SHAH WALIULLAH:
SYNTHESIS OF PANTHEISM AND APPARENTISM

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ABSTRACT

Shah Waliullah's chief mission in the field of practical mysticism was the reconciliation of shariah and tariqat. The followers of one each claimed themselves to be right and as such never hesitated to condemn each other and even their founders. Shah Waliullah bridged the gulf between the two antagonistic parties and proved that all orders were on the right and the mystics of each order were equal before God. He himself was a great sufi and brought about convergence between the two theories. This article is an attempt toward substantiating that Shah Waliullah unlike the common pantheists believed in the transcendental nature of God, but at the same time he had firm belief in His immanence though in a different way from other pantheists.

INTRODUCTION

Shah Waliullah was endowed by nature with the talents capable of exploring the spheres of matter and spirit with equal case. He inherited mysticism, theology and jurisprudence from his great ancestors who had been eminent scholars of all these sciences. In his *Anfasul Arifin*, Shah Waliullah gives details of their deep interest in mystic practices and the position they had attained in them. His father, Shah Abdur Rahim of *Fatawa Alamgiri* fame, was a distinguished sufi and held *khirqa* of the Naqsbandi, Chishti, and Qadri orders. Shah Rahim's spiritual contact with the great sufis like Shaikh Adam Banauri, Shaikh Ahmed Sarhandi, Khwaja Khurd and others; and his miraculous powers are mentioned by Shah Waliullah at various places in his writings. With him Shah Waliullah learnt the elements of mysticism and also became his disciple in all the three orders. He was only fifteen when by his diligent application to spiritual practices he became sufficiently acquainted with the actual mystic manner and got the *khirqa* from his father (Waliullah, 1897:202).

On his death bed Shah Rahim appointed Shah Waliullah his successor in mysticism and allowed him to take allegiance from the people and help them go on the path of *tariqat*. In the year 1732 A.D. as Shah Waliullah was in the Hejaz, he received another *khirqa* of almost all the orders from the great sufi Abu Tahir Makki. Here, Shah Waliullah explains how at various stages he had the vision of the Prophet and God through his spiritual efforts and how the difficulties of the path of *tariqat* were overcome. There, in the Hejaz, he was told that he had completed the *tariqat* and was therefore able to be the guide for the novices of the path (Waliullah, 1947:231). In another vision he saw that he was granted the robe of spirituality and blessed with immunity from all questionings of the day of Judgment - this is the gift which very few sufis have been blessed with (*Ibid*:233). He was titled as *qaimuz-zaman* (leader of the time) whom God had entrusted with the task of reformation of the people, who were going astray forgetting altogether the primary object of life (*Ibid*:297).

CONDITION OF CONTEMPORARY SUFIS

In the time of Shah Waliullah, the sufis were divided into various schools and orders which were always at loggerheads with one another and at the same time the entire class of mystics was faced with the stiff opposition of the jurists and theologians who, due to the former's blasphemous expressions, condemned them right and left. The main reason for such condemnation was the sufis' belief in the doctrine of pantheism introduced by the great sufi, Shaikh Muhyyuddin Ibnal Arabi. The import of pantheism is that the Creator is identical with the creation. The sufis' ingenious argumentation in support of their belief had embarrassed the theologians, especially the jurists, and fearing misguidance of the illiterate through it, they denied any place to spiritual practices. This again was extremism on their part. In this way, the two extremes were doing more harm than good to the religion itself.

About a hundred years before Shah Waliullah, Shaikh Ahmed of Sarhand, himself a great sufi, had denounced altogether the theory of pantheism in favour of his own apparentism. The Shaikh meant that the Creator was not one with the creation. But on the other hand, God was beyond the reach of any human

understanding, and that all the spiritual stages could only be traversed by following strictly the path of *shariat*.

On the contrary, Shah Waliullah was himself brought up in the atmosphere which was replete with the general belief in pantheism. Every one with whom he came in contact right from the beginning of his education was a staunch believer in it. His father Shah Rahim and his uncle and teacher Abu Rida were profound scholars of pantheism and he made great research in it. But both Shah Rahim and Abdu Rida being great jurists themselves intended to reconcile the paths of mysticism with *shariah* (Sindhi 1946:20). This object was however left to be realized by the efforts of Shah Waliullah who had achieved perfection in both *tariqat* and *shariah*, and having been the *qutb* and *mujaddid* (i.e. a genuinely inspired sufi and reviver of the faith) was able to find out a way of reconciliation between *tariqat* and *shariat*.

DIVINE GUIDANCE IN ISLAM

The religion of Islam as a matter of fact has two aspects: exoteric and esoteric. The exoteric strictly deals with the affairs of the world, man's dealings with man, outlining his position among his fellow beings and his relation with the supernatural power who is responsible for his life here and elsewhere. The esoteric aspect deals exclusively with man's intuitive study of the Invisible and his attempt to solve the enigmas of it (Rizvi 1983:39). Undoubtedly, it has been the wish of God that both sides of the religion should continue to develop side by side and it is perhaps for that reason that He from time to time has sent His *mujaddidin* (revivers) and *qutub* (mystics) for the guidance of the people. The actual position of the sending of this guidance which Shah Waliullah names as *tadalla* (guidance) is this. When God wants the people of the world to follow a particular path, the *tadalla* appears in *haziratul quds* (enclosure of purity) in an ideal form (Waliullah 1894:63). From there it descends to the world-of-matter according to the condition and the state of the people. Thus *taddalla* facilitates one's progress towards God, as it clearly points out to the *salik* (ascetic) where and what type of difficulties he will face and how he will have to tide over them.

Besides this, says Shah Waliullah, there is another path for reaching God and that is the direct path of *tariqat* (mysticism), which transcends all other means (Waliullah 1947:180). But this second course of approaching God was not followed in the time of the Prophet, because he was the *tadalla* or guidance for the first course.

"The thing is," says Shah Waliullah (1947:182), "that if both the courses are seen from one angle, so to say, one would appear decidedly superior to the other; but again if they are seen from another angle, the difference would altogether disappear". On these bases, for one reason the possibility of one's superiority over the other would disappear, although for another reason one will be better par excellence, and the other clearly devoid of all values. But, however, the ascetics took advantages of both the paths according to their individual circumstances and conditions.

FOUR STAGES OF MYSTICAL DEVELOPMENT

Explaining how mysticism gradually established itself in the life of the Muslims, Shah Waliullah divides spiritual progress into four stages. Although to the sufis of each stage he assigns the same position and status in regard to their relation with God they are all equal as all of them are devotees of the Lord.

First Stage: In the time of the Prophet and his friends and their immediate successors, the elect were devoted entirely to be obedience of the laws of *shariah*, and through that alone they could obtain perfection in their spirituality. For instance, their mystic practices comprised of prayers, recitation, fasting, pilgrimage and zakat only. None of them however indulged in meditation as it was done by the sufis of the later times. Indeed, very few miracles or supernatural incidents are ascribed to them. The reason is that the spiritual state which gives effect to such miracles was not sufficiently developed or it had not yet become a special attribute of theirs. If anything of this nature at all happened, it was merely by chance and due to their strong belief and their brightened intellectual powers by which they could see unknown things in dreams (Waliullah 1964:47).

Second Stage: The second stage begins with the eminent sufi Junaid of Baghdad who evidently is the chief of all the mystically groups (Attar 1997). As some elect of the former group advanced a little further on their path of spirituality, they detached themselves from the affairs of the world and passed much of their time in meditation. By this practice they intended to attain the spiritual state of connection with God. These mystics received divine illumination and expressed their experiences in allegorical language (*Ibid*). They were the people who listened to music, danced in ecstasy and could read the secrets of the hearts of others. They preferred solitude to the society of men and could understand well the dupes of satan. The main object of their constant worship was neither fear of hell nor desire of paradise, but on the other hand, it was a pure love for God.

Third Stage: A large number of the mystics stopped at the second stage; but a few among them like Abu Sa'id Abul Khayr and Abul Hassan Kharqani, however, proceeded further and opened up a new stage for themselves on the path of mysticism. They had reached the state of absorption and with this state of absorption the veils of the mortal things were lifted up before them and they could see now manifestly that the existence of everything depended on the One Being and that one being was the Sustainer of all. At this stage these mystics lost themselves altogether in the contemplation and with this they lost the consciousness of the formalities of recitations and worship. In this stage, the *tauhid-i-wujudi* (Creator, one with the creation), and *tauhid-i-shuhudi* (Creator different from the creation) were not yet understood as distinct entities. They had in their view the object of absorption into the Godhead and they cared little about the relation that was between the creation and the Creator. Also they heeded little about the explanation of how a man could be merged into God and what were the realities of death and life.

Fourth Stage: In the time of Shaikh Ibnal Arabi mysticism took another turn when along with the spiritual practices the mystics stated discussions about the intricacies and the truth of their pursuits. This was partly due to the progress they had made on the path and partly to the broadening of their vision. Now they

could observe clearly 'how the universe took its origin from the Eternal Being and through such and such processes'.

Every one of the sufis of all these stages attained a special position on the path of spirituality which remained intact even after his death and the people of the following generations could take advantage of their attainments by contacting them in meditations or dreams (Waliullh 1964:51).

Just as the origin of the *tariqat* (mysticism) is the same, all the sufis agree upon the same procedure for the novice to start on the path. For instance, at first the novice must correct his belief and for that the friends of the Prophet and their successors would be the best examples for him. After this, he should regulate the practices enjoined upon him by *shariah*, avoiding perpetration of sins and all that is forbidden. This is the state of submission and first on the path of *tariqat*. This submission in reality is the root of mysticism and spiritual progress and without it one misses the real object (Attar 1997:55). After the stage of submission, beings for him the stage of *aurad* and *wazaif* (recitations and extra obligations) which help him reform and develop his morals (Waliullah 1894:95). Each great mystic had prescribed his own *aurad* and *wazif* for his disciples. According to Shah Waliullah (1964:59), the best *aurad* are those which have been taken from the authentic *ahadith* (traditions). The *aurad* should also be such as to inspire love for God and help the novice in getting rid of his attachment for worldly affairs. As for his wakefulness, he should remain two-thirds of the day and night awake. It is essential for him that he should not mix much with the people, but at the same time he must not forget his responsibilities towards society in general and towards his relations in particular. He should also meet the people in order to calm down his mind, to broaden his views and to increase his knowledge. But if there is not occasion for these things then it would be better for him to avoid social contacts.

It would not be advisable for the novice to change his dress. He must dress as the people of his original profession do. For instance, if he is a solider he must keep his uniform on; or if he is an artisan he should put on the dress that all the artisans do.

In short, the main object of the *aurad* and *wazaif* is the concentration of attention and development of love towards the almighty. When the mystic has achieved this object, the stage of *muraqaba* (meditation) begins for him (Waliullah 1892). He would do well to detach himself from worldly affairs and all physical pleasures. Success of the mystic in this stage depends mostly on his natural capacity and aptitude. He will now find himself surrounded by the perceptive light which after a little more attention will appear without dimensional limitation. With this he will get the state of *birangi* (shadeless). If this state of *birangi* perpetuates, the mystic enters the stage of 'Revelation of Secrets' (Waliullah 1964:141).

After the state of *birangi*, in this stage of 'Revelation of Secrets', the mystic finds the path of *tariqat* bifurcated before him: one is the state when a sufi finds all the veils disappearing between the world-of-matter and the Ultimate Reality, and the other is when the sufi is imbued with humility, purity and love. Here the mystic has to take up for himself the one which befits his personal capacity and attainment. The *murshid* or his preceptor can be of help to him, and can let him know all the difficulties he will have to face in future.

Among the early Muslims, the first person who succeeded in attaining absorption is the Prophets' cousin, Ali Ibn Abi Talib. It is due to this fact that Ali is regarded by all the *majdhubs* as their chief preceptor (*Ibid*: 126). After Ali comes Abdul Qadir Jilani, the founder of the Qadiria order of sufis.

The position of the sufis on the path of *tariqat* varies according to the stages they have passed. The path itself lies far extended between the perceptible and the imperceptible worlds, divided into various stages which the sufis achieved according to their natural powers and spiritual guidance. Some having been endowed with great gifts of angelic power even reached the ultimate goal and contracted the Ultimate Reality. The expressions of the sufis concerning the nature of the Ultimate Reality varied in accordance with the knowledge they had obtained about it. For instance, some happened to possess knowledge about the Truth,

some perceived a flash of it and some went still further and established contact with it. So, if the words of the sufis differ at some place on some points, they should not be considered as altogether wrong. In reality they are not wrong, though they appear to be so, for they speak about their own experiences which also, vary according to the extent of the divine knowledge they happen to acquire by gradual process.

AMALGAMATION OF PANTHEISM AND APPARENTISM

Pantheism is the doctrine concerning the relation of God with His Creation, as propounded by the theocrats of ancient India and Greece. In Islam, Ibnal Arabi is said to have been the first exponent of it. But in course of time it became so popular that we find the ideas and expressions of every great sufi tinged with the details of this doctrine. Although there have been several attempts on the part of the jurists and other orthodox people to refute it altogether and punish severely the exponents of it. According to this doctrine, it is only God that exists, everything else is His manifestation. Hence the world is identical with Him.

The doctrine as a matter of fact is purely a personal and spiritual affair and has nothing to do with dogmatic discussions, for the experiences on the path of *tariqat* could be felt and not explained. It was due to this fact that the words of Ibnal Arabi were always misconstrued and at a stage the things came to such a pass that *tariqat* had a direct opposition in *shariah*. The theologians, therefore, felt it necessary to refute the doctrine and along with it the *tariqat*. But Shaikh Ahmed of Sarhand who was both a theologian and a sufi had to refute it in his own way. He did it in the light of this own theory of appearentism. Shaikh Ahmed (1972:Epst.31) divides his mystic progress into three stages, viz. *Wujuduyyat* (pantheism), *Zilliyat* (adumbration) and *Abdiyyat* (servitude). At the first stage, a sufi has the spiritual experience of pantheism and finds that God is imminent in man and the world. This stage lasts for a long interval (*Ibid*); thereafter he passes over to the stage of *zilliyat* or adumbration. There he finds that the world is a shadow or semblance of reality (*Ibid*). But this is only a transitional stage. So far the duality of the Creator and the creation has not become clear. In course of time he outgrows that stage too,

and enters the final stage, the stage of *abidyyat* or servitude. There he finds that the world and God are two. At this stage he realizes that all his mystic experiences were subjective and unreliable, and they did not correspond to objective reality (Faruqi 1940:66).

The gist of Shaikh Ahmad's argumentation is that pantheists were wrong because they had not yet reached the stage of perfection like Shaikh Ahmad himself; their opinion in regard to the Reality was therefore immature and false. This clear and unequivocal refutation of the common faith of mystics by a great mystic himself caused a great commotion among the people and actually resulted in dividing them into two warring camps, each trying to substantiate its own claim to righteousness.

Shah Waliullah who himself was a great sufi however brought about a reconciliation between the two theories and bridged the gulf between the two antagonistic parties. He maintains that God created *nasfs-i-kul* or the Collective Self from nothing and what we call the universe is the differentiation of this *nafis-i-kul*; or in other words the universe is the manifestation in various modes of the *nasf-i-kul*. If the sufi finds unity in diversity, it is nothing but the Unity of the *nafs-i-kul* and not *dhat-i-ilahi* or Divine Being. It is really difficult to explain the distinction which lies between Divine Being and the Collective Self. Indeed, there is a "unity in the Creator from nothingness and the created from nothingness, but that is not a true unity" (Waliullah 1964:156) as one cannot be identical with the other. The real fact is that human reason is not capable enough to grasp the idea of distinction between *nafs-i-kullia* and *dhat-i-illahi*. It is due to this fact that sometimes one is taken for the other.

Shah Waliullah (1964:156-57) argues that:
"The relation between *dhat-i-illahi* and *nafs-i-kullia* is the same as between digit 4 and digit 2. For instance, looking to digit 4 as it exists by itself, we find nothing there except the digit 4. But as we look as step below it, although in its present capacity nothing could be connected with it, we find 4 as the sum total of two twos. Thus, we see that 4 has two positions: one as a 4 and the other as two

twos. In this way if I say 2 plus 2 is 4, I will be right, or, if in other words, 2 plus 2 is given the names of 4 that would be correct too.

In the same way, we can understand and explain the relation between God and Collective Self. Now those who believe in the *wahdatul wujud* would be correct if by unity they mean the unity of *nafs-i-kullia*. The mystic must bear in mind that the relation of *daht-i-illahi* and *nafs-i-kullia* is not confused with the relation of *nafs-i-kullia* and its modes. Otherwise he will be like the man who looking through red or green glasses finds everything red or green. A real mystic, who looks by his insight, having left his reasoning behind, will see the unity of *nafs-i-kullia* clearly in the diverse form of the universe. But if he, looks to *dhat-i-ilahi* with the insight the universe will altogether disappear. Again if his insight is accompanied by the divine light he will find *nafs-i-kullia* and *dhat-i-ilahi* or two separate entities. But this is the state which only belongs to the perfect sufis."

In *Fuyuzal Haramayn* Shah Waliullah (1947) explains how the pantheist has failed to grasp the real nature of God owing to their deficient intellect and immature faculties. Indeed the doctrine is based on real facts but the sufis allowing themselves to wander into the labyrinth of the nature of Dvine Manifestation, let the concept of 'respect for the Lord', 'love for him', and his transcendental and independent nature elude their grasp. In reality the true secret of pantheism is understood by those alone who have their faculties of reason and wisdom fresh and fruitful, and not darkened by the veils, lying fold upon fold, of modes and forms of the world of matter.

CONCLUSION

The main point in the above discussion is that pantheism and apparentism are, as a matter of fact, two relative terms used at two different places in an argument about the Divine Being. To Waliullah, parentheism is scrutiny of 'the encompassing Truth' which has filled the Universe by unfolding itself with various values (*ahkam*) on which is based the knowledge about good and evil; while apparentism is the bringing together of the values of similar and contradictory nature.

It is clear that the created things are one for one reason, and different for another, which can only be perceived by the saints who are really perfect. Pantheists see the contingent or accident (*hadith*) connected with the eternal (*qadim*), and the apparentists maintains that the Universe is a reflection of the Necessary Being reflected in opposite non-beings. *Wahdatush shuhud* of Shaikh Ahmed does not in any way contradict, but on the other hand it confirms Ibnal Arabi's *wahdatul wujud*. In short if the real facts are taken into account and are studied, both the doctrines will appear almost the same. If there is any difference at all, it is so insignificant that human reason or intuition cannot perceive it.

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