

Shah Waliullah's *Hajj* Journey and its Academic Impact

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Shah Waliullah's journey to *Hijjaz* is of historical importance in reference to his academic, thought provoking and revivalistic life. This journey opened up many new vistas and fields of his writing and achieved the zenith on the intellectual and academic front, which were not possible to be achieved in India at that time. It seems that the *Hijjaz* was the breeding ground of such intellects. In this journey, he delved into the vastness of *ilm al-Hadith* and accomplished it under the guidance of many pious mentors, who had assembled there since long time. Their support proved to be corner stone of his intellectual mega structure. Apart from performing hajj, his main objective to go there was to study *Hadith* and evaluate different sets constructively and critically.¹

Shah Waliullah was thirty years of age when he set out for pilgrimage. The fact that he had made up his mind to go there during a time of unsettled political conditions and lawlessness prevailing in the country and frequent piracies in high seas speaks of his courage and attachment to the sacred mosques. Shah Waliullah also wanted to study the conditions in other Muslim countries before deciding his course of action for the defense of Islam in India. Most probably he had the Quranic instruction for acquiring knowledge- that they may witness things that are of benefit to them-keeping in his mind, he benefited from the experience of the learned and wise from all parts of the world converging in the centre of Islam.²

Surat was then sea-port for ships for Arabia but the entire route, particularly Malwa and Gujrat was hunting grounds for Maratha marauders. The great distance from the North to the South India had in those days to be covered on carts driven by bulls or camels. Indian sea was also infested by a most formidable breed of Europeans pirates, chiefly English and

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Portuguese, who practiced fiendish cruelty on the people - men, women and children. The hardship undergone by the *Hajj* pilgrims may be seen in the travelogues of the time that have survived. The journey within the country was no less hazardous. Shah says that whenever anybody accompanying his party was missing during the night, he started reciting the litany of *ya badi al-Ajaib* for his safety.³

The ship boarded by Shah Waliullah took forty days to reach Jeddah and he reached Makkah on the 15th of *Zil al- Qada*. He also started delivering lectures within the holy mosque, near the space allocated to the *Hanafite* Imam. It was a great success since the number of people who flocked to listen him was quite large.⁴

Shah Waliullah writes in the *Al-Juz' al-Latif*, "I had a great yearning to perform the hajj during 1730-31, which was accomplished by the end of that year. During the succeeding year i did homage to Allah at the *Kabah*, paid a visit to Madinah and studied *Hadith*. Early in 1732, I was again on the move for India and I reached my home (Delhi) safely on the 16th Dec. 1732 A.D".⁵

Shah Waliullah's literary life started with this journey and the inaugural book was *Fuyuz al-Haramayn*. This book somewhat reflects the intellectual and spiritual revolution which he encountered while staying at *Hijjaz*. This journey had a vital and revolutionary effect on his thinking, style of writing, perception and observations. This stay not only changed his thinking and perception but also strengthened the foundation of his principled life. Moreover, his mission and vision also got broadened while staying there. He was aware of his inner change but his disciples and pupils realized it more efficiently. Commenting on this change, Shah Abdul Aziz, son of Shah Waliullah says, "After returning from *Hijjaz* my revered father's condition of inner self, academic vigour and way of discourse was totally changed". The pupils and disciples of former years could discern this change while comparing the two phases i.e. pre-Hajj and post-Hajj.⁶

It is also evident from the works of Shah Waliullah that the constructive and orderly approach of teaching and learning program began only after this journey. This can be discerned from the comparison of *Hujjat allah hi al-Balighah* and *Al-Qaul al Jamil*. The visionary approach, which is presented in former, is not found in the latter one. Certainly, the latter work was compiled before journey to *Hijaz*, the strength and vigour of thoughts presented in *Hamat* is the result of this journey.⁷

Shah Waliullah also accomplished the scholastic maturity and soundness at *Hijaz*. Shaikh Abdur Rahim was a mentor to him in India. Under his guidance he got the direction and future strategy of achieving and gaining knowledge. While going through *Fuyuz al-Haramayn*, it is quite clear that it opened up many vistas of *Alam-i-Mithal* and *Hazir al-Qudus* for him, both of which were introduced to him by Abdur Rahim. Due to minority, he could not get them fully at that time, but this journey proved useful on both these fronts.⁸

The teacher at *Hijaz* and the ambience of knowledge over there also helped and strengthened his approach. Shah Waliullah had already delved into the Quranic verses under the guidance of his father. At Hijaz, he got the chance of delving deep into the *ilm al-Hadith* and the way of its teaching. His father Abu Tahir al-Kurdi used the method of *Sard* while teaching *Ahadith* i.e. instead of stressing on the narrators, or their character or the strength of the chain of narrators; he gave preference to the beauty of the narrators and its message to humanity. Shah Waliullah adopted this method for propagating the divine message to humanity.⁹

The literary principles of writing and editing were also learnt by him while staying at Hajaz. With regard to this, he was influenced by Shamsuddin, his teacher at *Hijaz*. He has discussed the method of writing and compiling the work of Shamsuddin in *Anfas al-Arifin* as:

Shamsuddin used to say that what he had compiled can be categorized into seven parts viz: firstly, either the compilation was of its kind; or secondly the compilation was improved version of any previous defective work; or thirdly, the compilation was the first commentary of any book; or fourthly, the compilation was an abridged version of any book; or fifthly; the work which were not in order were synchronized by him; or sixthly the compilation rectified the error of other works and lastly; the compilation was the collection of scattered works”.¹⁰

Keeping in mind this method, Shah Waliullah wrote and compiled his works. Shah Waliullah’s works come under the above categories of Shamsuddin’s method of compilation.

With regard to the wisdom and pedagogy, Shah Waliullah not only got knowledge from his father but also learned the art of pedagogy from him. He interpreted the art of teaching as an aspect of wisdom. He had discussed the principles of pedagogy in treatise *Risalah-i-Danishmandi*.¹¹ He got to know the importance of teaching method at the hand of

Shah Abdur Rahim. During the stay in *Hijaz*, he paid great attention towards the methodology of only one e.g. Shaikh Tajuddin who was the mufti of Makkah. He had taken permission from various great *Ulema* for teaching but only employed the teaching methodology as learnt from Shaikh Ahmad Qehtan. He had passed several years in his companionship. Shah Waliullah learnt many books of *Hadith* on this method by Shaikh Tajuddin and subsequently he got permission of teaching *Hadith* using this method.¹²

The affection of sufi order was already perfected in Shah Waliullah by his father at an early age. Shah Abdur Rahim was very much attached to many orders like *Qadriya*, *Chishtiya* and *Naqshabandiyah* but Abu Tahir kurdi imbibed in him the principles of choosing good and avoiding evil. Moreover, he let him to have allegiance with the above mentioned sufi orders. Shah Waliullah says that got from Shaikh Abu Tahir is superior to what I got from others.¹³

Shah Waliullah's book *Fuyuz al-Haramayn* reflects the intellectual and spiritual revolution which was inculcated in him during his stay at Makkah. This period not only reinvigorated Shah Waliullah's consciousness and wisdom but also reinvigorated sub-consciousness in him. Even his divine manifestations are the result of this journey. The quest inside him to carry on the great mission of Allah was also ignited in him while on this journey. In his misty divine manifestation certain quotes shine brighter than the lighting and prove to be the guide of this spiritual path which he had acquired after his stay at Makkah e.g. the divine manifestation or Allah has made me "the rational speaker of this period and has given me the status of *Kalim*. Moreover, I had been made as a leader and prominent personality of this period:. The quest and realization of this mission has elevated his literary skill to new heights.¹⁴

Most of the divine manifestations are found in *Fuyuz al-Haramayn* and a few in *Tafhimat*. The titles which he appointed for himself have close relations with every stage of his life and mission e.g. in the 40th divine manifestation of *Fuyuz al-Haramayn*, he has described himself as *Quyum-e-Zaman* (Successor) and this points towards his political goal or objective. The 10th manifestation, conferred on him the following titles as revivalist, savant and saint.¹⁵ Regarding the 12th manifestation, he says that through this he got the realization of the principles of Shariyah.¹⁶ that is why one of his titles is the philosopher of last times. Revivalism does not boast Sufism but implies the power of deduction by which the

foundation and reality of commandments of Allah are understood, thereby is helpful in mending the schism and deviation of *Ummah*. Regarding *Kutbiyat*, in 34th manifestation, he says that it implies discernment of rectitude i.e. the word *maratib* (level) in Sufism does not mean any rank but connotes the aspects of guidance and correct behavior or rectitude. In 31st divine manifestation, he says that he was informed that Allah has intended by employing me to conjoin the *Ummah* and remove the schism amongst them.¹⁸ Commentary of his title *Wasi* i.e. heir related to mission in 15th divine manifestation, Shah Waliullah was given the name of *Zaki* (pious person) and the last critical analyst of knowledge amongst the other critical analysts.¹⁹

It may be noted that Shah Waliullah during the period of his staying in *Hijaz* studied *Hadith* and subsequently the jurisprudence with open heart and clear mind. This made him generous, liberal, tolerant and respectful to every *sunni mazhab* and prepared him for accepting the opinion of every *mazhab* which has been supported by the sound *Hadith*. This approach developed in him during the twelve years of deep study and teaching in *Madrasah Rahimiyah* in Delhi before his journey to *Hijaz*. After advanced study of *Hadith* and jurisprudence under the renowned scholars of different *mazhab* in *Hijaz* his former thought of satisfaction with *fuqha muhaddithin* had been strengthened.²⁰

It will also be noteworthy to give brief information regarding Shah Waliullah's teacher and subjects of study which were studied from them. In Makkah, Shah Waliullah read whole of *Muttah* of Imam Malik on the transmission of Yahiya bin al-Masdusi under Shaikh Muhammad Wafduallah Makki al- Maliki.²¹ He also granted a certificate of proficiency to Shah in Hadith compilation of his father Shaikh Muhammad bin Sulaiman al- Maghribi.²²

Another scholar from whom Shah Waliullah received the instructions in *Hadith* was Shaikh Tajuddin al-Qalai Hanafi, who was the mufti of Makkah. With him Shah Waliullah read Sahih al-Bukhari, a part of *Muwatta* of Imam Malik, a few chapters of *Musnad al-Darimi*, *kitab al-A'thar* of Imam Muhammad and the *Muwatta* arranged by him.²³

The most renowned and worth mentioning teacher of Shah Waliullah in *Hijaz* was Shaikh Abu Tahir Shafii bin Shaikh Ibrahim al-Kurdi. He was an erudite and eminent scholar of Hadith as well as a sufi of high spiritual order. He had deep attachment with Shaikh Abu Tahir as was his father. Abu Tahir also used to employ in academic discourse the art which was found in the tradition of *Madarsah Rahimiah*. That art included spiritualism, emotional

depth, rationality and the like. Shah Waliullah used to say that Shaikh Abu Tahir would turn to tears while preaching or teaching of *Hadith*. He never answered any criticism or query until he consulted all the authentic sources.²⁴ From this great scholar he revised famous books of *Hadith*. At this time he was awarded the permission to transmit that knowledge onward. Shah Waliullah studied from Sheikh Abu Tahir al-Kurdi the important books of *Hadith* like *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih al-Muslim*, *Sunan Abu Daud*, *Tirmidi*, *Nasai*, *Ibn Maja*, *MishKat al-Masabih* and *Hisn-e-Haseen* as well as *Muwatta* of Imam Malik, *Musnad Ahmad*, *Risalah* of Imam *Shafii*, *Jami al-Kabir*, *Musnad al-Darimi*, a part of *Al-Adab al-Mufrad* of Imam Bukhari, a part of *Al-Shifa* of Qazi Ayaz and *Al-Umam* Shaikh Abu Tahir himself.²⁵

Notes and References

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