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AKBAR – THE GREAT: Akbar was the third Mughal Emperor got the position of a King in 1556 and ruled until 1605, Akbar, the third Mughal emperor, arrived to the throne in 1556 and ruled until 1605. His government is remembered for its policy of religious diversity and tolerance, named "Sulh-i-kul" or "universal peace." He believed in equal treatment and ensured that it was implemented in its true sense. Akbar's attitude to religious diversity is defined by multiple fundamental elements which are:

- ➔ **Akbar Religious Tolerance:** Akbar was very broadminded and wanted to work out a synthesis of all religions. His treatment with the Hindus was very tolerant. In fact, he was so liberal in his religious outlook that he attempted to find a new religion based on the good points of all religions.
- ➔ **Abolition of Jizya:** In 1564, Akbar eliminated the Jizya tax, which previous rulers imposed on non-Muslims. This action decreased the economic burden on non-Muslims while also showing a dedication to equality.
- ➔ **Religious Freedom:** Akbar the Great was known for his religious tolerance and interest in other cultures. He believed in equal treatment and ensured that it was implemented in its true sense. Akbar was very broadminded and wanted to work out a synthesis of all religions. His treatment with the Hindus was very lenient. In fact, he was so liberal in his religious outlook that he attempted to find a new religion based on the good points of all religions, Akbar's policy of religious harmony and tolerance was so inclusive that he even stepped out of conventional Islam, and introduced religious practice by merging some important elements of religions of that time in India, i.e. Islam, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, and his new capital, Fatehpur Sikri.
- ➔ **Din-e-Ilahi:** Din-i Ilahi was a syncretic religion or spiritual program propounded by the Mughal emperor Akbar in 1582. The name Dīn-i Ilāhī literally translates to "God's Religion", "Religion of God", or "divine religion". The elements were drawn from different religions, including Islam, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity. Akbar created the Ibādat Khāna (House of Worship) at Fatehpur Sikri in 1575, which invited theologians, poets, scholars, and philosophers from all religious denominations, including Christians, Hindus, Jains, and Zoroastrians.

→ Promotion of Art and Culture: Akbar the Great was an avid supporter of art and culture. He was gifted with a group of talented musicians, poets, and various types of cultural people. His forts and palaces were magnificent pieces of architecture with unmatched workmanship. Akbar's reign saw the development of a distinctive Mughal style of art, combining classical Persian motifs with Indian vibrancy and the European innovation of perspective. The art reflected the empire in its vibrancy and inclusiveness.

Aurangzeb Alamgir: The Exclusive Policies:

Aurangzeb Alamgir, the sixth Mughal emperor, was known for his strict Islamic policies and expansionist ambitions. He was an conventional Sunni Muslim who did not have any faith in other religions except his own. Aurangzeb reversed Akbar's policy of religious toleration and instead followed a rigid Islamic policy which annoyed the Hindus who constituted the main bulk of the society. Aurangzeb's policies signaled a danger to the empire. His orthodox nature, unjust and harsh measures on Hindus, annoyance of Sikhs, Rajput's and Marathas and Deccan boil in fact ruined him and the Mughal Empire.

→ Re-Imposition of Jizya: Aurangzeb, the sixth emperor, re-introduced and levied jizya on non-Muslims in 1679. Aurangzeb's reimposition of the poll tax (jizya) on Hindus is a controversial topic. However, as the text of the fatwa indicates, an exemption was provided for various classes of people, such as those who were indigent, without employment, unable to work on account of poor health, and so on.

→ Persecution of Religious Minorities: Aurangzeb, is known for his religious policies that were different from those of his predecessors. According to historians, Aurangzeb's religious policy was fanatical and intolerant towards other faiths, especially Hindus. He aimed to convert India into a country of Islam and adopted anti-Hindu measures. Aurangzeb's religious policy had two aspects: (i) to promote the tenets of Islam and to ensure that the people led their lives accordingly, and (ii) to adopt anti-Hindu measures. Following were the anti-Hindu measures adopted by Aurangzeb:

1. Aurangzeb as governor and later emperor of India, aggressively demolished numerous temples, including notable ones like Keshva in Mathura, Vishwanath in Varanasi, and Somnath in Kathiawar, replacing them with mosques. These actions signify a significant shift in religious and cultural dynamics during their rule.
2. Akbar had abolished this tax on the Hindus but Aurangzeb again levied this tax. According to Elliot, the object of reposing the Jaziya or poll tax "was to control the nonbeliever and to distinguish the land of the faithful from an nonbeliever's land".

→ Aurangzeb's Intolerance towards Shia Muslim: Aurangzeb was known for his religious policies that were different from those of his predecessors. It is also notable that as a firm Sunni, Aurangzeb dealt as firmly with the Shia kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda as he did with the Hindus or Muslims.

Conclusion:

Akbar, was known for his religious tolerance and interest in other cultures. He believed in equal treatment and ensured that it was implemented in its true sense. Aurangzeb, on the other hand, aimed to convert India into a country of Islam and adopted anti-Hindu measures. He demolished several temples and replaced them with mosques. Art, culture, and architecture gained huge patronage and popularity under Akbar and faced a huge downfall under Aurangzeb.

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