

Q:- How the reform movement of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi influenced the history of Muslim India?

Introduction:

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi influenced the religious and political history of the Indian subcontinent by rejuvenating Islam and condemning the un-Islamic practices, thus highlighting the Muslim's separate identity. He opposed Deen-i-Elahi, condemning the misconceptions related to Wahadat-ul-Wajood, and pulling the Muslim of the subcontinent out of the religious, cultural and moral crises. Thus Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi, the father of religious-political reform movement influenced the history of Muslim India.

2. Historical Perspective: The condition of India

During his time

In the 16th century, especially during the reign of Akbar (1556-1605) Islam faced overwhelming threats. Deen-e-Elahi was launched by the king, which was his own religion thereby, virtually negating Islam. Muslims during this period had become so deficient in knowledge of Islam that they started believing more in miracles of saints than the teaching of Islam. The Ulama had abandoned Quran and Hadiths, they preferred Jurisprudence over Quran or Hadiths. Akbar's policies had made the Hindu

Rajas so powerful that they started interfering in state affairs. Sirhindi has labelled this age as "the age of Islamic poverty". It was the crying need of the time that there should appear a man who might have the boldness to oppose the worship of the Emperor by refusing to bow before him, and thus revive the true spirit of Islam and the extirpate heresy.

Influence of Sheikh Ahmed's Reform movement:

a. Religious Influence:

Nothing ruined the Muslim society during Akbar's era the way Deen-e-Elahi did. It changed the nature and spirit of Islam. Un-Islamic practices and a widespread belief in karamat and supernatural powers became a common tradition. That was the time when Sheikh Ahmed appeared on the horizon as a saviour of Islam. He started eliminating the un-Islamic tendencies by rebuking the newly born Deen-e-Elahi. He presented the concept of Wahdat-ul-Shahud by presenting and encountering the prevalent idea of Wahdat-ul-Wajood and greatly emphasized that the creator and creatures are two different and separate entities. With that, all the Islamic rituals became part and parcel of society. The great practice of slaughtering cows, ordering khedbas, taking Jizya, and constructing prominent mosques was again started due to Sheikh's reform movement. All of his efforts to revitalize Islam helped him to influence Jahangir to alter his religious views, abandon his father's

Practices and win him honour and title of Mujaddid Alf Sani. Hence, the steps of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi purified the religious and practical life of Muslims.

Political Influence:

As far as the political influence of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi was concerned, he never took part in politics. Still, all of his preachings and efforts gave birth to Two Nation Theory in the subcontinent, an impregnable political slogan. He staunchly believed that the Muslims and the Hindus are separated identities; thus their amalgamation on any grounds would lead both identities towards complete disintegration. Sheikh Sirhindi not only identified the erosion with the Muslim Society but also, worked towards addressing this problem in a comprehensive manner.

Hence the influence of Sheikh Ahmed paved the way for coming reformers, like Shah Waliullah, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Syed Ahmed Shaheed and others in the political arena. Allama Iqbal did praise Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi for his work by saying:

¹⁶ "He was the guardian of the Muslim Faith in India whom God had given a timely warning."

Social Influence

The social condition of the Muslim was interlinked with the religious situation prevailing in United India. It soon became

better when the muslim society started moving back towards Islam, which resulted in the prohibition of inter-religious marriages the root cause of social evils of that time. Moreover, the abundant Islamic rituals were restored as sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi persuaded the muslims to adopt simple life in the light of Islam and Sunnah.

Conclusion:-

To encounter all these social, political and religious evils, the only personality who came forward with a distinctive ideology was sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi. His preachings were the reaction of Akbar's propagatable practices and his newly promulgated. Not last but least his efforts impacted the indian sub-continent saw the seeds of the two nation theory, a concept on which Muslims successfully secured a separate homeland, Pakistan.