CHAPTER VI

REACTION TO AKBAR'S RELIGIOUS EXPERIMENTS
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As mentioned earlier Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi stayed for a long time at the royal court of Akbar in Agra. He personally observed the whole political, social, cultural and religious atmosphere and even came into contact with many eminent ulama, sufis, scholars and nobles as well as government officials in order to study their attitude - both thinking and activities, towards Islam, its Prophet, Revealed Book and the followers. Though it is unknown whether he ever met Emperor Akbar, sources say he was fully acquainted with the circumstances of the time and specially the situation in the royal circle. Born in the first decade of Akbar's reign, Shaikh Ahmad was forty three at the time latter's death in 1014 A.H./1605 A.D. Hence the last twenty five years of his whole period of administration were completely in the eyes of the saint. All the contemporary and later works - including his own maktubat and other treatises - reveal him a great opponent and severe critic of the policies and attitude Akbar adopted for Islam and Muslims. But before studying the Shaikh's reaction to Akbar's religious thought and activities, it is better and necessary first of all to bring to light the Emperor's religious experiments.

Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, who ruled over India for about a half century, (1556-1605), played most important
part in consolidating the Mughal empire in the subcontinent. In the words of Ishtiaq Husain Quraishi, "He built up, from extremely shaky foundations, a mighty and splendidous empire." All the contemporary sources, whether produced in India or the works of foreign travellers, are unanimous in their assessment of Akbar as possessed of a powerful personality, magnetic and inspiring. His period is credited with political stability, peace, harmony and economic prosperity. However, we are informed of great concern and distress, on the issue of religion and religious activities in the Royal Court, among the Muslims of the age. Badayuni throws immense light on Akbar's dislike and hatred of Islam and Muslims. The other historian and the works of contemporary ulama and poets also supply the material in the context. Let us study the process of his religious experiments at the court in a very systematic and chronological framework.

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3. According to Professor K.A. Nizami Akbar's attitude towards Islam falls into three distinct phases:
   First phase 1556–1574
   Second phase 1575–1580
   Third phase 1581–1605
   He says, "His (Akbar's) attitude towards Islam was of sympathy in the first, of apathy in the second and antipathy in the world". See for details, Akbar and Religion, pp.100, 101.
Akbar, in the early years of his reign, seems a pious, true and devout Muslim, having great love for and extreme devotion to Islam, its Prophet, and Almighty Allah. He offered namaz punctually, observed the fast of Ramazan, paid zakat and fulfilled religious obligations. He took very much interest in religious festivals. He also helped poor and needy persons, distributed alms and charity among them and worked for their welfare and upliftment. He reversed ulama, respected sufis and mazhaikhs and regarded religious personalities in high esteem. He also paid visits to the shrines of eminent saints — especially the dargah of Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti of Ajmer. His firm belief and religious confidence strengthened in him strong feelings to work in accordance with Islamic laws and customs. Although he married the daughter of Bihari Mal in 1562\(^1\), remitted the pilgrim tax in 1563\(^2\) and abolished jizya in 1564\(^3\), he however, continued to show his deep interest in religious and religious matters and displayed religious reactions of different sorts, specially during his important campaigns.\(^4\)

1. For details see, Akbar, the Great Mogul, Delhi 1966 (Third India Reprint), pp.42-43.
2. Ibid., p.47.
3. Ibid., p.48.
It was his religious stanchness that in 1574 he changed the name of Prayag to Allahabad. Moreover, the dismissal of Bayram Khan which took place in 1560 can also be seen into religions perspective.

Akbar had deep love and respect for the Prophet of Islam during the early years of his reign. It is reported that when Abu Turab, on his return from Hajj pilgrimage, brought a stone with the impression of the Prophet's foot on it, he (Akbar) went out several miles to receive the relic. He also respected the family of the Prophet. when in 1564 one of his wives gave birth to twins, Akbar named them Mirza Hasan and Mirza Husain.

Akbar, in the early years, was so much devoted to his religion and religious ideology that he was generally

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1. Ibid., pp.161-2.
critical of other modes of thought and behaviour. It appears that he strictly followed the Sunni path as there is an example of its that in 1569 Mirza Muqim of Isfahan and Mir Yaqoob of Kashmir were put to death on the recommendation of Shaikh Abdum Nabi and other ulama for certain Shia-Sunni differences.¹

We are also informed of Akbar's extreme religious aptitude, his long and untiring association with religious and spiritual exercises with sincerity and genuine faith. He performed his religious duties meticulously. He himself offered the five time namaz punctually and even exhorted others to offer prayers regularly and in congregation.² Seven imams (leaders of the congregational prayers) were appointed by him for each day of the week. Sometimes he himself called people to for namaz by pronouncing the azan³. Shaikh Farid Bhakkari says that Akbar even cleaned the a mosque with his own hands. In the matter of dress also, he

². Ibid., p.350. Also, Akbar and Religion, p.108.
adhered to the norms of religion. Farid Bhakkari writes, "The late Majesty (Akbar) used to wear dress according to the practice of the Prophet and used to strive hard in enforcing things permitted and preventing acts forbidden (by the laws of Shariat)." Shahnawaz Khan also says the same thing. According to him Akbar in those days strictly followed the Shariat and made all possible efforts for 'amr bil maruf and nehi an' al mukar'. Badayuni has given the details of his repetition of the names of God though out the nights in meditation. To quote him: "Most of the time he (Akbar) passed in discussion about 'qala Allah', God says, and 'qala Rasul', the Prophet says. He kept himself engaged in spiritual sayings, learned discussions and ascertaining the truths of philosophical and theological problems etc. He passed the whole night in meditation on god, and repeating 'ya Hu' (O He) and 'yadhadi' (O'guide), the names of god, in which he became well-versed. In order to offer his thanfulness for any Divine favours, he (Akbar) used to sit in morning, by way of humility, alone on a black stone in an old room, in the neighbourhood of the royal palace."

Interest in religious festivals

Akbar took great interest in religious festivals. Professor Nizami writes, "Whether due to youthful exuberance or in order to study public attachment with saints and shrines. Akbar sometimes restored to strange tracks. Many people made flags of different colours and carried them, along with offerings and presents, to the tomb of Syyid Salar Masu Ghazi at Bahraich. Large contingents went from Agra also and kept vigil for several night preparing for the occasion. Akbar went incognito to see there flag processions. When a person seemed to have recognized him, he immediately rolled his eyes and squinted, rendering recognition impossible". ¹

Akbar laid great emphasis on Hajj pilgrimage. A large number of Muslims went to Arabia every year on the royal expenses. ² Akbar sent gifts to the sharif of Mecca though these pilgrims. A huge amount was every year given to them

¹. Akbar and Religion, p.103.
   Also Akbar Nama, Vol.II, p.145.

   Also, Tabaqat-i-Akbari, Vol.II, p.517.
for the distribution among the needy and poors of Mecca and Madnia. Once a sum of six lakhs of rupees was sent for this purpose. He is also reported to have financed the construction of a Khangah for the stay of pilgrims in Hijaz. According to Badayuni Akbar had issued a general order to the effect that any one who desired for Hajj might go to Mecca at the royal expenses. The author of Maathir-i-Rahimi informs us that when the Kingdom of Gujarat was entered amongst the added territories, Akbar decided to send a special delegation of pilgrims from India consisting of bright hearted persons of Indian, Central-Asian and Khorasanese origin with ration and other materials, like the caravans of Egypt and Syria, to Hajja pilgrimage through the ports of Gujarat. It appears that at one stage in 1576 A.D. he himself expressed his wish to performed Hajj. At one time the zeal of the Emperor reached such a level that he stripped himself, donned the pilgrim's garment (ihram) and uttering the words 'Allahuma labbaikh, Allahuma

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p.239.
labbaik' (My God I am present, My God I am present) went on for some distance to see the pilgrims. Such rights moved the spectators and convinced them of his deeply religious sentiments. He had appointed 'Mir-i-Hajj' to look after the needs of the pilgrims Khwaja Yahya, a descendant of Khwaja Obaidullah Abrar, Sultan Khwaja, son of Khwaja Khwand Mahmoud, and Abu Turab acted as the leaders of the Hajja pilgrims and defrayed the expenses of the party on different occasions.

Akbar held ulama, the religious scholars, and mashaikh, the sufi-saints, in high esteem. Encouraged by his excessive interest in traditional religion, the section of the conservative ulama made a bid for controlling his religious behaviour and consolidating their position at the court. He appointed Shaikh their position at the court. He appointed Shaikh Abdun Nabi as his 'Sadr-us-Sudur', and in course of time he developed great respect for him. Akbar was so deeply attracted towards the Shaikh that he often visited his

2. Ibid., pp.151, 246, 320.
   Also, Akbar Nama, Vol.III, pp.382-83.
   Also, Akbar and Religion, p.110.
   Also The Religious Policy of Akbar, p.16,
residence to attend his discourses on hadith, the traditions and figh, the Islamic jurisprudence. Sometimes he also did not hesitate in putting the Shaikh's shoes in order to pay his extreme regards to him. One occasion he sent to him through Abdul Qadir Badayuni costly and beautiful Nakhudi Shawals, prepared in the royal workshop, with a message, "These shawls are from our own private treasury and we had them prepared for you, do use them". As Sadr-us-Sudur Abdum Nabi enjoyed wide powers with reference to the grant of 'madad-i-maash' land. Akbar added more powers and enhanced his status and position. He also sent Prince Saleem to the

3. It may be mentioned that Abdun Nabi's attitude towards Akbar also became over bearing. Once, some saffron water was sprinkled on the clothes of Akbar on the occasion of his birth day. The Shaikh objected to this and in great anger threw his rod towards Akbar. It fell near him and broke into pieces. Angrily be enquired from the Emperor as to why he had put on the dress of 'ahl-i-bid'at', (people who indulge in innovation. Akbar was exasperated but he controlled himself. He expressed his distress and agony to his mother who pacified him by her remark that the incident really enhanced his dignity since it was in the enforcement of Shariat principles that the Shaikh had acted in that way and that God would reward for his (Akbar's) patience. See Zakhirat-ul-Khwanin, Vol.I, pp.69-70.
Shaikh's house to study the Chehl Hadith of Maulana Abdur Rahman Jani.¹

Similarly, Abdullah Sultanpuri, the other distinguished alim of the period, also succeeded in getting close to Akbar. Jealous of Abdur Nabi's influence he developed acrimonious attitude towards him. He was known as "Shaikh-ul-Islam and 'Makhdum-ul-Mulk".²

Besides, Akbar also highly regarded the mashaikh of his period. During early years of his reign Akbar's faith in sufis and saints was beyond the measure. During his conflict with Hence he approached Shaikh Jalaluddin Thanesari and sought his blessings.³ On another occasion he paid another visit to the Shaikh.⁴ Likewise, a large jagir was granted to Syed Muhammad Ghanth of Gwalior, the famous sufi of the Shattari silsilah, and, after his death, he continued to pay reverence to his son Shaikh Ziaullah.⁵ When Prince

². Akbar and Religion, p.115.
Saleem started his education, Akbar held a huge ceremony and invited Maulana Mir Kalan Harawi to bless the prince.\(^1\) He also had firm faith in and highly regarded Shaikh Saleem Chishti, through whose blessings he was rewarded with the birth of Prince Salem. He is reported to have set his wife, (Prince Saleem's mother), to the saint's house in order to obtain his spiritual favour.\(^2\) Moreover, Prince Murad was also born at the Shaikh residence.\(^3\)

As the Shaikh was ninety five years old in those days. Akbar punctually went to his Khangah. He was concerned of his old age and deteriorating health.

Akbar is also reported to have approached and obtained blessings from Shaikh Burhan, Sahikh Nizammuddin of Narnaul,

\(^{\text{1. Ibid., p.170.}}\)

\(^{\text{2. Ibid., pp.108-9. In this context Badayuni says, "As the Emperor has some issues who died early, and in this year one of the respected ladies became pregnant he sought the help of the Shaikh ul-Islam Chishti, a resident of Sikri, and sent his lady in the sacred precinct of the Shaikh. The Shaikh had, before this, given the good news of the auspicious birth of the Prince and the King, delighted with this good news, used to visit the Shaikh after every few days and was awaiting the fulfilment of the promise. For these mutual interviews, he built a big edifice on the top of the hill of Sikri, near the monastery of the Shaikh."}}\)

\(^{\text{3. Ibid., p.123.}}\)
Shah Abdul Ghafoor of Azampur, Miyan Abdullah of Badayuni and Shaikh Nizamuddin of Ambethi.¹  

Both Abul Fazl and Badayuni inform of Akbar's faithful attitude towards Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti of Ajmer. He went there first of all in 1562 in order to pray for the birth of a male child. Badayuni say, "On the 8th Jamada I, 969, (14th January 1562), he went on a pilgrimage to the holy tomb of the pillar of Shaikhs and saints, Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti (may God sanctify his secretly), and bestowed gifts and bounties on assiduous in prayers."² Subsequently, he undertook several journeys to Ajmer. His second visit to the shrine of great chishti saint is reported to have been paid in 1568, after his victory of Chittor.³ This time he went on foot to the shrine of the Khwaja.⁴ The third visit of Emperor Akbar, to Ajmer, was paid in 1570, after the birth of Prince Saleem, in order to pay homage to the great saint.⁵ At this time he ordered the construction of

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buildings at Ajmer and Nagaur. He also arranged for the management of the dargah and provided funds for the care and comfort of the visitors.¹

Akbar also visited the tombs of the mashaikh of Delhi and pleased the saints and the poor by his gifts of dirhams and dinars.² In 1564 he visited the shrine of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. Once on his way back from the dargah he had to face an attempt on his life. It is his love for the muslim saints that he attributed his providential escape to the spiritual help of the Shaikh and other saints of Delhi.³ He also went to Hansi and visited the tomb of Shaikh Jamaluddin, and distributed charity.⁴ He went to see the dargah of Shaikh Fareeduddin Ganj-i-Shakar at Pakpatan, in

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1. Ibid., pp.350-51. Abdul Baqi Nahavandi has given a detailed account of this journey of Akbar. He says that Akbar went on a pilgrimage to the tomb of Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti (may God sanctify his secrets). His Majesty engaged himself in the fulfilment of the vows, started from Agra on Friday 12th Shaban, 977 (20th January 1570), for Ajmer where he performed all the conditions of pilgrimage and rules of circumambulation and bestowed presents on the saints and poors. See Maathir-i-Rahimi, Vol.I, p.768.

2. Ibid., pp.857-61.


Punjab, were, throughout his stay, he performed prayers and spiritual exercises.\(^1\) There he also kept himself engaged in the company of saints and men of God.\(^2\) In 1574 he sent Mir Ghiyathuddin and Naqib Khan to the shrine of Shaikh Sharafuddin Yahya at Maner, along with a large sum of money, in order to ask for inspiration.\(^3\)

**Change in attitude and construction of the Ibadat Khana**

Now we find a change in Akbar's religious outlook. We also observe a state of enquiry and skepticism in him. Contrary to his interest and attraction the religion; its followers and obligations, during the early years for understanding the principles of Islam and the ultimate Reality as well. He also seems to passionately interested in the mystery of the relations between God and man, and in all the deep questions concerned with that relation. With he returned home after gaining a long succession of remarkable and decisive victories which left him without an important enemy, he issued orders for the erection of a building at Fatehpur Sikri entitled 'Ibadat Khana' the House of worship.

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the chief object of Akbar in raising this religious hall was to provide facilities to the selected persons representing the various schools of Muslim theological and philosophical learnings to provide for his heart yearning for truth. Initially he invited four classes of Muslims, viz. ulama or the doctors of Islamic jurisprudence and laws; mashaikh or the Muslim saints; Syeds or the descendants of the Prophet of Islam; and umara or important and selected nobles of the royal court. Giving a detailed account of this Hall of worship, Mulla Abdul Baqi Nihavandi, the author of Maathir-i-Rahimi, says, "As from the beginning of his youth fortune avoured him (Akbar), through the guidance of the auspicious fortune. His Majesty, the Caliph of God, had an inclination for the company of the masters of learning and perfections and the association of the men of sufi traits. He always paid respect to this honoured class of people and admitted them in his heavenly assembly and paradise-like hall. By listening to the intricacies of the sciences, ancient and modern, he acquired a perfect store of knowledge of the history of the ancient religious and the narration of the former peoples and course accounts of the stages of the world. And through the great interest he took in this group of people at the time of his return from the auspicious
journey to Ajmer, in the month of Zi-Qaida 982 (Feb. 1575) corresponding to the 20th year of the Ilahi Era, he issued this high command that skilled masons and thoughtful builders should build a house and a home for the sufis in the neighbourhood of the lofty palace; and that none except the group of Syeds of high status and the barred and the Shaikhs should lie there. The expert engineers in accordance with the world-abiding order, laid foundation of a building comprising of four wings. And on the completion of that auspicious edifice His Majesty the Emperor (to whom the sky was a slave) spent his honours on Friday nights and other holy nights in that holy building and the house of love, in the company of the people of Happiness till the down of the great lamp, ie. sin. He had fixed the following arrangement: in the West, the Syeds should sit; in south the ulama and the wise men; in the north mashaikh and men of spiritual attainment should without any difference; and umara or nobles, who had connections with masters of learning and men of sufi traits, should sit in the east. His Majesty bestowed his bounties on the people of all the favour groups. He selected from amongst the members of the assembly a number of people so that they may bring to the notice of the King deserving people who may be present within the precincts of the Ibadat
Khana. And with his ocean - bestowing hand be used to give to every one handfuls of *asharifis* and rupees. And to those who by ill luck were kept away from the receipt of His Majesty's bounty, having gathered them on Friday morning in the enclosure before the Ibadat Khana, in a line, he used to give handfuls of gold; and if by chance some uneasiness came to His Majesty's nature, he appointed one of the servants of the court he trusted for great kindness and compassion.1"

So far as the proceedings of the House of Worship, Ibadat Khana, are concerned, Abdul Qadir Badayuni sheds a flood of light on what happened there. He says, "After performing his Friday prayers he (Akbar) used to come out from the new monastery (Khanqah) of the Shaikh-ul-Islam and arranged for an assembly in that house of worship wherein no other than mashaiikh of the time and ulama and learned scholars, with a few of the favourites and courtiers were allowed admission. All sorts of instructive and useful discussions were held. One day Jalal Khan Qurchi, who was my patron and through whose influence I entered the services in the midst of the conversation, said that he had gone to Agra

to see Shaikh Ziaullah, son of Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth. The latter, he said, was so much hard up that one day in the assembly having taken some quantity of pulse, he took a part for himself and gave a part to me and the part he sent for his family. On hearing this news His Majesty was affected, and listening to his words, he called for Shaikh Ziaullah and fixed a place for him in the Ibadat Khana. Every Friday night he called for the groups of Syeds, mashaikh, ulama and umara, and when he found some unusual behaviour from these groups he laid down that nobles should sit in the east wing, the Syeds in the west, the Ulama in the south, and mashaikh in the north. He himself came to them and held discussion, ascertained the truth of his questions and employed all sorts of pleasant arguments. Countless gold was given to the deserving ones through the favourites in proportion to their deserving. His Majesty himself distributed among the Ulama and the learned scholars many useful books which were entered in the general treasury from Itamad Khan Gujrati during the conquest of Gujrat. Of the several books given to me was the one called Anwar-ul-Mishkat.¹

Thus we see that the meetings of the Ibadat Khana continued, in the beginning, very quietly and with full discipline. It also created in Emperor a love of Islam and Muslims. But very soon, in the subsequent years, it lost its influence and played a significant role in Akbar's religious deterioration. In the near future the house of worship (Ibadat Khan) became a centre great differences amongst the and other groups. Ill-feelings arose among themselves even about the seats and the order of precedence. When the discussions started, it was discovered that ulama, as mentioned earlier, divided in groups and even individually against each other. They differed not only on common issues but on fundamentals as well and showed intolerance for each other's views. All these circumstances led emperor Akbar to great anxiety and disappointment.

Stormy discussions in the Ibadat Khana led Akbar to great discussions in the Ibadat Khana led Akbar to great disappointment and unpleasantness. Instead of bring credit, its proceedings brought frustration discredited to him. Hence, he thought of stepping in as one invested. As public interest in religion was necessary in order to qualify for
the investment of that authority, be, therefore, arranged Mitad (anniversary of the Prophet of Islam) celebration on a big circle. Nizamuddin Ahmad says that hardly there was anybody in the city who did not enjoy feast that day.¹

He took one step further. In June 1579 he decided to read the Khutba, congregational address, in the mosque and lead the Friday prayer. Justifying this step of Akbar, Abdul Fazl says, "As at this time it came to his hearing that the guiding Imams and legitimate Caliphs did not leave worship to others, but look this weighty matter on their own shoulders, he (Akbar) resolved to initiate them in this."²

One Friday he displaced the regular preacher (Khatib) of the chief mosque at Fatehpur Sikri, he, mounting the pulpit (mimbar) of the mosque, himself began to recite the following verses composed by Faizi, "In the name of God, who gave us sovereignty, who gave us a wise heart and a strong arm, who guided us in equity and justice, who removed all


N.B. - Nizamuddin Ahmad make it more specific by saying that Akbar wanted to emulate the traditions of the Pious Caliphs, the Abbasids and the Timurides, particularly Timur and Ulugh Beg. See, Tabaqat-i-Akbari, Vol.II, pp.344-5.
else from our thought justice, His praise is beyond the range of our thought. Exalted be His Majesty, great in the Lord."

It is reported that the situation was so serious that Akbar had hardly recited these verses that he began to stammer and tremble. He stopped and suddenly came down from the puppet only after reciting the Fatiha, the opening chapter of the Quran, and few verses of the holy scripture, and offered the Friday prayer.¹

Furthermore, Akbar felt confident to proceed with the idea suggested by Shaikh Mubarak some five years back, i.e. to claim himself a most superior religions as well as spiritual leader of the Muslims of India. In the other words he now decided to assume to himself all authority, temporal and spiritual. Accordingly was drawn up by shaikh Mubarak in the form of a Mubzar as "most just, most wise, and most

¹. It may be mentioned here that Abul Fazl himself has pointed out the public reaction to this action of Akbar. He says that his (Akbar's) recitation of the khutba gave lever to commotion and disturbance in the people. See Akbar Nama, Vol.III, p.397.

Professor Nizami is rightly of the view that obviously it was due to strong public feelings against Akbar's religious ideas that such a situation developed. See, Akbar and Religion, p.127.
learned". The document is reported to have been issued on behalf of eminent ulama of the Mughal court. According to Badayuni, "After great circumspection and deep thinking on the intricacies of the meaning of the holy verse. Obey god and obey the Prophet and those who have authority among you, and the true tradition (Hadith) surely the man who is dearest to go on the Day of Judgement is the Imam-i-Adil; whosoever rebels against him rebels against me, Akbar ruled that the position of the Just Ruler in the eyes of God is superior to that of the Mujtahid, the interpreter of the Divine Laws, the Shariat.

"And His Majesty, the Sultan of Islam, the Protector of men, the Amir of the Faithful, Abdul Fath Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar Badshah, the warrior, is the most just, the most wise and the most God-fearing. therefore, if in the problem of religion concerning which there are different concerning which there are different opinions among the mujtahids, he by his sound thinking and clear meditation, takes side with one of the quarreling parties, in order to facilitate the living of human beings, and welfare of the world order, and issues an order, all must follow it; and similarly if he issues are order just thinking, which in no way conflicts with the text of the Quran and which tends to
the betterment of the people of the world, it is incumbent upon all the act upon it and opposition to it will draw upon its perpetrator the damnation of the next world and religious and worldly grief. This truthful document is drawn up for the glory of God and the propagation of the rights of Islam, in the presence of the doctors of religion, the ulama, and learned theologians, and took place in the month of Rajab 987 A.H./August 1579. Even according to Badayuni the text of the document runs as, "Whereas India has now become the centre of security and peace, and the land of justice and beneficance, a large number of people, especially learned men and lawyers have immigrated and chosen this country for their home.

"Now we, the principal ulama, who are not only well-versed in the several departments of the laws and in the principles of jurisprudence, and well acquainted with the edicts which rest on reason and testimony, but are also known for piety and honest intention, have duly considered the deep meaning, first, of the verse of the Quran, 'Obey God, and obey the Prophet, and those who have authority among you, and secondly, of the genuine tradition, 'Surely

the man who is dearest to god on the Day of judgement is the Imam-i-Adil; whosoever obeys the Amir, obeys me; and whosoever rebels against him, rebels against me. And thirdly of several other proof based on reasoning or testimony. We have agreed that the rank of Sultan-i-Adil is higher in the eyes of God than the rank of a mujtahid.

Further, we declare that the king of Islam, Amir of the Faithful, Shadow of God in the world, Abdul Fath Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar Padshah Ghazi is a most just, most wise, and a most god-feasing king.

"Should, therefore, in future, a religious question come up regarding which these opinions of the mujtahids are variance, and His Majesty, in his penetrating understanding and clear wisdom be inclined to adopt, for the benefit of the nation and as a political expedient, any of the conflicting opinions which exist on that point, and should issue a decree to that effect - we do hereby agree that such a decree shall be binding on us and on the whole nation.

"Further, we declare that should His Majesty think fit to issue a new order, we and the nation shall likewise be bound by it; Provided always, that such order be not only in accordance with some verse of the Quran, but also real
benefit to the nation; and further, that any position on the part of his subjects to such an order passed by His Majesty shall involve damnation in the world to come and loss of property and religious privileges in this.

"This document has been written with honest intentions, for the glory of God and the propagation of Islam, and is signed by us, the principal ulama and lawyers, in the rajab in the year 987 A.H.".¹

It is stated that those who signed the mahzar were Makhdom-ul-Abdullah Sultanpuri, Sadr-us-Sudur Shaikh Abdur Nabi, Ghazi Khan Badkhshani, Hakim-ul-Mulk, Qazi Jalaluddin Muttani; Badr-i-Jahan Mufti, and Shaikh Mubarak himself.² But here it is remarkable that in accordance with Badayuni's statement all these ulama except Shaikh Mubarak subscribed to the document against their will and, that too, not without a long discussion.³ Thus the mahzar assured to Akbar the utmost power that any man could claim to exercise with the limits of Islam. Though it seems to have been issued for the propagation of Islam, to recognize the authority not

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3. Ibid., p.272.
only of Quran but of the genuine traditions of the Prophet of Islam as well, yet also according to Badayuni, it established the superiority of the intellect of the Iman-i-Adil, the title proclaimed for Akbar, and rendered any type of opposition impossible. An Islam was considered secondary.\(^1\) He (Akbar) only wanted to possess the power of ignoring all legal rulings if they inhibited him from acting in accordance with his wayward desires to injure the orthodox ulama and the position of orthodox Islam itself.\(^2\)

Complete Change in religious outlook:

Now there starts third phase in Akbar's religious attitude. During this period he adopted an attitude of distrust and hatred towards the conservative section of the ulama whom he had pampered in the first and tolerated in the second phase of his career. He gave up prayers enjoined by the Shariat, spoke with scant respect about the companions of the holy Prophet, became critical of Islamic thinkers like Razi and 'Ghazzali', and abjured his relations with the mystic centres. He criticised not only the orthodoxy but the principles of Islamic faith also. he now started working for

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\(^\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\)

\(^\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\)
his own supremacy in religious matters.¹ According to Badayuni the road to *ijtihad* (interpretation) was opened for him and it was established that the Imam (the Emperor) possessed superior wisdom. No obstacle was left in his way. The difference between things, lawful and unlawful, was abolished. The superiority of wisdom of the Imam prevailed over the *Shariat*. He now called Islam as blind acceptance of traditions.²

Akbar gradually became stranged from Islam and Muslims. By 1580 he had definitely moved away from the old moorings of his thought. According to Abul Fazl he joined the standing tongues of the bigots of the age.³ He gave up visiting the shrines of Muslim saints. He sent Murad to Ajmer in 1580 to represent saints. He sent Murad to Ajmer in 1580 to represent saints. He sent Murad to Ajmer in 1580 to represent saints. He sent Murad to Ajmer in 1580 to represent saints. "As he was himself on way to becoming a religious leader," says Professor Nizami, "It was not below

¹. *Akbar and Religion*, p.131.
his dignity to accept anybody a superior to himself." ¹ He felt that his association with and presence of the scholars of other religions might produce some sobering influence. He, therefore, came into contact with and opened the door of the Ibadat Khana to Christians, Hindus, Jains and Parsees etc. In the words of Abul Fazl, "The Emperor's court became the home of the inquiries of the seven climes (haft aqleem), and the assemblage of the wise of every religion and sect." ²

With the admission of scholars of other faiths the earlier atmosphere of recrimination and tension in the 'Ibadat Khana' disappeared. Abul Fazl says that sufi, philosopher, orator, jurist, Sunni, Shia, Brahman, Jati, Siura, Carbak, Nazarena, Jew Sabi (Sabian), Zoroastrian, and others enjoyed exquisite pleasure by holding the calmness of the assembly, the sitting of the world-lord in the lofty pulpit. ³ Now Akbar made an attempt to bring about a synthesis of various religions. In 1582 formal debates on religion were stopped and a new religion styled as the Tauhid Ilahi or Din-i-Ilahi was promulgated. In 1584 the

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1. Akbar and Religion, p.130.
3. Ibid., p.365.
Italu Era was introduced. In 1592 millennial coins were issues Professor Nizami rightly says, "Both ideologically and structurally the process of drifting away from the central traditions of Islam was completed."\textsuperscript{1} The new faith was based upon the principles of universal toleration, Sulh-i-kul. Many important Hindu, Jain, Parsee and Christian doctrines found a prominent place in it. There were the important rites and rituals of the new faith:

1. Its followers\textsuperscript{2} had to exchange greetings with the words Allah-o-Akbar and Jalla Jalaluh, and
2. The members were enjoined to distribute during their life time the food that is usually distributed after death to bless the soul of the departed;

\textsuperscript{1} Akbar and Religion., p.132.
Commenting upon this new religion of Akbar, Professor K.A. Nizami further says, "The Din-i-Ilahi had no metaphysical or even ethical foundations. No religious philosophy sustained it and higher moral or spiritual values buttressed its ethical position. It was a haphazard agglomeration of certain rituals, whimsically visualized and pompously demonstrated. Von Noer totally demolishes its foundations as a creed when he observes, 'The Din-i-Ilahi' had an importance of pre-eminent practical value; it was a political fraternity the members of which had bound themselves by oath to stand by the emperor in good all ill-fortunes, in joy and in trouble'. The use of religious medium for the realization of political objectives had an inherent danger of weakening, in the long run, the base of secular institutions." (See, Akbar and Religion, p.133).
3. Birth day parties were to be arranged compulsorily by the members.
4. During birth days meat could neither be seen nor eaten.
5. Vessels of butchers, fishers and birth catchers could not be used.
6. Cohabitation with old, pregnant or barren women and with girls under age of puberty was forbidden.  

Disciples were initiated into the fold of new religion on Sunday because on that day the world illuminating sun in its highest splendour. These disciples were required to sacrifice their property life, honour and religion for the founder of the faith, i.e. Akbar. As a symbol of initiation of shast was given to the new entrant. Every new member of Din-i-Ilahi, if he was a Muslim, had to adjure his faith in traditional (taqlidi) and metaphorical (majazi) Islam.

3. Shast is supposed to be the sacred thread that Zoroastrians and Hindus tie round their waist and round their neck. It is also known as zunnar.
4. It may be borne in mind that by demanding severance from ancestral and traditional faith in Islam, one more dimension was added to the situation: real Islam was one as interpreted by Akbar and that all other interpretation and approaches were wrong and needed to be discarded.
The phrase Allah-o-Akbar, which means 'God is Great' and is frequently repeated in the prayers, was interpreted by the followers of Din-i-Ilahi as 'Akbar is God'. According to Professor Nizami, "Being the form of solutation of the followers of Din-i-Ilahi and the opening line of all works writtens under court patronage, it came to be looked upon as a subtle way to bruit about Akbar's claim to divinity." 1 Akbar used the phrase on the coins, the imperial seals, the royal farman and in all official correspondence. 2

The Sijda or prostration is looked upon by Muslims as the exclusive right of God. But in Akbar's court it became part of religious devotion. They (the disciples) tooked upon a prostration before His Magesty as a prostration performed before God: for loyalty is an amblem of the power of God. Akbar invented Sijda for him and called it 'zamin bos' (kissing the ground), and looking on the reverence due to a king as an absolute religious command. He called the face of the king 'kaba-i-Muradat' (sanctum of desires), and 'Qibla-


2. The Mughal farman, and even nishans continued to bear the inscription 'Allah-O-Akbar' till the early years of Shahjahan's reign. Later he substituted the prase by 'Bismillah ar-Rahman ar Rahim', means 'In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful',.
i-Hajat (goal of necessities). Though being informed of the public opposition and criticism Akbar had issued orders of exemption and made prostration voluntary, he was annoyed if anybody disregarded it.

The situation did not stop here. Akbar and his associates went to great extent in demolishing in cultural structure of Islamic ideology and practices. He did not want any limitation. All the restrictions, which Islam places on autocratic power, were removed by making it subservient to law. The main obstacle in his way was the class of ulama who had not at all been impressed by the proclamation of the malizar. Even both Makhduum-ul-Mulk and Abdun Nabi seem to have had qualms of conscience at having fixed their seal to such a false and mischievous document as the mahzar. Their approval to it, though unheartily, had made them so disgraced that they retired from public life in their houses and mosques. They are reported to have told every one that their signatures had been obtained under duress and that its

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2. Ibid.
contents were illegal. Consequently, on hearing their activities, Akbar, early in 1580, decided to banish both of them to Mecca. It appears that so much discontent had spread among the ulama that the continued presence of the two divines was considered dangerous. It is to be mentioned here that they were not silent even in Mecca and Madina about what was happening in India. According to Muhammad Husain Azad, both Makhdum-ul-Mulk and Sadr-us-Sudur acquainted the scholars (ulama) of Arabia with Akbar's aberrations. The reports reached Akbar who was further enraged. On hearing the news of rebellion in Bengal and the march of Mirza Muhammad Hakim against Akbar, in 1581, the two divines returned to India. But Akbar treated them with great severity as he did not like their coming back because of their unhidden hostility towards him. Makhdum-ul-Mulk was poisoned. His dead body was taken very secretly to Sultanpur, his home town and buried there. Akbar did not stop here... All the property of Makhdum-ul-Mulk was confiscated and his sons were repeatedly tortured.

According to Badayuni his family was reduced to such penury that they did not have a cat's meal to satisfy their hunger.\textsuperscript{1} Similarly, Shaikh Abdun Nabi was also dealt with extreme cruelty. He went to the capital and had a private audience with Akbar. It is reported that the Shaikh spoke harshly to the Emperor who was so enraged that he gave his face a hard blow with his fist. Then he handed over Abdun Nabi to Todar Mal. The latter's hostility clearly reveals from Abdul Fazl's remarks when he condemns Todar Mal for his religious intolerance.\textsuperscript{2} Abdun Nabi was further humiliated and imprisoned. One night a group of men murdered him in the imprisonment and, according to Badayuni, his body was thrown in the square of minarets where it lay for several hours.\textsuperscript{3}

Akbar's hostility towards ulama and Islam did not stop here. He went further. Assasinations of Makhdum-ul-Mulk and Sadr-us-Sudur paved the way for future activities. I.H. Quraishi say; "The banishment of these two theologians in 1580 was, in fact, the beginning of a large scale prosecution of orthodox ulama who were not willing to toe \\

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the official line."¹ Many prominent ulama were victimized by suspending all grants of five hundred bighas or more.² All the qazis, appointed before the time of Sultan Khwaja, who was an active member of Din-i-Ilahi, were dismissed.³ The department of Sadr lost its significance. The lands earmarked for grants ran waste.⁴ Many ulama were banished from their houses and sent into exile either to Mecca or to distant places.⁵ Several leading scholars were secretly put to death.⁶

Akbar went further in his persecution of Islam. His hostility towards Islam and Muslim increased suddenly. It appears that his association with Rajput families and the views expressed by his Hindu wives had great impression upon him. They created a desire in him to find out the comparative merits of Islamic and Hindu ideas. Badayuni inform us that many madaris, (Muslim religious schools), and

¹. Akbar, p.161.
³. Ibid.
⁴. Ibid., p.343.
⁵. Ibid., pp.274, 277.
⁶. Ibid., p.277.
masajid, (mosques), were obliterated and a large number of religious minded Muslims left their native places.\(^1\) Akbar drove away many Shaikh and Fakirs out of Qandahar and exchanged them for horses.\(^2\)

Wine was allowed. Badayuni says, "For those addicted to it (wine) a wine shop was opened at court under the supervision of a lady, the wife of the gate-keeper who is descended from the line of drunkards, and a fixed price was settled so that any one desiring wine for illness, many dictate his name together with father's and grandfather's to the clerk and then may take it. People under this pretence gave false names and took it. And the wine-shop was opened for drunkards."\(^3\)

Similarly even according to Badayuni the public prayers (namaz-i-ba'jamat) and the azan, call for the prayer, which were said five times in the court were abolished.\(^4\)

\(^{2}\) Ibid., p.299.
\(^{4}\) Ibid.
Not only this, the names like Ahmad, Muhammad, Mustafa and others like these, in order to please the infidels outside and their daughters inside the haram were disliked. In course of time, the names of some of the favourites who bore such names, were changed. For example the names like yar muhammad and Muhammad Khan were uttered and written as Rahmat.¹

Another anti-Islamic thing, which was introduced, was that the dead body should be buried with head eastwards and feet to the west. Akbar himself used to go to bed in this manner.² Commenting upon it vincent Smith wrightly says that, "This rule appears to have been prescribed for general compliance. It had the double purpose of honouring the rising sun and offering and insult to Muhammadans who turn towards Mecca which lies westward from India".³

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2. Ibid.
3. Akbar the Great Moghul., p.158.
Besided, the tradition of having beard was very badly treated and many distinguished persons in the Mughal court very proudly shaved their beards. Dadayuni says, "He (Akbar) exhorted people to shave off their beards, and this custom became current, and those who shaved their beards brought fourth the argument that beard takes its nourishment from testicles. Previously the pious persons considered the keeping of beard as a sort of religious duty now that duty lies in shaving it off and not in keeping it."  

Furthermore, the ordinance of washing the whole body after ceremonial uncleanness was put off absolutely. They argued that the essence of humanity is the drop of semen which is the root of the good and the pious; and what it means to say that there is no need of bath after an emission of human excrement and the emission of this tender thing (drop of semen) wants no bath. The proper thing is that they should first take bath and then co-habit.  

Akbar also made it obligatory to use gold and silk dresses at prayer time.\(^1\) Namaz, rauza (the fast of Ramazan) and Hajj were abolished long before this.\(^2\) The reading and knowing of Arabic language was discouraged. The tafseer (exegesis of Quran), tradition, jurisprudence and their reading became hateful and rejected. The sciences like astrology, philosophy, medicine, mathematics, poetry, history and short stories became current and necessary.\(^3\)

The Emperor and his disciple ridiculed Islamic doctrines. Badayuni says that Akbar, in this way, cast doubts and laughed at every precept of religion and every principle of Islam whether basic or secondary like prophethood, scholastic theology (Kalam), vision of God (royat), impositions (takleef), creations (takween) and resurrection (hashh-wa-nashr) etc. If any one gave an answer he was prohibited from doing so. All took part in this discussion, rather a meeting for arrogance and defamation.

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
The heretics (din faroshan) brought as present, exploded errors from every quarter. For pampering the Emperor. Here is an instance when Akbar ridiculed islamic beliefs in open which touched the hearts of pious Muslims. One night, addressing Birbal, Akbar said, "How can reason accept this fact that a person with that weighty body can go towards heaven from his bed in one minute and exchange ninety thousand words with Almighty God and his bed still remains warm by the time he returns, and people believe this." They also considered as fake the integrity of the Quran and the verbal authority of the same, as also such matters as the perpetuity of the soul after the dissolution of the body, and rewards and punishments, except by way of transmigration, and they gave weight to such phrases as, "Truly the Quran remained in the hands of a few useless ones. Grave speaks not to anyone; none speaks after the secrets of the Quran. Festival has come and things will improve - like the face of the bride."1

Akbar and his followers still did not stop their anti-Islamic activities. They did every thing and even went out

1. The Religious Policy of Akbar., p.27.
of range in the opposition of Islam and Muslims. They were not satisfied with only claiming the dignities and status of Imam-i-Adil and 'mujtahid' for Akbar. Now they declared Akbar a prophet. Contemporary literature contains innumerable instances of poets, scholars and courtiers trying to invest Akbar with prophetic and even divine attributes.\(^1\) It appears that Akbar liked and appreciated this idea and did not stop people from such attempts.\(^2\) According to Abul Fazl he used to say that in India no one had ever set himself up as a prophet because the pretensions to divinity had suppressed it.\(^3\)

No doubt, Abdul Fazl, who had greatest insight in the mind of Akbar, prepared ground for his prophethood and invested him at every turn of his life with some attributes of the prophets. Moreover, other poets and writers, especially among the royal circle, also followed the tone

\(^1\) Mbax and Religion, p.186.

\(^2\) Ibid., Vol.III, p.397.

set by Abul Fazl. Not only this, they ascribed divine attributes also to him. Now Akbar was not the 'shadow of god' but 'God in human form'.

Professor Nizami has given various poetic verses of Kahi, Faizi and Rahai who represented three different backgrounds and enjoyed great pleasure at the Mughal court. These verses clearly reveal Akbar as a prophet and God in human form. For details see, *Akbar and Religion*, pp. 187-9.
Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's reaction:

This was the religious condition of Akbar's reign, especially at his royal court. Though many ulama, sufis and scholars flourished there and even enjoyed Akbar's closeness and intimacy, none of them is reported to have openly come in his opposition. But, on the contrary, various sections of Muslim society outside the court reacted against his religious experiment and ideology. Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi deserves special mention in this regard. Sources say that he was dissatisfied with the then religious condition. The circumstances led him to great anxiety and distress. Therefore, his reaction to Akbar's thought and activities was most powerful, and he openly criticised his attitude towards Islam and Muslims.

As mentioned earlier, Shaikh Ahmad, on the completion of his education, proceeded to Agra, the then royal capital, and stayed there for several years in order to observe the religious environment at the Mughal court. Due to his deep understanding and insight into religious learnings - both rational and traditional - and spiritual disposition he soon became popular amongst the ulama, sufis and scholars of the city. The nobles and grandees of the mughal empire were also attracted towards him. We don't have any information whether
or not he ever came into contact with Akbar. However, his works – rasail (treatises & brochurs), and maktubat (epistles) – reveal clearly that he was fully aware of the personal religious outlook of the Emperor. His long stay at the Mughal Capital, association with the top officials and contact with the ulama and intellectual class had provided Shaikh Ahmad with an opportunity to deeply understand the socio-religious condition of the time. All his writings and other sources – contemporary and later – as well as modern works contain material in this regard, and present him as a critical and severe opponent of Akbar's religious experiment and ideology.

Shaikh Ahmad observed that many important personalities and even the Emperor himself were impressed by the Greek philosophers and thinkers, and convinced by their thought and arguments. He witnessed that they denied the prophecy of the Prophet of Islam and raised objections in this context. Sirhindi found Akbar and his loyalists to be renouncing Wahi (Divine revelation upon prophets), and discarding mojizat (prophetic miracles). Shaikh Ahmad studied the wicked ideas and came across impious views of these people of the royal circle. He also came to know that Abul Fazl and others tried to invest prophecy to Akbar by calling him God's prophet.
Having observed the Hindu dominance at the important offices, Shaikh Ahmad also seriously noticed the increasing influence of a particular (Muslim) sect, (Shias), and found its followers openly preaching their religious ideas, criticising the Prophet's wife, Aisha, his companions and the first three pious Caliphs at the royal court.

Born and brought up in an orthodox family of Sirhind Ahmad was well-versed in Islamic sciences, and fully knew the rules and regulations which Islam recommends to run a state. His attachment to the religion, love and respect for the Prophet of Islam, his family, descendants, companions and the Pious Caliphs could not be questioned. As such it was, therefore, impossible for him to keep silence at this critical juncture. How could have he tolerated the anti-Islamic ideology, laws against the commandments of Shariat, or sayings and activities dishonouring the most distinguished personality of the holy Prophet.

Analysing the situation, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi felt that the kings, the ulama and sufis were equally responsible for creating this. He looked upon the rulers as 'all soul' and the people as 'all body'. According to him if the soul
goes wrong, the body is bound to go astray. The Shaikh declared, "The Kings being on the right path means that the world is on the right path; his waywardness is waywardness of the whole world." He, therefore, tackled the situation in a fundamental way by openly criticising Akbar's misguided religious experiments and even his attempt to assume religious leadership. He also felt that Akbar had violated the basic value system of Islam and his experiments had damaged and diluted the monotheistic character of Islamic teachings. He was of the view that the realm of religion should remain beyond the imperial jurisdiction.

So far as ulama and sufis were concerned, Shaikh Ahmad also attacked these sections of the Muslim society with full seriousness. He thought that Akbar's religious experiments were also fed by the mystic ideology of Wahdat-ul-Wujud which, when indiscriminately applied to situation, weakened the distinctive features of faiths and created an atmosphere

2. Ibid.
of moral holiday.¹ He, therefore, enunciated a counter theory known as Wahdat-ul-Shuhud and defined the mystic concepts pertaining to hal, (state), and magamat, (stations), in the light of Quran and Sunnah. He also criticised the role of ulama, especially 'ulama-i-su' whom he considered responsible for the then religious condition, and felt that the Muslim society of his day was sunk in bid'at. He was of the opinion that no progress, individual or collective, was possible without closely following the path indicated by the Prophet.² Though he supported giyas, (personal judgement in matter relating to religions problem), and ijtihad (interpretation of Islamic laws), but he was opposed to introducing heresies under the garb of fresh interpretation. Within the framework of the Quran and the Sunnah Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi was prepared to give any amount of liberty, but outside it none. Professor Nizami says that he believed that mystic faith in pantheistic philosophy, negligence of Shariat law by the ulama, and emphasis on the interiorization of religious rites to the exclusion of formal adherence to law had weakened the

2. Ibid., p.263.
moral fibre of the community and debilitated the structure of faith.\(^1\) The Shaikh, therefore, came forward and decided to banish from the royal circle all activities and ideologies which Islam forbade. His reaction to Akbar's religious experiments resulted step by step, and at every moment he did not deviated from the **Quran** and **Hadith**.

**Discussion with Faizi and Abul Fazl:**

Shaikh Ahmad, therefore, came forward and initially held discussion with the eminent persons who apart from holding the key position in the government, claimed themselves well-versed in rational sciences. The **Zubdat-ul-Magamat**, as mentioned earlier, tells us that the Shaikh used to visit Abul Fazl Faizi and other scholarly nobles and discussed with them many important themes of the **Quran**, **Hadith**, philosophy, jurisprudence and sufism etc.\(^2\) The saint himself says that he held polemics with those who had gone astray as far as their beliefs and religious ideas were concerned, and tried to bring them back to the path of the **Quran** and the **Sunnah**.\(^3\)

\(^1\) Akbar and Religion, p.264.

\(^2\) Zubdat-ul-Magamat, p.131.

\(^3\) Ithbat-un-Nubuwwat, Karachi, 1963, pp.8-9
moral fibre of the community and debilitated the structure of faith.1 The Shaikh, therefore, came forward and decided to banish from the royal circle all activities and ideologies which Islam forbade. His reaction to Akbar's religious experiments resulted step by step, and at every moment he did not deviated from the Quran and Hadith.

Discussion with Faizi and Abul Fazl:

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Compilation of Ithbat-un-Nabuwat:

Afterwards, still at Agra, he wrote an Arabic treatise Ithbat-un-Nabuwat,\(^1\) which, according to Friedmann, gives arguments to necessity of prophecy in general and the Prophecy of the Prophet of Islam in particular.\(^2\) The opening part, preface, of the brochure throws light on the circumstances which led Ahmad Sirhindi to its compilation. It also discusses the religious condition of Akbar's court and throws light on his and his nobles' beliefs, Sirhindi says, "I observed the defects and the weaknesses in the beliefs of some of the people of the time regarding the prophethood, especially of the Prophet of Islam; and I found, with certainty and evidence, a particular person (Akbar) to be claiming himself a prophet; and I came across the changes and irregularities in his conduct about the prescribed condition of prophethood; and I saw these things, with certain facts, to be infiltrating amongst the common people. A large number of ulamā, our time were tortured on account of their firm belief in the steadfast

\(^{1}\) See supra p. (Chapter II, P.16)

\(^{2}\) Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, p.5.
prophets (mursalin) and the strict following of the Shariat. Many of them were executed and murdered. 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, the last of the chain of the prophets. And those, whose names were as Muhammad and Ahmad, changed their names. The cow slaughtering, which had been one of the 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 honour and respect.

"In short, the symbols and customs of Islam were declared false and useless; and the rites and rituals of the infidels and their (false) religions were publicly introduced. The rules and regulations of the infidels of India (Hindus) were brought to light, and translated, from their own languages, into Persian so that all the impressions of Islam in India could be destroyed. I realized that the illness of doubt and denial is widespread, and even those, who could be expected to make reforms, indulged in such maladies. The people came near to destruction."
"I made inquiries of the individual's beliefs, looked into their doubts and misapprehension (about Islam and Islamic laws), and examined their feelings as well as secret notions. I discovered that their deviation from Islam and its beliefs is due to long distance from the time of the Holy Prophet, their keen interest in philosophy and the studies of the works of the Indian (non-Muslim) scholars.

"I, therefore, engaged me in polemics with some of those people who claimed themselves to be wellversed in philosophy and the works of the infidels and were misleading innocent Musalmans. I came across the result that they had gone astray on account of their misbeliefs in the Quranic concept of prophethood and their hypothesis of the prophecy of a particular person (Akbar). They had gone to the extent of believing that only wisdom and sagacity were the main objects of prophethood. According to them a prophet's advent does not mean any other thing than to reform the outward condition of the people, provide the freedom of desires and the lust, and keep them away from the mutual differences. They also used to say that prophecy had no concern with the 'Ultimate salvation (najat-i-Ukhravi) but it is an output of
such merits and virtues of the civilized moral (tahzeeb-i-Ikhlq) and sincere acts (a'mal-i-Qalbi) as the philosophers had described and discussed it in their works. Sometimes, they quote Ghazzali and say that he too, like other philosophers, has divided his 'Ihya-ul-Ulum-id-Din into four parts and given preference to the moral acts rather the prayers like namaz and the fast of Ramazan. They maintain that the physical prayers are of no use to get salvation, and, accordingly, a prophet's mission and teachings cannot be enforced upon and practiced by the person born after a long duration of his (the prophets) time.¹

This was the condition which prevailed at the Mughal Court at that time. Continuing the discussion Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi now presents his own arguments. He says, "According to Divine Mysteries and Favours (Hikmat-i-Azaliya and Inayat-i-Ilahiyay)', the perfection of human soul and treatment of the inward diseases of individuals are the main purposes of the advent of and the task to be fulfilled by a prophet. In order to carry on his prophetic mission

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successfully, a prophet has to necessarily warn his enemies and announce good news (of the hereafter) to his followers and believers. He has also to inform human beings of their ultimate rewards and punishment. As the desires and the worldly things easily surmount and attract human being, he is very much supposed to commit sins and the worthless acts. If the human soul is perfect, it leads him to the happiness and salvation in this world as well as in the world hereafter. That is why a prophet's mission is to invite human being to the 'Eternal Happiness' and the 'Ultimate Salvation' because the worldly fortunes are less and worst.¹

Now Sirhindi refutes the philosophers' views and condemns their works. He is of the opinion that the philosophers, especially those of Greece, with a view to introduce their absurd thought and false ideas in the human world, have amalgamated with them (their views) the learnings and the sciences of different prophets and their companions. So far as the area of these prophetic learnings and science is concerned, they include the 'Description of the Refined Manners (bayan-i-tahzeeb-i-Ikhlaq') and the

1. Ithabat-un-Nabuwat, p.7.
'Good Esoteric Deeds etc.' They popularized these disciplines as their own inventions.¹

Prolonging his discussion, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi now turns his attention to Akbar and his supporters, especially Abul Fazl's view that 'on account of a long distance of time from the Prophet of Islam's period nobody can be satisfied in maintaining his faith in him (the Prophet of Islam). Commenting upon this view, the Shaikh questions as to how they came to know about 'Galen' and 'Sobayah' as eminent physician and Arabic graminarian respectively whereas they have not seen these scholars due to a long distance of time between themselves and those learned men. According to Sirhindi if they (Akbar and his supporters) respond that they have studied the learned works of those thinkers and found out their views as well as their description as physician and graminarian in other books of these disciplines, he (Sirhindi) too would advise these people to deeply consider the Qur'anic conception and injunctions and the traditions of the Holy Prophet so that they may adequately understand the aims and objects of the

¹ Ithbat-un-Nabuwat, P.7.
Prophethood. If they do so, they will surely come to the conclusion that the Prophet of Islam is the most superior amongst all the prophets; and the distance of time is not at all an obstacle in this way as it is in case of Galen and Sabiyah. Shaikh Ahmad argues, "As all the sayings and the actions of the Prophet of Islam informs us that the perfection of human soul, both in doctrinal as well as practical spheres, takes place through the good actions and the correct faith and removes the diseases and the darkness of the heart, it is, therefore, obvious that the prophethood is exactly but according to his (Prophet of Islam's) sayings."  

In the concluding remarks of the 'preface' Shaikh says that when he observed and analysed the religious condition at the Mughal Court, he thought it necessary to write this treatise, the Ithbat-un-Nabuwwat, which comprises an introduction and two chapters. All the arguments in it are based on the Quranic verses, the Prophet's traditions and the works of eminent Muslim divines. Really the attribution of prophecy to Emperor Akbar or any other person

1. Ithbat-un-Nabuwwat, pp.8-9.
2. Ibid., p.9.
was an act of great anxiety for the Muslims in India in those days. Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī stood up in time and, despite great difficulties, took steps in this regard. All his arguments have been represented with authentic and reasonable evidences. If he had not realized his duties as an ardent Muslim divine, of course, the history of Islam in India would have taken an entirely different shape. Shaikh Muhammad Ikram says that the Ḥithbut-un-Ḥabīwwat is a highly advanced analysis of an important aspect of Islam and Muslims. Sirhindī's argumentations not only convince Musalmans but, to great extent, are incontrovertible and significant for non-Muslims as well.¹

Radd-i-Rawafiz: As mentioned earlier, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī also observed the Shia Muslims and found them to be rapidly influencing the Mughal Court and attracting eminent personalities to their own sect. He considered their increasing domination, over the royal circle, a greater danger to Sunnis and their sect. Shī’as, at the royal court, openly criticised Sunnis and passed strictures upon the Prophet's companions.² In the meantime when Abdullah Khan

1. Shaikh Muhammad Ikram, Ṣud-i-Ḳaṣar (Reprint), Delhi 1987, p.231.

Uzbek, the ruler of Central Asia, captured Mashhad in Iran, there arose severe differences amongst the Sunni and Shia ulama. The latters produced a brochure against Sunnis and their religion. It is said that Abdullah Khan Uzbek had ordered to burn it publicly after cutting out from it the verses of the holy Quran. Later on, the brochure was brought to India and introduced to Akbar's court by some Shia students. They circulated and propagated it among the nobles and the Emperor. In those very days Ahmad Sirhindi also received a copy of it. After studying it he wrote another treatise, Radd-i-Rawafiz, by refuting the Shia sect and its religious doctrines. The author of Zubdat-ul-Magamat also says that the Radd-i-Rawafiz was written when Shias held positions in the Mughal court and the capital, and were very much closed to Akbar. The latter had great enmity with Islam and its followers. Nevertheless, the Shaikh did not care any thing on account of his attachment to Islam. Describing the circumstances which led him to the compilation of the brochure, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi says that to all intents and purposes

the treatise of the Shia ulama condemned the first three Pious Caliphs as infidels and reproached and slandered Aisha. Its contents were a matter of great pride to the assembly of nobles and princess. The Shaikh adds that he would refute these Shias in the gatherings he attended. Furthermore, he straight way took to writing a treatise for the benefit of all class of people and named it Radd-i-Rawafiz.

The treatise starts with a very brief description of the advent and development of Islam in India. According to Shaikh Ahmad it was the main cause of the rapid spread of Islam in this country was that almost all Muslims strictly and staunchly followed the Sunni path and believed in Hanafite school of Islamic jurisprudence.1 Afterwards, the Shaikh turns to the arrival of Shias in India and says, "During the reign of Abdullah Khan Uzbek many powerful Shias, who had created disturbances in Iran and Khurasan, were punished to death. Many of them migrated to India and made contacts with the rulers and nobles by leading them into error."2 Then Sirhindi says that the shias consider

1. Radd-i-Rawafiz, p.6.
2. Ibid., p.7.
Ali, the fourth Pious Caliph, the righteous Imam after the Holy Prophet Islam. They believe that the Imamat is confined to Ali and his descendants only. If any other person claims to hold this religious position, he does so because of his own tyranny of Ali and his descendants or on account of their pious fraud, tagaiyyah. Now Shaikh Ahmad throws light on the twenty two obscure Shia sects, describes their beliefs, ideology and mutual differences. According to him their internecine war was the principal source of their destruction. The transmigration of soul which was a taboo with Muslims was commonly held by these Shia sects.

Referring to the polemics surrounding the statement that the orders and actions of the Holy Prophet enjoyed the status of Divine Revelation, the Shaikh Pleaded that it was not true without qualifications. The tafsir-i-Baiizawi has made the point clear. Had all the words of the Prophet enjoyed the status of Divine Revelation, Allah would not have from time to time, warned him to correct himself.

2. Ibid., p.9.
3. Ibid., p.19.
rational matters and on problem of *ijtihad*, the Prophet's companions were entitled to differ from him. The Prophet of Islam himself did not pay much attention to the rational matters. The suggestion of Umar, the second Pious Caliph, regarding the action against the prisoners of *Badr* was endorsed by the Divine Revelation. Consequently the Prophet's order to bring the paper or to march under the command of Usama or to expel Marwan from Madina were not identical to Divine Revelation but were based on his own opinion and *ijtihad*.

Referring to the Shia allegations regarding the unreliability of the *Sunni hadith*, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi says that the Shias dispute the correct Sunni *hadith* without any reason and distort them. They even mutilate the *Qur'an* and accuse the third Pious Caliph, Usman, of excluding the Quranic verses that enlogised the Ahl-i-Bait, the family of the Prophet of Islam, and permitted the concoction of evidence in support of their statements. Consequently their works were garbled like the book of Moses and the Christian gospels. Their allegations against Sunni

works were designed to defend their own inventions and fabrications. Although the Sunni **ahadith** enlogising the companions of the Prophet were literally ahad, the innumerable repetitions have bestowed on them the position of **mutawatir**. Referring to the end of the Caliphs the Shaikh wrote that the **ahadith** enlogising them guaranteed their glorious end. So far as annoying Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, was concerned Ali also sometimes annoyed Fatima. The Prophet intended to discourage people from annoying Fatima for their selfish ends. She was annoyed with Abu Bakr because of the adverse judgement delivered by him against Fatima's claim of Fadak, a garden near Madina which the Holy Prophet had left in his inheritance. Nevertheless, it was based on the Prophet's **hadith**. She was annoyed because of human passions. Referring to Joseph's companion in prison, the Shaikh wrote that two idolaters embraced Islam because of the blessings of Joseph's company. The impact of the Prophet's company on the first three Pious Caliphs was far reaching and the same was confirmed by the Quranic verses. The Shi'i plan that the paucity of followers and the fear of destruction of righteous people prevented Ali from fighting for his right is a clear proof of Ali's bay'at with Abu Bakr. As pointed out by the **ulama** of Transoxiana Ali's
bay'at with Abu Bakr justified the letter's Caliphate. Since the Shias were unable to defend Ali's bay'at with Abu Bakr, they invented that story that Ali reluctantly made bayat or some of them think that Ali performed ṭaqiyya. Although Mu'awiya was exceedingly powerful Ali fought against him for his right. Neither did he nor did Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, however, take the same step against Abu Bakr.

Although some Sunni ulama did not consider the Shias as infidels, the Shias are infidels because they cursed Aisha and accused her of violating the following verse of the Quran:

"And stay in your houses. Bedizen not yourselves with the bedizenment of the Time of Ignorance". (The Holy Quran, XXXIII, 33) / The command in the above verse, according to Shaikh Ahmad, is not universal. The exceptions were made even in the Prophet's time when some of his wives accompanied him to his travels. Aisha's war against Ali was designed to meet certain useful ends. Since she was endowed with the power of ijtihad, her judgement to fight against Ali could not be questioned. The Shaikh quoted the traditions from the Sunni authorities to show that the Prophet had forewarned Ali of the emergence of sect known as
Rawafiz who would exaggrate his (Ali's) achievements and revile his (the prophet's) companions. God and angels would be of no avail to them. Those who bore malice towards the first two caliph or annoyed them equally bore malice against him (the Prophet). As the Shias annoyed him (the Prophet), the annoyed God. The opinion of the Sunni scholars, who do not consider Shias as infidels, should be glossed over. At last Ahmad Sirhindi urged the Muslims to leave the disputes that took place between the Prophet's companions to God and remember them respectfully. According to him, it was non of the business of Muslims to interfere with the dispute of the Prophet's companions.¹

Shaiikh Ahmad Sirhindi's reaction against Akbar's religious experiments did not stop here. After joining the Naqshbandi silsilah and receiving the khilafat from Khwaja Baqi Billah, especially after the latter's death in 1012 A.H./1603, as his chief successor, Shaikh Ahmad had acquired great fame and important place amongst the religious circle of northern India. The Khwaja himself, in his life time, had placed him on the highest position amongst his own disciples. As mentioned earlier, Sirhindi had already come, ^^

¹. Radd-i-Rawafiz, pp.56-73.
during the long stay at Agra in his youth, into contact with many important nobles of Akbar's court. The joining of the Khwaja's discipline gave new energy and direction to his acquaintance with those officials as they held Baiq Billah in high esteem, visited him frequently and obtained his spiritual blessings. They had helped the saint immensely in consolidating his position in Delhi. If on one hand, these nobles, having right perspective of and proper place for Islam, the Prophet of Islam and the Shariat in their minds and hearts, had not yet accepted and even been influenced by Akbar's innovations, on the other, they still had strong position in the court and the Emperor himself regarded them very much. Despite having complete authority in various sufi order, the Shaikh, at that time, did not lead a quiet and passive life. In this connection he followed his spiritual ancestor Khwaja Obaidullah Ahrar and more willingly decided to continue his efforts against the heretical trends of the royal society. The Shaikh, realizing the situation, did not let the opportunity slip. He, therefore, tried to preach the teachings of Islam systematically through the nobles and grandees of the Imperial court as he considered them the best way of persuading the Emperor to Islam and its laws. He started correspondence with them by recalling what had been
forgotten and bringing home the significance of the Shariat to them. The first volume of his maktubat contains some letters, addressed to important nobles, which seem to have been written in the reign of emperor Akbar. Initially these letters were sent to Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, Qulich Khan, Khwaja Jahan and Murtuza Khan (Shaikh Farid Bukhari). These letters bemoan the sad state into which Islam had fallen in India during the reign of Akbar and remind the nobles of their religious duties. These also throw valuable light on Shariat and its implementation on human society. In the words of Shaikh Ikram, "The rhetoric and appeal of these letters kindled a religious fervor which, although it took some time to bear fruit, profoundly affected the history of Islam in India by strengthening the position of the orthodox in place of power." It should not be presumed by going through these epistles that Sirhindi had no intention to persuade the Monarch. As just told, he was of the opinion that if those nobles became perfect Muslims both in beliefs and practices, they could easily advocate the cause of Islam before the Emperor and influence his deeds and thoughts. And, of course, influenced by Shaikh Ahmad

Sirhind\'s thought, these nobles exerted great influence upon Akbar and even pressurized him to turn to Islam. "No serious student of history," says Professor, Nizam\'i, "Can evade the conclusion that in the later years of Akbar\'s reign, under the influence of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhind\', a definite ideological cleavage had developed between Akbar and his nobles."

1. *State and Culture in Medieval India*, P. 166.

(This conclusion is supported by Jahangir himself who remarks that during his princehood before and during the illness of his father, the opinion of nobles and courtiers had changed).