

**Psychological Trends in
Shah Wali-u Allah Dehlvi:
A Brief Analysis**

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Abstract

Human psychology is a fascinating subject that has attracted the attention of great minds of the classical and the modern times. Shah Wali-u Allah had also a good concern with it and dealt the theme in his two seminal works, *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* and *Al-Budur al-Bazighah* in a distinguished way. The present paper analyses briefly the psychological trend of disposition in his thought in comparison with the observations of the modern western psychologists like William James, William MC Dougall and Sigmund Freud. To Wali-u Allah dispositions are simple in animals but in human beings they are much complex and shape his individual behaviour. The universal reason (*ray al-kulli*) and civilizing devices (*irtifaqat*) are also related to them. This renders their physico-psychological and ethical meaningfulness properly.

1. Introduction

Classical works literary or philosophical are generally those which adhere to the established standards and principles of their times. They are of high and excellent standards. They are related to the most developing stages of human civilization and culture. Though written at a particular period of time yet have a lasting recognition. Such works have a universal appeal and touch the very core of man by integrating the themes, understood by readers of wide range backgrounds and levels

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of experience. The ancient Greece, Rome, Medieval Europe and the Muslim East have produced a good number of the classical works. These are imbued with deep vision, superb thoughts and exquisite art. Shah Wali-u Allah Dehlvi's *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* is a classic of this nature. It is regarded as the *magnum opus* of the author. His other famous work, *al-Budur al-Bazighah* imbibe precisely its many themes. Both of them depict many modern philosophical, psychological and sociological trends in them. In this essay his treatment of psychological trend of disposition (*Jibalah*) will be dealt in a comparative way. We shall, however, rely on the relevant portions of the original sources and make an analytical approach to the subject by focusing on its key themes.

2. Dispositions and Their Role

The illustration of dispositions in Shah Wali-u Allah's *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* is made within the concept of his philosophy of the nature of man¹. In it, the concept of *taqdir* (potentiality), *takhlif* (responsibility) and *Jiza* (reward) have pioneering significance. By examining the phenomenon of the world, according to the Shah, it is clearly found that each of its objects has full capacity and capability to function properly in its own domain. This is bestowed upon by their Creator – God – and is termed as *taqdir* which ordinarily is characteristic of their potential perfectionism². It is quite appropriate for realizing their purpose of living. The purpose of behaving as a responsible human being is partly attained through the faculties of reason and experience yet more through the source of revelation. Wali-u Allah views that man's liking for universal good is as much deeper in him as an animal being has the urge towards its physical needs. To him, search and recognition of good is the essence of human nature.

Next follows his discussion on dispositions described by him as *jibalah*. Here he distinguishes the dispositions of man

with those of an animal being. He says that animals too display various dispositions like anger, courage, revenge, wooing, grief and parental care. But their dispositions are simpler and lack refinement and modification which is a characteristic of human disposition³. It is said that by characterizing the animal dispositions as simple they are called instincts and on account of human being's dispositions being refined and complex they are called emotions and sentiments. Though Shah Wali-u Allah does not describe them in such terminology yet it seems that such distinction would have been obvious to his mind. For example, he uses the term *shaja'ah* (bravery) for both man and animal but from his account of the human quality of bravery, it is clear that the latter differs widely from the former in refinement and development⁴.

According to Wali-u Allah, man's dispositions are characteristic of perfection and superiority as they act under the influence of *ra'al-kulli* — the universal purpose. He brings forth his feelings and emotions in a refined and rich way. The Shah finds that this distinction is based on the following three factors:

1. That an animal being is dominated by physiological faculty (*nafs*). Its external behavior is mainly to satisfy the urges and instincts of biological needs. They are individual needs and Wali-u Allah calls them *rai al-juz'i* (individual ends). Such is not the case with man. In man dispositions are realized with purpose of wider import. Fulfilment of them here is to follow a definite code of law and develop society and civilization⁵.
2. In man, dispositions are characteristic of aesthetics (*zarrafah*). Things are not simply needed here but to satisfy man's sense of aesthetics and attain his peace of mind. Refining and beautifying of elements is made to make things and deeds appealing and

- satisfying⁶.
3. In animal beings the inspirational disposition acts as a source of their economic living. It is used when they feel its necessity. For them there is no necessity of acquiring of knowledge. But man requires knowledge for living a proper way of life. He has the urge to discover and follow others in knowledge and thus needs to undergo through the process of acquiring knowledge. This knowledge includes both the rational and the transmitted ('*aqli* and '*naqli*) sources and is meant to develop his personality and social culture.

Shah Wali-u Allah also finds differences of displaying dispositions in both animal and human species at their respective individual level. To him, it depends upon the nature of relation and coordination in their personality formation elements. He says that some people are strong and clean and depict perfect individuality while in others such qualities are absent and thus have weak individuality. On this account various types of people or individuals—the perfect (*kamil*), the middle (*mutawast*) and the weak (*naqis*) are formed. The perfect individual is described as one who is strongly clean and has a good unity in personality formation elements. Moreover, the impressions of such qualities in him must be reflective in his spiritual, social and psychological self. Then, according to Wali-u Allah, he is worthy to be an ideal person whose morals and deeds serve as a standard for others⁷.

Wali-u Allah's making mention of grades and interaction of dispositions is also interesting. The classification of grades is based on the relation between physical and psychological factors and their respective strength and dominance. They are described by Halepota under three heads—physiological, physico-psychological and psychical. The first is related to bodily needs. It is also called *nasma*. The second is the slumbering disposition

— *naim al-tiba'* and the third is called the wakeful disposition
— *yaqzan al-tiba'*.

The physiological disposition is described as having peculiarities to display those impulses in it which move the organs of the body more immediately towards the realization for their aims without any modifying or controlling inter activity of intelligence or intellect. The slumbering dispositions, on the other hand, are those which are more developed and modified on the part of intellect than physiological disposition. However, its ratiocination is limited to its external experience. It lacks to a great extent the power of forming pure conceptions or images beyond the immediate sensory experiences⁸.

Knowledge from them belongs to the category that Wali-u Allah calls pragmatic knowledge (*ulum al nasmiyya*). However, in comparison to wakeful dispositions the second category of dispositions are of low level. The wakeful dispositions are much more developed, stronger and specifically modified than slumbering dispositions. They are capable to form perceptual images without the aid of sense perception. They are more introvert and capable of wider generalizations and efforts towards the universal ends. They can even perceive the essence of universal ideas which underly the particular things. How and why is also within the purview of such dispositions. Their deriving of pain and pleasure depends on mental states rather than to objects of physical needs. These qualities are not present in the slumbering dispositions as they are dominated by their environment. The wakeful dispositions, on the other hand, aim at seeking the significance (*ma'ana'*) of objects and the spirit they represent. These two types of dispositions, according to Wali -u Allah, form their purposes differently. The dominant motive in the former is generally related to physical and worldly needs while in the latter it rises higher by having its relation to mind and spirit. In this way, they form two kinds of ethics. One is called ordinary ethics and the other is called

the higher ethics.

3. Observations of Some Modern Psychologists

Wali-u Allah's approach to dispositions can be compared to its expositions by some modern psychologists. William James (1842-1910), William MC Dougall (1871-1938), Alfred Alder (1870-1937) and Carl Jung (1875-1961) are few prominent figures of the field who treat the nature and significance of dispositions in human behavior. They generally use instincts in place of dispositions while in Wali-u Allahian thought they are interchangeable. William James, a Harvard psychologist, provides a list of instincts and to him 'they are the faculties acting in such a way as to produce ends without fore sight of certain ends and without previous experience in the performance'.⁹ William Mc-Dougall, a renowned American socio-psychologist holds that all behavior is the result of instincts (dispositions). He adds that instinct is an inherited or innate psycho-physical disposition which determines its possessor to perceive, and to pay attention to objects of a certain class, to experience an emotional excitement of a particular quality upon perceiving such an object and to act in a particular manner or at least, to experience an impulse to such an action'.¹⁰ Jung while recognizing the disposition of life energy in man, views its power in a limited way. To him, it is only undifferentiated life energy, which manifests itself at one time in pursuit of sensual pleasure and at another time in the striving for superiority, artist creation, etc. Describing the four ways of human contact he includes feeling as a way in it and holds that the unity of these ways, sensing, instinct, feeling and thinking brings harmony in life¹¹.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the great psychoanalyst of modern times, also presents his theory of instincts. To him, human beings constitute complex energy system that can be classified into physiological and psychic energy. The latter is

related to those psychological or mental representations of the bodily excitations or need which can be called instinct. Instinct is a wish to fulfil psychological need. It is, according to Freud, an internal drive that operates as a motivational force and its origin is *id* yet comes under the control of the ego¹². Freud further categorizes instincts into two types - the life instinct or *eros* and the death instinct or *thanatos*. The life instinct includes the forces that sustain vital life process and assure propagation of species. The death instinct or *thanatos* also known as destructive instinct includes all those forces that manifest murder, suicide aggression and cruelty. Such instincts are no less important in determining the individual's personality. According to him, in all human organisms a tendency to reestablish the inanimate state out of which they have been formed. On this account he claims that goal of all life is death¹³. Freudian analysis of human instincts or dispositions is a good effort in terms of its investigating into the behavioural motivations of man yet emphasizing much more on sex instinct, though its own due role cannot be ignored, in his theory is unreasonable, particularly in the context of the working of multiple urges in man like love, kindness, mercy, friendship, co-operation.

4. Significance of Shah Wali- u Allah's Approach

The modern theory of instincts, on the whole, does not call patterns of instincts as total behavior of man. They have to undergo through other skills and experiences to realize life and goals. Shah Wali- u- Allah, however, takes dispositions in a broader way. To him, in human beings they are followed by the developing modes through the processes of thinking and knowledge (of secular and spiritual nature). It is an entity leading towards the various stages of personality and societal growth. Wali-u Allah describes them in terms of four *irtifaqat*. These are related to the evolution of human behavior, consisting

of immediate physical needs, family organization (*tadbir-i-manzil*) organization of city or state (*siyasat- madun*) and internationalism (*imamat-i-uzma*)¹⁴. In the first *irtifaq* (civilizational stage) man makes efforts to fulfil his immediate needs of food, shelter and dress etc. and they resemble more or less to those of an animal¹⁵. In the second stage, he fulfills them with refinement and richness (*tarafu*). Here dispositions go with rationalisation. He builds his family to enjoy love and raise children. Social economic transactions also took place here to build a social life¹⁶. It then gets evolved towards the city state due to necessity of the establishment of law and order in the society otherwise violence and conflicts will prevail¹⁷. Lastly, the society culminates into international state (*khilafat-i-uzma*) when the ruler becomes powerful either by his virtues or by aggression¹⁸. This signifies the scope of the dispositions when integrated with rational and experienced knowledge, and in Shah Wali-u Allahian sense it is an *irtifaqat* or *tahdhib-i-nafs* (civilizing mankind) development.

5. Conclusion

The above discussion on Shah Wali- u Allah's treatment of dispositions (instincts) which are characteristic of both animal and human beings, brings out the diverse usefulness of the dispositions in them. In case of human beings their nature is developed and complex and marks a distinction between the two. Even the differences are traced among the individual beings themselves at various levels. Clean and stable development of the dispositions in man lead him towards perfection in personality. The dispositions here follow the *rai'-al-kulli* (universal good) and thus transcend the physical needs. The developed and refined dispositions are also distinguished by higher ethics while as the simple dispositions depict ethics of lower nature. By comparing Wali-u Allah's notion of dispositions to those of the modern western psychologists like

William James, Carl Jung, Willam Mc Dougall and Sigmund Frued, it is found that there is a general recognition of them in both the traditions of thought – the Islamic and the Western. Wali-u-Allah's perception of them is, however, in a broader way that includes its introvert and extrovert nature and its evolution under the four *irtifaqat* (civilizational devices). Both human behavior and social culture are linked with the dispositions in way of their development through acquiring knowledge and experience in day to day the practical world. The treatment of the subject by the Shah is marked by his integrative approach in universal paradigm. Thus there is much scope of examining it in the context of modern psychological and sociological thought.

References and Notes

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4. Ibid, Chapter II.
5. Shah Wali-u Allah, *op. cit*, p. 65.
6. *Al-Budur al-Bazighah*, p. 28.
7. Shah Wali-u Allah, *op. cit*, p. 80.
8. Ibid., pp. 146-47.
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12. Prof. Arun Kumar Singh, *The Comprehensive History of Psychology*, Motilal Banaras Das Publishers Pvt Ltd. Delhi 2006, p. 297.
13. Ibid., p. 298.
14. For details see the present author’s article, “Nature of Man and Society in Shah Wali-u-Allah’s *Hujjat Allah al-Ballighah*” *Insight Islamicus*, S.H. Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Kashmir Srinagar, 2002, pp. 147-160.
15. Shah Wali-u Allah, *Hujjat Allah al-Ballighah*, p. 113.
16. Ibid., p. 115.
17. Ibid., p. 123.
18. Ibid., p. 133.