

Shah Wali-u Allah

Shah Wali-u Allah was born on 4th Shawwaal, 1114 / 21 February 1703 at Phulat in Delhi. His ancestors had migrated from Arabia to Iran for reasons not known. Later on when the invasion of the Tatars caused widely spread terror and destruction in Iraq and Iran, the forefathers of the Shah are said to have migrated to India and found their settlement here at Rohtak village. His grandfather was a gallant soldier in the Mughal army and a deep lover of the Qur'aan. Shaykh Abdur-Rahim was Shah Wali-u Allah's father, the pupil of a great scholar and sufi – Zahid Herawi. Abdur-Rahim was famous for his profound knowledge of the traditions and Islamic jurisprudence. That is why he was offered the service in the government to revise Fataawa Alamgiri which he undertook at the instance of his mother. He was also famous for found his seminary, Madrasah-e-Rahimiyyah in Delhi the forerunner of the present Darul Uloom Deoband. Shaykh Abdur-Rahim had interests in mysticism yet he did not ignore the practical aspects of life. In the home of such a pious and learned father, the Shah grew up to great heights of eminence.

At the age of five, the Shah had his first lesson at school. After two years he learnt reading and writing. He learnt the Qur'aan by heart upto the age of ten. At the age of fourteen years he read a part of Bauzayi and the major part of Mishkawah. He got the graduation from Rahimiyyah college at the age of fifteen. The prescribed syllabus of the college laid great stress on the Qur'aanic studies with lesser aid from commentaries and the Shah himself felt thankful to God for being provided with opportunity to lecture on the lessons of the Qur'aan which opened the doors of its knowledge for him. The other sciences like the Hadith, Fiqh, logic, etc. were also learnt by the Shah. He became the teacher of this very college of his father at the age of seventeen. Only two years later, his father died and the management work of the school fell upon him. The Shah took up the task with devotion and attained the help of the old graduates of the college. He prepared his lectures after extensive study on various Islamic disciplines and sciences. and provided guidance on the problems of varied nature. While sitting on the grave of his father in pious meditation, he sought solutions of the spiritual problems. 'When I sat meditating,' he reports, 'at the grave of my father, problems of Tawhid (oneness of God) were solved. The path of the divine attraction (Jazb) was opened; and a large share of Saluk (spiritual journey) fall to my lot, and inspirational knowledge (Uloom-e-Wajdaniyyah) thronged the mind with it.' Through his study of standard Fiqh literature and Hadith books, the Shah came to the conclusion that the institution of Fuqaha-e-Muhadditheen (jurisprudents who drew heavily upon traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam)) was an adequate one that he would adhere to in his future life.

Shah Wali-u Allah's journey to Hijaaz in October 24 1730 / 8 Rabi-as-Thaani 1143 proved a turning point in his career. It was the time when the Indian subcontinent was undergoing a deep crisis consequent upon the declining fortunes of the Mughal empire. Under such conditions there was growing an indifference towards religion. The sectarian conflicts had become the order of the day. Sufism had generated and various evils had crept into the society as a result of the practices of the false Sufis. The sensitive mind of the Shah was deeply moved by the deplorable situation prevailing in India and his journey to Hijaaz had

much to do with this preoccupation of the scholar. In Hijaaz, the Shah stayed for about two years, performed Hajj twice at Makkah and also spent sometime at the Prophet's tomb in Madinah. Besides acquainting himself with the general condition of the Muslim world during his stay in Hijaaz, the Shah also received lessons on the Qur'aan and the Hadith and thereby was able to attain considerable guidance in the spiritual matters. He read from the scholars of repute, Muatta of Imaam Maalik with Shaykh Wafadullah and Bukhari of Imaam Bukhari with Shaykh Taj-al-Din Hanafi, the Mufti (juri consultant) of Makkah. At Madinah, the Shah attended to Shaykh Ibrahim Kurdi, an eminent traditionist and sufi, and revised all famous books on Hadith under his guidance. Shaykh Abu Tahir, another great theologian in Madinah, also guided the Shah in the science of Hadith.

It can hardly be denied that Shah Wali-u Allah's sojourn to Hijaaz proved to be a landmark in his spiritual development. He himself mentions many spiritual blessings and experiences in His Fuyuz al-Haramayn. He received them in a series of visions at the precincts of the holy Ka'abah and the holy tomb of Rasulullah (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam). In these visions include the task of the revival of Islam entrusted to the Shah by the grandsons of the prophet, the intelligibility of the most controversial problems of ontological versus phenomenological monism, clearance of doubts on the controversial issues relating to solidarity and development of the Muslim institutions. A.D. Muztar has eloquently described this enlightenment of Shah Wali-u Allah in the following words:

The prophet cleared his doubts concerning them in a series of visions. For example, the prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) told Shah Wali-u Allah.

1. The order of succession of the Khulafa-e-Raashideen (the four immediate successors of the prophet) had taken place under the will and pleasure of God. It was best suited to the interests of Muslim community and so far as the personal excellence of these four companions of the prophet was concerned, all of them were blessed with qualities and stations special to each of them. The contentions over the attributive supremacy of Ali on the one hand and of Abu Bakr and Umar (Shaykhayn) on the other, were just useless and needless. Such a controversy was apt to create hatred and disharmony among the Muslims.

2. All the mystic orders, such as (Chishti, Naqshabandi, Qadiri, Suhrawardi, etc.) were equally acceptable to God. Nor was the prophet of God especially inclined towards any particular order. One may follow any or all of them with the only proviso that they were followed for the sake of God Almighty.

3. None of the schools of Jurists, Maaliki, Hanafi, Shaaf'ee and Hanbali, excelled the other. All of them were fundamentally the same. Therefore, all were equal in the eyes of the Prophet ... It was further revealed to him that in conveying his message to the nation and share their responsibilities; he benign and compassionate in his speeches and writings; and pray for what was good for the people in their world life and the life hereafter.

After the Shah's return to Delhi, he addressed himself to the task of bringing about the revival of Islamic sciences for the general good of Muslims. He made useful reforms in the studies at Rahimiyyah college in order to impart such teaching and training to the pupil as could enable them to relate true religious education to the practical needs of the people.

The wrong beliefs and customs, associated with Islam, were reformed through the Shah's translation of the Qur'aan into Persian which made the people to understand its actual message. His Tafhimat-I-Ilaahiyya and Hama'at played a great role in clearing off the doubts about the innovations in Sufism. The interpretation of Islamic system comprising beliefs and Ibaadat, social, political and economic matters, was made by the Shah under the new and growing exigencies of his time. Al-Badur al-Bazigah, Hujjatul Allah al-Baaligha, al-Insaaf fee sabab bayaan al-Ikhtilaaf, etc. clearly demonstrate the deep concern of the Shah in bringing about the revival of Islamic sciences in accordance with the needs of the Muslim society in the Indian context.

The resurgence of Islamic political thought marks an outstanding feature of Shah Wali-u Allah's Islamic revivalism. The Ummah in general and the Indian Muslim in particular were exposed to the internal and the external threats. The so often controversies over the standpoints of the Shi'as and the Sunnis, luxurious and lethargic habits in the Mughal bureaucracy in the capital, rapid growth of the Maratha power, the Jats, the Sikhs and above all the intrusion of the Western imperialistic influences had undermined the solidarity of the Indian Muslims. Their disdain and disunity was further affected by their indulgence in the conflicts of sectarian, jurisprudential schools of law, heterodoxy and orthodoxy nature. The Shah sensitively reacted to these problems of political confusion and instability of Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. He attempted considerably for the purification and the revitalisation of this political deterioration. His expositions on the political thought mark his rational approach to human history and his critical interpretation of the classical history of Islam.

Political Thought of Shah Wali-u Allah – an Analytical Study