

A Study of Rajput Strategy in Famous Mughal Ruler in Indian History

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Abstract – Aim of this paper is to highlights the Rajput Policy of Akbar and Aurangzeb. Mughal emperor Akbar implemented many policies during his reign, which also included 'The Rajput Policy'. Abul Fazl says that in order "to soothe the mind of the zamidars, he entered into matrimonial relation with them". In course of time, Akbar expanded and elaborated this policy. The Rajputs were the greatest obstacle in his pursuance of policy against the Hindus. Aurangzeb attempted to destroy the power of the Rajputs and annex their kingdoms. The mutual relations of the Mughals and the Rajputs have a great importance in the history of the Mughal period.

Keywords: Rajput Policy, Mughal Emperor, Empire, Matrimonial Alliance Pilgrimage Tax, etc.

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INTRODUCTION

The Rajputs are resident of the northern regions of India. They are a warrior clan but for some reason they formed an alliance with the Mughals and served them with loyalty and dedication. The Rajputs were actually the military wing of the Hindus. Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babar (1483-1530A.D.) also Babar (literally means of Babar is 'the Lion') was 16th-century ruler of Indian subcontinent and founder of the Mughal Empire. He defeated Ibrahim Lodi, sultan of Delhi in the first battle of Panipat in 1526 and Babar won this battle. The first battle of Panipat marks the end of Delhi sultanate and rise of the Mughal dynasty in India. The Mughal Emperor Babar is described as a military genius and a skillful warrior. Babur had to carry on warfare with the Rajputs but these battles had been fought because of political reasons. Babur could not frame any fixed Rajput policy due to his early death in 1530 A.D. After the death of his father Babur, Nasir ud-din Muhammad Humayun (1508-1556A.D.) was second Mughal emperor and he succeeded to the throne of India, at the age of twenty-three. Humayun lost his kingdom early to the Pashtun noble, Sher Shah Suri, but with Persian aid he regained them 15 years later. Subsequently, in a very short time, Humayun was able to expand the Empire further, leaving a substantial legacy for his son, Jalal ud-din Muhammad Akbar also known as Shahanshah, Akber-e-Azam or Akbar (means 'the Great'). Akbar (1542-1605 AD) was the third and greatest ruler of the Mughal dynasty in India. Akbar succeeded his father, Humayun, under a regent, Bairam Khan, who helped the young emperor expand and consolidate Mughal domains in India. At the Second Battle of

Panipat he defeated the newly self-declared Hindu king Hemu in 1556.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Rajput policy of Akbar was based on a planned policy towards the Rajputs. He was impressed by the chivalry, faithfulness, fighting skill, etc. of the Rajputs. Akbar tried several ways to gain the trust of the Rajputs. The Rajputs ruler of Amber, Raja Bharmal was the first one to establish friendly relation with Akbar in 1562. The younger daughter of Bharmal, Harkha Bai (also known as Heer Kuwari, Jodha Bai and as per Mughal chronicle her name was, Mariam-uz-zamani) was married to Akbar. Akbar gave complete religious freedom to his Hindu wives and gave an honored place to their parents and relations in the nobility and he gave high posts to Rajputs in his empire. Most Rajput kings recognised Akbar's supremacy and later on helped Akbar in expanding and consolidating the Mughal empire. Rajputs like Raja Birbal and Raja Man Singh were his most trusted officials. Both of them were also a part of the nine gems- navratnas - of his court. Ain-i-Akbari lists names of 24 Rajput mansabdars. Raja Todarmal was made the head of revenue department. He abolished the Pilgrimage tax in 1563 and Jizya tax in 1564 as both were based on religion discrimination. Jahangir followed his capable father's policy only and maintained friendly relations with those rajputs who accepted the authority of the mughal. Akbar could not succeed in conquering Mewar due to many causes. Later on Mewar also conquer by Mughal Empire.

The Rajput policy of Akbar was unique as it not only helped to end the long drawn conflict between the Rajputs and Mughal ruler but also helped Akbar in the consolidation of his empire. It resulted in the development of a composite culture. At the end of his reign in 1605 the Mughal Empire covered most of the northern and central India and was one of the most powerful empires of its age.

RAJPUT POLICY OF AURANGZEB AND THEIR RESULTS:

The Rajput policies adopted by Aurangzeb were strict and stern. There were three important Rajput rulers at that time, viz. Raja Jaswant Singh of Marwar, Rana Raj Singh of Mewar and Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur. All the three were at peace with the Mughals when Aurangzeb ascended the throne. But, Aurangzeb never kept faith in the loyalty of these Rajput rulers. Aurangzeb deputed Raja Jai Singh in the Deccan where, ultimately he died in 1666 A.D. Raja Jaswant Singh was deputed to defend the north-western frontier of the empire. Two of his sons died fighting against the Afghan rebels and he himself died in Afghanistan in 1678 A.D. Aurangzeb was waiting for this opportunity. At that time, there was no successor to the throne of Marwar. He occupied Marwar immediately and with a view to disgrace the ruling family sold the throne of Jaswant Singh for rupees thirty-six lakhs. It seemed that the existence of Marwar was lost forever. While returning from Afghanistan, the two wives of Rana Jaswant Singh gave birth to two sons at Lahore. One of them died but the other named Ajit Singh remained alive. Durga Das, the commander-in-chief of the Rathors came to Delhi with the prince and requested Aurangzeb to hand over Marwar to Maharaja Ajit Singh. Aurangzeb did not agree. Ajit Singh was declared the ruler of Marwar and the war of independence of Marwar began from that time. In 1679, Aurangzeb reintroduced Jizyah at the usual rates of 48 dirhams on the rich, 24 on the middle class, and 12 on the poor, the rich being those earning ten thousand dirhams or more a year, the middle those earning over two hundred, and the poor those earning less. Rana Raj Singh of Mewar, who realised that it was in the interest of Mewar to fight against the Mughals, gave support to Marwar. In 1681 A.D., Akbar, son of Aurangzeb revolted against his father with the support of the Rajputs. The revolt of Akbar failed and he fled to Maharashtra under the protection of Durga Das. Aurangzeb offered peace to Mewar and it was accepted. The Rathors of Marwar, however, continued their fight against the Mughals. Pursuing his son Akbar, Aurangzeb left for Deccan and could never come back from there. Marwar fought against the Mughals till the death of the emperor in 1707 A.D., of course accepting peace in between twice, and finally succeeded in gaining its independence. Thus, Aurangzeb failed to subdue either Mewar or Marwar. The only result of his policy against these states was that he lost the support of the Rajputs. The Rajputs, who were one of the best

supporters of the Mughal Empire since the reign of Akbar, revolted against Aurangzeb. Their services could no more be utilised in strengthening the Mughal empire. On the contrary, it added to the troubles of the empire. It encouraged other revolts also. Thus, the Rajput policy of Aurangzeb failed and resulted in the weakening of the Mughal Empire.

AKBAR-THE SAINTLY MUGHAL:

Abul Fath Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar was born on 15th October, 1542 to Mughal emperor Humayun and Hamida Banu Begum in the Rajput fortress of Umarkot in Sind. However the untimely death of Humayun following an accident and the invasion mounted on Delhi mounted by the forces of Adil Shah Sur and his Hindu general Raja Hemu proved to be hindrances in Akbar's path to the Mughal throne in Delhi. After the second battle of Panipat in 1556 Akbar was crowned the Mughal emperor under the guidance of Bairam Khan, a close friend and ally of Humayun. Akbar, the Great is often celebrated in history as the gem of the Mughal dynasty who led the Empire during its zenith and was highly revered and worshipped not only by his Muslim subjects, but those of other faiths as well. However in this section we will discuss only the policy of religious toleration and his attempts at establishing of a secular state for which he is widely cherished by people hailing from various communities till date. Akbar's religious policy was moulded and motivated by his parental and social heritage. All of Akbar's religious teachers and guides incidentally happened to be men with unorthodox views. His early teacher Abdul Latif was a person holding liberal Sufi ideals who introduced young Akbar to the concept of sulh-i-kul or religious tolerance. Although many earlier Muslim rulers had realised the need for adopting a policy of mutual toleration among their subjects it was Akbar who raised the policy of religious toleration to the pinnacle of secularism. The first major attempt by Akbar towards the realisation of the secular character of the Mughal empire was the separation of the state and religion. His declaration of Majhar was the greatest ever declaration made during the medieval period. The main objective of this decision was the separation of state from religion and gives more importance to royal decree than the orthodox Islamic laws. Akbar tightened the reins over the Diwan-i-qaza or the judicial cum religious department which was dominated by the Ulemas who often tended to favour the Muslims and exhibited a bias attitude towards other traditions by vehemently trying to impose the Sharia laws in the Mughal Empire. Akbar declared himself the Imam-i-Adil or Chief Interpreter of the Islamic law which allowed the emperor final say in all matters pertaining to justice. The declaration of Majhar and the portrayal of the emperor as the spiritual leader of his subjects severely curtailed the power of orthodox Sunni Islamism which once held sway in most courtly matters. Another important step in his efforts towards building goodwill with his subjects hailing diverse tax

was the abolition of jiziya tax and the tax which had to be paid by Hindu pilgrims for visiting their holy sites. Akbar came to know about this discriminatory taxation in 1563 while encamping in Mathura where he came across taxation levied upon Hindus for a holy dip in the Yamuna River. Citing such a measure as discriminatory and biased towards the subjects Akbar ordered for the revocation of such taxes in 1564. As evident, this measure led to heated debates in the court between the Mughal emperor and the Ulemas who emphasised on strict adherence to Sharia laws. However Akbar was supported in his endeavour by his Prime Minister Abul Fazl the author of Akbarnama the official history of the Mughal Empire in Akbar's lifetime. Abul Fazl was noted by Akbar for his non-conservative stand and often defended the liberal policies of Akbar by engaging in heated debates with the Ulema. By arguing that Hindus were as loyal to the state as Muslims, Abul Fazl sought to remove the chief prop of the theological argument in favour of jiziya. He also stressed that levying jiziya was against justice and political expediency (Chandra, 1969). The concept that no distinction could be made between subjects on the grounds of loyalty and the ideal of sulh-i-kul that all religions were road to one God tended to put the state as an institution above religion which highlights Akbar's deep understanding of the idea of a secular state. Akbar's liberal views and secular nature was embodied by the Ibadat Khana or "House of Worship" located at Fatehpur Sikri, the Mughal capital in present day Agra. Stimulated by the example of Suleiman Kirani, the late ruler of Bengal who used to spend nights in the company of 150 holy men "listening to commentaries and exhortations" the house of prayer was constructed immediately in 1575 after the successful siege of Puna initially with the aim of receiving the Sufi saint Mirza Suleiman of Badakhshan by providing a large debating hall suitable for the accommodation of a large number of Muslim theologians. Gradually the Ibadat Khana became the meeting point of Muslim Ulemas, Sufi Shaikhs, Jain munis, Buddhist bhikshus, Hindu Brahmins and later Christian missionaries as well. The debates enabled Akbar to grasp the essence of the varying faiths and he came to realise the innate oneness of all religions as the final aim being unity with the Supreme Being. The debates used to be conducted in Fridays keeping view the Islamic tradition of Friday being regarded as holy and auspicious. However the passing of the Infallibility Decree (Majhar) of 1579 which empowered Akbar to act as supreme arbitrator of all questions regarding Muslim theology rendered vain the debates by the various schools of Islamic thought and gradually the house of worship fell into decay and dereliction and the structure was probably put down with later debates being carried out in the interior chambers of the imperial palace.

THE DECLINE OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE:

This section examines the various allegations made regarding Aurangzeb- Was he really a bigot who wanted to establish dar-ul-Islam (the land of pure faith)? Was he responsible for destroying the secular fabric of the Mughal empire built by Akbar with the goodwill of people hailing from other traditions? Were the discriminatory and communal policies implemented during his reign with the aim of bringing about large-scale religious conversion of the subjects or there lay subtle political calculations behind such moves? Was he really the anti-Hindu, demonic ruler of Hindustan who sounded the death knell for the glorious Mughal dynasty? Firstly we shall examine his conventional picture as a religious bigot inclined towards establishing an Islamic state in a land whose populace was non-Islamic. In the light of this accusation, the two main points brought up by conventional historians in defence of their claims are jiziya tax and temple desecration. For permission to live in an Islamic state the unbeliever i.e. non- Islamic people had to pay a toll tax called Jiziya which means substitute money or the price of indulgence. Non-Muslims live under a contract (zimma) with the state according to which a commutation tax known as jiziya had to be paid to the state. The reimposition of jiziya by Aurangzeb in 1679 is generally regarded as a turning point in the history of the Mughal empire marking the culmination of religious bigotry, which led to feelings of alienation among Rajputs, Jats, Marathas etc. The conventional view of the reimposition of the tax as a mark of religious intolerance claims support from the writings of contemporary or near-contemporary observers. Muhammad Saqi Musta'id Khan who can be regarded as an official historian of Aurangzeb who wrote on the basis of official papers say "As all the aims of the religious Emperor were directed to the spreading of the law of Islam and the overthrow of the practice of the infidels, he issued orders to the high diwani officers that from Wednesday, the 2nd April 1679/ 1st Rabi I 1090, in obedience to the Quranic injunctions 'till they pay commutation money (jizyah) with the hand in humility' and in agreement with the canonical traditions, jizyah should be collected from the infidels (zimmi) of the capital and the provinces" (Chandra, 1969, p. 323). Contemporary Europeans like Thomas Roll, the president of the English factory at Surat or the Italian traveller Manucci state in their writings that the imposition of the jiziya tax was with the aim of replenishing the dry treasuries of the state and to 'force poorer sections of the population to become Mohammedans'. But shouldn't it occur as a surprise that the jiziya tax was should be imposed by Aurangzeb, who was well-versed with the Sharia, on the twenty-second year of his reign? As far as concerning religious conversion, there is no account of large-scale conversion despite the jiziya being a regressive tax;

the Hindus clung stubbornly to their faith. Any large scale acceptance of Islam by the Hindu population would have been recorded by the Emperor's eulogists as a victory of his policy but no such records exist in the official chronicles of the reign of Aurangzeb. Keeping in view the economic aspect, it is true that when Aurangzeb reviewed his finances in the thirteenth year of his reign, it was found that expenses had exceeded income during the preceding twelve years. Continuous warfare and campaigns in the Deccan, which intensified after 1676, frontier wars with the Ahoms of north-eastern India, intermittent clashes with Afghan tribesmen and later conflicts with the Rathors and the Sisodias had drained the treasury. In order to sail over this crisis, Aurangzeb ordered retrenchment in the expenditure of the Emperor, the Begums and the princes and abolished a number of unnecessary customary cesses in the jagirs or plots of land held by the imperial officials. It was expected that the jagirdars would make these remissions out of their sanctioned income. But only a few nobles complied with the order while the majority demanded monetary compensation in lieu of the income they were asked to give up; the order remained a dead letter in the imperial decree with the revenue department continuing to include income from the forbidden cesses in their evaluation of income from the jagirdars. Therefore it refutes the claim that by abolishing the other unnecessary cesses which went against the Islamic charter Aurangzeb was justified in the levying of jiziya. However we do not possess any figures regarding the yield of jiziya from the reign of Aurangzeb. According to Shivdas Lakhnawi, an eighteenth century writer who wrote that the realisation (hasil) from all the provinces of the Mughal dominion was 40 million rupees although this figure is given at the instance of the re-abolition of the tax by Raja Jaswant Singh following the defeat of the Saiyid brothers in 1720. Jagjiwandass the hasil of the empire around 1708-09 was a little over 260 million rupees (Chandra, 1969, p. 326). From these figures it can be inferred the share of jiziya to be about 15 per cent of the total income. Thus the yield from jiziya was not a negligible sum and the proceeds were lodged in a separate treasury called Khazanahi-jizyah where the amount was earmarked for charitable purposes. Thus the jiziya can be seen as a device for relieving the pressure on the general treasury to the extent that the state could economise on the disbursement of amounts to cash-stipend holders or yaumiyadars (Chandra, 1969, p. 328). The army of stipend holders included theologians, recluses, widows and orphans, a section of the literati and a large number of nondescript beneficiaries were always a problem for the medieval Sultans of India as well as Mughals- it was the duty of the Islamic state to provide for some sort of sustenance to the able-bodied Muslims especially those who possessed some learning of the Holy laws. Attempts were made to meet this challenge since the time of Akbar by setting aside some villages for granting to the a'immadars but the

problem renewed during the reign of Aurangzeb. Among the stipend holders the theologians formed a considerable force in the medieval empires of India. They had a monopoly over education and the services of the Ulemas and the Qazis were often utilised by the Sultans in the administration of the empire. However the ever present rift between the Ulema who wanted to establish an Islamic state according to the Sharia in India emulating the example of West Asia and the Sultan and his nobles who were guided by political considerations and the need to strike alliances with the indigenous ruling powers was a source of tension and conflicts in the court and affairs of the state. The Ulemas stressed upon the need to impose jiziya as a basic tenet of the Canonical Laws and its exaction from Hindus and other non-Muslims as a means to demean their "false religions" and as a constant reminder of the inferior status of the non-Muslims as being dependent upon the Islamic state. The debate between the orthodox trend of treating the Hindus as perpetual enemies subject to constant humiliation and the liberal notion of trying to win over Hindu rajas by various concessions remained part a political and intellectual life in the country well into the eighteenth century. It is in this background the decision of re-imposing jiziya by Aurangzeb must be placed and examined critically.

CONCLUSION:

The evolution of relations between the Mughals and the Rajputs during the reign of Akbar can be placed within more than one historical context. They can be seen in terms of the expansion of Mughal territorial control and State power, the evolution of Akbari religious policy, and the mutual need for some kind of a political accommodation on the part of both the Rajputs and the Mughals. On the whole, the study of Mughal-Rajput relations is particularly important because it illustrates, among other things, the incorporation of a distinct though not homogeneous – cultural group within the larger matrix of Mughal state power. The liberality of Akbar was the primary reason of the success of his Rajput policy. Revolution against the Rajput by Aurangzeb was one of the major mistakes and its failure contributed to the failure of Aurangzeb. The sixth Mughal emperor Aurangzeb is mostly remembered for the darker shades of his character, often emphasised and exaggerated by proponents of the communal discourse of history according to whom the medieval period was an age of darkness even if it witnessed the reign of wise and far-sighted, tolerant rulers like Akbar. By conventional history Akbar was the 'great Mughal', Jahangir continued the secular trend of his father and Shah Jahan built the seventh wonder of the world- the Taj Mahal. But the memory of Aurangzeb is marked only by streaks of violence and religious bigotry. Lastly as a concluding remark one should be aware of the following words by EH Carr while examining the historicity of any figure who lived in the past- "History consists of a corpus of

ascertained facts. The facts are available to the historian in documents, inscriptions and so on, like fish on the fishmonger's slab. The historian collects them, takes them home, and cooks and serves them in whatever style appeals to him."

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