

Shah Wali Allah

An Analysis of His Metaphysical Thought



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To
My Beloved Parents
And
All of My Affectionate Teachers

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Preface:

The distinguishing Characteristic and the dominant aspect of man's life is his rationality. It is this characteristic which prompts man to know the reality in its totality as well as in detail. The natural philosophers concern themselves with the particular things in order to know the world in which they live. The metaphysicians, on the other hand, attempt to know the particulars with respect to their causes or first principles, origin, nature, and ultimate purpose. This approach to the reality of existence has always been present in almost all human traditions.

The Muslim thinkers, motivated by the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), throughout the centuries have developed a well-structured metaphysical system of their own that also deals with the basic metaphysical questions. During the 18th century, in continuity with the legacy of Islam, Shah Wali Allah (1703-1762), the most out-standing intellectual and religious scholar of the Muslim India, outlined a well-balanced metaphysical system which is the central theme of the present work. Starting with introductory information about Shah Wali Allah's life, education, intellectual legacy, contribution, and influence, the work then proceeds to outline in details the four main branches of metaphysics namely, Epistemology (Theory of Knowledge), Ontology (Study of Being/Wujud), Theology (Rational Study of Religious Dogmas), and Cosmology (Philosophical Study of the Universe). The purpose of the present study is fourfold:

To give a brief introduction of Shah Wali Allah, encompassing various aspects of his life as well as his influence upon the philosophical, theological, political, social and religious circles so as to determine his influence in these fields. Moreover, some light will be thrown on the deteriorating Mughal Empire and the general decay of the socio-political life of Muslim India and the vital role played by Shah Wali Allah in order to try to re-vitalize the life of Muslims of the Indian sub-continent.

To examine the influence of various trends of Islamic thought including the schools of Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, Ibn Sina,

Suhrawardi, al-Ghazali, Ibn `Arabi, Mullah Sadra, etc., which contributed to his synthesis.

To carry out a survey of his voluminous works in various fields such as Hujjat Allah al-balighah, al-Budur al-bazighah, al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, Lamahat, Sata'at, al-Khayr al-al-kathir, Anfas al-`arifin, Altaf al-quds, etc., with the view to understand better his metaphysics.

To analyze his metaphysical ideas in themselves in the light of the role that they play in his thought in general. His unique approach i.e., reconciliation between various conflicting metaphysical doctrines, is also emphasized. Likewise, his originality in each of these areas is pointed out.

The metaphysics of Shah Wali Allah provides an indispensable link in the continuity of the Islamic intellectual tradition between the "Golden Age" of Islam and modern times. Any comprehensive modern formulation of Islamic thought would have to take account of his systematic presentation and would benefit from it. The work terminates with summary and conclusive remarks about this eminent scholar of eighteenth century of Muslim India (Shah Wali Allah) followed by a selected bibliography comprising of the primary and general important works on Islamic thought which can be a guiding force for those who would like to pursue further research in the field of Islamic philosophy and theology.

Being grateful to Almighty Allah for all of His favors and bounties, I am also whole heartedly obliged to my late Parents who kindly, wisely and carefully supervised and monitored my long academic journey. Likewise, my sincere gratitude is due to all of my great affectionate teachers and benefactors who contributed effectively to my intellectual, spiritual and religious disposition and career. With special reference to the present work, my heart-felt gratitude is due to Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Professor Ismail R. al-Faruqi (late), Dr. Gerhard Spiegler, and Dr. Tamar Sonn for their valuable guidance and supervision. I am also grateful to Dr. Hafiz Iftikhar Ahmed for his great help in the editing and composing this academic work. My gratitude is also due to my family and children for their technical help and proof reading of the manuscript.

To Allah belong all Praises and Admirations.

Introduction:

This work is concerned mainly with the metaphysical thought of Shah Wali Allah (1114-1176/1703-1762), the greatest Muslim scholar of eighteenth century India. From the intellectual point of view, eighteenth century has a similar importance for the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent as it has for the West. By that time, Shah Wali Allah set out to reformulate the religio-intellectual legacy of Islam in order to reorganize the Muslims on the basis of their religion. The most distinguished feature of this movement was that theological and metaphysical issues were interpreted rationally. Reason was used not as a weapon against religious truth but as instrument for supporting it. The worldly happiness was emphasized but not at the price of man's spirituality. The happiness of man was viewed in his awareness of the natural as well as supernatural domains. Nature was taught as an independent force but as a manifestation of the Divine Activity. In this movement, the misery of man was viewed as a result of his ignorance and of his break from his past. Man was made aware of his authority of independent judgment which was necessary for his future development. Reason and revelation were harmonized and were not considered two antagonistic forces. The active force behind this intellectual tradition was the personality of Shah Wali Allah ... the subject matter of this work.

In order to achieve his objectives, Shah Wali Allah designed his scheme of activity in the following way:

He wrote on almost all the subjects related to Islamic Studies. He left a rich legacy of Islamic thought in the form of about fifty valuable works. His interpretation of religious truth was rational and balanced. His approach to the controversial issues was reconciliatory.

He taught transmitted and intellectual sciences for about 45 years at the greatest learning center of his time in India ... the *Madrasah Rahimiyyah*, founded by his father Shah `Abd al-Rahim. During this period, he trained a generation of scholars including his four sons who continued the movement after his death.

He also participated in the practical aspect of life and, on certain occasions, played a role of well-trained politician.

But despite his great scholarship, long continued intellectual, political and social achievements, and unparalleled status in the history of Muslim India, Shah Wali Allah is little known in the West. It is only in the second half of the twentieth century that about ten of his more than fifty works have appeared in English translation. Most of these translations are due to the efforts of G.N. Jalbani. Jalbani has also composed two works in the English language namely "Life of Shah Wali Allah" and "Teachings of Shah Wali Allah" which signify a general view of his life and doctrines. Some other scholars such as D. A. J. Halipota, Dr. A. D. Muztar, Dr. S. M. Ikram, and Dr. S. A. A. Rizwi have devoted complete or partial works to him. None of the extant English works on Shah Wali Allah deals specifically with his metaphysical thought. The purpose of this present work, then, is to introduce Shah Wali Allah's metaphysical thought in detail, with respect to his intellectual background, biography and his influence.

This work is divided into the present introduction and five chapters. The introduction contains an overall view of the work. The first three Sections of the first chapter are devoted to Shah Wali Allah's intellectual, political and family background. The section on the intellectual background focuses on the development and establishment of a philosophical and theological school of thought, purely of Indian origin, during the Mughals period. Information about distinguished scholars, their works and the various educational centers have been provided. The discussion culminates with the works of Mirza Muhammad Zahid Harawi, one of the most distinguished logicians, philosophers, theologians, and metaphysicians of his time, and above all a teacher of Shah `Abd al-Rahim, the father of Shah Wali Allah. (Shah `Abd al-Rahim is dealt with in the section on "Family Background" as Shah Wali Allah's father as well as his intellectual and spiritual guide.)

In the section on political background, we have described the situation of 18th century India; the period during which Shah Wali Allah lived. Details regarding the internal instability as well as external invasions and their effects on the Muslim community in India are outlined.

In the section on family background, Shah Wali All's genealogy is discussed, especially those members of the family in various generations who played an important role in maintaining and continuing the intellectual and religious tradition in the family. Two of the immediate predecessors of Shah Wali Allah, Shaykh Abu al-Rida (uncle of Shah Wali Allah) and Shaykh `Abd al-

Rahim (father of Shah Wali Allah) are dealt with in detail in order to make clear the transitional process of metaphysics up to Shah Wali Allah. The remaining part of the first chapter deals with Shah Wali Allah's life, education, career, works, and his major contributions. His life-history is mainly based on his autobiography, "al-Juz' al-latif fi tarjumat al-'abd al-da'if" and some other works which have biographical discussions. In the section on works, his extent published and un-published works have been listed. The section concludes with brief comments on some of his metaphysical works, especially the important ones for the main part of this present work.

The section on Shah Wali Allah's contribution is confined mainly to his religious and intellectual contributions. His political and social contributions are slightly taken into consideration. Readers seeking further information on this aspect of Shah Wali Allah are directed to "Shah Wali Allah and His Time" by S. S. A. Rizwi, "Shah Wali Allah: A Saint-Scholar" by A. D. Mudtar and "Life of Shah Wali Allah" and "Teachings of Shah Wali Allah" by G.N. Jalbani.

The first chapter winds up with the discussion of the influence of Shah Wali Allah on the subsequent intellectual and religious movements. We have pointed out there that the intellectual movement started by Shah Wali Allah is still flourishing. As most of his biographers agree, his intellectual and religious movement was taken up by his four sons, Shah `Abd al-`Aziz, Shah Rafi` al-Din, Shah `Abd al-Qadir, and Shah `Abd al-Ghani and then, by their graduates, the founders of the *Dar al-`Ulum Deoband*. It is due to the efforts of the Deoband school of thought that the educational as well as intellectual tradition of Shah Wali Allah has been retained, preserved and popularized throughout the Muslim world. Because of the close relationship and full devotion of the Deoband school of thought to the intellectual and religious tradition of Shah Wali Allah, we have dealt at length with the *Dar al-`Ulum Deoband* movement. In addition, we have also dealt with the question of the influence of Shah Wali Allah on other religious and intellectual movements and organizations.

The rest of the work is concerned with the metaphysical thought of Shah Wali Allah. It is divided into four chapters: Epistemology, Ontology, Theology, and Cosmology. The chapter on Epistemology is concerned with the following three basic inter-related questions in the context of Shah Wali Allah's writings. They are: 1. Origin, nature and definition of knowledge; 2. Division

or various kinds of knowledge, and 3. Means and channels of knowledge. In dealing with these questions, the relevant writings of earlier Muslim scholars have also been consulted. The most distinguished feature of Shah Wali Allah's Epistemology is that he, like al-Ghazali, Ibn `Arabi and other Muslim metaphysicians before him, considers intuition the most reliable and accurate channel of knowledge. This is the point where Shah Wali Allah departs from the early theologians as well as those speculative philosophers such as al-Ash`ari, Baghdadi, Ibn Hazm, al-Kindi and Ibn Rushd who are not interested in intuitive knowledge. It was this affirmation of intuitive knowledge that impelled Shah Wali Allah to treat knowledge in a way significantly different from that of the philosophers and the early theologians. This aspect of his epistemology is dealt with in detail in the second part of the chapter.

The subject matter of the third chapter is "Ontology". It begins with a brief account of various types of ontology developed in the Muslim world before Shah Wali Allah. Shah Wali Allah's own ontological system is divided into many sections and sub-sections. The most important questions, such as the stages of being, potentiality and actuality of being, the question of essence and existence, and the unity and multiplicity of being are extensively discussed. At the end of the chapter, the famous metaphysical doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of being) of Ibn `Arabi and *wahdat al-shuhud* (the unity in conscience) of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi along with Shah Wali Allah's reconciliatory comments are expounded in detail. It has been made clear that reconciliation of these two apparently opposite metaphysical doctrines is one of Shah Wali Allah's unique contributions in the field of metaphysics.

The fourth chapter is devoted to theology. In the beginning of that chapter, we have presented an account of theological development in Islam. The Mu`tazilites are dealt with in detail comprehensively because of their being the first rationalists in Islam. The orthodox theology of al-Ash`ari and al-Maturidi is discussed in detail in the context of Shah Wali Allah's writings. We have been careful to point out Shah Wali Allah's divergence from his predecessors. The major theological issues, such as the Existence and Unity of God and His Attributes, the question of providence (*al-qadr*), free will and determinism are all dealt with in depth. The issue of prophecy is discussed appropriately in relation to the Divine Attribute "*kalam*" (word of God).

Cosmology comprises the subject matter of the fifth chapter of the work. This is the part where Shah Wali Allah's scientific and metaphysical approaches to

the universal domain as well as his originality are fully realized. The major part of this chapter is the section on the nature and creation of the universe. In discussing the various contexts where Shah Wali Allah deals with these issues, some ontological issues, such as the hierarchy and gradation of being, are repeated but from a different perspective. Subsequently, different parts of the universe, such as the heavens and man, are dealt with, and Shah Wali Allah's different interpretations of man are elaborated from a different point of view. Next, the major issues of cosmology, such as time, space and causality are expounded. His unique solution to the problem of time is fully described in the light of his own writings. Shah Wali Allah's inclination towards the Muslim Peripatetics on the issue of causality is also indicated. The work concludes with a brief summary of the subject along with some corollary remarks about Shah Wali Allah.

Chapter One: Background and Biography

Intellectual Background:

Before going into detail, I would like to mention here that Shah Wali Allah lived in 12th/18th century Mughals India. In the section on his intellectual background, we are going to have a brief survey of the Islamic intellectual tradition in India before Shah Wali Allah in order to trace the sources of his theological, philosophical and metaphysical thought.

The ancestors of the Mughals were patrons of science and learning. The culture which Muhammad Zahir al-Din Babur (1483-1530 A.C.), founder of the Mughals dynasty in India, brought to India had flourished long ago in Baghdad, Khurasan and Transoxiana. Amir Taimur (Tamerlane d.1405), the predecessor of Babur, made Samarqand a meeting place for distinguished philosophers, theologians, poets, and artists. It was his court where `Allamah Sa`d al-Din al-Taftazani and Mir Sayyed al-Sharif al-Jurjani, the eminent philosophers and theologians of the time, lived together.¹ The immediate successor of Taimur continued the tradition and made much advancement in the field of science and arts. Learning centers were established at Herat where rational and religious studies flourished. Baber himself grew up in that intellectual environment, and was given the best education available at that time. He eventually transmitted this intellectual and cultural heritage to India after assuming power in 1526. Shaykh Muhammad Ikram writes:

“Taimur attracted a large number of poets, musicians, and philosophers to his court, and built and established his capital, Samarqand, in a truly magnificent style. After Taimur’s death, in 1405, this cultural tradition was than maintained by his descendants, who made their capitals centers of art and learning that drew upon the whole Islamic world. This was the atmosphere in which Babur grew up, and which he and his successors were to transplant to Lahore, Delhi and Agra.”²

Babur was succeeded by his son Humayun who was soon defeated and replaced by Sher Khan Suri, a famous Afghan leader, in 1540. Sher Khan

¹ . Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition, London, 1954, Vol. 2, p. 602.

² . Ikram, S.M., Muslim Civilization in India, New York, 1964, p. 136.

had a profound knowledge of Persian and Arabic literature and had studied rational sciences at Junpur (one of the greatest learning centers of that time) in his youth. Having this intellectual background, he gave special attention to the cultivation of philosophical, theological and pure metaphysical sciences. He founded a *Madrasah* (religious school) at Narnaul where the curriculum and teaching method of Junpur School were followed. This *Madrasah* later became a famous seat for rational sciences.³

Humayun regained power in 1550 A.C., with the help of the Persian army. This incident opened a new chapter in cultural activities in India. Distinguished scholars, artists and administrators, such as Beirum Khan, Sayyed `Ali and `Abd al-Samad, came with him to India from Iran. These scholars brought with them the newly developed philosophical tradition of Iran and introduced it in India. But the golden age of rational sciences in India begins with Jalal al-Din Akbar, son of Humayun, who ruled the country for half a century (1556-1606 A.C). By that time, philosophy and other intellectual sciences dominated even the imperial court. The meetings of the *`ibadat khanah* (the place of worship which Akbar built within the imperial palace) were eventually devoted to philosophical and theological discussions. Philosophers and scholars of other traditions, particularly Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity were also welcomed to participate in the intellectual activities of the court. Mir Fath Allah Shirazi, Abu'l-Fadl and his brother Faydi were among the eminent exponents of Aristotelian and Illuminationist philosophy and of Ibn `Arabi's gnosis in Akbar's court. Outside the imperial court, there developed learning centers in various parts of the country among which Delhi, Junpur, Sialkot, Sirhind, Dakkan, and Kashmir are worth mentioning.⁴

During the late Mughals period, especially by the time of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, philosophical learning continued to flourish. Dara Shikoh, son and successor of Shah Jahan, had a strong background in Islamic metaphysics and Hindu philosophy. He wrote some valuable works that deal with metaphysics and rationalistic philosophy. His Safinat al-awliya', Sakinat al-awliya', Risalah haqnuma, Majma` al-bahrayn and Hasanat al-`arifin are of great value. He also translated Upanishads into Persian under the title, "Sirr-i

³ . Husain, Yusuf, Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture, Bombay, 1962, p. 77.

⁴ . Ikram, S.M., Raud-i kawthar, Lahore, n.d., p. 162.

akbar“(The Great Secret) or “Sirr-I asrar” (The Secret of the Secrets). The Bhagavad-Gita and the Yoga Vasista were also translated into Persian at his insistence.⁵ Several other scholars and philosophers of the Mughals period played an eminent role in the growth and the cultivation of intellectual sciences in India. Shah Wali Allah, the subject matter of this study, was the immediate successor of those scholars. Following is a brief account of a few scholars of the Mughals period.

Mir Fath Allah Shirazi:

Mir Fath Allah Shirazi (d. 1589 A.C.) was one of the most outstanding philosophers of his time. He was born in a scholarly Sayyed (descended from the Prophet) family in Shiraz, Persia. Shiraz at that time was famous for rational and religious learning. Mir Fath Allah Shirazi was provided with the best education available at that time. He studied under distinguished philosophers, theologians and mystics such as Jamal al-Din Mahmud, a student of Jalal al-Din Dawani, Maulana Kamal al-Din Shirazi, Maulana Kurd and the famous philosopher Amir Ghiyath al-Din al-Mansur ibn Mir Sadr al-Din al-Dashtaki Shirazi.⁶

Upon completing his formal study, Mir Fath Allah Shirazi started his career as a teacher of rational sciences at Shiraz. He also served as an advisor for the ruler of Shiraz. Then, at the request of `Adil Shah, governor of Bijapur, he left Shiraz for India. He worked at Bijapur as an advisor to the ruler of Bijapur as well as principal of the official school of the state. After the death of `Adil Shah, Mir Fath Allah Shirazi moved to the imperial court in 1583 at Akbar’s invitation. He was well received in the court and was put in charge of religious affairs and endowments (*awqaf*). Later on, he worked with Rajah Toder Mill to organize the revenue system.⁷

But the most important service of Mir Fath Allah Shirazi was his educational reformation. When Akbar made him responsible for education, he formulated the curriculum on new lines. He not only introduced the works of later Persian scholars such as `Allamah Sa`d al-Din al-Taftazani, Mir Sayyed al-Sharif al-jurjani, `Allamah Jalal al-Din Dawani, Mir Sadr al-Din Dashtaki, and

⁵ . Husain, Yusuf, op. cit., p. 54.

⁶ . Bilgrami, Mir Ghulam `Ali Azad, Ma`athir al-kiram, Lahore, 1971, p. 226.

⁷ . Rizvi, A. Abbas, Shah Wali Allah and His Times, Australia, 1980, p. 63.

Mir Ghiyath al-Din Mansur Shirazi but made them a necessary part of the curriculum. He also continued teaching in his free time and numerous students graduated in philosophy under his supervision. He also wrote some valuable commentaries on and glossaries for some of the most difficult philosophical and theological works of the time such as Sharh al-mawaqif of `Allamah Sayyed al-Sharif al-Jurjani, Sharh Mulla Jalal of `Allamah Jalal al-Din Dawani and others.⁸

Mir Fath Allah Shirazi died in Kashmir during a tour with Akbar on 22 Jamadi al-thani, 997/1589. He was buried in *Takht-e Sulayman*, a place famous for its beauty.⁹

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi:

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi is considered one of the most influential and distinguished scholars in the intellectual history of Muslim India. On the basis of his services to the cause of religion, he was given the title of "*Mujaddid al-f-thani*" (reformer of the second millennium). He was born in 1564 at Sirhind in a distinguished scholarly family. His father Shaykh `Abd al-Ahad was a theologian and metaphysician who had studied intellectual sciences at Junpur. At an early age, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi first memorized the Qur'an and then studied the primary books of religious and rational sciences with his father for years. He was then sent to Siyalkot, a famous seat of learning, to complete his formal study. In Siyalkot, he studied under the supervision of Shaykh Kamal al-Din, a famous *Muhaddith* of the time. He mastered all the branches of formal learning at the age of seventeen.¹⁰

In 1599, after the death of his father, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi came into contact with Khawajah Muhammad Baqi Bi'llah (1563-1603), a celebrated mystic and founder of the Naqshbandi Order in India.¹¹ At the

⁸ . Bilgrami, Azad, op. cit., p. 229.

⁹ . Ibid., p. 228

¹⁰ . Muslim Civilization in India, op. cit., p. 167.

¹¹ . The Naqshbandi Order was founded by Khawajah Baha' Din Pir Muhammad Naqshbandi (1317-1398 A.C.) at Bukhara. Khawajah Muhammad Baqi Bi'llah (1563-1603 A.C.) seventh in line from the founder was the first who introduced the Order in India. The Naqshbandi, from the very beginning, stressed the observance of *Shari'ah*. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, a disciple of

latter's invitation, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi spent few days in his *khanqah*. During his stay, he was deeply influenced by Khawajah's conduct and spiritual life. He was initiated into the Order and thus became his formal disciple. He stayed with his spiritual master for a few months in order to fulfill the necessary requirements of the Order. Finally he was granted *khirqah* (Sufi robe) and was permitted to initiate others into the *silsilah* (the Order). On that occasion, Khawajah Muhammad Baqi Bi'llah said:

"Shaykh Ahmad is ... rich in knowledge and rigorous in action. I associated with him for a few days, and noticed truly marvelous things in his spiritual life. He will turn into a light which will illumine the world."¹²

After the death of the Khawajah, Shaykh Ahmad made Sirhind his permanent abode and started his mission there. His main concern was to remove all kinds of innovations from the religious life of the Indian Muslims, mostly resulting from Akbar's liberal policy regarding religion. He was anxious to see once again the glory of the Muslim Orthodoxy in India. To attain his goal, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi adopted two means: 1. Oral instruction and guidance, and 2. Writing books and epistles to nobles on various religious topics. The latter approach was more effective and resulted in good relations with some important personalities who later became defenders and champions of orthodoxy within and outside the imperial court.

In 1619, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi was summoned to the court of Jahangir (1605-1627), to face charges of innovation and heterodoxy leveled against him. Although he cleared himself from a theological point of view, he was sent to jail for not prostrating before the Emperor. During his imprisonment, his piety, constancy, spirituality, and influential personality sustained him and the official circles, including the Emperor, were greatly impressed by him. He was released after spending two years in the fort of

Khawajah Baqi Bi'llah, gave new momentum to the Order by attacking all kinds of religious innovations. See Yusuf Husain, op. cit., p.57.

¹² . Muslim Civilization in India, op. cit., p. 167.

Gawaliar as a prisoner, and was sent back to Sirhind with great respect and numerous valuable gifts.¹³

He spent the last years of his life at Sirhind in seclusion. He died on Dec. 10, 1624, and was buried in his native city.

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's greatest contribution in the field of Islamic thought is his exposition of the concept of *wahdat al-shuhud* (unity in conscience). He rejected and severely attacked the well-known metaphysical concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of being) of Ibn `Arabi. For him, the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* was a subjective experience wherein the mystic and the object of his love become identical and where the mystic realizes one overwhelming reality. This state of identity is not a permanent one; rather it is transient and temporal. The higher state accordingly is that of servitude (*`abdiyyat*) wherein neither the transcendental nature nor infinity of God is degraded nor the contingent and accidental position of man and other creatures is elevated to the realm of transcendence and infinity.¹⁴ Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi also criticized the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* from the ethical point of view. The pantheistic union of God and man, for him, negates the idea of human individuality as well as his position as a responsible being before God. It also makes it difficult to evaluate the morals of individuals and thus negates the whole idea of reward and punishment in the Hereafter. Furthermore, this conception denies human freedom.¹⁵ This discussion will be continued later on.

Most of his philosophical, metaphysical and theological thoughts are expounded in his Maktubat (epistles) which have been published in four volumes. Along with this work, he wrote many treatises on various subjects. The following are of special significance: Risalah Tahliliyyah, Risalah fi ithbat al-nubuwwah, Risalah mabda' wa'l-ma`ad, Risalah ma`arif al-laduniyyah, Ta'liqat bar sharh-e ruba'iyat, Ta'liqat-e `Awarif, Irshad al-muridin, and Mukashafat-e `ayniyyah mujaddidiyyah.¹⁶ Almost all these works deal with

¹³ . Ibid., pp. 168-69.

¹⁴ . Husain, Yusuf, op. cit., p. 58.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ . Raud-e kauthar, op. cit., pp. 243-47

metaphysics. The Risalah fi ithbat al-nubuwwah is a work on theology which deals with the question of prophecy.

Mullah `Abd al-Hakim Siyalkoti:

Mullah `Abd al-Hakim Siyalkoti was another notable philosopher, theologian, logician, and metaphysician of the Mughals period. He was born at Siyalkot in a well-known family of intellectual repute. He was a later contemporary of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi. By that time Siyalkot was famous for intellectual and transmitted sciences. Mullah `Abd al-Hakim studied all the branches of philosophy with Shaykh Kamal al-Din, a distinguished scholar of his time. He also studied theology with the Shaykh and soon became known as a philosopher in the intellectual circles.¹⁷

During the reign of Shah Jahan (r. 1627-1658), Mullah `Abd al-Hakim became the most influential scholar in the imperial court. He was granted special awards and prizes for his teaching and religious services in the imperial *Madrrasah* at the capital. Towards the end of his life, he left the court and returned to his native city, Siyalkot, and devoted his time to teaching and writing. Numerous students studied philosophy and other sciences with him, and late continued the intellectual tradition in India.¹⁸

Besides being a distinguished teacher, Mullah `Abd al-Hakim was also a prolific writer. He wrote many valuable commentaries for some of the difficult Islamic philosophical and theological works. All of his writings were well received by the Muslim scholars within and outside India. His most important works are: Hashyah-I Sharh hikmat al-`ayn, Hashyah-I Sharh al-`aqa'id of `Allamah Jalal al-Din Dawani, Hashyah-I Sharh al-mawaqif of al-Jurjani, Hashyah-I Sharifiyyah, Hashyah-I Sharh al-shamsiyyah, and Durrat al-thamin.¹⁹

Mulla `Abd al-Hakim died in 1067/1656 at Siyalkot and was buried there. His mausoleum still exists on *Shaban Road* in Siyalkot.

¹⁷ . Bilgrami, Azad, op. cit., p. 193.

¹⁸ . Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 193-94

Mulla Mahmud Junpuri:

Mulla Mahmud Junpuri ibn Shaykh Muhammad Junpuri was another prominent philosopher, theologian and metaphysician of Shah Jahan's period. He was born in Junpur in Ramadan, 1015/1630. His father died before he was twelve. His maternal grandfather Shaykh Shah Muhammad, a renowned scholar, took him into his care. His early education was completed under the same Shaykh.²⁰ For higher study of the rational sciences, Mullah Mahmud Junpuri joined the intellectual circle of 'Ustad al-Mulk Shaykh Muhammad Afdal, the well-known rationalist of his time. He studied almost all the rational sciences with him. For the study of transmitted sciences, he remained a student of Mullah Shams Noor Bronvi of Junpur. He started teaching while he was still under twenty. He soon became a recognized scholar of transmitted as well as of intellectual sciences.²¹

One point which distinguishes Mullah Mahmud Junpuri from his Indian contemporary scholars is his attending the philosophical circle of Mir Damad, one of the eminent scholars of the Safavid Persia and the foremost teacher of Mulla Sadra. Mulla Mahmud Junpuri attended Mir Damad's lectures on philosophy and metaphysics when the former made a temporary stop at Shiraz while he was on his way to Makkah. The young scholar disagreed with Mir Damad's doctrine of *huduth-i dahri* (eternal creation). Yet both scholars were deeply impressed by each other.²²

²⁰ . Mubarakpuri, Qader Athar, Diyar-i Purab main `ilm aur `ulama' Dehli, 1979, pp. 306-07.

²¹ . Bilgrami, Azad, op. cit., p. 199.

²² . Muhammad Baqir Damad, better known as Mir Damad, was one of the greatest philosophers and metaphysicians of the Safavid period. His contribution in the establishment of the theosophical school of Isfahan is more than any other Persian scholar. He was the foremost teacher of Mulla Sadra, Sayyid Ahmad `Alavi, Mulla Khalil Qazwini, and Qutb al-Din Ashkiwari. Mir Damad wrote many valuable works in the field of philosophy and theology such as Shari` Najat; al-Ufuq al-mubin; al-Sirat al-mustaqim; Qabasat; Tagdisat; Jadhawat; and Sidrat al-muntaha.

Mir Damad died in Iraq in 1041/1663. See S.H. Nasr, "The School of Asfahan": History of Muslim Philosophy, Ed. By M.M. Sharif, Wiesbaden, 1963, Vol. 2, pp. 914-15.

Mulla Mahmud Junpuri was not only a speculative philosopher; he also had a strong mystical background. There had been a mystical tradition in his paternal and maternal ancestors. He himself was greatly influenced by Mian Mir Lahori, the famous leader of the Qaderiyyah Order in India at that time.²³ He visited him, for the first time, in the company of Shah Jahan, the then emperor, and Mullah `Abd al-Hakim. Mian Mir reproached both scholars for their worldly inclinations, particularly the courtly life. Mulla Mahmud Junpuri immediately left the imperial court and spent the rest of his life in Junpur; teaching, writing and contemplating.²⁴ He also became in contact with Shaykh Ni`mat Allah Fairuzpuri, a notable Sufi of Qaderiyyah Order in Bengal. Mulla Mahmud Junpuri visited Bengal at Shah Jahan's request for the instruction of Prince Muhammad Shuja`. Mulla Junpuri was initiated into the Order and was granted *ijazah* (permission to initiate others into the Order). It was a turning point in his life. After that he was completely devoted to teaching, writing and spiritual training.²⁵ Mulla Mahmud Junpuri achieved a high social status even during his life time. He was considered one of the prominent philosophers and intellectuals by his contemporaries. His foremost teacher, Shaykh Muhammad Afdal, used to say about him and Mulla `Abd al-Rashid Junpuri (Mulla Mahmud's classmate):

“Since the time of `Allamah Taftazani and Mir Sayyid al-Sharif al-Jurjani, no two great scholars of such a high level have come together in one city as Mulla Mahmud and Shaykh `Abd al-Rashid.”²⁶

Mulla Mahmud Junpuri did not live a long life. He died at the age of forty seven. Despite this short time, he trained numerous students in the field of philosophy and metaphysics. He also composed some original works in

²³ . The Qaderiyyah Order was founded by Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir Jilani (d. 1166 A.C.). Shaykh Ni`matullah and Makhdum Jilani introduced the Order into India in the middle of fifteenth century. Mian Mir Lahori (1550-1635 A.C.) was a distinguished leader of the Order of his time. Dara Shikoh, a son of Emperor Shah Jahan, was a devoted disciple of Mian Mir Lahori. See M.L. Baghi, Medieval Indian Culture and Thought, The Indian Publication, Amabalah, 1965, p. 233.

²⁴ . Mubarakpuri, Qadi Athar, op. cit., pp. 320-21.

²⁵ .Ibid., pp. 321-22

²⁶ . Bilgrami, Azad, op. cit., p. 190.

logic, theology, metaphysics, and speculative philosophy. His Shams al-bazighah is considered one of the most basic works in traditional Islamic philosophy in Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and the neighboring countries. It has been and continuous to be studied along with Sharh hidayat al-hikmat of Sadr al-Din Shirazi known as Mulla Sadra, in the traditional *madaris* in the eastern Muslim world. The following works of Mulla Junpuri are noteworthy: Shams al-bazighah, al-Fara'id fi sharh al-fawa'id, Risalah al-dauhat al-miyadah fi haqiqat al-surah wa'l-maddah' Risalah fi'l-kulli wa'l-juz'i, Risalah 'irtifa`al-naqidayn, Risalah fi wahdat al-wujud, Risalah Tahqiq qada wa qadr, and taqsim-e niswan.²⁷

He died in 1062/1652 while his teacher Shaykh Muhammad Afdal was still living. The Shaykh was so shocked by the early death of his brilliant student that for forty days nobody saw him smiling. After forty days the Master also departed from the temporal world.²⁸

Mirza Muhammad Zahid Harawi:

Mirza Muhammad Zahid Harawi son of Qadi Muhammad Aslam was another distinguished scholar of the age of Shah Jahan (r. 1627-1658 A.C) and of Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707 A.C). Moreover, he was the foremost teacher of Shah `Abd al-Rahim, father of Shah Wali Allah. Mirza Muhammad Zahid's father was *Qadi al-qudat* (chief justice) during the rule of Jahangir (r. 1605-1627 A.C) and Shah Jahan.²⁹ During his early years, Mirza Muhammad Zahid Harawi studied with his father Qadi Muhammad Aslam and Mullah Muhammad Fadil Badakhshani. Then he became a disciple of Mullah Sadiq Halwa'i of Kabul, a notable thinker of his time. For the higher education of rational sciences, he went to Turan (Transoxiana) and joined the circle of Mirza Jan Shirazi, a well-known philosopher, and studied philosophy and other rational sciences with him. Later, he studied exegesis of the Qur'an (*tafsir*) with Mulla Yusuf Lahori, a student of Mirza Jan Shirazi. For the study of *fiqh* (Islamic Law) and *usul al-fiqh* (*jurisprudence*), he remained a student of Mulla Jalal Lahori.³⁰ On the completion of his formal study, Mirza

²⁷ . Mubarakpuri, Qadi Athar, op. cit., pp. 339-59.

²⁸ . Bilgrami, Azad, op. cit., p. 191.

²⁹ . Ibid., pp. 195-97

³⁰ . Shah Wali Allah, Anfas al-`arifin, Lahore, 1974, p. 90.

Muhammad Zahid Harawi started teaching at Lahore and soon became known as a philosopher and a theologian. Since his father Qadi Muhammad Aslam had been a chief *qadi*, Mirza Muhammad Zahid also accepted some responsibility at the imperial court. The Emperor Aurangzeb first appointed him as a royal *muhtasib* (controller) and then governor of Kabul.

Mirza Muhammad Zahid was a notable scholar of peripatetic philosophy, *Ishraqi hikmah*, Ash`arite and Maturidite theology, and logic. He taught these subjects privately in his free time. It was at Akbarabad that Shah `Abd al-Rahim, father of Shah Wali Allah studied all these subjects with him intensively.³¹ Along with some original works in the field of intellectual sciences, Mirza Muhammad Zahid Harawi also wrote glosses on `Allamah Jalal al-Din Dawani's commentary on Hayakil al-nur of Suhrawardi Maqtul, on the Tajrid of Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, on the Sharh al-mawaqif of Mir Sayyid al-Sharif al-Jurjani, on Sharh al-tahzib of `Allamah Dawani, and on Tasawwur wa tasdiq of Qutb al-Din Razi.³²

Political Background:

In the preceding section, we dealt with the intellectual background of Shah Wali Allah in the context of Mughals dynasty. What we are going to deal with here is the political atmosphere at the time of Shah Wali Allah. The political situation from the beginning of the Mughals dynasty especially from the time of Emperor Akbar until the death of Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707) was much better than the latter period. Aurangzeb was fortunate enough to maintain stability in the vast Muslim empire in the subcontinent during his long rule of approximately half a century. His strong personality and unshakable Sunnite orthodoxy allowed nobody to seriously challenge the boundaries of the Islamic state. Disturbances remained isolated and temporary. But such was not the case with his successors. They did not have the administrative acumen, decisive courage and adventurous minds to take on the task of their predecessors and maintain the empire they had inherited from their ancestors. They also lacked a clear religious policy, and this gave rise to religious differences among the Sunni and Shi'ah, both inside and outside the court. These differences were not confined to the theological

³¹ . Ibid., p. 191

³² . Bilgrami, Azad, op. cit., p. 198.

circles but also revived the ethnic and legal questions of the Turanians and Iranians. The Turanians who came with the Mughals from Central Asia, were strict *Hanafi Sunnis* while the Iranians had a Shi'ite background. Muhammad Mu'azzam also called Shah `Alam Bahader Shah, the son and successor of Aurangzeb, imposed some minor changes upon the preachers in the Friday *khutba* (sermon) which contributed very little but caused great confusion and hatred among the Sunni majority.³³ These factors also provided a chance for the rival forces, such as the Jats, Sikhs, and Marathas, to rise once again against the Mughals. The Marathas very soon succeeded in getting upper hand in Gujrat, Malwa, Bengal, Bihar, and Doab. The Sikhs overwhelmed the province of Punjab and some area of Uther Pradesh. The Jats, living in the vicinity of Delhi, were a direct threat to the capital of the empire.

The situation within the imperial family was also not stable. Within a short period of seven years, five emperors succeeded to the throne. None of them proved to be the stature of Akbar, Shah Jahan or Aurangzeb `Alamgir. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami describes the unstable political situation of the time as follows:

“The Mughals throne was tossed to and fro like a shuttlecock among the contending parties. Puppet kings appeared and disappeared from the political stage in quick succession. The crown of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb became the phantom of a forgotten glory.”³⁴

Internal instability paved the way for foreign invaders and placed the Mughals in an untenable position. This is why when Nadir Shah of Persia invaded India in 1739, the Mughals Empire with all its resources could not even stop him marching into the capital itself. The general massacre of the inhabitants of Delhi left about 20,000 dead, but the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah could do nothing.³⁵ Shah Wali Allah lived during this period of decline, chaos and destruction, in the very center of the Mughals Empire. He observed all these events. These were the circumstances which contributed greatly to the constitution of this eminent Muslim thinker. They

³³ . Rizvi, S. A. A., Shah Wali Allah and His Times, op. cit. pp.112-14

³⁴ . Nizami, Khaliq Ahmad, “Shah Wali Allah Dehlawi and Indian politics in the 18th century”, Islamic Culture, Vol. 25, 1951, pp.134-35

³⁵ . Rizvi, S. A. A., Shah Wali Allah and His Times, op. cit., p. 145.

served to determine his goal in life to be the reformation of Muslim society. He sought to strengthen Mughals India and began by diagnosing the diseases; and sought to outline the real causes of the downfall of the Muslim community in India. He thereby wished to provide a remedy for these and thus revive and restore Islam in India.

Family Background:

Shah Wali Allah's lineage from the paternal side goes back to 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (581-644 A.C.), the second caliph of Islam.³⁶ From the maternal side, he descended from Ali ibn Abi Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the fourth caliph of Islam.³⁷ His early ancestors left Hijaz for Persia in the early centuries of Islam. The exact date of their settling in Persia is not known. However, on the basis of the lineage it can be said that some members of the fifth generation must have settled in Persia. The Iranicized names have been found in the names of the sixth generation.³⁸ The first member of the family under whose leadership the family migrated to India, according to Shah Wali Allah's own account, was Shaikh Shams al-Din Mufti, a renowned scholar of the time. After arriving in India, Shaikh Shams al-Din settled in Rahtak, a populous town about thirty miles to the west of Delhi, and established a *madrasah* (a school for religious studies) over there. He also served as an unofficial *Mufti* (judge) in the surrounding area.³⁹ Due to his manifold services to the community, he and his family were highly respected.⁴⁰ The family maintained that status and position for centuries by keeping the religious and intellectual tradition intact and strong within the family. Some members of the family of various generations such as Shaikh Kamal al-Din, Shaikh Qadi Kabir al-Din, Shaikh Ahmad, Shaikh Abu'l-Rida, and Shaikh Abd al-Rahim (father of Shah Wali

³⁶ . For Shah Wali Allah's genealogical table see Anfas al-'arifin, op. cit., p. 331.

³⁷ . Ibid., pp. 99-100.

³⁸ . Muztar, A.D., *Shah Wali Allah: A Saint Scholar of Muslim India*, Islamabad, 1979, p. 12.

³⁹ . Anfas al-'arifin, op. cit., pp. 331-32.

⁴⁰ . Rahim Bakhsh, Hayat-e Wali, Lahore, 1972, pp. 33-6.

Allah) all became renowned scholars of their time.⁴¹ Some members of the later generations such as Shaykh Mansur, Shaykh Mu`azzam and his son Shaikh Wajih al-Din, the grandfather of Shah Wali Allah, served in the Mughul Army and earned high ranks on the basis of their achievements.⁴² Shaykh Wajih al-Din was survived by three sons, Shaykh Abu'l-Rida Muhammad, Shaykh `Abd al-Rahim (the father of Shah Wali Allah) and Shaykh `Abd al-Hakim, the youngest among the three. As far as Shaykh Abu'l-Rida Muhammad and Shaykh `Abd al-Rahim are concerned, Shah Wali Allah devoted two works Bawariq al-wilayah and Shawariq al-ma`rifah to their life history and religious and intellectual thought. They have been dealt here briefly.

Shaykh Abu'l-Rida (Uncle of Shah Wali Allah):

Shaykh Abu'l-Rida was born during the reign of Shah Jahan, probably in 1045 A.H. He studied under Hafiz Basir, a famous scholar of that time. He also joined the educational circles of some other eminent scholars of the time. After the successful completion of formal study, he was initiated into the Naqashbandi Order by Khawajah Khurd, son of Khawajah Baqi Bi'llah, the founder of the order in India. He was soon granted the *khirqah* (the Sufi robe) with *ijazah* (permission to initiate others into the order).⁴³ After completing both his exoteric and esoteric training, Shaykh Abu'l-Rida retired completely for some time from active life. At the end of this seclusion, he started teaching formally. In the beginning, he used to teach the entire intellectual (*ma`qulat*) and transmitted (*manqulat*) sciences in his *khanqah*. Students from distant places came and joined his educational circle. During this period, Shah `Abd al-Rahim studied most of the transmitted and intellectual sciences with him. Towards the end of his life, he confined himself to the teaching of Tafsir al-baydawi (one of the famous commentary of the Qur'an written by `Abd Allah bin `Umar al-Baydawi, d. 685/1282) and Mishkat al-masabih (a *hadith* collection by Khatib `Umari Tabrizi). In addition, he gave a special sermon after every Friday prayer, largely based on the verses of the Qur'an

⁴¹ibid, p. 333

⁴² . For Shah Wali Allah's genealogical table see his *Anfas al-`arifin*, translated into Urdu by S.M. Farooq al-Qadri, al-Ma`arif, Lahore, 1974, p. 331. See also Maulana Hafiz Rahim Bakhsh, *Hayat-e Wali*, Lahore, 1972.

⁴³ .Ibid., 193

and some *ahadith* of the Prophet.⁴⁴ Shaykh Abu'l-Rida was also well versed in metaphysics. His specialty was to render the most complicated and difficult topics of metaphysics into simple and intelligible constructions. He was a great exponent of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of being) of Ibn `Arabi and was considered an authority on the subject. Shawariq al-ma`rifah of Shah Wali Allah contains detailed discussions about his metaphysical thought.⁴⁵

Shaykh Abu'l-Rida died on Muharram 17, 1100 A.H. He was survived by a son about whom very little is known.

Shah `Abd al-Rahim (Father of Shah Wali Allah):

Shah Abd al-Rahim was born in 1056-1131/1646-1719. When he was four year old, he started reading of the Qur'an with his father. Completing the Qur'anic reading, he then became a full-fledged student of his elder brother Shaykh Abu'l-Rida Muhammad. He studied the books of Arabic and Persian grammar, literature, jurisprudence, and the works on scholastic theology and philosophy up to the level of Sharh al-'aqa'id, Sharh al-mawaqif and Hashyah-i khiyali.⁴⁶ By the time he was eleven years of age, he had a proper understanding of the profound theological and philosophical writings and discussions. It was his fortune that his father, Shaykh Wajih al-Din was staying in the court of `Alamgir at Akbarabad at that time, along with the well-known theologian, philosopher and metaphysician of 17th century India, Mirza Muhammad Zahid Harawi. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Shaykh Wajih al-Din requested the great scholar to take his son Shah `Abd al-Rahim as his student. Thus Shah `Abd al-Rahim became a formal full-time student of Mirza Muhammad Zahid Harawi, studying theology, philosophy and metaphysics under his supervision.⁴⁷

After successful completion of his formal study, Shah `Abd al-Rahim turned towards spiritual training. In this regard, he visited various saints and renowned scholars and spiritual masters. The most distinguished among

⁴⁴ . Ibid.,

⁴⁵ .Ibid., p. 197

⁴⁶ . Anfas al-`arifin, op. cit., pp. 88-9.

⁴⁷ . Ibid., pp. 56-8

them were Sayyid `Azmat Allah Akbarabadi (a leader and Shaykh of Chishtiyyah Order), *Khalifah* Abu'l-Qasim Akbarabadi (a famous Shaykh of Qaderiyyah Order) and Khawajah `Abd Allah, known as Khawajah Khurd, son of Khawajah Baqi Bi'llah. He remained with the latter for a long time and finally, through his persuasion, became a spiritual disciple of Hafiz Sayyid `Abd Allah Akbarabadi, a distinguished *khalifah* of Sayyid Adam Benawri.⁴⁸ Eventually, he was initiated in the Naqshbandi Order. He fulfilled the requirements of the Order very soon and was granted the *khirqah* and *ijazah*.

Shah `Abd al-Rahim was well acquainted with the writings of Ibn `Arabi particularly Fusus al-hikam and Futuhat al-makiyyah. He used to say, "If I want to, I could sit on the *minbar* (pulpit) and explain the controversial issues of Ibn `Arabi's Fusus al-hikam convincingly in the light of the teachings of the Qur'an and *hadith*."⁴⁹ He also worked for some time under the patronage of `Alamgir, the then Mughal emperor, as a compiler and an editor of the well-known Fatawa-i `Alamgiri (legal opinions of the day). Although his work was appreciated by the Emperor, he soon left government service upon the order of his spiritual master Shaykh Khalifah Abu'l-Qasim.⁵⁰

His greatest achievement was the establishment and management of *The Madrasah Rahimiyyah* situated in Kotlah Fayroz Shah in the vicinity of Delhi. It was this Institute wherein not only Shah Wali Allah was taught and trained but hundreds of students from far and near studied and quenched their thirst for religious and intellectual sciences. This *madrasah* later became a great center for Shah Wali Allah's intellectual, social and political activities. The graduates of the *Madrasah Rahimiyyah* extended this intellectual and scientific tradition not only to the rest of the Indian sub-continent but also the surrounding countries such as Afghanistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Burma as well. Shaikh Abd al-Rahim passed away on Wednesday, the 12th of Safar, 1131 A.H. in Delhi and was buried over there.⁵¹

We can conclude from the discussion about Shah Wali Allah's family background that he was not a scholar, saint and leader by chance. From the

⁴⁸ .Ibid., p. 39

⁴⁹ .Ibid., pp. 9-10

⁵⁰ .Ibid., p. 74

⁵¹ . Shah Wali Allah, op. cit., p. 333.

very beginning, there had been a long and strong intellectual tradition in the family. Likewise, the political awareness and consciousness of leadership never waned in the family. In the same way, the mystical tradition and metaphysical tendencies throughout the history of the family were a major part of his heritage. Finally, the *Madrasah-I Rahimiyyah*, founded by his father Shah `Abd al-Rahim provided him with an excellent environment to study and the opportunity to do so under the supervision of his father. This institute also provided him a central place for work. These and many other factors contributed to his education and enabled him to set up an intellectual system which, after more than two centuries, still gaining importance. In the following pages, we will expound further about the life-history, works, achievements, and thought, particularly the metaphysical one, of this eminent scholar of eighteenth century Muslim India.

Life and Education of Shah Wali Allah:

Qutb al-Din Ahmad b. Abd al-Rahim, known as Shah Wali Allah, was born on Wednesday, *Shawwal* 4, 1114/February 21, 1703, at Phult, a small town in the vicinity of Delhi. Being a member of a distinguished intellectual and spiritual family, he was exposed to a highly structured educational system and spiritual training. Most of his education and training was undertaken at the *Madrasah Rahimiyyah* under the supervision of his father, Shaykh Abd al-Rahim. Starting with the reading of the Holy Qur'an at the age of five, Shah Wali Allah studied in depth the Arabic and Persian literature, *tafsir*, *hadith*, *fiqh* and *'usul al-fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *'ilm al-kalam* (Islamic theology), *mantiq* (logic), *hikmat* (philosophy), *ma`ani* (rhetoric), *tibb* (medicine), and *handasah wa hisab* (geometry and arithmetic) under three distinguished scholars of the time namely his own father, Shaykh Abd al-Rahim, Shaykh Muhammad Fadil Sindhi known as Shaykh al-Qurra', and Shaykh Muhammad Afdal Siyalkoti. Shaykh Abd al-Rahim formally celebrated his son's (Shah Wali Allah) graduation when the latter was barely fifteen years old. In the same year, his father also initiated him into the famous Naqshbandi Order. A year before graduation, Shah Wali Allah was married to a daughter of his maternal uncle, Sayyid `Abd Allah Phulti. However, his wife died a few years later after bearing son and a daughter, Muhammad and

Amat al-`Aziz respectively. In 1131/1719, his father, prior to his death, gave him *Ijazah* in the Naqshbandi Order.⁵²

After completing his formal education, Shah Wali Allah started his career as a teacher at *Madrasah Rahimiyyah* under the patronage of his father. When his father, Shah Abd al-Rahim, passed away on Safar 12, 1131/1719, Shah Wali Allah became the sole in charge of the *Madrasah*. He taught all the transmitted and rational sciences at that center for about twelve years. At the same time he continued his own studies in the various fields of knowledge. This two-fold engagement in academic activities broadened his vision and strengthened his foundation. That was the time when his fame as a distinguished teacher spread throughout the country. Students from near and far rushed to join his intellectual circle.⁵³

In 1143/1731, Shah Wali Allah left for *hajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah) and stayed at Makkah and Madinah for about fourteen months. His activities at the two sacred cities consisted of the study of *hadith*, intellectual discussions, meditation, and spiritual perfection. During his stay at *haramayn*, he sighted the forty seven spiritual visions that form the subject matter of his famous mystical work called *Fuyud al-haramayn*. This stay in the two holy cities also brought him in contact with some great spiritual leaders and *shukykh al-hadith* (authorities in *hadith* literature) such as Shaykh Taj al-Din al-Qali al-Hanafi, Shaykh Abu Tahir al-Kurdi al-Madani (d. 1145 A.H.), Shaykh Wafd Allah al-Makki al-Maliki, Shaykh `Umar b. Ahmad al-Makki, Shaykh `Abd al-Rahman al-Makki, and Shaykh Salim b. `Abd Allah. Shah Wali Allah has devoted one of his works called *Insan al-`ayn fi masha'ikh al-haramayn* to these scholars, a work that has been published in his *Anfas al-`arifin*. The most influential among them with regard to Shah Wali Allah was Shaykh Abu Tahir al-Kurdi al-Madani. Besides being a great scholar of *hadith*, Shaykh Kurdi was also a notable Sufi and had received *khirqah* and *ijazah* in many Sufi orders. He was an eminent exponent of Ibn `Arabi's *wahdat al-wujud*. He granted Shah Wali Allah a comprehensive *khirqah* and *ijazah* in *hadith* and *tasawwuf* (mysticism). This experience at the *haramayn* provided him with first-hand knowledge of the various intellectual and juridical schools of

⁵² . Shah Wali Allah, *Anfas al-`arifin*, pp. 404-05.

⁵³ . *Ibid.*, p. 406

thought in Islam and thus universalized his vision. At the end of 1144 A.H., he performed *hajj* for the second time and then, returned to Delhi on Rajab 14, 1145/July 9, 1732.⁵⁴

Shah Wali Allah spent the rest of his life at *Madrasah Rahimiyyah* teaching and writing. He confined his teaching to *hadith* literature and metaphysics while other subjects were taught by his colleagues and students. He, being a prolific writer, devoted most of his time to writing and with exception of one or two out of about fifty of his works was produced during this later period of his life. He wrote both in Arabic and Persian on almost all the subjects he taught for years. He contributed in many ways to the intellectual, economic, social, political and religious life of the Muslim community in India. His intellectual contribution is undoubtedly greater and more important than that of any other Muslim scholar in the sense that it came at the time when the Muslim empire was losing ground in the Indian sub-continent, while the Muslim community was divided into many sections for numerous reasons. Shah Wali Allah tried to reconcile the various factions of the Indian Muslims so that they may be able to protect the empire from total collapse.

On *Muharram* 29, 1176/August 20, 1762, this prominent scholar of Muslim India died in Delhi and was buried over there. He was survived, from his second marriage, by his four sons, namely, Shah `Abd al-Aziz, Shah Rafi` al-Din, Shah `Abd al-Qadir, and Shah `Abd al-Ghani. They inherited a sacred mission from their father and made significant additions and improvements to the intellectual legacy of their family.

Intellectual Legacy:

Shah Wali Allah was not only a well-known teacher of transmitted and intellectual sciences but he was also a prolific writer. He wrote on almost all those subjects which he taught for years in the *Madrasah Rahimiyyah*. He wrote both in Arabic and Persian. The years between 1145/1732 and 1176/1762 of his life were the most productive in terms of his writings. The

⁵⁴ . Ibid.,

Also see Mazhar Baqa, *Usul al-fiqh awr Shah Wali Allah*, Idarah-i Tahqiqat-e Islami, Lahore, 1973, P. 59.

exact number of his works is still a controversial issue for his biographers. G.N. Jalbani asserts that more than fifty of his works have been published.⁵⁵ Dr. Mazhar Baqa has given a list of seventy works including five collections of his letters and epistles.⁵⁶ The following is a list of the known works of Shah Wali Allah arranged according to subject.

Works related to the Holy Qur'an:

Fath al-Rahman fi tarjumat al-Qur'an
 Al-Muqaddimah fi qawanin al-tarjumah
 Al-Fawz al-kabir fi usul al-tafsir
 Al-Fath al-kabir
 Ta'wil al-ahadith

Works on Hadith and related Topics:

Arba'un hadithan
 Al-Durr al-thamin fi mubashshirat al-Nabiyy al-Amin
 Al-Fadl al-mubin fi musalsal min hadith al-Nabiyy al-Amin
 Al-Nawadir min ahadith Sayyid al-awa'il wa'l-awakhir
 Al-Musawwa fi ahadith al-Muwatta' (Arabic)
 Al-Musaffa fi ahadith al-Muwatta (Persian)
 Tarajum abwab al-Bukhari wa sharh tarajum b'd abwab al-Bukhari
 Al-Irshad ila muhimmat al-isnad

Philosophy of Religion:

Hujjat Allah al-balighah

Ilm al-Kalam (Scholastics Theology):

Husn al-'aqidah
 Qurrat al-'ayn fi tafdil al-shaykhayn
 Izalat al-khifa 'an khilafat al-khulafa'

Jurisprudence:

'Aqd al-jid fi ahkam al-ijtihad wa'l-taqlid
 Al-insaf fi bayan sabab al-ikhtilaf

⁵⁵ . Jalbani, G.N., Life of Shah Wali Allah, Delhi, 1980, p.32

⁵⁶ . Baqa, Mazhar, Usul al-Fiqh awr Shah Wali Allah, Islamabad, 1973, pp. 65-73

Metaphysics:

Al-Qawl al-jamil
 Fuyud al-haramayn
 Al-Khayr al-kathir
 Al-Budur al-bazighah
 Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah
 Hawami` sharh hizb al-bahr
 Kashf al-ghaym `an sharh ruba`iyatayn
 Shifa' al-qulub
 Altaf al-quds
 Sata`at
 Hama`at
 Lamahat
 Lama`at
 Al-Intibah fi salasil awliya' Allah wa asanid warith-I Rasul Allah

Biography & History:

Surur al-mahzun
 Anfas al-`arifin

Poetry:

A collection of Arabic poems
 Persian poems published in Hayat-e Wali & Kalimat tayyibat

Miscellaneous:

Al-Sirr al-maktum fi asbab tadwin al-`ulum
 Risalah-i danishmandi
 Fath al-wudud fi ma`rifat al-junud

All of these listed works have already been published. Dr. Mazhar Baqa mentions about fourteen other works that have not yet been published. Such works as al-Balagh al-mubin, Fayd al-`ayn, Tuhfat al-muwahhidin, al-Qawl al-sadid and Qurrat al-`ayn fi ibtal shahadat al-Hussain are falsely attributed to him.

What follows here is a descriptive account of some of Shah Wali Allah's major metaphysical works which will be used in the succeeding chapters.

Al-Qawl al-jamil fi bayan sawa' al-sabil:

Al-Qawl al-jamil is one of the most important works of Shah Wali Allah on mysticism. He wrote it before he left for hajj. The work is divided into eleven sections. The first three sections deal with the question of initiation (*bai'ah*), its various kinds, its authenticity and philosophy, conditions for the *Shaykh*, and disciple, and methodology of instructing the disciple. In the proceeding five sections, he deals with the practical aspect of mysticism with special reference to the three major mystical Orders namely the *Qaderiyyah*, the *Chishtiyyah* and the *Naqshbandiyyah*. He discusses the various mystical practices of these three Orders along with variations in their methodologies. He also points out the prerequisites and requirements of each of these Orders. In section eight, Shah Wali Allah insists upon the efficiency of the Qur'anic verses and certain religious and mystical practices with respect to various kinds of spiritual and physical diseases. In the last section, he records his mystical and some of his intellectual chains.

Fuyud al-haramayn:

Fuyud al-haramayn is another metaphysical work of Shah Wali Allah of great importance. It is actually account of the forty visions which Shah Wali Allah experienced during his stay at Makkah and Madinah. The book was written after his return to Delhi in 1145/1732 and contains details about the practical aspects of Islam as well. One of the distinct features of this work is that it includes reconciliatory accounts of some of the most controversial issues which had caused disunity in the Muslim community in India as well as in the rest of the Muslim world.

Al-Khayr kathir:

Al-Khayr al-kathir is another important metaphysical work written by Shah Wali Allah. The book is divided into ten chapters each called *khizanah* (a treasure). In the first four chapters, Shah Wali Allah deals with the questions of the reality of being (*wujud*), knowledge of God, the relationship between God and the universe, and human knowledge. From the discussion of human knowledge, Shah Wali Allah turns to the reality of prophecy and the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him). He then deals with the rules and principles of sainthood and mysticism. In chapter eight and nine, the practical aspect of Islam, the *Shari'ah*, as well as the eschatological view of Islam are dealt with in rational perspective. At the end of the work, Shah

Wali Allah presents his own theological view which, according to him, is in full accord with the Ash`arite theology.

Altaf al-quds fi ma`rifat lata`if al-nafs:

Altaf al-quds is another mystical work of Shah Wali Allah concerned with the inner dimensions of human personality. In general, according to Shah Wali Allah's own assertion, this work deals with the question of mystical intuition (*kashf*) and inspiration (*ilham*). He investigates the reality of both the internal and external perspectives of a human being such as the heart, the intellect, the spirit, the self, the secret (*al-sirr*), and the ego. He also devotes a chapter to the metaphysical teachings of the famous Sufi Shaykh Junaid wherein he outlines a historical account of mysticism. The last chapter of the work deals with a subtle question of "thoughts and their causes". In this part, he points out various internal and external causes that affect the human mind and give rise to thoughts. This important work has been rendered into English language by G.N. Jalbani under the title of "The Sacred Knowledge".

Sata`at:

Sata`at is one of the most important works of Shah Wali Allah on metaphysics that deals with all aspects of reality. Here we find a systematic division of being representing his views concerning the hierarchy or gradation (*tashkik*) of being. The various branches of metaphysics, ontology, theology and cosmology are dealt with thoroughly. Jalbani has translated this work into the English language. It has been already published by Shah Wali Allah Academy, Hyderabad, Pakistan.

Lamahat:

In Lamahat, Shah Wali Allah deals with the main metaphysical issues of being, *al-shakhs al-akbar* (the cosmos), the Universal Soul, the Attributes of God, emanation (*fayd*), and *hazirat al-quds* (the holy fold). In addition, he deals with the relationship between God and the universe using his unique terminology of *ibda`* (origination), *khalq* (creation), *tadbir* (administration), and *tadalli* (emanation). This work is also translated by jalbani into English that is very helpful in understanding the Arabic text. The English translation has been published by Shah Wali Allah Academy, Hyderabad, Pakistan.

Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah:

Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah is a comprehensive work divided into sections of various lengths called *tafhim* (instruction). Both Arabic and Persian languages are used for the expression of ideas and thoughts. These *tafahim* are actually Shah Wali Allah's mystical visions and experiences, and his letters and articles written to various people at various times in different contexts. Most of the work is devoted to metaphysical and philosophical discussions. The famous Maktub al-madani of Shah Wali Allah written to Isma'il Afindi, is a part of the second volume of the work. This epistle is a detailed description of the famous controversial metaphysical concept of *wahdat al-wujud* and *wahdat al-shuhud* along with Shah Wali Allah's reconciliatory attempts concerning this contentious issue. Along with the ontological discourse, the work contains his cosmological, anthropological and theological views as well. The work also includes biographical sketches of some metaphysicians.

Hujjat Allah al-balighah:

Hujjat Allah al-balighah is unquestionably the magnum opus of Shah Wali Allah. It is a comprehensive work dealing with both intellectual as well as practical aspects of Islam. The work in general is divided into two parts, each divided into chapters, sections and sub-sections. In the first part, Shah Wali Allah deals with metaphysics, scholastic theology, the gradual development or evolution of human society, and the philosophy behind the divine injunctions. The second part or volume is devoted to ethics, politics, rituals, and the social life in Islam. In short, the first part is more concerned with the intellectual aspect of Islam while, in the second part, Shah Wali Allah deals with the practical aspect of Islam. With reference to its theological discourses, this work is appropriately classified as a book on philosophy of religion. But with respect to its sociological discussions, it could be considered as a thesis on the sociology of religion. Likewise, the frequent usage and quotation of *ahadith* of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in this magnificent work brings it closer to the rank of other collections of *hadith*. Because of its manifold characteristics, Hujjat Allah al-balighah has become an authentic source of comprehensive knowledge for Muslim scholars and students throughout the Muslim world.

Al-Budur al-bazighah:

Al-Budur al-bazighah is another significant work written by Shah Wali Allah closely resembling Hujjat Allah al-balighah in style and subject matter. It is appropriate to consider it as a compendium of the latter. It consists of an introduction and three chapters. In the introduction, Shah Wali Allah deals with the basic metaphysical issue such as “being” in general, the unity of God, essence and existence of God, and the relationship between God and the universe. The universe for Shah Wali Allah, here is the manifestation of the Divine Attributes. The first chapter is devoted to the study of man with respect to his worldly life, but as a rational being in the universal domain. He relates this aspect of man to *al-hikmat al-`amaliyyah* (practical philosophy). In the second chapter of the work, he deals with man with respect to his creator. He points out that man is naturally inclined towards truth and discusses means and channels through which man can come closer to his creator. This part of the work is mystical and theological in its nature and appropriately called *al-hikmat al-nazariyyah*. In the last part, Shah Wali Allah describes the causes and reasons of the development and evolution of the various *Shara’i`* (religions or religious laws) and *milal* (religious communities).

The Contribution of Shah Wali Allah:

Shah Wali Allah contributed in many ways to the intellectual, religious, economic, social, and political life of the Muslim community in India. His biographers and commentators deal with this subject extensively. Our concern in this section is to give a brief account of his intellectual contribution, including the diffusion of Qur’anic knowledge, the reconciliation of the apparently contradictory views of various metaphysicians and thinkers in reference to various metaphysical and theological concepts. His intellectual contribution is indubitably greater than that of any other scholar in the history of Muslim India.

Diffusion of Knowledge:

Shah Wali Allah’s writings in totality played and are still playing a major role in the intellectual and religious life of the Muslims in the Indian sub-continent. Yet some of his works are of great significance with respect to the study of their scripture i.e., the Holy Qur’an. The foremost and greatest of

his contribution in this regard is his Persian translation of the Holy Qur'an called *Fath al-Rahman fi tarjumat al-Qur'an*. He was of the opinion that the root cause of the overall downfall of the Indian Muslims is their ignorance towards the Qur'an. He rendered the Qur'an into Persian language that had been an official language for centuries in Muslim India and was spoken and understood by the common people of the region at that time with the view to facilitate the understanding of the Qur'an for the common Muslims in India. Some scholar such as Shaykh Muhammad Ikram, are of the opinion that this is the first complete translation of the Qur'an into a foreign language by a distinguished Muslim scholar in the history of Muslim India. Before Shah Wali Allah, a translation of the Qur'an was done into the Berber language that was undertaken by the Berber leader Tumarth.⁵⁷ The historical significance of Shah Wali Allah's translation is twofold. On the one hand, it provided to the Muslims of India, all of whom could read, speak and understand Persian well, a direct access to the knowledge of the Qur'an. On the other hand, it paved a way for the Indian scholars to translate the Qur'anic text into other languages. In addition to the literal translation of the Qur'an, he wrote occasional marginal notes which are considered very helpful in understanding the difficult parts of the Holy Qur'an. Directly related to the study of Qur'an, Shah Wali Allah composed the following three other important works.

Al-Muqaddimah fi qawanin al-tarjumah:

This is an independent small treatise dealing with the principles and rules of translating the Qur'anic text into a foreign language. It played a guiding role for the scholars who wanted to translate the revealed scripture into their native languages.

Al-Fawz al-kabir fi usul al-tafsir:

This is another original contribution of Shah Wali Allah in the field of Qur'anic study. This work written in Persian language contains the principles and rules for the *tafsir* (exegesis) of the Qur'an. His division of the Qur'anic themes into five categories i.e., *ilm al-ahkam*, *ilm al-mukhasamh*, *ilm tadhkir bi ala' Allah*, *ilm tadhkir bi ayyam Allah*, and *ilm tadhkir bi ma ba'd al-maut* is a unique work and one of the most comprehensive approaches to the study

⁵⁷ . Muztar, A.D., Shah Wali Allah: Saint-Scholar of Muslim India, Islamabad, 1979, p. 177

of the Holy Qur'an. This book is written for the commentators of the Holy Scripture with the view to facilitate access to the basic themes of the Qur'an. The book has been translated into Arabic and Urdu languages and is studied as a text book in the religious schools in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and the neighboring countries.

Fath al-khabir:

Fath al-khabir is another notable work by Shah Wali Allah related directly to the study of the Holy Qur'an. It resembles al-Fawz al-kabir in style and contents. It lays great emphasis upon the explanation of the difficult terms and phrases of the Qur'an in the light of *hadith* literature. It also contains the basic principles of exegesis of Qur'an. Some scholars are of the opinion that this treatise is a part of al-Fawz al-kabir. But what distinguishes it from the latter is the language, because it is written in Arabic while al-Fawz al-kabir was written in Persian. Furthermore, Shah Wali Allah taught the Holy Qur'an as essential part of the curriculum throughout his life.

Shah Wali Allah's contribution to metaphysics is unique in the sense that he tried to reformulate and reshape Islamic metaphysics to be in greater conformity with the teachings of the Qur'an. His rational approach to the controversial issues of metaphysics to a large extent changed the approach of the future Muslim metaphysicians and created a phenomenon of conformity and harmony among them. His balanced criticism of some of the views of his predecessors did not cause further contentious environment. Rather, it was always considered as a sincere attempt of reconciliation. Instead, it resulted in greater harmony and mutual understanding. Shah Wali Allah's attempt to reconcile the two famous apparently contradictory doctrines of *wahdat al-wujud* of Shaykh Ibn Arabi and *wahdat al-shuhud* of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi is the first effort in the domain. The *mutakallimum* (the theologians) were very much against the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* of Ibn `Arabi prior to Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, introducing the doctrine of *wahdat al-shuhud*, opened a new factor of controversy even among the Muslim metaphysicians. The exponents of each of these doctrines were aggressively critical of the others. It was Shah Wali Allah whose rational explanation of both doctrines and along with their reconciliation resolved the controversy. The positive effect of his reconciliatory efforts was twofold. On the one hand, it brought about harmony between the opposing groups of the metaphysicians; on the other hand, it legitimized the doctrine of *wahdat al-*

wujud among the theologians. We shall see Shah Wali Allah's balanced and appropriate system in the part which comprises the main body of this work.

Shah Wali Allah's reconciliatory efforts were not confined to metaphysics. He also tried to bring the four schools of law closer to each other. His commentaries on the *Muwatta* of Imam Malik called *al-Musawwa* (Arabic) and *al-Musaffa* (Persian) were written with the view to find a common orthodox ground for the reconciliation of different schools of law. Dr. A. D. Muztar says, "The work (*al-Musaffa fi ahadith al-Muwatta*) was prompted by Shah Wali Allah's wish to find a formula for creating conciliation and compromise among the contentious schools of *Sunni fiqh*. For this purpose, he selected a collection of *hadith* which would be acceptable to all the schools."⁵⁸ Likewise, Shah Wali Allah wrote *iqd al-jid fi ahkam al-ijtihad wa'l-taqlid* with a proposal that the door of *ijtihad* is open. According to this view, the experts of Islamic knowledge (*'ulama' and mujtahidin*) have the right to respond effectively to new situations instead of being perpetually bound to previous solutions.

Shah Wali Allah also tried to provide common ground and strong basis for mutual cooperation and possible harmony between Sunni and *Shi'ah*. But in this regard, he cannot be considered successful. In short, reconciliation between different points of view was one the most distinguished characteristics of Shah Wali Allah which contributed much to his fame and success. This aspect of his teachings stands on the premises of the unity of the Muslim *ummah*. In addition, it signifies the universality of his teachings.

Influence of Shah Wali Allah:

In this section, we are going to deal with the influence of Shah Wali Allah upon the later generations of Muslims in Indo-Pakistan subcontinent as well as outside it. Shah Wali Allah died in 1176/1762. He left behind him a rich intellectual legacy in the form of literary works, of well-trained disciples including his four sons, and one of the greatest educational institutions of the time. During his lifetime, the *Madrasah Rahimiyyah* had moved to a large palace (donated by the then Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah 'Alam) in the

⁵⁸ .Ibid., pp. 178-79

heart of Delhi. Many of his works had become part of the curriculum of the *Madrasah* when he was still alive. Some of these were taught by Shah Wali Allah himself. His eldest son Shah `Abd al-`Aziz, succeeded him at the age of seventeen. The students and followers of Shah Wali Allah fully supported this young brilliant successor of their leader. As a result, the academic activities at the *Madrasah Rahimiyyah* not only continued but flourished and became ever greater. The other sons of Shah Wali Allah namely Shah Rafi` al-Din, Shah `Abd al-Qadir and Shah `Abd al-Ghani also became eminent scholars and continued the spiritual, intellectual and reformative mission of their father. They shared the intellectual legacy of their father with thousands of their students and spiritual disciples who came to them from distant places. They wrote new works on various subjects and added to their family intellectual legacy.⁵⁹ They also succeeded in keeping the next generation with them in line, with a view to retaining the intellectual tradition within the family. They handed over the mission successfully to the next generation, of which the names of Shah Isma`il Shahid, Maulana `Abd al-Hayy, Maulana Muhammad Isahq and Maulana Muhammad Ya`qub are worth mentioning. The metaphysical tradition within the family was still so strong that even Shah Isma`il Shahid (who is only known as *martyr*) wrote one of the most comprehensive works in metaphysics called “‘Abaqat”.⁶⁰ This later generation maintained the leadership within the family. The *Madrasah Rahimiyyah* was the only center where the affairs of the Indian Muslims used to be taken care and solved. The well-trained students continued the mission even after the center was destroyed by the British army in 1857.⁶¹

⁵⁹ . Malik, Hafeez, Muslim Nationalism in India and Pakistan, Washington, D.C., 9163, p.139.

⁶⁰ .Ibid., p. 141

In this work Shah Isma`il has tried to present a systematic metaphysical system which is akin to Shah Wali Allah’s system. The metaphysical teachings of Ibn `Arabi, Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, Maulana `Abd al-Rahman Jami, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, and Sadra al-Din Shirazi are discussed extensively. In many cases, the author is willing to prove superiority of Shah Wali Allah.

⁶¹ . Metcalf, Barbara Daly, Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900, New Jersey, 1982, pp. 76-9.

Ten years after the destruction of the *Madrasah-i Rahimiyyah*, some of the graduates and spiritual disciples of the family, such as Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi, Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, Maulana Muhammad Ya`qub, and Haji `Abid Hussain founded a *dar al-`ulum* (theological and philosophical seminary) at Deoband. The intellectual tradition of Shah Wali Allah once again made a new start at Deoband under the supervision of his spiritual successors. The *Dar al-`Uloom* of Deoband followed strictly the *Madrasah-i Rahimiyyah* and confirmed fully to the method and curriculum prescribed by Shah Wali Allah. This is why the biographers of Shah Wali Allah are agreed upon the fact that the Deobandis are the real intellectual and religious heirs of Shah Wali Allah. S. M. Ikram writes:

“Deoband has absorbed some features of modern educational organizations, but largely it is true that it maintains the tradition of Shah Wali Allah. The “chain” of the students of all important teachers of the institution reaches Shah Sahib and the study of *hadith* occupies the same place of pride at Deoband as it did at the earlier *Madrasah* at Delhi (the *Madrasah-i Rahimiyyah*). Emphasis on the spiritual side, and an attempt to incorporate best traditions of all Sufi orders and a similar catholic approach to Islamic Law as characterizes Shah Wali Allah’s school of thought are visible here.”⁶²

It is through the Dar al-`Uloom Deoband that the influence of Shah Wali Allah spread throughout the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. The graduates of the Deoband School, wherever they went, opened branches of Deoband where the same tradition is maintained to this day. It was not only within the country, but also outside of India that the graduates of the Deoband School were fully responsible for the spreading of Shah Wali Allah’s influence especially in the neighboring Muslim countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Malaysia, Indonesia, Bukhara, Burma, and even South and East Africa. In Malaysia, the famous theological school of Kelantan founded by Haji Van Musa was under the direct influence of the Dar al-`Uloom Deoband. During the first World war, a graduate of Deoband Abu `Abd Allah Sa`id Hasan b. Noor al-Khurasani, first established a branch of the Deoband School at Kelantan. Haji Nik `Abd Allah and Haji Nik Muhammad Salleh, sons of Mufti

⁶² . Ikram, S .M. Modern Muslim India and the birth of Pakistan, Lahore, 1970, p. 115.

Haji Van Musa of Kelantan, both studied *hadith*, philosophy, theology, etc., at Deoband and took the tradition to Malaysia with them. They also studied some works of Shah Wali Allah under the supervision of `Allamah `Ubayd Allah Sindhi Deobandi, first at Makkah and then at Delhi in Jami`ah Milliyyah.⁶³

The influence of Shah Wali Allah reached Hijaz first through himself and then through his sons and grandsons such as Shah Muhammad Ishaq and his brother Muhammad Ya`qub, and Haji Imdad Allah (a spiritual disciple of the family), who settled permanently in Makkah.⁶⁴ Later on it was the `Ulama' of the Deoband School and the spiritual heirs of Shah Wali Allah such as Shaykh al-Hind Maulana Mahmud al-Hasan, his brilliant students Shaykh al-Islam Sayyid Husain Ahmad Madani, `Allamah `Ubayd Allah Sindhi and many others who visited or stayed in Makkah and Madinah and taught for years there. `Allamah `Ubayd Allah Sindhi had spent most of his sixteen years of exile from India in Afghanistan, Turkey and Russia before shifting to Makkah. He introduced the philosophy of Shah Wali Allah in his close intellectual circles. In today's world the philosophy, teachings and mission of Shah Wali Allah has reached the four corners of the world through the branches of the Deoband School established by the direct and indirect graduates of this great academic institution.

Again, the Dar al-`Ulum of Deoband has absorbed in it the universality of Shah Wali Allah's teachings. It has not only provided excellent scholars and teachers of *tafsir*, *hadith*, *fiqh*, *kalam*, *falsafah*, *adab*, etc., but also provided great politicians, *mujahidin leaders*, writers, and mystics of international renown. In the freedom movement of India (1857-1947) as a whole the role of the Deobandi `Ulama', such as Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi (the founder of Dar al-`Ulum Deoband), Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, Shaykh al-Hind Maulana Mahmud al-Hasan, `Allamah Sayyid Husain Ahmad Madani, `Allamah `Ubayd Allah Sindhi, and Maulana `Uzayr Gul Peshawri is unforgettable. Some of the graduates of the Deoband School such

⁶³ . Salleh, b. Van Musa, Muhammad, "Theological Debate: VN Musa b. Haji `Abd al-Samad and His Family", Kelantan, Religion, Society and politics in Malay State, by W.R. Roff, 1962, pp. 162-65.

⁶⁴ . Metcalf, Barbara Daly, op. cit., pp. 71-82.

Also see S .M. Ikram, op. cit., p. 113.

as `Allamah Shabir Ahmad `Usmani, `Allamah Zafar Ahmad `Usmani, Mufti Muhammad Shafi`, etc., played a leading role in the movement to establish the Muslim state of Pakistan. They tried to implement the politico-religious philosophy of Shah Wali Allah in the newly established state of Pakistan. Even today in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh the `Ulama' of Deoband are playing a crucial role in the state politics.

As far as the mystical and metaphysical aspect of the Deoband School is concerned, there is a direct and continued mystical chain through which the founders, gradates and students of the School are linked with Shah Wali Allah. Some of the early `Ulama' of Deoband, such as `Allamah Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi, Maulana Ashraf `Ali Thanwi, etc., excelled among their contemporaries in *tasawwuf*. They produced mystical and metaphysical literature at least on a par that of others in both quality and in quantity. Thus they retained, preserved and further popularized the metaphysical and mystical tradition of Shah Wali Allah which was in full conformity with the basic teachings of Islam.⁶⁵ As far as the writings of the scholars of the Deoband School are concerned, they wrote on almost all the subjects related to Islamic Studies. Their works on *tafsir*, *'ulum al-Qur'an*, *hadith*, *'usul al-hadith*, *fiqh* and *'usul al-fiqh*, *'ilm al-kalam*, *falsafat al-Islamiyyah*, *adab*, *tarikh*, and many contemporary topics would require a separate work just to enlist them. The spirit running through their works is the universal philosophy and balanced approach which characterized Shah Wali Allah's legacy. In short, the Deoband School of thought is responsible more than any other organization for the spreading of Shah Wali Allah's influence within the subcontinent as well as outside it. The enrollment of international students at Deoband throughout more than a century-long history provides undeniable evidence for this claim. S. M. Ikram has given figures only of 1931 as follows:

“In 1931, 900 students were on the role of the Madrasah out of whom 368 were from U.P., 185 from Bengal, 150 from N.W.F.P. and Punjab (presently in

⁶⁵ . Metcalf, Barbara Daly, op. cit., p. 79. For the general writings of the Ulama' of Deoband see Barbara Metcalf, op. cit., pp. 198-234.

Pakistan), 26 from Assam and Barma, 17 from Chinese Turkistan, and 26 from Bukhara.”⁶⁶

Following is a hundred years report prepared by the Deoband School which provides us exact figures of national and international graduates produced by the School during the century (1283-1382 A.H.)⁶⁷:

India	3,759	Pakistan	1,591
Bangladesh	1,672	Burma	144
Afghanistan	109	China	44
Iraq	2	Iran	11
Siam	1	Russia	70
Indonesia	1	Kuwait	2
Saudi Arabia	2	Yamane	
Malaysia	28	Ceylon	2
S. Africa	14		

Today the annual enrollment in the Dar al-`Ulum of Deoband itself is about 3500 students. Currently, millions of students are studying Shah Wali Allah’s thought and philosophy in the branches of the Dar al-`Ulum throughout the world. Today almost all the religious schools and denominations in Indo-Pakistan subcontinent derive their authority from Shah Wali Allah. But in most cases some aspects of his teachings are emphasized. It is the School of Deoband and its affiliates that have taken the tradition in full with its universal and balanced nature. In conclusion, we are going to present the assessment of an expert on Shah Wali Allah in order to show the balanced position of the Deoband School with respect to the teachings of Shah Wali Allah. Dr. A. D. Muztar writes:

⁶⁶ . Ikram, S .M. Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan, op. cit., p. 113.

⁶⁷ . Metcalf, Barbara, op. cit., pp. 110-111.

“Shah Wali Allah’s teachings brought about a far-reaching effect on the rigid conformity (*taqlid*). A rapid thaw set in the rigidity of Hanafis. It was divided as Dr. Mazhar Baqa has observed, into two groups: 1. the people who could not bring themselves to conform to his theology; they remained as they were (they are commonly known as Barelwis), and 2. Those who were influenced by him. The latter were further divided into two: a. those who remained Hanafis but accepted the theory of the supremacy of *hadith*; they are called Deobandis and it is held that the sons of Shah Wali Allah (Shah `Abd al-`Aziz and his brothers), were the forerunners of this group; and b. those who renounced Hanafism as well as conformity (*taqlid*), they are called Ahl al-hadith, and Shah Isma`il Shahid (the martyred), the grandson of Shah Wali Allah, is supposed to be the founder of this group.”⁶⁸

What can be concluded from the present discussion that the religio-intellectual movement started by Shah Wali Allah did not cease after his death. Rather, it was carried on by his sons and students and thus spread throughout the subcontinent, the neighboring Muslim countries and known throughout the world. His influence on the Muslim community of the region is still so strong that today almost all the religious schools of thought in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent claim to derive their intellectual inspiration from him. His writings are studied not only in the religious *madrasahs* but also in the institutions of modern education.

⁶⁸ . Muztar, A. D., op. cit., p. 117.

Chapter Two: Epistemology (Theory of Knowledge)

Introduction:

Shah Wali Allah's theory of knowledge, in its nature, is intuitive and metaphysical. His main sources in this regard are Revelation, prophetic wisdom and mystical inspiration. But this does not mean that he owes nothing to the earlier philosophers, Sufis, theologians, illuminationists, and metaphysicians in his epistemological thinking. In fact, as in other areas of his thought, he derives a great deal of his theory of knowledge from his Muslim predecessors. For example, his division of the senses into internal and external is purely peripatetic, closely following Ibn Sian's division of perceptive qualities.⁶⁹ Likewise, we find close resemblance between his description of dreams and the knowledge received through them and that of the philosophers.⁷⁰

From Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi and his Persian commentators, particularly Mir Damad and Mulla Sadra, Shah Wali Allah takes the idea of *al-'ilm al-huduri* (knowledge by presence or immediate knowledge) and *al-'ilm al-husuli* (formative or empirical knowledge).⁷¹ There is clear similarity between the views of Shah Wali Allah and of Mulla Sadra regarding the definition of knowledge as well as the relationship between knowledge and being. Knowledge, for Shah Wali Allah, means "realization of the form of an object in the mind of the subject with full acquaintance".⁷² For Mulla Sadra, it is an expression of the realized form of a thing in the intellect; or it is realization of the form of the known in the very being of the knower.⁷³

Shah Wali Allah not only borrows the mystical view of knowledge from the Sufis such as al-Ghazali and Ibn `Arabi, but bases his whole epistemology, as they had done, on intuition and inspiration. Like al-Ghazali,

⁶⁹ . Shah Wali Allah, Al-Budur al-bazighah, ed. Saghir Hussain Ma`sumi, Hyderabad, Pakistan, 1970, p. 40.

⁷⁰ . Ibid., pp. 198-99

⁷¹ . Shah Wali Allah, Al-Khayr al-kathir, Cairo, 1974, p. 135.

⁷² . Al-Budur al-bazighah, op. cit., p. 142.

⁷³ . Sajjadi S. Ja'far, Mustalahat-I falsafi-ye Sadr al-Din Shirazi, Tehran, 1969, p.166.

he is of the opinion that true knowledge of reality could only be obtained through intuition and illumination of the heart. With Ibn `Arabi, he agrees that all knowledge comes from the ultimate sources of knowledge i.e., revelation, intuition and inspiration and that our knowledge of reality is not new but the primal knowledge which was revealed to the prophets through the ages.⁷⁴ Shah Wali Allah's *Ta'wil al-ahadith* and Ibn `Arabi's *Fusus al-hikam* deal with the same subject and resemble each other in style.

With the theologians, Shah Wali Allah is in complete harmony on the question of God's knowledge of the particulars. In short, Shah Wali Allah had ready access to all the available sources with regard to his epistemology.

A systematic description of Shah Wali Allah's epistemology can be found in his *al-Khayr al-kathir*, *al-Sirr al-maktum fi asbab tadwin al-`ulum*, *Ta'wil al-ahadith fi rumuz qasas al-anbiya'*, *Altaf al-quds*, and *Fann-i Danishmandi*. The fourth khizanah (treasure) or chapter of *al-Khayr al-kathir* is completely devoted to epistemology, including an orderly presentation of the origin, kinds, and sources of knowledge. In his treatise *al-Sirr al-maktum*, Shah Wali Allah discusses the various causes which resulted in the growth and flowering of all philosophical, mystical, theological, practical and physical sciences from a historic perspective.

Ta'wil al-ahadith is actually a narrative of some of the Qur'anic prophets written in the style of *Fusus al-hikam* of Ibn `Arabi. The dominant features of the work are those sciences which were revealed to various prophets in different times. Shah Wali Allah asserts that all kinds of sciences originated from the Divine Source of knowledge first to the prophets who in turn taught them to the ordinary people. He thus points to the sacred basis of all knowledge.

The *Fann-i Danishmandi*, written in Persian, is a treatise on the methodology of education and learning in the Muslim world. In this short book, Shah Wali Allah speaks about the transmission of science. At the outset, he states that this particular art, like of the intellectual sciences, go back to Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash`ari, the founder of the Ash`arite school of theology in Islam. This treatise provides the most appropriate classification of the transmitted sciences taught formally at that time.

⁷⁴ . Shah Wali Allah, *Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyah*, Surat, India, 1936, Vol. 1, p.54.

In *Altaf al-quds* a detailed description of intuitive and illuminative knowledge and means/channels of receiving it is outlined. Shah Wali Allah divides these means or faculties of the “higher knowledge” into manifest and hidden qualities. *Altaf al-quds* is one of the most important works on metaphysics.

Along with these mentioned works other philosophical works of Shah Wali Allah such as *al-Budur al-bazighah*, *Sata`at*, *al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah*, *al-Maktub al-madani*, *Lamahat*, etc., provide sufficient material regarding his theory of knowledge.

Origin and Nature of Knowledge:

Sapiential knowledge, according to Shah Wali Allah, has a divine basis. It comes to man by way of revelation, inspiration, intuition, dreams, and mystical experience. Man by his nature accordingly is not a mere brute, but has also a proportionate spiritual element to his makeup. Since he has within himself a soul which has a connection with the Divine Reality, he has been endowed with angelic qualities and was allowed to live for some time in the company of spiritual beings (angels). He was also endowed with an intellect that became a basis for his distinction from his earthly fellow creatures. On the basis of angelic disposition, nature and a rational soul, man has the power to receive inspiration concerning his material as well as spiritual life. He was directed through his intellect to invent wonderful contrivances, crafts and appliances. Thus, through extraordinary inspiration, man with the help of his intellect, was able to build family, society and civilization. Likewise, it was divine inspiration which instructed man concerning his inner purification and perfection.⁷⁵

According to Shah Wali Allah, Adam, the first man, received the basic knowledge necessary for human beings such as sowing, reaping, threshing, cattle breeding and the cooking of food through inspiration. He was also instructed in the science of speech and verbal communication as well as the method of procreation and daily rituals. In short, Adam was acquainted with all those sciences which were useful and necessary for establishing the

⁷⁵ . Shah Wali Allah, *Ta'wil al-ahadith fi rumuz qasas al-anbiya'*, Eng. Translation by J.M.S. Baljon, Leiden, 1973, pp. 6-7.

human race on earth. But soon man became aware of his intellectual power. He was not satisfied with his manifest brutal life and the things apparently related to it. He wanted to understand the inner reality of things around him in order to make proper use of them and derive maximum benefits of his involvement therein. The Divine Power did not abandoned man in this state of wonder but led him in the right direction. All the intellectual sciences, according to Shah Wali Allah, were revealed to the Prophet Idris who in turn taught them to his fellow human beings. Thus, all the intellectual sciences, such as physics, metaphysics, logic, astronomy, medical sciences, astrology, mathematics, and other applied sciences flourished in the human world. In the same way, knowledge regarding social and economic progress, ethics, monotheism, sacrificial rites, political and legal affairs, mechanical, technological and industrial developments, interpretations of dreams and sagacity, etc. were revealed primarily to various prophets and messengers in different ages.⁷⁶

According to Shah Wali Allah, all knowledge comes to man from its principle source (the Divine Being) through intermediaries called *al-mala' al-a`la* (the exalted assembly of angels). He says:

“... Of the hidden knowledge, by which God distinguishes His chosen servants (prophets and saints) is the knowledge of the utterances of *al-mala' al-a`la*, when the Gnostics contemplate on *al-tajalli al-a`zam* (the great manifestation) and whatever is surrounding *al-mala' al-a`la*, some of the knowledge of these high ranking angels is imprinted on the slate or screen of their souls as the engraving of a stamp is imprinted in wax so they become acquainted with the knowledge of these noble angels in the way as if they knew it from within their souls.”⁷⁷

The knowledge that emanates from *al-mala' al-a`la* is *huduri* (immediate) and is thoroughly comprehended by and preserved in the soul of the mystic. Because of this primarily sacred nature of knowledge, Shah Wali Allah is of the opinion that knowledge is neither a passing phenomenon nor a temporary subsisting reality rather it is eternally present with God as an essential Attribute. Whosoever is endowed with this precious gift is granted

⁷⁶ . Ibid., pp. 10-12

⁷⁷ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyah, op. cit., Vol. p. 210.

khayr kathir (an abundant good). This means that knowledge is not something which can be created. Knowledge is eternal with Almighty God. Man, in the very beginning of his existence, was endowed with a segment of that knowledge. He forgets it while passing through various stages of his life. Learning and teaching are the ways through which that forgotten knowledge is recalled to one's own mind or is reminded about by others. In this regard, Shah Wali Allah's view resembles Plato's who also held knowledge as not something new but a recollection of forgotten truth.⁷⁸

Definition of Knowledge:

In its very nature, the term knowledge is a simple reality having neither genus nor differentia. Therefore, it is indefinable in the common way. It is a stage or a kind of existence and so is not subject to definition. This relationship between knowledge and being, according to Shah Wali Allah, is from eternity, caused by the subjective knowledge of God.⁷⁹ On this point Shah Wali Allah is in complete accord with Mulla Sadra for whom knowledge and being are often interchangeable.⁸⁰ But despite this difficulty, Shah Wali Allah, like many other epistemologists, provides a kind of description to the term of knowledge in his *al-Budur al-bazighah*, saying that "knowledge is a realization of the form of the object by the subject (the knower) with full consciousness". In other words, knowledge is the full acquaintance of the knower with the form of the known object.⁸¹

Again, this description of knowledge is applicable only where knowledge is taken in the formative or empirical sense in which the knower and the known or the subject and the object of knowledge are two distinct realities. While in the case of *ʿlm al-huduri* or in the case of God's knowledge of the world the above mentioned definition is absurd. For example, the knowledge of a person of his own self or "*ana*" is not subject to this definition because in this case the person in question cannot be impressed by his own form but is still in full awareness of his own reality all the times. Likewise, in the case of intuition or mystical knowledge, the aforesaid

⁷⁸ . *Al-Khayr al-kathir*. Op. cit., p. 146.

⁷⁹ . *Ibid.*, p. 62

⁸⁰ . Sajjadi S. Ja`far, op. cit., pp. 166-67.

⁸¹ . *Al-Budur al-bazighah*, op. cit., p. 142.

definition of knowledge has no meaning. The Gnostic, in his intuition, faces or apprehends no formal or empirical object. He is not only unaware of the known object or idea but is also not sure about the very mean or perceptive faculty of that intuitive knowledge. Especially, in the case of the knowledge about future events, awareness of the actual form is completely out of question. In intuition, the saint or the prophet receives knowledge from the sublime presence (*hazirat al-quds*) by way of reflection where the ordinary senses or the perceptive faculties even the human intellect fails to cognize or speculate about something. The correctness, exactness and authenticity of this type of knowledge depend upon the purification and perfection of the mystic in question. This is why the difference found between the intuitions of different persons is directed towards the difference between their states of purification or the environment, or towards the intuition itself.⁸²

The same is the case with God's knowledge of the world where the very existence of the latter is because of the fact that God knows it. In other words, God's knowledge of the world is the efficient cause of its existence. His knowledge of the world and whatever is in it is *huduri* (by presence or priory) not *husuli* (empirical or posteriori). God's prior knowledge or *`ilm al-huduri*, according to Shah Wali Allah, is His knowledge of Himself. This God's knowledge of Himself embodies the knowledge of all His attributes all of His creatures not only from the point of view of unity (*ittihad*), but also from the point of view of otherness (*ghayriyyah*) because His essential attributes are inseparable manifestations of His Essence. Thus all of His creatures stand as necessities in His Being in this context. This is why His knowledge of His essential attributes and of the un-detachable requirements of Essence is included in His *`ilm al-huduri*.⁸³ Consequently, the above mentioned definition of knowledge by Shah Wali Allah does not apply to the knowledge of God of the world.

But no deficiency should be directed to his definition of knowledge because he never claimed that the term knowledge, in its general sense, is definable. His definition of knowledge as "realization of the form of the known object in the intellect of the knower" is limited to *al-`ilm al-husuli*. He is not alone in limiting it in this manner as many philosophers hold the same

⁸² . Ibid., pp. 219-21.

⁸³ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 137.

view. The clear example is that of Mullah Sadra for whom knowledge is “expression of the received form of an object in the intellect of the knower; or as “a realization of the form of known object in the very essence of the knower.”⁸⁴ Shah Wali Allah’s view of intuitive knowledge as well as the knowledge of God of the world will be discussed later on.

Division of Knowledge:

The most complicated and troublesome aspect of Shah Wali Allah’s epistemology is his division of knowledge into various kinds. His division of knowledge into various categories in different contexts makes it difficult to comprehend. In this regard he seems to be influenced by several schools of thought. In some cases, we find him dividing knowledge as do the theologians and religious scholars. For example, in his al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyah, quoting a hadith of the Prophet, he confines the sources of knowledge to three kinds:

“Knowledge is three kinds and whatever is beyond that is superfluous: Revealed verses (ayat), Established Sunnah (the traditions or way of the Prophet) and justified precept of injunctions.”⁸⁵

The knowledge of the ayat means knowledge of the Qur’an. Knowledge of the established Sunnah is that which is reported from the Prophet in regard to the religious rituals, legal affairs, customs, and morality. And knowledge of divine precepts or injunctions is knowledge of the judgment and administration of law according to the Divine Will.

In another place, he divides prophetic knowledge into two kinds, saying that the Prophet has bestowed upon us two kinds of knowledge distinct from one another in their details and gradation: “knowledge of the maslahah (welfare) of the society and the shari`ah (the revealed canonical law), divine ordinances and legal punishments.”⁸⁶

⁸⁴ . Mullah Sadra, Sadr al-Din Shirazi, Al-Asfar al-arba`ah, Vol.2, trans. (Persian) by Jawad Muslih, Tehran, 1379 A.H., P.67, also see Sajjadi Ja`far, op. cit., p. 166.

⁸⁵ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 40

⁸⁶ . Shah Wali Allah, Hujjat Allah al-balighah, Lahore, Hyderabad, Karachi, 1979, pp. 316-317

In his treatise al-Sirr al-maktum fi asbab tadwin al-`ulum, he has classified almost all sciences under the following four categories: 1. al-`ulum al-`arabiyyah (Arabic linguistic sciences), 2. al-`ulum al-shar`iyyah (religious or legal sciences), 3. al-`ulum al-hikamiyyah (philosophical or theological sciences), 4. al-`ulum al-muhadarah (applied sciences).⁸⁷ In his metaphysical work, Sata`at, we find a different division of knowledge as follows: `ilm al-ilahiyyat (metaphysics), `ilm al-tbi`iyyat (physics), `ilm bi ayyam Allah (knowledge of the days of God or history), `ilm al-mujadalah (science of argumentation or religious dialogue), `ilm bi ma ba`d al-maut (knowledge about eschatology), `ilm al-ahkam (science of divine law), and `ilm al-tarhib wa'l-tarhib (science of threats/warnings and inducement or incitement).⁸⁸

In some of his philosophical works such as al-Khayr al-kathir, Altaf al-quds and al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, Shah Wali Allah speaks of al-`ilm al-huduri (knowledge by presence or intuitive knowledge) and al-`ilm al-husuli (formal or empirical knowledge). This division of knowledge was elaborated by Shah Wali Allah, Suhrawardi, Mir Damad and Mulla Sadra among others. This terminology was also used by Sufis along with the terms of kashf and wijdan (intuition and inspiration). The division into batini (esoteric) and zahiri (exoteric) which Shah Wali Allah occasionally uses in his writings was also of Sufi origin. These various categories of knowledge will be explained later on.

Following the Peripatetic system, Shah Wali Allah classifies knowledge once as sensation, imagination, apprehension, and intellection. But the most comprehensive division of knowledge from the theological, philosophical and mystical point of view is that mentioned in his famous epistle to Isma`il Afindi, al-Maktub al-madani. In the beginning of this long document, he mentions the following kinds of knowledge: al-manqulat (the transmitted sciences), al-ma`qulat (the intellectual sciences), and al-makshufat (the intuitive or mystical sciences).⁸⁹ These are some of the most

⁸⁷ . Shah Wali Allah, Al-Sirr al-maktum fi asbab tadwin al-`ulum, Urdu Translation in Armaghan Shah Wali Allah, ed. By Muhammad Sarwar, Lahore, 1971, pp. 383-97

⁸⁸ . Shah Wali Allah, Sata`at, Eng. Trans. By G.N. Jalbani, Hyderabad, Pakistan, pp. 16-7.

⁸⁹ . Shah Wali Allah, Al-Maktub al-madani, printed in Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.217.

common divisions of knowledge frequently dealt with by Shah Wali Allah in his writings. Despite the variety of these divisions of knowledge into al-`ilm al-husuli and al-`ilm al-huduri and that into al-manqulat, al-ma`qulat and al-makshufat are the most comprehensive ones, because each of these categories satisfies the categories mentioned in the other systems of division. Now the question is what Shah Wali Allah means by these categories? Furthermore, what are the means, agencies, channels, instruments, and media through which this mentioned knowledge can be acquired? These questions are the subject matter of the remainder of the chapter.

Division of Knowledge into al-`ilm al-husuli and al-`ilm al-huduri:

Al-`Ilm al-husuli:

Al-`Ilm al-husuli can be translated as sensory, empirical, conceptual, formative and a posteriori knowledge. It is called sensory because it involves the perceptive senses. It is called empirical or observational because observation and practical experience are its pre-requisites. It is called formative because the form of the known object is the central point where the activities of the perception become knowledge. And it is called a posteriori because knowledge in this case comes after the experience and observation. Sayyid Ja`far Sajjadi defines al-`ilm al-husuli as “the knowledge which comes through the form of an object about the very essence of that object in the mind of the subject or the knower”.⁹⁰ According to this definition, the subject or the knower becomes acquainted with two things: 1. the geometrical form or the shape of the known object, and 2. the essence or intrinsic nature of it. For example, the `ilm al-husuli of a man will first reveal the form or the bodily structure of that man and secondarily his essence and intrinsic nature as rational animal, scholar, etc. The knowledge of the form or outer shape is the actual required knowledge in al-`ilm al-husuli while the knowledge of the essence is accidental or bi'l`arad.

Shah Wali Allah defines al-`ilm al-husuli slightly in different manner. For him al-`ilm al-husuli is limited to the perpetually changing form of the object. Because of this changing condition of the form, its knowledge cannot be true knowledge. Also this knowledge is encompassed by the mind of the knower which is colored with the color of possibilities or is liable to doubt and

⁹⁰ . Sajjadi, S. Ja`far, op. cit., p. 173.

error. So certainly it is a narration of a state of the known object in which it actually is not. This is why Shah Wali Allah calls al-`ilm al-husuli "ignorance embellished with knowledge".⁹¹

Al-`Ilm al-huduri:

The concept of `ilm al-huduri is found in Plato's idealistic theory of knowledge. The intuitive power of mind, in Aristotle's epagoge or induction is mixed with his universal residing in the particulars and, therefore, is not clear. It was Plotinus who, for the first time, introduced the two distinct functions of the nous, namely intuitive and discursive. The intuitive aspect of the intellect was concerned with `ilm al-huduri.⁹² Among the Muslim philosophers al-Farabi and Ibn Sina took this Neo-Platonist idea of `ilm al-huduri virtually intact. But Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi Maqtul gave it a new interpretation in the light of his famous doctrine of light, taken from the Qur'anic "ayat al-noor" (verse of light). In his system this hudur (presence or intuition) became zuhur or ishra'q (manifestation or illumination). Allah's knowledge, according to him is huduri because it is an expression from the light or being of the self or of essence.⁹³

The Sufi's idea of `ilm al-huduri is slightly different from that of Suhrawardi. Their understanding is that it is a direct fayd (emanation) from al-Rahman, not from the person who is receiving the intuition or illumination. According to them, the Gnostic is in a passive state. It is al-Rahman who induces intuitive knowledge in the heart of the heart of the mystic in an indescribable way. At the time of inspiration, the senseshional and speculative faculties of the Gnostic are inactive as Ibn `Arabi has stated.⁹⁴ Shah Wali Allah's view regarding al-`ilm al-huduri which is in complete accord with that of the Sufis' will be discussed later on.

For Sayyed Hossain Nasr al-`ilm al-huduri is scientia sacra or sacred knowledge which can be obtained through revelation and intellection or intellectual intuition. This is possible only when the heart and mind of man

⁹¹ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyah, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.43.

⁹² . Peters, F.E., Greek Philosophical Terms, New York, 1967, p. 127.

⁹³ . Sajjadi, S. Ja`far, op. cit., p. 170.

⁹⁴ . Hussaini, S.A.Q., The Pantheistic Monism of Ibn Arabi, Lahore, 1970, pp.139-40.

are illumined. This highest form of knowledge does not involve any kind of sense perception or speculative reasoning; rather, it is a presence of knowledge in the very essence or self of the mystic of an immediate or direct nature. He says:

“The twin sources of this knowledge (*scientia sacra*) is revelation or intellection or intellectual intuition which involves the illumination of the heart and the mind of man and the presence in him of knowledge of an immediate and direct nature which is tested and experienced, the sapience in the Islamic tradition refers to as “presential knowledge” (*al-`ilm al-huduri*).”⁹⁵

As stated previously, Shah Wali Allah’s theory of *`ilm al-huduri* is in complete accord with that of the Sufis. By *al-`ilm al-huduri* he means that abstracted and unblemished knowledge which rises from the essence of the rational soul. This knowledge is not possible unless the self comes in direct contact with the Divine Reality. At the direct communion with Almighty God, the Gnostic experiences the knowledge of all the particulars within himself. At that specific moment, he realizes that this universal knowledge arises within him, not from somewhere else. Shah Wali Allah calls it “illumination of the Pure Essence in the mirror of the self of the Gnostic. He says:

“The perfection of the Gnostic rises above the pure intellect; a stage is reached when the universal soul takes of his body and the Pure Essence becomes his soul. Then, by the dint of the science of presence, he sees the whole universe within himself. Now the science of presence is fundamentally rooted in the Pure Essence; so he regards this particular selfhood as being distinct from the other forms of selfhood.....This state is called “illumination of the essence” and it is impossible to render it full justice either in this world or in the next.”⁹⁶

From this passage we can infer that *al-`ilm al-huduri*, according to Shah Wali Allah, is an illumination of the Pure Essence in the mirror of the self of the Gnostic. It comes through the universal soul (*al-anfs al-kulliyah*) as a direct and immediate relation without involvement of any kind of sense

⁹⁵ . Nasr, S.H., Knowledge and the Sacred, New York, 1981, p. 130.

⁹⁶ . Shah Wali Allah, Altaf al-quds, Eng. Trans. By G.N. jalbani, London, 1982, pp. 73.4.

experience. This special kind of knowledge (al-`ilm al-huduri) is indescribable in the common sense

.Al-Manqulat (Transmitted Sciences):

The term manqulat is a plural of manqul which is derived from the root term/verbal noun naql, literally “transmission or conveyance”. Technically, manqulat in Islamic terminology applies to all those religious sciences which are deduced or are related in any way to revelation such as tafsir (exegesis of scripture), usul al-tafsir (principle of tafsir), hadith or usul al-hadith (traditions or saying of the Prophet or its principles), etc. They are called transmitted because their authenticity and validity depend on the authority of the Prophet, or on the authority of the compiler, or those who are in the chain of transmission. A detailed and a systematic description of manqulat can be found in Shah Wali Allah’s al-Sirr al-maktum fi asbab tadwin al-`ulum. But it should not be inferred from this definition of manqulat that reason has nothing to do with these sciences. In fact, reason examines not only the chain or the persons and means involved in the process of transmission but also evaluates the authenticity and genuineness of the data. In particular, deductive reason plays the most important role in this regard. The only aspect of manqulat in which reason fails to play an authoritative role is the transcendental aspect of the revelation i.e., the original source and that which is revealed.

Al-Ma`qulat (The Intellectual Sciences):

The term ma`qul comes from the root word `aql which means intellect or reason. Al-Ma`qulat comprises all those sciences in which the intellect plays an authoritative role. They are also called speculative sciences because speculation is the first condition of these sciences. Shah Wali Allah also uses the phrase al-`ulum al-hikamiyyah (philosophical sciences) for speculative sciences. According to his account, al-ma`qulat consists of mantiq (logic), al-tabi`iyyat (physics or natural philosophy), al-riyadiyyat (mathematics), and ilahiyyat (metaphysics).⁹⁷

⁹⁷ . Al-Sirr al-maktum fi asbab tadwin al-`ulum, op. cit., 391-96.

Al-Makshufat (The Intuitive Sciences):

Kashf means uncovering, unveiling and revealing. A related term is *wijdan* which means intuition. By *al-makshufat*, Shah Wali Allah means that knowledge which the soul or mind receives direct from the Divine Source without any involvement of the perceptive senses or speculative reason. *Al-Makshufat* are divided into many branches such as *al-wahy* (revelation), *ilham* (inspiration), *al-ru'ya* (dreams or visions), *al-ishraq* and *al-kashf* (illumination), and *al-dhawq* (mystical taste). These divisions, in fact, reflect the various states of the mystic. *Al-Makshufat* are also called *khirq al-'adah* (extraordinary sciences) because the process of receiving them is un-known to the ordinary mind. The highest form of *makshufat* is *al-wahy*. Next to that is *al-ma'rifah* or *irfan* (gnosis), which the mystic receives by way of inspiration direct from the Divine Source. This is why it is also called "*al-'ilm al-laduniyyah*" (knowledge derived direct from the presence of God). A person who has reached a stage of *fana* (annihilation), according to Shah Wali Allah, receives *al-ma'rifah* (gnosis) direct from the Divine Intellect. But the knowledge which is the very basis of the secret of being is called *al-dhawq* (spiritual taste) and *al-hikmah* (wisdom) in Sufi terminology.⁹⁸ As far as the knowledge or cognition of God's essence is concerned, it is beyond human capacity. *Al-Ma'rifah* of God means to know him in an immaterial order, a manifestation or nominal assimilation of the Divine Being. In this process the Divine Essence is manifested in the inner self of Gnostic which resembles a mirror. This state is peculiar to prophets. The knowledge which is received in this way is called *al-wahy* of the prophets. Shah Wali Allah calls this *qurb al-fara'id* because this knowledge contains commandments and prohibitions.⁹⁹

After this brief analysis of these two types of division of knowledge i.e., 1. *al-'ilm al-husuli* and *al-'ilm al-huduri* and 2. *al-manqulat*, *al-ma'qulat* and *al-makshufat*, we come to the conclusion that in fact, the *'ilm al-husuli* of the first type comprises *al-manqulat* and *al-ma'qulat* of the second type. Likewise, the second component of the first division, *al-'ilm al-huduri*, when elaborated is nothing other than *al-makshufat* of the second division. So it does not matter whether one adopts the one or the other. Hence, from this point on, we turn our attention to the second question in order to find out

⁹⁸ . *Al-Khayr al-kathir*, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

⁹⁹ . *Ibid.*, p. 64.

the means, channels, instruments, and media of knowledge in Shah Wali Allah's theory of knowledge.

Means and Channels of Knowledge:

In the light of the above mentioned tripartite division of Shah Wali Allah, the channels or means of acquiring knowledge can be divided into three kinds: 1. The senses, 2. The intellect, and 3, the intuition. The function of the senses is called sensation or sense perception. The activity of the intellect or reason is known as intellection and reasoning. Intuition is a mysterious power through which the mystic receives knowledge from the Divine Intellect in an un-describable manner. The formative or empirical knowledge (al-`ilm al-husuli) of Shah Wali Allah is subject to sensation. In his intellectual sciences (al-ma`qulat), reason and the intellect have an authoritative role. The intuitive or mystical knowledge (al-makshufat) is attainable through intuition, inspiration or revelation.

However, the account of perception and discernment given in Shah Wali Allah's al-Khayr al-kathir is slightly different. There, perception and apprehension are divided into four types: sensation (al-ihsas), which is the result of the external five senses; imagination (al-takhayyul) which is the result of imaginative faculty; estimation (al-tawahhum) which is the function of the estimative faculty, and intellection (al-ta`aqqul) which is a function or activity of the reason and the intellect.¹⁰⁰ The problem with this fourfold perception or cognition is that it covers only al-manqulat and al-ma`qulat. There is nothing in this order through which al-makshufat (the intuitive knowledge) can be attained. This is why we, for the purpose of our study, are taking into consideration the former account of channels of knowledge, i.e., sensation, intellection, and intuition, which can be derived easily the tripartite division of knowledge made by Shah Wali Allah.

Sensation (al-ihsas):

Sensation is a process of knowledge or perceiving the external world through the senses. Senses, according to Shah Wali Allah, are ten in number divided into internal and external senses. The external senses are five: smell (al-shamm), sight (al-basr), taste (al-dhawq), hearing (al-sam`), and touch (al-

¹⁰⁰ .Ibid., p.55.

lams). Smell, taste, sight, and hearing each have a special kind of organ. The organ for touch is the whole body, particularly the skin or flesh. Each sense has an object and a manner of perceiving peculiar to it. These organs perceive their peculiar objects through specific media and never err in reporting about their experience. The media differ according to the sense organs. For instance, eyes see visible objects through the medium of light. Eyes will see nothing if there is no light. The ears receive sounds through the medium of air. Without air no sound could be heard. In the case of smell the corresponding medium has no special name. Water and air have a special quality which serves as the medium for receiving smell. In al-ihsas, the sense organs, the external sensible object, and the media all play important roles. The external senses are like windows in the body of living beings opened to the outer world. Shah Wali Allah calls them the spies (jawasis) of the brain which provide information to the mind concerning the external world. Through these sense organs the microcosm (al-shakhs al-asghar or man) comes into contact with the macrocosm (al-shakhs al-akbar or the universe). They are the corresponding agencies within the living beings.¹⁰¹

The internal senses, for Shah Wali Allah, are also five: common sense (al-hiss al-mushtarak), imaginative faculty (al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah or khiyal), estimative faculty (al-quwwat al-mutawahhimah or wahm), the collective faculty or memory (al-quwwat al-mutadhakkirah or al-hafizah), and finally the comprehensive cognitive faculty (al-quwwat al-mudrikah al-jami'ah). The functions of the common sense are manifold. It activates the sense organs to perceive, collect data from the sense organs, and distinguishes the various data from one another. Furthermore, it sends the data to the imaginative faculty. Because of the diverse nature of the common sense in the process of knowing and perceiving, some philosophers such as Ibn Sina have thought of it as the real perceiving faculty.¹⁰² The function of the imaginative faculty is twofold. It abstracts form from the sense-data received through the common sense and then passes it to the formative or estimative faculty. Through the estimative faculty the living being is able to differentiate between the harmful and the useful, the dangerous and

¹⁰¹ . Al-Budur al-bazighah, op. cit., pp. 40-46.

¹⁰² .Ibid., pp.40-46.

Also see Ibn Sina, Kltab al-nafs, ed. By F. Rahman, Oxford, Britain, pp.163-65.

beneficial. For example, a sheep, through the estimative faculty immediately perceives that it has to flee from the wolf. The faculties of memory (al-hafizah) or recollection (al-mutadhakkirah) stores the data received from the estimative and imaginative faculties and recollect them whenever needed.

The comprehensive perceptive or cognitive faculty (al-quwwat al-mudrikah al-jami'ah) of Shah Wali Allah is common to both internal and external senses as the common sense (al-hiss al-mushtarak) is common to the external senses. It activates and administers all the senses. This faculty is precisely the actual and cognitive power of the mind through which all other senses are related as its instruments or agents.¹⁰³ But it should not be confused with intellect (al-'aql), which is also sometimes called the cognitive (al-quwwat al-mudrikah). The faculty in question, i.e., the comprehensive cognitive faculty (al-quwwat al-mudrikat al-jami'ah) perceives the forms, images and meanings or ideas of the particular objects, while the intellect apprehends the universal forms or ideas and concepts.

The basic question of course is that of the validity of knowledge attained through sensation. Sensation is, without doubt, a kind of knowledge, but of what degree? Can sensation provide us true knowledge about an object or a situation? Shah Wali Allah, like some other thinkers such as al-Ghazali, is of the opinion that sensation cannot provide us true knowledge about a thing. The reason is that sense perception involves means and instruments i.e., the sense organs which are subject to change. The changing nature of the perceptible objects as well as of the perceiving faculties degrades the value of the information received through them. This is why Shah Wali Allah thought of sensation as invalid and un-authoritative knowledge. What we perceive through sensation are forms and ideas of the particulars. Senses have nothing to do with the universal forms or ideas which are unchanging and permanent. To apprehend the universal forms or concepts is the work of intellect which we are going to deal with in the next section in detail.

Intellection (al-ta'addul):

As stated earlier, intellection is the activity of the intellect. The function of intellect is to cognize universal forms and ideas. But what is the

¹⁰³ .Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 2. P 181.

nature of the intellect? Is there only one intellect or many? Does it have many grades and aspects? How does it perceive its object? As a whole Shah Wali Allah's theory of intellect is metaphysical rather than speculative. In this regard, he seems to be deeply influenced by al-Ghazali (450-505 A.H.), Ibn `Arabi (560-638 A.H.) and `Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 898 A.H.). He differs from the speculative philosophers in many aspects of the issue. For example, the "First Intelligence" (al-`aql al-awwal or `aql al-fa`il), according to Shah Wali Allah, is not an independent substance as the philosophers believed. It is, rather a Divine Name or al-fayd al-aqdas (a Divine Effusion). The secondary intellects vanish in the divinity when they are elevated to al-lahut (the Divine world). But when they descend to the phenomenal world of multiplicity, they gain their individuality or nominal reality.¹⁰⁴

Likewise, Shah Wali Allah is of the opinion that the active power behind the worldly order is not the intelligences of the soul or the intellect of the sphere of the moon as the philosophers believed, but it is Al-Rahman who emanates or effuses the substantial as well as the accidental forms, bestowing upon the material objects. He controls, manages and commutates things in whatever manner He wants. As far as the individual elements are concerned, they are as instruments of Al-Rahman which Shah Wali Allah sometimes calls "the Universal Soul".¹⁰⁵

The human intellect, according to Shah Wali Allah, is the most subtle part of the nasamah (the airy soul) whose function is to apprehend all kinds of concepts and gain certitude. Intellect is like a dais or stage for observing the functions of the rational soul. Because of this apprehending quality, the intellect is sometime referred to as knowledge or the faculty which causes knowledge. Shah Wali Allah's own description of intellect is comprehensive and interesting. He says:

"What we mean by intellect is the perceptive energy which imagines and verifies, so that the heart and the self may follow its lead, and a coordinating

¹⁰⁴ .Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 168.

Also see Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁰⁵ . Ibid., pp. 167-68.

function may arise in the constitution of the perceptive faculty, to which heart and self lend their support....the intellect is rooted in the brain.”¹⁰⁶

The human intellect has a natural inclination and attraction towards the supreme manifestation or theophany (al-tajalli al-a`zam). When this intellect is purified through spiritual and intellectual exercises, it is then in a position to attain certitude about the Supreme Manifestation through the Sacred realm (al-`alm al-quds). Furthermore, the power of conjecture and logical inference of the possessor of this purified intellect is increased. In this purified state the intellect is called al-sirr (the secret or mystery). Shah Wali Allah says: “What we intend to convey by the term secret is precisely the intellect after it has given up earthly inclinations and is governed by the impulses of the Sublime World, thus attaining to the contemplation of the Supreme Manifestation. The secret faculty is likewise super-corporeal, but its particular sphere is the brain”.¹⁰⁷ The individual who possesses this kind of intellect is called the master or possessor of al-sirr (the secret).

Shah Wali Allah divides human intellect into three distinct kinds: al-`aql al-ma`ash (the practical intellect) which enables man to manage and administers his worldly affairs; al-`aql al-ma`ad, the intellect which guides man in eschatological matters, prompts him towards righteous deeds and enables him to live virtuous life, and al-`aql which brings man into close contact with the Divine World.¹⁰⁸ This division of human intellect can be further simplified into two basic aspects. In one aspect, the human intellect is related to the lower world, the world of generation and corruption, or in other words, to man’s affairs of his present life and its probable consequences in the hereafter. Intellect, in this aspect of its existence, apprehends the concepts of the intelligible in a universal sense. From the existents of this world, the intellect, according to Shah Wali Allah, apprehends four things in habitual way. They are: 1. Matter in its simple condition (al-hayula), 2. Time (al-zaman) in the general sense, not as a specific period or moment which is subject to measurement and division and 4. Place (al-makan) in its totality, not a particular place which is subject to change,

¹⁰⁶ . Altaf al-quds, op. cit., p. 39.

¹⁰⁷ . Ibid., pp.39-45.

¹⁰⁸ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.86.

motion, division, and measurement. The intellect receives knowledge of these four by the way of abstraction.¹⁰⁹

We conclude from this that intellect, in its worldly aspect, although it deals with universal forms and ideas, relies upon the forms of the external realities. Its practical ordering and administering of human affairs always involves phenomena of the external world and reach the goal when all the necessary requisites and conditions are present. Shah Wali Allah makes this point clear by way of analogy. He says, "For example, we see a fire burning and have no doubt in it. Unless we know that our sense of sight perceives wrongly, we will have the certitude that fire is burning."¹¹⁰

In its second aspect, the intellect is related to the higher world i.e., the Divine World. In man, it is the intellect which has natural inclination towards the angelic world as well as the Supreme Manifestation or First Intelligence (al-`aql al-awwal). It has the ability to contemplate the Divine Essence and establish with it a kind of relationship which is beyond description. In this state, the intellect receives knowledge of the universe from the Supreme Manifestation or the Sacred Realm directly or through the Exalted Assembly.¹¹¹

Intuition (Ilham or Wijdan)

In the preceding section, we have dealt with Shah Wali Allah's theory of sensation and intellection. His theory of sensation is not different from that of the Muslim Peripatetics. In his description of intellect as well as intellection, he seems to be more concerned with analysis than metaphysics. Now we come to that part of his epistemology where he appears more metaphysician and Gnostic. Here his sense-perception is suspended. The intellect has lost its human qualities and worldly inclination. It is transformed into al-sirr (purified soul). It is no longer active in ordering man's worldly affairs; rather, it has become passive for the activity of the First Intelligence. The intellect has now become into direct relationship with the angelic world, particularly with the Exalted Assembly, with the Sublime Realms, and finally with the Divine Order through intuition, inspiration and illumination in a way

¹⁰⁹ .Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 48.

¹¹⁰ . Sarwar, Muhammad, Armaghan-e Shah Wali Allah, Lahore, 1971, p. 305.

¹¹¹ .Altaf al-guds, op. cit., p. 44.

which no human language can describe properly. Likewise, in this aspect of Shah Wali Allah's theory of knowledge, the heart of the mystic turns into a spirit (purified soul) or mirror in which the Divine Reality is reflected. This heart is no longer concerned with the bestial conditions of man; rather, it has been illumined, and is able to elevate man to the angelic world. This aspect of his theory of knowledge is called "intuitive Knowledge". We are going to deal here with it in detail in order to bring his view in this regard to light.

What is intuitive knowledge? Intuitive knowledge, according to Shah Wali Allah, is that kind of knowledge which is attainable through intuition and inspiration. Intuition is not attainable by means of an organ perceiving as the senses are for sense-perception and the intellect is for speculative knowledge; rather, it is a mysterious power through which the mystic receives knowledge of the Divine Intellect in an un-definable and undifferentiated manner. The total form of intuitive knowledge itself is received immediately without intermediaries or secondary forms or natural process. This knowledge is actually rooted in the most subtle parts: al-sirr (the secret or purified intellect) and al-qalb (the spirit or the purified heart) of the Gnostic.¹¹² Intuitive knowledge is not subject to reason because it is beyond the sphere of reason. Reason works only on forms which are inferior to the Giver of forms. Intuitive knowledge does not involve any kind of sensory or intellectual activity absorbed in the Divine Reality. Because of its mysterious nature, intuitive knowledge cannot be conveyed properly. A person who is unaware of mystical experience will never understand the real nature of this knowledge just as a blind man will never perceive colors. It can only be conveyed through symbols and metaphors.¹¹³ Shah Wali Allah tries to make it understandable by way of analogy. He says, "Intuition actually, is like finding some quality or state in yourself as a hungry person realizes hunger or a full person realizes heaviness."¹¹⁴

Illustrating this point, Shah Wali Allah further says that when a person is isolated to his sir, he may find one organized order of existence

¹¹² . `Uthman A. Karim, Al-Dirasaat al-nafsiyyah `ind al-msulimin, Cairo, 1963, p. 15.

¹¹³ . Affifi, A.E. The mystical Philosophy of Muhyi al-Din Ibn `Arabi, New York, 1939, pp. 105-09.

¹¹⁴ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah. Op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 20.

changing in various colors. This awareness is a kind of intuition. Elsewhere he says that it is as one turns his attention towards a reality whether of a high level or of a lower, and find a state imprinted in his soul as a form is reflected in a mirror. Thus this imprinted state in the soul becomes an instrument for observing that reality as the mirror becomes as instrument for observing whatever is hidden from the person looking to it. This is a second kind of intuition.¹¹⁵

As far as the means and instruments of the intuitive knowledge are concerned, according to Shah Wali Allah, there are two means ... the intellect and the heart... which, in relation to each other, are effective in this regard. But this intellect and heart are not the common ones which are possessed by all human beings. By intellect Shah Wali Allah, here, means that kind of intellect which has purified through asceticism. He calls this intellect al-sirr (the secret). Al-Sirr or the purified intellect of the Gnostic relinquishes its worldly inclinations and becomes subject to the activity of the First Intelligence. In this purified state the intellect has the ability to contemplate the Supreme Manifestation and to receive knowledge from it. For Shah Wali Allah this is the highest stage of intellect.¹¹⁶ Likewise, the heart is not that piece of flesh which lies to the left of the chest or the seat for the baser impulses; it is the heart as center of being which because of its purified state is called "the spirit or the secret of the heart (latifat al-qalb). When the heart is purified from all kinds of vices through mystical and religious practices, it is then attracted towards the Supreme Manifestation as the heart is attracted towards its center. As a result inexplicable tranquility and peace fills the heart of the mystic. This is the highest stage of the heart.¹¹⁷

The knowledge received by al-sirr and al-qalb in the highest stage is called al-'ilm al-huduri (knowledge by presence) because in intuition and illumination the sensory and bodily functions cease and the Gnostic feels the knowledge and inspiration as having arisen from within himself. This knowledge comprises the knowledge of the whole universe which the Gnostic realizes in his own ana. Shah Wali Allah writes:

¹¹⁵ . Ibid.,

¹¹⁶ . Altaf al-quds, op. cit., p. 39.

¹¹⁷ . Ibid., pp. 54-5.

“The perfection of the Gnostic rises above the pure intellect; a stage is reached when the universal soul takes the place of his body and the Pure Essence becomes his soul. Then by the dint of the knowledge by presence, he sees the whole universe within himself....in which case it does not seem to him that knowledge or inspiration percolate down to him from above; instead he sees the upheavals of state and the inner ferment of knowledge and inspiration as having arisen from within himself, with one intuition giving rise to another, and one thought causing depression while another gives rise to pleasure. This state is called illumination of the essence.”¹¹⁸

What is clear from this passage is that the purified intellect and heart which receive secret knowledge from the Supreme Manifestation in an indescribable way. But the question is how this intellect and heart can be purified? In other words, what is the method of the purification of the heart and intellect; and what will be the consequences of that purification?

Purification for Shah Wali Allah means first of all “Changing a bad characteristic to a good one”. Purification of the spirit is possible only by the seeker’s turning his attention towards the Supreme Manifestation and uniting himself with it in humble adoration and accepting the sign of the Exalted Assembly and taking on its coloring. The reason for that is that soul, spirit and intellect in their very nature are divine substances and have natural tendencies towards the Divine World, particularly the Supreme Manifestation. In relation to the material body they lose some of the characteristics. The veils of habit, custom and miscomprehension hide them as clothing hides the body. To relieve these faculties from bodily and environmental bondages, it is necessary to orient them towards the Supreme Manifestation which is the closest reality to their real nature and the most suitable cause for bringing them back to the original state. In this process of purification the organs of the body also play an important role. They are the means for the fulfillment of the obligatory ordinances (religious commandments and rituals) which are not only helpful but necessary for the purification of the self, heart and intellect. Shah Wali Allah says:

“Our view on this is that the desired objective with regard to the human species is neither more nor less than the purification of the bodily members

¹¹⁸ . Ibid., pp. 73-4.

through actions, and purification of the manifest faculties by means of states and stages. The human race has come into being in such a manner that its happiness lies in turning its attention towards the Supreme Manifestation and the Exalted Assembly while its wretchedness lies in deviating from these.”¹¹⁹

This means that man’s goal, the object of life, is to purify his bodily organs through righteous deeds, and his higher or hidden faculties i.e., self, heart, and intellect through mystical practices such as contemplation, invocation of the Divine Names and asceticism. In this way the veils of habit (hijab al-tab’), custom (hijab al-rasm) and miscomprehension (su’ al-fahm) are removed and the subtle faculties are purified. After gaining purification, the intellect and the heart are able to come in contact with the Divine World. This is not a mere contact between two entities but is a kind of interaction in which the intellect and the heart of the Gnostic are illumined by the light of the Supreme Manifestation. They receive Divine Knowledge from it.

Another related question concerns the difference between the intuitions of various mystics or contradiction between intuitions of one mystic regarding a single fact or reality received at different times. If intuition is the most correct and trustworthy method of receiving knowledge, why do the Gnostics differ in the information concerning a reality? Why do mystics give contradictory accounts regarding a single fact? This is considered one of the most difficult questions posed by those who oppose the idea of intuition or intuitive knowledge of the supernatural realities. The exponents of Gnosis and mysticism such as al-Ghazali, Ibn al-`Arabi, Rumi, Jami, Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi have tried to answer this question in their own way.

As far as Shah Wali Allah is concerned, he has given many accounts for the differences and contradictions in intuition. According to him, intuition is always in conformity with what is actually is occurring. Whatever contradiction or defect we find in intuition is due to the state of the mystic or mystics who, because of some shortcomings or for some other reason such as different states and times, receive or perceive the reality. For example, when the forms of future events are determined in the Supreme World, the

¹¹⁹ . Ibid., p. 80.

purified souls receive these forms from the Divine World through reflection. But Gnostics differ in this reception of forms. Some of them whose hearts are illumined and intellects are highly purified, receive the forms of the future events or information about unknown things as they really are. Others, because of the deficiency in a particular spiritual quality, perceive them with ambiguity, as if the mirrors of their hearts are not clean enough for the accurate reflection of reality.¹²⁰

The contradiction in intuitions of a single mystic regarding the same reality is due to the manifold nature of the mystic. According to Shah Wali Allah, man is essentially an independent living being. But at the same time he shares his humanity with all his fellow human beings, animality with all animals, growth and augmentation with all growing things, and finally being with all existing realities. For each one of these stages there are characteristics and sciences related to that particular stage which can be expressed in a special language. Sometimes the Gnostic contemplates a reality from the point of view of his essential being. At another moment he concentrates on the same reality but from his animalistic aspect or of his augmentative nature. On some other occasions he might look at it from the point of view of the realms of spiritual beings and of pure intelligences or finally, of Absolute Being. In all these states the mystic receives intuitions about reality which is different from one another. For the expression of these stages he uses different terminology, a different language. To bring them all under one category and describe them through a single terminology would not be possible. Sometimes, the Gnostics remains in one state and gives an account of it in a specific language and neglects the other. Then he remains in another condition and expresses it in a different language while ignoring the others, and so on. This is the point where the people who are not familiar with the mystical path find contradictions in the mystic's intuition. To the mystic himself, there is no contradiction at all in the intuition.¹²¹

Kinds of Intuition:

The various stages or states of gnosis have led philosophers to divide intuitive knowledge into many kinds. Imam al-Ghazali divides intuitive

¹²⁰ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 219.

¹²¹ . Ibid., vol.1, p.219.

knowledge into al-ilahm (inspiration) and al-wahy (revelation).¹²² For Ibn `Arabi, “knowledge is one because the knowing substance (the pure light), which is the essence (huwiyah) of all human faculties, is one”.¹²³ Shah Wali Allah differs from his predecessors in this respect. He divides intuition into many kinds, the most important of which are the following: 1. al-kashf (illumination), 2. al-ilahm (inspiration), 3. al-ru`yah (dream or vision) and 4. al-wahy (revelation).¹²⁴

Al-Kashf:

Al-Kashf is a kind of intuition in which the imaginative faculty of the mystic receives knowledge in a state of wakefulness without any involvement of senses and intellect. Illumination arises from within the heart of the mystic as fountains of water gush forth within the well. In al-kashf, the mystic realizes that he is seeing something. But that vision is not the function of the external eyes; it is the eye of the heart which is called basirah (mental or inner vision or discernment).

Al-Ru`ya:

Al-ru`ya means vision or dream. Dream in Islam is considered one of the sources of Divine Knowledge. In a hadith of the Prophet it is stated, “The good dream is one the forty-six perfect attributes of prophets”. After the prophethood of Muhammad, peace be upon him, there will be no man with prophetic revelation of the miraculous nature, save that among man of holiness there will appear unto them special dreams.¹²⁵ In Sufi terminology, al-ru`ya means that knowledge which the Gnostic receives during a dream. In this case, the Gnostic feels that he is receiving knowledge through his senses.

Al-Ilham:

Al-Ilham literally means inspiration. In Sufi terminology, ilham is that kind of knowledge which originates from the light which in turn is caused by God in the heart of the mystic. According to al-Ghazali, ilham is God’s removal of veils from the heart and the intellect so that man is ready for the

¹²² . Uthman, A. Karim, op. cit., p. 348.

¹²³ . Affifi, A.E., op. cit., p. 108.

¹²⁴ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

¹²⁵ . Isma`il, Muhammad, al-Bukhari, Bukhari, Vol. 1. Bab Ru`ya al-salihah.

acceptance of reality.¹²⁶ For Shah Wali Allah, ilham is a kind of speech formulated in the imaginative faculty of the mystic at the time when his soul is completely attentive towards God.¹²⁷ It means that ilham is by its nature audible and the mystic is hearing something during his experience.

Al-Wahy:

Al-Wahy is the highest form of knowledge and a kind of intuition. In its nature, wahy is very close to ilham. The only difference between the two is that the former i.e., wahy is reserved exclusively for prophets and is free from all kinds of ambiguity and doubt. The latter i.e., ilham is shared by prophets, saints and even other creatures. For Shah Wali Allah, al-wahy means assimilation of Divine Speech with clarity and perspicacity. It comes from Almighty God to the prophets only.¹²⁸

Summary:

We started the discussion, here, with Shah Wali Allah's theory of knowledge with respect to the early Muslim philosophers, theologians, Sufis, and metaphysicians. Subsequently, we stated Shah Wali Allah's view regarding the origin, nature, definition, division, means, and channels of knowledge. We have noted that knowledge, according to Shah Wali Allah, has a divine basis. From its Divine Sources, all knowledge came first to the prophets and then spread out. It is also stated that the term knowledge is indefinable because of its simple nature. Yet formative or empirical knowledge was described as "a realization of a form of the known object in the mind or soul of the knower". From the various divisions of knowledge made by Shah Wali Allah, we have arrived at the conclusion that knowledge is divided into al-`ilm al-huduri and al-`ilm al-husuli or al-manqulat, al-ma`qulat and al-makshufat. Al-`ilm al-husuli or al-manqulat and al-ma`qulat are subject to sense perception and discursive reason. Al-`ilm al-huduri or al-makshufat are attainable through inspiration, intuition and revelation.

Finally, we dealt with the means and channels of knowledge in the context of Shah Wali Allah's works. We have noticed that sense, intellect and intuition are the only means of knowledge. Sensation, the function of the

¹²⁶ . `Uthman, A. Karim. Op. cit., p. 213.

¹²⁷ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., pp. 34-5.

¹²⁸ . Ibid., p. 34

intellect and intuition by their very nature are the only ways or channels through which all kinds of knowledge can be obtained. It is also pointed out that the knowledge received through senses is not always reliable because of the changing nature of the perceptible object as well as of the perceiving faculties. The knowledge received through intellect is trustworthy because it deals with the first principles and causes of things as well as with the universal forms and concepts. Intuitive knowledge is of the highest level because it is concerned with Divine Reality. It is received through the purified heart and intellect directly from the Divine Source of knowledge without any involvement of the senses and speculative reason. The chapter has been concluded with the brief definition of the various kinds of intuitive knowledge taken from Shah Wali Allah's writings.

Chapter Three: Ontology (Study of Being/Wujud/Hasti)

Introduction:

Ontology or study of being (*wujud*) is that branch of metaphysics which, according to the Dictionary of Philosophy, is concerned with the study of existence itself.¹²⁹ The Muslim scholars, from the very beginning, showed keen interest in the study of existence (*wujud*). On the basis of their different approaches there developed three distinct ontological systems in the Muslim world, namely (1) the pure philosophical ontology of the Muslim Peripatetics, (2) the illuminationist ontology of the *Ishraqi* and (3) the emanationist ontology of the Sufis. The Muslim philosophers such as al-Kindi, Ibn Sina al-Farabi, and Ibn Rushd, deeply influenced by the Greek thought especially that of Aristotle, developed their own ontological system that was based on the primordality of existence. They held that it is existence which necessitates the reality of a thing in the external world and provides genuine grounds for its knowledge. The essence of a thing, for them, was nothing other than an abstracted form of the ontological reality of that particular thing. On the basis of existence, the ontological status of the universe is established. Essences, being mental entities or forms, cannot provide ontological reality or existence to a thing in the external world. They maintained that existence has numerous corresponding realities in the world of manifestation. What is common among these corresponding realities is the very *mafhum* (notion) of existence. Essences and other qualities are the very core of the basis of distinction between the particular beings.¹³⁰

The illuminationist's ontology was introduced by Shaykh Shihab al-din Suhrawardi Maqṭul. Suhrawardi, contrary to the Muslim philosophers,

¹²⁹ . A Dictionary of Philosophy, ed. Antony Flew, New York, 1985, p. 255, see term "Ontology".

¹³⁰ . Al-Taftazani, Sa'd al-Din, Sharh al-mawaqif, Eng. Trans. Earl Edger Elden, New York, 1950, p. 36.

Also see Nasr, S. H., Three Muslim Sages, Caravan Books, Delmar, New York, 1976, p. 26.

considered existence to be of secondary level in comparison to the essence of a thing. He thought of existence something additional to the essence of a particular reality. His ontology was mainly based on the doctrine of light probably taken from the Qur'anic *ayat al-nur* (the verse of light). According to Suhrawardi, all beings are nothing but illuminations of the Supreme Light ...the Light of lights. The Supreme Light is the Essence of God which is veiled by numerous secondary lights. This ontology is hierarchical, based on the various grades of lights, which corresponds to the hierarchy of being. The Necessary Being (*wajib al-wujud*) is the Pure Light which is self-Subsistent and eternal and is a source of all secondary lights or contingent beings. The contingent or possible beings are those which have the ability to receive illumination, in any way, from the Supreme Light. They are dependent on the Necessary Being (*wajib al-wujud*) in all aspects of their existence. The impossible being (*al-wujud al-mumtani`*) is that which is completely deprived of the illumination of the Pure or Supreme Light.¹³¹

In the mystical ontology of the Sufis, Neo-Platonist elements were obvious. Ibn al-'Arabi introduced a new system of transcendental ontology in Islam. For the expression of his ontological ideas, he used the terms of the Divine Essence (*al-dhat al-muqaddas*), Divine Names and Attributes (*al-'asma' wa'l-sifat al-ilahiyyah*) and the theophany (*al-tajalliyyat*) or manifestations (*al-mazahir*). In his ontological system, the Divine Essence is not one individual of the order; rather it transcends the hierarchy of being. Being with respect to the Divine Essence stands as its first determination (*al-ta'ayyun al-awwal*).¹³² The ontology of the Sufis can also be called "emanationist" in the sense that all the contingent beings are nothing but theophanies (*tajalliyyat*) or emanations (*fuyudat*) of the Divine Essence or of the Divine Names and Attributes.¹³³ The Gnostics introduced some new concepts and doctrines in the field of ontology such as the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of being) and *wahdat al-shuhud* (the unity in consciousness), which will be discussed in detail later.

¹³¹ . 'Abd al-Haye, "Ash`arism" A. History of Muslim Philosophy, ed. By M.M. Sharif, Wiesbaden, 1963, Vol. 1, p. 241.

¹³² . Three Muslim Sages, op. cit., pp. 25-6.

¹³³ . 'Assar S.M. Kazim, Thalathah rasa'il fi'l-hikmat al-islamiyyah, Tehran, 1971, p. 8.

A few things may be mentioned regarding the attitude of the *mutakallimun* (the Muslim scholastics/theologians) with respect to the study of being. The early theologians, in general, strongly resented any kind of ontological discussions in a philosophical sense. The works of the early masters of *kalam* (theology), such as Imam al-Ash`ari, al-Maturidi, al-Tahawi and their immediate successors, are virtually devoid of any such discussions. In the later period, when *kalam* and the speculative philosophy intermingled, the ontological discussions became a part of the theological writings. The works of Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi such as al-Mabahith al-mashriqiyyah, and of `Allamah Sa`d al-Din al-Taftazani such as Sharh al-`aqa`id; and of Sayyed al-Sharif al-Jurjani such as his famous Sharh al-mawaqif all contain discussions on theology. What is important to mention here is that their ontological discussions were always colored with their theological ideas.

The philosophical, illuminationists, and emanationist ontology was elaborated and presented in different molds by the later Muslim scholars. During the Safavid period, Sadr al-Din Shirazi known as Mulla Sadra synthesized these various versions of ontology in a single system and elaborated it in his writings. These variedly developed ontological systems along with other intellectual disciplines reached India, as stated earlier, through the works of the great masters of these schools of thought. In continuation of the intellectual chain, Shah Wali Allah inherited this legacy from his father, Shah `Abd al-Rahim. According to his own account, Shah Wali Allah studied such works as Sharh al-hidaya al-hikmah of Mulla Sadra (one of the most important work on philosophy), the Sharh Lama`at, Lawa`ih Ruba`iyat and Naqd al-nusus of Maulana `Abd al-Rahman Jami, the Sharh al-mawaqif of Sayyed al-Sharif al-Jurjani and the Sharh al-`aqa`id of `Allamah Sa`d al-Din al-Taftazani, as text books under the supervision of his father. He also studied `Awarif al-ma`arif of Shaykh Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (the founder of the Suhrawardiyah Order) and some treatises of the Naqshbandiyah Order. Along with these text books, he also studied the works of Ibn `Arabi, Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, Ibn Sina, and other Muslim thinkers. His al-Sirr al-maktum fi asbab tadwin al-`ulum gives us a brief account of his profound knowledge of these disciplines. His philosophical and pure metaphysical works such as al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, Lamahat, Sata`at, al-Khayr al-kathir, Altaf al-quds, etc., provide us detailed information about his full acquaintance with the works of these early masters of the intellectual

sciences. On the basis of this rich background, Shah Wali Allah outlined his own ontological system which shall be dealt with in the following sections.

As stated earlier, Shah Wali Allah's philosophy as a whole is derived from the twin most reliable sources of human knowledge, namely the Divine Revelation and intellectual intuition. The thorough study of the Qur'an, *hadith*, scholastic theology, peripatetic philosophy, and Gnostic metaphysics provided him a strong basis in the field of religious and intellectual sciences. On the intellectual side, he succeeded in creating a philosophical and metaphysical synthesis which, being in complete conformity with the Islamic teachings was suitable to his era as well as future generations. In formulation his ontological system, Shah Wali Allah not only derived his ideas from the above mentioned sources but very often also used their terminology. One can find a number of elements akin to the early philosophers and pure metaphysicians. A systematic exposition of Shah Wali Allah's ontology can be found in his al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, al-Budur al-bazighah, Fuyud al-haramayn, Lamahat, Hama`at, Sata`at, al-Khayr al-kathir, and al-Maktub al-madani. The subject/purpose of our study in these sections is to analyze, from Shah Wali Allah's point of view, the definition and nature of being, its various stages and modes, the question of essence and existence, the question of the unity and multiplicity of being along with the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of being) and *wahdat al-shuhud* (the unity in consciousness). In tackling these issues, references will be made to some of the early works wherever necessary so as to illustrate and clarify the subtle aspects of these problems.

Nature and Definition of Being:

The foremost question of any ontology is: "What is being?" This question requires a proper definition as well as meaningful description of the nature of being. But before providing analyses of Shah Wali Allah's response to this question, we would like first of all to draw attention to the very term "being" itself. It is attributed to a number of possible meanings and it calls for some clarifications.

The term "being", according to Kenneth Dougherty, has two distinct usages. It can be used as a participle of the verb "to be", denoting the very act of existence. Secondly, it is also used as a noun signifying the object of existence whether Necessary or possible, actual or potential, substantial or

accidental, material or spiritual.¹³⁴ According to Shah Wali Allah, “being” in its universal or absolute sense, is self-evident and self-subsistent. It is indefinable because it has neither a genus nor differentia which is pre-requisites for a real definition of anything. There exists nothing similar or opposite to “being” in comparison to which it can be known. It is known only when it is brought in relation to the external realities. In other words, “being” is not a mere idea or an imaginative invention, as some thinkers believe; rather, it establishes its reality in relation to the particular beings which in turn are its determinations and particularizations. The human mind, pondering on the particular realities, discovers this universal being by way of abstraction. He says:

“The truth is that just as you see Zayd and `Amr, you abstract man from them. And the cause of this abstraction is present in both of them (which is humanity). Likewise, when you see a man and a horse you abstract animality from them, which both of them commonly share. Similarly, you ponder the essences altogether and abstract “being” from them which lies at the very core of each one of them.”¹³⁵

It means that all realities, according to Shah Wali Allah, are encompassed by existence. All particular beings, in whatever form they be, are submerged in the “ocean of being” on the transcendental level. Furthermore, human beings are accustomed to know things or differentiate between them on the basis of their various conditions which are subject to change or motion. Or they differentiate things from one another on the basis of their predications which is to see things in relation to other things or realities. These conditions and predications vary with the variation of time and space. They come into existence at one moment but disappear at another. Now “being” in its universal sense, is of such a nature that it does not accept any kind of change or division. Likewise, the first and foremost predication of all things is “being”. This is why “being”, according to Shah Wali Allah, is not properly definable. He says:

¹³⁴ . The basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon, New York, Random House, 1941, p. 733.

Also see Dougherty, Kenneth, Metaphysics, pp. 32-3.

¹³⁵ . Shah Wali Allah, Lamahat, ed. Ghulam Mustafa al-Qasimi, Hyderabad, Pakistan, 1963, p. 8.”

“And it, i.e., “being”, in reality is genus of genera and essence of essences. A thing is known only by its opposites or contrary but there is nothing contrary to the nature of “being”. Man is accustomed to be aware of things because of the difference in predications, their absence in one moment and their presence at another. But there is no variation in anything in respect to “being”. “Being” is the ever present reality and does not lose its reality in any condition of a thing. This is why “being” is considered not to be taken as an essence or genus or anything else of this kind.”¹³⁶

Division of Being:

“Being” in general, as stated earlier, is a simple, self-evident and self-subsistent reality. It has neither genus nor differentia and therefore, is indefinable and indivisible. But this is not the only way that “being” can be viewed. Rather, “being” can also be looked at from the point of view of the intellectual dimensions that can pertain to it. In relation to the external realities, the unity of “being” appears in the multiplicity of “being” and is interpreted respectively. It is impossible to think of “being” in the external world completely separate from the particular beings which stand as appendages, determinations or accidents to it. This manifold aspect of “being” has been one of the most important issues of philosophy. In the light of the division of “being” the whole reality of existence is explained by the philosophers as well as the metaphysicians in various ways.

Shah Wali Allah’s division of “being” is not very different from that of his predecessors. He agrees, in general, with their notion of division of “being”. He is of the opinion that existence, in relation to the determined being (as possible being is composed of existence and essence) has many grades, stages and modes. The particular beings in the universe provide the basis or foundation for the claim of the gradation (*tashkik*) and multiplicity (*kathrat*) of “being”. Each grade or stage covers a certain area of determination and each stage is related to the next not in a way as a material being is connected to another material being but in an ideational (*ma`nawi*) manner. Shah Wali Allah has described the relationship between the various stages of “being” as the relationship between the lights of various lamps lit in a single room. The lights of these lamps are, apparently mingled but are one,

¹³⁶ . Ibid., p.8.

and are difficult to differentiate from one another. But in reality, they are different from one another because of the number of the lamps.¹³⁷ As far as the difference between the various grades of “being” is concerned, Shah Wali Allah clarifies it through the analogy of light probably taken from Suhrawardi or Mulla Sadra who also have used it in the discussion of *tashkik al-wujud* (gradation of being). The light of the sun, the moon, and the lamp are one in the sense that each one of them can be called “light”. But they are different from the point of view of intensity. Also the different modes of whiteness such as that of snow and of ivory is another example to illustrate the difference between the various grades of “being”. He says:

“The archetypal existence of a thing is different from its external reality such as the rays of the sun and moon are different from one another; or as the rays reflected in the mirror and on the earth is different. Or (the beings are different from one another) such as the whiteness of snow and ivory is of different grades.”¹³⁸

Based on the various stages and grades of existence, Shah Wali Allah divides “being” into many categories in different perspectives. To bring his various divisions of being in a systematic order, we have to start from his division of “being” into intellectual or mental (*dhihni*) and external (*khariji*) beings. Abstracting the universal concept of existence from determined beings, Shah Wali Allah confines all the beings in the world of manifestations to the mental (*dhihni*) and external (*khariji*) beings. As he says, “Is it not the case that for each one of the external and mental being, there is a reality which differs from the other?”¹³⁹ The division of being into external and mental comprises all the sensible, intellectual and imaginative beings. Each one of these categories of being is further divided into sub-categories. In order to gain full acquaintance with Shah Wali Allah’s ontology, we have first to analyze the concept of mental and external existence in detail.

Mental Existence (*al-wujud al-dhihni*):

By mental being, here, is meant the being or concept which can be thought of as a mental entity. Shah Wali Allah, in accordance with Ibn Sina,

¹³⁷ . Shah Wali Allah, *Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah*, op. cit., Vol. 2), p. 78.

¹³⁸ . Shah Wali Allah, *Lamahat*, op. cit., p. 24.

¹³⁹ . *Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah*, op. cit., Vol.2, p. 223.

divides the mental existence in relation to the external existence, into three kinds: 1. *Wajib al-wujud* (the Necessary Being), 2. *Mumkin al-wujud* (the possible being) and 3. *Mumtani` al-wujud* (the impossible being). The Necessary Being is that whose existence is logically necessary, and that of whose non-existence is unthinkable. Necessary Being, according to Shah Wali Allah, is self-subsistent and is not in need of anything other than itself. It is the cause or foundation of all possible beings in the universe. The possible being is that whose existence and non-existence are equally thinkable. It is not self-subsistent, but is dependent in all aspects of its existence on the Necessary Being from which its existence is derived. The impossible being, accordingly is that which does not come under the category of Necessary or possible being; or that whose non-existence is a logical necessity. The actual existence of impossible being is inconceivable.¹⁴⁰

External Existence (*al-wujud al-kharij*):

By external existence, Shah Wali Allah means that which has its substantiation or corroboration in the external world. External being is not merely an idea or mental abstraction but exists in reality. It is in actuality the external being in which the quiddity or *mahiyyat* of a thing finds its reality. Without its crystallization in the form of external being, the essence or *mahiyyat* of a thing will remain only a pure idea.

From the three kinds of mental existence classified by Shah Wali Allah, it is *al-wujud al-mumtani`* (the impossible being) which cannot be thought in the external world. Because existence in the external world means having reality. The very nature of impossible being is that whose existence is unthinkable in the world of manifestation and hence its nonexistence (*`adam*) is a logical necessity. It means that in the discussion of external existence it is not possible to deal with the question of *mumtani` al-wujud* (the impossible being). So, external existence can be divided only into *al-wajib al-wujud* (self-subsistent or independent being) and *al-mumkin al-wujud* (the dependent being or existing because of something else). The former is also called *wajib al-wujud* (the Necessary Being) while the latter is called *mumkin al-wujud* (possible being).

¹⁴⁰ . Lamahat, op. cit., p. 11.

According to Shah Wali Allah, the Self-Existent or Necessary Being is free from any kind of cause because ascribing any kind of cause to It will destroy its essential necessary nature. It is not a body composed of parts or atoms, or substance and accident, of form and matter, because these elements are various constituents of material or natural beings. The Necessary Being is devoid of any kind of multiplicity, place and time. Or in other words, it is free from any kind of change and motion. These categories are realized only in relation to the natural world. The Necessary Being or *al-mawjud bi'l-dhat* (the Self-Existent being) is not of dual nature constituted from existence and essence as that of *al-mawjud bi'l-ghayr* (the contingent being). Shah Wali Allah says: "The existence of the Necessary Being is His essence which means that essence is His existence which in turn stands as His *mahiyyah* (quiddity)".¹⁴¹ The Necessary Being is pure, active and effective. It is the first cause of all beings; not in the sense that it is one individual among the many in the series, but in the sense that it encompasses all the levels and stages of "being" in a way as the number "one" is present and runs through all the cardinal numbers. *Al-Mawjud bi'l-dhat* (the Self-Existent) is the basis of all realities which in turn stand as its determinations or particularizations such as the waves and bubbles on the surface of sea or ocean are nothing other than the sea or ocean itself.¹⁴²

Al-Mawjud bi'l-ghayr (the dependent or contingent being), according to Shah Wali Allah, has a necessary ground in the Necessary Being. Without this relationship with the Self-Subsistent being, the contingent beings are unable to get and then, maintain any kind of certainty or determination in the external world. Contingent or possible being is of dual nature in the sense that it is constituted from essence and existence. It means that its existence is other than its essence. On the basis of its existence it gains reality in the external world; while its essence is a cause of its determination (*al-ta`ayyun*) and particularization (*khususiyat*). It is composed of atoms or substance and accidents as the *mutakallimun* (the Muslim scholastics) believe; or from form and matter as the philosophers suggest; or is a manifestation or emanation of the Divine Essence or the Divine Names as the Sufis and Gnostics maintain. It

¹⁴¹ . *Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 168.

¹⁴² . Shah Wali Allah, *Hama`at*, in *Armaghan-e Shah Wali Allah*, ed. And trans. (Urdu), by Muhammad Sarwar, Lahore, 1971, p. 257.

is inactive, passive, impure, and ineffective in its very nature. It has its genus, species and individuals, each one of which has its own nature, characteristics and attributes.¹⁴³

One point is worth mentioning and that is that the division of the external existence into Necessary and contingent does not mean that these two kinds of existence are two independent constituents or parts of one whole, and that they are completely separate from one another. The fact is that the Necessary being, as it is stated, cannot be considered as a part or an individual of the whole of “being”. Rather it is a simple reality in which even existence and essence are identical. It is self-evident and self-existent and is not caused by anything else. Existence itself is one of its attributes or modes or state or first determination (*al-ta`ayyun al-awwal*). It is a source of existence from which the secondary realities derive their existence. The contingent being, on the other hand, has no existence independent from the Necessary being. All the possible beings are nothing by themselves. Even the term being, according to Shah Wali Allah, is applied to them allegorically because probing deeper into the problem reveals that possible beings do not possess being in themselves, and that they, in their essential nature, do not exist. It is the connection with the Necessary being which provides them a kind of reality or existence which, in its very nature, is determined and relative.¹⁴⁴

As far as the nature of the connection (*irtibat*) between the Necessary and contingent beings is concerned, it is not like the connection between two material entities, both independent from one another. This connection, according to Shah Wali Allah, is a state or mode of Necessary Being which is crystallized in the form of a possible being.¹⁴⁵ So one state is called this possible being and, then, another state is called that possible being and so on. This is why the Sufis regard the contingent being as the emanation of the Divine Essence or manifestation of the Divine Names.

The contingent being is further divided into many categories. Its most essential division, for Shah Wali Allah, is into substance (*jawhar*) and

¹⁴³ . Ibid., p. 257.

¹⁴⁴ . *Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 168.

¹⁴⁵ . Ibid.,

accident (‘arad). Substance is self-subsistent in the sense that it exists in itself and not in other things. It is the immediate recipient of existence and serves as the subject and locus for accident. As a general term, it applies to all those things which have substantial reality such as atom and body, *hayula* (matter) and form, soul, and intelligence. This is why substance (*jawhar*) is the most basic element for the definition or knowledge of anything in the world of manifestation.¹⁴⁶

Accident is that which subsists in something else i.e. substance. It has no reality at all separate from substance. Accident and substance have correlation in the sense that none can be found in the external world without the other. This is why temporal priority of one over the other is not possible. However, substance has logical priority over the accident because of its subsistence and being the locus for the latter. According to Shah Wali Allah, substantiality and accidentality or, in other words, substance and accident are related to the world of nature. The Divine world is beyond the question of permanency and contingency or of dependence and independence. All the realities of the Divine world are equal.¹⁴⁷ In view of this understanding, the issue of substance and accident will be discussed in the chapter on “Cosmology”.

Another comprehensive division of being (*wujud*), found in Shah Wali Allah’s writings, is that of *al-wujud al-muntazi`* (the abstracted being), *al-wujud al-munbasit* (the extended being), and *al-wujud al-khass* (the particular or determined being). *Al-Wujud al-muntazi`* (the abstracted being) is a pure mental concept abstracted from the particular or determined beings. It has no apparent connection with the *mahiyyat* (quiddity). *Al-Wujud al-munbasit* (the extended or unfolded being) is also called in Sufi terminology, *al-fayd al-aqdas* or *al-fayd al-muqaddas* (the most Sacred or the Sacred Effusion of God) or *al-nafs al-rahmani* (the Beneficial Soul) or *al-nafs al-kulliyah* (the Universal Soul). It is mysteriously connected with the determined being and is realized in different forms in all the stages of “being” in the universe. The particular beings, spreading in the universe, according to Shah Wali Allah, are nothing but various manifestations and determinations of *al-wujud al-munbasit*. It means that the simple unfolded being exists by itself and is a

¹⁴⁶ . The Basic Works of Aristotle, op. cit., p. 783.

¹⁴⁷ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 42.

source of subsistence for the other beings in the world. In its very nature, *al-wujud al-munbasit* (the extended being) is, accordingly, a manifestation of the Divine Essence. The philosophers call it the “First Intelligence”. It is not particularized or determined in itself. However, it is manifested in the subsequent stages in the various modes of existence and has become, indirectly, determined and polarized. *Al-Wujud al-khass* (the particular or determined being) is the external existence which primarily is realized in substance and the numerous existents composed of essence and existence. There are correspondents in the external world of *wujud al-khass*. In al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah Vol. 2, we find a systematic exposition of this aforesaid division of being. Shah Wali Allah says:

“The fact is that there exist certain things which we call *mahiyyat* (quiddities). These *mahiyyat* are encompassed by two other existences. The first is the one simple or extended being spreading over the structures of the determined beings. This extended being precedes all the particular realities. These particular beings are various descents and determinations of the simple being as a result of a relation, known in origin but unknown in details. The second existence is *al-wujud al-muntazi`* or the abstracted being which is not connected with particular beings.”¹⁴⁸

Potentiality and Actuality of Being:

Another related question to the study of “being” is the question of act and potency or actuality and potentiality of “being”. Potency, according to Ibn Sina, means a quality or state of “being” potent to effect a certain result. Or potency is the hidden power of doing or becoming something, inherent in an actual being. For example, a child has the potency of becoming a man, or man has the potency of writing and reading before his actual being an actual writer or reader. Potentiality, according to Ibn Sina’s account, is divided into two kinds: active potentiality which is inherent in the very nature of the agent and cannot be separated from it in any moment such as heat in relation to fire and rays in relation to the Sun. However, active potentiality in living beings is conditioned to their will. The passive potentiality is that in which the agent is not producing an effect in something else; rather, it is capable of

¹⁴⁸ . Ibid., vol. 2. P. 223.

receiving an effect of another agent, such as matter in relation to form or substance in relation to accident.¹⁴⁹

Act or actuality, in metaphysics, means the actualization or realization of potentiality. This is why it is always used in opposition to potentiality. The potency or potentiality of certain thing ceases to be when once it is actualized in a form of an actual thing. It denotes the fact that the potentiality of a certain object has temporal priority over its actuality, because everything, before its actual existence, exists in potency.¹⁵⁰ This correlation between potentiality and actuality leads us, on the other hand, to the fact that they belong to the realm of natural beings. The Divine Being is "Actual" in absolute sense and is a real cause of all actuality in the universe. Potency cannot be directed to Him in any sense; otherwise, His necessity as well as eternity will be destroyed.

Shah Wali Allah divides being in relation to potentiality and actuality into two kinds. He names these two states of being its *kamal* (perfection). The first kind is the inner perfection or *kamal* of being which is its potentiality to be manifested in multiple realities (*kawnuhu haqa'iq mutakaththirah*). The other kind is the outward *kamal* or perfection of being with its manifestation in the external world. When a connection or relationship between the inner potentiality and external being is established and all the necessary conditions are available, and all the hindrances are lifted, then the actual being, with all its suitable and appropriate characteristics and attributes, is actualized. According to Shah Wali Allah, what differentiates potential being from actual being is the very act of existence which is also cause of differentiation between existing and non-existing beings.¹⁵¹

Essence and existence:

The issue of essence and existence has been one of the major controversial issues among the Muslim scholars. It was due to their deep interest in this issue that there developed two different philosophical schools in the Muslim world, one based on the primordality or principality (*isalah*) of essence and the other on the principality of existence. The contribution of

¹⁴⁹ . Ibn Sina, The Metaphysics of Avicenna, Tehran, 1303 A.H., pp. 45-6.

¹⁵⁰ . Ibid.,

¹⁵¹ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 187. Also see Vol. 2, P. 222.

the Muslim scholars, in this regard, is too great to ignore. Shah Wali Allah, inheriting the view of early Muslim thinkers through his immediate predecessors, further elaborated the discussion with his own interpretation in his writings. Essence and existence, according to Shah Wali Allah, are the most basic elements in the constitution of a particular being in the world of manifestation. They are correlative to each other in the external world, which means that an actual being cannot be found if one of them is missing. But the question is “What is the nature of essence and existence?” For the Muslim Peripatetics as well as the Sufis and theologians, essence is actually the “whatness” (*mahiyyah*) of a thing. In other words, essence is the answer to the question about a thing “What is it?” According to Ibn Sina, essences are either in things (the intrinsic nature of things) or in the intellect. They do not proceed from existence; rather, it is due to its being itself qua itself.¹⁵²

For Shah Wali Allah, essence is the essential element in the totality of a thing in which all attributes of the thing subsist potentially. Whatever is manifested in the world are actualized essences. Essences are of such a nature that they can be thought or imagined separate from its actual existence. They are originated but not in time. Shah Wali Allah also calls them “ideas” or “intellectual forms” and, sometimes, “modes” or “states” of the Universal Soul.¹⁵³ Existence itself, for Shah Wali Allah, is an abstract notion. It is a simple reality and, therefore, cannot be properly defined. It has correspondents in the external world. The particular or determined beings exist only because of the connection with the absolute existence.¹⁵⁴

A related question of importance is whether essence and existence are identical or distinct from one another? Muslim scholars are divided into two groups in this regard. Some of the theologians such as the Karramites were of the opinion that essence and existence are two distinct notions. They maintained that even God’s Essence is distinct from His Existence, thinking of existence as an attribute of God.¹⁵⁵ For the Muslim philosophers and the

¹⁵² . The Metaphysics of Avicenna, op. cit., p. 32.

¹⁵³ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 222-23.

¹⁵⁴ . *Ibid.*,

¹⁵⁵ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. p. 53.

See also M. `Abd al-Hay, Ash`arism, A History of Muslim Philosophy, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.239.

Gnostics, especially Ibn Sina and Ibn `Arabi, existence was distinct from the essence in the contingent beings. According to them the finite beings are essentially constituted from essence and existence. Their finitude is contradictory to the identity of their essence and existence. As far as the Necessary Being is concerned, His Essence, accordingly, is identical with His Existence. This identity of essence and existence, in the Necessary Being is demanded by His eternity.¹⁵⁶

Shah Wali Allah is in full agreement with the view of the Muslim philosophers and Sufis. For him, every being in the external world has essence and existence. Essence itself is the hidden nature of a thing in which all attributes of a thing subsist potentially. Existence is the second constitutive element in the formation of a thing. It is as essential as essence is. It is existence, on the basis of which an essence becomes a reality in the external world. Without existence no actual being is possible in the external world, and everything will remain a mere potentiality. It means that essence and existence, accordingly, are two distinct realities of which only one possesses reality in itself. The former is the basis of distinction and determination for things, while the latter is a cause of realization and actualization of things in the external world. Shah Wali Allah says:

“...here is a thing which we call it a “being” in the manifested world. And there is another thing we call “non-being”. Sometimes an essence of a thing is imagined regardless of its existence. ...At another moment existence of a thing is conceptualized regardless of its essence. ...Sometimes existence is attributed to more than one essence, while the same meaning is understood in both cases. From all this detail it is clear that existence and essence are certainly two different things.”¹⁵⁷

In Necessary Being, this distinction between essence and existence is unthinkable. According to Shah Wali Allah, the Necessary Being is beyond all kinds of constitution, determination and particularization which are predicates of finite beings. The eternity, infinity and simplicity of the Necessary Being demand the identity of His Existence with Essence. In Shah

¹⁵⁶ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., p. 53.

¹⁵⁷ . Lamahat, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

Wali Allah's own words, "In the Necessary Being existence and essence are identical. His essence is His existence and His existence is His essence".¹⁵⁸

Primordality and Principality of Existence or Essence:

Another related question to the issue of essence and existence is whether existence or essence is principal. The later Muslim scholastics such as `Allamah al-Nasafi, al-Taftazani, Sayyed al-Sharif al-Jurjani, and the Israqi particularly, Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi and his commentators such as Mir Damad, maintained that essence is primordial or principal (*asil*). For the formers, it is the essence or quiddity of a thing which gives the thing identity. The basis of all distinction and differentiation between things is their essence or relative attributes which inherit in the essence. Essence, according to them, is of such a nature that even in negation of existence of a thing something of its real nature is established.¹⁵⁹ For example, when we say that Zayd is not present in the room, what is negated here is the presence of Zayd in the room. But indirectly, we assert the essence of Zayd by saying "Zayd is". For Suhrawardi, it was quiddity which possesses reality. Existence, according to him, was something added to quiddity. His ontology was mainly based, as stated earlier, on the doctrine of light.¹⁶⁰

Many Muslim philosophers including the Peripatetics and the school of Mulla Sadra and the Sufis advocated the principality of existence. According to them, it is existence that assures the reality of a thing in the external world. Without existence, essence or quiddity cannot be realized in the world. As far as the accidentality of existence ascribed to Ibn Sina is concerned, it is because of the relative of existence in relation to the contingent beings. A contingent being, related to God, has a reality, and is intelligible. But in itself, apart from God, a possible being has no reality at all. This is why Ibn Sina called existence "an accident" added to the quiddity of a possible being.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸. Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 168.

¹⁵⁹. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁰. Nasr, S. H., Three Muslim Sages, op. cit., pp. 26-29.

¹⁶¹. Rahman, Fazlur, "Ibn Sina" A History of Muslim Philosophy, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 489.

Shah Wali Allah's approach to the issue of principality of essence and existence is manifold. What is clear is that Shah Wali Allah holds the principality of existence. In order to have a better understanding of his position, we have to restate briefly his definition of existence and essence. We have stated earlier that existence for Shah Wali Allah is an abstract concept which indeed, has a corresponding reality in the form of the Necessary and possible beings. The latter is completely dependent on the former Who is Self-subsistent and infinite. Essence and existence are identical in the Necessary Being while, distinct in the possible being.

Now, as far as the question of principality of existence or essence is concerned, the Necessary Being is beyond consideration, because, according to Shah Wali Allah, the Existence and Essence of the Necessary Being are identical. Accidentality cannot pertain in any way to His Essence or Existence. It is only the realm of the possible beings where the question of principality, either of essence or existence, could be taken in consideration. But, it is clear from Shah Wali Allah's account that essences are originated though not in time. These essences have become determined in the form of external beings which are definitely contingent. Furthermore, the realization of the essences in the world is due to their connection with existence. This is why Shah Wali Allah considers existence to be principal.¹⁶²

The same point is further elaborated in his al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah Vol. 1, in a slightly different way. There, he says that all the possible beings subsist through universal existence. He calls this universal existence "*al-wujud al-munbasit*" (the extended existence). This extended existence is spreading over the structure of the particular existence. It is the basis of their reality in the external world. All the possible beings are its various modes, states, manifestations, and determinations. The possible beings stand to it as waves to the sea or rays to sun or accidents to their loci. Shah Wali Allah thinks of the essences as additional qualities.¹⁶³

As far as Shah Wali Allah's account, in his Lamahat, regarding the issue of essence and existence is concerned, one can easily infer from it the principality of existence. Accordingly, the existence of a thing is determined

¹⁶² . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 222-23.

¹⁶³ . *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 187.

in the world of similitude (*`alam al-mithal*) before its appearance in the world of elements (*`alam al-`anasir*). This archetypal existence of a thing before its actual existence in the world of elements (*`alam al-`anasir*) was in a state of possibility or potentiality. But when the essence is actualized in the external world, it is said that it came into existence ignoring its archetypal existence. The fact is that the essence is, now, exemplified along with its existence before you. The only difference is that the existence of the thing in question before its actual existence was visualized in the mind. In other words, it had only mental existence. Then, the mental existence was represented in elements. But this representation of the essence in the matter was possible and accompanied by existence. The concept which can be abstracted from both of the states of the being i.e. the actuality and potentiality or archetypal and actual existence, is the concept of existence. It means that existence is the most fundamental and principal element in things.¹⁶⁴

In his Hama`at, Shah Wali Allah approaches the issue in a different way. There, “being” in its pure sense is considered as standing beyond all kinds of relation, determination and comprehension. In its descent, it is manifested in the essences. Essences, then, stand for existence as matrix or mold in which the latter manifests itself. Each essence has certain qualities and attributes which are the bases of difference between the various beings in the external world.¹⁶⁵ All these various accounts about essence and existence, given by Shah Wali Allah denote the fact that existence is principal. The essence, on the other hand, plays the role of additional qualities or attributes or manifestation of the one Absolute Reality.

Unity and Multiplicity of being:

Another important issue related to the study of “being” is that of unity and multiplicity of “being”. This issue has always been a cause of controversy among the Muslim scholars. Shah Wali Allah has also dealt with this question and has tried to harmonize the various aspects of this purely metaphysical issue with Islamic teachings.

¹⁶⁴ . Lamahat, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁶⁵ . Hama`at, op. cit., p. 257.

When we look at the multiplicity in the universe, says Shah Wali Allah, we gradually reach the conclusion that there is only one reality which constitutes the basis of this multiplicity. That simple reality, accordingly, is “*al-wujud al munbasit*” (The Extended Being) or “*al-nafs al-kulliyah*” (The Universal Soul). He believes that the realization is gradual, because the human mind reaches *al-wujud al-munbasit* by means of abstracting various kinds of *kulliyat* (universal concepts) from particular beings. Shah Wali Allah says that the individual members of a species such as human, for example, Zayd, `Amr, Bakr, etc. share humanity among themselves. This means that humanity encompasses all the members of the human species despite their personal different characteristics. It also reveals the fact that there is a close relationship between humanity and the particular characteristics of human beings. Shah Wali Allah interprets this relationship with *zahiriyat* (exteriority) and *mazhariyyat* (outward manifestation or phenomenology).¹⁶⁶ He sometimes clarifies this relationship by the analogy of form and matter. He maintained that humanity stands for all the members of the human species as matter stands for various forms. As matter lies at the basis of each form, humanity is the basis and foundation for each individual human being. Or as matter is unthinkable apart from forms, likewise, humanity cannot be found in the external world separate from individual human beings. Also this humanity, in relation to other species and genus, becomes differentia (*fasl*) for human beings and differentiates them from all other creatures.

Next comes the stage of animality in which all the living beings, including human species, become one class called animal. In this stage, the constituent species play the role of individual members of the totality. The form of each species is determined; each species has special characteristics and attributes. Animality can also be considered as differentia for its members in relation to the higher genus which is the bodily form (*surat al-jismiyyah*). The bodily form is a stage which, at the highest level, is shared by all those beings which have a body. But when this bodily form, according to Shah Wali Allah, is descended in the lower stages and is manifested in the various forms; then it is realized in the various forms such as the bodily form of man, horse, tree, flower, etc.¹⁶⁷ Next comes, according to Shah Wali Allah,

¹⁶⁶ . Ibid., p. 253.

¹⁶⁷ . Ibid., p. 254.

the stage of substance (*jawhar*) and accident (*'arad*) which are the most basic and common elements not only in material beings, but also encompass the realm of spiritual beings. Even the First Intelligence, according to some philosophers including Shah Wali Allah, is a spiritual substance. Substance and accident comprise the realms of individual beings, of the species, of the genus, and of the higher genus. The natural philosophers, according to Shah Wali Allah, failed to go beyond the level of the substance and accident so as to find out a higher stage where these two elements could become united. But the metaphysicians, on the other hand, carried their investigations further and found a reality which encompasses all the realities including substance and accidents. Shah Wali Allah calls this encompassing reality "*al-wujud*" (existence) or "*haqiqat al-wahdaniyyah*" (the essence of oneness) which is a simple reality.¹⁶⁸ He sometimes calls it "*al-wujud al-munbasit*" (The Extended Being). There exists no contradiction or confrontation between this Extended Being and the possible beings which are its determinations and manifestations.

This unity of being, according to Shah Wali Allah, can also be reached in another way. He explains that all the composed things, natural and artificial, have two aspects: 1. their inner realities, which he calls "*suwar*" (forms) or "*mahiyat*" (quiddities) and 2. the external manifestations which are the material bodies of these realities. Above these material bodies or natural and composed things there are the primary elements and the heavens. Shah Wali Allah holds that these primary elements and heavens also have a form which brings together all these mentioned realities. It is *surat al-jismiyyah* (the bodily form) which some philosophers such as Suhrawardi call *al-maddat al-'ula* (the primary matter). This universal bodily form is directed or inclined towards the center of existence from which it gets reality for all of its component members. In short, there exists a systematic order between the multiple realities in the universe. The individuals, the species, the genus, the higher genus from base to the top, all the realities are connected to each other in an orderly way. But the ground of their unity as well as existence lies in the Extended Being (*al-wujud al-munbasit*). In his *al-Budur al-bazighah* and *Hama`at*, Shah Wali Allah names this Extended Being "*al-wujud al-aqsa* (The Ultimate Being). In his *al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah*, *al-Khayr al-kathir*, *Lamahat*

¹⁶⁸ . Ibid., p. 256.

and Sata`at, this reality is called “*al-nafs al-rahmani*” (The Beneficial Soul), “*al-Rahman*” (The Most Beneficent), and “*al-nafs al-kulliyah*” (The Universal Soul). The Universal Soul or Extended Being, according to Shah Wali Allah, is the subsisting element for all the beings in the world in the same way as water of the ocean is a subsisting element for all the waves and bubbles on the surface of the ocean. Or as wood is the subsisting element for all those numerous objects which are made of wood, regardless of what forms or shapes they have; or as the number one is the subsisting and primary number for all the cardinal numbers.¹⁶⁹ In this way all the realities, or in other words, the multiplicity in the universe is seen by him in the form of a unity. This is what he sometimes calls “tawhid-i wujudi) (existential unity). The various beings are, here, not only related or connected to one another, but are various manifestations and modes or states of the Universal Soul or Extended being. It should also be clarified that despite this close relationship between the Extended Being and the particular beings, the former is completely free from all kinds of impurities and imperfections which are the characteristics of the latter, i.e. possible beings.

Now the question is what is the nature of *al-wujud al-munbasit* (The Extended Being) or *al-nafas al-kulliyah* (The Universal Soul). Is it the Divine Essence (*dhat al-haqq*) ... God ... as some thinkers such `Abd al-Rahman al-Jami believe? Shah Wali Allah, agreeing with Ibn `Arabi and Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, maintains that the Divine Essence or the Necessary Being is far beyond the stage of the Universal Soul or Extended being. The Universal Soul stands, accordingly, in relation to the Divine essence as the particular beings stand to the Universal Soul. The Universal Soul or the Extended Being itself is originated by the Divine Essence by the way of *‘ibda`* (origination from nothing) not by the way of *khalq* (creation from something). This means the relationship between the Divine Essence and the Universal Soul is that of *‘ibda`* which is far beyond the human understanding. Shah Wali Allah calls this relationship *umm al-nasabat* (the mother or basis of all relations).¹⁷⁰ Shah Wali Allah concludes from all these details that it is the stage of the Universal Soul or Extended being where the multiplicity is realized and observed in a form of a unity.

¹⁶⁹ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cite, Vol. 1, p. 187.

¹⁷⁰ . Hama`at, op. cit., p. 260.

Shah Wali Allah uses three other terms which are akin to the mystical concept of *tawhid* (oneness or unity). They are *tawhid al-dhati* (essential unity of God), *tawhid af`ali* (actional or effective unity) and *tawhid sifati* (qualitative or attributive unity). He uses the first in the context of a mystical journey, a stage where the mystic is completely absorbed in the Divine Essence. All the secondary realities disappear from his vision.¹⁷¹ This is highest stage of unity, accordingly, in Sufi terminology. By the second term he means that mystical stage or station where the *salik* (the seeker of truth) realizes that behind all activities, motions and changes there is only one active force ... the force of the creator and administrator of the universe that is God. The mystic realizes in the everyday activities the unseen divine administration. Shah Wali Allah's interpretation of *tawhid af`ali* is similar to that of the orthodox theologians who also maintain that efficient cause and effective force in actuality in the universe is the Divine Reality.¹⁷²

The third term *tawhid sifati* means for Shah Wali Allah that the *salik* realizes one principle in all manifestations. This principle is the cause of all perfections and good qualities in the forms of this world. The *salik* is supposed to see or realize this principle, says Shah Wali Allah, in its purity free from colors. He should be aware of the fact that the colorless principle can be manifested in the colorful beings of the world. And there is no contradiction between the pure nature of the principle and its becoming manifest in the other realities.¹⁷³

Wahdat al-Wujud & Wahdat al-Shuhud (The Unity of Being & Unity in Conscience):

The concepts of *wahdat al-wujud* and *wahdat al-shuhud* are two different interpretations of a metaphysical issue where the relationship between the One and the many and the eternal and the temporal is in question. The concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of being) was introduced and fully elaborated by Shaykh Muhyi al-Din Ibn `Arabi (560-638

¹⁷¹ . *Ibid.*, p. 272.

¹⁷² . *Ibid.*, p. 269.

¹⁷³ . *Ibid.*, pp. 269-70.

A.H.) in his writings, especially in Futuhat al-makkiyyah and Fusus al-hikam.¹⁷⁴ The latter concept of *wahdat al-shuhud* (unity in conscience) was first introduced by `Ala al-Dawla Simnani¹⁷⁵ in the seventh century in Baghdad. Later on, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, known as Mujaddid Alf-e Thani (971-1034 A.H.), introduced it in India and elaborated it in his writings, particularly in Maktubat and Ma`arif al-ladunniyyah. These two purely metaphysical doctrines have been since their emergence one of the most controversial

¹⁷⁴ . Shaykh Muhyi al-Din ibn `Arabi was born in Murcia south east Spain in 560/1165, in an Arab family from the tribe Tayy. He studied at Seville, one of the greatest learning center at that time. He studied there for years under some well-known scholars of that region such as Abu Bakr ibn Khalaf, Ibn Zarqan and Abu Muhammad `Abd al-Haqq al-Ashbili. At Seville, he also received spiritual training under the guidance of Yusuf ibn Khalaf al-Qumi, Shaykh `Adawi, Yasmin of Merelena, and Fatima of Cordova.

After completing his formal training in exoteric as well as esoteric learning, Ibn `Arabi set for the exploration of the Muslim world both east and west. During his traveling, he met scholars and Shuyukh of various disciplines and spiritual orders which contributed a lot to his own mystical and philosophical system. During his stay at Makkah; in 598/1201, he started the composition of his magnum opus, Futuhat al-makkiyyah. This work took his next thirty years of his life to complete it.

After traveling throughout the Muslim world, Ibn `Arabi, finally, settled in Damascus in 621/1223 and spent the rest of his life there writing and giving spiritual guidance to the people. He died in 638/1240 at Damascus and was buried in Salihyyah. See S.H. Nasr, Three Muslim Sages, op. cit., pp. 92-97. Also see A.E. Affifi, "Ibn `Arabi", A History of Muslim Philosophy, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 399-401.

¹⁷⁵ . Shaykh Rukn al-Din `Ala' al-Dawla simnani was a great theologian and metaphysician of seventh century Hijrah. He was born at Simnan. His early education was completed under the guidance of Shaykh Nur al-Din. In 687 A.H., he settled at Baghdad and spent the rest of his life over there. He studied Ibn `Arabi's work, particularly "Futuhat al-makkiyyah" and wrote commentary on it. He disagreed with Ibn `Arabi's view of "*wahdat al-wujud*" (the unity of being). Criticizing the doctrine of "*wahdat al-wujud*", he, for the first time, introduced the doctrine of "*wahdat al-shuhud*" (the unity in conscience). He considered the world as a reflection not a manifestation of the Divine Names and Attributes. He was of the opinion that Existence is distinct and external to the essence. See Mir Valiuddin, "Reconciliation between Ibn `Arabi's *Wahdat al-wujud* and The Mujaddid's *Wahdat al-shuhud*" Islamic Culture, Vol. 25, 1951, p. 48.

issues for Muslim intellectuals. Shah Wali Allah is said to have reconciled these two apparently conflicting metaphysical concepts, and for this he has gained special reputation in intellectual circles. In his famous *maktub* (epistle) known as *al-maktub al-madani*, written to Afindi Isma`il b. `Abd Allah al-Rumi al-Madani, Shah Wali Allah gave a detailed and systematic exposition of these two doctrines, along with his reconciliatory remarks. To understand his reconciliation of these two concepts, it will be helpful to give first a brief description of the doctrines of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of being) and *wahdat al-shuhud* (unity in conscience).

Wahdat al-Wujud (Unity of Being):

The concept of *wahdat al-wujud* was first introduced by Shaykh Muhyi al-Din ibn `Arabi. According to this doctrine, “being” in reality is one and that is God. All other actual and possible beings in the universe are various manifestations and states or modes of His Divine Names and attributes. By the act of creation through the word “be” (*kun*), Ibn `Arabi means the descent of the Absolute Existence into the determined beings through various stages. This gradual descent of the Absolute Existence is called “*tanazullat al-khamsah*” (five descants) or “*ta`ayyunat al-khamsah*” (five determinations) in Sufi terminology.¹⁷⁶ These Attributes of God are not completely separate from the Essence of God. Rather, they are, for Ibn `Arabi, identical with the Divine Essence. Thus he maintains that the world has no reality of its own. It is dependent on the Absolute Reality ... God ... Whose Being alone is real and self-subsistent. The Absolute Existence is like an infinite ocean on the surface of which the limited existences are as bubbles and waves, continuously coming into existence and passing away.¹⁷⁷ In the Fass-e Yusuf of his Fusus al-hikam Ibn `Arabi says, “Whatever you comprehend is God”. God is the *essence* of the possibles. In His absolute capacity, He is existence, while in reference to the difference of forms in existence, He is the essence of forms and existence. He is essence of the possible beings.” This and many other passages like this in Futuhat al-

¹⁷⁶ . Siddiqi, A. Ahmed, “Renaissance in Indo-Pakistan: Shah Wali Allah Dehlawi”. A History of Muslim Philosophy, Op. cit., Vol. 2, p.1570.

¹⁷⁷ . Tahanawi, Maulana Shaykh Muhammad, Tahqiq-i wahdat al-wujud wa'l-shuhud, Karachi, 1963, p. 198.

makkiyyah, Fusus al-hikam, and Insha' al-dawa'ir express Ibn `Arabi's strong belief in the unity of being. This led some scholars to accuse him with pantheism. But in some passages of the same works, we find Ibn `Arabi as a strong advocate of God's transcendence. As he says in his Insha' al-dawa'ir:

"When we examined the universe as to what it is and understood its reality ... and when we examined in detail the Divine manifestation in it, we found the Divine Essence to be too pure to have any semblance of or relation with the mundane world or the creation of the spirits, for reality forbids this. Then we examined as to which force operates in this world, we found that it is the Beautiful Names and Attributes whose manifestations and effects are clearly realized. ... Thus the Holy Essence is left holy and pure."¹⁷⁸

Wahdat al-Shuhud (Unity in Conscience):

In reaction to the doctrine of "*wahdat al-wujud*" of Ibn `Arabi, there developed the concept of "*wahdat al-shuhud*" (the unity in conscience). The greatest exponent of this doctrine was Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi known as *Mujaddid alf-I thani* (Reformer of the second millennium). According to the doctrine of *wahdat al-shuhud*, God and creation are not identical; rather, the latter is a shadow or reflection of the Divine Names and Attributes when they are reflected in the mirrors of their opposite non-beings (*a'dam al-mutaqabilah*). This reflection resulted in some realities whose forms are the reflection of the *asma'* (Names) but their matter is non-existence. This is why he calls the possible beings "shadows or reflections of the Divine Attributes".¹⁷⁹ Although the *haqa'iq al-mumkinat* (the essences of the possible beings) do not possess independent reality, yet they are not identical with the Divine Essence or the Divine Names and Attributes, as shadows can never be identical with the things of which they are shadows. He criticized the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* which upholds, in some sense, the identity of the Divine Names and the possible realities.

As far as the pure mystical aspect of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* is concerned, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi interprets it in a different way. He holds that the unity of being, which the mystic perceives during the state of *jadhb*

¹⁷⁸ . Hussaini, S.A.Q., op. cit., p. 177.

¹⁷⁹ . Sirhindi, Shaykh Ahmad, Maktubat, Urdu trans. by Q. `Alim al-Din, Hyderabad, India, n.d., Vol. 1, maktub No. 234.

(absorption), is a middle stage in *suluk* (the spiritual path or journey). In this state the mystic sees or realizes one simple reality and the secondary realities disappear from his vision. The mystic, then, affirms the Absolute Being, prevailing everywhere and denies the reality of all possible beings. But this, he says, is the unity which is realized or found only in the conscience of the mystic. Despite the mystic's unawareness, all the things around him and the world as a whole still exist.¹⁸⁰ He illustrates the whole issue through an analogy and brings into light different aspects of these two metaphysical doctrines. He says that when, in this phenomenal world, the sun rises the stars disappear from the sight of the people. Now some people, completely absorbed in the observation of the sun, forget the very reality of the stars. They affirm the existence of the sun and deny the reality of the stars. But there are some others who, being absorbed in the observation of the sun, are also aware, at the same time, of the reality of the stars. Affirming the overwhelming light of the sun, they also proclaim the reality of the stars during the midday. In the same way, says Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, there is a stage in *suluk* (spiritual journey) where the mystic experiences the Divine Essence and the world with all its details disappears from his vision. The exponents of *wahdat al-wujud*, then, affirm only one Absolute Reality ... God ... and deny the existence of all other possible realities. But the advocates of *wahdat al-shuhud*, along with the affirmation of the One, are also aware of the existence of the other things though possible, contingent and temporal in their nature.¹⁸¹

The two metaphysicians also differ on the question of the eternity of *al-a`yan al-thabitah* (the archetypes) or the *haqa'iq al-mumkinat* (the essences of the possible beings). Ibn `Arabi thought of *a`yan al-thabitah* or *haqa'iq al-mumkinat* as eternal on the basis of God's knowledge of them from eternity. Shaykh Mujaddid, on the contrary, maintained that the essences or realities of the possible beings are created by God; therefore, they cannot be eternal. Possible is possible, he says, from the point of view of its parts, form, and its nature and reality. Necessity cannot be directed

¹⁸⁰ . Ibid., Vol. 1, maktub No. 272.

¹⁸¹ . Ibid.,

towards a contingent being in any way. It can be said regarding its existence that it is created by God.¹⁸²

Shah Wali Allah's Reconciliation between *Wahdat al-wujud* & *Wahdat al-Shuhud*:

Until the time of Shah Wali Allah, the two metaphysical doctrines of *wahdat al-wujud* and *wahdat al-shuhud* were considered two opposing concepts. The adherents of each one of these doctrines tried to affirm their views at the expense of the others. Many memorable works written in the affirmation and rejection of these doctrines some of them having the same title such as the treaties of Mullah Mahmud Junpuri, `Allamah Muhib Allah Allahabadi, `Allamah `Abd al-`Ali Ansari, Maulana Shaykh Muhammad Tahanawi Deobandi, Sayyed Muhammad Kazim al-`Assar, etc. During the eighteenth century, Shah Wali Allah studied the two concepts with the view of reconciliation. On the basis of his study, he arrived at the conclusion that there is no essential difference between these two doctrines. The difference or contradiction found between them is a result of the ambiguous language and unfamiliar terms used for the expression of ideas in the discourse. The most systematic and detailed exposition of his views on the subject can be found in his famous epistle al-Maktub al-madani.¹⁸³

Shah Wali Allah starts the discussion with the various usages of the term *wahdat al-wujud* and *wahdat al-shuhud*. Sometimes these terms, he says, signify two different spiritual stations of a mystic. In this context, *wahdat al-wujud* means the stage or level where the mystic experiences one Absolute Reality. The universe with all its details disappears from his vision. The mystic affirms the Absolute Existence of God and denies the existence of contingent beings on the basis of spiritual experience. This is why this state or station is called *wahdat al-wujud*

The term *wahdat al-shuhud*, in this context, means that the *salik* (the seeker of truth) has passed through the stage of *wahdat al-wujud* and

¹⁸² . Ibid., Vol. 3, maktub No. 122.

¹⁸³ . Shah Wali Allah wrote this epistle to Afindi Isma`il b. `Abd Allah al-Rumi al-Madani in response to his inquiry about "wahdat al-wujud and wahdat al-shuhud". This epistle is published in his *al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah*, Vol.2, Surat, India, 1936.

has reached a higher level where he becomes aware of the fact that the unity and multiplicity of being are two respective states. He affirms the unity of existence on the one hand, but on the other hand, he is also aware of the reality of the possible beings. Shah Wali Allah holds that the stage of *wahdat al-shuhud* is higher than that of *wahdat al-wujud*.¹⁸⁴

Sometimes these terms, according to Shah Wali Allah, are used to determine the position and status of *a`yan al-thabitah* (archetypes) or *haqa'iq al-mumkinat* (the realities of the possible beings) in relation to the Absolute Being. The basic differences between the doctrines of *wahdat al-wujud* and *wahdat al-shuhud*, in this context, are found in three areas: 1. The relationship between the One and the many or God and the world; 2. The nature and position of the Divine Names and Attributes, and 3. The nature and position of the *a`yan al-thabitah* (archetypes) or *haqa'iq al-mumkinat* (the realities or essences of the possible beings) and their relationship to the Divine Names and Attributes on the one hand, and to the particular beings on the other hand. In order to have a better understanding of these controversial points as well as Shah Wali Allah's reconciliation of them, we would like to say few words concerning the mystical concept of *tanazzulat al-khamsah* (five descents) of *wujud* (being).

Shaykh Ibn `Arabi and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, both, maintain that the Absolute existence has five stages of descent. They call them *tanazzulat al-khamsah* (five descents) or *hadarat al-khamsah* (five presences). Beyond these five descending stages, there is the stage of the Pure Being or Divine Essence. In this remote stage, the Divine Essence is absolutely undetermined, and beyond every kind of relationship and is devoid of all attributes. Shah Wali Allah, in keeping under mystical thought calls this stage or state of the Divine Essence "*ahadiyyah*" absolute oneness), "*al-dhat al-baht-*" (Pure and Sheer Being).¹⁸⁵

In its first descent, Pure Being manifests itself to itself in a universal state. This state is called "*wahidiyyah*" (unity or unicity). Shah Wali Allah, sometimes, calls this stage "*batine al-wujud*" (the intrinsic or inward reality of being). In the second descent, the Absolute Existence descends into *al-wujud*

¹⁸⁴ . *Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah*, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 218-19.

¹⁸⁵ . *Hama`at*, op. cit., p. 259.

al-munbasit (The Extended Being) or *al-nafs al-kulliyah* (The Universal Soul). He sometimes calls this stage or state *zahir al-wujud* (the outward or exterior aspect of being).¹⁸⁶ These two descents of the Absolute Existence are considered cognitive or intellectual and conceptual descents by some scholars, because in actuality there is found nothing external to Pure Being. From the Extended Being or Universal Soul proceeds *`alam al-arwah* (the world of spirits). It is also called *ta`ayyun ruhi*. After that, comes *`alam al-mithal* (the world of similitude) or *ta`ayyun mithali*. Sometimes it is called the stage of *al-a`yan al-thabitah* (the archetypes) or *haqa'iq al-mumkinat* (the realities or essences of the possible beings. Finally, "being" (*wujud*) descends into *`alam al-ajsad* or *ajsam* (the physical world or the world of bodies). It is also called *ta`ayyun jasadi* (physical or bodily determination). Here, "being" is manifested in possible or contingent beings.

When all the conditions of its manifestation are present and all the hindrances are lifted, then the essence or form of a thing gains a kind of relation (knowable in essence but un-knowable in detail) with Existence. As a result, special effects, according to Shah Wali Allah, proceed from Existence in relation to the possible reality is found in the external world. Then it is said that Existence has descended, is determined and is manifested in a particular phenomenon.¹⁸⁷ The last three stages as a whole are sometimes called *ta`ayyunat al-kharijiyah* or *maratib al-kawniyah* (external determinations or stages of possible beings) because existence has corresponding realities in each one of these worlds. These three stages, according to the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*, are manifestations of the Divine Names and Attributes. This is a brief view and account of the *tanazzulat al-khamsah* held by the exponents of *wahdat al-wujud*.

As far as the relationship between God and the world is concerned, for Ibn `Arabi, there exists a causal relationship between God and the world. He maintains that the world, as a necessary effect, is with God from eternity. But this is not like the philosophers' causal relationship. Everything, he asserts, has two aspects. In relation to God's knowledge, it is in the stage of *thubut* (determination or establishment) and is, therefore, eternal. But in

¹⁸⁶ . Ibid.,

¹⁸⁷ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol.2, p. 224.

relation to its external manifestation everything is contingent.¹⁸⁸ Shah Wali Allah agrees with Ibn `Arabi on the question of *thubut* of things in the knowledge of God. He says, "Whatever exists in the external world is *thabit* (determined and established) necessarily and whatever is non-existent is not *thabit*. Everything which exists at any moment of time is subsistent through the Divine Essence from the point of view of *thubut* and from the point of a quality or necessity of the Necessary Being". This *thubut* or subsistence of a thing in the knowledge of God, before the external existence, is called by Sufis "*al-tanazzul al-`ilmi* (intellectual or cognitive descent). But this cognition is not an impression of a form in the mind of God. Rather it is emanation of all the possible beings as a whole at once from the Divine Essence on the intellectual level. They are considered as perfections (*kamalat*) and exigencies and qualities of the Divine Essence (*'iqtidha' al-dhat al-ilahiyyah*). On the level of *thubut* (determination) the possible beings in the knowledge of God are sometimes called by the Sufis "*al-fayd al-aqdas* (the most sacred emanation).¹⁸⁹

What is the position or metaphysical status of *a`yan al-thabitah* (the archetypes) and the particular beings? This is the most controversial aspect of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*. We have already stated that according to Ibn `Arabi, *al-maratib al-kawniyyah* (the world of *arwah*, *mithal* and *ajsad*) are determinations of the Divine Names and Attributes. But these Names and Attributes are relative qualities and have no reality apart from the Divine Essence. They are relations in the sense that they determine the reality of things in the external world. They cause the multiplicity in the world because they themselves are multiple in relations to things. But essentially, they are one in relation to God and are identical with His Essence.¹⁹⁰

Regarding *a`yan al-thabitah*, Shah Wali Allah points out that Ibn `Arabi maintains that they are nothing other than the Divine Names and Attributes, distinguished conceptually. They have two aspects. In one aspect, they are related to the Divine Names and are found with God eternally. In the other aspect, they are realized in the external things which in turn are their

¹⁸⁸ . Affifi, A.E., op. cit., pp. 27-31.

¹⁸⁹ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 226-27.

¹⁹⁰ . Affifi, A.E., op. cit., pp. 35-6. See also al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 234.

manifestations. In the second aspect, the archetypes are called “states” or “modes” of the Divine Essence. They have no substantial reality of their own apart either from the knowledge of God or worldly manifestations. This is why Ibn `Arabi considers them at time as non-existents which have not even smell the odor of existence (*ma shammat ra'ihat al-wujud*).¹⁹¹ The particular beings, Ibn `Arabi holds, are manifestations or reflections of the Divine Names and Attributes or of *al-a`yan al-thabitah*. They are completely dependent on their a`yan or the Divine Names and Attribute, as reflection or shadow is dependent on its origin.¹⁹²

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, the chief exponent of *wahdat al-shuhud*, disagrees with Ibn `Arabi on some points related to the issue of the relationship between God and the world, the reality of the Divine Names and Attributes, *al-a`yan al-thabitah* (the archetypes), and the particular beings. The most important are the following:

“Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi rejects Ibn `Arabi’s view of the identity of the Divine Names and Attributes with the Divine Essence not on the level of Pure Essence but in the lower stages. He maintains that in the lower stages the Divine Names and Attributes have gained their relative existence and are distinct from the Divine Essence. He calls these stages “*maratib al-tafsil*” (the stages of detail).”¹⁹³

Shaykh Mujaddid differs from Ibn `Arabi on the question of the eternity of the archetypes (*al-a`yan al-thabitah*). He emphasizes the temporal and contingent aspect of a`yan which is their connection and relation with the particular beings.¹⁹⁴

Contrary to Shaykh Ibn `Arabi, Shaykh Sirhindi makes a clear distinction between the modes and states of the Divine Essence and the Divine Names and Attributes. In *maktub* No. 287 of Vol. 1, he describes that modes and states are subjective qualities of the Divine Essence and have no separate

¹⁹¹ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyah, op. cit., Vol. 2. Pp. 226-27.

¹⁹² . *Ibid.*, p. 229

¹⁹³ . Maktubat, op. cit., Vol. 1, maktub No. 234.

¹⁹⁴ . *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, maktub No. 122.

reality from it. The Attributes on the other hand, have external existence and are something additional to the Divine Essence.¹⁹⁵

The fourth point is that the reality of *al-a`yan al-thabitah*, where Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi opposes the relative view of Ibn `Arabi. Shaykh Sirhindi calls them "*haqa'iq al -mumkinat* or *al-imkaniyyat*" (realities of the possible beings or possible realities). He is of the opinion that this *haqa'iq al-mumkinat* are not the same as the Divine Names and Attributes. Rather, they are reflections or shadows of the Divine Names and Attributes reflected in their opposite non-beings (*al-a`dam al-mutaqabilah*).¹⁹⁶

The difference between these two great metaphysicians regarding the reality of the archetypes also leads us to their difference about particular beings. For Ibn `Arabi, particular beings are theophanies (*tajalliyyat*), reflections (*`ukus*) or Shadows (*zilal*) of the Divine Names or Attributes which in turn are identical with the Divine Essence. In this sense particular beings are manifestations of the Divine Essence. Shaykh Sirhindi strongly opposes this idea. He maintains that particular beings are the indirect shadows or reflections of the Divine Name and Attributes when they reflect in their *a`dam al-mutaqabilah* (opposite non-beings). He maintains that the matter of *a`yan* or *haqa'iq al-mumkinat* is *`adam* (non-existence), while their form is the reflection of the Divine Names in the mirrors of *`adam*.¹⁹⁷

Shah Wali Allah calls these differences "verbal controversies" which have come about because of the ambiguous language and misunderstanding of one another's view. If we leave, he says, all the metaphors and similes used for the expression of ideas aside, the apparently opposite views of the

¹⁹⁵ . Sirhindi, Shaykh Ahmad, Ma`arif al-ladunniyyah, "*ma`rifat No. 20*, quoted by `Allamah Abd al-`ali, Wahdat al-wujud, Urdu trans. Shah Zayd abu'l-Hasan, Dehli, 1971, p. 29.

¹⁹⁶ . The term *al-a`dam al-mutaqabilah* is used by Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi in his metaphysical writings. It means that every Divine Name and Attribute of God has one opposite or contrary to itself. For instance, the opposite of knowledge is ignorance; the opposite of life is death; the opposite of existence is pure non-existence; the opposite of power and capability is weakness and incapability, and so on. See Maktubat, Vol. 3, *maktub No. 89*.

¹⁹⁷ . Maktubat, op. cit., Vol. 2, *maktub No. 1*.

two scholars will become harmonized.¹⁹⁸ Taking in view the issue of *haqa'iq al-mumkinat* (the realities of possible beings), Shah Wali Allah holds that apparently some differences exist between the two points of view. This is the result of the manifold meanings of the term. Sometimes, he says, it signifies the particular realities such as man, horse, trees, etc. These realities are determined in the external world. Sometimes, the term "*haqa'iq al-mumkinat*" is used in place of the archetypes which from the point of view of their nature are neither existing nor non-existing realities. They are realized in the external world when they are brought in connection with existence. The philosophers call them "*mahiyat*" (quiddities) in this sense. For the Sufis, they are theophanies (*tajalliyyat*) or emanations (*fuyudat*) of the Divine Essence in the third stage of *tanazzulat al-khamsah* (the five descents of the Absolute Existence). Shah Wali Allah sometimes calls them *al-suwar al-ma'lumah* (the known forms) which are determined and related to the knowledge of God.¹⁹⁹

There is another interpretation for the essences of possible beings (*haqa'iq al-mumkinat*) in which it has a kind of relationship with the Divine Names and Attributes. Shah Wali Allah asserts that the *haqa'iq al-mumkinat* and the Divine Names are two different realities but not in a sense that they could be divided into two distinct categories. Rather, they have a kind of collaboration and can be applied to one another. Whatever is hidden in the Divine Names and Attributes becomes manifest in the *haqa'iq al-mumkinat*.²⁰⁰

Now in the light of these three usages or meanings, the term is interpreted in different ways. Ibn `Arabi and his followers, emphasizing the close relationship of the *haqa'iq al-mumkinat* with the Divine Essence, maintain that both are the same. On the other hand, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi and his followers assert that they are reflections and shadows of the Divine Essence and Attributes reflected in *a`dam al-mutaqabilah* (the opposite non-beings). Shah Wali Allah concludes that both of the interpretations are correct and there exists no such contradiction between them. Whatever

¹⁹⁸ . *Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah*, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 219, 238.

¹⁹⁹ . *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 231-32.

²⁰⁰ . *Ibid.*, p. 232.

difference is found over here is insignificant.²⁰¹ To say that the *haqa'iq al-mumkinat* are reflections or shadows (*`ukus or zilal*) of the Divine Names and Attributes, is in no way against the explanations of Ibn `Arabi and his followers. Many quotations, says Shah Wali Allah, can be presented, in this regard, from their writings. Likewise, the view of Ibn `Arabi that the archetypes or in other words the Divine Names are the basis of existence, is not against the view of Shaykh Mujaddid.²⁰²

AS far as the controversy regarding the nature of the world is concerned, there is no real contradiction between the two scholars. Both of them agree that the world in itself has no ontological reality apart from the Absolute Being ... God. It is completely dependent in its existence as well as subsistence on the Ultimate Reality. Ibn `Arabi describes this fact in a different language than that of the Shaykh Mujaddid. He says that the world is a manifestation of the Divine Names and Attributes which are identical with the Divine Essence. Shaykh Mujaddid affirms the contingency of the world in a different way. He says that the world is a manifestation of the *haqa'iq al-mumkinat* which in turn are reflections are shadows of *a`dam al-mutaqabilah* (the opposite nonbeings) of the Divine Names and Attributes.²⁰³

After this detailed description of these two metaphysical doctrines, Shah Wali Allah concludes that there exists not a real controversy among Ibn `Arabi and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi on the subject of the unity of "being". Whatever controversy is found is a result of the use of metaphorical language. He is of the opinion that the apparent controversy could be easily resolved by using unambiguous terms for the expression of ideas in the issue in question.

²⁰¹ . Ibid.,

²⁰² . Ibid., p.234.

²⁰³ . Ibid., pp. 229-31.

Chapter Four: Theology (Rational Study of Religious Dogmas)

Introduction:

In theology (‘ilm al-kalam), Shah Wali Allah adheres strictly to the orthodox theological system developed by Imam Abu’l-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Isma‘il al-Ash‘ari (260/873-330/944) and Imam Abu Mansur Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Maturidi (238/853-333/941).²⁰⁴ At an early age, Shah Wali Allah studied the Sharh al-‘aqa’id of ‘Allamah Sa’d al-Din al-Taftazani, the

²⁰⁴ . (a) Imam Abu’l-Hasan Al Ash‘ari was born at Basrah, Iraq, in 260/873. He was a descendent of Abu Musa Al-Ash‘ari, the famous companion of the Prophet, peace be upon him. At his early age, Imam al-Ash‘ari studied with Abu ‘Ali Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Jubba’i, a great Mu‘tazilite leader of his time. He himself remained as a Mu‘tazilite till the age of forty. After that, due to various reason, the Imam renounced the Mu‘tazilite views and became a strong exponent of orthodoxy. He led the orthodox movement at the center of *khilafat* and developed his own theological school which is named after him. He composed many works on theology and other disciplines including al-Maqalat al-islamiyyin, al-Ibanah ‘an ‘Usul al-diyannah, Kitab al-luma’, al-Risalah fi istihsan al-khawd fi ‘ilm al-kalam, and Kitab al-sharh wa’l-tafsil are of great importance. He died at Baghdad in 330/944 and was buried between Karkh and Bab al-Basrah. See ‘Abd al-Hayy, “Ash‘arism”, A History of Muslim Philosophy, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 222-23.

(b) Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi was born in 238/853 at Maturid, Samarqand. He studied under Shaykh Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Ishaq, Abu Nasr Ahmad b. al-‘Abbas, Nusayr b. Yahya al-Balkhi (d. 268/881), and Muhammad b. Muqatil al-Razi (248/862). All of these scholars were students of Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767). He led the orthodox theological movement in Central Asia. He developed his own theological school which was named after him. He enjoyed a very high position among his contemporaries and was considered one of the greatest scholars of his time. He wrote many works on theology and other disciplines. His Kitab al-tawhid, Kitab ta’wilat al-Qur’an, Kitab al-jadal, Kitab al-‘usul, and Kitab al-maqalat are of great value. He died in 333/944. See A.K.M. Ayyub ‘Ali, “Maturidism”, A History of Muslim Philosophy, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 59-61.

Sharh al-mawaqif of Sayyed al-Sharif al-Jurjani²⁰⁵ and other theological works with his own father Shaykh `Abd al-Rahim Dehlawi. His chain of teachers in intellectual sciences, particularly in *`ilm al-kalam* goes back un-interruptedly to Imam Al-Ash`ari. Some of the greatest theologians and thinkers of various generations are various rings of his intellectual *sanad*.²⁰⁶

After completing his formal education, Shah Wali Allah taught *`ilm al-kalam* (theology) along with other intellectual disciplines for about twelve years which enabled him to have full command of the subject. He composed a treatise called "Husn al-`aqidah" (irreproachable creed) which contains his concrete and comprehensive theological system. But this was not the only work that deals with his theological views. In fact, most of his works such as Hujjat Allah al-balighah, al-Budur al-bazighah, Lamahat, al-Khayr al-kathir, al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, Ta'wil al-ahadith, Sata`at, Hama`at, Fuyud al-haramayn, al-Sirr al-maktum fi asbab Tadwin al-`ulum, Izalat al-khifa' fi khilafat al-khulafa', etc., have chapters devoted to theological discussions. The main subject of our discussion in the present chapter is the "analyses of Shah Wali Allah's theological ideas in the light of his own writings". But a preliminary to treatment the main subject, it is necessary to say few words regarding the

²⁰⁵ . (a) `Allamah Sa`d al-Din al-Taftazani (1322-1389 C.E.) was born in Taftazan, Khurasan. He studied under al-`Ijji, the famous scholar of his time and the author of al-mawaqif, the famous work on Islamic theology. Al-Taftazani taught at Herat. He also remained in power at Samarqand in the court of Tamerlane, the forefather of the Mughals. He wrote a commentary on the Creed of al-Nasafi which remained for centuries and still is one of the most important theological textbooks in the Muslim world. See M.M. Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Edinburgh, 1962, p. 154.

(b) Al-Sayyed al-Sharif al-Jurjani (1340-1413 C.E.), a contemporary and friend of al-Taftazani, was born in Gurgan. He studied in Herat, Kerman and Egypt. He taught at Shiraz. He also remained at the court of Tamerlane at Samarqand. He was a distinguished scholar of his time. He composed many valuable works on theology and philosophy. Sharh al-mawaqif is the most important one. See M.M. Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, op. cit., pp. 154-55.

²⁰⁶ . Shah Wali Allah, Fann-I Danishmandi, pub. In Armaghan, op. cit., P.398.

definition as well as formation and development of *ilm al-kalam* (theology) as a distinct science in Islam.

Definition of Kalam (Theology):

The term "*kalam*" literally means "word", "speech", "utterance", "conversation", and "discussion".²⁰⁷ As a distinct science, *ilm al-kalam* is defined by the Muslim scholars with different expressions but all having similar meanings. In his *Ihsa' al-'ulum*, al-Farabi defines *ilm al-kalam* as a "science which enables its possessor to obtain the victory of the right creeds and religious practices ordained by Almighty God and to refute all opinions which contradict and confront them".²⁰⁸ In *al-Ta'rifat*, the term is defined by Jurjani as "the science concerned with the Essence and Attributes of Almighty God and with the various conditions and states of the possible beings from the point of view of their origin and repetition according to the Islamic *shari'ah*".²⁰⁹ 'Allamah 'Abd al-Rahman al-Iji known as "Adud al-Din", author of the famous theological work *al-Mawaqif* and *al-'Aqa'id*, defines *ilm al-kalam* in a slightly different way. He says that "*kalam* is the science by the help of which one (the *mutakallim*) is able to establish firmly religious belief, supplying (rational) arguments and (valid) proofs, and banishing the doubts (of the opponents) against them".²¹⁰ For 'Allamah Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani, *ilm al-kalam* is the basis of the science of Islamic law and judgments as well as the ground of the principles of Islamic dogmas, which is knowledge of the Unity and Attributes of God. This discipline or distinct science, according to him, delivers and rescues man from the darkness of doubts, fancies and imaginations.²¹¹ Because of this close relationship between *ilm al-kalam* and the basic Islamic teachings, the former is sometimes is called "*ilm usul al-din*" (science of the principles or foundation of religion), "*al-fiqh al-akbar*" (the

²⁰⁷ . *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J.M. Cown, New York, 1976, p. 838, see term "al-kalam".

²⁰⁸ . Al-Farabi, *Ihsa' al-'ulum*, quoted in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edition, Vol. 3, p. 1141.

²⁰⁹ . Al-Jurjani, al-Sayyid al-Sharif, *al-Ta'rifat*, Tunisia, 1971, p. 98, see term "*al-kalam*".

²¹⁰ . Al-Jurjani, *Sharh al-mawaqif*, n.d. n.p., Temple U. Catalogue No. B.P. 166/1 57j8x, p. 11.

²¹¹ . At-Taftazani, *Sharh al-'aqa'id* (Arabic), Chirkof, Qazan. Russia, 1897, p. 4.

highest or greatest knowledge), or “*ilm al-tawhid wa’l-sifat*” (knowledge of the Unity and Attributes of God).²¹²

The Origin and Development of Theology in Islam:

Both Muslim and non-Muslim historians of religions have given different accounts for the rise and development of rational theology in Islam. The point upon which they all agree is that during the life time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, there existed no theological disputes among the believers. The reason was that the sole authority on religious matters was the Prophet himself who could resolve any kind of disputes of a religious nature through Divine Inspiration. Speculations regarding the theological and metaphysical issues were resented and discouraged by the Prophet himself. Many traditions of the Prophet can be quoted which bear a distasteful attitude towards pure speculative thinking in dogmatic issues.

The theology (*kalam*) which developed in the rest of the first century A.H. was semi-political by nature. Most of the early theological groups such as the *Shi`ah*, *Khawarij*, *Qadariyyah*, *Jabariyyah*, etc., were the result of political differences among the believers. Most of the important theological issues such as the question of *imamah* (leadership) the status of believer in relation to grave/major sins, the question of salvation, as well as that of responsibility and lack of responsibility, etc., were result of internal politico-religious differences. External influences could hardly be directed towards these early theological disputations.

As far as the rise of rationalistic theology in Islam is concerned, it started in 2nd/8th century with the advent of the Mu`tazilites. Most of the Muslim scholars including Shah Wali Allah have thought that this movement was the result of the Muslims’ contact with the people of other traditions. The rapid expansion of Islam, especially in the Middle Eastern countries, brought the Muslims into direct contact with the Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and Greeks.²¹³ Basrah, Kufah, Jundishapur, and Baghdad, the cradles of the ancient Persian civilization, once again became centers for the

²¹² . Al-Taftazani, Muhammad A`la b. Ali, Kashshaf istilahat al-funun, (A Dictionary of Technical Terms), Calcutta, India, 1862, vol. 1, p. 22.

²¹³ . Shah Wali Allah, *Al-Sirr al-maktum fi asbab tadwin al-ulum*, op. cit., p. 389.

exchange of ideas and thoughts. Great Christian theologians such as John of Damascus, his students and followers held administrative responsibilities in the capital of the newly established Islamic state. The theological debates of Christians and Jews in the Islamic capital were an indirect challenge for the Muslims. These circumstances impelled the Muslim scholars to think seriously about the defense of the basic principles of their religion. The Mu`tazilites were considered the first who adopted the Greek dialectical methodology and made frequent use of rational arguments in dogmatic issues.²¹⁴

The Mu`tazilites were deeply influenced by the early theological school called "*Qadariyyah*". At the beginning, their discussions were restricted to those issues which were common among the early theologians. But latter on new issues such as the createdness of the Qur'an, the denial of the beatific vision, denial of the possibility for man to understand the Attributes of God, the doctrine of *manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn* (the intermediary state for the grave sinner between faith and infidelity), free will, etc. also became a part of their theological discussions. Wasil ibn `Ata' (80/699-131/748), the founder of the school, `Amr ibn `Ubayd and Dirar ibn `Amr were the earliest leaders of the rationalistic theological movement in Islam. The works of Wasil ibn `Ata', such as Kitab al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn, Kitab al-futya and Kitab al-tawhid contain the basic teachings of the early Mu`tazilite School.²¹⁵

After the first generation the movement was carried on by Abu'l-Hudhayl al-`Allaf (131/748-226/840), Abu Isahq Ibrahim ibn Sayyar known as al-Nazzam (d. 231/845), Bishr ibn al-Mu`tamir (d. 210/825), Mu`ammar ibn `Abbad al-Sulami (d. 228/842), Thamamah ibn Ashras al-Numayri (d. 213/828), al-Jahiz (d. 255/869), and finally Abu `Ali Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab al-Jubba'l (d. 235/849). These leaders systemized Mu`tazilism in their writings and established the movement on a strong basis. The basic principles of the Mu`tazilites were the following:

Al-Tawhid (the Unity of God);

Al-`Adl (justice of God);

²¹⁴ . Ibid., pp. 389-90.

²¹⁵ . Valiuddin, Mir, "*Mu`tazilites*", A History of Muslim Philosophy, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 204-05.

Al-Manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn (an intermediary state for the grave sinner between faith and unbelief);

Al-Wa`d wa'l-wa`id (promise and threat), and

Al-Amr bi'l-ma'ruf and nahyi `an al-munkar (enjoining good and forbidding evil).²¹⁶

Al-Tawhid:

The Mu`tazilites emphasized the Unity of God. Thus, they denied the Divine Attributes as being distinct from the Divine Essence. According to them, the affirmation of Divine Attributes, distinct from the Divine Essence, necessitates many eternals besides God and compromise the Unity of God. This belief in the absolute unity and inaccessible nature of God led them also to the denial of beatific vision even in the hereafter.²¹⁷

Al-`Adl:

By the doctrine of *al-`adl* (justice), the Mu`tazilites meant, that God wills and commands only good things. He creates in man the *qudrah* (power and ability) to create his actions. Man, having free will, chooses either good or bad things or actions and, therefore, is fully responsible for what he performs. God as the absolutely Just, according to them, is obliged to reward or punish man accordingly.²¹⁸

Al-Wa`d wa'l-wa`id:

By the principle of *al-wa`d wa'l-wa`id*, the Mu`tazilites meant that the promises and threats, declared by God in the Divine Revelation, are true and that He has to carry them out necessarily, in distinction to Ash`ari's notion of "forgiveness".

Al-Manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn:

This Mu`tazilite doctrine means, as stated earlier, that a believer who committed a grave sin remains in an intermediary state between belief and unbelief. If he repents and makes a just remedy for the sin committed, he

²¹⁶ . Encyclopedia of Islam, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 1143.

²¹⁷ . Al-Ash`ari, Al-Maqalat al-islamiyyin, ed. M.M. `Abd al-Hamid, Cairo, 1969, vol. 1, pp. 235-38.

²¹⁸ . Encyclopedia of Islam, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 1143.

becomes a true believer. But if he dies without repentance, then he is an infidel and will remain in hell for ever.²¹⁹ This doctrine itself was an intermediate position between two extreme positions held by the *Khawarij* and the *Murji'ah* regarding the person who commits a grave sin. The *Khawarij* were of the opinion that commission of a grave sin causes the loss of faith and the sinner no longer remains a true believer. The *Murji'ah*, on the contrary, maintained that committing a grave sin does not necessarily effect the faith of the believer. The person who commits a grave sin is still a believer. Repentance or limited punishment in the hereafter is a remedy for it. An intermediate position between these two extreme views regarding the issue in question, actually, was held by the early *Qadariyyah*. The doctrine was called *al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn* not because of an intermediate position between two extreme views but because of the intermediate position of the grave sinner whether he should be considered a believer or on-believer. The Mu`tazilites took this doctrine from the early *Qadariyyah* and made it one of the basic principles of their theology.

Al-Amr bi'l-ma`ruf wa'l-nahyi `an al-munkar:

The Mu`tazilites stressed so greatly on this Qur'anic injunction that they even allowed the use of state power in this regard wherever necessary. And they actually exercise power for the restoration whatever they considered to be good and the forbidding whatever was wrong. Even in the early stage of the movement when they were suppressed, they tried to depose the guilty Umayyad ruler by using force.²²⁰

Under the umbrella of these five principles, the Mu`tazilites brought in and discussed many related doctrines such as the createdness of the Qur'an, the denial of the physical existence of the Balance, the denial of the *kiram al-katibin* (the noble scribes of the human actions), the issue of the Divine decree and free will, and the efficacy of prayer, etc.²²¹

²¹⁹ . Al-Maturidi, Kitab al-tawhid, ed. Fathullah Khulaif, Beirut, 1970, pp. 329-32. Also see al-Maturidi, Sharh al-figh al-akbar, published in Rasa'il al-sab'ah, Hyderabad (Dakkan), 1367/1948, pp.2-3.

²²⁰ . Encyclopedia of Islam, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 1144.

²²¹ . Valiuddin, Mir, op. cit., pp. 202-03.

Politically, the Mu`tazilites supported the Abbasids. This is why they enjoyed a very high position in the Abbasid court from the beginning of the dynasty until the reign of al-Mutawakkil. It was only during al-Mutawakkil's rule (847-861 C.E.) when the government policy was revised regarding theological matters. This change in governmental policy resulted in the downfall of the Mu`tazilites. A favorable environment was created for the development and consolidation of the Orthodox Sunni theology. The most distinguished Mu`tazilite leader of the last generation was Abu `Ali Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab al-Jubba`I (b.235/849) who lost against his pupil Abu'l-Hassan al-Ash`ari, the founder of the well-known theological school, "Ash`arism".

Orthodox Sunni Theology (Kalam):

In the struggle against the Mu`tazilites, various orthodox groups such as the *muhaddithun* (traditionists), the *fuqaha'* (the jurists), the *Zawahir* (the followers of Dawud ibn `Ali who emphasized on the literal meaning of the revelation), etc. participated whole-heartedly. Yet they had different approaches towards *kalam* (rationalistic theology). The traditionists, the *Zawahir* and most of the early jurists showed resentment towards *kalam*. For them studying *kalam* or using its arguments in defense of the faith was itself an undesirable innovation or *zandaqah* (heresy).²²² Many works were composed in this regard to prove the futility and invalidity of such theological works. The Tahrim al-nazr fi kutub ahl al-kalam, of Ibn Qudamah al-Maqdisi is one among the many of this kind.²²³ But some of the orthodox scholars, especially Imam Abu Hanifah,²²⁴ and most of his followers, and many among

²²². Elder, Earl Edger, introduction to the Eng. Trans. of Sharh al-`aqa'id of al-Taftazani, op. cit., p. zv.

²²³ . In this work Ibn Qudamah has severely criticized use of philosophical terminology as well as dialectical language in the discussion of the articles of faith. According to him, even reading of theological works is not appropriate for the ordinary Muslim.

²²⁴ . Al-Nu`man ibn Thabit known as Abu Hanifah, theologian and religious leader was the founder of school of *hanafi fiqh*. He died in 150/767 at the age of 70. In theology as in law, Imam Abu Hanifah played an important role. For more details see the related article in the Encyclopedia of Islam, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 123-24.

the followers of Imam Shafi'i²²⁵ were of the opinion that articles of faith can be described and defended rationally but in accord with orthodox belief. In support of this view there appeared many works. The treatise of Imam al-Ash'ari, Risalah fi istihsan al-khawd fi 'ilm al-kalam, is one of the classical works in this regard. During the early third century A.H., three movements started simultaneously in different parts of the Muslim world. In Egypt, Imam al-Tahawi (850-933 C.E.) a follower of Imam Abu Hanifah, in Basrah Imam Abu'l-Hassan al-Ash'ari (270/873/-330/941), a follower of Imam Shafi'i, and in Samarqand, Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 333/944), a follower of Imam Abu Hanifah led the orthodox rationalistic movement.²²⁶ There were inner differences in their approaches to some of the issues but in general they all advocated orthodoxy and defended the orthodox creeds by providing rational arguments akin to the orthodox point of view. A systematic and elaborated exposition of orthodox *kalam* can be found in the theological writings of these scholars as well as in the writings of their students and successors. It was al-Ash'ari's version of *kalam* which eventually became dominant in most parts of the Muslim world because of the official support of the Abbasid. The most important issues of the Orthodox *kalam* will be discussed in the context of Shah Wali Allah's *kalam* later in this chapter.

As stated earlier, Shah Wali Allah's Husn al-'aqidah (The Irreproachable Creed) contains the most comprehensive and systematic exposition of his *kalam*. Whatever theological discussions are found in his other works may be said to be further details and explanations of the contents of this work. We will explain the contents of Husn al-'aqidah in the light of his other theological works.

Existence of God:

After praising Almighty God, the Lord of the universe, and offering salutation of peace for the Prophet and his family, Shah Wali Allah says:

“The world has a maker or originator (*sani'*) Who is eternal, living from sempiternity, and will be living everlastingly. His existence is necessary and

²²⁵ . For the life and works of Imam Shafi'i see the related article in the Encyclopedia of Islam, op. cit.

²²⁶ . For details of these three orthodox theological movements see A History of Muslim Philosophy, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 220-74.

His non-existence is impossible. He is transcendent having all the qualities of perfection. He is free from all kinds of imperfection, deficiency and shortcoming.”²²⁷

In the very first sentence, there is an indication concerning the famous theological argument of the existence of God used by almost all the great theologians in the medieval period.²²⁸ Shah Wali Allah, following the early masters of *kalam*, attempts to prove the existence of the Maker or Originator (*sani'*) of the world from the existence of the temporal and contingent world. According to him, the world as an effect is originated and has a cause which is prior to it. Being originated, the world has a beginning which indicates transformation or change from one state to another. But any kind of change or motion necessitates the existence of an agent which makes the change or motion possible. The agent or the mover cannot be a part of the moved or originated body. Otherwise, there will be a need of another agent or mover and so on. Thus it is proved that there must be an agent behind the universal motion and change that is God.²²⁹ Or it can be said that the world is composed of parts or things. Things are composed of substances and accidents which are prior to things. But every kind of composition necessitates a composer who performs the act of composition. By itself no two or more parts can become together in one whole. The agent behind the composition of things in the world as a whole is Almighty God Who is not a part of the world.²³⁰ This assertion that the world has a maker or originator is based on the numerous verses of the Qur'an which bear evidences for the existence of God from the point of the contingent or originated world.²³¹

Talking about the essence or intrinsic nature of God, Shah Wali Allah declares that God is eternal and everlasting. God as the ultimate cause of the universe and a Necessary Being can only be eternal. To deny His eternity means that He is a contingent being which in turn signifies a beginning,

²²⁷ . Shah Wali Allah, Husn al-`aqidah, Urdu trans. pub. In Armaghan, op. cit., p. 496.

²²⁸ . For details consult all the concerned sections in works of the early theologians.

²²⁹ . Shah Wali Allah, Lamahat, op. cit., p. 1.

²³⁰ . Ibid.,

²³¹ . Al-Qur'an, 64:3, 30:27.

motion, change, and transformation in His nature. Likewise, the denial of God's eternity will make His non-existence possible which is contrary to the notion of God as Necessary Being. Change, motion, beginning, and possibility of non-existence are the necessary characteristics of contingent beings. These states or qualities can never be directed or ascribed to God in any way. Otherwise, God's necessity is compromised and He cannot remain God. Shah Wali Allah clarifies his argument further by saying that the affirmation that "He (God) will be living endlessly or everlastingly" implies that He is eternal (*qadim*) not only from the point of view of *azal* (eternity) but also from the point of view of *abad* which means that He will be living everlastingly. This absolute eternity of God signifies that He is not subject to time and space. The assertion, "His existence is necessary and His non-existence is impossible", further explains the nature of God. According to Shah Wali Allah, Necessary Being by definition is that which subsists in itself and is not dependent on anything else other than itself. Dependency on something else simply implies imperfection and defect which cannot be found with respect to God. God is absolutely perfect, sufficient, and stands not in need of any of His creatures.²³² This necessity in "being" distinguishes God's existence from the existence of all possible beings which are dependent on Him in all aspects of their existence.

The statement, "His non-existence is impossible", further illustrates God's necessary being. Non-existence is a contrary notion to absolute and pure existence which is the existence of God. So ascribe non-existence to God is self-contradictory. God is transcendent in the sense that nobody can know Him in His essence. He is not contingent in all aspects. He is not a substance because substance is an element or component of a body in which qualities or accidents subsist. Substance cannot operate without another substance like itself or a natural body, subject to rest and motion. God is not a component in a body or a constituent of anything. He cannot be a locus for qualities and accidents. Furthermore, substance occupies a place and formulates boundaries. It is also susceptible to division. God transcends all these states. He cannot be thought to be in a place having boundaries. Nor

²³² . Ibid., 3:97.

can any kind of division in any category be directed towards the Divine Essence.²³³

God cannot be an accident, says Shah Wali Allah. Accident does not even subsist in itself. It is dependent on substance for its very existence and has no continuity in itself. God rises far above these kinds of imperfections. God is self-subsistent, necessary and has absolute continuity.²³⁴ God cannot be said to be a body, because body is composed of parts which precede it. God is beyond any sort of composition or being mingled with something. He is a simple Reality in the sense that existence and essence are identical in relation to Him.²³⁵ A body resides in a place and in a direction and, therefore, can be pointed at. God, says Shah Wali Allah, exceeds place and direction and, therefore, cannot be indicated to be here or there.²³⁶ Likewise, motion, transformation or any kind of change cannot be thought of in relation to God. These are all qualities of possible beings. Translocation is unthinkable in relation to God because He encompasses the whole universe. Motion is impossible in God because it needs an agent or mover or cause from outside while God Himself is cause of all causes ... the Ultimate Cause. Also change in state and location implies contingency and renewal or revival which can be thought only in relation to contingent beings.²³⁷

As far as God's *istiwa' `ala al-`arsh* (establishment on the Throne) is concerned, Shah Wali Allah says that it does not signify His being in a specific place or direction. The reality of God's establishment on the Throne is known through Divine Revelation as it is said, "(God) the Most Gracious is firmly established on the Throne (of authority)". But the *kayfiyyah* (the mode or state) of His establishment is unknown to man.²³⁸

Since transcendence requires all the qualities of perfection and excellence and avoids all kind of defects, Shah Wali Allah asserts that God possesses all attributes of *kamal* (perfection). But this transcendence of God does not mean that He is absolutely cut off from the world of manifestation

²³³ . Shah Wali Allah, Husn al-`aqidah, op. cit., p. 497.

²³⁴ . Ibid.,

²³⁵ . Shah Wali Allah, al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 168.

²³⁶ . Shah Wali Allah, Husn al-`aqidah, op. cit., p. 497.

²³⁷ . Ibid.,

²³⁸ . Ibid.,

and has no relationship with the contingent world. In fact, there exists a necessary relationship between God and the world. Otherwise, the world could not exist. The world and the various stages of contingent beings constitute creation which point to God, their Creator. The foremost relationship between God and the world, theologically speaking, is creation. It was the Divine Act, taking place with Divine Knowledge and Will which resulted in the creation of the contingent world. Being created through the Divine Will, all the contingent realities are operating according to fixed universal laws. Nothing save God is self-subsistent and self-existent. This is why Shah Wali Allah asserts, “He (God) is the Creator of all the creatures and knower of all the knowable realities. All the possible beings are under His control. The system of the universe is running according to His Will”.²³⁹

Unity of God (Tawhid):

Tawhid literally means “making something one”. Technically, it means to believe in God as One, Unique, and the sole Creator and Administrator of the universe, and to worship Him alone. The doctrine of *tawhid* is one of the most distinguished characteristics of Islam. Islam, being a monotheistic religion, emphasizes greatly the absolute unity and uniqueness of God. This is why *tawhid* has always been one of the most important issues of Islamic theology. The Mu`tazilites even denied the Divine Attributes in order to preserve the unity of God. The orthodox theologians have discussed this issue in their writings from their own point of view. Shah Wali Allah’s elaborated account of *tawhid* can be found in his Hujjat Allah al-balighah. In his Husn al-`aqidah, he describes the whole notion of *tawhid* in two or three sentences: “And nobody shares with Him (God) the necessity of being and deserves to be worshiped. He has no partner in creating and administering (the universal administration)”.²⁴⁰

According to the account in Hujjat Allah al-balighah, *al-tawhid* is the basis of Islamic faith and is the highest kind of righteousness. It is the belief and proper knowledge of *tawhid* which leads to a sincere adoration of and humbleness before God. This, in turn, is the noblest conduct leading to salvation and ultimate happiness. On the basis of *tawhid*, Shah Wali Allah

²³⁹ . Ibid., p. 296.

²⁴⁰ . Ibid., p. 495.

asserts that the believer is able to turn attention towards the unseen Divine Power active in the universal administration. And thus his soul is capable of developing a kind of special relationship with the Divine World. The Holy Prophet, speaking about the importance of *tawhid*, has exemplified it in relation to other religious matters as the heart in relation to the other limbs of the body. When the heart is (spiritually or physically) corrupted the whole body is perverted in that respect. Likewise, when belief in the unity of God is corrupted, the whole religious life of the believer is damaged.²⁴¹

According to Shah Wali Allah, *tawhid* has four stages or grades:

Only God's being is necessary. Nothing else can be said to be the Necessary Being;

The Creator of the Throne, heavens, earth and all the substances (and accidents) is God and only God;

The administrator or organizer of the universe is only God, and

God and only God deserves to be worshiped.²⁴²

As far as the first grade or stage of *tawhid* is concerned, it is made clear in the chapter on "Ontology" that Necessary Being is that which is self-subsistent and self-existent and that is God. God's being is not something added to His essence but His essence is pure being. In other words, the essence and existence of God are identical.²⁴³ This necessary being of God implies His unity and uniqueness on the one hand, and on the other hand, it eliminates any possibility of something else being necessary. All other beings in relation to God are contingent, and their existence is not self-existent. They exist because of their relationship with the Necessary Existing ... God. Apart from God they are mere non-existence. The Necessary Being is one if there were two or more than two necessary beings, they would share necessity as a common property or quality among themselves. In that case the Necessary Being would be something additional to their essences, caused by external agent and they would, then, be contingent.

²⁴¹ . Shah Wali Allah, Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., pp.156-57.

²⁴² . Ibid., p. 157.

²⁴³ . Shah Wali Allah, Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 168.

Again, the Necessary Being involves the question of infinity. The Necessary Being must be infinite because finitude in being is a defect which cannot be directed towards Necessary Being in any respect. Now, there can only be one infinite being. Two or more than two infinite beings are not even thinkable. This is why Shah Wali Allah asserts that only God can be called “the Necessary Being”. Nothing else can be necessary in its being.²⁴⁴

The arguments for the second stage or grade of *tawhid* are already been mentioned in the preceding section. Briefly, every particular thing in the universe and the universe as a whole is a contingent totality. Rest and motion, change and transformation, etc., are the proofs of their contingency. The contingency of the world implies its createdness which in turn necessitates a creator. If not, it would be contingent. It also must be one having no partner in creating the world. Otherwise, it would not be necessary and eternal. This is why Shah Wali Allah maintains that the world has a maker (*sani`*) who is eternal, living and everlasting. His being is necessary. And His non-existing is impossible.²⁴⁵

The third grade or stage of *Tawhid* is that the administrator and director in the heavens and earth is God who is one. It is God alone who takes care of His creatures. The running of the well-organized universal order in a fixed fashion is the strongest argument for the existence as well as for the unity of God. Innumerable verses of the Holy Qur’an describe the unity of God from the point of view of the universal order. For example:

“If there were in the heavens and the earth other gods besides God, these two would have been corrupted.”²⁴⁶

“Say: if there had been other gods with Him as they say behold, they would certainly have sought a way to the Lord of the Throne.”²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ . Shah Wali Allah, Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 157. See also Husn al-`aqidah, op. cit., p. 496.

²⁴⁵ . Shah Wali Allah, Husn al-`aqidah, op. cit., p. 496. See also Lamahat (Arabic), op. cit., p. 1.

²⁴⁶ . Al-Qur’an, 21:22.

²⁴⁷ . Ibid., 17:42.

Shah Wali Allah has quoted some other Qur'anic verses which also signify the unity of God from the point of view of creation. In his Hujjat Allah al-balighah, he refers to the following verses:

“Say: Praise be to God, and peace be on His servants whom He has chosen (for His message). (Who) is better? – God or the false gods they associate (with Him)?”

“Or, who has created the heavens and the earth, and who sends down rain for you from the sky? Yea, with it we cause to grow well planted orchards full of beauty and delight; it is not your power to cause the growth of the trees in them. Can there be another god besides God? Nay, they are the people who deviate from the straight path.”

“Or, who has made the earth firm to live in; made rivers in its midst; set thereon mountains immovable; and made a separating bar between the two bodies of flowing water? Can there be another god besides God? Nay, most of them know not.”

“Or, who listens to the (soul) distressed when it calls on Him, and who relieves its sufferings, and makes you (mankind) inheritors of the earth? Can there be another god besides God? Little it is that you heed.”

Or, who guides you to the depth of darkness on land and sea, and who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His mercy? Can there be another god besides God? High is God above what they associate with Him.”

Or, who originates creation, then repeats it, and who gives you sustenance from heavens and the earth? Can there be another god besides God? Say: Bring forth your argument, if you are telling truth!”²⁴⁸

In short, all the happenings and changes take place in accordance to the Divine Law. Individuals, species, and genera, etc. fulfill the Divine Commands under an unseen administration. The modern mind calls the unseen administration “natural law”. But for Shah Wali Allah, this natural law is nothing other than the fixed universal rules executed by the power of God for the ever growing universe. It is He (God) Who controls the causes of all

²⁴⁸ . Ibid., 27:59-64.

Shah Wali Allah has referred to these verses of the Qur'an in his Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 164.

events. The living organisms as well as the simple elements receive the Divine Command through inspiration. As a result the inter-mixture takes place and the whole system is brought in order. God, absolute Good, keeps the order in conformity with the universal expediency.²⁴⁹

The fourth grade or stage of *tawhid* is that God alone deserves to be worshipped. It has become clear from the preceding discussion that God ... the Necessary Being ... is the sole Creator, Administrator and Maintainer of the universal system. These qualities require that He alone should be worshipped. The Qur'an emphasizes the worship of God alone. According to the Qur'an, all the prophets invited their communities to the worship of the one true God.²⁵⁰

These four kinds or stages of *tawhid* can also be described as "*tawhid fi'l-dhat*" (unity in essence) which means to believe that God is essentially one and He is the only Necessary Being; "*tawhid fi'l-takhliq*" (unity in creation) which means to believe that God is the sole creator of the universe; "*tawhid fi'l-tadbir*" (unity in administration) which means that God is exclusive administrator and organizer of the universal order, and "*tawhid fi'l-ibadah*" (unity in worship) which means to believe that God alone is deserving of worship. This gradation of the doctrine of *tawhid*, made by Shah Wali Allah, finds its basis in the Divine Revelation. Many verses of the Qur'an can be quoted in support of each one of these stages of *tawhid*. A belief contrary to any one of these kinds of *tawhid* is called "*shirk*" (association with God) which is strongly criticized and rejected by the Qur'an. Chapter 112 of the Qur'an describes God's absolute unity and uniqueness in the following words:

"Say: He is God, the One and only; God is Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him."²⁵¹ Or "There is nothing like unto Him."²⁵²

²⁴⁹ . Shah Wali Allah, *Lamahat*, op., cit., pp. 40-41.

See also *Sata`at*, op., cit., pp. 8-9.

²⁵⁰ . Al-Qur'an, 7:54, 59, 65, 73, 85, and 11:25-6, 50, 61, 84.

²⁵¹ . *Ibid.*, 112: 1-4.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 42:11

Shah Wali Allah has devoted two chapters in Vol. 1 of Hujjat Allah al-balighah to the discussion of “*shirk*”, its historical background, its various forms, and its necessary consequences.²⁵³

The Attributes of God:

The issue of the Divine Attributes has been one of the major controversial issues in Islamic theology and philosophy. It was this issue which caused the emergence of many new theological groups among the Muslims. The Mu`tazilites, the Shi`ites and most of the Muslim philosophers, emphasizing the absolute unity of God, asserted that the Attributes of God are identical with His Essence. They argued that the affirmation of God’s Attributes, being necessarily eternal, would necessitate multiplicity of eternals and thus the unity of God would be destroyed. They expressed the Attributes of knowledge, power, will, life, etc., by saying that God knows, is powerful, is willing, is living, but by His Essence. Some of them stated the meanings of these Attributes in a negative sense, i.e., that God is not ignorant, impotent, dead, etc. The most disputed Divine Attribute “the Attribute of speech (*kalam*)” was interpreted in relation to some other things (like in the case of Moses, the speech of God was related to the tree from where it was heard). They maintained that God speaks with a kind of speech which does not subsist in Him but in something else.²⁵⁴

The Karramiyyah maintained that God has attributes which are not identical with His Essence. In order to escape the charge of plurality of eternals or multiplicity in God’s Essence, they asserted that the Divine Attributes are originated and do not subsist in the Divine Essence.²⁵⁵

The Mujassimiyyah (the anthropomorphist) took the Divine Attributes in a purely literal sense and characterized God with human qualities and properties. They even asserted that all those bodily organs which are mentioned in the Qur’an in relation to God such as hands, face, etc. possess a literal meaning.

²⁵³ . Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op., cit., Vol. 1, pp. 156-7.

²⁵⁴ . Al-Tafhimat, op., cit., Vol. 1. Pp. 159-167. Also see W.M. Watt, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought, Edinburgh, 1973, pp. 245-46.

²⁵⁵ . Al-Tafhimat, op., cit., p. 51. (Arabic p. 38).

The orthodox Sunny theologians (the Ash`arites, Maturidites and the following of Imam al-Tahawi) had a different view regarding the Divine Attributes. They held that God has Attributes which are eternal because of their subsistence in the Divine Essence from eternity. The famous Arabic phrase used for the expression of the meaning of their view is “*la hiya Huwa wa la ghayruhu*” which means that the Attributes are not He (God) nor are they other than Him.²⁵⁶ In this way they rejected the Mu`tazilites view of the identity of Attributes with the Divine Essence on the one hand, and the Karramites concept of the contingency and otherness of Attributes from God as well as the anthropomorphist view of the Mujassimiyah regarding the Divine Attributes, on the other hand. According to the Orthodox theology, the Divine Attributes are distinguishable from God’s Essence in the mind because they represent distinct ideas. But in the external world, they are not distinguished from the Divine Essence. They have no such distinct reality completely separate from God. On the contrary they subsist in the Necessary Being from eternity.²⁵⁷

Shah Wali Allah’s account of the Divine Attributes is in harmony with the view of the Orthodox theologians. But his approach to the issue is interesting in the sense that on some points he has tried to reconcile different views held by the philosophers, Sufis and theologians regarding a specific problem which we shall see later on. Talking about the firm belief in the Divine Attributes, he says that to believe in the Attributes of God is one of the highest virtues in Islam and is a necessary part of Islamic creed. A strong belief in the Attributes of God opens the door of relationship between man and God, and enables the former to know more about the Divine Unveiling of Majesty and Sublimity.²⁵⁸

According to Shah Wali Allah, God has Attributes which are eternal, because they belong to and subsist in the Necessary Being from eternity. But this subsistence of the Attributes in the Divine Essence is not like the subsistence of accident in substance or of a substance in a place. The subsistancy of the Divine Attributes in the Necessary Being is of such a nature

²⁵⁶ . Al-Maturidi, Sharh al-fiqh al-akbar, op. cit., p. 19.

²⁵⁷ . Mulla `Ali Qari, Sharh al-fiqh al-akbar, Cairo, 1323 A.H., p. 24, quoted in the Eng. Introduction to al-Maturidi’s Kitab al-tawhid, op. cit., p. xxvii.

²⁵⁸ . Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 167.

that common human reason is unable to comprehend its reality. It is not something which can be expressed in words or described through the everyday language. God is beyond comprehension by pure human reason or can be felt through senses. There exists nothing like unto Him. Yet it is to the benefit of ordinary people, says Shah Wali Allah, to describe Him by His Attributes in metaphorical language so that the people could accomplish their religious duties and actions as responsible beings to the greatest extent.²⁵⁹

Now the question is what is the reality of the Divine Attributes? What is the nature of their relationship with the Divine Essence on the one hand, and to the manifest world on the other hand? The answers which Shah Wali Allah provides to these questions are metaphorical by nature. As far as the reality of the Divine Names and Attributes is concerned, Shah Wali Allah asserts that they are not mere abstracted concepts or notions or non-existents, rather, they are divine and necessary theophanies or *fuyudat* of the Necessary Being. As he writes:

“You must know that we do not mean by the Divine Names “abstracted notions or concepts”. They are far beyond this. They are Divine essences (*aniyyat muqaddasah*) pure epistemies (*huwiyat munazzahah*) and necessary *tajalliyat* or *fuyudat* of the Necessary Being.”²⁶⁰

Shah Wali Allah rejects the view of those scholars who thought of the Divine Names and Attributes as non-existence (*al-a`dam*). According to him, the reality of the Names and Attributes of God is affirmed by the revelation as it is asserted, “The most beautiful names (*al-asma’ al-husna*) belong to God: so call Him by them”.²⁶¹ Shah Wali Allah interprets the view of those scholars who held the Divine Names and Attributes as non-existence as that the Divine Names and Attributes have no reality separate from or completely independent of the Necessary Being.²⁶²

Regarding the relationship of the Divine Names and Attributes to the world of manifestation, Shah Wali Allah explains that *Al-Rahman*, which is the first emanation (*al-fayd al-awwal*) or first origination (*al-sadir al-awwal*) from

²⁵⁹ . Ibid.,

²⁶⁰ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 34.

²⁶¹ . Al-Qur’an, 7:180

²⁶² . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 23.

the Divine Essence, has a universal flow (*fayd*) which is related to all contingent beings. It is related to substance and accident, form and matter, body and spirit, etc. They all exist because of that universal emanation of *al-Rahman*. *Al-Rahman*, in its beneficial relationship to the various stages of the lower existents or manifestations, becomes multiple because of various states and modes. Each state or mode is characterized by a certain name or attribute.²⁶³ This means that the Divine Names and Attributes in their ascending state are one because they are various states or modes of one single name i.e. *al-Rahman*. But in their descending state, the Divine Names and Attributes are numerous because of their involvement in the numerous things or states of things in the world. Or in Shah Wali Allah's own words, "The Divine Attributes in relation to God are one because plurality and multiplicity in the Divine Essence is unthinkable. But in relation to worldly manifestations, the Attributes of God are numerous because the worldly things are numerous, and are nothing other than various manifestations or consequences of the Divine Attributes"²⁶⁴.

But from this correlation between the Divine Attributes and the worldly manifestations (which are contingent in their nature) the contingency of the former should not be deduced. Contingency and *zawal* (fleetingness), according to Shah Wali Allah, can only be directed towards that relationship which is found between the Attributes and their effects (the contingent beings) to the contingent beings themselves, because the contingent beings are completely dependent on the Necessary Being and have no reality of their own. Contingency cannot be directed or ascribed to the Divine Attributes because they are eternal, and are subsisting in the Necessary Being from eternity.²⁶⁵

One thing should be made clear here and that is that all the Divine Attributes and Names are not relative, though they may be relational. This means that not all the Attributes and Names of God should be understood in relation to the world of change. There are some Attributes or names of God such as *al-Hayy* (the Living), *al-Qayyum* (the Eternal and Self-subsistent), *al-Haqq* (the Truth), etc. which can only be thought of in relation to the Divine

²⁶³ . *Al-Budur al-bazighah*, op. cit., pp. 135-6.

²⁶⁴ . *Husn al-'aqidah*, op. cit., p. 99.

²⁶⁵ . *Ibid.*, p. 497.

Essence. In theological language, these kinds of Attributes or Names are called “Essential Attributes”. Because of their correlation with the Divine Essence, some scholars have thought of them as the Divine Essence. Shah Wali Allah rejects this view and asserts that these Essential Attributes, in their totality, are a kind of description of the Divine Essence. But taken separately, each one of them is correlative of but one with the Divine Essence.²⁶⁶ Other Attributes such as *al-Rahman*, *al-Musawwir*, *al-Raziq*, etc. cannot be understood except in relation to the objects of the Divine Activity they indicate.

The account regarding the Attributes given in Lamahat also leads us to the idea of one comprehensive Attribute which is the real basis of all kinds of change and renewal in the universe. Shah Wali Allah says:

“Even though there are renewals in these (worldly) affairs, yet they have recourse to the Eternal Attribute which does not accept any kind of change or renewal in itself. It is the gradation of Divine Grace and truth. Its renewal is taken only in the sense of its appearance in many forms and wonderful emanations according to the condition of the world accepting its grace. This is expressed in a way that the Attributes of God are eternal and their relations are contingent. These Attributes are established for God in consideration of His Being as the Administrator and Maintainer of the universal nature in order that it (the universal nature) may penetrate the whole of the universe, its limbs and its qualities, and not in consideration of His Essence.”²⁶⁷

In his al-Khayr al-kathir, Shah Wali Allah has dealt with the issue of Divine Attributes in a slightly different way. There, he considers the Attributes of God as one of the most fundamental principles of wisdom. For him, the other principles are the knowledge of the Divine Essence and of contingent realities. The Divine Attributes have a middle position or connecting status and play a corresponding role between the Divine Essence and the created world. They issue from the Divine Essence through the first Divine Name *al-Rahman* and cause order in the world. They are manifested in worldly manifestations in various ways. In this state they are called “*al-asma’ al-*

²⁶⁶ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p.25.

²⁶⁷ . Lamahat, op. cit., p. 58. English Trans. is taken from G.N. Jalbani’s trans., op. cit., p.60.

bad'iyyah" (the originative or creative Names). Since worldly things are changing and fleeting, the relative Attributes return back to the Divine Essence and dissolve in It or in the first *fiyd al-Rahman*. In this returning mode these Names are called "*al-asma' al-'awdiyyah*" (the returning Names). The whole process of becoming, disappearing and reshaping and recreating of the worldly manifestations is due to the involvement of the *asma' al-bad'iyyah* and *asma' al-'awdiyyah*. Shah Wali Allah calls this process "*al-sisilah al-dawriyyah* (cyclical or rotational process). What is clear from this detail is that the Divine Attributes or Names play the main role in the universal administration and thus provide a strong basis for the knowledge of the Divine Majesty as well as the rotational process of the universe. This is why Shah Wali Allah asserts that whosoever is granted the knowledge of these cyclical processes (and of related principles) thoroughly, he is given abundant good.²⁶⁸

The other distinct feature of the account in al-Khayr al-kathir is the classification of the most of the Attributes in various groups on the basis of their relationship with the Divine Essence. Their main division is into essential Attributes (*sifat al-dhatiyyah*) and practical or active Attributes (*sifat al-fi'liyyah*). The essential Attributes are those which describe the various essential aspects of God such as His Life, Eternity, Unity, Subsistancy, Reality, Truthfulness, Majesty, Grace, Power, Sufficiency, etc. In short, they are concerned with the Divine Essence rather than the world of change and contingency.²⁶⁹ Shah Wali Allah has further categorized these essential Attributes or Names into many sub-categories. The practical or active Names are those which are related in some way to creatures such as the Names *al-Bari* (the Originator), *al-Khaliq* (the Creator), *al-Raziq* (the Sustainer), *al-Musawwir* (the Giver or Bestower of forms), *al-Hadi* (the Guide), *al-Ghaffar* (the Forgiver), etc. Shah Wali Allah considers all these kinds of Names as various members of one comprehensive Divine Name called "*al-Murid*" (the Willer) because every Divine Action, theologically speaking, is full of wisdom which necessitates the involvement of the Divine Will. These practical or active Names can be further divided into beneficial and punitive Names which can be easily found in the Holy Qur'an.

²⁶⁸ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 24.

²⁶⁹ . *Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.

Some scholars such as al-Imam al-Maturidi have made a distinction between the essential and the practical Names and Attributes. They say that it is correct to say that God knows through His Knowledge, or God is powerful through His Power, or God is eternal through His Eternity, etc. It means that all the essential Attributes can be expressed or predicated to God in this way, but not the practical or active Attributes of God. For example, it is not correct to say that God is Creator through His creation, or that God is Sustainer through His sustenance, or that God is Bestower of forms through His forms, etc. To say that He creates through His creation, or that He sustains through His sustenance, or that He bestows forms upon through His form, or that He originates through His origination, etc. is not correct for the expression of God's practical Attributes.²⁷⁰

Describing the relationship between the Divine Names and Attributes and their corresponding meanings, Shah Wali Allah says that for every kind of name or quality ascribed to a certain thing, there are agreed signs and consequences which make the ascription legitimate. But there are some other signs and characteristics of the thing which are nullified and ignored while naming or characterizing it with certain terms or qualities. For example, the Arabic term "*al-qatl*" which signifies a certain kind of action (killing), involves many things such as the instrument, the subject, the object, etc. But all these factors are ignored in giving a name to the totality of this fact. *Al-qatl* literally means nothing other than the destruction and annihilation of life. The killer, using all these necessary means, destroys the life of the killed. In this way all the realities are signified and named with different words and terms.

The Divine Names and Attributes also have meanings which correspond to them. But we cannot take these Names and Attributes in relation to their meanings in purely literal or human sense. Otherwise, we will anthropomorphize God Who is Transcendent and Absolute. For a better understanding of the Divine Names and Attributes as well as for the better expression of their corresponding meanings, Shah Wali Allah suggests instead the following points:

²⁷⁰ . Al-Maturidi, Sharh al-fiqh al-akbar, op. cit., p. 19.

The Divine Names and Attributes should be taken in their absolute sense not in their primary and purely literal sense;

Metaphorical language should be used where it is necessary in order to express the most appropriate and correct meanings of a Divine Name or Attribute;

Any kind of description which can lead to anthropomorphism should be strictly avoided in relation to the Divine Names and Attributes, and

Any name and attribute which unsuitable and unfitting to His Majesty, should be negated.²⁷¹

Another related question to the issue of Divine Attributes concerns the basis of God's characterization with the Divine Names and Attributes. According to Shah Wali Allah, the issue of Divine Names and Attributes is *tawqifi* (established in revelation). Most of the Names and Attributes are affirmed and clearly predicated to God in the Qur'an. For example, regarding the Power of God, the Qur'an asserts:

Verily God has power over all things.²⁷²

Say: He has the power to send calamities on you from above and below or to cover you with confusion in party strife ...²⁷³

See they not that God, Who created the heavens and the earth has the power to create like of them (new).²⁷⁴

Regarding God's Knowledge the Qur'an affirms:

Verily God knows the secret of the heavens and the earth; and God sees well all that you do.²⁷⁵

With Him are the keys of the unseen, the treasures that none knows but He. He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf does fall but with His Knowledge; there is not a grain in the darkness (or depth) of the

²⁷¹ . Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op.cit. Vol. 1, p. 167. See also al-Budur al-bazighah, op. cit. pp. 139-40.

²⁷² .Al Qur'an, 2:20.

²⁷³ . Ibid., 6:65.

²⁷⁴ . Ibid., 17:99.

²⁷⁵ . Ibid., 49:18.

earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered) but is (inscribed) in the record clear.²⁷⁶

In the same way all other Divine Attributes and Names are affirmed and predicated to God in numerous verses of the Qur'an which provide a religious basis for characterizing God with them (the Attributes and Names). But the nature of this characterization is unknown to the human mind. Any kind of investigation in this regard is forbidden in the *shari`ah*, because the Prophet, peace be upon him, has shown resentment to this kind of investigation.²⁷⁷

Some Attributes:

In his Lamahat, Shah Wali Allah gives a list of Divine Attributes which represent his own point of view regarding the issue. He says:

“Indeed God is living, is Self-subsistent and is the Knower of all the universals and particulars. The knowledge of some other things in this respect does not conflict with Him. He is the Seeing, the Hearing and the Powerful over all possibilities. He is the Willer of whatever He decides, and is the efficient Doer of whatever He desires. He is speaking through inspiration into the hearts of His servants, by calling them from behind the veils and by means of sending an angel who appears before them in a certain form and reveals with His (God’s) permission whatever He likes. He superintends every soul as to what it is doing ... He is the Director, the Wise, the Just, doing nothing but is truth and wherein lies the Universal Expediency for the thing. He knows all in details, but our knowledge falls short of it.”²⁷⁸

The Attribute of Life:

The Attribute of life is one of the essential Attributes of God. This Attribute necessitated by all other attributes such as Knowledge, Will, Mercy, Creativity, Sight, Hearing, Speaking, etc. None of these Attributes can be thought of in the absence of life. In other words, life is the very foundation of and basis for all other qualities. This is why, Shah Wali Allah has mentioned it in the very beginning of his list concerning the Divine Attributes. Life is a kind

²⁷⁶ . Ibid., 6:56.

²⁷⁷ . Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 169.

²⁷⁸ . Lamahat (Arabic), op. cit., p. 57. Eng. Trans. is taken from Jalbani’s trans. op. cit., p. 59.

of perfection and a praiseworthy quality; it is the closest and nearest quality to the nature of God. Death and solidification is a kind of imperfection and defect which cannot be directed towards God. But the question is what life means in relation to God Who is Pure Being, Pure Act and Giver of life. Shah Wali Allah says that living or life in relation to God means the presence of His Essence to His Essence by His Essence without having any kind of multiplicity (in His Essence). In other words, God's consciousness or awareness of Himself means His Life when His Unity is not affected.²⁷⁹

The Attribute of Self-subsistence:

God is Self-subsistent (*al-Qayyum*), which signifies the eternity as well as necessity of His Essence and other Divine Attributes, because Self-subsistent is that which is neither contingent nor dependent in any aspect of its existence on something else. God is not only Self-subsistent in Himself but is also the basis of subsistency of all other beings. Everything exists and subsists because of God. This is why His non-existence (*al-'adam*) is said to be impossible.²⁸⁰ This like the Attribute of Life, is affirmed by the Qur'an. For example:

God, there is no God but He ... the Living, the Self-subsistent, the Eternal.²⁸¹

He is the Living (One); there is no god but He; call upon Him, giving Him sincere devotion. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds.²⁸²

There exists no meaningful controversy among the Muslim scholars regarding the Attributes of Life and Self-subsistency. Only the Mu'tazilites have a different view of predicating these Attributes to Almighty God.

The Attribute of Knowledge:

Knowledge as an Attribute of God is one of the most controversial issues of Islamic theology. For the Mu'tazilites, Shi'ites and the Muslim philosophers, as stated earlier, Knowledge of God is an essential Attribute was identical with God's Essence. According to them, God's Knowledge means "God's knowing things by His Essence", or that "God is not ignorant".

²⁷⁹ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 26. Also see Lamahat (Arabic), op. cit., p. 58.

²⁸⁰ . Husn al-'aqidah, op. cit., p. 896.

²⁸¹ . Al-Qur'an, 2:255, 3:2.

²⁸² . Ibid., 40:65.

They rejected knowledge as an eternal separate reality, being with the Divine Essence from eternity, on the ground that it would necessitate multiplicity of eternals which is a notion contrary to the Unity of God.²⁸³

As a representative of Orthodox theologians, Shah Wali Allah asserts that God has the Attribute of knowledge from eternity. He knows all the universals as well as the particulars. Knowledge, in general, for him, means attainment or occurrence of the form of a thing in the mind of the knower, or simple cognizance and experience of an object. A person who has this experience is called “knower” (‘alim) in relation to the object or concept known. If this is correct of a contingent being (a man) despite all his shortcomings, it is more appropriate but necessary, says Shah Wali Allah, to characterize God with the Attribute of knowledge because of His absolute cognizance, awareness and knowledge of all things. From the stand point of His transcendence above of ignorance and negligence, it is also necessary to call Him “‘Alim” (the Knower and Omniscient).²⁸⁴

The reason given in Hujjat Allah al-balighah for the characterization of God with the Attribute of knowledge is slightly different. There, he says that knowledge originally means “disclosure and unrevealing of the object known”. Now, for God all the possible beings revealed in complete sense, it is necessary to name Him “‘Alim” (the Knowing and Omniscient).²⁸⁵

Based on these arguments, Shah Wali Allah asserts that God knows all the universals as well as particulars. In this assertion, he is in complete accord with the Orthodox theologians. It is an indirect rejection of those who deny the Attributes of God at all or hold the view of identity of Divine Attributes with the Divine Essence. He also rejects the view of those scholars who maintain that God knows only universal but not the particulars. Shah Wali Allah also clarifies that God’s Knowledge is not like ours. We know or comprehend things by way of sensation or reasoning. We distinguish among them on the basis of their accidents or characteristics. But God knows them from the stand point of their causes. God knows all those things which emanate from Him. These things are included or embodied in His Knowledge

²⁸³ . Al-Taftazani, op. cit., p. 51. (Arabic, p. 38). Also see W.M. Watt, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought, op. cit., pp. 245-6-

²⁸⁴ . Al-Budur al-bazighah, op. cit., p. 142.

²⁸⁵ . Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 170.

of His Essence from His Essence which encompasses all the correlatives and attributes of the knowable things. According to Shah Wali Allah, all contingent things are God's effect, and are states or modes of His Attributes.²⁸⁶

The account given in al-Khayr al-kathir regarding God's knowledge of things is again slightly different. Accordingly, Almighty God knows Himself through knowledge by presence. And this knowledge of Himself contains the knowledge of all His Attributes as well as of all of His creatures not only from the stand point of unity but from the stand point of otherness also. This view is mainly based on his assertion that the Divine Attributes are correlatives or necessities of the Divine Essence, and that the creatures are correlatives of His Attributes. There is no doubt that the knowledge of the essential attributes and correlatives of the Essence is included in the knowledge of Himself.²⁸⁷ In short, according to Shah Wali Allah, God knows all the universal as well as particulars by knowing Himself, because all things are caused (*ma'lul*) by His Essence, or all the possible beings are correlatives or necessities or various states or modes, or manifestations of the Divine Attributes. This view of Shah Wali Allah concerning God's knowledge of things is similar to that of Ibn Sina and Suhrawardi in the sense that they also maintain that "all things are known to God due to His Essence. He does not become a Knower of things because He is caused by them, but on the contrary, His Knowledge is the cause for the existence of all things".²⁸⁸

Shah Wali Allah's view of God's knowledge of things resembles that of the Sufis, such as Ibn `Arabi and Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, in the sense that the latter also consider the contingent things ... the objects of knowledge ..., various states, modes or manifestations of the Divine essence and of Its Attributes. But what is surprising in the whole discussion of God's Attribute of knowledge is his assertion that there does not exist a significant difference between the views of the philosophers and the theologians regarding the issue in question. Whatever difference is found in this regard between them

²⁸⁶ . Al-Budur al-bazighah, op. cit., p. 136.

²⁸⁷ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 137.

²⁸⁸ . Ibn Sina, Ilahiyat (Danishnamah-y `Ala'i) ed. M. Mu'in, Tehran, 1371, A.H., pp. 85-6.

is mere verbal disputation which can be easily resolved through further investigation.²⁸⁹

Shah Wali Allah's view of God's absolute Knowledge finds its basis in numerous verses of the Qur'an. For example:

"He knows all that goes into the earth, and all that comes out thereof; all that comes down from the sky and all that ascends thereto. And He is the Most Merciful, the Oft-forgiving. ... By Him Who knows the unseen ... From Whom is not hidden the least little atom in the heavens or on earth; nor is there anything less than that, or greater, but is in the record perspicuous."²⁹⁰

"And God knows all that is in the heavens or on earth. He has full knowledge of all things ... Verily God knows the secret of the heavens and the earth, and God sees well all that you do."²⁹¹

"And whether you hide your words or publish it, He certainly has (full) knowledge of (all) hearts. Should He not know ... He that created? And He is the One that understands the finest mysteries (and) is well acquainted (with them)."²⁹²

Attributes of Hearing (*al-Sam`*) and Seeing (*al-Ru'yah*):

In the discussion concerning the Attribute of knowledge, we learned that knowledge for Allah literally means unveiling or disclosure of the object of knowledge (the knowable thing or concept) for the subject of knowledge (the knower). We also learned that God has knowledge of all the universals and particulars. In His knowledge all conceptual as well as sessional objects of knowledge are included. Despite this fact, Shah Wali Allah, like all of his predecessors, affirms separately the Attribute of Hearing (*al-sam`*) and of seeing (*al-ru'yah*) in relation to God but not the Attributes of touch, smell and taste which are also channels of sessional knowledge. The reason is that, according to Shah Wali Allah, touch, smell and taste are extremely bestial qualities. It is improper to ascribe them to God Who transcends all qualities of this nature. These qualities denote a kind of deficiency,

²⁸⁹ . Al-Budur al-bazighah, op. cit., p. 136.

²⁹⁰ . Al-Qur'an, 34:3-4.

²⁹¹ . Ibid., 49:16, 18.

²⁹² . Ibid., 67:13-4.

imperfection and need to some purely material things which in relation to God are unthinkable. The absence of these qualities can hardly be said to imply “ignorance”, “negligence”, etc. even in relation to human beings. Their absence is not considered as blameworthy as are the absence of hearing (deafness) and of seeing (blindness). In God’s case their affirmation would be considered a deficiency (*ʿayb*) and imperfection (*naqs*) rather than perfection (*kamal*). This is why the Muslim scholars including Shah Wali Allah have shown strong resentment to the idea of God smelling, touching and testing something. Shah Wali Allah has clearly negated these qualities from God by saying that it is unlawful to say that God is *dhaʿiq* (the one who has gustatory sense) and *lamis* (the one who has touching sense).²⁹³

As far as the qualities of hearing and seeing are concerned, their presence is always considered perfection (*kamal*). *Al-Sam`* (hearing) and *al-ruʿyah* (seeing) literally means a complete disclosure of audible and visible things. These two qualities bring the possessor in connection to the near as well as distant things. A person who is deprived of these qualities is ignorant of audible and visible things. Now, God to Whom all the audible and visible things are disclosed in an absolute sense, is more deserving to be characterized with the Attributes of *al-sam`* (hearing) and *al-ruʿyah* (seeing). This is why Shah Wali Allah asserts that it is necessary to call Him (God) *al-Sami`* (the Hearing) and *al-Basir* (the Seeing).²⁹⁴ Also from the point of view of perfection, it is of utmost important to characterize God with the qualities of *al-sam`* and *al-basir*, because the negation of these qualities from God would mean imperfection. In the very beginning of Husn al-ʿaqidah, as stated earlier, Shah Wali Allah has asserted that God possesses all the Attributes and qualities of perfection (*kamal*), and transcends all kinds of imperfection (*nuqsan*), deficiency (*ʿayb*) and fleetingness (*zawal*).²⁹⁵

To believe in God’s Attributes of hearing and seeing is also important from the point of view of our moral life. To believe that God sees all things including our actions, and hears all sounds including our utterances makes man cautious concerning his actions and talking which is the whole of his

²⁹³ . Al-Budur al-bazighah, op. cit., pp. 145-6.

²⁹⁴ . Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp.170-71.

²⁹⁵ . Husn al-ʿaqidah, op. cit., p. 496.

external life. The Qur'an also deals with these Attributes of God mostly in relation to man's moral life. For example:

"And be steadfast in prayer and regular in charity; and whatever good you send forth for your souls before you, you shall find it with God; for God sees well all that you do."²⁹⁶

"Do whatever you want: verily He sees (clearly) all that you do."²⁹⁷

"Those who dispute about the signs of God without any authority bestowed upon them, there is nothing in their hearts but (the quest of) greatness, which they shall never attain to; seek refuge, then, in God; it is He Who hears and sees (all things)."²⁹⁸

"And He will judge with (justice and) truth, but those who invoke besides Him, will not (be in position to) judge at all. Verily it is God (alone) Who hears and sees (all things)."²⁹⁹

Again it should be remembered that the reality (*haqiqat*) of God's hearing sounds and seeing things is proved by *naql* (revelation) and *'aql* (reason). But its *kayfiyyah* (state or mode) is not known to us. It is not correct, according to Shah Wali Allah, to take them in a purely literal sense. Otherwise, we will certainly affirm ears and eyes for God, which means nothing other than making God a human.³⁰⁰

The Attributes of hearing, seeing and knowledge signify God's relationship with the world of manifestation from the stand point of view of His awareness of the latter. This relationship of awareness is not manifold in its essence; despite the variety of the related Attributes it is one and the same. In relation to the visible and audible things, it is called seeing and hearing. While in relation to the knowable and comprehensible things, it is called knowledge.

²⁹⁶ . Al-Qur'an, 2:110.

²⁹⁷ . Ibid., 41:40.

²⁹⁸ . Ibid., 40:56.

²⁹⁹ . Ibid., 40:20.

³⁰⁰ . Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. p. 169.

The Attribute of Power:

Power (*qudrah*) is another quality or Attribute which must be attributed to God not only on the basis of revelation but also from the point of view of our observation of the universal administration. Every single entity in the universe as well as the universal order as such reveals the absolute power of God. What is important here is to know the meaning of power particularly in relation to God i.e., His giving preference to some actions despite having power of other similar or contrary actions.

According to al-Ta`rifat, "*qudrah*" signifies a quality by which a living being is able to execute or abandon an action when accompanied by will.³⁰¹ Imam Ghazali has defined *qudrah* (power) as that which produces the object of power when will is realized and the locus is receptive.³⁰² Shah Wali Allah has described the term "*qudrah*" in various ways but with similar meanings. For him, "*qudrah*" means an equal ability of a person to execute or abandon an act, such that no external cause can be responsible for his choice. Moreover, his choice of alternative does not negate his ability to choose the other.³⁰³ Shah Wali Allah ascribes Power (*qudrah*) an Attribute of God in an absolute sense, that God has power over all possible things in the universe. He asserts that He (God) must be called *al-Qadir* or al-Qadir.³⁰⁴ AS far as God's giving preference to some actions is concerned, Shah Wali Allah relates it to Divine Providence and exigency. The universal order as a whole and the various particular mechanism signify His absolute power on the one hand, but, on the other hand, it reveals Divine Providence, exigency and universal expediency. In his Sata`at, Shah Wali Allah referred to many verses of the Qur'an which explain God's power largely in relation to the particular remarkable process in the universe as well as to the well-ordered universe as a whole. For example:

³⁰¹ . Al-Jurjani, Al-Ta`rifat, op. cit., p. 92, see term "*qudrah*".

³⁰² . Al-Ghazali, Al-Iqtisad fi'l-i`tiqad, partially trans. into Eng. by A.Rahman Abu Zaid, Lahore, 1974, p. 12.

³⁰³ . Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 171. See also Al-Budur al-bazighah, op. cit., p. 143. See also Lamahat, op. cit., p. 59.

³⁰⁴ . Husn al-`aqidah, op. cit., p. 496.

“And God has full power and control over His affairs.”³⁰⁵

“And He has power to send calamities on you, from above and below or to cover you with confusion in party strife.”³⁰⁶

“To God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth.”³⁰⁷

The Attribute of Will (*Iradah*):

Iradah (will) by definition is a quality which necessitates an action for a living being in which it performs an action in a specific way rather than in another.³⁰⁸ For Imam Ghazali, “will” is an attribute the function of which is to distinguish one act from another or give preference to one act over another equally possible act.³⁰⁹ Shah Wali Allah defines the term “*Iradah*” as a determination concerning the performance or abandonment of an action or as an anxiety or that which utilizes a determination regarding doing something or abandoning it.³¹⁰ In his Sata`at and al-Khayr al-kathir, he defines “will” in a slightly different way. He says:

“The will (*Iradah* or *mashi`ah*) apparently means the appearance of intellectual form of a thing (to the mind). After that, an admiration for and an inclination towards it takes place. That inclination then mixes with the temper of heart, and this is how resolution emerges.”³¹¹

In relation to God, *Iradah* (will) is a Divine Attribute which is taken differently by Muslim scholars, particularly in consideration of the world as a whole and the continuous origination of things. For some philosophers, the world, as a necessary effect of the Divine Essence, has no temporal beginning. Therefore, *Iradah* (will) as distinct Attribute cannot be entertained. For the Mu`tazilites, the contingent world came into existence in a specific time through a contingent Divine Will which was not subsisting in the Divine Essence. For al-Nazzam (d. 231/845), the Divine Will means that “God creates

³⁰⁵ . Al-Qur`an, 12:21

³⁰⁶ . Ibid., 6:65.

³⁰⁷ . Ibid., 5:17.

³⁰⁸ . Al-Jurjani, al-Ta`rifat, op. cit., p.11, see term “*Iradah*”.

³⁰⁹ . Al-Ghazali, al-Iqtisad fi'l-i`tiqad, op. cit., p. 37.

³¹⁰ . Lamahat, op. cit., p. 58. See also al-Budur al-bazighah, op. cit., p. 143, and also see Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit. Vol. 1, p. 171.

³¹¹ . Sata`at, op. cit., p. 12.

things according to His Knowledge".³¹² Abu'l-Qasim Muhammad al-Ka'bi maintained that "God wills" means that He is knowing and is powerful and is neither forced to perform an act, nor He is hateful of it. His willing of something means "His creating it according to His Knowledge of that thing".³¹³ The Karramiyyah held that the world is created in a specific time through a contingent Divine Will which subsists in the Divine Essence.³¹⁴ The Orthodox theologians asserted that "will" in relation to God is a Divine Attribute which is eternal, subsisting in the Divine Essence from eternity. The contingent world is a result or outcome of its connection with the eternal Will of God in a specific time without occurrence of any change in the latter (the Divine Will).³¹⁵

Shah Wali Allah's account of the Divine Will is an elaborated version of the Orthodox view. In many of his writings he considers the Will of God as an eternal Attribute subsisting in the Divine Essence. He finds God's Will together with His Power and Knowledge in the various manifestations of the world. The origination of the world from nothing, the perpetual creation of the substances and accidents as well as the composition of all bodies (physical things), and the universal administration, according to him, are clear signs of God's absolute Power, Knowledge and Will. It is the Divine Will which causes Divine Power and Knowledge to bring into existence certain things and effects rather than other similar or opposite things. This is why Shah Wali Allah maintains that God must be called "*al-Murid*" (the Willer).³¹⁶ He considers this contributive name of God a comprehensive one in the sense that it is a basis of all the creative or practical Attributes or Names of God, which in turn are various parts or members of (or related Attributes to) it. He says, "For the Divine Name "*al-Murid*", there are parts or members such as *al-Bari* (the Originator), *al-Raziq* (the Sustainer), *al-Musawwir* (the Bestower of forms), *al-Hadi* (the Guide), *al-Ghaffar* (the Forgiver), *al-Rafi`* (the Evolver),

³¹² . Valiuddin, Mir, "Mu`tazilites" A History of Muslim Philosophy, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 209.

³¹³ . Al-Baghdadi, `Abd al-Qahir, al-Farq bayn al-firaq, Cairo, 1328/1910, p. 166.

³¹⁴ . Ibid., p. 204.

³¹⁵ . Al-Ghazali, Al-Iqtisad fi'l-i`tiqad, op. cit., p. 33.

³¹⁶ . Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 171.

etc.³¹⁷ It means that, for him, the Divine Will is necessarily involved in every actual object of the Divine Power. This Will can also be expressed in Shah Wali Allah's terminology as "Divine Providence" and essential exigency, which together with the Divine Power and Knowledge produces things in accordance with the universal expediency. On the basis of this Divine Will some objects of God's Power receive preference over others.³¹⁸

Concerning the relationship between the eternal Will of God and the contingent world, Shah Wali Allah asserts that the creation of the world as a whole and the particular happenings are due to the Will of God. And it is not incorrect to ascribe the eternal Will of God to the contingent particular things. In support of this view, he has referred in his Sata`at to the following verses of the Qur'an:

"Verily, when He intends a thing, His command is, "Be", and it is."³¹⁹

"And when We will to destroy a town We (first) send a definite order there to those who are given the good things of this life and yet transgress; so that the word is proved true against them; then (it is) We destroy them utterly."³²⁰

The Attribute of Speech (*Kalam*):

Speech (*kalam*) as a Divine Attribute is the most debated and most controversial issues among Muslim theologians. The most problematic aspect of the issue is the status of the Qur'an which is also called "*Kalam Allah*" (the word of God) in 2:75. The question is whether the Qur'an is created or uncreated. The Muslim theologians were divided into three main groups with regard to this issue. The Mu'tazilites, the Khawarij, the Jismiyyah, and most of the Shi'ites were of the opinion that the Qur'an, the *kalam* of God is created. Speech, for the Mu'tazilites, is not a Divine Attribute eternally subsisting in God's Essence. Rather, it is a Divine Act created in something else, i.e., the Preserved Tablets (*al-lawh al-mahfuz*) the Angel Jibra'il, the prophets, the tree in the case of Prophet Musa (peace be upon him), etc. They claim that their view of the createdness of the Qur'an was based on Qur'anic teachings (*naql*) and rational argument (*'aql*). They made frequent use of those verses

³¹⁷ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 25-6.

³¹⁸ . Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 171.

³¹⁹ . Al-Qur'an, 36:82.

³²⁰ . *Ibid.*, 17:16.

of the Qur'an where terms "ja' l" (making), "nuzul" (sending down as a whole), "tanzil" (sending down in parts), etc. are used in some way in relation to the Qur'an. They reasoned that the letters (*huruf*) and the sounds (*aswat*) which produce recitation as well as the paper, the ink and the bindings, as means for the writing of the Qur'an are all contingent. Also the written Qur'an exists in various places and in different times, and is recited by different people at the same time. All these signify the createdness of the Qur'an. The Mu'tazilites differed among themselves in regard to the minor aspects of the issue.³²¹

The Orthodox theologians, contrary to the Mu'tazilites, believed that God has the Attribute of *kalam* (speech) which is eternal and subsists in the Divine Essence from eternity. Imam al-Ash'ari made a distinction between eternal and contingent speech by inventing the idea of "*al-kalam al-nafsi*" (the inner speech) which is not composed of *huruf* (letters) and *aswat* (sounds) and is not subject to contingency. The Qur'an as *kalam Allah* (Speech of God) is that *kalam al-nafsi* and is eternal and uncreated. But the letters, sound, paper, ink, etc., all are contingent and created in time. Imam al-Nasafi (d. 537 A.H.), one of the greatest theologians of his time, and adherent of the Maturidiyyah school of *kalam*, summarized the orthodox view regarding the Qur'an, in his famous "*Aqidah*" (Creed), in the following words:

"He (God) speaks with a kind of speech which is one of His Attributes, from all eternity, not of the genus of letters and sounds. It is an Attribute incompatible with silence and defect. Allah speaks with this Attribute, commanding, prohibiting and narrating. The Qur'an, the Speech of Allah, is uncreated and it is written in our volumes, preserved in our hearts, recited by our tongues, heard by our ears, (yet) it does not reside in them."³²²

Among the orthodox, the Hanbalites and the Zahirites were of the opinion that the Qur'an composed of letters, words and sounds, is eternal and subsists in the Divine Essence from eternity. The extremists among them

³²¹ . Al-Ash'ari, Maqalat al-islamiyyin, op. cit., p. 33.

See also al-Maturidi, Sharh al-fiqh al-akbar, op. cit., p. 19.

³²² . Al-Taftazani, Sharh al-'aqa'id al-nasafi, Eng. trans. op. cit., p. 58.

asserted that even the paper, cover and the bindings are eternal.³²³ The third position was that since the Qur'an as *kalam* of Allah is a Divine Attribute, the question of createdness and uncreatedness should not be raised. This position was taken by Hisham ibn al-Hikam, the famous Shiite theologian who lived in Baghdad till 815 A.C.³²⁴

Shah Wali Allah's approach to the issue of Speech of God (*kalam Allah*) as a Divine Attribute is rationalistic. *Kalam* for him, means technically expression or transmission of intended meanings through affiliated words, indicative of them (the meanings or ideas). God bestows knowledge and various sciences upon His servants. For more explicit instructions, He also casts into their minds some familiar and affiliated words along with these sciences.³²⁵ So to characterize God with the Attribute of speech means that God bestows knowledge and sciences upon His servants along with the affiliated and appropriate words for some explicit instruction. According to Shah Wali Allah, this method of transmission of Divine Knowledge is manifold. Sometimes it is cast in the heart of the prophet through the way of revelation (*why*, which means to put some ideas in the heart of another person). Sometimes this message is conveyed from behind the veil, which means that the speech is heard but the speaker is hidden from sight. On other occasion, He sends His message through His messenger (an angel) who, by God's command and permission, conveys the Divine Message as He wants. This is why Shah Wali Allah asserts that it is necessary to characterize God with the Attribute of *kalam* (Speech). This view is based on the following verse of the Qur'an:

"It is not fitting for a man that God should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind the veil, or by the sending of a messenger to reveal, with God's permission, what God wills; for He is Most High, Most Wise."³²⁶

Shah Wali Allah interprets the term "*wahy*" as instruction (*tafhim*) or casting knowledge in the mind or heart of the recipient at the moment of contemplation of the unseen, or in vision through which the proposed meanings are made clear. The transmission of the Divine Speech from behind

³²³ . Al-Jurjani, Sharh al-mawaqif, op. cit., pp. 495-96.

³²⁴ . Watt, W.M., The Formative Period of Islamic Thought, op. cit., p. 245.

³²⁵ . Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 171.

³²⁶ . Al-Qur'an, 42:51.

the veil refers to that specific speech which is heard without seeing the speaker. But this veil should not be considered a veil or screen of a material nature. This veil is a veil of light which is affirmed by a tradition of the Prophet in some other context. For Shah Wali Allah as for all other Muslim scholars the sending of a messenger means the assimilation of an angel in human form and its delivering of the message of God in an explicit way.³²⁷ From the Islamic point of view, it is the archangel Jibra'il through whom God's message was conveyed to most of the prophets in this specific way.

Shah Wali Allah differentiates between *wahy* (revelation in its technical sense) and *ilham* (inspiration in general) by saying the former (*wahy*), being absolutely true, is completely protected and free from falsehood, and is sent or conveyed only to the prophets. In *wahy*, the meanings as well as the words are from God. In *ilham* (inspiration), the suggestion or message, idea or meanings are received through inspiration but are explained and interpreted in human language.³²⁸ *Ilham* is common to prophets as well as other saintly men but, in some cases, to other creatures also. This is why it bears a shadow of doubt with regard to people other than prophets.

In his *al-Khayr al-kathir*, Shah Wali Allah has dealt with the issue of *kalam Allah* in a metaphysical language. There, he calls *al-kalam* a glimpse from the glimpses of the comprehensive Divine Will in the domain of knowledge. In this domain of the Divine Knowledge there exists spiritual forms (*al-suwar al-muqaddasah*) in the face of each preceding (*lahiqah*) effectiveness (*fi'liyyah*). These Divine Forms have corresponding realities in the physical world which are called *al-huruf wa'l-suwar* (letters and forms). When these Divine forms or ideas, accompanied by Divine Will, are expressed in the related letters (*huruf*) then it is called *al-kalam al-mutajaddad* (a renewed speech). In *al-kalam al-mutajaddad* the letters are assimilated to the ideas or forms in a real intellectual or ideational way in the sense of human speech. When God speaks to somebody by way of Divine Forms or Ideas, a kind of speech is formulated in the very soul of the recipient in a form of well-ordered or well-proportioned speech (*kalam sawiyyah*) and heard letters (*huruf masmu'*). Shah Wali Allah asserts that this is the meanings of *al-*

³²⁷ . *Al-Budur al-bazighah*, op. cit., p. 143-4. See also *Hujjat Allah al-balighah*, op. cit., Vol. 1. Pp. 171-2.

³²⁸ . *Al-Khayr al-kathir*, op. cit., p. 35.

kalam al-nafsi (the inner speech) which Imam al-Ash`ari has pointed out in his writings.³²⁹

Again this *kalam al-nafsi* is applied to these sounds and letters because of the close assimilation which is found between them (the *kalam al-nafsi* and the letters and sounds). In religious terminology, this kind of *kalam* is called *al-wahy* (revelation) or *ilham* (inspiration) which varies according to the nature of the recipient.³³⁰

Divine Providence (Al-Qadr):

Al-Qadr (predestination) is one of the most troublesome terms from point of view of its technical meanings as well as its application to a particular theological sect in Islam. It is always described technically along with another similar term, "*al-qada'*", which also denotes Divine Decree. Muslim scholars have differentiated between these two in terms of application to a variety of interpretations. For the Muslim theologians particularly the Ash`arites, *al-qada'* is the eternal Divine Will related or connected to the possible things from eternity. For them, *al-qadr* means God's creation of things with a certain measurement or special characteristics in their essences and states.³³¹

For the Muslim philosophers, *al-qada'* is an expression of God's knowledge in relation to the existence of the external world so that it may be in the best order and proper regularity. They call it eternal providence (*al-`inayat al-azaliyyah*) which is the basis of the emanation of all the possible existing things from the point of their best and perfect nature. *Al-qadr*, according to them, is an expression which denotes the coming into being of these existing realities i.e., into real (external) existence through their causes in the way determined in *al-qada'*.³³²

For the theosophers and Sufis, *al-qada'* is the expression of all the possible existing realities written in *al-kitab al-mubin* (the Divine Plan Book) and *al-lawh al-mahfuz* (the Preserved Tablet) by the way of origination. And

³²⁹ . Ibid., pp. 33-4.

³³⁰ . Ibid., p. 34.

³³¹ . Al-Jurjani, Sharh al-mawaqif, op. cit., p. 529.

³³² . Ibid. p. 529.

al-qadr is the expression from their detailed external existence of the necessary conditions.³³³ The Qur'an says:

“And there is not a thing but its (source and) treasures (inexhaustible) are with us. But we only send down thereof in due and ascertainable measures.”³³⁴

According to Shah Wali Allah, *al-qadr* or *al-qada'* (predestination) in general means that for every species in the universe a constitution, certain manners of living and actions are fixed. These may be called their natural instincts or intrinsic nature. All species or existing things in the world act effectively in accordance to their natural instincts.³³⁵ As far as the distinction between the meanings of *al-qadr* and *al-qada'* is concerned, Shah Wali Allah differs from the early scholars. Ascribing the view to the orthodox scholars, he says that the people of reality mean by *al-qadr* “the requirement or necessity of the eternal Divine Will”. And by *al-qada'*, they mean the requirement or necessity of the renewal will (*al-iradat al-mutajaddadah*) through which the everyday events take place.³³⁶

In his Lamahat, Shah Wali Allah describes the terms of *al-qada'* and *al-qadr* in relation to the universal nature of things and the everyday happenings in accordance with universal administrative nature (*al-tabi'at al-mudabbirat al-kulliyah*). According to him, each species or individual thing has a fixed law and nature. Each individual member of a specific species necessarily follows those universal laws or universal nature when all the necessary conditions are available and all hindrances are removed. For example, the nature of fire is to burn other things. If a flammable object is thrown into the fire and nothing hinders it from burning, then the fire will definitely burn it without delay. Shah Wali Allah also uses the example of water. He explains that the very nature of water is to flow in all direction if the necessary conditions are fulfilled. For instance, if one side of the pipe is put in the water and the air from within the pipe is sucked from the other side and no other hindrance is found, the water will necessarily rise up, and will fill the space inside the pipe. In both of the above mentioned examples

³³³ . Al-Tahanawi, al-Kashshaf istilahat al-funun, op. cit., p. 1235.

³³⁴ . Al-Qur'an, 15:21.

³³⁵ . Sata'at, op. cit., p. 14.

³³⁶ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 32.

i.e. the fire and water, two things are present: (1) the intrinsic universal nature of the fire and water (which are burning and flowing respectively), and (2) the actual burning of flammable object and flowing of the water into the pipe. According to Shah Wali Allah, the universal or intrinsic nature of things is technically called "*al-qadr*" (providence) while the actual happening of everyday events in accordance with the stated universal administrative nature (*al-tabi`at al-mudabbirat al-kulliyah*) is called *al-qada'* (execution).³³⁷. Theologically speaking, *al-qadr* (providence) and *al-qada'* (execution) with the above mentioned description are both ordained by God, the Creator and the Administrator of the universe.

Explaining the importance of belief in predestination, Shah Wali Allah says that the belief in the Divine Providence is one of the highest virtues and a necessary article of Islamic creed. In this way the believer is able to realize the "One" Who encompasses the whole universe. A strong belief in providence rescues the person from the slavery to worldly things and directs him to the Master of the universe Who originates, administers and organizes all that exists. Worldly manifestations including man's actions and selections appear to him as just reflections of the Divine Decree. This kind of realization and observance impels believers to follow the Divine Law which is provided to them in addition to their universal or intrinsic nature so that they may improve their moral values.³³⁸

In order to show the importance of belief in the Divine Providence, Shah Wali Allah quotes the following two sayings of the Prophet:

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "Whosoever does not believe in providence, both the good as well as the evil thereof (from Allah's side) then I am free (or clear) of him".

The Prophet has said: "A person is not a true believer until he believes in *al-qadr* both good and evil thereof. And unless he knows (believes) that whatever has happened to him was not to be prevented (or returnable from

³³⁷. Lamahat, op. cit., pp. 36-7.

³³⁸. Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 172-3.

him), and whatever is prevented (from happening to him) is not to be happened (to him).³³⁹

Again, Shah Wali Allah explains the transmission or process of becoming of things in the external world in the context of God's absolute knowledge. He says that there is a process or an order between *al-qadr* (providence) which he also calls eternal Divine Will (*al-iradat al-ilahiyyat al-azaliyyah*) and *al-qada'* (the execution) or renewed will (*al-iradat al-mutajaddadah*) which contains five stages. But all these stages or the whole process is completely encompassed by God's knowledge, because nothing exists outside God's knowledge. To believe otherwise is to imply ignorance in God. These five stages are fully explained in Hujjat Allah al-balighah, Vol. 1. A summary of that detailed discussion is given below.

God decreed in *azal* (sempiternity) to originate the best possible world in compliance with all exigencies, and effective and inductive to all additional qualities at the time of its real existence. A certain model or an overall image for the possible world was then determined in which all the events including the universal nature of the species existed comprehensively according to the knowledge of God. This is why nothing is hidden in this world from the God's knowledge. According to Shah Wali Allah, God's willing to bring the world into existence means to determine and fix all the forms of all the universal systems in their complete and perfect manner.

In the second stage God decreed or predetermined the destinies of all the creatures. It is narrated (from the Prophet) that the destinies of all the creatures were (decided and) written fifty thousand years ago, when the actual creation of the heavens and earth took place. Because of His eternal Divine Providence God brought them together under His Throne. All the species received their universal forms there in accordance to the Divine Providence. The specific form of each species is to keep its relative individual members under the limit of that form. For example, the universal form of man will keep all the individual members (the human beings) within the limits of human form or humanity and so on. This universal form of each species means not only the external form of that species, but also signifies their intrinsic nature. The appearance and the natural disposition of the various

³³⁹ . Ibid., p. 173.

species in the world of manifestation is exactly according to the above mentioned eternal Divine Providence or predestination.

Thirdly, when the creation of Adam (peace be upon him) as father of the mankind and the starting point of humanity was decided, the forms of all men were created in the similitudinary world (*`alam al-mithal*). Their happiness and wretchedness were exemplified by light and darkness. They were made responsible for their deeds. And they were endowed with God's knowledge and gnosis, and were instructed to be humble before God. That was the real covenant (*mithaq al-azali*) says Shah Wali Allah, taken from them that day in relation to God and this was placed in their nature. On the basis of that covenant, they are made responsible, and in case of any break in this covenant they are considered blameworthy even though they have forgotten that great event. According to Shah Wali Allah, the worldly creatures are reflections or shadows of those forms which were created in the *azal* (sempiternity).

When the soul is breathed into the embryo within the womb of the mother, the administrative angel receives a Divine Instruction concerning the age, his sustenance, his inclinations, and his final happiness and wretchedness. This is the fourth stage of predestination which is encompassed by the knowledge of God, and through that knowledge is also known to the respective angels.

The final stage related to the Divine Providence according to Shah Wali Allah is that before every actual occurrence of an event in the external world an archetypal form of that event is descended from the *hazirat al-quds* (The Holy Fold). The various causes of that event are activated in the external world and the event takes place. Shah Wali Allah relates many of his personal experiences in this regard.³⁴⁰

It should be made clear that providence described above conflicts in no way with causes in relation to their effects, because, according to Shah Wali Allah, natural as well as artificial causes are also part of God's destination, fulfilling in one way or the other His purposes.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ . *Ibid.*, pp. 173-5.

³⁴¹ . *Ibid.*, p. 176.

Free Will and Pre-determination of Human Actions:

The most controversial aspect of the issue of predestination is whether man's actions are predetermined by God's will and knowledge or whether he is free to choose and act. Is it man who creates or invents his own actions or is it God Who is the creator of man's actions? It was in this context that the term *al-qadr* (providence) was illogically applied to an early Muslim theological sect "*al-Qadariyyah*". The *Qadariyyah* (predecessors of the Mu`tazilites) strongly advocated human free will and opposed the concept of predestination or predetermination of man's actions by the will of and creative act of God. They frequently spoke in opposition to determinism (*al-qadr*) and hence, the name *al-Qadariyyah* was appended to them.³⁴² In accordance with them, the Mu`tazilites and some of the Shi`ah also denied predestination of man's action by God's will or creative act. They asserted that God's knowledge encompasses all the actions of man, but this fore knowledge of God does not impose any kind of determination on man's actions. For them, it is man who himself invents (*yujidu* or *yakhtari`u*) or creates (*yakhluru*) his own actions through his own power and free will. Their contention was that if man's actions were determined and created by God and not by man himself, then the imposition of legal responsibility (*al-taklif al-shar`i*) becomes meaningless. How could be one praised or blamed, rewarded or punished for his or her actions?³⁴³

The *Jabariyyah* went to the other extreme and denied man's free will. According to them, man's actions were destined by the Divine decree. God was considered the sole creator of all the possible things including man's actions. To think of men as creators of their actions was, according to them, the worst kind of *shirk* (polytheism). Man, having no free will and choice, was considered just as an instrument which fulfils or carries out the Divine Commands.³⁴⁴

The Orthodox theologians, particularly Imam al-Ash`ari and al-Maturidi, introduced the doctrine of *istita`ah* (capacity or capability) and *iktisab* (acquisition). According to them, the sole creator of all things,

³⁴² . Watt, M.M., The Formative Period of Islamic Thought, op. cit., p. 116.

³⁴³ . Al-Taftazani, Sharh al-'aqa'id al-nasafi (Arabic), op. cit., p. 116. See also al-Jurjani, Sharh al-mawaqif, op. cit., p. 529.

³⁴⁴ . Al-Tahanawi, Al-Kashshaf istilahat al-funun, op. cit., p. 199.

including man's actions, is God. But God has also created in man a choice to select and a capacity to do or perform deeds and actions. In regard to choice and will man is not destined but is free. Using God's given choice and capacity, man chooses and then performs the actions which have been originated with God. In other words, he acquires actions on the basis of his free will but does not create them. This acquiring of actions is the basis of his being responsible for his deeds. He is also praised or blamed, rewarded or punished because of his choosing and acquiring. Imam al-Nasafi al-Hanafi (d. 537 A.H.) has summarized the orthodox view in the following words:

"God is the creator of all the actions of His creatures whether of unbelief or belief, of obedience or of disobedience. ... His creatures have actions of choice for which they are rewarded or punished. And the good in them (the actions) is by the good pleasure of Allah and the evil in them (the actions) is not by His good pleasure."³⁴⁵

Shah Wali Allah's view regarding the issue in question is similar to that of his orthodox predecessors. He asserts that it is God Who creates all the actions of man, both good and evil. Yet, He is not happy with unbelief and evil deeds. Man has freedom to choose or select actions, but he has no choice or free will in the selection of his choice or free will. His choice or free will is mysteriously caused by the appearance of a beneficial, useful or desirable aspect in a thing. It is the beneficial aspect of a thing itself and man's need or desire of it which compel the free will of man to give preference to it. Even though the person could hardly realize this inner compulsion and inclination of his will in regard to the desired or needed object.³⁴⁶ This means that Shah Wali Allah finds the determination or enslavement of man's choice and free will in the natural causes around him not in the eternal predestination of God. In such a case, man's choice or free will is an effect for the apparent causes. And effect cannot be different from its causes. Shah Wali Allah says that it is impossible that the causes are present with all the conditions but the effect is not found.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ . Al-Taftazani, op. cit., (Eng. trans.), p. 176.

³⁴⁶ . Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 176. See also Husn al-'aqidah, op. cit., p. 498.

³⁴⁷ . Hujjat Allah al-balighah, op. cit., Vol. 1. P. 178.

Summary:

We started the discussion with the definition of the term "*kalam*". Subsequently, a brief account of theological development in Islam was presented. In this regard, the Mu`tazilite movement, being the first rationalistic movement in Islam, was dealt with in detail. In the following section, a detailed description of the Sunny theology was incorporated into the work. In the remaining part of the chapter, Shah Wali Allah's theological views regarding Existence and Unity of God, His Divine Attributes, the question of *al-qadr wa'l-qada'*, free will and predestination, were analyzed in the light of his own writings. His departure from his predecessors, in some issues/cases were clearly pointed out and explained.

Chapter Five: Cosmology (Philosophical Study of the Universe)

Introduction:

“Cosmology is a science dealing with all orders of formal reality, of which the material order is but one aspect. It is a sacred science which is bound to be connected to revelation and metaphysical doctrine in whose bosom alone it becomes meaningful and efficacious.”³⁴⁸

In the last two chapters i.e. Ontology and Theology, we dealt with Shah Wali Allah’s concept of being qua being or the general principles of reality (*al-umur al-`ammah*) and as being qua Being (God) or the First Principle, His Essence and Attributes (*al-umur al-khassah*). The Necessary Being was dealt with in the chapter on Theology not as a part (*juz`*) or one individual (*fard*) of being in general, but as the real being in the external world. But that was not the whole of our discussion concerning being. Being, as stated earlier, also has another correspondent which though contingent and dependent completely on the Necessary Being, has an important place in the total scheme of things. It is the realm of the contingent or possible beings where the relative Divine Attributes are manifested in various forms and states. The subject matter of the present chapter, i.e., Cosmology, is actually contingent being in general. In other words, it is the universal or cosmic order as a whole of which the numerous particular beings are but constituents. These particular beings in the world are related to being not only through the totality of the universe, but also individually. This is so because every particular existent is a manifestation, correspondent and state or mode of the absolute existence in the external world. This account also clarifies our position concerning the question whether “Cosmology” which deals mostly with the world of change and motion, is a branch of metaphysics or whether it should properly be a subject of the physical sciences. We consider cosmology to be the metaphysical study of the physical world and hence, the question above reflects on the presence of the Divine in the physical world.

³⁴⁸ . Nasr, S.H., The Encounter of Man and Nature, London, 1968, p. 22.

The cosmology of Shah Wali Allah as we shall see is religious in the sense that it is, first of all, based on Divine Revelation. It finds its basis in the Divine World. Contrary to modern scientific cosmologies, it never tries to exclude God and His involvement in the universal administration. Shah Wali Allah's description of God's fourfold relation with the world (*ibda`* or origination, *Khalq* or creation, *tadbir* or administration, and *tadalli* or emanation) signifies God's thorough involvement in the cosmic order as a whole, as well as in detail.³⁴⁹ The metaphysical connection of the physical world with the Divine Essence and Attributes is fully realized in the world under these four categories. Shah Wali Allah bases his cosmological doctrines on the monotheistic principle, the principle of unity. The various particulars and systems as well as the various grades of contingent beings are described in such a systematic way that multiplicity leads to unity. For example, the natural species are considered, in his cosmology, to be subject to the universal nature which together with other higher orders is shown to be subordinate to the universal soul --- the responsible agent of God for the cosmic activities. The Universal Soul is considered by the Sufis "the first emanation" from the Divine Essence. But for the Muslim Peripatetics, this Universal Soul, in turn is dominated by a being higher and stronger than it called "the First Intelligence" or "the Active Intellect".³⁵⁰ The first emanated being, whether the Intellect or the Universal Soul, is the closest one in the cosmic hierarchy to the Divine Essence. Through it the whole multiplicity of the universe is brought together and is shown as one unit working under a single administration. Furthermore, Shah Wali Allah frequently quotes verses of the Qur'an and the saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to give religious validity to his cosmological doctrines. His reconciliation of cosmological doctrines with Islamic teachings is one of his distinguishing contributions to this field.

Again, Shah Wali Allah's cosmology is philosophical in the sense that after revelation intellectual intuition is its second source. It is the philosophical terminology of the Muslim philosophers particularly that of Ibn

³⁴⁹ . Shah Wali Allah, Lamahat, op. cit., p. 39.

³⁵⁰ . Ibid., pp. 22, 24.

See also Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyah, op. cit., Vol. 2. P. 227. See also Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 19.

Sina and Ibn Rushd, which Shah Wali Allah uses often for the expression of his own cosmological doctrines. And it is not only the use of their terminology which brings Shah Wali Allah close to the Muslim philosophers, but there are also certain views which he shares with them. For example, on the issue of the hierarchy of being, the nature of celestial bodies and the issue of causality, he agrees with the philosophers.³⁵¹ But that does not mean that he is in full agreement with the philosophers in all aspects of cosmology. There are many other issues such as the eternity of the world, the concept of the ten intelligences, etc., in which Shah Wali Allah disagrees with them. Likewise, Shah Wali Allah's conformity to the views of the Sufis in the field of cosmology is beyond doubt. He owes much to the Sufis particularly to Ibn `Arabi, Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi and `Abd al-Rahman Jami in many issues such as the notion of Divine Time (*al-zaman al-ilahi*), the division of being to *al-lahut*, *al-jabarut*, *al-rahmut*, and *al-nasut*; the issue of *al-a`yan al-thabitah* (the archetypes), *`alam al-mithal*, etc.³⁵²

Nature and Creation of the Universe:

The foremost question of any cosmology, whether philosophical or scientific, mystical or religious, is that of the genesis of the cosmos and nature of its component parts. Philosophers, theologians, scientists, and Sufis have approached the issue differently. Our concern in this section is to discuss Shah Wali Allah's view of generation as well as the nature of the universe.

As far as the nature of the universe is concerned, according to Shah Wali Allah, the term "universe" applies to all things other than God. But this otherness does not mean that the universe is independent reality having actuality and determination from within itself. Rather it is an effect of the Divine Attribute called "Will". The actuality, essence, determination, and continued existence of the universe are due to the Divine Will in the sense that the former is related to the latter eternally and everlastingly. Explaining the necessary relationship between the Divine Will and the universe as a whole, Shah Wali Allah says, "We on our own part say that the creation is the will of God and its connection (to the Divine Will) is eternal."³⁵³ But this eternal

³⁵¹ . Lamahat, op. cit., pp. 24-5, 28-33.

³⁵² . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 157-9.

³⁵³ . Al-Khayr al-kathir. Op. cit., p. 32.

connection of the universe to the Divine Will does not imply that Shah Wali Allah believes in the eternity of the world. In fact, in the debate concerning the eternity and contingency of the world, he sides with the orthodox theologians in general, although he differs with them in some aspects of the issue. Contrary to the philosophers, he asserts that world together with time, space, *hayula* (prime matter) is created in the sense that it is created by the Divine Will. In its very nature, the world, perpetually changing from state to state, is related to motion, time and space. These elements (motion, time and space) are preceded by some extended imaginary distance (*bu'd al-mawhum*).³⁵⁴

What distinguishes Shah Wali Allah from his orthodox predecessors is his opposition to the temporal or *zamani* creation (*huduth al-zamani*) of the world. He believes that the world is created but not in time, because time itself, as a co-existent of the world and space, was created with the creation of the world. According to Shah Wali Allah, the creation of the world along with its co-existents such as space and time took place in *azal* (sempiternity). The *azal* is not the name of a fixed limit followed by time. *Azal* is actually only a receptacle (*zarf*) taken for granted for that (sublime) universe which transcends both time and space by its abstraction and priority. It is only in relation to us that there are renewals and terminations with regards to time. With respect to God, time is a pure extension always present with Him. He is performing pure acts in it as He wishes. Shah Wali Allah strongly opposes the idea of those scholars who believe in the temporal creation of time, space and the universe as a whole. He says:

“He who tries the temporal origination (*huduth al-zamani*) for time and its co-existents is wondering in a wilderness. He cannot find any verse or tradition (of the Prophet) as proof in support for it.”³⁵⁵

As far as the problem of the creation of the universe is concerned, Shah Wali Allah deals with it in different ways. He sometimes describes the issue with respect to God’s fourfold relation with the world, for which he has his own terminology. He uses the terms *al-ibda`* (origination or creation out of nothing), *al-khalq* (creating or making a thing out of something), *al-tadbir*

³⁵⁴ . Ibid., p. 33. See also Lamahat, op. cit., p. 15.

³⁵⁵ . Ibid., op. cit., p. 42.

(administration), and *al-tadalli* (emanation). According to him, God created two bodies in the stage of *ibda`*. The first of them is Throne (*al-`arsh*) which is spiritual in its nature, perfect, all-encompassing, and un-penetrable. It has a universal perfect soul. It is Throne, he points out, about which it is rightly said, and “al-Rahman (the most beneficial) is established on the Throne.”³⁵⁶

The second body created from out of nothing, according to Shah Wali Allah, is that of water. It has a dual nature of matter and simple form, capable of receiving any form which is applied to it. In contrast to the Throne, it is imperfect, determined and limited, penetrable, and ultimately devisable. It is a pure material body far removed from the sublime world, and is devoid of *tadbir* (administration), soul and *istila`* (appropriation).³⁵⁷ The account in al-Khayr al-kathir gives us an extended list of the first created things. But the definition of the term *ibda`* is not changed. There Shah Wali Allah says:

“*Al-Ibda`*: it is originating or inventing something without of matter (or out of nothing). And the first originated things (*al-mubtada`at*) are *al-qalam* (the pen), then *al-lawh* (the Preserved Tablet), then *al-`arsh* (the Throne), and *al-ma`* (the water).”³⁵⁸

After *ibda`* (origination), comes *al-khalq* (creation) which means, as stated earlier, bringing something out of a prior matter. It is where the subject of cosmology becomes a subject of interest for the natural scientists as well. This is the stage from where the world of nature with its necessary constituents makes its start. The important question here again is, “what is the basic element from which the physical universe is composed”. According to Shah Wali Allah, it is water from which God created whatever He wanted to create. Shah Wali Allah finds the basis for his view regarding *al-ibda`* and *al-khalq* in the Qur’an as well as in the sayings of the Prophet. He quotes the following verses of the Qur’an in support of his view:

“It is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days --- and His Throne was over the water.”³⁵⁹

³⁵⁶ . Al-Qur’an, 20:5.

See also Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 40.

³⁵⁷ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

³⁵⁸ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 55.

³⁵⁹ . Al-Qur’an, 11:7.

Relative to the above verse, Shah Wali Allah quotes a saying of the Prophet narrated by Imran ibn Hassin, the meaning of which indicates that nothing existed before God. But His Throne was on the water. Then He created the heavens and the earth and wrote everything in *al-dhikr* (the Preserved Tablet). In another tradition, we hear that He (God) created the heavens and the earth from water.³⁶⁰

Shah Wali Allah sees the creating process as a relationship between God and the ever-changing things. But matter, the passage of time, and Universal Soul as God's agent are of inextricably involved in this process. He says:

“By creation is meant making a thing “thing” (making a thing out of something). This is between God and that which changes from state to state. And the subsequent result of this creative relationship is the appearance of the celestial spheres, the elements and all the species with their intrinsic natures and qualities. It is of the prerequisites of creation that the thing created should be preceded by its matter, some passage of time, and that the Universal Soul is inclusive of all things.”³⁶¹

In creation of the particular things, Shah Wali Allah finds a horizontal process working under a hierarchical administration which ends with God on the top. He says that when elements or physical powers mingle with some others, the Universal Soul must descend upon that specific portion of mixture in due proportion. The requirement of this mixture and the involvement of the Universal Soul bring into existence whatever was concealed in the garments of other forms of existence. The real agent of this appearance is the Divine Essence as it makes a continuous flow towards the Universal Soul. The Universal Soul with all of its properties and attributes stands as “passive agent” for the Divine Effusion.³⁶²

In another place, Shah Wali Allah has described the relationship between the Universal Soul, the Throne and water as well as the celestial

See also Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 55.

³⁶⁰ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 41.

³⁶¹ . Lamahat, op. cit., p. 40.

³⁶² . Ibid.,

spheres and elements in a different way. The Universal Soul is the basis and foundation for the whole cosmic order. He says that the first thing which emanated from the First Principle is the Universal Soul. From its active aspect there appeared the Throne, while from the passive aspect of the Universal Soul there manifested water which, in turn, is the matter of the celestial bodies and the simple elements. It was because of the preconditioned effective nature of the Throne that the forms of the celestial bodies and elements appeared in water.³⁶³

The third stage *al-tadbir* (administration), is God's independent governing and management of the cosmic order in such a way that the everyday happenings therein confirm with the universal expediency (*al-maslahat al-kulliyah*). Shah Wali Allah thinks of Divine *tadbir* as a necessary principle in view of the fact of the opposing and contradictory powers and elements which constitute the physical world. In the absence of the Divine Administration, he says, the intermixture of the opposing powers and elements would have led to evil and destruction which is not only undesirable, but necessarily rejected and negated by the Divine Wisdom. It is in the realm of *tadbir* that God's will and creative act is realized and observed not only in the higher stages of *ibda`* (origination) and *khalq* but also in the lower stages of the genera, species, and the three kingdoms (mineral, plants and animals).³⁶⁴

Al-Tadalli is the fourth form of God's relationship with the world as well as with human species in particular. With respect to the world, emanation means God's being as an administrator of the world in the manner as that human soul is the administrator of the human body. In relation to the particular human species, *al-tadalli* is an expression of God's knowledge, guidance and Divine Law for the improvement, perfection, happiness and final salvation of human beings. All revealed religions are the result of this Divine Emanation in the specific sense of the term.³⁶⁵ Again, these four stages of God's relationship with the world are interconnected in a way that brings integrity and unity in the whole created order. As Shah Wali Allah states:

³⁶³ . *Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 109-110.

³⁶⁴ . *Lamahat*, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

³⁶⁵ . *Ibid.*, p. 41.

“Creation (*al-khalq*) is the completion of origination (*ibda`*) and administration (*al-tadbir*) is the completion of creation (*al-khalq*), while emanation (*al-tadalli*) is the completion of the administration (*al-tadbir*).”³⁶⁶

In al-Tafhimat, this fourfold relationship of God to the cosmos is described with respect to the Divine Names and Attributes. The real correspondent in the external world is the Universal Soul in its essence in the sense that it receives constant effusion or emanation from Almighty God. As far as those Divine Names and Attributes which are related to administration and emanation are concerned, there is constant renewal and beginning in their nature. They are effective in the lower realities.³⁶⁷

The cosmological account of Shah Wali Allah with respect to origination, creation, administration, and emanation is more theological than purely mystical or philosophical. But this is not the only description of his cosmology. Elsewhere he has also dealt with the subject in a purely mystical as well as philosophical manner. His mystical cosmological doctrines are mainly derived from the works of early metaphysicians such as Ibn `Arabi, Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, `Abd al-Rahman Jami, Ahmad Sirhindi, and others. The universe as a great body is considered a requisite of the Divine Grace and Wisdom. This simple body is not of material nature. Rather, it is completely devoid of matter. Shah Wali Allah thinks of the universe as a correlative of the Divine Essence. Describing this necessary relationship of the world with God, he says the universe with respect to its Creator is not like a building to its builder who prepares mud, erects a building and then completes the work. After its completion, the building is in no need of its builder and can stay without his care. If the builder dies or shifts to another region, for example, the building will remain the same. But the case of the universe with respect to God is different. In relation to God, the universe is as rays of the sun are with respect to the sun itself. The sun illuminates the world through its rays. The illuminative quality of the sun does not for a moment cease or departs from it. Likewise, the universe is a *fayd* (effusion or emanation) of the Divine Essence ever present with and completely dependent on it.³⁶⁸ This example

³⁶⁶ . Ibid.,

³⁶⁷ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 110-111.

³⁶⁸ . Lamahat, op. cit., p. 18.

See also Sata`at, op. cit., p. 10.

given by Shah Wali Allah, is very similar to that of Ibn Sina, who has clarified the necessary relationship between the Divine Essence and the contingent world using the sun/rays analogy.

This emanative relationship between God and world, according to Shah Wali Allah, is threefold. First, it involves creation of the Great Body (*al-shakhs al-akbar*) with its two aspects: the active and the passive. Secondly, it involves creation of all the particular beings which potentially exist and are inherent in the very nature of the Great Body. Thirdly, it involves preservation of all the particulars, along with their intrinsic nature as long as they survive. This means that this relationship between God and both the universe as a whole and the particular beings in it implies a continuous *fayd* (emanation) from the Divine Essence. Otherwise, the universe would cease to exist.³⁶⁹

Now the question is what exactly *al-shakhs al-akbar* (the Great Body) is? Shah Wali Allah says that *al-shakhs al-akbar* as the first *fayd* is taken differently by the philosophers and the Sufis. For the philosophers, the first emanation is the “intellect”. The Sufis maintain that the first emanation is the Universal Soul. They also call it as *al-fayd al-aqdas* (the most sacred emanation) or *nafs al-rahmani* (the beneficial soul). Further explaining the nature of the Universal Soul, Shah Wali Allah says that the Great Body or the Universal Soul from the point of view of the Divine Essence does not seem to have emanated from the latter but rather is ever present with it. All the particulars having attributed to the Divine Essence can equally be predicated of the Great Body or the Universal Soul. But from the point of view of its own nature, the Great Body or the Universal Soul is seen as emanation of the Divine Essence which is again always present with the Divine Essence.³⁷⁰ In *Sata`at*, Shah Wali Allah spoke of the Universal Soul as one of the two aspects of *al-shakhs al-akbar*. The second aspect is said to be the Universal Matter.³⁷¹

Shah Wali Allah’s systematic description of cosmology, a complete order from the first created being to the realms of the three kingdoms (the minerals, the plants and the animals), can be found in his metaphysical division of the various worlds. From this perspective, he divides being into

³⁶⁹ . *Lamahat*, op. cit., p. 19.

³⁷⁰ . *Ibid.*,

³⁷¹ . *Sata`at*, op. cit., p. 3. For more details see pp. 2-4.

four main categories: *al-lahut* (the Divine World), *al-jabarut* (the world of pure intelligences), *al-rahmut* (the world of spirits), and *al-nasut* (the world of bodily forms). All these different realms of being are closely related to one another in an orderly manner. For example, the relationship between *al-lahut* and *al-jabarut* is that of quiddity and of its essential characteristics such as the relationship between the number and evenness or between the sun and its rays. The relationship between *al-jabarut* and *al-rahmut* is as the relation of a universal soul to that of an individual member realized in a particular form. *Al-Rahmut* is related to *al-nasut* (the world of bodily forms) in the way in which the soul is related to body, or form to matter. Between *al-rahmut* and *al-nasut* there emerge the celestial bodies and elements. Between these two kinds of being, whichever is closer to spirituality comprises the realm of *al-malakut* (the angelic world of the souls or the supra-sensible world). But those entities which have a material nature constitute the three kingdoms (*al-mawalid al-thalathah*).³⁷² Each realm of these lower beings is further divided into sub-categories which will be discussed later on. Shah Wali Allah points out that these four stages are called *al-aniiyyat al-'ula* (the stages of pure existence), *al-'aql* (the intellect), *al-nafs al-kulliyah* (the Universal Soul), and *al-hayula* (pure matter) by the philosophers.³⁷³

The most detailed description of Shah Wali Allah's cosmology in its descending order with respect to the hierarchy or gradation of being in the philosophical sense is found in his Lamahat. Starting from Absolute Existence, the hierarchy or order goes down even to the accidents. The various grades of contingent beings which comprise the whole of the universe are described in such a manner that the multiplicity of the possible beings disappears and the unity of being prevails. Each descending order is a necessary consequence of the higher order which in turn is perfection of the lower being. Again, every grade of being is said to be related directly to the Necessary Being which is the source of their existence as well as subsistency. It bears

³⁷² . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 157.

There are two other stages of existence ... *al-wujud al-tashbihi* (allegorical existence) and *al-'awalim tatakawwan fi'l-wahm al-mutlaq* (absolute imaginative existence). We do not think it appropriate to deal with them here.

³⁷³ . Ibid.,

repeating that the language used here is philosophical. For example, the Universal Soul is considered as a consequence (*tabi`*) of the intellect.

Shah Wali Allah's philosophical hierarchy of being starts with *al-lahut* (the Divine World). That is the stage of pure being which is permanent, Necessary, and is beyond any kind of imperfection and dependency. That stage is followed by the stage of *al-`aql* (the Intellect) which is the strongest and closest in nature to the Divine World. The Intellect, because of its highly sublime nature, can only be perceived intellectually. According to Shah Wali Allah, it is a prevailing phenomenon which encompasses all the stages of being below it. It is like an exposition and elucidation for all the *kamalat* (perfections) of the First Principle in intellectual sense. It has a necessary subsequent or dependent called *al-nafs al-kulliyah* (the Universal Soul) through which the Intellect finds connection with the particular souls. The Universal Soul, from its own point of view is a well-established simple being having neither equal nor rival. It has a unique nature in the sense that existence (*al-wujud*) and determination (the universe) meet here together in agreement. The Universal Soul stands in relation to the particular souls as the human body stands in relation to its limbs. These particular souls or parts are the souls of the celestial spheres (*al-aflak*) and the earthly beings or of the simple elements (*`anasir*). Next to the stage of the celestial spheres and the primary elements is the realm of the three kingdoms of nature (*al-mawalid al-thalathah*). These naturally composed beings are related to the celestial spheres and the simple elements, according to Shah Wali Allah, as fever, headache, etc., are related to the human body. As far as the archetypes are concerned with respect to the Universal Soul they stand as designs stand in relation to the imagination of an architect.

Next to the three kingdoms of nature (the minerals, the plants and the animals), there is the realm of pure substances and accidents. Substances are self-subsistent in the sense that they do not subsist in anything other than themselves. They are the first recipients of existence and the essential constituents or elements in all the bodies in an absolute sense. The accidents have no self-subsistent and independent reality. They reside in loci which are other than themselves. These loci are the substances, the self-subsisting created existents. According to Shah Wali Allah, the multiple accidents are parts or particles (*juz'yyat*) of the general accident. Like substances, despite all their dependency, accidents are necessary constituents of natural

phenomena.³⁷⁴ This gradation of being made by Shah Wali Allah not only provides us information concerning his concept of being but also reveals his cosmological doctrines in greater detail. The important aspect of the discussion is that the whole cosmic order is shown absolutely connected to and dependent on the Divine Essence.

In Shah Wali Allah's descending hierarchy of being, we have seen that all the lower stages of contingent beings were derived gradually from the highest stage of existence. But there is another tendency found in Shah Wali Allah's works where the cosmological order is presented in ascending fashion. That can also be called an evolutionary process of the individual parts within a species. But Shah Wali Allah's evolutionary description of the material beings should not be mistaken with that of the modern theory of evolution where evolution is considered as taking place intra-species. In Shah Wali Allah's system every species is determined, permanent and un-transferable into another member species of the same genus or another genus. The only relation he finds in the various species is that the highest or the most developed form of the lower species or genus is close in nature to the lowest form of the higher species or genus. Also there are some common qualities shared among the higher and the lower species share among them. In the higher stage, they appear in greater intensity than in the lower one. For example, Shah Wali Allah affirms soul for each one of the three kingdoms. But the soul found in the minerals is not like the soul of the plants in actuality and efficiency. Likewise, the soul found in the plants in no way can compete with that of the animals irrespective of duration.

Again the process proposed by Shah Wali Allah is a process from potentiality to actuality in the same species. In this process the various primary elements and powers, the universal nature of things, the Universal Soul, the Universal Expediency or Divine Wisdom, all play an important role. Shah Wali Allah explains it with the help of analogy. He says that when we sow a corn-seed in the ground, water, air and earth encompass it. The corn-seed, then, necessarily absorbs in itself small parts (*al-ajza' al-sighar*) of environment around it which are amalgamated and added to its body. As a result of this process, the size of the corn-seed is extended so much that the universal nature finds it necessary to gradually transform it into leaves,

³⁷⁴ . Lamahat, op. cit., pp. 24-5.

branches, trees, flowers, and fruits until the time comes for the disintegration of its structure.³⁷⁵ Shah Wali Allah says that for the common people there is nothing in the whole process except the small parts (*al-ajza' al-sighar*) changing from state to state. But for the people of deep insight, in the growing of different corns in different forms, there is a principle called vegetative soul which under the Divine Command controls and directs the various species of the plants in specific manner.

From the vegetative soul the mind of the sage shifts to the animal soul which is responsible for the worlds of animals in general. From there it turns to the human world, the angelic soul, and the celestial souls. Each one of these souls determines the growth and nature of their respective world. Beyond all these various souls there is a stage of the Universal Soul which is the basis for all the lower souls (*umm al-nufus*) from which all the secondary souls rise. Shah Wali Allah asserts that all the secondary souls are dependent upon the Universal Soul in the same way that as all the cardinal numbers are dependent on the number one or the black letters are dependent on the black lines.³⁷⁶ With this ascending order of the souls there is consequently found an ascending order of physical and spiritual beings which constitute in turn the components in the systematic cosmology of Shah Wali Allah.

In al-Khayr al-kathir, Shah Wali Allah speaks of these various souls in the context of the various contingent worlds describing them in ascending order. Starting from the mineral, he says that mineral is a material body which has soul of a very weak nature. This soul is responsible for the preservation of the essential form and intrinsic nature of the minerals. Next to the minerals is the world of plants. According to Shah Wali Allah, a plant in general possesses a body and has a soul stronger than that of the minerals. The essential nature of the vegetative soul is nourishment or nutrition and augmentation which are also shared by animals. The animal in general also has a body and a soul. However, in addition, the animal soul has faculties of consciousness, sensation, imagination, will, cognition, contentment, anger, etc. Animals have also the ability of locomotion which is also one of their additional distinct characteristics in comparison to plants.

³⁷⁵ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 206-07.

³⁷⁶ . Ibid.,

Higher than the world of animals in general, there comes the stage of rational beings. Rational beings are divided into many categories. The main reason for this categorization is the proportion of the four elements each category possesses. What is common among them is that like the lower stages of the physical world, they are composed of body and soul. The very nature of the rational being is that of intellection (*al-ta`aqqul*) and wisdom (*al-hikmah*). Shah Wali Allah defines *al-ta`aqqul* (intellection) as intellectual and practical adherence to the principles of the cosmos which are the Divine Names.³⁷⁷ The first category of rational being is that of man. Man is the closest among the rational beings to the lower material beings i.e., the minerals, plants and the other animals. The reason is that in man the earthly element is dominant quantitatively, while the four elements are in proper qualitative proportion. Because of his earthly nature, man shares many qualities with the lower animals, such as eating, drinking, having sexual desires, breeding, etc. Shah Wali Allah also mentions another kind of man called *al-insan al-ma'i* (sea-man) in which the element of water is dominant quantitatively but qualitatively the four elements are still in due proportion.

The second category of rational beings is that of the lower angels in whom the airy element prevails quantitatively but qualitatively the four elements occur in fair proportion. They are subordinates and agents for the angels of higher ranks. These angels are closer in nature to chastity and purity than man. Likewise they have stronger and purer soul than that of man.

The third category of rational beings is that of demons or jinn. Here the fiery element prevails quantitatively, while qualitatively the four elements are in good proportion. The jinn because of their fiery nature, are more subtle and stronger than man. According to Shah Wali Allah, they have some supernatural powers and are effective in the lower living beings.

The final category of rational beings is that of the celestial angels which, according to Shah Wali Allah, are assimilations or agents of the Divine Names in perfect souls. They are subtle beings. Some of them are of universal nature and are influential in the natural as well as the intellectual domain. Others are particulars (*juz'yyat*) in the sense that they are in charge only of

³⁷⁷ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 42.

the natural domain ... of the mountains, seas, clouds, etc. They are the closest among the rational beings to the Divine Essence.

Next to the angels is the stage of *al-qalam* (the pen) which, accordingly, is an abstract substance. *Al-Qalam* is an exemplification of the active aspect of Divine Knowledge. Along with *al-qalam* there is the domain of *al-lawh al-mahfuz* (the preserved tablets) which is assimilation of the passive aspect of the Divine Knowledge. This *lawh* is of such a nature that for each one of the Divine Names there is a definite sign in it. The form of that sign is imprinted in it, and both the potential and actual aspects of it appear in it. Thus the form of a specific Divine Name is one but its aspects are many. It encompasses all the realities of the created universe.³⁷⁸

This account of al-Khayr al-kathir covers many aspects of Shah Wali Allah's cosmology such as the domain of the three kingdoms (the minerals, the plants and the animals), the simple elements, the various souls, the angelic world, the classification of the rational beings, the domain of *al-qalam* (the pen), and *al-lawh al-mahfuz* (the preserved tablets), etc. We are now going to deal with some of these areas separately.

The Heavens:

From the metaphysical point of view, the heavens or celestial spheres have an intermediate position between the pure material and the pure spiritual world of the souls and intelligences. The celestial spheres have two aspects ... passive and active. With respect to the higher world i.e., the world of souls and intelligences, the celestial spheres are passive in the sense that they are affected by the Universal Soul or *al-Rahman* and the universal nature. With respect to the lower worlds i.e., the three kingdoms, etc., the celestial spheres are active in the sense that they are effective in them. Their effect in the physical world is so obvious that it is realized even in sensible objects, such as the heat of the sun with respect to the change of weather, or the moon with respect to the tides in the movements of the ocean, etc. This intermediate position of the heavenly spheres sparked a controversy between the metaphysicians and philosophers with regard to the essential

³⁷⁸ . Ibid., pp. 42-4.

For more details see the whole of the second *khazanah* (treasure or chapter) of al-Khayr al-kathir.

nature of the heavenly spheres. For some of the metaphysicians, the heavenly spheres are spiritual in nature. For the natural philosophers, they are elemental but with spirits of their own. Shah Wali Allah has tried, once again, to reconcile both of the views concerning the heavenly spheres. In general, Shah Wali Allah agrees with natural astronomers. He is of the opinion that the celestial spheres are elemental in nature. All the planets such as the sun, moon, etc., are floating and rotating according to their own natures in their orbits (in the heavenly spheres) in conformity with the fixed order of God. He asserts that the heavenly spheres have spirits and possess knowledge.³⁷⁹

In al-Tafhimat, Shah Wali Allah deals with the heavenly spheres with respect to their subtle nature and sublime souls. He also describes their direct relation with the *wahib al-suwar* (Bestower of the forms) or *al-Rahman* (the Most Beneficent). He says, "Yes, the heavenly spheres have a sublime soul, being similar to the Universal Soul. ... They are always willing to receive emanation from the Bestower of forms (*wahib al-suwar*). So whenever *al-Rahman* decrees a thing, the form of that particular thing is imprinted in it (the soul of the heavenly spheres). The heavenly spheres are equal in receiving and acquiring blessing from the Absolute Reality."³⁸⁰

Shah Wali Allah also believes that the heavenly spheres have their own intelligences which are actually their various respects (*i`tibarat*) and directions (*jihat*) embodied in the world of intelligence (*jabarut*). Contrary to the philosophers, he thinks of these heavenly intellects as the Divine Names. It is these intellects which connect the heavenly spheres with the Divine World (*al-lahut*).³⁸¹

`Alam al-Mithal (The World of Similitude):

Like many other metaphysicians, Shah Wali Allah holds that between the world of spirits and the visible world there exists an intermediate world called *`alam al-mithal* (the world of similitude). He considers *`alam al-mithal* as an aspect of *al-shakhs al-akbar* (the macrocosm) which stands as a

³⁷⁹ . Ibid., op. cit., p. 45.

³⁸⁰ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 167.

³⁸¹ . Ibid., pp. 167-8.

Universal Nature for the secondary souls ... being of particular nature. Shah Wali Allah divides these particular souls into three categories:

Those which are nearest to abstraction and sublimity. These exalted souls comprise the world of spirits.

Those souls which are extensively remote from abstraction and sublimity. This category of souls constitutes the visible world.

Those souls which lie between these two kinds of soul. They constitute the world of similitude.³⁸²

Shah Wali Allah then divides the term *mithal* into three sub-categories with different meanings and expressions. They are:

Determined similitude, a form which gets imprinted either in the imagination in thought or in perception. It is a particular creation (*al-nash'at al-juz'iyah*) of the intellectual creation (*al-nash'at al-'ilmiyyah*).

Absolute similitude which is something like the impression in water or air. It is real and is the result (manifestation) of the Divine Names. But these similitudinary bodies are more delicate and subtle than the material bodies, because their form is subtle and transparent.

“The actualized or real similitude which being a bodily things appears in the external world. In its very nature, it is more determined, deeply rooted and permanent. It may be taken as another worldly body by its very nature.”³⁸³

Man and His Cyclical Process:

Man has a unique position in the universal order. Biologically, he is one of the living beings belonging to a distinct species composed of body and a natural soul. Philosophically speaking, man is a rational being whose deeds and actions and indeed whose whole life is marked by his rationality. He has the faculty of reason which is the basis for his distinctiveness from other animals. From the religious and metaphysical point of view, man is a spiritual being, created by God as His vicegerent on the earth³⁸⁴ for a noble purpose ...

³⁸² . Sata`at, op. cit., p. 3.

³⁸³ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 48.

³⁸⁴ . Al-Qur'an, 2:30.

the worship of God.³⁸⁵ On the basis of his rational soul and intellect, man is connected with the higher stages of reality.

Shah Wali Allah deals with man in many ways in his writings. In al-Tafhimat, he gives a comprehensive description of the gradual development of man in such a manner that the various aspects of his (man's) personality are fully realized in a harmonious way. His body, natural or airy soul (*nasamah*), rational soul, and his spiritual root all are dealt with equitably. According to him, man as a whole does not come into existence at once. Rather, there is a process or gradual development through which man has to pass in order to reach the highest stage of perfection. Each grade or stage has a specific form, an appointed term, a beginning and an end, an order and the requisite resources. It is obvious that the material body or the apparent aspect of man is a result of a long process. Man eats and drinks digestible things. Under the nutritive system within the body certain constituents of food and drink change into gastric juices which are necessary building blocks of sperm, blood and *nasamah* (the natural or airy soul). Then, the sexual intercourse the male sperm mingles with the female sperm. After that, blood is continuously in contact with the mixture (*amshaj*) and the human body is gradually developed from the combination of male and female constituents and blood, just as a plant or bush developed from seed, earth and water. Shah Wali Allah says that this is the order of the outward form or model which is the lowest stage in the whole process.

After the stage of the outward material body, there comes the stage of the *nasamah*. It is actually the subtle part of the mixture attached to the heart of man. When this subtle part comes into contact with the temperature or heat of the heart, it becomes a balanced soul. Shah Wali Allah asserts that man is actually this *nasamah*. As far as the body is concerned, it is like a cover or wrapper (*ghilaf*) of the *nasamah* which protects and accommodates it. When this cover is disengaged or broken, the airy soul remains the same. It is

“Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: ‘I will create a vicegerent on earth’.”

³⁸⁵ . Ibid., 51:56.

“I have only created jinns and men that they may serve Me”.

the *nasamah* by which man is addressed as moral. Also the external and internal senses of man are intelligible at this level.

Shah Wali Allah divides the *nasamah* into three branches and relates them to the animality, rationality and spirituality of man. First, a branch of the *nasamah* which administers the body and requires its desires such as food, drinks and all the delightful things which are useful for the health of the body is called the natural soul. The Sufis call this branch of *nasamah* “*al-nafs*” which is like a small window (*kuwah*) to the body through which the devil suggests or inspires bad thought.

The second branch or part of the *nasamah* is that which goes along with the commands of the rational soul and becomes a manifestation for its emanation as well as a platform for the purification of its state. This branch is called *al-qalb* by the Sufis, and is considered as a window to the body through which the angels communicate with man and lead him to the right things. When man is absorbed in this part of the *nasamah*, he gets satisfaction and purification and is completely humble before God. In the third aspect, the *nasamah* becomes a dais or platform for the appearance of the intellectual activities of the rational soul. This is called *al-`aql* (intellect) through which the cognition and perception of the cognitive faculties is verified. Through intellect, man establishes a kind of relationship with his Lord. It is intellect which is attracted by its nature towards the Great manifestation (*al-tajalli al-a`zam*).³⁸⁶

This description of Shah Wali Allah regarding man’s evolutionary creation and progressive development is in full conformity with the teachings of the Holy Qur’an and sayings of the Prophet. Many verses of the Qur’an and *ahadith* (traditions) of the Prophet deal with man’s progressive creation. For example:

“Verily we created man from a drop of mingled sperm.”³⁸⁷

“O mankind if you have a doubt about the resurrection, (consider) that we created you out of dust, then out of sperm, then out of leach-like clot, then out of a morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, in order that we

³⁸⁶ . *Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 170-71.

³⁸⁷ . Al-Qur’an, 76:2.

may manifest (our power) to you; and we cause whom we will to rest in the womb for an appointed term, then we bring you out as babies, then (foster you) that you may reach your age of full strength; and some of you are called to die, and some of you are sent back to the feeblest old age, so that they know nothing after having known (much)."³⁸⁸

'It is Allah Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections that you may give thanks (to God)."³⁸⁹

Regarding the three stages of soul (*al-nafs*) the Holy Qur'an uses three terms: 1. *Al-nafs al-ammara* which activates and impels man to do bad things; 2. *Al-nafs al-lawwama* which reminds man of his real position after his involvement in sinful and shameful deeds, reproaches him, and tries to bring him out from that blameworthy situation, and 3. *Al-nafs al-mutma'innah* which is in complete accord with the Divine Will and has reached the level of satisfaction and peace.³⁹⁰

In his Sata`at, Shah Wali Allah speaks in detail of a cyclical process of man which signifies man's spiritual and intellectual origin as well as his destiny. According to that account, man, in the beginning, was an abstract pure intellect. From the stage of pure intellect, he descends at an appointed moment to the world of similitude, in the faculties of the celestial spheres and those of the sublime assembly (*al-mala' al-a`la*). The ideal picture of man is drawn in these realms. At that time, according to Shah Wali Allah, it is said, "God has written what has happened and what is to happen", and that picture is called the clear writing.³⁹¹ After that, the reality of man enters into the various stages of *'alam al-mithal*. Then, the earthly causes are ready for his appearance in the material world at a fixed time. At that moment he appears in the visible world in a specific material form. In the world of manifestation, he lives for a certain duration ordained for him by the Divine Administration. After completing his days in the world, he is once again ready for the ascending journey. The material form then discards the bodily cover and he (the human being) resides in the perceptive faculties of the celestial

³⁸⁸ . Ibid., 22:5.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 16:78.

³⁹⁰ . See al-Qur'an 12:53, 75:2, 89:27.

³⁹¹ . Sata`at, op. cit., p. 25.

spheres as well as *al-mala' al-a`la*. Then he further ascends in the same order he had descended till he reaches his original abode. There he takes the form of and becomes once again the same pure intellect he was originally.³⁹²

Analogy between the Macrocosm & the Microcosm:

It has been a tradition among the Muslim Philosophers to describe a partial or total analogy between the macrocosm or *al-shakhs al-akbar* (the universe) and the microcosm or *al-shakhs al-asghar* (the human being). Some of the Muslim scholars such as the *Ikhwan al-Safa* (the brethren of purity) and Imam Ghazali have described this analogical relationship between man and the universe symbolically. They have tried to draw an analogy between human body and some of its organs with a city or with the universe as a whole or with some of its parts. Perhaps it is more appropriate to use the word 'anatomical' than 'symbolic' for their approach.³⁹³ Other philosophers such as Ibn Sina, have tried to find rational basis for the analogy between the microcosm and macrocosm. According to them, parallel to the Universal Intellect which dominates all the realities in the universe, there is a principle ... the human intellect ... in the human body which is a similarly dominant power in the human body.³⁹⁴ Ibn Sian's approach to the issue of analogy between man and the universe can thus be called a 'rational' one.

Shah Wali Allah's view of the analogy between the macrocosm and microcosm is rational and is based purely on his intellectual intuition. In his discussion of the analogy he uses two pairs of terms to express man and the universe: 1. *Al-shakhs al-akbar* (the macrocosm), and 2. *Al-shakhs al-asghar* (the microcosm). We find here two analogical relationships between man and the universe.

Taking the analogical description of man and the universe with the terms *al-shakhs al-akbar* and *al-shakhs al-asghar*, Shah Wali Allah points out three kinds of selfhood (*al-ananiyyat al-thalathah*) in both the macrocosm and microcosm. The *ananiyyat al-thalathah* (three selfhood or self-awareness) found in the macrocosm are: *Ananiyyat al-kubra* (the great

³⁹² . Ibid.,

³⁹³ . See for details S.H. Nasr, An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines, op. cit., pp. 96-101.

³⁹⁴ . Ibid., pp. 259-61.

selfhood) which is the knowledge of the Universal Soul of itself and of all things subsisting in it, like the knowledge of a single thing. *Ananiyyat al-wusta* (medium selfhood or self-awareness) and that is the knowledge of the heart (essence) of the Universal Soul of itself which is irresistible and majestic (*Qahir*) with respect to all that in the universe; influential and effective in them. Thus, its rule, power and dominion are submerged in the universe. *Ananiyyat al-sughra* (the smaller selfhood) and that is the knowledge of those individual souls such as the angels, jinns, man, and other animals which possess will. This kind of selfhood or self-awareness determines each individual's distinct nature from that of his fellow beings. Summarizing, one can say that in the macrocosm three kinds of awareness are found. Its awareness of itself and whatever is in it as a whole; its awareness of its irresistible, majestic and influential nature with respect to the lower realities, and the awareness of the individual souls (which are as organs of the macrocosm) of their distinctiveness and individuality.

After describing these three aspects of *al-shakhs al-akbar*, Shah Wali Allah tries to locate a similar triad of selfhood or kinds of self-awareness in the microcosm (*al-shakhs al-asghar*). Defining *al-shakhs al-asghar* as an individual of the human species, he says that there is an administrative soul in man which looks after all that is in the body of man. This soul cognizes itself with its own awareness. Secondly, there is a heart (*qalb*) of man which is dominant over all the faculties and organs of the body. Shah Wali Allah says that if the human heart had had this knowledge, it would have definitely realized that it is overpowering over and influential in the substances and faculties of the body. Thirdly, even though they are unaware of the fact, every organ and faculty of human body has a distinct nature. Shah Wali Allah asserts that if each one of them knows its own distinct nature, it would have definitely known itself, and its *ananiyyat* (selfhood) would have been externally manifested.³⁹⁵

Shah Wali Allah also points out the difference between these two cases. He says that the heart (*qalb*) of the Universal Soul (which he calls *al-tajalli al-a`zam*) is aware of its dominant position, while the human heart hardly realizes its overpowering and irresistible position against the other organs of the human body. Likewise, the particular souls (which are parts of

³⁹⁵ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 104-05.

the universal soul of *al-shakhs al-akbar*) are aware of their individuality and distinct natures, while the qualities and organs of the human body are ignorant of their individualities and distinctiveness.³⁹⁶

Time and Space:

The issue of time and space has been one of the most debated issues among the Muslim Peripatetics and the orthodox theologians. The former, especially Ibn Sina, hold that time and space as well as the world have no temporal origination. World for him is the necessary effect of the First Cause (God) and exists with It from eternity. Likewise, time, being a measurement for the motion of the celestial bodies, exists with the world from eternity. The orthodox theologians maintained that time is a result of the motion of the celestial bodies (which are created) and therefore is posterior to it and is created. They also introduced the idea of the atomic time which means that time like matter, can be subdivided into atoms or basic units. According to this concept of time every atom of time is created by Divine Command with the creation of atoms of the bodies. These atoms constitute time. Further, it is also linear by nature which has a starting point and an eventual end-point. In order to resolve the dispute concerning time, Ibn Rushd reformulated the concept of circular time. According to him, time is an outcome of the cyclical motion of the celestial bodies which has no beginning and no end. This is why he asserted that time itself is circular and has no beginning and no end.³⁹⁷

Shah Wali Allah's account of time is different from both of these views. His view of time is not only related to the world of change and motion but it also deals with the Divine World of permanence and eternity. He tries to reconcile the contradictory views of the Muslim Peripatetics and the *mutakallimun* (the theologians) by introducing three terms, each one of which conveying different nuances of the meaning of time. These are *al-zaman* (time), *al-azal* (eternity) and *al-zaman al-ilahi* (pure Divine Time). This concept of time resembles Mir Damad's notion of time divided into *sarmad* (absolute eternity), *dahr* (time which transcends the world, space and the

³⁹⁶ . Ibid.,

³⁹⁷ . Kogan, Barry S., "Eternity and Origination: Averroes', Islamic Theology and Philosophy, ed. By Michael E. Marmura, Albany, New York, 1984, pp. 208-09.

humanly conceived time) and *zaman* (time in human sense). According to Shah Wali Allah, the controversy regarding time is verbal not a real one because it does not occur in a single place. In his proposed system, as we shall see, the controversy disappears.

Shah Wali Allah divides time as stated, into three categories: *al-zaman al-ilahi* (Divine Time), *al-azal* (eternity) and *al-zaman* (time). He explains these three levels of time with respect to the fourfold ontological division of reality namely, *al-lahut* (the world of Divine Essence), *al-jabarut* (the world of intelligences or Divine Names and Attributes) *al-rahmut* (the world of spirits), and *al-nasut* (the material or physical world). The Divine World or the Divine Essence Itself transcends all notions of time and space, relations and determinations, contingency, and temporality. But at the same time, the Divine Essence is the first principle of all realities and is the origin of the Divine Names and Attributes or, in philosophical terminology, of all the intelligences. The Divine Names and Attributes are identical with the Divine Essence with respect to their essential nature, but are distinct from It with respect to their relation with the lower realities i.e., *al-rahmut* and *al-nasut*. The relationship between the Divine Essence and the Divine Names and Attributes takes place in *al-zaman al-ilahi* which is eternity in absolute sense. Strictly speaking, the term 'time' could hardly be applied to it.

Again, the Divine Names and Attributes which are eternal in their nature form the original basis of the contingent world. But the relationship between the Divine Names and Attributes and the world is not temporal, rather, it is eternal. As Shah Wali Allah says, "*al-takwin* (the creation) is the will of God and its relation to the Divine Will is eternal (*azaliyy*).³⁹⁸ But this eternity is like that of *al-zaman al-ilahi*. Shah Wali Allah, calling it *azal* describes it as follow:

"The *azal* (eternity) is not the name of a fixed limit, followed by (the concept of) time. It is only a receptacle (*zarf*) taken for granted for that sublime universe which transcends both time and space by its abstraction and priority."³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ . *Al-Khayr al-kathir*, op. cit., p. 32.

³⁹⁹ . *Ibid.*, p. 33.

In al-Tafhimat, *al-azal* is described in the context of the ontological division of reality. There *azal* which transcends time and space, is called the stage where *al-jabarut* (the world of intelligences and Divine Names and Attributes) is distinct from *al-lahut* (the Divine World). In this stage, says Shah Wali Allah, the absolute unity is expounded and is inclined or turned towards all its *muqtadiyahat* (requirements or exigencies) from sempiternity to eternity. As a result, all the *muqtadiyahat* are assimilated in a pure sublime world which transcends time and space.⁴⁰⁰ This means that the relationship between the Divine Names and Attributes (which are the basis for the world) and the world is eternal, not temporal. But it should not be deduced from this that the world itself is eternal. Shah Wali Allah strongly rejects the idea of the eternity of the world. As he says, “We are of the belief that the whole universe together with its time, space and *hayula* is contingent in the sense that it is caused by the Divine Will. By its very nature it (the universe) requires change (from state to state), movement and such relation to time and space which preceded by some extended, imaginary distance (*al-bu'd al-mawhum*).”⁴⁰¹ Shah Wali Allah makes it very clear that although *azal* transcends time and change in all aspects, it does not imply that the object of the eternal act should be necessarily eternal. That means that it is just possible for the object of eternal act to be contingent.⁴⁰²

As far as *al-zaman* is concerned, in Shah Wali Allah’s terminology, it is related to the world of change and motion. It is a consequence of the motion of the celestial bodies and in turn is a measurement of the motion and change of the material things. In other words, the relationship between material things is subject to time and space. In its very nature, time is a self-extending substance which came into existence with the creation of a body. He says:

“Time is the name of the measure of motion and change, whether it is locomotion or substantial or qualitative change, as the sound nature may

⁴⁰⁰ . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 159.

⁴⁰¹ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 33.

⁴⁰² . Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 112.

predicate. The origin of time is this capability of undergoing changes infinitely.”⁴⁰³

Again, in relation to the particular material things, time and space have temporal as well as special priority. According to Shah Wali Allah, time and space are self-extending and self-enlarging substances which encompass all things of the physical world. They are related to all the material bodies equally and have penetrated them. Their (time and space) actualization is realized with respect to the actualization of the bodies. This is why, according to Shah Wali Allah, some scholars have thought of them as accidents. He rejects the idea of accidentality of the time and space on the basis that it would imply temporality (origination in time) of them. As stated earlier, Shah Wali Allah does not accept of *huduth al-zamani* (creation within time) for time and space. As he says:

“The whole universe is contingent (*hadith*). However, time and its co-existents (space and the world) are originated in a restricted sense. ... He who tries to prove the temporal origination (*huduth al-zamani*) of time and its co-existent is wandering in a wilderness. He cannot find any verse in the Qur’an or tradition of the Prophet as a proof in support of it.”⁴⁰⁴

Causality:

Causality has been one of the most controversial issues among all philosophers. The Muslim theologians, believing in God’s absolute omnipotence and sovereignty, denied any kind of necessary causal relationship between the natural causes and their effects. God as absolute Cause is believed to be the only efficient cause of all phenomena in the world. The Sufis introduced the idea of the continuously created universe. According to them, the universe is destroyed at every moment and a new creation is brought into existence by God in the subsequent moment. In such system the efficacy of the secondary causes or any kind of necessary causal relationship between the natural causes and their effects is beyond conceptualization. The Muslim philosophers such as al-Kindi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd advocated the efficacy of the natural causes on the secondary level.

⁴⁰³ . Lamahat, op. cit., p. 17.

⁴⁰⁴ . Al-Khayr al-kathir, op. cit., p. 42.

They maintained that there exists a necessary relationship between the secondary causes and their relative effects. But this does not mean that they deny God's involvement in the natural world. God is the Cause of causes, under Whose command all the causes are working appropriately. The everyday experiences and the observed habitual sequence between events and their causes led them to the adoption of the Aristotelian concept of causality or of the four causes namely the material, the formal, the efficient, and the final.⁴⁰⁵

With respect to the issue of causality, Shah Wali Allah sides with the Muslim Peripatetics. He does not deny the efficacy of the immediate or natural causes. A total denial of casual relationship between the immediate causes and their effects, according to him, would lead to chaos. It would imply that things can happen without their immediate causes and as a result certain knowledge of the natural world would be impossible. He thinks of the natural causes as a linkage between the First Cause ... God Who is Eternal ... and everyday happenings. He says:

"Know, that the everyday happenings which take place day by day have certain complete causes with which they are never in variance. Otherwise, there would be existence without its necessary causes. It is also not possible for the cause to be only eternal, because then it would be only eternal and non-temporal (and then there will be no link between the eternal cause and its contingent effect)."⁴⁰⁶

Shah Wali Allah agrees with the orthodox theologians in the sense that the efficacy of the secondary or natural causes is not totally due to their own essences. He asserts that the real agent behind all happenings is God. All other causes are efficacious because God has made them so. These causes receive constantly fresh light from the Great Manifestation (*al-tajalli al-azam*) as token of Divine approval for their efficacy. He says, "Every cause is connected to its effect ... fresh light from the Great Manifestation has

⁴⁰⁵ . Nasr, S.H., An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines, op. cit., pp. 229-30.

⁴⁰⁶ . Lamahat, op. cit., p. 28.

permeated every cause and effect, and has removed every cause from its real causality and instead has made it apparent causality to remain.⁴⁰⁷

Apart from this expressed resemblance and partial agreement with the philosophers and *mutakallimun* (the theologians), Shah Wali Allah has his own description of causality. Among the secondary causes for all the happenings he finds three basic ones in the natural world: 1.The elemental nature of things which is also called “the universal nature”; 2.The planets which according to Shah Wali Allah are influential in the elements. He asserts that some planets do influence even the objects of sense, such as the change of heat and cold by the change of the orientation of the sun to the earth, or such as the ebb and flow of tide because of the change of the orientation of the moon vis-à-vis the earth, and 3.The celestial spheres which according to Shah Wali Allah have spirits of their own. The celestial bodies are influential in the three kingdoms of nature just as our souls are effective in our bodies. Their utmost concern in the world of nature is to look for the betterment of the three kingdoms.⁴⁰⁸

In *lamahah* No. 27 of his Lamahat, Shah Wali Allah discusses the doctrine of causality in greater detail. There, he divides the natural causes of all sublunary happenings into two kinds: 1. The Celestial powers and 2. The terrestrial powers. The celestial powers are further divided into four kinds. First is the passivity of the heavenly powers with respect to the intelligences or first principles. Shah Wali Allah asserts that the particulars or the bodily forms are loci for the manifestation of the various Divine Names. The species have their archetypes or forms, abstracted from matter which is always inclined towards the exigency (*iqtida'*) of the Divine Essence.⁴⁰⁹ The second kind of heavenly causes effective in the natural phenomena are the nature of the planets. Their effect with respect to the three kingdoms is manifold. The reason for the variety of the effects upon the natural things is either the different location of the *mawalid* (the three kingdoms) in relation to the stars, or the difference in the way the sun’s rays fall on natural things and the response of the *mawalid* to those rays.

⁴⁰⁷ . Sata`at, op. cit. p. 12.

⁴⁰⁸ . Lamahat, op. cit. p. 29.

See also Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyyah, op. cit. Vol. 2, p. 147.

⁴⁰⁹ . Lamahat, op. cit. p. 30.

The third category of heavenly powers is the cognitive, intellectual or speculative, and imaginative faculties of man which encounter the chain of the cosmic order as it is regardless of its usefulness or harmfulness. Divine Providence (*al-`inayat al-azaliyyah*) then inspires the most beautiful and desirable state of things in three ways. It provides and creates (if necessary) earthly causes for the production or development of desirable things in the universe. It strengthens the weak but necessary causes in order to get the desired effects. And it restrains and prevents all those causes which are against the universal expediency (*al-maslahat al-kulliyah*). The fourth kind of celestial powers effective in the natural world is actually the agreement or coincidence of the Divine Will with the humble supplication of man when he asks for the required means of a specific object.

Shah Wali Allah also divides the influential earthly powers into four types. They are: 1. The active powers of nature which are inherent in the intrinsic nature of the elements, in the simple substances, and in every specific form of particulars; 2. The passive powers of nature which enable the object to receive an effect from an agent other than itself (as wood burns, iron melts, etc.); 3. The free active powers of the living beings accompanied by will, such as human actions and 4. The passive willing powers of the living beings subject to the heavenly or earthly souls which are stronger than the former.⁴¹⁰

Summary:

We started the discussion with Shah Wali Allah's affinity with the previous Muslim thinkers with respect to cosmology. It has been made clear that Shah Wali Allah's cosmological scheme is comprehensive and has elements akin to almost all great cosmological traditions developed in the Muslim world before him. The rest of the chapter was devoted to Shah Wali Allah's own scheme. The issue of the nature and creation of the universe was dealt with in detail. In discussing the various context in which Shah Wali Allah has dealt with this issue, some ontological discussions, such as the hierarchy or gradation of being, have been repeated but with different perspectives. Subsequently, different parts of the universe, such as heavens and man, have

⁴¹⁰ . Ibid., pp. 31-3.

been dealt with. Shah Wali Allah's different interpretations of man from different point of view are elaborated.

Next we have dealt with the major issues of cosmology, such as time, space and causality, in the context of Shah Wali Allah's own writings. His solution to the problem of time is fully described there. Likewise, his detailed description of causality is presented with respect to the theological and philosophical schemes of causality.

Conclusion

In the main body of this work, we have dealt with the metaphysical thought of Shah Wali Allah along with his background, life and influence. Here, in the conclusion, we are going not to open a chapter of discussion; rather, we intend to present a brief summary of whatever this work contains along with some corollary remarks concerning Shah Wali Allah's specific views.

In the first part, we have pointed out that Shah Wali Allah had a strong basis in religious as well as intellectual sciences. Religion and *hikmah* (Islamic philosophy) had been a hall-mark of his family for centuries. His immediate predecessors, his uncle, Shaykh Abu'l-Rida and father Shaykh `Abd al-Rahim both were great exponents of Islamic philosophy particularly of al-Ghazali and Ibn al-`Arabi's metaphysics. Mirza Muhammad Zahid Harawi, the foremost teacher of Shah `Abd al-Rahim in intellectual sciences, being an eminent theologian and jurist, had a full command of peripatetic philosophy, illuminationist wisdom and Ibn al-`Arabi's gnosis. Along with some original works in the field of intellectual sciences he also wrote glosses on `Allamah Dawani's commentary on Hayakil al-nur of Suhrawardi Maqtul, on the Tajrid of Nasir al-Din Tusi, on the Sharh al-mawaqif of Mir Sayyid al-Sharif al-Jurjani, on `Allamah Dawani's commentary on al-Tahdhib, and on al-Tasawwur wa'l-tasdiq of Qutb al-Din Razi. Thus through the chain of Mirza Muhammad Zahid Harawi, Shah Wali Allah had a direct access to the most dominant intellectual disciplines of the time.

We have also pointed out that Shah Wali Allah studied the transmitted sciences first under the supervision of his father, Shah `Abd al-Rahim and other scholars at *Madrasah-i Rahimiyyah*. He, then, taught these sciences for about twelve years in the same institute. After that he left for Hijaz where he studied *hadith* and some metaphysical treatises under the guidance of distinguished scholars of Makkah and Madinah. This experience at Hijaz broadened his vision and played an important role in the formulation of his intellectual system.

We have also mentioned that the mystical tradition in his family had been very strong. He was initiated into Naqshbandi Order when he was hardly fifteen years of age. He was granted *ijazah* when he was seventeen. In

1143/1731, he received a *khirqah* (Sufi robe) and *ijazah* from Shaykh Abu Tahir Kurdi al-Madani for many Sufi orders. These were the sources and means through which Shah Wali Allah got into various religious and philosophical disciplines. These various experiences enriched his intellectual and religious knowledge and enabled him to formulate his own intellectual system. Based on this account, it has been asserted that Shah Wali Allah's philosophy is not pure discursive and speculative; rather, it is derived from the most reliable sources of human knowledge, the revelation and intellectual and mystical intuition.

One point should be made clear and that is that Shah Wali Allah was an orthodox Muslim. He tried to reform the various aspects of the Muslim community in India on the basis of orthodox Islam. He fought but in a moderate way against all kinds of innovations and un-Islamic practices which found way among the Muslims in India. He thought of those practices and customs the root cause of the down-fall of the Indian Muslims.

It has been also pointed out that Shah Wali Allah's major contribution was his reconciliation between various schools of thought. His reconciliation between the two famous metaphysical doctrines, *wahdat al-wujud* and *wahdat al-shuhud* has been considered a unique contribution to metaphysics. We have also dealt with his theological views in detail. His rational interpretation of some of the controversial issues of theology such as the Divine Providence and free will and determinism has been elaborated. We have also analyzed his views concerning the nature and creation of the universe, man, time, space, and causality. His unique solution to the problem of time as well as his interpretation of causes has been described in the context of his own writings.

We have also dealt with his influence within the Indian subcontinent and outside it. In this regard, it has been pointed out that the influence and effect of Shah Wali Allah was far reaching. It has been mentioned that various elements had been effective in this regard. The most important were his own writings, his four sons and students, their spiritual and intellectual disciples, and the great learning center, the *Madrasah-i Rahimiyyah*. Within a span of about a century (1762-1867), on the basis of his teachings, various religious, political, intellectual, and educational movements arose the strongest and the most far-reaching of which had been the educational and intellectual movement of the School of Deoband. Today the writings of Shah Wali Allah

are studied in the academic institutions throughout the Muslim world particularly, the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and the neighboring countries. Almost all the religious and intellectual schools of thought in the region derive their authority as well as intellectual inspiration from Shah Wali Allah.

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Dr. Hafiz Abdul Ghaffar Khan (The Author):

Dr. Hafiz A.Ghaffar Khan was born in Bannu, Pakistan, in August 1950, in a family with a strong religious background. In his early age, he memorized the Holy Qur'an by heart and studied the preliminary Islamic curriculum locally. In 1970, he left his home town for the study of traditional Islamic sciences and studied in depth both rational and transmitted sciences. In 1973, he joined the prestigious Islamia College, Peshawar University, for his B.A. in Theology. In 1977, securing the highest position in Master Program throughout Peshawar University, he was honored with a Gold Medal and Scholarship for higher study abroad. In 1979, he secured another Gold Medal for his top position in the Master Program for Arabic Language. The same year, he was appointed as faculty member in the Department of Islamic studies, University of Peshawar, Pakistan.

In August 1981, Dr. Khan proceeded to U.S.A. for higher studies (Ph.D.) and joined the Religion Department at Temple University, Philadelphia. At Temple University, he studied philosophy, metaphysics, theology, psychology, and history of religions for five years under renowned scholars of various traditions/religions including Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Professor Isma'il R. al-Faruqi (late). After a successful completion of Ph.D. program in 1986, he returned to Peshawar University, Pakistan, and taught for five years in the Department of Islamic Studies. In 1991, he moved back to U.S.A. and established "Atlanta Dar al-Uloom" for the memorization of Qur'an and Islamic sciences under the al-Farooq Masjid administration and worked as its director till April 1996. In August 1996, he moved to Lawrenceville, GA., and founded "**Georgia Islamic Institute**", an independent institution for the memorization of Qur'an and Islamic sciences. The Georgia Islamic Institute is currently one of the few well-established centers for Islamic learning in U.S.A. Dr. Khan has a long history and rich experience of teaching Islamic sciences and *Hifz al-Qur'an*. Visit: (www.georgiaislamicinstitute.com)

