Book Review

The Socio-Political Thought of Shah Walī Allah by Muhammad al-Ghazali. Islamabad, Pakistan: Islamic Research Institute Press, 2001, 335 pp. ISBN 1-56564-098-5.

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There is sufficient evidence to contend that Shaykh Muḥammed ibn ᶜAbd al-Wahāb and Quṭb al-Dīn Ahmed ᶜAbd al-Raḥīm, universally known as Shah Walī Allah al-Dehlawī, were the two most important *mujaddids* in the eighteen-century Muslim world. Some orientalists-colonial administrators, as well as academicians had coined the code-name "Indian Wahabism" to describe the Indian Islamic reformist movement pioneered by Shah Walī Allah, and subsequently actively pursued by his students and disciples. This nomenclature is consciously heavily-loaded with charges of "fanaticism and dogmatism" to the Indian *tajdīd* movement, and may also imply that its founding father Shah Walī Allah was a "replica," or even a "carbon copy," of his contemporary, Muḥammed ibn ᶜAbd al-Wahāb.

Not surprisingly, the thematic work under review does not entail any reference—not even a passing remark—to Wahabism or its leader. Nonetheless, its comprehensive analysis of Shah Walī Allah's socio-political and religo-philosophical thought goes a long way to articulately negate this "replica hypothesis," and convincingly ascertains that the Shah was a *mujaddid* and an Islamic thinker in his own right. Indeed, as the author clearly demonstrates, in more than one part of his discourse, the Shah's tangible contribution in the promotion of Islamic studies is in some ways distinctive and unique. This is particularly so with regard to the theory of *irtifaqāt*, his singular contribution to Islamic socio-political thought, and to his classification of the *khilafah* into ᶜ*āmmah* (ordinary) and *khāṣṣah* (extraordinary).

Muhammad al-Ghazali's 325 page book is an extensively revised and updated version of his Ph.D. thesis and is composed of three

major parts. The first part (pp.1-107) entails the gist of the discourse, namely an elaborate critique of the Shah's outstanding contribution in enriching Islamic thought in the religo-philosophical and socio-political fields. Depending on the Shah's own works, this part discusses his views on a number of important issues such as the four stages of *irtifaqāt,* the status of man in the universe and his distinction from the *bahīma* (the Arabic equivalent of animal), including the interesting concept of *zarāfah* (aesthetic sense and social temptation). It also addresses the all important institution and concept of the *Khilāfah,* that, according to the Shah, materializes in the fourth *irtifāq* (stage of social development), and constitutes what he considers the Islamic universal model of society and state.

Part two of the book (pp.109-141) gives an interesting analytical survey of the Shah's major writings of which, incidentally, many are in Arabic, a fact that is regrettably unknown to many in the Arab world. Particular attention is given in this survey to three major works that were extensively used in this research, namely his masterpiece and *magnum opus, Ḥujjat Allah al-Bālighah* (God's Conclusive Argument), *al-Buddur al-Bāzighah* (Full Moon Rising on the Horizon), and *Izālat al-Khafā ʿan Khilāfat al-Khulafāʾ* (Ending the Mystery about the Caliphate). What particularly drew my attention in this part is the author's brief (pp.127-129) but most illuminating analysis of the Shah's sizable *mukātabat,* political epistles or letters, to his students, friends and notables of his time, of which "some two hundred and eighty two have been preserved in the two volumes of a collection prepared by Shah Muhammed Ashiq, a cousin, brother-in-law and friend of Shah Walī Allah" (p.127). Subsequently, these were further enlarged (to 352 letters) and edited by the latter's son who was also a student of the Shah. In his useful analysis of these *mukātabat,* al-Ghazali gives their "distinctive traits," and argues that their content is in "conspicuous conformity" with the one that the Shah "espoused in his writings" (p.129). Al-Ghazali's mastery of the Arabic and English languages enabled him to give in part three of his book (pp. 145-282) a good translation of selected parts of the *Ḥujjah* that are relevant to the theme of the discourse. The book contains a foreword by Prof. Marcia Hermansen, a modest preface by the author, and a useful note by the editor Prof. Zafar Ishaq Ansari. This is, of course, besides the notes and references and the bibliography. By the very nature of this setting, a measure of overlapping in the literature in inevitable, but this is tolerable and acceptable.

As hinted above, this work is a credible and original contribution to our understanding of the thought and role of Shah Walī Allah because it predominantly, almost exclusively, depends on the writings of the Shah himself. The author, as Prof. Ansari eloquently puts it in his note, "lets Shah Walī Allah speak for himself" (p.xiv). Unlike some amateurs in the discipline of *tajdīd*, Muhammad al-Ghazali does not tackle his subject in isolation, but relates it to the rich Islamic intellectual legacy. He explores the impact of some early Muslim thinkers, particularly al-Fārābi, al-Māwārdi, al-Ghazālī, Muḥī al-Dīn ibn ʿArabī and Ahmad Sirhindī, on the Shah. However, it is difficult to agree with the author's apparent conviction that the Shah had not been "profoundly" influenced by Ibn Khaldūn. His four-stages discourse on rise and fall of civilizations appears to be somehow influenced by Ibn Khaldūn's three-stage theory of which *al-badawah* is the first and *al-ʿimrān* is the peak. In any case, this observation may deserve further exploration and analysis. One other point that intrigues me is the Arabic word *irtifāq* (plural *irtifāqāt*) which the Shah uses in the sense of "stage." If this is not a Sufi neologism, then the usage of the word in this sense may need verification. To the best of my limited knowledge in the Arabic language, the word *irtifāq* is derived from the Arabic root *irtifāqa* which means to utilize and use or to lean and rest on. The word *irtiqaʾ* (plural *marāqī*) is, on the other hand, derived from the verb *irtaqā*, to advance and progress or to ascend and rise. The word *iritiqāʾ* has thus the connotation of advancement and progress, and therefore appears to be linguistically more suitable than *irtifāq* to mean an "advanced stage," *wa Allahu aʿlam*. Is there a likelihood for a misquotation? Or is the Shah using the word *irtifāq* metaphorically to mean social cohesion and smooth transfer from one stage of development to another? As a distinguished expert on the writings of Shah Walī Allah, Professor al-Ghazali may throw some light on this concept.

The book is understandably confined to the theoretical aspect of Shah Walī Allah's socio-political thought. But it opens the way for other serious studies on the thought and role of this monumental *mujaddid*. One subject may be an analysis of the Shah's role in shaping the political future of the Indian sub-continent, and perhaps the Muslim *ummah* at large. Another possible discourse is a comparative study between the essentially activist Muhammed ibn ʿAbd al-Wahāb and the predominantly intellectual Shah Walī Allah. The latter is, however,

known to be fond of the Arabs and Arabism.

Despite the supreme quality of this book, the author records in the preface that his study "does not lay claim to having brought to light something altogether new or to have disclosed anything hitherto entirely unknown" (p.x). This is commendable academic modesty that is, indeed, deeply rooted in our Islamic intellectual heritage, though, alas, we do not find it in the writings of not a few of our boastful and self-magnifying colleagues! To conclude, al-Ghazali's book is well-balanced and scholarly. It is the most engrossing of all the discourses that I have read on Shah Walī Allah.

Preparing the Information Professional: An Agenda for the Future by Sajjad ur Rehman. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000. xi + 177 pp. ISBN 0-0313-30673-7.

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The onslaught of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), especially from the mid-1980s onwards, has, over time, changed the working environment of all the professions. The introduction of ICT into various professional activities has forced these professions to re-examine the base of their skills and competencies necessary to perform effectively and successfully. In turn, this re-thinking has had critical implications for educators, curriculum, and practitioners at the same time. Such a re-examining and re-thinking exercise, if successfully carried out, should lead to the complete re-structuring of the curriculum in the light of innovations in ICT, renewal of present educators, and continuing professional development of existing practitioners.

The Library and Information Profession (LIS) became aware of this grave situation early on. The professional discourse that began during the mid-1980s has resulted in a respectable body of research literature focusing on competencies for LIS professionals from a variety of perspectives. There is a long list of scholars and studies that have not only contributed to this body of literature but have influenced the professional associations to formulate polices and standards in this regard. These activities should have resulted in a reasonable and global change, at least in the developed countries, in restructuring and updating the curriculum, re-training of educators, and some sort of