Conclusions

Shah Waliullah lived in Delhi, India’s capital, and then ruled by the Mughals. The Mughals were next to the Ottomans in power and prestige, at least until the beginning of the 18th century. But soon decadence and anarchism engulfed the whole empire. Regional forces from all over India were on the path of revolt, seeking to annex Delhi and establish their own hegemony. Frequent changes of kings weakened the regime, and Mughal rulers lost their wisdom, courage and political insight. Luxurious living, extravagance, an empty treasury and heavy taxation added to the unrest and anxiety of their subjects. In this way, disunity and disintegration were the biggest challenges faced by Muslim rule in India.

Shah Waliullah advised the Muslims to return to the Arabic language, Arabian dress and Arab style of living and preferring them to others. Above advice given by him proved that he was not at all pleased with the Iranian and Hindu cultures which had entered the palaces of Empires and nobles of the Mughal Empire and to a pure Muslim society.

He kept himself away from the court of the king and active politics but he could not keep himself aloof from the political arena. When he saw that regional forces were about to put an end to centuries old Muslim rule in India and establish their own hegemony, he wrote to the ruler of Afghanistan for direct assistance. Although the latter acceded to his request, the Mughal ruler of the time did not avail himself of this opportunity to correct both this own behavior and reinforce his rule. Thereafter, Shah Waliullah chose an academic career to carry out reform and renovation. Since unity of the Muslim ummah was the most pressing need of the time, he called upon the removal of rigidity among the followers of Islam by inviting them to rely in their matters on the Quran and Sunnah. He stressed Tawhid as the basis of this unity. He criticized heretic Sufism, but approved that form of Sufism which did not conflict with the authentic teachings of Islam.

Shah Waliullah was born in the beginning of 18th century (1114 H./1703 A.D.) which was a very uneasy, critical and ruinous period for the Muslims in all spheres-political, social, religious, educational etc. He lived in an age when the Muslim society and the government were heading towards decline. Shah Waliullah completed
his education under Shaikh Abdur Rahim (d. 1131 H./1718 A.D.) and other scholars in India and served as the teacher in Madrasah Rahimiyah which was established by his father in Delhi. During this long teaching he studied deeply and widely and taught the students different religious and rational subjects, so he got the opportunity to reflect over a variety of issues. After studying the fiqh and usul of four mazhabs and hadiths from which they deduce those fiqh and usul and with divine help his heart became satisfied with the methods of the jurists who depended on hadith.

Commenting on Shah Waliullah’s role as a Sufi, Prof. Gibb has rightly said: “he has contributed essential elements to the present currents of thought in Islam”. He did not merely lay the foundation of a new Ijm al-kalam, but he was striving to restate the bases of Islamic theology in a manner which broke away from the formalism of orthodox manuals, and after all, he had laid new stress upon the psychological and ethical elements in the religion. Shah Waliullah was a prolific warrior of Islam. He bravely challenged the problematic contemporary situations. Shah Waliullah did not hesitate to analyse the formidable political atmosphere. His encyclopedic knowledge and steadiness in practical life are the great models for the Muslim world. As Allamah Muhammad Iqbal remarks, “he was the first Muslim to feel the urge for rethinking the whole system of Islam without any breaking away from its past”. The fact to which Shah Waliullah draws our attention is that since the religion of Islam has come for the establishment of the greatest international power and when its domination is to continue forever, it can be rightly ensured only when the Muslim nations make themselves strong both morally and materially, draw closer and work together as far as possible.

Shah Waliullah’s thought was for the economy, which brought development to the people who were below the poverty line. He wanted to increase the purchasing power of the common man, which was so much needed during his days. He was not in favor of the economic model, which did not benefit the economically weak class. He also came down heavily on the policy dictated by the feudal-oriented system. He was more concerned about the value while the market economy of those days was concerned about price. He realized that the capitalist model of development was ruining the country so far as the interest of the common man was concerned. He did not approve the concentration of the sources of economy in a few hands and in its
place, suggested an alternative arrangement in which the economy is largely beneficial for the humanity. He criticized the development of the country which was not for the masses but for a particular rich section of the society. For him the basic need of the society was to augment the production for the masses, which was the need of the hour. The problem of the common man, he emphasized was an equitable or just distribution of the wealth and that the sources of income should be utilized for the benefit of the masses. Shah Waliullah considered the economic model of those days utterly alien to the realities of the country, which was inhabited largely by the toiling masses. He wanted the market to be for the people and not the people to be for the market.

Shah Waliullah’s thoughts on the economic conditions of those days provide yet another example of his masterly skill in integrating economic theory with ethical values. No doubt, he was definitely ahead of his time in suggesting solution for the ills of the society. All his emphasis was on the plea that the economy of the society should not be pushed into the hands of the capitalist class. It should be for the larger and needy section of the population of the country which included agriculturists, small traders, labor and people belonging to different vocations. Needless to say, he also defined injustice and unfairness as the creation of imperfection in the market and the artificial raising of prices.

Shah Waliullah stands in the Indian subcontinent’s history as a link between medieval and modern Islamic thought. Through his writings on various Shāri’ah sciences, he brought about a revolution in the Muslim mind on that continued in inspire his readers even today. Focusing on the economic problems of his time, he reflected upon the economy’s applied aspects and such theoretical issues as a person’s basic occupation, the need for a division of labor, the nature and function of money, and undesirable economic practices. He also analyzed riba al-fadl and riba al-nasi’ah in economic terms and emphasized the need and importance of having a full treasury.

In addition, he formulated a theory known as al-irtifaqat. “Opening from simple village life” and ending with an “global society,” he divided society’s socioeconomic development into four stages, the first of which is dominated by the simple economic struggle and the last of which is developed to maintain a “now political organize on top of the global level” in order to “maintain” the various states’
socioeconomic interest and establish mutual “quiet and fairness”. The entire economic “thoughts” revolve around and are related to his concept of *irtifaqat.*

Shah Waliullah decided an academic career to carry out reform and renovation. Since Muslim unity was the most pressing need of the time, he called for the removal of rigidity among Muslims by inviting them to rely on the *Quran* and *Sunnah,* stressed *tawhid* as the basis of unity, and criticized what he considered to be “heretical” *Sufism.* In his discussion of public finance, Shah Waliullah classifies countries as “pure Muslim” and “mixed” societies. According to him, the former will require fewer public expenditures and sources of income than the latter.

The relevance of Shah Waliullah’s theory of human development to us today, as he himself points out, is that when we cannot control of the fourth stage, we should adorn and improve the third stage; when we lose the third stage, we should concentrate on bettering the second stage and so on, until we regain the next higher stage. The national and international socioeconomic and political institutions can serve their inherent purposes only if they function properly and crime, corruption, exploitation and oppression are eliminated. The increasing concern with improving the human development index, as well as many modern-day writers’ ongoing emphasis on adopting a value based system, only shows Shah Waliullah’s continuing relevance. History of *irtifaqat* is, therefore, a lasting and still-relevant contribution to the social sciences.

Apart from the Holy *Quran,* Shah Waliullah also wrote authentic books on *Hadith,* the principles of *Hadith,* *Tafseer* and on mystical subjects. But the most popular is the book of *“Hujjatullah-al Baligha.”* It explains how Islam was found suitable for all races, cultures and people of the world and how successfully it solves social, moral, economic and political problems of human beings.

His works may be classified into six categories. The first deals with the Holy *Quran.* It includes his translation of the Holy Book into Persian, the literary languages of the subcontinent of those times. According to him, the object of studying the Holy Book is to reform human nature and correct the wrong beliefs and injurious actions. The second category deals with *Hadith,* in which he had left behind several works, including the Arabic and Persian commentaries on *“Mu’atta”*, the well-known collection of the traditions of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) compiled by Imam Malik. He
attached great importance to this collection of traditions by Imam Malik, even greater
than those of Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim. He is an outstanding Muhaddith and
links of all modern scholars of Hadith in the subcontinent may be traced to him. Shah
Waliullah wrote a number of books and pamphlets dealing with Hadith. The third
category deals with ‘Fiqh’ or Islamic Jurisprudence, which includes “Insaaf-fi-
bayaan-i-Sabab-il-Ikhtilaaf” which is a brief but a very interesting and informative
history of the Islamic Jurisprudence of the last five centuries. The fourth category
deals with his works based on mysticism. The fifth category pertains to his works on
Muslim philosophy and Ilm al-Kalam. He also wrote a pamphlet on the principles of
Ijtihad and Taqlid. In his “Principles of Ijtihad” he clarifies whether it is obligatory
for a Muslim to adhere to one of the four recognized schools of Islamic Jurisprudence
or whether he can exercise his own judgment. In the opinion of Shah Waliullah, a
layman should rigidly follow his own Imam but a person well versed in Islamic law
can exercise his own judgment which should be in conformity with the practice of the
Holy Prophet (pbuh). But the most outstanding of all his works “Hujjatullah al-
Baligha” which deals with such aspects of Islam that are common among all Muslim
countries. In its introduction, he observed: Some people think that there is no
usefulness involved in the injunctions of Islamic law and that in actions and rewards
as prescribed by God there is no beneficial purpose. They think that the
commandments of Islamic law are similar to a master ordering his servant to lift a
stone or touch a tree in order to test his obedience and that in this there is no purpose
except to impose a test so that if the servant obeys, he is rewarded, and if the
disobeys, he is punished. This view is completely incorrect. The traditions of the Holy
Prophet (pbuh) and consensus of opinion of those ages, contradict this view. The sixth
category deals with his works on the Shia-Sunni problem which had become
somewhat acute in those days. His writings, on this subject have done a great deal in
simplifying this problem. His theories pertaining to economics and socialism are of
revolutionary nature and he may be considered as the procress of Karl Marx. Writing
about his works in the History of the Freedom Movements, Sheikh Muhammad Ikram
states: Shah Waliullah wrote learned works and initiated powerful and beneficial
movements, but perhaps no less important are the invisible qualities of approach and
outlook, which he bequeathed to Muslim religious thoughts in the Indo-Pakistan
subcontinent. His work is characterized by knowledge, insight, moderation and
tolerance, but the quality, on which he laid the greatest emphasis, in theory and in practice, was Adl or Adalat. His works and views bear ample testimony to the ways he observed this principle in practice and he lost few opportunities of emphasizing in theory its role in maintaining the social fabric.

Shah Waliullah was responsible for awakening in the community, the desire to win back its moral fervor and to maintain its purity. To raise a community’s conscience, belief and faith from destruction was not a small achievement. His teachings created new awareness in the minds of Muslims of the subcontinent. He was a realist in his political thinking. He had a clear vision of society, religion, ethics, morals and politics. He presented such modern and golden principles of economics and politics that are still in use.

An inductive survey of human societies led Shah Waliullah to the conclusion that; any diversity of human societies pursuits various levels of social development, variation in their fads and fashions, divergence of their customs and conventions, heterogeneity of their races, stocks and vernaculars, dissimilarity of their cultural patterns and religious rites, and their difference in terms of time and space notwithstanding, they all recognize the broad essentials of universal social culture as identified by him. Thus, on the basis of a more or less empirical understructure Shah Waliullah tried to develop a universal paradigm of society.

Cooperation and division of labor has been one of the most discussed topics of economic thought. He considered it as the foundation of a healthy and balanced development of the economy. He highlighted its basic elements. To him the implications of the Islamic provision of fard kifayah is also a kind of division of labor and non-concentration of all into one job. In case of riba’l-fadl and riba’l-nasi’ah accruing due to an exchange of gold for gold and silver for silver, he considered thamaniyah as the illah and in case of food stuffs he considered only those which are storable and preservable. While discussing the economic significance of various provisions of zakah, such as, its reasonable rate, time of collection, productive zakah bases, consideration of growth and labour involvement etc., In his discussion of public finance, Shah Waliullah classified countries as purely Muslim and pluralistic. Accordingly, there will be less or more requirement of public expenditure and sources of income. Shah Waliullah presented a theory of socio-economic development based
on human nature. His theory works in a straightforward fashion. He also expanded it to other worldly spheres to seek nearness to Allah and spiritual progression as the ultimate goal of human beings.

Shah Waliullah is not only unique in his theory of socio-economic development among Muslim scholars but is a pioneer of the theory known in the West as the ‘stages of history’ approach to development. Here is an account of the same: over the last two and half centuries, a number of Western economists have adopted this ‘stages of history’ approach to development.

The development of humankind in the third and fourth stages without the necessary and just institutions and void of human values will only lead to exploitation of the weaker nation and oppression of the masses and ultimately the breakdown of the whole system, just as he complained during his own time and that has been experienced in every period. Shah Waliullah’s theory is also distinguishable from others in so far as he does not consider the development of humankind into a fourth stage and the establishment of an international socio-economic institution as the climax of humanity. Instead, this should lead to nearness to the Creator of this world through good deeds and following the life patterns of the Last of the Prophets. Improvement in this relation will improve the condition of al-irtifaq and vice-versa.

Thus, there is no end of history in Shah Waliullah’s theory of mankind’s development. The relevance of his theory of development today, as he himself pointed, is that where we miss the control of fourth stage, we should adorn and improve the third stage and where we lose the third stage, concentrate on the betterment of the second stage and so on till we regain the higher stage of it. National and international socio-economic and political institutions can serve their right purpose only if their diseases are cured and crime, corruption, exploitation and oppression are eliminated. The increasing concern about improvement of the human development index and emphasis on the adoption of a value based system on the part of many contemporary writers only shows the relevance of Shah Waliullah’s ideas in the modern age. His theory of al-irtifaq is a lasting contribution to the social science, one that is very much relevant today.

In short, the entire thought of Shah Waliullah is a rational theorization of the Prophetic experience of receiving Divine guidance and reforming society according to
the terms of this guidance. This Prophetic reform at once affected the totality of human existential enterprise. The contribution of Shah Waliullah lies in his pioneering endeavour to establish an organic link between the diversity of life and environment within a holistic framework of the Islamic World view. In brief, he laid the foundation of an economic and social theory which is well balanced and which safeguards the economic and social interests of all the sections of the humanity at large.