

SULH -I- KHUL

What is it?

Sulh-i kul is an Arabic term literally meaning “peace with all,” “universal peace,” or “absolute peace,” drawn from a Sufi mystic principle. As applied by the third Mughal Emperor of India, Akbar (who reigned 1556-1605), it described a peaceful and harmonious relationship among different religions. In keeping with efforts to mesh the diverse populations of his realm, Akbar proposed unity and peace among all human beings – sulh-i kul. The concept implies not just tolerance, but also the sorts of balance, civility, respect, and compromise required to maintain harmony among a diverse population.

Sulh-i kul was originally used during Akbar's reign and sometimes after him in the Mughal court and among some Sufi movements in India. Today the term is used primarily by historians, art historians, and scholars researching in the field of Mughal culture and Sufi movements of India, and less so by other scholars and peace activists. Fit with intercultural dialogue? In the field of interfaith dialogue, tolerance plays an important role in constructive interactions, so the concept of sulh-i kul has great potential relevance to discussions of intercultural dialogue specifically, and cultural diversity more generally.

Sulh-i kul was invented to describe universal peace, specifically with regard to interfaith tolerance and equal treatment for all, regardless of religious beliefs. Given continuing religious conflicts matched to the reality of cultural pluralism, it seems useful to resurrect this historic term as a modern tool. The concept also has potential for discussions of such concrete contexts as managing a multicultural workforce.

Akbar ruled with a social and religious toleration that was relative, not absolute, and was based on his concept of sulh-i-kul (for the general good of all people) which built on his liberal views of religion.

Akbar took the Sufi mystic notion of Sulh-i-kul and transformed it to become a principle denoting amity- within a culturally pluralistic India.

Muhammad Abdul Baki, in his history of Akbar's reign, states: Akbar extended toleration to all religions and creed, and would recognize no difference between them, his object being to unite all men in a common bond of peace.

Sulh- i-kul was to become his method of judging what was legally right or wrong within his empire and was created because Akbar understood that he was trying to build political institutions for predominately non-Muslim society. Thus, in his empire, the beliefs and opinions of the orthodox

mullahs were not to be the critical test for his rule because he wanted all of his subjects to be judged equally before the law.

Akbar established separation of state and religion and opened government positions to members of all religions. He abolished the jizya on non-Muslims and the forced conversion of prisoners of war to Islam. He converted the meetings of Muslim clerics into open discussions between Islam, Hindu, Parsi and Christian scholars and in 1579 issued an edict that made him the highest authority in religious matters.

In the civil courts Akbar abolished laws that discriminated against non-Muslims. He raised the Hindu court system to official status side by side with Muslim law and reformed the legislation with the aim to maximize common laws for Muslim and Hindu citizens.

To begin with, Akbar first freed himself from existing methods of kingship. He chose to adopt a style which maintained Muslim beliefs while uniting Muslim and Hindu systems of governance. This sort and synergetic approach had been adopted in other lands by his Mongol forefathers to great effect.

To separate himself from the filed past standards of Muslim rule, Akbar waged war against the mullahs (experts in Muslim religious matters) for control over social and political policy in his empire. In the past, orthodox mullah governments had imposed their version of orthodox Islamic polity, and their personal opinions, onto all of the subjects. Akbar's drive to establish his full control over the mullahs demonstrates clearly his goal of a multi-cultural state which would incorporate Hindus into all levels of government.

(Please find more detail study <https://selfstudyhistory.com/2015/01/28/akbars-religious-views-and-social-reforms/>)

