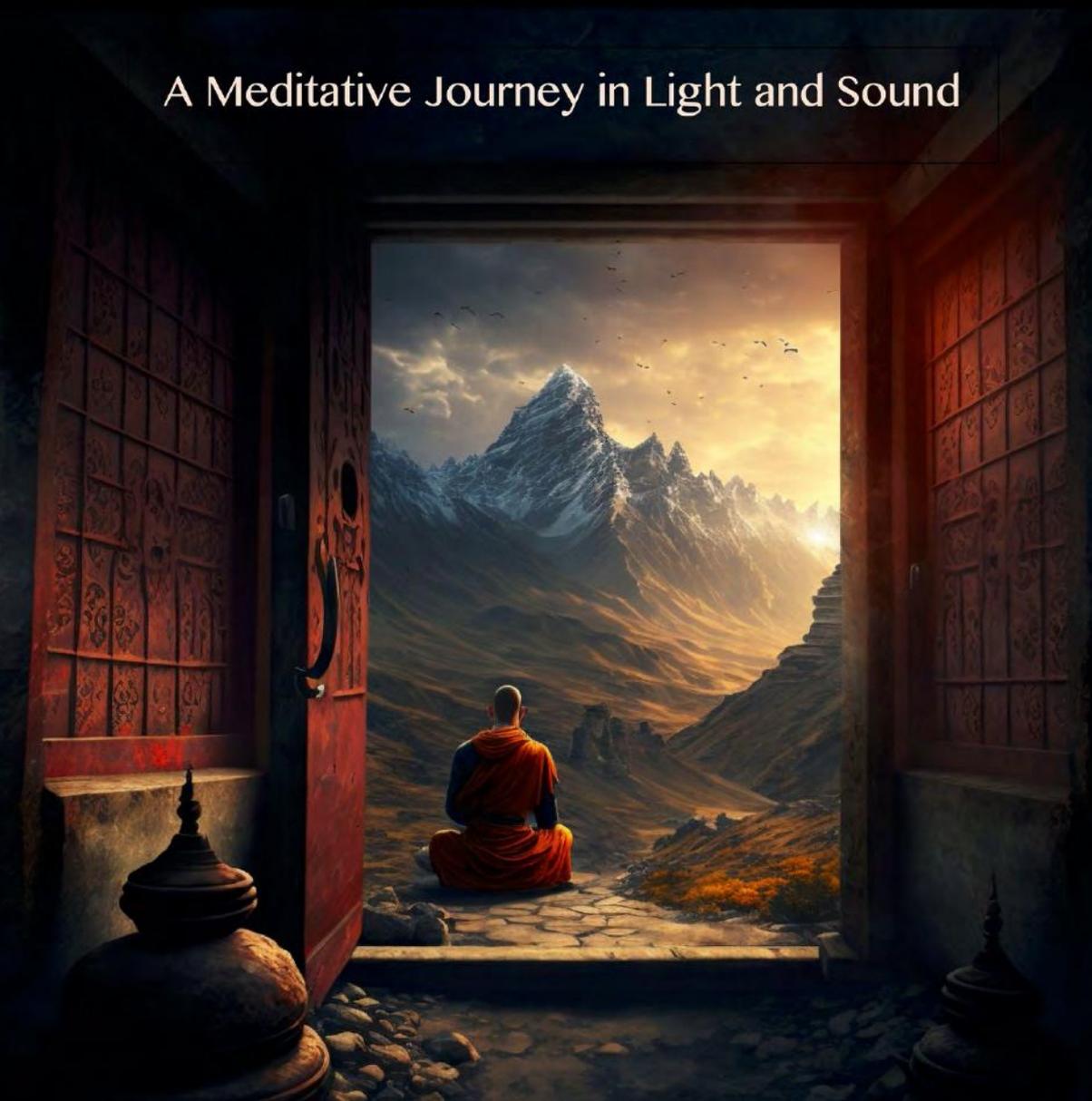


VERTICAL ASCENT

A Meditative Journey in Light and Sound



"The Way Forward resides in the Present"



THE VERTICAL ASCENT

A MEDITATIVE JOURNEY IN LIGHT AND SOUND

دين واقعى | सच्चा धर्म



THE VERTICAL ASCENT

Copyright 2023 © MSAC Philosophy Group

First Edition | Trade paperback

ISBN: 978-1-56543-143-0

Editors: David Christopher Lane and Kelly Lane

Mt. San Antonio College



DEDICATION

To James Bean, historian extraordinaire



“I am a bubble of the supermost consciousness.
In the process of evolution, I appeared or
manifested. Similarly, you also appeared. I did
not exist before, and I won't exist again. Only
One Element will remain from which this
bubble came into existence.”

—BABA FAQIR CHAND (1886-1981)



The one common denominator amongst those who are on a spiritual quest—be they Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, or Taoist—is that each utilize practices that focus the mind. While the goals may be different and the techniques may vary, all aspirants are repositioning their attention to that which they believe is of ultimate importance. As such, they are on a Vertical Ascent away from the merely mundane.



“Keep your eye fixed on the way to the top, but don't forget to look right in front of you. The last step depends on the first. Don't think you're there just because you see the summit. Watch your footing, be sure of the next step, but don't let that distract you from the highest goal. The first step depends on the last.”

— René Daumal, *Mount Analogue*





In Zen, a monk in a secluded enclave contemplates
the Koan given to him by his Master.

“What is the color of the wind?”



ONE



In Tibetan Buddhism, a lama near a mountain peak silently repeats the sacred words Om maṇi padme hūm as he aligns himself with Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.



TWO



A Christian Monk repeats the Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,” over and over again, imaging his Savior in his devotional heart.



THREE



A Muslim Sufi, sitting on his prayer circle, performs Zikr, beautiful names of the Sacred, in remembrance of Allah.



FOUR



An elderly Sikh quietly recites Guru Nanak's *Sri Japji Sahib* adjacent to the Sri Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar, in the Punjab.



FIVE



A Roman Catholic nun says her rosary and remembers the suffering and compassion of her beloved Savior.



SIX



A Hindu woman recites a mantra that her guru gave to her as she focuses on the image of Krishna.



SEVEN



A Jain holy man inside a temple dedicated to Mahavira utters the holy Navkar mantra.



EIGHT



A Taoist priest in a hidden garden ruminates over a passage of the *Tao Te Ching*.



NINE



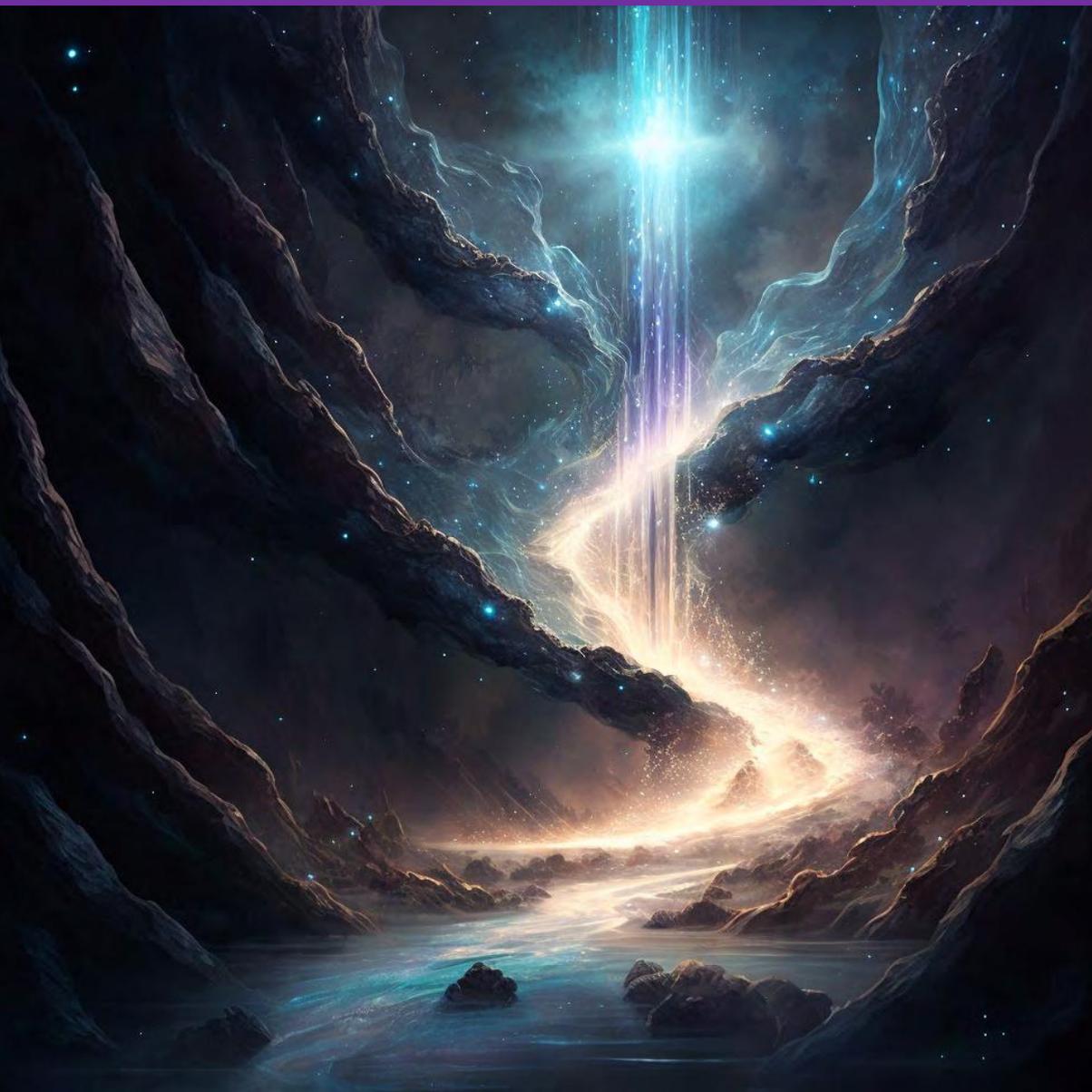
A female astronomer is lost in thought as she contemplates the night sky, resplendent with stars.



TEN

THE INNER VOYAGE

TRACING THE INNER LIGHT AND SOUND
TO ITS PRIMORDIAL SOURCE



Our consciousness streams out in the world through our five senses and from this process we interact with all that we can see, touch, smell, hear, and feel. But mystics, from both East and West, reverse this innate tendency by taking their attention from the outside and placing it within. Theirs is a quest to understand the nature of consciousness itself.





The distinctive characteristic of **surat shabd yoga** is its emphasis on listening to the inner sound current, known variously as shabd, nad, or audible life stream. The Sufi mystic, Mullah Shah, referred to this esoteric practice as Sultan-ul-Azkar.



THIRTEEN



It is through this union of awareness with the primordial music of the universe that the practice derives its name (surat—attention; shabd—sound current; yoga—union). Pythagoras imagined that all of matter was made of vibratory music.



FOURTEEN



Hence, masters of this path emphasize a three-fold method designed to still the mind and vacate the body: simran (repetition of name/names), dhyan (contemplation of inner light or radiant forms) and bhajan (listening to the inner sound current).



FIFTEEN



As Dr. Julian Johnson explains, “In due time, if the process is complete, the individual spirit current or substance is slowly withdrawn from the body. First from the lower extremities which become feeling-less, and then from the rest of the body.”



SIXTEEN



“The process is identical with that which takes place at the time of death, only this is voluntary, while that of death is involuntary.”



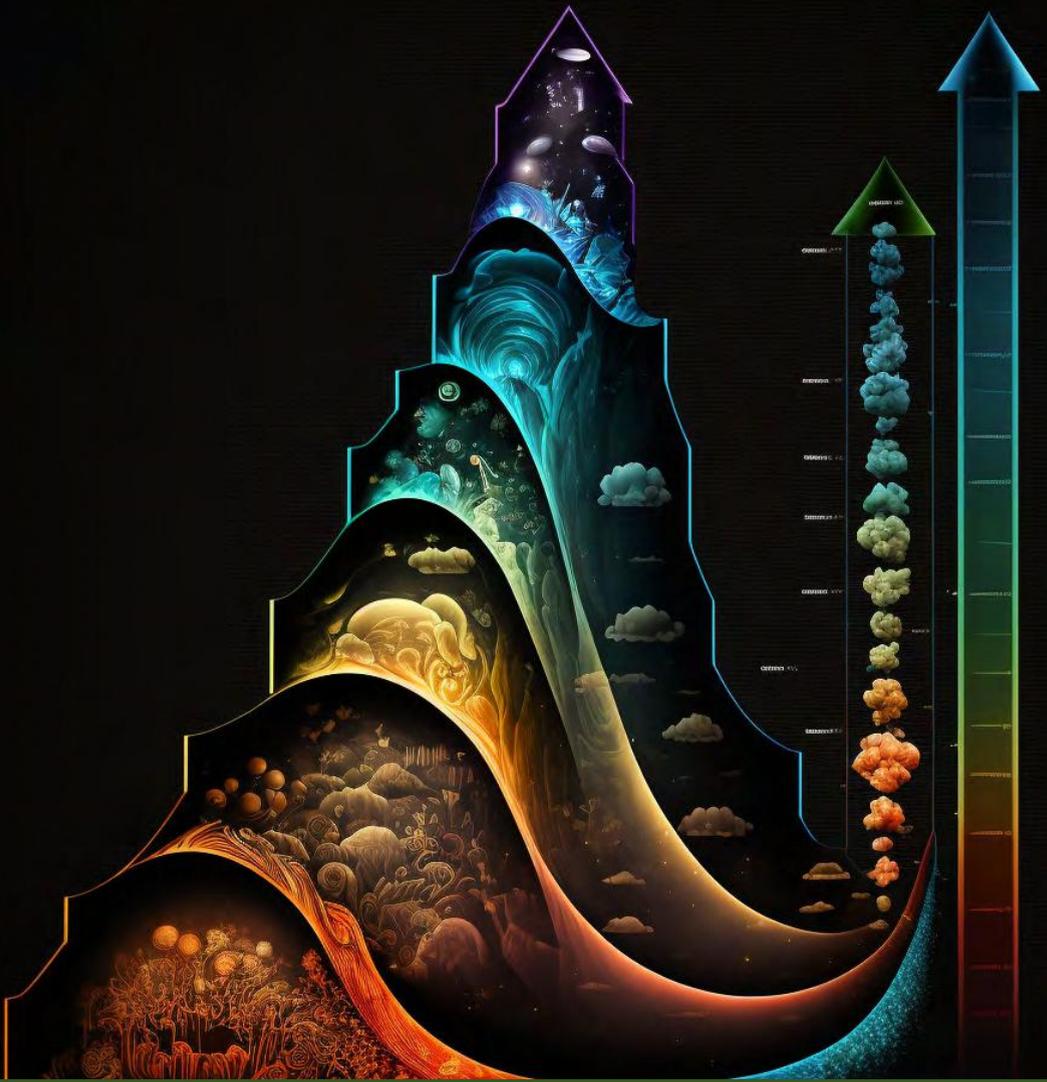
SEVENTEEN



“The body remains in the position in which he left it, quite senseless, but unharmed by the process. He is now in a world he never saw before.”



EIGHTEEN



The pattern is quite clear; clarity increases steadily the more one ascends (not vice versa). Ken Wilber has beautifully described this spectrum of consciousness as having a definite hierarchical structure, with the higher orders subsuming and transcending their lower counterparts.



NINETEEN



Our common language expresses in a graphically simple way the process of awareness: "We *fall* asleep; we wake *up*," In yoga psychology the farther down one's consciousness descends the deeper the sleep (or unconscious) state; the further up it ascends the higher the awareness (super-conscious).



TWENTY



The following account, primarily based upon Shiv Dayal Singh's inner journey as described in his *Sar Bachan*, is filled with rich mythological characterizations, metaphors, and illustrations. Let the literalist be forewarned.

THE FIRST INNER REGION
SAHAS-DAL-KANWAL

Entering the Portal of the Astral Plane



हजार रेशनी

“You will see the Akash in which is located Sahas-dal-Kanwal, the thousand petals of which perform the various functions pertaining to the three worlds.”





*The Sound Current is likened to a Tinkling Bell
and later a Conch.*

घंटी | शंख



The Presiding Demiurge of this Realm
Niranjan



I will give you the secret of the Path; a few hints concerning it. First fix your mind and soul upon tisra til. Gather together mind and soul, again and again, and bring them inside. Then behold a window; and beyond that an open *maidan*, or field.



TWENTY-FOUR



Concentrate the attention upon that and hold it there. You will see a five-colored flower garden, and inside of that, behold the Jyoti, radiant flame of light.



TWENTY-FIVE



Enjoy this scene for some days. Then see the blue-colored sky appearing like a chakra (circular disc). Impelled by love and longing, pierce through this.



TWENTY-SIX



Then gaze at the Jyoti with detached mind. Hear the unending bell sound and become absorbed in it. Next you will hear the conch. Let yourself become saturated with it."



TWENTY-SEVEN



Just before the first region, near the entrance to this region at Ashtdal Kanwal, the student first meets the Radiant Form of the Master. From here on they make the journey together.



TWENTY-EIGHT

THE SECOND INNER REGION
TRIKUTI

The Three Prominences



तीन प्रमुखताएँ

Now, my dear companion, prepare to enter the second stage. Behold Trikuti, the abode of the Guru, where the sound of Onkar is heard perpetually resounding.





*The Sound Current is likened to a Mridangam
or Primordial Drum.*

मृदंग



The Presiding Demiurge of this Realm
Onkar



Then you go on up and open a gate and enter bunk nal (the crooked tunnel), passing on to the other end of it. Then you cross high and low hills.

Now the vision appears to be reversed, and one sees as if from the opposite side of the veil which he has penetrated.



THIRTY-ONE



Looking upward, he passes into a fort-like region which he enters and becomes master of it. He reigns there as lord of that region.



THIRTY-TWO



Here the soul becomes adorned with the attributes of devotion and faith. Here the seed of all karma is burned, destroyed.



THIRTY-THREE



You will see thick dark clouds, from which peals of thunder constantly resound. When rising above these dark clouds, behold, the entire sphere is red, with the beautiful red sun in the center imparting its color to everything.



THIRTY-FOUR



Here you will see the red four-petalled lotus spoken of by the Saints, the details and colors becoming visible as one comes nearer to it. Here the bell and conch sounds are left behind and the sound of mardang (like a drum) is heard.



THIRTY-FIVE



After that, the soul resumes its upward journey.
Now comes the sound of a huge drum, beaten
incessantly. Here the soul has grasped the Primal
Current, from which all creation emanates.

Innumerable suns and moons are
seen here and many kinds of skies,
filled with stars.



THIRTY-SIX



He sees and traverses' deserts and mountains and gardens. In the gardens are flowers arranged in artistic designs and groups everywhere. Canals and rivulets of transparent water are flowing in abundance. Then one approaches an ocean, which he crosses by means of a bridge.



THIRTY-SEVEN



He then beholds the three mountains, or prominences, called Mer, Sumer, and Kailash. (From these the region is named.) After this, he passes on to a region of the most unalloyed delight.



THIRTY-EIGHT

THE THIRD INNER REGION
DASWAN DWAR

The Tenth Door



दशम द्वार

Now, the soul goes on up and opens the third veil and hears the voice of the Sunn region. This is Daswan Dwar, with very brilliant light. The Akash of Sahansdal Kanwal and Gagan of Trikuti have been left behind.





The Sound Current is likened to a Sarangi.

सारंगी



The Presiding Demiurge of this Realm
Rarankar



The soul here bathes in Mansarover and joins the group of hansas (swans). The soul then circles about and rises to the top of Sunn, and there hears the kingri and sarangi (stringed instruments, something like a guitar).



FORTY-ONE



After hearing this sound one penetrates and crosses Tribeni (a place where three streams meet), there entering the vestibule of Maha Sunn, where he picks up the secret knowledge.



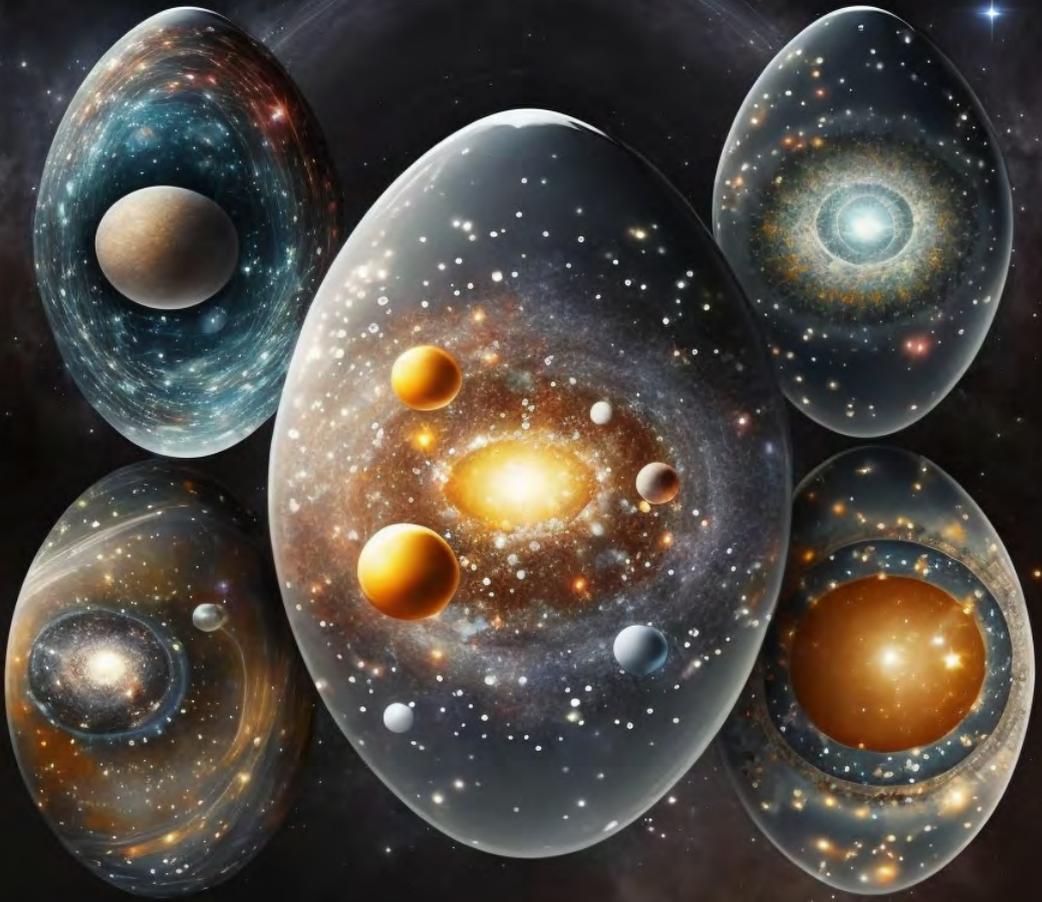
FORTY-TWO



This great sphere alone is seventy palangs in circumference and in this sphere there is at first pitch darkness. Four Sound Currents are heard emanating from invisible sources, the music varying, every minute changing in tone.



FORTY-THREE



The sound of the Rarankar predominates and is indescribable in mortal language. One hears them and is entranced by their sweetness. Here are five egg-shaped regions or worlds all full of a variety of creations and each is permeated and governed by a Brahm.



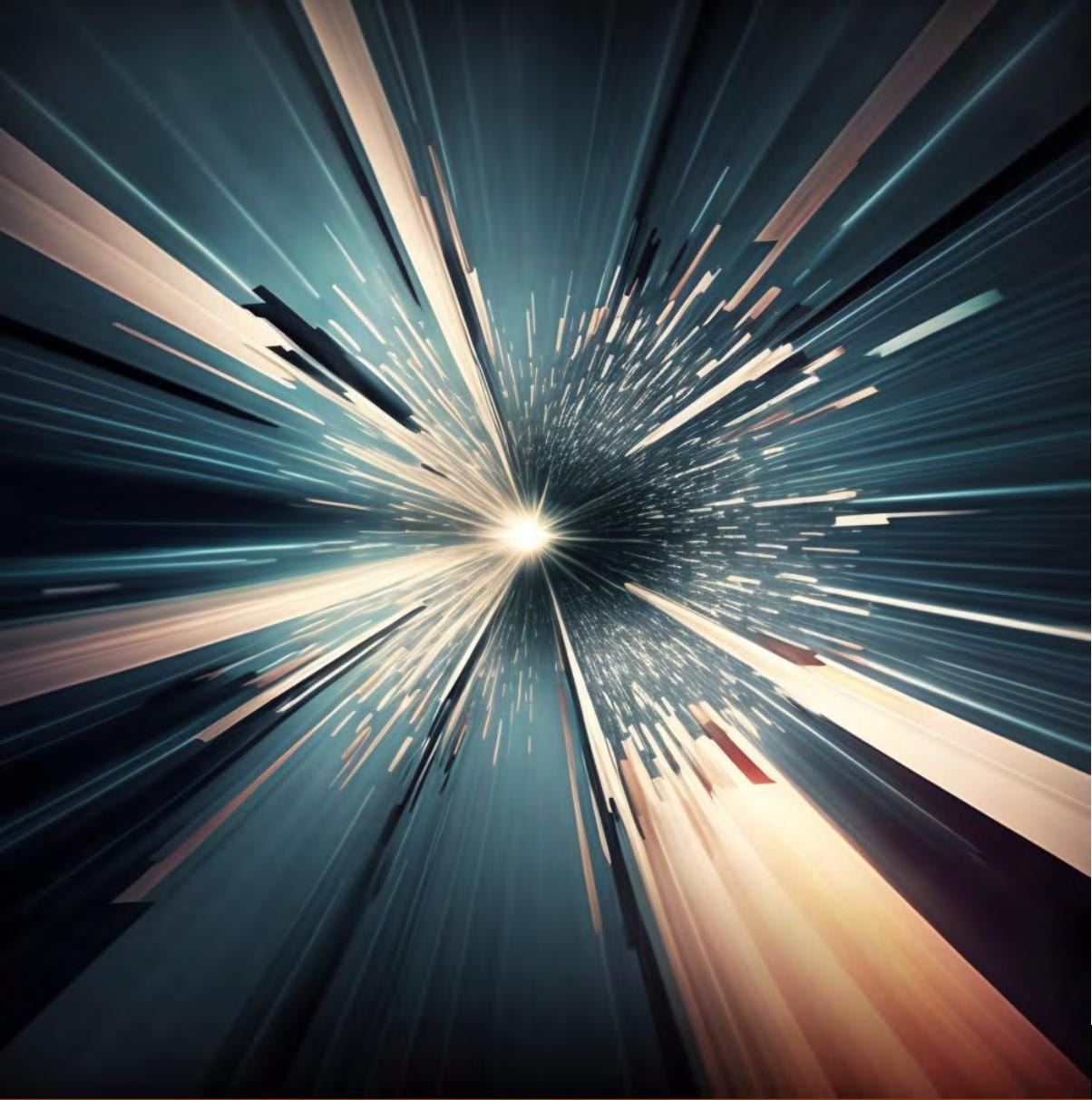
FORTY-FOUR



Each has its own predominating color like green or yellow or even white. They are quite vast in extent, in comparison with which the entire universe below Trikuti appears very insignificant."



FORTY-FIVE



We traverse almost measureless space and approach
the fourth region.



FORTY-SIX

THE FOURTH INNER REGION
BHANWAR GUPHA

The Whirling Cave



चक्करदार गुफा

Cross the pass above the Hansni tunnel and enter the Rukmini tunnel, where you will see a strange and beautiful mark, or structure.





The Presiding Demiurge of this Realm
Sohang



The Sound Current is likened to a Flute.

बांसुरी



On the right side there are bright islands and on the left many continents covered with palaces, with their spheres of other temples and worlds.



FORTY-NINE



I then saw the Bhanwar Gupha mountain,
approaching which I heard the Sohang Shabd. The
Sound emanating from there is like a keen flute.



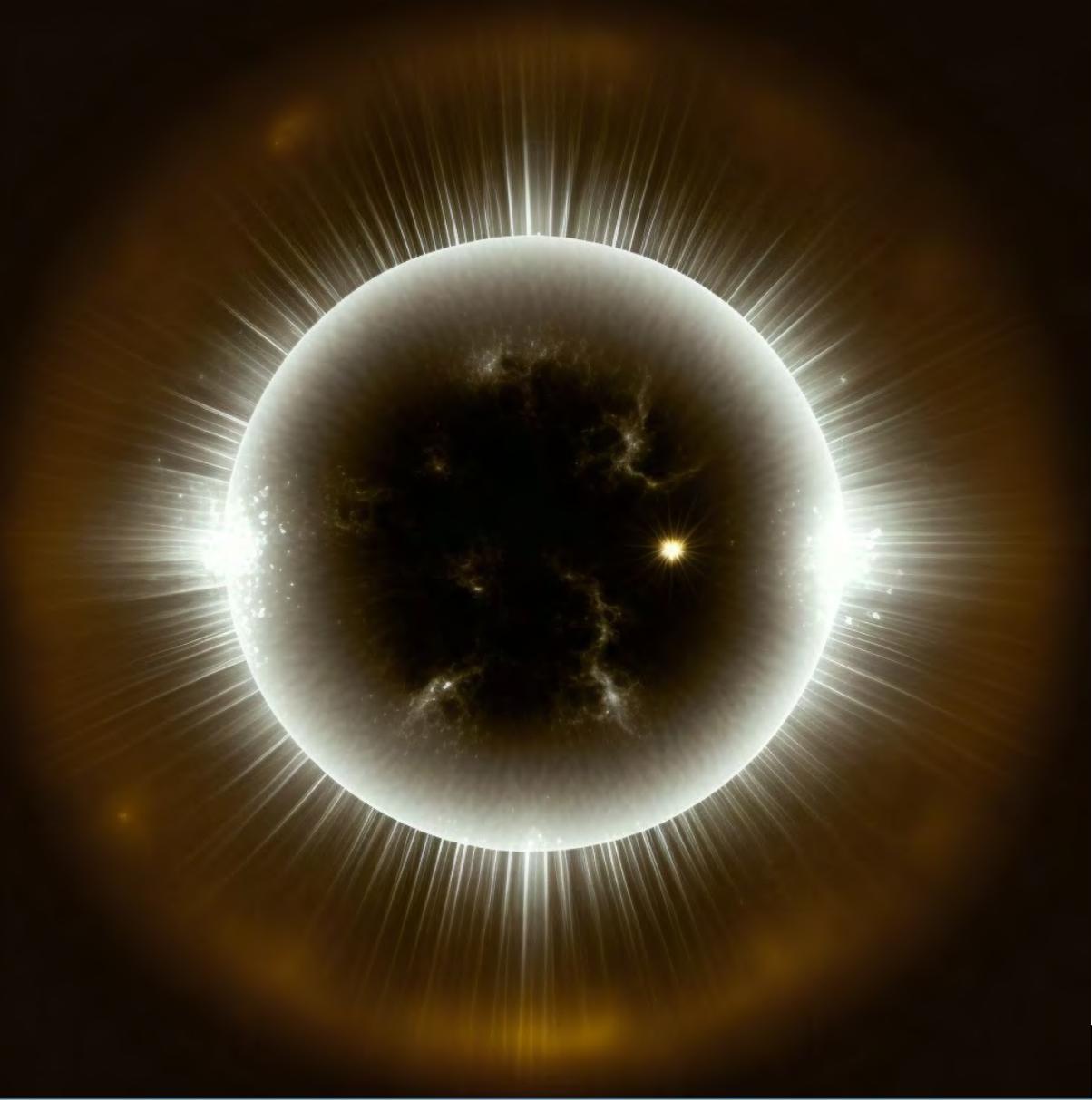
FIFTY



Kabir Sahib also refers to eighty-eight thousand island-continents, all with magnificent palaces of sparkling light.



FIFTY-ONE



Here the soul beholds the sun above, with immense
light. The region is most beautiful and sweet and
full of light. The souls there live on the Sound
Current as their food.



FIFTY-TWO

THE FIFTH INNER REGION
SACH KHAND

The True Realm



सच्चा धर्म

In the fifth region there is a fort-like palace
wherein is situated the throne of the King of
Kings.





The Sound Current is likened to a Vina.

बीन



The Presiding Demiurge of this Realm
Sat Purush



The soul now advances to a great and wonderful field, or park, the scenery of which is absolutely indescribable. There is also a great reservoir, from below which flow abundant streams of the most delicious nectar, and this nectar flows out through large canals, to supply distant regions.



FIFTY-FOUR



Golden palaces are set in open fields of silvery light. But the landscape is indescribable, and the beauty of the hansas living there is incomprehensible, the brilliancy of each one being equal to the combined light of sixteen suns and moons.



FIFTY-FIVE



The soul then passes on up to the real entrance. The watchers by the gates are the hansas. Here the Sahaj Surat asks the soul: 'How have you managed to reach this region?' The newcomer replies:

'I came across a Saint and he gave me knowledge of this region.'



FIFTY-SIX



Saying this, the soul then pushes on and enjoys the darshan of Sat Nam, and rejoices with an exceeding great joy. A voice then emanates from within the lotus, saying: 'Who are you, and what purpose or object brings you here?'



FIFTY-SEVEN



He answers, 'I met the Satguru and he gave me full instructions. Through his kindness I now have the privilege of your darshan.'



FIFTY-EIGHT



From this darshan the soul derives immense pleasure. Sat Purush then speaks of the mysteries of Alakh Lok, and with his own powers and love, he aids the soul to make further advance toward the still higher regions."



FIFTY-NINE



The soul has now seen the three regions above Sach
Khand, and the ruling Purush in each one.



SIXTY



Radhasoami Dham is boundless, infinite, endless and immeasurable. It is the Nij Sthan, the special resting place of Sants (Faqirs). That region is the Ultima Thule of all Sants, and all speech and description end here.



SIXTY-ONE

THE ULTIMATE REALIZATION
ANAMI LOK

The Nameless Realm



बेनाम



In the ultimate realization, all the regions that one has traversed—from Sahans-dal-Kanwal to Bhanwar Gupha appear as but illusory dreams without a sustaining reality. They are but cascading simulations upon simulations without number.



SIXTY-THREE



Just as in a dream when we wake up all the landscapes and all the characters vanish and a new world emerges that makes all that came before it appear vacuous. Even the most magnificent visions are but temporary and void of permanence.



SIXTY-FOUR



Anami Lok is not an attainment as such. But rather a radical undoing, a letting go of all that is less than Truth Itself. The contracted bubble of Consciousness realizes its prior Nature and that it has always been part and parcel of the Ocean of Being which lives it.



SIXTY-FIVE



Shiv Dayal Singh, the founder of Radhasoami, realized that no words could suffice to explain the final Moksha, so he ended with the words, "Wonder, Wonder, Wonder, Wonder has assumed a Form."



SIXTY-SIX



According to Adepts in the yoga of the Sound
Current, the key is to follow the Audible Life Stream
to its terminal Source and not be waylaid by any
sidetracking and enchanting visions.

Stay with the Current.



SIXTY-SEVEN



Although the sound current is one constant Audible Life Stream, it has four major gradations: **Anahad** (unstruck); **Sar** (essential); **Sat** (true); and **Nij** (original).



SIXTY-EIGHT



By following the Light and Sound, one is eventually led to the Transcendent Space which has neither. It is Inexpressible. As the great sage, Baba Faqir Chand, realized: "Inquire into the Subjective Source that is seeing, hearing, and experiencing. "



SIXTY-NINE

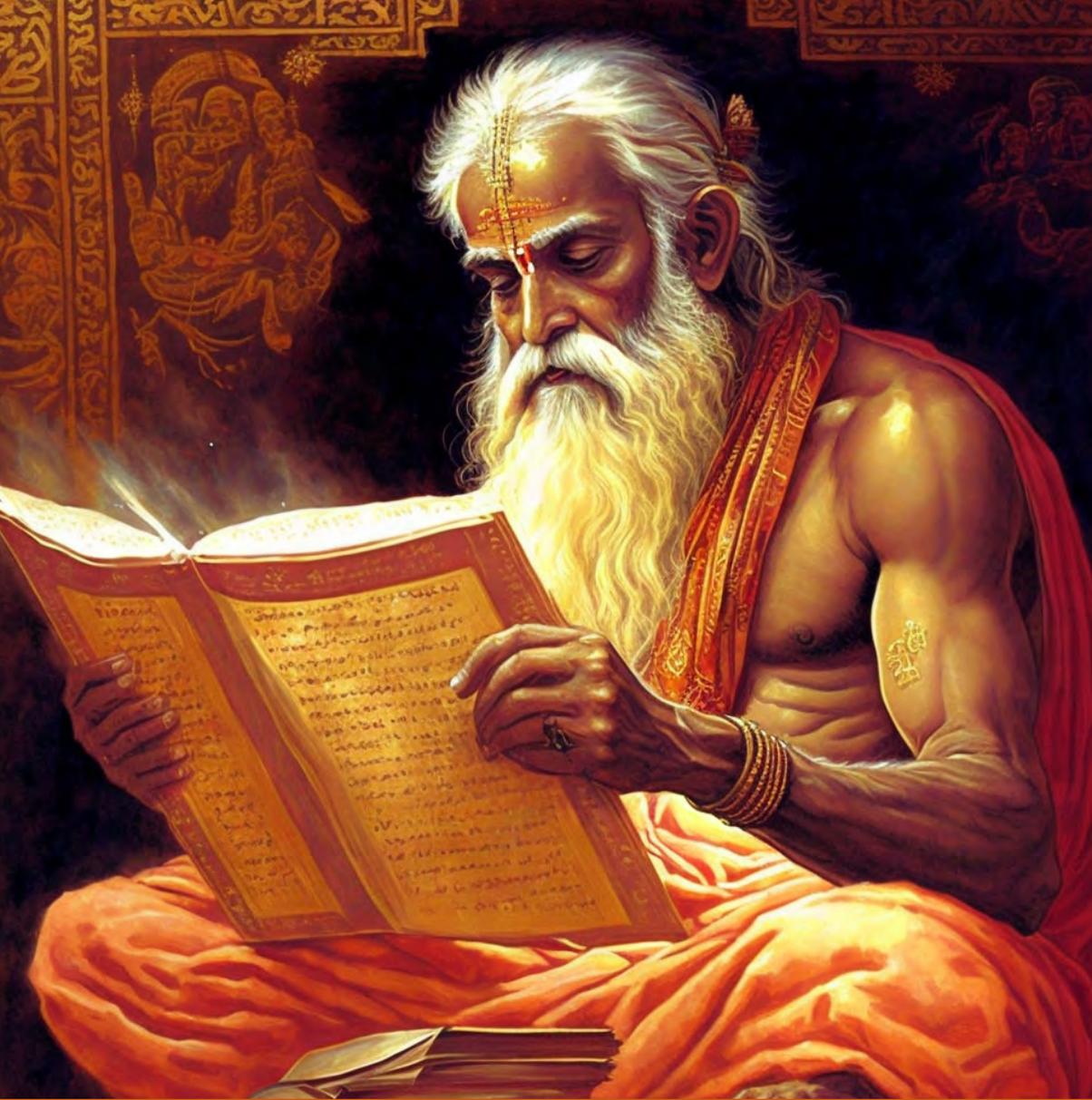


Who is That? "That I am."

That Source is without Name, without Form,
without Restriction, without End.



SEVENTY



The yogin being in the siḍḍhāsana (posture) and practising the vaiṣṇavīmuḍrā, should always hear the internal sound through the right ear.



SEVENTY-TWO



In the beginning of his practice, he hears many loud sounds. They gradually increase in pitch and are heard more and more subtly.



SEVENTY-THREE



At first, the sounds are like those proceeding from—
the ocean, clouds, kettle-drum, and
cataracts: in the middle (stage) those proceeding
from marḍala (a musical instrument),
bell, and horn.



SEVENTY-FOUR



At the last stage, those proceeding from tinkling bells, flute, vīṇā (a musical instrument), and bees. Thus he hears many such sounds more and more subtle.

NADABINDU UPANISHAD



SEVENTY-FIVE



The glorious consummation takes place, when the
Lord of the Five Melodies comes. The wondrous
Music of the Five melodies, God Himself may make
audible if He so wisheth.

GURU NANAK



SEVENTY-SIX



Abstract sound is called Saut-i Sarmad by the Sufis;
all space is filled with it. The vibrations of this
sound are too fine to be either audible or visible to
the material ears or eyes.

HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN



SEVENTY-SEVEN



It is easiest to hear this Sound when it is quiet,
particularly at night-time. Once you have identified
this Sound, then you place your awareness on it
without wavering.



SEVENTY-EIGHT



Resting your mind in the Sound, you continue to
listen, going further and further into the Sound
itself.

DZOGCHEN PONLOP RINPOCHE



SEVENTY-NINE



Therefore, when one of our members listens internally and expectantly for the divine sound, with controlled body, mind and will, he will become lifted up towards the bliss and wisdom of the Supreme Being as soon as he hears the divine sound.

SAHABJI MAHARAJ



EIGHTY



There was borne in on my perception a heavenly spiritual sound, which pertains to the song of everlasting praise and the sweetness of the invisible melody.



EIGHTY-ONE



Invisible I call it because it can be neither known nor heard except by him to whom it is vouchsafed; and he must first be purified and separated from the world.



EIGHTY-TWO



For while I was sitting in the same chapel,
and chanting psalms at night before
supper, as I could, I heard as it were the tinkling
music of stringed instruments, or rather
of singers, over my head.

RICHARD ROLLE



EIGHTY-THREE



deep silence
the shrill of cicadas
seeps into rocks

— Matsuo Bashō



EIGHTY-FOUR



God picks up the reed-flute world and blows.
Each note is a need coming through one of us, a
passion, a longing pain.

—Rumi



EIGHTY-FIVE



Sound brings liberation and peace to all sentient beings who in their distress are calling for aid.

—Surangama Sutra



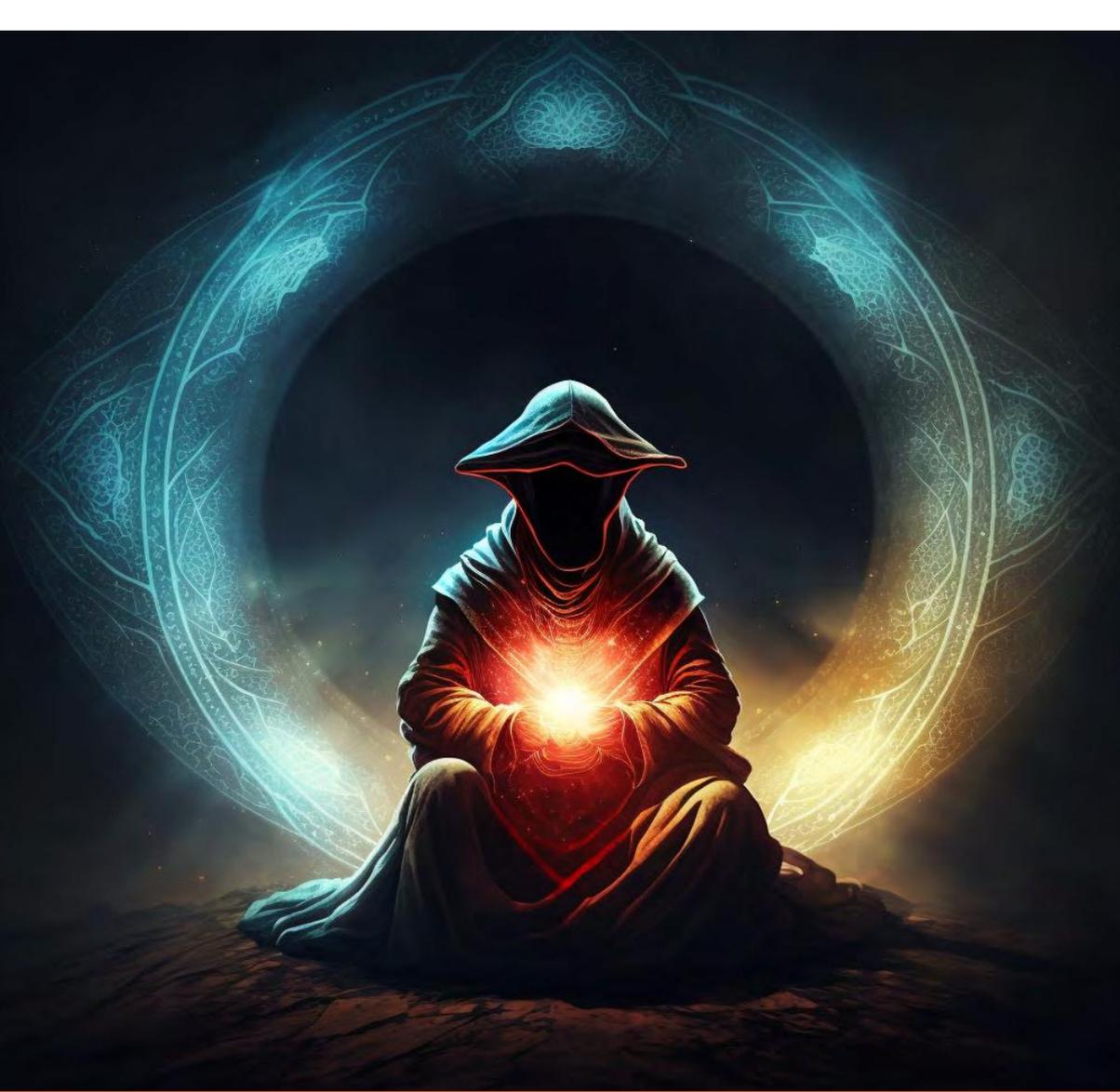
EIGHTY-SIX



Let the Inner Ascent Begin.



EIGHTY-SEVEN



RESOURCES

The Sound Current Tradition. Cambridge University Press. 2022.

With a Great Master in India. Sawan Service League. 1934.

Naam or Word. Ruhani Satsang. 1960.

Sar Bachan. Dayalbagh Satsang. 1959.

The Yogic Philosophy of Saints. Manavta Mandir. 1980.

