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

(I) Introduction

Muslims ruled the subcontinent for centuries. The year Islam entered there was 712 AD with the advent of Muhammad Bin Qasim. The rule of Muslims by gradual passage of time started to deteriorate. The rulers in the 18th century drifted away from Islam and its codes resulting in the downfall of state. It was during this hard time that a prominent figure arose, who worked tirelessly to improve the condition of Muslims and to strengthen the condition of governance. The noteworthy figure that dedicated his life for the cause of Muslims was Shah Waliullah.

(II) Life and Services of Shah Waliullah

a. Life of Shah Waliullah

Shah Waliullah was born on 21 February, 1703 in a village near Delhi.

His father Shah Abdul Rahim was a scholar and religious figure. He had his own institution called Madrasah-i-Rahimiyyah. At the early age Shah Waliullah initiated his education at this medarassah and at the age of 17 succeeded his father in leading the mederesah. After the basic education, he went to Hijaz, Saudi Arabia for advanced religious studies. His youth marked the death of Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir and it was the start of the period of decline of Muslims. Shah Waliullah returned to India and found that the people have drifted away from the religion and the muslim empire had started to be weak. upon realizing the threats faced by muslims, he delivered various services which proved beneficial in safeguarding the identity of muslims.

b. Services of Shah Waliullah

- • Crushing defeat to Marathas
- • Promotion of Islamic teachings
- • Translation of Holy Quran
- • Removing unislamic teachings

◦ Crushing defeat to Marathas

As the role of Muslims started to degrade in the subcontinent, Shah Waliullah wrote letters to several Muslim leaders including Najibuddin, the ruler of Rohillas and Ahmed Shah Abdali, the Afghan ruler. It was after the letter of Shah Waliullah that Ahmed Shah in 1761 that he defeated the Marathas in a battle at Panipat. Marathas never recovered of that battle.

◦ Promotion of Islamic teachings

After returning back to India, Shah Waliullah found that the Muslims have drifted from the teachings of Islam and were subject to moral and spiritual degradation. Realizing this serious situation, he wrote Hujjat-ul-La-Hul-Baligha. In this work he emphasized upon the teachings of Islam and sticking on the path of Sunnah.

◦ Translation of Holy Quran

During the time of Shah Waliullah, there was no such translation of Holy Quran in the native language of India that was Persian. Shah Waliullah became the first person to translate the Holy Quran to Persian.

o Removing UnIslamic teachings

Shah Waliullah emphasized upon Muslims not to follow the unIslamic teachings specifically Din-i-Ilahi initiated by Akbar which aimed to synthesize the teachings of Islam, Hinduism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism. He wrote letters to the then ruler to get rid of those practices.

(III) How Shah Waliullah Saved Indian Muslims from political Annihilation and Religious Degeneration

The services rendered by Shah Waliullah during the critical moments where Muslims not only faced grave risk on not only political front but also on religious.

a. Safeguarding from political annihilation

Muslims during the period of Shah Waliullah had weakened, they were at the mercy of tribals of Jatts and Marathas. Shah Waliullah's efforts not only secured the Muslims but also inflicted severe defeat to Marathas.

b. Saving from religious degeneration

Muslims had totally drifted from the teachings of Quran and Sunnah, and were involved in unIslamic practices. It was because of Shah Waliullah that Muslims regained their identity and were also able to read the words of God in their own language. Moreover, his book Hujjat-ul-Hal-Baligha worked as a pillar of guidance along with his Madrasah.

(iv) Conclusion

Shah Waliullah was a major figure in the revivalist movement of India. He delivered various services which proved to be beneficial for Muslims not only politically but also religiously. It was because of him that the worsening condition improved. He worked to ensure lasting and strengthening of the rule of Muslims in the subcontinent.