

Amir Abd al-Qadir revolution :

In the year 1808, Abd al-Qadir ibn Muhiy al-Din was born, who later became known as Abd al-Qadir the Algerian, in the village of Ghitna near the city of Mascara. His father, known as Sidi Muhiy al-Din, was the leader of the Qadiriyya Sufi order, and his maternal grandfather was also a religious leader. The spiritual status of Abd al-Qadir's family played a significant role in shaping his destiny and path to becoming a knowledgeable leader.

The life of Abd al-Qadir the Algerian can be divided into important stages. The first of these was his birth into a family with spiritual influence derived from its noble lineage, living by Sufi principles, sheltering travelers, settling village affairs, mediating disputes, and acting as judges among the villagers. Abd al-Qadir's initial education took place in what is known as the "zawiya."

From his father, Abd al-Qadir received instruction in Quranic interpretation, hadith, jurisprudence, grammar, religious principles, and legal foundations. His father, Sidi Muhiy al-Din, passed on to him the knowledge he had acquired from the scholar Abd al-Qadir al-Mashriqi. Sidi Muhiy al-Din himself was a knowledgeable and devout figure with expertise in both religious knowledge and Sufism.

Sidi Muhiy al-Din was not the sole teacher for Abd al-Qadir the Algerian. The young boy also learned rhetoric and logic from scholars in Oran, such as Mustafa ibn al-Hashemi and Sheikh Muhammad ibn Naqrid, as well as scholars from Fez like Abu Hafs al-Fasi and Ibn Rahal.

One of the most important stages of Abd al-Qadir the Algerian's education, which he began before his second decade, was his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1825. He accompanied his father on this journey, which lasted two years or more. In reality, this pilgrimage served as a means of escape from the oppressive rule of Hussein Dey, the ruler of Algeria, as Sidi Muhiy al-Din opposed Hussein Dey due to his tyranny and dominance.

The First Pledge: The Beginning of French Colonial Defeats

In 1828, Sidi Muhiy al-Din, along with his son Abd al-Qadir, returned from their pilgrimage to the village of Ghitna near Mascara. Within two years, France entered Algeria after Hussein Dey surrendered easily. The country found itself in a frightening vacuum without a functioning authority. Lawlessness and theft were rampant, and security was nonexistent. The tribes had to take action and find a leader.

At that time, the people of the village of Gherys asked Sidi Muhiy al-Din to lead them in a jihad against the colonizers. However, he refused the pledge due to his old age. The attention turned to his son, Abd al-Qadir, who was then pledged as the leader on November 27, 1832, in the presence of scholars from Gherys and local dignitaries. This pledge became known as the First Pledge.

The tribes chose Abd al-Qadir to lead the resistance and outlined general tasks for the new leader. First and foremost was the unification of the tribes, as the French had established themselves in western Algeria, changing the lives of Algerians and encroaching on their properties. His second task was to establish order, ensure security, and mediate disputes while safeguarding lives and property.

Abd al-Qadir's affiliation with a highly regarded family was not the only factor in his selection as a leader. He met all the other required conditions, making him a knowledgeable and capable leader. The tribes that sought his father's help against French oppression testified to Abd al-Qadir's valor on the battlefield and his exceptional leadership qualities, particularly in battles such as the Battle of Kheng el-Nat'hah in April 1832, followed by battles like the Battle of Ras al-Ayn and Saint André in May 1832. Abd al-Qadir also led the Second Battle of Kheng el-Nat'hah, which began in June 1832, where his leadership and military skills were evident.

Fostering National Unity: Dismantling the Heavy Ottoman Tribal Legacy

Abd al-Qadir's mission was not an easy one. The loyal rulers of the Ottoman Empire had left behind a heavy social legacy by prioritizing tribal loyalties over national identity, dividing the people and weakening them. Abd al-Qadir recognized this early and sought to unite Algerians by restructuring the social framework, emphasizing the concept of a nation rather than tribal affiliations.

In his autobiography, Abd al-Qadir spoke extensively about the efforts he had to put into uniting the tribes and ensuring the success of their unification. He could never convince Ahmed Bey, the former ruler of Constantine, to join the fight against the French alongside him. The First Pledge led to the participation of several other tribes, ultimately placing them under Abd al-Qadir's command.

The battles fought by Abd al-Qadir, who was barely in his twenties, were part of a clever strategy to confront French colonialism. He understood that facing the might of France required a state with its own authority, a unified society rallying under one banner, and a well-organized and trained national army with its budget. This approach was the most effective way to stand up to French colonial rule.

Building an Expansive State:

Abd al-Qadir began building his state between 1832 and 1834, seeking to expand his influence and incorporate Tlemcen and Miliana under his authority. This move greatly angered France and led to the removal of General Boyer, who was replaced by General Demichel. Abd al-Qadir divided his state into eight provinces, each headed by an appointed representative responsible for preserving unity and preparing to face the colonizers.

Abd al-Qadir's state extended from Tlemcen in northwestern Algeria to Mascara, one of the important Algerian cities, and its borders reached as far as Miliana in southwestern Algeria, close to the capital.

Death.

Abd al-Qadir passed away in Damascus on May 26, 1883, at the age of 76. He was buried in the Salhiya neighborhood, next to the tomb of Sheikh Ibn Arabi, following his last will. In 1965, his remains were repatriated to Algeria and laid to rest in the High Cemetery.