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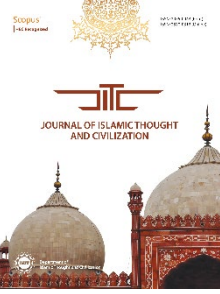
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Reevaluating the Religio-Political Policies of Aurangzeb Alamgir: A Critical Insight from Indian Historians

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Abstract

Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir ruled the Indian Sub-Continent for the best part of five decades. The Mughal Empire flourished under his rule, particularly in the spheres of economy, administration and territorial extension, by maintaining exemplary religio-political harmony, unmatched political stability, and cultural development. He was a devout Sunni Muslim and a disciple of the Naqshbandi order. With such an affiliation, he sought to rule his Empire in accordance with the injunctions of Islam. Resultantly, the Hindus felt deprived of the religious freedom which they had enjoyed during the reigns of his predecessors Akbar (r.1556-1605), Jahangir (r.1605-28), and Shah Jahan (r. 1628-58). After the demise of Alamgir in 1707, the Mughal Empire started declining gradually. Many Indian historians have criticized the policies of Alamgir and attributed them as the primary cause of the gradual disintegration of Mughal rule. This research focuses on three major policies of Aurangzeb, namely, temple destruction, re-imposition of *jizya*, and dismissal of Hindus from the state services. After content analysis of selected Indian historians who mainly focused on the religious outlook of Aurangzeb, this research has made an attempt to counterbalance the allegations leveled against him by Indian historians. Aurangzeb had nothing to do with his non-Muslim subjects concerning his religious zeal but merely pretended to rule the state administration with the injunctions of Islam, aiming to draw military support from the orthodox Muslims against the Shias and the Marathas with the Deccan. He did not deprive them of state services or religious freedom because of his Islamic approach to governance. His religious policies are not responsible for the gradual decline of the Mughal Empire. He was not as much of a religious bigot as depicted by the Indian historians.

Keywords: Jizya, Mughal Empire, religious policies, state services, temple destruction

Introduction

The advent of Islam in the Indian Territory began with the conquest of Sindh in June 712. Muhammad Bin Qasim was the first Muslim commander to set foot on Indian soil from south-west after defeating Raja Dahir (d.712). At that time, the two main religions in Sindh were Hinduism and Buddhism. However, after establishing Muslim rule in Sindh, Muslim rulers introduced appeasement policy and remained lenient towards their non-Muslim subjects, irrespective of their religious beliefs. The Brahmins, the upper elite class of Hindus were allowed to continue as revenue collectors. Their places of worship and the sanctity of their idols were safeguarded.¹ They were neither persecuted nor did they face any personal security threat; their communities were safe to live their lives. Moreover, they were accommodated into the hierarchy of nobility. The most ancient contemporary historical work *Chachnamah* (story of the *Chach* or of the conquest of Sindh) recorded not even a single forcible conversion to Islam.² They established themselves as traders benefitting both communities. Furthermore, Arabs did not impose their culture on indigenous people; on the contrary, they were

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¹M. Athar Ali, *Mughal India Studies in Polity, Ideas, Society, and Culture* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 13.

²*Ibid.*, 14.

inspired by Hindu and Jain Temple's architecture, which was evidently visible in their construction and arts. They did not build mosques from the debris of temples.³ Over time, the Muslim state in Sindh disintegrated; subsequently, dismembered into small petty states, which were overthrown by Mahmud Ghaznavi (d.1030) in the first quarter of the 11th century. This marked the dismemberment of the Muslim state in Sindh and the replacement of the Umayyad dynasty (661-750) by Abbasids dynasty (750-1258) in 750. The Abbasid Caliphs engaged themselves in the conquests of Central Asia, Europe, and Africa rather than India. Consequently, they stopped sending governors to the Muslim state in Sindh, leading to the gradual decline and disintegration of the Muslim state in Sindh over the next two centuries.

Mahmud Ghaznavi intruded from North-west into Indian Territory. He is considered as iconoclast in the annals of history. He attacked India seventeen times of which his last invasion of the temple of Somnath had considerable impact on the religious, political, and cultural history of India. Al-Beruni wrote: "Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country (India) and performed their wonderful exploits, by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions, and like a tale of old in the mouth of the people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims."⁴

This became a foundational event that created antagonism between Hindus and Muslims since the raid could neither be forgotten nor forgiven.⁵ It is worth noting that his army also considered Hindu commanders and mercenary soldiers.⁶ This military relationship went far beyond the concerns of conversions and religions. He deployed them into other state departments and never forced them to convert to Islam. After his death, his successors lacked political insight and military genius. They were soon overthrown by Shihabuddin Ghauri (1173-1206) who established Muslim rule in Northern India and deputed his commander Qutbuddin Aibak (r.1206-10) as the first Muslim ruler who stayed in India.

The period from 1206 to 1526 is considered the Sultanate period in the history of India. It included five different dynasties, namely, the Slave Dynasty (1206-90), Khilji Dynasty (1290-1320), Tughlaq Dynasty (1320-1414), Sadaat Dynasty (1414-51), and Lodi Dynasty (1451-1526) replacing one another. Qutbuddin Aibak was the first sultan of the Slave Dynasty. His rule lasted just four years. His capital was Lahore where he died and is buried. He was succeeded by Shamas al-Din Iltumish (r.1211-36), a pious and a God-fearing ruler. He was the first ruler who established Muslim rule and made Delhi his capital. He was very lenient towards his non-Muslim subjects. Once he established his rule, some *ulama* at his court issued fatwa (religious decree) for the general massacre of Hindus if they did not embrace Islam. The Sultan asked his vizier Nizam-ul-Mulk Junaidi (1018-1092) to give them a suitable reply. The Vizier replied to them in these words: "But at the moment India has newly been conquered and the Muslims are so few that they are like salt (in a large dish). If the above orders are to be applied to the Hindus, it is possible they might combine, and a general confusion might ensue, and the Muslims would be too few to suppress this general confusion. However, after a few years when in the capital and in the regions and the small towns the Muslims are well established and the troops are larger, it will be possible to give Hindus, the choice of "death or Islam."⁷

³Romila Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History* (London: The Bath Press, 2004), 116.

⁴Ibid., 17.

⁵Ibid., 12.

⁶Ibid., 37.

⁷Khalid Ahmad Nizami, *The Early Turkish Sultans of Delhi* (New Delhi: Shri Jainendra Press, 1992), 24.

Shamas al-Din Iltumish also destroyed temples during the campaign of Bhilsa (an archaeological site in India) during 1234-35. According to Minhaj-us-Siraj, the construction of this temple took three hundred years.⁸ His successors lacked political insight and sagacity. Consequently, another slave Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban (1216-1286) took the reign of government in 1266.

Balban was the first Muslim ruler to establish a standing army at the court. He reckoned that the Sultan was the shadow of God and introduced *Zaminbos* (prostration before the Sultan) and *Paibos* (to kiss the feet of the Sultan to appreciate his power). He also initiated the Persian festival *Nowruz*, celebrating the 21st of March as the New Year. This new celebration continued for centuries but was banned by Alamgir in 1669. Balban followed rigorous court discipline and military training. His army primarily consisted of Turkish soldiers but also included an army of two hundred thousand troops from various castes. He organized this army to counter the threats posed by Mongols. For this purpose, he created a new department *Diwan-i-Arz* (department of military) under the charge of *Ariz-i-Mumalik* (head of military department) for the military regulations. He did not appoint Hindus to any key posts. Only Muslim soldiers and officers of noble birth were employed in the army. His successors were incompetent and were overthrown by Khiljis of whom Alauddin Khilji (d. 1316) had excelled in terms of economy, administration, market reforms, and intrusion into the south Deccan. His attitude was harsh towards Hindus as he demolished some temples during the war. He also imposed *jizya*, which was levied on Hindus in lieu of their security. He also barred *Ulema* from the court politics on the grounds of their interference in state matters. Even Ziauddin Barani (1285-1357) was exiled for his complaints regarding the state matters.⁹ The Sultan wanted to exert unlimited authority over his subjects. His successor Mubarak Khilji (r.1316-20) was morally corrupt and subsequently was overthrown by the Tughlaq Dynasty.¹⁰

Firuz Tughlaq (r.1351-88) was one of the remarkable Sultans from the house of Tughlaq. He was the first Muslim ruler in India who imposed *jizya* on Brahmans.¹¹ He created a slave department in which one hundred and eighty thousand slaves were enrolled irrespective of their religions. They were the backbone of state administration and were deployed in every department of the administration on sheer dint of merit. Firuz's successors had short-lived reigns and were eventually replaced by the Sadat dynasty.

Sadaat rulers had no considerable importance in the annals of history. They were overthrown by Sikandar Lodi (r. 1451-88). They were ethnically Afghans and promoted their kith and kin. They granted *jagirs* (feudal land grants) to the Afghan nobles. Ibrahim Lodi (r. 1517-26) was the last ruler of this dynasty who lacked political insight and military geniuses. He was defeated by Zahiruddin Babar (1483-1530) in the first battle of Panipat in 1526. Thus, Babar established Mughal rule in India.

Babar was the first Mughal emperor who established his political suzerainty over feudatory and Rajput states adjacent to Delhi. Upon becoming emperor of India in 1526, he showed general amnesty to all, even to those who sided with Ibrahim Lodi during the war. He restored their *jagirs* and bestowed their titles. He also tried to appease his non-Muslim subjects. However, he destroyed temples wherever he faced resistance from Hindus.¹² Humayun (1508-56) followed the footsteps of his father. His son Akbar (1542-1605) who is often considered the real founder of the Mughal Empire, incorporated policies, such as the abolition of *jizya*, matrimonial alliances with Rajputs to integrate them into mainstream politics, the introduction of *sulh-i-kul* policy (peace with all) and appointing

⁸Ibid., 222.

⁹Romila Thapar, *A History of India*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 291.

¹⁰Ibid., 275.

¹¹Thapar, *Somanatha*, 65.

¹²Sri Ram Sharma, *The Mughal Empire* (New Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1988), 294.

Hindus to key posts in the state administration. He aimed to appease his non-Muslim subjects by implementing these policies in which he remained successful. Hindu rulers accepted his political suzerainty. Indian historians hailed him as the national king. He was succeeded by his son Jahangir (1569-1628).

Jahangir followed in the footsteps of his father, continuing to induct Hindus into the royal fold and forming a matrimonial alliance with them. He ensured religious freedom and did not re-impose *jizya*. He continued the practice of prostration introduced by Balban, resulting in a period of peace and political stability. However, he did demolish temples when he received complaint from a Brahman who used to teach Hindu theology to the children of both Hindus and the Muslims in a temple.¹³ He was succeeded by his son Shah Jahan (1592-1666) who had good terms with the Hindus. He offered them employment and entered a matrimonial alliance with the Rajputs. However, he banned the practice of prostration and destroyed some temples in the same way as Jahangir did. His reign took an unexpected turn when he fell ill, allowing Alamgir to seize control by imprisoning his father and eliminating his contenders for the Mughal throne. Indian historians, Jadunath Sarkar (1870-1958) and Shriram Sharma, (1911-1990) argued that Alamgir reversed several policies introduced by Akbar, which continued by Jahangir and Shah Jahan. These changes included re-imposing *jizya*, temple destruction, and the exclusion of Hindus from state services. Apart from this, he banned music, *sati* (burning of a widow on the pyre of her husband), re-imposed undue taxes on Hindus while giving undue favors to the Muslims in tax collection. He waged a war against the Marathas and a holy war against the Shias in the Deccan that resulted in the gradual downfall of the Mughal Empire.

The reign of Aurangzeb spanned over five decades and resulted in the largest territorial extent of Mughal Empire. After eliminating all the contenders to the Mughal throne, Alamgir felt secure and started administering his rule on Islamic lines. He promulgated orders, which aimed at the re-imposition of *jizya*, demolition of temples, exclusion of Hindus from state services, the banning of music, and abandonment of *sajdah* (bow head to the ground in honor of the emperor), and allowing Hindu widows to remarry. He changed the name of Mathura to Islamabad, ceased eighty un-Islamic taxes, prohibited Muharram processions, banned *sati*, and prohibited the castration of children with a view to selling them as slaves, among these the first three have concern and investigated in this study. Some of the other regulations were not only un-Islamic but also inhumane. He issued such orders to benefit the whole of his subjects irrespective of Hindus and Muslims.

His successors could not hold sway over the glorious Empire. Their incompetency and lack of political insight led to the collapse of Mughal rule over the next five decades. Hindu historians argued that it was the policies adopted by Alamgir that resulted in the decline of the Mughal Empire. Jadunath Sarkar an Indian historian has produced a tremendous work on the history of Aurangzeb in five volumes. He is of the view that the progressive spirits in the Mughal Empire died out after the death of Akbar. His successors ruled a stationary civilization, and such a civilization was bound to decay under the rule of Aurangzeb.¹⁴ He also opined that Aurangzeb was not a genius ruler to carve out new policies and legislate with political foresight. He did not introduce any new policy with respect to state administration rather reversed the pragmatic policies, such as *sulh-i-kul*, religious

¹³Sri Ram Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors* (Lahore: Panco Press, 1940), 137.

¹⁴Jadunath Sarkar, *A Short History of Aurangzeb* (Calcutta: M. C. Sarkar & Sons, 1930), 472.

tolerance, and matrimonial alliances.¹⁵ Sarkar largely holds Aurangzeb responsible for the downfall of the Mughal Empire.¹⁶

Srivastava also opined that the policies introduced by Akbar were reversed by Alamgir, which caused the disintegration of the Mughal Empire.¹⁷ L. P. Sharma is of the view that his religious bigotry resulted in the loss of loyalty of his subjects, including Shia Muslims, the Jāts, the Sikhs, and the Satnamis.¹⁸ All of them argued that Akbar incorporated policies, such as religio-political harmony through *sulh-i-kul*, induction of Rajputs into state services through matrimonial alliance, and introduction of *mansabdari* (rank-holder) system, which united all the subjects, irrespective of being Hindus and the Muslims under one administrative umbrella. Thus, the empire reached its zenith in terms of economic prosperity, peace, political stability, flourished art, and architecture. Aurangzeb reversed all these policies.

2. Destruction of Hindu Temples

Jadunath Sarkar argued that religious bigotry, persecution of Hindus, and desecration of Hindu temples fueled resentment against Aurangzeb. His bigotry was evident from the very first year of his rule when he started desecrating and destroying Hindu temples. He not only banned the construction of new temples but also desecrated the old ones.¹⁹ After establishing his rule and eliminating his contenders, including his father, he issued an order in the 12th year of his rule to demolish all Hindu temples to curb their religious preaching and practices. He laid hands over those temples with which millions of Hindus had religious sentiments and veneration. It included the temple of Somnath, previously destroyed by Mahmud of Ghazni (r. 997-1030), the Vishvanath temple in Banaras, and the Keshav Rai temple in Mathura, on which more than three million rupees were spent by Raja Bundela.²⁰ The governors of provinces were strictly instructed to carry out the orders to demolish temples in their respective territories.

Similarly, the city of Mathura, the birthplace of Lord Krishna, a deity for whom millions of Hindus had personal veneration, has always been the victim of bigotry of the Muslim rulers from Alauddin Khilji (r.1296-1316) to Aurangzeb.²¹ This city was situated on the road connecting Agra and Delhi. Sarkar argued that this city seemed to taunt the Mughal rulers with Luke's warmth in exalting Islam and putting down infidelity.²² Alamgir meditated in *Ramadan* in 1670, which stimulated his zeal to destroy Mathura. He dispatched troops intending to demolish the temple of Mathura and changed its name to Islamabad.²³ He chalked out such a systematic plan, which included a hierarchy of officials aimed at desecrating worshipping places of Hindus. It was their major duty, and a *darogha* (director general) was appointed to report their progress in this regard. His orders were obeyed all over India, such as Gujarat, Ahmadabad, Banaras, Mathura, Bengal, Orissa, Amber, Jaipur, and Deccan. Sarkar argued that neither age nor experience of life softened his bigotry. In the last decades of his era, he used to inquire whether the destroyed Hindu temples had been rebuilt or not. Furthermore, he also confiscated all the lands previously granted to Hindus as religious grants

¹⁵Ibid., 463.

¹⁶Satish Chandra, *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1996), 154.

¹⁷M. P. Srivastava, *Policies of the Great Mughals* (Lahore: Maktabah-AI-Islamia, 1979), iv.

¹⁸L. P. Sharma, *History of Modern India* (Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1987), 4.

¹⁹Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb* (Karachi: South Asian Publishers, 1981), 174.

²⁰Ibid., 15.

²¹Thapar, *Somanatha*, 183.

²²Ibid., 175.

²³Ibid., 175.

in Gujarat.²⁴ Aurangzeb envisioned the establishment of an Islamic state, which implied the conversion of entire population of his non-Muslim subjects to Islam.²⁵

L. P. Sharma argued that his religious bigotry lost him the loyalty of his non-Muslim subjects, including Shia Muslims, and resulted in the revolts of Sikhs, Satnamis, and the Jāts. His policies sucked up the economic resources and broke down the entire administration of the empire.²⁶ He demolished their temples and images of their gods and goddesses. Ashvini Agrewal holds the same view that Alamgir destroyed temples by thousands and religious festivals were stopped.²⁷ J. L. Mehta gave a similar statement that religious persecution and fanaticism led the Hindus to withdraw their support to the Mughal throne.²⁸ Girish Chandra Dwivedi also talked in the same manner.²⁹ Dwivedi argued that the religious bigotry of Aurangzeb destroyed temples.³⁰ Nilakantra Sastri also opined that Alamgir issued a general order to the governors of all the provinces to go around and demolish Hindu temples. It was also accompanied by degradation such as the slaughter of cows in the temples and the idols being trodden down publicly.³¹

2.1. Analysis of the Allegations

Recent research has shown that Aurangzeb might not have been as much of a religious bigot as portrayed by Indian historians. Historians, such as Jadunath Sarkar, Sri Ram Sharma, J. L. Mehta (1912-1988), Ashvini Agrewal, and L. P. Sharma have analyzed the religious policies of Aurangzeb in the nationalist paradigm. These historians prominently aimed of holding Aurangzeb solely responsible for the Mughal Empire's disintegration based on his religious beliefs. Some of the Indian writers have confessed this exaggerated portrayal. Audrey Truschke is an American historian who has recently written a book on Aurangzeb titled: *Aurangzeb the Man and the Myth* in which she argued that he did not destroy Hindu temples but rather protected the interests of Hindu religious groups.³² It is worth noting that the allegations made against Alamgir have been refuted by Indian historians, such as Romila Thapar, Satish Chandra, and Zahiruddin Faruki. Satish Chandra argued that there is no record found of royal orders to demolish temples in the very first year of his reign.³³ As far as the case of temple demolition at Vishwanath at Banaras, Mathura, and Thatta is concerned, Satish explains that it was brought to the notice of the emperor that the children of both Hindus and Muslims used to assemble from far-flung areas to study theology under the supervision of Brahmins at these temples. R. P. Tripathi shared a similar viewpoint in this regard, as did Sri Ram Sharma.³⁴ These temples were destroyed to discourage the preaching and teaching of Hindu theology under Brahmins who had started to impart knowledge of Hindu theology even to Muslims. Babur (1483-1530) and Humayun (1530-1556) also demolished temples in times of war.³⁵ Shah Jahan (1592-

²⁴Ibid., 176.

²⁵Chandra, *Historiography*, 153.

²⁶Sharma, *The Mughal Empire*, 230.

²⁷Agarwal Ashvini, *Studies in Mughal History* (Delhi: Shri Jainendra Press, 1983), 16.

²⁸J. L. Mehta, *Advanced Study in the History of Medieval India the Mughal Empire* (Vol. II: 1526-1707) (Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1984), 582.

²⁹Girish Chandra Dwivedi, *The Jāts their Rule in the Mughal Empire* (New Delhi: Arnold Publishers, 1989), 33.

³⁰Chandra, *Historiography*, 151.

³¹K. A. Nilakantra Sastri, *History of India Part II Medieval India* (Madras: S. Wishwanathan, 1950), 235.

³²Audrey Truschke, *Aurangzeb the Man and the Myth* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2017), 12.

³³Chandra, *Historiography*, 156.

³⁴Sharma, *The Religious Policy*, 139.

³⁵Sharma, *The Mughal Empire*, 294.

1666) and Jahangir did the same thing when this matter was brought to their notice.³⁶ Shah Jahan also ordered the demolition of temples in Gujarat, Banaras, and Allahabad, where a temple was converted into a mosque in Ichchhabal.³⁷ The emperor also ordered the preservation of the dignity of prominent temples even in the Deccan territory where he had engaged his army with the Marathas for almost three decades.³⁸ Demolition of temples only took place in the case of the rebellion of Hindus. However, Sharma is of the view that Aurangzeb should have punished those few guilty Brahmans instead of temple destruction. He also continued to grant lands and other favorable provisions to worshipping places of non-Muslim subjects, including the Sikhs shrine at Dehradun.³⁹

Alamgir did not demolish temples in the regions where the entire population was of Hindus, despite knowing their rebellious nature. On 13 October 1681, after having conquered Jaipur, his official, Qamar-ud-Din suggested that all the temples in this territory should be razed to the ground, but Alamgir ordered not to demolish them.⁴⁰ Even, some temples were built during his reign with inscriptions dating back to 1681. Anil Saxena holds the same view that orders of Alamgir with respect to the demolition of temples were related to a few specific cases such as Mathura, Banaras, Thatta, and Multan; where Brahmans were engaged to teach Hindu theology to the children of the Muslims.⁴¹ Shashi Tharoor also argued that temple destruction was politically motivated rather than on religious grounds.⁴²

Romila Thapar, a renowned Indian historian stated that Alamgir initially ordered his troops to demolish temples, but later, he withdrew his orders.⁴³ She did not mention even a single example with respect to the demolition of temples in Gujarat whereas Sarkar stated that Aurangzeb destroyed temples there twice. It was a political culture to destroy temples during the war with the intention of degrading the inhabitants and looting the wealth. Temples held treasures of jewels, gold, and wealth at that time. The prosperity of Somnath made it a target for military attack.⁴⁴ Chaulukya and the Pallava kings also looted and destroyed temples. The Chaulukya king, Ajayadeva, a patron of the Shaivas demolished temples. Several Kashmiri rulers such as Kalhana (minister and 12th-century writer of *Rajtarangini*) looted and plundered sixty-four temples. Romila summed up the whole story in the following words: "There were multiple reasons for attacking temples establishing political supremacy, legitimizing succession, obtaining fiscal benefits, and demonstrating religious differences and it would be worth examining the Turkish attack on temples in the light of these many reasons. What remains unexplained is that, in the process of creating a memory of temple destruction in modern times, only the temples desecrated by Muslim rulers are remembered, those desecrated by Hindu rulers are forgotten."⁴⁵

3. Re-imposition of *Jizya*

The second allegation made against Alamgir by the Indian historians is the re-imposition of *jizya*, which caused resentment among the Hindus and paved the way for the rebellion of Shivaji. He also faced criticism from his Muslim courtiers. Even, his eldest sister Jahanara Begum (1614-81)

³⁶Sharma, *The Religious Policy*, 137.

³⁷Srivastava, *Policies of The Great Mughals*, 100.

³⁸Chandra, *Historiography*, 156.

³⁹Ibid., 156.

⁴⁰Sharma, *The Religious Policy*, 146.

⁴¹Anil Saxena, *Great Mughal* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 2007), 134.

⁴²Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire What the British did to India* (New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2016), 135.

⁴³Thapar, *Somanatha*, 65.

⁴⁴Ibid., 94.

⁴⁵Ibid., 217.

opposed this move. *Jizya* is levied on non-Muslim subjects permanently living in an Islamic state under the injunctions of Islam. Alamgir was not the first emperor in the history of India who imposed *jizya*. It was levied on non-Muslims ever since the inception of Islamic rule in India. The early Muslim rulers exempted Brahmans from this tax, but Firuz Shah Tughlaq (r.1351-88) imposed it on Brahmans too.⁴⁶ Alauddin Khilji also levied *jizya* upon the peasants.⁴⁷ Sometimes, it was withdrawn as per the wishes of the emperor to appease his non-Muslim subjects. However, the Hindu historians argued that the re-imposition of *jizya* by Aurangzeb was one of the foremost causes of the downfall of the Mughal Empire.

Jadunath Sarkar, who labeled Alamgir as a religious fanatic, opined that he imposed this tax to humiliate Hindus. He ordered that taxpayer must come on foot and pay their tax standing, while the receiver should be seated.⁴⁸ The re-imposition of *jizya* was to put pressure on Hindus to increase the strength of Muslims.⁴⁹ Sharma also shared a similar idea that Alamgir not only re-imposed this tax but also lowered the status of Hindus in the administrative machinery of the empire.⁵⁰ Nilakantra, in this regard, said that he re-imposed *jizya* in April 1679. Hindus protested against the imposition of this tax; nevertheless, they were trodden down by elephants. Several of them converted to Islam to avoid the wrath of the emperor.⁵¹ Dwivedi gave a similar statement that much hated *jizya* was re-imposed, which caused increasing bitterness among the Hindus and tended them to rebellion.⁵² Ashvini stated that religious festivals and pilgrimage were stopped and *jizya* was re-imposed to heighten the degradation of the Hindus.⁵³ Srivastava argues that the re-imposition of *jizya* was to penalize Hindus.⁵⁴ Sharma says that Alamgir re-imposed *jizya* accompanied by several social and economic restrictions keeping in view encouraging large conversion to Islam.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Sharma argued that Shivaji protested the re-imposition of *jizya* and wrote a letter to Aurangzeb to withdraw his order.⁵⁶ Sri Ram goes on to say that *jizya* was imposed on Brahmans, non-Brahmans, officials, non-officials, clerks, and warriors.⁵⁷ These historians narrated the Mughal history with a nationalist perspective. It seems that these writers had developed nationalist grudges against Aurangzeb, which led them to label him as an anti-Hindu ruler.

3.1. Justification of *Jizya*

Indian historians asserted that Aurangzeb wanted to establish a puritanical state. For that purpose, he re-imposed *jizya* coupled with the abolition of several un-Islamic taxes and the promulgation of Islamic ordinances. Irfan Habib argued that the actual role of Islam in shaping the polity and religious policies was extremely limited.⁵⁸ This move was not the result of the religious outlook of Alamgir. He did not intend to impose *jizya*. This administrative-cum-religious development took place in the 12th year of his rule. He did not want to humiliate the non-Muslim

⁴⁶Sharma, *The Religious Policy*, 151-152.

⁴⁷Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, ed., *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Volume I: c.1200-c.1750 (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1950), 67.

⁴⁸Sarkar, *A Short History of Aurangzeb*, 156.

⁴⁹Ibid., 180.

⁵⁰Sharma, *Studies in Medieval Indian History* (Delhi: Aryabushan Press, 1956), 292.

⁵¹Nilakantra, *History of India*, 235.

⁵²Dwivedi, *The Jāts their role in the Mughal Empire*, 33.

⁵³Agrawal, *Studies in Mughal India*, 19.

⁵⁴Srivastava, *Policies of the Great Mughals*, 108.

⁵⁵Sharma, *History of Modern India*, 4.

⁵⁶Sharma, *The Mughal Empire*, 250.

⁵⁷Ibid., 153.

⁵⁸Irfan Habib and Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, eds., *Muslims in India (a miscellany) Vol. III* (Lahore: Alhamra Art Press, 1985), 136.

subjects by re-imposing *jizya*. It was suggested by his noble Anayat Khan.⁵⁹ Furthermore, he exempted monks, women, and children, the physically handicapped, indigent, and government servants from paying this tax.⁶⁰ He also abolished *jizya* in 1705, but no Indian historian has mentioned it except Chandra.⁶¹ Srivastava gave a similar statement that monks, visually impaired persons, children, and beggars, which were not bound to pay *jizya*.⁶² On the other hand, Firuz Tughlaq (1309-1388) and Alauddin Khilji did not spare even Brahmans from levying *jizya*.

Furthermore, no Indian historian spoke of his leniency towards his non-Muslim subjects. He ceased more than eighty taxes that were levied prior to his rule by his predecessors. Chandra took the view that his measure was both political and ideological in nature. From the ideological point of view, he wanted *ulama* to his side by giving them jobs as the collectors of *jizya*. From the political perspective, he was hopeful to get their support against his conflict with Rajputs and Marathas.⁶³ Thus, it was an ideological and political move, not a religious one. The struggle of the Marathas and the revolt of the Rajputs were primarily because of political reasons.⁶⁴ Saxena opined that the emperor ceased several taxes resulting in the remission of the state exchequer. Inayat Khan suggested the re-imposition of *jizya* to raise another source of revenues, which would show that it was primarily a fiscal measure. Being the dominant force in the court, the *ulama* endorsed this suggestion.⁶⁵ Aurangzeb grabbed the opportunity to carry it out by the injunctions of Islam. Sastri also seconded his move that Aurangzeb remitted nearly eighty taxes keeping in view the goodwill of his subjects.⁶⁶

Even Jadunath Sarkar, who was highly critical of the religious policies of Aurangzeb partially confessed that he exempted women, children below fourteen, and slaves. Cripples, visually impaired persons, and lunatics were required to pay only when they became wealthy. Monks were also untaxed if they were poor.⁶⁷ Thus, it illustrates that Alamgir did not intend to re-impose *jizya*; it was suggested by his nobles and *ulama* at the court. There is no example, even among his critics, where Aurangzeb forcibly levied *jizya*. He spared those who were unable to pay this tax. It was simply a state order aimed at winning the support of orthodox Muslims against his non-Muslim rivals. His orders remained in practice only in the vicinity of the capital and metropolitan cities. Neither had he aimed to persecute his non-Muslim subjects nor burden them with this tax.

4. Deprivation of Hindus from State Services

The third allegation made by Indian historians against Aurangzeb is the deprivation of Hindus from the state services during his rule. Jadunath is again at the forefront of accusing Aurangzeb that he deprived Hindus of state services. Thus, he deprived himself of the best fighting force of Rajputs.⁶⁸ In 1670 an ordinance was issued, directing all governors to dismiss their Hindu head clerks and accountants, replacing them with Muslims. Sharma made a similar argument that Hindus were not treated equally in the state services with certain appointments being made on religious grounds. Muslim servants refused to serve under the Hindu superior nobles.⁶⁹ He also pointed out that Aurangzeb started reducing the number of Hindu *mansabdars* holding high positions. Neither were

⁵⁹Sharma, *The Religious Policy*, 153.

⁶⁰Chandra, *Historiography*, 157.

⁶¹Ibid., 157.

⁶²Srivastava, *Policies of the Great Mughals*, 81.

⁶³Chandra, *Historiography*, 157.

⁶⁴Sharma, *History of Modern India*, 4.

⁶⁵Saxena, *Great Mughals*, 134.

⁶⁶Sastri, *History of India Part II-Medieval India*, 231.

⁶⁷Sarkar, *A Short History of Aurangzeb 1618-1707*, 156-157.

⁶⁸Ibid., 182.

⁶⁹Sharma, *Studies in Medieval Indian History*, 292.

they shouldered the responsibility of discharging military duties, nor were they called upon to hold executive offices.⁷⁰

Furthermore, no Hindu was to be given a high *mansab* (rank) in the revenue department and the army.⁷¹ Dwivedi holds the view that his religious persecution resulted in the exclusion of Hindus from the public offices.⁷² After the death of Jaswant Singh of Marwar and Jai Singh of Amber, the emperor made sure not to assign any Hindu a high *mansab* and not to appoint any Hindu in the revenue department as assistant to departmental heads.⁷³ He intentionally lowered the status of Hindus by decreasing their strength in the administrative machinery of the empire. He did not allow them to retain their hereditary *jagīrs* after the death of their predecessors in the case of the death of the rulers of the Amber and Marwar states. The emperor also issued an order addressing Muslim servants not to serve under any of the Hindu nobles. Hindu historians have narrated that the deprivation of Marathas, Rajputs, Jāts, and Satnamis resulted in their rebellion against the crown, which led to the gradual downfall of the empire.

4.1. Counter Arguments

Since the inception of Muslim rule in India, the Muslim rulers ranging from Alauddin Khilji, Firuz Shah Tughlaq,⁷⁴ Babur, and Akbar to Aurangzeb had deployed Hindus into the administration of the state. They earned fame and received honors from the Muslim monarchs on the basis of their performance. They also dismissed and relieved them of their duties when their services were no longer needed. Aurangzeb neither dismissed nor issued any such order of not assigning high *mansabs* to the Hindus with few exceptions. He encouraged each segment of society to join the state services. He deployed more Hindus than his predecessors did. Both Jahangir and Shah Jahan recognized the services and importance of the Marathas in the South and recruited them into the state services but with limited success.⁷⁵ Aurangzeb even honored those Maratha leaders who did not accept his political suzerainty, such as Shivaji (1627-80) and his son Sambhuji (1657-89). He did not discriminate against any of his noble factions, he appointed and promoted his officials by sheer dint of their hard work.

The reign of Alamgir was divided into two phases; the first 1658-79 and the second 1679-1707. During the first phase, the Hindus constituted 21.6% of Mughal *mansabdars* of the rank of 1000 and above, they constituted 31.6% during the last phase of his rule.⁷⁶ Racial and religious composition of provincial governors during the second phase of his reign followed by Turanis at 25.5%, Iranis at 13.4, Afghans at 6.6, Indian Muslims at 13.4, other Muslims at 12.3, and Hindus at 19.2, respectively.⁷⁷ If one compares the statistics of both Akbar and Aurangzeb concerning providing *mansabs* of 5000 and above. Akbar whom Hindus considered national king gave only one Hindu the *mansab* of 7000 and two Hindus of 5000. On the other hand, Aurangzeb gave *mansab* of 7000 to three Hindus, *mansab* of 6000 to four Hindus, and *mansab* of 5000 to sixteen Hindus.⁷⁸ For the rank of 500 to 5000, Akbar appointed 32 whereas Aurangzeb employed 104 Hindus.⁷⁹ Hindus stood

⁷⁰Sharma, *The Religious Policy*, 134.

⁷¹Sharma, *The Mughal Empire*, 306.

⁷²Dwivedi, *The Jāts their Role in the Mughal Empire*, 33.

⁷³Srivastava, *Policies of the Great Mughals*, 107.

⁷⁴Irfan Habib, *Essays in Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perception* (New Delhi: Tulika, 1995), 86.

⁷⁵Chandra, *Historiography*, 160.

⁷⁶Ali, *Mughal India Studies*, 207.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 265.

⁷⁸Sharma, *The Religious Policy*, 68-69, 178-180.

⁷⁹Zahiruddin Faruki, *Aurangzeb His Life and Times* (Lahore: Al-Beruni, 1977), 567.

second in the racial and religious composition of provincial *mansabdars* when Aurangzeb had devoted all his energies to rooting them out. Even in this wartime scenario, he used to induct them into the state services. The allegation that Alamgir excluded Hindus from the state services relates to an order sent to *Subedar* in 1671 that Hindus should not be recruited as clerks and accountants in the revenue administration. However, the order was soon withdrawn, and decided that half of the Hindus should be employed and the same goes for the Muslims.⁸⁰ This decision was made on the grounds that Hindu clerks and accountants had monopolized the revenue department and engaged themselves in corrupt practices.

This was the only letter that was used by Indian historians to portray Aurangzeb as anti-Hindu. The emperor was so pleased with the Marathas in the times of war, when they submitted and accepted his political suzerainty; that nine out of thirteen Maratha chiefs were given the *mansab* of 5000.⁸¹ Hindu historians also alleged that he dismissed court painters most of which were Hindus. Certain paintings were destroyed because the practice of this art was prohibited by Islam. However, the emperor pensioned these painters and arranged for their employment by provincial governors in their respective regions.⁸² This indicates that he was not against the employment of Hindus at the court but was focused on restricting the practice of painting and music at the court. Painting and music were banned only to the extent of capital. Painters and musicians were allowed to continue their profession outside the premises of the capital. This allowed the art of painting to flourish at regional level. Neither did Aurangzeb prohibit Brahmans from teaching Hindus nor did he exclude them from the public services.⁸³

Zahiruddin Faruki highlighted the reason for the dismissal of Hindus from public services in these words: “The army is treated by the Hindu clerks and drowsy writers as more degraded than a fire-worshipping slave and more unclean than the dog of a Jew. Whenever that forked-tongued cobra, their pen, brings its head out of the hole of the inkpot, it does not write on the account book of their dark hearts any letter except to pounce upon and snatch away the subsistence of the soldiers. Indeed, when their tongue begins to move in the hole of their mouth, it does not spit out anything except curtailing the stipends of the soldiery.”⁸⁴

The Indian historians have presented biased opinions on the religious bigotry of Aurangzeb but his actions do not align with this characterization. He tried his best to appease factional politics by promulgating religious policies in the 12th year of his rule. He prolonged his rule and expanded the territorial extent of his Empire under the cloak of religion. For instance, he did not re-impose *jizya* during the first decade of his rule. In 1670, he started confronting the Rajputs and the Marathas in Rajputana and Deccan respectively. He re-imposed *jizya* in 1669 to win over the Muslim clergy. After the conquest of Shia states Bijapur and Golconda and the crushing of Marathas, he abolished *jizya* in 1705. He was shrewd enough to play off the religious sentiments of his subjects irrespective of Hindus and Muslims. The portrayal of his religious policies by Indian historians as anti-Hindu, fanatical, and bigoted had more to do with political and historical biases than with his true religious beliefs.

5. Conclusion

This study indicated that Indian historians have left no stone unturned to propagate the religious persecution and bigotry of Aurangzeb (Mughal emperor). Hindus had been subject to Muslim rule for centuries. During this period, they suffered in several ways, such as by forced conversion, temple

⁸⁰Srivastava, *Policies of the Great Mughals*, 107.

⁸¹Sharma, *The Religious Policies*, 133.

⁸²Sharma, *The Mughal Empire*, 383.

⁸³Saxena, *Great Mughals*, 137.

⁸⁴Faruki, *His Life and Times*, 191.

destruction, dismissal from state services, and re-imposition of *jizya*, ban on their social customs, religious rites, and discriminatory behavior. Furthermore, the British colonial historians attempted to antagonize Hindus against Muslims. Romila Thapar has rightly said that Hindu-Muslim ideological differences were rooted in colonial interpretation of the Indian past. Thus, personal grudges developed against the Muslim rulers over the course of centuries. Resultantly, Hindu historians have chosen a Muslim ruler without any rational grounds whom they could allegedly make responsible for all past sins done to them.

As an orthodox ruler, Aurangzeb became the convenient choice for them to attribute their past grievances. As a ruler, he was not a religious fanatic; his policies were selectively highlighted, misrepresented, and misinterpreted. Neither of his religious policies nor his political actions discriminated against any of his noble factions. His policies have no direct relevance to the disintegration of the Mughal Empire. The decline of the empire started almost three decades after his death. The rise of petty independent states such as Bengal, Awadh, and Hyderabad gave vent to the colonial establishment. Irfan Habib has rightly said that its collapse contributed to the emergence of a new form of property rights in land which disrupted the network of revenue. The lack of revenue weakened the state structure, which led to the collapse of the Mughal Empire. The absence of *asabiyyah* (solidarity) among the ranks of *mansabdars*, the rise of independent states, and the establishment of colonial rule have no little relevance to the religious persecution and bigotry of Aurangzeb Alamgir.

The theory of *asabiyyah* among the ranks of the Mughal elite caused the gradual decline of the Mughal rule. Ranges from Babur to Jahandar Shah (r. 1712), no Mughal emperor appointed Indian *Mir Bakhshi* (army chief) other than Iranis and Turanis who were their kith and kin. The post of *Mir Bakhshi* was second to the emperor in terms of powers. Farrukh Siyar (r. 1713-19) gave this post to Syed Hussain Ali and his elder brother became vizier. Thus, he became *de facto* ruler and entrusted unlimited powers to both brothers. They introduced factional politics at the court. They annoyed nobles and got three Mughal emperors imprisoned and murdered. It changed the homogenous nature of Mughal nobility to heterogeneous on ethnic lines which paved the way for the emergence of independent states by those nobles who were the administrative perils of the state. In the absence of *asabiyyah* among the noble ranks, the Mughal Empire started declining. In this context, Aurangzeb's religious policies and alleged bigotry had little direct relevance to the disintegration of the Mughal Empire.

Conflict of Interest

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