

Emperor Jalaluddin Mohammad Akbar, known as "Akbar the Great," was one of the greatest and most powerful rulers of the Mughal Empire. He ruled from 1556 to 1605, a time considered a golden age for the Mughal Empire. He was not just a warrior but also a skilled ruler, a reformer, and a symbol of religious tolerance.

#### **Birth and Family:**

Akbar was born on October 15, 1542, in the Umarkot fort in Pakistan. His father was Emperor Humayun, and his mother was Hamida Banu Begum. At the time of his birth, Humayun was in exile because he had lost his throne to Sher Shah Suri.

#### **Childhood and Education:**

Akbar spent most of his childhood in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Iran. He didn't receive a formal education, but he became skilled in hunting, warfare tactics, and administration. These abilities shaped him into a strong and brave warrior, which later brought him fame as a ruler.

#### **Father's Death and Taking the Throne (1556):**

In 1555, Humayun recaptured Delhi and restored Mughal rule. However, just a year later, on January 27, 1556, he died in an accident. Akbar was only 13 years old at the time. His guardian and chief commander, Bairam Khan, declared him the emperor.

#### **2. First Challenge: Second Battle of Panipat (1556)**

Soon after Akbar became emperor, an Afghan commander named Hemchandra Vikramaditya (Hemu) marched toward Delhi. On November 5, 1556, the Second Battle of Panipat took place between the Mughals and Hemu's forces. During the battle, Hemu was struck by an arrow in the eye, which caused his army to panic and lose direction. The Mughal forces won the battle. This victory helped Akbar strengthen the foundation of his empire and brought Delhi and Agra back under Mughal control.

## **Empire Expansion and Wars (1556 - 1605)**

Akbar was a skilled military leader. During his reign, he conquered most parts of India.

### **Relations and Wars with Rajput Kings:**

Akbar understood that maintaining good relations with the Hindu Rajput kings would make his empire stronger. He fought battles with the Rajputs but also built diplomatic ties. He formed alliances with many Rajput kings and married their princesses. Notably, Raja Bhagwan Das and Raja Man Singh became his key supporters.

## **4. Administrative Reforms and Policies**

### **Din-i-Ilahi:**

Akbar adopted a policy of religious tolerance. He introduced a new religious idea called "Din-i-Ilahi," which combined beliefs from Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, and Christianity. Though it didn't become popular, it stood as a symbol of Akbar's openness to all religions.

### **Abolition of Jizya Tax:**

Akbar canceled the special tax (Jizya) that was imposed on Hindus.

### **Map and Division of Empire:**

Akbar divided his empire into 15 provinces, called "Subahs," and appointed a separate governor for each. This system made his administration more effective and efficient.

## Revenue System:

His minister, Raja Todarmal, introduced an improved revenue system. Taxes were set based on the fertility and productivity of the land. This reduced the burden on farmers while increasing the empire's income.

## ### Akbar's Wives: Numbers and Details

Historians disagree about the exact number of Akbar's wives. According to various historical sources, he had anywhere between 300 to 3,000 wives. Many of these were princesses married for political reasons or noblewomen from different parts of his empire. These marriages helped him build alliances and strengthen his rule.

### #### Key Wives of Akbar:

1. **\*\*Mariam-uz-Zamani\*\***: She was one of his most prominent wives, a Rajput princess from Amber. She was the daughter of Raja Bhagwan Das and the sister of Raja Man Singh. She was also the mother of Akbar's eldest son, Salim (later Emperor Jahangir). Her marriage to Akbar was a significant alliance between the Mughals and the Rajputs.
2. **\*\*Ruqaiya Sultan Begum\*\***: She was Akbar's cousin and his first wife. She was the daughter of Hindal Mirza, a relative of Akbar's father, Humayun. Their marriage was more personal than political, and she held a special place in his life.
3. **\*\*Salima Sultan Begum\*\***: She was a princess from Babur's family. Before marrying Akbar, she was the wife of his regent, Bairam Khan. After Bairam Khan's death, Akbar married her, strengthening his ties to the Mughal nobility.

4. **\*\*Maham Anaga's Daughter\*\***: Maham Anaga was Akbar's wet nurse and a trusted figure in his early life. One of her family members (likely her daughter) became one of Akbar's wives, showing the influence of his foster family.

5. **\*\*Jodha Bai (Historically Debated)\*\***: Many believe Mariam-uz-Zamani and Jodha Bai were the same person, but some historians argue that "Jodha Bai" never existed as a separate individual. The name might be a popular myth or a confusion in historical records.

6. **\*\*Princess Manmati\*\***: She was the daughter of Raja Udai Singh of Jodhpur, another Rajput king. This marriage was part of Akbar's efforts to ally with Rajput rulers.

Akbar's large number of wives reflects his strategy of uniting diverse regions and communities through marriage. While some wives, like Mariam-uz-Zamani, played key roles in his life and legacy, others were less prominent but still important for political stability.

### ### 6. Cause of Death and Succession (1605)

By 1605, Akbar fell seriously ill. He suffered from dysentery (a stomach infection) or severe diarrhea, which worsened his health. On October 27, 1605, he passed away at Fatehpur Sikri in Agra. After his death, his son Salim, who took the title Jahangir, succeeded him and became the next Mughal emperor.

### ### Conclusion

Emperor Akbar was one of India's greatest rulers. His military skills, administrative policies, and religious tolerance earned him the title "Akbar the Great" in history. During his reign, the Mughal Empire reached its peak not only in terms of geography

but also in culture and economy. Akbar's rule was a historic milestone, and it remains an important chapter in our history even today.

## **Emperor Akbar: Why Is He Called "Akbar the Great"?**

Emperor Akbar (1542–1605) was one of the greatest rulers of the Mughal Empire. His reign is seen as a golden age for India. He wasn't just a conqueror; he was also a skilled administrator, a reformer, a symbol of religious tolerance, and a clever diplomat. His achievements in military success, administrative reforms, religious openness, and cultural contributions earned him the title "Akbar the Great."

Let's discuss this in detail—

### **1. Empire Expansion and Military Skills**

Akbar's biggest strength was his military power and smart war strategies. He conquered about two-thirds of India during his rule.

#### **(a) Important Battles and Expansion**

**Second Battle of Panipat (1556):** At just 13 years old, after becoming emperor, he defeated the Afghan leader Hemu and took back Delhi.

**Rajput Wars:** Through battles and diplomacy, he captured Mewar, Chittor, and Ranthambore from the Rajputs.

**Bengal and Bihar (1574–1576):** He defeated the rebel Daud Khan Karrani and added Bengal and Bihar to the Mughal Empire.

**Gujarat and Afghanistan (1572–1581):** He took Gujarat, a key trade area, and Kabul.

**South India Campaigns (1590–1605):** He conquered parts of Bijapur, Golconda, and Ahmadnagar in South India.

### **(b) Military Strategies and Navy**

He created the first Mughal navy, which made him strong on rivers and seas.

His army included Rajputs, Afghans, Turks, and Persians, making it diverse and powerful.

These military successes made him one of India's most powerful rulers.

## **2. Administrative Reforms and Good Governance**

Akbar didn't just win lands; he organized his empire well.

### **(a) Subah System (Administrative Division)**

- He divided his empire into 15 provinces called "Subahs."
- Each Subah had a governor called a "Subadar."
- This system improved the economy, military, and justice in each province.

### **(b) Revenue Reforms**

- His minister Raja Todarmal introduced a fair land measurement and tax system.
- Taxes were based on how fertile the land was, which helped farmers.

### **(c) Army Reforms**

- He started the "Mansabdari" system, where soldiers got ranks, salaries, and land based on their service.

These reforms kept the Mughal Empire strong for a long time.

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### ### 3. Religious Tolerance and Din-i-Ilahi

Akbar was a kind and open-minded ruler when it came to religion.

#### (a) Ending Jizya Tax

- He stopped the "Jizya" tax on non-Muslims, which was a big relief for Hindus.

#### (b) Hindu-Muslim Harmony

- He married Rajput princesses to build good relations with Rajput kings.
- He gave Rajputs high positions in his government.

#### (c) Din-i-Ilahi (1582)

- Akbar started a new belief called "Din-i-Ilahi," mixing ideas from Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Christianity.
- Though it didn't become popular, it showed his open-mindedness.

## **4. Contributions to Education, Literature, and Culture**

### **(a) Fatehpur Sikri and Architecture**

- He built his capital, Fatehpur Sikri, famous for the Buland Darwaza (grand gate).

### **(b) Growth of Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu**

- In his court, people wrote and spoke in Persian, Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu.

### **(c) Akbarnama and Ain-i-Akbari**

- His court poet Abul Fazl wrote "Akbarnama" (Akbar's biography) and "Ain-i-Akbari" (records of his administration).

## **5. Cultural and Social Development**

### **(a) Ibadat Khana (Religious Discussion Center)**

- In 1575, Akbar set up the "Ibadat Khana" in Fatehpur Sikri, where leaders from Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism discussed religion.

### **(b) Women's Rights and Against Sati**

- He discouraged child marriage and supported education for women.
- He made laws against the Sati practice (burning widows), saving many lives.



Conclusion: Why "Akbar the Great"?

1. Empire Growth: He conquered a huge part of India and made the Mughal Empire strong.
2. Skilled Ruler: The Subah system, Mansabdari, and Todarmal's tax policies showed his smart governance.
3. Religious Harmony: Ending Jizya, befriending Rajputs, and starting Din-i-Ilahi set an example of unity.
4. Education and Culture: Fatehpur Sikri, Akbarnama, and Mughal art grew under him.
5. Social Reforms: He protected women's rights and fought against Sati.

Because of all this, Emperor Akbar is known as "Akbar the Great" and is considered one of India's best rulers ever.