

## SHAH WALIUULLAH AS A MACRO-SOCIOLOGIST: AN ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

*This research paper describes the sociological contributions of Shah Waliullah. His period of life was famous for political instability, social degeneration, moral deterioration and religious decadence. An all-round decline was visible. In such a suffering state of affairs Shah Waliullah appeared as political, religious and social reformist. He focused on moderation and justice for a purpose to oust society from the quagmire of social vices. Along with this, he also adopted a rational approach rather than traditional methodology to have remedy for social pathologies. In this line, he imparted the concept of the development of society. He has used word Irtiqafat for the development of society in his scholarship Hujjaj Allah al-Baligha. This research paper discusses the social evolution of society which gets completed in four stages.*

**Keywords:** Shah Waliullah, Sociology

### INTRODUCTION

Shah Waliullah was born in 1703 at a small village in India named Pulth. His period of life was famous for political instability, social degeneration, moral deterioration and religious decadence. An all-round decline was visible. In such a suffering state of affairs Shah Waliullah appeared as political, religious and social reformist.

Politically, the political control and authority of the Mughal rulers was diminishing (Sadangi & Mohapatra, 2017, p.14). Aurangzeb Alamgir, the last ruler of Great Mughal period, died when Shah Waliullah was just only four years old. After the demise of Aurangzeb Alamgir, the long list of Later Mughals appeared on the political stage of India. Most of these rulers were incompetent and inept in the field of politics. Shah Waliullah lived to see the rule of almost nine rulers from Bahadar Shah to Shah Alam.

Religiously, society was polarized at that particular time. People had poor understanding of Quran and were lost in sectarian conflict. Moreover, they were divided in different sects of Islam and followed blind *Taqlid* i.e., rigid conformity. In contradiction to such prevailed sets of understandings, he propagated the cause of blending diverse sects (Ben-Rafael & Sternberg, 2010, p. 194) imparted the concept of *Ijtihad* (Stephens, 2018, p. 110) and translated Quran into Persian language for the sake of understanding the true spirit of Islam.

Socially, the society was corrupt and submerged in various kinds of vices and social disease (Ahmad, 2000, p. 196). For instance, the repudiation of remarriage among Hindu, large amount of dowry and squandering of wealth on different events were rampant in society. He, therefore, focused on moderation and justice for a purpose to oust society from the quagmire of social vices. Along with this, he also adopted a rational approach rather than traditional methodology to have remedy for social pathologies. In this line, he imparted the concept of the development of society which he entitled as *Irtiqafat*.

This social development is a process that gets completion in four stages. The first stage has likeness with the social life of nomads. In this stage people rely on agriculture, plantation and taming of animals to meet their fundamental human needs. In the second stage, people reside in the urban cities. It is little bit complex than the first stage in the context of challenges faced by people and its responses to concerned challenges. In the third stages, government is created for the regularization of state affairs and imposition of taxes. In the fourth stage, the relation among the citizens of different countries is developed. In this stage, he talks about the establishment of an authority superior to existing ruler. Emphatically, this stage is also termed as that of 'internationalization'. Looking at the sociological thoughts of Shah Waliullah, his social reforms and social development of society, can he be termed as macro-sociologist? This will be the purpose of this research.

### **Hypothesis**

Shah Waliullah has conferred profound knowledge regarding the sociological thought and societal development and in that prospect he can be warranted as macro-sociologist.

### **Scope and Significance**

The objective of this paper is to comprehend the sociological thoughts and social development of society of Shah Waliullah. The sociological thoughts of Shah Waliullah and his systematic approach regarding the development of society will also question the notion of entitling August Comte as the 'father of sociology'.

### **METHODOLOGY**

For the conduct of this research, the researcher will depend on the primary works as well as secondary sources. Along with this, the researcher will use descriptive and analytical approach to have research.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Development of Society**

The development of society moves from simple to complex. As an individual grows from birth to childhood, puberty and maturity; in similar way, society also moves from rural to urban, national and international. In *Hujjat Allah Al-Baligha* Shah Waliullah has used term *Irtifaqat* for the evolution of society. The various stages of the growth of society described by Shah Waliullah are here.

#### **The First Stage of Irtifaq**

In the beginning of life society was primitive in nature rather than developed. Man was the slave of one's instinct and nature i.e., food, shelter and clothing. For the fulfillment of material (physical) needs, man discovered the methodology to achieve these needs. To substantiate it, man started taming animals and fabricated clothes from the leather of animals. For the protection and shelter, he constructed huts from straws and other available materials. Similarly, for the fulfillment of food, man commenced cultivation (Chaghtai, 2005, p. 422-423). So, the cultivation, dressing and housing have been developed as a result of satisfaction of the physical needs.

The evolution of society is linked with the distinctive trait of man. This distinctive trait also distinguishes man from that of animal. Shah Waliullah has enunciated three traits that distinguish man from animal.

The first distinctive trait is that Man does not think of himself only but also thinks about the utility of things in the context of society. To authenticate it, Shah Waliullah contends that all animals have instinct of food, shelter and sex. The satisfaction of these instincts is equivalent to the satisfaction of their physical needs. Moreover, he has termed these needs as 'individuality of purpose'. Above than the 'individuality of purpose' human beings have 'universality of purpose' (Al-Ghazali, 2001, p. 44). Universality of purpose means that man after the satisfaction of physical needs works for the betterment of society. The only fulfillment of these physical needs doesn't satisfy him. To get satisfaction man quests for the materialization of rational goals of good social system, salvation in hereafter, cultural accomplishment and perfection of his morals etc. (Nizami, 1987, p.52).

The second distinctive trait of man is aesthetic taste i.e., *Zarafah*. Beasts fulfill their instinct needs without aesthetic taste. Contrast to this, man adds aesthetic sense along with the fulfillment of instinctive needs. Therefore, man yearns for delicious food, graceful dress, magnificent house and beautiful mate (Nizami, 1987, p.52).

The third trait of distinction is understanding, knowledge and intelligence. Some of the individuals have been rewarded with exceptional intelligence that helps in designing the methodology for the development of society (Al-Ghazali, 2001, p. 46). It depends on two factors. One is the knowledge acquired from the source of intuitional guidance and other is knowledge acquired from experience (Al-Ghazali, 2001, p. 46).

In this stage of development Shah Waliullah also highlights the importance of language. He is of the opinion that language is the instrument of expression of anything that is born in mind (Al-Ghazali, 2001, p. 44). It is this language that has created a huge distinction between humans and other existing species. It is because of the fact that the exchanges through words are more influential than that of exchanges done through the gesture.

Necessarily, there must be someone in every nation who might be equipped with exceptional ability to guide the society scientifically. These individuals have the skills to bring order in society and the rest of the people will follow them (Waliullah, 2003, p.120).

### **The second stage of *Irtifaq***

The traits of exceptional ability, knowledge, reason and *Zarafah* i.e., 'aesthetic urge' force man to move further and work for the betterment of society. In this regard, when individual overcomes the fundamental needs of first stage, then one struggles to achieve higher degree of social progress.

This is the stage of urbanization. In this stage man acquires the proper method of eating, sitting, sleeping, dwelling, clothing, decoration, cleanliness, polite conversation, charms against disorder, celebration of events like birth of children, marriages and festivals etc. (Waliullah, 2003, p.121). In this stage, the taste of beauty and life is seen in the daily long actions and interaction of individuals with other fellow beings. Man tries to come across the element of beautification in almost all standards of life. At this stage, temperament is also developed that debars fellow beings from eating harmful food (Waliullah, 2003, p.121).

Here consensus is developed over preferring cleanliness at individual level as well as on surrounding level. Keeping hygiene at all levels; consensus has also developed over the decoration. In this context, the married women should use the beauty care, jewelry, and other means of adornment (Al-Ghazali, 2001, p. 55).

### **The Management of Household**

Shah Waliullah attaches high significance with fundamental social unit of society i.e., family. He describes that family is composed of husband, wife, children and the mutual cooperation between husband and wife. Both husband and wife are dependent on each other as both of them perform their particular tasks in the social system. Man has the responsibility for providing maintenance to wife and wife in response has to remain obedient to husband, manages the home and brings up the children (Waliullah, 2003, p.124). For the strengthening of this bond of matrimonial alliance, Shah Waliullah hints that it is inevitable that both the husband and wife consider each other's interest as one's own (Waliullah, 1980, p.72). He further instructs that good wife is one who is trustworthy and affectionate towards husband. Similarly, a good husband must not be irritant in temper, maintain his wife and protect the sanctity of his wife (Waliullah, 1980, p.72).

Children are the product of the social institution of marriage. The parents should provide proper attention to the health, education and guidance of children. These children once get mature will develop help and care for their aged parents (Waliullah, 2003, p. 124-125).

### **Economic Transactions**

Economic transaction is concerned with means of earning, expansion of different professions, exchange of commodities among the fellow being and cooperation. In this case, some of the individuals have one skill or commodity which is lacked by the rest. Equally, each individual could not fulfill all one's needs single handedly. Therefore, one has to depend on fellow beings for cooperation. Shah Waliullah says that exchange arose due to necessity and exchange among people is the only solution for the fulfillment of diverse needs (Waliullah, 2003, p.127). The expansion of needs also diversified professions. He points out two reasons for each individual that opts for any profession. The first one is the ability of any individual for joining any profession. And the second one is the availability of prevalent opportunities for any individual to fulfill the needs of society (Waliullah, 1980, p.78-79). For instance, the individual who resides at seashore would go for fishing than any other profession. And similarly, those who are incapable of doing the things in proper way would go for gambling, begging and robbery that seems detrimental to society.

Shah Wali Ullah also talks about the systemization of these stages of development. He is of the opinion that the second stage of *Irtifaq* may not occur before the first stage of *Irtifaq*. According to him, the first *Irtifaq* is the initial stage in the ladder of societal progress when man has not yet developed properly. As time passes, one moves to higher stages of development. It was observed that the small villages of first *Irtifaq* now gained the status of big cities along with the prevailed social order in the second stage of *Irtifaq* (Jalbani, 1973, p. 171-172).

### **The Third Stage of *Irtifaq***

This is the stage of nationalism. In this stage of societal development, the small cities and towns are developed into large communities. These communities are then organized through the help of administration for a purpose to avoid chaos and anarchy. Each city is run by an administrator who is subordinate to the executive in center. In the city, there may be individuals of varied form consisting wicked people, secret poisoners, offenders, perpetrators of immoral acts, gamblers and cheaters who could cause disorder in society (Waliullah, 2003, p.129-130). These people who are prone to engender the disruption may be regulated more than others.

Apart from the above-mentioned groups of individuals that deteriorate the society, there are two more causes. First one is the depletion of treasury where the king assigns gifts to one's will wishers like ascetics, poets, soldiers and sometimes *Ulema*. In this case, people take the money from state treasury without doing work for state. The second cause of deterioration is the imposition of heavy taxes on farmers, merchants and professionals that will lead them either to ruin or rebel (Waliullah, 2003, p.131).

### **The conduct of King**

All the people don't follow the order of the society. Therefore, it is inevitable that the society must have a ruler powerful enough who could enforce the order in the case of anarchic situation. To develop respect in the hearts of people, ruler must contain some of the particular characteristics. For instance, the ruler should be brave, gentle, wise, tolerant, intelligent and mentally healthy etc. In case other, the ruler would be burden on society (Al-Ghazali, 2001, p. 68). Whenever, the king perceives any kind of disobedience then the guilty must be punished accordingly. The king should also remain careful in assigning the punishment to his subjects (Waliullah, 2003, p.132-33).

### **The policy towards Assistants**

King needs helpers and without the support of helpers or assistants, he could not run the administration. Therefore, the assistants must be trustworthy to king all the time. King must also be aware well enough to discriminate between those who love king because of fear and those who love him for himself (Waliullah, 2003, p.134). Five of the 'Chief-aides' that Shah Wali Ullah has mentioned in *Hujjat Ullah Al-Baligha* are here.

#### **1) Qazi**

The judge must be a free, independent, sane and mature individual. He is sitting on the position to impart justice to people who are entangled in disputes. Before imparting justice, *Qazi* needs to consider the two aspects. One aspect is concerned with what each of the claimants propagates and other aspect is concerned with the true status of the case (Waliullah, 2003, p.135).

#### **2) Commander of warriors**

Commander of the soldiers is one who is astute in the profession of war, war training to soldiers, spies' deployment and war strategies. He must also be aware regarding the information and strategies of the rivals (Waliullah, 1980, p. 93-94). Moreover, the ruler should not appoint the commander from the group (relatives) whom one cannot easily dismiss (Ghazi, 1984, p. 359).

#### **3) Chief of police**

It is the one who is experienced and knows the means of welfare and that of reasons of the decay of the social order. He is a man with firm and patient capacity. He can't remain silent when he sees the things that displease him (Al-Ghazali, 2001, p. 70).

#### **4) Amil**

'*Amil*' is the institution of tax collector. He collects the taxes and distributes them among those who are entitled to them (Waliullah, 2003, p.136).

#### **5) Wakil**

*Wakil* or secretary is the one who performs the task of the king, where the king could not show his presence in person because of his busy schedule (Al-Ghazali, 2001, p. 71).

### **The Fourth Stage of Irtifaq**

In the context of the social evolution, the fourth stage is the advanced stage. In the previous stage, king accumulated arch amount of wealth and was surrounded by powerful men. Moreover, king is perceived as one of the most potent man inside state. Being potent in the social, financial and political nature, he could also wage war against the bordering states for the acquisition of more land, economy and strength. Therefore, there should be a *Caliph* that could fight against every kind of tyranny and injustice pursued by perpetrators (Waliullah, 2003, p.137) including the king. This is actually the stage of Internationalism. In this stage, Shah Waliullah actually points out regarding the establishment of an international organization which is inevitable for sustaining peace and tranquility (Chaghatai, 2005, p.426).

"To become the greatest international power in the world, this could stand against every challenge of time. It is, therefore, the sacred duty of all the Muslims throughout the world to work hard and spare no pains for the establishment of the Islamic International Organization which could successfully face the combined opposition of evil forces. The completion of favor takes practical shape only when such a great force is created." (Chaghatai, 2005, p. 427-28).

This confederacy also requires an army and war machinery to establish the order of the just by force, if required. Before, engaging in war, the *Caliph* should think carefully for going to war. *Caliph* should not go to war for his own interest (Ghazi, 1984, p. 361-62). Contrast to this, one should work for establishing the general order of the day.

In this stage, the state interacts with other states for similar goal to sustain order, peace and tranquility in the world. When this International organization is strong, powerful and (itself) law abiding then it can force all the subservient states to obey order to establish peace in society (Jalbani, 1967, p. 179-80)

## CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, it is stated that Shah Waliullah has given the concept of socio-political evolution of society in detail. The first stage of *Irtifaq* has resemblance with the social life of nomads. In this stage people rely on agriculture, plantation and taming of animals to meet their fundamental human needs. In the second stage of *Irtifaq*, people reside in the urban cities. It is little bit complex than the first stage in the context of challenges faced by people and its response to concerned challenges. In the third stages of *Irtifaq*, government is created for the regularization of state affairs and imposition of taxes. In the fourth stage of *Irtifaq*, the relation among the citizens of different countries is developed. In this stage, he talks about the establishment of an authority superior to existing ruler. This superior authority (*Khalifah*) requires numerous qualities. This stage is also termed as the stage of 'internationalism'. In the light of all these ideas, Shah Waliullah can be termed as macro-sociologist.

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