

“THE RAJPUT & RELIGIOUS POLICY OF AKBAR THE GREAT”**Ms.Shabnam Bharti****Assistant Professor, P.G Department of History****Guru Nanak Girls College, Yamunanagar****Abstract**

Aim of this paper is to highlights the Rajput & Religious Policy of Akbar. Rajput policy of Akbar was a grand success. All Rajput states, accepted the sovereignty of Akbar. Those Rajputs who were fighting against the Muslim rulers for the last three hundred fifty years submitted to Akbar and participated in the expansion of the Mughal Empire. Akbar was the real founder of the Empire of the Mughals and the first successful conqueror of Rajput independence. Due to the Rajput policy of Akbar, the Rajputs forgot their ideal of maintaining their independent political existence and they gladly pulled up their strength with the Mughal emperor. It was the greatest success of Akbar. It helped in expanding and strengthening the Mughal Empire. Akbar neither forced any Rajput ruler to enter into matrimonial alliance with him nor asked their princesses to accept Islam before marrying them. Besides, he honoured his wives, allowed them to follow their own religion, respected their Rajput relatives and gave them high offices in the state.

Keywords:-Rajput, Akbar, Mughal, Muslim, Hindu

THE RAJPUT & RELIGIOUS POLICY OF AKBAR THE GREAT”

Akbar's grand-father Babar is sometimes described as a liberal-minded, cultured prince, but the record of his activities in India belies the above theory. He treated the war against RanaSanga as jihad or religious war. On the eve of the battle of Khanua, he exempted Muslims alone from paying stamp duties in compliance with strict Muslim theory of taxation. Hindu Beg, his officer is credited with the conversion of a Hindu temple at Sambhal into a mosque. Another officer ShaikhZain razed many Hindu temples at Chanderi to the ground, and a third officer, named Mir Baqi, converted the Hindu temple commemorating the birth-place of Ram Chandra at Ayodhya into a mosque in 1528-29. Babar himself destroyed Jain images at Urva near Gwalior, and defaced many statues in the fort of Gwalior.¹ Humayun did no better. He believed in the Muslim theory of discrimination against the non-Muslims and refused to attack his enemy Bahadur Shah of Gujarat while the latter was fighting against the Rana of Chittor, because it was un-Islamic to fight a brother Muslim, even though an enemy, when the latter was engaged in fighting non-Muslims.²

The contemporary records show that Babar and Humayun had come into close contact with the rulers of Amber, Mewar, and had fought with them, but they could not subjugate them completely. These Mughal emperors did not have enough statesmanship in them to realize the importance of an alliance with the Rajputs and to appreciate the value of their co-operation and friendship. Humayun did not abolish the jiziya, the pilgrimage tax and other discriminatory taxes that the Hindus had to pay. Sher Shah, the famous Afghan ruler who expelled Humayun from India, was also guilty of destroying the principal Hindu temple at Jodhpur. He treated his wars against Maldeva of Jodhpur and Puran Mal of Raisin as religious wars.³ His son Islam Shah “Brought the state under the complete subjugation of the mullas”.⁴

The credit to realize the importance of an alliance with the Rajputs must be given to Akbar who revolutionized the Mughal policy towards the chiefs of Rajasthan. But Akbar's treatment of the Rajputs was not the outcome of thoughtless sentiment or a mere chivalrous regard for their valour, generosity and patriotism. It was the result of a deliberate policy and was based on the principles of enlightened self-interest, recognition of merit, justice and fair play. As his Muslim nobles and officials had been far from loyal and had rebelled again and again and as the Afghans in the country were the sworn enemies of his royal house. Akbar decided to seek the co-operation of the Rajputs and use them as a counterpoise against his self-seeking Muslim nobles and officials.⁵ During the first few years of his reign Akbar followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather and the Turko-Afghan sultans of Delhi. He was then under the influence of orthodoxmullas and he not only persecuted the Hindus but also Muslim heretics. Among others AbulFazl and Faizi and their father Shaikh Mubarak escaped persecution and death at the hands of the young emperor's courtiers by a mere chance.⁶

Rajput Policy of Akbar:-

Akbar was a great pragmatist. He was the first Muslim ruler to realize that without the help of the Rajput's, no permanent empire could be set up in India. Akbar was born under the sheltering roof of a Hindu and shortly after his accession, relations developed between him and the Rajput's which have

been of wide significance in the history of Hindustan; for it was precisely from this race that he not only drew friends but some of his most influential counsellors and distinguished generals.⁷ The Rajputs were the military leaders of the Hindu community. They were the best fighting men of India and it was necessary for him to subdue or conciliate them if his empire was to rest upon solid foundations. Akbar became more inclined to extend his favour to them and to make them sharers in developing the grandiose plan of the empire, knowing no distinction of caste and creed when men like Todermal, Man Singh and Birbal joined his service and impressed him with their genius and ability.⁸

Akbar was shrewd enough to realize what his father and grandfather had failed to see that the Rajputs, who held large areas in their possession and were masters of legions and renowned for their valour and fidelity to their word, could safely be depended upon and converted into friends. In January, 1562 when the Akbar was going to Ajmer to visit the holy shrine of Saint Chishti, he accepted the submission of Raja Bharmal of Amber and welcomed a matrimonial alliance with that Kachhwaha ruling family and on his return from Ajmer Akbar married with his daughter on 6th February, 1562. Bharmal with his son Bhagwant Das and grandson Man Singh accompanied the Emperor to Agra where he was given a command of 5,000 and his son and grandson were granted commissions in the imperial army. Dr. Ishwari Prasad admits that this marriage is an important event in our country's history.⁹

Jahangir followed his capable father's policy and maintained friendly relations with those Rajput's who accepted the authority of the mughal. Akbar could not succeed in conquering Mewar due to many causes. Later on Mewar also conquer by Mughal empire. The Rajput policy of Akbar was unique as it not only helped to end the long drawn conflict between the Rajputs and Mughal ruler but also helped Akbar in the consolidation of his empire. It resulted in the development of a composite culture. At the end of his reign in 1605 the Mughal empire covered most of the northern and central India and was one of the most powerful empires of its age.

The Rajput policy of Akbar was wise and statesman like. He succeeded in bringing the majority of the Rajput kingdoms under his authority. What is more important, Akbar was able to enlist the support of the Rajputs in fighting his wars. It has been justly observed that "the Empire of Akbar was, in fact, the outcome of the co-ordination of Mughal powers and diplomacy and Rajput valor and service". But it would be a mistake to suppose that Akbar's Rajput policy was wholly successful. It was not. He was unable to break the power and pride of Mewar. It was not till Jahangir's time that Mewar concluded terms with the Mughals. Even then the Mughal Emperor had to concede to the ruler of Mewar, a status of special honour and privilege.

Religious Policy of Akbar:-

Akbar's policy of religious tolerance was based on the precedents of the philosophy of Sufi saints. For all of his innovations, Islamic texts or precedents, genuine or spurious, were cited by his courtiers. Although Akbar did not claim to be a prophet or to establish a new religion, Islam lost its privileged position.

According to S.M. Ikram, religious policy of Akbar was largely aimed at securing goodwill of the masses. He writes:

“For this policy of religious tolerance and of giving an adequate share in the administration to all classes there can be nothing but praise, and it became a part of the Mughal political code.”

In 1562 while Akbar was yet a boy of less than twenty he gave the first indication of his broad-mindedness by promulgating a decree that the non-combatants in the time of war, including the families and children of the combatants, must not be made prisoners and slaves, nor be converted to Islam.¹⁰ In 1563, he abolished the pilgrimage tax¹¹ on the Hindus, and in 1564 made a clean sweep of the hated *jizya*,¹² which meant the end of a great discrimination against the non-Muslim population, at the sacrifice of a considerable revenue to the imperial exchequer. A little before his time he had employed Toder Mal in a high office in the revenue department and brushed aside¹³ the protests of the Muslim nobility against the employment of a Hindu in the state service, which he had thrown open to the non-Muslims sometime in 1562. This last measure was prompted by the fact that many of his Muslim nobles and officers were found guilty of disloyalty and rebellion and Akbar felt that capable Hindus, particularly Rajputs, could be utilized as a counterpoise against the former.¹⁴

Why was change in Akbar's Religious Views?

The Religious Policy of Akbar was liberal. Akbar was born and brought up in comparatively liberal surrounding. Bairam Khan, who subsequently became Akbar's guardian and protector, was a Shia Muslim. Bairam Khan is responsible for molding his conduct and shaping his early policy. Akbar's most notable tutor, Abdul Latif, taught him the principle of universal peace which Akbar never forgot. Thus, the early environment influenced the Akbar's religious views in the direction of liberalism.

Akbar ardently desired religious unity India, and, therefore, he founded a religion of his own, named *Din-i-Ilahi*. *Din-i-Ilahi* was founded with the laudable object of bringing to an end religious bitterness and conflict. It is no wonder that Akbar failed to realize that both the Hindus and Muslims were so orthodox in that age that it was unthinkable for them to give up their hereditary beliefs and practices.

Akbar was established a religious assembly hall (*Ibadat Khana*) at Fatehpur Sikri in 1575, meant for the discussion of religious problems of the Muslims. Akbar attended these discussions, but he found the *ulama* divided among themselves and holding bitterly opposite views not only on ordinary religious problems but also on fundamental principles of Islam. He became disgusted with the so-called learned Muslim divines on account of their shallowness, uncompromising sectarian fanaticism, the lack of discipline and decorum among them, and their hostility to one another. He therefore, felt convinced that it was wrong to suppose that Islam possessed the monopoly of truth. So he threw the religious assembly open to non-Muslim scholars and thinkers, and thus came into close contact with Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Christianity. He now felt that there was truth in every religion, and that there were some honest pious men in each community.¹⁵ As a result of his association with diverse religious, Akbar's religious views underwent a great and perceptible change.

Conclusion: -The evolution of relations between the Mughals and the Rajputs during the reign of Akbar can be placed within more than one historical context. They can be seen in terms of the expansion of

Mughal territorial control and State power, the evolution of Akbar religious policy, and the mutual need for some kind of a political accommodation on the part of both the Rajputs and the Mughals. On the whole, the study of Mughal-Rajput relations is particularly important because it illustrates, among other things, the incorporation of a distinct though not homogeneous – cultural group within the larger matrix of Mughal state power. The liberality of Akbar was the primary reason of the success of his Rajput policy and Akbar was a great pragmatist. He was the first Muslim ruler to realize that without the help of the Rajput's, no permanent empire could be set up in India. The result of Akbar Policy was in the end of his reign in 1605 the Mughal empire covered most of the northern and central India and was one of the most powerful empires of its age.

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