

Deconstructing the Popular Notions Related to the Religio-Political Policies of the Mughals: An Analytical Study of First Three Great Mughal Rulers

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ABSTRACT

Heterogeneous Mughal nobility was mainly constituted of Afghans, Persians, Turanis, Rajputs and Hindustani Muslims. These noble factions had diverse ethnic, religious and political backgrounds. And to gain their vested religio-political interests, these factions not only tried to exert considerable influence upon Mughal emperors but created many troubles for a smooth and continuous Mughal rule as well. So, keeping this perpetual factional problem in view and to achieve political mastery over these factions, the Mughal emperors chalked out such policies which brought the above-mentioned factions under their nose and made them politically and religiously impotent.

This article tries to analyze and deconstruct the previous popular notions related to above mentioned factional politics and the policies of Mughal emperors such as religious diplomacy, Din-i-Ilahi, matrimonial alliances, Mansabdari system and royal patronage provided to the different groups irrespective of cast, creed and ethnicity which resulted in fading away their ethno-racial and religio-political recognition. Moreover, the actual purpose of this article is to find out the hidden motives of the Mughals emperors related to these policies. We scrutinized the above mentioned Mughal policies in the light of classical literature and came up with a new perspective which argues that the actual motive behind dealing with these different factions was to gain political superiority over them and make them religiously and politically sterile.

KEYWORDS: Heterogeneous, Mughal-nobility, Great-Mughal, Din-i-Ilahi, Sulh-i-Kul, Religious-Diplomacy, Religio-political, Matrimonial-alliances, Mansabdari-system, Timurid-court, Shia-Sunni

INTRODUCTION

The Mughal empire (1526-1857) came into being, following the first battle of Panipat in 1526, was mainly composed of Turanis, Afghans, Persians, Rajputs and Hindustani Muslims. These noble factions had diverse ethnicities and political backgrounds. Thus, they formed heterogeneous Mughal nobility. Heterogeneous *umara* factions dominated court politics and exerted considerable influence upon the emperor with a view to secure their vested religio-political interests. Amidst these circumstances, the Mughal emperors carved out such policies that would seek to resolve the problem of their high-handedness.

The Mughal rulers were shrewd enough to secure supports against their rivals. For this purpose, they even went to the extent of converting themselves to other faiths. Amir Timur (1336-1405) confessed Sunni Islam. [1] It was followed by his successors until the downfall of Mughal Empire that followed the war of independence in 1857. Babur (1483-1530) was the first Timurid ruler in Hindustan. He converted himself to Shia faith with a view to secure military contingent from Shah of Persia against his arch rival Shaibani Khan. [2] His son Humayun (1508-1556) followed his footsteps, who treated his subjects in the same way. His son Akbar (1542-1605) even went to the extent of cultivating new faith '*Din-i-Ilahi*' keeping in view to counterpoise the influence of noble factions.

Apart from religious diplomacy, the Mughal emperors chalked out many other policies to maintain religio-political harmony at their respective courts. They cultivated matrimonial alliances irrespective of their non-Muslims and Muslims subjects. Humayun entered matrimonial bonds with Rajputs. Akbar also followed this conciliatory policy and offered them employment into the royal fold. He was shrewd enough to use their strength as a bulwark against his rivals.

Similarly, they conferred *jagirs* upon their *umara* to win their sympathies and support against enemies. Babur and Humayun continued to confer *jagirs* upon their nobles. Akbar went a step ahead and made *jagirdari* system very mechanized and systematized that could run the state machinery efficiently. Later, this system came to be known as *mansabdari* system. Through this system, ethnic affiliation of *mansabdars* with their soldiers was faded away. Furthermore, its hereditary nature was abolished. Officials used to serve the crown rather than accomplishing their interests.

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Likewise, the Mughal emperors inducted into the royal fold of officials irrespective of cast, creed, Shia-Sunni and Muslims non-Muslims. Contrary to the Sultans of Delhi Sultanate, they inducted even low-born subjects on their sheer dint of merit. Like Shah of Persia, they never persecuted even their non-Muslim subjects on religious grounds. They elevated and promoted their nobles on ground of their commitment to serve the crown. Keeping in view the divergent stock of nobility, these policies served their political ambitions.

The Mughal emperors formulated various policies pursuant the nature of matters arising out of heterogeneous nobility, because divergent stock of nobility raised a host of problems. They confessed Shia faith and Akbar introduced new faith to serve their political vested interests. Their adopted policies are as follow.

RELIGIOUS DIPLOMACY

Babur was ten years of age when his father died. He became ruler of his fatherly state constituted of Farghana and Samarqand. He soon confronted with Shaibani Khan that resulted his expulsion from Farghana. He wanted to recapture his kingdom. He cultivated friendship with Shah Safvi. [3] A treaty was concluded in which Shah demanded Babur's confessions to Shia faith. He acceded to his proposals. Shah dispatched seventeen thousand cavalries. With this military contingent, he came out victorious against Shaibani Khan. He confessed Shia faith and accepted *Shia Taj*. He even struck coins bearing Shia text. [4] After having grinded his axe, he denounced Shia faith. [5]

Similarly, Humayun followed the footsteps of his father. He confronted with Afghans under the leadership of Sher Shah Suri. He battled with them in which he was forced to leave for Persia. He was left with no other option but to seek shelter at the court of Shah Tehmasp, ruler of Persia. He requested Shah to provide him military strength in re-capturing his lost throne. He offered him conditional support. He demanded his confession and propagation of Shia Islam once he would destine to rule Hindustan again. Humayun made promise to propagate the religious ideology of Shah in Hindustan. [6] He also accepted *Shia Taj*. It was also agreed that he would surrender Kabul and Kandahar to Shah after re-capturing the throne of Delhi. After having it done, he denied to surrender both the provinces to Shah. [7] He also ill-treated his troops. [8] He did not fulfill the promise he made to him.

The Mughal emperors played off the religious sentiments of Persian rulers. Akbar followed the legacy of exploiting religious sentiments of his subjects. He was thirteen years of age when he was destined to rule over Hindustan. Bairam Khan was appointed Akbar's regent. [9] His mother Hamida Bano was also Shia by faith. Being regent, Bairam extended considerable influence upon the infant emperor. Wide powers were placed at his disposal to carry out the whole administration. He even possessed royal seal. Akbar used to call him *Khan Baba*. [10] He elevated the officials of his creed to the dignity of Khan. [11] He promoted twenty-five of his friends to the dignity of *panch hazari*. [12] He superseded old Turani nobility and reduced them to poverty and destitute. [13] He got some of them killed and detained for more than twenty nobles. [14] He appointed Shaikh Gadai as *Sadr-us-Sadur* as he was in good terms with him. [15] He continued to exert influence upon court policies for more than half a decade.

Akbar was outraged at his high-handedness. He was mature enough to administrate state matters on his own. He wanted to get rid of regency of Bairam. Keeping in view royal intention, he rebelled against the imperial authority. Later, he was pardoned by Akbar and carried on towards Makkah where he intended to spend the rest of his life. On his way to Makkah, he was murdered by an Afghan whose father he had murdered in the second battle of Panipat.

With his departure, Shia influence was faded away at Mughal court and replaced with Sunni and Shia religiously and politically respectively. Akbar intended to reduce Shias to powerless faction. His intention seemed when Alam Mir Murtaza Sharifi Shirazi, an imminent Shia scholar died in 1567 and had buried beside the tomb of Amir Khusrau (1253-1325). Sunnis did not tolerate this and persuaded Akbar to get his corpse dig-out. He acceded their request and ordered for the replacement of his corpse. [16]

ABOLITION OF JIZYA

To redeem the situation that stemmed from Shia influence, he established matrimonial alliances with the Rajputs and employed them in the royal fold. They were the sons of soil. Their ruling territory was known as Rajputana. It is pertinent to mention that they did not accept the political suzerainty of the Sultans of Delhi Sultanate. [17] It was impossible to establish rule over Hindustan without taking them into confidence. Akbar took concrete steps to win over them by abolishing *jizya* and pilgrimage tax. This pleased them very much. He used their military strength as bulwark against his rebel chiefs. After crushing rebellions, Rajputs emerged the most powerful faction.

Once Akbar established his rule over Rajputana after the fall of Chittor (1576), he reversed his policies against them. He re-imposed *jizya* with a view to reduce Rajput faction to such powerlessness so that they could not rise in revolt against his established authority. He also issued *farman* in which he conveyed in such an aggressive manner to his *mansabdars* to prevent the Hindus from practicing idol-ship. [18]

Sunni replaced Shia influence in terms of religion. Wide powers were placed at the disposal of Shaikh Abdun Nabi and Makhdum-ul-Mulk Abdullah Sultanpuri. They were entrusted with ecclesiastical affairs. However, they both were very much involved in worldly mischief. Moreover, they exerted profound influence upon the emperor in carrying out state

policies. With the passage of time, they obstructed the emperor from the true path of Islam. Badauni held them responsible for turning Akbar away from the teachings of Islam. [19] Different interpretations of various religions led the emperor to carve out such a policy that would make his authority unchallengeable in term of religion and politics. Meanwhile, an incident occurred that changed the whole course from bad to worse.

Qazi Abdur Rahim started erection of a mosque. The whole material that was to be used for the construction of mosque was taken away by a Brahman forcefully to construct a *mandir*. [20] When material was demanded, instead, he returned the material and obtained pardon; he desecrated Prophet (S. A. W. W.) and degraded Islam. Abdur Rahim pursued the court of Abdun Nabi, then *Sadr-us-Sadur* to get the Brahman punished. Nabi summoned him for which he brazenly refused. [21]

Akbar himself took the matter to get it resolved. He dispatched Birbar and Abul Fazl to Mithra who persuaded Brahman to appear in court. On his appearance, the emperor appointed Abul Fazl to inquire the matter. He submitted the report in which the Brahman was proved guilty. The emperor placed discretionary powers at the disposal of *Sadr* to decide the case. The *Sadr* discharged him with capital punishment which was carried out immediately. [22] The royal harem that was mainly composed of Hindu wives exerted profound influence upon the emperor to save the life of Brahman from the wrath of Nabi which he could not.

The execution of Brahman provoked the situation that ultimately led to the fall of Sunnis and the emergence of *Din-i-Ilahi*. It further aggravated the situation when Akbar came to know that the execution was not in line with the teachings of Hanafite school of thought. [23] Nabi considered it his moral duty to charge him with capital punishment as he claimed his descent from Imam Abu Hanifa. [24] It infuriated the emperor. He decided to get rid of religio-political influence and religious interpretations of various schools of thought. The emperor kept on thinking how to make his authority unchallengeable in terms of religion and politics.

Meanwhile, an arrangement was made to celebrate the birth anniversary of Akbar. All his courtiers and *mansabdars* attended the court in person. Shaikh Mubarak Nagori was also among them. The emperor was not so happy as he should have been. Mubarak tried to inquire the matter. On this, the emperor described the whole story regarding the execution of Brahman. He told him that being ruler, he had absolute powers over his subjects including *Qazi-ul-Qaza'at*. He should not have owed to the religious decrees issued by *ulema* of any school of thought. The emperor entrusted him with the task of introducing an alternative policy with a view to get rid of *mullaism*.

INTRODUCTION OF MAHZAR

Mubarak outwitted all his contemporary scholars when he introduced the historical document of *mahzar* in 1579. It seems difficult to include the whole translated text of *mahzar* in the following paragraphs. However, main points of the text are as follows.

Hindustan has become a center of peace under the just leadership of Akbar.

In keeping view of its political stability and peaceful environment, scholars, philosophers and jurists have flocked at the Mughal court.

They were multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic people and had expertise in their respective fields.

Quraanic Verse:

اطيعوا الله و اطيعوا الرسول و اولى الامر منكم [25]

Trans: Obey ALLAH and obey His Prophet (S.A.W.W.) and those who are rulers among you.

Similarly, he cited the Saying of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.):

ان احبب الناس الى الله يوم القيمة امام عادل من يطع الامير فقد اطعنى و من يعصى الامير فقد عصانى [26]

Trans: On the Day of Judgment, the ruler would possess the most dignity who had been just ruler and who obey the *adil* ruler, Verily he obeys Me; and who disobeys *adil* ruler, Verily he disobeys Me.

Per the above mentioned Quraanic verse and the Saying of the Prophet, the dignity of *adil* ruler is higher than that of *mujtahid*.

Sultan-i-Islam, Amir-ul-Momineen and the Shadow of God Abul Fath Jalal ud Din Muhammad Akbar Padshah Ghazi is the most *adil* and sagacious ruler of the time.

Among his subjects who have different ethnicities and religions, difference of opinion existed and the *mujtahids* also have their own interpretations.

In this tense situation, the Emperor can rationalize the matters in the light of his own geniuses to relief his subjects from the curse of different sects.

His decision and opinion would be binding on all the ruled in his Empire. [27]

Per this religio-cum-political dignity, Akbar was elevated to the dignity of *Imam*. [28] It is pertinent to mention that Mubarak was shrewd enough to convert himself to the religion of the court wherever he went. He had been Sunni, Shia, Sufi, Mahdavi and God knew what religion he had. [29]

Through *mahza'* Akbar could not declare himself as *Caliph* because this dignity was already possessed by the Ottoman Sultans. So, Mubarak cultivated the dignity of Imam that was an addition to the status of Caliphate. The emperor was

made unchallengeable authority on ecclesiastical affairs. After the promulgation of *mahzar*, *fatwa* of *kufr* was issued by Shia scholar. [30] His Majesty soon realized the mistake of issuing this decree and ordered to put it in cold storage fearing rebellion from orthodox scholars of the realm. [31] But, he remained determined to get rid of Abdun Nabi and Abdullah Sultanpuri.

Meanwhile, a discussion took place on the legality of wives including free-born and slaves by the emperor. On this issue, Abdun Nabi and Abdullah could not satisfy the emperor because he kept many wives in his harem. Being the follower of Hanafite school of thought, they could not issue *fatwa* to legalize *muttah* marriages. [32] On the other hand, Shia scholars justified it. This pleased the emperor very much. He replaced Nabi with Qazi Hussain Arab Maliki who was appointed new *Sadr-us-Sadur*. He also issued *fatwa* regarding the legality of *muttah* marriage. In disgust, His Majesty terminated Nabi and Abdullah and treated them like slaves. [33]

Akbar played off all his *umara* factions whenever he needed their strength against his rivals. He was shrewd enough to exploit the religious sentiments of his subjects. Some of his Chughtai nobles along with his brother Mirza Hakim in connivance with Afghans claimed the Mughal throne and declared them independent from the central authority. To crush the rebellion, he won over the Rajputs by abolishing *jizya* again in 1580. [34] Rajput troops fought well for the Mughal cause that ultimately defeated the rebel chiefs. His Majesty entrusted Bhagwan Das and Man Singh the governorship of Kabul and Zabulistan respectively. Such was the height of his religious diplomacy. He used to reverse his policies whenever he needed their support against powerful.

PRINCIPLE OF *SULH-I-KUL*

Akbar continued to carve out such policies which would seek to resolve the problem of religio-political differences. He was fed up with factional politics. Discussions commenced and Mir Abdul Latif was entrusted with the task of chalking out such policy that would resolve the matter. After much deliberation, he propounded the policy of *sulh-i-kul*. [35] Per this principle, he declared peace with all irrespective of cast, creed, ethnicity and religion. However, he remained subservient to the influence of *umara* groups to a lesser extent. He wanted to make his subjects fully subservient to his authority. [36]

Before going into depth to discuss *Din-i-Ilahi*, we would discuss the concept of plurality of religions. We are not supposed to support or degrade Akbar; rather we just want to scrutinize the few historical notions attached with him. As some believe that Akbar was very Brainiac political ruler. Likewise, some historians have a view that it was he who acknowledged the importance of religious plurality and cemented the feelings of love for all the religions on state level. And to accommodate the Truth from all the religions he founded a religion of his own, the 'celebrated' *Din- I-lahi* or divine religion. Akbar and vizier Abul Fazl formulated this religion to accommodate the multiple truths of existing religions. [37]

Before going to inspect this false assumption that Akbar created a congenial and religiously pluralistic environment for all the religions in Hindustan [38], it is better to understand the phenomenon of Pluralism. Pluralism is a state which means having more than one of anything. The recent Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy offers four entries under Pluralism, however, under the general entry, Hirji defines Pluralism as, "A broad term, applicable to any doctrine which maintains that there are ultimately many things, or many kinds of things; in both these it is opposed to Monism." [39] In the same manner, Plurality in philosophical terms means that it's a state which accepts multiple values and principles. Here, we want to clear this confusion that plurality does not mean that it erases all distinctions and eliminate all the differences; rather it's an approach which connects different ideologies with one and other. It promotes active understanding among diverse racial, religious and ethnic groups and make them active participant to promote a common culture. [40] It is very important to note that not even a single source endorses this fact that Religious plurality means that you undermine as specific religion to promote the other.

Along with this theoretical debate of this section, it is better to add this explanation that our work is not to analyze the personal likes and dislikes of Akbar. For example, once under the influence of a Jeni Pendit, Jey Chand Suri, Akbar left eating onions and meat. As it was his personal affair we will not bring this act in our debate, however, contrary to personal act we will focus on those decrees which Akbar announced for public.

Our question of inspection is that what was the actual fault with the religious policies of Akbar? He undoubtedly, supported many ethnic, racial and other religions, like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, etc. However, simultaneously, he discouraged Muslims to perform the basic teachings and rituals of Islam. For example, once he ordered his son to demolish a mosque in Asirgarh and built a Temple over the ruins of demolished mosque. [41] In the same manner, once he ordered his Muslims courtiers not to offer prayer in court, however, contrary to it, he granted permissions to other Non-Muslim courtiers to perform their religious prayers in the court.

Likewise, Akbar was very much inspired by the wisdom, sagacity and virtue of a Jain scholar, Hera Vajiya Suri. Akbar requested him time to time to visit his court but every time he declined the invitation of Akbar. But once he accepted the call of Akbar and shifted to his royal court for more than two years. Under his influence, Akbar stared to follow the policy of Ahimsa. [42] Akbar was much obsessed with Ahimsa that he did not realize this fact Islam and some other religions have not refrained his followers from eat meat. Just to gain the support and political favor from Hindu and

Buddhist masses he ordered his officials that from now onwards, no one can kill animals or birds on different days of week. [43] Moreover, this decree created multifarious social problems for butchers and those who were attached with the hunting. Due to the official decree people started abhorring and disgracing the butchers and hunters.

So, if Akbar wanted to accommodate all the religions then he must have had to contemplate all the after matches and then issue such degrees. For example, if he wanted to accommodate Hindus and then he should have ordered his son to construct a Temple on some other place in Asirgarh rather to demolish the already constructed Mosque in the city.

Moreover, a letter of Mujaddid Alif Thani disinters the vulnerable religious conditions of the Muslims under the Akbar. This letter reveals this fact that Akbar was not a religiously pluralistic ruler and he did not provide full rights to his Muslim masses. Letter states that Non-Muslims have full civic and religious rights. However, Muslims were not allowed to perform upon the fundamental teachings of Islam. Mujaddid, writes that on the event of Kashi [44] Hindus observe Fast for a day and they make it clear that Muslim shopkeepers close their shops in day time. However, contrary to this attitude, Hindu shopkeepers not only open their shops in day time and eat publicly. [45]

However, after critical analyses of these historical notions one by one, we will try to draw a conclusion that neither Akbar he introduced neither a new religious nor he adopted the policy of religious plurality to extract a common truth out of all existing religions. So, what he did was not out of his love for humanity and other religions but to achieve political mastery and a sort of unchecked religious superiority in the form of Imamate. [46]

So, the above-mentioned examples of Akbar's biased attitude towards Islam, neither it is suitable to call him a genuine seeker of Truth nor he qualifies to be called as the religiously pluralistic ruler of Hindustan.

THE EMERGENCE OF *DIN-I-ILAH*

Akbar experienced the influence of Shia, Sunni, Afghan, Rajput and the teachings of *sufi* cult from time to time that continued to disturb the political atmosphere of his court. His Majesty had to accept religious decrees issued by his *ulema*. He was so fed up with this menace that he started degrading *ulema* and even avoided attending the *urs* of Salim Chishti whom he owed a lot. [47] He wanted to combine in him political, religious and spiritual powers. For this purpose, he started discussions with the scholars of various religions. The religious debates led the emperor to synthesis all the religions of his empire. He intended to merge the best elements of the religions into one bond with a view to maintain religio-political harmony. [48]

It is worth-mentioning that he had no intention at all to introduce a new religion which could bury the religio-political differences. It is unnatural to unite people based on a synthetic religion. There is not even a single instance in the annals of world history where all the inhabitants could have formed unity based on a synthetic religion. Furthermore, *Din-i-Ilahi* cannot be termed as religion because nothing can denote the meaning of religion that has no divine knowledge. It had no revelation, no prophet and no divine book. In addition to this, Akbar never ordered for the imposition of *Din-i-Ilahi*. The only criterion to enter the new faith was voluntarily.

After the promulgation of *Din-i-Ilahi*, monopoly over state policies of different factions was faded away. They had no religious grounds to influence the mind of emperor against their rival factions. Qazi Abdul Sami Miyankali was appointed *Qazi-ul-Qaza'at* under the new faith. [49] Qazi was responsible to follow the teachings new faith in dealing state matters. No other religion remained practicable under the guise of *Din-i-Ilahi*. Only nineteen of his courtiers accepted the new religious cult. It means that it was confined to be practiced to the circle of nineteen people. Its implementation proved last nail in the coffin of religious bigotry of different factions. Thus, he got rid of *mullaism*.

It should be kept in mind that neither it was a religion, nor a religious decree rather a religious cult. [50] Shaikh Ikram is of the view that it was sanctum of desires and cynosure of necessities and beliefs. [51] It was rather a religio-political contemporary administrative system that made all his subjects subservient to his authority. His was only intention to keep balance among his noble factions that ultimately led to prevail until his demise. It is evident from the last two-decade regime of Akbar that no such uprising and rebellion took place.

MATRIMONIAL ALLIANCES

The Timurid rulers tried their utmost to make their subjects more subservient. At first, they adopted harsh measures against their rivals but soon they realized the impracticableness of such policies. They started applying more pragmatic and diplomatic policy of reconciliation. Matrimonial alliance was one of their conciliatory policies. All the Timurid rulers with few exceptions made matrimonial bonds with their rivals to win their confidence and offered them royal services. It is worth-mentioning that Aurangzeb Alamgir (1618-1707) who battled with the Rajputs also entered matrimonial alliances with them. [52]

Babur initiated this policy when he became ruler of Samarqand and Bukhara. Shaibani Khan was his arch rival who posed continued threat to his rule. He betrothed his sister Khanzada Begum with a view to appease him. [53] Despite this, Shaibani Khan overran his kingdom and deprived him of his fatherly state. Being expelled, Babur conquered Kabul and established himself as king in 1504. The inhabitants of Kabul who were mainly composed of Afghan tribes resisted his rule. He adopted harsh measures to subdue them but to no avail. He showed leniency towards them and offered them

employment. Subsequently, Shah Mansur Yousafzai gave his daughter Bibi Mubarakan in marriage to Babur in 1519. [54] Their military strength proved instrumental in uprooting Lodhi dynasty in 1526. Similarly, he had deep respect and great veneration for Sayyids because they had large followings. He betrothed himself to Sayyida Afaq. In return, Sayyids were inducted into the royal fold of *umara*. [55]

After becoming emperor of Hindustan, he declared general amnesty to all even to those who sided with Ibrahim Lodhi. He conferred upon them *jagirs* in the eastern zone of his empire. After his death, they declared themselves independent and challenged status quo. Humayun had to confront with them. To overcome Afghans, he cultivated matrimonial ties with Rajputs. [56] He also followed the same policy with Muhammad Nuruddin, a leading Naqashbandi sufi whom he gave his sister in marriage. [57] Thus, he secured their support.

Akbar followed the footsteps of his forefathers. He was ten years of age when he became master of Hindustan with Bairam Khan as his regent. He was Shia by faith and started promoting the men of his faith. He elevated menial servants to the dignity of Khan. [58] He possessed royal seal. His high-handedness annoyed the old nobility. He even set aside the wishes of emperor on state matters. On the other hand, Afghans wanted to regain their past glory. They posed constant threat to his establishing authority. They disturbed the political atmosphere in the empire that Akbar was left with no other option but to seek the strength of another group to counterpoise the influence of old Turani nobility. He made matrimonial bonds with Rajputs except for Sirohi and Hadast tribes. Both the tribes did not accept the political suzerainty of Mughals. In return, they were offered employment. He utilized their military strength against his rivals. With the induction of Rajputs, the influence of Shia and Turani nobility was faded away. He also adopted the same policy with the leading Sayyids families of Delhi and Agra. It is pertinent to mention that Timurid rulers did not allow their sisters and daughters to give them in marriage outside their royal family. Matrimonial alliances were dictated by state necessities.

MANSABDARI SYSTEM

Akbar revised *jagirdari* system which later came to be known as *mansabdari* system. He retained *jagirdari* system until the promulgation of *mansabdari* set-up. It was hereditary and stationary. *Jagirdars* were not likely to be transferred from one place to another. They were also entrusted with the task of recruiting their troops mainly composed of their ethno-racial background. With the passage of time, they established strong foothold in their respective territories. For instance, Sher Shah Suri was given *jagir* in Bihar where he organized Afghans against Humayun that ultimately to his expulsion. Keeping in view their harsh treatment meted out to his father under the cloak of *jagirdari* system, Akbar decided to revise it. Furthermore, he wanted to crush their *asbiya* based on their ethno-racial background. [59]

Mansabdari system was highly unified and systematic administrative structure of government. *Mansab* means the office, status and income of a rank-holder. It was a hierarchical administrative structure of rank-holders ranging from ten to ten thousand. It had sixty-six grades which later reduced to thirty-three. Above the rank of five thousand, this honor was reserved for the members of the royal family. It was not a hereditary and stationary system. [60] It was militaristic rather than political. Civil administration was also placed at their disposal. Their posting were likely to be made from one station to another after every three to five years. It is pertinent to mention that soldiers like *mansabdars* were not likely to be transferred. They had to recruit their troops irrespective of their cast, creed and ethnic background or adopted the existing divergent stock of soldiers.

Through the promulgation of this system, a significant change took place in the nature and functioning of state institutions. It was the evolution of homogeneous nobility out of multi-racial and religiously heterogeneous elements brought together by the emperor through *mansabdari* system. [61] Once this change took place, the rank-holders, derived their dignity and status from their participation in serving the crown rather than descent, ethnicity and personal accomplishment. [62] *Asbiya* among noble factions based on ethnicity and religion was faded away. Their ethnic and racial recognition was abolished. Subsequently, a national army was formed irrespective of Shia-Sunnis and non-Muslims-Muslims. It is ironic to note that the Hindus were 9 percent of the total aggregate of the imperial services. [63] On the hand, Turanis were 52.9 percent. Despite this, Akbar was successful enough to maintain religio-political harmony in his empire.

STATE PATRONAGE

The Mughal emperors gave deserving place to their subjects in every term of respect. They did not dismiss and terminate their low-born courtiers like Sultan of Delhi Sultanate. Noble ranks were not confined to the royal family. They even patronized their courtiers irrespective of gender whose services caused dignity to the crown.

Shams-ud-Din Muhammad Khan Atakah was mere a soldier. He saved Humayun from drowning in the river Ganga when he was fleeing from the battlefield after being defeated by Sher Shah Suri in 1540. As a reward, he was offered employment in the royal services. His wife Jiji Anagah was appointed one of Akbar's wet nurses. Under Akbar, he rose to the dignity of *Wakil*. [64] Akbar himself betrothed to his daughter Tara Begum and conferred her, the title of Padshah Begum. Udham khan, foster brother of Akbar and son of Maham Anagah was envious of his status. [65] Shams rose one of the highest dignitaries of the regime. This enraged Udham very much. He himself was in possession of the rank of *panch hazari*. Udham got him killed in connivance of his accomplices in 1562. The emperor was outraged, he

ordered for Udham's execution which was carried out immediately. [66] His execution was dictated by state necessity to maintain religio-political harmony. The rest of his regime did not witness such high-profile killing at his court.

It is very interesting to note that the Timurid rulers patronized their courtiers even irrespective of gender. They elevated them to the highest dignity on sheer dint of merit. For instance, Akbar conferred the title of Itmad Khan on Phool Malik, a eunuch. [67] He was also entrusted with *yakhazari mansab*. [68] keeping in view his services to the crown, he went to the extent of assigning him the task of government of Bhakkar where he was murdered by his courtiers on the ground of his high-handedness like Bairam Khan. Thus, embarrassment never occurred among the ranks of noble factions, because, they were treated on sheer dint of merit.

CONCLUSION

The above-mentioned policies adopted by Mughal emperors from time to time proved instrumental in maintaining religio-political harmony and counterbalance more influential noble factions over least influential. The Mughal emperors were successful enough to make subservient their subjects to the extent that their respective authority could not be challenged.

They adopted religious harmony generally and religious diplomacy particularly with a view to meet their political ends. For this purpose, they confessed and converted themselves to other faiths. There is no denying the fact that there are many schools of thought like Aligarh school of thought which wrote extensively in propagating this notion that Akbar was a religiously pluralistic ruler of Hindustan. However, when we peep into some seminal classical works, neither we find him a religiously pluralistic ruler nor a true seeker of truth. His sole purpose behind all such policies was to grab the status of Imamate which led him to declare himself unquestionable authority over ecclesiastical affairs.

They tied themselves in matrimonial alliances with those who posed constant threat to their establishing authority. They cultivated this relationship with those factions whose services could be rendered as a bulwark against their rebel chiefs. They formed matrimonial alliances even irrespective of caste, creed and ethnic background through which their political vested interests remained fulfilled. In return, they were offered employment. Thus, they became part of mainstream politics.

Similarly, *mansabdari* system was put in order that would seek to resolve the matters arising out of religio-political disharmony. Although, it was a revised form of *jagirdari* system, yet more efficient and systematic. Through this system, *asbiya* among noble factions based on ethnicity, creed and political ambitions was faded away. All the segment of society in terms of administrative structure became harmonized under the cloak of *mansabdari* set-up. Now, their personal accomplishment was to serve the cause of crown rather than serving the interests of their respective factions.

Likewise, the Mughal emperors elevated their menial servants to the highest dignity of the empire whose services caused dignity to the crown. They, even, patronized their subjects irrespective of gender. Contrary to the Sultan of Delhi Sultanate, they provided patronage to their low-born subjects on sheer dint of merit. Their equal treatment to their courtiers resulted in expanding their rule over the course of more than three centuries. If they did not patronize their *mansabdars* on equal grounds, then their rule had been rooted out after few decades like Sultan of Delhi Sultanate.

Above-mentioned policies led to make all the factions harmonized in terms of religion and politics. The Timurid emperors had no sympathy with the ruled, while, inducting them into the royal fold rather than pampering their religio-political ambitions. Akbar had no quest to invent a new faith. His was only intention to declare his authority unchallengeable in the sphere of politics and religion. All these policies served their political ends rather than appeasing the factions. Their religious policies were dictated by state necessities.

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- [29] Burn, *Cambridge History of India*, p.18.
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- [42] Ahimsa is a Buddhist religious doctrine, which restricts its followers to kill and harm other living beings.
- [43] Aslam, p.153.
- [44] It means that Hindus usually observe fast.
- [45] Aslam, *Deen-e-Ilahi*, p.135.
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- [47] *Urs* is a religious festival, celebrated at the death anniversary every year.
- [48] Roychodhury, *The Din-i-Ilahi*, p. 271.
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