

Q:- Discuss the role of Sheikh Ahmed Raza Khan as a pioneer of Islamic renaissance in South Asia.

Sheikh Ahmed Raza Khan:-

Sheikh Ahmed Raza Khan, known as Mufaddid-e-Af-Sani, was born into a family of respected sufis. At 36, he went to Delhi and met Khawaja Bagh Billah, who introduced him to the Naqshbandi sufi order. He dedicated his life to purifying and revitalizing Islam in India during the 16th & 17th Centuries.

Services to Islam:

① **Opposition to Deen-e-Elahi:** During Sheikh Ahmed Raza Khan's time, many Muslims in India were moving away from traditional Islamic teachings and adopting ideas influenced by Hinduism. Emperor Akbar introduced a new religion called Deen-e-Elahi that blended elements of both religions. Sheikh Ahmed opposed these changes and convinced Emperor Jahangir to stop following Akbar's new beliefs, aiming to restore pure Islamic practices instead.

2. **Refusal to Bow to Jahangir:** After Akbar's death, Jahangir became emperor and continued some of Akbar's policies. Sheikh Ahmed refused to bow before Jahangir, citing it as against Islamic principles. This defiance led to his imprisonment for two years in Gwalior fort.

(2) **DISCIPLES:** Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi trained a group of followers and sent them across Muslim countries and Indian cities to promote Islamic teachings. He emphasized the importance of following the Sunnah, countering heterodox beliefs, and urged people to adhere strictly to Islamic principles. His letters to influential figures were widely shared, focusing on reviving Islam and gaining support from nobles and countries to influence the Emperor's court.

(3) **Correspondence:** He began writing letters to prominent individuals across the region. These letters were

widely shared and focused on the importance of following the Sunnah (the teachings and practices of prophet Muhammad).

④ **WAHDAHAT-UL-SHAHOOB** against Pantheism:
He opposed the concept of Wahdat-ul-Wujud introduced by Ibn Arabi, which suggests everything is GOD. Instead, Sheikh Ahmed proposed wahdat-al-shahood, meaning unity of witness. He believed that any sense of unity with GOD is personal and doesn't mean God and creation are the same. (It holds that God and his creation are entirely separate. His most famous work, 'Makhtubat' is a collection of letters he wrote in Persian to friends in India and north of the Amu Darya river. These letters show his significant impact on Islamic thought.

⑤ **Opposition to Bid'ah:**

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi strongly opposed heresy, which refers to

innovations in religious practices. In his letters, he emphasized that all forms of heresy are unacceptable. He quoted teachings from the Holy prophet that condemned heresy, comparing it to darkness and something misleading.

⑥ **Concept of Government**: - Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi believed that the emperor's role is crucial in governing the state. He emphasized the king should be free from religious corruption and act as a guardian of Muslim states. He likened the king's purity to the purity of the heart in the body, essential for the well-being of the state.

⑦ **Sharia's Superiority to Mysticism**: - Sheikh Ahmed and Shah Waliullah emphasized that Sufism should be in accordance with Sharia law. They taught that following the prophet's teachings and Sharia leads to true happiness and closeness to God. They believed and criticized mystical practices that

What deviated from these teachings, advocating instead for devotion through rituals like prayers, fasting, Quran recitation and charity. They believed true spirituality came from following Sharia, not from mystical experiences. "Kashf and revelation get value through the book of Allah and Sunnah and not through 'wajd'" (Sheikh Ahmed).

⑧ Opposing United Nationhood:

Sheikh Ahmed argued that Muslims should focus on their own identity and avoid mixing with Hindus. He warned that if Muslims don't realize their identity, when it is feared that they would be swept away with the flood of combined nationhood, Islam would be destroyed like Buddhism and Hinduism.

⑨ Two Nation Theory:

Sheikh Ahmed taught Muslims that they were a separate Nation from Hindus, with no mixing in common b/w them. He urged Muslims to maintain distinct

identities in food, dress, social customs and way of life compared to Hindus. This idea led the foundation for the Two Nation Theory in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent, which supported the Pakistan Movement and led to the establishment of Pakistan. That's why Mujahid Alf Sami is considered the first founder of Pakistan.

"Sheikh Ahmed Rishidi: The Man who Revived Islam and Saved Sub-Continent Muslims".

by Hamza Obaid.