

Adopting Sulh-e-Kull for Political Religious Moderation in Indonesia: Lessons from the Mughal Dynasty

Badat Alauddin

International Islamic University of Islamabad, Pakistan

Correspondent : alao.bs2625@iiu.edu.pk

Received : Maret 29, 2024

Accepted : April 07, 2024

Published : April 28, 2024

Citation: Alauddin, B. (2024). Adopting Sulh-e-Kull for Political Religious Moderation in Indonesia: Lessons from the Mughal Dynasty. *Politeia : Journal of Public Administration and Political Science and International Relations*, 2(2), 83-95.
<https://doi.org/10.61978/politeia.v2i2>

ABSTRACT: This study examines the relevance of religious moderation in Indonesia by analyzing Sulh-e-Kull and Din-e-Ilahi, policies of Sultan Akbar during the Mughal Dynasty. Using a qualitative-descriptive approach, it explores how Akbar's tolerance policies—such as abolishing the jizyah tax, establishing interfaith spaces, and promoting interfaith marriages—fostered social and political integration. The findings highlight that religious moderation not only preserves societal harmony but also strengthens political legitimacy. However, challenges arise from misconceptions equating moderation with absolute pluralism. Learning from Akbar's successes and criticisms, Indonesia can adopt tolerance-based governance while upholding religious principles. This study concludes that effective religious moderation requires respecting diverse beliefs without compromising core faith values. Policymakers should implement inclusive policies, encourage interfaith dialogue, and promote historical awareness to sustain national unity in a pluralistic society.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Tolerance, Sulh-E-Kull, Din-E-Ilahi, Sultan Akbar, Mughal Dynasty, Indonesia.



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a country with cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity, continues to face challenges in maintaining social harmony in a pluralistic society. Religious intolerance is often the cause of conflicts that threaten national unity. According to (Darlis, 2017), this conflict is often triggered by exclusive religious attitudes and contestation between groups in gaining support without being based on tolerance and respect for diversity. In addition, this phenomenon is exacerbated by narrow interpretations of religious doctrine that support the view that truth is only possessed by certain groups, thus creating a gap between communities (Shihab, 1992).

In recent years, reports from the Research and Development and Training Agency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs have stated that the polarization of Indonesian society is getting stronger due to social and political dynamics that increase the rivalry of extreme groups. Religious moderation, which emphasizes the values of tolerance and openness, has emerged as a solution to overcome this tension. Religious moderation not only demands a tolerant attitude but also promotes respect for diversity, as expressed by Ahmad Mahmud as-Sadati, who emphasized the importance of respecting each individual's beliefs as the basis of a harmonious society (as-Sadati, n.d.).

Historically, the implementation of religious moderation has had a significant impact on plural societies. One example is the policy of universal tolerance (Sulh-e-Kull) implemented by Sultan Akbar during the Mughal Dynasty. Akbar believed that the unity of a pluralistic society could only be achieved through respect for all beliefs without discrimination. This concept involved the abolition of the jizyah tax for Hindus, the establishment of interfaith places of worship, and interfaith marriages as an effort to create an inclusive society (Anwarsyah, 2014).

According to (Streusand, 2011), this policy not only strengthened the legitimacy of Mughal politics but also became a model for other countries in managing pluralistic societies. However, although religious moderation has been applied historically, its implementation challenges in Indonesia today remain great. According to Quraishi Shihab's study (1992), many parties in Indonesia misinterpret moderation as absolute pluralism, namely the view that all religions have the same truth. This misunderstanding is often exploited by certain groups to weaken authentic religious values, thus creating resistance among religious people.

This historical precedent offers valuable insights for Indonesia today, where religious moderation remains a key policy for managing diversity. However, its implementation faces significant challenges. Quraishi Shihab (1992) highlights a common misinterpretation in Indonesia: some view religious moderation as equivalent to absolute pluralism—the idea that all religions are inherently equal in truth. This misconception has been exploited by certain groups to undermine religious authenticity, creating resistance among believers.

By examining the successes and limitations of Sultan Akbar's religious moderation policies, this study explores their relevance to contemporary Indonesia. Through historical analysis and policy evaluation, this research aims to provide practical insights that support government and community efforts to strengthen social harmony in a diverse society.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach to analyze the concept of religious moderation implemented by Sultan Akbar during the Mughal Dynasty and its relevance in the social context of Indonesia. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to dig deep into data on the policy of tolerance and social harmony through historical and comparative analysis. Historical analysis is used to understand the context, dynamics, and impact of Sultan Akbar's religious moderation policy, while comparative analysis is applied to assess the relevance of the policy to the pluralistic society in Indonesia.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from historical documents such as Akbarnama by Abu al-Fadhl, the policy archives of Sulh-e-Kull and Din-e-Ilahi, and other historical records of the Mughal Dynasty. Meanwhile, secondary data were taken from various academic journals, books, and research reports that discuss the concept of religious moderation, Sultan Akbar's policies, and the socio-political conditions of Indonesia.

Data collection is conducted through documentation studies and literature reviews. Documentation studies involve systematically identifying and gathering information from historical records and policies related to the Mughal Dynasty. Meanwhile, literature reviews provide theoretical perspectives from scholars on religious moderation, both from historical and contemporary viewpoints. To ensure validity and reliability, this study employs several strategies:

1. **Triangulation of Sources:** Data are cross-referenced from multiple sources, including historical texts, policy records, and modern academic studies, to ensure accuracy and minimize bias.
2. **Expert Validation:** Theoretical interpretations are supported by established scholarly works on religious moderation, Mughal governance, and Indonesian religious pluralism.
3. **Contextual Consistency:** The historical analysis is conducted by considering the socio-political context of both the Mughal era and contemporary Indonesia, ensuring that comparisons remain contextually relevant.
4. **Systematic Analysis Techniques:** The study applies historical analysis to understand the implementation of religious moderation under Akbar's rule, comparative analysis to evaluate its relevance in Indonesia, and descriptive analysis to present findings comprehensively.

The analysis techniques used include historical analysis, comparative analysis, and descriptive analysis. Historical analysis aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the context and implementation of religious moderation policies during the reign of Sultan Akbar. Furthermore, comparative analysis is used to compare the policy with religious moderation efforts in Indonesia to evaluate its relevance and adaptability. Finally, descriptive analysis is applied to present the results of the analysis systematically and comprehensively. Through this method, the research is expected to provide a significant contribution to enriching the literature on religious moderation and become a reference for cultural strategies that support harmony in Indonesian society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia is a country with diversity consisting of ethnicity, nation, language, customs, and religion, until today often hears news of intolerance or forms of violence based on the understanding of a religion's ideology. Movements that claim to be certain groups are increasingly daring to vocally voice the teachings and ideologies they adhere to. Of course, this action can cause disharmony in religious communities in Indonesia.

In this pluralistic Indonesian society, the attitude that only recognizes the truth as belonging to certain groups can cause friction between religious groups. Religious conflicts that often occur in Indonesia are generally based on exclusive religious attitudes, as well as contestation between

religious groups in gaining support from the community that is not based on a tolerant attitude, because each uses its power to win, thus triggering conflict in society.

In viewing and resolving this issue, scholars and intellectuals try to take a compromise approach and be in the middle (*washl*). According to Darlis in his writing "Bringing Islamic Moderation amid a Multicultural Society", he stated that Islam offers a moderate attitude to resolve this issue, which means that Islam prioritizes an attitude of tolerance, an attitude of mutual respect, but still believes in the truth and holds fast to the beliefs of each religion, school of thought, or ideology that they adhere to. If we talk about tolerance, of course, we will find many interpretations related to the meaning of this word, Religious tolerance can mean letting people live their lives according to their will. Tolerance can also be interpreted as respecting beliefs, respecting other people's opinions, and understanding their ideas positively, as well as providing religious freedom for adherents of other religions.(Darlis, 2017).

Today there is a lot of religious intolerance in the world that causes a lot of chaos and conflict, especially because it affects the image of Islam, the Islamic religion is seen as negative because of some forms of intolerance carried out by individuals who embrace Islam. Islam is the greatest moral revolution in the world that has had a significant impact on social change, in a relatively short time, a period of 24 years, Islam was able to change the classical Arab society (jahiliyah) with all forms of moral deviation and bad image into a society that has high moral integrity, a society that can respect and give rights to everyone to live their lives according to their beliefs.

In this article, we will try to examine the religious tolerance policy of the Mughal Dynasty in South Asia, which can be an early milestone in learning and an example of religious tolerance in the nation and state of Muslims today, especially in Indonesia. The Mughal Dynasty was established a quarter of a century after the establishment of the Safavid Empire in Iran (Persia). The Mughal Sultanate was not the first Islamic kingdom in the Indian Subcontinent. Islam entered India during the time of Caliph Umar bin Khottob then continued with the governor's leadership under the Islamic State until the time of Caliph al-Walid, from the Umayyad Dynasty. The conquest of this region was carried out by the Umayyad army under the leadership of Muhammad ibn Qasim (Hamka, 1975).

Abd al-Hayy al-Husni in his book *Ats-Tsaqafah al-Islamiyah fi al-Hind* explains that the Mughal Dynasty (1256-1858 AD) was one of the largest Islamic powers in the Indian subcontinent. This dynasty was founded by Zahiruddin Babur (1526-1539 AD), the grandson of Timur Lenk, a famous ruler from Central Asia. Babur began his journey with great ambition to conquer the important city of Samarkand, which had strategic value in the Central Asian region. With the support of the Safavid King, Ismail I, Babur succeeded in conquering Samarkand in 1492 AD. After that, in 1504 AD, Babur occupied Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. The success of controlling Kabul gave him a foothold to continue expansion into the Indian region, which at that time was under the rule of Ibrahim Lodi, a ruler who was facing an internal crisis so that the political stability and government were disturbed.

Under these conditions, Alam Khan, Ibrahim Lodi's uncle, and Daulat Khan, the Governor of Lahore, asked Babur for help in overthrowing Ibrahim Lodi. They sent an envoy to Kabul to convey this request, and Babur accepted it. In 1525 AD, Babur succeeded in capturing Punjab with

its capital in Lahore. From there, he led his army towards Delhi. The peak occurred in 1526 AD when a major battle in Panipat broke out between Ibrahim Lodi's and Zahiruddin Babur's troops. This battle is known as the Battle of Panipat I, in which Ibrahim Lodi was killed, and his power passed into Babur's hands. With this victory, the Mughal Dynasty was officially established in India, with Delhi as its capital.

The presence of the Mughal Dynasty sparked resistance from Hindu Rajput rulers, including Rana Sanga, who joined forces to form a large alliance to fight Babur. However, Babur was able to defeat the combined Rajput forces. On the other hand, in Afghanistan, there was still a group of Lodi loyalists who appointed Mahmud Lodi, Ibrahim Lodi's younger brother, as sultan. However, Mahmud Lodi was also defeated by Babur. In 1530 AD, Babur died at the age of 48, leaving behind a vast territory. The government was then continued by his son, Humayun (al-Husni, 2014).

Humayun's reign (1530-1540 and 1555-1556 AD) did not go smoothly. He faced many challenges, including the rebellion of Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Gujarat who broke away from Delhi. Humayun finally died in 1556 AD and was succeeded by his son, Jalaluddin Akbar, who was only 15 years old when he ascended the throne (al-Husni, 2014). At the beginning of his reign, Akbar handed over state affairs to Bairam Khan, the Prime Minister who had great influence. However, after growing up, Akbar removed Bairam Khan because he felt that his power was too dominant and tended to enforce the interests of the Shia sect. Bairam Khan rebelled but was defeated by Akbar at Jullundur in 1561 AD.

After Akbar, power passed to his son, Jahangir (1605-1628 CE). Jahangir's reign was also marked by internal conflict, including a rebellion led by Kurram, his son. After Jahangir died, Kurram ascended the throne with the title Muzaffar Shahabuddin Muhammad Shah. The reign of Shah Jehan (1627-1658 CE), Kurram's successor, was also not free from rebellion and internal strife, including conflict with his own family. Shah Jehan fell ill in 1657 CE, triggering a power struggle among his sons. Aurangzeb emerged victorious after defeating his brothers.

Aurangzeb, who ruled from 1658 to 1707 CE, is considered the last great Mughal emperor. He was given the title Alamgir Padshah Ghazi and was known as a wise and courageous ruler. His greatness is often compared to that of Akbar, his predecessor. Aurangzeb succeeded in expanding the Mughal territory, including the Deccan, Bengal, and Andhra. However, his policies differed from those of his predecessors, especially in relations with the Hindus (al-Husni, 2014). He reversed the conciliatory policies that had been pioneered earlier, which led to tensions and rebellions. Although he was able to quell the rebellions, the stability of the empire continued to weaken. When Aurangzeb died in 1707 CE, many regions broke away, and the Mughal Dynasty began to lose its power.

The Concept of Universal Peace of Sulh-i-Kull and the Politics of Din-e-Ilahi of Sultan Akbar

Discussing the history of Islam in South Asia cannot be separated from the important role of the Mughal Dynasty. The kingdom founded by Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur became the source of many ideas and policies, including in the field of religious politics. Two central figures who attract attention in discussions related to religious policies are Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, the

third Mughal king, and Abul Muzaffar Muhiyuddin Aurangzeb. Both are blood relatives, where Aurangzeb is Akbar's grandson.

Despite being in the same dynasty, Akbar and Aurangzeb ruled at different times and were known for their very contrasting characters. Jalaluddin Akbar is remembered as a leader who was respected by various religious communities, especially Hindus. In contrast, Aurangzeb is often considered a harsh leader towards Hindus, which caused hatred among them. Their differences in policies regarding local religions were the main cause of the emergence of contrasting views between the two. Akbar was known as a tolerant figure with his policies such as Din-e-Ilahi, which reflected respect for religious diversity. Meanwhile, Aurangzeb was more exclusive, often restricting the activities of Hindus, including their religious practices. Therefore, many see Akbar as a symbol of religious tolerance in the Mughal Dynasty, while Aurangzeb is considered a conservative Islamic leader.

Sultan Akbar, whose full name was Abul Fath Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, was born on October 14, 1542 in Sindh to Emperor Humayun and Hamida Banu Begum (An-Nimr, 1981). He spent his childhood in Afghanistan under the supervision of his uncle. At the age of 14, in 1556 AD, Akbar ascended the throne to replace his father. The early period of his reign was marked by various challenges, such as demands for independence from Mughal vassal kingdoms, economic crises, and Hindu rebellions in Delhi and Agra.

To unite the diverse peoples of South Asia, Akbar implemented the policy of Sulh-e-Kul, or the policy of tolerance. The basic principle of Sulh-e-Kul was to view all people as equals regardless of religion or social status. This policy aimed to create universal peace and prosperity for the people of South Asia, where Hindus were no longer seen as objects of exploitation but as an integral part of a progressive and civilized society. The implementation of Sulh-e-Kul resulted in several new policies rooted in this principle. These policies reflected Akbar's vision of building a harmonious and inclusive pluralist society.

a. Establishment of Khana Worship

Ibadat Khana was established by Sultan Akbar in Fatihpur Sikri, India, in 1575 AD. It was a hall in the Mughal palace that was used as a regular discussion location on religious issues, held every Thursday night (Anwarsyah, 2014). Initially, these discussions only involved Sunni scholars. However, Sultan Akbar later changed this policy because there were frequent disputes between them. Akbar considered that some of the views of Sunni scholars were inflexible and tended to be rigid, especially in discussions on comparative religion. This prompted him to invite figures from various other religions and sects, such as Shia, Christian, Hindu, and Jewish, to participate in the discussions. With the involvement of various parties, Ibadat Khana became a space for open debate that encouraged broader and more flexible thinking.

Sultan Akbar's main motivation for establishing Ibadat Khana was the frequent conflicts that arose in discussions between royal religious officials, especially between Sheikh Abdul Nabi and Makdumul Mulk. The peak of tension occurred when Sheikh Abdul Nabi sentenced a Brahmin to death who was accused of stealing mosque equipment and uttering hate speech against the Prophet

Muhammad SAW. Sultan Akbar viewed this decision as an unwise action. He believes that truth is not only monopolized by one particular belief, but can be found in various views.

To strengthen this concept, Sultan Akbar invited scholars, religious figures, and clerics from various backgrounds to discuss the ideas of pluralism which he considered as a solution to create peace. Ibadat Khana became a symbol of Sultan Akbar's efforts in promoting tolerance and interfaith dialogue for the sake of harmony in society.

b. Determination of Mazhar

The impact of the Sulh-i-Kul policy greatly motivated Sultan Akbar to ensure the welfare of all his people, including protecting them from religious doctrines that had the potential to harm or trigger social violence. This policy often clashed with the authority of the ulama who had long enjoyed a dominant position in religious and state affairs (Streusand, 2011). The conflict between Akbar and the ulama was not only limited to religious issues, but was also political. This was due to the central role of the ulama as Qadi-ul-Qadha or Supreme Judge, who controlled various sectors such as education, social, religious law, and state administration. In some cases, the ulama were considered less competent in the fields they managed, so their decisions tended to be subjective.

The assumption of the scholars that Sultan Akbar was trying to erase the gap between Muslims and other religions also widened the conflict between them. The elimination of several policies such as jizyah directly impacted the economy in addition to generating jealousy among Islamic figures. Several policies of Sultan Akbar Agung had given rise to open rebellion among the scholars in 1579 but were suppressed and the Mazhar policy was formed in the same year. The policy of forming Mazhar tended more towards efforts to reduce the power of conservative scholars, Mazhar was a decree or charter which consisted of several provisions regarding the position of Sultan Akbar Agung, there were several points outlined in this decree:

- 1) Sultan Akbar Agung acted as the holder of the highest power and mediator over all problems (Imam-i-Adil).
- 2) Imam-i-Adil was the figure most loved by God, whoever opposed him was opposing God.
- 3) The rank of Imam-i-Adil was higher than that of mujtahid (Isnaini, 2020)

This charter stated, among other things, that the Imam-i-Adil was the most beloved figure to God and had higher authority than a mujtahid. This policy sparked resistance from conservative scholars, including Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, a Sufi figure who was vocal in opposing it.

One of Akbar's most famous religious policies was the establishment of the doctrine of Din-e-Ilahi in 1582. This doctrine sought to unite elements of all religions to worship one God. This concept was based on Akbar's belief that truth could be found in all religions. Some of the controversial points of Din-e-Ilahi's policies include: the abolition of jizya, permission to build places of worship for other religions, freedom to leave Islam, prohibition of cow slaughter in honor of Hindus, and legalization of interfaith marriages. This policy has drawn both pros and cons, with some considering it a new religion, while others see it as an attempt at harmony.

The background of Sultan Akbar's policies cannot be separated from the influence of genealogy and the environment in which he was raised. Akbar came from a Timurid lineage that admired art

and literature without any particular religious fanaticism. His childhood education under the guidance of Abdul Latif, a liberal thinker, as well as the influence of Sufi figures such as Bairam Khan and the teachings of the Chisti order, helped shape Akbar's view of tolerance. The Chisti order, which emphasizes love, openness, and generosity regardless of religion or nation, became Akbar's main inspiration in formulating Sulh-i-Kul.

In politics, the Sulh-i-Kul policy became an important strategy to strengthen the power of the Mughals, which consisted of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. Akbar realized that the success of his government depended on the support of various groups, including the Hindu Rajputs who eventually became his loyal supporters. Akbar also saw the kingdom as a blessing from God that must be appreciated with policies that create equality and harmony. This is reflected in Akbar's efforts to unite Muslims and Hindus as one unit of the Mughal people.

The Sulh-i-Kul policy was formulated to integrate society without distinction of religion or ethnicity. This edict asserted the authority of Sultan Akbar over the conservative religious scholars who opposed his pluralist approach. Akbar sought to replace sectarian loyalties with universal loyalty to the empire. Despite resistance from the ulama, this policy succeeded in expanding the influence of the Mughal Empire to become one of the great powers of Asia at the time.

The implementation of the concept of *sulh-i kull* thought as Akbar's religious political policy also contained political motives related to the procedures for regulating state politics, especially relations between diverse religious communities in the majority of South Asian people who are Hindu. Akbar wanted to assert his authority over the orthodox religious views in his environment which he thought were hindering the project of uniting Mughal society into an integrated social system, without distinguishing between religions. Through this political motive, of course Akbar wanted broader obedience from his people towards him. In 987 Hijrah, as recorded by Sheikh al-Badauni, a historian of Akbar's era who had a different religious view from Akbar, mentioned a declaration made by Akbar which was approved by many religious figures of the kingdom at that time, including the Grand Mufti Abdul Nabi and the Grand Mufti Sheikh Mubarak Naghori (asy-Syayyal, 2001).

Lessons for Developing Religious Tolerance and Moderation in Indonesia

Defining tolerance and Islamic brotherhood is not an easy task. This is because both terms are not only related to outward attitudes but also include inner attitudes. However, we can still describe it as the Prophet described Islamic brotherhood in the hadith, for example: "A Muslim with another Muslim is like a building that strengthens each other," or "like one body." Thus, if we want to formulate the meaning of tolerance and Islamic brotherhood, at least we can conclude that both are dynamic conditions that reflect respect for differences, which are driven by feelings of shared fate and burden.

In realizing Islamic brotherhood, there are several important requirements. First, there must be *busnuzan* (good assumption) towards fellow Muslims. When bad assumptions dominate, then all actions of other parties, even good ones, will be interpreted negatively, which ultimately causes a rift in the relationship. Second, no group should monopolize truth or error. Third, educational background influences the formation of Islamic Brotherhood. The higher a person's knowledge,

the greater the opportunity to be tolerant. Conversely, low levels of education often trigger negative attitudes, especially if there is provocation from outside parties. In Islamic countries with advanced levels of education, Islamic brotherhood is stronger than in countries with lagging levels of education.

Muslims agree that the Qur'an is a guide to life, but as a text, the Qur'an can give rise to various interpretations. Some principles are definite (qath'i), such as the oneness of Allah, the prophethood of Muhammad, and the truth of the Qur'an itself. However, some interpretations are conjecturally close to the truth (zhanni), so there are possible differences in interpretation.

Quraish Shihab in his writing *Satu Islam, Sebuah Dilemma* argues that the absence of Islamic brotherhood is not caused by differences in schools of thought, but rather by the narrow fanaticism (ta'assub) of some schools of thought adherents. The leaders of the schools of thought themselves show great tolerance and brotherhood, even willing to follow the more correct opinion. Unfortunately, the absence of husnuzan among Muslims is often the main cause of the loss of Islamic brotherhood.

Historically, Sultan Akbar of the Mughal Dynasty is known as a leader who has a reformist and liberal approach. One of his most controversial policies was the idea of Sulh-e-Kull and Din Ilahi, which aimed to unite society through a religious syncretism approach. However, this policy was criticized because it was considered to deviate from Islamic teachings. Din Ilahi failed to unite all parties, and even triggered challenges from Muslims because it mixed religious teachings. This policy also became a loophole used by opponents to weaken Sultan Akbar's government.

In the context of Indonesia, religious moderation can be a cultural strategy to create a peaceful, tolerant society that respects diversity. Religious moderation emphasizes the importance of living side by side in harmony without causing conflict due to existing differences. However, it is undeniable that there are still Muslims who misunderstand the meaning of tolerance. Some equate tolerance with pluralism, such as assuming that all religions are true or feeling that it is okay to follow the rituals of other religions as a form of tolerance. This trend often causes Muslims who maintain the limits of tolerance according to religious teachings to be labeled as extremists.

Religious understanding and practice must always be directed towards the middle path so as not to turn into extremism or injustice. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, extreme religious understanding violates three things: humanitarian values, mutual agreement, and public order. The phenomenon of radicalism that occurs in Indonesia is more often triggered by social inequality and political projects than by extreme religious understanding. True tolerance does not mean mixing religious symbols, but trying to be a wise mediator, providing awareness in a good way, and embracing all parties. When religious moderation creates tension and polarization, it is difficult to call it religious moderation. If this happens, then the moderation is nothing more than political propaganda like that carried out by Sultan Akbar through the Sulh-e-Kull and Din Ilahi policies.

Implementation of Mughal Political and Social Context of Religious Moderation in Indonesia

Adopting Sulh-e-Kull for Political Religious Moderation in Indonesia: Lessons from the Mughal Dynasty

Alauddin

The religious and political challenges faced by Sultan Akbar in the Mughal Empire share striking similarities with contemporary Indonesia. Both contexts feature a highly diverse population, where religious pluralism is both a strength and a potential source of conflict. Akbar's reign (1556–1605) saw tensions between Hindu and Muslim communities, while Indonesia today faces polarization between conservative and moderate Islamic groups, as well as interfaith tensions. Akbar's response was Sulh-e-Kull (universal peace), a policy that sought to integrate different religious communities under a single, tolerant framework. Similarly, Indonesia has embraced religious moderation (moderasi beragama) as a national policy to promote coexistence and prevent extremism.

Both Akbar's Sulh-e-Kull and Indonesia's religious moderation framework emphasize inclusivity, yet their implementation differs that elaborate as table below:

Aspect	Sulh-e-Kull (Mughal Era)	Religious Moderation (Indonesia)
Legal Reforms	Abolished the <i>jizyah</i> tax for non-Muslims to ensure equality.	Government policies uphold religious freedom while regulating radical teachings.
Interfaith Dialogue	Established <i>Ibadat Khana</i> , a forum for discussions between religious leaders.	Interfaith forums such as FKUB (Forum for Religious Harmony) foster dialogue between faith groups.
Religious Pluralism in Governance	Integrated Hindus into administrative and military positions.	Encourages religious representation in government but with limitations on sectarian influence.
Social Integration Efforts	Promoted interfaith marriages and multi-religious spaces.	Advocates tolerance without necessarily endorsing religious syncretism.

Although both approaches aim to integrate religious communities, Sulh-e-Kull leaned toward religious syncretism, whereas Indonesia's model focuses on coexistence while preserving religious distinctiveness. However, both policies have faced resistance and misinterpretation. Akbar's religious reforms were met with opposition from orthodox scholars who feared that his policies weakened Islamic authority. Similarly, in Indonesia, some conservative groups perceive religious moderation as an attempt to dilute Islamic teachings. Furthermore, Akbar's Din-e-Ilahi—which sought to merge various religious elements—was misunderstood as a new religion rather than a governance strategy. Likewise, in Indonesia, some misinterpret religious moderation as absolute pluralism, assuming it equates all religions as fundamentally the same. Another shared challenge is the political instrumentalization of moderation policies. Akbar used Sulh-e-Kull to secure loyalty in a multi-religious empire, while in Indonesia, religious moderation is sometimes promoted as a state narrative rather than an organic movement rooted in society.

Despite these challenges, Indonesia can draw valuable lessons from Akbar's approach. One key takeaway is that religious moderation should not be merely a state policy but also a civic virtue, encouraging grassroots engagement through religious organizations rather than relying solely on government initiatives. Additionally, the Indonesian government must ensure that moderation is understood as respectful coexistence rather than enforced religious uniformity, avoiding the pitfalls of Din-e-Ilahi, which blurred religious identities and provoked a backlash. Moreover, interfaith dialogue should be strengthened through inclusive spaces, much like Akbar's Ibadat Khana, which encouraged open discussions between different religious groups. By refining its approach—emphasizing dialogue, maintaining religious integrity, and addressing misinterpretations—Indonesia can ensure that religious moderation remains an effective and sustainable strategy for national harmony. Akbar's policies illustrate both the possibilities and pitfalls of state-led religious moderation, demonstrating that while historical models can provide insights, they must be adapted to contemporary socio-political realities.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this article emphasizes the importance of religious moderation as a strategy to maintain harmony amidst the diversity of Indonesian society. The concept of moderation implemented by Sultan Akbar in the form of Sulh-e-Kull and Din-e-Ilahi during the Mughal Dynasty proves that universal tolerance and respect for different beliefs can create significant social and political stability. Policies such as the abolition of jizyah, the establishment of interfaith places of worship, and the unification of society without discrimination are clear evidence that religious moderation can create an inclusive society based on peace.

However, the implementation of religious moderation in Indonesia faces various challenges, especially due to the misunderstanding of the meaning of moderation as absolute pluralism, which is often used for certain agendas. Religious moderation does not mean eliminating religious identity, but rather integrating respect for the beliefs of others without sacrificing the principles of each person's faith. The historical experience of the Mughal Dynasty provides a valuable lesson that moderation can be an effective solution in overcoming social conflict, but it needs to be supported by fair policies and deep understanding at all levels of society.

This research contributes to exploring the relevance of the concept of religious moderation from a historical perspective to be applied to modern challenges in Indonesia. By adopting the values of tolerance and respect for diversity that have been tested in the past, Indonesia can maintain social harmony, which is an essential foundation for the sustainability of this pluralistic country. However, for religious moderation to have a tangible impact, several practical recommendations should be implemented. First, strengthening interfaith education at all levels is crucial to fostering an understanding that moderation does not mean diluting religious beliefs but promoting mutual respect. This can be done by integrating religious moderation principles into school curricula and religious institutions, ensuring that young generations grow up with an inclusive mindset.

Second, enhancing grassroots interfaith engagement is necessary to prevent religious moderation from being perceived as a mere state-driven agenda. Community-based initiatives, such as

interfaith forums, religious dialogue programs, and collaborative social projects, should be encouraged to build trust and solidarity among religious groups. The success of Akbar's Ibadat Khana shows that open dialogue can reduce prejudices and foster mutual understanding.

Third, the government should balance religious regulation with inclusivity, ensuring that policies promoting religious moderation do not alienate conservative groups. Instead of imposing rigid state narratives, policymakers should engage with religious leaders from diverse backgrounds, making them active participants in shaping moderation policies. This would help prevent resistance from groups that may see moderation efforts as an attack on religious authenticity.

Additionally, addressing misinformation and misinterpretation of religious moderation is vital. Just as Din-e-Ilahi faced opposition due to misconceptions, Indonesia must clarify that religious moderation is not absolute pluralism but rather a middle path that respects religious identities while promoting peace. Public awareness campaigns, media engagement, and religious literacy programs can help counter false narratives that misrepresent the intent of religious moderation.

Lastly, institutionalizing legal protections for religious minorities is necessary to ensure that tolerance is not just a concept but a lived reality. Legal frameworks must safeguard minority rights, prevent discrimination, and ensure that religious moderation policies translate into fair treatment of all religious communities. Learning from Akbar's approach, Indonesia must go beyond symbolic tolerance and create mechanisms that protect religious minorities while fostering national unity.

By implementing these practical recommendations, Indonesia can move beyond theoretical discussions of religious moderation and create a society where diversity is not just tolerated but embraced as a source of national strength.

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