

CONTRIBUTION OF SHĀH WALĪ ALLĀH TO ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN THE SUBCONTINENT

Dr. Muhammad al-Ghazali*

Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm who became famous and posthumously rose to great renown as Shāh Walī Allāh (1703-1762) has been one of the most outstanding Muslim thinkers of India. His ideas and efforts to rejuvenate the Islamic scholarly tradition left a deep impact on the development of Islamic thought in India. Many subsequent initiatives in the religious revival and reform of the Muslim community were more or less inspired or influenced by his seminal ideas. The prevailing patterns of Muslim education in South Asia had multifarious moorings and multi-faceted dimensions. This educational tradition received the most abiding influence of this great reformer and intellectual leader. And he remains unexcelled in this regard to this day. Apart from his very original contribution to the substantive Islamic disciplines like *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *kalām*, and *taṣawwuf*, Shāh Walī Allāh has had a very eventful practical life. He addressed the Muslim community at different levels and strata. And for this purpose, he adopted various channels of effective communication, making a vigorous attempt to reform the thought and behaviour of his fellow Muslims. The impact of his academic reform as well as his sustained work to revivify his community has been a unique phenomenon of history for it exerted an abiding and extensive influence on the future development of Muslim culture, society and politics.

That is why we find the academic contribution and practical achievements of Shāh Walī Allāh earning wide recognition in the academic circles. It attracted the attention of many a scholar and writer, both Muslim and non-Muslim, within and outside India. This is displayed, among other things, in several scholarly works of lasting interest. The widespread acknowledgement of Shāh Walī Allāh is also reflected in the active existence of full-fledged institutions that are exclusively devoted to studies and research on Shāh Walī Allāh. I would just mention two of them here. One is the Shāh Walī Allāh Academy at

* Professor, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Hyderabad, Pakistan, which is the older one (active from about 50 years); and the other more recent one is Shāh Walī Allāh Research Cell, that was established about four years ago at Muslim University of Aligarh in India. Similarly, the number of works, from large volumes to short treatises, from small articles to entire special numbers of academic journals point to a continuing interest of scholars in Shāh Walī Allāh.

In the vast field of Islamic studies, Shāh Walī Allāh's contribution gained unprecedented prominence for several reasons. He is among those exceptional figures who delved deep in the classic tradition of philosophy and logic, apart from devoting themselves to pure Islamic disciplines of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, and *kalām*. Additionally, through his mastery of the spiritual sciences and practical initiation in almost all the significant orders of taṣawwuf, Shāh Walī Allāh assimilated its rich intellectual capital and fully benefited from various shades and schools of the Sufi tradition of his time. In fact, few scholars before Shāh Walī Allāh or after him were able to encompass such vast and varied fields of knowledge, wisdom and experience to the extent he did. The only exceptions in this respect whose names come to mind—at least from within the Subcontinent—are Shaykh Aḥmad Sarhindī and Mawlānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānvī.

Among the most prominent features of Shāh Walī Allāh's contribution to Islamic scholarship, is his exceptional synthesizing genius and reconciliatory approach to differences of opinion among the scholars of Islam. He was gifted with a remarkable ability to trace the common roots of significant variation of individual and sectarian positions in the authentic sources of Islam. This trend is visible in almost all his writings. The overriding concern which seems to have inspired Shāh Walī Allāh's exposition of Islam was to verify and authenticate all the subsequent post-prophetic developments in Islamic thought by the criteria of Qur'ān and the Sunnah and the practice of early followers of the prophet (*Ṣalla Allāh Alayhi wa Sallam*). He has generally been regarded by the Muslim scholars of India as a Mujaddid, whose appearance had been foretold by the prophet (*Ṣalla Allāhu Alayhi wa Sallam*) in a famous hadith.¹ That being so, Shāh Walī Allāh appears

¹ Abū Dā'ūd al-Sijistānī, *Sunan Abī Dā'ūd*, Kitāb al-Malāhīm, Bāb Mā Yudhkar fī Qarn al-Mī'ah.

to have been destined to undertake the task of reforming the religious thought and practice of the Indian Muslim community. And this reformation could only be effected through a critical evaluation of the prevailing patterns of thinking and modes of behaviour. This was necessary in order to reconstruct the society on the perfect model provided by the prophet of Islam (*Salla Allāhu Alayhi wa Sallam*). Hence, it was quite natural and appropriate in the Islamic scheme of things, that Shāh Walī Allāh should devote himself to restore the pristine purity of Islamic heritage, by bringing it back to the track of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and the authentic early model. To achieve this objective, he had to effectively counteract a number of age-old accumulations of alien and un-Islamic influences, whether their source had been Persian, Indian or any other.

A clear understanding of Shāh Walī Allāh's significance as a great revivalist scholar of his time would enable us to appreciate the great reform movement launched by him. This movement cast the existing cultural heritage of Muslims in a somewhat modern mould. Not only that, it also gave almost a new direction to the entire intellectual, educational and cultural development of the Muslim community.

In his time, Shāh Walī Allāh had witnessed a decadent post-Mughal Muslim society that suffered from many of those ills and evils that are characteristic of the period of decline in all societies and civilizations, which had been once prosperous and preponderant. Symptoms of political disintegration, economic backwardness, social chaos, cultural confusion, sectarian anarchy and theological literalism and rigidity were the order of the day, when Shāh Walī Allāh made his debut in the Indian Muslim history. This was the period following the beginning of the great Mughal Empire's decline. Among these problems, the growing sectarian divide and increasing vogue of hair-splitting, in matters religious, leading to constant division and disunity, was one of the main issues that agitated the sensitive mind of Shāh Walī Allāh. He knew quite well that the route to a lasting solution of all their problems in this world, and success and salvation in the hereafter, lay in resolving the differences of religious perception and practice, and forging a broad unity of thought and action in the Muslim leadership as well as among their rank and file. Naturally, if religion had to provide the norms for organizing the Muslim community toward a

healthy and purposeful reconstruction, then it was imperative to devise a proper mode of understanding and applying religion, without falling prey to the prevailing deviant tendencies in the community.

In all his writings, Shāh Walī Allāh stresses his strong belief in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah as the two fundamental, flawless, perfect, comprehensive, infallible and ultimate sources of knowledge, instruction, vision and guidance. However, human capacity for cognition, comprehension, understanding, abstraction, empathy and experience is always limited. It is mostly subjective, and is often strongly affected by temporal and spatial factors. The need to have resources to other auxiliary and subsidiary disciplines, that would give a meaning to the divine commands and the prophetic instructions was, therefore, quite evident. But these secondary disciplines are no more than means and instruments. These disciplines evolved in history following the demise of the prophet (*Ṣalla Allāhu Alayhi wa Sallam*) on the basis of an ex-post-facto theorization - as it were - of the whole phenomena of the prophet's function of reforming, guiding and transforming the believers into the best community (*khayr ummah*).

However, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, the two basic sources of Islam, at the same time, provide sufficient space for human reasoning to address the conditions of the ever-changing human society. If the Qur'ān clearly settled some issues of human life, and answered certain questions explicitly, it has also kept silent on others. This, however, was not a coincidence, but was meant to serve a certain purpose. Hence, this silence too had been a definite intention of the divine Book. The purpose was to leave further elaboration of issues to the Sunnah, which Shāh Walī Allāh saw as an oral and practical commentary on the Qur'ān, in accordance with the well-known position of Imam al-Shāfi'ī in this regard. Likewise, when the prophet (*Ṣalla Allāhu Alayhi wa Sallam*) elaborated on some issues and left others unexplained, this was also intended to leave the field open for the collective will and consensus of the community, and also for individual reasoning to find a solution within the given framework. Muslim scholars indeed exercised this discretion, while having due regard for the demands of the space-time exigencies. However, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, the process of reasoning in solving new problems that was undertaken by the early elders of the ummah, was pursued within the over-all framework of the

legal ordinances, spiritual norms and moral principles provided by the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and in the light of the authentic early practice because these fresh solutions to new problems were essentially derived, through a well-developed and elaborate methodology, from the same normative roots. In fact, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, then prescriptive function of defining creed and canons, and spelling out the terms of applying them to human condition, is confined to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. The other two secondary sources namely, consensus and reasoning are nothing but offshoots of the former.

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, if one remains steadfastly attached to higher aims and objectives of the religious mission of the prophet (*Ṣalla Allāhu Alayhi wa Sallam*) and constantly keeps them in focus, then all the differences of opinion among the scholars could be explained in terms of their unmistakable common roots that are well-preserved in the prophet's legacy. It should, however, be kept in mind that a number of prominent Muslim scholars, before Shāh Walī Allāh, also attempted to identify the general frontiers and fault lines, that indicate the variety of juridical thinking and the arguments advanced by different scholars of Islam. These works essentially focus their attention on the borders between the ideas of various scholars, in the light of which, it becomes easy to appreciate the distinctive features of each school of law and theology. These works, at the same time, provide insights about domestic differences of opinion among the scholars and exponents of the same school. In this way, all such works are helpful in understanding the dynamics of thought and variety of opinion in Islam, as these had been evolving throughout our history. The basic issue before Shāh Walī Allāh, however, had been to trace in the diversity of scholarly views, a central unity of principle propounded by the Qur'ān and expounded in the Sunnah of the prophet (*Ṣalla Allāhu Alayhi wa Sallam*).

Another prominent trait which typifies Shāh Walī Allāh's characteristic perspective on this issue is to find a link between the various opinions and the temporal circumstances, in the context of which these opinions had initially emerged. The approach of Shāh Walī Allāh, unlike many other scholars before him, was not to judge the value or validity of legal opinions strictly from the vantage point of any particular school. Rather, he sought to evaluate them by vigorously

applying the strict criterion of adherence to the canons of the Shari'ah as clearly enunciated in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In other words, the overriding concern of Shāh Walī Allāh had been to emphasize a return to the creedal and cultural roots of the whole corpus of Islamic juridical thought. He tried not to judge any opinion on its face value, but endeavoured to discern – through his profound understanding and penetrating analysis – a general doctrinal principle provided by the law-giver, which might have guided, governed or permeated a particular opinion. At the same time, Shāh Walī Allāh accorded due consideration to the peculiar circumstances or accidental causes that might have given rise to a certain way of thinking on the part of a particular individual, in his own peculiar set of circumstances. In this way, Shāh Walī Allāh was often able to identify a unity of purpose that clearly revealed itself to him across all the apparent polarization of opinion. Shāh Walī Allāh enjoyed a remarkable ability to reach the deeper layers of meaning and message implicit in the original sources of Islam. At the same time, he did not view the commands and canons enunciated by them, in isolation from other significant factors. Moreover, he clearly demonstrated that these latter factors have also been duly endorsed by the twin sources themselves. Hence, he looked at them in the context of the prevailing socio-political and psychological conditions of Arabia, in which these injunctions and instructions were issued and applied. Furthermore, by his exceptional God-given insight and ingenuity, Shāh Walī Allāh was able to have access to those profound principles of purposeful coherence that joined these injunctions and instructions of the prophet (*Ṣalla Allāhu Alayhi wa Sallam*). Thus, he was able to show that these injunctions could be organized into a well-integrated intellectual system, a holistic cultural vision and a harmonious existential scheme of Islam.

Now, since the fountainhead of all knowledge and wisdom that guided the views and responses of Muslim savants and scholars, had been one and the same, Shāh Walī Allāh's superb Islamic genius was able to link the apparent variation in individual views to a definitive unity of origin and also to show a certain uniformity in their evolution. In this manner, he was able to transcend those temporal and spatial differences that often suggested an apparent alteration or inconsistency to a superficial observer. Besides, he was among that finer breed of

scholars of Islam who, not only respected difference of opinion within the given normative framework of Islam, but also recognized the value of variety and change in human response to space-time situations. In this way, he demonstrated that healthy difference of opinion, the scope of which had been widening in the Muslim community with the onward march of history, was something that was occurring by design and not by default. Therefore, if there have appeared among the Muslim scholars, several approaches to solving the problems of life under the supreme mandate of Islam, then far from being any defect or deviation from the straight path, this seeming diversity within a definite unity, had precisely been in accord with the intended scheme of Islam. In this connection, he frequently cited the statement of the prophet (*Ṣalla Allāhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam*) in which he is reported to have said:

*“What I prohibited you from stay away from it and what I enjoined upon you do what you can from it, for those people who lived before you faced disasters on account of their excessive queries, and for involving their prophets in many un-warranted differences.”*²

The significant idea that Shāh Walī Allāh seems to have derived from the above *ḥadīth* is that a prophet occupies the loftiest locus in the pyramid of culture, created and sustained by him under the Divine Guidance. He exclusively represents the zenith of perfection in the common ideals shared by his community. He combines, in his ideal personality, all the essential verities and varieties of human genius, that unfold themselves in the course of the cultural development of his immediate companions and the community of his followers at large. All those streams of knowledge, wisdom and ingenuity that irrigate and enrich the society and civilization, inspire and invigorate the moral and spiritual progress of the individuals and the collectivity not only emanate from this very fountainhead but also eventually flow to join the same ocean of unity and integrity. Hence, a prophet stands over and above all such differences of perception and varieties of response to reality, that constitute the natural predilections of the human mind. That was why the prophet (*Ṣalla Allāhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam*) – in Shāh Walī Allāh’s opinion – quite often disapproved those queries from his

² Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Kitāb al-Faḍā’il, Bāb Tawqīruhu Ṣalla Allāhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam wa Tark Ikthār Su’ālihi.

companions, that tended to restrict the wide scope and vast sphere of thought and behaviour, that his Sunnah sought to provide to the community as a living and viable legacy.

Shāh Walī Allāh, thus, tries to show that the diversity of opinion found among the scholars of various schools, represents a natural onward process of understanding and enforcing the teachings of Islam to different space-time situations and circumstances. However, a true appreciation of these disagreements requires their strict evaluation on the touchstone of Revelation. So as long as these opinions are traceable to their basic origins and conform to the ideals and objectives of Islam, they are all valid and justified. For these different positions, taken by authentic exponents of Islam, merely project different vantage-points, from which one can observe the same reality. The apparent diversity of views is understandable in view of the variety of perceptions and the processes of natural change in the conditions of human life. What Shāh Walī Allāh emphasizes most, throughout his writings, is the dire need of Muslim scholarship to transcend specific particularities of the varying schools as well as the variables of time and space. For, it is this ability that ensures a constant return and consistent adherence to the original message of Islam. This is because this touchstone alone supplies the criteria, in terms of which, one could judge the merit and value of all human responses and attitudes.

This exceptional gift of Shāh Walī Allāh, to discover essential elements of unity, in diversities of thought, also expressed itself in his socio-political ideas. The main ingredient of his grand social theory is that all human societies share the natural common traits of a universal culture. These traits originate from mutually shared needs and common wants of all human stocks and groups. These needs in turn arise from the same primordial and immutable human nature. All the discourses of Shāh Walī Allāh on human society and its processes of socialization and acculturation, and his various writings on the related themes, are premised on the following idea: “notwithstanding the apparent diversity of cultures, the essential unity of human nature is clearly discernible in the overwhelming evidence of a commonality of universal human

culture.”³ Displaying a high degree of cultural relativity, as it were, Shāh Walī Allāh draws the conclusion that: Islam, the religion of *fiṭrah*, has addressed this common core of the human condition, and has fully responded to all those healthy and constructive urges and ambitions that are rooted in the universal human nature. Elaborating the Qur’ānic concept of human *fiṭrah*, Shāh Walī Allāh further says that moral vision and aesthetic demands, rather than mere rational tools and apparatus, are the chief distinctions of man, that distinguish him from the animal species. And it is the fusion of ethics and aesthetics that constitutes the mainstay of all cultural progress and civilizational development.

Another great contribution of Shāh Walī Allāh to Islamic thought is that he made a bold and successful attempt to revive the pristine spirit of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah as the prime mover and core of Muslim education. This he did in such a manner that these twin sources once again began to play a decisive role in animating the educational life of the Indian Muslims. He tried to purge the Muslim educational tradition of all unhealthy and unwholesome elements in their accumulated heritage, so as to restore the vast expanses of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, with their universal appeal and harmonious approach to human mind, heart and soul. He endeavoured to identify the most fertile and imaginative Muslim minds in the Indian Muslim society, so as to pool the collective genius of the community. Thereafter, he attempted to rigorously expose these minds to the perennial wisdom of the Qur’ān and to the inimitable insights that are abundantly available in the prophet’s Sunnah. This Shāh Walī Allāh did by providing them with a greatly refined and reformed educational lore.

In this manner, he tried on the one hand, to integrate the educational process with a confluence of the three streams of revelation, reason and spiritual wisdom. And on the other hand, he sought to emancipate Muslim ethos from the unhealthy influences of Hindu mysticism which tended to inhibit a healthy growth of Muslim mind along the lines consistent with the spirit of Islam. At times, these influences even threatened to derail the Muslim conscience from the straight path of its distinct theocentric worldview. In this respect, Shāh

³ See Shah Wali Allāh, *Hujjat Allāh al-Balighah* (Karachi: Kār Khāna Tījārat-i Kutub, n.d.), pp. 38-49.

Walī Allāh supplemented the reformist work undertaken a century earlier by Aḥmad Sirhindi and brought it to fruition in an elaborate and renewed curricular structure. This new structure of Muslim religious education, was not only commensurate with the requirements of his time, but was also capable of responding to some of the needs of the future.

Another reformist thrust of Shāh Walī Allāh in the field of Islamic education was to free the Muslim pedagogic and epistemological tradition from the literalism that had made inroads in it over a period of time. By this corrective effort, Shāh Walī Allāh successfully tried to reformulate the Muslim educational culture of India, so as to provide a viable, dynamic, rational and comprehensive alternative to the status quo which had, by then outlived its utility. The fact that nearly all the significant movements and institutions, that subsequently rose in the Subcontinent in the field of education, were influenced by the ideas of Shāh Walī Allāh in one degree or the other, is an index of the exceptional success of this great teacher and reformer. His contribution continues to inspire and guide Muslim educational endeavours to this day. His impact is evident most conspicuously in the successful experiments of Deoband, Nadwah and Aligarh, and in several other promising initiatives, in the field of Islamic education. In all likelihood, his impactful contribution will remain, for a long time to come, a major influence on the cultural life of the Muslims of the Subcontinent, for its abiding value and continuous relevance.

In sum, the thrust of reform initiated by Shāh Walī Allāh, for the resurgence of the religious consciousness and intellectual development of the Muslim community, consisted mainly in six important corrective measures that he proposed and applied with full vigour:

- (i) The foremost of his reform aimed at returning to the pristine purity of Islam, by reviving the weakening links of Muslim scholarly tradition with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. He made one of the first attempts to translate the Qur'ān into lucid Persian – the *lingua franca* of the Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent. He thereby sought to disseminate the Divine message of the Qur'ān among the rank and file of the

Muslim community instead of keeping it confined to the limited circle of some academic specialists.

- (ii) Shāh Walī Allāh is also credited with sponsoring a new tradition in the teaching and learning of *ḥadīth*. In this field of Islamic scholarship, he introduced an assimilative and integral perspective for an understanding of the prophet's mission and message. This was distinguished from a reductionist sort of approach to the study of the prophet's traditions, an approach which prompted scholars to treat each tradition as a single – somewhat fragmented – unit of religious knowledge and instruction. Further, he emphasized the core of the actual message contained in the *ahādīth* of the prophet (*Ṣalla Allāhu Alayhi wa Sallam*) along with other allied disciplines of *ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*. The latter mostly consisted of examining the authenticity of the context, as well as critically considering the traditions from linguistic and semantic angles and assessing the credibility of the transmitters. Shāh Walī Allāh was perhaps the first exponent of Islam, who clearly asserted that “discerning the deeper and integrated layers of meaning and levels of message underlying the prophet's traditions constituted the ‘kernel’ of *ḥadīth*, while all the discussions relating to the transmission of their texts were merely its ‘peel’.” He, therefore, designated the former as *ʿilm asrār al-dīn* i.e. ‘the science of the subtle meanings of religion.’ To implement this idea of his for shifting the focus in studying the *ḥadīth* sciences, he wrote a number of commentaries on the major compendia of *ḥadīth* specially Imam Bukhārī's *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* and Imam Mālik's *al-Murwattaʿ*. Shāh Walī Allāh made an earnest effort to introduce a holistic approach in the understanding of Islam by reconciling the apparently divergent insights supplied by spiritual, rational and intuitive points of view into an integrated vision of the reality. He thus tried to show a complementarity and concord between these points of view that had been seen in the past as mutually incompatible approaches, and had set their votaries unnecessarily estranged and apart from each other. At the same time, he employed

his masterly skills in synthesizing the views of the so-called traditionalists and the rationalists in their interpretations of Islamic texts. He wrote a number of treatises to highlight the methodology of arriving at the underlying unity in the apparent diversity of individual opinions.

(iii) Shāh Walī Allāh tried to link his understanding and exposition of Islam with the existential issues of his contemporaneous life and the concrete problems of his milieu. For this purpose, he pleaded to shift the focus of the Muslim academics from speculative, theoretical and abstract issues to the practical problems of the Indian Muslim community. The best specimens of his writings, that reflect this particular thrust of his thought, are his epistles that he specifically wrote to people of note, who represented important sections of the Indian Muslim community: such as rulers, scholars, preachers and sufi masters.

(iv) As alluded to before, Shāh Walī Allāh developed a new approach in understanding and interpreting the texts of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, by probing into the socio-economic, political and psychological conditions prevailing in the Arabian society at the time of the prophet (*Ṣalla Allāhu Alayhi wa Sallam*). He was of the view that without taking into consideration these particular circumstances, it was not possible to determine the true signification of those texts. In this way, Shāh Walī Allāh tried to moderate the accumulative effects of past literalism in comprehending the texts and applying them to the problems of life. In this regard, he clearly distinguished between constants and variables in the commands embodied in the Shari'ah. Moreover, Shāh Walī Allāh not only extensively practiced various modes of *ijtihād* himself, but also intensely pleaded for their operationalization, whenever this was warranted by the circumstances. In fact, as a contemporary authority on Shāh Walī Allāh, Marcia Hermansen, has rightly remarked, these innovations in Shāh Walī Allāh's Islamic thinking, provide yet another evidence

of continuity in the functioning of *ijtihād*, as a principle of movement in the structure of Islam.⁴

(v) Shāh Walī Allāh also tried to steer the Muslim scholarly tradition toward such new orientations as could serve the purpose of establishing a channel of communication between Muslims and non-Muslims. He did this by developing a new scholastic tradition in *Ilm al-Kalām*, which relied more on inductive modes of argument than deductive modes of logic. Inspired by one of his spiritual visions, Shāh Walī Allāh had prophesized that ‘a new era was going to dawn wherein the *‘Mustafid Shari‘ah* shall appear in the perfect garment of demonstrative proof (*burhān*).’ (See *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, opening remarks of the author about the reasons for writing his *magnum opus*). In this way, the discourse of Islamic thought as initiated by Shāh Walī Allāh, and later developed by his descendants and disciples, was made progressively more and more comprehensible to non-Muslims. For it was anchored in dialectics, that were based on commonly acceptable premises. By introducing this particular direction in Muslim thinking, Shāh Walī Allāh could rightly be regarded as the precursor of a reformist scholastic tradition in Islamic thought. A very evident proof of the truth of this statement is that in the post-Walī Allāh period, the Subcontinent of India witnessed the emergence of a galaxy of scholars, who followed this epoch-making trend in Islamic thought, which was set by Shāh Walī Allāh. We have already mentioned the name of the great Indian luminary of the last century, Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānvī (d. 1943). This great scholar, sufi reformer and intellectual leader of Muslim India, greatly enriched this particular trend of Shāh Walī Allāh in his own works. One could also enumerate the names of such great men as Allamah Iqbal (d. 1938), Maulana Abd al-Majid Daryabadi (d. 1977) and Maulana Maududi (d. 1979) who quite conspicuously represent a continuous development of the same trend.

⁴ See her foreword to *The Socio-Political Thought of Shāh Walī Allāh* by Muhammad Al-Ghazali (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 2001).

Lastly, the most important reason which could perhaps explain the singular success achieved by Shāh Walī Allāh – a success that appears almost without parallel in recent times – was that he adopted a highly effective and persuasive mode of communication. This mode of communication was typically represented by the concern for spiritual reform and an inner transformation of human beings. This mode had been employed and excelled by the spiritual sages and masters in all periods of Muslim history. In this way, Shāh Walī Allāh directly addressed the hearts and souls of individuals, and did not confine his effort to mere intellectual articulation. His authorship of more than forty seminal works, re-enforced with his instruction of hundreds of gifted disciples, was greatly re-invigorated by his super-imposing role of a spiritual mentor and master, who at once held the mantles of almost all the living spiritual orders of his time. And this formidable field of Islamic knowledge and experience, namely, *taṣawwuf* or *tazkiyah* and *Iḥsan*, also continued to receive the healthy influence of the reformist views of Shāh Walī Allāh after him because he tried to bring the old tradition of *taṣawwuf* in strict line with the demands and dictates of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah.

Having said this, I would like to end my submissions on the note, that what perhaps explains the extraordinary success of this great *mujāhid*, *mujtahid*, *murshid* and *mujaddid*, is: that the Divine Grace must have touched the pure and sincere soul of Shāh Walī Allāh with its special care, support and blessing. And that is indeed the ultimate factor in every real success that a man can ever achieve, both here and hereafter.

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