on the topic of mysticism. We might also consider, inter alia, the influence constructivist models of mystical experience (Katz 1978, 1983; Proudfoot 1985), which present it as being primarily determined by contextual factors, have had in Religious Studies more generally. Moreover, although philological studies of medieval Sufi texts abound, it seems almost as if the mystical teachings of modern *shaykh*s are somehow not worthy of study, possibly in part due to the lingering legacy of proponents of the notion of a Sufi golden age whose demise was heralded by the emergence of the *tariqa*s and popular Sufism (e.g., Arberry 1950; Trimingham 1971).

Whatever the cause, academic knowledge about the mysticism of modern Sufis and also of Sufi *tariqa*s in general, not only in the West, could stand to be much further developed. Regarding the Naqshbandiyya, Algar admits that "At a certain level, it is legitimate to detach the devotional practices of the Naqshbandi order from historical, geographical and social contexts and to examine them independently". Yet context is crucial for understanding, so "detaching" mysticism from such factors is certainly not what is advocated here, only that mysticism should not simply be glossed over and is an important topic of inquiry in its own right. Algar continues: "Very little has yet been achieved in this area; much of the discussion concerning the political role of the Naqshbandiya takes place in ignorance of what Naqshbandis, *qua* Naqshbandis, actually practise and believe" (Algar 1990, p. 53). While there have been important contributions in this direction since he made this statement (e.g., ter Haar 1992; Buehler 1998; Lizzio 1998; Dahnhardt 1999; Widiyanto 2012), there is still much to be done.

In a similar vein, Westerlund observes how there are more and more studies of Sufism focused on "political and socio-economic issues", due in part to how "an increasing number of social scientists and social science-influenced scholars of religion have become interested in Sufism", and he posits "a risk that, in the long run, there will be a new one-sidedness, so that the religious [incl. mystical] and cultural aspects of Sufism become marginalized in the research" (Westerlund 2004, p. 12). It appears that if his fears had not already been realized at the time he wrote that, as Algar's statements suggest, we have at least reached that point by now. A significant byproduct of the current emphasis on context over mysticism seems to be that when considering transfer, it is change rather than continuity that tends to

come to the fore. By focusing on contextual factors, like the social, political, institutional or gender ratios and other demographics, we are already setting ourselves up to see primarily change. Yet depending on the particular tradition and lineage in question, shifting the focus to mysticism itself might reveal greater continuity.[3]

While there are undoubtedly limitations to seeing Sufism as merely Islamic mysticism, as has been well-argued by Nile Green (Green 2012, pp. 1–14), the notion of mysticism ought not be abandoned or marginalized. After all, at the risk of essentializing, the encounter with ultimate Reality that is at the core of mysticism might be seen as the very *raison d'être* of Sufism. By analogy, it would certainly be possible to write a study on football and only consider its major personalities and institutions like teams, leagues and so forth along with their social, cultural, economic and even political impacts all without ever touching upon or even knowing the rules of the game or how it is played. But this would perhaps be more writing around the game rather than about it. This article seeks to examine the game itself, viz., mysticism, which we define here as consisting of a human–divine encounter at its core along with all that leads up to as well as all that results from such encounter.[4]

Without detracting from the valuable insights of more context-focused studies on Sufism in the West, or denying the usefulness of such labels as NRMs or neo-Sufism, it must also be acknowledged that they have a tendency to place the focus on that which has changed *at the expense of* that which has actually remained the same. It is argued here that in spite of changing demographics and other contextual factors, depending on the particular group in question, when examined through the perspective of mystical doctrines and practices, there may actually be some very important ways in which Yoga in London and Yoga in Varanasi might actually be the same, something that is also true in the case of Sufism between Western settings and its preceding contexts.

Moreover, it seems that the very labels of change versus continuity themselves may not only be rather subjective and based on one's chosen focus of inquiry and metrics, but they may fail to fully apprehend the complex and multifaceted character of such transfers. The notion of "dynamics" has been proffered as a potential alternative to help overcome the limitations of this dichotomy (Asbury and Zarrabi-Zadeh 2022). Here, instead of just reporting and describing change and/or continuity, we seek to understand the dynamics of how change and continuity are determined and shaped, and in this endeavor, the notions of resonance and damping can be helpful.

The choice of employing these concepts was inspired by an auditory analogy wherein Sufism, in its varied forms, is seen as a sound emitted into the soundscape of "East and West", being shaped by innumerable factors encountered as it travels through that space; resonating, echoing and reverberating within it or conversely it may be dampened, muffled or distorted (Malik and Zarrabi-Zadeh 2019, pp. 1–29). It is argued here that examining how, between old and new contexts and audiences, areas of similarity or congruity may resonate and be capitalized upon as well as how areas of dissimilarity or incompatibility that may produce damping or dissonance are dealt with and negotiated, provides a deeper understanding of the dynamics behind change and continuity. Understanding how such cases of harmony or tension, resonance or damping, consonance or dissonance, are dealt with and resolved, or not, is crucial to fully understanding as well as going beyond change and continuity. Of note, certain broader trends pertaining to mysticism in modernity which may affect sender, receiver or both and can be sources of resonance or damping will be returned to frequently below and include the scientification, rationalization, de-mystification, individualization, psychologization and experientation of mysticism as well as the emancipation of mysticism from religion (Zarrabi-Zadeh 2020).

2. Examining the Mysticism of Azad Rasool and His Heirs

As its case study, this article examines the mysticism of a Sufi lineage associated with five different *silsila*s (Chishtiyya, Qadiriyya, Shadhiliyya, Naqshbandiyya and foremost of all as well as the focus of this study, the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya)[5] that spread from India to the West, and eventually globally, starting from 1976 when, after noticing large

numbers of Westerners arriving in India in search of spiritual fulfillment, Azad Rasool (1920–2006) established the Institute of Search for Truth (IST) to make his Sufi teachings available to such a demographic. Gradually, an international network of his students that would come to be known as the School of Sufi Teaching (SOST) expanded to the point where there are now groups on every inhabited continent with a membership that has grown far beyond Rasool's original target audience to include Muslims and non-Muslims of diverse backgrounds.[6] After Rasool passed away in 2006, two different branches emerged, and while leadership of IST and SOST continued under his son Hamid Hasan (b. 1961), Rasool's American *khalifa* ("deputy"), Ahmed Abdur Rashid (b. 1942), whom he had appointed in 1984, continued to lead his own students from their shared community in rural Virginia, known as the World Community, as well as internationally.

This study is based on analysis of the main textual sources of this lineage, foremost of which being Rasool's two works *Turning Toward the Heart* (Rasool 2002) and *The Search for Truth* (Rasool 2010), along with a consultation of their broader literature and electronic media combined with insights gained from multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in Germany and the US, along with an excursion to India, and including participant observation as well as interviews, conducted with both communities from 2015 to 2020.[7] While there are some differences among Rasool and his two living heirs, the six core mystical doctrines and practices examined below remain basically the same in the teachings of all three men. Hasan has streamlined explanations with his clear and concise descriptions (e.g., Sufi School of Sufi Teaching on YouTube) and major parts of the SOST website (SufiSchool.org) consist of carefully selected excerpts from Rasool's writings, especially as related to the main teachings analyzed here. Moreover, the introductory lessons developed by the London group and adopted for use in Germany deal with these terms and faithfully reproduce the descriptions of them in Rasool's writings. Conversely, Abdur Rashid has semantically expanded some terminology as well as (re-)introduced other ideas and practices from wider Sufi tradition (Asbury and Zarrabi-Zadeh 2022; Abdur Rashid 2007), yet these have been added to and have not changed Rasool's original core teachings. Thus, in the interest of space and avoiding repetition, we focus on Rasool's account of his main mystical teachings, which also remain the central common core for both of his heirs.

This also seems appropriate given the considerable degree of standardization in mystical doctrines and practices across this lineage in spite of changing contextual factors. By way of illustration, the first SOST meetings attended by the researcher in Germany beginning in 2015 took place in the art studio of one of the participants or in private apartments in Munich or Nuremberg among small groups of mixed gender, but ranging from roughly equal to a slight female majority, and often of non-Muslim origin and usually wearing Western-style clothing with few men having beards. Participants spoken to often cited past experiences with other forms of alternative spirituality in the West, especially Yoga, Qi Gong and Buddhist meditation as well as universalist forms of Sufism, including in the line of Irina Tweedie. In contrast, the retreat attended in a Muslim-majority area of Hyderabad, India in 2016 was held in a large prayer room that was filled to capacity with only men and boys, almost all of whom were of Muslim upbringing, donned white *shalwar qamiz* (traditional dress often worn by Muslims in South Asia) with a prayer cap and had beards. There were only two female participants and they prayed and performed the practices separately and were not even seen by the researcher during the retreat.[8] Yet in spite of these apparent differences, both groups were engaged in the very same practices and when asked to elaborate on the core mystical teachings analyzed here, they consistently and faithfully reproduced the same basic descriptions found in Rasool's works and examined below.

Such consistency and standardization were also apparent in the interviews conducted among Abdur Rashid and his students at the World Community as well as in conversations with members of other SOST groups encountered, such as from the London, New Zealand, Singapore or Malaysia groups. This is not to mention the standardization evident across SOST's numerous country websites, including articles on the six key terms examined here

drawn from Rasool's works and translated into the main languages of those countries. Thus, hailing back to Hammer's assertion that Yoga in London versus in Varanasi are not the same, while they may look like very different things through the lens of contextually determined factors, from the perspective of their main mystical doctrines and practices, it seems that for this particular lineage, Sufism in Munich is actually very much the same as Sufism in Hyderabad. The same is also true of their Sufism in Nuremberg, London, Wellington, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur or rural Virginia *vis-à-vis* that found in Delhi.

Ultimately, it is argued here that, in the expansion of our case study lineage to the Euro-American sphere, there was more resonance than damping and that areas of damping were successfully negotiated in such a way as to eliminate the need for substantial change to its main mystical doctrines and practices. In order to argue our thesis and to demonstrate the predominance of such continuity, we take as our basis the six primary technical terms used by Rasool and his heirs. These cannot encompass all of their mysticism, for instance, the practice of shrine visitation (*ziyara*), which was a central part of the retreat attended by the researcher in Hyderabad, and its continuation for students in the West through international retreats, held each year in a different city in South Asia, Central Asia or the Middle East, where Sufi shrines abound, could regrettably not be covered here.[9] Yet the six identified key terms might be seen as the foremost concepts and practices, particularly when explaining their highly practice-oriented mysticism as well as in relation to the everyday lives of their students with their regimen of daily practices.

Three of these terms provide the cosmo-psychological foundation for their mysticism; *nisbat* ("relationship"), *lata'if* ("subtleties") and *indiraj al-nihayat fi al-bidayat* ("inclusion of the end in the beginning"); while the remaining three pertain to actual mystical practices and their performance with the guidance and support of the shaykh; *muraqaba* ("watchfulness"), *dhikr* ("remembrance") and *tawajjuh* ("to face"). After describing each of these in turn as well as considering their potential for resonance or damping and how these have been capitalized upon or negotiated, we trace a brief history of these ideas and practices over the *longue durée*, considering the emergence and development of each of the six key technical terms as well as that which they denote. This drew on several important surveys of Sufism and its history (e.g., Nicholson [1914] 2002; Schimmel 1975; Knysh 2000; Karamustafa 2007; Baldick [1989] 2012; Green 2012) as well as various specialized literature and primary sources among contemporary lineages cited below.

It should be made clear that this is in no way a presentation of the full breadth of diversity found throughout the history of Islamic mysticism. Instead, it is an attempt to identify samples from the strata of various time periods in the development of Sufism which provide reasonable precedents, if not direct antecedents, to trace a plausible trajectory of development for the specifically selected six key terms and the concepts and practices they denote. Each concept or practice that we describe must be understood as only one example from a vastly larger field of other possibilities that existed in the same time and even space. Thus, the examples mentioned do not necessarily indicate the dominant trend for any given period or place. To aid in this venture, we draw on and adapt a periodization of the history of Sufism that was introduced by Jamal Malik in one of the seminal works on the study of Sufism in the West (Malik and Hinnells 2006, pp. 2–11). For us, those periods include (1) early Islam and asceticism-oriented mysticism (600–800 AD), (2) the inward turn and the emergence of Sufism and other mystical trends (800–950), (3) standardization of Sufism (950–1100), (4) Sufi theosophy and the emergence of the *tariqa*s (1100–1300), (5) the early period of the Naqshbandiyya, a late-arriving *tariqa* (1300–1550), (6) the Naqshbandiyya in India and the early Mujaddidiyya (1550–1800), and finally, (7) British colonialism, independence and Western spiritual seekers (1800–1975).

Note that the final period ends the year before Rasool established IST and began his mission to spread his lineage far beyond India. This also coincides with what has been called the period of the re-orthodoxization of Sufism in the West (Malik and Zarrabi-Zadeh 2019, pp. 14–17; Asbury and Zarrabi-Zadeh 2022, pp. 295–96). It was around this time that we see most Naqshbandi-related presence in the Euro-American sphere beginning to

grow, either as a result of increased immigration, particularly from Turkey and Pakistan but also/or eventually from elsewhere, including Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, India, Bosnia, Indonesia and Malaysia, or related to the interests of Western spiritual seekers, such as in search of the origins of Theosophical or Gurdjieffian teachings.[10] Here, examples from the extremely diverse range of Naqshbandi-connected groups in the West as well as on the global stage will be cited to demonstrate that, despite how there is far from any standard Mujaddidi mysticism, many of the core doctrines and practices taught by Rasool and his heirs can also still be found in some form or another among other related lineages.

These groups were divided here based on existing typologies (esp. Hermansen 1997, 2009, 2014; Geaves 2000; Hammer 2004; Godlas 2005; Lassen 2009; Green 2012)[11] but modified to specifically address these groups' relationships to the Naqshbandiyya and to Islam, thus resulting in (1) *universalists* who offer a religiously unattached mysticism with Naqshbandi origins;[12] (2) *Sufism 1st*, describing groups in which, despite being Islamic, it is possible for non-Muslims to encounter Sufism prior to Islam (hence, "1st" denotes sequence of encounter and not degree of importance); (3) *Islam 1st*, wherein Islam is generally encountered prior to or concurrently with Sufism;[13] and (4) *post-tariqa* groups which adhere to Islam and have historical roots in the Naqshbandiyya, but no longer maintain the traditional *tariqa* structure. Considering these can lend further support to the thesis of continuity by demonstrating that the same or at least similar concepts can also be found among the diverse array of other Naqshbandi lineages today, including in cases of "binary fission" (Geaves 2000), "transplants" (Hermansen 1997, 2022) or as labelled here, Islam 1st groups who have not programmatically sought to appeal to Western spiritual seekers. So without further ado, we turn to the main six key terms in the mysticism of Rasool and his heirs.[14]

3. Cosmo-Psychological Foundation

We begin our exploration by first turning to three of the six identified key terms that provide much of the cosmo-psychological foundation of the mysticism of Rasool and his heirs. These span the full breadth of our definition of mysticism, including the encounter with God as well as both that which leads up to it and that which results from it. Specifically, they deal in turn with the relationship sought between the aspirant and God (*nisbat*) followed by their conceptualization of the subtle anatomy, anthropology or psychology (*lata'if*) understood to be involved in seeking to develop such a relationship. We then address the main principle that dictates how this is pursued (*indiraj al-nihayat fi al-bidayat*).

3.1. Nisbat

Rasool uses the term *nisbat* ("relationship", or as he translates it, "affinity") in two main senses, first, to refer to the ultimate goal of the Sufi path, viz., a deeper relationship with God as well as various facets thereof, and second, to indicate an affinity between people, particularly the disciple's relationship with the shaykh, which is held to facilitate the first sense of the term. We return to the latter sense further below but deal here with its technical Sufi meaning as "the affinity that develops between God and human beings" (Rasool 2010, pp. 53–54). To gain some idea of what it might mean, for Rasool and his heirs, to develop an affinity with God, we turn to some of the different ways he describes the aim of Sufism.

In one summarizing statement, Rasool explains the overall goal of Sufism itself in rather ecumenical, even humanistic ethics-oriented terms, which can be appealing to the anti-exoterically minded while also making use of the language of personal transformation so common to the HPM (Puttick 2004), as being "to transform the seeker into a highly humane and moral person by building the seeker's character through spiritual training". Such a framing has the potential to make this concept appealing to prospective students who may be anti-exoterically minded. Yet what precedes this is also an explanation of the goal of Sufism in more specifically Islamic and traditionally Sufi vocabulary. Therein,

Rasool states that Sufism's goal is "the development of certain noble qualities", examples of which he lists as "the purification of the self, purification of the heart, moral etiquette [*akhlaq* or perhaps *adab*], doing what is beautiful (*ihsan*), nearness to God [*ma'iyyat*], inner knowledge (*ma'rifat*), annihilation in God (*fana'*), and subsistence in God (*baqa'*)" (Rasool 2010, p. 43). Another list of affinities to be developed is provided as: "the affinity of doing what is beautiful (*ihsan*), the affinity of purity, […] of intense love, […] of spiritual ecstasy, […] of unity, […] of peace, and […] of remembrance" (Rasool 2010, p. 53). Still yet another list of affinities, or categories thereof, includes *fana'*, *baqa'*, *jadhba* ("attraction [to God]"), *suluk* ("wayfaring") and *sayr ila Allah* ("journeying to God") (Rasool 2010, p. 47).

Thus, *nisbat* can be used to refer to a broad range of things on the Sufi path toward cultivating a profound relationship with God as well as to refer to that relationship itself. There is, however, another crucial point to note in this regard, that for Rasool, the experience of unity, often associated with mystics like Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240), is not the ultimate aim of the path, rather the greater aim is to go beyond this to return to the world transformed from the experience, as a specifically Mujaddidi feature (Rasool 2002, p. 3) that resonates well with and can be culturally translated through the language of personal transformation as found in the HPM and among Western spiritual seekers. Yet it also embodies the Naqshbandi emphasis on being with God and in society at the same time (*khalwat dar anjuman*, "solitude in the crowd"). Rasool's son and the current leader of SOST and IST highlights how such an approach is compatible with modern lifestyles, allowing a spiritual life next to work, family and social responsibilities,[15] much like it was for the artisans who were drawn to the Naqshbandiyya in its first years in fourteenth-century Bukhara (Weismann 2007, pp. 15, 22). Moreover, one of the two supposed defining characteristics of the Naqshbandiyya is "activism", the other being "orthodoxy" (Weismann 2007), a trend that would resonate and converge in the West with a broader trend towards societal engagement, including "Engaged Buddhism", "Engaged Hinduism" and also "Engaged Sufism" (Clarke 2006b, pp. xiv, 278–80) as well as specifically with the societal engagement of Rasool's American *khalifa*, Abdur Rashid, which began in the 1960s, prior to his discovering Sufism, with social activism such as taking part in the Civil Rights Movement or protesting the Vietnam War, but which has since evolved to become more societal engagement, notably through interreligious dialogue as well as service through the civic education, peace education and leadership development programs of the NGO he founded, Legacy International (LegacyIntl.org; Asbury and Zarrabi-Zadeh 2022). But this facet of the return descent after mystical attainment is important to keep in mind as we turn to consider the historical trajectory of the development of this notion of cultivating an affinity with God (Rasool 2002, p. 3; 2010, pp. xvi, 46–54).

Nisbat in Historical Perspective

From the very beginning of Islam, God was understood as being paradoxically both transcendent and immanent, being the "Most High" (Q 87:1) who established Himself "above the Throne" (Q 10:3) but who is also closer to man "than his jugular vein" (Q 50:16). Early forms of Islamic mysticism were characterized by asceticism and an emphasis on God's transcendent nature. Yet toward the end of this first period, we begin to see a shift toward a relationship of proximity to, and even love of, God (Melchert 1996; Malik 2006, p. 4; Schimmel 1975, pp. 23–41; Knysh 2000, pp. 5–42; Karamustafa 2007, pp. 1–7; Green 2012, pp. 16–24). This shift in emphasis toward achieving nearness to God in this lifetime would come to fruition in the second period, marking the very emergence of Sufism (Malik 2006, pp. 4–5; Schimmel 1975, pp. 42–77; Knysh 2000, pp. 43–82; Karamustafa 2007, pp. 1–55; Green 2012, pp. 24–41). In the third period, such an understanding and goal would become more systematized and reconciled with juristic normative Islam, most notably in the figure of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) (Malik 2006, pp. 4–5; Schimmel 1975, pp. 77–97; Knysh 2000, pp. 116–49; Baldick [1989] 2012, pp. 50–67; Karamustafa 2007, pp. 57–113).

The fourth period would be marked by (1) the further elaboration of Sufi theosophy, characterized by the attainment of proximity to God, by such monumental figures as Ibn

'Arabi and Rumi (d. 1273), but also by (2) the emergence of formal institutions (*tariqa*s) devoted to pursuing this goal (Malik 2006, pp. 6–8; Schimmel 1975, pp. 228–86; Knysh 2000, pp. 150–244; Baldick [1989] 2012, pp. 69–85; Karamustafa 2007, pp. 114–55). In particular, the Central Asian Kubrawiyya would provide a number of precursors to later Naqshbandi doctrines and practices, as we will shortly see. In the fifth period, we find critiques of Sufism's elaborations of attaining a profoundly close relationship with God (even to the point of unification) from the likes of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and 'Ala' al-Dawla al-Simnani (d. 1336). The latter advocated a notion that re-emphasized God's transcendence which he called *wahdat al-shuhud* ("unity of witnessing"), to critique and also serve as an alternative to the idea of *wahdat al-wujud* ("unity of being"), ascribed to Ibn 'Arabi (Elias 1995; Landolt 1973, 1996).

In the sixth period, Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624), the founder-figure of the Mujaddidiyya, propounded his own version of *wahdat al-shuhud* in critique of *wahdat al-wujud* (Faruqi [1940] 1989; Kartal 2013; Alam 2012).[16] This notion rejected the possibility of unification with God and although the idea of descending back to creation after reaching the heights of mystical attainment (whether unitive or not) was present since the very beginning of Sufism (e.g., Junayd, cf. Abdel-Kader 1962, pp. 88–93) and can even be perceived in the thought of Ibn 'Arabi, such as with his emphasis on the doctrine of *al-insan al-kamal* (mentioned below), Sirhindi placed a special emphasis on the descent portion of the path. Significantly here, he actually used the term *nisbat* (and the related *munasaba*) to denote both the relationship of affinity that the mystic seeks with God, as well as the relationship with one's *shaykh* which helps lead to such relationship with God (ter Haar 1992, pp. 78–80; Buehler 2011, p. 146). Thus, at least as early as Sirhindi, we find the employment of *nisbat* as a Sufi technical term that is very similar to Rasool's own usage.

Subsequent Mujaddidi's, like Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan (d. 1781) or notably Shah Wali Allah (d. 1762) in Rasool's own *silsila*, would also use *nisbat* as a Sufi technical term to denote the relationship of proximity with God that Sufism has sought since its very inception as well as the relationship with the *shaykh* that is believed to facilitate that relationship with God (Rizvi 1980, p. 326; Bashir 2010, pp. 49–50; Alam 2021). They would also take up various positions on the *wujudi-shuhudi* debate, sometimes attempting to transcend and reconcile the differences between these two perspectives and to pursue the ascent to God while also upholding the importance of the descent portion of the journey (Faruqi [1940] 1989, pp. 141–70; Valiuddin 1951; Rizvi 1980; Faruque 2016), which Rasool and his heirs also continue to do. So, the Sufi technical term *nisbat* in the main senses that Rasool uses it appeared no later than the early 1600s, yet the concepts that it encompasses regarding the relationship with God sought by the mystic, have been central to Sufi thought since its very beginnings. Moreover, the particularly Mujaddidi nature of this relationship, with its emphasis on going beyond the unitive state (or the perception thereof) and returning to creation, also endures.

Today, because this was a technical term used by Sirhindi, the founder-figure of the Mujaddidiyya, other contemporary Naqshbandi lines also use the technical term *nisbat* in the same ways as Sirhindi and Rasool (e.g., Ghaffari 2011a; Alam 2010a, pp. 47–50; Awan 2009, p. 13; Khanqah Naqshbandia Mujaddidia 2011), including even one universalist lineage of Hindu origin (NaqshMuMRa School of Sprituality 2009). When this particular technical term is absent, what it signifies, cultivating a profoundly deeper relationship with God (or with the *shaykh*), is usually if not always still present,[17] even central as the very aim of Sufism. But crucial to how this relationship is pursued as well as experienced for Rasool and many other Mujaddidis, past and present, are the "subtle centers of consciousness" or *lata'if*, to which we now turn.

3.2. Lata'if

Often the very first technical term which a new pupil is introduced to in receiving instructions for the practices is *lata'if* ("subtleties", sg. *latifa*), rendered most frequently into English by Rasool as "subtle centers of consciousness", as opposed to the mind or intellect,

but sometimes also as "centers of perception", "inner senses" or "inner faculties", as opposed to the five conventional senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. These centers of spiritual perception are seen as sources of understanding, knowledge and guidance and "means to greater awareness of the Divine Presence". They have both a cosmological significance, in that they are the microcosm of man, which is a reflection of the greater macrocosm, as well as a central role to play in the practices of the order.

Cosmologically, the ten *lata'if* are the microcosm of the human being and are a reflection of the greater macrocosm, therefore man is also divided between spiritual and physical aspects. Drawing on Sirhindi, for Rasool and his heirs, the catalyst for the creation of the universe was God's utterance of "*Kun*!" or "Be!" at which the "world of [God's] command" (*'alam-i amr*, the spiritual world) instantly came into being and the gradual evolution of the "world of creation" (*'alam-i khalq*, the physical world) was then set into motion, culminating in the creation of man, in whom both of these realms, the spiritual and the physical, are combined. In creating man, God placed the ten *lata'if* within him as a "trust", five of which being part of the *'alam-i amr*; the *qalb* ("heart"), *ruh* ("spirit"), *sirr* ("secret"), *khafi* ("hidden") and *akhfa* ("most hidden"); and the remaining five being part of the *'alam-i khalq*; the *nafs* ("self") along with the *'anasir-i arba'a* ("four elements") of *khak* ("earth"), *ma'* ("water"), *nar* ("fire") and *bad* ("wind") which comprise the physical body (Rasool 2002, pp. 86–87; 2010, p. 55). Of these ten centers and as depicted in Table 1, six are associated with particular locations within the human body while the remaining four permeate it. Five of the ten centers are each "under the feet of" a law-giving prophet, or messenger (*rasul*), and six are also associated with a particular color (Rasool 2002, p. 90).

Table 1. The *lata'if* and their associated realms, locations in the body, colors and prophets.

Latifa	Realm	Location in Body	Color	Prophet
Qalb ("heart")	*'Alam-i amr* ("word of [God's] command, "the spiritual world)	two fingers width below left nipple	golden	Adam
Ruh ("spirit")		two-fingers width below right nipple	red	Abraham
Sirr ("secret")		two-fingers width above left nipple	white	Moses
Khafi ("hidden")		two-fingers width above left nipple	black	Jesus
Akhfa ("most hidden")		center of chest between the *qalb* and *ruh*	green	Muhammad
Nafs ("self")	*'Alam-i khalq* ("world of creation", the physical world)	between eyebrows	azure blue or colorless	N/A
Khak ("earth")		The four elements permeate the entire physical body, also called the *qalab* ("mold")	N/A	
Ma' ("water")				
Nar ("fire")				
Bad ("wind")				

In order for the *lata'if* to perform their perceptive and guiding functions, their dimmed state as a result of being connected to the body must be reversed and their original luminous state restored, they must be "awakened", "illumined" or "enlightened". Another way of saying this is that they must be returned to their origins, or "their true form" in the *'alam-i amr* above the throne (*'arsh*), a necessary condition for one to achieve annihilation (*fana'*) in God (Rasool 2010, p. 55). For Rasool and his heirs, this awakening is to be accomplished largely through meditation (*muraqaba*), wherein the disciple turns their attention to each *latifa*, awakening them in a particular sequence, discussed in detail shortly with the next key term.

To summarize some of the major characteristics of the individual *lata'if*, beginning first with those of the *'alam-i amr*, we find the *qalb* as the locus of divine guidance while also being the rightful ruler of the human being, though the unrefined *nafs* and the intellect both seek to usurp its reign. Next, the term *ruh* refers to a subtle etheric animating substance within the body that is particularly connected to spiritual travel and is inherently drawn toward God. Much like the *qalb*'s function in receiving divine guidance, the *sirr* relates to the human capacity to perceive and contain a deeper kind of knowledge about God known as "secrets", with the *khafi* and *akhfa* each providing successively still deeper and deeper ineffable perspectives onto the encounter with God, all the while experiencing increasing ecstasy inwardly while manifesting complete sobriety outwardly. Turning to the *lata'if* of the *'alam-i khalq*, the untamed *nafs* seeks to challenge the rule of the heart as the rightful monarch of one's being, yet it can be purified and transformed into a loyal subject and active ally of the heart. Finally, the last four *lata'if* are the four elements of earth, water, fire and wind, which are found throughout the entire body and when they are awakened, the entire body is illuminated in remembrance of God (Rasool 2010, pp. 129–37; 2002, p. 88).

Consistent with the scientification of mysticism in the modern era,[18] Rasool explains that this arrangement was discovered over time through the spiritual insights of various earlier saints, gained through experimentation in the laboratory of the self (Rasool 2002, p. 6). Furthermore, and also in line with the experientation of mysticism, visions of the different colors are said to have been "reported" from these saints' "experiences" of *kashf* ("unveiling") (Rasool 2002, pp. 86, 89–90). Moreover, the fact that the *lata'if* are not only associated with various colors but also with different focal points in the body to which attention is directed during meditation may call to mind the pervasive *chakra*s of Yoga, thus offering some sense of familiarity for spiritual seekers in the West. This is not to mention what seem to be allusions to them as hidden inner potentials (Rasool 2010, p. 154), thus culturally translating via the language of the HPM. In the same vein and going along with the psychologization of mysticism in the modern era, the fact that they are different components of the inner constitution or psyche of the human being makes it only natural to draw parallels to concepts of the psyche from modern psychotherapy. But while Rasool argues that modern psychologists have arrived at similar conclusions to those of Sufism, he is quick to distinguish the *lata'if* as being quite different from concepts like the id, ego and superego as well as the *chakra*s (Rasool 2002, p. 90), thus illustrating the limits of how far he was willing to go to appeal to new audiences in presenting this traditional Sufi concept, which we now briefly consider the intellectual history of (Rasool 2002, pp. 86–91; 2010, pp. 54–56, 129–37).

Lata'if in Historical Perspective

Beginning in the first phase with the Qur'an, the breast (*sadr*) and particularly the heart (*qalb*) are identified as the seat of religious experience and divine guidance. After all, it was to Muhammad's heart that God revealed the Qur'an (Q 26:192–94). Notwithstanding the possibility of interpretations that posit more than one *nafs* within each person, the self (*nafs*) is described variously as inciting (to evil), being self-accusing or being tranquil. Lastly, the terms *ruh*, *sirr* and *akhfa* are used in rather ambiguous senses not necessarily related to cosmo-psychology (e.g., Q 20:7), but these terms would be the subject of speculation by later Muslim scholars and mystics.[19]

In the second period, understandings of cosmo-psychology were comparatively diverse, though having an inner aspect oriented toward God and following God's commands (*ruh*), another aspect oriented toward creation and earthly needs and desires (*nafs*) as well as another aspect that serves as the battleground for these two opposing forces (*qalb*) was beginning to emerge as a common basis. One figure, Sahl al-Tustari (d. 896), would not only include the *qalb*, *ruh* and *nafs* in his subtle anatomy, but would also introduce the *sirr*, as the locus of colloquy with God at the core of one's heart (Böwering 1980, pp. 185–86, 191–200). Also of note, Hakim al-Tirmidhi's (d. 932) detailed cosmo-psychology is largely

associated with the breast and torso generally and also includes the four Empedoclean elements (Gobillot 2006, pp. 29ff).

In the third period, the four-fold appearance of *qalb*, *ruh*, *sirr* and *nafs*, which we first saw with Tustari, would appear in the thought of multiple other thinkers, though with different understandings, nuances and sequence orders (Kamada 1983). Thus, the *sirr* became a commonly encountered *latifa* and these four subtleties became a usual fixture of Sufi cosmo-psychological models. Notably, one of these early thinkers to include *qalb* (Pers. *dil*), *ruh* (Pers. *jan*), *sirr* and *nafs*, viz., Ali b. 'Uthman Hujwiri (d. ca. 1072), also notes that the body consists of the four Empedoclean elements (Hujwiri [1911] 1953, pp. 198ff), thus providing a substantial and very early precedent for later Mujaddidi cosmo-psychology, having eight of what would eventually be ten *lata'if*.

In the fourth period, Kubrawi thinkers would place special emphasis on the *lata'if* as well as visions of colored lights. In particular, Najm al-Din Razi (d. 1256) would introduce a *latifa* even subtler than the *sirr*, the *khafi* (though also excluding the *nafs* from his list, but adding *'aql*), resulting in the following model: *'aql*, *qalb*, *ruh*, *sirr* and *khafi* (Corbin 1971, pp. 99–120; Algar 1982). In the fifth period, the abovementioned later Kubrawi, Simnani, further elaborated on the *lata'if* with a *latifa* even subtler than the *khafi*, *al-latifa al-haqqiyya*, thus setting a precedent for the later introduction of the *akhfa*. Simnani's model also included the *qalab* ("mold") to refer to the physical body and this term would later be used by Mujaddidis interchangeably with the four elements. Simnani also associated each *latifa* with a particular color as well as with a prophet, though he does not seem to have associated them all with particular locations in the body. His model includes *qalab*, *nafs*, *qalb*, *sirr*, *ruh*, *khaf* and *haqq* (Elias 1995; Corbin 1971, pp. 121–39; 1972).

Simnani's *latifa*-model would later be accepted by Muhammad Parsa (d. ca. 1420) (Tosun and Bayraktar 2014b), the chief ideologue of the first generation of Naqshbandis and a direct student of the founder-figure of the Naqshbandiyya, Baha' al-Din Naqshband (d. 1389), thus making clear the continuity of mystical doctrines and practices from the Kubrawiyya to another but newer Central Asian *tariqa*: the Naqshbandiyya. In the sixth period, some significant later Naqshbandis would also accept Simnani's *latifa*-model, namely the direct teacher of Sirhindi, Baqi Billah (d. 1603), as well as Sirhindi's rival to be Baqi Billah's heir, Taj al-Din (d. 1640) (Weismann 2007, pp. 18, 54, 61), who not only accepted Simnani's *latifa*-model, but also elaborated further on it (Tosun and Bayraktar 2014b).

But with the founder-figure of the Mujaddidiyya, Sirhindi himself, for the very first time, we find the exact same ten-fold *latifa*-model adhered to by Rasool and most other later Mujaddidi lineages who are known to practice *muraqaba* according to a guided curriculum of intentions. This model is divided into the *lata'if* of the *'alam-i amr* (*qalb*, *ruh*, *sirr*, *khafi*, *akhfa*) and those of the *'alam-i khalq* (*nafs* and the physical body comprised of the four elements) (ter Haar 1992, pp. 90, 98). It is unclear whether Sirhindi himself associated the *lata'if* with particular colors and locations in the physical body, since the first textual evidence for these appears in the writings of a later Mujaddidi, Mir Muhammad Nu'man (d. ca. 1650) (Buehler 1998, p. 235, fn 4; Tosun and Bayraktar 2014b). Nevertheless, this ten-fold structure would become more or less standard for many Mujaddidis, though alternatives have been proposed and used. Notably, Wali Allah expanded upon Sirhindi's ten-fold model by adding five more *lata'if* for a total of fifteen (Hermansen 1988; Waliullah et al. 1982), though this model does not seem to have taken root, as no lineages were encountered that adhere to it today.[20]

Out of the range of contemporary Naqshbandi and Mujaddidi mysticisms, this particular set of *lata'if* has become somewhat standard among those who are known to have an established curriculum of intentions for *muraqaba*. Others may use abbreviated versions, such as incorporating *qalb*, *ruh*, *nafs* and sometimes *sirr*, or versions that draw from or interact with other sources, such as how the Hindu lineages reconciled the Mujaddidi *lata'if* with a Yogic *chakra* arrangement with special emphasis on the *hridaya* ("heart") *chakra*, which early on was understood to contain all five *lata'if* of the *'alam-i amr* (Dahnhardt 1999, pp. 219, 195–218), how one Naqshbandi Haqqani *shaykh* describes a unique cosmo-psychological

model in what seems to claim to be the origin of the enneagram, likely in a bid to appeal to seekers with a Gurdjieffian background (Kabbani 2004a, pp. 435–40) or how some universalists engage with modern psychology and psychotherapy (e.g., Tweedie 1991; Vaughan-Lee 1991; Ali-Shah 1995). Interestingly, Idries Shah lectured on the original Mujaddidi *lata'if*, though in a quite psychologized, rationalized and de-mystified manner (Barakabee 2013). Further still, in the post-*tariqa* category, we find Fethullah Gülen expounding upon the very same five *lata'if* of the *'alam-i amr* in his writings (Seker 2015).[21] But as noted, Rasool and both of his heirs, as well as other contemporary Islamic Naqshbandi lines with set curricula of intentions for meditation, generally use Sirhindi's ten-fold *latifa*-model (though sometimes described as seven-fold, counting the four elements of the *qalab* as just one) along with usually similar associations with colors, law-giving prophets and locations in the physical body (e.g., Buehler 1998, pp. 110–11; Lizzio 1998, pp. 201–33; Ghaffari 2011b; Awan 2009, pp. 1–13; An-Naqshbandi et al. 2011, pp. 228–31; Tazkiya.org 2013; Ahmed 2016).

3.3. Indiraj al-Nihayat fi al-Bidayat

Having addressed the ten *lata'if*, we now turn to the principle that guides the overall order in which they come into play in spiritual training, namely, *indiraj al-nihayat fi al-bidayat* ("inclusion of the end in the beginning", or as Rasool translates it, "where others end, there marks our beginning", henceforth *INfB*). This approach to spiritual training entails beginning with the purification of the heart before proceeding to the purification of the self, or stated differently, purifying the five *lata'if* of the *'alam-i amr* prior to those of the *'alam-i khalq*. Still another way of describing it is by saying that it is characterized by *jadhba* ("attraction [to God]") rather than *suluk* ("wayfaring"), here meaning to engage in "austerities" with the aim of "conquering the self" (Rasool 2002, pp. 92–93), which is also described as taking a "detailed outward journey" through the ten stations (*maqamat*) (Rasool 2002, p. 48). This principle of beginning with the heart and attraction to God (*jadhba*) is presented as a point of divergence that separates the methodology of Naqshbandi *shaykh*s from the Sufi teachers of earlier times as well as of other contemporary *tariqa*s, who it is explained begin with the difficult and time-consuming task of subduing and wresting control over the *nafs* through *suluk*.

As opposed to an emphasis on *suluk*, the single most important aspect of the inner journey for Rasool is *jadhba*, which we might equate with what Sedgwick has called "emanative pull" (Sedgwick 2017, p. 8). It is the driving force for spiritual travel toward and in God and it is because of *jadhba* that the arduous "detailed outward journey" of purifying the self, that is *suluk*, is shortened and is actually accomplished during the purification of the heart so that "the seeker obtains a general overview of the ten stations as a whole because the blessings have absorbed him or her in love [...]" (Rasool 2010, p. 48). In other words, "in the process of pursuing [...*sayr-i anfusi*, or inner travel, the student is...] simultaneously advancing in [...*sayr-i afaqi*, or outer travel]" (Rasool 2002, p. 93).

The idea centers on the view that purifying the self is a lengthy process which many aspirants might never finish within their lifetime, and thus they would never even be able to begin with purifying the heart. With the assistance of a *shaykh*, however, who has himself already reached the end of this journey, it is held that one may be granted a taste of what awaits them at their destination, by way of the accompaniment (*suhbat*) and non-physical transmission of *baraka* from the *shaykh* (*tawajjuh*). This taste serves to motivate and support the disciple so that while they are purifying their heart, the task of purifying the self becomes easier and is done concurrently with the former, thus the need for such austerities is eliminated and all is accomplished primarily through assigned meditations and recitations.[22] This approach is thus said to have the benefits of being easier and faster in addition to providing greater incentive for the student by offering a taste of the end of the path at the very beginning.

Let us now consider some further implications of the narrative surrounding this late medieval to early modern concept, particularly with regard to the arrival of this lineage of

the Naqshbandiyya to the globalized late twentieth and early twenty-first century context. First, *INfB*, along with other technical terms and practices that did not exist at the time of the Prophet, are considered to have evolved later in response to a particular need. Relying on the narrative of the "corruption of time" (*fasad al-zaman*) (van Gelder 2017), the argument goes that they were not needed during the lifetime of Muhammad and his companions because just being in the Prophet's company or being that temporally close to him was sufficient for bringing about the same levels of spiritual advancement that Sufis have sought through history with the various methods that evolved over time. In one place, after mentioning *INfB*, Rasool alludes to the culmination of this developmental process by saying, again with a scientific framing, that "From the experiments and tests carried out previously by others, it has been revealed that the Naqshbandi Mujaddidi way is nearer in its approach, and that students of this Order reach their destination in less time" (Abdur Rashid and Rasool [1989] 2015, p. 1).

Thus, *INfB* serves as a major selling point for this lineage, in terms of the incentive taste of the end in the beginning and the resulting speed and ease of progress *vis-à-vis* the harsh, rigorous and time-consuming training methods attributed to preceding saints and other *tariqa*s. This narrative, in its interpretation and presentation of history, not only presents the method as more effective, faster and easier, but it also simultaneously guards against accusations of innovation (*bid'a*) from Islamic reformists and modernists while also being appealing to a contemporary educated and largely urban audience in pursuit of authentic *tradition* and personal spiritual experience but also that values the refinement of ideas and spiritual technologies through the empiricism of the scientific method, though not necessarily its materialist insistence on objective rational or physical evidence.

These two aspects of this narrative converge in a discussion of the need for this new approach wherein Rasool quotes Baha' al-Din Naqshband from an unidentified source as saying: "In contrast to seekers of the past, today's students are subject to constant distractions that diminish their yearning, intention, and will power" (Rasool 2002, pp. 93–94). Whether or not we can confirm the attribution of this statement to the fourteenth century eponym of the Naqshbandiyya, living fully seven centuries after the time of the Prophet but just a century before the beginnings of early modernity, it can mean different things to different people, or the same thing to the same person. It might refer to a state of deterioration due to temporal distance from the idealized time of the Prophet, yet to another reader, it might speak to their own busy life in a post-industrial society in the information age. The two are not mutually exclusive understandings and it seems very unlikely that this would have been lost on Rasool and it has clearly not eluded his son who, as seen in his interviews, short videos and low-key public appearances, takes this into account in making the path understandable and personally meaningful for, and thus resonating with, a largely urban, educated and professional constituency in the West as well as globally (Sufi School of Sufi Teaching 2017; Rasool 2002, pp. 92–94; 2010, pp. 47–52).

Indiraj al-Nihayat fi al-Bidayat in Historical Perspective

Considering *INfB* in historical perspective, in the first period, the Prophet Muhammad advocated some degree of self-denial, such as fasting during Ramadan as one of the very pillars of Islam, but clearly denounced complete renunciation from the world (Q 57:27). Nevertheless, as mentioned, many early Muslim mystics practiced asceticism and withdrawal from the world, though toward the end of this phase, we find an inward shift. For instance, for Shaqiq al-Balkhi (d. 810), the path begins with asceticism and taming the lower soul (*nafs*) but culminates in love for God (Nwyia 1991, pp. 213–31). In the second and third periods, it would become increasingly common for Muslim mystics to follow this pattern in enumerating stages of the mystical path, placing the need to subdue the *nafs*, such as through repentance and poverty, at the beginning of the path and proximity and love of God, associated with the heart, at the later stages (e.g., Nicholson [1914] 2002, p, 21; Knysh 2000, p. 97; Schimmel 1975, pp. 109–48). This laid the groundwork for a reversal (centuries later) of this approach of *nafs* first, heart last with the principle of *INfB*, which

would propose the opposite: starting with the heart first (hence, including the end in the beginning).

In the fourth period, we look again to the Kubrawiyya for precursors to later developments in the Mujaddidiyya. The founder-figure of the Kubrawiyya, Najm al-Din Kubra (d. 1221) himself, appears to have been the first person to begin articulating the concept of *INfB*. He addresses the problem of spending one's entire life in the lower stages of the path, never advancing to higher levels, and describes how the Kubrawis rely on attraction to God (*jadhba*) as a faster method for making progress on the path (Meier 1957, p. 285; Buehler 1998, p. 121, fns 81 and 82). This very same description, along with further elements added later on, is found centuries later in the writings of Sirhindi as well as of course Rasool and his two heirs. Still, also in the fourth period, another previously mentioned Kubrawi *shaykh*, Razi, describes what seems to be *INfB* from a different perspective, one also used later by Sirhindi, Rasool and his heirs, as well as other contemporary Mujaddidis. Rather than the *jadhba* mentioned by Kubra, he explains the asserted greater efficacy and speed of Kubrawi *shaykh*s' methods by saying that they begin with the heart in contrast to others who begin work on the *nafs* (Algar 1982, p. 213).

Pertaining to the fourth period, as already mentioned, scholarship on Naqshbandi mystical doctrines and practices could stand to be in a more developed state. So the evolution of the concept of *INfB* during this period, if any occurred at all, is presently a significant knowledge gap. Later generations (viz., at least from Sirhindi onwards) attributed this doctrine to Baha' al-Din Naqshband himself, though since he wrote no works of his own, we cannot know this for certain. A consultation of Parsa's *Qudsiyya* by a skilled Persian linguist might reveal something, but what we do know for certain is that, congruent with the principle of *INfB*'s prioritizing the heart, there was a substantial and undeniable emphasis on the heart in early pre-Mujaddidi Naqshbandi mysticism, as notably evinced in the *Rashahat 'Ayn al-Hayat*'s description of the eleven Naqshbandi principles (Safi 2001, pp. 16–26).

After the early and pre-Mujaddidi phase of the Naqshbandiyya, Sirhindi discusses the concept of *INfB*, he uses the name *INfB* to describe it and he attributes its origin to Baha' al-Din Naqshband. Like Kubra, he refers to emphasizing attraction to God, using the same term *jadhba*, over *suluk* (here referring to arduous practices), as an easier and faster method for making progress on the Sufi path. Yet like Daya, Sirhindi also describes it as prioritizing working on the heart over purifying the *nafs*, and he speaks of *sayr-i afaqi* (wayfaring in the external world, or literally, "wayfaring to the horizon") and *sayr-i anfusi* ("inner wayfaring") in this regard. He also describes it as beginning in the *'alam-i amr* rather than in the *'alam-i khalq* (ter Haar 1992, pp. 31, 79, 108, 138; Buehler 2011, e.g., pp. 139, 181, 233, 246, 267 but esp. 208–12; Alam 2009; 2010a, p. 51).

These are the exact same main elements that Rasool uses in his descriptions of *INfB* as examined above. He and his heirs have passed on the concept of *INfB* and described it in the same way Sirhindi has. But they have also taken advantage of the idea of it being a faster and easier path to appeal to contemporary spiritual seekers with busy lives as well as used the narrative of the development of this concept to present their teachings as the result of a rational, scientific, experience-based and empirical process. Such a presentational or marketing strategy takes advantage of the doctrine as it is without substantially changing the doctrine itself, just while pointing out aspects thereof that could make it appealing to a new audience with new concerns.

Other contemporary Islamic Mujaddidi lineages that make reference to *INfB* usually describe it in similar ways to Sirhindi (and by extension, to Rasool and his heirs as well), using some or all of the above elements (cf. e.g., Ghaffari 2011b; Alam 2009; 2010b, pp. 51–56; Buehler 1998, pp. 120–22, 242–43; Lizzio 1998, p. 202). Enduring key aspects of this doctrine can also be found in the post-*tariqa* category, such as discussions pertaining to *jadhba* and *suluk* (not to mention *nisbat* as well) in the writings of the famed Deobandi scholar, Ashraf Ali Thanwi (d. 1943) (Bashir 2010, pp. 203–5). Even among universalist Hindu-derived lines, major facets of this doctrine remain. Dahnhardt notes that prioritizing *jadhba* over *suluk* "is

particularly evident" and they stress the ease of their approach (Dahnhardt 1999, pp. 203–4). Today, for instance, Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM) refers to their teachings as *sahaj marg*, which they normally translate as the "natural path" (SahajMarg.org), but it can also be rendered as the "easy path".[23] Moreover, a particular emphasis on the heart, which is inherent in the concept of *INfB*, can be found across all four categories of Naqshbandi-related articulations today, including SRCM's "heartfulness meditation" (Heartfulness.org), which leads us to mystical practices as well as the next key term that denotes a particularly Mujaddidi, heart-focused form of meditation.

4. Mystical Practices with the Guidance and Support of the *Shaykh*

After having covered the cosmo-psychological foundation of the especially practice-oriented mysticism of Rasool and his heirs, we now turn to consider the actual mystical practices that they teach. These consist primarily of a meditative method known as *muraqaba* supplemented by the performance of silent recitations of sacred formulae, including *dhikr* as well as other elements of their litany (*wazifa*). Yet for them, the performance of such practices must be accompanied by the guidance and spiritual support of the shaykh, including a relationship of affinity (*nisbat*) with him as well as his non-physical transmission of blessings (*tawajjuh*). Although these seemingly focus on that which leads up to the encounter with God in our definition of mysticism, due to the broader senses of the first two terms (discussed below), they could also be considered as part of the encounter itself as well as that which results from it.

4.1. Muraqaba

Muraqaba ("watchfulness"); which Rasool translates as "meditation" but notes other meanings as being to "wait", "guard" or "protect" as well as "vigilance" and "attentiveness"; is the first practice taught to a new student and it is considered the most important component of this lineage's practices. *Muraqaba* also plays a part of in the narrative wherein the Naqshnandiyya Mujaddidiyya is held to be a comparatively faster and easier path as well as one that is especially suited to modern times. While explaining that past Sufis might have engaged in harsh and austere practices like extended periods of fasting and seclusion; Rasool notes that today all that is required is for the students to devote the necessary time out of their daily schedule, making a temporary renunciation of the world, to simply sit in *muraqaba* and "wait to receive the blessings [*baraka*]" (Rasool 2002, p. 31). In addition to Baha' al-Din Naqshband and the introduction of *INfB*, Rasool credits Sirhindi with having developed the specific methods that rendered "prolonged renunciation unnecessary" and notes that Sayyid 'Abdul Bari Shah (d. 1900), another monumental figure in this particular Mujaddidi line, systematized these even further so that they were "better suited to conditions in the modern world" and "fully compatible with today's lifestyles" (Rasool 2002, pp. 98–99).

To perform *muraqaba*, the student is to cease all physical and mental activity, sit with closed eyes, mentally pronounce an assigned *niyya* ("intention"), direct his or her attention to one or more of the *lata'if* as instructed by the *shaykh*, and then passively wait. As observed at retreats and local meetings, the room is darkened and utterly silent and practitioners typically drape a blanket or shawl over their heads, with some leaving the face exposed while others leave only a small opening for air, seeming to facilitate turning away from the outside world. The student is expected to consistently and punctually perform this temporary seclusion, waiting on a daily basis at the same appointed times (which are associated with Islamic prayer times) and for the prescribed duration (at least thirty to forty-five minutes per sitting). The *shaykh* is understood to provide his *tawajjuh* (the non-physical transmission of blessings [*baraka*] discussed below) to assist in the disciple's spiritual progress while the blessings involved are said to ultimately originate from God and it is for these blessings that the meditator waits. In stating the *niyya*, one turns one's attention to the heart, and later when instructed to do so, the other *lata'if*. In the second part of the intention, that *latifa* or those *lata'if*, as suprasensory organs, are then turned

("*mutawajjih*") so as to be oriented toward "the Holy Essence" in anticipation of the flow of blessings. Later intentions have an additional component of spiritual travel in specific locations in Mujaddidi cosmology and stages on the path (School of Sufi Teaching 2020).

The curriculum of practices said to have been standardized by 'Abdul Bari Shah consists of a series of such intentions for *muraqaba*. These intentions are divided into a set of ten preliminary exercises for awakening each of the ten *lata'if* (School of Sufi Teaching 2016b) followed by the curriculum proper, whose intentions (or transmissions) are divided into groupings known as "circles" (School of Sufi Teaching 2016a). The preliminary practices are assigned prior to becoming an oath-bound student of the *shaykh* and, as an adaptation for the introduction of this lineage to the West and indeed the global stage, they can also be performed by non-Muslims. After these, it is necessary to pledge allegiance (*bay'a*) to the *shaykh* and accept Islam before proceeding to the circles. In South Asia since at least the eighteenth century, Sufi cosmology has often been graphically depicted with complex diagrams consisting of multiple interconnected circles (Hermansen 1992; Zauqi Shah 2010, pp. 130–31). In Rasool's Mujaddidi curriculum, these circles are first, the "circle of possibility" (three transmissions), followed by the "circle of shadows" (seven transmissions), the "circle of lesser intimacy" (two transmissions) and finally, the "circle of greater intimacy" (one transmission) (Rasool 2010, pp. 65–67).

In line with Rasool's strong emphasis on practice over theosophical speculation, the issue of such circles is only briefly discussed (Rasool 2010, pp. 65–67). Nevertheless, the names and content of the circles clearly reflect and draw from preceding Sufi, and specifically Mujaddidi, cosmology and conceptualizations of the path (see below), which might be described as emanationist, thus offering great resonance potential for those with backgrounds in other mystical traditions that are emanationist or share other fundamental similarities, whether Neoplatonic, Hermetic, Kabbalistic, Christian, Vedantic, Taoist, etc. (e.g., Izutsu 1983; Albanese 2007; Sedgwick 2017; Zarrabi-Zadeh 2021). But displaying continuity with preceding Sufi and especially Mujaddidi cosmologies, examining the names of the circles as well as the individual transmissions within them, one can discern a journey that begins with activating the ten *lata'if* and then continues with travel in the sphere of contingent existence, proceeding through the shadows and then the attributes toward the Divine Essence before the return or descent back to the created world (School of Sufi Teaching 2016a).

Returning to resonance, this lineage's strong focus on practice over theory fits well with the experientation of mysticism, and the invitation to simply try the practices and experience them for oneself, without first having to embrace Islam or pledge allegiance to the *shaykh*, is congruent with the rationalization of mysticism in the modern era, not simply performing them because told to do so by a religious authority, as well as its scientification, by a kind of empirical testing of the methods oneself. This is of course compatible with the tendency toward "questing", involving trying out various traditions, so prevalent among Western spiritual seekers (Roof 1999, pp. 9, 82–83), though Rasool notes this trend and criticizes dabbling and then presuming oneself as competent to judge based on such limited experience (Rasool 2002, p. 55). Also quite rational is the fact that there is a set curriculum of intentions, which Abdur Rashid has described as a "spiritual roadmap" based on the cosmo-psychological insights of generations of past Sufis (Abdur Rashid 2013).

The practice-orientation can also appeal to the many seekers in search of concrete spiritual techniques or "technologies" and can also resonate with those who are disenchanted with the New Age lecture circuit. This is also true of the facts that the teachings are provided free of charge, with very clear, consistent and matter of fact explanations that do not seek to "mystify" the audience (Rasool 2002, p. 8) and that, although there is a clear drive to spread the teachings and to present them in ways that are understandable and appealing to prospective students in the West, this is not at the expense of making fundamental modifications to the teachings to pander to new audiences. There is an acceptance of the fact that they will likely attract smaller numbers as a result, but this is done to ensure the integrity of their teachings. Such features contrast with the efforts of some other Sufi

groups to expand to the West[24] as well as more broadly with the commodification and even "McDonaldization"[25] of spirituality (e.g., Milani and Possamai 2013; Ritzer 2018).

But back to inherent resonance, the particular technique of *muraqaba* itself, bears similarity to, and thus potential resonance with, the now highly popular "mindfulness meditation". Not to make light of the actual and significant differences, such as the absence or presence of God, like *muraqaba*, mindfulness meditation usually involves directing one's attention to a particular focal point (like the breath), not becoming involved with passing thoughts and gently returning to the focal point after any noted wandering thoughts (as was instructed at retreats and local meetings of SOST in Germany), though Rasool is clear to point out that it is not the mind that is used in *muraqaba*, but the heart (Rasool 2002, p. 100). On a final note, while visions have been associated with such silent contemplative practice across religious traditions (Rouget 1985, p. 11) and these are not discounted in this lineage, they are also not emphasized, as Rasool states: "If a person sees colors, well and good. If a person does not, that is fine too. The object is to remember God, not to have visions" (Rasool 2002, p. 90; 2010, p. 59), a position that is congruent with the rationalization and de-mystification of mysticism in the modern era (Rasool 2002, pp. 98–102; 2010, pp. 58–59, 64–67, 78–80, 95–105, 114–15, etc.).

Muraqaba in Historical Perspective

In the first period, though without using the word itself, *muraqaba* as turning one's attention away from the mundane world and toward God might be seen as pre-figured in the fundamental Islamic practice of prayer introduced by the Prophet, wherein at least five times a day, Muslims temporarily cease their mundane activities and direct their attention toward God. The simple act of directing one's attention to God was already described with the term *muraqaba* by Harith al-Muhasibi (d. 857) (Smith [1935] 1974, pp. 207–11) in the second period and centuries later in the fifth period, it was still used in the same way among the first generation of Naqshbandis (Tosun and Bayraktar 2014a). Moreover, later also in the fifth period, the eleven Naqshbandi principles, as described in the *Rashahat*, place an enormous emphasis on developing a deeply profound awareness of God and maintaining this continuously in daily life while still engaged in one's worldly responsibilities. The heart is given a central role in such awareness (Safi 2001, pp. 16–26).

As for the practice of using a standardized curriculum of intentions for *muraqaba* intended to lead step-by-step through various levels of Sufi cosmology, this may be a late modern development. There is no textual evidence for this before the emergence of the *ma'mulat* genre, which included committing such curricula to writing around the turn of the nineteenth century (Buehler 1998, pp. 234–40; Giordani 2012; Ziad 2016). Yet the cosmological structure the intentions are intended to navigate through is much older and is based on the emanationism and cosmological speculations of early Arab philosophers as well as Sufis. For instance, the idea of dividing existence into the necessary (*wajib*) and the contingent (*mumkin*), thus the circle of possibility (*da'ira-yi imkani*) from which Rasool's first Mujaddidi circle takes its name, can be found as early as Ibn Sina (or Avicenna, d. 1037). Such speculation began in the second period (e.g., Nasr 1964, 1997) and is often understood to have reached its pinnacle in the fourth period, often considered the "golden age" of Sufism or Sufi theosophy, with the likes of Ibn 'Arabi, who had a tremendous impact across the Muslim world, including among the early Naqshbandis (Chittick 1991), as did Rumi (Ridgeon 2012), as well as in South Asia (Chittick 1992), where it would provide a foundation for Sirhindi's thought, such as with the doctrine of the five divine presences (Chittick 1982; Affifi 1939) being perceptible in the general structure of later Mujaddidi meditative exercises (Buehler 2011, pp. 32–36).

Yet well before being later incorporated into the standardized curricula of practices found in the *ma'mulat* genre at the turn of the nineteenth century, such cosmology would continue to be developed and refined upon by later thinkers in the late medieval and early modern eras, notably with the abovementioned concept of *wahdat al-shuhud* ("unity of witnessing", as opposed to the notion of *wahdat al-wujud*, or "unity of existence", that has

become associated with Ibn 'Arabi) in the thought of Simnani in phase five and Sirhindi in phase six, placing particular emphasis on going beyond perceived unity with God to re-realizing differentiation and returning to creation to serve one's fellow man as a moral exemplar (Buehler 1998, pp. 122–25; 2011, pp. 36–39). The notions of *zilliyyat* ("shadowism") as well as *wilayat-i sughra* ("lesser intimacy") and *wilayat-i kubra* ("greater intimacy"), from which the last three circles in the Mujaddidi curriculum of Rasool and his heirs take their names, are drawn directly from Sirhindi's reformist thought in critique of *wahdat al-wujud* (ter Haar 1992; Ansari 1986, pp. 15, 211, 279, 299–300; Buehler 2011, pp. 36–37, 91, 225, 233, 238, 268; Alam 2012).

Today, among Islamic Mujaddidi branches, there seem to be two general and non-mutually exclusive trends pertaining to mystical practices: (1) those who center more around collective activities like group *dhikr* along with a private daily litany (*wazifa*), are not publicly known to have set curricula for *muraqaba* and may be characterized by a more distant allegiance and devotion to the *shaykh*, examples of which might be the Haqqaniyya (e.g., Böttcher 2011; Atay 1994) or the Ghamkol Sharif community (Werbner 2003; Ghamkol-Sharif.org), and (2) those who are known to follow some form of set curriculum for *muraqaba* leading through the various levels of Sufi cosmo-psychology, supplemented by a personal *wazifa* and which may involve the personalized guidance or direction of the *shaykh* or his[26] *khalifa* in carrying out such practice, like Rasool and his heirs or the Hakimabad Khanaqah (Hakimabad.com), Sayfiyya (Lizzio 1998, pp. 243–49; Buehler 1998, pp. 249–53), Tariqa Naqshbandiyya wa Qadiriyya (Widiyanto 2012, pp. 162–66), the extremely numerous yet very under- or un-studied lines tracing back to Fazal 'Ali Shah Qureshi (d. 1935) (e.g., Ghaffari 2011b; IslahulMuslimeen.org; Tasawwuf.co; Zikr.co.uk; Tazkiya.org; Murshid-Hussain.com; BeautyofIslam.org; Khanqah-e-Naqshband.com; IslaheNafs.org) or even the non-Mujaddidi Naqshbandi Owaisiyya (Awan 2009; see also Buehler 2015).[27] Buehler's theory of the mediating *shaykh* points to the former trend, while his label of directing *shaykh* points to the latter (Buehler 1998). Interestingly, among some Hindu-derived lines, like SRCM's abovementioned "heartfulness meditation", one finds a meditative practice that, on a very fundamental level, is similar to that taught by Islamic Mujaddidi branches, and the heart *chakra* plays a central role in this practice, though apparently without the step-by-step guided travel through Mujaddidi cosmo-psychology. This formlessness is also true among those tracing back to Irina Tweedie, such as Vaughan-Lee or Annette Kaiser, who describes her teachings as "*dem pfadlosen Pfad der Liebe*" (or "the pathless path of love") (AnnetteKaiser.ch). Similarly, although likewise without a curriculum of intentions, the passive receptivity of Subud's *latihan* also bears a fundamental similarity to *muraqaba* that might bespeak the founder's Mujaddidi (Khalidi) background (Widiyanto 2012; Geels 1997; Subud.com). While there are not known to be any set curricula for meditation in the post-*tariqa* category, the most important source for these curricula remain important, as the collected letters and other writings of Sirhindi were highly influential on the thought of Said Nursi (d. 1960) and Gülen and are also widely read by Deobandi scholars (Bashir 2010, p. 38) as well as Sulaymançis (Jonker 2006, p. 74).

4.2. Dhikr

Literally meaning "remembrance", there are two main senses in which Rasool uses the word *dhikr*. The first refers to the recitation of specific formulae, but second, it also denotes continuously maintaining God in one's awareness throughout daily life. The first sense is a technique intended to lead to the attainment of the second sense. *Dhikr* as the practice of recitation includes various methods, each of which is to be prescribed by the *shaykh* who assigns different formulae to be repeated at certain times of day and for a specific number of iterations (Rasool 2002, p. 108) which, as observed at retreats and local meetings, is often counted with the aid of a string of beads (*tasbih*) being silently passed through the fingers. While *dhikr* is considered the main practice of many Sufi lineages, for Rasool and his heirs, these and other recitations play more of a supplementary role in relation to the central practice of *muraqaba*. One particularly significant formula is the *dhikr-i nafy*

wa ithbat ("remembrance of negation and affirmation"). This involves the repetition of "*La ilaha illa Allah*" ("There is no god but God") broken up into segments, with different movements, strokes or "strikes" (sg. *darb*), which ultimately land on the heart, being visualized within the body. Another major formula is *dhikr-i ism-i dhat* ("remembrance of the name of the [divine] essence"), which consists of repeating "*Allah*" (Rasool 2002, p. 104; 2010, p. 58). Such recitations are intended to bring about a constant remembrance of God in the practitioner's life, even when not engaged in recitation and in fact, at all times no matter what one is doing. In this sense, it is explained that *dhikr* is more than a routinized ritual, it is "an exalted *psychological state* that becomes part of a human being's *consciousness* [emphases added...] and an integral part of that person's being" (Rasool 2002, pp. 106–7; 2010, pp. 56–58).

But to shift gears back from results to practices, while not usually referred to under the label of *dhikr*, the practices of reciting *al-Fatiha*, *durud* and *khatm*, which together with *muraqaba* and *dhikr* constitute the five main practices of this lineage (Rasool 2010, p. 100), are briefly discussed here given the fact that they involve assigned recitations and are also all part of the *wazifa*. To discuss these briefly in turn, first, *al-Fatiha* is the opening *sura* of the Qur'an, which includes praising God and asking for guidance along "the straight path". It is recited with each cycle (*rak'a*) of Islamic prayer, appears in various situations of daily life and is also very commonly encountered in Sufi litanies. Next, *durud sharif*; also called *salawat*, *tasliya* or simply *durud*; denotes supplications for blessings upon the Prophet and his family. It is considered polite to make such a supplication when mentioning the Prophet in conversation and *salawat* are also made during ritual prayer. Here such invocations for blessings are recited as a mystical practice in and of itself. Lastly, the *khatm* involves honoring the saints of the *silsila*; mentioning two of these specifically by name, Sirhindi and 'Abdul Bari Shah.

Considering resonance and damping, obviously with *mantra*s and personal affirmations as prominent fixtures of contemporary alternative spiritualities, chanting sacred formulae (often in foreign languages) is not an unfamiliar practice for many. Yet the religious, and specifically Islamic, character of such recitations may act as a source of damping in light of the trend toward the emancipation of mysticism from religion in the modern era and the anti-exotericism among many spiritual seekers in the West, not to mention prejudices about Islam, especially in the post-9/11 era. Still, the path was paved in advance for accepting Sufism as Islamic by the prevalence of Traditionalist literature, such as by Martin Lings or Seyyed Hossein Nasr,[28] which upholds the inseparability of Sufism from Islam along with a search for authenticity leading seekers curious about Sufism, or the "Sufi 'flavored' teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff" (Dickson 2015, pp. 83–86), to Muslim *shaykh*s. Even more significantly, among Rasool and his heirs, the lack of pressure to convert to Islam, gradualism in the process of conversion,[29] if one chooses to do so, and the focus on the inner meaning of the revelation over extreme literalism help to neutralize such damping potential.

But this is also specifically negotiated through framing, and for a significant example related to *durud*, in the PDF instructions provided to students, their potential apprehensions are acknowledged but, rather than emphasizing Muhammad as an historical figure, they highlight him as "the complete man, the archetype and model of your own perfection" (School of Sufi Teaching 2011, pp. 2–3). This makes use of the possibility for resonance between the classical Sufi doctrine of *al-insan al-kamal* ("the perfect [or complete] person") and the quest to actualize one's latent inner potential in the HPM and more broadly among contemporary spiritual seekers in the West, including with a seeming nod to Jungian archetypes. As learned at group meetings in Germany, while prospective students who are Muslim are often assigned both *muraqaba* and *durud*, non-Muslims are generally not instructed to perform *durud* until later. In the researcher's case, he was not assigned this practice at all during the course of the research.

But specifically on the issue of silent versus vocal *dhikr*, in Rasool's Mujaddidi line, recitations are traditionally performed silently, and sobriety is particularly emphasized.

Such sobriety over ecstatic displays,[30] which is often considered a defining characteristic of the Naqshbandiyya and also typifies *muraqaba*, has the inherent potential to appeal to more reserved and rationally oriented spiritual seekers. This is not to mention how, although the practices are performed collectively at regular gatherings and retreats, they are still mostly performed privately, thus offering inherent resonance with the individualization of mysticism in the modern era. But now we go back in time to consider the historical trajectory of *dhikr* and the remainder of the *wazifa* (Rasool 2002, pp. 104–8; 2010, pp. 56–58).

Dhikr in Historical Perspective

Beginning in the first period, the Qur'an itself often exhorts to remembering (*dh-k-r*) God (e.g., Q 13:28; 29:45; 33:41; 43:36). In the second period, with the abovementioned al-Tustari, we find the word *dhikr* ("remembrance") being used to describe the practice of silently repeating a word formula as a means of carrying out such remembrance and perhaps for the first time, connecting it with the spiritual heart (Green 2012, p. 34). Through this and the third period, various methods of *dhikr*, as the devotional practice of recitation, would develop and in the fourth period, different *tariqa*s emerged who would propagate their own particular litanies and distinctive approaches to performing *dhikr* (Trimingham 1971, pp. 194–217; Knysh 2000, pp. 317–22). In the fifth period, the Kubrawi Simnani advised a method of silent *dhikr* using an already very common formula, "*La ilaha illa Allah*", but dividing it up into different strokes, with the last of which landing on the heart (Elias 1995, pp. 126–29). The Naqshbandiyya itself also emerged in the fifth period and variations of Simnani's distinctive method would also be later adopted by early Naqshbandis, such as being described in the *Rashahat* under the Naqshbandi principle of *yad-kard* ("remembering") (Safi 2001, pp. 19–21) and also later by Taj al-Din, the abovementioned rival of Sirhindi to be the successor to their *shaykh* Baqi Billah.[31] It would also be used by Mujaddidis up to the present day.[32]

Moreover, from the emergence of the Naqshbandiyya, silent *dhikr* was ostensibly a defining characteristic, yet even in the first generation after the founder, there were differing perspectives as to whether and under what circumstances vocalized *dhikr* was permissible (e.g., Weismann 2007, pp. 25–27). Nevertheless, generally Sufi as well as early Naqshbandi and later Mujaddidi litanies up to the present, whether performed aloud or silently, privately or collectively, often include (1) standard *dhikr* formulae drawn from Qur'anic language as well as (2) recitation of verses from the Qur'an, (3) recitations to honor the saints of their *silsila* as well as other important figures and (4) supplications for blessings upon the Prophet (e.g., Meier 1994, pp. 192–98; Kabbani 2004b, pp. 158–88; Alam 2010b; Ahmad 2017). Rasool and his heirs also follow this same pattern for their litany. On a fundamental but significant level, these are the same practices performed for the same basic reasons and sometimes using even the exact same words. *Dhikr* also endures among post-*tariqa* groups, such as the *dhikr* gatherings of the Milli Görüs and Sulaymançis (Jonker 2006, p. 73; VIKZ.de; Jonker 2014). Whether under the name of *dhikr* or not, the recitation of sacred formulae also exists in one form or another among universalists, such as how Ali-Shah prescribed Islamic *dhikr* formulae (Sedgwick 2017, p. 217) or how *dhikr* endured as the practice of *japa* (a Sanskrit term denoting recitations performed among the various Indic religions) among Hindu lines (Dahnhardt 1999, pp. 237–56), such as how Tweedie was instructed in *japa*, including the recitation of "*La-il-llillah* [sic]" (Tweedie [1979] 1988, p. 174).

4.3. Tawajjuh

We now finally turn to the last key term, namely *tawajjuh*, but alongside it we also discuss *nisbat* in its second main sense, as both relate to the student's relationship with the *shaykh*, much like how Rasool deals with them together, as two related aspects of how spiritual training is understood to be imparted (Rasool 2002, pp. 94–97; 2010, pp. 52–54). *Tawajjuh* has the literal meaning of "to turn toward" or "to face", or as Rasool translates it, "spiritual attention" or "spiritual transmission". The term *tawajjuh* can be understood

more broadly as the focusing or turning of a person's attention and/or the turning of the orientation of a particular *latifa* (or combination of *lata'if*) toward a person, place or thing, and subsequently either (1) the passive reception of *baraka* or (2) the active transmission thereof. The first passive sense would be performed by the student every time they meditate. Yet the far more common use of *tawajjuh* in Rasool's writings is to indicate the attention of the *shaykh* towards his students to actively transmit *baraka* to facilitate their spiritual progress along the path. Such transmission is understood to be non-physical and not dependent on geographical proximity.

The second meaning of *nisbat* is the affinity which develops between human beings, primarily with reference to the *shaykh*. A *nisbat* between a disciple and the *shaykh*, who is understood to have already reached an affinity with God, is seen as a means for the disciple to attain a *nisbat* with God. Rasool states that since all Sufi *shaykh*s and orders trace their lineages back to the Prophet, they received their *nisbat* from him (Rasool 2010, p. 46). Thus, the disciple who develops an affinity with the *shaykh*, is seen as the benefactor of a *nisbat* which is said to have been passed along through a chain of successor *shaykh*s leading back to the Prophet. It is this affinity with the *shaykh* that is believed to facilitate the pupil's training through *tawajjuh* and the awakening of the *lata'if* and to allow the disciple to "realize their full potential and [be] transformed" (Rasool 2010, p. 50).

Rasool includes the concepts of *tawajjuh* and *nisbat* (in its second sense), in spite of their damping potential with respect to rationalization as well as the apprehensions of some spiritual seekers in the West toward religious authority, because they are indispensable in this lineage's mysticism and have thus not been abandoned in the Western setting. This too is likely possible due to not only inertial perpetuation and the crystallization of tradition, such as especially in the teachings of Sirhindi, but also to intrinsic compatibilities as well as successful negotiation. The notion of *baraka*, for instance, could naturally seem familiar to Western spiritual seekers with a background in Qi Gong or Yoga, perhaps seeing parallels to the concepts of *chi* or *prana*. Also, the non-physical transmission of *baraka* between individuals could appeal to those with an interest in "psi phenomena", yet Rasool expresses concern with those who view Sufism "through an occultist lens" and are drawn to it in search of such phenomena (Rasool 2002, p. 2).

Moreover, not only does the trend of following Eastern spiritual teachers in the West, which became especially popular in the 1960s (e.g., the Beatles and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, d. 2008), help make it more normal to follow the guidance of a *shaykh*, but in this lineage, he is seen not as an utterly distant and unquestioned authority figure. Seeming to refer to Buehler's mediating *shaykh*, Rasool laments how the role of the Sufi *shaykh* has sometimes "received undue emphasis" and become "more of a hindrance than a help" (Rasool 2002, p. 78). Instead, while upholding the necessity of the *shaykh*'s *tawajjuh* and having a *nisbat* with him, he highlights the *shaykh*'s role as a teacher, who provides "a full course of structured study and training" which the student should follow just as they would at a university (Rasool 2002, p. 75). He is seen as one who has travelled the path before and who now acts as a teacher and guide for students travelling that same path, but one who also serves as a connection to the *silsila* of saints leading back to the Prophet and ultimately to God. He furthermore makes certain to point out, however, that while the student "takes direction from a shaykh, [...] he or she submits to God, not to a human being" (Rasool 2002, p. 78). Additionally, the students' relationship with this guide is more outwardly informal and toned-down as compared with some other Sufi lineages, emphasizing the inner spiritual relationship, the heart-to-heart bond (*rabita*) and attitude toward the *shaykh* over outward formalities, like initiation through the pledging of allegiance (*bay'a*) to the *shaykh* and external expressions of etiquette (*adab*) (Rasool 2002, pp. 74–82). Such a low-key approach to the place of the spiritual guide has the potential to resonate well in European and American contexts (Rasool 2002, pp. 94–98; 2010, pp. 43, 46–47 and 53–54).

Tawajjuh in Historical Perspective

The authority and intercessory power of the *shaykh* was prefigured by the Prophet Muhammad, but after the "Seal of the Prophets", a vacuum was created that needed to be filled. Actually, due to his multi-faceted character as a political, military and spiritual leader, etc., multiple vacuums were created. With regard to spiritual leadership, among his earliest heirs in this capacity, we might look to preachers like al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 728), who are sometimes regarded as among the predecessors of Sufism (e.g., Knysh 2000, pp. 10–13). Moving into the second period with the early development of Sufism, we find circles of thinkers who gathered loosely and informally around a teacher figure, esp. in Baghdad and Basra (Schimmel 1975, pp. 42–77; Knysh 2000, pp. 43–67; Karamustafa 2007, pp. 1–42; Green 2012, pp. 24–41), as well as the development of the notion of sainthood (Radtke and O'Kane 1996). In the third period, prefiguring the doctrine/practice of *nisbat*, the need for a teacher in one's quest to become closer to God becomes understood as a standard and necessary requirement, such as noted by al-Qushayri (Baldick [1989] 2012, p. 63). Similarly, prefiguring *tawajjuh*, tales of saintly miracles and intercession take on a greater prominence, such as those surrounding the figure of Abu al-Hassan Kharaqani (d. 1033) (Nicholson [1914] 2002, pp. 61, 96–99). In the fourth period, after the status of the *shaykh* had been increasingly elevated over the course of the preceding periods, his role became properly institutionalized with the emergence of the *tariqa*s (Malik 2006, pp. 6–8; Schimmel 1975, pp. 228–58; Knysh 2000, pp. 150–244; Baldick [1989] 2012, pp. 69–85; Karamustafa 2007, pp. 114–55; Green 2012, pp. 81–103).

The term *tawajjuh* itself was employed at least from the early Naqshbandis, who emerged in the fifth period and used *tawajjuh* and *muraqaba* nearly synonymously at this point (Tosun and Bayraktar 2014a). Yet during the sixth period, at least as early as Sirhindi himself, we find the terms *tawajjuh* and *nisbat* both being used in the very same senses (ter Haar 1992, pp. 31–32, 40, 45, 77, 84, 91, 107, 109, 111, 174, 176) they are used by later Mujaddidis as well as our case study lineage and other contemporary Mujaddidi branches who use those words (e.g., Lizzio 1998; Chodkiewicz 1990; Meier 1994). In universalist lineages, the need for a guide, whether called a *shaykh*, a guru or something else, continues and *tawajjuh* might be seen as fundamentally synonymous with the Sanskrit term found among some Hindu-derived lines, *pranahuti* (rendered as "Yogic transmission" or "transmission of life force" (Zeng 2017; SriRamChandra.org 1999; SahajMarg.org 2002). In the post-*tariqa* category, although there is no longer a living *shaykh* to provide guidance and spiritual transmission of *baraka*, past *shaykh*s may be revered, like among the Sulamançis (Jonker 2006, pp. 77–78), and there are also still individuals who hold leadership positions whose direction and spiritual guidance could be seen as analogous to that of a *shaykh*, whether that be leaders in a religio-social movement, like Gülen's Hizmet, or teachers and mentors at a *dar al-'ulum*, like Deoband or Nadwatul Ulama.

5. Conclusions

Having examined the main mystical doctrines and practices of an Islamic Sufi lineage that expanded to the West and then globally among those of both Muslim and non-Muslim background, we have demonstrated substantial continuity with the trajectory of development of its main mystical doctrines and practices in the history of Sufism as well as much common ground with other related lineages, including especially "transplants", who have been held to adhere to a Sufism that more or less resembles that in their places of origin. This seems to have been possible because, in addition to the crystallization of tradition in the teachings of such major figures as Sirhindi and the resulting inertial perpetuation, there were already in fact more areas of resonance than damping, and the former were capitalized upon and underscored, while the latter were successfully negotiated and dealt with in a manner that did not require substantial change. The mysticism Rasool had to offer was already much what his audience in the West was looking for, thus negating the need for significant modification. The fact that he and his heirs have presented it as rational, scientific, experiential and suitable for modern lifestyles, or made use of language

from the HPM, such as discovering one's inner potential, personal transformation and elevating one's consciousness, to culturally translate their teachings, highlight inherent compatibilities and make them understandable and appealing for new audiences, does not entail a fundamental alteration of their core mystical doctrines and practices.

With regard to NRMs, Clarke argues that the label of "New" need not necessarily indicate the inclusion of entirely new innovations in doctrine and practice, but may refer to breaks from traditional understandings (Clarke 2006a, p. ix). Yet as just argued, in the case of Rasool and his heirs, such breaks have not occurred and framing or presentational strategies have not entailed a substantial departure from earlier Mujaddidi tradition in terms of the major contours of their core mystical doctrines and practices. This raises the question of whether or not other Sufi lineages, or religious traditions generally, that have been transferred to new settings and among new demographics are really as new or different as preceding studies on them have declared when viewed from other perspectives, such as through the lens of mysticism. It seems necessary to acknowledge both change and continuity wherever they exist, but also to explore the dynamics behind them, understanding the complex interactions both within a transferred tradition as well as between it and its new environment.

Notes

[1] Mark Sedgwick also uses the term neo-Sufism in a similar sense, such as in his contribution "Neo-Sufism" in *The Cambridge Companion to New Religious Movements*, edited by Hammer and Rothstein (Sedgwick 2012), though he perhaps more prominently uses the label of "Western Sufism" (Sedgwick 2017). Yet the term neo-Sufism has also been used quite differently, and with lively academic discussion (O'Fahey and Radtke 1993; Radtke 1994; Hoffmann 1999; Voll 2008; Saghaee 2018; Khodamoradi 2019), to describe eighteenth- to nineteenth-century Sufi reformist currents, including significant personalities in the Mujaddidi *silsila* of our case study lineage. Thus, if both terms are accepted, some scholarship might label them as "neo-Sufi" twice, first around the turn of the nineteenth century and again around the turn of the twenty-first century.

[2] On this point, Hammer astutely observes a trend toward personal inner experience ascending over correct practice of ritual observances (Hammer 2004, pp. 139, 141–42). Yet it must be questioned whether or not such "experientation" (discussed further below) has really resulted in significant changes to actual doctrines and practices. On the "rhetoric of experience", its intellectual geneology and a critique of its usage to shield from external critique, see Sharf (2000). See also Sharf (1995).

[3] Such a perspective shift was inspired by Khodamoradi (2019).

[4] This tripartite definition appears in Zarrabi-Zadeh (2008, p. 86; 2015, 2016). It is based upon the definition used by (McGinn 1999). While it may be tempting to try to divide each of the key terms examined below into only one of the three parts of this definition, the matter is not so simple, since most of the terms discussed relate to all three categories. Instead, this definition was used as a sieve to help discern what does or does not constitute mysticism while collecting the key terms.

⁵　Although the Mujaddidiyya is the main sub-branch of the Naqshbandiyya, Rasool and his heirs provide two different Naqshbandi *silsila*s: one Mujaddidi and one not, with the latter involving a claim to spiritual (*uwaysi*) initiation from the founder figure of the *tariqa*.

⁶　While this lineage has thus far eluded the attention of studies devoted specifically to the topic of Sufism in the West, two doctoral dissertations by scholar-practitioners in the fields of architecture and design were produced in conceptualizing the scheme of the *lata'if* through visual geometry and designing Rasool's tomb (Nosyreva 2014) as well as SOST's Sufi Centre in London (Nasser 2019, 2022).

⁷　The ethnographic research among SOST primarily took place in Germany, happenstantially coinciding with the beginning of their expansion to this country. It involved participant observation and interviews at four annual retreats in Bavaria from 2015 to 2018 when the *shaykh* visited as well as at local weekly group meetings in Munich and Nuremburg, but also remotely, such as through Zoom or WhatsApp. A special feature of this research is that it included following the approach to studying mysticism advocated by Frits Staal (Staal 1975, pp. 121ff) as well as performed, for instance, by Gustavo A. Ludueña (Ludueña 2005), with the researcher actually attempting the practices himself throughout the duration of the research under the instruction of the current *shaykh* of SOST, Hamid Hasan. This is not as unprecedented as it may seem, since other research projects on Sufism in the West have been written by oathbound members of the groups they studied (Habibis 1985; Atay 1994; Hazen 2011). While the current researcher sought to diligently perform the meditative practice assigned to him by the *shaykh* on a daily basis throughout the research, he remained in a liminal status, still being an outsider in the senses that he was a researcher and that he neither pledged *bay'a* nor converted to Islam. Moreover, to have some comparison with SOST's Sufism in its place of immediate origin, the research also incorporated an excursion to India in 2016, with travel to Delhi, Sirhind and Hyderabad, where the researcher attended a retreat presided over by the *shaykh*. The research among Abdur Rashid and his students was of a different character, involving four separate visits to the World Community in the US from 2017 to 2019 in which the main focus was on interviews, including with students but especially with the *shaykh*, who was very generous with his time. It also involved email correspondence for further clarification as well as a consultation of Abdur Rashid's vast output of lectures and other literature, which has been examined separately in another article (Asbury and Zarrabi-Zadeh 2022).

⁸　When asked about this difference, Hamid Hasan explained that the segregation of genders (*purdah*) was adhered to during the Hyderabad retreat because it was the norm for this particular area. At the end of the retreat, the researcher shared a taxi to the airport with two participants, one of whom was one of the two females who had been in attendance. She explained that there are other groups in India that in many ways resemble more what was encountered in Germany, including both genders interacting freely.

⁹　Although the options for shrine visitation in Europe and North America are limited, there are some possibilities, such as the *mazar*s of Bawa Muhaiyaddeen (d. 1986) in Pennsylvania or 'Abdul Wahab Siddiqi (d. 1994) in the UK. Abdur Rashid also mentioned sanctified persons who were laid to rest at the World Community's cemetery, among whom is now another American *shaykh*, 'Abdullah Nooruddeen Durkee (d. 2020). On pilgrimage among Muslims in Europe, including to Sufi shrines, see Flaskerud and Natvig (2017).

¹⁰　With her background in Theosophy, Tweedie's account of her Sufi training makes clear that she was in search of and understood her teacher, Bhai Sahib, at least initially, as a representative of Blavatsky's "Great Brotherhood" (Tweedie [1979] 1988, pp. 24–25, 28, 36). Furthermore, Subud, Omar Ali-Shah, Idries Shah, Itlaq Yolu and active Sufi *tariqa*s, like our case study lineage or the Haqqaniyya or the Mevlevi branches tracing back to Suleyman Loras (d. 1985), all owe some degree of the interest in them in the West to a search for the source of Gurdjieff's teachings. For a coherent account, see Sedgwick (2017, pp. 176–85, 194–202, 208–21, 246–48). Rasool even includes a section on Gurdjieff in his *Turning Toward the Heart* (pp. 24–25). See also Pittman (2012) and Maltabarova (2022).

¹¹　For a comprehensive survey of these and other typologies, see Zarrabi-Zadeh (2019).

¹²　Some of these, namely Subud and certain Hindu-derived lines, technically fall completely outside of this four-fold typology, since they neither embrace Islam nor claim Naqshbandi identify despite Naqshbandi origins. Yet rather than creating a fifth category of "universalist/post-*tariqa*", it seemed most appropriate to group these with the universalists.

¹³　The two categories in which Naqshbandi and Islamic identity converge, Sufism 1st and Islam 1st, relate more to the students themselves. If the lineage seeks to attract non-Muslim spiritual seekers with Sufism, then they are Sufism 1st for those students, but are simultaneously Islam 1st for their Muslim student base.

¹⁴　For some important points of clarity before proceeding, describing the internal logic of a mystical tradition, as is done here, does not constitute validating or advocating those beliefs and practices. Moreover, demonstrating continuity with the past is no more authenticating a tradition than demonstrating discontinuity is de-authenticating it. As Westerlund observes, "it is not the duty of scholars to decide which kind of Sufism is authentic or not" (Westerlund 2004, p. 12).

¹⁵　Audio recording of Hasan speaking at the 2017 SOST retreat in Poland, courtesy of Ilya Uglava.

¹⁶　It may not have been Ibn 'Arabi's actual thought that Sirhindi was criticizing, but rather his understanding of it in light of the South Asian reception of the notion of *wahdat al-wujud* as *hama ust* ("everything is He", as opposed to *hama az ust*, or "everything is from He"), in which it had come to be associated with antinomianism, heterodox beliefs and religious syncretism (Khodamoradi 2012).

17   An example where God seems to have been deemphasized in favor of psychologization and a quest for personal effectiveness is in the works of Omar Ali-Shah (e.g., Ali-Shah [1992] 1998, 1995).

18   Concerning a similar relationship with Buddhism and science, see Lopez (2008).

19   On *ruh* and *nafs*, see Macdonald (1932).

20   On the *lata'if*, see esp. Buehler (1998, pp. 103–20).

21   Also see Gülen's two-part article "Qalb (Heart)" as well as "The Spirit and What Follows", "Sir (Secret)" and "The Horizon of 'the Secret' and What Lies Beyond", available at FGulen.com.

22   Schimmel describes *INfB* as follows: "It is not the long periods of mortification but the spiritual purification, the education of the heart instead of the training of the lower soul, that are characteristic of the Naqshbandiyya method" (Schimmel 1975, p. 366).

23   Dahnhardt also notes the parallel between the Hindu notion of *sahaja* and the Mujaddidi idea of *jadhba* being easier and faster than *suluk* (Dahnhardt 1999, p. 242).

24   Consider the abovementioned apparent appropriation of the enneagram. See also Draper (2004).

25   I am thankful to Thomas K. Gugler for introducing me to this concept.

26   The use of male pronouns in relation to *shaykh*s is only meant to facilitate readability as well as to reflect the vast majority of Mujaddidi cases. This is not in any way intended to discount the many distinguished *shaykha*s or the even more numerous female Sufi practitioners, Mujaddidi or otherwise (cf. e.g., Böttcher 1998; Fonseca Chagas 2013; Buehler 2016, pp. 189–210).

27   There is no single standard curriculum of intentions for all Mujaddidi branches, though all clearly draw from the thought of Sirhindi. Those descending from Shah Ghulam 'Ali (d. 1824), however, seem to be the most common and standardized between lineages. For Bayraktar's partial translation of Ghulam 'Ali's *Risala al-Muraqaba* on this topic, see Malik (2020, pp. 352–56). For a discussion based on the broader contents of his *Durr al-Ma'arif*, see Fusfeld (1981, pp. 90–106).

28   I am grateful to Katya Nosyreva for pointing this out to me. On Traditionalism, see Sedgwick (2004).

29   A significant example of such gradualism at the collective level is the very first retreat to take place in Germany in 2017. It was held in a Catholic abbey on an island in the Chiemsee that also hosts retreats for other non-traditional forms of spirituality, like Yoga and Qi Gong, thus providing a familiar and religiously neutral environment for prospective non-Muslim students. Also of note, while the various practices follow immediately after different Islamic prayers, during the first retreat, Muslim students performed their prayers in a separate room before coming together with the non-Muslim participants to perform *muraqaba* or other practices collectively. This seems to have been a testing of the waters in this new majority non-Muslim country, so as not to frighten off or overwhelm non-Muslim participants. At subsequent retreats, prayers and *muraqaba* were performed in the same room with all present. Furthermore, the choice of venue also demonstrates how, as Hammer noted, "The success of a movement often has to do with its successful marketing strategies, and not least its ability to expand its membership by exploiting pre-existing social networks" (Hammer 2004, p. 143). Interestingly, we met a group of universalist Mujaddidis in Tweedie's line who were also at the abbey but were holding a Qi Gong seminar. Moreover, just days before this retreat, Hamid Hasan appeared for a bookreading of the German translation of *Turning Toward the Heart*. Significant for understanding his initial target audience, this was held at a Sufi center in Munich that is affiliated with the universalist Sufism of Inayat Khan.

30   On the dichotomy of sober versus intoxicated Sufism, see Mojaddedi (2003).

31   For a translated description of this *dhikr* according to Taj al-Din, see Trimingham (1971, p. 202). The original manuscript can be viewed at the Cambridge Digital Library. Islamic Manuscripts: Epistle on the Customs of the Naqshbandiyya Order. Available online: http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01073/12 (accessed on 8 January 2018).

32   Cf. e.g., Lesson 8 of Ghaffari (2011b) or Tazkiya.org (2013).

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