

Q: Keeping in view the socio-Politico circumstances of Sub-continent, discuss the role of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindī (Mujaddid Alf Thani) who revived Islamic Ideology and established Muslim identity in sub-continent.

Introduction:

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindī, known as Mujaddid Alf Thani (Reviser of the Second Millennium), was a prominent Islamic scholar and reformer who played a vital role in reviving Islamic ideology and preserving Muslim identity in the subcontinent. He emerged during the Mughal era when Emperor Akbar's policies like Din-i-llahi and Sulh-i-Kul promoted religious

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syncretism, weakening Islamic teachings and marginalizing scholars. In this context, Sirhindi emphasized Tawheed, the Supremacy of Sharia, and the distinct identity of Muslims. His famous assertion, "The real unity lies in the distinction of religious, not in their merger," reflected his resistance to these policies. Historians like Dr. Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi credited him with saving Muslim India from religious decline, while Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad stated that without him, "Islam would have lost its distinct identity in India." Even Allama Iqbal regarded him as a restorer of the Muslim self (khudi), laying groundwork for future revival. In a time of confusion, Sirhindi's efforts rekindled religious clarity and reaffirmed Muslim identity.

keep the introduction a bit brief.

Socio-Political Circumstances

of the Subcontinent:

1- Religious Sectarianism under Akbar:

During Emperor Akbar's reign, the subcontinent experienced religious experimentation that deeply affected Islamic identity. His introduction of Din-i-illahi, a syncretic faith blending Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism, aimed at uniting the empire but diluted core Islamic beliefs. Along with this, his policy of Sulh-i-kul promoted religious tolerance but equated all religions, undermining Islam's finality. These reforms weakened Sharia-based governance and marginalized Islamic scholars, creating confusion among Muslims and threatening the foundation of their faith.

keep the description of a single argument brief.

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Weakening of Islamic Practices:

As Akbar's policies gained ground, Islamic religious practices began to decline in both spirit and form. The influence of traditional sufi orders, once deeply rooted in their Islamic spirituality, started to fade as excessive innovations (bid'ah) crept into their rituals.

Practices such as grave worships, musical gatherings, and exaggerated saint worship became widespread, overshadowing the core tenets of Islam.

The Ulama, once key religious authorities, were sidelined by courtiers and pseudo-scholars who supported Akbar's sectarianism. This lead to widespread innovation, moral decline, and the erosion of Islamic orthodoxy. The situation demanded a strong rivalist response to restore purity of faith and realign

practices with the Quran and Sunnah.

3- Political Environment:

Under Akbar, the Mughal Empire had strong centralized rule and absolute control, allowing him to introduce major religious reforms without resistance. His court, encouraged interfaith dialogue, but this often sidelined Islamic traditions. His blending of religion and state policy weakened Islamic influence. However, after his death, a shift occurred. Jahangir, though initially supportive of Akbar's ideas, became more open to Islamic scholars. Shah Jahan further strengthened this trend by respecting Islamic orthodoxy. These changes created a more favorable environment for reformers like Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi to oppose un-Islamic practices and revive

Islamic values.

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi

Biographical Sketch:

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, known as Mujaddid Alf Sani, was a famous Islamic reformer, thinker, and Sufi. Born on May 26, 1561, in Sirhind, he belonged to the family of Caliph Umar (R.A.). He received early education from his father and local scholars, memorized the Quran, and studied Hadith, Tafsir, philosophy, and Tasawuf. He wrote many important Islamic books, including *Ibtal-e-Nubuwah*, *Ramil Radd Rawafid*, *Risalat-ul-Tahleelia*, *Kasail Sharh Rubaiyat*, and his famous work *Maktabat Imam Rabbani* (letters of spiritual guidance). He passed away on December 10, 1624.

not required in this detail.

Role of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi in Reviving Islamic Theology:

1- Reform Movements, Letters, and Silent Revolution:

"The real greatness of Mujadid lies in the fact that he was the first to realize the practical implications of the idea of the finality of prophethood."

Allama Iqbal

Mujadid Alf Sami strongly opposed Akbar's religious policy of Din-i-illahi, which had caused religious decline among Muslims, and worked hard to restore true Islamic teachings. His efforts successfully reversed the impact of Akbar's policies, leading later rulers like Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb to adopt Islamic principles in governance. To spread his message, he sent students across the

: region to promote Islam and the Sunnah, and engaged in letter exchanges with scholars and thinkers such as Shaikh Farid and Khan-i-Azam, emphasizing core Islamic beliefs and the importance of following the Prophet's path. With the support of his followers in the royal court, he influenced the emperor's stance on religion, sparking a quiet but powerful Islamic revival that shaped both government policy and Muslim society.

2- Abolition of Innovations (Bid'ah) in Islam:

"Mujaddid Alf Sami was the architect of Islamic renaissance in India."

Prof. K.A. Nizami

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi actively condemned bid'ah, religious innovation, which had crept into Muslim practices during Akbar's reign. He particularly criticized grave worships, excessive Sufi rituals, and Syncretic beliefs, calling for a return to pure Islamic teachings.

3- Promotion of Quran and Sunnah as Sole Legal Sources:

Sirhindi emphasized that Islamic jurisprudence (Sharia) must be rooted exclusively in the Quran and the Sunnah. He rejected philosophical or mystical reinterpretations that diluted Islam's legal and moral clarity.

4- Wahdat-us- Shahud vs. Wahdat-ul-Wajood:

The idea of Wahdat-ul-

Wajood means "Unity of Being" and was popular among many Sufis. It teaches that everything in the world is a part of God or a reflection of Him. This belief sometimes led to the idea that God and His creation are not separate, which could go against basic Islamic teachings.

Mujaddid Alf Sami disagreed with this and introduced a new concept called Wahdat-us-Shahad, which means "Unity of Witnessing". He said that God and creation are completely separate, and humans only feel close to God because of deep spiritual experience not because they are actually part of Him. This view was more in line with Islamic beliefs and the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah.

Sirhindi's idea made sure that Sufi spirituality stayed within the limits of Islamic law (Sharia).

5- Restoration of Jizya (Tax on Muslims):

Sirhindi advocated for the re-imposition of Jizya, which Akbar had abolished. He viewed it as a sign of Islamic governance and a way to differentiate the roles of Muslims and non-Muslims in a religious state.

6- Restoration of Religious Practices:

He supported the revival of traditional Islamic rituals such as mosque construction, cow sacrifice on Eid, and public Islamic observances. These had either been sidelined or diluted under Akbar's religious policy.

of universalism.

7- Reforming Sufism: Subordination to Sharia:

Sirhindi aimed to align Sufism strictly with Sharia. He condemned excessive saint worship, music and rituals that had no basis in Islamic law.

His reforms reinforced the idea that spiritual practices must remain within legal Islamic boundaries.

8- Strengthened Trust in Khatm-e-Nabuwat:

Mujaddid Alf Sani strongly opposed Akbar's actions that seemed to challenge the finality of Prophethood. In response, he firmly reaffirmed the concept of finality of Prophet

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Muhammad (PBUH). He saw this

principle as a cornerstone of
Islamic belief and identity.

and preventing disbelief and
misguidance.

Role in Establishing Muslim Identity:

1- Establishment of the Basis of Two-Nation Theory:

By clearly differentiating Islamic beliefs and practices from those of Hinduism, Mujaddid Alf Sani laid the early intellectual foundation for what later became known as the Two Nation Theory.

He stressed that Muslims were not just a religious group but a distinct political and cultural community, separate from the Hindu majority. His emphasis on preserving Islamic identity and

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resisting religious amalgamation helped shaped the idea that Muslims and Hindus had fundamentally different worldviews, values, and ways of life - a notion that later played a key role in the demand for a separate Muslim state.

2- Regaining India for Islam :

Sirhindi sought to re-establish Islamic dominance in the Mughal court and Indian society after it had been weakened under Akbar's rule. His goal was to bring back the influence of Islamic principles in governance and public life. He envisioned a society where Shariah would guide state policies, cultural norms, and social practices, ensuring that Islamic values

remained central to the political and moral fabric of the empire.

3- Opposition of Heterodox Movements:

He strongly rejected Din-i-Ilahi and other pluralist trends. He criticized the inclusion of non-Islamic elements into Muslim life, including interfaith marriages, courtly innovations, and the influence of worldly scholars detached from Islamic norms.

4- Reformed Mughal Royal Decrees (Farmans):

By influencing Mughal rulers like Jahangir and Shah Jahan, Sirhindi successfully steered royal policies toward Islamic principles. His teachings impacted court decisions, official appointments, and the visible

practice of Islam in public life, helping to realign the empire's governance with Shariah-based values.

5- Revival of Muslim Identity:

Sirhindi's ultimate aim was to awaken the Muslim Ummah to its true Islamic identity. He strongly opposed cultural mixing and religious confusion, striving to help Muslims regain their distinct beliefs, values, and way of life in the Indian subcontinent.

Conclusion:

In the Mughal era, Islamic identity faced serious challenges due to Akbar's religious innovations like Din-i-illahi and Sulh-i-kul, which aimed to merge religions and undermine Islamic supremacy.

In response, Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi,

as a key reformer who revived Tawheed, reasserted the authority of Shariah, and emphasized Quran-Sunnah-based theology. His mission was both spiritual and political focused on restoring the purity of Islam and preservation of Muslim identity. Through his Maktubat, he guided scholars, nobles and even influenced rulers like Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb towards Islamic orthodoxy. He condemned bid'ah and corrected deviations in Sufism, aligning it with Shariah. Sirhindī's efforts preserved Sunni Hanafi thought and inspired later reformers like Shah Waliullah and Syed Ahmad Shaheed. His stress on Muslim distinctiveness made him a forerunner of Muslim nationalism. His legacy proves that in times of religious deviations, reform through faith and knowledge can restore direction.

good attempt. but the answer is lengthy and might affect your time management, so, shorten it a bit.