

# Shah Waliullah (1703-1762)

## ⇒ 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 the South Asia, during a time of waning Muslim power.
- After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the decline of Muslim power in the sub-continent started.
- The Muslims in the sub-continent had degenerated from a powerful and well-integrated community to a helpless and disorganised 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.

## ⇒ Biographical Sketch:-

- Shah Waliullah was born in Phulat a town in Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh India on February 21, 1703.
- His real name was Qutub-ud-din Ahmad Ibn-e-Abdul Raheem.
- For his pious habits, he was known as Shah Waliullah, which means "Friend of God".
- His father Sheikh Abdul Raheem was a renowned scholar of his time and founded the renowned Madrasa Rahimiyya in Delhi.

- Shah Waliullah received his education at Madrasa Rahimiyya.
- After finishing his education at the Madrasa Shah Waliullah taught there for 12 years.

### ⇒ Pilgrimage to Makkah and meetings with Arab Ulemas.

- He went to Arabia for higher studies and received education under the most capable teachers of Makkah and Madina.
- He received education from Sheikh Abu Tahir Bin Ibrahim and also obtained the sanad of Hadis from him.
- He performed Haj in 1731 and saw the holy Prophet in his dream, telling him to guide the Muslims of sub-continent. This was a turning point in his life.
- 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.

### ⇒ <sup>or causes</sup> Reasons of Muslim Decline.

1. Incapable successors of Aurengzaib after his death.
2. Lack of understanding religion in its proper prospective and true spirit.

### 3. The rise of Sikhs and Marhallas

(i) They succeeded in uniting hindus.

(ii) They were trying to become independent political power.

(iii) They were very strong that even Aurangzair lived half of his life trying to defeating them.

### 4. Sectarian conflicts.

5. Heavy taxation of Peasants, merchants and workers.

6. Money obtained from the exchequer by those who do not perform any corresponding duty. People such as Ulemas and Soldiers.

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## Beliefs

- Shah Waliullah believed that Islam has lost its glory in the sub-continent.
- He realized that it was necessary for Muslims to reconnect with Islam and its teachings if they want to improve their conditions.
- He wanted the rulers to enforce Islamic laws.
- He urged rich Muslims to live a simple life and traders to follow Islamic laws in their dealings.
- He feared that if reforms are not taken then Muslims and non-Muslims will be indistinguishable.
- He despised the division of Shia and Sunni because it was weakening Muslims roots and wanted them to be united.
- He believed that reforms cannot come from weak leadership of Dehli, they must come from

Community itself.

### ⇒ Situation of the Society.

1. Hindu reformist movements.
2. Weak muslim rule.
3. Aloofness from Sharia.
4. Spread of social evils.
5. Threat of christian missionaries.
6. Increasing threat of Marathas.
7. Deviance from divine laws.
8. Threat of (christian) and dominance of Hindu culture.

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### Services Rendered By Shah Waliullah

Shah Waliullah took a number of steps to safeguard the Muslim rule and society:

⇒ ~~Services~~ ~~Rendered~~

#### 1. Efforts for Preserving muslim rule in India:

- After the weakening of muslim power, Marathas emerged as the biggest threat in the muslim rule in the sub continent. 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 Ahmed Shah Abdali against the Marathas.

- As a result Ahmed Shah Abdali crushed the Marathas in the third battle of Panipat and the muslim rule in the sub continent was saved from imminent collapse.
- In this way, Shah Waliullah not only safeguarded the muslim rule from Marathas but also infused a spirit of jihad amongst the muslims.

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### Translation of the Holy Quran:

Shah Waliullah felt that deviation from Islamic norms had led the muslim community into decline. This deviation he attributed to lack of direct access to the meaning of the Holy Quran. He took the bold step of translating the Holy Quran into Persian in 1738. This act of Shah Waliullah drew fierce criticism from the Ulema but his reputation was great enough to withstand the critics.

### 3. 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 studied and discussed the whole question very objectively. He wrote "IZALAT-UL-KHIFA" and "KHILAFAT-IL-KHULAFAT" to remove misunderstanding between Shia and Sunnis.

• Secondly, he tried to reconcile opposing strands of Sufism. He maintained that the Wahdat ul Wajood of Ibn Arbi and the Wahdat us Shadood, of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi were correct and there was no meaningful difference between the two.

#### 4. Shah Waliullah and Ijtihad:-

• Shah Waliullah was a firm believer of the institution of Ijtihad. He considered Ijtihad obligatory because each age presents, new problems and new situations which were not envisaged by the lawmakers of bygone days. But he also believed that jihad is an exhaustive endeavour to understand the derivative principles of canon law and therefore only those who are well versed in theology could perform Ijtihad. In his famous treatise Hujjat Allah al-Baligha, Shah Waliullah discussed in detail the intellectual and scholastic requirements of a mujtahid (jurist) and the general principles of Ijtihad.

#### 5. Balance Between Four School of thought:-

He wrote AL INSAF FI BAYAN SAHAB AL IKHTILAF in order to create a balance between the four schools of thought:

(i) Hanfi      (ii) Shaafi      (iii) Maliki      (iv) Hanbali

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#### School of Hadith:-

He established a school for study of Hadith. He selected Imam Malik's ALMAWATA as the most authentic of all collections of the

Hadith and took steps to popularize its study by writing a review on this book in Persian and Arabic.

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### Equitable Distribution of wealth:-

- Shah Waliullah's guiding Principles were justice and balance.
- Therefore Shah Waliullah was in favour of an equitable distribution of wealth in society.
- The concentration of wealth in one class leads to a wasteful spending at one level and extreme deprivation at the other.
- At the same time, he also laid great stress on moral constraints.
- Wealth he said should be acquired only by honest and ethical means.
- He stressed that the labour of the craftsmen and peasant should be justly rewarded and justice and equilibrium should form the backbone of a more egalitarian society.
- He urged traders and businessmen to adopt a fairer system of trading and making money.
- He stressed that economic equality must be eradicated because it leads to social, spiritual and national degeneration.

### 8. 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 detailed the benefits to be gained from such obligations as Prayers, alms giving (Zakat) and fasting.
- He forbade the adoption of Hindu customs for two reasons.

(1) distinctive identity of minority.

(2) There were many customs taken from Hindus, like, Pomp and show at marriages and oth events, that led Muslims to extravagance and ultimately to debt.

### 9. Moral Reform of Muslim Community.

- Shah Waliullah said that all the Sufi orders consist of tariqat (spiritual path) and all tariqat is subordinate to Shariah (religious law).
- This was also the main platform of his reformist movement as it was under the cover of Sufism that a number of Practices, threatening morality had crept into Muslim society.

### 10. All Embracing Nature of Islam:-

- Shah Waliullah was a firm believer in the embracing nature of Islam.
- He did not believe that the Principles of Politics, economics or Sociology could be separated from religious teachings.
- In this view, a good society was impossible to achieve without the moral and spiritual values of Islam. Shah Waliullah also asserted that



Islam is a complete code of life and has a definite role to play in the functioning of State.

### 11. Literary Works of Shah Waliullah:-

Shah Waliullah also rendered a major contribution in the realm of education and intellect. He was a prolific writer and wrote extensively on Fiqh and Hadith. Eventually had 51 books to his credit **23 in Arabic** and **28 in Persian**. He always tried to underscore how many minor and petty the controversies were between the different schools of thought within Islam.

### 12. Two nation theory:-

He was strong supporter of two nation theory. He inspired the Muslims for Pakistan Movement and said Muslims cannot live under the governance of Hindus.

### 13. Hujjat Allah al Balighah:-

This book explains how Islam was found suitable for all races, cultures and people of the world and how successfully it solves social, moral, economic and political problems of human beings. No other book of the eighteenth century has had a profound effect on the Muslims of South Asia.

### 14. Izalat al Khifa :-

Izalat al Khifa is commentary and explanation of Holy Quran.

### 15. Insaf fi Bayan Sahib al Ikhtilaf:-

The intent of the book was to strike

a balance between the Hanafi, Malaki, Shafi, and Hambali schools of thought.

### 16. Letters By Shah Wali Ullah:

He wrote open letters to:

(1). To Mughal rulers, To give up their corrupt and inefficient practices.

(2). To Artisans, workers:- To remind them of the fact that the economic prosperity is dependent on them.

(3). To the masses:- To make them conscious of their duties as citizens.

(4). To the Emperor:- To request them to give up nepotism.

(5). To the Soldiers:- To inculcate within them the spirit of Jihad.

### Impacts of Shah Wali Ullah Teachings

● The poet-philosopher of Pakistan, Allama Muhammad Iqbal describes "Shah Wali Ullah as the last great theologians of Islam and the first muslim to rethink the whole system of Islam."

The movement of political as well as spiritual regeneration of muslim India did not die with Shah Waliullah.

● His talented son Shah Abdul Aziz, and his worthy disciples and successors, strove for the realization of his mission. The torch of Islamic revival kindled by Shah Waliullah was kept aloft by his worthy successors.

Both form the landmarks of the same struggle. His real greatness lies in the cumulative effect produced by his writings, by the contribution of persons trained by him and by the achievements of the school of thought founded by him.

- In religious matters, he struck a mean between extremes; in **social affairs** he strove to introduce in the muslim society the simplicity and purity of early Islam.

- In the sphere of economics he advocated justice and equilibrium and in the **political field** he forged a united muslim front against the non-muslim forces which were threatening to storm Muslim India.

### ● (1) Giving Priority to Madhhab:

Although he was a follower of Hanafi fiqh, he could reconcile comparative fiqh. He tried to bridge the gap between the Hanafi, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools in an orderly manner. So, in our era, it has become legal to follow any of the four schools of thought. In our era, people's courage has decreased, and people's hearts have become full of desires. So in this era, there is no alternative to following the madhhab or taqlid.

### ● (2) Reform and Revolutionary Movement Among Muslims:

Shah Waliullah is a person who has defined the history of Islam and the history of muslims

Separately. He criticised and reviewed muslim history from the perspective of Islamic history. He used to analyse and explain the prophecies of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on all these matters. He also explained social iss. He established a new philosophy in the Indian subcontinent called "Comprehensive Muslim Mind". Apart from explaining Shari'ah, he also explained social issues beautifully. He has made a balance between the knowledge given to man by Allah and the merits that man has acquired by himself.

### (3) Shah Waliullah's anti-British Attitude:-

Shah Waliullah, in his time, started various movements against the British. The anti-British movement of muslims was conducted in the light of Shah Waliullah's thoughts and philosophy. The British realised Shah Waliullah's knowledge, research philosophy had taken root in people's hearts. So, the British resorted to various strategies to stop his anti-British movement. Therefore, his sons spread his movement across the country.

### (4) Concept of a Dynamic Economy:-

He clarified the concept of a dynamic economy by breaking the axiological economy. He condemned labour diversionary earnings. He gave equal status to capital and mental skill to labour and determined the nature and shape of the national welfare and

taxation system. He despised capitalism and favoured establishing a way of creating and sharing wealth.

#### (5) A call for Reforms in Education Systems:-

He noted the influence of Greek philosophy on the education system of Muslims in the seventeenth century.

He addressed the self-proclaimed intellectuals of the time, saying that <sup>the</sup> fools were those stuck in the maze of Greek epistemology and ethics, as well as jurisprudence and rhetoric. He also addressed the community of scholars and said, "You have narrowed the scope of the life of God's servants, and you have ignored the flexibility of Islam."

#### (6) Giving Importance to the Teaching of the Quran and Hadith:-

He paid particular attention to this and subsequently translated the Quran and different Hadith books, including "Muwatta Al-Imam Malik" into the national language, Persian. Through the efforts of Shah Waliullah, his sons, and their students, ilm-al-hadith spread widely in the Indian subcontinent.

#### ⇒ Conclusion:-

Shah Waliullah was responsible for awakening in the community the desire to win back some of its moral fervour and maintain its purity. To revive a community conscience, belief and faith from the destruction of the 18th century was no small achievement.

## ⇒ Death:-

Shah Waliullah Dehlawi died on August 20, 1762. At that time of his death, this muslim leader and reformer was 59 years old. He was buried next to his father in India's famous Munabadian graveyard, and after the death of Shah Waliullah, his son, Shah Abdul Aziz, continued his efforts, including spirituality, to re-establish the Muslim faith in his followers and successors.

## ⇒ Critical Analysis:-

- Shah Waliullah's era, spanning the 18th century, was marked by social, political, and intellectual challenges in the muslim world. He advocated for Islamic reform and revival in response to the decline of muslim societies. Today, we see parallels in various regions where muslims face similar challenges, including political instability, socio-economic disparities, and ideological divisions.
- In both eras, there's a struggle for interpreting and applying Islamic principles amidst changing societal norms.
- Shah Waliullah emphasized the need for Islamic education and unity among muslims, which resonates today with calls for religious education and intra-faith dialogue to address extremism and sectarianism.
- In Shah Waliullah's time, colonialism

Posed challenges to Muslim governance and autonomy.

Similarly, today's muslim-majority countries grapple with issues of sovereignty and influence from external powers.

- Analyzing Shah Waliullah's era allows us to draw insights into addressing contemporary issues facing Muslim communities, emphasizing the importance of education, unity, and adaptability while remaining true to Islamic principles.