SHAH WALEULLAH AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO ISLAMIC EDUCATION.

This doctoral thesis is an attempt to project Shah Waliullah as a reformer in various fields of Islamic Society with special reference to his educational thought. His was the period when the Islamic society was on its way to ultimate ruin and destruction. The political power of the Mughal dynasty was challenged by new forces and the corrupt Mughal kings were unmindful of their responsibility as rulers. Shah Waliullah was a witness to the political religious educational, economic and other conditions of the society and was conscious of the consequence to which the society was exposed. He tried his best to halt and divert the process of the destruction of Islamic values in the Muslim society with the zeal of a reformer. In this thesis a general survey of his achievements has been attempted with particular emphasis on his contribution to Islamic education. The study has been conducted under chapters excluding the introduction, which are summarized below:

The introduction forms the background of the study in which discussion on various aspects of Shah Waliullah’s achievements has been attempted from the beginning of his career to its end. This is followed by chapter I, which deals with the events of Shah Waliullah’s life. He was born on the 4th of Shawwal 1114 A.H. His birth was foretold to his father Shah Abdur Rahim in his vision. When he reached the age of seventeen
years his father died. During the twelve years after the death of his father he was busy in his father's institution Madrasah Rahimia in giving lessons on theology, logic and Philosophy. In the year 1143 A.H he visited the holy cities of Mecca and Madina. He stayed there for about two years taking lesson in the science of Hadith from the renowned scholar Shaikh Abu Tahir. Then he returned home on the 14th of Rajab 1145 A.H. (December 20th the 1732 A.D.) During his life Shah Waliullah saw the period of the region of ten Mughal rulers. The main events of this period are the massacre of the population of Delhi by Nadir Shah, rise of Sadat Bara, the imprisonment of Farrakha sair, his torture and death, rise of Maratha and Sikhs and the destruction of Maratha power.

Shah Waliullah died in 1176 A.H. (1763 A.D.) leaving behind his four illustrious sons.

His prominent contemporaries were:
1. Shaikh Muhammad Ashiq
2. Shaikh Fakhruddin Dehelvi

The B portion of this chapter is concerned with the works of Shah Waliullah in which a detailed account of his contribution of Islamic services is given along with his other works.

The second chapter gives an account of the political, social, economic and educational conditions of Shah Waliullah's times.

The political conditions were such that India was divided into many camps, Mughal Empire was in ruin, loot and killing was the order of the
day. A foreign power was emerging as a force. It was difficult to change the course of events and nobody could visualize the future of the country and its people.

As regards the social conditions no doubt the religion of Islam had left its influence in India but at the same time it is Islam that has accepted more from the culture and religion of the country. In practice people had forgotten the life to come after death. The enjoyment of Life on this earth was the order of the day. The morals of the public were so debased that it was only the worldly interest with which they were concerned. The so-called Mujahedeen has lost the spirit of fighting in the way of God. Some people had occupied the position of court poets enjoying the company of the rulers and the nobles. Others entered the profession of mystics, Faqirs and story tellers which had became their profession and the means of living. In short lawful means of livelihood which require hardwork and sense of moral values became absent and people were indulging in the art of idleness.

In his analysis of the rise and fall of nations Shah Waliullah goes deep and links the moral degradation to the ills of the economic system prevailing in the society.

He addresses the different sections of the society and points out the state of affairs He addresses the nobles, the soldiers, the people of learning, the scholars and Divinity and also the people of different vocations drawing their attention to the moral weakness they were suffering from.
As regards the educational conditions of Shah Waliullah's period, no doubt the interest had shifted from the study of the science of Hadith to other sciences. No doubt the old pattern which was adopted by the Muslim countries was prevalent here also with minor changes which suited the local conditions. The courses of study were also based on the old pattern. Educational activities were carried out either in mosques or the private houses of the nobles. It was mostly in mosques that the school functioned. but in cities and towns the houses of the nobles served the purpose of the school buildings.

The great institution of Shah Waliullah's time, Madrasah Rahimiah, has the distinction of catering to the needs of the Islamic education for generations. Students from different parts of the Muslim world flocked to it. Though the Institution did not remain but it left its influence for the generation to come. The founders of the great Muslim educational centres, Muslim University Aligarh and Darul Ulum Deoband, are the products of the same school of thought.

The courses prescribed were taught stage by stage. There were four stages of education:

1. Standard I
   Reading of the Quran without its translation.

2. Standard II
   Study of Persian with elementary basic Arabic

3. Danishmandi

4. Fadil.

School equipments and libraries
It is needless to compare the pomp and show of our present day equipment with the simplicity of those old days since education was considered a religious duty. Simplicity was the chief feature of the educational activity. Regarding school libraries they were such which the students and the teachers used. This treasure was very dear to them and they were more anxious for its safety that for even their lives.

The Arts of Calligraphy

The arts of calligraphy had developed to such an extent that large number of people earned their living by means of this occupation only. Even books were cheap. The paper industry had also flourished very much during this period.

Scholarships

The schools run by rulers and nobles provided sumptuous food to the students under their care. Najibud-Dawla had nine hundred scholars in his institution, the lowest amount paid to them was rupees five and the highest rupees five hundred according their abilities. Students in Shah Waliullah's institution were receiving monthly help from the government of Hafizul-Mulik.
Economic conditions of the period

After the death of Aurangzeb the process of the all round disintegration of the empire had already set in comprising all aspects of the society, political, social, moral, religious, economic and other. As we know the feudal system was the order of the day all over the world. The land the country had become the property of the kings, nobles, Jagirdars and Zamindars who were treating the agriculturist as their farm workers. They were the people who had to bear the main burden of taxes. They had to work hard from morning till evening and even then it was difficult for them to meet the expenses of their daily life. The rich class lived in extreme luxury while the farmer, traders and workers suffered. There was a class of people who totally depended on the state grants such as poets, scholars, Sufis, the so called Mujahideens and preachers of Tawheed, and many others who could manage to get state help. Such people were infact economically a burden to the state. But the system was so deep rooted in the society that it could not be abolished. In short the capitalist created system of economy of the country had resulted in an unjust system of distribution of wealth.

Shah Waliullah with vision of a reformer says that the main causes of the failure of economy are twofold. The first cause is that a section of the society such as poets, the so called Mujahideen. Sufis and others of this class who are getting economic grant without doing anything for the benefit of the society.

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The second cause is that the agriculturists, traders, people engaged in different crafts have to pay heavy taxes which are beyond their means and capacity, although the secret of the prosperity of the Country and the improvement of its economy lies in the reduction of taxes. Conditions should be created for the Industry and agriculture to flourish.

Shah Waliullah’s thoughts on economic conditions of his days provides yet another example of his master skill in integrating economic theory and ethical values. All his emphasis is on his plea that the economy of the society should not be pushed into the hands of a capitalist class a particular section of the society. It should be for the larger and needy section of the population.

Chapter III is a discussion on the Shah Waliullah’s philosophy of education. It also gives in details his contribution to Islamic education, which is the main chapter of this work. First of all Shah Waliullah defines knowledge as something which does not fade away and comes to naught. For him it is enteral with God and everlasting. Again he considers true knowledge to be in conformity with the needs and aspiration of the times and for us the believers, the Quran is the only Book of the most dignified and most honoured and the most important knowledge which has been revealed in conformity with the needs of the time.

Elaborating his point Shah Waliullah quotes Sadi Shirazi, who says that knowledge which does not lead to the quest of truth is not knowledge but ignorance. Again quoting the same scholar he asserts that, knowledge which is sought for material gain is a snake, and knowledge acquired for
the purification of heart is your real friend. No doubt this view of Shah Waliullah about knowledge strikes a note of ethico-sociological system in his educational thought, since the object of education for him is to attain the pleasure of Lord of the universe, and also to gain eternal bliss in the life to come after death.

Sir Ahmed Hussain in his book "Philosophy of Faqir" compares the views of Bergson with those of Shah Waliullah and says:

"Readers of the works of the late Henry Bergson will be surprised to find that his teaching is in exact accord with the teaching of Shah Waliullah and his followers. The difference is only in words used."

While examining various points of view regarding the aim of education we have mentioned that education is for character building and social efficiency. But it is only a partial truth, since the philosophy of Shah Waliullah does not rest wholly on the ethico-sociological foundation. It encompasses the whole human life and therefore education for complete living is the aim on which his educational thought rests. It is, therefore that he considers the Holy Quran and the Hadith the guides for complete living.

Shah Waliullah defines the type of individual that his educational system aims at producing. Regarding the nature of a child, of course, he wants to produce an ideal individual. But before presenting the composite picture of his ideal individual he starts with the question of the nature of a child and he quotes the following Hadith:
meansthat every child is born in conformity to Fitrat. It is his parents who make him Jew, a Christian, and a magian. But the question arises as what Al – Fitrat ( ﺔﻠﻋ ﺖﺨﺮ) means according to Shah Waliullah. Al – Fitrat is the results of the total of the four cardinal qualities in every human being Viz. 1. Al – Tahar ( ﺔﻠﻋ ﺖﺤﺮ) 2. Al – Ikhbat ( ﺔﻠﻋ ﺖﺤﺐ) 3. Al – Samahat and 4. Al – Adalat which respectively mean purity, Humility before God, liberality and justice. As a result of the missing of these four qualities the Fitrat is formed. Means of acquiring these qualities are twofold the knowledge ( ﺔﻠﻋ ﺖﻌﻠﻢ) and the action ( ﺔﻠﻋ ﺖﻌﻤﻞ) Shah Waliullah holds fast to the theory of the essential goodness of child nature. The four qualities if nourished properly go to make man an ideal individual but the question is how to nourish them properly when man has been created with two urges in him one is animal urge and the other, an angelic urge. The two are in conflict with each other and man is caught between the two. Shah Waliullah’s theory of the two urges in man and his analysis of the same eventually divides man into eight types of individuals each belonging to a separate category differing from each other in details.

Shah Waliullah defines clearly the type of an individual which his system of education aims at producing. According to him an ideal individual is one who subordinates his animal urge to his angelic urge. It is only then that he can develop in the above-mentioned four qualities.

In fact shah Waliullah’s Philosophy of education as described above was practised in his great educational institution details of which we need not mention in this brief survey of his educational activities. However we
may mention here that it is from this institution that the stream of learning flowed.

Shah Waliullah left no stone unturned to popularize the study of the science of Hadith which is praised by the great scholar Rashid Riza the English translation of which is given below:

"If our scholars of divinity from India has not focused their attention on the study of the science of Hadith this important branch of learning would have suffered enormously. It is obvious that the credit for the revival of the Hadith goes to Shah Waliullah. It is a period when the leadership of Muslim education passed into the hands of shah Waliullah and his students who followed him. We need not repeat here the grades and stages of education and the syllabus prescribed in shah Waliullah's Institution. However we shall give the special features of the working of that centre of learning.

Shah Waliullah was in fact practising in this institution what he was preaching. He was treating all students with equal affection irrespective of the class of society to which they belonged. He was kind to all. He was giving the intelligent and pains taking students' special financial help to keep them in good spirit.

As regards the timing of the teaching hours classes were held in the morning, in the afternoon and even after Isha Prayers. No teaching hours were prescribed for teachers. In fact they were devoting as much time for their work as they could.
There was provision for physical education also. Student could be punished in the case of neglect of prayers by the students.

Chapter IV  Discusses the factors governing the conditions that make and mar the society. Shah Waliullah, under the Caption Irtifaqat has divided the development of human society into four stages. The fourth Irtifaq is concerned with International Organization when the society is at the height of its material development. The history of the world provides evidence that nations had reached a certain stage of development and there came a time when a process the reverse started when moral values were forgotten and preference was given to material gains. Shah Waliullah has written exhaustively on the causes and down fall of nations, but his approach is different. He blames the unjust economic system also for such disasters. His idea of an ideal society has very much to do with his idea of a just economic system. Among the many conditions that he wants to secure for every individual in order to develop his individuality in his scheme of education he gives great importance to the economic condition of the society. For him an ideal society and a just economic system are intertwined. Here we find Shah Waliullah unique in his approach for all other thinkers like Aristotle, Socrates, Ibn Sina, Miska Waih, Al- Ghazali, Ibn Khaladun and others are all silent on this point. It goes to the credit of shah Waliullah that he is the first to discuss the problem in terms of Eco-friendly development of human society which he calls a just economic system. This problem has been discussed extensively by Shah Waliullah in his remarkable work Ilujjatullahi al Balighah the Arabic text of which along with its English version is given in this chapter.
Shah Waliullah has divided the life of an individual into two compartments, the one attached to the other, one is the worldly life and the other is the life after death. Shah Waliullah attaches equal importance to both, because it is only the actions of an individual in his worldly life that will determine his place in the life to come in the next world.

No doubt Shah Waliullah has contributed in a big way in throwing light on different aspects of the social life. He is the first to explain the details of economic life of man in the context of the moral values, which we may also call spiritual.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that among the Islamic scholars and economic thinkers Shah Waliullah is the first to give thought to the fact that economic problems of human life deserve as much interest and consideration as other important problems like moral, spiritual religious and others. He begins with extensive theoretical discussion of economic order and the ideals of Islamic economic system taking into account the religions and political framework conditions. He gives a wealth of information who goes beyond the bounds of economies. In fact he gives utmost importance to economic aspects of human life.

Our study has revealed that in linking ideal society with the just economic order, he is far ahead of his time since before Shah Waliullah the inability or reluctance of our other thinkers to give the slightest thought to such problems is simply amazing. No doubt Karl Marx in the later period, starts from the same data and both the thinkers consider their theory
a basic truth of human life but they differ in their approach and in details for obvious reasons. However we regard Shah Waliullah a Pioneer in the scientific treatment of the problem since Marx and other thinkers in this regard belong to the later period. It may be noted that Shah Waliullah died in 1765 A.D. while Karl Marx was born in 1818 A.D, and he called his first international in 1864 A.D. and died in 1883 A.D.

The study of Shah Waliullah’s economic thought provides an evidence of his skill in interpreting economic theory and ethical values.

The fifth chapter of the thesis is a conclusion of the discussions previously held and it is not necessary for us to go into its details. This chapter is followed by a useful bibliography. At this stage I may venture to humbly submit that I have tried in my own way to submit Shah Waliullah’s Contribution to Islamic education, to a detailed and comprehensive Study and critical examination.

I believe it will help immensely in understanding Shah Waliullah’s thoughts on education in general and Islamic education in particular.