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Administrative Policies Of Akbar

Zorintluanga
Undergraduate Student
Amity Institute of Social Sciences
Amity University, Noida, India

Abstract:

Akbar (1556–1605) was one of India's greatest Mughal kings. Following the passing of his father, Humayun, at the tender age of 13, he ascended to the throne. Akbar established a robust, stable, and well-functioning administrative structure during his protracted reign. His primary goal was to bring India together and establish peaceful governance over it.

Unlike the previous rulers, Akbar shows a great tolerance towards all other religion and lift them up from their position as India during that time was ruled by Muslim rulers and they showed great favor towards their Muslim subjects and gave them privileges like excusing them from giving religious taxes which other religion paid. He believed in good governance, justice and tolerance. Sulh-i-kul which means 'peace with all' is a policy he followed during his rule which was also adopted by his successors. Because of his policy, other religions like Christian, Hindu, Jains, Buddhist etc. got free from the jizya tax which was imposed on non-muslim subjects. This shows his tolerance and respect towards other religion and also helped him gain trust of his subjects.

Because Akbar's government was centralised, the emperor held ultimate authority. He did, however, hire competent officers to assist him in ruling. There were several key departments within the central government. The Diwan oversaw revenue and finances. The army and officer wages were managed by the Mir Bakshi. The Sadr-us-Sudur handled charitable and religious affairs. The chief minister was the Wazir. Administration was efficient and seamless because of this distinct divide.

The income system that Raja Todar Mal created, called Zabt system, was one of Akbar's finest accomplishments. Revenue was set based on the average crop production over a tenyear period, and land was meticulously measured. The majority of taxes were collected in cash rather than in kind. Farmers benefited from this system, which also raised state revenue. In addition, Akbar established the Mansabdari system, which served as the foundation for his army and government. Mansabdars were officers who were paid and assigned ranks based on their status. They were required to keep a certain number of warriors for the emperor. With the aid of this method, Akbar was able to keep a powerful army and manage nobles.

The empire was split up into Subas, or provinces, each of which was governed by a Subedar. Parganas and Sarkars were added to the provinces. The central government appointed officials at every level, guaranteeing tight control. These highlight the essence of Akbar's administrative policies without digging deep into the reason and why.

Introduction

Akbar was the most powerful emperor of the Mughal Empire and one of the greatest rulers in Indian history. He ascended to the throne at an early age following the death of his father, Humayun, and ruled from 1556 to 1605. The Mughal Empire was not completely stable when Akbar ascended to the throne. India was a huge country home to people from many cultures, faiths, languages, and customs. It was a difficult task to rule such a diverse empire. Akbar understood that maintaining authority required more than just military power. He recognised the value of cooperation, fairness, and strong governance. He thus implemented efficient administrative measures that contributed to the fortification and unification of his realm.

Akbar had reasonable and organised administrative policies. His goal was to create a mechanism that would enable smooth communication between the federal government and the provinces. Although the emperor had ultimate power, he was supported by competent officials who oversaw several administrative divisions. Each department's responsibilities were well-defined, which decreased confusion and increased productivity. In order to improve governance, Akbar also divided his empire into provinces. The monarch nominated and made accountable provincial officials. This approach kept remote regions under control and kept local leaders from growing too strong.

Another important aspect of Akbar's government was revenue management. The empire's primary source of revenue was agriculture, and the stability of the state was directly related to the well-being of farmers. Akbar was aware that unjust taxes could lead to discontent and rebellion. As a result, he established a methodical and equitable land revenue system based on accurate land measuring and assessment. Farmers were less burdened because taxes were set based on the productivity of the land. These changes produced economic stability throughout the empire and guaranteed a consistent revenue stream for the state.

Akbar also gave military administration a lot of thought. Maintaining internal harmony and defending the empire required a powerful army. Akbar established a ranking system for both military and civil officers in order to efficiently control the armed forces. The emperor was able to maintain allegiance among officials while keeping control over the nobles because to this arrangement. Since the army was maintained through wages and land distributions, the military administration and the income system were closely related. As a result, an administrative structure that was balanced and supported the military, political, and economic institutions was established.

Akbar's social and religious policies were among his administration's most notable aspects. Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, and Christianity were among the various religions practiced in India during this time, and religious disputes were frequent. Akbar adopted a policy of religious tolerance and respect for one another because he thought that intolerance might weakened his empire. He eliminated taxes that discriminated against non-Muslims and permitted people to freely practise their religion. Akbar fostered a strong sense of unity among his subjects by advocating for justice, equality, and harmony. His administration was founded on moral ideals as well as laws and regulations.

Overall, Akbar's administrative policies can be divided into three main areas—Central and Provincial Administration, Revenue and Military Administration, and Religious and Social Policies—which together formed a balanced system of governance that ensured stability, prosperity, and long-term strength of the Mughal Empire.

Akbar's central and provincial administration

The central and provincial administration of Akbar has been the backbone of a strong, stable and lasting Mughal State, showing how Akbar combined ancient Indian traditions with Persian and Islamic ideas to create a practical system of governance. After arriving on the throne in 1556, Akbar ruled a vast and diverse empire, including many religions, languages and regions, so his main aim was to build a state that was efficient, fair and acceptable to various communities.

At the central level, the emperor himself was at the top of the system and the final authority in all matters of administration, justice, military affairs and income. However, Akbar did not rule alone, but with the help of a group of ministers and departments, which helped him to manage the empire every day. The most important central officer was Wazir (also known as Diwan-i-Ala), who was responsible for the financial management of the empire. Wazir supervised the collection of incomes, expenditures, salaries of officials and the maintenance of accounts and ensured that incomes from land revenues, which were the main source of state income, were properly recorded and used. Under Akbar, the office was very powerful, but it was also carefully supervised so that no minister could become too powerful. Another central figure is Mir Bakshi, who is responsible for military administration. He managed the recruitment of soldiers, maintained the Mansabdari system (a ranking system that determined the rank, salary and military obligations of nobility), recorded horses and soldiers, and presented officers to the emperor for appointment and promotion. Through this system, Akbar ensured that the army remained faithful to the emperor rather than to individual nobility.

Sadr-us-Sudur was responsible for religious and charity matters, distributed subsidies to religious institutions, supervised Islamic law and cared for officials' moral behaviour, although Akbar later reduced the religious power of the office in order to maintain his policy of tolerance. The chief justice was the judicial system and dealt with cases related to Islamic law, while the local qazis worked in cities and provinces. In addition to these officers, departments such as Diwan-i-Insha (for state communications and royal orders) and Diwan-i-Arz (for military organization and discipline) helped the emperor maintain control over the administration and communication of the entire empire. Akbar also holds regular court meetings and public audiences (Jharokha Darshan and Durbar), which allow him to hear requests directly from subjects and strengthen the idea that justice comes from the emperor himself.

Akbar reorganized the empire into large areas called subas, or provinces. These replaced the older system of sarkars and parganas as the main ways to manage the regions. Each suba had a governor, called a Subadar, who acted for the emperor. The Subadar was in charge of keeping the peace, guarding the province, and overseeing everything. To stop officials from abusing their power, Akbar created a system of checks and balances. This meant no single person was in charge of all parts of the province's management. For example, the finance officer, the Diwan, worked separately from the Subadar and reported directly to the main finance officer in the capital. This division helped cut down on cheating and uprisings. The Diwan handled the assessment, collection, and records of money from land taxes. This followed Akbar's well-known tax system, created with Raja Todar Mal. This system involved carefully measuring land, checking soil types, and using the average produce from ten years to set tax amounts that were more consistent and fair for farmers.

The provincial military officer, the Bakshi, managed the soldiers in the province and kept records like the main military officer in the capital. The Sadr looked after local religious gifts and charity. The local judge, the Qazi, handled legal cases, both civil and criminal, following the law, though local traditions were often considered, especially in areas where most people were not Muslim. Each suba was then split into sarkars, managed by officers like the Faujdar (responsible for law, order, and military safety), the Amalguzar (tax collector), and the Kotwal (city police and administrator). The sarkars were further divided into parganas, the smallest country areas. Here, officials like the Shiqdar, Amil, and Qanungo worked with village leaders

to collect taxes and maintain peace. The Mughal government had many levels, so it could manage even far-off villages, but the emperor still held all the power.

Akbar's government, both in the capital and in the regions, was strong because it included everyone. Akbar hired good people no matter their religion or where they came from, giving important jobs to Rajputs, Persians, Central Asians, and Indians. This made things work better and made people less likely to fight against Mughal rule. The mansabdari system connected the main government with the regional governments. It gave officials ranks that decided where they would work and how many soldiers they needed to keep. This created a consistent way of running things everywhere in the empire. Moving officials around to different regions regularly also stopped them from gaining too much power in one place. The central government and the regions stayed in touch through good roads, fast messengers, and official letters, making sure the emperor's orders were carried out quickly. In short, Akbar's government was well-planned, fair, and adaptable. It had a strong central government that also managed local areas well. It kept money stable with smart tax rules, controlled the army with the mansabdari system, and promoted fairness and acceptance through its open-door policy. This system not only helped Akbar rule a huge empire during his time but also created a strong base for the Mughal government that his successors kept, with small changes. It became one of the most successful government systems in India during that period.

Akbar's revenue and military administration

Akbar set up a really organized system for managing money and the military that was top-notch for its time in India. This system was key to making the Mughal Empire stronger and more stable. During his rule, the empire grew a lot in terms of land, people, and wealth, so it was super important to have good ways to collect taxes and keep a strong, dependable army. Akbar knew that money from land was the lifeblood of the state and that military power was needed to defend and grow the empire. Because of this, he made big changes to both areas and made sure they were closely connected to the main government. The way taxes were collected under Akbar mostly relied on taxes from farmland, since farming was the main way people made money back then. Before him, rulers often took taxes in ways that weren't fair, which really hurt farmers and caused problems in the countryside. Akbar wanted to fix this by creating a fair, consistent, and kinder way to figure out and collect taxes. The biggest changes were made with the help of Raja Todar Mal, who used his knowledge and talent to shape how the Mughals handled their money. Land was precisely measured, and fields were sorted based on soil type and how well they grew crops. Crops were also grouped, and the amount of tax the state wanted was decided by looking at the average yield and prices from the last ten years. This method, which historians call the Dahsala system, made sure that tax amounts were predictable and fair, meaning farmers weren't taken advantage of as much. The state usually took about a third of what was grown, and people could pay with either crops or money, though paying in cash was pushed to help connect the farming economy with the larger market. Local officials like the Amil and Qanungo were put in charge of keeping track of things, figuring out land values, and collecting taxes. Meanwhile, village leaders and clerks acted as the go-betweens for the government and the farmers. There were strict rules in place to stop corruption, and they regularly checked the books to make sure everyone in charge was being honest. Akbar also made sure to help out during famines by forgiving taxes and handing out food, showing he cared about the farmers and wanted to keep farming going strong for the future.

Akbar's way of collecting taxes was smart not just for money, but also for politics. It helped get the people in the countryside, who were most of the population, on his side. By being cool with local traditions and using the villages' own systems, the Mughal government avoided a lot of trouble and pushback. The main finance minister, the Diwan, kept a close eye on everything, and the local Diwans reported straight to him, making sure things were consistent everywhere. Officials in charge of collecting money were moved around regularly so they couldn't build up too much power in one place. This organized system gave the Mughal government a dependable stream of cash, which paid for public projects, the royal family, and

especially the army. Akbar's military wins and good management wouldn't have happened without this solid financial backing.

Akbar's military setup was also a big deal, blending old Indian fighting styles with ideas from Central Asia and Persia. The core of this was the mansabdari system, a special setup that managed the empire's leaders, both military and civilian. Each official, regardless of whether they were in the army or government, got a mansab, which was basically a rank. This rank decided where they stood, how much they got paid, and how many soldiers they had to keep ready. These ranks weren't passed down from father to son; the emperor could bump them up or down, making sure everyone was totally loyal to him. Mansabdars usually got paid by being given the right to collect taxes from certain areas, called jagirs. These jagirs could be moved around and were controlled tightly so that the nobles couldn't build up their own power bases. The emperor himself oversaw who got hired, promoted, and moved, keeping a tight rein on the military nobles. The head military official, the Mir Bakshi, kept careful track of soldiers, horses, and gear, and made sure the soldiers the mansabdars were responsible for met the emperor's standards. They also made sure to brand the horses and keep detailed descriptions of the soldiers to stop cheating and keep the cavalry in good shape.

Akbar's military relied heavily on cavalry, a nod to Central Asian warfare, but it wasn't just horses; they also had foot soldiers, cannons, and even war elephants. His artillery, especially, became a real game-changer, with heavy cannons and cannons that could be moved around the battlefield giving the Mughals a big edge over many other rulers. They also beefed up their defenses, keeping a chain of forts spread across the empire to guard important roads and borders. The army wasn't like today's permanent forces; it was more of a go-with-the-flow setup where soldiers were called up as needed. This saved the state a lot of money while keeping them ready to fight. Plus, Akbar was smart about bringing local fighting groups, particularly the Rajputs, into his army. By giving them important roles and showing them respect, he turned old enemies into dependable friends, which really boosted the Mughal army's power and togetherness.

Akbar's system was really defined by how closely linked revenue and the military were. Money from land paid the salaries of his officials and kept the soldiers equipped, and in turn, the military's strength helped make sure taxes were collected smoothly by keeping things peaceful. This setup created a kind of loop where stability led to progress. Writings from that time, like Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari*, show us how Akbar himself kept a close eye on both sides of this, stressing that things needed to be orderly, just, and run well. Akbar's approach to revenue and the military was a really significant achievement in how states were run back in medieval India. By setting up a fair and organized way to collect taxes and tying it to a disciplined army under his direct control, Akbar built the groundwork for an empire that was both strong and long-lasting. Even though his successors made a few tweaks, these systems stayed pretty much the same and became key characteristics of the Mughal Empire, leaving a major mark on how India was administered.

Akbar's Religious and Social Policies

Akbar's approach to religion and society was one of the most innovative and impactful parts of his reign, really defining what the Mughal empire in India became. Ruling over so many different kinds of people, Akbar knew that just using force wouldn't keep things stable. India had a mix of religions like Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and various local beliefs, each with its own traditions. Akbar understood that forcing a strict religious view would just cause trouble, so he slowly built a strategy that embraced acceptance, bringing people in, and talking things through. His religious ideas didn't just pop up overnight; they grew as he got more experience as a leader and met different religious thinkers. Early on, Akbar stuck to traditional Islamic ways, but as he got older, he started doubting strict religious ideas and focused more on good behavior, logic, and peace rather than just rules and beliefs. A big move towards this was setting up the *Ibadat Khana*, or House of Worship, in Fatehpur Sikri in 1575. Here, he brought in experts from various faiths to chat about religious and philosophical ideas. Even though these discussions sometimes got intense and showed how some strict scholars couldn't handle different views,

they had a big effect on Akbar and made him more convinced that no single religion had all the answers. This experience led him even more toward a policy of religious acceptance and the state staying out of religious disputes.

Akbar's open-mindedness really showed in his "Sulh-i-Kul" policy, which basically means "peace for everyone." This idea was the core of how he ran his religious and social affairs, stressing that everyone should get along, respect each other, and be treated equally by the government, no matter their religion. Sulh-i-Kul wasn't about abandoning religion; it was more about the government not picking favorites among religions and that being loyal to the emperor, not your faith, was what mattered for political power. So, in reality, this meant Akbar got rid of unfair taxes like the jizya (a tax on non-Muslims) and the tax on Hindu pilgrims, which were obvious signs of religious unfairness. Getting rid of these taxes was a big deal and really earned him a lot of goodwill from his non-Muslim subjects, particularly the Hindus, who made up most of the population. Akbar also stopped forcing prisoners of war to convert to Islam and let people freely practice their own religious traditions. He made sure temples were safe, gave money to religious places for Hindus, Jains, and Zoroastrians, and showed respect to religious leaders from various faiths at his court. These actions made different communities feel safe and like they belonged, which in turn made Mughal rule seem more legitimate.

Akbar's religious ideas were linked to his efforts to improve society. He wanted to get rid of unfairness and bad traditions. A major change he made was to stop practices that hurt people, especially women. Akbar did not support the practices of widow burning themselves alive when their husband passed away. He only allowed it in very specific situations and eventually stopped it most of the time. He also encouraged widows to get married again, which wasn't common in many Hindu communities back then. Akbar also tried to stop child marriage by setting a minimum age for getting married: 14 for boys and 12 for girls. This was very forward-thinking for the 1500s. He also didn't like it when people demanded too much in dowry and tried to reduce traditions that made families struggle financially and emotionally. Even though these changes didn't completely stop these problems, they showed that the government was trying to help people and encourage good behavior.

Akbar had a kind approach towards the Rajputs, which was important for both their society and religion. Instead of seeing Rajput rulers as enemies he had beaten, Akbar made friends with them through talks and marriage. He respected their customs and gave them important jobs in government and the army. Akbar let Rajput leaders practice their own religions without forcing them to become Muslims. This helped bring strong Hindu warrior groups into the Mughal system and made the long-standing arguments between Muslims and Hindus less intense at the government level. In society, it led to different groups working together and sharing their cultures, which helped create a mixed Indian and Persian culture. Akbar himself joined in Hindu celebrations, followed Jain ideas of not hurting animals by stopping meat-eating on certain days, and was very interested in different ways of thinking. These actions showed he believed that good leadership meant understanding and caring about people from all religions.

Akbar was very curious about many things and liked to think about big questions about life and faith. This led him to create Din-i-Ilahi, which means Divine Faith. It wasn't really a new religion. Instead, it was a small group of people who agreed to live by good rules, like being honest, faithful, and religious, and also to be loyal to the emperor. Not many people joined, and they joined because they wanted to. Most historians believe that Din-i-Ilahi was more about Akbar's personal search for meaning than something the government wanted. But, it shows how Akbar was moving away from strict religious ideas towards a broader and kinder way of thinking about faith. It's also important that Akbar never made anyone join this group, showing he believed everyone should be free to choose their own beliefs.

In the social domain, Akbar fostered cultural unity and mutual respect by promoting the translation of significant religious and literary works from Sanskrit into Persian, the language used for administration. Works such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana were translated for the comprehension of Persian-speaking

elites regarding Indian traditions. This policy not only diminished the cultural gap between rulers and subjects but also enhanced Mughal intellectual life. Akbar's court transformed into a hub of knowledge, creativity, and dialogue, where intellectuals, poets, artists, and philosophers from various backgrounds engaged openly. These cultural policies advanced his wider religious and social vision by promoting dialogue instead of division

In summary, Akbar's social and religious policies signified a pivotal moment in medieval India's history. Through the promotion of tolerance, elimination of discriminatory practices, reform of detrimental social customs, and encouragement of cultural exchange, Akbar fostered an environment of trust and collaboration among his people. His policies were driven not by limited religious interests but by a practical and ethical outlook on governance that prioritized unity, justice, and human dignity within the state. Contemporary historians stress that these strategies were essential for the Mughal Empire's lasting stability and prosperity, establishing the groundwork for a blended culture that became one of the most lasting legacies of Akbar's rule.

Conclusion

Akbar created a powerful and steady empire by using smart plans for how his government, money, army, religion, and society were run. At the top, Akbar was in charge, with help from important people like the finance minister, the military chief, and the judge. The government was set up so that different officials kept each other in check, preventing any one person from having too much power. The empire was split into regions called subas, each led by a Subadar, who had his own people in charge of money, the army, and justice for that area. This setup made sure things ran smoothly, were controlled well, and were the same everywhere in the empire. Akbar's way of collecting money was one of his best accomplishments. With Raja Todar Mal's help, he started the Dahsala system. This system involved carefully measuring land, figuring out what kind of soil it had, and looking at the average crops grown over ten years. The amount of tax was set and fair, usually one-third of what was produced. This meant farmers were treated better, and the government always had a reliable income. This strong income helped pay for the government and the army.

The army was organized using the mansabdari system, where officers were ranked by their position and military duties. Soldiers were paid with land, and strict rules, like marking horses, kept them disciplined and loyal. The army had horse riders, foot soldiers, cannons, and elephants. Akbar's rules about religion and society were about being accepting and including everyone. Through his idea of Sulh-i-Kul, meaning "universal peace," he stopped a special tax on non-Muslims, supported various religions, encouraged positive changes in society, and fostered unity. All these actions together made Akbar's reign stable, welcoming to all, and enduring.

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