

**ISLAMIC SPIRITUAL THOUGHT OF SHĀH WALĪ
ALLĀH: A STUDY OF *HAM'ĀT*
AND *ALTĀF AL-QUDS***

NIYAZ AHMAD LONE

Department of Islamic Studies, Islamic University of Science and
Technology, Kashmir, India
Email: niyazahlone@gmail.com

DR. SHEIKH JAMEIL

Department of Islamic Studies, Islamic University of Science and
Technology, Kashmir, India
Email: sheikh.jameil@gmail.com

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Abstract

During the 13th century, as Islam began to disseminate in the Indian Subcontinent, Ṣufī thought became central to the region's Islamic development. Ṣūfism deeply influenced the propagation of Islam in the Subcontinent, and its teachings shaped the Muslim ethos. Among the influential figures, Shāh Walī Allāh stands out for his extraordinary contributions to Ṣufī thought, particularly in his works *Ham'āt* and *Altāf al-quds*. This study focuses on his role in shaping Islamic spirituality, emphasizing inner purification and aligning personal and societal transformation with the Holy Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. In *Ham'āt*, Shāh Walī Allāh examines the essence of spiritual experience and its practical effects, providing a historical and philosophical assessment of Islamic spirituality. This work explores how spirituality can guide individual development. In *Altāf al-quds*, he refines the relationship between humans and the Divine, promoting a balanced approach to spirituality that blends mystical insights with *Sharī'ah*-based ethics. He also addresses the purification of the heart, intellect, and self (*Laṭā'if*). This research investigates Shāh Walī Allāh's philosophical and theological foundations, his integration of Ṣūfism with mainstream Islamic principles, and his critique of contemporary religious practices. It explores his vision for the moral and spiritual upliftment of the Muslim community. By applying textual analysis, qualitative, and

historical methods, this study offers a nuanced understanding of his thought, distinguishing it from prior research.

Keywords: *Altāf al-quds*; Ethics; *Ham ‘āt*; Purification; Revivalism; Spirituality; Thought

1. Introduction

The self-styled terminologies have frequently perverted the original essence of knowledge, and people often wrangle about the originality of the knowledge. Same happened with the spiritual tradition of Islam. When during the second century of *Hijrī* the term *Taṣawwuf* (تصوف) was emerged, Islamic spiritual philosophy became a debatable issue with regard to its meaning, sources, origin, and its objectives. Islamic spirituality aims to enrich the mankind with high morals, which, according to holy Qur’ān constitutes the primary aim of sending Prophet Muḥammad (The Final Prophet of Allah, Peace be upon him, his Progeny and Companions),

“He is the One who raised amidst the unlettered people a messenger from among themselves who recites to them His verses, and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the wisdom, while they were earlier in open error.”¹

Had we given the name of *Tazkiyah* (تزكیه) *Iḥsān*, (احسان), or *Tehzīb-ul-ikhhlāq* (تهذيب الاخلاق) to this spiritual aspect of Islam, there would not have been controversies regarding this issue, says Mawlānā Sayyid Abul Ḥassan Nadvī.²

To comprehend and trace the origin of the Islamic spiritual movement, it is imperative to know the meaning and aims of this spiritual phenomenon. Collectively, this spiritual manifestation aims to remind us the covenant which took place among the spirits of human beings and God, wherein all the humanity accepted that God is our lord. Holy Qur’ān mentions,

“(Recall) when your Lord brought forth their progeny from the loins of the children of ‘Adam, and made them testify about themselves (by asking them,). Am I not your Lord? They said, .Of course, You are. We testify. (We did so) lest you should say on the Day of Judgment, .We were unaware of this.” (A‘rāf 07:172).

This covenant constitutes most important aspect of the religious commitment of the Muslims. Hence, there will be no exaggeration to say that this Islamic spiritual conscience was existed during the time of Prophet (*Ṣal Allāh-u-‘alaihe wa sallam*), though the word “*Taṣawwuf*” was unknown for the people of that very time.³

During the early inception of Islam, Prophet (*Ṣal Allāh-u-‘alaihe wa sallam*) was a living spiritual icon for the people. This spiritual tradition during Prophet (*Ṣal Allāh-u-‘alaihe wa sallam*) and his immediate companions (*Ṣaḥābah*) was completely subordinate to the holy Qur’ān and *Sunnah* (سنت). They found holy Qur’ān to be the only mechanism for their spiritual development, and had no need to divorce them from the society. This was the revolutionary feature of the spiritual movement of Islam during its initial period. They focussed much more on their inner purification; however, simultaneously they were not oblivious from the social services. Shāh Walī Allāh says that it was initial picture of Islamic spiritual movement.⁴ Nevertheless, during the time of Prophet (*Ṣal Allāh-u-‘alaihe wa sallam*), there were some Companions who were inclined towards the seclusion. Like Abū ‘l Dardā ‘Uwaymir ibn Zayd, and Abū Dharr Jundub Ghifārī like some prominent Companions who preferred to go for seclusion to achieve the pleasure of Allah Almighty. These people exercised meditations and preferred renunciation from the material world. However, Prophet (*Ṣal Allāh-u-‘alaihe wa sallam*) did not allow them to adopt such an attitude of life, because Islam keeps no scope for renunciation, and maintains a balance between spiritual and mundane world. It was the pure and real image of Islamic spiritual manifestation.⁵ Fear of God, piety, simplicity, and abstinence were fundamental teachings of this spiritual philosophy of Islam. However, subsequently, with the course of change in the leadership of this spiritual character, and transmission of leadership from orthodox Muslim scholars to others led a change in the essence of this spiritual consciousness.⁶

Nonetheless, after the transmission of pious *Khilāfah* (خلافت) (caliphate) into *Mulūkiyah* (ملوكيت) (monarchy), Muslim *Ummah* (امت) went through various unhealthy and bitter experiences. Sectarian divisions among the Muslims, political unrest and instability, especially political rivalry during the last moments of Umayyad dynasty put Muslims in the trouble. Moreover, due to the influence of newly converts who had retained some previous cultural traits, growing inclination of the people towards materialism, and arising of philosophical discussions among the Muslims were some other reasons which led sensitive minded people to prefer isolation because it was a matter of concern for religious committed people, and especially those who were caring about their self and were worried

about the world to come. The origin of spiritual movement of Islam which later came to be known as *Taṣawwuf* or *Ṣūfism* can be traced from these religiously committed, pious, and spiritually elevated people. Abu Hāshim (d. 150 A.H.) was the first who came to be known as *Ṣūfī*. Ḥaḍhrat Junāid Baghdādī, Fuḍail bin ‘Iyaḍ, Ibrāhīm Adham, Ma‘rūf al Karkhī and Shafīq Balkhī were some other prominent *Ṣūfīs* during that time. Meanwhile, *Taṣawwuf* experienced coming of many other people also, like Rābi‘ah of Baṣra a famous Muslim *Ṣūfī*. The revolutionary feature of *Taṣawwuf* of this time was that, it was completely divorced from the philosophical discussions, and was absolutely subordinate to the holy Qur’ān and *Sunnah*. And the approach of Muslim *Ṣūfīs* to Allah Almighty was firm. The proximity of Allah Almighty was their main aim.⁷ Ḥaḍhrat Ḥasan of Baṣra was another prominent figure of that time.⁸

Furthermore, the emergence of various schools of thought among the Sunni Muslims and the emergence of theological discussions among the religious leadership of Islam during the rule of Abbasid king Al-Māmūn (813-833 C.E), also contributed much in giving a new shape to this spiritual movement of Islam. Hence, subsequently this spiritual trend gradually intensified among the Muslims with regard to religion and life.⁹

2. Literature Review

Although an extensive collection of literature is available under the current theme, however, keeping in view the nature of my research paper, I have reviewed Shāh Walī Allāh’s few books and some authentic books from secondary sources. In his *Anfās al-‘Ārifīn*, Shāh Walī Allāh provides a vision of spiritual purification that is grounded in Islamic law and ethics while remaining deeply mystical. The book focuses on personal transformation through the purification of the heart, its integration of *Ṣūfī* teachings with Islamic orthodoxy. Moreover, the book provides biography of Shāh Walī Allāh’s father and teachers. Similarly, *Ham‘āt* is an inclusive book by Shāh Walī Allāh about Islamic spiritual thought. Here in this work, the author has presented his spiritual experience. In this book, he has made an assessment on Islamic spiritual manifestation in depth. This book is based on historical background of Islamic spirituality and its fundamental philosophy. He characterizes Islamic spirituality as a religious phenomenon which emphasizes on the esoteric purification of an individual. Again *Altāf al-Quds* is another remarkable work of Shāh Walī Allāh on Islamic spiritual phenomenon. It occupies a high place in the spiritual thought of Shāh Walī Allāh. Here, he has discussed the reality of *Laṭā‘if* i.e., heart, intellect, and self, and have

mentioned the means to purify these *Laṭā'if*. Moreover, this work is based on the personal experiences of Shāh Walī Allāh about Islamic spirituality also.

A. D. Muztar, in his book *Shah Wali Allah: A Saint-Scholar of Muslim India*, examines the life, works, and contribution of Shāh Walī Allāh. Muztar presents a balanced and detailed portrait of Shāh Walī Allāh as both a saint and a scholar. The book brings out his intellectual rigor, spiritual depth, and commitment to social and political reform. It situates him as a crucial figure in the Islamic history of India, whose teachings continue to influence Islamic thought, mysticism, and the broader Muslim world. ‘Abdul Ḥamid Siddiqui in his article *Renaissance in Indo-Pakistan: Shāh Wali Allah Dihlawi* presents a comprehensive analysis of Shāh Walī Allāh’s life and works, positioning him as a foundational figure in the intellectual and spiritual renaissance of Islam in India. Siddiqui also examines about the influence of early scholars upon Shāh Walī Allāh ideas. The author discusses about socio-economic, political, and metaphysical thought, and jurisprudential aspect of Shāh Walī Allāh. Dr. Syed ‘Alīm Ashraf’s book *Shāh Walī Allāh aur Taṣawwuf* is a significant academic contribution to the study of Shāh Walī Allāh’s thought, especially his approach to Ṣūfīsm. The book effectively connects Shāh Walī Allāh’s mystical teachings with his broader intellectual and social reformist agenda, highlighting his importance not only as a *Ṣūfī* mystic but also as a scholar and reformer. The author has discussed about Shāh Walī Allāh’s criticism towards the penetration of un-Islamic elements in the Islamic Ṣūfīsm because of ignorance of some Muslim saints. Mawlānā ‘Ubaidullah Sindhī’s *Shāh Walī Allāh aur un kā falsafa* is an insightful and comprehensive exploration of Shāh Walī Allāh’s philosophy. Sindhi provides an in-depth analysis of Shāh Walī Allāh’s intellectual and spiritual contributions, emphasizing his synthesis of Islamic law and mysticism, his approach to knowledge, and his ethical and political thought. The book underscores the importance of Shāh Walī Allāh’s ideas in shaping modern Islamic thought in South Asia and highlights his lasting impact on both spiritual and intellectual reform movements of the Muslims. So, this was literature review of some authentic books both primary as well as secondary, in order to explore the Islamic spiritual ideas as discussed by Shāh Walī Allāh in his *Ham ‘āt* and *Altāf al-quds*.

3. Research Methods

The current research employs historical method to study the *Ṣūfī* thought of Indian Subcontinent with special reference to Shāh Walī Allāh’s Islamic spiritual concepts. The study qualitatively

analyses the Islamic spiritual philosophy presented by Shāh Walī Allāh in his two main works i.e., *Ham'āt* and *Altāf al-quds* which are two primary compilations by the author with respect to his Islamic spiritual ideas. Since this research centres on *interpretation of texts*, *thematic analysis*, and *historical-contextual understanding* of Shāh Walī Allāh's above mentioned two works, qualitative methods are highly appropriate.

4. Results and discussions

4.1. Discussions:

4.1.1. Development of Islamic Spiritual ¹⁰ Thought in Subcontinent

The phenomenon of conversion in a peaceful atmosphere was started with the arrival of Sayyid Yūsuf Dīn, a descendant of Sheikh 'Abdul Qādir Jilānī in Western India during fifteenth century C.E. from Baghdad, where force, persecution, and violence played no part. This was the initial picture of emergence of spiritual movement of Islam in Subcontinent.¹¹

Various Muslim Ṣūfī saints emerged in the Subcontinent during eight century CE. Abu 'Alī as-Sindī, Shaykh Ismā'īl, and 'Alī ain 'Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī, were some prominent Ṣūfīs of the same period. The emergence of this spiritual phenomenon brought various changes in the behaviour of the Muslims in the Subcontinent. These Ṣūfī saints contributed ample towards the spiritual development of the Muslims.¹² Subcontinent experienced a gradual process of Islamic spiritual manifestation. During the Arab conquest in 711 C.E., though Muslims were more inclined towards *Ḥadīth* sciences, but were concerned and worried about their spiritual aspect of life also. Similarly, during the arrival of Ghaznavids on about 1001 C.E., various theologians, poets, and *Ṣūfī* saints emerged in Subcontinent. Nevertheless, it was 12th and 13th century when in the Subcontinent Islamic spiritual aspect emerged as a dominant movement in an organized way. Meanwhile various *Ṣūfī* schools of thought established. Mu'inuddīn Chishtī was a famous *Ṣūfī* saint during this time.¹³ He was born in Sistan on 18th April 1142-43 A.C.E., who later on associated himself with Chishtiyah order founded by Khawaja Abu Ali Ishāq Shami at Chist, Khurasan.¹⁴ He was the first person who used Islamic spirituality as a religious manifestation to preach Islamic teachings among the people of Subcontinent.¹⁵ He introduced Chishtī order in Subcontinent. Gradually this order spread to the different parts of India. After the emergence of Chishtī order, Subcontinent witnessed conversion of non-Muslims at a large scale. The simplicity, rich behaviour, piety, and good morality of the Muslims of Chishtī order

impressed non-Muslims who later on accepted Islam. In such background we can understand the emergence and early development of Islamic spiritual movement in Subcontinent.¹⁶

4.1.2.1. Spiritualistic thought of Shāh Walī Allāh in The light of *Ham'āt* and *Altāf-al-quds*

Being a religious reformer of Islam, Shāh Walī Allāh felt a need of reformation in Islamic spiritual dimension. Although he produced an extensive amount of literature on Islamic spiritual aspect, however, in the current research, we will focus on his spiritual thought in the light of his two important books i.e., *Altāf al-Quds* and *Ham'āt*.

4.1.2.2. *Ham'āt* (بمعات): Among these two works, *Ham'āt* is a comprehensive book in Islamic spiritual ideas presented by Shāh Walī Allāh. Originally this book was written in Persian language by the author. Here in this work, Shāh Walī Allāh has presented his spiritual experience. He says that “*what I have received during my spiritual journey it will be beneficial for inner purification*”. Furthermore, he says that, I felt need to convey this spiritual experience to other also for their guidance. Shāh Walī Allāh says that because of this, I have named this book as *Ham'āt*.” In this book, he has made an assessment on Islamic spiritual manifestation in depth. This book is based on historical background of Islamic spirituality and its fundamental philosophy. He characterizes Islamic spirituality as a religious phenomenon which emphasizes on the esoteric purification of an individual. He further states that, Islam is conglomeration of two main components, one is exoteric and another one is esoteric component. The former deals with the apparent activities of the individuals, while later one focuses on the inner purification. He says that now there was need to secure both the aspects. As for the protection of external aspect of Islam is concerned, Shāh Walī Allāh says that, *Muḥadithīn* (محدثین), *Fuqahā* (فقهاء), and other men of knowledge and capacity shouldered this responsibility. They accomplished their religious duties with commitment and dedication. Similarly, Shāh Walī Allāh says that for the safety of inner dimension of Islam, Allah Almighty bestowed some people with inner comprehension who are fulfilling their responsibilities, and are inviting people towards Divine guidance. They are providing guiding principles for the inner purification of the people. He gives the term *Ihsān* (احسان) for inner purification. *Ihsān*, according to him, is a state which brings creation close to Allah Almighty. Moreover, *Ihsān* means to have a firm belief on Allah Almighty. He says that, the group of people who shouldered this responsibility came to be known as Muslim saints (*Ṣūfīs*). He says that these people are close to Allah Almighty and are aware about the inner

conditions of the individuals. Then he discusses other contributions of these people with regard to esoteric wellbeing of the Muslims. He says that in every century there comes a revivalist who reforms both inner as well as outer aspect of Islam.¹⁷

4.1.2.3. Historical background of Islamic spiritual thought in *Ham'āt*

For centuries, a large number of Muslim thinkers, intellectuals, and men of insight have been pondering on the Islamic spirituality. Among them, Shāh Walī Allāh was an august Muslim thinker. Taking into consideration the historical background of Islamic spiritual movement, Shāh Walī Allāh says that it was existed during the life time of Prophet (*Ṣal Allah-u-'alaihe wa sallam*) also. He has divided the history of this movement into four transitional periods. First phase was during the time of Prophet (*Ṣal Allah-u-'alaihe wa sallam*) and his Companions. During this time Islamic spirituality was completely subordinate to the holy Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. People focused upon external aspect of Islam. Selfless and disinterested love became a tool for approach to God. People preferred to lead a life of seclusion by disassociating themselves from mundane concerns. *Tawajjuh* (concentration) on Absolute Reality was used by *Ṣūfīs* as a tool to gain proximity of Allah Almighty. A complete obedience to Allah Almighty constituted the cardinal principle of Islamic spirituality during this period. Junaid Baghdādi (d. 910) was the leading figure among the Muslim saints during this time. During the time of Shaykh Abu Sayīd bin Abi al-Khayr (357/967-440/1049) and Shaykh Abu al-Ḥassan Kharqānī (d. 425/1034), this phenomenon underwent through a change, though the *Ṣūfīs* continued to adhere their predecessors, yet some of them preferred to live in a state of ecstasy, and were more inclined towards spiritual enrichment. Here the *Ṣūfīs* tried to absorb themselves in the qualities of God, which they called *jadhb* (جذب), and tried to approach to God furthermore. Thereafter, during Shaykh al-Akbar Muhiy 'al-Dīn ibn-'Arabi (560/1165-638/1240), the *Ṣūfīs* started to discuss about the reality of the universe. The phenomenon of *Waḥdat al Wujūd* (وحدت الوجود) (Unity of Existence) was emerged during this period. Shāh Walī Allāh calls this period the culmination of Islamic spirituality. Although there was a constant transition in the external activities and states of the *Ṣūfīs*, nevertheless, the essence of this spirituality was same and the *Ṣūfīs* of all these stages possessed a common goal.¹⁸

Shāh Walī Allāh treats Islamic spirituality as a religious manifestation of Islam, which bases its whole structure on the holy Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. Thus, he says that a *Ṣūfīs* must follow holy Qur'ān

and *Sunnah*. However, for a lay person who is not accessible to the primary sources of Islam, Shāh Walī Allāh paved way for emulation of any of the four *Sunni* schools of thought. Then he discusses some terms of this spiritual aspect. Like *Ṭā'at* (اطاعت) (obedience), Shāh Walī Allāh says that the primary responsibility of a *Sālik* (سالک) (traveler in the mystical path) is to follow *Sharī'ah* (شریعت) as a whole, and a *Sālik* should correct the basic beliefs about Islam, and should adhere the pious predecessors. Shāh Walī Allāh calls it *Ṭā'at*. Similarly, a *Sālik* should abstain from discussing about *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* (unity of existence) or other philosophical issues. Moreover, Shāh Walī Allāh says that Junaid Baghdādi was the first who compiled these rules and regulations about Islamic spirituality.¹⁹

Thereafter, Shāh Walī Allāh says that a *Sālik* should spend most of the time in remembering Allah Almighty, this, he called *Awrād* (اوراد) and *Adhkār* (اذکار). Similarly, recitation of holy Qur'ān and offering extra prayers are also must for a *Sālik*. He should abandon all those things which are considered to be repugnant to Islam, like jealousy, backbiting, and hypocrisy, and should enrich morality with good traits. Shāh Walī Allāh says that, again a *Sālik* should follow the sayings of Prophet (*Ṣal Allāh-u-'alaihe wa sallam*) in this regard. The main aim of these *Awrād* and *Adhkār* is to inculcate a sense of disinterested loyalty and service to God.²⁰

Although, Shāh Walī Allāh says that a *Sālik* should exercise seclusion mostly for the sake of remembrance of Allah Almighty, nevertheless, Shāh Walī Allāh does not retire a *Sālik* from social services and other responsibilities towards fellow beings, like visiting patients, assisting distressed, and extending kindness towards relatives. Shāh Walī Allāh says that a *Sālik* should not remain oblivious from social issues. This was the revolutionary feature of Shāh Walī Allāh's Islamic spiritualistic thought. He made this spiritual dimension of Islam subordinate to holy Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, and treated it as a spiritual manifestation of Islam on one side, and as a mechanism to understand the universe through Islamic worldview on the other side. He bridged the dichotomy created by his earlier Muslim Ṣūfī saints between spirituality and mundane concerns.²¹

Shāh Walī Allāh traced the origin of *Dhikr* (ذکر) (remembrance) and *Fikr* (فکر) (ponder) from Prophet (*Ṣal Allāh-u-'alaihe wa sallam*), and said that Prophet (*Ṣal Allāh-u-'alaihe wa sallam*) has ordered us about these two things because these involve both mind and tongue in the remembrance of Allah Almighty. *Dhikr* means the constant remembrance of Allah, and *Fikr* serves the purpose of revealing the reality of the universe by pondering upon it.²²

Thereafter, a *Sālik* should go through *Muraqabah* (مراقبه) (meditation). By *Muraqabah*, Shāh Walī Allāh means to say that a *Sālik* should exert or toil all the perceptive faculties in gaining knowledge about Allah Almighty, which is called *M'arifāt* (معرفت) in the terminology of Islamic spirituality. The whole concentration (*Tawajjuh*) should be focused upon this knowledge.²³

After achieving all the stages of *Muraqabah*, a *Sālik* reaches into a station called *laṭā'i'f* (لطائف). It means all the faculties of a *Sālik* enriches with good comprehension through which a *Sālik* attains absolute reality.²⁴ Subsequently, a *Sālik* reaches up to a station called *Jadhb* (جذب) and *Sulūk*. Here, in Islamic spiritual aspect, *Jadhb* means when a *Sālik* completely turns towards absolute reality, and attains a living, firm, and direct experience of God. *Sulūk* means that when a *Sālik* inculcates purity, piety, and simplicity like qualities.²⁵

Laṭā'if occupies a main place in the spiritualistic thought of Shāh Walī Allāh. He says that human beings possess some faculties with different activities, these faculties are called as *Laṭā'if*. Then he discusses these *laṭā'if* separately and their functions:

Qalb (قلب) (heart): Human heart possesses some abstract entities, like, evil, jealousy, anger, etc. *'Aql* (عقل) (intellect): It aims to comprehend the things. It exists in the mind. *Ṭabī'at* (طبیعت) (physicality): It works to fulfill the instinctive needs of the human beings.

Since human beings possess capacity of both evil and good deeds, so, sometimes an individual becomes guilty of sin and sometimes and individual migrates towards Allah. Shāh Walī Allāh says that when the individuals act anything wrong their heart becomes *Qalb-i-bhamī* (*Nafs-i-amarah*) (نفس اماره).²⁶ Similarly, when the human beings act according to the will of Allah Almighty, their mind becomes *Qalb-i-insānī* (*Nafs-i-lawwāmah*) (نفس لوامه)²⁷, and they become satisfied with good deeds. Shāh Walī Allāh calls it *Vilāyat-i-Ṣughrā*. He says that if a person constantly remains steadfast in the right path, then the person develops spiritually more, and reaches on the two more stations; *Vilāyat-i-Kubrā* (ولایت کبری) and *Mufāhamat*. Shāh Walī Allāh calls *Mufāhamat* (مفاهمت) as insight which receives from Prophethood. About *Vilāyat-i-Kubrā*, he says that when a person completely disassociates from the animal instincts and ponders on the self deeply then the reality of the universal self or the whole universe becomes clear. In fact, Shāh Walī Allāh says that when persons realize their own personality, then they realize the reality. However, Shāh Walī Allāh says that all these stations are subject to one's faith, piety,

firm belief, and constant remembrance of Allah almighty. In nut shell, he constructs the Islamic spiritual thought based on holy Qur'ān and *Sunnah*.²⁸

4.1.2.4. *Altāf al-Quds* (الطاف القدس)

Altāf al-Quds is another remarkable work of Shāh Walī Allāh on Islamic spiritual phenomenon. It occupies a high place in the spiritual thought of Shāh Walī Allāh. Here, he has discussed the reality of *Laṭā'if* i.e., heart, intellect, and self, and have mentioned the means to purify these *Laṭā'if*. Moreover, this work is based on the personal experiences of Shāh Walī Allāh about Islamic spirituality.²⁹

Laṭā'if: According to Shāh Walī Allāh, in human body there are three main branches to serve the human personality. These three branches are: *Qalb* (heart), *'Aql* (intellect) and *Nafs* (self). These are called *Laṭā'if*. Each branch functions separately. *Nafs* involves the fulfilling of carnal desires, *Qalb* as a seat of joy, sorrow, enmity, determination of doing something, and *'Aql* acts as a tool to understand things well and to believe in things. He says that the individuals differ on the basis of functions of these three branches. Some individuals are physically strong, but they lack the qualities of heart and mind. They are more inclined towards animal instincts. Some individuals are full of good qualities, but they are physically weak and intellectually feeble. Some individuals are rich in heart, but poor in physical and mental blessings. Nevertheless, the source of all three branches is one i.e., *Nafs-i-nāṭiqah* (ناطقه), and are dependent on one another.³⁰ Shāh Walī Allāh says that, it is must to make oneself subordinate to *Sharī'ah* in order to purify all the three *Laṭā'if*. He says that people subdued *Nafs-i-amārah*, then Allah Almighty has chosen a person among them who purified their self, and provide him means and ways for the guidance of the people. Shāh says that it is called *Sharī'ah*. The main objective of this *Sharī'ah* is the welfare of humanity in this world as well as in hereafter. Shāh Walī Allāh says that Allah Almighty have deposited two types of capacities in humans; (*Quwat-i-malāi'kah*) (قوت ملائکه) power of angles and (*Quwat-i-bahīmiyah*) (قوت بهیمیہ) power of evil. So, the *Sharī'ah* aims to remove the evil traits from individuals. For that very purpose, Allah Almighty asks human to inculcate four types of traits; first quality is purity through which an individual become angels like. Second quality is modesty, it helps individual to inculcate angel like qualities. Third quality is generosity which purifies an individual from all the satanic powers. Fourth quality is *'Adālat* through which an individual deserves the blessings of angels. He says that Islam guides humanity in two ways: it seeks the reformation of the human beings through exercising of good, and thereafter, Islam

emphasizes on the establishment of the human values. For that very purpose, it seeks to inculcate the above-mentioned qualities. These are some which are prerequisite with regard to *Taqwā* (تقوى) oriented life, which is called *Ihsān*. These qualities aid humans to refrain from both internal as well as external aspects of the sins which, Shāh Walī Allāh calls *Bāṭin-i-Shr'h*.³¹ Besides these three *Laṭā'if*, he says there is one more *Laṭīfah* which is known as *Laṭīfat-ul- Jawāriḥ*. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, when 'Aql, *Qalb*, and *Nafs* functions commonly for the development of the body it is known as *Laṭīfat-ul- Jawāriḥ*.³²

Mawlānā 'Ubaidullah Sindhī which is an authority on Shāh Walī Allāh differentiates between the Islamic spiritual philosophy of Shāh Walī Allāh from that of other Muslim Ṣūfīs. He says that some Ṣūfīs believed in the separation of internal and external forces of the human body, so they had to divide the Islamic teachings accordingly into two parts. They said that *Sharī'ah* and *Taṣawwuf* or *Ṭarīqat* are different. Moreover, they admit that the path of Ṣūfism was not prevalent during the time of Prophet (*Ṣal Allah-u- 'alaihi wa sallam*) because of Prophet's existence among the people; hence, there was no need for any inner enlightenment for them.³³

Sindhī again states that after reading the philosophy of Shāh Walī Allāh we came to the conclusion that human life has a unity both physically and spiritually, moreover, the present life and the next life are not separate rather both are two stages of the same journey. Sindhī says that Shah Wali Allah's *Jawāriḥ* has two sides one is towards *Jawāriḥ* and its culmination which is called *Sharī'ah* and other one is towards its sources which is called culmination of *Taṣawwuf*, *Ṭarīqat*, or *Falsafah*. So, he says that *Sharī'ah* and *Ṭarīqat* are two sides of the same thing which can maintain the unity of the life.³⁴

Then Shāh Walī Allāh discusses about the modification and purification of these *Laṭā'if*. He characterizes Islamic spirituality as a mechanism for inner purification; however, he was against all those innovations which were crept into Islamic teachings. He says that after the initial three centuries of Islam, Muslims got involved in un-Islamic activities, and adopted a life of seclusion. They avoided all the necessary and basic needs. Shāh Walī Allāh calls it *Taṣawwuf* of the common people who were not aware about Islamic teachings. He says that Hārith Muḥāsibī was first who introduced such a way of life. However, later on, Shāh says that Junaid Baghdād was first among the later Muslims saints who adopted a moderate and balanced way, and put everything related to Islamic teachings in their right position, and all the subsequent Muslims saints followed him. Junaid Baghdādī stressed on the purification and guidance of five *Laṭā'if* i.e., self, heart,

intellect, spirit, and *Sir* (سر)³⁵ because these are main functionary parts in human body. The purification of self, heart, and intellect calls *Ṭarīqat*, (طریقت) and the purification of spirit and *Sir* is called *Ma'rifat*. Shāh Walī-Allāh says that, the Muslim saints have used these terms for different meanings. Like the self of human beings possess diverse meanings, however, that human body have controlled both the self and heart, which gives arise to various vices, it is called self. Similarly, heart also has multiple meanings according to the Muslim saints, but heart helps to overcome the instincts. Intellect is a comprehensive power of human beings. So, all these three *Laṭā'if* are commonly functions in a human body. Similarly, Shāh Walī Allāh says that, spirit means that the heart which possess angelic qualities. *Sir*, according to Shāh, is higher and superior than human body, and it concentrates on human mind. Nevertheless, he says that due to the different terms used by *Ṣūfīs*, it is difficult to comprehend the main aim of these *Laṭā'if*. He says that one should not be confused with these different terms, because all these *Laṭā'if* are commonly functions in a human body. Then Shāh Walī Allāh discusses about *Muqām* (مقام) (station). He says that it is a quality which a *Sālik* should attain. The primary aim of this quality is to purify self from all the carnal desires. When a seeker attains freedom from all the evil desires, it is called *Muqām*. Similarly, he says that when a seeker attains the spiritual purification, it is called *Hāl* (حال). Since human self is frequently inclined towards carnal and other sexual desires, so, it is imperative for a *Sālik* to perform repentance for self-purification. He says that, it is also *Hāl*.

Wajd (وجد), according to him, is another mechanism to overcome the evil desires. When a human heart dominates the soul, he says that it is *Wajd*. Moreover, it means to purify the heart for the remembrances of Allah. He says that *Wajd* manifests in different forms. Like sometimes it appears in a state of unconsciousness, sometimes in the form of jumping and tearing clothes³⁶, and sometimes heart completely attracts towards Allah Almighty. Then comes the stage of *Baydārī* (بیداری) (awareness). Shāh Walī Allāh says that, it means to understand right and wrong, to avoid all the anti-Islamic elements, and to make *Nafs* subordinate to the Islamic teachings. Then comes the stage of *Zuhd* (زهد) (asceticism). This stage helps a seeker to avoid all those activities whether internal or external which deviates a seeker from the remembrance of Allah Almighty and the Day of Judgment. Then he says that comes the stage of *Muḥāsabah* (محاسبه) (introspection) and *Hoash dar Dum* (هوش دردم). This stage helps a seeker to be aware that whether a seeker is remembering Allah. These are the stages which are necessary for the purification of *Nafs*. Shāh Walī Allāh says that these stages collectively known as *Tawbah*

(repentance), which means to migrate towards Allah Almighty. He says that to subdue the self, some exercises are must to perform, i.e., to eat less, to sleep less, to talk less, and to meet people less, which further helps a seeker to come towards Allah Almighty. Then he says that the impact of purification of self gradually shows in the whole personality of a seeker. Patience, trust on fate, piety, generosity, and truthfulness are some main qualities which arises in a seeker after the purification of self. He says that the essence of this purification is worship of Allah Almighty forever, or to continue the servitude of Allah Almighty. This worship, according to him has two aspects; one is related to tongue and heart. It means to spend the time in the remembrance of Allah Almighty and recitation of holy Qur'ān. Another aspect of this worship is related with heart and intellect where a seeker constantly attaches with the Allah Almighty. Shāh Walī Allāh says that it is must to maintain a balance between the purification of inner and outer aspect of the personality. This approach of Shāh Walī Allāh was a unique in his Islamic spiritualistic thought.³⁷

Shāh Walī Allāh discusses about hidden *Laṭā'if*. He says that about these *Laṭā'if*, a layman is not familiar. So, only those who know these *Laṭā'if* well, and possess capacity to purify them can perceive these *Laṭā'if*. Similarly, he says that those who have a brief understanding about these hidden *Laṭā'if*, they can comprehend these *Laṭā'if*. Describing the hidden *Laṭā'if*, Shāh Walī Allāh says that after the completion of purification of the above mentioned five *Laṭā'if*, a *Sālik* turns towards *Ruḥ-i-'Alvi* (روح علوی). He says that this *Ruḥ-i-'Alvi* is compound of two things: *Nafs-i-nāṭiqah* which is a part of *Nafs-i-Kulliah* (نفس کلیه) (universal self), and every *Nafs* (self) from *Nufūs-i-M'ādaniyah* (نفوس معادنیه), *Nufūs-i-Nabāṭiyah* (نباتیه), *Nufūs-i-Malikiyah* (ملکیه), and *Nufūs-i-Shayṭāniyah* (شیطانیه) is a part of this universal self. However, every self has separate order. Yet every self is near to the universal self. He says that every self has a matter, and universal self appears according to the capacity of that matter. When this matter gets benefit from the universal self, and modifies itself, then this matter becomes able to the self and in another time when this matter benefits more from the universal self, it becomes able to the self which is more subtle, refined and wise than previous one. The other component of *Ruḥ-i-'Alvi*, is *Ruḥ-i-Samāvī* (روح سماوی). He says that it is also a part of universal self. Primarily it appeared in the form of universal human being. Then after a long time it disintegrated in to various forms. He says that human form is not universal itself, rather it is an individual in '*Ālam-i-Mithāl*'³⁸ (عالم مثال). He says that *Ruḥ-i-'Alvi* constitutes of two elements, and both the elements are united with each other in such a way that one element functions as matter, and

other functions as *Nafs-i-Nāṭiqah*, and *Ruḥ-i-Smāvī* has been appeared from *‘Ālam-i-Mithāl*. He gives an example in this regard and says that a painter always draws a sketch of an image in his mind, and this idea of his mind becomes cause for the existing image, and he makes images according to his idea. Similarly, Allah has changed the condition of oneself to another condition, and finally *Nafs-i-Nāṭiqah* appeared which was according to the ideal form, and was existed before the appearance of *Nafs-i-Nāṭiqah*. Therefore, he says that, the journey of a seeker of the truth starts from supreme manifestation (*Tajalli ‘Āzam*) (تجلی اعظم) and his last journey is towards absolute uniqueness (*Anāniyat Muṭlaqah*). He says that in the heart of *Ruḥ-i-‘Alvi*, there is a point which is called *Ḥajar Baḥat* (حجر بحت). While explaining this, he says that when a seeker of the truth see himself, he ponders on his real aim, then he thinks that this point exists in my spirit, though it is not something like that. He says that Muslim saints have used different terms, and there are frequent controversies, so we should mind that Allah knows better.³⁹

Then he says that, subsequently, the seeker of the reality proceeds further from *vilāyat-i-Ṣugrā* (ولایت صغری) (initial stage of *‘Irfān*). Then, here two situations arise either angelic like traits inculcates in him and he absorbs in the great manifestation. During this spiritual experience, the seeker receives something extraordinary from the reality which he cannot conceive it; neither is it something like spiritual observation. But he says that it is something, and that it is hereditary from the Prophethood, or he becomes victim of animal instincts and same sort of elements starts to appear in him. Then he considers his existence as first real aim or prefers absolute reality over his existence and perceives all the vicinity for this absolute reality, and all other becomes meaningless in front of absolute reality. Shāh Walī Allāh says that, here also two situations arise either he puts absolute ego in place of specific ego and a seeker conceives specific ego as absolute ego, or he ignores specific ego. He says that the people of *Sulūk* calls it *Tajalli-i-‘Azam* (great manifestation). Here, Shāh Walī Allāh says that the highness of a seeker’s insight and main objective is universal self and from this station he starts to proceed towards reality and he receives some spiritual capacity which he is unable to comprehend and interpret this spiritual journey. Shāh Walī Allāh calls this journey as *vilāyat-i-Kubrā*.⁴⁰

Hence, *Ruḥ-i-‘Alvi* covers *Ḥajr-i-Baḥat* in such a way that the seeker cannot see and comprehend this reality. Shāh Walī Allāh says that due to dominance of celestial body and due to inclusion of *Ḥajr-i-Baḥat*, *Ruḥ-i-‘Alvi* has an appropriate name i.e. *Nūr-al-*

Quds (نور القدس) Similarly, due to dominance of rational self and the inclusion of this order into *Hajr-i-Baht*, *Ruḥ-i-'Alvi* needs a separate name, and i.e. *Laṭā'if Khafiyah*. Then appearance of *Hajr-i-Baḥat* and dominance of this over these two spirits and the implementation of its order on these needs is one more name and i.e., *Akhfa*. Shāh Walī Allāh says that it is the final destination of a seeker. He says that some people go through different situations which are beyond human comprehension. When an *'Arif* go high to *Hajr-i-Baḥat*, the universal self becomes parallel to his body, and *Dhāt-i-Baḥat* (ذات بحت) become parallel to his spirit, then he sees whole universe along with knowledge inside him. This knowledge is about *Dhāt-i-Baḥat*.⁴¹

Shāh Walī-Allāh says that the annihilation of spiritual existence and survival of the divinity or the world which is beyond time and space, means to prevail over the creation, and it aims to dominate all the *Laṭā'if* by *Laṭīfa Khafiyah*, or among the *Laṭīfa Nūr al-Quds* and *Laṭīfa Hajr-i-Baḥat*, one should prevail. This dominance is of two types: dominance of *Athār* (آثار) and dominance of *Dhāt*. The dominance of *Athār* means absolute ego should be explained in special ego. So, in this way, it is experienced that he finds universe in reality or to find reality in the universe, or to disassociate from the tangible world while observing the reality. In fact, Shāh says that a *Sālik* should see reality in reality. Then the human intellect, heart, and self becomes pure, and an individual becomes a personality of comprehensive traits, who later on purifies the whole society, and pulls out all the individuals from all social malaises. Shāh calls this individual as a caliph of Allah.⁴²

Shāh Walī Allāh discusses about the purification of *Ruḥ-i-'Alvi*. By its purification he means to replace all the evil qualities with angel qualities. For that very purpose it is must to concentrate on great manifestation and show simplicity. Similarly, he says that it is must to take effects from angels for purification. In short, he says that the main objective of individuals is purification of *Jawarah* through good deeds, and in this regard, we must adhere *Sharī'ah* because it provides a complete code of life for all the human beings.⁴³

Then Shāh Walī Allāh discusses some instincts which are present in humans by nature. He says that some are related with heart or in other words heart provides base for some for them, like fear, hope, love, regret, etc. Some are related with intellect, like intellect feels some imminent incidents or other devil thoughts. Sometimes heart and intellect both gives rise to these instincts, like, sometime

intellect conceives about some plan and heart intends to culminate that very plan. He calls it *Khwāṭir wa dawa* 'ī. Shāh says that it is must to come out from these threats and for that very purpose we should gain knowledge about these threats, and should have awareness about the causes of these threats. He says that sometimes heart, intellect, and human self gives rise to the threats, like, hunger, thirst, sexual desires, and other physical feelings, like hotness or coldness. These are some threats which either directly or indirectly badly effects both physical and psychological aspect of the human nature, or provoke humans towards unhealthy and harmful activities. Sometimes devil activities occupies place in human beings like anger, horror, greed, etc. He says that during this time these devils are assisted by other harmful elements of the self, which results in the destruction of a healthy social system. He says that, now it is an assignment of a *Sālik* to get awareness about these devil elements and should try to stay away from these elements.⁴⁴

Results and Conclusion

Shāh Walī Allāh was a multidimensional Islamic scholar who wrote and pondered on all the aspects of Islamic teachings. His thought encompassed all the dimensions of an Islamic society and its principles. Similarly, he comprehended Islamic spiritual aspect as a unique religious mechanism which purifies individuals both esoterically as well as exoterically. He attempted to liberate Islamic spiritual dimension from un-Islamic elements and innovations. In this regard he produced a number of works on the said discipline. Out of these, his *Altāf al-quds* and *Ham'ūt* are two remarkable works on Islamic spiritual dimension in which he presented a comprehensive explanation of Islamic spiritual phenomenon. In *Ham'ūt*, he has discussed in detail about the historical background of Islamic spirituality, different stages of a *Sālik*, different prayers necessary for a *Sālik*, ways of exercising prayers, and the obstacles in the way of a *Sālik*. The author has confirmed that the phenomenon of Islamic spirituality was existed during the early inception of Islam also. Similarly, in *Altāf al-Quds*, the author has focused on different aspects of human body like spiritual, intellectual, and physical aspect. Here, he has discussed about their reality and functions in a human body. Moreover, he has discussed about the purification of these different aspects of human body in this work. So, the two works of Shāh Walī Allāh have comprehensively discussed Islamic spiritual domain. In nutshell, we can say that, Shāh Walī Allāh made holy Qur'ān and *Sunnah* as base for revival of Islamic spiritual aspect, and highlighted its efficacy. He approached with an Islamic spiritual thought which

was according to the essence of Islamic teachings, though one can partially disagree with his Islamic spiritual thought.

Limitations

The current research, though studied the spiritual thought of Shāh Walī Allāh as depicted in his two main works i. e., *Ham'āt* and *Altāf al-quds*, is not the only source of Shāh Walī Allāh's Islamic spiritual thought. In this connection, the present work has investigated the Islamic spiritual thought of Shāh Walī Allāh with special reference to his above mentioned two works. Since, Shāh Walī Allāh's spiritual thought is portrayed in his other notable works also, so there is further scope of research in this field. In the current study, special focus has been given on his two above mentioned main works in order to comprehend the Islamic spiritual phenomenon.

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Notes and References

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- ¹ Holy Qur'ān 62:02 Translated by Mufti Taqi Uthmānī, Karaachi, 2010.
- ² Mawlānā Sayyid Abul Ḥassan Nadvī, *Tazkiya wa Ihsān ya Taṣawwuf wo Sulūk*, Lakhnow, 1979, pp.13-16
- ³ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, United States, 1975, p. 24
- ⁴ Shāh Walī-Allāh, *Ham 'Āt* (Urdu Transl. by Prof. Muḥammad Sarwer) Sindh Sagar Academy, Lahore Pakistan, 1946, pp. 45-46
- ⁵ Louis Massignon, *Essays on the origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, (Trasnl. from French by Benjamin Clark), University of Notre Dame Press Indiana, United States, 1997, pp. 108
- ⁶ Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb. A. R., *Mohammedanism – A Historical Survey*, New York Oxford University Press, 1949, pp. 133-134
- ⁷ 'Alama Muḥammad Iqbal, *Tārīkhi-i-Taṣawwuf*, Urdu Bazar Lahore Pakistan, 1985, pp. 53-54 (This book was completed by Sabir Kulorvi by taking help from all the writings of Iqbal)
- ⁸ Sayyid Athar Abass Rizvi, *History of Ṣūfism in India* (Vol. 1), New Delhi, 1978, p. 27
- ⁹ 'Alama Muḥammad Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (scholar select), London, 1908, pp. 100-101
- ¹⁰ Since this paper aims to explore the exclusive Islamic spiritual ideas rather than general Sufism, presented by Shāh Walī-Allāh, hence, the term "Islamic Spiritual" has been used instead of Sufism or *taṣawwuf*.
- ¹¹ T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (second edition), London, 1913, p. 274

- ¹² ‘Azīz Aḥmad, *An Intellectual History of Islam in India*, Edinburg North America, 1969, pp. 34-35
- ¹³ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, United States, 1975, pp. 344-345
- ¹⁴ Mirza Waḥiduddīn Begg, *The Holy Biography of Khawaja Muinuddin Hasan Chishti*, Ajmer, 1960, Foreword NO. II
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 25
- ¹⁶ Schimmel, op.cit., p. 345
- ¹⁷ Walī-Allāh, Shāh, *Ham ‘āt* (Ur. Transl. by Prof. Muḥammad Sarwer), Sind Sagar Accademy, Lahore, 1946, pp 34-42
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 45-51
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 53-56
- ²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 57
- ²¹ *Ibid*, pp. 65-66
- ²² *Ibid*, p.72
- ²³ *Ibid*, pp. 73-74
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 77
- ²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 86-87
- ²⁶ *Al-Qur’ān*, 12:53 (The force which persuades an individual towards evil deeds is called *nafs-i-amara*)
- ²⁷ *Al-Qur’ān*, 75:02 (A human being, by nature is able to differentiate between right and wrong, this capacity has been called *nafs-i-lwama*)
- ²⁸ Shāh Walī-Allāh, op.cit., pp. 221-225
- ²⁹ Shāh Walī-Allāh, *Altāf al-Quds* (Ur. Transl. By Sayyid Muḥammad Farōq al-Qādrī), Lahore Pakistan, 1998, p. 10
- ³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 29-31
- ³¹ *Ibid*, pp. 36-39
- ³² *Ibid*, p. 41
- ³³ Mawlānā ‘Ubaidullah Sindhī, *Shāh Walī-Allāh aur un kā falsafa*, Sindh Sagar Accademy Lahore, 2002, pp. 190-191
- ³⁴ Mawlānā ‘Ubaidullah Sindhī, “Imām Walī-Allāh ki Ḥikmat ka Ijmālī T‘āruf” ed. *Al-Furqān* by Muḥammad Manzūr N‘umānī, Barley, U. P. India, 1970, pp. 314-315
- ³⁵ Shah says that *sir* literally means hidden. Since every section of *Laṭā‘if* is hidden, so, it has been called *ser*.
- ³⁶ However, such type of worship is unacceptable to Islam
- ³⁷ *Altāf al-Quds*, op. cit., pp. 49-59
- ³⁸ *Ālam-i-Mithāl*, according to Shāh Walī-Allāh is an imaginary world where things are present in an abstract form before appearing in the present world in physical shape. See *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha* (Ur. version), p. 32
- ³⁹ *Altāf al-Quds*, op. cit., pp. 76-81
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 82-83 (Mawlānā Fazlur Rahman, says that “*Ḥajar Baḥat* is a technical term, meaning the original state of a person's mind, which, of course varies in its capacity to reflect the great epiphany and the *Ḥazīrat al-quds*,” see *Revival and Reform in Islam* (edited and with an introduction by Ibrāhīm Mūsā), Oneworld Publications England, 2000, p.177)
- ⁴¹ *Altāf al-Quds*, op. cit., 84-85
- ⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 86-88
- ⁴³ *Ibid*, pp. 90-91

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 105-106

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