

Give an account of the life and services of Shah Waliullah. How did he save the Indian Muslims from political annihilation and religious degeneration?

## Introduction:-

Shah Waliullah was the first reformer to appear during the period of Muslim decline. He worked for the revival of Muslim rule and intellectual learning in South Asia, during a time of waning (daji) Muslim Power. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the decline of Muslim power in subcontinent started. The Muslims in subcontinent had degenerated from a powerful and well integrated community to a helpless and disorganized crowd. The greatness of Shah Waliullah lies in identifying the causes of decline of Muslims and in finding remedies to counteract them. He took number of steps in the social, intellectual and religious milieu to reform and revitalise the Muslim society in the Indian sub-continent.

## EARLY LIFE OF SHAH WALIULLAH:-

- Shah Waliullah was born on **21st February, 1703** in Delhi
- His father Sheikh Abdul Rehman was a renowned scholar of his time and founded the renowned Madrasa Rahimiyya in Delhi.
- Shah Waliullah completed his formal education under loving care of his father at the age of 15 and later initiated in the Naqshbandiya Silsilah. Soon after, he was permitted to teach others in Madrassah-Rahimiya.
- After the death of Abdul Rehman, Shah Waliullah continued

teaching for 20 years.

- He then went to Arabia in 1730 for pilgrimage and higher studies. By the time, he returned to Delhi in July 1732, the decline in the Mughal fortunes was obvious.
- Shah Waliullah dedicated his life for the uplift of Muslim society until his death in **1762**.
- I. H. Qureshi describe that

What he saw of the Muslim people there deeply affected him and the social, political and spiritual decline of the Muslims at home and abroad confirmed him in his belief that it was high time to re-interpret Islam and popularize Islamic values amongst the Muslims.

## SERVICES RENDERED BY SHAH Waliullah:-

### 1. Efforts for Preserving Muslim Rule in India:-

- After the weakening of Muslim power, Marathas emerged as the biggest threat to the Muslim rule in the subcontinent. It seemed certain that Marathas would capture the throne of Delhi easily. Realising the gravity of the situation, Shah Waliullah wrote to Afghan King **Ahmad Shah Abdali** to remind him of his duty as a Muslim king to liberate the Muslim community. Shah Waliullah also enlisted the support of Ruhaila tribe to support Ahmad Shah Abdali against the Marathas. As a result Ahmad Shah Abdali crushed the Marathas in the third battle of Panipat and the Muslim rule in the subcontinent was saved from imminent collapse. In this way, Shah Waliullah not only safeguard the Muslim rule from Marathas but also infused a spirit of Jihad

## 2. Conciliation between Muslims:-

Shah Waliullah realized the necessity of Muslim solidarity at a very critical juncture of their history. For this he took a number of steps towards conciliation. The worst internal conflict was amongst the Sunnis and Shias. Shah Waliullah wrote Izalat-al-Khifa to eliminate active hostility between the Shias and Sunnis.

## 3 - Adoption of Islamic Practices :-

Shah Waliullah urged the Muslims of the sub-continent to concentrate on the fundamental principles of Islam and follow the example of Holy Prophet (PBUH). He gave details about the benefits to be gained from such obligations such as prayers, alms giving (Zakat) and fasting. He forbade the adoption of Hindu customs for two reasons.

- He said that minorities needed to assert their distinctive identities.
- There were many customs taken from Hindus like pomp and show at marriages and other events that led Muslims to extravagance and ultimately to debt.

## 4 - Moral Reforms of Muslim Community:-

Shah Waliullah scathingly criticized the luxurious and indolent lifestyle of Muslim, particularly the upper stratum of society. He believed that the moral decadence of the Muslim elite had torn apart the very fabric of society. He urged the rulers to shun their decadent and ostentatious lifestyle and perform their responsibilities with diligence and imbibe Fear of Allah.

# EFFORTS OF SHAH WALIULLAH TO SAVE INDIAN

## MUSLIMS FROM POLITICAL ANNIHILATION :-

### 1. Identification of causes of Muslim Decline :-

• Shah Waliullah was the first Muslim who identified the causes of Muslim decline. He pointed out following causes of Muslim decline in the subcontinent.

- 1 - Incompetent rulers
- 2 - Lust for power
- 3 - Burden of taxation
- 4 - Feudalism
- 5 - Bankruptcy

• In his book, "Hujjat-Ullah-Bilagah", he described other reasons of widespread deterioration are heavy taxation of the peasants, merchants and workers and unjust dealings with these groups. No other statesman or thinker had so carefully studied and analyzed the causes of social and political malaise as Shah Waliullah did.

### 2. Steps against rising power of non-Muslims :-

Shah Waliullah had seen the horrors of Delhi successively by the Jats, the Sikhs and the Persian under Nadir Shah. The prospects of an interruption of the Mughals had filled princes and people alike with fear and frantic efforts were made by some of northern rulers to form a league against the common foe.

### 3. Political Consciousness through Writings :-

Shah Waliullah wrote about 50 books, trained a group of Ulemas, established several branches of his school in Delhi and prepared the ground for a wider and more

effective dissemination of his ideas. His activities and writings spread political consciousness among the Muslims of subcontinent.

• Shah Waliullah wrote books on particularly all important Islamic subjects such as

→ Tafsir

→ Hadith

→ Islamic law

→ Islamic History

→ Sufism.

#### 4 - Calling Ahmad Shah Abdali:-

Shah Waliullah took the responsibility to counter the Muslim decline and Ahmad Shah Abdali was the only hope at that time. Shah Waliullah made an appeal to him to intervene for the help to Muslims of India. Therefore in 1761, Ahmad Shah Abdali inflicted a crushing defeat on the Marhattas at **Panipat** and provided a great loss to this constant threat faced by Mughal Empire.

#### 5 - Resistance for Muslim Absorption in Hinduism:-

Every subsequent political, social and religious movement may be tracked back to Shah Waliullah and it was he who laid the emotional and intellectual foundations of the movement for national independence. In this way, he provided the basis for resistance for Muslim absorption in Hinduism. Shah Waliullah was a realist in his political thinking "who had a clear insight into the intimate relationship between ethics, politics and economics. He made a passionate appeal to all classes of the society to realize the danger and prepare themselves to face it squarely.

# EFFORTS OF SHAH WALIULLAH TO SAVE INDIAN

## MUSLIMS FROM RELIGIOUS DEGENERATION

Shah Waliullah observed that the prevailing Muslim degeneration was due to the fact that the Muslims had drifted away from Islam. So he rendered the invaluable services for the regeneration of the Muslims in the subcontinent.

### 1. Translation of Quran in Persian:-

Shah Waliullah wanted to reorganize the society through the translation of Quran in a local language. Because he viewed that after the translation of Quran, the people would be able to understand the message of Allah. In his famous book "**Fuz-ul-Harain**", he stressed for the utility of Quranic Translation. It was due to translation of Quran in local language that an extensive study of Holy Quran was begun in the subcontinent.

### 2. Efforts against Sectarianism:-

Shah Waliullah opined that there would be no progress in the society if the harmful controversies between the Shias and Sunnis on one hand and squabbles between various classes of Sunnis on the other hand were not eliminated. He introduced the concept of "**Izalat-ul-Khifa**" and "**Khilafat-ul-Khulifa**" to create a sense of balance among both sects i.e. Shia and Sunni.

### 3. Efforts for Moderation:-

Shah Waliullah tried to discard path of extremism and introduced a balance between four schools of thoughts. He also worked for bringing about a workable synthesis without showing any partiality.

for any one among four school of thoughts of Sunni law. His approach was so liberal that it was difficult to know as to which school of Fiqh he himself belongs. He also disapproved the blind adherence to the traditional school of law.

#### 4- Pruning of Sufism:-

Shah Waliullah wanted to shun the Islamic practices from its Greek overtone and Hindu Growth, so that Islamic practices could be harmonized with the Shariat. He also resolved controversies between law and mysticism. He tried to reconcile controversies between Sufis and Ulemas about Wahdat-ul-Wujud and Wahdat-ul-Shahud.

#### 5. Stress on Jihad :-

He opined that it was necessary for the Muslims to revive their habits of Jihad so that glory of Islam and that of Muslims could be achieved. He said that to give up the life of ease, draw the sword and establish true faith and infidelity as the infidels are punished and they are rendered unable to raise their head again.

### Conclusion:

From the above mentioned discussion, it may be concluded that his teachings created awareness of the present dangers and what the future had for the Muslims of the subcontinent. Shah Waliullah's position as a theologian and traditionalist is undisputed and unrivalled in the subcontinent. His services and contributions made a fine Muslim society and played his role for regeneration of Muslims in the subcontinent. He lived in 18<sup>th</sup> century but his outlook and approach