

## The religious policy of Akbar

Undoubtedly Akbar was a staunch follower of Islam and observed all its principles, but he was not a fanatic. The exposition of Akbar's religious policy was not the sudden outburst of an idea but a slow and steady process that impressed him from childhood to the world.

Akbar's ancestors were not at all orthodox in religious thinking. Babar was a man of free-thinking and Humayun an enlightened Sunni. Akbar's mother Hamida Begum was a Shia. His regent Bairam Khan was also a follower of the Shia creed, and his first teacher Abdul Latif was so liberal in his Outlook that he was considered Shia by the Sunni and vice versa.

As soon as he stepped into youth, he married several Rajput Princess and permitted them to follow their own religion if they so desired. He also remained in the company of Raja Bhagwan Das, Mansingh, Birbal, etc, who impressed him a lot. Akbar was anxious about the elements of all religion and wanted to know the secret of birth and death and he felt in himself an internal reapproach, so he adopted a liberal party towards all based on the principle of **Sulehkul** (universal peace). He was the first emperor who restored this policy.

Akbar was quite anxious to know the truth of religion. He not only passed time in the company of saints

but also visited the shrine of Sheikh Moinuddin Salim Chishti. Hence, he ordered the construction of **Ibadat Khana** (place of worship) at Fatehpur Sikri and first of all invited all renowned Muslim saints and Sunni scholars, then he invited the theologians and scholars of all other faiths such as Hindus, Persians, Jains, and Christians in order to know their religious ideas. The Christian missionaries of God visited his court thrice. Hindu scholars like Purushotam and Devi, Persian scholar Dasturji Mehar Ji and Jain saint-like Hira Vijay Suri, Hirchand Suri, Vijay Sen, Shanti Chandra, etc. were also called for discussion in the Ibadat Khana at Fatehpur Sikri. After meeting the scholars of different religions, Akbar realized that no religion is complete and there is some truth in every religion. So, he adopted a liberal view towards the other religions and begin to give them liberal grants.

Akbar was immensely impressed by the discoveries of non-Muslim scholars, being influenced by Hindu scholars, Akbar begins to worship Hindu gods and goddesses and he also begins to express respect for Hindu rituals and traditions. He was very much impressed by the theory of Karma and migration of soul and the Parsi scholars generated in Akbar regard for sun and fire worship. Jain scholars inspired for non-violence and the Christians taught him morality and love for humanity.

Now he removed the head priest of the Jama Masjid at Fatehpur Sikri and himself mounting the pulpit read the **Khutba** in his own name on June 22, 1579. It was composed by Faizi, the renowned scholar in verse. As this declaration of **Mahzar** Akbar was recognized as a just monarch and **Amir ul mominin**, the supreme interpreter of the Islamic law, in all the controversial disputes concerning religion or civil matters. The declaration of Mahzar enabled Akbar to become the chief judge.

Now in 1582 **Din-i Ilahi** was formed. It was an obvious result of the declaration of khutba (Mazhar).

**Dr. K S Lal**- "Since now the emperor was supreme in religious matters also, he must give spiritual guidance to his people."

Even **V A Smith** writes- "The divine faith was a movement of Akbar's fully not of his wisdom."

Abul Fazal was declared the chief priest of this Divine Faith and everybody willing to join this had to go to the emperor on Sunday and put his turban at his feet. Akbar besides putting the turban on his head used to give a Sast to him on which '**Allah- Hu- Akbar**' was engraved. Akbar established himself as a spiritual Guru. After a person was declared a member of this sect, he had to follow the following principles-

1. The members of the divine faith on seeing each other saluted with 'Allah Hu Akbar' and responded 'Jalla Jalalhu'.
2. They were required to give a dinner in their lifetime which was usually given in remembrance of a man after his death.
3. Each member was required to give his birthday party and to bestowalms.
4. The members were not permitted to take meat.
5. They were to abstain from marrying old women or minor girls.

6. They had to subdue worldly desires and endeavor for salvation.
7. They were expected to maintain good conduct and purity.
8. The members were expected to sacrifice their life, property, religion, and honor to the service of the emperor.

Akbar did not make use of power for the expansion of these sets. Hence, the number of its followers remained quite limited even in the lifetime of Akbar and after his death, the divine sets came to an end. Among Hindus only Raja Birbal accepted it.

Whatever might be the policy of the emperor, whether liberal or orthodox, it did not suit all equally. Akbar's liberal religious policy also offend some orthodox Muslims who wished from the core of their heart that Akbar should establish the supremacy of Islam in India, failing which they accused Akbar of having left and insulted Islam.

As a result of the liberal policy of Akbar, revolt accrued in some parts of the Empire. But besides these few critics, most people appreciated the liberal policy of Akbar. Their active support and loyalty enabled Akbar to make intensive conquest and to grand stability to the Mughal Empire.

Dr. Sargam Singh

Assistant professor

Department of history

Career convent girls PG college