

Hazrat Mujaddid Alfarsi (1564 - 1624)

CSS 2020

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

Answer:

Introduction:

The decline of the Mughal Empire and the growing influence of non-Islamic elements during the late 16th and 17th centuries led to a spiritual and ideological crisis among Indian Muslims. Amidst this religious stagnation emerged Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564 - 1624), famously known as Mujaddid Alf Sani. His reform movement sought to revive the true spirit of Islam, purify the Muslim faith from un-Islamic innovations, and strengthen Muslim identity in the subcontinent. His efforts laid the intellectual and religious foundation for later Muslim revivalist and reformist movements in India.

He revived Islam in its true form and spirit when it was in danger of being overshadowed by heterodox influences.

Dr. I. H. Gureshi

Historical Background:

During the reign of Emperor Akbar (1556-1605), a policy of religious tolerance known as "Sulh-i-kul" (Peace with all) was promoted. Akbar introduced a syncretic faith called "Deen-e-Elahi", combining elements of various religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Zoroastrianism. This resulted in a spiritual confusion among Muslims, as Islamic law (Shariah) and identity were neglected in the Mughal court. Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi emerged as a reformer (Mujaddid) to counter these heterodox tendencies and restore the supremacy of Islamic beliefs.

Main Objectives of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's Reform Movement

- Revival of True Islamic Teachings: Mujaddid in his letters, tried really hard to tell the people he's writing to prove that heresy is bad. He quoted many things the Holy Prophet said to show how much he dislikes heresy. He aimed to cleanse Islam from bid'at (innovations) and restore adherence to Quran and Sunnah.

Rejection of Akbar's Religious Innovations:

Akbar's Deen-e-Elahi was an attempt to bridge the religious gaps between Islam and other religions in India. However, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi strongly opposed the idea. He wrote a magazine called "Asbat-e-Nauwat" to challenge Deen-e-Ilahi, stating that considering Ram and Rehman as one is illogical because the creator cannot be the same as the creation.

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

Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi

Wahdat ul-Shahud against Pantheism

Mujaddad Alf Sani introduced the concept of Wahdat ul Shahood, which means "Unity of Witnesses". This belief states that God and His creation are completely separate from each other. Mujaddad Alf Sani's notable work, Maktubat ("letters"), reflect his significant contributions to Islamic thought. Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi refuted the extreme monistic view of Wahdat al-wujud. He rejected Pantheistic beliefs.

- Sharia's Superiority to Mysticism:

Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi emphasized on the difference between the Sufi way and the prophetic way which influenced the future development of Sufism. He highlighted that true understanding and revelation come from following the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, rather than through ecstatic states or mystical experiences.

Opposing United Nationhood:

If Muslims want to live as a nation then 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 ~~for~~ feared that they would be swept away with the flood of combined nationhood. Islam would be destroyed like Buddhism and Hinduism. (Sheikh Sirhindi)

Impact on the History of Muslims in India:

- Religious Reawakening:

Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi reform movement revitalized the spiritual life of Indian Muslims.

It curbed the spread of heterodox ideas and reaffirmed the orthodox Sunni faith.

- Preservation of Muslim Identity:

Sirhindī's struggle helped Muslims maintain their separate religious and cultural identity despite the growing pressure of assimilation with Hindus under Akbar's policies.

"He saved the Indian Muslims from complete religious and moral degeneration".

Prof. K. A. Nizami.

- Contribution to Muslim Political Thought:

By emphasizing a Islamic unity and distinct identity, Sirhindī indirectly contributed to the evolution of Muslim nationalism, which centuries later became a cornerstone of the Pakistan Movement.

"The Mujaddid laid the ideological foundations for all subsequent Muslim reform movements in India".

I. H. Qureshi.

- Two Nation Theory:

Shāikh Ahmad Sirhindī created the Naqshbandi order to

improve society and spread the Islamic way of life to people. He wrote many books including 'Isbat-ul-Nabat', Risal-i-Nabuwat, and 'Tauheed-i-Shahudi'. He urged people to follow the established path of Islam.

Influenced later Reformers:

His ~~and~~ revivalist ideas inspired later Islamic reform movements, including:

- Shah Waliullah's reform movement.
- Syed Ahmad Shaheed Brelvi's Jihad movement and
- Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Aligarh movement.

Thus, his legacy became the foundation of Islamic revivalism in South Asia.

Conclusion:

The reform movement of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi was a turning point in the religious and intellectual history of Muslims in India. His influence shaped centuries of Muslim thought and revival movements that contributed to the political awakening and independence of Muslims in South Asia.

