

# First Reform Movement

Hazrat Mujadid Alf Sani  
(Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi)

## Introduction:

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi (1564-1624) also known as Mujadid Alf Sani, which literally means Reviver of Islam during the Second millennium. Mujadid (reviver), Alf (millennium), Sani (Second).

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

- Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the revival of Islam in the subcontinent was the result of the efforts of Sheikh Ahmed. He challenged the might of Akbar and to re-establish the glory of Islam in India. Through his reforms and teachings by criticizing the Ulama of the time, who were working for worldly gain by pleasing the rulers, he revived the lost soul of Islam.

Sheikh Ahmed took various steps to achieve his goal of revival of Islam. For example, to condemn Din-illahi and purified the teachings of Sufism, he wrote letters to the nobles. He criticized the misuse of the philosophy of Wahdat ul Wajood in the hands of the Akbar and Ulana. The birth of two nation theory was also the fruit of Sheikh's efforts, which made the difference between two religions, Islam and Hinduism, which were merging into each other and Muslims were losing their separate identity. Consequently, his reform movement had a great influence on the Muslims and next ruler of India.

In the context of saying of  
**SM Ikram**

He was the most forceful and "original thinker" in India, before Shah Waliulla and Iqbal.

## Background Of The Movement

Akbar, from the beginning of his

rule desired to win the collaboration of Rajput chiefs, for this purpose he married a number of Hindu and Rajput women. He elevated the Hindus and Rajputs on high government assignments and they held important position in the royal court.

The mystics and Sufis of those days openly denied the authenticity of of Sharia by declaring Sharia as external and superficial. Ulama were working to please the ruler and stopped preaching of Quran and Hadith.

Consequently, Akbar propagated his **Din-i-Elahi**, which further worsened the condition of Islam. Akbar declared that all religions would be united in such a way that advantage of all religions would be gained by all and the evils of any faith would be disregarded.

Arthur Smith has written in his book **Akbar, The Great Mughal** that Akbar said

"Honour would be rendered to God, peace would be given to people and security to the empire."

Akbar combined the salient features of Islam and Hinduism.

"Its main purpose was the distortion of Islam."

- M. Ikram Rabbani

### Social Implications:

- Jizya and pilgrimage tax were abolished.
  - Cow slaughter was prohibited.
  - Azan was forbidden.
  - The mosques were to be used as warehouse.
  - Hindu wives of Akbar were allowed to worship in palace.
  - Akbar ordered that no child will be named as Muhammad in future.
  - Worship of Sun, fire and artificial lights was forbidden.
  - Supremacy of Islam was compromised.
  - Rehabilitation and construction of Hindu temples.
- S. M Ikram said, the content of which is

"Non-Muslims carried out aggressively the ordinances of their own religion in a Muslim state and the Muslims were powerless to carry out

the ordinances of Islam,  
if they carried them out,  
they were executed"

## Reforms By Sheikh Ahmed:

Sheikh Ahmed enlightened the then Muslims with the original teachings of Islam and emphasised on the concept of Tauheed. He strongly denounced the innovations in religion and called these innovations bidat. Moreover, he said,

"A nation which invents innovation in religion is deprived on the analogy of sunnah."

He strongly believed that religion is complete, and innovations only deformed its shape rather than beautifying it. In addition to this, he believed that the downfall of Islam in the Indian-subcontinent was because of Ulemas of that time which deformed the true image of Islam.

Moreover, to condemn Din-e-Ilahi Sheikh Ahmed wrote many letters

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to the nobles of the royal court in such a language which would move mountains. His letters are known as **Muktubat-e-Imam Rabbani**.

The philosophy of **Wahdat-ul-Wajud** was presented by some sufis of Akbar's time which deformed the philosophy. The advocates of Wahdat-ul-Wajud believed that there was no living difference between the Man and his creator God, both individual are not separated by each other. They also believed that every particle of the universe represented the presence of God and, therefore, the worship of God's creature amounted to the worship of God.

Consequently, Both Hindu and Muslims started merging into each other. Muslims were losing their separate identity under the philosophy of Wahdat-ul-Wajud. The supremacy of Islam was compromised. In order to check the negative impact of the philosophy and to restore the supremacy of Islam, it was important to launch another philosophy. Hazrat Mufaddil Alf Sani

Compiled the great philosophy of **Wahdat-ul-Shahud** which meant that the Creator and creatures are two different and separate entities.

## Two-Nation Concept

To put an end to the growing trend of joint nationalism, Sheikh Ahmed openly negated the philosophy of Wahdat-ul-Wajud. He was a staunch advocate of the separateness of the Muslims and desired to maintain the distinctive image of the Muslim Nationalism.

Sheikh Ahmed strongly believed in **Two-Nation Theory** and was in favour of maintaining the differences between Hindus and Muslims.

He wanted Jizya to be re-imposed on Hindus and demanded the destruction of Hindu temples. He advocated that Muslims shouldn't intermingle and intermarry with Hindus. He demanded, Hindus to be expelled from the court and removed from important positions. Moreover, Muslim ruler should distance themselves from Hindus.

## Influence Of Reform Movement

The efforts of Sheikh Ahmad to purify the religious and practical life of the Muslims left stirring impact on the history of Muslim India.

The Muslims started following the true teachings of Islam. Moreover, the emperor Jahangir influenced by Sheikh Ahmed and started the efforts for the revival of Islam in India. Muslims regained higher official positions in the royal court. Non-Muslim traditions were eradicated from society. Mosques were built and old ones were reconstructed.

Stan Lane Pole, who observed the situation of the subcontinent during Jahangir's rule said:

"The mosques that had been abolished during Akbar reign were reconstructed, and Arabic and Islamic learning was encouraged."

Similarly, Jizya was re-imposed on non-Muslims which was abolished during Akbar's rule. The step was essential for the glory of Muslims, and



the stronghold of the ruler in the society. Also, teachings of Sheikh greatly influenced the next ruler and ulemas. Aurangzeb Alamgir was greatly influenced by the teaching of Sheikh. Concisely, Sheikh not only had an impact on his generation but people coming after centuries.

In addition, with the lessening influence of Hindus, an idea of separate identity was born in the minds of people.

Thus, the first stone of the two-nation theory was laid by Hazrat Mujadid Alf Sani, which resulted in the formation of Pakistan.

## Critical Analysis:

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi was the ~~wa~~ first person in the Indian sub-continent who enlightened the true teachings of Islam and revamped the weakened soul of Islam. He openly stand against the ruler Akbar and even faced imprisonment for two years but didn't leave the efforts for the revival of Islam. He was focused on his goal of restoration of separate Muslim identity. He had a great influence

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on the people of Subcontinent from nobles to commoners, and even on the ruler of the time Jahangir who imprisoned him. but Due to his great influence and his efforts for revival of Islam, he is well known among the present generation. As said by Allama Iqbal:

The one who did not bow  
his head to Jahangir  
whose warm breath lends  
heat to the freemen  
- Allama Muhammad Iqbal

## Conclusion:

In a nutshell, Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi was the great reformer in the history of Subcontinent. His teachings awakened the true spirit of Muslims of India. His efforts created a ripple effect in society and eradicated many religious and social evils. Mujadid Alf Sani was the only individual in the history of India who opposed emperor Akbar and encountered unorthodox beliefs. He was the one who laid the foundation of the two-nation

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theory. Sheikh Ahmed Sirhind not only influenced his generation but causing generations too.

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