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Q1 Keeping in view the socio-political circumstances of sub-continent, discuss the role of Shiekh Ahmed Sirhindi who revived Islamic Ideology and established Muslim identity in sub-continent.

1. Introduction:

During the 16th century, especially under the rule of Akbar, Islam faced significant challenges. Akbar introduced a new religion called **Deen e Elahi**, which blended mysticism, philosophy, and nature worship. This religion did not recognize any specific God or prophets, and Akbar himself was considered its main authority. Akbar's Deen e Elahi marginalized orthodox Muslims and excluded them from participating in state affairs. Akbar was influenced by the Bhakti Movement, and during this time, many Muslims lacked proper knowledge of Islam, relying more on the miracles of saints rather than the teachings of Islam. In addition to these issues, Hindus demolished mosques and openly ridiculed Islam. Akbar's policies had given Hindu rulers significant power, leading to their

interference in state affairs. **Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi** (born in 1564 in Sirhind) played a significant role in reviving and re-affirming Islam in India during this time and he referred to this era as "**the age of Islamic poverty**" emphasizing the urgent need for a reformer who could guide the emperor and the Muslim society as a whole.

2. Role Of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi

in Reviving Islamic Ideology:

i) Preaching of Islam during the

Imprisonment:-

Hazrat Mujaddid continued preaching of Islam during the imprisonment in the fort of Granwalia. Due to his efforts thousands of Non-Muslims accepted Islam. After a year, however, Jahangir under the influence of his Islamic writings released him from jail and offered huge gifts to him. He also received the title of **Khilat-e-Fakhira** and **Rupees 1000**. Jahangir also listened his

advice. After Maghrib prayers the king would grant him special audience where Sheikh would talk about religious affairs to Jahangir. He asked his son Shah Jahan to become a spiritual disciple of Sheikh.

ii) Disciples:-

He took a bold approach to achieve his goals. Sheikh Ahmed trained groups of followers and sent them to different Muslim countries and cities in India. Their task was to spread what he believed was true essence of Islam. He emphasized the importance of following the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad and urged people to counteract false beliefs and adhere to the principles of Islam.

iii) Wahdat ul Shahud against Pantheism

Mohayyudin Ibn-e-Arabi presented the idea of Wahdat ul Wajood, which means the "Unity of Being". According to him, everything

that exists is God, and there is nothing separate from Him. On the other hand, Sheikh Ahmed introduced the concept of **Wahdat ul Shahood**, which means "**Unity of Witness**". This belief states that God and His creation are completely separate from each other.

iv) **Deen e Elahi :-**

Akbar was influenced by Bhakti Movement (a Hindu religious movement) and introduced new religion called **Deene Elahi**. Akbar's Deen e Elahi was an attempt to bridge the religious gaps between Islam and other religions in India. However, Shiekh Ahmed Sirhindi strongly opposed this idea. He wrote a magazine called **Asbat-e-Nauwnat** to challenge Deen-e-Elahi, stating that

"To consider Ram and Rehman as one is stupidity because creator cannot be one with its creation."

(Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi)

v) Opposition to Bidaat:-

Heresy means **coming up with new ideas**. The theologians called it good innovation or bad innovation. But the Mujaddid says he doesn't see anything good, useful, or enlightening in either of them. He quotes many things the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said to show **how much** he dislikes heresy. He compares every kind of heresy to **dirt, dust, and darkness** and thinks it leads people in the wrong direction.

vi) Sharia's Superiority to Mysticism:-

Sheikh Ahmed emphasis on the difference between the Sufi way and the prophetic way was well received among Sufi circles and influenced the future development of Sufism. There was a need to reform Sufism align it more closely with the teachings of Shariah (Islamic Law). He emphasized that true understanding and revelation come from following the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, rather than through ecstatic states or mystical experiences.

vii) Theological Writings:-

His extensive writings, including his renowned Maktubat (letters), provided clear guidance on orthodox Islamic beliefs and practices, helping to re-establish Islamic principles among the Muslim community.

viii) Letters to Leaders:-

His letters to influential individuals in the Muslim world gained wide attention. In these letters, he discussed (individuals in the Muslim)' issues related to Islam and its revival. He encouraged people to strictly follow the Sunnah and eliminate false teachings. He successfully attracted many noblemen and courtiers to support his cause, hoping to influence the emperor and his court to adopt a more faithful approach to Islam.

3. Role Of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi in Establishing Muslim Identity in the Subcontinent:-

i) Muslims Following Shariah:-

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindis teachings had a great impact on the Muslims of the sub-continent. The Muslims started following Shariah, and the true teachings of Islam had been re-established. Moreover, the emperor Jehangir influenced by Sheikh started the rejuvenation of Islam in India.

ii) New Mosques Built:-

New mosques were built and old ones were reconstructed. **Badshahi Mosque** was also constructed in this time.

iii) Re-imposing Jizya and Pilgrimage

Tax :-

The re-imposing of jizya and pilgrimage tax on non-Muslims. During the rule of Akbar these taxes were abolished. The re-imposing of jizya and pilgrimage tax were essential for the glory of Muslims and the stronghold

of the ruler in the society.

iv) Muslims Regained Higher Official Positions:-

The situation of Muslims in society improved. Muslims also regained higher official positions. During the rule of Akbar, Hindu rulers had significant powers, leading to their participation in state affairs. But Shiekh Ahmed revamped the situation of Muslims and Muslim Rulers started to distance from the Hindus.

v) Opposing United Nationhood:-

If Muslims want to live as a nation than they have to quit the talk of shirk and Bidaat and stay away from Hindus. If the awareness of separate national identity is not awakened in Muslims then it is feared that they would be swept away with the flood of combined nationhood. Islam would be destroyed like Buddhism and Hinduism.

(Shiekh Ahmed)

vi) Two Nation Theory:-

Muslim who indulged in wrong practices, like belief in Karamats and inter-religion marriages left them for good. The real sense of Sunnah was being followed in society. In many conquests during Jehangir's reign, a cow was slaughtered. With the lessening influence of Hindus, an idea of separate identity was born in the minds of people. Thus, the first stone of the two-nation theory was laid by Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi, which resulted in the formation of Pakistan.

vii) Community Cohesion:-

Shiekh Ahmed Sirhind's teachings fostered a sense of unity and solidarity among Muslims, countering the divisive effects of Akbar's policies and promoting a collective identity based on shared beliefs and practices.

viii) Cultural Preservation:-

By advocating for the preservation of Islamic cultural practices, Shiekh Ahmed

ensured that Muslims maintained their unique cultural heritage in the face of external influences.

4. Conclusion:-

In a nutshell, Shiekh Ahmed Sirhindi was the reformer Muslims were in dire need of. His teachings created a ripple effect in society and eradicated many social, religious, and political evils. Sheikh Ahmed, indeed, ~~(encountered)~~ encountered unorthodox beliefs and made people aware of true Islamic teachings. He not only influenced the people of his generation but coming generations too. He was the one who laid the foundation of the two-nation theory and modern Pakistan. As aptly said by Allama Iqbal

"The one who did not bow
his head to Jahangir

Whose warm beneath
lends heat to freemen"

(Allama M. Iqbal)