CHAPTER IV

SHAH WALIULLAH, THE GREAT THINKER AND REFORMIST

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I. INTRODUCTION

Qutubuddin Ahmad bin Abdur Rahim popularly known as Shah Waliullah was born in 1703 A.D. in the vicinity of Delhi. He was not only a Mujaddid of the 18th century but also an outstanding scholar of Islamic sciences. His period was one of the most emotional chapters of Islamic revivalist movements in the Indian Subcontinent. A revolutionary Indian thinker, and a theologian of pre-modern India, Shah- Waliullah was born in a period of multiple crisis, both political and socio-religious, that confronted the Muslim world in general and the Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent in particular. Shah Waliullah played an important role in safeguarding Islam from accretions and many syncretistic ideas and guiding the Muslim ummah in their intellectual and spiritual realms. He served as the mentor of Muslim ummah through his remarkable, writings, revelations and spiritual attainments.

Shah Waliullah was born in the stormy days of religious decadence when people were divided in sections and subsections. The conditions in the country were extremely bad there was political instability and a state of insecurity. The people had no peace of mind and no safety of life, loot and plunder feuds and fighting's had spread everywhere. Disintegration had set in the Mughal Empire and the Muslims were split among themselves.

Consequently they suffered much at the hands of the Sikhs, Jats and Marathas.\(^3\)

Shah Waliullah compared the conditions prevailing at the time of the glorious periods of Islam with the conditions of the Muslims of India in his own age. Shah Waliullah tried to reach a healthy solution of the complex problems and waged a war against the prevalent evils and tried to remove the crust of innovations and indifference on the surface of Islam. He wrote numerous books on Traditions, theology and mysticism. He became the founder of a school of Hadith and Tafsir. He translated the Quran into Persian. He tried to mould the life of the Muslims according to the Islamic conception of a perfect man.\(^4\) He believed that religion alone had been the source of strength and power for the Muslims and their decline was the direct result of their apathy towards it. His chief concern therefore was to call the Muslims back to the teachings of Islam. He bent all his energies towards purifying the Islamic ideals from all unhealthy influences thus providing them with a fresh intellectual ground to meet the challenges of the time. He was fully aware of the gap between the patterns of life as enunciated in the Quran and the Sunnah and the one, which the Muslims had devised for themselves.\(^5\)

The activities of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi in the political field are particularly noteworthy. Under the later

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\(^4\) Muhammad Yasir, *op. cit.*., p.152.
Mughals the disintegration of the Mughal Empire was complete. He took keen interest in politics and concluded that financial breakdown and the oppression of petty tyrants were generally responsible for the political unrest and revolt. He also tried to draw the attention of the ruling chiefs and the nobility to these evils but he did not get success and came to the conclusion that the political supremacy of the Mughal Emperor could not be restored unless the jarring factors of political dissension especially Jats, Sikhs and Marathas were weeded out from the political field.⁶

In 1739 Delhi was attacked by Nadir Shah he was however interested only in loot and plunder. The result of that plunder was that the Muslims suffered the most, the rebels and plunderers, gained added strength. Delhi was attacked by the Jats who took away what they could lay their hands on. Shah Waliullah therefore wanted to contact the persons in authority. He generally sent them his suggestions. Which sometimes helped them to become firm and steadfast against possible threats. Shah Waliullah had pinned his hopes on Najib ud Daulah who was the only top official who had the ability to run the administration smoothly in those hostile conditions. Jats, Marathas and Sikhs had wrought havoc and were a constant danger to the life and property of the Muslims. The guerrilla activities of the Marathas and other marauders increased considerably. Both the Muslims and the state could not stand their repeated attacks any longer. Finding no other

way to get out of this critical situation, he wrote a letter to Ahmad Shah Abdali to invade India. Encouraged by this strife and appeal, Abdali marched on Panipat and the Marathas suffered a crushing defeat. This was one of the decisive battles of history and wiped off the chances of the establishment of the Maratha Empire in the entire Subcontinent. This battle was fought in 1761 A.D. in the plains of Panipat. The Maratha despite their great military might suffered a crushing defeat their losses were terrible and their power was completely broken.

Shah Waliullah did not confine his activities to preaching and writing of books. He remained vigilant and watchful all the times towards the changes in the political situation of the country. Islam could maintain it pristine purity and flourish only when there was a strong power behind it. The life of Muslims was radically opposed to the spirit of Islam and its teachings. Absence of unity and lack of discipline kept them poles apart and at daggers – drawn. They stuck to blind imitation with the result that they failed to face the hard realistic and serious thinking. All disciplines, including Islamic law, were recklessly ignored with the result that they fell an easy prey to superstitions and innovations. Sufis were hollow and had no knowledge of the Holy Quran and the Traditions. Rationalism and philosophy had considerably influenced the people and created doubts in their minds about the truth of religion. Thus they began to test everything including faith at the touchstone of reason. Shah Waliullah presented true

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7 G.N. Jalbani, op. cit., pp. 44-47.
8 I.H. Qureshi, Ulema in Politics, p. 113.
philosophy before them, and showed to them that philosophy proper is one, which is enshrined in the teachings of the Prophets.\textsuperscript{9}

Analyzing the conditions then prevalent, he preferred to fight with his pen rather than with sword. He worked untiringly to produce a long list of books in both Arabic and Persian trying to build up a religious philosophy for the Muslims who needed a new approach to life in this age of catastrophe. He diagnosed their spiritual ailments and tried to find a remedy. He was aware of the tension between the schools of law and the various Sufi orders. So he aimed at \textit{Tatbiq} or conciliation, so much so that he even tried to reach an intermediate position between the conflicting ontological theories of Wahdat-al-Shuhud.\textsuperscript{10} His most significant contribution is that his teachings kept alive the religious life of Indian Muslims linked with their inner spirit for re-establishment of Islamic political authority in India.

Shah Waliullah was the only thinker who studied the life of various Muslim societies and Empires from sociological point of view.

Shah Waliullah was the \textit{Mujtahid} of his age. He did not only pin point the ills of the society and the government of his time, but he also suggested and recommended the remedies to remove them.

Shah Waliullah gave attention to the need for reforming the Muslim society after Mujaddid Alf-thani who

\textsuperscript{9} G.N. Jalbani, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 49-51.
\textsuperscript{10} Annemarie Schimmel, \textit{op. cit.}, p.153.
II. LIFE AND WORKS

Shah Waliullah the multifaceted theologian who has been called the first Muslim to feel the urge for a new interpretation of Islam was born in 1703 A.D. Twenty miles to the north of Meerut in the district of Muzaffarnagar, U.P. India in a village called Phulat. The members of his family had migrated to India about 300 years before. They had held important positions in the Mughal court. He writes in his *Anfas al-Arifin* that his family traces its lineage from Hazrat Umar, the second Caliph. His father was a descendent of Umar Ibn Khattab while his mother belonged to the progeny of Hazrat Ali b. Abi Talib. At an unspecified date Shah Waliullah's family moved from Madina to Yemen etc. In the wake of the Mongol invasions of Islamic lands his family was forced to emigrate to India.

Shah Waliullah's father *Shaykh Abdur Rahim* was a worthy scion of his illustrious ancestors. He was a leading scholar and a sufi of his day and inspite of unrivalled opportunities of being associated with a government of such an orthodox monarch as Alamgir. He refrained from himself availing of them. He however cooperated with the Emperor in the compilations of the well-known work on

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jurisprudence Fatawa-i-Alamgiri.\textsuperscript{14} He established a college the Madarasa-i-Rahimiyya and introduced there a particular syllabus and unique training methodology and laid great emphasis upon Quranic studies. Madrasa-i-Rahimiyya was functioning in the building of his house so the environment in which Shah Waliullah grew up was highly persuasive and conducive to learning. Shah Waliullah was five at the time when he had his first lesson and within the next two years he learnt reading and writing and finished the simple reading of the Quran.\textsuperscript{15}

Shah Waliullah has mentioned in his autobiography Al-Juzal latif fi Tarjamat al Abd al Daif that he had completed his formal religious education at the age of fifteen.\textsuperscript{16} He was under constant care and training of his father and had acquired all the natural faculties of his father and embarked upon books in Arabic and Persian. At the age of ten he was studying Sharh Mulla a book on Arabic grammar.\textsuperscript{17} When he reached the age of fifteen he took an oath of allegiance at the hands of his father. He then engaged himself actively in observing the sufi practices as were prescribed in the Naqshbandi order. In these fifteen years he had acquired enough knowledge from his father.

He started his life as a teacher at the Rahimiyya. His father fell ill and died. After the death of his father Shah Waliullah took proper care of the Madrasa-i-Rahimiyya and

\textsuperscript{14} I.H. Qureshi, *Muslim Community of Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*, p.177.
\textsuperscript{15} A.D. Muztar, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 39, J.M.S. Baljon, *op cit.*, p.2
\textsuperscript{17} M.Y.M. Siddiqui, *op. cit.*, p.12.
continued with the teaching of the Traditions. In the next about twelve years he penetrated deeply into the teachings of Islam and pondered seriously over the future of Muslims in India. At the age of thirty he had the urge to go for pilgrimage. He left Delhi in 1730 and stayed there for fourteen months. In this journey Shah Waliullah was accompanied by his maternal uncle Ubaidullah al Barahawi his uncle’s Son Muhammad Ashiq and some others. He stayed in the Holy cities for over a year. In Mecca he remained in close contact with scholars and benefited in the science of Tradition and jurisprudence. Shaykh Muhammad Wafdullah was one of the Meccan scholars. He read before him, the Muwatta of Imam Malik and obtained from him the certificate for teaching tradition. In Hadith he studied the whole of Mishkat and a part of Sahih Bukhari. In Tafsir he studied a part of Baidawi and a part of Mudarik. The other learned scholars he benefited from were Tajuddin Qalai Isa Jafari Maghribi and Shaykh Ibrahim Kurdi. Through these scholars he got attached to the line of sufi rag – robbing. After sometime in Mecca he left for Madina. In Madina he came under the influence of another reputed scholar Shaykh Abu Tahir bin Ibrahim. He was capable of taking broad views of problems and tried to remove conflicts in differing views wherever this could be achieved. During this period he came into contact with people from all parts of the Muslim world and obtained first

hand information of the conditions then prevailing in the various Muslim countries.²¹

He returned to Delhi in 1732 A.D. after a sojourn of fourteen months in the Hijaz. During his stay there he had carefully studied the currents of contemporary thought and he could say "Fukka kulla nizam" (overthrow the existing system).²² The weakness of the Mughal Empire and the rapid decline of its authority was already a cause of deep concern for Shah Waliullah. He was aware of the fact that some immediate efforts were necessary in the political and military fields. He also realized that the real causes of the helplessness and decay of the Muslims lay much deeper. He assigned to himself the immense task of the analysis of these causes and in the learned encyclopaedic and masterly accomplishment of this self-imposed duty laid his real greatness.

When he arrived at Delhi in 1732 he resumed the principaship of Madrasa Rahimiyya, a post he had occupied after his father's death before leaving for Hijaz. Very soon he established his reputation as a scholar and as a sufi and spent the rest of his life in producing numerous works till his death in 1763. A.D.²³

Shah Waliullah had produced more than fifty-one large and short books on various subjects like Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, philosophical theology (Hikmat), Sufism, Ethics, social philosophy and polity. But the number of

²¹ M.M. Sharif, op. cit., p. 1558.
²³ G.N. Jalliani, op. cit.
books or the variety of subjects is not so important as the way he approached the problems.²⁴

(1) Al-Khayr al-Kathir (The Abundant good)

This work is divided into ten chapters each called a Khizana (treasure). The first four chapters deal with the reality of Wujud (Being), knowledge of God, the relationship between God and the universe and the human knowledge. He also discusses the truth of prophecy and the Prophethood of Muhammad along with the rules and principles of sainthood and mysticism and the practical aspects of Islam and Shariah.

(2) Hujjat Allah al-Baligha: (The Profound Evidence of Allah)

Shah Waliullah's 'magnum opus', is his Hujjat Allah al-Baligha. This comprehensive work deals with both intellectual and practical aspects of Islam. The first part deals with metaphysics, scholastic theology, the gradual development or evolution of human society and the philosophy behind the divine injunctions. The second part is devoted to ethics, politics, rituals, and the social life of Islam.

(3) Al-Budur al-Bazigha: (The Full Moons Rising in Splendour).

The introduction to this metaphysical work deals with the basic metaphysical issues such as wujud in general, the Unity of God, the essence and existence of God and the relationship between God and the universe. Shah

Waliullah considers the universe to be a manifestation of the divine attributes. He also gives detailed reasons and causes for the development and evolution of the various shariahs and milal (religious communities).

(4) *Al-Musawwah Min Ahadith al – Muwatta*:

Shah Waliullah tried to provide a basis for bringing the four schools of law closer to each other. His commentaries on Muwatta of Imam Malik called al-Musawwa (Arabic) and al-Musaffa (Persian) were written with a view to finding common orthodox ground for the reconciliation of different schools of Islamic law.

(5) *Tawil al Ahadith*:

It recounts the stories of different Prophets mentioned in the Quran in order to draw out lessons and rules of Shariah from the Quranic descriptions. It shows his deep knowledge of the Quran.

(6) *Arbain*:

A collection of 40 ahadith which are brief yet of inclusive character.

(7) *Fuyuz al-Haramayn*:

This is a translation of the Quran

(8) *Iqd-al Jid Fi Bayan Ahkam al-ijtihad Wa-al- Taqlid*:

This he wrote with the proposal that the doors of Ijtihad are open. According to him the experts of Islamic knowledge and Mujtahidin have the right to respond effectively to new situations instead of being perpetually bound to previous solutions.
(9) Lam’at:
On the philosophy of Tasawwuf

(10) Al-Qasida al – Lam’iya:

(11) Al-Qaul al – Jamil Fi Bayan Sawa al – Sabil:
It deals with the spiritual and sufi practices and orders.

(12) Al-Muqadamma al-Sunniya Fi al-Intisar Lifiraq al-Sunniya:

(13) Sharah Tarajim Abwab Sahih al-Bukhari:
This is an annotation on certain chapters of the Sahih of Bukhari.

(14) Tawil al-Ahadith Fi Rumuz Qisas al-Anbiya:

(15) Al-Durr al- Thamin Fi Mubashshirat al-Nabi-al-Amin:
It is a collection of glad tidings the Shah and his ancestors had from the holy Prophet.

(16) Atyab al-Nagham Fi Madati Syed al-Arab wa al-Ajam:
A collection of odes eulogizing the holy Prophet which speak of Shah’s poetic talent and love towards Prophet.

(17) Al-Insaf fi Bayan Asbab al-Ikhhtilaf:
On the doctrinal differences among fiqh scholars

(18) Al – Musalsalat Min Hadith al-Nabi
It is about on Hadith.

(19) Irshad Ala Muhimmat ilm al-Isnad:
It is about the scholars of Hijaz who taught Shah Waliullah.
(20) *Fath al-Kabir bima la buddha min hifzi ilm al- Tafsir:*

(21) *Al-Nawadir in Ahadith Syed al-Awail wa’al-Awakhir:*

Some collections of Shah Waliullah’s letters have also been brought out. The following deserve mention *Majmua Makatib, Kalimat Tayyibat, Maktubat al-Marif, and Maktub Madani.*

(22) *Izalat al Khifa An Khilafat al-Khulafa:*

On the principles and history of Islamic Caliphate. Shah Waliullah lays down in very clear terms the duty of the Islamic state. The foremost functions of the Khilafat are the revival of Islamic teachings and their translation in practical life.

(23) *Altaf al-quds fi Marifat Lataif al-nafs:* (The Sacred knowledge)

This is another metaphysical work, which deals with the esoteric principles of mysticism. Here Shah Waliullah deals with the important questions of mystical intuition (*Kashf*) and inspiration (*ilham*). He examines systematically the reality of both the external and internal perceptive qualities of a human being as the heart, the intellect, the spirit, the self, the secret and the ego.

(24) *Sata'at:* (Manifestations)

This work is on the systematic division of *Wujud* (*Being*), representing Shah Waliullah’s views concerning the *Tashkik al-Wujud* (hierarchy or gradation of beings). Existence in relation to determined being it’s composed of

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existence and essence and has many grades, stages, and modes. The particular beings in the universe provide the foundation for the claim of the *tashkik* (gradation) and *kathrat* (multiplicity) of being. Shah Waliullah also tries to solve the riddle of co-relation between the eternal and contingent in this work.

(25) *Anfas al-Arifin*:

Collection of the following seven tracts

1. *Bawariq al-Wilayah*: The tract from parts of the *Anfas al-Arifin* in which the Shah has described the life and spiritual attainments of his father Shaykh Abdur Rahim.

2. *Shawariq al – Ma'arifah*: A biography of the Shah's uncle Shaykh Abdul Raza

3. *Al-Imdad-o fi Ma'athir al-Ajdad*: A brochure giving Shah Waliullah’s genealogical table containing brief notices about some of his ancestors.


(26) *Al-Juz al-Latif fi Tarjumat-al-Abd al-Dhayif*:

It contains a brief autobiographical account and some reminiscence of the Shah Waliullah.
(27) Fath al-Rahman Fi-Tarjumat al-Quran:

A brilliant translation of and commentary on the Quran

(28) Al-Fauz al-Kabir Fiusul al-Tafsir:

An important work on the principle of exegesis

(29) Hama’at:

It deals with the history and evolutionary growth of sufi orders.

(30) Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyya: (Instructions or clear understanding)

It is one of the most comprehensive metaphysical works. Both Arabic and Persian languages are used for the expression of ideas. These tafahim (plural of Tafhim) are actually Shah Waliullah’s mystical visions and experiences.

(31) Al-Balagh al- Mubin:

(32) Al-Intibah fi Salasil Auliya Allah wa Asanid Warithi Rasulullah:

It gives the history and brief introduction of different mystic orders.

(33) Muqaddama Dar Fann-i- Tarjuma:

(34) Hawami:

(35) Qurrat al-Aynain fi Tafzil al Shaykhain:

(36) Sarf Mir:

(37) Al- Maqala al-Waziya fi al-Nasiha:

(38) Surur al-Mahzun fi Siyr al-Amin al-Mamun:
It is a concise Persian rendering of the Kitab Nur al-Uyun il-Amin al-Mamum a well-known biography of the holy Prophet.

(39) Risala Danishmandi:

A valuable tract containing detailed directions in regard to methodology of teaching.

(40) Zahrawain

III. POLITICAL THOUGHT

Shah Waliullah’s political thought determined his political programme. He was deadly against every kind of inequality and tyranny but he practically wanted to strengthen the Mughal sovereignty, revive the unity of the Muslims and believed in centralism and political activism.

After the death of Aurangzeb 1707 A.D his successor could not control the Empire well. During the life time of Shah Waliullah eleven Mughal kings ascended the throne in quick succession. They generally paid no attention towards the complications and the problems of the Empire and engaged in luxuries and comforts of life. The result was the weakening of the central authority.

The invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739 A.D. also weakened the Mughal Empire. All these internal and

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external disturbances led to the disintegration of the Mughal Empire.\textsuperscript{29}

Shah Waliullah lived during a time of political and moral decline leading to chaos and destruction in the Mughal Empire. His vantage point near the centre of the Muslim state gave him a clear view of the situation. He did his best to bring stability to the tottering Empire and protect the Indian Muslims from disaster.\textsuperscript{30}

Shah Waliullah pointed out that one of the crucial conditions leading to the Muslim decline was that the real control of the government was in the hands of Hindus. He wrote to Ahmad Shah Durrani that he was the only king with sufficient manliness, gallantry and foresight for the task of reestablishing the Muslim rule. It was, therefore, his religious duty to declare a Jihad and liberate the enslaved Muslims.\textsuperscript{31}

Shah Waliullah played a vital role in the Indian politics of his times. He was witnessing the declining power of the Muslims in the Subcontinent and in many ways he tried to reform the declining fortunes of the Mughal Empire.

He did this in two ways first he sought to influence the Mughal rulers through his writings especially his letters. He appealed to the Muslims rulers, nobles and intelligentsia to be aware of the dreadful situation and its possible consequences. He also criticized the Mughal rulers and nobles boldly for their involvement in corruption, misdeeds, indolence and luxuries and persuaded them to

\textsuperscript{29} Hafeez Malik, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 105.
get rid of the widespread abuses characterizing their society.  

In his *Tafhimat-i-Ilahiyya* he reminded the Muslim rulers of their dominant role in the multi-religious society.  

Similarly, he then persuaded the soldiers of his day to avoid the un-Islamic ways and practices and develop an earnest zeal for Jihad in order to prove themselves to be true soldiers of Islam. He criticized them for their indiscipline inefficiency and the addiction of wine and other intoxicants.

According to K.A.Nizami the political role of Shah Waliullah represented two main objectives: First the restoration of peace in the empire and the second to reform and reconstruct it on the ideals of Islamic Shariah.

It was under this programme that he chose the most vivid, capable and disciplined Muslim leaders of his time for combating the Marathas. They were Najib al-Dawlah, the leader of Rohilas and Ahmad Shah Abdali the ruler of Afghanistan. His efforts towards forging a united front against the Marathas were successful and the defeat of Marathas in the third battle of Panipat in 1761 A.D. provided a turning point in the history of the Subcontinent.

Shah Waliullah visualized an ideal state, that of the pious caliphate, and strove for it.

\[33\] S. A. A. Rizvi, *op. cit.*, p. 299.  
Budur al-Bazigah, Hujjat Allah al-Balighah and Izalat al-Khifa were the outcome of his lifelong studies of the socio-political history of the Muslims. According to him, the state of political well-being of a country could only be attained, when ethics, politics and economics stood in complete intimacy.

In the face of the fading glory of Mughal Empire and the resurgence of anti-Islamic forces like Marathas, Jats and Sikhs in the Muslim-dominated India; Shah Waliullah decided to reevaluate the Muslim dilemma. He realized that sectarian divisions and dissensions in the community and struggle for power among the various Muslim rulers are the major factors responsible for the diminishing power and influence of the Mughal Empire. His aspiration was unity among them with an overall objective to restore political dominance of Islam.  

It was under these circumstances that Shah Waliullah decided that he had a mission to bring about changes in the socio-political set up. The first step, therefore, which he took was the translation of the Holy Quran into Persian in a way was the preliminary step towards his political movement. It is worthy to note that Shah Waliullah for all his activities, whether religious or political, always kept the Quran before himself as his guide and derived inspiration from it and did not turn to any other source.

Giving a call for a return to true Islam and asking the Muslims to go to the age of the Quran and listen to its

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36 A.D. Muztar *op. cit.*, p. 139.
37 G.N. Jilbani, *op. cit.*
literal voice Shah Waliullah boldly asserted, "the Prophet's teachings were the result of the cultural milieu then prevalent. He opined that today every injunction of the Shariat and every Islamic law should be rationally analyzed and presented. Shah Waliullah was strongly opposed to integration of Islamic culture in the cultural mainstream of the Subcontinent and wanted the Muslims to ensure their distance from it. In his opinion the health of Muslim society demanded that doctrines and values inculcated by Islam should be maintained in their pristine purity unsullied by extraneous influences.

Shah Waliullah did not want the Muslims to become part of the general milieu of the Subcontinent. He wanted them to keep alive their relation with rest of the Muslim world so that the spring of their inspiration and ideals might ever remain located in Islam and the tradition of world community be developed by it. His movement for Islamic revivalism backed by the ideology of pan Islamism was for the political unity of the Indian Muslims.

The movement of political as well as spiritual regeneration of Muslim India did not die with Shah Waliullah. His talented son, Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1823 A.D.) and his worthy disciples and successors strove for the realization of his mission.

The independence movement of 1857 was a turning point in the history of Islamic revivalism in India. With its failure the Indian Muslims lost all hopes to restore Muslim

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38 H.A. Ghani, op. cit., p. 184.
40 Ibid., p. 216.
power. But successive ulama in their attempt to keep the movement alive turned towards institutionalized Islamic movement. Some prominent Muslim ulama like Muhammad Qasim Nanautvi and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi drew further inspiration from the religio-political concept of Shah Waliullah and set up an Islamic Madrasa at Deoband in U.P. on May 30, 1866 which grew into a higher Islamic learning centre and assumed the present name of Dar-ul-Ulum.

For the last 149 years Dar-ul-Ulum, which is more a movement than an institution, has carried the tradition of Shah Waliullah. Even Sir Sayyid Ahmad drew inspiration from a rational moderation of Islam through Shah Waliullah in launching his Aligarh Movement. Shah Waliullah laid great stress on Tawhid the - oneness, unity, and uniqueness of God and opposed any practice, which smacked, however indirectly, of any association of man or any other being with God.

IV. SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS IDEAS

Shah Waliullah made an immense contribution to the intellectual, economic, social, political and religious life of the Muslim community in India. The effects of which persist to the present day.

Seeking to give theological and metaphysical issues a new rational interpretation and labouring to harmonize reason and revelation he tried to reconcile the various

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factions of the Indian Muslims thereby trying to protect the Empire from collapse. 43

Shah Waliullah contended that the root cause of the downfall of the Indian Muslims was their ignorance of the sacred scriptures of Islam. He initiated a movement with the theme 'Back to the Quran' and translated the Quran into Persian to facilitate its understanding among the Muslims. 44 God is unique and none of his attributes can be attributed to Prophets and saints. They may, he said, be considered intercessors but cannot be called upon or invoked for help no one should be worshipped in a direct or oblique form except God. The basis of all religious dogmas is the Quran and Hadith. All other sources of belief and law are subsidiary and subject to investigation. Islamic theology (Al-Kalam) needed re-examination and re-assessment and had to be presented in a new style. The prescriptions and prohibitions of religious law have three fold aim; the cultivation of self, the propagation of religious life and the service of humanity. He follows Ibn Taymiyya in considering that Ijtihad was permissible at all times and could be defined as an exhaustive endeavour to understand derivative principles of canon law. His concept of the structure of Muslim society is based on the revival of one theory of a universal caliphate. 45

Shah Waliullah actively criticized the practices of popular religion in India the imputation of divine powers to saints, worship at their tombs and sacrifice of animals to

44 Aziz Ahmad, An Intellectual History of Islam in India, p. 8.
any other than God. He lays special emphasis on the duty of jihad or holy war against the rebellious and insurgent infidels. He was constantly engaged in re-organizing the Muslim community on the basis of Quranic laws and Hadith. He wrote one full chapter of the Tafhimat-i-Illahiya and the entire book Al-Balagh al Mubin on the evils to which the Muslim community had come to be habituated.

By strengthening Muslim society Shah Waliullah meant to strengthen the Muslim faith that was his ultimate purpose for if the faith were strong so too would be the community. The strengthening of Muslim society would mean that many Hindu customs that had been assimilated by the Muslims of the Subcontinent such as the ban on the remarriage of widows would be abolished. Shah Waliullah opposed all extravagancy in engagements, weddings, and the high cost of alimony and funerals. None of these was practiced in early Islam and their removal would strengthen the Muslim community in India. It is indicative that his opposition to such practices was not because they were Hindu practices but because they were un-Islamic.

He was conscious of the debasement of Muslim society and decline in ethical values and moral standards. He warned the rulers and the nobles against the dire consequences of a degenerate life. In the Hujjat Allah al-Baligha he has discussed in detail the qualities that a ruler should possess, because the contemporary Mughal

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49 Mohd. Umar, op. cit., pp. 31, 32
Emperors sadly lacked the character prescribed in Islam.\(^{50}\)

Shah Waliullah maintained that two factors led to the downfall of the Mughal rule in the eighteenth century. First he refers to a large section of the Muslim community which had become a liability on the *Bait-ul-mal* for instance the ulama and the poets who did not render any service to the state but considered it their right to receive the maintenance allowances from the state treasury. The other was the levy of high taxes on the peasants, merchants, traders and artisans and their oppression, which resulted in the flight of loyal people from the imperial territory.\(^{51}\)

Shah Waliullah saw too that more than high living and the absorption of Hindu customs, the mutual discord and strife had weakened the society. There was no real unity. The community was divided against itself and the four principle sufi orders paid little attention to each other and the sufis faced a running battle with the orthodox who in turn warred on both the sufis and the Shias. Shah Waliullah hoped to achieve unity among the divergent Muslims by emphasizing a return to early Islam.\(^{52}\)

Shah Waliullah's vision was broad and he was not interested in the reform of one or either section of Muslim society alone, hence he warned every section of the Muslim society separately pointing out their shortcomings. Speaking of the sufis of the period he remarks that the sufis of the past wore coarse garments and gave the fine ones as gifts to others but now the sufis kept fine garbs for

\(^{50}\) *Haijat Allah al-Baligha*, vol. I Urdu trans., by Abdul Haq Haqqani, (Karachi, 1884), p. 90

\(^{51}\) K.A. Nizami, *op. cit.*, p. 6-7.

\(^{52}\) Freeland Abbot, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.
themselves and gave away only the coarse ones. In his Wasiyatnama he asked Muslims to keep aloof from such persons who misled them by taking the garb of the saints. He said one should not enrol oneself as a disciple of the mashaikh of the period because they profess various types of heretical practices and act like jugglers and miracle-workers. For sufis there is no difference between infidels and believers they treat them as equals. 53

The soldiers too had fallen into the state of degeneration and oppressed the weaker section of society. He points out that God had created them to carry on Jihad and they were expected to eradicate polytheism from the world but they had abandoned the task they had been assigned. On the other hand they maintained large houses and kept stocks of weapons to add to their wealth, drank wine and bhang, shaved their beards and sported bushy moustaches and, above all, oppressed the people. 54

He addressed the Muslims in general and drew their attention to the vices and irreligious practices which had ruined the real spirit of Islam. The Muslims in general did not understand the Quran and the importance of hadith, consequently they had inadvertently adopted many customs and manners from their Hindu neighbours. Shah Waliullah also pointed out that the Muslims were irregular in the performance of their rituals like offering prayers and payment of Zakat and observance of the fasts of Ramazan. They offered sacrificial animals to please saints and deities and transformed the shrines of the great Muslim saints of

54 K. A. Nizami, op. cit., p. 6; See Also Saiyyad Athar Abbas Rizvi. op. cit., p. 316.
the past into places of adoration like the Jews and Christians.\footnote{Mohd Umar, op. cit., p.34.}^55

The Sunni-Shia controversy had been critical in the eighteenth century. The Shia's had come into power under the patronage of Irani nobles who dominated the political scene at Delhi and in provincial towns. Shah Waliullah made an attempt to forge unity between the Shias and the Sunnis by removing the basic points of differences between them. He wrote the \textit{Izalat-al Khifa An Khilafat-al Khulafa} and through this work he tries to reconcile Shia-Sunnis differences.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 33-35.}^56 He knew that differences based in religious conviction could not be wiped off by simple appeals for unity. He made great efforts to enlighten the people regarding the nature of these differences. Murders engendered out of religious hatred and disdain were committed, political alliances were made with the Jats and the Marathas, enemies of the Muslim rule in India, and battles against each other were fought through the written and spoken words.\footnote{A.D. Muztar, op. cit.,p. 69.}^57

Shah Waliullah saw the Muslim Empire crippling, the Britishers were already casting their covetous eyes on India from the Bay of Bengal and the true religion was lost among the unworthy and the vicious. He therefore armed himself with all the necessary weapons of different sciences in vogue and raised a slogan "Back to the Quran". He desired to present Islam in its true form i.e., which does not admit extreme rigidity and reserve as shown by the

\footnote{Mohd Umar, op. cit., p.34.}
\footnote{Ibid., pp. 33-35.}
\footnote{A.D. Muztar, op. cit.,p. 69.}
theologians and the misguided mystics. He wanted to break away with the old order replacing it by the new to meet the requirement of the time. He visualized a new era dawning upon the Muslims and felt that he was selected to deal with the scientific age where people were not disposed to accept everything at its face value, so he aimed at unrevealing the secrets and the mysteries of religion to establish the true Islam.  

Lothrop Stoddard remarks. "By the eighteenth century as for religion it was as decadent as everything else. The austere monotheism of Muhammad had become overlaid with a rank growth of superstition and puerile mysticism".

The Mosques stood unfrequented and ruinous, deserted by the ignorant multitude, which, decked out in amulets, charms and rosaries, listened to fakirs or ecstatic dervishes and went on pilgrimages to the tombs of "Holy men" worshipped as saints and "intercessors" with that Allah who had become too remote a being for the direct devotion to these benighted souls.

Wine drinking and opium eating were well-nigh universal, prostitution was rampant and the most degrading vices flaunted naked and unashamed.

Annemarie Schimmel in "Islam in the Indian Subcontinent" tells us that Shah Waliullah in his reformist ideas was greatly inspired by the anti-innovations and anti-sectarian thoughts of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi.

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58 G.N. Jalbani, Teaching of Hazrat Shah Waliullah Muhaddith Dehlavi, p.3.
60 Annemarie Schimmel, op. cit., p.207.
Shah Waliullah spent the whole of his life in the service of religion. His service brought about far reaching consequences and has left a deep impression upon the people. He wrote a number of books on various branches of religious sciences. His contribution to the various Islamic sciences are discussed briefly in the following pages:

(i) Quran: Shah Waliullah called upon the community to turn to the Holy Quran and conveyed them the necessity of its study that it is the only book which could stand the test of all times and is the sure remedy of all their ills. It is the only source of guidance to be always referred to and relied upon. In the days of Shah Waliullah the official language was Persian therefore he decided to translate it into Persian for those who could not understand Arabic. This translation was meant for the use of common man as he himself explained in the introduction to the Fath-al-Rahman. He took this bold step at the risk of his life, since in those days translating the Holy Quran into another language and understanding through it was considered a Sin.

Shah Waliullah believed the Quran should be studied without consulting any commentary. In his opinion the real science is one which meets the requirements of time and that science to him is only the Holy Quran as it always is at pace with time and responds to its call. If anyone wishes to acquire the knowledge of the present age then it is necessary for him to take the obvious meanings of the

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61 G.N. Jalbani, Life of Shah Waliullah, p. 52.
62 Ibid., p. 53; I.H. Qureshi, Ulama in Politics, p. 112.
Quran and keep away from interpretations as far as possible. Shah Waliullah did not write any exegesis of the Quran. In his opinion only a good knowledge of Arabic was all that was needed to understand the meaning of Quran. He therefore was critical of the commentators and their commentaries. He wrote a book entitled *al-Fauz al-Kabir Fi usul al-Tafsir* on the broad principles on which the exegesis should be written. The salient feature of this book is that it strongly disagrees with the practice of citing stories borrowed from the Jewish legends to illustrate the Quranic verses and injunctions. Shah Waliullah believed that since the Quran is the book which gives the fundamentals of Islam, its commands should not be limited to a particular incident which happened at the time of its revelation. He was opposed to limiting the universality of the application of the injunctions of the Quran by too much dependence upon finding out the occasion on which each one of them had been revealed because he held that no injunction was intended to apply only to a particular situation and other situations of strictly of the same nature or category. Therefore the teachings of the Quran should be taken as absolute and applicable in all conditions and situations limited only by their own sense or the context of the other injunctions.

In his *Wasiyat-nama* Shah Waliullah suggested that Tafsir should rate second only to the literal translation of the Quran. He underlines the fact that the Quran was

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63 G.N. Jalbani, *op. cit.*, p.36
64 A.D. Muztar, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.
65 I.H. Qureshi, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
written in the Arabic of the time of Prophet and should therefore be interpreted in the light of Traditions of the languages and literature of those times.  

He divided the contents of the Quran into five categories (1) knowledge of injunctions relating to matters what is lawful and unlawful and what is forbidden they may concern prayers, social relationship, household administration or state politics. (2) Knowledge of polemics of those communities who left the right path such as Christians, Jews, Polytheist and Hypocrites (3) The third position includes the knowledge of divine gifts relating to the creation of heaven and earth and other matters etc. (4) knowledge of matter relating to divine creation that concerns rewards to the righteous and punishment of the evil. (5) The last part included knowledge related to death and life hereafter the day of resurrection, rendering of account of one's actions, the scale on which the actions of all men's would be weighed for reward or punishment.  

He held that the Quran was not only addressed to the community at the time of the Prophet or the succeeding generations but its injunctions had universal and eternal applications and thus were relevant to contemporary society.

He believed that the Quran had been revealed with the purpose of reforming the conduct and morals of all mankind. It describes the religious duties of members of the Muslim community and lays down detailed rules for

66 Saiyyad Athar Abbas Rizvi, op. cit., p. 232.
congregational prayers and the times of prayer were codified by the Prophet. The same is true for regulations relating to Zakat, Fasting, Pilgrimage and Jihad also.

In an attempt to offer further guidance to scholars of Quranic interpretations he compiled the following works. *Fath al-Rahman, Al-Fauz al-Kabir, Fath al-Kabir* and *Muqaddama Dar Qawanin-i-Tarjuma.*68

(ii) HADITH

In the Shariah after the Holy Quran the other great authority to rely upon is the tradition. It is the foundation of the religious sciences and occupies a very high place among certain sciences.69

After the Arab domination over Sindh ended, the Ghaznavid and Ghorid Sultans established their hold over the province. There was then an inflow of scholars from Khurasan and Transoxania giving rise to the study of poetry, astrology, and mathematics among intellectual sciences and law and jurisprudence at the cost of the study of hadith. This situation continued for long and ultimately Greek Philosophy became the main pursuit of Indian scholars.

It was customary in those days to leaf through *Mashariq al-Anwar* of Imam Saghani for making the grade as a scholar of Hadith. If any one desired to go in for further studies he went through Imam Baghawi's *Misabih-

68 Saifyyad Athar Abbas Rizvi, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-241.
us-Sunnah or the Mishkat. Any one who had studied these two books was considered a scholar of Hadith. ⁷⁰

In the tenth century of the Hijrah a number of scholars of Hadith came to India prominent among them were.


Shaykh Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dehlavi b. Saifuddin Bukhari (1551-1642 A.D.) was destined by God to diffuse the knowledge of Hadith in India. He started his pedagogical activities in Delhi at large. He lighted the torch of Islamic learning in darkened surrounding so resplendently that people from far off places felt attracted to him like fire flies. ⁷¹

Shah Waliullah’s contribution for Hadith is of great importance. He realized fully the need for the restoration of a decadent community to its original seat of dignity and honour. With this object in view he instituted an academy Da rul-Hadith. It was necessary to revive the science of tradition as India was lagging behind in the study of Hadith. The efforts that he made in imparting the knowledge of Hadith are so widely recognized in India that he is primarily known as a Muhaddith. ⁷²

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⁷¹ Ibid., p. 128.
Shah Waliullah not only revived its study in India but created a general awakening among the Muslims so much so that Hadith came to be recognized as an essential part of the curriculum of the religious schools. *Sihah Sittah*, particularly four of it that is *Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud* and *Tirmidhi* began to be studied in depth and numerous commentaries on the classical works of Hadith were produced in this time.\(^73\)

It is further remembered that all the scholars of Hadith in the Indian Subcontinent trace their links to him. The steps he took for the spread of Hadith are of two categories. In the first instance he introduced the study of Hadith at his college and trained scholars who carried on his mission after his death.\(^74\)

The teaching of Hadith was not an easy task not because Shah Waliullah was not well versed in it but because the Hadith literature was so bulky that for a student of average intelligence it was not easy to get acquainted with it. All the traditions ascribed to the Prophet could not be accepted as genuine. Many of them are of doubtful authority. Consequently it became necessary to examine and scrutinize thoroughly their validity, reliability and evidential value which again inevitably necessitated the knowledge of *Isnad*.

He selected Imam Maliki's *Muwatta* as the most authentic of all collections of Hadith and took steps to

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\(^74\) A.D. Muztar, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
popularize its study. He also wrote commentaries on *Muwatta* both in Arabic and Persian.\textsuperscript{75}

The thirst which Shah Waliullah had for the acquisition of the science of tradition could not be quenched at Delhi. He however studied hadith under celebrated traditionists of his time. Some books like *Mishkat-al Masabih*, *Shama’il al-Nabi* and the portion of *Sahih al-Bukhari* but all this was incomplete. He completed the study of this science and acquired proficiency in it at the hands of eminent scholars of Mecca and Madina.\textsuperscript{76}

In 1732 A.D. Shah Waliullah returned from Hijaz and having dug a canal of the science of Hadith from the illuminated Madina and brought it to flow anew on the Indian soil. In India Shah Waliullah has started the canal now developed into a raging river and its arms having spread all over the continent of Asia during the last one century quenching the thirst of the seekers of the Prophetic sciences.\textsuperscript{77}

(iii) FIQH

Fiqh literally means ‘intelligence’ and Faqih is a jurist, a person expert in legal sciences. Abu Hanifa ‘defines’ it as “the soul’s cognizance of its right and obligations”. It covers all aspects of religious, political and civil life.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., p. 97.
\textsuperscript{76} G.N. Jalbani, *op. cit.*, p.38
\textsuperscript{78} Mohammad Hammedullah Khan, *The School of Islamic Jurisprudence. A Comparative Study*, (Delhi, 1991), p.4.
This science was not written during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet nor was there raised any of question of critical nature about religious matters in those days. All the books and collections of jurisprudence are works, which appeared much later.  

Islam is unique among the world's great religions in that since the Prophet's demise no person could claim to be the absolute infallible authority to interpret the Quran. 

The great jurists Abu Hanifa, Malik bin Anas, Shaafi and Ahmad bin Hambal subsequently compiled their interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah to delineate the Islamic creed and practices. 

In the third century, however, it became a necessity to adopt and follow a definite school of thought of one particular Mujtahid. 

In the fifth century the differences of opinion in relation to certain points of jurisprudence multiplied and necessity to follow of a particular Imam firmly settled in the hearts of people. The cause of all this was the disagreement among scholars and quarrels among their followers. Thereafter every century that followed brought in an ever increasing number of disputes and conflicts among the religious leaders and consequently blind imitation gained strength. 

Shah Waliullah's ancestors and the majority of Sunnis in India were the followers of Imam Abu Hanifa. Among his 

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teachers at Madina Shaykh Abu Tahir was a Shaafi and Shaykh Tajuddin was a Hanafi. A large number of inhabitants of Mecca and Medina at that time were Shaafi. Shah Waliullah remained a Hanafi but his studies convinced him that the other three schools too were equally right.  

For him the betterment of the common people lay in their following any of the four schools of jurisprudence and it would be suicidal to rely upon the corrupt theologians (Ulams-i-Su).  

Shah Waliullah tried to lead the divided Muslim community on one platform of Shariah and wanted to bridge the wide gulf between them. The prescription, which he had for them, was that both the Hanafi and Shaafi schools be combined and made one and then whatever therein be found nearest to the tradition be adopted. In this connection the help of Muwatta be sought which can serve best the purpose of an impartial arbitrator.  

Shah Waliullah pointed out that those who adhered to any particular school of jurisprudence considered their own school to be hundred percent faultless save for some remote possibility of human error. The prevailing thought has been succinctly expressed in an adage which says our way is primarily exact and flawless with a remote possibility of error but those of others are basically wrong and unreceived with some prospects of validity.

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81 Saiyyad Athar Abbas Rizvi, op. cit., p. 246.
82 G.N. Jalbani, op. cit., p. 60
83 Ibid., p. 79 For details see: Abdul Hakeem Siddiqui, op. cit., pp. 1574-1576.
The result of this thought was that the four juristic schools, Hanafite, Malikite, Shaafite and Hanbalite, acknowledged since the earliest times as juristic sects within the main body of orthodox Islam and whose founders were undisputedly revered as pious and saintly souls, were drifting apart with time and their differences were degenerating into public debates which often turned into brawls and violent clashes.  

Shah Waliullah attempted reconciliation between the different schools of Muslim jurisprudence. He advocated the policy of confining oneself within the framework of the four main schools of Muslim jurisprudence.  

This liberal method of recourse to any school of Sunni law which suited the circumstances provided a wider scope for adjustment with new situations.  

According to him all the prevalent systems of Fiqh drew their inspirations from one single source so that there could be no fundamental differences in them. Differences were there in the past and would be in future too, but these are the differences in interpretation only not in principles.  

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

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84 Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, op. cit., p. 139.  
85 M.M. Sharif, op. cit., p. 74; see N. Hanif, Islam and Modernity, (India, 1997), p. 181; J.M.S. Baljon, op.cit., p.166  
86 K.A. Nizami, Socio Religious Movements in Indian Islam, p. 100.  
87 N. Hanif, op cit., p.186.
(IV) IJTIHAD

The term Ijithad literally means to exert and in the terminology of the Islamic law it means to exert with a view to form an independent judgment on a legal question.  

Ijtihad in Islam means an independent or original interpretation of problems not precisely covered by the Holy Quran, Hadith or Ijma. The word is derived from the root ‘Jahad’ which means exerting oneself to the utmost or to the best of one’s ability.

Shah Waliullah’s main contribution to modernist speculative thinking in India is his emphasis on Ijtihad. His own method of induction and argument was classical but he is generally regarded as the first Indian Muslim who felt the urge of the new spirit in him “Time has come”, he wrote in his Hujjat Allah al-Baligaha, “that the religious law of Islam should be brought into the open fully dressed in reason and argument”.

In his socio-economic thought he attached great importance to the use of Ijtihad without which it was impossible to understand the new developments and needs in the light of the Quran Sunnah. Thus Shah Waliullah introduced a dynamically new way of understanding the Quran. That was to make interpretive investigation of the verses in a fashion that must be independent of all commentaries and should naturally invoke the reason to Allah's greatness as manifested in the Ayats of the Quran.

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88 Mohammad Iqbal, op. cit.
90 Aziz Ahmad, op. cit., p.205.
The Sciences of Quran namely the science of injunction (Ahkam), the science of disputation (of the polytheist), the science of divine favours, the science of particular events that Allah had decreed and the science of hereafter were to be studied in a wholistic way in order to understand the totality of Quran for its significance to life.

Shah Waliullah was of the opinion that Ijtihad is obligatory for the ulama of every age, because with the passage of time human life comes across with numerous problems unprecedented in history. The rulings recorded in the books of law need new interpretations. A fresh probe and investigation of the Islamic commands and the rulings laid down by the doctors of law in their books is obligatory for the Muslims.

The necessity of Ijtihad arises from the expansion of human society and it has been discussed by Shah Waliullah in a number of books and his method is to train one particular people and to use them as a nucleus for the building up of a universal Shariat. After pointing out the function and scope of Ijtihad, he has also laid down rules and principles in the light of which a Mujtahid (religious scholar) can make independent interpretations. He was of the opinion that Ijtihad could not possibly have been exercised until the stronghold of rigid conformity was not broken.

He realized the dangers inherent in sticking to the

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92 A.D. Muztar, op. cit.
traditional patterns of thought and emphasized the need of re-interpreting Islamic thought in the light of the dynamic problems of a changing social order condemning the obstructive role of the ulama. In this respect he declared "The ulama of today are like camels with strings in their noses. They are tightened by Taqlid and do not think over the problems afresh".

To pave the way for the spirit of Ijtihad to develop, Shah Waliullah translated the Quran into Persian and also wrote two commentaries Musawwa and Musaffa on the Muwatta of Imam Malik, which, in his opinion, embodied the real spirit of the early era of Islam. 93 Aziz Ahmad defines Ijtihad as the necessity of the ever now or 'permanent' speculations arises because of the progress and expansion of religious and human society which is faced with new problems in a new age and in a new milieu". His emphasis on the role of Ijtihad is therefore a natural reaction to the element of growth and change in the society. 94

A close examination of Shah Waliullah's writings suggest that his visit to Mecca had exerted decisive influence in moulding his idea on Ijtihad. He appears to have been disgusted with the imitative habits of the ulama of India and with their un-proportionate reliance on the books of Fiqh or jurisprudence. In one of his earlier works he complains that the religious scholars of his time to whom was entrusted the task of enforcing the Shariah neglected the study of the Quran and the Prophetic

94 Aziz Ahmad, Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment, p. 204.
tradition and cared only for *Fiqh* and other theoretical sciences. This according to him produced disastrous results.

After his return from Mecca he not only reasserted the validity of *Ijtihad* but declared himself to be *Mujtahid* of religion, which he certainly was.

Abul Ala Maududi defining Ijtihad writes that “Shah Waliullah has not merely stressed the importance of Ijtihad but has also laid down its bases and principles and the conditions necessary for undertaking it. In his various books like *Izalah, Hujjat Allah al-Baligah, Aqd-al Jid Insaf, Buduri-Bazigah, Musaffa*, etc. There were allusions to, as well as lengthy discourses on, this subject.”

Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi regards Ijithad as interpretation or discovery of law from its sources within the framework and in accordance with the methodology laid down for such an exercise essential for every age in order to meet the changing social needs of the time. In his Introduction to *Musaffa* he writes “Ijtihad is a *Fard bil Kifayah*” or a collective duty, the fulfillment of which by a sufficient number of individuals that excuses the other individuals from fulfillment.

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(V) JIHAD

Jihad is a Holy war against non-Muslim powers, when Muslim places of worship are attacked or their religious interests are in danger.99

Patrick Bannerman defines that Jihad means exertion by Muslims individually and collectively *fisabil Allah* or in the path of God infuilmement of obligation to spread belief in Allah and to make His word supreme throughout the world.100

When civilization and culture make considerable advancement, the society starts to rot and corrupt in many ways. The reigns of the government go into the hands of the unworthy and wealth happens to move alternately from one rich person to the other rich person, as a result poor and labour class is deprived of their due rights. Shah Waliullah often uses the term Jihad for revolution against a corrupt political and religious system where Islamic tenets are threatened.

Shah Waliullah attracts the people to revolt and says that when the conditions so deteriorate that the government fails to meet the bare necessities of life of its subjects, it becomes necessary for them to work and use all possible means for the overthrow of that corrupt government and the sacrifices made in this respect are counted among the best of actions.

He believed that revolution cannot be brought by mere talks, prays and hopes. People will have to give their blood will have to work towards that end by revolution. He

100 Patrick Bannerman, *op. cit.*, p.86.
means that it is revolution that brings peace and prosperity. ¹⁰¹

Shah Waliullah did not believe in non-violence or passive resistance. He believed in military force as the means to crush a deep-rooted evil or a corrupt government about a positive revolution in drown trodden society. But the military force should be trained on the principles of Jihad. ¹⁰²

He expressed his disgust with monarchy and condemned it as an agency of exploitation and also as a cankerous growth in body politic of Islam. With great confidence he turned to the masses and exhorted them to rise up to the occasion and set the social and political life in order. ¹⁰³

Above all, his teachings and philosophy is to break the old order and replace it by a new one, which may satisfy the requirements of the changing times. It is for this reason he emphasizes the necessity of the continuation of Jihad by which he generally means revolution.

He further maintained that so long as this spirit was present the Muslims remained victorious and were honoured everywhere but no sooner did it disappear from them they were humiliated and hated wherever they were. To show the importance of Jihad he profusely quotes Quranic verses and the traditions. ¹⁰⁴

VI REASON AND RATIONALISM

¹⁰¹ G.N. Jalbani, Life of Shah Waliullah, p.61.
¹⁰² Shafique Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 70.
¹⁰³ K.A. Nizami, op cit., p.101
Reason and rationalism occupies prominent place in Shah Waliullah's thought. He refused to yield to the notion that religious injunctions were to be obeyed just because they were divine.\textsuperscript{105}

The Holy Quran does recognize revelation as a source of knowledge higher than reason but at the same time admits that the truth of the principles established by revelation must be judged by reason and hence it repeatedly appeals to reason and denounces those who do not use their reasoning faculty.\textsuperscript{106}

He also attaches great importance to reason. In his \textit{Hujjat Allah al-Balighah} he had discussed reason in great detail and has concluded that reason is superior to all other human faculties and he quotes many Hadith of the Prophet in support of his preposition. He also quotes verses from the Quran and tries to prove the superiority of reason concluding that a man whose reason dominates all other beastly faculties such as inordinate desire and sensuality is a true Muslim, such a person surrenders himself completely to the will of God and never revolts against the commands of Shariat.

He rightly asserted the necessity of explaining the rational significance of Islamic commands while preaching Islam to the non-muslims. So to him the strongest argument for the righteousness of Islam is that its injunctions are based on reason and self-evident prepositions. This dynamic realism and logic runs through

\textsuperscript{105} G.N. Jalbani, \textit{Life of Shah Waliullah}.

the entire system of Shah Waliullah's religious philosophy.  

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He was not a blind imitator and he did not even follow any of the four established schools of thought. Rather he subjected their Imams to thorough investigation both historical and rational ¹⁰⁸ and he also applied this in explaining the differences among the various schools of Fiqh. It is the same rationalism that is observed in his efforts to find a compromise and conciliation among these schools. Through his exposition that religion was based on reason he opened new vistas of thought for the coming generation of speculative mind. ¹⁰⁹

Shah Waliullah was also greatly influenced by Imam Ghazali, Khattabi and Shaykh al-Islam Izzad-Din bin Abd al-Salam. From them he learnt the art of rational interpretation of the different aspects of Islam. In his introduction to Hujjat Allah al-Baligah he mentions these names with great respect. ¹¹⁰

V. HIS IDEAS ON TASAWWUF

Shah Waliullah received education on Tasawwuf from his father Shaykh Abdur Rahim and devoted himself to the practices of the Naqshbandi order. During pilgrimage in 1730 he was awarded Khirqa in mysticism by his teacher Shaykh Abu Tahir, who was a distinguished Traditionist

¹⁰⁸ G.N. Jalbani, Teachings of Shah Waliullah, Muhaddith Dehlavi, p. 4.
¹⁰⁹ A.D. Muztar, op. cit., p. 89.
¹¹⁰ N. Hanif, op. cit., p. 163.
and a famous divine, with his rag, which contained all the qualities inherent in the rag of other sufis. ¹¹¹

Shah Waliullah's contribution to theoretical and practical mysticism is immense. He wrote a number of books on different aspects of mysticism. Al-Qawl al Jamil, al-Tafhimat al Ilahiyah, Lamat, al-Badur al-Bazigah, Fuyud al-Haramain etc. ¹¹²

The institution of Mysticism according to him is lawful in Islam. He enumerates verses of the Quran and sayings of the Prophet to support his arguments and points out that the swearing of allegiance at the hands of a spiritual preceptor for inner purification is desirable. ¹¹³

In the time of Shah Waliullah innovations and bad customs had considerably spoiled the purity of Islam. The preachers presented Islam incorrectly, the jurists had submitted to blind imitation. The pseudomystics, who were already demoralized, taking undue advantage of the simplicity and ignorance of the masses, attributed many a funny and strange things to themselves. They sold religion for worldly gains and some of them even turned atheists and freethinkers. ¹¹⁴

Shah Waliullah was critical of the sufis of his time because they had fallen prey to various excesses. Some of them had renounced worldly life and had retired into seclusion and some were addicted to drinking wine and bhang and still others had day-dreams and wore female

¹¹¹ Sheikh Mohammad Ikram, Ruh-e-Kauser, p. 566.
¹¹³ A.D. Muztar, op. cit., p. 164.
¹¹⁴ G.N. Jabani, op. cit., p. 85.
dresses. Yet another group of pseudosufis claimed spiritual perfection for themselves while as a matter of fact they knew nothing of *Tasawwuf*. They only did it for the sake of worldly gains.  

He tried to comb out all unhealthy foreign influences from *Tasawwuf* such as a morbid kind of neo-platonism and vedantism. He stressed that genuine *Tasawwuf* as distinguished from *pseudo-tasawwuf* encourages an active way of life, which assures progress and prosperity in this world and salvation in the hereafter.  

His mission was to reconcile differences between the various sufi orders and their teachings and practices. To the descendants of leading sufis Shah Waliullah posed the question as to why they had splintered into different groups each having a different path. He believed that these sufis had abandoned the Right Path and they had assumed their own leadership. Not only were they misguided in their own religious practices but they posed as teachers and influenced others.  

Moreover, Shah Waliullah asserted that they accepted disciples for money to which he said he was strongly opposed. He believed that in a sufi-disciple relationship the disciple was led away from Allah and the Prophet.  

Challenging the way of life of preachers and ascetics, who led retired lives in *Kanjah’s*, Shah Waliullah asserted that the rules they imposed upon themselves were not

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117 Saiyyad Athar Abbas Rizvi, *op cit.*, p.262.  
religious while the preachers were confusing people by quoting apocryphal Hadith in their sermons. 119

Shah Waliullah built his system of tasawwuf on Ihsan mentioned in the famous hadith of the Prophet known as Hadith-I-Jibrail. In the Hadith the Prophet defines Ihsan as follows:

*Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him. If you do not see him then you must be conscious that He is seeing you.*

"Ihsan is, therefore, a state in which there is close relationship with God so that His presence is felt by the worshipper or servant that renders his worship the submissive character.”

Shah Waliullah talks about various practices of Tariqa like obedience (ta'at), dhikr (words used in rememberance), a Muraqabah (meditation) and Karamah (miracle) performed by (Awliya) which leads the sufi to realize his chief objective.

Obedience (taat) to the Shariah is considered by Shah Waliullah as the primary requisite for transferring the path of sufism. By obedience to Shariah he means adherence to authentic beliefs and established regulations of Islam. Here the traveller in the mystical path is obliged to follow them on the model of the companions (sahaba), the Tabi’in and the Tab’-i-Tabi’in. 120

Shah Waliullah tried to reshape Islamic metaphysics in greater conformity with the teachings of the Quran and

119 Ibid., p. 386.
120 Abdur Rashid Bhat, op. cit., p.38.
the Sunnah of the Prophet. He adopted a more rational approach to the controversial issues of metaphysics, which led to greater harmony among subsequent Islamic metaphysical thinkers. He was careful to give a balanced criticism of some of the views of his predecessors and contemporaries. His constructive and positive approach to those issues was always considered a sincere attempt at reconciliation.\footnote{Burhan Ahmad Faruqi, op. cit., See Hazrat Maulana Mohammad Wali Rahmani, Tasawwuf of Hazrat Shah Waliullah in *Monthly Tarjuman-e-Deoband*, vol. No. 44, (Aug. 2004), p.30.}

The theosophical system of *Wahdat al-Wujud* or ontological monism which Ibn al-Arabi (d.1240) formulated became very popular among the sufis. Some of them however did not agree with it, others disliked and even denounced it. Nevertheless, the doctrine continued to dominate sufi speculations for four hundred years till Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (d 1624) subjected its basic concept as well as its moral and religious consequences to searching criticism and came out with a parallel theosophy popularly known as *Wahdat al-Shuhud*.

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi’s ideas were highly original. His concept of non-being was even radical. But he did not elaborate his ideas with the thoroughness that characterizes the work of Ibn al-Arabi, consequently, its impact on subsequent sufi speculations was not great.\footnote{Abdul Haq Ansari, ‘Shah Wallullah’s Attempt to Revise Wahdat al-Wujud’ in *Islamic Quarterly*, vol. 28, No.3, (1984), p. 150.}

The sufis were divided over whether *Wahdat-al-Wujud* was a reality or only a mystic sensation. It would be recalled that the *Mujaddid Alf Thani* had declared in no
uncertain terms that the monism experienced by the sufis was not real and that it was an experience which transcended when the sufi rose higher in mystic accomplishments until he realized the truth. He, therefore, called the experience *Wahdat al-Shuhud* or monism in experience not reality.\(^{123}\)

Sirhindi's criticism of *Wahdat al-Wujud* did have its impact in that it shook the sufi world. One result was that some sufis while retaining Ibn al-Arabi's concept tried to introduce into the system an element of transcendentalism. An outstanding instance of this attempt is the one made by the great eighteenth century thinker and sufi Shah Waliullah.\(^{124}\)

Shah Waliullah's was the first attempt to reconcile the two contradictory doctrines that of *Wahdat al-Wujud* of Ibn Arabi and *Wahdat al-Shuhud* of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, to check the spiritual decadence of Islam in his age. He completed the work began by Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, the chaneling of extreme sufi heritage into traditional Islam. This also involved a composition of sufis internal differences of practices and a synthesis by merging together various sufi disciplines in India into one.

According to Shah Waliullah there is no substantial difference between the philosophy of *Wahdat al Wujud* and *Wahdat al-Shuhud*. He neatly resolved the conflict calling these differences only verbal controversies, which had come about because of ambiguous language.

\(^{123}\) I.H. Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics*, p. 121.
\(^{124}\) Abdul Haq Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 151.
He is of the view that leaving similes and metaphors aside, there is no essential difference between the doctrines of Ibn al-Arabi and that of Sirhindi. The two relate the same fact in two different languages; the shortsighted critiques look upon these as matter of vital difference. This he has discussed at great length in his book *Faislat Wahdat al-Wujud wa Wahdat al-Shuhud*.\(^{125}\)

He says that this evaluation of the doctrine of Wahdat al-Wujud and Wahdat al-Shuhud is rationalistic not based on first hand mystic experience.

The positive result of Shah Waliullah's reconciliatory efforts was two fold it brought out harmony between the two opposing groups of metaphysicians, and it also legitimized the doctrines of *Wahdat al-Wujud* among the *mutakallimun* (theologians) who previously had not been ready to accept it.\(^{126}\)

**VI. IMPACT OF SHAH WALIULLAH'S THOUGHTS**

Shah Waliullah's teachings brought about a far-reaching effect on the rigid conformity, which was divided into two groups.

(1). The people who could not bring themselves to conform to his ideology they remained as they were.

(2). Secondly, those who were influenced by him. The later were further divided into two (a) Those who remained Hanafis but accepted the theory of the supremacy of the Hadith they were called Deobandis (b) And those

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who renounced Hanafism as well as conformity they were called Ahl-i-Hadith.

Shah Waliullah's impact on the religious thoughts of the Subcontinent is the claim pronouncing association with him by almost every school of thought. Thus the Barelwis, the Deobandis, the Ahl-i-Hadith and the neo-Mutazilites who form the main composite of Indian Muslim society acknowledge the authority of Shah Waliullah.

Each of them find a special attraction in one or the other aspect of his philosophy. In other words, not the whole but apart of his thoughts peculiar to each one's need is accepted by them.127

Shah Waliullah's religious philosophy consists, of four major composites (1) Spiritualism (2) Conventionalism (3) Traditionalism (4) Rationalism.

Spiritualism is of a special interest to the Barelwis conventionalism to the Deobandis, traditionalism to the Ahl-i-Hadith and rationalism to the neo-Mutazilites.128

The most important feature of Barelwi thought is its attachment to and an advocacy of Tasawwuf or spiritualism, which also includes their belief that the spirits of dead saints can be invoked for help.

Hence a visit to the tombs of pious men is a regular feature of their religious life. They believed that saints are the best mediators between man and God.

127 A.D. Muztar, op. cit., p. 117.
128 Ibid., p. 118.
Another feature of Shah Waliullah was that he visited the grave of his father and sat there in meditation. Now all that is said and practiced by the Barelwis is endorsed to very a great extent by the practice of Shah Waliullah.\textsuperscript{129}

Deoband, which had drawn its inspiration from Shah Waliullah's ideas of social revolution and to some extent from his concept of religious reform and which stood for religious traditionalism sought to emphasize its ideological links with him.

The Deobandis maintained that as the school of Deoband was founded by men who graduated from the seminary of Shah Waliullah's descendents so they are the real heirs of the Walliullahi thought and movement.\textsuperscript{130} The Deobandis followed Shah Waliullah in his emphasis on the "rational sciences" with still greater emphasis on "revealed sciences" of Quran and hadith.\textsuperscript{131}

Next come the Ahl-i-Hadith who accepts Shah Waliullah as one of the founders of their school in India. The factors, which inspire them, were his thoughts in the supremacy of Hadith to Fiqh. As the name of their community is indicative they renounce conformity to the schools of Fiqh and for them there is no authority after the Quran and Hadith.\textsuperscript{132}

They encouraged simplification of ceremonies and the practice of widow remarriage. They were directly in line with the critical views of Shah Waliullah emphasizing

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., p. 119.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., p. 120.
\textsuperscript{132} A.D. Muztar, op. cit., p. 120.
extremely strict Unitarianism arguing the abolition of un-Islamic customs and practices, including Khanqah and tomb culture.¹³³

Neo-Mutazilites turn to Shah Waliullah for his realism that runs throughout his thought. Shah Waliullah believed in the truth of Islam in the light of reason. Rationalism is the main feature of Waliullahi philosophy, which seeks to ascribe material causes to miracles.¹³⁴

Shah Waliullah's movement is unique in itself because of its tremendous impact on all subsequent reform movements in the Subcontinent. Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Aligarh, Sayyid Ahamd Shahid's Jihad, Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautvi's Deoband and several other movements in the Subcontinent right up to Iqbal are all extended forms of the Waliullahi doctrine some emphasizing its conservative and others its progressive side.

Shah Waliullah was a thinker who inspired rationalism as well as fundamentalism and all had far reaching effects on the intellectual, spiritual, political and socio-cultural life of the present day Muslim world.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ A.D. Muztar, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
CONCLUSIONS

Shah Waliullah Dehlavi led an intellectual revolution to change the whole system by drawing attention of the people towards degradation of European imperialism and the rampant corruption among oriental rulers. During his pilgrimage to Makkah in 1731, he was inspired by a vision to replace the imperialist and corrupt administration by establishing a government based on principles of equality and justice.

Shah Waliullah had seen the decline of Mughal rule in India and observed similar degradation in other countries of Asia and Africa. The last revered and powerful ruler of Mughal Dynasty Aurangzeb had already passed away in 1707 and the East India Company had assumed the power to rule a part of Eastern India, defeating Siraj ud-Dawla at Plassey in 1757. Ultimately Shah Waliullah came to the conclusion that monarchist and imperialist tendencies were the main cause for the worsening state of affairs. He formulated certain principles necessary for the revival of human values.

In his book “Hujjat Allah al-Balighah he laid down those principles i.e “Labour is a real source of wealth” and only those who put in the physical and mental labour for the sake of betterment of the society, deserve to possess wealth”. People, he believed, are equal and the position of the ruler of a state is no more than that of a common citizen in matters of justice and freedom. Things like right to freedom, security and property are essential for all, irrespective of religion, race or colour.
It is to be noted that he propagated these ideas long before the French; American or Soviet revolutions took place. It is a pity that even today these noble ideas lie buried under the trash of imperialist history that was mainly written to tarnish the image of Muslims and the Ulama in India.

Shah Waliullah who started his career as a teacher ended as a radical thinker, a farsighted politician and revolutionary reformer. His unfinished mission was carried on by a galaxy of scholars and intellectuals prepared and trained by him.

On the whole his approach to Islam was rational and moderate. He wanted to create a real understanding of Islam for all by softening the factional differences and sectarian rivalries. He wanted to see the Muslims as a consolidated and unified force to serve the cause of Islam.

He possessed a multidimensional and versatile personality. His real greatness lay in the cumulative effects produced by his writings, by the contribution of persons trained by him and by the achievements of the school of thought founded by him. In religious matters he struck a mean between the extremes, in social affairs he strove to introduce in the Muslim society the simplicity and purity of early Islam, in the sphere of economics he advocated the revolutionism of Islamic socialism and in the political field he forged a united Muslim front against the non-Muslim forces which were threatening to storm Muslim India.
Shah Waliullah was a luminary who during the stormy period of Indian history showed the bewildered Muslims the right path, the path of peace and glory.