

Shāh Walī Allah's Interpretations Of Divine Mercy (Al-Raḥmah) And Its Applications In Social Life: An Ethico-Psychological Study

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Abstract

It is significant to know various implications of Mercy (al-Raḥmah al-Ilāhīyyah) in Islam described by Shāh Walī Allah al-Dehlawī (d.1762). How do his contributions project the role of mercy in our daily life keeping in view the ethico-psychological perspective of human life? Is there any paradigm to protect, enhance and preserve the values and moral par-excellence in the social order? In this qualitative examination, we examined the Ṣūfī insight of Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762) regarding Divine Mercy (al-Raḥmah al-Ilāhīyyah) and his clarification about the applications of mercy (al-Raḥmah) in our daily life. This paper presents the values and ethico-psychic needs of human life and their realization and accomplishment through the remedies conditional to practice mercy. His thought persuades the importance to understand the role of Divine Mercy (DM) in the anthropocosmic entities and its mutual link between human beings and Divine Bestowal. We assessed that the Raḥmah-Oriented Society (ROS) should be established in the light of Walī Allah's solution in the prevailing situation and worldwide scenario. It may result in positive impacts on human attitude and behaviour associated with multidimensional elements for social reform.

Keywords: Shāh Walī Allah, Al-Raḥmah, Interpretation, Ethico-Psychic Implications, ROS

1. Introduction

During the Mughal rule in India, Quṭb al-Dīn Aḥmad also known as Shāh Walī Allah al-Dehlawī (d.1762) was born to 'Abd ur Raḥīm al-Dehlawī. He was a prominent figure in the subcontinent regarding Tafsīr, Ḥadīth and the other scholarships in addition to the elaborations of philosophy and theological matters from the Islamic perspective. He was a well-known intellectual, reformer

and highly qualified character and unparalleled theologian. Walī Allah (d.1762) memorized the Qur’ān by the age of seven and played a noteworthy role as a pioneer of Qurānic study in India.

A. D. Muztar remarked that Shah Waliullah’s impacts on the religious history and thought of the subcontinent of Indo-Pakistan can be viewed in the claims pronouncing association with him by almost every school of thought.¹ Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762) was a versatile genius and was respected and accepted by almost Muslims for his unusual intelligence, distinguished merit and his approach to know and teach true image of Islam. His contributions may help us to examine several issues encountering the psychological matters and emerging difficulties and complications in the social life.

He discussed various themes in relation to al-Raḥmah al-Ilāhīyah Divine Mercy (DM) and its role in human life physically and metaphysically considering this Divine Attribute at high rank. What are the ethics and moral values accentuated with special reference to the al-Raḥmah and its applications in the human life for individual and social betterment? Is there any need of Raḥmah Oriented Society (ROS) governing in the light of principles derived from Islamic concept of mercy explained in the literature contributed by Shāh Walī Allah al-Dehlawī (d.1762)? Dr. Halepota writes:

“He anticipated Rousseau and the nineteenth century sociologists and preceded them in producing a synthesis and correlation of biology, psychology, sociology and ethics”²

Moreover, Abbasi forwarded some recommendations for reconstructing Pakistani society in the light of ethical and moral philosophy of Shah Wali Ullah, in which compassion plays central role along with fairness, kindness, honesty, integrity, tolerance, and respect. In concluding remarks, he writes; “According to the moral concepts of Shah Wali Ullah, feeling a closed association and reciprocated compassion is very important being a human. Every human is responsible of respecting other’s rights.”³

Literature review shows that several Islamic scholars focused Divine Attribute of compassion and mercy with due attention while there are number of intellects who discussed this characteristics simultaneously while elaborating the other themes of Islamic theology. Let us visit his writings in order to know the Ṣūfī cognition and contexts concerning DM what can we understand from scholarly writings and academic input of Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762).

2. D.M and Divine Names and Attributes

According to Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762), al-Raḥmān is one and only one Divine Name out of beautiful Names of God (Asmā' u al-Ḥusnā) which is the origin of this unitary system (universe). He stated that the multifarious aspects of this name cannot be totally comprehended. But the creation of the system from ex-nihilo (nothingness) and variations in it are directly related to the theophany of the Most Merciful (al-Raḥmān) and (His Mercy; al-Raḥmah).⁴ So, existential aspect of anthropocosmic entities and their function and survival is by dint of Divine Mercy. Moreover, Sūrah 20 and 21 also mentioned Divine Name al-Raḥmān in the verses (20:5), (20:90), (20:108), (20:109), (21:26), (21:36), (21:42) and (21:112). In the light of these Divine Mercy Verses (DMVs) we should observe the manifold aspects of this Name to be familiar with the active role of this Divine Quality up to some extent.

The philosophy of Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762) regarding Divine Names consists of six levels and three strata (ṭabqāt). He categorized the Divine Names in each level and stratum to define the relevant attributes. He drew the line between, what is called as 'Starting Names' to those of 'Returning Names'. Both types of names manifest themselves on different existential aspects. Out of six, the fifth level is pertaining to the names manifesting Divine Love. The Divine Name Al-Raḥmān included by Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762) in this category. While he also discussed the Divine Names al-Raḥīm, al-Barr and al-Qādir placing them in the fifth level.⁵

This metaphysical discourse projects the concepts of mercy in the light of "The Most Merciful" and can be comprehended with other Divine Characteristics mentioned in the Quṭb al-Dīn's hierarchy.

In Al-Budūr al-Bāzighah, he stated that al-Raḥmān (the Benefactor) is one who fulfills all needs of the needy like the kind master treats his servants.⁶ So, this Divine Name (al-Raḥmān) may also be called as the expression of love due to which the needs of impecunious and needy required to saturate and fulfill. While provision of existence to every existent is also because of the manifestation of Divine Mercy (al-Raḥmān).

The concept of Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762) regarding mercy is interrelated with other Divine Attributes and Qualities. Whereas, mercy is a conditional one in spiritual up-gradation and the other affairs of human life directly or indirectly. Moreover, he wrote about the greatest theophany (Tajallī A'zam) considering three Divine Names i.e. Allah, al-Qādir and al-'Ālim whereas the Name al-Qādir has been explained along with 'breath of the Merciful' (nafas Raḥmānī) that is "ever-spreading and self-unfolding existence which gives rise to contingent beings."⁷ Manifestation of mercy (Tajallī-i Raḥmānī in urdu) adopts the shape of power of supra material world and then in material world ('Ālam-i Shahādāt), it turns into (different) shapes and existence

(wujūd).⁸ Moreover, Dr. Khalil ur Rahman Raz writes about spiritual and imaginal world conveyed by Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762). He says that in spiritual world things exist as per requirement of that dominion for example Raḥm stood up against the attitude to break ties with kith and kin when it was created.⁹

Hence, his thought shows that mercy has a central relation and a functional force behind the multiple universal matters.

Therefore, we have to contemplate the prevailing panorama and control in cosmic order projecting universal balance. This view and vista compel human being psychologically to exercise in accordance with the principles and bounding oneself with the code of ethics and moralities. These norms and standards have explained in the literature provided by Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762). We have to focus upon the Divine Mercy Verses (DMVs) and his works in this regard thinking about various relevant points, themes and requirements for a feasibility report to set up a ROS. On the other hand, it invigorates us to enhance the human working ability seeking assistance and succor from the Divine Attributes.

3. Al-Raḥmah and Prophetic Teaching in Islam

The role Prophet has a supreme position in the worldview of Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762). He explained the subtleties of his creed regarding Allah Almighty and multiple bestowals to the Prophet. The friends of Allah have been given various miraculous nature and showing DM upon them. He delivered the moderate way of mutual living.¹⁰

Baljon says that “Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam) realized that the main aim of his mission was to act as an intercessor for the believers and to serve as a medium for very special mercy on the Day of Judgment... Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762) gave importance to the intercession of Muḥammad (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam) and Jesus.”¹¹

It is noteworthy to mention that Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam) was asked to pray against the worshipers of Idols (mushriqīn). One should focus what the Prophet of Islam (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam) replied:

”قِيلَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، ادْعُ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَالَ: إِيَّيْ لَمْ أُبْعَثْ لَعْنًا، وَإِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ رَحْمَةً.“

“The Messenger of Allah was asked, O Messenger of Allah, Invoke curse upon the polytheists. He replied, I was not sent as an invoker of curse, rather I was sent as a mercy.”¹²

He conveyed that Prophet is at ideal and perfect position and his era and time is Divine Manifestation of mercy.¹³ According to G. N. Jalbani: “His (Waliullah) standard for judging religious issues was the Holy Qur’an and the sound Tradition. He was of opinion that every problem for dispute should be thoroughly analyzed and tested on the touchstone of the Holy Qur’an and the sound Tradition. If it be found in conformity with them, it should be accepted; otherwise, it should be rejected outright”.¹⁴ In the light of supplications to enter and leave the house of Allah i.e. mosque, we request to open the gate of mercy for us which is correlated with the favour in the life of Hereafter and when we invoke the supplication while leaving the mosque, it includes the concept of material favour in this world.¹⁵

Regarding the theory of Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762) about ethics, Dr Hussain says; Good deeds and ethical performance facilitate psychological aspects of human beings. The spirit of human self has upswing ability. This change can be observed in human attitude and behaviour (HAB). Therefore, humanity can adopt the ethics and performance endorsed and exercised by the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam), and this is the bestowal (mercy) of Allah Almighty.¹⁶

Hence, theophany of Divine Mercy everywhere is emphasized by Islamic philosopher with different methodological approaches but maximum spiritual approaches toward it are unanimous concerning various domains of elaboration e.g., mercy vis-à-vis an ontological aspect of anthropocosmic entities, Prophetic Mercy in Islam, mercy and its ethical implications for human performance and seeking mercy along with its deliverance in the direction of the social amelioration.

4. The Role of DM in Micro-cum-Macro Worlds

Waliullah correlates the Laṭā’if (singular Laṭīfah, means subtle or sensitive. It is a Ṣūfī term, a nonmaterial component of the person which can be influenced or awakened through spiritual practice) and the series of prophets in a historically developmental way. In his explanation of the progressive awakening of human spirituality in al-Tafhīmāt, he describes the relationship of the microcosmic world of man (al-‘Ālam al-Ṣaghīr) to parallel developments at the level of the Macrocosm (al-‘Ālam al-Kabīr). According to his description, at the creation of Ādam (‘Alayī ‘l-Salām), God emanated the ideal human form with three spiritual centers, the ‘Heart’, ‘Intelligence’, and the ‘Lower Soul’, as its foundation. As the human species progressed and man’s spiritual capacity developed, Muḥammad (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam) came as the seal of this (the Adamic) age and the opener of a new era... Therefore, at the time of Muḥammad (ṣallā llāhu

‘alayhi wa-sallam), “God’s glance of mercy” turned to the higher Laṭā’if, the rūḥ (spirit) and sir (mystery).¹⁷

These were, then, awakened at the level of the ideal form of the human species. While this humanistic development is nothing except the role of mercy and its applications. Dr Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui says that the source and the origin of thought and new concept are from unseen world and this psychological perception is linked with a force which has involvement in this cosmic system.

Human treatment and removal of illness is linked with al-Raḥmah (DM). He stated two types of forces in human nature. Many characteristics and ethics like Ṭahārat, ‘Ājizī, Sakhāwat and ‘Adālat are the four significant human characteristics. It is a journey towards the Sublime Assembly (malā’ A‘la) to get the closeness acquiring mercy and compassion. After that he elaborated the spiritual ethics in detail.¹⁸ He defined the precursors of wrongdoings and bad characters and inspiration linked with satanic actions. But to stop disorder of the system installed in humans (either physically or psychologically) and its improvement is associated with the implication of al-Raḥmah (DM).¹⁹ The universal phenomenon is a source of understanding and intellectual reasoning observing cosmic beauty always conveying and message of purposeful life.

5. Divine Mercy vis-à-vis Human nature, Ethics and Performance

Concerning the discussion of benevolence where human ethical nourishment and a balanced personality having the human traits; termed as; samaḥat which is mutually linked with the bestowal of DM. He advised that a devotee should have positive thinking concerning his forgiveness (which develops a hope-based sense towards Allah Almighty). Sunan and Ibādah brings al-Raḥmah al-Ilāhīyyah towards the creature and itself a reason to acquire DM which is more than anything else. This educated (us) the impact of mercy upon the physique of a devotee. It incorporates him, his generation, his possessions (belongings), and his supplications are acceptable, and this mercy saves him and assists him (in different walk of life).²⁰ Therefore, a person who gains mercy has a balance of his emotional intelligence leaving a positive psychic impact in surroundings and in the circle of relatives, friends and those who are in contacts.

It is obvious that his concept of the human rational soul (Qūwat-i Malakūtī) plays a leading role in subduing irrational forces (Qūwat-i Bahīmī) and as a result, man is blessed with apex and higher rank (kamāl). This is the methodology to acquire perfection but on the other hand, this excellent grade may also be acquired due to the attainment of Divine Mercy. What he experienced shows that the light of action is based on human actions and the purity of these actions as well while the light of mercy is from Divine Bestowal that is always greater one? However, the manifestation of mercy is always there in the realm of burzakh and grave. His thought presents

that, there may a weakness of human pneuma (nasma) due to illness of human body then according to Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762), Divine Mercy re-energized revitalize the quality.²¹

In his 8th metaphysical experience, Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762) entitled his spiritual observance; *mushāhdah*-8. He discussed the light of action (Nūr-i A‘māl) performed by a devotee in this world and its impacts on the eschatological matters. There are many reflections of mercy, for example, potential for work of *Da‘wah* and *Amr bil Ma‘rūf* is because of Divine Mercy. He defined light of mercy (Nūr-i raḥmah) in relation to light of action (Nūr-i A‘māl). On the graveyard of a *Badrī* Companions of Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam) he observed both lights. According to his opinion, the light of mercy (Nūr-i raḥmah) overcomes the light of action (Nūr-i A‘māl) while he observed the spiritual manifestation on the grave of *Syednā Abū Zar Ghifārī*.²²

His philosophy of *irtifaqāt* related to the social amelioration and gradual enhancement from lower grade to higher. His thought in this regard conveys friendliness, affection and compassion-based dealings which is correlation of *irtifaqāt* grades and four steps communicated in his *magnus opus* conclusive argument (*Hujjah Allah al-Bālighah*). This sociological view has also been considered by *Mawlānā Ubaidullah Sindhi*.²³ In this ethical discussion, *al-Raḥmah* (DM) plays a significant role when we pay attention to the various reforms sanctioned by Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762). The social improvement and the concept of *irtifaqāt* lead us to a major structural design of ROS which go together with the manifold dimensions and ethico-psychic implications of mercy.

Moreover, Dr Ghazali writes: “Elaborating the Qur’ānic concept of human nature *fitrah*, Shāh Walī Allah (d.1762), says that moral vision and aesthetic demands, rather than mere rational tools and apparatus, are the chief distinctions of man, that distinguish him from the animal species. And it is the fusion of ethics and aesthetics that constitutes the mainstay of all cultural progress and civilizational development.”²⁴

He adopted the course of moderation between *ijtihād* and *taqlīd* which chimed with the objectives of the *Sharīah*, human psychology and the realities of life.²⁵ There is a mutual link between ethical and psychological requirement of human being. He dealt with individual and collective psychic needs in a similar way emphasizing the ultimate upgradation of humanity. What are human intrinsic wants and their accomplishment within the ethically defined barriers. There is no detachment between ethical and psychological participation in the human personality.²⁶

He expressed his own spiritual experience indicating the importance of subject theme. According to him, *Nūr-i raḥmah* is due to Divine Pleasure on account of good actions of devotee. Humanity is benefitted from these actions and performance. It is also known as *Nūr-i Yādāsht*. In

his 8th metaphysical experience and spiritual observance (mushāhdah-8) he argued scientifically about how to train human self for a well-balanced performance rectifying the human attitude and behaviour (HAB).

6. Conclusion

This discussion concludes that ethical performance and good deeds strengthen psychological activities in the right direction. Shāh Walī Allah articulated a naturalistic approach to the betterment of social order. He also interpreted considerable phases of Divine Mercy and its application in different walks of life. These two facets are required to unite generating preliminary assignments to set up the Raḥmah-Oriented Society (ROS). Theory of Shāh Walī Allah for social, economic and political reform bounded with principles which have corresponding to the various ethics conveyed by Divine Mercy Verses (DMVs) of the Qur'ān. This blend and combination require a detailed investigation incorporating manifold dimensions of human psychological requirements.

He has shown an inability to interpret DM all-inclusively because it is an unknown area (terra incognita) and human beings are unable to understand the real nature of this Divine Characteristic (DM). But it is obvious from this study that DM plays a precursory role behind all blessings and betterments. His work compels us to bring a change in our individual and collective life. He guided regarding several intrinsic complexities of the human self and various stages towards Divine Nearness. We have to enhance our angelic urge instead of animal urge for self-training and contended soul. We required to contemplate the prevailing panorama and control in cosmic order projecting universal balance. This view and vista along with intrinsic needs compel human being psychologically to exercise in accordance with the principles and bounding oneself with the code of ethics and moralities.

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