

A Critical Analysis of Shah Waliullah Dehlawi's Sufi Influences in the Indian Subcontinent

Şah Veliyyullah Dihlevî'nin Hint Alt Kıtası'ndaki Tasavvufî Etkilerinin Eleştirel Bir Analizi

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Abstract

This article examines the pivotal role of Shah Waliullah Dehlawi (1703-1762) in the revival of Islam in the Indian subcontinent through Sufism following the decline of the Mughal Empire. Shah Waliullah, a Sufi affiliated with the Naqshbandi Order, also distinguished himself as an Ash'ari theologian and a Hanafi jurist. Shah Waliullah's distinctive interpretation, which underscores the significance of the Quran and the Sunnah in Islamic sciences and Sufism, has played an essential role in reforming Islamic thought in the region from theoretical and practical perspectives. His works in the fields of fiqh (jurisprudence), theology, and Sufism have profoundly influenced Muslim thought on the Indian subcontinent. Shah Waliullah, a proponent of the idea that Sufism could serve as a powerful tool in the moral and spiritual development of society, not only emphasised the potential risks posed by distorted Sufism but also cautioned against deviating from the path of the Quran and the Sunnah. His understanding of Sufism is based on rejecting any activity beyond the Quran and Sunnah. He made valuable contributions to the Aqidah (Islamic creed) reform, the promotion of hadith scholarship, and the reconciliation of fiqh (jurisprudence) and Sufism. Shah Waliullah also emphasised the importance of Islamic values and culture. In this article, an attempt has been made to offer a perspective for contemporary Muslims striving to reconcile their beliefs with the demands of modern life by analysing the views of Shah Waliullah on the interpretation of Islamic sciences and Sufism.

Keywords: Shah Waliullah Dehlawi, Sufism, Reform, The Islamic Awakening, Indian Subcontinent, The Impact of Colonialism, Transformation of Muslim Society.

Öz

Bu makalede, Şah Veliyyullah Dihlevî'nin (1703-1762) Babür İmparatorluğu'nun çöküşü sonrası Hint alt kıtasında tasavvuf aracılığıyla İslam'ın yeniden canlandırılmasındaki rolü incelenecektir. Nakşibendî Tarikatı'na müntesip bir sûfi olan Şah Veliyyullah aynı zamanda bir Eş'arî kalamcısı ve Hanefî fakihidir. Şah Veliyyullah'ın İslami ilimlere ve tasavvuf'a yönelik Kur'an ve Sünnet'in önemini vurgulayan kendine özgü yorumu, nazarî ve amelî açıdan bölgedeki İslam düşüncesinin ıslahatında önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Onun, fıkıh, kelam ve tasavvuf alanında yazdığı eserler, Hint alt kıtasındaki Müslüman düşüncesini derinden etkilemiştir. Toplumun ahlakî ve manevî gelişiminde tasavvufun güçlü bir araç olabileceğini düşünen Şah Veliyyullah, Kur'an ve Sünnet çizgisinden uzaklaşarak tahrif olmuş tasavvufun tehlikelerine karşı da uyarılarda bulunmuştur. Onun tasavvuf anlayışı, Kur'an ve sünnet'in dışına çıkan her türlü faaliyetin reddini temel almıştır. O, İslam akidesinin ıslahına, hadis çalışmalarının teşvik edilmesine ve fıkıh ile tasavvufun uzlaştırılmasına katkıda bulunmuştur. Şah Veliyyullah ayrıca İslami değerlerin ve kültürün önemini de vurgulamıştır. Bu makalede, İslamî ilimleri ve tasavvufu yorumlama konusunda, Şah Veliyyullah'ın görüşleri analiz edilerek modern hayatın gereksinimleriyle inançlarını uzlaştırmaya çalışan günümüz Müslümanları için bir bakış açısı sunulmaya çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şah Veliyyullah Dihlevî, Tasavvuf, İslahat, İslamî Uyanış, Hint Alt Kıtası, Sömürgecilik Etkisi, Müslüman Toplumun Dönüşümü.

Introduction

The Indian subcontinent has a rich historical background characterised by a significant period of Muslim governance, during which certain rulers actively endorsed the dissemination and advancement of the Islamic faith. Nevertheless, numerous emperors failed to disseminate genuine Islam among the populace. A few emperors, like Akbar in the sixteenth century, even attempted to incorporate a new religion into their ideologies, which caused Islam to fall. During this period, there was a tendency among Muslims to divert their attention away from the Quran and Sunnah, instead prioritising spiritual endeavours alone. They believed that nothing was legitimate until the Sufis sanctioned it, and as a result, hypocritical attempts at spiritual growth were included in the educational system. It eventually came to be that the Quran and the Sunnah were given less weight than the words and deeds of the Sufis. Several notable Islamic scholars, such as Imam Rabbani Ahmad Sirhindi (d.1624) and later Shah Waliullah Dehlawi (d. 1762), strongly criticised these Sufis, who were hypocritical while presenting a genuine understanding of Sufism to the Muslim community.

After the end of Muslim domination in the Indian subcontinent, there was frustration, aimlessness, and national stagnation among the Muslims. Shah Waliullah Dehlawi was one of those who showed the way to free the Muslim society from the totalitarian anarchy and despair that arose in the Muslim society in the Indian subcontinent after the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir. He was a Muslim philosopher, Sufi, educationist, thinker, and social reformer at the same time. Shah Waliullah, on the one hand, protected the Muslim society from social and state un-Islamic lawlessness; on the other hand, it removed the futility of Muslim thought.¹ His revolutionary thought paved the way for the political emancipation of India, especially Indian Muslims, from British colonial rule. He edited and refined the book "Fatawa-e-Alamgiri," led by Emperor Alamgir. Emperor Alamgir was very fond of him and was very grateful to him.²

1 Saeyd Rashed Hasan Chowdury, *Hint Alt Kitasında Süfi-Selefi Mücadelesi Bağlamında İslam'da İç Barışın Korunması* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi, 2023), 116.

2 Muhammad Abdul Alim, Shah Waliullah Muhaddis Dehlavi: A Historical Background, *no-bojagaran* (8 September 2023), 3-11.

Shah Waliullah's enduring legacy lies in his indispensable role in preserving Islamic identity and culture in the Indian subcontinent. Shah Waliullah's contributions extended beyond mere theoretical discourse. His efforts aimed to reformat and disseminate the Quran and Sunnah among the masses and harmonise jurisprudence, Hadith, and Sufism. Notably, he envisioned Islam not confined within the confines of mosques, madrasahs, and khanqahs but as a comprehensive solution for society's economic, political, cultural, and spiritual challenges. He stands as one of the foremost Islamic philosophers, thinkers, and proponents of the different reform movements, including 'Hukumat-e-Ilahiya' in the subcontinent, as he endeavoured to construct a philosophical framework aligning with Islam's ethical and cultural foundations, addressing the world and its inhabitants.

This article tries to review Shah Waliullah Dehlawi's biography and gives particular importance to his thoughts, writings, and activities on Sufism. This research also aims to assert that Shah Waliullah's distinctive interpretation of Sufism, which placed significant emphasis on notions of social justice and active political involvement, exerted a profound influence on the Muslim community in the Indian subcontinent and continues to serve as a source of inspiration for Muslims across the globe in contemporary times.

1. Methodology

While preparing this research paper, an attempt has been made to prepare a methodology by carefully reviewing the academic works on Shah Waliullah, especially in English, Bengali, Urdu, Arabic, Hindi, and Turkish, and data collection has been done based on secondary sources, considering Shah Waliullah's biography, thoughts, doctrines, and views on Sufism. In this regard, the books mentioned above about him are analysed in the various languages available. Later, all academic articles or research articles found on Shah Waliullah were analysed, and help was taken while preparing the article. Besides, the articles about him in the newspapers have also been reviewed. Apart from this, internet-based sources about Shah Waliullah also have been analysed.

This study is limited in scope by its exclusive reliance on secondary data. In addition, the scope of the study is restricted to Shah Waliullah's views on Sufism and spirituality; no other facets of his work are examined in depth. Notwithstanding these constraints, this research contributes significantly to comprehending Shah Waliullah's views regarding Sufism. This research is the inaugural attempt to conduct a thorough and methodical examination of the Sufism of Shah Waliullah in various languages. Academics interested in Indian subcontinent history, Sufism, or Islamic studies will find the study's results intriguing.

2. Literature Review

The intellectual discourse surrounding Shah Waliullah's perspectives on Sufism has engendered considerable controversy. A scholarly discourse exists about the classification of Shah Waliullah as either a traditional Sufi or a reformer of Sufism. A scholarly discourse exists on the correlation between Shah Waliullah's Sufi teachings and his political ideology. The literature on Shah Waliullah's Sufism highlights a significant subject about his recognition of the utmost significance of the Quran and the Sunnah. Shah Waliullah posited that Sufism should be grounded upon a comprehensive comprehension of Islamic jurisprudence and theological principles. Furthermore, he disapproved of the predominant manifestations of Sufism during his era, which he deemed shallow and superstitious. However, the research paper has been formulated with more priority to those academicians who have highlighted the issues of Shah Waliullah's biography and his contribution to Sufism.

Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi, a distinguished scholar of the Indian subcontinent, holds a significant place in Islamic scholarship. His notable work, "Tareekh e Dawat o Azeemat: Life and Works of Hazrat Shah Waliullah Muhaddith Dehlawi," stands as a comprehensive exploration of the life and contributions of Hazrat Shah Waliullah Muhaddith Dehlawi, a prominent 18th-century Islamic reformer. Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi examines the enduring impact of Shah Waliullah's ideas and reforms on subsequent generations. This includes exploring how Shah Waliullah's intellectual legacy influenced later scholars and reform movements. He has discussed in detail in the book his ideals, thoughts, and immortal

contribution to Islam in the wake of the Islamic Renaissance in the entire Indian subcontinent after the Mughal rule. He carried out many reforms in India whose impact can be felt even today. He created a group of Islamic scholars in the Indian subcontinent who propagated Islam throughout the subcontinent. He highlighted the superiority of Islam in religious institutions and centres of religious knowledge in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. He also encouraged and stimulated the Muslim Ummah through religious and educational activities. He significantly accelerated the da'wah activities, reformed Islamic thought by making reformative efforts, worked to revive and expand religious knowledge, and took a strong stand against contemporary confusion, superstitions, and customs.³ Hijaz fundamentally influenced his thinking and education because he completed the study of Hadith from Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim, the great man of Hadith and classical Imam Abu Taher. At that time, Hijaz was under the rule of the Ottoman Caliphate. The noble aristocracy of Mecca were representatives of the sultans of the Ottoman family and held the position of governor and ruler at the time. As a result, he got knowledge of Sufism from Ottoman scholars and Hadith from Arab scholars.⁴ In this book, the author sheds light on the politics of India at the time of Shah Waliullah's essential contributions in detail but does not discuss much about his contribution to Sufism. However, we have benefited from his book on various topics while writing this research paper.

Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi wrote a book titled Shah Waliullah and his political thought. He shed light on Waliullah's biography and political thoughts in his book. Through this book, the author has beautifully presented the philosophical and political thought of Shah Waliullah in Muslim society. By analysing the revolutionary thought of Shah Waliullah, the author highlights the fact that the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent should get inspiration. According to the author, Shah Waliullah was one of the most prominent philosophical scholars of the Muslim community of the Indian subcontinent. After the death of Emperor Alamgir Aurangzeb, the foundations of the Muslim empire in the subcontinent

3 Nadwi, Abul Hasan Ali Hasani. *Tareekh e Dawat o Azeemat Life and Works of Hazrat Shah Waliullah Muhaddith Dehlawi*, trans. Shah Abdul Halim Hussaini (Dhaka: Muhammad Brothers, 2009), 5/12-15.

4 Ebü'l-Hasan Ali en-Nedvî el-Hasenî, *el-İmamü'd-Dihlevî* (Kuveyt: Daru'l-Kalem, 1985), 92.

collapsed, and the downfall of Muslims began at all levels; Shah Waliullah took extraordinary measures to prevent this decline in his society and introduced a new way of thinking in the then judiciary. It is to be noted that intending to destroy the Maratha power in India, he invited the ruler of Afghanistan, Ahmad Shah Abdali. Even though Shah Waliullah himself was a Sufi scholar, the method he prescribed to prevent social degradation was called revolutionary for this reason. In the history of Muslim societies of the subcontinent, such a revolutionary and universally recognised Sufi scholar was rare.⁵

A detailed account of Shah Waliullah's political and philosophical thought can be found in the works written by Ubaidullah Sindhi. However, although the author analysed Waliullah's philosophical thoughts in the said book, he did not discuss anything in detail about his spiritual life. The author does not provide any significant account of his affiliation with any sect of Sufism and his contribution to the propagation of Sufism.

Ahmet Aydin mentioned in his PhD thesis titled "Shah Waliullah al-Dehlawi and Deobandism" that various scholars in the history of Islam have worked on the method of a revival of knowledge, but Shah Waliullah in the Indian subcontinent in the 18th century has worked very well on this method. In his PhD thesis, he elaborated on the biography of Shah Waliullah, his studies in Hijaz, his thoughts on the revival of knowledge, the contribution of fiqh to this thought, and finally, the Deobandi movement.⁶ However, if we analyse his thesis from the point of view of Sufism, his thesis does not mention anything in detail about the extent of Shah Waliullah's contribution to Sufism.

Zulfiqar Ahmad Kismati's book, titled 'Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlawi and His Thoughts,' explores the life and ideas of Shah Waliullah, emphasising his pivotal role in shaping the course of Muslim intellectual and social revival in the Indian subcontinent. Kismati notes that after the end of Muslim rule in the Indian subcontinent, a sense of despondency, aimlessness, and national stagnation pervaded among the Muslims.⁷

5 Moulana Obaidullah Sindhi, *Shah Waliullah and His Political thought*, trans. Nur-ud-din Ahmed (Dhaka: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 1992), 5-6.

6 Ahmet Aydın, *Şah Velîyyullah ed-Dihlevî ve Dihlevîlik* (Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Doktora Tezi, 2013), 21-44.

7 Zulfiqar Ahmad Kismati, *Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlovee and His Thoughts* (Dhaka: Adhunik Prokashani, 2000), 16-17.

During this challenging period, Shah Waliullah laid the groundwork for the national revival of the Muslims in the Indian subcontinent. While various scholars contributed to the Muslim renaissance in the Indian subcontinent, Shah Waliullah's contributions were particularly noteworthy for the Muslims of the region. He has considerable status and reputation as a spiritual scholar and Islamic knowledge expert in the community of scholars. He and his family contributed a lot to the expansion and spread of Hadith education in the subcontinent. He was a great Islamic philosopher and thinker and an active movement member to establish 'Hukumat-e-Ilahiya' in the Indian subcontinent. He also analysed various aspects of Islamic precepts for modern society in the light of logic.⁸

Besides, in this book, the author has tried to discuss the biography and education ideals of Waliullah. After the end of the Muslim rule in the last period of the Mughal rulers in the Indian subcontinent, English rule, various superstitions, and wrong ideas spread in the Muslim society. Despite this deplorable condition, the author mainly discussed how the Islamic revival occurred based on his thoughts. In addition, the author mentioned that his contribution to keeping Islamic nationalism and culture intact in the subcontinent would be unforgettable. However, although the book analyses his biography, his contributions and thoughts about Sufism are not detailed.

In their book "Sufism and the Islamic Tradition: The Lamahat and Sata'at of Shah Waliullah of Delhi," Shah Waliullah, G. N. Jalbani, D. B. Fry, and J. N. Jalbani highlight that although Muslim rulers governed the Indian subcontinent for an extended period and played a role in spreading Islam, certain rulers, like Emperor Akbar, did not actively promote authentic Islam among the people. These rulers failed to propagate Islam, instead distorting and misinterpreting its principles effectively. Some, such as Emperor Akbar, exacerbated the situation by introducing new religions into their ideology to serve their long-term interests.⁹ Amidst this crisis for Islam in the Indian subcontinent, Imam Rabbani Ahmad Sirhindi emerged and played a crucial role in preserving the core ideology of Islam, rescuing it from the potential disaster caused by rulers

8 Zulfikar Ahmad Kismati, *Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlovee and His Thoughts*, 18.

9 Shah Waliullah, G. N. Jalbani, D. B. Fry, J. N. Jalbani, *Sufism and the Islamic Tradition: The Lamahat and Sata'at of Shah Waliullah of Delhi* (UK: Octagon Press, 1980), 11.

who had deviated from authentic teachings. Later, during the fall of the Mughal Empire, Islam and Muslims faced another setback. At that time, Shah Waliullah was an Islamic scholar who tried to save Muslims from confusion and calamity with his unparalleled talent, foresight, wisdom, and diligence. Shah Waliullah included the spiritual aspects of Islam in Sufism. He has highlighted the issue of how to revive the Islamic consciousness by using Sufism. He presented Sufism as a discipline of knowledge by analysing various aspects of the Sufi experience.¹⁰ It would have been better if the authors had mentioned Shah Waliullah's contributions to Sufism in detail to clarify the issue.

The scholarly literature on Shah Waliullah's Sufism is substantial and characterised by various perspectives and approaches. Nevertheless, the existing body of literature exhibits certain deficiencies. An observation may be made that more scholarly research has been conducted on Shah Waliullah's perspectives on Sufism in English compared to other linguistic contexts. Moreover, more scholarly investigation has been conducted on Shah Waliullah's political ideology compared to his Sufi teachings. The present literature research has successfully identified and delineated the principal themes and scholarly discussions about Shah Waliullah's Sufism. Furthermore, the literature has been critically evaluated, identifying several shortcomings. The analysis has concluded that Shah Waliullah was a character instead of nature and diverse attributes whose perspectives on Sufism remain significant for contemporary Muslims.

3. Shah Waliullah: A Journey Through Life and Philosophy

Shah Waliullah was an Indian religious leader and influential Islamic reformer who attempted to reshape the Muslim societies of Asia. Besides writing on various subjects of Islam, he made significant contributions to Muslims. The impact of Shah Waliullah's teachings is significant, and his concepts persistently shape Islamic ideology and progressive initiatives. His focus on achieving equilibrium, promoting an enlightened perspective of Islam, and implementing changes in social and educational

10 Shah Waliullah, G. N. Jalbani, D. B. Fry, J. N. Jalbani, *Sufism and the Islamic Tradition: The Lamahat and Sata'at of Shah Waliullah of Delhi*, 12.

systems had a lasting impact on the intellectual development of the Indian Subcontinent.

3.1. Birth and Family Background

Shah Waliullah Dehlawi was born on 21 February 1703 in Phulat, Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh, India, during the last moments of the reign of Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor of India. From this point of view, he witnessed the era of ten Mughal emperors, including Emperor Alamgir. They were Alamgir Aurangzeb, Bahadur Shah, Muezzuddin Jahadar Shah, Farrukh Sheer, Rafiuddarajat, Rafiuddaula, Muhammad Shah Rangila, Abu Nasr Ahmad Shah, Alamgir II and Samrat Shah Alam.

His birth name was Qutbuddin, and his full name was Qutbuddin Ahmed ibn Abdur Rahim, but he was known as Shah Waliullah later. His father, Sheikh Abdur Rahim, was a descendant of Hazrat Umar, and his mother was a descendant of Imam Musa Kazim. His grandfather, Sheikh Wajihuddin, was a high-ranking military officer in Shah Jahan's army.¹¹ Waliullah's father, Shah Abdur Rahim, was a Sufi and a prominent Islamic scholar who helped compose Fatawa-e-Alamgiri, an extensive written work on Islamic law. His father, Shah Abdurrahim, established a Madrasah-i-Rahimiya in Delhi. This institution became an important area of religious liberation in Muslim India as it served as a springboard for later religious reformers.¹²

3.2. Primary and Higher Education

Shah Waliullah received his early education from his grandfather, but his father later gave him a spiritual education at his Madrasah-i-Rahimiya. His father enrolled him in a school for learning the Qur'an at one, and he became Hafez of the Qur'an at seven. Later, he also acquired knowledge of Tafseer, Hadith, Mysticism, Sufism, Metaphysics, Logic, and

11 G.N Jalbani, *Teachings of Hazrat Shah Waliyullah Muhaddis Delwi* (India: Kitab Bhavan, 1997), 36.

12 G.N. Jalbani, *Life of Shah Wali Allah* (India: Kitab Bhavan, 2006), 29.

Ilm-ul-Kalam.¹³ He then acquired proficiency in Persian and Arabic. After all, he also studied medicine.¹⁴

In 1730, Shah Waliullah began his higher education in Arabia. He studied at two prestigious educational institutions in Mecca and Medina, where he earned a reputation as a renowned scholar. In all, he studied in Medina for 14 years, where he earned his certificate in Hadith. He specifically derived the etymology of Hadith from Shaykh Obaidullah ibn Shaykh Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Maghrebi. Moreover, he also acquired a high education in Hadith from the best scholars of Haramain, Muhaddes Shaykh Abu Taher and Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Al-Madani. Shaykh Abu Taher al-Madani allowed him to propagate Hadith and gifted him his Sufi khirka.¹⁵ He acquired high education in Hadith directly or indirectly from prominent scholars of Makkah and Madinah such as Shaykh Ahmad Thanawi, Shaykh Ahmad Kashani, Syed Abdur Rahman Idrisi, Shaykh Shamsuddin Mohammad, Shaykh Isa Jaziri, Shaykh Hasan Azmi, Shaykh Ahmad Ali, and Shaykh Abdullah ibn Saleh. He returned to Delhi from Saudi Arabia on 14th Rajab 1145 AH.¹⁶

3.3. Working Life

After coming to Delhi, he taught at Madrasah-i-Rahimiya. After his father died, he became the head of the madrasah and taught students for 12 years. As the fame of Shah Waliullah's knowledge and research spread far and wide, students flocked from different places to study. As a result, it becomes impossible to accommodate students in the old building. Then, the Mughal emperor called Shah Alam Shah Waliullah and ordered the shift of the 'Madrasah-i-Rahimiya' to a big building in another part of the

13 Mehmet İlhan, *Şah Veliyyullah Dihlevî'nin Kelâmî Görüşleri* (Ankara: Araştırma Yayınları, 2007), 78.

14 Mohammad Afzal, *Shah Wali Allah's Philosophy of Education* (Islamabad: NIHCR Publication, 2003), 57.

15 Shah Waliullah Dehlawi, *The Sacred Knowledge of the Higher Functions of the Mind Altaf Al-Quds*, trans. G. N. Jalbani (UK: Octagon Press Ltd, 1982), 43.

16 Muzzammil Ahmad, and Ian Greer, "Shah Wali Allah in Defence of Ibn Taymiyyah: A Translation and Reading of Risalah fi Mana'iq Ibn Taymiyyah wa'l-Difa "anhu." *Islamic Studies* 61/1 (2022), 25.

city.¹⁷ Emperor Shah Alam donated this building to the madrasah. The Madrasah-i-Rahimiya established at this new location was once magnificent. This madrasah was called a high-level Darul Uloom or university at that time. After Shah Waliullah's death, his four sons taught in this madrasah, and the madrasah gained fame as the centre of Islamic education in the Indian subcontinent.¹⁸ In the absence of Shah Waliullah's sons, Shah Ishaq Muhajiremkki took over the responsibility of running the madrasah. After Maulana Muhammad Ishaq migrated to Makkah in 1256 A.H., Maulana Rafiuddin's representatives, Maulana Makhsusullah and Maulana Musa, supervised the madrasah. The madrasah remained intact till 1857 AD. However, in 1857, the British destroyed this madrasah during the Great Rebellion.

3.4. Writings

Shah Waliullah Dehlawi authored over a hundred books, with around 51 available titles.¹⁹ These works cover Islamic subjects, including Tafseer, Hadith, Sufism, and other disciplines. All of his books were written in Arabic and Persian. Shah Waliullah's writings in Persian and Arabic predominantly focus on Islamic sciences such as Tafseer, Hadith, Kalam, and Sufism.

3.4.1. Hujjat Allah al-Balighah (The Conclusive Argument of Allah):

This book has been written in Arabic by Shah Waliullah, and it is an invaluable resource for the Muslim ummah. In it, the Shariah regulations are presented mysteriously. This book provides excellent answers to various questions related to Shariah and spirituality in Islam.

Abu Tayyiba said about "Hujjat Allah al-Balighah." Although the book is not a hadith in science, it contains many interpretations of Hadith. Even the theories and mysteries of various hadiths have been revealed. No scholar had written such a valuable book in the

17 Saeyd Rashed Hasan Chowdury, *Hint Alt Kitasında Süfi-Selefi Mücadelesi Bağlamında İslam'da İç Barışın Korunması*, 117.

18 Ahmet Aydın, "Bir Bibliyografya Denemesi: Şah Veliyyullah ed-Dihlevi'yi Konu Alan Çalışmalar", *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 4/8 (Aralık 2013), 29-77.

19 Omar Khaled Rumi, "Shah Waliullah Dehlavi and his lifelong struggle", *bisleshon* (7 August 2023), 7.

previous twelve centuries. This is not only the author's best book, but one of the best books of all time."²⁰

He divided his book into two parts. The first part is divided into seven chapters. Each chapter is divided into several sections. The chapters in his book, which contain various descriptions of Sufism, are mentioned below.

In the book's first part, Shah Waliullah has highlighted the Shariah's mysteries and principles through which the Shariah's rules can be easily understood. He discussed why Allah would hold people accountable and why they would be rewarded or punished. In the first chapter, he discussed the discovery of creation and its management. Since cosmology is the original question of everything, he solved it first. Shah Waliullah has discussed in detail that Allah created man from a single drop of a blood clot. He then discussed Alame Mesal (exemplary world), Mala-e-A'la (higher council), Haqiqat Ruh (soul), and the theory of accountability. Then, he concluded in his book that everyone should enjoy the results of work.²¹ Good actions will get good results, and evil actions will have bad results.

In the second chapter, he discussed the most critical problem of earthly life, i.e., the overall system of human life. In this chapter, he has described well what steps a Muslim can take to succeed in various life fields. He has skilfully highlighted how people's personal, social, national, and international lives can be happy and beautiful. He divided this chapter into eleven sections and laid down the principles of human needs and fundamental rights. Then, he explained the implementation of various needs and rights of human beings. As a result, he has discussed various aspects of civic life, mutual transactions, state policy, military policy, economy, and social policy very nicely. He said the ruler must be of good character in the context of how the ruler's life would be.

On the one hand, a ruler must face the enemy like a hero, and on the other hand, he must be kind in the need of public welfare. The ruler must be sagacious and possess the wisdom to implement Islamic rules properly. He must be mature, intelligent, independent, or he will not

20 Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi, *The Conclusive Argument from God: Shah Wali Allah of Delhi's Hujjat Allah Al-Baligha (Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science)*, trans. Marcia K. Hermansen (Leiden: Brill Academic Publication, 1995), 77-84.

21 MK, Hermansen, "Shāh Walī Allāh's theory of the subtle spiritual centres (Laṭā'if): A Sufi model of personhood and self-transformation," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 47/1 (1988), 1-25.

influence the people. He must be a healthy person with a whole body; otherwise, people cannot give him due respect. He must be charitable and social; otherwise, people will not love him. He should be engaged in public welfare, or people will not consider him their benefactor. He should have constant vigilance regarding the security of the state. Thus, in a few words, he showed the characteristic features of a famous ruler. In the third chapter, he reviewed the various customs and practices among the human being.²²

In the fourth chapter, he dealt with fortune. He discussed in detail in this chapter what luck is, the differences among people about the meditations related to luck, and the ways to achieve luck. In the chapter on good fortune, he discussed tawheed, shirk and iman, prayer, fasting, hajj, zakat, and its related regulations. In particular, he analysed the mysteries and theories of these subjects. Finally, he clearly showed the different levels of sin and the harms of sin, especially how sin destroys an individual or society. Likewise, in the fifth chapter, he has highlighted how virtue opens the way for individuals and society to peace and happiness in this world and the hereafter.²³

In the sixth chapter, he discussed the national politics. He has divided this chapter into twenty-one sections. In these sections, he discussed various aspects of religion and nation, the guiding community of the nation, religions of the past, Islam, and various aspects of the Jahili era. Moreover, he has highlighted various secrets and theories of Sharia and state administration. He divided the seventh or final chapter into eleven sections. In these sections, he has made an enlightening discussion on the Prophetic knowledge, Hadith collections, the differences, and opinions of the Sahabah, Tabi'een, and Faqih. Therefore, he discussed taharat (cleanliness) and salat (prayer) in detail. In this way, he concluded the first volume by discussing various issues of Islam and Shariah.

Shah Waliullah wrote about worship, social relations, and political activities in the second volume of his book *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah*. At the

22 MK, Hermansen, *Shah Wali Allah's Theory of Religion in "Hujjat Allah Al-Baligha" With A Translation of Volume I of "Hujjat Allah Al-Baligha"* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, PhD thesis, 1982), 17-23.

23 Fadlan Mohd Othman et. al., "Hujjat Allah Al-Balighah: The Uniqueness of Shah Wali Allah Al-Dihlawi's Work." *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6/ 5 (2015), 403.

beginning of the book, he described the importance and reality of prayer, fasting, and hajj. He did not divide this volume into different chapters but gave each discussion a separate title. After discussing spiritual worship, he discussed various aspects of business and earning a livelihood because the basis of the acceptance of worship is Halal sustenance.²⁴

For this reason, he mentioned that managing business practices and means of earning money in an Islamic manner is the key to acceptance of worship. After that, he set up a section on the family system. In this chapter, he discussed marriage, divorce, wives' rights, education, and the initiation of children. Then, he discussed the issues related to country and race. He then discussed the caliphate, judicial system, penal code, military policy, and other critical national issues. Then, he discussed the various customs of the ordinary life of the people. He has laid down the basic principles regarding manners, clothing, culture, etc. Finally, he concluded this invaluable book by highlighting the characteristic qualities of the Sahaba.

3.4.2. Al Fauz Al Kabir Fi Usul at Tafsir: This book on the principles of Tafseer is a valuable contribution of Shah Waliullah. In it, he has made a very enlightening and valuable discussion about interpreting the Quran and its rules and principles. This book has been translated into various languages, including Arabic, Persian, Urdu, English, and Bengali. This book is taught at different higher-class levels in Islamic educational institutions of almost all the countries of the Indian subcontinent.²⁵

3.4.3. Ta'wil Al-Ahadith Fi Rumuz Qisas Al-Anbiya (Symbolic Interpretation of The Events in The Mysteries of Prophetic Tales): This is an important book written in Arabic. He discussed the stories of all the prophets mentioned in the Quran. The mystery and management of Prophethood from Adam to Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) have been briefly and beautifully discussed in this book.

3.4.4. Al Qawlul Jamil: Shah Waliullah wrote this informative book in Arabic on various Sufi theories. He has discussed in detail the four significant tariqats in this book.

24 MK, Hermansen, "Shah Wali Allah's Arrangement of the Subtle Spiritual Centers", *Studies in Islam* 1 (1982), 137-150.

25 Shah Waliullah Dehlewi, *Al Fauz Al Kabir Fi Usul at Tafsir*, trans. Akhter Faruq (Dhaka; Kutub Khanaye Roshidiya, 2004), 2-17.

3.4.5. Al-Budur al-bazighah (The Full Moons Rising in Splendour):

In this book, he sheds light on various aspects of Sufism. In this book, he discussed various theoretical frameworks of Sufism and extensively criticised other hypocritical Sufis in Sufism.

3.4.6. Al-Khayr al-Kathir (The Abundant Good): This book is also written in Arabic. It is full of descriptions of the mysteries and arts of creation. It is a unique book on this subject.

3.4.7. Az Zuhabin Fi Tafseer Surah Baqarah Wa Ale Imran: This is Persian analysis of Surah Baqarah and Ale Imran.

3.4.8. Fathul Rahman Betar Jamatul Quran: This book is the Persian translation of the Holy Quran. He has analysed the crucial issues of the Quran very well in this book. The book is still included in the syllabus of religious institutions in various Muslim countries.

3.4.9. Shefaul Kulub: This is an excellent book on Sufism written in Persian.

3.4.10. Al-Tafheemat All-lahiyya (Instructions or Clear Understanding). This book is written in two volumes. Some parts of it are written in Arabic and Persian. Various categories of Makalat and Risalat have been collected in this book. He presented it in an inspired manner. The Shah Waliullah Academy has published this book.

3.4.11. Awarif: He wrote this book in Arabic. In his book, he discussed various theories of Sufism.

3.4.12. Al Istibah fi Salasile Awliya Allah: This book is in Persian. In the first volume, he described the silsila of Awliya Keram. In the second volume of this book, he has highlighted the issues related to hadiths and jurisprudence. In this book on Hadith and Fiqh, he has highlighted the essential points.

He has several other books on Sufism, such as Sata'at (Manifestations), Lamahat (Flashes of Lightning), Futuh al-Haramayn (Emanations or Spiritual Visions of Mecca and Medina), Sata'at of Shah Waliullah of Delhi, and Altaful Quds. Besides, some of his notable books are Fathul Kabir, Al Munawa Min Ahadisil Muatta, Al Susaffa Sharehe Muatta, Al Arbain, Musal Silat, Ekdul Zeed fi ahkamul ijtihaad wat taqlid, al irshad fi bayanee shableel ikhtilaf, al insaf fi bayanee sabaleel ikhtilafe, Tarajimu Abwabil Bukhari, Izalatil Khafa an Khilafatil Khulafa, Qurratul Ainain fi Tafasilish Shaykhin, Kitabul Wasiyat, Risalaye Daneshmandi, Tabeelul Ahadith,

Al Khairul Qasir, Faizul Haramain, Addurrus Seeman fi Mubashshirate Nabayel Amin, Husnul Aqidah, Insanul Ain fi Mashayekhul Haramain, Al Sarrul Makhjayan, Majmuaye Ashr.²⁶

3.5. Death

Shah Waliullah Dehlawi died on August 20, 1762. At the time of his death, this Muslim leader and reformer was 59 years old. He was buried next to his father in India's famous Munahadian graveyard, and after the death of Shah Waliullah, his son, Shah Abdul Aziz, continued his efforts, including spirituality, to re-establish the Muslim faith in his followers and successors.

4. Beyond Borders: Shah Waliullah's Impact on Islamic Scholarship and Da'wah

Shah Waliullah elaborated on the branches of faith and the purposes and objectives of Islamic Shari'ah. He realised there is no substitute for wisdom and wise faith in dealing with the propagation and abrogation of Islam. For this reason, it is necessary to understand the wisdom inherent in Deen and Shariah thoroughly. Although many predecessors had offered some isolated interpretations of Deen-e Hikmat, he considered Deen-e Hikmat an essential document. He pioneered a new genre that combined hikmah (wisdom) with faith and tajdid (renewal) with ilm (knowledge).

4.1. Giving Priority to Madhhab

Although he was a follower of Hanafi fiqh, he could reconcile comparative fiqh. On his return from Makkah, he tried to bridge the gap between the Hanafi, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools in an orderly manner. Shah Waliullah believed that almost the entire ummah had become involved in the four established Madhhabs. So, in our era, it has become legal to follow (taklid) any of the four schools of thought. There are some

²⁶ Muhammad Abdul Alim, "Shah Waliullah Muhaddis Dehlavi: A Historical Background", 3-11.

excellent aspects to it, and that is obvious. In our era, people's courage has decreased, and people's hearts have become full of desires, so in this era, there is no alternative to following the madhhab or taqlid. He used to follow the pure and sahih Hadith in matters of disagreement. He qualified for ijtiħad in the field of religious knowledge. He gave preference to the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools of thought. He did not oppose the Hanafi Madhhab, as the largest population in the Indian subcontinent followed it.²⁷ He explained the reasons for the difference of opinion among the Mujtahid Imams. He opened the door of new ijtiħad for the needs of the age. By discarding instinctual ijtiħad, he introduced a new ijtiħad based on the principles of the Imams.²⁸

4.2. Reform and Revolutionary Movement Among Muslims

After Shah Waliullah arrives from Makkah, the reformative works carried out according to the new plan can be divided into critical and corrective. Among his first important formative works was his presentation of a rational approach to fiqh, or Islamic jurisprudence.²⁹ It does not favour one opinion and criticises another opinion as usual. Like a profound inquirer, he studied the tenets of all fiqh-based schools of thought and gave judgments with complete independence. Shah Waliullah did not like to argue about madhhabs and opened the way for inquiry and ijtiħad among the followers of madhhabs. In the books 'Al-Tafheemat Ali-lahiyya', 'Hujjat Allah al-Balighah' and 'Al Insaf,' he described this in detail.³⁰ Shah Waliullah's adoption of this moderate approach ended hatred, narrow-mindedness, blind following, and wasting time in futile long debates among the ummah. Shah Waliullah believed Muslims of different opinions can stand in the world as a dynamic living nation

27 Ghulam Shabbir - Muhammad Ibrahim, "Shah Wali Allah: Father of Muslim Modernism", *Journal of Positive School Psychology* (2023), 1327-1352.

28 Ahmet Aydın, "Bir Bibliyografya Denemesi: Şah Veliyyullah ed-Dihlevi'yi Konu Alan Çalışmalar", *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 4/8 (Aralık 2013), 29-77.

29 Zulfiqar Ahmad Kismati, *Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlovee and His Thoughts*, 40.

30 Marwan Ibrahim Al-Qeisi, *Some Religious and Political Aspects of the Thought of Shah Wali Allah of Delhi (1703-1762)* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1977), 36.

through this moderate approach. That is why Shah Waliullah emphasised the need for *ijtihad* for the good of the *ummah*.³¹

Shah Waliullah is a person who has defined the history of Islam and the history of Muslims separately. He criticised and reviewed Muslim history from the perspective of Islamic history. He has very successfully described the peculiarity and peculiarity of every era.³² He used to analyse and explain the prophecies of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) on all these matters. He also used to teach people by writing various books and giving lectures on the Muslim creed, faith, education, culture, ethics, and politics. He used to warn people about fundamental errors and the source of all errors and mistakes.³³

He established a new philosophy in the Indian subcontinent called 'Comprehensive Muslim Mind.' Apart from explaining *Shari'ah*,³⁴ he also explained social issues beautifully. He divided social responsibility into various levels. He elaborated on language, livelihood, organisational qualities, family management, and cooperatives' form and structure. He has made a balance between the knowledge given to man by Allah and the merits that man has acquired by himself.³⁵

4.3. Shah Waliullah's anti-British Attitude

The British ruled the Indian subcontinent when they occupied an area of Mysore in 1717. The British occupied the Indian subcontinent and started various attacks on the people here at different times. Shah Waliullah, in his time, started various movements against the British. He paved the way for the expulsion of the British. Shah Waliullah and his

31 J. M. S. Balijon, *Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi* (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 1986), 25.

32 Muhammad Athar'Ali, "Shah Wali Allah's Performance as a Mujaddid", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 48/3 (2000), 15.

33 Marietta Stepanyants, *Sufism in The Context of Modern Politics* (Torino: Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 2014), 166-181.

34 M. İkrām Chaghatai, *Shah Waliullah (1703-1762): His Religious and Political Thought* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2005), 42.

35 Abul Kalam Mohammad Shahed, "Socio-Political Reform of Muslims in The View of Shah Waliullah and Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi", *Islam: Past, Present and Future* (Selangor: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2004), 40.

followers shook the foundations of the British.³⁶ The anti-British movement of Muslims was conducted in the light of Shah Waliullah's thoughts and philosophy.³⁷ The British realised Shah Waliullah's knowledge research philosophy had taken root in people's hearts. So, the British resorted to various strategies to stop his anti-British movement. Therefore, His sons spread his movement across the country.³⁸

When Shah Waliullah died in 1762 AD, his eldest son, Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dehlawi, took over the leadership of this movement. Shah Abdul Aziz was only 17 when his father, Shah Waliullah, died. He was first taught the principles of Shah Waliullah's reform movement. Muhammad Ashiq and Maulana Muhammad Amin taught him about Hadith and the reform movement. Shah Abdul Aziz issued the Fatwa of Jihad to oust the British. He declared India Darul Harb (enemy-occupied territory) and issued a fatwa that war against the British was obligatory. Based on this fatwa of Shah Abdul Aziz, the Muslims in this sub-continent started fighting against the British for independence. Later, this fatwa worked extensively during the silk handkerchief movement.³⁹ Based on this fatwa, Syed Ahmad Barelbi later developed various movements against the British. He and his murid Syed Shah Ismail Dehlvi were martyred fighting against the British at Balakot Maidan in Punjab. Later, when this movement became more widespread, Maulana Qasim Nanawtawi, Maulana Rashid Ahmad Ganguhi, Maulana Zafar Thanewari, Maulana Mahmudul Hasan Deobandi, Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi, Maulana Hossain Ahmad Madani etc. joined this movement.⁴⁰ Shah Waliullah's follower, Qasim Nanawtawi, established Darul Uloom Deoband Madrasah in the small town of Deoband in Uttar Pradesh, India, in 1866 to educate

36 Mohammad Abdul Mannan, *Shah Waliullah Dehlawi: One of The Pioneers of Muslim Awakening in Bengal* (Dhaka: Darus Salam Publications, 1998), 11.

37 Rukhshinda Jabeen - Tehmina Talib. "A Comparative Analysis of Sufi Thoughts of Shah Fakhruddin Dehlvi and Shah Waliullah Dehlvi", *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology* 20/2 (2023), 1498-1512.

38 Zulfikar Ahmad Kismati, *Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlovee and His Thoughts*, 25.

39 Thanveer T, *Islamic Political Philosophy: With Special Focus on Shah Wali Allah & Mawdudi* (Chennai: Notion Press Media Pvt Ltd, 2019), 53.

40 Vahit Göktaş – Saeyd Rashed Hasan Chowdury, "Districts of Bangladesh Named After Sufis Manifesting the Great Impact of Sufism on Bengal Civilization: A Qualitative Study", *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13/1 (2023), 320-327.

Muslim students in Islamic education. By establishing this madrasah, Qasim Nanawtawi took forward the movement of Shah Waliullah.⁴¹

4.4. Concept of a Dynamic Economy

Shah Waliullah's economic philosophy is that the country's overall wealth was against monopoly ownership or ownership without any physical or mental labour. According to him, the essence of citizenship is cooperation. This cooperation is entirely dependent on the benevolence of each other, which is only possible through labour. It should be noted that he also considered labour and mental effort as labour. Therefore, according to him, no person in society can enjoy wealth without labour or possess more wealth with little labour. Because, despite the absence of this essential condition of citizenship among them, if they possess wealth, then the rights of those who are the principal earning power, such as farmers, labourers, capital, and mental labourers, will be undermined. As a result, the number of exploited and deprived in society will increase on the one hand; civic responsibility will increase them, they will be burdened with burdens, and they will have to face torture and harshness. On the other hand, luxury and extravagance will increase by another class so that the national wealth will not increase under any circumstances.⁴²

He thought the cultivator-labourer and other labourers engaged in developing the country and the nation were the real wealth owners. The progress and prosperity of all these individuals is essentially the progress and prosperity of the nation. Any other system attempting to control these labour-centric forces would be fatal to any country or nation. He advocated the state's destruction of all these evil forces in his book *Hujjatullah al-Baligha*. He commented that the social system, which does not value the actual value of labour, must end. According to him, the worker's working period should be fixed. He must be given additional opportunities for moral and spiritual reformation, meditation, and

41 Saeyd Rashed Hasan Chowdury, "Bangladeş'te Tasavvuf Kültürü ve Temsilcileri", *Tematik Tasavvuf Toplantıları Fikriyat Kişiler Kurumlar*, ed. Ahmet Cahid Haksever (Ankara: Sonçağ, 2019), 33-52.

42 Zulfıqar Ahmad Kismati, *Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlovee and His Thoughts*, 43.

contemplation of the afterlife. He explained that it is unfair for the state to impose more taxes on the people.⁴³

He clarified the concept of a dynamic economy by breaking the axiological economy. He condemned labour diversionary earnings. He gave equal status to capital and mental skill to labour and determined the nature and shape of the national welfare and taxation system.⁴⁴ He also identified the causes of economic decline in Muslim society and suggested appropriate changes, including more excellent distribution of wealth.⁴⁵ It is an idea that predates the economic theories of Karl Marx, a nineteenth-century philosopher and economist. He despised capitalism and favoured establishing a way of creating and sharing wealth.

4.5. A Call for Reforms in Education Systems

He noted the influence of Greek philosophy on the education system of Muslims in the seventeenth century. He addressed the self-proclaimed intellectuals of the time, saying that the fools were those stuck in the maze of Greek epistemology and ethics, as well as jurisprudence and rhetoric.⁴⁶ He told the intellectuals who call themselves learned at that time that the group of fools was occupied with the epistemology and ethics of the Greeks and the law and rhetoric and taught these subjects in their institutions. Moreover, they have assumed that knowledge is only in them. However, proper knowledge lies in the Book of Allah's clear verses and the Prophet Mummad's Sunnah (Pbuh). They preoccupied themselves with Greek philosophy, abandoning the pedagogy and elaboration of earlier jurists. Do they not know that what Allah and His Messenger Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) have said is the only commandment? The condition of most of their people is that when a hadith

43 Zulfiqar Ahmad Kismati, *Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlovee and His Thoughts*, 44.

44 Zulfiqar Ahmad Kismati, *Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlovee and His Thoughts*, 45.

45 Islahi, Abdul Azim, *Islamic economic thinking in the 12th AH/18th CE century with special reference to Shah Wali-Allah al-Dihlawi* (Jeddah: Islamic Economics Research Center, King Abdulaziz University, 2009), 59.

46 Noraini Junoh, and Nor Asmira Mat Jusoh, "Falsafah Ibadat Solat Berdasarkan Al-Sunnah: Analisis Pandangan Shah Wali Allah Al-Dihlawi: The Philosophy of Solat Based on al-Sunnah: Analitical Study of Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi's", *Journal of Fatwa Management and Research* 11 /1 (2018), 139-154.

of the Prophet reaches them, they do not act upon it. He also addressed the community of scholars and said, "You have narrowed the scope of the life of God's servants, and you have ignored the flexibility of Islam."⁴⁷

4.6. Giving Importance to The Teaching of The Quran and Hadith

Shah Waliullah strongly believed that the progress of the Muslim nation was entirely dependent on the widespread propagation of the actual teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. For this reason, he paid particular attention to this and subsequently translated the Qur'an and different Hadith books, including 'Muwatta Al-Imam Malik' into the national language, Persian.⁴⁸ However, he later translated and commented on the Qur'an in Urdu. He conducted various educational programs so that people could gain knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith. Through the efforts of Shah Waliullah, his sons, and their students, Ilm al-hadith spread widely in the Indian subcontinent.

Egyptian scholar Rashid Reza said about Shah Waliullah, the spread of 'Ilm al-hadith' in countries like Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Hijaz, etc., has been decreasing since the tenth century of Hijri, but our Indian brothers, especially Shah Waliullah, have worked hard to keep the said knowledge alive.⁴⁹

4.7. Advice and Admonitions to The State and The Ruling Group

According to Shah Waliullah, if the development of civilisation in a human group is continuous, then their art is fully developed. If the ruling class chooses a life of indulgence, comfort, and luxury, then it burdens that luxury on the working classes. As a result, most people in society are forced to live the lives of animals without humanity. The moral structure

47 Zulfiqar Ahmad Kismati, *Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlovee and His Thoughts*, 36.

48 Muhammad Raza Taimoor, "Mediating the Interpretations to Resolve Sectarian Differences: Shah Wali Allah's Approach to the Quranic Exegesis and His Legacy." *AL-Qalam* 25/2 (2020), 457-472.

49 Zulfiqar Ahmad Kismati, *Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlovee and His Thoughts*, 37.

of the whole social life is disturbed when a man is forced to live under economic pressure through compulsion. Then, people must work hard like animals for sustenance. Therefore, there is no alternative to a good ruler to eliminate this curse during extreme torture and economic disaster.⁵⁰

Shah Waliullah was a profoundly spiritual and renowned academic figure and politically significant to the Indian subcontinent.⁵¹ During his time, the Maratha power of South India became increasingly anti-Muslim. At this time, he felt that the declining Mughal Empire could not take a strong stand against the Marathas. Therefore, it will be impossible to save the existence of Muslims in India.⁵² He began to think at that time that perhaps the Muslims would disappear or their Islamic identity would be destroyed. From this thought, he invited the Afghan ruler Ahmad Shah Abdali to resist the Marathas in India. He also helped form the Muslim Front to oppose the growing Maratha power. At the third Battle of Panipat in 1761, at the invitation of Shah Waliullah, the Afghan army miserably defeated the Maratha forces in India.⁵³

5. Shah Waliullah's Sufi Contributions: A Manifold and Significant Legacy

Shah Waliullah is one of India's most famous Islamic thinkers and Sufi philosophers. He is a beautiful name in the history of Sufism. From his father, he received initiation into Sufism and philanthropy. He took the bai'at (Oath of allegiance) of Sufism at the hands of his father. Later, he received the caliphate of the sect from his father. He then gained experience in the various levels of Sufis of the Naqshbandiyya order. He also acquired such skill in spiritual practice that, within a short period, he gained considerable fame in the Sufi world. After completing his studies

50 Vahit Gökteş- Saeyd Rashed Hasan Chowdury, "Freedom of Religion, Faith and Religious Tolerance in Bangladesh: A Case Study on The Islamic Mysticism/Bangladeş'te Din Özürlüğü, İnanç ve Dini Hoşgörü: İslâm Tasavvufu Üzerine Örnek Bir Araştırma", *Disiplinlerarası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 5 (2019), 41-67.

51 Moulana Obaidullah Sindhi, *Shah Waliullah and His Political thought*, trans. Nur-ud-din Ahmed (Dhaka: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 1992), 5-6.

52 Zulfiqar Ahmad Kismati, *Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlovee and His Thoughts*, 38.

53 Muhammad al Ghazzali, *The Socio-Political Thought of Shah Wali Allah*, ed. Abdul Ahad (Minnesota: Adam Publishers, 2006).

on Seyr-u Suluk, his father, Shaykh Abdur Rahim, placed a turban of dignity on his head and permitted him to lecture on Sufism. Shah Waliullah Dehlawi has presented Sufism as an integral part of Deen in the light of the Quran and Sunnah along the path of Imam Junaid Baghdadi, Imam Ghazali, and Imam Rabbani Ahmad Sirhindi. He has simplified the theoretical complexities of Sufism. He presented spiritual purity as the path to the formation of the Muslim mind.⁵⁴ The spiritual education he received during his visit to Makkah-Madinah is discussed in his books to inspire the next generation. After him, his son, Shah Abdul Aziz, and Shah Abdul Ghani took over the responsibility of the Sufi activities. Shah Abdul Aziz was the first person whose anti-British fatwas led the Muslims of India to join the independence movement against the British. He explained the importance of Sufism in various books. One of his books is named Duri-i Sahin. In this book, it is written that Hz. Ali, one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), was the first Sufi and the first Arif.⁵⁵

Syed Abul A'la Maududi wrote about Shah Waliullah that if we put forward his times and environment on the one hand and his activities on the other, any person will be amazed. How was the birth of a personality with deep vision, thought, and intelligence possible in that era? He was educated in the Dark Ages and became a free thinker and commentator. He thought free from all the bonds of times and environment. He used to solve every life problem with the eyes of a deep inquirer and mujtahid, breaking the bonds of enmity frozen by the centuries. He created a literature whose language, narrative style, thought, ideals, themes, and conclusions were not influenced by the contemporary environment. A common question that comes to mind while reading his works is that he wrote them sitting where luxury, sensuality, murder, plunder, oppression, torture, and disorder freely reign.⁵⁶

He took respect and love for the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) to a unique position. He used to perform Miladunnabi mahfil, read qasidas

54 K. A. Nizami, "Religion and thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi 1703–1762. By JMS Baljon (Studies in the History of Religions, [Supplements to Numen] XVIII.), 221. Leiden, EJ Brill, 1986. Guilders 70." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 120/1 (1988), 219-221.

55 Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah and His Times: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Islam Politics and Society in India* (Canberra: Ma'rifat Publishing House, 1980), 114.

56 Syed Abul A'la Maududi, *Islamic Renaissance Andolan* (Dhaka: Shatadal Publications Limited, 1988), 62.

of Risalat at night, and mention the blessings of these things from his own experience.⁵⁷

5.1. The Worship of Feelings and Emotions as a Delusion

What Shah Waliullah criticises among the Sufis is the worship of feelings or emotions. He said this is covered everywhere from the east to the west. There is a group of hypocritical Sufis whose words and deeds dominate the minds of ordinary people more than the Qur'an and Sunnah. Their theories and indications are so well established that no one can deny them. No man can attain popularity without following these hypocritical groups called Sufism and is not counted among the Muttaqi (pious). Even a class of scholars standing on the pulpit praises these hypocritical Sufis. Even madrasah-taught scholars are forced to praise them; otherwise, they are considered foolish. He was highly critical of these hypocritical groups in the name of Sufism.⁵⁸

5.2. The Concept of The Hypocritical Prism in Sufism

He severely criticised those pirs who replaced their predecessors and declared themselves pirs without qualifications. He used to ask all those pirs why they had formed these different groups without following any good pirs. He used to criticise these groups of Sufism, asking why they established separate tariqats and abandoned the path Allah revealed to Muhammad (pbuh). Each of them became an Imam. They are calling the people to themselves and consider themselves to be guides while they are leading the people astray.⁵⁹ According to him, we are not pleased with those who make people pledge allegiance to Sufism for worldly interests. Furthermore, we are not pleased with those who acquire knowledge for

57 Ron Geaves, "A Comparison of the Ideas of Maulana Mawdudi (1903-1980) and Shah Wali-Allah (1703-1762): A Pure Islam or Cultural Heritage", *Islamic Quarterly* 41/3 (1997), 169.

58 Zulfiqar Ahmad Kismati, *Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlovee and His Thoughts*, 35.

59 Vahit Gökteş –Saeyd Rashed Hasan Chowdury, "An Evaluation of Mu'in al-Din Chishti's Sufi Influences in the Indian Subcontinent: The Case of Chishti Tariqa", *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 31 (Haziran 2023), 47-76.

the sake of the world or who call people to themselves and use them for their purposes. They are all bandits, dajjals, liars, deceivers, and misleads.⁶⁰

For this reason, some scholars say that Shah Waliullah was the first to speak out against Sufism in India. Nevertheless, the actual thing is the opposite. He tried to distinguish the authentic Sufism of Islam, called 'Tazkiyatun-Nafs' in the Qur'anic language, from hypocritical Sufism and presented what is pure Sufism in the eyes of Islam.⁶¹ If Shah Waliullah had not presented such a criticism of the so-called Sufism and its correct outline, then the existence of Sufism today would have been threatened because the writers of India were trying to lighten Sufism by saying that it "borrowed from various countries and religions and even the thought of Indian Yogis."⁶²

5.3. Dhikr (The Remembrance of Allah)

According to Shah Waliullah, the second criterion that should be found in a spiritual guide (murshid) is proficiency in the subject of "dhikr" (remembrance or devotion). When instructing his disciples in "dhikr", the spiritual guide should be careful of using words that do not violate the Sharia (Islamic law). Dehlawi did not emphasise much on the issue of whether the dhikr should be done aloud or silently but stated that, in principle, the dhikr must follow the words stated by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh); otherwise, it will fall into excess and deficiency. For example, the dhikrs determined by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) include the following phrases: "Subhanallah" (Glory be to Allah), "Alhamdulillah" (Praise be to Allah), "La ilaha illallah" (There is no god but Allah), and "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is the Greatest). Shah Waliullah found it beneficial to focus on different forms of dhikrs. He stated that it is possible to engage in "dhikrs" using the names of Allah. When the divine name is invoked, that name manifests to the person. If a person sincerely and with good intentions recites a divine name, a door is opened for them, light is

60 Shah Waliullah Mohaddis Delhvi, *Al-Tafheemat All-Ilahiyya* (Bijnor: Madina Barqi Press, 1936), 27.

61 Zulfiqar Ahmad Kismati, *Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlovee and His Thoughts*, 36.

62 Shafi Ali Khan, "Nationalist'Ulama's Interpretation of Shah Wali Allah's Thought and Movement", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 37/3 (1989), 209-248.

spread, they find pleasure there, and the perception of that pleasure increases through spiritual inspiration. When “dhikr” is done extensively, it takes on the colour of obedience and transforms into angelic qualities.⁶³

Dehlawi, who said that every dhikr has a secret, focuses on the esoteric meanings of La ilaha illallah. This remembrance firstly rejects overt polytheism, secondly hidden polytheism, and thirdly enables the removal of the veils obstructing the knowledge of God. When dhikr is done sincerely, it brings spiritual benefits to the person. It is hoped that the deficiencies in one’s worship can be completed through dhikr. It reminds us that Allah is self-sufficient (samed) and that one is inherently powerless. He takes refuge in Allah from situations that harm his soul and comes under His protection. Indeed, the one engaged in “dhikr” is protected under the mercy of Allah. Most importantly, dhikr facilitates the discipline and refinement of the self. According to Shah Waliullah, all these occur through the secret of dhikr.⁶⁴

5.4. Ālam Al-Mi h āl (The World of Similitudes)

According to Shah Waliullah, a non-material spiritual realm exists in the realm of existence. The “Ālam Al-Miḥāl” is where the Creator and our physical world are first reflected and manifested in various forms between Allah and our visible world. Then, He creates it in the phenomenal world from its physical elements. Because this realm is situated between the Creator and our visible world, functioning as an area where various paths converge, it manifests the spiritual realm above just as much as it reflects the forms emanating from the material world below.⁶⁵

Shah Waliullah described this realm: Many hadiths indicate the existence of another non-material realm in the realm of existence. In this realm, meanings take on a suitable form for themselves, and realisation occurs here before things come into existence on the earth. When it comes into being, just as that meaning was there, it is precisely the same in the

63 Guzel Ferdinandovna Mratkhezina et. al., “Sufism: Spiritual and cultural traditions in India”, *Journal of History Culture and Art Research* 8/3 (2019), 434-441.

64 Eldiir Zhahlov, “Şah Veliyullah Dihlevi’nin Tasavvuf Anlayışında Mürşid Olmanın Kriterleri”, *İlahiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 19 (Haziran 2023), 132-164.

65 Muhammed Kızılgeçit, “Şah Veliyullah Dihlevi’nin (1703-1762) Bazı Tasavvufî Görüşlerine Felsefî Bir Bakış”, *Tasavvuf İlmî ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 7 (2006), 191-210.

material realm of existence. According to the public, many things without a physical body (come and go from here); not everyone can see them.

Shah Waliullah first explained this realm's existence with the example of an actual dream (Sadiq Ruya). In such a way, with an actual dream, events that will happen in the future, even though they do not have material existence, are first seen in the form of reflections and then come true concretely. In this sense, an actual dream is an example of the existence of the Realm of the Ideal.⁶⁶

5.5. Alam-i-Maddeye (Material World)

Shah Waliullah Dehlawi classified the creation of the universe, in other words, the cosmological processes, into three categories. The stages classified as "ibda' (origin), creation (khalk), and management (tadbir)" are directly interconnected with each other. He explained his thoughts as follows: "Ibda' is complementary to creation (khalk), while management (tadbir) is the complement of creation."⁶⁷

To the creation of the universe, there are three interrelated attributes belonging to Allah the Exalted. One of these is "ibda'" the act of bringing something into existence from nothing. In this case, that thing emerges from non-existence to the realm of existence without any material presence.⁶⁸ Management (tadbir) is realised through the internal forces placed in the realm of existence. In every event, the fulfilment of the outcome dictated by the cause occurs through these forces. Furthermore, Allah the Exalted has made it necessary for there to be His dealings with beings in the realm of existence through seizing (kabz), dominance (bast), and inspiration (ilham).⁶⁹

66 Muhammed Kızılgeçit, "Şah Velîyyullah Dihlevî'nin (1703-1762) Bazı Tasavvufî Görüşlerine Felsefî Bir Bakış", 191-210.

67 Fuad S Naeem, "The Imaginal World ('Ālam al-Mithāl) in the Philosophy of Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlāwī", *Islamic Studies* 44/3 (2005), 363-90.

68 Saeyd Rashed Hasan Chowdury, *Bangladeş'te Tasavvufun ve Tarikatların Değerlendirilmesi, Sosyal Gelişimleri ve Oynadıkları rol: Yirmi Birinci Yüzyılda bir vak'a İncelemesi* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2019), 38-44.

69 Muhammed Kızılgeçit, "Şah Velîyyullah Dihlevî'nin (1703-1762) Bazı Tasavvufî Görüşlerine Felsefî Bir Bakış", 191-210.



Shah Waliullah's thoughts on existence in general and nature are systematically categorised and explained through the concepts of *ibda'* (origin), *khalk* (creation), and *tadbir* (management). Shah Waliullah not only described the emergence of the universe onto the stage of existence but also attempted to explain the rules of its operation based on scriptural sources.⁷⁰

5.6. Lataif -E- Ilm (The Knowledge of Spiritual Insights)

According to Shah Waliullah, Murshid must also be knowledgeable in the Lataif-e-Ilm because without understanding these, they cannot assist the disciples in purifying their souls. Lataif is an essential topic in Sufi terminology. Lataif may not have anything to do with the human world, but it is an entirely spiritual matter. The Qur'an and Hadith prove all the ingredients that lataif is a thin, fine-layered substance located in a particular place inside the human heart. Lataif can never be seen by the eye, heard by the ear, or imagined by the mind. In the terminology of Sufism, lataif is a specific place within the human heart upon which Allah's light descends during dhikr. Lataif has a total of ten. They are Qalb (heart), Ruh (spirit), Sirr (secret), Khafi (hidden/inspiration), Ikhfa (most hidden), Nafs (soul/self), Bad (air), Nar (fire), Ma' (water), and Khak (earth). However, among these lataifs, the first six lataifs are the main ones, and the rest are secondary. The importance of lataif's dhikr is immense. A person should often recite lataif to keep his life free from sin. It is never possible to achieve self-realisation without lataif's dhikr.

"Lataif" is the method of spiritual journey and self-purification of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidiyya Sufi Tariqat. The spiritual journey and self-purification are completed through "lataif." That is why Shah Waliullah considered knowledge of "ilm-i lataif" as one of the criteria for the murs-hid. Without knowing the "lataif," one cannot purify the souls. According to Shah Waliullah, "lataif" is a form of knowledge. When the murshid possesses this knowledge, they can educate others. The murshid, with experience in the spiritual journey (*seyr-u suluk*), is knowledgeable about the ups and downs of the path, its difficulties and ease, the deceptive

70 Muhammed Kızılgeçit, "Şah Velîyyullah Dihlevî'nin (1703-1762) Bazı Tasavvufî Görüşlerine Felsefî Bir Bakış," 191-210.

aspects of the ego, and the negative actions emanating from the heart in the purification of the soul and refinement of the heart. A murshid is like a doctor or a guide who calls the misguided people to the right path of Islam. Shah Waliullah said union (vusul) is achieved through "lataif." However, Shah Waliullah distinguished between "suluk" and "lataif" from each other. Suluk constitutes the practical aspect of Sufism, while lataif forms the intellectual aspect of Sufism.⁷¹

According to Shah Waliullah, it is beneficial to focus on any heart, spirit, secret, hidden, and most hidden "latâif." He found the difference between the saints (awliya) in the diversity of their "lataif." He also stated that the appearance of a saint in more than one place at the same time would occur due to ilm-i lataif. According to him, it is not the early Sufis (mutakaddimun) but their successors who have paid attention to the knowledge of "ilm-i lataif." Therefore, Shah Waliullah believed that explaining "ilm-i lataif" to someone without a specific foundation could lead to misunderstandings and potential misuse.⁷²

5.7. Ijtihad

In the introduction to the book *Musaffa*, he wrote about the necessity of ijtiḥad, which is obligatory in every era. According to him, ijtiḥad means gaining complete knowledge about the provisions of the Shari'ah, understanding their details and interpretations, and organising the laws of the Shari'ah properly so any madhhab can follow them. He believed that ijtiḥad was obligatory every era because numerous unique problems arose.⁷³ To solve these problems, it becomes obligatory to know Allah's instructions. However, solutions to many issues have been recorded and compiled. There are also various disagreements among the scholars regarding that and on different issues. If the scholars do not return to Sharia's

71 Eldiir Zhalilov, "Şah Velîyyullah Dihlevî'nin Tasavvuf Anlayışında Mürşid Olmanın Kriterleri", 132-164.

72 Eldiir Zhalilov, "Şah Velîyyullah Dihlevî'nin Tasavvuf Anlayışında Mürşid Olmanın Kriterleri", 132-164.

73 Majid Nawaz Majid Nawaz, and Ghulam Anwar Ghulam Anwar. "Impacts of Struggles of Hazrat Shah Waliullah and Hazrat Mujaddid-e-Alif Sani in Reforming Sufism: An Analytical Study: اصلاح تصوف میں حضرت شاہ ولی اللہ اور حضرت مجدد الف ثانی کی کوششوں کے اثرات: تجزیاتی مطالعہ", *Al Ehsan* 17/01 (2022), 115-131.

introductory provisions, it is impossible to eliminate such disputes. The method prescribed by the Mujtahids in this regard is also not followed adequately by different scholars due to disagreement. Therefore, there is no alternative to ijtiḥad for the ummah.⁷⁴

Shah Waliullah emphasised ijtiḥad and described in detail the rules, constitution, and terms of ijtiḥad. He highlighted the importance of ijtiḥad in his various books, especially Ijalatul Khifa, Hujjat Allah al-Balighah, Iqdul Zeed, Al Insaf, Badure Bayega, Musaffa etc.⁷⁵

5.8. Ruh (Soul)

The subject of the soul is crucial in Sufism. The Naqshbandiyya tariqat has six lataif, one of which is the soul. However, in Sufism, ten lataif are identified in total. Ruh lataif is included among the internal factors. Experts in Sufism have expressed many opinions on this matter. Shah Waliullah also has given various opinions on the soul. According to him, ruh is the basis and source of the life span of the animal world. The animal lives as long as the soul resides in the animal's body, and when the soul leaves, the animal dies. Subtle and light warmth exists within the body. Blood, bile, and phlegm are the perfect and precise combination of the body's four elements and are born inside the heart. Then, it carries the feeling, motion, and sense of energy to the container (the body) to extract sustenance. The reactions that arise from these forces influence the reactions of those forces.⁷⁶

When there is a disturbance in any organ related to the birth and development of the corpuscle, then the corpuscle also becomes disturbed. It is also known that the birth of a corpuscle causes life, and its dissolution causes death. At first glance, this corpuscle seems to be ruh (soul). However, if one looks deeply, it is only the lowest level of spirit. The soul is related to the body as the smell is to the flower or coal to the fire. If we think deeply, it is understood that this corpuscle is not the spirit

74 Zulfiqar Ahmad Kismati, *Philosopher Shah Waliullah Dehlovee and His Thoughts*, 40.

75 A. D. Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah: A Saint-Scholar of Muslim India* (Islamabad: National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, 1979), 65.

76 Saeyd Rashed Hasan Chowdury– Vahit Gökteş, "A Critical Analysis of Imam Rabbani Ahmad Sirhindi's Doctrines on Sufism", *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 11/1 (2021), 93-121.

or soul but the container or shell of the original soul and the medium of its connection with the body. The proof of this is that we have seen time and time again that children become young and young adults grow old. Likewise, the essential elements of that person's body are changed into blood, phlegm, bile, etc. Again, children grow from small to prominent, black or white, scholar or ignorant. Thus, his condition undergoes many changes, while his personality remains unchanged.

According to Shah Waliullah, this proves that it is the existence of matter that keeps man alive and not the soul. Likewise, the soul is not the body or personality as it appears. Instead, the soul is a single and distinct entity free from amalgamation. Ruh is a point of light or a body of light wholly free and independent from changing states or combinations of different substances. This real spirit being is the same in different states of small and big, black and white and other opposites, and it admits no evolution or division.⁷⁷

If the body does not have the power to produce inanimate life, then the inanimate life departs from there; this is called death. Separating the original soul from the material soul is not called death. Even when the material soul is afflicted with a destructive disease, the original soul remains attached to the body for Allah's strategic reasons. There can be no exception to the fact that the fundamental soul has a definite limit and measure. When the man dies, his composite soul assumes another form. Then what remains of his collective senses due to the elemental soul, with the help of the shadow world, acquires such power that all acts of seeing, hearing, and speaking are possible, i.e., the body possesses a subconscious mind.

Conclusion

Shah Waliullah observed the Indian subcontinent society for many years, saw many ups and downs, and realised that the Muslim nation should be saved from the ongoing misguidance of society. He faced many challenges when he carried out various reform programs through Sufism within society. There were social, political, economic, and

⁷⁷ Kiran Sami et. al., "Shah Waliullah: Synthesis of Pantheism and Apparentism", *Journal of Grassroots* 46/2 (2012), 46.



spiritual problems in the Muslim society in the Indian subcontinent at that time. However, he identified the causes of the problem and suggested appropriate remedies. He was critical of the un-Islamic practices and customs that had become integrated into Muslims, many of which came from exposure to Hinduism in Muslim societies. According to him, one of the underlying causes of problems among Muslims was their lack of knowledge of Islam and the Qur'an. He established various institutions to spread Islamic education and began teaching students. He also prepared his followers to become missionaries who later imparted the actual teachings of Islam to the masses. Furthermore, he translated the Qur'an into Persian to promote Islamic learning and make the Qur'an more understandable to the people.⁷⁸

Shah Waliullah was the father of Muslim renaissance and revolutionary thought in the Indian subcontinent. It was his children and disciples who later followed his path and led the independence movement and freedom struggle of the Indian subcontinent. He did not initiate a traditional political movement but gave birth to a revolutionary school of thought. Due to the intention of the ruling class and the influence of the local religion and culture, Islam lost its universal form in the subcontinent and became a ritualistic practice. Through his writings, Shah Waliullah established the truth that Islam is a complete life law. He focused on reforming the thinking of the Muslim Ummah through educational reforms. He attempted to rationalise Islamic epistemology through which the fundamental mysteries, facts and philosophical aspects of Islamic jurisprudence became apparent and led to the emergence of Islamic revivalism and Islamic politics. His writings guide all the means of political, spiritual, cultural, and economic emancipation and prosperity and social upliftment of the ummah.⁷⁹ Moreover, Shah Waliullah's writings, teachings, and how he lived inspired his later generations of Islamic followers, especially those who carried on his reform mission after his death.

78 Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi, *Islamic Renaissance in South Asia 1707-1867 The Role of Sah Wali Allah His Successors* (Islamabad: International Islamic University Islamic Research Institute, 2002), 154-167.

79 Ataur Rahman Khusru, "Shah Waliullah Dehlavi: A Timeless Muslim Philosopher of the Subcontinent", *Kaler Kantho* (17 October 2023).

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