

## Topic 3

### **SHAH WALLI ULLAH (1703-1762)**

#### **Early Biographical detail:**

Shah Wali Ullah Muhaddis Dehlvi was born on **February 21, 1703 at Delhi**, just when the reign of Aurangzeb was nearing its end. He was named **Qutb-ud-Din**, but is better known by his title of Wali Ullah, given to him by virtue of his goodness and piety. His **father, Shah Abdul Rahim**, was a sufi and theologian of great repute. He was the founding member and teacher of the **Madrassa-i-Rahimiyah** in Delhi and also taught there for 12 years. He was influenced by **Sheikh Abu Tahir bin Ibrahim**, a renowned scholar of the time.

#### **Beliefs:**

Shah Wali Ullah believed that Islam has lost its purity in the subcontinent. Hindu customs, practices and beliefs had crept into the worships and lives of the Muslims. It had become very important to tell the Muslims what was Islamic and what were simply myths and traditions.

During the reign of SWU, Mughal/Muslim rule declined sharply. He believed that the real cause of Muslims' decline was their ignorance from the teachings of Quran and Sunnah. He wanted the Muslims to implement Islamic teachings in all spheres of their lives – social, political, economic and religious. This would enable them to restore their pride and improve their living conditions.

He also believed that a number of social evils had corrupted the Islamic society. He wanted to transform the society in the light of Islamic teachings. He wanted the rulers to enforce Islamic laws e.g. Islam condemns social injustice and protects the rights of peasants and workers. He urged the rich Muslims to lead pure life and stay away from luxury and extravagance. He also urged the traders to follow Islamic laws in their dealings. He wanted to eradicate the sectarian differences that were undermining the foundations of Muslim unity.

Shah Wali Ullah wanted to protect Muslim religion, identity, values and interests. He believed that under the influence of infidels, Muslims will forget Islam and with the passage of time it would become difficult to distinguish them from non-Muslims. He therefore wished to revive the teachings of Quran and Sunnah in the subcontinent.

## Works:

### 1. Religious Services

Shah Wali-Ullah rendered many religious services. He completed **the translation of Holy Quran in Persian** in 1738. Later on his sons Shah Rafi-ud-Din and Shah Abdul Qadir translated the Holy Quran in Urdu. Moreover Shah Wali-Ullah wrote **commentary on Ahadiths** in Arabic and Persian. Shah Wali-Ullah also arranged the Hadith in respect of their topics. In addition he worked for the renaissance of Islam and wrote **51 books**. He propagated that Islam was a universal power and thus the Muslims should be the dominant force in the Sub-Continent and elsewhere.

Shah Wali-Ullah also trained students in different branches of Islamic knowledge. He recommended the application of **Ijtihad** against blind Taqlid in his famous work **-al-Ijtihad wa-al-Taqlid**.

He studied the writings of each school-of-thought to understand their point of view, and then wrote comprehensive volumes about what is fair and just in light of the teachings of Islam. He adopted an analytical and balanced approach towards four major school-of-thought of mysticism. In order to create a balance between the four schools i.e. **Hanafi, Malaki, Shafii, Hambali** he wrote **Al-Insaf**.

### 2. Political Services :

Shah Wali-Ullah possessed a deep political insight. He tried to trace the causes of the decline of Mughal Empire. In the middle of the 18th century **Marathas** had become a great political power. They were threatening to occupy the crown of Delhi. At this critical juncture Shah Wali-Ullah in order to check their advance prepared **Najid-ullah** (Rohilla Chief) and **Shuja-ud-Daulah** (Nawab of Oudh) for **Jihad**. Moreover he wrote a letter to **Ahmed Shah Abdali**, King of Afghanistan requesting him to save the Muslims from the aggression of Marathas. Consequently in the **Third Battle of Panipat**, Ahmed Shah Abdali inflicted a crushing defeat on the Marathas. Marhattas were a constant threat to the crumbling Mughal Empire. Shah Wali Ullah tried to reconcile the basic differences amongst the different sections of the Muslims and considered the government as an essential means and agency for regeneration of the community. He wrote to Ahmad Shah Abdali; "**...give up the life of ease. Draw the sword and do not to sheath it till the distinction is established between true faith and infidelity...**"

In his time **Shias and Sunnis** were aggressively hostile to each other and their rivalry was damaging the Muslim unity. Shah wali ullah wrote **Izalat-al-Akhifa and Khilafat-al-Khulafa** in order to remove misunderstanding between Shias and Sunnis. He refused to denounce Shias as heretics.

In short, the Muslim Renaissance Movement launched by Shah Wali-Ullah was the forerunner of all the future freedom movements of Indo-Pakistan. Maulana Mohammad Qasim founder of Madressah Deoband and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan were among his followers. Later on his son Shah Abdul Aziz founded the Jihad Movement which was carried forward by Syed Ahmed Shaheed.

### **3. Social Services :**

Shah Wali-Ullah directed his teachings towards reorienting the Muslim society with the concepts of basic **social justice**, removing social inequalities, and balancing the distribution of wealth. He established several branches of his school at Delhi for effective application of his ideas. In his book "**Hujjat-ullah-il-Balighah**", he pinpointed the causes of chaos and disintegration of Muslim society. He advised the Muslims to give up extravagance and wasteful expenditure on marriages, deaths, births and other occasions. Wealthy Muslims were asked to look after the poor and the needy.

Briefly speaking, Shah Wali-Ullah was responsible for awakening in the community the desire to win back its moral fervor and maintain its purity. To rescue a community's conscience, belief and faith from destruction was no small achievement. Even after his death in 1762, his sons and followers carried on his work and noble mission. Many future Islamic leaders and thinkers were inspired by his example.

#### **Third Battle of Panipat 1761:**

Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1658–1707) was a devout Muslim and persecutor of Hindus. Hindus of the Deccan rallied around a charismatic leader named Shivaji who was proclaimed king of the Marathas in 1674. His movement continued to gain momentum after his death in 1680, reaching its zenith in the mid- 18th century when the Marathas Confederacy controlled lands extending from Hyderabad in the south to Punjab in the north. But the quest for a restored Hindu empire in India came to an end in 1761 when the Marathas were badly defeated by Afghan forces under Ahmed Shah Durani at the Third Battle of Panipat. Although the Afghans retreated from India, the Maratha Confederacy never recovered. The British East India Company was the beneficiary and got strength.

#### **EXPECTED QUESTIONS:**

**Question No. 1:** How important was the work of Shah Wali Ullah to the revival of Islam in the Sub-Continent? Explain your answer. (14) Nov. 2000. Q.1 c

**Question No. 2:** Which of the following was the most important in the spread of Islam during 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

- a) Shah wali Ullah
- b) Syed Ahemd Shaheed Barailvi
- c) Hai Shariat Ullah?

Explain your answer with reference to all three of the above. (14) June 2001 Q.2 c

**Question No. 3:** Why did Shah Wali Ullah wish to revive Islam in the Sub-Continent?

(7) June 2003, Q.1 b

**Question No. 4:** How important was S.W.U in the spread of Islam in the Sub-Continent before 1850? Explain your answer. (14) Nov. 2004, Q.1 c

**Question No. 5:** Why did S.W.U have such an important influence on the revival of Islam in the Sub-Continent? (7) Nov. 2005 Q.1 c

**Question No. 6:** Was the work of S.W.U the most important factor in the revival of Islam in the Sub-Continent during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries? Give reason for your answer.

(14) Nov. 2006 Q.1 c

**Question No. 7:** Why were there attempts to revive Islam in the Sub-Continent during the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries? (7) Nov. 2007 Q.1 b

**Question No.8:** did SWU contribute more to the spread of Islam than anyone else in the sub-continent before 1850? Explain your answer. (14) Nov. 2009 Q.2 c

**Question No.9:** why did Shah Wali Ullah have such a major influence on the revival of Islam in the sub continent? (7) June 2010 Q.1 b

**Question No.10:** By the end of Aurangzeb's reign the authority of the Mughal emperors was declining. Hindus were not happy with his reign and after his death, Muslim power and influence over India, which had been so strong, began to disintegrate. At this time SWU was growing up.

Describe the achievements of SWU in reviving Islam. (4) June 2011 Q.1 a

**Question No.11:** In 1756, the French encouraged the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daulah, to attack the East India Company's base at Calcutta. He captured the city but was unable to keep control of it. Robert Clive decided to go to the city with a force of soldiers to retake it. This led to the battle of Plassey.

Describe the battle of Plassey. (4) June 2012 Q.1 a

**Question No.12:** Who of the following was the most important in the spread of Islam during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

- (i) Shah Wali Ullah;
- (ii) Syed Ahmad Shaheed Barailvi;
- (iii) Hajji Shariat Ullah?

Explain your answer with reference to all three of the above.

(14) June 2013 Q.1 c