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RULING ADMINISTRATION OF AKBAR AND HIS RELIGIOUS POLICIES – A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Akbar's legacy of ruling administration and religious toleration, firm but fair central control and liberal tax policies that gave commoners a chance to prosper established a precedent in India that can be traced forward in the thinking of later figures such as Mohandas Gandhi. His love of art led to the fusion of Indian and Central Asian/Persian styles that came to symbolize the height of Mughal achievement, in forms as varied as miniature painting and grandiose architecture. This lovely fusion would reach its absolute apex under Akbar's grandson, Shah Jahan, who designed and had built the world-famous Taj Mahal. Perhaps most of all, Akbar the Great showed the rulers of all nations everywhere that tolerance is not weakness, and open-mindedness is not the same thing as indecisiveness. As a result, he is honored more than four centuries after his death as one of the greatest rulers in human history. He had played the role of decisive from in the Indian society ever since the advent of Islam which most of his people had refused to embrace. Indian social-political order had been completely known to him and he fully understood the centrifugal tendencies of India this made to eliminate there by separating religion from politics.

Keywords: Akbar Dynasty, Shahjahan, Moghul Dynasty, Mogual Imperialism, System of Tax Collection, Ruling Welfare Measures.

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

“Learning is a plant that grows in all climes”

Akbar

Akbar the Great showed the rulers of all nations everywhere that tolerance is not weakness, and open-mindedness is not the same thing as indecisiveness. As a result, he is honored more than four centuries after his death as one of the greatest rulers in human history. Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar also known as Akbar the Great (November 23, 1542 –October 27, 1605) Born, Badr-ud-din Muhammad Akbar, his name was changed to Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar and his birthdate was officially changed to October 15, 1542. He was the son of Nasiruddin Humayun whom he succeeded as ruler of the Mughal Empire from 1556 to 1605. He was the grandson of Babur who founded the Mughal dynasty. On the eve of his death in 1605, the Mughal empire spanned almost 1 million square kilometers. Akbar, widely considered the greatest of the Mughal emperors, was only 14 when he ascended the throne in Delhi, following the death of his father Humayun. He was descended from Turks, Mongols, and Iranians — the three peoples who predominated in the political elites of northern India in medieval times. It took him the better part of two decades to consolidate his power and bring parts of northern and central India into his realm. During his reign, he reduced external military threats from the Pashtun (Afghan) descendants of Sher Shah by waging wars against Afghan tribes, and at the Second Battle of Panipat he defeated the Hindu king Samrat Hemu Chandra Vikramaditya, also called Hemu. The emperor solidified his rule by pursuing diplomacy with the powerful Rajput caste, and by admitting Rajput princesses in his harem.

Akbar was an artisan, warrior, artist, armorer, blacksmith, carpenter, emperor, general, inventor, animal trainer (reputedly keeping thousands of hunting cheetahs during his reign and training many himself), lacemaker, technologist and theologian. His most lasting contributions were to the arts. He initiated a large collection of literature, including the Akbar-nama and the Ain-i-Akbari, and incorporated art from around the world into the Mughal collections. He also commissioned the building of widely admired buildings, and invented the first prefabricated homes and movable structures. Akbar began a series of religious debates where Muslim scholars would debate religious matters with Sikhs, Hindus, Cārvāka atheists and even Jesuits coming from Portugal. He founded his own religious cult, the Din-i-Ilahi or the "Divine Faith"; however, it amounted only to a form of personality cult for Akbar, and quickly dissolved after his death leaving his wife behind.

Akbar Takes Power

In 1555, Humayan died just months after retaking Delhi. Akbar ascended the Mughal throne at the age of 13, and became Shahanshah ("King of Kings"). His regent was Bayram Khan, his childhood guardian and an outstanding warrior/statesman. The young emperor almost immediately lost Delhi once more to the Hindu leader Hemu. However, in November of 1556, Generals Bayram Khan and Khan Zaman I defeated Hemu's much larger army at the Second Battle of Panipat. Hemu himself was shot through the eye as he rode into battle atop an elephant; the Mughal army captured and executed him. When he came of age at 18, Akbar



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dismissed the increasingly overbearing Bayram Khan and took direct control of the empire and army. Bayram was ordered to make the hajj to Mecca; instead, he started a rebellion against Akbar. The young emperor's forces defeated Bayram's rebels at Jalandhar, in the Punjab; rather than executing the rebel leader, Akbar mercifully allowed his former regent another chance to go to Mecca. This time, Bayram Khan went.

Although he was out from under Bayram Khan's control, Akbar still faced challenges to his authority from within the palace. The son of his nursemaid, a man called Adham Khan, killed another adviser in the palace after the victim discovered that Adham was embezzling tax funds. Enraged both by the murder and by the betrayal of his trust, Akbar had Adham Khan thrown from the parapets of the castle. From that point forward, Akbar was in control of his court and country, rather than being a tool of palace intrigues. The young emperor set out on an aggressive policy of military expansion, both for geo-strategic reasons and as a way to get troublesome warrior/advisers away from the capital. In the following years, the Mughal army would conquer much of northern India (including what is now Pakistan) and Afghanistan. In order to control his vast empire, Akbar instituted a highly efficient bureaucracy. He appointed mansabars, or military governors, over the various regions; these governors answered directly to him. As a result, he was able to fuse the individual fiefdoms of India into a unified empire that would survive until 1868. Akbar was personally courageous, willing to lead the charge in battle. He enjoyed taming wild cheetahs and elephants, as well. This courage and self-confidence allowed Akbar to initiate novel policies in government, and to stand by them over objections from more conservative advisers and courtiers.

Systems of Faith and Marriage

From an early age, Akbar was raised in a tolerant milieu. Although his family was Sunni, two of his childhood tutors were Persian Shias. As an emperor, Akbar made the Sufi concept of Sulh-e-Kuhl, or "peace to all," a founding principle of his law. Akbar displayed remarkable respect for his Hindu subjects and their faith. His first marriage in 1562 was to Jodha Bai or Harkha Bai, who was a Rajput princess from Amber. As with the families of his later Hindu wives, her father and brothers joined Akbar's court as advisers, equal in rank to his Muslim courtiers. In total, Akbar had 36 wives of various ethnic and religious backgrounds. Probably even more importantly to his ordinary subjects, Akbar in 1563 repealed a special tax placed on Hindu pilgrims who visited sacred sites, and in 1564 completely repealed the jizya, or yearly tax on non-Muslims. What he lost in revenue by these acts, he more than regained in good-will from the Hindu majority of his subjects. Even beyond the practical realities of ruling an enormous, predominantly Hindu empire with just a small band Muslim elite, however, Akbar himself had an open and curious mind on questions of religion. As he mentioned to Philip II of Spain in his letter, cited above, he loved to meet with learned men and women of all faiths to discuss theology and philosophy. From the female Jain guru Champa to Portuguese Jesuit priests, Akbar wanted to hear from them all.

Foreign Policy

As Akbar solidified his rule over northern India, and began to extend his power south and west to the coast, he became aware of the new Portuguese presence there. Although the initial Portuguese approach to India had been "all guns blazing," they soon realized that they were no match militarily for the Mughal Empire on land. The two powers made treaties, under which the Portuguese were allowed to maintain their coastal forts, in exchange for which the promised not to harass Mughal ships that set out from the west coast carrying pilgrims to Arabia for the hajj.

Interestingly, Akbar even formed an alliance with the Catholic Portuguese to punish the Ottoman Empire, which controlled the Arabian Peninsula at that time. The Ottomans were concerned that the huge numbers of pilgrims flooding in to Mecca and Medina each year from the Mughal Empire were overwhelming the resources of the holy cities, so the Ottoman sultan rather firmly requested that Akbar quit sending people on the hajj. Outraged, Akbar asked his Portuguese allies to attack the Ottoman navy which was blockading the Arabian Peninsula. Unfortunately for him, the Portuguese fleet was completely routed off of Yemen. This signaled the end of the Mughal/Portuguese alliance. Akbar maintained more enduring relations with other empires, however. Despite the Mughal capture of Kandahar from the Persian Safavid Empire in 1595, for example, those two dynasties had cordial diplomatic ties throughout Akbar's rule. The Mughal Empire was such a rich and important potential trading partner that various European monarchs sent emissaries to Akbar, as well, including Elizabeth I of England and Henry IV of France.

In 1582, King Philip II of Spain received a letter from the Mughal Emperor Akbar of India. Akbar wrote: "As most men are fettered by bonds of tradition, and by imitating ways followed by their fathers... everyone continues, without investigating their arguments and reasons, to follow the religion in which he was born and educated, thus excluding himself from the possibility of ascertaining the truth, which is the noblest aim of the human intellect. Therefore, we associate at convenient seasons with learned men of all religions, thus deriving profit from their exquisite discourses and exalted aspirations." [Johnson, 208] Akbar the Great chided Philip for the anti-Protestant excesses of the Spanish Counter-reformation. Spain's Catholic inquisitors had by this time mostly rid the



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country of Muslims and Jews, so turned their murderous attentions to Protestant Christians instead, particularly in Spanish-ruled Holland. Although Philip II did not heed Akbar's call for religious tolerance, it is indicative of the Mughal emperor's attitudes towards people of other faiths Akbar is also renowned for his patronage of the arts and sciences. Miniature painting, weaving, book-making, metallurgy, and technological innovations all flourished under his reign. Who was this emperor, famed for his wisdom and goodness? How did he become one of the greatest rulers in world history?

The Nine Jewels in Akbar's Court

- **Abul-Fazel:** was the vizier of Akbar, and author of the Akbarnama, the official history of Akbar's reign in three volumes, the third volume is known as the Ain-I Akbari and a Persian translation of the Bible [14]. He was also the brother of Faizi, the poet laureate of emperor Akbar.
- **Faizi:** was the poet laureate of Akbar's Court. He was the brother of Akbar's historian. Abul Fazl. He composed beautiful poetry in Persian and is estimated by his contemporaries to have composed nearly 100 poetic works. He wanted to produce a Panj Ganj (lit. five treasures) in imitation of the Persian poet Nezami, but died after writing only three out of the five works. Towards this end he wrote Nal u Daman, Makhzan ul-advar, and Bilqis va Salman. These were in imitation of Nezami's Layla va Majnun, Makhzan ul-Asrar, and Shirin va Khusrau, respectively. Akbar highly recognized the genius in him and appointed him teacher for his son and gave place to him among his decorative 'Nav Ratnas'.
- **Miyan Tansen:** was a musician in Akbar's court and is considered among the greatest composer-musicians in Hindustani classical music. He was an extraordinarily gifted vocalist, known for a large number of compositions, and also an instrumentalist who popularized and improved the rabab (of Central Asian origin).
- **Birbal:** was the Grand Vizier (Wazir-e Azam) of the Mughal court in the administration of Akbar and one of his most trusted members. He was the only person other than Akbar who was a Din-i-Ilahi believer. Birbal's duties in Akbar's court were mostly military and administrative but he was also a very close friend of the emperor, who liked Birbal most for his wit and wisdom, as a result of which they frequently had witty and humorous exchanges between them. These exchanges and stories have become part of a rich tradition of folklore and legend.
- **Raja Todar Ma:** rose to become the finance minister in Akbar's Darbar. Todar Mal overhauled the revenue system of Akbar's Mughal empire. He was from the Khatri (or Khattri/Khattree) community of Punjab. Todar Mal had developed his expertise in Sher Shah's employment.
- **Raja Man Singh:** was the Kacchwaha Rajah of Amber, a state later known as Jaipur. He was a trusted general in Akbar's army. However, he was a devotee of Shri Krishna, and not an adherent of Akbar's religion, Din-i-Ilahi.
- **Abdur Rahim Khan:** I-Khana- was a poet in Akbar's darbar, and one of his main nine ministers (Diwan)in his court, also known as the Navaratnas; he is most known for his Hindi couplets and his books on Astrology. The village of Khankhana, named after him, is located in the Nawanshahr district of the state of Punjab in northwest India.
- **Fakir Aziao-Din:** (Faqr means Sage or Ascetic in Urdu) was one of Akbar's chief advisors, and belonged to his inner circle. Akbar regarded his advice in high esteem.
- **Mullah Do Piazza:** was among the Mughal emperor Akbar's chief advisors. Akbar regarded his advice in high esteem and included him among the nine gems of the Mughal court, or Navratnas, as he was known for his intelligence. He was a close competition to Birbal, but he always lost at the end.

Akbarnama

The **Akbarnāma**, which literally means Book of Akbar, is a biographical account of Akbar, the third Mughal emperor, written in Persian. It includes vivid and detailed descriptions of his life and times. The work was commissioned by Akbar, and written by Abul Fazl, one of the Nine Jewels of Akbar's royal court. It is stated that the book took seven years to be completed and the original manuscripts contained a number of paintings supporting the texts, and all the paintings represented the Mughal school of painting. The Akbarnama consists of three volumes or parts. The first volume deals with the genealogy of the descendants of Timur, and detailed information from the birth of Akbar, his accession to the throne, and the first seventeen years of his reign. The second volume narrates the reign of Akbar from the eighteenth year of his reign to the forty sixth year of his reign. It stops there because



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Abu'l Fazl was assassinated at the order of Jahangir, Akbar's son and heir on August 12, 1602. The third volume named Ā'in-i-Akbarī and details the administrative system of the Empire as well as containing the famous "Account of the Hindu Sciences". In this section, he expounds the major beliefs of not the six major Hindu philosophical schools of thought, and those of the Jains, Buddhists, and Nāstikas. He also gives several Indian accounts of geography, cosmography, and some tidbits on Indian aesthetic thought.

Mughal Empire and Dynasty

The **Mughal Empire** was a Muslim Persianate imperial power of the Indian subcontinent which began in 1526, ruled most of the Indian Subcontinent as Hindustan by the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and ended in the mid-19th century. The Mughal Emperors were descendants of the Timurids, and at the height of their power, around 1700, they controlled most of the Indian Subcontinent — extending from present-day Bangladesh in the east to Balochistan in the west, Kashmir in the north to the Kaveri basin in the south. Its population at that time has been estimated at between 110 and 130 million, over a territory of over 4 million km² (1.5 million mi²). Following 1725 it declined rapidly, weakened by wars of succession, agrarian crises fueling local revolts, the growth of religious intolerance, and British colonialism. The last Emperor, Bahadur Zafar Shah II, whose rule was restricted to the city of Delhi, was imprisoned and exiled by the British after the Indian Rebellion of 1857. The classic period of the Empire starts with the accession of Jalaluddin Mohammad Akbar, better known as Akbar the Great, in 1556, and ends with the death of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707, although the Empire continued for another 150 years. During this period, the Empire was marked by a highly centralized administration connecting the different regions. All the significant monuments of the Mughals, their most visible legacy, date to this period.

The Mughal Empire was the dominant power in the Indian subcontinent between the mid- 16th century and the early 18th century. Founded in 1526, it officially survived until 1858, when it was supplanted by the British Raj. The dynasty is sometimes referred to as the Timurid dynasty as Babur was descended from Timur. The Mughal dynasty was founded when Babur, hailing from Ferghana, invaded parts of northern India and defeated Ibrahim Shah Lodhi, the ruler of Delhi, at the First Battle of Panipat in 1526. The Mughal Empire superseded the Delhi Sultanate as rulers of northern India. In time, the state thus founded by Babur far exceeded the bounds of the Delhi Sultanate, eventually encompassing a major portion of India and earning the appellation of Empire. A brief interregnum (1540-1555) during the reign of Babur's son, Humayun, saw the rise of the Afghan Suri Dynasty under Sher Shah Suri, a competent and efficient ruler in his own right. However, Sher Shah's untimely death and the military incompetence of his successors enabled Humayun to regain his throne in 1555. However, Humayun died a few months later, and was succeeded by his son, the 13-year-old Akbar. The greatest portions of Mughal expansion was accomplished during the reign of Akbar (1556-1605). The empire was maintained as the dominant force of the present-day Indian subcontinent for a hundred years further by his successors Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb. In his role religion had played the role of a decisive force in the Indian society ever since the advent of Islam which most of its people had refused to embrace. Akbar fully understood the centrifugal tendencies of the complete Indian Socio-Political order and made a Serious attempt to eliminate there by Separating religion from Politics

Akbar's Religious Policy

Moreover, to his own bitter experience, Akbar had found that mere religious affinity was no guarantee to win the love and loyalty of his camp-followers. He had suffered much at the hands of his own Scrupulous and jealous kingsmen; I nor could he depend exclusively on his self-seeking and turbulent Muslim nobles who frequently resorted to revolts and at times. Pored a danger even to his personal life. On the other hand, Akbar's highly devoted, Intelligent and well-cultured Hindu wives won his love and their relatives earned his gratitude by their Selfish service to the throne. No wonder, the Rajputs emerged as the Pillars of the Mughal throne whom Akbar could whereas counter puibe against Muslim Kith & Kin. All those considerations deeply influenced Akbar's religious views and moulded his state polices. The exposition of Akbar's religious policy was not the sudden outburst of an idea nor a calculated political more. Moreover, its geniuses was Spontaneous in keeping with the nature of Akbar, its growth and development was spread over distinct stages in the years process of evolution of his religious policy.

Objectionable of his subjects, he, therefore, abolished the pilgrims. Tax throughout his dominious, close upon its heels, Akbar took the Most revolutionary step on March 15, 1564, in granting religious freedom to the Hindus; it was the abolition of jaziya. This was a poll tax, charged from the Hindus in their capacity as Zimni's, whereby they were denied the right of full-fledged citizenship of the state under their Muslim rules. The Hindu population was divided into three grades on the basis of their economic standing; the richest among them paid 48 dirhams, the second grade 24 dirhams, third 12 dirhams per annum. Akbar did not discriminate between his subjects on the basis of religion, instead, he was eager to establish his reputation as an impartial rule of the people – Hindus as well as Muslims, being a youth of courage & conviction, he wiped out the traditional religious disability from which the Hindu subjects of the Muslim rulers had been suffering since long. The abolition of jaziya caused a tremendous financial loss to the state exchequer & threw the revenue department of the Mughal government out of gear for a short while. Obviously, while



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taking this drastic step. Akbar was opposed by his muslim Ministers & bitterly criticized by the orthodox for having violated the age – old tradition of the Islamic polity. Nevertheless. Akbar faced the opposition with patience & courage & attempted Akbar married the first Rajput princes from Amber in January 1562 & received the voluntary services of the Rajput warriors as his relatives. He witnessed for the first time, at the siege of merta, a unique phenomenon it was that of the friendly Rajputs fighting with enthusiasm for the Mugal throne against their own people, led by the valiant Jai Mal, later the defender of Chittor. Akbar was so much impressed by the undaunted courage & valour of the Rajputs, including his friends as well as foes, that he forthwith stopped the practice of enslaving the prisoners of war & their forcible conversion to Islam. The decree issued to this effect, sometime after April 1562, made it clear that the women & children of the enemy camp must not be molested by the Mughal armies on any account. This was the first step of its kind taken purely on humanitarian considerations by a muslim ruler of India. It was apparently against the traditional Islamic law & practice. Akbar won great applause from the people, particularly the non-muslims, for this noble gesture.

Policy of Public Welfare

Akbar was encamped at Mathura in 1563 when he came to know that, in accordance with the old practice of the Muslim rulers, his government had also imposed a tax on the Hindu pilgrims who wanted to have a dip in the ‘holy’ waters of the Jumna. Akbar’s conscience did not allow the imposition of such curbs on the religious beliefs & practices, however superstitions & to cool the frayed tempers with arguments that the solidarity & stability of the Mughal state depended very much on the good will & cooperation of his Hindu subjects. Abul Fazl defends Akbar’s action on the ground that when owing to the blessing of abundant goodwill & graciousness of Akbar. Those who belong to other religious (viz. the non-Muslims), have, like the Muslims, bound up their waist of devotion & service & exert themselves for advancement of the dominion, why should they be classed with that old faction which cherished Mortal enmity & be the subjects of contempt & slaughter. It is very significant to note that Akbar had abolished jaziya & granted complete freedom to his Hindu subjects long before he came in contact with Sheikh Mubarak & his illustrious sons Faizi & Abul Fazl. Who later on, became the chief exponents of Akbar’s concept of the nation state of India, based on the pillars of Secularism? We have it on the testimony of Abul Fazl that Akbar was only twenty years old when he experienced an internal bitterness, for the lack of Spiritual provision for his cast journey & his soul was seized with exceeding sorrow. This spiritual awakening conditioned his father course of action as the ruler A.L. Srivastava makes significant comments on this inward change in Akbar as follows:

The feeling that twenty years of his life were practically wasted & that he had made little effort to work in a Manner as might lead to eternal bliss, produced in him a desire to work for the benefit of the people regardless of their race, religion, & way of life. It is clear that the belief that he firmly held in his mature years, that for a ruler there is no better way of pleasing God than the selfless service to his subjects of all classes & Creeds, began to dawn on him at this period of his life. Although there is no recorded evidence to show as to what factors were responsible for this revolutionary change, it is very likely that it was wrought by his association with Yogis, Sanyasis & other Sainly persons & his close contact with the Kachhwaha ruling family of Akbar, whose bravery, loyalty & unflinching devotion made a deep impression on his discerning impressionable, & receptive mind as against the wavering & questionable allegiance of his hereditary Mughal, Uzbek & other Muslim officers.

Sheikh Mubarak, liberal-Minded scholar of sufi dispositions, came in contact with Akbar in 1573. After the conquest of Gujarat. He became a personal friend, philosopher & guide of Akbar in his quest for truth. His illustrious son Faizl, the poet turned philosopher, who was younger than Akbar by about five years was introduced to the emperor early in 1574 & immediately attached to the court. Faizl, in turn, presented his younger brother Abul Fazl to Akbar towards the close of 1574. All the three of them, individually as well as collectively, found favour with their royal patron because of their high Moral character, & the identity of their religious views with his own. They appreciated the liberal religious views & secular outlook of Akbar & in turn, interpreted the royal gestures & elaborated his visions so as to transform them into a practicable state policy for public welfare. They made a contribution towards the fulfillment of Akbar’s ideal to be the national Monarch of India. Under their influence, Akbar became all the more liberal & tolerant towards the people of diverse religions faiths. He removed all restrictions on the constructions & Maintenance of Hindu temples, churches & other places of worship. Bodbold tells us that under the influence of brahmanas & sramanas Akbar came to have faith in the doctrine of the transmiration of the soul. In order to please his Hindu subjects. Akbar adopted their social customs & practices, mixed freely with them & appreciated their cultural values. As a ruler, Akbar made it a point to administer even-handed justice to all, opened the gates of state services to his subjects on merit, & began to appoint capable Hindus to the highest offices of the state.



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Spiritual Awakening

Akbar did not rest contented after the grant of complete religious freedom to his subjects. His next desire was to create a spirit of love & harmony among his people by eliminating all the racial, religious & cultural barriers between them under the ennobling influence of sheikla Mubarak & his sons. He was gradually drawn from the world of politics into the domain of spiritualism. As a first step towards it. She expressed eagerness to understand the fundamentals of his own religion, viz, Islam. In order to achieve this objective, he ordered, in January 1575, the construction of Ibadat Khana- ‘The house of worship’ at Fatehpur Sikri to adorn the spiritual kingdom: Here he initiated the practice of holding religious discoursed with the learned & the saints of the age: the meetings were held on

Thursday nights & sometimes continued till the early morning hours of Fridays. To begin with, Akbar used to invite only the Muslim theologians & Saints, including the Ulama, Sheikhs, Sayyads, the religious –Minded Mughal nobles, to take part in these deliberations. The Ibadat Khana hed four aiwans (Verandahs) & there were, according to Abul Fazl, four noble sections in that spiritual & temporal assemblage. In the eastern chamber of worship (Ibadat Kada) were the great leaders & high officers who were conspicuous in the courts of society for enlightenment. In the southern compartment the keen-sighted investigators, both those who gathered the light of day (i.e., the illuminati) & those who chose the repose of the night-hales of contemplation sat in the school of instruction. In the western compartment, those of lofty Lineage practiced auspicious arts. In the northern compartment were the Sufis of clear heart who were absorbed in beautific vision. The inaugural session of the august assembly at the Ibadat Khana was addressed by Akbar thus:

My sole object oh, wise Mullas! is to ascertain the Truth to find out & disclose the principle of genuine religion & to trace it to the Origin. Take care, therefore, that, through the influence of your human passions, you are not induced to conceal the Truth, and say nothing contrary to the Almighty decrees. If you do, you are responsible before God for the consequences of your implity Akbar took part in these religious discovers with great enthusiasm. The discussions were allowed be carried on by the scholars long after Midnight even when the emperor retired to his sleeping chamber which was attached to the Ibadakhana. Though these, discussions, according Abul Fazel, ‘wisdom & deeds would be tested, & the essence of Manhood would be exhibited. Those who were founded on truth entered the hall of acceptance, while those who were only ventured with good went hastily to the pit of base Metal At the very outset the Muslim theologians came to be divided into two groups who did not see eye to eye with each other in the matter of interpretation of the Islamic Canon Sheikh Makhdumul mulk & Sheikh Abdun Nabi were leaders of the orthodox sunni party while sheika Mubarak Faizi & Abul Fazl represented the group of free thinkers & liberal-minded Theologians. They failed to arrive at agreed opinions on many an Islamic belief & Practice, & in the midst of deliberations on very sober & thought-provoking aspects of divinity, displayed a spirit of intolerance towards each other. According to Badaoni, the mullas quarreled among themselves, drew the sword of the tongue, called their opponents names & even attributed motives to one another. One night, Akbar’s sleep was disturbed when the two rival groups of theologians actually drew their swords to settle the religious issues at stake. Akbar was shocked to witness the irresponsible behaviour of those self conceited greedy& intolerant mullas; they were lost in his estimation particularly because of the fact that they had failed to give satisfactory answers to his yearnings for spiritual enlightenment. In disgust, he threw open the gates of the Ibadat khana the priests & Scholars of other religious faiths, including Hinduism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism & Christianity. Thus, in the pleasant company of the renowned sages of his age, Akbar explored the mysteries nature & sought the truth about Good & his creation in the spirit of a disciple and in that spring-time of enlightenment; writes Abul Fazl a set of wisdom-having, judicious men were in readiness propound questions & to record views. The difficulties of the various classes of men were fittingly resolved. The whole of that night was kept alive by discussions which approved themselves to one & all. The degree of reason & the stages of vision were tested, & all the heights & depths of intelligence were traversed & the lamp of perception was brightened. By the blessedness of the holy examination the real was separated from the fictitious & the un-currency of those who were only coated with wisdom was brought of light

Religious Rule – Muslim Law

The Muslims constituted a religion-dominated society; the Islamic canon was deemed to regulate their social and Political order. The issue of the Mahzar confirmed & approved of the predominance of religious influence over the Indian Muslims. It authorised Akbar to interpret & implement the Muslim law whenever there occurred a difference of opinion between the various sects of the Mullas on religious & civil matters, governed by their religious law. He could exercise this power only when the muslim divines failed to arrive at an agreement. The Mahazar did not give any original or overriding powers to Akbar either to make a religious law or violate, go against, or obstruct the operation of such law, as a matter of fact, up till that time, Muslim populace of India regarded. The Mughal empire to be an Islamic state & expected the emperor to act as the amir-ul-Momnin- ‘Leader of the Faithful’, & the amir I adil- ‘The Just Ruler’. It was in this capacity that Akbar was entrusted with the responsibility of implementing the Muslim law over his subjects in letter as well as Spirit, what was given by the Mazhar to him was the power of interpretation of this law as the chief



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Imam or judge with a view to resolving the religious or civil disputes arising out of the difference of opinion among the ulama. As stated earlier, this power was enjoyed by the mullas- ‘the muslim divines in their capacity as the mujtahids- ‘the interpreters of the Canon law’. They made use of this power by issuing what were called the fat was ‘the religious decrees. The right to appeal against their fat was lay with the court of the Sadr at the provincial level & the sadar (Sadar of the Sadrs) or the chief sadr of the empire constituted the highest appellate authority in this regard. These officers were all the nominees of the Mughal emperor, who held their office at the Pleasure of the latter. According to the Mahzar, Akbar reserved to himself the function of interpretation of the Muslim law which was previously delegated to the chief Sadr of the empire. The Muslim divines were not deprived of their right to interpret the Islamic law albic Akbar asserted his authority over their heads as the chief Imam. According to the Islamic theory of Kingship of Emperor in his capacity as the amir I adil was already expected to be ‘the fountain of justice’; through the issue of the Mahzar, Akbar asserted this right. As a matter of fact,’ the Muslim state’ was a theocracy in which the religious priests – the ulama or the mullas wielded great influence in the state politics; whenever, a Muslim ruler happened to be orthodox in his religious views, or exhibited signs of weakness, the mullas usurped the high offices of the state & asserted their authority over the king in their capacity as the guardians of the Muslim law which regulated the affairs of their society including the state. To the misfortune of the muslim the predominance of the mullas in the state politics was no guarantee for Peace & harmony amongst them. They were usually divided into mutually hostile sects which did not see eye to eye with one another. The Sunnis, Shias & Mahdavis Persecuted their opponents, frequently entered into bloody conflicts with one another & Created law and order problems for the state. As stated elsewhere Akbar had a very bitter experience at the hands of the orthodox sunni ulama who held office of profit, under the leadership of his chief Sady Aldum Nadi, and exercised great influence over the state affairs for over a decade. What to say of granting religious freedom to the non-muslims, the orthodox sunnis did not allow Akbar even to act as the impartial ruler of the musalmans themselves. Because they discriminated against the Shias and publicly dubbed the Mahdavis as the heretics. They stood in the way of Akbar in the achievement of his ideal to transform the theocratic Mughal state into a Secular nation state of India. Through the mahzar, Akbar struck a serious blow to the Power and influence of the mullas in the state politics brought them under his subordination as the chief imam or guardian of the muslim law, and rendered them politically important therein lies the significance of the mahzar; it was apparently a religious document which carried the most significant the political implecations. R.P. Tripathi makes a significant reference to the international tension which them prevailed between various muslim countries owing to the mutual conflict of rival sects, particularly, the Sunnis and the Shias, he writes;

The international situation of the muslim world also called forth a clarification of the policy of the Mughal empire the Shia Kingdom of Persia and the Sunni States were at war more for religious than political reasons. The shah of Persia claimed to be the leader of the shias while the ottoman sultan of Turkey claimed Khilafat over the muslim states, particularly of the Sunnies. These warring states were egregious of know what policy mughal empire proposed to follow, the declaration of Akbar signed by some of the leading divines announced his policy in unambiguous terms to all concerned, both in India and outside. The mughal emperor refused to identify himself with any creed and declared his determination to follow an independent policy of enlightened toleration within the ambit of the Quran, Hadis and common agreements between the accredited divines.

Summing Up and Concluding Remarks

It is simply amazing to note the worldly character of the mahzar which stands unique in the history of Islam Interpreted by S.M.Jaffar as the Act of supremacy the document reveals most unmistakably the statesmanship of Akbar who caught the ferocious lions(The ulama) in their own dens Like King John’s magna carta it was a petition to the King from the most influential ulama but unlike it, it increased rather than diminished the royal prerogative. The mahzar came as a bolt from the blue to the orthodox Sunni circles who raised a hue and cry against Akbar’s interference in the religious affairs; nevertheless, it marks the liberation of the state-politics from the baneful influence of the orthodox ulama. The latter did not take it kindly. They fretted and fumed and started a vigorous campaign of hatred and character assassination against Akbar among the muslim masses, they accused Akbar of having assumed the role of the prophet badaoni, a bigoted mussalman, pours out the venom of his wrath Akbar and his confidential advisers who set the world on flames Abul Fazl refuters the charge that Akbar had denounced the prophet or let down the true. Islamic religion Akbar was an absolute monarch who did not broke the infringement of his sovereign powers at the hands of the ulama albeit his belief in the ‘ theory of divine Rights of Kingship should not be Confounded with the charge that he wanted to play the prophet Abul Fazl asserts that the bigoted mullas gave no need to the fact that the not honour and respect which this appreciative throne occupant used to show to the family of the prophet had been rarely exhibited by other monarchs, many good sayyids had been raised to dignities and high offices by the favour of his majesty and from time to time, they were still further promoted and the garden of their wishes kept watered and verdant. On viewing all the Assertions of the historians and critical views on the Akbar’s religious policy it is better to conclude that Akbar was one of the emperors who originally separated politics from the religion. And the first king in the mughal emperors who clearly separated the religion, from the politics. The religious based administrative policies had made him very popular and generous-specially in Non-Muslims. His religious policy was nor fully accepted at well as bitterly criticized by orthodox Muslim



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like mullas. Akbar's religious policy and views moulded his state policy. He had played the role of decisive from in the Indian society ever since the advent of Islam which most of his people had refused to embrace. Indian social-political order had been completely known to him and he fully understood the centrifugal tendencies of India this made to eliminate there by separating religion from politics.

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