

Part 2. Renaissance in South and South-East Asia

Chapter LXXIX

RENAISSANCE IN INDO-PAKISTAN SHĀH WALI ALLAH DIHLAWI

A

INTRODUCTION

Of the two leaders of thought who appeared during the early years of decadence, Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb of Arabia and Shāh Wali Allah of Delhi, the latter occupies a more prominent position. He was a luminary who during the stormy period of Indian history showed the bewildered Muslims the right path—the path of peace and glory. He was possessed of deep insight, profound learning, and heroic nobleness. Not long after his death his thought gave rise to a mighty movement under the leadership of Shāh Ismā'il Shahīd and Sayyid Aḥmad Bareilvi for liberating the Muslims from the clutches of Western imperialism.

B

LIFE AND WORKS

Quṭb al-Dīn Aḥmad, popularly known as Shāh Wali Allah, was born in 1114/1703, four years before the death of Aurangzib. His genealogy can be traced back to the family of 'Umar Fārūq, the great Caliph. It is difficult to ascertain the exact time when his forefathers left Arabia and settled down in India, but the circumstantial evidence indicates that it was about three hundred years after the great Migration (*Hijrah*). The historical records speak eloquently of the prominent position which Shāh Wali Allah's grandfather occupied in the Mughul Court. It has been narrated that he played an important role in the struggle for power amongst the sons of Shāh Jahān, and that he fought bravely against the Marathas of the Deccan.¹

Shāh Wali Allah's father, Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm, was greatly loved and respected by the people for his great scholarship and piety. He was entrusted by the Emperor 'Ālamgīr with the delicate and important task of revising the *Fatāwā-i 'Ālamgīri*. He acquitted himself creditably of the duty assigned to him and declined to accept any remuneration for the work.²

In his booklet *al-Juz' al-Laṭīf fī Tarjamat al-'Abd al-Ḍa'īf*, Shāh Wali Allah

¹ *Al-Furqān* (Special Number on Shāh Wali Allah), 2nd edition, Bareilly, 1941, pp. 203–04, 402.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 170.

gives an account of his brilliant educational career. Even a cursory reading of this booklet shows that Shāh Wali Allah was precocious as a child. He soon mastered the different branches of learning, and so great was his command over them that even at the tender age of fifteen he could teach all these with confidence to others. After the death of his illustrious father, we find him busy teaching *Tafsīr*, *Hadīth*, *Fiqh*, and logic—subjects commonly taught in the *madrasahs* of those days. During this period of about twelve years, he penetrated deeply into the teachings of Islam and pondered seriously over the future of Muslims in India.

In the year 1143/1731 he went to the Hijāz on a pilgrimage and stayed there for fourteen months studying *Hadīth* and *Fiqh* under such distinguished scholars as abu Ṭāhir al-Kurdi al-Madani, Wafī Allah al-Makki, and Ṭāj al-Dīn al-Qālī. During this period he came into contact with people from all parts of the Muslim world and, thus, obtained first-hand information about the conditions then prevailing in the various Muslim countries.

He returned to Delhi in 1145/1733, where he spent the rest of his life in producing numerous works till his death in 1176/1763 during the reign of Shāh 'Ālam II.³ The most important of Shāh Wali Allah's works is his *Hujjat Allah al-Bālighah* in which he made an attempt to present the teachings of Islam in a scientific manner. His approach, though radical from beginning to end, is without complete break with the past. The range of his works is varied and wide covering all aspects of knowledge: economic, political, social, metaphysical, as well as purely theological. Whether one agrees or disagrees either with Shāh Wali Allah's theses or his conclusions, one has to admit that the book represents the first brilliant attempt to rethink the entire system of Islam in a spirit of scientific objectivity.

C

SOURCES OF SHĀH WALI ALLAH'S THOUGHT

The pivotal point on which revolves the philosophical thought of Shāh Wali Allah is religion. Since it is religion alone which, according to him, had been the source of strength and power for the Muslims, their decline was the direct result of their apathy towards it. His chief concern, therefore, was to call the Muslims back to the teachings of Islam. He had a strong faith in the force and strength of Islamic ideology in which, he believed, if accepted fully and applied honestly, lay the hope for peaceful and prosperous development of the human race. Shāh Wali Allah consequently bent all his energies towards purifying Islamic ideals of all unhealthy influences and providing them a fresh intellectual ground to meet the challenge of the time.

³ Thus, he lived to see the reigns of ten kings who followed one another in quick succession, namely, 'Ālamgir, Bahādur Shāh I, Mu'izz al-Dīn Jahāndār Shāh, Farrukh Siyar, Rafī' al-Darajāt, Rafī' al-Daulah, Muḥammad Shāh, Aḥmad Shāh, 'Ālamgir II, Shāh 'Ālam.

Shāh Wali Allah was fully aware of the gap between the pattern of life as enunciated in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and the one which the Muslims had devised for themselves, the gap between the social and political institutions the framework of which had been supplied by Islam and the institutions which the Muslims had developed and set up for themselves in the course of history.

Nevertheless, Shāh Wali Allah keenly realized that it was impossible to wheel back the march of history. It was, therefore, unwise to think that the Muslims could afford to live usefully on the pattern of life accepted as valid in the past, under the illusion that it would remain valid for all times to come.

For a proper study of Shāh Wali Allah, historical imagination is, thus, the first necessity. Without referring to the intellectual environment from which he derived his inspiration, it is not easy to penetrate below the alluvial deposits of his intellectual and mystical experiences. Even a cursory glance reveals that the first and the strongest influence which engraved the deepest mark upon his mind was that which came from his own father. From him he learnt the Holy Qur'ān and the Sunnah and had the keen realization of the kind of invaluable guidance these contained for humanity. It can, therefore, be said that the Holy Qur'ān and the Sunnah formed the bedrock on which he raised the superstructure of his thought system.

Shāh Wali Allah was also greatly influenced by Imām Ghazālī, Khaṭābī, and Shaikh al-Islam 'Izz al-Dīn bin 'Abd al-Salām. From them he learnt the art of rational interpretation of the different aspects of Islam. In his introduction to *Hujjat Allah al-Bālighah* he mentions these names with great respect. He also seems to be interested in abu al-Ḥasan al-Ash'ari, abu al-Manṣūr Māturīdī, ibn Taimiyyah, and Imām Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī.

In mysticism he was influenced by both ibn 'Arabi and Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī. One may, however, find from the study of his mystical thought that though he received inspiration from both of them, yet his ideas were closer to the views of ibn 'Arabi than to those of the Mujaddid.

D

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

Shāh Wali Allah made quite a serious attempt to find out the relationship between social, ethical, and economic systems. According to him, spirituality has two aspects: first, it is a personal relation of man to God, secondly, it is man's relation to his fellow-beings. No man is fully spiritual who seeks only his own personal salvation in isolation from society. It is only in the social set-up that the spirituality of an individual is expressed. Islam, therefore, seldom deals with the individual as an individual; it always envisages him as a member of a family or a community. Thus, the achievement of social justice is a prerequisite for the development of the individual. How this ideal of social justice can be formulated and realized is a question which Shāh Wali Allah has taken up in great detail in his famous work *Hujjat Allah al-Bālighah*.

'*Adālah* (justice or balance), according to him, is the essential feature for the harmonious development of the human race. Its manifestations may be numerous, but it is the one golden thread which runs into the web and woof of the variegated patterns of human life. When it expresses itself in dress, manners, and mores, it goes by the name of *adab* (etiquette). In matters relating to income and expenditure, we call it economy, and in the affairs of the State it is named politics.⁴

Under the head *Irtifāqāt*,⁵ *Shāh Wali Allah* discusses the problem of human relations. He starts with the fact that man has innumerable wants which urge him to action. The satisfaction of human wants, involving as it does the interdependence of individuals, leads to the origination of a society and its mores. When human beings join hands for collective safety and security, the government is formed, and when they come into contact with one another for the satisfaction of their material needs, the economic system is established. The basic quality of a sound system, be it social, economic, or political, is the balanced relationship amongst the different members of a social group. This balanced relationship is without doubt a reflection of inward peace and of a sound relationship with the Creator. On the other hand, the social system it evolves is itself conducive to the achievement of such peace and relationship.

Shāh Wali Allah then briefly deals with some of the basic aspects of a social system as a dynamic process. He starts with language and points out that it is not only a vehicle of expression, but is also an important factor for the development of culture and civilization.⁶ Then comes agriculture which provides food for the people. In this process man learns the art of irrigation; he also domesticates the animals and is benefited by them in hundred and one ways. Then the houses are built in order to safeguard the human race against the inclemency of weather and seasons.⁷ All further development depends on the establishment of a State. The more uncultured a social group is, the more does it stand in need of a coercive power to exercise a proper check.

State, according to him, should not restrict the sphere of its activities only to the safety and security of the individuals, but should also devise ways and means for the happiness and progress of society as a whole. It is, therefore, within the functions of the State to eradicate all sorts of social evils, e.g., gambling, adultery, usury, bribery, etc. A careful check should be exercised upon the traders to ensure that they do not indulge in malpractices. The State

⁴ *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, Idārah Ṭabā'at al-Muniriyyah, Cairo, Vol. I, pp. 50-53.

⁵ Maulana 'Ubaid Allah Sindhi has translated this word as "social institutions" in his *Shāh Wali Allah aur Unki Siyāsi Tahrik*, Sind Sāgar Academy, Lahore, 1952, p. 43.

⁶ *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, Vol. I, p. 38.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

should also see that the energies of the people are made to flow into profitable channels, by maintaining, for example, the proper distribution of people in different occupations. *Shāh Wali Allah* points out: "When the occupations are not fairly distributed amongst the different sections of a society, its culture receives a set-back; for example, if the majority of the people take to commerce, agriculture would be necessarily neglected and, thus, there will be a marked decline in the agricultural produce. Similarly, the people would suffer great hardships if the bulk of population enlisted themselves in the army; there would be only a few left to look after agriculture and commerce and the whole social system would be disturbed."

Shāh Wali Allah thinks that after the functions of the army and police, the most important activity within the State is that of agriculture, for it supplies to the people those necessities of life on which their very existence depends.⁸ The State should develop methods of cultivation. Every inch of land should be properly tilled, and there should be a scheme for the rotation of crops.⁹ Besides, the State should adopt ways and means to encourage trade and industry. Thus, according to *Shāh Wali Allah*, the richness of society as a whole depends upon its diversity—a truism which cannot be too often stressed. This diversity should be achieved by fixing people into different professions according to their aptitudes. The unlimited possibilities latent in men can only be unfolded if they are permitted to seek occupations according to their own bents of mind.

Shāh Wali Allah believes that a sound economic system based on social justice can contribute to the happiness of society. If and when a State fails to develop or retain such a system, its decline becomes inevitable. He concludes his deliberations on this problem as it existed in his own times as follows: "After a careful analysis I have come to the conclusion that there are two main factors responsible for the decline of the Muslim culture. First, many people have abandoned their own occupations and have become parasites on the government. They are a great burden on the public exchequer. Some of these are soldiers; some claim themselves to be men of great learning and, thus, deem it their birthright to get regular financial help from the State. There are not a few who get regular donations, gifts, and rewards from the Court as a matter of past custom, such as, for example, poets and clowns. Many of the people belonging to these groups do not contribute anything to the welfare of society, yet they are allowed to suck its blood. The sooner the State gets rid of these parasites, the better. Secondly, the government has levied an exorbitant rate of tax on the agriculturists, cultivators, and traders. Added to this is the cruel treatment meted out to the tax-payers by government officials at the time of collecting the taxes. The people groan under the heavy weight of taxes

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 47.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

while their economic position deteriorates at an alarming speed. This is how the country has come to ruin."¹⁰

In this connection Shāh Wali Allah points out also a great misconception which is common among the Muslims. Most of them believe that poverty is loved by God and hence no good Muslim should make an effort to become rich. Such a view is erroneous. The simple living which comes from self-contentment is fundamentally different from the abject poverty to which the weaker groups are often subjected by the ruling classes. This "forced starvation of certain classes," as Shāh Wali Allah calls it, "is highly detrimental to the welfare of society. It is no virtue but a crime. Islam grants no licence to any class to compel others to remain as hewers of wood and drawers of water. It aims at the achievement of social justice, which is possible only when society is free from class conflict and everyone is provided with an opportunity to develop his latent powers and capacities and strengthen his individuality through free and active participation in the benefits of his material and cultural environment."¹¹ "Islam," he continues, "teaches that this strong concentrated individuality, sharpened and steeled through a life of active experience, should not become obsessed with self-aggrandizement; it should rather be devoted to the service of God and through this to the good of mankind. Islam never preaches its followers to submit themselves ungrudgingly to an oppressive social system. It is social justice rather than poverty which is eulogized by the Holy Prophet—justice which not only safeguards an individual against an attitude of arrogance and self-conceit, but also develops in him a power to spurn the temptations, bribes, and snares with which an unscrupulous ruling clique tries cynically to corrupt the integrity and character of the subjects."¹²

Shāh Wali Allah agrees with Aristotle that a State exists to promote "good life." By "good life" he means life possessed of goodness as enunciated by Islam. For him the State is a means to an end and not an end-in-itself. Therefore, he holds that the possession of coercive power cannot be defended regardless of the ends to which it is devoted. If a State wields this power honestly, then the highest duty of an individual is to become a loyal member of that State, but if it is a State only in name and is in reality a blind brute force, then it becomes the bounden duty of its members to overthrow it. Thus, an important duty of an individual is to become a member of the State, but more important than this is his duty to judge the quality of the State of which he is a member.

In his book *Izālat al-Khifā* 'an *Khilāfat al-Khulafā* Shāh Wali Allah lays down in very clear terms the duty of an Islamic State (*Khilāfat*). "*Khilāfat*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹¹ For a detailed study of this problem, see *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah*, Chap. "Iqāmat al-Irtifāqāt wa Iṣlāḥ al-Rusūm," pp. 104-09.

¹² *Ibid.* Shāh Wali Allah enumerates the mean tactics which the ruling class employed to corrupt the masses.

in general terms is a form of State which is established for the enforcement of the Laws of *Shari'ah* in accordance with the will of the Holy Prophet. The foremost functions of the *Khilāfat* are the revival of Islamic teachings and their translation in practical life, preparing the *millah* for endeavour (*jihād*), and carefully suppressing all those evils which arise from the misuse of its functions."¹³

Shāh Wali Allah clearly explains the relationship between the individual and the State. According to his theory of State, which he has in fact drawn from the teachings of Islam, an individual is not a mere part of a social whole in the same sense as bees, ants, and termites are. An individual has a real value of his own, for in Islam the beginning and the end of every consideration is the individual. But as every human being lives in a society it is through the social pattern that his spirituality is properly developed. Being the most powerful factor in the social pattern, a Muslim State is primarily responsible for the all-round development of an individual.

E

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Every theory of social dynamics is ultimately a philosophy of history. Its special urgency arises from the fact that it gives people, as best as it may, an insight into the experiences of mankind and brings to mind the lessons that accrue from them. History is not a series of mere accidents; there is always a purpose behind them. The essential task of a historian is to study that inner process of thought, that underlying motive of action, which works behind the social change. Anyone who cares to penetrate through the outer crust of historical events and episodes will find "something" that may be called the metaphysical structure of the historic humanity; something essentially independent of the outward forms—social, spiritual, and political—which we see clearly.¹⁴ Shāh Wali Allah as a historian tried in his own peculiar way to acquaint us with that "something." It is noteworthy that he has also offered us an explanation for the differences in the social codes of the various prophets.

Lastly, he has, with remarkable acumen and penetration, winnowed out many mistaken notions about Muslim history commonly found even amongst the Muslim historians themselves. He reviews even that delicate period of Muslim history about which there is much inept sentimentalism amongst the Muslims. More particularly he draws a line of demarcation between Islamic history and history of the Muslim people and courageously points out the

¹³ Shāh Wali Allah, *Izālat al-Khifā* 'an *Khilāfat al-Khulafā*, published in Bareilly, n.d., p. 1.

¹⁴ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, George Allen & Unwin, London, Vol. I, p. 3.

follies committed in the past because of overlooking this important distinction.

In his book *Tāwīl al-Aḥādīth*, he proves with the help of actual facts of history that man is not "an Ixion bound for ever to his wheel nor a Sisyphus for ever rolling his stone to the summit of the same mountain and helplessly watching it roll down again." Humanity is ever-growing and, thus, faces new problems at every step. The invisible hand that works on the loom of time is bringing into existence a tapestry in which one may envisage a developing design and not simply an endless repetition of the same old pattern. Shāh Wali Allah, thus, comes to affirm that though there is a complete agreement of prophets with regard to the basic import of the divine revelation, yet they differ with one another in the matter of the special codes which they presented in the forms that suited the needs of their times. In his book *Fauz al-Kabir*, Shāh Wali Allah says: "Every nation is accustomed to a certain mode of worship, and has a political and social pattern of its own. When a prophet is sent to the people by God, he does not replace the old order by an absolutely new one. He, on the other hand, allows those customs to continue which do not contravene the will of God and effects necessary changes in all those patterns where these alterations are essential."¹⁵

In his book *Tāwīl al-Aḥādīth*, Shāh Wali Allah traces the development of society right from Adam down to the last of the prophets and discusses in detail the peculiarities of each age. Amongst the Muslim thinkers Shāh Wali Allah is the first¹⁶ to compile a systematic history of the prophets and to explain that the social codes offered by the prophets can be reasonably interpreted in the light of the needs of their respective times.

Shāh Wali Allah believes that in Adam the angelic qualities and the urges of the flesh existed side by side. The former led him to discover the different modes of worship and the latter showed him the way to satisfy his material needs, for example, cultivation of soil, domestication of animals,¹⁷ etc. The Prophet Idris later was possessed of all these qualities which his predecessor, Adam, combined in himself, yet he improved upon them by pondering over the creation, acquiring thereby a good deal of knowledge about physics, astronomy, and medicine. Further, as he flourished in an age when the people had learnt handicrafts, he acquired proficiency in these as well.¹⁸

The period between the death of Prophet Idris and the birth of Prophet Noah was marked by an all-round deterioration in the moral standards of the people. Virtues such as piety, truthfulness, and selflessness were hard to be found anywhere; man had become a veritable brute. Noah, therefore, made

incumbent upon the people the offering of continuous prayers and observing of fasts. This was necessary to exercise a check on the urges of the flesh which had then taken full hold of the mind of the people.¹⁹

The above example should be sufficient to give an idea how Shāh Wali Allah explains the differences of the social codes presented by various prophets at various stages of human history.

It is, however, important to point out that the differences of *Shari'ahs* to which Shāh Wali Allah has referred here are differences in external forms only, i.e., in the rituals and routine activities, and not in their essentials. Since all prophets were inspired by God alone, there could not be any difference in their fundamental teachings. Belief in the unity of God, charity and brotherhood among mankind, subjugation of passions by the desire for higher values of life, accountability of human actions in the life hereafter, etc., formed the bedrock upon which were raised the superstructures of the various *Shari'ahs*. In his work *Hujjat Allah al-Bālighah*, Shāh Wali Allah particularly emphasizes the essential unity of all religions by saying, "Remember, the real faith is one. This alone was preached by all the prophets of God and it is this alone which should be followed by the whole of humanity. Differences, if any, are only in their superstructures and details, rather than in their fundamentals. All prophets have unanimously preached the gospel of divine unity."²⁰ At another place he reiterates: "Just as articles of faith are the same in all religions, similarly the basic virtues preached by them are necessarily the same."²¹

The unity of faiths and moral values is due to the fact that human nature has essentially remained the same through the march of time. The human race has not altered physically and very little intellectually during the thousands of years of recorded history. The passions, pleasures, heartaches, and the political and domestic problems of the people of bygone ages were, in all likelihood, much the same as ours. The greed of imperialistic powers was causing men to kill one another as brutally in 1600 B.C. as in the twelfth/eighteenth century. Though the fields of human activity have widened, the instincts which are the spring-boards of all action have remained the same. It is this sameness of human nature which led the celebrated philosopher-historian ibn Khaldūn remark: "The past resembles the future as water; hence sociology, the study of the present, casts light on history, the study of the past, just as the study of history supplies the material for sociological studies."²²

Shāh Wali Allah completely agrees with ibn Khaldūn on this point²³ and considers history "remembrance of the days of God," to be a key to the

¹⁵ *Al-Fauz al-Kabir*, Urdu translation, Maktabah Burhān, Delhi, p. 16.

¹⁶ It appears that Shāh Wali Allah has taken most of the material under this heading from ibn Kathīr's *Bidāyah w-al-Nihāyah*, Maṭba'at al-Sa'adah, Egypt.

¹⁷ *Tāwīl al-Aḥādīth*, Maṭba'at Aḥmad, Madrasah 'Azīziyyah, Delhi, pp. 9-13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15. See also ibn Kathīr, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-18.

²⁰ *Hujjat Allah al-Bālighah*, Vol. I, pp. 86-87.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Charles Issawi, *An Arab Philosophy of History*, John Murray, London, p. 7.

²³ For a detailed study of this subject, see *Hujjat Allah al-Bālighah*, Chaps. IV and VI.

study of the Holy Qur'ān.²⁴ It is one of the remarkable doctrines of the Qur'ān that nations are judged collectively and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. In order to establish this, the Qur'ān constantly cites historical instances and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and the present experience of mankind: "Of old did We send Moses with Our signs; and said to him: 'Bring forth thy people from darkness to light, and remind them of the days of God.' Verily in this are signs for patient and grateful persons"²⁵; "Already, before your time, have precedents been made. Traverse the earth then, and see what hath been the end of those who falsified the signs of God."²⁶

The latter verse is an instance of a more specific historical generalization which, in its epigrammatic formulation, suggests not only the possibility of a scientific treatment of the life of human societies, but a warning for the future. To the students of the Holy Qur'ān, Shāh Wali Allah gives a very valuable advice in the following words: "While reciting the Holy Qur'ān one should not think that the accounts of the nations of the past are given for the sake of mere narration. No, the stories of the past have been narrated not for an appeal to fancy but for the generalizations that may be drawn from them."²⁷

It may be noted that Shāh Wali Allah attaches great importance to the study of social phenomena as a preparation for the proper understanding of the Qur'ān. These phenomena are sufficiently constant and follow regular and well-defined patterns and sequences. The social changes and complexities of the past have an object lesson for those living in the present, since the people of every age have to encounter the same kind of complexities as were encountered by those who lived before them. The danger spots in the march of nations are nearly the same. The historical record is, therefore, the lighthouse which informs the new sailors of life about the perilous rocks that may be hidden beneath the surface of the bottomless ocean of human existence. The Qur'ān says: "Have they not travelled on land and seen the end of those who were before them? They were even stronger than these in power, and they dug the earth and built upon it more than these have built."²⁸

This verse reveals that the past with all its sunshines and sorrows recurs and manifests itself in the garb of the future. The events of life are governed by laws which have not only taken effect in the past, but which are also bound to take effect in every similar situation that may arise in the future. Shāh Wali Allah, like all great thinkers, has endeavoured to discover these laws according to which nations rise and fall. His generalizations are based mainly on the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, but the way in which he has

²⁴ *Al-Fauz al-Kabir*, pp. 4, 17.

²⁵ Qur'ān, xiv, 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, iii, 137.

²⁷ *Al-Fauz al-Kabir*, pp. 21-23.

²⁸ Qur'ān, xxx, 9, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* by Pickthall.

applied them to practical life bears ample testimony to his keen insight both into the Qur'ān and in the problems of human existence.

In his *Izālat al-Khifā*, Shāh Wali Allah points out that the love of material wealth leads the nation to moral depravity which brings in its wake its downfall. "Remember," says he with a note of grim warning, "that sensual qualities like selfishness, greed, etc., develop in unbalanced personalities. The abundance of riches brings these brutal qualities into action."²⁹ In support of this view Shāh Wali Allah recalls the words in which the Prophet on one occasion addressed the people: "By God, I am not worried about your poverty but I am afraid you might become proud of the worldly riches that might be stretched before you as was done by the people of the past ages and like them these worldly riches might destroy you as they destroyed those who were vainglorious before you."³⁰

Shāh Wali Allah is of the opinion, which in fact is based upon the teachings of the Qur'ān, that when the acquisitive instincts take hold of the majority of human beings, the creative genius dies in them and this brings about their ruin. If day in and day out they are busy in accumulating riches, morality, justice, and truthfulness become mere empty words, having no use in practical life.

The love of worldly riches is accompanied by the love of power and distinction. What the aristocracy desires is not only to own riches but to keep others under the yoke of abject poverty. Society is split up into two distinct classes, *haves* and *have-nots*, the one which owns the treasures and along with it controls the affairs of the government, the other which through persistent hard labour ekes out a precarious subsistence. The rich become callous and watch tyranny and oppression with complete indifference, the religious people retire into seclusion or become otherworldly, and the immoral aristocracy inflicts unchecked wrongs upon the class of *have-nots*. The result is a frightful moral disorder, born of unspeakable suffering and intolerable oppression. Such conditions strike at the very root of social structure and the outward grandeur and glare of national life cannot make any compensation for its inner wretchedness, and ultimately the whole nation collapses like a house of cards.

Shāh Wali Allah substantiates this contention with the rise and fall of the Roman and Persian Empires. He gives a vivid account of all the circumstances which led to the ruin of these two great nations of the past. He writes: "The historical records eloquently speak of the fact that the Romans and the Persians held sceptre and crown for a fairly long time. According to their own cultural requirements, they added a good deal to the luxuries of their age. Their highest aim was to lead a life of pleasure. . . . The people who could make their lives more luxurious flocked from all the corners of the world in order to achieve

²⁹ *Izālat al-Khifā* (Urdu translation), Nūr Muḥammad Kārkhānah Tijārat-i Kutub, Karachi, Vol. I, p. 560.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 563-64. See also al-Nawawī, *Riyāḍ al-Sālihīn*, Dār al-Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīyyah, Cairo, pp. 213-14 (*muttafiq 'alaih*, Bukhārī wa Muslim).

this objective. The aristocracy having thus become immersed in the pursuit of pleasures, there began a race amongst its members to excel one another in this respect, and matters became so bad that a rich man who tied a belt around his waist costing less than one thousand gold coins was looked down upon by others. Everyone tried to possess a magnificent palace with a number of orchards attached to it. Their whole life came to be centred upon sumptuous foods, gaudy and attractive dresses, horses of the finest stock, coaches and carriages, and a retinue of servants. . . . They got used to all forms of luxurious living, and this was in fact the canker eating into the very vitals of their society.

"This meant a heavy drain on the purse of the people, as the kings and rulers were forced to levy an exorbitant rate of taxation upon the artisans and cultivators. The poor had perforce to raise a banner of revolt against the ruling clique. But under the circumstances this was well-nigh impossible; therefore, the only course left for the poor was to live as bond slaves and lead their lives like donkeys. . . . In short, the lower strata of society were so much occupied in the service of the aristocracy that they found no time to pay any heed to the problems of the life hereafter."³¹

Shāh Wali Allah then further analyses this process of degeneration. He states that in order to run such a sensate system where all well-to-do persons were absorbed in the pleasures of life, a class of society came into existence, the highest duty of which was to supply the aristocracy the maximum luxuries of life. A useful section of the population was, thus, engaged in idle pursuits with the result that no one was left to think of the nation's welfare. All this naturally led to their downfall.³²

It is interesting to note that this brilliant analysis of the Roman as of the Persian society given by Shāh Wali Allah (1114/1703–1177/1763) is substantially the same as given by Edward Gibbon (1150/1737–1209/1794) about thirty years later. In his monumental work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon writes: "Under the Roman empire, the labour of an industrious and ingenious people was variously, but incessantly employed, in the service of the rich. In their dress, their table, their houses, and their furniture, the favourites of fortune united every refinement of convenience, of elegance, and of splendour, whatever could soothe their pride or gratify their sensuality. Such refinements, under the odious name of luxury, have been severely arraigned by the moralists of every age; and it might perhaps be more conducive to the virtue, as well as happiness, of mankind, if all possessed the necessities, and none of the superfluities, of life."³³

It is, however, wrong to conclude from the above discussion that Shāh Wali Allah favoured the life of renunciation and considered it as such conducive

³¹ *Hujjat Allah al-Bālighah*, Vol. I, pp. 105–06.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Modern Library, New York, Vol. I, p. 48.

to the progress of any nation. No, not in the least. He condemns such a view of life³⁴ and calls it un-Islamic. He commends the individual's active participation in the affairs of the world. This attitude of his does not interfere with his belief that unless the overwhelming majority of the people retain an inner attitude of detachment and superiority with regard to material possessions, a nation cannot make real progress. Its progress is possible only when the people, instead of becoming slaves to worldly riches, use them for the betterment of mankind. What is referred to here is a kind of intellectual and emotional asceticism rather than a life of renunciation.

F

METAPHYSICS

Doctrines of Wahdat al-Wujūd and Wahdat al-Shuhūd.—Like all great Muslim thinkers, Shāh Wali Allah penetrated deeply into the metaphysical problems raised by the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. His approach in this as in other matters was to bring about a creative synthesis by reconciling the opposite movements of thought. He tried, for example, to reconcile the views of ibn 'Arabi and those of Mujaddid Alf Thāni. In order fully to appreciate this effort of Shāh Wali Allah, it will be necessary to outline here briefly the views of ibn 'Arabi and those of the Mujaddid with regard to the problem of Being.

There are two different senses in which the term "Being" may be understood. First, it may be taken epistemologically as the *cognized form* or *idea* of existence and, secondly, it may be taken ontologically to stand for that which exists or subsists and not for the *idea* of it. *Tauhīd* or the unity of Being may, therefore, mean either the unity of the mystically *cognized* existence or existence *per se*. The term "Absolute Being" (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*) or "Universal Being" (*al-wujūd al-kullī*) explained by ibn 'Arabi's school is Reality as the ultimate ground of all that exists. This expression may be taken in either of the above two senses.³⁵ From the writings of ibn 'Arabi, which are, however, at places highly subtle and sometimes equally ambiguous, it may be gathered that when he says that all Being is One which is an Absolute Unity, he does not mean that all individual beings—past, present, or future—are essentially One Being, nor does he mean that Being in its abstract and most universal sense comprises all forms of Being in all possible universes of discourse. When he says that all existence is one, he means that all existence is at source one, that is to say, that God is the one *source* and *cause* of all that has being (existence or subsistence). It is only for the sake of convenience that ibn 'Arabi compares God's "Being" to a "universal" (say, colour) and the being of any other

³⁴ *Hujjat Allah al-Bālighah*, Vol. I, p. 53.

³⁵ A. E. Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyīd Dīn-Ibnul 'Arabi*, Cambridge, 1939, p. 1.

existent (or subsistent) to a particular "mode" or manifestation of that "universal" (say, red).³⁶

Were it not for the all-pervasiveness of God, by virtue of His form in all existents, the world would have no existence, just as, were it not for the intelligible universal realities (*al-ḥaqā'iq al-ma'qūlāt al-kullīyah*), no predications (*ahkām*) of external objects would have been possible.³⁷

To express the whole matter in modern terminology, there is an identity of God and universe on the basis of the identity of His "existence and essence" (*dhāt-o ṣifāt*) or substance and attribute, the world being only a *tajalli* or manifestation of His attributes. In other words, the creation of the world is a form of emanation. Ibn 'Arabi believes that the act of creation by the word "Be" (*kun*) is nothing but the descent of the Creator into the being of things. There are, however, five stages of this descent or determination. "The first two are 'ilmi or cognitive and the last three are *khāriji* or existential. In the first descent, Unity becomes conscious of itself as pure Being, and the consciousness of attributes is only implicit and general (*ṣifat-i ijmālī*). In the second descent, it becomes conscious of itself as presenting the attributes explicitly and in detail (*ṣifat-i tafṣilī*). These two descents seem to be conceived by ibn 'Arabi as *conceptual* rather than actual; they are supra-temporal, and the distinction between existence and essence in their case is only logical. The *real* distinctions begin with the third descent which consists in the determination of spirits (*ta'ayyun-i rūḥī*) when Unity breaks itself into so many spirits, e.g., angels. The fourth descent is ideal determination (*ta'ayyun-i mithālī*), whereby the world of ideas comes into being. And the fifth descent is physical determination (*ta'ayyun-i jasādī*): it yields the phenomenal or physical beings."³⁸

This shows that for ibn 'Arabi "Being" (*dhāt*) of God is identical with His attributes (*ṣifāt*), and these attributes express themselves in manifestations (*tajalliyāt*) as modes which are objects and events of this world. It is, thus, clear that, according to ibn 'Arabi, ontologically there is only one reality. It has two aspects: (1) a reality transcending the phenomenal world and (2) a multiplicity of subjectivities which find their ultimate ground and explanation in the essential unity of the Real.³⁹

Thus, the world as it looks and the multiplicity that we find in it is nothing but the multiplicity of the modes of the Unity; it has no existence of its own. Ibn 'Arabi proclaims that "existent things have not the slightest touch of reality about them."⁴⁰ He explains this statement through the metaphor of the "mirror" and the "image."⁴¹ The phenomenal world is the mirror-image,

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

³⁸ Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi quoted by Burhan Ahmad Faruqi in his *Mujaddid's Conception of Tawhid*, pp. 88-89.

³⁹ A. E. Affifi, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁴⁰ *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, Cairo, p. 63.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

i.e., the shadow of the real object beyond. The whole world is like a shadow play. At another place ibn 'Arabi uses the metaphors of permeation and "spiritual food." The many permeate the One in the sense in which qualities (say, colours) permeate substance. The One, on the other hand, permeates the many as the nutriment permeates the body; God is our sustaining spiritual "food," because He is our essence. He is also the spiritual food of the phenomenal world and it is thus that God is endowed with attributes.⁴²

We can, thus, sum up ibn 'Arabi's whole philosophical thought in the two propositions: (1) in God existence and essence or being and attributes are identical; (2) the world is nothing but a pale reflection or emanation, or mode of His attributes only.

Mujaddid Alf Thāni, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, vehemently criticizes the philosophy of ibn 'Arabi. He says that it is wrong to believe that the attributes are identical with Being. The Qur'an says: "Verily God is wholly sufficient unto Himself—He needs none of the world." According to him, this verse is clearly indicative of the fact that God is not dependent upon the world for His unfoldment. The attributes by which He turns to the world and creates it are other than His Self. The Mujaddid also finds no valid basis for the theory of ibn 'Arabi that the world is the emanation (*tajalli*) of the attributes of God. For, if the world is merely the emanation of God's attributes, it would have been identical with them, but the attributes of God are perfect, while the world is full of imperfections,⁴³ for example, human knowledge has no resemblance to God's knowledge, so the former cannot be called to be the *tajalli* of the latter.⁴⁴ Just as we cannot call the shadow of man his being on the existence of which his very existence depends, similarly it is wrong to conclude that God depends upon the creation for His own unfoldment. There is no reciprocity between the One and the many as understood by ibn 'Arabi. God is an objective Reality, independent of the existence of created worlds. Thus, there is no likeness whatsoever between the divine and the human attributes. The verse "Thy Lord is nobler than the qualities which they ascribe to Him"⁴⁵ clearly points to this.

So, while ibn 'Arabi bases his theory of *wahdat al-wujūd* on the identity of *asl* and *zill*, i.e., the thing and its adumbration, the Mujaddid insists that the *zill* of a thing can never be identical with its *asl* or being.⁴⁶ Thus, according to him, there is absolutely no identity between the unique Creator and the world created by Him. He also believes that mystic experience, however valuable and perfect it might be, has no objective validity with regard to Being and attributes. It is through prophetic revelation alone that we can understand

⁴² A. E. Affifi, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁴³ *Maktūbāt Imām Rabbāni*, Urdu translation by Qāḍi 'Ālam al-Dīn, Lahore, Vol. III, pp. 113-14.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁴⁵ Qur'an, xxxvii, 180.

⁴⁶ *Maktūbāt Imām Rabbāni*, Vol. II, Epistle 7.

Reality. Moreover, the finite beings cannot apprehend the Infinite through mystical experiences. Consequently, the faith in the unseen is unavoidable. Such faith alone is valid in the case of God, because it is in keeping with our limitations and His inaccessibility or beyondness. Shaiikh Ahmad also bitterly criticizes the doctrine of determinism which is a natural corollary of the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. He believes that man has been afforded opportunity by God to exercise his freedom in a sphere of life where he may accept or reject a certain line of action according to his own choice. Should he be a mere puppet, as he is according to the inherent logic of ibn 'Arabi's pantheism, he cannot be justifiably rewarded or punished for his good and evil deeds. The idea of reward and punishment presupposes a world of free and responsible moral agents who can adopt or reject a certain course of action.

These are, in short, some basic differences between the metaphysical thought of ibn 'Arabi and that of Shaiikh Ahmad Sirhindi. The Mujaddid's criticism of the philosophy of *waḥdat al-wujūd* was very severe, and few had the courage to oppose him. It was Shāh Wali Allah who for the first time tried to bridge the gulf that yawned between the views of these two great thinkers of Islam. Shāh Wali Allah professed that God had granted him the special gift of creative synthesis or reconciliation.⁴⁷

According to Shāh Wali Allah, there is no substantial difference between the philosophy of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and that of *waḥdat al-shuhūd* and the difference if any is nothing but an illusion. The world is not an attribute or emanation of attributes but consists of non-emanative modes of attributes in the mirror of non-existence. These modes look real, but in truth their reality lies only in Being. He resolves this difference with the help of an example. He says, "Let us make a horse, a donkey, and a man out of wax. This wax is common to all of them although their forms differ from one another. We call these forms, moulded out of wax, a horse, a donkey, and a man. If we reflect deeply we find that these forms are only modes of their being and their being is nothing but the wax."⁴⁸ Shāh Wali Allah contends, however, that if we leave simile and metaphor aside, there is no essential difference between the doctrines of ibn 'Arabi and those of the Mujaddid. To say that the essence of the contingent beings are the names and attributes of the necessary being differentiated in the conceptual, as ibn 'Arabi holds, or to say that the contingent beings are the *asmā'-o ṣifāt* of the Necessary Being reflected in their *'adam al-mutaqābilah* or non-being as the Mujaddid maintains, is practically the same.⁴⁹ If there is any difference between the two positions, it is quite insignificant. The Mujaddid and ibn 'Arabi relate the same fact in two different languages but the short-sighted critics look upon these as matters of vital difference.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Shāh Wali Allah, *Faiṣalat al-Waḥdat al-Wujūd wa Waḥdat al-Shuhūd* (Arabic), p. 6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

The Spiritual World and the Material World.—Shāh Wali Allah believes that in between the material world and its Creator, there is a spiritual world in which the planning will of God is first reflected and then materialized into different forms. Thus, there is a close relationship between the two. All beings and happenings of this world are first reflected in the spiritual world or, as Shāh Wali Allah names it, the *'ālam al-mithāl*, then these are transmuted into material forms. He elucidates this point by the example of a clairvoyant dream. The coming events are first visualized in the forms of shadows which have no material existence but which later may actualize into tangible existents. A true dream is, thus, an instance of the *'ālam al-mithāl*. The things found in the spiritual world appear to a layman to be immaterial, but to the prophets they are tangible and concrete. For example, the Prophet once after having offered his prayer said to his Companions, "I saw heaven and hell before me." Once in the midst of his prayer, he is reported to have heaved a deep sigh as if he were actually feeling the heat of hell. Shāh Wali Allah, quoting numerous examples in support of his contention, concludes, "It is an established fact that the prophets could not see all these phenomena with their physical eyes. Heaven and hell are too large to be comprehended physically. Had these been matters of common sight they would have been visible to the Companions also who were by his side at such occasions."⁵¹ Thus, over and above the material world, there is another world which transcends its spatio-temporal limitations and receives the impressions of the planning will of God before these are manifested as concrete configurations in space and time.

Space and Time.—Shāh Wali Allah in his book *al-Khair al-Kathir* deals with the nature of space and time. He affirms that space is inconceivable without time, and *vice versa*. These are not two separate categories, but a single category of space-time continuum in which time and space have their being. He further holds that space and time are indivisible and adds that but for this indivisibility there would have been complete chaos and disorder in the world so much so that the creation could not stand even for a single second.⁵²

He also maintains that space and time like all created things are not eternal, but were created by the will of God and would cease to be with the end of creation.⁵³

As regards matter, Shāh Wali Allah argues that matter can be conceived only in terms of space and time. It is only the external form of space and time, for it can be apprehended only through the agency of these.⁵⁴

Freedom and Fatalism.—Shāh Wali Allah's attempt to solve the problems of freedom and fatalism is also of the nature of a reconciliation. He looks upon fate as a fundamental article of faith and declares that anyone who disbelieves

⁵¹ *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah*, Vol. I, pp. 13-14.

⁵² Shāh Wali Allah, *al-Khair al-Kathir*, ed. Bashir Ahmad, Dā'irat al-Hilāl, Benares, pp. 29-30.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

it is not entitled to be called a Muslim.⁵⁵ The Qur'ān explicitly states that all beings and happenings in this world are due to a conscious creative power or divine will.⁵⁶ The omnipotent will of God has such a full grasp of the whole universe that no one can budge even an inch from His decree. In fact, our belief in God is closely related to our belief in the divine ordinances. They are as much laws, in the strictest sense of the term, as laws which regulate the movements of celestial bodies, and, thus, belief in them forms the cornerstone of Islam.⁵⁷

The above view of Shāh Wali Allah, however, should not be construed in terms of *waḥdat al-wujūd* which, through its intrinsic logic, leads to a form of determinism such as leaves no scope for the free activity of man. According to him, if men were mere puppets made to move by a kind of push from behind, they could not be held responsible for their actions, and the distinction between good and evil too would become meaningless; all this is repugnant to the teachings of Islam. Islam holds man accountable for his deeds to God; His justice demands that man should be given freedom to avoid the path of vice and follow the path of virtue and piety. Every human being has two inclinations—one angelic, prompting and impelling him to good, and the other beastly, prompting and impelling him to evil. It is up to man himself to adopt the one and abandon the other. "Everyone is divinely furthered in accordance with his character. Say not that man is compelled, for that means attributing tyranny to God, nor say that man has absolute discretion. We are rather furthered by His help and grace in our endeavours to act righteously, and we transgress because of our neglect of His commands."⁵⁸

G

JURISPRUDENCE

Shāh Wali Allah attempts a reconciliation between the different schools of Muslim jurisprudence. He delineates the broad outlines of Islamic Law, consisting of mandatory and unalterable edicts and fundamental principles which have always been accepted unanimously by all the Muslim schools of thought. More important, however, for our purpose here are his views with regard to the problems about which differences do exist and which are the outcome of interpretations and *ijtihād*—all, of course, within the limits prescribed by Islam.

He advocates the policy of confining oneself within the framework of the four main schools of Islamic jurisprudence, viz., Ḥanafī, Shāfi'i, Mālikī, and Ḥanbalī.

⁵⁵ *Hujjat Allah al-Bālighah*, Vol. I, pp. 65–66.

⁵⁶ Cf. Qur'ān, xv, 21; xvi, 79; xlviii, 21.

⁵⁷ For a detailed study of this aspect, see *Hujjat Allah al-Bālighah*, Vol. I, pp. 55–67.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.

There is a consensus of opinion amongst the majority of 'ulamā' that *taqlīd* is essential. He agrees with them, but moderates the traditional view of *taqlīd* by saying: "No one can have any objection to the concept of *taqlīd*; but I neither look upon any Imām as infallible, nor do I believe that his judgments were revealed to him by God Himself and so are obligatory for us. When we follow a certain Imām we do so on the explicit understanding that he was possessed of a deep insight into the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and his findings were drawn from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. . . . Had it not been so, we would not have attached any importance to them. It would be the height of misfortune to give priority to the reasoning of man over the command of the *naṣṣ*. This alone is the type of *taqlīd* which appears to me quite justifiable."⁵⁹

Similarly, Shāh Wali Allah offers a workable solution of the differences of pure traditionalists (*Muḥaddithīn*) and the followers of the four Imāms. "The general practice," he says, "with regard to the framing of *Fiqhī* Law is that either the deductions are directly based upon the *Ḥadīth* or they are drawn in the light of the principles enunciated by the jurists. The scholars of every age have been following these two courses, some stressing the former, others stressing the latter. . . . It is unfair to tilt the balance to one side only and neglect the other altogether. . . . The right procedure is to harmonize them. Both these methods should be employed for raising the superstructure of Islamic jurisprudence. The edifice of the *Shari'ah* so erected would be sound and well consolidated. The *Muḥaddithīn* should judge their deductions on the principles enunciated by the great jurists. On the other hand, those who follow the practice of deducing laws on the basis of the procedure adopted by great jurists should never give preference to their own principles over those of the *naṣṣ*, and see that their conclusions do not in any way contravene the injunctions of the *Ḥadīth*. In the same way it is not proper for any *Muḥaddith* to lay unnecessary stress on the principles laid down by the old compilers of the *Ḥadīth*. They were after all human beings and their principles could not, therefore, be claimed to be final and free from all errors."⁶⁰

Shāh Wali Allah fully recognizes the importance of individual judgment (*ijtihād*), but at the same time believes that as this important task entails great responsibilities, it cannot be entrusted to everyone. He recounts three main qualifications of a *mujtahid*: (1) He should be able to frame the principles according to which the individual judgment is to be exercised; (2) he should be fully conversant with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and should know the *ahādīth* which form the basis of *Fiqh*; (3) he must be capable of exercising his judgment to draw injunctions from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah in order to meet the new requirements of his times.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Shāh Wali Allah, *al-Inṣāf fī Bayān-i Sabab al-Ikhtilāf*, Urdu translation by Ṣadr al-Dīn Iṣlāḥī, Lahore, n.d., pp. 29–80.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

Shāh Wali Allah not only emphasizes the catholicity of Islamic Law and explains its assimilative spirit, but also stresses the need of reasoning in matters relating to the *Shari'ah*. He believes that the *ijtihad* of the old jurists, however high and exalted their status, is open to correction in the light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. He, thus, opens the gate of *ijtihad* which had been sealed long ago. No wonder that, like his illustrious predecessors, ibn Taimiyyah and ibn Qayyim, he was also accused of heretical innovations; yet he was one of the few intellectuals of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent whose influence was deeply felt even beyond the borders of that country. His works, especially *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah*, *Budūr al-Bāzighah* and *Fauz al-Kabir*, are read with admiration throughout the Muslim world. His popularity outside the sub-continent of Indo-Pakistan may be partly attributed to the fact that he had a perfect command over the Arabic and Persian languages. His mastery over the Arabic language was especially remarkable; he was one of the very few writers of the Indo-Pak sub-continent who could write Arabic prose with the same ease and confidence with which he could write his own mother tongue.

This might have been one of the factors of his popularity abroad. But a close analysis of the writings of the Muslim scholars of other countries clearly reveals that he was respected more for the depth of his thought and his keen insight in the matters of *Shari'ah* than for the lucidity of his style. This is substantiated by the fact that his reputation as a scholar and as a leader of thought has considerably increased during the last few decades when there has been a visible stir amongst the Muslims to reconstruct their thought on Islamic foundations without losing sight of the benefits which can be derived from the study of modern sciences. There is hardly any modern scholar of repute in the Muslim world who has worked on *Fiqh* and *Hadith* and has not quoted Shāh Wali Allah in support of his contentions. Abu Zuhra of Egypt, who is an authority on Muslim law, seems to be deeply influenced by him and has profusely quoted him in his scholarly discussions on Imām abu Ḥanifah's juridical views. Jamāl al-Din Qāsimi, an eminent scholar of *Hadith* in Damascus, has time and again referred to Shāh Wali Allah's valuable thought in his famous book *Qawā'id al-Taḥdīth*, which is considered to be a basic work on the principles of *Hadith*. Abu Zahau in his scholarly treatise, *al-Ḥadīth w-al-Muḥaddithūn*, in which he traces the history of the revival of *Hadith* in different lands, pays glowing tributes to Shāh Wali Allah for the enviable contributions that he made in connection with the popularization of the study of *Hadith* in India. In fact, he places him at the top of the list in this respect. The famous *Shaiikh* al-Islam of Turkey, *Shaiikh* Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kauthari, devotes a whole chapter to Shāh Wali Allah in his compilation *Maqālāt al-Kauthari* published in Damascus. Muḥibb al-Din al-Khaṭīb, a leader of the liberation movement of Egypt and for several years editor of *al-Fath*, speaks of Shāh Wali Allah in several of his articles with great respect. 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Namar, another leading scholar of Egypt and a member of the Board of

'Ulamā' of Azhar, in his book *Tārikh al-Islām fi al-Hind*, speaks of him as an authority on *Hadith* and *Tafsir*. He states that Shāh Wali Allah shattered the bonds of *taqlid* and prepared the Muslim scholars for research. *Al-Mukhtārāt*, a compilation by abu al-Ḥasan Nadawi, which has been prescribed as a text-book for the secondary school stage in Damascus, includes a selection from *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah*.

Shāh Wali Allah's most valuable book, *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah*, has been published in Egypt in various editions and is widely read in the Arab lands. *Musawwa*, another important work of Shāh Wali Allah, has also been translated into Arabic. A French translation of *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* has recently been published in Paris.

H

CONCLUSION

Shāh Wali Allah's influence was quite widespread and penetrating. He revolutionized the philosophical, political, social, and economic ideas within the framework of Islam. Like an experienced surgeon he analysed and examined the various components of Islamic mysticism and *Fiqh* and rearranged them in an order which made them highly beneficial to the Muslim society. According to Iqbāl, he was the first Muslim to feel the urge for rethinking the whole system of Islam without in any way breaking away from its past.

Shāh Wali Allah aimed at presenting Islamic thought in as coherent and logical form as any theologico-philosophical system could be. His style has all the philosophical subtlety and penetration about it and his doctrines have a logical cogency and consistency surpassing those of many Muslim theologians. His philosophical endeavour consisted in explaining and resolving satisfactorily the apparent contradictions and dichotomies between the eternal values and the changing conditions, the unity of God and the multiplicity within the universe, etc. In this he was the precursor of Iqbāl; anyone delving deep into Iqbāl's *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* will find the spirit of Shāh Wali Allah pervading this work from beginning to end.

In Islamic mysticism Shāh Wali Allah tried to comb out all unhealthy foreign influences, such as a morbid kind of neo-Platonism and Vedantism. He stressed that genuine mysticism, as distinguished from pseudo-mysticism, encourages an active way of life which assures progress and prosperity in this world and salvation in the hereafter. Commenting on Shāh Wali Allah's role as a Sufi, Professor Gibb 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 Nāblus (1641–1731) and the Indians Ahmad Sarhindi (1563–1624) and Shah Wali-Allāh of Delhi (1702–1762).⁶²

Shāh Wali Allah translated the Holy Qur'ān into Persian despite opposition and, thus, brought the Word of Allah within the reach of the common man. His illustrious son, Shāh Rafī' al-Dīn, following his example, translated the Qur'ān in Urdu and, thus, dispelled the prejudice against translations of the Holy Book.

In *Ḥadīth* he revived interest in the study of Imām Mālik's *Muwatta*, which became elevated in the eyes of scholars only through his efforts.

In *Fiqh*, Shāh Wali Allah attacked the conventional notions prevailing during his time. His main endeavour consisted in freeing the concept of the divine Law from the subjective elements that had intruded into it, thus restoring to it the purity and compactness which it had at the time of the Companions. He also tried to bridge the gulfs that yawned amongst the different schools of *Fiqh*. According to him, all the prevalent systems of *Fiqh* drew their inspiration from one single source so that there could be no fundamental differences in them; differences there had been and there would be, but these were differences in interpretation only, not in principles. The significance of Shāh Wali Allah's standpoint in *Fiqh* from the point of view of welding the Muslim community into one *ummah* cannot be over-emphasized.

Shāh Wali Allah, like Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, made it amply clear that Islam is not a religion in the usual sense of the term but a complete code of life which aims not only at individual righteousness but provides a framework for all individual and social activities.

It was the effect of the radical change brought about by Shāh Wali Allah in the outlook of the Muslim community in the various walks of life that a mighty movement under the leadership of Shāh Ismā'il Shahid and Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi was set afoot. This made the Muslim community realize the condition in which they had been left through a neglect of their faith, or through an incorrect approach to it. There sprang up an ardent desire in the minds of the Muslims to retrieve their position, not merely to claim the heritage of their past culture but also to revive the vitality inherent in it. Although the movement suffered defeat at the hands of the imperialistic powers, yet it could not be curbed permanently. The time that elapsed between the martyrdom of Shāh Ismā'il and late forties of the present century is very important for it was the time during which the plant nourished by the life-blood of Shāh Wali Allah continued growing till it flowered into the birth of Pakistan.

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⁶² H. A. R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, The New American Library, New York, 1955, p. 125.