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## USEFUL NOTE ON AKBAR'S RELIGIOUS POLICY IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

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**Abstract:-** Akbar, in full Abu al – Fateh Jalal al – din Muhammad Akbar ( 1542-1605), greatest of the Mughal emperor of India, who extended Mughal power over most of the Indian subcontinent. In order to preserve the unity of his empire. He adopted programs that won the royalty of the non –Muslim populations of his realm. He reformed and strengthened his central administration and also centralized his financial system and reorganized tax collection processes. Illiterate himself, he encouraged scholars, poets, painters and musicians making his court a centre of culture. In his childhood, he came in contact with Sufism and from 1542, for eighteen long years, he made annual pilgrimage to the shrine of shaike Muinuddin chisti at Ajmer. His Rajput views, his Hindu officials like Todarmal, Birbal and Man Singh, Scholars like faizi and Abul fazl and the Bhakti movement of the Sixteen century helped in moulding his religious views. His developed a passionate love for philosophical discussions and spiritual quest, which led to the foundation of the Ibadatkhana ( Hall of Worship) at Fatehpur Sikri. Religious policy of Akbar was that of complete toleration. His policy was based on the principle of universal peace.

**Keywords:** Akbar's Religious Policy, Causes of Religious Policy, Comments.

### INTRODUCTION :-

Akbar was born on october 15, 1542, in Umarkot in Sindh. Akbar was proclaimed emperor in 1556 under the tutelage of his father's trusted military commander, Bairam khan by 1560. Akbar took the complete reign of the empire into his own hands. Akbar's was an apotheosis of rule in the Indo-pak Sub continent. The British who came few decades later found Akbar's system of administration as their precursor. His religious policies, however, is the subject of controversies among the historians of the Mughal rule.

### AKBAR'S RELIGIOUS POLICY:

Diversity of sects and creeds was the source of strife in his kingdom. As a ruler, Akbar needed goodwill of his subjects across the board, in order for him to consolidate the empire. In this regard, he shaped his policies on the principle of religious tolerance known as Sulh-i Kull (Peace with all). This policy of religious tolerance was basically aimed at proper functioning of political and administrative machinery of the Empire.

Nevertheless, Akbar was not the first Muslim Ruler in the sub –continent who showed religious tolerance towards his subjects. Muhammad bin Qasim had also adopted such policy of tolerance. In fact Akbar formulated religious policies which not only caused uproars in the circles of orthodox Muslims, but his Muslims subjects considered him as an apostate to Islam.. Most controversial policies of Akbar include abolition of jizya, immunity given to Hindu pandits and European Jesuits at the Ibadat khana, prohibition of cow-Slaughter, marriage reforms, disciplinship etc.

Perhaps, the most abhorred was the Akbar's promulgation in 1582 of the Din-I Ilahi . His so called Din-I Illahi was an amalgam of Sufism, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism. Many among Muslims took Akbar's Din-I Illahi with a pinch of salt and considered that he had actually abandoned Islam. Vincent Smith and other European historian argue that Akbar had deserted the cause of Islam. On the other hand, Hindu writer, like Ram Sharma in his religious policy of the Mughal Emperor and Makhan Lal Roychoudhry in his Din I Illahi, have generally held that although he followed tolerant policy, he lived and died a Muslim.

The foundation of the misunderstanding of Akbar's religious history was laid by Blochmann in the interaction to his translation of Abul Fazl's Ain-i- Akbari. The crucial question about Akbar's religious activity is whether he established a new

religion or a new spiritual order. The expression used by both Abul Fazl and Badauni in this connection, however, are iradat or murdi.

Almost every historian including Badauni, the worst enemy of Akbar, unanimously concur on the fact in his early period of reign Akbar was an orthodox Muslims. S.M. Akram remarks - "There is every indication that he began his rule as a devout, orthodox Muslims. He said all the five prayers in the congregation, often recited the call for prayers and occasionally swept out the palace mosque himself".

#### **CAUSES OF AKBAR'S RELIGIOUS POLICIES:**

##### **1. Squabbles among Theologians at the Ibadat khana:**

The Muslims Theologians were at daggers` drawn among each on pretty religious issues. Each tried to display his own scholarship and reveal the inabilities of the others`. The two great theologians of the court, Makhdum-ul-Mulk and Shaikh Abul Nabi attacked each other so mercilessly that Akbar lost confidence in both of them. His disillusionment extended to the orthodoxy they represented.

##### **2. The Reformation Movement (1517-1648) in Europe:**

At the time of Akbar`s rule, the western Europe was engaged in scuffle for dominium mundi between the church and the state. It followed by the movement of reformation enticed by Martin Luther. The movement ultimately curtailed the ecclesiastical power in Rome. Some historians are of the opinion that this development must have influenced Akbar too who always appreciated new ideas. During his reign, laws pertaining to religious matters were entrusted to theologians who were next in position to the ruler.

##### **3. The scuffle between a Brahman and Qazi:**

In 1577, a case was brought before his majesty Akbar in which a Qazi blamed a Braman of having confiscated a building earmarked for mosque. The Qazi blamed that the barman had also disregarded the prophet of Islam and Muslims. The Brahman Languished in prison for a long time. After some time, the Ulama decreed the execution of the offender and he was eventually put to death. Akbar was troubled not only by this incident but by the general legal position which gave so much power to the Ulama that he was as their mercy on such vital issues.

##### **4. His Policies of Toleration:**

Religious policy of Akbar was that a complete toleration. His policy based on the principles of universal peace. He was the first among the emperors of Delhi who pursued such a policy. He invited to the religious discussion at the Ibadat khana. Mullah Muhammad Yazdi, the Shia Yazd, the shia qazi of jaunpur severely criticized Akbars` religious policies. Some of his courtiers like Qutb-ud -din khan kamboh criticized the emperor in the court. There is open rebellion broke out in 1581.

#### **COMMENTS:**

Akbar`s religious policy has attracted much of scholarly attention with varying approaches to it. There is some credit him for having himself a personal tolerant attitude which led to the promulgation of Din-i-Ilahi while there is some who regard his religious policy instigated by the need of the hour, to induct in his nobility wide variety of nobles so that no one group can its monopoly and therefore he carries out his political ambition through his religious policies. He was accompanied from . One his very childhood with people who did not possess sectarian attitude among them. One must count his regent Bairam khan who was a Shia and Sheikh Abdal latif who again had no secretarian prejudices. Vincent Smith the infallibility decree according to which there arises any issue of difference then the king was supposed to hold his interpretation above that of mujtahid. From 1770 he was also supposed to make regular vigits to Ajmer dargah and his considered Chisti as preceptor which was again a shift from orthodoxy towards heterogeneity. In 1782 he declared the principle of sulh-i-Kul or absolute peace where by one can practice his own faith without the fear of any persecution.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Akbar`s Policy of religious tolerance was based on the precedents of the philosophy of sufi saints. Although Akbar did not claim to be prophet or to establish a new religion, Islam its privileged position. According to S. M. Ikram-Religious policy of Akbar was largely aimed at securing goodwill of the masses. He says- "For this policy of religious tolerance and of giving an adequate share in the administration to all classes there can be nothing but praise and it became a part of the Mughal political code". Dr. Qanungo said- "If Akbar had Stopped with the remission of Ziza, the prohibition of cow-Slaughter, the partial Hinduisation of administration. History would have exalted him to the rank of the greatest statesman and nation-builder of the

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world". According to Vincent Smith-Akbar`s religious policy was-`the outcome of ridiculous vanity, a monstrous growth of unrestrained autocracy, a moment of Akbar`s folly and not of his wisdom".

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