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How to Cite:

Sidrah Shoaib. 2024: "A Critical Study of Jain Scholarship on Muslim Concept of Soul in Colonial Era: The Case Study of Champat Rai's Work". *Al-Mithāq (Research Journal of Islamic Theology)* 3 (02):44-56.

Article History:

Received:
20-08-2024

Accepted:
10-09-2024

Published:
30-09-2024

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Conflict of Interest:

Author(s) declared no conflict of interest

Abstract & Indexing



Publisher



HIRA INSTITUTE
of Social Sciences Research & Development

A Critical Study of Jain Scholarship on Muslim Concept of Soul in Colonial Era: The Case Study of Champat Rai's Work

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Abstract:

This paper presents a critical analysis of Champat Rai Jain's interpretation of the Islamic concept of the soul through the lens of Jain scholarship, focusing on his influential work *The Lifting of the Veil*, later translated as “The Gems of Islam”. Champat Rai, a notable Jain scholar of colonial India, sought to bridge the philosophical and theological divides between Jainism and Islam amidst a period of religious and socio-political tension. By examining Qur’ānic verses, ḥadīth, and Ṣūfī traditions, this study explores his portrayal of the soul as an inherently divine and omniscient entity, which resonates with aspects of Ṣūfī mysticism yet contrasts with orthodox Islamic views that regard the soul as created and distinct from God. The research employs a comparative methodology, systematically analysing Rai’s text against primary Islamic sources and prominent mystical works, while also considering Jain doctrines on the soul’s nature, immortality, and liberation. Rai’s syncretic approach draws on mystics such as Maṣnūr Al-Ḥallāj and poets like Rūmī, blending Vedantic, Jain, and Ṣūfī ideas to argue for a shared spiritual essence between Jainism and Islam. The findings reveal that while Rai’s work offers a unique interfaith perspective, it departs significantly from Islamic orthodoxy, particularly regarding divine unity and the soul’s autonomy. This study underscores Rai’s ambitious yet controversial contributions to interreligious dialogue, as he aimed to reinterpret Islamic mysticism within a Jain philosophical framework, fostering an intellectual understanding between the two traditions despite inherent doctrinal divergences.

Keywords: *Champat Rai, Philosophy, Ṣūfī Mysticism, Soul, Jain Scholarship.*

Introduction

The concept of the soul has been a prominent subject in Indian religious and philosophical traditions, with discussions about the soul's existence and its relationship to the body dating back to ancient times. These debates, such as whether the soul and body are separate entities or interconnected, are a testament to the intellectual depth of pre-Christian Indian thought. For example, in Buddhism, the soul and body are considered inseparable¹, a belief that contrasts with the dualistic views found in other traditions. This historical context forms the foundation for understanding Champat Rai Jain’s exploration of the soul, especially in relation to Islamic philosophy.

He is a significant figure in Jain scholarship of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.² Known for his intellectual contributions to Jainism and his engagement with other religious traditions, he sought to bridge cultural and religious divides during a time of significant socio-political change in colonial India,³ made notable contributions to interfaith dialogue, particularly with his work on Islamic thought. As a Jain, his engagement with Islamic mysticism and the soul is noteworthy, especially because there are few surviving Jain texts on Islam. Many such works have been lost over time, making Champat Rai's writings, particularly *The Lifting of the Veil*, or *The Gems of*

Islam, critically important. Written in English and later translated by the author into Urdu, this work showcases Rai's commitment to fostering interfaith understanding. In an era of colonial India where religious tensions were high⁴, his endeavour to engage with Islamic philosophy stands out as an attempt to build bridges between Jainism and Islam. In addition, this research highlights the importance of Champat Rai's work for understanding how his contemporaries approached Islamic philosophy. His writings offer valuable insight into how scholars of that time prefer to engaged with the religious and philosophical ideas of other traditions, at a time when political and social tensions often overshadowed intellectual discourse. This study will therefore provide a deeper understanding of Champat Rai's work and its significance in promoting Jain-Muslim relations in colonial India, especially in a context where religious scholarship was often limited by sectarian biases. *The Lifting of the Veil, or The Gems of Islam* is a significant yet underexplored work that engages with Islamic thought, especially within the comparative study of religions. One of the most neglected areas of research in this field is the examination of Jain scholars who have engaged with Islamic teachings. This book stands out as a rare instance where a Jain scholar not only delves into Islamic spirituality but also seeks to understand and interpret Islamic mysticism, particularly in the context of the soul (*nafs*). While most comparative religious studies focus on Christian or Hindu perspectives on Islam, Rai's contributions to this dialogue, particularly in languages like Urdu, are scarcely acknowledged.

Interestingly, *The Lifting of the Veil* was originally written in English and later translated into Urdu by the author himself, likely to engage a broader audience and foster interfaith harmony. This bilingual effort reflects author's intention to reach Muslim intellectuals and the broader Urdu-speaking public, suggesting an earnest attempt to revive the historic Jain-Muslim relationship. This research paper seeks to analyse whether Rai's interpretation was grounded in an authentic understanding of Islamic mysticism or if it was an effort to draw parallels between Islamic and Jain spiritual beliefs, particularly regarding the soul's nature and destiny. Given the sensitivity of the topic, especially in the context of Islamic theology, it is necessary to critically assess the Qur'ānic references, Aḥādīth, and mystical insights author has employed. A thorough academic analysis of his work can clarify whether his interpretation faithfully represents Islamic teachings or whether it reveals an attempt to integrate Islamic mysticism into Jain philosophical frameworks. This study aims to fill the gap in scholarship by providing a comprehensive examination of Champat Rai's portrayal of the soul in specially focusing on the third and 11th chapter of the book, offering insights into his unique perspective on interreligious dialogue in colonial Era. His work stands as a significant philosophical work, engaging with spiritual and metaphysical ideas discussing the complex concepts such as the nature of the soul, divine unity, and spiritual liberation. Jain, explores Islamic mysticism and the metaphysical dimensions of the soul, drawing upon Islamic sources, Qur'ānic verses, and ḥadīth traditions to present an intricate dialogue between Islamic theology and his philosophical inquiries. Jain's text is both unique and daring in that it reflects a syncretic philosophical approach, combining ideas from Islamic Sufism and other mystical traditions with Jain and Vedantic influences. numerous Islamic references to Qur'ānic verses and hadiths will be carefully analysed in this study to assess their authenticity and relevance within Islamic discourse. Moreover, Jain's use of metaphors, allusions to Islamic mystics such as Maṣū'ir Al-Ḥallāj⁵ and Bāyezīd Bustāmī⁶, and references to Ṣūfī poets such as Rūmī⁷ are critically explored to understand the depth of his intellectual engagement with Islamic spirituality.

In this paper, the focus will be twofold: first, on Rai's philosophical depiction of the

soul, particularly his emphasis on immortality, omniscience, and eternal happiness as attributes of the soul; and second, on how this depiction aligns or diverges from the classical Islamic understanding of the soul (*nafs*)⁸ in the Qur'ān and Islamic tradition. Additionally, the Sūfī concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*⁹ (the unity of existence) and its representation in Jain's text is explored in light of the Islamic concept of *tawḥīd* (divine unity), assessing the theological implications of the mystical statements Jain includes, such as "I am God."¹⁰ The study will also engage with key Jain-Muslim theological differences, especially concerning Jain's portrayal of the soul as a divine entity in contrast to Islamic teachings that differentiate between the Creator and the creation. By exploring both the Islamic references Jain draws upon and the broader mystical context he evokes, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how his interpretation of the soul both resonates with and departs from Islamic theology.

A Comparative Analysis of The Soul and Immortality in *Gems of Islam* and Islamic Teachings

Champat Rai presents an intricate philosophical understanding of the soul, its nature¹¹, and its quest for immortality¹². Rai's reflections echo certain mystical and philosophical traditions that advocate the idea of the soul's simplicity, non-compound nature, and its imprisonment within the material body.¹³ This concept of the soul and its pursuit of eternal life invites comparison with the Islamic understanding of the soul (*rūḥ*) as outlined in the Qur'ān and Islamic theological traditions. A comparative analysis reveals both points of convergence and divergence, particularly regarding the nature of the soul, its pre-existence, and the ultimate purpose of life.

Nature of the Soul

Rai's depiction of the soul is based on a philosophical dichotomy between compounds and non-compounds, asserting that only simple, non-compound entities are eternal. According to Rai, the soul is one such simple entity, which, unlike the body made of lifeless atoms, cannot be destroyed and is therefore inherently eternal. He argues that because the soul is endowed with life, perception, and intelligence, it must be a simple substance distinct from the body¹⁴.

In Islamic teachings, the soul is also viewed as an immaterial and eternal aspect of human existence, but its simplicity or non-compound nature is not discussed in such explicit philosophical terms. The Qur'an emphasizes that the soul is of divine origin, created by Allah:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ، قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا.¹⁵

And they ask you, [O Muhammad], about the soul. Say, 'The soul is of the affair of my Lord, and mankind has not been given of knowledge except a little.

While Rai focuses on the soul's intrinsic simplicity as the reason for its immortality, Islam attributes the soul's essence and purpose entirely to divine creation and command. Therefore, while both perspectives agree on the soul's eternal nature, Islamic theology grounds the soul's existence and function in the will of Allah, rather than in philosophical assertions of simplicity.¹⁶

Pre-Existence of the Soul

Rai implies that the soul pre-exists the body and suggests that it is trapped within the body, which he portrays as a temporary prison.¹⁷ He argues that the soul, being eternal, must have existed before the body and seeks liberation from the physical constraints imposed by the body.¹⁸

In contrast, Islamic teachings on the soul do not support the idea of its eternal pre-existence.¹⁹ Islamic doctrine holds that the soul is created by Allah at a specific point in time and is then breathed into the body. The Qur'an recounts that Allah breathed His spirit into Ādam:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ. فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتَهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ.²⁰

When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My Spirit, fall down in prostration unto him.

While the soul is eternal in the sense that it continues after death and transcends physical existence, it is not eternal by its own right but is created by Allah.²¹ Therefore, Rai's view of the soul as pre-existing and eternal contrasts with Islamic teachings, which emphasize that the soul is a creation of Allah and not an independently eternal entity.

The Soul's Liberation and Purpose

Central to Jain argument which Rai presented as the Muslim mystic thought is the belief that the soul's ultimate purpose is to attain liberation from the body. He aligns with mystical and philosophical traditions that regard the body as a prison for the soul, suggesting that the soul must be freed to realize its true, immortal state.²² This notion reflects a view of human existence in which the material body is seen as an impediment to spiritual growth and the soul's eternal potential.

Islamic teachings, however, offer a different perspective on the relationship between the body and the soul. In Islam, the body and soul are both necessary components of human life, created by Allah to serve a specific purpose.²³ The soul is not imprisoned within the body but is rather entrusted to it during life. The purpose of life is not to escape the material world, but to live in obedience to Allah's will and fulfil the soul's divine purpose through worship (*'ibādah*) and righteous deeds. The Qur'an states: "I did not create the jinn and humans except to worship Me"²⁴ The body and soul together are tested in this life, and the soul's journey continues after death, transitioning to the *Barzakh* (the intermediary state between death and resurrection) and ultimately towards judgment on the Day of Resurrection.²⁵

Thus, while Rai views the body as a constraint on the soul's immortality, Islam considers the body an integral part of human existence and a means through which the soul is tested and ultimately returns to Allah. Liberation, in Islamic terms, is not about freeing the soul from the body but about the soul's return to its Creator in a state of righteousness and submission.

Immortality and Eternal Life

Rai presents immortality as an intrinsic characteristic of the soul due to its simple, non-compound nature. He suggests that achieving immortality requires the soul to be liberated from the body, as the body is impermanent and made up of destructible elements²⁶ that aligns exactly with Jaina doctrine as they say that when *karma* ends the soul liberates and "*karam* ends when they finish *dukh* and *sukh* which are elements of *Karm*"²⁷. In Jain philosophy, the soul (*jīva*) is an eternal, conscious entity distinct from the body, which is composed of perishable matter (*pudgala*). The body serves as a temporary vessel, binding the soul through karmic accumulation. This entrapment is described as *samsāra*, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, perpetuated by the soul's ignorance (*mithyātva*) and attachment to material existence. Liberation (*mokṣa*) is achieved when the soul is freed from all karmic impurities through disciplined practices such as *samyak-darśana* (right faith), *samyak-jñāna* (right knowledge), and *samyak-*

cāritra (right conduct).²⁸ Key texts like the *Tattvārtha Sūtra* emphasize that only by severing the ties with the body and transcending passions like attachment (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*) can the soul achieve *kevala-jñāna* (omniscience) and attain *nirvāṇa*, a state of pure, unbound existence. The liberated soul ascends to the *Siddha-loka*, the realm of perfected beings, where it exists eternally, free from the cycle of rebirth. Thus, immortality in Jainism is not bodily preservation but the attainment of the soul's pure, formless state, beyond all temporal constraints.²⁹

Islam, however, teaches that immortality is not an inherent quality of the soul but is instead part of Allah's divine plan for human beings. The soul's journey after death is determined by Allah, and eternal life is either in Paradise or Hell, depending on a person's deeds and faith. The Qur'an makes clear that the soul will be held accountable for its actions and will face either eternal reward or punishment:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ. وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ، فَمَنْ زُحِرَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ، وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ³⁰

Every soul will taste death. And you will only be given your [full] compensation on the Day of Resurrection. So, he who is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise has attained [his desire].

Immortality, therefore, is not something that the soul inherently possesses or achieves by escaping the body; rather, it is granted by Allah as part of His judgment.

Mysticism and Philosophy vs. Islamic Theology

Rai's interpretation of the soul and its pursuit of immortality is influenced by mystical and philosophical traditions, particularly those that emphasize the soul's need to escape the physical body and realize its higher, eternal nature. His ideas reflect aspects of Jaina thought and some mystic philosophies that see human life as a spiritual journey toward enlightenment or union with a higher state. The Jain doctrine of *prekṣā*, often referred to as "insight" or "perception," is a crucial practice aimed at achieving liberation (*mokṣa*) from the cycle of birth and death (*saṃsāra*). Rooted in deep meditation and self-awareness, *prekṣā* emphasizes the importance of introspection to recognize the transient nature of the body and the eternal essence of the soul (*jīva*). Through this practice, individuals are encouraged to observe their thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations without attachment, fostering a detachment from material existence and karmic bondage. The *prekṣā* technique involves focused attention on the body's movements and breath, enabling practitioners to develop a heightened sense of awareness and control over their impulses. This mindful approach facilitates the purification of the soul by reducing the influx of negative karma, ultimately leading to spiritual enlightenment. By understanding the impermanence of the physical form and the need for self-discipline, *prekṣā* serves as a transformative tool that helps individuals transcend the limitations of the body and attain a state of liberation, where the soul is free from all worldly attachments and can experience its true, unbounded nature.³¹ *prekṣā* from Jain texts can be found in the *Yogaśāstra* by Acharya Hemachandra, which emphasizes the importance of meditation and self-awareness:

As the mind is, so is the dharma. As the mind is, so is the activity. As the mind is, so is the chanting. As the mind is, so is the insight.³²

In contrast, Islamic theology, while acknowledging the soul's spiritual journey, places more emphasis on the soul's accountability and its relationship with Allah. The soul's purpose is to worship Allah, and its ultimate journey is one of submission to divine will, culminating in resurrection and judgment. Islam does not emphasize the need to escape

the body but rather focuses on living a life of righteousness within the body, preparing the soul for its eternal return to Allah.³³

Champat Rai's work *Gems of Islam* provides a complex and deeply mystical perspective on the soul and its relationship with the Divine, drawing upon Islamic sources, Sūfī traditions, and philosophical contemplations. His interpretations reflect a synthesis of esoteric traditions with Islamic references, yet often diverge from orthodox Islamic beliefs.

The Soul in Islam: A Sacred Trust

In Rai's text, the soul is portrayed as an inherently divine and eternal entity, reflecting both omniscience and the source of eternal happiness. He emphasizes the soul's proximity to God, suggesting that it possesses the same qualities as the Divine.³⁴ This mystical portrayal, however, differs from the Islamic understanding of the soul (*nafs*), which is viewed as a creation of God, rather than an extension of divinity.

The Qur'an presents the soul as something mysterious and part of God's greater design. In Surah Al-Isra (17:85), the verse states:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ، قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا.³⁵

And they ask you, [O Muhammad], about the soul. Say, 'The soul is of the affair of my Lord. And mankind has not been given of knowledge except a little.

This verse highlights the limits of human understanding regarding the nature of the soul. The Islamic perspective holds that the soul is created by God, but it is not eternal or divine in itself.³⁶ Instead, it is subject to divine will and moral accountability.³⁷ Rai's treatment of the soul as an immortal, omniscient entity strays from this orthodox belief, leaning towards a more mystical interpretation found in Sūfī thought.

Eternity and Omniscience in Jaina Interpretation

Rai's depiction of the soul's omniscience and eternal happiness seems to resonate with the Sūfī concept of *Fana* (annihilation of the self) and *Baqā* (subsistence in God), and Jaina concept of *moksha*³⁸ where the self dissolves into divine reality. He states that the soul "is the storehouse of eternal happiness,"³⁹ reflecting an understanding that closely aligns the soul with God's attributes. However, traditional Islamic theology emphasizes that while humans can attain knowledge, omniscience belongs to Allah alone. Humans are not inherently omniscient; their knowledge is limited and dependent on divine revelation.

In contrast to Rai's assertions, the Qur'an reminds believers of their limitations:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ.⁴⁰

He who created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deed – and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving.

Here, happiness and success are tied to righteous actions and worship of Allah, rather than the soul's intrinsic nature. Rai's claim that the soul is the key to eternal happiness without reference to divine guidance and accountability contradicts mainstream Islamic teachings. The emphasis on the soul's omniscience and divinity points toward a mystical, Sūfī-centric view⁴¹, which diverges from orthodox beliefs about the soul's created and limited nature.

Sūfī Influence and the Notion of Divinity

Rai's text is deeply influenced by Sūfī mysticism, which often emphasizes the soul's

connection with the Divine and the eventual realization of unity with God. His references to Ṣūfī masters such as Mansur Al-Hallaj and Bayezid Bastami, as well as his use of Ṣūfī poetry, illustrate the doctrine of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* (the unity of being). This belief holds that all existence is a manifestation of the Divine, and the ultimate spiritual goal is to realize the self as a reflection of God's essence.

One of the most notable references in Rai's work is to Maṣṣūr Al-Ḥallāj, who famously declared "*Ana al-Ḥaq*" (I am the Truth), an assertion that led to his execution for heresy.⁴² In *Gems of Islam*, Rai glorifies this declaration as an expression of the soul's realization of its divine nature. However, orthodox Islamic scholars have historically condemned such statements as blasphemous,⁴³ because they blur the lines between the Creator and the creation.

Rai's reverence for Al-Ḥallāj and his mystical declarations represents a philosophical insistence on the soul's divinity, but this is in direct contradiction to mainstream Islamic theology, which maintains that God is absolutely transcendent and distinct from His creation.

The Authenticity of Ḥadīth References in the Text

One of the critical aspects of *Gems of Islam* is its reliance on Islamic sources, particularly the Ḥadīth, to support its philosophical arguments. However, several hadiths quoted in the text raise questions about their authenticity and validity within Islamic tradition.

- **"I am Arab without 'a'..."**⁴⁴: This play on words, suggesting that the removal of the letter 'a' from the word "Arab" leaves "Hab," which means "God," is not found in any authentic Ḥadīth collections. It is likely a mystical interpretation or esoteric wordplay, common in Ṣūfī literature, but not considered a reliable source in orthodox Islamic teachings.
- **"I am Ahmad without 'm'..."**⁴⁵: Similarly, this hadith is not found in the major Ḥadīth collections such as Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī or Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. The statement "I am Ahmad without mim (ma)" suggests that Ahmad (a name of the Prophet Muhammad) without the letter 'm' becomes "Aḥad," a reference to divine unity (*Tawḥīd*). This type of mystical interpretation is more characteristic of Ṣūfī discourse than of verified prophetic tradition.

These references to fabricated or weak hadiths undermine the theological credibility of Rai's argument, particularly when contrasted with the rigorously authenticated sources of Islamic law and theology. Orthodox Islam places great emphasis on the authenticity of sources, especially when deriving theological conclusions. Hadiths, in particular, are subject to strict verification methods, and weak or fabricated hadiths are not used as a basis for establishing beliefs.

Qur'ānic Interpretations: Mystical vs. Orthodox

In *Gems of Islam*, Rai also uses verses from the Qur'ān to reinforce his argument about the soul's divine nature. For instance, he cites:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ بَيْنَ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ⁴⁶

We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.

This verse, according to traditional Islamic exegesis, emphasizes God's intimate knowledge of and power over human beings. It reflects God's omnipresence and omniscience, but not the divinity of the human soul.⁴⁷ Rai's interpretation, however,

suggests that this closeness implies the soul's inherent divinity, an idea more aligned with Sūfī metaphysics than with mainstream Islamic theology. Similarly, Rai cites:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَسَيُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا.⁴⁸

The people who strike hand with thee do not strike it with thee, but with God.

This verse is traditionally understood as a metaphor for the allegiance made by the Prophet's followers. The physical action of taking the Prophet's hand in allegiance symbolized a covenant with God.⁴⁹ Rai, however, interprets this as evidence of God's presence within human individuals⁵⁰, reinforcing his mystical argument of divine immanence within the soul. Such an interpretation stretches the orthodox understanding of divine presence, blurring the distinction between human and divine.

Sūfī Poetry and Mystical Expression

Throughout *Gems of Islam*, Rai employs Sūfī poetry to elucidate his ideas on the soul's divinity and its search for union with God. This poetic tradition, especially in Persian and Arabic literature, often uses metaphors and allegories to describe the spiritual journey, the annihilation of the self, and the realization of the Divine within. Verses such as:

- "The Beloved is hidden under the veil, Like the river that lieth concealed beneath a bubble,"
- "Thou thyself art the image of the impress of Divinity,"

are representative of Sūfī thought, where the self is seen as a reflection of God's light, and the goal of life is to uncover this divine reality. While such expressions resonate with Sūfī audiences, they are not intended to be literal theological statements. Orthodox scholars caution against taking such metaphors as dogma, instead viewing them as expressions of deep spiritual longing and metaphysical reflection.

Conclusion

Champat Rai's *Gems of Islam* presents a deeply mystical and esoteric interpretation of the soul, drawing heavily from Sūfī traditions and Islamic references. His portrayal of the soul as inherently divine, omniscient, and eternal aligns with certain strands of Sūfī thought but departs from mainstream Islamic beliefs. The use of weak or fabricated ḥadīths, as well as mystical interpretations of Qur'ānic verses, further separates his ideas from orthodox Islamic theology, which maintains a clear distinction between Creator and creation. While Rai's text offers a profound exploration of spiritual themes, its theological foundations rest on interpretations that are not widely accepted in traditional Islamic scholarship.

Rai's interpretation of the soul in *The Lifting of the Veil* is fundamentally shaped by his Jain beliefs, particularly the concept of Awagon, or transmigration of souls. In Jainism, the soul is seen as eternal, bound by the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, and subject to the karmic consequences of one's actions. Rai's work reflects this deeply ingrained understanding of the soul's journey, even as he engages with Islamic mysticism and Sufi thought, exploring the soul's pursuit of immortality and liberation from the physical world. In Jain philosophy, the soul (*jiva*) is an indestructible entity that is trapped in a cycle of rebirths due to the accumulation of karma. Liberation (*moksha*) can only be achieved by freeing the soul from karmic bondage through ethical living, meditation, and self-discipline. Rai's discussion of the soul's journey towards

enlightenment echoes these Jain principles, emphasizing the soul's need to transcend its material entanglements and realize its pure, eternal nature. This approach parallels certain mystical and philosophical traditions in Islam, especially Sūfī thought, where the soul's union with the Divine is often portrayed as a journey of self-purification and enlightenment. However, Rai's interpretation raises interesting questions about the blending of Jain and Islamic ideas. While Sūfī mysticism speaks of the soul's return to the Divine and the experience of spiritual unity with God, Jainism emphasizes the soul's liberation through self-realization and its independence from any divine entity. This distinction is crucial because, while both traditions speak of the soul's transcendence, Jainism does not posit a relationship between the soul and a Creator God, as Islam does. Instead, the soul in Jainism is seen as inherently divine, but trapped by ignorance and karma. Rai's work, while engaging with Islamic mysticism, seems to reinterpret certain aspects of Sūfī thought through the lens of Jainism. His treatment of the soul's journey toward immortality and spiritual freedom can be seen as an attempt to harmonize the two traditions, but it is also possible that his underlying Jain beliefs shaped his presentation of Islamic ideas. By emphasizing the soul's need to overcome material existence and realize its higher nature, Rai's interpretation may reflect more of a Jain metaphysical framework than an orthodox Islamic one.

This kind of philosophical cross-pollination has been explored by other scholars as well. For instance, the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, like Rai, also presented ideas about the soul's relationship to eternity and the Divine that challenged traditional religious frameworks. Spinoza's concept of God as an immanent force, rather than a transcendent, personal deity, shares some resonance with the Jain view of the soul's self-sufficiency and its journey towards an impersonal state of liberation. Both Rai and Spinoza view the soul's liberation not as a return to a separate, external God, but as the realization of its own eternal nature. Yet, significant differences remain. Spinoza's pantheistic philosophy holds that everything is a manifestation of a single, infinite substance (which he calls "God or Nature"), whereas Rai, adhering to Jainism, views the soul as one of many eternals, individual entities that must strive to escape the cycle of birth and death. Spinoza does not believe in the transmigration of souls, nor does he posit the karmic consequences that are central to Jain thought. His emphasis on reason and intellectual love of God stands in contrast to the deeply spiritual and karmic process described by Rai. Thus, while both Spinoza and Rai explore the nature of the soul and its relationship to eternity, their conclusions are shaped by the distinct religious and philosophical traditions from which they emerge. Rai's work, deeply influenced by Jainism, frames the soul's journey as one of liberation from the cycle of rebirth, while Spinoza's vision is more concerned with the intellectual realization of the soul's unity with the whole of existence. These differences highlight the rich diversity of thought surrounding the nature of the soul, even as different traditions explore similar themes of immortality, enlightenment, and spiritual transcendence.

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- ⁵ Al-Ḥallāj (born c. 858, Tūr, Iran—died March 26, 922, Baghdad)(Hijri c. 244 AH – 309 AH) was a controversial writer and teacher of Islamic mysticism (Sūfism). He is best known for his saying: "I am the Truth", which many saw as a claim to divinity, while others interpreted it as an instance of annihilation of the ego.
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- ⁸ Al- Qur’ān 89: 27-30, See more verses: Al- Qur’ān, 12: 53; 75:02; 79:40.
- ⁹ The concept of *wahdat-ul-wajūd* suggests that all of existence is a manifestation or reflection of a single consciousness, which is the ultimate reality. In this view, creation reveals the attributes of this "One Consciousness." Ibn Arabi, who introduced *wahdat-ul-wajūd*, described everything in the universe as an extension or shadow of this single reality. In contrast, Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624 AD) developed the idea of *wahdat-ul-shahood*, which emphasizes that creation serves as a witness to the presence of the one true reality, rather than being a direct manifestation of it. Although these two philosophies share a common essence, they differ in their emphasis, as noted by Dr. Iqbal. See, I am Consciousness: a spiritual guide to peace and happiness. N.p.: Lieper publication, 2020, 112.
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