Significance and General Character of Shah Waliullah's Thought

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Abstract
The roots of Muslim sociological tradition in the studies of Qur'ān and Hadith has been traced out by numerous Islamic scholars and researchers. Quran and Hadith is used as source of Muslim sociological outlook in two ways: Firstly, they invite human beings to ponder over the phenomena around them; and secondly, they give central importance to social world as it is through social world that individual first acquires the basic elements necessary for his intellectual and spiritual growth and then gives expression of his inner experiences only with the help of existing social structures. This dialectic and reflexive relationship between individual and society was promptly captured by the early Muslim thinkers. Shah Waliullah arguably is one of the most important Muslim scholars in the intellectual history of Muslim civilization who has worked on this relationship. The principal attribute of Shah Waliullah's thought is its logical coherence. His works contain systematic analysis of various aspects of human condition. Shah Waliullah successfully employs various branches of knowledge including history, sociology, and psychology to expound various topics in his encyclopedic works. This study aims to serve as an an introductory endeavour to understand Shah Waliullah and his thought in the context of Muslim Sociological tradition. This paper will provide a brief description of Muslim sociological tradition and will discuss some of the general features of Shah Waliullah's thoughts and ideas. The paper will also explore the concept of social reconstruction and will provide an overview of Shah Waliullah's thoughts on the conception.

Keywords: *Shah Waliullah, Sociology, Muslim Tradition, Social Thought, Social Reconstruction*

(a) Introduction

Shah Waliullah (1703-1762) is one of the most profound Muslim scholars. His works and thoughts on the major issues concerning to disciplines of metaphysics, sociology, psychology and even political theory makes him one of the central Muslim scholars who played a vital role in changing the face of the society, particularly during an era marked with both social and political turmoil. Qutbuddin Shah Wali-ullah Muhadith Dehlevi is regarded as a lone genious of his times. He mastered rational sciences including Greek philosophy, logical syllogism, Gnosticism, dialectics, Iranian illumination, speculative reasoning, and arithmetic as well as traditional sciences including the exegis of the Holy Qur'ān, thorough study of Hadith literature, scriptural hermeneutics and mysticism. Even Iqbal believed that Shah Waliullah was the first Muslim Scholar who conceptualized the notion of modernity.

(b) 2. Genesis and Growth of Muslim Sociological Tradition

Muslim sociological tradition has its roots in Qur'ānic studies. Qur'ān claims to be a Book for man, enunciating the facts that all phenomena, social and cultural, physical and mental are meaningful entities. With this claim it was postulated that no socio-cultural order can come into being or survive and grow without system of meanings and the value patterns. Thus the sociological thought of the Qur'ān refers to an axiological base, with a plea that man, society and culture have from time to time to discover these meanings and to use them for the construction of a valid and causally related social order.[1]

Muslim thinkers were greatly inspired by the Qur'ānic fundamentals and methods and this inspiration coupled with the insights of Prophetic

[1]Dr. M. Basharat Ali, *Muslims-The First Sociologists* (Karachi: Islamic Sociological Society of Pakistan, 1961), 15-25.

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Traditions made (PBUH) them generate fresh systems of knowledge. Although some text books in sociology published in the western world still insist on tracing the beginning of sociological enterprise from August Comte (1798-1857)[2] and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903),[3] there is at the same time acknowledgement in the West of the works of Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) and their status as first ever original works in the field of sociological investigation. Dr. Basharat Ali, while acknowledging the immense significance of Ibn Khaldun, however denies that Ibn Khaldun was the first Muslim sociologist. According to Dr. Basharat[4] neither Ibn Khaldun was the first Muslim sociologist, nor was Comte the founder of the science of society. Long before them the Muslim thinkers, at the initial stages of the development of Islamic culture, founded sociology which was ultimately given a systematic form by Ibn Khaldun. According to Dr. Basharat various disciplines founded by Islamic scholars like *Tafseer, Kalām, Ilmul Akhlāq, Asma'-ur-Rijāal* and even Chemistry and Medicine carried sociological insights and methods.[5] In short, most of the systems of natural, humanistic, and theological sciences had sociological argumentation and analyses. And certain sub-fields of sociology developed by Muslims, like sociology of mysticism or eschatology, are still without any parallel in the western world. These Muslim scholars developed their own methodology which was an intermixture of analysis, comparison, hermeneutics, and induction.[6] A detailed and comprehensive study and analysis is needed to fully understand and trace the sociological tradition of Islam and this task can be accomplished only through an institute with a

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[2]Lewis A. Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1971)11.
[3]Ibid., 13-15.
[4]Dr. M. Basharat Ali devoted his life to sociology. From the beginning to the close of his university career, he studied no other subject than sociology and politics. He studied under eminent social scientists including Tonnies, Karl Mannheim, Brause, Schaeder, Ginsberg and Laski. With this background, he is well suited to compare and contrast the sociological thought of the Muslims with those of the Western scholars.
[5]Dr. M. Basharat Ali, *Muslims-The First Sociologists*, 33-95.
[6]Ibid.

team of good social scientists well versed in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish and Islamic sciences.[7]

The Qur'ān and the Hadīth provided a powerful incentive to the Muslims for the development of sociological thought which was later developed as a definite system of knowledge and a systematized scientific discipline. Qur'ān is full of sociological themes and ideas. Some important themes are:

(c) Human nature and personality[8]
(d) Family life and its problems[9]
(e) Peoples and cultural groups[10]
(f) Conflict and accommodation groups
(g) Population and territorial groups
(h) Collective behavior[11]
(i) Social organizations and social institutions
(j) Social problems, social pathologies and social adjustment
(k) Social change[12]

What has succinctly been referred to in the *Qur'ān* has further been developed in the *Hadith*. In the course of time, during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) an elaborate system of traditions was built up and this accelerated the development of sociological thought. Sprenger[13] (1813-1893) and Goldziher[14] (1850-1921), in spite of the patent illogicality of their assertions, have, in this behalf, admitted the cultural and sociological importance of the *Hadith*.

[7]Ibid.
[8]At-Teen 95:04.
[9]Al-Qur'ān al-Aaraf: 07:189; an-Nisa 04:01.
[10]Al-Qur'an, al-Hujurat 49:13; al-Mujadila 58:11.
[11]al-Mujadila 58:10.
[12]ar-Ra'ad 13:11; Al-e-Imran 03:140.
[13]Aloys Sprenger was famous Austrian orientalist who remained principal of Delhi College and who worked on Ibn Hajar and Soyuti.
[14]Ignac Goldziher was famous Hungarian Jewish orientalist and was one of the founders of Islamic Studies in Europe.

Qur'ān and Hadīth both emphasized the significance of observation and placed observation as one of the legitimate basis of generation of knowledge. Various kinds of observations have been mentioned in Qur'ān:

1) Observation of natural phenomena so that *Qudrah* and *Hikmah* of God is revealed.[15]
2) Observation of inner self[16]
3) Observation of annals of history and laws of rise and fall of nations[17]
4) Observation of different places of this world.[18]

Iqbal has rightly pointed out that this emphasis of Qur'ān on observation gave rise to the development of inductive logic which is the foundation of social sciences as well as natural sciences.[19] Mentioning observation of inner self, annals of history, and different places of this world particularly developed sociological investigation and thinking. Rather a kind of sociological imagination developed, to borrow the term of C. Wright Mills,[20] and this sociological imagination can be traced in all the important works of early Muslim scholars. According to Dr. Basharat, Muslims were able to develop the concept of the wholeness or oneness of life, whereas Christian civilization was fraught with conflicting cultural mentalities and ideals. This concept of organic unity of whole life coupled with their emphasis on observation of socio-cultural phenomena made the work of Muslim scholars engaged in different disciplines tinged with sociological thought. For example, elements of sociological insight and thought are present in the biographies of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), commentaries on the Qur'ān, general literature, and works on mysticism. These facts demonstrate that Sociology, in Muslim scholarship, was the product of various intellectual currents in its formative phase. Sociological

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[15]Al-Mulk 67:02-04.
[16]At-Tariq 86:05-06.
[17]Al-e-Imran 03:127; Yusaf 12:105; al-Kahaf 18:59; Taha 20:128.
[18]An'ām 06:11; Yousaf 12:109.
[19]Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam.* Edited by M.Saeed Sheikh. (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Cultre, 1986).
[20]C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

reasoning permeated the whole theological, ethical, and political philosophies of the *Asharites*, the *Mutazilites*, and the *Ikhwāan-ul-Safa.*[21]

Ibn Khaldun's sociological insights can be traced in the works of some of the most influential contemporary Western theorists including Karl Marx (1818-1883)[22] Max Weber (1864-1920),[23] Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923),[24] and Ernest Gellner (1925-1995).[25] Weber's typology of leadership, Pareto's circulation of elites, and Gellner's pendulum swing theory of Muslim society betray the influence of Ibn Khaldun.[26] And even before Ibn Khaldun, there was a rich tradition of work on society in which Al-Biruni (973-1048), Ibn Baitar (1197-1248), and Al-Mas'udi (896-956) are only few important names. According to Akbar S. Ahmed, Al-Biruni deserves the title of Father of Anthropology.[27] Thus it can be safely maintained that Sociology, in Muslim tradition, was a part of political, theological and moral philosophy. The Qur'ān, the Hadith, the scholastic theology and philosophy proposed the fundamental postulate of sociology. This

[21]Dr. M. Basharat Ali, *Muslims-The First Sociologists* (Karachi: Islamic Sociological Society of Pakistan, 1961).

[22]Karl Marx, *Selected Writing in Sociology and Philosophy*, Ed. by T. B. Bottomore (London: C. A. Watts and Co. Ltd., 1963).

[23]Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

[24]Vilfred Pareto is an talian economist and sociologist who is known for his theory on mass and elite interaction as well as for his application of mathematics to economic analysis; Vilfred Pareto, Giulio Farina, Elisabeth Abbott, Joseph Lopreato, *Compendium of General Sociology* (Minnesota: university of Minnesota Press, 1980).

[25]Ernest André Gellner was a British-Czech philosopher and social anthropologist and one of the world's most vigorous intellectuals. Gellner fought all his life—in his writing, teaching and political activism—against what he saw as closed systems of thought, particularly communism, psychoanalysis, relativism and the dictatorship of the free market. Among other issues in social thought, modernization theory and nationalism were two of his central themes, his multicultural perspective allowing him to work within the subject-matter of three separate civilizations: Western, Islamic, and Russian. He is considered one of the leading theoreticians on the issue of nationalism.

[26]Akbar S. Ahmad, "Toward Islamic Anthropology: Islamic Anthropology," 1986, https://i-epistemology.net/subjects/sociology-and-anthropology/item/502-toward-islamic-anthropology-islamic-anthropology.html

[27]Akbar S. Ahmad, *Al-Birnuni: The First Anthropologist* (London: Royal Anthropological Institute, 1984).

fundamental postulate is that society is *sui generis*, that it is prior to individual, and therefore social forces must be studied logically in order to undearstand the development of individual which is the principal concern of Muslim civilization. And in this way began the tradition of logical and scientific study of social phenomenon, the chief concerns of this study being the laws of developmnt of human personality, social structure, social evolution, degeneration of society, and rise and fall of nations and societies. According to Dr. Basharat, Farabi (872-950), Ghazzali (1058-1111), Nizamul Mulk (1018-1092), Ibn Bajjah (1085-1138), Ibn Tufail(1105-1185), Ibn Taymiyyah(1263-1328), and with greater force Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), and in the eighteenth century Shah Waliullah (1703-1762) are important scholars of this tradition.[28]

According to Dr. Basharat, Muslim sociological thought has passed through the following four phases[29]

(a) From the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) time upto 750 A.C.;

(b) From 750 to 900 ;
(c) From 900 to 1100, and
(d) From about 1100 to the modern time.

The chief contents of this sociological tradition were:

(a) Human nature
(b) Society, individual and group
(c) Evolution of society
(d) Social organization
(e) Rural and urban populations
(f) Social problems
(g) Conflict, prejudice and competition
(h) Rise and fall of nations

[28]Dr. M. Basharat Ali, *Muslims-The First Sociologists*, 75.
[29]Ibid., 50.

In Ibn Khaldun, Muslim sociological tradition is at its zenith. He clearly separated the study of social phenomena from politics. After Ibn Khaldun, Shah Waliullah of Delhi explored new dimensions of this sociological tradition.

(l) 3. Shah Waliullah And His Times

Shah Waliullah (1703-1762) is the most important Muslim intellectual of eighteenth-century India.[30] His father Shah Abdur Raheem (d. 1719) was a notable scholar and saint. Shah Abdur Raheem devoted much attention to the education and spiritual and moral training of his intelligent son. Besides religious subjects, his studies included astronomy, mathematics, Arabic and Persian language and grammar, and medical science (*Tibb*). He completed his studies when he was fifteen, and in that year his father accepted him as a disciple in the *Naqshbandiyah* order, and he began to perform its practices. He started teaching various religious sciences in the *Madrassa Raheemiya* of Delhi founded by his father. He taught for twelve years. This experience of teaching was immensely beneficial for him. Then in 1731, he left for Hijaz to perform Hajj and to pursue further studies in Islamic sciences. He stayed in Hijaz for fourteen months. This stay in Hijaz was an important formative influence on his thought and subsequent life. There he studied Hadith, Fiqh, and Sufism with various eminent teachers, the most important being Shaykh Abu Tahir Madni (d. 1733). Shah Waliullah was deeply impressed by his teacher about whom he wrote: "In short he was gifted with the virtues of the Godly faith, like piety, independence of judgement, devotion, attachment to knowledge and fairness in controversy. Even in minor matters of doubt he would not offer any opinion, until he had pondered deeply and checked up all the references."[31]

Shah Waliullah's writing career began on his return from Hajj. Along with writing on a wide range of Islamic disciplines, he was also teaching and

[30]For biographical details of Shah Waliullah, see: Rahim Bakhsh, *Hayat-i Wali* (Lahore: 1955); Fazle Mahmood, *A Study of the Life and Works on Shah Wali Allah* (Lahore: 1972); G. N. Jalbani, *Life of Shah Wali Allah* (Delhi: 1981); Allah Ditta Muztar, Shah *Wali Allah: A Saint Scholar of Muslim India* (Islamabad: 1979).

[31]S. M. Ikram, *History of Muslim Civilization in India and Pakistan* (Lahore: Institute of islamic Culture, 1993).

acing as a guide in Sufism. His sound and comprehensive education enriched with the expereience of his exposure in Hijaz had made him a celebrated scholar of Islam. At the same time he was not unaware of the socio-political conditions of India of his times.[32] In fact he was a keen observer of the dramatic changes on the political scene. Nadir Shah's invasion in 1739 had left the Mughal empire literally prostrate. It resulted in large scale massacre of the people of Delhi leaving behind notorious memories of killing and plunder. There was no real sovereign authority left with the Mughal emperor.[33] It was in this atmosphere of moral chaos and political anarchy that Shah Waliullah was pursuing his intellectual and spiritual activities aimed at the reconstruction of society. Shah Waliullah made earnest efforts to arrest the decay of the Mughal empire. But it should not be mistaken here as his belief in the Mughal institution of hereditary kingship. Professor Sh. Abdur Rashid has rightly observed: "He simply wanted to arrest its decay till a better substitute could be found for it."[34] In his work, *Shah Waliullah ke Siyasi Maktubat*, Professor Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (1925-1997) published a collection of Shah Waliullah's letters to various Muslim nobles and leaders, urging them to either strengthen the current administration, or in the case of outside Muslim leaders such as Abdali, to defeat Hindu threats to Muslim rule and society such as the threats of the Marathas.

In order to arrest their moral decline and mitigate the sectarian differences, he wanted the Muslims to follow the teachings of Islam which are gloriously treasured in the Qur'ān. For this purpose he translated the Qur'ān in Persian which was the language of literature and administration of his times. Shah Waliullah was a prolific writer. He wrote extensively in Arabic and Persian. His magnum opus *Hujjat ullah al-Baligha* can be

[32]The extent of political unstability is indicated by the fact that Shah Waliullah witnessed the reign of 11 Mughal emperors: (1) Aurangzab Alamgir (1658-1707), (2) Azam Shah (March 1707-June 1707), (3) Bahadur Shah I (1707-1712), (4) Jahandar Shah (1712-1713), (5) Farrukh Siyar (1713-1719), (6) Rifi ud Darajat (1719), (7) Shah Jahan II (1719), (8) Muhammad Shah (1719-1748), (9) Ahmad Shah Bahadur (1748-1754), (10) Alamgir II (1754-1759), (11) Shah Alam II (1759-1806).

[33]I. H. Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics* (Karachi, 1974).

[34]Sh. A. Rashid, *A Short History of Pakistan* (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1987).

compared to *Ihya-i Ulum al-Din* of Imam Ghazzali as a classic on the religious philosophy of Islam.[35] His works are often characterized by a historical, ststematic approach coupled with an attempt to explain and mediate divisve tendencies.[36] Among his other important writings are: *Al-Budur al-bazighah*, an Arabic work outlining his theory of social and religious development in human history, *Al-fa wz al-kabir fi usul al-tafsir* is a study of Qur'ānic interpretation (tafsīr), *Al- tafhimat al-ilahaiyah*, is a two volume collection of shorter mystical reflections in Arabic and Persian.

After Shah Waliullah's death in 1762, his misson and teachings were carried on by by his descendants, in particular, his sons, Shah Abdul Aziz (1745-1824), Shah Rafiuddin (d. 1818), and his grandson Shah Ismail Shaheed (d. 1831). The influence of this noble and notable family was termed as "*Wali-Ullahi movement*" by Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi (1872-1944).[37] And according to Maulana Sindhi, the educational movements of Deoband and Aligarh, both took inspiration from Wali-Ullahi movement and are thus two branches of the same trunk.[38]

(m) 4. Salient Features of Shah Waliullah's Thought

Shah Waliullah was the most distinguished Muslim theologian, metaphysician, philosopher, and social thinker. Contemporary Muslim as well as western scholars have rightly acknowledged his intellectual stature.

Iqbal was impressed by the creative imagination of Shah Waliullah in which he was able to visualize the totality of Islamic System without

[35]Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, "Shah Wali-Ullah of Dehli: His Thought and Contribution," *Islamic Culture* (July 1980): 141-152.

[36]Marcia K. Hermansen, "Shah Wali Allah," In *Shah Waliullah: His Religious and Political Thought*, by Ed. Ikram Chaghatai, 11-14. (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2005).

[37]Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi was a progressive scholar and political activist who remained in most of his life in exile. He formulated a socio-political framework for the reconstruction of Muslim society based on the teachings of Shah Waliullah. His two important works are: *Shah Waliullah aur Unka Falsafah* (Lahore: 1964); and *Shah Waliullah Aur Unki Siyasi Tahreek* (Lahore: 1965).

[38]Muhammad Sarwar, *Iffadaat o Malfoozat Maulana Sindhi* (Lahore: Sind Sagar Academy, 1972).

severing its link from the past heritage.[39] According to Shibli Naumani (1857-1914), the intellectual degeneration which had set in the Muslim scholarship since the time of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Rushd was arrested by Shah Waliullah whose subtle arguments eclipsed the academic accomplishments of al-Ghazzali.[40]

Commenting on Shah Waliullah's role, Professor Gibb (1895-1971) writes:

> "During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a succession of remarkable scholars strove to restate the bases of Islamic theology in a manner which broke away from the formalism of the orthodox manuals and laid new stress upon the psychological and ethical elements in religion. Among the more outstanding figures in this movement, which has not yet received the attention it deserves, were the Syrian Abd al-Ghani of Nablus (1641-1731) and the Indians Ahmad Sarhindi (1563-1624) and Shah Wali-Allah of Delhi (1703-1762)."[41]

According to Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988), Shah Waliullah was on orginal thinker who responded to the crisis of his time by accomodating diverse legal and ideological opinions, calling for a renewed ijtihad and searching for the spirit behind the tradition.[42]

The most striking feature of Shah Waliullah's thought, according to Fazlur Rahman, is its integrative nature.[43] Muslim theoligical and philosophical tradition is, in deed, very rich and there have been many an important theologian and philosopher who were able to develop their particular subject to great heights. But the scope of their work was restricted. They were theologians or historians or metaphysicians or jurists. Before Shah

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[39]Muhammad Iqbal, *The The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* Edited by M.Saeed Sheikh (Lahore: *Institute of Islamic Cultre,* 1986).

[40]Shibli Naumani, *Ilm al-Kalam* (Aligarh, 1906).

[41]Quoted in Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, *Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi.* Vol. II, in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, M.M. Sharif (Ed.), 1557-1579 (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1983), http://alhassanain.org/english/?com=book&id=930;
H. A. R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism* (New York: The New American Library, 1955).

[42]Fazlur Rahman, "Revival and Reform in Islam," In *The Cambridge History of Islam*, by Ed.
P. M. Holt et el, 632-656. (Cambridge, 1978).

[43]Fazlur Rahman, "The Thinker of Crisis: Shah Waliy-Ullah," *The Pakistan Quarterly* VI, No. 2 (1956): 44-48.

Waliullah, no one attempted to synthesize various disciplines into one harmonious whole. Shah Waliullah successfully developed highly systematic and harmonious thought in which metaphysical, ontological, ethical, spiritual, religious, and social components are very subtly connected. In the words of Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi, Shah Waliullah's thought is remarkably harmonious and has, in fact, got a mathematical symmetry and coherence.[44] Maulana Sindhi has pointed out three chief elements in the structure of Shah Waliullah's thought.[45]:

a) Logical arrangement and structuring of all the conceptual categories and information he learnt from the classical tradition of Islam.
b) Spiritual consciousness as a result of purification of soul by remaining in the company of saints and following the path of sufis.
c) Profound contemplation on the teachings and themes of the Quran.

According to Maulana Maududi (1903-1979), while all the previous philosophers of Muslim tradition have only attempted to *Islamize* Greek philosophy, it is Shah Waliullah who did original work and thus laid the foundation of an *Islamic Philosophy*. All the previous work was merely a *Muslim Philosophy*. Although Shah Waliullah has heavily borrowed the terminology and phraseology of classical philosophy, the principal sources of his thought remain the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and in this way, according to Maulana Maududi, he is the first ever *Islamic* philosopher.[46] Dr. Muhammad al-Ghazali[47] has, however, traced the influence of early Muslim philosophers, particularly *al-Farabi* , *al-Razi* , *Ibn Taymiyyah*, *Mawardi* , and *al-Ghazzali* on Shah Waliullah's thought.

Shah Waliullah attaches a great importance to reason *('aql*). In *Hujjat* he has discussed reason in great details and has concluded that reason is

[44]Muhammad Sarwar, *Iffadaat o Malfoozat Maulana Sindhi*, 89.
[45]Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi, *Shah Waliullah aur Unka Falsafah* (Lahore: Sindh Sagar Academy, 1964), https://ia800101.us.archive.org/30/items/BestUrduBooks1117/SHAH_WALIULLAH_AUR_UNKA_FALSAFA.pdf
[46]Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi, *Tajdeed-o-Ahyae Deen (urdu)* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1970).
[47]Muhammad al-Ghazali, *The Socio-Political Thought of Shah Wali Allah* (Islamabad: The International Institute of Islamci Thought, 2001), 10-20.

superior to all other human faculties. Reason and rationalism thus find a prominent place in his thoughts. In this chief work, he says that it is wrong to believe that the commands of religious law are merely an assertion of God's will, and that they have no beneficial purpose. So to him the strongest argument for the righteousness of Islam is that its injunctions are based on reason and self-evident propositions. This dynamic realism and logic runs through the entire system of his thought.[48] Another feature of his thought is the use of empirical observation. He was a keen and sensitive observer of his times and his political and personal letters[49] indicate that he was well aware of the weaknesses and potentials of various social and poltical groups. He utilizes all this obsevatinal data in building his macro-social theory.

How was he able to blend apparently divergent positions and propositions? This question cannot be adequately dealt with unless we try to understand the influences on the thought of Shah Waliullah. The most important and profound impact on Shah Waliullah's mind came from his father, Shah Abdur Raheem who gave primary importance to the Holy Qur'ān and *Sunnah* in the education and training of his son. The teachings of Holy Qur'ān and *Sunnah* thus become the substructure on which he eracted the superstructure of his thought. "Shah Waliullah was also greatly influenced by Imam Ghazzali (1058-1111), Khatabi, and Shaikh al-Islam 'Izz al-Din bin 'Abd al-Salam. From them he learnt the art of rational interpretation of the different aspects of Islam. In his introduction to *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* he mentions these names with great respect. He also seems to be interested in Abu al Hasan al-Ash'ari (873-935), Abu al-Mansur Maturidi, Ibn Taimiyyah, and Imam Fakhr al-Din Razi (1149-1209). In mysticism he was influenced by both Ibn Arabi and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. One may, however, find from the study of his mystical thought that though he

[48]A. D. Muztar, *Shah Wali-Allah: A Saint-Scholar of Muslim India* (Islamabad: National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, 1979).

[49]For letters of Shah Waliullah, see: Khaliq Ahmed Nizami, *Shah Waliullah ke Siyasi Maktubat* (Delhi: 1969), And Maulana Nasim Ahmad Faridi, *Nadir Maktubat Shah Waliullah Dehlavi* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore: 1999).

received inspiration from both of them, yet his ideas were closer to the views of Ibn Arabi than to those of the Mujaddid."[50]

5. Social Reconstruction

Shah Waliullah made an objective study of the society of his times. He examined in detail its social pathologies and then developed a strategy for its reconstruction. The main social problem which can arrest the progressive movement of a society, according to him, is the attitude of its elite classes. When ruling classes are intoxicated by their own pleasure and pride and start thinking only in terms of their comforts and conveniences, their burden on working classes increases to such an extent that the majority of the people is forced to live like animals. The collective morals of humanity are destroyed when they are forced to live under economic oppression. Now they would work like donkeys and oxen to earn their bread. When such a calamity befalls on humanity, God reveals some strategy for the emancipation of mankind. This is the time when, through revolution, the burden of such unlawful rule is removed.[51]

Thus according to Shah Waliullah, main abstacle in the natural progress of human society is inequality. The main responsibility of this crises lies with the ruling elite who becomes slave to its luxuries and greed. The solution to such a crises, according to Shah Waliullah is a complete revolution.[52]

In a mystical vision explained in *Fuyuzu al-Harmain*, he says the words of *Fakku Kulle Nizam* (Destroy the whole system). Moulana Obaid Ullah Sindhi has interpreted these words as a revolutionary slogan. Every revolution, of course, starts with the destruction of previous structure and only after that construction of new system can begin. At another place Shah Waliullah writes, Sometimes bestial people dominate the earth and if they are not destroyed, humanity will be ruined.[53]‖

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[50]Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, *Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi.* Vol. II, in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, by M. M. Sharif (Ed.), 1557-1579 (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1983), http://alhassanain.org/english/?com=book&id=930.

[51]Maulana Nasim Ahmad Faridi, *Nadir Maktubat Shah Waliullah Dehlavi* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore: 1999), 105-107.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Shah Waliullah, *Fuyuz al Haramain* (Haiderabad: Shaha Waliullah Academy, 2007),

Yet at another place he writes, ―These oppressive and tyrant rulers are like cancer of human body. A person having cancer can never recover his health until the cancer is removed from his body. A doctor will have to conduct surgery inorder to remove the organ infected with cancer. Sometimes it becomes necessary to do a little evil when the result is a great goodness.[54]‖

From these quotations it can be rightly concluded that Shah Waliullah was a revolutionary thinker and he advocated a radical solution for the social transformation. The same can also be deduced from his historical analysis of Roman and Persian Empires. The main problem with these empires was the exploitation of working classes in the hands of elite classes. In fact according to Shah Waliullah it was one of the principal objectives of Islam to overcome Roman and Persian Empires so that people can be emancipated from the tyranny and oppression of dominant classes.

Shah Waliullah was not just an idealist thinker, busy in developing his theoretical formulations in a society fraught with chaos, anarchy and corruption. Although, he was a revolutionary in his theory, he was pragmatic and wise enough to understand that some kind of social order must be maintained in society as a first step. In his times there were three anti-social groups which were responsible for spreading anarchy, anomie and plunder in society. These were Jats, Marahatas and Sikhs. Shah Waliullah urged rulers and bureaucrats of his times to take notice of anti-state activities of these groups. He made efforts to save the Muslim political power in India from total collapse. He wrote letters to nobles, bureaucrats and kings to play their due part. These letters were not a unilateral communication between the senders and the addressees. A study of the letters discloses that the addressees, excepting Ahmad Shah Abdali, used to refer their political problems to Shah Waliullah, and seek his advice.[55] These practical steps taken by Shah Waliullah demonstrate that he was able to transcend the dichotomy between theory and action.

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[54]Ibid.

[55]A. D. Muztar, *Shah Wali-Allah: A Saint-Scholar of Muslim India* (Islamabad: National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, 1979), 38.

6. Conclusion

Shah Waliullah is not a mere social theorist. He is fundamentally a metaphysician, ontologist, theologian, scholastic, psychologist, *sufi*, political theorist and a social thinker. The structure of his thought is so harmonious that it seems difficult to isolate his sociology from his metaphysics. The sociological outlook of Shah Waliullah is rooted in his psychology, his psychology is rooted in his concept of Man, his concept of Man is rooted in his theology and metaphysics. Shah Waliullah sees society as *sui generis* which means society is distinct from individuals but he does not take the extreme position of ignoring human agency. While analyzing social structure, Shah Waliullah displays his immense knowledge of existence and significance of various social institutions including family, religion, politics and economics. He has analyzed these social institutions just like a Structural-Functionalist sociologist. The truth is that, as is the case with any original thinker, Shah Waliullah‘s works invite more than one interpretations. Perhaps this is the reason that almost all the current Muslim organizations and groups associate themselves with Shah Waliullah. As Shah Waliullah‘s thought and mission would continue to guide various sections of Muslim intelligentia, an intensive study on various aspect of his thought is imperative.