



Din-I-Ilahi and Akbar's Religious Policy in Social Context

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Abstract

Akbar the Great (1556-1605) is widely accepted as the greatest Mughal ruler of the Sub-continent. He tried his best to unite all religions of India under his supervision. For this purpose, he introduced many policies and one of his most prominent policies is the Akbar Rajput Policy, and the other one is Akbar's religious policy. Din-i-Ilahi was an important constituent of Akbar's religious policy. It occupies a historical place in Mughal History. This work is aimed at describing Din-i-Ilahi as part of Akbar's religious policy, its objectives, rules, principles, its beliefs, followers, and opponents. It also discusses the religion of Akbar, his ancestor's religion, and other religions of the Sub-continent. It sheds light on the conspiracies of Akbar's supporters and opponents regarding his religious thoughts. The work is based on critical, interpretive, and evaluative scanning of the selected original works and the critical literature available on the topic.

Keywords: Din-i-Ilahi, Akbar's, Religious Policy, Sub-continent, Mughal Empire

1. Introduction

The Mughals ruled the Indian sub-continent for more than three centuries. They established one of the great empires in the world. Zaheer-ud-Din Babar first Mughal to come to India. He was a follower of the Sunni sect of Islam. Before that, he had to accept the Shia sect of Islam to get support from Persian rulers for the establishment of his rule in Central Asia. It was a compromise rather than an acceptance. After his death, Naseer-ud-din Humayun ascended the throne of the Mughal Empire. He had to face political problems along with religious issues. He left for Iran to escape the threats of Sher Shah Suri. In Iran, he was supported by the king and accepted the Shia sect of Islam. The support and acceptance gave him a chance to grab India again. The universal family of Mughals followed several religions Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity in different parts of Asia. Other than religion, they followed traditions and customs, and old beliefs. Mughals in India gave new ideas in warfare, arts, construction, and architecture. Abu-al-Fateh Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar is the third and most prominent ruler among the rulers of the Mughal Empire. He was born on 15 October 1542 in Umar Kot, Sindh. He died on 25 October 1605 in Delhi Agra. He is widely accepted as the greatest of the Mughal rulers of the Sub-continent. He ruled from 1556 to 1605 and extended Mughal rule over most of the parts of the Indian Sub-continent. To unite the masses of his empire, he introduced many policies which earned the loyalty of the non-Muslim population especially the Hindus of his empire. He was the first Mughal ruler who married Hindu ladies. He abolished the *Jizya* tax and the *Yatra* tax. Mughal Emperor Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar introduced a new religion by the name of Din-i-Ilahi, or the Religion of God in 1582. The new religion was compiled by Abu 'l Fazl, who was a court historian. First, its name was Tauheed-e-Ilahi (oneness of God) (Kennedy, 1968, pp. 13-30). However, this work will check the reason and purpose of the new religion. It will look into the matter of whether or not it helped Akbar to rule India easily. The research is based on secondary data. It will be an interpretive and evaluative work. The following are the details.

2. Religions of India and Akbar

Akbar was illiterate, he offered prayers and observed fast. Akbar greatly respected pious scholars and saints and appointed them to various paramount positions. Akbar appointed Sheikh Kamal-ud-din to a higher religious position. Sufi Najam ul Haq was gifted lands, and properties, and appointed many scholars to important positions. Akbar visited the shrines of various pious saints and prayed for the birth of a son. Prince Saleem was born due to the prayers made by Sheikh Saleem Chishti (RA). The department of Hajj was established by Akbar in 1576-77 and appointed Khawajas of Ajmer Sharif as its head. He sent Rs. 1600,000 and 1200 dresses to Mecca. The Hajj was made free and all the expenditures were fulfilled by the state. He was influenced by the thoughts of Sheikh Akbar Mohi-ud-din as his thoughts about Wahdatul Wajood affected him. Besides Sunni Islam and mysticism, Akbar was surrounded by followers of Shia Islam as well (Badauni, 1980, p. 127).

2.1. Shia and Akbar

The conflict between Shia and Sunni has been continuously affecting Muslims around the world for years. India was a perfect battleground for these two sects of Islam. Hameeda Banu Begum Akbar's mother was the daughter of a Shia Sufi Sheikh Ali Akbar. It was natural for Akbar to interact with the Shia sect. His teacher Behram Khan was a Shia officer and he nominated Akbar as a king at the age of 16. Behram Khan (known as *Khan-e-Khanan* or *Wakeel-e-Sultanate*) had close relations with Iranian rulers and appointed several Shias as officers in the Mughal regime. The appointment of Abdul Samad bin Jalal bin Fazal Dehlvi as a Sadr-e-Sadoor was highly criticized by Sunni scholars. It was Abdul Samad who taught Quran and hadith to Akbar. Sheikh Abdul Latif-bin-Yahya-Al-Masoom-Al-Hussaini Al-

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Haifi Al-Qarvaini; a Shia, fled from Shah Tahmasp of Iran. His teachings influenced Akbar profoundly and he spent his whole life on the principles of his book “Sulh-e-Kul”. Apart from that, Ahmed-bin-Nasarullah Al-Shihi met with Akbar. He was Sunni but later embraced the Shia sect (Buckler, 2009, p. 83).

2.2. Akbar and Hindus

Akbar decided to get Hindu support. He started including them in the Mughal administration. There were employees like Vishvanath as a painter, Maha Dev as a physician, and Chandrus as Surgeon. The famous Navratnas of Akbar constituted four Hindus like Raja Birbal, Miyan Tansen, Raja Man Singh, and Raja Todar Mal. Despite these, Baghwant Das, Bihari Mal, Raja Rai Singh of Bikaner, Raja Jugan Nath, Raja Deep Nath, and Madhu Singh were the other famous army commanders. They had a great contribution to the maintenance of the prosperity of the empire. It made him the ruler of India instead of Muslims. He adopted this policy after marrying the Rajput princess. He extended his relationship with other families including the Bihari family. Akbar was influenced by the honesty and bravery of this family. Therefore, he married the daughter of Bihari Mal, the daughter of Raja of Jaipur, the princess of Jaisalmer, and Bikaner. Prince Saleem got married to the daughter of Raja Baghwant Das and the princesses of Mewar. These marriages strengthened the relations between Mughals, Rajputs, and Hindus vis-versa. These Hindu females were free to act on their religious obligations. Akbar wanted to give religious freedom for the stability of his empire. He started celebrating Hindu traditions like *Tilak*, *Jharoka Darshan*, *Diwali*, *Dussehra*, *Holi*, etc, and allowed to build new temples (Choudhary, 1941, pp. 135-39).

3. Ibadat Khana or House of Worship

Akbar was illiterate, he was fond of learning Islamic teachings and principles. Therefore, Akbar established Ibadat Khana or House of Worship in 1575 at Fatehpur Sikri, which is a turning point in Akbar's religious life. It was established with the purpose to debate on various issues. The debates in Ibadat Khana were mostly based on the existence of God, teachings of the Quran and Hadith, Islamic law, divorce, nikah, and Muttah, the appointment of the first three caliphs, the garden of Fidak, and the battle of Siffin. Akbar greatly respected Sunni and Shia scholars (Malik, 2014, p. 542).

3.1. Impacts of the debates in Ibadat Khana on Akbar's religious life

Akbar was very different from his ancestors in religious issues. His administrators were liberal and religious. He had the company of staunch Sunni Moulana Abdul Nabi (appointed as *Sadr-e-Sadoor*), liberals like Sheikh Mubarak, and his sons Abu Fazal and Faizi. Despite having strong interactions with several other religions of India and sects of Islam. Akbar was still focused on Sunni Islam. He called only Sunni scholars to join the debates at Ibadat Khana. *Sadr-us-Sadur* Abdul Nabi and Makhdoom-ul-Mulk Abdullah Sultanpuri were early debaters in Ibadat Khana. Akbar used to attend them, and debaters started attacking each other personally. They reacted in anger to different issues. These debates pulled Akbar into a state of confusion. However, these debates compelled him to think about the truth of religion. Therefore, he decided to invite Shia scholars to attend debates in Ibadat Khana. He also decided to call the non-Muslims in Ibadat Khan in 1578 and kept his quest for truth (Blochmann, New Delhi, p. 540).

3.2. Entrance of Non-Muslims in Ibadat Khana

Except for Islam, Akbar was also closely connected with other religions of the Sub-continent. Therefore he met with the scholars of these religions and tried to learn the fundamental principles of these religions.

3.3. Hindus in Ibadat Khana

Akbar thought that knowing Hinduism as a religion will help him to end his quest for truth. Therefore, he allowed Hindus to take part in the debates of Ibadat Khana. He ordered his courtiers to translate several Hindu books into the court language. Akbar spent 40 days with the Hindu saint whose songs were very popular among Hindus. The entry of Birbal or Berber into the Mughal court became a source of information regarding Hinduism. He believed that the sun is the largest source of all items provided to mankind. As kings are beneficial to their masses, in this way, the sun is also very useful to the people of the world. Likewise, Birbal tried his best to convince Akbar to worship the sun and stars. Akbar founded *Dharampura* and *Khairpura* to distribute food among people which was held separate for Hindus and Muslims. He also established *Joghipura* for *joghis* (hermits). He used to visit *Joghis* and learn about their religious beliefs. So, after influencing *Joghis* Akbar decided to eat less and avoid women (Blochmann, New Delhi, pp. 537-47).

3.4. Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism religion is among the oldest religions in the world. Zoroaster worships fire and it is believed as a symbol of purity them. They believe in two Gods or creators of the world, one is *Ahura Mazda* which is for virtue and the second one is *Angra Mainyu* which is for evil. It is not preached, no one can be converted to it, except those who are following it by birth. Although the people of Iran had accepted Islam, the impacts of Zoroastrianism still prevailed there. Akbar spent his childhood in Iran, he was well aware of the customs and religious festivals of the people of Iran. He had many administrators from Iran in the Mughal court too. Birbal, his courtier was a worshiper of fire. Akbar met with Zoroastrian religious scholar Dastur Mahayarji Rana in 1573 at the time of the Battle of Surat and he was called to Ibadat Khana in 1576. He came to the Mughal court in 1578-79 and taught basic principles, methods of worship, traditions, and ceremonies of his religion to Akbar and Abul Fazal. Azhar Kevani, a scholar of Zoroastrian came from Pune. Akbar met with him too.

These meetings remained productive. Akbar celebrated several Zoroastrian festivals. He adopted the Zoroastrian calendar and ordered that fire must never be extinguished. He started wearing dresses according to the movement of the

Stars on various days. He received different gifts from Zoroastrian scholars. The candles were kept burning at night. Akbar and the courtiers stooped in respect in front of the fire and the sun. Akbar counted 1001 names of the sun after midnight. Bhami Chandra published a book by the name of *Hazar Shua* in 1582 which contained 1000 poems that were written in admiration of the sun (Dulfiqar, p. 73).

3.5. Jainism

A Kshatriya prince of the ruling family of Bihar spent 13 years of his life worshipping in jungles. His preaching was based on non-violence. He opposed killing any living organism and called it a sin. The traditions of *Mahavira* were spread by *Tirthankaras*, and they were 24. The followers of Jainism do not believe in God. The religion had two sects *Digambara* (Sky clad) and *Svetambara* (White clad). The major books of Jainism are *Purva* and *Angas*. *Sadhu* is known to carry the traditions and live with a composed property. *Moksha* is called the purpose of preaching and teaching religion in Jainism. Akbar called the Peshwa Hira Vijaya of Jainism along with his companions to the Mughal court in 1582. They discussed the basic principles, ways of worship, and traditions of their religion. Akbar was greatly impressed by the principle of non-violence that's why he banned fishing and later all kind of hunting was prohibited. The captive birds were freed. In 1587 slaughtering of animals was considered illegal for 180 days and later for a year. Hira Vijaya left the court in 1584 but his two companions remained in the court. Although the worship of the sun was not a component of Jainism these two Jain scholars read *Surya Sahasra Nama* with Akbar. Siddhi Chandra was appointed in charge of all holy religious places of Jainism. The tax on pilgrims to the holy mountains of Jainism was abolished. The *Adisvara* temple, situated in the mountains of Kathiawar was dedicated to Hira Vijaya (Faz'l, 1989, pp. 188-210).

3.6. Sikhism

Baba Guru Nanak (1469-1539) is the founder of Sikhism, and it has been spread by Gurus in Asia. *Guru Granth* is the holy book, which was compiled by Guru Gobind Singh on the principles of Music. Amritsar is the holiest place. The followers must practice a specific kind of custom that is they must keep comb, mirror, and avoid smoking. During Akbar's initial phase of rule, Sikhism had less popularity. Guru Amar Das and Akbar had very pleasant relations with each other. Akbar also respected Ram Das and he gifted a piece of land to him who established a pool there and named it Amritsar. Akbar wholeheartedly and with the policy of religious tolerance allowed Sikhism to spread in the sub-continent. Guru Arjan Singh greatly contributed to spreading Sikhism to nearly all of the Sub-continent and made Amritsar a center of Sikhism. According to historians Sikhism greatly developed during the reign of Akbar the Great and he had great respect for this religion in his heart (Cunningham, 1849, p. 52).

3.7. Buddhism

Gautham Buddha born in 557 BC is the founder of Buddhism. He left his family, and wife at the age of 29 and went into the Jungles. He learned philosophy from a few Brahmins in the mountains and after that, he gained *Gyan*. Buddhists believe that life means suffering, and meditation, physical, and spiritual labor, and kind behavior are the ways to achieve enlightenment or *Nirvana*. The historians are unable to present any evidence of the participation of Buddhists in debates of *Ibadat Khana*. Abul Fazal was in charge of Ibadat Khana who had met with Buddhists and was aware of the principles and the birth of that religion. According to him Buddhists once came to Ibadat Khana with the members of other religions. Akbar used to cut his hair like followers of Buddhism (Faz'l, 1989, pp. 252-253).

3.8. Christianity

Akbar criticized Judaism by saying that a miracle of the stick does not suit a prophet (Butenschon, Lahore, p. 87). On the other hand, Akbar had his first meeting with Christians during the conquest of Gujarat in 1572-73. Akbar was interested to get information about their living system and religious methods. Anthony Vaz and Peter Dias arrived in Bengal in 1576. Akbar through the viceroy of Bengal met with them and learned the basic principles, way of worship, customs, and traditions of Christianity. Another Portuguese officer Pietro Tavares also entered Akbar's court but couldn't satisfy him. Later, Dome Antonio Cabrol sent a group of missionaries to Agra who was Rudolf Aquaviva and Monserrate, who reached Fatehpur Sikri in 1580 and stayed in the Royal court. A Church was built for their worship. Monserrate was appointed as a tutor of Prince Murad, and Abul Fazal was appointed as a translator, who translated Bible. The ringing bells were allowed in the empire. These priests attended debates of Ibadat Khana on 18th March, 14 April, and 18th April and their debated topics were the following; Jesus as a prophet, the Bible as an accusatory book, the theory of the Prophet Muhammad on heaven, the belief of three Gods, transitions on a larger extent in Bible and debate on the personal life of Muhammad (P.B.U.H). Akbar the Great debated with them on the following topics which are: If Christ was powerful then why he couldn't save himself from hanging, Christ sitting on the right hand of God, and the meaning of the word Paraclete in the Bible. The relationship between Quran and Bible was also discussed. Although these priests remained for three years in India they failed to impress Akbar and they were called back by the government of Goa in 1583.

Another Greek priest Leo Grimon came to Akbar's court in 1590 and translated Greek books into Persian. At the time of departure, he was handed over two letters to the governor of Goa and the head of society. Leo Grimon informed Goa that Akbar is much inclined toward Christianity. He only needs guidance. According to him, Akbar agreed to demolish all mosques and leave his wives for Christianity. He also celebrated Christmas in 1590. On his recommendations, the government of Goa sent Edward Leiton and Christopher di Vega to India. These priests were welcomed as royal guests. A new school was established to teach children of the royal family. This mission was directed not to leave India without successful completion of their mission but they left India within a year.

At the request of Akbar, the third Christian missionary arrived in 1594. It included Jerome Xavier, Emmanuel Pinheiro, and Brother Benedict. They had a great command of Christianity. Akbar made them royal guests in Lahore and established a school under their supervision for the education of the children of the royal family. During a discussion, Xavier called Jesus the son of God, so it became a topic of debate between him and Akbar. Once In 1597, Akbar was worshipping the sun, and fire fell from the sky. Christians believed that this event took place due to the atheist beliefs of Akbar. Similarly, Akbar carried Xavier with him during the conquest of Deccan Aseer Garh. Once Akbar requested Xavier to call Portuguese for his help but Xavier refused which made Akbar angry. Despite efforts from the missionaries, Akbar never accepted Christianity. However, Monserrate believed that Akbar not only agreed to embrace Christianity but also to leave his kingship. He promised to come to Goa but first, he wanted proof of the existence of three Gods, the purity of Maryam, and Jesus as a son of god (Dulfiqar, pp. 65-71).

4. Promulgation of Din-i-Ilahi

The Promulgation of Din-i-Ilahi or Religion of God as religion took place at the beginning of the year 1582. According to Bartoli, "There was a formal council before the promulgation of Din-i-Ilahi and an old Shaikh Mulla Mubarak was sent to proclaim in all quarters that in a short time the law to be professed throughout the Mughal empire would be sent from the court and they should make themselves ready to take for the best and accept it with reverence whatever it might be, we do not know more about the embassy of Mulla Mubarak, the tone and language do not fit in with happy sayings of Akbar. Why should I claim to guide men before I am guided?" (Choudhary, 1941, pp. 282-83). Let's discuss the objectives and faiths of the Din-i-Ilahi.

4.1. Objectives behind the Promulgation of Din-i-Ilahi:

Some main objectives behind the formation of this religion are the following:

- Akbar wanted to bring his subjects under a single faith.
- It was introduced to unite the people of India on a religious basis.
- The Muslim rulers of the sub-continent tried to control the people with different techniques. Akbar was the first who thought that Hindus will support him only on a religious basis (Badauni, 1980, p. 204).

4.2. Principles of Din-i-Ilahi

Although the fundamental principles of Din-i-Ilahi were unclear few historians accept the following as basic principles of Din-i-Ilahi. These are Tolerance, Sulh-i-Kul, abstaining from worldly desires, remembrance of the day of resurrection, ardor with work, Discretion, good behavior, brotherhood, love with God and its creatures, etc (Badauni, 1980, p. 205)

4.3. Supporters or Followers of Din-i-Ilahi

The number of followers of Din-i-Ilahi couldn't exceed 18 most important of them were: Sheikh Mubarak, Sheikh Faizi, Jafar Beg, Qasim Kahi, Abu'l Fazl, Azam Khan, Abdus Samad, Mulla Shah Muhammad Shahdad, Sufi Ahmed, Mir Sharif Amal, Sultan Khawaja, Mirza Jani Thatta, Taki Shuster, Shaikhzada Gosla Benarasi, Sadar Jahan, Sadar Jahan's two sons, Birbal and Prince Saleem (Choudhary, 1941, p. 293).

4.4. Beliefs and Ceremonies of Din-i-Ilahi

There were some rules to show allegiance to the new religion and king. The new converters had to mark a *Tilak* on the forehead. The follower had to present himself in front of the king with a turban on his head and put his head and turban on the king's feet. The king had to put the turban back on his head and awarded a medal to a follower on which Allah-o-Akbar was written. The followers of Din-i-Ilahi were known as *Chelahs*.

- a. The Muslim method of greeting "Assalam-o-Alaikum" and "Wa'allaikum Assalam" was replaced by saying "Allah-o-Akbar and Jalajalalaho."
- b. The people of the sub-continent especially Muslims arranged a grand feast after the death of their beloved ones. Akbar ordered to arrange it in life instead of after death.
- c. The birthday was an Iranian festival, but Akbar ordered his subjects to celebrate it with joy and give to charities on this day. The followers of Jainism, Buddhism, and some sects of Hinduism were not allowed to eat meat in their religions. Therefore, Akbar directed his followers not to eat meat or even sit with a butcher, fisherman, or hunter was prohibited. So, the followers of Din-i-Ilahi were allowed to offer meat to others but they were not allowed to taste it.
- d. The dead bodies were first placed in a river for a long time with the belief that it washed their sins then these were taken out from the river and buried after cleaning their souls.
- e. It was directed to followers of Din-i-Ilahi that while sleeping or at the time of sleeping, the direction of feet must be towards the west and of the head towards the east.
- f. The followers of Din-i-Ilahi were prohibited to marry old, pregnant, and infertile women because of various beliefs.
- g. It was made compulsory for the followers of this religion to bow before the king.
- h. Drinking wine was allowed and made an important act in Din-i-Ilahi (Choudhary, 1941, p. 295).

4.5. Beliefs Opposite to Islam:

Some of the orders or beliefs of Din-i-Ilahi were opposite to Islamic teachings, which are the following:

- i. The names Muhammad, Ahmad, and Mustafa were prohibited in this religion.

- ii. The construction of new mosques was prohibited and some of the mosques were demolished.
- iii. *Azaan* (by which Muslims call for prayer) was banned by Akbar.
- iv. A ban was imposed on *Namaz* and *Hajj* which were fundamental acts of Islam and during the month of *Ramzan*, observing fast was prohibited.
- v. Eating beef, onion, and garlic was prohibited.
- vi. It allowed Muslim men to wear silk clothes and gold jewelry.
- vii. Circumcision is compulsory in Islam but Akbar ordered his followers not to undertake it before the age of 12. After that, it was the decision of the authorities or the kid to decide.
- viii. Keeping pigs and dogs in the palace was declared a holy act in this religion.
- ix. As gambling is strictly prohibited in Islam, Akbar established a special gambling house in his palace (Badauni, 1980, p. 215).

4.6. Causes of Failure of Din-i-Ilahi

Din-i-Ilahi was a religion propounded by a king. It had political purposes which were to maintain the stability of the state and rule of a particular ruler. Akbar wanted peace and integration among the people of his state. He composed this religion from the composition of beliefs of different religions of the sub-continent but there were no royal forces or religious missionaries to propagate this religion. Therefore, the death of Akbar, Mullah Mubarak, and his sons Faizi and Abul Fazl caused the ultimate death of this religion. Even Jahangir, the son of Akbar was also not in favor of Din-e-Ilahi (Badauni, 1980, p. 220).

4.7. Notable opinions of the Scholars on Din-i-Ilahi

The policies and reign of Jalal-al-Din Muhammad Akbar have a historical place in the history of the Sub-continent. Various historians and scholars have discussed his policies. Especially, his religious policy in the form of Din-i-Ilahi. According to V.A Smith “The divine faith was a monument of Akbar’s folly, not of his wisdom.” He further states “The whole scheme was the outcome of ridiculous vanity, a monstrous growth of unrestrained autocracy.” Akbar was greatly influenced by his cajoler courtiers like Behram Khan, Mullah Mubarak, Abul Fazal, and Faizi. His religious thoughts were also influenced by his Hindu wives. He had a dream of uniting the people of India. In this way, he successfully received the support of the Hindus. They came to his court and played a vital role in the stability of his empire. Din-i-Ilahi was a combination of beliefs of Islam, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, and Hinduism by which he tried to get religious supremacy in the subcontinent but people considered it as an interference in their religions and greatly neglected it. According to Abdul Qadir Badauni and Portuguese Christian missionaries “Akbar deviated from Islam. Therefore, he enforced Din-i-Ilahi which contained many beliefs which were against Islamic law Shariah”. But according to modern research, this statement of Badauni and Portuguese is not worth trusty and is based on hatred.

Abul Fazal admired Akbar by saying “he was a mystic person”

Jahangir writes “With the murder of Abul Fazal, Akbar’s mistrust or faithlessness ended and he died as a Muslim”. S. Beurage says, “Akbar had not left his forefathers’ religion, he was a free-minded person but he was set in the old days.”

According to Count Noir, “Akbar’s Din-i-Ilahi was not a new religion but a new belief which was composed on principles of mysticism, Hinduism, and Zoroastrianism.”

According to Lean Paul Stanley, “religion like Din-e-Ilahi could not get cooperation and sympathy of the people. Akbar’s philosophical thoughts, his mysticism, and worship of creatures of nature are all buried with himself but his views of vast sympathy left symbols of humanity and tolerance on the earth.”

Professor Sri Ram Sharma says, “Calling religion to Din-i-Ilahi is a great exaggeration. It had no holy book, no religious scholar, no customs and traditions, and no religious beliefs, it was just a Royal order, not a religion.”

According to Ayeshwari Prasad, “Din-i-Ilahi was not a new religion, and neither did it has specific beliefs. It was a belief that was composed of the merits of all religions. It contained philosophy, mysticism, and worship of natural creatures which was limited to the king.”

Dr. A. L. Sri Vastav says, “Din-i-Ilahi was the result of political aims. Akbar’s goal was to unite Muslims and Hindus to make stable his rule politically and culturally. A new religion was the result of his *Sulh-i-Kul* strategy and nationalism policy.”

According to Sir Wellesley Haig, “Akbar on the stimulation of his advisors, issued a new religion. He was of the view that all people of the sub-continent should run according to his will although neither Christianity allows this nor Islam.” (Malik, 2014).

5. Conclusion

Akbar is considered the greatest king of the Mughal Empire. This work has discussed his attitude toward religion in detail and reached a point to understanding the causes which led Akbar to introduce a new religion. A comprehensive study of his life shows that he was naturally secular and his beliefs in Islam were not as strong as should be. His secular mind was heavily influenced by the discussions held at Ibadat Khana. The discussions between Muslim scholars reached a high level of controversy. Akbar disliked this kind of discussion which further weakened his Islamic beliefs. In this way, he started thinking that no single religion could claim a monopoly on truth. Which changed his philosophical and political views. Another which persuaded Akbar to introduce a new religion was the effects of other religions on his thoughts. Akbar met with the scholars of different religions of India which greatly changed his beliefs, and the fourth

factor was his close courtiers like Mulla Mubarak, Abul Fazal, Faizi, Abdul Nabi, and Abdullah Sultanpuri. Though these courtiers were very close to Akbar, they were highly intelligent people and their interaction with Akbar greatly influenced his religious thoughts. Therefore, Akbar's quest of learning Islam ended up with the imposition of a new religion. The decision of introducing or ordering a new religion provided him a strong control over his empire. Although the new religion died with the death of Akbar, it kept the Mughal court under its influence for a long time.

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