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Paper : Outlines of Indian History
Module : Akbar : achievements, policies & contributions

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Development Team

Principal Investigator	Prof. P. Bhaskar Reddy Dept. of AIHC & A, S.V. University, Tirupati.
Paper Coordinator	Prof. P. Bhaskar Reddy Dept. of AIHC & A, S.V. University, Tirupati.
Content Writer	Dr. Mohammad Nazrul Bari Central University of Karnataka, Gulbarga.
Content Reviewer	Prof. P. Neerajakshulu Naidu Dept. of AIHC & A, S.V. University, Tirupati.

Component-I (B) – Description of module:

Subject Name	Indian Culture
Paper Name	Outlines of Indian History
Module Name/Title	Akbar : Achievements, Policies and Contributions
Module Id	I C / O I H / 26
Pre-requisites	Knowledge about the conquest and consolidation of Mughal Empire with the problems faced by Akbar and his achievements
Objectives	To know the life and history of Akbar; To list the challenges faced by Akbar after the death of his father Humayun To describe the events of Akbar's life and his administrative reforms To know the contribution made by Akbar in the composite culture and religious tolerance.
Keywords	Akbar / Afghanistan / Mughal Empire / Rana Pratap / Din-i-Ilahi / Sulah-e-Kul / Allahabad / Jahangir / Fathehpursikri / Battle of Panipat

E-text (Quadrant-I)**1. Introduction:**

Jalal-Ud-din Mohammad Akbar, son of Humayun was born at Amarkot (in Sind) on 15 October, 1542 in the house of a Rajput chief. Akbar spent his childhood under conditions of adversity and un-certainty as Humayun was in exile. Arrangements for his formal education were made by Humayun after his restoration to the throne of Kabul but Akbar was more interested in sports and martial exercises than in studies. In 1551 Akbar was made the governor of Ghazni and he remained its governor till November 1554 when Humayun embarked on an expedition for the conquest of Hindustan. Akbar was given nominal command of the army of Indian invasion and was given the credit of Humayun's victory at Sirhind in January 1555. After his occupation of Delhi Humayun, declared Akbar to be the heir apparent and assigned to him the Governorship of the Punjab. Humayun died in January 1556 as a result of the fall from the staircase of his library. At that time Akbar was just a boy of 14. When the news of his father's death reached, Akbar was at Kalanaur 15 miles west of Gurdaspur in Punjab. His guardian Bairam khan took immediate steps to enthrone him on brick-platform and performed the ceremony thereby proclaiming him the emperor on February 14, 1556.

2. Challenges before Akbar:

Though Humayun had recovered Delhi in June 1555 he had not been able to consolidate his position in India therefore everything was in a chaos. Akbar's position was very shaky, he was only a nominal ruler of a small part of the Punjab. India in 1556 presented a dark as well as a complex picture. In the Northwest Mirza Muhamed Hakim, Akbar's half-brother governed Kabul independently. Kashmir, Sind, and Multan were also free from imperial control after the death of Sher Shah. Orissa, Malwa and Gujarat were independent of the control of any overlord. In the eastern provinces the Afghans were strong under their king Adil Shah. The Rajputs also possessed considerable strength. The important Rajput princes were those of Mewar, Jaisalmer and Jodhpur. Gondwana was being ruled by Rani Durgavati in the name of her minor son. Beyond the Vindhayas lay the extensive Vijayanagar Empire and the Muslim sultanates of Khandesh, Berar, Bidar, Ahmednagar, Golkunda and Bijapur which felt no interest in northern politics. By this time even the Portuguese had established their influence on the western coast of India and possessed Goa and Diu. Thus there was hardly any territory which Akbar could call as his own at the time of his accession. His heritage was of a precocious nature and his task of building up an empire was indeed a very difficult one.

2.1 Second Battle of Panipat : (Nov. 1556)

The greatest rival of Akbar at this time was Hemu the Hindu Prime Minister of Muhammed Adil Shah who was bent upon expelling the Mughals from India. On hearing the news of the death of Humayun, Hemu marched towards Delhi and Agra and occupied the same by defeating Tardi Beg the Mughal governor of Delhi. Hemu assumed the title of Raja Vikramaditya. He thus became the first and the only Hindu to occupy the throne of Delhi during the medieval period of our history. Hemu was a man of extraordinary personality, and one cannot fail to admire his qualities of leadership and his prompt attempt to banish alien rule from the country. In fact being a real native of the soil his claims to the throne of Delhi were superior to that of the Mughals.

The Mughals were alarmed at the fall of Delhi and Agra. Some advised Akbar to retire to Kabul but Bairam Khan was in favour of recovering Delhi and Agra and Akbar accepted his advice. By this time Hemu had consolidated his position by winning over many Afghan officials and soldiers and he was preparing himself to meet the Mughal advance. The two armies viz the army of Hemu and of Akbar met on the historic battle field of Panipat in November, 1556. The Mughals fought valiantly but Hemu seemed to carry the day. However, he was struck by an arrow in the eye and he became unconscious. This caused panic in his army as it began to disperse in confusion. It marked a turning point in the battle. Hemu was put to death and Mughal victory was complete. The Second battle of Panipat was

a decisive battle. It brought to a close the Afghan-Mughal contest for supremacy in India by giving a verdict in favour of the latter. If Hemu had been victorious the Mughals would have been compelled to retreat to Kabul. His death doomed the Afghan cause and allowed time to the restored Mughal sovereignty to take root. The Mughals occupied Delhi and Agra. Sikander Sur also surrendered in May 1557. Muhammed Adil died in 1557 as a result of his conflict with the ruler of Bengal. Ibrahim Sur after wandering from place to place found asylum in Orrisa. Thus there was no Sur rival left to contest Akber's claim to the sovereignty of Hindustan.

3. Regency of Bairam Khan (1556-1560)

After the death of Humayun, Bairam Khan was guardian of Akbar from 1556 to 1560. The most important achievement of Bairam Khan during this period was the Mughal victory in the second battle of Panipat which marked the real beginning of Mughal Empire in India. After the battle Bairam Khan by virtue of his wisdom, age and experience was able to acquire a considerable influence over Akbar and became virtually the ruler of the country. He also made arrangements for Akbar's education and appointed Abdul Latif as his tutor who was a distinguished scholar and liberal in his religious views. Besides this Bairam Khan looked after the administration and also conquered Gwalior and Jaunpur. Bairam Khan did not remain in power for long. He was dismissed by Akbar in 1560 as Akbar was determined to take the reins of Government into his own hands. The removal of Bairam Khan did not atone enable Akbar to assume fully the reins of Government into his own hands. From 1560 to 1562, Akbar's foster mother, Maham Anaga and her son Adam Khan and their relatives exercised great influence in the matters of the state. Akbar was able to emancipate himself from the *harem* influence in 1562 and became independent.

4. Imperial Policy of Akbar:

Akbar was a strong imperialist by instinct therefore soon after assuming the reins of government in his hands he decided to extend the boundaries of his kingdom. It was Akbar who first thought of founding an All India Empire. It was certainly inspired by a longing for fame and glory. But according to Abul Fazal his imperialism was also inspired by a philanthropic motive that is he desired to bring peace and prosperity to people suffering under the selfish misrule of petty princes. He wanted to establish a strong central government. Therefore the political unification of the country and the establishment of an all powerful Central Government with a uniform system of administration throughout the land became the ideals of his life. Akbar and later on his successors did not aim at mere extension of territory nor did they base their authority on mere force. Up to the time of Shah Jahan they wanted to broad-base their power on the consent of the governed. They tried to evoke loyalty and respect rather than fear and awe. Aurangzeb adopted a comparatively

narrow outlook and he reaped its fruit in ruin and disintegration. Akbar's career of military exploits which started with the expedition to Malwa in 1560 and culminated in the conquest of Asir Garh in 1601 forms a glorious chapter in the military history of India.

4.1 The conquests of Northern India:

4.1.1 Malwa (1561) :

This was the first conquest of Akbar after the exit of Bairam Khan. The ruler of Malwa, Baz Bahadur was indifferent to politics and war, as he was interested in music and pleasures. Rupmati was his famous mistress. The administration of Malwa was naturally weak. Adam Khan son of Maham Aanga accompanied by Pir Mohammad led the expedition against Malwa. Baz Bahadur was defeated and he fled leaving the kingdom in the possession of the Mughals. Huge treasure and booty fell into the hands of the victors. Both Adam Khan and Pir Mohammad inflicted terrible misery on the people. The former was recalled by Akbar, the latter was drowned by crossing the river Narmada. Baz Bahadur returned to Malwa and reoccupied but his success was short lived. He was soon driven out by the Mughals. Baz Bahadur remained in exile and finally submitted to Akbar who enrolled as a mansabdar in the imperial court.

4.1.2 Jaunpur and Chunar :

The Afghans of the Eastern provinces under the leadership of Sher Khan son of the Late Muhammad Adil Shah collected a large army and made a bid to recover their lost power. But their attack on Jaunpur failed. At the same time the Mughals got the peaceful surrender of Chunar from the hands of the Afghans. The strong fortress of Chunar thus became an important outpost of the empire in the East.

4.1.3 Uzbek rebellion (1564-1567) :

The conquest of Gondwana synchronized with three important rebellions in Hindustan which were effectively suppressed. The first was led by Abdulla Khan Uzbek (who had superseded Pir Mohammad) rebelled in Malwa but was defeated and driven to Gujarat. The second rebellion was headed by Khan Zaman another Uzbek leader of Jaunpur. Akbar himself marched to East and drove towards Patna. The Uzbek suspected that Akbar hated their entire race and was bent upon reducing them to a subordinate position. More serious than these was the revolt of Akbar's brother Mirza Hakim in the Punjab who was also encouraged by the Uzbeks. Akbar marched towards the Punjab which frightened Hakim and he retreated across the Indus. Akbar returned to Agra in May 1567 and dealt with the rebellion Uzbeks. Khan Zaman was killed while other Uzbeks were severally punished.

4.2 Akbar's Rajput Policy:

The battle of Khanwah fought by Babur against the Rajputs did not result in the total eclipse of Rajput influence in North. Gifted with the true insight of a statesman, Akbar followed a policy of reconciliation with the Rajputs. Akbar realized that there could be no effective political conquest of India without political subjugation of Rajput. He could not see any state refusing to do away with the paramount power like his. More over Akbar had realized at an early age that his Muslim officials and followers could not be absolutely depended upon. There rebellion of the Uzbeg and the revolt of his brother Mirza Hakim had convinced Akbar that the only way to perpetuate his power and dynasty was to seek the support of the important political elements in the population of the country. No victory of arms could secure him the active support of the proud and sensitive Rajputs. Any political subjugation would have to be tempered by extending due respect and a treatment based on diplomatic equality.

Akbar had realized the value of Rajput alliance in his task of building up an empire in India. He was impressed by their character and qualities. They were the sons of the soil and were known for their bravery and faithfulness to their word. They could safely be depended upon. Their mental qualities were superior even to their military excellence. Their co-operation could help him to shake off the foreign nature of his monarchy and converted into a national one which in turn could win him popular support and strengthen the roots of his dynasty. Thus he tried to secure and ensure the active co-operation of Rajputs in almost all the activities. By his wise and liberal policy he won the hearts of most of them to such an extent that they rendered valuable services to his empire and even shed their blood for it.

The empire of Akbar was in fact the outcome of the coordination of Mughal powers and diplomacy and Rajput valour and service. Against this background Akbar adopted two fold policies towards the Rajputs. In 1562 Akbar made his first pilgrimage to the shrine of Khwaja Shaikh Muin Ud Din chishti at Ajmer. On the way he was received by Raja Bihari Mal of Amber (Jaipur) who offered him submission to Akbar and also proposed his eldest daughter's marriage with the emperor which took place at Sambar. The Rajput princess became the mother of Jahangir and exerted great influence on Akbar and his policy. Raja Bihari Mal with his son Bhagwan Das and grandson Man Singh proceeded to Agra. He was given a command of 5,000 and his son and grandson were also admitted to high ranking the army. Thus was opened the way through which the Mughal emperor was able to secure for four generations the services of some of the greatest Captains and diplomats that medieval India produces." The strong fortress of Merta in Marwar was captured by the Mughals after a brief siege in 1562.

4.3 Deccan Policy :

In 1591 Akbar dispatched four diplomatic missions to Khandesh, Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golkunda calling upon their rulers to recognise his suzerainty and pay him tributes. Raja Ali Khan the ruler of Khandesh whose territory laid immediately South of Akbar's empire offered to acknowledge his authority but the rulers of the other three states sent diplomatic replies politely rejecting the offer. The failure of the diplomatic missions led him to resort to arms.

4.3.1 Ahmednagar :

Ahmednagar ruled by Nizam Shahi dynasty was situated to the South of Khandesh and North of Bijapur. The ruler of Ahmednagar Burhan-ul-Mulk died in 1594 and there followed disputes about succession. Chand Bibi daughter of the former Sultan and widow of the Sultan of Bijapur acquired Political control over Ahmednagar and supported the cause of the lawful heir to the throne. Bahadur who was an infant but a group of nobles imprisoned him and raised another candidate to the throne. These dissensions offered Akbar an excellent opportunity for the conquest of Ahmednagar. Accordingly in 1593 he sent two armies to subjugate Ahmednagar by force one was led by Abdur Rahim Khan-I-khana and the other by prince Murad. The Mughal expedition was paralyzed by dissensions between the two generals from the very beginning. However, Ahmednagar was besieged in 1595. Chand Bibi defended the city with splendid courage and made the surrender of the fort difficult if not impossible ultimately a peace treaty was signed in 1596. According to which Berar was ceded to the Mughals, though reluctantly, and the Nizam Shah is recognized the Mughal suzerainty. Soon after the departure of the Mughals the treaty was violated by the Ahmednagar government and war with the Mughals renewed, in 1597. Ahmednagar was besieged and once again the Mughals suffered badly on account of the dissensions between Murad and Abdur Rahim. Akbar recalled both of them and appointed Abul Fazal in their place and prepared himself to march to the Deccan in 1599. Daulatabad fell before his arrival in 1599 and Ahmednagar was captured in August 1600. Chand Bibi who advised peace with the Mughals was Murdered by a faction which was opposed to her policy. The minor sultan Bahadur was sent Gwalior as a prisoner. The Mughals placed the capital city and the adjoining territories under their administrative control but a large part of the kingdom remained in the possession of the Nizam Shahi nobles. Ahmednagar Continued to resist the Mughal arms and the entire kingdom was not annexed to the empire till the reign of Shah Jahan.

4.3.2 Khandesh :

Raja Ali Khan of Khandesh had acknowledged the authority of Akbar but after his death his son Mian Bahadur Shah repudiated the Mughal authority and prepared to defend himself in his strong fortress of Asirgarh. Akbar took Burhanpur its capital and laid siege to the mighty fort of Asirgarh which was well provided with artillery and war like stores and provisions (1600). The siege continued for a long time and Akbar was unwilling to prolong it as his son Salim had rebelled against him. Akbar resorted to bribery and deceit for the fulfillment of his object. He called Mian Bahadur Shah into his camp and forced him to write a letter to the garrison with instructions to surrender the fort. The garrison still held out. Akbar then seduced the Khandesh officers by lavish distribution of money and the gates of Asirgarh were opened by golden keys in January 1601. Khandesh was annexed to the empire. Mian Bahadur was taken Prisoner to Gwalior. The capture of Asirgarh was an event of great significance. This was the last conquest of Akbar. Prince Daniyal was appointed viceroy of the Deccan. Akbar in view of Salim's rebellion at Allahabad had to give up his intention of staying and conquering other states in the Deccan. He left for Agra and arrived at Fatehpur Sikri and ordered to build the famous Buland Darwaza as a memorial of his victory over Asirgarh. The result of Akbar's policy in the Deccan was that he conquered Khandesh, Berar and part of Ahmednagar. He also acquired a number of valuable forts and further expansion of the empire by his successors was facilitated. He set the ball rolling for the interference in the Deccan and henceforth the Mughals became increasingly involved in the Deccan politics. Thus in a career of conquests spread over forty years beginning with the expedition to Malwa in 1560 to the conquest of Asirgarh in 1601 Akbar successfully brought the whole of North- Western including Kabul, Kandahar and Kashmir) Eastern and central and parts of southern India within his empire. The victories, in sheer magnitude were far more extensive than any of his predecessors or successors could venture forth.

5. Akbar's Religious Policy:

The establishment of the *Din-i-Ilahi* (*Din-e-Ilahi*) by Akbar shows that he was not only a great military conqueror and an efficient administrator, but also a tolerant and liberal statesman, who tried to bring harmony among the different religions existing in India. *Din-i-Ilahi* was the outcome of his association with the exponent's of various religions. Akbar attempted to establish a national religion common to all by bringing together the sublime principles and ideals of the various religions. However, *Din-i-Ilahi* did not survive Akbar's death. In order to understand and appreciate Akbar's liberalism and religious toleration it is important to review the fanaticism that existed at the time of his accession and the factors that were responsible for moulding his religious policy.

5.1 Din-i-Ilahi :

From the very beginning of the reign, Akbar was confronted with the spirit of fanaticism. The Hindus, who formed the majority of the population, were treated as non-believers' (*kafirs*). A number of discriminatory taxes such as *jizya* and pilgrim tax were imposed on them. Their right to worship was restricted. Many of their temples were destroyed and on their ruins mosques were built. The Muslim religious fanaticism continued even under the first two Mughal rulers, Babur and Humayun as well as the Afghan ruler, Sher Shah.

5.2 Factors that Influenced Akbar's Religious Policy :

There were various influences, which moulded Akbar's temperament and ultimately led him to establish a new faith - *Din-i-Ilahi*. First there was the influence of heredity. Though his father, Humayun was a *Sunni*, his mother Hamida Banu Begum was a Persian *Shia*. She impressed upon his mind the value of toleration. He was born in the house of a Hindu chief, Rana of Amarkot. His most loyal guardian and regent, Bairam Khan was also a *Shia*. His marriage with the Rajput princesses, and contact with Hinduism and crosscurrents of the different reform movements exerted a great influence on his mind. Akbar's most notable teacher, Abdul Latif impressed upon his mind the value of liberal ideas. He taught him the principle of *sulh-i-kul* (universal brotherhood). Besides, his association with Abul Fazal and his brother Faizee and his early contact with the *Sufi* saints weaned him away from the path of Islamic orthodoxy and made him earnestly to attain the bliss of direct contact with divine reality. Thus, heredity and environment combined to influence Akbar's religious policy in the direction of liberalism.

5.3 Akbar's Search for Truth :

Akbar had a yearning for truth and often pondered over the Problems of life and death, According to Abul Fazal, as early as 1557, when Akbar was barely fifteen, during the siege of Mankot he had experienced religious ecstasy and suddenly he broke away from the camp into a distance where he spent many hours in solitary meditation. Seventeen years later, according to Badauni's observation, Akbar would sit many a morning alone in prayer and meditation on a large flat stone in a lonely spot with his head bent over his chest and gathering the bliss of early hours.

5.4 Ibadat Khana :

In 1575, Akbar constructed a new building at Fatehpur Sikri, called the *Ibadat Khana* (House of Worship), where religious discussions were held every Friday evening. In the beginning Akbar invited the learned *ulema* and other Muslim theologians to the *Ibadat Khana* for philosophical and theological discussions. The intolerance of the orthodox party led by

Abdun Nabi and bitter difference between the *Sunnis* and *Shias* disgusted the emperor and alienated him from orthodox Islam.

The bitter differences between the different groups of the Muslim theologians and their failure to satisfy him by their answers to some of his questions convinced Akbar of their incapacity to comprehend the deepest truths of religion and the futility of their doctrines. Akbar therefore invited the exponents of other religions to the *Ibadat Khana* which became a parliament of religions where the *Sufi*, the philosopher, the orator, the jurist, the *Sunni* and *The Shia*, the Brahmin and the atheist (*Charvaka*), the Jain, the Christian and the Jew, the Sabian and the Zoroastrian and others met and debated in the presence of the emperor.

5.5 Contact with Other Religious Exponents:

The Brahmin representatives, especially Purushottam and Devi instructed Akbar in the secrets of Hinduism. He was convinced of the beliefs of transmigration of the soul and rebirth. Among the Jain teachers, Hira Vijay Suri, Vijaya Sen Suri and Bhanuchandra Upadhyaya exerted considerable influence on Akbar. Hira Vijaya Suri prevailed upon the emperor to release prisoners and caged birds and to prohibit the slaughter of animals on certain days. Due to the influence of Dastur Meherjee Rana, the religious head of the Parsis at Navasari in Gujarat, Akbar adopted many practices of the Zoroastrians such as the sun worship, fire-worship etc. He also introduced the Persian festival *nauroz*. Akbar also took keen interest in the doctrines of Christianity and invited Christian priests from Goa. In February 1580, the first Jesuit Mission from Goa arrived at Fatehpur Sikri. It consisted of Father Rudolf Aquaviva, an Italian, Antony Monserrate, a Spaniard, and Francis Henriquez, a Persian convert who acted as the interpreter. Akbar showed great reverence for a copy of the Bible, which the priests presented, to him. He appointed Abul Fazal to translate the Gospel and Monserrate was asked to give some lessons on Christianity to Prince Murad. Akbar also built a small chapel for the Jesuit priests in the palace and held prolonged discussions with them. Churches were built at Agra and Lahore. Akbar regarded the *Adi Granth*, the religious book of the Sikhs as a volume 'worthy of reverence'. Thus, we find that Akbar tried to satisfy his religious curiosity by coming in contact with the exponents of different religions. He went so far in relation with each religion that different people had reasonable grounds for assuming him to be a Zoroastrian, a Hindu, a Jain or a Christian. However, he was not converted to any one of them. The fact is that, his dissatisfaction with Islam prompted him to study other religions by means of discussions and debates, which finally resulted in his 'eclecticism'.

5.6 Foundation of the Din-i-Ilahi:

The studies and discussions on religions of various kinds confirmed the growing eclecticism of Akbar, who as Badauni points out found truth in all religions and realized that it was not a monopoly of Islam. Ultimately Akbar's spiritual evolution culminated with the promulgation of the *Din-i-Ilahi* (The Divine Faith) early in 1582.

Nature of the Din-i-Ilahi:

It is difficult to define the *Din-i-Ilahi* as its founder, Akbar did not define it. It was neither inspired by revelation nor based on any well-defined philosophy or theology. It was a religion without priests or Holy Scriptures. It was an ethical rationalism leading to the ideal of mystic union of the soul with the Divine Being. *Din-i-Ilahi* was a new religion, as the Jesuit author Bartoli says, "Compounded out of various elements, taken partly from the *Quran* of Muhammad partly from the scriptures of the Brahmins and to a certain extent, as far as suited his purpose, from the Gospel of Christ." The *Din-i-Ilahi* was a brilliant combination of the fundamental principles of all religions. Akbar was convinced that all religions were but different paths leading to the same goal. The *Din-i-Ilahi* enjoined such ethical and social reforms as recommending alms giving and sparing of animal life, permitting re-marriage of widows, prohibiting child marriage and marriage among close relations as well as forced *sati*, recommending monogamy, enforcing chastity and controlling gambling and drinking by restricting the sale of drink.

5.7 The Sulah Kul Policy:

The 1580 revolt left a deep impact on Akbar. He felt that his order to re-impose the *jeziya* had failed to please the Irani and Turani amirs and had needlessly hurt the Hindus. Once more there was a great change in Akbar's religious policy. In 1580 itself he again abolished the *jeziya*. Akbar started giving donations and alms to saints, temples, madarsas, and maths (maza) of all religions. Before this donations were given mostly just to Muslim saints, scholars, and mosques. But after 1580 Akbar began giving grants even to distant temples and maths. Akbar was keenly interested in other religions. It is said that at times he would sink into religious thoughts for whole nights. He would hold discussions with whichever religious person came his way. He got an Ibadat Khanah (a prayer room) made in the mosque near his palace. There he held discussions with important scholars of Islam, or maulvis. He told the maulvis, "I have but one objective – to find the truth – to bring forth the true principles of religion." Akbar found that the maulvis fought too much among themselves and kept hurling accusations at each other. He soon grew tired of this. In 1580 he began inviting saints and scholars of other religions to the Ibadat Khana. Hindu pundits, Sufi saints, Jain munis of Gujarat, Parsi scholars, and Christian padres – on Akbar's invitation all came there to take part in discussions. The Christian padres were those who used to come with traders from Portugal.

All these discussions had a great effect on Akbar's thinking. The thoughts and opinions of Abul Fazl, a minister in his court, also influenced him a lot. Abul Fazl wrote a book on Akbar's rule called Akbar Nama, and from this we get to know a lot about those times. A new kind of thought and understanding of religion emerged in Akbar's mind. Badayuni, a historian of the time, wrote, "As a result of these discussions a rock-like conviction grew in the emperor's mind, that in all religions there are good people. If true knowledge can be attained in all religions, then it is not correct to say that there is truth in only one religion and that other religions are false." Inspired by such thoughts, Akbar adopted a new policy – Sulah Kul. This was a policy of amity between all – a total peace between all religions and communities. Following this policy, Akbar banned the slaughter of cows. In his own life he started observing some of the rituals of Hindus, Parsis, and others. He had the main religious books or scriptures of different religions translated into Persian (the official language). The Gita, Mahabharata, Atharvaveda, Bible, Panchtantra, Singhasan Battisi, as well as many science books, were translated into Persian so that Persian-speaking Muslims could read and understand them.

At the same time, Akbar dropped many aspects of Islam that he felt were not correct. Akbar's policy of Sulah Kul was important because the Mughal Empire contained people of many religions. His amirs followed different religions and they all had to work together to administer the empire. There were lakhs of Muslims in his realm, but most of the minor officials were Hindus. The great majority of the peasants, craftsmen, and zamindars were Hindus. Members of the trading classes followed the Hindu, Jain, or Parsi religions. In such a vast empire it was necessary to be accepted and have support from all these kinds of people. Only then could the administration of the state run smoothly and peacefully. With the policy of Sulah Kul, the minds of all kinds of people could be inclined in favour of the emperor. This policy was also continued by the Mughal emperors who came after Akbar.

6. Akbar's Governing Style :

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.

6.1 Foreign Relations :

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 they 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.

6.2 Administrative change under Akbar:

Akbar's system of *central government* was based on the system that had evolved since the *Delhi Sultanate*, but the functions of various departments were carefully reorganized by laying down detailed regulations for their functioning

- The revenue department was headed by a *wazir*, responsible for all finances and management of *jagir* and *inam* lands.
- The head of the military was called the *mirbakshi*, appointed from among the leading nobles of the court. The *mirbakshi* was in charge of intelligence gathering, and also made recommendations to the emperor for military appointments and promotions.
- The *mirsaman* was in charge of the imperial household, including the harems, and supervised the functioning of the court and royal bodyguard.
- The judiciary was a separate organization headed by a chief *qazi*, who was also responsible for religious beliefs and practices

6.3 Taxation

Akbar set about reforming the administration of his empire's land revenue by adopting a system that had been used by *Sher Shah Suri*. A cultivated area where crops grew well was measured and taxed through fixed rates based on the area's crop and productivity. However, this placed hardship on the peasantry because tax rates were fixed on the basis of prices prevailing in the imperial court, which were often higher than those in the countryside. Akbar changed to a decentralized system of annual assessment, but this resulted in corruption among local officials and was abandoned in 1580, to be replaced by a system called the *dahsala*. Under the new system, revenue was calculated as one-third of the average produce of the previous ten years, to be paid to the state in cash. This system was later refined, taking into account local prices, and grouping areas with similar productivity into assessment circles. Remission was given to peasants when the harvest failed during times of flood or drought. Akbar's *dahsala* system is credited to *Raja Todar Mal*, who also served as a revenue officer under Sher Shah Suri, and the structure of the revenue administration was set out by the latter in a detailed memorandum submitted to the emperor in 1582-83.

Other local methods of assessment continued in some areas. Land which was fallow or uncultivated was charged at concessional rates. Akbar also actively encouraged the improvement and extension of agriculture. The village continued to remain the primary unit of revenue assessment. *Zamindars* of every area were required to provide loans and agricultural implements in times of need, to encourage farmers to plough as much land as possible and to sow seeds of superior quality. In turn, the *Zamindars* were given a hereditary right to collect a share of the produce. Peasants had a hereditary right to cultivate the land as long as they paid the land revenue. While the revenue assessment system showed concern for the small peasantry, it also maintained a level of distrust towards the revenue officials. Revenue officials were guaranteed only three-quarters of their salary, with the remaining quarter dependent on their full realisation of the revenue assessed.

6.4 Military organization

Akbar organized his army as well as the nobility by means of a system called the *mansabdari*. Under this system, each officer in the army was assigned a rank (*mansabdar*), and assigned a number of *cavalry* that he had to supply to the imperial army. The *mansabdars* were divided into 33 classes. The top three commanding ranks, ranging from 7000 to 10000 troops, were normally reserved for princes. Other ranks between 10 and 5000 were assigned to other members of the nobility. The empire's permanent *standing army* was quite small and the imperial forces mostly consisted of contingents maintained by the *mansabdars*. Persons were normally appointed to a low *mansab* and then promoted, based on their merit as well as the favour of the emperor. Each *mansabdar* was required to

maintain a certain number of cavalymen and twice that number of horses. The number of horses was greater because they had to be rested and rapidly replaced in times of war. Akbar employed strict measures to ensure that the quality of the armed forces was maintained at a high level; horses were regularly inspected and only *Arabian horses* were normally employed. The *mansabdars* were remunerated well for their services and constituted the highest paid military service in the world at the time.

6.5 Capital :

Akbar was a follower of *Salim Chishti*, a *holy man* who lived in the region of Sikri near Agra. Believing the area to be a lucky one for himself, he had a mosque constructed there for the use of the priest. Subsequently, he celebrated the victories over Chittor and Ranthambore by laying the foundation of a new walled capital, 23 miles (37 km) west of Agra in 1569, which was named Fatehpur ("*town of victory*") after the conquest of Gujarat in 1573 and subsequently came to be known as Fatehpursikri in order to distinguish it from other similarly named towns. Palaces for each of Akbar's senior queens, a huge artificial lake, and sumptuous water-filled courtyards were built there. However, the city was soon abandoned and the capital was moved to *Lahore* in 1585. The reason may have been that the water supply in Fatehpursikri was insufficient or of poor quality. Or, as some historians believe, Akbar had to attend to the northwest areas of his empire and therefore moved his capital northwest. Other sources indicate Akbar simply lost interest in the city or realized it was not militarily defensible. In 1599, Akbar shifted his capital back to Agra from where he reigned until his death.

7. Akbar's Death :

In October of 1605, the 63-year-old Emperor Akbar suffered a serious bout of dysentery. After being sick for three weeks, he passed away at the end of that month. The emperor was buried in Sikandra in western U.P. Akbar's legacy of 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. Akbar is also known for political alliance with the Rajputs which culminated in his marriage to Heer Kunwari (also called Harka Bai or Jodha

Bai) in 1562, who became one of his main queens. She gave birth to a son, Salim, later known as Jahangir, in 1569. His popularity in 21st century may simply understand that several international novels, such as 'The Years of Rice and Salt' (2002), 'The Solitude of Emperors' (2007), and 'The Enchantress of Florence' (2008) are based on his life and even number of television series - 'Akbar-Birbal' (late 1990s) and 'Jodha Akbar' (since 2013) and movies - 'Mughal-e-Azam' (1960) and 'Jodhaa Akbar' (2008) have chronicled this powerful character.

