

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

1. Introduction

The history of the subcontinent before the partition of 1947, is full of the challenges faced by the Muslims both in the hands of non-Muslims as well as the so-called liberal Muslim rulers. When the historians narrate the challenging environment of Indo-Pak history, they never forget the work and services of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi to transform the society. Due to his great services, he is hailed as "Mujaddid Alf-I-Thani" or reformer of the second millennium. During the time of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, the Muslim society faced a number of challenges. A number of Hindu reformist movements were the order of the day. Also, there was a problem of the aloofness of the Muslims from Shariah, social evils were being spread, and there was a dominance of Hindu culture everywhere. Moreover, the Mughal emperor Akbar had adopted controversial policies detrimental to the very existence of Muslim society. It was when Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi took the responsibility of reforming the Muslim society. He endeavored to restore pure doctrine to Islamic thought and to compel the Muslims to follow Shariah and Sunnah in letter and spirit. He undertook both intellectual efforts, in the form of his literatures and practical

steps. He felt the need to reform the Muslim morally in order to bring the social evils to an end. He also stood like Himalayas against the so-called liberal Mughal rulers, and opposed the policy of assimilation in the form of Baghdi movement. He also influenced the Muslim rulers to come in the future. The discussion goes on, and it is safely said that the Muslim society, which was diluted, came under the flag of Islam through the efforts of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

2- Life sketch of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi

He was born in Sirhind, East Punjab, in 1564, in the era of Akbar emperor. His family has a lineage to the caliphate.

2a- Wordly education

He received his wordly education from Agra and met with Fazl and Faizi sheikh as his teacher.

2b- Religious education

He journeyed to Delhi to meet with Hazrat Khwaja Baglo Bittah.

He died in Sirhind on 10th December, 1624.

3- Situation of the Muslim society at the time of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi

The situation at that time was not in favour of the Islamic society, rather they challenged the true values of Islam. Following were some of the conditions in the time of Shaikh Ahmad

steps. He felt the need to reform the Muslim morally in order to bring the social evils to an end. He also stood like Himalayas against the so-called liberal Mughal rulers, and opposed the policy of assimilation in the form of Babaji movement. He also influenced the Muslim rulers to come in the future. The discussion goes on, and it is safely said that the Muslim society, which was diluted, came under the flag of Islam through the efforts of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

2- Life sketch of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi

He was born in Sirhind, East Punjab, in 1564, in the era of Akbar emperor. His family has a lineage to the caliphate.

2a- Wordly education

He received his wordly education from Agra and met with Fazl and Faizi sheikh as his teacher.

2b- Religious education

He journeyed to Delhi to meet with Hazrat Khwaja Bagho Bittah.

He died in Sirhind on 10th December, 1624.

3- Saturation of the Muslim society at the time of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhind

The situation at that time was not in favour of the Islamic society, rather they challenged the true values of Islam. Following were some of the conditions in the time of Shaikh Ahmad

Sirhindi:

3a- Hindu Reformatist movements were at peak.

There were two movements which challenged the Muslim society.

3a(i) Shudhi Movement

It was aimed at converting the Muslims to Hinduism, as some of the Muslims were prone to conversion due to their financial needs.

3a(ii) Sangathan Movement

It was aimed at creating solidarity among the Hindus in the event of communal conflict.

3b- Aloofness of the Muslims from Shariah

The Muslims were muslims just in theory. There were no practical manifestation of Islam. There was no preaching of Islam, and the Muslims were involved in evil deeds.

3c- Spread of social evils

Both the rulers and the ruled were involved in malicious activities. Showing off, extravagance and drinking wines were commonplace among the Muslims.

3d- Dominance of Hindu culture

The matter reached the point that even the inter-religion marriage among the Muslims and the Hindus was allowed.

MOTOWOTOFOSO

3e - Threat of Baghti Movement

This movement was aimed at assimilating the Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Christians into a single cause.

3f - Deen-e-Ilahi by Akbar emperor

As part of Deen-e-Ilahi, emperor Akbar also married Hindu ladies. As a result, a number of Hindu customs and practices had become a part of the state.

4 - Effects of the reform movement of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi in the subcontinent

Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi rendered monumental services in order to reform the Muslim society of the subcontinent. His efforts can be divided into two portions:

4a - Intellectual efforts

Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi wrote a number of books to reform the Muslims. Some of his books are:

4a(i) Ma'arif-Ud-Dunya

This book stresses upon the need of spirituality among the Muslims.

4a(ii) Maktabaat

This book entails debates, research, and the need of Ijtihad for Muslims.

4a(iii) Asbat-Un-Nabwah

This book focuses on logic and reasoning among Muslims.

4b- Practical services of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi to Islam

Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi was quite successful in reforming the Muslims of the subcontinent. Some of the practical manifestations of the services of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi are as follows:

4b(i) . He worked on the betterment of Islamic morality

Sirhindi felt that in order to reform a society, the first and foremost task should be to inculcate morality in the individuals. He worked on the ethics and morality of the Muslims. Due to his efforts, the lost asset of morality returned to the people as well as to the rulers.

4b(ii) End of social evils

The constant efforts of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi went a long way in halting the social evils among the Muslims. The Muslims' lives were cluttered by the un-Islamic means of gambling, wine, and other such evils. In this line, Sirhindi reminded the Muslims of the true teachings of Islam. He preached the teachings of Islam throughout the subcontinent. For that purpose, he also faced the brutalities of prisons and the harshness of the rulers, but his determination never faded. Due to his constant efforts, the Muslim society was purified from the social evils.

4b(iii) Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi was a forceful voice against the unfaithful activities of the rulers.

In his efforts, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi was successful in neutralizing the work of Akbar and affecting a change in the mentality of his successors towards the Orthodox Islam. His teachings also had a great impact on a change in the outlook of the Muslim nobility and upper classes in general. Molana Abul Kalam Azad holds only Mujaddid responsible for the reformation and revival of Islam during the Mughal period. He considered himself more than a wali, a renovator (mujaddid) of religion who had projected to Islam at the turn of its second millennium.

4b(iv) Impact on Mughal emperor Jahangir and People around him

Due to the consistent efforts of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, the emperor Jahangir and other high-ranked ministers were tilted towards the true teachings of Islam. Jahangir had been influenced by Sirhindi's sincerity and devotion to Islam. The Shaikh was given an audience emperor and there he placed the following demands before him:

- 1- Prostration (sajdah) before the emperor should be abolished; the permission to slaughter cows should be given

2- The calumnious innuendoes should be ceased

3 - The offices of the Qazi and the department of the Ihtisab should be restored; and the mosques in need of repair should be renovated and those which had been demolished should be rebuilt.

The emperor Jahangir granted his demand & issued a royal decree accordingly. Thus, after more than a half century's struggle for life and death, Islam came out of its agony, and the Muslims heaved a sigh of relief.

A Hindu writer says that Jahangir was conscious of his duties as a Muslim sovereign, and he took greater interest in the future of Islam than his father had done & sometimes he tried to uphold his prestige.

Terry, who came India between (161-1619 A.D.) found the mosques were full of worshippers. Terry further tells that the Muslims used to keep a rosary in their hands, & had a great respect for Quran and Hadith. [Adnan Malik, Muhammad Zubair, et al.]

4b(v) Impact on Later Mughal Emperor

It had deep-rooted impact on the Mughal rulers to come. The Mughal king Shah Jahan (1627-1657) played a great role to save Islam in an age which was becoming secular. Aurangzeb (1657-1707) under the influence of Sirhindi, issued in 1659 many ordinances to restore the rules of orthodox Islam in the administration & to bring the lives of the people according to teaching of the Quran. Thus, the tone of administration changed and the liberalism of the day of Akbar had stopped.

4b(vi) Opposition by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi against the assimilator efforts of the Bhagti Movement.

Sirhindi laid emphasis and advised the Muslims to be Muslims, not Bhagtis. It was because of the fact that Muslims have a separate identity. Hence, it was Sirhindi who gave us the concept of nationality, that Muslims are a separate nation, and their nationality will be lost if they become part of Bhagtis.

5- Conclusion.

In conclusion, it can be said that the literature supports that Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi was not only a great scholar but also a social reformist leader. He played a vital role to establish the society based upon the teachings of Quran and Sunnah. He contributed significantly towards the protection of Muslim society from un-Islamic values of Hindu thought. 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 Mughal emperor Akbar had introduced new religion called Deen-e-Ilahi. The whole society was in darkness. It was a great achievement of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi to bring back the Shariah in society. Moreover, Sirhindi's teachings also had a great impact on later Mughal emperors. As a result, the whole society came under the flag of Islam through the efforts of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

X → X → The End → X → X