

How did the Reform Movement of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi influence the history of muslim india?

## Outline

### 1- Introduction.

1.1 Historical perspective: Situation in Akbar's era.

- a) Secular policies of Akbar
- b) waived jizya from hindus.
- c) Intermarriage b/w muslims and Hindus
- d) Policy of Sulh -i- kul
- e) Introduction of Din-e-ilahi
- f) The rise in the Bakhti movement
- g) Misinterpretation of wahdat-ul-wajood
- h) Growth of unorthodox sufism.

### 2- Impacts of the reformist movement:-

2.1 Religious Impact.

- a) Neutralized Akbar's innovation in religion
- b) Tackled Unorthodox sufism.
- c) Influenced jahangir to re-impose



Shariah law.

d) Introduced philosophy of wah. dat. ul-shahood

e) purified muslim belief Through teachings of the holy Quran.

### 3. Social Impacts:

3.1 - Abolishment of Inter-religion marriages of hindus and muslims.

3.2 - Termination of Sajda-e-Tazami

3.3 - Transformation of society Through observance of fast and Zakat.

3.4 - Reconstruction of mosques.

### 4. Political Impact:

4.1 - Introduced Two-Nation Theory

4.2 - Influenced Jahangir to re-impose Jizya.

### 5. Critical Analysis

### 6. Conclusion.



## Introduction

Opposing Akbar's policy of sulh-i-kul, which preached peace with all the religions, Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi popularly known as 'Mujadid-Alf-sani' - reviver of the second millenium - rejuvenated Islam in the indian sub-continent by rendering in life-long services in Islam. In his work, he stressed avoiding bidat and innovation in religion, negated the misinterpreted concept of wahdat-ul-wajood, rectified muslims beliefs through the ideology of wahdat-ul-Shahid which means 'Tauheed' which utterly clarified the oneness of Allah to all muslims, specifically to elites. In addition, he stressed upon muslims to purify their faith by following the Quran and Sunnah and not putting their faith in karamat or miracles of saints instead of teachings of the holy Quran.

- Through his reforms he not only denounced Akbar's 'Din-e-Ilahi' but also revived the muslim identity.



Creating an atmosphere of awareness in the sub-continent during Jahangir's reign. As a result muslims became the staunch believer of the two-nation theory and strengthen their belief in the separatism of Islam from hinduism and all other prevailing religions in the indian sub-continent.

## 1. Historical perspective

Mujadid Alf Sani's untiring efforts were a reaction against the miserable situation of muslims and Islam in Akbar's era. The already prevailing Bhakti movement - nationalist movement with ideology of one-nation without any division of religion - Threatened the muslim's separate identity in the sub-continent, as it influenced many saints and the masses. In addition mughal emperor, Akbar, had already married a number of hindu women, and the whole empire was under the influence hindu practices, such as



refraining from cow slaughter, demolishing the mosques and other religious monuments of muslims.

Moreover, Akbar had already abolished jizya, allowed inter-marriage between hindus and muslims and also introduced a new religion named 'Din-e-ihai', standing on the concept of sulah-e-kul, peace with all religions.

Moreover, The already prevailing misinterpreted philosophy of wahdat-ul-wajood, no difference between man and his creator, was striking the very core of the muslim belief. Furthermore, the Ulema-e-Su; worldly minded Ulemas, had ceased referring to Quran and Hadith in their commentaries and considered jurisprudence (law)-the only religious knowledge.

Last but not least, Muslims had become so deficient in the true teachings of Islam, they had more belief in karamats and miracles of



Saints rather than islamic teachings.

Hence all the reasons pushed Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi to stand against the mughal emperors and rejuvenate Islam in its true essence.

“The situation was so worst that it was given up in the royal society to openly speak (tasreeh) the name of the prophet of Islam. And those, whose names were Ahmed and Muhammad, changed their names. Cow slaughtering, which had been important symbols of the practices of Islam in India, was declared prohibited. The mosques and the tombs of the muslims were ruined and demolished. The places of worship of the infidels were paid great reverence and their important festivals were celebrated with full honor and respect.”

(Itihab-un-Nabuwat)



## Influence of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi on the Subcontinent's history.

### Religious Impacts:

Through his reformist movement, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi was successful in neutralizing Akbar's innovation in religion, discrediting bidat, and changing the mentality of Akbar's successors towards a more orthodox Islam. Under Mujaddid's influence, not only Jahangir re-impose Shariah for the general public but also ended all the unislamic practices in the Mughal court. He looked upon ruler as 'all soul' and the people as 'all body'. According to him, if the soul goes wrong, the body is bound to go astray.

### According to Shaikh

'The king being on the right path means that the world is on the right path; his waywardness is the waywardness of the whole world'



Through his maktubats - letters written to his contemporaries in the Mughal court - and verbal preaching, he spread the message of Islam amongst the nobles and the common Muslims. Moreover, he further purified Islam by countering the unorthodox Sufism and mystic beliefs. His greatest contribution, no doubt, is the philosophy of wahdat-ul-shahood against the philosophy of wahdat-ul-wajood where he differentiates between man and the creator of man in the light of Quran and Hadith and negates worshipping anyone except Allah and thousands of souls from indulging in the greatest sin, Shirk.

As a result of his efforts, Muslims were not only able to gain their lost prestige but also maintain a separate identity and lead their lives according to the Teachings of the Quran and Sunnah.



### 3. Social Impacts:

Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's work not only rejuvenated, revived and purified religion but also transformed society as a whole. With the teachings of Quran and Sunnah, he brought muslim back on the path of Islam and stopped them from further straying from religion. People started focusing on the main pillars of Islam, observed prayers and fasts, paid zakat and dignified the practice of Hajj.

Moreover, the mosques were rebuilt that were demolished during Akbar's reign. Similarly, the practice of Sajda-e-Tazami was abolished during Jahangir's time.

Overall, the reform movement changed the Muslim's thinking about religion and refreshed their belief. Therefore, the social impacts of Mujaddid Alf Sani were felt throughout the Indian sub-continent.



#### 4 Political Impacts:

Apart from his religious and social reforms, Mujaddid greatly influence the Mughal court through his Makhtubats (letters) to the nobles, who then influenced Jahangir to make decisions in the light of Quran and Sunnah. And, later he directly influenced Jahangir when he became the part of the royal court and re-imposed all the Shariah laws, including collection of Jizya, hence leaving the impact on the whole society.

Shaykh Ahmad Rishindi is also known as the pioneer of Two-Nation Theory as he was the first who argued and gave great stress on the wide and unbridgeable gap between Islam and Hinduism. He believed that these two countries could never compromise on their religious practices, and till the end of his life, emphasized the distinction between Islam and other religion. As a result when



mughal rule ended and muslims saw a downfall, they raised the slogan of seperate country for muslims based on the ideology of the two-Nation Theory.

### Critical Analysis:-

Truly, it would not be wrong to say that mujaddid Alf Sani revived and rejuvenated Islam in its true essence. At that time, Islam was at its lowest ebb in the Indian-sub-continent due to Akbar's attempt at innovation in the religion for his political gains, the rise of bhakti movement and practices of unorthodox sufism. However, if Mujaddid had not taken a stand and not started his reformist movement, the muslims would have lost the status of seperate nation and the authenticity of their religion. He considered himself more than a wali, a renovator of religion who had revived Islam in the second



millennium.

Conclusion:

In nutshell, Shaikh truly earned the title of Mujaddid of the millennium by giving Islam a new life in the Indian sub-continent.

As discussed above, he emerged on the horizon when the Mughal court was totally under the influence of worldly Ulemas.

According to him, "In the previous regime all types of darkness and disturbances were only because of the avarice of the Ulama-i-Su".

Moreover, it was the time when Akbar introduced a new religion, Din-e-Ilahi, which was threatening the Islamic way of life. Hence, Shaikh, through his Maktubat-e-Iman-Rabbani, neutralised Akbar's innovation in religion during Jahangir's reign.

Although Akbar's selfish acts harmed Islam greatly in 16th century, Shaikh's efforts saved Muslims of Indian sub-continent from

dooming.