

Unit No.2

Topic

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE 1857 AND ITS AFTERMATHS

The War of Independence is an important landmark in the history of Sub-Continent. This War was fought in 1857 by Indians against the British in order to get rid of their domination. It is also given names as Indian Rebellion, Indian Mutiny as well as Indian Revolt. The main causes of the War were political, social, economic, military and religious. It was an extreme effort made by Indians, but they failed due to certain reasons including mutual jealousies, disunity, and lack of central leadership etc.

his war was not spread throughout India but it was limited to few areas mainly Meerut, Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow etc. The main event which became the immediate cause of the war was the refusal of the Sepoys to use the grease covered cartridges (greased with fat of pig and cow) on January 23, 1857. At the same time, an Indian sepoy killed two British officers at Barrackpore, when he was forced to use greased cartridges. He was arrested and hanged to death on April 8, 1857. This news spread as fast as jungle fire.

Meerut

On 6th May, 1857 A.D. 85 out of 90 Indian soldiers at Meerut refused to bite the greased cartridges with their teeth. These 85 soldiers were court-martialled and imprisoned for 10 years. They were stripped off their uniforms in the presence of the entire Indian crowd. It was too much of a disgrace and this incident sent a wave of indignation. On 10th May 1857, the Indian soldiers at Meerut

broke into open revolt. They released their companions and murdered a few European officers. On the night of 10th May the mutineers marched to Delhi and reached there on 11th May.

Delhi

The revolutionaries reached from Meerut to Delhi on 11th May, 1857 and the small British garrison at Delhi was not able to resist and consequently fell into their hands within 2 days. The Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, was proclaimed Emperor of India. In order to regain Delhi, Sir John Lawrence sent a strong British force commanded by John Nicholson. After a long siege of four months, the British recovered Delhi in September 1857 A.D. The Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar was captured, his two sons and a grandson were shot dead before his eyes and he was sent to Rangoon where he died in the year 1862 A. D.

Kanpur

At Kanpur the struggle for Independence was led by Nana Sahib Dondu Pant (The adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II). A number of British fell into his hands and he showed great kindness to them. But when he heard about inhuman attitude of Gen. O'Neil towards Indians, he became very furious and killed all the British. General Havelock captured Kanpur after defeating Nana Sahib in a hotly contested battle on June 17, 1857. Later on Nana Sahib, with the help of Tantya Topi, recaptured Kanpur in November, 1857 but not for a long time and British defeated them once again in a fierce war from December 1 to 6, 1857. Nana Sahib fled towards Nepal, where he probably died, while Tantya Tope migrated to Kalpi.

Lucknow

The struggle for independence at Lucknow was led by Nawab, Wajid Ali Shah. The Chief Commissioner, Sir Henry Lawrence, sought refuge with 1000 English and 700 Indian soldiers inside the Residency. The Indians did not make any concession and killed most of the Englishmen, including Sir Henry Lawrence and the notorious English General O'Neil. At last, the Commander-in-Chief General Collin Campbell, marched towards Lucknow and captured it after a fierce battle in March 1858.

Jhansi and Gwalior

The leader of the revolutionaries in Central India was Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi. General Sir Hugh Rose attacked Jhansi in March 1858 but the brave Rani Laxmi Bai kept the British General unnerved for quite some time. She with the help of Tantya Tope created problems for the British troops. Both fought many successful battles against the British. A fierce battle was fought between the British and the revolutionaries under Rani Laxmi Bai and Tantya Tope from June 11 to June 18, 1858 A. D. But the personal valour of Rani and Tantya Tope could not match the resources at the command of the British. Tantya Tope was betrayed by the Gwalior Chief Man Singh and fell into the hands of the British. He was subsequently hanged on April 18, 1859.

Bihar

In Bihar, the Revolt was led by Kunwar Singh, a zamindar of Jagdishpur. Though he was eighty years old, he played a prominent part in the revolt. He fought the British in Bihar and then joined Nana Sahib's forces and took part in various encounters with the English in Oudh and Central India. He died on April 27, 1858, leaving behind a glorious record of valour and bravery.

Causes of War of Independence 1857

There were many causes of the War of Independence of 1857. They can be divided into political, religious, military, economic and social causes. The East India Company was aiming to annex all the states of India like Avadh, Tanjore, Jhansi, Satara, etc. That's why they introduced systems like Doctrine of Lapse by which Indian states could be taken over by the Company in case there was no male heir to the throne of the state. This provoked the rulers like Nana Sahib, the adopted son of Peshwa and Lakshmi Bai, the Rani of Jhansi. The Company also declared that after the death of the then Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, his family had to move out of the Red Fort and his successors were also forbidden to use the title of emperor. All these attempts alienated both Hindu and Muslim Indians who realized that the White men were intending to devour their lands.

The people of India at that time were highly concerned about their religion and religious rites. For them the most sacred thing was their faith. But when they realized that the Company was promoting Christianity in their land they became furious. In fact the Christian missionaries all over India were being patronized by the British government and in 1855 the priests like E. Edmund professed that the whole of India should be under one religion, i.e., Christianity. Similarly the introduction of some social laws added fuel to fire. For instance, the English government banned *Satti* (Hindu practice of burning the widow along with the dead body of her husband), and allowed the widows to remarry. Such legislations badly hurt the feelings of Hindus. In the military setup they introduced some regulations that injured religious sentiments of the Indians. For example, under the military rules the Indian soldiers were forbidden to have beards or wear turbans

or put *tilaks* on their foreheads. These regulations made Indians realize that their faiths were in jeopardy.

Whenever the English annexed any state of India into their domain they dismantled its army and disemployed the local soldiers. Thus after having been enslaved the second shock the local soldiers had to bear was unemployment that made them despise the foreign invader. Besides, the English invariably maintained discrimination between their soldiers and the Indian soldiers in respect of salaries and fringe benefits with the result that the disheartened soldiers made up their minds to fight against the English.

There were economic causes as well. During the rule of the Mughals, not only the Muslims but also the Hindus would be appointed on all important positions but by the English the Muslims and the Hindus both were deemed as untrustworthy and consequently all the higher posts were held by the White men. The natives were either turned jobless or appointed on lower levels of the state departments. The East India Company that was eager to amass wealth out of the trade considered India no more than a field of producing raw materials for the industries of England. The subsidiary system with additional taxes even on uncultivated lands added fuel to the fire and economically devastated the common Indians.

In addition to these reasons there was an immediate cause that coerced the Indians to go for war. In the words of Lord Canning, Lawrence and Syed Ahmed Khan it was, indeed, the most significant cause. For a new Enfield rifle introduced in the early period of 1857 the cartridges were covered with some animal fat that was supposed to be either of cow or a boar. Before using these cartridges they were to be cut by teeth. Since the cows were sacred for the Hindus and pigs were *haram* for the Muslims both of them refused to carry such rifles. But their English officers

used force that offended the Hindus and Muslims alike and thus all these causes instigated the war in India to which we call the War of Independence 1857.

Causes of the Failure of the War of Independence

Most of the Indian nationals fought bravely against the rule of the foreigner but failed in their bold attempts to overthrow the British Raj. The causes of this failure are many, but the important ones are discussed as below.

The foremost cause was the sudden start of the war in confusion, without any preparation or proper planning. Secondly since there was an extreme lack of communication and coordination among various groups of freedom fighters who started their uprising according to their own wishes, it became easy for the English troops to curb the revolt of different areas one by one.

Thirdly there was no experienced leader among them to lead the Indian soldiers. They had declared Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, their leader but instead of warfare he was devoted to poetry and was too old and incompetent to lead the revolutionaries. The British troops, on the other hand, were endowed with extremely competent generals like Edwards and Lawrence.

Fourthly, English troops were modern and strikingly advanced not only in warfare but also in new ways of swift and speedy communication. They did not have to cross long roads and grounds to deliver a message or order but could simply wire it with a few minutes. The Indians on the other hand were devoid of such means. That's why they utterly fell behind and got defeated.

Fifthly, the English had full command on waters due to their advanced navy they got enforcement from their Crimean fronts to counter Indian aggression without any delay. Being equipped with

modern weapons especially Enfield rifles they could hunt down Indians who were still fighting with their sticks, swords and daggers to fight their highly powerful opponents.

The economic conditions of Indian troops also entailed an obvious cause of their defeat. On the one hand the war started out of awkwardness, mismanagement and lack of planning and even the emperor was practically penniless who was asking for loans from Delhi landlords but they were determined to save their money, not their freedom. The British troops, on the other hand, had been wealthy because the prosperous regions of India were totally under their control.

Another major reason was the treachery of Sikhs who had been grudgingly fighting against Muslims for a long time. The East India Company took advantage of their feeling of antipathy and aroused them towards their own countrymen. Sikh states like Patiyala and Jind helped the English troops in crushing the native disturbance in Punjab. In the North-West Frontier Province there were certain feudal lords like the Wali of Swat displayed their allegiance to the alien rulers. Even in the Indian army there were some traitors like Moulvi Rajab Ali and Mirza Elahi Baksh who were honored and awarded with affluence for providing information to the Crown about whereabouts of the Indian Emperor.

Aftermath of the War of Independence

The aftermath of the war of independence, The Indians suffered a disappointing and discouraging defeat while a glorious victory for the White men prolonged their rule. For the subjugated Indians repercussions were rather more severe. The Mughal rule came to an end with the dethroning of the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. He was arrested during the course of the war and sent to Rangoon, Burma where he was sentenced to life imprisonment. His family members including

twenty-four princes were nastily executed by the soldiers of the East India Company. The second upshot was windup of the control and command of the East Indian Company in India. The British Charter of 1852 stated that the government of India was entrusted to the Company by the English crown. And since the war had left the impression that the Company was no longer capable of keeping it safe, the government of India was personally taken over by the Queen of England who would appoint a Viceroy in India to represent the crown. The Board of Directors and the Board of Control of the Company were dissolved and instead a council of fifteen members was appointed with Secretary of State for India as its head.

Another point the crown had realized was the obvious mistrust between the Company and the local landlords. The unlawful and corrupt activities of the Company in capturing all the land of India and its resources had enraged the lords of India who collaborated with the revolutionaries. Thus contrary to the policy of the East India Company the crown tried to develop a relationship of trust and confidence with the Indian masses. It was assured that England was no longer interested in capturing the Indian land anymore and that in the future all the agreements signed with the Indian lords would be duly acknowledged. The heirless rulers were also given free hand to adopt males as their successors. The motive was to eventually gain their trust and support.

The crown believed that primarily the Muslims had initiated the revolt against the British rule. For that reason they put all the blame on the Indian Muslims and took most of the revenge from them. Most of the Muslims in the government services were dismissed. Except the betrayers all the Muslims were ruthlessly looted and killed. The aim was to divest the Muslim community of their political rights. The Muslims in repulsion also utterly disgusted the British and rejected not only the White people but also all the new things that were introduced by them. In the long run

that proved to be a devastating trend that made the Muslims absolutely depressing, desolate and dismal community mainly because they kept themselves quite aloof from the modern education and thus remained awkwardly uneducated and unfortunately backward. The Hindus on the other hand joined hands with the new government and became well-educated and prosperous. This also caused a permanent rift in the Hindu-Muslim unity since the Muslims thought that although Hindus fought with them but it was only the Muslims who were paying the price. Eventually the second half of the nineteenth century India witnessed the rise of nationalism giving rise to two-nation theory that ultimately resulted in the partition of India and creation of Pakistan.

Conclusion

Most of the European historians have pointed out that it was a revolt of Indian soldiers who were offended at the use of greased cartridges. In their opinion, the discontented sepoys were incited by the landlords and the deposed native princes and the people of India were not directly involved in this rebellion. They further assert that it was not a national war of independence, in as much as the revolt was confined to a particular region and not to the whole of India; large areas like the Punjab, Sind and Rajputana remained unaffected. It was admittedly a great and courageous effort by patriotic Indians to get rid of the foreign domination. It was a glorious landmark in our history in as much as Hindus and Muslims fought shoulder to shoulder to win back their lost independence. One cannot but admire the patriotic spirit of boatmen of Lucknow who refused to carry British soldiers across the river. The sepoys and the people fought gallantly up to the very end. Though the revolt was unsuccessful, the spirit of the people remained unshaken. The revolt left an impression on the minds of the Indian people and thus paved the way for the rise of a strong national movement.

Political Philosophy of SHAH WALI-ALLAH

Introduction

Of the two leaders of thought who appeared during the early years of decadence, Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab of Arabia and Shah Wali Allah of Delhi, the latter occupies a more prominent position. He was a luminary who during the stormy period of Indian history showed the bewildered Muslims the right path, the path of peace and glory. He was possessed of deep insight, profound learning, and heroic nobleness. Not long after his death his thought gave rise to a mighty movement under the leadership of Shah Ismail Shahid and Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi for liberating the Muslims from the clutches of Western imperialism.

Life and Works

Qutb al-Din Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Rahim, known as Shah Wali Allah, was born in ah 1114/ad 1703 near Delhi, a member of a distinguished intellectual and religious family. He received a highly structured education and spiritual instruction at the *madrasa* (religious school) established by his father, Shah 'Abd al-Rahim, at Delhi. As well as the Qur'an, he studied Arabic and Persian grammar and literature and the higher philosophical, theological, metaphysical, mystical and juridical texts. He graduated from the school when he was barely fifteen years old; in the same year, his father initiated him into the famous Naqshbandi order. He began his career as a teacher at the Madrasa-e-Rahimiyya under the tutelage of his father; after the death of the latter

in ah 1131/ad 1719, Shah Wali Allah became the head of the *madrasa*, teaching all the current sciences at the school for about twelve years. During the same period he continued his own studies, growing in stature as a teacher and attracting students to his circle.

In ah 1143/ad 1731, Shah Wali Allah went on the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca), after which he remained in Mecca and Medina, the sacred cities of Islam, for about fourteen months, studying *hadith* (accounts of the Prophet) and engaging in intellectual discussions, meditation and spiritual perfection. During this time, he saw the forty-seven spiritual visions which form the subject matter of his famous mystical work *Fuyud al-haramayn* (Emanations or Spiritual Visions of Mecca and Medina). After making his second *hajj*, Shah Wali Allah returned home to Delhi in ah 1144/ad 1732. He spent the rest of his life teaching *hadith* literature and metaphysics and writing. All but one or two of his works were produced during his later years. He died in ah 1176/ad 1762.

Intellectual and metaphysical contribution

Shah Wali Allah wrote in both Arabic and Persian. He published between fifty and seventy works, including five collections of letters and epistles. His writings played a major role in the intellectual and spiritual life of the Muslims in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, a role which continues today. Some of these works have greatly changed the Muslim approach to the study of the Qur'an.

In addition, Shah Wali Allah tried to reshape Islamic metaphysics in greater conformity with the teachings of the Qur'an and the *sunna* of the Prophet. He adopted a more rational approach to the controversial issues of metaphysics, which led to greater harmony among subsequent Islamic metaphysical thinkers. He was careful to give a balanced criticism of some of the views of his

predecessors and contemporaries. His constructive and positive approach to those issues was always considered a sincere attempt at reconciliation.

Shah Wali Allah made the first attempt to reconcile the two (apparently) contradictory doctrines of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of being) of Ibn al-'Arabi and *wahdat al-shuhud* (unity in conscience) of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi. Shaykh Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi, the advocate of *wahdat al-wujud*, believed being in reality is one and God. All other actual and possible beings in the universe are manifestations and states or modes of his Divine Names and Attributes. By the act of creation through the word *kun* (be), Ibn al-'Arabi means the descent of Absolute Existence into the determined beings through various stages. This gradual descent of the Absolute Existence is called *tanazzulat al-khamsa* (five descents) or *ta'ayyunat al-khamsa* (five determinations) in Sufi terminology. On the other hand, according to Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, the exponent of the doctrine of *wahdat al-shuhud*, God and creation are not identical; rather, the latter is a shadow or reflection of the Divines Name and Attributes when they are reflected in the mirrors of their opposite non-beings (*a'dam al-mutaqabila*). Shah Wali Allah neatly resolved the conflict, calling these differences 'verbal controversies' which have come about because of ambiguous language. If we leave, he says, all the metaphors and similes used for the expression of ideas aside, the apparently opposite views of the two metaphysicians will agree. The positive result of Shah Wali Allah's reconciliatory efforts was twofold: it brought about harmony between the two opposing groups of metaphysicians, and it also legitimized the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* among the *mutakallimun* (theologians), who previously had not been ready to accept it.

Shah Wali Allah wrote about thirteen works on metaphysics, which contain his constructive and balanced metaphysical system. One of the most important is al-Khayr al-kathir (The Abundant

Good). This work is divided into ten chapters, each called a *khizana* (treasure). The first four chapters deal with the reality of *wujud* (being), knowledge of God, the relationship between God and the universe, and human knowledge. From the discussion of human knowledge, Shah Wali Allah turns to the discussion of the reality of prophecy and the prophethood of Muhammad. In the seventh *khizana*, he deals with the rules and principles of sainthood and mysticism. The eighth and ninth chapters contain details about practical aspects of Islam, the *shari'a*, as well as the eschatological view of Islam. In the tenth *khizana*, Shah Wali Allah explains his theological view which, according to him, is in full accord with Ash'arite theology.

Altaf al-quds fi ma'rifat lata'if al-nafs (The Sacred Knowledge) is another metaphysical work concerned with the inner dimensions of human personality. Here Shah Wali Allah deals with the important questions of mystical intuition (*kashf*) and inspiration (*ilham*). He examines systematically the reality of both the external and internal perceptive qualities of a human being as the heart, the intellect, the spirit, the self, the secret (*al-sirr*) and the ego. A separate chapter is devoted to the metaphysical teachings of Shaykh Junaid Baghdadi, wherein he presents a brief historical account of mysticism. The last chapter deals with the subtle question of 'thoughts and their causes'. Shah Wali Allah specifies various external and internal causes which affect the human mind and produce thoughts.

Sata'at (Manifestations) is a systematic division of *wujud* (being), representing Shah Wali Allah's view concerning the *tashkik al-wujud* (hierarchy or gradation of being). Existence, in relation to determined being, is composed of existence and essence and has many grades, stages and modes. The particular beings in the universe provide the foundation for the claim of the *tashkik* (gradation) and *kathrat* (multiplicity) of being. Each grade or stage covers a certain area of determination and

each stage is related to the next, not in a way that a material being is connected to another material being, but in *ma'nawi* (conceptual) manner. He describes the relationship between the various stages of being as like that between the lights of various lamps in a single room. The lights of these lamps are apparently mingled and are one, and are difficult to differentiate from one another; but in reality, they are distinguishable from one another because of the number of the lamps.

Shah Wali Allah's 'magnum opus' is his *Hujjat Allah al-baligha* (The Profound Evidence of Allah). This comprehensive work deals with both intellectual and practical aspects of Islam. The first part deals with metaphysics, scholastic theology, the gradual development or evolution of human society and the philosophy behind the divine injunctions. The second part is devoted to ethics, politics, rituals and the social life of Islam.

Al-Tafhimat al-ilahiyya (Instructions or Clear Understanding) is one of his most comprehensive metaphysical works. The work is divided into sections called *tafhim* (instruction). Both Arabic and Persian languages are used for the expression of ideas and concepts in this work. These *tafahim* (plural of *tafhim*) are actually Shah Wali Allah's mystical visions and experiences, and his letters and articles written to various people at various times in different contexts. The famous epistle called *Maktub al-madani* (*Madinian Epistle*) to Isma'il Afandi is a part of the second volume of the book. This article is a detailed description of *wahdat al-wujud* and *wahdat al-shuhud*, along with Shah Wali Allah's attempt at reconciliation concerning this controversial issue. In addition to the ontological discussions, the work also includes the author's cosmological, anthropological and theological views.

Another important metaphysical work is *al-Budur al-bazigha* (The Full Moons Rising in Splendour). The introduction deals with basic metaphysical issues such as *wujud* in general, the

unity of God, the essence and existence of God and the relationship between God and the universe. Shah Wali Allah considers the universe to be a manifestation of the Divine Attributes. In the first chapter, he deals with the study of humanity with respect to its social and rational being. The second chapter is devoted to humanity's relationship with the Creator. At the end of the work, Shah Wali Allah describes in detail the reasons and causes for the development and evolution of the various *shara'i* (religions or religious laws) and *milal* (religious communities).

Shah Wali Allah also tried to provide a basis for bringing the four schools of law closer to each other. His commentaries on the *Mu'atta* (a collection of the Prophet's sayings) of Imam Malik, called *al-Musawwa* (Arabic) and *al-Musaffa* (Persian), were written with a view to finding common orthodox ground for the reconciliation of different schools of Islamic law. Likewise, he wrote *'Aqd al-jid fi akham al-ijihad wa'l-taqlid* with the proposal that the door of *ijihad* (judgement) is open. According to him, the experts of Islamic knowledge (*'ulama'* (religious scholars) and *mujtahidin* (legists) have the right to respond effectively to new situations instead of being perpetually bound to previous solutions.

Political contribution

A hallmark of Shah Wali Allah was his ability to reconcile opposing points of view to the satisfaction of each side. Standing behind this aspect of his teachings is the unity of the Muslim community or *umma*. His powerful abilities as a reconciler enabled him to provide common ground and a strong basis for co-operation and harmony between the Sunni and Shi'i.

Shah Wali Allah lived during a time of political and moral decline, chaos and destruction in the Mughul empire. His vantage point near the centre of the Muslim state gave him a clear view of the

situation. He did his best to bring stability to the tottering empire and protect the Indian Muslims from disaster. Through his writings, especially his letters, he appealed to the Muslim rulers, nobles and intelligentsia to be aware of the dreadful situation and its possible consequences. His correspondence reveals many factors of Indian politics in the eighteenth century. His detailed letter to Ahmad Shah Abdali, the founder and ruler of Afghanistan, contained a comprehensive picture of the political situation in India. Ahmad Shah Abdali heeded Shah Wali Allah's call to invade India and restore Muslim power to the country, culminating in the defeat of the Marathas and their allies at the battle of Panipat in 1761. Shah Wali Allah himself left a rich intellectual legacy in the form of literary works, well-trained disciples including his four sons - who also became eminent scholars - and one of the greatest educational institutions of the time.