

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi's Views on Prophethood (*Nabuwwah*)

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, (971/1564-1034/1624) known for his revivalistic accomplishments as *Mujaddid Alf-i-Thani* (the Renovator of the Second Millennium), confronted a number of issues both of theological and social importance, the need to reassert and revitalize the importance of the institution of Prophethood (*Nabuwwah*) being one among the most important ones. There is no disagreement among Muslim scholars about Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi being 'the Renovator of the Second Millenium', but there is difference of opinion as to what was the greatest among a series of his brilliant revivalistic accomplishments. The differences fall into three categories, which can be summarized as follows.

The first category of scholars highlight that advocating the superiority of the shari'ah over *tariqah* is the central point of Sirhindi's wide ranging revivalistic endeavour, and therefore, he deserves to be called the *Mujaddid Alf-i-Thani*. No one before him had laid stress on the issue in such a forceful, confident and authoritative manner. He outrightly made it clear that the *tariqah* was meant to subserve the shari'ah and this checked the tendency to overlook or reject the shari'ah.¹

To the second category of scholars, Sirhindi's sturdy attack on the popular mystic philosophy of *wahdat al-wujud* was his main revivalistic achievement.² Sirhindi unlike traditional *ulema* not only criticized the doctrine but also gave an alternative philosophy of *wahdat al-shudud*, which he claimed to be closer to the concept of *Tawhid*. In their view nobody had come out so forcefully against that doctrine of sufism before him.

According to the third group of scholars, Sirhindi regained India for Islam, which was about to slip into the hands of religious eclecticism, flourishing under the patronage of the Mughal emperor Akbar.³ They believe that Sirhindi saved Indian Muslims from the immediate danger of comprehensive religious, intellectual and cultural apostasy, which had been made virtually unavoidable by Akbar's passionate drive and iron will and the intelligence of his sharp-witted

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