

AFFINITY OF IQBAL WITH SHAH WALIYULLAH*

Dr. A.J. Halepota

In order to bring out Iqbal's spiritual affinity with Shah Waliyullah I propose in this discourse to make a comparative study of some salient points in the thought of Iqbal mainly as given in his lectures entitled "Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam" and the thought of Shah Waliyullah, on more or less the same lines as those on which Prof. M.M. Sharif made a comparative study of William James and Iqbal.¹²¹

Philosophers of Modern Age:

Iqbal and William James both were product of the modern age, whereas Shah Waliyullah, as has been claimed by him and more or less substantiated by the history of intellectual development in the modern times, was Fātūh or precursor of the modern age. He laid the foundation of the new approaches to the study of phenomena of life on the lines on which such studies in the modern times are pursued. Iqbal himself has recognised this fact in respect of Shah Waliyullah in his following statement:-¹²²

"The task before the modern Muslim is immense. He has to rethink the whole system of Islam without completely breaking with the past. Perhaps the first Muslim who felt the urge of a new spirit in him was Shah Waliyullah of Delhi."

The method suggested by Shah Waliyullah for the study of phenomena was later adopted not only by Jamaluddin Afghani and other Muslim writers but was also intuitively followed by European philosophers like Comte and Herbert Spenser, who flourished in Europe about a century after him. Long before Iqbal, Shah Waliyullah adopted the attitude regarding modern knowledge about which Iqbal remarks in his lecture on freedom and

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¹²¹ Prof. M.M. Sharif, "About Iqbal and his thought" pp. 49-54.

¹²² *Iqbal*. Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam p. 97.

immorality in the following words:-¹²³

"The only course open to us is to approach modern knowledge with a respectful but independent attitude and to appreciate the teachings of Islam in the light of that knowledge, even though we may be led to differ from those who have gone before us".

Shah Waliyullah visualises modern knowledge as emanating in the form of light and reflected back from the west. This reference is found in the Muqaddamah of Hujjat Allah al-Baligha:¹²⁴

"Then my Lord infused me with the idea that in accordance with what has been decreed upon me by the supreme pen, I will have to get up one day for this great task (exposition of the divine phenomena) and with this idea that the Earth has been enlightened with the light of its Lord and the beams of that light are being reflected back from the West and that the time has nearly arrived when the laws concerning life prescribed by Shariah of Mustafa could be given exposition in the extensive and commodious garb of reasoning and scientific method".

Islamic Heritage:

These extensive forms of exposition of Reality became possible and due only after the new and renovated forms of knowledge were reflected back from the western part of the world of which Shah Waliyullah was so conscious. The knowledge that has been handed over from Europe to the modern world is only a reflection of the sciences of Islamic origin. This indicates that it was with Shah Waliyullah that a beginning was made of "the remarkable phenomenon of the world moving towards the West." This also points to the attitude which Muslims should have adopted towards the European sciences. A reference to these ideas is found in the following statement of Iqbal.¹²⁵

¹²³ *Ibid*, p. 97.

¹²⁴ Shah Waliyullah, Hujjat Allah Baligha p. 3.

¹²⁵ Iqbal, Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam p. 7.

"There was a time when European thought received inspiration from the world of Islam. The most remarkable phenomenon of modern history, however, is the enormous rapidity with which the world of Islam is spiritually moving towards the West. There is nothing wrong in this movement, for European culture, on its intellectual side, is only a future development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam."

Iqbal's Acquaintance With Shah Waliyullah

It is difficult to assess the extent to which Iqbal was influenced by Shah Waliyullah. However, he seems to have been very much interested in the study of Shah Waliyullah's work as is evident from the three letters which he had written to Maulana Suleman Nadvi. In these letters it is indicated that Hujjat Allah al-Baligha, the encyclopaedic work and compendium of Shah Waliyullah's thought has remained under his study. He was also interested to have a copy of al-Budur al-Bazigha and he seems to have been acquainted with the writings of Mussa Jar Allah-- a student of Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, the greatest exponent of the thought of Shah Waliyullah in recent times.¹²⁶

Iqbal's Views About Shah Waliyullah

In his lectures on "Reconstruction of Religious Thought", Iqbal's remarks about Shah Waliyullah reveal his deep and thorough grasp of his philosophy and thought. In his lecture on the Principles of Movement in the Structure of Islam, Iqbal's appraisal of Shah Waliyullah's view on Prophet's method of formulating a code of conduct for universal application is remarkably comprehensive.¹²⁷

In the lecture on Human Ego – Freedom and Immortality, while discussing continuity of life, Iqbal refers to the views of Shah Waliyullah in the following words:¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Shaikh Ataullah, Iqbal— Nama, Letters to Syed Suleman Nadvi, pp. 160-163. 198.

¹²⁷ Iqbal, Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam (Sources of Islamic law-Hadith) pp. 71-72.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 122.

"The point, however, which has caused much difference of opinion among Muslim philosophers and theologians is whether re-emergence of man involves the re-emergence of his former physical medium. Most of them, including Shah Waliyullah, the last greatest theologian of Islam are inclined to think that it does involve at least some kind of physical medium suitable to the ego's new environment."

In this statement of Iqbal a thorough grasp of the thought of Shah Waliyullah is indicated in his interpretation of the Nasma as some kind of medium suitable for the philosophy of Shah Waliyullah. This medium of the soul in various stages of life after the physical death is called Nasma, the Cosmic or astral body which undergoes changes in the various stages of the onward journey of the soul in its life hereafter.¹²⁹

Here it may be mentioned that according to the criterion of Iqbal, Shah Waliyullah's method is more comprehensive than that of Al-Ghazali. According to Shah Waliyullah, 'thought' or 'reason' and intuition (Wahy), as well as the tradition (Naql) and the concrete are intimately related to each other. This view is also held by Iqbal as he makes a comparative analysis of the implication of the methods of Al-Ghazali and Kant,¹³⁰ in which although he gives credit to al-Ghazali for performing almost an apostolic mission of breaking the back of the proud rationalism,¹³¹ which Shah Waliyullah calls 'Al-wahm Zulmāni'¹³² –conjecture leading to the dark — yet he points out the short-coming in method of al-Ghazali saying that it led him to draw a line of cleavage between 'thought' and 'intuition'.¹³³

With these brief general remarks a few points of agreement and affinity discerned in the thought of Shah Waliyullah and that of Iqbal are discussed here:

Wandat Al-Wujud:

¹²⁹ Shah Waliyullah, Hujjat Allah Baligha, Meaning of Death, States of peoples in Barzakh pp. 25-28.

¹³⁰ Iqbal, Reconstruction, p. 5.

¹³¹ Shah Waliyullah, Al-Budur al-Bazigha, p. 2.

¹³² Iqbal, Reconstruction, p. 5.

¹³³ Shah Ismail Shahid, Abaqat, Introduction.

I. As a disciple of Rumi, Iqbal supports Wandat al Wujud. Shah Waliyullah is also Wandat al-Wujudi, who has not only evolved a complete system on the basis of the view of Wahdat al-Wajud but also evolved principles on which Wahdat al-Wujud of Ibn ‘Arabi and Wahdat al-Shuhūd of Imam Rabbāni have been brought into such a harmony that both the systems seem to supplement each other.¹³⁴

Evolution

2. Iqbal is a supporter of the idea of evolution, change and development as held by Muslim philosophers like Jāhīz, Ibn Miskawaih and Rūmi. "Rumi regarded the question of immortality as one of biological evolution and not a problem to be decided by arguments of purely metaphysical nature."¹³⁵ Iqbal did not subscribe fully to the Western theory of evolution which brought despair and anxiety, The reason for this pessimistic result is to be found in the unwarranted modern assumption, that man's present structure, mental as well as physiological, is the last word in biological evolution and that death regarded as a biological event has no constructive meaning.¹³⁶

In contrast to this, Iqbal supports the view of Rumi, who creates the attitude of hope and kindles the fire of enthusiasm for life through his verses describing the evolutionary stage of man touching the past, present and future life of man.¹³⁷

Shah Waliyullah's view of evolution is more precise from various points of view. In his Budur al-Bazigha and al-Tafhimat al-Ilahiya,¹³⁸ he describes the various stages of evolution of man from the point of view of the cycle of life emanating from the ultimate Reality descending through various stages of ‘Alam al-Arwāh, ‘Alam al-Mithāl, and rising up through the stages of ‘Alam Shahadah, al-Barzakh and ‘Alam Hashr, until it submerges itself in its ultimate goal. Besides this he gives an analysis of the various stages of biological evolution through the stages of minerals, plant life, animal life, until the stage of humanity is attained. He carries out this analysis in three different ways namely: (i) from the point of view of emergence from one

¹³⁴ Iqbal, Reconstruction, p. 121.

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¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 121. -

¹³⁷ Ibid, pp. 185, 186, 122.

¹³⁸ Shah Waliyullah, al-Budur al-Bazigha, pp. 17-24.

stage to another; (ii) from the point of view of rise, development and perfection at the levels of different stages; (iii) from the point of view of the processes of disintegration that mark the end of each stage. Moreover, Shah Waliyullah's view of social evolution of mankind is thorough and extensive so much so that he excels even Ibn Khaldun.

God and World

3. As Iqbal views reality as a whole, the 'Universe', according to him "cannot be regarded as an independent reality standing in opposition to God." Iqbal rejects the materialistic view which reduces God and "the world to two separate entities confronting each other in the empty receptacle of an infinite space".¹³⁹ Shah Waliyullah's view of the relationship of the Ultimate Reality and the various stages of the universe substantiates the view of Iqbal. According to him the various phases of the universe are just different aspects of the emanation of the one and the only Ultimate Reality. None of the phases could be regarded an independent reality standing out separately.

Nature—Sunnatallah:

4. Iqbal's concept of the universe is the basis of his view that the working of nature in the universe can be interpreted as "habit of of Allah".¹⁴⁰ According to Shah Waliyullah this is

Study of Nature—Form of 'Ibadah

5. The observance of the universe and its study is, according to Iqbal, the means of getting closer to its Creator, a form of prayer.¹⁴¹

According to Shah Waliyullah, the study of nature and of the working of God's plan of the universe is one of the important constituents of 'Ibādah' (worship) and prayer. He calls this process of observation as "Tadhkir bi-ala Allah, that is the process of consciousness of God's benovolent working in the universe. The study of nature in the same way could be termed as 'Ibādah' (worship) provided one is not oblivious of its relationship with its ultimate source.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Iqbal, Reconstruction, p. 66.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 57-58.

¹⁴¹ Shah Waliyullah, Hujjat, pp. 13-14.

¹⁴² Iqbal Reconstruction, p. 58.

No Bifurcation of Sacred & Profane:

6. In view of this relationship the conceptions of sacred and profane, and religious and secular, have no place in Shah Waliyullah's thought as is the case with Iqbal. This becomes clear from the following statement of Iqbal.¹⁴³ This outlook is diagonally opposed to the view held by the Christian Church.

Tilism:

7. Iqbal looks at the external and apparent phenomenon of the universe as 'Tilism' as is indicated in 'Zabur-e-'Ajam' in the verse:¹⁴⁴

طلسم بود و عدم جس کا نام ہے دنیا خدا کاراز ہے قادر نہیں ہے جس پہ سخن!

Shah Waliyullah calls the manifestation of the apparent part of the universe 'Tilism Ilahi'.¹⁴⁵

Function of Prayer (Ibadah):

8. In the analysis of the meaning of the prayer, the thoughts of Shah Waliyullah and Iqbal seem to agree with each other.

According to Iqbal "prayer is a means of spiritual illumination, a normal vital act by which the little island of our personality suddenly discovers its situation. in a larger whole of life. Do not think I am talking of autosuggestion — auto-suggestion has nothing to do with the opening up of the sources of life that lie in the depth of the human ego."¹⁴⁶

To Shah Waliyullah prayer is an innate and natural tendency that springs up from the deepest recesses of the soul owing to which it is drawn towards God with a magnetic force and thereby attains some sort of contact with its ultimate source.¹⁴⁷ This indicates that as far as the innate impulse and attraction towards the source of life is concerned the views of Iqbal and Shah Waliyullah seem to exhibit a remarkable resemblance.

Psychology of Prayer:

¹⁴³ Shah Waliyullah, Hujjat (Chapter on 'Ibadah) pp. 53-55.

¹⁴⁴ Iqbal, Reconstruction, p. 55.

¹⁴⁵ Iqbal, Zabur-e-'Ajam, p. 119.

¹⁴⁶ Shah Waliyullah, Sata'at, p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ Iqbal, Reconstruction, p. 91.

9. While analysing the psychology of 'prayer', Iqbal says: "True to the psychology of mental attitude in prayer, the form of worship in Islam symbolizes both affirmation and negation".¹⁴⁸

Very similar is Shah Waliyullah's psychology of 'worship' in which both aspects, the negation and affirmation, subsist in the form of the consciousness of God's Great Attributes of Glory, Benevolence, Sublimation and Exaltation side by side with the negation of everything else other than God including the self of one who is in the act of worship as devoid of any power and being in absolute dependence on God for all purposes concerning life and existence.¹⁴⁹

Different Stages of History of Mankind:

11. Iqbal speaks about the stage of change through which humanity has passed and about the spirit of time at every stage in which the advent of prophets played a cosmic part.

In the philosophy of Shah Waliyullah one comes across a similar idea of different stages of the history of mankind, each stage having its own peculiar phase and peculiar demand for the conduct of life which were fulfilled under the universal scheme by the advent of prophets and great sages who brought about revolution and changes in the current of history.¹⁵⁰

International Unity of Mankind:

12. Shah Waliyullah also analyses the change in the process of the social evolution of humanity into four stages. Amongst these the fourth stage, the fourth Irtifaq is the international form of unity of mankind which is a political ideal with Iqbal.¹⁵¹

These are just a few points given as samples to show how Iqbal comes so close to Shah Waliyullah and his tradition which he carried on further. Indeed, there is a great need of an elaborate study in this direction concerning Iqbal and Shah Waliyullah as well as other Muslim savants, which will contribute a great deal towards the study of the intellectual development of the Muslims and bring to light as to how far they have drawn from the

¹⁴⁸ Shah Waliyullah, Hujjat (Chapter on 'Ibadah). p. 54.

¹⁴⁹ Iqbal, Reconstruction, p. 93.

¹⁵⁰ A.J. Halepote, Philosophy of Shah Waliyullah Part II (Worship), p. 242.

¹⁵¹ Shah Waliyullah, Al-Budural Bazigha (Chapters on Millats) pp. 240-264.

fountain-heads that belong to their own community.¹⁵²

This will also help strengthening the harmony and unity of our Millat whose foundations are laid on the Tawhīd taught by the Qur'ān and the great superman, the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) to whom Iqbal was completely dedicated in his art, thought and spirit.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Shah Waliyullah, Hujjat Budur (Chapters on Irtifaqat).

¹⁵³ Iqbal, Reconstruction, p. 158 and also Luce Claude Maitre, Introduction to Thought of Iqbal, p. 17.