

Pakistan Affairs

Q2: How the reform movement of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi influenced the history of muslim india? (2020)

Introduction:

The mystic saint Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi (1564-1624), popularly known as Mujaddid Alf Thani. He was born in the village of Sirhind, Punjab. He received most of his early education from his father Abd-al-Ahad. He studied in Sialkot, which had become an intellectual centre under the Kashmir born scholars Kamal-ud-din Kashmiri. There he learned logic, philosophy and theology, read advanced texts of Tafsir and hadith. Qazi Bahlol Badakhshani taught him jurisprudence, Prophet Muhammad's biography and history. He completed his studies and given permission to initiate ^{and} train followers at the age of 17.

Akbar's policy:

The policy of reconciliation which the Mughal Emperor Akbar persistently followed throughout his long reign (963-1013 A.H) was naturally calculated to hurt and weaken the religious consciousness of muslims. According to Abdul Qadir Badayuni a contemporary historian, describes the state of things prevailing in Akbar's time and his description mirrors the sore uneasiness under which every religious muslim was suffering. According to the book "Mujaddid's conception of Tawhid" by Burhan and Faruqi, they wrote that Emperor had ceased to believe in Quran, he did not believe in life after death nor in the day of judgement. He had gone further and had determined publicly to use the formula "There is no God but Allah, and Akbar is God's representative". A concise history of Pakistan Kazmi wrote that unusual combination exposed Akbar to Scepticism and eclecticism that is doubting orthodox beliefs and being quite prepared to borrow from other religion. He further wrote, 1580 onwards Akbar

walked a path which led him further and further away from Islam. He also waived Jizya, abolished pilgrimage tax on Hindus, and suppressed shia muslims in Bilgram. He developed a syncretic approach that incorporate ^{elements from} various faiths, and called it Din-i-Ilahi. The scholar of London University Peter Hardy view on Din-i-Ilahi as "Din-i-Ilahi ideologically was immature mystical (Mutasfana). The Zoroastrian beliefs were also included in it but this religion was purely Unitarian."

Effects of Sirhindi reforms in Sub-continent:

During this time/period the muslims in india had become so deficient in the knowledge of true Islam that they had more belief in karamat/miracles of the saints than islamic teachings. The Ulema and theologians of the time had ceased to refer to the Quran and Hadith in their commentaries and considered jurisprudence the only religious knowledge. Akbar had started

a series of experiments with Islam propagating his own religion Din-i-Ilahi an amalgamation of various faiths. In these circumstances, Shaikh Ahmed set upon himself the task of purifying the Muslim Society. His aim was to rid Islam of the accretions of Hindu pantheism. He was highly critical of the philosophy of Wahdat-ul-Wujud against which he gave his philosophy of Wahdat-Ush-Shuhud.

<u>Wahdat ul Wujud</u>	<u>Wahdat ul Shuhud</u>
No difference between man and creator.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creature and creator both are different and separate entities.
Worship of God's creature is worship of God	<p>A Person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We only see the attributes of Allah (sifat) everywhere
Entire universe is the symbol of God.	

Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi was successful in

neutralizing the work of Akbar and affecting a change in the mentality of his successors towards the orthodox Islam. Molana Abdul Kalam Azad holds only Shaikh Ahmed responsible for the reformation and revival of Islam during the Mughal period.

• Impact on Mughal Emperor Jahangir and people around him:

It was great achievement of Shaikh Ahmed to come back the shariat in society. He wrote a large number of letters to Government personalities emphasizing the need of true teaching of Islam. He eradicated the evils of the elite class of society and through letters strongly stressed upon those to follow the direction of Holy Prophet (SAW). Jahangir had been influenced by Shaikh's sincerity and devotion to Islam. The Shaikh was given audience emperor and there he placed following demands

- Prostration before the emperor should be abolished
- The permission to slaughter cows.

- the religious innovations should be ceased
- The office of Qadi and the department of the Ihtisab should be restored
- The mosques in need of repair should be renovated and those which had been demolished should be rebuilt

The Emperor granted his demands and issued a royal decree. After more than a half century's struggle for life and death, Islam came out of its agony and the muslim heaved a sigh of relief.

• Impact on Mughal Court:

During the stay in court of Jahangir, Shahich Ahmed founded the unique opportunity to preach king and the people around him. He read out the Quran to him, explained its messages, discussed the principles of faith and explained the rules of Shariah. The Emperor and the people were fully influenced by the teachings of Shahich Ahmed and became orthodox muslims. Jahangir forbade intermarriage between Hindu men and Muslim women in Kashmir by royal decrees. Edward

Terry writes in his book A voyage to East India. In Jahangir's period mosques were full of worshippers. Muslims used to keep a rosary in their hands and had a great respect for Quran and Hadith. Muslims observe rites of Islam. The age limit for marriage imposed by Akbar was abolished; Mohamedan confession of faith on the coins was restored by Emperor Jahangir. The mosques that had been abolished were rebuilt and Arabic Islamic learning was encouraged. Due to the effort of Shaikh Ahmad, the Mughal society began to turn into an Islamic state.

• Impact on Religious Teachings in Society:

Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi thought that the main channel of mischief were the "Ulama-i-Su" (worldly minded Ulamas) who had taken to Fiqh (jurisprudence) as the whole of religious teachings. Shaikh Ahmed held that "every slackness and irregularity that has taken place

in the matter of shariah in his age and every obstruction which has hindered the growth and expansion of Islam is due to the wickedness of the 'ulama-i-su' and the result of their incompetence". To turn for the better of society Shaikh Ahmed criticized innovation (Bid'at) in religion that was the main cause to change Islamic values. For the revival of Islam Shaikh Ahmed's condemnatory remarks about innovation in religion could be found in all the three volumes of his letter, bitter in his views about innovation in religion because he was well aware of the importance of following the true teachings of Islam. He tends to remove bidat in society by referring to several Hadiths in his letters. He explained innovation in religion is the opposite of Sunnah.

- Impact on Later Mughal Emperors:

The objectives of re-establishing the supremacy of Islam in Subcontinent

Date: _____

initiated by Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi continued by his sons and other emperors. The Mughal king Shah Jahan (1627-1657) played a great role to save Islam in an age which was becoming secular.

Shah Jahan, in keeping of his orthodoxy has been called by some historians "Faith defending Emperor" Struggled to purify Islam and bring it in accord with the shariat.

Aurangzeb (1657-1707), under the influence of Sirhindi, issued in 1659 many ordinances to restore the rules of orthodox Islam in the administration and to bring the lives of the people according to teaching of the Quran. He abolished persian festival Navroz and music at court. Jizya was re-imposed.

Conclusion:

Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi was only a great scholar but also a social reformer leader. He played a role to establish the society based upon the teaching of Quran and Sunnah. He contributed significantly towards the protection

Date: _____

of muslim society from un-islamic
values and Hindu thoughts. A number
of factors had weakened the religious
and cultural consciousness of the muslims.
Numerous evils had been created by
the people of Mughal court due to
their attachment with the worldly gains

The whole society was on the edge of darkness.
The reforming movements of Shaikh Ahmed
Sirhindi influenced the whole society to
come under the flag of Islam.