

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF *DĪN-I-ILĀHĪ* TOWARDS THE LIFE AND CULTURE OF INDIAN PEOPLE

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### ABSTRACT

*Akbar is the third and most sophisticated and successful Emperor (1556-1605) in Mughal Empire (1525-1858). There are many firsts under his rule; equal respect to different religions, against casteism and most importantly-Akbar encouraged interfaiths discussion and debate. After listening to many religious scholars from the prominent religions of his empire. He decided that no one faith was entirely and exclusively true; he developed a syncretic religion which he called *Din-i-Ilāhī*, or “the Divine Faith” The objectives of this research are to know how Akbar’s motivation in creating a policy of syncretic *Din-i-Ilāhī* and his thought contribution towards Indian people.*

*This research uses literary or library research with historical approaches. Data collection technique: firstly by doing inventarisation widely, critically and deeply reading references relating to Akbar’s thought, secondly by critical evaluation, and thirdly by making synthesis to find out the best elements of all.*

*The result of this research indicates that his policy of syncretic *Din-i-Ilāhī* purely promoted racial tolerance and religious freedom under the policy of “universal tolerance”. By influence of Renaissance and Scholasticism in Europe, making Akbar think more liberally. One of his suggestions is that Quran as divine revelation should be contextually interpreted and not textually in accord with the change of time and its community. His thought contributions then influence the daily life and culture of the Indians such as harmonism in interreligious community far better than before. He also constitutes symbol of liberalism and secularism then reflected by modern India.*

**Key-words:** *Din-i-Ilāhī, syncretism, universal toleration, contribution.*

### Introduction.

The *Din-i-Ilāhī* (Persian: دین الهی lit. “Religion of God”) *Din-i-Ilāhī* (*Tawhid Ilahi*) or *divine religion/divine faith*,<sup>2</sup> was a syncretic religion propounded by the Mughal or Moghul<sup>3</sup> emperor Akbar the Great in 1582 AD., intending to merge the best elements of the religions of his empire, and thereby reconcile the differences that divided his

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<sup>2</sup>The term of “*Din-i-Ilahi*” or in Western library “*divine religion or divine faith*” means “the religion of God”, See, Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 456. See also, Wikipedia, *Din-i-Ilahi*.

<sup>3</sup>The word of “Moghul atau Mughal” sometimes also written as Mogol borrowed from Persian and Arabic phoneme “Mongol” in Persian call for the Mongolian and their descendents. The Mughal Empire was founded in 1526 CE. See, Sharma S.R. *Mughal Empire in India: Akbar’s Din-i-Ilahi* (Bombay: Karnatak Publishing House, 1940), p. 331. The Mughal Dynasty or the Mughal Empire (1525-1858) was one of the biggest Islamic Superpower in the Indian sub-continent with its capital Delhi. See, William L. Langer, in *Encyclopedia of World History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956), p. 332. .

subjects. The elements were primarily drawn from Islam and Hinduism, but some others were also taken from Christianity, Jainism and Zoroastrianism.

Akbar promoted tolerance of other faiths. In fact, not only did he tolerate them, he encouraged debate on philosophical and religious issues. This led to the creation of the Ibādat Khāna ("House of Worship") at Fatehpur Sikri in 1575. He had already repealed the Jizya (tax on non-Muslims) in 1568. A religious experience while hunting in 1578 further increased his interest in the religious traditions of his empire.

The impact of Renaissance and Scholasticism in Europe, Akbar made a lot of changes for his people whether in religious, architectural, political, art, educational, social fields etc.

A mere narration of events of the age of the Emperor Akbar is not a satisfactory approach to the history of that important epoch of the Indians. Without a study of the cultural and intellectual activities of the Ibādat Khāna-the first parliament of the religions of the world-it is impossible to understand the forces and ideals for which India had been working for centuries. Indian civilization has a wonderful capacity of assimilating extraneous currents and transmitting her own to others. The *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* of emperor Akbar clearly demonstrated how the Central Asian forces, winding their course through the Semitism of Arabia and filtering through the Monism of Iran, were ultimately Aryanised by the touch of Hindustan. The contribution of the different cultures, as represented in that great Hall of Worship or Ibādat Khāna, to the transformation and Indianisation of Islam was immense, though of course the process had already begun. Maintaining the basis of real Islam, the great savants of the age metamorphosed and crystallized the spirit of the age into Sufi order, called the *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*.<sup>4</sup>

By way of his intellectuality and genius policy, Akbar could hold the power nearly a half of century (1556-1605 AD.). He reigned the empire with clean government and good governance and let the Hinduism surviving as majority up to now without forcing them to follow his *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* what's more to force them to profess Islam. Nevertheless, his syncretic *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* has at least influenced to many aspects of people's life particularly in India. Therefore, his contributions in pluralism and universal tolerance have been strongly remained in Indian sub-continent (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh)<sup>5</sup>.

Historically, Akbar was one of the two monarchs in the Indian sub-continent titled "*the Great*" by the West or Indian historians, and the other one was Emperor Asoka, "Akbar is one of the only two monarchs in the entire span of Indian history to be called 'great', the other being Asoka, who lived eighteen centuries before Akbar. Akbar's name meant 'great', and he would live up to its promise"<sup>6</sup>

## **The Methodology of this Research**

As a literary or library research, this research uses eclectic, blended, with qualitative method in content analysis. In consideration that historical approach containing philosophic thoughts. It cannot be obtained by one method only. History and

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>Islamic Republic of Pakistan (former West Pakistan) separated with Republic of India in 1947. Bangladesh is the former East Pakistan and separated with West Pakistan in 1971. The contributions meant covering these three independent countries.

<sup>6</sup>See, Abraham Eraly, *The Mughal Throne, The Saga of India's Great Emperors* (London: Phoenix Publisher, 2004), p. 163

human thoughts are so complicated and having a lot of dimensions. Hence, this study uses historical approach. The history of Akbar the Great as the third Emperor in Mughal Dynasty is quite significant to be researched with historical approach. According to Akbar S Ahmed that in the theory of Islamic history, there are six categories that should be observed.

To place our theory of Islamic history in context and to identify the main developments, we will create six socio-historical categories. These broad categories, overlapping and borrowing from each other, also identify distinct social characteristics correlating the time and place within which Muslims lived. It is a frame to help us view Muslim history and society simply, an otherwise formidably complex task. Although a clear common theme, the more towards the ideal runs through them, the categories are culturally and socially distinct from one another. Each possesses a characteristics way of looking at the world. The six categories are: 1). The time of the Prophet and the ideal caliphs. 2). The Arab dynasties. 3). The three Muslim empires. 4). Islam of the periphery. 5). Islam under European rule. 6). Contemporary Islam.<sup>7</sup>

Joachim Wach, also named as '*the father of comparative religions*' was born on 25 January 1898 in Chemnitz Germany and died on 27 August 1955. He suggested an approach on religious study as follows: "Historical approach is the attempt to trace the origin and growth of *religious ideas and institutions through definite periods of historical development and to asses the role of forces with which religion contended during these periods.*"<sup>8</sup>

The objectives of this research are to know how Akbar's motivation in creating a policy of *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* and his thought contributions towards Indian people. As a main source of this research is the biggest work of Indian historical professor Makhanlal Roychoudhury Sastri, "*The Dīn-i-Ilāhī or The Religion of Akbar*", published by *The University of Calcutta Press*, Calcutta India 1941. Data collection technics: firstly by doing inventarisation with widely, critically and deeply reading references relating to Akbar's thought, secondly by critical evaluation, and thirdly by making synthesis to find out the best elements of all.<sup>9</sup>

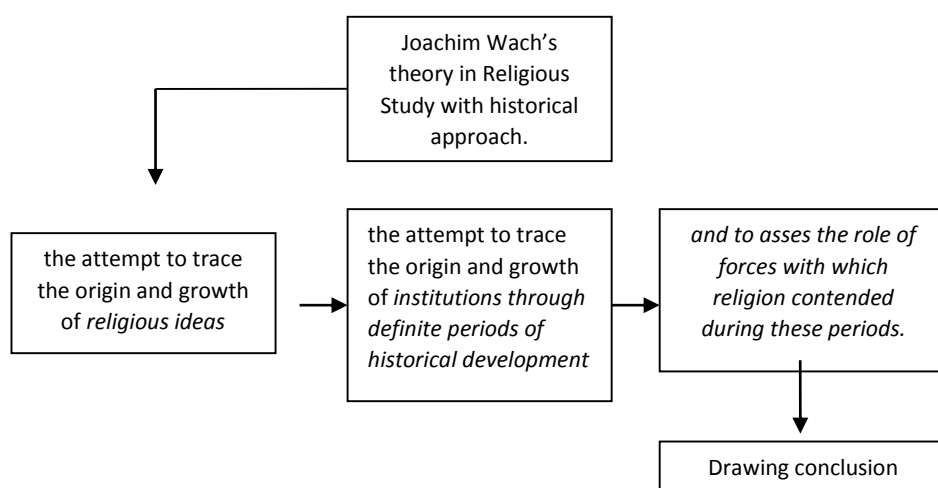
See the following diagram of Joachim Wach's theory in Religious Study:

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<sup>7</sup>See, Akbar. S. Ahmed, *Discovering Islam, Making Sense of Muslim History and Society: A Theory of Islamic History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 32-33.

<sup>8</sup>See, Joachim Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religions* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 21.

<sup>9</sup>See, George J, Mouly. *The Science of Education Research* (New York: American Book Company, 1963), p. 226.



How his contributions and the background of his thought especially about his syncretic *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* have been influencing to people's life and culture in Indian sub-continent would be analyzed in this paper.

### **The Background of Akbar's Thought**

#### **A. Internally.**

Akbar was born on 15 October 1542 AD in Amarkot Sindh India and born as *Abu al Fath Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar*. His father was *Humayun* and his grandfather was *Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur*, who invaded northern India from his post in Kabul (Afghanistan). At its height, the Mughal Empire included most of the Indian sub-continent and an estimated population of 100 million people at that time.<sup>10</sup> Akbar was the first Mughal emperor who was a natural born Indian, but he had no Indian blood in him; he was in fact more Persian than Mughal in blood, as his mother (Hamidah Banu Begum), as well Humayun's mother, were Persians.<sup>11</sup> At the time of Humayun's death, Akbar was in the field under his guardian Bairam Khan. Akbar, like his grandfather, had started his military career while still a mere boy. Having been born while his father was fugitive, he had received no formal education. It is even probable that he could not read or write, but he had a prodigious memory and a passion for knowledge. When the news of his father's death arrived, Bairam Khan hastily arranged for Anwar to be crowned as *Padshah* (leader or prime minister), before rival claimants should have the opportunity of rising. The coronation took place at Kalanaur in the Gurdaspur District, on 14 February 1556 AD.<sup>12</sup>

The political influence of Bairam Khan and his mother Hamidah Banu Begum, his foster parents the couple of Maham Anaga and Atga Khan and son Adam Khan and his wife Princess Amber were quite significant to Akbar's policies. According to Abu Fazl, the last four was also called as "behind the veil", and the above persons internally

<sup>10</sup>Sharma S.R. *Mughal Empire in India...*, p. 331.

<sup>11</sup>Abraham Eraly, *The Mughal Throne...*, p. 115.

<sup>12</sup>See, Shed Mahmuddunnasir. *Islam its Concept & History* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 2000), p. 267.



extremely influenced Akbar's policies. But on Akbar's wisdom, says Abu Fazl, "was not learnt or acquired, but he was the gift of God".<sup>13</sup>

The name of Amber Princess Akbar married is not recorded. Her Royal Title was Mariam Zamani, and she was buried, like a Muslim, in Sepulchre near Akbar's Tomb at Sikandra and Akbar died on 25 October 1605 in 63. The religious eclecticism influence of Akbar from his wife was quite hard as Makhanlal says:

There was nothing unusual in the *raja's* offer, nor in Akbar's acceptance. The custom of Hindu rulers offering their daughters in marriage to Muslim rulers, though not common, has been known in India for several centuries. Yet Akbar's marriage with the princess of Amber is significant, as an early indication of his evolving policy of religious eclecticism. Contrary to the usual practice of the sultans. He allowed the princess to remain a Hindu and maintain a Hindu shrine in the royal palace, and he himself occasionally participated in the *puja* (ritual prayer in Hinduism) she performed.<sup>14</sup>

In 1557 AD. Akbar established the Hall of Worship or *Ibādat Khāna*-the first parliament of the religions of the world. This place for weekly discussion with multi-religious scholars pertaining to religious thought, philosophy, universal tolerance, education etc. By this hall Akbar broke a lot of fresh innovations through discussions with cross religious experts.<sup>15</sup>

#### **B. Externally.**

Most European writers made an isolated study of Akbar without reference to the Central Asian background. Akbar's thought also influenced by the social condition of Indian sub-continent which is full of highly heterogeneity of castes, religions, ethnicities and cultures have been going on for centuries in Indian sub-continent. Because of the impact of Renaissance and Scholasticism in Europe, Akbar made a lot of changes for his people whether in religious, architectural, political, art, educational, social fields etc. In this matter, Makhanlal says that:

European writers on the Timurids in India tried to explain the life and actions of the great Emperor Akbar as mere accidents. They made an isolated study of Akbar without reference to the Central Asian background, neglecting the unity of the Islamic movements of the periods.<sup>16</sup>

In spite of all liberal tendencies of the age, Akbar could not be absolutely free from the Central Asian influences. Many of the social regulations of Akbar can be explained by a reference to the manners and customs of his ancestors (the hereditary traits of Gengis Khan and Timur Lank). Akbar was quite a good Musalman but the sad fact is that he had, on account of his state regulations, displeased the orthodox theocracy.<sup>17</sup>

Akbar is often considered the true founder of the Mughal Empire. He reigned over his Mughal Empire in India from 1556 AD. To 1605 AD. By now, in addition to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Sikhism were also religions that the Muslim rulers had to tackle. Akbar stands distinctively from all other Muslim rulers in his policy towards the religions of his kingdom. His policy of inclusivism, religious tolerance, and inter-religious respect and endeavour towards an empire based on unity and equality led to Jawaharlal Nehru calling him the 'the Father

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<sup>13</sup>Abraham Eraly, *The Mughal Throne...*, *Ibid*.

<sup>14</sup>See, Makhanlal Roychoudhury. *The Din-i-Ilahi...*, p. 136

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid*., h. xxi

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid*.

of Indian Nationalism.<sup>18</sup> As Thapar points out, Akbar 'won the allegiance of the Rajputs, the most belligerent Hindus, by a shrewd blend of tolerance, generosity, and force; he himself married two Rajput princesses. Rajput princess were given high government ranks, and by 1583 all Rajput states had accepted Akbar as ruler. His religious policy towards the Hindus was in such a time when religious intolerance was on high and Muslim rule over Hindus was more often of an oppressive kind.<sup>19</sup>

It is conjectured that Akbar's Hindu policy was greatly influenced by the many Hindu wives that he had. Akbar himself was a regular audience of Hindu saints and philosophers. Some consider that a probable influence behind Akbar's Hindu policy could be Sufism that is said to have inspired him towards a more liberal approach towards Hinduism. Others think that Akbar's Hindu policy was politically motivated.<sup>20</sup>

### **His Career and Works**

He was a patron of learning and of the arts and best known for his vision of empire as an interfaith community—a view quite exceptional for his time. Although a pious Muslim, he believed that truth underlies all religions and pioneered inter-religious collaboration through his discussions with religious scholars, his promotion of the unity of religious truth, and through his own inter-cultural marriages. Although his policies clearly had pragmatic benefits in attracting the loyalty of non-Muslims, Akbar's personal commitment to unity appears to have been genuine. Lane-Poole as quoted by Iqbal says:

"Akbar was a man of unlimited imagination. He had immense energy in his dealing with the state and society matters. Hence, the nature and volume of the reforms under him. All these and other innovations, came from the head of one man-Jalaluddin Akbar—a contemporary of Elizabeth (England), Philip II (Spain) and forerunner of Louis XIV (France), "whose age was that of religious intolerance, rigid inquisition and ruthless persecution, and whose environs in different fields "are the index of genius unsurpassed in the annals of the world"<sup>21</sup>

### **Political career**

Akbar was driven from the throne of India in a series of decisive battles by the Afghan, Sher Shah Suri. After more than 12 years of exile, Humayun regained his sovereignty, though he held it for only a few months before his death in 1556. Akbar succeeded his father the same year under the regency of Bairam Khan, a Turkoman noble whose zeal in repelling pretenders to the throne and severity in maintaining the discipline of the army helped greatly in the consolidation of the newly recovered empire. When order was somewhat restored, Akbar took the reigns of government into his own hands with a proclamation issued in March 1560.

It is speculated by historians that Bairam Khan attempted to dethrone or murder Akbar when he came of age, or led an army against his loyalists. It is also suggested that Akbar, suspicious of Khan's ambitions and loyalties, encouraged him to perform a pilgrimage to Mecca, and there had him killed by an agent. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (11th ed.) surmises rather that Bairam had been despotic and cruel as regent but that following his rebellion, Akbar forgave him and offered him either a "high post in the army or a suitable escort" to Mecca. On November 5, 1556, 50 miles north of Delhi, a Moghul army defeated Hindu forces of General Hemu at the Second Battle of

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<sup>18</sup>Ashirbadi Lal Srivastava, *History of India (1000-1707A.D.)* and Laxminarayan Gupta, *History of Modern Indian Culture*, p.24 (Agra: Shiva Lal Agarwal & Co.Ltd.), p. 434.

<sup>19</sup>Vidyadhar Mahajan, *Muslim-Kalin Bharat (Muslim Rule in India)* (Delhi: S. Chand & Co. Ltd., 1979), part II, p.103.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.* p.106-108.

<sup>21</sup>Sheykh Mohammad Iqbal, *The Mission of Islam* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House PVT Ltd., 19977),h. 205

Panipat, granting the throne of India to Akbar.<sup>22</sup> It was his conquest of Bengal that gave him control of the whole of northern India, which qualifies him according to some scholars as the real founder of the Moghul Empire.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Parallels to Elizabeth I of England***

A contemporary of Elizabeth I of England, some have compared their roles. Akbar ruled over a much larger territory, but Elizabeth, like Akbar, laid the foundation of her country's imperial expansion. Elizabeth lost England's last European colony but defeated Spain, turned her attention to the American colonies, and sponsored the voyages of Sir Francis Drake and others that eventually resulted in the acquisition of her overseas possessions. Qureishi assesses Akbar's legacy thus, "By all standards, Akbar was personally brave, a good general and excellent administrator. He was responsible for converting a small kingdom into a resplendent and mighty empire". It was Elizabeth I, too, who in 1600 granted a Royal Charter to the British East India Company, which would eventually bring about the downfall of the Moghuls; and it was Akbar's son, Jehangir, who first gave the company permission to trade in India (1617).<sup>24</sup>

### ***Administration***

Akbar did not want to have his court tied too closely to the city of Delhi and built a new capital for himself at Fatehpur Sikri, near Agra. Unfortunately, the new palace, although architecturally splendid, did not prove habitable—possibly because of an inadequate water supply—so he set up a roaming camp that let him keep a close eye on what was happening throughout the empire. He tried to develop and encourage commerce, and had the land accurately surveyed for the purpose of correctly evaluating taxation and he gave strict instructions to prevent extortion on the part of the tax gatherers. The agricultural tax system he used has been described as "scientific and benevolent" since it levied only an average of what was judged to be a medium yield of crop. Believing that the *wazir*, or *wazir al-saltana* had traditionally wielded too much power, Akbar restricted this function. Instead, his *diwan* exercised mainly fiscal authority. He divided the empire into provinces (*subas*), which were subdivided into districts (*sarkars*), which in turn were subdivided into *parganas*. This remained the pattern throughout British rule and is more or less maintained today in Bangladesh and Pakistan as well as India. His provincial governors were given short tenures to prevent their acquiring too much power or wealth. Akbar's *diwan*, Todar Mall, is credited with unifying the imperial administration.<sup>25</sup>

Mulk Raj Anand compared Fatehpur Sikri built by Akbar with London city that time:

The total complex of private palaces, residences as well as the Imperial establishments, and the great mosque with the giant gateway, is one of the most considerable achievements in the history of world architecture. The Hampton Court of Henry VIII, near London, seems like a ramshackle barn as compared to Fatehpur Sikri. One has to remember that the city was built at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, communications were difficult, materials inaccessible, and machine tools non-existent. And then one has to imagine the boldness of the conception, emerging from the social milieu of small moribund villages, where the construction of one grand mausoleum or

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<sup>22</sup>The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, Vol. 1-2, p. 454.

<sup>23</sup>Abraham Eraly, *The Mughal Throne...*, p. 158-172.

<sup>24</sup>Qureishi, IH. "Muslim India before the Mughals" and *India under the Mughals* in the *Cambridge of Islam*, Ed. P.M. Holt et. Al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 56.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

mosque had been the only aspiration of the most powerful monarchs and Akbar must have seemed an eccentric even to his own nobles, to even those who were used to the heroic deeds of the Emperor when he ordained the building of a whole city.<sup>26</sup>

#### **Patron of the Arts**

Although Akbar was illiterate, surprisingly because his family had a reputation for learning and two of the most important women in his life, his wife Salima Sultan and his aunt, Gulbadan, were “accomplished in letters,” he had a great love for knowledge. He was a patron to many men of literary talent, among whom may be mentioned the brothers Feizi and Abul Fazl. The former was commissioned by Akbar to translate a number of Sanskrit scientific works into Persian; and the latter produced the *Akbar-Nameh*, an enduring record of the emperor’s reign. It is also said that Akbar employed Jerome Xavier, a Jesuit missionary, to translate the four Gospels of the New Testament into Persian. He also built schools for Muslims and for Hindus. The western writer Philip Bamborough says:

“The Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) is generally regarded as the greatest of the Moghul Emperors. During his reign, elements of the native Hindu arts were incorporated with that of Islam, to produce some of India’s greatest art treasures.”<sup>27</sup>

#### **The Methodology of His Thought.**

Akbar who lived at the age of Renaissance in Europe where the transition time from Middle Age (14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century) to Modern Age in Europe marked by re-interpretation towards classical literatures, the growth of arts, new literature, modern sciences as philosophy, medicals, technics etc. At the same time he was influenced by Scholasticism i.e the philosophy and theology of Christianity based upon Aristotelianism as rational base of Christian faith.<sup>28</sup> These rational methods of thinking extremely influenced his way of thinking in drawing a conclusion without neglecting normative methods (Quran and Hadith or the Prophetic Traditions) with deductive/inductive, sociological and empiric approaches.

Ontologically, Akbar observed an issue as disharmony phenomena in the mids of his community consisting plurality and highly heterogeneity and people had broken the norms of religions and community, and in fact it should not be happened like that. Then epistemologically, he used normative-deductive, empiric and sociological approaches, and from this point he concluded his opinion. Axiologically, all his decisions were absolutely and unsatisfactorily unacceptable by a part of his plural people. But he had unified his people in an integrated nation-state. By its integration as a nation-state in his power, Akbar could develop his empire in all fields.

#### **IV. His Thoughts on Syncretic *Din-I-Ilahi*.**

His acquaintance with the three *shi’i* scholars make Akbar think more liberally. He promulgated an elite syncretic and eclectic religious movement in 1582, which never numbered more than 19 formal adherents.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, the informal or unregistered

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<sup>26</sup>See, Mulk Raj Anand, “*Fatehpur Sikri*”, Mark: A Magazine of the Arts, Vol. XX, No. 4 (Bombay: September, 1967), p. 39. See also, Akbar S. Ahmed, *Living Islam*, p. 91

<sup>27</sup>See, Philip Bamborough, *Treasures of Islam* (New Delhi: Heritage Publisher, 1979), p. 19

<sup>28</sup>See, The Department of Education and Culture of RI, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 2005), p. 946, 1079.

<sup>29</sup>The adherents were 1. Sheykh Mubarak. 2. Sheykh Abul Faizi. 3. Jafar Beg. 4. Qasim Qahi. 5. Abul Fazl. 6. Azam Khan. 7. Abdus Samad. 8. Mullah Shah Muhammad Shahadat. 9. Sufi Ahmad. 10. Mir Sharif Amal. 11. Sultan Khwaja. 12. Mirza Jani Thatta. 13. Taki Shustar. 14. Sheykh Zada Gosla Benarasi.

members are thousands and admittance with some conditions. Historically, one who wants to admit this movement must be in a deep religious conviction whatever his faith. Of course, it could not be a fact that all those who entered into the order were without exception, actuated by a deep religious conviction.<sup>30</sup>

The *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* was essentially an ethical system, prohibiting such sins as lust, sensuality, slander, and pride and enjoining the virtues of piety, prudence, abstinence, and kindness. The soul was encouraged to purify itself through yearning for God (a tenet of Sufism, Islamic mysticism), celibacy was condoned (as in Catholicism), and the slaughter of animals was forbidden (as in Jainism). There were no sacred scriptures or a priestly hierarchy in the *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*. In its ritual, it borrowed heavily from Zoroastrianism, making light (Sun and fire) an object of divine worship and reciting, as in Hinduism, the 1,000 Sanskrit names of the Sun.

In practice, however, the *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* functioned as a personality cult contrived by Akbar around his own person. Members of the religion were handpicked by Akbar according to their devotion to him. Because the emperor styled himself a reformer of Islam, arriving on Earth almost 1,000 years after the Prophet Muhammad, there was some

suggestions that he wished to be acknowledged as a prophet also. The ambiguous use of formula prayers (common among the Sufis) such as *Allahu akbar*, “God is most great,” or perhaps “God is Akbar,” hinted at a divine association as well. According to Akbar *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* was founded—that truth may be found in all religions, and that reason should be the sole basis for belief and action.<sup>31</sup>

As a matter of fact, Akbar never confessed that he was the God. He said, “Why should I claim to guide men before I myself am guided.”<sup>32</sup> “Universal toleration is the sole basis of *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*, and God ought to be worshipped with every kind of veneration, he said.”<sup>33</sup>

Akbar is recorded by various conflicting sources as having affirmed allegiance to Islam and as having broken with Islam. His religion was generally regarded by his contemporaries as a Muslim innovation or a heretical doctrine; only two sources from his own time—both hostile—accuse him of trying to found a new religion. The influence and appeal of the *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* were limited and did not survive Akbar, but they did trigger

a strong orthodox reaction in Indian Islam.

Akbar removed the tax on Hindus, despite the traditional mandate in Islam to tithe non-believers, and invited scores of religious scholars, including Hindus, Jews, and Christians, to debate him personally in his private chambers, often late into the night. Akbar’s wives were also of different religious backgrounds—each marriage was thus a strategic union that would allow the adherents of India’s many faiths to feel that they too were apart of the royal household.

Over time, Akbar’s fascination with religion grew to almost an obsession when he fashioned his own faith, called *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* was an eclectic mix of the other religions Akbar had studied during those late-night theological debates. He borrowed what he saw as the best components of each and blended them into the melange that became *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*. The new faith, however, never caught on among the Hindus and Muslims outside of his

15, Sadar Jahan. 16. Sadar Jahan’s first son. 17. Sadar jahan’s second son. 18. Birbal. 19. Prince Salim. See, Makhanlal Roychoudhury, *The Din-i-Ilahi...*, p. 293.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, h. 282

<sup>31</sup>Abraham Eraly, *The Mughal Throne:...*, p. 211.

<sup>32</sup>See, Makhanlal Roychoudhury, *The Din-i-Ilah...*, p. 282

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.* p. 283

court, but despite this failure, Akbar continued to support religious tolerance among his people.<sup>34</sup>

Certain ceremonials of the *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* were prescribed. There were four grades of the followers of *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*. Those grades entailed readiness to sacrifice for the Emperor Property, life, honour and religious. Whoever sacrificed all the four possessed the four degrees and whoever sacrificed one of the four, possessed only one degree.<sup>35</sup>

Badaoni tells us that “After the promulgation of *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*, Akbar issued many ordinances which were against Islam” but no reliance can be placed upon the views of Badaoni. Most of his information was based on hearsay. He criticized Akbar because he was dissatisfied with his own promotion. He was jealous of the rise of Abul Fazl and Faizi. His frustration made him the bitter enemy of Akbar and his friends.<sup>36</sup>

Akbar had no intention to perpetuate *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* by propagating it. With his own position it would not have been difficult for Akbar to have a large number of followers with the death of Akbar disappeared the *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*. Jahangir tried for some time to follow the example of his father, initiate disciples and bestow *Shast* and his picture.

The view of Malleon G.B. is that “The *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* was, by no means, a new religion or a new sect. At the most, it was an order whose purpose perhaps was veneration for Akbar. So far as Akbar was concerned, the *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* was an “earnest and intense endeavour in search of a formula which would satisfy all but hurt none and contained all that was good and true and beautiful in the great faiths of the world.”<sup>37</sup>

“It is difficult to define *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*. It may be that Akbar’s desire was that his person should be the symbol of the unity he sought to build up among his subjects. He believed that a king was the shadow of God. However, *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* cannot, in any sense be called a religion. It had no holy book or books, no priests, no ceremonies and no religious dogmas or beliefs.

#### **IV. The Contributions of *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* Development and Harmonism of the Indians.**

##### **A. *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* and Harmonism of the Indians.**

The greatest and most influential contributions of Akbar in the life of people in Indian sub-continent (included present Pakistan and Bangladesh) that there are harmonism and good tolerance among religious community much better than before Akbar’s reign. If previous people were so sensitive bringing about some conflicts and social conflict as consequence of castes level of people’s life. But after Akbar’s policy in universal toleration. So the implication of his thought strongly influenced people’s life in Indian sub-continent.

It is interesting what the First Prime Minister of Republic of India Jawaharlal Nehru (1949-1964) stated, as an Indian statesman and father of two-period Prime Ministress Indira Gandhi (1966-1977, 1980-1984), pertaining to Islamic influence and Akbar’s contributions in Indian sub-continent as quoted by Akbar S. Ahmed:

“Historically Hinduism absorbed the shock of Islam and, as best it could, survived. The secret, as Nehru noted, was synthesis”.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>*Ibid*, p. 283-288

<sup>35</sup>See, Sharma S.R. *Mughal Empire in India...*, p. 331-335.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid*. and see also, Sheykh Mohd. Iqbal, *The Mission of Islam...*, p. 203.

<sup>38</sup>See, Akbar S. Ahmed, *Discovering Islam...*, p. 73.

Nehru's statement showed that how great Islamic influence in India was. In spite of Muslim as minority, they held the power more than three centuries and not reducing Hinduism totally. It was because of Akbar's merit as the third emperor in Mughal Imperium for the first time making synthesis of all his policies such as in arts, architectures, cultures, art-paintings, and religious faiths. His synthesis policies have been influencing the life of Indian people up to now. This matter was certainly recognized either by the prominent Indian leaders or Indian and Western historians.

Akbar S. Ahmed then stated:

"By the time of his grandson, Akbar, Hindu influences; astrology, caste, magic – would be commonplace in daily life. The introduction of the foreign element was the cost Islam paid for the transition, the passage, to India".<sup>39</sup>

Besides Akbar's influence on universal toleration, many buildings with astonished architectures such as mosques, palaces, temples, tombs, and forts built by Akbar and his successors by maintaining Arabo-persian character, calligraphy in Hinduism style. All these can be found in Indian sub-continent. Akbar S. Ahmed confirmed the above statement:

The South-Asian sub-continent is littered with noteworthy examples of different kinds of mosques, shrines, tombs and forts, some showing a degree of synthesis with Hindu architecture, others self-consciously retaining an Arab-Persian character.<sup>40</sup>

Many Muslim kingdoms were established in Delhi before the Mughals, but it was with the coming of the Mughals in the sixteenth century that Muslim power reached its height in India. Art, literature and architecture flourished. The royal family were patrons of art and books; many wrote excellent diaries. They revelled in nature, beauty and good company. Six extraordinary emperors, in a direct line descent from Babur, father to son, ruled between 1526 and 1707. The drama of their reign, their conquests, their loves, their personal tragedies survive through folk tales, novels and, now the cinema.<sup>41</sup>

Many film productions made by *Bollywood* tells about the importance of pluralism in Indian people's daily life such as mixed married, syncretism in faiths, and all these caused by Akbar's influence in launching the universal toleration.

The other contributions of Akbar was historically recorded i.e the improvement of Urdu as national and official language for Indian people especially in Northern India. Urdu then has once become scientific language in Islamic history, and up to now Urdu still used as one of National languages in Republic of India and Pakistan. As one of the biggest emperors in Mughals Empire, Akbar has become the symbol of harmonism for Indian people, and his title as "*the father of harmonious people or the father of Indian Nationalism*" as Nehru said. He also constitutes as symbol of liberalism and secularism then reflected by modern India. As Ahmed S Akbar said, "He was the most successful ruler. The guide's emphasis on liberalism and secularism reflects the official philosophy of modern India".<sup>42</sup>

#### **B. *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* and Democracy in India.**

As the second democratic country after USA in the world. , India has more than 1.3 billions people and also the second most populous after China. India has kept its highly heterogeneity. The plurality of race, religion, culture, language, etc. Causing communal conflicts everywhere. These phenomena have been going on for centuries since

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<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>40</sup>See, Akbar S. Ahmed, *From Samarkand to Stonorway: Living Islam* (London: BBC Books Limited, 1993), p. 85.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>42</sup>See, Akbar S. Ahmed, *Discovering Islam....*,p. 85. See also, Annemarie Schimmel, *The Empire of The Great Mughal's History, Arts, and Culture*. (London: Treaction Books Limited, 2004).

the advent of Islam to sub-continent. Thus, when the Mughal held the power in the sub-continent facing oppositions from the Hindus as majority. The Hindus were frightened with the Muslim conquerors for in their mind Muslim were their enemies who would destruct their old traditions such as castes, *shuttee*<sup>43</sup> system where several Hinduism traditions have actually been going on for centuries, and when Islam entered would destruct the tradition.

Historically, the Muslim conquerors have extremely tolerantly acted. The tolerance proved that why Islam could hold the power for centuries in sub-continent. Most historians considered that the true founder of Mughal was Akbar the Great, and to subdue the communal conflicts he made a syncretic *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* protecting all his people consisting all races and religions.

In its journey *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* facing many oppositions, but many also considered that *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* realized them how important harmonism in life, mutual respect one to another in plural community in sub-continent.

After British fled from sub-continent in the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Indian founding fathers began to make unification movements in one nation-state called Republic of India. For Indian founding fathers such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Ghandi, Tilak as a matter of fact they have been inspired in leading the state by naming that the system of Mughal administratives leaving a lot of impressions to present modern India.<sup>44</sup>

The word “democracy” derives from Greek, *demos* means *people*, and *kratos/cratein* means *government or ruler*, this means as *people’s government or government from people, by people and for people*. The concept of democracy became a key in political science to obtain welfare people. Democracy at present as indicator of political development of a state in obtaining improvements in all fields. India as a big country firmly holding democracy to perform the principles of democracy. By carrying out general elections in selecting their leaders as its competence by consultation or deliberation, freely to express their opinions, and recognizing the plurality in different faiths, holding universal toleration, recognizing the right of minority, etc.<sup>45</sup> All these principles were covered in the doctrine of *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*.

The Indian founding fathers as above mentioned, they have been strongly inspired by the principles which of course had been practised in national life and state which once existed in Mughal Empire particularly in Akbar the Great’s time.

People may just have the opinion that the current democracy in India may not be related to the system or policy of Mughal Empire. For one thing that Akbar was the first leader in the Middle Age named as The Great, and none after that except eighteen centuries before his empire namely Ashoka who had the same title like Akbar.<sup>46</sup>

He was named the Great because he can inspire many people to follow the Mughal administratives, because he held the power from 1556 up to 1605. Akbar could lead his government well, full of toleration, no discrimination among the religious groups. To answer all these complexity, the founding fathers formulated their state constitution

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<sup>43</sup>Hindu customs were so little interfered with by the Muslims that even the despicable practice of *shutteeism* was not stopped by the Pathan Kings. It was only in the days of Akbar the Great that a serious attempt was made to prevent the immolation of widows on the occasion of their husbands’ cremation. See, Shed Ameer Ali, *Islamic History and Culture* (Delhi: Ammar Prakshan, 1981), p. 182.

<sup>44</sup>See, Akbar S. Ahmed, *Discovering Islam*,...,p. 73.

<sup>45</sup>For full principles of democracy, See, A. Ubaidillah, et al., *Civic Education* (Jakarta: IAIN Jakarta Press, 2000), p. 160-169.

<sup>46</sup>See, Abraham Eraly, *The Mughal Throne*, ..., p. 163



which also once used in Mughal empire. Thus, the Preamble of Indian Constitution written as follows:

“-----to constitute India into a sovereign democratic state and to secure to all its citizens: justice, social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and opportunity, and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and unity of the nation.”<sup>47</sup>

From the above quotation *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* as Akbar’s teaching clearly providing for Indian independent founding fathers which was proclaimed on August 15, 1947, particularly in formulating its preamble of constitution where secure to all its citizens: justice, social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and opportunity, and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and unity of the nation and mutual respect one to another. Once again as Akbar S. Ahmed quoted pertaining to Akbar’s policy that it is reflected to philosophy then followed by modern India. (*He was the most successful ruler. The guide’s emphasis on liberalism and secularism reflects the official philosophy of modern India*).<sup>48</sup>

### C. *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* and the Dynamics of the Indians.

The castes in the strata of Indian people’s life always emerged horizontal conflicts internally among religious people especially the Hindus. The high castes like *Brahmana* or *Satrya* seem always to look down the lower class as *Sudra* or *Paria* who never accepted opportunity in all cases such a chance in fulfilling their life needs as competent or feasible jobs, intimated friendship, kinship relation by marriage etc. Because the high castes’ views, it is impossible to mingle or join with low castes as above mentioned. As a matter of fact, the low castes also cannot against the high castes for caste institution too strong and quite rooted in Hinduism.

The advent of Islam to sub-continent and became the power holder and politically launching universal toleration. In accord with Islamic teachings that Islam does not discriminate one’s skin color or one’s descendents, and nations or race. The difference of races or nations as a matter of fact is to mutual acquaintance one to another. Historically the Muslim emperors never force the Hindus to convert to Islam. They always make tolerant policies that the low castes attract this and to be interested in Islam in grouply. This happen of course accepted by Islam as the power holder. If their ranks were quite low and contemptible by the high castes before, and after converting to Islam, they felt more self-confidently and as ranking as the Muslim who even hold the power too. For the high castes this event was so displeased. Because the tradition had existed for centuries. In consequence of being accepted the community of *Sudra* and *Paria* in Islam emerging oppositions from the Hindus who still wished the tradition surviving on.

*Dīn-i-Ilāhī* which was promulgated by Akbar consisting blended, syncretic, and eclectic doctrine taken from best elements of all religions make all religious adherents in India more aggressive, and more active in practice harmonious life. Not only that, *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*, also make the Indian people more enthusiastic in arts work as building architecture, paintings, calligraphy, music, and literature more living. The statement of Akbar S Ahmed in relating this in framework of confirming the above argument as follows:

Many Muslim kingdoms were established in Delhi before the Mughals, but it was with the coming of the Mughals in the sixteenth century that Muslim power reached its height in India. Art, literature and architecture flourished. The royal family were patrons of art and books; many wrote excellent diaries. They revelled in nature, beauty and good

<sup>47</sup>A. Ubaidillah, et al., *Civic Education...*, p. 83

<sup>48</sup>See, Akbar S. Ahmed, *Discovering Islam...*, p. 85.

company. Six extraordinary emperors, in a direct line descent from Babur, father to son, ruled between 1526 and 1707. The drama of their reign, their conquests, their loves, their personal tragedies survive through folk tales, novels and, now the cinema.<sup>49</sup>

*Dīn-i-Ilāhī* and the dynamics of Indian people in spirit to develop all changes to people's welfare certainly having a strong correlation. Because the people who are full of communal conflicts and disharmony or intolerance impossibly to improve well the structure of its people.

## V. Conclusion

*Dīn-i-Ilāhī* as religious sycetism of Akbar the Great purely promoted racial tolerance and religious freedom under the policy of "universal tolerance". Akbar appointed Hindus to high positions in his cabinet, married Hindu women and abolished taxes levied against both Hindus and non-Muslims. Akbar welcomed visitors of all faiths—including Jains, Jesuits (Renaissance Roman Catholics), Hindus and Zoroastrians—to his court. Discussions with these visitors led him to develop his own religious teachings, *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* or "divine faith," that sought to transcend the disagreements and conflicts of the world's religions. Music, art and literature flourished in Akbar's cosmopolitan court. By influence of Renaissance and Scholasticism in Europe, making Akbar think more liberally. One of his suggestions is that Quran as divine revelation should be contextually interpreted and not textually in accord with the change of time and its community. His thought contributions then influence the daily life of the Indians such as harmonism in interreligious community far better than before. He also constitutes as symbol of liberalism and secularism then reflected by modern India.

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<sup>49</sup>See, Akbar S. Ahmed, *From Samarkand.....*,p. 85. See also, Annemarie Schimmel, *The Empire of The Great Mughal's History, Arts, and Culture*. (London: Treaction Books Limited, 2004).

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