

LIFE SKETCH OF SYED AHMED SHAHID

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MUSLIM YOUTH IN THE PIOUS HOPE THAT THEY WOULD IMBIBE THE ZEAL FOR PROPAGATION OF ISLAM AND PRESERVATION OF 'SHARIAT' WITH THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE AS SHOWN BY THE MARTYRS OF BALAKOT.

TRANSLATOR

INTRODUCTION

It is a strange and inexplicable phenomena of Muslim history that whenever sincere efforts have been made for revival of Islamic tenets extraordinary results have come to be seen in its three branches, viz., faith, (righteous) deeds and morals and such examples of courage and fortitude, integrity and probity, sympathy and service, justice and equality, affection and compassion, fidelity and self-sacrifice were witnessed which were forgotten for a long duration of time and there appeared to be no hope of their coming up again.

These winds of change blew at different times of history. Sometimes for long and sometimes for short periods. But authentic records of such revivalist movements have been preserved for posterity.

Such a change came about in India at the beginning of thirteenth century Hijri when Syed Ahmed Shahid raised the banner of faith and 'jihad' which brought to mind the memories of early Islamic history.

Syed Ahmed Shahid based his movement on the simple and pristine faith of the earliest times and instilled a spirit of belief and 'jihad' and organised a large body of warriors and preachers.

He established the centre of his activities in the north-west region with the ultimate object of expelling Englishmen (British Imperialists) from India and setting up a theocratic state. The 'mujahidin' as they were called, inflicted many crushing defeats on the trained Sikh army in various battles

and to begin with, laid down the foundation of Islamic State in North-West Frontier, established revenue and Civil Courts at different places. But the local misguided villagers fell upon them as it were under a pre-meditated plan and murdered most of them in cold blood.

The Amīr, Syed Ahmed, Maulana Muḥammad Ismail and other indefatigable 'mujahidin' laid down their lives in the battlefield of Balakot for the sake of Islam and 'shariat' and with their martyrdom the hope of an Islamic State also died out like the last flicker of a dying flame as a result of persistent perfidy of certain tribal heads, their internal feuds, self-invented conventions and petty rivalries.

The surviving followers established themselves at different places and kept the flame of faith and 'jihad' burning. But the Englishmen pursued and subjected these valiant 'mujahidin' to merciless cruelties, atrocities and oppression. Their properties were confiscated and some of them were sent to the gallows and some were sentenced to life imprisonment. But these intrepid 'mujahidin' braved these persecutions and prosecutions with magnanimous courage and unflinching and axiomatic faith in their mission. They lived and died for propagation of Islam and preservation of 'shariat' and left a shining example of devotion and sacrifice for the coming generations and showed that these ideals have to be propagated and preserved at all costs and no sacrifice is too great in the way of Islam and 'shariat' – be it wealth or life.

"But the messenger and those who believe with him strive with their wealth and their lives. Such are they for whom are the good things. Such are they who are the successful."

(Surah at-Tauba : 88)

Dar-e-'Arafat

(Rae Bareli)

14th April, 1974.

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Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

LIFE SKETCH OF SYED AHMED SHAHĪD

The Pitiable Conditions of Muslims in thirteenth Century India

The political, religious and moral condition of Muslims in India in the thirteenth century Hijri (the end of eighteenth and beginning of nineteenth century C.E.) had come down to rock bottom. The Mughal Empire had disintegrated and East India Company and its allies swayed over various parts of India. The remaining parts were held by petty rulers and sardars. The Mughal King, Shah 'Alam, was a figure-head. The whole of South India was at the mercy of Marathas. The Punjab and part of Afghanistan were ruled by the Sikhs. The capital, Delhi and adjoining areas were the target of Maratha and Sikh forays. The political credibility of the Muslims was at a low ebb. They had no leader who could unite them. They were weak and anybody could harass them at will.

The moral fabric of the Muslim society was shattered and many sinful and heretic practices had become a fashion and people used to pride over them. The use of alcohol was not uncommon, the high and low revelled in wild orgies. The morality and sense of shame had lost their importance with some people; many Muslim women had entered the European households.

The polytheistic and heretic rites had infiltrated in the "millat". The Muslims had acquired such beliefs for which the Jews, Christians and infidel Arabs had earned the wrath of Allah. Many un-Islamic and Shiite rituals had entered the 'sunni' society and most of its members had lost sight of 'shariat'. The Islamic traditions were being forsaken. The injunctions of Glorious Qur'an and 'traditions' were not observed even in literate and respectable Muslim families. The widow re-marriage, daughter's share in property and traditional greetings were under taboo by social conventions. The same way the obligatory duty of Hajj was dropped on

the pretext of anarchic and disorderly conditions. The Glorious Quran was thought to be a riddle not to be understood or impossible to be explained by the uninitiated and it was considered a 'forbidden tree'.

But it would not be correct to presume that the thirteenth century was all unenlightened or devoid of learning, religious activity, spiritual life or there was no pursuit of knowledge. The earlier part of thirteenth century is historic for Islam and Muslims in India. There were such erudite scholars that it would not be easy to find their equals any where else, scholars who were unique for their profound knowledge and understanding of Traditions of the Prophet (peace be on him) and geniuses in the fields of literature and poetry, tutors with encyclopaedic knowledge and sufis and mystics of high order were all there. There was a net-work of schools and monasteries (khanqah) and 'ulama' who were busy in teaching and preaching, writing and compiling, the schools and 'khanqah' were full of students and disciples (murid) in those days.

It cannot, however, be denied that the store of knowledge, which their predecessors had built up was being depleted for want of replenishment. There was no further addition and no progress. There were geniuses in different branches of learning but their energies were being frittered away for want of purpose in life. The noble qualities of fortitude and bravery, sense of shame and ambition were being wasted for contemptible ends and epicurism was the order of the day. There were scattered sages and geniuses but no organised body as such. The life had lost its moorings and there was no trace of any useful and popular movement.

There was an urgent need for such a person or body of persons who would utilise the talents of these persons and give them a direction, who would popularise the ecstasy of 'khanqah' and the light of learning of the schools. The 'ulama' who would ride the chargers and the 'mujahid' who would enkindle the flame of love of Allah, provide warmth to the low-spirited and enliven the spirit of religion from one

end of the country to the other, who would put to good use the inherent talent of the Muslims; who would have foresight; who would not consider anything useless; who would have the healing-touch of a christ; who would be the epitome of all such qualities which go to make one an 'imām' of his time. This was the singular honour for which Syed Ahmed was the most suitable person in the galaxy of 'ulama' and sages. We are narrating in this book the selected facts and tales of his tenacity of purpose, impact on Muslim society and revolutionary changes which he brought about during his life time.

The Family

Shaikh-ul-Islam Syed Qutubuddin Muhammad al-Madani was the son of Syed Rashid-ud-Din, who was the twelfth descendant of Muhammad Zu Nafs Zakiyya Shahīd, grandson of Hazrat Hasan. Shaikh-ul-Islam Syed Qutubuddin was a high-minded sage and a pious man who was endowed with courage and spirit of 'jihad' along with erudite knowledge and piety. He came to India with a party of 'mujahidin' through Ghazni and conquered Kara (in Allahabad) where he settled, died and lies buried. The scions of Shaikh Qutubuddin had inherited qualities of leadership, self-possession, abstinence and piety. There was one sage Hazrat Shah 'Alamullah in the descendants of Syed Qutubuddin during the reign of Aurangzeb Alamgīr. He was 'authorised' (majāz) by Hazrat Syed Adam Binnori, one of the 'khalifa' of Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Sani. He was very pious and staunch "traditionalist". He died in 1096 (1684) and was buried at Daerah (Rae Bareli) which he had founded.

The Birth

Syed Ahmed was the fifth descendant of Shah 'Alamullah. He was born in 1201 (Nov. 1786). His father's name was Syed Muhammad Irfan and grandfather's Syed Muhammad Nur. At the age of four he was enrolled in a 'maktab'. But he was not disposed to learning and did not

make any progress in book lore despite the best of efforts. He was fond of manful sports and soldiership from childhood. When he reached adolescence he used to attend on the old, infirm and widowed in the manner the elders used to wonder at it. He was very fond of prayers and 'zikr'.

To Lucknow In Search Of Livelihood

His father Maulana Muhammad Irfān breathed his last when he was only twelve years old. The conditions warranted that he should shoulder the responsibility of maintenance of the family, and look for livelihood. He went to Lucknow with seven other relations in search of a job. The distance from Rae Bareli is seventy eight km. They had one mount and they used to ride it in turn. But Syed Sahib used to insist on others to ride at his turn and preferred to walk. He looked after his companions throughout the journey and reached Lucknow. Nawab Sa'adat Ali was the Ruler at that time. He was an ambitious and able administrator. But inspite of that except for a 'few jagirdars and big businessmen there was unemployment and poverty. Everyone busied himself in looking for a job in Lucknow, But it was difficult to find one. Inspite of hard work and day-long labour they had to be content with a frugal and insufficient meal. Syed Sahib was staying with a nobleman who had high regard for his family. But he used to feed the rich-fare he used to get from the host to his companions and he was content with potluck.

Under The Tutelage Of Shāh Abdul Aziz

He passed four months under difficult conditions. Once the ruler went for shooting and the nobleman with whom Syed Sahib was staying went with the entourage. Syed Sahib with his companions went with the party and attended on the co-travellers. He had to undergo many hardships in this safari. Syed Sahib tried to persuade his companions to proceed to Delhi and profit from Shāh 'Abdul Aziz but to

no avail. Ultimately he went to Delhi by himself.

He travelled the entire distance on foot, served the travellers on way but continued the journey most of the time thirsty and hungry and reached Delhi after many days. When he reached Delhi he had blisters in his feet on account of continuous walking. He presented himself before Shah Abdul Aziz. Shah Abdul Aziz knew the family well. He expressed great pleasure on introduction and after usual formalities sent him to his brother Shah Abdul Kadir.

He acquired such competence in 'contemplative sciences' in a very short span of time which others normally attain after hard and strenuous endeavour ranging over a long time. He was ordained (khalifa) and permitted to go to Rae Bareilly. He stayed here for two years during which period he married also.

Joins The Army Of Amīr Khān

He needed actual fighting experience to perfect the art of 'jihad' for which he was destined and which was his main object in life.

He went to Delhi again in 1226 (1811) and at the instance of Shah Abdul Aziz joined the army of Amīr Khan who was engaged in armed struggle in Malwa and Rajasthan. He tried to divert his struggle and contain the ascending English power. Amīr Khan was an ambitious Afghan soldier of fortune, who had collected a good number of valiant and adventurous fighters around him. He was a power to reckon with and the rulers sometimes requisitioned his services. The Englishmen too could not ignore him.

Syed Sahib served Amīr Khan for six years. He continued his prayers and preachings along with his duties with the result that the entire camp became a centre of preaching. The army men greatly benefited from it and there was a marked change in the life of Amīr Khan himself.

Return To Delhi

When Amīr Khan, compelled by circumstances and disloyalty of some of his close associates sought truce with Englishmen, Syed Sahib opposed it, but when he eventually signed the treaty and accepted the State of Tonk. He was disheartened and left for Delhi.

This time a large number of people gathered around him and two eminent persons of the family of Shah Waliullah, Maulana Abdul Hai and Maulana Muhammad Ismail were initiated (bai'at). Because of these two renowned 'ulama' the great and small, 'ulama' and 'mashaikh' thronged around him in multitude, and his popularity increased day by day. He started preaching around Delhi and went to Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur and other historical places, which had produced great men and were inhabited by 'ulama' and nobility - the cities like Rampur, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, etc., where hundreds of people were 'initiated' and they recanted and abandoned polytheistic and heretic practices. Haji Abdul Rahim, who was one of the famous 'mashaikh' of his time came for 'initiation' with thousands of his disciples. This tour proved very auspicious for the entire region. It is said on authority that whenever he stayed even for a short time the obligatory (farz) prayers (in mosques) were re-established, religious beliefs were revived, 'sunnat' were restored, the zeal for Islamic tenets was renewed and above all people developed a dislike for polytheistic, heretic and Shiite practices. Maulana Abdul Hai and Maulana Muhammad Ismail were with him in this tour, lot of people benefited from their sermons and lives of many people were revolutionized.

Back To Home Town

He came back home to Rae Bareilly. The entire region was then in the grip of a famine and there was scarcity and suffering, poverty and privation and he had over a hundred persons to feed. But there was an atmosphere of Shekinah and absolute faith in Allah. There were great scholars and

sufis with him and everyone, inspite of his scholarly learning used to profit from him and he used to be busy in serving the people. This small hamlet was a crowded monastery (khanqah), a religious school and a training ground for 'jihad'. It was a time of great delight and ecstasy though full of hardships. He also visited Allahabad, Benares, Kanpur and Sultanpur during this period and people came to him in groups for 'bai'at'.

The Vist To Lucknow

There was a good number of Pathans in Lucknow Cantonment who were devotees of Syed Sahib' and his ancestors, of whom Nawab Faqir Muhammad Khan is worth mentioning. He undertook this journey to Lucknow, with about one hundred and seventy disciples, at the request of these people for their reformation. Maulana Abdul Hai and Maulana Muhammad Ismail were with him in this tour also. Nawab Ghaziuddin Haider was the Ruler and Nawab Mo'tamad-ud-Dowlah Agha Mir was his Minister at that time. But there was chaos and disorder, repression and injustice in the State. The high and mighty indulged in epicureanism and sensualism. It was the spring time of merry-making, amusement and fun. But at the same time there were some people who were amenable to good counsel and they had regard and respect for the greatness of religion. The city was the centre of scholars and sages and the select among the nobility from outlying areas had also emigrated here. There were many pearls of the first water in the masses awaiting the master-touch of a wonder-worker.

Syed Sahib and his companions stayed on the western bank of Gomti near Shah Pir Muhammad mosque. The day he reached there, people started coming in great number and they used to mill around the place from morning till night. The successive and persuasive sermons of Maulana Muhammad Ismail had great effect on the local people. These sermons changed the lives of thousands of people. They came, recanted and started a new life. The people of Lucknow greatly benefited spiritually by the visit of Syed Sahib and

his blessed party during this short stay. The great savants and sages used to visit and enter the fold of 'bai'at'. Maulana Abdul Hai and Maulana Muhammad Ismail delivered sermons every Friday and members of different fraternities (biradaris) became the disciple (murīd) of Syed Sahib and recanted from polytheism and heresies (bid'at). There were innumerable feasts and many works of wonder (karamāt) were witnessed during this time. The polytheism and heresies were reduced to the minimum and those addicted to crimes and wickedness recanted. The government was perturbed at the popularity of Syed Sahib, specially at the relinquishment of Shiite practices. He was warned but he continued his preachings and invited people to the true religion with determination and grit.

He returned to his home town after one month and during this period he felt the urgent need for 'jihad' in view of the oppressions over Muslims in the Punjab and became restless for it. Whenever he saw a youngman of strong physique, he would say, "He is good for our cause." He would often wear arms so that other people may realise their importance. He would hold mock-battles, target practice and display of martial arts and soldiery.

The Hajj

During this period along with other tenets of Islam, the fundamental tenet like Hajj was abandoned or neglected on account of the juristic excuse of insecurity on way. A few 'so called' 'ulama' had given a judicial decree (fatwa) for it to be dropped. Syed Sahib wanted to stop this practice and preached the obligatory nature of Hajj himself with great force. He considered it necessary to take practical steps to revive it and went for Hajj with a number of savants and distinguished persons. He asked his disciples to write letters to different places on the indispensability of Hajj, with the result that a large number of pilgrims collected at this declaration and invitation for it. He started with four-hundred pilgrims on 2nd July, 1821, after Id prayers (Id-ul-Fitr) from

his home town.

He went to Dalmau from Rae Bareli and from there he went to Calcutta by boat. On way Maulana Abdul Hai and Maulana Muhammad Ismail and other savants in the caravan delivered sermons in which polytheism and heresies were countered and correct beliefs and virtuous deeds were restituted. Thousands of men and women entered the fold of 'bai'at'. It is said that not a single Muslim was left as the entire city of Mirzapur entered the fold of 'bai'at' and thousands of Muslims in Benares including the savants and sages same for bai'at with the result that polytheistic and heretic practices were hit hard. He reached Patna via Ghazipur and Danapur and stayed there for two weeks. During his stay importance of 'shariat' was emphasised and heresies were denounced with vigour. He sent a few Tibetan nationals to Tibet from Azimabād for preaching and the effect of their efforts was felt in China also. He reached Calcutta from Azimabād and stayed there for three months. Calcutta was the seat of the British Government and the biggest city of India. He brought about a religious revolution there. The heads of different families and fraternities (biradari) declared to their families and fellow brothers that those who do not enter the fold of 'bai'at' of Syed Sahib and do not stick to 'shariat' would be boycotted. The people lined before the halting place of Syed Sahib at this announcement. The pubs and dens of vice were deserted. The grand-children of Tipu Sultan, whose ancestors had good relations with the ancestors of Syed Sahib greatly benefited by his advices. He left Calcutta for Hajj pilgrimage with seven hundred and seventy five persons. The rush of on-lookers was so great that the roads were blocked with Muslims and non-Muslims and it was difficult for pedestrians to pass through the crowd. The caravan reached Jeddah on 16th May, 1822, stopping and preaching at every port and coastal region on way. He entered the 'Haram' on 21st May, 1822.

The people of this holy place also took advantage of his presence. The 'imām' of the Grand Mosque and the Grand 'Mufti' of Makkah became his disciples (murīd) and the

chieftains and noblemen of other Muslim states profited from him. He passed the month of fasting in Makkah. During the period of Hajj he took a vow (bai'at) for 'jihad' from his companions at 'Aqba'e-Ula' - the place where Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) had taken the vow (bai'at) from 'Ansar' and which later became the basis of his emigration to Madina.

He went to Madina from Makkah. There also savants and sages, high and low crowded round him in great numbers. He returned to Makkah, passed the second month of fasting there, performed Hajj for the second time and returned to Rae Bareli on 30th April, 1824.

The Pre-Occupation At Home Town

He stayed at Rae Bareli from 30th April, 1824 to 17th January, 1826 -- for one year and ten months. It was his last stay in his home town. He occupied himself with preaching and inducing others for 'jihad' which included practical training-- both spiritual and physical of the companions. This period was full of rigorous performance of religious duties, asceticism and vigorous work. The life was simple and spiritual, austere and disciplined. The entire village (Daera Shāh 'Alamullah) was full of life and high spirits.

Need For Emigration

The pitiable condition of the Muslim scholars and helpless position in which Islam was placed at that time was clear to Syed Sahib. He was a spectator to the over-whelming influence of un-Islamic powers, specially intolerable tyranny to which the Muslims in the Punjab were subjected. The entire community was living a serf-like life of distrust and disrespect, disappointment and discomfiture. Their property was being confiscated on trivial grounds. The chambers in the famous Shahi Mosque of Lahore were being used as stables. There was restriction on azān and Islamic practices at many places and Muslims had become despondent and restless with this

contemptible treatment.

In this big border province which was inhabited by martial community (Pathans) among Muslims and where they had clear majority this disgrace and subordination under a non-Muslim power, which was inimical to them, could not be allowed to remain as such. It was a permanent danger for Delhi, whole of north-west India, and Afghanistan. It was far-sightedness and political acumen of Syed Sahib and his companions that they realised this danger and made the Punjab the centre of their crusading activities.

The rise of British power in India, internecine feuds among Muslims and the resultant dispersion and decline of Islamic influence disturbed him. Raising the 'Voice of Truth' and need for liberation of Islamic lands made a demand for 'jihad' from all duty-conscious and self-respecting Muslims. In his opinion 'jihad' was an important part of religion and he considered emigration as the first step towards it. Because under the prevailing conditions 'jihad' was difficult without emigration. The clear verses of the Glorious Qur'an and Traditions incited him for 'jihad' and love of Allah and Divine Pleasure excited him to act and he made a firm determination for it.

Though his main object was India is clear from several letters which he wrote to different Heads of States and Muslim Rulers in and outside India. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had established his rule in the Punjab and the Muslims were tyrannised, that is why they needed immediate help. Besides, in view of military strategy and political expediency it was necessary to start this movement from north-west India which was the centre of powerful and zealous Afghan tribes. Then some of their families and relations were his disciples (murīd) and respected him. They promised help and cooperation for this purpose. Moreover, other Muslim countries extended right up to Turkey. He was preparing himself and his companions for 'jihad' from the very beginning.

The Emigration

He bid 'adieu' to his home town Rae Bareilly on 17th January, 1826. The caravan passed through plains and deserts, hills and dales, forests and rivers, mountains and passes and covered United Provinces, parts of Malwa, Rajasthan, Baluchistan and North-West Frontier to reach Afghanistan which was in itself an arduous task. They had to undergo various hardships, hunger and thirst, because of shortage of provisions and water, fear of highway robbers. They passed through new places, encountered unfamiliar dialects and strange people, some courteous and some contemptuous, faced their doubts and suspicions, their curiosities and close enquiries, prying and spying, etc. They endured all these odd situations on their way. The caravan consisted of noblemen, saints and sages, rich and enthusiastic youngmen, weak and infirm, but full of zest for 'jihad' and consisted of six hundred 'mujahadin'.

He stopped at Dalmau, Fatehpur, Banda, Jalon, Gwalior, Tonk and he was welcomed at every place and people became his disciples (murid). The Maharaja of Gwalior asked for an audience and he presented gifts. He went to Tonk from Gwalior. The Nawab of Tonk received him with great enthusiasm (Syed Sahib had served in his army for six years at Tonk) and saw him off. He reached Hyderabad (Sind) via Ajmer, Pali and through toilsome desert of Marwar. On way thousands of men and women entered the fold of 'bai'at' and many persons accompanied him. Sind was under the rule of independent rulers, who were members of a family and lacs of warriors and war-veterans lived in their territories. There were great many 'aulia' who had disciples all over Sind. They welcomed Syed Sahib and assured all help. The Ruler of Sind, Mir Muhammad and the *elite* received him with open arms.

He stayed at Hyderabad (Sind) for a week and went to Pirkot and stayed there for two weeks and then went to Shikarpur and met the respectable and prominent persons of the place. He went to Chhatarbagh and Dhadhar from

Shikarpur. On way he stayed at many places and invited the people for 'jihad'. The savants, sufis and citizens paid their homage to him. He journeyed through the narrow and perilous Bolan Pass with the entire caravan. It is a natural gorge which has been carved by denudation for strong-willed conquerors and the needy passersby in the long chain of mountains which separate India from Afghanistan. He reached Shal (Quetta) through Bolan Pass. The Chief of Shal paid him great respect and many 'ulama' became his murid.

In Afghanistan

He went to Kandahar. The Barakzai brothers ruled over Afghanistan during this period, who were called Durrani. Purdil Khan ruled over Kandahar, Mir Mohammad Khan over Ghazni, Dost Muhammad Khan and Sultan Muhammad Khan over Kabul and Yar Muhammad Khan over Peshawar. But there was no love lost between them and they used to engage in family feuds most of the time. The main purpose of this visit was to unite these brothers and prepare them for 'jihad' against the enemies of Islam.

When he reached Kandahar, the ruler received him and thousands of 'ulama', noblemen and other persons came out of the town on foot to welcome him. The roads were jam-packed with people. He stayed in Kandahar for four days. Everybody was ready and willing to join him for 'jihad.' He went to Ghazni from Kandahar. About four hundred learned men, students and sages from monasteries (khanqah) came to him eager for 'jihad.' He selected two hundred and seventy persons and took them with him. He informed Mir Muhammad Khan of Ghazni and Sultan Muhammad Khan of Kabul, of his arrival and the purpose of his visit and asked for their cooperation. When he reached Ghazni, rich and learned persons came about three miles out of the town on foot to receive him. He encamped near the mausoleum of Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi and lot of people entered the fold of 'bai'at'.

He stayed at Ghazni for two days and left for Kabul.

The rich, the *elite* and thousands of common people received him outside the town. The cloud of dust raised by the horses and crowd blinded everything. Sultan Muhammad Khan came out to receive him with his three brothers and fifty horsemen. He stayed in Kabul for one-and-a-half months. He spoke about reforms and 'jihad' most of the time. The *elite* and the commonmen, profited by his preachings finding the faith-lifting atmosphere, burning desire for 'jihad' and the will to lay down their lives in the 'Way of Allah' the people joined the blessed caravan. He did his best to bring reconciliation between the Barakzai brothers but he did not succeed. He left for Peshawar. The people used to receive him with great enthusiasm all through the journey. He exhorted the people for 'jihad' on way and reached Nowshera. He made the beginning of the highly desired object and a great divine worship which was the culmination of years of preaching and striving and the chief purpose of this strenuous journey — 'jihad.'

The Battle Of Akora

He asked in a despatch from Nowshera to the Ruler of Lahore to embrace Islam in the first instance or accept suzerainty of Islam and pay 'jizya' and in case of non-acceptance of these terms threatened him with war. He also wrote that probably you may not have that love for liquor which we have for martyrdom. The Ruler of Lahore sent a big Sikh army in reply to this notification. The moment he received the news he made preparations for 'jihad.' The 'mujahidin' were overjoyed with an opportunity for 'jihad' and everyone of them was brimming over with the high spirits of martyrdom. The 'mujahidin' were seven hundred and the enemy strength was estimated at seven thousand armed men. The handful 'mujahidin' confronted their ten times strong enemy at midnight on 20th Dec., 1826. The 'mujahidin' fought with their heart and soul and the enemy fell back. By dawn they were routed and put to flight. This victory inspired the Muslims, the tribal chiefs, 'ulama' and *elite* came to enter the fold of 'bai'at' at the hands of Syed Sahib. The

people had confidence in him now. He made peace in between warring tribal chiefs. Khadi Khan of Hund fort became his disciple and Syed Sahib stayed at Hund fort for three months at his request.

The Raid On Hazru

The local people expressed their desire to make a dawn attack on Hazru which was a big trading centre in the Sikh territory. Syed Sahib permitted it, but he did not participate in it. The raiders committed many irregularities in taking the spoils of war. They did not heed the instructions given by Syed Sahib. They did whatever they liked without regard to any rules. The 'ulama' among the 'mujahidin' unanimously decided that the most important and the foremost task is to appoint an 'imam' and 'amir' so that the 'jihad' be carried out under his leadership and command.

Then on 13th January, 1827 at Hund 'bai'at' for 'imāmat' and 'khilāfat' was carried through at the hands of Syed Sahib unanimously. Khadi Khan, Ashraf Khan, Fateh Khan, Bahram Khan, and the big and small chiefs came to him for 'bai'at' on both the counts. Besides, the 'ulama' of India also accepted his 'imāmat.' Syed Sahib issued letters for 'bai'at' and 'imāmat' to all the chiefs, rulers, savants and sages of India. The Rulers of Peshawar and Kabul Yar Muhammad Khan and Sultan Muhammad Khan came with a big party for 'bai'at' on seeing his piety and popularity. He promulgated laws of 'shariat' after election as 'arnīr' and issued ordinances based on 'shariat' all around. The judgements in Darul Qazā were being delivered according to 'shariat' now. The result of this superintendence (ihtisāb) was that no non-praying Muslims were found in the whole area--far and near.

The Battle Of Saidu And Poisoning

The whole region had become united as a single unit under the 'imāmat' and 'khilāfat' of Syed Sahib. The

suzerainty of big and small landlords came to an end and they became envious though they entered the fold of 'bai'at' compelled by circumstances. But they were boiling within their hearts for vengeance and were in league with the Sikh government at Lahore.

There were several skirmishes with the Sikh army. The local landlords who were outwardly with Syed Sahib but at heart with the Sikhs, expressed their desire to make an organised and final stand against the Sikhs. The plain of Saidu was selected at the instance of the local landlords. When the preparations for it were in full swing somebody poisoned the food. The local people and some others from outlying areas were with the Muslim army including the landlords and their troops. The Muslim army had the upper hand and on the point of winning the battle then all of a sudden the chiefs of Peshawar joined hands with the Sikhs. Yar Muhammad Khan deserted with his troops. The 'mujahidin' were left alone to fight the Sikhs -- rather the Sikhs and the deserters.

At Panjtār

In view of the changed circumstances Syed Sahib shifted to Panjtār from Hund at the request of Fateh Khan, ruler of Panjtār and made it the centre of his activities. Panjtār is a secure place situated in the mountains of Swat and it remained the headquarter of the 'mujahidin' for quite a long time. It was an Islamic camp and centre of preaching and reforms. This mountainous fastness was a solemn place of which every nook and corner was crammed with 'mujahidin' and devotees who were most of the time busy in recitation of the Glorious Qur'an-'zikr', preparation for 'jihad' and there was an atmosphere and spirit of fellow-feeling and friendliness, service and sacrifice.

Khadi Khan became very apprehensive with Panjtār being the headquarter, he turned jealous and prejudiced against Syed Sahib and wanted to harm his cause. The unexpected turn of events at Saidu did not dishearten Syed Sahib and did not, in any way, affect his dedication to his mission. He

went to Buner, Swat and Hazara. The tour was very successful so far as preaching, reformation and preparation for 'jihad' were concerned. He went to Khar which is the centre of Swat. He stayed there for one year. Maulana Abdul Hai passed away during this period. He was 'Shaikhul-Islam' of the Muslim army (mujahidin) and Syed Sahib had high regards for him.

Encounter With The French General

General Ventura, a French General in the services of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, attacked the 'mujahidin' with an army of about ten to twelve thousand and helped Khadi Khan of Hund. General Ventura retreated under fierce attack by the 'mujahidin' who fought with zeal for 'jihad' and fondness of martyrdom. He returned to Lahore after this defeat discomfited. He took the field again after a few months and advanced towards Sammah. Khadi Khan welcomed him and secretly helped him. Syed Sahib wrote letters to the responsible persons of that region and informed them of General Ventura's adventure, and organised a line of defence. The 'mujahidin' took a vow to fight to the last. When General Ventura saw that the 'mujahidin' have taken up positions of vantage in the hills and passes he again retreated out of fear. When the local people saw the steadfastness of 'mujahidin' and signs of Divine help, they came for 'bai'at' in groups. Syed Sahib also went round the villages and strengthened the system of 'shariat.' Khadi Khan conspired with the enemies inspite of instructions and warning to desist from it. Syed Sahib attacked the Hund fort and seized it under compulsion. Khadi Khan lost his life in the battle.

The Battle Of Zaida

Amir Khan, brother of Khadi Khan, joined hands with Yar Muhammad Khan at whose instance Syed Sahib was poisoned at Saidu. Syed Sahib spoke to Yar Muhammad Khan and asked him not to create dissension and discord.

However, he launched an attack on the 'mujahidin' at Zaida. The Durrani army was driven back by the 'mujahidin' because of their firmness and resolute stand and they captured their cannons. The defeated army retreated in disorder. Yar Muhammad Khan was killed. The routed Durrani army attacked the Hund fort which was under the control of 'mujahidin.' They were fifty or so in number but they fought with undaunted courage and determination and repulsed their attack and this attempt also ended in fiasco.

The news, somehow got circulated that the 'mujahidin' intended to attack Peshawar which was in the hands of the Durrani. They, therefore, left Peshawar. The 'mujahidin' seized Ashra and Amb in the meantime.

Syed Sahib thought of advancing towards Kashmir and for it, it was necessary to seize Phulra. He sent an expedition under the command of his nephew, Syed Ahmed Ali. The Sikhs attacked them from an ambush and many 'mujahidin' lost their lives including Syed Ahmed Ali. Syed Sahib camped at Amb, enforced the system of 'shariat' and initiated reformation of society.

The Battle Of Mayār

Sultan Muhammad Khan decided to fight a decisive battle with the 'mujahidin.' He collected a big army of Durrani and for this end in view he reached Charsadda via Chamkani. Syed Sahib also camped at Toru with 'mujahidin.' He did his best to prevent the chiefs of Peshawar from this fraternal feud. But they did not value this spirit of reconciliation. Sultan Muhammad Khan and his relations swore by the Glorious Qur'an to fight to the last. The entire army passed underneath the Glorious Qur'an which was hung in a gate. There was much blood-shed at the battle-field of Mayar which lies between Toru and Hoti. Maulana Muhammad Ismail and Shaikh Wali Muhammad seized their artillery. The Durrani turned tail and left the field in shambles and the 'mujahidin' emerged victorious. The 'mujahidin' demonstrated such fortitude and heroism, courage of conviction and devotion

to duty and penchant for the 'coming world' that it reminded of the heroic deeds of early Muslims.

The Triumphant Entry in Peshawar

Syed Sahib advanced towards Peshawar after the victory of Mayar which was an important city after Kabul and Lahore in north-west and the capital of North-West Frontier Province for a long time. The circumstances compelled him to take over Peshawar. When Sultan Muhammad Khan felt sure that the 'mujahidin' have decided to annex Peshawar he left it with members of his family and started negotiations with Syed Sahib. When Syed Sahib entered Peshawar, the people were very happy. They illuminated the city and provided sherbet at different places. The 'mujahidin' demonstrated the spirit of true Islamic virtue and training, probity and circumspection. Sultan Muhammad Khan offered to make peace, promised fidelity and vowed that if Peshawar be given back to him, he would enforce 'shariat' laws and convert the region into an Islamic state. Syed Sahib had not undertaken this expedition for territorial conquest but to establish Islamic government and to enforce 'shariat'. He, therefore, accepted the offer and gave him one more chance. Peshawar was handed back to Sultan Muhammad Khan and Syed Sahib left for Panjtar.

The Massacre Of 'Quzāt'

The tribal chiefs, specially Sultan Muhammad Khan and worldly-minded 'ulama' realised that enforcement of Islamic laws and 'shariat' and appointment of revenue collectors would be against their personal interests and result in loss of their income. They, therefore, decided to get rid of them.

Sultan Muhammad Khan prepared a scheme to 'defame' the 'mujahidin' among the *elite* and the commonman a little after he was handed over Peshawar. He obtained the signatures of a few 'ulama' on a 'fatwa' that the beliefs of the 'mujahidin' are perverse (*fāsid*). He prepared a scheme

to murder all the 'Quzāt', revenue collectors and censors (muhtasib) appointed by Syed Sahib at one time in the region of Peshawar and Sammah except Panjtar. They were murdered in a ruthless manner – somebody was killed while praying in the mosque and somebody while defending himself. The oppressors did not heed the supplications of 'ulama', womenfolk and non-Muslims too. The 'mujahidin' who were thus put to death were the choicest pick from India and were the product of years of hard training.

The Second Emigration

Syed Sahib lost heart with this merciless killing of innocent 'mujahidin.' He was so heart-broken with the infidelity, thanklessness, oppression and barbarism of the local people that he decided to emigrate from there. He collected the 'ulama' and the chiefs, investigated the reason for this heart-rending incident, placed before them the chief aim of his visit and his efforts in this regard. When he realised that his companions were innocent and oppressed and the entire blame for this massacre lay on the local people, he finally decided to emigrate.

When the 'ulama' and those persons who were sincere at heart got wind of emigration they grew anxious and came to Syed Sahib in a body and requested him not to emigrate. But he did not agree. He had come to know that Fateh Khan had colluded with Sultan Muhammad Khan in his conspiracy to exterminate the 'Quzāt', revenue collectors and censors. Fateh Khan also did not request to stay on but supported it in secret. Syed Sahib forgave them instead of any retaliation or revenge. He condoned Fateh Khan also and treated him with kindness and presented him a few gifts. But he did not waver in his firm resolve to emigrate from there and camped at Rajduari. On way the people from Sammah (where the Quzāt', revenue collectors and censors were killed in cold blood) came in tears to him and requested him to come back to Sammah. He said, "A faithful (Muslim) is not bitten twice

from the same hole."

Towards Kashmir

Syed Sahib selected Kashmir for future reformatory activities. He moved towards Kashmir with the remaining companions who were not prepared to leave him in these conditions of gloom and confusion, indefiniteness and uncertainty. The Valley of Kashmir was safe and provided with such natural defences that an intelligent leadership could derive lot of advantages from it. The location was such that it could influence India and those Muslim countries of Central Asia which were important from racial and military point of view and which had established strong Islamic governments in the past. Besides, cordial relations could be established with them.

At Balākot

The administration of the states of Pakhli and Kaghan Valley were in a state of flux--partly on account of successive Sikh-incursions and partly because of their clan feuds. They wanted the help of Syed Sahib. These states lay on way to Kashmir where he wanted to establish the centre of his future activities. The second emigration was being made for that purpose. Balakot was the most suitable place to lend support to these states, consolidate his own armed strength and for advancement towards Kashmir. It is situated at the southern end of Kaghan Valley and shut in by a mountain and there is no inlet except the mouth of Kunhar river. There are two mountain ranges running parallel with the valley in which the passage in between is not more than half-a-mile wide. The river Kunhar flows in this narrow passage with the hills of Kalu Khan and Matikot on the eastern and western sides respectively. This emigration was beset with many dangers and was painstaking. The mountains and valleys were covered with snow, and the path was full of twists and turns. There was no arrangement for supplies and transport. It proved to be an outstanding example of his ambition and daring.

endurance and forbearance and strength of faith of his companions for the object in view. He reached Sachchun from Panjtar halting at different places on way and proceeded towards Balakot and reached there on 17th April, 1831.

The Last War And Martyrdom

Prince Sher Singh was deputed by his father, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, to fight a last-ditch battle with the 'mujahidin.' When he came to know that Syed Sahib had camped at Balakot with his companions, he brought a large army and camped at the east bank of Kunhar river about five miles from Balakot.

When it was clear that Sikh army would attack Balakot scaling down from Matikot, arrangements were made for a final show down with it. The valley of Balakot was strategically favourable for the 'mujahidin.'

Prince Sher Singh lost hope of winning the war on account of Balakot's natural defences and was thinking of going back. But some local people guided him and his army reached Matikot on 6th May, 1831 in a short time. The Sikh army attacked the 'mujahidin' while coming down from Matikot. Syed Sahib was in the forefront and the 'mujahidin' were closely following him. The volley of Sikh bullets was raining like hail. Syed Sahib moved ahead of others and called-out the battle-cry 'Allah-u-Akbar' aloud. He was moving fast like a lion after its prey. He found a big rock in the field. He took cover behind it and started firing from there. The 'mujahidin' followed him and at first sent a salvo of gun-fire from their guns and then carbines and killed many enemy soldiers. The enemy started retreating under barrage of fire towards the hills and ascending it. The 'mujahidin' dragged them down and put them to sword.

The 'mujahidin' lost sight of Syed Sahib and felt sure that he has been martyred. Maulana Muhammad Ismail was hit by a bullet in the head and he was martyred too. The enemy saw that the 'mujahidin' were confused, they attacked once again with all their might and sent a continuous barrage

of gun-fire with the result that the scales turned against the 'mujahidin' and many of them lost their lives. (May their souls rest in eternal peace).

The journey of these intrepid 'mujahidin' which started on 17th January, 1826, when Syed Sahib left his home town Rae Bareilly with a handful of 'mujahidin' ended at Balakot on 6th May, 1831. They left their beloved families at home and covered deserts and valleys, mountains and forests, countenanced the rebellion and infidelity of the Durrani, but they were so enamoured of their Creator and were so fond of martyrdom that :

***"Life is the price for proximity with beloved
in the realm of love,
The head is a burden on shoulders with
this life-giving news"***



