Qutb al-Din bin Abd al-Rahim commonly known as Wali-u Allah Dehlavi is one of the most outstanding personalities of Islamic history. Born in 1114/1702 at Phulat (Muzzafar Nagar), he was educated in his father's seminary, Madrasa Rahimiyah and learnt all the important traditional sciences (ulūm) when he reached fifteen years of his age. He was appointed as the teacher of the madrasa but owing to the death of his father in 1131/1717 all the responsibilities of the madrasa fell upon his shoulders. In 1143/1730, Shah Wali-u Allah went to Hijaz for Hajj and stayed there for about two years. The Shah whom the madrasa and father's erudition had become formative in shaping his career, learnt extensively the sciences of hadith and fiqh at Makka and Medina from the renowned scholars of the time. The sojourn made a deep impact on the intellectual life of the Shah. He returned back to Delhi in 1145/1732 as a great erudite and resumed his teaching at the seminary. He, however, devoted most of his time to religious writings till his death (1176/1762). The number of Shah's treatises exceeds to fifty and treat the multiple themes of religious thought.

Shah Wali-u Allah's writings expound an integrated, dynamic and vivid religious thought. Religious thought which basically springs from the understanding of the scriptural knowledge (the Qur'an) and is accumulated by its interpretation and application in the diverse situations of human life, receives a distinguished treatment in
the works of Shah Wali-u Allah. He translated the Qur'an in Persian (to make its contents accessible to a common man) wrote a commentary on the Traditions of the Prophet (*al-Musawwa*) and formulated the principles of Tafsir (exegesis) and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) which do not only reflect his deep understanding of the scriptural knowledge but represent his explication of this knowledge as well. The Shah’s magnum opus *Hujjat Allah al-Baligha* that makes, on the one hand, a good use of the Qur’an and hadith and, on the other expounds the philosophy of religion from its basic principles (*tahārah, imān and ibadāt*) to the social economic and political institutions of Islam. The other aspects of his thought are theology (*kalām*) and *tasawwuf* (mysticism). The former is the scheme of his approach to the beliefs of Islam elaborated through common reason and the latter expounds the religious truths through esoteric method – the path of *salāk*. Few of the Shah’s works are devoted to theology and about a dozen of them are to sufism. Apart from these aspects Shah Wali-u Allah delves deep into the nature of the *fiqh* differences and attempt at the synthesis of the differences vis-a-vis the schools of *fiqh* (Hanafi, Shafā'ī, Maliki and Hanbali) in his *al-Inṣāfī Sabab-i Bayān al-* *Iktīlāf, Hujjat Allah al- Bālígha.* *Ijtihād* and *taqlīd*, the two important ingredients of Islamic system of thought are dealt with by the Shah in a wider perspective and propounds their legitimacy and significance in following the Shari’ah. In some of his works he develops the themes of socio-political dynamism of Islam and treats it under the universal paradigm and in the context of the classical history of Islam. *Al Bādūr al Bazigah, Izzalat al- Khīfa’ān Khūlīfāt al Khulāfāh* and *Siyāsī Maktūbāt* represent this aspect of the Shah’s thought.
The Shah's personality has remained a source of attraction to both the scholars of the east and the west. A great deal of works has been written on Shah Wali-u Allah during the later half of twentieth century. In its first phase the writings of Maulana Ubiadullah Sindhi, *(Shah Wali-u Allah ki Hikmat kā Ijmāli T’aruf* and *Shah Wali-u Allah Ki Siyasi Tahrik*) Maulana Manazir Ahsan Gilani, *(Tazakirah Shah Wali-u Allah)*, Maulana M. Manzoor Numani (editor *'Al-Furqān* Shah Wali-u Allah Number and M. Rahim Bakhsh *(Hayāt-i Wali)* are worth mentioning which attempt at the introduction of the Shah’s personality and achievements. In the next phase the works notable are those of J. N. Jalbani *(Teachings of Shah Waliyullah)*, S. A. Kamali *(Types of Islamic Thought)*, A. J. Halpota *(Philosophy of Shah Wali-u Allah)*, S. A. H. Nadvi *(Tārikh-i Dīwat-u Azīmat, Part VI)* and Mazhar Baqa *(Usūl-i Fiqh aur Shah Wali-u Allah)*. In the last phase the studies worth to mention are those of S. A. A. Rizvi *(Shah Wali-u Allah and His Times)*, J. M. S. Baljon *(Religion and Thought of Shah Wali-u Allah Dehlvi)*, and Sa’ud Alam Qasmi *(Hazrat Shah Wali-u Allah Dehlvi ki Qur’āni Fikr ka Mutāl’a)*. Like those of the first phase these studies have their own worth. However, a study devoted to the distinguished trends and features of Shah Wali-u Allah’s religious thought that have become highly formative in resuscitating and reshaping the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent in the subsequent times is awaited. The subject has still much scope in the academic research. It is further justified by the fact that the study of the Shah’s thought in an integrated and analytical manner is more functional to understand its dynamic and reformative features in its proper perspective.
The present work attempts at the analytical study of the trends in Shah Wali-u Allah's religious thought. By the trends we mean the features and modes of his thought. It focuses on some of the outstanding trends of his religious thought – theology, sufism, synthesis of fiqh disagreements, exploration of *ijtihād* and *taqlīd* and highlights his reformative approach and the wider perspective which becomes a link between 'the medieval and the modern'. The works of Shah Wali-u Allah and the writings on and about him by the later scholars, are mainly utilised here as the sources to study and examine the subject critically. The study follows the historical methodology and the technical terms are transliterated on the pattern adopted by the contemporary scholarship.

The work consists of the following chapters:

1. Development of Islamic Thought Before Shah Wali-u Allah

The chapter introduces genesis of Islamic thought and surveys its early development. It treats analytically the attempts of the Muslim jurists who exercised their mind to formulate the methodology as well as the rulings of the Shari'ah which contributed remarkably to the early development of Islamic thought. It got extended, in due course of time, by the compilations of the hadith collections, made by the famous *muhdithun* of the times. Under the post-formative developments, theological (kalam), philosophical (* falsāfa*) schools and the movement of sufism are discussed briefly and the special features of them are critically examined vis-a-vis the achievements of al-Ghazzali (d 505/1111) and Ibn Taymiya (661-728/1263-1328) to highlight their distinguished contributions to the development of Islamic thought. The chapter, on the whole, makes a critical review of the early and the medieval trends of Islamic thought and serves as a
back ground study to Shah Wali-u Allah’s religious thought, the main subject of the present work.

II. Shah Wali-u Allah, His Times, Life, Works and Modes of His Religious Thought

The chapter studies briefly the times and life of Shah Wali-u Allah. It makes a critical survey of the political, social and religious conditions of the age which were full of crisis and posed many threats to the Muslim solidarity. The chapter also gives an account of the early life of Shah Wali-u Allah, his sojourn to Hejaz, its special impact on his career and his works which he wrote from time to time on the various aspects of Islamic thought and sciences. Some of his works are Hujjat Allah al Bālīgah, Tashīmāt-i Ilāhīyah, al Insāf fi Bayān Sabāb-i Bayān al Ikhtilāf, Izzālat al Khīfa an Khilāfāt al Khulāfa and Fauz al Kabīr fi Usūl-i Tafsīr. His works treat the subjects of philosophy of religion, hadith, fiqh, theology, tasawwuf, psychology, economy, and polity. The concluding part of the chapter introduces briefly the various features and trends of Shah Wali-u Allah’s religious thought.

III. Theology and Sufism

This chapter examines the first two trends of Shah Wali-u Allah’s religious thought – theology and sufism. The first part of the chapter discusses theology of the Shah Wali-u Allah and focuses on his conception of God and His attributes. In it he highlights the innate God consciousness in man and distinguishes the higher reason from the ordinary reason. Each of the two contributes to worldly and eternal sa’adah (happiness) of an individual being. Among the other attributes of God, Determinism vis-
a-vis man’s freedom is also elaborated in the selection. The second part of the chapter treats sufi thought of Shah -Wali-u Allah. It studies his concept of Sufism which is characteristic of ‘ihzān’ and ‘tazākiya’ and discusses his review of various stages of tasawwuf including the practices of tawājūh, mujāhidah, marāqabah, ja‘fīb etc. The concluding part of the chapter treats the Shah’s response to the two doctrines of sufism – Wahdat al wajud of Ibn Arabi and Wahdat al shuhud of Shiekh Ahmad Sirhindi (971-1034/1563-1624) and examines the Shah’s reconciliation of these two doctrines.

IV. Fiqh Disagreements and Their Synthesis

Apart from its discussion on the sources of Fiqh and the introduction to the concept of ikhtilāf (differences) in the legal thought, the chapter treats Shah Wali-u Allah’s approach to the disagreements among the Sahābah, Tāba‘ūn, Taba Tābi‘in and the four Schools of law - Hanafi, Shafa‘i, Maliki and Hanbali. In the last part of the chapter Shah Wali-u Allah’s attempt at the synthesis of the fiqh disagreements is discussed and he terms these disagreements as superficial and subsidiary, influenced by the diverse individual capacities of the jurists (mujtahids), local conditions of the regions and the scholar’s aptitude towards particular methods of formulating the Shari‘ah rulings.

V. Exploration of Ijtihad and Taqlid

The chapter reviews briefly the early development of ijtihad under the Sahabah and the Tabā‘ūn and touches upon the contributions of the five schools of fiqh to ijtihād. It examines Shah Wali-u Allah’s concern with the subject of ijtihad, the systematic exercise of which has almost been ignored by the Muslims owing to the crisis and
onslaughts witnessed by them under their disintegrations. The Shah's exploration of the meaning, requires its qualifications and the categorisation of ijtihad into four kinds - mujtihid-i mutalaq mustaqil, mujtahid-i mutalaq muntasib, mujtahid fil madhab and mujtahid fil fatwa is also dealt with in this chapter Shah Wali-u Allah's response to the issue of taqlid and categorisation of taqlid into four gradations-taqlid of a common man, Taqlid of the specialist of the madhab, taqlid of the affiliated mujtahid are examined to highlight the moderate approach of the Shah to the subject. The chapter also makes a mention of the implications and influence of the Shah's views on the subject upon the succeeding scholars and thinkers of the Indian-subcontinent.