

Theurgy of the Snake:
The *Yoga Kalandar* and Bengali Sufism

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Abstract

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Abstract:

A radically alternative vision of the fakir is given in surviving medieval (Bng. *madhya-yug*, “Middle Age”) and pre-modern textual sources that predate and coincide with the colonial period in Bengal, such as the widely influential 17th century *Yoga Kalandar* text as well as Bāul oral traditions deeply influenced by this text’s cosmology. This thesis aims therefore to fulfill three key objectives: 1) to historically situate the *Yoga Kalandar* text and its practitioners; 2) to describe the distinctly yogic and tantric aspects of its theology, with specific reference to the way the text harmonizes Sufi and Neoplatonic hypostases and ritual theurgy with Sāṃkhya cosmology; and 3) to describe how the text’s cosmology was integrated in later colonial and modern forms of indigenous Bengali mystical poetry, especially the Bāul songs of Lālan Fakir that make numerous creative references to the practices outlined in the *Yoga Kalandar* and, in a sense, even transcend the text’s limitations. As an appendix for reference, a non-annotated English translation of this text (from Bengali and French critical editions) is also provided.

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| Preface and Acknowledgments |

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

This publication is adapted from an academic thesis of the same name submitted to the University of Washington for a Master of Arts in International Studies: South Asian Studies. It is the culmination of the author's four years at the university pursuing two concurrent degrees (the other being in International Studies: Comparative Religion), and reflects the immense dedication and commitment to teaching displayed by the faculty of that university who actively encouraged the critical pursuit of topics that were often heterodox and controversial to established thinking in the field of religious studies. It also reflects that two out of the last five years were spent abroad in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal interacting with fakirs, yogis, scholars, businesspeople, instrument-makers, chefs, and a host of artists who helped make the cultural context of the *Yoga Kalandar* come more fully alive.

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While the author does not wish to hide that he is a practicing Thelemite and is affiliated with the O.T.O. and A.:A.:., the views expressed herein are solely the opinions of the author and do not reflect the official views of either Order.

Love is the law, love under will.

| Note on Transliteration |

Transliterations of Bengali / Bangla, Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian terms have been italicized throughout, with diacritics given according to the international standardized system used by Carol Salomon and many other scholars in their published works. A few exceptions however were deemed necessary to fully communicate the richness of the Bengali alphabet's phonemes and to ensure that there would be no confusion between similar letters, especially in cases where an interpretation of a song could very well hinge on a single letter. These are as follows: *antahstha* ষ is always transliterated as *ỵ* to distinguish it from *bargiya* জ, which is transliterated as *j*. ঞ (and *yā-phalā* ঞ) is always transliterated as *y*. Vocalic ঞ is transliterated as *ṛ* to distinguish it from retroflex (*mūrdhanya*) ড়, which is transliterated as *r*. When ত is not followed by an inherent vowel (i.e. “broken” or *khaṇḍa* ঞ) is transliterated as *ṭ*. The inherent vowel *a* is sometimes transliterated as *o* according to vowel strengthening rules in certain verbal forms (e.g., 2nd person singular present tense), following Salomon's convention. The inherent vowel is also often dropped at the end of a word to reflect Bengali pronunciation (see Thompson, Ruth. *Bengali: A Comprehensive Grammar*. New York: Routledge. 2010).

| Abbreviations |

Ar. — Arabic

BBOBG — *Bāṃlār Bāul o Bāul Gān* (see Bibliography: Bhaṭṭācārya 1971)

Bng. — Bengali / Bangla

LG — *Lālan Gītikā* (see Bibliography: Dās 1958)

Pers. — Persian

Skt. — Sanskrit

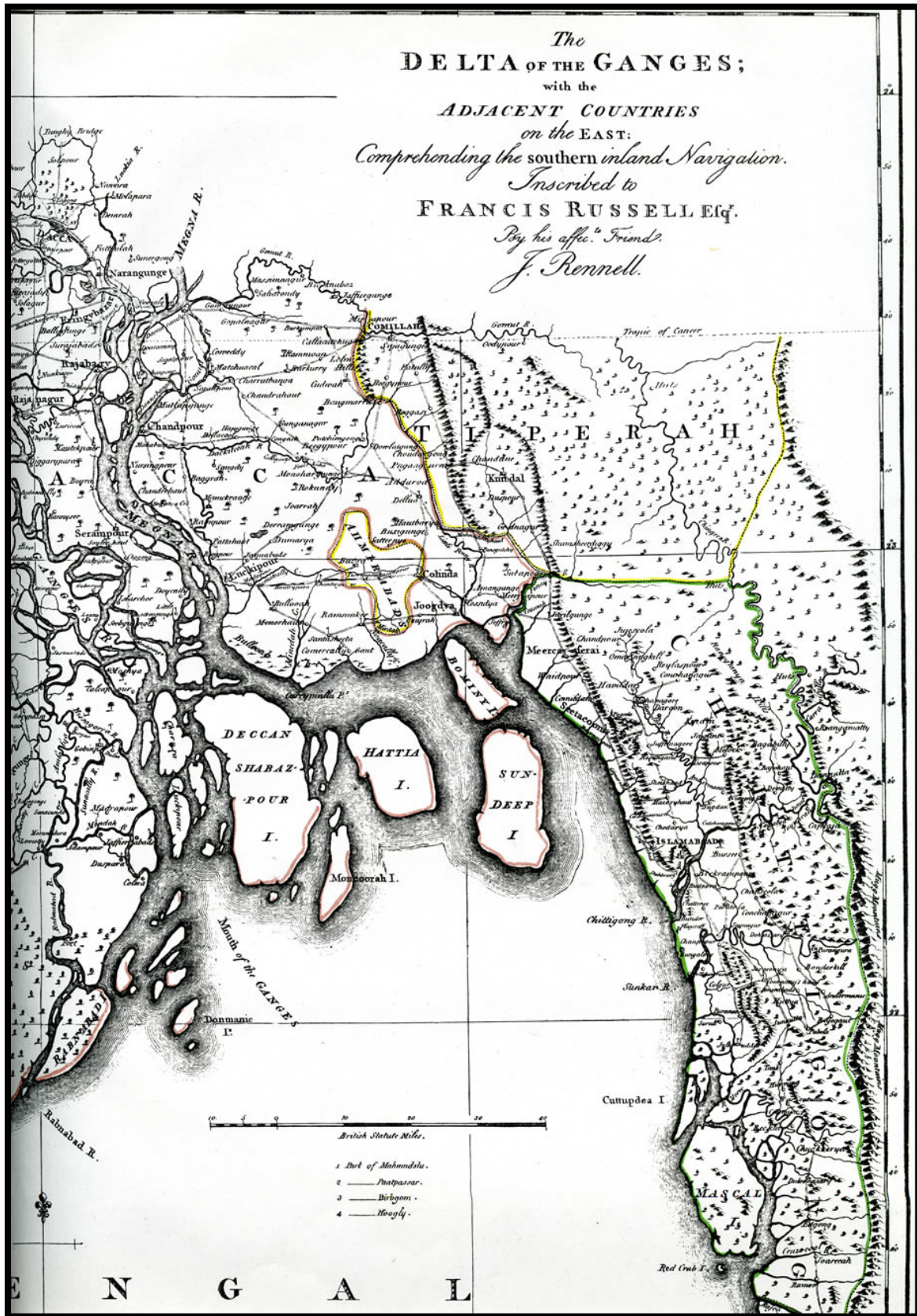


Figure 1. A map of southeast Bengal from Rennell's *Atlas*, first published in London in 1780.

| Introduction |

“The Muhammadan Fakirs in India were of indigenous growth. They assumed the title of Shah or King. They were not orthodox followers of Islam, and according to the author of the *Dabistan* they were really Hindus. ‘There is a class among the Hindus who gives themselves the term of Musulman—Sofies [Sufis] and really agree in several tenets and opinions with the Sofies” (Maulavi Abdul Ali, quoted in Ghosh 1930: 20).

In the 18th to 19th centuries C.E., the region that now constitutes Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal went through an unprecedented period of political and social upheaval. The increasing presence of colonial power sparked by the advent of the new capital of British India in Calcutta (modern Kolkata) led to a consolidation of political control in some areas of Bengal while leaving others largely outside the pale of imperial rule. Colonial records and indigenous cultural sources indicate that these frontier areas were home not only to settled populations but also to itinerant bands of religious practitioners of both Hindu and Muslim birth origin (*jāt*). To the East India Company officials these bands were simultaneously described as “beggars,” “mendicants,” “brigands” and even “terrorists” insofar as they posed a threat to the colonial establishment, but to the general population they were often supported as cultural heroes and freely given food and lodging (Ghosh 1930: 9-11). As was common in the discourse of the period, the disparaging colonial records not only fail to properly place their behavior in the context of Mughal common property laws but also neglect the fact that the religious beliefs and practices of these “fakir and sannyasi raiders” are significantly more complex than the words “beggar” or “mendicant” indicate, whether or not they are romantically glossed as an exotic “other” (cf. Said’s *Orientalism*). Indeed, their beliefs and lifestyles largely defy any conventional religious or social classification at all. Nevertheless, the negative stigma of these colonial descriptions lived on well into the twentieth century, with the scantily clad “fakir” image widely recognized and even finding its way into the popular Belgian comic strip the *Adventures of Tintin*.¹ This

¹ For example, the negative image of the fakir as a cunning, scantily-clothed ascetic lives on in

stigma is clearly a remnant of the same centuries-old colonial imagination that defined the fakir (Ar. *fuqarā*) as follows:

A poor man, a religious order of mendicants thus named by the Arabians; by the Persians Dervish or Sof [Sufi] and the Indians Senassey [Sannyasi]. In this singular class of men, who in Hindoostan despise every species of clothing, there are a number of enthusiasts, but by far a superior proportion of knaves, every vagabond of abilities who has aversion of labour, being received into a fraternity which is governed by laws of uncommon and secret nature (dictionary entry for “fakyr” [i.e., “fakir”] in John Richardson’s *A Dictionary, Persian, Arabic, and English* [1777], quoted in Ghosh 1930: 11).

There is obviously more to the fakir, however, than the colonial-era descriptions would have one think, and Ghosh himself also admits that even to the colonists many fakirs and dervishes were considered to be much more sincere than work-averse tricksters.

In any event, a radically alternative vision of the fakir is given in surviving medieval (Bng. *madhya-yug*, “Middle Age”) and pre-modern textual sources that predate and coincide with the colonial period, such as the widely influential 17th century *Yoga Kalandar* text as well as Bāul oral traditions which were deeply influenced by this text’s cosmology. These indigenous sources indicate that—at least at the grassroots level—fakirs (Bng. *phakir*), sannyasis (Bng. *sannyāsī*), dervishes (Bng. *darbeś*), goswamis (Bng. *gosvāmī*, often contracted to *gosāi* or *sāi*), and

Hergé’s Tintin series, as in this depiction from *Les Cigares du Pharaoh* (first published 1934), partly set in India. The fakir of the Tintin series turns out to be a ruthless assassin skilled in the art of hypnosis and shooting poison darts:



Figure 2. The “fakir” of *The Adventures of Tintin*.

members of other traditions (*sampradāy*) uniquely blended Hindu, Islamic and Buddhist ideas and actively pursued a path of yogic realization that at once harmonized and transcended sectarian divisions of caste and creed. Furthermore, the gradual introduction of Sufism into Bengali theological discourse saw a parallel influx of “Neoplatonic ideas”—albeit described in Islamic terms—that helped to negotiate with the Tantric discourse of pre-existing Nāth, Vaiṣṇava-Sahajiyā and Buddhist Tantric cosmologies (Salomon 1991: 271) that utilized the *tattvas* of the Sāṃkhya school (while rejecting its strict dualism) to describe an emanation from a transcendent negative principle (i.e. *vyoma* or *śūnyatā*).

This complex process of indigenous innovation also demonstrates how these itinerant practitioners were able to bond together in the highly tumultuous social environment of colonial Bengal. It also illuminates how the nationally-celebrated Bāul poetry of Lālan Fakir (d. 1899 C.E.) and other folk poets were later appropriated and harnessed as national figures during the more recent tumultuous period in the history of the region: the Liberation War of Bangladesh that secured East Bengal’s independence from West Pakistan in 1971. While this study is somewhat detached from the subaltern project, it is hoped that scholars of more secular aspects of subaltern history could also benefit from the history of ideas presented herein to the extent that it applies to important segments of the Bengali population who are known for challenging hegemonic structures.

This thesis aims therefore to fulfill three key objectives: 1) to historically situate the medieval Bengali *Yoga Kalandar* text and its practitioners; 2) to describe the distinctly yogic and tantric aspects of its theology, with specific reference to the way the text harmonizes Sufi and Neoplatonic hypostases with Sāṃkhya cosmology; and 3) to describe how the text’s cosmology was integrated in later colonial and modern forms of indigenous Bengali mystical poetry, especially the Bāul songs of Lālan Fakir that make numerous creative references to the practices outlined in the *Yoga Kalandar* and, in a sense, even transcend the text’s limitations. As an appendix for reference, a non-annotated English translation of this text (from a Bengali critical edition and a recent French translation) is provided.

| Chapter One: Historical Context of the *Yoga Kalandar* |

It is a natural early development on the Path of Initiation that most students experience a universal vision of the world religions, wherein the commonality within most of them is perceived. To witness them first-hand, to visit their temples and shrines and sacred places, may lead to an even more profound realization of the universal sacred character found in disparate religious movements.

— J. Daniel Gunther, *The Angel & The Abyss*

WHAT IS “BENGALI SUFISM?”

Defining “Sufism” is as problematic as defining, say, “Gnosticism” — the actors span several continents, the structures are simultaneously both ancient and modern, and there is no lack of “experts” who create conceptual genres or categories that are completely outdated a decade (not to mention a century) later. In any case, Das Gupta (citing Enamul Hak) records that the first influx of Sufism to Bengal most likely came in the 11th century C.E. with the visit of Shah Sultan Rumi, while by the 12th century the Chishti and Suhrawardi orders had “gained sufficient ground” and “succeeded in attracting a considerable number of Indian people to accept their tenets” (168). In subsequent centuries the Qadadiri, Naqshbandi, and Madari orders also came to be a driving force in Bengal, and by the 15th century there were as many as seven Sufi orders (with the addition of the the Adhami and Qadiri orders) operating in the region (169). The unique variations of Sufism that this influx created in medieval Bengal have been extensively documented in the scholarship of Ahmad Śarīph, Asim Roy, Enamul Hak, M. R. Tarafdar, S.B. Das Gupta, David Cashin, and Hans Harder, not to mention several other Bengali scholars in India and Bangladesh who have also published extensively on the subject. The wider social, political and historical contexts of Bengal’s interaction with Islam before and after the Mughal period were also extensively documented by Richard Eaton in *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760*, an important book that handily dismisses some of the most prevalent myths about the then predominantly Hindu and Buddhist population’s conversion to Islam.

Despite this rich history, the field of Bengali Sufism still arguably suffers from the broader problem of discounting oral tradition in favor of textual criticism. Past scholars of South Asia were largely content to dismiss Sufi discourse in South Asia

as illiterate and non-elite folk appropriations of Islam, and usually glossed its treatment with statements to the effect that adherents to Indian popular forms of Sufism have little or no understanding of the “actual” religious significance of the terms or rituals employed. While illiteracy certainly does account for certain folk departures from orthodox Islam, such an attitude is problematic as it tends to create a false dichotomy between literal orthodoxy on the one hand and heterodox oral tradition on the other. Positing a third relationship to scriptural texts that can be taken as independent of both literalism and folk appropriation, William Graham writes:

If the peculiarly strong orality of the Qur’ān or other sacred scriptures can reveal anything about the functional *meaning* of scriptural texts in religious life, it is that this meaning is not tied exclusively to the literal and intellectual content of the sacred texts, any more than it is to folk appropriation of such texts for divination, healing, or the like” (111, italics as in original).

While I would argue that Graham’s conception of “folk appropriation” still unfairly seems to stigmatize certain important ritual usages of scriptural texts among heterodox communities, he does acknowledge that scriptures can develop new functional meanings when they are “carried by the recitation over and above the particular meaning of the literal passage recited, however deeply felt and understood that meaning may be on an intellectual plane” (114). Indeed, as will be evident from the *Yoga Kalandar* and from Lālan Fakir’s songs, one intended effect of the practice (*sāadhanā*) is precisely that: to transcend the “intellectual plane” with its rational limitations. This transcendence is not unique to Bengali traditions, but appears to also be a hallmark of Sufism more generally (as for example the mysticism of al-Ḥallāj, covered in Chapter Four, indicates).

Although dedicated scholarship on Sufism in South Asia is now beginning to emerge (thanks in part to the work of Carl Ernst and Hans Harder), Bengali scholars are still critical of North American and European academics for neglecting to adequately treat Sufism’s Bengali-specific forms. In a new introduction to a 2012 reprint of Enamul Hak’s *Bāṅge Svūphī Prabhāb* (a work regarded as the first major

critical analysis of Bengali Sufism, published in 1935), Ananda Bhattacharya presents the following critique (translated from Bengali):

One will find traces of [Bengali Sufism] in several books and articles published by the School of Oriental and Asian Studies (SOAS) in London, by the University of Chicago and Princeton University Press in the United States, and by Cambridge, but since there is no delineation of distinct *lineages* [*silasilā* < Ar. *silsilah*], their discourse on distinct features of Sufism is lacking...Even though many different aspects of Sufi movements among all classes of Indian society can be found in the discourse of Carl Ernst, Francis Robinson, Simon Digby, Bruce Lawrence, Katherine Pratt Ewing, Barbara Metcalf, Annemarie Schimmel and other scholars, they are not treated extensively in a Bengali context (Hak 2012: ii-iii).²

There are many possible reasons for this relative neglect, but one complication in the study of Bengali Sufism is that a large corpus of texts survives (including, among many others, such works as the *Yoga Kalandar*, *Nabi-Baṃṣa*, *Jñāna-Sāgar*, *Jñāna-Pradīp*, and *Ādya Paricay*) that reflects Sufism's historical interaction with Hindu and Buddhist yogic traditions in South Asia. Śarīph in particular seems to have captured this process most succinctly:

It was not possible for all of the Sufi adepts that entered India to avoid being swayed by India's spiritual doctrines (*tattva*) and practices (*sādhanā*). The locals also who were initiated by them were unable to leave their previous

² Personal translation from the original Bengali:

লন্ডন-এর স্কুল অফ ওরিয়েন্টাল স্টাডিজ, আমেরিকার
চিকাগো বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, প্রিন্সটন ইউনিভার্সিটি প্রেস ও কেমব্রিজ থেকে একাধিক গ্রন্থ ও
প্রবন্ধ-র সন্ধান পাওয়া যায়, কিন্তু তারা কোনো এক বিশেষ *সিলসিলা* ভিত্তিক আলোচনায়
সীমাবদ্ধ না থেকে সুফিবাদের বিভিন্ন আঙ্গিক নিয়ে আলোচনা করতে আগ্রহী। আর.
এম. ইটনও এই ধারার অন্তর্গত। তাঁর সাম্প্রতিক গবেষণা মূলত চিশ্টি *সিলসিলা*র
প্রসার ও আধিপত্যক কেন্দ্র করে আবর্তিত হয়েছে। রাজদরবারের সঙ্গে চিশ্টি সুফিদের
যে সম্পর্ক উত্তরভারতে লক্ষ করা যাচ্ছিল, বাংলার ক্ষেত্রে তাঁর আলোচনায় কোনো
ব্যতিক্রম ঘটেনি [...]

traditions of non-dualist thought and yogic precepts. It is believed that at that time the now-diminished Buddhist society's 'yogic-kāya-sādhana' doctrines were still current among these people. As a result Sufi Islam was able to strike a compromise with the path of yoga and other prevailing paths of spiritual *sāadhanā*. As harmony with Sufism increased in the course of time, the Sahajiyā and Bāul traditions were also created as a result.³

In a more recent survey article that covers this aspect of Bengali esoteric interaction in great detail, Shaman Hatley argues similarly that Bengali Sufism "adapted to itself the basic template of the yogic body as formulated by the Nātha cult and reconfigured it within the parameters of Indo-Islamic thought" (2007: 353). While Hatley certainly presents one of the most comprehensive summaries available as to the scope of this reconfiguration, at times he relies excessively on Cashin's rigid categorization of Nāth or Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā identities. This rigid categorization, however, is the very aspect of Cashin's *Ocean of Love* that the celebrated scholar on the Bāul tradition Carol Salomon strongly disagreed with in her own review of that book:

Conceptually, the book is a jumble. On the one hand, Cashin states that he is attempting to prove that the texts are 'exclusively Nathist or exclusively Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā' (p. 40), and sometimes even goes so far as to identify an author of a Bengali Sufi text as a 'straightforward Nāthist yogī' (p. 141) or 'Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā' (p. 104). On the other hand, he admits that there are Nāth elements in Muslim texts which he considers to be Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā in orientation and vice versa, but holds that it is the tradition that predominates

³ Personal translation from the original Bengali, with assistance from Prof. Nandini Abedin:

তাই ভারতে যে-সব সূফী সাধক প্রবেশ করেন, ভারতীয় অধ্যাত্ম তত্ত্ব ও সাধনার প্রভাব এড়ানো তাঁদের পক্ষে সম্ভব ছিল না। তাঁদের কাছে দীক্ষিত দেশী জনগণও পূর্ব-ঐতিহ্যসূত্রে প্রাপ্ত অদ্বৈতচেতনা ও যোগপ্রীতি ত্যাগ করতে পারেনি। বিশেষ করে বিলুপ্ত বৌদ্ধ সমাজের 'যোগিক-কায়-সাধন' তত্ত্ব তখনো জনকিতে অল্পান ছিল। ফলে "সূফীমতের ইসলাম সহজেই এদেশের প্রচলিত যোগমার্গ ও অন্যান্য আধ্যাত্মিক সাধনমার্গের সঙ্গে একটা আপোষ করে নিতে সমর্থ হয়েছিল।" একই কারণে ও পরিবেশে পরবর্তীকালে সূফীবাদের সামঞ্জস্য হয়ে সহজিয়া ও বাউল সম্প্রদায়ের সৃষ্টি হয়। (Śarīph 1969: আ)।

which indicates the ‘cult’ of origin. Clearly, ‘exclusively’ is an overstatement and not apt to characterize the premodern Bengali religious scene, which tended to be fluid and inclusivist. In any case, the book for the most part discounts exogenous Sufi influence (1998: 555).

The question of “exogenous Sufi influence” is important, especially due to the historical presence of Nāth practitioners in rural Bangladesh, e.g. at Candranāth Dhām in the mountains around Sītākunḍa, or Maheśkhālī Island near Chittagong, both celebrated as cultural centers of Nāth and Vaiṣṇava activity (for the former see Figure 3 below). Hatley writes that “circumstantial evidence certainly points toward the ongoing Islamization of Nātha lay communities in Bengal” and quotes Cashin’s fieldwork as evidence that “Nāthism” has “virtually died out on the village level” in Bangladesh (2007: 364). If, however, the term “Nāth” in Bengal was never entirely an exclusive category, did the practices really “die out” or did they simply start operating within a broader paradigm (i.e., that of the fakirs) and shift their geographical location? This question also applies to Buddhist and tribal minority communities in Bangladesh, especially the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Perhaps academics have been searching for a static level of “purity” that never really existed in the Bengali Nāth tradition.

Carl Ernst (2005: 16-17) rightly points out that the terms “influence” or “syncretism” fail to adequately describe the real historical processes that characterized — and still characterize — Sufism’s discourse with indigenous yogic traditions in South Asia. The details of these processes are outlined in Ernst’s seminal study (2003) of the complex “process of Islamisation” in the *Amṛtakunḍa* (“The Pool of Nectar”), a 13th century Sufi composite text that is now only extant in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu, although the earliest portions of the text are thought to have been composed in Sanskrit in the environs of Kāmākhyā Temple in Assam (2003: 204). In many ways the *Amṛtakunḍa* is the prototype for the genre of literature that the *Yoga Kalandar* is a later example of, but the *Yoga Kalandar* also signals an important point of departure on the part of Bengali Sufi authors. Unlike the practitioners of the *Amṛtakunḍa* tradition who sought to Islamize that text by

infusing it with “scriptural Islamic themes, philosophical vocabulary, and the terminology and concepts of Sufism” (Ibid: 203), the fakirs of East Bengal (e.g. Lālan Fakir, Duddu Shah, and Pāñja Shah) who interpreted the *Yoga Kalandar* consciously drew from many “streams of thought” (*bhābdhārā*) — Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and even Christian, following the advent of colonialism — in an attempt to describe the physical and mental processes of a human being (*mānuṣ*) independent of religious birth-caste (*jāt*) or the limits of language (*bhāṣā*). The scholars Jeanne Openshaw and Carola Erika Lorea have both published detailed analyses (Openshaw 2002; Lorea 2015) as to how these themes were negotiated by Bāul poets who primarily operated in what is today the Indian state of West Bengal.

TEXTUAL HISTORY OF THE *YOGA KALANDAR*

As mentioned above, the *Yoga Kalandar* is one of the most prominent textual records of the Bengali folk discourse with Sufism, and can be contextualized as a “work of Sufi Muslims that is strongly impregnated with the concepts and practices of yoga” (Bhattacharya 2003: 69). Hak surmises that the *Yoga Kalandar* is exemplary of a historical period in which interest in the Persian language had been waning among the local population of Bengal, as few could natively speak the language. For this reason, pre-existing Sufi texts began to become widely translated (with, perhaps, additions) and available in the Bengali language. One unfortunate byproduct of this vernacular movement, however, was the lack of attention given to preserving Persian manuscripts. As a result, no known Persian manuscripts of the *Yoga Kalandar* survive, although Bhattacharya mentions that there are references to a text of that name in Persian circulating in North India. Hak quotes one Sufi (also from the 18th century) named Muḥsin ‘Ālī who summarized the situation thus in a prefatory note to another work from the period:

The messages (*resālā*) and books (*ketāb*) of the secret sciences (*gañjarāj*) /
When I saw these among them //
No one was able to understand them in the Persian language /
So I composed them in Bengali for all to understand (1975: 368).⁴

To my knowledge the complete text of the *Yoga Kalandar* has been published so far in only three academic sources: a Bengali version by Ahmad Śarīph (1969), an English translation by Enamul Hak (1975), and an annotated French translation by France Bhattacharya (2003). Bhattacharya notes in her translation of Śarīph’s version that Hak’s English translation adds several lines not found in Śarīph’s recension of the text, and therefore argues that they each utilized different manuscripts for their respective editions. While Hak’s recension attributes authorship of the text to the 17th century Bengali Sufi and Vaiṣṇava composer Saiyyad Murtaza, the authorship is contested and remains uncertain. The manuscript itself survives in at least twelve documented copies that are currently held in the library of the University of Dhaka (Husain 1960: 389, 391-396, 398, 399, 416, 457, 574), as well as an unpublished composite copy at Varendra Research Society Museum in Rajshahi (Tarafdar 1965: 215). While all of the manuscripts are in the Bengali language, some were written in a unique style that utilized the Perso-Arabic script to represent the letters of the Bengali alphabet, perhaps in a mode similar to the relationship between Urdu and Hindi. The manuscripts themselves were discovered in the collection of the scholar Abdul Karim, and circulated widely in the districts surrounding Chittagong (Bng. Caṭṭagrām) in southeastern Bangladesh (cf. Figures 4 and 5). Hak states that the text’s paleographic tradition “clearly shows that an attempt, though sporadic, was made by some Muslims of South Eastern Bengal (as all the manuscripts were discovered from this tract) to Arabicise the Bengali Script” (1975: 373).

⁴ Personal translation from the original Bengali, with assistance from Prof. Nandini Abedin:

“রেসালা কেতাৰ যত আৰ গঞ্জৰাজ ।
ষেমত দেখিলুম মুই এ সবেৰ মাৰ ॥
ফাৰ্ছী ভাষায় তাহা না বুঝে সৰ্বজন ।
সকল বুঝিতে কৈলুম বাঙ্গালা রচন ॥”

(মুহসিন আলী)

The text certainly also found resonance outside of Chittagong. As the songs of Lālan Fakir indicate, a similar cosmology to the *Yoga Kalandar* was also widespread throughout north, central and eastern Bengal during the 18th-19th centuries C.E., including the historical region of Nadia.⁵ Manuscripts of an earlier 15th century Sufi text called *Ādya Paricay* attributed to Śekh Jāhed have been discovered in Rangpur, a city in northern Bengal. This text partakes in a similar cosmology to that of the *Yoga Kalandar* and makes direct reference to Matsyendranāth, the guru of Gorakhnāth (who was instrumental in formulating the discipline of *haṭha yoga*), but it is unclear whether or not the textual traditions are directly connected. In any event, it is possible that several oral and textual traditions would have been circulating in the region that helped Lālan and other Bāul fakirs bridge the gap between Sufism and the more dominant Nāth and Buddhist traditions in the environs of Chittagong in southeastern Bengal.

While precise dating is impossible without a critical examination of the source manuscripts, it can nevertheless be determined from existing published sources that the *Yoga Kalandar* is one of the earliest and most important remnants of a folk cosmology that was widespread across Bengal prior to Islamic reformist movements of the late 19th and early 20th century (e.g. *Farāizi*, *Tariqa-i Muhammadiyah*, *Ahl-i hadith*, and *Taayuni*) that “largely derived their inspirations from sources outside the region [and] launched a massive campaign against what they regarded as ‘innovations,’ ‘accretions,’ and ‘deviations’ in the regional Islam” (Roy 1983: x, n.1). The Bāuls were seen as the chief “propagators” of these supposed “deviations,” and they were “denounced in *fatwas* (legal decisions) for corrupting Bengali Islam with Hindu beliefs and practices.” By the beginning of the 20th century, the culture of

⁵ The site of Lālan’s *ākhyā* or hermitage was located in the village Cheuriya in the environs of Kushtia, a region that was originally part of the greater Nadia region before Partition separated East Pakistan (modern Bangladesh) from West Bengal (now a state of India) in 1947. Nadia is perhaps more famous today for the towns Nabadvīp (the name from which Nadia is derived) and Mayapur (today the site of ISKCON), important historical and cultural centers in West Bengal where the great 16th century Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* reformer Caitanya Mahāprabhu resided. It is important to keep in mind, however, that prior to partition Nadia was a larger region that spans areas of what is today Bangladesh as well as West Bengal (see map in Figure 6). The dream of a united Nadia is still cherished even today among some Bāuls who revere the glory of its cultural past.

singing of Bāul songs in East Bengal had largely been driven underground (Salomon 1991: 268), and only began to openly resurface following the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 when Lālan Fakir was re-packaged as a national symbol of Bengali identity (cf. Urban 1999: 16-17).⁶

⁶ Though Lālan Fakir's newfound national status did seem to be successful in rallying folk movements to the cause of Bangladeshi independence, such an appropriation is nevertheless problematic as his songs tend to de-emphasize any birth-identity (*jāṭ*) at all, including an identity linked to one's nation of origin (*deś*).



নাম না-জানা শিল্পীর অঙ্কিত সীতাকুণ্ড চন্দ্রনাথধামের মঠ-মন্দির পরিচিত। এ ছবিটি চলে আসছে ধাম অব্দ শতাব্দিরও অধিক সময় ধরে। যদিও বর্তমানে মঠ-মন্দির এবং রাস্তা-ঘাটের অনেক সংস্কার হয়েছে তথাপি জনমানসে ছবিটি গেঁথে আছে সীতাকুণ্ড জৈবের ইতিহাসে। নাম না-জানা শিল্পীর এ ছবিটি ব্যবহার করা গেল গভীর শ্রদ্ধায় ও কৃতজ্ঞতায়। — সেন খন্দক

Figure 3. A map of the temple complex Candranāth Dhām near Sītākunḍa, Bangladesh, as drawn by an unknown artist in the early 20th century. At the summit of the mountains is Candranāth Mandir (“The Temple to the Lord of the Moon,” i.e. Śiva), recognized as a national Hindu center in Bangladesh. The different temples dedicated to aspects of Śiva also held in high regard by Nāth traditions (e.g. Candranāth and Birūpakṣanāth) possibly indicate a historical connection with the wider Nāth *saṃpradāya* outside of Bangladesh (cf. Mallinson 2014).



Figure 5. A modern map of the Chittagong (Bng. Caṭṭagrām) and Feni (Bng. Phenī) divisions (*jelā*) from an atlas designed for students of secondary schools in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The face on the lower right is a portrait of Abdul Karim, the literary historian and antiquarian in whose collection the original manuscripts of the *Yoga Kalandar* were found.



Figure 6. A British colonial map of Bengal from *Sannyasi and Fakir Raiders in Bengal* (Ghosh 1930) that shows the extended district of Nadia, today separated between Bangladesh and West Bengal, India. Lālan Fakir’s *ākhrā* (“hermitage,” < Skt. *ākḥāḍa*) was located outside Kushtia (not shown on this map), not far from Comercolly (modern Kumarkhali) on this map. Rabindranath Tagore resided for a period of time in nearby Śilāidaha in eastern Nadia, and is recorded to have met with Lālan on at least one occasion.

KALANDAR, FAKIR, DERVISH, BĀUL

Bhattacharya explains that the word *kalandar* (Ar. *qalandar*) in Bengali literary sources contemporary with the *Yoga Kalandar* denoted one born among the lowest classes who had become a heterodox “dervish” or “religious mendicant of low status, and does not refer to any Sufi order” (2003: 70). The word *kalandar* (lit. “unshaven”) however, like “dervish,” also has a rich history in the context of Muslim asceticism outside of Bengal. The term’s entry in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* provides the following details as to the wider history of the Arabic *qalandariyya* movement:

The existence of the movement in Khurāsān in the 5th/11th century is clearly attested; its adherents then may have been Buddhist ascetics maintaining their Buddhist beliefs and way of life under a Muslim guise; alternatively, the (earlier) Malāmīs had been inspired by such Buddhist ascetics. Since the *qalandars* looked with envy at the way of life of these Indian ascetics...the second alternative is more likely (Yahziel, et al.).

Khurāsān (modern Iran and Afghanistan) does indeed seem to be a plausible geographic source for many of the Islamic concepts in the *Yoga Kalandar*, although many esoteric concepts in the text are likely also native to Bengal — especially those with Buddhist undertones — and seem to reflect a vibrant period of intellectual exchange. The movement can be divided into two phases, as only one source (the *Qalandar-nāma* of ‘Abd Allāh-i Anṣārī) treats of the movement prior to the 13th century C.E., when a charismatic Sufi named Djamāl al-Dīn al-Sāwī “attracted the attention of the whole Muslim world...with his unusual style of dress, and his attraction of adherents” (Ibid). The movement then restructured and quickly spread to Egypt, Syria, and India, especially to Delhi and the Punjab where the *qalandariyya* interacted further with Hindu and Buddhist ascetics. The movement was distinguished from other Muslim orders by the following characteristics:

- (1) The shaving of the head, eye-brows and face (especially after the time of al-Sāwī) in order fully to reveal the beauty of the face,
- (2) The wearing of a *q̣hirkā* [Bng. *khirkā*]; in India the usual garb was a blanket over the body and a blanket or a cotton sash round the waist,
- (3) The wearing round the neck and

on the arms of iron rings called *ḥaydariyya*, (4) Austerities and seclusion were not considered important, and they were lax in following the obligatory precepts and practices of Islam, usually refraining from engaging in worship, or at least in corporate worship, [and] (5) They usually subsisted on charity, owned nothing but a few personal possessions, and did not marry. They were notorious for their coarse behaviour (Ibid).

These practices are not merely lost to history, for anthropological research suggests that among later Bāul fakirs several of these attitudes and practices appear to have become relatively commonplace, and indeed are even today still current in parts of West Bengal and Bangladesh. For example, in at least one of Lālan Fakir's songs that cover the subject of initiation ("Ke tomāy e beś bhūṣaṇe," "Tell me! Who dressed you in these clothes?"), the *khirkā* (Ar. *khirqā*) is mentioned directly as a distinguishing marker of a fakir who is "dead while alive" (*ḥayante-marā*):

Song no. 1 - "Ke tomāy e beś bhūṣaṇe"
(translation by Carol Salomon; LG no. 221)⁷

Tell me!
Who dressed you in these clothes?
Dead man's garb,
khirqā, cap, and loincloth
on a living man!

Live men wearing dead men's clothes,
doing their own funeral rites,
cutting themselves off from this world—
these look like impossible acts.

⁷ LG refers to the compilation *Lālan-Gītikā* edited by Matilal Das and Piyuskanti Mahapatra (Calcutta University, 1958), one of the earliest Bengali academic publications that contain Lālan's songs. Other major compilations include seminal works by Ābu Tālib (1968), Upendranāth Bhaṭṭācārya (1977), and Fakir Anoyār Hosen (1998). There are significant variations in spelling and word choice among the published versions, a situation that led Salomon to seek out original MSS and oral versions from practicing fakirs to compare these variations in her work. Her count is as follows: "At least seven hundred different songs with Lalan's *bhaṇitā* have been published. Of these, 462 songs in the collection...can be identified with reasonable certainty as authentic and thus be considered the core of the Lalan corpus" (1991: 276).

Yama won't touch a man who dies before his death.
So I've heard sadhus say.
Is that why you did this,
you clever fellow?

Your outfit suits you fine,
if you can die before diving.
But if you come back, Lālan says,
you will shame both sides (Salomon 2015: 294).

The celebrated anthropologist and scholar on Bāul traditions Jeanne Openshaw confirms that these kinds of initiations (called *bhek* or *khilāphat*) still exist among Vaiṣṇava and Muslim communities, and provides the following insight that describes the experience of renunciation: “Consonant with the fact that renunciation constitutes the death of one’s householder identity, dislocation in space is a precondition and a symbol of the social trauma involved” (133). She also adds that “the renunciation of householder life has a far less prominent place in Muslim society” (Ibid), but this could be a more recent pattern since numerous fakir communities are recorded as wearing the attire of renunciates at least up to the beginning of the 19th century, as in this example:

The beliefs and practices of these Fakirs are in many ways anti-Islamic. They grow long hair on their head, put coloured cloths, wear a small piece of cloth instead of breeches called *Kopni* and use shackles of iron and long iron tongs (Maulvi Abdul Ali, quoted in Ghosh 21).

Incidentally, the practice of growing long hair instead of shaving appears to be a comparatively later innovation (from the middle of the 19th century), as indicated in Salomon’s annotations that treat upon the motif of “shaveling” (*neṛā*) fakirs in Lālan’s songs. Her description of this movement with its Vaiṣṇava and Islamic ties is worth quoting in full:

‘Shaveling’ (*nārā*, *neṛā*, or *nyārā*, fem. *nārī*, etc.) refers to a Bengali Vaiṣṇava group that existed into the nineteenth century but has since disappeared.

According to legend⁸, in the sixteenth century Vīrabhadra, the son of Caitanya’s close disciple, Nityananda, initiated 1,200 Buddhist *neṛās* and 1,300 *neṛīs* into Vaiṣṇavism at Khardaha, a few miles north of Calcutta. When R.M. Martin described the Neṛās in 1838 ([vol. 3], 177) they were readily identifiable as a distinct group due to their shaven heads. By the time Aksay Kumar Datta published *Bhāratbarsīya Upāsak Sampradāy* in 1870, however, it seems that they had discontinued the practice. He remarks [1987 (1318 B.S.), vol. 1, 235-236] that the Neṛā (Vaiṣṇavas) have beards and also long hair which they wear tied up on top of their heads. He further notes that like the Bāuls they worship women (*bāulder nyāy e sampradāyero prakṛti-sādhan pradhān bhajan*). His descriptions of Neṛās and Bāuls are similar in respect to their appearance and practices. The exact historical connection between the Neṛās and the Bāuls is obscure, but they both consider Vīrabhadra a seminal figure. Many Bāuls, whether Hindu or Muslim, mention Vīrabhadra as their *ādiguru* “original preceptor” who gave legitimacy to their sexual *sādhanā* (Bhaṭṭācārya 1971: 44). Duddu Shah (“Bāul baisṇab dharma ek nahe bhāi,” *Jāhāngīr* 1964, no. 19), quoting Lālan, says that Vīrabhadra knew the practices of the *darbeśī* Bāuls (i.e., Muslim Bāuls).⁹ In fact, the term *neṛā* is also used contemptuously to refer to Lālan-panthī fakirs and other groups of fakirs who do not follow the Sharia and are known to have practices involving bodily substances. It was a choice invective of nineteenth century reformists for these groups (Ahmed 1981: 33). D.C. Sen (1917: 164) believes that the term applied

⁸ [Footnote by Salomon:] “The legend recorded in *Nityānandaprabhur Baṅśa Bistār* attributed to Vrindaban Dās (D.C. Sen, *The Vaisnava Literature of Mediæval Bengal*, 1917, 164, note 1; and R. Chakrabarty 1985, 154 note 3). Reference to the story is also found in the early eighteenth century Sahajīya work *Ānanda-Bhairava* by Premadāsa [University of Calcutta Library, MS no. 3926; critical edition in Dās, Śrī Paritoṣa 1972, 45-111]. A fair was held at Khardaha in commemoration of this event until early 1900, when it was discontinued for lack of funds (D.C. Sen, 1917, 165). Bhattacharya (BBOBG: 51) holds that the Buddhist *neṛās* and *neṛīs* who were initiated by Vīracandra were Sahajīyā Buddhists. D.C. Sen identifies the Vaiṣṇava Neṛās with the Vaiṣṇava Sahajīyās (1917, 165).”

⁹ [Footnote by Salomon:] *darbeśī bāul kriyā bīrbhadra jāne sei dhārā darbeś lālan sāir kathāy, duddu jānāy tāi*. It is interesting to note that *Mādhabbibir kaṛcā* links Vīrabhadra to the Islamic tradition. According to the text his guru was a Muslim woman named Mādhabbibi (BBOBG: 376).

to Muslim fakirs traces back to the shaven-headed Buddhist monks and nuns who converted to Islam, but there is no evidence legendary or otherwise to support this contention (Salomon forthcoming: 285).

Given the striking parallels between the “shavelings” (*neṛā*) and the *qalandariyya*, it is plausible that they could have had intertwining histories that account for a critical period in the intersections between Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic ascetic practices. It is possible that the Arabic and Persian textual sources of the *qalandariyya* may provide the evidence required to link these groups in Bengal more conclusively with their counterparts in other regions of South Asia, and perhaps a comparison of Bengali and Persian sources that mention these sects would prove fruitful.

As far as Bengal is concerned, Hak in *A History of Islamic Sufi-ism in Bengal* writes that “dervish”-hood (i.e., the title of *darbeś*, variant spelling *darbbeś*) indicated an especially advanced stage of Sufi practice that emphasized “the practical aspect of gnosis” and required “knowledge in nine subjects” (1975: 414). These nine subjects were **1)** the discernment of the dervishes (*darbbeś*), **2)** the worship of Khodā (God), **3)** the discourses on subtle bodies (*tan*), **4)** the essence (*tattva*) of the self, **5)** the essence of mental examination (*dilere dekhan*), **6)** the subject of the subtle nerves (*nārī*), **7)** the location of semen (*bindu*), **8)** an introduction to the six subtle centers (*ṣaṭcakra*), and **9)** that which is called “Brahmatattva” (415).¹⁰

¹⁰ Personal translation with assistance from Prof. Nandini Abedin. Enamul Hak provided the original Bengali for this list (copied below), but did not state the source from which it came. It is derived from a poem titled *Darbeśī Mahal* “Dervish Palace” in the *Talināmā / Śahdaulāpīranāma* of Śekh Cāḍ who lived in Comilla (in modern Bangladesh) during the 17th-18th centuries C.E. and composed numerous works on Islamic mysticism. The complete Bengali text is given in Śarīph 1969: 41-86.

That the title denotes an especially advanced course of knowledge is corroborated by the fact that Lālan Fakir in his songs always refers to his guru Sirāj Sāi as a dervish (*darbes*), but never uses the title to describe himself (Lālan's *bhanita*, if it even gives a title rather than a diminutive or humorous adjective, only ever has "fakir" before or after his name). Given the respect attached to such a title, it is quite possible that Dervish Sirāj Sāi would have been competent in the above nine forms of knowledge and would have engaged extensively in the "practical aspect of gnosis" in the tradition of the *qalandariyya*.

“প্রথমে জানিবে যত দর্বেশী বিচার ।
দ্বিতীয় জানিবে যত বন্দেগী খোদার ॥
তৃতীয়ে জানিবে যত তনের বিচার ।
চতুর্থে জানিবে যত তত্ত্ব আপনার ॥
পঞ্চমে জানিবে তত্ত্ব দিলেই দেখন ।
ষষ্ঠমে জানিবে যত নাড়ীর বর্গন ॥
সপ্তমে জানিবে যথা বিন্দু থাকয় ।
অষ্টমে জানিবে ষট্চক্র পরিচয় ॥
নবমে জানিবে রহস্যতত্ত্ব কহি যারে ।
যে কার্য করিবে সাধ্য যেমত প্রকারে ॥

| Chapter Two: Hybrid Cosmology in the *Yoga Kalandar* |

“Yes, art was magic; and as he owned the truth of the aphorism, he could comprehend that in magic there may be religion, for religion is essential to art.”

— Edward Bulwer Lytton (1803-1873 C.E.), *Zanoni*

FROM HELLENIZED HYPOSTASES TO SUFI STAGES

The *Yoga Kalandar* is unique as it presents one of the strongest textual indications available of a living “folk Neoplatonism” that thrived under an umbrella of Sufism alongside the yogic cosmologies of the Nāth, Vaiṣṇava-Sahajiyā and Buddhist Tantric traditions. As Sufi orders merged the transcendental hypostases of Plotinus (e.g. the One, the Intellectual-Principle, and the World Soul; cf. Shaw 39-40) with the principles (*tattva*) of the Sāṃkhya “school” (*darśana*) of Indian philosophy, classes of intermediary beings also became mapped onto a systematic cosmology of the universe that was founded upon the four classical elements, the cardinal directions, the seasons, the Tantric *cakras*, the Sufi *mokāms* (< Ar. *maqam*, “stage”) and many other associations. The implications of this are enormous, for it is clear that the *Yoga Kalandar* was intended primarily as a set of ritual practices rather than a collection of metaphysical speculations. To the extent that Neoplatonism factors into the discourse of Bengali Sufism, it is its practical implementation — often termed “theurgy” when Neoplatonism is discussed in the context of classical Arabic, Greek, Latin, or medieval European magic — that is paramount. The nature of this ritualized implementation is summarized in Chapter Three, but it will first be necessary to situate the text’s cosmology in a historical context.

Numerous scholars have convincingly demonstrated that Islamic philosophy (Ar. *falsafa*) is at least partially indebted to Hellenistic cosmologies and conceptions of the soul (cf. Adamson, Miskawayh, Gutas). This is perhaps most immediately evident by the reverence Arabic and Persian philosophers and ethicists give to Socrates, Plato (Ar. Aflatun), Aristotle (Ar. Aristu), Plotinus (under a mistaken pseudonym of Aristotle), Porphyry, Proclus, and Iamblichus. Many of these philosophers’ works were commissioned by the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty to be translated

from Greek into Arabic (likely via the medium of Syriac) by a circle led by al-Kindī (Adamson 2007: 5, 25-26). Although Adamson points out that al-Kindī likely had no knowledge of Greek and the translators whom he led did not always produce faithful Arabic translations of the Greek texts, indisputable and extensive traces of Neoplatonism permeate his later works, indicating his deep familiarity with the Greek philosophers mentioned above (2002: 179-205). These Arabic translations of Greek texts were rapidly spread into Persian- and Turkish-speaking regions and were made widely available all across the Islamic world, even traveling as far as South Asia and Europe by the medieval period (one of Al-Kindī's famous works or "translations," entitled *De Radiis* "On Rays," only exists in a medieval Latin translation).

The dissemination of Greek philosophy did have its limits, however, and in subsequent centuries Sufī intellectuals like al-Ghazali (11th century CE) and more orthodox reformists tried to distinguish Islamic philosophy from these Hellenistic texts and instead emphasize *kalām* "doctrine" and Qur'ānic exegesis (cf. Corbin 1964: 152-178; al-Ghazzali 2000:18-19). A long-standing scholastic tradition of *kalām* literature had existed ever since shortly after Muhammad's death, and this provided an impetus for theological rather than philosophical speculation on the part of the *motakallimūn* (interpreters of *kalām*).

Nevertheless, there is strong evidence that the Neoplatonic hypostases of Plotinus were adapted by Muslim "rationalists, metaphysicians, and theologians" into a form considered to be compatible with Islam, and as such were developed into a systematic triad of "the absolute, the universal intellect, and the universal soul" that "proceeded by stages" (Roy 1983: 114). This macrocosmic triad was then believed to be reflected in the microcosmic soul, including the rational faculty which had "three modes, viz., the First Intelligence (*al-'aqlu 'l-awwal*), Universal Reason (*al-'aqlu 'l-kullī*), and ordinary reason (*al-'aqlu 'l-ma'āsh*)" (Nicholson 115). Roy argues that it was these very triadic systems that were taken up by adherents to Sufī orders, many of whom had long debated the problem of the transcendence (*tanzih*) and immanence (*tashbih*) of God:

The significance of this compromise [i.e., between transcendence and immanence] from the cosmogonical stand-point may be viewed in the process of gradual “individualization” and “qualification” of the absolute from the state of bare potentiality to one of unity in multiplicity. In Sufi parlance this was known as the gradual descent (*tanazzul*) of the absolute from what was in the initial stage a bare potentiality, purely negative and supra-existential (*al-amā*), through a stage where the divine consciousness moved to the realization of its thought and knew itself as the transcendent unity (*ahdiyāt*), to the third stage of oneness in multiplicity (*wahdat*), or *haqiqa al-Muhammadiyah*, or *nur al-* or *nur-i Muhammadiyah*, as this particular stage was often called (Roy 1983: 114).

Compare this assertion with al-Kindī’s own words in his work *On First Philosophy* as to the intersections between negativity theology and unity:

Thus the true One possesses no matter, form, quantity, quality, or relation. And is not described by any of the other terms: it has no genus, no specific difference, no individual, no proper accident, and no common accident. It does not move, and is not described through anything that is denied to be one in truth. It is therefore only pure unity, I mean nothing other than unity. And every one other than it is multiple (Adamson 2007: 55).

These modified Neoplatonic hypostases or stages in Bengal were given anthropomorphic qualities and used to mediate Sufism with its emphasis on unity (Ar. *tawhid*) between Sāṃkhya-derived Nāth and Buddhist Tantric conceptions of *śūnyatā*, “voidness” (cf. Section 2.3). They are also precisely what forms the theological basis of the *Yoga Kalandar* as well as later Bāul cosmology as expressed in the songs of Lālan Fakir and his contemporaries. The details of each stage in these sources are described very technically and coherently, and from their descriptions a systematic cosmology emerges into view that could very well have extended from the Bengal “frontier” to southern Spain in the medieval period, to the extent that Neoplatonism integrated with folk movements all across the Islamic world. While the

cultural vehicle of this cosmology was certainly Islamic Sufism, the fact that Hellenistic ideas also went along for the ride cannot be dismissed (cf. Gutas 1998).

Ernst notes that in previous academic discourses on religion these historical aspects of Sufism have escaped proper analysis, for if “other religions [than Christianity] could be shown to be hybrids composed of various ‘Oriental’ influences, that was a testimony to their dependent and inferior nature” (Ernst 2005: 19). Hence Sufism was often regarded as an essentialized amalgamation of the “mystic East” rather than the relatively organized, coherent philosophical tradition that he actually presents. Despite regional variations, there is however certainly no lack of textual evidence for a relatively cohesive, integrated cosmological system at the core of Sufism as it developed between al-Andalus and Bengal.

SUFISM MEETS SĀṂKHYA

Sufism and its partially Hellenistic cosmology is only one side of the equation, however. The indigenous Tantric cosmological systems — many of which had derived from India’s traditional philosophical schools (*darśana*) — were not merely absorbed by this new development, but rather retained many of their original characteristics. One remnant of this indigenous cosmology was a system of emanating principles called *tattvas* (“essences” or “principles”) that were thought to proceed from and return to a state of non-existence (cf. Larson and Bhattacharya 1987). Numerous surviving medieval Bengali Sufi texts (including the *Yoga Kalandar*, *Nabi-Baṁśa*, *Jñāna-Sāgar*, *Jñāna-Pradīp*, and *Ādya Paricay*) provide ample evidence that elements of Islamic cosmology were indeed negotiated with pre-existent Nāth and Buddhist Tantric cosmologies (Roy 1983: 132-133; Cashin 1995: 13-15; Śārīph 1969) that emphasized transcendent negativity (e.g. *śūnyatā*, “voidness,” *ālekh/alakṣa* “the unseen,” *vyoma*, “the æther”). Bengali scholars in particular (e.g. Asim Roy, Ahmad Śārīph, Das Gupta) are often keen to emphasize that Neoplatonism played an important role in mediating between Islamic cosmology and the the system of *tattvas* as systematically formulated in Sāṁkhya philosophy (although the strict dualism of Sāṁkhya was rejected). For example, Ahmad Śārīph

explains how Sufi mediators negotiated Allah’s unity by comparing the illusion of his divided manifestation in the universe with the interplay (*līlā*) of a divided Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, together forming a composite unity (Rādhākṛṣṇa) in Vaiṣṇava-Sahajiyā schools (cf. Dimock 1966: 138-140). Śarīph then compares this to Advaita Vedanta, Buddhism, and even Neoplatonism as follows:

Śaṅkara’s teachings on illusion (*māyā*) are also pertinent here. Creation arises from the Brahman alone and is again dissolved in the Brahman. From that awareness of division (*bicchinnatābodh*) or realization of separation (*birahānubhūti*), born of ignorance (*abidyājāt*) is only a temporary corruption of awareness. From the confusion caused by the birth of illusion (*māyā*), the ego (*aḥam*) arises. The awareness of the ego, now companionless, solitary, and aware of its individual substance, is the birth of sorrow — such is the Buddhist teaching. [The Persian poet] Rumi also had a similar faith in reincarnation (*janmāntarabād*) and in cyclical nature (*bibartanabād*). In this it is remarkable that we can see the influence of Neoplatonic doctrine on the one hand and Buddhist reincarnation and life-consciousness on the other.¹¹

This seems to call for a reflective pause. Such a comparative approach does not necessarily have to discount local or regional variation, but indeed can actually serve to enliven and invigorate these same variations. In reading Bengali academic sources, one gets the sense that there is a real openness to discovering the social and historical interactions that lie at the root of any given tradition, regardless of how “indigenous” such a tradition may seem to be. There is present within such scholarship a spark of

¹¹ Personal translation of the original Bengali with assistance from Prof. Nandini Abedin:

আবার শঙ্করের মায়াবাদও অনুপ্রবেশ করেছে এখানে। সৃষ্টি মাত্রই ব্রহ্ম থেকে উৎপন্ন এবং ব্রহ্মতে লীন। কাজেই বিচ্ছিন্নতাবোধ বা বিরহানুভূতি অবিদ্যাজাত একটি সাময়িক বোধ-বিকৃতি মাত্র। মায়াজাত বিদ্রান্তি থেকেই ‘অহং’ এর উৎপত্তি। অহং বোধ তথা নিঃসহায় নিঃসঙ্গ স্বাধীন সত্ত্বাবোধ থেকেই দুঃখের জন্ম। এ বোধ মুখ্যত বৌদ্ধের। বিবর্তনবাদ তথা জন্মান্তরবাদেও আস্থা রেখেছেন রুমী। আমরা একদিকে নব প্ল্যাটোনিক তত্ত্বের এবং অপরদিকে বৌদ্ধ জীবনবোধ ও জন্মান্তরবাদের প্রভাব লক্ষ্য করি এতে।

Neo-Platonism-এ আছে —“As being the cause of all things, it is everywhere, and not also ‘nowhere’, it would be all things” (Śarīph 1969: ৩).

limitless imagination that absorbs the feelings of the past without sacrificing the integrity of critical academic analysis.

THE IKHWĀN AL-SAFĀ, *NUR MUHAMMAD*, AND MEDIEVAL THEURGY

In Baghdad, a community known as the Ikhwān al-Safā (“Brethren of Purity”) composed an encyclopedia in the 9th-10th centuries C.E. known as the *Rasā’il* (“Epistles”) that synthesized Islamic and Greek contributions to subjects as varied as mathematics, geometry, philosophy, astrology, and magic (Nasr 1993:25-104; Callataÿ 2005; El-Bizri 2008). Roy notes that in the writings of the Ikhwān al-Safā “God was sometimes placed above being, while in other instances they implied that being was divided into God and universe,” and that this concept was taken up by Islamic philosopher-scientists such as al-Fārābi and Ibn Sinā (Avicenna) who established a “connection between *nur* or the divine light and the intellect, the former being communicated to the latter at the first instance by the prime cause, the creator” (1983: 114-115). Upon this connection between “light” and “intellect” Sufis cultivated the theological principle of *Nur al-Muhammadiya* (“the Light of Muhammad”), and this idea quickly spread into Indian regions through various Sufi schools. Carl Ernst attests to the importance of this idea, and explains that the “primary framework for understanding Indian religions [by Sufis] was the Ishraqi form of Neoplatonic thought known as Illuminationism, developed by the Persian thinker Suhrawardi” (2013: 63) as early as the 12th century.

In medieval Bengal this framework was supplemented by several other schools of Sufism that also incorporated Neoplatonic cosmology in varying degrees into their teachings (cf. Section 1.2), and *Nur al-Muhammadiya* became a recurring cosmogonic symbol. Roy explains how this concept crystallized in the Sufi imagination of medieval Bengal:

Apart from its speculative implications, the *sufi* ideas about the creator and creation also gave birth to some conceptual developments within the mythical traditions, which the Bengali Muslim mediators not only accepted but also often adapted to the demands of local beliefs. Almost invariably they adopted

the sufic concept of the universe's proceeding from the love of God through the creation of *nur-i Muhammadi*, with a significant difference in the fact that the abstract sufic concept of *nur* assumed in their writings a clearly anthropomorphized and mythical form (1983: 121).

This same cosmology is attested in the *Yoga Kalandar* in conjunction with the *mokām* ("station") *jabarūt* (cf. Appendix One):

- 60 The image of the Prophet, the highest Friend of God,
Nur Muhammad, know that this is his abode.
- 61 The intelligence of causation, accompanied by an awakened
consciousness,
Hide within this purified temple.
- 62 The oyster is in the water, the pearl is in the oyster, and
The image of Nur Muhammad is in the pearl.
- 63 When you have obtained the vision of Muhammad,
Rejoice and dwell in a secret place.

Salomon affirms (1991: 284-285) with Roy that Bengali traditions reconciled the concept of *Nur al-Muhammadiya* with the Hindu Tantric concept of drops of sweat (i.e. semen) oozing from Nirañjan or Śiva, but also reveals that the idea evolved even further. She explains that *Nur al-Muhammadiya* was incorporated into the songs of Lālan Fakir and other 19th century Bāul composers (such as Pāñja Shah), where it developed overtly sexual connotations as an androgynous byproduct of uniting masculine and feminine principles within the body. This has a microcosmic as well as macrocosmic dimension, for in order for the creation of light to occur, Allah was believed to have necessitated a Śakti (although the reverse idea — that of Śakti not necessitating a male principle — also appears to a valid interpretation of many of Lālan Fakir's songs):

“The myth of creation from liquid light appears to be consistent with Islamic cosmogonic ideas. But there is a problem from the tantric point of view: the Supreme can only create in contact with the *śakti*. The Baul fakirs believe that Allah did not act alone to create Muhammad...” (Ibid: 285).

In any event, this entire process of creation was often described in alphabetical terms using the Perso-Arabic alphabet (cf. Nasr's treatment of *'ilm al-jafr* in 1993: 50-51) as in this Bāul song translated by Salomon:

The head of the *āliph* split
and a drop of light fell.
Mother in the form of Eve caught it.
The Lord, our protector, was born
in the form of *mim* (Ibid: 285, quoting Phulbas)

An explanation of this song is given in the following song by Lālan Fakir, also employs this kind of letter symbolism in his songs and also refers explicitly to *Nur al-Muhammadiya* :

In *āliph* is Allah
In *mim* is Nur Muhammad
No one figured out the meaning of *lām*
So the dot (*nūktā*)¹² was stolen.

Incidentally, the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Safā also had colorful histories as the text traveled the opposite direction across North Africa toward Western Europe, as well as China (cf. Swetz 2008). Several epistles of the *Rasā'il* were in subsequent centuries compiled separately under the title *Ghayyat al-Hakim* ("The Goal of the Wise"). This compilation was then translated from Arabic into Spanish and Latin with additional material as *Picatrix* in the 13th-century in al-Andalus in modern-day Spain (Pingree 1986; cf. Menocal 2002, Jaffee 2006). *Picatrix* rapidly became a primary source text in medieval Europe for astrological magic (Fanger 2012: 128-129; Kieckheffer 1990: 6-7; Yates 1964: 49-53), and both Queen Elizabeth's court astrologer Johannes Dee and the famous alchemist Elias Ashmole possessed a manuscript of it. The implications of the *Ikhwān al-Safā*'s writings being a sort of historical bridge between astrology and theurgy (lit. "God-work") as practiced in Europe and South Asia will be discussed in Chapter Three below, especially as it pertains to the practices given to invoke angels in the Bengali *Yoga Kalandar*.

¹² Salomon notes that the "dot" (*nūktā*) is placed above or below a letter to distinguish it from other letters. She also cites Karim Shah's opinion that the *nūktā* here is a pun as it is a synonym of *bindu*, "point" which also means semen (2015: 169-170).

Whereas Ernst argues that the angels in the *Yoga Kalandar* act merely as “substitutions” for “Hindu deities in the cakras” (2005: 33), I would argue that this is an over-simplification that neglects the rich angelic tradition of angelic theurgy in Sufism as well as in medieval Judaism and Christianity.

| Chapter Three: The Ritual of the *Yoga Kalandar* |

To overcome and subjugate the elementary spirits, we must never yield to their characteristic defects... But we must be prompt and active, like the Sylphs; pliant and attentive to images, like the Undines; energetic and strong like the Salamanders; laborious and patient, like the Gnomes: in a word, we must overcome them in their strength without ever being overcome by their weakness.

— Eliphas Levi (1810-1875 C.E.), *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, trans. A.E. Waite

WHEELS, STAGES, AND STATIONS OF LIGHT

Darvieshi in Tabular Form

Names of Maqāms.	Nāsūt.	Malkūt.	Jabrūt	Lāhūt.
Situations of Maqāms in the human body.	Sacral region	Region of navel	Sinciput	Heart
Guardian angels of Maqāms	Azrā'īl	Isrāfīl	Mikā'īl	Jibrā'īl
Forms generally assumed by the guardian angels.	Tiger	Serpent	Elephant	Pea-cock
'Unāsir or elements corresponding to Maqāms.	Fire	Air	Water	Earth
Colours of elements	Red	Green	White	Yellow.
Manzils corresponding to Maqāms.	Sharī'at	Ṭarīqat.	Ḥaqīqat	Ma'rafat
Obligations of Manzils	Imān, Namāz Rūzah, Ḥajj, Zakāt.	Extinction of lust, anger avarice, infatua- tion.	Absorption in the thought of God.	Knowledge of one's own self.
Dhikr prescribed for Manzils.	Lā ilāha illāllāh. or There is no God but Allah	Yā hu or O He ;	Hū Hū or He, He	Allāh hū or Allāh is He
Chakras in Yoga correspon- ding Maqāms.	Mulādhāra	Maṇipura	Ājñā	Anāhata.
Seasons prevailing in Maqāms.	Grisma or Summer.	Hemanta or Early winter.	Basanta or Spring.	Śarat or Autumn.

Figure 7. A table from *A History of Sufi-ism in Bengal* (Haq 1975, 416) that gives a list of the variety of associations from Sufi, Buddhist and Hindu Tantric sources found in the *Yoga Kalandar*.

The Sufi ritual framework described in the *Yoga Kalandar*, including its intersections with the Nāth tradition of *haṭha yoga* and Buddhist Tantrism, is skillfully introduced in France Bhattacharya's article and annotated French translation (2003) of Śarīph's Bengali recension (1969), and as such only merits brief treatment in this thesis. Nevertheless, Bhattacharya's treatment of how the text's ritual framework was incorporated into the later poetry of the Bāuls of Bengal is relatively limited when evaluated in the current context of the past decade's expanding

scholarship on the Bāul tradition. When her annotations are read alongside the dedicated research of the late Carol Salomon, for example, striking similarities come immediately into view that warrant further analysis. When taken together, the work of these two scholars affords the luxury of diving into the subtleties of the vocabulary of the *Yoga Kalandar* as reinterpreted in the poetry of Lālan Fakir, Pāñja Shah, Duddu Shah, and other Bengali Bāul fakirs. Furthermore, it also illuminates the precise nature of these fakirs' embodiment of a rich tradition of Tantric and theurgic ritual practice.

Salomon in her posthumous publication of Lālan Fakir's songs presents translations of several songs that explicitly refer to the *Yoga Kalandar*'s system of attainment. Her translation of a song with perhaps the most direct references to the text is given below:

Song No. 2 - "Jān gā nūrer khabar"
(translation by Carol Salomon; LG no. 226)

Go and learn
about the light that surrounds Niranjan.
Worship that light and you'll catch him.

The Prophet was born from light.
The Steady One at the top created light.
Stages and stations are illumined by light.

But the best light of all
only those who are clever know.
That light moved in waves
and Zohura's light arose.

As soon as the light in the lamp goes out,
Death's messengers will surround
your four-room house.
Lālan says, Then your earthen cage
will go empty.

This entire song appears to be an eloquent commentary on the *Yoga Kalandar* text, and in her annotations to this song Salomon summarizes the framework of "stages and stations" as follows:

The “stations” (*mokām*; Ar. sing. *maqām*) and “stages” (*manjil*; Ar. sing. *manzil*) are the stages on the journey towards union with God. There are four *mokāms*: *nāsūt* (Ar. *nāsūt*, “human nature”), *mālkut* (Ar. *malakūt*, “the heavenly world”), *jabrut* (Ar. *jabarūt*, “spiritual power”), and *lāhut* (“divine nature”). Each of the *mokāms* is located in a specific part of the body in one of the yogic *cakras* and corresponds to one of the four *manjils*: *śāriat* (Ar. *sharīat*, “Islamic law”), *tarikāt* (Ar. *ṭariqat*, “path”), *hakikat* (Ar. *haqiqat*, “truth”), and *mārphat* (Ar. *ma’rifat*, “gnosis”). They are also associated with the four elements, with the angels Azrail, Israfil, Mikail, and Jibrail, among other things (2015: 349).

Moreover, the songs of Lālan Fakir and Pāñja Shah provide evidence of innovation upon this framework of four stations, as they add a fifth station not mentioned in the *Yoga Kalandar*, at least explicitly: *lā mokām* “the station of nothing.” The *lā mokām* is one possible abode of the “Supreme in semen” (both male and female), and is synonymous with the *sahasrārcakra* at the top of the head that represents transcendent space. The term Nirañjan (“the Stainless One”) is often translated by Salomon as “Supreme” (cf. Salomon 1991: 272)

One aspect of the *Yoga Kalandar*’s framework that is not mentioned by Salomon, however, is a possible link with astrology and the exact sciences. In the text itself there is a curious passage:

42 One star (*nakṣatra*) resides in the region of the *maṇipur* —
You will see it if you distinguish it with your yogic eyes (*yug ākhi*).

While the “star” or “constellation” (*nakṣatra*) in question may simply be nothing more than a reference to a point of light resembling a star, there may be more embedded in this statement than meets the eye. The 16th century Bengali Sufi poet Saiyad Sultan’s work *Jñāna-Pradīp* “Light of Gnosis,” includes a short poem entitled *Rāśi Cakra* “Wheel of the Signs” that links the *cakra* (in this case counted as six with the addition of *svādhiṣṭhān* and *viśuddha*) with the familiar zodiac signs of astrology:

Here is one more subject you should know about,
 Which is that place the twelve signs come together;
 Know that both *meṣa* [Aries] and *br̥ṣa* [Taurus] dwell in *mūlādhāra*,
Mithun [Gemini] and *karkaṭ* [Cancer] inside of *adhiṣṭhān* [i.e. *svādhiṣṭhān*];
Siṃha [Leo] and *kanyā* [Virgo] reside in the *manipur* [i.e. *maṇipur*] *cakra*,
Tulā [Libra] and *bichā* [Scorpio] stay together in *anāhata cakra*;
Dhanu [Sagittarius] and *makar* [Capricorn] dwell in *viśuddha cakra*,
Kumbha [Aquarius] and *mīn* [Pisces] have their abode in the primal *cakra*;
 Sultan says, “Use your judgment -- is there division or not
 Between the twelve signs and six *cakra*?”¹³

This kind of associative system was clearly a popular motif at the time, as a contemporary Bengali Tantric compendium of mantras, *Bṛhat Tantrasāraḥ*, also includes a diagram named *Rāśi Cakra* (cf. Figure 7) that ascribes each of the Sanskrit or Bengali phoneme sets to a Zodiac sign. These phonemes are then strung together in words and phrases to invoke gods and goddesses who are thus also endowed with astrological significance. While these two texts likely preceded the tradition of the *Yoga Kalandar*, they both demonstrate the fact that Islamic mediators had creatively appropriated the system of the *cakras* (including its astrological symbolism) in their attempt to formulate coherent ritual frameworks for attainment, and that these frameworks evidently also included an astrological component.

¹³ (Personal translation from the original Bengali published in Sultan 1978):

॥ রাশি-চক্র ॥

আর এক কথা কহি কর অবগতি
 এখাত যে বার রাশি হএ সংস্থিতি ।
 মেঘ বুধ দুই জ্ঞান বৈসে মূলাধারে
 মিথুন কর্কট অধিষ্ঠানের ভিতরে ।
 সিংহ কণ্ঠা মনিপুর চক্রেত বসতি
 তুলা বিছা অনাহত চক্রে সংস্থিতি ।
 ধনু আর মকর বিশুদ্ধ চক্রেত বৈসএ
 কুম্ভ মীন আদ্য চক্র মধ্যে স্থিতি হএ ।
 বিচারিয়া চাহ ভেদ হএ বা না হএ
 ছয় চক্র বার রাশি সুলতানে কহে ।

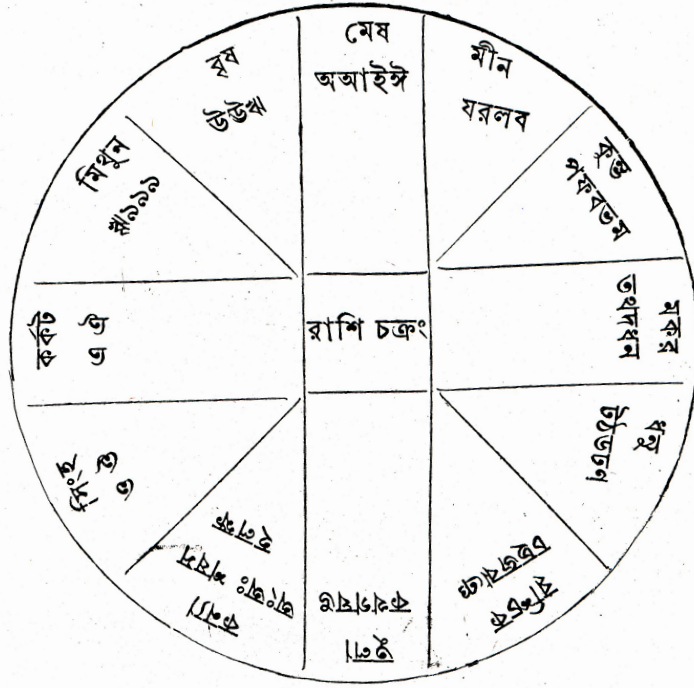


Figure 8. *Rāśicakraṅ* “Wheel of the Signs” from the *Bṛhat Tantrasārah* (Caṭṭopādhyāy 1982).

THE SERPENT POWER IN THE TRIANGULAR ROOT

The Sufi yogic and meditative practices that are outlined in the *Yoga Kalandar* to invoke angelic beings are essentially situated in the Tantric context of raising *kuṇḍalinīśakti* (Skt. “power of the serpent”) within the body to encounter transcendent space beyond the cranium or fontanel (cf. White 2003: 225). This context is clearly evident right from the outset in the author’s description of the attributes of the first station traversed on the path, *nāsut* (“human nature”):

- 6 Know that the station *nāsut* (Ar. *nāsūt*) is the Three Points (*tin tiharī*). The angel Azrael (Ar. Ajrāil) is the guardian there.
- 7 Know that the inside entirely is a place of fire. There a fire blazes constantly, but it is never to be heard.
- 8 Know that the *mūlādhār* [*cakra*] is the risen sun, and Understand that the existent-self (*jībattamā*) is its lord.
- 9 With the eyes closed and hearing withdrawn, there repeat the Name. Respecting the spiritual guide, follow his or her way.

Bhattacharya (2003: 73) explains that the term *tin tiharī* “three points” indicates the “earthen stove of three points upon which one places a pot to cook rice,” and that it

signifies “the place where the three subtle conduits or *nāḍī* begin: *iḍā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā*.” In this context, Bhattacarya also references the *Śiva-saṃhitā* II, 22:

tasminnādhārapadme ca karṇikāyāṃ suśobhanā |
trikoṇā varttate yoniḥ sarvatantreṣu gopitā ||

In the pericarp of the *ādhāra* lotus there is the triangular, beautiful *yoni*, hidden and kept secret in all the Tantras [Translation from Vasu 1914: 18].

This identification of the tripartite earthen stove (*tiharī*) with the triangle (*trikoṇa*) in the *Śiva-saṃhitā* is significant in that it situates the *Yoga Kalandar* more squarely within established traditions of yogic realization throughout South Asia. In the *Amarauḡhaśāsana* attributed to Gorakṣanāth we similarly read:

Between the anus and the sexual organ sits the *trikoṇa* with three circles around it. And there, in that triangle, are perceived one, two, three knots of this root [basis]. In the middle of the three knots sits a lotus with four downward-turned petals. There, in the center of the pericarp, is found a conch of extreme subtlety, like the fiber of a lotus stem, wherein rests the Kuṇḍalinī energy, the coiled one, resembling a very young shoot. The latter, in the form of two or three conduits (*nāḍī*), after entering the seed of consciousness, lies dormant” (Quoted in Silburn 1988: 125).

David Gordon White has published extensively on this topic with regard to the Nāth and other alchemical traditions, and at one point explains the sexual dimensions of this process to arouse *kuṇḍalinī* as follows:

[...] In a tantric metaphysics that stresses unity-in-difference (*bhedābheda*), or nonduality-in-duality (*dvaitādvaita*), there has as well to be a stress on equipose, equivalence, and equanimity, on the union or coincidence of polar opposites. In practical terms, the factoring of the two into the one has been perennially enacted, in tantra, through sexual union between practitioner and consort (1996: 252).

This is precisely how later Bāul fakirs and poets interpreted the *Yoga Kalandar*. Take, for example the words of Lālan Fakir in the song “Āe jan padmahem sarobare yāy” (“He who goes to the golden lotus-river”):

Song No. 3 - Ýe jan padmahem sarobare ýāy
(translation by Carol Salomon; LG no. 48)

He who goes to the golden lotus-river
easily gets a lasting and priceless treasure.

This river has miraculous water.
It yields all kinds of jewels and pearls.
How can I describe its power?
One touch and you turn to gold.

In the wink of an eye
the river silts up.
In the wink of an eye
it rushes on.
It's no simple task
to catch a fish, standing
where there's no firm ground.

Without wind waves surge.
At the Trivenī three rivers merge.
True lovers, those great souls,
just dive in and come up with jewels.

Whoever makes his guru
the helmsman of his boat,
reaches the shore of this shoreless river.
Lālan says, By the strength of his worship
he escapes the clutches of death.

In her annotations to the song, Salomon explains the embedded meaning as follows:
“The ‘golden lotus-river’ symbolizes the menstrual flow in the woman’s *mūlādhār cakra*. The jewels found in its waters, in particular the pearls, represent...the essence of the Śakti present in menstrual blood.” She then further elaborates as to how this plays out in a sexual context between practitioner and consort:

The “jewel” also symbolizes the active form of the absolute, as does the “fish.” It can be caught by the vigilant adept on the third day of a woman’s menstrual period at the ghat of the “Trivenī,” the confluence of the three *nāris iṛā*, *piṅgalā*, and *suṣumnā*, in her *mūlādhār* (2015: 543).

This motif also figures into other songs by Lālan Fakir, such as *Dil dariyāy dube dekho nā* “Just dive into the Ocean of the Heart and you’ll see” (LG no. 153) a song that unmask certain alchemical concepts embedded in his poetry:

At the slippery quay of the Trivenī,
waves surge without wind.
The dumb speak, the deaf hear,
and a half-pice, tested on a touchstone,
proves to be gold (2015: 375).

Notably, the *trivenī* can also refer to the *ājñā cakra*, the other place where the three *nāris* (in some texts spelt *nādis*) or “subtle nerves” converge in the yogic body. It is in this sense that the term is used in the *Yoga Kalandar* (as the Bengali derivative *tripinī*), as contrasted with the Three Points (*tiharī*):

- 150 Fix your mind well in the Posture of the Womb (*garbha āsan*):
The eyes flexed, behold the forehead with a focused mind.
- 151 The eye in the forehead, the three junctures of the nose (*nāsiker sandhi*)
Meditating on these four binds the form (*rūp*).
- 152 The three subtle channels (*nārī*) meet at the eyebrows, and
The wise call this place the quay of Tripinī (*tripinīr ghāṭ*).
- 153 Can’t whoever bathes each day at the quay of Tripinī
Wash away tens of millions of sins (*pāp*)?

Could the author of the *Yoga Kalandar*, like Lālan Fakir, be speaking of the *kuṇḍalinīśakti* in sexual terms? The scholar Gordan Djurdjevic presents perhaps the most compelling argument as to how the associative correspondences in the *Yoga Kalandar* — as with the esoteric terminology employed by the Nāth Siddhas — can be viewed simultaneously in an occult and physical context:

The principle underlying the regime of yoga as practiced by the Siddhas may be justifiably defined as esoteric or magical because it is based on the assumption that the manipulation of the body, breath, and mind will have effect on their spiritual, or occult, correlates. The sperm (and the menstrual blood, in those cases where it is employed) is not the elixir in and of itself (otherwise, every celibate person who preserves his semen would be a Siddha). The sexual fluids and the elixir, are *correspondent* to each other, however, and

the belief in correspondences *is* a major characteristic of esoteric thinking (2008: 28).

POSTURE, BREATH, AND THE ASCENDING PSYCHE

Central to the *Yoga Kalandar*, as with the medieval *Haṭhapradīpikā* attributed to Svātmārāma and the *Śiva-saṃhita*, is the yogic control of posture (*āsana*) and breath (*prāṇāyāma*). There are four postures outlined in the *Yoga Kalandar* (verses 149-160 in Appendix One): the “Posture of the Womb” (*garbha āsan*; see Figure 8 below), the “Posture of the Peacock” (*mayur āsan*), the “Posture of the Lotus” (*padmāsan*), and the “Posture of Yoga” (*yogāsan*). It is unclear whether the Posture of Yoga is intended as a specific posture or whether it refers to yogic postures in general. In any case, it appears that the goal of the postural practice is primarily to facilitate physical steadiness for meditative work, a goal in stark contrast to the modern conception of yoga that promotes postural practice largely as an end in and of itself (cf. Singleton 2010).

Whereas posture plays a critical role in the first station practiced (*nāsut*), the second station (*malakut*) is primarily centered on control of the breath:

- 30 Know that the station *malakut* (Ar. *malakūt*) is in the region of the navel, and
Know that the wind blows in this place.
- 31 In yoga one gives it the name *maṇipur*,
Here the spring is constantly in season.
- 32 This station is under the authority of the archangel Israfel (ar. Isrāphil),
Know that here the nose is his door.
- 33 The navel cavity is the seat of the lungs.
Constantly make an effort to control your breath.
- 34 Each day and night 40,000 breath-cycles come and go.
Always stay mindful of the breath within the body.
- 35 As long as there is breath, there is life.
When the breath stops, death is certain.
- 36 Fixing the gaze past the end of your nose, contemplate the breath.
The chin pressed upon the throat, consistently observe the rules [of practice].
- 37 Place your right foot on your left thigh, and
With your two eyes open look towards the tip of your nose.
- 38 In such a way the breath will not leave the body, and
You will see a color that appears like arum leaves (i.e., green).

Bhattacharya notes that the word used for control in the *Yoga Kalandar* (verse 33) is *sambaraṇ* and cites as its equivalent the term *kumbhaka* “retention,” as employed in the *Haṭhapradīpikā* II, 43:

tatsiddhaye vidhānajñāścitrāṅkurvanti kumbhakān |
vicitrakumbhakābhyāsāddhi citrāṃ siddhimāpnuyāt ||

Those knowing the procedures do various kumbhakas to achieve [steadiness of mind]. From the practice of various kumbhakas, one obtains various powers (Akers 2002: 43).

The way in which the *Yoga Kalandar* adapts the yogic practice of *prāṇāyāma* in a Sufi framework to obtain magical powers — including the attainment of health, longevity, virility, and visions of transcendent space is certainly unique, but perhaps there had been a natural affinity already present that allowed the Neoplatonic-inspired Sufi cosmology to more readily adapt to its new environment on the Bengal frontier. White points out that the entire process of awakening *kuṇḍalinī* along the spinal cord to encounter other worlds may have had its origin in pre-Pythagorean Greek cosmology:

It is tantalizing to note that the prototype for this Hindu body of theory and practice — of both the “logic of projection” and “inner” travel to “higher” worlds — may have been Greek. The notion of the spinal column as a channel for semen and seminal thoughts (*logoi spermatikoi*) was both a medical and mystical notion dear to the Stoics. Here, however, I wish to concentrate momentarily on a pre-Pythagorean doctrine that was formative to Plato’s theory, found in the *Phaedo*, of cyclic rebirth and the recovery of lost knowledge as “recollection,” *anamnesis*. This doctrine identified the female soul (*psyche*) with the breath (*pneuma*) that was flung upward through the head via the action of the diaphragm (*prapides*) to travel to higher worlds (White 2003: 187).



Figure 9. The posture *garbhāsana* (Bng. *garbha āsan*) from a 17th century Persian manuscript of the text *Bahr al-hayat* (“Ocean of Life”), first composed around 1550 C.E. (Photo from Smithsonian Institute gallery exhibition entitled “Yoga: The Art of Transformation”).

THE CONJURATION OF THE FOUR

Thus far in this third part of my thesis dedicated to the ritual of the *Yoga Kalandar*, we have dealt nearly exclusively with concepts that will be familiar to one versed in the art or study of yogic practice. The introduction of four angels (Azrail, Israfil, Mikail, and Jibrail) and the mention of intermediary beings, however, gives an added dimension to the text that exceeds most current definitions of what constitutes a yogic text. Furthermore, the invocation of angels and other intermediary beings is also a theme important to medieval Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and “Sabeian” magical traditions, not to mention the crux upon which many schools of modern occultism rest. Katelyn Mesler points out that in the Middle Ages angels were often invoked in Islamic ritual contexts that also echoed other contemporary medieval traditions:

As in the works of Avicenna, angels in Islamic magic were reimagined as planetary spirits. A sort of intellectual rigor and purity is necessary to communicate with them, somewhat parallel to the requirement for ritual purity in Jewish texts. Through sympathies, correspondences, or harmonies, these incorporeal beings can affect the world when invoked. While the power of names is not as prevalent as in Jewish tradition — indeed, many Islamic texts leave the spirits anonymous — it is not entirely absent. Its presence in some cases may in fact be a result of Jewish origin, as these two traditions undoubtedly influenced or, in Steven M. Wasserstrom’s terminology, ‘cross-fertilized’ each other (Mesler, article in Fanger 2012: 129).

A critical key to understanding the *Yoga Kalandar* is to realize that the text embodies an unprecedented convergence of Sufi theurgy and Tantric (both Hindu and Buddhist) *sāadhanā*. On the one hand, Roy informs us that intermediary beings were a common concept in many branches of Islamic philosophy: “the more neo-Platonic school, like the *Ikhwān al-Safā*, and the more Aristotelian one, represented by Ibn Sinā (d. [C.E.] 1037) and Ibn Rushd (d. [C.E.] 1198), both regarded God only as the first cause, but stressed many intermediaries existing between his activity and the temporal world” (Roy 1983: 150). On the other hand, Bengali folk traditions had

independently developed Tantric Buddhist conceptions of *dhyānibuddha* (“Buddhas of meditation”) and Hindu conceptions of *yoginī* (“sorceresses”), *ḍakinī* (“witches”) *bhūtinī* (“female elementals,” “ghosts”), *yakṣa* (“dryads”), and *asura* (“spirits,” “dæmons”) on the other. The *Yoga Kalandar* is where these imaginations converge, and the science underpinning its associative correspondences is a distinction between four elements, four colors, and even four anthropomorphized imams, as in this song by Lālan Fakir:

Song no. 4 - “Āche ādi makkā ei mānabdehe”
(translation by Carol Salomon; LG no. 245)

The primal Mecca
is in this human body.
Mind, won't you take a look?
Why race all over the map,
huffing and puffing
till you're ready to drop?
The Lord,
with most astounding skill,
built this human Mecca
out of divine light.
At its four gates
are four imams of light.
The Lord sits inside within.

In a space
the size of a sesame seed,
the Lord built a city
way up in this human Mecca.
Hundreds and thousands of pilgrims
just sit there and make the hajj.

The human Mecca's a divine work.
A strange sound bursts out,
penetrating seven stories.
At the lion-gate is a guard
who never sleeps.

There are ten gates to this human Mecca.
Stand your ground,
focus on your murshid's feet
and you'll see it.
Fakir Lālan says, At the hidden Mecca,
the first imam was a woman.

In her annotations Salomon outlines the quadripartite symbolism in the song, linking it to the *Yoga Kalandar* text, as follows:

The “four gates” represent the four directions [...] The “four imams of light” are anthropomorphizations of the elements earth, air, fire, and water out of which the world was created. They are equivalent to four moons that flash in the room of jewels (*maṇikoṭhāghar*; see Lālan's song “Ceye dekh nā re man dibya najare” [LG no. 180]), to the black, red, yellow, and white lights that surround the Lord's throne in the *lā mokām* (see Pāñja Śāh's song “Ei mānuṣe nabīr nūre jhalak dey”), and to the four cups of light *jaharī*, *jabbarī*, *sattarī*, and *nūrī*, among other things (for details, see Salomon 1991, 291-292). The “imams of light” seem to be analogous to the angels Jibril, Mikail, Esrafil, and Azrail who, in addition to being associated with the above mentioned items, also are said to preside over the *mokāms*.

In her article *Cosmogonic Riddles of Lālan Fakir*, Salomon connects this elemental symbolism to the motif of the Pākpañjātan (Pers. *pākpanjtan*) “Five Holy People,” who are the “preexistent forms of Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain,” and who accompany the “birth of the Creator Niranjan from an egg floating on the cosmic waters.” There is a “fifth element” as well that also corresponds to the fifth station, *lā mokām*, mentioned in Section 3.1. Quoting Song no. 2 above (“Jān gā nūrer khabar”), she states that the “light” (*nūr*) in the song signifies menstrual blood,” and that “Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain represent the four elements earth, air, fire, and water, and Muhammad is Divine Light.” She also explains that the source for this is likely a convergence between Shī'ī tradition that “recognizes the luminous preexistence of the five members of the Holy Family (including the first three imams Ali, Hasan, and Husain) and of the other nine Imams” on the one hand,

and Tantric Buddhism's "similar notion of five luminous Tathāgatas" on the other (1991: 284). Perhaps even more significant here is Lālan's assertion that the "first imam was a woman," a reference to the feminine Śakti (e.g. Fatima) by whom the cosmos is born.

In this context, Salomon's allusion to Pāñja Shah's view that the "Pākpañjātan surround the Absolute's seat in the *lā mokām*" as an ornamented star (ibid.) is also important, as the colors employed by Pāñja Shah in his poetry are similar to those mentioned in the *Yoga Kalandar*, albeit associated with different elements. Pāñja sings (translation by Salomon):

The Prophet's light
shines in man.
Search your body
and you can find it.
Black, white, red, and yellow colors
surround the light's seat (292).

Compare the corresponding passage in the *Yoga Kalandar*:

237 Water, fire, earth, air — these are the four elements,
Now I will tell you about their colors.
238 The wind is the color of green leaves, the fire is black,
The color of the sun is red, and water is white.
239 You can be sure that the color of earth is yellow.
Each has the color of its own deep nature.

It doesn't appear that Pāñja Shah ever explicitly links each color to a single element, but rather mentions the four colors as pertaining to the elements without giving any one-to-one correspondence. The discrepancy in the number of colors (four instead of five) is resolved by Salomon (1991: 290-292), for she groups the colors black and green together. However, she (quoting a song in Talib 1968, vol. 2, no. 359) actually provides a different correspondence pattern (black / green is earth, red is fire, yellow is water, white is air) to the *Yoga Kalandar*. The song she quotes as a source ("Maner kathā śudhāi kāre") however bears the signature (*bhañitā*) of Duddu Shah, Lālan Fakir's disciple. So it is highly possible that somewhere in the oral tradition from the *Yoga Kalandar* to Lālan Fakir to Duddu Shah the exact associations changed despite the framework remaining intact (notably, the quoted song by Duddu also mentions

the archangels). This could reflect a shift over time, for the *Yoga Kalandar* predates both Lālan Fakir and Pāñja Shah by at least a century. For the theoretical basis of these colors and their importance in mysticism, the reader must be referred to the pioneering research by Henri Corbin into the mystical experience of color by the Iranian Sufis. Corbin explains that “their visionary apperception of colored lights postulates an idea of *pure color* consisting of an *act of light* which actualizes its own matter, that is, which actualizes in differentiated stages the potentiality of the ‘hidden Treasure’ aspiring to reveal itself” (1994: 101).

More broadly speaking, the four directional quarters as an associative framework to conjure four archangels is not unique to Bengali Sufism, nor even to Islamic philosophy. As surprising as it may be, the model is also commonly found in Medieval European grimoires and cosmological texts, and even featured prominently in Jewish Kabbalistic texts and Merkabah literature, and (albeit not explicitly in a ritual context) in the work of the English polymath Robert Fludd (1574-1637). A history of how such a framework developed would fill many volumes and is unfortunately outside the scope of this study, but suffice to say the practice lived on into modern times with assistance from the Victorian occult explosion (cf. Eliade 1976: 49) that facilitated interest in the ceremonial magic of Éliphas Lévi (Alphonse Louis Constant), the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and the O.T.O. and A.:A.: (Thelemic orders associated with the occultist, visionary prophet, and poet Aleister Crowley). The two Thelemic orders and modern offshoots of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn recommend the daily practice of a ritual called “The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram” (Crowley 2004: 618; cf. Gunther 2014: 65-69) that includes an invocation of four archangels situated in a specific position according to the sefiroth of the Hebrew Kabbalistic Tree of Life, originally derived from a 19th century ritual Éliphas Lévi penned called “The Conjunction of the Four.”¹⁴ The parallels in the ritual frameworks of the *Yoga Kalandar* text and these

¹⁴ The original Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was disbanded after a schism involving S.L. MacGregor Mathers, and the Order was reconstituted as the Outer Order of the A.:A.: by Aleister

magical traditions (many of which are also inspired by Neoplatonic cosmologies) are certainly many, but the direct historical links still remain to be traced.

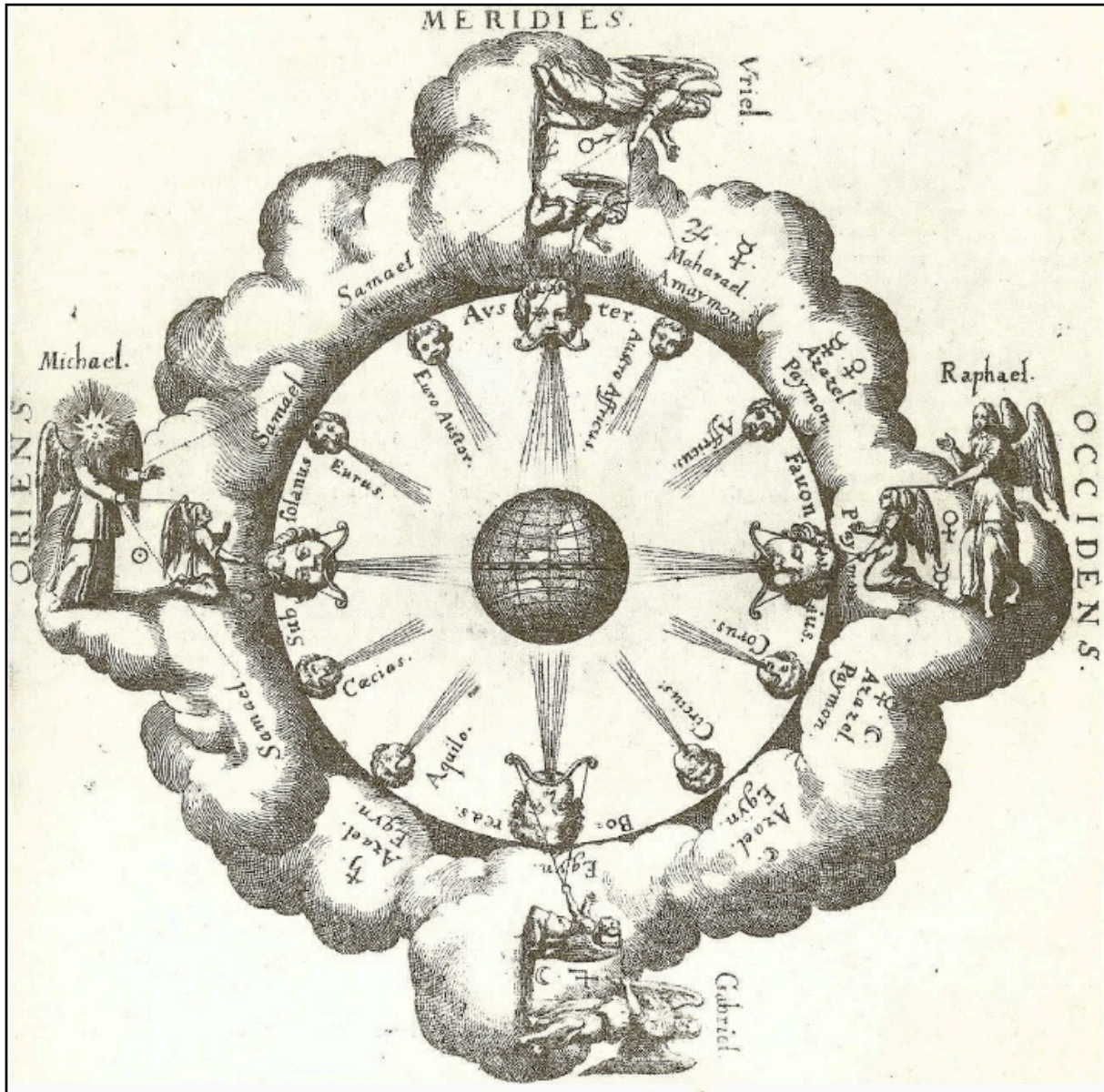


Figure 10. Robert Fludd’s sketch entitled “The Four Archangels and the Twelve Winds.” In this arrangement the four archangels presiding over the quarters are Raphael (West), Gabriel (North), Michael (East), and Uriel (South) (Godwin 1979: 57).

Crowley and George Cecil Jones. However, several offshoots survive worldwide that recommend the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram as a cornerstone of occult practice.

| Chapter Four: Fakir Mansur al-Hallāj |

After all, this Mansur Hallaj Fakir
had said, “I am the Truth.”
He got approval from the law of the Lord, but
could he find its meaning in *sharī‘a*?
— *Lālan Fakir* (d. 1899 C.E.)

HALLĀJ AS A MODEL IN BENGALI SUFISM

Some of the most field-defining academic scholarship on Sufism and Islamic philosophy has centered on the personality of Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Hosayn ibn Mansūr al Hallāj, who is believed to have been born in the province of Fārs in southwest Iran in 244/857 C.E. Understanding Hallāj in the context of Bengali Sufism is critical to understanding the *Yoga Kalandar* insofar as the text prescribes practices that seek transcendence beyond exoteric, normative Islam. Furthermore, it is clear that in the text’s prescribed processes of meditative visualization the aspirant is encouraged to attain to mystical truths that allow the adept to perceive one’s divine nature beyond what exoteric knowledge can reveal. Hallaj’s own example of this attainment is paramount and would have undoubtedly been familiar to the practitioners of the *Yoga Kalandar*.

The most expansive work on al-Hallāj in the 20th century was Louis Massignon’s *La Passion de Husayn Ibn Mansūr Hallāj* (1922, rpt. 1975), a compilation that covers nearly every detail of his life and doctrine, including his famous “theologie mystique” (mystical theology) that provoked his martyrdom on the 24th of Dhū’l-Qa’da, 309/March 27, 922 C.E. Massignon also published a translation of Hallāj’s work of poetry *Kitāb at-ṭawāsīn* in 1913. More recently, Henri Corbin also situated Hallāj in the historical context of Islamic philosophy (1964: 275-278), and Annemarie Schimmel gave a significant amount of attention to his “love mysticism” in her work on Sufism (1975: 62-77). All three of these scholars refer to the ethical views of Hallāj’s contemporaries (including his enemies) as well as point out the subtleties of his alleged “pantheism” in claiming *anā’l Haqq*, “I am the Truth,” an epithet of Allah.

Despite such pioneering scholarship that has greatly illuminated the life and times of this enigmatic personality, much of the spread of Hallāj's teachings in South Asia, especially West Bengal, India and Bangladesh, still remains undocumented. Schimmel reports that Hallāj traveled eastward at least as far as the northwestern Indian state of Gujarat:

During a second pilgrimage to Mecca, 400 disciples accompanied him, and eventually, in 905, Hallāj took a boat to India. His enemies ascribed this journey to his desire to learn magic, specifically, the rope trick. But he told his family that his aim was to call the heathen to God [...] (1975: 67).

Whatever his real intentions for the journey, the fact remains that Hallaj's message was adopted by Sufi missionaries and communities throughout South Asia, and in subsequent centuries also became current among the fakirs, dervishes and Bāuls of Bengal, including Lālan Fakir who directly references Hallaj in at least two of his songs.

SHARIAT VERSUS MARIFAT

There are two of Lālan Fakir's songs in particular that are directly centered upon Hallaj, as given in translation below. Both can also be viewed as a reflection of the social attitudes that fakirs and dervishes had towards orthodox practice in general, and serve to reinforce their connection with the wider *qalandariyya* movement as outlined in Section 1.3. Song no. 5 (“*Murśider thāi ne nā re tār bhed bujhe,*” LG no. 259; translated by Carol Salomon) juxtaposes “religious law” (Ar. *sharī‘a*; Bng. *shariat*) and “mystic knowledge” (*marifat*), while Song no. 6 (“*Āmi ki tāi jānile sādhan siddhi hay,*” LG no. 255; translation my own) applies the juxtaposition to Hallaj's statement “*anā’l Ḥaqq.*”

Song no. 5 - “Murśider thāi ne nā re tār bhed bujhe”
(translation by Carol Salomon; LG no. 259)

What message
did the Prophet pass on to this world
from one heart to another?
Find out from a murshid.

The heart's message is in hearts;
the Book's message, in the Book.
Whichever way your mind goes
that's where you end up.

The Prophet didn't tell the message
to sophists and wicked men.
He locked the message away
and taught Shariat to them.

If they had heard the message,
all those pious souls, servants of God,
would have been saints, for sure,
and impaled on the stake by morons,
as happened to Mansur.

Search the commentary called *Tafsir Hosni*.
You'll find the gist of the *Mathnawi*.
The whole message is written there in code.
These words are not Lālan's own.

Salomon in her annotations to Song no. 1 notes the following regarding Lālan's perspective on exoteric versus esoteric knowledge:

Lālan says that the Prophet imparted two teachings to the world; one is found “in the Book,” (*safīnāy*), and the other, “in the heart” (*sināy*). The former, *shariat* “religious law,” is *zāhir* “external,” “exoteric” and “available to all” while the latter, *marifat* “mystic knowledge,” is *bātin* “hidden,” “secret” and given only to a few. As Lālan sings in another song (LG no. 263 [“Dibārete theko sab re bāhu sārī”]): “The exoteric (*zāhir*) words are all in the Book, but the secret (*gupta*, a synonym of *bātin*) words I (Muhammad) put in the heart” (2015: 525).

Furthermore, she points out that the *Mathnawī* is a reference to the work of the same name by Jalaluddin Rumi, but that *Tafsir Hosni* could refer to an unknown Sufi commentary:

Tafsīr “commentary on the Qur'an” is one of the literary forms Sufi mystics used to express their beliefs. The *Tafsīr Hosnī* may have been a commentary

of this type written in “code,” i.e., in a cryptic style termed *ishārāt* (pl. of *ishāra*; Bengali *isārā*), in order to veil the truth which is too dangerous to express openly. Since I have found neither the original text nor a description of it, the exact nature of this *tafsīr* must remain conjectural (Ibid).

T. Zami has pointed out (personal note) that this text may in fact be the *Tafsīr-i-Husaini*, a Persian commentary on the Qur’an. In any event, attention paid to secrecy among the fakirs of Bengal is a unique counter-balance to normative Islam’s exoteric, egalitarian approach to religion. Nevertheless, the tone of the song seems to emphasize that the secret (*bātin*) teachings are not kept hidden out of a desire to deceive the public, but because they contain truths that could not be properly understood even if the secrets were to be revealed — also a defining characteristic of many other esoteric texts. It is precisely these teachings that the *Yoga Kalandar* seeks to germinate in the mind of the aspirant by means of a rigorous set of yogic and ritual practices.

Not everyone shared the view of Hallaj, however, that *shariat* is only a beginning stage that has to be overcome if one is to make progress on the mystical path. Even in modern times, scholars like Roy have been at pains to demonstrate that the fakirs are in harmony with Islamic law even when evidence indicates the contrary:

Despite the strong emphasis placed on love and esoteric truth, the importance of formal knowledge (*ilm*), revelation, and adherence to *sharia* was not overlooked. Even in Ali Rajā’s religious perception, which is so thoroughly permeated by yogico-tāntric influence, *sharia* lies “at the very root,” and is essential to the realisation of the āgamic truth. Those who are capable of living up to the “norms set by the Prophet” are only “worthy of taking to the yogic path.” True *faqiri* is not divorced from the Prophet’s rules of conduct. The Prophet scrupulously covered his body in all conditions, and a true *yogi* has no need to flaunt his “matted hair.” There are no external signs of a *yogi*. He never approaches people for favor or help. Only a pseudo-*faqir* is given to

thaumaturgic deception. A mere particle of hypocrisy or malice in a *yogi* is enough to undo his spiritual accomplishments (1983: 146).

SELF-REALIZATION AND SELF-ANNIHILATION

As is shown in the *Yoga Kalandar* text as well as the songs of Lālan Fakir, the aim of the aspirant is precisely to transcend the exoteric *shariat* to reach higher states of mystical realization (cf. Song no. 6 below). The framework for this (as demonstrated in Section 3) is the very “thaumaturgic deception” of a “pseudo-*faqir*” that Roy criticizes. Such a negative attitude towards theurgy and ritual practice underscores normative attitudes in orthodox Islam that discount magical practice as idolatry.

Song no. 6 - “Āmi ki tāi jānle sādhan siddhi hay”
(Personal translation; LG no. 255)

What is “I?”
If that is known, then my striving becomes attainment.
The word “I” has heavy significance.
“I” is no longer within me.

In the marketplaces of various cities
everyone shouts, “I, I!”
Unable to recognize my own “I,”
I read scriptures like a fool.

After all, this Mansur Hallaj Fakir
had said, “I am the Truth.”
He got approval from the law of the Lord, but
could he find its meaning in Shariat?

“Join the fire.” “Join the divine fire.”
The Lord’s command entails two “I’s.”
Lalan says, “This is an open message
at the dwelling-place of the Guide.”

While this song certainly connects with the epistemological problems posed in the Song no. 1 (by calling into question the validity of *shariat*), it also directs these problems inwardly to focus on truth’s relationship with the self. The enigma of the

last verse provides an especially intriguing window into the way that Bengali Sufis perceived the alleged “pride” of Hallaj in proclaiming “I am the Truth.” The logic seems to flow like this: Hallaj did not proclaim, “Hallaj is the Truth,” but rather “I am the Truth.” Therefore, to whom does the pronoun “I” (*āmi*, Ar. *anā*) actually refer?

Massignon provides a compelling clue by citing Hallaj’s words as recorded by his disciple Wāsītī in the work *Tā Sīn al-Azal* :

When Satan says, “I am worth more than him (Adam),” it is that he had not seen other lovers (jealous of the divine Unity) than himself. When Pharaoh says, “I have not taught you of any other divinity than me,” it is that he did not know anyone among his people who could discern truth from falsehood. And me, when I say, “If you don’t know Him, recognize Him from His signs, and here I am His sign! *I am the Truth!*” it is that I have never stopped and will never stop realizing Truth. Now, my friend and my master are Satan and Pharaoh; Satan was hurled, wings unfurled, into the fires of hell, without recanting; Pharaoh had been engulfed by the Red Sea without recanting or accepting a mediator; and me, even were I to be killed, crucified, or my arms and legs amputated, I will have not recanted! (1975 [1922]: 375).¹⁵

Massignon then goes on to record that the “I” of Satan, the “I” of Pharaoh, and the “I” of Hallaj are linked together, for they each came to venerate “the divine mystery of supreme personality” (Ibid) and as such were eventually put to death. Indeed, Hallaj’s martyrdom was interpreted by his followers as “the crowning of a life of asceticism, as the supreme verification of the mysticism that he had preached to

¹⁵ Translation my own from the original French: “Quand Satan dit, « Je vau mieux que lui (= Adam) », c’est qu’en effet, il ne voyait pas d’autre amoureux (jaloux de l’Unité divine) que lui-même. Quand Pharaon dit « Je ne vous ai pas enseigné d’autre divinité que *moi* », c’est qu’il ne connaissait personne, parmi son peuple, qui sût discerner le vrai d’avec le faux. Et moi, quand j’ai dit « Si vous ne Le connaissez pas, reconnaissez-Le à Ses signes, me voici Son signe! *Je suis la Vérité!* » c’est je n’ai jamais cessé et ne cesserai jamais de réaliser la Vérité. — Or, mon ami et mon maître, ce sont Satan et Pharaon; Satan a été précipité, ailes déployées, en enfer, sans s’être rétracté; Pharaon a été englouti dans la mer Rouge, sans s’être rétracté, ni avoir jamais admis de médiateur; et moi, si j’ai été tué, crucifié, amputé des mains et des pieds, je ne me suis pas rétracté!”

them” (374). Could the two “I’s” (*dui āmi*) mentioned in Lālan’s song then refer to the supreme personality being annihilated in the fires of the murshid (“Guide”)? Other songs by Lālan appear to support this interpretation. In any event, after his death revering Hallaj seems to have fallen out of favor with many Islamic thinkers except as a warning against presumptuous ecstasy or as a heterodox justification for magical practice. His contemporary, the Persian ethicist Miskawayh (c. 932-1030 C.E.), for example, presents a strong critique of pride as antithetical to the virtue of friendship (translation by Zurayk):

Arrogance and self-conceit will cause him [a prospective friend] to belittle his friends and to try to hold himself above him. But no friendship or bliss can be maintained with such an attitude, and inevitably his relationship with them will turn into enmity, rancor, and much hatred (Miskawayh 143).

HALLĀJ AND SEXUAL ALCHEMY

It is unclear if Hallaj himself had felt the way his followers did about his death or if, instead, he would have seen it as more of a transformative alchemical process. Indeed, it is through an alchemical lens that the example of Hallaj connects most intricately with the cosmology of the *Yoga Kalandar*, regardless of whether such an interpretation was a later interpolation. In a chapter on different perspectives by which Hallaj’s works were interpreted, Massignon devotes detailed sections to both alchemical and magical interpretations. In the alchemical section, he notes that the later alchemist Jildakī (d. 1342 C.E.) interpreted Hallaj’s poem (*qasīda*), “Kill me, O my protectors, for my death will be my life” — also famously celebrated by Bistāmī, Sohrawardī, Ibn ‘Arabī, Kishī, Maqdisī, and Rūmī — as a technical “description of the Great Work,” and that the alchemist believed that the other poems of Hallaj were nothing more than “veiled allegories that guide the adept to the discovery of the Philosopher’s Stone” (370).

Lālan Fakir seems to have adopted this alchemical interpretation, as in several of his songs (LG nos. 48, 90, 153) he sings of a “touchstone” (*paraśmani*, *paraśpāthār*, or *kaṣṭipāthar*), a term also translated by Salomon as the “Philosopher’s

Stone.” In her annotations to Lālan’s song “Āche din duniyāy acin mānuṣ ekjanā” (“There’s an unknown person in religion and the world,” LG no. 90), she writes: “the ‘touchstone’ is a metaphor for the transformative power of woman. Through intercourse with the *sādhikā* [female adept] the *sādhak* [male adept] gains a ‘perfected body’ (*siddha deha*) that remains strong and healthy in old age and is compared to gold” (2015: 108). While neither Hallaj nor Jildakī may have supported Lālan’s sexual interpretation of the “Philosopher’s Stone,” it is clear that Hallaj did see mystical annihilation (*fānā*) in metaphorical terms as dissolution into the fires of one’s beloved, a dissolution that echoes physical processes of alchemical transformation.

The alchemical interpretation of Hallaj is an important one, as a similar lens can be used to view the *Yoga Kalandar*. Embedded within the text are both implicit and explicit references to the so-called “exact sciences” of antiquity (e.g. astrology, alchemy, numerology, ritualized alphabets and lapidaries) that connect its cosmology to the wider scientific discourse of the medieval period, variously described as Sufi, Nāth, or Buddhist Tantric. While it may be tempting for modern readers to dismiss some of the text’s non-empirical suggestions (e.g., the remedies prescribed to detect and prevent death) as irrational “pseudo-science,” their presence is nevertheless important as it indicates an early form of scientific discourse, i.e., alchemy.¹⁶ By similarly tracing the associations present in the *Yoga Kalandar* as well as contemporary texts and the Bengali songs that pull from similar bodies of knowledge, it may be possible to situate medieval Bengali Sufism in more proper relation to other classical medieval cultures.

¹⁶ Thanks to groundbreaking scholarship in the exact sciences of antiquity, there is now a strong academic precedent for utilizing lists of correspondences to track exchanges of scientific knowledge over vast expanses of geographic space and time. A prominent example of this is the pioneering work of David Pingree, who was able to trace the spread of certain astrological conceptions (such as the Zodiac and its thirty-six decans and horas) from Alexandria, Egypt to India, and then trace their subsequent adoption by Islamic astrologers such as Abu Ma’ashar and “re-introduction” to Europe via translations sponsored by Alfonso X from Arabic to Spanish and Latin in medieval al-Andalus (Pingree 1963). While some of the technical aspects of his translations have recently been critically reexamined by scholars like Bill M. Mak, his general thesis as to the spread of the Zodiacal decans from Sanskrit to Arabic and European astrology remain unchallenged.

In any event, for the purposes of this thesis it is enough to emphasize the fact that certain elements of Hallaj's story and writings that were rejected by orthodox Islamic thinkers seem to have lived on in South Asia among Bengali Sufis, dervishes, and Bāul fakirs, where they have found common ground with yogic practices. More research that covers the spread of Hallaj's ideas into these regions could unlock new historical interpretations of his work that have long since disappeared from the mainstream ethical or philosophical discourses prevailing in the Islamic world.

| Concluding Remarks |

Should therefore the candidate here the name of any God, let him not rashly assume that it refers to any known God, let him not rashly assume that it refers to any known God, save only the God known to himself. Or should the ritual speak in terms (however vague) which seem to imply Egyptian, Taoist, Buddhist, Indian, Persian, Greek, Judaic, Christian, or Moslem philosophy, let him reflect that this is a defect of language...

— Aleister Crowley (1875-1947 C.E.), *Liber LXI vel Causæ*

It has been my aim throughout this thesis to demonstrate that the *Yoga Kalandar* poses many academic problems for scholars of religious history, for it presents a viable framework for spiritual attainment that cannot be pinned down to any single religious tradition (i.e. Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism) or non-institutionalized religious movements (i.e. Sufi, Nāth, Vaiṣṇava-Sahajiyā, Buddhist Sahajiyā, Bāul). Indeed, the text violates much established scholarship on religious traditions that often seeks to create boundaries between essential categories rather than recognize the process as much more fluid and ultimately linked to ritual processes that privilege practical considerations over the theoretical or theological.

Finally, the text underscores the fact that the modern phenomenon of so-called “new religious movements” (NRM) that appropriate techniques of yoga for their own paths of realization may not be so “modern” or “new” (or even “religious”) after all, especially as the pre-modern religious scene of Bengal in many ways had been even more fluid and inclusive than today (cf. Salomon 1998: 555) — a sobering thought with political implications for today’s world. As Andrew Nicholson informatively summarizes, the “Take Back Yoga” campaign of Aseem Shukla and the Hindu American Foundation claimed that yoga is the “intellectual property of [Hindu] spiritual heritage” (490). This has in recent years been taken up by Christian pastors, who from the pulpit (or Powerpoint) proclaim that Christians who practice yoga are “flirting with spiritual destruction by taking on such ineluctably non-Christian practices” (490). Despite the distance in geographical space, these fears seem to echo the concerns of Islamic reformists in early 20th century Bengal who singled out Lālan Fakir as “the number one foe, a spy for the Arya Samāj [a Hindu revivalist organization], and a deceiver of six to seven million Muslims” for “corrupting

Bengali Islam with Hindu beliefs and practices” (1991: 268). The foundation of each argument is the same: religions can be neatly boxed in as categories and as a result should not interact with each other in a way that violates their essential purity. Perhaps, therefore, the most powerful aspect of the *Yoga Kalandar* from a social perspective is that it all but dismantles the argument that Islamic forms of piety were ever “pure” (i.e. free of elements deemed foreign or contradictory), much in the same way that ceremonial magical texts of Medieval Europe dismantle the argument that Christian ritual practices were ever “pure” of so-called pagan elements (cf. Fanger 2012). The line in the sand between orthodoxy and heterodoxy is always drawn by the orthodox, but it is a line that history can at least blur if not erase.

| Appendix One |

THE *YOGA KALANDAR* TEXT (ENGLISH)¹⁷

- 1 I salute first the venerable Nirañjan,
After him I salute the feet of the Prophet.
- 2 Allah the Merciful, the Generous, the All-powerful Protector,
He who has created the eighteen thousand worlds.
- 3 Know that the Prophet became anxious, and to the world
The Messenger of Allah spoke many ideas.
- 4 Know also that Bibi Fatima is the daughter of the Messenger,
The spouse of the venerable Ali, the Mother of the World.
- 5 After saluting the feet of all the Companions,
Listen attentively! I will tell you all about unity-in-difference (*bhedābheda*).
[I pay my respect to all the angels living on the sky.
By whose order, the whole system of the universe is maintained.
Now, O people, hear the (great) tidings:
I only tell you the mysteries of the four *Maqāms*.]¹⁸

Principles of the Stations | *Mokām Tattva*

- 6 Know that the station *nāsut* (Ar. *nāsūt*) is the Three Points (*tin tiharī*).
The angel Azrael (Ar. *Ajrāil*) is the guardian there.
- 7 Know that the inside entirely is a place of fire.
There a fire blazes constantly, but it is never to be heard.
- 8 Know that the *mūlādhār* [*cakra*] is the risen sun, and
Understand that the existent-self (*jībattamā*) is its lord.
- 9 With the eyes closed and hearing withdrawn, there repeat the Name (*jikir*).
Respecting the spiritual guide (*murśid*), follow his or her way.¹⁹
- 10 There in the lotus dwells the lord of the house.
Kindle a fire in this land each day.
- 11 So that it can never be extinguished,
Kindle this fire with the utmost care.
- 12 This fire renders the body immortal,
Be careful that it never goes out.
- 13 Know that this fire is ever always in the Three Points.
Thus for the tenth door you will make a lock.
- 14 Just as a beast squeezes to tighten [the anus] after it shits,
In such a way apply pressure to the hidden root.

¹⁷ This non-annotated English translation by the author of the *Yoga Kalandar* text is primarily based on France Bhattacharya's annotated French translation (2003) of Śarīph's Bengali recension of the text (1969), although Enamul Hak's English translation (1975) of a different recension of *Yoga Kalandar* has also proved helpful to ensure that the right meaning of the Bengali original is preserved in certain cases where the wording is obscure. It is hoped that in the near future the MSS can be tracked down and that a proper critical edition comparing each variant can be made.

¹⁸ Bhattacharya points out that these verses are only present in Hak's recension of the text, and thus does not number them.

¹⁹ Given the lack of gendered pronouns in Bengali, I have purposely attempted to keep the gender of this translation ambiguous to more adequately reflect the potential for either gender in the Bengali original.

15 Just as a blacksmith maintains a fire in the forge,
 So apply pressure repeatedly by squeezing.
 16 If you are able to accomplish this task each day,
 You will destroy all illness in the body.
 17 I know that to the bodily self (*śarīrer āttamā*) the ears are the most important —
 The sound of *anāhata* arises like instrumental music.
 18 The most important doors of the self are the two ears;
 Know that they are where one gets news from every kingdom.
 19 Know that the Three Points is the principal cavity.
 It is the place where the father breathes an immense spring breeze.
 20 Fix your gaze with care towards the unseen, and
 You will see a lamp unto your eyes.
 21 This lamp will bestow a living clarity,
 In the middle of this radiance, you will see an image.
 22 Fixing your gaze upon the center of this light,
 You will see all that comes and goes.
 23 If you are able to consistently have this vision,
 Your body will never be destroyed.
 24 Those who only have a year to live
 Will not see this image that remains hidden.
 25 He has neither any strength nor any power,
 Nor an appetite for any meal.
 26 He whose phallus remains inert in love,
 Know that for him death is near.
 27 He who only has two or three days more to live
 Does not contain sperm in his organ.
 28 His two testicles remain hidden, and
 At the moment of death his phallus is shrunk.
 29 When you have mastered the practices of the station *nāsut*,
 Then start to engage in the practices of the station *malakut*.
 30 Know that the station *malakut* (Ar. *malakūt*) is in the region of the navel, and
 Know that the wind blows in this place.
 31 In yoga one gives it the name *manipur*,
 Here the spring is constantly in season.
 32 This station is under the authority of the archangel Israfel (Ar. Isrāphil),
 Know that here the nose is his door.
 33 The navel cavity is the seat of the lungs.
 Constantly make an effort to control your breath.
 34 Each day and night 40,000 breath-cycles come and go.
 Always stay mindful of the breath within the body.
 35 As long as there is breath, there is life.
 When the breath stops, death is certain.
 36 Fixing the gaze past the end of your nose, contemplate the breath.
 The chin pressed upon the throat, consistently observe the rules [of practice].
 37 Place your right foot on your left thigh, and
 With your two eyes open look towards the tip of your nose.
 38 In such a way the breath will not leave the body, and
 You will see a color that seems like arum leaves.
 39 Inside this you will have a vision of an image.
 Know that this image has the color of the Self.
 40 Those who are able to constantly contemplate this image
 Are able to tell what actions will and will not happen.

41 When you have successfully accomplished this,
 Gaze repeatedly into the *maṇipur*.
 42 One star (*nakṣatra*) resides in the region of the *maṇipur* —
 You will see it if you distinguish it with your yogic eyes (*yug ākhi*).
 43 In this mansion (*purī*) you will catch sight of the angels, and
 You will see all kinds of gods and demons (*surāsura*).
 44 When you have accomplished the practices of the station *malakut*
 Move on to those of the station *jabarut* (*jabarūt*).
 45 Know that the station *jabarut* is at the base of the palace,
 There one finds an abundance of brainy intellect (*magaj*).
 46 The authority is held by the archangel Michael (Mikāel),
 Know that his name is the station *nāsirā*.
 47 Its door is found in the two eyes, and
 Its organ is the area of the liver.
 48 There in its midst, water flows without ceasing.
 Know that this water is what keeps the body stable.
 49 Those who are able to awaken to the intelligence of causation,
 They will recognize it with the consent of the Master.
 50 The practices call this the “reservoir of nectar,” and
 Within breathes the season of spring.
 51 This reservoir of nectar is a large lake, and
 One who drinks its water is immortal and indestructible.
 52 There a celestial moon rises.
 The light of the body becomes the rays of this moon.
 53 The dwelling of the self is in this water.
 Remain fixed upon it always in meditation.
 54 When the vision has newly appeared in meditation,
 The intelligence of causation is born by catching sight of the beloved companion.
 55 The wicked Iblis cannot mislead one who has seen this beloved.
 Thinking with a stable intelligence, such a one is without worries
 56 The supreme Self (*param āttamā*) is with the individual self (*jībāttamā*).
 While meditating you will see them in sight.
 57 The Self is in the water, the water in the Self.
 You will see it very brilliantly, without any blemish.
 58 The self and the Self are united,
 They play with each other in the same body.
 59 Diving constantly in this reservoir,
 The mind dwells in concentration while meditating.
 60 The image of the Prophet, the highest Friend of God,
 Nur Muhammad, know that this is his abode.
 61 The intelligence of causation, accompanied by an awakened consciousness,
 Hide within this purified temple.
 62 The oyster is in the water, the pearl is in the oyster, and
 The image of Nur Muhammad is in the pearl.
 63 When you have obtained the vision of Muhammad,
 Rejoice and dwell in a secret place.
 64 When you have completed the practice of the station *jabarut*,
 Apply yourself to attain to the station *lāhut* (Ar. *lāhūt*).
 65 Know that this *lāhut* of the heart is a station made of clay.
 An angel named Gabriel is found there.
 66 Know that the form of the heart is like the trunk of a banana tree.
 The Master resides there in his own hermitage.

- 67 Know that his name is the station *māhmudā* (Ar. *maḥmūdā*).
In this place the throne of God is found.
- 68 This is also called the *anāhata cakra*.
There autumn is always in season.
- 69 The place of the heart is entirely situated within.
Its door is the open mouth.
- 70 Within the heart is the ocean of the existent self.
Purify it by the mouth of the guru.
- 71 Just as one fills up a glass of churned milk,
The two become one as radiance melts in radiance.
- 72 The Lord Nirañjan resides in the station *lāhut*.
Each of the two has a vision of the other.
- 73 As soon as they see each other,
They are dissolved into one another.
- 74 This clarity is more brilliant than a crystal lamp.
The mind through concentration meditates and perceives it in sight.
- 75 The two images of the supreme Self and the individual self
Arise while radiance melts into radiance.
- 76 Just as when the star of day rises in the sky,
Its rays expand to cover the earth.
- 77 The self dwells in the midst of the thousand petals (*sahasra dal*), and
Its clarity illuminates the entire body.
- 78 A lamp shines from a single place, but its brilliance is everywhere.
This is an image of the station of the Lord in the thousand petals.
- 79 One who aspires to the vision of the Lord
Looks always to the center of the heart.
- 80 One who fixes divine eyes upon the hidden form
Will have a vision of the Lord on the throne.
- 81 The self of animal intelligence resides in this place.
One calls it the name *ruhu hāiyaoyāni*.
- 82 To the left is found the wicked Iblis.
He gives false counsel while restraining one from behind.
- 83 Within the heart dwell always his servants:
Desire, anger, eagerness, and attachment.
- 84 If you are successful in removing them from the heart,
Your vision of the Lord will be consistent.
- 85 When the mirror of the heart has been cleaned,
You will obtain the vision of the Lord Nirañjan.
- 86 The song of *anāhat* resounds there always without stopping.
Listen constantly with your mind in concentration.
- 87 Silently perform the recitation of *ajāp*, the mind being calm.
Recognize that within the body is the Lord Nirañjan.
- 88 If your mind dwells always in this place,
Your longevity and understanding will both increase.

Concerning the Body

- 89 I want to tell you now some essential things about the body.
There are four bodies in one body — listen to their names.
- 90 There is the *kasiphu* body, the *latiphu* body, the *bakāu* body, and the *phāni* body.
Listen to their description from the mouth of the guru and understand.

91 There are seven incomparable mountains.
 They are found in the body, listen to their names:
 92 Udayagiri, Aṣṭagiri, and Maṇigiri,
 As well as Kuṭagiri, Malayagiri, and Hemagiri.
 93 I have spoken of the inferior worlds, but now listen regarding Sumeru.
 At the same time, listen to what makes up the ten doors.
 94 The pair of eyes and the pair of ears make four doors.
 With the nose and the mouth, there are seven.
 95 Know that the anus, the phallus, and the navel are three.
 Learn separately about the tenth door.
 96 One: semen. Two: the veins and arteries. Three: the bones.
 Four: the brain. These are determined by the father.
 97 One: the hair. Two: the skin.
 Three: the blood. Four: the vision.
 98 These four things come from the mother's womb.
 Four from the father, four from the mother, and ten from Allah.
 99 When the servants [of Allah, i.e. human beings] are five months old in the womb,
 Five things are assuredly written upon them:
 100 Life, death, sustenance, riches, and tribulations.
 Know that these five things are the goods of this earth.
 101 Listen now, for I am going to tell you the characteristics of the stations, and
 The ways that the Lord Nirañjan stays in the body.
 102 Water, fire, earth, and the air are the four stations.
 Listen attentively, for I will tell you their respective names.
 103 Know that the station *nāsut* is the Three Points
 The angel Azrael (Ajrāil) is its guardian.
 104 He takes the appearance of a tiger.
 He memorizes the Name, installed at the stage (*mañjil*) of *śarīyat*.
 105 The two ears are his doors.
 He lies in cold slumber in the father's chamber.
 106 If you are able to succeed after fixing your gaze there,
 Know that you will comprehend the stage of *śarīyat*.
 107 *Malakut* is the umbilical cord – know that it is the station of air.
 There is an angel there with the name of Israfil.
 108 He takes on the characteristics of a serpent.
 At the *tarikāt* stage it's all about the memorization of the Name (*jikir*).
 109 There the nose is his door.
 He lies in cold slumber in the chamber of *pheskā*.
 110 One who meditates, the eyes fixed upon this place
 Know that certainly he will attain the *tarikāt* stage.
 111 *Jabarut* is the station amid the palace, and is the station of water.
 There is in that place an angel named Michael.
 112 He takes on the appearance of an elephant.
 He repeats the Name, and is established at the *hakikat* stage.
 113 The two eyes are there its doors.
 To sleep he retreats into the heart.
 114 One who meditates with eyes fixed upon this place
 Will assuredly see the form of the *hakikat* stage.
 115 Know that the station *lāhut* is a station of earth.
 In that place there is an angel named Gabriel.
 116 He takes the appearance of a peacock.
 He repeats the name, and is situated in the *marifat* stage.

117 Nirañjan, Gabriel, and the wicked Iblis
 Constantly hide in the heart (*demeure*).
 118 If you are able to arrest these three, then
 You will surely obtain this form in meditation.
 119 The lotus upon the forehead is the door of this place.
 It is sleeping in the midst of the heart, fresh and hidden.
 120 One will act according to the stage in which one is found.
 I will tell you about this, for it is quite incredible.
 121 Know that first there is *śarīyat*, then *tarikāt*,
 next is *hakikat*, and then *mārphat*.
 122 At the *śarīyat* stage is found the station *nāsut*.
 At the *tarikāt* stage, there is *malakut*.
 123 At the *hakikat* stage, know that it is the station *jabarut*.
 At the *mārphat* stage one finds the station *lāhut*.
 124 At the stage of fire you will accomplish the tasks of *śarīyat*.
 To fortify your faith you will recite the profession of faith (*kalemā*).
 125 You will speak to Allah with your mouth and you will obey him in your heart.
 In the heart and with the mouth you will recognize the unity of Allah in essence.
 126 You will give away to charity the riches that come to you.
 You will distinguish between the lawful and unlawful, one type from another.
 127 One calls *śarīyat* those five obligations of the Muslim:
 fasting, prayer, pilgrimage, the profession of faith, and alms
 128 At the *tarikāt* stage you will renounce filthiness,
 Attachment, debauchery, and everything that is of the world.
 129 You will control all of your negative thoughts:
 Desire, anger, greed, debauchery, these four.
 130 You will not despise either great nor small, but will
 Increase your love for both great and small.
 131 You will not cause either the great or small to suffer.
 Upon seeing the needy, you will give up your clothing and food.
 132 You will address respectable people with devotion (*bhakti*), and
 You will consider yourself as inferior.
 133 Know that the one who is able to accomplish all these actions
 Is the friend of Allah at the *tarikāt* stage.
 134 Listen to what pertains to the *hakikat* stage:
 You will bear hunger, thirst, and loss of sleep.
 135 Stay on earth, absorbed in the thought of the Lord,
 Each day eating and sleeping infrequently.
 136 Good people renounce violence to their neighbors.
 Think without ceasing of Lord Nirañjan.
 137 Renouncing quarrels and ill-will, and begging out of love,
 One who does good immerses their mind in the Lord.
 138 Understanding yourself as in a mirror,
 Stay always in the *mārphat* station.
 139 You will read the Qur'an constantly, the body and mind acting as one.
 You will be the lover of everyone in every place.
 140 You will neither speak lies nor listen to them, and
 You will publicly explain the science of conduct.
 141 In a pleasing fashion, so as to make all appreciate you,
 You will speak publicly virtuous words.
 142 Do not speak well of yourself and make your ego grow, and
 Do not be indifferent to the opinions of the unhappy and the weak.

- 143 The one who performs the practices of the four stations is
 Considered by Allah to be a great person.
- 144 Who is able to exhaust the subject of the stations and stages?
 I have said a few words, but listen briefly to some more.
- 145 In the body one finds four hundred and forty-four bones.
 One hundred and six vessels are assembled in the eyes.
- 146 The sperm of the father, the blood of the mother, this is birth.
 In the same place are mixed earth and flesh.
- 147 Water, fire, earth, air, these four elements
 With light (*Nūr*) make five inside the body.
- 148 Know that these five things and these forty characteristics
 Together when mixed together make a living being conscious.

Meditation and Postures

- 149 Listen now as I tell you a little about the features of the postures —
 The postures that allow one to obtain Nirañjan while meditating.
- 150 Fix your mind well in the Posture of the Womb (*garbha āsan*):
 The eyes flexed, behold the forehead with a focused mind.
- 151 The eye in the forehead, the three junctures of the nose (*nāsiker sandhi*) —
 Meditating on these four binds the form (*rūp*).
- 152 The three subtle channels (*nāṛī*) meet at the eyebrows, and
 The wise call this place the quay of Tripinī (*tripinīr ghāṭ*).
- 153 Can't whoever bathes each day at the quay of Tripinī
 Wash away tens of millions of sins (*pāp*)?
- 154 Meditating before a mirror in the Posture of the Peacock (*mayur āsan*),
 You will see there the form of your own master (*thākur*).
- 155 This form, if I am able to recognize it as one,
 In such a way I come in a blended form, the color of rubies.
- 156 Concentrate on [the tip of] your nose in the Posture of the Lotus (*padmāsan*).
 There you will see cereal-grains [or corn] above the horns of a cow.
- 157 Observing there with your gaze focused,
 If you recognize this form you will be released from sin.
- 158 In the Posture of Yoga (*yogāsan*) stay seated and composed.
 While seated, breathe in the spring breeze.
- 159 Pressing on the Three Points (*tiharī*), then press upon the Tripinī.
 With one mind, go into deep meditation.
- 160 Keep your mind fixed on your purpose and repeating the Name,
 It will be as if a fine pearl appears into view.
- 161 One who recognizes this form and fixes their gaze will be
 Delivered from the sins of all [previous] births.
- 162 While meditating at night after having lit a lamp,
 You will be able to see the form amid a great brightness.
- 163 Red, yellow, black, and white —
 In these four forms a single form will manifest.
- 164 If you recognize this form and have fix your gaze upon it,
 All your sins will be removed.
- 165 If you are fixed there upon the rising of the sun,
 The infinite and invisible form will appear unto you.
- 166 Contemplate the same form within while meditating, and
 Its day will destroy the sins of all births.

167 At the setting of the sun, beneath the shadow, know that
 You will see the beautiful brilliance of the *latipha* (Ar. *latīfa*) body.
 168 In this place if you fix well your gaze,
 You will see the form of a body while observing the shadow.
 169 If you have recognized this form and concentrate your mind there,
 All your sins will be destroyed and you will have a pure body.
 170 At night, fixing your gaze on the moon,
 You will see there a man (*puruş*).
 171 You will see in this instant the same radiance of the self.
 At that time you will see within some red and some black.
 172 You will see black in red, and red in black.
 If you have recognized this form your sins will be immediately destroyed.
 173 Placing your right leg over your left leg,
 Watch the form of the guide (*murşid*) after piercing the front [of your gaze].
 174 She sparks in pure crystal,
 She is more beautiful than a necklace of pearls.
 175 A glint of rubies is in the midst of pure crystal, and
 Only a sage pierces [the secret of] this supreme wisdom.
 176 The mind as an image of gold is [like] a body of fire.
 The mind as an image of silver is [like] a shadow of a mirror.
 177 The mind as the rays of the sun is [like] a probe in the darkness
 The mind as lightning in the clouds is [like] four lunar digits (*kalā*).
 178 Above, below, in front, to the right, and to the left.
 Recognize the forms, each with their name.
 179 The form of the right, know that it is Nirañjan, the Self.
 The image on the left, know that it is the wicked Iblis.
 180 If the form of the right has appeared at first,
 Fix well your gaze there between the eyes.
 181 Do not regard first the radiance of the left, for
 The wicked Iblis has appeared in the radiance.
 182 First recognize the light of the face — it is Nirañjan.
 You will obtain that form which you imagine.
 183 If you are able to succeed at repeating the name,
 The infinite and invisible form will be accessible to you.
 184 From the heavens will descend the form who is named Gabriel, and
 His radiance will blend together in incomparable splendor.
 185 Issuing from the inferior worlds will appear a radiance, and
 Know that this is the form of Azrael.
 186 Know that Michael will come from the radiance of the right, and
 Taking his proper form he will blend in the radiance.
 187 Know that from the radiance of the left will come Israfil, and
 Taking his proper form he will blend at this every moment.
 188 These four angels are found in the body of the servants.
 One who does not understand is counted among the ignorant.
 189 With Kerābin and Kātebin there are six, and
 The individual self and supreme Self, a jewel without price.
 190 Know that with these two Selves there are eight —
 Allah and Muhammad are two bodies of light.
 191 In that place there is another light called the luminous manifestation (*tajallī*).
 There is a joy born at the sight of a companion beyond comparison.
 192 [There is] one who sees the companion, Nur Muhammad,
 One who, for many reasons, does not want to reveal himself.

- 193 One who does not see the beloved companion at the door
Is characterized by sadness and has a body that is not calm.
- 194 The doubts of they who have recognized all these forms are dissipated, and
The bodies of they who have recognized them are indestructible and immortal.
- 195 One who has recognized each of them separately will cause
To appear in view the infinite and invisible form.
- 196 As long as the grains stay fixed between the horns of the bull,
The sins of those who see them are removed.
- 197 The murder of a bull, of a woman, of a brahmin, and the consumption of alcohol;
These four sins are destroyed at the moment of the divine game (*līlā*).
- 198 The hundred-petaled lotus is found at the City of the Holy Cowherder, and
From there that nectar of love illuminates Tripinī.
- 199 Practicing the five rituals of the *ghāṭ* of Tripinī,
One who removes fear stays hidden in the wilderness.
- 200 Light an indestructible fire in two places, and
Listen to these two descriptions from the mouth of the guru.
- 201 I who have spoken of its grandeur am small.
This incomparable room does not break even when it breaks.
- 202 The day of the New Moon, the eighth, ninth, and tenth day, and the full moon —
Do not approach a woman on any of these days.

The signs that announce death

- 203 O servant, listen well to the Yoga of the Kalandars.
If you understand [their words] you will know all about death.
- 204 If one always sees sweat on the head,
If one does not hear sound when the ears are pressed,
205 If the ears are broken at the same time,
If the moon [or drop of liquid] is not seen when one presses on the nose,
206 If one who is without anger is subsequently full of anger, and
One who does not cease to remain in illusion,
207 One who cannot hold urine for twelve months out of the year,
All these signs announce death within one year.
- 208 One who always sees the planet Earth above a tree,
Who sees the signs of the sun while contemplating the heavens,
209 One who sees female vultures and jackals feeding on flesh,
Who sees oxen driving an ox-cart.
210 Who hears human voices even when there is no one behind,
Whose mouth dries up when not seeing the seven stars,
211 Who at the sight of the rising sun does not perceive any deep feeling,
Who does not see the great path in the lines of the moon,
212 Who does not see the nose if the tip is curved,
Who does not here the primal sound (*nāḍ*) when making love,
213 One who in the broad daylight sees a choir of comets,
Who suddenly comes to fall while whirling on someone,
214 One who sees these specific signs will
Assuredly die in six months.
- 215 One who, while lifting up the head in plain daylight,
Sees a person similar to oneself,
216 But does not see a head while watching —
These signs announce death within one month.

- 217 One who sees a human form in the sky and
Does not see a head while watching,
- 218 One who does not perceive the smell of oil when lighting a lamp, but
Perceives suddenly the smell of death,
- 219 One who does not see light when pressing a finger to the eye, and
Of which the front appears immense at the touch of the hand,
- 220 He or she is assured to die in six months if
All of these signs are recognized.
- 221 One who sees lightning when there are no clouds,
Who constantly sees ducks, ravens, peacocks, and serpents,
- 222 One who sees a rainbow at night,
Who grinds teeth in anger,
- 223 These signs announce death in one month.
One who feels cold during the day, but only slightly cold at night,
- 224 One who has a body that is halfway hot and halfway cold,
Know that this is not good when one is this way.
- 225 One who does not see their reflection neither in the water nor in a mirror,
Who dreams of a peacock while sleeping,
- 226 One whose feet and hands dry up quickly after a bath,
One whose heart beats strongly each day and night,
- 227 [For this person] death is certain within ten days.
One whose iris is the color of an eggplant,
- 228 Know that he or she will die in seven days.
One who sees his or her shadow facing to the right (or south).
- 229 He or she will die that very day.
If pressing the ground using the middle finger to see, and
- 230 The finger of immortality lifts slightly,
One has twenty *danḍa* (1 *danḍa* = 24 minutes) remaining if the shadow is short.
- 231 Seven *danḍa* remain for those who have two breaths pass together, and
Twenty *danḍa* when the two breaths pass.
- 232 The shadow is under the feet when there remains six *danḍa*.
When three hours (1 *prahar*) remain, the shadow passes to the right (or south).
- 233 When the last day of *māgh* is in five days,
If one sees the wind blow to the right (or south) then know that this is death.
- 234 When the two testicles are hidden by a stroke of fate,
Be certain that death will happen this very *danḍa*.
- 235 Reflecting upon all of this, watch for each of them in your own way.
One who understand the winter and spring is wise.
- 236 When the shadow is in the direction of the lamp,
That is the moment when the self leaves the body.

Principles of the Colors

- 237 Water, fire, earth, air — these are the four elements,
Now I will tell you about their colors.
- 238 The wind is the color of green leaves, the fire is black,
The color of the sun is red, and water is white.
- 239 You can be sure that the color of earth is yellow.
Each has the color of its own deep nature.²⁰

²⁰ Bhattacharya points out that Hak's discussion of the colors ends at verse 239, and continues with the following final verses that if authentic provide the identity of the author as Sayyid Martuzā:

- 240 The prophet says in the Hadith (Bng. *hādīs*) that
The entire *śarīyat* is in my speech.
- 241 You will understand that the *Tarikat* is my interior.
Know that *Hakikat* is devotion to my states.
- 242 Know with certainty that *Maraphat* is my unveiling,
This is what the Hadith expresses about these four.
- 243 Listen well, O servant, to the Yoga Kalandar.
If you understand it, you will know everything about death.

Leaving wisdom think over Nirañjan in meditation, and
In the quay of Tribenī drink nectar-like water.
To him in whose heart Murshid or Pīr has not a place,
Thākur (i.e. God) does not reveal Himself.
Father is responsible for birth and mother for milk.
Sayyid Martuzā says, — This is the clue to human birth.

| Appendix Two |

QUOTED SONGS OF LĀLAN FAKIR (ORIGINAL BENGALI VERSIONS)

[The versions of the songs given here are based on Carol Salomon's manuscript versions compiled from numerous sources, including her evaluation of manuscripts, interviews with fakirs and LG (*Lālan-Gītikā*, see Bibliography). Song no. 6 was received orally by the author from Sadhu Humayon Fakir of Narsingdhi, Bangladesh, but a version is also published in LG no. 255.]

Song no. 1 - "Ke tomāy e beś bhūṣaṇe"

কে তোমায় এ বেশ ভূষণে
সাজাইল বল শুনি ।
জেন্দা দেহে মরার বসন
খিরকা তাজ আর ডোর কোপিনী ॥

ke tomāy e beś bhūṣaṇe
sājāilo balo śuni|
jendā dehe marār basan
khirkā tāj ār ḍor kopinī ॥

জেন্দা মরার পোশাক পরা
আপন ছরাদ আপনি সারা
ভবলোকে ভয়ংকারা
শুনে অসম্ভব করনি ॥

jendā marār pośāk parā
āpan charād āpni sārā
bhabaloke bhayaṃkārā
śune asambhab karani ॥

যে মরণের আগের মরে
শমনে ছোঁবে না তারে
শুনেছি সাধুর দ্বারে
তাই বুঝি করেছ ধনি ॥

ye maraṇer āger mare
śamane chōbe nā tāre
śunechi sādhur dvāre
tāi bujhi karecho dhani ॥

সেজেছে সাজ ভালই তোর
মরে যদি ডুবতে পারো
লালন বলে যদি ফেরো
দুকুল হবে অপমানি ॥

sejeche sāj bhāloi toro
mare yadi ḍubte pāro
lālan bale yadi phero
dukul habe apamāni ॥

Song No. 2 - “Jān gā nūrer khabar”

জান গা নূরের খবর যাতে নিরঞ্জন ঘেরা
নূর সাধিলে নিরঞ্জনকে যাবে রে ধরা ॥

নূরে নবীর জন্ম হয়
নূর গঠলেন অটলময়
ছিল কাঙ্গুরা
নূরেতে মোকাম মঞ্জিল উজ্জ্বল করা ॥

আছে নূরের শ্রেষ্ঠ নূর
জানে সদায় সচতুর
জীব যারা
সে নূর হিল্লোলে বর্ত হয় নূর জহরা ॥

নিভবে যেদিন নূরের বাতি
এসে ঘিরবে কাল দ্যুতি
চৌ মহড়া
লালন বলে থাকবে পড়ে থাকের পিঞ্জরা ॥

jān gā nūrer khabar yāte nirañjan gherā
nūr sādihile nirañjanke yābe re dharā ॥

nūre nabīr janma hay
nūr gaṭhlen aṭalmay
chilo kāngurā
nūrete mokām mañjila ujjval karā ॥

āche nūrer śreṣṭha nūr
jāne sadāy sacatur
jīb yārā
se nūr hillole barta hay nūr jaharā ॥

nibhabe yedin nūrer bāti
ese ghirbe kāl dyuti
cau maharā
lālan bale thākbe paṛe khāker piñjarā ॥

Song No. 3 - “Ýe jan padmahem sarobare ýāy”

যে জন পদ্মহেম সরোবরে যায়
অটল অমূল্য নিধি সেই অনায়াসে পায় ॥

ýejan padmahem sarobare ýāy
aṭal amūlya nidhi sei anāyāse pāy ॥

অপরূপ সেই নদীর পানি
জন্ম তাতে মুক্তামনি
বলবো কি তার গুণ বাখানি
পরশে পরশ হয় ॥

aparūp sei nadīr pāni
janma tāte muktāmani
balbo ki tār guṇ bākhāni
paraśe paraś hay ॥

পলকে ভড়ে পড়ে চড়া
পলকে বয় তড়কা ধারা
সেই ঘাট বেঁধে মৎস্য ধরা
সামান্য কাজ নয় ॥

palake bhare pare caṛā
palake bay taṛkā dhārā
sei ghāṭ bēdhe maṭsya dharā
sāmānya kāj nay ॥

বিনে হাওয়ায় মৌজা খেলে
ত্রিখণ্ড হয় তৃণপিণ্ডালে
তাহে ডুবে রত্ন তোলে
রসিক মহাশয় ॥

bine hāoyāy maujā khele
trikhaṇḍa hay ṭṛṇapināle
tāhe ḍube ratna tole
rasik mahāśay ॥

গুরুজী কাণ্ডারী যারে
অথায়ে থাই দিতে পারে
লালন বলে সাধন জোরে
শমন এড়ায় ॥

guruji kāṇḍārī yāre
athāye thāi dite pāre
lālan bale sādhan jore
śaman eṛāy ॥

Song no. 4 - “Āche ādi makkā ei mānabdehe”

আছে আদি মক্কা এই মানবদেহে
দেখ না রে মন ভেয়ে
দেশদেশান্তর দৌড়ে এবার
সরিস কেন হাঁপিয়ে ॥

āche ādi makkā ei mānabdehe
dekh nā re man bheye
deś deśāntar douṛe ebār
saris kæno hāpiye ॥

করে অতি আজব ভাঙ্কা
গঠেছে সাঁই মানুষ মক্কা
কুদরতি নূর দিয়ে
ও তার চার দ্বারে চার নূরের ইমাম
মধ্যে সাঁই বসিয়ে ॥

kare ati ājab bhākkā
gaṭheche sāi mānuṣ makkā
kudarati nūr diye
o tār cār dvāre cār nūrer imām
madhye sāi basiye ॥

তিল পরিমাণ জায়গার ভিতর
বানিয়েছেন সাঁই উর্ধ্ব শহর
এই মানুষ মক্কায়ে
কত লাখ লাখ হাজী করছে রে হজ
সেই জায়গায় বসিয়ে ॥

til parimāṇ jāygār bhitar
bāniyechen sāi ūrdhva śahar
ei mānuṣ makkāye
kata lākh lākh hājī karche re haj
sei jāygāy basiye ॥

মানুষ মক্কা কুদরতি কাজ
উঠছে রে আজগুবি আওয়াজ
সাত তালা ভেদিয়ে
আছে সিং দরজায় দ্বারী একজন
নিদ্রাত্যাগী হয়ে ॥

mānuṣ makkā kudarati kāj
uṭhache re ājagubi āoyāj
sāt tālā bhediye
āche siṃ darjāy dvārī ekjan
nidrātyāgī haye ॥

দশ দুয়ারী মানুষ-মক্কা
গুরু পদে ডুবে দেখা গা
ধাঙ্কা সামলায়ে
ফকির লালন বলে (সে যে) গুপ্ত মক্কা
আদি ইমাম সেই মেয়ে ॥

daś duyārī mānuṣ-makkā
guru pade ḍube dekha gā
dhākkā sāmālāye
phakir lālan bale (se ye) gupta makkā
ādi imām sei meye ॥

Song no. 5 - “Murśider thāi ne nā re tār bhed bujhe”

মুর্শিদেৰ ঠাই নে না রে তার ভেদ বুঝে
এ দুনিয়ায় সিনায় সিনায়
কি ভেদ নবী বিলিয়েছে ॥

murśider thāi ne nā re tār bhed bujhe
e duniyāy sināy sināy
ki bhed nabī biliyeche ॥

সিনার ভেদ সিনায় সিনায়
সফিনারো ভেদ সফিনায়
যার যে দিকে মন গেল ভাই
সে সে ভাবে দাঁড়িয়েছে ॥

sinār bhed sināy sināy
saphināro bhed saphināy
yār ye dike man gelo bhāi
se se bhābe dāṛiyeche ॥

কুতর্কী আর কুস্বভাবী
তারে ভেদ বলে নাই নবী
ভেদের ঘরে দিয়ে চাবি
শরার মতে বুঝিয়েছে ॥

kutarkī ār kusvabhābī
tāre bhed bale nāi nabī
bheder ghare diye cābi
śarār mate bujhiyeche ॥

নেকতন বান্দারা যত
ভেদ পেলে আউলিয়া হতো
নাদানেরা শূল যাঁচিত
মনছুর তার সাবুদ আছে ॥

nektan bāndāra yato
bhed pele āuliyā hato
nādānerā śul yācita
manchur tār sābud āche ॥

তফসীর হোসেনি যার নাম
তাই ধুড়ে পায় মসনবী কালাম
ভেদ ইশারায় লিখা তামাম
লালন বলে নাই নিজে ॥

taphsīr hoseni yār nām
tāi dhure pāy masnabī kālām
bhed isārāy likhā tāmām
lālan bale nāi nije ॥

Song no. 6 - “Āmi ki tāi jānle sādhan siddhi hay”

আমি কি তাই জানিলে সাধন সিদ্ধি হয়
আমি কথার অর্থ ভারি
আমাতে আর আমি নাই ॥

āmi ki tāi jānile sādhan siddhi hay
āmi kathār artha bhāri
āmāte ār āmi nāi ॥

অনন্ত শহর বাজারে
আমি আমি শব্দ করে
আমার আমি চিন্তে নারে
বেদ পড়ি পাগলে প্রায় ॥

ananta śahar bājāre
āmi āmi śabda kare
āmār āmi cinte nāre
bed paṛi pāgaler prāy ॥

মনচুর হাল্লাজ ফকির সেতো
বলেছিল আমি সত্য
সই পলো সাঁইর আইন মত
শরায় কি তার মর্ম পায় ॥

manchur hāllāj phakir seto
balechilo āmi satya
sai palo sā̃ir āin mato
śarāy ki tār marma pāy ॥

কুমবে এজনি কুমবে এজনিল্লা
সাঁইর হুকুম দুই আমি হিল্লা
লালন বলে এ বেদ খোলা
আছে রে মুর্শিদের ঠাঁই ॥

kumbe ejni kumbe ejnillā
sā̃ir hukum dui āmi hillā
lālan bale e bhed kholā
āchere murśider ṭhā̃i ॥

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