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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?

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 an illustrious reformer of India and a great Muslim thinker of 18th century. His time was one of the most emotional chapters of Islamic revivalist movements in the Indian subcontinent. Shah Waliullah rendered invaluable services for social, political and religious regeneration of Muslim society. He not only correctly diagnosed ills of Indian Muslim, but also produced effective remedies against future malaise. He translated the Holy Quran into Persian language the language of the time. Moreover, the Muslims were divided into sectarianism fights, and he

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united them through the teaching of *khulf-e-Rushden*.

Early life:

Shah Waliullah real name was *Qutb-ud-din* and born in Delhi to a respectable family on ²¹ February 1703. His father's name was Shah Abdul Rahim and he was a renowned Islamic and scholar of his time. He completed his formal education under loving care of father at age of fifteen and was later initiated in *Nasrbandiya* *silsilah*. soon after, he was permitted to teach others at *Madrasah-i-Rahmimiyah*, established by his father. After the death of *Abd-ur-Rahim*, Shah Waliullah continued teaching for twenty years. This period was marked with persistent decline and deterioration in the Muslim society. According to *Aqbal*, "He was 'first Muslim,' to kind urge of a new spirit in him." He died in 1762.

Vision of strategy:

It was impossible for him to remain indifferent, aloof and unaffected by prevailing situation.

so, he pondered the prevailing situation of India and wanted "to carve out a straight way of knowledge and action out of the jungle of confused ideas and thoughts. Shah Waliullah believed that the various problems Muslim faced were due to the ignorance from ^{the} Quran and Islam.

Freeland Abbott in his ^{book} Islam and Pakistan-

Shah Waliullah writes:

"The painful collapse of the Mughan 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."

Religious services:

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

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(i) Translation of Quran in Persian:

Shah Waliullah wanted to reorganize society through translation of Quran in a local language. Because he wanted that after translation of Quran, people would be able to understand Allah message, though it was considered an unlawful work viewed by some religious clerics. Therefore, he translated Quran in Persian language. In his famous book, "Faz-ul-Harmin," Shah Waliullah stressed for utility of Quranic translation. Waheed-uz-Zaman, wrote about him, he was "only man who had done this and earned permanent gratitude among Indian Muslims." It was due to translation of Quran in local language that an extensive study of Holy Quran was begun in sub-continent.

(ii) Efforts against Sectarianism:

Shah Waliullah started efforts against the sectarianism. He opined that there would be no progress in society if the harmful controversies between shrafs and sunni

on one hand and squabbles between various classes of sunnis on other hand were not eliminated. He introduced his conception of "Izalat-ul-Khifa" and "Khilafat-ul-Khulfa" so a sense of balance could be restored among both sects, Shias and Sunnis. Professor I.H. Quraishi commented, "Shah Waliullah tried to reconcile basic differences amongst the different sections of Muslims and he considered government as an essential means and agency for regeneration of Muslim society."

(iii) Efforts for Moderation:

He tried to discard path of extremism and introduced a balance between four schools of thoughts by applications of moderation school of thoughts. A prominent historian Waheed-uz-Zaman, describes about his role, "His approach was so liberal that it was difficult to know as to which school of Fiqh he himself belongs". He also disapproved blind adherence to traditional school of law.

(iv) Pruning of Sufism:

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He wanted to show Islamic practices from its Greek overtone and Hindu growth, so that Islamic practices could be harmonized with Shariat. He tried to reconcile controversies about Wahadat-ul-Wajud and Wahadat-ul-Shahid.

(v) **Stress on Jihad:**

He opined that it was necessary for Muslims to revive their habits of Jihad, so that Muslim and Islamic glory could be achieved. So, he stressed upon beginning of Jihad for the revival of their glorious past.

(vi) **Foundation of Institutional Basis:**

Shah Waliullah also established various madaris for Islamic learning and took practical steps for revival of Islamic learning by establishing educational institutions and providing Islamic education among Muslims.

Political services

Besides being a deeply spiritual and noted academic, Shah Waliullah was practically astute.

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(i) Identification of causes of Muslim decline:

S.M Ikram describes, " He was the first Muslim who identified the causes of Muslim decline. Shah Waliullah pointed out the following causes of Muslim decline in the subcontinent;

- (i) Incompetent leaders/rulers
- (ii) Lust for power
- (iii) Burden of taxation
- (iv) Feudalism
- (v) Bankruptcy (plundering of property)

shah waliullah describes in his book, "Hujjat-ul-illah -il- Bilagah," " pressure on public treasury which is due to the fact that people have developed a habit of obtaining money from the exchequer without performing any corresponding duty. These people diminish the sources of other people's income and are a burden on the economy.

(ii) steps against the Rising power of Non-Muslims:

shah waliullah had seen horrors of Delhi successively by Jats, Sikhs and Persians under Nadir shah. The prospects of an

interruptions of Marhataas had filled princes and people alike with fear and frantic efforts were made by some northern rulers to form a league against common foe.

(iii) calling Ahmad Shah Abdali

He also took responsibility to counter the Muslim decline. Shah Waliullah made an appeal to Ahmad Shah Abdali to intervene for help to Indian Muslims. Therefore, in 1761, Ahmad Shah Abdali, in response to Shah Waliullah call, inflicted a crushing defeat on Marhataas at Panipat and provided great loss this constant threat to crumbling Mughal Empire.

(iv) Political consciousness through writings:

He wrote about 50 books, trained a group of Ulemas, established several branches of his school at Delhi and prepared the ground for a wider and more effective dissemination of his ideas. His activities and writings spread political consciousness among Muslims of subcontinent.

(v) Resistance for Muslim Absorption in Hinduism:

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Every subsequent political, social and religious movement may be traced back to him and it was he who laid emotional and intellectual foundations of movement for national independence. In this way, he provided basis for resistance for Muslim absorption in Hinduism.

Critical Analysis:

Undoubtedly, Shah Waliullah lay the foundations of modern Islam in subcontinent.

During his time, Islam was on the stage of destruction after the death of Aurangzeb, the last Mughal emperor. So, he revived the Islam in subcontinent through his religious, social and political efforts. However, his work for socio-political and economic uplift of the people is ^{still} written in golden words.

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

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sub-continent. He emphasized on the islamic value by translated the Holy Quran into persian language so that people easily understand the Allah's message. He has ^{been} also worked for eliminating the differences among sects and differentiating the works and duties of Ulama and sufis. Nevertheless, he wrote 50 books to carry the legacy for future generations.

