

Keeping in view the socio-political circumstances of sub-continent, discuss the role of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi who revived Islamic Ideology and established Muslim Identity in sub-continent.

1) Introduction:-

The socio-political circumstances of sub-continent during the era of Akbar were alarming for Muslims and Islamic rule. The people had started making changes to Shariah based on their professed ideals and for their convenience. The ruler, in his bid to make conciliation between Islam and Hinduism, had introduced a new religion. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi started to work as the Reformer of Second Millennium under such circumstances and was able to reinvigorate the true spirit of Islamic ideology and Muslim identity both within the Muslim public and Muslim rulers.

2) A Look at Social Condition of Sub-Continent :-

The society of sub-continent

in the late 1500s faced decline in Muslim power and loss of Islamic vitality.

a) Rising Belief in Karamat

This was the main feature of Muslim community at that time. Due to excessive belief of Muslims in miracles (Karamat) of spiritual guides and rise of the concept of magic in Islam, the Muslims were starting to forget the main tenets of Islam.

b) Rise of Twistic Views of Islam

Under the influence of corrupt religious guides and Hindu culture, Muslims started to interpret Islamic law in ways they saw fit for their lifestyle. They started to cherry pick the laws that they found easy to implement and abandoned the others.

3) Political Condition of Sub-Continent:-

It was in fact the political scenario that had led to decline of Islamic spirit in the Muslims of the society.

a) Rising Influence of Hindu Nobels

The influence of Hindus in the Mughal court was rising exponentially. It was these Hindu Nobels who orchestrated

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the policies in the court of Akbar. Commenting on the influence of Hindu Nobels in Akbar's court S.M IKram says -
"There were more Hindu officers under him than any other Mughal emperor."

b) Introduction of Deen-e-Ilahi by Akbar

In the year 1582, Akbar came up with a plan to harmonize the Muslim - Hindu society through his religion - Deen-e-Ilahi. It was a fiasco but He thought of it as a master plan. To please his Hindu subjects, he introduced worship of fire and sun, banned cow slaughter and Azaan in mosques. He also abolished Jizya and called himself the "Shadow of God".

4) Rise of Reformer of 2nd Millennium :

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi is a great saint and mystic of Naqshbandia order. His family was traced back to second Caliph. Sheikh Ahmad was a well-read scholar of Islamic fiqh and Seerah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). To gain further knowledge and to unleash his mystic qualities, he became a student of Khawja Baji Billah. According

to Khanqah Bagi Billah: "Sheikh Ahmad is ... rich in knowledge and rigorous in action"

5) Efforts Made to Revive Islamic Ideology

Sheikh Ahmad began his efforts to revive the Muslim Society of subcontinent in the first decade of 1600s -

a) Promotion of Ittibat-e-Sunnah

To promote true Islamic ideology among Muslims, he trained his students on various aspects of Sunnat-e-Nabri and sent them on missions across the country to promote Ittibat-e-Sunnah.

b) Correspondence with Royals of the Court.

This was a top-down approach for change where he sent letters of persuasion and lamentation to Muslim royals of Akbar's court. He aimed to awaken them and take vigorous action.

c) Counseling of People Close to Jahangir

His efforts for change bore fruit when royals like Abdul Rahim Khan-e-Khana and Maulvi Sardar Jahan took oath of allegiance on his hand and swore to work against Hindu officials.

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who were governing Akbar's court at the time

d) Correspondence with Other Scholars

Sheikh Ahmad also corresponded with other saints and scholars of his time regarding the deplorable condition Muslims were in and the remedies to these social ills.

6) Efforts to Revive Muslim Ideology :-

The individuality of Muslims and the notion that Muslims and Hindus are two separate nations was getting blurred by the onslaught of Hindu culture. The Hindus and allied Muslims had come up with the idea of Wahdatul Wajood, meaning that man and God are in essence one.

To counter this notion, Sheikh Ahmad promoted the idea of Wahdatul-Sahood, which implied that man and God are two very different concepts. God is one supreme being and man is this one of many creations.

7) Effects of His Efforts

The effects of his efforts were not instant. He had to face many hurdles to revive Islamic ideology amongst the Muslims and Mughal rulers.

He was even imprisoned by Jahangir but it was his chastity that eventually led to Muslim revival and reversal of the policies of Akbar (i.e., abolition of jizya and ban on Azan).

discuss this part in more detail by giving multiple subheadings.

8) Conclusion:-

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi came to the rescue of the Muslims of sub-continent when they were about to forget the distinguishing characteristics of Islam and about to get lost in the reality that Akbar and his Hindu vizirs had created (in the form of Deen-e-Ilahi). With his constant effort he was able to revive the character of Muslims that was characteristic of the early muslims. His teachings also succeeded in rekindling Muslim nationalism.