

## ‘ABD AL-ḤAQQ DIHLAWĪ, AN ACCIDENTAL REVIVALIST: KNOWLEDGE AND POWER IN THE PASSAGE FROM DELHI TO MAKKA

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The authors of biographical literature do not generally attract the attention of other biographers. They are figures who live backstage, who play a secondary role collecting first-hand experience and second-hand accounts of the major actors in the religious and political life of their times. But the rare person surfaces who was both scholar and public figure, both author and actor, who was a biographer and attracted the spotlight of later biographical attention. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī is just such a versatile Muslim author.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq is most often cited as a biographer, yet he was in his lifetime more renowned as a *ḥadīth* scholar and reviver of the Islamic scholarly traditions in Delhi. In his mature years in Delhi (from the end of the sixteenth century CE through the early decades of the seventeenth) he articulated this revival with the clear aim of social reform gently to undermine some of the Mughal cultural synthesis and religious experimentation that took place during the reign of Akbar. He announced a moderate approach to such revival that sought to avoid the extreme rhetoric and ideological stridency of Aḥmad Sirhindī’s approach. It is this activity in scholarly revival and social reform that invites authors to document his life with biographical accounts. The most noteworthy of these is the recent twentieth-century effort to rekindle the memory of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq for modern audiences by the late Professor Khaliq Ahmed Nizami.<sup>1</sup> This essay was written as a tribute to

<sup>1</sup> Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Ḥayāt-i Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī* (New Delhi: Nadwah al-Muḥannifin, 1964), written in Urdu. Small portions of the text and sources have been translated into English by Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi in his *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1st edn., Agra: Agra University Press 1965; 2nd edn., New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1995), 148–75. Rizvi builds on Nizami’s biography while taking exception to some of his conclusions. However, Rizvi

K. A. Nizami after his death, and it attempts to build upon his work and refine it.<sup>2</sup>

Biographies, despite their pretension to account for the whole of the subject's life can obscure just as much as they elucidate. Particularly dangerous is the trend to project a figure's reputation (whether from their mature career or their posthumous fame) into their early life or even their childhood. The strategy that leads biographers into this danger is to impose a unilinear narrative that depicts the steady unfolding of a personality which is already known and expected, and makes a hero of the subject. Equally misleading is a second temptation to present the subject's life as an outcome of the surrounding environment, which seeks to 'explain' the subject's every action. In either case (and often both cases overlap) biography can easily fail to capture the contingency, ambiguity and multivalent nature of the path of a single life, while the shifting cross-currents which shape it remain obscure.

Keeping these potential pitfalls in mind, one can ask the basic question upon which any biography must centre: how did ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq as a person become the renowned personality that others have documented in hagiographic and biographic records? This study argues that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq's mature endeavour to reform society, through revival of the study of scriptural sciences and moderation of Sufi practice, did not arise solely within his personality, nor purely in reaction to his South Asian environment. Rather, before he became the renowned reformer and revivalist, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was an inter-regional, multi-lingual Sufi-scholar. His mature efforts at reform are built on the symbolic legitimacy, scholarly acumen, and pious discipline that he acquired in his youth and middle years, most especially in his travels to the Hijaz and his discipleship in Makka under the training of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Muttaqī. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq's mature vision (and the means to actualize it) are the result of his training in ‘the Muttaqi method’ of Sufi discipline, his initiation into the triple-lineage represented by the Muttaqi *khirqā*,<sup>3</sup>

does not exhaust the subject of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq; his work contains factual inaccuracies and leaves much source material untranslated. Ultimately his reworking of the subject does not do Nizami's original biography justice.

<sup>2</sup> This essay was originally written for a memorial volume in honour of K. A. Nizami, proposed by Bruce B. Lawrence. Although that volume never materialized, I thank its editor for his advice and guidance while revising the essay.

<sup>3</sup> *Khirqā* is the technical term for ‘the patched cloak’ given to initiates in a Sufi lineage to mark their completion of spiritual training. The Muttaqi community gave initiates a cloth shoulder-bag rather than an actual cloak as the *khirqā* of the lineage.

and his contacts with wider sources of Islamic literature unknown in his environment in Delhi.

These inter-regional connections, which are so hard to account for in ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s biography, were his means to achieving maturity in his thought and personality, and to finding direction in his career and renown among his contemporaries. This study will illuminate those ambiguities and loose threads in ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s biography, focusing on the middle years that include his stay at the Mughal court, his self-styled ‘insanity’ that was ‘cured’ by his pilgrimage to Makka and three-year stay in the Hijaz, before he returned to Hindustan as a renewed man and a confirmed revivalist.

### THE SAINTLY REVIVALIST: A VIEW FROM COMMUNAL MEMORY

Clearly, the twentieth-century biographies of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī are shaped largely by traditional hagiographic sources that have piously preserved his memory among South Asian Muslims. Before one can take account of the modern biographies, one must therefore understand the general shape of this hagiographic record. In his own writings, the Shaykh asserted his position among the reputed masters of South Asian *taṣawwuf* and crafted an image of himself for posterity, especially in his letters and the biography of his teachers and masters. Yet the more strictly biographic tradition on ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was in the hands of others, almost. His biography began right after his death, at the place of his burial, at his own request. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq had left a will with his son, Nūr al-Ḥaqq, describing how his followers should design his tomb and suggesting that ‘if it is considered beneficial, affix a plaque on the wall, on which is written the dates of birth and death, and a few concise phrases about the [deceased’s] scholarly achievements and travels and vacillating states of life’.<sup>4</sup>

In obedience to this request, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s son wrote a brief account of his father’s achievements and mounted it on the wall of his tomb. The tomb-bound biography acted as prototype for all subsequent biographies of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq. There are two important features of this sketch, which needs to be looked at afresh. First it highlights the Shaykh’s childhood genius for learning and his single-minded devotion to Sufism in his youth.

<sup>4</sup> Translated from ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s *waṣīya*, as reproduced in Nizami, *Ḥayyāt*, 150. This and all subsequent quotations of *Ḥayyāt* are translations by the author of this essay.

This is in accord with ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s own autobiographical account in the closing chapter of his *Akhhbār al-akhyār*. Through this text, the Shaykh transmits many details from his early life while leaving his adolescence and early adulthood, before he undertook the ḥajj, in complete obscurity. The second important feature is that his son’s sketch of the Shaykh’s mature life focuses on his scholarly work in Delhi; it presents the Shaykh as the most efficacious *ḥadīth* scholar in the Islamic world east of Arabia. However, he is not credited with political aims for social reforms beyond the boundaries of ‘spreading the noble discipline of Prophetic *ḥadīth*’. Thus this first account of the Shaykh’s life blurs over the trials and travels of his middle years as well as his mature programme for revival and reform. Since this official account presented at the Shaykh’s tomb has been so pervasive in shaping later accounts of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, it is fitting to recount it here fully in English translation.

The most concise statement of the modesty of the miraculous gifts of this Shaykh, the leader of his age and exalted personality, Abū l-Majīd ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq (may Allah be merciful with him in the most expansive mercy) is just this, that from his earliest consciousness he felt the longing to obey the call of Truth and prepared to search restlessly for knowledge. By the time of his adolescence, he had already acquired competency in almost all the disciplines of religious learning. Thus by the age of twenty-two, he finished his studies, and taking the Qur’ān in his hand he mounted the high seat of teaching and preaching to benefit others. At the same time, since his youthful days, he felt the stirring and loving attraction toward the divine, such that all at once his heart renounced his dear home and loved ones and he turned his face toward the holy cities of the Hijaz. He resided there for an extended time in those noble cities, staying in the company of those who were axes of the age and the greatest of saints. With an auspicious parting, they granted him permission to guide disciples of his own. Besides this, he completed his training in the science of the [assaying and transmission of] Prophetic traditions. Having accrued all the abundant blessings, he returned to his native home, Delhi.

He resided in Delhi for fifty-two years; becoming fully established as an authority, he completed the training of his sons and followers with outer peace and inner tranquillity. He was attentively and fully engaged in spreading the disciplines of knowledge, especially the noble discipline of the Prophet’s *ḥadīth*. He spread this discipline in such an active manner as nobody from the scholars in the Persian-speaking lands, of the past or present, had been able to do before him. He gained wide renown and high praise.

In the scholarly disciplines he has authored many highly respected books, especially in the discipline of *ḥadīth* studies. These have earned the painstaking study of other scholars, who have taken them into practice as their model

of action. Many a wise man from among the common people and special ability [in scholarship and piety] would sell their lives for these books and the actions they signify.

His compositions, these exalted gems that overflow with knowledge, number over one hundred volumes both large and small, that consist of over five-hundred thousand written lines.

He was born in the month of Muḥarram in the year 958 [AH], and in the year 1052 [AH] he strode steadily into the sacred world in his full senses and with a mind at peace.<sup>5</sup>

As a testimony to the power of this text, made sacred by its location inside the tomb of the Shaykh, many subsequent traditional biographers simply recount it as a sufficient and authoritative summary of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s personality and career. Azad Bilgrami adopts this authorial *fait accompli* in his popular biographical compilation, *Ma’āthir al-kirām*. Similarly, Muḥammad Ghawthī, who included an account of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq in his biographical compilation even during the Shaykh’s own lifetime, refers the reader back to the Shaykh’s own autobiographical account published in *Akhhbār al-akhyār*.<sup>6</sup>

With such a weighty precedent at hand, is it an act of hubris or disrespect for modern scholars to try to delve beneath the surface of this biography, despite the fact that it had been sketched out by the subject himself? This study proceeds on the assumption that the answer to this question is ‘No’. K. A. Nizami himself, for all his intimate engagement with *taṣawwuf* as a living tradition, did not hesitate to question the apparent clarity of this account and its hagiographic niceties. This study continues that effort to reach a fuller understanding of the life of the person behind the renowned personality. To the extent that this entails focusing on some ambiguities that the subject and his intimates left obscure, it is a risk worth taking: articulating these ambiguities can contribute depth and beauty to the portrait of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, just as the dark and blurry edges of chiaroscuro give depth and humanity to a painted portrait. It is the faith of humanistic scholarship that further research, even into the authoritative life of a saintly figure, will lead

<sup>5</sup> Translation from the Persian text reproduced in Nizami, *Ḥayyāt*, 151.

<sup>6</sup> Muḥammad Ghawthī Shattāri, *Gulzār-i abrār*, transl. Fadl Aḥmad Jewarī as *Azkhār-i abrār* (Agra: Maṭba‘-yi Mufidi-i ‘Āmm, 1326 AH). Ghawthī has noted that, by teaching *ḥadīth* and other scholarly disciplines, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was at the same time teaching about *taṣawwuf* and giving training in devotional disciplines, thus balancing out Nūr al-Ḥaqq’s exclusive focus on his father’s scholarly activities.

to a fuller, more illuminating vision of the person as a human being, at once both frail and bold.

## THE INEVITABLE REVIVALIST: A VIEW FROM MODERN BIOGRAPHY

Modern biographers have elaborated on the traditional version of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq as the reviver of the Shari‘a in Delhi. They have tried to emphasize the role of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq over and against the more popularly acknowledged revivalist figure of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī. The biography by K. A. Nizami is a detailed and very useful account of the life of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq. However, despite its wealth of detail and explorations of texts, in the final analysis it is an elaboration upon the traditional version, which does not fully address the ambiguities, contradictions or silences that are the foundation of its construction. It is limited by two interlocking facets of Nizami’s narrative strategy: the narrow scope of his historical perspective and the unilinear plot of his rendering of the Shaykh’s personality.

Firstly, Nizami frames his biography in a very limited historical narrative, which turns on Delhi as the natural centre of South Asian Islamic culture. In a 50-page introduction, he expends considerable effort laying out this historical framework, in which he seeks to judge how the various sultans in Delhi supported Islamic scholarship and applied the Shari‘a. The narrative pivot is the assertion that the dissolution of imperial power in Delhi created a void, allowing heresy and innovation to corrupt society. The void called inexorably for a political and religious reviver. The person of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq is thus framed as just this historically necessary revivalist.

This account is problematic for two reasons—because of what it asserts and because of what it elides. It asserts that as imperial power dissolved, moral order broke down and society became corrupt from the top down. This historical perspective is supported by two main sources, Bada’ūnī’s *Muntakhab al-tawārīkh* and Āzād’s *Tadhkira*, both of which are of questionable accuracy in their assertion that not only court life but religious and scholarly life in Hindustan had become un-Islamic by the time that Akbar firmly established Mughal rule.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Nizami may have given a more subtle treatment to religious movements during Akbar’s reign in his later study, *Akbar and Religion*. However, he rendered the narrative of this biography strategically black and white,

The narrative focus on Delhi as the centre of Hindustan elides from view a very important historical dynamic—that the dissolution of central power created opportunities for new political powers in the periphery, as in coastal states and the Deccan, and in particular, Gujarat. These new political dynasties provided the context for different, and in many ways more creative, Islamic syntheses of religion, culture and state power. For example, Nizami notes how scholars and saints fled Delhi during a series of political setbacks starting with Timūr's invasion of Hindustan, thus leaving the city without proper moral leadership. His historical narrative frames this observation as a denunciation of the moral corruption of Hindustan at the time. However, most of the scholars who fled Delhi found patronage at the thriving 'peripheral' courts in Gujarat, the Deccan or Bengal, and played an important part in legitimizing these new dynasties. These 'peripheral' dynasties in turn acted as the context for the formation of many revivalist movements, whether of the Mahdawi variety or the explicitly Sunni variety of which 'Abd al-Ḥaqq was to become the paragon.

Furthermore, in Nizami's biographical treatment, a unilinear narrative of 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's personal development meshes with the narrow historical framework supporting it. Nizami posits an archetype for 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's personality as necessitated by the narrative that acts as its scaffold. In this treatment, the Shaykh takes on the heroic role of the reviver of the Shari'a in Delhi, by which the author signifies all of Hindustan. Nizami fashions a hero out of 'Abd al-Ḥaqq, and sets this archetype against the demonized figure of Abū l-Faḍl—a temptation hard to resist, as the two famous figures were born in the same month.

The month of Muḥarram, in the year 958 AH, was a gravely important time for Islamic Hindustan. In this month, Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq was born; and in the same year was born Abū l-Faḍl. The latter spent his days ridiculing and belittling the famous scholars of Islam, while the former invested his whole life in reviving the Shari'a and enacting the command to 'enjoin what is known to be good'. The one sought to strengthen the '*dīn-i ilāhī*' while the other raised up the '*dīn-i Muḥammadī*'.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, this modern biography announces that, from the very date of his birth, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq was destined to play a heroic role as reviver of the

in order to cast Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq in a heroic light as the reviver of the Shari'a. In this context, Nizami does not present the Shari'a as a complex outcome of the efforts of a network of scholars, pious critics and political patrons; instead, the Shari'a is understood as something pre-existing, needing only to be 'applied' or 'enacted' by authorities.

<sup>8</sup> Nizami, *Ḥayyāt*, 76.

Sharī‘a against the historical backdrop of decadence and decay. Such a unilinear characterization is not really an explanation of how a personality develops or how a vision takes shape through the vagaries of a human life.

The heroic archetype may be explained by the author’s intent to write a biography to serve the moral need of his own community of South Asian Muslims, to elicit heroes from its past. Nizami’s biography fulfils this need in ways comparable to Mawlānā Āzād’s *Tadhkira*, which treats both Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī and Aḥmad Sirhindī as heroic revivalists and elevates them to the pedestal of moral exemplars. In the view of both these authors, it is as if past revivalist struggles against ‘Mughal decadence’ were analogous to contemporary struggles against ‘modern decadence’. Indeed, Nizami draws heavily upon the vision of the *Tadhkira* without being as explicit about the ethical injunctions that ultimately motivated Āzād’s historical forays.<sup>9</sup>

This unilinear narrative continues to inform the biographical depiction of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s childhood and youth. In Nizami’s presentation, the revival of *sharī‘i* scholarly disciplines is the singular goal that burned in his mind from his boyhood on, and he worked ceaselessly, relentlessly towards it. In this passage, one can see clearly how the historical framework and the hero narrative intermesh to create a vivid portrait of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, but one that tilts toward idealization:

This was a time when the curse of world-worship had choked out the spirit of truth and sincerity. The voice of heresy spread from the royal palaces into every hut and hovel... The mantle of the scholars became polluted with the stains of selfishness and envy, while the Sufis were engrossed in worshiping the acquisition of worldly gain. Dark shadows spread over the Islamic community as their connection to the Qur’ān and Sunna was severed. Disbelief and hypocrisy were spreading under the misleading slogan of imperial order and striving for justice... [‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s] return to India had the effect of a scholarly revolution. The religious disciplines, which for some time had been fading away as if extinguished, were once again ignited by the advent of this miraculous figure. In the light of the Qur’ān and the Sunna, a new era dawned for religious mission and social reform. This man decided that the single goal throughout his long life was to be the revival of the Islamic scholarly disciplines and the popularization of the Sharī‘a.

Under this heroic spotlight, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s biography begins to read like hagiography. Thus Nizami’s work does not effectively move outside the parameters set by Nūr al-Ḥaqq on the wall of his father’s tomb.

<sup>9</sup> Scott Kugle, ‘Maulana Azad Revives the Mahdi between Ethical Vision and Historical Revision’, *Journal of Islamic Culture* 72 (April 1999): 79–114.

The event in the Shaykh's life that stands out in this biography is also the one that does not fit comfortably with its historical narrative, namely 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's departure from Delhi, his pilgrimage and his stay in the Hijaz. And yet, as revealed in the passage just cited, precisely this event is the fulcrum in 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's life, the springboard that allowed him to pass from his early development into his mature career.

It is crucial to re-explore this series of events in order to set 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's life-pattern in a different, wider context. This study strives to depict the Shaykh primarily as an inter-regional, multi-lingual Sufi-scholar, and only secondarily and contingently as a heroic reviver of the Shari'a. The fact that he achieved such fame and recognition in Delhi as a *ḥadīth* scholar and social reformer rested on the prior fact that he left Delhi and tapped a current of authority centred elsewhere. Following this insight, this study tries to take into account 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's experiences outside of the geographical and cultural precincts of Delhi in order fully to account for his later fame in Delhi. Even if this pilgrimage and sojourn lasted only a period of three or four years, its later impact on his life was of exponential importance compared to its duration. As we take this view of 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's career, we will have to discard some of the hagiographic armour that earlier chroniclers have built around him. The discarding of stereotypical elements from the narrative will allow more human elements of uncertainty and contingency within the development of 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's personality to emerge.

## AN UNLIKELY REVIVALIST: A VIEW FROM YOUTH

It was during 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's sojourn outside of Delhi that he came into contact with the teachers and books upon which he based his project for the revival of the *shar'i* disciplines and social reform. To assess 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's passage to this mature phase, this study will examine in detail how he reacted to the widely differing political, cultural, and devotional practices with which he came into contact in Gujarat and the Hijaz. Even more importantly, this study will highlight how he adopted these practices strategically to bolster his personal claim to scholarly and mystical authority.

A survey of his childhood and youth discloses that it was no foregone conclusion that 'Abd al-Ḥaqq would become a Shari'a-minded revivalist at all. Biographies that project his mature project retroactively back into his childhood and youth actually distort his life-story. His early Sufi

orientation was ecstatic and philosophical, with just as much emphasis on poetic eloquence and passionate longing as on scholarly achievement. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq began his Sufi training under the tutelage of his father, Shaykh Sayf al-Dīn.<sup>10</sup> His father gained renown in Delhi as a poet who expressed the mystical themes of losing the self through immersion in the divine presence which sustains the world, and regaining the self through passionate union with the divine. Although he had studied the basic Shari‘a disciplines, he was not a famous Shari‘a scholar, nor did he advocate a sharpening of Shari‘a training in order to revive a society in decay. Shaykh Sayf al-Dīn formally initiated his son into the Qadiri order in 967/1559, when ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was only nine years old. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq recalled the ecstatic states inspired by his father’s gatherings for the recitation of poetry and pious exhortations.

Five years before ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s father died, he ordered his son to take initiation from another Qadiri preceptor, Shaykh Mūsā, and to join his circle of disciples in Delhi.<sup>11</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq met the Shaykh in 985/1577, when he was twenty-seven years old and had already developed into an accomplished scholar and teacher. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq does not relate many

<sup>10</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Dihlawī, *Akbbār al-akhyār* (Delhi: Persian lithograph, no ascription, 1308 AH), 243. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq grants his father, Shaykh Sayf al-Dīn, an individual entry in this, his most renowned, collection of sacred biographies.

<sup>11</sup> *Akbbār al-akhyār*, 316–17. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq gives the biographical details of Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn Mūsā in the midst of his own autobiographical sketch in the conclusion of the collection. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq took initiation from him in 985/1577. This happened most probably in Delhi, for he took this initiation at his father’s order and it is assumed that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq remained in Delhi until his father died in 990/1581. Strangely, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq does not accord Shaykh Mūsā a separate entry in *Akbbār al-akhyār*, as he does his father, his father’s Qadiri shaykh, his own later shaykh, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, and ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s shaykh. Perhaps this lacuna was a way to avoid mention of the controversy that dominated Shaykh Mūsā’s life. It was left up to a secular chronicler, Badā’ūnī, to document the struggle over Shaykh Ḥamīd’s seat of authority after his death, leading Shaykh Mūsā to seek the emperor Akbar’s support, and then to stay on in Agra with a royal *manṣab* of the rank of 500. See ‘Abd al-Qādir Badā’ūnī, *Muntakhab al-tawārīkh*, English transl. by George Ranking (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delhi, 1st edn. 1898, repr. 1973), ii. 404 and iii. 91. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq mentions Shaykh Mūsā in the entry of his father, Shaykh Ḥamīd, asserting that Shaykh Mūsā was the true successor of his father without mentioning the conflict between Shaykh Ḥamīd’s two sons. By including Shaykh Mūsā only under the rubric of his father, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq not only avoids citing the conflict over succession, but actually effaces any mention of Shaykh Ḥamīd’s other son, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir, who was older than Shaykh Mūsā and remained in their hometown of Uch upon the seat of authority of his father; see *Akbbār al-akhyār*, 206.

details about his training under Shaykh Mūsā, but he indicates that the essence of his Qadiri training was immersion in love mysticism with the goal of subverting the bonds of reason and freeing the heart.<sup>12</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq writes of his life during that time:

I was always engaged, day to night and night to day, in trying to gain this great profit [union with the divine presence]. Sometimes I would stay awake for many nights, so that a flash of that divine beauty might light up my consciousness. Sometimes I would spend many days as if in a dream of my imagination, so that I might find some sign of divine union.

*If you promise to meet me while I am awake  
then I forbid myself from ever sleeping a wink  
If You reveal a glimmer of Your beauty in my dreams  
till Judgement Day I won't lift my head from sleep.*

I remained in this practice until the time when the obstructing veil of my reason and my own desire for self-knowledge were lifted from me. This act was the result of divine blessing and generosity alone, that raised me up, helpless in myself, and brought me to the threshold of the divine's own home. And all wakefulness [that I was granted] is a result brought forth from closing the eyes and discerning dreams, which is a state much better than the wakefulness of one's self.

*I am content simply to sleep and imagine You  
for I meet You only through imagination and slumber.*

*Just this much is enough of this story; more details I cannot tell with the pen.  
One can never fully express the depth of longing  
Better then to leave the drawn-out saga cut short.*<sup>13</sup>

‘Abd al-Ḥaqq saw his second initiation as a natural progression from his first. Not only was the second initiation at the order of his first Shaykh, his own father, it also represented an intensification of his Qadiri allegiance. His father may have been a Qadiri shaykh, but Shaykh Mūsā was a direct descendent of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī, and like the Qadiri founder, he was a descendent of the Prophet. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq praises him as the physical embodiment of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī, since he is genealogically descended from his family. Though ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq could never gain access to this ascribed Sayyid lineage,

<sup>12</sup> Shaykh Mūsā wrote at least one work, an exposition of different prayers, meditations, and recitations current among the Qadiri Sufis. *Adhkar-i Qādirīyyah* (MS Calcutta: Asiatic Society Collection, 1261 Fārsī Ṭaṣawwuf), fos. 45–125.

<sup>13</sup> *Akhhār al-akhyār*, 317. The lines in italics are poetic couplets interspersed with ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq's prose.

he came as close as possible to acquiring it, for he reports that ‘Shaykh Mūsā loved me to the furthest extent possible and accepted me as his son, and gave me leave to be his *khalīfa*.’<sup>14</sup>

Although it is clear that he was engaged in very intense devotional exercises under the care of Shaykh Mūsā, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq does not specify what the Shaykh’s devotional method really consisted in. As for the spiritual benefits that he accrued during this time, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq hints that he experienced ecstasy, alienation from his egoself, and longing for union with divine beauty by breaking the bonds of his reason—standard stages of love mysticism. He never mentions a revivalist project, nor did he seek to contain Sufi practice through Sharī‘a disciplines or to address social and political issues through the Sharī‘a.<sup>15</sup>

There has never been a contradiction between the practice of rituals obligatory in the Sharī‘a and the inward practice of mystical longing and ecstatic love. Fidelity to the practices of the Sharī‘a does not eclipse the longing for mystical union; conversely, the ecstatic exercises of love mysticism do not normally lead to the reification of Sharī‘a disciplines through revivalist strategies. Such is the relation between scholarly discipline and mystical devotion apparent in ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s early life under Qadiri preceptors; each had its sphere of activity and its religious legitimacy. It is clear that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was participating in a current of the South Asian Qadiri order whose initiates were immersed in love mysticism and *tawḥīd-i muṭlaq*. Like them, he revered Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn b. ‘Arabī, and was devoted to the Persian poetic tradition that popularized Ibn ‘Arabī through love lyrics.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Nizami, *Hayyāt*, 132. Nizami relates this quote from ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s *Waṣīyat-nāma*, in which he provided details of all his initiations from different Sufi masters. Nizami claims that the text of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s *Waṣīyat-nāma* is preserved in the prose of a later work, *Mir’at al-ḥaqqā’iq*, 60. The manuscript of the *Waṣīyat-nāma* seems no longer to exist. However, a manuscript containing similar information on ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s various initiations currently exists under the title *Risāla fī-labs al-khirqā* (MS Rampur: Reza Library, Arabic 993).

<sup>15</sup> Badā’ūnī observed that Shaykh Mūsā scrupulously performed his obligatory prayers, even to the point of himself giving the call to prayer in the court of Akbar. However, this does not imply that Shaykh Mūsā was in any way a ‘revivalist’. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements*, 156.

<sup>16</sup> *Tawḥīd-i muṭlaq* is the theological term for ‘reducing all existence to absolute unity’. *Tawḥīd*, or ‘limiting God to One and only One’, is the primary theological foundation of Islam. Sufis distinguished between *tawḥīd* as a statement of belief that is required of all Muslims, and *tawḥīd-i muṭlaq*—the inward experience in which all material reality becomes existent only in that it reflects the divine presence animating it. Some intellectually oriented Sufis

The Qadiri order has always harboured many variegated currents. Some Qadiri communities tended to emphasize upholding the Sharīʿa, others stressed becoming absorbed in *tawḥīd-i muṭlaq*. As in the example of Shaykh Mūsā, one shaykh can represent both currents. Carl Ernst depicts the ‘Qadiri option’ as the dynamic of some Sufis choosing to affiliate with the Qadiri lineage because they wished to stress adherence to the Sharīʿa.<sup>17</sup> While this description may be true for some Sufis, it cannot characterize the devotional style of the whole lineage in its diversity. The eponymous Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir himself embodied all these various cross-currents. He harboured within his personality many claims to authority, from that based on tradition-centred jurisprudence (in the Hanbali school), to that based on discourses exhorting self-obliteration through love, as well as the more charismatic authority based on his Sayyid lineage. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, claimed to be closer to the Prophet than any other shaykh since he wielded three types of authority—the authority achieved through aptitude in scholarly disciplines, the authority embodied through personal virtue, and the authority inherited through social status.<sup>18</sup> Thus his person provides a multi-dimensional axis of authority for the various devotional styles current in the Qadiri *ṭarīqa*. The crucial point is that, during the youth of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq in Delhi, none of the devotional styles stressed the need to revive the Sharīʿa or necessarily saw it as in imminent danger of fading into disregard.

worked out a system of poetic, scriptural and philosophic references that became known as *wahdat-i wujūd*, or ‘the unity of existence’, to capture this ecstatic experience of *tawḥīd-i muṭlaq* in a systematic form. While *wahdat-i wujūd* as a philosophical system became contested and debated, the experience of ‘reducing all phenomenal reality into absolute Unity’ subsisting in the divine presence was a primary experience for all Sufis, even those who questioned or rejected *wahdat-i wujūd*.

<sup>17</sup> Carl W. Ernst, ‘Persecution and Circumspection in the Shattari Sufi Order’, in Fred de Jong and Berndt Radtke (eds.), *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Debate and Conflict* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, Islamic History and Civilization Series, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī, made many bold claims to absolute spiritual authority, the most famous being his statement that ‘my foot is on the neck of all the other saints’. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq defends this statement as an utterance made in a state of spiritual intoxication while the Shaykh was spontaneously speaking in poetic meter. Despite this, claims ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, the statement is true since, at the moment he uttered this, other saints in distant locations knelt to the ground and extended their necks for him to step upon. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, *Zubdat al-asrār wa zubdat al-āthār* (n.p.: Bookselling Company Press, lithograph, 1312 AH).

The period during which ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq took a second initiation with Shaykh Mūsā is the very ambiguous one of his early adulthood, his twenties and thirties. His traditional biographers simply note that ‘when he reached the age of twenty, he had completed his studies and advanced to the stage of teaching and guiding others. After some time of active teaching, he departed to Makka for the ḥajj.’<sup>19</sup> This abridged account leaves obscure many salient points: such as what he taught, in what official capacity, and where. It is reasonable to assume that he stayed in Delhi until his father died in 990 AH, when ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was 32 years old. He was already married and a father by this time.<sup>20</sup> But soon thereafter, he moved to Fatehpur Sikri, to the court of Akbar. Whether he was a teacher or a courtier there is not clear. The discovery that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq spent time at Fatehpur is one of the greatest contributions of K. A. Nizami’s biography, for ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq himself purposefully blurred this period in his own autobiographic record (and the early biographic accounts of him followed his lead). These records simply state that while teaching, the Shaykh was overpowered by *jadhba*, by strong powers of attraction to the divine which erupted in his heart, breaking his power of reason and discrimination and overshadowing his personality in the form of something like insanity. In the traditional records, this divine attraction drew him inexorably to Makka.

The reality of these years is considerably more complex. Shaykh Mūsā was probably the one who introduced ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq into the court, either personally or through his contacts there. Shaykh Mūsā himself had made successful use of the resources of Akbar’s court. He had come to seek Akbar’s aid in the conflict over succession to his father’s prestigious position, a conflict that had erupted between himself and his elder brother. Instead of supporting Shaykh Mūsā directly in his family quarrel, Akbar persuaded him to settle near the court and offered him the rank of nobility. Shaykh Mūsā accepted this offer and settled down to train disciples around Delhi, and was a frequent visitor to the imperial court. It is not beyond conjecture that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq in his early adulthood sought to emulate the success of his preceptor by making use of the resources of the court. As an educated gentleman, budding scholar and avid poet, courtly circles would have welcomed him and respected him; indeed he made friends with some of the leading personalities there like Fayḍī, Badā’ūnī and Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad Bakhshī. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq

<sup>19</sup> Nizami, *Ḥayyāt*, 90.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 257. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s eldest son and major successor, Shaykh Nūr al-Ḥaqq, was born in 983/1575.

participated in the lively debates on religious topics that coursed between these luminaries.

Did ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq come to the court in order to revive the Sharī‘a, as implied by the narrative scheme of Nizami’s biography? This is very doubtful, because it was not a high priority of the Qadiri order (as ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq experienced it) to reform the court or to blame court life for social and religious ‘degeneration’. There was no figure in his past who might have pointed him to such a project or established a precedent for it. Although Shaykh Mūsā was personally pious, there is no evidence of his thinking of the Sharī‘a as being in need of dramatic revival or of Akbar’s court as being degenerate. If he had thought this, he surely could not in good conscience have accepted a position in the nobility and a *jāgīr* stipend from the emperor.

It is far more likely that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq came to the court at Fatehpur to seek royal patronage or a teaching position in court in order successfully to make the transition from gifted student to respected teacher. He may have spent a period of as long as five years at court. But unlike his Sufi shaykh, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq could not turn the resources of the court to his own advantage. He began to alienate himself from the more ambitious people around him. In his ‘official autobiography’, the conclusion of his masterpiece *Akbbār al-akhyār*, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq makes only the most elliptical, literary references to this period, while shying away from any direct statement about what he was doing, whom he knew, even about where he lived. From this, it is clear that he was deeply scarred by and ashamed of his experiences at court. He felt that he had to show that he knew nobody there, that he was indebted to nobody and helped nobody. This insistence hints that there is something to hide.

I was sitting in isolation, separated from home and relatives. My heart bore great hopes, yet I neither did favours for others nor harmed them. I never allowed the dust of other’s footsteps to settle on my heart. My conscience was clear of the need to keep the company of this person or that particular person; no, even more than this I had grown tired of mentioning the names ‘Zayd and ‘Amr in grammar lessons and books of composition.

*A hundred thanks that I have no quarrel with anyone  
and have done nothing to injure the heart of anyone  
Although my enemies may bear a weight in their hearts  
among my friends no bad conscience burdens anyone*<sup>21</sup>

‘Abd al-Ḥaqq makes only tangential, figurative and literary allusions to his retreat from the burning ambition and intrigue of the court.

<sup>21</sup> *Akbbār al-akhyār*, 313–14.

He deliberately uses ambivalent expressions that could be descriptive of his Sufi exercises at the time and/or of his liminal social status. He depicts himself during this time as sitting in the *‘zāwiya’*—this could mean a lonely corner or a Sufi hospice—one valence of meaning expresses his professed aloofness from human company, while the other reveals that he was very much in the midst of a community. He also describes himself as living *‘ghurba’*—this could mean that he chose to live in the spiritual condition of a stranger recognized by nobody, or could more literally mean that he was spatially separated from home and family and living in a strange and alienating place.

When ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq claims in this official autobiography that his conscience was ‘clear of the need to sit with this person or that person’, he unintentionally reveals that he was both tempted and compelled to find patronage, support, and build allies in the court. It also shows that others at court may have vied with each other over who could claim this brilliant young scholar in their circle of debate, discussion and intrigue. This is hinted at in the allusion to Zayd and ‘Amr, the stock characters of classical Arabic grammar expositions and exercises. Zayd and ‘Amr could be a cipher for the two leading personalities at court, the brothers Abū l-Faḍl and Fayḍī; if ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was engaged as a teacher of Arabic composition and rhetoric as well as religious sciences in the circles of these courtiers, his mention of Zayd and ‘Amr during lessons might entangle him in exhausting court intrigues.

‘Abd al-Ḥaqq mentions obliquely that, during this time, he turned to others for counsel and relied on their guidance, a reliance upon others which exposed his conscience to temptation, doubts and even moments of disbelief; but his turning to them was of no avail:

The Lord has blessed this poor servant with grace in general, and with a special spiritual taste and state that has given me presence of mind and inner tranquillity and kept me apart from the hubbub of human company and the troubles people cause each other. I have a secret that I harbour within myself, and every time I dwell upon it I experience joy, even in the midst of pervasive melancholy . . . The times that make me joyful are those times, like in my youth and my endeavour to gain knowledge, when I get by the places of straits and snares which cause the foot to slip and the eyes to wander astray. In those times, a divine help is extended from beyond the veil of the Unseen from that place I know, so that the overwhelming power of divine authority leads me, without my own choosing, from the doubts and weak misgivings that are dropped into the workshop of the ego and satan, and leads me to sit in the tranquil haven of alienation and aloneness. By these means, the Lord turns the direction of my seeking aid from others into another direction, toward the Lord alone. For a time, due to the opposition of my reason and the tumult of my vain ambition, I did not even have

that basic belief in divine singularity (*tawḥīd*) that is the primary condition for any seeker on the Way. My heart was not inscribed with the desired orientation toward sincerity and righteousness. But in the end, after taking counsel with other people and following their advice came to no use, then there remained no way out except to pass the reins of choice back to the Truth. Since my own reason could not untie the knots that held me down, there was no way forward except through letting go of reason and embracing a holy madness.

*You must leave aside calculated rationality  
and lay hold of what seems like insanity*<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq blots out his experience in the court with this intense, inward self-scrutiny. In this remarkable and delicately phrased text, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq does not accuse others of disbelief and heresy at court, but rather confesses that he found himself guilty of unbelief, for he turned to others for material aid and social advancement, rather than relying on the will of the divine alone. Just how much he relied on others is made clear by an ‘unofficial’ autobiographical fragment that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq included in one of his letters. By his own admission, he found a modicum of success and support at court. His position was raised up by the Emperor himself, who took care of his material needs. However, this success led only to his dissatisfaction, as he suspected that various factions at court sought to manipulate him and use his fame to increase their power and achieve their selfish designs. In this letter, written by ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq just after he returned to Delhi from the Hijaz, he reveals some of the candid details of his experience at court, and recounts how he explained his dissatisfaction with court life to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Muttaqī once he had arrived in Makka.

When I came into the presence of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, I presented before him my life story from the beginning, and I said: ‘Sir, I am a man who grew up since my youngest days accustomed to exertions of learning and worship. So I never got accustomed to the company of worldly people and the demands of socializing with them. Once I had acquired by the grace of God a reasonable experience with socializing, and satisfied my needs and aims in engaging with society, some people of means in the government prevailed upon me to present myself for service at the hands of the worldly rulers. I met the Sultan of the age [the Emperor Akbar] and he provided for me and took care of my needs and raised my position. They sought to increase their following through using me, and to gain command of wealth and power through manipulating this poor man. But God protected me and did not leave me to their designs. God evoked in the

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 314.

heart of His servant an overwhelming attraction and passion for the divine and led him out of Hindustan to this holy place.’<sup>23</sup>

How explain the introversion and self-questioning into which ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq had fallen? This state was powerful enough to cause him to leave the potentially rewarding resources of the court, and further to abandon all plans of becoming a teacher.

K. A. Nizami offers the explanation that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq abandoned the court because of his disgust with the policies of Akbar and his closest circle of courtiers. Nizami follows the lead of the medieval historian, Badā’ūnī, who claimed that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s leaving the court was a protest against the Emperor’s heretical experimentations.<sup>24</sup> In Nizami’s estimation, a great reformer like ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq could not possibly bear to stay at a corrupt and degenerate court like Fatehpur, let alone find the companionship and support to thrive there. He writes: ‘It is evident that Shaykh Muḥaddith stayed for some at Fatehpur Sikri . . . but how could such a personality, on the face of whose destiny it was clearly written that he revive and strengthen the Islamic scholarly disciplines, possibly remain in that cultural environment in which religiously sanctioned custom [*shar’*] was not respected or followed and where the disruption of heresy [*bid’ a*] was on the rise.’<sup>25</sup>

In this argument, Nizami clearly joins both types of biographic fallacies; he argues that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s mature life-orientation was inherent in him from the beginning, while also claiming that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s life-path was shaped in reaction to his surrounding environment. In this case, the event that marks the change in that environment

<sup>23</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, *Makātīb va rasā’il* (Delhi: Maṭba‘-yi Mujtabā’, 1297 AH), 279. Nizami (*Ḥayyāt*, 92) quotes this fascinating letter as a biographical source, as does Rizvi (*Revivalist Movements*, 155). Rizvi mistakenly claims the letter was addressed to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Muttaqī. In fact, the addressee is unnamed, but is evidently a Qadiri shaykh and an advocate of *tawḥīd-i muṭlaq* who lived in Madina, whom ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq had been unable to meet personally when the Shaykh came to Hindustan. This unnamed Shaykh could most likely be ‘Alī ibn ‘Īsā al-Ḥalabī al-Shāfi‘ī al-Qādirī, whom ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq mentions as a notable Qadiri shaykh whom he had previously met while in Madina: see *Zād al-muttaqīn fī sulūk ṭarīq al-yaqīn* (MS London: British Museum Library, Oriental Collection 217) fol. 63<sup>b</sup>. All translations and folio citations in this study are from this British Museum Library manuscript. Other copies are located at: Rampur: Saulat Public Library, 407 (acquisition no. P/19), and Hyderabad: Oriental Manuscript Library and Research Institute (formerly the Asafiya Collection) 1523 Persian Taṣawwuf.

<sup>24</sup> Badā’ūnī, *Muntakhab al-ṭawārīkh*, iii. 113.

<sup>25</sup> Nizami, *Ḥayyāt*, 92.

was Akbar's circulation of his *maḥḍar*, the decree that 'a just Sultan was superior to a paradigmatic legal scholar.'

Nizami bases his very gloomy assessment of Hindustan's level of heresy and decay upon the *Tadhkira* of Abū l-Kalām Āzād, which he explicitly quotes as a historical source for the judgment pronounced in the following passage: 'In the time that Shaykh Muḥaddith had decided to leave Hindustan, its religious environment had become completely corrupted. Worldly [ulema] both within the court and outside it had created such a regrettable and despicable situation that no great shaykh could stay there without suffering great trials and difficulties. The renowned scholars and masters of the religious arts as well as those who cashed in on showy asceticism and inherited positions of mystical popularity had spread corruption and social strife from every side.'<sup>26</sup>

In point of fact Akbar circulated his controversial decree in 987/1579, three or four years before 'Abd al-Ḥaqq would have come to the court. He further established the *'ibādat khāna* and formal religious debates among the ulema two years later, in 989 AH. Yet the only religious scholars officially banished in this period were Ṣadr al-Ṣudūr and Makhdūm al-Mulk, who were, by all accounts, crooks and cheats not interested in the Sharī'a beyond what it might profit them. Nizami seals his argument with the following claim.

The religious speculations of Akbar began to change rapidly with alarming intensity. Courtiers began to critique the masters of the Islamic sciences and to belittle them. Beneath the guise of the discourses of 'the Aḥmadī faith' [belief in the special dispensation of the second thousand years in which the Islamic legal norms would no longer apply], contentment with the pillars of normative Islamic custom began to dissolve. Then the *'Dīn-i Ilāhī* was organized and an entirely new dimension was added to the religious strife of the time... Abū l-Faḍl and Fayḍī were the vanguard of this religious ideology. Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq had friendly, even intimate, relations with Fayḍī. Upon witnessing this situation at court, his conscience became alarmed and perplexed. If he would act a little like the movers and shakers of his time, then he might secure fame and wealth or power and social prestige. However, his religious sensitivities remained acute and his conscience remained alert. By some decree of fate, he was not prepared to

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 92–3. Immediately after this passage, Nizami quotes Mawlānā Abū l-Kalām Āzād, *Tadhkira* (Lahore: Anārkalī Kitāb Ghar, 1st edn., n.d.), 87. Āzād advanced the claim that heresy abounded in order to explain why his ancestor, Shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn, left Delhi and settled in the Hijaz. It is unfortunate that many modern scholars have treated the *Tadhkira* as a historical study, whereas it is actually a text of personal and ethical reflections by Mawlānā Āzād as refracted through his historical imagination.

suppress the inner voice of his conscience. In these circumstances, no other course of action seemed possible except voluntary exile from his home country. So in zealous and jealous defence of his religion, he made his way to the Hijaz.<sup>27</sup>

The problem with this explanation is that nowhere does ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq claim to have left Hindustan in defense of orthodoxy. His conscience was certainly alarmed and perplexed, and he was tempted to secure power and prestige like his colleagues. However, the religion that he declares as defunct and bankrupt is his own, not that of Akbar or Fayḍī or Abū l-Faḍl. In addition, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was not composing any texts during this period which sought to reify the Sharī‘a against perceived threats. He began to compile his first major work, *Akbbār al-akhyār*, in 993/1584, during this period at court. Yet this collection of biographical narratives about saints and scholars offers no evidence of disgust with contemporary heresies.

‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s second modern biographer, Athar Abbas Rizvi, scoffs at the explanation offered by Nizami, but offers no cogent counter-explanation.<sup>28</sup> Rizvi claims that many scholars at Akbar’s court were able to follow the Sharī‘a without being ridiculed or banished, either by imperial decree or by their own scruples. By way of a counter-explanation, Rizvi claims that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq left Hindustan simply because the pilgrimage is an obligation upon every Muslim, and that beyond this he may have held purely scholarly motives to get further training in *ḥadīth* studies. However, this claim accords neither with the texture of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s own narrative nor the common pattern of scholarly travel.<sup>29</sup>

It is the contention of this study that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq became a revival-minded Sufi-scholar only after having met Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in Makka, after having trained under him in the Muttaqī method. The autobiographical reflections cited above make clear that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was not so much disgusted by others at court, as by himself for having come there. He was perplexed not by the spread

<sup>27</sup> Nizami, *Ḥayyāt*, 94–5.

<sup>28</sup> Although Rizvi is critical of Nizami, he is also dependent on Nizami’s painstaking research in Urdu and, regrettably, fails honestly to give credit where it is due. He refers to Nizami’s biography as the weak opinion of ‘some modern scholars’, yet clarifies later that he intends to single it out for criticism: *Revivalist Movements*, 156–7, n. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Scholars normally set out for the Hijaz for the purpose of study and initiation at a younger age, before marrying and starting a family. This is the typical pattern as evidenced by ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Muttaqī and Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir Pattanī, a generation before ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq.

of heresy in the imperial camp, but by his own worldly ambition to gain fame as a teacher of religious knowledge and an embodiment of Islamic piety. In the intense internal reaction that overwhelmed him, he not only abandoned the court and his position as a teacher, but perhaps also all claim to being a saintly guide.<sup>30</sup>

During this period at court, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was traversing the dangerous zone between being a scholar and becoming a saint as recognized by the society around him. But the process of finishing one’s studies and emerging as a saint is not at all painless; it is often a precarious passage, even a dangerous one. The modern anthropologist ‘Abdellah Hammoudi has analyzed this passage in the life of a late nineteenth-century saint in southern Morocco, and his observations are very pertinent in regard to ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq: ‘Here is a young man who starts out by devoting himself to *‘ilm* [knowledge]. This decision itself sets him apart from the majority of his contemporaries and launches him on a path which differs from the ordinary lives of cultivators, merchants, shepherds and artisans . . . But if a student, reaching the end of his apprenticeship and the beginning of adulthood—and expected to settle in an occupation and found a family—chooses to follow another path, to search for God through Sufi exercises and illumination, the decision brings distress to the family and concern to the group.’<sup>31</sup> The pursuit of knowledge can be the key to a profitable career and a life of secure social status. Throughout his early life, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s loyalty to the ideals of Sufism and its practice did not conflict with his aspiration to become a scholar and teacher. However, as he began to work as a teacher and attain renown and symbolic capital, he experienced an internal backlash and a deep questioning of all that he was engaged in, including his pursuit of and dependence on knowledge.

There is no question that the saint is a familiar figure, but unlike the scholar in the Islamic sciences, he is engaged in an unpredictable quest. The development of his career is totally dependent on the grace of God, the work of his initiators, and endorsement by the people, all things over which the political authorities and the *‘ulamā’* have little control . . . Most important, the departure of a man for initiation takes the concrete form of a spectacular and immediate renunciation of the values which govern daily life. Instead of getting married he leaves his home and his village; instead of earning a living or accumulating resources he scorns

<sup>30</sup> A *majdhūb* is somebody so absorbed in divine love that his or her reason is cracked; therefore, though the *majdhūb* may display a certain spiritual potency or command social awe, he or she is not a reliable spiritual guide for others.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Abdellah Hammoudi, *Master and Disciple: the Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 88.

money making, entrusting God with his needs; instead of settling down, giving allegiance to a territory, a community, a government, he wanders, engaged in a quest for a master and a charismatic group—travelling over spaces in which the only things that count are the traces of past revelation and the signs of future spiritual conquests.<sup>32</sup>

The relevance here of Hammoudi’s analysis is that it restores to the hagiographic narrative the sense of uncertainty, contingency and danger which permeated the real life of the saint-in-process. However, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq deviates from the classic archetype that Hammoudi outlines in some important ways.<sup>33</sup> He was more devoted to study than the average pupil, and did not easily give up his attachment to the outward pursuit of and dissemination of knowledge. For a long time he perceived no conflict between outward knowledge that could be acquired by study and inward knowledge that came only through spiritual experience. Consequently, he had already married and settled into a life of teaching when he began to feel the urge to renounce his worldly position gained by his mastery of knowledge; this intensified his internal conflict to dangerous levels when he interrupted the stream of his career to leave for Makka.

Finally, he could not justify this renunciation on the grounds of searching after an initiating Shaykh as many students had done, for he had already pledged his allegiance to two stable figures, his father and Shaykh Mūsā. In comparison to others who joined the Muttaqī community in the Hijaz early in their lives at around age twenty (such as ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir Pattanī), ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq made this transition at a much older age, when he was thirty-eight. In many ways, then, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s precocious and resource-rich childhood poorly equipped him to face the challenges of early adulthood, and made this precarious passage even more dangerous for him.

In the end, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq justified his devastating internal critique and subsequent renunciation as the effect of *jadhba*, overpowering urges to leave reason and calculation and draw close to the divine presence. To those conversant with Sufi concepts, the effects of *jadhba* are often only shades different from the signs of insanity; to most others they appear identical. It is possible that his bout of *jadhba* was actually a rhetorical strategy that he used in the composition of his autobiography gracefully to blur over the details of this difficult and disappointing time. Or he may have acted out the signs of *jadhba* socially as a means to cut loose and run from the court. It may not have been as easy to get out of the court as

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>33</sup> This classic pattern presented by Hammoudi applies more clearly to Shaykh ‘Alī Muttaqī and especially to his successor, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Muttaqī.

it had been to get in, especially if his position had been raised by Akbar himself. Or finally it is certainly possible that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s autobiography reports sincerely the collapse of his worldly ambition and the eclipse of his self-discrimination, which he recognized as *jadhbba*, as divine love pulling him out of himself as well as pulling him out of his current situation.

In any case, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq left the court and, in his words, ‘wandered’. Again, his autobiography provides no clue as to where and how he wandered; he claims only to have left all work, disregarded all human contact, and ended up in the Hijaz.

After I found some peace of mind and the agitation of doubts and temptations subsided, doubts which ultimately cause disappointment and despair, then I ceased to struggle with any kind of work and shut my eyes to the presence of others around me. I sat on the threshold of my own heart, waiting to see what might happen and what door might open before me. Under the ruling of the phrase ‘Whoever allows God to act on their behalf will never be disappointed’ and ‘Whoever turns to God in trials will find release’, the empowerer of the helpless and the guide of the wandering called me toward the divine presence. God placed the chain of longing and love around the neck of this homeless wanderer, and pulled him toward His own abode. And this undeserving one reached that most sought after goal, the place of the beloved, Makka and Madina.<sup>34</sup>

In reality, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq first drifted back to Delhi in his state of *jadhbba*. This was sensible enough, since his family may have remained in Delhi while he moved to court. He seemed to have suffered from a vague longing to go to Makka but did not have the material means, which he neither took from the court nor procured from Delhi.

If Akbar’s threat to orthodoxy was so stark and the spread of heresy so extensive that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq had left Fatehpur in protest, as presented in Nizami’s account, there is little reason to believe he would head for Delhi. Surely Delhi would have been just as submerged in decay as the court near Agra. He should have left directly for the ḥajj. His return to Delhi was not even a means to achieve this end, since ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq did not procure funds for his travels in Delhi. Rather, his wandering back to Delhi makes sense only as a result of an emotional regression that was part of his temporary insanity. As he renounced all hopes for success

<sup>34</sup> *Akbbār al-akbyār*, 314. With this episode, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq ended his ‘official autobiography’ in *Akbbār al-akbyār*, which was completed in 999/1590. He took up the narrative of his own life again from this point forward in another short autobiographical statement in the introduction to *Zād al-muttaqīn*, which details his condition upon arrival in the Hijaz; this composition was completed in 1003/1594.

through the court, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was also renouncing the model of his exemplary Shaykh Mūsā Jilānī, who was still alive and well when ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq left.<sup>35</sup> As he did so, he regressed to the more comforting model of his first Shaykh, his deceased father. There is evidence of this regression where he explains his renunciation as faithfully upholding his father’s advice and embodying the very spirit of his guidance.

It is as if this final couplet from a *ghazal* articulates my state of mind perfectly [while I was wandering]:

*Whose company does Ḥaqqī keep  
lost as he is in the thought of his lover  
He keeps to himself in his own world  
like a madman in this world of ours*

From my very earliest days, I have observed the advice of my father, who used to tell me, ‘Be careful that you don’t become a dry and hard-hearted *mullā*.’ So every breath that I draw in love and passion increases my tender-heartedness, and each step I take is on the path of distancing my need from others and evoking sympathy to their needs from myself.

*I am not hard-hearted, for I live in passion  
I bear a heart always full of pathos and pain*

I am hopeful that with each breath, I can follow the footsteps of that respected master and guide [my father], and that I benefit from taking up the real work that is stepping outside the business of the self.<sup>36</sup>

As the armour of his ambition was stripped away, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq must have sorely missed the warm shelter of his father’s social circle in Delhi. He drifted back to Delhi with vague hopes of rediscovering this lost equipoise. Yet when it was not to be found, the last strands of reason beyond the cords of ambition itself snapped, and his state of *jadhba* reached its fullest extent. This ‘insanity’ allowed him to leave his family

<sup>35</sup> That ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq did not meet his Shaykh again in Delhi speaks of the depth of his renunciation of Shaykh Mūsā’s personal example. Otherwise, it would have been unthinkable bad etiquette to return to Delhi and not visit his Shaykh. Nor does he mention having met him again after returning to Hindustan, though Shaykh Mūsā remained alive until the same year that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq returned to Delhi. Shaykh Mūsā died in 1001 AH, shot by highway robbers: see Ghulām Muḥammad Lāhorī, *Khazīnat al-aṣfiyā* (Lucknow: Maṭba‘ Munshī Nawwāl Kishore, n.d.), 137. This record does not explain why the Shaykh was in Multan, but since he was a noble of the imperial court he may have been leading a military expedition in the area.

<sup>36</sup> *Akhbār al-akhyār*, 314.

and children behind in uncertain conditions and to wander to Gujarat without the means in hand to secure passage to the Hijaz. He had fallen into the perplexed state now called a 'nervous breakdown' or 'mid-life crisis'. The advice of his colleagues and the plans of his own reason had led him ultimately to a dead end, and only the powerful waves of *jadhbā* could carry him on a journey whose outcome he could not yet foresee.

## RELUCTANT REVIVALIST: VIEW FROM A SERENDIPITOUS SOJOURN IN MAKKA

ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq could not leave immediately for the ḥajj. He wandered overland from Delhi into the cities of Gujarat in a slow progress toward Surat, the major port commanding the overseas trade routes from South Asia to the Hijaz. This journey took at least one year. ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq's activities during this time provide some evidence that helps to clarify what his state of heart may have been, in regard to the Mughal court and in regard to the condition of Sufism in South Asia. An especially crucial dimension of this last point is the question of whether ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq was searching for a new Sufi initiation to provide him with a new foundation and orientation.<sup>37</sup> On the surface, he does not mention any desire for a new shaykh representing any new lineages. Yet by the time of his arrival in the Hijaz, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq expressed the reality that, after finding consolation by visiting the Prophet's tomb at Madina and achieving the honour of fulfilling the rituals of the ḥajj in Makka, he turned his attention to finding a teacher in *ḥadīth* studies and a guide in Sufi discipline.<sup>38</sup> The events of his passage through Gujarat shed light on this apparent contradiction.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Although Nizami's biography provides details about all four of the spiritual guides from whom ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq took initiation and training during his long life, he does not discuss the relation between them nor does he specify what forces may have prompted ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq to request initiations from new shaykhs.

<sup>38</sup> *Zād al-muttaqīn*, fol. 4<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq narrated the full story of his travel to the Hijaz, a sea voyage that involved strange events and wild tales, in the introduction to his Persian book on the history of Madina, entitled *Jadhb al-qulūb ilā diyār al-Maḥbūb* (the Hearts' Attraction to the Beloved's Home). This work was printed in Persian in 1846 in Calcutta, and later in Lucknow by Munshī Nawwāl Kishore Press. It was printed in an Urdu translation under the title, *Ta'rikh-i Madīna*. He began this book in Madina in 998 AH, and completed it in 1001 after his return to Delhi; see *Makātib va rasā'il*, 279.

When ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq arrived in Gujarat, it was a place both connected to Hindustan and also quite distinct from it. The administration of the country was an extension of the Mughal polity, since the army of Akbar had conquered Gujarat. Yet despite this surface similarity, since Gujarat had been ruled as an independent polity for about 150 years, Gujarati society and its relationship to Sufis had developed differently from that situation obtaining in the Gangetic plain and Delhi. All the while that Delhi was apparently plunged in decay and disarray, the Gujarati dynasty was wealthy and the court at Ahmadabad patronized Sufis as well as scholars. Finally, while Delhi offered a land-locked continental environment, Gujarat was a coastal, porous society, which nurtured and profited by intensive contacts with distant points—most notably Yemen and the Hijaz, but extending as far as Indonesia and the Ottoman Mediterranean. Foreign arrivals had been very quickly integrated into society as beneficial elements and given high-status positions as courtiers, Sufis and religious scholars.

Gujarat harboured many varieties of Sufi devotion. The Shattari community of Sufis acted as an important bridge of continuity between the Gangetic heartland and the Gujarati coastland, and the fortunes of this lineage were intimately connected to the ascendancy of the Mughal polity. The renowned Shattari ascetic, Muḥammad Ghawth Gwāliyōrī was himself the primary foundation of this bridge, for he rose to eminence in the Gangetic plain under the patronage of Bābur and Humāyūn.<sup>40</sup> Humāyūn’s defeat left the Shaykh vulnerable to persecution from the victorious Sūrī regime, and under pressure the Shaykh found refuge in Gujarat. For the next sixteen years, Shaykh Muḥammad Ghawth stayed in Gujarat, building up a strong following despite the efforts of some rivals to persecute him again; only after Humāyūn reconquered Hindustan did the Shaykh return to Agra and Gwalior.

When ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq travelled through Gujarat, he was supported by a network of Shattari Sufi leaders. He stayed with Muḥammad Ghawthī Shattārī once he arrived in Mandu. At Ahmadabad, he kept company with Shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn ‘Alawī, one of the strongest disciples of Shaykh Muḥammad Ghawth.<sup>41</sup> These good relations with the Shattari

<sup>40</sup> See Carl W. Ernst, ‘Persecution and Circumspection in the Shattari Sufi Order’ and Kugle, ‘Heaven’s Witness: the Uses and Abuses of Muḥammad Ghawth Gwāliyōrī’s ascension’, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14/1 (January 2003): 1–36.

<sup>41</sup> Muḥammad Ghawthī Mandawī Shattārī, *Gulzār-i abrār*, Urdu transl. by Faḍl Aḥmad Jewarī, *Adbkār al-abrār* (Agra: Maṭba‘-i Mufīd-i ‘Āmm, 1326 AH), 405–10. Wajīh al-Dīn was not only a disciple, but the teacher of four of the sons of Muḥammad Ghawth Gwāliyōrī.

community further demonstrate that ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq did not advocate a reformist agenda at this stage in his life. The Shattaris were exponents of an assertive brand of *tawḥīd-i muṭlaq* and advocated their own lineage’s superiority because of their total absorption in this mystical philosophy.

In the generation before ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq, the Shattaris had been subject to persecution by *sharʿī* and reform-oriented Sufis and scholars; and the persecution in Gujarat focused upon their theology as well as their political allegiance to the Mughals.<sup>42</sup> Revival-minded Sufis were suspicious of the Shattaris’ boastful asceticism and speculative theology as well as their political ties. For example, one shaykh in Mandu, Walī Allāh, warned his young son against taking initiation from shaykhs like ‘certain persons prominent these days in Gujarat [who] indulge in praying on the divine names and attempting to captivate kings’, and offered a sharp critique of the Shattari practices of Muḥammad Ghawth and his brother Shaykh Phūl. Instead, the father urged his son to find a Shaykh who was strictly pious and scrupulously pure, and advised him specifically to serve Shaykh ʿAlī Muttaqī, or someone like him.<sup>43</sup> If at this time, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq had been advocating an internal reform from within Sufism in order to curb ascetic and speculative adventurism, he could not in good conscience have kept the company of this Shattari community.

Furthermore, when ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq arrived in Gujarat, he also found protection and support from the Mughal nobility and administrators who were based there. When he arrived in Malwa, he was hosted by the Mughal governor, Mirzā ʿAzīz Kōkah. In Ahmadabad, he was welcomed by Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad Bakhshī, the treasurer of the district and a previous acquaintance from the Mughal court; this administrator

<sup>42</sup> See Kugle, *Sufis and Saints’ Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality and Sacred Power in Islamic Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2007), which documents ʿAlī Muttaqī’s decision to lead the movement to persecute Muḥammad Ghawth in Ahmadabad.

<sup>43</sup> *Zād al-muttaqīm*, fol. 46<sup>b</sup>. This son grew up to be ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Muttaqī, who took his father’s advice literally, and continued to be sceptical of the Shattaris until his last days. ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq later asked about this practice of *daʿwat-i asmaʿ* or ‘invoking the divine names’ and whether it was an authentic method of reaching intimacy with God; ʿAbd al-Wahhāb answered: ‘It might be a way of reaching a sort of closeness, and surely adhering to the divine names cannot be without effect. However, the dervishes who habitually indulge in this practice neglect to polish their ethical comportment. Most of them are truly rude and selfish people who bear grudges against others. From anyone who might slight them or oppress them, they are sure to take retribution.’ *Zād al-muttaqīm*, fol. 61<sup>a</sup>.

secured for ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq his sea passage to the Hijaz.<sup>44</sup> This is still further evidence that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq did not leave Hindustan in protest against the practices of the Mughal court itself.

‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s journey through Gujarat ended in Ahmadabad, where he learned that the sailing season for the westward voyage to the Hijaz had already ended. He had to wait for the seasonal winds to change, which could have meant a wait up to ten months long.<sup>45</sup> He spent these long months in the company of Shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn. Throughout his crisis, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq continued to be fiercely and zealously loyal to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir and his contemporaries in the Qadiri lineage. He was especially pleased to meet and keep company with Shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn and learn more Qadiri litanies and prayers from him (for in addition to being a Shattari, he was also a Qadiri, for those who took initiation from Muḥammad Ghawth Gwāliyōrī received affiliation to fourteen distinct lineages). By learning *dhikr* techniques from him, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq treated him as a *shaykh al-istifāda* from whom he could receive learning and litanies without offering himself for discipline and training.

His close relations with Wajīh al-Dīn show that even after ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq left the court, he still felt comfortable with the current of Qadiris who openly advocate *tawḥīd-i muṭlaq*, like those with whom he was familiar in Delhi. Indeed, if ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq were self-consciously searching for a new Shaykh, Wajīh al-Dīn would have been a choice dear to his heart, for this Gujarati Shaykh compounded an outer Sharī‘a rectitude and acumen in the discipline of *ḥadīth* with an inner attachment to the philosophical and ecstatic method of existential unity. These were two faces of Sufi devotion with which ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq had been raised and at which he excelled. Shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn founded the major madrasa of Ahmadabad for the teaching of the scriptural and Sharī‘a disciplines. At the same time, he also defended the radical ecstatic claims of Muḥammad Ghawth and protected him from persecution.

Shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn was an exemplar of one style of fusing Sharī‘a studies with Sufi piety: the lynch-pin that held the two together was *tawḥīd-i muṭlaq*. In his spiritual outlook, the key to embodying the Prophet’s ethics was to embody the properties of the divine names.

<sup>44</sup> *Gulzār-i abrār*, 599.

<sup>45</sup> M. N. Pearson, *Pious Passengers: the Hajj in Earlier Times* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1994), 149–50. The annual season for sailing out of Surat to Yemen and the Hijaz occurred for only a narrow window of time in March and April, before the monsoon storms, from June through September, made navigation across the Arabian Gulf impossible. Ships returned from the Hijaz and Yemen to Surat in September. One who missed the spring sailing season would have to wait until the next spring in order to make the voyage safely.

These are the names of divine qualities that both support the basic structure of the Qur'ānic revelation and through which the divine essence permeates all existence.<sup>46</sup> Though he was a *ḥadīth* scholar, Wajīh al-Dīn did not seek to reify the person of the Prophet through his normative behaviour. Rather, Wajīh al-Dīn sought to illuminate the essential reality of the Prophet, which was precisely the most complete manifestation of the divine names.<sup>47</sup>

In fact, Wajīh al-Dīn was instrumental in opposing the activities of revivalist Sufis who advocated a more activist social ethic. His defence of Muḥammad Ghawth may have occurred when Shaykh 'Alī Muttaqī was actively intervening in affairs of state to assert the primacy of the normative behaviour of the Prophet. 'Alī Muttaqī had requested permission from the Gujarati sultan Maḥmūd III to review the operations of the court, judge whether they were in accordance with the Sharī'a and enforce whatever changes he deemed necessary. This reformist agenda could have included placing limits on those Sufis, like Muḥammad Ghawth, who were vocally ecstatic and leapt over the particular examples of the Prophet's behaviour (as formalized in the Sharī'a) into more imaginary and intimate relations to the Prophet's spirit.<sup>48</sup> When this

<sup>46</sup> In this way, Wajīh al-Dīn's method was in accordance with the tradition that, when 'Ā'isha was asked about the Prophet's character, she simply said that his character was the Qur'ān.

<sup>47</sup> Wajīh al-Dīn composed the Arabic text, *al-Ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*, which presents his vision of how the divine names regulate the emanation of the cosmic world from the divine essence down to base materiality. In this way, every created being is also an event in which the divine names manifest their realities. The Prophet's essence is the light that illumines all these manifestations. This was collected into a text and given a commentary by his disciple and successor at his madrasa, Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz Khālīdī. The whole text acts as a commentary on the saying of the Prophet, 'The first thing that God created was my light'. Muḥammad Zubair Qureishi (ed. and transl. into Urdu), *al-Ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya* (Sarkhej near Ahmadabad: Committee of the Tomb of Shaykh Aḥmad Khattū, 1966).

<sup>48</sup> The persecution of Muḥammad Ghawth centred around the issue of his ascension experience, as reported in his *Mī'rāj-nāma* and published in his collection of meditation exercises entitled *Aurād-i Ghawthiyya* (Raichur, Karnataka: Maṭba'-yi Sibghatullāhī, 1313 AH). Carl Ernst has critically discussed the role of shaykh 'Alī Muttaqī in the persecution in Ernst, 'Persecution and Circumspection,' 6. In general, 'Alī Muttaqī criticized those shaykhs who claim personal authority based on having transversed various spiritual states and heavenly planes. In some letters, 'Alī Muttaqī denounces Muḥammad Ghawth as a cheat and impostor who lied about having ascension experiences and disrespected the Prophet.

attempt at reform failed, ‘Alī Muttaqī returned to the Hijaz never to come to Gujarat again; his student and *khalīfa*, Muḥammad ibn Tāhir Pattanī, took up his role. Just as he had tried to thwart ‘Alī Muttaqī’s persecution of Muḥammad Ghawth, so Wajīh al-Dīn also tried to curb the reform efforts of Muḥammad ibn Tāhir.

From his home base in Pattan, Muḥammad ibn Tāhir tried to prove that the Mahdawi movement transgressed the bounds of the Sharī‘a; during the Mughal invasion of Gujarat, Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Tāhir conferred with Akbar in the hope of harnessing state power to enforce his aims of social reform. While travelling to Agra to see Akbar in person, again in order to complain against the current governor who was cooperative with the Mahdawi community, he met Shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn who tried to dissuade him from his style of activist ethics and political involvement. The core of his advice to the revival-minded reformist (the advice of one master of *ḥadīth* studies to another master who saw *ḥadīth* in a completely different light) was to ask what was the use of reifying the Sharī‘a when every thing in creation exists only as a manifestation of the divine names?<sup>49</sup>

Once Shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn’s background as a subtle and scholarly opponent of reformist efforts in Gujarat becomes clear, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s cordial relations with him take on a greater significance. It shows that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, even after leaving the court, did not consider *tawḥid-i muṭlaq* to be an obstacle to authentic Islamic piety. Nor did he view *ḥadīth* studies as a method of tempering the speculative and poetic strains of Sufi devotion. The long period that he spent with Wajīh al-Dīn shows that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was still dislocated in a state of transition. He admired the Shaykh’s erudition and ecstatic piety enough to keep his company and offer himself to receive scholarly instruction and the blessing of *dhikr* techniques. Yet he did not offer his hand to Wajīh al-Dīn for initiation. He was unable to articulate what kind of shaykh could fulfil his aspirations; indeed he was still unable to acknowledge that he was searching for a new method.

The Shattari and Qadiri affiliations of Shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn must have seemed comfortably familiar to ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq. However, in Gujarat, he must also have come into contact with other lineages that were new and alien to him. These lineages represent the dimension of Gujarati society that faces away from Hindustan and leads out over the Arabian Sea. In Ahmadabad, he encountered the ‘Maghribi’ lineage of Sufis, who occupy a patriotic niche in Gujarati history because of their active involvement with the foundation of Gujarat as a separate and independent dynasty.

<sup>49</sup> An Urdu translation of this speech is reproduced in *Gulzār-i abrār*, 323–4.

Wajih al-Dīn himself held an initiation into this lineage. The ‘Maghribī’ lineage is the name of a branch of the Madyani lineage,<sup>50</sup> which became the most prestigious lineage in Gujarat during the days of the foundation of the Muẓaffar Shāhī dynasty.

The Madyani lineage came to Gujarat from Morocco through a wandering Sufi named Bābā Ishāq Maghribī. His only disciple to gain renown was Shaykh Aḥmad Khattū. The life story of Aḥmad Khattū vividly illustrates how the breakdown of ‘central’ power in Delhi created new opportunities for ‘peripheral’ local dynasties. His biography reads like an allegory of the process by which Gujarat gained independence from Delhi’s rule.<sup>51</sup> Shaykh Aḥmad eventually settled in Gujarat at Sarkhej; his blessings helped the local governor to break free of imperial control from Delhi, and to establish the Muẓaffar Shāhī dynasty. Shaykh Aḥmad continued to cooperate with this Sultan’s son, named Aḥmad

<sup>50</sup> Vincent J. Cornell, ed. and transl., *The Way of Abū Madyān: Doctrinal and Poetic Works of Abū Madyān Shūʿayb ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Anṣārī* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1996) provides a critical biography of the Shaykh in his introduction.

<sup>51</sup> Shaykh Aḥmad Khattū was the son of a noble in the Tughluq court in Delhi who became lost in a dust storm, but Bābā Ishāq rescued and adopted him. Even after his origins became apparent, Ahmad stayed with Bābā Ishāq, renouncing his ties to Delhi’s ruling house. Bābā Ishāq quit Delhi on account of the behaviour of Sultan Firōz Tughluq, whom he thought did not keep the proper respect and obeisance toward the Sufis. He took Aḥmad and left Delhi for good, a riddance that implies that the blessings of Aḥmad Khattū would support some other kingdom. After his Shaykh’s death, Aḥmad Khattū travelled to perform the ḥajj, and then returned to Delhi. In accordance with the sign of Bābā Ishāq, Shaykh Aḥmad was carried off from Delhi by Tīmūr, who sacked Delhi and drove out the Tughluq sultan, Maḥmūd. Aḥmad Khattū managed to impress Tīmūr and gain his freedom from Samarqand, then toured the ‘periphery’ territories, which were slowly gaining independence: Sindh, Gujarat, and the Deccan. As he passed through Gujarat, the governor begged him to stay in his own territory, and Shaykh Aḥmad settled at Sarkhej. The governor financially supported the Sufi’s community kitchen, and eventually become the first sultan of independent Gujarat. Shaykh Aḥmad Khattū wrote about his own Shaykh, Bābā Ishāq Maghribī, in *al-Risāla al-Aḥmadiyya fī l-shuyūkh al-Maghribiyya* (MS Ahmadabad: Pir Mohammedshah Dargah 593 and 1425). Further biographical details can be found in *Malfūzāt-i Shaykh Aḥmad Maghribī* (MSS Calcutta: Asiatic Society Collection 247) and also in the appendix of the history of the Muẓaffar Shāhī dynasty written by ‘Alī Muḥammad Khān, *Miʿrāt-i Aḥmadī*, transl. Syed Nawab Ali and Charles Norman Seddon (Baroda: Oriental Institute, Gaekwad’s Oriental Series nos. 146 and 153, 1928).

after him.<sup>52</sup> Thus the shaykhs of this lineage became the patriotic spiritual foundations for the Gujarati dynasty. The mythical biography of Aḥmad Khattū reflects the idea that Gujarat inherited the best from Tughluq rule while the Tughluqs themselves were steeped in tyranny and political disaster. Gujarat was able to prosper due to contacts across the oceans (with the Arab world to the west as indicated by the *nisba* ‘al-Maghribī’) while Delhi was plunged in disarray due to its connections to continental central Asia.<sup>53</sup>

‘Abd al-Ḥaqq probably understood this Madyani lineage as a branch of the Qadiri lineage, for the two have often been juxtaposed, and members of the Madyani lineage often consider themselves to be Qadiris as well. Those who narrate the life-story of Shaykh Abū Madyān often distort the facts to depict him doing the ḥajj and meeting Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir in order to be initiated by him. Others explain that Abū Madyān accepted a spiritual initiation by ‘Abd al-Qādir that did not require a physical meeting.<sup>54</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was to build upon this newly-gained familiarity with the Madyani order, for when he took initiation from ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Muttaqī in Makka, he took a *khirqā* that symbolized three lineages fused together: the Qadiri, the Shadhili, and the Madyani lineages.

<sup>52</sup> Together they laid the foundation stone for the new Gujarati capital of Ahmadabad in 815/1412. The centrality of Shaykh Aḥmad Khattū’s disciples to the new Gujarati polity is reflected in popular nicknames that they were granted: ‘Shāh-i ‘ālam’, the Ruler of the World, and his son ‘Quṭb-i ‘ālam’, the Axis of the World.

<sup>53</sup> The alliance between Aḥmad Khattū and Sultan Aḥmad Shāh marked a new pattern of relations between Sufis, scholars, and rulers. Their new city of Ahmadabad collapsed the bipolar model (of Pattan as governing centre with Sarkhej as spiritual centre) with the creation of a new capital city that was also a centre of intense Sufi activity.

<sup>54</sup> Although such authors acknowledge that Abū Madyān never travelled outside the Maghreb, they claim that he once inexplicably bowed his head to the ground and extended his neck: he later explained to his astounded fellows that, just at that moment, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir in Baghdad pronounced that ‘my foot is upon the neck of all the saints’. The hagiographer Dara Shikoh includes Shaykh Abū Madyān as a link in his very own lineage back to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlāni, with the former as a successor to the later’s spiritual authority. Dara Shikoh, *Safīnat al-awliyā’*, Urdu transl. (Delhi: Naz Publishing House, n.d.), 98. Still other hagiographers depict Abū Madyān as the axial saint of the West, just as ‘Abd al-Qādir is the axial saint of the East, and the two are indelibly linked by their shared prestige, rather than by any more colourful meetings.

From Wajīh al-Dīn, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq may have learned about the existence of this distinct current of Sufi-scholarly devotion that was exemplified by Shaykh ʿAlī Muttaqī and his disciple, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb.<sup>55</sup> Shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn was an admiring competitor of ʿAlī Muttaqī, and spoke of him often. He is reported to have been the one to engineer a compromise which obscured the original conflict between Muḥammad Ghawth and ʿAlī Muttaqī. He often told his disciples to take ʿAlī Muttaqī as the exemplar for how to uphold the outer dimensions of Sharīʿa (devotion to the Prophet’s normative behaviours, social ethics, scrupulousness, non-dependence on others, just behaviour), and to take Muḥammad Ghawth as the exemplar of how to uphold the inner experience of the Sharīʿa (devotion to the Prophet’s inner experience, of dissolving attachment to the world, meditative equipoise, inner ascension).<sup>56</sup> Although ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq never mentions that he knew of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Muttaqī by reputation before he left for the Hijaz, he may well have, for ʿAbd al-Wahhāb’s name was well known in Yemen, Gujarat and the Deccan.<sup>57</sup> And if he did not, then at least his stay in Gujarat while waiting for his ship’s advent gave him a glimpse into the more variegated streams of Sufi affiliation and method that were coursing through Gujarat and connecting that land with the Hijaz, Yemen, and even the Maghrib.

The very act of ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq’s pilgrimage needs to be reconsidered. Many analysts, including Nizami, assume that the ḥajj was the central factor in bringing *sharʿī* activism and reform-mindedness

<sup>55</sup> Most likely, he heard of them only by reputation, for most of ʿAlī Muttaqī’s direct disciples who had returned to Gujarat, like Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir and Qāḍī ʿAbdullāh Sindhī, had died by the time ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq arrived. Thus by 996/1586, the Muttaqī circle was active mainly in the Hijaz.

<sup>56</sup> This advice is recorded in the sayings of Shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn, and is included in every biographical report on him. With such advice, he meant to show that the once dramatic conflict between the two Sufis was actually no conflict at all. His mediating position was very effective since almost all hagiographic sources do not specify that ʿAlī Muttaqī criticized or denounced Muḥammad Ghawth at all. Of all the major sources, this information is specified only by a secular court chronicler, Badāʾūnī. See Ernst, ‘Persecution and Circumspection’, 4. See also *Malḥūzāt-i Shāh Wajīh al-Dīn ʿAlawī Gujarātī* (MSS Hyderabad: Oriental Manuscript Library and Research Institute [formerly Asafiya Collection] 547, Fārsī Ṭaṣawwuf) and also (MSS Calcutta, Asiatic Society Collection 1343, Fārsī Ṭaṣawwuf), fos. 67–76.

<sup>57</sup> ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq reports that ʿAbd al-Wahhāb received letters of admiration and praise from Sufis in distant locations, as well as considerable charitable contributions from supporters and well-wishers in Gujarat and the Deccan. *Zād al-muttaqīm*, fos. 48<sup>a</sup>, 50<sup>a</sup>.

to India. This is undoubtedly an important dynamic, but not at all a simple one. That Sufis who return from the ḥajj will return as reformers is not at all a foregone conclusion or a natural event. Rather, this dynamic requires further explanation and illustration. It is clear that many Sufis who made the pilgrimage and settled in the Hijaz for a time of intense scholarly training never became reformers. Many of these Sufis, even after extended residence in Makka and Madina, never wavered in their devotion to *tawḥid-i muṭlaq* as the primary intellectual and aesthetic articulation of Sufi practice.<sup>58</sup>

‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s reformist ideas, therefore, cannot be explained simply by his going on the ḥajj and staying in Makka for a few years. The more potent explanation lies in whom he met in Makka and the particular character of his initiation and scholarly training there. By chance or by reputation, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq met Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, a master of *ḥadīth*, the principal representative of the ‘triple *khirqā*’, and the spiritual guide in the Muttaqī method of Sufi–scholarly devotion. His initiation with the triple *khirqā* opened him into a devotional and ideological world much wider than South Asia, one not readily recognized by South Asian Sufis of his time (or contemporary scholars).

It is primarily through the teaching of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq found his footing again, both within his person and in his career as a saint–scholar. By examining the content of this teaching, and the ways in which it both challenged and disciplined ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, it will become clear that he was neither a born-reformer, nor a reformer due solely to environmental pressures in South Asia. Rather, he became a reformer and revivalist because he was first and foremost an inter-regional, multi-lingual Sufi–scholar, which attracted him to the Muttaqī method and allowed him to excel within its paradigm. It was this connection to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb that allowed ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq to return to Delhi, reoriented and strengthened to take on the rest of his mature career.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, it obliged him to do so against his will.

<sup>58</sup> Shāh Sibghatullāh, a Shattari disciple of Wajīh al-Dīn Gujarātī and a contemporary of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, provides a cogent example. His biography appears in *Gulzār-i abrār*, 576. Other biographic details can be found in the record of his oral teachings, *Malfūzāt-i Shāh Sibghatullāh* (MSS Hyderabad: Oriental Manuscript Library and Research Institute, 1460 Fārsī Taṣawwuf). Pearson offers a short survey of this question about the ‘purifying effects’ of the pilgrimage to Makka and its role in spreading an Arabicized, standardized and self-consciously orthodox version of Islam, as well as mentioning the limits of these general trends. Pearson, *Pious Passengers*, ch. 3, ‘The Centrality of the Hajj’.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq even admits that, had he not joined the circle of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, he would have left the study of the religious disciplines entirely.

At first ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq had intended only to find *ḥadīth* experts in the Hijaz and to master their scholarly discipline. Yet, he also harboured a deeper, unarticulated hope of finding another Sufi guide.

After I came to the Ḥaramayn [Makka and Madina], I fulfilled my primary goal, and was granted the blessing of visiting the Prophet's tomb, and witnessing the beauty of the Kaʿba and performing the rites of the ḥajj. These are the peak experiences of anyone's life. But then, I also had a secondary goal which was to study the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet which brings one closer to the Prophet's spirit in the Prophet's very own place. And here, I might mention a further blessing, the realization of which was completely outside of my control or planning. That was finding one of those special persons who dwell here in Makka, who are so intimate to the Prophet in their own souls. I could barely hope that one of these people might chance to meet me and to perceive my plight, or that my eye might be illuminated by the sight of him. In either case, it would be a great bliss. And further, I might get the chance to speak with one of them and to serve him, and this would provide the very key to attaining salvation and would lay the foundation for my whole life to come. For the Sufi masters say that one hour of sitting with love and affection in the presence of one who has reached the Goal and one who is chosen by the Prophet, that single hour would be the apex of one's whole life... And if I could stay in his company and training for an extended time so that [absorbing the illumination of his sainthood] could reach its full effect, filling me with the reflection of the brilliant manifestations of divine beauty and keeping my gaze from straying to the multiplicity of the created world, then this would indeed fulfil the promise of the Qur'ān [24. 35]: *Light upon Light, God guides to the light whomever God wills*. For many years, this prayer has been on my tongue and in my heart, to ask for just this. As Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir Jilānī, has said, '[Pray to Allah thus] O Lord, O Lord! Guide me to one from among those who are intimate with You, who may guide me to Your presence and may teach me the way to reach You'.<sup>60</sup>

At first, he settled in Makka with some unspecified masters of the discipline of *ḥadīth*, who specialized in narrating, authenticating and explaining the meaning of the traditions of the Prophet. Through these teachers, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq came into contact with Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhāb

However, since ʿAbd al-Wahhāb was only satisfied if a disciple combined the acquisition of knowledge with the inner experience of illumination, he kept up his studies in order to please his Shaykh. He says: 'My mental state when I arrived in Makka was such that if I saw two students debating and arguing among themselves about a point of study, I would think them totally deranged.' But Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhāb stressed that knowledge was like food—one could never suffice without taking in more every day. *Zād al-muttāqin*, fol. 59<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, fos. 4<sup>b</sup>–5<sup>b</sup>.

Muttaqī toward the end of his first year in the Hijaz, and began to study with him the *ḥadīth* collection, *Mishkāt al-maṣābiḥ*.<sup>61</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s two goals were thus fulfilled in one man, for this particular *ḥadīth* scholar was also a Sufi master who did not separate the two activities. Rather, he intentionally fused them together into a unique, temperate piety that was orientated toward strengthening the Shari‘a from within. In fact, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq may not have immediately recognized ‘Abd al-Wahhāb as a Sufi guide, for it was this Shaykh’s clear method to simply teach what each student came to him to learn. Only slowly would the Shaykh focus his inner attention upon the soul of the student and subtly achieve spiritual direction as well, rather than demand up-front allegiance with dramatic rituals of renunciation and submission.<sup>62</sup>

This is the distinct style of Sufi discipline which ‘Ali Muttaqī forged and ‘Abd al-Wahhāb propagated. They tried to fuse the pursuit of religious knowledge through study with the internal discipline of asceticism and self-alienation, which they summed up as the dynamic of ‘voluntary death’. The goal is not to claim charismatic authority by distancing the Shaykh from more academic scholars and more socially active jurists; rather, the goal is to make these outer scholarly efforts sincere by infusing them with Sufi devotion, while at the same time tempering Sufi devotion and making it strong by limiting who could claim the social status of being a saint. In this sense, it is the continuation of a project initiated by Shaykh Aḥmad Zarrūq, a Moroccan Sufi scholar, jurist and reformer who lived in the previous century. His ideas and writings circulated through a stream of the Qadiri–Shadhili–Madyani order in Egypt and the Hijaz, until they were picked up and refashioned by the Muttaqi community into a cogent project of Sufi reform.<sup>63</sup>

‘Abd al-Ḥaqq does not record how long it took him to recognize in ‘Abd al-Wahhāb the spiritual guide for whom he had been secretly longing. Within one year, he became a devoted disciple. However, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was different from his master, in his early devotional training and temperament that stressed *tawḥid-i muṭlaq*, his geographic orientation toward Delhi, and his potential mission of returning there. For ‘Abd al-Wahhāb had experienced wanderlust and divine attraction very early

<sup>61</sup> Of his three-year period in the Hijaz, he had spent two years with Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb: *ibid.*, fol. 6<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 66<sup>a-b</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> On Zarrūq, see Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law: Aḥmad Zarrūq, Juridical Sainthood and Authority in Islam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). On the spread of Zarrūq’s ideas to South Asia, see ‘Usuli Sufis: Aḥmad Zarrūq and his South Asian Disciples’, in Eric Geoffroy (ed.), *La Voie Soufie des Shadhilis* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2005).

in his life (more along the patterns laid out in Hammoudi's archetype); he left his fatherless home in Burhanpur in his teens and wandered extensively in Gujarat, the Deccan, and southern India as far as Sri Lanka, searching for teachers and spiritual guides, but never adhering to any for long and never finding satisfaction. Then he came to Makka at the age of twenty-three and became the assistant of 'Alī Muttaqī, and then his closest disciple and constant companion.<sup>64</sup> While Shaykh 'Alī remained alive, 'Abd al-Wahhāb considered it a distraction and a disrespect to marry, and remained unwed until he reached his forties. It is evident how different 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's life pattern is from his teacher's, for he arrived in Makka already married with children whom he had left behind, just as he arrived having already taken initiation with two Shaykhs who impressed him deeply. 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's record of his interaction with his new Shaykh shows that he was extremely wilful, assertive, and questioning with him, in contrast to 'Abd al-Wahhāb's almost complete self-abnegation under 'Alī Muttaqī. 'Abd al-Wahhāb accepted such comportment from 'Abd al-Ḥaqq as a mature disciple, and may even have seen his wilfulness as a sign of his increasing strength.

Despite these differences in their early lives and careers, 'Abd al-Wahhāb carefully cultivated 'Abd al-Ḥaqq to return to Delhi to spread the Muttaqī method there.<sup>65</sup> This cultivation was, to the end, against 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's own will and natural inclination. It is apparent that this initiation was going to be a monumental challenge to 'Abd al-Ḥaqq, from the very first moment that he requested formal initiation. He relates that he told Shaykh 'Abd al-Wahhāb:

'When I arrived in the Hijaz and was made joyful after visiting the tomb of the Prophet, then I came into your circle of students and followers and was ennobled with your company. There appeared in my heart a little of the light of faith that refuted whatever might have remained in my heart of greed for worldly gain and hopes of attaining worldly recognition. And now, I desire only to course the path

<sup>64</sup> Shaykh 'Alī Muttaqī had already trained Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir to be the disciple who would return to Gujarat to advance his project for reform there. He selected 'Abd al-Wahhāb, a generation younger, to stay close to him as the successor who would continue his tradition in Makka. Details of Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir's biography can be found in *Gulzār-i abrār*, 322–4, and in Mawlāwī Faqīr Muḥammad Lāhorī, *Ḥadā'iq-i Ḥanafīyya* (Lucknow: Munshī Nawwāl Kishore, lithographic print, n.d.), 385.

<sup>65</sup> By the time 'Abd al-Ḥaqq arrived in Makka, Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir had been dead for a decade. This main exponent of the Muttaqī method in Hindustan was assassinated by Mahdawi partisans in 986/1578, while the Shaykh was going to meet Akbar to encourage him to suppress that community.

that you teach along with your followers and enter into the company of the *fuqarā*’ who are devoted to you.’ The Shaykh remained silent for a while with his head bowed. Then he raised his head and said, ‘Praise be to God! Nothing could be better than that one choose to halt the natural course of his life and commit himself to sitting in the corner of isolation and anonymity, for this is the highest level of achieving divine acceptance.’ Then he added: ‘But following my path is a very difficult task and attaining a firm footing in it takes long struggle. The basic principle is that you must participate in the lives of others and mix with them constantly, sharing with them in what is good and avoiding in them what is evil.’<sup>66</sup>

How striking this challenge must have been to ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq! He had just finished laying bare his heart to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb by admitting that before his experience at court, he ‘never had socialized with people and thus suffered despair at their hands’. Yet his master told him that he would not be allowed to stay in the Hijaz, leading a simple and scholarly life in detachment from the political and social confusion back home.

As part of this two-year cultivation, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb squarely challenged ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq in many other ways, and cleverly diverted him from his intellectual and ideological inclinations. Upon his arrival in the Hijaz, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq passed out of the domain where the Hanafi legal method was predominant, and into a territory of Shafī’i dominance. In fact, Hanafi visitors to Makka found themselves often beset by zealous Shafī’is who were convinced that their own legal method was the purest and the most elegant in its theoretical foundations; they accused others, especially the Hanafis, of basing their decisions on ‘opinion’ and ‘speculation’ rather than on soundly established Prophetic *ḥadīth*.

‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was initially convinced by these arguments. As a *ḥadīth* scholar he was eager to follow a juridical method that ideologically based itself on the Prophetic precedents, and most of the great *ḥadīth* scholars in Makka were Shafī’is from Egypt. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq considered changing his allegiance to the Shafī’i method.<sup>67</sup> But when he admitted this to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, the Shaykh launched into a spirited defence of the Hanafi method and its ‘founder’, Abū Ḥanīfa. He claimed that although the Shafī’is were more ideologically articulate in stressing the importance of the *ḥadīth* in legal reasoning, the Hanafis actually

<sup>66</sup> *Makātib wa rasā’il*, 279. This is the first moment in the numerous fragments of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s life story that such a strong reference has been made to the Qur’anic injunction to assert an activist social ethic: enjoining upon others what is known to be good while forbidding others from what is uncertain and evil, *al-amr bi-l-mā’rūf wa-l-nahy ‘an al-munkar*’ (Qur’ān 3. 17).

<sup>67</sup> *Zād al-muttaqīn*, fols. 72<sup>b</sup>–3<sup>a</sup>.

made more important contributions to *ḥadīth* literature than did the Shafī'is. Since the Hanafi method was the earliest, books of Hanafi juridical decisions actually contain the earliest compilations of *ḥadīth*, and include some *ḥadīth* traditions not found in decisions of Shafī'ī jurists.<sup>68</sup>

With these creative arguments (which run against the grain of accepted ideas about the history of the development of the legal methods that are current even today), 'Abd al-Wahhāb dissuaded his disciple from a rash decision to change juridical allegiances. Becoming a Shafī'ī would have been a serious obstacle to 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's return as an effective teacher and reformer in north India, where the Hanafi method was dominant.<sup>69</sup> By dissuading his disciple from becoming a Shafī'ī, 'Abd al-Wahhāb subverted his explicit policy that everyone should choose for themselves which legal method to follow, rather than continue to be a partisan of the method into which they were born. That the Shaykh blatantly disregarded his own policy reveals just how crucial he considered it that 'Abd al-Ḥaqq remain a Hanafi so that he could return to Hindustan as an effective reformer.

'Abd al-Wahhāb also confronted his disciple on the issue of his extreme partisanship in regards to the Qadiri order. In a letter, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq describes how 'Abd al-Wahhāb changed his viewpoint on this issue.

Shaykh 'Abd al-Wahhāb gave me legitimate certification in the books of the Sufis and their methods and initiation into four of their lineages: the Qadiri, Shadhili, Madyani, and Chishti... But this lowly one abridges these initiations and just calls himself 'Qadiri', and is content with the nobility of this single lineage. I used to be partisan to excessive and zealous devotion to Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir; I used to never look to other masters or even mention their names, so absorbed was I in turning toward Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir, for he is always present for those who turn their attention toward him. Shaykh 'Abd al-Wahhāb had said to me, 'You are certainly from among Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir's disciples and servants, but

<sup>68</sup> Shaykh 'Abd al-Wahhāb argued that a Hanafi legal text written by Ibn Hammām in commentary on the *Hidāya*, entitled *Mukhtaṣar al-Wiqāya wa-mawāhib al-Rahmān*, makes use of *ḥadīth* reports just as methodically as any Shafī'ī text, and uses more reliable *ḥadīth* reports than the Shafī'is ever do. *Zād al-muttaqīm*, fol. 72<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> Later, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq came up with other ways of conceiving the connections between his juridical affiliation and his attention to *ḥadīth*: he invented a neologism, calling himself 'a Hanbalo-Hanafi'. 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Dihlawī, *Kitāb Taḥṣīl al-ta'arruf fī l-fiqh wa-l-taṣawwuf* (MSS Rampur: Reza Library 1347 Arabic) fol. 150. In this later theoretical work, he expanded substantially on these arguments of 'Abd al-Wahhāb, in the framework of his mature reform programme.

it is the job of the one who seeks the Truth to learn from every beneficial source, and also to teach whomever can learn from you [regardless of their lineage]. Never close upon yourself the door of seeking or bar the way of learning from others. From whatever source you may draw benefit, you may ascribe the blessing to the presence of your Shaykh [‘Abd al-Qādir].<sup>70</sup>

‘Abd al-Wahhāb came into conflict many times with his disciple, who was too eager to learn any new litany or ritual that seemed to belong to the Qadiri lineage. Often he would say that ‘one should never believe that absolute perfection lies in one place and one place only; whoever claims this will induce others to denounce him and weaken his own belief’.<sup>71</sup> ‘Abd al-Wahhāb argued that one could have a constant spiritual orientation to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir without that preventing one from taking initiation into other lineages, for each lineage had a method that was beneficial.<sup>72</sup> His own Qadiri method was very moderate compared with the other Qadiri shaykhs whom ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq met and admired, for it was tempered by being fused into the triple *khirqā*.

Further, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb tempered his disciple’s admiration for the intellectual elegance of *tawhīd-i muṭlaq* and overtly emotional devotion in an intoxicated state. Many times he subtly turned ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s attention away from his professed eagerness to read the texts of Ibn ‘Arabī and ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī. He never forbade him from reading these books, but in his last advice given to ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq when he was leaving to return to Hindustan, the Shaykh forbade him to speak openly with others about the secrets and subtleties of divine existential unity. Soon after he had arrived in Delhi, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq received a letter from a Qadiri shaykh from the Hijaz which was loaded with reason-dazzling expressions about divine realities. In his response, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq wrote that he admired those expressions, but was forbidden to speak of them.<sup>73</sup>

‘Abd al-Wahhāb spent two intense years cultivating his disciple in this path of Sufism that was moderated from within and tempered from

<sup>70</sup> *Makātib va rasā’il*, 283. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq uses this advice to justify his taking a further, fourth initiation into the Naqshbandi lineage with Shaykh Bāqī bi-Allāh once he returned to Delhi. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq recounts another moment when Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb forcefully repeated this advice, in *Zād al-muttaqīm*, fol. 64<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, fol. 62<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, fols. 63<sup>a-b</sup>. Some of these extremist Qadiris would even modify their statement of faith by attesting that ‘I am satisfied with Allah as Lord, with Islam as religion, with Muḥammad as Prophet . . . and with ‘Abd al-Qādir as Shaykh’.

<sup>73</sup> *Makātib va rasā’il*, 272. His Shaykh urged ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq to speak openly only about matters pertaining to the outward aspects of Islam and the condition of ordinary Muslims. This is to follow the path of Aḥmad Zarrūq, who gave the strongest foundation to this ‘triple *khirqā*’; he had enjoined each disciple to be

without by being joined with *sharʿī* studies and the acquisition of religious knowledge. Yet by the end of two years, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb was still faced with a recalcitrant and headstrong disciple who insisted on staying in the Hijaz, or else going to Baghdad to stay at the tomb of ʿAbd al-Qādir Jīlānī. The Shaykh had to abandon his normally subtle tactics of argumentation and strategic silences, and directly commanded ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq to return straight to Delhi. His Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ordered him to keep apart from such worldly people as had devastated him before in Hindustan, and also urged him to be flexible—to visit other Sufis and scholars, and to maintain contacts with society.<sup>74</sup> ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq still had not fully acknowledged the role that ʿAbd al-Wahhāb had perceived within him and for which he had been primed. Or perhaps he understood what ʿAbd al-Wahhāb was demanding of him, yet could not abandon the props of his former life: *ḥadīth* studies which would require him to stay on in the Hijaz, and Qadiri devotions which would require him to move to Baghdad. ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq still longed to avoid the responsibilities of his mature life, which was now beginning to dawn as he prepared to return via ship to Hindustan.

Upon returning to Delhi, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq set up a madrasa in Delhi for teaching the *sharʿī* disciplines and training those whom he initiated into his Sufi lineages.<sup>75</sup> He also began to complete and circulate more and more of the written works which he had begun in Makka at the instigation of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhāb. While Akbar was still emperor for the next fourteen years, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq kept a low profile. However, once Akbar died in 1014/1604, he began to make contact with nobles and authored treatises of advice to them, subsequently included in his collected letters. Especially notable is a letter to the new Emperor

a *ʿfaqīh*-Sufi, a jurist-mystic, who joins the best of both methods and avoids the extremes of both. Finally, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhāb forbade him to discourse about divine realities and existential unity at all, but rather to assert that Sufism rests on sincerity of orientation toward the divine, not the knowledge of secrets about the divine.

<sup>74</sup> Nizami's biography is especially insightful in acknowledging that, once ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq returned to Delhi, his old friend from court, Fayḍī, tried to lure him back into his circle. But ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq, backed by his training under ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, was able to resist this.

<sup>75</sup> Some of ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq's letters hint that his return to Delhi was not easy. His colleagues in the Qadiri lineage tempted him to speak in the language of philosophy and existential unity, or urged him to enter absolute seclusion in order to gain further mastery over spiritual secrets. He even mentions coercion by one Qadiri *majdhūb* who was intent on forcing ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq to revert to his previous, ecstatic, South Asian ways. *Makātīb va rasāʾil*, 279.

Jihāngīr just after his accession. This marks the full expression of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s mature paradigm. After establishing his own madrasa in Delhi, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq took his fourth and last initiation with Khwāja Bāqī bi-Allāh in the Naqshbandi lineage, to make a strategic alliance with the forces of reform and social activism rising in Delhi at that time. He sent letters to Bāqī bi-Allāh offering his critiques of various religious movements which flourished in the time of Akbar,<sup>76</sup> thereby building a reputation as an avid reformer, the basis of his renown during his mature years in Delhi and after his death.

*Accidental revivalist: a wider view of contingencies*

This study has looked in depth into the details of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s tension-filled and ambivalent middle passage. But to what advantage? It is specious to argue that a more detailed biography is necessarily a better biography, or even a more useful one. This study has uncovered not just more details about his life, but rather new details: details that call in question the framework of his biography, and demand a new analytic framework. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq was certainly not a born reformer, but rather developed into one, and somewhat suddenly, contingent upon his new experiences. He developed into a reformer not in Delhi, nor even in Hindustan, but rather in Makka. This development depended on the fact that Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, prior to his becoming a mature revivalist and reform-minded religious leader in Delhi, was first and foremost an inter-regional Sufi–scholar. This analytic framework provides a new perspective to help make sense of not only the new biographical details, but also of the vast and varied body of writing that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq left behind. It also singles out what uniquely distinguishes ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq from other reformers active in Delhi at his time and after.

‘Abd al-Ḥaqq can be classified as an inter-regional figure in a number of dimensions. First and most generally, he bridges regions in the linguistic dimension, for he wrote and taught at the interface of Persian and Arabic. He gained renown as a *muḥaddith*, an expert in Prophetic traditions that are discrete nuggets of meaning encased in difficult

<sup>76</sup> Nizami, *Ḥayyāt*, 139. As the prime example of such social critique, Nizami cites the letter that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq wrote to Khwāja Bāqī bi-Allāh entitled ‘*Taḥṣīl al-kamāl al-abadī bi-l-ikhtiyār al-faqr al-Muḥammadī*’, the fifth letter of his published collection. However, this social critique reveals the hidden presence of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s Shaykh in Makka, for ‘Abd al-Wahhāb had introduced him to the book which is the topic of this letter, *al-Faqr al-Muḥammadī*, and critically discussed it with him; see *Zād al-muttaqīn*, fol. 65<sup>a</sup>. Discussing it gave ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq the vehicle to express his dissatisfaction with many elements of religious life in Delhi under Mughal rule.

Arabic, often in colloquial idiom or with obscure references. Thus *ḥadīth* experts from Persian speaking lands (or from areas like Hindustan where Persian was the elite language, but not the daily local language) underwent rigorous training and attained a special status. Achieving proficiency as a *muḥaddith* required an intensive engagement with the minutest details of Arabic grammar and rhetoric. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq went through this exacting training, but did not rest with the social status accorded to a *muḥaddith*. He further turned his skills to practical use in writing Persian commentaries on the major collections of *ḥadīth*, in the hopes that other scholars and Sufis would integrate the meanings of the reports into their own juridical, devotional, and literary work.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to *ḥadīth* texts, he authored extensive translations and commentaries of Arabic works into Persian. These Arabic works are mainly from books on Sufism.<sup>78</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq would often work over an Arabic text twice: the first time as a commentary or summary written in Arabic, and the second with a fuller commentary in Persian, perhaps with a direct translation of the text into Persian.

In this endeavour to bridge the gap between theoretical works written in Arabic and the Persian reading world, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq participated with a long line of other Sufi scholars from South Asia.<sup>79</sup> However, he differed from others in that he projected the engagement with Arabic learning as part of a wider strategy to limit Sufi devotion within the parameters of *ḥadīth* and jurisprudence. Concurrently, he hoped to wean Sufi literature in Arabic from its dependence on poetry and mysticism that centred on existential unity.

These linguistic and literary activities point out the importance of his affiliation with the Qadiri lineage, for most of his translations which

<sup>77</sup> In this project, he was carrying out the work begun by Shaykh ‘Alī Muttaqī and continued Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Muttaqī. ‘Alī Muttaqī spent his entire life organizing *ḥadīth* reports into subject categories in his huge work, *Kanz al-‘ummāl*, in order to facilitate their use in juridical decisions and devotional reforms.

<sup>78</sup> Nizami’s biography is also very useful for its full and detailed bibliography of texts authored by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, noting those that have been printed, those that remain in manuscript, and those that seem to have been lost over time. Examples of this interface between Arabic and Persian include his Persian translations like *Miftāḥ al-ghayb* (from ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī’s *Futūḥ al-ghayb*), *Marj al-Bahrayn* (from Aḥmad Zarrūq’s *Qawā’id al-taṣawwuf*), and *Zubdat al-asrār wa-zubdat al-āthār* (from al-Yāfi‘ī’s *Bahjat al-asrār*).

<sup>79</sup> He could be compared to his predecessor Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Gēsū Darāz, his contemporary Wajīh al-Dīn ‘Alawī, or the antecedent scholar, al-Qashshāshī.

were not from *ḥadīth* texts were from texts that circulated among Qadiris. This affiliation provides another dimension to his inter-regional character. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq is a Qadiri on many levels: as a family legacy, as a youthful loyalty, as an author and commentator, and finally as a compiler of hagiographic records. This last factor is very important, for ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s main strategy in compiling his masterpiece, *Akbbār al-akhyār*, was to integrate Qadiri shaykhs into the wider panorama of South Asian Sufis in an attempt to give them their ‘rightful’ place beside their Chishti contemporaries.<sup>80</sup> He continued this project in his second hagiographic work, *Zād al-muttaqīn*. In this collection, he revealed the intimate connections between South Asian Sufism and the Muttaqi community of Sufis and scholars in Makka, who fell outside the habitual limits of South Asian hagiographic writings since they were either expatriates or foreigners.<sup>81</sup> Many of these personages in Makka were Qadiris, either through the lineage of the triple *khirqā* or independently.

The Qadiri lineage itself has a reputation for enjoying the widest geographic scope of any Sufi lineage, and for being inter-regional in its activities. There are many reasons for this reputation, including the lineage’s emphasis on fulfilling the obligation of the ḥajj and on encouraging members to visit ‘Abd al-Qādir’s tomb in Baghdad. Thus, Qadiris had a double incentive to travel outside their localities, reside for extended periods in the central Arab lands, and enjoy close contacts with Arab colleagues and teachers.<sup>82</sup> They often nurtured a

<sup>80</sup> In this strategy, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq contrasts with Dārā Shīkoh, a second Qadiri compiler of saintly biographies. Dārā Shīkoh’s project was more exclusivist in raising the Qadiri lineage above other South Asian lineages, and was not as generous or even-handed as ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq. For further comparison between Prince Dārā Shīkoh and Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq as Qadiri biographers, see Bruce B. Lawrence, ‘Biography and the 17th century Qadiriya of North India’ in Anna Libera Dellapiccola and Stephanie Zingel-Ave Lallemand (eds.), *Islam and Indian Regions* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1994).

<sup>81</sup> A few of these shaykhs from the Hijaz are included as ‘South Asians’ in *Akbbār al-akhyār*. Others were later integrated into South Asian hagiographies because they had been independently documented by ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq in *Zād al-muttaqīn*. Two examples of biographical collections which integrate them into a South Asian environment are Ghulām Muḥammad Lāhōrī, *Khazīnat al-aṣfiyā*, and *Bahr-i zakhbār* (MSS Hyderabad: Oriental Manuscript Library and Research Institute 328, Fārsī Tadhkira) whose author is unknown, but was probably a disciple of the Chishti Shaykh Allāhdād.

<sup>82</sup> In comparison, the Chishti lineage’s major sites of visitation are all local in South Asia, while the Suhrawardi lineage’s members were mainly satisfied with visitation sites in South Asia, even though they respected sites beyond its borders.

certain 'double-vision', with their local identity set within and against an inter-regional (largely Arab) sense of community. This double-vision was reinforced by the fact that 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī, was not just a Sufi shaykh, but also a *sayyid*, one descended from the Prophet's family. The Qadiris rejoiced in this juxtaposition of acquired saintly and ascribed genealogical authority. Qadiri shaykhhood tended to pass through generations of the branches of the *sayyid* family descended from Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir, with clearly articulated Arab roots.<sup>83</sup>

Contrary to this reputation, not all Qadiris in South Asia maintained an aloof attitude toward local practices and loyalties. Many Qadiris eagerly sought parallel affiliations within the Chishti and the Shattari lineages, allowing a local South Asian style of devotion to predominate. Therefore, to assess 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's status as an inter-regional Sufi scholar more deeply, one has to look further than his Qadiri background or his *ḥadīth* training. He is inter-regional not just as a Qadiri, but as a particular kind of Qadiri with a special dispensation of the 'triple *khirqā*', with a special regime of training and a particular devotional outlook.

The 'triple *khirqā*' is inter-regional because it fuses three Sufi lineages from different regions: the Qadiri, Shadhili and Madyani, with centres in Egypt, the Maghreb, and Yemen respectively. It was Shaykh Aḥmad Zarrūq who first institutionalized this practice and infused this affiliation with reformist ideas and juridical training.<sup>84</sup> One of Shaykh Zarrūq's disciples, Ṭāhir bin Zayyān al-Zawawī al-Maghribī, has analysed the nature of the initiation he received from Shaykh Zarrūq.<sup>85</sup>

This is the authentic chain of blessed transmission of the noble triple *khirqā*, which comes from separate cloaks representing the Way of Sīdī Abū Madyān, of Sīdī Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, and of Sīdī 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. I have received

<sup>83</sup> 'Abd al-Ḥaqq profusely praises his Shaykh Mūsā Jīlānī, by depicting the latter's virtues as reflections of the virtues of the major members of the Prophet's family: Muṣṭafā (the Prophet), Murtaḍā ('Alī), Ḥasān, Ḥusayn and Zayn al-'Ābidīn. Thus Shaykh Mūsā is not just a saint in his own virtues, but as a physical embodiment of the Prophet's own character through his bloodline, *Akbbār al-akhyār*, 314.

<sup>84</sup> These lineages may have been compounded by Zarrūq's predecessors, like Shaykh Aḥmad ibn 'Uqba al-Ḥaḍramī. He expressed a marked ambivalence about his own lineage. He was reputed to be a Shadhili, although technically his lineage appears to be Qadiri; further, when Zarrūq asked him explicitly to describe his lineage, Aḥmad al-Ḥaḍramī stated that he was simply a Madyani, and that this was perfectly sufficient.

<sup>85</sup> His full name is Ṭāhir ibn Zayyān ibn Qā'id al-Zawawī al-Maghribī, and he lived in Madina.

all three together from my Shaykh Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad al-Barnūsī known as Zarrūq... In reality, all of these lineages represent one single Way, since the lineage of Shaykh al-Shādhilī grows out of the lineage of Shaykh Abū Madyān, and his lineage grows out of the lineage of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir. Therefore, my Shaykh, Aḥmad Zarrūq, is a Shadhili in his outward affiliation to a lineage, yet is a Madyani in his method of coursing the path, and yet further is a Qadiri in his innermost spiritual reality.<sup>86</sup>

On the personal level, the ‘triple *khirqa*’ is inter-regional because it circulated among Sufis through scholarly circles in the Hijaz and Egypt. The author of the above text, like many others in this lineage, acquired initiation while travelling outside his homeland (the fort-town of Tadla in the middle Atlas region of Morocco) and sojourning in the Hijaz. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq himself acquired initiation into this lineage only in Makka, through an expatriate community of South Asians who found refuge there. Among them, this lineage was known as ‘the Muttaqī lineage’ after Shaykh ‘Alī Muttaqī. He traces his lineage through three or four generations of Sufi shaykhs (who were also *ḥadīth* scholars) to Shaykh Zarrūq. Ironically, the Muttaqī lineage in the ‘triple *khirqa*’ leads from a Gujarati-in-exile back to a Moroccan-in-exile.<sup>87</sup>

The Muttaqī community was defined not just by their lineage, but also by their common project of reform and revival. They promoted Sharī‘a-oriented scholarship through both jurisprudence and study of the *ḥadīth* traditions, in order to assert that the core of Sufi devotion was nothing but emulating the Prophet in his inner character and his outer comportment. Through this revival, they sought to reconnect the methods of mystical devotion seamlessly to the normative behaviours enjoined by jurisprudence. Prophetic *ḥadīth* provided the seam that joined these two practices, for the Prophet’s example ultimately acted as the basis for both sets of behaviours, mystical and juridical. In this way,

<sup>86</sup> Aḥmad al-Sumā‘ī (ibn Abī l-Qāsim al-Tādilī), *Kitāb al-Mu‘za fī manāqib al-Shaykh Abī Yī‘za* (Rabat: Dār al-Jīl, 1997), 350–1. The author composed this book on the character and miracles of the Shaykh Abū Madyān in the year 1000/1592. In this excerpt, he quotes the *Risāla Qaṣḍiyya* of Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad al-Zayyān while documenting his own initiation into this order, several generations later, in the late tenth century AH.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Alī Muttaqī took initiation from Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī, who took initiation from Abū l-Ḥasan al-Bakrī, who is reputed to have taken initiation from Shaykh Zarrūq. However, there must be one intermediary in this lineage that has slipped mention, since Abū l-Ḥasan al-Bakrī was born too late to have taken initiation directly from Shaykh Zarrūq.

the Muttaqi community advanced the project that was initiated by Shaykh Aḥmad Zarrūq about a century earlier. This project was to enunciate criteria which would limit who could claim the authenticity of mystical experience and the authority of being a saint, thereby limiting what social and political forms sainthood might take.

From its outset, this was a project that sought to delineate the principles by which current forms of mystical devotion might be reviewed, judged, and reformed. In a series of exacting theoretical works, Shaykh Zarrūq had sought to outline a new genre of Sufi writings called *uṣūl al-taṣawwuf*, or the principles of mystical devotion, which would mirror the already well established genre of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, or principles of jurisprudence.<sup>88</sup> He tried to specify clearly the scriptural sources for Sufi devotion, and depict the rationale by which methods of devotion had been derived from these sources. By this method, he could critique the practice of current Sufis from within the tradition without denouncing Sufism as a whole. He sought to strengthen the roots of mysticism by pruning its branches. The Muttaqi community of Sufi scholars likewise sought to retrace the devotional forms and rituals cherished in their local societies to their fundamental principles, as derived from the scriptural source of the Prophet's example. In the process, they described many of those accepted and popular forms as reformed, and actively denounced those whom they believed were manipulating public veneration of those forms for worldly gain.

Dedication to this project of revival and reform gave the Muttaqi community a unique character among contemporary Sufi lineages. As a consequence of their insistence on returning to the principles of mystical devotion, they relinquished exclusive adherence to any single lineage in order to stress adherence to the principles that underlie all the lineages. This is why the triple nature of the lineage is so crucial, and why 'Abd al-Ḥaqq's Shaykh was so constant in opposing his overzealous adherence to only one third of this triply-fused lineage—the Qadiri third.

Likewise, members of the Muttaqi community even relinquished exclusive reliance on the rituals of Islamic mysticism (and the popular

<sup>88</sup> Shaykh Zarrūq wrote a series of works beginning with *Qawā'id al-taṣawwuf* [The Principles of Being a Sufi] with a view to bridging the gap between mysticism and jurisprudence. Then he wrote *Kitāb al-Ī'ānat al-mutawwajih al-miskīn* [Aid to the Humble Petitioner] to show how following these principles would shape the spiritual life of a mystic. Thirdly he wrote *Uddat al-murīd al-ṣādiq* [Preparing the Sincere Disciple] as a religious, social and political critique of his fellow Sufis who did not cleave to these principles. In addition, he wrote *Uṣūl al-tarīqa* [Sources of the Path] as a concise guideline for his disciples and companions.

appeal of such rituals) for the foundation of their own authority. Rather, they vacillated purposefully between claiming authority as teachers in the scriptural disciplines and claiming authority as saints along the pattern of sainthood recognized and expected by their surrounding society. The purpose of such ambiguity was to call into question the authority of those saintly figures who could not prove their thorough grounding in the scholarly disciplines and juridical norms, thereby limiting who could authentically lay claim to the status of sainthood. This characteristic of the Muttaqi community formed the basis of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s mature persona once he returned to Delhi. He founded a madrasa rather than a *khānqāh*, in order purposefully to fuse his authority as a saint with his authority as a teacher of the acquired Shar‘ī disciplines.

The twentieth-century biographies of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq ignore this important precedent for his reform project that is to be found in the Muttaqi community. Two types of biographical analysis miss this important connection. The first fails to take into account the inter-regional connections through which this project flourished. This reformist project was highly critical of contemporary Sufi practices just at a time when regional Sufi movements were offering legitimacy to newly ascendant political dynasties; it tended to reject the political legitimacy of these dynasties and the authenticity of the Sufis who supported them. Such reformists coursed a dangerous path and were seldom able to settle comfortably in their own local regions. Instead, they thrived ‘in the cracks’ by doing the ḥajj, settling in the Hijaz, or travelling back and forth between these relatively ‘safe’ places of refuge and their own home territories. Analyses which limit their parameters to the ‘centre’ of these local dynasties necessarily fail to notice such reformist activity on the ‘periphery’.<sup>89</sup>

The second type of analysis which fails to assess the importance of the Muttaqi community is one that reifies the Sufi *ṭarīqa* as a rubric of analysis. Such analysis cannot acknowledge that very different currents of devotional method and ideology flowed within and between the discrete Sufi lineages. For this reason, I used the phrase ‘Muttaqi community’ to denote those people who associated together in a

<sup>89</sup> As an example, modern scholars fail even accurately to identify the Madyani lineage. Rizvi calls it the ‘Madiniyya’ lineage, relating it to the city of Madina, without specifying the eponymous saint who anchors this lineage as Abū Madyān Shu‘ayb al-Maghribī. Nizami is far more accurate in specifying the Madyani lineage, yet his biographical framework does not allow any place for a discussion of this highly inter-regional community; therefore he relegates a discussion of ‘Alī Muttaqī to an appendix in his biography of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq.

common project, differentiating them from others who might have shared with them a certain lineage affiliation. The Muttaqī community represents a distinct ‘type’ of Sufism, which cannot be contained in an analysis which focuses only on the Sufi lineage.

An apt example of this misleading conflation between a Sufi lineage and a type of Sufi devotion is provided by the biographer Muḥammad Ghawthī Shattārī. He notes that people in South Asia knew ‘Alī Muttaqī as a ‘Naqshbandī’.<sup>90</sup> Ghawthī means to specify that ‘Alī Muttaqī’s ‘type’ of reform-oriented, Sharī‘a-minded Sufi devotion was analogous to the type of devotional mysticism that later circulated among Naqshbandīs after Aḥmad Sirhindī. Yet he confuses the matter by reifying the name of a lineage to denote this type of reformist devotion.<sup>91</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq himself may have inadvertently obscured the nature of his training in Makka, firstly by tending to stress its Qadiri lineage and secondly through his initiation into the Naqshbandi lineage. This event may have given rise to the mistaken impression among South Asian writers that ‘Alī Muttaqī represented a Naqshbandi orientation or was, indeed, a Naqshbandi shaykh. Later biographers in South Asia were far more familiar with the Naqshbandi lineage and its reputation for reformist piety than they were with the inter-regional Muttaqī community. Therefore, they may credit Khwāja Bāqī bi-Allāh with the majority influence in turning ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq toward a programme of reform. In reality, however, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq spent considerable effort in transmitting to Bāqī bi-Allāh, through their correspondence, information on the sources of his own reformist ideas and writings from his Muttaqī community.<sup>92</sup> Past biographers have been content to cite the word ‘reform’ without ever clarifying of what ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s real programme of reform may have consisted. This programme falls outside of past

<sup>90</sup> *Gulzār-i abrār*, 402.

<sup>91</sup> In reality, ‘Alī Muttaqī never requested initiation into the Naqshbandi lineage and had no relations with its shaykhs. He lived a generation before the Naqshbandīs become strong as a reforming community in Hindustan. Therefore, he never felt the urge for strategic reasons to join with them as did ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq. The difficult matter of keeping analytical terms exact in their denotation is a very old problem that demands the special vigilance of contemporary analysts.

<sup>92</sup> It is important to note that most of the six letters that Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq wrote to Khwāja Bāqī bi-Allāh transmit the reformist teachings of the Muttaqī method, and try to publicize the writings of Aḥmad Zarrūq and ‘Alī Muttaqī. For example, the letter entitled ‘*Sulūk tarīq al-falāḥ ‘ind faqq al-tarbiyyat bi-l-iṣṭilāḥ*’ is based on a saying of Zarrūq’s Shaykh al-Ḥaḍramī, while that entitled ‘*Uṣūl al-ṭarīqa li-kashf al-ḥaqīqa*’ deals with a treatise of Zarrūq. Furthermore, the letter entitled ‘*Tabyīn al-ṭuruq li-ahl al-irāda bi-iltizām waḥdā’if al-khayr*

biographical analysis, since ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq laid out its substance in a pair of texts that are commentaries upon the work of Shaykh Aḥmad Zarrūq, who falls outside of the boundaries of their vision.<sup>93</sup> This is not strange, since this programme matured during the middle years that ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq spent in his dangerous and profitable voyage from insecurity to full maturity, from Gujarat through the Hijaz and back to his lost home in Delhi.

*Respectful reform: a view of humanities scholarship*

Biographical studies are analogous to *ḥadīth* studies in that they become more exact and reliable with time, even if biographers themselves seem to be in sharp competition with each other and to court cantankerous disagreements. This study offers an assessment of K. A. Nizami’s biography of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Dihlawī that is admiring and yet also critical on some basic points. This combination of admiration and criticism is best explained by Shaykh ‘Alī Muttaqī himself. He has offered a rule to describe the way the discipline of *ḥadīth* studies develops that is analogous to the way biographical studies develop:

Each generation produces *ḥadīth* scholars, generation after generation. Those scholars who come later are more exact and more comprehensive than those scholars from the earlier generation. This is because the sources of *ḥadīth* reports and their authentic lineages are spread over vast areas of the Muslim world, just as those scholars who collect and recite them are scattered in all corners of the world. Each of them has a distinct but limited body of knowledge. Each new scholar’s work supplants and supersedes the work of scholars in an earlier generation, and will likewise be supplanted and superseded by the work of scholars yet to come. In one’s own time, one makes an authoritative statement more advanced than any, yet later scholars treat one’s work as a specialized

*wa-l-‘ibāda*’ plays off the title of ‘Alī Muttaqī’s first treatise, *Tabyīn al-ṭuruq ilā Allāh*. It is an open question just how ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq and Khwāja Bāqī bi-Allāh interacted, and in what ways they influenced each others’ conceptions of religious reform. Yet, as these letters suggest, the interaction must have been a two-way exchange, despite the Naqshbandis’ stong reputation for being the leading reformists.

<sup>93</sup> These texts are the most distinct product of his inter-regional sojourn, yet no biographer has yet noted their crucial place in ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s life work. The texts are *Kitāb Taḥsil al-ta’arruf fī l-fiqh wa-l-taṣawwuf* and *Marj al-baḥrayn fī l-jam’ bayn al-tarīqayn*. It is beyond the scope of this study to offer an analysis of how ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq absorbed the critical writings of Shaykh Zarrūq and refashioned them into a reform programme fitting for South Asia. This remains an open field for future research.

source with limitations. New scholars may criticize the achievement in *ḥadīth* studies of prior scholars and relate prior material in a better way with a clearer explanation of antecedents, integrating into it new knowledge; they don't criticize out of obstinate opposition, but only to extend the width and depth of the body of *ḥadīth* traditions.<sup>94</sup>

Modern research scholars are like the *ḥadīth* scholars of old, and operate under the same general rule. One should not misinterpret their exacting and critical assessment of scholars who have gone before them, for that is the mark of their admiration. For, unlike Sufi masters who can never live up to their past masters, the *ḥadīth* scholars of each generation surpass their predecessors in the fullness of their knowledge, the exactness of their source-criticism, and their ability to connect scholarly endeavours from distant regions into a greater whole. It is the ideals of the predecessors that inspire the current generation, over and above their words and judgments. The present generation must concentrate on carrying forward the project of past scholars like K. A. Nizami, with his own spirit of inquiry and high standards. That spirit must be preserved as the starting point of all research, beyond respect for the conclusions which are its end point.

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<sup>94</sup> 'Alī Muttaqī, *Risāla dar jawāb-i risāla-yi 'Abd al-Malik* (MSS Rampur: Reza Library, 1975 Arabic), fol. 10<sup>b</sup>. This treatise is in answer to the book by the Mahdawi scholar, 'Abd al-Malik Sujawandī, *Sirāj al-abṣār* (Hyderabad: published under the auspices of the Mahdawi community, Anjumān-i Mahdawiyya, Chanchalguda, n.d.).

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