

→ Pakistan Affairs - Past Papers 2016

Question 2: 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 a transitional figure between the medieval and the modern age, somewhat as Dante was in Europe and like Dante, he was far more medieval than modern.”

(Freeland Abbott)

Shah Waliullah was the first reformer to appear during the period of Muslim decline. He realized that the Muslim community had to be emancipated both militarily and morally. He stroived for the restoration of Muslim rule in which Ulama would play an important role. His ability to interpret the Quran was such that he declared himself a *Qayem-al-Zaman*, a semi-divine personality given the mission by Prophet (SAWW) himself.

to reform the faith.

Early Life

Shah Waliullah was born on 21 February 1703 during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir, in Delhi. This period was marked with persistent decline and deterioration in the Muslim society.

“The painful collapse of the Mughal Empire, forced into extended reflection those orthodox Muslims who were not content merely to hide themselves in the swamps of Kismet. All Muslims were bewildered, even though they continued to look to Delhi as the final arbiter.”

[Freeland Abbott, Islam & Pakistan - Shah Waliullah]

Family Background :-

Shah Waliullah was born into a prominent religious family. His father, Shah Abdul Bahim was a notable Islamic scholar and the founder

of the madrasa Rahimiyya in Delhi.

⊗ Education:-

From a young age, Shah Waliullah was immersed in the study of Islamic sciences. Under his father's guidance, he studied the Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, and other branches of Islamic knowledge.

⊗ Teaching:-

By the age of 17, Shah Waliullah had completed his formal education and began teaching at his father's madrasa. His early teaching experience further honed his intellectual skills.

⊗ Pilgrimage to Mecca:-

In 1731, Shah Waliullah went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. This journey was pivotal in his life. During his stay, he studied under Sheikh Abu Tahir Muhammad bin Ibrahim and Sheikh Sulayman Maghribi. This experience broadened his perspective and reinforced his commitment to Islamic revival.

⊗ Spiritual & Intellectual Development:-

Shah

waljullah's early life was marked by a blend of rigorous intellectual training and deep spiritual practice. He was known for his exceptional memory, analytical abilities, and spiritual discipline, which would later underpin his influential work in Islamic thought and reform.

⇒ Shah waljullah's Services

His services can be categorized into several

Key areas:

1. Religious Reformation-

shah waljullah

sought to revive and purify Islamic practices. He advocated for a return to the Quran and Sunnah, to remove un-Islamic practices that had crept into Muslim society. He translated the Quran into Persian, making it accessible to a broader audience who did not understand Arabic.

2. Educational Contributions-

He reformed

the curriculum of Islamic education, integrati

rational sciences with religious studies. He also wrote extensively, authoring numerous works on hadith, tafsir, fiqh and other Islamic sciences. His works include "Hujjat Allah al-Baligha" and "Ghazat al-Khafa'an Khilafat al-Khulafa'."

3. Social and Political Thought -

He emphasized the importance of unity among Muslims and addressed the socio-political issues of his time. He highlighted the need for just and ethical governance based on Islamic principles.

Efforts to Save Indian Muslims from Political and Religious Decline

Shah Waliullah played a crucial role in saving Indian Muslims from political annihilation and religious degeneration through a combination of religious reform, political activism, and intellectual contributions.

Here are the key strategies he employed:

Religious Reforms

1. Reviving Authentic Islamic Practices

Shah Waliullah

forbade the adoption of Hindu customs for two reasons. First, he believed a beleaguered minority needed to assert its distinctive identity. He emphasized the need to return to the Quran and Sunnah, advocating for the purification of Islamic practices.

2. Translation And Accessibility

He attributed

Muslim decline to lack of direct access to the meaning of ^{the} Quran. He took the bold step of translating the Holy Quran into Persian. He sought to curb the influence of the ulama as a class, and for this reason he also favoured ijtihad over taqlid.

3. Sectarian Conciliation

One of the most

important steps he took was towards conciliation between sects and approaches. He

realised the necessity of muslim solidarity and was able to achieve this because he had humanistic concepts of worship. Gashiaq Husain Qureshi has pointed out that shah waljullah believed what God has revealed is beneficial for mankind:

“ God is not a tyrant revealing in getting himself obeyed; such a conception is unworthy and erroneous. In His great mercy He has shown the way which leads to mundane and spiritual well-being and progress! ”

4: Thought on Jihad:-

He realized that the war was the lesser jihad and the greater jihad was against the temptations facing one's own soul. Therefore, the greater and longer part of his mission was to effect a moral reform to create peace.

Political Reforms

1. Letter to Ahmad Shah Abdali:-

He realized

that the muslim community had to be emancipated both militarily and morally. The maratha power was the threat. To this end he wrote to Ahmad Shah Abdali to remind him of his duty as a muslim king to liberate the muslim community, and the result was the maratha defeat in the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761.

2: Thoughts on Perfect Law:-

His guiding principles of reforms were *adl* and *tawazun* 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 wasteful spending at one level and extreme deprivation at the other.

3. Thoughts on Corrupt Govt. :-

Shah Waliullah says: "A corrupt government, which neglects satisfying the basic needs of life, should and must be overthrown by hook and crook. If it is allowed to continue, its corruption will spread like a

Cancer; first in some members of the administration, which, if it is not cut out from its very root, will go on spreading till the whole body will disintegrate. ”

Significance

Shah Waliullah's contributions towards Islamic revival was extremely important for a number of reasons:

- He was one of the first muslim thinkers to state that the decline of the Mughal Empire was due to a neglect of the principles of Islam.
- The madrasa Rahimiya continued to play a vital role in teaching Islamic principles.
- His writings in Persian made Islamic teachings available to large numbers of muslims who had not been able to understand Arabic.
- He tried to build bridges between

the different muslim sects and to unite the muslim community.

Conclusion

Shah Waliullah was a significant figure in Islamic history, known for his efforts to revive Islamic scholarship and reform societal practices. His teachings emphasized the importance of understanding and practicing Islam in a contemporary context while remaining faithful to its core principles.