

The Religious Impact of Aurangzeb's Policies on the Stability of the Mughal Empire

Introduction

Aurangzeb's religious policies marked a turning point in Mughal history. Unlike Akbar, who promoted tolerance and integration of different communities, Aurangzeb pursued a strict Sunni orthodox approach. These policies created deep resentment among non-Muslims as well as divisions within the Muslim community, undermining the empire's stability.

Impact on Hindus and Rajputs

Aurangzeb revived the jizya tax on Hindus and ordered the destruction of temples, which offended Hindu religious sentiments. The Rajputs, who had been loyal Mughal allies under Akbar and Jahangir, turned hostile. Their alienation weakened Mughal control over Rajputana and reduced Hindu participation in imperial service. This was a serious blow to the empire's inclusive character.

Impact on Sikhs and Marathas

The execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur angered the Sikh community and transformed it into a militarized force under Guru Gobind Singh. Similarly, the Marathas resisted Aurangzeb's authority, partly due to religious grievances and partly due to heavy taxation from his long wars. Both groups became long-term political and military threats, draining the Mughal treasury and strength.

Impact on Muslims and Nobility

Aurangzeb also divided the Muslim community by favoring Sunni ulema and sidelining Shia officials. This created sectarian bias within the nobility, reducing the inclusiveness of the Mughal administration. Many nobles resented this favoritism, which weakened their loyalty to the emperor. The Mughal claim of ruling over a diverse empire lost credibility.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Aurangzeb's religious policies played a destructive role in destabilizing the Mughal Empire. By alienating Hindus, Rajputs, Sikhs, and Marathas, and by creating divisions among Muslims themselves, Aurangzeb weakened the social and political foundations of the empire. His religious intolerance drained resources, fueled rebellions, and destroyed the pluralistic tradition that had once been the source of Mughal strength.