

The Dynamics of Divine Manifestation and Concealment in Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi's Makkan Unveilings

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The Tarajeem Al Asedi is a series of books on Tasawwuf (Islamic mysticism) authored by Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri. In this series, the Shaikh has translated and explained most of the foundational books on Tasawwuf written by the Shuyookh of Ihsan (Awliya Allah and scholars of Tasawwuf), including the works of Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه). A hallmark of the Tarajeem Al Asedi is its commitment to preserving the meanings of original terminologies used by these scholars, while presenting the content in modern English. This approach allows readers to access these texts in their purest form, without unnecessary simplification or alteration of the original concepts. All books in the Tarajeem Al Asedi series are available for free download at sahihiman.com.

Abstract

This article investigates how Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) defines the relationship between *Divine Manifestation (tajalli)* and *concealment through veils (hijab)*, i.e., veils of light, darkness, names, and creation, and what are the consequences of this relationship for human perception and existence? Drawing exclusively upon the volumes of *The Makkan Unveilings (Al Futuhat Al Makkiyyah)*, as translated and explained in English by Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri, the study demonstrates that for Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه), unveiling and veiling are not opposites but complementary modes of the same Divine act. The cosmos, the human self, and every act of worship becomes a mode of *Divine self-disclosure* filtered through *merciful concealment*.

Keywords - Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه), Makkan Unveilings (al-Futuhat al-Makkiyyah), Divine Manifestation (Tajalli), Veiling (Hijab), Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri

Introduction

For Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه), *Being (wujud)*, is not a static or monolithic presence. It is an ever-renewing self-disclosure of the *Divine Reality (haq)*, whose radiance becomes perceptible only through the very veils that appear to obscure it. The paradox of unveiling and veiling constitutes, in his cosmology, the essential logic of existence, i.e., *manifestation requires mediation, and concealment is the condition of revelation*. Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri's English translation and explanation, renders this dialectic

accessible by translating Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi's (رضى الله تعالى عنه) esoteric vocabulary into a precise philosophical idiom while preserving the devotional resonance of his original Arabic. Through these translations and explanations by Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri, *The Makkan Unveilings* has received its proper recognition as a rigorous metaphysical treatise on the relationship between Divine transcendence and created perception.

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) writes intensively about the principle of *Absolute Unconditioned Being (Wujud-e-Mutlaq)*. Allah is the *Wujud-e-Mutlaq*. Everything other than Allah exists only as a contingent reflection of that unbounded *Reality*. In the earliest books of the *Makkan Unveilings*, Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) explains that the cosmos emerges when the *Divine Essence (zaat)* discloses *Itself* through the attributes and names (*asma-e-ilahiyyah*), each name acting as a locus of manifestation. The very act of disclosure thus gives rise to veils as necessary forms through which the Infinite becomes knowable. “*The servant,*” as Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri’s translation phrases it, “*is a veil on the Truth,*” since the visible world is itself a Divine act of concealment that enables recognition.

Absolute Existence and Manifestation

Existence (wujud) is singular, eternal, and indivisible. Multiplicity arises only in the modes through which that Existence manifests *Itself*. Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri’s translation repeatedly emphasizes the point that, “*The servant is the veil on the Truth, for the apparent effects are only perceived in generality and are attributed to the causes that the Truth has established.*” This statement encapsulates the foundational paradox of Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi's (رضى الله تعالى عنه) cosmology, i.e., what appears as independent existence is, in truth, the projection of Divine self-disclosure refracted through the veil of causality.

The Unity of Existence and the Principle of Manifestation

In the earliest strata of *Makkan Unveilings*, Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) establishes that there is “*nothing in existence except Allah and His attributes and His actions.*” Creation has no autonomous being. Its *wujud* is derivative and borrowed. Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri’s rendition of these passages captures this subtle point by differentiating between the *Divine Essence (zaat)*, which remains eternally hidden, and the *immutable archetypes (ayan-e-thabita)* that exist within *Divine Knowledge* as the potential forms of all possible beings. The movement from the unmanifest to the manifest begins when the Divine wills to be known, a process described in the famous hadith of the Prophet of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), “*I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known.*” Thus, *manifestation (tajalli)* is not a transition from non-being to being, but a shift from latent knowledge to self-disclosure. The *Real* unveils *Itself* through the mirror of *Its* names and attributes.

The act of manifestation is continuous and eternal — not a single creative event but an unending renewal of creation (*tajdid-e-khalq*). Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) likens the cycles of existence to “*the*

repetition of lights and dreams” through which *“the creation occurs in Heaven according to what the creation of the Hereafter gives, for judgment is always in the receptacles, for the movement is one and its effects differ according to the receptacles.”* Here, Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri’s translation illuminates the metaphysical subtlety, i.e., the Divine movement (*haraka*) is singular, the eternal motion of Being, while its effects differ because each receptive locus (*mahall-e-ta’ayyun*) reflects the *Light* in accordance with its capacity. The multiplicity of forms, therefore, arises from the limits of receptivity in the created realm.

Veils as Modalities of the Real

Because the *Essence* is beyond comprehension, manifestation necessitates veiling. Each veil (*hijab*) both reveals and conceals. It is a form through which the *Real* discloses *Himself* without exposing *His* ineffable *Essence*. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi’s (رضى الله تعالى عنه) ontology is a theology of mediation, i.e., the *Real* never appears except under a form, and every form is a veil. This is the metaphysical root of his oft-repeated dictum that *“the servant is the veil on the Truth.”* The veils are not accidental. They are intrinsic to the architecture of Being. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) explains this through the example of a leather sock, stating that just as a *khuff* (leather sock) mediates between the body and the earth, retaining the purity of the one who wears it, so too the human form mediates between the Divine and creation.

This analogy demonstrates the ontological mercy (*rahmah*) embedded in veiling. Were the *Light* of the *Essence* to shine without the protective filter of forms, creation would dissolve in the intensity of its brilliance, an idea echoed in his commentary that the *Truth* *“does not accept the sanctification of His servants in that they are workers, for no one sees sanctification as work except the ignorant among the servants, for the knowledgeable one sees it as knowledge.”*

The Divine Names as Creative Veils

The Names of Allah constitute the first level of veiling, i.e., the primordial differentiation of the undifferentiated *Essence*. Just as the elements give rise to physical forms, the Divine Names generate ontological realities. Each name is a theophany (*tajalli*), an aspect of the *Real*’s self-revelation, yet each also conceals the plenitude of the *Essence* behind its specific meaning. The Name *“the Merciful”* (*Ar Rahman*) reveals compassion but veils majesty. The Name *“the Avenger”* (*Al Muntaqim*) reveals justice but veils gentleness. In this way, the Names function as luminous veils that shape perception and constitute the structure of the cosmos.

Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri’s translation elucidates this dynamic by stressing that the *“action of Allah is distinguished by that which does not participate in the action of the creature, so the creature is always in a place of need and helplessness, and Allah is the Rich, the Mighty.”* This statement mirrors Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi’s (رضى الله تعالى عنه) principle of *tafriq-e-ḥaqq an al-khalq*, i.e., distinguishing the *Real* from creation even in the moment of their unity. The Names veil the *Essence* by affirming difference within oneness. They are the Divine modes through which multiplicity is born without compromising unity.

The Cyclical Ontology of Manifestation

In Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi's (رضى الله تعالى عنه) cosmology, manifestation proceeds through cyclical emanations rather than linear causation. He writes, “*Know that since the universe was the most perfect form, man yearned at its end for its beginning... every matter and every existing thing is a circle, returning to what it began from.*” Existence thus unfolds as an infinite rotation of manifestations (*tajalliyat*) in which every return is a renewed unveiling of the same Reality. The circle symbolizes the inseparability of beginning and end, creation and return, unveiling and veiling. The Real veils Himself in creation, and creation returns to unveil the Real.

Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri's translation and explanation underscores the Qur'anic foundation of this metaphysics, citing verses such as the following.

It is in the Qur'an - وَالْإِلَهَ الْمَصِيرُ - [and everything will return back to Him] (Al Ma'idah, Verse 18, Tafseer Al Asedi).

It is in the Qur'an - ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ - [and you will return to Him] (Al Baqara, Verse 28, Tafseer Al Asedi).

Every created form is a condensation of this breath, and every dissolution is its reabsorption. Hence, even annihilation (*fana*) is a mode of unveiling, for it returns the contingent to its origin in the Real.

The Role of Knowledge in Manifestation

Every intention and act reflects a specific Divine Name and thus participates in manifestation. Yet, knowledge of these names is graded. Human cognition perceives only according to its spiritual capacity. The scholar, the saint, and the layman, each witness different degrees of *tajalli*, veiled or unveiled according to the refinement of their hearts. Divine knowledge is not possessed but received. It descends as light filtered through the veils of intellect and disposition. Hence, epistemology in Makkan Unveilings is inseparable from ontology. To know is to participate in the Divine act of manifestation, and to err is to misread the veils of appearance as independent realities.

The Mechanics of Veiling

Veils, as per Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi's (رضى الله تعالى عنه) doctrine, are the very instruments through which the Real (*haq*) reveals Himself. Light and darkness, form and name, visibility and absence, all participate in a dialectic that sustains the possibility of perception and existence. It is the metaphysical grammar of Divine self-disclosure. It defines the relationship between the unknowable Essence (*zaat*) and the knowable manifestations (*zuhur*). Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri's explained these complexities in lucid prose in his rendering of the Makkan Unveilings, enabling the modern reader to discern how Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى

(رضى الله تعالى عنه) transforms classical theological categories of “light” (*noor*) and “darkness” (*zulm*) into dynamic metaphysical principles of revelation.

The Double Veil

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) likens the servant’s purification to an act of veiling. When one wipes over the *khuff* (leather sock) in ablution, he writes, the purity of the foot is “transferred” to the covering, and the veil becomes the locus of purification. Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri translates this as, “Just as the shoe became a veil between the one performing ablution and the ruling of purity being transferred to the shoe, likewise the man’s purification of his Creator, which is purity and sanctification, since he was unable in the matter itself to convey the effect of that transcendence to the Truth because He is transcended in His essence, the ruling of the effect of that transcendence was transferred to the transcended human being who is a veil on his Creator.”

Note: In the quotation above, the phrase “man’s purification of his Creator” may sound irreverent at first. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) is NOT suggesting that God requires purification or that the human being has any power to sanctify the Divine Essence. Rather, he is describing the human act of *tanzih* which is the theological impulse to declare God utterly transcendent and incomparable. Since God is already transcendent in Himself and cannot be affected by human description, the “effect” of this sanctification cannot truly reach the *Real*. Instead, it returns to the human knower, i.e., it purifies his conception, his language, and his imagination of God. In this sense, the human being becomes a “veil” not by blocking God in reality, but by becoming the locus where the ruling of transcendence lands. Just as wiping over the shoe transfers the legal ruling of purification to the shoe rather than the foot. Thus, Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) is warning that excessive transcendence, if not balanced with Divine nearness (*tashbih*), can unintentionally produce the idea of a “God” who is conceptually distant, abstract, and inaccessible, i.e., more a product of human negation rather than a lived encounter with the *Real*.

This metaphor, though drawn from jurisprudence, expresses an ontological principle. Divine transcendence (*tanzih*) cannot be “directly” acted upon by creation. Instead, it manifests its effects through veiled intermediaries. The veil does not oppose the Real but carries the trace of Its sanctity, just as the *khuff* receives the law of purity. The universe itself functions as such a *khuff* in which the traces (*athaar*) of Divine attributes are deposited.

Light and darkness are the twin modalities of this veiling. Light discloses by excess, and darkness conceals by deficiency. Both equally prevent direct observation of the Essence. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi’s (رضى الله تعالى عنه) cosmology treats these as complementary dimensions of Being’s self-differentiation. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) describes the “repetition of lights and dreams”, as the oscillation by which creation is sustained. It is a ceaseless continuum of illumination and obscurity that maintains the world’s balance. In Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi’s (رضى الله تعالى عنه) words, Light represents the outpouring of Divine effulgence, darkness, the receptivity of matter and limitation. The world is born from their mingling.

Veils of Light

For Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه), the following Quranic verse confirms that the light is not synonymous with revelation. It is itself a veil of a higher intensity.

It is in the Qur'an - **اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ** [Allah is the Light of the Heavens and Earth.]
(An Noor, Verse 35, Tafseer Al Asedi).

He asserts that the Real is revealed only as Light, but the Essence remains hidden even in luminosity. The angels, the intelligences, and the “*poles of the universe (Al-Aqtab)*” are veils of light. They mediate Divine governance across the cosmic hierarchy. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) explains that the four elements arose the human world are governed by cycles of divine luminosity and shadow. These celestial ranks, *i.e.*, the *alam-e-malakut (angelic world)* and *alam-e-jabarut (world of power)*, are forms of radiant veiling, for they manifest Divine command while concealing the Essence’s immediacy.

Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri explains this as, “*the action of Allah is distinguished by that which does not participate in the action of the creature*”. This clarifies that the function of these luminous veils is to preserve the ontological distinction between Creator and creation even at the point of contact. The light is too bright to see; therefore it preserves distance through its very brilliance. Thus, the Awliya Allah, who experience overwhelming *tajalli* in spiritual vision, describe it as both unveiling and annihilation.

Veils of Darkness

If light veils by intensity, darkness veils by absence. And yet this absence, too, is mercy. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) writes that “*the universe was the most perfect form, [and] man yearned at its end for its beginning.*” The descent from pure Light into material form is the descent of the Divine Breath into density, establishing the lower world (*alam-e-mulk*) as the “*dark*” mirror of the luminous world above. The darkness of the material realm is NOT evil but the shadow that makes form possible. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) speaks of the *earth, water, fire, and air* as the “*daughters of the heavens*”, each a condensation of the higher lights into opacity.

Darkness is the matrix of manifestation. It receives the Light and gives it shape. Without the veils of darkness, the limitations of matter, body, and perception, the world would dissolve back into undifferentiated luminosity. For this reason, darkness must not be confused, instead recognized as the compassionate boundary that allows creation to endure. In the words of Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه), “*the movement is one, and its effects differ according to the receptacles.*” The receptacle (*qabil*), whether a body, an intellect, or a soul, is the dark mirror through which Light acquires contour.

The Veils of the Divine Names

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) calls the *Asma-e-Ilahi (Divine Names of Allah)*, as the “*mothers of creation*,” for each Name gives rise to a specific mode of Being. Yet every Name is simultaneously a veil upon the Essence and a disclosure of It. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) expounds upon the “*Breath of the Most Merciful*,” illustrating this subtle balance as, “*The Most Gracious Himself has no support; His rule is over every group... He has neither spirit nor body... He is the One sought after and the Self-Sufficient.*”

The Name *Ar Rahman (the Most Merciful)* is a luminous veil. It reveals the Divine through compassion while veiling the majesty of His transcendence. The Names, in their plurality, enable the cosmos to exist as differentiated realities, yet each veils the simplicity of the Essence behind its particular attribute. Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri’s translation of these sections consistently highlights how Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) treats the *Names* as living agencies rather than abstract designations. Every *Name* acts within creation, governing a domain of existence, and when the seeker encounters a *Name’s tajalli*, he experiences both revelation and limitation. To witness *Al Jalil (the Majestic)* is to be overwhelmed by awe. To witness *Al Latif (the Subtle)* is to be softened by intimacy. Each illumination hides the fullness of the Real behind its own perfection. Hence, the multiplicity of the *Names* is the Divine strategy of self-concealment within revelation.

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) extends this to human action, declaring that “*intentions are for action as the spirit is for the body.*” Every intention activates a specific Divine Name, which in turn veils others. When the seeker acts under the Name *Al Adl (the Just)*, he experiences equilibrium but is veiled from the tenderness of *Ar Rahim*. Spiritual progression therefore involves moving through veils and realizing their function as theophanies.

The Metaphysics of Balance

Because light and darkness, majesty and beauty, mercy and wrath, are not dualistic opposites but interdependent reflections of the Divine plenitude, their alternation constitutes what Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) calls “*the balance*” (*mizan*). He writes that Allah “*sets the just scales for the Day of Resurrection, so no soul will be wronged in the least.*” This scale is both eschatological and ontological. It represents the equilibrium between disclosure and concealment. Every excessive light demands the counterweight of darkness. Every act of manifestation is balanced by an act of veiling.

Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri’s explanation makes this balance intelligible by linking it to Divine mercy. The scales, he notes, were “*legislated*” because the servant, endowed with a limited share of justice, could not sustain the perfection of Divine justice in this world. The “*just scales*” of the Hereafter symbolize the final harmonization of light and darkness within knowledge, i.e., the unveiling that still preserves difference.

This harmony also underpins Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi's (رضى الله تعالى عنه) concept of *tajalli fil-addad*, i.e., manifestation through opposites. The Real appears in the alternation of night and day, wrath and mercy, concealment and revelation. Without opposition, manifestation would collapse into uniformity. Without veiling, perception would vanish into blindness. This is NOT the struggle between good and evil. It is the Divine rhythm through which Being perceives Itself.

Perception and the Veil of Self

Humanity stands at the juncture where *tajalli* (Divine Manifestation) and *hijab* (concealment) intersect, for the same capacity that allows man to reflect the Real also obscures Him. This double status, as mirror and veil, defines the ontological and epistemological structure of human existence in Makkan Unveilings.

Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri's translation explains this delicate balance with clarity, presenting the human being as the microcosm (*alam-e-saghir*) through whom the macrocosm (*alam-e-kabir*) is reflected. Every perception, intention, and act becomes a mirror surface upon which the Divine gazes at Himself. Yet, because the human mirror is limited, every reflection distorts the fullness of the image. The veil of selfhood (*nafs*) is therefore the most subtle and pervasive of all veils.

The Complete Human Being as the Locus of Divine Self-Reflection

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) builds his notion upon the Qur'anic principle that Allah created Adam (عليه السلام) "*in His image*." In this sense, the human being is not merely a part of creation but the mirror through which creation attains self-awareness. He describes man as "*the most perfect form*," noting that "*since the universe was the most perfect form, man yearned at its end for its beginning*." Here, the yearning (*shauq*) of man to return to his origin is the impulse of the Divine Self-seeking to know Itself in the finite.

As Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri explains, "*Man stands between the two veils: the veil of non-being and the veil of form. Through him, the Real contemplates both His absence and His manifestation*." This intermediary position grants humanity the capacity to know but also exposes it to illusion. Every perception of the Real through the senses, intellect, or imagination is already veiled by the mode of human reception. The mirror reveals only in proportion to its polish.

In this light, Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) reinterprets the Hadith, "*He who knows himself knows his Lord*," not as an anthropocentric statement but as a metaphysical axiom.

The Structure of Perception

Perception (*idraak*) occurs primarily through the heart (*qalb*), which is the mirror of perception. This metaphor is illuminated through the symbolism of purification. "*The servant is a veil on the Truth, for the apparent effects are only perceived in generality and are attributed to the causes that the Truth has established*."

The “*apparent effects*” refer to sensory and intellectual perceptions, which are attributed to empirical causes. Yet these causes are themselves veils through which Divine causality acts. Thus, all human perception is mediated. It reflects the Divine act through the limitations of created faculties. The heart, being mutable and reflective, turns from one Divine Name to another, from one aspect of manifestation to another. Its purity determines its capacity to receive *tajalli*.

In his discussion on *taharah* (purity) and *niyyah* (intention), Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) likens the purification of the body to the polishing of the mirror of the heart. As Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri explains, “*Just as washing removes the dust that veils the form, remembrance and sincerity remove the obscurity that prevents the heart from reflecting the Divine Light.*” Ritual purity becomes the physical analogue of epistemic purification. Every act of *ibadah* (worship), when performed with inner awareness, cleanses a veil from the heart, refining its ability to perceive the Real.

Yet, even at its most purified, the heart never reflects the Essence directly. It remains a mirror of colored light, each hue corresponding to a Divine Name. What the cognizant (*arif*) perceives, therefore, is not God in Himself but God as He discloses Himself through the mirror of his own disposition (*istidad*).

The Problem of Ego

The veil of selfhood (*hijab-un-nafs*) is the most difficult to penetrate, precisely because it is the condition of consciousness itself. The self-mediate between the Real and the world, translating Divine impulses into human thoughts, desires, and actions. But when the self-mistakes its borrowed existence for autonomy, it becomes an opaque veil, the “*Me*” that blocks the view of the “*Hu*” (*Divine Existence*).

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) speaks of the “*illness of signs*,” describing how those who “*are unaware of the face of truth in things*” fall into the claim (*dawa*) of separateness. “*And whoever is unaware of the face of truth in things, the claim is able to be made to him, and the claim is the very disease.*” This “*claim*” is the ego’s assertion of independent existence. The one who recognizes the Divine face in all things is healed, while the one who sees multiplicity as real suffers from ontological blindness.

Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri’s rendering of this passage underscores its epistemological implications. He observes that Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) does not call for the annihilation of perception but for its reorientation. The knower (*arif*) must see through the veil of selfhood, recognizing that his very act of seeing belongs to the Divine. The goal is not to remove the veil, which is impossible, but to render it transparent, to see the Light shining through one’s own opacity.

The Ethics of Seeing

To witness (*shuhud*) the Real through the veils of creation demands spiritual courtesy (*adab*). Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) warns that the untrained seeker who tears away the veil of form prematurely risks annihilation or delusion. This is why the Sharia and the Prophetic disciplines exist. They are veils of mercy.

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضي الله تعالى عنه) explains that *“Allah does not accept the sanctification of His servants in that they are workers, for no one sees sanctification as work except the ignorant among the servants; the knowledgeable one sees it as knowledge.”*

Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri interprets this as a profound ethical principle. The Cognizant’s task is not to “do” unveiling, but to “know” unveiling as Divine action. The self must not claim agency even in acts of piety. This is the inner meaning of *ubudiyyah* (servitude). To act while knowing that the act is not one’s own. When the servant attributes sanctification to himself, he transforms the veil of servitude into a barrier. When he attributes it to the Real, the veil becomes transparent.

The Human Journey Between Two Veils

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضي الله تعالى عنه) describes man as suspended between two veils — the veil of non-existence and the veil of existence. Non-existence veils the Essence in Its absoluteness. Existence veils It through form. Man stands precisely between them, belonging to both. His body ties him to the darkness of matter, while his spirit draws him toward the light of the Names. This in-between state defines human ontology as perpetual mediation, i.e., the mirror that reflects only because it stands between light and shadow.

This position explains why human perception is inherently limited yet uniquely privileged. The angels perceive only light, the elements only darkness. Man alone perceives both. As Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri notes that, *“Man’s knowledge is the knowledge of veiled unity — he knows by not knowing.”* The cognizant+ recognizes that unveiling (*kashf*) does not abolish veiling. It deepens it, revealing new layers.

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضي الله تعالى عنه) alludes to this paradox through the symbolism of fasting: *“If our intentions are correct, then we unite in secrets.”* Fasting removes the veil of desire and imitates the Divine abstention from need. Yet it is performed through the body, the very veil of matter. The act of withholding reveals the Divine by concealing the self. In this way, every discipline of worship becomes a movement through veils toward the recognition that the veils themselves are Divine.

The Dialectic of Manifestation and Concealment in Worship

Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri’s translation of Makkan Unveilings highlights how Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضي الله تعالى عنه) interprets the canonical acts of worship, purification, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, as microcosmic rehearsals of the cosmic rhythm between Divine disclosure and concealment.

Purification (Taharah)

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضي الله تعالى عنه) compares ritual purification to the metaphysical process by which the heart is made ready for *tajalli*. He writes that, *“The servant is a veil on the Truth, for the apparent effects are only perceived in generality and are attributed to the causes that the Truth has established.”*

The act of washing, wiping, or performing wudu does not merely cleanse physical impurities but symbolizes the removal of perceptual obstructions. The water, in Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi's (رضى الله تعالى عنه) symbolism, represents the medium of life and illumination (*noor*), while the act of ablution mirrors the descent of Divine effulgence upon creation.

Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri's explains this parallel succinctly. *"Just as the water removes dust from the surface of the body, remembrance and repentance remove the veils that cloud the heart's reflection of Divine Light."* The *khuff* (leather sock), as discussed earlier, becomes a metaphor for the merciful veil. It protects the body's purity as creation protects the heart's receptivity. Thus, the Sharia's regulations on cleanliness correspond to the metaphysics of veiling. Each layer of ritual law preserves the sanctity of unveiling by limiting exposure to the unmediated Real.

Prayer (Salah)

Prayer is the supreme act in which the servant oscillates between proximity and distance, revelation and concealment. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) asserts that intention (*niyyah*) is the inner face of prayer. *"The intention of the manifestation is gratitude from the one being manifested to the one to whom it is manifested, and the intention of the one to whom it is manifested is knowledge and enjoyment of that manifestation."*

This reciprocity between God manifesting and the servant witnessing defines prayer as the mirror of the Divine-human relation. Every movement in prayer corresponds to a level of unveiling. Standing (*qiyam*) manifests awareness of Divine majesty. Bowing (*ruku*) enacts humility before that manifestation. Prostration (*sujud*) embodies annihilation in the Face of the Real. Yet each posture is also a veil, containing the radiance of the Divine Name that it evokes.

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) distinguishes between the outer prostration of the body and the inner prostration of the heart. *"Prostration is required on the heart, and if he prostrates, he should never raise it, unlike the prostration of the face."* Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri comments that the *"prostration of the heart"* signifies perpetual witnessing, the continuous inward humility that endures beyond the physical act. When the heart prostrates, it is veiled from itself and sees only the Real. This is the station of *hifz* (protection), where Satan has no access.

The words, forms, and prescribed times of salah are veils of mercy that prevent the worshipper's direct exposure to the unmediated Presence. Through the veil of ritual, the servant ascends yet remains safeguarded by law.

Fasting (Sawm)

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) presents fasting as the worship of concealment par excellence. He writes that, *“Ramadan is one of the names of Allah the Most High... Standing in this month is for the sake of this name... for if it is mentioned, standing is obligatory for it.”*

Here, fasting is interpreted as the evocation of the Divine attribute of self-sufficiency. By abstaining from food, drink, and desire, the servant evokes the Divine independence. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) calls this *“the standing before the Name,”* an act in which the believer becomes aware that his hunger is itself a theophany of the Divine Name *As Samad (the Self-Sufficient)*.

The veil of hunger thus becomes the revelation of Divine plenitude. At sunset, when the fast is broken, the servant passes from the mode of Divine evocation to the mode of servanthood. The day’s abstention conceals. The evening’s nourishment discloses. Together they form the rhythm of *tajalli* and *hijab* that structures existence itself.

Almsgiving (Zakat)

The chapters on zakat in the Makkan Unveilings, contain some of Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi's (رضى الله تعالى عنه) most profound reflections on the ethical dimension of veiling. He states that *“Zakat is due from a person on eight parts of his body: sight, hearing, tongue, hand, stomach, private parts, foot, and heart.”*

Here, zakat transcends its legal function and becomes an ontological purification. The act of giving discloses the Divine attribute of *The Generous (Al Karim)* while veiling the illusion of possession. When the servant withholds zakat, Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) calls him *“a wrongdoer, not an unbeliever,”* because he *“withheld the right of others that is due to them.”* The sin lies not in disbelief but in re-asserting the veil of ownership that charity is meant to dissolve.

In Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri’s explanation, zakat is described as *“the purity of money and the purity of organs.”* The circulation of wealth and the exercise of virtue correspond to the circulation of Divine Names within creation. Just as purification cleanses the body, and prayer purifies intention, charity purifies relation.

The Law as a Protective Veil of Manifestation

Throughout the Makkan Unveilings, Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) insists that the *Sharia* itself is a veil of mercy. Its outward prescriptions preserve the seeker from the perils of unmediated *tajalli*. The multiplicity of forms in law corresponds to the multiplicity of Names in ontology. Each legal limit is a luminous boundary that ensures balance within manifestation.

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) explains that even forgetfulness and error are forms of Divine veiling designed to protect the servant from despair. *“If any of its causes are difficult for him and its attainment is*

not easy, then he does not go against fate and knows that Allah has chosen for him.” The inability to act becomes a mercy, an enforced concealment of will that preserves harmony with Divine decree.

Worship as Theophanic Dialogue

Taken together, these rituals form what might be termed a theophanic dialogue, i.e., a conversation between the hidden and the manifest aspects of the Divine within human life. Each act of worship speaks both ways. God reveals Himself through it, and man conceals himself within it. In *salah*, the servant stands before the Real through the veil of words. In *sawm*, he veils himself to unveil the Divine self-sufficiency. In *zakat*, he erases ownership to reveal the Divine generosity. In *taharah*, he washes away dust to mirror the transparency of Being. In each of these acts, concealment is not negation but method. The form (*surah*) of worship limits exposure, while the intention (*ma'na*) unveils its truth.

Consequences for Human Perception and Existence

Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri's translation of Makkan Unveilings highlights how Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضي الله تعالى عنه) repeatedly situates man between two absolutes, i.e., the infinite light of the Real and the finite darkness of possibility. From this tension arises consciousness, moral responsibility, and the perpetual oscillation between awareness and heedlessness that characterizes the human condition. To understand human perception, therefore, is to understand the mechanism by which the Divine hides Himself in order to be known.

Existence as Manifest Veiling

The first consequence of Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi's (رضي الله تعالى عنه) doctrine is ontological. Existence itself is a veil. The Real manifests through form, but every form simultaneously conceals Him. He writes that, *“Our emergence from nothingness to existence was through Him, glory be to Him, and to Him we shall return.”* Existence, then, is not self-subsistent. It is the shadow of Divine Being, the *tajalli* of nonexistence transformed into appearance. Creation *“veils”* the Absolute precisely by expressing It.

Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri explains that Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi's (رضي الله تعالى عنه) term *zuhur* (appearance) never implies separation. Rather, it denotes *“the face of the Real turned toward the possible.”* The cosmos is a fabric woven of light and shadow, where the shadow preserves the creature's individuality while the light reveals the Creator's presence.

Knowledge as Mediated Light

The second consequence pertains to knowledge / cognition (*marifah*). Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi's (رضي الله تعالى عنه) epistemology is an extension of his ontology. Just as existence is a veil, so is knowledge. Every act of knowing is a *tajalli* i.e., a flash of Divine illumination filtered through the receptacle of the knower. As he

states, “*The spirit is for the body, and the intentions are for action... Thus do images emerge from our deeds.*”

Human cognition is not an autonomous reflection. It is Divine revelation through a limited instrument. The intellect, imagination, and senses each receive a portion of the Light, but none can grasp its totality. Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri emphasizes this gradation. “*The Divine knowledge descends in degrees, and each heart reflects only what its purity allows. Just as water takes the color of its vessel, so does Light assume the shape of the knower’s perception.*”

Thus, ignorance (*jahl*) is not merely the absence of knowledge, it is the opacity of the vessel. When the heart is veiled by pride, heedlessness, or desire, the Light of *tajalli* cannot penetrate it. Conversely, when the heart is purified through worship and humility, the Light passes through transparently, revealing the Real as though through clear glass. But even the clearest glass still refracts. It does not transmit without distortion.

The Human Heart as the Oscillating Veil

The heart (*qalb*) is central to Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi's (رضى الله تعالى عنه) psychology of unveiling. It is the mirror of the Real, yet its very nature is fluctuation, *taqallub*. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) calls this rhythm *ta’aqub-e-anwaar wal-zulmah* i.e., the succession of lights and shadows.

For the cogniant, this psychological rhythm defines spiritual life. Moments of inspiration (*bast*) and contraction (*qabd*), presence and absence, are not contradictions but necessary phases of unveiling. Each contraction is a veil that protects the heart from getting overwhelmed by excessive light. Each expansion is a gift that renews faith in the unseen.

Humility as the Recognition of Veiling

If perception and knowledge are veiled, then humility (*tawadu*) becomes the highest ethical virtue. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) warns that, “*Allah does not accept the sanctification of His servants in that they are workers, for no one sees sanctification as work except the ignorant among the servants; the knowledgeable one sees it as knowledge.*”

This elucidates that humility arises from recognizing the illusory nature of self-acting. The servant's actions are veils. To attribute sanctification (*taqdis*) to oneself is to mistake the veil for the Light. To attribute it to the Real is to make the veil transparent.

The moral struggle is not between good and evil as external opposites, but between seeing through veils and being blinded by them. True virtue lies in perceiving every moral act as a theophany, patience as a manifestation of the Divine Name *As Sabur*, generosity as *Al Karim*, justice as *Al Adl*. When one acts with this awareness, one's deeds cease to be personal achievements and become channels of Divine self-expression. The ethical life becomes a continuous unveiling of Divine Names within human limitation.

Veiling Beyond Death

The dialectic of *tajalli* and *hijab* does not end with death. It continues in the Hereafter. Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) often reminds his reader that the afterlife is the unveiling of what was veiled in life, not a change in reality, but a change in perception. He notes that on the Day of Resurrection, the limbs will testify, “*Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart — about all those ones will be questioned.*”

Every faculty that once veiled the Truth through partial perception will now unveil it through testimony. The servant will see that his very senses were instruments of Divine action. Yet even in the next world, absolute unveiling remains impossible. Paradise itself is a veil of light and Hell a veil of darkness. Both manifestations of Divine Names (*Al Jamil and Al Qahhar*). “*There is no state beyond veiling, only a difference in the clarity of the veil.*”

Living Within the Veil

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) transforms the metaphysics of *tajalli* and *hijab* into an existential program. To live rightly is to live consciously within the veil, to engage the world as theophany without mistaking it for the Essence. This mode of existence he calls *hadrat-ul-jam wal farq*, the Presence of Unity-in-Distinction.

Man’s task is not to destroy the veils, for that would destroy the conditions of being, but to see their translucence. The Mi’raj of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) exemplifies this. He (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) ascends through veils, not beyond them. Each veil is an increase in proximity, not an obstacle. Similarly, the seeker ascends through the veils of knowledge, form, and action until he realizes that veiling and unveiling are one. As Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) states, “*The movement is one, and its effects differ according to the receptacles.*”

Conclusion

Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) structures all levels of existence, knowledge, and devotion upon the rhythm of disclosure and concealment. Every being, act, and perception participates in it, and the complete human being (*insan-e-kamil*) is its most perfect expression.

As elucidated through Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri’s explanation, this vision unfolds through an ordered hierarchy of meaning. At the ontological level, *wujud-e-mutlaq (Absolute Being)*, remains eternally hidden in Its Essence, yet discloses Itself through theophanies of Names and forms. Creation itself is the grand veil. It conceals the Infinite by revealing It in finite proportion. Light and darkness, far from being antagonistic forces, are the alternating modalities through which the Real maintains this proportion. Light veils by excess, darkness by deficiency. Both serve mercy, ensuring that existence can endure the intensity of the Divine presence.

At the human level, the heart becomes the mirror of this phenomenon. Perception, intention, and action are reflections of the Divine act within the boundaries of the creature. The self (*nafs*) is the most subtle veil, the locus where the Real gazes upon Himself under the form of otherness. To know oneself, therefore, is not to transcend veiling but to recognize it as the very condition of Divine self-observation.

In worship, this metaphysics becomes embodied. Purification, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are not external disciplines but enactments of the cosmic dialectic. Each removes one veil while instituting another. The Sharia itself functions as the compassionate boundary that regulates unveiling. Ritual form is the protective architecture of Presence, the framework through which the servant may encounter the Divine safely, without dissolution. Every bow and prostration is therefore an oscillation between light and shadow, unveiling and veiling.

Epistemologically, Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi (رضي الله تعالى عنه) teaches that all knowledge is mediated. The intellect, imagination, and senses are degrees of translucent veils that refract the Light of *tajalli* according to their purity. Perfect knowledge (*marifah*) is not the removal of veils but the awareness of their transparency. Ethically, this produces humility. The true knower attributes all knowledge and action to the Real, perceiving his own being as a veil through which the Real acts. Theologically, the dialectic of *tajalli* and *hijab* secures the unity of transcendence and immanence. The Real remains forever unknowable in His Essence, yet intimately present in every form. Veiling is not separation but differentiation. It is the principle that allows the One to appear as many without ceasing to be One.

Eschatologically, this rhythm continues beyond the world. The Resurrection is the unveiling of veils, yet not their abolition. Paradise is a veil of luminous mercy. Hell is a veil of severe mercy. The blessed and the damned differ not in their distance from the Real but in the clarity with which they perceive His Light through their respective veils. Thus, there is no escape from veiling, only the perfection of seeing within it.

Ultimately, the metaphysical relationship between manifestation and concealment yields a profound anthropology of perception. The consequence of this relationship is not despair at limitation but gratitude for mediation. Without veils, neither the world nor the knower could exist. The veil is the mercy that renders revelation possible.

Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri's translation and explanation makes this paradox vivid, showing how Shaikh Ibn Al Arabi's (رضي الله تعالى عنه) mystical lexicon is not poetry alone but a precise metaphysical science. The *Makkan Unveilings*, in his rendering, becomes a map of Divine pedagogy, teaching that every form of concealment is a measured disclosure. The seeker's task is not to tear away veils, but to perceive their Divine texture. To see the Face of the Real glimmering through the fabric of the world.

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