

Shah Wali Ullah Dehlavi: Spiritual Faculties, Human Dispositions, and Self-Transformation

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Abstract. This article explores key concepts such as spiritual faculties, human dispositions, and self-transformation as discussed in the writings of Shah Wali Ullah. It outlines three levels of Lataif, the concept of fitrah (natural disposition), and the idea of secret depositions. Additionally, the article addresses the causes of thoughts, stages of personal development, and variations in people's dispositions. These topics are relevant to the emerging field of Islamic psychology, which draws on the spirituality articulated by early Muslim scholars who extensively wrote about Islamic spirituality and philosophy.

Keywords: Nafs, Latifas, Human dispositions, Islamic spirituality, Islamic psychology.

Introduction

Shah Wali Ullah Dehlavi (1703-1762) was a prominent Indian Islamic theologian born in Uttar Pradesh, India, during the latter years of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's rule. Originally named Qutbuddin Ahmed ibn Abur Rahim, he later became known as Shah Waliullah. He received his early education from his father at the Madrasah Rahimiya in Delhi, where he studied tafseer (interpretation of the Quran), hadith (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad), Sufism (a mystical Islamic belief), and 'ilm-ul-kalam (the study of Islamic theology and philosophy). The term "kalam" refers to the discourse on matters of faith, highlighting the importance of being well-versed in religious speech. Shah Waliullah passed away in 1762 at the age of 59 and was laid to rest in Delhi.

Wali Ullah advanced his education in Makkah and Madinah and, upon returning to India, taught at his father's madrasah. Although this madrasah was destroyed during the 1857 uprising against the British, his disciples later established the Deoband madrasa in 1867, which has continued to exist in India since then (Britannica, T., October 2024).

Wali Ullah, having witnessed the subjugation of Muslims under both Hindu and British rulers, believed strongly that restoring Muslim society was possible by integrating the religious ideals of Islam with the social and economic conditions of his time (Hermansen, 1988). He emphasized the universality of Islamic ideals, advocated for their application to restore honor to Muslims, and stimulated the Ummah through religious and religious activities (Nadwi, 2009). Additionally, he supported Ijtihad (independent thought) and the application of the Quran and Sunnah in all aspects of life. In his efforts to make the Quran more accessible to Muslims, he became the first theologian to translate the Quran into Farsi (Dad & Khan, 2019), which was the official language of India at the time.

Wali Ullah authored about 50 books (Jalbani, 1973, p. 41), with one of his most notable works being Hujjat Allah al-Baligha (The Conclusive Argument from God). This volume consists of seven books each containing various chapters. The structure of the volume reflects Wali Ullah's

¹ The author is a non-resident research scholar at Cambridge Muslim College, UK. The author notes that summarizing Wali Ullah's writings on psychology in a brief article fails to capture the depth of his work, as it only scratches the surface of his extensive manuscripts. The lack of English translations complicates accessing relevant materials. It is hoped this article will inspire interest in exploring the profound contributions of this esteemed scholar.

comprehensive approach to exploring Islamic theology, philosophy, and spirituality.²

1. Book One contains thirteen chapters that investigate the causes of religious obligations and the concept of requital.
2. Book Two has four chapters that explore how requital occurs both during life and after death.
3. Book Three, referred to as the "third investigation," consists of eleven chapters and focuses on the support of civilization.
4. Book Four addresses the topic of human felicity.
5. Book Five discusses piety.
6. Book Six covers the regulation of religion.
7. Book Seven is about the derivation of Shariah laws from the Hadith of the Prophet.

Another influential book he wrote on Islamic spirituality and psychology was Altaf Al-Quds fi Ma'rifa Lataif an-Nafs, translated into English by Jilbani (1992) as *The Sacred Knowledge of the Higher Functions of the Mind*.³ This book has seven chapters covering 1) knowledge of the higher functions, 2) nature of soul, 3) the manifest faculties, 4) holy law and manifest faculties, 5) teachings of Junaid, 6) the hidden faculties, and 7) thoughts and their causes.

This article is based on excerpts from three books. It includes selected materials from Book One of "Hujjat Allah Baligha," which discusses the nature of the nafs (self) and human dispositions. Additionally, it summarizes all seven chapters from "Altaf al-Quds." Lastly, it features insights from "al-Tafhimat al-Ilahiyya," which consists of divine inspirations received over time (Jalbani, 1973, p. 36). The presentations are combined to emphasize the topics of discussion.

This article highlights the significant contributions of Wali Ullah to Islamic Psychology, a field that has gained popularity in recent decades.⁴ To better understand the great scholar and appreciate the context of his works, readers can benefit from reading the e-book edition of "Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Ullah Dehlavi" <http://www.katinkahesselink.net/sufi/baljon-dihwahli.html>

Ruh and Nafs⁵

Ruh, which is the spirit, is the breath of life that Allah imparts into human beings, while the nafs (soul), is responsible for actions in the material world. The confusion arises because ruh and nafs are often called the soul, and nafs may sometimes be referred to as the source of life. In other contexts, nafs may describe human nature and its basic needs for food, drink, and other necessities, referring

² In his preface to Urdu translation of *Hujjat Allah Baligha*, Ahmed (2012) stated, "In my humble opinion, if no other book is read to understand the Islamic faith, this book should suffice." The translator into English, Hermansen (1995), remarked that "it is one of the best books of all time." In this book, Waliullah also aimed to reconcile superficial conflicts among various schools of thought within Islam, ultimately arriving at a comprehensive and unifying set of principles, which he called Tatbiq, or "all-inclusive."

³ The literal translation is "The Grace of the Sacred." However, the exact year of the book written in Urdu is not known, except that Waliullah wrote most of his books between 1710-1750.

⁴ In his book *Tafhimat ul-Ilahiyya* (p.88), he lamented that despite his very hard work as a reformer and revolutionary, his aspirations could not materialize in his lifetime and expressed this in couplet. Many generations of Muslims have come and gone since Wali Ullah, but his message is still valid.

*We are departing but are leaving behind the sciences which
Because of their being neglected
Are weeping as bitterly as those mothers weep who are
Deprived of their only children.*

⁵ Although these spiritual faculties are discussed throughout the paper, it is important to introduce and distinguish these concepts for readers, as scholars have often used them interchangeably.

specifically to the carnal self. The ruh however, is higher than the nafs and has a direct connection to the divine, with the ultimate purpose of realizing and returning to its source, which is Allah. The ruh is eternal and transcends both the body and the soul. It gives life and consciousness to humans.

The nafs can be either noble or base, depending on how it is nurtured. It is also the battleground between lower desires (nafs al-ammara) and the refined spiritual qualities that can lead to nafs al-mutmainnah. Ruh is of divine origin and represents the most spiritual aspect of human beings, while the nafs interacts with both the material and spiritual dimensions of existence.

The ruh serves as the source of spiritual insight and connection to Allah, while the nafs deals with the psychological and emotional aspects of human life. The ruh is inherently pure, but the nafs can be tainted by base desires and ego unless it is tamed and refined through spiritual efforts. The ultimate goal of humans is to align the nafs with the ruh, allowing the nafs to transcend worldly desires and attain spiritual purity, thereby achieving closeness to Allah.

Wali Ullah described the nafs as a system of subtle spiritual centers, which he referred to as Latifa. He explained that the vapors within the body influence both the five outer senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) and the five inner senses (common or shared sense, perceptions, imagination, memory, and understanding). This mixture of bodily humors that reaches the brain is known as al-Ruh al-Nafsani, and the faculties that arise from it are considered nafsani.

The Spiritual Centers

Wali Ullah proposed a model consisting of three main components defining human beings: physical elements, spiritual centers, and moral qualities (Altaf Al Quds, p. 20-27). He viewed nafs as the main essence of a person that has the potential to reach great spiritual heights or fall into moral decay, depending on how it is nurtured. While the nafs is inherently pure, it can become impure through desires and attachments to the material world.

Wali Ullah elaborated on his definition of the nafs and introduced the concept of Latifa (plural: Lataif), which are spiritual centers within humans that hold deep spiritual significance. These centers are also linked to the soul's relationship with God. The Lataif includes elements such as nafs (self), 'aql (intellect), qalb (heart), ruh (spirit), and sirr (secret). Through these faculties, individuals can receive divine light and knowledge.

According to Wali Ullah, to progress in harmony with the greater purpose of the universe—which involves manifesting God's will, fulfilling divine wisdom, and realizing God's attributes—one must first overcome internal conflicts and achieve balance at lower levels. God has created two types of energy in humans: animal energy, which drives behaviors similar to those of animals, and angelic energy, which inspires actions that resemble those of angels. The purpose of self-purification is to allow angelic energy to dominate over animal energy, which can be achieved by training one's spiritual centers.

He argues that every species has perfect forms that exist in a timeless and transcendent realm known as Alam al-Mithal, or the World of Images. In this realm, the spiritual representations of physical objects are manifested before they enter the material world and points out that humans can transcend the limitations of their initial forms by evolving into a state of expanded possibilities through knowledge and supplication to God.

He believes that the different metaphysical realms act as a guide for the nafs' journey toward spiritual growth and divine enlightenment, and that the nafs can ascend through these realms to attain spiritual perfection.⁶

⁶ Wali Ullah noted that “The writings of the Sufis may well be an amazingly effective alchemy for the specially gifted, but for the masses they can be a deadly poison.” (Hermansen, 1988, p.2) While reading the Urdu version of the book, the author noted Waliullah's assertion that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) hinted at spirituality but advised against exploring it too deeply, as it could lead to confusion for the average person. However, Waliullah suggests that this knowledge is

Nasama, Nafs Natiqa, and Ruh Samawi (Breathing soul, rational soul, angelic soul)

According to Wali Ullah, the nafs consists of three essential elements (Wali Ullah, 1975). The first element, known as Nasama (Pneuma), is a concept derived from ancient Greek philosophy and is regarded as the lowest level of nafs in the physical world. It is generated from the four elements—fire, air, earth, and water—absorbed by humans.⁷ This spirit or ruh hawa'i is the most refined distillation of these vapors that flows through the body and allows higher levels of spirit to connect with it. In essence, Nasama forms the foundation of the Ruh hawa'i (breathing soul), linking it to the ruh samawi (angelic soul), which is the divine spirit within the physical body.

The functional or practical aspect of Nasama relates to the fundamental human needs, such as seeking food, drink, clothing, and intimacy. Its intellectual aspect includes sensitivity, imagination, perception, and breath control. While Nasama seeks to protect the body, it can also lead to negative behaviors since it is tied to earthly desires. Nonetheless, it possesses a divine aspect that is enhanced by the Nafs Natiqa, or the rational soul.

Nasama basically ascends to the brain and is divided into ten parts: five for the external senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch) and five for the internal senses (imagination, estimation of sensible objects, retention of concepts, and the ability to combine and organize these concepts). A portion of Nasama also flows into the liver and is distributed throughout the organs, providing them with the potential for growth and reproduction. Additionally, some of the Nasama remains in the heart.

Nasama exists in the material world and can manifest in three different states. The first state is when it is governed by the body's limbs and organs, which is referred to as the animal soul. The second state occurs when it partially avoids complete submission to the limbs and organs, instead being influenced by the heart and brain. The third state is when it is controlled and transformed into an angelic soul, characterized by its presence with the Holy Spirit in the heavenly realm. This transformation enables the human heart to receive secret insights from celestial souls.

The Nafs Natiqa (rational soul) or the second level of spirit corresponding to the middle circle (see fig. below), also known as the lower rational soul, distinguishes humans from other creatures and makes each person that particular individual. It emerges from the interaction between the divine essence (Al-Dhat) and the human body, serving as a connection between the spiritual and material realms. This rational soul possesses the faculty for reasoning and the pursuit of truth, ultimately guiding individuals toward the realization of divine knowledge and closeness to God. The rational soul's primary role is to merge with the universal soul, absorbing a greater essence.

When the ruh is infused into an embryo, the nafs al-Natiqa, or rational soul, emerges like a bubble on the ocean of the Universal Soul (Nafs Kulliyah). This universal soul represents the totality of all individual souls and acts as a bridge between human souls and the divine. This concept also reflects the idea of the "unity of existence" (wahdat al-wujud), where all individual entities are viewed as manifestations of the same divine reality.⁸ Hermansen (1988) notes that Wali Ullah was influenced by Ibn Arabi.⁹

accessible to those who are inclined toward Sufistic interpretations of spiritual faculties (Waliullah, Al Lataif Al-Quds Urdu, p. 20).

⁷ Waliullah's knowledge of physiology and ilm tibb (the Greek medicine known as Unani Dawa in India) is clearly demonstrated in his autobiography (Hermansen, 1996, p. 5). This discipline developed during the Mughal rule, primarily by Muslims in the subcontinent, and it continues to be practiced in many regions of India today.

⁸ This concept is commonly found in Sufi literature and metaphorically suggests that everything in existence signifies the presence of One God. Critics argue that this terminology fails to distinguish between God and His creations, and therefore, it should be approached with caution. Islamic scholars agree that believing in this terminology or attempting to fully understand it is not a requirement for being a Muslim.

⁹ Wali Ullah was influenced by Ibn Arabi's concept of spiritual unity; however, he developed his own framework and philosophy. He is recognized for integrating his ideas with Islamic teachings derived from the Quran and hadith. Wali Ullah emphasized that all spiritual insights should align with Islamic laws (Uyesi, 2023).

The Subtle Spiritual Faculties (Lataif)

Shah Wali Ullah's Three Levels Model

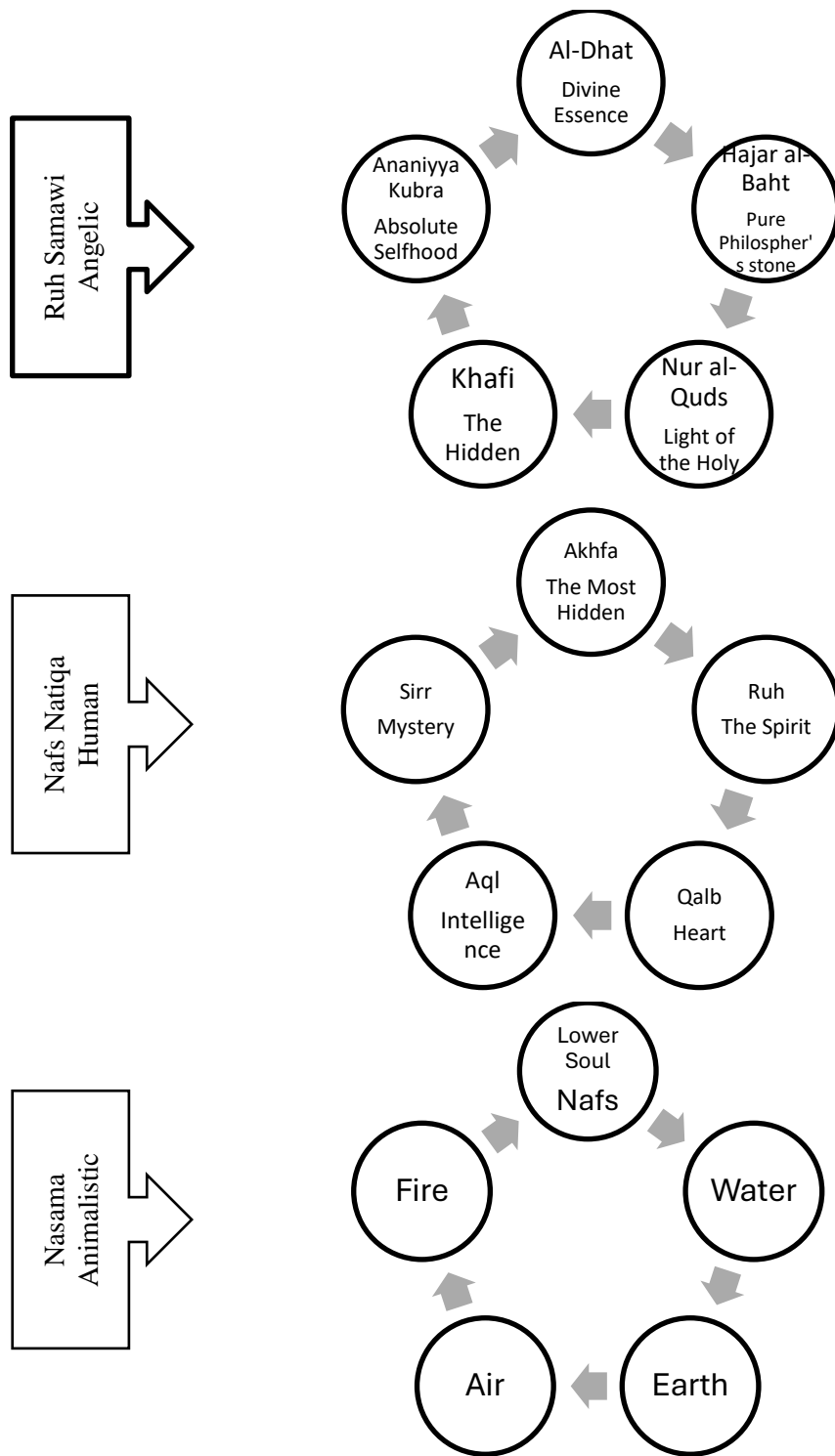


Figure 1. Adapted from diagram in Shah Wali Ullah, al-Tafhimat al-Ilahiyya, vol. 1. P. 183

In an earlier text *al-Qawl al-Jamil*, Wali Ullah's father once illustrated a series of circles, starting with the first one called *Qalb*. He then illustrated additional circles, each representing a stage moving inward from *Qalb*. *Ruh* is found within *Qalb*, and the innermost circle symbolizes *Sirr* (the subtlety of the secret). These circles depict the journey from *Qalb* towards the inner *Latifas*, ultimately leading to the true self recognizing its identity with God (Baljon, 32). This concept aligns with the Hadith that states, "One who knows oneself knows the Lord."

In Sufi circles, progressing inward signifies the advance to a higher spiritual status and a deeper connection with God. The journey through the *Latifas* begins at the level of the *Qalb*, where the primary focus is on the remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*). It then extends to the stage of *Ruh*, where one experiences *Hudur*, or the presence of one's heart in relation to God. This stage represents a state in which a person becomes spiritually attentive and mindful of the Divine, rather than being distracted by the material world.

The process of moving from *Qalb* to *Sirr* is a profound transformation that involves transcending the limitations of intellect, purifying the heart, awakening the soul, and finally creating a deep connection with God. As one reaches the level of *Sirr*, *Mukashafa*, or unveiling, is granted. This allows the individual to perceive the reality of *Alam al-Mithaal* with their physical eyes.

The universal soul can also be seen as a divine essence from which all individual souls emanate. After a process of purification and self-realization, these souls ultimately return to this divine source. The terms *Sirr* and *Khafi* explained by Waliullah in figure 1 has a basis in the Quran 20:7— "Whether you speak openly 'or not', He certainly knows what is hidden (*sirr*) and what is even more hidden (*khafi*)."

Nafs Shahwiyya, Qalb, and 'Aql

In the perceptible category of *Latifas*, every human comprises three essential components: *Nafs Shahwiyya*, *Qalb*, and '*Aql*. The *Nafs Shahwiyya*, which resides in the liver, is responsible for preserving the body and governs activities such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and procreation. This is also the part where Satan may whisper suggestions of evil, impurities, and anger. In order to maintain a balanced temperament, Waliullah recommended the knowledge and practice of spiritual sciences through divine laws (Waliullah, p.47).

The *Qalb* is regarded as the spiritual center within the physical heart; it houses emotions and the capacity for decision-making and is inspired by angels. The '*Aql*, located in the brain, encompasses both concrete and abstract ideas, memories, and planning. If the *Qalb* and *Aql* are controlled by the *nafs*, various vices may arise. However, if the *Qalb* and *Nafs* are guided by the *Aql*, praiseworthy qualities will emerge. Through refinement, these perceptible *Latifas* can return to their original constitution and strengthen their attachment to God. The ancients viewed the *Qalb* as the human faculty and *Aql* as the tongue of the soul. Wali Ullah pointed out that when a seeker gains freedom from *nafs natiqa* (airy soul), they must address two subtler aspects of their being. At this stage, the heart becomes the spirit, and the intellect becomes the secret faculty.

The term "*nafs*" has several meanings, including the source of life (or soul) as well as basic human needs like food and water. It can also describe animal instincts and is sometimes associated with evil. Similarly, "*qalb*" refers to the physical heart, encompassing understanding and emotions such as anger or love. "*Aql*" denotes intellect, often regarded as governing a person's nature and heart, but it has limitations and cannot grasp concepts beyond its scope. The "*ruh*" is considered to hold a higher status than "*aql*." Relying solely on "*aql*" may lead to misunderstandings. These terms can be used interchangeably depending on the context.

The "*Ruh*" (spirit) exists in a physical form and has the ability to influence human inclinations. However, these inclinations can sometimes become overwhelming when an individual's natural

tendencies are too strong, rendering both the heart ("Qalb") and the intellect ("Aql") ineffective. Waliullah compared such individuals to vegetation or plants that lack reasoning. A person who is guided solely by their heart is driven by intense emotions such as anger, fear, and shame, resembling animals. Waliullah asserts that the highest beings are those guided by Aql and they surpass plants and animals in this regard.

The various elements of the body function together in coordination, despite their differences. The nafs is guided by the Qalb, relying on it for sensations. The Qalb heeds reason, which warns it of potential dangers and influences emotions such as love, fear, and anger. The Aql follows the Qalb, as the senses are connected to it. Both the Qalb and Aql are subordinate to the Ruh, which holds the highest authority over the body and can control all desires and inclinations. Although these three elements operate independently, they ultimately work together in harmony.

In addition to these three, Wali Ullah mentioned *Latifa-e-Jawarih* or faculty of the limbs that reflect the faculties of qalb, nafs, and aql. The injunctions of the law (Shariah) have connection with this *Latifa*, and human beings will be asked in the hereafter to give accounts of their actions in relation to this *Latifa*.

These *Latifas* have their own *Maqamat* (stages) and *Ahwal* (states). When the qualities of an angelic nature become established as habits and consistently influence actions, these are referred to as *Maqamat*. Conversely, if actions lead to visions, they are termed *Ahwal*. A fundamental element of the *Maqamat* and *Ahwal* pertaining to aql is certainty (*Yaqin*) in respect to the Islamic creed. Both *Maqamat* and *Ahwal* are crucial in strengthening *Yaqin*.¹⁰ The *Maqamat* resulting from *Yaqin* include *Shukr* (gratitude) for God's blessing, *Tawakkal* (trust in God), *Hayba* (awe of God), *Husn al Zann* (think positively about God), *Tafriid* (focusing attention on God), *Ikhlas* (God as the only object of faith), *Tawhid* (God's Oneness), and *Siddiq* (Divine closeness).

Maqamat of Qalb

- a) Thinking of the hereafter
- b) Regarding worldly things as secondary
- c) Exclusive love of God
- d) Becoming a shaheed (Martyr) in the way of Allah.

Ahwal or States of the Qalb

- a) *Sakr*, or intoxication of faith that occurs when the brilliance of faith becomes so overwhelming that worldly matters seem insignificant.
- b) *Ghalaba* or a consistent sense of awe and obedience to God in all matters and above all else.

Maqamat of Nafs

- a) *Tawbah*, fostering a sense of shame and self-discipline, helping to redirect the *Nafs* away from confusion.
- b) *Zuhd* or renunciation of the world beyond one's essential life needs. *Zuhd* serves as a means to improve the *Nafs* but is not an obligatory requirement.

Ahwal or States of the Nafs

- a) *Ghayba* (invisibility), which occurs when all carnal desires are transcended.
- b) *Mahq* (annihilation), where one's intellect is filled with the light of God, enabling a person to refrain from food and drink for an unusually extended period.

¹⁰ For a detailed description on *Maqamat* and *ahwal*, see Husain and Muslim (2024), who also derived much of their work from the three books used in preparing this article.

Lataif Khufia: Sirr, Khafi, Akhfa

The three Lataif, Sirr, Khafi, and Akhfa, are referred to as the secret dispositions Lataif-e-Khufia. Waliullah believed that these concepts are understood by a select group of individuals who train themselves to refine their spiritual senses.

Sirr is more subtle than the nafs or the Qalb. It represents the innermost core of the self and embodies secret knowledge or intimate experiences with God. This is where the highest state of spiritual realization occurs.

Khafi is recognized as the deepest level of spiritual experience, where the seeker becomes completely absorbed in the presence of God, leading to the dissolution of individual selfhood. When a seeker attains the stage of Latifa Khafi, they experience Mushahada, or contemplative witnessing, realizing that their essence is intertwined with God's essence. Although Khafi is a concealed state, it can be accessed through dedicated spiritual effort.

Akhfa represents the most hidden aspect of the spiritual journey, where an individual reaches a state of Fana (annihilation) in God. In this state, the nafs (ego or self) loses all traces of individual identity and becomes one with the divine.

The placement of Akhfa in the diagram under Khafi may seem confusing at first. However, Wali Ullah clarified that progressing from the lower stages is more challenging than moving upward from Khafi to the other concealed Lataif (Hermansen, 1988, p. 17). Understanding these hidden Latifas can lead to a transformation that transcends intellect and reason. This profound understanding is referred to as Dhawq, or intuitive insight (Altaf-ul-Quds, p. 34).

Ruh samawi (angelic soul) is the highest of the three levels of spiritual faculties as depicted in the figure and it allows a person to ascent to the heavenly realm of the world to come, where the deeds are recorded, and consists of five centers located beneath Al Dhat (divine essence): Ananyia al-Kubra (absolute selfhood), Hajar al-baht (the pure philosopher's stone), Akhfa (the most hidden), Khafi (the hidden), and Nur al-Quds (the light of the Holy). The arrows connecting the circles indicate the processes are interconnected.

The divine essence (Al-Dhat) depicted in the circle at the top of the figure symbolizes the pure, divine origin of the soul, which is connected to the heavenly realm. According to Wali Ullah, true happiness for humans comes from getting closer to this heavenly spirit, while misery arises from drifting away and becoming attached to worldly matters. Additionally, divine essence represents God's oneness, and the attributes mentioned in the Quran. The term "essence" refers to something that is beyond human understanding. While much has been written about this topic in Islamic philosophy, it is beyond the scope of this paper.

Ananiya Kubra, or absolute selfhood, refers to the concept that true realization or success is achieved when an individual transcends their selfhood and recognizes their closeness to God. Hajr Baht, or the Stone of Falsehood, is a concept in Islamic spirituality that represents spiritual blindness, which prevents a person from aligning with the divine. To overcome these obstacles, one must purify one's heart and engage in spiritual practices.

Nur al-Quds signifies not only intellectual knowledge but also the divine presence that guides the heart (Qalb) toward Al Dhat. It denotes the spiritual purity that resonates with the pursuit of esoteric knowledge and illumination.

Purification and Activation of the Latifa

The Latifah serves as a landmark on the spiritual journey of a person. Each stage of Latifah reached, offers unique influences and experiences. For instance, if the Latifah of Ruh is dominant in a person, they may find themselves enjoying spiritual pleasures, which can draw them away from material

temptations. There are specific meditative exercises designed to assist a person in transitioning from ‘Aql to Sirr. For example, a) contemplation of Divine Unity and the reality of the self in relation to the Creator—silent affirmation of *La ilaha illallah* and allowing the rational mind to understand that all manifestations point back to God, b) focusing on divine names, understand their meanings, feel their vibrations in the heart and listen to the whispers coming from the heart as it creates closeness to God, c) silent contemplation with closed eyes and focusing on the presence of God with the soul, etc.

Human Dispositions

Fitrah

The original nature (*fiṭrah*) represents the consistent religion (*din*) that all prophets have agreed upon throughout different eras (Wali Ullah, p. 72). As long as individuals adhere to the patterns defined by their human nature, they experience no pain (Wali Ullah, p. 107). However, this nature can be altered by external circumstances that affect a person's original state.¹¹ Children naturally rely on their parents, and the inherent bond of sympathy they share necessitates that their upbringing should be aimed at nurturing their original nature effectively (Wali Ullah, p. 106).

When offered two cups—one with wine and one with milk—the Prophet (PBUH) chose the milk. This choice represented a preference for following one's original nature (*fiṭrah*) over carnal appetites, exemplifying the path of the rightly guided.

Once a rightly guided practice takes root, people follow it across generations, intertwining their beliefs with its principles. Typically, only those with questionable character or unclear reasoning would deviate from it. Such deviation creates a barrier between them and the common good, reflecting their inner turmoil and hindering their faith.

When this practice is established, the Highest Council prays for its adherents and against its opposers, bringing satisfaction to those who conform while invoking wrath on those who rebel. Individuals who align with their innate nature (*fitrah*) attain true happiness. It is remarkable that Arabs and non-Arabs, despite their diverse customs and religions, can agree on fundamental truths due to their shared original nature.

The state characterized by these four qualities is known as original nature (*fiṭrah*). The first quality is purity (*tahara*). The second quality is the act of humbling oneself (*ikhbat*) before God. The third quality is magnanimity (*samaha*), which involves the soul's ability to resist animalistic impulses. The fourth quality is justice (*‘adala*). It seems that the soul is inherently inclined toward these traits (Wali Ullah, p. 156-160).

The Veils Preventing the Manifestation of the Fitrah

The veils that obstruct one's *fitrah* (natural disposition) can be classified into three types: 1) The veil of nature, 2) The veil of convention (*rasm*), and 3) The veil of misinterpretation of God and His attributes (Wali Ullah, p.165).

Basic drives for food, drink, and marriage, along with emotions like sorrow, joy, anger, and fear, keep individuals preoccupied. This focus on physical and intellectual needs often prevents them from seeking spiritual growth, a condition referred to as the lower soul (*nafs*).

This is the veil of convention known as "the world," where people often imitate the wise of their society in speech, clothing, morals, and lifestyle. Many follow what they hear instead of understanding the *Jabarut* and the unseen management of the world.¹²

¹¹ The topic of *fiṭrah* is very profound, and the question of whether it can change is debatable among scholars, making it outside the scope of this paper.

¹² In Sufi literature, *Jabarut* refers to a higher spiritual realm where saints experience a closer relationship with Allah. This concept is often described in terms of four key metaphysical realms: *Nasut* (the physical world), *Malakut* (the angelic

Those who are alert may choose to follow divine law and recognize the Almighty Lord as the one who governs their affairs and grants blessings. Some succeed in this understanding, while others do not. However, they may still err in two ways: believing that the Divine possesses human-like attributes (anthropomorphism or Tashbih) or thinking that created things reflect divine qualities (associating others with God or Ishrak).

People instinctively believe that worship is a duty to God, as He is the source of their blessings. Major sins warrant punishment in the grave and at the Resurrection because they disrupt the established order and contradict a person's original nature, or Fitrah.

Secret Dispositions

Wali Ullah describes the divine soul (Ru-e-Alvi) as one of these dispositions, representing the unity of the rational soul along with other forms of existence—such as mineral, vegetative, animal, angelic, and even devilish—each animated by the universal soul (Nafs-e-Kulliyyah). The divine soul, which originates from the universal soul, manifests within each individual, displaying varying levels of development. This concept illustrates the evolution of the soul (Altaf-ul-Quds, p. 71-72).

The human soul is akin to the universal soul and possesses the ability to acquire knowledge and evolve through various stages. The material forms that the human soul can take are categorized into levels that exceed mere humanity. The idea of the "perfect man" refers to an individual distinguished by reason, who transcends basic animal instincts. According to Waliullah, the perfect man has a soul that is closely aligned with the universal soul and shares in the divine essence, rendering that soul inherently divine in nature (Altaf-ul-Quds, p. 73-74).

Thoughts and their Causes

Any thought that occurs in a person's mind can be classified into one of three categories. The first category includes thoughts that take place solely in the heart. These are referred to as "states" or "moments" and encompass emotions such as fear, hope, depression, elation, love, regret, and grief, among others. The second category consists of thoughts that exist solely in the intellect. The third category arises when a thought is present in both the heart and the intellect. In this case, the intellect imagines and formulates a concept while the heart provides the necessary resolution. These types of thoughts are known as "impulses."

Intellect has the power of perception, while the ability to make decisions and set intentions resides in the heart. It is through this relationship that they exert control. Occasionally, thoughts may arise in the mind of an individual due to negative influences (demons). These influences stem from malignant entities (demons) that infiltrate deeper aspects of the psyche. Their primary aim is to induce feelings of melancholy, indecision, and greed, ultimately disrupting harmony in personal, social, or national spheres.

When a person becomes open to receiving various impulses and thoughts, they may attract numerous negative influences, often referred to as "demons." These entities, in alignment with their nature, focus on the individual and fill their heart with impulses characteristic of themselves. Such impulses typically lead to feelings of melancholy, indecision, and hardness of heart, while also distracting the person from acts of kindness. A seeker is fortunate if they possess the knowledge to reject and dispel these harmful thoughts, seeking refuge in God to protect themselves from them.

Sometimes, these thoughts may stem from the world of ideas, which can occur with or without the involvement of angels assigned to this realm. The "world of ideas" refers to a combination of the

world), Jabarut (the realm of closeness to God), and Lahut (the highest realm, where one can fully experience the essence of God's unity).

aspirations and secrets from both heavenly souls and the angels of the divine assembly.

Angels, who serve the realm of ideas, are serene beings that inhabit a balanced body made up of subtle elements. They come into existence at different times, which links them to various spheres of influence. Each angel, in line with its original nature, has the ability to receive inspiration on specific matters. The diverse impulses that flow from the world of ideas into the hearts of angels can be classified into two distinct types.

The first type of occurrence happens during a specific conjunction of the stars, resulting in a universal event that is set to manifest at the appropriate time and place. The angels assigned to this event work diligently on its behalf. If they intuitively recognize someone whose nature aligns with that event, they draw that person closer to it.

The second type involves a curse on human souls that are tied to particular destinies, where each individual experiences life according to their unique fate. Impulses descend into the hearts of humanity following this pattern. At times, angels devise a strategy to rescue someone from destruction. Other times, they may make an individual aware of their true circumstances through dreams or voices. Additionally, they might use another person or even an animal as a means to convey important information or assist someone.

Most of these thoughts seep into consciousness through the energy of the world of ideas. Beyond the many angels that serve humanity, there exists a group of pure souls who perform angelic work and are thus considered part of this celestial assembly.

We now turn to the second category of thoughts and impulses. This impulse originates in the realm of ideas and trickles down into the hearts of those who are devoted to the world of ideas and to the angels who bear this profound knowledge. Spiritual leaders, reformers of religion, and even the guide who represents the very axis of the earth all draw deeply from this source. Occasionally, inspiration may be directed towards a specific person, but the message of that inspiration is communicated through the words of someone else—who may or may not be aware of the underlying situation and the intention behind those words.

The third and final category consists of the luminous angels appointed to watch over acts of praise and submission. They surround those who engage in these practices, and some of their splendor touches the person's intellect and heart. If the heart is predominant, the resulting state is characterized by intimacy and tranquility. However, if the intellect takes the lead, the resulting blessing may manifest as premonitions, or the resolve of the heart may be connected to the intention of performing good actions. This intention aligns with the understanding of the angels and is therefore referred to as angelic thought.

Sometimes, the same state or thought is experienced by the seeker during sleep. In the first case, this sleep transforms into a dream filled with splendor, bliss, intimacy, and tranquility. In the second case, it manifests as a warning, conveying a message that either urges the seeker to take a specific action or to refrain from doing something harmful.

Stages of Personal Development

Wali Ullah explains that individuals progress through three stages of development. In the first stage, they are primarily driven by their senses and habits, similar to animals. The second stage represents a shift in the control of the heart and mind, emphasizing moral qualities. In this stage, there are two possible outcomes: the senses can either become virtuous and align with human instincts, or the animal instincts may dominate, leading to a lack of virtue. Regardless of the outcome, the individual still possesses a human soul. In the third stage, individuals rise above their animalistic and lower instincts (nafs), allowing their souls to take on a more angelic nature. Reflecting on these stages can help individuals reconnect with their spiritual essence.

The human being is influenced by key dispositions or character traits that are crucial for spiritual growth and purification of the soul:

1. Tawhid refers to the realization of the oneness of God. This concept involves not just acknowledging God's oneness but also fully surrendering to the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah. It is a quality of the heart where all thoughts, actions, and emotions are directed toward the presence of God everywhere.
2. Ikhlas signifies sincerity in the purity of intention, devoted solely to pleasing God without any expectation of worldly gain. Ikhlas is the opposite of Riya, which is the act of showing off and can nullify the effects of good deeds.
3. Tawbah means repentance for one's sins and shortcomings. It involves seeking forgiveness from God and making a firm resolve to avoid sins in the future. This practice cleanses the heart and removes the spiritual obstructions caused by sin, and it also serves as a sign of spiritual maturity.
4. Zuhd is about detachment from the material world. Wali Ullah recommended maintaining a balance in desires rather than completely renouncing worldly pursuits, as long as these desires do not distract from the soul's focus on God.
5. Tawakkul, or trust in God, involves complete reliance on God's will. It encompasses the understanding that ultimate success, sustenance, and outcomes come from God alone. There is also a need for balance here; the seeker should put in effort in their work and then place their trust in God. Tawakkul helps the seeker achieve tranquility and peace of mind.
6. Shukr represents gratitude, which involves thanking God for His blessings in all aspects of life. Wali Ullah stressed the importance of cultivating a thankful heart that recognizes every moment as a blessing and views trials as manifestations of God's mercy and wisdom. Gratitude allows a person to remain grounded, leads to increased blessings, and fosters contentment and inner peace.

Fana and Baqa

Wali Ullah compared the journey of a mystic to the process of melting ice. Just as ice first transforms into water and then into vapor, a mystic undergoes a transformative journey. This journey involves facing trials that facilitate a change from one state of being to another. The key concepts in this process are Fana (annihilation) and Baqa (continuation). While this author could not locate details other than passing remarks on Fana in Hujjat Allah Al- Baligha (p. 76, 106, 184), Hussain & Muslim (p. 75-78, 2024) present a detail description of these concepts as forwarded by the Naqshbandi order followed by Wali Ullah.

Fana represents a spiritual journey characterized by the annihilation of the self, or ego, in the presence of God. It symbolizes a state in which worldly attachments and the nafs (the self) are transcended. During this phase, a disciple's identity undergoes a significant transformation as they shift their focus entirely towards the presence of God. This state does not imply the destruction of one's human nature, but rather an end to the illusion of separation from God.

Fana Wujud Zulmani refers to a specific type of annihilation in which an individual becomes aware of their spiritual darkness caused by the dominance of the nafs (lower self) and attachment to worldly identity. This stage serves as a process of spiritual purification and is a crucial step before reaching the next level, known as Baqa, where one aligns fully with the Divine will.

This realization is crucial for progressing to the next stage, known as Baqa, or "continuance." In the Baqa stage, the individual sustains a renewed awareness of God's presence while continuing to exist in this world. During this time, their thoughts, actions, and intentions align completely with God's will. The individual understands that although they are present in this world, they are not attached to it and are not driven by worldly desires.

It is important to note here that while Wali Ullah was a proponent of Tasawwuf, he wrote that Sufi practices are in general of no use and disliked those attempting to achieve the state of Fana and Baqa, even to the extent of saying that this it is a disease that can adversely affect the community (Jalbani, p. 57). Knowing the times and conditions, he likely discouraged common practice of Sufism as Muslims were under plunder and he demanded attention to societal issues than detachment and isolation from community responsibilities as that is against Islamic law.

Dhikr and Muraqaba

Dhikr, or the remembrance of God, leads to Tahara or purification. According to Waliullah, achieving spiritual purification requires several key practices: maintaining a secluded space, adopting moderate eating and drinking habits, performing regular Ghusl (major ablution), and engaging in Tawassul (intercession) and Tafakkur (contemplation) regarding the creations of Allah. These actions contribute to spiritual growth, contentment, and peace of mind, fostering a harmonious environment.

Dhikr involves both negation and affirmation, centered around the kalimah, "La ilaha illallah" (there is no deity but Allah). It also includes contemplation on the names and attributes of Allah. This practice fosters a deep yearning (Shawq) and joy by remembering the Creator. Dhikr can be performed either silently or aloud, depending on one's tradition and community (Wali Ullah, p. 168, 219, 228-229, 231, 258, 301, etc.).

Engaging in Dhikr can awaken the heart and enhance one's desire for a spiritual connection with the divine. Through this practice, one can attain a state known as Muraqaba, which is best experienced in a tranquil environment, free from worldly distractions and material pleasures. In this state, the focus should be on the attributes of Allah.

Muraqaba in Sufi spirituality primarily refers to the practice of being watchful over one's inner state and maintaining mindful awareness that goes beyond worldly distractions. This allows individuals to connect more deeply with the divine. The purpose of Muraqaba is to analyze and enhance one's moral character, fostering qualities such as humility, purity, silence, self-reflection, and a profound love for Allah. Additionally, Muraqaba helps awaken the Nafs Natiqa's sense of modesty and aligns an individual with angelic qualities, fostering a longing for the World of Omnipotence.

Different Sufi Orders (Tariqas) approach Muraqaba in distinct ways. Waliullah, for example, followed the Naqshbandi Tariqa. During his time, two other prominent Tariqas in India were the Chishti and Suhrawardy orders.

Variations in Natural Dispositions

Wali Ullah categorizes people's dispositions¹³ based on their engagement in Tajazub and Istilah

¹³ The basic principle on people's dispositions is the hadith, "If you hear that some mountain had moved from its place, believe it; but if you hear that a man's nature has changed, don't believe it, for he remains true to his inborn disposition." The Prophet then cited the hadith that "the children of Adam are created at various ranks and among them are those who

(Husain & Muslim, 2023). He believes that happiness, or Sa'adah, is achieved by uniting the mind and body to create harmony, a state he refers to as Tajazub¹⁴. He explains that when physical energy predominates, a person may become overly focused on worldly pleasures, neglecting their higher faculties, and the opposite can also occur. The balanced state in which the body and mind are in harmony is known as Istilah, where both aspects are interconnected. This harmony can be attained through practices such as prayer, charity, serving humanity, and fostering positive relationships with others.

The four groups of Tajazub

1. Both the mind and body are strong, but they are constantly in conflict.
2. Both the mind and body are weak and in conflict with each other.
3. The mind is weak while the body is strong, and they are both in conflict.
4. The mind is strong, but the body is weak, leading to a conflict between the two.

The four groups of Istilah

1. Both the body and mind are well-balanced.
2. The mind is stronger than the body.
3. The mind is weaker than the body.
4. Both the mind and body are weak but well-balanced.

The behavior of the Tajazub group reflects a strong desire to withdraw from worldly affairs, similar to a bird trapped in a cage. In contrast, the Istilah group exhibits a timid demeanor in their use of body and limbs. They place a high value on truth and justice, possess a solid understanding of both worldly and religious matters, and typically maintain a sense of calm without succumbing to agitation or turmoil. They are regarded as the most devoted followers of the divine code of life.

When angelic energy conflicts with animal energy, there can be three possible outcomes. First, animal energy may prevail, causing angelic energy to be subdued and only surface on rare occasions. A person in this situation is often considered a hypocrite. Second, angelic energy can overpower animal energy, but the latter may still struggle for dominance. If angelic energy remains steadfast in the battle, that person is known as a companion of the right-hand side. The third outcome occurs when angelic energy achieves a decisive victory, keeping animal energy permanently “starved.” In this case, the individual is considered to be close to God.

Three types of hypocrites

The first type is dominated by physical desires and primal instincts, with both heart and intellect subservient to these drives. Such individuals act on their whims, disregarding laws and reason. They may engage in forbidden affairs and even take pride in their sins, often bragging about them. As stated in scripture, their sins will encompass them, and they will be companions of fire forever (Quran 2:81). The second type of hypocrite has excessive aggressive energy, focusing on dominating others and seeking revenge against those who resist them. The third type is someone whose intelligence is confused. They may have sound reasoning but fall into errors, such as believing God has a body, attributing human

are born as believers, live as believers, but die as unbelievers. Some are born unbelievers, live as unbelievers, but die as believers. Thus, some are quick in anger but slow to repent. Some are slow to anger and quick to repent, and so on.” He also said, Children of Adam were created with various ranks; those with ranks in anger and readiness to pay debts, and saying “People are mines, like mines of gold and silver,” referring to different types and capacities. Tirmidhi Fitan, 26, Ibn Hanbal III, 19.

¹⁴ The root word is jazb or to draw in, referring to the spiritual state of being pulled by the attraction of the divine and gaining a sense of losing one’s individual self-absorbed in the mystical experience of God’s closeness.

traits to God, or doubting the holy Quran, the holy Prophet, or the afterlife without being declared an apostate (Jalbani, p.29).

Self-transformation

In his discussion of God's laws and spiritual principles, Wali Ullah emphasizes the importance of purifying the body and addressing the three manifest faculties. He argues that individuals must turn away from their natural instincts and instead focus on divine law in order to cultivate four cardinal virtues within themselves.

The first virtue is purity, which connects a person to the angels. The second is humility, through which individuals develop a bond with the exalted assembly. The third virtue is generosity; by cultivating this quality, a person can eliminate the negative traits associated with our baser instincts, such as animalistic behavior and lust, which can still be present in the rational soul. The fourth virtue is justice; it is through justice that an individual can be pleasing in the eyes of the exalted assembly, gaining its favor, mercy, and blessings.

Wali Ullah emphasizes that the greater one's understanding of their Latifas, the more refined their soul can become. In addition to the five perceptible Latifas—namely nafs, ‘aql, qalb, ruh, and sirr—there are the concealed ones, specifically the Khafi and Akhfa.

Most people do not benefit from being informed about these matters. Only two types of individuals gain from understanding them: those who are close to developing these abilities and can refine them, and those with a general understanding of these faculties who are on a continuous journey of self-transformation.

The main reason for this is that people are generally more familiar with what can be understood through intellect and emotion. They often shy away from concepts that can be grasped through a subtler sense. It's possible that they can indeed comprehend these finer aspects, yet still choose to deny them. This denial stems from the fact that the aspirations of many have diminished to such a low level that they can only acknowledge sensory pleasures. Anything that isn't evident to the external senses is often dismissed as non-existent.

To remedy this spiritual ailment, the first step is to explore the sensitive faculty and recognize the scope and quality of this type of understanding. The intuitive sense is an imaginative power, distinct from the outward senses.

Jabarut and Hadirat al-Quds

A person's spiritual journey can progress through the realms of Jabarut and Hadirat al-Quds,¹⁵ ultimately reaching the realm of Lahut, which is the state closest to angelic nature. In his discussions about the unseen realms, Waliullah describes Jabarut as a metaphysical domain of Divine power that transcends both the physical world and the world of images. Jabarut is characterized as the realm of Divine will that manifests without any intermediary or external influence. This realm goes beyond ordinary human perception and transcends both time and space. Hadirat al-Quds refers to a spiritual gathering for those closest to God, such as the prophets and saints, and is a realm where God's mercy is most readily manifested.

The Perfect Man

The perfect man is a unique individual among other men, just as humans are distinct from animals. While humanity is often considered superior because of its universal perspective on life, the

¹⁵ The text above describes Jabarut from a Sufi perspective, while Hadirat al-Quds refers to the sacred divine presence, often interpreted as a direct experience of God. Wali Ullah discussed this topic in various writings and also illustrated it in the diagram presented in this article.

perfect man stands out due to the refinement of his spiritual and ethical qualities. This individual embodies human potential by representing a complete harmony between the external and internal aspects of existence. He reflects the larger universe and mirrors the divine order within the cosmos, ultimately realizing his innate nature, or Fitrah.

This person fulfills his role as a vicegerent of God on Earth, and his individual soul is closely aligned with the universal soul. "These extraordinarily talented individuals are not merely useful instruments at the service of the mala'ala;¹⁶ in fact, they may join those ranks after death, once their earthly garments are shed. Contrary to popular belief, a Perfect Man who dies is not lost to the world. On the contrary, he transitions from being composed of transient qualities to becoming a pure essence, continuing to increase in perfection. (Fuyûd, 11th Vision)." Wali Ullah regarded Prophet Muhammad as the archetype of human perfection, and his life serves as a model for all of humanity.

Conclusion

Shah Wali Ullah's contributions to Islamic spirituality are both original and unique, as they present a synthesis of Shariah (Islamic rulings), Tariqa (the Sufi path), and Haqiqah (metaphysical reality). He emphasized the importance of integrating the totality of knowledge and practice by merging the external aspects (the Quran and Sunnah) with internal dimensions (spirituality). His theories incorporate elements of psychology, which are valuable for students of Islamic psychology to explore, as many students are unaware of the rich legacy left by various Muslim scholars in different regions of the world. This article aims to highlight some of his contributions to psychology, merely scratching the surface of his relevant works in the field. The intent is to inspire students to explore his extensive writings, many of which have yet to be translated into English.

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¹⁶ The mala'ala also refers to heavenly or celestial realm associated with angels and divine presence (Quran Saffat:8). For Wali Ullah those who are spiritually elevated, may receive knowledge, insight, and insight from the celestial realm guiding them toward a greater understanding of divine realities and offer wisdom for guiding others. The concept is also linked to the Prophet's night journey and ascension.

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