**Shaikh Ahmed Sarhindi (1564 – 1624) (Mujaddid Alif Sani)**  
“He is described as Mujaddid Alf Sani, meaning the "reviver of the second millennium",  
for his work in rejuvenating Islam and opposing the heterodoxies prevalent in the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar.”  
  
**Introduction:**  
Shaikh Ahmed Sarhindi popularly known as Mujaddid Alif Sani was born in 1564. He was an Indian Islamic scholar from Punjab and a prominent member of the Naqshbandī Sufi order. He is described as Mujaddid Alf Sani, meaning the "reviver of the second millennium", for his work in rejuvenating Islam and opposing the heterodoxies prevalent in the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar. This great reformer of Islam used all his energies to purge Islam from all evils.  
  
**Early Education:**  
Shaikh Ahmed received his early education at home.  
He learnt The Holy Quran by heart very early.  
Then he took to the study of Hadith, Tafsir and Philosophy and went to renowned scholars at various place.  
When he was 28 he went to Delhi and joined the Naqshbandiyah order, and soon received its Khilafat from Khwaja Baqi-Billah (972-1012 A.H).  
Khwaja is the person from whom this order begins in India.  
It is said that he was directed in a vision to leave his home, Afghanistan, and go to India, where he had initiated a very great man into the order.  
This great man was Shaikh Ahmad.  
  
**Religious Conditions During Mujaddid’s Time:**  
When the great Mujaddid came to his task of reform,  
he found that Tasawwuf had taken complete possession of the Muslim soul.  
A Pantheistic deity had been substituted for the Monotheistic, Personal Transcendent God of Islam.  
Excessive belief in Karamat or miracles of saints was commonly cherished.

Many un-Islamic means of the development of occult powers had been introduced into Tasawwuf itself.  
The mystic had gone to the extent of denying the commandments of Shari’at or the Law of Islam as universally binding,  
**They regarded Shari’at itself as something external and superficial.**  
They were indifferent to the Sunnah or the example of the Holy Prophet.  
**Ulema referred to Jurisprudence rather than Quran**  
  
**“He had to re-establish the authority of The Holy Qur’an and Sunnah and reduce Fiqh or jurisprudence to its proper place. He had to contend against the mystic pantheistic theory of Wahdatul Wujud of Ibnul ‘Arabi.”**  
  
**United Social Order:**  
In such a situation when the Muslim forces had weakened,  
Akbar lost hope that the Ulema would be successful in establishing a united social order on the basis of Islam’s superiority relying on an Iranian concept that after every thousand years a requirement of life and its exact anti-thesis becomes the crying need of the times.  
  
**At the cost of Islam, Akbar employed the worldly-wise Ulema and intellectuals who repudiated revolution and denied the validity of Shariah.**  
The high and the low declared spiritual reality to the Emperor who rejected The Holy Qur’an and refused to accept the concept of life after death;  
in the Kalema in place of the words “Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah” the words “Akbar is the Khalifah of Allah” were openly substituted.  
  
**Hazrat Mujdid Alf Sani’s Reforms:**  
Thus the times cried for the appearance of a great reformer.  
He had to establish that he was the reformer.  
He had to contend against the Ulema of all shades and opinions.  
He had to challenge the mighty Emperor who had set up a rival religion with inexhaustible material, intellectual, demographical, and other resources totally inimical to Islam.  
He had to re-establish the authority of The Holy Qur’an and Sunnah and reduce Fiqh or jurisprudence to its proper place.  
He had to contend against the mystic pantheistic theory of Wahdatul Wujud of Ibnul ‘Arabi.  
  
**Religious Services:**  
In the 16th century, during the reign of Akbar, Islam faced overwhelming threats.  
The Din-i-Ilahi, as propounded by Akbar, was a mixture of various religions.  
It recognized no gods or prophets and the emperor was its chief exponent.  
Akbar was actually influenced by the Bhakti Movement that had started during the Sultanate period.  
Many sufis condemned his religious innovations.  
However, the man who took it upon himself to revive Islam was Sheikh Ahmad of Sarhind, commonly known as Mujaddid Alf Sani.  
Through verbal preaching, discussions and his letters addressed to important nobles and leaders of religious thought, he spread his message amongst the elite in particular.  
  
**Refusal to prostrate before Jahangir**  
As soon as Akbar died and Jahangir ascended the throne, Sheikh Ahmed Sarhindi came out to reform and to do away with all Un-Islamic practices and beliefs initiated by Akbar among the Muslims. Sheikh Ahmed Sarhindi never entered into any political conflict directly. He wrote letters to all the nobles' of Jahangir's court. Most of them were the same who were present in Akbar's court. The opponents of Sheikh also came out and he was dubbed as an atheist by them. So Sheikh was summoned to the court of Jahangir ans was asked to bend down. He was so rigid in his approach towards Islam that he did not bend before the emperor as per the prevalent custom. His plea that bending down before anyone except Allah was un-Islamic annoyed Jahangir, who ordered for his imprisonment in the Fort of Gawaliar for two years due to his discourteous behaviour.  
  
**Preaching of Islam during the Imprisonment in Gawaliar's Fort**  
Hazrat Mujaddid continued preaching of Islam during the imprisonment in the Fort of Gawaliar. Due to his efforts thousands Non-Muslims accepted Islam. After a year however, Jahangir under the influence of his Islamic writings released him from jail and offered huge gifts to him. The king befriended and respected the Sheikh. He listened to his advices. After Maghrib prayers the king would grant him special audience where Sheikh would talk about religious affairs to Jahangir. He asked his son Shah Jahan to become a spiritual disciple of the Sheikh.  
  
  
  
**Full Command over Quranie Knowledge:**  
At the time of laying claim in Mujaddid hood at the head of the forthcoming thousand years of Islam, he had established solid reputation for erudition, and full command over Qur’anic and canonical knowledge. He had reached the highest step of the most respected disciplines of the Sufi orders –  
which was a rare distinction. Mujaddid adopted the following measures to fight against the heresy:  
  
**Preparation of Disciples:**  
Firstly, he prepared a number of his disciples for the work and sent them in all directions in India as well as the contiguous Muslim countries to preach the true Islam.  
  
**Maktubat-e-Imam Rabbani**  
Shiekh Ahmed adopted an effective method of persuasion by writing letters to the leading nobles of the royal court. His letters are known as Maktubat-e-Imam Rabbani. Through preaching, discussions and his maktubat addressed to important nobles and leaders of religious thought, he spread his message amongst the elite in particular. Letters and messages were sent to them exhorting to serve the cause of Islam. He also requested the scholars to show the right path to the people, and the King. He asked the saints to give up their Un-Islamic practices and beliefs.  
  
**Books and Magazines (Risala)**  
Rejecting the heterodoxies of the great Mughal Emperior Akbar, this eminent Islamic mystic of this time and a hardcore Sunni Muslim strongly refuted the shia point of view in his writing entitled Risala Tahliliyya and made a major contribution towards rehabilitation of orthodox Islam in India.  
  
He wrote many books, including his famous works, Isbat-ul-Nabat and Risal-i-Nabuwat. In these works the need and importance of prophethood was described. His greatest work on Islamic philosophy was the Tauheed-i-Shuhudi. Sheikh Ahmed continued preaching Islam till the end of his days. He urged peopled to adhere to the accepted and clearly laid down path of Islam.  
  
**Correspondence:**  
Secondly, he started a vast correspondence with men of eminence in various parts of these countries. These epistles were widely circulated. They expounded religious truths, and laid the greatest emphasis on Ittiba-e-Sunnat.  
  
**Enlistment of great Nobles:**  
Thirdly, he enlisted the great nobles of the Imperial Court as his disciples and used them to bring about a change in the life of those circles, and to influence the Emperor towards a change of heart.  
“Sheikh Ahmad's greatest contribution was undoubtedly the task of countering unorthodox Sufism and mystic beliefs. He wrote many books, including his famous works, Isbat-ul-Nabat and Risal-i-Nabuwat. His greatest work on Islamic philosophy was the Tauheed-i-Shuhudi.”  
  
**Campaign After Akbar:**  
Fourthly, when Akbar died and Jehangir succeeded, the Shaikh started a campaign.  
People had to take a vow that they would not obey any orders contradictory to Islam. This campaign was extended also to the army.  
  
**Wahdat-al-Shuhud**  
The philosophy of Wahdat-al-wujud was presented by some Sufis of Akbar's time. They believed that the entire universe is the symbol of Almighty God and a source of revelation of God's sovereignty. He vehemently opposed the Sufi doctrine of Wahdat-al-Wujud which maintained, that real Being is Allah and we are all His manifestations. This approach resulted in bringing about greater unity among people of different religion, race and tribe.  
  
**He was highly critical of the philosophy of Wahdat-al-Wujud, against which he gave his philosophy of Wahdat-al-Shuhud.**Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi preached the doctrine of what he called Wahdat-al-Shuhud i.e. unity of witnessing. Thus he maintained that we are not manifestation of One Being but it is only an appearance, not reality. The implications of the doctrine of Wahdat-al-Shuhud were quite grave as it emphasizes superiority of people of one religion on the other and for that reason that religion should be kept pure and divested of all other influences.  
According to this doctrine, the experience of unity between God and creation is purely subjective and occurs only in the mind of the Sufi who has reached the state of fana' fi Allah (extinction in God).  
  
**Sufism and Mystic Beliefs:**  
Sheikh Ahmad's greatest contribution was undoubtedly the task of countering unorthodox Sufism and mystic beliefs.  
He wrote many books, including his famous works, Isbat-ul-Nabat and Risal-i-Nabuwat.  
His greatest work on Islamic philosophy was the Tauheed-i-Shuhudi.  
He urged people to adhere to the accepted and clearly laid down path of Islam.  
  
**Two Nation Theory**  
Mujaddid Alif Sani cleared on the Muslims that they were the separate nation from Hindus and nothing was common in them.  
Therefore, the Muslim should keep themselves distinct from Hindus with reference to food, dress, social custom and way of life.  
With this declaration, he founded the first stone of Two Nation Theory in Indo-Pak subcontinent which led to the success of Pakistan Movement and establishment of Pakistan.  
That's why Hazrat Mujaddid was rightly called First Founder of Pakistan.  
  
**He passed away in 1624.**  
  
  
**Works:**  
Most famous of his works are a collection of 536 letters,  
collectively entitled Collected Letters or Maktubat, to the Mughal rulers and other contemporaries.  
It consists of three volumes.  
An elaborate printing of the book was accomplished in 1973 in Nazimabad, Karachi, Pakistan.