

## Human Nature and Society in Shah Wali Allah's *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* :A Conceptual Analysis

Dr. Abdur Rashid Bhat \*

Shah Wali Allah (1703-1762) is regarded as one of the profound and prolific Islamic thinkers of Indian subcontinent. He wrote abundantly and the number of his books exceeds to fifty. *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* is his *magnum opus*. It is devoted to various themes of religion comprising fundamental truth of life, socio-political philosophy, the wisdom (*asrār*) of the rituals of worship (*ibādāt*) and the philosophy of *Sharī'ah* commandments.

Human nature and society form the two important, concepts in *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*<sup>1</sup> and Shah Wali Allah treats them profoundly here as well as in his other work, *al-Budūr al-Bazighah*. The present paper is an attempt to analyse these concepts and highlight their significance.

At the outset it may be said that in *Hujjat*, Shah Wali Allah touches upon 'metaphysics' which has bearing upon his concept of human nature. It is found in his mention of multi-worlds—physical and metaphysical or what may be called transcendental world. *Ālam al-mithāl*, *mala a'la* (High Council) and *hazīrat al quds* (Holy Enclosure) include in the metaphysical world and the physical world is the world of matter and common observation (*'ālama-i tab'i* or *'ālam-i mushāhidah*). In his description of these realms, Wali Allah defines their purposefulness for the material (*madi*) world.

*Ālam al-mithāl*, according to the Shah, is the realm where the things exist

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\* Senior Lecturer, S.H. Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Kashmir, Srinagar

with their characteristics prior they come into being in the world of matter<sup>2</sup>. Wali Allah seeks its basis in some of the Traditions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in which the expressions like standing of mercy (*rahm*), coming up of the actions (*amal*) like *salah, sawm, sadqah*, on Doomsday and appearance of 'good' and 'evil' as two bodies on this Day have been mentioned.<sup>3</sup> The commentators of Shah Wali Allah understand it as the projection of images of the spiritual or abstract realities.<sup>4</sup> This sets the different nature for *alam al-mithal* and becomes beyond the common observation.

*Mala-i a'la* realm is described by the Shah as the abode of angels who are Allah's loyal servants and have high place and intimacy with Him.<sup>5</sup> This too is elaborated by Wali Allah through the verses of the Qur'an and Prophet's Tradition (*Hadith*):

الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ  
وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ، وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ  
كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا  
سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ  
رَبَّنَا وَأَدْخِلْهُمْ جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي وَعَدْتَهُمْ وَمَنْ صَلَحَ  
مِنْ ءَابَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Those who bear the Throne (of Allah) and those around it sing Glory and Praise to their Lord; believe in Him; and implore Forgiveness for those who believe: "Our Lord thou embracest all things, in Mercy and Knowledge, Forgive then those who turn in Repentance, and follow Thy Path; and preserve them from Chastisement of the Blazing Fire!

“And grant, our Lord! That they enter the Gardens of Eternity which Thou hast promised to them and to righteous among their fathers, their wives and their posterity! For thou art (He), the Exalted in Might, full of Wisdom.”<sup>6</sup>

In a Hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) it is told that “when Allah gives His decision or command then the angels of ‘*arsh*’ sing His praise (*tasbih*). Then it is sung by the angels nearer to Heaven till it reaches the lower realm. And then the angels nearer to ‘*arsh*’ say “What your Lord hast said? So they are conveyed the commands of Allah.”<sup>7</sup>

What is worth to note is the Shah’s characterising this angelic world as a spiritual and moral awakening power towards the right direction. This is not intelligible in an ordinary way, for angels influences work in a hidden and mysterious way. Wali Allah also refers to the angels of *mala-i sāfil*, the angels of the lower council and *ḥazīrat al-quḍs*, the holy enclosure or council to illustrate the nature of the angelic realm. *ḥazīrat al-quḍs* is defined as the holy council where *mala a’la* and the spirits (*arwāḥ*) of the perfect people concentrate on the problems relating to this world and Hereafter.<sup>8</sup> The overall purport of this description is how these realms are related to the life of mankind in which moral motivation is of special significance. Wali Allah refers to it as following:

It is to clarify that *Shari’ah* bears the testimony to it that there are some special servants of Allah who are of high rank and His intimate angels. They pray for those people who reform and refine their *nafs*. To them this prayer becomes the source of (Allah’s) bounties. They curse upon those who disobey Allah and strive for corruption (*fasād*). However, their curse and bad prayer can lead them regret and feel humbleness and inspire the angels of the lower council (*mala-i sāfil*) to be annoyed with and harsh upon the evil doers. The angles (therefore) function as messengers between Allah and His servants in their material world until man passes away.<sup>9</sup>

Shah Wali Aallah relates this mystical working of the angelic world vis-a vis

the human world to the following verses of the Qur'an:

(To the righteous soul will be said "O (thou) soul in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back thou to thy Lord, —well pleased (thyself) and we'll pleasing unto Him! enter thou then among My Devotees! Yea enter thou in My Heaven."<sup>10</sup>

By this illustration Shah Wali Allah evolves the concept of metaphysical world of Islamic tradition in a coherent way. Man is related to it in terms of both his nature and practical role. The world of *ʿālam al-mithāl*, 'the holy enclosure' and 'the higher assembly of angles' serve as intermediary between creation and existence of man, his soul-consciousness and material consciousness and, in modern terms, his idealism and pragmatism.

In his *Hujjat*, Wali Allah conceives human nature in the description of *amānah* (trust), *taklīf* (responsibility), soul, *taqdīr* and *jaza* (recompense). *Amānah* and *taklīf* explain considerably the basic human nature. He elaborates his views through the following verse of the Qur'an:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ  
أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being, afraid thereof. But man undertook it. He was indeed unjust and foolish.<sup>11</sup> :

While commenting upon the verse, the Shah remarks that granting the trust to man is a natural requirement. His nature is capable and akin to it and the other creature's refusal of the trust is due to their incapability.<sup>12</sup> Their refusal of it tantamounts to their basic and natural weakness. Man's accepting the trust represents his *ista'dad*

for its realization. *Zulm* and *juhal* are here interestingly interpreted by the Shah. To him *zulm* —tyranny is practised by one who has power to do justice and, similarly foolishness is witnessed from that person who is capable to seek knowledge.<sup>13</sup> So characterizing man as *zuluman juhula*—unjust and foolish—is within the consideration of his natural capability. The other creatures are solely just and knowledgeable like angels or without these specifications like animals.<sup>14</sup> The wisdom (*hikmah*) of *taklif* (responsibility of man) is found in accepting the trust of God. The trust leads to the fulfillment of responsibility by means of practical behavior of man. He is distinct from the nature of angels and animals as the former are free from material passions, kept in obedience to Allah’s commands while as animals strive for their physical needs.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand man possesses power of the both the components termed as *malakiyah* (angelic) and *bahimiyah* (beastly). The *malakiyah* power is angelic power in man which is by the grace of the spirit (*ruh*), already existing in him, and acts, in subordination to the latter.<sup>16</sup> *Bahimiyah* power is like that of an animal and having its own stand hold it can influence the spirit. Both these powers are in tension, struggling to motivate man towards their respective goals.<sup>17</sup> By his ‘consciousness’ man is able to exercise his choice to subordinate the animal to the angelic disposition and secures himself from being swayed away by the animal passion. In both the cases Allah provides him with the means to utilise his potentialities and earn the results accordingly.<sup>18</sup> The difference between the two kinds of strife (*amal*) in man is amplified in the following verses of the Qur’an:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ  
 جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَاهَا مَذْمُومًا مَدْحُورًا ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَنْ أَرَادَ  
 الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ  
 سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُورًا

If any do wish for the transitory things (of his life), We readily grant them such things as We will, to such persons, as We will in the end have We provided Hell for them. They will burn therein, disgraced and rejected. Those who do wish for the (things of) the Hereafter, and strive therefore with all due strivings, and have faith—they are the ones whose striving will be thanked (by Allah).<sup>19</sup>

In Shah Wali Allah *taqdīr* (destiny) is interpreted with *tadbīr* (Allah's planning) and is harmoniously related to *taklīf* (responsibility). Cause and effect chain is there in objects but above this chain is the supreme and powerful system governed by Allah. Each species (*naw'ā*) is distinguished by its characteristics. Plants have their own characteristics and are categorised in one species. Animals too have their own features and are identified by them. All these objects have *ist'ādā* (power) for particular acts.<sup>20</sup> Plants and animals have been given instinctive inspiration (*ilhām-i jibaliyah*) and it forms their law which is Allah's *taqdīr* and *tadbīr*. Man on the other hand, has potential of gathering knowledge from the various sources *jibliyah*, revelation, reason (*aql*) and empiricism. It makes him to manage agriculture, undertake experiments, inventions, specialise in different sciences and rule over other people.<sup>21</sup> Wali Allah elaborates this distinctive nature of man through the latter's rational and practical potentialities. Here he explains that in man the trait of the extensive use of reason functions under two purposes—one is to fulfil physical and civilizational needs and the other is to be able to attain the unseen knowledge (*ulūm-i ghabīyah*).<sup>22</sup> Along with this man is having the power of perfect action. This power of action (*qaww-i amaliyah*) is further subdivided by the Shah in two categories. One is that man's action is by his choice (*ikhtiyar*)<sup>23</sup>. He has free will while animals are not given such a freedom. Man's action is affected by his soul (*ruh*) and in reciprocity the latter is influenced by it positively or negatively which the Shah defines in symbolic terms of '*nūr*' and '*zulm*' (light and darkness). Through an analogy Wali Allah elaborates that the process is like the prescription of a doctor who says that putting a poison or antidote down one's throat and its reaching the stomach is the condition for one's benefit or harm. What is meant by

it is that the results of a thing are dependent upon its proper practice.<sup>25</sup> Similarly things make their affects upon the individual by his power of response to them. The other characteristic of man's action, says Wali Allah, is his rising to high states of spirituality and morality like devotion and trust in Allah and forming a moderate and balanced temperament.<sup>26</sup> For this, seeking of knowledge from the erudite, knowledgeable becomes necessary and to recognize Allah and reform his socio-economic living, a law (*shari'ah*) is to be followed.<sup>27</sup>

A mention may be made here about Wali Allah's views regarding the soul (*ruh*). He conceives soul with its two constituents. One is that conveys potentialities of nourishment and growth through which the sense, movement of body and digestion are activated and names it *nasma* (pneumatic soul).<sup>28</sup> At other place it is described as disposing two abilities—practical and intellectual. The physical body is *matiyya*, substratum of *nasma*.<sup>29</sup> The second component of the soul is *ruh-i malaki* and it functions as an open window to *nasma* and reveals it the ideas to bring changes in it as per its capability and position just like the sun that brings change on the cloth and the bleacher with consideration to their respective capacities.<sup>30</sup> It is this constituent of the soul that, according to Wali Allah, responds to the revelation of angels and vision of *hazirat al-quds*. The philosophy of the transcendental realms, which have been already mentioned in the present paper, becomes more intelligible here in relation to the role of soul. This, at the same time, forms the reality of soul in Shah Wali Allah's thought. It is cardinal in shaping the personality of an individual through his use of *malakiya* and *nasmaic* tendencies in him. In Islamic tradition, earlier Ghazzali (1058-1111)<sup>31</sup> Rumi (1207-1273)<sup>32</sup> and in modern times Iqbal (1873-1938)<sup>33</sup> and Absar Ahmad<sup>34</sup> are some worth mentioning scholars who have elaborated the vital aspects of human soul in terms of *wajdaniya* (intuition) *nafs* (self), ego, psyche etc. In Shah Wali u Allah, however, the treatment seems apparently consistent and balanced.

It can be, therefore, easily maintained that the distinct nature of man in respect of extensive use of reason and intuition and gathering of knowledge from its valid sources, according to Wali Allah, rank him high in the whole fabric of

cosmos and amplifies *hikmah* (wisdom) of Allah's Will and Law (*Shari'ah*) which can be comprehensively described as *taqdīr* and *tadbīr*. The *ist'dād* in man for receiving *amanah* (trust) and taking up responsibility (*taklif*) is also borne out by his two-fold tendencies of his soul (*ruh*)—*nasmaic* and *malakiya*; and it fashions him in time and space dimensions.

Society, which is our next concern here, is also an important theme in Shah Wali Allah's *Hujjat*. In his philosophy it complements the human nature through realising the dispositions and needs of man meaningfully. Wali Allah's concept of society typifies its universal nature and integrates natural order with the moral and rational order. It is explained in the Shah's description of *irtifāqāt* which is here our point of discussion.

*Irtifāq* is from root word *rafaq* meaning soft, tender, gracious etc.<sup>35</sup> Wali Allah's use of it is somewhat in the sense of making the things soft or gentle to solve the growing needs of an individual vis-a-vis his environment. That is why some of his commentators have translated it as 'social device', 'stages of social development' or 'social institution'.<sup>36</sup> Wali Allah conceives five *irtifāqāt* which adopt his comprehensive approach to the genesis and development of human society.

The first *irtifāq* denotes the fulfillment of the primary needs of man. These are the needs resembling more or less to those of an animal yet man excels the former by the qualities of purity, communal sense and culture. In this stage man learns to gather grains for his food, clothe himself and make his shelter.<sup>37</sup> He also coins words to form his speech and communicate to others.<sup>38</sup>

His depending upon others for agricultural work and taming of animal is also related to this stage of social development. His biological tendency leads him to find his wife as an uncontested mate to produce the offspring.<sup>39</sup> To maintain law and order, one who appears to be the most sensible person and behaves in the bravest way becomes the leader and the code is enacted to settle the disputes, check the criminal and repulse raiders.

The second *irtifāq* grows when the individual faces complete needs of his



life. That are related to his sense of *taraffu* (aesthetics) family matters (*tadbir-i-manzil*) and *mu'amalāt* (contractual dealings). *Taraffuh* implies the successful and nice completion of the techniques evolved in the first *irtifāq*.<sup>40</sup> Aesthetic elements, now, enter into the satisfaction of primary needs. Deliciousness of food, impressive dress, comfortable house and the idiomatic use of language become his liking at this stage.<sup>41</sup> Likewise the organisation of family gives rise to the development of relations. Wali Allah says that family is to be understood an extensive process of relationships. It includes relationship between husband and wife, parents and children and master and slave. Shah Wali Allah enumerates fifteen such problems dealing with the institution of family.

1. Principles involved in marriage.
2. Annulment of marriage.
3. Qualities to be possessed by a husband.
4. Qualities to be possessed by a wife.
5. Settlement of disputes in the family.
6. Determination of period that must elapse before the second marriage of a widow.
7. The upbringing of the offspring.
8. Ways of good treatment with parents.
9. Ways of dealing with slaves and servants.
10. Manumission
11. Relations to kinsmen and neighbours.
12. Relations to the destitute.
13. Inheritance.
14. The office of *naqīb al qabīlah*—general observer of the tribe.
15. Protection of genealogy records.<sup>42</sup>

On the increase of economic needs whose fulfillment becomes difficult at an individual level the means of collective nature, like exchange of commodities and use of coins is desired.<sup>43</sup> Wali Allah mentions five such wisdoms which regulate the economic dealings of this stage:

1. Wisdom of Economy (*al-hikmah al-m'ashiyyah*). It is related to the principles of earning of livelihood by adopting sound and virtuous manner and utilization of new experiments and modes in eating, dressing, speaking and traveling.
2. Wisdom of earning (*al-hikmah al-iktisābiyah*). It means that every individual should adopt distinct vocation befitting him like trade, agriculture etc.<sup>44</sup>
3. Domestic Wisdom (*al-hikmah al-manziliyyah*). It is related to marriage, procreation, rights of close relatives etc.<sup>45</sup>
4. Wisdom of Business (*al-hikmah al-ta'muliyyah*). It includes the matter of sale, gift, renting, tenancy, loan, debt, mortgages etc.<sup>46</sup>
5. Co-operative Wisdom (*al-hikmah al-Ta'auniyyah*). It is related to mutual help and includes institutions like surety, bail, guaranty, partnership and the other contracts of this type.<sup>47</sup>

These wisdoms denote the significance of economy in the growth of human society. In its extension of social domain through the process of economic transactions and cooperation towards perfection the role of the second *irtifaq* is vital. There seems very little to achieve in terms of social dealings after the realisation of the second *irtifāq*.

Expansion of society in population, social and economic institutions necessitates its stable and just organisation. This is the politics of society and Wali Allah defines it in the third *irtifāq*. He terms it as *siyasat-i madina*, city-state.<sup>48</sup> *Madina* (state) here does not simply typify the city but if the citizens of cities and towns have interaction and cooperation it can be termed as state.<sup>49</sup> It is, says the Shah, a unity like that of the human organism. In the words of the Shah its nature is elaborated as following:

It is these groups of people that by way of their mutual relation and coordination is framed. The real state is not the name of city wall, forts and trading centre but is the interaction and coordination among the people. If there are many towns in the vicinity of each other and the people living there carry on transactions with each other in a

descriplined and coordinated way, we will call them a state.<sup>50</sup>

According to Wali Allah the unity, an essential element of state, is to be preserved, improved and developed to yield its full results.<sup>51</sup> This objective is attained by granting authority to a person called *imām* or *khalifah* who possesses the specific qualities, required to this office. He maintains law and order of the state, resolves its disputes and deals with the threats which are posed by those individuals who are ruled by 'low' designs. The state basically emerges as an agency to ensure the provision of socio-economic benefits for all its members vis-a-vis the moral values. The institutions of judiciary, executive, police, public works, religious and moral instruction assists the state in materialising the *raison d'etre*.<sup>52</sup>

This social development at the state level is followed by the development at international level. When a ruler becomes independent in his state, controls its economy, uses the services of soldiers, an element of greed and hatred may prompt to the quarrel and fighting among the various rulers that necessitates the establishment of a supreme authority to regulate the control and prestige over the people.<sup>53</sup> Such kind of supreme authority is called *imām al-iamah* or *khalifah 'azam* (supreme ruler) and this development of society is conceived by Wali Allah in the fourth *irtifāq*.<sup>54</sup> It constitutes high politics of the society based on justice and peaceful pluralism.

This brief analysis of Shah Wali Allah's concept of human nature and society brings out his philosophy of human civilization vis-a-vis religion. His viewing of man as unity of both *malakiyah* and *bahimiyah* dispositions, rational and practical powers by which he is distinguished from other creatures of the cosmos and signifies his responsibility and accountability. The realisation of natural dispositions (*fitrah*) as per the social code of Allah (*Shari'ah*) is the philosophy of religion which Wali Allah propounds through these concepts. The philosophy fathoms out man to his best both from within and without, from psycho-spiritual to socio-political domains, microcosms to macrocosm. Revealed and inductive knowledge are unified here purposefully. *Irtifāqāt* which emerges as a comprehensive term in Wali Allah's

philosophy explores the development of social devices and institutions in empirico-inductive method. What is of vital significance in it, is that this development of socio-human culture from early stage of fulfilling the primary needs, utilising wisdom in family and economic dealings to the organising of the institution of state and international politics; is essentially his response to natural human urges vis-a-vis physico-social environment which is accepted universally by all Revealed religions.

**References:**

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6. *Al-Qur'an*, al-Mumin, 7-8.
7. Shah Wali Allah, *op. cit.*, p.53.
8. *Ibid.* p.56.
9. *ibid.*, p.55.
10. *Al-Qur'an*, al-Fajar, 27-30.
11. *Ibid*, Ahzab, 72.
12. Shah Wali Allah, *op. cit.*, p.64.
13. *Ibid.*
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16. *Ibid.*
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20. Shah Wali Allah, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.
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28. Shah Wali Allah, *Al Budūr al-Bazigh*, (Urdu tr. Dr. Qazi Mujib ur Rehman, Published by Wazirat Madhabi Amur, Pakistan, Islamabad, p. 84. See also Shah Wali Allah, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

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40. *ibid.*, pp.117-128.
41. *Ibid.*
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43. *ibid.*, p. 116.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Hujjat*, *op.cit.*, pp. 118-119.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Al-Budur*, *op,cit*, p.161.
51. *Ibid.*, P. 161
52. *ibid.*, pp. 162-167.
53. *ibid*, pp. 204-209
54. *Ibid.*