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QNO: NO: 02: Give an account of the life and services of Shah Waliullah. How did he save the Indian Muslim from political annihilation and religious degeneration?

1 Introduction

The 18th century was a period of decline for the Mughal empire, with political instability, the rise of regional powers like Marathas, and the gradual erosion of Islamic practices among Indian Muslims. Amid this turmoil, Shah Waliullah (1703-1762) emerged as a scholar, reformer, and visionary. He sought to restore political strength, religious purity, and social cohesion among Indian Muslims. His multidimensional efforts saved them from imminent political annihilation and religious degeneration, laying the foundation for later reform movements.

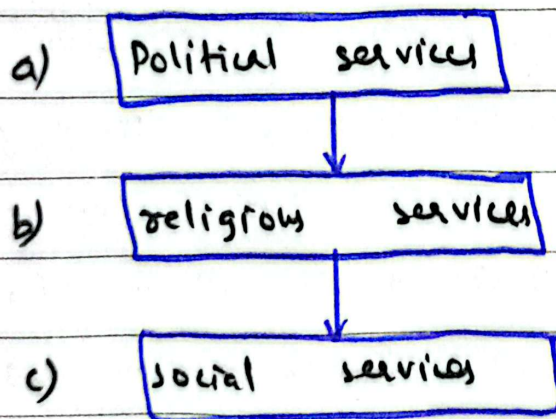
2 Early life of Shah Waliullah

He was born in 1703 in Delhi to Shah Abdul Rahim. He memorized the Quran at an early age, studied Hadith, Fiqh, and Islamic philosophy. After his father's death, he continued his studies

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under renowned scholars and later traveled to Hijaz where he studied under Sheikh Abu Tahir al-Kudiri. On his return to Delhi, he started his reformist mission.

3 Services of Shah Waliullah



a Political services

i) Analysis of decline of Muslim power in subcontinent

Shah Waliullah closely studied the reason behind the decline of Mughal empire.

These included corruption, luxury, and internal dissunity among rulers and nobles. He stressed that without moral and political reform, Muslims could not resist external threats. (J.M. Iqbal, Muslim civilization in India and Pakistan)

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ii) Letter to rulers and nobles for unity and defend Islam

Understanding the threat posed by Marathas, He wrote letters to rulers like Nizam-ul-Mulk, and influential nobles. He urged them to unite and defend Islam. He emphasised the importance of collective unity and warned selfishness among rulers would lead to downfall of Muslims.

(I. H. Qureshi, The Muslim community)

iii) Role in the third Battle of Panipat (1761)

Shah Waliullah's political foresight helped bring Ahmad Shah Abdali to India. This alliance culminated in the third Battle of Panipat, where Abdali defeated the Marathas. The battle was crucial in preserving Muslim political influence in northern India, giving a chance to Muslims to recover from decades of decline. (K. K. Aziz, A History of ideas of Pakistan)

iv) Vision of Islamic polity for justice

He believed that political authority must be based on justice and sharia. He combined religious ethics with political strategy, advocating that

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spiritual and temporal authority must work together to 'save' Muslims. (M. Abdul Haq, The political Thought of Shah Waliullah, 1970)

b) Religious services of Shah Waliullah

i) Translation of Quran into Persian language

Recognizing that most Indian Muslims could not understand Arabic, Shah Waliullah translated the Quran into Persian. This allowed common people to access divine guidance directly, strengthening their faith and reducing religious ignorance.

(I.H. Qureshi, The Muslim community)

ii) Reconciliation of Islamic school of thoughts

He worked to reduce sectarian conflict by harmonizing interpretations of Hanafi and Shafi'i jurisprudence. This encouraged unity and prevented fragmentation within Muslim community, strengthen collective ^{religious} identity. (S.M. Ikram, Muslim civilization)

iii) Purification of Islam for spiritual discipline

He criticized un-Islamic rituals

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and superstitions that had crept into sufi practices. He restored spiritual focus and discipline among sufi order by linking sufiism with Quran and sunnah. This made them instruments of true Islamic moral guidance. (K.A. Nigam, Muslim Religious leaders & Movement, 1961)

c) Bourd services of shah Waliullah

i) emphasised on promotion of education

He expanded the Madrasah Rahimiyyah as a center of Islamic learning. The institution trained scholars, who became leaders of future reform movements. (I.H. Qureshi, The Muslim community)

ii) economic reforms to prevent from exploitation

shah Waliullah believed wealth should be circulated fairly in society to prevent poverty and social unrest. He highlighted the exploitation of peasants by feudal lords and emphasized fair economic policies. (Dr. Hamidullah, Muslim conduct of state)

iii) campaign against social evils and

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stress on unity of Muslims.

He condemned social vices such as extravagance, bribery, and corruption. He urged Muslims to adopt simplicity, honesty, and moral uprightness. He also emphasized the importance of Muslim unity beyond ethnic, regional, and sectarian lines. (Dr. Mubarak Ali, Tarikh aur Danishwar)

4 Shah Waliullah's Role in saving Muslims.

a) saving Muslims from political annihilation

i) warning against Marathas expansion and alliance with Ahmad Shah Abdali

He identified the Marathas empire as a critical threat capable of ending Muslim rule in India. To counter the Marathas, he invited Ahmad Shah Abdali to India. This strategic political alliance supported the Muslims and protected Muslim interests. (IH. Qureshi, The Muslim community)

ii) Guidance to Muslim nobility against soulless

He consistently urged the nobility to

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abandoned selfish notions and unite for the defense of Islam. His advice helped create coordination among fragmented regional power. (A. Abdul Haq, Political Thought of Shah Waliullah)

iii) Third battle of Panipat and end of Marathi domination on northern India

The victory of Abdali over Marathas in 1761 saved northern India from Marath domination. This preserved Muslim political authority due to Shah Waliullah's intervention. (J.M. Ikram, Muslim Civilization)

iv) Foundation for future political Awakening

Shah Waliullah's political thought influenced later leaders such as Syed Ahmed Barelvi. This promoted a sense of Muslim identity and political consciousness that eventually shaped the idea of Pakistan. (I.H Qureshi, The Muslim community)

b) Saving Muslims from Religious degeneration

a) Quranic revival through translation

Through his Persian translation of the

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Queen, he made Islamic teachings accessible to the masses, safeguarding them from adopting non-Islamic customs & practices. (I. H. Qureshi, Ulema in politics)

ii) Reduction of sectarian conflicts

Shah Waliullah promoted harmony among Sunni schools and discouraged divisive debates. This preserved unity and prevented religious fragmentation. (J.M. Iqbal, Muslim Civilization)

iii) Reformation of Sufism

He reoriented sufi practices toward true Islamic teachings. This eliminated superstitions and rituals that had distorted spiritual understanding. Moreover, this reformation of sufism also removed corruption and social evils through sufi's self-purification way. (K.A. Nigami, Religious leaders, and Movements)

iv) Promotion of Ijtihad for intellectual growth

He encouraged independent reasoning in Islamic jurisprudence rather than

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blind limitation (taqlid). This rejuvenated Islamic thought and prevented intellectual stagnation. (M. Managis, Muslim Theology)

Conclusion

In short, Shah Waliullah's vision and efforts combined political strategy, religious revival, and social reform to save Indian Muslims from annihilation and degeneration. His work not only prevented immediate collapse but also laid the intellectual and spiritual foundations for future reform movements.