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Ibn ‘Arabī’s “Kitāb al-Ḥujub”

(Translation and study of the concept of Veils
in comparison with the Hindu concept of Maya)

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Islamic Studies in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M Phil. Department of Comparative Religion.

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September 2010

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Dedication

To the unending support of my mother and father,

To all those who compelled me to do it,

To Shaykh Rifaqat Hussain Shah, who guided and supported me spiritually in the journey of unveiling of realities.

To Shaykh al-Akbar Muḥyiddīn Ibn ‘Arabī, who inspired & guided me in getting closer to the knowledge of realities.

Abstract

The veil is a notion which evokes the idea of mystery, because it hides from view something that is either too sacred or too intimate. We are all in veil from the Real that's why we are always in search of the Real. This search demands the lifting of these veils which seems impossible but one can come closer to the Real, Which is the real aspiration of a wayfarer (*Sālik*).

This small work (*Kitāb al-Hujub*) of Ibn 'Arabī sheds light on an important concept of veiling and unveiling; in it al-Shaykh al-Akbar has alluded to various types of *hujub* that shelter us in our way toward the Real. He reveals deliberately, how to acquire the higher knowledge of lifting these curtains. In pursuit of the truth, I have proposed a thesis for preparing the Critical Edition of the Arabic text and its translation into English.

As the idea of a veil alludes to a mystery, a thorough study was required to the key concepts of veils in writings of Ibn 'Arabī, so I added a chapter on enlightenment of this concept. This third chapter contains three major types of veils categorized as done by Ibn 'Arabī in *Futūḥāt*. As this idea is not easy to apprehend and can't be explain in a space of a chapter that's why I have alluded to these veils in a systematic manner. For those who want a deep study they should at least know all the related terminological concepts in detail.

In my understanding, I have found the concept of *hijāb* by Ibn 'Arabī very closer to the Hindu concept of *māyā* so I proposed a comparative study to both concepts. Fourth Chapter of the thesis covers the concept of *māyā* in Advaita Vedānta. I have tried my best to collect all the necessary information related to *māyā* and to put them in a systematic manner. This chapter is the base for the concept of *māyā*. If you have understood the meaning then you can understand the comparison in the fifth chapter.

The fifth chapter demonstrates the similarities and dissimilarities of both concepts. In my opinion, these two concepts have originated from the same source of eternal divine wisdom. The chapter starts with the terminological comparison and the hidden meaning in them. I have not found any intentional replication of ideas, which confirms that these are

two different spiritual experiences in two different times. We should also keep in mind that when two different concepts agree with each other in principles it doesn't mean that the latter is a replica of the earlier. The chapter focuses on the idea behind the two concepts and analyses these issues with respect to both concepts. These results are deduced at the end of the thesis under conclusion.

Acknowledgement

I owe full appreciation and acknowledgement to Dr. Jamil Qalander, without whom this work would not have been completed. His corrections for the English translation of *Kitāb al-Hujub* were very encouraging. I also would like to thank Prof. Denis Gril who voluntarily checked the critical Arabic edition and corrected those tiny details which had remained invisible to my eyes. I appreciate the support of the Ibn Arabi Society and its librarian Jane Clark for providing me the rare manuscripts of this beautiful work, which were used for this critical edition.

I would also like to thank Mr. Modassir for his scholarly guidance in the second part of my thesis which was about the concept of *Māyā* in Advaita Vedānta. I highly appreciate his editing of those chapters.

I would also like to thank all of my friends and colleagues with whom I had great and important discussions and those who provided me the sources which helped me a lot. I just would like to mention here some of them: Mr. Hamesh Gul, Mr. Irfan Hayat, Mr. Qaiser Shahzad and others.

At the end I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my Shaykh Syed Rifaqat Hussain Shah for his spiritual backing and support, which was inevitable in a project like this. May Allah elevates his rankings and makes me his true disciple. Amen

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Abbreviations

This work is mainly based on Ibn 'Arabī's major comprehensive work *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*. As for our continuous reference to that work, we have used a short reference style: each quotation from the *Futūḥāt* is followed by a reference in brackets: (X, 000) which means: [volume, page]. We have mainly used the standard edition of the *Futūḥāt* issued by many publishers based on a reproduction of the old edition of Bulāq 1329/1911 which comprises four volumes each about 600-700 pages of 35 lines; the page size is 20 cm by 27 cm (see the Bibliography). In addition to that old edition we have also used some reference of *Futūḥāt* from the new 14 volume critical edition edited by Osman Yahia and Ibrāhīm Madkūr, published by *al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-Āmmah lil-Kitāb*. The short reference style for this edition is (OY: X, 000) which means: [Osman yahia's edition: volume, page]

In addition to the *Futūḥāt*, we use short form of references to many other books by Ibn 'Arabī and other related famous works (such as William Chittick's two important works: *The Sufi Path of Knowledge [SPK]* and *The Self-disclosure of God [SDG]*) as explained in the Bibliography. In most of these cases we put the short form of the reference followed by the page number.

All references to the Holy Qur'ān are given also in the text and not in notes; after each verse quoted or meaning indicated in the text we add a reference (xx: yy) where xx refers to the number of the Sūra (chapter) and yy is the number of the Āya (verse).

Introduction

The concept of veiling and unveiling plays an important role in the spiritual journey of a wayfarer. We know that Sufis in general and Ibn ‘Arabī in particular always talk about the hidden world (*‘Alam al-Ghayb*). In fact, it is always necessary for the wayfarer to start polishing his heart in order to attain the *tajalliyat* of the hidden. Ibn ‘Arabī says: When the mirror of the heart is cleansed, the heart tells of all those mysteries which were hereto hidden. Therefore, in order to attain that *Tajallī*, *Sālik* must know about how to clean the mirror of his heart and what are the veils that he may face in this regard. These veils are the dark cloud which came between the eye of the heart and the Angelic realm. Ibn ‘Arabī says: “All these veils are caused by the influence of the material world upon mans ego and this ego in turn, renders the heart sick. When the heart is sick, the mind radiates a beam of light upon it to immunize the heart against the tyranny of the ego. However, while burning the malfeasance of the ego, it also burns the heart – and the heart, on fire, is covered by the dark smoke which it generates. This smoke separates the heart from the mind, breaking all connections between them. Thus the heart is darkened. It is the dark cloud which becomes a blinding veil. It will put out the light of certainty and obscures the sight of the eye of the heart. This is a lack of sincerity, lack of trust, faithlessness and an inability to distinguish right from wrong” (Ibn ‘Arabī, “Divine Governance” 189). These are the ills within the range of the human possibility and with intention and effort and God’s permission they can be cured. This will restore health of the heart and produce peace of heart. So a comprehensive understanding of these veils is a basic necessity for any wayfarer (*Sālik*) who wants to realize a way towards the Real.

KITĀB AL-ḤUJUB

Kitāb al-Ḥujub is one of those short works of Ibn ‘Arabī which exclusively alludes to the different types of veils between the Real and the engendered beings. In this book he has given hints to those expressions which will become veil for us. He wants us to

understand these veils so that we may realize things as they actually are. Although he has not categorized these veils here in this work but the idea is very clear and even without categorization one can smell the aroma of these veils and the knowledge of their unveiling.

In the preface of this short work, Ibn ‘Arabī says: “All praise belongs to God, who veiled us by Him-self, for the jealousy that anyone may know his core, He appeared as light (*nūr*) and then got veiled from sights by His light, He manifested, but got concealed from insights (*Basā’ir*) by virtue of His manifestation,” expressing the notion of veiling and unveiling, how *nūr* which brings light to other things can become itself a veil? The whole idea of the veil is the very being of a thing and in reality nothing other than the thing is veiling upon itself. That was the main point behind the categorization of these veils, further he has divided them into sensory and supra-sensory. Later in the book he has alluded to several of these veils without any explanation or categorization, some are:

1. The veil of knowledge; which according to him is a noble veil and is a veil from seeing (*‘ayn*) as seeing is a veil from the second knowledge, which is the [knowledge of] the Truth (*Ḥaqq*).
2. The veil of Love; he says: love is a veil upon itself because it seeks you with annihilation (*fanā’*) and subsistence (*baqā’*). These two states are opposite to each other so in this veil you have a dual nature; one is to obey orders of your lover and the other is to subsist with your self for your desire of the union with your beloved.
3. The veil of the witness (*shāhid*); which is a veil from the witnessed, as the witness is that trace that resides in your heart after witnessing the witnessed. So if you adhere to the witness you are ignoring the witnessed.
4. The Veil of the Engendered Being; It is a veil because the engendered being is in exile from its homeland, which is nothingness and when he roams in the reign of existence he feels he has found his real self which is nothingness, so he longs for it.

5. The Veil of Proximity; *Qurb* is a veil from the Real Self, because in it is the witnessing of the survival of one's trace. The one whose trace survives doesn't partake of and the one who doesn't partake of witnessing has no spiritual gnosis (*ma'rifa*) of the Real Self.

These are some examples of the veil that has been alluded to in this short work for complete translation see chapter 2 of this thesis.

MĀYĀ

The concept of Maya is the key concept regarding the relationship of Brahman and Ātman in Advaita Vedānta. In my understanding, this concept is quite close to the concept of *ḥijāb* by Ibn 'Arabī that's why I have proposed a comparison of both concepts. According to Advaitins *māyā* has different meanings and several interpretations. Although it is impossible for me to cover all of them in detail here in this thesis due to time restrictions, I have picked up three basic understandings of the concept by three famous scholars of Upaniṣads. These are:

1. The traditional view of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya by Swāmi Nikhilānanda; according to which *māyā* is a power of the Lord by which He controls this universe.
2. The modern view of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan; according to him *māyā* is not an illusion. He has interpreted *māyā* and traced untraditional new meaning of the term.
3. The rigid and literal view of Prabhu Dutt Shāstrī in his book "*The Doctrine of Māyā in the Philosophy of Vedānta.*" According to him *māyā* is an illusion in its literal sense and the world around us is unreal at all.

I have tried my best to summarize all these views objectively. Thus you can say this that chapter 4 of this thesis construct a good idea about the several interpretation and meanings of the term *māyā* in Advaita Vedānta.

In general the Upaniṣads make it clear that all that which we sense through our senses is not the reality but a mere appearance and form and to find reality in this unreal world is an illusion, that is *māyā*, so one should free his mind of that *māyā* if he wants to seek the truth. This attempt of realization needs the lifting of the veils of ignorance (*vidyā*). So we can say that the concept of veiling and unveiling is already present in Upaniṣads.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

My methodology in this thesis is textual, analytical and comparative. I have emphasized on making the very first Critical Edition of *Kitāb al-Ḥujub* with its English translation. In chapter no 3, I have used the descriptive research method which is to describe or present the picture of a phenomenon under investigation and to go into great depth and detail in describing it. I have tried my best to construct an idea of veils in the writings of Ibn 'Arabī, scattered in his different books and short works like *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, *Al-Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya*, *Kitāb al-Tajalliyāt al-Ilāhiyya* and many other. The information on which I rely is only from the writings of al-Shaykh al-Akbar, not from the works of his disciples and commentators.

For referencing I have used MLA 7th edition. MLA style requires brief references in the text of the paper and complete reference information at the end of the paper.

Chapter No 1

Biography of Shaykh al-Akbar Ibn ‘Arabī

Born in the Spanish township of Murcia on 17th of Ramaḍān 561 AH (27th or 28th of July 1165 AD) with respectable family roots of *Banū Ṭayy*,¹ this unique mystic of Islam, *Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-‘Arabī al-Ṭā’ī al-Ḥātmī* is universally known as *al-Shaykh al-Akbar* (The Greatest Master).

YOUTH AGE

His father, *‘Alī ibn Muḥammad* served in the Army of *Ibn Mardanīsh*, and later when *Ibn Mardanīsh* died in 1172 AD, he swiftly shifted his allegiance to the Almohad Sultan, *Abū Ya’qūb Yūsuf I*, and became one of his military advisers. While still a lad of eight years the family of Ibn ‘Arabī left Murcia and took Seville for their home. In Stephen Hartenstein’s words: “Ibn ‘Arabī spent his youth age in the most advanced city of that time, an atmosphere steeped in the most important ideas – philosophical, scientific and religious – of his day. For the young Ibn ‘Arabī, twelfth century Seville was no doubt the equivalent of today’s London, Paris and New York” (Hirtenstein 36).

EDUCATION

Ibn ‘Arabī’s dogmatic and intellectual training began in the cultural and civilized centre of Muslim Spain as Seville was known in 578 AH. Most of his teachers mentioned in the *ijāza* wrote to King *al-Muẓaffar* were the ‘*ulamā*’ of the Almohad era and some of them also held the official posts of *Qāḍī* or *Khaṭīb* (Addas 97). He was just a young boy when his father sent him to the renowned jurist *Abū Bakr ibn Khalaf* to study Qur’ān. Ibn ‘Arabī learnt the recitation of the Qur’ān from the book of *Al-Kāfī* in the seven different readings (*qirā’āt*). The same work was also transmitted to him by another *muqrī*, *‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghālib ibn al-Sharrāt* (Addas 44). At the age of ten, he was well-versed in the *Qirā’āt*; afterwards he learned the sciences of *Ḥadīth* and *Fiqh* from the famous scholars of the time.

¹ An important Arab tribe of Yemenite origin, related to which was Ḥātim at-Ṭā’ī who was famed for his generosity in pre Islamic age.

He studied *Ḥadīth* and *Sīra* with the *muḥaddith* ‘*Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suhaylī*, who taught him all of his works. He also attended lectures of *Qāḍī Ibn Zarkūn*, who transmitted to him *Kitāb al-Taqaṣṣī* of *Al-Shāṭibī* and issued him an *Ijāza* (permission of transmission to others.)

Later he studied under ‘*Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Azdī al-Ishbīlī* his works on *Ḥadīth*; these are *Alḥkāṁ al-Kubrā*, *al-Wuṣṭā* and *al-Ṣughrā*. In addition to his own works, he also transmitted to Ibn ‘Arabī the writings of the famous *Zāhirī* scholar, *Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī* (Addas 45). The complete list of his teachers and masters can be found in a scholarly certificate *Ijāza* given to *Sultan al-Ashraf al-Muẓaffar*, in this document Ibn Arabī mentioned 70 of his teachers and masters (Ibn ‘Arabī, “*Ijāza li Malik al-Muẓaffar*” 7).

THE SUFI PATH

Ibn ‘Arabī was about sixteen when he went into seclusion. He himself never explicitly mentioned the reasons behind it. Yet the following factors are worth considering:

There goes a story, heard after 150 years of his death, Ibn ‘Arabī was at a dinner party which rounded off with wine. As he took the wine cup to his lips, he heard a voice: “O *Muḥammad*, it was not for this that you were created!” (Addas 36). This gave him an urge to quit worldly pursuits and to embark upon the search of God.

Another important cause of this retreat was a vision of the three great Prophets, Jesus, Moses and Muḥammad (PBUT). Ibn ‘Arabī says: “When I turned to this path, it was accomplished through a dream-vision (*mubashshira*) under the guidance of Jesus, Moses and Muḥammad (PBUT). In it, Jesus urged him to take to asceticism (*Zuhd*), Moses divulged to him that he would get to the infused knowledge called “*al-ilm al-ludunnī*” and the Prophet Muḥammad advised him to follow him step by step; “Hold fast to me and you will be safe!” (Addas 41).

As a consequence of this retreat and the spiritual insights granted to him, two things seem to have happened: firstly, he began to study *Qur’ān* and *Ḥadīth* and secondly, Ibn ‘Arabī was sent by his father to meet the great philosopher *Ibn Rushd* (Averroes, 1126-98).

The meeting was very significant in the sense that Ibn ‘Arabī answered his questions in ‘Yes’ and ‘No,’ and *Ibn Rushd* declared: “I myself was of the opinion that such a thing (i.e. spiritual knowledge without learning) is possible, but never met anyone who had experienced it” (OY: II, 372).

SPIRITUAL MASTERS

Ibn ‘Arabī’s contact with spiritual masters began in Seville. At that time the pursuit of the spiritual life normally involved keeping company with many different masters instead of only one master. Ibn ‘Arabī has described brief biographies of his masters in his book *Rūḥ al-Quds. Al-‘Uryabī*² of ‘Ulya³ was one of those masters who visited Seville nearly in 1184, and Ibn ‘Arabī met him at that stage of his life when he had already embarked on the Path. One can call *al-‘Uryabī* as his first teacher (*al-murshad al-awwal*), a relationship which is always of significance in Sufism. *Shaykh al-‘Uryabī* had reached the high spiritual state of total servitude (*‘ubūdiyya*), which in Ibn ‘Arabī’s eyes surpass all others. Later on meetings with his Shaykh transformed Ibn ‘Arabī’s life so quickly that he wrote in *Futūḥāt*: “While our *Shaykh al-‘Uryabī* was *Isawī* at the end of his life. I was *Isawī* at the beginning of my life on this path. I was then taken to the states of *Mūsawī* sun illumination. Then I was taken to *Hūd*, and after that to all the Prophets, there after I was taken to *Muḥammad*. That was the order for me in this path” (OY: III, 361-2). Some of his masters are:

1. *Abū al-Abbās al-‘Uryabī*
2. *Abū al-Ḥajjāj al-Shubarbulī*
3. *Abū Ya’qūb Yūsuf al-Kūmī*
4. *Abū Yaḥyā al-Ṣanhājī*

² There are two version of his nisba mentioned in the books some says it Al-‘Uraynī and other Al-‘Uraybī but the autograph copy of *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* and manuscript sources of *Rūḥ al-Quds* clearly mention the nisba as Al-‘Uraybī.

³ Now a days called Loulé, near Silves in Portugal.

5. *Abū ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Qassūm*
6. *Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Sharafī*
7. *Abū ‘Abbās al-Kashshāb*
8. *Abū ‘Imrān al-Mīrtulī*
9. *Ṣāliḥ al-‘Adawī*
10. *‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Mahdawī*
11. *‘Abd Allāh al-Mawrūrī*
12. *Abū Madyan al-Ghawth*

Detail about his masters and their relationship with Ibn ‘Arabī can be found in *Rūḥ al-Quds*, *Durrat al-Fākhira* and *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*.

MEETINGS WITH KHIḌR

Factually speaking, *Shaykh al-‘Uryabī* initiated Ibn ‘Arabī’s contact with *Khiḍr* in Seville, when he was only a youth. Ibn ‘Arabī says: “I met *Khiḍr* in *Qūs al-haniyya* in Seville, and he said to me: “Accept what the Shaykh says!” I immediately turned to the Shaykh [*‘Uryabī*] and before I spoke he said: “O *Muḥammad*, does that mean that every time you contradict me, I will have to ask *Khiḍr* to instruct you in submission to the masters?” I replied: “Master, was that person *Khiḍr*?” He answered: “Yes!” (I, 331; Addas 63). That was his first meeting with *Khiḍr*. Later Ibn ‘Arabī met *Khiḍr* several times. In 1193 at the age of 28 Ibn ‘Arabī visited Tunis and the main intention behind this visit was to meet with the great disciples of *Abū Madyan*, notably *‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Mahdawī* and *Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh al-Kinānī*. He stayed there for less than a year during which he realized the station of pure servant-hood and the Muhammadian inheritance. On return from Tunis, he met *Khiḍr* for the second time; it happened when he was returning from Tunis by boat, on a lunar night he saw a man walking on the water towards him. On

reaching the boat, *Khidr* stood on the sea and showed him that his feet were still dry. After that *Khidr* conversed with Ibn ‘Arabī in a language which is peculiar to him (OY: III, 182).

On reaching Andalusia in late 590 AH, Ibn ‘Arabī had his third meeting with *Khidr*, this time *Khidr* performed a miracle to provide evidence to a companion of Ibn ‘Arabī who denies the existence of miracles. A common feature of all these meetings with *Khidr* was that they took place in the presence of a high rank spiritual master initiating Ibn ‘Arabī into the knowledge of Divine mysteries.

GREAT VISION IN CORDOBA

In the year 586, Ibn ‘Arabī had a rare vision in Cordoba, in which he met all the Prophets from the time of *Adam* to *Muḥammad* (PBUT) in their spiritual reality. Prophet *Hūd* (AS) spoke to him and explained him the reason for their gathering. We can trace what *Hūd* told him in *Rūḥ al-Quds* when *Abū Muḥammad Makhlūf al-Qabā’ili* – a saint of Cordoba – died, the Prophet *Hūd* said: “We came to visit *Abū Muḥammad Makhlūf al-Qabā’ili*” (Ibn ‘Arabī, “Rūḥ al-Quds” 116). According to a tradition among the direct disciples of Ibn ‘Arabī, *Hūd* (AS) explained that the real reason for their gathering was to welcome him (Ibn ‘Arabī) as the Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood (*khatm al-wilāya al-muḥammadiyya*), the supreme heir (Addas 76).

Stephen Hirtenstein writes in *Unlimited Mercifier*: “It is from his return from Tunis, we find the first evidence of Ibn ‘Arabī beginning to write; later in 1194, he wrote one of his first major works, *Mashāhid al-Asrār al-Qudusiyya* (Contemplation of the Holy Mysteries) for the companions of *al-Mahdawī* and perhaps around the same time, in a space of four days, also composed the voluminous *Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya*⁴ (Divine Governance) in

⁴ We can say that he started writing this work or wrote it in this year but some evidences like the name of other later works – i.e. *Insha’ al-Dawā’ir* written in 598 according to OY mentioned – in it supports this argument that Ibn ‘Arabī reviewed and amended his works years after they were written.

Mawrūr (Moron⁵) for *Shaykh Abū Muḥammad al-Mawrūrī*” (91).

IBN ‘ARABĪ IN FEZ

The next five years were a time when Ibn ‘Arabī entered into a different world. Having been brought up under the instruction and guidance of various spiritual masters of the West, he now came into his own as a Muhammadan heir. As from this point the real genius of Ibn ‘Arabī began to emerge and he became universal. Shortly after his return to Andalusia from North Africa in 1194 AD, Ibn ‘Arabī’s father died and within a few months his mother also died. Now the responsibility of the upbringing of his two young sisters fell upon his shoulders. His cousin came to him with the request that he should take up his wordly duties, and give up the spiritual life (Hirtenstein 110). It was a time of great uncertainty for Seville because of War. The third Sultan, *Abū Yūsuf Ya’qūb al Manṣūr* offered him a job but Ibn ‘Arabī refused both the job and an offer to marry off his sisters and within days he left Seville heading toward Fez, where they settled.

In Fez Ibn ‘Arabī met two men of remarkable spirituality, one of them was a sufi Pillar (*awṭād*), his name was *Ibn Ja’dūn* and the second one known as *al-Ashall* (literally, “the withered” for the reason that he had a withered hand) who was the Pole (*qutb*) of his time. It was a happy period of his life, where he could utterly dedicate himself to spiritual work. In Fez in 593 AH, he entered a new degree of vision in the form of light. In that vision, when he was leading a Prayer in the *al-Azhar* Mosque, he saw a light which was more visible than what was in front of him, he says:

“I lost the sense of behind [or front]. I no longer had a back or the nape of a neck. While the vision lasted, I had no sense of direction, as if I had been completely spherical (dimensionless).” (II, 486)

⁵ A town near Seville.

THE MI‘RĀJ

This light vision is a kind of foretaste of his great journey of light; in 594 AH at the age of 33, Ibn ‘Arabī was taken on one of the most extraordinary journeys of all: the ascension (*al-mi‘rāj*). Ibn ‘Arabī wrote a book named *Kitāb al-Isrā* (Book of the Night Journey) immediately after this spiritual experience. Some sections of *Futūḥāt* and *Risālat al-Anwār* (Epistle of Light) also elaborate the hidden meaning of these ascensions. It is quite interesting that Ibn ‘Arabī’s (the Muhammadan heir) ascension is an exact and faithful replication of the Prophet Muhammad’s ascension; while the Prophet’s ascension took place bodily, his ascension was a dream, vision of a heart or the vision of forms. These divine events are determining the way forward for his ultimate role as the Seal of Muhammadian Sainthood. Ibn ‘Arabī tells us that in 594 AH, in Fez Allah laid bare to him it’s true import and showed him the signs of his function. In *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* Chapter 43 starts with an open claim to the Seal of Muhammadian Sainthood, he says:

I am the Seal of Sainthood without any doubt, أنا ختم الولاية دون شك
by virtue of the inheritance of the Hashimite, لورثي الهاشمي مع المسيح
along with the Messiah (OY: IV, 71; Elmore, “Islamic Sainthood” 56).

These lines have no possible room for doubt: Ibn ‘Arabī is identifying himself categorically and explicitly with the Muhammadan Seal like Jesus (AS).

A LIFETIME FRIEND

In Fez 594 AH, ‘*Abdallāh Badr al-Habshi* first met Ibn ‘Arabī and for the rest of his life became a soulemate and a faithful friend, accepting Ibn ‘Arabī as his master and guide. *Al-Shaykh al-Akbar* said about him in *Futūḥāt*:

“[He is a man] of unadulterated clarity, a pure light, he is a *Habashī* named ‘*Abdallāh*, and like a full moon (*badr*) without eclipse. He acknowledges each person’s right and renders it to him; he assigns to each his right, without going further. He has attained the degree of true discrimination. He was

purified at the time of fusion like pure gold. His word is true, his promise sincere" (OY: I, 72; Hirtenstein 123).

In the year 595 AH Ibn ‘Arabī returned to the Iberian Peninsula for the last time and it seems he had two intentions: to introduce *al-Habashī* to his friends and masters and to depart finally from the land of his birth. In December 595 AH, Ibn ‘Arabī was in Cordoba, at the funeral of Ibn Rushd, whom once he met some 18 years earlier. When the coffin was loaded upon a beast of burden, his works were placed upon the other side to counterbalance it. Ibn ‘Arabī said the following verse on that day:

Here the master, there his works – هذا الإمام و هذه أعماله
Would that I know if his hopes have been fulfilled! يا ليت شعري هل أتت آماله

From Cordoba they travelled to Granada and met with ‘*Abdallāh al-Mawrūrī* and *Abū Muḥammad al-Shakkāz*. From Granada to Murcia, the town of his birth and stayed with an old friend *Abū Ahmed Ibn Saydabūn*, a famous disciple of *Abū Madyan* who at the time of their meeting was evidently going through a period of *fatra* or suspension. They travelled again to Almeria, where they spent the month of *Ramadan* in 595 AH and Ibn ‘Arabī wrote *Mawāqī‘ al-Nujūm* over a period of eleven nights. Perhaps in Almeria also, he started writing ‘*Anqā’ Mughrib*’ where full explanation about the Seal of Saints can be found.

These were his last days in the West, where he started visiting his masters for the last time, and he collected his writings and ensured that he must at least have a single copy of all of his works as now he was departing toward the East forever. When he left Andalusia for the last time he appeared to have a vision of his future destiny at the shores of the Mediterranean as he later told his stepson *Sadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī*:

“I turned towards God with total concentration and in a state of contemplation and vigilance that was perfect: God then showed me all of my future states, both internal and external, right through to the end of my days. I saw that your father, *Ishāq ibn Muḥammad*, would be my companion and you as well” (Hirtenstein 127).

In the year 597 AH/1200 AD, he was in Morocco and took his final leave from his master *Yūsuf al-Kūmī*, who was living in the village of Salé at that time. This shows that he had finally completed his training under the teachers of his early years and was now ready to go to a new world. On his way to *Marrakesh* of that year he entered the Station of Proximity (*maqām al-qurba*).

“I entered this station in the month of *Muḥarram* in 597 AH... In joy I began to explore it, but on finding absolutely no one else in it, I felt anxiety at the solitude. Although I was realized in [this station], but I still did not know its name” (II, 261).

Later Ibn ‘Arabī finds *Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī*⁶ in it and he told Ibn ‘Arabī that this station is called, the station of proximity (*maqām al-qurba*) (Hirtenstein 128).

VOYAGE TO CENTRE OF EARTH

Having left behind all the traces of his past, Ibn ‘Arabī began his long journey to the East from *Marrakesh* where he had a marvellous vision of the Divine Throne. In that vision, he saw the treasures beneath the Throne and the beautiful birds flying about within them. One bird greeted Ibn ‘Arabī, saying that he should take him as his companion to the East. This companion was *Muḥammad al-Ḥaṣṣār* of Fez. He started travelling with his friends towards the East. After visiting the tombs of his uncle *Yahyā* and *Abū Madyan* in ‘*Ubbād* near Tlemcen, he stopped at *Bijāya* (Bougie) during *Ramaḍān* and saw a remarkable dream about the secrets of letters and stars. He saw himself united like the union in marriage with all the stars of heavens, after the stars the letters were given his union, and he united with all of them (Ibn ‘Arabī, “*Kitāb al-Bā*” 10-11). This dream was later interpreted as the great Divine knowledge which was bestowed upon Ibn ‘Arabī.

His next stop was Tunis 598 AH where he happened to see *Syakh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Mahdawī* whom he had met about six year ago. At the same time he continued writing

⁶ Famous Sufi and the author of the *Tabaqāt al-Awliya’*. who died in 421/1030.

works like *Inshā' al-Dawā'ir*⁷ for his friend *al-Habashī*. Resuming his travels, he arrived in Cairo in 598 AH/1202 AD where he met his childhood friends, the two brothers, 'Abdallāh *Muhammad al-Khayyāt* and *Abū al-Abbās Aḥmad al-Harrārī* and stayed at their house in the month of *Ramaḍān*. That was a period of great devastation, terrible famine and plague for Egypt. Perhaps the death of his companion *Muḥammad al-Ḥaṣṣār* was due to this plague. Ibn 'Arabī saw this devastation with his own eyes and a passage of *Rūḥ al-Quds* tells us that when people made light of Allāh's statutes He imposes the strictures of His Law upon them (yūsuf 240).

Ibn 'Arabī resumed travelling toward Palestine, and his route took him to all the major burial places of the great Prophets: Hebron, where Abraham (AS) and other Prophets are buried; Jerusalem, the city of David (AS) and the later Prophets; and then Madīna, the final resting place of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

PILGRIM AT MAKKAH

At the end of his long journey he finally arrived at *Makkah*, the mother of all cities, in 598 AH (July 1202 AD). The Makkan period of Ibn 'Arabī's life can be viewed as the fulcrum of his earthly existence; he spent 36 years of his life in the West and the upcoming 36 years in the East, with about 3 years in *Makkah* in between. This three year period both connects and differentiates the two halves of his life. It was in *Makkah* that he started writing the very best of his works *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, It was in *Makkah* that his status as Seal of Muhammadian sainthood was confirmed in the glorious vision of the Prophet; it was in *Makkah* that he had the dream of the two bricks and his encounter with the *Ka'ba*; it was in *Makkah* that the love of women was first evoked in his heart by the beautiful *Nizām*, who became the personification of wisdom and beauty. It was in *Makkah* that he first savoured the pleasures of married life, marrying and becoming a father. His first wife was *Fāṭima bint Yūnus* and their first son *Muḥammad 'Imāduddin* was probably born in *Makkah*

⁷ *Risāla Inshā' al-Dawā'ir* describes the fundamentals of his metaphysics, discussion about existence and nonexistence, manifestation and nonmanifestation and the rank of human being in this world.

(Hirtenstein 148-150). Again it was in *Makkah* that he produced the very best of his works, like the first chapters of *Futūḥāt*, the *Rūḥ al-Quds*, the *Tāj al-Rasā'il*, the *Ḥilyat al-Abdāl* and a collections of hadīth qudsī named "*Mishkat al-Anwār*". It is also worth mentioning that in *Makkah* he met some of the eminent scholars of *Ḥadīth* of his time. Amongst them was *Abū Shujā'* *Zāhir bin Rustam*, father of the beautiful *Nizām* and *Yūnus ibn Yaḥyā al-Ḥāshimī*, who had been a pupil of the great *'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī* in Baghdad. He not only introduced Ibn 'Arabī to the Prophetic tradition but also transmitted to him the teachings of the most famous saint in Egypt in the ninth century, *Dhū'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī*. *Yūnus ibn Yaḥyā* also invested him in front of the *Ka'ba* with the *Khirqā* (Mantle) of *'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*.⁸ (Ibn 'Arabī, "Nasab al-Khirqā"; Elmore "Mantle of Initiation" 1-33). It is believed that after wearing this *Khirqā* Ibn 'Arabī formally joined the *Qadriyya Traīqa*.

VISIONS AT KA'BA

Apart from all this, several visions were granted to him in *Makkah*. The first took place at night during his circumambulations of the *Ka'ba* when he met a young beautiful girl *Qurrat al-'Ayn* (Hirtenstein 148). In the second vision, during his circumambulations of the *Ka'ba*, he met the mysterious figure who had appeared at the beginning of his ascension and here at *Makkah*. He said to Ibn 'Arabī, you should circumambulate in my footstep and observe me in the light of my moon, so that you may take from my constitution that which you write in your book and transmit to your readers⁹ (OY: I, 218). The third vision also occurs at *Ka'ba* in a spiritual conversation with the *Ḥaram* and the *Zamzam* stream; *Ka'ba*

⁸ A copy of the Mss dated 814, copied from Ibn 'Arabī's hand is present at Ibn 'Arabī Foundation's digital archive.

⁹ That book was *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, a faithful transcription of all the things he was allowed to contemplate on that particular day in the form of the Spirit he encountered. It has been claimed by Ibn 'Arabī that in the *Futūḥāt*, the content of the message and the form of its presentation has been determined by Divine Inspiration. Regarding Chapter 88 he writes that: "it would have been preferable to place this chapter before the one I wrote on the ritual acts of worship, but it was not of my choosing" (II, 163).

ordered him to circumambulate it and the *Zamzam* told him to drink this pure water but a soft refusal made *Ka'ba* angry and he took revenge on a cold and rainy night in the year 600 AH. Shaykh heard the voice of *Ka'ba* loud and clear; later in a meditation God taught him the lesson and to express this gratitude Ibn 'Arabī composed a collection of letters in rhymed prose, entitled the *Tāj al-Rasā'il*, in homage to the *Ka'ba*. The next vision is also related to *Ka'ba*, in the year 599 AH in *Makkah* Ibn 'Arabī saw a dream which confirms once again his accession to the office of the Seal of the Muhammadian Sainthood. He saw two bricks – one of Gold and the other of Silver – were missing from two rows of the wall of *Ka'ba*. He says: “In the mean time I was observing that, standing there, I feel without doubt that I was these two bricks and these two bricks were me And perhaps it is through me that God has sealed sainthood”¹⁰ (Addas 213). In the year 599 AH during circumambulating the *Ka'ba*, he encountered the son of Caliph *Hārūn al-Rashīd*, who had been dead for four centuries and was famous for choosing Saturday for work to gather food for rest of the week. Ibn 'Arabī asked him: “Who are you?” He replied: “I am *al-Sabtī*¹¹ *ibn Hārūn al-Rashīd*.” Later Ibn 'Arabī asked him: “What was the reason of choosing Saturday for work?” He replied: “As God has made this universe in six days from Sunday to Friday, and he rested on Saturday, so I, as His servant worked on Saturday and devoted myself to worshiping Lord for the rest of the week.” In another glorious vision at *Ka'ba* Ibn 'Arabī saw his forefathers and asked one of them his time, he replied he had been dead around forty thousand years ago. Finally, at *Ka'ba*, behind the wall of Hanbalites, Ibn 'Arabī was granted the privilege of being able to join a meeting of the seven *Abdāl* (Addas 216).

¹⁰ Addas says that to understand we need to remember that 599 was the year when Shaykh Akbar entered in the 40th year of his life which is quite similar to Prophet Muḥammad, as he received his first revelation in the 40th year of his life (213).

¹¹ Ibn 'Arabī explained his name to be called *al-Sabtī* because he worked only on Saturday (*al-Sabt*) to gather food for the rest of the week.

COUNSEL MY SERVANTS

The message was clear and it was from God; in a passage of *Kitab al-Mubashshirāt*¹² Ibn ‘Arabī admits that one evening in *Makkah* he experienced a brief spell of despondency on the face of his disciples, he thought of leaving all counselling, abandon men to their fate and to devote his future efforts to himself alone as those who truly enter the Path are rare. On the same night, he saw himself in dream facing God on the Day of Judgment. In that dream, He said: “I was standing in front of my Lord, head lowered and fearing that He would punish me for my short comings but he said to me: “Servant of Mine, fear nothing! All I ask of you is that you should counsel My servants” (Addas 218). Faithful to this assurance he would spend the rest of his life giving advice to people from all walks of life, direct disciples, religious authorities and political rulers. This vision probably occurred in the year 600 AH at *Makkah*, as the very first page of the *Rūḥ al-Quds*, written following this revelational order mentions it vividly. According to Osman Yahia; Ibn ‘Arabī produced 50 of his works after this Divine order, some of which are short epistles of less than 10 pages but all of these are rooted in the Divine order: “Counsel My servants.”

JOURNEYS TO THE NORTH

Ibn Arabī’s life, spanning between 600 to 617 AH is full of journeys, he frequently kept crossing and re-crossing Syria, Palestine, Anatolia, Egypt, Iraq and the *Ḥijāz*, yet this physical activity stood in no way in his spiritual pursuits and obligations. The two dimension activity had indeed the same spiritual provenance and was motivated by the sublime purpose of higher life unrelated to egocentricity. The year 600 AH witnessed a meeting between Ibn ‘Arabī and *Shaykh Majduddīn Ishāq ibn Yūsuf*, a native of Malatya and a man of great standing at the Seljuk court. This time Ibn ‘Arabī was travelling north; first they visited the city of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) and in 601 AH they entered Baghdad. This visit besides other benefits offered him a chance to meet the direct disciples of *Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī*. *Shaykh al-Akbar* stayed there only for 12 days because he

¹² A short work about glad tidings and visions that Ibn ‘Arabī had in dreams.

wanted to visit Mosul to see his friend 'Alī ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Jāmi', a disciple of Qaḍīb al-Bān. There he spent the month of *Ramaḍan* and composed *Tanazzulāt al-Mawṣiliyya*, *Kitāb al-Jalāl wa'l-Jamāl* and *Kunh mā lā Budda lil-MurīdMinhu* (Hirtenstein 176). Here he was invested with the *khirqā* of *Khidr* (AS), transmitted to him by 'Alī ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Jāmi'. Later the group travelled north and arrived at Malatya, *Majduddīn*'s hometown and then to Konya. In Konya Ibn 'Arabī met with *Awḥaduddīn Ḥamīd Kirmānī*, who became his friend like *Majduddīn*. He transmitted to Ibn 'Arabī teachings and stories of the many great spiritual masters of the East. Over the next 20 years Ibn 'Arabī and *Kirmānī* remained close friends and companions (Hirtenstein 179).

After spending 9 months in Konya, he returned to Malatya where *Kaykā'ūs*, one of the *Kaykhusraw*'s sons, had been made ruler of Malatya. *Majduddīn* was appointed as his tutor and Ibn 'Arabī also became involved in the young prince's education.

RETURN TO SOUTH

In the year 602 AH he visited Jerusalem, Makkah and Egypt. It was his first time that he passed through Syria, visiting Aleppo and Damascus. In Jerusalem, he continued writing, and 5 more works were completed. These are: *Kitāb al-Bā'*, *Ishārāt al-Qur'ān*. In May 602 AH he visited Hebron, where he wrote *Kitāb al-Yaqīn* at *Masjīd al-Yaqīn* near the tomb of Prophet *Ibrāhīm* (AS) (Yūsuf 307). The following year he headed toward Cairo, staying there with his old Andalusian friends, including *Abū al-'Abbās al-Ḥarrār*, his brother *Muḥammad al-Khayyāt* and 'Abdallāh al-Mawrūrī. In Cairo *Rūḥ al-Quds* and *Kitāb Ayyām al-Sha'n* were read again before Ibn 'Arabī, with the reader this time being a young man named *Ismā'il ibn Sawdakīn al-Nūrī* (Yūsuf 309). Like *Badr al-Ḥabashī*, *Ibn Sawdakīn* attached himself to Ibn 'Arabī forever. He left value-oriented commentaries on the works of Ibn 'Arabī notably *Mashāhid al-Asrār*, *Kitāb al-Isrā'* and the *Kitāb al-Tajalliyāt*. His house in Aleppo was often used for the reading of Ibn 'Arabī's works over the next 40 years (Yūsuf 311).

Later in 604 AH he returned to Makkah where he continued to study and write, spending his time with his friend *Abū Shujā bin Rustem* and family, including the beautiful *Nizām* (II, 376; Hirtenstein 181). The next 4 to 5 years of Ibn ‘Arabī’s life were spent in these lands and he also kept travelling and holding the reading sessions of his works in his own presence.

BAGHDAD, CITY OF THE SAINTS

In the year 608 we find him in Baghdad with his friend *Majduddīn Ishāq* and there he met the famous historian *Ibn al-Dubaythī* and his disciple *Ibn al-Najjār*. In Baghdad, he had a terrifying vision regarding the Divine deception (*makr*), In which he saw the gates of heaven open and the treasures of Divine deception fell like rain on everyone. He awoke terrified and looked for a way of being safe from these deceptions. The only safe way he found is by knowing the balance of the Divine law.

According to Osman Yahia in Baghdad Ibn ‘Arabī met with the famous Sufi *Shihābuddīn Suharwardī* (d. 632), author of the *‘Awārif al-ma’ārif* who was personal advisor to Caliph *al-Nāṣir*. In this meeting, they stayed together for a while, with lowered heads and departed without exchanging a single word. Later Ibn ‘Arabī said about *Suharwardī*: “He is impregnated with the *Sunna* from tip to toe” and *Suharwardī* said about Ibn ‘Arabī: “He is an ocean of essential truths (*baḥr al-Ḥaqāiq*)”.

TARJUMĀN AL-ASHWĀQ

In the year 611 he was again in *Makkah*, where his friend *Abū Shujā* had died two years before. Ibn ‘Arabī performed *Ḥajj* and started compilation of his most famous poetic work the *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*. After *Ḥajj* Ibn ‘Arabī left *Makkah*, travelling north towards the Roman lands, probably Konya or Malatya and in the year 610/611 he returned to Aleppo. In Aleppo this work caused uproar and consternation in certain quarters, since he came under the blame of writing erotic verses under the cover of poetic allusions. The jurists from Aleppo severely criticized the claim that this poetry was a mystical or expresses

Divine realities, which made his disciples very upset. Later on the request of his two disciples, *Ibn Sawdakīn* and *Badr al-Ḥabashī* he wrote a commentary on these poems by the title of “*Dhakhā’ir al-A’lāq*” in a great hurry. It was completed in Anatolia in 612. When the jurists heard this commentary, they felt sorry for unjustly exposing Ibn ‘Arabī to scathing criticism (Yūsuf 335).

IN SIVAS AND MALATYA

The period of extensive travelling came to an end and for the next few years he seems to have made his home in the Seljuk Kingdom. In the year 612 AH, at Sivas he had a vision anticipating *Kaykā’ūs* victory at Antioch over the Franks. He wrote a poem in which he enlightened the Sultan of the vision and his future victory. Later Ibn ‘Arabī returned to Malatya and according to Stephen Hartenstein he met *Bahā’uddīn Walad*, father of the famous Persian Poet *Jallaluddīn Rūmī*. the famous Persian poet of that time. Little *Rūmī* was with his father and after the meeting when *Bahā’uddīn* left with his son tagging along behind him, *Shaykh al-Akbar* said: “What an extraordinary sight, a sea followed by an ocean!” (Hirtenstein 188).

His reading and writings continued in Malatya, where in 615 AH, we find hearings of *Rūḥ al-Quds*, finalization of The *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq* and compilation of a short epistle on the technical terms of Sufism: the *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfīyya*. The year 617 was the year of mourning for him as he lost one of his best friends *Majduddīn Ishāq*, Ibn ‘Arabī took charge of the upbringing of the young *Ṣadriddīn* and married the widow as it was necessary according to the customs of the time. (Hirtenstein 189). Lastly his close companion and valet, friend and fellow, traveller on the way of God *Badr al-Ḥabashī* died.

DAMASCUS, THE LAST DAYS

After criss-crossing the east for a period of 20 years Ibn ‘Arabī now decided to settle in Syria and spent the last 17 years of his life in Damascus, the city was already known quite well to him, he had several contacts with leading notables there. He was greeted in

Damascus as a spiritual master and a spacious house was provided to him by the Grand *Qadi* of the town Ibn Zakī. In Damascus, he devoted himself to writing and teaching to fulfil the commandment of his Lord: “Counsel My servants.” The first thing he did was to collect and disseminate the works which had already been written, copies were made and reading sessions took place in his house. *Kitāb al-Tajalliyāt* was one of these first books to record such a certificate (*ṣimaʿ*) in the presence of his disciple *Ibn Sawdakīn*. In the year 621 AH eight more works bore these hearing certificates, among these were: *Kitāb al-Yaqīn*, *Al-Maqsid al-Asmāʾ*, *Kitāb al-Mīm wal-Wāw wal-Nun*, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayūb* and *Kitāb al-Ḥaqq*. At the same time, Ibn ʿArabī devoted his attention to complete the lengthy *Futūḥāt*, many volumes of this book came into being in this period.

During this period of his life, he imparted direct instructions to many of his disciples including *Ṣadrud-dīn al-Qūnawī*. He brought up alongside Ibn ʿArabī own family in Malatya and after the death of his real father *Qūnawī* joined Shaykh al-Akbar in Damascus. He accompanied and served *Kirmānī* on his travels in Egypt, Hijaz and Iran. In his private collection *Ṣadrud-dīn* wrote that he had studied 10 works of Ibn ʿArabī under him and later Ibn ʿArabī gave him a certificate to freely relate them on his authority. He studied and discussed with Ibn ʿArabī no less than 40 works, including the whole text of *Futūḥāt* in 20 volumes.

VISIONS AT DAMASCUS

Ibn ʿArabī had several visions of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) at Damascus. In 624 AH he had been told by the Messenger of Allah that angels are superior to men. In the same year, he had another discussion with the Prophet, this time Prophet replied to him regarding the resurrection of animals: “Animals will not be resurrected on the Day of Judgement.” (I, 527; Addas 275) In the third vision he was ordered by the Prophet to write a poem in favour of *al-Anṣār*. In this vision Ibn ʿArabī was informed that his mother was from *al-Anṣār*’s tribe (I, 267). In the fourth vision, at the end of *Muḥarram* 627 AH the Prophet came to him once again and handed him the book *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (The Bezels of

Wisdoms). Ibn ‘Arabī started writing this book with all the purity of his intentions and his deepest aspirations. He said: “I state nothing that has not been projected toward me; I write nothing except what has been inspired in me. I am not a Prophet nor a Messenger but simply an inheritor; and I labour for my future life” (Ibn ‘Arabī, “Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam” 47). In the same year just over two months after receiving the book of the *Fuṣūṣ* he had a vision of Divine Ipseity, its exterior and interior which he had not seen before in any of his witnessings.

THE FUTUHAT AL-MAKKIYYA

In 629 AH the first draft of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* was completed. The book has hundreds of manuscript in various libraries of the world, the most important of them is the manuscript of Konya, written by its author. This book had taken the best part of his thirty years and Ibn ‘Arabī dedicated it to his eldest son, *Imāduddīn Muḥammad*. It contains 560 chapters of esoteric knowledge and is truly the encyclopaedia of Islamic Sufism. The book is divided into six sections and these are:

1. Spiritual Knowledge (*al-ma‘ārif*)
2. Spiritual Behaviour (*al-ma‘lūmāt*)
3. Spiritual States (*al-aḥwāl*)
4. Spiritual Abodes (*al-manāzil*)
5. Spiritual Encounters (*al-munāzalāt*)
6. Spiritual Stations (*al-maqāmāt*)

Chapter 559 contains the mysteries and secrets of all the chapters of the book, so we can say that it is like a summary of the whole *Futūḥāt*. In the 48th chapter of the *Futūḥāt*, he says that the content of the message and the form of its presentation have been determined by Divine Inspiration.

Three years later in 632 AH, on the first of *Muḥarram*, Ibn ‘Arabī embarked on a second draft of the *Futūḥāt*; this he explained, included a number of additions and a number of deletions as compared with the previous draft. This revision completed in the year 636 (Addas 286). After completion of this 2nd draft, he started teaching it to his disciples. Dr. Osman Yahia has mentioned hundreds of these hearings or public readings that occur between the year 633 AH and 638 AH. These hearings show that the *Futūḥāt* was a primary document of his concepts and was widespread in his life in comparison with the *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam*, which has only one *Samā’* given to only *Ṣadrud-dīn al-Qūnawī*.

DEATH

Finally on 22 Rabī‘ al-Thānī 638 AH at the age of seventy-five, Ibn ‘Arabī’s terrestrial life came to an end. He was present at the house of *Qaḍī Ibn Zakī* at the time of death, *Jamāluddīn ibn ‘Abd al-Khālīq*, *‘Imād Ibn Naḥḥās* and his son *‘Imāduddīn* performed his funeral rites. He was buried in the family tomb of the *Banū Zakī* in the small beautiful district of *Ṣāliḥiyya* at *Jabal Qāsiyūn*.

MAJOR WORKS OF IBN ‘ARABĪ

Ibn ‘Arabī wrote at least 350 works, ranging from the enormous *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, which fills thousands of pages of Arabic, to innumerable small treatises no more than a few pages long. Verification of these works as Ibn ‘Arabī’s works is still an ongoing process which started when the shaykh first wrote an *Ijāza* for Sultan *Al-Ashraf al-Muẓaffar*, and a booklist; the *Fibriṣṣ al-Mu’allaḥāt*. These two documents contain lists of his works. The *Ijāza* was a teaching certificate in which Ibn ‘Arabī listed 290 works alongside 70 of his spiritual teachers. According to Osman Yahia, who compiled the first detailed study of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works in 1964 AD, there are 317 works cited by Ibn ‘Arabī in his books of which only one-third are known in manuscript form at present. Now 40 years later in Ibn ‘Arabī Society, Stephen Hirtenstein and Jane Clark has successfully completed the first

phase of the MIAS archiving project, which has the aim of creating an online catalogue for the historic manuscripts of Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī and his school. The catalogue builds on the pioneering work of Osman Yahia in the 1960s, and seeks to establish the real corpus of Ibn 'Arabī's writings that has survived. In so doing, it will provide a solid and comprehensive basis for future researchers by clarifying those works written by Ibn 'Arabī, resolving the many anomalies in Osman Yahia's work, and including new manuscripts which have come to light in the last 50 years and research done by various scholars in the field. Their findings have substantially reduced the verified number of works written by Ibn 'Arabī and are present in manuscripts form in different libraries of the world. They says: “As regards the updating of the bibliography, Osman Yahia identified 841 works by Ibn 'Arabī, many of them without a surviving manuscript (and several scholars have used his listings to claim that he wrote 300–700 works). Our figures for the different categories listed above, based upon the 1580 Ibn 'Arabī manuscripts that we have investigated, are as follows:

Verified:	83
Probable:	12
Unverified:	66
Not by Ibn 'Arabī:	79
Extracts:	33
Commentaries:	26
Osman Yahia duplicates:	28

It hardly needs saying that this constitutes a radical amendment to current conceptions of Ibn 'Arabī's output and surviving corpus” (MIAS Archiving Project Report 2009). This present selection of the Shaykh's works has been arranged under short titles and in approximate chronological order for benefits of the reader. Although some of the works took many years to write and some were rewritten. (Hirtenstein 267-272)

Mashāhid al-Asrār al-Qudsiyya (Contemplations of the Holy Mysteries)

Written in 590 AH/1194 AD, it is dedicated to the disciples of *Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Mahdawī* and to his paternal cousin, *'Alī b. al-'Arabī*. It describes a succession of fourteen contemplations in the form of dialogues with God.

Al-Tadbirāt al-Ilahiyya (Divine Government)

Written in the space of four days while staying with *Shaykh al-Mawrūrī* in Moron (Andalusia), this work describes the government of the human empire as the microcosm which summarises the macrocosm.

Kitāb al-Isrā' (The Book of the Night-Journey)

Written after a great visionary experience in Fez in 594 AH. It describes in rhymed prose Ibn 'Arabī's mystical ascension, encountering the spiritual realities of the Prophets in the seven heavens and being brought to the fullest realization of his own reality.

Mawāqī' al-Nujūm (Settings of the Stars)

Written in eleven days at Almeria in Ramadan 595, for his companion and disciple *Badr al-Ḥabashī*, it explains what all spiritual masters need to teach, in fact the teachers need it. It includes a detailed discussion of how all the faculties and organs of man participate in Divine praise.

'Anqā' Mughrib (The Fabulous Gryphon of the West)

This work was written around 595 during his final year in Spain. It describes in rhymed prose the meaning of the station of the *Maḥdī* and the Seal of the Saints, and the rank of the Muhammadian Reality.

Inshā' al-Dawā'ir (The Description of the Encompassing Circles)

It was written in 598 in Tunis for *Badr al-Ḥabashī*. It describes the fundamentals of his metaphysics, discussing existence and non-existence, manifestation and non-manifestation, and the rank of the human being in the world, using diagrams and tables.

Mishkat al-Anwar (The Niche of Lights)

Composed throughout the year 599 in *Makkah*, it comprises a collection of 101 *ḥadīth qudsi* (Divine sayings). The work itself conforms to the tradition that recommends the practice of preserving 40 *ḥadīth*s for the community.

Ḥilyat al-Abdāl (The Adornment of the Substitutes)

Written in 1203 (599) in the space of an hour during a visit to *Ta'if*, for *Badr al-Ḥabashī*, it describes the four corner-stones of the Way: seclusion, silence, hunger and wakefulness.

Rūḥ al-Quds (The Treatise of the Spirit of Holiness)

Written in 600 in *Makkah* for *Shaykh al-Mahdawī*, it is one of the best sources for our knowledge of Ibn 'Arabī's life in Andalusia and the people he knew. It contains three sections: a complaint about the lack of comprehension of many people practicing the Sufi Way, a series of biographical sketches of some fifty-five Sufis in the West and a discussion of difficulties and obstacles encountered on the Way.

Tāj al-Rasā'il (The Crown of Epistles)

Written in 600 in *Makkah*, it consists of eight love letters composed for the *Ka'ba*, each one corresponding to a self-disclosure (*Tajallī*) of a Divine Name which appeared in the course of the ritual circumambulations.

Kitāb al-Alif, Kitāb al-Bā', Kitāb al-Yā'

A series of short works, using an alphabetical numbering system, begun in Jerusalem in 601 and composed over three years or more. They discuss a range of different Divine principles, such as Oneness Compassion and Light.

Tanazzulāt al-Mawṣiliyya (Descents of Revelation at Mosul)

Written in April 601 in Mosul, it describes the esoteric secrets of the acts of worship in terms of ablution and Prayer, and how each phase of this everyday ritual is imbued with meaning.

Kitāb al-Jalāl wa'l-Jamāl (The Book of Majesty and Beauty)

Written in the space of one day in 601 in Mosul, it discusses various Quranic verses in terms of two apparently opposing aspects, Majesty and Beauty.

Kitāb Kunh mā lā Budda lil-Murīd minhu (What is Essential for the Seeker)

Also written in April/May 601 AH/1205 AD in Mosul, it outlines the essential practices for someone embarking on the spiritual Way, in terms of holding fast to the Unity of God, having faith in what the Messengers have brought, practising *dhikr*, finding a true spiritual teacher, etc.

Risālat al-Anwār (Treatise of Lights)

Written in 602 in Konya in answer to a request from a friend and companion that he should explain the journey of ascension to the Lord of Power and return to creatures. It describes the spiritual quest in terms of a non-stop ascension through the various levels of existence and knowledge, leading to the level of human perfection.

Kitāb Ayyām al-Sha'n (The Days of God's Work)

Composed sometime around or before 603 AH, this work is a meditation on the structure of Time and the ways in which the hours and days of the week interrelate. It is founded on the Quranic verse "Everyday God is at work." [55:29]

Kitāb al-Tajalliyyāt (The Book of Self-disclosures)

Written sometime before 606 AH in Aleppo, it describes a series of self-disclosures on subjects such as Perfection, Generosity and Compassion, based on insights into the second Sura of the Qur'ān. These visions often involve dialogues with deceased saints such as *Hallaj*, *Junayd* or *Sahl al- Tustarī*.

Kitāb al-Fanā' fi'l-Mushāhada (The Book of Annihilation in witnessing)

Written in Baghdad, probably during his second stay there in 608 AH, it is an extended meditation on the ninety-eighth *Ṣura*, describing the experience of mystical vision and the difference between people of real knowledge and people of intellect.

Tarjumān al-Ashwāq (Interpreter of Ardent Desires)

Compiled in Ramaḍān 611 AH in *Makkah*, although written over a longer period, with a subsequent commentary composed later in the same year in Aleppo, it comprises sixty-one love-poems dedicated to the person of *Nizām*, alluding to the real secrets of mystical love and prophetic inheritance.

Iṣṭilahāt al-Ṣūfiyya (Sufi Technical Terms)

Written in Malatya 615 AH is an answer to a request from a dear friend and companion. It consists of 199 brief definitions of the most important expressions in common use amongst the people of God.

Kitāb al-Isfār (The Unveiling of the Effects of Journeying)

This work is a meditation on the meaning of the spiritual journey in general and the journeys of the Prophets in particular. These journeys are without end, in this world and the next, and are described as "a reminder of what is within you and in your possession that you have forgotten".

Kitab al-'Abādilah (The Book of the Servants of God)

Written sometime before 626 AH, probably in Damascus, it consists of 117 sections devoted to individuals called '*Abd Allah*', the work conforms to a *Ḥadīth* that man possesses 117 characteristics, and explains the realisation of these characteristics in terms of Divine Names.

Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam (Bezels of the Wisdoms)

Written sometime after a vision of the Prophet in 627 AH in Damascus, and in accord with his (the Prophet's) order that it be written. Considered to be the quintessence of Ibn 'Arabī's spiritual teaching, it comprises twenty-seven chapters, each dedicated to the spiritual meaning and wisdom of a particular Prophet. The twenty-seven Prophets, beginning with Adam and ending with Muhammad, are like the settings of a ring, holding the Bezels of Wisdom, and represent all the different communities of humankind, under the spiritual jurisdiction of Muhammad, their Seal.

Kitāb Nasab al-Khirqa (The Line of the Mantle of Initiation)

It describes his own spiritual affiliation and how he has been awarded the mantle of Sufism in the different orders of *Tasawwuf*.

Al-Dīwān al-Kabīr (The great Diwan)

Written over a period of many years, it consists of vast collections of poems he had written.

Al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya (Makkan illuminations)

His magnum opus, begun in Makkah in 598 AH and completed its first draft in 20 manuscripts volume in 629 AH. A second draft of 36 volumes was completed in 636 AH. It contains 560 chapters in six sections, and it was evidently intended as a kind of encyclopaedia of Islamic Spirituality.¹³

¹³ This list has been copied from Stephen Hirtenstein's book "The Unlimited Mercifier."

Chapter No 2

The Book of Veils (Kitāb al-Ḥujub)

All praise belongs to God, who veiled us by Him from Him, for the jealousy that anyone may know his core, He appeared as light (*nūr*) and then got veiled from sights by His light, He manifested, but got concealed from insights (*Basā'ir*) by virtue of His manifestation. Thus light entered in light, and self-manifestation got concealed in manifestation. So no sight falls but onto Him; no out-comer comes out but from Him, and no goal-seeker eventually ends up but to Him. So O people of Intellect; where is absence and veil?

It's strange that I long for them

I inquire of them in desire, while they are with me.

My eyes weep for them, and they are in its iris

My soul misses them and they are in my ribs.

When one's very being is a veil upon him, then there is no veil and veiled. When one's gifts do not transcend one's hands, then there is no bestower and the [thing] bestowed.¹⁴ The world is transferred from one hand to the other, and there is no escape of one from the One.

Now whosoever seeks bestowals from the bestower, he is bestowed upon in any case; and the one who seeks bestowals from anyone "other" than Him, he seeks a bestowal of the impossible. Him I implore and turn to for assistance and support, because I am the needy, and he is the generous. There is no God but He, Lord of the inferiors and superiors, witnessed of the faraway and the nearer, the bestower of the mystery of absolute generosity to Muḥammad (PBUH). Hence, he has morals realized there by; thus for him are the morals (*khuluq*) and for us the imbibing [of these morals] (*takhalluq*) and for us the

¹⁴ Ibn 'Arabī says in *Futūḥāt*: Sciences are of two kinds: One kind is bestowed (*mawḥūb*). It is referred to in God's words, "They would have eaten from what is above them." [5:66] It is the result of God fearing as God has said, "Be god-fearing, and God will teach you" [2:282] The second kind of science is acquired (*muktasib*). God alludes to it in His words, "What is beneath their feet," alluding to their hard work and their effort. These are the people of "moderation" (Chittick, "SPK" 200).

knowledge (*ilm*) and the seeing (*ʿayn*) and for him is the station of realization (*taḥaqquq*) thereof.

Motive

Know! If there had been no love, no demand for a thing and neither its existence would have been valid – here there is a secret, look for it – and neither, there would have been a movement of a thing towards another thing. Thus love is the source in the domain of the existence of the essentials, their gradations and stations. It may be imagined that the fear also necessitates some of what we have mentioned and forms a second source of what necessitates actions; that is not so, since it is the love of salvation [self-preservation] that lurks behind fear. If there had been no love of self-preservation, no movement on the part of the one who fears would have been justified, since there is nothing but fear [to spur action]. So it is imagined that movement is fear-oriented, but it is [also] love-oriented. Do you not look at the one who seeks what is habitual, that is he gets repulsed therefrom, and it is pain and says:

“I desire you, I don’t desire you for reward,

but I desire you for pain

All my aims I have achieved thereby

save the pleasure I find in pain.”

Thus pleasure is loveable in itself. This seeker doesn’t ask for the pain that is agony, as pleasure is opposed to it; rather he asked for the cause of the pain so that the pleasure may issue there from, and that is the “breaking of habits” (*kharq al-ʿāda*). It is this [very fact], which was hinted at, when said:

“It is not strange that a flower grows in the garden,

but it is strange when a flower grows at the bottom of a fire.”

He is pointing [thereby] to the one whose passion for his beloved intensifies, with his sight always focused on him and with desire of getting proximate to him. So his heart

remains burning because of his being overwhelmed by the fire of passion. He enjoys the beloved's eyes focused on him. It is this station that a sayar hints at when he says:

“I am in bliss due to pain and in pain due to bliss.”

All this does not pertain to the domain of realities; rather it belongs to the domain of the intoxication (rapturous) states, as he doesn't differentiate between the means of bliss and agony. Ḥallāj, despite the majesty of his status, his extensive claim that the Ultimate Reality has possessed him, and he has achieved annihilation in Him, his pin-pointing of the Union in his saying is like:

“Your soul intermingled with mine,
in nearness and remoteness,
so I am you
as you are me and my desire.”

And similar to [all] that by which he is well-known, despite, he had the sensation of pain in the beginning of his affliction, and when he felt the changing of his skin, he stained his face with his blood, because of his jealousy for this station, lest masses should fall in [love with] it. His state at that time was bringing home that point, and he was saying at that moment:

“None of my organs and joints has been cut
but in it is your remembrance”

He also spoke at that station, which reveals his sensation therefore:

“When the cup of esoteric wine began to circulate,
He called for leather strips and the sword.
Such is the fate of the one who drinks wine
in summer with a companion.”

So he made him an equal. And what he said was according to the level of the knower of the stations of this man. The whole affair of this man, in a nutshell, is that he was a man of coquetry rather than of intoxication¹⁵.

If “Love” is the loftiest of stations¹⁶ and states,¹⁷ with their source, and inhering in them, and all other [stations and states] are just an offshoot of it, then it is more behoves that all stations and conditions are made to return to it.

What supports you in this contention here that it [Love] is the all-unifying phenomenon (*al-amr al-jāmiʿ*) and the universal source (*al-aṣl al-kullī*), being posited with the position of the origin of Being and the source of this universe and its re-inforcer, and he is Muḥammad (PBUH). God has taken him as beloved (*ḥabīb*) while others than him

¹⁵ Ibn ‘Arabī defines Intoxication as: An absence brought about by a strong arriver, but it is only an absence from everything that contradicts joy, delight, happiness and the disclosure of wishes as forms subsisting with the entity of the possessor of this state. There are three levels of intoxication 1- Natural intoxication, 2- Rational intoxication, 3 – Divine intoxication. (II, 544) Intoxication is the fourth level of self-disclosure; the first is tasting, second is drinking, third is quenching (*ṛī*) and the fourth is intoxication (Dhakhāʾir al-ʿAlāq 67).

¹⁶ The word station (*maqām*) is derivative of the root *q.w.m*. The basic meaning of this root is a tribe of people or standing at a certain place; these are stations which one must pass through in order to reach God. Ibn ‘Arabī defines station and says: “Every station in the path of God is earned and fixed, it is every attribute which becomes deeply rooted (*rusūkh*) and cannot be left behind, such as repentance.”

¹⁷ The word state (*ḥāl*) is derived from the root *h.w.l*. The basic meaning of this root is to change from one situation to another; these are states which one may experience during journey on the path of God. Ibn ‘Arabī defines the term in *Iṣṭilāḥāt* as: “A state is that which enters in upon the heart without self-exertion or the attempt to attract it. One of its condition is that it disappears, and is followed by its like and so on, until it subsides, though it may also not be followed by its like” (Chittick, “SPK” 264). Every state is a bestowal, neither earned nor fixed. The state is like the flashing of lightening. When it flashes, it either disappears because of its contrary or it is followed by similar (Chittick, “SPK” 278).

[respectively] as an intimate friend (*khalil*), a bosom friend (*najyyi*) and the selected friend (*safi*). The Prophet (PBUH) has said: “I have been given comprehensive words.” Thus it is from the reality of this Master (PBUH) that realities branched off upward and downward.

“It is not impossible for Allah to epitomize this universe in one.”

Thus Allah, the most glorified has proven the origin of all stations, that is love as the origin of all existents and that is Muḥammad [PBUH]. From love is the very existence of the contingent. It has been mentioned in the revealed scriptures, that Allah says:

“I was a [hidden] Treasure but was not known, so I loved to be known. Therefore, I created the creation, and endeared myself to them with bounties till they knew me.”

It also has been mentioned “I loved” (*alḥabtu*) and “I endeared myself” (*taḥabbabtu*). Now if you have realized that Love is the origin and the loftiest bestowal of ornaments then its loftiness should not make you despair of achieving it, as it has been said:

The remoteness of glory should not make you despair,
as glory is achieved gradually and gradually,
the canal whose loftiness you witness
grows stepwise, stream by stream.

If [our master] Muḥammad [PBUH] is specially gifted with this [station], he didn’t specialize but by virtue of [his] perfection, there in every being has his [share of] drinking¹⁸ (*shrub*) from this [station], but these drinking modes and stations excel each other. Although [Love] is the most exalted station, but to stop with it is a veil from the beloved (*maḥbūb*). So what to think of those [stations] which are just its offshoots! As this affair depends on evolution (*taraqqī*) and drawing closer (*tadānī*) to the station of receiving (*talaqqī*) and coming down (*tadallī*) Thus if you are coming down, then the higher must be

¹⁸ In the Sufi terminology of Ibn ‘Arabī: Drinking is the middle of self-disclosure within a station that calls for quenching (*ṛī*) and it may be that the constitution of the drinker does not accept quenching. Thus tasting (*dharwq*) is the first beginnings of self-disclosures, it is a state if this state stays for two instants or more, it is drinking. (II, 548; Chittick, “SPK” 220)

a veil upon the lower, and if you are drawing close, then the lower must be a veil upon the higher. But the ascendant (*ṣā'id*) is ruled upon and the down comer (*mutadallī*) is the ruler; all is in a veil, and the station of “no veil” is also a veil.

Finishing Section

O Lover! Whosoever you are, know that the veils between you and your beloved – whosoever he might be – are nothing save your halt with things, not the things themselves; as said by the one who hasn't tasted the flavour of realities. You have halted with things because of the shortcoming of your perception; that is, lack of penetration, expressed as the veil; and the veil is nonexistence and nonexistence is nothing. Thus there is no veil, if the veils were (considered) correct then he who got concealed from you, you would have been in veil from him. No one understands what we are talking about except the one who's hearing and sight is the Real. He knows what we express as the veil.

Know, if you have totally devoted yourself to a certain matter, then essentially you have halted with it. This halting is your veil, and you think that the thing [halted with] has veiled you, this is not so. Halting with creatures is your veil from the Real, and halting with the Real is your veil from creatures. This pertains to the domain of expansion and intimacy, like the veils of luminosity and the darkness which have been mentioned in the *kitāb* and the *Sunna*¹⁹. It is based on this expansion [both upward and downward] that we prove [the existence of] veils.

THE VEIL OF KNOWLEDGE

It is the first of the noble veils, and is a veil from seeing (*ʿayn*) as seeing is a veil from the second knowledge, which is the [knowledge of] the Truth (*Ḥaqq*). Its truth is what is found the knowable thereof; it may be known before seeing, so this second knowledge also becomes a veil from viewing. These three stages do not exist, unless the known thing is one of the engendered things.

¹⁹ Kitāb and Sunna refer to the Holy Quran and tradition of the Holy Prophet.

As for the intended essence (*al-dhāt al-maqṣūda*), it is nothing but the first knowledge and viewing because it is inconceivable to ask about it, “What for?” as this is the property of the accidental (*ḥudūth*). But, however, it is said so, since it [this question] demands that the world is of two sections

He is with me and yet calls me toward him

So I leave him and go towards him in response [to his call]

and I see him when he calls me toward himself,

I see in it a strange arrangement.

Thus our knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of the existence of *Ka'ba* is “knowledge” (*ilm*), its viewing is a direct experience (*ʿayn*) and the gnosis of what it has been placed for is its reality the *ḥaqq*, the second knowledge. This is what is in vogue of the tribe as knowledge of Certainty (*ilm al-Yaqīn*), Eye of Certainty (*ʿayn al-Yaqīn*) and Reality of Certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*).

THE VEIL OF LOVE

Know that love is a veil upon itself because it seeks you with annihilation (*fanāʾ*) and subsistence (*baqāʾ*). These two contradictory [notions] are from the rulings of Love, because it [=Love] invites you to demand observation (*mushāhada*); that is for bewilderment, so it makes you annihilate/pass away from your own self, [and at the same time] it invites you to obey the command in order to make you endure with yourself. If you have preferred to abide by (his) decree, it means that you have preferred your beloved to yourself, as long as you don't imagine occurrence of a breakup by disobedience. If you have imagined it, you have given preference to yourself. If you have preferred witnessing (*mushāhada*) then you are in the share of your own self, preferring it over your beloved's share. Thus love demands from you the love of union, as it demands from you the love of separation, if separation is the love of your beloved. It has been said: “Everything that beloved does is beloved,” another one says:

“I loved for him everything that he desires
of separation till I began to love its opposite.”

Although we understand, that the love of union in love is intrinsic (*dhātī*) and the love of separation in love is accidental and nonessential, but its love is necessary. If the lover loves separation, then he had done something against the reality of love, but if he has not loved separation, which is the love of his beloved, then he has done something not demanded by love.

Its result is that lover is [always] dying, defeated with arguments and has no ground, because he has entered the station of mutually contradictory rulings, as the saying of the one who said:

“I desire his union and he desires breakup with me,
so I quit what I desire for the sake of what he desires.”

This one is not complete and perfect in love, as he talks of quitting and not of love, in disagreement with the statement of this other: “all what beloved does is beloved.” So the one is quitter and whether he loves or not, that’s a probability, and the other one is more perfect in his walk in the love of his beloved; not that he is perfect in love. The one who quits and has the will is more perfect in love, not that he is more perfect in his walk in the love of the beloved. The matter in nutshell with me is that we care for the love of [our] beloved for separation, not the separation itself; like the one’s good-pleasure for the decree of Allah (*qadā’ allāh*) when He decreed disbelief (*kufṛ*), This man approves the decree but not the destined thing, as the destined thing is disbelief. Likewise, the beloved’s decree of separation is not “the separation” itself. The love of the lover pertains to the desire of the beloved for separation, not the separation [itself]. Pertaining to this kind is the saying of *Majnūn banī ‘Āmir*, when *Layla* hugged him, he viewed her and said: “Stay away from me as your love has engaged me away from yourself.” This is annihilation in love and is known as the appetite of love (*shahwat al-ḥubb*), its possessor is in a state of pleasure of eternal union (*ittiṣāl dā’im*). It has been said:

“When I saw love with its increasing value
and I do not have hands therein till death
I began to love Love all my time
And I did’nt say:
It suffices what I received from him.”

No separation is imagined in this station, because the supra-sensory spiritual form, which the lover has grasped in himself, out of contemplation of his beloved, is fixed within him, this [form] has no existence outside of the witness, that’s why it has been said:

“The *Majnūn* of *Banyy ‘Āmir* had no caprice (*hawā*)
but the complaint of remoteness and expatriation.
My affair is contrary to him, as my beloved
is in my heart, always in the state of proximity.
My beloved is from me, in me and with me,
then why should I say: What did happen to me?”

The sense does not restrict him from witnessing the image (*mithāl*) he has due to its authoritative power upon him and his realization thereby. Thus when a lover from outside approaches the beloved, then the lover (from inside) seeks to get away from him, because it [the image] is more subtle in him than him in its essence due to being appropriate, as love is spiritual and essential so is the image, and hence the correlation (*munāsaba*) is more perfect.

It is in the nature of union with a separating self to be followed by separation and pain because he is not provided with eternal union due to what the station gives him of variability of states. So he imagined like *Qays* this separation, he feared the pain after this bliss. That’s why his unwillingness occurred to this external form, because strangeness accompanies it and embraced the closer form in satisfaction as the neighbour who is of kin [unto you] is preferable than the neighbor who is not of kin. This is a taste which strengthens its founder, especially in the way of God.

If those who talk of “their inner attachment with the beloved” (*shāhid*) and listening (*Samāʿ*) – the junk in Sufis – had perceived this matter, they would have asked for neither a witness (*shāhid*) nor hearing (*samāʿ*) ever, because it is the station of separation. That’s why the Kitāb and Sunna never came up with the witness and hearing, neither they would have taken it for a (spiritual) path and nor as a means to proximity (to God). These are among the permissible (*mubāḥāt*) save the “attachment with the beloved” (*shāhid*), as it is more nearer to being prohibited than to be permissible.

What supports our contention is that the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) never loved hearing (*Samāʿ*), nor called for it, and his incoming thoughts never pertain to it. Since he (PBUH) is the confluence of all stations; even he said to the woman, who vowed to Allah that she will play Tambourine (*daf*) in front of him: “if you really vowed to Allah [then play], otherwise don’t [play].” Every *Ḥadīth* transmitted from him about his proceeding for listening and like that is fabricated by the one who has no share thereof, so that he may be in a position thereby to quench his lust. Most masters of this path are in the locus of weakness from this perception; on the contrary this [perception] is from the power of prophecy and of true divine inheritance.

Also the servant’s love for his lord is from this waystation (*manzila*) as mentioned. No separation is imaginable in it, as he is with him, in him, from him, to him and him; thus there is no separation. But he has to recognize which essence (*dhāt*) he has witnessed, so that he could differentiate between the two essences; the true [Essence] which is “*ḥowa*” and the metaphorical Essence which is expressed by forms, and in these [forms] change and transmutation occurs. Thus when the lover offers what he has, that is, the witnessing and when he offers what he has not, that is, the vision, the bliss is more perfect with it [i.e. in vision]. Beware of your seeking him with what you bear witness to him with him. Seek him without what you bear witness to him with him, but through what he makes himself known by. Allah is no doubt the supporter; there is no Lord but Him.

THE VEIL OF SECLUSION AND OPENNESS

Seclusion (*khalwa*) is a veil from the general proximate self-disclosure and openness (*jalwa*) is veil from the special proximate self-disclosure. One who stood near both of these, is also veiled. A poet has included both of them in his verse when he has said;

My soul likes to feel at ease with you in seclusions

like the solitary who feels good company of everyone.

Thus one seeks him in seclusion when he has lost him in plenum (*al-mala'*), and the other seeks him in plenum when he has lost him in seclusion, as He is not limited in these two. Thus both of them testify themselves to lack of gnosis (*ma'rifa*). Some of the masters – may Allāh be pleased with them – have said: The one who finds intimacy with him in seclusion and losses that intimacy in plenum, then his intimacy was with seclusion, not with Him and vice versa. But intimacy with seclusion is more important and superior, because it is the most proximate veil, the safest station and the most pleasant state.

THE VEIL OF CURTAINING

Seeking qualification (*ittiṣāf*) with the blameworthy²⁰ (*malāmiyya*) attributes is a veil from their realization in natural disposition (*jabilla*). Like Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) who was [at night] closer to his lord than the two bows, but in the morning he had no sign thereof on him because nothing happened to him, which was not in him, and he didn't

²⁰ Ibn 'Arabī says: Blameworthy (*malāmiyya*) are the highest of tribe, they know and are not known; their stations are not known, because their states conceal their stations. Hence they flow with the common people in respect of the outward acts of obedience (II, 501). They are the masters and leaders of the folk of God's path. Among them is the master of the cosmos, that is Muhammad, the messenger of God – may God bless him and give him peace! (Chittick, "SPK" 372). In *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya* Ibn 'Arabī says: These are the ones who have no effect of their inwards upon their outwards, these are the highest among tribe. Their students undergo fluctuation in all stages of Manliness. (Chittick, "SPK" 374)

came across anything that wasn't in his nature (*fitra*). That's the reason, why his tribe never believed this closeness. It has been said in this meaning:

“It was in my nature to love you, and I maintained my ecstasy,
as it was in my nature to bear with your indifferences.”

If other than he came across any strange thing or it occurred to him, it influences him, so as narrated about him, he used to get veiled with the veils of light upon His face, since it takes away the sight of the viewers.

THE VEIL OF AWARENESS

Awareness²¹ (*ṣaḥw*) is a veil from annihilation in Him because it gives spiritual knowledge (*ma'rifa*) and this knowledge requires good etiquette, which in turn require wisdom and the wisdom do not make its fellows approach a thing whose time has not arrived, as it has been said:

“The pleasures of the adolescence were intoxicated
So I recovered, and it resumed the short passage.
I sat monitoring the yard like a rider,
who recognized the location but spent his night outside home.”

﴿Be not in haste with the Qur'an before its revelation to thee is completed.﴾ (Tāhā: 114) Companion of this station does not respond to any call, whose knowledge is not demanded by him, because he is aware, so he misses many calls.

²¹ Ibn 'Arabī define sobriety or awareness (*ṣaḥw*) in chapter 247 of the *Futūḥāt*: Know! Sobriety near tribe is the returning toward sensation after [the state of] absence with a strong arriver (*wārid*). Know that in this path sobriety always came after intoxication, as for before intoxication he is not sober nor the companion of sobriety, but it can be said for him that he is not the companion of intoxication (II, 546).

THE VEIL OF ONENESS

The one is a veil from himself by the names which belong to him in different grades, as two and three are from amongst the names of the one, since the source is one and the emanating is one, the one multiplied by himself does not proceed there from save himself, even if he is many, he manifests in the single units of himself. The one who counts is looking at these single units, so entire existence is built upon singularity. It has been said:

“In each thing He has a sign
signifying that He is One.”

None acknowledges the singularity except the one, thus if all “that is everything” had not been one, it would have neither valid to say that he indicates the one and nor that he knows that he is the one and nor he would acknowledge the singularity, as everything knows the other from itself, not from that other. That’s why the meaning of spiritual opening (*fath*) according to us is that you have been unveiled from yourself, and you see everything in yourself. If that thing was not in you, you will not see it in yourself when you have been unveiled from yourself ﴿So far (is this the case) that, when terror is removed from their hearts﴾[34:23].

Thus think about our saying that you will know everything from yourself, as it enshrines a divine secret, which you do probe in the realm of knowledge through the world.

THE VEIL OF UNION

Union (*ittihād*) is an exaggeration in Unity (*tawhīd*) and Unity is the knowledge of the One (*al-wāḥid*) and Non dual (*al-aḥad*). Thus Union is a veil from the reality and truth because it claims annihilation of the imperishable and non-existence of the existent, because the union of two essences is [mere] ignorance. It is merely a self-annihilation (*istihlāk*) in the very essence of reality, thus the one who never existed [by its own] annihilates, like the

gnostic²² who has said: when they witness the very essence of reality (*‘ayn al-ḥaqīqa*) the states of the wayfarers withered away in it until the one who never existed [by its own] annihilated, and the one who existed from eternity subsisted, so you overtook him without being there anymore as it has been said:

“You appeared to him whom you spared after his annihilation

So he came to exist without existence, because you were his being.”

Junaid – may Allah’s mercy on him – was asked about unification, he said: I have heard someone saying:

“My heart desire sang to me and I sang as it sang,

We were where they were and they were where we were.”

He replied in terms of vicegerency, that is union with its adherents, and it is not a reality with in reality.

Unification (*taṣwīḥ*) is the emanation of the number from the one, like the one if you add it to one there shall manifest two, add one more, it becomes three, and remove it the three vanish, rest of the numbers are like that. Thus the entities of things appear by one and vanish by its vanishing. The union is disappearing of [any] number in the One from which it appeared, and its annihilation in it with respect to that one. Number is not other than the one, nor the one itself.

Correlations (*idāfāt*) are notional judgements (*alḥkāṁ*); these are the objects of knowledge, required through demonstration (*burhān*) which is affirmation of a correlation or its negation, like the affirmation of eternity for the creator [exalted is He] and its negation from the world, and negation of contingency (*ḥudūth*) from the creator [exalted is He] and its affirmation to this world, and likewise is every predicate of the subject.

²² Ibn ‘Arabī defines gnostic as: He whose locus of witnessing is the Lord, not any other divine name, states become manifest from him and gnosis is his state. (II 129) Hence the gnostic is the one who achieved the knowledge referred to in the *ḥadīth*, He who knows himself knows his Lord (Chittick, “SDG” 252).

As for the individual things, they are known innately and by senses, thus when an inquiry occurs in them, it particularly occurs for the terminology, and that's why they are apprehended by limits, not by demonstrations, know this!

THE VEIL OF THE UNITY OF ACTIONS

His unity in actions is to return all the actions – good or bad, beautiful (*husn*) or hideous (*qabīh*), of obedience and disobedience, belief and disbelief – onto him, and it is these [actions] that incur praise and blame as it has been said:

“I will let my heart burn and let you
feel the pain, as you are in my heart.
throw the arrows of your glances or withhold them,
since you will be hit along with me by what you throw
as my heart is their target,
and you are the one
whose lodging is in that place.”

Allah, exalted is he says: ﴿when thou threwest [a handful of dust], it was not thy act, but Allah's﴾ [8:17] and ﴿But Allah has created you and your actions﴾ [37:96] and ﴿Allah is the Creator of all things﴾ [39:62] and ﴿They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity﴾ [5:73] and ﴿Allah hath heard the taunt of those who say: Truly, Allah is indigent and we are rich.﴾ [3:181] An acquisition has no influence at all, since there is none effective save He and this unification is a veil from the Divine courtesy (*al-adab al-ilāhī*).

THE VEIL OF PRESENCE WITH THE UNITY OF ACTIONS

Your presence with the unity of actions means your presence with the meanings that have trace, but you are in the one with the knowledge of certainty (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*) and

with another with the vision of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*). Thus your preoccupation with knowledge at the time of vision/direct experience made you oblivious thereof, as it has been said:

“It’s so strange that I cherish compassion for them,

I crave them in desire, while they are with me.

My eye cries for them, while they are in its iris

And my soul yearns for them, while they are in my ribs.”

Many in creation look at you, but don’t see you, but there is no veil between you and him save his own reflection. Thus sight is in the possession of insight, freely disposed toward the world of Imagination (*‘alām al-khayāl*) and the bodily organs are gazing within you. You are to them like a mirror, but the person having this state in [his] gazing upon you is all stillness.

THE VEIL OF YEARNING AND LONGING

As regards yearning; it pertains to the trait of Love, and yearning is [a kind of] flaying toward someone absent, which is a veil in that state from conformity to the beloved. Verily the beloved’s goal is separation at that time; thus the one who yearns is [both] absent and away, as it has been said:

“There is no sense in the complaint of yearning any day

for the one who does not vanish from the eye.”

The one who yearns has said: ﴿"O my Lord! show [Thyself] to me, so that I may look upon thee﴾ [7:143] Thus he bears witness to his being in veil at that time.

As regards longing, it is also a veil since it is meant for the joined (*mawṣūl*), and it gives a halt with the eternity of the joining. Hence its halt with the non-existent in point of time and that is eternity, so he has been deprived of the pleasure of the moment, as it has been said regarding that which suits the pleasure of the moment:

“The night when she joins me is like the night when she is gone,
I complain of the length as I complain of the shortness.”

Another says:

“Thus I weep in yearning for them, if they get away (from me),
and I weep for being afraid of separation, if they get close.”

This state combines the reality of yearning and longing. Yearning subsides in meeting and longing arouse in meeting. Thus yearning (*shawq*) is a [momentary] state where as longing (*ishṭiyāq*) is constant one.

THE VEIL OF WITNESS

When the witness²³ (*shāhid*) departs the heart along with its spiritual ecstatic states (*wāridāt*)²⁴ and the heart is sure of separation; and the cause for it is a disrespect which issues from you by a kind of attention toward other than Him, and due to intimacy/familiarity and company, the heart doesn't realize His value, so when there is a call for departure, his yearning (*shawq*) agitates in it and the fire of ecstasy (*wajd*) ignites within it, with the show of grief and that is weeping of heart and tears shedding [in yearning] for the witness, as it has been said:

²³ William Chittick says in the Sufi Path of Knowledge: *Shāhid* or witness according to Ibn ‘Arabī is which gives information or testimony about what has been seen. Ibn ‘Arabī defines it in *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya* as: “The trace which witnessing leaves in the heart of the witnesser (*mushāhid*). This is the witness and in reality, it is what the heart retains from the form of the witnessed (*mashhūd*). Fut [II 132.25] In other words, the divine self-disclosure leaves a trace in the heart, which gives testimony and “witnesses to” what has been seen (266).

²⁴ Arriver (*wārid*) according to Ibn ‘Arabī is: Every praise worthy incoming thought (*khaṭir*) which arrives at the heart without self-exertion; or, every affair which enters in upon the heart from any divine name. Each and every arriver arrives with a benefit and that is the knowledge gained from its arrival by the person upon whom it arrives” (Hakim 1203).

“When the dawn breathed; and they turned away;
and their caravan was crossing the road;
they announced the outbreak of fire and my eyes flooded with tears
so they announced [both] the fire outbreak and the drowning.”

Sorrow for the departure of the witness (*shāhid*) indicates the state of taking pleasure in his company at the moment of its being in the heart. The witness is a veil who conceals the witnessed, as the witness manifests after their return to their places with the pleasure taking place due to him, contrary to the witnessed, as there is no regret in its separation.

THE VEIL FOR THE OBSERVING OF COURTESY

Observing of etiquette (*adab*) in His presence (*bisāt*) is a veil from the witnessed (*mashhūd*) because the heart is diverted [at that moment] in observing the etiquette, which is obligatory; that’s why it has been said: “Sit upon the prayer-mat (*bisāt*) and beware of delight (*inbisāt*).” A Gnostic has said: “I entered in his presence and I slipped away so I was expelled.” Thus when the slipped-one is returned to His holy presence after repentance (*tawba*), he does not find the moment he was familiar with, because the writing in obliteration (*maḥw*) is not like the writing in the non-obliteration as it is clearer and purer. Allah – exalted is he – says: ﴿What! Do those who seek evil ways think that We shall hold them equal with those who believe and do righteous deeds,- and that equal will be their life and their death? Ill is the judgment that they make.﴾ [45:21] Here, their life (*maḥyā-hum*) is an allusion to their subsistence with Him, in the holy presence of His witnessing (*mushāhada*), whereas their death (*mamāt-hum*) is an allusion to their annihilation from their-selves in the holy presence of His witnessing, and “ill is the judgment that they make” is about the equality of these two individuals. It has been said:

“When you came I brought my sitting place close [to you]
and your face was trickling with the water of bliss,
so bless me with the eye with which

you use to look at me once in the time bygone.”

THE VEIL OF AWE

Awe (*hayba*) is a trait of heart, which prevents it from vision (*ru'ya*) in the holy presence of witnessing, as it has been said:

“I yearn for him but when he appeared
I bowed my head due to his majesty (*ijlāl*)
not because of fear but because of awe
and due to regard for his beauty (*jamāl*)
I turn away from him coping with it patiently,
and I aspire for the visitation of his apparition.”

Beauty emanates from that Presence which results awe in the heart, because the beauty is something that inspires awe and the majesty is something that causes fear, contrary to what our masters have said. There has occurred in this problem a deceit coming forth from the face of divine majesty in which it is not possible to see the Real. They believe that it is the one in which His majesty manifested to us, it is not like this but the beauty [also] has a glory; and it is that in which the Real is seen when we say: we have seen Him at the station of majesty. As regards the saying of him “and regard for his beauty,” that is saying of *Shibli*: “I feel jealous for the eternal that the temporal should see Him.” Someone else was asked: Do you desire to see Him? He said: No. He was asked: Why? He replied: “I regard that beauty too chaste to be seen by someone like me.” And his saying “I aspire for the visitation of his apparition,” he was referring to the witness, so used [the term] metaphorically.

THE VEIL OF THE KEEPING OF THE SECRET

Keeping of the secret is a veil, as it will not happen but with separation, as for in the presence of the beloved, [there are no secrets to keep] because of his occupation with the witnessing. Moreover, keeping of the secret is a veil from witnessing the witness. As when it is disclosed, this disclosure is for the “other,” and the discloser is expelled from the chamber of the trusteeship, as it has been said:

“[There was] an inquirer of the secret of Laylá, whom I sent back

He stays in oblivion of Laylá and is unsure [of the real fact]

They say: Tell us since you are her trustee,

But I, if I tell them something, shall not be faithful.”

THE VEIL OF VIEWING

Viewing is a veil from the viewed, although viewing has a subtle meaning known to the viewer, as it has been said:

“However, viewing has a subtle meaning,

that’s why Moses (AS) asked for viewing”.

However, knowledge of something is more subtle in its essence, in the incidence of perceiving (*idrāk*) it. It demands a parallel for the knowledge thereof that’s why he will not find it; so is the case with him. Thus his viewing becomes a veil upon him. It has been said:

“When I saw the Real, his veil upon me was

from perceiving reality in nearness.”

But the grand viewing is contrary to what we have mentioned, because “the viewed” here is not in the form of knowledge save in some respect, because the viewed essence (*māhiyya*) is not known but his existence and negation are known. As regards the specific face here for the Gnostics is the witnessing which they have here. As it has been said:

“I have seen my Lord with my heart’s eyes,

and I said: no doubt you are You.

You are the one who occupies every “place,”

and where there is no place, there You are

No fancy has scope for fancying about You,

as the fancy knows where You are. (i.e. unknown)

In my annihilation, did my annihilation annihilate

and in my annihilation I have found You.”

The witness is the result of witnessing, and with him the pleasure takes place, not in the witnessing.

THE VEIL OF THE EXISTENCE

Existence is a veil and its observer is veiled, he wishes he were not brought into existence, as it has been said:

“Whenever the strange existence appears to my sight

I began to long for the homelands,

as the travellers long.”

The engendered being is in exile from its homeland, which is nothingness, so nothingness for him in his essence is his real homeland. Existence for him is acquired through the rule of compulsion which is also my homeland that I have longed for, because I loved to leave my homeland for existence to the One whom I have acquired this existence. Thus when He has caused me to stand with my form, which is the engendered being, I felt as if I have seen myself; since I didn’t witness save my form, so I remembered my homeland and longed for it. That’s the God’s speech: ﴿I did indeed create thee before, when thou hadst been nothing!﴾ [19:9]

THE VEIL OF MOTIONLESSNESS

Motionlessness (*sukūn*) is a veil from realizing (*taḥaqquq*) the prerequisites of servitude (*‘ubūda*) like fluctuation (*taqlīb*) and turning (*taṣrīf*), as it has been said:

“Did you not see the Loin, who, when old loves his lair

While the vagabond beasts roam about here and there.”

Motionlessness is fixity (*thubūt*) but the cosmos has no real fixity, it has been fixed and its domain is annihilation. If it got constant, as if it comes to resemble (*tashbbaha*) (the Divine) and how does that behove it [i.e. cosmos] ? Allah – exalted is He – says: ﴿Unto Him belongeth whatsoever resteth in the night and the day﴾ [6:13] which means: all that is fixed; this signifies that movement belongs to existence (*wujūd*) and it has a claim [on it]. Allāh is the ablest of all “associates” to dispense with any association.

THE VEIL OF ANXIETY

Anxiety (*qalq*) is a veil, which is the domination of heart by yearnings in terms of flying to the beloved, or longing in terms of perpetual flying. So the one who has the said state is like the one stated in the verse:

“I don’t know that my night has lengthen or not

How does he knows that, who diminishes.”

THE VEIL OF RISING

Rising up (*inb‘āth*) towards witnessing is a veil from bestowal (*wahb*). It has been established with the seeker that the spiritual opening (*fath*)²⁵ occurs only at the time of knocking (*qar’*); it is to that end that the seeking is used, as said:

²⁵ The term opening (*fath*) near Ibn ‘Arabī is more or less a synonym for unveiling and tasting; Hence it signifies direct, experiential knowledge of the realities of things, a knowledge that God

“The fire hidden in its stones,

It does not burn if it is not ignited by the flint.”

THE VEIL OF INTERVAL

Interval (*al-fatra*) is a veil from getting up to move towards the goal; there is no escape for any seeker (disciple) from it. Hence, the question: either/or. If it is intended, he gets up travelling towards the goal of his intention and he becomes as what is said:

“You are not but a Sun, whose light was concealed by an eclipse

Which covered it and then disappeared.”

THE VEIL OF BELL RINGING

Bell ringing (*ṣalṣalat al-jaras*) is a veil from total correspondence. The pain occurs because of the lack of correspondence; but the impact of this ringing is so strong that nothing can repel it, as it is said:

“When death fixes its claws,

I threw away every amulet/talisman that is useless.”

THE VEIL OF PROXIMITY

Proximity (*qurb*) is a veil from the Essence, because in it is the witnessing of the survival of the trace. The one whose trace survives doesn't partake of and the one who doesn't partake of witnessing has no spiritual gnosis (*ma'rifa*) of the Real Self, as said:

“In Proximity is my alienation from the perceiving of His Essence,

and I don't have any goal except the Pure essence.”

gives to the servant through self-disclosure it is a knowledge belongs exclusively to people of the path, the Folk and Elect of Allah (Chittick, “SPK” 394).

THE VEIL OF RETURNING

Returning (*rujū*) is a veil, because in it is the separation (*‘ayn*). Among them are those who suffer like Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī; when he took a step out of his [Lord’s presence], he fell in swoon, so there arose a call: “Bring my beloved back to me, as he can’t cope with separation from me. So when he is forced to return away from his this state (of proximity), then the path gets far away for him, as it is also in case he starts returning to him, then the path gets closer to him, as it is said:

“I see the way closer when I take it towards my beloved
and distant when I returns.”

Amongst them is the one who does not suffer in the process of his returning, but he remains in a (another) veil.

THE VEIL OF THE MUTUAL PROXIMITY OF ATTRIBUTES

Proximity of attributes (*taqārab al-awṣāf*) to the attributes is a proximate veil, because in it there is looking up for the stations of the bosom friends, so his concern and which aggravates his anxiety and excitement, as it is said:

“How great the yearning will become on that day
when homes get closer to homes.”

So he continues to traverse the stations in such a speed that he anchors at the goal of his aspiration. If he devotes his attention thereto, then that end becomes the beginning of something higher [than that], as Allah bids: ﴿And say, O my Lord! advance me in knowledge﴾ [20:114]

THE VEIL OF CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence (*murāsala*) is a veil of proximity; it is peculiar to men and pertains to the domain of love. The turning away of the beloved is not because of enmity, as love

forbids it, God has said: ﴿Your Lord has neither forsaken you nor hates you﴾ [93:3] but in it there is seeking to win pleasure, which has a sort of enjoyment in it, as said:

“If the love has neither displeasure (*sakht*) nor good-pleasure (*ridā*)

then when would be the sweetness of messages and letters?”

Since love is of mutually contradictory characteristics (*aḥkām*), pain and pleasure enter it from two different angles, which love demands, as it has been said:

“The love has sweetness and bitterness in it

and the love has wretchedness (*shaqāwa*) and bliss.”

THE VEIL OF VARIEGATION

Variegation (*talwīn*)²⁶ is a veil from firmness (*rusūkh*) as it brings forth the thing and its contrary, and the one who undergoes it swings in between grief and joy, and its cause is the self-interest, as said:

“There is a day against us and a day for us,

one day we were saddened and the other day we are made rejoice.”

THE VEIL OF RETURN FROM HIS HOLY PRESENCE

Returning from his Holy Presence toward the waystation of “breaking of the habits” related to the witness without any affair is an open deprivation and a clear loss. As when he asks for return to His Holy Presence, he is prevented from [doing so] and expelled out. Thus he remains tearful and heart wounded, as said:

²⁶ On Variegation (*talwīn*) and its opposite; stability (*tamkīn*), Ibn ‘Arabī asserts that variegation is a higher state than stability, since it corresponds to the nature of things, the divine self-transmutation in forms, but the actual verifier attain the station of “Stability in Variegation” (*al-tamkīn fi al-talwīn*) which is the constant witnessing of the renewal of creation at each instant, direct vision of the fact that Each day He is upon some task [55:29] (Chittick, “SPK” 108).

“You depart your beloved and then weep for him,
Then what motivated you to this separation.”

Another says:

“You traverse stages of journey away from your beloved,
and you keep on weeping for him with streaming tears.
You sleep after your separation from him in [a state of] bliss,
whereas the lover never falls asleep away from his beloved,
Your soul falsifies your claim; you are not from the folk of love.
You complain of separation and you are the oppressor in yourself;
why you didn’t stay, even though on the tenterhooks of tamarisk;
and turn your sword upside down or sharpen it?”

That is the requital of those who preferred separation over unification and who equates angles and blacksmith. This is the state that common people demands from the Gnostics; and who responds to them from the same, he falls prey to this state; and the one who refuses he remains well-grounded and close. It’s no secret that this is the great veil and a painful suffering.

THE VEIL OF WHO MENTIONED HIMSELF

The one who mentioned his soul with reference to its station, not demanded by love, while he [claimed to be] lover, then he is a pretender in veil, as said:

“I am the trust worthy and the noble king;
Leave me [O my beloved!] I am drunk with thy love;
Do you like that I should die in nostalgia for you?
and the people who have no beloved should remain alive?”

When it is in the nature of love to demand glorification of the beloved, and passing away from yourself and your contrivance, then how it is possible for you to mention yourself by glorifying [it]. It has been said: “There is no good in love that is managed through intelligence,” whereas the lover the one who is made to speak and he is [by himself] not the speaker. The speaker is ruled, being under the control of the one who makes [things] to speak; and his controller is love. So how it is conceivable for him to mention himself.

THE VEIL OF THE CONCEALMENT OF LOVE

The concealment of love (*kitmān al-muḥabba*) is a veil as it signifies the instability of its authority. On the contrary, it is not valid at all to conceal love, because the power of love is stronger than any other power, as the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd said, while swearing:

“Three young ladies held my rein
and they occupied each and every nook and corner of my heart,
What did happened to me: all people obey me
and I obey these women, whereas they disobey me.
It is because the power of love – from which they derive strength –
is stronger than my authority.”

It is not valid to conceal love, as its tongue is the tongue of [his own] state, not the tongue of articulation, as it has been said:

“The one who thinks that he shall conceal his love
till he makes you doubt it, [he] is a liar.
The love overwhelms the heart due to its domination
In such a way that it is impossible to conceal it.
And when a secret of that intelligent manifests,

then no sooner does it manifest then the man is dominated.

I certainly envy a committed lover whom neither eyes, nor
hearts did accuse [of any betrayal].”

As regards the aforementioned concealment by its upholders, consist in the fact that the lover doesn't speak out the name of his beloved for [certain] reasons, and alluding towards it the one said:

“The *Majnūn* of *Banū 'Āmir* disclosed his love

but I concealed my love and died due to my passion.

Thus when on [the day of] resurrection when shall be asked aloud

Who had been the victim of love, I shall be the only one who shall come forward.”

If the beloved is surrounded, the name might be concealed because of the tell-tales as it may lead to separation, but if the beloved is not surrounded then he leaves the name by way of respect, as said:

“The bodily sick one has forsaken sleep

he accompanies the whispering of the tell-tales in terms of “no, not,”

He roams about with (his) spirit of purity untouched by affliction,

When he saw sirus, he got exalted,

He says: I am the one assassinated with no arrow,

and my “self” is full of arrows [thrown at me],

I concealed the name of my beloved as a pledge made by me and binding upon me

and observed both the intimacy and the sanctity

I didn't conceal his name due to any fear about him,

But I sought respect [due to him]”

The all-comprehensive crux of concealment is that its holder is the man of intellect and consideration and falls short of the degree of love, as it has been said: “There is no good in love controlled by reason.” Another has said: Love has more authority over soul than that of reason. Thus concealment is a veil.

THE VEIL OF CAUSES

Causes (*‘ilal*) are veils, because everyone sees you from his own angle, not from your position and the one who sees you from his own angle, he merely sees his “self.” One day – in the days of my ignorance – I was in Cordoba and was going to the Friday prayer in the company of my friends. In that company there was a person from amongst the most elite ones with us, and he was infatuated with the love of a boy with beautiful face. On that day his beloved was holding his left hand. When we passed by one of our friends, he greeted us and looked at the lover and his beloved, and then said to the lover: your beloved is of unpleasant looks, what does please you of him? He recited two verses instantly, I don’t know whether he quoted them or improvised them; they are:

“The one who blames me saw the face of the one whom I love and said to me:

I deem you too higher than the face whom I see unpleasant,

I said to him: The face of the beloved is his mirror

and you see the reflection of your face in it.”

Thus think over what I have alluded to, in the context of this story.

THE VEIL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit (*al-rūh al-qudāsī*) in human being²⁷ is a requirement which

²⁷ The Arabic word *Insān*, a key term in Ibn ‘Arabī’s vocabulary, will be translated either as human being’ or on occasion as “man. In Arabic *insān* has no gender connotations though it is grammatically masculine. Men and women are equally *insān* (Chittick, “SPK” 385).

contradicts the requirement of nature. The natural self (*al-nafs al-tabi'yya*) is stronger to control man than his holy spirit, as said:

“The descent from *Hāshim* is of no avail,
if the self-hail from a stupid quail.”

If the spirit had not been busy with regaining its temperament, it would have got relieved and relieved the soul, and the existence of the Real would have opened to it therefrom. Hence, it has a face towards Him, and that (face) is to be relied upon in necessity. If that had not been so, it would not have indicated unification, as said:

“In each thing He has a sign
signifying that He is one.”

Thus seeking of the spirit by the self from its station is a huge veil, difficult to be lifted up, except for the one whose insight has been illuminated by God through the light of general and special prophetic consciousness (*al-nubawwa al-‘āma w’al-khāṣa*).

THE VEIL OF THE Gnostic TURNED BACK

The Gnostic turned back to the world of suffocation and detention is tormented, agonized and with head of drooping. If you ask him he will say:

“If there were no necessity I wouldn’t have come to him,
It is in case of a necessity, that I go to toilet.”

It is because suffering of the opposites in a state of not being in the sanctuary of the Holy presence, despite your knowledge of what behoves it, is something that weighs too heavy upon the gnostics. It is from this station that Prophet (PBUH) has said: “None of the prophets has been put to trial as I have been put to” and from [this station] Moses showed his wrath and threw the tablets. From [this station] was the ill-wish of Noah (AS) upon his community. That is a veil upon the Divine Hand of Manipulation known in His saying: ﴿There is not a moving creature, but He hath grasp of its fore-lock﴾ [11:56]

THE VEIL OF DISAGREEMENT

Disagreement (*mukhālafa*) is a veil, as it is from the rules of Love, and clashes with Love, as it has been said:

“You disobey God and demonstrate your love for Him,

It is a strange thing impossible in the field of analogy.

If you had a true love, you would have obeyed him

because the lover always obeys his beloved.”

And as said [by someone else]:

“I desire his union and he desires my separation,

So I quit what I desire, for what he desires.”

These two are the mutually contradictory states of love in which the lover perishes, because the lover always seeks contact (*ittiṣāl*) and union with the beloved, he seeks the beloved's endorsement for what he desires from him. Thus if he [= the lover] had agreed with him here, he would not have sought union. But if he seeks union, he does not intend what his beloved intends. Thus he is over-powered and defeated [with arguments].

Chapter No 3

Concepts of Veils by Ibn ‘Arabī

VEIL (DEFINITION)

In Arabic language the meaning of veil (*ḥijāb*) is everything that separates two things. The word *ḥijāb* (veil) is mentioned in the Qur’ān eight different times in many derivative forms. Allah says: ﴿It belongs not to any mortal that Allah should speak to him, except by revelation, or from behind a veil﴾ [42:51] and ﴿Verily, from their Lord, that Day, will they be veiled.﴾ [83:15] We also find this word used in several *aḥādīth*. In one *ḥadīth* transmitted by *Mu‘adh ibn Jabal*, the Prophet (PBUH) said at its end: “Fear the prayer of oppressed as there is no veil between his invocation and Allah” (Bukhārī, Vol- 2, Book 24, Number 573).

The Sufi terminology

Many Sufis have used this word *ḥijāb* as a term in different contexts according to the state they refer to. These definitions fall in three major categories as follows:

When it is said that this wayfarer or that true disciple’s veil has been lifted, then this means that the veil of this world has been lifted from in front of him and now he is ready to receive the self-disclosures and bestowals of his Lord.

The word *ḥijāb* is also employed in the sense of a hindrance in the way of someone’s spiritual journey. If a friend of God falls from his previously achieved station and remains in ambiguity according to a certain verdict of the Law of God, then it is said that he has been veiled from witnessing the reality.

The word *Ḥijāb* is also employed as a synonym to concealment (*sitr*); when the actual value of a servant of Allah remains obscured for his creatures, then the Sufi says that this servant is curtained (*mastūr*) from ordinary mortals (Kasnazānī Vol-5, heading: *ḥijāb*).

Definition of veil by Ibn ‘Arabī

A general definition of Veil by Ibn ‘Arabī in his *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya* is:

Everything that curtains a thing of your liking from your eye is a veil (415).

A veil is anything that prevents seeing the face²⁸ or reality of something. Inasmuch as everything prevents seeing God's face (*Wajhullāh*) everything is a veil but inasmuch as everything discloses *wujūd*, everything is identical with his face (Chittick, "SDG" 104). If you ask about a curtain; what is it? It is Everything that curtains from you a thing which suffices you. It is also said: it is a wrapper of the engendered existence, or halting with habits and the results of deeds. (II, 132)

Thus veil is a relation between the creator and the created things, the Lord and the servants. As everything other than Him is created, everything is a veil upon its Creator, in the sense that the thing cannot actualize and realize its Creator. This lack of ability to actualize and realize its Creator is a veil, spread upon everything. Ibn 'Arabī has alluded in chapter 151 of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* to this curtaining of Allah when Allah Says: ﴿They measure not God with the *ḥaqq* of His measure﴾ [6:91] as He is immeasurable. He conceals Himself in manifestation, so His manifestation is a veil upon His non-manifested reality (*batīn*). No one can have a real knowledge of His non-manifested reality; as the veils restrict us to perceive the true knowledge in His manifestation.

TYPES OF VEILS

Ibn 'Arabī says, "Know that veils are of various sorts:"

"Among them are engendered veils (*hujub kayāniyya*) between the engendered things (*akwān*), as in His words, "Ask them from behind a veil." [33:53]

Among them are veils through which creatures are veiled from God, as in His words: ﴿They say, Our hearts are in covers﴾ [41:5] and veils through which God is veiled from His creatures, as in the Prophet's words, "God will disclose Himself on the day of resurrection with nothing between them save the mantle of Majesty (*ridā' al-kibriyā'*) on

²⁸ The face mentioned in this passage by Ibn 'Arabī is not just an ordinary face, but the reality and essence of that thing. For more detail about the concept of face please see Chapter 3 The face of God (Chittick, "SDG" 91).

His face,” or, in another version, “with three veils between Him and His creatures.” (III, 211).

Now we shall try our best to elucidate these categories of veil in detail as been explained by Ibn ‘Arabī in many of his scattered texts particularly in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*.

ENGENDERED VEILS

The first of these veils are the engendered veils among the engendered things. The engendered things (*akwān, kāi’nāi*) are the existents or the acts, the creatures which have been brought into existence by the Divine command “Be” (*kun*), when God wants to bring a thing into existence or to “engender” it, He says to it, “Be!” and it comes into existence. This existence will pass away when their stay in this world is over.

Causes or occasions are one of those terms which Ibn ‘Arabī applies to veils. An occasion is something that causes something else. There are two types of occasions; some are concrete (*khilqīyya*), while others are supra-sensory and relational (*ma’nawīyya nisbiyya*). Thus we can say that there are two types of these engendered veils:

Sensory engendered veils

Supra-sensory engendered veils

Sensory Engendered Veils

The Sensory veils of engendered beings are those from which engendered things are in veil from other things. These engendered things are forms of veils upon other things, known as sensory and corporeal veils. These veils are placed by God so that the engendered things may perceive them and then proceed towards the supra-sensory veils. The Qur’ān epitomizes these types of veils and says: ﴿And when you ask (the Prophet’s ladies) for anything you want, ask them from behind a veil: that makes for greater purity, for your

hearts and for theirs. ﴿ [33:53] . In the following examples Ibn ‘Arabī alludes to some of the sensory engendered veils, he says:

“The king’s veil-keepers called in Arabic as *ḥujjāb* are of the first type, as they are his veils because it is through them, the king judges a person, whether the subject turns his eyes to the veil keepers or goes beyond them in search of the vision of the king. These veil-keepers are veils because they stand there for the king not for themselves, as the ultimate goal of any visitor is to meet the king, because the king only has the ultimate authority in a kingdom. [Similarly] the veils of shelter and protection are those which protect the animal bodies (*ajsām al-hayawāniyya*) from extreme heat and cold, and due which they spend a painless life. Like the shields and armours that protect the soldier from enemy’s arrows and swords, these veils only protect the soldier when they work as a barrier between him and his foe. Thus any material veil between the two things belongs to this category” (III, 211).

As previously said that occasions are concrete and supra-sensory, thus a good example of an concrete occasion is our body because it depends upon the prior existence of another body which causes this body to exist, like as God says: ﴿We created them of plastic clay﴾ [37:11] Thus clay is the cause or occasion for the existence of the human body.

These occasions are the connections between the created things which lead us toward the Occasioner of the occasions (*musabbib al-asbāb*). Ibn ‘Arabī says: In the first cause we are involved in veils as “occasions are curtains and veils.” (II, 553) which is one of the two faces of the same thing. All the things have two faces, whose one face is towards God and the other face towards the occasions. In the letter written to *Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razī* (d. 606), Ibn ‘Arabī explains the difference between these two faces and between the knowledge acquired by unveiling and the rational knowledge, thus giving us a hint how to react in these type of veils. He says:

“You should know my friend – may God give you success – that everything existent at an occasion that is newly arrived like itself has two faces. Through

one face, it looks at the occasion and through the other it looks at the existence-giver who is God. All people look at the faces of their own occasions, including all the sages, the philosophers and others – but not the realizers from among the Folk of God, such as the prophets, the friends and the angels, although they have the knowledge of the occasions, they look through the other face at their Existence-giver” (Ibn ‘Arabī “Rasā’il Ibn ‘Arabī 186).

As a veiled person is very far from reality, unveiling or at least understanding of the veil and how to lift it is very essential for the true understanding of the material and immaterial reality. Here Ibn ‘Arabī has guided us a way to get closer to the reality which is beyond these sensory engendered veils.

Supra-sensory Engendered Veils

Supra-sensory engendered veils are those creatures which we cannot perceive through our senses. These veils are diverse like human intellect, good and bad like his character, predestined or pre-programmed knowledge which resides in his permanent entity (*Al-ayn al-Thābita*). Ibn ‘Arabī says: some of the engendered veils are supra-sensory, like the veil of who is creator of our good and bad actions. As we associate our unworthy of praise actions to our own selves not to God and associate all the worthy of praise actions to God. Allah says: ﴿And if a good thing visits them, they say, 'This is from God'; but if an evil thing visits them, they say, 'This is from thee.' Say: 'Everything is from God.' How is it with this people? They scarcely understand any tiding.﴾ [4:78] al-Shaykh says: we know that all of these are from God but when dispraise has attached it self to those actions, we have veiled our God’s name by ourselves for the sake of Divine Courtesy. And for those actions which were good and praise worthy we have attributed them to our Lord so that He became the praise worthy behind those actions.

Ibn ‘Arabī has also considered that some occasions are supra-sensory veils and those occasions that are conceived in respect of the occasioned thing and the Occasioner. In

respect of the occasioned thing, it is its preparedness to receive the trace within itself. If it had no preparedness, the trace would not occur within it. And in respect of the Occasioner what God mentioned as ﴿And Our word unto a thing, when We intend it, is only that We say unto it: Be! and it is.﴾ [16:40] This is His Entity and His word, His intention and its connection with the object of His intention. All of these occasions are relational but His Entity is the Occasioner.

“Since God has established the occasions, no one can remove them when God has established there ruling properties, and none can possibly repel them When He is the Occasioner of the occasions, so He created the malady and the remedy” (II, 490).

On the placement of occasions, Ibn ‘Arabī says:

“God has not established these occasions in vain; among them are the essential causes (*al-asbāb al-dhātiyya*), there is no way to lift them here. Among them are the accidental causes (*al-asbāb al-‘arāḍiyya*) which are possible to lift” (II, 208).

We have given you the knowledge that the occasions are divine veils that cannot be lifted but through them. Lifting them is letting them is identical with letting them down, and the reality of obliterating them is to affirm them. Here once again we have returned toward the importance of true knowledge. As we have seen Ibn ‘Arabī directs most of his discussions towards two major veils, the self which is wujūd and the knowledge which is truth. These are the two basic veils and all other veils originate from them. On the effects of these occasions Ibn ‘Arabī says:

“If secondary causes had no effect in that which is caused, God would not have brought them into existence. If their property (*ḥukm*) were not intrinsic (*dhātī*) to the caused things, they would not be causes and it would not be true to call them causes. This situation is known, for example, when something can only accept existence in a locus, while there is no locus, though the Giver of Existence (*mūjīd*) desires to bring the thing into

existence. Hence, He must bring a locus (*maḥal*) into existence for the existence of that thing whose existence He desires. Hence the existence of the locus is a secondary cause for the existence of the desired thing. ... Hence, it is known that secondary causes have properties within the things that are caused. They are like tools of the artisan (*ṣāniʿ*). The art (*ṣanʿa*) and the artifact (*maṣnūʿ*) are attributed to the artisan, not to the tools” (III, 134; Chittick, SPK, 45)

Thus the people of unveiling contemplate God beyond these occasions; they know that these are veils, established by their Lord in order to judge their deeds. A Gnostic’s rely on occasions other than God is a pure association (*shirk maḥḍ*) and an impugnation toward the power of his Lord. Thus true gnosis (*maʿrifa*) of these occasions leads the gnostic to the right path of their Lord and in order to attain that path one must have true knowledge of these veils.

CREATURES ARE IN VEIL FROM THEIR LORD

The second category of the veils is in which creature or engendered things are in veil from their Lord. Ibn ‘Arabī says that there is nothing in *wujūd* but veils and greatest of these veils are:

The sensory veil; that is you, over yourself.

The supra-sensory veil; that is ignorance (III, 215).

The Veil of Ignorance

Ignorance is the greatest of the supra-sensory veils. Ignorance (*jahl*) is lack of knowledge, nothing else. Hence it is not an ontological quality (*al-amr al-wujūdī*) but pertains to nonexistence (*al-amr al-ʿadamī*). Thus from an ontological point of view, ignorance is the very self of the ignorant thing as a synonym to nonexistence (*ʿadam*) and evil. On the contrary, God is Being (*wujūd*), Pure Good (*al-khayr al-maḥḍ*) and Knowledge.

The Shaykh says: God does not really place anything behind a curtain, but our ignorance prevents us from seeing the realities as they are in themselves. “He places no veil upon you but your own self” (III, 215). Hence it is the ignorance (or lack of the real knowledge) which leads us to think that God is curtained and not self-disclosing, but actually we are curtained from that self-disclosing.

As knowledge is the most all-encompassing of the divine attributes, which is to say that “God is the knower of all things.” [4:71] “Not a leaf falls but he knows it.” [6:59] and “our Lord embraces all things in knowledge.” [7:89] Thus true knowledge leads back to God because from God it emerges and unto Him it returns. The lack of true knowledge is ignorance, which is a veil. It is a state of total ignorance with respect to our knowledge of God’s Essence. Here knowledge comes to an absolute halt; no heart has the capacity to conceive His reality, the very Essence of Him, no eyes can withstand to see the blazing glories of His face, no reflective or rational thinking can lead us by any way toward a positive attribute of His Essence. Thus God in Himself, in His very Essence, cannot be known. He discloses Himself by His Names and Attributes, but never discloses Himself as His Essence, so “none knows God but God.” While stating this, al-Shaykh al-Akbar makes it very clear that we as engendered beings do not have the capability to possess the true knowledge of God’s Essence:

“He who has no knowledge imagines that he knows God, but that is not correct, since a thing cannot be known except through positive attributes of its own-self, but our knowledge of God is impossible, So Glory be to Him who is known only by the fact that He is not known! The knower of God does not transgress his own level. He knows that he knows that he is one of those who do not know” (II, 522; Chittick, “SPK” 154)

The reason for the unknowability of the Essence is that it has no name; thus its reality is un-comprehensible and unperceivable in terms of creatures; only God knows its true state and name. Ibn ‘Arabī says about the name of the Essence of God (*dhāt Allāh*):

“In respect of itself the Essence has no name, since it is not the locus of effects (*maḥall athar*), not it is known by anyone. There is no name to denote it without relationship, nor with any assurance (*tamkīn*). For names act to make known and to distinguish, but this door [to knowledge of the Essence] is forbidden to anyone other than God, since “None knows God but God” (II, 69; Chittick, “SPK” 62).

“Reflection (*fikr*) has no governing property or domain in the Essence of the Real, neither rationally nor according to the Law. For the law has forbidden reflection upon the Essence of God, a point to which is alluded by His words, “God warns you about His Self.” [3:23] This is because there is no interrelationship between the Essence of the Real and the essence of the creatures” (II, 230; Chittick, “SPK” 62).

When it has been confirmed that reflective thought has no governing property in the Essence of the Real, the next question is: Do the Folk of discovery and finding (*ahl al-kashf w'al-wujūd*) achieve any knowledge of the Essence of the God by their discovery? This question was put by William C. Chittick in *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*. We say that the answer is clear and Ibn ‘Arabī has explicitly entertained this question in several chapters of the *Futūḥāt* and in most of his short treaties (*rasā’ils*). In *Kitāb al-Jalāla* after mentioning the bewilderment of the reflective thinkers and the Folk of considering (*ahl al-naẓar*), he says:

“The Folk of witnessing in witnessing became more bewildered than the Folk of rationality. Likewise the Folk of vision, when the first vision occurs for them they grasp what occurs to them in it. The next time when they view Him, they view Him different from the first [vision] as well in every [next] vision. So they became bewildered like the Folk of witnessing. There is none save bewilderment in bewilderment” (Ibn ‘Arabī, “Rasā’il Ibn ‘Arabī” 53).

It shows that the Folk of direct observation (*ashāb al-mushābāda*) and the Folk of vision (*ashāb al-ru'ya*) both are in bewilderment with the Folk of considering²⁹ (*ashāb al-naẓar*) in grasping “*al-Hū*” which is the Essence of God. In chapter 46 of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Ibn ‘Arabī confirms this statement, when he says:

“Our companions have differed in opinion about the knowledge of the created being (*muhḍath*) as to whether it can grasp unlimited known things (*ma‘lūmāt*) or not? Those who deny that anyone can know the Essence of God, have denied this and those who do not deny that knowledge, do not deny this acquiring. But it is not reported to us that anyone has gained this [i.e. knowledge of the Essence of God] in this world and I don’t know what will happen in the Last World. As we already know that Muḥammad (PBUH) had known the knowledge of the formers and the laterers and he himself said: He will praise tomorrow on the day of resurrection when he entreats God to open the gate of intercession (*shafā’a*) with praises, and said: God will teach him these praises at that time, which he doesn’t know now. If someone else had known them then his words would not have been accepted as true when he says: I have been given the knowledge of the formers and the laterers. He (PBUH) is truthful in his saying” (I, 254).

It has been clarified here that the Shaykh totally disagrees with anyone who has a slight doubt in his mind that the knowledge of God’s Essence can be acquired by any of the means mentioned above. As regards the knowledge of His Essence, all of His creatures are in a state of total ignorance and it cannot be overcome, that’s why the Prophet (PBUH) has said: “Reflect upon all things but reflect not upon God’s Essence as between the seventh

²⁹ The Arabic term *nazar*, which is translated here as “consideration,” means: to look, to gaze, to inspect, and to investigate. For the proponents of *Kalām*, it denotes the process of investigation and reasoning whereby conclusions are drawn. Ibn ‘Arabī uses the term technically to denote the speculative activities of rational thinkers in general and theologians and philosophers in particular (Chittick, “SPK” 165).

heaven and His Throne are seven thousand veils of light and he is beyond them.” A folk of Allah has said: “Glory be to Him who has set down no path to knowledge of Him except incapability to know Him” (I, 126; Chittick, “SPK” 62). The Folk of Allah express their poverty *vis-à-vis* God through their faith in Him, thus they are at least aware of the fact that they cannot know His Essence. This is the knowledge, opposite to the total Ignorance as Abū Bakr (RA) has said: “Incapability to attain comprehension is itself comprehension”. Ibn ‘Arabī frequently cites this saying attributed to Abū Bakr (RA) as it is a description of the highest level of human knowledge possible regarding the Essence of Almighty Allah.

The Veil of Self

Al-Shaykh al-Akbar has categorically mentioned “self” as the greatest of the sensory veils. He says “God placed no veils over you save yourself.” (III, 215) Thus there is no escape from the curtain, for there is no escape from you (II, 554). In chapter 431 of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* he says:

“The servant’s veils is from himself, but he knows not that his *wujūd* is the same as the veil” (IV, 43).

The veil of self is like the veil of proximity; if something is closer to us than our-self, then we are in veil from that thing. Allah says in Qur’ān: ﴿We are nearer to him than his jugular vein﴾ [50:16] We know that the jugular vein is closer to us than our body, because it is inside our body and that’s why our eyes don’t see it. The Real is like this; He is nearer to us than our jugular vein, but we don’t see Him like we don’t see our jugular vein. If we want to see our jugular vein, we would have to see inside our body and if we want to see the Real we would have to come out of our self, which is known as annihilation from self as described by Ibn ‘Arabī, he further says:

“Be cautious of the folk of the curtains, lest they lead you on step by step to the curtains. They are the folk of deceit and deception. Is there a curtain over Him who, in relation to you is nearer than the jugular vein? [50:16] He is curtained from you only through you, so you are identical with His curtain

over you. Were you to see your own nonmanifest side, you would see Him”
(III, 229; Chittick, “SDG” 121)

The self is the veil that keeps us wandering aimlessly. The way to lift this veil is to know oneself and thereby to know one’s Lord as it has been said: “He who knows himself knows his Lord.” Thus the self is one’s basic *dalīl*, one’s proof or signifier of the Lord. “There is nothing (Macrocosm) outside of you (i.e. Microcosm), so do not hope to know yourself other than yourself, for there is no such thing. You are the signifier of yourself and of Him, but there is nothing that signifies you” (III, 319).

Wujūd and ‘Adam

Hence our existence relies upon His existence and our knowledge of Him relies upon the knowledge of ourselves. When we know the reality of ourselves, we come to know the existence on which we rely for our own existence, that is, His *wujūd*.

“There is nothing in *wujūd* but He, and *wujūd* is acquired only from Him. No entity of any existent thing becomes manifest except through His self-disclosure. (III, 80) The Real is existent through His own Essence for His own Essence, unbounded in *wujūd*, not bounded by other than Himself” (I, 90).

In Ibn ‘Arabī’s terms we can say that everything other than God is other than *wujūd*; however, in creating the cosmos and the entities, God “gives them existence”, which is to say that they acquire and receive *wujūd* from Him.

“The fixed entities (*al-a‘yān al-thābita*) have no *wujūd* [of their own] except by way of acquisition from the *wujūd* of the Real. Hence they are His loci of manifestation in this qualification by *wujūd*.” (II, 57) Although the possible thing exists, it has the property of the nonexistent thing. [Prophet PBUH has said:] The truest verse spoken by the Arabs is the words of *Labīd*, ‘Is not everything other than God unreal?’, and the unreal is nonexistence” (I, 716; Chittick, “SDG” 30)

These entities are essentially nonexistent, which is to say that in their very essences they are other than *wujūd*, but they exist as fixed entities in the knowledge of God. This is one of the four kinds of *wujūd* which is “existence in knowledge”³⁰ (*al-wujūd fil-‘ilm*). This existence in knowledge is other than “existence in entity” (*al-wujūd fil-‘ayn*). Hence when God gives these fixed entities existence, He brings them out of *wujūd* in His knowledge to *wujūd* in the cosmos. He creates thing from “nothingness” only in the sense that they are not found in the cosmos before He puts them there. But even when they come to be found, they remain nothingness in themselves, because the *wujūd* bestowed upon them is not their own positive property. All existent things stand between nonexistence and existence. Nonexistence is their reality and existence is the generosity of their Lord. If these things recognize their reality, they will also recognize that the pure *wujūd* belongs to their Lord only, and when they recognize this fact, they know their Lord, as “He who knows himself knows his Lord.”³¹ Ibn ‘Arabī says:

“There is no wilderness and no desert save you, for you are your own veil upon yourself. So withdraw and the affair will be easy. He who knows creation knows the Real, but he who is ignorant of his part of this task is ignorant of its whole” (III, 246).

GOD IS VEILED FROM HIS CREATURES

Inasmuch as He manifests in the form of forms He also conceals in the Glory of His Face. In his book: *The Self-disclosure of God* William C. Chittick writes: “Closely connected with God’s face and His veils are the “glories” (*subuhāt*), which are the lights of God’s face that burn away the eyesight of anyone who sees beyond the veils” (122). Ibn ‘Arabī says:

³⁰ For a detail on these different types of existence and nonexistence, please see (Ibn ‘Arabī. *Risālat Inshā’ al-Dawā’ir*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 2004.

³¹ Ibn ‘Arabī has referred to this saying in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* more than sixty times and he attribute this saying to Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH).

“The prophet (PBUH) has said: ‘God has seventy or seventy thousands veils of light and darkness; were He to lift them, the glories of His face would burn away everything that the eyesight of His creatures perceives.’ The eyesight mentioned in this *Hadīth* is the eyesight of the creature, who view the Real and encounter these veils of glories of His face, because Allah continues to view this world and it will remain in his view forever, but this constant viewing of Allah has never burned the world” (III, 210).

The word glories (*subhāt*) derives from the same root as *tasbīh* (glorification) which on its basic meaning is to utter the Qur’ānic term *subhān Allāh* “Glory be to God”. All things glorify God through their own created nature or through the knowledge given to them by their own specific face. In Ibn ‘Arabī’s term “glorification” is the acknowledgement and assertion of God’s transcendence (*tanzīh*). Hence glories of the face have to do primarily with God’s transcendence, exaltation and majesty, the fact that God is so brilliant and splendorous that creatures are blinded by His light.

“The curtains may be let down out of mercy toward those upon whom they are let down, like the divine veils between the cosmos and God that allow the creatures to subsist, lest they be burned away by the facial glories” (III, 179).

God loves his creatures and he knows that they have no capability to view His glorious face. If He unveils Himself to them, they will exterminate at the first moment of this viewing, because He is the Creator of them and their capacities. Thus these veils are a kind of His mercy bestowed upon His servants, which prevent His servants from viewing His glorified Face, which is the Divine Reality. These glories of the face are the rays of light that emerge from the divine Light. Although these rays blind those who look upon them, but they also make the cosmos manifest in the form of self-disclosures (*tajalliyāt*). This means that they also possess creative powers that establish the *wujūd* of the entities. But once things come into existence, they act as veils, preventing the vision of the glories. In Shaykh’s words:

“The glories of the face are the rays of the Essence, when they are deployed, the entities of the possible things become manifest, so the possible things are the veil between us and the glories” (II, 488).

As the *Hadīth* of glorification mentioned two types of veils, both those of light and those of darkness, these two types are two faces of each possible thing as Ibn ‘Arabī says:

“The dark and luminous veils through which the Real is veiled from the cosmos are nothing but the light and darkness by which the possible thing (*al-mumkin*) becomes qualified in its reality because it is an intermediary (*al-wasat*). It [possible thing] looks only upon itself, so it looks only upon the veil. Were the veils to be lifted from the possible thing, possibility (*imkān*) would be lifted, and the Necessary (*al-wājib*) and the impossible (*al-muhāl*) would be lifted through its being lifted. So the veils will remain forever hung down, and nothing else is possible” (III, 276; Chittick, “SPK” 214).

These veils are a passage toward the understanding of our selves and by knowing our selves we can know our Lord. The question here is how can we know our selves by these veils? The answer is simple, if we know these veils, mentioned in the *Hadīth*, then we know that either these veils are on the Real or on His creatures. If these are on the Real, there is no way to lift them, so they remain hung down for ever and there is no way to lift them except if the Real wants. The Real doesn’t want to hurt His creation, so He keeps them hanging down. If these veils are creation, then the glories would burn them away, because the glories would then be perceived by the eyesight of the creatures without veil. If the veils are burned away, the creatures would be burned away too. But as God perceives us today without doubt through His eyesight and that the glories of His face exist and we also exist without doubt, it means that the veils are hanging down and are not lifted. So our very existence has the basic threat from the lifting of these veils and that is why Ibn ‘Arabī says, these veils are the rays of the Essence which manifests the possible things.

In other words, His names are these veils; so if He lifts these names, these veils are lifted and if the veils of names are lifted, the unity of Essence (*aḥadiyyat al-dhāt*) manifests

and there does not remain for His unity (*aḥadiyyat*) an entity (*ʿayn*) attributed with existence. Thus His unity will exterminate the existence of the entities of possible things. After that, these possible things will not be qualified with existence as they will not accept this qualification of existence save with these names. He has made these veils for us, as a protection from the blazing glories of His face, that burn everything which sees them due to the exalted jealousy, lest anyone can know his core.

“All this is because of what is required by Divinity due to jealousy and mercy. As for jealousy (*al-ghayra*), He is jealous lest some “other” (*al-ghayr*) perceives Him. But He encompasses everything [4:126] so He is not encompassed by him whom He encompasses. And as for mercy, this is because He knows that newly arrived things cannot subsist along with the glories of His face. On the contrary, they would be burned away by them so out of mercy toward them He curtains them so that their entities may subsist” (II, 554).

Does the lifting of these veils possible? Can a mortal being perceive God in the presence of these glories on His face, Ibn ‘Arabī says:

“When the veils are lifted, the glories of the Divine Face shine forth and the name ‘cosmos’ disappears. Then it is said, “This is the Real.” But the veils can never be lifted in all cases, so the name ‘cosmos’ can never be lifted. However, this name can be lifted specifically for some people, though it can never be lifted perpetually for mortal man, because of the fact that he brings together all of *wujūd*. It can only be lifted for the high ones (*al-ʿālīn*), who are enraptured ones (*al-muḥayyamūn*), and the cherubim (*al-karrūbiyyūn*). [But] for mortal man, this can happen at certain moments” (IV, 312; Chittick, “SDG” 161).

It can be understood from this passage that in a certain phase of time when the mortal man annihilates from his own-self, then his *wujūd* gets extinct and he subsists in God known as annihilation in God and subsistence through God.

CONCLUSION

I conclude this subject with a summary reproduction of a beautiful chapter of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, namely, the protection of the veil and curtaining. In this chapter al-Shaykh al-Akbar has mentioned several verses of the Qur’ān and some *aḥadith* which are considered to be the base for his concept of the veils. Allah says: “We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.” (50:16) so the veils exist but the veils are so subtle and obscure that we cannot see them. In a very intimate discourse with his Lord Ibn Arabī says:

“O our Lord; yes! We don’t see You and we don’t see these veils. We are behind the veil of veils, and You are nearer to us than our jugular vein or nearer than our self. This [extreme] proximity is the reason that we cannot see You. Man cannot see his own self so how he can see You, as You are closer to us than our selves. Thus extreme proximity is a veil as extreme farness is a veil. And You O my Lord, You have placed Yourself under the property of limit (*ḥadd*), and our rational faculty which under the attribute of consideration, which you have bestowed us, rejects this limitation for You. We have but our sense and reason, so we perceive by our senses and reason. If You are behind a veil, this limitation occurs and You are [phenomenally] delimited [to that veil] if You are nearer to us than our selves, then You are also delimited. But if you are encircling all things, You are closer to the negation of limits. O Lord! why You have wrapped Your Own self in a limit when You have told us of these veils which are the divisions between “You and our” selves. Rational faculties (*‘uqūl*) are bewildered in between “You and ourselves” (II, 159).

Here we find Ibn ‘Arabī raising the basic question of this bewilderment for the reason as worded by him: Why our Lord You have limited Yourself in expressions of veils, You have given us two faculties, sense and reason and by both of these faculties we perceive and conceive in your saying: “there are seventy thousand veils of light and darkness”, that You are in veils which means You are delimiting Yourself. Thus how can we perceive the

exact relationship that occurs between You and the veils? In answering this question Ibn ‘Arabī says:

“O our Lord, ﴿It is only Your trial by which You leave in error whom You will and guide whom You will. You alone are our Guardian. Forgive us and have mercy on us﴾ (7:155) You have trailed your servants by proofs (*dalīl*) and there is no such proof which leads to Your (Essence). Proofs are established in order to lead towards their establisher, not to lead towards the reality of its establisher.

After examination, classification and what has been given by the Eternal speech, we see only that, Thou art Thyself the veils.³² That is why the veils are also veiled and we do not see them, though they are light and darkness. They are what Thou hast named Thyself, the “Manifest” (*al-zāhir*) and the “Nonmanifest” (*al-bāṭin*). So Thou art the veil we are veiled from Thee only through Thee and Thou art veiled from us only through Thy manifestation” (II, 159; Chittick, “SPK” 364).

The Shaykh is very clear on this point that these subtle and obscure veils are none other than the Real itself, His two attributes, the manifestation (*zūhūr*) and non-manifestation (*buṭūn*). That’s why we don’t see these veils around us in this world of sense and reason because our sense and reason are encircled by these veils, which is the Real itself. Shaykh says:

“However, we do not recognize Thee, since we seek Thee from Thy name, just as we look for a king by his name and his attribute, even he should be with us, but not manifest in that name and that attribute. God has a manifestation through his Essence, so He talks to us and we talk to Him. He witnesses us and we witness Him; He recognizes us but we don’t recognize Him. This is the strongest proof that His attributes are negative, not positive. If they were positive, He would make them manifest when He became

³² You are the none other than veils (*‘āyan al-ḥujub*)

manifest in His Essence. But we do not recognize that He is He until He gives us knowledge, so we follow His authority in knowledge. Were his attributes positive, they would be identical with His Essence, and we would recognize Him through the very thing that we witness. But such is not the case” (II, 159).

In the concluding paragraph of this chapter, It has been confirmed that Ibn ‘Arabī closely relates these veils which are none other than the Real itself, with the possible things. He says all what we have discussed and understood above, leads us to believe that all this is the manifestation of the Real in the loci of the manifestation of the entities of the possible things, and this manifestation comes forth in accordance with the preparedness of each possible thing. The difference between the attributes depends upon the different level of preparedness of these possible things. The Shaykh in saying so returns to his main theme of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, which amounts to say that there is nothing in existence except Allah and properties of the entities. Thus if we consider their properties, they are present in *wujūd*, but if we consider that they have no entity in existence, they are absent. In the same way we can say that in manifestation the Real “is” and “is not.” “He is” because He manifests but because the properties and preparedness of each of the entities are different in which He manifests “He is not.” This is the biggest of the veils which results in bewilderment of the reason and sense.

“This matter has led us to consider existent things in all their differentiations that they are the manifestation of Real in the loci of manifestation (*mazāhir*), that is, the entities of the possible things (*a’yān al-mumkināt*) in accordance with the preparednesses possessed by the possible things. Hence, the attributes of the Manifest are diverse, since the entities within which it becomes manifest are diverse. Hence, the existent things become distinct and plural through the plurality of the entities and their distinction in themselves. Hence, there is nothing in Being/Existence except God and the properties of the entities, while there is nothing in nonexistence except the entities of the possible things prepared to be qualified for existence. So in

existence “they are [and] they are not”: The manifest is their properties, so “they are.” But [considering that] they have no entity in existence, “they are not.” In the same way, “He is and is not”: He is the Manifest, so “He is.” But the distinction among the existents is intelligible and perceived by the senses because of the diversity of the properties of the entities, so “He is not.” There is no one but Allah, and the universe is a temporally originated thing, and there is no one but Allah, and the universe is manifested” (II, 160).

Chapter No 4

Concept of Māyā in Upaniṣads

THE SACRED TEXTS OF HINDUISM

The Vedas are the oldest and most authoritative group of Hindu sacred texts, also designated by the term *Śruti* (heard). According to tradition, these texts were not composed by human beings, but are based in the primordial vibrations of the cosmos itself. The ancient sages, whose faculties of perception had been honed through arduous religious practice, were able to “hear” and understand these vibrations, and transmitted them to others in a lineage of learning (Lochtefeld 744). The Hindus consider that the Vedas, containing truths regarding the soul, the universe, and Ultimate Reality, are eternal (*nitya*) and without beginning (*anānd*). These truths descend upon the heart of men and women purified by the practice of self-control and meditations, these individuals are called *Rishis* or the seers of Truth. These ancient great truths were later compiled and arranged into four great books called the Vedas, these are the *Ṛg-Veda*, the *Yajur-Veda*, the *Sāma-Veda* and the *Artharva-Veda*. The orthodox Vedic scholars divide Vedas into *Mantras* and *Brāhmaṇas*. The Mantras are used in the ritually based religious practices known as *Tantra*. The *Brāhmaṇas* include the *Āranyakas* and the *Upaniṣads*.

THE UPANIṢADS

Upanishad in its literal definition means, “to sit down near.” The word is derived from the root “*śad*”, to sit, with the prepositions “*upa*”, near, and “*ni*”=very (adverbial), and conveys the sense, “that which is imparted to a pupil when he sits very near his teacher” —hence, “secret doctrine” (Shāstrī 47). Śaṅkara derives the word Upaniṣad as a substantive from the root ‘*sad*,’ to loosen, to reach out or to destroy with ‘*upa*’ and ‘*ni*’ as prefixes and *kṣip* as termination. If this derivation is accepted, Upaniṣad means brahma-knowledge by which ignorance is loosened or destroyed (Radhakrishnan, “The Principal Upaniṣad” 20).

These are the concluding chapters of *Āranyakās* and known as *Vedānta*, the concluding chapters (*anta*) of the Vedas. These teachings were transmitted orally from father to son or from teacher to disciple. Today we know only eleven major Upaniṣads from one

hundred and eight as Indian traditionalists puts it and two hundred as mentioned by some of the western scholars. These Upaniṣads are the basis of Vedānta, a philosophy which was developed later by the great thinkers of the Hindu mystical tradition. There are three main schools of Vedānta that have basic contradictions among themselves; these are:

1. The *Advaita* or Non-dualistic.
2. The *Viṣiṣṭādvaita* or Qualified Non-dualistic.
3. The *Dvaita* or Dualistic.

Each of these schools of thought has its own interpretation about the realities of the world. The Non-dualists believe that Brahman or pure Consciousness is the only Reality; the universe of names and forms is unreal, and man, in his true essence is one with Brahman. The theist or Non-dualists accept a personal God as Ultimate Reality; He is related to the universe and embodied souls in varying degrees. The Qualified Non-dualists confirm Brahman as Reality but believe that individual souls and the universe are also very real, being parts of Brahman or modes of His manifestation. Brahman, with the universe and the individual souls, constitutes the whole of Reality (Nikhilananda 14).

The Upaniṣads contain a wide range of material; most often, they teach the knowledge of Brahman the ultimate reality and hence is called *Brahmavidyā*, and sometimes the Ātman, the ultimate self or soul; or their relationships with the individual self or soul. In order to discuss further, first we need to define some of the basic terminologies used in the text.

Brahman

Brahman is one of the most important terms with a rich variety of meanings in it. It derives from the Sanskrit root “*br̥h*”, which means “to swell” “to grow,” or “to burst forth” and evidently first referred to the swelling or growing power of the sacrifice.

Śaṅkara derives the word ‘*brahman*’ from the root ‘*br̥hati*’ to exceed, *atīśayana* and means by it eternity, purity. The unchanging reality in the universe is called Brahman. It is

beyond time, space and causality and is all pervading Spirit (Nikhilananda, 124). In *R̥g Veda*, the word '*brahman*' is used in the sense of sacred knowledge or utterance, a hymn or incarnation. In the Brāhmaṇas, '*brahman*' denotes the ritual and is regarded as omnipotent. He who knows *brahman* knows and controls the universe (Radhakrishnan, "The Principal Upaniṣad" 52).

Later Brahman meant wisdom or Veda. It is the entity to whose expansion or immensity there is no limit. It is the absolute, the Supreme Reality, the Substratum and Ground of the visible world, the All-pervading Consciousness, the Spirit behind the universe, the Godhead, from which all beings are evolved, by which they are sustained, and to which in the end they are absorbed (Radhakrishnan, "The Principal Upaniṣad" 10). Eventually, the term Brahman was developed in the Upaniṣads to mean "the All" or "Ultimate Reality." In the world-view of the Upanishads, Brahman is the single binding unity behind the world's apparent diversity; it sustains the cosmos and is the self of each individual. These texts also affirm Brahman's identity with Ātman, the individual soul, and thus the identity of the essence of macrocosm and microcosm (Lochtefeld 122).

Ātman

The wisdom contained in the Upaniṣads are also called *Ātmavidyā*, the knowledge of the Ātman, or the self. This word is derived either from the root "*at*" (to move) or the root "*an*" (to breathe and is the breath of life) and is used both for the individual self or soul and for the transcendent "Self" or "All-soul," which is all reality (Grimes 68).

Śaṅkara derives ātman from the root which means 'to obtain' 'to eat or enjoy or pervade all.' He says, "The nature of Ātman is Eternity, Purity, Reality, Consciousness and Bliss, just as luminosity is the nature of the sun, coolness of water and heat of fire" (Nikhilananda 150).

Ātman is the deathless, birthless, eternal, and real substance in every individual. It is the unchanging reality behind the changing body, sense organs, mind, and ego. It is Spirit,

which is pure consciousness and is unaffected by time, space and causality; therefore it is limit less and one without a second (Nikhilananda 124).

Ātman is the principle of man's life, the soul that pervades his being, his breath, *prāṇa*, his intellect, *prajñā* and transcends them. Ātman is what remains when everything that is not the self is eliminated. The *Rg Veda* speaks of the unborn part in man, the inmost Spirit which is of the nature of pure Consciousness, and according to Non-dualists, identical with Brahman, the essence of reality as a whole and its source. Whoever gains insight into the depths of his nature and becomes fully aware of *Ātman* as his innermost core, will also, according to the teaching of the Upaniṣads, realize his identity with Brahman, the divine source of the whole universe, and thereby reach salvation. This knowledge is called '*ātma-jñāna*' (Werner 26).

Brahman as Ātman

It is evidently clear that there are texts in the Upaniṣads, Purāṇas including Gītā, which imply that the individual soul is different from the Lord. For Śaṅkara, these texts had validity within the world of nescience. But if they were to be taken as the final truth, they would conflict with the other texts speaking of the utter transcendence of the one and only non-dual self. Thus according to Śaṅkara the individual soul in its true nature is identical with the Lord but the Lord in his true nature is not identical with the individual soul in its individual nature. So the relation between the individual soul and the Lord appears different from different stand points. From the standpoint of nescience (*avidyā*) they may seem different and identity with the Lord then appears to be a 'goal' that has to be 'attained'. But from the standpoint of knowledge this identity is a fact (Alston 63).

In *The Principal Upaniṣads*, Radhakrishnan writes that "In the early prose Upaniṣads, ātman is the principle of the individual consciousness and Brahman the super-personal ground of the cosmos but soon the distinction diminishes and the two are identified. God is not merely the transcendent numinous other, but is also the universal spirit which is the basis of human personality and its ever-renewing vitalizing power.

Brahman is the first principle of the universe, is known through Ātman” (77). Thus we find no distinction to be mentioned within the Upaniṣadic scholars regarding the unity of Ātman with Brahman.

Vidyā and Jñāna

Vidyā is a synonym of knowledge, meditation, wisdom and insight from the Sanskrit root “to know.” In its philosophical meanings, it usually denotes direct knowledge of the transcendent reality resulting from yogic insight, which dispels ignorance (*avidyā* or *ajñāna*), the condition of the untrained mind. Initially it connoted the knowledge of the Vedic Mantras and ritual, and it bestowed great power. When the Upaniṣads concluded that Vedic rituals alone could not help break the cycle of birth and rebirth, Vedic knowledge began to be called the “lower knowledge” (*aparā vidyā*) while the Upaniṣadic knowledge of the imperishable was called the higher or liberating knowledge (*parā vidyā*).

The importance of this higher knowledge can easily be found in Upaniṣads as quoted by Radhakrishnan in The principle Upaniṣad:

1. “The *Chāndogaya Upaniṣad* distinguishes between the knowledge of texts and the knowledge of the self.
2. The *Tarittirīya Upaniṣad* reduces the knowledge of Vedas to an inferior position as mind-made in relation to the Divine bestowed knowledge.
3. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* asserts that the knowledge of self or higher knowledge cannot be achieved by logical reason but by spiritual contemplation.
4. The *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* teaches that those who put their trust in intellect cannot attain the knowledge of Brahman” (99).

The question is, if the knowledge of ultimate is only possible through insight or by self realization, how we can apprehend reality in this world? The answer given by the Vedic scholars is that the Self cannot be realised except by those whom the Self chooses. This

realization is possible only through the grace of the Divine. God-vision is the fruit of strenuous effort and Divine grace and only the Spirit in us can raise us to the spiritual status. *Vidyā* and *avidyā* are two ways of apprehending Reality. Both are forms of relative knowledge and belong to the manifested universe. *Vidyā* as *Jñāna* is the essential nature of the Divine Reality. It is the eternal wisdom hidden beneath the sheaths of ignorance not to be possessed by any individual, different from the knowledge attained by senses. It is the possession of the soul, and through its possessor can be gained.³³

MĀYĀ

Etymologically, the term *māyā* is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root *mā*, which means: (1) measure: (2) measure with, compares; (3) mete out: (4) arrange, form build: make.’ Therefore, the literal meaning of *māyā* is “that which measures, arranges, forms, builds, makes” (Braue 101). It is the principle of appearance or manifestation of God's power or “mirific energy,” “that which measures.” It is the force which shows the unreal as real and presents that which is temporary and short lived as eternal and everlasting. In the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkarācārya, it is described as the beginningless cause, which brings about the illusion of the world: an indescribable power of the Absolute (Brahman), which is neither real nor totally unreal. Śaṅkara used the term *māyā* as interchangeable with *avidyā*. (Grimes 189)

According to Advaita Vedānta, it is the indeterminable principle which brings about the illusory manifestation of the universe. It is the principle of illusion. It is not ultimately real, nor can it function without Brahman/Ātman as its locus. It is the device by which the *Advaitin* explains how the one reality appears as many. It is the power which brings about error and has significance only at the empirical or relative level.

³³ Here the possessor is the Ātman, which according to the Upaniṣadic scholars is Brahman.

CONCEPT OF MĀYĀ BY PRABHU DUTT SHĀSTRĪ

In “*The Doctrine of Māyā in the Philosophy of Vedānta*”, Prabhu Dutt Shāstrī, a research scholar of Sanskrit has traced different meanings of this expression in the stages of its transition. His conclusions about the history of this word are:

1. In *R̥g Veda* (R.V.) the word *māyā* occurs no less than twenty-four times. There are altogether seventy-five hymns in R.V. in which, the word appears in its simple or compound forms. It is not employed in one and the same sense throughout R.V. but has different meanings according to context. The two chief meanings, therefore, which the word is assigned in R.V. are “power” (Prajñā, lit. “Knowledge”) and “deception” (“*Kapata/Vañcanā*”). He says, its meaning as “power” does not mean any “physical” power, but “a mysterious power of the will.” The idea of “mystery” is being common to both these meanings; it is quite easy to understand the transition from the idea of “mysterious will-power” to that of “deception” (23-30). Thus we can say that *māyā* in R.V. means “a wondrous or supernatural power,” “an extraordinary skill,” and that the “supernatural” element is more strongly emphasized in *Atharva Veda* (A.V.), where it means “magic” and hence “illusion”.
2. The *Bṛhad-āranyaka Upaniṣad* contains the word *māyā* in many ways and later Upaniṣads continued using the word in all of its major forms with in a diverse range of meanings from “appearance,” “illusion,” “mysterious power,” and the “Lord’s greatest illusion” (23-30).

Prabhu Dutt Shāstrī viewed *māyā* as an essential part of the Vedānta system, the very life of the primitive Indian philosophy. He believed that the concept of *māyā* explains the illusionary nature of the world; everything other than Brahman that we perceive by our senses or mind is unreal. All we comprehend is an illusion or distorted knowledge of the reality because we do not have the ability to comprehend the Absolute Reality.

He started his discussion by giving the doctrine a legitimate position in the early texts of the Hindu philosophical system. He says that the idea of *māyā* is not to be confused with the word “*māyā*”. In his understanding the idea of *māyā* is very old, certainly older than the word and is the central point of the Hindu philosophical system. He summarized the idea in this couplet

“Brahman is the Reality, the universe is false,

The Ātman is Brahman, nothing else.”

In other words, there is only one Reality, call it Brahman or Ātman—what you will, and the world around us which appears so real is not so. This is the central thought which has been so admirably expanded and developed in various ways in the Upaniṣads. What we call the doctrine of *māyā*, is nothing more than an attempt to explain this fact in detail, to show how it is impossible for the world to be anything more than an “appearance” as distinguished from “Reality,” which strictly speaking is only Brahman. Thus, the concept is expressible in these two ways:

1. The world is an illusion or appearance.
2. Ātman (as Brahman)³⁴ is the only reality.

These two statements mean the same thing, so that the passages which emphasize the statement that the Ātman is the only reality mean most transparently that all else (i.e. other than the Ātman, viz. the world, etc.) is not real (Shāstrī 49). Prabhu Shāstrī argues that when it is confirmed that “the Ātman is the only Reality” it at once implies that the world is unreal. Some of the passages presented by him to support his idea are:

“The Ātman is to be seen, heard, understood, meditated—O Maitreyī; by seeing, hearing, understanding and realizing the Ātman, all this world is known.” (*Bṛhad Up.* ii. 4. 5)

³⁴ Please keep in mind that according to some Vedāntists and Prabhu Dutt Shāstrī is one of them, there is no distinction between the Ātman and the Brahman.

Thus Ātman is the key to all when the Ātman is known then there is nothing else that is worth knowing; the multiplicity perishes and the unity asserts its sway. This idea is also central to the sufi knowledge of the self when sufis say: “He who knows himself knows his Lord.” On unity of existence, Prabhu Shāstrī has quoted a long passage from Bṛhad Upaniṣad.

“For where there is duality, *as it were*, there sees another, another thing, there smells another, another thing, there hears another, another thing, there speaks another of another thing, there thinks another of another thing, there knows another, another thing; but where all has become nothing but the Ātman, there how can one smell anything, how see anything, how hear anything, how speak of anything, how think of anything, how know anything. By what shall one know him, by whom knows one this all? By what shall one know the knower?” (*Bṛhad. Up. ii. 4. 14. 2*)

He further says that, “The word “*iva*” (= as it were) is important here. “Where there is duality, as it were” shows that duality, which refers to the multiplicity (*nānātva*) in the world, is unreal; in other words, it is only an appearance. The conception of subject and object is only possible when each of them has at least a distinguishable existence. But when all this “otherness” is found to be false, that which was called the “object” disappears and only the one Ātman remains as the knower. In that sense even the word “subject” (in the current sense) would be inadmissible, since it is only a relative term, and when the object perishes, the idea of the subject also goes with it. The distinction is lost; that which was real remains as the one, and the unreal, which never did actually exist, is found to be a nullity” (53). He further says that “the Ātman is always in us, in fact. We are never justified in saying “in us” as truly speaking; “it is ourself,” not “it is in us”; the latter would imply that we are different from the Ātman” (55). Here Prabhu Shāstrī is very clear about the fact that we are actually the Ātman, the Real, the Absolute Consciousness, the Ultimate Reality. He is rejecting the idea that the “Ātman is in ourself” but He is “us” or we are nothing but “the Ātman.” Thus he is very clear in saying that Ātman is Brahman.

False multiplicity of the world

If Ātman is we, how it can be possible to perceive the multiplicity of *nāma-rūpa* (names and forms) in this world? He says, “In *Bṛhad. Up.* iv. 4. 4, again, the simile of a goldsmith is employed. As he by taking a bit of gold moulds it into various newer and more beautiful forms, so the Ātman is supposed to create through *avidyā* various forms, such as the *Pitṛis*, the *Gandharvas*, the gods, *Prajāpati*, Brahma, etc. Here all the variety of forms is spoken of as *avidyā*, hence unreal.”³⁵ And he quotes this Upaniṣadic passage for supporting his idea:

“It is to be perceived by the mind alone, there is here no multiplicity whatever; who sees here as it were “many” passes from death to death.”
(*Bṛhad Up.* iv. 4. 19)

He further elaborates this concept by saying that: “he who sees as it were a plurality actually existing is never saved, but is over and over subject to the pangs of birth and death in this *samsāra*.” The conception of *māyā* exhibits itself in such passages clearly, and yet many do not see it. Here also attention may specially be drawn to the word ‘*iva*’ — “as it were” —which implies that the multiplicity is only an appearance, an “as it were”. This exactly is the highest (and the truest) stand point of the Upaniṣads. When they deny in such clear and distinct terms the existence of “the many,” it means that they refuse to concede any reality to the world from that standpoint, the idea of the world being meaningless without all this ‘*nānā*’ (multiplicity). Abstract “the many” and you bring the world to a zero-point, nothing remains behind; all vanishes” (Shāstrī 56)

He concludes that all the words which we use in our every-day life to express the various distinctions among objects, or “the many,” are mere abuses of our speech, since they are ill-spent or wasted, “the many” having no existence at all. Only “the One” exists, and when that is known all else are known, and the use of words breaks down. This clearly signifies that he supports the idea that the entire world we perceive through our senses is

³⁵ Ibn ‘Arabī used a technical word in expressing this idea. He calls it ‘the Reality of the realities’ (*Ḥaqīqat al-Ḥaqā’iq* (Ibn ‘Arabī, “Risālat Inshā’ al-Dawā’ir” 147).

merely an illusion, nothing else. We are the Ātman (Absolute reality) and this multiplicity is just a manifestation of Ātman in forms and names. Hence by knowing the one you can know all like all the forms into which clay is moulded are known by knowing clay so the many-fold world is known by knowing the one Ātman.

CONCEPT OF MĀYĀ BY RADHAKRISHNAN

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's approach to the problem of *māyā* is different from the traditional one. He is not afraid to put forth his own unorthodox views about the subject. His overall understanding of the topic led him to take a new modernistic stance on the concept of *māyā*. He strongly rejects the views of those Vedāntists who award no real existence to this world of ours and that's the reason he was criticized by several of the sympathetic critics of his first book "Indian *Philosophy*." But his response was: "My criticism to the theory of 'illusion,' generally associated with Śaṅkara's metaphysics and supported by Deussen, led some of my critics to imagine that I was opposed to Śaṅkara's view. I submit that my interpretation of the Upaniṣads is not an unreasonable one, though it may seem to differ from this or that tradition in this or that point" (Braue 22)

In his article "The Vedānta philosophy and the doctrine of *Māyā*" he has once again raised the fundamental question of questioning the origin of the doctrine of *māyā*, which explains the world as unreal, illusion or a mere dream and fantasy. He says: "Although the doctrine of *māyā* is viewed in the present day as an essential part of the Vedānta system, Oriental scholars are divided on the concept. Deussen and Prahbū Dutt Shāstrī have all asserted that the doctrine of *māyā* is native to the Vedānta philosophy. But I think that the text of Vedānta viz., the Vedas, the earlier Upaniṣads and the Vedānta Sūtras, does not suggest even remotely, the theory of *māyā*. On the other hand it will be possible for us to establish that these texts point to a realistic conception of the universe. It was Śaṅkara,

under the influence of the Buddhistic teaching, following the tradition of Gaudapāda,³⁶ who imported the concept of *māyā* into the Vedānta system. *Māyā* is a pivotal principle of the later Śaṅkara Vedānta, but it is not a part of the primitive cosmological conception of the Vedas and the earlier Upaniṣads” (431-451).

He strongly disagrees with those scholars who are convinced about the unreal and illusionary nature of this world and who attribute this nature to the Vedas or to the Upaniṣadic Sages. He not only strongly rejects this notion, but on the contrary has presented strong arguments from the earlier Upaniṣads about the real nature of this world. He says, “There are passages in the Upaniṣads which make out that the world is an appearance, while Reality is pure being. There are others which grant reality to the world, though they maintain that it has no reality apart from Brahman. Śaṅkara tells us that the former is the true teaching of Upaniṣads” (Radhakrishnan, “The Principle Upaniṣad” 89).

He seems to be the only one among the Vedāntists who asserts the real nature of the world and rejects the projection of it as an illusion. He says: “The world which our intellect reveals to us is real, though its reality is limited and partial because it demands something else on which it depends. It is Brahman that imparts its being to the world. But from this it does not follow that our life is a mere dream and our knowledge of the world a mere fantasy. However imperfect and inadequate it may be, it is the real knowledge of a real world. The world to the *māyā* theorists is a false appearance, as unreal as the snake for which a piece of rope is mistaken; according to a strict Vedāntic view, our reality is Brahman or the whole. We have to see Brahman in everything and everything in Brahman.” As said, “He who sees all beings in the Supreme self and the Supreme self in all beings, becomes fearless and is not anxious about saving his self” (Radhakrishnan, “The Vedānta Philosophy” 441).

³⁶ *Gaudapāda* famous Advaita vedāntin who is the author of the *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* and first known Advaitin from whom we still possess a written text. He was thought to be Śaṅkara’s teacher’s teacher (*paramaguru*).

But the question here is if this world is as real as he says, why did the Upaniṣads as a whole portray an unreal illusionary status of it? Why are the old sages and *ṛiṣṭis*, commentators and the founding fathers of Indian mystic philosophy united in depicting it as an illusion that has nothing to do with the reality? If we come across Radhakrishnan's works, we find him quoting passages from the Upaniṣads which portray the unrealistic nature of this world. Some of these passages are mentioned below with his comments:

1. The *Ketha Upaniṣad* warns us not to find reality and certainty in the unrealities and uncertainties of this world.
2. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* tells us that a covering of untruth hides from us the ultimate truth even as the surface of the earth hides from us the golden treasures hidden under it. The truth is covered by untruth.³⁷ This veiling of untruth is also mentioned in the *Īśa Upaniṣad*.
3. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads* tells the cessation of the great world illusion is possible by the worship of God.
4. The *Maitrī Upaniṣad* compares Absolute to a spark, which, made to revolve, creates apparently a fiery circle.³⁸
5. The *Aitareya Upaniṣad* asserts that the universe is founded in consciousness and guided by it.³⁹ (Radhakrishnan, "The Principle Upaniṣad" 78-80).

According to him all of the above mentioned passages are not explaining the unreal nature of world as a whole but they are relative. They are clarifying a single point and that

³⁷ The covering of truth by untruth means the veil of unreal that veils the real.

³⁸ His comments were: This may suggest that the world is a mere appearance. Even here the intention may well be to contrast the reality of the Absolute with empirical reality without making the later an illusion (Radhakrishnan, "The Principle Upaniṣad" 80).

³⁹ His comments were: "This assertion is the reality of the universe and not merely its apparent existence. To seek the one is not to deny the many" (Ibid).

is one-sided dependence of the world upon the Ultimate Reality. His arguments are: This world does not carry its own meaning, to regard it as final and ultimate is an act of ignorance (*avidyā*). It is the creation of God and has its roots in Brahman, though it does not constitute the nature of Brahman. It is neither one with Brahman nor wholly other than Brahman. *Māyā* in this view states the fact that Brahman without losing his integrity is the basis of the world. He says this dependence of the world on God is explained in different ways:

1. The fleeting is enclosed on both sides by an eternity which is real.
2. The world comes from Brahman and returns to Brahman.
3. Whatever exists owes its being to Brahman.

Here we see him shifting from the position of one-sided dependence of this world upon Brahman to a state where Brahman becomes this universe of name and form. He says: This suggests that the many are parts of Brahman even as waves are parts of the sea. All the possibilities of the world are affirmed in the first being, God. The whole universe before its manifestation was there. The antecedent of the manifested universe is the non-manifested universe, i.e. God. God does not create the world but becomes it. Creation is expression. It is the self projection of the Supreme and everything exists in the secret abode of the Supreme (Radhakrishnan, “The Principle Upaniṣad” 82). Donald Braue in explaining the term “*māyā*” says that Radhakrishnan has used the term in its strict etymological sense, as “measuring out and forming” is one of the meanings of the term. Radhakrishnan has used this literal meaning in a philosophical idea. Thus *māyā* is power of self becoming, the creative power, and the power of manifestation. As Ātman and Brahman have no distinction in his views therefore *māyā* as a religious symbol expresses his attitude of conviction that Brahman becomes the world. As he derives Brahman from the root ‘*br̥h*’ which means to grow, to burst forth, thus this world is the result of the growth or the bursting forth which is Brahman. Thus according to him *māyā* is the power of self expression which resulted in the creation of this world (Braue 112).

This meaning of the term is mentioned in many of the Upaniṣadic passages and he quotes: “The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads* mention God as *māyin*, the wonder-working powerful being, who creates the world by His powers.” Here *māyā* is used in the sense of the divine art of power by which the divinity makes a likeness of the eternal prototypes or ideas inherent in his nature. *Indra*⁴⁰ is declared to have assumed many shapes by his *māyā*. *Māyā* is the power of *Īśvara*⁴¹ from which the world arises, he is both transcendent and immanent, he is the manifest (*vyakta* or *ẓahir*) and the un-manifest (*avyakta* or *batin*), the silent and the articulate. While the world is treated as an appearance in regard to pure being, which is indivisible and immutable, it is the creation of *Īśvara* who has the power of manifestation and *māyā* is that which measures out, moulds forms in the formless. Thus God had control of *māyā*: he is not subject to it.

His concluding remarks are that the Absolute is not a metaphysical abstraction or a void of silence. It is the Absolute of this relative world of manifestation. What is subject to change and growth in the world of becoming, reaches its fulfilment in the world of the Absolute. If the world is altogether unreal, we cannot progress from unreal to the Real. If a passage is possible from the empirical to the Real, the Real is to be found in the empirical also. The Ultimate Reality sustains the play of the world and dwells in it. That is why we are able to measure the distance of the things of the world from the Absolute and evaluate their grades of being. There is nothing in this world which is not lit up by God. Even the material objects which lack the intelligence to discover the nature of the divine ground of their being are the emanations of the creative energy of the God and they are able to reveal to the discerning eye the divine within their material frames. Thus world is real as based on Brahman; it is unreal by itself. Further he says “if immutability is the criterion of reality, then the world of manifestation has no claim to reality. Change is the pervading feature of

⁴⁰ Literally means; ruler, chief, mighty and powerful is the Vedic king of heaven, the god of thunder lightening and rain (Grimes 140).

⁴¹ Literally, from the root *is* ‘to rule’ is the Great God and the supreme Ruler and Controller. *Īśvara* is the personal God in contrast to *Brahman*, the Ultimate Reality in Hinduism (A., Grimes 142).

the world. Changing things imply non-existence at the beginning and non-existence at the end” (Radhakrishnan, “The Principle Upaniṣad” 85). The forms we see in this world are manifestations of the Real, not arbitrary inventions out of nothing. Form, *rūpa*, is the revelation of the formless *a-rūpa*. *Nāma*,⁴² name, is not the word by which we describe the object, but it is the power of the character of the reality which the form of a thing embodies. The infinite is nameless for it includes all names. Thus the world depends on Brahman, and not Brahman on the world. God is the dwelling place of the universe; but the universe is not the dwelling place of God.

MĀYĀ BY ŚAṆKARA

At the end we want to conclude this chapter on the meaning of *māyā* from Śrī Śaṅkarācārya’s *Ātmabodha* translated by Swāmi Nikhilānanda. In a very good introduction to this work he has discussed some of the very basic tenets of Advaita⁴³ Vedānta. He says: I have chosen this introduction from all those books which are considered by orthodox Hindus to be authoritative treatises on Non-dualistic Vedānta.⁴⁴ Thus we intend to conclude this chapter from a traditional orthodox view of *māyā* as *māyā/avidyā* is one of the key concepts of Advaita Vedānta.

He says: Śaṅkara speaks of *māyā* as the power of Lord and speaks of universe as *māyā* this is because its nature is impermanence. *Māyā* is a fact and that is the appearance of one inexplicably as many. Similarly the mirage is *māyā*, dream objects are *māyā* and the

⁴² Nāmarūpa: “Name and form,” Advaita Vedānta uses the term to indicate the phenomenally existent universe which means every appearance consists of name and form (Grimes 200).

⁴³ Advaita means non-dualism; non-duality; “not two” (from *a* = “not” + *dvaita* = “dual, two”)

A term used to indicate a position of non-duality adopted by various Indian schools of thought. Advaita Vedānta adopts a position of absolute non-duality while all other uses of the term accept internal distinctions within their various types of monisms. Thus, in its latter usages, it signifies the interconnectedness of everything, which is dependent upon the non-dual One, Transcendent Reality (Grimes 15).

⁴⁴ Please see the introduction of Swāmi Nikhilānanda (Nikhilānanda xvii).

creation is *māyā*. Thus *māyā* is a cosmic illusion synonymous to *avidyā* and *ajñāna* on account of which Brahman appears as the creator of the universe and Ātman as the *Jivā* or individualized self. The root cause of this appearance of ‘One’ as many or Absolute as relative is *ajñāna* which can be understood as veil.

According to Vedāntists, *māyā* cannot be described either as being or non-being that’s the reason it is indefinable. They argue that if *māyā* were being then its effects would be perceived by all times and if it were non-being one could not see the world of names and forms. Thus *māyā* and its effects disappear when one attains the knowledge of Brahman because Brahman and *māyā* cannot co-exist, when one of these is perceived, the other is non-existent. In this sense *māyā* is the inexplicable power of the Supreme Lord, *parameśaśakti*, by which the illusion of the creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe is produced. Brahman does not see a trace of *māyā* because He is Absolute Light and Knowledge, *māyā* can only affect the relative mind and knowledge. The Vedāntists believed that, as mind itself is the product of *māyā*, one cannot know the cause of *māyā* through reasoning.

The Three Guṇas

Māyā, or *Prakṛti*⁴⁵ is said to consist of the three *guṇas* (qualities), these are *sattva*, *rajas* and *taṃas*. These three qualities are the basic three ingredients of *māyā*, as it has no existence independent of the *guṇas*. These qualities are present in all objects, gross or subtle,

⁴⁵ *Prakṛti* literally means that which accomplishes everything: *Pra* – abundantly or perfectly; *kṛti* – that which creates or accomplishes, from the root *kṛ*, to do (cf. pro-create). The word *prakṛti* is an adaptation from the samkhya. In ordinary parlance, *prakṛti* means *svabhāva* or the nature of a thing, or its original unmodified state, as against *vikṛti* the modified state. Nikhilananda says, we read in *Śvetāśvatra Upaniṣad*: “Know *Prakṛti*, or Nature, to be *māyā*, and the Great Lord to be the Master of *māyā*” (Nikhilananda 52). Radhakrishnan also says: *Maya* is also used for *Prakṛti*, the objective principle which the personal God uses for creation (Radhakrishnan, “The Principle Upaniṣad” 86).

including the mind, the *buddhi* and ego. These three are present in every human soul of this universe. Only Brahman untouched by *māyā* is beyond these *guṇas*.

1. *Rajas* is energy, from it emanates activity. Through its power the phenomenal universe alternates between evolution and involution, manifestation of names and forms and their recession into the seed state. Under its influence a man becomes violently attached to the world. *Rajas* is the source of suffering.
2. *Tamas* literally means: darkness; inertia; dullness; state of rest which resists activity. It is the veiling power that hides the true nature of a thing and makes it appear as real. Man is ignorant, dull, stupid and lassitude under the influence of *Tamas*. It derives a man to doubt and uncertainty and is known as the mother of delusion.
3. *Sattva* means joy; pleasure; goodness and illumination. It is the giver of the happiness and his real friend in his quest for truth. Under its influence man becomes fearless, faithful, liberal, truthful and self-controlled. It helps one to lessen his physical activities, concentrate on contemplations and strive in ways of attaining peace and blessedness (Nikhilananda 54).

Two powers of Māyā

In the traditional Non-dualistic view held by Swāmi Nikhilānanda: *māyā* is believed to have two powers:

1. The power of concealment (*āvaraṇaśakti*)
2. The power of projection (*vikṣepaśakti*)

The power of concealment is the power which obscures the knowledge of the observer; it conceals, as it were, the true nature of the Brahman. From a Sufi perspective, this concealment is a veil (*ḥijāb*), a veil spread upon everything, which makes that thing blind in perceiving the Real. Thus from this point of view *māyā* is a veil.

The projecting power of *māyā* is an effect to its concealing power. When this veil obscures the Real from the relative, or the true nature of the Brahman is hidden, there arises the condition of individuation and relative existence; just as when the real nature of a rope is concealed by darkness. By this second power Ātman appears as *jīva* or finite (59).

Śaṅkara says:

“Brahman appears to be a *jīva* through ignorance, as the stump of a tree appears to be a man. This *jīva*-hood is destroyed when the real nature of the *jīva* is realized” (Nikhilananda 169).

The concealing and projecting power of *māyā* functions almost simultaneously. It is the Ignorance which obscures our perception of the Real, and then the projection creates the entire universe (*Brahmāṇḍa*) in front of us as real. Thus Brahman, in association with *māyā*, is the projector or Manifester of the universe. We will discuss both of these powers and compare them to the Sufi’s *Hijāb* in the final chapter of this thesis.

CONCLUSION

We conclude this chapter with some of the major points we have found in the definition of *māyā*, in accordance with the Non-dualistic approach towards it.

Māyā by Prabhū Dutt Shāstrī

1. *Māyā* is very life of the primitive Indian philosophy.
2. The only true existence is that of Brahman and Brahman is identical with Ātman.
3. The world is an illusion or *māyā*, having only a phenomenal relative existence.
4. The manifested multiplicity of this world has no existence at all in reality and it is the manifestation of Ātman in forms and names.

Māyā by Radhakrishnan

1. The concept of *māyā* is not native to Hindu sacred scriptures like the Vedas, the earlier Upaniṣads and the Vedānta Sūtras.
2. Śaṅkara imported the concept of *māyā* into Vedānta system under the influence of Gaudapāda.
3. There are passages in Upaniṣads which grant reality to this world. Thus knowledge of this world is the real knowledge of the real world.
4. The unreal nature of the world is relative and it expresses the single fact of one-sided dependence upon the Ultimate Reality.
5. *Māyā* is the power of self expression which resulted in the creation of this world. The world is real as based on Brahman; it is unreal by itself.

Māyā by Śaṅkara

1. *Māyā* is the power of the Supreme Lord and it is the appearance of one inexplicably as many.
2. *Māyā* is *ajñāna* and *avidyā*, it is a veil, and is neither being (*sat*) nor non-being (*asat*).
3. *Māyā* is a cosmic illusion on account of which Brahman appears as the creator of the universe and Ātman as the *Jīvā*.
4. *Māyā* is *Prakṛti*, it is the projection which obscures the Real from the relative.

Chapter No 5

Māyā and Ḥijāb: A Comparison

In this chapter I will compare these two concepts; the concept of veils in the writings of Muḥyiddīn Ibn ‘Arabī and the concept of *Māyā* in the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta. In the broader understanding of these concepts, I will try to compare each of the terminologies used in one concept with its counterpart on the other side. Most of these terminologies have more than one meaning; their literal meanings which at sometimes are totally different from their meaning in their respective concept. This chapter of ours also works like a glossary to the topic with a comprehensible comparison. I’ll first use the terms by Ibn ‘Arabī then their possible equivalents in Advaita Vedānta system and finally their similarities and dissimilarities.

THE ABSOLUTE PLANE (PARAMĀRTHIKA)

The Absolute plane is the understanding of things from the standpoint of Pure Brahman. It is the highest of the three levels of reality. It represents the absolute truth. In this plane, no attributes are ascribed to the Ultimate. Rather, He is the only idea, the one being, all in all, unqualified and formless. That plane totally lacks any duality in terms of Creator and creature; here there is no creation no God and no worshiper (Nikhilananda 62). All the Divine names rest on the relative plane, the plane of creation.

Al-Hū/Brahman (The Essence)

Brahman in Advaita Vedānta is the Ultimate Reality, the Ground of the universe, the Absolute, the Divine, the All-Pervasive Supreme Principle of the universe. He has nothing similar to Him and nothing different from Him, and has no empirical distinctions from the a-cosmic viewpoint. Advaitins insist that it is impossible to explain Brahman in words as He transcends all concepts and ideas and is therefore, *nirguṇa*— beyond conceptualization. Thus Brahman is believed to be the single binding unity behind the world’s apparent diversity.

The word Hū/Huwa in Arabic language is a “Nominative detached Pronoun” (*al-damīr al-marfū‘ al-munfaṣil*) for the third person, which is translated in English as “it/He.”

The holy Qur’ān uses this pronoun in several of its verses for the Essence of Allah (The name of Personal God in Arabic). Allah says: ﴿He is God; there is no god but He﴾ [59:22]

Ibn ‘Arabī has used this term for the Essence of God “the Invisible Essence, who’s witnessing is impossible, thus He (*hū/huwa*) is neither a manifestation nor the loci of manifestation, but He is that what is desired by the tongues.” (II, 128) In his *Kitāb al-Yā’ wa huwa kitāb al-Hū* he says: *al-Hū* is tantamount to His Unity (*aḥadiyya*), that’s why it has been said in the kinship of Allah; ﴿Say: He is God, One﴾ [112:1] Thus *Al-Hū* is the Absolute Essence which no face can perceive by its eyes and no reason by its considerations. *Al-Hū* is unknowable, unperceivable, un-viewable and un-referable from all faces. Shaykh says: all existing things have no existence but by *Al-Hū*, and they have no subsistence after existence but by *Al-Hū*. Thus all the names are interpreters of *Al-Hū*, and *Al-Hū* is encompassed by the veil of honour and protection in his Unity (*aḥadiyya*) and “He-ness” (*huwiyya*) (*Kitāb al-Yā’*, 1)

As we have seen, both terms refer to a single Reality, which is without qualities, formless, nameless, indefinable, and grammatically a neuter noun (Lochtefeld). He is *nirguṇa/ la yudrak bil afkār w’al-‘uqūl, sat/ wujūd, cit/‘ilm* or *nūr*. Nothing is similar to Him (*laysa ka mithlihī shay’*) and nothing is different from Him because “all the existing things have no existence and no subsistence after existence but by Him. Both traditions agree that it is impossible to explain *Al-Hū* and Brahman in terms of words and names, rather all names denote Him. Ibn ‘Arabī’s saying that what is desired by the tongues is the true portraying of Him as no one knows His real name and everyone desires His real name.

The Shaykh is very clear that “Interrelationship (*munāsaba*) between the Real and the creation is neither intelligible (*ma‘qūl*) nor existent. Nothing comes from Him in terms of His Essence; everything denoted by the Law or taken by the rational faculty (*al-‘aql*) as a denotation is connected to the Divinity, not the Essence.”

Wujūd and Ātman

In *Upaniṣads*, *Ātman* relates to both, the individual self or soul and the transcendent “Self” or “All-soul,” which is all reality. This word is derived either from the root “*at*” to move or the root “*an*” to breathe and is the breath of life. It is the unchanging Reality behind the changing body, sense organs, mind, and ego. It is Spirit, which is Pure Consciousness and is unaffected by time, space and causality.

Ātman is Reality, substrate of the individual and identical with the Absolute (Brahman). It denotes the Ultimate Essence of the universe as well as the vital breath in human beings. It is the basis of all experience, and it can’t be known by thoughts, as the Knower cannot be known. According to Non-dualists, it is identical with Brahman and one with the individual soul (Nikhilānanda 260).

In its literal meaning, the word *rūḥ* in Arabic is closer to the Sanskrit *Ātman* but the Advaitins have only used this term on the absolute plane, where there is no creation, no-duality and where there is only one Reality known as Brahman. To convey the meaning of non-duality Vedāntins denoted *Ātman* as identical with Brahman. Ibn ‘Arabī’s *wujūd* seems to be an equivalent of the Upaniṣadic *Ātman*. *Wujūd* in his words is identical⁴⁶ with the Real (*‘ayn al-Haqq*), not other than He.” (III, 566) Hence, there is nothing in *wujūd* but God and that *wujūd* supports us in our *wujūd*. Here *wujūd* does not relate to individual self but to the Ultimate. The word *Ātman* –with capital A– is very confusing, on one hand, it is identical with the Brahman, but on the other hand, it has something to do with the individual self. Is it the manifestation of the individual self on the absolute plane?

Similarities between the Ātman and Wujūd	
Śaṅkarācārya’s Ātman	Ibn ‘Arabī’s Wujūd
Though <i>Ātman</i> is an ever-present reality, yet because of ignorance it is unrealized. [44]	The Ultimate’s <i>wujūd</i> supports every <i>wujūd</i> in this universe.
The yogi endowed with complete	The Real is identical with the <i>wujūd</i> , not

⁴⁶ William Chittick has translated the word *‘ayn* by Ibn Arabī as identical (SPK 389).

enlightenment sees through the eye of knowledge the entire universe in his own self. [47]	with the fixed entities (<i>al-A'yān al-Thābita</i>). Thus every <i>wujūd</i> is His <i>wujūd</i> . (II, 519)
The tangible universe is verily <i>Ātman</i> ; nothing whatsoever exists that is other than <i>Ātman</i> . [48] (Nikhilānanda 168).	The cosmos is existent through God, neither through itself [its fixed entities] nor by itself. In its very essence it is bound in <i>wujūd</i> through the <i>wujūd</i> of the Real (I, 90)

A major distinction between *Ātman* and *wujūd* is that *wujūd* in its essence has nothing to do with the self. Individual self is nothing but a fixed entity, it only became qualified by *wujūd* whenever its bestower wills, but after being qualified, it remains non-identical with the Real in terms of its essence. Here we find a clear distinction with Real and the non-real entity; a creature. There is no possibility of a union, nor a stage where the creatures enter in Divinity. These individual selves or fixed entities are only real as long as they acquire (*istifāda*) or receive (*qabūl*) *wujūd* from the Real. These entities are also His loci of manifestation in this qualification by *wujūd*, but being a locus of manifestation does not mean that they have changed in themselves. They are immutable and fixed.

The term *Ātman* is confusing because in uttering it, we do not find a distinction between the Real, which is Brahman and the individual Self, which is not Brahman. Paul Deussen says in *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*: The *Ātman* is an idea capable of very different interpretations. The word signifies no more than "the self," what we regard as ourselves. Three positions are possible here:

1. The corporeal self, the body.
2. The individual soul, free from the body, which as knowing subject is contrasted with and distinct from the object.
3. The supreme soul, in which subject and object are no longer distinguished from one another, or which, according to the Indian conception, is the objectless knowing subject (94).

In the absolute plane, only the third interpretation works for *Ātman* because the first two interpretations refer to the relative plane as the first is merely a body and the second is the individual soul (*jīva*).

Our question still stands what is the real nature of the *Ātman*. The basic distinction between the Advaitins *Ātman* and Ibn ‘Arabī’s *wujūd* is that *wujūd* is only identical with the Ultimate and has nothing to do with the Individual self, which is a fixed entity (*al-a‘yn al-thābit*) of a thing and is non-existent in his very nature. We do not find an equivalent of a “fixed entity” in Advaitins terms. When Advaitins says *Ātman* is Brahman, they refer to all what is individual is Absolute, but when Ibn ‘Arabī says *wujūd* is for the Essence only, all the individual things still exist apart from it without *wujūd*, known as the fixed entities (*al-a‘yān al-thābita*). Thus these fixed entities after being qualified with *wujūd* are not identical with the *wujūd*; hence there is a clear cut distinction between the Creator and the creature.

THE RELATIVE PLANE (VYĀVAHĀRIKA)

The relative plane is the standpoint of ignorance, at this level, the Absolute is with attributes (*saguna*), one individual differs from another and the entire pluralistic universe exists. In this plane, the Absolute is viewed under the condition of name and form. All this is because of the *upādhi* of collective ignorance (*avidyā*). This limiting adjunct *upādhi*“ refers to that through which any determinate name, form, attribute, or conception is applied to the Absolute; it is said to be “set up by ignorance,” because it depends upon an initial differentiation, and thus implicitly negates all that which is not encompassed by the particular adjunct in question” (Shah-Kazemi 5). This *upādhi* seems to alter the true nature of an object but this alteration is only apparent, not real. When Brahman is associated with this *upādhi*, He is designated as *Īśvara*. When *Ātman* is associated with *upādhi*, it becomes *jīva*, the individual soul. Both *Īśvara* and *jīva* are the products of *māyā*, because from the standpoint of creatures as they are under the spell of *māyā*, *māyā* puts a limitation upon the Absolute in order to conceive Him in this world of name and form. This results in the appearance of Brahman as *Īśvara* and *Ātman* as *jīva*.

Allah/Apara Brahman

Apara Brahman or “the lower Absolute” is the term used for the Supreme Reality as conditioned with attributes (Grimes 48). When the Absolute is spoken of as being the “performers of all actions” and as “knowing all things”, we are speaking of it as associated with adjuncts (*upādhi*). When Brahman is associated with the *upādhi* of collective ignorance it is designated by Vedāntins as *Ívara* or *Saguṇa Brahman*, who corresponds roughly to the Personal God of various religions. This personal God is the highest symbol or manifestation of Brahman in the relative world. Although there is no distinction between the Brahman and *Ívara*, but *Ívara* is the highest conception of the infinite that can be formed by the finite mind.

He has different aspects and specific attributes. He is the omnipotent, omniscience, omnipresence, eternally self-evident and has an unlimited power; He is creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. He is often characterized by negatives. He has nobody, no defects, no sins, has no form. As *Ívara* is the product of *māyā* but *māyā* is under his control, He uses it for the purpose of creation, preservation, and dissolution of the universe. We also find a distinction between the Lord and the individual soul from the stand-point of nescience (*avidyā*) this is all because of *upādhi* or external adjunct (Alston 13).

Ibn ‘Arabī has used the term “God of creeds” (*ilāh al-mu‘taqdāt*), which is similar to the *Apara Brahman* of *Upaniṣads* or Personal God of every religion. This God of creeds (*ilāh al-mu‘taqdāt*) is none other than the all-comprehensive name of God, which is “*Allāh*” in Arabic. Al-Shaykh al-Akbar says in book *al-Maqṣad al-Asmā* “The name *Allāh* is an encompassing name, every other name is encompassed by this name. This is the name of metaphorical Essence (*al-dhāt al-majāzīya*) which diversifies Itself in different forms for the sight and insight.”⁴⁷ This diversification is according to the possessor of the creed that’s why Shaykh has used the term “God of creeds.”

⁴⁷ RG 418 *Maqṣid al-asmā*, Ms. National Library of Pakistan 52. ff^{os} 1-23. dated 1324 AH, Ibn Arabi Foundation (digital copy) ff^{os} 417-419. dated 814 AH. Osman Yahia lists 24 mss., of which seven

The name “Allāh” according to Ibn ‘Arabī is a proper name (*ism al-‘alam*) encompassing all names. “If you say “Allāh” this name brings together the realities of all the divine names, so it is impossible for it to be said in a non-delimited sense (*‘ala’l-iṭlāq*). Hence, states (*al-aḥwāl*) must delimit it.” (III 317; Chittick, “SPK” 66) Thus like Śvara, according to Ibn ‘Arabī the name Allāh is the Personal God, that’s why Ibn ‘Arabī has said in his most controversial work *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, in the “The Seal of the Unique Wisdom in the Word of Muhammad”

The God of creed is the product of its considerer, He is his artefact, and hence his [the possessor’s] praise for what he believes is his praise upon himself [as he is the creator of his creed]. For this reason, he condemns the creed of others, if he had been fair, he would not have done that.

Indeed, the possessor of this particular object of worship is certainly ignorant in his rejection of others, as what he believes about Allāh, since had he recognized what al-Junayd said, "The colour of water is the colour of its vessel," he would have conceded to everyone who has a creed and what he believed in, and he would have recognized Allāh in every form [of worship] and in every creed.

He has opinion not the [true] knowledge. For that reason, Allāh says, "I am in My slave's opinion of Me," that is, I only appear to him in the form of his creed. If he wishes, he non-delimits, and if he wishes, he delimits” (Ibn ‘Arabī, “*Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*” 225).

As we have seen, there is no difference between Advaitins and Ibn ‘Arabī about the Personal God or God of form and name. Both agree that God of form and name is a lower manifestation of the Essence of the Absolute, although it is lower in rank from the Absolute’s standpoint, it is the highest possible form of Absolute from the relative’s standpoint. This limiting adjunct for Advaitins is *māyā* or nescience (*avidyā*) and for Ibn

can be considered historic. The best is Shehit Ali 2813 (621H, written by Ayyūb b. Badr in the presence of IA and verified). MIAS Archive Project report (Yahia 580).

‘Arabī, it is the lack of knowledge of the Essence that is because of Its independence from the world. The name Allāh is the all-comprehensive name of God, It refers to God’s Essence, attributes and Acts. His seven major attributes are life, knowledge, desire, power, speech, hearing and sight. These are mothers of leaders of other names and Shaykh has described the whole story of creation and subsistence after creation in his work *Inshā’ al-Dawā’ir*. Thus there is no distinction between the concept of a Personal God from the Advaitin and Akbrain point of view.

Rūḥ, nafs and Jiva

The word *jīva* is derived from the root *jīv* which means “to continue breathing” (Grimes 147). According to Advaita Vedānta it is the Pure Consciousness associated with individual ignorance. As Brahman under the limiting adjunct (*upādhi*) of *māyā* appears as the Personal God or *Śvara* similarly the *Ātman* under this *upādhi* appears as *jīva*. Thus *jīva* is the ignorant soul. In its ignorance it totally forgets its true nature and thus remains a product of *māyā*. *Jīva* on a relative plane is the worshipper of the *Śvara* and *Śvara* is its creator, thus a created being.

The word *rūḥ* is from the root *r.w.ḥ*, which means “the breath of life” (Wehr and Milton 365). In the vocabulary of Ibn ‘Arabī it is the life it-self, which gives life to others. Allah has created three ranks of souls; one that has no other works but the veneration of the Real (*al-ḥaqq*); second that controls the natural bodies and third are the souls of the animals. Here we find the word created (*khalaqa*) which means that although the spirits are from the realm of command (*‘alam al-amr*) they are under the influence of Divine command.

Ibn ‘Arabī says the word *rūḥ* sometimes refers to the self (*al-nafs*), and sometimes to the reason (*al-‘aql*) Allah says in Qur’ān: ﴿When I have shaped him, and breathed My spirit (*rūḥi*) in him﴾ [15:29]. Here He has not said my-self (*nafsi*). But in another verse he has said ﴿Every soul (*nafs*) shall be pledged for what it has earned﴾ [74:38]. Here the word *nafs* is used instead of *rūḥ*. *Rūḥ* is the command of the Lord (*amr rabbī*) and thus a created being.

If we compare these terminologies in both traditions, they are very similar in their essence. Both *rūḥ* and *jīva* are identical as they are individual spirits or souls who have control over the body. Both *jīva* and *rūḥ* are immortal; they do not die with the death of the body rather death is the separation of the soul from the body. Both agree in their sayings that *Ātman* or *rūḥ* is Eternity, Purity, Reality, Consciousness and Bliss. Soul is the deputy (*khalīfa*) of God in the realm of human-self and *jīva* is the worshipper of *Ívara*. Both are created beings and Allāh⁴⁸ or *Ívara* is their creator and Lord.

MĀYĀ AND ḤIJĀB

The word *māyā* in Advaitins concept has several different interpretations; it is the principle of appearance, illusion, marvellous power of creation, magical power, mystery, God's power. It is the force which shows the unreal as real and presents that which is temporary and short lived as eternal and everlasting. In the Advaita Vedānta of Sankaracārya, it is described as the beginning less cause that brings about the illusion of the world; an indescribable power of the Absolute (Brahman), which is neither real nor totally unreal. It is also the *upādhi*, which delimits the Absolute and shows the attribute less Absolute as having attributes. It is the principle of illusion, and it cannot function without Brahman/*Ātman* as its locus. It is the device by which the Advaitins explain how the One Reality appears as many.

According to Ibn ‘Arabī a veil is that thing which curtains a thing of your liking from your or that prevents seeing the face or reality of something. Thus everything is a veil upon itself because it prevents itself from comprehending the reality of itself. Similarly if anything prevents realizing the reality of the Real that thing is considered to be a veil. Thus veil is an isthmus, a relation, between the Real and the unreal, the existent and the non-existent, the Absolute’s Entity and the Individual’s entity (*al-‘ayn al-thabit*).

⁴⁸ Allah says in Qurān (God is the Creator of every thing) [39:62]

As stated above that *māyā* delimits the real nature of the Absolute, so does the *ḥijāb*. Any one who has witnessed the Real has only witnessed the *ḥijāb*, thus *ḥijāb* has delimited the Reality of the Real from eye of the witnesser. Advaitins have used the term illusion for this perceived unreal Real. Similarly the shaykh has used the term (*waḥm*), which can be translated as illusion or fancy. In his Kitāb al-Hujūb, he says: No fancy has scope for fancying about you, as the fancy knows where you are.”⁴⁹

When Advaitins say that *māyā* acts upon the relative in the relative plane from the standpoint of relative, and the Absolute is not the subject of *māyā* rather He is the controller of *māyā*. They are very close to what al-Shaykh al-Akbar says that this world is the locus of the veil, and the Absolute has seventy thousand veils of light and darkness, that is why the veils are also veiled, and we do not see them, though they are light and darkness. They are what Thou hast named Thyself, the “Manifest” (*al-zāhir*) and the “Nonmanifest” (*al-bāṭin*). So Thou art the veil we are veiled from Thee only through Thee and Thou art veiled from us only through Thy manifestation. (II, 159) Here we find veils similar to *māyā* which acts as the concealing power and hides the Real from the relative. Hence in a broader view we can say that *māyā* and *ḥijāb* are identical as they both hide the true nature of the Absolute from the relative. They both afflict only the relative and cause no change to Absolute.

Let’s now compare in detail some aspects of Advaitins *māyā* with Ibn ‘Arabī’s *ḥijāb*.

Māyā as mystery

As reality in its entirety cannot be grasped by the discursive intellect in Advaita Vedānta, they have shaped this conviction in an idea known as *Māyā*. Thus, *māyā* signifies the inexplicable mystery surrounding the relation between Brahman and the world. Radhakrishnan says that “if the Supreme Reality is unaffected by the events of the world then the rise of these events becomes an inexplicable mystery.” The basic mystery is to establish a real relation between the Real and the relative world. “As we can never

⁴⁹ See our critical Arabic edition of this work in Chapter 6.

understand how the ultimate reality is related to the world of plurality, since the two are heterogeneous, and every attempt at explanation is bound to fail. This incomprehensibility is brought out by the term *māyā*” (Braue, 102). Thus, when no one knows the exact nature of relationship between the Creator and creature, they termed this inexplicable mystery as *māyā*. The inexplicability arises by the existence of the world, as it exists, but we do not know how, so we have signified this inexplicable existence by the word *māyā*. Similarly, when Advaitins failed to provide a logical relationship between the *Ātman* and the world they used the term *māyā*. If Brahman and *Ātman* are identical then their relationship should be identical, and we have to consider both as one with one name and one entity, but Radhakrishnan put it as “The Real is one yet we have the two” (Braue, 105). This is *māyā* the inexplicable mysterious relationship between the two.

First we need to define mystery what does it means? Mystery is a thing that is not fully understood or that baffles or eludes the understanding; an enigma. One whose identity is unknown and who arouses curiosity, it is a truth that is incomprehensible to reason and knowable only through divine revelation. We have seen above that in Advaita Vedānta *māyā* is a mystery, a secret about the relationship between the Brahman and the world. The question is does *ḥijāb* a similar mystery, an obscure inexplicable secret or not? Ibn ‘Arabī says that *ḥijāb* is which covers the reality of a thing or make it hide. We know by our experience that if anything is in veil then something else has covered it. If it is a materialistic thing our eye will only see the outermost veil that has covered this thing. Thus our perception clings to the veil, not to the thing itself. If we have to explain that veiled thing how can we explain it? Without doubt there is no way to explain that veiled thing, unless we have its true knowledge and in Shaykh’s terms true knowledge or reality of a thing is only possible to acquire if the thing itself bestow its knowledge to you. Since there is a veil on that thing, this evolves mysteries about the real nature of that thing. In reality the word mystery is only used to define an inexplicable secret nothing else.

Advaitins says that *māyā* signifies the inexplicable mystery surrounding the relation between Brahman and the world. Although the term *Hijāb* has nothing to do directly with this concept, but this idea has its roots in the Sufi wisdom of Ibn ‘Arabī.

Māyā as self becoming

Etymologically *māyā* means that which measures, arranges, forms, builds, makes. Thus, Radhakrishnan has referred to it as a power of self-becoming. It is the power of Isvara, the personal God, and by this power, He has created this world. Creation according to Radhakrishnan is becoming. Thus through *māyā* Brahman becomes the world.⁵⁰ *Māyā* is the power of self-expression and in his thoughts; an Absolute Self requires the power of self-expression in order to produce the world. Here we find him saying that the Real became this world of name and form.

Radhakrishnan says: “God has the power to become anything at anytime through what is known as His *māyā-śakti*. He is the creator of everything and is the material and efficient cause of the world” (Braue 113). This self-limiting power of the Absolute in Indian philosophy is *Māyā*.

I have not any meaning of self-becoming in Ibn ‘Arabī view on *ḥijāb*. The Shaykh says He is *ḥijāb* for the immortal or immortal’s own being is *ḥijāb* for realization or spiritual witnessing of the Real. The Shaykh says: The veils are what Thou hast named Thyself, the “Manifest” (*al-zāhir*) and the “Nonmanifest” (*al-bāṭin*). So Thou art the veil we are veiled from Thee only through Thee and Thou art veiled from us only through Thy manifestation.” (II, 159)

Here Ibn ‘Arabī has expressed Real as identical to veil (*‘ayn al-ḥujub*). The reality behind this statement is that from a subjective, as it is not possible for engendered being to witness the exalted Essence of the Real. We express this state as a veil and as the very being of this engendered being is the reason we express his being as veil. The lights of His self disclosures are the veils by these he created the world and concealed Himself. These are the veils of Light and darkness expressed by the glories of His face that burn away the eyesight of anyone who sees beyond the veils. These glories are also known as the rays of creation for a detail description of them please see chapter 3 heading God is veiled from His creatures.

⁵⁰ It was noted earlier in chapter four that Radhakrishnan derives Brahman from the root *byh* meaning to grow, to burst forth.

Māyā as illusion

In Prabhu Dutt Shāstrī's views, the concept of *māyā* explains the illusionary nature of the world; everything other than Brahman what we perceive by our senses or mind is unreal. All we comprehend is an illusion or distorted knowledge of the reality, because we do not have the ability to comprehend the Absolute Reality. His findings suggest that there is only one Reality in this universe, which is Brahman, and the world around us is unreal. *Māyā* is an attempt to explain how this world of name and form is just an appearance, an illusion, distinguished from the Real, the Brahman. He concludes that *Ātman* which is identical to Brahman is the sole Reality in this universe. He rejects the notion that *Ātman* is "in us," but "It is us," we are *Ātman* thus we are the Real.

He says: "The most eloquent passage on the subject is the analogy of the spider and the sparks. Just as spider goes forth from itself by means of its threads, as from the fire the tiny sparks fly out, so from this *Ātman* all the spirits of life spring forth, all worlds, all gods, all living beings. (*Bṛhad Upaniṣad* ii I. 20)." Commenting on this passage, he says: "The one notable point in this connection is that at this stage the *Ātman* who creates the world is identical with that who lives in it. Brahman is the *Ātman*. The universal self, the creator of the world, is not different from the individual self within each of us" (77).

If we compare these conclusions of Prabhu Dutt Shāstrī with Ibn 'Arabī's, we have to keep in mind the different terminological meaning of the term *Ātman* and its parallels in Ibn 'Arabī's theory of *al-Wahdat al-Muṭlaqa* (Please see the heading *wujūd* and *Ātman* in chapter 3 for details). If we consider *wujūd* as a parallel of *Ātman* as we have considered it earlier, we can say that there are analogies between the two. Ibn 'Arabī claims that there is only a single *wujūd* in this universe, which belongs to the Real. He says: "There is nothing in *wujūd* but He, and *wujūd* is acquired only from Him. No entity of any existent thing becomes manifest except through His self-disclosure" (III, 80) and "Existence is a veil and its observer is veiled." (*kitab al-Ḥujub*, Veil of Existence)

By comparing this statement with Prabhū's that there is only one Reality in this universe, which is Brahman, and the world around us is unreal. We see how these two concepts can come together to a single base.

Ibn 'Arabī says in his book *Inshā' al-Dawā'ir* that each possible thing has four stages of existence, these are:

1. Existence in entity (*wujūd fi al-'ayn*).
2. Existence in Knowledge (*wujūd fi al-'ilm*).
3. Existence in articulation (*wujūd fi al-alfāz*).
4. Existence in writing (*wujūd fi al-ruqūm*) (141).

Existence in entity (*wujūd fi al-'ayn*) is the only stage where fixed entities (*al-a'yān al-thābita*) acquire *wujūd* from the Real. At this stage of existence, they are known as things, but before this stage, they are not qualified to be called things. That was the logic behind this Qur'ānic verse: ﴿I did indeed create thee before, when thou hadst been nothing!﴾ [19:9] This is the starting point of Ibn 'Arabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, he says: "Praise belongs to God, who brought things into existence from nothingness and nothing of nothingness." (I, 2) Thus these entities of all possible things are in a state of non-being before acquiring *wujūd*, which is the existence in knowledge, in the Divine knowledge, or existence in articulation and writing. These fixed entities have no *wujūd* of their own. The Shaykh says, in reality, they have nothing to do with this *wujūd*, they still remain in their state of nothingness. He says: "The entities have never smelled the aroma of existence; they remain in their primary state, in spite of the multiplicity of forms in existence" (Ibn 'Arabī, "Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam" 76). If all that is qualified by *wujūd* has acquired this *wujūd* from the bestower of *wujūd*, which is God. All that is real is that *wujūd*, not the fixed entity qualified by it. Hence, we can say in reality, only God is Real by His own *wujūd* and everything other than Him is unreal, because these fixed entities have no existence of their own. And we can say that God is Real and everything other than Him is real by Him.

There is no one but Allah, and the universe is a temporally originated thing, and there is no one but Allah, and the universe is manifested” (II, 160).

Māyā as the power of Lord

Śankara speaks of *māyā* as the power of Lord, by this power the Lord makes appear Himself as the creator of the universe and the *Ātman* as the individualized Self. The root cause for this appearance is *ajñāna*, which is a veil upon the Real. *Māyā* is not a being, nor a nonbeing rather it is an appearance and its effects only disappear when one attains the knowledge of Brahman as Brahman and *māyā* cannot coexist. Thus *māyā* is the inexplicable power of the Supreme Lord, *paramēśaśakti*, by which the illusion of the creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe is produced. *Māyā* is believed to have two powers:

1. The power of concealment (*āvaranaśakti*)
2. The power of projection (*vikṣepaśakti*)

If we closely see both powers and relate them to our ignorance, which according to Ibn ‘Arabī is greatest of the supra-sensory veils. Then it is obvious that God has not placed anything behind a curtain, but our ignorance and lack of ability to realize things has prevented us from seeing their realities. Thus our ignorance conceals the true nature of things from us, not our Lord. Ignorance is like darkness as knowledge is like light thus when God says: ﴿God is the Light of the heavens and the earth﴾ [24:35] He says that all knowledge of the heavens and the earth belongs to God and all ignorance about the heavens and the earth belongs to the mortal. So when Śankara speaks that the concealing power of *māyā* conceals the true nature of Brahman. He is very close to Ibn ‘Arabī in his saying that: “Reflection (*fikr*) has no governing property or domain in the Essence of the Real, neither rationally, nor according to the Law.” This concealing power, which is nothing but the intrinsic ignorance of a mortal being, is like a *ḥijāb*.

We don’t know the true nature of the Brahman, what we know of Him is the *Īśvara*, the personal God. Similarly the knowledge of God’s Essence is impossible to acquire for an

engendered being, for details see heading the veil of ignorance in chapter 3. According to Śāṅkara this is the stage where second power, the power of projection plays its role. This power projects realities in a manner so that the relative mind can easily comprehend them. In this projection, some of the realities are distorted because the relative has no ability to comprehend the realities as they are in themselves. We can say that by this power the Absolute creates different forms and names in the universe so that one may distinguish itself from the other. By this power, He creates a name God, *Īśvara* and *Allāh*.

Similarly the Shaykh views all of His names as the “names of the names” He says: Although these names are His names as He says: ﴿Call upon God, or call upon the Merciful; whatsoever you call upon, to Him belong the Names Most Beautiful.﴾ [17:110] But these are names of His names (II, 396) and His reality is beyond any name and form. The name “Allah” according to him is the name of metaphorical Essence (*al-dhāt al-majāzīya*) which diversifies Itself in different forms for the sight and insight (please see heading Allah/Apara Brahman in Chapter 5. All these names are similar to the power of projection.

CONCLUSION

I must say that the basic intention behind this study of mine is to bring forth the similarities between the Sufi transcendental wisdom of Ibn ‘Arabī and the everlasting wisdom comprehended in the *Upaniṣads*. As there is no apparent connection of obtaining this knowledge from one another, we say that both have gained this eternal knowledge from its very source. These two great oceans of knowledge have more similarities than differences and that’s the reason why the Holy Qur’ān (the last book of God’s religion) always wants from a Muslim to ﴿Say: ‘People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we serve none but God﴾ [3:64]

My intention behind this study was to elaborate these similarities in a manner, which is acceptable to both. I have accumulated certain realities in one worldview and their possible equivalents in the other. I must say: O people of Vedānta most of the things you believe that are exclusive in your scriptures are same as interpreted by our scholars in the light of the given knowledge. It confirms that: ﴿‘Everything is from God.’ How is it with these people? They scarcely understand any tiding.﴾ [4:78] and as instructed to the Prophet (PBUH): ﴿Naught is said to thee but what already was said to the Messengers before thee﴾ [41:43]

In light of this, I recommend a deep study of this eternal wisdom in any of its forms and to take guidance from its light, as Prophet has said: “Wisdom is the desire of a believer” (Tirmidhī, Hadith no 2611). I know that you believe in your scriptures so by interpreting this *Hadith*, I must say that it should be your desire. I hope that one day we will find a path to the Real in peace, harmony and coexistence.

I will now conclude my findings on the topic. The concept of *māyā* in Advaita Vedānta is the key concept for understanding true nature of the Real and the universe. Eternal and true knowledge of the conscious self is the only way forward in attaining this realization. Distorted knowledge or nescience of our own-self and the things around us, create layers of veils upon us. These veils hide us from the eternal Bliss and self-realization as “one who realize his own self, realize his Lord.” Some name these veils as *māyā* and some

name these veils as *ḥijāb*. In comparing these two concepts, I have come up with the following conclusions:

1. The whole comparison is based in making good equivalents of the basic terms used in both of these concepts. For this I have devoted a fair amount of study. I have divided these concepts in two points of reference or two planes of existence.
2. In the Absolute plane I have compared the concept of *al-Hū* by Ibn ‘Arabī with the concept of Brahman according to Advaita Vedānta. Similarly in my comparison the term *wujūd* is an equivalent of the term *Ātman*. Although there are some major differences in both in terms of interpretation. But if we have to find an equivalent of *Ātman* in Ibn ‘Arabī’s inspirations, *wujūd* is the best candidate.
3. In the relative plane, which is the stand point of ignorance/nescience (*avidyā*) there is an *upādhi*; a delimitation. Here we have spoken of *Allāh* (the personal God in Islam) with *Apara Brahman* or *Īśvara* of Vedānta. Similarly, the term *Rūḥ* and *Nafs* are synonyms of the term *Jīva*.
4. My last comparison is the main subject of this dissertation which is comparison of the two concepts: *Ḥijāb* and *Māyā*. There are several meanings of the term *māyā* in Advaita Vedānta, and same is applicable to the term *ḥijāb*. Thus I have selected some of its main meanings and tried to fetch out similarities and distinctions between the two. These are my conclusions:
 - a. The most generally assumed meaning of *māyā* is “illusion.” According to the Vedāntists this meaning explains the illusionary nature of the world. In my conclusions, we can extract a similar meaning of the sufi term *ḥijāb*. If *māyā* conceals the reality, if *māyā* makes this unreal world as real, so does the *ḥijāb*. But we have to keep this in mind that this world has its base in reality because it originated from the Real although it is not real by it self.

- b. Radhakrishnan has associated the term *māyā* with mystery. It is the mystery surrounding the relationship between Brahman and the world. A veil is a thing, which curtains your desire thing from your eye. Thus, *ḥijāb* hides the true nature of relationship between the Ultimate Essence and the possible things. Thus when things are hidden mysteries evolves.
- c. *Māyā* is the power of self-becoming, it is the power of creation and creation is the self-expression, this power is known as *māyā-śakti*. Similarly, Shaykh views each and every creature a veil upon its creator. The reality of all manifestation is the Concealed Reality. He conceals His Essence by the veils of His creatures or beings. So if *māyā* is power of self-becoming or self-expression *ḥijāb* is similar to it.
- d. Śāṅkara speaks of *māyā* as the power of Lord this power has two acts: Act of concealment and the Act of projection. When it conceals the true nature of the Ultimate it is a *ḥijāb* and when it projects or reveals the unreal or illusionary nature of the Ultimate it is also a *ḥijāb*, but upon the creature. Similarly the veil hides and reveals. It hides the truth and reveals itself to the observer, when he sees a veil.

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