

Q: Explain the services of Shah Waliullah and Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi. How these reformers impacted the history of sub-continent. Discuss.

Introduction:

Shah Waliullah and Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi hold very prestigious position in the history of muslims of the sub continent. The time they were born situation of muslims was abysmal. Muslims were grappling with multitude of problems including severe moral decline. The religious condition of muslims was also deteriorated. Both of them work in their respective eras to re-establish moral values in muslims. They worked to reestablish religious norms and preach ^{teachings of} islam to clear all ambiguities about islamic principles.

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi:

→ Situation at the time of Mujadid:

The situation ^{of muslims} at the time of

Sheikh Ahmed was abysmal. The reign of Akbar had disastrous impacts on the Muslims of sub-continent and also structural organization of state and Muslims. He allowed intermarriages and discouraged cow slaughter. Hindus were empowered to enjoy full religious independence, while Muslims were oppressed by Hindus. Jizya was abolished and Muslims were discouraged to practise religious rituals. Sheikh Ahmed called this era "The age of Islamic Poverty".

⇒ Services of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi:

1. Religious services:

After the death of Akbar and in the reign of Jahangir, Sheikh Ahmed started his reformist movement to eliminate non-Islamic practises and beliefs among Muslims. He wrote letters to the nobles of Jahangir's court to clear misconception about Islam.

→ Preaching during imprisonment:

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi was sent to jail, when he refused to bow down in front of Jahangir, the emperor of state. He remained for one year in "Gawalior fort". But he continued to write letters to influence muslims of sub-continent. He trained his followers and sent them to different muslim countries just to spread the true essence of islam.

→ Wahdat-ul-Shahid against wahdatul wajud.

He surfaced the concept of wahdat-ul-shahid against Ibn-e-Arabi's idea of wahdat-ul-wajood. He negate the idea of "unity of being" by saying, "giving unity of witness". According to this perspective, any perception unity between God and His creation is subject. The wahdatul-shahid states that God and His creation are completely separate from each other. He also wrote letters in this regard to his friends in india.

→ Response to Akbar's Deen-e-Elahi:

He wrote a magazine "Isbat ul Nebuwat" to challenge Deen-e-Elahi. He stated that "To consider Ram and Rehman as one is stupidity because Creator cannot be one with its creation."

→ opposition to Biddat:

The concept of Biddat was spreading speedily among muslims. Sheikh Ahmed opposed it by giving examples from the Holy Quran and Hadith. He said quoted Holy prophet (PBUH) "he who invented something fake which does not have any linkage with islam is forbidden." He compares every kind of heresy to dust dirt and darkness.

→ Sharia's superiority:

He emphasized the difference between sufism and prophetic way. He wrote a book Hujjat Allah al-Balighah which highlighted the difference between sufi way and prophetic way.

2. Concept of governance:

He stated that king has important

role in shaping how things are in country
So, king should not mix religion with
other things. Because his actions influence
the whole country.

3. Two Nation's Theory:

He opposed the concept of united
nationhood. He said that if the awareness
of separate national identity is not awakened
in Muslims then it is feared they would
be swept away with the flood of combined
nationhood.

Shah Waliullah:

The conditions of Muslims of the
sub continent during Shah Waliullah's life
was very disorganized and distorted.
There was religious disintegration and
political and economic decline. Shah Waliullah
served in fields of religion, economy,
politics and social issues.

1- Political Service:

In the 18th century there was a threat
of Marathas' rule in Delhi. Shah-
Waliullah took courageous steps. He
prepared Najid-ullah and prepared many

others for "jihad." He also wrote letter to Ahmed Shah Abdali seeking his help against Marathas. As a result, in third war of Panipat Marathas were defeated by Ahmed Shah Abdali.

2. Religious Services:

The most important ^{religious} service of Shah Waliullah was "the translation of Holy Quran into Persia" in 1738. After six years his sons translated the Holy Quran into Urdu. It was a great help to muslims to understand teachings of Quran in their own language.

3. Educational Services:

Shah Waliullah taught students about different aspects of Islamic knowledge. In his work called "Aqad-Al-Juyud-Fi-Ahkam-Al-Ijtihad" he encouraged the use of Ijtihad.

4. Work to resolve sectarian misunderstandings:

There was a greater sectarian turmoil in that era. He wrote "Izalat-al-Akhifa" and Khilafat-al-Khukfa to help clear up misunderstandings between Shias and Sunni.

5- Economic Services:

Shah wali-ullah gave four principles of Economy.

- The resources of specific area belong to its natives. He emphasized the equality or equitable distribution of resources.
- Everyone has the right to do things according to his abilities.
- He also discouraged the centralization of wealth in few hands.
- The fourth principle emphasized that a balance should be maintained in these factors for societal development.

⇒ Impacts of their Services on the people of Sub-continent:

1- Impact on religious teachings and revival of religious practises:

The ardent struggle of these reformists in religious field resulted in revival of religious practises in Sub-continent.

Sheikh Ahmed's efforts brought the fruit, jizya was re-imposed, Ban on cow slaughter was revoked, intermarriages were also abolished.

2. Resolve Sectarian clashes and enhance muslim unity:

The reformists movements of Shah Waliullah and Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi restored the lost muslim unity and works of Shah Waliullah had really cleared the misunderstandings of Sunni and Shia sects.

3. Restored Moral values:

Their teachings helped the muslims of subcontinent to come out of moral decline. Reformist movements helped muslim understand the differences between sufism and prophetic ways. Their misconception of bid'at was also removed. Ignorance about islam was also eradicated.

4. Impact on Governance:

Their ideas about effective governance and conduct of ruler bore fruits. It was the teachings and influence of Sheikh Ahmed that Jahangir and Aurangzeb strictly followed the "principles of Shariya."

S- Impact of two nation theory:

The idea of two nation theory provide strong basis for the movement of independence in sub-continent. Sheikh Ahmed was the first who gave the idea of two nation theory which later on helped muslims achieved a separate homeland for themselves.

Conclusion:

To sum up, the reform movements of both Shah wali-ullah and Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi hold great importance in the history of muslims of sub-continent. They devoted their lives for the preaching of true essence of islam. It resulted in great betterment of muslims in all fields of life. They started following teachings of islam is a true essence. And the idea of two-nation theory, resulted in achievement of separate homelands. Their services are a great milestone in the muslims history.