



بخش انگلیسی

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**THE BACKGROUND OF THE
MAKTUBAT OF SHAIKH AHMAD SARHINDI:
A STUDY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:**

The role played by Shaikh Ahmad Sarindi in the period of Akbar and latter during the reign of Jahangir is very remarkable in more than one way. In the first place he tried to persuade the nobles of the court of Akbar and Jahangir, who were very important and influential and from whom there were expectations that they will have perceptible impact on the future course of things in the Court. In the second place he tried to identify the heretical tendencies, blasphemous practices, deviant behaviours, and Hinduistic attitudes which were coming to fore due to the royal patronage to the people who were susceptible to such matters. On the third he tried to do away with the ideological frame work of **Wahdat-al-Wajud**, which was being perpetuated as a guiding philosophy by the King and his countries under the leadership of Abul Fazal and his likes. The advocacy of **Wahdat-al-Wajud** by Akbar as the basis of **Sulhi Kul** is rightly attributed to the subtle influence of Abul Fazal. It is in this context that Sarhindi has tried to present a befitting alternative to this moribund theosophical doctrine by advocating an altogether new, yet very reasonable and religiously tenable doctrine, which later on was called as **Wahdat-al-Shuhud**. Moreover, the

Maktubat, more than 534 in number are also an important source of history which throw light on several aspects of Akbar and the Mughal period in a very substantial manner which otherwise would have remained unknown and unexplored in absence of historical evidence. Because the court historians, like Abul Fazal and even Badauni could not mention the darker side of this 'golden period' of Mughal rule. Thus these letters are the important historical source for any historical under taking on this period, which have not been studied thoroughly so far, especially as a very substantial historical source. In the present paper an attempt has been made to discuss the back ground of these important letters and their impact on the nobles and the Mughal emperors. Furthermore, the depiction of the religious conditions of the Akbar's period will be presented in the light of Abdul Qadir Badauni's **Muntakhabu't-Tawarikh**. Finally the important doctrine of **Wahda-al-Wajud** will be discussed with special reference to Ibn Arabi in the context of Akbar's period.

Badauni¹ in his famous **Muntakabat-ul-Tawarikh** has described the important evils of the period of Akbar, the summary of these details is as follows:-

01. Akbar declared himself as the **Mujtahid**, rather more than a **Mujtahid**. This indicated that the matters where the jurists are not able to reach to any consensus will be referred back to Akbar and his decision will be final in such matters and binding on all./1;
02. Abul Fadl started hurling the choicest filthy titles and abuses on the religious scholars and jurists and dubbed them as Halwais (bakers) kafashdoz and Charm ghar etc etc. 2/;
03. Akbar was led to abuse the pious Caliphs of the Prophet and this trend became quite prevalent in the court.

Moreover the Islamic heritage and legacy was subjected to scathing criticism and it was called as fabricated (**Hadith**) and devoid of any rationality (**na maqul**), and the people who were its proponents were declared as “poor Bedouins”.3/;

04. The religious beliefs like Prophethood, Beatific Vision, Accountability of men, Creation of the universe, Resurrection and Day of Judgement and such other doctrines were ridiculed and doubts were raised about their tenacity.4/;
05. Such false doctrines as Creation of the Quran, impossibility of Divine Revelation, Denial of Angels and the unseen creatures were upheld and on the other hand, miracles, **Karamats**, Consistency of the Quran, Eternity of soul denied, instead of this the theory of incarnation of the soul was upheld.5/;
06. Ascension of the Prophet was denied, and the prophetic miracle of cleaving the moon into two parts was not accepted.6/;
07. The early attacks which took place during the period of the Prophet at Madina and Mecca against the infidels, marriages with several women and banning use of honey were some matters which were called into question.7/;
08. The people who had names like Ahmad, Muhammad, Mustafa, etc were not pronounced as such for securing the pleasure of the “external infidels” and “internal members of the Harem”. For example, Yar Mohammad and Khan Mohammad were called simply by the name Rehmat and while writing these names the same practice was preferred.8/;
09. Emboldened by the unrestricted patronage by Akbar, the wretched wordily scholars

- abandoned the practice of eulogizing (Nat) of the Prophet on the pulpits.9/;
10. Some Hindus and Hinduised Muslims started criticizing the very belief in the Prophethood. 10/;
 11. No one was allowed to offer prayers openly in the premises of the royal court. 11/12. The king abandoned observing fasting, hajj and the Islamic prayers.12/;
 12. Verses were composed against the religious practices and these were sung openly in the streets.13/;
 13. According to the belief of the king the thousand years of Islam were already completed; therefore there, in his view, was a need of declaring the emergence of a new religion. Even the coins to this effect were circulated.14/ If Akbar and his courtiers could manage they would have, in the opinion of Badauni, compelled the people to change their religion by force and adopt infidelity instead.15/;
 14. This belief was floated that in every religion there were reasonable people and there had been people of mystical tendencies endowed with the traits of spiritual excellence who are found in all groups of the world belonging to all the denominations. Therefore, in their view there is no point in believing that the truth is confined to one denomination at the expense of all others.16/;
 15. The prayers, like Fasting and all other matters, which are related to Prophethood, were called taqlidi.17/;
 16. The disregard for the religion and Shariah had reached to the extent that the king would say in a lighter vein that the questions related to the

matters about Shariah may be asked from the Mullahs and the matters relevant to reason or wisdom from him instead.18/;

17. The Christians were allowed to prove their religious doctrines like Trinity in the royal court. 19/;
18. The Zoroastrians were free to appear in the royal court and inform the king about their religious tenets. Akbar had ordered Abul Fadl that the Fire may be kindled for whole day and night in the court in accordance with the Zoroastrian beliefs and practice.20/
19. With the passage of time the king started respecting and honouring all other religions. But it was only the religion of Islam, which was selected for all kinds of abuses and vilification and was declared unreasonable (Nauoz Billah), fabricated (hadith) and the creation of the Arab Faqirs.21/;
20. After five six years the influence and prestige of Islam was damaged to the extent that the reverse setbacks were witnessed.22/;
21. The king used to call a person by the name of Faqhi, if he was to be condemned.23/;
22. Usury, gambling and wine was made available freely, while beard, veiling, circumcision, purifying bath(**ghusul-I-Jinabat**), last funeral ceremonies, and such other religious symbols were banned and prohibited.24/;

It is interesting that even while recording reactions to Akbar's religious experiments, Abul Fadl says:-

“Every faction went about in the streets of darkness. Assemblage of wickedness congregated together”.25/
Furthermore he remarks:

“The pleasant land of India became full of the dust of opposition”.26/

According to Prof. Nizami, “this was Akbar’s own doing. When every thing seemed to be moving in the right direction in an atmosphere of general goodwill and cooperation. His venture in the religious domain suddenly changed the entire atmosphere. His attempt to work out a synthesis of religious was a task too difficult for rulers or politicians to accomplish”.27

How did Shaikh analyze the situation and what were his reactions to it? In his letters he says again and again that the world has sunk in heresy and innovation.28/ He was opposed to Bid’ at being interpreted as Ijtihad. He argued that Ijtihad was not departure from the Sunnah but its application to new problems and situation. He condemned those Ulama and mystics of his day who encouraged deviations from Sunnah. In a letter he writes that the Ulama of his day were responsible for introducing innovations and obliterating the Sunnah.29/. He thought that since court was the real centre of all such religious experiment, it was necessary to bring about a change in its atmosphere. He turned to the nobles for that purpose and wrote letter to Nawab Murtaza Khan, Shaikh Farid, Abdur Rahim Khan-I- Khanan, Mirza Aziz Koka Khan-I-Azam, and others, exhorting them to stop religious vagaries and experiments at the court.30/. Sarhindi’s movement was a reaction to Akbar’ religious experiments and to the atmosphere it had created at the court.

At soon as that atmosphere disappeared his attitude underwent a great change. In letters written subsequently one does not find any bitter criticism or exclusiveness. Shaikh Ahmad objected to Akbar’s interference in religious matters and his assuming religious leader ship. He wrote during the reign of Jahangir:-

“In the previous regime, the activities (of the court) amounted to hostility towards the religion of Mohammad.

But in the present reign there is no such open hostility. It there is, it is due to ignorance".31/

Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi expounded his philosophy in his letter which were collected in the three volume.32/ These letter are the 'only sure guide' of Shaikh Ahmad himself.33/

Sarhindi wrote other treatises also, in which he expounded his thoughts, the most important among those are Maarij Ladunya, dealing with Sufism and Kalam, Risala Tahliliya and Risala fi ithbat-al-nubuwwah.34/ These treatises were" reactions against the Shia influence generally and especially at the court and against the philosophical skepticism of the two brothers Abul-Fadl and Faidi whose influence on Akbar was one of the great contributory factors to the crisis of orthodox Islam at the court".35/. It appears that at first Sirhindi's relations with the two brothers were good, so much so that he is said to have been associated with Faidi in his venture to write a commentary on the Quran entirely with undotted letters. But is is said that once Abul Fadl spoke in 'exuberantly appreciative language of the Muslim Philosophers', that sounded as 'disparagement of orthodoxy'36/ Thereupon Sarhindi spoke of Ghazzali's Rebuttal of the Philosophers and their sciences and praised Ghazzali's Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal. Abul Fadl became angry and described Ghazzali as " stupid" (Na-maqul) Sarhindi was shocked and left the meeting 37/. Accordingly to another report Abul Fadl had raised serious doubts about Prophethood and that caused their separation and provided the occasion for Sarhindi treatise on prophesy. Fazlur Rehman accepts both the reports, which can according to him be substantiated by what the contemporary historian Badauni has to say about Abul-Fadl's views. In 991/1503 he left for Agra where he taught at a school, and established contacts with some scholars of Akbar's court like Faydi (d.1014/1605), Abdul-Fadl (d.1011/1602) and the historian Badauni(1024/1615).

It gave him the opportunity to know at first hand what changes were taking place in the attitude and thinking of the members of the royal court regarding Islam. The famous Mahdar Namah investing Akbar with the powers to interpret the Shariah and to promulgate new laws, over and above the temporal authority he had, had already been brought to his attention (987/1579) by the ulams of the court under the leadership of Mulla Mubarak, the father of Faydi and Abul Fadl. The next year Akbar was declared the founder and the high priest of a new Divine Religion (DIN ILAHI). Attack on the fundamental tenets of Islam such as prophesy and the life hereafter, and effort to replace the Shariah law by laws borrowed from various sources started. The necessity of prophecy was questioned and the finality of Mohammad's prophethood was denied 38/. Sarhindi was alarmed at this situation. In his first book, Ithbat al-Nubuwwah (Defense of Prophecy), which he wrote at this time, he observed.

"I saw that the people were questioning prophecy of some particular prophets. I saw them defying the Shariah that the Prophet had given. This trend has grown so strong that people in power were persecuting religious scholars and causing them indescribable hardship and suffering, simply because they were-sincere followers of the Shariah and true believers in the prophets".39/ He described the views of a leader of this anti-Islam campaign in the following words:-

"Prophecy is essentially a matter of prudence, an effort to secure human welfare and regulate social relations, prevent disputes and quarrels among people and restrain them from indulgence in pleasure. Prophecy has nothing to do with future salvation. Its sole object is to promote noble character, good behavior and higher virtues which have been elaborated by philosophers in their books:.

Sarhindi criticized this rather mundane concept of prophecy and expounded a more comprehensive view in his

book. With regard to the prophecy of Muhammad (peace be on him) he wrote:

“The mission of Muhammad in the light of his preaching and work was the perfection of man’s intellectual and practical powers by cultivating right beliefs and good behavior, and removing the maladies of his heart and the darkness of his soul”.40/

This period of association and a knowledge of what transpired at Akbar’s court seems to have been formative of Shaikh Ahmad’s stand, setting his mental-spiritual tone. The ground for the amazingly rapid developments which took place in his mind later under the direction of Khwaja Baqi Billah was prepared adequately in this period.41/

The main source for Sarhindi’s thought is his published letter which he wrote over a period of twenty-two years or more to different people his master Shaikh Baqi bi-Allah, his sons, disciples, sons of his master, Sufis of different affiliations, ulama, members of the nobility and rulers. Some of the letters are very short; hardly a page, but some are as long as sixty pages of big quarter size almost a small book. They have been put in three volumes. The first volume was compiled in 1025/1616 and consists of three hundred thirty-three letters; the second volume was compiled in 1028/1619 and consists of ninety-nine letters and the third volume was compiled in 1030/1621 which consists of one hundred and fourteen letters. Later on ten other letters were added to the volume of which the first nine were confirmed as genuine by Sarhindi’s son Shaikh Masum. Not all letters have been put in these volumes according to the date of their writing. In the case of a few at least we have reasons to believe that they were written earlier but put after the ones written later.42/

The most important documents for the evaluation of Sarhindi’s historical role have been those few letters to the Mughal officials in which he expresses his view on the situation of Islam in India during the reign of Akbar and

Jahangir. His view of the decline of Islam during the reign of Akbar's period and his rejoicing at the occasion of Jahangir are too well known to need any detailed description. He bemoans the ascendancy of infidelity during the reign of Akbar and demands that Jahangir be prevailed upon by his ministers to forbid the hearetical customs that have been established at the court. He lays much of the blame at the door of the wicked worldly Ulama, (Ulama-I-Sui, Ulamai-duniya) 43/.

About 70 letters out of total 534 are addressed to persons who can be identified as servants of the emperor. Most of them are found in the first volume, of those only a few deal with subjects that can be classified under the heading of religion and state.44/. Sarhindi maintains correspondence with the ruling circles and demands that they seek the advice of the ulama. However, he "is not always enthusiastic about joining the court"45/. Prof. Irfan Habib claims that "it was natural that he should himself strive to get an interview with the king and to hoin his courtiers in the fond dream of helping to establish thereby the perfect rule of the Sariah"46/. But any historical records can't substantiate this claim. What to say about his desire to hoin any royal court, he rather objects to other hoining or having desire to do so. "He objects when a Sufi decides to hoin the services of the State; Sarhindi considers such an occupation worldly and therefore base. He, however, maintains correspondence with the ruling circles. In the Maktubat there are several passages in which Sarhindi sternly warns his correspondents against any connection with the rulers and their institutions. In the first volume we have a letter in which Sarhindi strongly advises one Baha al-Din against any association with the rulers.47/.

The letters which have been written by Sarhindi deal with diverse subjects, few of his letters contain personal recommendations of various kinds. In a letter to Khwaja Jahan, Sarhindi requests him to release a prisoner

who has requests that a certain learned man be given a governmental post or tries to obtain a stipend for the father of a large family who had to join the army because of his destitution. In a letter to Shaikh Farid Bukhari, he expresses the hope that a certain Shaikh Zakariyah will again be included in the diwan, apparently the receipt of a stipend. In two letters sent to his teacher Baqi Billah, he seems to function as a public notary in Sarhindi. He certifies that certain persons eligible for government pensions are alive and asks the sums be given to the bearers of the letters. In a letter to Shaikh Farid Bukhari, Sarhindi complains that the city of Sarhindi does not have a qadi and people are therefore compelled to act unlawfully in certain cases, this situation will not arise if the vacancy were filled. 48/. However, these letters throw light yet on some otherwise unknown facets of Sarhindi, i.e., his involvement in the day to day affairs of the people, commoners and elite at one and the same time. Moreover, it shows the respect and authority he enjoyed in the important circles of Government and officialdom. In letters addressed to Abdul Rahim Khan-I-Khanan, Sarhindi prais for his faithfulness to the Naqashbandi silsilah, apart from depicting the relation of a Pir and that of Murid. The views of Prof. Rizvi that the letters of the Shaikh to the Khan-i-Khanan exhibit the constant struggle which Mujjadid had to wage to convince him to the correctness of his approach to Islam. Shaikh Farid Bukhari wrote to Sarhindi at least three times and it is clear that the correspondence was not unilateral. In the same way Khan-i-Khanan and his son Darab Khan wrote to Sarhindi several times which contradict the view of Irfan Habib.49/.

Sarhindi trained an immense number of people and sent them not only in to the major towns of India but also to Afghanistan and Transoxiana. Mullah Murad of Russia became migrant to Mecca and translated the letters into Arabic, which were printed in Egypt and as a result were

spread throughout Arab Muslim world. In some Commentaries on the Quran, some letters were quoted as in the *Ruhul-al-Maani*, which was written during the reign of Turkish Sultan Abdul Hamid. The author of the *Tafsir Mohammad Alusi* while quoting calls him as "Al Mujjadid -al Faruqi" and mentions his view with great reverence and as the authoritative evidence in favour of his personal statements. His letters started exerting their influence not only in India subcontinent, but the influence was extended to the countries under the Ottoman Caliphate. The greatest proof of this fact is the presence of a branch of Mujjadadia Sufi order, known as Khaliddiyah which became very famous in the countries of Iraq and Syria and other Ottoman countries 50/.

Among his eminent contemporaries who became his disciples was Shaikh Mirak, prince Dara Shikoh's tutor. It is also claimed that the famous scholar Abd al-Hakim of Sialkot became his disciple (Murid) and wild Nawab Murtada Khan, known as Shaikh Farid, who subsequently became governor of Lahore, did much to help the cause of Shaikh Ahmad who had inherited the discipleship of this eminent figure from his own master Baqi Billah. In his letter to those Amirs, Shaikh Ahmad stressed the crisis of Islam in India—both religious (at the hands of the Sufis and the Shiah) and political (at the hands of the Hindus and the Shiah). He expounded the orthodox doctrine theologically and Sufiscally, emphasized the need for total conversion of the Emperor and demanded a new, radically anti Hindu royal policy that would crush the rising Hindu consciousness 51/.

The situation at the Royal Court was tense. Jahangir had come to power through the backing of the Muslim orthodoxy, as is well-known. His mother was a Hindu, his wife Nur-i-Jahan—a Shiah. Nurjahan's nearest relatives were in the highest posts. But that is not all, Sarhindi's followers and disciples were working in the

army as well. One of his disclose, Badi al-Din, was working at Agra, the capital and army head--- quarters, and his activities seem to have become the special object of official suspicion, 52/. The Shaikh was summoned to the Court of Jahangir, he refused to perform the prostration of respect (Sajdat al-Tazim) before the Emperor and was sent to jail in the Gwailiar Fort 53/.

Probably the imprisonment lasted for about a year. Shaikh Ahmad was then released and honoured. His release must be attributed to the good offices of his followers at the court. In any case, he was not only released but was invited to the court to take part in the discussions. Letter No. 40 in part 11 of text eas written to his sons from Emperor's Court. It states that the Shaikh spoke on Prophethood, on the weakness of reason and several other subjects and that the king "listened favourably". In this letter which Sarhindi wrote to his sons Khwaja Mohammad Sayeed and Khwaja Mohammad Masaum from Dalhi, when he was released from the jail and given audience by Jahangir in his Court. He writes:-

"The circumstances on my side are good. It is the time of thanks giving (hamad) that strange meetings and audiences are taking place. By the grace of Allah in those discussions (with the Emperor) about religious matters and Islamic principles, no shade of compromise or lapses were witnessed. In the secret meeting (with the Emperor), the same mode is prevalent. The description of such meeting requires a huge space. However, today on Ramzan 17, the king listened from me the details relating to the appointment of prophets, limitations of reason (in religious matters and other problems) belief in life hereafter, Beatific vision, Finality of Prophethood (saw), arrival of Mujjadid after every hundred years (Mujjadid har mieta), and the following of the Four Pious Caliphs, the Sunnah of Tarawih, rejection of Incarnation of souls (Butlan-I-Tanasukh), mention of the Jinni and Jinns and the

vulnerability from their punishment and rewards and such other matters were discussed and the Emperor listened these all details with a rare attention (bi-husn-I-istimah' masmuh gardeed). In the same way the discussion related to Abdals, Aqtab, Awtad and their characteristics came to fore. The king remained constant in his attention and did not show any sign of boredom or dislike etc 54/. Two years after recording Shaikh Ahmad's imprisonment, the Tuzuk-I-Jahangiri also records that "two letters No. 41 is addressed to the king himself".55/

The relations didn't become "undisturbed but that they improved".

For the last three years, he remains "in the company of the army". Shaikh says of "—being in the army involuntarily and unwillingly". In letter 45 he says:- "People are continuously watching our hardships (mihnat-ha) and are seeking to find some way out of this trouble" (madiq) Zubdah calls it "nazar-bandi) detention" 56/

Mujjadid was born in 971 A.H. i.e. after eight years of Akbar's coming to power. He spent around 40 years in Akbar's reign, which proved to be the formative period for him. It was after the death of Akbar that he started his mission with a new zeal and zest. He systematically avoided to remain aloof from government and its activities, but there was hardly any official whom he had not written letters. The letters were written to Khan-I-Azam, Khan-I-Khanan, Mirza Darab, Qaleej Khan, Khwaja Jahan etc, etc. However, most of his letters are addressed to Nawab Syed Farid. The basic theme of almost all these letters is to stress the urgency of doing what ever is possible for them "to rectify the harm, Islam was exposed to during the reign of Akbar" This process of reforming the court started with the inception of Jahangir's rule. His letters itself indicates this fact. Lala beg, one of the counsellors of Jahangir was addressed by the Shaikh and told that if during the first phase of Jahangir's rule he is

persuaded to help in making Islam prevalent (musalmani rewaj yaft) and the Muslims trustworthy (musalmanan atibar paida kardand). But if any laxity is shown in this matter, the problems of Muslims will be multiplied (wa agar ayazan billahsubhanhu dar tawaquf uftad kar bar musalmanan bisyar mushkil khawad shud). He encouraged the concerned to be fore runners in this sacred mission (takudam sahib ba ein saadat mustead garded wa kudam shahbaz ba ein dulat dast burd numayad). In a second letter the same zeal and zeal can be evinced in which he writes to Khan-I-Jahan.

“If you are employing your service for the implimentation of the Prophetic Shariah, it will be as good as you have performed a prophetic deed. If you are able to make the firm religion of Islam manifested and established, the Faqirs like us if struggle with their bodies for years together will not be able to perform. He calls them as eagles (Shah bazan)”. 57/

In a letter No.33 to Mullah Haji Muhammad Lahori he talks about the wretchedness of the Ulamai-I-sui (worldly scholars) and says, “these scholars are captivated by the charms of the world and have rendered their knowledge as a means to get maximum mundane benefits”. However he praises the austere scholars (ulamai zuhad), who have become indifferent from the enchanted charms of world. 58/

In a different letter he writes to Khan-I-Khanan that this world is the farm of the life hereafter. The person who do not cultivate in the world, and leave the farm of propensities uncultivated and ignore sowing the seeds of actions 59/. The influence on Akbar and his important courtiers which seems again and again at work was that of Ibn Arabi's Wahdat-al-Wajud whether in the background of his theory of sulh-I-kul or unity of religions, perfect man or Insan-I-Kamil etc. Irfan Habib says:-

“The dominant influences which led to the formation of the new views came from within the Islamic tradition, perhaps, the most significant was derived from Ibn Arabi,” conveyed in night sessions the matters of “Unity Existence” (Wahdat-al-Wajud) and “perfect man” (Insan-I-Kamil to the Emperor. “He says further: It is true that, as modern critics point out, that Ibn Arabi’s theory does not amount to simple monism, or monotheism. But however “transcendental” the unity, once its Reality is recognized, the differences seen in the sensory world are bound to lose their significance and become illusory. From this a worldview followed, which Abul Fadl describes in introducing Akbar’s spiritual views “60/. The fulfilling by the sovereign of the obligations of being father (pidar) of mankind: Different kinds of person receive comfort from his benevolence and out of the diversity of religion the dust of duality does not rise forth. This is the tolerance of conflicting faiths, which Abul Fazl subsumed in the term he and his master so often used, viz, Sulhi Kul, ‘absolute peace. This concept invoked directly Ibn Arabi’s philosophy”.61/. Moreover, if Din and Duniya are delusions and lead to difference and quarrels, then how is this situation to be remedied? It is to be remedied by an assertion of the only spiritual truth, that man and his intellect are created by God and therefore, since there is one God and everything that he Creates or emanates from him is one unity therefore all mankind is one and all that divides, whether affairs of Din, whether religion or affairs of the world, are divisive and those divisions must be rejected. And the rejection of these divisions and assertion of the spiritual unity of mankind as reflective of the Unity of God, was called sulh-i-kul. The concept of ‘Absolute peace’ mankind or as Professor Rizvi translates it ‘Universal peace’. It does not mean ‘Peace with All’ –that is a mistranslation Sulhi-i-Kul is total peace, also universal peace. This too as a term and as a concept has its roots in

the mystic philosophical traditions giubg bacj ti tge great Spanish thinker and ultimately West Asia thinker, by migration, Ibn Arabi. 62/. Seen in this perspective, the rejection of Wahdat-Wujud by Sarhindi can be appreciated from different angle, which to my knowledge has not hitherto been seen in this light. It seems that the ideological foundation of Akbar, new religion could be traced back to Ibn Arabia's philosophy as has been explained by the modern Communist advocates of this so called 'Islamic tradition', i.e. Prof. Irfan Habib and his company. While discussing about the influence of Wahdat-al-Wajud on India, Fazlur Rehman, alluded to this fact when he says that under the influence of this philosophy there " sprang speculative mystical thought of which the glaring manifestation on the political plane was Akbar's Din-I-Ilahi" 63/. The force of indianised Wahdat-al-Wajud "increased manifold by Hindu India's patent and specialist native product of Vendantic monism, after it reached to India enriched with the poetical gems of Rumi, Jami and others 64/. Thus the movement which set out as an Islamic reaction to these forces found its chief intellectual and spiritual leader in Shaikh Ahmad. He attacked the doctrine of monism; unity of Being (Wahdat al Wujud) both metaphysically and on the basis of his mystical experience 65/. The metaphysical position of Sarhindi against Wahdat -al Wajud, has been descrikbed variously as tawhid shuhudi, Wahdat al -shuhud or ziliyyat. The first two terms refer to the negative, whereas the last term refers to the positive aspect of his doctrine. In essence the doctrine means that the identity of the existence of God and the world wich a mystic perceives in his experience is true as a fact of him vision (shuhud) but it is not true as a proposition about reality. Moreover the mystic has this vision of identity only in the first stage of his experience. At later stages he comes to see that God is completely different from the world. He is different from the world,

first, in the sense that the world is a being separate from the world and, second in the sense that it is of a lower order of being as compared to God. God is the real being (Wujud asli), rather he alone is being in the real sense, whereas the world is only as how being (Wujud zilli). But shadow being is not the final doctrine of Sarhindi. A shadow is different from its original it is also in a sense one with the original. Hence shadowism (ziliyyat) is not the proper term from describing the absolute otherness of God. Therefore, Sarhindi abandoned the term and uses a Quranic term abdiyat (servanthood) and khalq (creation) to emphasize the absolute transcendence of a God; the former in the context of man and the latter in the context of the world' 66/. Moreover, Sarhindi opposed the doctrine on the moral and religious grounds, rendering therefore the edifice of Din ilahi groundless. In its pure monism the doctrine of Ibn Arabi does not take account of the evil that exists so palpably and, by removing the contrast between good on the one hand and the positively unholy and evil on the other, it leaves no ground for real religion. Ibn Arabi has gone so far to exhort the people of Kufr and misguidance to stand firm in their position, as there is no universal criterion for truth rather every thing is relative. Moreover Ibn Arabi's metaphysical system does not take account of the facts of moral struggle 67/.

So far as Sarhindi's rejection of Wahdat-al-Wujud on the basis of his mystical experience is concerned, it is most instructive. He has mentioned this in his Maktubat with extensive details. For example he says at a place:-

"I attained to an extreme degree of Wonder (hairah. At this point I Remembered a passage of (Ibn al-Arabi's) Fusus, which I had heard from my father, it says , if you wish, you may say that it (i.e. the world) is God; or, if you like , you may say that it is created ' or; if you desire, you may say that it is God in one sense and creation in another, or finally, if you prefer, you may speak of wonder (hairah),

because both are indistinguishable. The passage made me satisfied in general. Afterwards I went into the presence of the Shaikh and described my condition; he said, 'As yet your intimate presence (before God hundur) is not pure, continue with your task until the real Existent (maujud) and the phantasmal (mauhum) become clearly distinguishable. I read before him the passage from the Fususn, which indicated indistinguishability (of the two). The Shaikh said, Shaikh (ibn Arabi) has not described the state of a perfect Sufi, although some Sufis have maintained indistinguishability.'" After stating that after two days this state was replaced by another, and that his Shaikh told him that this state of 'difference after unity is the end of human endeavor" 68/.

Sarhindi proceeds to sum up this experience and says:-

"you should note that when I was brought from intoxication to sobriety and from annihilation restoration (at the first stage of experience), I could see nothing but God in every particle of my beingFrom this station, I was taken back to the state of Wonder and when I returned to myself, I found God 'with' every particle of my being--- not 'in' it. The previous stage now seemed much inferior to this new one. Again I was taken back to the state of Wonder and on restoration found that God was neither joined to the world nor separate from it, neither inside it nor outside--- Once again I was throuwn back into Wonder and on return to sobriety I found that God the exalted has a relationship (to the world) beyond the above mentioned relationships (of immanence and transcendence, etc.), and that that relationship is of unknown quality (majhul al-kaifiyat). Once again I went into the state of Wonder and this time I experienced a kind of spiritual contraction (qabd) upon return to myself witnessed God without even that relationship of unknown quality---- without any relationship at all... and also witnessed the world in this

manner. At this point a special gnosis was bestowed upon me which removed all relationships and comparisons between God and the world altogether, although I witnessed both, and I was made to understand that this object of vision with this quality of transcendence is not God Himself but in an image of the (Divine) relationship of creation.”69/.

Thus the letters of Sarhindi are very substantial source of religious history of the Mughal period especially so far the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir are concerned. Though this has had been a matter of considerable controversy to what extent these letters were effective in arresting the innovative ‘religious experiments’ of Akbar and his progeny. On the one hand there are scholars who do not even accept the fact that there was any perceptible impact of these letters on Akbar or even Jahangir. Irfan Habib does not accept the delivering of these letters to the nobles and officers of Jahangir period. While as Friedman and Fazlur Rehman cautiously believe about the subtle impact of the letters. However there is a good number of Scholars, like Prof. Nazi and Manazar Ahsan Gilani, who claim that the whole course of history was changed by these powerful letters, resulting in the emergence of the kings like Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, who have undone the legacy of Akbar in a big way. According to Manazar Ahsan Gilani, it was under the influence of Sarhindi that Shah Jahan was prepared to give his hand as a Murid in the hand of Sarhindi. However about the deep and penetrating influence of the Shaikh on Jahangir as has been described by many scholars does not seem as true as is blown out of proportions. No doubt several direct or indirect courtiers have taken place between the two. No doubt many of the nobles and courtiers of Jahangir were in a sense the murids of Sarhindi. But to say that every thing changed to the complete satisfaction of Sarhindi, will be tantamount to an exaggeration.70/. But there is no denial of the fact that

14. Ibid. 15. Ibid Pp-301-6,
16. Ibid. P-256, 17. P-211,
18. Ibid,P-308 19. Ibid. 20. Ibid-
21. Ibid.P-256, 22. P-255 23. Ibid.
24. P-339
25. Akbar Namah, 111,397, also PP 369-400
26. Ibid.Bol.11 P-103,
27. Islamic Culture, 1965, Jan.P-45
28. Maktubat. Bol. 11 P-103
29. Ulamai ien waqt rewaj dhahidha yee Bidat and wa mahu kund hai Sunat Maktubat 11, P-103.
30. Nizami op.cit.p. 46,
31. Nizami, op.cit. P-50
32. Abdul Haq Ansari, Islam and Modern Age, Feb. 1984, P-16.
33. Fazlur Rehman, Letters of Shaikh Ahmad, P-72,
34. Ibid. P.74.
35. Fazlur Rahman, op. cit. P-74 36. Ibid.
37. Zubdah, P-137
38. Abdul Haq Ansari, Shaykh Ahmad Sarhindi's Doctrine of Wahdat Al-Shuhud,. The Quarterly journal, Islamic Studies, Volume 37, Autumn 1998, Number 3, Islamic

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Islamabad (Pakistan) P-90,

39. Ithbat al-Nubwwah, Arabic text with Urdu terns,
Karachi: Ghulam Mustafa Khan, 1383A.H. 5-6, Ibid P-
285,
40. Ibid.pp 7-8 quoted in Ansari op. cit.p 285.
41. P-74,
42. Abdul Haq Ansari P-280.
43. Yohanan Friedmann, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhandi, An
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44. Ibid P-79, 45. Ibid P-78,
46. The potitical Role of Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi and Shah
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47. For further details see Friedmann op.cit. Pp-78-79.
48. Friedmann P-80, 49. Friedmann P-81
50. Manazar Ahsan Gilani, Al-Furqan, Mujjadid Alaf Thani
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51. Fazlur Rehman, Selected Letters of Shaikh Ahmad
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52. Zubdah, P. 336, quoted by Fazlur Rehman op.cit. P-78.
53. Ibid. P-79, 54. Volume III, letter no. 43,
55. Fazlur Rehman op.cit. P-80

56. Zubhah calls it "nazar-bandi" detention, Fazlur Rahman, op. cit.p.81.
57. Maktubat, A letter to Khan-I-Jahan,
58. Maktubat P-46,
59. Maktubat P-31
60. Theorists of the State, Barani and Abul Fazl, Middle East Studies, Association, Chicago-P-12, 1998
61. Ibid P-41.
62. Irfan Habib ,Akbar and His Age, I.H. C-69, Social Scientist, Vol. 20, no. 9-10, Step- Oct. 1992.
63. Op.cit. Letters P-32, 64. Ibid. P-31
65. Ibid P-32
66. For further details see A.H. Ansari Op. cit. 288
67. Fazlur Rehmanop cit. Pp-34.
- 68.Fazlur Rahman op.cit. Pp-75-76, 69. Op.cit.
70. Friedmann.op.cit.pp-82-85