

## **A Comparison of Bahauallah's Religious Unity with Akbar's Eclectic Din-e-Elāhi**

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### **Abstract**

Mirza Husayn Ali Nuri (1817-1892) was one of the early followers of the Bab, and later took the title of Bahauallah's mission was about to bring unity of all the mankind .He invited the world's religion followers to peaceful coexistence with amity and harmony. He claimed that he was unique, in giving the idea of 'Most Great Peace' through 'Religious unity' and a 'Global civilization' as a chosen 'Manifestation of God'. He claimed to be a messenger from God referring to the fulfillment of the eschatological expectations of Islam, Christianity, and other major religions . He wrote many religious works, most notably the Kitab i Aqdas, the Kitab i Iqan and Hidden Words. In the History of Sub-continent, Great Mughal emperor Jallal ud Din Mohammad Akbar (1542-1605) is also known for the great task of 'Religious unity'. Disillusioned with orthodox Islam and perhaps hoping to bring about religious unity within his empire, Akbar promulgated Din i Ilahi, a syncretic creed derived from Islam, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity. Majority of muslims condemned him to deform the real shape of true Islam . Akbar was deeply interested in religious and philosophical matters. In 1575, he built a hall called the Ibadat Khana ("House of Worship") at Fatehpur Sikri, to which he invited theologians, mystics and selected courtiers renowned for their intellectual achievements and discussed matters of spirituality with them. The policy of sulh-e-kul, which formed the essence of Dīn-e-Elāhi , was adopted by Akbar not merely for religious purposes, but as a part of general imperial administrative policy. With the passage of time Dīn-e-Elāhi lost its attraction and became a dead religion. It is interesting to make a comparison between the two.

**Keywords:** Eclectic, Din i Ilahi, religious unity, Divine Manifestation, religious tolerance, justice , revelation, Unity

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of All : Sulh i kul , Great peace: Sulh i Asghar , The Most Great Peace: Sulh i Akbar , Wali Amrillah, Ayadi i Amrillah, Islamic shariah , Reformer.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Abu'l Fath , Jallal ud Din, Muhammad Akbar (1542 - 1605), The Third Timurid Emperor of Hindustan was the son of Humayun. His mother Hamida Bano ,the daughter of a Persian scholar in the service of Hindal. Umerkot, Rajputana (present-day Sindh, Pakistan) was his birth place. He was crowned on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1556. Akbar is remembered with fondness by Hindus for Religious tolerance. In the beginning he was a simple Muslim. Deeply moved by several intense mystical experiences , he established a Hall of Worship: Ibadat Khana. Every Thursday Muslim theologians of different sect used to come there for the debates. The reason to establish The Hall of worship was to promote Islamic knowledge. Akbar was shocked by the intrinsic quarrels of Muslim scholars. This situation led him to make his own interpretation of Islam.<sup>1</sup> The famous historian of Akbar's period, Abu al Fazl reported from King Akbar that once he used to consider the outer side of the religion of Islam, and had faith to perform the explicit practices were sufficient to be a true Muslim. For this reason he used to stress upon Hindus to convert as Muslims. To discard the religious differences, he realized the importance of spirituality and use of human intellect.<sup>2</sup> He suggested for his courtiers to use reasoning and justice in religious differences.

The story of Bahaullah's life and of the faith ,which bears his name and called Bahaiism is intensely dramatic and little known. Mirza Hussein Ali nuri, Bahaullah was born in Tehran November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1817. His father Mirza Abbass Buzurg of Nur , was a state minister. He had thirteen children from nine wives. Mirza Hussein Ali nuri : Bahaullah and Yahya : Subh I Azal were amongst these children .<sup>3</sup> Both became famous for Babi and Bahai movements.<sup>4</sup> In Persia ,many persons of Bahaullah's rich family were appointed by the government on important positions and in Military Services of Persia. According to Bahai historians he never attended any school or college. He led a princely life as a young

man .His only education was focused on horsemanship, swordsmanship, calligraphy and classic poetry.<sup>5</sup> He learned all these arts at home. Extraordinary wonderful wisdom and knowledge were shown by him in his childhood.<sup>6</sup> From his childhood he rejected all the worldly gains. His aim was high beyond the materialistic world. The main aim of his life was to introduce the new cycle of Manifestation of God, initiated after the appearance of the Day of God, search after truth, oneness of mankind, Unity of religions, Unity of Races, Unity of nations, Unity of East and West, The reconciliation of religion and science, The Eradication of prejudices and superstitions, The establishment of Justice and Righteousness, The setting up of a supreme international tribunal, the Unification of languages and the Compulsory diffusion of knowledge. His teachings were aimed to introduce a Global Civilization and Peace in the whole world.

### **Comparison of Dīn-e-Elāhi and Dīn-e-Bahai**

#### **1. Mujaddid after passing thousand years**

The epoch of Akbar's Dīn-e-Elāhi was round about the end of sixteenth century. Historians wrote it was 1581 A.D - 989 A.H. The incident behind it was the evidences of some flatterers that after passing of one thousand years of Islam ,now it was the time of a new authority to come . They aroused him by saying that only Akbar was surely the suitable person for this great task.<sup>7</sup> An Islamic tradition about the commencement of a Mujaddid: "reviver of the second millennium" after passing thousand years was quoted as an argument. It is interesting to notice that Seyyid Ali Muhammad Shirazi entitled the Bab <sup>8</sup> and the precursor of Bahauallah, also based his Bab hood on the same tradition. Unlike Akbar he belonged to a Shia family. He claimed Bab hood exactly after one thousand year of the succession of Imam Mehdi to Imamate , in 1260 A.H. soon after this declaration he abrogated the Islamic Shariah.<sup>9</sup>

The Islamic tradition was introducing a Mujadid: a Reformer to recall the true Islamic teachings not a new prophet to dismiss the Shariāh.. It was not about to restructure Islamic teachings

but their revival was told. Yet both the movements excerpted the wrong meanings. Even Bahauallah himself declared: "Whoso layeth claim to Revelation direct from God, on the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying impostor".<sup>10</sup> Thought-provoking point is this that Bahauallah himself claimed of Prophet hood and claimed for being a Manifestation of God, nearly after nine years of the Prophet hood of Bab.

## 2. Unity of All

Akbar was a great ruler His policies to govern the country were marvelous. None of the other Hindustani ruler could compete him. Contrary to other rulers he tried to indulge in politics and religion side by side. His ultimate goal was to strengthen his rule. The religious policy laid by him had twofold dimensions: 1. Unity of all in the administrative and political matters and; 2. A mixture of different laws, called as Dīn-e-Elāhi or Akbar's divine faith. Sheikh Muhammad Ikram discussed the two dimensions of his religious policy and he further differentiated between the two measuring there time and period of occurrence. Unity of All was a political and Administrative method. It was established in the early period of his rule.

Attention-grabbing fact is this that both concept are found prevailing in Din i Bahai Bahauallah introduced two terminologies for this. They are: 1. Sulh i Asghar :The Great peace, 2. Sulh i Akbar: The most Great peace. In his words, he said that "soon will the present day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead".<sup>11</sup> Great Peace means : the political unity of governments. Besides this The most Great peace intended to Unity of governments in political as well as in spiritual religious and economic matters. Bahai teachings declare that animosity and conflicts among the people are not due to religion. More clearly all these prejudices and conflicts, imitations and misrepresentations are the weapons to destroy the true religion. This is the way through which Bahai religion deals with political and religious matters as well. To achieve these goals Bahauallah introduced : The Supreme Tribunal.<sup>12</sup> Apparently Bahais are forbidden to indulge into politics, but the matter is not so simple. On the other hand they have two types of Administrative

and Instructional bodies. These are intended to prepare the Bahai community politically to rule the whole world. Akbar's Dīn-e-Elāhi target was just to rule over his throne with peace contrary to this Dīn i Bahai intended to rule the world. The administrative body is further divided into 1. Beit el adl i Milli :The Local Spiritual Assembly, 2. Beit el adl i Milli Markaazi : The National Spiritual Assembly and 3. Beit el adl i Umumi The Universal House of Justice. The Jurisdiction of these assemblies is absolute and competent .It is binding upon all the Bahai community. The Instructional bodies consist upon 1.Wali Amr illah : the Guardian, 2. Ayadi Amr illah : the Hands of the Cause of God, and 3. Ayadi Ayadi Amr illah : The hands of the hands of the cause of God. This system is outlined in the book of Bahaullah named Kitab i aqdas. It was improved by his successors Abdul Baha Abbas Effendi, was the eldest son of Bahaullah, the founder of the Dīn i Bahai . In 1892, Abdul Baha was appointed in his father's will to be his successor and head of the Bahá'í Faith and Shoghi Effendi ,head of the Bahá'í Faith from 1921 to 1957. Bha introduced this system as a nonpolitical but in reality Bahais are advised to wait under full administration just like Jews waiting for government and power.

### 3. Eclecticism

Holding target to rule over Hindustan, Akbar showed the slogan of Unity of All. To achieve his objectives ,he married Hindu rajputanis. His attitude with Hindus was kind and respectful. A lot of Brahmans were appointed by him as government officials. Hindus became part of government and got chance of utilizations through unfair means.<sup>13</sup> To inculcate vast Hindustani majority and considering the religious disputes in Muslim sects , he thought to make his own way of judgement to terminate the differences among Muslims and to improve co-existence with the people of other religion in Hindustan. To attain this goal he mixed different religious laws for his followers.<sup>14</sup> Most of Akbar 's made laws were against Islamic teachings. Just like Judges were advised by the emperor to lawfully terminate the cow, buffalo's horses and camels slaughtering's, Circumcision under the age of twelve was forbidden, Islamic marriage law was changed. Emperor Akbar

himself practiced upon other religion teachings. He abstained from meat eating. Like Paresis he used to worship sun and light. He used to celebrate Diwali with Hindu wives.<sup>15</sup> He introduced Ahansa of Jainism and Celibacy of catholic Christians to his followers. It was obligatory to confess these wordings that There is no God but Allah and Akbar is the vicegerent of Allah. His followers used to greet each other by Allah o Akbar and Jalla jalal o hu. Akbar became atheist of the Holy Quran, Revelation, Life after death, and the concept of Hereafter. Prostration for the honour of the king was made compulsory. Drinking was legalized. Eating pig was legalized. Jizyah tax from non- muslim was forbidden. Offering Prayers and Hajj was abrogated. Announcement for five time prayers was abrogated .Congregational prayers were forbidden. Learning Arabic was disliked. The Islamic calendar was abrogated. Hindus were allowed to eat and drink openly in the month of Ramadhan.<sup>16</sup> Infact Akbar's Dīn-e-Elāhi was an eclectic faith aimed more at synthesizing Indian and Mughal culture than at preaching a new path to divine. Akbar never claimed to be a Prophet after the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) nor he claimed to be a god as some sufist Nasiris and Haloolis consider him. Due to his motto Peace with all and Unity of all, he never harshed with anybody. All the religion followers took him a person of his own creed. He was a Muslim for Muslims, a Zoroastrian for Zoroastrians, a Janie for Janis a Christian in the eyes of Christian and a Hindu for Hindus.<sup>17</sup>Akbar's faith had nothing of his own. No sacred scripture was there. It is to better to call it a creed rather than a religion, truly eclectic in its nature.

Dīn-e-Elāhi also has the claim of Religious Unity alongwith the claim of abrogation of Islamic shariah. Although none of the practices of other religion were adopted in it. All the teachings were given by the Manifestation of God ,the Bhaullah. He was a prophet and God in Flesh. He had his own revelation and his own shariāh. He introduced the Bahai Calendar based upon the calendar established by the Bab. The year consists of 19 months, each having 19 days, with four or five intercalary days , to make a full solar year. The Bahai New Year corresponds to the

traditional Persian New Year, called Naw Ruz, and occurs on the vernal equinox, 21 March, at the end of the month of fasting. Dr. Browne studied Baháism more than thirty years concluded that “the Fact is that though the synthesis may be original, almost every single doctrine held by the Babís and Baháís ... was previously held and elaborated by one or another of the earlier cognate sects”<sup>18</sup> of the Shiites in Persia. consequently he also regarded Bhaiism as an eclectic religion as it mixed the teachings of different sects. Along with some additions Mr. William Mc Elwee miller of Presbyterian Church U.S.A at Meshed, Persia is also in favour of Dr. Browne. He did addition with these words that “and another teachings which cannot be traced to a Persian source were derived either from the Bible or from contemporary western thought e .teachings of love to the enemy, kindness towards poors and the unity of mankind are directly taken from the Bible. The Most Great Peace goes back to Isaiah. Slavery Had already been abolished by England and America when Baha forbade it. Mr. Ali Reza Naqvi in his article “Babism and Baháism” stated: Such pompous claims of the Baháís for world unity and the great emphasis laid by them on religious tolerance should not lead others to any misunderstanding. It must be clearly understood that Baháism or Babiism ,is in no sense latitudinarian or eclectic, and stands in the sharpest antagonism to other religions. In spite of all its ambiguity and vagueness , it is essentially dogmatic and every utterance s of the “Divine Manifestation” (i.e. the Bab, Baha, and their Successors) must be accepted in tote without any reserve”.

What makes his arguments more strong is the wordings of Kitab-e-Aqdas: The first thing which God has prescribed unto his servants in Knowledge of the Day- spring of His Revelation and the dawning- place of His command. Whosoever attain unto his hath attained unto all good, and whosoever debarred there from is of the people of error, even though he produces all(manner of good) deeds”.

This commandment of Baháullah is totally against his claim of tolerance with other religions. So Baháism cannot be regarded syncretistic in its nature. Although it accepts all the prophetic

religions as essentially true ,It claims that it is the one best adapted to the present time, and that it include in itself all its predecessors. To testify the authority of Bahaullah tolerance and unity with other religions were showed off. Bab the precursor of Bahaullah declared with clear words that no other religion other than Babiism would be accepted. All the non-Babis were considered great opponents and it was obligatory to murder them. Inter marriages with non-Babis were strictly forbidden. Bahaullah was a follower of Bab at that time but soon after his death claimed for himself as the promised one of Bab.he Abrogated all the teachings of the Bab .in this way he attempted to make his religion universal. He announced that he is the promised one by all the religions: for whose commencement Zoroaster gave the name of “Shah Behram”, Moses named him as “Lord of Hosts”, Christ heralded it “the son of man in the glory of father”, and Muhammad (SAW) declared it as on the “Day of Resurrection” He would appear to judge them all. Most of the teachings in Din-e-Bahai were taken from Christianity to attract the Christian world. Abd ul Baha ,the son of Bahaullah played a great role by his own writings to make the Christian and Bahai religion nearer.

### **CONCLUSION**

Concluding precisely it could be analyzed that Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) of Hindustan’s interaction with various religious theologians had convinced him that despite their differences, all religions had several good practices, which he sought to combine into a new religious movement known as Dīn-e-Elāhi. He attempted to make integration rather than co-existence. it is also accepted that the policy of sulh e kul, which formed the essence of Dīn-e-Elāhi, was adopted by Akbar not merely for religious purposes, but as a part of general imperial administrative policy. This also formed the basis for Akbar's policy of religious toleration. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi<sup>19</sup>, responded by declaring this to be blasphemy<sup>20</sup> to Islam. At the time of Akbar's death in 1605 there were no signs of discontent amongst his Muslim subjects . Din i Ilahi appears to have survived Akbar according to the Dabestan e Mazahab <sup>21</sup> of Mubad Shah (Mohsin Fani) . However, the movement

never numbered more than 19 adherents. Bahaullah attempted to make “the Most Great Peace” in the shape of religious unity, but not through integration. Nor through co-existence. He proclaimed for it through claiming his own dogmatic position as he is the best from his announcement till the thousand years will be passed by The charm of Bahaullah’s morality vanished when he introduced himself not a reformer but a “God in flesh” who should be obeyed and worshipped alone.

## End Notes and References

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<sup>1</sup> Sheikh Muhammad Ikram, *Rood i Kausar* (urdu), Lahore: Idara as Siqafat al islamia. 1992. 4<sup>TH</sup> ed. Pp. 89- 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Rood i kausar*, p. 93

<sup>3</sup> Yahya was appointed by the Bab as his legal successor and titled him *as Subh I Azal*: the Dawn of Eternity. he was not considered a legal authority by Bahaullah and his followers.

<sup>4</sup> *Exerpted from the Bahais*, a publication International community, since 1997

www.bahai.com

<sup>5</sup> J.E. Esslemont, *Bahaullah and the new Era*. N.Y: Macmillan publishing Trust. 1970 P. 38

<sup>6</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *God passes by, Qarn e badee'*(urdu) , Trans. Sayyid Irtiza Hussein abidi, Karachi: Muassassa Matbuaat e Milli, Bahaiyan Pakistan. pp . 179 - 184.

<sup>7</sup> Sayyed Qasim Mehmood, *Islami encyclopedia* (urdu) Karachi: Shahkar Foundation, 989 A.H. p. 880.

<sup>8</sup> The Gate to the Manifestation of God.

<sup>9</sup> Edward G. Browne, *Bab Babis*, in Hasting’s, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 2, p. 300

<sup>10</sup>. Bahá'u'lláh (1976). *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. Shoghi Effendi, trans. , Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust P. 346

<sup>11</sup> *Gleanings*. P. 7

<sup>12</sup> *Bahaullah and the New Era*, P. 4

<sup>13</sup> *The Ain-i-Akbari* , Volume 4, The fourth book treats of the social condition and literary activity, especially in philosophy and law, of the Hindus, who form the bulk of the population, and in whose political advancement the emperor saw the guarantee of the stability of his realm. There are also a few chapters on the foreign invaders of India, on distinguished travellers, and on Muhammadan saints and the sects to which they respectively belong.

<sup>14</sup> Roy Choudhury, Makhan Lal (1997) [First published 1941], *The Din-i-Ilahi, or, The religion of Akbar* (4th ed.), New Delhi: Oriental Reprint

<sup>15</sup> See, *Rood i Kausar*, pp. 121- 126.

<sup>16</sup>, *Islami encyclopedia*, P. 880

<sup>17</sup> See, *Rood i Kausar*, p. 126

<sup>18</sup> See, William Mc Elwee Miller, *Bhaism, its origin ,History and teaching*, N.Y. Fleming H. Revell. Company. p. 123

<sup>19</sup> *Imām Rabbānī Shaykh Ahmad al-Fārūqī al-Sirhindī* (1564[3]–1624) شیخ احمد الفاروقی السربندی was an Indian Islamic scholar, a Hanafi jurist, and a prominent member of the Naqshbandī Sufi order. He has been described as the Mujaddid Alif saānī, meaning the "reviver of the second millennium", [4] for his work in rejuvenating Islam and opposing the heterodoxies prevalent in the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar.

<sup>20</sup> *Blasphemy* is the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence to a deity, to religious or holy persons or sacred things, or toward something considered sacred or inviolable.

<sup>21</sup> *The Dabistan-e Madahib* is best known for its chapter on the *Dīn-i Ilāhī*, the syncretic religion. It is possibly the most reliable account of the Ibādat Khāna discussions.