

Topic 4

Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilly (1786-1831)

Early Biographical detail:

Syed Ahmed Shaheed was born at Rai Bareilly in November 1786. His father Shah IIm-Ullah was pious religious scholar. He was a well-built young man and took interest in manly sports. He was inspired spiritually by Shah Abdul Aziz. In 1810 he joined the army of Nawab Ameer Khan of Tonak in order to take part in Jihad against the British. He fought against the English and Sikh forces and displayed his skill in the art of fighting. Syed Ahmed Shaheed was an outstanding orator. His religious and political sermons won him many companions which included Shah Ismail and Shah Abdul Haye.

Beliefs:

In the first half of the nineteenth century Punjab was under the rule of Sikhs who were very cruel to the Muslims. They were showing disregard to the Muslim culture, customs and religious places The Sikh rule which extended from Punjab up to Kabul was harsh on Muslims. Mosques were dishonored & Muslims could not follow their religion freely.

On hearing about these brutalities Syed Ahmed Shaheed decided to launch Jihad against the Sikhs. For this purpose he founded Jihad Movement. The Muslims of India responded to his call and thousands of Muslims got themselves enrolled in the Jihad Movement. Syed Ahmed Shaheed decided to launch Jihad from North West Frontier region of the country. Thus on 17th January 1826 he started his journey along with thousands of Mujahideens. He reached Sindh via Gwalior, Tonak, Ajmer and Marwar. Then he went to Afghanistan through Balochistan. From Afghanistan he arrived at Nowshera after nine months journey.

Battles Against Sikhs:

On his arrival in the Frontier province the warriors of Yousaf Zai tribe, followers of Pir Syed Akbar Shah and the local Muslims joined the Jihad Movement. Syed Ahmed Shaheed declared war against Sikhs. Ranjit Singh the Sikh ruler of Punjab sent Budh Singh at the head of ten thousand soldiers to meet the challenge of the Mujahideens. On 21st December 1826 a strong group of Mujahideens attacked the Sikh army at night. As a result thousands of Sikh soldiers were killed and Budh Singh had to retreat with heavy losses. Later on after several skirmishes the Sikh army was defeated in the battle of Hazru. After these successes Syed Ahmed Shaheed decided to organize the local administration. He established an Islamic state in the area and announced his caliphate on January 11, 1827. These victories and successes of Mujahideens disturbed Ranjit Sikh very much. He decided to weaken the Mujahideens through diplomacy. He reached Peshawar and won the sympathies of two local chiefs Yar Mohammad Khan and Sultan Mohammad Khan by appointing them the ruler of

Peshawar. Thus the Muslims were divided into two camps. However Syed Ahmed Shaheed succeeded in conquering **Peshawar in November 1830**. Through mistake Syed Ahmed Khan re appointed Sultan Mohammad Khan the ruler of Peshawar. Unfortunately Sultan Mohammad turned a traitor and hatched a conspiracy against Syed Ahmed Shaheed. Thousands of Mujahideens were murdered treacherously at Peshawar (after the withdrawal of SASB to Balakot to liberate Kashmir). In the meantime Sikh army under **Sher Singh** advanced against the Mujahedeen. Syed Ahmed Shaheed gathered all of his forces and encamped at Balakot which was a very secure place. Sardar Sher Singh too arrived at **Balakot at** the head of 20 thousands soldiers. The Sikh army besieged the area. The famous **battle of Balakot** was fought on **6th May 1831**. The Sikhs emerged victorious. Almost all the Mujahideens including Syed Ahmed Shaheed were martyred.

Expected Questions:

Question No. 1: why did Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi conduct a Jihad against the Sikhs in the early 19th century? (7)

November 2000, Q.1 b

Questions No. 2: why did Syed Ahmed Shaheed wish to revive Islam in the Sub-Continent? (7)

November 2002, Q.1 b

Question No.3: Why did Syed Ahmed Shaheed have such a major influence on the revival of Islam in the Sub-Continent? (7)

November 2003, Q.1 b

Question No.4: Was the work of Syed Ahmed Shaheed the most important factor in the revival of Islam in the sub-continent during the 17th & 18th centuries? Give reasons for your answer. (14)

June 2008, Q.1 c