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Q How the reform movement of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi influenced history of Muslim India?

Introduction :

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi, also known as Mujadid Alif Sani (reformer of 2nd millennium) was born in East Punjab in 1564. His father Sheikh ^(Amad) was a renowned scholar. Mujadid got his primary education of Quran and Hadith at home, later he went to Delhi and worked on logic, Falsafah under the supervision of Khwaja Bayi Billah. It was at this time that he got prominence and established good relations with the courtiers of Mughals. His teacher Bayi Billah spoke about him that he will be the guiding star for generations to come. His contribution for the promotion of Islam and reforms are unmatched till date. He publicly opposed Jahangir for his liberal and un-Islamic behaviour towards governance for which he was put in jail for two years, however

Soon he got released with the miracles of his teachings and got the title of Mujadid.

Situation at that time:

It was at this time that the assimilation of cultures and religions was at the peak. The ruler of the time (Akbar) introduced Deen - Elahi and got was spoiling the society through his newly introduced religion. There were also hindu movements such as shudi and sanghats which really posed a threat to Islam. It was Sheikh Ahmed who took the responsibility of reforming the society despite powerful resistance. Below are given some of the reasons why reform was necessary.

(a) Deen - Elahi:

The Mughal emperor Akbar introduced new religion, combining both hindu and Islamic teachings. It was based on logic, philosophy and religion. Akbar solely

was considered the supreme authority and no other god was had any place in this society. He was the god and the prophet too. This led to the disorganisation of society which forced Sheikh to start his reform movement.

(b) Shudi and Sangathan Movements

Shudi (purification) and Sangathan (conversion) was two movements of the time. Hindus were on the rise and enjoyed unmatched freedom and support from the emperor. They became too powerful and started to enforce their religion on the behest of Akbar. This was another reason why reform was necessary.

(c) Indulgence in un-Islamic deeds:

Another reason why reform was essential is the indulgence of Muslims in un-Islamic deeds. Alcohol consumption and betting were permitted

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by the authorities. This was due to the fact that the education and interpretation of Deen was not apt. The mark and people were entirely fooled.

(d) Wahdat-ul-Shahad:

Muhammad

Ibn-Arabi introduced the concept of wahdat-ul-wujud meaning the ~~unification~~ "unity of being". Sheikh thought that this led to the idea of pantheism as the creation and the creator cannot be the same. Mujadid gave the idea of "unity of vision" meaning that worldly things are only the witness of the presence of the creation.

"Ram and Rab cannot be the same"

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi

(e) Opposition to Bidat:

Sheikh was a staunch critic of Bidat. He disliked Bidat as our prophet disliked it and preached to stay away from heresy. He advocated the learning of Quran and Hadith than anything else.

(f) Un-Islamic rule:

He criticized the rulers of the time and said "A ruler is like a heart in the body, if the heart is pure the body is pure but if the heart is impure the whole body gets intoxicated."

Reforms:

(a) Opposing United nation-hood:

Sheikh openly challenged the authority and said that the Muslims and Hindus cannot be a united nation as "Rams and Rats cannot be the same".

Nehru said " If it was not for Sheikh Ahmed Sirkindi, the cultural assimilation of Hindu and Muslims would have happened, but due to his reform movements the two nation theory came into existence and that lead to the creation of Pakistan.

(b) Defence of faith:

Sheikh defended the Muslim faith by openly opposing movement like Bakhti (Humanism) and Deen-e-Elahi and declared these evil. Sheikh told us that we cannot ignore the mirror identity for a bigger identity because it is the mirror details that makes up a bigger picture.

(c) Opposition to Ijma and Ijtihad:

Sheikh preached the importance of Quran and Hadith as his number one priority. At that time people were more dependent on Ijma and Ijtihad rather than Quran and Hadith.

(d) Ending of Social Evils:

reformed the society through his writings and through practical steps too. He declared child marriages, widow burning un-islamic. Gambling and Alcohol was also abolished through fatwas.

(e) Opposition to corrupt rulers:

Jahangir once summoned Sheikh and asked him to bow down, Sheikh refused with a reply that He only bows down to Allah. Upon this he was put in jail. This shows us that he was straight forward and clear in his mind about deen and Dunya. He said

"The moral corruption of the ruler is a threat to the state and that of a society to society".

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Conclusion :-

Sheikh Ahmed was a true advocate of Islam who ~~did~~ not only opposed the corruptions of Deen but reformed it through practical and theoretical manner teachings. He reformed the society on the basis of Islam and opposed rulers and powerful stakeholders despite strong influence of the evils. He also wrote books on Logic, Hadith and Quran and lead the way towards a separate nationhood.

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