



Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's Contribution to the Religious Reform and Revival: A Response to Akbar's Heterodoxy in Mughal India

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the deep religious, spiritual, and revivalist impact of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, widely known as Mujaddid Alf Thani. He lived during a turbulent period in Mughal history. In this disrupted period, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi rose a strong defender of orthodox Islam and worked tirelessly to restore the dignity of Islam. The study discusses how he systematically revived the authority of Shari'ah, challenged the deviations introduced through the heresies of Din-e-Ilahi, and confronted the influence of misguided Sufis, corrupt scholars, and overly rationalistic thinkers. One of his major theological contributions was the propagation of the concept of Wahdat al-Shuhud, offering a balanced Sufi interpretation that separated authentic spiritual experience from speculative philosophical claims. Through his Maktubat, his training of disciples, and his engagement with political leaders, Sirhindi played a crucial role in reshaping the intellectual and moral environment of Mughal India. His influence can be traced in the policies of emperors such as Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb, and his efforts provided the groundwork for later Islamic revival movements in South Asia. Using qualitative, historical, and descriptive research methods, this paper examines Sirhindi's reform strategies, spiritual outlook, and the enduring legacy of the Mujaddid tradition.

Keywords: Mujaddid Alf Thani. Islamic Reform, Wahdat al-Shuhud, Naqshbandi, Akbar, Mughal India

Mention in the table a brief sketch of Second author's Contribution:- (Maximum two Authors allowed only)

A. Introduction

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi widely accepted and revered as the reviver of the second millennium who practically revived the glory of Islam during the period of the political, social and religious turmoil. The polity of his time was marked by an absolute monarchy confessing all rights reserved for the King. The social fabric was torn into such a degradable place where there was no sense of morality and the scenes of crimes were patronized by the authorities. The religion was threatened to wipe out assuming that its age has come to an end. With deep insight, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah have mercy on him) was a visionary reformer who observed the moral and social decline of his time with deep spiritual insight. Recognizing the growing distance of Muslims from Islamic teachings, he began his mission to restore the religious, ethical, and social life of the community in accordance with the Shari'ah. His goal was to reshape the entire social order upon the model of Islamic law and values.

He reminded the Muslims of India and the subcontinent of a long-forgotten message—a call to return to the true spirit of Islam that had been obscured for centuries. His letters and teachings revived in them the consciousness of faith, purity, and obedience to divine law. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi also extended his efforts to the rulers of his time, counselling them with wisdom and urging them to govern in harmony with Shari'ah principles. Before the mighty emperors Akbar and Jahangir, he stood firm and unshaken, proclaiming the truth of Islam with courage. He endured the trials of imprisonment and persecution but refused to compromise on the honor of his faith. Allama Iqbal later celebrated his courage and steadfastness, praising him as the guardian of the Muslim nation's spiritual wealth and the man whose spirit rekindled freedom among believers:

"He whose head never bowed before Jahangir's throne, Whose burning spirit rekindled the fire of freedom, The guardian of the nation's faith in India, Whom God awakened at the destined hour."¹

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's reformist work was not confined to India alone. His vision of revival extended beyond borders where he sent letters

¹. Allama Iqbal, *Bal-e-Jibreeel*. (Lahore: Kapoor Art Printing Works, 1935), 211.

and delegations to influential figures, calling them toward spiritual renewal and true faith. His efforts made him not only a reformer of the Indian Muslims but a reviver of Islam across regions.

B. Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the major religious, spiritual, and reformative contributions of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi during the Mughal period. This study will analyze his efforts in reviving Islamic faith, defending Shari'ah, and reforming the religious, moral, and social conditions of the Indian subcontinent. It will also examine his role in correcting the deviations of Akbar's *Din-e-Ilahi* and re-establishing the authority of Islamic law and orthodoxy.

C. Research Methodology

This research is qualitative and descriptive in nature. It is based primarily on the study, analysis, and interpretation of historical, religious, and biographical sources related to Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi. The data for this study has been collected from authentic *Urdu* and English texts, including classical writings, and letters (*Maktubat*) of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi.

D. Discussion

Discussion is based on the following:-

1. Religious and Social Conditions of Sirhindi's Era

To truly understand his greatness, one must first comprehend the religious and social conditions of India during Sirhindi's lifetime. When he was born, Emperor Akbar ruled the subcontinent. Akbar was skilled in statecraft and administration, yet he exceeded his rightful bounds by interfering in matters of faith. Under the influence of philosophers and rationalists around him, he began to undermine the foundations of Islam. Around 1582, he introduced a new religion called *Din-e-Ilahi* a fabricated creed intended to unite all faiths under his authority and strengthen his empire. In the name of religious harmony, Akbar began to distort the core principles of Islam. The Shari'ah was mocked, and the non-Muslims grew arrogant, while Muslims fell into despair. Contemporary historians like Abdul Qadir Badayuni documented these events, and Shaykh Ahmad

Sirhindi himself described the conditions of that era in his famous collection of letters, *Maktubat*.

According to Mulla Badayuni, Akbar sought to please his Hindu subjects and surrounded himself with corrupt scholars who, for the sake of royal favor, denied the authority of revelation and divine law. They mocked belief in prophecy as blind imitation and labeled it unfit for intelligent minds. Akbar, influenced by such men, went so far as to publicly oppose Islam, claiming that its injunctions were temporary and irrational. As blasphemy and criticism of Islamic beliefs spread, many Hindus and even Muslims swayed by them began to speak irreverently of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.²

The entire subcontinent was engulfed in chaos. Disorder and corruption prevailed, and people of all ranks submitted themselves to the emperor's so-called spiritual authority. Akbar denied the Qur'an, rejected life after death and the Day of Judgment, and even ordered that the traditional Islamic creed "*There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger*" be replaced with "*There is no god but Allah, Akbar is His Caliph.*" This blasphemy provoked outrage, leading to the decision that such utterances be limited to the royal court.

Worse still, Akbar made prostration a gesture of worship reserved solely for God compulsory before himself. Wine was declared lawful; the *jizya* tax was abolished; beef was forbidden; and the breeding of dogs and pigs was encouraged, with these animals being absurdly regarded as divine manifestations. Fasting, prayer, and pilgrimage were discontinued, and the Islamic calendar was replaced with Akbar's so-called "*Divine Era.*" He declared that after a thousand years, Islam had come to an end. Arabic, the sacred language of the Qur'an, was despised, and the call to prayer and congregational worship in the royal court were stopped altogether.

In one of his letters, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi described the tragic state of Islam under such rule. He wrote that for nearly a century, Islam had suffered isolation and weakness. The disbelievers were not satisfied

². Abdul Qadir, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*. Ur.tr., Mehmood Ahmad Farouqi Shaykh (Lahore: Ghulam 'Ali and Sons, 1980), 2: 465.

merely with enforcing their own customs—they sought to erase Islamic law altogether and remove every sign of Muslims from the land. Matters had reached such extremes that a Muslim displaying Islamic symbols could be executed. Cow slaughter, a defining mark of Islamic identity in India, had become a capital crime. Non-Muslims might agree to pay the *jizya*, he observed, but they would never tolerate the sacrifice of a cow.³

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi concluded that the fate of Muslims depended upon the early assertion of Islamic identity within any reign; if delayed, the situation would only worsen. His letters reflect both his pain at the condition of Muslims and his unwavering resolve to restore Islam's rightful place in society.

2. The Religious Crisis and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's Reform Efforts

During the time of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (Mujaddid Alf Thani), one of the most dangerous challenges to Islam came from the so-called '*ulama al-su'*' (the corrupt scholars). Although religious scholars were not few in number, most lacked awareness of the prevailing conditions and failed to fulfill their intellectual and moral responsibilities. In contrast, this group of worldly clerics remained highly active, seeking favor with the rulers and echoing whatever pleased the court. They exaggerated the emperor's virtues, and many even omitted the blessed name of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ from their writings, replacing it with the heretical phrase "*La ilaha illa Allah Akbar Khalifatullah*" (*There is no god but Allah, and Akbar is His Caliph*).

In such an environment, no one dared to uphold the Quranic duty of "*amr bil ma'ruf wa nahi 'anil munkar*" (enjoining good and forbidding evil). Another intellectual challenge of the period was the rise of so-called rationalist thinkers led by Abu'l Fazl, Faizi, and their father, Mubarak. These men propagated the dangerous idea that after recognizing the oneness of God, prophethood was no longer necessary. According to them, religion should be accepted only when it conformed to human reason, and if any divine command appeared contrary to rational judgment, it

³. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktubat Imam Rabbani*. Vol.1. Ur. Tr., Muhammad Sami' Ahmad Naqshbandi (New Delhi: 1996), Letter no. 81.

should be discarded. Their philosophy reduced faith to mere intellectual speculation and eroded the foundations of Islamic belief.

It was in this climate of spiritual confusion and moral decay that Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi raised his voice. He recognized that the revival of Islam required not only intellectual reform but also spiritual purification. At that time, Sufism which had long been a noble discipline for the refinement of the soul — had itself become tainted with misunderstandings. No one could imagine being a true Muslim without associating with a Sufi order. In India, three major Sufi orders were dominant: *the Qadiriyyah*, *the Suhrawardiyyah*, and *the Chishtiyyah*. Each had produced saints and scholars, yet with the passage of time, excessive devotion to metaphysical ideas like *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of existence) had led to errors and confusion among the less educated followers.

Toward the end of Akbar's reign, a great Sufi master from Afghanistan introduced the Naqshbandi order into India. This order was distinct in that it emphasized strict adherence to the *Shari'ah* and sought to purify Sufism from un-Islamic innovations. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi became one of the foremost leaders of the Naqshbandi path. Through his teachings and letters, he redefined the relationship between *Shari'ah* (the law) and *Tariqah* (the spiritual path), emphasizing that true Sufism could never exist apart from the observance of divine commandments. His reform of Sufism restored balance between the inward and outward dimensions of Islam.

At that time, Indian society was also heavily influenced by Hindu customs that had gradually infiltrated Muslim life. Non-Islamic traditions such as certain forms of ritualism, music, and social ceremonies had become common among Muslims, blurring the distinction between Islamic and Hindu practices. Sectarian conflict between Sunnis and *Shi'as* had further divided the community, spreading disorder and mistrust across society. In the midst of this turmoil, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi emerged as a beacon of guidance. He began his spiritual and educational

movement to eliminate these corruptions and restore the pure teachings of Islam.

His first and most decisive service to the faith was the eradication of *Akbari Ilhad* -the heresy introduced under Akbar's patronage. When Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi began his work of renewal (*tajdid*), the religious and political condition of India was extremely bleak. Akbar's heterodox creed had pushed Shari'ah into the background, and idolatrous practices had taken root even among Muslims. The great historian Mulla Badayuni, in his *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, exposes the full extent of this heresy. He records that Akbar had imposed the worship of the sun four times a day at dawn, noon, sunset, and midnight as an obligatory practice.⁴

But sun worship was not the only element of this misguided religion. Akbar's so-called *Din-e-Ilahi* incorporated numerous Hindu rituals and beliefs. Badayuni notes that the followers of this creed also venerated fire, water, stones, trees, and other natural objects — even cows and their dung treating them as sacred symbols. They adorned themselves with the *tilak* and the *zunnar* (the Brahmanical cord), adopting external marks of Hindu devotion. As this heresy spread, even people of noble rank and learning bowed before the emperor's spiritual authority. Akbar eventually denied the Qur'an and introduced the blasphemous formula replacing the Islamic creed with "*La ilaha illa Allah Akbar Khalifatullah*." This distorted creed was recited publicly, and its followers were compelled to renounce Islam.⁵

Badayuni documents that converts to the *Din-e-Ilahi* were required to make a formal declaration, renouncing Islam and pledging loyalty to Akbar's new faith. The declaration read:

"I, so-and-so, willingly and with full devotion, renounce the Islam inherited from my forefathers and enter into the Divine Faith of

⁴. Abdul Qadir, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*. Ur.tr., Mehmood Ahmad Farouqi Shaykh Ghulam 'Ali and Sons (Lahore: 1980), 2: 471.

⁵. Abdul Qadir, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*. Ur.tr., Mehmood Ahmad Farouqi Shaykh Ghulam 'Ali and Sons, Lahore. (1980) 2: 479.

*Akbar, accepting all four stages of sincerity — renouncing wealth, life, honor, and religion.*⁶

Such declarations illustrate the depth of Akbar's religious deviation and the danger it posed to Islam in India. His followers greeted one another with new phrases: when one said "*Allahu Akbar*," the other would respond, "*Jalla Jalaluhu*." Prostration before the emperor was made compulsory and renamed "*bosa*," meaning "kiss of reverence."

Furthermore, practices explicitly prohibited in Islam were now encouraged. Wine, usury, and gambling were legalized, and even religious scholars and judges participated in drinking sessions during the Persian New Year festivities. The beard a symbol of the Prophet's Sunnah was condemned, and courtiers took pride in shaving as a sign of loyalty. The obligatory ritual bath after impurity (*ghusl al-janabah*) was abandoned, and circumcision another prophetic practice was discouraged for children under twelve. Veiling, the emblem of modesty in Islam, was declared unnecessary, and women were encouraged to appear unveiled in public.⁷

Arabic, the sacred language of revelation, was despised. It was declared a crime to study or teach it. The study of Qur'anic exegesis, jurisprudence, and Hadith was condemned as backward. Mulla Badayuni records that "reading or knowing Arabic became a fault, and those who studied *Qur'an*, *Hadith*, or *Fiqh* were treated as outcasts."⁸

It was in these dark circumstances that Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi rose as the Mujaddid, the reviver of the second millennium of Islam. Through his scholarship, spirituality, and fearless struggle, he restored the dignity of Shari'ah, reformed the Sufi path, and reawakened the Muslim community's sense of identity and purpose.

3. Relying Completely on Reason and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's Response

⁶. Abdul Qadir, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*. Ur.tr., Mehmood Ahmad Farouqi Shaykh Ghulam 'Ali and Sons, Lahore. (1980), 2: 497.

⁷. Abdul Qadir, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*. Ur.tr., Mehmood Ahmad Farouqi Shaykh Ghulam 'Ali and Sons, Lahore. (1980), 2: 498-500.

⁸. Abdul Qadir, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*. Ur.tr., Mehmood Ahmad Farouqi Shaykh Ghulam 'Ali and Sons, Lahore. (1980) 2: 498-500.

The great achievement of Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Thani (may Allah have mercy on him) was the renewal of religion and the revival of Islam. During that time, the rationalist faction had created great intellectual confusion. Abu'l Fazl, Faizi, Mubarak, and Akbar himself were among those who belonged to this free-thinking circle. According to them, after acknowledging the oneness of God, belief in prophethood was not necessary. Everything had to be tested on the touchstone of reason. When Muslims weakened, non-Muslims found the opportunity to launch severe attacks on Islam.

Describing the weakness of Islam and the miserable condition of Muslims, Hazrat Mujaddid writes in his *Maktubat Sharif*:

*"The helplessness of Islam has reached such a stage that the unbelievers openly speak against Islam and its followers. They unhesitatingly practice the laws of unbelief and praise the followers of those laws in the streets and markets, while Muslims are forbidden to act upon the commandments of Islam and are reproached for doing so."*⁹

In another letter he writes:

"The infidels, without hesitation, demolish mosques and build their temples in their place."

A group of intellectuals had become accustomed to judging all religious injunctions solely by reason, straining to reinterpret the laws of Shari'ah. About these rationalists, Hazrat Mujaddid says:

*"They accept only what their minds can grasp, and whatever lies beyond their understanding they reject."*¹⁰

Imam Rabbani keenly felt the gravity of these circumstances. He wrote several treatises refuting the arguments of the rationalist school. Most notably, in his *"Risalah Ithbat al-Nubuwwah"* (Treatise on the Proof of Prophethood), he explained the lofty position of prophethood and, by

⁹. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktubat Imam Rabbani*. Ur. Tr., Muhammad Sami' Ahmad Naqshbandi. New Delhi, (1996): Vol. 2. Letter No. 65.

¹⁰.Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktubat Imam Rabbani*. Ur. Tr., Muhammad Sami' Ahmad Naqshbandi. **New** Delhi, (1996): vol. 2. Letter. 162.

both rational and scriptural proofs, demonstrated its necessity against the claims of the intellectualists.¹¹

4. Reconciliation of Shariah and Tariqah

One of Hazrat Mujaddid's most important services was defining the boundaries between *Shari'ah* (the divine law) and *Tariqah* (the spiritual path). He revived the true method of Sufism within the Naqshbandi order, in which adherence to *Shari'ah* is essential. Since he was the sincere disciple of Khwaja Baqi Billah (may Allah have mercy on him), he propagated this order widely throughout India and gathered thousands of disciples who spread his teachings. This was a great achievement: he re-introduced the correct form of mysticism and stressed obedience to the law.

The author of *Rud al-Kauthar* writes:

"The essence of this path, in both its principles and its branches, lies in perfect conformity to the Sunnah and avoidance of innovation. Its followers dress like the Companions, live as they did, remember God in the same manner, observe self-accountability, maintain the etiquette of the Shaykh, seek little hardship yet gain abundant grace, and learn not only the perfections of sainthood but also the perfections of prophethood. In this order there is no forty-day retreat, no forced remembrance, no music, no mixed gatherings, no prostration of reverence, no pantheistic claims such as *Ana'l-Haqq*."¹²

Hazrat Mujaddid himself wrote in a letter to Shaykh Badi' al-Din:

"In short, all outward and inward perfections depend upon the perfections of the *Shari'ah*. The divine sciences and insights rest upon the theological doctrines established by *Ahl al-Sunnah*. Thousands of mystical visions are not equal to a single matter of belief concerning God's

¹¹. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Risalah Ithbat al-Nubuwwah*. Ed. Ghulam Mustafa Mujaddadi. Farid Book Depot, Mumbai. (2015)

¹². Shaykh Muhammad Ikram, *Rud-e-Kawthar*. Idara Saqafat-e-Pakistan. Islamabad, (1982): 284.

transcendence. Any spiritual states or illuminations that appear contrary to a single injunction of *Shari'ah* are not worth even a grain of barley, for such manifestations are signs of deception.¹³

He viewed *Tariqah* and *Haqiqah*, the inner path and ultimate truth as branches of the same blessed tree, both serving the *Shari'ah*. Thus he united mysticism and law, establishing a balanced and authentic spiritual tradition that endures to this day.

Hazrat Mujaddid (may Allah have mercy on him) never regarded even the slightest deviation from the *Shari'ah* and the spiritual path (*Tariqah*) as permissible. Any mystical unveiling (*kashf*) or intellectual reasoning that contradicted the *Shari'ah* he considered invalid.

He said:

*"The Tariqah and the Shari'ah are one and the same, and there is not even a hair's breadth of difference between them. The only distinction is one of summary and detail. Any argument or mystical insight that opposes the Shari'ah is to be rejected."*¹⁴

Some people regard the *Shari'ah* as a mere shell and the inner truth (*Haqiqah*) as the kernel. The Mujaddid considered such people to be far from true understanding and said:

*"They think that the Shari'ah is the outer covering and that the Haqiqah is the inner core but they do not understand what the reality of this relationship truly is."*¹⁵

In short, the Mujaddid declared false all those confused Sufi ideas which sought to separate the boundaries of *Sharia'h* and *Tariqah*. He demonstrated that both are interdependent and inseparable. He removed from the hearts of people all the misunderstandings that had been spread concerning *Sharia'h*, and he built the Naqshbandi order upon these two firm pillars, ensuring that no deficiency would ever enter the edifice of Islam. This was indeed one of his greatest services.

¹³. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktubat Imam Rabbani*, Ur. Tr., Muhammad Sami' Ahmad Naqshbandi. New Delhi, (1996): Vo. 1. Letter no. 276.

¹⁴. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktubat Imam Rabbani*, Ur. Tr., Muhammad Sami' Ahmad Naqshbandi. New Delhi, (1996): vol. 1. Letter. 43.

¹⁵. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktubat Imam Rabbani*, Ur. Tr., Muhammad Sami' Ahmad Naqshbandi. New Delhi, (1996): vo.1. letter.1. letter. 40.

5. The Concept of Wahdat al-Shuhud (Unity of Perception)

Among Hazrat Mujaddid's many contributions, his exposition of the concept of *Wahdat al-Shuhud* holds special importance. Before him, many Sufis followed the philosophy of *Wahdat al-Wujud* (Unity of Being), which had been advanced by Ibn al- 'Arabi. This doctrine held that in all existence there is only one true Being that of Allah and that all created things are merely manifestations of that one Being. Just as the waves of the sea are not separate from the sea itself, so the entire universe is but the appearance of God. In this view, there exists only one real existence the Divine. The *Sufi*, upon reaching the state of annihilation (*fana fi'llah*), sees nothing but God and declares, "*I am the Truth (Ana al-Haqq).*"

After deeply examining this philosophy through spiritual experience, Hazrat Mujaddid presented instead the concept of *Wahdat al-Shuhud*, the unity of perception. He taught that the entire universe is not God, but the manifestation of God's power and majesty within creation. Everything reflects His glory; the oneness is one of reflection, not of essence. The Sufi perceives the light of God shining through all things, yet this radiance is only the reflection of His beauty, not His very Self. In this way, the Mujaddid beautifully reconciled the doctrine of *Wahdat al-Wujud*, proving that the true intent of the early saints was not pantheistic union but the recognition of divine manifestation.

He explained:

*"Among the noble Sufis, those who affirm Wahdat al-Wujud and see all things as 'He' — meaning that all are within His command do not intend by this that the Divine Essence and created things are literally one. Far be it that the Necessary Being becomes the contingent or that transcendence is turned into resemblance such a notion is disbelief and heresy. Their true meaning is only this: that everything besides God is nothing, and only He truly exists."*¹⁶

¹⁶Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktubat Imam Rabbani*. Ur. Tr., Muhammad Sami' Ahmad Naqshbandi. New Delhi, (1996): Vol. 2. Letter. 44.

Hazrat Mujaddid clarified that when the early saints used the phrase "All is He" (*Hama Ust*), they never meant that the world was identical with God or that God had entered His creation.

He wrote:

"Those Sufis who say 'All is He' do not regard the world as united with God, nor do they affirm incarnation or pervasion. Their expression is based on the aspect of dependence, not on actual identity of existence. Although their words may outwardly suggest unity of being, God forbid that they ever meant such for that would be sheer disbelief and heresy. Since their expressions refer to the manifestation of God, not to His essence, the real meaning of Hama Ust is Hama az Ust 'All is from Him.' When they are overwhelmed in ecstatic states, they may utter 'All is He,' but their intended meaning is that all things are by Him."¹⁷

He further explained that when Sufis reach the station of annihilation in God (*fana fi'llah*), certain utterances may escape their lips which seem to suggest union or incarnation. The Mujaddid interpreted these as the result of overpowering divine love:

"Such expressions arise from the dominance of love. The overwhelming affection for the Beloved removes from the lover's sight everything other than the Beloved. It is not that, in reality, nothing else exists for such a belief would contradict reason, revelation, and sensory experience but rather that love's gaze sees only the Beloved and becomes blind to all else."¹⁸

In this way, Hazrat Mujaddid removed every doubt and confusion that people held regarding the sayings of the earlier Sufis. Through the doctrine of *Wahdat al-Shuhud*, he uprooted all possible misunderstandings. This clarification was one of his greatest intellectual and spiritual achievements.

6. The Continuation of His Mission

¹⁷Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktubat Imam Rabbani*. Ur. Tr., Muhammad Sami' Ahmad Naqshbandi. New Delhi, (1996): Vol. 3. Letter.89.

¹⁸ Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktubat Imam Rabbani*. Ur. Tr., Muhammad Sami' Ahmad Naqshbandi. New Delhi, (1996): Vol. 1. Letter . 31.

Another great service of Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Thani (may Allah have mercy on him) was the formation of a body of Sufis and scholars. No nation can progress unless it possesses a group devoted to spreading its teachings; no religion can survive unless there exists a community that lives according to its principles. When such a group practices the divine law and works to propagate it, society grows stronger; when it becomes lazy, society decays and disintegrates. All the saints of Islam were aware of the Qur'anic principle:

"Let there arise among you a community who call to good, enjoin right, and forbid wrong."¹⁹

Hazrat Mujaddid formed a group of righteous men, instilling in them zeal for the preservation and propagation of Shari'ah, and continued his reformatory work tirelessly. He organized extensive efforts for preaching and propagation. He sent trained scholars to every corner of the country, making it clear to the people that the enforcement, protection, and spread of the Shari'ah were the essence of religion. He not only dispatched his disciples and scholars throughout India but also sent letters and delegations to Afghanistan and Badakhshan to emphasize the importance of divine law. The result was that Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir later considered nothing more important than the administration and implementation of the Shariah. Even Jahangir, in the last years of his life, inclined toward enforcing Islamic law. Though weak and lacking firmness, he abandoned his earlier irreverence toward the Shariah and began to show it respect. Shah Jahan completely abolished the practice of prostration before the throne, built numerous madrasas, patronized learning, and generously supported the scholars all of which were outcomes of Hazrat Mujaddid's movement.

According to biographers, the Shaykh had about nine hundred thousand disciples and five thousand deputies (*khulafa*). Muhammad Hashim Kishmi, in *Zubdat al-Maqamat*, wrote detailed biographies of many of them, and the author of *Tajalliyat Imam Rabbani* summarized the lives of forty-five deputies.

¹⁹. Al-Quran. 03: 104.

Among his successors, foremost were his sons, through whom the *Naqshbandi* order spread across India and beyond. Although he had seven sons, three Shaykh Muhammad Farukh, Shaykh Muhammad 'Isa, and Shaykh Ashraf passed away in youth, and his youngest, Shaykh Muhammad Yahya, was still a child. Three sons, however, studied directly under him and continued his mission: Khwaja Muhammad Sadiq, Khwaja Muhammad Saeed, and Khwaja Muhammad Ma'sum (may Allah have mercy on them all).

7. His Sons and Spiritual Successors

Khwaja Muhammad Sadiq (may Allah have mercy on him) was the eldest. Signs of sainthood were visible on his face even in childhood. At an early age he achieved spiritual stages that elder seekers could hardly reach. He was fully endowed with both outward and inward knowledge. Although he lived only thirty-four years, he guided many students in the path of Islam through teaching and example.

Hazrat Mujaddid wrote about him:

*"The benefit this humble one has received is through the beauty of his sainthood, and the benefit my son, the greatest, has gained is through the detail of that sainthood."*²⁰

According to *Tazkirah Mujaddid Alf Thani*, he passed away in Sirhind on Monday, 9 Rabi' al-Awwal 1025 AH, due to plague.²¹

The second son, Khwaja Muhammad Saeed (may Allah have mercy on him), like his elder brother, possessed great piety and spiritual aptitude. He studied both the rational and transmitted sciences under the celebrated scholar Mulla Tahir Lahori and began teaching at the age of eighteen. He could solve complex problems within moments, astonishing the scholars of his time. The *Maktubat* mentions both brothers, Muhammad Saeed and Muhammad Ma'sum, as the spiritual heirs of their

²⁰. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktubat Imam Rabbani*. Ur. Tr., Muhammad Sami' Ahmad Naqshbandi. New Delhi, (1996): vol. 1. Letter. 311.

²¹. Muhammad Manzoor Nu'mani, *Tazkira-e-Mujaddid Alf-e-Thani*, Al Furqan Book Depot. Lucknow, (1992): 288.

father. Khwaja Muhammad Saeed passed away on the 27th of Jumada al-Akhirah.²²

The third son, Khwaja Muhammad Ma'sum (may Allah have mercy on him), was unique in his knowledge and spirituality. His contemporaries acknowledged his excellence. He was the inheritor of his father's sciences and secrets. At sixteen he completed his education and turned to spiritual disciplines under his father's supervision, who appointed him to the rank of *Qutb* (spiritual pole). Muhammad Hashim Kishmi records the Shaykh's glad tidings to him:

*"You shall be the Qutb of your time."*²³

In *Zubdat al-Maqamat*, Mujaddid Alf Thani is quoted as saying that his son Muhammad Ma'sum was inherently worthy of the highest Muhammadan sainthood. Through him the Naqshbandi order flourished widely, and even today countless seekers trace their lineage to Hazrat Mujaddid through him.²⁴

In short, these three sons were fountains of blessing. Even today, throughout the subcontinent and other parts of the world, the streams of knowledge and spirituality that flow are reflections of their grace. About their inner capacities, Hazrat Imam Rabbani's Pir Hazrat Khwaja Baqi Billah wrote:

*"The children of this Shaykh, though still young, are repositories of divine mysteries. In short, they are a blessed tree; may God nurture them in goodness."*²⁵

Through these sons the Mughal rulers also received the honor of serving religion. Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir was a disciple at the hand of Khwaja Muhammad Ma'sum, and many other nobles were devoted to this blessed family.

²². Ibid., 289.

²³. Muhammad Hashim Kishmi, *Zubdatul Maqamat*, Ganj Shakar Printers. Sialkot, (1986): 431.

²⁴. Muhammad Hashim Kishmi, *Zubdatul Maqamat*, Ganj Shakar Printers. Sialkot, 1986), 428.

²⁵. Khwaja Baqi Billah, *Kuliyat Baqi Billah*. Malik Din Muhammad and Sons. (Lahore: n.d.), 131.

Besides his sons, Hazrat Mujaddid had thousands of deputies who spread the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order. To list all their names is impossible, but among the most prominent were: *Badr al-Din Sirhindi, Khwaja 'Ubaydullah, Shaykh Badi' al-Din Saharanpuri, Shaykh Hasan Barqi, Shaykh Hamid Bengali, Haji Khizr Khan Afghan, Shaykh Tahir Lahori, Khwaja 'Abdullah (Khwaja Khurad), Maulana 'Abd al-Ghafur Samarkandi, Maulana Qasim 'Ali, Khwaja Muhammad Ashraf Kabuli, Maulana Muhammad Salih Kolabi, Maulana Muhammad Siddiq Kashmiri, Khwaja Muhammad 'Uman Badakhshi, Shaykh Muzammil, Hafiz Mahmud Lahori, Shaykh Nur Muhammad Pani, and Maulana Yusuf Samarkandi.*

As a result of these efforts, the spiritual path of Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Thani spread widely throughout the Indian subcontinent. Many great saints of later generations carried forward his mission. Among them were Khwaja Muhammad Ma'sum, Hazrat Ishaan, Hazrat Syed Jamaat Ali Shah, and Hazrat Mian Sher Muhammad Sharaquri (may Allah have mercy on them all). Through their work, the Mujaddidi teachings continued to polish the rusted hearts and minds of people, as they do even today.

8. Results of His Mission

Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Thani (may Allah sanctify his noble secret) brought about such a magnificent revolution that scarcely any parallel to it can be found in the entire history of the world. A humble, mat-dwelling, God-intoxicated dervish stood up against the entire system of government a man whose only weapons were the rosary in his hand, the words of Allah and His Messenger pbuh upon his tongue, the remembrance of God in his heart, piety as his armor, and sincerity as his provision for the path. Around him was a small band of God-absorbed devotees, each of whom, at his own station, was engaged in spiritual combat against the tyrannical powers of the age with the light of his faith. Opposed to them stood a vast empire an absolute monarch wielding every material resource imaginable. Yet the world witnessed that this dervish of God triumphed. The king and all his armies were compelled to bow before him in reverence and to wait upon the signal of his eyebrow. His purpose was not the mere change of a dynasty, but the transformation of the very ideology of kingship. Thus, upon the same throne that Akbar

who was the rebel against Islam had once occupied, there sat Jahangir, a supporter of Islam; then Shah Jahan, a lover of Islam; and after him Aurangzeb Aalamgir, the living embodiment of Islamic teachings, a ruler who spent his nights in prayer and his days in fasting. Their ascension to the throne was the sweet fruit of the blessed efforts of Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Thani (may Allah sanctify his lofty soul).

9. Conclusion

The revolution Shaykh Ahmad brought about was all-encompassing. He reformed the officials of the state and guided the common people. He corrected the behaviour of the emperor himself. He waged jihad against the corrupt scholars (*'ulama al-su'*), removed the deviations of misguided Sufis, restrained the ideas of freethinkers and irreligious men, and opposed the excesses of both extremist and denigrating *Shi'a* sects. He provided the general public with spiritual and intellectual training, guiding the astray and the innovators back to the straight path. In every aspect of the religion beliefs, worship, transactions, punishments, manners, morals, politics, and social relations he rendered outstanding services of renewal and reform.

Moreover, he left behind a legacy of enduring blessings: noble writings, virtuous descendants, and a wide circle of deputies and disciples whose spiritual influence spread to every corner of the world. From the day of his blessed departure until now, countless works have been written about his life and his achievements in the renewal of religion. Yet even today, the situation remains as it was in the beginning: with every passing age, new aspects of his exalted personality continue to be revealed. Each era brings fresh insights into his thought and mission and writing about these ever-unfolding dimensions remains a need of the present time. His blessed personality was a masterpiece shaped by the Divine Hand a being of many dimensions, each of which shone with a unique brilliance and charm. The passage of time has not dimmed his radiance; rather, it has only increased its glow.

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