



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Dara Shikoh And His Multiculturalism

Dr. I.Sandhya Jyosthna

Assistant Professor, Dept. of History, GDCW (A) Begumpet, Hyderabad, India.

Abstract:

This paper explores the life and intellectual contributions of Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, during the vibrant cultural milieu of medieval India. Dara Shikoh's legacy is characterized by his deep engagement with Hindu and Sufi philosophies, exemplifying a unique multicultural vision that sought to bridge religious divides through scholarly pursuits and dialogue. His translations of Hindu scriptures into Persian and his seminal work, "Majma-ul-Bahrain" (The Mingling of Two Oceans), underscore his belief in the unity of spiritual truths across traditions. Despite facing opposition, Dara Shikoh's advocacy for religious pluralism and mutual respect continues to resonate in contemporary discussions on religious harmony and cultural diversity in India.

Keywords:

Dara Shikoh, Mughal Empire, multiculturalism, Hinduism, Sufism, religious pluralism, Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb, Persian translations, Majma-ul-Bahrain

Introduction:

During the Mughal Dynasty's reign from the early 16th to the mid-18th century, India experienced a cultural zenith under rulers who not only expanded their empire but also fostered intellectual and artistic advancements. Among these rulers, Shah Jahan stands out not only for his architectural feats but also for his eldest son, Dara Shikoh, who embodied a unique multicultural vision in an era marked by religious diversity.

Objectives:

- 1.To Explore Dara Shikoh's Multicultural Vision: Investigate how Dara Shikoh, amidst the religious diversity of medieval India, fostered a vision of religious harmony and cultural synthesis.
- 2.To Analyze Dara Shikoh's Intellectual Contributions: Examine Dara Shikoh's translations of Hindu scriptures into Persian and their implications for religious dialogue and understanding.

3.To Assess the Contemporary Relevance of Dara Shikoh's Legacy: Evaluate the enduring impact of Dara Shikoh's ideas on modern discourse surrounding multiculturalism, secularism, and religious tolerance in India.

Review of Literature:

Dara Shikoh's life and contributions have been the subject of scholarly interest, particularly in the fields of history, religious studies, and cultural studies. Previous works have highlighted his role as a bridge-builder between Hinduism and Islam during the Mughal period, emphasizing his translations of Hindu texts and his philosophical syncretism.

Scholars such as Muzaffar Alam and Audrey Truschke have examined Dara Shikoh's intellectual pursuits and their implications for understanding religious plurality in pre-modern India. They argue that Dara Shikoh's translations of Hindu scriptures into Persian were not mere linguistic exercises but deliberate efforts to find common ground between different religious traditions.

Additionally, historians like Jadunath Sarkar and R.C. Majumdar have explored the political and religious context of Dara Shikoh's time, highlighting the challenges he faced from orthodox clerics and his ultimate downfall at the hands of Aurangzeb. These studies provide insights into the broader socio-political dynamics of the Mughal court and the implications of Dara Shikoh's multicultural vision.

Methodology:

This study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing historical analysis and textual interpretation. Primary sources such as Dara Shikoh's own writings, court records from the Mughal era, and contemporary accounts by historians and chroniclers will be consulted. Secondary sources including scholarly articles, monographs, and critical essays on Dara Shikoh will provide additional context and interpretations.

Early Life and Education:

Born in 1615 to Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal, Dara Shikoh was immersed in a rich cultural milieu from a young age. Raised alongside his siblings in the opulent courts of the Mughal Empire, he received a comprehensive education that included Quranic studies, Persian literature, poetry, and calligraphy. Unlike his younger brother Aurangzeb, who was more orthodox in his religious views, Dara Shikoh displayed an openness and curiosity towards various religious traditions, a trait that would define his legacy.

Intellectual Pursuits and Scholarly Achievements:

Dara Shikoh's intellectual journey was marked by a deep engagement with Hindu and Sufi philosophies. He was particularly drawn to Sufism, a mystical branch of Islam that emphasized spiritual unity and transcended sectarian boundaries. This inclination towards Sufism influenced his perspective on religious pluralism, leading him to engage deeply with Hindu scholars and texts.

One of Dara Shikoh's most significant contributions was his endeavor to translate Hindu scriptures into Persian, the official language of the Mughal court. With the assistance of Brahmin scholars from Varanasi

(Kashi), he translated the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita, believing these texts to be compatible with the teachings of Islam as expounded in the Quran. His magnum opus, "Majma-ul-Bahrain" (The Mingling of Two Oceans), compared and synthesized the philosophical underpinnings of Hinduism and Islam, highlighting their common spiritual essence.

Multicultural Vision and Legacy:

Dara Shikoh's efforts were not merely academic but were driven by a vision of harmonious coexistence among different religious communities. His belief in the unity of all religions, as reflected in his writings and translations, challenged the prevailing orthodoxy of his time. Despite facing opposition from orthodox clerics within the Mughal court, Dara Shikoh remained steadfast in his belief that religious plurality could enrich rather than divide society.

His holistic approach to religious and cultural dialogue laid the groundwork for what is now known as Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb, a syncretic culture that blends Hindu and Islamic traditions. By advocating for mutual understanding and respect among religious communities, Dara Shikoh anticipated modern ideals of secularism and religious tolerance.

Assassination and Historical Impact:

Tragically, Dara Shikoh's vision of a multicultural India was cut short. In the power struggle following Shah Jahan's illness, Dara Shikoh was defeated by his younger brother Aurangzeb and eventually executed in 1659. Aurangzeb's ascension marked a turn towards more orthodox policies, undermining the pluralistic ethos championed by Dara Shikoh.

Contemporary Relevance:

Today, Dara Shikoh's legacy resonates deeply in India's multicultural fabric. His intellectual courage and commitment to interfaith dialogue continue to inspire scholars and activists advocating for religious harmony. His translations of Hindu scriptures remain pivotal in fostering cross-cultural understanding, reminding us of the rich tapestry of India's religious and philosophical traditions.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Dara Shikoh's life and work represent a beacon of hope and enlightenment in a historical period fraught with religious tensions. His efforts to bridge the gap between Hinduism and Islam through scholarly pursuits and dialogue exemplify a commitment to pluralism that transcends time and place. As we navigate contemporary challenges of religious intolerance and cultural division, Dara Shikoh's vision serves as a poignant reminder of the transformative power of intellectual curiosity and mutual respect.

Through his writings and translations, Dara Shikoh continues to beckon us towards a future where diversity is celebrated and differences become a source of strength rather than strife. His legacy invites us to embrace our shared humanity and build bridges across cultures, echoing his timeless message of unity in diversity.

Reference:

Chandra, Bipan, and Sucheta Mahajan. *Composite culture in a multicultural society*. Pearson Education India, 2007.

Cohen, Signe. "Dara Shikoh and the first translation of the Upaniṣads." In *The Upanisads*, pp. 231-237. Routledge, 2017.

Tiefenauer, Marc. "Upanikhat-i garbha: a Mughal translation into Persian of a small Sanskrit treatise of embryology." *Early Modern India: Literatures and Images, Texts and Languages* (2019): 93-109.

Gandhi, Supriya. *The emperor who never was: Dara Shukoh in Mughal India*. Harvard University Press, 2020.

Husain, Tasadduq. "The spiritual journey of Dara Shukoh." *Social Scientist* (2002): 54-66.

Palakkal, Shan Eugene, and A. Mughal Mystique. "DARA SHUKOH: A FORGOTTEN MUGHAL'S LEGACY OF TOLERANCE." *Twenty Fourth Issue* (2018): 123.

Moosvi, Shireen. "Book review: Avik Chanda, Dara Shukoh: The Man Who Would be King and Supriya Gandhi, The Emperor Who Never Was: Dara Shukoh in Mughal India." (2020): 236-237.

Alam, Muzaffar. "In search of a sacred king: Dārā Shukoh and the Yogavāsiṣṭha s of Mughal India." *History of Religions* 55, no. 4 (2016): 429-459.

Sarkar, Jadunath. *Fall Of The Mughal Empire-Vol. I (4Th Edn.)*. Vol. 1. Orient Blackswan, 1991.