

A Hindu-Islamic Translation: Retrieving Dārā Shikūh's Confluence of the Two Oceans

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As early as the tenth century, important moments of encounter between Islam and Hinduism occurred, most notably through Al-Bīrūnī's historic journey to India, known in Arabic as *al-Hind*, and the publication of his renowned *Tarikh al-Hind (The History of India)*. Similarly, Sufi master al-Jīlī in the fourteenth century argued that the *barāhima* (Hindus) belong to the religion of Abraham and seek to realize *tawhīd* (the ontological oneness of God) too. In such a long history of cross-cultural exchange and discourse between the two religions, the comparative treatise between Islam and Hinduism, *Majma' al-bahrayn (Confluence of the Two Oceans)* by the Mughal prince Dārā Shikūh (1615–1659), as well as his translation of the Upanishads (*Sirr-i akbar*) from Sanskrit into Persian, are only drops in a larger ocean of Hindu-Islamic encounter. Dārā's comparative treatise is far from being the first one. Mīr 'Abd al-Wāhid Bilgrāmī writes in the *Haqā'iq-i Hindī* or *Indian Truths* (1566 C.E.) that the "truths of India" overlap with the truths of Islam. As Orsini tells us, Bilgrāmī wrote his treatises in a larger context of Sufi poetic engagements with Krishna stories, songs and devotional lyrics called *bishnupad*.¹

This lengthy and rich dialogue, of which Dārā Shikūh is one among many interlocutors, has produced mutual epistemological enrichment and has contributed to the rich pluralism of the Indic tradition. It fortunately did not start nor did it end with Dārā Shikūh. The works of the young prince are part of one of the greatest and longest movements of translation in human history (from Sanskrit and Hindavi to Persian and Arabic).² What can we learn

from Dārā's comparative hermeneutical endeavor in *Majma' al-bahrayn*? And can we judge the *Sirr-i akbar* according to the expectation of a purely "word-by-word" translation of the Sanskrit Upanishads?

Dārā's life and works illustrate how translation can have profound impacts and how the translation of religious treatises cannot be simply reduced to the realm of political tactics and calculative thinking. A more textually rooted and nuanced assessment of Dārā's translations should include concepts such as semantic expansion across religious traditions and inner transformation. I suggest we could learn from both these texts by seeing them as translations of *metaphysical concepts* and as *commentaries*, which are connected to Dārā's self-portrayed spiritual and intellectual journey. The prince claims that it is the meeting of Sufism with Advaita Vedanta that made him realize and underline the metaphysical principle of *tawhīd*.³ Translation of language and concepts seems to go along with metanoia, an inner translation.

I will begin this essay by providing some historical background to the Mughal Empire as well as by addressing historiographical questions, namely "the narrative of exceptionalism" in relation to revisionist scholarship on Dārā. After introducing Dārā's political and intellectual-spiritual life, I will move on to discuss translation theory as a hermeneutical model for understanding cross-religious encounter. This will set the ground for exploring not only selected aspects of Dārā's *Majma' al-bahrayn* (namely, the elements, the soul, the divine attributes, and the four worlds) but also the process by which it is translated from Persian to Sanskrit (*Samudrasangama*).

1 Francesca Orsini, "Krishna is the Truth of Man": Mir 'Abdul Wahid Bilgrami's *Haqā'iq-i Hindī* (Indian Truths) and the Circulation of Dhrupad and Bishnupad" in Thomas Bruijn and Allison Busch eds., *Culture and Circulation: Literature in Motion in Early Modern India*. (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

2 Carl Ernst says that "the translation movement between the Indian and Islamic cultures is still rarely studied, though as a cross-cultural event the movement from Sanskrit into Arabic and Persian is comparable in magnitude and duration to the other great enterprises of cross-cultural translation (Greek philosophy into Arabic and Latin, Buddhism from Sanskrit into Chinese and Tibetan)." [Note: more studies have happened since this statement was made] Carl W. Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism? A Reconsideration of Arabic and Persian Translations from Indian Languages," *Iranian Studies* 36:2 (2003): 173.

For an extensive survey of Persian works on Indian learned traditions, see "Perso-Indica: An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions," accessed April 24, 2016, <http://www.perso-indica.net/contacts>.

3 *Tawhīd*: Unity, at once of the Divine and of all things and also the integration which leads to the awareness and realization of Unity: Allah is our origin and our ultimate goal as "there is nothing else but Allah and Mohamed is his Messenger" (*lā illāh illā allāh wa Muḥammad rasūl allāh* is the *shahāda* or the declaration of faith, the first pillar of Islam). Sufis take it further: the ultimate stage of *tawhīd* is to dissolve separateness in union with God. A practice of *tawhīd* is to pray for someone that hurts you. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (New York: Praeger, 1967).

Finally, I will look at how Dārā's *Sirr-i Akbar* demonstrates the intrinsically commentarial nature of his translation, and of translation as such, as well as the necessity for translation, in Dārā's terms, within "the soul of the translator."

Historical Background, Historiographical Issues

Around 1520, the Mughal dynasty was founded by Babur, a descendant of the Timurid line, in North India. The Mughals, however, were not the first Muslim dynasty in the Subcontinent as they established themselves after the long rule of the Delhi sultanate from 1206 to 1526. Mughal governance lasted from 1526 to 1857, ending with British colonial rule in India. When speaking of any premodern empire, it is important to avoid uncritically describing it as a "state" in the modern sense: Sudipta Kaviraj distinguishes premodern Indic governance (both Hindu and Muslim) from the modern British colonial state. If, in the former, sovereignty rested on a divine and morally transcendent legislative order that stood above the political ruler, in the latter the state, which emerged out of the East India Company, monopolized sovereignty and gradually destroyed transcendent forms of authority, especially after 1857, when direct colonial domination over the Indian empire was explicitly established.⁴

The accommodative and pluralistic governance of the Mughals was then conceptually far from being "secular" in the modern sense since, like most pre-modern modes of governance, including the Mughals' Timurid ancestors or their Safavid and Rajput contemporaries, it was framed by a notion of kingship that was embedded in a sense of the sacred.⁵ Paradigmatically, the Islamic ruler had the duty to enforce, *not to legislate*, the expression of divine will as translated into law (which is coterminous with morality), namely the *sharī'a*, under which he was himself subjected. A king, hence, ought to be virtuous and just, subjected to God, to the moral law as interpreted by the legal scholars. This model has a completely different metaphysic from the modern state's legal monopoly, since the rulers are subservient to a legal framework which they do not create.⁶

In particular, the Mughals' pluralistic governance did

not emerge in a vacuum: the spatial and temporal extent of Hindu-Muslim cross-religious encounters at the level of popular devotional practices is vast, commencing perhaps from the third century *hijrī* (ca. ninth century C.E.) onwards, as exemplified by the encounters between the (Hindu) bhakti and (Islamic) Sufi mystical traditions.

In this context, Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Akbar (r. 1556–1605), the third Mughal emperor, oversaw the *kitābat-khāna*, a translation bureau which translated texts from Sanskrit to Persian for the sake of religious understanding, created the *ibādat-khāna* (house of worship) for inter-religious debate, and implemented the policy of *sulh-i kull*. The policy literally means "the peace of all," referring to the ruler's duty to achieve universal peace in his realm. He also initiated the "religion of God" (*dīn-i ilāhī*), which was influenced by Sufism, and was based on the idea that no single religion has monopoly over truth. These are the conditions of Mughal rule which led to greater possibilities for Hindu-Muslim encounters, an environment that can be said to have contributed to such texts as Dārā Shikūh's *Majma' al-bahrayn* and *Sirr-i akbar*.

I will now address some historiographical issues surrounding the latest Mughal revisionist scholarship that has engaged with valid concerns about the (British Orientalist-initiated) "narrative of exceptionalism," which posits Akbar and Dārā Shikūh as having been the only Mughal emperors who upheld *sulh-i kull*.⁷ In fact, the political framework of *sulh-i kull* as guiding all facets of governance was not an episodic occurrence but a paradigm that was sustained independently from the individual tendencies of specific rulers. The demonization of Aurangzeb thus has very weak historical basis and operates in a larger scheme that "emplots" violence into historical narratives (using Hayden White's term).⁸ However, although the framing of Dārā and Aurangzeb as the "good" and "bad" Muslims respectively should be challenged, it ought not involve fabricating a derogatory image of Dārā altogether. Nehru's naming of Dārā as the great synthesizer and the "genius of the nation" is partially a "nationalist myth-making" and partially true if we see him as symbolizing the larger encounter between

4 See: Sudipta Kaviraj, "On the Enchantment of the State: Indian Thought on the Role of the State in the Narrative of Modernity", *European Journal of Sociology* 2 (2005), 263-296; Wael B. Hallaq, *Sharī'a: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 197-223.

5 Profoundly demonstrated in A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), *passim*.

6 On the "paradigm of Islamic governance" and the separation of powers, see Wael Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 48-72.

7 See Rajeef Kinra, "Handling Diversity with Absolute Civility: The Global Historical Legacy of Mughal Sulh-i kull," *Medieval History Journal* 16 (2013): 251-95.

8 He was compared to the Taliban in 2001 after their destruction of ancient Buddha statues. Aurangzeb was supposedly "the last person who had tried to destroy them". Brown shows that the claim about Aurangzeb banning music is fallacious at many levels. See Brown, Katherine, "Did Aurangzeb Ban Music? Questions for the Historiography of his Reign," *Modern Asian Studies* 41 (1) 2007: 78.

the Islamic and Hindu worlds.⁹ This essay will consider the real possibility of appreciating Dārā's life and works, without actively attempting to excavate details that show his insincerity, immaturity, or "adolescent sexual frustration".¹⁰ Persianthe soul of the translator. tion, treatise, for cross-religious encounter. ce he hears.

Comparative Hermeneutical Endeavor: Majma' al-bahrayn or "The Confluence of the Two Oceans"

The Political, and Beyond the Merely Political

Before engaging in a lengthy intellectual-spiritual biography of Dārā, a glimpse of the more explicitly political aspects of his life is necessary. He is said to have been the favorite son of his father, emperor Shāh Jahān—a status that enabled him to be more isolated than his brothers and to spend most of his life in the cocoon of the Delhi court. His administrative and military experience was thus limited. He never served as a governor in the Mughal provinces (*subas*) and faced a terrible failure in the battle of Qandahar against the Safavid armies in 1653.¹¹ By the end of the struggle for succession (1658–9), Dārā and his brother Murad Baksh were killed at the behest of their newly enthroned brother, emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir.¹²

One interpretation of the fact that Dārā received large political, financial, and military support, that was equal to that of his three brother combined by 1650, the "greatness" and saintliness he portrayed could be read along with his "major ambition" of succeeding the throne of his father.¹³ Faruqui makes the distinction between the outward appearance of the prince's personality as "theological" and the implicit one as "political."¹⁴ Traditionally, the iconography of Mughal emperors (Akbar, Jahangir etc.) would depict the bearer of worldly power with signs indicating ascetic Sufi leanings. In the case of Akbar, the king is supposedly a *faqīr* (Muslim ascetic) in the garb of a prince: his political identity hides his more ontologically accurate ascetic identity. Faruqui's proposition seems to be that the metaphor of the

faqīr in a prince's garb should in fact be interpreted as a trick used for political gain. The "theological personality" portrayed is only a garb hiding Dārā's primary intentions, which are, we are told, political in the first order. Such a conclusion could be contested or perhaps supplemented by a "hermeneutics of grace," to use Ricoeur's term, which would not see political power as the ultimate framework of interpretation. This "hermeneutics of grace" could allow us not to dismiss the possibility for the principle behind the metaphor of the *faqīr* to exist, namely the principle that gaining political power is conceptually inferior to abandoning worldly attachments altogether.

In fact, even Foucault, who is often misunderstood to have claimed a totalizing view of power, never implies that there is no escape from a "regime of truth."¹⁵ He acknowledges that there are two ontologically distinct forms of "truths:" if one is manipulative and ideological, the other is ethical and in a sense "truly true."¹⁶ The latter involves "the courage of truth" or *parrhesia*¹⁷ and suggests that the truth which Socrates spoke is not of the same nature than the propagandist so-called truth produced by the human sciences in the service of the modern state. That is why Wael Hallaq argues for the similarity between the spiritual techniques of theologian mystic Al-Ghazālī and Foucault's "technologies of the self" or "care of the self",¹⁸ which, in Foucault's words, permit "individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of

9 Faruqui, Munis D., "Dara Shukoh, Vedanta, and Imperial Succession," in Vasudha Dalmia and Munis D. Faruqui, eds., *Religious Interactions in Mughal India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 32

10 See Rajeev Kinra, "Infantilizing Bābā Dārā: The Cultural Memory of Dārā Shekuh and the Mughal Public Sphere." *Journal of Persianate Societies* 2 (2) 2009: 165-93.

11 Faruqui, "Dara Shukoh, Vedanta," 57.

12 There is much discussion about the reasons behind the assassination of Dārā, his "heresy" or more generally the fact that he challenged his brother's authority.

13 Faruqui, "Dara Shukoh, Vedanta," 59.

14 Ibid, 34.

15 Frederick Gros, "The Courage of Truth (1983-1984)", (Seminar, Foucault 13/13: The Columbia Center for Contemporary Critical Thought and The Society of Fellows in the Humanities, Columbia University, New York, NY, April 14, 2016).

16 Ibid.

17 Foucault interprets the Greek term *parrhesia* as follows: "To summarize the foregoing, *parrhesia* is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain type of relation to himself or other people through criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty. More precisely, *parrhesia* is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself). In *parrhesia*, the speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy" Foucault, Michel, and Joseph Pearson, *Fearless Speech* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2001), 19-20.

18 Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, 98.

happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality.”¹⁹ I find that these possibilities of the self allow for a hermeneutics that can go beyond a monolithic interpretation which claims that the “truth” of a historical text or figure must be an ideological and manipulative one. An expanded hermeneutics can allow for a different reading of Dārā Shikūh’s life and literary/religious endeavors.

The Steps Towards Confluence

Assuming that humans have the *capacity* for transcending the merely political and calculative, we could look at Dārā’s spiritual and intellectual journey more closely by drawing from the writings ascribed to him (See Appendix B.). In keeping with the traditions laid down by his Mughal ancestors, Dārā was from a very young age in direct contact with Sufis and their *tariqas*. In fact, he was born in Ajmer (1619 C.E.), the city and pilgrimage site where the mystic Moinuddin Chishti, also called Gharīb Nawāz (Benefactor of the Poor), is buried.²⁰ After the death of his first daughter, Dārā met the mystic Miyan Mir, who is the master of the Sufi Qadiriyya order for a long time revered by Shah Jahan, in the city of Lahore.²¹ During the same year, 1634, he became a disciple of the Qadiriyya order under Mullah Shah, Miyan Mir’s successor. His aspiration for divine knowledge did not cease after Miyan Mir’s death since he continued seeking guidance in the lives of past saints and prophets. He said that an angel told him God had bestowed on him what no king has had before, which meant he would receive divine knowledge. “And day by day the veil was lifted little by little”, he said.²² This is reflected in his book *Safinat al-Awliya’* in 1640, where Dārā, after being inspired by visions in his dream,²³ dedicates hundreds of pages to describing saints and prophets: from prophet Muhammad to his wives, the four righteous caliphs, the Shi’i imams, and the leaders of Sufi orders. He also includes women saints at the end of his book. K.R. Qanungo rightly interprets this attitude as an “act of

devotion *substituting* the company of the saints.”²⁴

The phase coming after this quest is epitomized by his *Sākinat al-Awliya’* in 1642, which collected biographies of Qadiri saints, mainly Miyan Mir and his *pir* and *murshid* Mullah Shah.²⁵ This was followed by *Risāla-yi Haqq Numā* (“The Compass of Truth”) in 1646, which marked a significant turning point. Again, he declared to have been divinely inspired to unveil the truths of Sufism for novices and uninitiated disciples, as a *pir* to a *murid*.²⁶ In his introduction, he already speaks of the divine unity present in all religions, including Hinduism, and articulates the different stages a Sufi ought to go through: annihilation of self (*fanā*), intoxication of union (*sukr al-jam*), and ultimately “Unity in Plurality” (*wāhidiyya*).²⁷ To pass away with the “small self” is to realize that ontologically nothing exists except God—this is Ibn Arabi’s *wahdat al-wujūd* or Unity of Existence. Such a realization leads one to see that “there are as many ways to God as there are seekers of Him”: *wāhidiyya* is to realize that the many are identical in essence with each other and with the divine reality.²⁸

He says that, like Hindu gods, Prophet Muhammad did not cast a shadow and that no fly could sit on him.²⁹ The culminating point of the journey that he describes is poignantly reflected in the progression of his life and works. In the 1650s, he wanted to understand more profoundly the plurality within unity and hence studied the sacred scriptures from other religious traditions—the book of Moses, the Psalms, the Gospels, Hindu scriptures and the Pentateuch (possibly taught by the eclectic Muslim-Hindu-Jewish mystic Sarmad in 1651). His reaction to different scriptures will be discussed later in this paper, but what is relevant is that he perceives deep similarities particularly between the Islamic and Hindu religions—a logical conclusion considering the

19 Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow ed., *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 225. Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, 98.

20 Shikūh, Dārā, and Asghar Ali Engineer, *Comingling of Two ceans = Majma-‘ul-bahrain: A Discourse on Interreligious Understanding* (Gurgaon: Hope India Publications, 2006), 20. Dārā followed a long line of emperors who had intimately strong connections with Sufi orders and Hindu sages.

21 Qanungo, Kalika Ranjan, *Dara Shukoh* (Calcutta: S.C. Sarkar, 1952), 99.

22 Ibid., 100.

23 The cosmological importance of dreams as reflecting a higher level of reality. Dreams can enable a more direct access to Truth. The Upanishad says that during sleep “the self sleeps with the Self.”

24 Qanungo, *Dara Shukoh*, 102 (emphasis added).

25 Mullah Shah in a ghazal exalting spiritual achievements of Dara says “our Dārā Shikūh “the *Sāhib Kirān* of heart””. Shikūh and Asghar Ali Engineer, *Comingling of Two Oceans = Majma-‘ul-bahrain*, 28. The Timurid continuity of sacred kingship and Sahib Qiran (the Lord of Conjunction) can be found as late as the 17th century. For an expansive treatment of the subject, see A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), passim. 83) Suprn with the Chisti o had intimately strong connections with Sufi orders: Akbar and the Chisti, on and history that the l

26 In his *Risala* he tells his readers: You would remark “that God has, in spite of his being in this garb (of a prince), opened to him the portals of saintliness and divine knowledge; so that human beings may know that His favour is without any particular cause” Shikūh and Asghar Ali Engineer, *Majma-‘ul-bahrain*, 29.

27 Tasadduq Husain, “The Spiritual Journey of Dara Shukoh,” in *Social Scientist* 30 (7/8) 2002: 60-2.

28 Qanungo, *Dara Shukoh*, 114.

29 Ibid., 107.

oneness of their source. He also gradually commissioned new translations of the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Yogavāishishtha*, the *Prabōdha-chandrōdaya*, the *Atmāvilasa*, and Śankarācārya's *Brahmasutrabbāsyā* at the court.³⁰

His intellectual intuition was further confirmed and his metaphysical doubts answered through his discussions with Hindu sage Baba Lal Das as recorded in *Mukālama-i Bābā Lāl wa Dārā Shukōh* ("Conversations of Dārā Shikoh and Baba Lal").³¹ These events lay the ground for his comparative treatise on (Hindu) Vedānta and (Islamic) Sufism *Majma' al-bahrayn* ("Confluence of the Two Oceans") in 1655 and, of course, *Sirr-i Akbar* ("The Greatest Secret"), his translation of fifty-two Upanishads with the help of pandits (Sanskrit scholars) and sanyasis (renouncers, ascetics) of Banāres in 1656-7. The *Majma' al-bahrayn* and translation of the Upanishads are the "culminating project" of his spiritual journey,³² for he claims it to be his duty to reveal the "importance of the Upanishads at the metaphysical level for all religions."³³

How to Read Confluence?

"He is manifest in all; and everything has emanated from Him. He is the first and the last and nothing exists,

except Him."³⁴ The first lines of the *Majma' al-bahrayn* spell out Dārā's commitment to *tawhīd* and his emphasis on describing ultimate reality through opposites, echoing the Upanishadic apophatic *neti neti* (not this nor that). From the onset, the "*faqīr*," that is, himself, is said to have attained knowledge of the "Truth of truths" through Sufi teachers and to have been moved into knowing the religion of the *muwahhidān-i Hind*³⁵ through their highest scholars and teachings.³⁶ This endeavor leads him to see the difference between Hindus and Muslims as an outward and merely verbal one, the distinction being one of language and expression (*ikhtilāf-i lafzī*).³⁷ He gathers the knowledge of the two "Truth-knowing groups" for the spiritual growth of truth seekers and his family members rather than to convince a larger audience as "he has no concern with the common folk of either community."³⁸ Far from claiming to undertake a comprehensive survey of the extremely diverse strands within Hindu tradition, I think Dārā's project is a more humble one. He is honest in explicitly stating that he has "put down these researches of [his], according to [his] own intuition (*kashf*) and taste."³⁹ We can now read his treatise as a form of conceptual *translation* conceptually preceding the Persian translation of the Sanskrit Upanishads.

Dārā offers twenty-two chapters or discourses in

30 Faruqui, "Dara Shukoh, Vedānta," 40.

31 Rajeev Kinra relays different retellings of these dialogues. One major argument is made in contrasting two accounts of Dārā's encounter with the Hindu sage Bābā Lal. The account of Surjān Rā'i shows that Dārā had metaphysical questions for the sage on the difference between *nāda* ("ineffable cosmic sound vibrations") and *veda* (knowledge) and more importantly on matters of kingship—how to reconcile higher objectives with the exercise of worldly power. (Kinra, "Infantilizing Bābā Dārā," 172). The latter is contrasted with the *Mathnavi-e kajolāb* of Anandaghana "Khosh" in which Dārā is supposedly portrayed as "an oversexed adolescent in need of adult supervision" (Kinra, "Infantilizing Bābā Dārā," 177) because of his asking for help in controlling his physical desires. This rather crude conclusion fails to see that these two accounts are far from contradicting each other. Metaphors of desire, longing and separation from human and divine love are central in Hindu-Muslim Indic tradition and poetry, as Kinra himself points out. Even a literal reading does not demean Dārā since the control of the senses is a matter of ultimate concern (rather than a sign of adolescent immaturity), especially with regards to kingship. However, Kinra strikingly sees that Shir Khan Lodi criticizes Dārā Shikoh *along with his forefathers, Akbar, Jahangir and Morād Bakhs*, which shows that even Dārā's critiques did not see exceptionalism in his rule and personality. Despite retelling the accounts of Dārā's opponents, he admits considering himself an admirer of the prince. (Kinra, "Infantilizing Bābā Dārā," 191).

32 Faruqui, "Dara Shukoh, Vedānta," 42.

33 Ibid, 42.

34 Shikūh and Asghar Ali Engineer, *Majma-'ul-bahrain*, 66.

35 Literally, "those who make/realize Oneness" or *wahdat al-wujud*, unity of existence. "Oneness" should not be read in the numerical sense but in its ontological meaning

36 Shikūh and Asghar Ali Engineer, *Majma-'ul-bahrain*, 66.

37 Shikūh and Asghar Ali Engineer, *Majma-'ul-bahrain*, 66. Qanungo, *Dara Shukoh*, 144.

38 Shikūh and Asghar Ali Engineer, *Comingling of Two Oceans = Majma-'ul-bahrain*, 66-7. In the introduction: "Now, thus sayeth this unafflicted, unsorrowing *faqīr*, Muhammad Dārā Shukoh, that, after knowing the truth of truths and ascertaining the secrets and subtleties of the true religion of the Sūfis and having been endowed with this great gift, he thirsted to know the tenets of the religion of the Indian monotheists [*muwahhidān-i Hind*]; and, having had repeated intercourse and discussion with the doctors and perfect divines of this religion, who had attained the highest pitch of perfection in religious exercises, comprehension, intelligence and insight, he did not find any difference, except verbal, in the way in which they sought and comprehended Truth. Consequently, having collected the views of the two parties and having brought together the points—a knowledge of which is absolutely essential and useful for the seekers of Truth—he has compiled a tract and entitled it *Majma-ul-Bahrain* or "The Meeting-Point of the Two Oceans", as it is a collection of the truth and wisdom of two Truth-knowing groups." Jonardon Ganeri, "Dara Shukoh and the Transmission of the Upanishads to Islam," in William Sweet ed., *Migrating texts and traditions* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2012), 155-6.

39 Ibid, 67.

his *Majma' al-bahrayn*. The following themes are only a sample: the elements, the senses, devotional exercises, the attributes of God, the soul, resurrection, salvation and the infinity of cycles. I will emphasize the search for words across languages as a translation of metaphysical concepts between the two traditions, as Dārā interprets them. Tony Stewart proposes “translation theory”, as opposed to syncretism, as a hermeneutical model to understand the meeting of the two religions, a method that involves shifting the preoccupation from “the final form” to the *process of encounter*.⁴⁰ His approach is relevant to understanding both *Majma' al-bahrayn* and the Persian Upanishads. He asserts that religions and languages share important features as they are both “semiotic systems” with the ability to “capture, preserve, and reify basic cultural values, to structure experience according to shared conceptual elements”.⁴¹ They are intimately concomitant in producing meaning, value and experience. When Bengali Muslim authors (Stewart’s focus is on early Islamic Bengali texts) imagined the world, they did not “borrow” terms, but sought “in a more intellectually astute process” to find “terms of equivalence” between Islamic metaphysics and their Hindu counterparts, the latter being *already available* within Bengali/Sanskrit.⁴² Most importantly, these terms are not just words but conceptual and metaphoric worlds which can make “the other become self”.⁴³ This is crucial in our engagement with Dārā’s works.

Paul Masson-Oursel explains that the principle of comparison is not necessarily “identity” nor “distinction” but *analogy*, the equality of two relations, as follows: A is to B what Y is to Z. He suggests that this equivalence would accommodate heterogeneity between A and Y, as well as B and Z.⁴⁴ Furthermore, for Stewart, metaphoric equivalence involves “shared metaphoric worlds” and “the domain of the intersemiotic.”⁴⁵ The realm of the intersemiotic is especially

relevant to this essay. For example, translation can be dynamic in a cultural context in which terms are used interchangeably (i.e. in eighteenth century Bengal, since *nabī* and *avatara* share an *analogous function* in restoring morality on earth, saying that Muhammad is an *avatara* expands the “semantic domain of the concept *avatara* itself”).⁴⁶ The intersemiotic involves equivalence of ideas among mythologies, rituals and theological systems. It is a full-fledged cultural translation where “an entire conceptual world is understood in terms of another, not just in its single terms or phrases.”⁴⁷ This metaphoric equivalence enables a “Muslim truth” to be expressed “in a language and conceptual structure that is Hindu,”⁴⁸ thereby possibly effecting an inner transformative dimension at the intellectual and spiritual levels. It could produce inner translation⁴⁹ and the capacity to see the inward Truth underlying its seemingly contradictory forms.⁵⁰

Elements of the Confluence Itself

Dārā’s first discourse in the *Majma' al-bahrayn* is on the five elements (*anāsir*). The “great element”, also called *arsh-i akbar* (the great throne), from which wind emanates, followed by fire, water and dust. He finds a direct parallel to this succession in the Hindu concept of *panch bhut* (Sanskrit. *pancha bhūta*). All creation is constituted by *akās* (Sk. *ākāśa* or primal element), *ba’i* (Sk. *vāyu* or wind), *tej* (Sk. *tejas* or fire), *jal* (Sk. *jala* or water) and *pirthi* (Sk. *prthivi* or dust). Out of the primal element (*māhākāśa* or *arsh-i akbar*) emerged theophanic Love (*ishq*) called *māyā*, which was created out of the movement of divine awareness from oneness to multiplicity.⁵¹ Both *māyā* and *ishq*, Shayegan notes, share a bi-dimensional function—that of cosmogonic revelation through the power of projection and that of obscuring

40 Tony K. Stewart, “In Search of Equivalence: Conceiving Muslim-Hindu Encounter through Translation Theory,” in *History of Religions* 40 (3) 2001: 273.

41 Stewart, “In Search of Equivalence,” 268.

42 These concepts in Islamic metaphysics, cosmology, theology, were *present* in Bengali. The ideas were not so alien and therefore could be expressed in that vocabulary. *Ibid*, 269.

43 *Ibid*, 273.

44 Daryush Shayegan, *Les Relations de l’Hindouisme et du Soufisme d’après le Majma’ al-Bahrayn de Dārā Shokūh* (Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1979), 19.

45 Originally formulated by Eugene Nida. Stewart, “In Search of Equivalence,” 281-2. An example: *Avatara* and *nabī* because prophethood and *avatara* have analogous *functions*, i.e. guidance to dharma right path. Prophet Muhammad is therefore called *avatara* in Saiyid sultan’s *Nabī Vamsa*. He thus expands the “semantic domain of the concept *avatara* itself” by using it for Mohammad. Siva and Hari are also *nabis*. Similarly, Ali Rajā uses Samkhya terms to describe duality in Islamic cosmogony.

The terms are not *identical but share “common core of meaning in specific local contexts”* Stewart, “In Search of Equivalence,” 281-83.

46 Stewart, “In Search of Equivalence,” 281-2.

47 *Ibid*, 283.

48 *Ibid*, 284.

49 In the Vedas, as in the Biblical-Qur’anic traditions, ‘the word’ or ‘the sound’ (OM) is at the beginning of all that exists: translating that first element is at the root of revelation and hence essential to any attempt to achieve true knowledge.

50 “Dogmatism reveals itself not only with its inability to conceive the inward or implicit illimitability of the symbol, the universality that resolves all outward opposition, but also by its inability to recognize, when faced with two apparently contradictory truths, the inward connection that they implicitly affirm, a connection that makes of them complementary aspects of one and the same truth.” Frithjof Schuon, *Transcendent Unity of Religion*, (Wheaton: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1984), 3.

51 Shayegan, *Les Relations de l’Hindouisme et du Soufisme*, 19.

through the power of a veil.⁵² Although these two terms are not interchangeable, they have analogous functions. They are both between being and non-being, the absolute and the relative, participating in each without being identical to either, and hence explain the divine movement from the one to the many.⁵³

Rūh-i a'zam (the great soul) or *jivātman* (soul of the self) was then born from this Love, Dārā tells us. This soul was embodied in its perfect form (*naḥs-i kāmil*) in Muhammad—*abl-i hind* (people of India) name this soul *Hiran Garbha* (Sk. *Hiranyagarbha*), referring here to the “golden womb” at the source of cosmic manifestation, that also symbolizes cosmic Intellect,⁵⁴ and *Avasthat* (Sk. *Avasthātman*) which means “state of the soul/self/ātman.”⁵⁵ In his “discourse on the soul”, he distinguishes the common soul, *rūh* or *ātma*, from the “Soul of souls”, which is *abul arwāh* (Father of souls) or *paramātmā* (Supreme Self).⁵⁶ Pure selfhood expresses itself on the subtle plane as *rūh* or *ātman* and on the substantial realm as *sarīr* (the body). Water is to the waves what *sarīr* is to *rūh*. Existence or consciousness (*caitanya*) is the water, while the Supreme Self (*paramātmā* or *abul arwāh*), in its universality, is the totality of waves.⁵⁷

His comparative approach to the attributes of God is also expressed through analogy. He starts by stating that Sufis see the *jamāl* (Beauty) and *jalāl* (Majesty) of God as encircling all of creation whereas the Indians have *tergon* (Sk. *triguna*, the three attributes constituting reality in Hindu metaphysics), which is *sat* (Sk. *sattva* or light), *raj* (Sk. *rajas* or passion), and *tam* (Sk. *tamas* or darkness). He sees these three attributes as equivalent to Creation, Duration and Destruction, the three functions of God in Islam and those respectively embodied in Brahma, Visnu and Mahesh (a name of Siva) within the Hindu *trimurat* (Sk. *trimūrṭi* or three-forms of the divine).⁵⁸ He sees the *trimūrṭi* as comparable to the three angels in Islam: Jibra’īl, like Brahma, an instrument of creation while Mikā’īl, like Visnu, is a vehicle of sustenance, and Israfil, like Siva, one of destruction.⁵⁹ The analogy goes further as each attribute is connected to an element: Brahma, like Jibra’īl, is associated with water, the

moisture of the tongue at the root of Divine utterance; Visnu, with Mikā’īl, is associated with fire, the fire in the eyes as the source of light and eyesight; finally, Mahesh, like Israfil, is associated with air, the air in nostrils “instrumental in creating two breaths which lead to death if stopped.”⁶⁰ These attributes are manifested in all beings. Dārā then mentions *sakt* (Sk. *sakti* or the principle of power manifested in the Goddess) as the “potential power above these three attributes,” which is *terdivi* (Sk. *tridevī* or the three consorts of the *trimūrṭi*).⁶¹ He concludes by connecting Saraswati with Brahma and the attribute of *raja*, Pārvaṭī with Siva and the attribute of *tamas*, and Lakshmi with Visnu and the attribute of *sattva*.⁶²

Another beautiful analogy is found in Dārā’s discourse on the four worlds in which he lays down the four spiritual stages all beings must go through according to the Sufis. *Avasthātma*, the “state of the soul/self/ātman” is the equivalent for the faqīrs of Hind.⁶³ *Nasūt* corresponds to *jāgrat*, the world in which humans are awake and conscious, *malakūt* to *sapan* (Sk. *avapna*), the invisible world where humans are unconscious, *jabarūt* to *sakhūpat* (Sk. *susupta*), where “I and thou” dissolves, and finally *lādhūt* to *tury* (Sk. *turiya*), the world of His Existence.⁶⁴ These vertical stages can be either ascending or descending steps in human life. This culminates in *mukt* (Sk. *mukti* or *moksha*) or the deliverance from the embodied selfish self,⁶⁵ which is the “annihilation of all determinations in the Divine Essence”, the entrance within *rīzwan-i akbar*, the greatest divine satisfaction.⁶⁶ Ultimately, *Brahmānd* means *al-kul*, the All, the Necessary Being.⁶⁷

I have attempted to offer a glimpse of the *Majma’ al-bahrayn* by elucidating Dārā’s discussion on the elements, the soul, the divine attributes, and the four worlds. Dārā does not invent new syncretic concepts but partakes in what Supriya Gandhi has framed as a *dialogue* or *samvāda* (“speech together”), a hallowed genre in Sanskrit and Indic literatures.⁶⁸ He participated in a space where exoteric differences can be discussed in light of their metaphysical unity⁶⁹ and in the larger engagements of the Persian and Indic

52 Ibid, 20.

53 Ibid, 20.

54 “The awakening of Visnu at the dawn of creation from which names and forms are projected ad extra in a total vision symbolized by the Golden egg (Hiranyagarbha) which is also a sort of cosmic Intelligence” (my translation). *Ibid*, 21.

55 Shikūh and Asghar Ali Engineer, *Majma-‘ul-bahrain*, 68-9.

56 Shikūh and Asghar Ali Engineer, *Majma-‘ul-bahrain*, 78. Shayegan, *Les Relations de l’Hindouisme et du Soufisme*, 33.

57 Shikūh and Asghar Ali Engineer, *Majma-‘ul-bahrain*, 78. Shayegan, *Les Relations de l’Hindouisme et du Soufisme*, 33.

58 Shikūh and Asghar Ali Engineer, *Majma-‘ul-bahrain*, 76-7.

59 Ibid, 76-7.

60 Ibid, 76-7.

61 Ibid, 76-7.

62 Ibid, 76-7.

63 Ibid, 80-2.

64 Ibid, 80-2.

65 Ibid, 116-22.

66 Shayegan, *Les Relations de l’Hindouisme et du Soufisme*, 43.

67 Shikūh and Asghar Ali Engineer, *Majma-‘ul-bahrain*, 106.

68 Supriya Gandhi, “The Prince and the Muvah h id: Dārā Shikoh and Mughal engagements with Vedānta,” in Vasudha Dalmia and Munis D. Faruqi eds., *Religious Interactions in Mughal India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 69.

69 This is described in the Alamgirnama: “He always had affection for Brahmins, Jogis and Sanyāsīs, and considered that straying, misleading and false group to be perfect spiritual guides and

traditions through the *samvāda* narrative frame of Vedantic texts, that is, the frame of the spiritual seeker (i.e. the prince) asking questions to the master (i.e. Hindu sage Baba Lal) and learning from him.⁷⁰

Waves Back and Forth: The Samudrasangama

The dialogue indeed continued as the scholar-prince commissioned the writing of the *Samudrasangama*, which was the translation of his *Majma' al-bahrayn* from Persian to Sanskrit. The initial inclusion of Sanskrit terms in the Persian treatise expanded the conceptual realm of Persian. The waves go back and forth as the Persian to Sanskrit translation under Dārā's supervision again expanded the religious world of the host language.⁷¹ Through expansion, the two worlds overlap. For instance, when passages from the Qur'an are translated into Sanskrit, they start *functioning* in the Hindu conceptual world. In fact, the Qur'an is called "asmadveda" which means "our Veda".⁷² This expression reflects selfhood and difference: that the scriptures have the same *substance*, since they are both Divine Knowledge, albeit in different *forms*, since each is associated with a particular community. Perso-Arabic expressions easily find their Sanskrit correspondence, Jean Filliozat tells us, and both versions (Persian and Sanskrit) give both the original words and their equivalents.⁷³ The expression *nubuwwat* and *wilayat*

is translated as *siddhatva-rsisvaratva*: the first, prophecy, is "the fact of being Perfect" and the second is "the fact of being a master of the clairvoyants."⁷⁴ The *rsi* or the seers are the authors of the Vedas and the *rsisvara* are "presented as equivalents of the *wali* in the Islamic tradition."⁷⁵ Again, cross-lingual search for equivalence produces mutual religious and conceptual enrichment, expansion and overlap between Persian and Sanskrit worlds. The latter culminates with the project of the *Sirr-i Akbar*, the translation and commentary of the Upanishads into Persian.

Sirr-i Akbar: Translation as Commentary, Creating Inner Translation

Translation as Commentary (Tafsir)

Happy is he who having abandoned the prejudices of vile selfishness, sincerely and with the grace of God, renouncing all partiality, shall study and comprehend this translation entitled the *Sirr-i-Akbar*, knowing it to be a translation of the words of God, shall become imperishable, fearless, unsollicitous and eternally liberated.⁷⁶

The Sanskrit to Persian translation of fifty-two Upanishads by Banares pandits under the supervision of Dārā is another instance of great historic-spiritual significance. Entanglements about the linguistic exactitude or authenticity of *Sirr-i akbar* ("The Greatest Secret"), accusations of "selective appropriation", of "Islamization" of Hinduism or of using the "advaitic filter", could all be set aside if we look at translation as being intrinsically *commentarial*. In our case, two levels are involved. On one hand, Dārā sees the Upanishads not only as one of the divine revelations, but as being an especially deep esoteric expression of *tawhīd*, a "treasure of Divine Oneness" (*ganj-i tawhīd*).⁷⁷ It elucidates *tawhīd* in a way that no other sacred scripture does. It was for him hermeneutically continuous with the Qur'an, in that *Sirr-i akbar* was a direct commentary or *tafsir* on the Qur'an, elucidating the Qur'an's subtleties.⁷⁸ He interprets a Qur'anic verse in Surah *Al-Wāqī'a* (The Event): "Truly it is a Noble Quran in a Book concealed [*kitāb maknūn*]. None touch

gnostics united with the truth. He thought that their books, which they call "Bed," were the word of God revealed in heaven, and he called them "eternal codex," (*mushaf-i qadim*) and "noble book" (*kitāb-i karīm*)" Gandhi, "The Prince and the Muvah h id," 67.

70 Gandhi, "The Prince and the Muvah h id," 65-68. This narrative frame can be seen especially in the dialogue between Dara and Baba Lal Das but is also indirectly present in his other works since he learns about Hindu teachings from several pandits and sanyasis.

71 It is often said that translation does not go from Persian to Sanskrit and that Sanskrit writings refer only in subtle ways to Mughal presence. Audrey Truschke analyses the *Kavindrachandrodāya* ("Moonrise of Kavindra"), a Sanskrit anthology of panegyric poems to Kavindracharya—a Brahmin noble in the Mughal court who taught Sanskrit to the royal family. The latter integrates a contingent or worldly event directly related to the Mughal court while adopting a framework of timelessness where myths and wider ethical teachings are poetically fostered. See Audrey Truschke, "Contested History: Brahmanical Memories of Relations with the Mughals," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58, 2015: 419-52.

72 Jean Filliozat, "Dara Shikoh's *Samudrasangama*," in M. Waseem, *On Becoming an Indian Muslim: French Essays on Aspects of Syncretism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 138.

73 Filliozat, "Dara Shikoh's *Samudrasangama*," 135. In the introduction, Muhammad is called "*paramaparakasa-prakasakah*,

kindler of the supreme light; *jagatsrstinimittah*, cause of the world; *asmakam siddhanam siddha* "the perfect among the perfect among us", *satkṛta* and *sammatita* (favoured and confirmed) by *Paramesvara*, the Supreme Master, God." Filliozat, "Dara Shikoh's *Samudrasangama*," 137.

74 Filliozat, "Dara Shikoh's *Samudrasangama*," 138.

75 Ibid.

76 Ganeri, "Dara Shukoh and the Transmission of the Upanishads to Islam," 155

77 Faruqui, "Dara Shukoh, Vedanta," 50.

78 See Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism?" 185-6.

it, save those made pure, a revelation from the Lord of the worlds” (Q56:77–80).⁷⁹ The Upanishads are the *kitāb makhnūn* (“Hidden Book”) referred to in the Qur’an, from “which all other revelations take their cue”.⁸⁰ Sanskrit etymological roots also show that “upanishad” can mean “a hidden secret” or “that which is taught in secret”. Shankaracarya in fact calls the Upanishads *paramam guhyam*, “the greatest secret”.⁸¹ Faruqui confirms that Dārā saw Hindu texts as *tafsīr*⁸² on other scriptures in the sense that “the words of God are their own commentary” (*kalām-i ilāhā tafsīr-i khud ast*).⁸³

On the other hand, the *Sirr-i Akbar* is itself a commentary of the Upanishads from a Sufi point of view. Svevo D’Onofrio rightly sees it as a proper Advaita⁸⁴ *bhāṣya* (commentary) accompanied by Sufi *tīkā* (subcommentary), “in accordance with the Indian traditional commentary genre”.⁸⁵ It is full of annotations, remarks and interpretations. The organizational scheme of the Persian translation allowed for the direct insertion of commentarial texts (*Upanisadbhāṣya-s*),⁸⁶ especially those of the great eighth century philosopher and theologian Shankara.⁸⁷ D’Onofrio

also traces the advaitic “bias” of the Hindu translators.⁸⁸ However, Dārā and his translators do not falsify the Upanishads by using an advaitic or Islamic filter. They simply give a *commentary* that incidentally illustrates a metaphysical essence common to Sufism and Advaita. Their effort was a serious attempt to create a bridge between Hindu and Islamic metaphysics.⁸⁹ Abhinavagupta, eleventh century philosopher-mystic, as relayed by Sudipta Kaviraj, defines the nature of commentary:

Commentarial texts sometimes claim, in a revealing metaphor, that they have removed the deposit of grime that covered the originals with excessive use; and a good commentary restores the original shine to the meanings of ordinary textual words.⁹⁰

Sirr-i akbari could be assessed through such a definition. To truly translate is to “reconstitute as nearly as possible the effect of a certain cause,”⁹¹ which means to comment such as to reinstate the *original shine* of a scripture as well as its *effects*. For the Upanishads to be successfully translated into Persian,⁹² Sufi vocabulary, Persian mystical verses, and oral retellings of Shankara’s commentaries seemed to be necessary to give it aesthetic value, scriptural authority, and *effectual* spiritual power.

Conceptual translation is the most profound cross-religious exchange possible as it requires *inner translation* in the soul of the translator. Shayegan clearly elucidates such a necessity from Dārā Shikūh’s point of view:

Dārā believed that translation is not merely “transposing in a servile manner the subtleties of a metaphysical doctrine

79 The Qur’anic verses are taken from the following translation: Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, and Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E.B. Lumbard, Mohammed Rustom eds., *The Study Quran: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015).

80 Irfan Omar, “Where the Two Oceans Meet: An Attempt at Hindu-Muslim Rapprochement in The Thought of Darā Shikūh,” in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (44:2) 2009: 306.

81 Douglas Berger, “The Unlikely Commentator: The Hermeneutic Reception of Sankara’s Thought in The Interpretive Scholarship of Dara Shikoh” in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 50 (1) 2015: 91.

82 People questioned him, because he does not have the long training required before being considered as *mufassīr*, a qualified exegete who has mastery of previous work of *tafsīr*. He is seen as questioning the Qur’anic logic of supersession through *ta’wīl* (subset of *tafsīr* which uses dreams). Faruqui, “Dara Shukoh, Vedanta,” 54-5.

83 Faruqui, “Dara Shukoh, Vedanta,” 55.

84 *Advaita* is one of the schools of Vedanta philosophy upholding non-dualism of the Human and the Divine, also called monism. The Supreme Being and the other beings are One universe.

85 Svevo D’Onofrio, “A Persian Commentary to the Upanishads: Dārā Shikūh’s «Sirr-i Akbar»,” in Denis Hermann and Fabrizio Speziale eds., *Muslim Cultures in the Indo-Iranian World during the Early-Modern and Modern Periods* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2010), 533.

86 Berger, “The Unlikely Commentator,” 91.

87 Sankaracarya established the advaita Vedanta school of philosophy. He is one of the “great integrators” within the Hindu tradition. Sankaracarya’s commentary, the *Brahmasutra*, was included in the following Upanishads: Aitereya, Brhadāranyaka, Chāndogya, Isa, Māndaka, Māndūkya, Kena and Katha. Berger, “The Unlikely Commentator,” 90.

88 D’Onofrio, “A Persian Commentary to the Upanishads,” 533.

89 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973), 141.

90 Kaviraj, Sudipta, “The Sudden Death of Sanskrit Knowledge” in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33 (1) 2005: 128.

91 A.K. Ramanujan is quoting St John of the Cross. A. K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva* (London: Penguin, 1973), 13.

92 “This type of translation typically mediated Vedāntic philosophical and mystical texts through a loose oral commentary provided by Indian pandits; this was rephrased in the Sufi technical vocabulary, presenting the texts as a kind of gnosis (Persian *ma’rifat*), and frequently amplifying their contents by the insertion of Persian mystical verses.” (Ernst, “Muslim Studies of Hinduism?” 183) Supriya Gandhi confirms this: “While Shaikh Ṣūfī follows quite faithfully the order of the *Yogavāsīṣṭhasāra*’s Sanskrit verses, he weaves into his translation a commentary that expands on and explains certain verses, sometimes interspersed with Sufi sayings in Arabic [...] Shaikh Ṣūfī’s rendition amplifies the Sanskrit, while adding the famous *ḥadīth qudsī*, or the Prophet Muḥammad’s report of God’s words to him, “he who knows his soul, knows his Lord” (*man ‘arafa nafsahu fa-qad ‘arafa rabbahu*),⁴⁴ a saying that circulated extensively in Islamic mystical writings.” Gandhi, “The Prince and the Muvah h id,” 81.

into another language, but requires, on the doctrinal level of gnosis, an active participation in the spirit of the text, and *assimilation and recreation of that thought in the soul of the translator*.⁹³

The later trajectory of the Upanishads from Persian to Latin through Anquetil-Duperron's translation had an immense impact on nineteenth century European thought. Schopenhauer, Wittgenstein, and Romantic poets Blake and Schelling, also assimilated Upanishadic thought perhaps in a comparable way.

Conclusion

Translation, inner change, cross-religious encounter, and the relationship between linguistic and semantic worlds are among the most significant issues and themes with which Dārā Shikūh grapples. His works have served as a case study that is illustrative of a larger translation phenomenon that he neither started nor ended. The meeting of Sufism with Advaita Vedanta made him realize and impart the metaphysical principle of Oneness. The translation of language and concepts seems to go along with metanoia, an *inner translation*. As this essay has demonstrated, Dārā can be read in counterposition to “the narrative of exceptionalism,” and allows us to question the epistemological basis of “romanticization” as an accusation that discredits an author's legitimacy. Dārā's life can be situated in both the realm of the political and beyond the merely political; hence, a hermeneutical method based on translation theory is best suited for a reading of the prince's works. Dārā's *Majma' al-bahrayn* and its translation from Persian to Sanskrit (*Samudrasangama*) were then discussed in relation to cross-religious conceptual expansion that resulted from translation. Finally, Dārā's *Sirr-i Akbar* exemplifies translation as an inherently commentarial project and its effects as possibly transcendental—as causing a change within “the soul of the translator.”

We can see that Dārā ultimately articulates what his grandfather Jahangir saw after meeting the ascetic Jadrūp: that the latter “had mastery over the science of Bedant [Vedanta], which is the science of *tasawwuf*.”⁹⁴ Does Dārā Shikūh's “foray

into Hindu texts” “paradoxically” serve “to solidify and secure his essentially Quranic worldview,”⁹⁵ as Faruqui suggests to us? The “transcendent unity of religion” as Schuon defines it, and as Dārā Shikūh demonstrates, could help us ponder on this question:

If the expression ‘transcendent unity’ is used it means that the unity of the religious forms must be realized in a purely inward and spiritual way and without prejudice to any particular form. The antagonisms between these forms no more affect the one universal truth than the antagonisms between opposing colors affect the transmission of the one uncolored light... Just as every color, by its negation of darkness and its affirmation of light, provides the possibility of discovering the ray that makes it visible and of tracing this ray back to its luminous source, so all forms, all symbols, all religions, all dogmas, by their negation of error and their affirmation of truth, make it possible to follow the ray of revelation, which is none other than the ray of the Intellect, back to its Divine Source.⁹⁶

Appendix

Appendix A

Discourse on light (*nūr*) in the *Majma' al-bahrayn* showing striking resemblance with Upanishadic passage.

Dārā Shikūh:

When one does neither “behold anything with his eyes nor hears with his ears nor speaks with his tongue nor smells with his nose nor feels with his sense of touch [...] the senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch become merged in one—such is the Light of Essence/ of God”⁹⁷

Kena Upanishads 1:

The Self is the ear of the ear,
The eye of the eye, the mind of the mind,
The word of words, and the life of life.
Rising above the sense and the mind
And renouncing separate existence,
The wise realize the deathless Self.
Him our eyes cannot see, nor words express;
He cannot be grasped even by the mind
[...]
Because he is different from the known
And he is different from the unknown.
Thus have we heard from the illumined ones.

93 Daryush Shayegan, “Transcendent Imagination in Sufism and the Vedanta according to the Persian Translation of the Upanishads,” in Frank Moraes et al, eds, *Science, Philosophy, and Culture Essays Presented in Honour of Humayun Kabir 's Sixty-Second Birthday* (New York Asia Publishing House, 1968), 253-254 (emphasis added).

94 Jahangir, and W. M. Thackston, *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India* (New York: Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Association with Oxford University Press, 1999), 79.

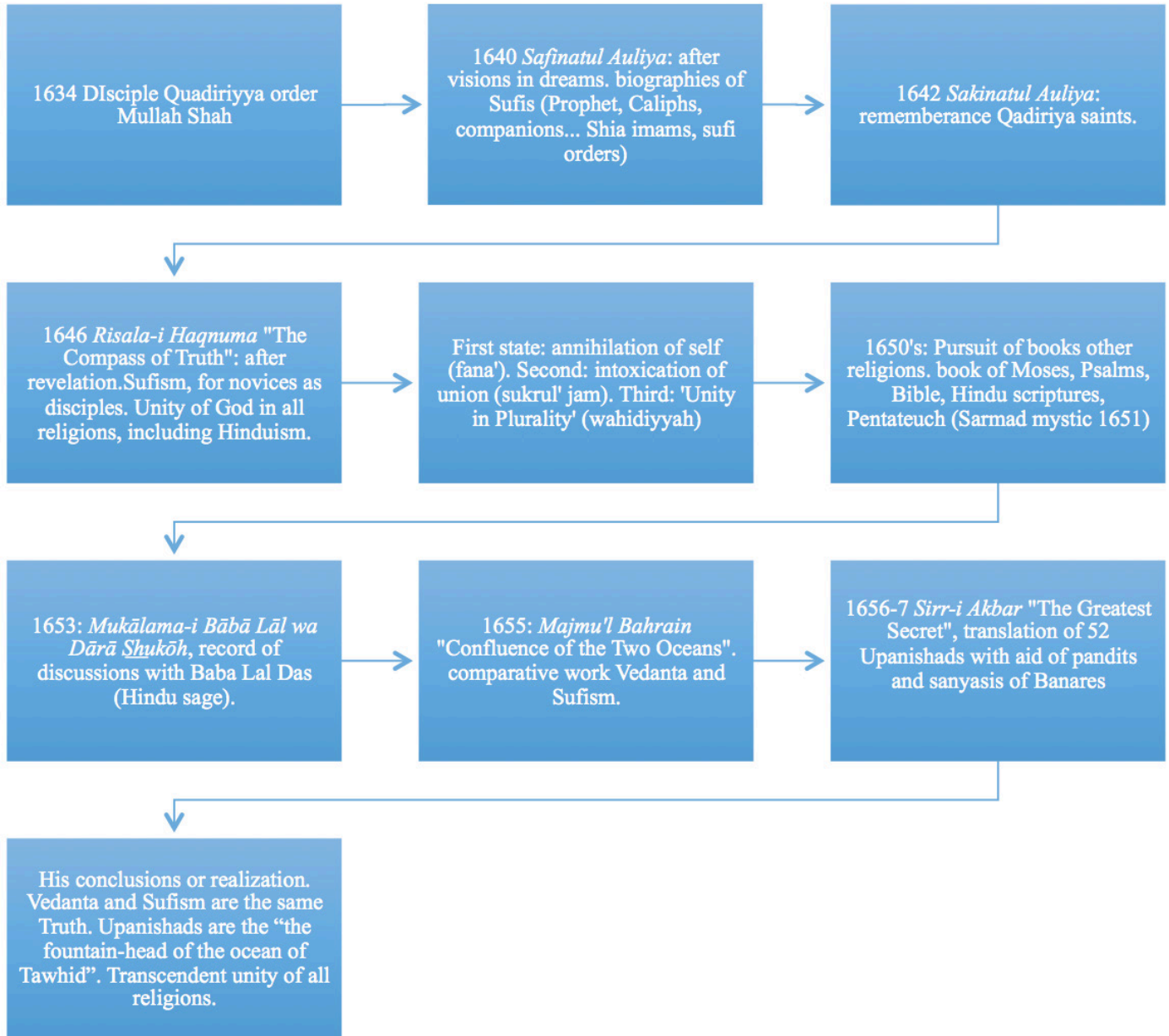
95 Faruqui, “Dara Shukoh, Vedanta,” 32.

96 Schuon, *Transcendent Unity of Religion*, xxxiv.

97 Shikūh and Asghar Ali Engineer, *Majma'-ul-bahrain*, 85-7.

That which makes the tongue speak but cannot be
 Spoken by the tongue, know that as the Self.
 This Self is not someone other than you.⁹⁸

Appendix B



98 Eknath, Easwaran, and Michael N. Nagler, *The Upanishads* (Petaluma, CA: Nilgiri Press, 1987), 214.

99 Husain, "The Spiritual Journey of Dara Shukoh," 54-66.