

How the reform movement of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi influenced the history of Muslim India? (2020)

Introduction

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, also known as Mujaddid Alf Sani (the reformer of the second millennium) was a great Muslim Saint and mystic of the Naqashbandia order. He challenged the might of Akbar, the great Moghul emperor to re-establish the glory of Islam which had gravely been threatened by the anti-Islamic trends of Akbar. By 1604 the time was ripe for the great reformer to appear on the scene which inspired Sheikh Ahmad known as Mujaddid Alf Sani to bring about a second millennium of the Islamic era. His reform movement emphasized sharia, Tawheed (monotheism) and the distinct identity of Muslims, which played

a crucial role in shaping the religious and political landscape of Muslim India.

Allama Iqbal

referred to him as

"Mu'addid-e-Azam (The Greatest Reviver),

who purified Islam from un-Islamic

influences and strengthened Muslim identity

in India"

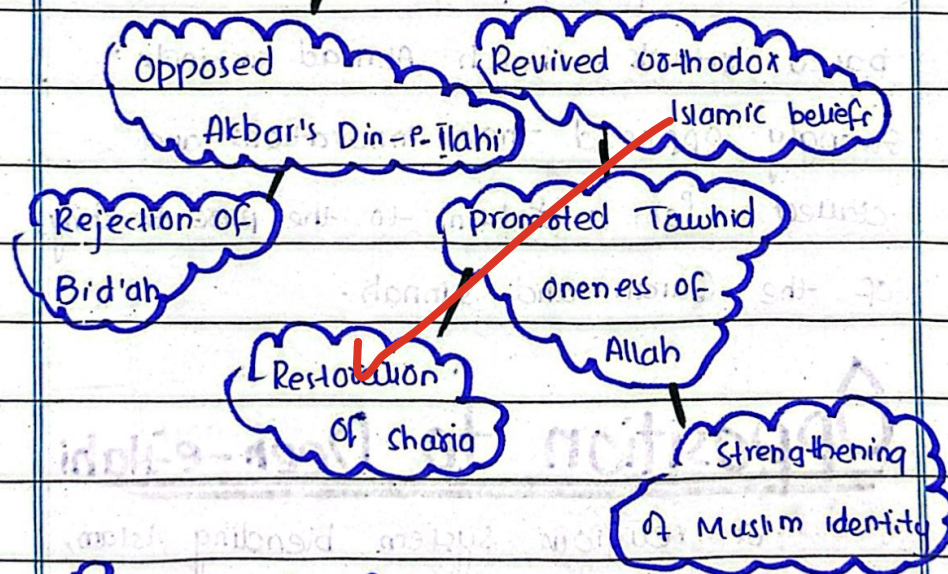
Social Condition of India

when Sheikh Ahmad began his reform movement. Muslim Society was ridden with un-Islamic practices and trends under the Hindu influence. A firm and widespread belief in karamat (miracles of the saints) had developed in the society which greatly misguided the innocent people. The Mystics and Sufis of those days openly denied the authenticity of Sharia by declaring Sharia (the law of Islam) as superficial and external. During these days Akbar ruled the sub continent.

whose anti Islamic outlook was spread.
He promoted Hinduism, his introduction of
Din-i-Ilahi was grave attempt to distort
Islamic teachings and create new religious
order that blended elements of different faiths

Influence of Sheikh Ahmad Raza's Reform
Movement

Religious Reforms



Revival of Pure Tawheed

(Monotheism)

Many Sufi scholars of that time promoting
Wahdat-ul-Wujud (the idea that everything
is a manifestation of God). Sheikh Ahmad

Sirhindi opposed this view and introduced wahdat-ul-shuhud (emphasizing that Allah and His creation are separate). He argued that this distinction is necessary to maintain true monotheism.

Rejection of Bid'ah

Muslim society had adopted many un-Islamic practices such as saint worship, superstitions, and shrine based rituals. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi strongly opposed these innovations and called for a return to the pure teachings of the Quran and Sunnah.

Opposition to Deen-e-ilahi

a religious system blending Islam, Hinduism and other beliefs. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi strongly condemned this attempt to distort Islam, arguing that Islam is a complete and perfect religion that does not need modifications.

Restoration of Sharia

He emphasized that sharia should be the guiding principle in all aspects of life, rejecting the idea that mystical experience (Tasawwuf) could replace Islamic law. He called on rulers and scholars to govern according to Islamic principles.

Strengthening of Muslim

Identity

He encouraged Muslims to follow Islamic traditions, maintain their unique cultural and religious identity and avoid Hindu influences in their daily lives. He believed that Islam should not be diluted with non-Islamic customs.

Social Reforms

Revival
of Islamic
Education

Purification
of Muslim
Society

Opposition to
interfaith marriages

Revival of Islamic Education:

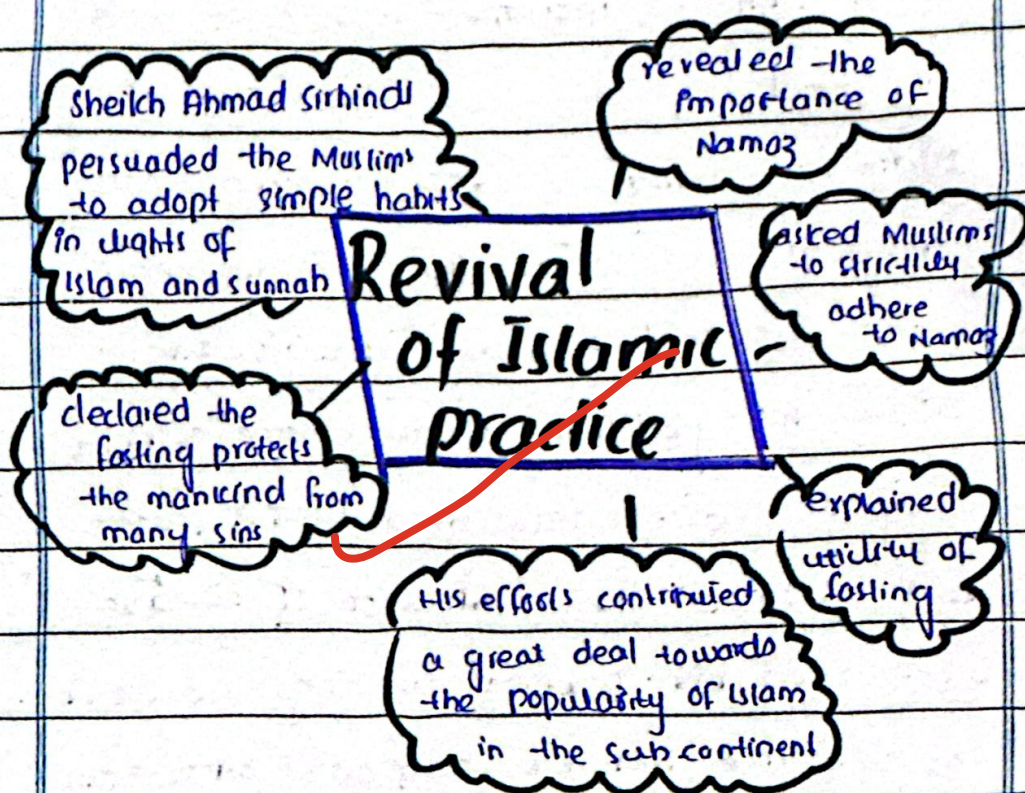
During Akbar's reign, Islamic education had been neglected, and Persian and Hindu philosophical ideas had gained popularity. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi encouraged a return to Quranic and Hadith-based education. He urged scholars and religious leaders to focus on authentic Islamic teachings and protect the Muslim community from deviating influences.

Purification of Muslim Society

Sirhindi worked to reform the moral and ethical conditions of Muslims. He criticized the decline in religious observance and called for a revival of Islamic values such as honesty, piety, and discipline. He urged to avoid adopting foreign cultural influences that weakened their religious identity.

Opposition to Interfaith Marriages

Akbar had promoted interfaith marriages b/w Muslims and Hindus as part of his policy of religious tolerance. However, Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi viewed this a threat to Islamic identity. He believed that such marriages diluted Islamic beliefs and practices, leading to the erosion of Muslim culture. He strongly opposed these unions and encouraged Muslims to preserve their distinct religious and social identity.



Conclusion

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi's efforts to revive Islam had a profound and lasting impact on Muslim India. Allama Iqbal has paid rich tributes to Sheikh Ahmad in one of his poems for refusing to perform the act of prostration before the emperor. Iqbal considers him as the spiritual guardian of the Muslims of India.

Sheikh Ahmad's movement was seen as a call back to the true teaching of Islam, leaving a deep influence on religious and social life. His influence even reached Emperor Jahangir, who, under his guidance, reversed some of Akbar's religious policies, reinstated Islamic practices and allowed the construction of mosque.

He used his powerful writings and speeches to denounce Akbar's religious innovations.

After spending three years in Jahangir's court, he returned to Sirhind. He passed away

on Dec 10, 1626. His legacy remains a cornerstone of Islamic revival in the subcontinent.