

Q11 Question. 1

How the reform movement of Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi influenced the History of Muslim India? (2020)

Introduction.

Hazrat Mujadid Alf Sani was a great social reformer, Alim, Sufi and Mujadid. He started reform movement in 17th century. It was the period of Akber's Deen-e-Elahi. And the presence of Islam was in threat. Muslims and Muslim scholars had been deviated from the real essence of Islam. Many muslim scholars had allowed the things that were forbidden in Islam like alcohol, gambling and usury. Then in a wake of Deen-e-Elahi a bright reform movement aroused. Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi emphasized on the urgent need for a reformer

Who could guide the King and the Muslim society. The ~~reform~~ reform movement of Sirhindi was an Islamic movement that guided the deviated Muslims to the real Islamic path and make them orthodox. He revived the true spirit of Islam by stopping heretical practices.

Background

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi was a theologian. He was born in 1564 in Sirhind, India. He received his early education in the Holy Quran, Hadith and theology in Sirhind and Sialkot. Then he focused on Hadith, Tafseer and philosophy. He played a significant role in reviving and reaffirming Islam when Islam was under the rule of Emperor Akbar. At the age of 36, Sheikh moved to Delhi and joined Naqshbandiya order under guidance of Khwaja Bagi Billah. Khwaja Bagi

Billah predicted that Sheikh Ahmed would be a guiding light for the entire world.

Deen-e-Elahi

In order to find a middle ground between Islam and Hinduism, Akbar proclaimed his Deen-e-Elahi or divine faith in 1581. Deen-e-Elahi was under influence of Bhakti movement that aimed to deepen the spiritual connection with God through devotion. Deen-e-Elahi was an attempt to bridge the gap between Islam and other religions in India.

Sheikh Ahmed's deny.

Sheikh Ahmed referred to this era as "the age of Islamic poverty". He denied Akbar's Deen-e-Elahi. Sheikh thought that the main channel of mischief were the Ulema, who had taken the jurisprudence as the whole of religious teachings. To turn for the better of society Sheikh criticized innovation (Bid'at) in Islam that

the main cause of changing Islamic values. Sheikh cited these verses of Holy Quran and Hadith against innovations in Islam. The verse and Hadith are:

"Today I have perfected the religion for you and have completed my favor upon you"
(Al-Quran)

"He who invents something false which has no linkage with the religion of Islam is forbidden."
(Hadith)

Sheikh's Reforms.

After the death of King Akbar, his son Jahangir became the new ruler. Then Sheikh wrote letters to the nobles and courtiers. As a result Sheikh was called to the court where he was asked to

to bow down. ~~before~~ Sheikh denied and sent to the jail for two years. When he refused Jahangir got angry. he sent Sheikh in the Fort of Gawaliar for two years imprisonment. There Sheikh continued his mission and he became more popular. Many non-muslim accepted Islam. Sheikh's rivals became jealous and they started spreading rumors against him. Asaf Jah and other nobles started feeling intrigue against his reforms.

Jahangir's influence.

After a year of imprisonment Jahangir released him, under the influence of his Islamic writings. He not only offered him huge gifts but also gave him the title of **Khilat-e-Fakhira** and 1000 Rupees. Jahangir listened to his advice. During that time Sheikh got the unique opportunity to preach King and people around him. In

sessions with Jahangir, he read out the Holy Quran to him, explained its messages, discuss the principles of faith and explained the rules of Shari'ah. After Maghrib prayers the session was held by King Jahangir. The Emperor and the people of the Mughal court were fully influenced by the teaching of Sheikh Ahmed. The Emperor Jahangir forbade inter-marriages, imposed taxes, rebuilt the abolished mosques, Arabic and Islamic learning were encouraged. It was the time when mosques were full with worshippers.

Stanly Poole said:

Jahangir also restored the hijrah chronology which his father had abandoned.

Ibid

Sharia's Superiority to Mysticism.

Sirhind cleared the difference between Sufi way and Prophetic way. There

was a need to reform sufism. Shah Waliullah in his book **Hujjat Allah** **Al Balighah** writes:

There are two paths to attain happiness: one followed by theistic philosophers and God-intoxicated Sufis, and the other represented by the prophets themselves.

Sheikh Ahmed Sarhindi emphasized that true understanding and revelation come from following the teaching of the Quran and Sunnah, rather than through ecstatic states or mystical experiences.

Opposing United Nationhood.

Sheikh Ahmed opposed united nationhood. Although he did not clearly use the word two nation but he actually laid the foundation. He said:

If Muslims want to live as a nation then they have to quit the talk of Shirk and Bid'at 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.

(Sheikh Sirhindi)

Correspondence and Disciples.

Sheikh started correspondence with a number of high ranked men across the continent. He wrote a large number of letters to Government personalities emphasizing the need of true teaching of Islam. Hence Sheikh eradicated the evils through his letters and strongly stressed upon to follow the direction of the Holy Prophet. Sheikh trained groups of his followers and sent them to different Muslim countries and cities in India to spread what he believed was the true essence of Islam. He emphasized the importance of Sunnah and urged people to counteract false beliefs and follow the principles

of Islam.

Conclusion.

To conclude, it is obvious that Sheikh Ahmed was a great social reformer. He played a vital role to establish the society based upon the teaching of Quran and Sunnah.

He significantly protected the Muslim society from anti-Islamic values and Hindu thought. A number of factors had weakened the religious and cultural identity of Muslims.

A lot of evils had been created by Mughal courtiers only for own gains. Akbar had introduced a new religion, Deen-e-Elahi. Muslims were at the edge of darkness. Then it was

the result of Sheikh's reform that Muslim society be brightened with Shariat and real essence of Islam.

As a result of his efforts, the whole society came under the flag of Islam.

His reform mission filled a large space in the religious and political history of Muslims.