

Question: 03 (2024)

Keeping in view the sociopolitical circumstances of subcontinent, discuss the role of sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi (Mujadad Alf Thani) who revived Islamic ideology and established muslim identity in the subcontinent.

Introduction

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi, Mujadad Alf Thani, ^{was} the most original thinker of the subcontinent long before Shah Waliullah and Allama Iqbal. Amidst the rise of Deen-E-Elahi and fading Islamic identity of muslims due to intermixing of Hindu culture, Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi stood up to revive the Islamic ideology and muslim identity in the subcontinent. From standing against Deen-E-Elahi to sending his disciples across the subcontinent, he has offered great services restore Islamic identity to its true essence in the subcontinent.

Sociopolitical Circumstances of Subcontinent:

Background

During 16th century, Islam in the subcontinent was losing its essence and true identity. Ulema and scholars were deviated from their paths. They were issuing fatwas supporting social evils. Gambling and alcohol was allowed. Fasting during ramazan was accepted. Even to the extent, a fatwa was issued declaring Hajj as not a compulsory pillar of Islam. Social ills

under the influence of Hindu culture became common. Along with this, Deen-E-Elahi of Akbar was catching rise promoting more collaboration and interaction with Hindu culture. For these social and political reasons, the separate identity of Muslims as a nation was threatened. To protect the supremacy of Islam and revive Islamic identity, Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi came to the stage and took various measures.

Efforts of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi

i) Letters to Jahangir's Nobles in the Court

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi, after the death of Akbar, wrote letters to the nobles in the court of Jahangir, stating opposition of Deen-E-Elahi and telling about its ill impacts on Muslims of subcontinent and their identity as a nation. Because of the letters, Jahangir ^{summoned} called Sheikh to the court. While in court he asked Sheikh to bow before him. On refusal to bow before Jahangir Sheikh was jailed, and this marked one of his initial efforts towards revival of Islamic essence in the subcontinent.

i) Preaching Continued in Jail

Sheikh kept preaching in the jail. During

his exile period, he also wrote writings on to revive the Islamic spirit in its true shape among the Muslims of the subcontinent. He succeeded in converting many to Islam. Impressed by his writings Jahangir released him from the jail. Jahangir appointed Sheikh as the teacher of his son, and gave him title of "Khatib Fakhra".

iii) Revival of Islamic Ideology by Disciples

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi had sent his disciples all across the subcontinent to spread the true form of Islamic ideology and purify it from the effects of Hindu culture and Deen-E-Elahi. Along with subcontinent, he had sent his disciples all across the world in different regions to pursue the cause.

iv) Opposition of Deen-E-Elahi

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi

strongly opposed Deen-e-elahi. According to him Deen-E-Elahi was strong source spreading unification of Islamic ideology with Hindu culture. Akbar, following Deen-E-Elahi had opened mandirs in his house, married Hindu women, allowed superior positions to Hindu Rajas in the court. All these policies of Akbar, made Hindu Rajas set their foot into the political landscape and eventually strengthening their standing.

Thus, this rise of Deen-E-Flahi during Akbar's period, played key role in threatening separate identity of the Muslims of the subcontinent and Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi preached against Deen-E-Flahi to let Muslims realize their identity and revived Islamic ideology in the subcontinent.

v) Concept of Wahdat Ul Shahud over Wahdat Ul Wajood

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi countered the philosophy of Wahdat Ul Wajood, given by Ibn-Al-Arabi, with the stance of Wahdat Ul Shahud philosophy. The Wahdat Ul Wajood stance says that, "Everything that is being, is the being of God"

This philosophy of Wahdat Ul Wajood eroded the spirit of Islamic ideology in the subcontinent by eliminating the difference between Raam and Raheem. Creator can't be equal to the creation, thus, continuous with this belief Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi presented the philosophy of Wahdat Ul Shahud, which states as,

"Every creation is the testimony to the presence of a creator"
Thus, by countering the philosophy of Wahdat Ul Wajood, Sheikh took an

pivotal step to revive Islamic ideology in the subcontinent.

vi) Opposition of Biddat (Innovation)

The innovation (Biddat) was at peak during the time of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi, either in the form of ~~Qeen~~-B-Elahi or new practices from Hindu culture. Sheikh Ahmed opposed both types of biddat namely good and bad biddat. He has called them as nothing but dark and misleading.

vii) Opposition of United Nationhood

The concept of united nationhood was met with criticism from Sheikh Ahmed. He was of the belief that union with Hindus and consideration of one nationhood would deprive Muslims of their identity and true spirit of Islam would be lost then. In order to protect identity of Muslims of subcontinent, he has used his writings and preachings against the concept of united nationhood with Hindus of the subcontinent.

viii) Form of Government

Sheikh stressed on the strength of character of the Emperor. Public follows the leader and thus, strength of leader's character guide the character of the public. This stress

was mainly referred to the contexts of Deen-e-Elahi and activities of Babar. He used his writings to influence the leaders of subcontinent (like Jahangir) and this was a pivotal step towards revival and protection of Islamic ideology in the subcontinent.

ix) Writings

Sheikh also used his writings like "Asbab-e-Nabuwat, Ihtbat al-Habwah, Maktobat e-Imam Rubani", to strengthen Muslim unity in the subcontinent, and reveal the true essence of Islam and its ideology.

Conclusion

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi has played a notable part to revive the spirit of Islamic ideology in the subcontinent. From using his pen to opposing social ills eroding and threatening Islamic ideology in the subcontinent, Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi has ^{promoted} ~~established~~ secured a separate and distinct Muslim identity and saved Islamic ideology in its true essence.