

DARA SHIKOUH AND HIS MODEL OF INTER-RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING: AN ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

Prince Muhammad Dara Shikouh held two-sided position in Indian history as a political figure and as an intellectual personality. However, his political carrier was short and shadowed with failures. However, his contribution toward cultural legacy of Indian intellectual history is profound and amazing especially in the field of inter-religious dialogue. He was the icon of cultural pluralism. Religious exclusim, radical ideology, religious fundamentalism, and communal forces have shadowed the ethos of cultural pluralism and secular tendencies of contemporary world, hence put the peace of the planet in threat. Before Dara Shikouh, many saints, reformers, and liberal ideologists tried to promote mutual cooperation and peaceful coexistence between adherents of various religions, cultures, and ethnicities, but Dara's efforts were unique in various manners in this regard. He has given a model of religious toleration, which was short lived but still has relevance and can be helpful in many ways in the present times for the promotion of socio-religious harmony between Muslims and Hindus. The present study will try to examine and explore the contribution of Dara Shikouh in the promotion of inter-religious understanding in Indian context through historical analysis of his thought.

Keywords: Cultural legacy, Religious exclusim, Cultural pluralism, Inter-religious dialogue.

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INTRODUCTION

Prince Muhammad Dara Shikouh was the third, but the first male child of Emperor Shah Jahan from the womb of Mumtaz Mahal. He was born at the historic city of Ajmer on 19th Safar 1024 A.H, that is, March 20, 1615 C.E as recorded in the introduction of *Sakīnat-ul-Awliya* (Badakhashi, 1981). The education of the prince begins at the very early age of six. From the records of *Padshah-Nama*, *Sakīnat-ul-Awliya*, and *Amal-i-sālih*, it has appeared that he received his early education from Mullah Abdul Latif Sultanpuri (Qanungo, 1935). Dara's early education was similar like those of the average Mughal princes such as learning of Quran, Persian poetry, and history of Timur with special focus on calligraphy. Therefore, Dara was educated in the very ordinary manner of Mughal system, no sort of any distinctive arrangement was made for his education by Shah Jahan (Qanungo, 1935). He learned Arabic, Persian, *Tafsir* and *Fiqh* from Hazarat Akhund Mirak. Mirak Sheikh was the utmost ranked Ulma of his age. He was also one of notable the disciples of great *Qādiri* Sufi Miyan Mir (Rahmatullah). Mirak Sheikh was also a *Zāhid*, *Arif*, and *Sufi* of highest caliber, thus became spiritual guide of Dara also. Although his first teacher was Mullah Abdul Latif Sultanpuri but surprisingly, Dara had mentioned him nowhere in his works, while, on the other hand, he had showed extremely high respect and regard to Miyan Mir and Mullah Shah Badakhashi in his work *Sakīnat-ul-Awliya* (Badakhashi, 1981).

After getting education in these subjects, he latter also learnt Greek, Roman and Standard categories of calligraphy. However, the education which always thrilled him was the spiritual knowledge. Dara received Spiritual education from various Muslim mystic Saints including some Hindu divines (Wajid, n.d). Chief among them was Hazarat Mian Mir (rh) a Qadriya Sufi of Lahore, Mir Badakhashi (rh), and Baba Lal Das. They have profound role in shaping his outlook and spiritual thought. Although Shah Jahan was intending to train Dara as a heir apparent, a great statesman like Alexander the great as it is witnessed by historical evidences that Shah Jahan had conferred on him the title of *Shah Buland Iqbal* (means king of great fortune), but the Prince was inclined toward Spiritualism, intellectualism, and Scholasticism; hence, he wishes to be a great thinker (Wajid, n.d). Dara was a profound scholar, prolific writer, poet, and calligrapher with a scholarly bent of mind. However, as a statesman, unlike his ancestors such as Akbar the Great (1551-1605), Jahangir (1605-1628), and Shah Jahan (1628-1658), he was incapable

and hardly possessed the skill of dealing with political hardships. No doubt, the crown prince also tried to test his military abilities on the battleground against his young and battle-hardened brother Aurangzeb in the war of succession at Samugarh. But he could not stand against his young martial zeal brother, who badly defeated him in the war of succession. Latter executed him on the verdict heard by the council of Ulma, who charged Dara with committing heresy in 1069 A. H.

Dara Shikouh occupies double-sided position in Indian history as a politician and as an intellectual figure. Nevertheless, he is remembered in Indian history much as a philosopher king than Emperor's Son (Hasrat, 1953). With the emergence of a Muslim state in North India (the Sultanate of Delhi) in the 13th century Christian era, more channels opened for cross-cultural contacts between people of central Asia and inhabitants of India, which had otherwise been going on since early times in some form or another, but this intensified the process. As a result, such cross-cultural contacts gave birth to a cosmopolitan pattern of culture in north India. The reflections of that composite culture were reflected not only in social spheres but were reflexive even in the spiritual, literary, and cultural traditions of India. One such reflection can be seen in the spiritual philosophy propagated by Bhakti saints during mediaeval times. (Mushtaq & Lateef, 2013).

Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To explore the religious model proposed by Dara Shikouh
2. To examine various influences on Dara Shikouh's religious thought.

Research questions

1. What is the significance/relevance of Dara's religious views in context of current Indian society?
2. How Dara Shikouh is an inspiration for religious scholars?
3. How Dara contributed to the Indian cultural history?

METHODS

This study will be conducted by reviewing the literature on the specified topic authored by authors from diverse backgrounds. In addition, Dara Shikouh's religious beliefs will be examined in light of his own religion's fundamental sources. The data have been collected from both

online and offline sources, including public libraries, j-store, Google scholar, research gate, online libraries, journals, and dissertations. The investigation will be conducted using historical analysis.

Religious thought of dara shikouh

Dara Shikouh's religious convictions and his drive to have equitable relations with Hindus are products of a complex interplay of events are the result of a number of factors, such as his family background and upbringing, his learning inquisitiveness, his involvement with Sufism, his association with Saints, Mashaikhs, Sufi teachers, Hindu Yogis, and Saniyasis, as well as his engagement with religious and philosophical traditions of other communities besides the Quran and the Sunnah. In this sense, the significance of his mystic behaviour is of the utmost importance. Therefore, for a deep understanding of his religious views, it is essential, or rather, a precondition, to understand his ascetic nature and inclination towards Sufism.

Dara shikouh; ascetic nature and sufi inclinations

It is being acknowledged by a vast majority of Scholars that the appropriating nature of Sufism had transformed Islam into a world religion. The most significant component of Sufi way is its use of local languages for preaching to reach out common masses. This appreciation of vernacularization of religious knowledge by Sufis became a strong tool for establishing cross-cultural contacts among people of various denominations. As a result, this method of disseminating the fundamental Islamic message of peace in vernacular languages by Sufis helped establish a liberal atmosphere of inter-religious interactions among the followers of diverse faiths across cultures. (Dey, 2013). So in that, context Sufism could be seen as an effective tool for strengthening communal relations in the society. Prince Muhammad Dara Shikouh belongs to that fraternity who was naturally inclined toward Spiritualism as it is evidenced from the introduction of his *Risāla-i-Haq Numa*, where he had himself mentioned that "I was among those devotees, who were inclined to God naturally, devoid of performance of any sort of austerities. He also admitted that I have got enlightened about the secrecies of God head from the kindness of Saints and God fearing people" (Vasu, 1912). It is evident from his early works that he revered and respected Sufis and their beliefs since his tender age, which later ultimately pushed him towards Sufism. His very first work was on Sufism *Safinat-ul-Awliya* come merely when he was 25 years of age. The inspiration behind writing this work as mentioned by Dara was that it made me extremely sad after finding events related to the lives of saints as scattered in pages; therefore, he decided to compile a book for the same reason. He had discussed all Major Sufi *Silsilās* [orders] of Islam from Prophet Muhammad ﷺ till his own time period devoid of any sectarian mindset. The unique feature of this work is Dara's attention on women as he talked about prophet's ﷺ daughters and some women mystics including Jamāl *Khatoon* Miyan Mir's Sister (Dey, 2013). From his works, it appeared also that Dara displayed unwavering love and affection to Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani [rh]. Expression of which is also found in his choosing the pen name *Qādrī* for himself in his poetry. His 2nd work on Sufism was *Sakinat-ul-Awliya*, in which he expressed his unwavering love and reverence for Miyan Mir (rh) a Qadiri Saint of Lahore and his spiritual guru Mullah Badakhashi (rh). He had described in it the status, life, genealogy, and levels of spiritual perfection achieved by his spiritual master [Sheikh] Mullah Badakhashi and *pīr* (Teacher/guide) of his *pīr* Miyan Mir (rh). His third work was again on Sufism *Risāla-i-Haq Numa* written in 1058 AH, which discussed various stages in the path of Mysticism and the methods required for attaining highest level of spiritual perfection (Wajid, n.d). Dara's fourth work was *Hasanāt-ul-Arifin* or *Shathiyāt* that was written by Dara in 1064 AH, which was also on Sufism. It is the compilation of Ascetic utterances, sayings, and Sufi aphorism of various great Mystics such as Junaid Baghdadi, Bayzid Bistami, Dun-Nun-al-Misri, Abdul Qadir Jilani, Gazali, and Ibn-ul-Arbia, besides sayings of Prophet ﷺ, his Companions and Hindu Saint Baba Lal Das Bayragi (Chaudhuri, 1954). This was first phase of his literary carrier which shows his complete devotion toward Sufism.

Prince Muhammad Dara Shikouh's world view was produced under massive inspiration of Sufi teachings which were very popular in the

east since centuries. The pantheistic ideas of Sufism appeared under straight impact of classical Persian poetry and Dara was much familiar of that (Mushtaq and Latif, 2013). In this regard, the impact of liberal Qadiri Sufi teachings was deep on him. According to Haroon Khalid that, it was the direct effect of Miyan Mir's relation which boosted him toward work for tolerance, because Miyan Mir was himself an open-minded and liberal in approach as result, he was in cordial relations with saints of other religions too. He was close friend of Guru Arjun the 5th Sikh Guru, which, in turn, became latter close friend of Dara Shikouh also (Imam, 2019). Thus, it was natural for prince Dara Shikouh to get fascinated with some religious divines of other faiths such as Baba Lal Das a Hindu saint due to his close association with Miyan Mir (Mishra, 2006).

Furthermore, Qadiri Sufi's was in general believers of doctrine of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud*. According to this, philosophy essence of God is beyond the determination of speculation, reason, and thought. He is absolute, perfect, eternal, invisible, all pervading, and incomprehensible. Every creature including man is nothing but a reflection of God's absolute being. *Who* (means God) is *Himself*, formless, shapeless, and colourless and is not bound by time and space. Divine essence put clothes of different colors and shades but flashing every time same light in every particle of matter and heart (Chaudhuri, 1954). Sufi's used the term "*Hama Ust*" which means every-thing is "He," hence, it denotes that God is manifested in everything. Believing on this doctrine certain Sufis even went to the extent that God is also manifested in Hindu. Therefore, in this condition, Hindu cannot be labeled as "*Kafir*" (Dey, 2013). Such pantheistic Sufi teachings profoundly contributed toward the formation of Dara Shikouh's religious views. Such pantheistic Sufi teachings profoundly contributed to the formation of Dara Shikouh's religious views. As Dara Shikouh was the active Qadiri Sufi, further Mughal emperors in general were staunch believers of *Wujūdi* Philosophy or the philosophy of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud*. Therefore, it became a contributing factor in forming his religious views. His enthusiasm for *Tawhid-i-Wujūdi* can be understood from these verses on the concept of God. According to Dara:

1. Existence of God is like a boundless ocean, men are waves in the water. Look wherever you like, All is He, God is ever face-to-face
2. Nowhere exists anything but God. All you see or know other than him is separate in name, but in essence, it is God (Bilgrami, 2005).

The above verses of Dara Shikouh clearly reflect impact of pantheistic Bhakti teachings and ibn-ul-Arabia's *Wahdat-ul-Wujūd* which has very close affinity with Vedantic pantheism. Due to influence of Vedantic Bhakti Cult, the Qardi Sufis of Punjab believed that the Spiritual Union could be attained by the mercy of God only (Bilgrami, 2005); therefore, spiritual communion could be achieved only through self-less love of God and kindness to his creation. Same was visibly reflected in Dara Shikouh too.

Dara Shikouh had a very distinctive comprehension of basis of Hindu and Islamic Mysticism and recommended that their variances are external only (Ebrahim, 2019). The impact of ibn-ul-Arbia on him must be measured as an essential factor in his understanding of Hindu thought. Dara had also imbibed many pantheistic ideas from Sheikh Muhibullah Allahabadi. With this backdrop Hindu Vedantic texts which were sufficient of pantheistic subject matter, were quit comprehensible and well-known to him. The motivation behind his translation of main Vedantic text of Hinduism the Upanishads were to explore more similarities between Islam and Hindu ideals. He had also communication with some other renowned Sufi's of other orders such as Shāh Fath 'Alī (famous *Qalandar*), Sulaymān Miṣrī Qalandarī, Shāh Muḥammad Dilruba, and Hazrat Bārī which were among his teachers (Ebrahim, 2019).

The universalistic nature of Sufi teachings became the basic source of inspiration for the establishment of mutual cooperation and interaction in medieval Mughal Indian society. Since the inception of Islamic rule in India efforts had been made by various persons, reformers, and groups

to enhance the positive Hindu-Muslim cooperation in multicultural society of India for the mere aim of prevailing peace and stability in the empire. In this regard, the role of Sufis was significant, their teachings of love, Universal brotherhood, peace, and religious toleration connected adherents of various faiths, hence expanded the scope of Sufi Inclusive approach in relation to bring socio-religious harmony in the society. The process of inter-cultural and inter-religious interactions attained new mode under Mughal emperor Akbar the great. He took measures for the translation of Hindu Scriptures such as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, into Persian, an institution called *Maktab Khana* was created for the said purpose. Frequent inter-religious interactions were organized by Akbar, these theological discourses transformed his spiritual life. These inter-religious discourses convinced Akbar that truth is not the monopoly of Islam only rather other religions also possessed elements of truth. Akbar also believed that "constant self-examination was a spiritual exercise of prime importance and that no action should be taken without sound reason." This was how he had tried to tackle the religious differences among his subjects (Dey, 2013).

Sufism has a practice of "wandering" or "traversing the earth." Sufism includes the practice of "wandering" or "traversing the earth." According to this practice, Sufis are supposed to travel to various locations as part of their meditation in order to achieve spiritual perfection. As an outcome, they had more acquaintances with the adherents of other religions than, the theologians, philosophers, *jurists*, and other Muslims. Likewise, they had expectedly a more tolerance than the other Muslims. Hence, the mystical upbringing of Dārā in the *Qādiriyah* Sufi order reinforced the spirit of tolerance and kindness in his approach and made him open minded toward different ideas and traditions (Ebrahim, 2019).

Prince Muhammad Dara Shikouh was the most learned member of Mughal Family as well the greatest intellectual figure of his age. He was not only professional in the domain of scholarship but was also an earnest student of theosophy with a zeal for exploring the element of unity-in-plurality in revealed religions. According to Qanungo the biographer of Dara Shikouh, learning inquisitiveness and philosophical inquiry was with him a component of religious worship and his best prayer to God was his writings. He got convinced that monotheism (*Tawhid*) or the doctrine of divine unity is not the derogative of Islamic religion only but other religions also possess the element of *Tawhid* including Hinduism (Qanungo, 1935).

Dara's belief of Universality of religions and his inter-religious understanding

His intellectual life depicts two visions, initially, he was completely devoted to Sufism but right after 1647 C.E, he dedicated himself toward the study of other religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism. He studies *Bible*, *Psalms*, *the Gospels*, *Pentateuch*, *Gita*, *Vedas*, and so on with the aim to explore the fundamental tenants of these faiths and toning them with principles of Islam (Qanungo, 1935). Dara was staunch believer of universal brotherhood and unity of religions. He translated Upanishads and Bhagwad Gita and established close contacts with Hindu religious divines such as Baba Lal Bas. He even quoted Baba Lal's aphorism in his *Shathiyāt* (1062 A.H) which declared that, "truth is not the monopoly of any one religion" (Haq, 1982, p. 27).

Dara Shikouh's faith on mutual cooperation, inter-religious understanding, universal brotherhood, and unity of religions practically appeared through his famous book *Majma'-ul-Bahrain*, in which he wrote in 1065 A.H. in this work that he expressed his religious views openly. According to Dara Shikouh on the higher reaches of intelligence, there is essentially no difference between Hinduism and Islam (Imam, 2019). He also claims that, "Islam and Infidelity (Hinduism) are galloping on the way toward him; both exclaim: 'He is one and none Shares His Sovereignty'" (Haq, 1982, p. 37). On the matchless and incomparable Face of Almighty, he said are the unparalleled locks of faith such as Islam and Infidelity (Hinduism), but he had with none veiled his beautiful face. He had started his tract on religions *Majma'-ul-Bahrain* with the verse

of *Sanā'ī* as, "in the name of one who hath no name; with whatever name thou Callest Him. He uplifteth His head." (Haq, 1982, p. 37).

The above vision of Dara manifested his faith of Unitarianism, a straight impact of pantheistic ideology of Ibn-ul-Arabia's philosophy and Vedantic pantheistic teachings of Baba Lal Das. He was also a Sufi and Sufis are mostly Unitarians in Islam; hence, their main target is *Tawhid* or unity of God. According to Sufi belief system of attaining top level of spiritual perfection, and respectively, the communion union with God could be reached through various ways. They rather stress on individual efforts of reaching the truth. In other terms according to this belief, there are as many ways to reach God as are Seekers. It is witnessed by the quote of famous Saint Abu Said Fazlullah, who says that, "innumerable are the ways to God, Yet the way is but a single step: take one step out of thyself, that thou mayst arrive at God." Therefore, the doctrine of *Tawhid* or Unitarianism was the main context of Dara lifelong literary journey and complete realization of it was the main goal of Dara Shikouh (Qanungo, 1935, p. "not found"). Such belief system had played an extensive role in making Dara's world outlook.

Majma'-ul-Bahrain is an effort to reconcile Islam and Hinduism on those general truths which are often earmarked due to mere fervor of externalities of faith as argued by Dara Shikouh. In the preface of *Majma'-ul-Bahrain*, he says that after learning the true religion of Sufis and acquiring mystic inspiration, he became thirsted to know truth about principles of monotheists of Indian religions too and when after discourses and deliberations with the religious divines of highest Spiritual perfection and Study of their scriptures, he got convinced that there is no essential difference between Islam and Hinduism mere verbal (Hasrat, 1953).

The central point of Dara's theosophy in simple terminology was the realization of uncompromising Quranic *Tawhid* (monotheism) in the tenet of "Unity in Plurality." He says that in the heart of *Musliman*, there is no space for more than one; either "I" or "He," this tassel must perish at physical as well as spiritual plane for the eternal peace of soul. He says that it is faith of Muslim to fight inside against his "lower self" (*Nafs*) and outside against "others" who do not recognize the oneness of God. Proud Muslim conquers others with his innate ego-ism "I am and no other" and cognizes himself and the unity of God through the strong course of elimination by the logic of the sword. The saint of Islam is always ready to wrestle "others" which look into his heart as dangers (*Khatrat*), and fight with them until he acknowledges them to be wanton pranks of his own self; but outside he meets humanity with unlimited love of his true heart. He conquers God and man by receiving into his bosom and expands himself into the universal person (*Shakhs-i-Kul*) to feel ones with the whole creation and the creator (Qanungo, 1935).

It can be observed from his famous work *Majma'-ul-Bahrain* that he believed on the principle of *Ijtihad* (use of reason to reach on some conclusion independently). He stressed on use of reason "Aql" than blindly following interpretations of traditional *Ulma* (*Islamic scholars*). He was sincerely insightful man and loved to reach on sovereign conclusions after proper understanding, considerations, and deliberations.

The main reason behind the Muslim hostility toward Hindu as believed by Dara was their ignorance of Hindu religious beliefs. Hence, he made arrangements for the translation of their main religious texts into Persian, to make them available for Muslims. *Yogvishta*'s translation was first step in this connection. However, the important translation in this connection was Dara Shikouh's translation of Upanishad's title as *Sirr-i-Akbar*. This was the earliest translation of Sanskrit Upanishads and he has used simple and fluent Persian in this translation. He also consulted the classical commentaries of Upanishads. Although supporting and encouraging the translation of Hindu religious texts had started from the period of Akbar, his aim of promoting mutual-understanding and cooperation to facilitate his rule. While the purpose of Dara doing so was not only political, but he tried to demonstrate that Hindus had a share of truth also (Ebrahim, 2019).

Eclecticism and dara's religious views

The main feature of Dara's religious model was its eclectic nature. In the Indian History of mystical thought, the 17th century Christian era occupies unique position as it witnessed the circulation of two metaphysical ideas *Waḥdat-ul-Wujūd* (unity of Being) *Waḥdat-ul-Shuhud* (unity of manifestation) in the field of Muslim theosophy and this conflicts resulted in the formation of various religious sects, Sufi orders, etc. The main Proponents of *Waḥdat-ul-Wujud* include Muhibbullah Allahabadi, Miyan Mir, Sarmād, and Dara Shikouh. Muhibbullah Allahabadi stands head and shoulders above the rest in debating and popularizing the notion of *Waḥdat-ul-Wujūd* in the public realm. His coherent and well-organized exploration of the ideas of *Waḥdat-ul-Wujud* won him the title of Ibn Arabia *thani* [2nd ibn Arabia] (Ansari, 2006). He is also responsible for shaping and developing the speculative mysticism and theosophical religious thought in the period of Shah Jahan [1627–57] (Ansari, 2006).

Dara was closely associated with Muhibbullah Allahabadi and Sarmād who's pantheistic discourses and ideology had a huge impact in making his religious views. As a result, like many great Sufis such as Sheikh Nizamuddin Awliya, who adopted many Hindu Yoga exercises (especially the exercise of controlling breath) in order to concentrate on certain regions of the body while repeating the names of God (known as *Zikr* in Islam) for the sake of developing a mystic communion with God. Dara Shikouh also adopted many humanistic elements of Hindu philosophy and tried to find Islamic connections for such values through the self-intellectual interpretations of those Quranic verses and prophetic traditions which contain inversely some info about other religions. While leaving aside traditional understanding of these verses, he preferred *Ijtihad* and tried to reach his own independent conclusions, for example, about the following Holy verses he interpreted as; "*That this is indeed A Quran most honorable; in a book well-guarded; which none shall touch But those who are clean*" (Holy Quran, 56. p. 77-79).

He says the hidden book (*Kitāb-i-Maknūn*) referred in the above verse does not indicate *Psalms*, *Pentateuch*, or *Gospels*, it is rather referencing the ancient book of Hindu's "*Upanikhat*." He furtherer says that he had extensively studied religious scriptures of all major religions in search of knowing truth about *Tawhīd* but "I found very little information about monotheism in religious scriptures of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, , *Zoroastrians* etc and finally, I decided to approach Upanishads and surprisingly, I found this traditional book of Hindu full of monotheistic discussion, rather an elaborative explanation of Quranic concepts." (Haq, 1982, p. 13). Dara also argued that Spiritual truth gets unveil to only perfect religious divines whether belongs to any religion. Therefore, he put all the religions on same footing as for as goals are concerned. However, Dara Shikouh's such religious views met with severe criticism from the orthodox circles of both religious communities (Islam and Hinduism).

However, his Inclusive vision and Humanistic outlook made Dara the unparallel champion of Hindu-Muslim unity in the 17th century because perhaps that was the need of society in those times. He considered all religions as paths leading to same truth. He even revered the religious divines of other faiths especially Hindus equally with Muslim Saints. He had derived inspiration from diverse sources both Islamic as well as other religious. He literally believe on the Quranic verse which Allah says that, "*....Nor would we visit with our Wrath until We had sent an apostle [to give warning]*" (Al-Quran, 17:15), and at another place, it is said as, "*Verily We have sent thee in truth, as a bearer of glad tidings, And there never was A people, without a Warner Having lived among them [in the past]*" (Holy Quran, 35: 24). On the basis of these verses, he tried to prove his claim that Hinduism is also revealed religion and their books are revealed like *Quran* and *Bible*. He went arguing to the extent that it is ignorance to call Hindus infidels (Mahfooz, 1993).

In his writings, he had adopted reconciling approach initially through his works on Sufism he attempted to bring unity among different religious orders of Islam. Although he belonged to Qadiri order, he had

shown great regard to Sufi's of other denominations also such as *Chisti*, *Naqshbandis*, and *Suhrawardiyyas*; in the same way, he praised equally along with Abu Hanifa other imams including *Shia Imam Jafar-as-Sadiq*. He later extends this reconciliatory approach to his writings on comparative religions, also with the aim of finding connections between them. Further, the tolerant *Qadiri* teachings made him value Hindus, write books on the compatibility between Islamic and Hindu principles, which have dialogues for resolving ambiguities, and to translate Hindu classic texts to promote mutual understanding. Focusing on the shared beliefs in Islam and Hinduism was one of the strategies of Dārā to create liberal outlook among enlightened Muslim of likeminded toward Hindus (Ebrahim, 2019). He offered a practical model of interaction which constitutes Dara's biggest achievements and which has still relevance in the current Indian society from broader perspective.

Dara as a source of inspiration and introducer of Indian mystic philosophy to the west

Sirr-i-Akbar which was in the 1800 C. E. translated into Latin by popular German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer got so much impressed by this work especially the liberal approach of Dara, said that Dara Shikouh must be truly called as a real propounder of concept of modernism based on universalism, which was largely reflected in the ideas and actions of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the 19th century. He had examined theological issues from the tolerant – human – logical viewpoint. Ram Mohan Roy's religious ideas like Dara were also helpful to the growth of a new consciousness in a multi – religious country like India (Ebrahim, 2019).

Some other reformers of modern period who tried to bring people of different communities close to each other on the lines as Dara had attempted earlier such as Keshab Chandra Sen (1838–1884) wanted to build up a new human society. For that purpose, he directed some of his chief disciples to study Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. He Himself studied Islam and for that learnt Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. Besides the Quran, he translated several books on Islam from Arabic, Persian, and Urdu into Bengali.

Ebrahim (2019) asserts that, taking up the eclectic thread from Dara Shukoh, famous nationalist leader and theologian Mawlana Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958) interpreted Islam from a different perspective. His personal vision was perceptible by a universal Islamic humanism very much in affinity with the liberal Sufi traditions. He endeavored to establish Indian society on the grounds of her cultural pluralism.

Dara was from ruling family as well as the nominated successor of Shah Jahan; therefore, political interests were also wearied in his thought. He had likely understood the fact that religious exclusim of orthodox "*ulma*" (*Islamic scholars*) is harmful for peaceful running of such a vast empire of which more than 85% subjects are non-Muslims. Hence, he intentionally tried to made some institutions strong like as Sufism, which could help in strengthening the composite fabric of Indian society (Dey, 2013).

RESULTS

From the Analysis of above discussion, the researcher reaches the following findings about Dara Shikouh's religious outlook;

1. Universalism, Humanism, Unitarianism, pantheism, and liberalism were the main ingredients of his religious model
2. He was the believer of the universality of religions, he says that truth is not the property of any single religion rather all religions possess the elements of truth
3. He concludes that truth is single, but the ways to realize that truth are multiple; hence, it is ignorance to label followers of other religions as infidels as Islam and Infidelity (Hinduism) are galloping on the ways toward Him means God
4. Quranic monotheism in the principle of unity-in-plurality was corner stone of Dara's theosophy
5. Purity of heart, mind, and love are main elements of his religious thought
6. Impact of Ibn-ul-Arabia's *Waḥdat-ul-Wujūd* and pantheistic

philosophical views of Hindus are quiet reflex able in his religious model

7. His overall approach was inclusive, he vehemently rejected the religious exclusivism of orthodox *Muslim 'Ulma* in view that it is dangerous for heterogeneous society like India
8. Besides other factors, the factor of political motivation behind his religious thought could not be denied.

CONCLUSION

Indeed, his religious beliefs drew several criticisms from clerics in both groups, particularly from the orthodox branches of Islam and Hinduism. The critique was, for the most part, sincere and helpful. However, what is more significant to appreciate here is Dara Shikouh's sincere efforts towards searching for a connection between Islam and Hinduism through the thread of Sufi notions and alike Vedantic notions. Dara Shikouh might have realized that the recurrent rebellions and revolts faced by Muslim Mughal rulers in India's Hindu-dominated empire require some serious solutions. He was convinced that religion could provide a better solution to this protracted issue. Consequently, he proposed his religious model of compromises over the exclusivism shown by some members of his family. It was probably necessary to find a solution through religious means at the time due to the multi-cultural nature of Indian culture and the frequent disturbances for minority Mughal emperors caused by majority Hindu people. Dara accomplished this through his approach. Even today, secularism remains the greatest option for nations like India that have such a great range of religious practices. Even if his model was short-lived, its analysis could be useful for fostering understanding and peaceful coexistence in the context of Indian society today, when sectarian forces are rapidly gaining power. Long-standing concord between Hindus and Muslims is in grave risk as a result of rising religious intolerance, bigotry, and fanaticism. Promotion of dialogue and interreligious understandings are unavoidable conditions for strengthening the multi-cultural tradition of Indian society. People like Dara Shikouh, Abul Kalam Azad, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and others can serve as examples for us in this regard by

demonstrating how mutual collaboration and understanding can be promoted in the present.

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