

# THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ISLAMIC MUGHAL EMPIRE IN JALALUDDIN AKBAR'S ERA: SULH-I-KUL POLICY DETERMINATION

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## **Abstract**

*This research aims to determine the main factors underlying the glory of the Mughal Islamic empire by using a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Methods of data collection using literature study of books and ebooks. The results of the research prove that: Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar was the first Muslim ruler who able to maintain his position in a long time, not merely to fulfill his personal ambitions but to take advantage of his position as king to unite all Mughal society under his rule. To realize this vision, Akbar must legitimize his government and build a strong military superiority among his pluralistic society. The sulh-i-kul or tolerance for all policy that he implemented was able to become a driving tool for several subsequent policies such as the abolition of the jizyah, the establishment of ibadat-khana, and the application of din-i-Ilahi to unite the Mughal community in building a superpower empire based on universal tolerance. Without this basic ideology of sulh-i-kul, the Mughal society at that time could not have become a famous empire.*

**Keywords:** *Sulh-i-kul; Jalaluddin Akbar; Mughal Empire; Islamic Policy*

## **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui faktor utama yang melandasi kejayaan kerajaan Islam Mughal dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Metode pengumpulan data menggunakan studi pustaka dari buku, ebook dan sejenisnya. Hasil penelitian membuktikan bahwa: Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar merupakan penguasa muslim pertama yang dapat mempertahankan kerajaan Islam dalam waktu lama. Hal ini tidak semata-mata untuk memenuhi ambisi pribadinya tapi untuk memanfaatkan posisinya sebagai raja dalam menyatukan semua masyarakat Mughal di bawah kekuasaannya. Untuk mewujudkan visi tersebut, Akbar harus melegitimasi pemerintahannya serta membangun superioritas militer yang kuat diantara masyarakatnya yang majemuk. Kebijakan *Sulh-i-Kul* atau toleransi kepada semua yang diterapkannya mampu menjadi alat penggerak beberapa kebijakan berikutnya seperti penghapusan *jizyah*, pendirian *ibadat-khana*, dan penerapan *din-i-Ilahi* untuk menyatukan masyarakat Mughal dalam membangun kerajaan yang superpower berdasarkan toleransi. Tanpa ideologi dasar *sulh-i-kul* ini belum tentu masyarakat Mughal kala itu dapat menjadi kerajaan yang masyhur.

**Kata kunci:** *Sulh-i-kul; Jalaluddin Akbar; Kerajaan Mughal; Kebijakan Islami*

## **Pendahuluan/Introduction**

Lately, many policies have been implemented but have not brought much good in a broad scope and can be implemented in the long term. This will result in changes that occur continuously without end. Meanwhile, policies in an

area are not created without reviewing the reciprocity that will be obtained. It requires an in-depth needs analysis of what is really needed and what is only a temporary fulfillment.

Furthermore, many policies in today's era are not related to customs and

culture that have been ingrained in social life. So that there is a reluctance in the hearts of policy followers to apply these policies in everyday life. If the policy designed by the leader does not see this social context, then the policy only functions as a written rule without implications.

Even though it has been exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad in leading the city of Medina when he migrated and formulating the contents of the Medina Charter agreement which became the legal policy of the people living in Medina most of which correspond to the culture that is ingrained there. The figure of a leader does not only rely on his own thoughts in formulating policies and contributions from other trusted parties are needed to participate in making these policies. As well as leadership that stands after leadership Rasulullah SAW still applies the same leadership model so that the policies implemented are as effective as the policies designed by Rasulullah SAW. However, there are many leaderships today who only make policies as the legality of leadership without considering many things and the policies are designed by him personally. The higher the position of a leader, he is required to be able to make good policies and be able to run them well. (Faiqatul Husna, 2017)

When viewed from its history, the Mughal Islamic empire is one of the famous kingdoms because of its success in managing leadership and policy. The Mughal Islamic Kingdom is one of the Islamic kingdoms located on the plains of Hindustan which was established from 1526 to 1857 (Syarifah, 2020). The founder of this kingdom was Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur who came from the Mongol area of Timurid descent. This change in leadership of the Mughal Islamic empire was based on family chain until its peak managed to control an area of 3.2 million square kilometers, spanning most

of the subcontinent, and 150 million diverse people. This Islamic empire rose to its peak to become the most powerful country with a large military power and the richest almost a quarter of the global Gross Domestic Product.

The progress and glory of this kingdom did not just happen after it was founded, but through a lot of persistence and hard work and through a change of leadership. The glory of this Mughal Islamic empire could reach its peak during the reign of Jalaluddin Akbar (the third king of the Mughal Islamic Empire) which lasted from 1556 to 1605 AD. Overcoming family conflicts and the dominance of a series of royal ministers, Akbar emerged as a very powerful ruler. Reflecting on the past life of his father, Humayun, who was betrayed by his brothers until he emigrated to Afghanistan, as well as Humayun's persistent efforts to reclaim the throne of the Mughal Islamic empire, spurred Akbar to perfect his leadership from many sides. (Siti Zubaidah, 2016)

As a concrete step to realize his wishes, Akbar's regime created the social, cultural and political institutions of the Mughal empire that spread and grounded the empire in India. In particular, he created new relationships with local Hindu and Muslim rulers in strategic northern India, including through political marriages, which gave him subordinate allies and new officers and officers to complement what he inherited. (Jos Gommans, 2002)

Departing from Akbar's desire to form a new leadership structure, several leadership policies formed by Akbar will emerge. In this article, we will describe the background of the emergence of problems in Akbar's kingdom and the solutions to these problems. Then it will be explained the policies that Akbar set as a solution to the problems he faces so that an impact will be found that is able to deliver the Mughal

empire led by Akbar as a famous kingdom in implementing policies.

The type of research used in this research is library research, namely research whose data sources and data searches use books, ebooks, journal articles and the like. Then the data obtained will be processed using a descriptive analytical method with a qualitative approach that aims to describe, analyze and interpret the data and draw conclusions. To verify the originality of the research data, external and internal criticism were used. This step was taken to find out that there were no data errors raised in the results of this study.

## **Pembahasan (Discussion)**

### **1. Biography of Jalaluddin Akbar**

Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar (Abu'l-Fath Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar) who became the third king of the Mughal Islamic empire began his glory when he ascended the throne at the age of 13 years. Akbar is the biological son of Humayun (the second king of the Mughal Islamic empire) and Hamida Banu Begum. More precisely, Akbar's real name was born in Sind (west India) on October 25, 1542. Throughout his life the longest period as a royal prisoner in Kabul was during his childhood because his father king Humayun fled to Afghanistan first. In 1571, after Akbar had asserted his imperial authority and succeeded in defeating northern India as his main opponent, Akbar moved his royal capital from Agra to Fathpur Sikri, some 24 miles to the west. (Stephen P. Blake, 2013)

According to Michael H. Fisher (2016), after Akbar's succession was finally secured and Akbar emerged from the district. Akbar and his close adviser Abu'l Fazl made the main policy. Akbar expanded his household, courts, administration and army through extensive recruiting, most notably through

the many political marriage alliances and cultural policies that attracted a wide range of Indian Muslims and non-Muslims. He and his courtiers reorganized the Empire by developing a more centralized fiscal and administrative system. During each phase of his imperial career, based in a different capital city, he commanded an expanding Mughal army that was almost constantly engaged in defensive and offensive wars against his ambitious relatives, rebellious imperial officials, elite and popular uprisings, and neighboring rulers. Most of his life, Akbar personally entered the battlefield and directly led military campaigns until before his death. Thus, Akbar and his supporters founded and expanded the Mughal empire as a complex synthesis of the diverse processes, cultures, and peoples of Central Asia, Islam, and India.

### **2. Policy Background of *Sulh-i Kul***

Particularly in patrimonial states, the various political marriages of the ruler can provide a significant way of defining and expanding his household, allies, and body of officials and officials. In contrast, the ruler's new relatives by marriage linked themselves to his regime and were able to gain access to his power and prestige. What often affects the outcome of political marriages is the relationship between the ruler and his bride, including their personal affection. In his first marriage when he was nine years old, Akbar and Shahzadi Ruqaiya Sultan Begum, daughter of Hindal, his future wife did not have much choice because they had been betrothed by the two of them. This marriage did not produce children for both of them and queen Ruqaiya decided to take care of Khurram, the son of another wife of Akbar. (Michael H. Fisher, 2016)

Then in his late teens, Akbar decided for his own marriage and married Salima Sultan Begum who was still his cousin and cousin of his first wife. Even in this second marriage, Akbar is still not blessed with

children. So Akbar decided to marry the descendants of the Hindu Rajput rulers who eventually some of them would embrace Islam. When Akbar emerged from the district and was on a pilgrimage to the Sufi shrine of Khwaja Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti in Ajmer (near Amber), King Bihari Mal of Amber again approached Akbar. King Bihari Mal proposed a more personal and lasting alliance by offering as a bride his eldest daughter, Harkha Bai also known as Hira Kunwari, 'The Diamond Princess,' and Mariam-uz-Zamani, 'Maria Zaman'.

From marriage to the Rajputs placing the Mughal royal clan in the same social and divine order with the same martial dharma i.e. bhakti with Sufism. Over time, relations between Hindu Rajputs and non-Rajputs correlated with Akbar's religious and political policies from the beginning of his reign.

Akbar vowed to break free and break away from the artificial traditions and religions that arose after doubts arose. At the end of 1582 there were two consequences faced by Akbar, first that all religions have an element of truth and all religions lead to the highest reality and the second is the narrow view and bigotry and arrogance shown by the ulama (Tadd Ferne, 2021).

On the other hand, Akbar was also heavily influenced by the theory of transmigration, a cornerstone of traditional Hindu doctrine. Akbar is also said to have appreciated the value of Hindu gods and goddesses and had performed several rites which were customary among Hindus. So from this consequence, the concept of *Sulh-i-kul* ideology was born which played an important role in creating a new liberal and mutually tolerant state. In language, *sulh-i-kul* means universal peace or tolerance for all. (Akhil Jonnalagadda, 2020)

The concept of this ideology implies not only tolerance for others, but also considers the balance, courtesy, respect, and compromise needed to maintain

harmony among diverse populations (Ramin Hajian Fard, 2016). Thus, Akbar stressed to respect all groups that submitted to him as 'perfect humans' and 'universal rulers' even though his troops continuously suppressed dissidents and conquered neighboring kingdoms in order to expand the territory of the Mughal Islamic empire. Akbar justifies his many invasions by arguing that enemy rulers are immoral rebels against their sovereignty or perpetrators of violence against their people, who deserve the truly impartial justice that only Akbar can provide.

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According to Abu'l Fazl, the king is an agent of a universal God so that his sovereignty is not tied to any one belief. In other words, a king is forbidden to discriminate between different religions and if he discriminates, then the king is not fit to act as an agent of God. From Abu'l Fazl's point of view, Akbar's religious views are considered a rational decision made to maintain harmony between the various religions in the Mughal Islamic empire. (M. Athar Ali, 1996)

Broadly speaking, Akbar's thoughts and policies were influenced by beliefs about the position of kings from his Mongol lineage. From his ancestor Ghengiz

Khan (r. 1206-1227), Akbar accepted the royal theory in which the king had a divine mandate to rule and was not accountable to other superiors. This meant that the Mongol rulers had to rule by concentrating power rather than by distributing it. The Mongol indifference to the religion of its people is also reflected in Akbar's actions. Akbar can be seen as continuing the method of rule that allowed all religions to be worshiped in his kingdom. Subordination of subjects to non-dictation of social policy, such as religion, was the main goal of the Mongol rulers. With the Turkic pluralistic culture, Timur Gurgan of Samarkand, came the addition of Islam to the Mongol theory of empire, but did not come to dictate how Akbar should rule. Akbar managed to explain the supreme status of the sultan within Islamic boundaries by stating "because God is one and has no partner, therefore, the deputy regent (sultan) of God's land must be one." (Alex Padamsee, 2018) Akbar believes that religious law is legal. and the kingdom comes directly from God and thus the king is accountable only to God. The Eastern concept of the kingdom that the right to rule comes from God, so all actions, whether done in the name of Islam or not, are justified by the divine decree of the sultan.

The influence of other religions caused Akbar to finally believe in mysticism and, Sufism. Akbar was very interested in the Chishtiyah order in India, including Shaykh Salim Chishti, who assisted Akbar in conceiving his first son Salim (later Jahangir), and Shaykh Mubarak Nagawri. An important change in the development of Akbar's worldview occurred when he came under the influence of Sufi doctrine beginning around 1571. His very different view of Islam turned away from orthopraxy and towards overcoming worldly desires and impulses while maintaining fundamental doctrines. (Christopher P. Holland , 2005) One of the influential aspects of the Sufi

Akbar doctrine is the belief in the transcendent unity of religions while understanding the unique differences of each religion. His mystical religious beliefs blended well with his belief in equality with his fellow human beings.

Abu'l Fazl officially emphasized Akbar to focus on the perspective of universality sovereignty with the establishment of social harmony as the missionary goal of the Mughal empire (Harbans Mukhia, 2014). Personally, Akbar himself has stepped his policy towards *sulh-i-kul* or universal peace since Akbar just ascended the throne as king. India's socio-political order was fully familiar to him and Akbar had fully understood the centrifugal tendencies India created to eliminate there by separating religion from politics. This can be seen from several methods used by Akbar, namely:

1. Doing a political marriage. This marriage was carried out to strengthen the royal regime even though they had different religious and cultural backgrounds. From Akbar's first marriage to Shahzadi Ruqaiya Sultan Begum to Akbar's last marriage to Mariam-uz-Zamani. In 1579, Akbar reorganized the aristocratic echelons by ensuring that no social group was at a higher level. This method is a pragmatic step towards the realization of absolute peace in the distribution of political resources. (Michael H. Fisher, 2016) This was adopted by Akbar from his childhood who saw that his parents came from different religious sects but could survive until the end of age. By carrying out this political marriage, it can further strengthen the expansion of the territory. (Daimalu Brahma, 2020)
2. Abolished the *jizya* or capitation tax in 1563 which was paid by non-Muslims as protected persons of the

Mughal state. Jizya is a symbol of inferiority because it has become a formal law that establishes Muslims as rulers and Hindus as second-class subjects through taxation. This step was implemented as one of the steps to harmonize Hindus and Muslims. This policy was motivated by Akbar's household life with the Rajputs so that justice was needed in living with different beliefs. With the abolition of this tax, the lives of non-Muslims in Mughals are more prosperous so that they are not burdened with the obligation to pay taxes and still receive facilities like Muslims. Mughal government revenue department lost steam for a while. In taking this drastic step, Akbar was opposed by his Muslim ministers and harshly criticized by the orthodox for violating long-standing traditions of Islamic rule. Akbar then proceeded with the move to end the ban on the construction of new Hindu, Jain, Parsi and other non-Muslim temples. Akbar makes *inams* (endowments of land income) to Hindu temples (including in Vrindavan) and to non-Muslim saints.

3. Akbar saw that the people in his kingdom controlled many religions, so that Akbar as king had the responsibility not to discriminate between the treatment of Muslims and people of different religions. Later, Akbar gave the authority to build the *Khana Ibadat* or house of worship in 1575 as a place for discussion of several religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Jainism and Zoroastrianism. In the end, from these discussions, Akbar drew the conclusion that all religions basically come from the same

conclusion, only wrapped in different regulations. However, the *Khana Ibadat* was not used for long because it ended in a prolonged debate by scholars of every religion.

4. Formulating the *Din-i-Ilahi* which was previously known as *Tawhid-i-Ilahi*. According to Cemil Kutlutürk (2016), *Din-i-Ilahi* is the most substantial syncretic religious movement from the mutual interaction and relationship between Hinduism and Islam. This concept uses three approaches, namely a theological approach (Sunni theology), a political approach (part of the constitutional system), and a psychological approach (personal self with various religious knowledge) and a socio-cultural approach (inseparable from the socio-cultural conditions of society) (Anwarsyah, 2014). . The purpose of this *Din-i-Ilahi* is to bridge the two religions by believing in the oneness of God, Jalaluddin Akbar as God's representative so that they get direct guidance from God, all religious leaders must submit to Jalaluddin Akbar, not eat meat, respect the sun and fire as symbols of life , declared Sunday as the official day for worship, prohibited from marrying old women and girls who were not yet mature, replacing *Assalaamualaikum* with *Allahu Akbar* and *Alaikum salam* with *jalla jalalah*, and expected to sacrifice property, life, religion and honor to serve the sultan. This was taken by Jalaluddin Akbar considering that the ulama had different opinions on religious issues, religious bigotry, and the encouragement from people around the king to encourage Jalaluddin Akbar to think radically.

5. Order the *mahzar* or "Maximum Provision", issued. This drew a lot of criticism from the orthodox mullahs in court because Akbar declared himself an interpreter of the law and no longer wanted the mullahs to interpret and draft laws. Through his conflict with the mullahs, Akbar freed himself from the constraints of traditional Muslim rule dictated by Sharia. This rule free from the control of the mullahs meant that everyone in the kingdom, from the king to his subjects, had social freedoms that were unprecedented under Muslim rule in Hindustan. Literally, *Mahzar* designates Akbar as someone who is able to reason individual laws, just rulers, rulers of Islam, amirul believers, and the shadow of Allah over the two worlds.
6. Time reorientation, Akbar devised a new sun-based calendar, *Tarikh-i Ilahi* ('Divine Era'), which began with his own accession. This calendar also has practical administrative advantages since the harvest is annual and thus the income cycle varies in the lunar Islamic Hijri calendar. Akbar also added '*Allah-o-Akbar*' to imperial documents and coins. From this policy, farmers are no longer confused about the time to deposit agricultural taxes and land taxes. In addition, the existence of this Divine Date makes it easier for farmers to start planting diverse plants according to the duration of the harvest.

### 3. Impact of *Sulh-i-Kul* Policy

According to Sari Agustina (2020), the impact of implementing the entire *sulh-i-kul* can minimize social discrimination in Indian society. However, on the other hand, *sulh-i-kul* is misused by Hindus to

trigger a dispute between the king of the state order and the king of the religious order. This dispute also sparked a dispute between Jalaluddin Akbar and Prince Salim who wanted to immediately occupy the throne of the Mughal Islamic empire.

The impact of the cancellation of the *jizyah*, which is a tax given by the government to non-Muslims living in Islamic countries, is making non-Muslims even more prosperous. After paying this tax, non-Muslims will be given the freedom to carry out their worship activities. By itself it is very important because it eliminates a hierarchical society based on religious divisions and creates an equal class of subjects.

Other changes made to existing laws helped to break up social inequalities, such as the abolition of the Hajj tax, which only applies to Hindus because it is part of their belief to go on pilgrimage in their lifetime. Akbar also allowed all forms of public prayer to take place, allowed non-Muslim temples and churches to be built or repaired, banned the slave trade, and allowed open conversion to or from Islam, although he forbade the forced conversion of slaves to Islam. Akbar forbids the slaughter of animals on certain days which helps in his quest for approval from the Hindu majority. (Christopher P. Holland, 2005)

It was from Akbar's new policies that the wealth and territorial gains gained by some of the ruling Rajput clans through imperial service gave them status, resources and political power not available to their forefathers on a local basis, especially as the homeland of Rajasthan was not agriculturally rich. (Michael H. Fisher, 2016) Furthermore, the concept of 'Rajput' changed through their interaction with the Islamic Mughal empire, evident in: clan genealogies and history highlighting sacred ancestors; Prepare vocabulary and literary, artistic and administrative skills; clothing and other clothing imitating the style of the imperial



court; and the primacy of the royal clan head over his subordinate relatives. In addition, Rajput imperial officials moved further and further away from their homeland, often forming marriages and other alliances with the Rajputs they met there. They used revenues and awards from imperial service to fund the expansion of their homeland and to protect Hindu temples and other places of worship. Thus they gained financial and political advantages, especially compared to rival Rajputs who underestimated participation in the Mughal Empire and spent their limited resources fighting it.

Silver coins were created of uniform purity and weight, standardized throughout the kingdom. This silver inflation lowers interest rates and raises prices for producers, stimulates the kingdom's economy, promotes dynamic innovation by Akbar's government. Thus, the impact of implementing sulh-i-kul on the political and economic side of the Mughal Islamic empire really helped the Mughals to become a great empire.

From adapting Persian cultural, administrative and political institutions to reorganizing military and civilian institutions as well as provincial government, Akbar also created a political and religious ideology, derived from a range of Islamic and Indian traditions, which bound him not only to core officials but also to many Indians in the world. its entire territory. Gradually, many tributary lords and landowners became royal functionaries, paying systematically assessed revenues and receiving fixed incomes. More and more people are accepting the sovereignty of the Mughal empire. All of this increased the empire's power to rule and extract resources from India's economy, which was largely agriculture-based.

## Kesimpulan/Conclusion

Before setting a policy under his authority, Akbar first saw the situation of the diverse Indian society so that the policies to be implemented were in accordance with the characteristics of the people. The reason for this was done by Akbar to avoid the mistakes that occurred in the two reigns of the kings before him.

With a background of different religious sects from his parents (Sunni and Shia), Akbar has studied the values of tolerance with people who have different beliefs with him. Under the direction of Abu'l Fazl, Akbar managed a policy of universal tolerance well known as *Sulh-i-kul*. Unofficially, this policy has been implemented by Akbar since Akbar ascended the throne, but officially Akbar only launched it after several other religious policies to strengthen other religious policies (*ibadat khana* and *din-i-ilahi*) to spread the value of tolerance to all humans without indiscriminately.

The end result was a lot of progress, especially in the social, political and economic fields that the Mughal empire had under Akbar's leadership starting from a policy of mutual tolerance between religions in the lives of its people. Without tolerance, it will be difficult to realize the ideals of advancing a nation no matter how smart its leader is.

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