Sufi Meditation
and Contemplation

Timeless Wisdom
from Mughal India

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Translator's Introduction
by Carl Ernst

One of the most intriguing aspects of the development of Sufism in South Asia has been the interaction of Sufis with the spiritual traditions of India, especially Yoga.¹ This short Persian text on Yoga and meditation is attributed to the famous founder of the Indian Chishti Sufi order, Shaykh Mu'in al-Din Chishti (d. 1236). A number of different versions of this treatise exist often with different titles, though most commonly it is called the Treatise on the Human Body (Risala-i Wujudiyya).²


² Muslim philosophers interpret the key term in the title (Wujūd) as the abstract concept of existence, but it also has an archaic meaning of “body” and it is systematically treated in that way in this text. Manuscripts of this text are found as 3634 Ganj Bakhsh, Islamabad, entitled simply Treatise of Mu'in al-Din Chishti; cited by Ghulam-'Ali Arya, Ṭariqa-i Chistiyya dar Hind wa Pakistan (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-i Zavvar, 1365/1987), p. 100. And also Treatise on Horizons and Souls (Risala-i Afq wa Anqaf), 1754 India Office Library, London, fols. 272-4; and the Treatise on Spiritual Cultivation about the Channels of the Human Being (Risala dar suluk dar hu'l-n-i ng-ha-yi adami), MS 152 Pir Muhammadshah Dargah, Ahmedabad, fols. 1-15. There are at least nine other MSS in libraries in Pakistan, of which the two oldest are dated 1084/1673; for details, see Ahmad Munzavi, Fihrist-i mushkat-i nukha-ha-yi khatti-i farsi-i Pakistan (Islamabad: Markaz-i Tahlīqat-i Farsi-i Iran u Pakistan, 1363/1405/1985), 3:2101-3, no. 3820.
This text on Yoga and cosmology is attributed to Mu'in al-Din Chishti but this is probably fictional. The successors of Mu'in al-Din asserted that he never wrote anything. No manuscript of this text is older than the late seventeenth century. Why should such a collection of teachings with Indic psychophysical practices be attributed to Mu'in al-Din Chishti? In one sense, this attribution is an indication of the seriousness with which Indian Sufis approached the meditation practices of Yoga. These teachings were important enough that they should have been part of the teaching of the greatest Sufi master in the Chishti tradition.

The text is divided into three short chapters. Chapter 1 begins abruptly, omitting the customary praise of God and the Prophet Muhammad, and it consists of an account of the subtle physiology of Hatha Yoga, with emphasis on the three channels that parallel the spinal column. It relates in detail an esoteric system of breath control related to a complicated cosmology, which assumes the concept of the human body as the microcosm related to the larger universe as macrocosm. Many details are obscure and demand more explanation than the text provides, which presumably would be available from oral commentary by a master. Chapter 2 carries forward the microcosm-macrocosm analogy with frequent quotations from the Qur'an. Chapter 3 has an interestingly composite structure, in which the metaphysical levels and archangels of Islamicate cosmology are linked to the breaths of Yogic practice.

The text asserts that the realization of these levels is closely related to the supreme spiritual states associated with the Prophet Muhammad, especially with knowledge revealed during his ascension to heaven (mi'raj). Moreover it maintains that this knowledge was then conferred on Mu'in al-Din Chishti, either spontaneously by the Prophet Muhammad or through the agency of Mu'in al-Din's master, Shaykh 'Uthman Harwani. Mu'in al-Din is warned not to transmit this esoteric teaching to just anybody, but the restrictions are generous enough to include sincere followers of the Chishti order in later generations.

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Editor's Comment

by Scott Kugle

This text is both profound and puzzling. It is known by many different titles: Treatise: On the Human Body, or On World Beyond and the Soul Within, or On Spiritual Cultivation about the Channels in the Human Being. It displays a deep Islamic piety rooted in certain verses of the Qur'an, and pictures this piety as compatible with Indian devotional traditions like Hatha Yoga. The text is attributed to Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti. We know little about him for certain, and the lack of historically credible biographical material only fuels the loving urge to make Mu'in al-Din into a legendary spiritual hero.

Surely, for innumerable Muslims in South Asia—both for those belonging to the Chishti lineage and for almost all other Sufis as well—Mu'in al-Din is a legendary saint who radiates spiritual power and under whose protection falls the whole of South Asia. To Mu'in al-Din, tradition ascribes certain texts. Since the medieval period, these writings are assumed by Chishti Sufis to accurately convey the personality and teachings of Mu'in al-Din. Yet in all likelihood, the attribution to Mu'in al-Din is false. The earliest sources from the Chishti lineage assert that Mu'in al-Din and his immediate successors wrote no texts.

Like these other texts, the Treatise on the Human Body is also attributed to Khwaja Mu'in al-Din. How are we to understand that attribution? Carl Ernst has rightly pointed out that this text was not written by Shaykh Mu'in al-Din Chishti, yet all the manuscripts of this text are attributed to him. Are we to conclude that their attribution of authorship to Mu'in al-Din is simply a lie, though one made persuasive by repetition? Perhaps the question is too narrowly framed.

Before making a judgment about authorship of a text, it is necessary to investigate what kind of text it is. Not all texts have single authors in the way that modern readers may assume. For instance, we know that E. M. Forster wrote A Passage to India, and so it would be a lie to assert that it was written by Salman Rushdie. But not all texts are like modern novels. Devotional texts, in particular, may not have single authors. They may be the product of many generations of accumulation of text, with commentary and clarification. It might be said that such texts are authored by a "tradition" rather than by a single person. In this sense, the attribution of this Treatise on the Human Body to Mu'in al-Din is more symbolic than actual; it signals that the text emerged from the collective experience of many generations of Chishti Sufi devotees. Just as these Sufis take their communal name "Chishti" from the saint whom they consider the "founder" of their spiritual path, Khwaja Mu'in al-Din from Chisht, so they also attribute a document that circulated among them to convey wisdom to the authorship of Mu'in al-Din. By attributing it to Mu'in al-Din, Chishti Sufis gave it value and advocated its use as a devotional aid that expresses some of their most deeply held convictions. A historical assessment of authority might miss the deeper point of the text's nature and usefulness!

So this Treatise on the Human Body should not be seen as the product of one person's imagination and one man's pen. If it were the product of one person's systematic exposition, we...
would judge the text to be a failure because it is so fragmentary and elusive. But if we see the text as the product of a communal effort over many generations, then we can understand its real value. The text is quite sketchy and difficult to understand. It makes reference to terms without defining them. It alludes to practices without describing them. It offers a framework for devotional practice without providing any details of how to achieve its lofty goals. This text is clearly a written companion to an elaborate oral tradition of inspiring mystical insight through disciplining the body. The bulk of that tradition would be oral, transmitted from spiritual guide to initiated disciple; this written document only provides a sketch of that tradition's aspirations, goals and foundational axioms. As a text, this treatise proves the existence of an oral tradition of devotional exercises, and it also hints at that tradition's richness and potential for inter-religious synthesis. But as a text, this treatise does not document the full content of that oral tradition, in which yogic techniques merged with Sufi contemplative discipline.

As a written text, this treatise dates only from the 17th century during the Mughal period. We have no manuscript copies that exist from a date earlier than this. Nor do we have any reference to this text in other authentic sources from an earlier period. Yet though the text might date only from the Mughal era, the core ideas might have been passed on in an oral tradition from a much earlier time. In that sense, the core ideas of the treatise probably have a much earlier origin, perhaps even with the earliest Chishti Sufi teachers in India. Seen in this perspective, the attribution to Mu`in al-Din Chishti might point to the ancestry of these ideas and practices in an oral tradition that was passed on from "bosom to bosom" from a spiritual guide to initiated disciples.

The attribution should not be interpreted literally to mean that Mu`in al-Din Chishti wrote this text himself. It might be that Mu`in al-Din and other early masters of the Chishti order in India taught certain meditation practices that were in parallel with Yogic practice or perhaps borrowed from it. We know, for instance, that there were certain dramatic parallels between Sufi concepts of physio-psychic centers in the body and similar concepts held by Yogis in India. Among Sufis in Central Asia, such an energy center was known as latif`a or "subtle center." Among Yogis in India, it was known as chakra or "revolving center." Beginning with the figure of Mu`in al-Din Chishti, this Central Asian Sufi tradition came to India, and later generations of Indian Sufis sought to refine the parallel concepts held by these two traditions. They sought to harmonize these two traditions, especially through the practice of "suspending the breath," which was cultivated by Yogis in India and by Sufis in Central Asia independently. This treatise gives vivid evidence of this process, which had reached a state of maturity by the Mughal era.

Certainly, the earliest Chishti sources which give a biography of Mu`in al-Din, telling the narrative of his settling in India, include many stories of his intimate interactions with Yogis, Brahmans, and Hindu mystics. These narratives tell of Mu`in al-Din deciding to settle at Ajmer, the site of an ancient temple to the deity Brahma, who represents the creative force and cosmic soul. They mention that he studied Sanskrit in order to understand the profound religious literature of Hinduism and in order to engage in discussions with Brahmans. They also tell of his adopting Indian musical modes in order to convey an Islamic and Sufi message, giving rise over time to the distinctive use of music for meditation that characterizes the Chishti Sufi order. They also tell of his acrimonious conflict with certainly local Brahmans and Yogic adepts who resented his settling there or saw him as representing the vanguard of polluting foreigners—Muslim Turks (or Turuksha as they were known in Sanskrit and Indian vernaculars of the time)—who were threatening to overpower South Asia militarily.
These biographical narratives may be wholly legendary or they may carry a kernel of truth in their heroic retelling. In either case, the figure of Mu'in al-Din is important as a symbol for the encounter between Muslims and Hindus, a new chapter of which opened with his settlement in India and propagation of Sufi ideals and practices there, in a mode characterized by deep appreciation of India's spiritual and aesthetic heritage. The meeting and merging between Yogic discipline and Sufi devotion is only one aspect of Mu'in al-Din's legacy. The Treatise on the Human Body deserves to be read, translated and studied to understand this convergence of two ancient wisdom traditions. It may even inspire readers to take up the practice of Sufi meditation or Yogic exercise, or to explore the commonalities between these two.

There is yet another reason to read this text, and that reason becomes significant when it is coupled with the other Sufi meditation texts in this volume. This text offers perhaps the earliest mention of two key concepts in the Chishti Sufi meditation tradition: the “Praised Station” (maqam mahmud) and the “Helping Authority” (sultan nasir). These terms were extracted from the Qur'an and refined to refer to psycho-spiritual states of a person ecstatic in meditation. A sequence of two verses in the Qur'an mentions two spiritual states—a “Praised Station” and an “Aiding Authority”—that are causal forces in transforming a devotee's late-night prayers and meditation vigils into a positive experience of rapture and ascension. The whole verse reads: “Pray in the late stretches of the night an additional voluntary prayer, that your Lord might send you to a praised station. Say, ‘Oh my Lord, make my entering by the entryway of sincerity and make my leaving by the exit of sincerity and let me receive from you an aiding authority’”

This treatise gives the earliest evidence that these two terms were being used to guide meditation practices in the Chishti Sufi order.

Yet the meaning of these terms is very allusive. These two terms helped Chishti Sufis to refine their experiences of ecstatic bliss, and to understand how this monistic union with pure being was to be reconciled with Islamic scriptural norms. These terms appear to be a distinctively Chishti contribution to Sufi meditation in general. The earliest texts by Qadiri Sufis in South Asia do not seem to use these terms; for example, The Compass of Truth written by Dara Shikoh does not mention these terms. Yet later meditation manuals, like The Alms Bowl of Shaykh Kalimullah, who had initiation into both the Chishti and Qadiri orders, do use these terms. In fact, Shaykh Kalimullah describes a distinct meditation practice guided by these two terms. Though the terms are slightly garbled: both are called stations (maqam)—the “Praised Station” and the “Station of Aid” (whereas in the Qur'an the second one is the “Aiding Authority”). Yet Shaykh Kalimullah leaves no doubt that these two terms are linked to the same practice, for he specifies that it also uses the technique of focusing both eyes on the tip of the nose or between the eyebrows (“Chapter 2 Morsel 12”). It appears as if this were the same practice alluded to in this Treatise on the Human Body attributed to Mu'in al-Din Chishti. It appears that the authors of the Treatise on the Human Body and the author of The Alms Bowl were drawing off of a common tradition of oral teaching that featured these two terms. The technical vocabulary might vary from one generation to the next or from one teaching circle to the next, but the actual practice as a ritual remains fairly constant.

This treatise attributed to Mu'in al-Din Chishti has many parallels with Hatha Yoga texts in its basic religious presuppositions, its technical understanding of anatomy, and in its prescriptive meditation practices. A good comparison is to the Shiva Sambhya, a Sanskrit text on Hatha Yoga mentioned earlier. The Shiva Sambhya was written as a compilation of advice on the nature of God, the human body, and how it can be harnessed to realize union with the divine; its subject and style
are directly comparable to the Treatise. The Shiva Samhita is attributed to a single author, the deity Shiva, but is obviously a composite that evolved over many generations with numerous variations based on practice and oral advice. This textual structure is also comparable to the Treatise which, though attributed to a respected ancient source—Mu'in al-Din Chishti—is most likely a later written record of oral teachings that evolved in practice over many generations. Finally, the text of Shiva Samhita can be dated to roughly 1500; and the text of the Treatise is assumed to have been written down in the Mughal period, though in fact both texts record meditation techniques that were in practice for many centuries before.

The Shiva Samhita presents a monistic world-view in which there is only one absolute being—the divine being—and all appearances of diversity are illusion that must be dispelled by devoted contemplation. In the Shiva Samhita, God says, “The entire universe, animate and inanimate, comes from me. Everything is seen through me. Everything comes to rest in me. I am no different from it and nothing in this world is different from me. In the same way that single sun reflects innumerable times in innumerable bowls full of water, so diversity is seen in the world. But just as there are as many suns as there are bowls, so there are as many selves as there are conditions for their appearance. Just as in a dream the dreamer appears in many different ways but is one on awakening, so the universe appears to have many forms.”

Compare this to a Persian ghazal attributed to Mu'in al-Din Chishti.

3 James Mallinson, The Shiva Samhita, 9-10.
4 Dīwān-i Hazrat Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishti (Lithograph; Lucknow: Munshi Nawal Kishore Press), 48. Its first couplet is “Andar d'ina-ya jan 'aks-i jamali deedam / ham-cha khusheerd keh dar ab-i zulali deedam.”

The gaze of reason is stunned by one ray of my beloved’s face
I see his image despite the obscuring of a hundred veils
The light shining from my soul’s mirror is of the essence I see it, however, as a metaphor representing the truth
Let me be excused for acting so bewildered and drunk I see his beauty and goodness in my amazement’s mirror
I am a drunken lover since I heard “Am I not your Lord?” I see reason and intelligence as impossible for me
My being is gone and all that’s left is his absolute being I see all this as exile endured in hopes of some future union
Through a painful narrowness I’ve entered the party of oneness I see nothing as impossible after passing through such an ordeal
In the expanse of “all is he” this whole world and cosmos I see as less than a crowing cock unable to even fly
Since Mu’in left phenomena’s dust for eternity’s light I see no impending dawn and no sunset and no high noon

This poem cites the Qur’anic phrase “Am I not your Lord?” to denote the moment when God faced all human beings directly, in the spiritual world before their material manifestation, and asked “Am I not your Lord?” This is the moment called “the primordial covenant.” It forms one of the basic concept of Sufism: all human beings have shared the intimacy of God’s presence and have born witness to God’s lordship before their creation, and each must now strive to remember the resonance of that moment, which forms the basis of faith. This remembrance is the goal of the ritual of zikr or meditation, which forms the basic subject of all the texts translated in this book.

Although the content of this treatise alludes to commonalities with the Hatha Yoga tradition, and elements of Hinduism in general, it is allusive. This translation presents an almost untranslatable text. Some passages are quite cryptic. Others are nearly illegible. Others represent sounds in Sanskrit through the letters of the Arabic alphabet, rendered by scribes who probably did not know Sanskrit! The challenges to a translator are quite formidable. Carl Ernst has ventured boldly where few dare to tread. He had originally published side-by-side translations of two variations of this text that he had on hand. This is sound scholarly practice, as it preserves the differences so that the reader can compare and come to her or his own conclusion. As the editor, I have adapted his bold scholarly translation and made it even more audacious. I have taken two more variations of the text that I have on hand, compared them to the two that Carl Ernst had originally translated, and endeavored to synthesize their variations into a single text. This is not very sound scholarly practice! But as an editor, I found that the gaps in one variation of the text were often filled in by other copies, such that a composite picture of the text's intent emerged from a comparison of several variations of it, each of which is by itself incomplete.

To create this synthesis, I have taken the liberty of altering some passages of the scholarly translation offered by Carl Ernst, with many apologies to him. Yet I freely admit the resulting synthesis contains mainly the original translation's words, with many thanks to him. It is hoped that the resulting synthesis will be useful to general readers and spiritual seekers, who care more for the enduring intent of the text than for a literal exposition of its difficulties. It is also hoped that scholars who read this synthesis translation will be lenient with the editor who oversaw its hodge-podge birth, and will acknowledge that

6 Carl Ernst, "Two Versions of a Sufi Text on Yoga and Cosmology Attributed to Shaykh Mu'in al-Din Chishti," Eliezer 2: 69-77.
Treatise on the Human Body
Attributed to Nuwaja Mu'en al-Din Chishti

In the name of God, the compassionate and merciful
Oh Lord, make the way easy for us and lead us to a good end!

This is a treatise in which I explain the knowledge and spiritual training of the Yogis, as they are known in the Indian language.

Chapter 1

Know that in the human being the first thing that appeared was the channel called sukhumā. Then came the channels called ingalā and pingalā. From these three, the nine channels became manifest and from these nine, the 360 channels and the 16,000 came into existence. But the goal of these is the three channels, and their root is the one called sukhumā.  

1 Sanskrit term sometimes transliterated sushumna. Meditation by activating this channel is an ancient idea in India. In the Maitri Upanisad, it is written, “There is a channel called the Susumna, leading upward, conveying the breath, piercing through the palate. Through it, by joining the breath, the syllable Aum and the mind, one may go aloft.” Beck, Sonic Theology, 46. 
2 These are channels (nag in Persian, nadi in Sanskrit) in the body that convey energy and give life. Carl Ernst had translated the Persian term nag as “vein.” This is technically correct, as the term does denote a blood vessel (either vein or artery) in anatomical texts. But this translation prefers to render the term as “channel” because in this text (as in the Hatha Yoga tradition as a whole) these are channels that convey energy (sometimes described as “breath”) through the body; they do not refer specifically to channels that circulate blood, as implied by the word vein. For example, James Mallinson, The Shiva Samhita, 33 writes that a nadi or channel conveys sensations and conduct the winds across and along the body; this cannot refer to veins and arteries as understood through anatomy.
The sukhumā channel draws the breath from below the navel, and its root is at the center below the genitals. From there it rises upward. The ingalā and pingalā are the channels of the left and right of the sukhumā. Whenever the seeker draws breath from the navel, it is through the sukhumā. Then it comes to the heart. From that place, it divides in three parts, and going among flesh, skin, and arteries, it enters into the head. Then, going out between the two eyebrows, it comes to its place and circles three times. When the seeker wishes to suspend his breath and to become aware of its substance, he closes the nine doorways (nine orifices of the body) and he eats mild and scanty food. Then during a forty-day retreat, a knot appears beneath the breast; in the second retreat, it is at the waist; and in the third retreat—if the seeker takes on very difficult austerities and eats less and concentrates greatly—the knot appears above. When this knot is firmly established, vision and wisdom of the three knots is firmly established. Then the breath is within and it circles there three times.

Then he goes with the breath by the way of the mother's womb. There are six doorways there, within the folds of the navel in the midst of the knot of the throne, which has three doorways on the right side, and three doorways on the left side. Having opened these six doorways, he enters the window of the loins (rosan-i sub or lumbar window). There he travels through twenty-eight stations. In each direction there are four foundations (rukn) and there are twenty-eight stations. First, the seeker wants these twenty-eight stations, and at each station is a spiritual guardian (muwakkat). He recognizes them, for their origin is from five things. From among them, four are of a dominant quality and one is of a dependent quality. He takes them as guides (mursīd) in his affairs, though in fact they are of him and are from his reality (bagīgat-i khud). From those five people, twenty-eight people appear with these details to their appearance: five are of earth and their color is yellow, five are of water and their color is white, eight of them are of air and their color is green, five are from fire and their color is red, and five are from light and their color is black.

These twenty-eight stations are the cycle of the moon (da'īrat-i mahtar). There are twenty-eight stations of increasing (ʿurūj) and they are the stations of the right. There are twenty-eight of diminishing (nusul) and they are the stations of the left. Those twenty-eight stations have three knots and three whirlpools (gīnd-āb). There the breath becomes three lotuses (bārāj).

At that time, this sign appears. First, as he draws in a breath and (holds it) within, in a week he takes in five (breaths) from the stomach, and the stomach is set right. The sign that the stomach is set right is that whatever he may eat gets consumed, but if he does not eat he does not desire food and yet much power appears in him. After the stomach is set right, it (the breath) goes between the flesh, skin, and blood to the extent that for one week it goes between them. In every inhalation of breath, three times each it goes between them. At that time, the flesh and blood decrease. The sign of that is that whatever secret is hidden appears to him. Spiritual disclosure (kashf) appears. Then the seeker reaches perfection.

Chapter 2

When God desired, “I want to make my own divinity manifest openly that I might witness myself,” then God caused
creation from non-existence the four elements (anusir) and four realms of being (unjul) and four souls (nafs). In this way creation happened when God desired to openly manifest the hidden secret of God's own divinity.

What did God do? First, God manifested from God's own pure essence a light (nur). It emerged from the divine essence in a single point and became established in four levels: the realm of divinity (lahut), the realm of archetypes (jabarut), the angelic realm (malakut), and the human realm (nashut), just like fire, air, water, and earth. In this way each became established as separate from God with four foundations (rukun). And likewise, the elements (tabai) are four. And likewise, the archangels (farishna muqarrrib) are four. And likewise, the intimate friends who supported our Prophet Muhammad—may God praise and bless him—are four.

In this way from a single point creation emerged. And likewise, the human soul is of four kinds: the soul that incites to evil (al-nafs al-amanna), the soul that blames (al-nafs al-lawwama), the inspired soul (al-nafs al-mulhama), and the tranquil soul (al-nafs al-mumma‘anna). They are of four kinds, just as there are four elements: air is related to the spirit, water is related to the intellect, fire is related to love, and earth is related to the

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4 There is some ambiguity in the manuscripts about whether this word is "four souls" or "four breaths." This is because the word for soul (nafs) and breath (nafas) appear the same written in Persian when no vowel signs are specified. This translation favors "souls" because the four kinds of soul are detailed on paragraph later; however, in Chapter 3 the text describes four kinds of breath.

5 The phrase chahar yar-i ghar means the "four friends of the cave." These are the four friends who helped Muhammad (Ali, Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman) especially in the crisis of his exile from Mecca and escape to Medina when he had to hide in a cave (ghar).

6 It is a foundational idea in Sufism that the state of the soul can progress through four levels in reference to the Qur'an: the soul that incites to evil (Surat Yusuf 12:53), the soul that blames (Surat al-Qiyamat 75:2), the inspired soul (Surat al-Shams 91:8), and the tranquil soul (Surat al-Fajr 89:27).

soul. Even so, the soul that incites to evil is related to fire, the soul that blames is related to water, the inspired soul is related to air, and the tranquil soul is related to earth.

God has created the cosmos such that everything in the external world (afaq) is also created likewise in human existence (unjul-i insan). This is in accord with the divine word: "We shall show them our signs on the horizons and in your souls; do you not then have insight?" In this way God created twelve zodiacal signs in heaven and has also created their correspondence in the human being. First, the head is Aries, Taurus is the shoulders, Gemini the hands, Cancer the arm,Leo the breast, Virgo the belly, Libra the navel, Scorpio the genitals, Sagittarius the thigh, Capricorn the leg, Aquarius the shank, and Pisces the sole of the foot. And the seven planets that wander through these twelve zodiacal signs correspond as follows: the Sun is the heart, Jupiter the liver, the moon the lungs (shush), Mercury the kidney (gurda), Saturn the spleen (sypur), Mars the brain, and Venus the gall bladder (zahna).

In this same way God divided the year into 360 days, and also created the human being in 360 degrees. The zodiacal signs of the heavens cover 360 degrees, and on the face of the earth there are 360 mountains and 360 great rivers. In the human being, 360 individual bones stand in the place of mountains and 360 veins in the place of the rivers. 360 pieces of flesh are in place of the 360 degrees of the zodiac, and 360 pieces of skin in place of the days.

The belly of a man is like the sea, and the hair is like trees, and in the forest and meadow there are biting worms and the like; and genital worms are in that position. The face is like an inhabited building. The back is like a desert and wasteland. In the world there are four seasons, and in the human such as these exist: childhood is spring, youth is summer, maturity is a fall, and old age is the rainy season.

7 This phrase combines two verses from the Qur'an which both say "and in our souls" (Surat al-Fusilat 41:53 and Surat al-Dhariyat 51:21).
Chapter 3

My dear, you should strive to understand all I have said. Then you should know the four breaths and grow familiar with them and recognize the quantity of each of these four. What is the quantity of these four breaths, and what power does each engender? The seeker must look into this deeply and must realize it through profound introspection. That is an essential obligation (farz ‘ain) for each person to demonstrate their realization of this before their spiritual guide (mushid).

Further, it is said that “Knowledge is a single point.” You must understand what is meant by this single point. In each principle there is a word, and in each word there is a station. The divine realm (labut) is fivefold, my son. The spiritual realm (malakut) is the branch of that tree. The realm of divine might (jabarut) is the leaf, behold it. The realm of human phenomena (nasut) in the world is just like fruit.

The realm of divinity (labut) corresponds to the tongue, the station of the Holy Spirit. The archangel Gabriel (Jibril) knows it. The place of Gabriel is “the praised station” (maqam mahmud). Gabriel is earthy and the “praised station” is also an earthy name; its color is yellow and its taste is thick. Drawing the breath is a distance of twelve fingers beyond.

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8 The word for head (dimagh) can also denote the brain or nasal cavity or region above the palate of the mouth; because of this ambiguity, this translation prefers to simply say “head” but readers should be aware of the possible nuances.
9 Surat al-Inshiqaq 84:19.

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10 In Arabic, this saying is: “al-ilm nukht.”
11 Gabriel is one of the four archangels who is also called “the holy spirit” (al-rub al-qods as in Surat al-Nahl 12:103) in the Qur’an, and Gabriel is responsible for conveying God’s presence and message to humanity. Gabriel is named in the plural here (arsab al-muqaddas), perhaps out of respect for his greatness.
12 Surat al-Isra 17:79-80
13 The manuscript then says, “In the Indian language, it is called mangle mandala varahkamal labhna.” The text gives equivalents “in the Indian language” to these regions/angels/breaths. The Indian language appears to be Sanskrit, but the actual words are highly ambiguous and are varied in different manuscripts. Little sense can be made of these equivalents. For that reason, they are given here in the footnotes, rather than in the translation above.
The spiritual realm (malakut) corresponds to the nose, and its station is the navel. The archangel Israfil knows it. Israfil is airy; his color is green and his taste is sour. Drawing the breath is a distance of eight fingers beyond.

The realm of divine might (jabarut) corresponds to the eye, and its station is the top of the head. The archangel Michael knows it. Michael is watery, and the station of the top of the head (of the head) is also watery; its color is white, its form is like the form of the new moon, and its taste is sweet. Drawing the breath is a distance of sixteen fingers beyond.

The realm of humanity corresponds to the ear. The archangel `Azra'il knows it. `Azra'il is fiery, and the station of the ear is also fiery. Its color is red, and its taste is bitter, and its form is like a coiled serpent (shikanj), and this form of a coil glows bright red like a burning lamp. Drawing the breath is a distance of four fingers beyond.

That is the "helping authority" (sultan nasir), and the "praised station" (maqam mahmud), the light of divine majesty (nur-i jalal) and the light of divine beauty (nur-i jamal), the light of Muhammad and Ahmad and Mahmud and Ahad.

And these are the four bodies: the subtle body (tan-i latif), the gross body (tan-i kasif), the body of annihilation (tan-i fana), and the body of eternity (tan-i baqa). These are the four spirits: the lowly spirit (rub-i safali), the lofty spirit (rub-i `alawi), the holy spirit (rub-i qadsi), and the angelic spirit (rub-i malaki). "Truly God encompasses everything."

From this you should recognize these four breaths. The quantities associated with each of them you should learn from your spiritual guide. Then you should draw them all together in as a single breath, in a particular fashion from one place of the breath to another, as is written above. You should practice this until that air (bad) of "the praised station" and "the aiding authority" becomes dominant. As long as the seeker does not traverse these four breaths, annihilation in the master (fana fil-shaykh) does not take place, and there is no eternity with God (baqa bi 'llah).

One should know these four breaths and perform the action. These four airs in the human being are each like an emperor, but despite this they obey a single person. Thus they follow as one body. And this one body is the light of Muhammad, which rides all the four elements. The light of Muhammad is the light of Ahad (of the One).

The seeker should [know] that just as all was One, even so all will be again One. Thus, the being of the light of Muhammad and the light of Ahad is an acquisition (kasb) from this. Wayfarers on this path are given no access to the ascent without this acquisition. For it is not possible, because the spiritual guardians (muwakkal) are overpowering and do not allow anyone to enter as long as he does not acquire this acquisition by the will of God.

14 Israfil is one of the four archangels, known in Christianity as Rafael. Israfil announces judgment day by blowing upon the trumpet at the end of time.

15 The manuscript then says, "In the Indian language they call this barmal tali or balkamal pa.

16 Mikha'il or Michael is one of the four archangels, who is the angel of mercy or rain, and is the sustainer of life.

17 The image of the top of the cranium being associated with the new moon and with a sweet white liquid like nectar is common to Hatha Yoga, which associates the top of the head with Shiva, the male principle of divinity, which secretes the nectar of life or amrit that passes down the spine to nourish life.

18 The manuscript then says, "In the Indian language they call this shatadhal kamal bhanwos bhasil or balkamal badn."

19 `Azra'il is one of the four archangels, who is the angel of death

20 The manuscript then says, "In the Indian language they call this matakamal amal or malkamal an kab."

21 The text cites again Surat al-Isra 17:79. Here a relationship is suggested between the "praised station" and the "aiding authority." It is a praised station because it is the place or the spiritual condition in which God's aiding authority comes down to or into a devoted worshipper who engages in meditation.

My dear friends, know that this is the acquisition of the revered Prophet, taught to him by Gabriel who had learned it from God. And that time when my master and savior, Lord ‘Uthman Harwani (may God sanctify his conscience) had bestowed grace and kindness upon this beggar (Mu‘in al-Din Chishti), he took my spirit to the presence of that revered Prophet. He said, “Your highness, this is a child who is worthy of succession (khilafat).” The revered Messenger of God gave me this much knowledge and this divine acquisition, saying, “Oh Mu‘in al-Din, God most high taught this acquisition to Gabriel, and Gabriel taught it to me. The time when God wished to send his Prophet on his mission, he separated me from that place and I became united with this acquisition. The day when this practice was completed was the very time when the ascension (mi‘raj) became my destiny. Then my prophetic mission became manifest. Oh Mu‘in al-Din, now I bestow this very acquisition upon you!”

I came to this side (the world) and became occupied with this acquisition. At the time when this practice was completed I reached the height; at that moment this beggar experienced the ascension (mi‘raj). But I was given permission to write only this much about the effect of that experience. Again I presented my case to the Revered One with a thousand entreaties and laments, and permission was granted on the condition that he stated: “Do not speak of this to every seeker and disciple, that this secret should not go from house to house; but you can speak of this secret to sincere seekers who have more or less learned the knowledge.”

My dear brother, this acquisition is something to be realized. So realize through your own experience. Then go before your spiritual guide (mursbid). Only once the guide attests that the realizations have clearly taken place for the seeker, then he authorizes this as real acquisition. He says that spirits have two forms: one lofty and the other lowly. He adds four forms in between the two forms. Again, these two forms both have a station: one is the “Praised Station” (maqam mahmud) and the other is the “Helping Authority” (sultan nasir). These are of two forms: one is a traveling form and the other is a stationary one. The seeker should know the traveling form and recognize its color, as is said above, so the seeker does not make a mistake. If no mistake is made, then the traveling form reaches the stationary form, and that stationary form attains witnessing of the real One, and in that place he attains the reality of the ninety-nine names (asma).

The master tells the seeker to direct his gaze down to a point at the bridge of the nose (barra). This is from the point of view that these two eyes, which they call sun and moon, and which are related to both chief channels which in the Indian language are called ingalā and pingalā, are both related to the channel of life, which in Indian language they call sukhumna. These two channels, called the solar and the lunar channel, run firmly along either side of the sukhumna channel. By focusing thus, the seeker’s own image is effaced, in the way that we showed above. In this way, one adds a form through visualization (tasawwur), and that is the form of the spiritual guide (mursbid) as if seen with the external vision.

23 Here the two different terms from the Qur’an, the “praised station” (maqam mahmud) and the “aiding authority” (sultan nasir) are placed in an even closer relationship, such that both are described as a kind of spiritual authority (sultan).
24 This word barra is likely related to the term arra, which refers to the sound generated by the breath within the nose when one meditates upon the name of God (Allah) within the breath. The manuscript writes barra but this probably denotes bi-arra or “at the arra” meaning the nasal region. In The Aims Bowl, Shaykh Kalimullah refers to this as the “arra of the nose” and arra is a Persian word meaning a saw, or friction that is like the sound of a saw. In Chapter One on Methods of Meditation, in Morsel 12, Shaykh Kalimullah writes: “it may be that a sound is generated in the nose while performing this meditation. That sound is known as “nasal sawing” (arra-i-bini)” and the friction from this meditation through breathing generates an internal heat.
At whatever moment is specified by the spiritual guide, the
gaze is raised to a place in the center above the nose. In the
midst of the nose is the station of the spiritual realm (malakut), and in that realm are displayed forms in a thousand ways,
external and internal. But one should not pay attention to the
many forms it displays, but rather one should keep holding
in one’s visualization the form of one’s spiritual guide. One
should persist with this until to the visualization of the form
of the master is added the form of Muhammad. Then one at-
tains the visualization of Muhammad, and this is superimposed
upon the image of one’s spiritual guide. As one attains the vi-
ualization of Muhammad, one attains the visualization of Ahad
(the One). Then the reality of the ninety-nine names of God
becomes manifest, and those ninety-nine names are effaced in
a single name. The one name exists as “A” (alif). It became the
inhalation of “he” (huwa). And “he” makes its station to be M
(mim). And from M is N (nun). And N is W. Wa huwa arham
al-rabimin—and he is the most merciful of the merciful!

This treatise is now complete.