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QUESTION

Describe contribution of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi to Muslim Society of India?

① INTRODUCTION:

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi played a pivotal role in the reformation of Muslim society in the 16th and early 17th century. He came on the horizon when the muslim society was plagued with the ill-effects of Akbar's Deen-i-illahi and various other issue. His contributions in the religious, social and political arena led to the rejuvenation of islamic principles in the Muslims of Indian ^{also} subcontinent. Therefore, he is known as Mujaddid Alif Sani. Due to his contribution revivalism of Islamic values, Allama Iqbal had said.

"He was the guardian of the Muslim faith in India whom God had given a timely warning"

② HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: THE CONDITION OF MUSLIMS OF INDIA:

Before Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi started his reformation movement, muslim society had degenerated. Various customs and practices that were un-islamic had become part of the creed. Some of them are as follows.

(a) Ill Effects of Akbar's Deen-i-illahi:

The proclamation of Deen-i-illahi by the Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1581 is considered to be the biggest controversy of the Islamic history in the subcontinent. Akbar introduced this new Deen in order to find a middle ground between Hinduism and Islam.

(b) Ulema Ceasing to Refer to the Quran and Hadith:

The Ulema had stopped referring to the Quran and hadith in the

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Indian subcontinent. This led to the proliferation of un-Islamic customs and rituals within the Muslim society.

(c) Dissemination of Doctrine of Wahad-ul-Wajood:

The unorthodox Sufis had propounded the doctrine of Wahad-ul-Wajood which states that there was no difference between the Creator and his creations and both were one and the same thing. It was through this dogma Hindu justified idol worshipping. This doctrine was diametrically opposite to the teachings of Islam.

(d) Practising Un-Islamic Customs and Traditions:

Various un-Islamic practices were being followed by the Muslims such as

- ↳ Widespread belief in Karomat
- ↳ Jizya on non-Muslims had been lifted
- ↳ Ban on cow slaughter

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↳ Inter marriages between Muslims and Hindus

↳ High offices occupied by Hindus.

③ CONTRIBUTION OF SHEIKH AHMED SIRHINDI FOR THE MUSLIMS OF INDIA

(3.1) Religious Contributions of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi:

Religious Contributions

- Rejection of Deen-i-illahi
- Propagation of true Islamic teachings
- Whadat-al-Shahud to counter Wakaal-al-Wajood
- Advocated for Reimposition of Jizya
- Strict Adherence to Shariat and Sunnah

(a) Rejection of Akbar's Deen-i-illahi

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi vociferously rejected Akbar's Deen-i-illahi. As much as Akbar tried to play down the differences between the two religions. Sheikh Ahmed pointed out the differences between Islam and Hinduism.

(b) Countering Wahad-ul-Wajood
with the Doctrine of Wahad-al-
Shahud:

Countering unorthodox sufi doctrine, Mujodid Ali' Soni put forward the doctrine of Wahad-al Shahud or phenomenological monoism which means that the creator and the ~~creation~~ creation is not same, but God is separate from what he has created.

According to the words of Istiaq Hussain Qureshi:

The cornerstone of his philosophy was the rejection of ontological monoism ... it is on this rejection of monoism that Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi's claim for being the Mujodid of his age is based

(c) Advocated for Reimposition of Jizya

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi advocated and pressed upon the rulers to impose Jizya on Non-Muslims:

(d) Propagation of True Islamic Values:

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi rejuvenated true islamic values and shunned un-islamic practices that had become normalised among the muslims. For instance, he rejected to prostrate in front of Akbar, for which he was incarcerated. He had said:

True humility is not in prostrating before others but in bowing down before the Almighty

(e) Strict Adherence to Shariah and Sunnah:

He emphasised^{ed} strict adherence to the Quran and Sunnah. He asked Muslims to give up heretical ideas and return to pure islam. He emphasized concept of Tawheed and stressed upon muslims to maintain separate identity from Hindus

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(3.2) Political Contribution of Mujaddid

Alif Soni :

(a) Laid the Foundation of Two Nation Theory :

By bringing to light the divergent creeds of Hindus and Muslims, he laid the foundation of "Two Nation Theory" which ultimately led to the creation of Pakistan.

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

(b) Revival of Muslim's Higher Civil Positions in the Mughal Court:

His Islamic Renaissance movement helped Muslims to achieve their lost glory. He paved the way for the coming reformers like Shah Wali Ullah Sir Syed, and Ahmed Shaheed in the political arena.

(c) Correspondence with eminent personalities:

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi wrote letters to ruler and eminent men in India and neighbouring countries. The letters expounded religious doctrine.

④ CRITICAL ANALYSIS:

The legacy of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi endured long after his death. His emphasis on strict adherence to Islamic orthodoxy and purification of Sufism resonated with later reforms such as the Deobandi Movement.

Mozrat Khawaja Bagh Billah predicted that,

Sheikh Ahmed is such a
light which will illuminate
the whole world

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⑤ CONCLUSION:

To sum it up, the reform movements of Mujadid Alif Soni had a profound and far reaching impact on the history of Muslim India. His efforts played a pivotal role in shaping the socio-religious landscape of the subcontinent.
