

The Socio-Political Thought of Shāh Walī Allāh

MUHAMMAD AL-GHAZALI

Contents

Foreword	v
Preface	ix
Editor's Note	xiii

Part ONE

The Contribution of Shāh Walī Allāh to Islamic Thought	1
1 Introduction	3
2 Religio-Philosophical Thought	13
The Ontology of Shāh Walī Allāh	13
'Ālam al-Arwāḥ (Spiritual Sphere)	18
'Ālam al-Mithāl (Supra-material World)	18
'Arsh	19
Al-Insān al-Akbar	19
Ḥaẓīrat al-Quds and al-Mala' al-A'lā	19
Man and His <i>Raison d'être</i>	20
Basic Morals of Man	21
Concept of Prophethood	22
Prophets and the Reform of Human Society	25
Sources of Shāh Walī Allāh's Thought	28
3 Social Thought	33
Influence of Earlier Muslim Thinkers on Shāh Walī Allāh	36
The Influence of Fārābī	37
The Influence of Māwardī	41
The Influence of Ghazālī	42
The Four Stages of Social Development	43

4	The Theory of <i>Irtifāqāt</i>	51
	The First Stage of <i>Irtifāq</i>	51
	Second Stage of <i>Irtifāq</i> and the Five Basic Sciences	53
	The Primary Stage of Political Organization	67
	Aides and Lieutenants of rulers	68
	Sources of Corruption in the City-State	71
	The Fourth Stage of Social Development <i>Irtifāq</i>	72
	Shāh Walī Allāh's Conception of Islamic State and its Relation to His Fourth <i>Irtifāq</i>	77
	The Universal Model of Society and State	80
	Shāh Walī Allāh and Ibn Ṭufayl	81
5	Politics and Statecraft	83
	Shāh Walī Allāh's Concept of Islamic State	83
	Qualifications of the <i>Khalīfah</i>	87
	Modes of Appointment of the <i>Khalīfah</i>	89
	Responsibilities of the <i>Khalīfah</i>	92
	<i>Khilāfah 'Āmmah</i> and <i>Khilāfah Khāṣṣah</i>	93
	Relations between the <i>Khalīfah</i> and the Citizenry	96
	Functions of the State	97
	1. Penal Injunctions <i>Mazālim</i>	99
	2. Crimes against Society and their Specified Punishments <i>Hudūd</i>	100
	3. Judicature	101
	4. <i>Jihād</i>	102

Part TWO

The Major Writings of Shāh Walī Allāh: An Introduction		109
1	A Survey of Shāh Walī Allāh's Works	111
2	<i>Al-Budūr al-Bāzighah</i>	117
3	<i>Izālat al-Khafā' 'an Khilāfat al-Khulafā'</i>	123
4	Political Epistles of Shāh Walī Allāh	127
5	<i>Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah</i>	131

Part THREE

Selection from <i>Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah</i>	143
1 Section I: The Method of Deducing <i>Irtifāqāt</i>	145
2 Section II: The First Stage of <i>Irtifāq</i>	149
3 Section III: The Science of the Manners of Living	151
4 Section IV: The Management of Household	154
5 Section V: The Science of Human Transactions	158
6 Section VI: The Administration of the City-State	161
7 Section VII: The Conduct of Rulers	165
8 Section VIII: The Policy with Regard to Aides and Lieutenants	168
9 Section IX: The Fourth Stage of <i>Irtifāq</i>	172
10 Section X: Universal Consensus on the Principles of <i>Irtifāqāt</i>	175
11 Section XI: The Conventions Prevailing Among People	178
12 Section XII: The Need for Guides of Paths and Founders of Religious Communities	181
13 Section XIII: The Essence of Prophethood and its Attributes	185
14 Section XIV: The Origin and Essence of Religion is One, but the Prescribed Laws Vary	193
15 Section XV: Causes of the Revelation of a <i>Sharī'ah</i> Peculiar to a particular Era and Community	199
16 Section XVI: Causes for Impeachment concerning the Methods of Guidance	207

17	Section XVII: The Subtle Meanings of an Injunction	211
18	Section XVIII: The Establishment of <i>Irtifāqāt</i> and the Reformation of Customs	217
19	Section XIX: The Need to a Religion which Abrogates all other Religions	225
20	Section XX: The Conditions of <i>Jāhiliyyah</i> reformed by the Prophet	231
	Sections on Politics	240
21	Section XXI: <i>Khilāfah</i>	243
22	Section XXII: Judiciary	249
23	Section XXIII: <i>Jihād</i>	260
	Notes and Reference	283
	Bibliography	323
	Index	329

Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to contribute this foreword for Professor Muhammad al-Ghazali's work, "Socio-Political Thought of Shāh Walī Allāh".

Shāh Walī Allāh was a prolific writer whose contributions range over the entire spectrum of the classical Islamic disciplines: Qur'ānic Studies, *Ḥadīth* methodology, applied and theoretical jurisprudence, and Islamic mysticism. In the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent he is seen as an intellectual inspiration behind almost all contemporary interpretations of Muslim thought. Modernists, Ahl-i Sunnat wa al-Jamā'at, Ahl-i Ḥadīth, Deōbandīs, the Jamā'at-i Islāmī and others view him as an intellectual precursor to their own interpretations of Islam.

Professor al-Ghazali's specific focus in this work is on the socio-political aspects of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought. He reviews all of the major discussions of social and political ideas in Shāh Walī Allāh's extensive writings. In particular, al-Ghazali considers material drawn from three of the author's major works most concerned with questions of practical and theoretical politics and sociology. These three works are *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* ("The Conclusive Argument from God"), *al-Budūr al-Bāzighah* ("Full Moons Rising on the Horizon"), and *Izālat al-Khafā' 'an Khilāfat al-Khulafā'* ("Ending the Mystery about the Caliphate").

In addition to presenting a synopsis of the author's socio-political terminology and concepts, Professor al-Ghazali contextualizes this dimension of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought within the preceding Islamic intellectual tradition. One of the services rendered by this work is the tracing of Shāh Walī Allāh's social and political thought in the intellectual lineage of Islamic philosophy and theology, for example, the heritage of al-Fārābī, al-Rāzī, al-Māwardī, Ibn Taymiyyah, Aḥmad Sirhindī, and others. Professor al-Ghazali's work is the first to trace in some detail these major intellectual currents influencing Shāh Walī Allāh. The highly structured, or as Professor Halepota characterized it, "systematic", nature of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought led him to lay out a comprehensive schema integrating

the various domains of human activity. This schema was structured within the overarching cosmology of classical Islamic religious thought, and had as its guiding principle, concern with the ultimate purpose and religious meaning of all spheres of human activity. Shāh Walī Allāh therefore strove to find the organising ethos, conscience, and principle of movement and development that pulsed through all aspects of individual and collective experience, drawing humanity toward its greatest felicity and highest divinely ordained purpose. He combined the sources of reason, tradition, and intuition in his search for a comprehensive vision which could integrate the increasingly fragmented approaches to religious and political authority tearing apart the Islamic polity.

Shāh Walī Allāh understood himself as living in an age of crisis in which the integrity of the various Islamic sciences was threatened by the tendency to abandon broader vision and principles in favour of narrow disciplinary specializations and polemical rejection of other perspectives. One of Shāh Walī Allāh's goals was the achievement of an ideally moral, altruistic, and perfectly civilized society. Therefore Professor al-Ghazali is particularly concerned with exploring the possibilities of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought as an early macro-sociological theory. Accordingly, he gives considerable attention to the author's doctrine of the *irtifāqāt*, or the progressive stages in the development of human social configurations and their concomitant political orders.

Shāh Walī Allāh was influenced by Islamic Sufism and philosophical ethics in envisioning a similar process of progressive development of the inherent potential of the human individual. This model of inner development incorporated increasing refinements of consciousness conceived of as stages of drawing closer to God (*iqtirābāt*). The usefulness and relevance of Professor al-Ghazali's scholarly contribution lies not only in its constituting an important resource for locating Shāh Walī Allāh's socio-political thought within the Islamic intellectual heritage but also in its suggestiveness regarding Muslim responses to contemporary social, political, and theological issues.

For those Muslims who are today striving for the recovery of elements of tradition which can inform contemporary struggles for authenticity in the ethical, political, and intellectual domains, Professor al-Ghazali's characterization of Shāh Walī Allāh's contribution in *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* as a new approach to Muslim theology (*'ilm al-kalām*) suggests a productive direction. This renewal of Islamic theology (*'ilm al-kalām*) would find its home neither in dry scholastic reasoning nor in the flat assertion of literalist legalism. Encompassing and reaching beyond exclusively social and

political concerns, the quest for a broader existential vision within which the authentic tradition can be articulated and applied is one of the major principles elaborated in the writings of Shāh Walī Allāh.

The characterization of Islam as an "orthopraxic tradition" suggests a concern with observance of the law to the neglect of the understanding of that law's deeper spiritual and existential significance for both human worldly and spiritual benefit. Professor al-Ghazali correctly points out that Shāh Walī Allāh's thought is a Muslim theology in the broadest sense of *'ilm al-kalām*. This theological perspective views the practical and material situation and the *sharī'ah* rulings within a framework of ultimate religious meaning. Since Shāh Walī Allāh "looks at the totality of existential phenomena as a manifestation of Divine unity", his system is ultimately grounded in the principle of *tawhīd*, even when it considers features that might seem to be exclusively social or political. His *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* is a work in the *asrār al-dīn* (inner meanings of religion) tradition in Islamic thought that had been developed by scholars such as Imām al-Ghazālī and 'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām al-Sulamī. Such integrative works in Islamic thought aimed at developing a framework for theology that orients human activities within the context of the divine unity.

This study of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought is therefore an important corrective to the perception that Islamic theology remained frozen in a scholastic mode, unable to address either empirical facts or broader human existential concerns. The focus of this volume on social and political aspects of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought reflects the project of contemporary Muslim scholars and intellectuals of recovering and implementing aspects of the Islamic heritage which can speak to the practical needs of today's political and social contexts.

It is instructive to note that as a Muslim thinker who bridged the classical and the modern periods of Islamic history, Shāh Walī Allāh did not have a rigid interpretation of concepts such as the Caliphate (*khilāfah*). His methodology for understanding such concepts was both historical and religious. In treating the Caliphate as the highest stage of political development, the fourth *irtifāq*, Shāh Walī Allāh allowed that the super-national or transregional Islamic polity could legitimately assume a variety of forms. For example, this exposition of the Caliphate (*khilāfah*) stressed the "moral reformation of a socio-political organization rather than focussing on the specifically Islamic character of the society." This greatly enlarges the scope for the conceiving of social and political institutions within a contemporary and Islamic framework.

The religious character of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought is recognized by Dr. al-Ghazali as incorporating a dimension which is unrealized in the modern secular concepts of nationalism and sociology, disciplines which at the same time share some of his practical concerns. It remains for contemporary Muslim thinkers to decide whether an act of historical recovery of the essential religious principles as undertaken by Shāh Walī Allāh remains viable, and whether it may serve as a corrective to certain rather literal and inflexible notions of Islamic political and legal orders which are today represented as being the Islamic option for Muslim societies.

Professor al-Ghazali's substantial work includes extensive and well-rendered translations of critical portions of the *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*. By providing the scholarly and lay reader with a significant portion of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought on political and social topics, Professor al-Ghazali has made possible a broader awareness and informed consideration of this aspect of Muslim intellectual history.

Department of Theology
Loyola University
Chicago, IL, USA

Marcia Hermansen

Preface

In the recent history of Islam Shāh Walī Allāh stands as a bridge between the classical and contemporary streams of scholarship. Indeed, he has been acknowledged as a precursor of the galaxy of luminaries that emerged in Muslim India during the last two centuries. The spiritual and intellectual successors of Shāh Walī Allāh left a perennial impact on the Muslim ethos of the Sub-continent by their unremitting efforts for the revival of the true perception of Islam and the application of its teachings to the dynamic and diverse conditions of society.

Muslim scholars, especially those from the Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent, have displayed a keen and sustained interest in understanding the versatile genius and vivifying message of Shāh Walī Allāh. This is evident from the spate of studies over the last fifty years or so dealing with his life, his academic contribution and pioneering role in the Islamic renaissance in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent. Nevertheless, little notice seems to have been taken of the socio-political aspect of his thought. One possible reason to account for this could perhaps be the absence of any independent work of Shāh Walī Allāh dealing exclusively with human society, state and politics as such.

Doubtlessly there have been contributions mainly in the form of short monographs or articles on various aspects of Shāh Walī Allāh's socio-political thought which is represented by his peculiar theorization of anthropo-cultural and socio-economic evolution of society (*irtifaqāt*). However, there has not yet appeared any full-fledged and comprehensive exposition of his thought on the subject in the context of the over-all framework of his cosmology which is integral to this theme of Shāh Walī Allāh.

Shāh Walī Allāh's approach to the phenomena of society and politics combines the essential elements of the plurality of trends discernible in the past among different Muslim scholars and thinkers in dealing with socio-political ideas. Further, he developed a total cosmological framework, indeed a complete *weltanschauung*, and sought to identify man's

career in life with reference to the entirety of its diverse experience. He looks at the totality of existential phenomena as a manifestation of Divine unity permeating the wholeness of the complex, albeit orderly cosmic scheme. Identification of this all-pervading unity in divergent spheres of knowledge and experience is thus a central theme of Shāh Walī Allāh's philosophy. All his works and writings appear to be fully related to this basic framework of thought. It is within this framework of total and comprehensive approach to the reality that he explains the career of man, his nature, function and role in this temporary life as a necessary prelude to his ultimate destiny, realizable in the absolute scales of the Hereafter.

In this regard, Shāh Walī Allāh occupies a unique position for no other scholar or thinker was able to develop an approach to the enterprise of human life which is as comprehensive as that of Shāh Walī Allāh. It is an approach whereby the unity regulating the diversity of individual and social undertakings of man could be rationally explained within a well-integrated ethical framework. In this endeavour, he evolved his own premises that would serve as the basis of further argument. However, he derived the parameters of his thought from *revelation*, i.e., the Qur'ān and its authentic and authoritative explanation, the *sunnah*. His originality lies in that the basic premises founded on the word of God have been supplemented by supportive or illustrative evidence provided by empirical observation and 'practical wisdom' (*hikmat-i 'amalī*) further reinforced by logical reasoning.

This epoch-making contribution of Shāh Walī Allāh to socio-political thought is enshrined mainly in *Hujjat Allāh-Bālighah*, his *magnum opus*. However, some of his other works are also directly relevant to the study of this subject. These works are: *Izālat al-Khafā* 'an-Khilāfat al-Khulafā' and *al-Budūr al-Bāzighah*.

The present study does not lay claim to having brought to light something altogether new or to have disclosed anything hitherto entirely unknown. However, it is hoped that it will make some contribution to a better understanding of this dimension of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought by putting together the relevant material in a manner that would bring out its significance and help an appreciation of its meaningful implications.

The study is divided into three parts. Part one, after briefly referring to important areas of Shāh Walī Allāh's contribution to Islamic thought, proceeds to define his religio-philosophical framework and concludes with a brief notice of the sources of his thought. An appreciation of this framework is essential to the understanding of his socio-political ideas. This is

followed by a discussion of his substantive social thought. While attempting to do so, we have not been oblivious to some aspects of the influence of earlier Muslim thinkers on him. Thereafter, the features of his peculiar universal paradigm of society, which emerges through a natural and progressive evolution of social culture according to him, have been explained. This is followed by a discussion of *khilāfah* as conceived by Shāh Walī Allāh with particular reference to its period of perfection realised in the early Islamic history. Here, the culmination of the universal paradigm of a cultured human society as identified by him in the *khilāfah* has also been brought into sharp relief.

Part three begins with an identification of some celebrated works of Shāh Walī Allāh and proceeds to present a slightly more detailed introduction to the three main works mentioned above which, apart from other things, embody his socio-political thought. This part also contains an annotated English version of selected portions of the *Hujjah* that embody the socio-political doctrines propounded by Shāh Walī Allāh.

The writer would like to acknowledge his gratitude for the help and encouragement provided to him by Dr Zafar Ishaq Ansari, Chairman, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Director General of the Islamic Research Institute, who spared no means to assist him in completing the work, providing all resources at his disposal for that purpose. He is especially indebted to Dr Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi, his elder brother, teacher and a senior member of the faculty of International Islamic University, for his help and guidance extended from the initial steps to the final stage of the work. Gratitude is also due to the writer's wife, Mrs. Saimah Ghazali, for her help in proof-reading the typescript and in the preparation of bibliography.

The author is also grateful to his friend, Mr Khalid Bin Majeed, for his earnest attention and expert advice on the technical aspects of this work in addition to conceiving an impressive title cover for this book. His thanks are due to Mr Amjad Mahmood for typing the first draft and to Mr Alam Zeb for preparing the final typed copy. Last, but not the least, is the debt which the writer owes to Dr S.M. Zaman, former Director General, Islamic Research Institute for his considerate personal attention and help in this work.

May God reward them all for their sincere help and co-operation.

Editor's Note

Shāh Walī Allāh, whose socio-political thought forms the subject of the present study, is one of the most erudite, profound and brilliant scholars and thinkers produced by Muslim South Asia. In fact it would be no exaggeration to say that he ranks among the most towering personalities of Islam, comparable in some respects to intellectual giants like Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī. Like al-Ghazālī, Shāh Walī Allāh attempted to study Islam in its totality and like him he tried to go below the surface and plumb the deeper meaning and purpose of the injunctions of Islam. His *magnum opus*, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, is among the most profound works of Islamic scholarship. This work constitutes a serious and sustained attempt to answer a basic question: do Islamic injunctions solely represent God's intent to impress His power and authority upon His creatures and to force upon them the realisation that He can command as He pleases? Or, should one rather regard them as a conglomerate of values, directives, and commands of Divine provenance alongwith a set of beneficent considerations and objectives that ought to guide man's pursuit of good life? Shāh Walī Allāh strongly subscribes to the second view and sets out to show how these permeate the entire gamut of Islamic injunctions. While this view is most evident in *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, of which it forms the centrepiece, it is also evident in quite a few of Shāh Walī Allāh's other writings.

It is heartening that not only the scholars of South Asia are waking up to recognise the extraordinary profundity of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought, but scholars of the Arab countries too are showing keen interest in it. It is significant that several editions of *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* have already been published from Egypt. Further, Arab scholars are paying increasing attention to quite a few aspects of Walī Allāh's thought and have begun to perceive their abiding value and relevance for Muslims, especially in their striving to establish an Islamic society and polity in our time. Likewise, perceptible interest has been shown by several Western scholars who have laboriously studied Shāh Walī Allāh. The most mentionable among

them, of course, is the veteran Dutch scholar, J.M.S. Baljon, who has devoted a full-scale book to an analytical study of Shāh Walī Allāh. There are, however, also other Western scholars who have contributed to a better understanding of his thought.

Dr Muhammad al-Ghazali, Professor at the Islamic Research Institute, has devoted many years to a careful, painstaking and perceptive study of Shāh Walī Allāh. The present work is the outcome of that effort and is focused on Shāh Walī Allāh's socio-political thought. It is pleasing to note, however, that, as one would expect from a scholar of Professor al-Ghazali's maturity, Walī Allāh's socio-political thought has not been studied in isolation. Instead, it has been viewed in the context of his thought as a whole and in conjunction with his overall intellectual approach and outlook. Also, the author has made a serious attempt to relate it to the various strands in the rich and variegated intellectual tradition of Islam.

What has greatly added to the value of this book is that the author lets Shāh Walī Allāh speak for himself. This has been achieved by the translation of those portions of Walī Allāh's writings which pertain to socio-political matters. Professor al-Ghazali was much assisted in this task by his extraordinary grip over Arabic language and literature and his deep acquaintance with various branches of Islamic learning. All this, combined with a good command of English, has made the translation faithful, lucid and readable.

We feel particularly happy to publish this book for it deals with socio-political matters which have been among the priority concerns of the Muslim intellectuals of the present time. Now, as we know, Shāh Walī Allāh lived over two centuries ago and hence was familiar with the socio-political ideas and structures that are substantially different from our own. Shāh Walī Allāh, however, drew upon the teachings of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, the perennial source of guidance for Muslims. We hope sure that the readers will be struck by the relevance of a great many of Shāh Walī Allāh's ideas and observations. To be sure, the Islamic intellectual tradition is a rich resource of insights and wisdom articulated by a host of outstanding scholars and seers over the last fourteen centuries; insights and wisdom to which they were led in the course of their effort to understand the meaning of God's Message and the way of His Last Messenger (peace be on him). Hence, it would not be surprising if a great many men and women of our time, who are baffled by the bewildering circumstances confronting them, will find a great deal in this tradition that will help them find a new, constructive orientation in their lives. It goes without saying that the way to benefit from the treasures of Islamic tradition is not to carbon-copy the

ideas of these great thinkers and blindly apply them. This tradition will yield the riches of its meaning only to persons with keen minds and genuine curiosities. It is only such persons who will discover valuable gems of wisdom in the writings of Muslim thinkers and savants that would either elude the grasp of the mediocre and the undiscerning, or would appear to them as utterly irrelevant to the problems of our age.

We hope that we will be able to present, in a series of publications, the thought of several significant Muslim thinkers, especially their ideas relative to issues of abiding concern to mankind.

We are grateful to the author for carefully revising his work, originally a doctoral dissertation, and making it available to us for publication. Professor Marcia Hermansen has placed us under considerable obligation by writing a 'Foreword' to the work that is both concise and illuminating. That Hermansen's 'Foreword' should be as brilliant as it is does not come as a surprise. For there are very few scholars who have studied Shāh Walī Allāh with as much care and understanding as she has. Her English translation of the first half of *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, a tough and challenging task for any scholar, is a living monument of her penetrating grasp of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought which deserves much applause.

My friend and colleague, Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee, helped me in solving a number of technical problems pertaining to the composing of the work. To Mr Khalid Bin Majeed we are grateful for giving us an attractive cover design and assisting us in improving the format of the book. Mr Alam Zeb, our computer operator, has, as on so many other occasions in the past, cheerfully put up with my annoying habit of endlessly revising the text in the course of its editing and has worked very hard indeed to compose it. Sincere thanks are offered to all of them.

Islamabad
July 2000

Zafar Ishaq Ansari

Part ONE

The Contribution of Shāh Walī Allāh to Islamic Thought

Introduction

Qutb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, popularly known as Shāh Walī Allāh (1114-1176/1703-1762), lived at a critical juncture of Muslim history.¹ India, where Shāh Walī Allāh was born and where he lived and died, had enjoyed the peaceful and prosperous rule of the Mughals for more than 200 years. By the time of Shāh Walī Allāh, however, the state had begun to disintegrate into a number of mutually hostile principalities which tended to claim independence of the central authority of Delhi one after the other.² Among the newly emerging quasi independent states, many were not even under Muslim control. Power and glory in the Sub-continent of India were being gradually lost to the rising influence of the militant Maratha, Sikh and Hindu communities.³ At that time Muslims in other parts of the world too were far from being ascendant. The authority of the Ottoman Caliphs as a super-power already showed signs of weakness. Although Muslims had achieved a historic victory against the Byzantium by conquering Constantinople in 1453, yet the dreadful fall of the Muslim empire in Spain in 1492 was not too remote an event in their memory. It was at this moment of utter despair and despondency for Muslims that Shāh Walī Allāh was born, *dextro tempore*. It is perhaps at such hours that the Providence chooses to favour humanity and reformers emerge.⁴

The generations of Muslims who succeeded Shāh Walī Allāh owe a considerable debt to him in many ways. The intellectual and cultural history of the Muslims of the Sub-continent, and to some extent, of those in other parts of the world in the post-Walī Allāh era, can hardly be discussed without reference to the impact of his reformist ideas. Many educational, intellectual and spiritual currents of thought which arose in India in the

late 18th century and which subsequently made any notable contribution in any branch of Islamic scholarship proudly trace their origins to the school of Shāh Walī Allāh. The most outstanding centres of traditional Muslim education that flourished in the Sub-continent during the 19th century — Deoband, Farangī Maḥal, Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’, Aligarh, and others — have all claimed the intellectual and spiritual influence of Shāh Walī Allāh. These centres not only provided the nuclei for purely educational programmes which produced specialists in the religious disciplines and other branches of knowledge, but also responded to the needs of spiritual training and moral reform of the society at large. Besides, the contribution of Muslim scholars in various basic Islamic sciences, such as *Tafsīr*, *Ḥadīth*, *Fiqh*, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, *Kalām*, and other auxiliary disciplines such as philosophy, logic, Arabic language, syntax, morphology, and rhetoric, was made almost exclusively by those scholars whose academic genealogy is traceable, directly or indirectly, to Shāh Walī Allāh.

Shāh Walī Allāh’s contribution has many facets and dimensions. It is not confined to purely academic and theoretical matters. Its wide and profound impact is discernible, *inter alia*, in the *jihād* movement which swept the entire Sub-continent under the inspiring leadership of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd (d. 1246/1831) in a heroic struggle against the anti-Islamic forces in India. This struggle sought to bring about a total change in the body-religious as well as body-politic of the Indian Muslim society. It included in its ranks many celebrities among whom Shāh Ismā‘īl Shahīd (d. 1246/1831) is particularly mentionable. He was not only a descendant of Shāh Walī Allāh, but also an exponent of his philosophy and a prominent scholar of Islam in his own right.⁶

The tremendous influence of Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1356/1938) not only on the Muslim thought of the Sub-continent but also on the contemporary Islamic thought in general is too well known to require any elucidation. He was no exception in receiving the guiding influence of Shāh Walī Allāh’s thought. According to a recent writer, Shāh Walī Allāh was the precursor of Iqbal: “Anyone delving deep into Iqbal’s *Reconstruction*,⁷ will find the spirit of Shāh Walī Allāh prevailing this work from beginning to end”.⁸

Thus it would be evident, as the present study would attempt to show in the following pages, that the impact of Shāh Walī Allāh’s thought has been both intense and extensive. In a catastrophic period of Indian Muslim history, he grew to see the Muslim community suffer from a number of maladies. As pointed out earlier, the political power of the Muslims had already begun to crumble due to the weaknesses and follies of the Muslims and the malice and hostility of their cunning foes. Neither was any ray of

hope visible to the Muslims nor did they have any reason for optimism. Thanks to his wisdom and sagacity, Shāh Walī Allāh was able to diagnose, at an early period of his life, the malaise of his society. In his view, it consisted in: (i) lack of strong faith, (ii) disunity in the Muslim ranks, and (iii) acute moral degeneration.⁹

Shāh Walī Allāh's role, however, did not remain confined to this diagnosis but he also suggested a cure and vigorously tried to have it put into effect. He tried to redress lack of faith by presenting a rational interpretation of Islam. In his expositions of religious doctrines, we find that rational arguments proceed side by side with traditional dialectics. Reason, tradition, and intuition appear in full harmony when Shāh Walī Allāh articulates his religious point of view.¹⁰

As to the malady of disunity, Shāh Walī Allāh addressed the problem by attempting to bring about a reconciliation between the diverse schools of law and theology. His genius was specially gifted with an exceptional ability to conceive a *via media* between divergent points of view. With this synthesizing approach, he was able to render insignificant many controversies which had hitherto kept the adherents of divergent viewpoints poles apart.¹¹ One remarkable example of this blending of ideas and fusing them together, so as to make them appear essentially one and the same, is his reconciliatory approach to the so-called metaphysical doctrines of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd*. The former had been typically represented by the Spanish saint-philosopher Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240) and his followers whereas the latter represents a critical response to it by Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624).¹²

The third malaise of the Muslim society, viz. its moral degeneration was treated by Shāh Walī Allāh through *taṣawwuf* which, for him, meant a direct approach to the heart. Shāh Walī Allāh, who derived his wisdom from the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, knew very well that without purification of the heart, it was not possible to overcome the moral degeneration which permeated the individual and collective life of the Muslim community. He was initiated in the realm of spirituality by his illustrious father Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm (d. 1131/1719). He richly contributed to his father's spiritual legacy and advanced that cause further.¹³

In the wake of this grave crisis which engulfed the entire Muslim society of India and infected all its strata in varying degrees, Shāh Walī Allāh undertook the onerous task of reforming the minds and morals of his brethren in faith. He adopted both short-term and long-term measures for rebuilding the culture, polity and ideological orientation of the Muslims. The thrust of his reform movement ranged from matters of belief to social

structure, from politics and statecraft to economy, from legal and juristic concepts to philosophical and metaphysical ideas. He addressed himself to the needs of this world but at the same time did not forget to respond to the requirements of ultimate success in the Hereafter.¹⁴

Shāh Walī Allāh conceived man to be a microcosm and viewed the cosmic scheme to be merely an enlargement of man's needs, hopes, aspirations and ideals, on the universal scale. To him, man is the central agent in the Divine scheme of life. He has been granted the necessary faculties —instinctive, aesthetic, rational and intuitional — to actualise the objective of a just, peaceful, humane and theo-centric civilisation here. This would lead to the ultimate realisation of true and lasting bliss in the Hereafter.¹⁵

The most remarkable feature in the thought of Shāh Walī Allāh is the treatment of problems on firm grounds of inductive reasoning in which process he establishes that the evidence of revelation is in full conformity with the axioms of reason and observation. In this connection his spiritual imagination complements his rational thinking.¹⁶ But the focal point in this synthesis of religio-rational dialectic is the Qur'ān which remains throughout the ultimate source of his thought.

The introduction of a new methodology in the understanding and application of the revelational guidance embodied in the Qur'ān is another remarkable contribution of Shāh Walī Allāh. The principles of Qur'ānic exegesis, which he has set forth in his masterly work, *al-Fawz al-Kabīr*, introduced a new dimension in the science of *tafsīr*.¹⁷ He emphasises a direct approach to the Qur'ān which was facilitated by him for posterity by his rendering of the Divine text into easy Persian prose. By performing this service Shāh Walī Allāh ushered in a new era of understanding the Qur'ān. The comprehension of its meanings from then onward became easily accessible to the common man.¹⁸

Prior to Shāh Walī Allāh, the question of the permissibility to translate the Qur'ān had largely remained an unresolved issue. The notion that the Qur'ān may not be translated had rendered Qur'ānic scholarship, to a great extent, an exclusive domain of the specialists. Shāh Walī Allāh took a bold initiative and translated the Qur'ān into Persian, the *lingua franca* of the Muslim literati in the Subcontinent. This had a wholesome impact on the religious life of Muslims. It became increasingly possible for ordinary people to understand the teachings of the Qur'ān. They were helped in this by the works of a growing number of scholars who concentrated their efforts on explicating the message of the Qur'ān. This was a healthy development, especially in the non-Arabic speaking lands.

Although jurists had always regarded the Qur'ān as the primary source of legal doctrines, yet the jurists of the later period generally tended to confine the verses containing injunctions of legal import to five hundred or a little more. They did not consider it necessary for a *mujtahid* to master the rest of the verses. Even men like Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505 /1111) did not consider that necessary.¹⁹ Thus the field was left open, to a considerable extent, to preachers and story-tellers who let loose their imagination to explain the meaning of the Qur'ān. Further, the classical exegetes tended to narrow down the scope of Qur'ānic verses by assigning rather strictly a certain context to each verse of the Qur'ān. Shāh Walī Allāh rejects this tendency and considers it tantamount to unduly constricting the Qur'ān which, by the nature of things, has a wide and universal application.²⁰

Shāh Walī Allāh's pervasive approach to the Qur'ān, once again, emphasises its application to the entirety of human thought and experience. There is a great debt which the students of the Qur'ān after Shāh Walī Allāh's time owe to him. This consists in his classification of the main themes of the Divine Book. After a penetrating and comprehensive survey of the contents of the Qur'ān, he classifies them under five subjects: (i) *aḥkām* (injunctions); (ii) *mukhāṣamah* (dialectics); (iii) *tadhkīr bi ālā' Allāh* (reminding man of the Divine favours); (iv) *tadhkīr bi ayyām Allāh* (reminding man of God's interventions in history); and (v) *tadhkīr bi al-mawt wa mā ba'd al-mawt* (reminding man about death and the life thereafter). Thanks to this classification, many misunderstandings of the students of the Qur'ān disappeared and a number of problems as regards the sequence of the verses, their inter-relationship and thematic coherence, were solved. For no statement occurring in the Qur'ān falls outside the scope of these five categories. This insight, indeed, constitutes a great achievement of Shāh Walī Allāh in the field of *tafsīr*. The second heading in the classification of Shāh Walī Allāh namely: 'dialectics', is worthy of particular notice. Many '*ulamā'*' had been neglecting this important theme of the Qur'ān and thus were unable to appreciate the discourse of the Revelation addressed to all mankind who must belong to either of the following categories: (i) the faithful, (ii) the people of the Book, (iii) the polytheists or atheists, and (iv) the hypocrites.²¹

Another source of confusion for many students of the Qur'ānic exegesis prior to Walī Allāh was the vagueness of the notion of *mutashābih*.²² This put more or less an embargo on human mind to exert itself on many verses of the Qur'ān and attempt to grasp their true meaning and signification. For there remained an apprehension among the scholars that their

understanding of the Book was likely to be erroneous as it could be in conflict with the *mutashābih*, which itself was not clearly defined. Shāh Walī Allāh emphasized the essential comprehensibility of all the verses of the Qur'ān, including those assigned by the exegetes to the category of *mutashābih*.²³

In short, the contribution he made to a better understanding of the message of the Qur'ān and its application to the lives of common Muslims and the pursuit of its knowledge by students other than those specialized in the Qur'ān was indeed great and singular. As a result of his efforts in this behalf, an increasing number of ordinary Muslims began to approach the Qur'ān with confidence and enthusiasm. They thenceforth treated it as a universal message addressed to all mankind and not merely as a code of law containing commandments and prohibitions for the use of a few specialists of law. 'Ubayd Allāh Sindhī, one of the most prominent exponents of Shāh Walī Allāh's philosophy, expressed the view that after being imbued with the philosophy of Shāh Walī Allāh, one can understand the overall message of the Qur'ān directly from its text and can be satisfied with it without being compelled to seek any external aid.²⁴

Shāh Walī Allāh's approach to the Science of *Ḥadīth* is characterized by his view that the *Sunnah* is essentially a commentary on the Qur'ān itself, rather than something independent of it. An intensive and profound analysis of the Prophet's traditions led him to see an organic relationship between the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*.²⁵ Further, he brought out the rational and beneficent considerations underlying the directives of the Prophet (peace be upon him).²⁶ He also took note of the severe criticism made against *Ahl al-Sunnah* by the rationalists, partly under the impact of Hellenistic philosophy in the classical period of Islamic thought. He advocated the traditional point of view of the former and supported it with strong rational arguments.²⁷

Shāh Walī Allāh adopted a method of interpreting the traditions of the Prophet in which he has shown an evolutionary process in the lives of all Prophets from Ibrāhīm upto Muḥammad (peace be upon them), in that they received Divine guidance gradually and commensurate with the onward progress of human civilization. He looked upon the teachings of all Prophets as a continuous commentary on the ever-unfolding process of revealed guidance.²⁸ Moreover, unlike many other jurists, Shāh Walī Allāh did not assign to *ijmā'* (consensus)²⁹ a categorical position as an independent source of law. He rather has a restricted conception of *ijmā'*. He recognizes the binding character of the consensus based on the rulings of the early caliphs, especially Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, the three

immediate successors of the Prophet (peace be upon him), on any interpretation of the Qur'ān or the *Sunnah*. He grants this special status to these Companions on grounds of their close association with the Prophet and their temporal proximity to him. Any other consensus which took place at any later period is, in his opinion, not of the same consequence in as much as it does not bind Muslims of any other era or area to any particular view.³⁰ Thus, Shāh Walī Allāh gave *ijmā'* a somewhat diminished position. According to him, *ijmā'* is an explanatory source and an authentic interpretation of the Qur'ān by those whose understanding is less fallible than of others for the reasons we have stated earlier.³¹ The fourth source of law, according to the generally held view of jurists, is *qiyās* (analogy). Again, this is not recognized by Shāh Walī Allāh as an independent source because it is integral to our process of understanding the Qur'ān and its interpretations that are either embodied in the *Sunnah* or can be derived from the collective understanding of the Companions in the Best Era (*khayr al-qurūn*).³²

In the field of law and jurisprudence, Shāh Walī Allāh's remarkable genius is reflected in his ability to reconcile the differing views found among Muslims and explaining them with reference to the basic principles that may be deduced from the Qur'ān and are also plausible on rational grounds. He mentions this as a great Divine favour to him.³³ Shāh Walī Allāh did not undertake this synthetic exercise in the domain of law alone, but it is a distinctive mark of his works on theology and mysticism as well. This is evident, for instance, from his synthesized version of the doctrines of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of existence) and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* (unity of manifestation).³⁴

Shāh Walī Allāh's contribution to the development of a new '*Ilm al-Kalām*' is perhaps the most original component of his entire intellectual legacy. It left a deep impression on the subsequent Muslim scholastics and established an altogether new tradition in this field.³⁵

In order to assess this contribution it is important to compare it with the state of *kalām* before Walī Allāh's time. In this connection we must cast a glance at its genesis and development in the early Islamic period. The evolution of classical *Kalām* from the end of the second century *hijrah* onwards took place mainly in response to the intellectual challenges posed by the Hellenic metaphysics. The expansion of the Muslim State beyond the Arabian Peninsula, and the resultant interaction between Muslim intelligence and the Persian and Byzantine civilisations and Greek thought gave rise to a number of intellectual debates. One of the main consequences of these debates was that a number of new questions began to be posed. These questions betrayed an attitude of skepticism towards some of the very basic

postulates of Islamic worldview. Muslim scholars accepted this challenge and responded to it vigorously. They delved deep in the Hellenic intellectual legacy, and not only articulated the position of Islam in response to the new questions, but also undertook a critical examination of the Greek logic and other important tools of their dialectics. In this process the scholars of Islam sought to establish the superiority of the Islamic *weltanschauung* on the one hand, and to expose the fallacies underlying certain assumptions of Greek philosophy, on the other.³⁶

These Muslim scholars, known as *mutakallimūn*, resorted to articulating their position in the intellectual terms which they shared with the main exponents of Greek philosophy. As these discussions went on, a distinct corpus of knowledge emerged and the bulk of literature thus produced by Muslim scholars came to be known as '*Ilm al-Kalām*'. In this process there appeared on the intellectual scene a galaxy of scholars who contributed to the development of '*Ilm al-kalām*' and in the course of time diversified those discussions. Notable among them were such luminaries as al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085.) al-Ghazālī, al-Ash'arī (d. 324/936 A.H.), al-Māturīdī, (d. 333/944), al-Shahrastānī, (d. 548/1153), and many others. The last prominent representative of these intellectual giants was Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209).³⁷

The later *mutakallimūn* developed their themes in scholastic discussions more or less on the same pattern as were set forth by these pioneers. However, with the passage of time, *Kalām* became a rigid and sterile discipline with little contemporaneous relevance. It became fashionable for Muslim scholars to be immersed in highly formalised discussions of a theoretical nature in utter disregard of their diminishing value for their own ethos.³⁸

This was the state of *Kalām* when Shāh Walī Allāh made his debut in the Islamic academia. He at once realised the futility of the prevalent formulations of *Kalām* and felt the pressing need of introducing a new approach in this discipline. One comes across his remarks about this dire need in his preface to *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* in these prophetic terms: "[T]he *muṣtafīd* [Muḥammadan] *sharī'ah* has now reached the threshold of an era in which it is destined to appear in the perfect garment of demonstrative proof".³⁹

For this new discipline of *Kalām* which he named '*ilm asrār al-dīn*' ('Science of the Subtle Meanings of Religion'), he formulated his own framework which he derived from the principles enunciated in the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*.⁴⁰ Shāh Walī Allāh established these principles on the basis

of solid empirical evidence. Thus he provided fresh and sustainable rational foundations for this discipline along with the speculative reasoning of the classical *mutakallimūn*. The main subject of his *Kalām* is an enquiry into the weal and wisdom underlying the injunctions of Islam. The most remarkable and original trait of his discourse is that he relates the entire body of injunctions to the fundamental objective of the universal mission of the Prophets and Messengers of God, namely, preparing man to countenance the Ultimate Reality. This predominant objective in the Divinely ordained Prophetic dispensation is to be realised through the purification of the soul and reformation of morals which provide the sole guarantee for human salvation and eternal bliss.⁴¹

Shāh Walī Allāh perceives human life essentially as a unity. The emphasis that life here and the Life Hereafter are not different or mutually exclusive, but merely different stages in one interminable journey, pervades all his discourses on *Kalām*. While discussing the religious issues, he does not address human intellect alone but also appeals to man's heart. As a result, we find his *Kalām* to be an amalgam of *shari'ah* and *ṭariqah*, philosophy and metaphysics, reason and tradition, intuition and imagination. His achievement in this domain lies in that he has endeavoured to make *imān bi al-ghayb* (belief in the unseen) appear to perceptive minds as a kind of *imān bi al-shuhūd* (belief in the seen).⁴²

To sum up the discussion, it can be said that Shāh Walī Allāh injected a new life in this discipline. This fact would become clearer if his writings on the subject are compared with those of his predecessors. As we have noted before, *Kalām* in the classical period mostly consisted of lengthy discussions dealing with questions posed by Greek philosophy. These were often fragmented discussions, aimed at answering the philosophers' questions and doubts so as to defend the theological point of view of Islam. The corpus of *Kalām* thus evolved often lacked coherence and consistency required of a well-organised and full-fledged discipline. The questions dealt with by the *mutakallimūn*, in a great many cases, had no logical or sequential relationship with each other. The point of culmination in these discussions was a severe criticism and strong rebuttal of the premises of Greek thought by men like Ghazālī and Rāzī.⁴³ However, despite the valuable contribution of these important thinkers, the discipline itself did not undergo any significant change in its general characteristics. In contrast to this incoherent and fragmented approach, Shāh Walī Allāh laid the foundations of a solid, fully integrated and logically consistent discipline. He undertook the paramount task of re-stating the fundamental postulates of Islamic belief system within the framework of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. Furthermore,

he provided external evidence drawn from pure reason, empirical observation and intuitional imagination to reinforce the propositions derived from Revelation and tradition.

According to the famous Islamic scholar and historian of India, Shiblī Nu‘mānī (d. 1914), the scholastic profundity of Shāh Walī Allāh, which is reflected, *inter alia*, in his contribution to *kalām* overshadows men like Ghazālī and Rāzī. While the expositions of earlier *mutakallimūn* exclusively focussed on questions of belief (*‘aqīdah*), Shāh Walī Allāh went beyond this narrow scope of theology. The new discourse that he introduced, in the main, sought to substantiate the inimitability (*i‘jāz*) of the *sharī‘ah*. He endeavoured to establish an organic link between *‘aqīdah*, (belief) and *sharī‘ah* (revealed code of law). Moreover, he tried to bring home the inimitability of the latter in as much as it responds to the diversity of the varying conditions of human life. Avoiding as far as possible, a discussion of the archaic issues of early theology such as the eternity of the Qur’ān and free will, pre-determination, and the indivisibility of Divine Essence and Attributes, he developed an altogether original approach to *Kalām*. This approach consisted chiefly in presenting the rationale of the injunctions of Islam on the premise of their compatibility with human nature. By developing this comprehensive approach to *Kalām*, Shāh Walī Allāh arrived at a holistic explanation of Islam. His contribution lies in that he put in bold relief not only the rationality of belief, but also established a necessary nexus between the ordinances of the *sharī‘ah* and the innate urges of human nature.

Religio-Philosophical Thought

One of the striking features of the writings of Shāh Walī Allāh is his stress on the necessary relation between the creation and the Creator which consistently pervades all his thinking. Whether the subject of his discussion is highly spiritual or purely mundane, the consciousness of the Ultimate Reality is always uppermost in his mind. This characterizes all his discussions including those pertaining to such questions as the evolution of man as a moral being or man's role as an active member of the society. This also characterizes his analysis of human instincts and behaviour, or his survey of the development of human society even when it is in the nature of an empirical enquiry.⁴⁵

Shāh Walī Allāh essentially looks at the entire contingent phenomena as a manifestation of God's creational power. In his opinion, without reference to the Absolute there could be no conception whatsoever of the creation. This distinctive characteristic of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought is perhaps attributable to the influence of the monistic philosophy of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī. A probe into the sources of his thought which would be attempted at a later stage of this study would further elaborate this hypothesis.⁴⁶

The Ontology of Shāh Walī Allāh

In his discussions on the genesis of man and the creation of the universe, Shāh Walī Allāh develops three main terms namely *ibdā'* (creation *ex-nihilo*), *khalq* (creation), and *tadbīr* (governance). *Ibdā'* is creation out of

sheer nothingness. *Khalq* is to create something out of an existing substance. *Tadbīr* is to manage and employ a set of created things so as to derive the required benefits which are conducive to universal weal. With reference to these concepts, which signify different stages of the Divine creative process, Shāh Walī Allāh discusses the creational phenomena.⁴⁷

Another key concept which constitutes an important element in his philosophy of existence is the doctrine of 'universal soul' (*al-naḥs al-kullīyyah*). Explaining this doctrine, Shāh Walī Allāh says that a deep and profound thought on the diversity of universal phenomena leads human intelligence to the notion that God has created a universal soul *ex-nihilo*. From this 'universal soul' or 'universal genus' emanate all existents. But the relationship between the Creator *ex-nihilo* and the 'universal soul' cannot be explained in terms of this material world. There is some kind of unity between the Creator and the 'universal soul'. But this unity is neither real, nor comprehensible to the finite human intelligence. The highest degree of perception attainable by human intellect is this 'universal soul' where it is able to combine all diversity of existence on one point. At this point the voyage of human intellect ends. This unique relationship between the Creator and the 'universal soul', which is called *ibdā'* by Shāh Walī Allāh, is far beyond the grasp of the human mind.⁴⁸

The problem of existence has always occupied an important place in the metaphysical and mystic thought of Islam. Shāh Walī Allāh's position on this issue is middle of the road between the well-known doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Unity of Existence) of Ibn 'Arabi and *waḥdat al-shuhūd*⁴⁹ (unity of manifestation), which was put forward by Aḥmad Sirhindī in the course of his criticism of the doctrine of Ibn 'Arabī. As mentioned by us in the preceding chapter, Shāh Walī Allāh's stand on this question is that there is no significant disagreement between the ideas of these two great philosophers, one from Spain and the other from India. He looks at the apparent difference in their respective positions as simply a problem of semantics. Both, according to him, ultimately arrive at the same conclusion.⁵⁰

Explaining his stand on the problem of Existence, Shāh Walī Allāh says that when we look at the things in existence, we find both common and distinctive features in them. There are certain characteristics that are common to all things. For example, all human beings share the characteristic of humanness although in several other respects they are distinct from one another. At the same time, being a man or a horse distinguishes one from the other. But all the existents do have a common feature of existence.

Both the 'contingent' (*mumkin*) and 'essential' (*wājib*) have the characteristic of existence. 'Existence', however, does not merely mean 'to be'. It rather signifies the 'Reality' on the basis of which we regard something as existent. This 'Reality' itself exists without any external cause, giving it its existence. Since this 'Reality' is the cause of all existence, therefore, it must, of necessity, exist by itself. Hence its existence is all-pervading. For if this 'Reality' were not there, every other thing would have been non-existent. Now all other things that exist (other than this Essential Reality) are merely accidental. For without the Essential Existence they would disappear into sheer nothingness. This is the nature of all the things of this world. They merely have an accidental existence, the only exception being the 'Real Existence'. Thus it is clear that existence is a common feature of all existents. If there is no existence then all things shall vanish.⁵¹

This led some mystics to think that God consists in the existents, or that He has manifested Himself in these existents. This school of mystics has been called *wujūdiyyah* or '*ayniyyah*'. But there are other Sufis who think that the existence of all things that exist is contingent upon this Real Existence. This school of Sufis is called *warā'iyyah*. They are so named because they hold that the Essence of God is beyond this cosmic phenomena.⁵² There are some statements attributed to Ibn 'Arabī which suggest that his position on this issue is closer to the school of '*ayniyyah*' or *wujūdiyyah*. Such statements have been taken by Shāh Walī Allāh in a metaphorical rather than their literal sense. It may be pointed out that on other occasions Ibn 'Arabī clearly draws a line of distinction between the 'Essential Existent' (*wājib al-wujūd*) and the contingent existent (*mumkin al-wujūd*) and discusses at length the five stages (*tanazzulāt*) of determination. These stages, according to Ibn 'Arabī, are *aḥādiyyah*, *lāhūt*, *jabarūt*, '*ālam al-mithāl*' and *nāsūt*, all of which emanate from the 'Essential Existent' (i.e. God). Like many other Muslim thinkers before and after him, Shāh Walī Allāh offers an explanation of the ideas of Ibn 'Arabī which conform to the views held by the major theological schools of Islam.⁵³ Shāh Walī Allāh interprets all such statements of Ibn 'Arabī, statements in which he identifies a unity between the creational phenomena and the 'Essential Existent', to mean unity of the latter with the 'universal soul'. This is so because the stages of existence beyond the 'universal soul' fall, in his opinion, outside the cognitive domain of human intellect.⁵⁴

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, the 'universal soul' constitutes the stage where a confluence takes place between substances and accidents, and there remains no disparity between them. He criticizes Greek philosophers for their lack of vision and for their failure to recognize this necessary level

of existence which transcends all duality between substance and accident. A significant implication of this idea is the negation of any real incongruity between matter and spirit. This hypothetical dichotomy between matter and spirit has permeated human thought since the Greek times and has resulted in a number of misconceptions about the nature of man's constitution.⁵⁵

Moreover, along with this concept of 'universal soul', Shāh Walī Allāh also recognizes a physical dimension of this soul, which he terms as *al-shakhṣ al-akbar (universum permagnum)*. The entire physical world with its length and breadth, according to him, constitutes this *universum permagnum*. All corporeal bodies stand in the same relation to it as waves belong to the ocean. The *universum permagnum* has tremendous power of imagination. This power of imagination is represented by what is called '*ālam al-mithāl*, world of pre-figuration. It also has its own will power which resides in its *qalb* (mind). This mind is the centre or the throne ('*arsh*') of the 'universal soul'. The throne is like a mirror in which reflections of the Creator of *universum permagnum* (i.e. God) are constantly cast. Through these reflections the *universum permagnum* attains cognition of its Lord and naturally forms an image of Him. This image is known as *al-tajallī al-a'zam (repercussus permagnum*, or 'supreme theophany', or radiance).⁵⁶ Shāh Walī Allāh asserts that the highest level of human conception of God, whether attained under the guidance of the Prophets or acquired, if at all, by following the course set by the philosophers, cannot go beyond a conception of this *repercussus permagnum*. This is the centre wherefrom all human intentions, movements, and activities emanate.⁵⁷

The metaphysical thought of Shāh Walī Allāh should not be viewed in terms of any given system of philosophy which might have existed before his time. He has formulated his own perspectives on metaphysics, something which parallels his creative and original approach in other branches of thought. Some of his views on metaphysics appear to be similar to those of the Greek philosophers. A study of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought shows that several of his ideas have been influenced by the Aristotlean school. At the same time, points of similarity are also noticeable between him and Ibn 'Arabī and Aḥmad Sirhindī. Notwithstanding these and other similarities, he has developed his own original framework of metaphysical thought.⁵⁸

Shāh Walī Allāh does not attempt, like many Greek philosophers and some Muslim thinkers influenced by them, to establish, on grounds of pure reason, the existence of God.⁵⁹ On the other hand, he takes the Qur'ānic approach to the problem and regards the idea of God as one that is naturally rooted in human conscience. This latent God-consciousness, according to him, is activated in the human mind and soul by the Prophets. It is they

who, on the basis of revealed guidance from God, spell out the right attitude of man to his Creator, and then, in accordance with the requirements of space and time, the Prophets lay down the details of a definite course of action as per the Divine mandate. Thus he considers Revelation and Prophetic teaching to be the only reliable sources of the human conception of God.⁶⁰

Shāh Walī Allāh also criticizes the speculative approach of the Greek philosophers to a conception of Deity as the first cause productive of a series of causes and effects. In *al-Budūr al-Bāzighah*, a basic source of his metaphysical doctrines, he says:

One should not think that the ultimate being is actually necessary as the termination of a chain of emanations of contingent being, so that if an emanation were to emanate from the Ultimate Being and another emanation were to emanate from that emanation, then the first emanation would become an intermediate link between the last emanation and the Ultimate Being; and the last emanation would stand in need of the first emanation only, even if the latter stands in need of the Ultimate Being. No, it is not like that.⁶¹

The above passage shows a clear rejection of the typical philosophical concept of God in the Greek tradition as a mere speculative theorem or a mathematical idea out of which no message can be communicated to man.

In the rich and varied material on metaphysical thought spread over dozens of treatises and books authored by Shāh Walī Allāh, we come across a number of original doctrines and ideas. Taken together, they provide the framework of his philosophy as a whole. He approaches the same problem in a variety of ways. Sometimes he resorts to the employment of more than one alternate term for explaining one and the same idea. At times he expresses himself in wholly mystical terms. Perhaps he consciously addresses different schools of Muslim intellegentia on different occasions, and intentionally employs a variety of terms depending on the requirement of the context.

There are, however, certain basic concepts to which reference in his writings is very frequent. It is important to have some idea about these concepts in order to grasp his theoretical framework. This would help appreciate Shāh Walī Allāh's point of view in its proper perspective. As the following terms would suggest, the Sufi orientation of Shāh Walī Allāh seems to have significantly influenced the development of this perspective.

‘*Ālam al-Arwāḥ* (Spiritual Sphere)

We have already seen that the term used for cosmos in the philosophy of Shāh Walī Allāh is *al-shakḥ al-akbar (universum permagnum)*. If we accept a world which has the same relationship with the *universum permagnum* as our intellectual images have with our mind, this world is called ‘*ālam al-arwāḥ* (spiritual sphere) by Shāh Walī Allāh. As intellectual images in our minds are free from matter, similarly the spiritual world is also free from matter.⁶²

‘*Ālam al-Mithāl* (Supra-material World)

In the same way, if we recognize a sphere of existence which has the same relation to *universum permagnum* as our mental images that are created by our imagination, fancy and cognition, have to our brain, when these pictures contain form and magnitude but no matter, this is called ‘*ālam al-mithāl* (supra-material world).⁶³ All things and events that occur in the material world have a prior existence in the ‘*ālam al-mithāl*. Moreover, any act, whether good or bad, when committed in the material world, is reflected in ‘*ālam al-mithāl* and preserved there in some form.⁶⁴

According to Shāh Ismā‘īl Shahīd, a descendant of Shāh Walī Allāh, and a prominent exponent of his philosophy, a considerable number of Qur’ānic verses and traditions from the Prophet (peace be upon him), cannot be adequately explained without recognizing ‘*ālam al-mithāl*. He, therefore, considered it necessary for all those engaged in an indepth study of the Qur’ān and the *Sunnah* to recognise that all things existing or occurring in the material world have a prior existence before their actual occurrence. When these things will disappear from this tangible world, they will still retain some kind of existence with God (that is, in the supra-material world).⁶⁵

Shāh Walī Allāh substantiates his ideas about ‘*ālam al-mithāl* with the help of a number of traditions from the Prophet (peace be upon him).⁶⁶ These traditions, which Shāh Walī Allāh frequently cites in the chapter on ‘*ālam al-mithāl* in *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, signify that a lot of abstract things of this material world assume certain forms in ‘*ālam al-mithāl*.⁶⁷

This signification of the traditions which entails a recognition of ‘*ālam al-mithāl* also conforms to the principle of interpretation of traditions recognised by the *muḥaddithūn* namely that as long as the literal meaning of a tradition is not inconsistent with reason, it need not be taken in a

figurative sense. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, the same view is also held, among others, by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505).⁶⁸

‘Arsh

While discussing the concept of *al-shakhṣ al-akbar* (*universum permagnum*), we have already seen that it has its own will power of which the repository is its mind (*qalb*). This mind is the ‘throne’ of the ‘universal soul’. The range of the ‘throne’ extends to all creatures including animals, jinns, human beings, angels and other forms of life. This is the focus of the *al-tajallī al-a‘zam* (*repercussus permagnum*) and is fully exposed to it. It is also the nucleus for the entire creational world from where all events originate, and to which all things of this world finally return. From this focal centre constant waves of light are showered upon our planet and Divine bounties are ceaselessly supplied in great abundance.⁶⁹

Al-Insān al-Akbar

In that centre of light and radiance there is an entity which may be regarded as an embodiment of the entire humanity. This entity is called *al-insān al-akbar* (cosmic man) in the mystic terminology. It is also known as *imām* (head) of the humankind. The mind and heart of this cosmic man receives radiances of various degrees from *al-tajallī al-a‘zam* (*repercussus permagnum*). All mankind are attached to the ‘cosmic man’ with such a strong tie that they cannot exist without it. This tie is established through a kind of spiritual force in the same way as atoms of earth are attracted to each other magnetically. It is this force which maintains a nexus between the inner components of the ‘cosmic man’ i.e. individual human beings or microcosms. There are many centres for the different forces operating in the ‘cosmic man’. Human faculties of senses, reasoning and imagination are only specimens of the spiritual force granted to the ‘cosmic man’.⁷⁰

Ḥazīrat al-Quds and al-Mala’ al-A‘lā

There is, in ‘*ālam al-mithāl*’, a certain enclosure to which all spirits of great and virtuous men are attracted, like iron to magnet. This enclosure is known as *ḥazīrat al-quds* (holy enclosure). This is the *rendezvous* for the spirits of great human beings after being emancipated from their corporeal bodies. This constellation of spirits is called the ‘supreme spirit’ (*al-rūḥ al-a‘zam*). There is found in this ‘holy enclosure’ the biggest assembly of

prominent angels who, along with the spirits of the most pious members of mankind, constitute *al-mala' al-a'lā* (the higher assembly). The highest level of spiritual progress attainable to man is some kind of association with *al-mala' al-a'lā* and *ḥazīrat al-quds*.⁷¹

Man and His *Raison d'être*

In the cosmic scheme envisaged in Shāh Walī Allāh's thought, man occupies a central position. It is through the agency of man, the Divine vicegerent on earth, that the universal moral and spiritual ideal is realised in history. The value of this realisation lies in its voluntary acceptance and actualisation as a tangible reality. Apart from man, the rest of the observable natural phenomena so far discovered, seems to have been created for no end other than serving the purposes of the moral and spiritual ideal for which man has been commissioned.

Conscious acknowledgement by man of his Lord and conformity to the code of approvals and disapprovals (*dīn*) prescribed by Him is inherent in his nature. The primary testimony which points to the verity of the 'religious truth' revealed by God to man through the Prophets is provided by his own natural disposition anchored by sound intellect and immaculate imagination. Man is called upon to seek cognizance of the fundamental truths, by accepting the express Divine commands conveyed by the Prophetic revelation. He should strive for further understanding necessary for his objectives by heeding to the dictates of sound reason and by responding to the implicit Divine message in nature within and without.

The ultimate end for which man has been entrusted with the enterprise of Religion will be actualized in the Life Hereafter. But in order to qualify for Paradise, man is expected to create a paradise here. To this end, he is required to disseminate justice and constantly try to eliminate injustice and wilful acts of evil from the earth.⁷²

Like some other Muslim and many Hellenic philosophers, Shāh Walī Allāh expounds his idea of man in contra-distinction to the fellow members of his genus i.e. animals whose higher kind constitutes man according to many of them. But the originality of Shāh Walī Allāh's conception of man lies in that he essentially regards man as a 'moral being' unlike merely the 'social animal' of Aristotle. What basically distinguishes man from beasts, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, is *al-ra'y al-kullī*, i.e. universality of purpose, which motivates many altruistic actions on the part of man and determines his priorities in life. The beasts, on the other hand, merely pursue

what Shāh Walī Allāh calls *al-ra'y al-juz'ī* that is, individual purposes pertaining to the immediacies of biological existence. Man is urged by nature to voluntarily abide by a moral law to achieve certain objectives beyond his immediate selfish needs of food, shelter, and sex.⁷³

The other quality by which Shāh Walī Allāh distinguishes man from fellow-animals is *zarāfah*, i.e. aesthetic sense. This sense is employed by man to seek added joy out of material life. For example, man feels the desire for beautiful spouse, delicious food, elegant dress and a lofty house. The Divine scheme in this manner fashioned man as a suitable agent for effecting an equilibrium between the requirements of the Hereafter and the demands of this temporary abode by investing him with these two distinct qualities.⁷⁴

This equilibrium, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, can be maintained properly by balancing the dual capacity of human personality consisting of *malakiyyah* (i.e. the angelic disposition) and *bahīmiyyah* (i.e. the animalistic disposition). Also, Shāh Walī Allāh identifies two main categories of human beings according to the nature of the inner relationship in man between his angelic and animalistic dispositions. In some individuals there is a complementarity between both the dispositions. They are designated by Shāh Walī Allāh as *aṣḥab iṣṭilāḥ* (harmonious individuals). There are others in whom there remains a constant struggle between the two. They are called by him *aṣḥab tajādhub* (individuals with an inner competition). While in the former category the animalistic disposition is subdued through progressive spiritual efforts, in the latter, it is strong enough to put up resistance to the dictates of the angelic disposition. The Prophets and Messengers belong, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, to the first category. He makes further classification of human beings on the basis of the relative intensity and depth of these two dispositions.⁷⁵

Basic Morals of Man

As noted before, the basic trait distinguishing man from animals, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, is his moral urge. Morality, therefore, constitutes an integral ingredient of human personality. Essential morals, according to him, are the following:

Ikhbār: total submission before the Lord. This implies modesty and humility before Him and His creatures. This is the pivot around which the entire moral personality of man revolves;

Tahārah: cleanliness and purity of body, dress and environment as a necessary reflection of the inner purity of the soul;

Samāḥah: generosity and benevolence. This moral quality, among other things, implies possession of worldly treasures without compromising the other essentials of morals;

Justice and equity: this is the cardinal virtue which, according to the Qur'ān,⁷⁶ is the most essential norm and a basic principle of human association.⁷⁷

After a profound analysis of human personality with its biological and spiritual components, its intellectual and psychological dimensions and an explanation of his environment which brings into focus the nature of relations between man and the creational phenomena, Shāh Walī Allāh concludes that *taklīf* (encumbering man with responsibility) and holding him accountable for all his deeds is an essential demand of his own nature. To this end, man has been endowed with the requisite faculties of reasoning and contemplation, and all necessary inner as well as outer opportunities have been afforded to him.⁷⁸

The entire corpus of injunctions prescribed in the *Sharī'ah* is based on this basic conception of man. Obviously, it is ultimately man who, as an individual, is responsible in the sight of God for the realization of the moral and spiritual ideals. However, this realization is contingent upon a healthy socio-political organization, which emerges as a necessary corollary of the application of these injunctions in the lives of individuals. Our concern in this study is to highlight the features of this socio-political organization of which the chief agent is man. In the philosophy of Shāh Walī Allāh there appears to be little emphasis on anything comparable to merely abstract or impersonal entities referred to in the contemporary Western socio-political thought as 'institutions'. On the contrary, we find that Shāh Walī Allāh's emphasis remains throughout on the healthy, balanced, purposeful and theocentric cultural growth of individuals, which *ipso facto* leads to the development of society and state, displaying these characteristics on the collective plane.

Concept of Prophethood

According to the theological doctrines generally propounded in the Aryan metaphysics, there is more or less a consensus on the existence of the 'Essential Being'. But their conception of the 'Essential Being' is so abstract and mathematical, as we have seen before, that they almost rule out the possibility of any meeting point between the cognition of the 'Essential Being' and human perception.

This is a radical departure from the teachings of the Prophets which necessitates, for obvious reasons, the possibility of some kind of human cognition of the Absolute. For the very office of prophethood implies the communication of an express, explicit and definite articulation of the 'Divine Will' from the 'Essential' to the 'contingent', through the intermediacy of the Prophets. It is on the basis of this communication, i.e. *wahy*, that the Prophets are able to express 'Divine approval' for those who consciously conform to the 'Divine Will' in thought and life. Nay, the Prophets go even further and promise the actual sight of the *repercussus permagnum* in the Hereafter to those who will have attained in their worldly life enough spiritual purity through the constant effort of both body and soul. Shāh Walī Allāh's metaphysics explains this question by elaborating the concept of *al-tajallī al-a'zam* (*repercussus permagnum*).

This concept had been a familiar theme in the mystic literature of Islam before Shāh Walī Allāh.⁷⁹ But Shāh Walī Allāh developed it further and made it comprehensible by employing a peculiar terminology of his own and by relating it to the basic framework of his ontology. He elucidated the issue by saying that the phenomenon which is exposed to Divine radiance is so infused and enlivened with Divine complexion that in a sense it may be called identical with the 'Essential Being'. In our intellectual quest and spiritual voyage we reach a point where we attain a kind of relationship with the *repercussus permagnum* by establishing our link with the phenomenon exposed to it. In such an event we can rightly say that we have reached God. Thus the radiance of the 'Essential' becomes an object of cognition for our inner senses and intellect. When that happens we may also say that we have seen God or heard His speech.⁸⁰

Thus Shāh Walī Allāh explains the possibility of Divine communication of meta-rational, supra-sensuous knowledge, i.e. *wahy*, to man in terms of which he is able to understand and apply the Divine commands. But the pattern of this communication unfolds itself in a process of selection by God, from amongst mankind, of an extraordinary individual who receives Divine dispensation on behalf of his community. By the dictates of the Divine Providence, this individual is enabled to attain such a high level of spiritual purity as to acquire the capacity to reach the fountainhead of Divine Knowledge in *ḥaẓīrat al-quds* (holy enclosure). With regard to this individual (i.e. the Prophet), there is already, in the estimation of people, an idea that he is on the right path and an object of Divine blessings. Thus they are prepared to respond to his call, whereby he invites humanity to the path of the Lord and to establish, in collaboration with them, the patterns of life approved by Him.⁸¹

We have seen in the foregoing that Shāh Walī Allāh introduces a classification of human beings on the basis of the relative intensity and depth of angelic disposition, or lack of it in different individuals. He makes a further categorisation of human beings according to the religious perception, spiritual vision, and wisdom with which they are endowed. He identifies eight categories of individuals below the rank of a Prophet, namely:

- *muḥḥam*: the one who is granted understanding;
- *kāmil*: the perfect man;
- *ḥakīm*: the wise man;
- *khalīfah*: the vicegerent;
- *mu'āyyad bi rūḥ al-quḍs*: one who is supported by the holy spirit;
- *hādī muzakkī*: one who guides and purifies;
- *imām*: the leader; and
- *mundhir*: i.e. the warner.

Thereafter he defines *nabī* (i.e. Prophet) and rounds off the above list with the mention of a Prophet who delivers people from darkness to light and conducts them to the path of guidance, and whose community is the best of communities raised for all mankind.⁸²

Thus it appears that Shāh Walī Allāh's acute religious perception and keen spiritual insight led him to identify the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) at the pinnacle of a graded human pyramid, as it were, of moral and spiritual excellence. Further, he conceived the life of a Prophet to combine in its fold all the dimensions and depths of the faculties with which man has been endowed. His mind and heart are exposed to Divine luminosity to the utmost limit. The entirety of his soul is focussed, with full concentration, on progressive acquisition of Divine proximity. This proximity, which is achievable by his soul, is unparalleled in the rest of mankind. Thus each Prophet is given a singular opportunity for spiritual ascension as a pre-condition for the showering of Divine blessings and the descension of Revelation on him.

Shāh Walī Allāh, does not subscribe to the generally-held view that a Prophet is necessarily appointed at the age of forty. Nor does he think it necessary for each Prophet to possess miracles. What is important, in his view, is that the Prophets be given clear signs to convince people of the

truthfulness and genuineness of their mission. These may be rational arguments, supernatural portents, or a Book with miraculous qualities. Or else, the moral example of a Prophet might be so excellent and extraordinary as to surpass the entire people, providing a testimony to the truth of his mission.

Shāh Walī Allāh also believes that the Prophets possess, from the outset, qualities of perfection. These are natural endowments as well as qualities acquired through personal effort. For example, the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) possessed wisdom and innocence and was conscious of some of the realities of the life Hereafter even before he was proclaimed a Prophet. His wisdom protected him from the contaminations of the material life. His innocence made his soul an object of Divine enlightenment which was conducive to the instinctive negation of evil and a natural affirmation of good as well as purging his conduct of every evil and embellishing it with every kind of goodness. This inner purity attained by the Prophet (peace be upon him) much before receiving Divine revelation manifested itself in the excellent and unique moral and spiritual virtues of which his life was an embodiment.⁸³

In *al-Khayr al-Kathīr* Shāh Walī Allāh deals at length with the excellent virtues of moral and spiritual perfection in the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He contends that there was a constant progress in his spiritual and moral ascension, and the evolution and growth of religious dispensation granted to him from God was commensurate with this progress.⁸⁴

Prophets and the Reform of Human Society

Reform of the society, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, constitutes the basic objective of a Prophet's mission. The writings in which he has dealt with this important theme of his philosophy are scattered in his various works. His philosophy has a comprehensive bent and takes a total view of human life and society. In many of his treatises dealing with different branches of thought he frequently returns to this theme. He does not conceive any reformation of the social organization of human beings without assigning a central role to the religious dispensation of the Prophet and his rightly-guided successors.

A survey of his numerous writings on the subject shows that by reform he means essentially a 'revival' of the qualities that are latent in human beings. Some of these qualities are an integral part of human nature. Other qualities are either remnants of their own past, patterns of living rooted

in the collective experience of their progenitors, or have their origins in the teachings of the earlier Prophets. Their influence on human lives diminishes with the passage of time due to a variety of factors. Therefore, when a Prophet introduces a pattern of life, it is neither alien to the collective memory of his people nor in any way incompatible with their natural temperament. Moreover, Shāh Walī Allāh considers reform of people from within much more vital and substantial than their reform from without. The scope for the latter aspect of social change is, therefore, limited in his opinion. He also considers fertility of land, abundance of water and sunshine, favourable weather and environment necessary pre-conditions for sowing the seed of Prophetic reform in the soil of human society.⁸⁵

Further, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, the raising of the Prophets entails the presence of certain conditions here below which provide a definite context warranting their advent with a specific mission. God's will requires that people understand the Divinely ordained *sharī'ah*—which streamlines the reform of their thought and behaviour—and that this *sharī'ah* should be universally known and acknowledged so that circumstances are created wherein mankind are driven voluntarily toward Good and repel Evil in all forms. This cannot take place unless a Prophet, aided by the "sacred realm", is raised among human beings.⁸⁶

We have noted above in this chapter that Shāh Walī Allāh considers *taklīf*—investing man with responsibility and holding him accountable for his deeds—to be an integral part of human nature. This peculiar conception of *taklīf* has perhaps largely influenced Shāh Walī Allāh's ideas about the reform of the society with an accentuated emphasis on its inner dimensions.⁸⁷

The fundamental problem, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, lies in striking a balance between the angelic (*malakiyyah*) and the animalistic (*bahīmīyyah*) dispositions. This is attainable by pursuing the angelic deeds which are not in conflict with the animalistic disposition, and following, at the same time, the animalistic practices which are compatible with the angelic disposition. The peculiar formation of man as a species demands this balanced state.⁸⁸ This state has its own degrees of excellence, conditions and contingencies that are the means to attain it. There are many things that hinder this attainment whereas there are other things which can redress this hindrance. When God calculated the measured courses (*taqdīrāt*)⁸⁹ of all species in eternity, and determined the urges of the human species, He determined, in His infinite wisdom, the conditions, contingencies and degrees of excellence of this state of balance (*fitrah*). God also prescribed the means

of attaining it and identified the factors which hinder its attainment. This identification precisely constitutes the universal *sharī'ah*.⁹⁰

The universal *sharī'ah* is a body of injunctions that are mainly categorized into *wājib* (obligatory), *mustahabb* (recommended) and *ḥarām* (prohibited). Man cannot be instructed in these injunctions except through a similarity and concord between them and his instinctive intuitions. The universal *sharī'ah* is one and immutable, and does not admit any change or alternation. But its injunctions have been restricted by God to definite occasions and circumstances like a physician who prescribes, from among the numerous possible treatments, one definite treatment in view of the age, condition and environment of the patient who is in need of treatment.⁹¹

It will have become evident from the foregoing that the Prophetic reform, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, consists mainly in the revival of latent potentialities of the members of the society. Moreover, on different occasions Shāh Walī Allāh explains at length the factors which led to the laying down of legal injunctions. In this connection he surveys the conditions and circumstances in which various communities of Islam prior to the time of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) received different sets of Divine commandments and injunctions. He draws attention to the social, cultural and psychological conditions of those societies to show that they provided the underlying considerations for these injunctions. Each community was charged only with those obligations which already had a basis in their consciousness as something worthwhile and valuable. The injunctions and commandments which constitute the preferred pattern of living have been invariably compatible with the legacy of the religio-cultural thought and practices possessed by a community.⁹²

The conclusion drawn from this discussion by Shāh Walī Allāh is that no Prophetic dispensation introduces any reform in a society which brings in its wake an idea or precept which is completely foreign to that society or is totally inconsistent with its religious consciousness. On the contrary, the Divine practice in reforming a society had been to appeal to the religious imagination of people with reference to the ideas preserved in their collective genius. These ideas served as the common premises for intellectual interaction between a Prophet and his community.⁹³

Thus it seems that in Shāh Walī Allāh's view of reform, direct Divine intervention is minimal. Of course, in a certain sense, God's intervention is always there. This is so because He alone is the Creator of all actions and is the sole Maker of all causes and effects, and of time and space. In this sense, nothing is beyond the domain of His constant control and governance. On the other hand, in the limited sphere of human endeavour

wherein God Himself has granted man a choice between alternate courses of action, He does not interfere to suspend the cause-effect relationship operating in this created world of accidents.

Shāh Walī Allāh's discussion of this theme, which has been summed up in this chapter, clarifies the misconception of those who tend to consider every reformation in the name of religion to be free from God's law of causality. They somehow are led to believe that man, who is actually the main agent of reform, may sit idle after pronouncing certain articles of faith, and wait for the hand of providence to confer upon him the favour of ascendancy in the world and supremacy over all false creeds and cults. Such a belief is in clear conflict with the statements of God concerning His *modus operandi* in history. Shāh Walī Allāh is to be credited with removing the misconceptions on the subject and for clearly defining the principles which govern the change brought about under the guidance of the Prophet.

So far we have made an attempt to highlight the general framework of the overall religio-philosophical thought of Shāh Walī Allāh. It is within the matrix of this world-view that he conceptualizes the archetypal model of society and spells out the terms of the Islamic scheme for its reformation. Thereafter he goes on to develop his concept of *khilāfah* which symbolizes the political organization of the society with a given set of religious and moral traits.

The socio-political doctrines expounded by Shāh Walī Allāh constitute an integral part of his theoretical framework outlined above. An understanding of this framework should, therefore, precede any endeavour to define these doctrines.

Sources of Shāh Walī Allāh's Thought

Before we proceed to the main theme of our study, it seems useful to throw some light on the sources of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought. This would help appreciate his socio-political ideas in their proper perspective. Almost all the scholars who have carefully studied the life of Shāh Walī Allāh and his thought agree that his illustrious father, Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm, had a profound and abiding influence on his intellectual and spiritual development.⁹⁴ Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm was a noted Sufi thinker and jurist of his time. Apart from his other attainments, he was well-versed in the esoteric and monistic tradition of Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī. He was in fact a disciple and student of his elder brother, Shaykh Abū al-Riḍā (d. 1111/1699), a prominent exponent of the philosophy of Ibn 'Arabī. Both Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm and his brother had been influenced by Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī through

spiritual association with the latter's disciples. Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī was a prominent critic of Ibn 'Arabī in India. Despite that, Shāh Walī Allāh's father and uncle were inclined towards Ibn 'Arabī's school of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and later it fell to the lot of their outstanding son and nephew to evolve a new mystic-philosophical tradition by bringing about a reconciliation of the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* with the express injunctions of Islam.⁹⁵

The intellectual and academic mission of his father and uncle lay in their efforts to "build a boulevard of thought which Muslim philosophers, mystics, theologians and jurists could tread together".⁹⁶ To this end they sought to combine the differing traditions of reason, tradition and spiritual intuition. The impact of this synthetic approach is clearly discernible in the comprehensive and well-integrated thought of Shāh Walī Allāh whereby he further advanced the mission of his father and uncle. He made a successful attempt of doing away with the incongruity between the various schools of Islamic thought that sought guidance exclusively either from reason or tradition or spiritual intuition. Shāh Walī Allāh, on the contrary, judiciously emphasised all the three equally important sources of human knowledge and wisdom.

Among the prominent teachers and mentors of Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm, Mīr Zāhid Hirawī (d. 1101/1690), is also worthy of mention. He was an eminent mystic and logician. His thought was also oriented in the approaches of tradition and reason at the same time. Further, his ideas were developed, under the overpowering influence of his intellectual progenitor Jalāl al-Dīn Dawwānī (d. 928/1522), whose celebrated work, *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, is an epoch-making contribution to the philosophy of ethics.⁹⁷

Among the distinctive features of Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm's thought was his strong emphasis on what he called *ḥikmat-i 'amalī* (practical wisdom). On the other hand, we find the majority of *mutakallimūn* prior to him engrossed in purely theoretical discussions, using mostly the terms borrowed from the speculative philosophy of Aristotle. One can note the influence of Shāh Walī Allāh's father on him in his concern with the practical issues of life.⁹⁸

Another important factor which contributed to the flowering of Shāh Walī Allāh's genius, quite early in his life, was a thorough study of the Qur'ān. He mentions in his short autobiographical note entitled *al-Juz' al-Laṭīf fī Tarjamat al-'Abd al-Ḍa'īf* that he had committed the Qur'ān to memory by the age of seven. In the same work, while mentioning important landmarks of his academic life, he says:

Out of the numerous favours of God upon me, one very great favour is that in addition to an exhaustive study of several exegeses and deep contemplation over them, I have had the good fortune of attending my worthy father's discourses on the Qur'ān. Thus I was able to read the text of the Qur'ān with him several times. It was precisely this experience which proved conducive to a great opening for me.⁹⁹

This explains the profound impact of the early memorization, study and absorption of the Qur'ān, on the mind and soul of Shāh Walī Allāh. His father seems to have whetted up in the young Walī Allāh the appetite for a direct nexus with the Qur'ān in addition to creating in him an insatiable thirst for acquiring the knowledge and guidance enshrined in it. This experience invested Shāh Walī Allāh's scholarship with an aptitude for understanding and interpreting the Qur'ānic verses, something which endured throughout his life and its influence on his thought is clearly discernible in all his ideas.¹⁰⁰

Among other disciplines which Shāh Walī Allāh studied as a regular student at the Rahimiyyah College, an institution established by his father and named after him, were Persian language and literature including works on ethical philosophy, Arabic language, grammar, syntax, etymology, and rhetoric, *Ḥadīth*, *Tafsīr*, *Fiqh*, *Uṣul al-Fiqh*, logic and philosophy. It is also worth noting that he studied, as part of the curricula, selected major works of *Taṣawwuf*, which played a significant role in the direction of his thought. He also studied medicine, astronomy, and mathematics. This vast range of learning contributed to the broadening of his intellectual horizons and the enrichment of his mind, traits which are fully reflected in his numerous works.¹⁰¹

In 1143/1733, Shāh Walī Allāh travelled to Ḥijāz, where he performed *Ḥajj* and stayed for two years. During this sojourn he found a valuable opportunity to benefit from scholars who came to Ḥijāz from various countries and representing different academic traditions in the world of Islam. Among the prominent scholars who influenced him most, was Shaykh Abū Ṭāhir al-Kurdī al-Madanī (d. 1145/1733). His impact on the subsequent spiritual and academic development of Shāh Walī Allāh's personality was indeed tremendous. Shaykh Abū Ṭāhir was a disciple of his own father, Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Kurdī (d. 1101/1690). It is interesting that both Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Kurdī and Shāh Walī Allāh's father traced their academic genealogy to Jalāl al-Dīn Dawwānī. Again, both of them were under the influence of Ibn 'Arabī, an influence which they received through their respective spiritual guides. Therefore, this interaction of Shāh Walī Allāh

with Shaykh Abū Ṭāhir al-Kurdī further reinforced his orientation in the academic and spiritual traditions of Jalāl al-Dīn Dawwānī and Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī.¹⁰²

Although Shāh Walī Allāh was brought up in the Ḥanafī tradition of jurisprudence which was followed by the majority of his own countrymen, he nevertheless benefited from the legal heritage of other schools as well. His approach in dealing with the variant opinions of the four schools was to identify the common ground of their apparently differing lines of argument. He regarded *al-Muwattaʿa* of Imām Mālik as the main source of all the major Sunnī schools of law. His two commentaries on this early source of *Ḥādīth* namely *al-Musawwā* (Arabic) and *Muṣaffā* (Persian) clearly indicate the importance which Shāh Walī Allāh attached to this work.¹⁰³ He considered *Muwattaʿa* to be the most authentic source of the legal opinions of ‘Umar, the second Caliph, whom he regarded as an absolute *mujtahid* in the true sense of the term. The founders of the other four legal schools were, in the opinion of Shāh Walī Allāh, mere followers of ‘Umar’s school of *fiqh* and exercised *ijtihād* within the framework of his legal opinions.¹⁰⁴ Thus, we find that among the books which left the deepest impact on the mind of Shāh Walī Allāh after the Qur’ān, was the *Muwattaʿa* of Imām Mālik ibn Anas which, according to him, was the most valuable source of traditions as well as authentic legal opinions of the early Islamic era.¹⁰⁵

Among the other noteworthy sources of his thought, Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) deserves particular mention. We have already referred to the influence of Shaykh Abū Ṭāhir al-Kurdī’s ideas on Shāh Walī Allāh. The former and his father, Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Kurdī, were great admirers of Ibn Taymiyyah and his school. It was perhaps through this association with the two Kurdīs that Shāh Walī Allāh established an intellectual liaison with this great thinker of Islam and immensely benefited not only from his works, but also from those of his illustrious pupil, Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751/1350). On more than one occasion we find Shāh Walī Allāh paying rich tributes to the scholarship of Ibn Taymiyyah and his typical revolutionary orthodoxy.¹⁰⁶

Empirical observation is yet another important feature of his thought. In many of his writings, particularly *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, we find him often having recourse to empirical arguments to establish a contention. He marshals evidence from the simple fact that an act of virtue, a moral value or a cultural norm is universally acknowledged as such by all human communities, irrespective of their differences in creed, culture, race or geographic location.¹⁰⁷ This empirical dimension of his thought afforded him a perception of reality that was at once more comprehensive and profound

than that of a great many of his predecessors. We would sum up this survey of the sources of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought by pointing to the three important elements which constitute, according to Maulānā 'Ubayd Allāh Sindhī, the main components of his thought:

- First of all, he logically arranged in his mind all information acquired from the classical sources, initially through learning as a student, and later through instruction and independent pursuit of studies.
- By the activation of intuitional faculties (which he achieved through association with many saints and spiritual guides), he acquired a consciousness of the grand Divine scheme at work in this cosmos. His intellect further anchored this intuitional consciousness and re-inforced it.
- With this perception, comprising reason and intuition, he focused his mind on contemplating over the teachings of the Qur'ān. Therein he was able to discover the eternal principles governing the forces of history, principles that bring about a meaningful change in the individual and collective life of mankind. He fully absorbed those principles and, in their light, strove to identify the straight path in thought and behaviour conducive to eternal bliss. In his understanding of the message of the Qur'ān, however, he received full guidance from the traditions of the Prophet.¹⁰⁸

Social Thought

Shāh Walī Allāh's conception of the society is an integral part of his basic philosophy of life. It would perhaps be no exaggeration to say that his social thought constitutes one of the most original and significant aspects of his philosophy. It seems that with his peculiar orientation of thought, of which the main features have been outlined in the preceding two chapters, one is bound to conceive the emergence of the human social organization as he spelled it out. From the vantage-point of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought, the entire phenomenon of life seems to be nothing but an all-round spectacle of the grand Divine scheme, whether in the realm of the natural order or in the sphere of social organization. Although his understanding and exposition of the social development of man appears to be somewhat in the nature of an empirical survey, yet the final conclusions drawn by him come as a confirmation of the fundamental postulates of Religion.

Some modern exponents of Shāh Walī Allāh's social doctrines tend to suggest lack of originality in many of his ideas. They point out that similar ideas had previously been held by some of the Muslim thinkers such as Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) and Ibn Khaldūn (d.808/1406), who were the possible sources for some of Shāh Walī Allāh's ideas. But a total view of Shāh Walī Allāh's framework of thought does not confirm such a contention.¹⁰⁹

Shāh Walī Allāh's survey of the social phenomena seems to have been intended essentially for substantiating the standpoint of Religion by empirical argument. He looks at the creational phenomena, with man installed in its centre as the chief executor of the Divine scheme, as a supplement to the Revelational guidance from God embodied in the scriptures and handed

down to the Prophets. His basic premise, therefore, is that knowledge attainable to man through the intellect or the senses is bound to be in total conformity with the Divine Revelation. This is because whatever we come to know about the laws of nature, including the laws of human behaviour, by means of inductive enquiry, is nothing but a part of the Supreme Divine Law, of which the Revealed Law is the portion enunciated by the Prophets. This guided Shāh Walī Allāh's thought to the inescapable conclusion that man's relation to his follow-beings is just another aspect of his spirituality.¹¹⁰

Shāh Walī Allāh takes a total view of life, identifying an essential unity pervading all the diverse pursuits in human life. His philosophy represents a vigorous attempt to bring out a strong objective link between social, ethical, economic and political spheres in the temporal life of mankind.¹¹¹

Given Shāh Walī Allāh's theocentric view of the human individual, the primary unit of social organisation, it was natural that a transcendental moral law should provide the mainstay for this organisation. This law ought to be comprehensive and immutable and should serve as the final touchstone for determining right and wrong, good and evil, virtue and vice.¹¹²

The most outstanding and distinctive characteristic of human society, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, is '*adālah* (justice), which is both an individual and a collective quality. We have already noted that Shāh Walī Allāh recognises justice as an essential moral trait of human beings. This individual moral consciousness needs to be augmented on the collective plane where its maintenance and preservation is even more necessary than at the individual level since moral degeneration spells disaster and may even prove fatal if it extends to the society as a whole. Moreover, Shāh Walī Allāh's conception of '*adālah* encompasses the entire spectrum of diverse human pursuits. When '*adālah* is expressed in dress, manners and mores, it is *adab* i.e. etiquette. When it is maintained in matters relating to income and expenditure, it is 'economy'. Its observance in the affairs of the state is called 'politics'.¹¹³

Shāh Walī Allāh regards economic justice as the basic requirement for the realization of the objective of '*adālah* in every human group. Economic justice is, therefore, necessary for the healthy and balanced development of human society. Every social group needs an economic system, guaranteeing material necessities of life to all members. Without these necessities, human beings cannot remain contented, and without contentment, they will not find sufficient leisure for the pursuit of higher purposes of life, and it is very likely that they turn neglectful of the eternal bliss of the Hereafter.¹¹⁴

Like many other philosophers and propounders of the theories of sociology from Plato (d. 347 B.C.) down to Auguste Comte (d. 1857), Shāh Walī Allāh's ultimate concern was the achievement of an ideally moral, altruistic, and perfectly civilized society. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, however, it is not possible to achieve this objective without attaining a high level of God-consciousness and spiritual purification.¹¹⁵ However, as we know, the attitude of founders of modern sociology is at variance from such ideas. August Comte, for instance, thought that "perfect society would come about by the proper application of a new moral science, the study of society". He aspired for building a "scientifically designed commonwealth, wherein social control would be entrusted to the "Religion of Humanity"—with sociologists as its priests".¹¹⁶ Comte insisted that a strictly rational, rather than religious course should be followed to alleviate the ills of the post-industrial European society. An application of this 'rational strategy', according to him, would be possible by incorporating the methodology of physical and natural sciences in the service of social relationships.

Another notable social philosopher after Comte, Herbert Spencer (d. 1903), also advanced his theories more or less along the same lines as Comte. He was of the opinion that: "there can be no complete acceptance of sociology as a science, as long as the belief in a social order, not conforming to natural law survives".¹¹⁷

It is evident that in the scheme of Western sociology no significant role has been assigned to religion. Modern sociology, like all other social sciences, developed in the West approximately during the last two centuries, gradually divested all knowledge of the spiritual dimension of the reality. The inevitable consequence of this secularization in all behavioral sciences, in addition to other curbs and bars on man's comprehensiveness of perception, is that has been reduced to a *promethean anthropos* rather than a holistic moral and spiritual being whose ultimate fulfilment is to be actualised in the Hereafter. Moreover, today's sociology is mostly concerned with "low level empirical generalisations rather than constructing grand theories and fail[s] to come to grips with the great problems of the modern society at large".¹¹⁸

Notwithstanding this overall constricted outlook prevailing in the predominant perspectives of contemporary sociology, we also find that some sociologists take a broad view, examining such themes as total societies, world wide trends, historical phenomena, or the relationship between personality types and cultural differences. Thus Max Weber(d. 1920)¹¹⁹ related the rise of capitalism to the Protestant reformation;

David Riesman (1909-) associated different character types with social trends;¹²⁰ and Robin Williams analysed the American society.¹²¹

In contemporary sociological parlance, studies of such large-scale macroscopic phenomena as cited above are called macro-sociology.¹²² In a sense we may call Shāh Walī Allāh, among other things, a great macro-sociologist in his own way. For he made a lasting contribution to the development of human thought as an outstanding social philosopher, in that he was a grand theorist concerned with historical trends and human destiny, one who worked out a social philosophy that explains a broad range of phenomena and constructs a model of a good society. The writers on modern sociology are generally disinclined to acknowledge anyone other than Auguste Comte and Karl Marx (d. 1883) as 'social philosophers' while applying the criteria set forth above.¹²³ It would seem that Shāh Walī Allāh's original and innovative ideas in the field of sociology aptly fulfil this criteria of contemporary sociology.

Influence of Earlier Muslim Thinkers on Shāh Walī Allāh

Shāh Walī Allāh is one of those few thinkers who are known for their consistent and systematic approach who tend to treat the questions in hand in a pervasive manner, a quality which he shares with some of his illustrious predecessors such as Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), al-Rāzī, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Aḥmad Sirhindī. To begin with, he marshals arguments from the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). These arguments are then supplemented by corroborative evidence from history, philosophy, logic, *kalām*, Sufism and many other disciplines in vogue at the time.¹²⁴

Shāh Walī Allāh's socio-political thought is based primarily on a perceptive study of his own environment, particularly Muslim India. He was a keen observer of all important developments of social and political significance that took place around him.¹²⁵ His political letters display his deep and critical insight in the prevailing socio-political situation in Muslim India.¹²⁶ He looks at the problems of the human society from the Qur'ānic perspective and it is from that same perspective that he interprets everything. The question of the rise and fall of societies discussed by him in the *Hujjah*, and the ideas set forth by him for understanding various developments in history, have their bases in the Qur'ān. When necessary, he also substantiates these ideas by referring to the relevant traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him).¹²⁷

As we have pointed out elsewhere,¹²⁸ the socio-political thought of Shāh Walī Allāh emanates from his theoretical framework. Society to him represents a certain stage of human development. But a meaningful social and cultural development can only take place under Divine guidance. To him, Divine guidance is internal as well as external to human nature and the two are complementary to each other.¹²⁹

While developing his social philosophy, Shāh Walī Allāh further advances the line of thought developed by his predecessors in this field on the one hand assimilates and systematises various ideas that have a bearing on the socio-political development of the society on the other. In this respect, it seems that his endeavour was to combine different academic traditions into one coherent system of thought. It is not strictly within the scope of the present study to make a detailed comparison between the socio-political doctrines of Shāh Walī Allāh and the ideas of the earlier thinkers in this field. However, an attempt will be made below to identify the main areas in which Shāh Walī Allāh shows traces of the influence of the earlier thinkers and to highlight those aspects in which he further advanced their ideas. It seems that Shāh Walī Allāh's socio-political thought was influenced by several Muslim philosophers and thinkers of the past such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Miskwayh (d. 421/1030), Dawwānī and Aḥmad Sirhindī. In the present context, we would confine ourselves to three scholars who represent the major trends in Muslim scholarship. One of these was Fārābī, who has influenced Muslim thinkers in the field of pure philosophical thought, and had a penchant for abstract rational approach. Another thinker was Māwardī, who is perhaps the best representative of juridical approach to socio-political problems. Still another thinker was Ghazālī who represented a combination of scholasticism, philosophy and jurisprudence blended with Sufism. It is significant that out of these three, Ghazālī is the only one to whom Shāh Walī Allāh has not only paid rich tributes, but whose influence he has generously acknowledged in his introduction to the *Hujjah*.¹³⁰

The Influence of Fārābī

Let us first consider Fārābī. As the founder of an independent school of philosophical thought, he has left a deep and profound impact on philosophical thought, both in the East and in the West. His ideas and style set the standard of philosophical writing for many centuries to come.¹³¹ Eminent thinkers and celebrated philosophers like Ibn Sīnā ungrudgingly record their indebtedness to Fārābī.¹³² Muslim philosophy, in general, has

always recognised the exalted position of Fārābī in the history of human thought. This is evident from the appellation of *al-Mu'allim al-Thānī* or the Second Teacher conferred on him, the first teacher being Aristotle.¹³³ Indeed the impact of the 'second teacher' on Muslim philosophico-ethical thought is no less profound than that of the first.

Shāh Walī Allāh was no exception to the general indebtedness of Muslim thinkers to Fārābī. Although he has not specifically made any reference to the political ideas of Fārābī in any of his writings, there are some traces of the latter's thought on his style and approach. The effort to reconcile the rational with the traditional, so conspicuous in Fārābī, is also evident, and in fact seems to have reached its culmination, in Shāh Walī Allāh. The idea of integrating the institution of prophethood with cultural developments in human society was first initiated by Fārābī. This idea found its mature expression in Shāh Walī Allāh's *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*. The categorisation of the state and society on moral bases which we note in Fārābī in the fourth century of the *Hijrah* finds its echo in Shāh Walī Allāh's writings in the twelfth century.¹³⁴

There is also a significant degree of similarity between the two in respect of style. "Fārābī is characteristically concise and precise. He selects his words and expressions as deliberately as he profoundly conceives his ideas. His aphorisms are pregnant with profound significance".¹³⁵ The same can safely be said about Shāh Walī Allāh. His books, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, *al-Budūr al-Bāzighah*, *al-Khayr al-Kathīr* and *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyyah* are particularly remarkable for their precision and succinctness.

Both Fārābī and Shāh Walī Allāh emerged at very significant transitional periods in the intellectual history of Islam. In the age of Fārābī, Muslims were on the threshold of an epoch which was to be characterised with attempts to synthesize various philosophical points of view and to reconcile hellenized rationalism with the teachings of Islam. For this purpose, Fārābī undertook a survey of the available fund of philosophical knowledge and tried to develop a framework of doctrines compatible with his own academic ethos. In this connection, he attempted to evolve a systematic and coherent philosophy which could accommodate both traditional and rational points of view. Thus he paved the way for more advanced efforts to harmonize differing or conflicting ideas into a systematic and synthesized statement of Muslim philosophical thought.

An integrated approach in philosophy, which is conducive ultimately to a unity of knowledge, is also an important facet of philosophical thought on which the views of Shāh Walī Allāh appear to be in considerable agreement with those of Fārābī. It was, perhaps, under the influence of the cardinal

Islamic doctrine of *tawhīd* that Fārābī was able to develop the idea that philosophy was essentially a single unit. His *Ihṣā' al-'Ulūm*¹³⁶ is not simply an attempt to classify the various prevalent sciences and disciplines, but its real value rather lies in that it sets forth a definitive concept of the unity of knowledge. Shāh Walī Allāh's systematic re-statement of an Islamic *weltanschauung* in the *Hujjah*, which comprises discussions on almost all important areas of social and cultural significance, is a remarkable example of philosophical thought premised on the unity of knowledge.

It was primarily the idea of the unity of knowledge which provided an intellectual framework in which Fārābī and other Muslim scholars made an attempt to synthesize *hikmah* or rational philosophy with the *sharī'ah* or the revealed law of Islam. In this respect, Fārābī is considered to be the first Muslim thinker who tried to develop a philosophical system based on such a synthesization. During his own life-time, this attempt might not have attracted much attention, let alone much participation from or approval of the traditional scholars. However, with the passage of time it became increasingly evident that Muslim thought, owing to the compulsions of history as well as the sheer force of logic, was bound sooner or later to follow the lines set by Fārābī. About four centuries later, the greatest Muslim scholar of his time, Ibn Taymiyyah declared that there was no conflict or inconsistency between *ṣarīḥ al-ma'qūl*, a rationally established fact, and *ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl*, an authentic religious doctrine. This statement of Ibn Taymiyyah was, in fact, a tribute to the sound seminal thinking of Fārābī as early as in the fourth century A.H.

Shāh Walī Allāh's *Hujjah* and *Budūr* represent the culmination of the process of harmonizing the rationally established facts and the authentic religious principles of Islam. In fact the entire effort by the author of the *Hujjah* was to marshal rational arguments in support of the teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

But the most important area in which Shāh Walī Allāh seems to have been conspicuously influenced by the line of Fārābī's thinking is the institution of prophethood and revelation which furnishes the basis for all religious teachings. Right from the days of Fārābī upto our own time when we have had such an important and brilliant thinker as Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938),¹³⁷ Muslim philosophical thinking has been centrally concerned with interpreting the doctrines of prophethood and revelation in rational and philosophical terms. The aim of this exercise was to articulate these concepts in such a manner as to make them comprehensible in rational terms.

The concept of prophethood, as presented by Fārābī, can rightly be considered a pioneering attempt toward explaining this strictly religious and transcendental experience in philosophical terms. How far Fārābī was successful in this attempt can be assessed partly by the fact that men like Ibn Sīnā and Shāh Walī Allāh could not go beyond the ideational parameters set by Fārābī, who explained prophethood, within the broad framework of perspectives borrowed from the insights of psychology, metaphysics, ethics, sociology and politics. The combination of all these fields suggests that while explaining prophethood Fārābī had the extraordinarily great and all-embracing personality of the Prophet of Islam in mind.

Shāh Walī Allāh also developed his ideas on *nubuwwah* (prophethood) on the axioms of metaphysics, psychology, ethics and politics. Shāh Walī Allāh integrates his discussion on *nubuwwah* with his theory of *irtifāqāt*. He conceives Prophet as the embodiment of the highest degree of spiritual development. This development starts from the level of *khalīfah* or the ruler who presides over the third and the fourth *irtifāq*. Thereafter he mentions *hādī* or the spiritual guide, *imām* or the leader, and *mundhir* or the warner. These levels refer to various degrees in the hierarchy of spiritual leadership short of the final degree of Prophet. Shāh Walī Allāh's discussion on the nature of prophethood and the categories of revelation mentioned by him in *Budūr* present an interesting example of his approach of integrating the perspectives of different fields in dealing with this subject.

Another important area in which there is a close affinity of views between Fārābī and Shāh Walī Allāh is the concept of bliss or *sa'ādah* which has been a question of great interest and a subject of lengthy discussions by the Muslim philosophers. It is on the basis of *sa'ādah* that Muslim thinkers from the days of Fārābī to Shāh Walī Allāh evolved their socio-ethical theories, which eventually developed into their ideas on politics and statecraft. *Sa'ādah*, according to Fārābī, is a stage of ethical accomplishment and moral perfection of the human soul. It is here that this perfection and accomplishment becomes a Prophet's second nature, and he remains no more in need of any external factor to sustain it. This moral perfection permeates all the spiritual aspects of his life.¹³⁸

Like Fārābī, Shāh Walī Allāh also defines *sa'ādah* in terms of moral perfection. The latter, however, goes a step further and interprets *sa'ādah* in the context of spiritual accomplishment. Shāh Walī Allāh relates the attainment of ultimate happiness with *'ibādāt* or acts of worship, and with *riyāḍāt* or acts of spiritual purification.¹³⁹ He contends that the real and lasting happiness can only be achieved through acts of worship whose ultimate objective is the spiritual progress of the soul, its close communion

with the 'Higher Assembly', and the subservience of man's animal urges to his spiritual ideals.¹⁴⁰

Thus, both Fārābī and Shāh Walī Allāh, see *sa'ādāh* as the *summum bonum* both in this world, and in the Hereafter. In this context, they develop their argument on the basis of their study of human-nature. Following the Qur'ānic statements which consider change as one of the signs of God,¹⁴¹ both of them recognise change and variety as necessary elements in human nature. This nature varies from person to person and from society to society. Human qualities and characteristics are as susceptible to variation as any other thing in this world. Despite this change there is an element of permanence in human life which provides the basis for an understanding of human nature and life. Both Fārābī and Shāh Walī Allāh have elaborately discussed these aspects of human behaviour in their masterpieces on socio-political thought, namely *Arā' Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah* of Fārābī and the *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* of Shāh Walī Allāh. There are striking similarities between the two.

Shāh Walī Allāh's socio-political thought is, in the main, constructed on his theory of *irtifāqāt*, i.e. the stages of social development. In this area he has developed an original and coherent social philosophy with reference to the nature of human society, its needs and requirements. One finds traces of certain rudiments of this theory in the writings of Fārābī who refers to the nature of human needs and the amenities of life.¹⁴² For him, it is incumbent on men to gather and organise themselves in large groups in order to achieve the highest degrees of cultural progress.¹⁴³ While Shāh Walī Allāh introduces different categories of society in accordance with the degrees of cultural development of the social organism, Fārābī categorises them into perfect and imperfect, rightly guided and misguided, virtuous and sinful. In effect, both interpret the diversity of human social phenomena by subsuming them into the unity of a systematic social philosophy based on the broad principles of Islamic ethics.

The Influence of Māwardī

As we have pointed out earlier in this chapter, in the exposition of his political ideas, Shāh Walī Allāh's approach appears to bear similarity to that of the fifth century jurist and political thinker, Māwardī. He raises almost the same issues which Māwardī had discussed and marshalled almost the same arguments that we find in Māwardī's *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*.¹⁴⁴ We do not know, however, whether Shāh Walī Allāh was influenced directly by Māwardī or not, but we can safely assume that he did receive an indirect

influence of his Abbasid precursor, through the writings of the Shāfi'ī and Hanbalī jurists of a later period with whom he had become familiar during his stay in Arabia. The impact of Ibn Taymiyyah on Shāh Walī Allāh is also well-known.¹⁴⁵ It was, perhaps, through the writings of Ibn Taymiyyah and others like him that the influence of Māwardī extended to Shāh Walī Allāh.

Apart from this indirect impact, it appears that a similarity in social conditions and intellectual and political climate, despite the obvious time and space gap between Māwardī and Shāh Walī Allāh, also contributed to a correspondence of views between them. The two lived at a time when their respective contemporaneous Muslim empires were on a rapid decline. Their heyday was over and their only concern was to arrest this decline. Unlike Shāh Walī Allāh, Māwardī occupied judicial offices in the Abbasid empire in addition to his engagement in teaching and research.

There is an unmistakable similarity in the ideas, modes of argument and methodology adopted by these two great thinkers. The concept of *imāmah* and *khilāfah* and their bases and functions discussed by Shāh Walī Allāh are almost identical with what we find in the writings of Māwardī. Both consider the establishment of state obligatory for the Muslim *ummah*. The basis of this obligation, according to both, is reason as well as revelation. Likewise, the functions of government, as enumerated by Māwardī, have also been enunciated by Shāh Walī Allāh, and along more or less the same arguments.

Shāh Walī Allāh's treatment of the institutions of *qaḍā'* and *jihād* is also essentially a reproduction (of course, with some addition and improvement), of what Māwardī had already written seven centuries earlier in his *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*.

The Influence of Ghazālī

Last, but not the least, is the influence which Shāh Walī Allāh received from Ghazālī. This indebtedness to Ghazālī is not something peculiar to Shāh Walī Allāh for Ghazālī occupies an exceptionally important place in the history of Islamic thought. His impact on the subsequent thinking of Muslims in several fields such as jurisprudence, Sufism, ethics, logic, philosophy, socio-political thought and theology has been tremendous. We can hardly find any Muslim scholar after Ghazālī who is not directly or indirectly influenced by him.

As we have already pointed out, there are striking similarities between Ghazālī and Shāh Walī Allāh. Both of them are considered important links

between two distinct epochs of scholarship. Each of them left a lasting imprint of his ideas on the thinking patterns of the subsequent generations. The thought of each of the two represents a unique combination of religious, rational and intuitional systems of knowledge. Each tried to present and interpret the teachings of Islam in the light of the hitherto developed rationalist tradition of scholarship in his respective milieu.

Like Shāh Walī Allāh, Ghazālī extensively wrote on society, state and politics. His *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, in many respects, is a forerunner of Shāh Walī Allāh's *Hujjah*.¹⁴⁶ Both of them have dealt with the teachings of Islam in their entirety and attempted to explain them in terms of a consistent, rational, and logically tenable philosophy of life. Like the *Hujjah*, the *Ihyā'* also discusses politics in the framework of its author's social thought. In this respect, both Ghazālī and Shāh Walī Allāh make a sort of anthropological study of human society and trace the onward development of human social behaviour. Both of them have discussed the need, and surveyed the emergence, of various arts and skills universally found in human societies.

The Four Stages of Social Development

Shāh Walī Allāh explains the evolution of social life by identifying four stages for the development of a cultured society. He gives them the name of *irtifāqāt*.¹⁴⁷ First, he underlines, as a great many medieval and modern social philosophers do, the distinctive traits of human beings whereby they become different and distinguished from 'fellow animals'. These traits, as briefly mentioned earlier, are:

- a. *Al-ra'y al-kullī*, i.e. universality of purpose. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, all members of the genus of animals share the instinctive drive to pursue their immediate physical needs of eating, drinking, sex, and seeking shelter from the vicissitudes of weather. Satisfaction of these immediate needs have been instinctively taught to every member of the animal genus according to the requirements of each species. For instance, God has taught a bee to instinctively partake of varied fruits, to make a dwelling where the members of its species may join each other, to submit to the drone, and then to produce honey. In the same way, the natural law ordained by God has provided for each species a *sharī'ah*¹⁴⁸ (i.e. a course of conduct) which is transfused in the heart of each individual member of the species. Likewise, God has inspired man to instinctively pursue his beneficial ends (*irtifāqāt*) with regard to these necessities.¹⁴⁹

Over and above these immediate and instinctive drives, which Shāh Walī Allāh terms as *al-ra'y al-juz'i* (individuality of purpose), man is further driven by a degree of *al-ra'y al-kullī* (universality of purpose). This drive inspires him to pursue a purely rational goal which may not be rooted in his instinctive disposition. For instance, he may seek to create a good social system, to perfect his morals, to achieve cultural accomplishments, or to strive for salvation in the Hereafter.¹⁵⁰

Thus it is clear that the fundamental point of distinction between man and beast, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, is the moral aspect of the former's nature. It is man who, despite the fullest satisfaction of his biological needs, remains dissatisfied and feels an additional urge to strive in a variety of ways for the ascendancy of moral ideals on the individual as well as collective planes of human life. He devotes a good deal of his opportunities and resources for attaining accomplishments in the fields of culture and civilization. Moreover, a very large measure of the material means available to man are often dedicated to no purpose other than attaining Divine salvation in the Hereafter.¹⁵¹

It is to be noted here that unlike many other Muslim social philosophers before him Shāh Walī Allāh does not emphasise the faculty of intellect or *virtus rationalis*, as the essential difference between man and the rest of the animal world. This is notwithstanding his discussion of some external physical and inner mental features of the archetypal man, such as uprightness, power of speech, a relatively hairless body and the perceptive faculty of the mind (*idrāk*).¹⁵²

The most prominent propounder of sociology before Shāh Walī Allāh is perhaps 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn. He also regards *quwwah nāṭiqah* (*virtus rationalis*), *fikr* (*cogitativa*) or *rawiyyah* (deliberation) to be the essential differentia of man.¹⁵³ This seems to be almost a common notion of a very large number of early thinkers in and outside the tradition of Islam. Shāh Walī Allāh's approach to the issue, in our opinion, represents an improvement in this respect. His main emphasis is placed on the identification of the underlying motives rather than merely the potencies with which man or animal has been endowed. As to the rational faculties, to him they are instruments conferred upon man by the Divine Power. But it is ultimately a conscious pursuit of the higher ends which distinguishes man from the beast. The value of pursuing the ends that are beyond the frontiers of biological existence lies in the fact that this pursuit transcends all his immediate selfish interests that are essentially of a beastly nature. This transcendence requires suppression of the

animalistic disposition (*bahīmiyyah*) and elevation of the angelic disposition (*malakiyyah*). The distinction granted to man over all animals is, therefore, due to his conscious struggle for the achievement of certain objectives that are morally commendable and conducive to universal good.

This original concept of *al-ra'y al-kullī* expounded by Shāh Walī Allāh settled the issue arising out of the seemingly overlapping instinctive pursuits of man and beast, which led the human mind to different confusions concerning the correlation between various species of the animal world. This confusion might also have been responsible for leading many thinkers to exaggerate ostensible aspects of similarity between men and beasts, so much so that fantastic theories about the origin of species gained currency, claiming a common ancestry of both man and animal.¹⁵⁴

- b. The second distinctive trait of man, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, is that his satisfaction of the instinctive needs is supplemented by an aesthetic urge which Shāh Walī Allāh calls *zarāfah*. While a beast is exclusively concerned with warding off heat and cold, allaying hunger, quenching thirst and relieving sexual tension, man aspires for added pleasure and joy out of these things. He yearns for a beautiful mate, delicious food, elegant dress, and a lofty house.¹⁵⁵

Though man's pursuit of these instinctive desires namely food, sex and housing is rooted in his animalistic disposition, he employs his intelligence to satisfy them in an accomplished and refined manner. Therefore, a great deal of human energy, time, and potential is spent for achieving progressive refinement, and capricious modes of fulfilment, in enjoying the pleasures of food, sex and housing.

- c. The third distinctive trait of mankind is that there are found among them some individuals who possess intelligence and understanding at a higher level than others. These gifted individuals apply their minds to discover the beneficial stages of social development (*irtifāqāt*). Other individuals in the human species might feel an urge to discover something beneficial like them, but they are not intellectually advanced enough to be able to do so. Such people naturally turn for help to those gifted with exceptional intelligence, learn what they have discovered for common good, and adopt their methods whole-heartedly because these methods conform to their own general perception.¹⁵⁶

Thus a foundation for co-operative effort toward achieving common good is established. This mutual co-operation is the primary condition for the growth of a social set-up. Shāh Walī Allāh seems deeply conscious of the varying degrees of intellectual capacity among different individuals of the human species when he assigns the role of discovering methods of human social development, to a gifted group of men on behalf of the rest. He explains this by various illustrations. He imagines a man living at the most primitive level of existence. He feels hunger and thirst, but finds nothing to eat or drink. He faces acute hardship until he somehow finds food and drink. Thereafter he strives to develop a regular method to satisfy these vital needs in a regular manner, but fails to do so. Perchance he comes across a wise man who, on facing the same situation, already discovered certain remedies by making use of his intelligence. Thus he learns from this wise man that there are seeds of food and also discovers methods of growing, watering, reaping, threshing and refining — which he finds out to be the various stages of growing food stuff. He further learns the methods of preserving the produce for future needs. Similarly, that wise man explains to him methods of digging well for irrigating the lands that lie at some distance from springs and streams, and of making earthen waterpots, skin bags and other big containers to carry and preserve water. This layman thus discovers methods of satisfying his needs in an organised and intelligent manner and is able to attain a degree of *irtifāq*. He then attempts to crack seeds as they are with his teeth and tries to swallow raw fruits, only to find out that he cannot digest them. He tries to overcome this difficulty but finds no means to do so. Then he comes across another wise man who has already discovered methods of cooking, frying, grinding and baking. He learns from him yet another means of satisfying his needs in an organised and intelligent manner.¹⁵⁷

Shāh Walī Allāh gives the above illustration to offer an analogy whereby one can form an idea as to how the imaginary primitive man gradually attains the primary level of *irtifāq*. These attainments, according to him, come about by the presence of two elements. One is the natural intuitional guidance provided by nature to man by virtue of his very creation as human species. The knowledge, accumulated by the human mind from the source of this intuitional guidance, is further supplemented by the knowledge acquired from experience. These two elements constitute the knowledge whereby man discovers various methods of satisfying his material needs in an organised and regular manner. In the course of time these practices become so common and familiar that they form part of the collective habitude of a human group living together.¹⁵⁸

The characteristics of man, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, are too numerous to be counted. But when we analyse them, they can be reduced to three:

1. the urge for social welfare and common good of humanity which he terms as *al-ra'y al-kullī*;
2. the urge for cultural accomplishment which he calls *zarāfah*,¹⁵⁹
3. the capacity to attain knowledge. Man aspires for perfection through the attainment of knowledge. But all men are neither equally capable of attaining knowledge, nor every knowledgeable person has the aptitude for the same kind of knowledge as others. Rather, God has endowed different individuals with varying capacities for attaining different kinds of knowledge.¹⁶⁰

Further, it should be noted that according to Shāh Walī Allāh, as the animal species can be classified into higher, middle and lower orders on account of their relative harmony, vigour and purity, so also human individuals can be classified on grounds of possessing these qualities in higher or lesser degrees.¹⁶¹

The most perfect individual is he whose vigour, harmony and purity are most perfect. The effects of these qualities are manifested in three faculties: (i) *qalb*: conation and will, (ii) *tabī'ah*: physico-biological constitution, and (iii) *al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*: rational soul.¹⁶²

It is obvious that the three traits of human species namely the urge for social welfare or universality of purpose, the urge for cultural accomplishment, and the capacity for knowledge are not found in all human individuals to the same extent. This disparity in aptitude and competence between members of the same species is attributable to a number of causes and factors. However, we would not go into the details of these factors in this study. Its significance for our purpose lies in the fact that, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, *irtifāq* exists at two levels owing to the varying intellectual and cultural levels of different social groups of mankind.

The first or primary level of social development (*irtifāq*) is an essential characteristic of small social groups like those of nomadic people and the dwellers of remote and far-flung areas such as mountain peaks. These lands are geographically distant from the main centres of civilisation and culture. Shāh Walī Allāh calls them *al-aqālīm al-ṣāliḥah* (the virtuous realms).¹⁶³

The second stage of social development (*irtifāq*) is attained by the people who live in urban areas and civilised cities, in the 'virtuous realms'. These 'realms' have been called 'virtuous' by Shāh Walī Allāh because the

social environment of these 'realms' is a constant incentive for the breeding of men of excellent morals and wisdom. This is so because in such realms human social organisation expands tremendously, giving rise to increasing needs and requirements of life. The natural result of this expansion is that the experience of their inhabitants is diversified, and a large number of social practices are developed. In the course of time, these practices become permanent social customs and form part of the collective social behaviour of the individuals.¹⁶⁴

The point of culmination in the second stage of social development is reflected in the practices that are in vogue among kings and rulers, who acquire and possess higher standards in the amenities of life. An additional advantage enjoyed by them is that they are visited by men of wisdom drawn from different communities of the world. They acquire 'virtuous practices' (*sunan ṣāliḥah*) from these men of wisdom. When the rulers and kings learn, adopt and follow these virtuous practices these are also reflected in the living patterns of their subjects. These societies may then be called 'virtuous realms'. This, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, constitutes the highest level of the second stage of social development (*irtifāq*).¹⁶⁵

The achievement of the second stage of social development (*irtifāq*) to its point of culmination leads as a natural consequence to the third stage, the stage in which a human society needs the agency of government. It so happens that when various transactions take place between the members of a society, elements of greed, jealousy, procrastination, and denial of each other's rights give rise to many differences and disputes. The form in which this generally appears is that some individuals, who are ruled by low passions, tend to commit murder and loot. Apart from this, there is another reason which warrants the establishment of government. There are some *irtifāqāt* of which the benefits are shared by all members of the society. However, these *irtifāqāt* cannot be easily achieved by every member of the society individually. Or, perhaps, every member may not be prepared or interested to work for their achievement.

It is for these and for such other reasons that the members of the society are compelled to instal a ruler (or a government) in order to resolve their disputes, administer their affairs on the basis of equity and justice, and deter those who commit contravention of social rules and cultural norms, and repel all those who might show criminal tendencies. All these objectives require collection of necessary taxes from the more affluent members of the society. This precisely is the *raison d'être* of the establishment of government in the opinion of Shāh Walī Allāh.¹⁶⁶

Again this third stage of social development (*irtifāq*) leads to yet another stage, the fourth stage. This comes about when a ruler tends to become independent in his own domain, comes to possess considerable riches through taxes and maintains a substantial army. All this generates niggardliness, greed and hatred which, in turn, prompt different rulers to engage in mutual quarrel, even fighting. In this state of affairs, people feel compelled to establish the office of a superior authority—*khalīfah*—or to join the jurisdiction of *al-khilāfah al-kubrā* (supreme authority). The definition of *khalīfah* offered by Shāh Walī Allāh is that it is the rule of someone who acquires such prestige and popular respect that it becomes almost impossible for anyone to deprive him of his position.¹⁶⁷

Each individual *khalīfah* essentially reflects the social psychology of those over whom his authority is established. All communities whose temperaments are stronger and sharper stand in greater need of rulers and *khu-lafā'* (singular, *khalīfah*) than those who are less greedy and grudging.¹⁶⁸

It will be clear from the foregoing that contextual evolution and cultural relativity are the prominent marks of the social philosophy of Shāh Walī Allāh. He conceives and constructs the evolution of society like one organic whole.¹⁶⁹ In his view, society is a dynamic organism which naturally evolves. This evolution is relative to a variety of factors and circumstances that accompany it. The Islamic form of society is no exception to this rule. Shāh Walī Allāh does not regard society "as an aggregate of units, held together by an external force, or artificial means of social contract, but as a veritable living organism. It obeys the laws of its own evolution. It has an end and a purpose. It works on lines almost analogous to those of the individual, who is subjected to states of health and ailment, progress and regression, life and death".¹⁷⁰

The Theory of *Irtifāqāt*

After this general introduction to *irtifāqāt* — the four stages of social development expounded by Shāh Walī Allāh — we shall proceed to discuss separately the distinctive features of each *irtifāq* (stage of social development). As we have already pointed out, Shāh Walī Allāh conceives human society to have moved ahead through these four stages. He begins his survey of human social phenomenon by pointing to the emergence of a primitive type of society and traces its evolution and development to the highest level of culture and civilisation attainable by any social organisation. At the pinnacle of the social evolution of man he envisages something in the nature of a cosmopolitan socio-political organisation, or a commonwealth of different countries, bound together by the spirit of a universal Islamic fraternity. The golden examples of the early Islamic history as well as the hopes and aspirations for a future socio-political resurgence of Muslims seem to have contributed immensely to shaping the ideas of Shāh Walī Allāh on these questions.

The First Stage of *Irtifāq*

Language

Man's first step toward socio-cultural development is language which is not only the vehicle of communication, but also a great instrument of intellection. Shāh Walī Allāh defines language as "an instrument whereby man expresses something born in his mind".¹⁷¹ Tracing the genesis and evolution of this phenomenon, he says that various acts, forms, postures

and physical objects are associated with certain sounds either by proximity, causality or some other factor. These sounds are spoken as they are. Then etymological alternations are made in them through the derivation of different forms and tenses according to variation in connotation. Things that have some association with vision, or which create any mental image, are represented by sounds similar to them. This is the primary form of language. Thereafter this phenomenon of language undergoes a process of expansion and diversification beyond the limited scope of proximity, similarity or relation between external sounds and their introspective meanings.

The significance of language as "the real incomparably important, and absolute distinction between humans and other living organisms" has been recognized by contemporary sociologists as well.¹⁷² However, the experiments conducted in recent years for teaching chimpanzees to communicate by gestures, or to recognise words with the help of plastic tokens representing words, have been of little avail. These experiments have only further established the enormous gap between human and non-human communication.¹⁷³ Thus the modern science of sociology, which is now equipped with the supplementary aid of data provided by anthropology, psychology and even zoology, would seem to endorse the contention of Shāh Walī Allāh regarding the significance of language as the distinctive trait and important vehicle of human culture.

Among other attainments which Shāh Walī Allāh enumerates as marks of man's progress in the first stage of *irtifāq* are cultivation of land, plantation of trees, digging of wells, adoption of different methods of cooking food, and enriching nutrition, making of pottery and water containers, animal husbandry and utilization of animal's backs, meats, skins, hair, furs, milks and their offspring, building houses to seek shelter from heat and cold; making dresses to protect and cover human body, identification of an undisputed spouse for sexual satisfaction, procreation of progeny and mutual assistance in raising children and other familial needs, discovering and making instruments for cultivation, plantation and drilling, barter and other co-operative activities for serving the common interest of the members of society.¹⁷⁴

An important feature of this stage of social development, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, is that a man of sound judgement and an exceptional ability to set things in order comes forward, subdues the people around him, and becomes their leader in one way or the other.¹⁷⁵

A society with the characteristics outlined above also naturally demands that there should develop among its members certain established

conventions for settling disputes, preventing injustice and oppression and repelling aggressors.¹⁷⁶

Besides, it is also an essential trait of every social set-up that there remain amongst its members some individuals of relatively higher intellectual calibre. These individuals possess the ability to discover methods of social development (*irtifāqāt*) which they employ to this end, and which the rest of the people in the community follow. They also enjoy the fruits of the former's intellectual labour to improve their conditions of living.¹⁷⁷

It is also natural that in every society some individuals love beauty, comfort, and means of luxury in one way or the other, while others feel greater pride in possessing moral and intellectual qualities like bravery, generosity, eloquence and a sharp mind. There are still others who crave for spreading their fame and exalting their prestige in the world.¹⁷⁸

The above exposition of Shāh Walī Allāh's understanding of the socio-cultural development of man from its initial stages amply shows that his approach is universal and comprehensive. In his survey of the socio-cultural phenomena of human life, he takes notice of different kinds of society, without limiting the scope of his survey to any particular period or to any specific region, clan or creed. In the current text books of sociology, human society is usually understood to be divided into five kinds with reference to their main sources of sustenance, namely (i) hunting (ii) horticulture, (iii) pastoral pursuits (iv) agriculture and (v) industry.¹⁷⁹ In Shāh Walī Allāh's social philosophy we find a notice of all these kinds of society.

Second Stage of *Irtifāq* and the Five Basic Sciences

We have already noted that according to Shāh Walī Allāh, it is a part of human nature that man should have a constant urge to seek and pursue improvement in the patterns of living which is dictated by the inherent aesthetic urge of man. We have also noted earlier the diverse needs of socio-cultural significance and their various categories which are attained by man in the first stage of social development, according to Shāh Walī Allāh.

When man seeks the satisfaction of these basic needs in a refined and sophisticated manner so as to improve and develop their means further, this gives birth to five sciences. When these sciences emerge in a society and guide man's pursuit of his basic needs, he achieves a higher degree of social progress which constitutes the second stage of *irtifāq*.

These five sciences are:

1. *al-ḥikmah al-ma'āshiyyah* or the wisdom living;

2. *al-ḥikmah al-iktisābiyyah* or 'earning wisdom';
3. *al-ḥikmah al-manziliyyah* or 'household wisdom';
4. *al-ḥimkah al-ta'āmulīyyah* or 'business wisdom'; and
5. *al-ḥikmah al-ta'āwuniyyah* or 'co-operative wisdom'.¹⁸⁰

1. The Wisdom of Living

This science deals with that department of human knowledge which guides man towards desirable manners and etiquettes of living. When society reaches the highest level of the second stage of social development (*irtifāq*) in the satisfaction of its needs pertaining to the manners and mores of living, the sum-total of practices that evolve in this process are further streamlined by experience. The experience which is collectively gained by the society recommends certain beneficial practices in this behalf, and disapproves some attitudes as detrimental to the common weal. The former are, therefore, further reinforced, while the latter are eschewed. In the same manner, these practices are also subjected to the scrutiny of the principles of excellent morals that are inculcated in the people who have perfect temperaments. Whichever of these practices is found in accord with the requirements of excellent morals is adopted and the rest is abandoned. These practices also undergo a process of further refinement by another standard. All such activities are adopted which fulfil the requirements of sociability and amicable co-existence among the members of the society. The final standard of judgement in retaining or eschewing these practices is, of course, their compatibility with the aim of the 'universality of purpose' (*al-ra'y al-kullī*).¹⁸¹

Thus before any habit or collective behaviour acquires the status of a custom or convention of the society, it undergoes a long and thorough process of scrutiny both from pragmatic considerations and ethical standpoints. Not only that, the customs and practices in vogue in a society become permanent parts of a society's culture only if they fully conform to the ultimate human aim of the 'universality of purpose', which is the chief distinction between man and animal in Shāh Walī Allāh's philosophy. It is according to this distinction that every quality which makes man distinct from the beasts is either a sign of moral virtue or of cultural accomplishment.¹⁸²

The main issues dealt with in this science are: manners of eating, drinking, walking, sitting, sleeping, various methods of personal hygiene, conjugal life, dressing, maintenance of household, cleanliness, beauty care,

manners of conversation, medication, practice of incantation for the cure of diseases, feasts on happy occasions like birth, marriage and also other festivals, and celebrating the returning home of a traveller, mourning on grievous events, visiting the sick and burying the dead.¹⁸³

The customs and conventions mentioned by Shāh Walī Allāh above are mostly parts of the universal human culture which, according to him, is rooted in 'healthy human temperaments'. It is clear that there has been no cultured social group of human beings in the past, nor is there any today, in which a good number of such practices is not found.¹⁸⁴

Elaborating the 'universally followed customs' of human culture, Shāh Walī Allāh points to a number of positive and negative elements of behavioural patterns that are according to him, a matter of social consensus "among the inhabitants of the civilised societies, who have healthy temperaments, and whose examples are worthy of notice".¹⁸⁵ For instance, it is accepted by all such people that dirty food should not be eaten. Such people also prefer to serve food in utensils on proper dining tables, recommend the cleaning of face and hands before taking meals, and avoid improper postures and expression of greedy feelings. Such people also abstain from drinking stinking water, or drinking it directly without using any pots, or gulping it down. There is also a social consensus on maintaining personal hygiene and keeping the environment, particularly the areas of human habitation and their surroundings, clean. They also agree that a married woman should attend to the requirements of beauty care with dye-stuff, jewellery and other means. They also agree that dressing is grace and nakedness is a disgrace, and that the exposure of the private parts is an abomination. Further, there is social consensus among various human societies on the desirability of adopting proper modes of speech. This involves choice of pleasant words and expressions that are both easy to pronounce for the speaker's tongue and, at the same time, are not disgusting for the ears of the listeners.¹⁸⁶

This survey of the universally acknowledged and adopted patterns of social and cultural behaviour leads Shāh Walī Allāh to the conclusion that "in every department of life, there are some universally accepted ideas among peoples of different societies, however, remote they might be from each other in time or space".¹⁸⁷ He, however, grants that there exist variations in different societies as to the detailed rules concerning manners and etiquettes. Further, there also occur some differences which are attributable to the varying approaches that are adopted in addressing the different problems of human society. A physician, for instance, shall evolve

certain behavioural patterns in accord with the priorities of the medical science, and an astrologer, according to the assumed properties of stars. But a theologian derives his ideas from the principles of *ihsān*, i.e., considerations of spiritual proximity to the 'holy quarters'.

Despite this apparent similarity in the cultural phenomena at the macro level described above, Shāh Walī Allāh does not disregard the existence of variations and diversities of cultural patterns at the micro level. Each human society, according to him, possesses a set of visible fashions and folkways whereby its members are distinguished from the rest of mankind.¹⁸⁸

2. Science of Family and Management of Household

Another important component of human culture at the second stage of social development is the science of the family and household management. Shāh Walī Allāh defines it in the following words: "the wisdom of discovering ways and means for preserving relations between the members of one house at the second level of *irtifāq*".¹⁸⁹ Acquisition of this wisdom enables man to cultivate the qualities of excellence which are to be supplemented by empirical knowledge in order to pursue general welfare in his dealing with other members of his household and with friends of the family.¹⁹⁰

Shāh Walī Allāh identifies four issues that form the subject-matter of this science. These are marriage, procreation, ownership, and companionship. In a manner peculiar to him, he deals with these issues by tracing the roots of the institution of family. According to him, man's instinctive need for sexual intercourse necessitates contact and fellowship between man and woman. The affectionate predilection of the parents toward their children, a predilection which is common to both the parents, demands mutual co-operation in bringing up the children. While a female by dint of her natural endowments is abler than a male to nurse children, she is weaker in intelligence and generally tends to evade hardships. At the same time, she is more perfect in modesty and attachment to her home, more skilful in looking after secondary matters, and has a greater capacity for sacrifice. A male, on the other hand, is intellectually stronger, abler to protect himself from disgrace, and has more courage than his female partner to undertake challenging tasks. Also, he has a higher capacity to wander about, to impose himself, to debate with others, and to zealously pursue his aims. These natural tendencies of the two sexes lead male and female to the necessary conclusion that the life of each is incomplete without the other.¹⁹¹

Shāh Walī Allāh finds a natural justification for the bond of matrimony in the psychological attitude of men toward women. He says that with regard to women men are highly jealous and are prone to strong rivalry. This can be overcome only by a proper and formal attachment of each male to his spouse in full knowledge of the society. Shāh Walī Allāh puts forth a rational argument to support the idea of prohibited categories of kinship (*maḥārim*) on the grounds that they are essential, not only for the sake of the free choice of husband by a woman, but also in order to ensure that a woman's chastity would be considered beyond all doubt by those who might solicit her matrimonial companionship. He further says that the sound instinct with which man has been endowed by nature disposes him not to desire the bond of marriage with someone from whom he is begotten or who is begotten from him, or who has grown with him like the two branches of the same tree.¹⁹²

Although Shāh Walī Allāh's description of marriage in the context of human social evolution is not substantially different from the standard definitions given by the Muslim jurists, that is, "establishing a permanent bond between male and female, other than the relations in the prohibited degrees, in the presence of people, with offering a dower, and a prior proposal, having regard to proper match, involvement of guardians and a feast to publicise the event".¹⁹³ Shāh Walī Allāh, however, describes this phenomenon in a form which seems to be almost universally applicable. Indeed, barring a few negligible exceptions, the institution of marriage in almost all known cultures fulfils certain minimum requirements recognised in every society. Ever since the inception of human society, marriage has been the established procedure for founding a family and is usually symbolised by a ceremony. Its most prominent characteristic function in the sexual sphere is to sanction parenthood and to legitimize children. It typically involves the expectation of common residence, economic co-operation, and reproduction.¹⁹⁴

Shāh Walī Allāh discusses the institution of marriage from different angles. His discussion contains elements of significance from the perspectives of various disciplines such as biology, psychology, anthropology and sociology. However, an elaboration of these elements would fall outside the main scope of our discussion. We would, therefore, confine our treatment here to the basic features of a healthy and balanced family life as identified by Shāh Walī Allāh. For the realisation of this goal which, according to him, is cherished by every normal human being, he assigns a positive role of responsibility to each of the three angles of the triangle which constitutes the main structure of a conjugal family, namely, husband, wife and

children.¹⁹⁵ In this context, Shāh Walī Allāh details the qualities of excellence that are normally expected from each of the three main participants in the familial enterprise. These qualities, according to him, represent the criteria for an ideal family.

"A good husband is expected not to be needy, nor lean and slender, nor irascible in temper, nor unsteady, nor incapable of going to women, nor afflicted with elephantiasis, leprosy or insanity, nor to be a parasite on others".¹⁹⁶ Moreover, he should live amiably with his wife and protect the sanctity of private life from indecency and disgrace.¹⁹⁷

For a woman entering wedlock with a man possessing the above qualities, "it is recommended that she be pretty, virgin, fertile, chaste, affectionate toward children, loving toward her husband, trustworthy about his property, experienced in home management, and neither irascible in temper nor prone to fainting".¹⁹⁸

As to the third angle of the triangle, that is children, Shāh Walī Allāh regards it as inherent in their nature that they are obedient to their parents. This is so because parents foster their children under their guidance, authority, affection, kindness and care, and become the masters of the children while they are still in their tender and impressionable age.¹⁹⁹ Thus the kind and loving attitude of children to their parents in the later stage of life, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, stems from the children's indebtedness to their parents. He goes further and says that this acknowledgement of kindness and love for him who has been kind to someone is even present in the nature of animals.²⁰⁰ Therefore, it is a requirement of the 'moral rectitude' inherent in man's nature, that children be kind to their parents, and try to repay the good done to them earlier by their parents. Hence kindness to parents is an essential social norm and an absolute moral value in the estimation of Shāh Walī Allāh.²⁰¹

For strengthening the bond of matrimony, Shāh Walī Allāh considers it necessary that there be lasting love between husband and wife and that each of them regard the gain or loss of the other as his/her own.²⁰² He contemplates a relation of equal partnership between the spouses. According to him, this partnership cannot be productive of the required results except by providing a firm foundation of *ulfah* (mutual affection and congeniality). But this affection and congeniality is contingent upon certain attitudes to which each partner should commit himself. These attitudes, apart from the purely legal obligations, include consolation of each other, forgiving each other's omissions, avoiding the behaviour which is conducive to resentment or ill will, humouring and amusing each other, and keeping a cheerful and jovial countenance toward each other, etc.²⁰³

After highlighting the significance of family as a primary and basic social unit, Shāh Walī Allāh proceeds to underline the importance of the cardinal principle of social cohesion between human beings, namely mutual co-operation. This is an inevitable need of every member of the society in order to cope with countless problems of life, and also to receive a return for performing one's obligations to others at various levels. For no human being can single-handedly solve the complex and diverse problems of life; in fact, everyone constantly depends on the co-operation of fellow beings. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, there are some rules of conduct for benefiting from, and providing this co-operation to, others. These rules are binding for everybody and are sanctioned by the entire society. Thus any violation of them incurs censure from other members of the society.²⁰⁴ Shāh Walī Allāh recognises two main levels of co-operation and holds them to be subject to two considerations. First, they are subject to the nature of needs that prompt man to seek co-operation of his fellow-beings. Second, they are subject to the nature of the mutual relationship between those who extend co-operation or benefit from it.

The first level involves the need which can only be satisfied when someone regards the loss and gain of the other as his own, and exhausts all energies in supporting him by obligatory expenditure (e.g. maintenance of parents, spouse, children and other near kin as prescribed by the *sharī'ah*) and by other efforts. The same attitude of co-operation is, in turn, expected from the other side. This establishes the principle that the "enjoyment of a benefit incurs an obligation".²⁰⁵ The most proper application of this level of multilateral co-operation is to relatives since their mutual love and consideration provides a natural incentive for it.

The other level of co-operation involves a relatively lower degree of mutual support and assistance. It includes all forms of help and aid extended to the disabled and the depressed members of the society, which is a universally accepted practice among mankind.²⁰⁶

Concluding his discussion of the subjects dealt with under the "science of family and the management of household", Shāh Walī Allāh lists the following items:

- reasons for marriage;
- factors compelling the abandonment of marriage;
- traditions of matrimony;
- qualities of spouses;

- modes of reconciliation between spouses should they violate their matrimonial obligations;
- procedures for divorce and mourning over the deceased spouse;
- nursing and upbringing of children;
- kindness to parents;
- treatment to slaves and servants;
- observance of obligations toward kith and kin;
- extending help and assistance to the poor and aid to those in adversity;
- respect for the chief of one's tribe or clan and the latter's obligations to look after his community;
- distribution of inheritance, and
- protection of lineage.

Every human society, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, upholds the main principles of the above norms and customs and strives for their establishment despite their difference in creed or geographic location.²⁰⁷

As the above survey would show, Shāh Walī Allāh focussed on different dimensions of the institution of family. His treatment of the subject, as usual, is comprehensive and multi-dimensional. He approaches the issues involved in this basic science—the science of family and household—from the biological, psychological, sociological, anthropological, micro-economic and ethical points of view. There is hardly any Muslim thinker after Shāh Walī Allāh who, to our knowledge, has enriched sociological thought to the extent that he did. In fact, most of the literature produced in the post-Walī Allāh period on the subject, specially in the subcontinent largely draws on the doctrinal framework of his sociology. It would perhaps be no exaggeration to say that Islamic Sociology has been virtually stagnant since Shāh Walī Allāh.

3. The Three Sciences of Human Transactions

Under this heading, Shāh Walī Allāh discusses three items, namely, the origin of exchange, the emergence of vocations and the ways and means of

establishing various forms of co-operation for the common good of society. He considers these "sciences of human transactions" among the basic components of the second stage of social development (*irtifāq*). These three sciences, taken together, have been defined as: "the wisdom to discover ways and means of establishing exchanges, mutual co-operation and modes of earning pertaining to the second stage of *irtifāq*". He deals with these three sciences of economic import under the heading of *fann al-mu'āmalāt* in *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*. In his other work, *al-Budūr al-Bāzighah*, however, he discusses each of these three sciences separately.²⁰⁸

We have seen above that the institution of family has been identified in the sociology of Shāh Walī Allāh as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. It is conceived as an important instrument for satisfying some needs of an economic character on the primary level. When the individual is unable to meet certain needs, this leads to the emergence of the family. When it is not possible for the family to fulfil all its economic requirements by itself, there arises the need to have barter or to have recourse to commodity economy because human needs are ever-increasing. Further, man's aesthetic urge constantly inspires him to attain higher standards of excellence so as to "provide comfort to the eye and pleasure to the soul".²⁰⁹

While still at the primary levels of livelihood by horticultural and pastoral means, man is able to develop some commodities which satisfy his needs and those of his family, without much external aid. As his needs increase, he is compelled to occupy himself with making other commodities, or providing some services, in order to barter them for his needs.²¹⁰

Further diversification in needs opens avenues of specialisation and division of labour, so that efforts of all individual members of the society, taken together, fulfil the needs of the entire society. This is a higher level of exchange than barter, which necessitates an unwritten agreement among the members of the society. Under this agreement, each member undertakes to provide a certain need, to specialise in it, and to work for providing all instruments necessary for it. This agreement is a natural compulsion of the society because a lot of people are interested in certain commodities and not interested in others. For enabling everyone to acquire what he needs, the society adopts a *modus operandi*. "It agrees to employ some durable metallic objects as instruments of exchange between people, and it becomes an established usage among them. Since the best of metallic objects to be used for this purpose were gold and silver owing to their small size, identical forms, tremendous benefits for human body, and their common use for beautification, they were adopted as real money and other things were treated as money by agreement".²¹¹

When division of labour takes place in response to the divergent needs of the society, there emerge a number of vocations that are adopted by different individuals depending on their variant aptitudes, competence and peculiar circumstances. These vocations also afford people regular opportunities to seek their livelihood. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, the basic professions that are necessary to satisfy the essential human needs are confined to the following categories:

- that which pertains to waging war against infidels, to expressing an opinion on a point of law, and so forth;
- that which relates to providing food;
- that which relates to the supply of dress;
- that which relates to the procurement of drink;
- that which relates to provision of housing;
- that which relates to import or export of goods to meet the needs of the people; and
- that which relates to hunting, fishing, or gathering of other valuable things from land and sea, from mountains and plains.²¹²

Choice of vocations by different individuals is mainly determined, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, by two factors: (i) the aptitude and ability of the individual concerned, as pointed out above; and (ii) the availability of suitable means and opportunities for a vocation and the society's need for it.²¹³

There are some individuals in every society who are not morally strong enough to adopt good vocations. They become so degenerate morally as to have recourse to those means of earning which bring harm to the society in different ways such as theft, gambling, and beggary.²¹⁴ When, pursuant to the conditions enumerated above, various vocations are designated for different members of the society, the second stage of social development (*irtifāq*) expands to its full, opening avenues for trade and commerce. Different forms and modes of business like buying and selling, renting and loaning are widely practiced.²¹⁵ At this stage the society moves forward towards increasing opportunities of business transaction and mutual co-operation. This mutual co-operation cannot be regularised without recourse to some contracts, stipulations, and a general agreement in the society on

certain established conventions. Thus there emerge such practices as crop-sharing (*muzāra'ah*), profit-and-loss sharing (*muḍārabah*), hire (*ijārah*), partnership (*mushārah*), and agency (*wakālah*).²¹⁶

When people engage in such activities, they naturally experience, in the course of time, breach of obligations, evasion of responsibilities, and various manners of procrastination in their mutual dealings. They resort to calling people to witness, to the writing of deeds, and preparing other necessary documents, mortgages, sureties, bills of exchange, and similar other procedures. Thus, diverse modes and procedures of economic transactions emerge, and gradually form part of the society's permanent customs and conventions.²¹⁷

Moreover, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, integrity and cohesion cannot be maintained in a society without creating mutual love and congeniality among its members. This requires, among other things, that at times people are provided with their needs without any return. This consideration gives rise to the customs of gift and lending. The same consideration also demands that the less affluent members of the society are helped by the more affluent. This gives rise to the practice of almsgiving (*ṣadaqah*).²¹⁸

This attitude of mutual help and assistance is all the more necessitated by the fact that all individuals in a society are neither equally competent, nor sufficiently rich to be able at all times to meet all their needs. Besides, some individuals are disposed to undertake trivial jobs which others disdain; some are strained for want of basic necessities of life, while others enjoy luxuriant living. The living of all members of the society, therefore, cannot be maintained without mutual help and assistance.²¹⁹

When the main components of social and cultural progress, which Shāh Walī Allāh discusses with reference to the five basic sciences, are actualised, human society fully attains the second stage of social development (*irtifāq*). The sequence in which he mentions these sciences is indicative of their order of precedence and importance in his mind. However, in his two main works, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* and *al-Budūr al-Bāzighah*, in which he has discussed these ideas at length, and which mainly embody his socio-political doctrines, we find a difference in their order and arrangement. One possible explanation for this variation might be that the former work not only seems to belong to a relatively earlier period, but also appears, as a result of comparative analysis, to be an outline for his later and more gigantic enterprise, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*. This concision and rudimentary form and relative lack of sequence which characterises *al-Budūr al-Bāzighah* lends further support to our view. Hence, it can be safely assumed that the order maintained and the emphases placed by Shāh Walī Allāh in the

treatment of this subject in *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, represents not only his later views, but also the more carefully considered ones. Besides, there seems to be greater logical coherence in the order maintained in the *Hujjah*, as we shall presently see.

At the very outset, Shāh Walī Allāh discusses the “science of the manners of living”, as the foremost pre-requisite of social evolution. Now this aspect of human culture provides the mainstay for every society. Without reference to the mores and manners of living prevalent in a society we cannot assess its moral fibre and cultural worth. The more a society’s manners and mores are in conformity with the universal norms of decency and rules of ethics and morality, the higher it rises in terms of the standards of culture and civilisation. Therefore, the “science of the manners of living” has been rightly considered by Shāh Walī Allāh as the foremost criterion of the ethical and cultural level of a social organisation.

The second in Shāh Walī Allāh’s order of discussion is the “science of family and management of household”. Now, almost all sociologists worth any note agree on the pivotal importance of family as the basic unit of a social organisation. In many ways, society is nothing but an enlargement of family. If the latter is established on sound and healthy foundations, and its moral fibre is strong, it will eventually be conducive to the consolidation of the social organisation. But if moral values loosen their grip on the family, there remains no way for strengthening their hold on the society as a whole. Similarly, if there is fairness and justice in the mutual relations of members of the families, positive effects would be visible in the relations between the various groups of society.

The third in Shāh Walī Allāh’s order of importance is the group of sciences pertaining to economic transactions. Naturally, the prospective actors who will come forward to play various roles in market places and business centres, would be drawn from the general body social consisting of families. If human beings will have attained sufficient moral accomplishment and cultural refinement in the first and second phases of social evolution as mentioned earlier, it would, *ipso facto*, yield its fruits and moral values would dominate economic life and business enterprise. This will also heighten the spirit of co-operative activity which is so vital for the welfare of a society.

Thus there appears to be a well-thought-out and logical order in the various components of human culture identified by Shāh Walī Allāh as necessary steps in the social evolution of man.

We have noted earlier that the social evolution which starts in the life of man with the acquisition of language, the primary instrument of culture

and communication with fellow-beings progresses further as human needs multiply and assume diverse forms. The expansion of social structure goes side by side with the development of refined manners and mores, fads and fashions, and the diversification in the modes of business transaction and economic co-operation which enriches culture and civilization. Further, as we have already noted, Shāh Walī Allāh traces various phases through which human culture passes and considers this graded progress to be quite natural. He cites many paradigms which, in modern parlance, would relate to cultural anthropology, paradigms that are universally applicable. Shāh Walī Allāh demonstrates that each phase in the socio-cultural development paves the way for the attainment of the subsequent higher stage. These stages, which he calls *irtifāqāt*, finally lead the society to the primary political stage of *madīnah*, which Shāh Walī Allāh considers the third *irtifāq*. This third stage is a natural outcome of all the achievements made in the preceding two stages. Moreover, the third stage, as its very nature requires, is the pinnacle of the whole pyramid of social organisation.²²⁰

As in the preceding stages of social development, wherein the society required a number of basic sciences to fulfil various needs of domestic, cultural and economic life, the third stage also requires the science of 'civics' for the realization of various objectives related to it. Shāh Walī Allāh defines this science, as "the wisdom of discovering methods of preserving the relations which exist between the members of a city-state".²²¹

Elucidating his concept of city-state, Shāh Walī Allāh points out that it is "a socio-economically homogenous group of people, who conduct regular transactions among them".²²² He regards the city-state as "an organic whole while each group of people and each family are the constituent parts of it".²²³

Society's acquisition of the five basic sciences and their interaction is further reinforced by moral excellence and mutual co-operation. All this leads to the emergence of a socio-political organisation, i.e. *madīnah*, which is Shāh Walī Allāh's standard term for city-state. *Madīnah* is not merely a city; if the citizens of a group of cities and towns have this interaction and co-operation among them, this group will also be termed as *madīnah*. Moreover, "a *madīnah* is not confined to its boundaries, its bazars and its edifices. It is, in fact, a special kind of relationship among various groups".²²⁴

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, a society attains the stage of political organisation when a "bond is created between various groups of people such as farmers, merchants, and craftsmen, etc., when men carry on various transactions with one another, and different men specialise in different

occupations, and seek help from each other, and as a result various forms of exchange of goods and co-operation come into being. It is these groups which, by dint of that unifying link, form the body of a city-state".²²⁵ Unity is, therefore, a necessary precondition for a city-state, which cannot yield its full benefits without preserving and developing unity.²²⁶

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, when unity is established between the constituent groups of a society and is further reinforced by their mutual co-operation, this collective body resembles a single individual, having a kind of spiritual entity. This 'corporate' individual goes through phases of health and illness arising from outward and inward causes. To cure this corporate individual from its illnesses and to preserve its health, there should be a competent physician. This physician is the *imām* and those who adhere to him. According to Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi, a contemporary scholar of Shāh Walī Allāh, "...by *imām* Shāh Walī Allāh does not mean any particular individual; *imām* seems to be the equivalent of government or ruling group in his terminology".²²⁷ Shāh Walī Allāh seems to recognize, on pragmatic grounds, the need and value of the institution of government. He regards this institution as a means for preserving the ethical and cultural accomplishments of the society on the one hand, and for safeguarding the individual and collective economic interests of its members on the other. According to him, a large body of men comprising the society do not always voluntarily abide by just and fair conventions, nor can they deter one another from wrongs except through achieving the distinction of an office; hence the need for establishing a government.²²⁸

Further, the developments brought about by man in the process of his social, cultural and economic evolution, on both micro and macro levels, require a political order for their preservation. Obviously, in order to discipline their individual and collective behaviour towards positive and useful orientation, human beings are in need of certain factors from without, along with some others from within. Moreover, there are certain other vital interests of the individual and the society which in Shāh Walī Allāh's opinion, provide the *raison d'être* of a political order. For example, there is need for (i) a proper and equitable distribution of economic resources; (ii) a fair and profitable deployment of human labour and specialized skills in various fields of economic and cultural enterprise; (iii) deterring people from letting loose their criminal tendencies and thereby depriving others of the opportunity for social development; (iv) defending the society and its treasures from external aggression; (v) mobilizing the society to defend itself in the event of such an aggression; (vi) engaging in other positive activities conducive to public welfare such as construction of wells, market

places, bridges and irrigation systems, food supply and providing means of communication, and maintenance of public health; and (vii) introducing devices for spiritual guidance and moral reform. All these and many other objectives of public weal and welfare warrant the establishment of an agency comprising able men from among the members of the society so that it may undertake the above tasks on behalf of the society. This gives rise to establishing the agency of government on its primary level, i.e. the city-state.²²⁹

The Primary Stage of Political Organization

Shah Walī Allah conceives the third stage of social development to be the first stage of political organisation. At this stage, the natural evolution of human society leads to the identification of an individual who would head, on behalf of the society, the agency to carry out a number of responsibilities. For this purpose, this institution is invested by the society with some authority. Referring to this individual, on different occasions, Shāh Walī Allāh employs two terms, almost interchangeably, namely, *imām* (leader) or *malik* (king).²³⁰ In the context of this preliminary stage of political organisation, he does not use the word 'government' or any other term equivalent to it. But the characteristic features of the third stage of social evolution, as he has portrayed them, make up the conditions of the primary form of government. Moreover, he discusses a society's need at this stage for a ruler who is assisted by a number of aides to carry out certain duties. These duties are universally acknowledged to constitute the functions of the government from time immemorial.²³¹

It appears that Shāh Walī Allāh does not attach much importance to the concept of government as an abstract institution, at least in its preliminary stage. But as he develops his political philosophy and proceeds to spell out his conception of *khilāfah*,²³² he conceives it in a somewhat abstract form, as we shall see later.²³³

We also find that Shāh Walī Allāh explains the natural ingredients of a government with reference to the qualifications which he deems necessary in a ruler. Therefore, when he uses such terms as *imām* or *malik*, these can be considered, in a sense, equivalents of 'government' in the absence of any other appellation conveying that meaning.

These necessary qualities of rulers have been set forth by Shāh Walī Allāh as a universal paradigm of government in that they offer a solution to the problems faced by every society in the realization of its vital interests.

Some of these qualities are in the nature of personal traits such as bravery, intelligence, balanced temperament and mental alertness, etc. There are other qualities as well which pertain to a conscious moral and political conduct that the rulers are required to adhere to. Without these qualities, Shāh Walī Allāh considers the ruler to be a burden on the city-state.²³⁴

The minimum essential qualities of a ruler, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, are the following:

- Sanity, adulthood and maleness;
- bravery: if a ruler is not brave, he would show weakness in confronting aggressors, and his own subjects would look down upon him;
- forbearance and gentleness, so that the subjects do not collapse under his powerful authority;
- wisdom: so that he is able to formulate proper public policies;
- extraordinary understanding and judgement; the ability to listen, observe and articulate; an acute ability to sense the state of public psychology;
- noble birth: he should be widely acknowledged as such; and
- reputation among people for dedication to the welfare of society with a practical record testifying to this reputation.²³⁵

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, the above qualities are recognised among people of all regions and religions because the objectives for which a ruler is installed cannot be achieved by him without possessing these qualities. When a society disregards any of them, that leads to unpleasant consequences and resentment among the populace.²³⁶

Aides and Lieutenants of rulers

No ruler, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, can carry out his duties toward public policy without being assisted by a number of honest and competent aides and lieutenants who are his well-wishers, both openly and secretly. The aides ought to be answerable to the ruler, but the latter should not be under any obligation to them on account of kinship or otherwise.²³⁷

Shāh Walī Allāh recognizes three main categories of aides and lieutenants, and considers them as essential for a city-state as different parts

and limbs of a human body. These categories in fact represent different departments into which the functions of a government are usually distributed. These have been identified by Shāh Walī Allāh with reference to the individuals who look after them and whom he considers the chief and foremost lieutenants of a ruler. They are:

- Those who protect the city-state from the treachery of enemies. Shāh Walī Allāh likens them to the two hands in the human body that carry arms.
- Those who formulate various policies and run the general affairs of the city-state. Shāh Walī Allāh considers them to be as important for the city-state as the natural potential in the human biological system.
- Those who advise the ruler. They are to the ruler like intellect and sensory apparatus are to an individual.²³⁸

As to the number of aides and lieutenants needed by a ruler, in the opinion of Shāh Walī Allāh, that may vary according to the difference in the requirements of the city-state. There may be more than one aide in-charge of one department, or one aide for a number of departments as expediency requires.²³⁹

On different occasions Shāh Walī Allāh employs different terms to denote different aides/heads of departments necessary to assist the ruler in the governance of the city-state. Similarly, the number of aides to whom he assigns various departments, varies in his different writings. While in *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* he mentions five chief aides, in his earlier work, *al-Budūr al-Bāzighah*, this number is seven with the addition of two more functionaries. The first is called *Shaykh al-Islām*, an authoritative representative of Islamic Law, who issues authentic edicts on matters involving doctrinal questions, in order to enthrone religion in human life and to arrange for religious preaching. He has also been called "teacher of good morals" on another occasion. The second is called *hakīm*, a versatile intellectual, with knowledge of medicine, astrology, history, arithmetic and art of composition. Shāh Walī Allāh considers a ruler's need for expertise in these fields to be self-evident.²⁴⁰

A possible explanation for this variation could be that Shāh Walī Allāh might have been visualising an Islamic framework when he emphasised the need for a ruler to be assisted by a *Shaykh al-Islām*, while in the *Hujjah* his terms of reference are defined by a universal paradigm of city-state. As we have noted before, in the *Hujjah* Shāh Walī Allāh traces the natural evolution of society from its most primitive stage upto the level of its eventual

Islamic form of political dispensation. He, therefore, conceives the emergence of five departments looked after by the ruler's aides in this process of socio-political evolution as a minimum requirement of every city-state, irrespective of whether it adheres to Islam or not.

The five 'chief aides' identified by Shāh Walī Allāh as the main functionaries in-charge of the basic departments in a city-state are the following:

1. **Judge:** He should be free, male, adult, sane, competent, and possessing knowledge of the established norms and conventions of human transactions. He should be firm, but at the same time mild and patient. He should not pronounce any judgement without considering all the evident and hidden circumstances, and all relevant antecedents and evidences whether written or otherwise pertaining to the case concerned. Further, he should give full opportunity to both the plaintiff and the defendant to explain their positions. Thus he would be able to ascertain exactly what is pleaded by each litigant.²⁴¹
2. **Commander of the Soldiers** (*Amīr Al-Ghuzāt*): It is essential for him to know all about war machinery, formation and organisation of brave soldiers and gallant fighters. He should also be fully aware of the capacity of the troops under his command. Besides, he ought to understand the methods of equipping the army, and the techniques of deploying spies and informers to gather all necessary information about the enemy's tactics. Moreover, before engaging in any war, he should consider exactly what is his aim in that war.²⁴²
3. **Administrator** (*Sā'is al-Madīnah*): He is the over-all in-charge of the internal affairs of a city-state. He should be an experienced man with full understanding of the means of welfare and the causes of decay. He should be firm and patient. But the exercise of patience should not lead to suppressing his reaction over the things that he abhors. He should appoint, for every group of people, someone in-charge of their affairs (viz. *naqīb*),²⁴³ who is fully aware of their conditions.²⁴⁴
4. **Tax-collector** (*'Āmil*): He should know the ways and means of collecting taxes and distributing them among those who are entitled to them. The term employed by Shāh Walī Allāh for this office in *Hujjah* is *'āmil*, while in *al-Budūr* we find the term *wazīr*. But the functions assigned to them in both the works are more or less identical.²⁴⁵

5. **Secretary** (*Wakīl*): He is responsible for the living of the ruler because the latter cannot personally attend to many things due to his pre-occupation with important affairs of the city-state.²⁴⁶

Sources of Corruption in the City-State

Discussing the different factors that hinder the progress of culture and civilisation in the city-state, Shāh Walī Allāh identifies a number of causes of decadence that are of common occurrence. The most prominent of these are the following:

- Disunity in matters of religion which is not often without elements of false pride and vanity. For if these elements creep into man's relations with God, he will be afflicted with evil consequences in the Hereafter. If there appear syndromes of fraud and corruption in the economic life of people, their temporal well-being will be adversely affected. Besides, division and discord among people often lead to disputes and litigations that are the root-cause of decadence in a city-state. The remedy for this social malaise lies in urging the apostates and all deviators from the straight path to repent; but if they persist, there is no other option left save putting such corrupt elements to death.²⁴⁷
- Concealed forms of corruption like magic, poisoning, and mischief by scoundrels among traders who purchase goods and sell them without employing any money. Their sole purpose is to defraud people and deprive them of their rights. Another instance of this concealed form of corruption is the profession practiced by unscrupulous lawyers who teach people tricks of litigation and various methods of subterfuge. These forms also include clandestine activities of spies, who spy on behalf of the enemies of the city-state. All such individuals deserve to be imprisoned or put to death.²⁴⁸
- Violation of the sanctity of properties belonging to people such as usurpation, theft, or robbery. Those guilty of such crimes should be punished in an appropriate manner.
- Crimes of homicide which might have been committed either deliberately or by mistake, or crimes in which injuries are caused to the human body.

- Slander and defaming the honour of people and violating the sanctity of their genealogies e.g. false accusation of un-chastity, or recourse to vilification or use of vile language against people.
- Instigating people to commit adultery which, in addition to other consequences, incites violence and fights among people, corrupts human race and degrades the institution of marriage, the preservation of which is so vital for every society. Another form of such evil is sodomy which destroys the healthy nature of man, corrupts the human race and puts marriage into disrepute. Included in the sources of corruption are such evil practices as gambling and usury which lead to the squandering of money and generate unlimited disputes among people, and drinking wine which, apart from causing damage to faith, gives rise to numerous fights and quarrels;
- Corruption also ensues from attempts to distort the characteristics of each of the two genders, masculine and feminine. Through such attempts, the masculine traits of males and the feminine traits of females are deformed in dress and demeanour.²⁴⁹

The Fourth Stage of Social Development (*Irtifāq*)

Human aspiration for progressive accomplishments in culture and civilization through attaining higher degrees of social cohesion prompt people to go further beyond the stage of city-state. Besides, the emergence of a plurality of city-states creates certain conditions in their mutual relations, prompting them to establish a common basis for co-existence. This gives rise to a kind of confederacy or commonwealth of various city-states. Under this confederacy, they enter into a formal relationship in pursuit of common goals of peace, security, justice and public weal. For these ends, the city-states have to voluntarily forego certain rights that are to be exercised by the confederacy on their behalf. This constitutes the highest stage of social development which, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, is a natural outcome of the developments hitherto achieved by the human society. He calls this stage the fourth *irtifāq*.²⁵⁰

Shāh Walī Allāh had, perhaps, two main models of such a confederacy in mind when he formulated the above concept. These were the Mughal empire, based in Delhi, and the Ottoman empire, centred in Constantinople. They were the two greatest Muslim empires of his time. Each of them comprised semi-independent states and autonomous entities which had many

characteristics similar to those identified by Shāh Walī Allāh in his city-state. The presence of these examples in practice might have influenced his thinking, even if in a minor way, about confederacy.

In modern political parlance we can say that the confederacy envisaged by Shāh Walī Allāh mainly exercises its authority in the spheres of foreign relations and defence. In financial matters, the city-states or the units of the confederacy are invested with a large measure of autonomy, except that they are obliged to surrender a portion of their respective revenues to the confederacy. This is further supplemented by their participation in the armed forces of the confederacy for the defence of its territorial and ideological frontiers. But the forces provided by the units are to act under the supreme command of the confederacy.

Shāh Walī Allāh's writings on this subject show that he does not conceive the state as a centralized repository of authority similar to some of the modern unitary systems of government with concentration of power. For example, his distribution of the functions between various departments at the level of city-state with many checks and balances rules out any form of unitary government, autocracy or even oligarchy.²⁵¹ Further, the institution of *naqībs*, as explained by him, clearly suggests exercise of autonomous political authority by providing sufficient financial resources at the grass-roots level of the city-state.²⁵²

Shāh Walī Allāh does not entertain any totalitarian notions about the state. This is indicated, *inter alia*, by his strong emphasis on minimising the burden of taxes on farmers, traders and craftsmen on the one hand, and by his insistence on keeping a reduced size of the administrative machinery of the state whose living is dependent on the public exchequer, on the other. Indeed, he considers the burdening of small earning groups with heavy taxes, while keeping a large number of individuals dependent on the exchequer, to be one of the main sources of decay in his times.²⁵³

As we have noted in the case of city-states, Shāh Walī Allāh does not designate his idea of confederacy by any particular term which he would consistently use in every subsequent reference to it. On some occasions, he calls it *al-khilāfah al-'uẓmā* ('supreme vicegerency'). On other occasions, he discusses it with reference to the *khalīfah*, the agent responsible for administering it as its head. This head has also been called *ṭabīb al-aṭibbā'* ('the supreme physician') on another occasion, while in the same context, the ruler of a city-state has been termed as *al-ṭabīb* ('the physician'). At other places Shāh Walī Allāh uses such titles as *khalīfat al-khulafā'* (the supreme vicegerent) and *imām al-a'immah* (the supreme leader), or *malik*

al-mulūk (the king of kings). While on some occasions the ruler of city-state has been called *khalīfah*, *imām* or *malik*, on another occasion Shāh Walī Allāh uses the term *al-khalīfah al-a‘ẓam* (the supreme vicegerent). This is where he talks about the highest level of political authority.²⁵⁴

By alternating these variant terms on different occasions, Shāh Walī Allāh seems to consciously emphasize various roles that he assigns to the office of *khalīfah* or *khalīfat al-khulafā’*. *Khalīfah* is a standard Islamic term of which the most remarkable signification is that authority is a sacred trust, and therefore, its incumbent is obliged to exercise it accordingly. Similarly, the term *imām* points to the fact that a ruler is also a community leader, which involves a high level of moral integrity, social obligation and even spiritual responsibility. Also the term *ṭabīb* or *ṭabīb al-aṭibbā’*, whether used in the context of city-state, or any higher political organisation, necessarily implies an attitude of extreme diligence, sincerity and altruism on the part of the ruler toward the ruled. Further, it signifies an educative and corrective role of the rulers, who should constantly apprise themselves of the conditions of their society, to diagnose its maladies and devise their remedies. It is because of the realisation of such moral objectives that Shāh Walī Allāh stipulates the participation of the “teachers of good morals” in the actual conduct of the business of the state, side by side with the rulers.²⁵⁵

Thus, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, when human society continues its development and cultural progress to reach the level of city-state, and a number of city-states emerge in different areas, there arises the need for a science relating to city-state. By acquiring this science, people from various city-states learn how to fulfill the requirements of this higher stage of socio-political development, which constitutes the fourth *irtifāq*. Shāh Walī Allāh defines this science as “the wisdom of dealing with the political and administrative patterns of governors and rulers of city-states, and the ways and means of preserving the relationship between the people of various countries;.”²⁵⁶

Discussing the factors leading to the fourth *irtifāq*, Shāh Walī Allāh says that selfishness, greed and jealousy are bound to appear among people when a ruler consolidates his authority in his city-state, collects revenues and mobilises armies of gallant men. This results in disruption of the established conventions of civilised behaviour in mutual relations. If this situation is not properly controlled, different people, mobilised under their respective rulers would fight each other, causing colossal loss of life and property. This would ruin the peace and tranquillity of human life, and all achievements in the sphere of socio-cultural development, i.e. *irtifāqāt*,

would be undermined. Moreover, the organised groups of people who acquire power, motivated by 'individual purposes' (*al-ra'y al-juz'ī*), often resort to the use of force against the weak so as to exploit them. This vitiates all norms of justice and equity. It is, therefore, imperative to instal a *khalīfah* to look after the common interests of peace, security, justice and public welfare which are shared by all the city-states. For the realisation of this objective it is necessary that the *khalīfah*, in addition to possessing perfect moral qualities and political acumen, should also have such tremendous power and prestige that it would be well nigh impossible for anyone to challenge or usurp his authority. When a *khalīfah* is installed in office and establishes virtuous patterns of conduct in his realm, subjugates all those who might pose a threat to his authority, and secures the active co-operation of the rulers of different city-states, life is filled with prosperity and contentment.²⁵⁷

The above observations of Shāh Walī Allāh concerning the unbridled pursuit of selfish and parochial political and economic interests by organised and powerful political groups and their recourse to various forms of oppressive and exploitative policies toward the smaller and weaker communities can be fully substantiated by historical evidence. The experience of humanity with nationalism during the last hundred and fifty years or so bears ample testimony to the soundness of Shāh Walī Allāh's diagnosis. Although he lived at a time when humanity had not fully tasted the bitter fruits of the cult of nationalism, which brought in its wake the worst forms of economic imbalance between the rich and the poor communities, Shāh Walī Allāh's acute grasp of the collective psychology of nations and his penetrating analysis of the political behaviour of mighty states, evidences the profundity of his political genius. This originality of thought is almost without any known parallel not only in the Muslim academic tradition, but perhaps also in world scholarship in the recent history of mankind.

Shāh Walī Allāh's views also bring into sharp focus the incompatibility between the *weltanschauung* of Islam and the contemporary political philosophy of nationalism. For the latter appears to be nothing but an enlargement of man's egocentric and promethean pursuit of individual interest (*al-ra'y al-juz'ī*) to the detriment of the universal purpose (*al-ra'y al-kullī*) which constitutes the borderline between human civilization and the world of beasts ruled by the law of the jungle, according to the philosophy of Shāh Walī Allāh.²⁵⁸

It has already been noted that the most prominent cause for setting up a confederacy, or entering the fourth stage of *irtifāq*, to use Shāh Walī Allāh's characteristic terminology, is that no human society is devoid of

some wicked elements whose brutish nature ceaselessly harbours designs of plundering the properties of peaceful people. These elements thus pose a threat to their life and honour, necessitating the establishment of justice on firm foundations. This *raison d'être* of confederacy is also the fundamental function of the *khalīfah*. But no system of justice can be kept intact without maintaining physical force which could be used against those individuals or organized groups who might attempt to totally destroy this system. For this purpose the *khalīfah* requires an army and a war machinery. At the same time, the *khalīfah* needs to understand the factors calling for war or peace and such means of containment as imposition of land-tax, or tribute. He should not engage in war for its own sake. Rather, he ought to carefully consider his motives at the time of going to war. The motives justifying war, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, are repulsion of injustice and extermination of extremely wicked elements who are well-nigh past reform. As to the less wicked elements, they may be suppressed by measures short of war such as by curbing the activities of some wrong-doers, by executing or imprisoning their ring leaders, or confiscating their lands and properties. In this connection Shāh Walī Allāh strongly emphasises that in the furtherance of a cause, the *khalīfah* should not take any strong action unless it is necessary and is warranted by overwhelmingly valid reasons.²⁵⁹

Like other points of similarity noted earlier, in considering the phenomenon of state to be a social necessity, Shāh Walī Allāh has been preceded by Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī.²⁶⁰ This most outstanding political philosopher of the classical Islamic period, tremendously influenced almost all subsequent Muslim political thinkers of any significance in a variety of ways as we have already noted in the preceding chapter. Among others, one of the most celebrated exponents of Muslim political thought in the post-Fārābī period, al-Māwardī, developed under Fārābī's influence the doctrine that establishing political authority was a social necessity and that the maintenance of social order demanded the office of kingship and obedience to a ruler.²⁶¹

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, one of the devices through which the *khalīfah* might enhance his prestige and make his office formidable, is to win over the hearts of his subjects. To this end, it is necessary for the *khalīfah* to know the level of usefulness of every functionary in his government. He should neither charge anyone nor depend on anybody beyond his capacity. Further, he should acknowledge the standing of leading and shrewd individuals. While pursuing formidable tasks such as war, a *khalīfah* should have recourse to means that will inspire people variously with fear and expectation.²⁶²

No *khalīfah* is able to fully discharge his avowed responsibilities without exercising unquestioned authority. It is necessary, therefore, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, that the *khalīfah* should pay his utmost attention to dispersing the alliances of rulers (of city-states). This would blunt the edge of their possible animosity, and would inspire awe in their hearts and prompt them to submit to his authority for they would then have no other option.²⁶³

Moreover, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, the *khalīfah* is the overseer and protector of a system combining in its fold heterogeneous elements. It is therefore necessary for him to remain alert, to disperse his spies in every nook and corner, and above all, to utilise his own penetrating acumen. Whenever he senses any rebellious move from any individual, he should hasten to take preventive measures against his possible advances. He should not rest until he has destroyed the power base of his adversary and has rendered him incapable of posing any threat to his confederacy.²⁶⁴

At the same time, Shāh Walī Allāh emphasises that the *khalīfah* should make constant efforts to achieve general acceptability among his subjects so that their popular consensus in his favour becomes an established fact. However, he does not consider that merely the verbal acceptance of his authority would be sufficient. Rather, he deems it necessary that there should be some evident signs of this acceptance. For instance, prayers should be offered for his success and a public acknowledgement of his authority should be expressed in large gatherings. Further, the public should adopt those symbols for their expression of allegiance which are prescribed by the *khalīfah*. In this connection, Shāh Walī Allāh cites an example from the practice which had been in vogue in his own time viz. engraving on the coins the name of the *khalīfah*.²⁶⁵

Shāh Walī Allāh's Conception of Islamic State and its Relation to His Fourth *Irtifāq*

We have so far attempted to survey the ideas of Shāh Walī Allāh concerning the evolution of human society and its gradual cultural development. This development goes through various phases before reaching the political stage when the city-state (third *irtifāq*) emerges. This development continues further to culminate in the attainment of the level of confederacy (fourth *irtifāq*). These ideas of Shāh Walī Allāh seem to be some kind of an empirical survey of macro-sociological nature in which he does not introduce Islamic norms, except that he alludes to them on two occasions. The first is a reference to the 'teacher of good morals' as a requirement of the city-state. Such a teacher has been termed by Shāh Walī Allāh as

Shaykh al-Islām.²⁶⁶ But the emphasis here seems to be laid more on the moral reformation of a socio-political organisation than on the specifically Islamic character of the society. As we have noted from the outset, morality is regarded by Shāh Walī Allāh as the most distinctive characteristic of man. At no point does he play down the paramount importance of the moral foundations of the individual and collective conduct of human beings.²⁶⁷

Another reference to Islamic norms in Shāh Walī Allāh's description of *irtifāqāt* is found in the discussion in which he contends that the attainments of the fourth *irtifāq* are inevitably necessary for the human society in order to preserve its security and maintain a system of justice. The only other course available is contingent upon the rise of some overpowering spiritual personality who is aided by Divine guidance. Such a personality, when joined and supported by the most valiant and obedient warriors, is able to curb and control all wicked elements and to establish a peaceful and just order. It is an exceptionally gifted personality who can truly guide his people to realise the objectives that are usually pursued by the application of the principles identified in the fourth *irtifāq*. The actual presence of such a guide, however, is not a permanent feature of human society and is subject to many conditions that may not always exist. Therefore, the society has no option but to strictly adhere to the principles of the fourth *irtifāq*, which constitute the universally valid norms. Any departure or deviation from these principles would be detrimental to the socio-economic and cultural accomplishments of the society.²⁶⁸

It is also important to take note of some references to the Qur'ān that are found in *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* in the context of the fourth *irtifāq*. They occur in connection with the elaboration of the vital needs that justify the establishment of a confederacy. Shāh Walī Allāh refers to the Qur'ānic verse (2:246) which points to the prayer of the Children of Israel to God to grant them the dispensation of a full-fledged king under whose leadership they might fight in the way of God. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, this prayer was meant for the establishment of an authority envisaged in his fourth *irtifāq*.²⁶⁹

There are two other references to the verses (17:40) and (2:193) which are also in the nature of illustrative explanations, the purpose being to emphasize that recourse to the establishment of higher political authority and to curbing through its power the forces of evil and mischief was like a natural law described in the above verses. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, it is to confront and subdue evil dispositions such as those mentioned in the above verses 17:40; 2:193 that the establishment of a confederacy becomes a natural compulsion for the human society.²⁷⁰

It is clear from the above that references to the Qur'ān in the present context come as a supplement to Shāh Walī Allāh's elaboration of the universal laws of socio-political evolution of human society, and these references are not mentioned as a mandatory source in the traditional sense.

In this connection it would be useful to quote some remarks made by Shāh Walī Allāh himself which support our view:

We have dealt with the concept of *irtifāqāt*, and their relevant sciences, at great length. In this context, it is necessary to take two important points into consideration.

First, we often cite a particular illustration to explain *irtifāqāt*. But we do not, thereby, intend the cited case *per se*. Rather, we mean to say that it can be something similar or approximate to that illustration. Our purpose is to show that the general principles which we outlined above apply to the social phenomena. Obviously, these phenomena cannot be totally identical in each country or community. For every people have their own particular customs and peculiar heritage. What is important for us is that they conform, in essence, to the general principles, even though they might appear somewhat different in their particular forms and manifestations.²⁷¹

These remarks of Shāh Walī Allāh explain his point of view concerning his references to the Islamic conceptual framework while explaining the universal laws of social evolution. Thus the co-existence of a variety of trends in his thought is easily explained.

The underlying idea which seems to be prominent in the mind of Shāh Walī Allāh is that he regards the Islamic dispensation as a natural course for a society's evolution. Therefore, without making any conspicuous departure from the universal model of state and society, he proceeds to discuss the Islamic paradigm of socio-political organisation.

Shāh Walī Allāh's conception of the Islamic state presupposes a certain level of that society's accomplishments in culture and civilisation wherein the Islamic state is established. He conceives, at this high level, a supra-national and extra-territorial entity which "belongs to the fourth and the last *irtifāq*, because it is a perfect and mature concept of both state and society".²⁷²

The Universal Model of Society and State

A striking feature in Shāh Walī Allāh's social philosophy is his construction of a more or less empirical theory of a universal model of socio-political organisation. He marshals numerous examples based on an observation of the social phenomena to substantiate his basic contention that all cultured societies that have emerged in the world since the genesis of man have adhered to the basic principles of *irtifāq*.²⁷³ These principles, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, have been common among all human societies, for they stem from the urges rooted in human nature and these are ultimately directed to actualize humanity's common objectives. It is these objectives which constitute the immutable basis of all culture and civilisation. Notwithstanding any variations that might appear from time to time between various kinds of society in forms, fads, fashions and customs, mankind has always unanimously upheld these basic principles.²⁷⁴

Shāh Walī Allāh derives this conclusion from his penetrating analysis of human nature. Through this analysis, he was able to identify the basic urges of *ẓarāfah* (aesthetic urge) and *al-ra'y al-kullī* (universality of purpose) inherent in man's nature which distinguish him from the rest of the animals. The two urges are supplemented by man's *virtus rationalis*. These urges, combined with man's rational and intuitional faculties, generate in his life moral consciousness and provide the mainstay for his social and cultural strivings and attainments. All enterprises undertaken by man are a response to these urges inherent in his natural disposition. In this way, they give rise to such accomplishments of human society as culture, civilisation, moral discipline, economic order and political organisation, in varying intensive and extensive degrees.²⁷⁵

Any appreciation of Shāh Walī Allāh's views on society and statecraft should be made by relating it to his overall perspectives on man and his nature. Each step in the development of his social and political philosophy is fully integrated with his basic views on man and his relationship with his environment. The point of culmination in his socio-political thought is the Islamic version of state. But he does not approach it through the process of classical arguments derived from the traditional sources — the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. Rather, he constructs a full-fledged theory of society on empirical and rational foundations, and finally arrives at a meeting point between inductive reasoning, empirical observation, and religious prescriptions. Thus, the Islamic state in Shāh Walī Allāh's view, emerges as a natural outcome of a free and healthy pursuit by man of his socio-cultural aims as dictated by his natural disposition, provided it is unhampered by moral perversion, or any other deviation from the natural course.²⁷⁶

Shāh Walī Allāh and Ibn Ṭufayl

In this respect, the approach of Shāh Walī Allāh seems comparable to that of the Spanish-Muslim philosopher, Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185) in his famous philosophical fiction *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*. Ibn Ṭufayl had imagined the natural evolution of an individual human being, who, in total isolation from society, pursues an imaginative, intuitional and rational quest to discover God. Shāh Walī Allāh, on the other hand, conceives the evolution of human society from its primary stage to finally reach the stage of the God-conscious Islamic state.²⁷⁷

This similarity between Shāh Walī Allāh and Ibn Ṭufayl is further accentuated by a brief remark made by Shāh Walī Allāh in *Hujjah*²⁷⁸ and another remark which is slightly more elaborate in *al-Budūr al-Bāzighah*. In the latter work, Shāh Walī Allāh emphasizes that the *irtifāqāt* were a natural attainment made by man through his intuition. This was just like the instinctive knowledge imparted by nature to birds and animals so that they may obtain their means of sustenance. We also come across in this regard to the following significant remark of Shāh Walī Allāh:

... I have heard from some of those who are not gifted with sound imaginative perception that this system [(of *irtifāqāt*)] is acquired from the ancestors. Had there not been any legacy from the ancestors, people would have been ignorant of this system. If by this statement they mean that the second *irtifāq* was based on the first *irtifāq*, then this statement is correct and stands to reason. Otherwise, it is an obvious untruth. An evident sign of this untruth is that if we presume a man growing all alone in wilderness, and he never sees another human being, he still must acquire a degree of the morals that we have made mention of.²⁷⁹

While the conclusions drawn by Ibn Ṭufayl appear to be based on elements of fantasy and imagination, in the case of Shāh Walī Allāh these ideas are founded on the observation of the functioning of the human society.

Likewise, Shāh Walī Allāh's concept of *iqtirābāt* is fully integrated with his basic ideas about man and his nature. The psychological, moral and religious personality of man is deeply rooted in his nature. As we have noted previously during our exposition of Shāh Walī Allāh's theological ideas,²⁸⁰ he regards religion as a response to the natural urge of man. Indeed, he points to man's concern for salvation in the Hereafter as stemming from *al-ra'y al-kullī*, the universality of purpose.²⁸¹ *Iqtirāb* is the equivalent of *irtifāq* in the domain of religion.²⁸² Any endeavour on the part of

man to seek spiritual fulfilment by attaining Divine proximity is termed *iqtirāb* by Shāh Walī Allāh.²⁸³

Shāh Walī Allāh's comprehensive understanding of man posits the concept of a balanced and multi-faceted being who is at once a biological animal, a moral agent, a spiritual being, and a rational creature. He then traces the evolution of this comprehensive personality as an active member of the social organism. In this process of evolution, he identifies various apparently differing pursuits, as integrated phenomena catering for various urges that have been deposited in this comprehensive personality by nature.

Shāh Walī Allāh's unique contribution lies in that he moves from an analysis of the micro level of cultured and civilised society to spelling out the features of a universal paradigm of society and state. He is able to ultimately bring home the point that a healthy evolution of culture, both in the sphere of the individual's life as well as in that of the collectivity, is of necessity, conducive to the attainment of *iqtirābāt*. This attainment, when it assumes the collective form at an organised level and is reinforced by the apparatus of an army and a judiciary, *ipso facto* leads to the emergence of *khilāfah*, i.e. the Islamic state.²⁸⁴

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, the emergence of this Islamic state on the universal plane represents the point of culmination in the cultural evolution of human society. With its emergence, Divine mercy and favour to humanity are consummated to the degree of perfection. For, at this stage, humanity is able to achieve the highest levels of peace and tranquillity by means of organised solidarity between various social groups under a just and beneficial order. The establishment of this order ensures felicity in this world and brings the promise of eternal bliss in the Hereafter.²⁸⁵

Politics and Statecraft

Shāh Walī Allāh's Concept of Islamic State

Khilāfah has been the standard term used in almost all the political discussions of Muslim scholars from the earliest times to denote the institution charged with social, political, economic and ideological responsibilities on behalf of the *ummah*.²⁸⁶ The word *khilāfah*, meaning vicegerency, is derived from the root *kh-l-f*, which carries a general sense of succession. The term obviously has been borrowed from the Qur'ān, where it has occurred no less than twenty two times in various forms and in different contexts. Among the contemporary writers, W.M. Watt denies the Qur'ānic source of this term, and suggests instead that it had been derived from "its use in secular affairs at the time".²⁸⁷ But a careful examination of the relevant Qur'ānic verses would easily rule out Watt's assumption and lend sufficient support to our contention. Almost all prominent Muslim political thinkers have employed the term *khilāfah* in nearly the same sense from the very early period of Islam to this day.

Another term related to the theme is *imāmah*. Both *khilāfah* and *imāmah* have generally been used as interchangeable terms. In the juridical literature, however, the latter term is often used in preference to the former.²⁸⁸ In the juridical context wherever the terms *imām* or *imāmah* occur, they almost invariably stand for the same meaning as 'ruler' and 'government' respectively in the modern political terminology.

The term *imām* seems to emphasize the paramount importance of religion as the guiding ideology of government since *imām* is also the religious title used in Islam for the leader of the congregational prayers. As the entire

life is regarded as '*ibādah* (servitude of God), therefore, the leader of the Muslim community in the temporal sphere was granted the same title as assigned to their leader in the ritual activity of *ṣalāt*. That was why, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) designated Abū Bakr as *imām* in the prayers during his last days, the Muslims generally took this to imply the Prophet's preference for him as his successor in the mundane affairs as well.²⁸⁹

As we have noted before, Shāh Walī Allāh also uses the term *khilāfah* in the context of the universal model of state. When he finally proceeds to discuss the Islamic concept of state, he still uses the same term. By his consistent employment of this typically Islamic term in both the contexts, he seems to suggest that the state in its Islamic form is the state *par excellence*.

In the course of time, the terms *khilāfah* and *imāmah* came to be used for 'state' and 'government' respectively in the political literature of Islam. *Amīr* and *imārah* are also two other familiar terms that are in use since the early decades of the first century of *Hijrah* as almost synonymous with *imām* and *imāmah*. All these four terms have been frequently used in a number of traditions from the Prophet (peace be upon him), which have a political import and therefore, they seem to have their roots in those traditions.²⁹⁰

We have seen in the foregoing discussion of Shāh Walī Allāh's theory of *irtifāqāt* that he regards the emergence of the Islamic state as a natural outcome of the socio-cultural and politico-economic development of human society at a time when it attains a level of convergence between *irtifāqāt* and *iqtirābāt*. Thus the establishment of Islamic state (*khilāfah*) is seen by Shāh Walī Allāh both as a compulsion of reason and as a pragmatic requirement of human society. In the classical discussions on Muslim political theory we come across two different approaches to this question. On the one hand, there have been some political thinkers, including Shī'ī theorists, who regarded the Islamic state as a compulsion of reason. In contrast to this position, the Ash'arī view which was represented by such major figures as Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) and al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) contented that the inevitability of state had its roots in the obligations prescribed by the *sharī'ah*. There was yet another school of some Mu'tazilah represented by Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025), Abū Bakr al-Aṣamm (d. 346/975) and others, who rejected the obligatory character of the state. These men were of the opinion that if the affairs of the community were based on fairness and justice, there remained hardly any need for the state.²⁹¹ In keeping with his reconciling and synthesizing trend of thought, Shāh Walī Allāh combined both the elements of reason ('*aql*) and tradition (*naql*) in spelling out the *raison d'être* of the state (*khilāfah*).

Adding a rational dimension to the traditional approach, Shāh Walī Allāh considers the establishment of *khilāfah* a *fard 'alā al-kifāyah* (collective religious obligation of the Muslim community). If a group of individuals performs the duty of establishing and running the institution of *khilāfah* on behalf of the whole community, the latter would be absolved of its obligation. But if no one comes forward to undertake this task, the entire community will be guilty of collective sin on account of this negligence.

In this respect, the line of Shāh Walī Allāh's argument is as follows: whereas God has prescribed the duties of (i) *jihād* (peaceful as well as military struggle to promote faith and protect the faithful), (ii) dissemination of justice through all available means including an elaborate mechanism of judicature, (iii) revival of religious sciences (*iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*), (iv) establishment of the pillars of Islam in the individual and social life of the community, and (v) defence of the Islamic realms against the aggressive forces of unbelief as a collective obligation. Now since all these tasks cannot be accomplished without installing an *imām* and since whatever is a necessary condition for the discharge of a collective obligation is also a collective obligation, therefore, the establishment of *khilāfah* is a collective obligation.²⁹²

Shāh Walī Allāh derives further support for his argument from the fact that the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) addressed themselves immediately after the Prophet's demise to the election and appointment of *khalīfah* even before his burial. This shows that the Companions were fully cognizant of their obligation, under the *Sharī'ah*, of installing *khalīfah*. This is because, according to their understanding, any delay in the matter was prohibited. Had this not been the case, argues Shāh Walī Allāh, the Companions would never have given precedence to the appointment of *khalīfah* over the burial of the Prophet (peace be upon him).²⁹³ In support of his contention, Shāh Walī Allāh relies on the following statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) which provides a textual basis (*naṣṣ*) for the obligatory character of the institution of *khilāfah*: "Whoever dies while there is no oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*) in his neck, he indeed dies the death of *jāhiliyyah*".²⁹⁴

Furthermore, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, the establishment of *khilāfah* was historically necessitated to provide continuity in some of the basic functions performed by the Prophet (peace be upon him) during his lifetime. These functions included waging *jihād*, appointment of governors and tax collectors, despatch of military expeditions, adjudication of disputes, appointment of judges, enforcement of the ordained punishments, and enjoining good and forbidding evil (*amr bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'an*

al-munkar). A rigorous discharge of these functions, in accordance with the precedents set by the Prophet (peace be upon him), called for the establishment of *khilāfah*, with the *khalīfah* as its head. Such a head alone could be the true successor of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and a living symbol and upholder of his mission in an all-embracing sense.

Shāh Walī Allāh also classifies the *khilāfah* into temporal *khilāfah* (*al-khilāfah al-zāhirah*) and spiritual *khilāfah* (*al-khilāfah al-bāṭinah*). While the former concerns the establishment of *jihād* and judicature, the enforcement of *ḥudūd*²⁹⁵ (ordained punishments), the collection and distribution of taxes, etc., the latter pertains to the teaching of the Book (i.e. Qur'ān) and wisdom, the purification of the faithful through preaching and spiritual training, which were the main functions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) as had been spelled out in the verse 62:2 of the Qur'ān.²⁹⁶

Shāh Walī Allāh also recognises partial succession (*khilāfah*) of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the domain of knowledge and wisdom. According to him, among the Prophet's Companions, 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd was the Prophet's successor in the field of Qur'ānic sciences and law, Mu'ādh ibn Jabal in the sphere of judiciary, and Zayd ibn Thābit in the field of the law of inheritance. In contrast to this partial succession, there were some other Companions who fulfilled the criteria of 'absolute succession' (*al-khilāfah al-mutlaqah*). They were the ones who were also competent to shoulder the responsibilities of state and government in addition to the ones mentioned just above.²⁹⁷

As a result of keen understanding of the early model of the *khilāfah*, Shāh Walī Allāh formulates the following definition of it:

It is the general authority to undertake the establishment of Religion through the revival of religious sciences, the establishment of the pillars of Islam, the organisation of *jihād* and its related functions of maintenance of armies, financing the soldiers, and allocation of their rightful portions from the spoils of war, administration of justice, enforcement of *ḥudūd*, elimination of injustice, and enjoining good and forbidding evil, to be exercised on behalf of the Prophet (peace be upon him).²⁹⁸

It is evident that this definition is so comprehensive that it encompasses all areas of activity in which the Islamic state or *khilāfah* is required, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, to engage. In the following pages, the functions of the Islamic state, as set forth by Shāh Walī Allāh, would be discussed in some detail. It seems appropriate for the present to briefly take note of the

salient features of the state that immediately come to mind from the above definition:

- The first condition or the basic constituent of *khilāfah* is its effectual character. This implies that the state should be physically strong so as to undertake the tasks assigned to it, and to execute them. Obviously the nature of these tasks demands that the Islamic state should enjoy fullest geo-political, economic, and military independence and sovereignty.
- The second feature of the state is its ideological character. The entire concern of the state, as conceived by Shāh Walī Allāh, seems to be focused on the establishment of the supremacy of Religion. All other functions of the state are subservient to this fundamental ideological objective.
- The educative role of the state is stipulated by the mention of the revival of religious sciences. Since the society of which the state is a manifestation, espouses a certain world-view and a definite set of values, it is one of the foremost responsibilities of the state to protect and promote that world-view, and to inculcate those values in its members through the dissemination of religious sciences.
- There is also a strong emphasis on *jihād* which, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, constitutes one of the most important duties of the Islamic state, as we shall see later.
- The administration of justice has been regarded as the main reason not only for the existence of the Islamic state, but of every good state and government as we have noted before.
- There is great stress on the role of the state as an agency for the moral upliftment and ideological guidance of people by having recourse to *amr bi al-ma'rūf* and *al-nahy 'an al-munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil).

Qualifications of the *Khalīfah*

Discussing the qualifications of the *khalīfah*, Shāh Walī Allāh points out that some of these qualifications have been universally recognised as criteria for rulers and kings by every community, irrespective of its creed or space-time location. While discussing Shāh Walī Allāh's ideas on *irtifāqāt*

we have noted the universal qualifications necessary for the rulers. They are: sanity, adulthood, malehood, bravery, wisdom and the abilities to hear, observe and articulate. Further, they include a general acceptance by the people of their ruler's distinction for these qualities, and an acknowledgement by them of his sincere pursuit of the public weal in running the affairs of the state, and in his general political conduct.²⁹⁹

In addition to these universally recognized conditions, Islam lays down, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, a few other qualifications necessary for the *khalīfah*. They are: (i) total loyalty to Islam, (ii) keen insight and understanding in the matters of the *sharī'ah*, and (iii) a high level of integrity and upright conduct ('*adālah*).³⁰⁰

Explaining the last condition i.e. '*adālah*, Shāh Walī Allāh says that the incumbent of *khalīfah* should be a person who abstains from major sins,³⁰¹ and at the same time, does not persist in the commission of minor ones. Moreover, he ought to be generous and magnanimous.³⁰²

As regards knowledge of the *sharī'ah*, we find that Shāh Walī Allāh considers it necessary for the *khalīfah* to be a *mujtahid*, that is, he should be knowledgeable and competent enough to form an independent opinion while interpreting the provisions of Islamic law. This seems necessary since the office of the *khalīfah*, as defined by Shāh Walī Allāh, involves certain responsibilities which cannot be adequately discharged by a non-*mujtahid*. They include the following:

- judicial functions at the highest level;
 - revival of the religious sciences; and
 - enjoining good and forbidding evil.
- It is, therefore, necessary for the *khalīfah* to possess thorough knowledge of a large body of Islamic injunctions (*aḥkām*) along with their detailed proofs (*al-adillah al-taḥṣīliyyah*) derived from the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, consensus (*ijmā'*) and analogical reasoning (*qiyās*). This means that he should understand each injunction pertaining to his functions as *khalīfah* in relation to its effective cause ('*illah*). However, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, the *khalīfah* need not be an independent (*mustaqill*) *mujtahid* like Abū Ḥanīfah or al-Shāfi'ī. It would rather suffice for him to be a *mujtahid muntasib*, that is, a *mujtahid* affiliated with any one of the four major schools of law. This would require, instead, an acute understanding of the investigations made on legal injunctions alongwith their supporting arguments by the first elders of the Muslim community (*salaf*).³⁰³

Following the opinion of the majority of the classical Muslim political thinkers, Shāh Walī Allāh also holds that the *khalīfah* should be a Qurayshite in paternal ancestry. In this connection, he relies on the well-known tradition attributed to the Prophet: "The leaders are from amongst the Quraysh".³⁰⁴ Moreover, according to him, the first *khalīfah* Abū Bakr, had recourse to this tradition in his debate with the Anṣār, the Madīnite followers of the Prophet, on the occasion of the election of *khalīfah* following the Prophet's demise. In this connection, Shāh Walī Allāh also cites a statement attributed to 'Umar, the second *khalīfah*: "This matter (i.e. *khilāfah*) shall remain among the Quraysh as long as there survive two persons among them who are qualified for it".³⁰⁵

Modes of Appointment of the *Khalīfah*

In Shāh Walī Allāh's opinion, a *khalīfah* who fulfils the above qualifications can be lawfully installed in office in either of the four ways mentioned below. These modes of election are mainly based on the precedents that were set in the appointment of the first four caliphs. These precedents furnish the normative framework for the ideas of Shāh Walī Allāh, as far as the questions of election and legitimacy are concerned, as we shall see later. These modes of election are as follows:

- Oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*) by those who are competent to "loosen and bind" (*ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd*).³⁰⁶ They include, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, scholars, judges, leaders or chiefs (*umarā'*) and other prominent personalities among the people. He does not deem it necessary that all individuals fulfilling the criteria for *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd*, drawn from the entire realm of Islam, should participate in the election of a *khalīfah*, for this is impossible. Rather it would be sufficient that those among them who are easily available should perform this function. However, if an oath of allegiance is made only by one or two persons in favour of some individual, it will not be of any consequence. In this respect, Shāh Walī Allāh cites a statement of 'Umar, prohibiting oath of allegiance for anybody without "a general acceptability of the Muslims" in his favour. This was the mode of election adopted in the appointment of Abū Bakr.³⁰⁷
- Testamentary designation of a person who fulfils the requisite conditions by a just (*'ādil*) *khalīfah* out of sincere concern for the future well-being of Muslims. He may announce this succession publicly and make a will to the Muslims, calling upon them to accept him as his successor and

to follow him. Thus this particular individual becomes distinguished by his designation among all those who fulfil the requisite conditions for the office of *khalīfah*. This mode of appointment was adopted in the appointment of ‘Umar as *khalīfah*.³⁰⁸

- Testamentary designation confining this office among a particular group of persons who fulfil the necessary conditions so that one of them is elected by mutual consultation. After the demise of the earlier *khalīfah*, the successor is to be elected from amongst those designated by the predecessor by a process of consultation ending in a consensus. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, when a testamentary designation is made in favour of a particular individual or a group of individuals, it becomes unlawful to elect any other person to the office of *khalīfah*. It was through this procedure that ‘Uthmān was elected to the office of *khalīfah* when ‘Umar, in his last days, nominated a group of six prominent Companions of the Prophet, out of whom one was to be elected as ‘Umar’s successor. Following the demise of ‘Umar, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf, who was one of the six, conducted extensive consultations to ascertain the public views about these men. In the light of these consultations, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān finally decided in favour of ‘Uthmān. A similar process of mutual consultation was subsequently followed, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, in the election of ‘Alī.³⁰⁹
- Acquisition of authority by a person who establishes himself as a *khalīfah*, the investiture being regarded as *fait accompli*. It takes place when the office of *khalīfah* becomes vacant by the death of the *khalīfah* and an individual comes forward and takes over the office, without any oath of allegiance by *ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*, or a testamentary designation in his favour by the earlier *khalīfah*. This incumbent of the *khalīfah* secures the support of the people by recourse to appeasement, force, or oppression. Such an individual becomes a *khalīfah de facto*. All the commands issued by him which conform to the *sharī‘ah* will be deemed as valid. According to Shāh Walī Allāh those commands of such a *de facto khalīfah* that are not contrary to the *sharī‘ah* and are consistent with public weal ought to be complied with by all Muslims. Such a compliance is deemed an obligation.

Further, this latter mode is of two kinds:

1. The individual who acquires the office fulfils the requisite conditions prescribed for *khalīfah* and is able to avert the resistance of opponents without resorting to unlawful practices and achieves this purpose

through peaceful means. This kind of acquisition is valid in times of necessity. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, this mode was adopted in Mu'āwiyah's accession to the office of *khalīfah* after 'Alī's demise, following his agreement with al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī (d.50/670).

2. The individual who occupies the office of *khalīfah* does not fulfil the requisite conditions and defeats his opposition by resorting to violence or other prohibited means. This form of acquisition is invalid according to Shāh Walī Allāh. Indeed he considers the person acquiring office in this manner to be a sinner. However, he recognises the necessity of validating his lawful orders. If *zakāt* is paid to the collectors deputed by him it would absolve the payers of their religious obligation. Similarly, the decrees issued by the judges appointed by him should be enforced. It would also be lawful to join *jihād* under such a *khalīfah*. For, in Shāh Walī Allāh's opinion, the validation of the lawful actions of such *khalīfah*, and an acceptance of his *de facto* authority, is dictated by necessity. In this connection he subscribes to the generally held view of the Muslim jurists that such a *khalīfah* need not be removed from office at all costs³¹⁰ because this, according to him, would involve heavy loss of the lives of Muslims and might lead to a state of anarchy. Moreover, it is not certain that the hardships and troubles incurred in the process of his forcible removal would lead to good results. On the contrary, it is very likely that someone worse than the previous incumbent might take advantage of the conditions of anarchy, and become dominant. Shāh Walī Allāh is, therefore, of the opinion that Muslims should not open the avenues of anarchy in the hope of promoting public interest when that is seriously doubtful. In this behalf, he cites a number of traditions from the Prophet supporting his view.³¹¹

Shāh Walī Allāh confines the modes of appointment of *khalīfah* to the four methods outlined above. According to him, even if there is found at any time an individual or a group of individuals who fulfil the requisite qualifications of *khalīfah*, none of these qualified individuals, even if he is considered the best suited for the office, shall be recognised as *khalīfah* if he does not follow any of these four procedures.³¹²

Further, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, the cardinal principle underlying all the modes of appointment outlined above, is to ascertain popular consent for the *khalīfah*, for which either of the four procedures is to be adopted.³¹³ Since the first form of acquisition, mentioned under the fourth mode is so comprehensive as to include all possible methods of accession

to office that do not involve any resort to prohibited means, Shāh Walī Allāh rightly considers his listing of the four valid procedures to be exhaustive.

Responsibilities of the *Khalīfah*

The *khalīfah*, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, is charged with heavy responsibilities for the protection of the vital interests of the Islamic community. His main responsibilities are:

- Safeguarding and protecting the Religion, as established by the authentic traditions from the Prophet and upheld by the consensus of the pious elders of the past. This includes denunciation of infidels by executing apostates and atheists and punishing the heretics.
- Establishing an elaborate system for the observance of the pillars of Islam e.g. Friday congregation, daily congregational prayers, collection and distribution of *zakāt*, and the organisation of Pilgrimage and fasting. The *khalīfah* should organise these activities personally in his own city and should deploy *imāms* of mosques and collectors of *ṣadaqāt*³¹⁴ at other places. He should also appoint *Amīr al-Ḥajj*, leader of the Muslims performing the Pilgrimage.³¹⁵
- Reviving the religious sciences and appointing teachers, and instructors at various places for this purpose. This would involve a vigorous intellectual and instructional activity to ensure the growth and transmission of authentic Islamic knowledge and academic heritage.
- Providing for emoluments of judges, jurisconsults, teachers, preachers and *imāms* without extravagance or miserliness.³¹⁶ This constitutes an important duty of the *khalīfah* because the latter relies on these functionaries for the performance of these vital functions.

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, it is also a part of the duties of a *khalīfah* to appoint his lieutenants from amongst the truthful, honest and sincere people to run the business of the state. Besides, he should keep himself fully abreast of the affairs of his people, the conditions of the regular armies, the activities of the chiefs of cities and battalions of voluntary warriors, and the functions of judges, etc. This is required to ensure that no injustice or embezzlement of funds is committed. Moreover, the *khalīfah* should, on no account, leave the affairs of the Muslims to the care of the infidels.³¹⁷

Khilāfah ‘Āmmah and Khilāfah Khāṣṣah

Shāh Walī Allāh introduces a unique classification of *khilāfah* into ‘*āmmah* (ordinary) and *khāṣṣah* (extraordinary). Whatever has so far been explained concerning the qualifications, the modes of election or functions and duties of the *khalīfah*, pertain to what Shāh Walī Allāh terms as *khilāfah ‘āmmah*. This latter type of *khilāfah* can be established at any point of time in history whenever the necessary conditions, as outlined above, exist. In addition to this, Shāh Walī Allāh recognises a distinct form of *khilāfah* which he regards, as it were, an extension of the Prophetic mission, and which historically emerged immediately after his demise in 10/632. He identifies certain extraordinary qualities (in addition to those enumerated above) and characteristics that were hall-marks of the personalities of the four immediate successors of the Prophet (peace be upon him). These successors are commonly referred to, by the Muslim scholars, as *rāshidūn* (the rightly guided). But Shāh Walī Allāh avoids the use of this term in the present context. In preference to this common appellation, Shāh Walī Allāh employs his own innovative term of *khilāfah khāṣṣah*, which represents an original idea hitherto unknown in the Muslim political thought. Relying on a number of Qur’ānic verses and traditions from the Prophet (peace be upon him), he contends that promise for the emergence of this peculiar and extra-ordinary type of *khilāfah* was implied in these verses and traditions. Among these verses, the following verse most conspicuously carries the signification pointed out by Shāh Walī Allāh:

God has promised to those among you who believe and do the righteous deeds that He will, of surety, grant them in the land inheritance of Power, as He granted to those before them; that He will establish in authority their Religion that He has chosen for them; and that He will change their state, after the fear in which they lived, to one of security and peace; they will worship Me alone, and not associate anything with Me. If any do reject Faith after this, they are rebellious and wicked.³¹⁸

The above verse, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, clearly contains the Divine promise of ascendancy in the land through the agency of *khilāfah* to “those among you who believe” (i.e. the first addressees of the Qur’ān) who did good deeds. He discusses in depth the different aspects of the signification of this verse, establishing that it alludes to none except the immediate successors of the Prophet (peace be upon him), who were his Companions and the first addressees of the Revelation.³¹⁹

Shāh Walī Allāh extensively surveys some other relevant verses of the Qur'ān and several traditions from the Prophet (peace be upon him), which have any bearing on the *khilāfah khāṣṣah*, and identifies its peculiar characteristics in contrast to those of *khilāfah 'āmmah*.³²⁰

Shāh Walī Allāh identifies the following peculiar traits of a *khalīfah*, belonging to the category of *khilāfah khāṣṣah*:

- That he should be from among the *Muhājirūn* (Migrants).³²¹
- That he should be from among those who were promised entry to the paradise by the Prophet (peace be upon him).
- That he should be one of those whom the Prophet (peace be upon him), considered as belonging to the highest ranks of the faithful mentioned in the Qur'ān namely *ṣiddiqīn* (the truthful), *shuhadā'* (the martyrs or witnesses to the truth of Islam in their actual conduct) and the *ṣāliḥīn* (the pious).³²²
- That the Prophet (peace be upon him) should have accorded to him the treatment of a *khalīfah* or that of his designated successor. This means that such circumstantial indications should have been discernible in the Prophet's dealing with him as would suggest to the Companions that he had a tacit approval of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to become *khalīfah*.
- That he should have been charged by the Prophet (peace be upon him), in his lifetime to perform the duties which relate to the Prophet's mission as the Messenger of God.
- That a Divine promise made to the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been actualised, and he (i.e. the *khalīfah* belonging to this special category) became instrumental in it.
- That his opinions were regarded by the community as authentic evidence (*ḥujjah*) in matters of the *sharī'ah*; and
- that he had been reckoned the best of the community by the standards of reason (*'aql*) as well as textual evidence (*naql*).³²³

Shāh Walī Allāh raises a question by way of a hypothetical objection to his contention (i.e. so called: *duf' dakhl muqaddar*) that the basis for establishing the *khilāfah* of the early successors of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was available in a *naṣṣ* (an express injunction of the Qur'ān

or the Prophet's tradition). The question is as follows: "... if it were so, why was the need felt to instal the successors in office by following the procedures of oath of allegiance by *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd*, or by seeking sanction from testamentary designation (*istikhlāf*) in their favour"? Shāh Walī Allāh answers this hypothetical question through the following illustration: "Prayers have been prescribed in the eternal word of God, and by the express injunctions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). But their performance actually becomes obligatory only when the appointed hour comes". Moreover, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, holding consultation before the appointment of Abū Bakr, or the latter's nomination of 'Umar through testamentary designation, does not necessarily point to the absence of any textual basis (*naṣṣ*) to that effect. For, obviously, these elders of Islam must have based their opinions in that behalf on some text (*naṣṣ*) or tacit suggestion by the Prophet (peace be upon him). Shāh Walī Allāh further elaborates this point by another illustration. He says: "... if one were to say that Abū Ḥanīfah prescribed something or al-Shāfi'ī prescribed a certain act or 'Umar permitted something, then all these statements would actually mean that it was the Prophet (peace be upon him) who, in fact, prescribed them. These men only formed opinions on the basis of some proof derived from the law-giver, and not of their own will".³²⁴

In short, a *khalīfah*, belonging to the category of *khilāfah khāṣṣah*, is distinguished by his auxiliary role in the realization of the supreme objectives that have been regarded as a part of the Prophet's mission, according to the Qur'ān and the Prophet's traditions. The achievement of these objectives is indeed attributed to the Prophet, but the *khulafā'* do become instrumental in it in some way.³²⁵ Further, such *khulafā'* command an extraordinarily high degree of confidence and faith of the Muslim community in their leadership. This faith stems from the explicit and implicit approval pronounced by the Qur'ān and the Prophet's traditions in favour of their installation. On the other hand, a *khalīfah* who belongs to the category of *khilāfah 'āmmah*, does not enjoy this lofty level of faith from the community. Members of the community do support his appointment on account of high level of knowledge and integrity, but they do so merely on the basis of their opinion in that behalf and not pursuant to any revelational indication or Prophetic approval to that effect.

Moreover, in the *khilāfah khāṣṣah* there is a convergence of *khilāfah ṣāhibrah* (temporal vicegerency) and *khilāfah bāṭinah* (spiritual vicegerency), according to Shāh Walī Allāh. Thus this extraordinary *khalīfah* becomes not only the head of the Muslim community in a mundane sense, but

is also acknowledged as its unquestioned head in spiritual and religious matters.³²⁶

Relations between the *Khalīfah* and the Citizenry

The Prophet's traditions regarding his statements and acts that have any significant relevance to politics and statecraft mostly furnish the contents of the ideas of Shāh Walī Allāh on what may be called, in contemporary parlance, the constitutional law of Islam. We, therefore, find that in respect of the exemplary relations that ought to exist between the *khalīfah* and the members of the community or the citizens of the state, Shāh Walī Allāh also draws heavily on the relevant traditions from the Prophet (peace be upon him).

We have noted earlier the duties of the *khalīfah* towards the citizens living in his realm as spelled out by Shāh Walī Allāh. He also dwells upon the duties of the citizens towards the *khalīfah* and relies on a number of traditions to define the parameters of their obligation to comply with the commands of the *khalīfah* in an Islamic political framework. The cardinal principle in this connection, which is a striking feature of Islamic political theory, and which has been recognised by all Muslim political thinkers since the early era, is that the citizens are under an obligation to obey the *khalīfah*, whose commands in turn ought to be in conformity with the injunctions of Islam. Muslims are obligated to obey whatever command is issued by the *khalīfah* in the interest of Islam and the Muslim community. This obligation to compliance is not contingent upon the just or unjust character of the *khalīfah*, according to Shāh Walī Allāh. He further holds that, in matters that call for *ijtihād*, it is the duty of the citizens to enforce the opinions based on the *ijtihād* of the *khalīfah* even if some of the citizens themselves are qualified to make *ijtihād* by dint of their erudition and integrity.³²⁷

Moreover, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, it is not permitted by the *shari'ah* to rebel against any government which has already received the support of the Muslims, even if its head does not fully qualify for the office. It is only when a ruler commits 'evident infidelity' (*kufr bawwāh*), and openly rejects, condemns or puts into disrepute, any of the 'essential postulates' (*darūriyyāt*) of the true Religion, then it becomes not only permitted, but even obligatory to struggle for his deposition. This struggle would then be considered the highest form of *jihād*.³²⁸ In this respect, Shāh Walī Allāh relies on a tradition, according to which, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked by a Companion: "Shall we not then overthrow them"? (i.e. the

unjust rulers). In response to this question, the Prophet (peace be upon him) categorically said: "No, as long as they establish Prayers".³²⁹ These words of the Prophet (peace be upon him) have been interpreted by Shāh Walī Allāh to signify a ruler's general adherence to the cause of the true Religion and his upholding of its principles, symbolically represented by the establishment of Prayers, notwithstanding trivial shortcomings or minor lapses here and there. Shāh Walī Allāh expresses this opinion by employing the well-known terminology of Muslim scholars, namely, "rejecting any of the essential postulates (*darūriyyāt*) of the true Religion".³³⁰ Further, it is lawful, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, to refuse to obey those commands of the *khalīfah* which are violative of the *sharī'ah*, provided that this violation is established by a clear proof (*burhān*). In such a case anyone who collaborates with the *khalīfah* in vexing or tormenting those who might challenge the *khalīfah* on the said ground will be a sinner and liable to God's chastisement.³³¹

Shāh Walī Allāh is of the view that if a person enjoins the *khalīfah* to do good and forbids him to commit evil, that will be the highest form of *jihād*, provided it is not accompanied by recourse to violence. He further holds that those who perform this important duty ought to be lenient rather than harsh in their expostulations with the *khalīfah*, and should address their protestations preferably in private rather than in public.³³²

In short, the relations between the *khalīfah* and the citizens, the obligations of the latter to the former, and the former's answerability to the latter, are determined by a number of principles laid down in the *sharī'ah*. It is these principles that provide the framework for the mutual relationship between the ruler and the ruled. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, it was necessary to lay down these principles of governance so as to check those rulers who had any oppressive tendencies, or who might be inclined to pursue their whims and desires in their political conduct, thus putting the public policy in jeopardy. With these principles succinctly spelled out, the limits of authority in Islam are clearly defined, and it is possible to hold to account the rulers who might violate them.³³³

Functions of the State

Shāh Walī Allāh discusses the functions of the Islamic state on different occasions, from various angles. While in *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* his approach, like that of al-Māwardī and al-Bāqillānī and many others, is mainly juridical,³³⁴ in *al-Budūr al-Bāzighah* he confines his treatment to a discussion of the conceptual foundations of the state. In this work he shows that

the state emerged in the course of a natural development of human social organisation. In *Izālat al-Khafā* 'an *Khilāfat al-Khulafā*' as its title also suggests, he mainly adopts a historical approach, tracing the genesis and development of the institution of *khilāfah* in its period of perfection. This perfection, according to Shāh Walī Allāh and other Muslim political thinkers, except some Shī'ah thinkers, was attained by this institution at the time of its inception, immediately after the Prophet's demise. Hence, this period of perfection in *khilāfah*, which Shāh Walī Allāh designates by the term *al-khilāfah al-khāṣṣah*, provides an important source of normative precedents for state and government and their functions, alongside the two main sources of Revelation and Prophetic tradition.

Shāh Walī Allāh divides the functions of the Islamic state into two main categories. The first pertains to the general political role of any state, whether Islamic or otherwise, whereby it is able to protect its frontiers against external aggression, deter oppressors from various forms of injustice and oppression, and provide a judicial framework for settling disputes and dispensing justice among its citizens. We have already discussed this universal feature of a state's functions in some detail with reference to the theory of *irtifāqāt* as propounded by Shāh Walī Allāh.³³⁵

The second major function of the Islamic state is the pursuit of a religious mission. It is the paramountcy of this religious mission, which characterises the Islamic state as an essentially ideological entity, in contradistinction to the universal paradigm of state identified by him in the context of his discussion on *irtifāqāt*.

Explaining this distinctive ideological feature of the Islamic state, Shāh Walī Allāh points out that the "supremacy of the Religion of Islam over all other religions was inconceivable without contemplating among the Muslims a *khalīfah*, who can put those who might transgress the ideological frontiers, and commit acts which have been prohibited by their Religion or omit their obligations under it, into open disrepute". Further, he should be able to subdue the followers of all other religions and receive *jizyah*³³⁶ from them, while they submit to the supremacy of the *sharī'ah*.³³⁷ For, in his view, without establishing the supremacy of Islam over other religions and creeds, no preference of the Muslim community over non-Muslims could be visibly demonstrated.³³⁸

These functions of the Islamic state, which were identified by Shāh Walī Allāh as pertaining to its role as an ideological entity, have been defined, according to him, by the Prophet (peace be upon him) under four main categories. These are penal injunctions (*mazālim*), injunctions pertaining to the punishments provided for specified crimes against God

(*ḥudūd*), injunctions relating to judicature (*qadā'*), and rules and regulations governing the peaceful and military struggle to protect, defend and promote the true Faith (*jihād*).³³⁹

In respect of all these areas in which the Islamic state mainly functions, some basic principles of policy that are binding on every *khalīfah* have been laid down. But their particular modalities have been left to the discretion of the leaders of the Muslim community who have been counselled to act in the best interests of the community without violating the general framework of these principles.³⁴⁰ Before concluding this chapter, it seems appropriate to have a glimpse of these four categories of the ideological functions of the Islamic state as identified by Shāh Walī Allāh.

1. Penal Injunctions (*Maẓālim*)

One of the chief objectives that have been pursued by all the Prophets, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, is to prevent oppression in society which is the biggest source of human misery. Oppression mainly consists of three kinds of crime: (i) crimes against human life; (ii) crimes against human body; and (iii) crimes against private property. For each kind of these crimes, the *sharī'ah* provides strong and deterrent measures whereby people with criminal tendencies may be forcefully deterred from committing those criminal acts again. According to the priorities established by the *sharī'ah*, the most heinous of all crimes is the one committed against human life. This, according to the Qur'ān, amounts to the genocide of all mankind.³⁴¹ Therefore, the *sharī'ah* takes an extremely serious view of the crime of murder and provides for *qiṣās*, i.e., retaliation by the heirs of the victim. They may take life for life in retaliation, or agree to blood-money (as specified in the *sharī'ah*), or compound the murder with the guilty, or exercise the right to pardon, if they so desire.³⁴²

Next in Islam's order of priorities, as explained by Shāh Walī Allāh, are the crimes committed against human body. For these crimes too the *sharī'ah* provides the punishment of retaliation by way of *qiṣās* i.e. inflicting similar physical injury on the criminal as was sustained by his victim. The victim, as in the case of murder, may accept compensation specified by the *sharī'ah*, or compound the crime, or simply pardon the offender.

The third kind of crimes to which the *sharī'ah* addresses itself after giving precedence to the crimes against human life and limbs, are the crimes against property. These crimes have been categorised by Shāh Walī Allāh into: (a) *ghaṣb* (usurpation); (b) *itlāf*, damage; (c) theft; and (d) dacoity. The latter two crimes fall in the category of *ḥudūd*.³⁴³

2. Crimes against Society and their Specified Punishments (*Hudūd*)

This category of crimes includes those offences against the society which combine numerous elements of moral turpitude. These crimes, on the one hand, cause the spread of mischief in the land and destroy the general peace and tranquillity in the life of the community on the other. Further, they cause damage to victims which cannot be removed without the intervention of the state. Moreover, for curbing these crimes so as to minimise their occurrence, it is not sufficient to warn the offenders against the chastisement to which they will be subjected on the Day of Judgement. Hence, the public policy sanctioned by the *sharī'ah* demands that those guilty of such grave crimes as adultery should be exposed to strongest censure and be awarded the severest deterrent punishment. By prescribing these severe punishments, the *sharī'ah* seeks to eliminate the root cause of a number of evils which generally cause immeasurable mischief. Besides, if adultery is not checked by strong deterrents, it gives rise to countless genealogical, psychological, social and moral problems. Furthermore, unlawful sex-indulgence has a corrupting influence on human temperament and gives rise to incessant fights and disputes among people.³⁴⁴

Other crimes included in this category are theft, highway robbery, drinking and false accusation of un-chastity (*qadhf*). If theft is not dealt with strongly through deterrent measures, it would diminish the opportunities of earning livelihood by fair and legitimate means, and would pose a constant threat to the sanctity of private property. Preservation of this sanctity is among the primary functions of the state. Similarly, the victims of highway robbery (*hirābah*) are exposed to open plunder and serious threat to life and property. Individuals cannot, repulse this danger by themselves. If the state does not provide adequate punishment for such fierce crimes, citizens can enjoy no peace or security. So is the case of drinking. If this goes unchecked, it opens avenues of enormous corruption and damage to human sanity and intelligence, which is the instrument of improving this life as well as the Life in the Hereafter. Further, the state should also take a serious notice of the crime of *qadhf* (false accusation of unchastity). Those who are made its victims experience great anguish and suffering. They can find no means to avert it, save murder. Thus *qadhf* often proves to be a cause of murders. If the victim resorts to beating, he is beaten in turn. Therefore, to deal with such situations, human reason demands something which has also been prescribed by the *sharī'ah*, namely, strong preventive

measures, and exemplary punishment by the state in order to protect the honour, and property of its citizens.³⁴⁵

Since the nature of the crimes categorised under *hudūd* is such that they produce extremely adverse effects on the peace and tranquility of human society, it was necessary for the state to treat them sternly, without showing the least leniency in awarding the specified punishments. For these are, in the eyes of the *sharī'ah*, unpardonable crimes against society. Hence the strict enforcement of *hudūd* has been stressed and is regarded as one of the main functions of the Islamic state.³⁴⁶

3. Judicature

Adjudication of disputes is reckoned by Shāh Walī Allāh as one of the main functions of the state for it seeks to eliminate the causes of injustice and exploitation as far as possible. According to him, mutual disputation is a common phenomenon in human society. It opens avenues of animosity, mutual hatred and family feuds. Above all, it gives rise to greed, which by its very nature tends to contemptuously deny the rights of others and defies all reason. Therefore, one of the primary responsibilities of the state is to depute judges throughout its realm to undertake settlement of disputes and compel the disputants to comply with their judgements. Since the function of the judiciary is a delicate exercise which is liable to be influenced by bias and prejudice, it has been the utmost concern of the *sharī'ah* to lay down certain rules for the judges in the discharge of their judicial functions.

Shāh Walī Allāh derives these basic principles from the relevant traditions which he frequently cites to substantiate his views on the subject in *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*. The foremost principle in this behalf is that the expression of the wish to be appointed to a judicial office constitutes a disqualification because self-candidature may at times stem from a selfish desire for wealth, prestige or satisfaction of a personal grudge or vendetta against some adversary. Since the *sharī'ah* lays great emphasis on a high level of integrity and competence for a judge, only those who are pre-eminent on account of being free from the elements of bias and wrongdoing and possess adequate knowledge and understanding of the Divine Law, particularly in the field of judicature, are qualified to hold the judicial office.³⁴⁷

Emphasizing the psychological aspect of this question, Shāh Walī Allāh says that a judge is required to be of sound and resolute mind, should have a fine intellectual and balanced temperament, and should not be prone to fury and anger in his judgements. For, shortness of temper blurs a man's vision and clairvoyance distorts his objective and impartial perception of

the reality, and hampers a cool and detached deliberation over intricacies of jurisprudence and law. It also prevents a clear and comprehensive grasp of facts and circumstances involved in the case brought up for judgement. Moreover, no judgement should be pronounced in any dispute without full opportunity of defence being afforded to the defendant, as has been clearly laid down in the Prophet's command which Shāh Walī Allāh quotes.³⁴⁸

Further, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, the judicial process is followed in two stages. The first stage involves questions of fact and its verification. The second stage is to determine a just, fair and right judgement which is warranted by the facts of the case. A judge ought to take both these aspects into full consideration. The first aspect is governed by the rules pertaining to evidence and oath. It is through these instruments that the circumstances of a case can be ascertained. The fundamental criterion laid down for ascertaining facts is *hujjah* (clear and conclusive proof) which should be established by evidence, whether circumstantial or otherwise. Since the evidence administered by witnesses occupies an important place in the dispensation of justice, the *sharī'ah* lays down strict conditions for witnesses. The main conditions are adherence to the teachings of Islam, sanity, adulthood, sound understanding of the case in question, integrity, upright conduct, and an unimpeachable moral character.³⁴⁹

4. *Jihād*

It is with reference to Shāh Walī Allāh's theory of *jihād* that the international role of the Islamic state can be appreciated in the right perspective. Therefore, an attempt would be made in the following pages to acquaint ourselves with Shāh Walī Allāh's concept of *jihād* and its significance as one of the basic functions of the Islamic state.

As noted earlier, Shāh Walī Allāh considers *jihād* to be one of the *raisons d'être* of the Islamic state. He even goes further and contends that no religion is complete if it does not stipulate and prescribe *jihād*.³⁵⁰ According to Shāh Walī Allāh, since the religious dispensation granted by God to man through the intermediation of the Prophets was a great Divine favour, God did not choose, out of His boundless mercy towards man, to leave it wholly to his will to enter the fold of God's religion. He rather sought to provide the conditions through prescribing *jihād* wherein man might feel motivated *perforce* to acknowledge his Lord and follow the way of life which had His approval. Since there are people who, overcome by selfish and lowly passions, do not heed the call of the true Religion, and thus deprive themselves of the eternal bliss, therefore, compassion for such

people demands that they be not left alone; that, on the contrary, they be afforded ample opportunity to hear, see, listen and choose the right path. It is similar to a physician's concern to make his patient take medicine, even if the latter does not like the taste of it.³⁵¹ This inducement to enter God's Religion and enjoy its blessings can be provided only by overpowering active opposition to the Faith by those strong elements who choose to collaborate with others against the natural growth and rise of the true Religion. Thus, on the one hand, they stand in the way of other people's acceptance of Islam, and obstruct the entry of their own progeny to its fold, on the other. If active opposition of the leaders of the forces which stand for unbelief breaks down, their weak followers and descendants will easily find their way to Islam.

In this connection, Shāh Walī Allāh cites a tradition from the Prophet (peace be upon him), which significantly points to this underlying concept of *jihād*. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "God marvels those who enter Paradise in chains".³⁵²

This tradition supports the contention of Shāh Walī Allāh that mercy to mankind requires that they be afforded the fullest opportunity to follow the straight path. At the same time, the oppressive elements which not only do not accept the Truth themselves but also prevent others from doing so, ought to be rendered helpless in their obstinate opposition to the call of Islam which guarantees general peace and tranquillity as well as the social, political and economic well-being of all mankind. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, the corrupt states controlled by perverted elements, which pose a constant threat to Islam and hinder the Muslim community from conveying the universal message of God to humanity, are like a cancer in the human body which cannot be restored to normalcy without cutting off the sick part. If a little use of force is of necessity conducive to tremendous good, it is obligatory to resort to a little force for the sake of greater good.³⁵³

Shāh Walī Allāh likens those who perform the duty of *jihād* to Angels, in so far as the former also dedicate themselves to the execution of the Divine mission, as decreed by God. The only difference, according to him, between the two in this respect is that the Angels undertake their mission without pursuing any given and definite principles. They only carry out the Divine command in total obedience to God's decrees. As for the Muslim community, when it is engaged in *jihād*, it struggles for the same end, but pursuant to a principle given by God. That is why this struggle, on the part of the Muslim community, is reckoned as the best and most desirable of all human acts. Hence the act of killing in the cause of God is not attributed

to the human agents. It is rather attributed to the One Who issued the command to do so (i.e. to God). This, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, is the purport of the Qur'ānic verse: "... it is not you who killed them it was God who killed them".³⁵⁴

Jihād, therefore, becomes the chief instrument of the Islamic state for actualizing the Divine scheme on earth, and all efforts for its realization bring about overwhelming mercy. Any attempt to frustrate this scheme incurs an all-pervading curse, as unequivocally declared in numerous verses and the traditions which are profusely cited by Shāh Walī Allāh.³⁵⁵ Any omission on the part of the state in the discharge of this fundamental duty would, therefore, mean negligence of a vital objective of the public policy.³⁵⁶

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, *jihād* is a strenuous struggle that involves great hardships, heavy expenditure, sacrifice of life and property, forsaking one's home and comfort. Those who undertake this noble mission are regarded as the most loyal and sincere servants of God. For they virtually demonstrate their unqualified preference of the Hereafter to this temporal life, and place their total reliance on God. Such a spirit of whole-hearted submission to the Divine will cannot be attained without there being some resemblance with angelic traits. Only those who are farthest from animality and in whose hearts and souls the true Religion and its ideals are deeply seated can carry this spirit to its perfection.³⁵⁷

In a number of traditions cited by Shāh Walī Allāh, it has been emphasized that *jihād* should be undertaken purely for the 'sake of God and should be solely motivated by the aim of 'exalting the Word of God', (*i'lā' kalimat Allāh*). This struggle should aim at nothing except Divine approval and ought to be free from such motives as the display of bravery, or pride, or vengeance, or worldly fame or material gain.³⁵⁸

Furthermore, *jihād* is an extraordinary act of piety which merits Divine pleasure and commendation. *Jihād*, however, obviously requires a number of tools, instruments, and means such as expense of money, preparation of arms and armoury and other logistics and auxiliaries. Therefore, by a necessary corollary, Divine commendation also extends to the means required for waging *jihād*.³⁵⁹

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, the great emphasis laid upon *jihād* in the Qur'ānic verses and the Prophet's traditions is explained by the fact that through it the religious dispensation of Islam, symbolised by the state, is fully actualised, the superiority of the true Religion is manifestly established in space and time, and the Islamic way of life eventually emerges as an obligatory course for humanity.³⁶⁰ That is why we find numerous

verses and traditions placing great stress on *jihād*. They also contain good tidings for those who sincerely participate in *jihād*, whether directly or indirectly by providing the necessary means for it, even though they may not be engaged in the actual conduct of war.³⁶¹

Referring to the significant contribution made by *jihād* during the early period of Islamic history to the expansion of Islam, Shāh Walī Allāh points out that the benefits of *jihād* multiply, a fact that is illustrated by the annals of history. For the *jihād* undertaken by the early followers of Islam from amongst the *Muhājirūn* and the *Anṣār* brought the tribe of Quraysh and the people who were under their influence into the fold of Islam. Subsequently, it was at the hands of these Muslims of Quraysh that Islam's conquest of Mesopotamia and the Byzantine Empire took place. Thereafter, God enabled the people of Iraq and Syria to conquer the Persian and Roman realms, whose inhabitants were in turn instrumental in introducing Islam among Indians, Turks and Sudanese. By offering this historical illustration, Shāh Walī Allāh emphasizes the point that *jihād* is a multiplying act of virtue.³⁶²

Further, explaining the importance of *jihād* as a function of fundamental significance carried out by the Islamic state, Shāh Walī Allāh argues that one of the chief aims of the Prophet's mission was the establishment of the supremacy of Islam over all other creeds and cults. This aim could neither have been achieved in the absence of *jihād* nor sustained without performing it, and without maintaining a constant preparedness for it. Therefore, if the Muslim community neglects *jihād* and is lulled into slumber due to its immersion in worldly comforts, it would soon become dominated by other religions, and would be degraded to a state of subjugation and humiliation. This would frustrate the very purpose of its religious mission.³⁶³

Discussing the juridical aspect of *jihād*, Shāh Walī Allāh expresses the opinion that this is a collective obligation of the Muslim community (*fard 'alā al-kifāyah*) like the establishment of the state itself. But the duty to take all necessary measures for enabling the individuals to discharge this obligation devolves upon the state. Any voluntary initiative by individuals or groups to engage in *jihād*, and to provide the means for it, does not absolve the state of its duties toward *jihād*. This, however, would absolve the general body of the Muslims of their obligation because a group from amongst them, be they regular warriors or voluntary fighters, were already performing that duty. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, the engagement of the entire community in *jihād* would be detrimental to *irtifāqāt* (i.e. the vital socio-economic and cultural interests of the community). It is necessary, therefore, that a group from amongst them should perform this duty.³⁶⁴

Moreover, since *jihād* is an obligation of the state, and whatever is a necessary means for performing an obligation is also an obligation, therefore defence of the frontiers, raising of armies, deployment of warriors in the battle fields, deputation of commanders, and providing all necessary tools of war machinery are also an important obligation and a basic function of the state.³⁶⁵

Shāh Walī Allāh also derives some important principles from the Prophet's traditions which concern the conduct of war in *jihād*. It is within the framework of these commissions and omissions that the commanders deputed by the state for various military tasks relating to war are authorized to carry out their duties.³⁶⁶

It is the foremost duty of a commander to fear God in all his endeavours and to be a well-wisher of the Muslims at all times. These two considerations provide the touchstone for evaluating all actions and moves that are made by the commanders in the execution of their military plans.³⁶⁷

Similarly, there are other traditions, some of which have been cited by Shāh Walī Allāh, which expressly prohibit certain acts in war. These include mutilation, the killing of women, elderly people and children, the breaking of pledges, the destruction of crops and vegetation, putting things to arson, and the killing of animals.³⁶⁸

It is necessary before waging an offensive to invite the enemy to either of the three options: (1) to embrace Islam and to accept its necessary implications of *jihād* and *hijrah*.³⁶⁹ In this case they would be entitled, like other Muslims, to the same rights including a share in spoils of war; (2) to accept Islam, but without agreeing to join *jihād* along with the Muslims; and (3) to accept to pay *jizyah* and surrender. In this last case, they will be treated as protected citizens (*dhimmīs*) of the state. They shall be free from any obligation to participate in war, but will be required to submit to the supremacy of Islam.³⁷⁰

As to the treatment of prisoners of war, it has also been regulated by a number of Qur'ānic verses and traditions in the light of which Shāh Walī Allāh deals with that question. In this behalf, the state is authorised to follow either of the four courses: (i) to kill them; (ii) to ransom them; (iii) to set them free gratuitously; and (iv) to enslave them. Whichever of these four options best serves the interests of the Muslim community may be adopted. Moreover, the state may also grant safe conduct to enemy persons, both individually and collectively.³⁷¹ The state may also enter into peace treaty with non-Muslims and eschew the option of war altogether, should the common weal of the Muslim community so demand. This may

be in consideration for money or without it, as the *imām* may deem fit in his best judgement.³⁷²

There are also elaborate rules based on a number of Qur'ānic injunctions and traditions from the Prophet (peace be on him) relating to the distribution of the spoils of war, which have been summarised by Shāh Walī Allāh. In some respects, these rules bind the state to act in a certain manner, while in others, the state is permitted to act according to its discretion in the best interest of the community. In this connection, Shāh Walī Allāh identifies some basic objectives which the state ought to pursue by making use of proceeds from the spoils. These objectives too have been derived by Shāh Walī Allāh from a general survey of the relevant verses and traditions. These objectives are as follows: (1) to provide people with sustenance; (2) to protect the state from aggression; (3) to maintain law and order in the state; (4) to preserve the true religion by appointing *imāms* of mosques, preachers and teachers, etc. Keeping these general objectives in view, the state may appropriate those proceeds according to needs and in conformity with public policy.³⁷³

Shāh Walī Allāh also identifies some other general rules of conduct laid down in the traditions and which the state should observe while discharging its duties relating to *jihād*. Among them is the selection of commanders who are valiant, chivalrous, wise, and sincerely dedicated to the common cause of the Muslim community. Moreover, the following may not be included in the ranks: those who are under fifteen years of age, those who are in the habit of eulogizing the power of the infidels and thus causing demoralisation among the Muslim troops. In like manner polytheists and young women may not be included in the ranks of the army.³⁷⁴

To recapitulate, it is the duty of the state to have recourse to all lawful means of acquiring prestige and glory for the Muslims and making them a formidable power that can defend itself against the forces of unbelief. To accomplish this aim, the *khalīfah* should seek guidance from the conduct of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Where no precedent from the Prophet (peace be upon him) is available, the *khalīfah* should exert his own mind and follow a course of action according to his discretion.³⁷⁵

Part TWO

The Major Writings of Shāh Walī Allāh: An Introduction

A Survey of Shāh Walī Allāh's Works

Shāh Walī Allāh was a prolific writer. He wrote extensively on a wide range of subjects relating to what we now call Islamic studies. They include *Tafsīr* (Qur'ānic exegesis), *Ḥādīth* (traditions of the Prophet), *Fiqh* (law), *uṣul al-Fiqh*, (principles of jurisprudence), '*Aqā'id* (beliefs), *Kalām* (scholastics), philosophy, *Taṣawwuf* (spiritual sciences), history, biography, Arabic poetry, and grammar. He also wrote extensively on topics that are significant for the contemporary students of sociology, politics, psychology and ethical philosophy. But the main focus of his academic enterprise was on the Qur'ān, *Ḥādīth*, *Kalām*, socio-political and ethical philosophy and spiritual sciences. Indeed, his academic contribution is so original, profound and multi-dimensional that it can hardly be assessed merely by drawing up a list of works that could be classified according to any given categories. It rather calls for an in-depth and analytical study focusing on each individual work. Further, since his approach in almost all his writings is inter-disciplinary, in so far as he treats the problems from a diversity of angles and at the same time, a unity and cohesiveness pervades all aspects of his thought. It is difficult, therefore, to assign the works of Shāh Walī Allāh to definite fields of knowledge. The classification of his works is thus bound to be only relative and tentative.³⁷⁶

In the present study, we are mainly concerned with the socio-political aspects of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought. We would, therefore, present below a brief survey of his three works which are particularly relevant to our theme with a view to assessing their value as sources for the study of his socio-political ideas. However, we shall also mention, though quite briefly, selected titles from amongst his other prominent works, indicating

the broad area of the subjects dealt with in each of them.

Studies on the Qur'ān

- *Faṭḥ al-Raḥmān fī Tarjamāt al-Qur'ān*, Karachi, 1984. It is among the first popular renderings of the Qur'ān into simple Persian language. It was completed by the author in Ramaḍān 1151 A.H.
- *Al-Fawz al-Kabīr*, Lahore, 1951, 52 pp. It is a concise, but extremely valuable treatise on the principles of Qur'ānic exegesis. It is among the most popular works of Shāh Walī Allāh, which has made an outstanding contribution to the study and understanding of the Qur'ān. Originally written in Persian, it has been translated into Arabic, Urdu, Turkish, and English languages. It was first published in Delhi in 1898 A.H.
- *Al-Faṭḥ al-Kabīr* (Arabic), Lucknow, 1314 A.H. It deals with the explanation of the difficult words used in the Qur'ān, with terms that are usually called *gharā'ib*, i.e. words that are not quite familiar in the common diction.

Hadīth Sciences

- *Al-Musawwā min Aḥādīth al-Muwatta'* (Arabic). It is a highly technical commentary in Arabic on this early collection of traditions compiled by Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179 A.H.). It was first published in Delhi in 1293 A.H.
- *Muṣaffā Sharḥ-i Muwatta'* (Persian). It is another commentary on the *Muwatta'*. It represents Shāh Walī Allāh's methodology in the teaching of *Ḥādīth*. It was first published in 1293 A.H. in Delhi in two volumes. It has been translated into Urdu by Sayyid 'Abd Allāh and was published from Calcutta in 1294 A.H.
- *Sharḥ Tarājim Ba'd Abwāb al-Bukhārī* (Arabic), Hyderabad, 1949. In this treatise, Shāh Walī Allāh has discussed the wisdom of the topical headings adopted by Imām Bukhārī for different chapters of *aḥādīth* of this important compendium of traditions compiled by Imām Bukhārī (d. 256 A.H.). It was first published in Hyderabad (India) in 1323 A.H.

Law and Jurisprudence

- *Al-Inṣāf fī Bayān Sabab al-Ikhtilāf* (Arabic), Beirut, 1977, 114 pp. It is a juridical discourse on the compilation of the early compendia of *aḥādīth*, and the evolution of different schools of jurisprudence. It also discusses the nature of disagreement among the jurists and the principles of resolving various conflicting opinions so as to arrive at a synthetic view within the broad framework of Islamic jurisprudence. It was first published in Delhi in 1308 A.H. It was also translated into Urdu.
- *ʿIqd al-Jīd fī Bayān Aḥkām al-Ijtihād wa al-Taqlīd* (Arabic), Delhi, 1925. This treatise discusses various dimensions of the issues involved in *ijtihād* and *taqlīd* and presents a balanced view on this oft-discussed and much-debated question. It was also translated into Urdu.

Philosophy and Scholastics

- *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* (Arabic), Cairo, 1933. It is the *magnum opus* of the author which has been universally acknowledged by Muslim scholarship as his most outstanding and epoch-making contribution. It constitutes a highly significant exposition of the Islamic worldview. We shall separately present an introduction to this work in some detail. It was first published in Bareilly (India) in 1286 A.H. A number of Urdu translations of this work have appeared. It has also been recently translated into English under the title: *The Conclusive Argument from God* by Marcia Hermansen, and the first part of the translation has been published by E.J. Brill at Leiden in 1996.
- *Al-Budūr al-Bāzighah* (Arabic), Hyderabad, 1970. It is the second most important contribution of the author to a philosophical and rational interpretation of Islam after *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*. This work would be reviewed separately in the subsequent pages. It has also been translated into English by J.M.S. Baljon.
- *Al-Khayr al-Kathīr* (Arabic), Bijnaur, India, 1325 A.H. It is a brief but extremely valuable work of Shāh Walī Allāh in which he attempts to explain the fundamentals of faith with an approach combining rational and traditional arguments.
- *Maktūb-i Madanī* (Persian), Lahore, 1965. It is a long letter addressed by Shāh Walī Allāh to one Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAbd Allāh Rūmī. It deals with the

metaphysical dimensions of the concept of existence. The work explains the position of the author on the problem of existence which synthesises the views of Ibn 'Arabi and Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī. This letter has also been included in *al-Taḥfīmāt al-Ilāhiyyah* (at no. 15 below).

- *Al-'Aqīdah al-Ḥasanah* (Arabic), Lucknow, 1962, 72 pp. It is a plain and rational presentation of the fundamentals of belief in Islam. It has also been translated into Urdu.
- *Al-Muqaddimah al-Saniyyah fī Intiṣār al-Firqah al-Sunniyyah* (Persian), Delhi, (n.d.). This work attempts a rational exposé of the Sunnī theological doctrines in comparison with the doctrines of the *Shī'ah*. This is in fact Shāh Walī Allāh's introduction to the Persian translation of a treatise by Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī entitled *Radd-i-Rawāfiẓ*.

Spiritual Sciences

- *Al-Taḥfīmāt al-Ilāhiyyah* (Arabic and Persian) (Bijnaur India: 1936), 264 pp. This work is in two volumes and includes a number of stray writings of the author, in which he has explained subtle points of rational and spiritual import with regard to the teachings of the true faith. Some of these writings are in Arabic and others in Persian.
- *Altāf al-Quds* (Persian) Delhi, n.d. It deals with the basic principles of the spiritual sciences. It has been translated into Urdu (Lahore: 1975), and also English under the title: *The Sacred Knowledge of the Higher Functions of the Mind* (Lahore: 1982).
- *Ṣaṭa'āt* (Persian) (Hyderabad: 1970), 54 pp. It discusses various aspects and dimensions of Divine theophany and attempts to explain the nature of the abstract and material worlds and their respective characteristics. It has also been translated into English and Urdu.
- *Fuyūḍ al-Ḥaramayn* (Arabic) (Delhi: n.d.), 144 pp. In this book, Shāh Walī Allāh relates his spiritual experiences during his sojourn in Makkah and Maḍīnah. It has also been translated into Urdu. The Urdu version was published in Lahore in 1947.
- *Anfās al-Ārifīn* (Persian). It narrates the spiritual attainments of the author's forefathers and spiritual ancestors. It was first published in 1335 A.H. in Delhi.

History and Biography

- *Izālat al-Khafā' 'an Khilāfat al-Khulafā'* (Persian), 2 vols. (Karachi: 1286 A.H.) It is one of the most remarkable works of Shāh Walī Allāh on the early Caliphal model. We shall review its contents later in some detail. Its contents have also been included in *Anfās al-Ārifīn*.
- *Qurrat al-'Aynayn fī Tafdīl al-Shaykhayn* (Persian) (Delhi: 1320 A.H.), 336 pp. It discusses the significant achievements of the first two Caliphs and their place in Islam. The discussion is fully substantiated by reference to the relevant verses of the Qur'ān and traditions of the Prophet.
- *Al-'Atīyyah al-Ṣamadiyyah fī al-Anfās al-Muḥammadiyyah* (Persian). It is a short treatise on the biography of Shaykh Muḥammad Phulatī, a great saint and maternal grand-father of Shāh Walī Allāh. Details as to the place and date of publication are not available.
- *Al-Imdād fī Ma'āthir al-Ajdād* (Persian). It is a biographical account of some ancestors of the author. Its contents have also been included in *Anfās al-Ārifīn* (listed at no. 19 above).
- *Surūr al-Mahzūn* (Persian), 24 pp. It is a short but comprehensive biography of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It was first published in Tonk, India in 1271 A.H.
- *Al-Juz' al-Laṭīf fī Tarjamat al-'Abd al-Ẓa'īf* (Persian). It is a short note on the autobiography of the author. It has been translated into Urdu by Muḥammad Ayyūb Qādirī and published in the monthly *al-Rāḥim*, vol. II, no. 5, October 1964, pp. 18-26.³⁷⁷

Al-Budūr al-Bāzighah

This work of Shāh Walī Allāh is considered as one of the three main sources of his socio-political thought, the other two being *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* and *Izālat al-Khafā'*. While Shāh Walī Allāh's approach in the *Hujjah* is scholastic and juridical, it is mainly historical in *Izālat al-Khafā'*, as required by the latter's theme which is also indicated by its title. In *al-Budūr al-Bāzighah*, however, we find that the treatment is predominantly philosophical and metaphysical.

Unlike the *Hujjah*, *al-Budūr al-Bāzighah* does not contain any introduction from which one could have any clue as to what prompted Shāh Walī Allāh to write this work. Further, no student of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought or any of his biographers has brought forth any evidence on the basis of which a definite chronological order of the different works of Shāh Walī Allāh, particularly those of special relevance for our purpose, could be established. Although we have no external source of information to support our hypothesis, a look at the relatively rudimentary and concise form of *Budūr* suggests that it was written before the *Hujjah* and might have been intended to serve as an outline for the latter, which came out as a more comprehensive and gigantic enterprise.³⁷⁸

One of the remarkable traits which appears as a common feature of all the works of Shāh Walī Allāh, particularly of *Hujjah* and *Budūr*, is the development of a terminology of his own by the author for the articulation of his ideas. He, therefore, scarcely seems to confine himself to using the typical terms of Greek philosophy which had been a visible mark of many Muslim scholastic writings prior to him.

One of the striking features of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought which is fully reflected in his writings, is his reconciliatory trend whereby he attempts a blending of rational, traditional and spiritual points of view in an effort to arrive at a comprehensive and balanced perception of the reality. Shāh Walī Allāh appears all along to maintain an equilibrium in his thinking which combines these three elements in their proper proportions.

In *Budūr*, Shāh Walī Allāh's treatment of the problems of sociology and politics seems to be more inclined to an approach of ethical philosophy, which is not as pronounced as in the *Hujjah* and almost absent in *Izālat al-Khafā'*. For example, he goes into a detailed discussion of the essential qualities that characterise man as an 'ethical being'. Then he tries to identify the roots of the ethical traits of human personality in his natural instincts. Thereafter he proceeds to discuss the socio-political organisation of human society with a view to project its role essentially as a protector of the ethical values of the individual and as a promoter of their attainment by the society comprising those individuals.³⁷⁹

Al-Budūr al-Bāzighah (literally, 'full rising moons') consists of a preamble and three discourses. Both the preamble and the discourses are divided into different sections, mostly under separate topical headings but on occasions without them.

The preamble has been devoted to 'some basic issues in philosophy' and is divided into three sections. Following the pattern adopted in the *Hujjah*, Shāh Walī Allāh first of all sets out to define the doctrinal framework of Islamic theism, by presenting a philosophical view of the existence and unity of God. He opens the discussion by refuting the assumptions of some philosophers that the 'Ultimate Being' (*al-Wujūd al-Aqṣā*), was just one unit among the many units of existence, which overwhelms them like the universal overwhelms each of its particular units. He goes on to refute the assertions of a number of philosophies about the 'Ultimate Being' one by one, and in this critical process, articulates Islam's metaphysical position on the total absoluteness of the Ultimate Reality. This reality, according to him, transcends all imaginable scope of human cognition. In this preamble Shāh Walī Allāh also states his views regarding the phenomena of existence as a reflection of certain Divine Attributes. According to him, all possible potentialities and existents flow from God's Attribute of Beneficence epitomised in *al-Raḥmān*, (the Beneficent).³⁸⁰

Despite his sharp critical perception of the philosopher's views, Shāh Walī Allāh does not altogether deny their positive contribution to the understanding of the reality. He divides their ideas into three broad categories: (i) issues on which they fell into error of understanding; (ii) issues on which

they could not reach the utmost aim of their philosophical enquiry and were thus were unable to attain full perception of reality; and (iii) some matters concerning which they were absolutely right.³⁸¹

This preamble is followed by the first discourse on "the issues pertaining to the archetypal man and his distinctive traits rooted in his nature, whereby he is guided towards morals, cultural attainments and healthy customs".³⁸² In this discourse, Shāh Walī Allāh identifies the characteristics of the archetypal man after describing the features of the animal world, of which man is the most perfect prototype. He also points to the qualities that distinguish man from animals, as he has done in the *Hujjah*. But here he goes into greater detail to describe the physical qualities and to analyse the natural psychological traits and the rational faculties of man.³⁸³ He then proceeds to discuss the emergence of social organism, the gradual evolution of culture and the socio-economic dimensions of human social development as a natural and instinctive demand of the peculiar anthropological faculties and potentialities afforded to man by his primordial nature.³⁸⁴

Further, in this discourse of *Budūr*, Shāh Walī Allāh goes into a detailed analytical discussion of the ethical aspect of the human personality. He considers these to be deeply seated in man's psyche and which distinguish him from the rest of the animal species. In this connection, he discusses 'seven virtues' that constitute, according to him, the distinctive marks of developed, sound and normal human disposition. He regards these virtues as the "psychic characteristics of excellence".³⁸⁵ He then proceeds to discuss another significant aspect of the issue which is also one of his important themes in the *Hujjah*,³⁸⁶ namely, human psyche as the exclusive source of all external behaviour of man. The main conclusion which Shāh Walī Allāh has finally drawn from this discussion, both in the *Hujjah* and in the *Budūr*, is that any behaviour in itself is neither virtuous nor vicious. It is the particular psychic state prompting a behaviour which assigns it to either of the two categories.³⁸⁷

This is followed by a detailed discussion of the evolutionary stage of socio-cultural development (*irtifāqāt*), the ways of improving them, their various spheres and departments, the sources of moral decay in the society leading to social and cultural set-backs, and the means of overcoming them. In this discourse, he also traces, as he has done in the *Hujjah*, the natural and healthy evolution of culture in a society from its primary social stages to the final stage of political organisation. But unlike the *Hujjah*, we find that in the *Budūr*, his discussion is more or less confined to the Universal Paradigm of the state as such and does not progress towards any detailed

treatment of the Islamic state and its universal civilisational and ideological rôle which is a hallmark of the *Hujjah*.³⁸⁸

This is followed by a discussion of customs, their variables and different categories from psychological and ethical points of view. Shāh Walī Allāh's analysis of this problem brings him to the conclusion that corrupt customs originate essentially from the psychological deviations of man and his resultant defiance of virtuous deeds, which leads to decay in the *irtifaqāt* and a denial of *iqtirābāt*.³⁸⁹ Shāh Walī Allāh ends this discourse with a note on the universal character of *irtifaqāt* which, according to him, can be fully substantiated by common human experience.³⁹⁰

The second discourse of the *Budūr* is devoted to "the issues pertaining to the archetypal man and his distinctive traits rooted in his nature whereby he is guided to attaining Divine proximity in knowledge and action and saving himself from the trials and travails of the grave and the Hell-fire and other related issues".³⁹¹

As would be evident from its long title, this discourse concerns one of the most remarkably significant themes of this work namely, man's innate cognition of God and the fundamental eschatological truths that are, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, ingrained in his very nature. An acknowledgement of God and a sense of obligation to, or surrender before, Him, is thus deposited in the uncorrupted human conscience prior to its being supplemented by the revelational guidance provided through the Prophets.

The second discourse contains an extremely profound discussion in which Shāh Walī Allāh substantiates the above contention with rational arguments. In this discussion his reasoning is based on the psychological traits of the human soul which, according to him, attain perfection and complete fulfilment by reviving the latent potential of man's personality. Full gratification of man's soul, therefore, lies in responding to this spiritual urge of his own nature.³⁹²

The discourse then proceeds to present an analytical discussion of the foundations of belief (*'aqīdah*), the ways of spiritual purification, and the postulates of moral science of Islam from the simultaneous standpoints of reason and tradition. This bears the distinctive stamp of Shāh Walī Allāh's religious thought.

There appears to be a logical sequence and a natural growth in the contents of the first and the second discourse of the *Budūr*. While the first discourse sets forth the biological, anthropological, ethical, psychological, social and cultural traits of human life, the second spells out the spiritual, religious and other-worldly possibilities and prospects for the human mind and soul. The main thrust of Shāh Walī Allāh's argument is that man's

attainments in the social, cultural and political spheres cannot be properly streamlined along a healthy course without recourse to the fountainhead of religious guidance which is also an urge of man's own conscience.³⁹³

The third discourse of the *Budūr* is a logical continuation of the previous discourses in so far as it spells out the distinctive features of the religious dispensation, focusing on its macro level, after the author has explained the same phenomenon at the micro level. This discourse is, therefore, entitled: ...“On the explanation of religions and the codes of law prescribed therein”.³⁹⁴

The third discourse opens with an analytical exposition of the concept of religion, the causes of its appearance as a social phenomenon, the elements that contribute to its growth, and the factors responsible for variation in the different forms and versions of it subject to the alternations of space and time. Here Shāh Walī Allāh draws a distinction between any religion (*millah*) and the ‘True and Pure Religion’ (*al-millah al-hanifiyyah*) whose first perfect representative in the religious history of mankind was the Prophet Ibrāhīm (peace be upon him). It was by instituting his prophetic mission that God ushered in a universal era in the realm of religion. This True and Pure Universal Religion of God passed through various stages before reaching its point of culmination in the advent of the Prophetic era of Muḥammad (peace be upon him). In this discussion, Shāh Walī Allāh presents a comparative analysis of the components of various religions in order to explain, by contrast, the nature of the ideological mission embodied in the True and Pure Religion of God.³⁹⁵

Thereafter, Shāh Walī Allāh proceeds to discuss the basic characteristics and fundamental teachings of the Religion taught to humanity by the final Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). He states that the attainment of God's pleasure was now contingent upon following this Religion alone, to the exclusion of all other religions and creeds. He also explains the philosophical aspects of this contention of Islam, and substantiates it with rational arguments.³⁹⁶

Although the *Budūr* is an extraordinary work of great academic ingenuity, a work of the same proportions as several other scholarly contributions of Shāh Walī Allāh, yet it could not receive sufficient attention and recognition in the academic circles. This might have been, perhaps, due to the fact that this work was overshadowed by the other more comprehensive and epoch-making contribution of the same author, namely, the *Hujjah*.

Izālat al-Khafā' 'an Khilāfat al-Khulafā'

In the Islamic tradition perhaps only a few works are as remarkable for having so comprehensively and systematically expounded the normative model of the *Khilāfah* as this extraordinary book of Shāh Walī Allāh. This model of the *khilāfah* was realized in history and concretized in the pious reign of the successors of the Prophet (peace be upon him) immediately after his demise. In accord with the consensus of the majority of Muslim scholars throughout the ages, Shāh Walī Allāh also recognises the constitutional pattern of statecraft developed by the earliest successors of the Prophet (peace be upon him) during the first three decades to be the ideal pattern of an Islamic state always and everywhere.

In *Izālat al-Khafā' 'an Khilāfat al-Khulafā'* (lit. 'Removal of Ambiguity about the Caliphate of the [Early] Caliphs'), Shāh Walī Allāh attempts to demonstrate the fundamental importance of this early model of *Khilāfah*, as one of the cardinal principles of Religion. Explaining the purpose of writing this book in its preface, he says:

In this age, the heretic credulity of people has lent itself to the influence of the doctrines of the Shī'ah so much so that many people in this country entertain doubts regarding the validity of the installation of the Orthodox Caliphs. Therefore, Divine favour radiated the heart of this humble servant with a knowledge. It established with certainty the conviction that the accession to the caliphal office (*khilāfah*) by these early elders of Islam was one of the cardinal

principles of Religion. Without strict adherence to this principle, no other principle of the *shar'ah* could be sustained on any firm ground.³⁹⁷

Therefore, although this work chiefly constitutes an argument for the normative value and authentic character of the early *Khilāfah*, nonetheless the author in expatiating on this argument, has also delved deep in explaining the conceptual framework of the institution of *khilāfah* in Islam. Hence, *Izālat al-Khafā'* had generally been regarded as one of the main sources of Shāh Walī Allāh's political thought ever since its first publication in 1286 A.H.³⁹⁸

While Shāh Walī Allāh's treatment of this subject in the *Budūr* and the *Hujjah* is mainly metaphysical and juridical, as we have already noted, his discussion in *Izālat al-Khafā'* is focused on the actualisation of the socio-political ideals of Islam in history. From this historical analysis Shāh Walī Allāh derives the applied principles of state and government. There was another significant pragmatic motive in this academic undertaking on the part of Shāh Walī Allāh: it addressed an intellectual issue of contemporaneous relevance for his time. As we have noted in his own remarks cited above, Shāh Walī Allāh felt inspired to write this book in order to dispel the doubts cast on the institution of Caliphate under the influence of the Shī'ī theologians who questioned the validity of the early caliphal era as a normative model for the socio-political ideals of Islam in history. This perhaps explains why he chose to articulate his views in Persian, the *lingua franca* of the Muslim intelligentsia of India at that time. For a number of his other works, however, he preferred Arabic, as in the case of the *Budūr* and the *Hujjah*, apparently because these works were primarily addressed to specialists in the Islamic lore all over the Muslim world whose intellectual medium of communication had always been Arabic.

Explaining the significance of his endeavour in the preface of *Izālat al-Khafā'*, Shāh Walī Allāh substantiates his contention that the conviction about the valid caliphal authority of the four early caliphs was one of the cardinal principles of Religion. In this connection, he argues that a large body of injunctions contained in the Qur'ān was brief and summarily expressed. Their full understanding and wider ramifications compel recourse to explanations and commentaries of the early pious authorities (*salaf sālih*). Further, for their interpretation we have to fall back on the traditions. These traditions cannot be admitted as an authentic record of the Prophet's exemplary pattern (*sunnah*) nor relied upon in juridical arguments, without their transmission and confirmation by these early authorities. Besides, no instrument of resolving the seemingly conflicting traditions is available to

us except our reliance on their verdicts. In all the above areas, the early authorities have strictly followed the acts and utterances of these Caliphs. Also the compilation of the Qur'ān and a consensus on its authentic reading was accomplished by the efforts of the early caliphs and under their supervision and guidance. Moreover, detailed rules with regard to the institution of the judiciary, the penal ordinances of the *sharī'ah* and the provisions in other fields of public law are based on their opinions and rulings. From these premises, Shāh Walī Allāh arrives at the conclusion that: "Whoever attempts to break away from this root (i.e. the early *khilāfah*), he indeed seeks to obliterate the entire corpus of the Religious Sciences".³⁹⁹

After a brief preface, Shāh Walī Allāh divides this work into two parts. Part one discusses the conceptual foundations and legal and constitutional framework of the *khilāfah*, with its two categories of *khilāfah 'āmmah* and *khilāfah khāṣṣah*, which have been discussed in the previous chapter in some detail. Part one further deals with the arguments for the validity of the early caliphal model and reconciles between the two apparently conflicting views with regard to the discretionary or mandatory character of *khilāfah*.⁴⁰⁰ Part one also presents a detailed explanation of the relevant injunctions of the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* on the basis of which Shāh Walī Allāh upholds the obligatory nature of the *khilāfah*. He then defines various modes of installation of the *khalīfah*, his requisite qualifications, functions and duties and mutual relations between him and the people in general.⁴⁰¹

Shāh Walī Allāh then proceeds to discuss the main ingredients of the early normative model, i.e. *khilāfah khāṣṣah*. This term has been adopted by Shāh Walī Allāh to denote the textual evidence in favour of the four immediate successors of the Prophet (peace be upon him), as distinct from the Caliphs who came after them. He explains its mandatory character and substantiates it by citing a large number of verses and traditions that have a bearing on various aspects of the *khilāfah khāṣṣah*. Then he undertakes a historical appreciation of the role of *khilāfah* in the growth, progress and advancement of Islam's mission and the profound impact of its rich culture and universal civilisation on humanity, which was realised through the agency of *khilāfah* during the various stages of its history. In passing, Shāh Walī Allāh also surveys the rise and fall of the Muslim society during the different phases of caliphal history which, according to him, had always been commensurate with the degree of conformity or conflict between the pattern of *khilāfah* and the criteria provided by the early normative model.⁴⁰²

The second part of *Izālat al-Khafā'* deals with those aspects of the lives of the four early caliphs which point to the singularly excellent virtues

(*faḍā'il*) that make their political conduct an exemplary pattern in statecraft. Thus this work adopts a dual approach, one that combines the juridical and historical treatment of the subject. Further, it sets out to refute the political doctrines of the *Shī'ah*. This is not only the central theme of the book, but also the main motive of this study. Additionally, the book has a pronounced scholastic orientation.

Again in the second part, Shāh Walī Allāh presents an in-depth study of the verses of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's traditions that allude to the high status of the four caliphs in general and the first two among them in particular, either explicitly or implicitly. To this end, he not only interprets the relevant texts (*nuṣūṣ*), but also marshals additional evidence from the generally accepted principles of jurisprudence with regard to the interpretation of texts to support and substantiate his contentions. In this process, he takes notice of the many objections, real as well as hypothetical, that can be raised against these interpretations and then refutes them. He also refutes many political and theological doctrines of the *Shī'ah* by adducing traditional and rational arguments and controverts their assertions that belittle the status of these Companions and Successors of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Shāh Walī Allāh also presents, in the second part of *Izālat al-Khafā'*, various authentic reports contained in the collections of traditions and in the annals of Islamic history. He supplements these reports with his profound analytical comments that go to prove the extraordinarily high moral, ethical and spiritual conduct of the early Caliphs. Further, he highlights their singular role in the reformation and guidance of the society and the expansion and promotion of the universal mission of Islam in their times. In addition to these aspects and dimensions of these personalities, Shāh Walī Allāh also throws light on the intellectual and academic contribution of the Companions of the Prophet, particularly in the fields of the Qur'ān, *Ḥadīth*, law, jurisprudence, international relations, Arabic language and spiritual guidance. All these constitute, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, an extension of the mission undertaken by the Prophet (peace be upon him).⁴⁰³

Political Epistles of Shāh Walī Allāh

It had been common practice in the past among many prominent scholars and religious reformers to communicate with their students, disciples and leaders of opinion through letters. They used this medium to educate and guide their addressees on various issues, especially those of current significance, and also to maintain personal liaison with them. The *maktūbāt* (letters) of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī, and Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd (d. 1831) and the letters of Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī (d.1943) to Qaid-i A‘zam Muhammad Ali Jinnah (d. 1948), the founder of Pakistan, are some prominent examples in this regard.

Shāh Walī Allāh also followed this tradition and frequently wrote letters to his students, friends and the notables of his time. Out of a large number of these letters some two hundred and eighty-two have been preserved in the two volumes of collection prepared by Shāh Muḥammad ‘Āshiq, a cousin, brother-in-law and close friend of Shāh Walī Allāh. This collection was further enlarged and edited by the former’s son, Shāh ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, who was also a student of Shāh Walī Allāh. The latter brought the number of these letters to three hundred and fifty-two.⁴⁰⁴ A useful selection of political letters had been culled out from them by late Professor Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, which he had first published in 1951 in Aligarh, India. He later brought out another enlarged and edited version of his collection, containing some forty letters, with an introduction and Urdu translation of the letters in 1969.⁴⁰⁵

These letters of political significance were addressed by Shāh Walī Allāh to the compiler, Shāh Muḥammad ‘Āshiq, and to some other notables, rulers and kings of his time. They, along with the other works of

Shāh Walī Allāh, provide an important source for the study of his political ideas in the context of the socio-cultural milieu of India at the time of their writing.

The focus of the present study is confined to the theoretical aspects of Shāh Walī Allāh's socio-political thought. It would, therefore, be beyond the scope of this work to attempt to explain the role played by Shāh Walī Allāh in shaping the political future of India, which indeed can constitute the subject of a separate work. However, it would be useful to note here some salient features of the political statements contained in these epistles to see how far Shāh Walī Allāh's response to the political life of his country was in consonance with the ideas he expressed in his other writings.

First of all, it is evident that Shāh Walī Allāh regarded the entire Muslim world as a single entity, even though it may have been under the suzerainty of different political rulers who were virtually independent of each other. This is explained, *inter alia*, by the fact that Shāh Walī Allāh invited the rulers of other countries to intervene politically and militarily in the affairs of India so as to rectify its deteriorating condition.⁴⁰⁶ This attitude of Shāh Walī Allāh appears most pronounced in his letter to Aḥmad Shāh Abdālī (d. 1772), the founder of modern Afghanistan. Apprising him of the deplorable decay found in India, Shāh Walī Allāh appealed to this formidable military commander and ruler of the neighbouring Muslim country to bring his armies into India in order to suppress the forces of anarchy and disorder represented by the Jats and Marathas, the two organised and militant communities among Hindus.⁴⁰⁷ Another important addressee of Shāh Walī Allāh's letters was Najīb al-Dawlah (d. 1770), a powerful Indian notable and chief who was a "close personal friend of Shāh Walī Allāh and a bastion of Muslim Orthodoxy in the Sub-Continent during post-Aurangzeb period".⁴⁰⁸ From 1761 to 1770, the entire politics of Delhi revolved around this most prominent statesman and military commander of India and it was he who carried the entire system of government on his shoulders.⁴⁰⁹

Out of a total of forty letters compiled by Professor Nizami, seven were addressed to Najīb al-Dawlah. Apart from other specific details of their contents, certain points have been conspicuously stressed in these letters. For instance, in a long letter to Najīb al-Dawlah, he says:

No wrong or maltreatment should be meted out to the city of Delhi. The people of Delhi have several times faced the plunder of their wealth and property as well as dishonour and disgrace. That is why the realisation of royal objectives has been delayed. For the cry of the oppressed does have its effects. This time if you want that the

delayed works are done, you should strictly prohibit that no one is to vex or offend the Muslims and the *dhimmīs* of Delhi.⁴¹⁰

Another distinctive trait of these letters is a strong emphasis on subduing, and if necessary, exterminating the organised forces of corruption in order to secure the community's peace and tranquillity from their increasing mischief. In the case of India at the time of Shāh Walī Allāh, these forces were represented by the Jats and Marathas. It was this concern of Shāh Walī Allāh to protect the future of Muslims from the treacherous designs of these evil forces which prompted him to address an appeal to Emperor Aḥmad Shāh Abdālī of Afghanistan for direct physical intervention.⁴¹¹

In one of his letters to Najīb al-Dawlah, Shāh Walī Allāh urges the latter to resolve in his heart to make the word of God exalted, to strengthen the Religion of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and to wage *jihād* against "these accursed people", i.e. the Jats and the Marathas.⁴¹²

It is evident from these examples that the objectives which inspired Shāh Walī Allāh in his actual life were in conspicuous conformity with those he espoused in his writings. The most remarkable concern of his life seems to be the promotion of the universal mission of Islam which, in his opinion, could not be realised without waging *jihād* against the forces of oppression and infidelity. It is this paramount objective, which constitutes the *raison d'être* of the socio-political organisation of Muslim society, embodied in the agency of the *khilāfah*.

Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah

This *magnum opus* of Shāh Walī Allāh, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* (lit. 'The Conclusive Proof of God'), borrows its title from a verse of the Qur'ān (6:149). Explaining the background of this grandest academic venture of his life in its prologue, the author relates an extraordinary spiritual experience that he underwent during one of his meditations. Once following the Afternoon Prayers, he was overwhelmed by the spirit of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and felt covered by something like a robe. In that state of spiritual exaltation, a heavenly suggestion was instilled into his heart towards a re-statement of the faith. At the same moment, he found a light spreading gradually all through his bosom. After a span of time, he once again felt inspired by Divine Providence to rise and take up this task. He felt as if the whole earth had been radiated with Divine luminosity and lights were being reflected in its western hemisphere; and that the *Sharī'ah* revealed to Muṣṭafā, i.e. Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), had reached the threshold of an era in which it will appear in the perfect garment of demonstrative proof. This experience was followed, after some time, by a dream while he was in Makkah. The author saw the two Imāms, Hasan and Husayn, the maternal grandsons of the Prophet (peace be upon him), handing over a pen to him saying: "This is the pen of our maternal grandfather, the Prophet of God (peace be upon him)".⁴¹³

After these successive experiences, Shāh Walī Allāh seriously pondered for some time over the idea of writing a book "which could provide understanding and guidance to the beginners and serve as a reminder for the learned".⁴¹⁴ This ambition was further reinforced by forceful pleading and persistent counsel of his closest companion, cousin and brother-in-law,

Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Āshiq, to the same effect. Thus, thanks to a combination of spiritual inspiration, academic devotion and strong intellectual zeal and ambition, this outstanding historic enterprise came to be realised.

These intuitional suggestions inspired Shāh Walī Allāh to produce a remarkable compendium covering a vast spectrum of themes ranging from the philosophy of religion, law, jurisprudence, ethics, psychology, mysticism, sociology, social anthropology and economics to the philosophy of state and government. He undertook a thorough discussion of numerous dimensions of the Islamic dispensation for human life covering almost all theoretical and practical issues involved therein. Indeed he went much beyond that and took up, for discussion and profound philosophical analysis, each important injunction pertaining to almost all significant areas of life such as those enumerated above. His frame of reference in all these discussions is mainly defined by the parameters of the Qur’ān and the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), to which he strictly confines himself throughout this work. He endeavours to understand, analyse and present the teachings and principles of Islam in their pristine purity, without attempting to read into them any pre-conceived notions of speculative philosophy.

The work is mainly divided into two parts. The first part is like an introduction, as it were, to the second. In the first part, he sets forth the basic principles and premises of religious philosophy that provide the theoretical framework for subsequent discussion of detailed rules and injunctions of the Islamic dispensation presented in the second part.

The second part of the work takes up for discussion each important item of Islam’s agenda for the life of mankind on individual and collective planes, in the spheres of personal ethics and public morality, ritual observances and spiritual purification, business, trade and economics, psychology and sociology, state, government and politics, law, judicature and international relations and finally the universal paradigm of a society founded on Religion.

In elucidating the guidance provided by Islam in these spheres of life, Shāh Walī Allāh adopts simultaneously a rational and traditional approach. First, he sets out to empirically survey the behaviour of the archetypal man, at the micro level. Then he develops the theme further to identify the common features of a universal paradigm of human society at the macro level. Thereafter he proceeds to give a rational explanation of the given features of the individual and social life of mankind. This is followed by identifying the sanctions of Religion that endorse this temperate individual and collective behaviour of man. Thus the final conclusion drawn by Shāh Walī

Allāh establishes an essential harmony between the healthy natural course of human life and the religious dictates of Islam.

In the course of interpreting the injunctions of Islam, Shāh Walī Allāh also corrects a number of misconceptions that distorted, over the course of time, its original teachings in the domains of belief and rituals and with regard to the nature of its ethical, spiritual, social, political and legal directives for mankind.

According to ‘Abd al-Rahīm, one of the translators of *Hujjah* into Urdu, who has added a useful introduction to the thought of Shāh Walī Allāh: “One of the most remarkable trends characterising the present age, is a strong insistence that a rational explanation, logical basis and the wisdom underlying each proposition be provided. This work of Shāh Walī Allāh is an antidote for this disease”.⁴¹⁵ He further says that this work of Shāh Walī Allāh “furnishes authentic, elaborate and convincing answers to the questions of belief, ethics, social organisation, *irtifāqāt*, i.e. stages of cultural development, politics and principles of social life. But sophistry, prejudice, grudge and malice are incurable and no treatment is available for them in the whole world”.⁴¹⁶

Muḥammad Manzūr Nu‘mānī, another scholar who carefully studied the Islamic thought of India, brought out a special issue of the monthly journal *al-Furqān* on Shāh Walī Allāh, which has been an important source of studies on his thought, also paid rich tributes to *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* in the following words:

This work can rightly be called a commentary on the whole of Islam. In all my life I have not been benefited by any human work, as much as God has enabled me to benefit from this book. It is through this work that I have been able to comprehend Islam as a well-knit scheme of life. A number of religious precepts of Islam, in which I used to believe merely as a matter of faith, are now part of my conviction, based on understanding and personal certitude. That was possible after studying this book.⁴¹⁷

It is not possible to take note of all such tributes paid by scholars to this work of Shāh Walī Allāh, for these are simply innumerable. It would, therefore, suffice to conclude by reproducing another brief comment made by a leading scholar of Islam in the recent times namely, the late Maulana Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwī (d. 1419/1999):

We do not find a philosophical explanation of the entire legal system of Islam before Shāh Walī Allāh. Therefore, according to our

knowledge, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* is the first work dealing with this subject so extensively and comprehensively and with an intense emphasis which are all its own. Further, most of its subjects and themes are hitherto unparalleled. It is an exclusive distinction of Shāh Walī Allāh that he combined the varied discussions on philosophy, scholastics, Qur'ān, *Hadīth*, and *Taṣawwuf* with his own forceful contemplation, observation and dialectical vigour.⁴¹⁸

In his brief preface to the *Hujjah*, Shāh Walī Allāh speaks about the main subject-matter of his work. According to him, the most authentic and paramount of all religious sciences, which occupies a fundamental position in the entire religious tradition of Islam, is no doubt, the science of *Hadīth* and its auxiliary branches. Different sections of this science and its many branches occupy varying levels of importance and significance in understanding the message of Religion. But the very core of all sciences, originating from this fountainhead of knowledge and wisdom (i.e. *Hadīth*), is what Shāh Walī Allāh terms '*ilm asrār al-dīn*', the science which enquires into the subtleties underlying the wisdom of religious injunctions. For it is through this science that the meaningful considerations permeating the Divine ordinances can be comprehended, and a clue can be found to their logical order and purposeful coherence. Further, it is through this science that the profound and subtle meanings of various acts of virtue prescribed in the *Sharī'ah* can be discovered. By coming to grips with this science one is able to attain the true perception of what the *Sharī'ah* stands for. One's understanding of Religion, then, becomes like that of a master of prosody for poetry, or that of a logician for the dialectics of philosophy, or that of a grammarian for Arabic language, or like that of a jurist for particular provisions of law.⁴¹⁹ This core of all *Hadīth* sciences and their elucidation constitutes the main subject-matter of *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* and, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, without pursuing its subtleties and grandeur, human bliss cannot be fully attained.⁴²⁰

Among the scholars of *Hadīth* prior to Shāh Walī Allāh, we hardly find anyone who so elaborately identified the inner dimension, as it were, of the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), within a well-integrated rational framework. This unique approach to the interpretation of *Hadīth* is most prominently reflected in the themes of the *Hujjah* more than any other work of Shāh Walī Allāh.

Before proceeding to survey the contents of the *Hujjah*, it seems appropriate to note the author's own description of the thematic plan of his work. According to him, the work is divided into two parts. Part one deals

with the basic principles which govern the wise and beneficial considerations underlying the Divine Ordinances. These considerations that provide anchorage for the injunctions revolve around two main conceptual foundations. These foundations have been discussed in the discourse on virtue and vice (*birr* and *ithm*), and the discourse on the philosophy of religious dispensations (*al-siyāsāt al-milliyyah*). Again the nature of virtue and vice cannot be understood in the true perspective without first comprehending the philosophy of Divine recompense (*mujāzāh*), *irtifāqāt*, stages of cultural development, and human felicity, which have also been discussed in separate discourses. Moreover, the first part deals with the essential components of the religious dispensation relating to *ḥudūd*, i.e. injunctions which aim at the preservation of morals in society. These discussions are followed by an explanation of the methodology for deducing injunctions from the established record of the Prophet's life. The second part of this book deals with the interpretation of the traditions pertaining to belief, knowledge, cleanliness, hygiene, prayers, *zakāt*, fasting, pilgrimage, spiritual excellence (*iḥsān*), transactions of various categories, matters relating to household and family life, civics (*siyāsāt al-mudun*) and economics, etc. This is followed by a discussion of miscellaneous subjects that have a bearing on the above themes in one way or the other.⁴²¹

As we have noted, Shāh Walī Allāh has divided his work into two parts: part one deals with the basic premises from which the principles underlying the Divine Ordinances are to be deduced.⁴²² This part is subdivided into seven discourses (*mabāḥith*) covering the main subjects discussed in this part. These seven discourses are further subdivided into seventy chapters. Each chapter discusses a separate topic under a sub-heading.

Part two of the *Hujjah* deals with "detailed elucidation of the wisdom underlying the traditions transmitted from the Prophet (peace be upon him)". This part is again divided into eleven sections, for which Shāh Walī Allāh has adopted the nomenclature of the scholars of *Hadīth*, which they generally employ in classifying the subjects of their various compendia of the traditions namely *abwāb* and not *mabāḥith* as in part one.

In part one of the *Hujjah*, the first discourse is titled: "Factors responsible for charging man with obligations and providing recompense". This discourse, as would appear from its title, sets forth the distinctive features of the Divine cosmic phenomena, with God as the alpha and omega and the Creator and Sustainer of all beings, and then explains, in that perspective, the position of man as the creature charged with a well-defined set of duties.

In the various chapters of this discourse Shāh Walī Allāh attempts to establish, as a primary premise for his thesis, that religious dispensation comes essentially as a response to the urge rooted in the nature of man himself. He highlights the nature of human soul and its relationship with the spiritual world. He does so to show that man's own fulfilment calls for a transcendental religious guidance and an eventual anticipated return from the visible world of corporeality to the invisible realm of spirituality. He identifies a logical sequence between human accountability and Divine recompense. He then proceeds to discuss elements of variation in human moral traits and the differing capacities for attaining bliss. His analysis betrays an intense grasp of human psyche, the centre from which all actions originate, and shows that the value of all human acts is ultimately determined by the psychic states that prompt them. Thus the main conclusion of the discourse is that the prescription of a religious path for humanity, through revelational guidance, is fully in accord with human nature.⁴²³

The second discourse is devoted to a discussion of the philosophy of Divine recompense, both in this world and in the life Hereafter. In this connection Shāh Walī Allāh tries to find a link between the various acts of man and their necessary consequences. These consequences, according to him, are two-fold: material and spiritual. As there exists a causal relationship between acts and their results in this material phase of life so also there is a relation between every conscious human act here and its consequence that shall be manifest in the Hereafter. As material objects have been invested with certain properties by the nature ordained by God, so the abstract human acts have also been impregnated with definite characteristics by God. Man, therefore, is destined to encounter the inescapable consequences of his deeds. While the results of human acts that appear in the temporal world are somewhat limited, their outcome in the subsequent phase of the Hereafter is going to be total and in absolute measure. This, in a nutshell, is the conclusion of the second discourse of the *Hujjah*.⁴²⁴

In the third discourse, Shāh Walī Allāh discusses his theory of *irtifāqāt*, which is his singular contribution to socio-political thought. As we have already seen, he sets out first to establish that the attainment of *irtifāqāt* was an unavoidable natural course for every social organism at its primary level. He then traces the gradual growth of the socio-economic and cultural needs of human society that ultimately brings about its political organisation at the level of the city-state. He tries to show that each phase of human cultural development naturally paves the way for attaining higher degrees of culture and civilisation so as to finally reach the universal stage of socio-political organisation. The main focus of this discourse is on the

identification of a universal paradigm of a politically organised society, which finally attains, in the course of its healthy natural development, a stage of perfection in the form of *khilāfah*.⁴²⁵

The fourth discourse expounds the philosophy of human bliss. Shāh Walī Allāh, first of all, spells out the essence of bliss with reference to his conception of human nature as he identified it in the first discourse of this work.⁴²⁶ True human bliss, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, is attainable by "the surrender of animality to the enlightened soul and submission of desire to intellect so that the enlightened soul controls animality while intellect dominates the desire".⁴²⁷ In this connection Shāh Walī Allāh draws a clear distinction between "contingent bliss" (*sa'ādah bi al-'ard*) and the "real bliss" (*al-sa'ādah al-ḥaqīqiyyah*) which, according to him, are often confused with each other, leading to many misconceptions on this issue. He then identifies the various degrees of 'bliss', mentioning different approaches to its attainment and the varying capacities among people for its realisation. Thereafter he points to the main impediments that hinder the human pursuit of self-realisation, which leads to the attainment of 'bliss', and concludes the discussion by mentioning the appropriate means of overcoming these impediments.⁴²⁸

The fifth discourse concerns itself with the philosophy of virtue and vice (*birr* and *ithm*). This discussion is prefaced by an analysis of the essence of virtue and the nature of vice, an appreciation of which is regarded as central to any rational comprehension of the Divine ordinances by Shāh Walī Allāh. Because the entire corpus of religious mandates revolve around this cardinal principle in so far they either approve virtue or disapprove vice in varying degrees. In this context, Shāh Walī Allāh discusses the most fundamental postulate of Religion namely monotheism (*tawḥīd*), which he regards as the highest degree of all virtues. For its position "is pivotal in all attitudes of veneration and servitude to the Lord of the worlds"⁴²⁹ This is followed by a discussion of polytheism (*shirk*) which is, as it were, an antithesis to monotheism. Shāh Walī Allāh considers polytheism as the worst form of all evils. He describes the relative degrees of virtue and vice and finally comes to the conclusion that all actions, ideas and attitudes that strengthen and promote monotheism in one form or the other fall in the broad category of virtue (*birr*), and any behaviour, act or notion which draws man any closer to polytheism in any manner, constitutes vice (*ithm*) in higher or lesser degrees.⁴³⁰

The sixth discourse pertains to the foundations of the religious dispensation. It opens with an explanation of the role played by the Prophets in

the religious guidance of human societies, which has a fundamental significance in the entire scheme of moral and spiritual reform of mankind envisaged by religion. Here, Shāh Walī Allāh defines Prophethood and explains humanity's need for Prophetic guidance. Thereafter, he proceeds to establish that the essence of all Prophetic teachings has been one and the same, right from the first Prophet, Adam (peace be upon him), until the final Prophet, Muḥammad (peace be upon him). The only difference between their teachings lay in the details of their legal codes and methodologies of reform. And that too did not represent any significant variation in substance but merely in forms and particulars. This identification of the common essentials of the religious mission of different Prophets is an important theme of Shāh Walī Allāh in the *Hujjah* to which reference has been frequently made by him in different contexts. He then points to some striking features of the religious dispensation which provided the immutable framework of the Prophetic reform of human society in all ages and climes.

Additionally, this discourse contains a discussion of the significance of abrogation (*naskh*) in the religious philosophy of Islam and explains the nature and rationale of replacing one injunction or set of injunctions by another, with particular reference to the teachings of the Final Prophet (peace be upon him).

Shāh Walī Allāh concludes this long discourse by a brief survey of the reforms introduced by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the moral, spiritual, social and cultural life of his contemporary society, against the background of *jāhili* ethos.⁴³¹

The seventh discourse of the *Hujjah* sets forth the central theme of the work for which the previous discussions serve as premises. It deals with the principles of deducing injunctions from the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It is the investigation of these principles and their rational application to the problems of human life which, according to Shāh Walī Allāh, constitutes the very core of all *Hadīth* sciences.

After surveying the categories of knowledge imparted by the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the community, Shāh Walī Allāh discusses the conceptual difference between the underlying benefits (*maṣāliḥ*) and codes of law (*sharā'i*) and their mutual relationship. He then explains the methods of acquiring the knowledge and understanding of the code of injunctions (*sharī'ah*) from the Prophetic source. In this connection he mentions the degrees of authenticity of various compendia of *Hadīth*, and explains the modes of understanding the purport of the Prophet (peace be upon him), from his acts, utterances and approvals. Shāh Walī Allāh also discusses, in this connection, the principles that are to be applied in solving the problem

of traditions that seem to be at variance with each other and explains the nature of disagreement between the scholars and transmitters of *ahādīth* on the one hand, and the jurists on the other. Here, once again, we come across the extraordinary genius of Shāh Walī Allāh, which expresses itself in his exceptional competence to synthesize the apparently conflicting traditions or their interpretations, and his superb ability to discern the common element of unity out of a huge mass of seeming diversity.⁴³² He ends this discourse with a note on the complexity of issues involved in *taqlīd*.⁴³³

In the seventh discourses of the first part of the *Hujjah*, Shāh Walī Allāh attempts to spell out the basic principles of the 'core science' of discovering the latent subtleties of signification in the Prophetic traditions. It is through the application of these principles that one is able to discern the weal and wisdom underlying the Divine injunctions that are deducible from the traditions.

The second part of the *Hujjah* constitutes an attempt by the author to present a detailed rational application of these principles to the traditions pertaining to different spheres of human life on the individual, familial, social, economic, political and spiritual levels.

As pointed out before, this part is divided into some eleven sections that have been designated as *abwāb*, the typical term in vogue among the early compilers of *Hadīth* for a subject-wise classification of traditions. Although the order and method of classification of traditions adopted by Shāh Walī Allāh here are more in keeping with the pattern of *sunan*,⁴³⁴ it shares some of the traits of *jāmi*⁴³⁵ for its comprehensiveness and diversity of contents.

Indeed the scope of the subjects covered by the *Hujjah* (Part II) is much larger, since the classification adopted by Shāh Walī Allāh is more comprehensive than that of *jāmi* and *sunan*. It includes such innovative headings of various sections which are not quite familiar in the *Hadīth* works, e.g.:

- the section on *ihsān* (spiritual excellence);
- the section on earning livelihood;
- the section on civics/politics; and
- the section on economics.

It also includes such subsections as (i) *adhkār* (supplications) in the section on 'spiritual excellence'; and (ii) co-operation and social welfare in the section on earning livelihood; and (iii) a subsection on *khilāfah* in the section on civics/politics.

Thus Shāh Walī Allāh makes the thematic scheme of the second part so comprehensive as to encompass many areas of significance in the individual and social life of mankind wherein guidance could be available from the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

A large body of traditions discussed by Shāh Walī Allāh has been drawn from *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, the *Jāmi'* of al-Tirmidhī, and the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd notwithstanding a few other sources that he has occasionally taken from other than the above four, as he points out himself in his opening remarks of the second part.⁴³⁶

Shāh Walī Allāh avoids going into the typical discussion of the doctors of *Hadīth* and the jurists of the classical times in his treatment of the traditions. Often he does not even quote the full text of a tradition. He merely confines himself to stating the central idea of the relevant tradition on a subject. Then he puts forth his interpretation of the tradition in question and explains its legal import, spiritual significance, and moves on to a discussion of the philosophical dimensions of the injunction contained or implied in it. This is supplemented by a rational argument which is sometimes reinforced by evidence from a sort of empirical inquiry into the customs and conventions that are universally followed in the human society and are accepted as established cultural norms.

At times Shāh Walī Allāh also substantiates his contentions by adducing supportive evidence from the psychological traits of human beings that are universally recognized almost as established facts. Thus, he is able to highlight a compatibility between the Divine injunctions and the human nature on the one hand, and between the Divine injunctions and the genuine temporal needs of the individual and the society on the other.

The above survey will have shown the vast canvas on which Shāh Walī Allāh attempted a re-statement of Islamic world-view in this celebrated work. In the intellectual history of Islam, both in recent times as well as before the time of Shāh Walī Allāh, there are hardly any noticeable instances of producing such comprehensive works, with such a holistic approach to human life and its problems, in both mundane and spiritual domains, as characterizes this *magnum opus* of Shāh Walī Allāh. This singular contribution by the great saint philosopher of South Asia was well received, not only in his own country, but in the Muslim world as a whole. The momentous response of Muslim scholarship to the *Hujjah* is evidenced, *inter alia*, by the numerous translations and several edited versions of the work which have appeared to this date. Moreover, the *Hujjah* has formed, and continues to form, an important part of the curricula of Islamic education

designed for specialists in Islamic disciplines in many a leading centre of Islamic learning in the world.

Moreover, apart from the purely academic significance of the work, which has been widely acknowledged, its message is of immense practical import with a conspicuous contemporary relevance. For it addresses itself to a number of problems which confront the present-day Muslim society in various fields of life, and offers feasible answers worthy of very serious consideration.

Part THREE

Selections from *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*

SECTION I

The Method of Deducing *Irtifāqāt*

1. It should be known that man is similar to the other members of his genus in his need to eat and drink, have sex, seek shelter from the sun and rain, and in requiring warmth in winter, etc. It is a Divine favour to man that God inspired him to derive benefit by the satisfaction of these needs. This inspiration he naturally receives by virtue of his formation as a human species, of which all the members are equal in this characteristic except those who might suffer from abnormal deficiency.
2. In the same manner, God inspired a bee how to partake of different fruits and make a dwelling where members of its species could live together and obey their drone, and then to make honey. Similarly, He inspired a sparrow how to collect grains, to reach water, to run away from cats and hunters, and to fight those who might obstruct the satisfaction of its needs and how its male should copulate with female in the hour of lust and also how the two of them should make a nest on the hills and cooperate with each other in the preservation of eggs and in feeding their young ones. In the same way, every other species has a prescribed course of life which is inspired to its members by their very formation.
3. In the same manner, God has inspired man to derive benefits in the satisfaction of his needs. But in addition to this, man has been endowed with three distinctive qualities by virtue of his higher formation.
4. The first of these qualities is that man's propensity to something stems from a universality of purpose, whereas a beast tends to

achieve an end grasped by its sense-perception or suggested by a temptation instinctively emanating from its nature like hunger, thirst and lust. Man, on the other hand, sometimes tends to achieve a rational purpose to which he may not be attracted instinctively. Hence, he endeavours to realize a good civic system, to perfect his morals, to civilize himself, to emancipate himself from the chastisement of the Hereafter or to establish his prestige in the minds of people.

5. The second distinctive trait of man, apart from these pursuits for social development, is his aesthetic sense. While a beast seeks only that which may quench its thirst and satisfy its instinctive needs, man often requires contentment and pleasure beyond his instinctive needs. For instance, he desires a beautiful spouse, delicious food, elegant dress, and lofty house, etc.
6. The third distinctive quality of man is that among the human species there are people gifted with exceptional reason and perception who discover, by employing their rational faculties, certain beneficial stages of social development. Similarly, there are others among the human species who feel an urge to achieve the same end, but they are not capable of any innovations. But when such people come across some wise men and learn what they have discovered, they wholeheartedly adopt their ideas because they find them in conformity with their own general understanding.
7. For instance, there is a man who feels hunger and thirst, but finds nothing to eat or drink; he undergoes hardship until he finds food and drink. Such a person strives to develop a method to satisfy these needs, but fails to discover the means to do so. Perchance, he comes across a wise man who, having encountered the same difficulty, discovered methods of overcoming it. So he learnt from him about seeds of food and understood methods of growing, weaving, reaping, threshing and refining them and then preserving the produce for the hour of need. Similarly, that wise man explained to him the methods of digging wells in lands which are far from springs and streams, making earthen water pots, skin bags and other big containers to carry and preserve water. Thus he discovers a method of satisfying his needs in an organised and intelligent manner. Then he attempts to crack these seeds as they are with his teeth and to swallow raw fruit, but they do not digest in his stomach. He then strives to overcome these difficulties, but does not find the means. He then comes across another wise man, who has already discovered methods of cooking,

frying, grinding and baking. He learns from this wise man yet another means of satisfying his needs in an organised and intelligent manner.

8. By analogy we can comprehend that in the same manner, man gradually learns to satisfy his needs. A perceptive man observes, as we mentioned, the evolution of many facilities and amenities in human societies from their very inception; then he further observes that centuries pass over humanity being engaged in these practices until a stage comes when a useful set of intuitional knowledge is developed which is reinforced by human cultivation. Humanity becomes attached to its application and lives and dies with it. The essential intuitions of man are related to these three qualities, just like the beating of pulse is related to human life; while their qualities are comparable to the varying degrees of the longness or shortness of the respiratory capacity.
9. These three qualities are not found equally in all human beings. Therefore, it is either due to varying temperaments or differing degrees of intelligence that prompt them to be motivated by a universality of purpose, aesthetic drive and an urge to discover the means of social development, and to pursue them, or due to the variation which exists in their devotion to reasoning and contemplation. These and other causes of variation demand that social development should have two levels.
10. The first level of social development is an essential characteristic of small social groups, like those of the bedouins and the dwellers on mountain peaks and people of the areas which are distant from the virtuous realms. This level of social development is what we call the first stage of *irtifāq*.
11. The second stage of *irtifāq* is that which is possessed by people living in urban areas and civilised cities belonging to those virtuous realms that raise men of excellent morals and wisdom. In such places human social organisation tremendously expands, giving rise to increasing needs and requirements of life. Hence their experience widens and a large number of social practices are developed in the course of their evolution. People living in such societies adopt these practices and follow them consistently. The highest degree of the second stage of *irtifāq* is that which is practiced by kings and rulers who possess higher standards of comfort. They are visited by wise men of various

communities from whom they acquire virtuous practices. This, we would call the second stage of *irtifāq*.

12. When this second stage of social development is achieved, it leads to the third stage. This stage is reached when various transactions take place between human beings in the society, and elements of greed, jealousy, procrastination, and denial of each other's rights crop up, giving rise to differences and disputes. In such a state of affairs, there appear some individuals who are ruled by low passions and are disposed to commit murder and loot. Besides, there are some stages of social development (*irtifāqāt*) of which the benefits are shared by all, but no single individual among them is able or ready to achieve them easily. Therefore, they are compelled to instal a ruler to resolve their disputes and administer their affairs in a just manner, to deter those who commit contravention, to confront all those who have criminal tendencies, and to collect necessary taxes from them, in order to spend their revenues in the proper places.
13. The third stage of social development (*irtifāq*) again leads to the next stage, the fourth stage. It comes about when each ruler tends to become independent in his domain, controls the collection of wealth by way of taxes, etc. and secures the services of gallant men. At this stage, elements of niggardliness, greed and hatred intervene and people start quarreling and fighting each other. In such a state of affairs, they are compelled to instal a *khalīfah* (superior authority) and to follow someone who can exercise the powers of *al-khilāfah al-kubrā* (supreme authority) over them. By *khalīfah* I mean someone who acquires such power and prestige that it is almost impossible for anyone to depose him except after many alignments involving expenditure of huge amounts of wealth, which may not be possible for anyone to undertake except once in a long stretch of time. Each individual *khalīfah* should be different, according to the habits and character of his subjects. The communities whose temperaments are stronger and sharper are always in greater need of rulers and *khu-lafā'* [plural of *khalīfah*] than those which are on a lesser degree of greed and grudge. We would like to explain to the reader the principles of these *irtifāqāt* and the categories of their various stages as perceived by the minds of virtuous communities, that possess high standards of morals and have well-developed and well-established practices which are unquestionable by anyone among them, whether great or small. Now, therefore, listen carefully to what is being said.

SECTION II

The First Stage of *Irtifāq*

14. The primary attainment in this stage of social development (*irtifāq*) is language which is an instrument of expressing something that dawns in the mind of man. The essence of language is that there are certain acts, forms, postures and physical objects associated with a certain sound, either by proximity, causality or some other factor. This sound is then spoken as it is. Thereafter, etymological alterations are made in it through the derivation of various forms and tenses according to variation in meaning. Things which have a bearing on the vision, or which create certain mental images, are likened to the first kind, and a sound similar to it is attempted. Then languages expand beyond the scope of similarity, proximity or any other relationship. Besides, there are some other principles which you will find explained in some of our discussions elsewhere.
15. Another attainment in the first stage of *irtifāq* is cultivation of land, plantation of trees, digging of wells, manners of cooking and enriching food, making of pottery and water containers. It also includes taming of beasts and their preservation in order to utilise their backs, meats, skins, hair, furs, milks and their offspring. Similarly, in this stage man acquires the ability to build a dwelling which can provide shelter from heat and cold. The dwelling might be a cave, nest or anything similar to them. He also acquires the ability to make dresses which serve the same purpose for him as feathers for birds or skins for animals or leaves for trees or anything else which man is able to make manually. Another attainment is the identification of a spouse, in whose partnership he is not disputed by anyone, and through whom he satisfies his sexual urge, procreates his progeny, and is assisted by her in his domestic needs, including the raising

of children. Non-humans, on the other hand, do not identify their spouses, except by chance or by living together as twins and gradually reaching the stage of companionship. This stage of *irtifāq* also includes a discovery of such instruments as are necessary for cultivation, plantation, digging and taming of beasts like mattock, bucket, plough and ropes, etc. Man's ability to exchange and barter things and to perform certain acts through cooperative activity is also another attainment in this stage.

16. Also in this stage, an individual, who is most sound in opinion and strongest in controlling human affairs, comes forward. He subdues the rest of his people and becomes their leader, in one way or the other. Similarly, this stage of *irtifāq* includes an established practice for settling disputes and for preventing injustice and exploitation, and repulsing those who commit aggression. It is essential that in every community there are some individuals who are able to discover methods of *irtifāq* in matters which concern them all, and then the rest of the community should follow them. It is also essential that there are some individuals in the community who love beauty, comfort and luxury, in one way or the other. Similarly, there are others who are proud of their moral traits such as bravery, generosity, eloquence and sharp intelligence, while there are others who crave for spreading their fame and exalting their prestige. God Almighty has favoured His servants by revealing various elements of this first stage of *irtifāq* in His great Book because He knows that prescribing obligations through the Qur'ān includes all groups of mankind and also that it is only the first stage of *irtifāq* which concerns all humanity.

SECTION III

The Science of the Manners of Living

17. This science contains the wisdom to discover methods of *irtifāq* in respect of needs pertaining to the second state of *irtifāq*, as we explained before. The basic idea is that when the first stage of *irtifāq* is attained, it is subjected to the scrutiny of the right experience in every sphere of activity. Then modes of behaviour that prove more beneficial and less harmful are adopted, and the rest are dispensed with. In the same way, the activities pursued at this stage of *irtifāq* are compared with high standards of morals to which people of perfect temperaments are disposed. Then the activities that are compatible with those standards are retained and the rest are eschewed. Similarly, all the activities which fulfil the requirements of sociability and amicable dealing among people and conform to the aims arising from the universality of purpose are adopted.
18. The main issues involved in this sphere are the manners of eating, drinking, walking, sitting, sleeping, going to lavatory, conjugal life, dressing, maintaining household, cleaning, beauty care, conversation, use of medicines, and incantation for the cure of diseases, foretelling future events, feasts on happy occasions like birth, marriage, festivals, return of a traveller, mourning on grievous occasions, visiting the sick, burying the dead, etc.
19. There is consensus among the inhabitants of civilised societies with healthy temperaments whose example is worthy of notice, that filthy food such as the flesh of dead animal, rotten food or [flesh of] animals whose temperaments are unbalanced and behaviour unsound, should not be eaten. Such people also prefer that food is served in utensils, and is placed on a dining table; and when they intend to

eat, face and hands should be cleaned, and that improper postures and greedy feelings be avoided, such being acts which may generate feelings of rancour among the participants of the meal. They also prefer to abstain from drinking stinking water and to avoid drinking from lips without recourse to the use of hands and pots and gulping down a drink. They also have a consensus on the desirability of cleanliness of body, dress and habitat from all contaminations of filth and dirt. That includes the uncleanliness which grows naturally like odours of mouth which are removable by cleaning of teeth, hair growing under armpits, and pubic hair, dirt of dress, and overgrowth of vegetation around the house.

20. There is also a consensus that a person should be distinguished among people for being properly dressed, with his hair and beard combed and that a woman, when attached to a man in matrimony, should beautify herself with dyestuff and jewellery and similar other means. They also agree that dress is grace and nakedness disgrace, and exposure of private parts is shameful, and that the best dress is that which covers most of the body. This is so because a dress which conceals merely the private parts cannot sufficiently cover the whole body. There is a similar agreement on foretelling future events by one means or the other, through dreams, stars, foreboding, prognosticating by the flight of birds, soothsaying, geomancy or similar other means. In the same way, whoever grows with a healthy temperament and sound taste, of necessity chooses in his speech words which are not disgusting to hear or cumbersome for the tongue to pronounce. He also chooses expressions and phrases which are sound and faultless, and adopts a style which charms the audition of the listeners and attracts their hearts. Such a person is considered a standard of eloquence.
21. In short, in every department of life, there are some universally accepted ideas among people of different societies, however remote they might be from each other in time and space. People, however, differ in developing detailed principles of these mores and etiquettes. A physician, for instance, will develop them according to the priorities of medicine; an astrologer will base his ideas on the properties of stars and a theologian will derive his thoughts from the principles of spiritual excellence (*iḥsān*) as you can find in their literature in

detail. Every community has an apparel and etiquette of its own, according to its temperament and habitude, by which its members are distinguished from others.

The Management of Household

22. By the management of household we mean the wisdom to discover ways and means of preserving the relationship existing between the people of one house at the second level of *irtifāq*. Four issues are involved in this discussion, namely, marriage, birth of children, possession and companionship. The root of this development is that the instinctive need to sexual intercourse necessitates a contact and fellowship between man and woman. Then their affection towards children necessitates their mutual cooperation in their upbringing. By nature a woman is abler to nurse children. Moreover, she is of lighter intellect, more evasive from hardships, more complete in modesty and attachment to the house. She is also more skilful in looking after ordinary matters and has a greater capacity for sacrifice. A man, on the other hand, is more accurate in intelligence, has a stronger ability to protect himself from disgrace, and has greater courage to undertake challenging tasks. He also has more capacity to wander about, assert himself, to debate with people and to jealously pursue his aims. Moreover, neither the life of a woman is complete without man, nor can a man dispense with woman.
23. Natural rivalries and jealousies among men over women require that these affairs be resolved by proper attachment of a woman to a man as the latter's wife in the presence of witnesses. Similarly, man's interest in woman, her sanctity in the eyes of her guardian, and her protection by him demand that there be dowry, proposal and a guarding restraint on the part of the guardian. Further, if the doors were open for the guardians to desire their unmarriageable relations (*maḥārim*), it would have led to the great harm of preventing women from marrying whomsoever they desired. In this case, there would

not have been anybody to solicit her matrimonial rights on her behalf in spite of her importunate need for such a person. Besides, it would have given rise to controversies about the establishment of kinship, etc. Apart from these considerations, healthy human temperament is disposed to the least desire of the companionship of a mate from whom he is born or who is born from him, or who has grown with him like the two branches of one tree.

24. Moreover, modesty prevents express mention of the need to sexual intercourse, and demands that it should be euphemistically conveyed with reference to a point of fulfillment, which both of them aspire, as if they were created to attain it. Further, civilised way of publicising the affair and symbolising the rise of man and woman through their betrothal requires that a feast be organised to which people should be invited and entertained with music and songs, etc. to mark the event. Hence, for reasons many of which we have mentioned and others omitted counting on the understanding of the intelligent, marriage in the conventional form, I mean, the one between those other than the relations in the prohibited degree, in the presence of people, with payment of dower and previous proposal, having regard to proper match, with the indulgence of guardians, and with a feast to mark the event, has been a well-established practice.
25. Similarly, the custodianship of men over women and their being responsible for women's living, and the latter's serving the household, nursing children and being faithful spouses, is also an essential characteristic of human habit and disposition which God has inculcated in the very nature of men. In this matter, there is no difference between Arabs and non-Arabs.
26. Each spouse strives to strengthen matrimonial cooperation in such a spirit of camaraderie that each regards the gain or loss of the other as his own. Success in this striving depends on their ability to adapt themselves to a lasting matrimony. At the same time, it is necessary to keep the door for deliverance open in case the two of them are not happy with each other and are unable to care for each other, notwithstanding the fact that divorce is the most detestable of the permissible acts. It is necessary to impose certain restrictions on divorce and to prescribe the intervening period (*'iddah*), both in case of divorce or death of the husband. Prescription of *'iddah* after the termination of marriage is meant to honour the institution of marriage, to emphasize its significance in the minds of people, to show consideration for the

long association and companionship between the spouses, and lastly, to protect the lineage from confusion and doubt.

27. The need of children for their fathers and the latter's favourable inclination towards them by instinct, demand that they [that is, the children] are trained to act in a manner beneficial to them according to their nature. Similarly, the advancement of the fathers in age by virtue of which they acquire more wisdom and experience alongside the dictates of right morality, i.e. repaying good with good, since the parents undergo in the upbringing of their children hardships which are well-known, it became an essential practice in civilised human societies to practice kindness toward parents.
28. The varying capabilities of the descendants of Adam demand that there be among them individuals who are leaders by nature. They are shrewd and able to maintain an independent living. By instinct, they have an aptitude to dominate and to live in comfort. Similarly, there should be other individuals who are servants by nature. The latter are people of weak intelligence and are inclined to act as they are commanded by others. The living of both these groups of individuals cannot be complete without their mutual concord. It is, therefore, necessary that both of them commit themselves firmly to a durable cooperation in pleasant times as well as in hours of adversity. By some coincidence, one of them captures the other and is able to sustain this captivity, and thus this possession becomes an established practice. Then there arises the need to prescribe certain rules governing this relationship by which both the possessor and the possessed should voluntarily abide, and on the violation of which they may be held to censure. However, there must remain a way out in one form or the other to secure deliverance from this servitude, either in return for some consideration or otherwise.
29. The incidents of this life drive man to face countless needs and problems resulting from disease and other adversities. Moreover, man has to perform his obligations to others. He cannot cope with all these problems of life single-handedly, and is constantly dependent on the cooperation of his fellow beings. All men are equal in this need for cooperation from fellow beings. Therefore, mankind felt the need to establish a lasting congeniality among them to prescribe rules of conduct to help the needy and aid those in trouble. These are binding upon them and on their violation they incur social censure.

30. These needs have two levels. The needs of the first level cannot be satisfied, unless everyone regards the loss and gain of the other as his own and exhausts all his energies in support of the other through obligatory expenditure and mutual inheritance for each other's benefit; in short, through such other acts as are equally binding on both sides. This established the principle that: "entitlement to a benefit incurs a liability as well". Out of all people, this first level of mutual support is most properly applicable to relatives because their mutual love and companionship is a natural thing. The other level involves a lesser degree of mutual support and assistance. Therefore, it was necessary that the help and aid of the disabled and the depressed should be a unanimously accepted practice among people, while cooperative relationship among kith and kin should be further strengthened and emphasised to greater degree than the preceding category.
31. The main issues which form part of this subject (i.e. household management) include an understanding of: (i) the factors which prompt people to marry; (ii) the factors which impel the abandonment of marriage; (iii) the common practices of matrimony; (iv) the qualities required of the spouses, including the obligations of the husbands, which consist of the ability to live amiably with their spouses; protecting the sanctity of private life from indecency and disgrace; and the obligations on the part of the wife, comprising chastity, fidelity to the husband, and expending her energies in looking after the general welfare of the house; (v) modes of re-conciliation between spouses who violate matrimonial duties; (vi) procedure of divorce and the practice of mourning over the deceased husband; (vii) nursing and up-bringing of children; (viii) kindness to parents; (ix) control of slaves and servants and kind treatment to them including service of the masters by the slaves and the procedure of manumission; (x) observance of obligations toward kith and kin and neighbours; (xi) help and assistance to the poor members of the society, and cooperation in providing aid to them in calamities and adversities; (xiii) respect for the chief of the community or clan and his pledging himself to look after the welfare of his community; (xiv) distribution of heritage among the heirs; and (xv) protection of lineage and descent.
32. You will never find any community of human beings which does not subscribe to the principles of these activities as enumerated above and does not strive to establish them, irrespective of religious differences or geographical distances that might set them apart.

The Science of Human Transactions

33. This science embodies the wisdom to discover the ways and means of establishing exchange and mutual cooperation and earnings pertaining to the second stage of *irtifāq*. The fundamental principle in this respect is that when human needs multiplied and man sought to attain excellence in their satisfaction so as to provide comfort to the eye and pleasure to the soul, it became difficult to achieve this purpose by individual effort. For instance, if someone found food in excess to his needs, but could not procure water, while another person obtained excessive quantity of water, but could not obtain food, each of them sought what the other possessed. So they found no other way to solve their problem except by recourse to exchange. Thus originated the idea of exchange and barter in response to human need. This necessitated an agreement between human beings under which everyone undertook to provide a certain need, to excel in it, and to strive for providing all instruments necessary for it. Then he made it a means to acquire all his other needs through exchange. Thus exchange became an established practice among people.
34. There were a lot of people interested in certain things but not interested in others. When, in such a circumstance, they could not find anyone with whom to make transactions they had to adopt a *modus operandi* for this purpose. They agreed to adopt durable metallic objects as means of exchange between them and this became an established custom among them. The best of metallic objects used for this purpose were gold and silver, as they were small in size and their units were identical in value. Besides, they were tremendously, beneficial for the human body and were also utilised as means for

beautification. Therefore, gold and silver came to be naturally used as real money, while other things were used as money by agreement.

35. The chief means of earning are cultivation, grazing, acquisition of valuable minerals, cultivation of vegetables, and breeding of animals from land and sea. They also include various crafts such as carpentry, smith craft, weaving, and all such other crafts and vocations whereby various natural substances are put to use for achieving the purpose of the requisite *irtifāq*. Then trade became a source of earning. So also all pursuits for the welfare of the society and every other activity to provide people with their needs became sources of earning. As human souls attain refinement and go deeper in the love of pleasure and comfort, sources of earning diversify and each person specializes in a particular vocation. This specialisation is determined by either of the two factors:

- (i) the capacity of the person. Hence we find that war suits a brave man, arithmetic suits a shrewd man having good memory, while lifting of weights and carrying out tough manual jobs suit a man of strong physique;
- (ii) chances that arise and determine a person's induction in a particular vocation. For instance, the son of a blacksmith and his neighbour can find opportunities of smithcraft more easily than any other profession and more conveniently than other people. In the same way, a dweller of coastal areas can take to fishing more easily than any other vocation and more conveniently than other people. There remain some individuals who do not have enough moral strength to strive after legitimate means of earning and they degenerate to pursue the means of earning, which are harmful for the society such as theft, gambling, and beggary.

36. Exchange either takes place between one material thing and another, which is called sale, or between a material thing and usufruct which is called leasing and hiring. Since the solidarity of a society is difficult to be maintained without developing mutual congeniality and love among its members—which often depends on providing what is needed without return there emerged the practices of gift and lending. The solidarity of a society also demands that its poor members be helped and assisted. Therefore, there arose the practice of charity and almsgiving. This attitude of mutual help and assistance is all the

more required because of the fact that there are always some individuals who are clumsy while others are competent; some are bankrupt while others are rich; some disdain trivial tasks while others do not disdain from them; some are burdened with needs while others relax in leisure. The living of the members of a society, therefore, cannot be maintained without mutual cooperation. This cooperation is not possible without certain contracts and stipulations and a general agreement on the established conventions. Thus, there emerged the practices of crop-sharing, profit and loss sharing, hire, partnership and agency. Similarly, there arose needs which led to mutual loans, credits and deposits. When people experienced breach of obligations, evasion and procrastination in their dealings, they resorted to calling people to witness, to writing of deeds and documents, mortgages, sureties and bills of exchange. As people rose in their level of comfort and luxury, diverse forms of cooperative activities developed. You cannot find a community of human beings which is not engaged in such transactions and which does not distinguish justice from injustice.

God knows best.

The Administration of the City-State

37. *Siyāsāt al-madīnah* (civics) is the wisdom concerned with the methods of preserving the relations existing between the members of the city-state. By city-state I mean a socio-economically homogeneous group of people who have regular transactions with each other, and who are distributed into various houses. The basic principle underlying *siyāsāt al-madīnah* is that the entire society is one single person from the point of view of the relationship which binds it together. This 'person' is composed of various parts and a social organism. Every composite is likely to face some flaw or defect in its substance or form, or to suffer from some malady, that is, a condition from which another condition is better for its peculiar constitution, well-being, improvement and appearance.
38. The city-state consists of a large number of people whose unanimous agreement on just and fair conventions is not possible, nor can they deter one another except through achieving the distinction of an office, an office without which disputes are likely to erupt. Therefore, it is necessary for the proper administration of the affairs of the city-state that there be someone on whose obedience all men who are capable of exercising the ability to hire and fire, should agree. Such a man should enjoy glory and prestige and the cooperation of aides.
39. People who are more narrow-minded, are more violent, have greater tendency to kill, and are inclined to be seized by fury, are in greater need of a coercive political authority. It is a source of great disorder that some wicked individuals attaining ascendancy and prestige should join together to pursue their desires and violate the established norms of fairness and justice. Such people either pursue their

wicked ways out of greed for the wealth possessed by others and become highwaymen, or they inflict injury on the people out of mere contempt or jealousy, or out of a desire to capture political authority. Apprehension of such a disorder necessitates marshalling of human resources and preparation for war.

40. These evil deeds of disorder include attempts by some cruel people to deprive someone of his life, or to cause any hurt or harm to him or his family by making advances towards his spouse, or illegitimately desiring his daughters or sisters. Such activities also include attempts to openly usurp someone's property or to secretly steal it as well as attempts to defame someone, by attributing to him something abominable which deserves censure, or by using rough and rude speech to him. They also include activities that bring invisible harms to the society and its members such as practice of magic, surreptitious administration of poisons, spreading corruption and perversion among people and instigating subjects against their rulers, servants against their masters and wives against their husbands. Similarly, they include practices of moral turpitude that involve neglect of obligatory *irtifāqāt* such as sodomy, tribad, and sexual intercourse with beasts. Such practices obstruct the avenues of legitimate matrimony and drag man completely away from healthy nature. They amount to the reversal of human nature like turning a male into a female and *vice versa*.
41. Other forms of disorder include a wide range of disputes and quarrels, like rivalries over women without legitimate attachment to them, and addiction to wine, etc. They also include such harmful activities for the society as gambling, usury and its doubling and redoubling, bribery, cheating in weights and measures, forgery through concealing defects in commodities, monopoly, hoarding and deceiving customers in sale.
42. Disorder in society also takes place through complicated disputes between different individuals. Each individual clings to some legal lacuna and tries to get the benefit of doubt and thus the truth of the matter does not crystallise. This requires adherence to proofs, oaths, documentary and circumstantial evidence and similar other means. All these modes of finding truth are governed by recognised principles and conventions so as to discern the cause of preference and to understand the tricks of litigants, etc.

43. Disorder also occurs when people stick to ruralisation and become content with the first stage of *irtifāq*, or adopt a civic system altogether different or when the allocation of various vocations among them becomes unbalanced and harmful to the society. For example, most of the members of the society engage themselves in trade and abandon agriculture, or most of them start making their living out of military service alone. What ought to be done instead is that while the agriculturists play the role of producing food for the society, other craftsmen like manufacturers, carpenters and government functionaries should supply the digestive salt for that food. Disorder is also created sometimes by the spread of predatory animals and vermin, which warrants necessary measures to eliminate them.
44. Among various protective steps that are taken for the common benefit of all members of the society is the construction of buildings, such as erecting of walls around the city, inns, forts, ports, bazars, building of bridges, digging of wells, discovery of fountains, provision of boats on river banks, etc. These steps include giving incentives to traders and merchants to continue supplies through cordial persuasion and inducing people of the city to deal amicably with outsiders because such an attitude opens the way for their frequent visits. These steps also include prompting farmers not to leave any land barren, the craftsmen to excel in their products and improve them, and the people of the society in general to go for the learning of various arts and sciences, such as calligraphy, mathematics, history, medicine, and other useful branches of knowledge.
45. These also include being aware about the general conditions of the society so that those who are corrupt and those who are honest may be identified. This awareness is also necessary so that those in need are identified and may be assisted, and those who are masters of some useful art or craft may be discovered and their services utilised.
46. The chief causes for the ruin of the city-states in our times, are two:
 - (i) Some people over-burden public exchequer, and become habitually dependent on it for their living under the pretext that they are warriors, or scholars with a claim to being financed by the public exchequer. They also include people who are generally close to the rulers like ascetics and poets and all such people who depend on parasitical means for their living. The essence of their attitude is earning a living without performing any service. Each group of such parasites

is succeeded by another group and becomes an unpleasant burden on the society.

- (ii) Heavy taxes are imposed on farmers, merchants and artisans creating difficult conditions for them. This leads to ruinous injustice to law-abiding and responsible people and gradually to their elimination, while strong and militant elements become increasingly invincible and treacherous.

47. The society's affairs can improve only by establishing a fair and convenient system of tax-collection and maintaining the strength and size of the controlling machinery of the government in proportion to the demands of necessity. Let the people of our times take note of this significant point.

God knows best.