RAJA BIRBAL
(Life and Times)
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Foreword by S.H. Askari

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FOREWORD

Here an honest effort has been made to sift facts from fiction while portraying the life of Birbal and his activities from the birth upto his death. Based as the book is on very credible and unshakable evidences, both contemporary and nearest in point of time. It may be taken as a welcome contribution to the biographical literature of the Mughal period. It has salvaged Birbal from the welter of legends, fables and stories with which his name has come to be so intimately associated. An important companion of the great and glorious Akbar has been restored to his proper place in the world of history. A careful and dispassionate study has enabled the author to establish that Birbal was an able general, an efficient administrator, a shrewd statesman, and a skilled diplomat. He was a poet of eminence, a thinker and a philosopher and unrivalled for his superb wits and humour. Shorn of all that is trite and puerile, stains which have stuck to him for centuries, Birbal, when judged in the light of historical perspectives, becomes a man of captivating, robust and attractive personality. The excellences in Birbal lay in his versatility, fidelity and readiness to serve his master not only in courts and assemblies but also in the—fields, battles and conflicts. Painstaking efforts have been made here to study Birbal in depth with all about his many-sided activities and his attractive personality. The book offers a closeup picture not only of Birbal but also of Akbar, the Great Emperor, and his many talented courtiers. One can conjecture the important role played by Birbal in moulding and shaping the contents of the religious thoughts
of Akbar which were eclectic in character, chosing the best out of every thing, thanks to the closest association that subsisted between the two. Equally memorable had been the role played by Birbal in the great renaissance that the Hindi literature and art went through in this period. No less was the contribution made by Birbal in the field of literary and cultural revolution.

It is a pleasure to introduce this interesting study on Birbal, throwing as it does, a good deal of light on his antecedents and achievements and his intimate association with emperor Akbar in various capacities as a friend, a courtier, a boon companion and a charming conversationist. The author deserves congratulation for bringing out this book which fills up a gap by presenting many illuminating information in as many as ten chapters, all well written characterised by clarity and historical objectivity and precision.

S.H. Askari
PREFACE

In this fast-changing modern world there has also been a considerable expansion and widening of the scope of history and the field of historical researches. There has been a marked and significant swing from the political history—a 'Chronicle of Kings and their Courts', to socio-economic aspects and cultural achievements of the people during a particular age. This re-oriented history is now being written and read in the wider context of the history of human civilisation. A 'Biographical work' in this changed context, if not completely out-of-date, may be dubbed as 'one of the conventional type'. Nevertheless I feel inclined to the view that the biographical phase of Mughal Historiography is not yet over; and perhaps it will never be out of taste if proper care is taken in the selection of the theme, and new emphasis is laid on the nature of treatment of the subject selected.

The role of the individuals, whose importance is ever increasing today, shall continue to manifest and mould the destiny of mankind. 'The history of a country', rightly observes a modern scholar, 'is to a great extent the history of its great men and women. It is they who have moulded it and built it up and it is essential for the ordinary citizens to know something about these personalities in order to understand how our country has evolved.' In fact biography is and shall remain an integral part of history; of course, it is the biographer's duty to function both as a historian and a portraiture-artist. The mere listing of facts without art is neither history nor biography.
Many kinds of such considerations weighed with me when I selected the present topic and chose to work on the 'Biography of Raja Birbal':

Since early school days when I knew very little of history and biography, I got interested in the stories and anecdotes of 'Akbar-Birbal'. Strange as it may appear, I could first learn about Akbar the Great through Birbal's stories. His anecdotes whetted by inquisitiveness about the historical authenticity of Birbal's colourful personality and the present work is the fulfilment of a long-cherished desire. This biography of Birbal may, thus, be said to have emerged out of my long and enduring interest in Birbal's anecdotes and tales themselves.

Though Birbal is one of the most popular and oft-quoted names amongst all classes in the country, the details of his life have been obscure and have remained buried in legends. Birbal has fast been becoming a legendary figure, and almost nothing excepting his 'jokes and gossips' are generally known. I was, no doubt, conscious of this limitation caused by the paucity of materials and known reliable sources for preparing a biography of Birbal. My doubts and diffidences were also confirmed by many scholars. But in spite of all these, I could not reconcile my mind to get away from Birbal and I finally launched on this 'mis-adventure' in January, 1965. The little that I had gathered about him from historical sources that he was 'one of the closest courtiers', one of 'the dearest friends', one of the 'constant companions' of the Emperor, who bestowed on him titles of Kavi-Ray and Bir-Bar, and that when he died, 'the Emperor did not touch food for two days and nights' etc., enchanted me. How could a stranger of an obscure origin reach the Emperor's court and become one of his 'nine gems', and continue to rise in rank, honour and distinction without any intrinsic worth and talent in him? Legends, stories and anecdotes, however brilliant and entertaining, cannot explain the prominent position that he held at the court. Raja Birbal remained a close courtier for about three decades, amongst a brilliant set of contemporaries, each distinguished in his own field. His overwhelming personal influence on the Emperor, one of the greatest rulers and wisest men of the age, gave me a clue to the intrinsic worth of the man and the extraordinary
talents that he might have possessed. I felt sure that relevant materials might come up adequately if proper investigation was undertaken. And on this simple logic, backed with my long interest in his personality, I kept myself clung to the subject rather obstinately, and hunted for materials in the libraries and the personal collection of the scholars.

In my frantic searches, when sometime I felt dismayed and disappointed to the point of giving up the topic, Dr. P.N. Ojha, my supervisor and Dr. A.L. Shrivastava kept me steady through their bold and confident advice to stick to my original subject. Words cannot express the gratitude that I owe to them.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge the valuable suggestions received from the eminent scholars like Dr. R.P. Tripathi, Dr. B.P. Saksena, Dr. Sukumar Ray, Dr. K.R. Qanungo, Dr. S.R. Sharma, Dr. J.M. Shelat and Dr. K.M. Munshi. My revered teachers, Dr. K.K. Datta, Dr. J.N. Sarkar, Prof. S.H. Askari and Dr. R.S. Sharma have been kind enough to take keen and active interest in this work from time to time. Dr. Sarkar very kindly went through some of my chapters and offered his valuable suggestions. I also express my obligation to Sri B.P. Ambashthya of K.P. Jaiswal Institute, Patna, for his help and co-operation. Amongst the Hindi scholars, Pt. Bishwanath Prasad Mishra, Sri Prabhu Dayal Mittal, Sri Agar Chand Mehta, Dr. Bhawani Prasad Yajnik, Dr. Saryu Prasad Agrawal and the famous writer Sri Brindawan Lal Verma have also rendered valuable assistance to me regarding Hindi sources. Dr. P. Roy, Principal, H.D. Jain College, Arrah (Bihar), introduced me to Sri Manohar Lal Sharma ‘Shabnam’ of Dehradoon, who was kind and cordial enough to send me some rare materials from Bhatt sources. Amongst my colleagues and friends in the University, Dr. U.P. Verma, Dr. H.M. Mishra. Late Prof. Sachchidanand, Sri S.C.P. Narain, Sri S.B. Prasad ‘Shitanshu’, Sri Mangal Moorty and Sri S.K. Das have been of invaluable help to me. Dr. Shyamanand Prasad of K.K.M. College, Jamui, has helped me in arranging the verses of Raja Birbal and my friend Dr. P. Mishra, Head of the University Department of History of Bhagalpur and Prof. R.K. Chaudhry, Principal have offered valuable suggestions at every stage of the work. I am also grateful to my Principal, Sri K.N. Singh
'Kapil', for giving some important references and for his un- grudging help from time to time.

My special thanks are due to the librarians of the Anup Sanskrit Library, Bikaner, Azad Library, Aligarh, National Library, Calcutta, Nagri Pracharini Sabha, Varanasi, Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library, Patna, Bihar Research Society and K.P. Jaiswal Institute, Patna and last but not the least, the management of Seva Sadan, Monghyr, for their kind co-operation and all possible help in this research project. I cannot but mention with gratitude the personal interest taken by Dr. A.P. Das Gupta, Curator, Victoria Memorial Hall, Calcutta, in permitting me to have a copy of the Nao-Ratna painting there. The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal and Hindustani Academy, Allahabad also deserve special mention for placing at my disposal the relevant number of journals which contain plates of Birbal's 'Articles of his Worship' and his portrait. Prof. Kamlı Sahney of Jamuna Nagar was also kind enough to send me the photograph of the 'Rang Mahal' of Raja Birbal at Burhiya in Haryana.

Thanks are also due to Sri Ram Brit Singh and Nand Kishor Singh Proprietor, Janaki Prakashan, Patna for his great enthusiasm in publication programme.

And finally, I must express my gratitude to all those who have taken interest in the subject and have been making anxious enquiries about the progress of the work which, again, reflects the pervading curiosity for the historical authenticity of the legend-bedecked Birbal.

Parmeshwar Prasad Sinha
ABBREVIATIONS

1. A.D. Anno Domini.
2. A.H. Anno Hijrae.
Historire of Du Jarric, trans. into English by C.H. Payne under the title of 'Akbar and the Jesuits'.

14. E & D.
The History of India as told by its own Historians, by Sir H.M. Elliot & Prof. John Dowson, 8 Vols., 1867-77.

15. Firishta.
Tarikh-i-Firishta, by Mahammad Qasim Hindu Shah (Trans. Briggs).

16. Foster.
Early Travels in India, edited by Sir William Foster.

17. I.G.
Imperial Gazetteer of India (Oxford, 1907-1908).

18. Iqbal Nama.
Iqbal Nama of Mutamid Khan.

19. Insha-i-Abul Fazl.
Insha-i-Abul Fazl or Maktubat-i-Allami, Per. MS. O.P.L., Patna.

20. J.A.S.B.
Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.

Agra, Historical & Descriptive—by Saiyad Muhammad Latif, Calcutta. 1896.

22. Maclagan.
'The Jesuit Missions to the Court of Akbar' (J.A.S.B., Part—1, Vol. ixv, 1896).

23. Manucci.

24. Modi.
'The Parsees at the Court of Akbar'. by J.J. Modi, Bombay, 1903.

25. M.A.Q.
Tarikh-i-Akbar Shahi by Muhammad Arif Qandhari.

26. M.R.
Ma’asir-i-Rahimi of Mulla Abdul Saqi Nahavandi.

27. M.U.
Ma’asir-ul-Umara, by Shah Nawaz Khan.

The Nainsi Khayat, by Muhnot Nainsi.

Tabaqat-i-Akbari, by Nizamuddin Ahmad Khan.
33. S.V. Samvat Era.
34. Sirhind. Akbarnama, by Shaikh Illahad Faizi Sirhind in E & D., VI.
35. Tuzuk. Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri.
40. Wolseley Haig. Wolseley Haig, Cambridge History of India, Vol, IV.
Portrait of Raja Birbal

By Courtesy: Hindustani Academy, Allahabad (U.P.)
Introduction

SECTION I

Background of Birbal

No name in Medieval Indian History can rival that of Birbal in its popularity as well as its obscurity. Being a notable noble and one of the ‘NINE GEMS’ of Akbar’s Court, he has fast been becoming a legendary figure. A popular theme for a poet, dramatist and novelist, his true life story has remained a ‘forbidden ground’ and a ‘mis-adventure’ for a research-scholar of History. It is just three hundred and ninetytwo years ago1 that Raja Birbal lived in flesh and bones and could be generally seen occupying a seat just beside His Majesty, the Emperor, in the Royal Darbar at the capital2. But within this small time-gap his name has been surrounded with a thick fog of myths and legends, fables and fancies and his biographical details, if not completely lost in oblivion, have become obscure, controversial and even points of dispute amongst scholars.

Here is an humble attempt to clear the ‘dust and debris’, ‘fables and stories’ for bringing Birbal back from the jungle of legends, to his coveted place in the royal court of Akbar, the

1. Raja Birbal died in February, 1586.
2. See the ‘NAVA RATNA’—Photo-copy in the Appendix, p. 315.
famous monarch of the 16th century. As one of the prominent personalities of the Age, he had a significant role to play in the formulation of the principles and politics of the State by suggesting important measures of reforms in the administration of Law and Justice and in moulding and influencing the religious thought of the Emperor and his policy of religious toleration. In fact, he was not merely Akbar's 'constant companion' but also his 'confidential adviser'. No noble, not even Abul Fazl, the 'King's Jonathan' could rival him either in personal intimacy with the Emperor or in having a greater influence on him.¹

Raja Birbal was not only a close Courtier and a dear friend of the Emperor but one of the twenty one important Hindu Mansabdars who held a high rank of 2,000. He belonged to the class of Amirs, who were known as Hazir-i-rikab as distinguished from Tainatians and proved to be a versatile genius, combining in himself the rare talents of a military general, administrator, diplomat and a poet and philosopher. The full facts, as brought to light, may prove to be stranger than fiction and the pleasure of the discovery of real Birbal, as revealed by the contemporary sources, may also prove to be more entertaining and thrilling than most of his oft-quoted misquotations. He did thus have a significant role both in the political and cultural history of the time. It was his versatility and the charms of his personal character and not merely his wit and humour that attracted the notice of the Emperor and drew him every day closer. It was a simple example of like drawing the like. As in legends, so in life, they always lived together, becoming almost 'a flesh of the flesh and blood of the blood'. To know Birbal closely is to understand Akbar better and to have still a clearer grasp of the lofty ideals and achievements of the great monarch. Akbar was not merely the 'child of the century' but the man who moulded and influenced it and helped the process of liberalism in the country. I have tried to study the man (Birbal) in the setting of his age and naturally

it has resulted in a ‘double close-up picture’, both of the King and the Courtier.

The age of Akbar has been described as an age of a great ruler, and some hold that of his contemporaries, Elizabeth of England, Henry IV of France and Abbas the Great of Persia; he was not the least. Even V.A. Smith accepts that ‘He was a born king of men, with a rightful claim to rank as one of the greatest sovereigns known to history. That claim rests securely on the basis of his extraordinary natural gifts, his original ideas and his magnificent achievements. Though foreigner in blood, he was the only one of the long line of rulers professing Islam, who conceived the idea of becoming the father of all his subjects, rather than the leader of a militant and dominant minority, alien in faith, and to a great extent, in race. He also attempted to build up a united nation of India. The empire which Akbar bequeathed to his son ranked, in point of extent, population, and administrative organisation among the foremost in the world. The word ‘empire’ suggests the idea of force, but force can form only one of the supports of a State—never the sole or the chief support. It has rightly been said that, ‘one can do everything with bayonets except sit on them’. Akbar, the real founder of Mughal Empire in India, was a great Statesman. The basis of his empire lay neither in religion, nor in force, nor in caste or race. He sought it in the active or passive acquiescence of the people at large. ‘Will, not force’ was the basis of his government. ‘One of the implicit conditions of popular compliance with any Government in India,’ remarks Dr. Beni Prasad, ‘is sure to be the freedom of religious belief and worship’, and the significance of Akbar’s age lies in its atmosphere of religious freedom. Akbar could get the willing support of the people not only because of his policy of religious toleration but also because he granted to them freedom of social life. Though he tried to reform some of the social evils like the customs of early marriages and the Suttee system, yet he always

respected the Hindu sentiment and never tried to enforce his ordinance at the point of the sword. He also showed his respect for the immemorial village autonomy. In those days when the arm of the State was not so long as it is today, the village organisation was a real force in the body-politic. One important reason which helped the consolidation of the empire was that the Mughal State under Akbar was fast rising from the level of the 'police or war State' to the rank of the 'culture State'. This policy gave it a sounder foundation and added to the dignity and grandeur of the Empire. He tried to become a 'national ruler' and granted religious toleration to all sects and groups. In his adherence to the principle of 'Sulh-i-Kul' (universal peace), he was far ahead of the age. Abul Fazl, while describing an ideal king, writes thus, "The true King fears God, is just and solicitous of the happiness of the people, understands the spirit of the age, is benevolent, vigilant and forbearings an, does not allow sectarian difference to create strife." He further observes, "If the king does not inaugurate universal peace and if he does not regard all classes of men and all sects of religion with the single eye of favour... he will not become fit for the exalted office." All contemporary accounts give an unanimous verdict that Akbar was admirably 'fit for the exalted office'. Akbar's own 'sayings', quoted by Abul Fazl, illustrate his lofty ideas of kingship, and like Ashoka the Great, he practised what he preached. He really proved himself to be the pioneer of our national integration and social synthesis. A great nationalist himself, Sri Jawahar Lal Nehru describes him as 'a symbol of India's unity' and 'the father of Indian nationalism'.

There was a good deal in common between Akbar and Ashoka. Both were idealists, sincerely tolerant towards all faiths. They were equally affable towards the meanest of their subjects and noted for their humanity towards all living creatures. "It is a strange thing", comments Sri Jawahar Lal Nehru, "that a Buddhist Emperor of India of the third century before Christ, and a Muslim Emperor of India of the sixteenth century after Christ, should speak in the same manner and almost in the same voice. One wonders if this is not perhaps
the voice of India herself speaking through two of her great sons."

A critical study of Akbar's reign proves the genuineness of the desire of Akbar to weld and unite together the manifold social entities conflicting races. He sincerely believed in the cardinal principle that differences of race and religion made no difference in the man. In his eyes merit was merit, whether shown by a Hindu or a Muslim, a high-born noble or a man of humble origin. Hence, men like Bhagwan Das, Man Singh, Todarmal, Birbal, Daswant, and many others, found that they enjoyed wide considerations under the Muhammadian sovereign. In spite of strong domination of Muslim sentiment, the Hindu nobles governed imperial provinces and commanded imperial armies, and were admitted to the close councils of the emperor, whose main object was to obliterater all the dissensions and prejudices of the past. His toleration was so absolute, his trust once given so thorough, his prejudices of their birth, of their religion, their surroundings, they yielded to the fascination.

The form of government was, no doubt, despotic in nature. The Emperor's will was law. But it was a Despotism with a difference. It can be well compared with the 'Enlightened Despotism' of the 18th century Europe. As Abul Fazl says, the Emperor believed in the moral missions of the sovereignty. It was a sacred trust and the good of the governed was always the underlying motive.

Theoretically, all powers were in the hands of the monarch, but he had a peculiar knack of selecting the right man for the right place and was generous enough to give them all initiative and powers. The Moghul aristocracy played a vital role in the consolidation of the Mughal Empire. If in the Council and in the Court he invited and listened to their advice, altered and modified his decisions, in the implementation of those policies also, the nobles fully justified the trust reposed in them. They were the 'props' and 'the pillars of the State' (Arkan-i-Daulat). The guiding maxim of Akbar's government, like that of Napoleon Bonaparte's in France, was 'career open to talent'. Abul Fazl has referred to it thus: "the best worship by a sovereign is the choosing of right thinking men and then
appointing them to look after the weak". "He is always testing friends and strangers and exalting the humble." From the early years of his reign he enunciated a policy which was based upon liberal and humanitarian principles. That Akbar was by nature a man of liberal ideas, bent on reforms—social and religious—was shown by his progressive and prudent outlook which have been duly recognised and appreciated by the historians. "In Akbar", observes V. A. Smith, "the people of India had been given a king of the ideal kind." To Abul Fazl, Akbar appeared, "the spiritual guide of the nation" who saw "in the performance of the duty, a means of pleasing God." His principles were akin to the Hindu principles enunciated in the Mahabharat that "Heaven lies in the Ethics of the State."

Akbar had collected around him the ablest and most learned men of the time, who were his advisers and collaborators in reorganising the system of government and in carrying out the great scheme of political, social and religious reforms. It may be emphasised here that Akbar's success both as a warlord and as an administrator was largely due to his unerring judgment in the selection of his officers. Thus the superiority of his civil administration was owing not to his own genius alone, but also to the able statesmen, whom, like Queen Elizabeth, he had "the wisdom to collect around him," (Marsham). Judged in this wider context of Akbar's administration, the role of Raja Birbal can be well appreciated. Abul Fazl describes in Akbarnama the administrative assignments held by him, which form one of the important chapters of his career, though not properly emphasised by the modern historians. If the progressive administration of Akbar shows him as an ideal king, his religious policy and thought reflect him as an ideal man, and here Birbal has a good deal to account for.

The 16th century was an epoch-making century in the history of the world civilisation. It was an age of Renaissance in Europe, of Mahdavi Movement in Islam, of Ming revival in China, and of the Sufi forces and Bhakti cult in India. Every civilised country in the world was pulsating with a new life.
INTRODUCTION

There were some reform movements in some form or the other, both in the East and the West. In India, the rise of Ramanand, Ravidas, Kabir, Chaitanya, Dadu and many others were all 'putting the world to flames'. Akbar appearing in this environment was the natural product of the spirit of the time. The life and actions of Akbar, if judged in the wider atmosphere of the age, will show that he was really, 'a child of the century'. Akbar was a great mystic, yet a true rationalist. Even Badaoni, while describing the proceedings of Ibadat Khana says, "Crowd of learned men from all nations came to the court and were honoured with private conversations. After enquiries and investigations which were their only business and occupation, day and night, they would talk about the profound points of science and subtleness of revelation, the curiosities of history and wonders of nature, on subjects of which large volumes could give only an abstract summary." (M. T.)

Indeed, Akbar was a sincere searcher after truth. He wanted to discover the real religion and the real 'physicians of soul'. He himself visited the places of saints and sages, summoned religious enthusiasts and preachers to his court, arranged discussions at the Ibadat Khana—the first parliament of religion and in the end tried to establish a system which could combine the merits of all religions, discarding their defects. 'There is good, in every creed, let us adopt which is good, and discard the remainder': such was his motto. Indeed, Akbar the Man was even greater than Akbar the Monarch. In his religious quests, beginning with his visits incognito to Hindu saints and sages, leading to the discussions of Ibadat Khana and the establishment of Din-i-Ilahi, Birbal was his closest associate. Badaoni traces his influences in Akbar's sun and fire worship. He accuses him for drawing the Emperor towards the Hindu religion. By examining the religious beliefs and leanings of both the Emperor and the courtiers separately, it so appears that like Emperor, Birbal also was intensely a religious man and was an initiated disciple of the Vithalnath School of Vaishnavism. There are references in the contemporary Varta literature (84 Vartas and 252 Vartas), when Birbal took the Emperor to the Vaishnava saints. Birbal's religious
character and his spiritualist bent of mind is evident from his devotional verses. It is further affirmed by the Emperor himself in one of his letters written to Abdur Rahim, which has been quoted in Inshai-i-Abul Fazl.¹

The age of Akbar was also an age of cultural renaissance. The Mughal Court had become a centre of culture. Poets, musicians, artists and scholars flocked to the Court. The royal capital had become the abode of the cream of intellect, and incredible wealth and affluence, and thus a most splendid court in the world. Akbar had a large number of friends and associates. Abul Fazl, Faizi, Man Singh, Todar Mal, Birbal, Tansen, all were picked up talents, each distinguished in his own field.

This century witnessed a great renaissance in the Hindi literature and art, and it has rightly been called the golden age of Hindi literature. There was an extraordinary outburst of literary vigour and there was always a constellation of poets which shown forth brilliantly. It has rightly been compared with the Elizabethan age of English literature. This was the age of the gems of Hindi literature, viz., Sur, Tulsi, Gang, Biharilal, Keshavadas and Birbal. The reign was marked by brilliance and splendour, and Akbar proved to be a great patron of arts and literature, architecture, music, painting and calligraphy, which were all encouraged. The Emperor established a large library of books of various languages, and had translations made from Sanskrit into Persian and the vernacular. The proverbial patronage of the Emperor had a stimulating effect on the growth of literature and the magnificence of the court caught the popular imagination. The poets began to sing his praises and the glory of the Empire, which, even after the lapse of four hundred years, are preserved as a part of literature. A contemporary Hindi poet of his Court, Holrai, emphasises the glory of the reign thus:

दिल्ली ते न तबल, बलत, ना मोगल कैसौँ
हुवे है ना नगर कहूँ ग्रामरा नगर ले।

¹. Daftar—Ist.
Another poet of the same age refers to Akbar as 'Hindupati' (Lord of Hindus). This trend continued to grow even under his successors, and the famous court poet of Shahjahan's reign, Pandit Jagarnath, came out with his Sanskrit composition where he called, 'The lord of Delhi as the Lord of Universe'.

It was in this magnificent background of progressive administration, an age of religious renaissance and cultural upheaval that Birbal could find a coveted corner and a remarkable place in the Imperial Capital. It was not, and could not be, without special talents in the man.

Raja Birbal was, no doubt, a man born in a middle class Bhat family but he was a man of parts. An extempore poet, a skilled musician, and a man of vast wit and wisdom, it was surely by his merits that he rose to rank and distinction. He was surely fortunate that the royal patronage came to him in abundance. But for getting these patronages also, one had to evince merit. The royal court was a place of great competition and counterfeit coins could not remain long in currency. Everyday new nobles were made and old ones disappeared. He remained closest to the Emperor for about thirty years and yet never fell from his favour even on a single occasion.

SECTION II

Source of Study

As stated earlier, it is generally held that materials for the biography of Birbal are very scanty. I myself started with
diffidance, but in course of my searches, I could discover sufficient materials on Raja Birbal, though they lie scattered and in a dispersed form. The present biography is mainly based on contemporary sources—both historical, literary and archaeological. I have discovered and used some of the manuscripts which have not been utilized at all by any scholar as yet. The literary sources, specially the religious literature of the time relating to the Vaishnava school of Vallabhacharya and Vithalnath (a contemporary of Akbar), supply very useful information about Birbal’s religion, his character and his family details, specially about his talented daughter, Sobha Batti.

The sources utilised in this work can be divided into the following groups:—

(A) Historical—Chronicles of the period and contemporary Persian works
(B) Literary—Secular
   Religious
(C) Archaeological and epigraphical finds
(D) Accounts of foreign travellers
(E) Portraits and paintings
(F) Some old and rare manuscripts in Persian and Hindi
(G) Modern Works:—
   1. General History of Medieval India
   2. Biographies of Akbar
   3. Biographies of important nobles
   4. Biographical sketches of Birbal, mostly in Hindi and Urdu
(H) Journals and magazines in
   (a) English, (b) Urdu and (C) Hindi, etc.

The Chronicles

One must begin with Akbar Nama of Abul Fazl which is ‘an accurate record of the varied activities of the State’ in which its every phase is accurately and vividly brought out. The author was not only quite close to the Emperor, but was in personal touch with every important affair of the Empire. He was also conscious that he was writing the history of the period, and as such even the minutest details have not been
It was written by Abul Fazl in obedience to the imperial orders and partly checked by Akbar himself. The chronology is more accurate than that of other books. Mr. Blochmann says, "Abul Fazl has far too often been accused by European writers of flattery and even of wilful concealment of fact damaging to the reputation of his master. A study, though perhaps not a hasty perusal, of the 'Akbar Nama' will show that the charge is absolutely unfounded... His love of truth and his correctness of information are apparent on every page of the book."

Much of the force of the criticism against Abul Fazl does not stand diluted, when one takes into account his flowery style and his flattery-spattering verbosity. But even then so far as the narrative is concerned, it is quite trustworthy, cogent and unshakable.

Though I studied all the volumes of Akbar Nama (tr. Beveridge), volume III alone supplies quite profuse essential information on the important assignments of Birbal and his role in the realm of administration and diplomacy. All this information is in a scattered form and one has to pick it up very diligently.

The Ain-i-Akbari is a unique compilation and the result of seven years' hard labour by the author, in which he was assisted by numerous staff. The English translations by Blochmann and Jarret are much serviceable, annotated so profusely as they are. In volume I of the book, Blochmann gives a short biographical sketch of Birbal, which in its small compass, gives the main details of his career and has proved to be quite useful. The third volume containing the 'Sayings of the Majesty' enables us in having a glimpse of the inner personality of the Emperor, his lofty ideals of kingship and his high religious ideas, where Birbal had a significant role to play.

Insha-i-Abul Fazl or 'the letters of Abul Fazl' contain many important letters. I have discovered, with profit, the letter addressed to Abdur Rahim Khankhana, after the death of Raja Birbal. It is in the form of a consolatory letter to
Khan-Khana reflecting the sad feelings of Akbar on the death of his friend, and it throws valuable light on the traits of Bribal's character which has generally been missed by the contemporary historians, including Abul Fazl in his chronicles.

The other contemporary historian, Badaoni, was 'a sun dried Mullah'. He was quite hostile to Birbal and always felt jealous of his closeness to the Emperor. But even while condemning, he gives us copious details about his career at the Court, his personal sway over the Emperor, his influence in moulding the religious thought and policy of the Emperor and the like. Many other interesting details about the bestowal of titles and grant of jagirs to Birbal can be had in his Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Volume II.

The 'Tabaqat-i-Akbari', written by Nizamuddin, is a general history and the information gathered from the above sources find corroboration there. Though the chronology is sometimes 'erroneous', the military expeditions in which Birbal participated, like the Kangra campaign, the second Gujrat Expedition, Bihar Conquest, and the Yusufzai campaign are all dealt with in full details.

The 'Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri,' the 'Iqbal Nama,' the 'Ma’asir-i-Rahimi' and Farishta's book give stray details on the topic. I have collected some details about Birbal’s eldest son from the Iqbal Nama; and the Ma’asir-i-Rahimi also quotes the same letter written by Abul Fazl, on behalf of the Emperor, which has been referred to above. I have picked up materials from these sources which are very stray and scattered. But all these contemporary Persian sources have important information on the subject, and I have tried to reconstruct his biography on the basis of those sources.

Besides the Persian chronicles, the contemporary Sanskrit and Hindi sources have proved to be invaluable. These sources can be classified, again, into secular and religious literatures. Amongst the secular literary sources, I have been greatly profited by the commentary of the famous Sanskrit grammar, 'Prakriya Kaumudi', which has been published by the Bhandarkar Institute, Poona. One Shesh Krishna, the writer of the commentary, gives interesting details about Birbal. In his introduction, he writes that he undertook the work at the
expressed desire of Birbal who wanted the commentary for teaching Sanskrit grammar to his son, Kalyan Mal. Fortunately he has also given a genealogical table in which we find the names of Birbal’s father and grandfather also. Amongst the Hindi poets of Akbar’s time, Keshava Dass, Ganga Kavi, and Holrai have written many verses in praise of Birbal and his benevolence to the poets. I collected such verses and have used the information after checking them from the Persian chronicle and the letters of Abul Fazl. The works of Hindi poets are full of interesting historical information regarding Abul Fazl, Todarmal, Birbal and others, and I think they have not as yet been tapped in the manner I have tried to use them. So far as Raja Birbal’s contribution to literature and his important role in the cultural field are concerned, the literary sources have proved to be of immense value.

The religious literature of the time supplies abundant information not only on the religious attitude of the Emperor himself but also those of his important courtiers like Man Singh, Todarmal, Birbal, Tansen and many others. The two important compilations known as Do Sao Bawan Vaishnavon ki Varta (252 citations) and Chourasi Vaishnavon Ki Varta (84 citations) contain important pieces of information about Birbal, his daughter, and his benevolence to the saints and sages of that Vaishnava School. A research work in Hindi, namely, “Varta-Sahitya” published from Agra gives a good historical analysis of the two collections and the evidences, as they are contemporary, may add some interesting details of the period. There is also a Sanskrit letter of Swami Vithalnath to his disciples in which Birbal has been mentioned in very respectable terms, which shows both his close association with that School and his benevolence towards them.

Amongst the archaeological sources, the most important and splendid one is Birbal’s house at Fatehpur Sikri. Its architecture, the sculptural beauty and its proximity to the royal harem, all contain hidden points of history, about which we get stray hints and reflections in the modern books dealing with the architectural remains of the famous city. Akbar had
not only built the Mahal for Birbal but of the nine gates of the city, one was named after him and was known as Birbal’s gate. V.A. Smith\(^1\) gives a plain sketch of the city, showing the nine gates of Sikri. A field survey gives us the names of ‘Birbal Ka Rang Mahal’ at Burhiya, three miles away from Jagadhari in Haryana. At Narnaul (in Haryana), there still stands a massive building known as Birbal Ka Chatta. At the appropriate place in the thesis, an attempt has been made to examine their historical importance. The most important of the epigraphic sources, however, is the contemporary inscription on the Ashokan Pillar in the Allahabad Fort, which gives the original name of Birbal as well as that of his father and his visit in 1574. It seems to have been inscribed (in 1574), when Birbal accompanied Akbar to the Bihar campaign and halted for sometime at Allahabad for performing his religious rites.

The information gleaned from the sources about the prominent position of Birbal are beautifully reflected in some old portraits and paintings depicting Raja Birbal in the Court. The painting of ‘Akbari-Nao Ratna’ in the Victoria Memorial Hall, Calcutta, shows Birbal sitting just beside His Majesty, the Emperor.\(^2\)

As regards the manuscripts, I have been able to trace out one in Azad Library, Aligarh, which is a translation of Bhagwat Gita. Two more manuscripts exist in Bikaner—Anup Sanskrit Library, and the Abhai Jain Granthalaya (Bikaner). They are entitled as ‘Sudama Charita’. Another manuscript ascribed to him was at Lucknow with Sri Lakshmi Bhat, and has been referred to in the Khoj report of Nagri Pracharini Sabha. I have tried to examine them in detail at the appropriate place, while dealing with the literary contributions of Birbal. More than one hundred verses of Birbal remain still in manuscript form in the Yagyik collections of Nagri Pracharini Sabha Manuscript Section.

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1. Akbar the Great Moghul.
2. A photograph of the painting is attached herewith in Appendix ‘A’.
Amongst the foreign travellers, Monserrate in his commentary refers to him and the banquet that he gave to the Emperor. Mannuci narrates one of his interesting anecdotes in the Court, which has been quoted in full in the thesis.

As regards the modern works, all histories, written on Mughal period, supply stray information and they have been enumerated with their details in the Bibliography. To name a few, they are the biographies of Akbar like Von Noer’s ‘Emperor Akbar’, Malleson’s ‘Akbar’, V.A. Smith’s ‘Akbar the Great Mogul’, J.M. Shelat’s ‘Akbar’ in 2 volumes, Rahul Sankrityayan’s ‘Akbar’ (in Hindi) and last but not the least, the monumental work of Dr.A.L. Srivastava on ‘Akbar’ (two volumes). Monographs on ‘Abdur Rahim Khan-Khana’ by S.B. Singh and ‘Man Singh of Ambar’ by R.N. Prasad, yield forth additional information.

On Birbal himself, we get good chapters in Ma’asir-ul-Umara by Shah Nawaz Khan, Tazkirit-ul-Umara by Kewal Rani, Durbar-i-Akbari by M.H. Azad, Umarai-i-Hunood by Saiyyad Ahmad. The interesting pamphlet entitled ‘Mulla Dupiyaza’ and Raja Birbal by Muhammad Tahir in Urdu and Raja Birbal Ka Jeewan Charita by Munshi Devi Prasad of Jodhpur who also refers to his Urdu work named ‘Birbar Nama’, give interesting information on Birbal. Pandit Ballava Bhatt wrote a biography on Raja Birbal in Hindi which was published from Bharat Jiwan Press (Benares) in the year 1927.

In the Raza Library, Rampur, there are two published works in the Tazkira Section, entitled Raja Birbal Ki Mukamall Sawanii Umri aur Lataif (N.K. Press, Lahore 1903), and Hayat-i-Raja Birbar by Abul Ali Barlas, (Lahore (1899), Thomas William Beale’s work namely, Oriental Biographical Dictionary, called also Miftahul Tawarikh (in Persian), give interesting details which are mostly based on Badaoni’s history.

Amongst the very important articles on Birbal, two need special mention. The first was published in Hindustani of January, 1931 (Allahabad Hindustani Academy) and was contributed by Dr. R.P. Tripathi, where the writer has examined
both the historical role of Birbal as well as his literary contributions. The second article was published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bengal, (Vol.X, 1944) where Dr. B. Prased (Dr. Baini Prasad), while giving his biographical sketch, has also examined the ‘Articles of worship of Raja Birbal’, which were then lodged in the Jalan Museum at Patna City.

Besides all these sources, we also get stray references in the various famous histories of literature written during the last two centuries. I have tried to survey them and pick up the points which are corroborated by the historical writings. Grierson’s work, History of Modern Vernacular Literature supplies good information about Birbal and the poet’s association with the famous Court of Akbar.

Making an overall estimate of the sources, it may be said that the contemporary Persian chroniclers give the main details of his biography and generally I have relied on the versions of the contemporary historians. Badaoni even in his disparaging style bears witness to his ‘capacity and genius’ and traces his career at the Court.

The literary sources, which are contemporary, have also supplied additional information, but I have tried to check them from the contemporary Persian sources about their probabilities. At certain places, I have made references to secondary sources only, when I have quoted opinions of the modern authors. But I have taken care to verify that the statements do not contradict the versions or the purport of the contemporary writers.

The legends and traditions have generally been discarded, as they have not stood the test of historical evidences. There has already been enough of legends surrounding the life and career of Birbal, and my efforts have been to bring him back from the realm of legends to the world of History. Raja Birbal was famous for his sense of justice and was renowned for his liberality and benevolence. I shall feel my labour rewarded, if he is given his due place in history, which has long been denied to him.
SECTION III

Plan of the Work

The work has been planned in nine chapters, besides the two entitled Introduction and Conclusion. The Conclusion, while giving a brief resume of the whole work, embodies the critical estimate of the character and achievements of Raja Birbal.

In Chapter one, the problems relating to his ancestry and early career find discussion. The original name of Birbal, his caste, the date and place of his birth, the bestowal of the title of Birbal with its origin and significance—all these vital points have almost been lost in legends, and the little that is now known has become a subject of controversy. After a critical study and analysis, I have tried to establish the facts backed by historical evidences and come to some concrete conclusions. Both the historical and the literary evidences go to prove that he was born in a Braham Bhat family of Ganga Das in Tribikrampur (Tikwapur) in the modern Kanpur District of U.P.

Chapter two deals with the career of Raja Birbal at the imperial Court. Though widely known as one of the ‘Nine Gems’ of Akbar’s Court, nothing on definite lines has so far been said as to when he joined the Court, and how, and by whom, was he introduced to the Emperor. Like his early career, the details of his career at the Court are also full of conflicts and controversies. By examining the different points in the broader frame work of the Imperial services and the Mansabdari system, an attempt has been made to clear up the controversies and assign the probable date (A.D. 1556) or a little later as marking the beginning of his career as a ‘mansabdar’ which is also corroborated by the contemporary evidence of Badaoni himself. Other details, too, have been diligently traced out from the stray and scattered references in the contemporary chronicles.

Chapter three depicts Birbal as a brave warrior and a military commander—the least known aspect of his biography.
The significance of his title Bir-Bar (Renowned Warrior), the bestowal of the high rank of 2000, the references of his being referred to as ‘Sahibus Saif-wal-Qalam’\(^1\) (Master of sword and pen) and as a mon ‘both of battle and banquet (ba bazm-u-razm)\(^2\) in Akbarnama gave me definite clues to his military career. The Kangra campaign forms a landmark in his career; though Badaoni holds him responsible for the desecration of the temple of Maha Mai. The episode has been examined in its details and Birbal’s exact role assessed. Raja Birbal also figures prominently both in Gujrat and Bihar campaigns and in both the expeditions only selected and front rank nobles were allowed to accompany the Emperor. Birbal’s lost military assignment was in the famous Yusufzai campaign in which he valiantly fell fighting. The Yusufzai disaster has been referred to by the historians to show that the failure of the expedition was mainly because of the wrong selection and the sending of a ‘Court-wit’ to the war front naturally resulted in the disaster. A careful study of the history of the campaign has been made in the Chapter to show that the failure was not due to Birbal’s lack of military ability but mainly because of the great dissensions among the three generals. The element of betrayal and treachery towards Birbal is clearly hinted at by Badaoni as well. The Emperor, in his letter to Khan-i-Khanan,\(^3\) writes about the early successes of the Imperial army sent under Birbal. A study of all these gives a new interpretation to the facts connected with this campaign and the military career of Raja Birbal.

The fourth Chapter deals with the administrative talent of Birbal. Abul Fazl records the important assignments given to Birbal from time to time, which were both of executive and judicial nature. As the details given by Abul Fazl are scattered and dispersed, they have escaped systematic assessment. Here they have been collected and pieced together to yield interesting information about Birbal’s role in the administrative set up of the period. I have referred to his

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3. Insha-i-Abul Eazl.
assignments of the year A.D. 1577, when he along with Abul Fazl, was sent to enquire into the case of Mathura Brahmana in A.D. 1578 he was sent to Jalandhar to supervise distribution of ‘madad-i-maash; in 1582 he successfully regulated the market price and held the department of cattle and buffaloes. Again in the year 1582 he is recorded to have offered valuable suggestions for reforms to improve the condition of oppressed people and seekers after justice. Last but not the least, in the 27th year when Akbar reorganised the departments of Central Government, the administering of justice to complainants was made over to Raja Birbal and Abul Fazl too was attached to his office with many other important nobles. Thus he held the important wings of administration as his charge and the legends of ‘Shahinshah and Wazir’\(^1\) have as much adequate foundation of evidence. As in the administration, so in the field of diplomacy, he played a significant role.

In Chapter five, one finds the special missions in which he was occasionally employed. His achievements in this field are of the years A.D. 1563, 1569, 1576. 1579, 1581 and finally of the year A.D. 1584 when he successfully brought Raja Ram Chand Bhat to the royal Court.\(^2\) As a diplomat, he helped the plan of synthesis inaugurated by Akbar.

In Chapter six, his role in influencing the religious thought and policy of the Emperor has been duly examined. Badaoni describes the details but, of course, in his usual disparaging tone. I have tapped the contemporary religious literature—the Vaishnava Vartas, which throw interesting sidelights on the characters both of Akbar and Birbal. Birbal was not merely a ‘witty courtier’ but also a ‘spiritual companion’ of the Emperor.

The next Chapter, the seventh, describes in a comparative and critical manner, the close and intimate association of Birbal with the Emperor. Akbar took personal care of him, cured him when he fell down unconscious in the Chaugan field.

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2. The Diplomatic assignments have been dealt in Chapter V.
and even saved him from the elephant's attack at the risk of his own life. Birbal had the unique privilege of receiving four royal visits; and during the long career of thirty years, he was never punished or reprimanded. He had thus a wonderfully clean record of service all through his career. The intimacy of the two is further proved by the deep laments of Akbar over his death, dealt within Chapter eight, which fully brings to light the philosophical mood as well as the lyric outpourings of the Emperor at his death and also gives us an insight into Birbal's true character. From the contemporary Hindi sources, one learns about two more names of Birbal's sons—Kalyanmal and Dhirabal; and the details of his talented daughter—Sobha Bati.

The last Chapter of my work deals with the literary contributions of Birbal. Though uniformly referred to as a 'poet and musician' by the contemporary writers, no detailed study has yet been made even by the scholars of Hindi. A reference to his works will show that he was at once a prose writer, a translator, and a poet of outstanding merit. I have referred to some important manuscripts which find mention in the 'Khoj reports'. It is the most interesting aspect of his biography. Indeed, his cultural achievements make him still live and grow in our memory. The concluding estimate reveals Birbal as a great patron of poets and artists, whose liberality and munificence have not only been sung of by the poets of his age but are born testimony to even by contemporary and later historical sources.

The photo-copies affixed in the Appendix are not only interesting but throw light on many important aspects of his biography and a few choice selection of his verses and puzzles may also awaken a new curiosity amongst the historians and the lovers of Hindi literature.

1. See Chapter VIII.
2. Details in Chapter VIII.
Ancestry and Early Life

Raja Birbal\(^1\) is one of the most popular names in the history of Medieval India. M. H. Azad, in his famous book entitled “Darbar-i-Akbari”, has rightly mentioned that Raja Birbal’s name is as closely associated with the name of Akbar the Great as Aristotle’s with the name of Alexander the Great.\(^2\) Birbal’s name has gradually passed from history into the realm of legends, and his memory is cherished even now in the hearts of the illiterate people in the villages. But it is really curious to note that none of the two terms, Raja and Birbal comprised the proper and personal name of the person who bore them. They were mere titles or surnames, which have completely over-shadowed the real name of the person.

A modern biographer writes that Birbal’s real name was Brahma Das. The Contemporary historian Badaoni\(^3\) calls him Gadai Brahma Das, but Grierson\(^4\) gives Mahesh Das as his

\(^1\) ‘Birbal’s name is always written more correctly as Birbar by the Mughal Chroniclers.’ Hodivala, S.H., Studies in Indo-Muslim History, Bombay 1939. p. 555.
\(^4\) Badaoni, M.T. (Tr. Lowe, W.H.), A.S.B. 1884 Vol. II. p. 164,
\(^5\) Grierson, George A. The Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindustan (J.A.S.B.), 1889, p. 35.
original name. The author of Darbar-i-Akbari\(^1\) also describes him as Mahesh Das which is also corroborated by the writer of Maasir-ul-umra\(^2\) and has been adopted by H. Blochman in his translation of Ain-i-Akbari.\(^3\) Thomas William Beals, in his Persian book entitled "Miftahul-Tawarikh",\(^4\) also called Oriental Biographical Dictionary,\(^6\) mentions Mahesh Das as the proper and original name of Birbal. This name is also given in the inscription on Ashoka’s pillar in Allahabad Fort\(^6\) (dated S.V.1632-1574-75 A.D.) where his father’s name is also mentioned as Ganga Das.

\(\text{संवत् १९१२ शाके १४५३ मार्ग बदी पंचमी सोमवार गंगादास सुत महाराजा बीरबर धी तीर्थराज प्रवास के यात्रा सफल लेखितम्।}

If a proper analysis is made of this controversy about names, it becomes clear that Birbal’s real name was Mahesh Das, but in his earlier days he apparently preferred to assume his nom de-plume ‘Brahma’ not Brahma Das as given by Badaoni or Brahna Das as was incorrectly copied by some ignorant or bigoted scribes of the Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh. Badaoni seems to have taken the second part of his name (Das) and joined it with his pen name, Brahma, and has called him Brahma Das with a prefix ‘Gadai’. Lowe has incorrectly regarded Badaoni’s epithet Gadai as a part of the name. This was only an invective used by the author out of scorn for Birbal; it only means ‘a poor and begging man’ and cannot be regarded as a part of his name. Besides Brahma Das and Mahesh Das, another name put forward by a writer\(^7\) is Supranath, for he is said to have captivated the hearts of

the people of Delhi by his melodic music. But this name is not supported by any other evidence or tradition and can be safely dropped out. After a careful scrutiny of all available evidences, the name ‘Mahesh Das’ can be safely accepted as the personal name of Birbal which is also supported by the contemporary pillar inscription dated S.V. 1632 (1574-75 A.D.). The name Mahesh Das, has rightly been accepted and adopted by modern writers like V.A. Smith, Maha-Pandit Rahul Sankrityayan, Dr. S.P. Agrawal, Dr. A.L. Srivastava and Dr. J.M. Shelat in their books on Akbar.

There has also been a good deal of controversy regarding is caste and place of birth. Fortunately, the caste controversy is confined to the Brahman caste only. Munshi Devi Prasad writes that he was a Brahman by caste. Sengar and the Mishra Bandhu Binod have described him as Kanyakubjaya Grierson treats him as a Kanyakubjya Dube Brahman, while Braj Ratna Das designates him as only a Kanyakubja. Some others call him a Mathur Chaturvedi Brahman. The people of Marwar know him as a Brahmana of Makrana, but those of Bundelkhand claim him as a Sanadhya-Brahman.

13. Ibid. p. 11.
14. Ibid., p. 11.
As regards this caste controversy, it is better to examine the evidence of contemporary and later writers about his caste and the sub-section he is said to have belonged to. Badaoni\(^1\) calls him a Bhatt. The Ain-i-Akbari\(^2\) says that, he was a Brahmana of the name of Mahesh Das and was a Bhat or minstrel—a class of men whom the Persians call badfarosh “dealers in encomiums”. It, therefore, unmistakably show that Mahesh Das, who bore the pen name of Brahma (ब्राह्म) was a Bhatt-Brahman by birth and caste. He subsequently adopted the tradition and profession of a minstrel or a Bhat. Both Maasir-ul-Umara\(^3\) and a later work, Darbar-i-Akbari\(^4\) call him a Bhat, indicating, thereby both his caste and his profession.

Dr. Baini Prasad\(^5\) calls it an unfortunate error on the part of the Mohammedan historians and writers that the epithet, Bhat, in the case of Birbal was apparently used to signify his profession of a bard, a poet, and a genealogist, and not to indicate his caste.

Those who have tried to prove Birbal a Kanyakubhya have tried to quote the authority of the Kanyakubhya Vansawali\(^6\) where Ashadhar, the fifth son of Ramai, has been mentioned to have married Birbal’s daughter. This marriage once again proves that Birbal was Bhat Brahman by caste. The ‘Vanshavali’ further states that progeny of Birbal’s daughter came to be specially known as ‘Birbali Tiwari.’ The Bhats were quite prominent people in the 16th century. The poets like Narhari, Gang and Tansen were also Bhats. Geographically also, the area (Kanpur district) had, and still has, a good population of Bhats.\(^7\) In view of all these historical and corroborative

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evidences, there should not be any hesitation in accepting Birbal as a member of Bhat Brahman community, amongst whom he has rightly been glorified. Bhusan Kavi (also a Bhatta Brahman) introduces himself in his verses, and glorifies himself as a co-villager of the Great Birbal.¹

Let us now turn to the problem of his birth place and the real date of his birth.

The people of Bundelkhand claim that Birbal belonged to a village called Tehri in Bundelkhand,² while according to another tradition his birth place is assigned to a village near Ajmer³ where he seems to have attracted the attention of Emperor Akbar when he had gone on a hunting expedition. The people of Marwar⁴ claim him as a Brahmana of Makrana and it is said that it was he (Birbal) who had informed the Emperor, through the local agency, about the existence of marble stones in that area. In the Punjab, at a place called Burhia⁵ (a village three miles away from Jagadhari now in Haryana), there are historical ruins of a palace called Rang Mahal,⁶ which is associated with the name of Birbal, and the local traditions strongly claim this place to be the native place of Birbal. The ruins of the big and massive palaces are still standing, and they have given rise to the tradition associated with these places. At Narnaul, there is a big palace, popularly known as ‘Birbal Chatta,’⁷ where his descendants lived for a long time. The whole of the area was the field of activities of Raja Birbal, and the traditions have no doubt some elements of truth in them. Thus what appears likely is that these different places like Ajmer, Bundelkhand, Narnaul and Burhia were associated with the Raja and he might have visited them or

3. Ibid. p. 11.
4. Ibid. p. 11.
5. Ibid. p. 11.

*See the Photo Copy of Rang Mahal in the Appendix. p. 318.

6. I am grateful for this information to Sri Omprakash Sanghi, Advocate, Narnaul. (Haryana).
lived there temporarily. But all efforts to find out any inscrip-
tion or any record have proved futile and all these claims, may
therefore, be said to be based on sentimental grounds. And
as such, in the absence of any corroborative evidence, they may
be safely discarded.

But Birbal hailed from Kalpi, a fact which is clearly asserted
by Badaoni. Bhusan, the famous Hindi poet of the
17th century, sings the glory of the village named Tribikram-
pur (Modern Tikwapur) that had produced Birbal and others
like him. The time gap between Bhushan and Birbal is hardly
seventy to eighty years, when at least the third or the fourth
generation of Birbal must have been living there.

Dr. R. P. Tripathi, in his article on Raja Birbal has very
critically examined this point and has come to the conclusion
that Birbal belonged to Kalpi Sarkar and not to Kalpi proper.
He says that Birbal’s living at Akbarpur has been corroborated
even by Abul Fazl and the use of the word ‘khana’ besides
‘Bungah’ in the same sentence may be said to be indicative of
his home. It is clear from the Ain-i-Akbari that in those
days Kalpi Sarkar was under Agra Suba. Jalaun, Hamirpur
and Kanpur were different districts in Sarkar Kalpi. A study
of the different places on the map of Kanpur gives us a clue to
the solution of this controversy. Birbal in the court was
more known by his association with the famous Kalpi Sarkar
and not by the actual village he hailed from. Hence, generally
speaking, Badaoni appears to be right, when he says that Birbal

The famous verses of Bhushan are:

‘इंज़ कनोज़ भुल कस्मवीरी, रतनाकर सुल धीर।’ (२६)
बसत विविक्रमपुर सवा, तरंगतनूजा तीर।’
‘धीर बीरबर ते जहाँ, उपजे कवि ग्रह भूप।’
‘देव विहारीबर जहाँ, विश्वबर तद्वृप।’ (२७)

5. Tripathi, L.K., ‘Kanpur Ke Kavi’. 5th Edn. Bhisham & Brothers,
Kanpur (1953), p. 16.
hailed from Kalpi, but if we intend to pin-point the specific place, Bhushan's descriptions of Tikwapur as the birth-place of Raja Birbal has the best claim to find final acceptance. It was here that Birbal built a temple of Bihareshwar (A Radha-Krishna Temple) referred to by Bhushan and still commemorates him. Birbal had founded a town named 'Akbarpur-Birbal' to commemorate the name of the Emperor and his own intimate friendship with him. The above named village is only two miles away from his native village Tikapur. Akbar paid a royal visit to this place (Akbarpur) in the year 1584. In view of all these evidences, historical, literary and epigraphical, we can safely assume, even assert, that Birbal belonged to Tribikrampur (modern Tikwapur) under the Kalpi Sarkar which was an important Sarkar in the Agra Subah because of its proximity to the imperial capital.

There is not much controversy regarding the date of his birth. Though the persian chroniclers are silent on this point the famous history of literature entitled 'Kavita Kaumudi' by Sri Ram Naresh Tripathi, the year of his birth is given as S.V. 1585. Grierson also says that he was born in S.V. 1585 (A.D. 1528). V.A. Smith clearly asserts that he was born in the year A.D. 1528 and was fourteen years older than his patron Akbar (born in A.D. 1542). All the later writers like Prof. L.K. Tripathi and Dr. A.L. Srivastava have accepted A.D. 1528 as the exact year of his birth.

Mahesh Das was, thus, born in the year A.D. 1528 in the family of a Brahmana Bhat at Tribikrampur. His father's name was Ganga Das and his mother was named Anabha.

Davi. A contemporary Sanskrit Scholar gives us a genealogical table in which we also get the name of Birbal’s grand father as Rupadhar, who lived in ‘Patrapunja’. Birbal was the third son in the family of Ganga Das, and it is said that it was in his childhood that he lost his father. The death of the head of the family meant a serious set back to the family, and it has been said that Mahesh Das was sent by his mother to her father’s place for early schooling. According to Hindu traditions, his early education commenced at the age of five, and in his childhood he learnt Hindi, Sanskrit and Persian, which was the court language at that time. Following the family traditions, he was also given lessons in poetry and music, where he showed his special aptitude, and in a very short time he began to compose extempore verses which he used to recite in a melodious voice. His talent for composing verses, and especially his recitals, soon attracted the attention of many, and his fame as a poet and singer soon crossed the limits of his locality. Besides poetry and music, Mahesh Das had established himself as a ready wit and had also specialised in the art of storytelling. He became quite famous for his witty remarks and jokes and with which he could easily win the hearts of the people with whom he once came in contact. In those days when Darbar atmosphere was rather lively, and in the Rajput courts such singing bards and ‘badsharosh’ were easily given an important place, it is not surprising that Mahesh Das was picked up as a court-poet of Jaipur by Raja Bhagwant Das.

1. Ibid. p. 173-174.
3. According to geographical location described, it should be in Kanpur District.
5. Ibid. p. 10.
6. Ibid. p. 11.
We do not get any authentic information as to how and when exactly Mahesh Das joined Jaipur service, but there are some references relating to his court-life at Jaipur where he used to sing his compositions as 'Brahma Kavi', and his fame as a poet was spreading far and wide. By the time he reached AkAbr's court, his non-de-plume 'Brahma' was fast taking the place of his original name, Mahesh Das.

Besides his services at Jaipur, Mahesh Das was also associated with the Rewa Court. According to Badaoni,² he was at first in the service of Raja Ram Chandra of Bhatta, now known as the Rewa State in Baghelkhand. The Baghel Raja, on the basis of the writings of Babur, was one of the famous rulers of northern India and ranked third in the list. His successors had kept up the tradition, and Raja Ram Chandra (A.D. 1555—1592)³ was known as a great patron and lover of learning. He had picked up talents in his court and the fame of his courtiers had spread beyond the frontiers of his realm. Both Birbal and Tansen had lived at his Court, where their talents had found ready recognition. Dr. Baini Prasad⁴ refers to a legend current in the Rewa State which proves the association of Raja Birbal with Rewa and its surroundings.

Thus, Birbal, popularly known at that time as 'Brahma Kavi', had earned name and fame before he joined the Imperial Court of Akbar. He had become a well-known poet and had married the daughter of a rich and respectable family of Kalinjar.⁵ This marriage had placed him on a sounder financial footing, and even though he was not very rich, at least he was not a 'begging Bhat' at the time of his entry into the Imperial

5. The Chief Pandit of the State of Kalinjar gave his daughter in marriage to him, R. Kuleekh Ram, Stories of Raja Birbal, p. 172.
Court of Akbar as Badaoni scornfully describes him. It seems that his name and fame, together with that of Tansen, had reached Akbar’s ears. Birbal joined the Court of Akbar at the expressed desire of the Emperor, as was the case with Tansen, and that seems to be the reason for his speedy rise to prominence and his growing personal influence with the Emperor himself. Birbal had certainly a background of fame, and he enhanced his reputation all the more soon after he joined the Imperial Service.

Before beginning to trace the glorious career of Mahesh Das the Imperial Court at Agra, it is worthwhile to examine the meaning and significance of the title of Birbar which was conferred upon him by the Emperor and which became so popular that it gradually replaced his real name. He has always been referred to by this name and he himself used some times this name ‘Birbar’ or ‘Birbal’ in his verses. Dr. S.H. Hodivala, in his commentary on Tabakat-i-Akbari says, ‘The title Vira-Vara, best warrior, is not common and its origin or the reasons for its bestowal upon a begging Bhat has not been elucidated. It may, therefore, be permissible to offer the suggestion that Akbar borrowed it from the Vetal Panchvinhati or Baital Pachisi, ‘The Twentyfive Tales of Vampire.’ In the third story of the collection, a man named Vira-Var offers his services to the King and fully earns the extraordinary high pay allowed to him, by giving undeniable proofs of his loyalty and devotion to his master (Kin Caid, Tales of Vikram p. 28).’

Dr. Hodivala’s suggestion and his explanations can he accepted as quite plausible, so far as it relates to his suggestion that the title of Birbar was borrowed from Birbal Pachisi. Of course, it is quite clear that Akbar bestowed well earned and meaningful Hindu titles¹ based upon ancient Indian history and mythology.

Birbal had already shown his feat of military skill on the earlier occasions in Multan, in the Punjab and in consequence

2. Akbar bestowed titles like Kavirai, Jyotikrai, Mahapatra and Jagatguru, all of these were based on Hindu traditions.
of which he was graced with the title of Bir-Bar, then known as Kavi Rai in the 18th regnal year of Akbar when he was assigned the the jagir of Nagarkot, in A.D. 1574.

Dr. Agrawal has tried to explain this transformation on the basis of the rules of Sanskrit philology, according to which when two ‘R’ sounds occur in close proximity, the latter is pronounced as ‘L’. The Tabakat-i-Akbari also mentions that there are some manuscripts in which Birbar has been written as Birbal. The title of Raja Vira-Var, which came to be called in common parlance among the laities as Raja Birbal gained such popularity that it became his name, and his real name as well as all the previous titles gradually became eclipsed, and finally they were lost in oblivion.

Thus, the ancestry and early career of Raja Birbal constitute a very enchanting story. His rise from obscurity to prominence can be explained both in terms of his personal talents as well as the patronage that was bestowed on him by the famous courts of Rewa and Jaipur, and finally by this future patron, Emperor Akbar the Great.

2. Tabaqat-i-Akbari. (De), Vol. II. P. P. 398.
Chapter II

Raja Birbal's Entry into the Imperial Court and his Accomplishments

The most popular and well-known aspect of Raja Birbal's life is his brilliant career at the court of Akbar the Great. The contemporary historians describe his close association, and intimate relation with the Emperor. The Court historian Abul Fazl, wrote that, "He (Birbal) was among the intimate associates" of the Emperor. Even the most hostile critic among the contemporary historians, Badaoni, who probably hated Birbal most, could not but recognise his great merit, for he observed, "He was possessed of a considerable amount of capacity and genius."² He further chronicled that Birbal was honoured with the distinction of becoming the Emperor's confidant: "Thy flesh is my flesh and thy blood my blood."³

Both in the camp and at the court, in the administration of justice as well as in subtle discussions on religious and philosophical issues at the Ibadat-khana, in hunting expeditions and

3. Ibid, P. 164.
the playfields of chaugan, one finds Birbal in close attendance upon the Emperor. But unfortunately, Birbal, who is a victim of Badaoni’s frequent criticisms, has also suffered neglect at the hands of Abul Fazl. We do not get a full and connected account of his career at the court from any contemporary source. It must be admitted, however, that there are stary and scattered references in the Akbarnama relating to his important position and role at the Imperial Court.

The story, based on traditions, points him as a sycophant and flatterer, court-wit and a jester. Even in some of the books on history, the same sentiment has been echoed. This kind of general impression, thus created, has not only dimmed the glorious career of Birbal but also has given rise to certain misconceptions about the Emperor and his famous royal court. Thus it becomes imperative here to explain the true nature of the royal court and get a more exact portrait of Birbal as one of the most important courtiers of Akbar. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to paint him in his true colours without fully unfolding the canvass of the contemporary court life.

Indian history, during the medieval period, is mainly a chronicle of kings and their courts rather than of democratic movements and political progress. Mughal kingship was not only ‘personal’ and ‘despotic’ in nature but also was thought to be a divinely ordained institution. Emphasising this, Abul Fazl writes: ‘No dignity is higher in the eyes of God than royalty; and those who are wise, drink from its auspicious foundations.’ He further says: ‘Royalty is a light emanating from God and a ray from the sun, the illuminator of the universe, the argument of the book of perfection, the receptacle of all virtues.’ ‘The king can do no wrong’ was the cornerstone of the absolute monarchy of the Mughals.

Akbar was his own chief minister, and he himself expressed it in very clear terms thus: 'It was the effect of the grace of God that I found no capable minister, otherwise people would have considered that my measures had been devised by him.' The Emperor was, thus, the pivot of Mughal administration. But 'no absolute ruler, however diligent, could discharge alone the multifarious duties of the government at the Centre. He must have around him persons to whom he could trust and who acted as such as his eyes and ears, and spared him a lot of detailed work'. So, there were counsellors and advisers, but they were mere instruments to execute the royal policy and the council and the court were purely advisory in nature. 'The King with his court was not merely the centre of government but he was the whole government itself.'

"In all monarchies, there exists, besides the efficient parts; the dignified parts to impress the imagination of the people and excite and preserve the reverence of the population. Grand Darbars and courts, rich and ceremonious State functions, gorgeous paraphernalia of royalty, all are intended to serve no other purpose than to enhance the dignity of the ruler and the state." The early Turkish rulers of India felt such a need and had elaborately organised their courts and ceremonies after the fashion of the Persian rulers. Balban's court was gorgeous beyond measure, and the Mughals had revived the old glory of the Delhi monarchy. Akbar's court was organised on a scale commensurate with the dignity of the Mughal Empire. Akbar laid the foundations of a grand structure of Imperial Services and had a magnificent royal court. The glory of his great Empire in its extent has no doubt been outshone by the greater and more expansive Empire under the British regime, but the

grandeur of the Mughal court has yet remained unrivalled and undiminished. Not only the English travellers but also others from the European Continent were struck with wonder and surprise by the pomp and glamour of the Mughal Court.¹

But, the Mughal Court was not a Darbar as we understand by the term today, a place for formal audience and amusement of the King. It was the King-in-Council, transacting state business in public, and yet it was not a popular assembly of officials presided over by the King. The Court had a set of officers like Mir-i-Tazuk (Master of Ceremonies), Arz-i-Mugarar (Chief Secretary), the imperial news-writers and many others, who were always in attendance upon the King.² All important appointments were made here; prominent ambassadors and distinguished visitors were received in the Court; important principles of State Policy were discussed and deliberated upon; and on every Wednesday the Diwan-i-Am was converted into a Court of Justice. In modern terminology, the Mughal Court combined all the three functions of a State, legislative, executive and judicial. Besides, it served as the cultural centre and as an epitome of all that the country had to present before others. Raja Birbal was a courtier of this kind of magnificent court. One can very easily appreciate the talent and genius required for getting not merely an entrance but a prominent place in such an august assembly. No one could be in the company of such a large number of highly placed officials without having some extra-ordinary traits of character. It was not always possible for the Moghul Emperors to have applied themselves to every question; they were certainly influenced by the recommendations of their high officials. Such a busy time-table kept the administrators and the courtiers up to the mark. No one could assume that a courtier could be able to get away with his folly or want of judgment.³ No important courtier, not even Abul Fazl, escaped royal displeasure or censure on some occasion or the other. But it was a

³ Ibid, p. 36.
unique privilege of Raja Birbal that the Emperor never found an occasion to show his displeasure to him or to reprimand him.\(^1\) He had a wonderfully good record of service all through at the Imperial Court.

In tracing Raja Birbal’s career at the Court of Akbar, we have first to determine the date of his coming to it and to investigate as to the method by which he might have found his access to the Imperial Court at Agra. There are many stories, current in traditions, which try to explain his first meeting with the Emperor. They can be roughly classified into three categories. There are writers\(^2\) who advocate an accidental meeting with Akbar, when the Emperor was struck by his genius and witty remarks and decided to take him into his service. Another group of writers\(^3\) maintain that he was duly presented as Nazar (presentation) by Raja Bhagwan Das of Amber, in whose court he had spent some years of his early career and had earned his reputation as ‘Brahm Kavi’. Another biographer, quoting a tradition, writes that he was introduced to the Imperial Court by Todarmal.\(^4\) There is yet another tradition, supported by Dr. R.P. Tripathi, which makes us believe that Birbal was summoned by Akbar to the court, and like Tansen, he came from the court of Raja Ram Chand Bhat of Rewah. There is also Badaoni’s statement\(^5\) which throws a hint that Birbal had himself come to the court in search of service, and Akbar was pleased to take him in because of his uncommon ready-wit and impressive intelligence.

1. See Chapter, VI of this Thesis.
   (iii) Bhatta, Ballava, Raja Birbal, Kashi S.V. 1984. p. 69,
3. (i) Tod, Rajasthan (Cal, Ed.) p. 390.
   (ii) Smith, V.A. Akbar etc. p. 171.
5. Tripathi, R.P, Raja Birbal, Hindustani, January, 1931. Allahabad, p. 4. Tripathi’s findings appear to me to be quite cogent and documented.
Closely connected with this question of Birbal's introduction to the Court is the question of the year and time of his arrival. Badaoni writes thus, "...at the beginning of his reign, a certain Brahman musician, Gadai Brahman Das by name, whose whole business was perpetually to praise the Hindus, and who was possessed of a considerable capacity and genius, came to the Court." But there are some modern writers who believe that he came to the Court about six years later, and that his career at the Court began in the year 1562 A.D. Another historian, Dr. M.L. Roy Choudhary, has mentioned 1572 A.D. as the date of Birbal's entry into the Imperial service.

It would be better or rather more systematic to take up first the date-controversy and arrive at certain conclusions before entering into the question of the method of his introduction to the Court. The first conclusion will help us in eliminating some unnecessary controversies. Badaoni, as stated before, is of the opinion that he came in the beginning of the reign. Blochmann in his translation of Ain-i-Akbari says that, "he came soon after Akbar's accession." This date viz., 1556 has also been accepted and advocated by M.H. Azad, V.A. Smith, Maha Pandit Rahul Sankrityayan and G.S. Sardesai. The other date, which falls six years later (1562), has been advocated by Dr. R.P. Tripathi, Dr. Baini Prasad

and Dr. A.L. Srivastava\textsuperscript{1} as the year of Birbal’s coming to Akbar’s Court. The third date as mentioned by Dr. M.L. Roy Choudhary is 980 A.H. (1572-72 A.D.).\textsuperscript{2}

Raja birbal was given the title of ‘Kavi Rai’ in A.D. 1572, and Dr. Roy Choudhary has perhaps incorrectly taken that date as the date of his arrival in the Court. But, it is now clear from the study of the history of Akbar’s reign that by A.D. 1572 Birbal had became quite an important courtier, and he finds mentions more than once before the year 1572 A.D. in the records of the period. Dr. Baini Prasad who believes in the story of Birbal’s presentation by Raja Bhagwan Das, has remarked that the date of his introduction into Akbar’s service cannot be placed earlier than February 1562, when Raja Bihari Mal with his son Raja Bhagwan Das and grandson Raja Man Singh first came to Akbar’s Court near Ajmer, and the Emperor was married to Raja Bihari Mal’s daughter at Sambhar.\textsuperscript{3} The main plank of Dr. Prasad’s argument rests on the first meeting of Akbar with the Jaipur ruler. But he failed to take note of Bihari Mal and his son’s earlier interview with Akbar, just in the first year of his accession, ‘when the robes of honour had been presented to the Raja and to his sons and other relatives ‘for the excellent loyalty of the Raja shown at the siege of Narnaul. His Majesty was mounted on a ‘mast elephant’ which in its intoxication was rushing in every direction, but the Rajputs held fast to their loyalty, and this steadiness pleased the lofty glances of His Majesty and he made a prophetic remark, “We shall rear you.”\textsuperscript{4} So Akbar’s first meeting with the Jaipur ruler was not in 1562 but as early as 1556, and one may put forth a suggestion that Birbal might have been presented on that occasion. But it is advisable to postpone any final conclusion in this regard before finishing the examination of all the different theories mentioned earlier.

\textsuperscript{1} Srivastava, A.L., Akbar the Great, Vol. I. 83.
\textsuperscript{2} Roy Choudhary, N.L., ‘Din-Ilahi’. p. 142.
\textsuperscript{3} Prasad, Baini, Op. Cit. p. 46.
\textsuperscript{4} Akbar Nama (Beveridge) II. p. 70.
Dr. R.P. Tripathi, in his learned article on Raja Birbar describes his early career at the court of Raja Ram Chand Bhatta of Rewah where both Birbal and Tansen had received royal recognition and patronage, and the fame of both the poet and the musician had reached the ears of the Emperor. Akbar asked the Baghel Raja to send them (Birbal and Tansen) to the Imperial Court. He further adds that Tansen reached Akbar’s Court in 1563 but we get no exact date about Birbal, though in all probability, he also may have been admitted in the same year as Tansen.

Dr. A.L. Srivastava also has accepted 1562 as the date of the arrival in Court; he even marks the presence of Birbal at the Court in the early months of 1562, whereas Tansen according to him, joined towards the end of the same year. Thus different dates advocated by different writers create a gap of six years and the period of his coming to Court lay between 1556 and 1562 A.D.

But one fails to understand why the learned historians have not assigned any reason for not accepting Badaoni’s version who puts Birbal’s entry into the Court in the early years of the Emperor’s reign, and traces his gradual rise to rank and power on the basis of his own merit and by the art of pleasing his patron. Badaoni’s hostility to Birbal is evident and hence, he could not have shown any favour to him. Besides Badaoni, even Abul Fazl mentions him acting as an intercessor in favour of Raja Ram Chand in the year 1563, which means that Birbal had become quite an important courtier by that time. The attainment of this responsible position could have been possible only when he had spent some years at the Court for establishing his reputation and gaining the confidence of the Emperor.

An attempt has been made here to examine this point from another angle also. Between Tansen and Birbal, we are told

2. Ibid. p. 75.
4. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) II, p. 283.
definitely about the former's date of entrance, and also about his established reputation. He had joined the Court at the expressed desire of the Emperor. Naturally, when there was a question of his old patron, it was expected that Tansen should have acted as an intercessor. But the mention of Birbal as an intercessor can mean only two things. It may be said that Raja Birbal was senior and more influential courtier and in his comparison, Tansen was just a new entrant. It may also mean that in political affairs Tansen did not like to indulge and hence it was left to Birbal to represent the case of Raja Ram Chand. Thus it is evident that Birbal's role in 1563 proves his earlier entry and stay at the Court.

In view of all these evidences, especially Badaoni's clear statement, there appears to be good ground accepting 1556 or little later as the date of Raja Birbal's arrival in the Court. Birbal was one of the senior most courtiers of the Emperor. Out of the 'Nine friends' of Akbar as described by V.A. Smith,¹ he was the first to enter into the royal service and was older than all others excepting Raja Todarmal who was senior to him in age by five years.

As regards the method of Birbal's coming to the Court, we have also to examine the controversies with regard to this question. As discussed earlier, opinions are sharply divided on this point also.² The best way to reach nearer the truth will be to examine the different systems of recruitment prevalent in the time of Akbar. This will not only offer a suitable solution to our problem but will also throw some light on the origin of the different traditions and legends connected with the beginning of Birbal's career at the Court. Let us have a side-glance on Akbar's Court and study the organisation of the Imperial services.

The Mughal Court was perhaps the most magnificent in the world. It was the centre of wealth, dignity and culture. The

2. Supra of this Chap. p. 5.
state service drew the highest talents in the country, as it was the most lucrative career open to any one. All those who were entitled to be called great in the country, were in the service of the Emperor. There was practically no rank or distinction outside the pale of the Imperial service. The guiding maxim of Akbar’s government like that of Napoleon Bonaparte in France was ‘career open to talent.’ Able men from distant countries of Asia came to the Moghal Court in search of a career and found a ready welcome at the Court. When foreign talents were constantly pouring in, it is no wonder that a talented man like Birbal also might have tried to test his fortune by knocking at the gate of the Imperial Court. The tradition quoted by Dr. Bainsi Prasad in his article entitled ‘Raja Birbal a biographical study,’ finds some support here. “Men came to Court”, writes Moreland, “in search of a career or at least a livelihood, if the search was unsuccessful, they withdrew, while success meant the attainment of military rank, administrative functions and remuneration, sometimes in the form of a cash salary and sometimes by the grant of the whole or a portion of the revenue yielded by a particular area.” In fact, Mughal nobility was mainly recruited from this band of fortune-hunters.

In the Mughal Court new nobles were created every day, and every day some of the old ones disappeared. Many were encouraged to come to the court with the help of their friends, who had proceeded there and had fared well. Appointments to the services were made by the Emperor personally, the rank being fixed in accordance with the circumstances in each case Raja Bihari Mal, for instance, was appointed direct to the rank of 5000, the highest position open to any one outside the Imperial family. In ordinary cases, however, a

candidate had to find a patron who would introduce him to the Emperor, and if he could win favour, his appointment came after a somewhat lengthy series of formalities.\textsuperscript{1} There appears to have been no recognised test of fitness, certainly nothing in any way corresponding to the modern practice of possessing some evidence of educational or other qualifications. Akbar had great faith in his ability of discerning human character, and he appears to have acted uniformly on his own judgment.\textsuperscript{2}

In brief, real talent was sure to catch the Emperor’s eye, and successfully attract his attention. This could be done either in the Court or outside, when the Emperor was on his ‘nocturnal rambles,’\textsuperscript{3} or his ‘incognito movements’ in the streets of Agra\textsuperscript{4} or even during the hunting expeditions where the formalities of the Court could not have been strictly enforced.

Besides these general cases, Akbar was always in search of talent to adorn his court, and whenever he heard of any celebrity in the courts of the local rulers, he asked them to send him to the Imperial Court. Akbar had a strong desire to make his ‘Court a centre of culture,’\textsuperscript{5} and this policy of the Emperor is fully corroborated by Abul Fazl’s description of Tansen’s coming to the court and how Jalal Khan Qurchi was sent with a gracious order to Raja Ram Chand for the purpose of bringing Tansen.\textsuperscript{6} The Court historian rightly ‘lauds the discrimination of the far-seeing minerologist who brings out rubies and cornelians from among dust and makes the ornaments of dominion’s throne.’\textsuperscript{7} It was this plan and purpose

\textsuperscript{1} Moreland, W.H. Op. Cit. pp. 64-65.
\textsuperscript{2} Akbar Nama (Beveridge), II. p. 225.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid. p. 65.
\textsuperscript{4} Akbar Nama (Beveridge), II. p. 224.
\textsuperscript{5} Sharma, S.R. Mughal Government and Administration, Bombay, 1951, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{6} Akbar Nama (Beveridge) II, p. 279-80.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid. p. 307.
that led ultimately to the establishment of the famous institution of ‘Nine Gems’ (Nava Ratna), associated with the Court of Akbar. Raja Birbal was one of the brightest jewels of this august assemblage.

When we judge the different traditions relating to Birbal’s coming to Court in their proper perspective and against the background of the Mughal Court discussed above, all the stories regarding his accidental meeting with the Emperor appear to be false, fabricated and mere interesting concoctions. They are all related to Birbal’s childhood and are fit to be summarily rejected. Tod’s version regarding the presentation of Birbal by Raja Bhagwan Das, which has been adopted by V. A. Singh and other writers, is not corroborated by any other source and seems to be based on the assumption that since Birbal was for sometimes at the Jaipur Court, he might have been presented by Raja Bhagwan Das to Akbar. It is a confirmed fact that immediately before he came to the Agra Court, he was in the Court of Ram Chand Bhat of Rewa. It was on his intercession in A.D. 1563 that the Raja’s territories were not interfered with, and again, in A.D 1584 it was Birbal who was sent on a mission to bring Ram Chand to the Court. Badaoni’s statement throws a clear hint that he came from the Court of Ram Chand Bhat. A recent research work in Hindi,


4. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) II, p. 283.

entitled, 'Rewa Darbar-Ke-Hindi Kavi'\(^1\) also points to the same conclusion.

A thorough and critical examination of all this evidence leads to the conclusion that Raja Birbal reached Akbar's Court from Rewa and he may have joined the Imperial service as early as 1556 or little later. His high rank of 2,000 without a mention of any previous promotion from lower ranks also indicates that his appointment was of special nature. Normally all appointments in those days were made in lower grades.\(^2\) Abul Fazl had started his career as a mansabdar of twenty and rose rapidly to the rank of 5000.\(^3\)

The qualifications and the essential traits of a Moghul courtier have been discussed in detail by Mr. R. P. Khosla in his book 'Moghul Kingship and Nobility'. He writes, "An Amir had to possess a ready wit and prepossessing address, combined with the capacity for honest work. He must be brave and courageous, clever at intriguing as well as checkmating intrigues. Those Amirs who distinguished themselves on the battle field were always exalted by suitable titles and given an increase in rank and fief... A good address and pleasant manners, were a sure passport to success".\(^4\) He further adds, appointments and promotions being based on individual ability, a talented man could rise from the lowest to the highest position, if he knew how to utilise the opportunities that came his way. Greatest caution and keenest intelligence were the necessary conditions of success, as any false step might hurl a man down. Favours came in plenty but only after their recipients had proved their merit to the entire satisfaction of him who could appreciate it in a tangible manner. It was a system of competition. Timidity was always at a discount. It was very difficult to make a start, but once the Emperor's eyes fell on a

promising man, his fortune was made and his advancement assured". 1 Raja Birbal possessed all these requisite qualifications of a successful courtier. His witticism and skill in repartee has been acknowledged and accepted by both the contemporary as well as the later historians. His loyalty and devotion to his master have been confirmed and referred to in a letter addressed to Khan-i-Khanan by Akbar himself conveying to him the sad news of Birbal’s death. 2

It is not only interesting but also useful to study Raja Birbal’s wit, humour and intelligence. Akbar was greatly attached to him because of these innate qualities. In fact, his rise to prominence and his constantly successful career at the Court can be traced to these very peculiar traits. Unfortunately, this most popular aspect of his life has been painted rather cheaply. The legends and traditions have become adulterated and admixed so much that they have lost their taste and temper. Dr. Tirpathi has carefully examined this aspect and has commented: “Birbal was surely of genial and happy temperament, and occasionally made humorous and witty remarks. But this never proves that he was the originator of all those silly anecdotes now current amongst people. Birbal must have been not only very careful but very respectful in his utterances before the Emperor”. 3

In the ‘Ain-i-Akbari’ we get a glimpse of the busy life of the Emperor. All his engagements were well-routined and regulated and the stories, as narrated, seldom fit in with the court life. Akbar’s countenance was highly dignified. On the basis of the Jesuit writer who saw him in his 38th year, it can be said that his expression was tranquil serene and full of dignity; yet in moments of anger he proved to be an awful majesty. He laughed heartily, cracked jokes and enjoyed every kind of entertainment, but when he was offended, his wrath was

terrible. There is no doubt that Akbar himself possessed a sense of humour and was at times witty and indulged in repartee.\(^1\) We get a good illustration of it in the ‘Ain-i-Akbari’ when poet Fani said in Akbar’s presence that no one surpassed him in the three C’s—Chess, Combat and Composition. The Emperor quipped that he had forgotten a fourth, ‘Conceit’.\(^2\)

Akbar was really a complex personality. His smiles broke into laughter, but nobody knew when he would fall into a violent anger and would become quite terrible. It is evident from the mercurial temperament of the Emperor and the nature of the prevalent courtiers and etiquettes that Birbal was not an ordinary ‘court-wit’. It would be a great injustice to him to depict him as a simple ‘entertainer’ or ‘jester’ and no more. “His poetry and other compositions”, remarks Dr. Tripathi, “reflect a different personality of the poet and the writer. There is no evidence of cheapness and light-heartedness in them”.\(^3\) The Emperor’s letter quoted in Insha-i-Abul Fazl corroborates the remarks of Dr. Tripathi.\(^4\)

Wit and humour, generally used as synonyms, have finer distinction. The former is a matter of verbal expression and consists in giving a surprising twist to an idea, thought or saying, while humour is a genial appreciation of the incongruities of life. Wit is certainly aristocratic in that it invariably implies an attitude of intellectual superiority. Humour is democratic in that it implies an attitude of sympathetic identification. Raja Birbal must have been witty in the court. He could be humorous on a suitable occasion, preferably when the two friends were together in a friendly and relaxed mood. But even on those occasions the difference between the Emperor and his courtier had always to be kept in the fore-front of the mind. We know that even the royal princes and the members of the harem had to maintain the formalities and dared not

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2. Ain., (Blochmann), I. p 471.
disregard the elaborate etiquettes. The Emperor's attitude is made clear from the retort once given to Abul-Maali, who had enjoyed favours even from Humayun, and had complained of the detached treatment given to him by His Majesty, by providing for him a 'separate rug' and a 'separate table cloth'. 'Tell him', Akbar had commented, 'the regulation of the State and the laws of love are distinct'.

Raja Birbal was surely a very intelligent man. His 'ready wit' and wonderful 'art of conversation' have been acknowledged even by Badaoni, who was his bitterest critic and generally called him 'Birbar—that bastard' or referred to him as 'hellish dog'. Akbar always loved to have Birbal by his side, so that he might enjoy his witty conversation, but this cannot be taken as the full story. Birbal possessed 'the uncanny powers of divining his master's secrets'. He could 'untie the difficult knots' of Akbar's heart and had always ready solutions for all kinds of problems—both personal and general. Besides being a 'boon friend', he was Akbar's constant companion.

It can be clearly asserted that most of the stories and anecdotes associated with his name are later concoctions and their currency amongst the people have completely eclipsed Birbal's true personality. By giving a little of mass popularity, they have buried deep into legend the true personality of Birbal. The full facts, when brought to light, will prove to be stranger than fiction. The pleasure of discovery of the real Birbal will surely prove to be more amusing and thrilling than most of his oft quoted miss-quotations.

Before concluding this Chapter on Raja Birbal's career at the Court, it is necessary to emphasise his peculiarly prominent

1. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) I, p. 662.
position among the courtiers—both Hindu and Muslim, old and new. Maulana Muhammad Husain Azad really expressed his surprise at his wonderful luck and says that in some respects he was more fortunate than Aristotle himself. Not even Abul Fazl could rival him in closeness and intimacy with the Emperor. Raja Birbal was a member of Akbar's innermost circle of friends and was constantly attached to the Court. His 'uncanny power of divining his master's secrets' was a unique gift to which even Abul Fazl did not pretend.

But this eminent position could not have been attained just 'by means of conversing with the Emperor and taking advantages of the idiosyncrasies of his (Akbar's) disposition,' as Badaoni wants us to believe. M.H. Azad goes on still further and says that Birbal had the rare privilege of free access inside the harem. Maha Pandit Rahul Sankrityayan also refers to this special privilege enjoyed by Birbal. Referring to the participation of the Hindu nobles in the administration, Fr. Monserrate says, 'they were nearly always with him. Some of them were admitted even to the inner parts of the Royal Palace, a privilege not shared even by the Mugal nobles'. Thus, there is enough of authoritative evidence to show that Raja Birbal was one of the most important courtiers, a 'spiritual companion,' a confidential adviser, and the most intimate friend of Akbar who has been acclaimed as one of the greatest kings of all times. In fact, one of the greatest friends of that great monarch of the age could not be anything but a great personality.

CHAPTER III

Raja Birbal as a Military General and Commander

Birbal is well-known for his wits, presence of mind and accomplishments in the field of learning. But very few are aware of his talents, skill and leadership in the arts of warfare. As Badaoni puts it: "He first received the title of Kab-Rai, meaning 'Prince of Poets'¹ and afterwards that of Raja Birbar, meaning 'Renowned warrior.'"² What one finds strikingly rare in him is the combination of a man of pen and a man of sword rolled into one. And here in the court of Akbar, Birbal could find a second one only in Abul Fazl.

A careful perusal of the history of Akbar's reign shows Birbal's association with many important expeditions and it throws sufficient light on the military acumen of his character. Raja Birbal shortly after he joined the Imperial service was given the title of Raja with a military rank 2,000 horse.³ In the Mughal Mansabdari system, the nobles had to begin from the lowest rung on the ladder⁴ and the mansab which Birbal

2. Ibid, p. 164.
held was definitely of a very high order. As mentioned above, Badaoni himself asserts the bestowal of the title of ‘Bir-Bar’ (meaning Renowned Warrior) on him by the Emperor. We find Birbal’s name for the first time associated with the campaigns in the then disturbed province of the Punjab in the 17th year. He was also associated with the Kangra expedition, when Nagarkot was bestowed on him by Emperor Akbar as Jagir in 980 A.H. (1572-73 A.D.). In the 18th year,¹ he accompanied the Emperor on his famous expedition to Gujrat, and in the 19th year,² he was with him in the expedition to Bihar. Finally, in the 30th year,³ he was deputed to the Yusufzai campaign in the North-West Frontier in which he laid down his life. Thus a man of pen and wits died in his boots and the ‘Renowned warrior’, (Bir-Bar) had become a martyr. He had lived for the Emperor and died for his master, thus attaining to the ‘Veer Gati’ (glorious end), true to the glory of Hindu martyrdom.

The first recorded military assignment of Birbal is referred to by Abul Fazl in the 17th year,⁴ when “Mirza Yusuf Khan, Fattu, Raja Birbar and a large force was sent to the Punjab to help Husain Quli Khan against the threat of an invasion by Hakim Mirza.” Birbal showed his valour and bravery in the Multan campaign as well; and on his success in capturing and presenting Masud Mirza as a prisoner, the Emperor bestowed upon him the title of ‘Musahib-i-Danishwar’ (wise counsellor).⁵ Besides these minor deputations, his name also figured in the Imperial expedition against Kangra. The fortress of Kangra, situated in the district of Nagarkot in the lower Himalayan belt of Siwalik hills, wellknown for its strategic importance by virtue of its geographical location in the Medieval period as is evident from a number of its sieges and conquests that followed in the various points of time, viz, by Muhammad bin Tughlaq

1. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) III, p. 69.
2. Ibid., p. 123.
3. Ibid., p. 719, 720.
4. Akbarnama (Beveridge) II, p. 538.
in A.D. 1337, by Firoz Shah Tughlaq after a long siege of six months, by Timur in A.D. 1398, and by Akbar himself as early as the very first year of his reign against Siwalik hills, where the Raja of Nagarkot was the most noted among other petty rulers, was reduced to submission by the Mughals in the 18th year of this great Mughal emperor.

The occasion for its more thorough subjugation arose, when it was assigned to Raja Birbar in Jagir by Emperor Akbar. The expedition against the fort of Nagarkot was primarily and essentially put under the over all charges of Husain Quli Khan and Raja Birbar was one of the associate generals with the Khan, by virtue of his being an assignee of it. What demands here a notice of the fact, for a critical evaluation, is the charge of tirade made against Raja Birbar by Badaoni for his direct involvement in the responsibility for the desecration of the temple of Mahamaya, so sacred to the Hindus. This demands, first a wholesome account on the Nagarkot expedition, best chronicled at length by Nizamuddin.

Nizamuddin writes thus: "As the sacred disposition (of the Emperor) became alienated from Raja Jaichand, Raja of Nagarkot, he ordered him to be imprisoned. The Raja’s son Bidhichand,....considering himself to be in his father’s place, and counting his father to be dead, rebelled. His Majesty, conferring the title of Bir-Bar on Kavi Rai, bestowed the country of Nagarkot on him. And a 'firman' was issued to Husain Quli Khan and the Amirs of Punjab, that they should wrest Nagarkot from the possession of Bidhichand and make it over to Raja Birbar."¹ M.H. Azad² and Maha Pandit Rahul Sankrityayan³ have suggested that Akbar had in mind the religious sentiment of the people there and deliberately appointed a Brahmin as Jagirdar of Nagarkot.

"When Raja Birbar arrived in Lahore", writes Nizamuddin, "Husain Quli Khan, in concert with Mirza Yusuf Khan; and
Jafar Khan, and Fath Khan Jabari, and Mubarak Khan Kakar and Shah Ghazi Khan and all the Amirs of the Punjab started towards Nagarkot."¹ The earlier phase of the expedition was a success; the custodian of that place, Jamuna by name had strengthened the fort. But he also ultimately sent his Vakil with tribute and with a message that he was willing to discharge the duties of guarding the road. Husain Quli Khan bestowed robes on the Vakil, and gave him leave to go.²

Husain Quli Khan marched with his army forward and arrived at the fort of Kotla, which in respect of its height laid claim to a rivalry with the sky, and which had formerly belonged to Raja Ram Chand, the Raja of Gwalior, and which Raja Dharam Chand and Raja Jaichand had forcibly taken possession of. The retainers of Raja Jaichand put their hands on their muskets, and bows and stones, and caused injuries to a body of foot soldiers, belonging to the Imperial camp, who had gone out to plunder. Husain Quli Khan took some cannon atop the hill, and shot some balls. The house of the commandant of the fort was shattered and a large body of the garrisons fell under its walls, and there was a great panic among the people in it. The Rajput garrison was frightened by the shocks caused by the artillery and fled during the night. When Husain Quli Khan heard the news in the morning, he beat the marching drum, and going to the fort made it over to Raja of Gwalior, but left a garrison in it, and continued his march.³ Thus the second phase of the camping had also progressed well.

"Then in the early part of the Rajab in the year 980 A.H., corresponding with the 17th year of the Itahi era, he arrived near the Polo ground of Raja Jaichand, which was near Nagarkot. The troops in their first attack conquered with the strength of their brave and powerful arms the citadel of Bhul in which there was a temple of Maha-mai (the great mother), a goddess of the Hindus.

1. Tabaqat-i-Akbari (De) II, p. 399.
2. Ibid., p. 399.
No one except the attendants of the goddess could go there. A number of the Rajputs who were determined on their own death stood firm, and performed deeds of valour and fell down on the dust of destruction. Many Brahmans, who had for years served as attendants of the temple, and had never without necessity been away from it, were killed. About two hundred black cows had been collected in that temple as offerings, as in this great tumult the precincts of the temple had been considered to be a place of safety. "Some savage Turks at such a time", clearly writes the historian "when arrows and musket-shots followed each other like rain drops, killed each one of the cows. They then took off their boots and filled them with blood, and splashed it on the roof and walls of the temple."

The outer fortification having fallen, the buildings were destroyed and levelled down to make a camping ground. After this, the fort was invested. Sabats were formed and a mound commanding the fort (Sar-kob) was raised. One day the Commander of the artillery fired a large gun upon a place which the Raja had thought to be safe. The ball struck the walls and killed nearly eighty people within the building. Among them was Bhujdeo, son of Raja Takhat Mal.

"In the beginning of shawwal letters came from Lahore with the intelligence that Ibrahim Husain Mirza had crossed the Sutlaj and was marching upon Dipalpur. Husain Quli Khan became anxious. The army was suffering great hardships, and even the dogs in the fortress were anxious for peace."

Husain Quli Khan considered it necessary to give his consent to peace. The infidels undertook to pay a large tribute, five maunds of gold in Akbar Shahi weight, and various kinds of stuffs for His Majesty. A mosque was founded in front of the palace of Raja Jaichand, and a pulpit was raised and Hafiz Muhammad Baqar read the Khutba in the name of the

1. Tabaqat-i-Akbari (De) II, p. 401.
2. Ibid (E and D) Vol, V, p. 358.
3. For the terms of the peace, See E and D Vol. V., p. 358-359. One of the terms (No. 4) was regarding compensation to Raja Birbal.
Emperor. When the peace was concluded, the Khutba read, and the coins stamped with the Emperor's names, Husain Quli Khan marched away. The expedition thus came to an end.

Judged in the light of the aforesaid, as chronicled by Nizam-ud-din, Badaoni's account is quite short, but the episode connected with the desecration of the temple of Mahamaya has been recorded by the last named writer in a vein which smacks as much of his zeal as a biggest as it speaks of his deep-seated motivation and antipathy to defame Birbar. As Badaoni puts it—"So many Brahman sojourners in the temple, were killed, that both friends and strangers heaped a thousand thousands of curses on the head of Birbar who reckoned himself a saint among the Hindus (curse on them)."

Some other writers also, having taken this clue from Badaoni's remarks, have associated the name of Birbal with the defilement of the temple of Maha-mai. J.M. Shelat observed thus, "Birbal, himself a Brahman, had merely the mortification of witnessing the horrible sight of his colleagues sacrilegiously sprinking the great temple with the blood of the sacred cows and the venerable Brahmin devotees." Munshi Devi Prasad also in his biographical book on Birbal has written that Raja Jee (Birbal) felt greatly ashamed of the incident and gave up his Jagir (Nagarkot) for good and got in exchange the Jagir of Karra and Kalinjar. The same kind of sentiment has been expressed in 'Darbar-i-Akbari' and 'Umarai-i-Hunood.' But unfortunately all these writers have accepted Badaoni's version without any attempt for a scrutiny.

There is no doubt that there were great severities in the Kangra expedition and Nizamuddin's account, quoted above, also refers to the desecration of the temple, "but he does not mention the name of Birbal in that context, rather he has

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depicted it clearly 'as a savage act of some of the Turks:' Badaoni himself accepts that the 'Musalmans killed them all' (the 200 black cows), 'and through their zeal and excessive hatred of idolatory, they filled their shoes full of blood and threw it on the doors and walls of the temple.' But he also does not explain how Birbal was responsible for it. Dr. R.P. Tripathi in his article on Raja Birbal has rightly expressed, 'it is not quite clear from the description given in Akbarnama, whether Birbal was actually present on that occasion, though Badaoni hints at it. But even Badaoni does not mention his name in the list of generals connected with Nagarkot expedition, which means that he was an ordinary rank holder and not an important general in the campaign. Perhaps this was the reason why he could not stop the excesses of the Musalman soldiers.2

The assertions of other writers that Birbal was ashamed of the incident and gave up his Jagir of Nagarkot, are evidently wrong assumptions. The Raja held the principality of Nagarkot till the end of his career. We find in Akbarnama that in the 26th regnal year we welcomed the Emperor at Desua which was in his Jagir of Nagarkot.3

It is thus clear that Badaoni has just brought in the name of Birbal to defame and malign him, for which he was always in search of opportunity. Akbar himself, if he would have been in the expedition, could not have permitted it, because of his respect for the religious sentiments of the Hindus. So far as the temple of Maha-mai is concerned, it is said that he has offered a golden umbrella4 for the temple and had himself visited Nagarkot in the 26th year of the reign, where he had witnessed miracles and had a wonderful dream in which the Maha-mai had said to him that she and a hundred like her were not worthy of Akbar’s visit. ‘Akbar had himself men-

3. Akbarnama (Beveridge) III, p. 510.
tioned that vision and returned."

A critical analysis of all these facts clearly indicates that Birbal was not in any way connected with the desfilement of the temple, and naturally he can not be held responsible for it. Badaoni, on account of his intense jealousy and hatred towards him, falsely brings his name and casts aspersions on him.

Next to Nagarkot campaign come Birbal’s association with Gujrat expedition of Akbar, which too followed that very year after the subjugation of Nagarkot. Raja Birbal was one of the few selected nobles, who accompanied Akbar in both the Gujrat campaigns, which led to its final conquest, an episode which marks an epoch in Akbar’s history as feats of great military exploits. A perusal of the two Gujrat campaigns brings to light Birbal’s mobility required of the campaigns to execute its full operation in its thoroughness.

The conquest of Gujrat marks an important landmark in Akbar’s history. Having conquered Malwa and broken the power of the Rajputs, Akbar resolved to lead an expedition to Gujrat. The rich province of Gujrat, lying between Malwa and Arabian sea, had been held by Humayun for a short time, and long before had been subject to the control of the Sultanate of Delhi in the days of the Khaljis and Muhammad bin Tughlaq. Akbar, therefore, could advance reasonable claims to the recovery of the province which, in any case, invited aggression on account of its wealth and commerce. Just then, too, the government had fallen in disorders and the intervention of Akbar was actually asked for by the local Chiefs. The province of Gujrat was an important centre of trade with

1. Akbarnama (Beveridge) III, pp. 510-511.
2. Gujrat, the ancient Saurashtra (the goodly land), has at all times been an important part of India. Intellectual progress kept pace with the rapid march in agriculture, trade and commerce, and as having contrasted with the later ages, ripened its most generous fruit-tolerastion in matters of belief. Evidences of the toleration may by seen in the decrees chiselled on the rock of Girnar by Command of the famous Buddhist King Ashoka. After the Buddhist the Jain found refuge in Gujrat and chose Mount Abu for the site of their Principal temple.” Von Noer, “The Emperor Akbar”, Vol. I. p. 177.
the west and it was there that the ships for pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina anchored. Besides, Akbar made up his mind to conquer Gujrat which had given shelter to powerful rebels from his court in A.D. 1564, 1565 and in 1567.¹

The campaign began in A.D. 1572, when on July 2, A.D. 1572 Akbar set out from Fathpur Sikri, brushing aside every obstruction to his arrangements. Marching by way of Sanganair, he reached Ajmer from where on August 12 he despatched to Ahmedabad a mounted force, ten thousand strong, under Khan-i-Khanan (Mir Muhammad Khan) as an advance guard and resumed his journey in September.² On November 7, A.D. 1572, he encamped outside Patan, and on the 16th November Itamad Khan and the leading men of his party came out of Ahmedabad, met the Emperor at Kadi and surrendered the keys of Ahmedabad.³ On the 20th November, Akbar reached the banks of Sabarmati where the Khutba was read in his name; a large number of men from the city did homage and presented gifts to him.⁴

Akbar started for Fathpur Sikri on April 13, A.D. 1573. On June 3, A.D. 1573, he entered the gates of Fathpur after an eventful and triumphant expedition.

Akbar had hardly been back to Fathpur Sikri, when news of revolts in Gujrat reached him. Khan Azam appealed for reinforcements. The rebels were able to collect a force of 20,000 men, and they had advanced towards Ahmedabad. Such, indeed, was the confusion created by these rebels that it was apprehended that the province might again revert to anarchy. Quick action was needed to restore order. Without a moment of hesitation, Akbar decided to act, anxious not to let slip through his hands so rich a prize as Gujrat which he had acquired with so little effort.⁵ If the first expedition had shown Akbar in his glory as fighting man, leading his soldiers, with

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
the reckless daring of an Alexander, this second expedition reveals him as a born general.\(^1\) Akbar left nothing to chance. He planned the expedition, equipping the soldiers well and on August 23, 1575, saw him ready and marching out of Fathpur with a force of 3,000 men mounted on swift she-camels, himself riding the quick travelling camel called Jummuza, a camel swifter than an arrow.\(^2\) Across the arid desert of Rajputana, in the suffocating heat of August, he marched at a rapid pace of fifty miles a day. When tired on the camel, he continued the march without a halt, sometimes in a chariot. When reached Baliana between Patan and Ahmedabad, he halted for a while and arranged his army into three divisions. The centre he entrusted to Abdur Rahim, the son of Bairam Khan, trained under his own supervision and then a lad of 16 only; the right wing was left to Noor Mahomed, Khan-Khanan, and the left wing was under the control of Wazir Khan. Under his own command he kept only 100 horses, all veterans and picked men.\(^3\) Fifteen amongst those select men were Hindus—Birbal, Man Singh Darbari, Lal Kalawant, a musician, Sanwal Das, a painter who drew the battle plan of Sarnal Tarachand Khawas, yet another painter, Raja Bhagwan Das and his uncle Rupsi, to name some of them. When his forces approached the vicinity of Ahmedabad, Akbar put on his armour and issued armours to his officers. Mounting his horse, Nur Baiza (white light), he had his men drawn in battle array and issued the order to cross the Sabarmati. Akbar had by forced marches covered nearly six hundred miles in eleven days, a feet at once remarkable and unique.\(^4\) He had really flung a surprise on the enemy. Mohammad Husain Mirza, in all innocence, asked a Turk soldier, Subhan Quli, whose army it was that had come. When the Turk informed him that it was the Emperor in person, the Mirza could not believe his own ears, blurring out that his

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1. Binyan, Lawrence, Akbar, p. 83.
2. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) III, p. 62.
spies had informed that Akbar was in Fathpur only fifteen days ago. 'If this be the imperial army', he asked dumbfounded, 'where are the elephants which always accompany it?' It was only when Subhan Quil retorted as to "How could elephants travel a distance of 400 Kosses by forced marches in nine days," that it fully dawned on him that Akbar had come to face him."

Some of his officers counselled caution to Akbar and to wait till Khan Azam came out of the city, but Akbar rejected such advice and compelled his force to fight atonce and with characteristic impetuosity he plunged his own horse into the river, his small army following his example. He crossed the river half way and then found that the enemy forces, hidden so far from his sight by the high river bank, were far larger than his. He realised the danger to which he had exposed his army, but the die was cast. He must keep up the courage and morale. He, therefore, addressed his troops through Raja Bhagwan Das almost in the same strain as his grandfather, Babur, had done on a similar occasion at Panipat, "it behoves our comrades", he said, "to hold fast to the cable of the Divine favour and not give place to perplexity or alarm. Let them be of one heart, one face and one way and assail the doomed body which carry red standards."\(^3\)

The battle started and it raged so furiously that "the events will be remembered for revolutions of generation and ages."\(^4\) Akbar noticed his vanguard giving way. He pushed his way all alone in the front and raising battle cry Ya Muin' (O—God the Defender) in his extraordinary loud voice, charged like "a fierce tiger", breaking and scattering the enemy lines before him. The battle was over.

"His Majesty with victory and good fortune", writes Nizamuddin, "dismounted on the top of a bank, which was on one side of the battle field, and occupied himself with offering

3. Akbar Nama (De), III, p. 77.
thanks. Gadai Ali Badakshi, and servants of Khan Khanan then brought before him Mohammad Husain Mirza who was wounded. Each one of them claimed to have seized him. Raja Birbal asked him, "which of these men captured you?" "The salt of His Majesty has captured me", was the reply and indeed it was the truth that he uttered. His Majesty with gentleness and courtesy reproved him a little, and made him over to Raisingh.

Akbar's return to Fathpur, though not done with the same speed with which he came to Gujrat, was accomplished in three weeks. He started from Ahmedabad on September 13, and reached Fathpur on October 5, 1573. The entire campaign was finished in just fortythree days, the speediest on record so far. He entered the gates of Fathpur on a grey horse with a spear in his hand held proudly aloft, with all his attendants holding their spears in like fashion.

The history and the details of the campaign, as mentioned above, makes it quite clear that Birbal was as close with the Emperor in the battle field as he was at the court. But he is not mentioned as holding any independent command of any wing of the army, may be because the Emperor selected some of the picked men and kept them in his personal entourage. Even Badaoni accepts that Akbar had taken only picked men with him, and with the discerning eyes, which he is credited to have possessed, it can be safely argued that Birbal had martial qualities in him to justify his selection for the campaign. This strenuous campaign did not mean a personal glory for Akbar alone, rather it was a successful test of the entire personnels accompanying him, including Raja Birbal. A man who could successfully keep pace in the swiftest campaign, through the arid deserts of Rajputana, riding on she-camels, can surely be credited with possessing a sound physique and

2. Ibid.. (De) II, p. 417.
3. Akbar Nama (Tr., Beveridge) III, p. 90-91.
the qualities of a seasoned soldier and can not merely be said to be having the pleasing manners of a courtier. Neither his photograph, as shown in Nau-ratan painting,\(^1\) nor his associations in the military campaigns, specially the second Gujrat expedition, justify the comments of M.H. Azad in his Darbar-i-Akbari, about Raja Birbal, where he depicts him as fat as lazy and a man of awkward personality.\(^2\) But final comments on his military career and qualities may be postponed until we examine his association and role in some other campaigns as well. This much is certain that had he been found lacking in military qualities, the Emperor would not have permitted him again to accompany him in the Bihar expedition which came just in the wake of the Gujrat campaign.

The next great military campaign with which Birbal was closely associated with Emperor Akbar was the conquest of Eastern provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The very fact that Birbal had given a good account of his military skill and talents in the previous campaigns in the Punjab, Kangra and Gujrat to the full satisfaction of the Emperor, once again made Akbar firm in his resolve to associate Raja Birbal with the conquest of the Eastern regions. It becomes quite evident from the list of the eminent military generals and chiefs who had accompanied Emperor Akbar in the campaign and amongst whom one finds the specific mention of Raja Birbal as one of those eminent war lords. The list includes, over and above Birbal, such eminent military commanders, like Bhagwan Das, Man Singh, Zain Khan Koke, Shah Beg Khan, as chronicled in ‘Akbar Nama’, to name some of them.

This famous Eastern campaign of Emperor Akbar, which he led in person, was directed against Daud Khan Kararani who had assumed an air of defiance by proclaiming himself as independent ruler by striking coins and causing the Khutba to be read in his name.

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1. See the Photo-Copy of Raja Birbal’s portrait in front page to Introduction.
This campaign of Akbar followed in A.D. 1574 and the Mughal Emperor, after effecting the conquest of Patna and driving out Daud from Bihar to Bengal, returned the very year to Jaunpur, enroute to Agra, duly accompanied by most of his generals excepting Munim Khan, Raja Todar Mal and a few others here. Birbal was one among those who returned along with Akbar to the west.

Raja Birbal's selection and his constant association with Emperor Akbar in these two great military campaigns of his, in Gujrat and Bihar, clearly brings to light the military talent and acumen of the Raja and of which Akbar had, therefore, taken full cognizance. Though, the contemporary historians do not give much details regarding his exact role in these campaigns, there is nothing on the record against him, and like a seasoned and veteran soldier he had valiantly stood the hardship and the test of the two expeditions which, as discussed above were very important expeditions of the Emperor, both from the political and military points of view. Raja Birbal's passion for military glory is quite evident from the fact that even after participation in the campaigns in the Punjab, Kangra, Gujrat and Bihar expeditions, he was so keen for the military assignment that the Emperor in order to choose between him and Abul Fazl, cast a lottery and the lot went in his favour for heading the auxiliary expeditions in the Swat and Bajaur Valley\(^1\) where he ultimately met his premature end.

The Swat and Bajaur campaign, popularly known as the Yusufzai episode, was the last and the most important military assignment in the career of Raja Birbal. Unfortunately, however, he not only laid down his life in this campaign, but also suffered a loss in prestige and military glory. The historians have used this military disaster as a plea for ridiculing Birbal's military talent and holding him responsible for the failure of the campaign. While condemning Birbal, they have not spared also the Emperor, who had selected and sent a 'Courtwit and

\(^1\) Akbar Nama, (Beveridge) Vol. III, p. 719.
a jester to the war front and thereby, by his wrong selection, shared the responsibility of the terrible defeat and disaster. It is necessary, rather proper, to examine the details of the campaign in their proper perspective so as to examine the role of Raja Birbal and make an assessment of his responsibility for the failure of the said campaign. The Yusufzai campaign was not a simple or isolated event of Akbar’s reign; rather it formed an integral part of the frontier policy of the Great Mughal.

The North-West frontier, unlike its eastern counterpart, had ever been a source of great concern to successive governments of India. Right from the 13th and the 14th centuries when the Mughals made their periodic raids on India, the rulers of Delhi found it necessary to adopt measures to safeguard this North-Western gateway of India. The military policy of the Delhi Sultans had always been governed by the need for fortifying this corner against possible attacks. It was, therefore, quite natural for Akbar to establish his firm hold on the countries in the North-West. Besides the defensive aspect Akbar had a general plan for the acquisition of a scientific and defensible frontier.

There were two sources of danger; the powerful Uzbegs and the wild turbulent Afghan tribes, who lived all along the north-west border. Abdullah Khan, the chief of the Uzbegs had become truly formidable, and there was also every likelihood of his gaining sympathies of the orthodox Sunnis in India. So serious was the fear of an Uzbeg invasion that it made Akbar move to the North-West and make Lahore his capital for the next fifteen years. The Yusufzai and the Mander Afghan tribes living on the border, with their restless ways of life and abhorrence for any authority, had constantly led

5. Ibid., p. 266.
marauding attacks on the surrounding regions. The Muslim rulers in India had been quite conscious of this delicate but difficult problems and the construction of such massive forts as Rohtas on the Jhelum by Shershah, Manmot in the Sivalik by Salimshah and Attock by Akbar were instances of a definite policy in that direction.¹

During Akbar’s time, able and tried soldiers like Munim Khan, Bhagwan Das, Man Singh, Zain Khan Kokaltash and Todarmal were successively kept in charge of this frontier.² With the death of Mirza Hakim in July 1585, Kabul became for all practical purposes a province of the Empire. Akbar sent Man Singh to Kabul as the governor to keep that territory in check and Zain Khan Kokaltash to subdue the tribes on the border.

Zain Khan Kokaltash, as Abul Fazl chronicles set off to bring to Yusufzais to the right path and effect the conquest of Swat and Bajour. The Yusufzais, at first, feigned submission to Zain Khan but shortly after took to the path of defiance and rebellion. This led Emperor Akbar to be more serious and vigorous in effecting the conquest of Swat and Bajour. He also sent military commanders like Hasan Khan Patni (Batni), Raja Mukund Ram, Janesh Bahadur, Arkaran Panchanan, Hira Pradhan, and Ramchandra and some others to the aid of Zain Khan in the accomplishment of the assigned task.

The Yusufzais were spread over an extensive mountainous region, which was sixty miles long and thirty to forty miles broad. It was enclosed by the river Indus on two sides and the river Kabul and the northern hills protected it on other sides.³ As Kokaltash went on to Bajaur without paying any attention the plans, His Majesty despatched another army under the Command of Sheikh Farid.⁴ They made a good attack and then returned. They Further reported that there was a great

1. Ibid., p. 267.
3. Ibid., p. 717.
4. Ibid., p. 718.
deal of work to he done in be plains, and another army should be appointed in order to root out the thorn of rebellion. Accordingly, another contingent consisting of Sheikh Faizi, the poet-laureate, Sher Khwaja, Fathullah Sharbatdar and many others were also sent. But it was reported that "if the work was left to those first sent, it would take long to finish as there were many recalcitrants, and it was difficult to get through the mountain defiles; it was resolved that another army should be sent under the charge of an experienced servant."

It was in this context that Abul Fazl represented for himself, and his prayer was almost accepted. "But by a sudden turn of fortune 'His Majesty said that it had occurred to him that lots should be cast between me and Raja Birbar, so that without reference to the wishes of either the Divine decree might be elicited." The lot cast was in Birbal's favour and so writes Abul Fazl, "That man who was fitted for battle and for banquet (Ba bazm-u-razm) went off by heaven's decree on 12 Bahman, 21st January, 1586." Qasim Khwaja, Gada Beg, Haji Siyanduk, Ahmad Beg, Tash Beg, Khwaja Hisamuddin and other distinguished persons went with him. Next morning, at dawn, His Majesty, on returning from hunting, visited the Raja's camp, and honoured him with various favours.

Abul Fazl, while describing their deeds, writes, "In a short time they swept the plain. Whoever was refractory was punished and whosoever submitted had his honour and property preserved. The victorious army then addressed itself to the conquest of Banir (Buner) and proceeded to by the ravine Near Duk (or Duki). The Afghans proceeded to offer battle, and there was a hot engagement in which a large number were made prisoners, and many were killed. In the evening they returned to the camping place." It is evident that in the first phase of

1. Ibid., p. 719.
2. Ibid., pp. 719-720.
3. Ibid., p. 720.
4. Ibid., p. 720.
5. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) III, p. 720.
the campaign Birbal and the generals under his command had fought with valour and bravery, and they had done good and satisfactory progress in the work assigned to them. At that stage another contingent was also sent by the Emperor under Hakim Abul Fath on the request of Zain Khan for still more reinforcements.¹

With all these reinforcements, Zain Khan began his plan for the conquest of Bajaur. There were 3000 house-holders of the Yusufzai tribe, and they were naughty on account of difficulties of the passes. The army entered by the way of Danishkol, and from there they proceeded to Swad, where lived 40,000 house-holders of the tribe. A hot engagement ensued and the enemy was badly defeated and driven away. The Kokaltash had laid the foundation of a fort in Chakdars, which was in the centre of the country. He had fought and won twentythree battles and had destroyed seven stockades.

"With the exception of the Karakar defile and the district of Buner", writes Abul Fazl, "the whole country had been subdued by him."² It was at that time that the reinforcement under Raja Birbal and Hakim Abul Fath arrived and "when they joined the dust of dissension and doublemindedness (durangi lit. two colours) rose up." Previously, there had been hot words between the Kokaltash and the Rajah and the latter and the Hakim were also not on good terms.³ "By the jugglery of fortune they", observes the historian, "in spite of their lofty natures entered the narrows of envy. They could not brook any partnership in the royal favour."⁴

The main points of differences between Kokaltash and the leader of the new reinforcements under Raja Birbal centred on the supremacy of the command of forces and the plan and the main objective of the campaign. The royal 'Qur' (armoury) was with the Raja and naturally he said that all the able men

1. Ibid., p. 720.
2. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) III, p. 727.
3. Ibid., p. 727.
4. Ibid., p. 727.
should gather round the royal Qur (arsenal) and hold confidential talks there. Kokaltash was very sore on this point, and though he suppressed his anger and came to the Raja, yet in that meeting "the Rajah and the Hakim came from hard language to mutual abuse. By the forbearance of the Koka, things quietened down somewhat."\textsuperscript{1}

But then the difference arose about the plan of their activity. Kokaltash proposed that a part of the army should be stationed to guard the conquered territories, and the other wing should go on chastising the tribe. But the Raja and Hakim did not accept this proposition. "The orders were", they said "to attack the country, not to guard it. They should all combine to chastise the enemy and then hasten by that road together to court." Kokaltash replied "why should we leave disorganised country which has come into our hands after so much fighting."\textsuperscript{2} They differed also with regard to the route of their proposed march. It is evident that from the military standpoint Zain Khan was right, but as courtiers, the Raja and Hakim put all emphasis on the orders of the Emperor, which seems to have been quite vague and general in nature.

It is quite evident from the narrative of Abul Fazi that the three generals were badly quarrelling among themselves and were mutually suspicious and distrustful of one another. Raja Birbal and Hakim Abul Fath stuck to their original idea and wanted to follow word by word the command of their sovereign. But Kokaltash, who was a veteran soldier, "from an ill-timed submissiveness, put the rules of command on one sides." He was afraid that "those eloquent courtiers should make disagreeable remarks (about himself) and the much occupied Shahin Shah would be displeased with him."\textsuperscript{3} But Birbal and Hakim also 'were afraid lest they should not be able to accomplish the work by themselves, and they should be disgraced.'\textsuperscript{4} It was in

\textsuperscript{1} Akbar Nama (Beveridge) III, 727.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., p. 728.
\textsuperscript{3} Akbar Nama (Beveridge), III, p. 729.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., p. 728.
this peculiar situation that "the Rajah's head and heart were disfigured by wrinkles, and he indulged in such remarks as these to his confidants: "It looks as if my fortune had been inverted that I should have to traverse hill and plain with the Hakim for support of the Kokah; when shall the things end.""¹ M.H. Azad in his Darbar-i-Akbari has twisted things in such a way which would give the impression to the readers that Raja Birbal had become completely demoralised after seeing the heights and hollows of the mountainous area. The Raja, according to him, did not possess the qualities and traits of a soldier.² But, in fact, Raja Birbal was not afraid of the obstacles and hardships of the campaign, rather he was tired of the treatment of the Kokaltash, who was growing ever jealous of his successes every day. Their relationship was growing worse and "there were daily improper expressions used to one another."³ By the irony of fate it was determined to make on unsuitable march and the discussions arose about arranging the troops. The Rajah and the Hakim declined, from the apprehension of failure, to take the command of the right and left wing.

On 2 Isfandarmus (12th February 1587), they set off for Chakdera towards Karakar, and, after covering five Koss, they encamped at the village Kandak. The march continued, and from time to time victory showed her face, and in a short space the defiles were traversed and much booty was obtained, and thousands were taken as prisoners.⁴ The Afghans became desperate, came from behind, and, began to plunder, and there was a hard fighting. But the imperialists gained victories. Next day they advanced six Koss and halted near Khandpur. Dissensions again broke out amongst the Mughal generals, and on 16th February, 1586, they proceeded towards Balandari.⁵ Kokaltash prudently took upon himself the charge of the rear

1. Ibid., p. 727.
3. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) II1, p. 727.
4. Ibid., p. 729.
5. Ibid., p. 750.
guard, and a harder battle than that of the previous day ensued.

When they had marched a little way, the evening set in, and the Raja wanted to make a halt. But just then a man came to Raja Birbal and said, "the Afghans intend to make a night attack, and the breadth of the mountain defile is not more than three to four Kosses. If you pass through this defile, you may be free from all anxiety about night attacks." Herein lay the treachery, and this was really the beginning of the tragedy.

Raja Birbal, on the basis of the above intelligence, started with the intention of passing through the defile, without acting in concert with Zain Khan and the whole army started behind him. The sun was setting, and the Afghans from all the different sides, having climbed to the top of the hills, attacked them with arrows and stones. The men lost their way in the narrow defile in the darkness of the night, and were killed in the holes and caverns. There was a terrible defeat, which has been called the Yusufzai disaster, in which Birbal, along with his entire army, perished. Raja Birbal was, in fact, "inveigled into an ambuscade in a narrow defile, where his troops were cut to pieces, and he himself with many other officers, was killed." The number killed is said by Abul Fazl to have been 500. But as Beveridge writes, "he apparently wanted to soften the disgrace of Akbar's army." Nizamuddin and Badaoni

4. The work in original for 'mon' is 'kas', and this in Persian has two meanings. Firstly, it means ordinary persons or 'no-account men'. Secondly, it means persons of distinction, that is personages, and the context shows that the word is used here in the secondary sense.
   Blochmann, too on p. 345 of Ain., Tr. has "500 Officers followed."
   —Beveridge in Akbar Nama (Tr.) III, p. 341. F.N.
5. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) III, p. 731.
estimate the number slain at 8,000 and they have been followed by Farishta and Khafi Khan’s estimate of the number killed i.e. 40,000 to 50,000 appears to be too high.\(^1\) A close study of the whole campaign with the several reinforcements sent naturally points towards heavy casualties, and Dr. A.L. Srivastava has rightly accepted the number as given by Nizamuddin and Badaoni.\(^2\)

When the news of the disaster reached the royal camp, Akbar was plunged into grief. The Emperor ‘never experienced such grief’, writes Badaoni, at the death of any Amir (noble) as he did at that of Birbar.\(^3\)

As regards the role of Raja Birbal in this campaign, the detailed narrative above throws sufficient light and evidently proves that he took active part in it. Both Abul Fazl and Nizamuddin, in their narratives, confirm the successes gained by him in spite of the mutual dissensions amongst the generals. The versions of V.A. Smith, M.H. Azad and others ridiculing the military talent of the Raja are not corroborated by the writing of either Abul Fazl or Nizamuddin. Unfortunately, however, the expedition ended in a tragic disaster; but it was not “due, in large parts, to his (Birbal’s) folly and inexperience”\(^4\) as V.A. Smith comments. The nature and topography of the area, the mutual dissensions amongst the three generals, the vague and general orders of the Emperor, and the formidable nature of the Afghan tribes, and their guerrilla warfare, all were contributory factors for the defeat and disaster of the Imperial army. Nizamuddin also refers to the element of treachery, which drove Birbal and his army to the death valley. Even the hostile critic, Badaoni, while accusing Birbal for his ill-timed march through the defile without taking counsel with

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2. Ibid., p. 341.
3. Badaoni (Lowe) II, p. 361
   See Chapter—VIII for the grief and laments of Akbar on Birbal’s death.
Zain Khan, accepts that Birbal had been betrayed and had fallen victim because of the treachery of the generals. "And since they", (Hakim and Zain Khan), writes Badaoni, "had not dared to come after having basely betrayed such a prime favourite as Birbar, and their treacheries became confirmed and proved for some time they were excluded from the Emperor's sight." In face of all these evidences, Birbal cannot be held wholly responsible for the disaster. It is also wrong to hold that Birbal was just 'a poet and a court-wit' and did not possess the qualities of a soldier. Of course, the military aspect was not as prominent in him as we find in Man Singh or Todarmal.

V.A. Smith writes thus, "Akbar made a serious mistake in sending such people as Birbal and the Hakim to command military forces operating in a difficult country, against a formidable enemy." But the learned author himself has answered the query by observing that "when Birbal was appointed, Abul Fazl had claimed the command. Akbar decided the rival claims of his favourites by drawing lots. Abul Fazl at that time was no better equipped with military experience than the Raja was." As examined above, the Raja had been associated with the military campaigns in Kangra, in the Punjab, in Gujrat and in the Bihar campaigns. In the last two campaigns, he had been closely watched by the Emperor, who had surely a discerning eye for talents. At that time, when a reinforcement was required to be sent, most of the top-ranking generals of the Empire had already been nominated to different corners, and amongst the nobles available, Birbal was certainly not a bad choice. Von Noer makes another pertinent suggestion in this context and observes, "Acute as Akbar was in matters of religion and philosophy, he must have divined that there was opposed to him in the Raushanias not only a rebel people but

4. Ibid., p. 170.
the embodiment of religious ideas. Into such Zain Khan might possibly allow himself to be enticed, Birbar hardly.\textsuperscript{1}

Whatever might have been the exact motive of the Emperor in the matter of selection, the matter was finally decided by the system of lot, which was confined to Abul Fazl and Birbal only. But a survey of the different military expeditions in which Birbal is recorded to have participated, unmistakably points to the military traits of his character. Unfortunately, however, the treachery and the ultimate tragedy have cast a cover of gloom over his military achievements, which still form an interesting aspect of his career.

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CHAPTER IV

Raja Birbal as an Administrator

There is an age-old tradition which depicts Raja Birbal as Akbar’s minister (Mantri). Popularly, their relationship has often been described as that of ‘Shahinshah and Wazir’ (Emperor and Minister). This tradition finds expression and support in the books of some important Hindi writers. Shib Singh Sengar in his ‘Shib Singh Saroj’, Ram Naresh Tripathi, in his ‘Kavita Kaumudi’, and Sri Ayodhya Singh Upadhyaya

1. Scholars derive the word ‘Waz’r’ from the Pahlavi root Vich ir (Sanskrit Vichar), meaning to judge. But the Abbasides who borrowed much of the Persian administrative system were the first to style him (Katib) Wazir. As a rule, Wazir in later times was simply a title of the high officials. Enc. Islam, IV 1135, (Sarkar, J.N. Mughal Administration, 3rd Edn. 1935. pp. 22-23).

The author of Adab-ul-Wizarat says that the Wazir is the second king in the state and his duties are more difficult to perform than those of the King....The stability of the kingdom is attributed to the ruler and its disintegration to the Wazir (Ibn Hasan, Central Structure of the Mughal Empire, p. 113).


‘Harinaudh’ in his History of Hindi Literature,¹ have given the epithet ‘Mantri’ to Birbal. Grierson also describes him as ‘the celebrated minister and Poet-Laureate (Kavi Ray) of Akbar’s Court.’²

V.A. Smith also says, “He is sometimes described in English books as a ‘minister’ or even as Prime Minister, but erroneously. He is not recorded as having held any important office, although he was occasionally employed on special missions and enjoyed the rank and pay of a commander of 2,000.”³ He adds, however, that the “proximity of his beautiful house in the palace of Fathpur Sikri to the stables has suggested the hypothesis that he may have been the Master of the Horse,”⁴ who was then known as Atabegi.⁵

But it is surprising that the learned historian, in a later chapter, accepts the truth of the tradition about Raja Birbal’s ministership and contradicts his earlier statement. While describing the ‘Throne Pillar’ at Fathpur Sikri, he writes, “Tradition affirms and no doubt, with truth, that Akbar comfortably seated on the cushions and rugs, occupied the central place, while a minister stood on each corner of the room awaiting his orders. According to local belief the ministers so favoured were the Khan Khanan, Raja Birbal, Abul Fazal and Faizi....”⁶

The contemporary historians do not mention Raja Birbal as holding the post of a minister; but a close and careful study of the administrative system of Akbar shows clearly that he

4. Ibid., p. 171.
5. ‘The Atabegi is in charge of all horses belonging to the government. This office is one of the highest of the State, and is only held by grandees of high rank; at present is filled by Khan-Khanan (Abdur Rahim)’. Ain, I. (Blochmann), p. 145.
occupied a prominent position in the political set up of the period. The use of the English nomenclature ‘Minister’ and the Hindi equivalent ‘Mantri’ in the books of the authors quoted above, has instead of clarifying his position, made it still more vague and hazy.

The terms emphasise the connotations more than the statement of mere actual position. Raja Birbal, like Abul Fazl, performed most of the functions of a minister, without actually ever holding the post. It would not only be interesting but also useful to examine and ascertain Birbal’s position in the wider context of Akbar’s administration, and then would the facts speak for themselves.

In Akbar’s administration about twenty-one Hindu chiefs served either as minister or as very close counsellors. Birbal was one amongst a few selected ones chosen as eminent persons to attend the inner circles of Akbar. What is significant to point out here is that out of these twenty-one Hindu chiefs, seventeen alone came from the sections of the Rajputs and out of the remaining four Birbal and his son were two Bhatta Brahmins and the remaining two were Khatris of which one was the famous Raja Todarmal. This clearly shows how much closely Birbal was associated with Emperor Akbar as one of the picked few counsellors to help him in taking decisions in matters of administration.

As the service pattern under the Mughals was mansab-oriented for determining the pay, emoluments and status of an officer in the state and the highest mansab of 8,000 was meant exclusively for Royal princes with a few very notable exceptions, Raja Birbal’s rank of 2,000 is quite good enough to indicate high position and status in the administrative hierarchy.

Birbal met with his death in the course of leading troops in the expedition against the Yusufzais indicates his multi-sided genius and his participation in the various fields of administration—both civil and military.

As such, Raja Birbal proved to be one of the most worthy confidants of Emperor Akbar in the whole of the Imperial
Service. Hence it was that he belonged to a set of officers, who were known as 'Hazir-i-Rikab', and he, therefore, constantly remained in attendance on the Emperor at the court, where he held an eminent position in the inner circle. Akbar was so immensely fond of his company that he wanted Birbal to remain invariably in the Court. A letter quoted in the Insha-i-Abul Fazl addressed to Khan-i-Khana amply bears out Akbar's trust and confidence reposed in Birbal. Hence nothing strange, if Raja Birbal by virtue of his position of eminence that he held in the court, coupled with his intimate personal relationship with the Emperor, had his notable contribution in shaping out the liberal policy of Emperor Akbar in the field of polity and his religious eclecticism. Unfortunately, however, there is paucity of records to check up the presence and the exact nature of Raja Birbal's participation on specified occasions in the Royal meetings.

The Mughal Imperial Service was mansab-based and a mansab without a jagir was really an unconceivable proposition. Raja Birbal also held Jagirs at a number of places in different points of time. He held Nagarkot in his Jagir in A.H. 980 (A.D 1572), he was therefore, assigned the charge of Kalinjar as his fief, followed by the subsequent assignment of a jagir at Karra, near Allahabad. After the conquest of Kalinjar in A.D. 1569. Emperor Akbar was pleased to assign its charge also to Raja Birbal as his jagir. Perhaps he also held in fief a portion of Kalpi sarkar too. That the Emperor in A.D. 1582, as recorded by Abul Fazl, had paid a royal visit to the Raja at some place, which came to be known as 'Akbarpur-Birbal', a place which might have formed his jagir.

The management of his vast and scattered jagirs, with their glorious history under important rulers, required administrative skill and talent of very high order which Birbal might naturally be credited to have possessed. His general role in administration, thus, cannot be doubted. A careful and close study of the 'Akbar Nama' and other contemporary sources supplies us with certain details relating to administrative assignments made to Raja Birbal, and his suggestions for reforms, which the Emperor was pleased to approve of and
accept, are additional evidences which are also corroborative of his political and administrative genius. They throw ample light on his lofty ideas in the sphere of administration of law and justice. In order to present here a clear and complete picture of the different executive, administrative and justicial assignments, the scattered references have been collected and arranged in a chronological order.

The first assignment given to Raja Birbal was in the year 1577 A.D. when he along with Abul Fazl was sent to enquire into the case of a rich Mathura Brahman, who had defied the orders of the Sadr, and whose case had been referred to the royal court. Badaoni has recorded the main incidents of the case and says "Qazi Abdur Rahim, the Qazi of Mathura, laid a complaint before the Sheikh, to the effect that a wealthy and stiff-necked Brahman of that place had carried off the materials, which he, the Qazi, had collected for the construction of a masjid and had built of them an idol temple, and that when the Qazi had attempted to prevent him, he had, in the presence of a witness, opened his foul mouth to curse the prophet (on whom be peace) and had shown the contempt for Muslims in various other ways. When the Brahman was called upon to appear, he disobeyed the Sheikh's summon." "The Emperor", adds Badaoni, "sent Birbar and Sheikh Abul Fazl to fetch him, and they brought him."

The case, as stated above, was a difficult and delicate one. The appointment of Raja Birbal, who was himself a Brahmin, shows the amount of trust the Emperor reposed in him. The case, by its nature, fell under the jurisdiction of a Sadr, who had failed to solve the problem and forwarded it to the royal court, and thus, Raja Birbar was deputed to solve this thiccish problem. Raja Birbar's success was really a difficult achievement.

Another important assignment made to Birbal was in the year 1578-79 A.D., when he was sent to Jalandhar to supervise the distribution of ‘madad-i-maash’ (subsistence allowance). This work was entrusted to a separate department which was presided over by the Sadr. There was a great corruption and bungling in its distribution and the Sadrs were appointed one after the other to tackle the problem. The Emperor had instituted an enquiry in 1575, and then he himself undertook to revise the grants of big sayurghal holders and ordered that the holders of over 500 bighas should appear personally before him.1

It was in continuation of this policy of reform and redistribution of madad-i-maash that “Raja Birbar and Saiyid Muzaffar were sent to Jalandhar in order that for some days they might serve at a distance and gather bliss by sympathy for the helpless. Everyone who was looking for a holding (madad-i-maash) and those who could not get, it was to be sent to the court, where he would get one sufficient for him from the crown lands.”2 Raja Birbal’s deputation for this job is significant, for as Dr. R.P. Tripathi comments, “Such works were given only to honest trusted officers of the State.”3

Raja Birbal was, again, in the year 1582, appointed a member of an agency to regulate the price and sale of cattle

*(i) Since the foundation of the Muslim State, one of its recognised function was to support the learned scholars, men engaged in spiritual pursuit, indigents, decrepits, widows and respectable men without employment. The state either gave them help in cash or in land or both. Help given in cash was called ‘Wazifa’. While land bestowed for such purpose was known as milk, Madad-i-Maash or Sayurghal. (Tripathi—’Rise & Fall of the Mughal Empire., Allahabad, 1956., p. 243).

(ii) The Sadr was judge and supervisor of the endowments of the lands made by the Emperor for the support of pious men, scholars and monks. The rent free land bore the name of Sayurghal (Turkish) Madad-i-Mass (Arabic) ‘Ajma’ etc. (Sarkar, J.N. Mughal Administration, Calcutta, 1935, pp. 28-29).

2. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) III, p. 357.
and buffaloes, and he successfully laid down principles for market control and regulation of prices. Akbar had received reports that "from the abundance of business and cupidity, there was much oppression in the conduct of the work of buying and selling and that the traders were injured. He, from a love of justice and from graciousness, ordered that various articles should be put into the charge of tactful and honest men in order that the unjust might be placed in the corner of failure."¹

As a member of the agency with which a number of big officials like Raja Todarmal, Zain Khan Kokha and other great Amirs were associated, Raja Birbal as being one of its members was given the charge of cattle and buffaloes.

As the system of agency, involving a number of departments was created to enforce a thorough control of the markets, and since this shows only men of integrity were appointed as the 'acute and unavaricious overseer' Raja Birbar, who held the charge of cattle and buffaloes, indicates that the Raja was of unimpeachable character in the matter of administration.

Abul Fazl, in his 'Akbar Nama' records an incident in the 27th year when on the occasion of the commencement of the New year, Akbar himself expressed his lofty ideals about service and devotion and asked every noble present in the Darbar to offer suggestions.

Among those who offered suggestions for improvement Raja Birbal was one such and he suggested that "some right-minded energetic men should act as Inspectors in various places to represent impartially the condition of the oppressed people and seekers after justice, and report unavoidable calamities"².

A careful analysis of all the different suggestions throws light on the problems of administration in Akbar's reign. Raja Birbal's suggestion was not only practical but essentially beneficent. We find that his suggestion was echoed and elucidated by some other nobles also. The problem of law and

¹. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) III, p. 585.
². Ibid., p. 559.
justice was the crying need of the time and the officers were generally corrupt and negligent towards their duties. When they had made the suggestions 'to H.M.', concludes Abul Fazl, "he accepted their representation. The dejected world—assumed a new face and the door was open for divine bounty." In face of these definite evidences, it is not fair to deny to Raja Birbal his role in the sphere of administration.

In pursuance of the solemn declaration, made in the middle of A.D. 1583 (27th regnal year), based on the suggestions of his courtiers, as noted above, suitable steps were taken to reorganise the departments of Central Government, each of which came to be headed by a distinguished and able officer. Raja Birbal was given the charge of the administering of justice to complainants and Abul Fazl was also attached to Birbal's office.  

Abul Fazl records that the arrangements greatly reformed the administration. He says, "In a short time the outer world attained an excellent management and the spiritual world a new development. The wicked descended into the hollow of ignominy and the good were exalted." "In fact this body," writes Dr. Baini Prasad, "was established as final appellate court of the realm on the lines of the present day Federal Court of India."

Dr. J.M, Shelat calls it "a judicial committee, not unlike the modern law commissions, for the proper administration of justice especially for expeditious disposal of cases and for improvement in the tone and practice of judicial administration," though he wrongly puts the year 1585 instead of 1583.

Thus Raja Birbal held important assignments in the year 1577, 1578, 1582 and 1583. His deputations were of executive,

1. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) III, p. 559.
3. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) III, p. 599.
administrative, religious and commercial nature. It is creditable that he performed his tasks successfully to the entire satisfaction of all concerned, and earned the approval and trust of the Emperor, who reposed more and more trust and confidence in him.

But a careful study of the different assignments makes it evident that his special field of activity was the administration of justice, Dr. J.N. Sarkar has rightly mentioned that “one of the most essential functions of a modern state is the administration of justice and the maintenance of order.”¹ Only loyal and trusted persons of proved integrity and honesty were entrusted with the administration of justice.

The four important ministers in the time of Akbar were the Diwan, Mir Bakhshi, the Mir Saman and the Sadr. The system of balancing power by this four-fold divisions of ministers was carried further by Emperor Akbar. As Dr. Ibn Hasan puts it, “At times, the Supervision of administrative affairs was entrusted to officers attached to the court, not holding any post in any of the departments of the Central Government.”² Raja Birbal has been chronicled as holding such supervisory post for more than once. Another check on the powers of the ministers, was the opening of the King’s Council to officers and nobles other than those who were its members. Raja Birbal’s presence in the Council is a recorded fact. This shows that Raja Birbal played his role well in the field of administration in various capacities. The prominent part played by Raja Birbal along with Raja Bhagwan Das and Todarmal in the Councils of war on the eve of the Gujrat and Bengal expeditions in the 17th and the 19th regnal years of Emperor Akbar is a phenomenon of great importance in assessing the service of Raja Birbal in streamlining of the administration on even keel.

2. The four ministers were certainly the four pillars of the Empire but not like the symbolical pillar of the Turkish Empire which held the tent, but pillars like those of the Mughal Taj, which do not support the structure but add to its dignity, majesty and beauty”, Ibn Hasan, Central Structure of the Mughal Empire., 1936, p. 296.
In fine, it can be safely said that some of the contemporary records throw sufficient light on the achievements of Raja Birbal in the sphere of administration. He not only held lofty ideas of law and justice for the oppressed, but by holding important administrative assignments he had also succeeded in relieving their distress to a considerable extent. Raja Birbal’s role in the administration of law and justice is, no doubt, significant, and V. A. Smith’s remark that “he is not recorded as having held any important office,” followed by Dr. J.M. Shelat and others, is erroneous and unwarranted. It seems to have been made not carefully and perhaps in haste, even if it is not actually coloured by prejudice. The sooner one gets rid off such misconceptions and ‘half truths’, the better it would be in the true interest of history, and more just in respect of Raja Birbal and his illustrious patron, Akbar the Great.
Raja Birbal’s Role in Akbar’s Diplomacy

In order to understand Raja Birbal’s role in a proper perspective one has to familiarise oneself with the nature and character of Akbar’s diplomacy itself, and here the problem that he had to square with was somewhat arduous if not baffling. The misfortune with Akbar was that he himself was a foreigner¹, a Turk and a Muslim and he was called upon ‘to deal with the heterogeneous elements of the Indian society, that is the, majority population of the Hindus, the converted Muslims from the parent stock of the Hindus, the scions of the earlier ruling Turks and Afghans.’

Akbar attempted the task well and brought it to a successful consummation. Actuated by the lofty ideals of kingship³

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1. ‘Akbar was a foreigner in India. He had not a drop of Indian blood in his Veins.’ Nevertheless, Mr. Havell boldly asserts that Akbar was ‘an Indian of the Indians’ (Indian Architecture. 1931. p. 162). Smith, V.A., ‘Akbar the Great Mogul’. p. 7.
2. Tripathi, R.P. Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire, p. 341.
3. Akbar’s ideals are well reflected in his sayings:
   (A monarch is a pre-eminent cause of good. His gratitude to his Lord, therefore, should be shown just in Government and due recognition of merit; (Ain, vol. III (Jarret) p. 449-50) ‘Tyranny is unlawful in everyone, especially in a sovereign who is the guardian of the world’ (Ibid, p. 451.)
based upon the welfare of the common man by providing them with a just and efficient government, by eschewing tyranny, by promoting a cause of cohesion in the heterogeneous elements in the society founded on the sheet-anchor of national kingship, Akbar succeeded amazingly well in bringing forth in a common fold men of different races, religion and culture.

The basic and the essential instrument adopted for fostering the concept of National kingship among the people the great Mughal Emperor adopted diplomacy first as a peaceful means in dealing with first as a powerful means in dealing with other rulers and chiefs. It was only when diplomacy failed, Akbar took recourse to the force of arms. This meant that Akbar never went to wage a war first, "without exploring all avenues of peace, in consonance with his ideas or ideals." Hence it is that Akbar has rightly been called a 'consummate diplomatist of his age'.

Akbar was fortunate enough to have a number of illustrious nobles like Bhagwan Das, Man Singh, Todarmal, Birbal, and the two brothers, Faizi and Abul Fazl, who were endowed with remarkable ability, talent, shrewdness and political expediency in translating into action the ends of Akbar's diplomacy. In fact, the success of a principle or policy of a ruler depends very much on the ability of the officers who have to execute them.

On the basis of the foresaid ideals of diplomacy as enunciated by Akbar, Raja Birbal was more suitably qualified because of the accomplishments of his character to prove to be quite upto to the mark in executing them and here his main role as a diplomat was to serve as an intermediary between the Mughal Emperor, Akbar and the Hindu Rajput rulers and other independent chieftains with whom he was quite a familiar figure by virtue of his personal contacts with them.

Another dominant hall-mark of Akbar's diplomacy vis-a-vis with the Rajput rulers and chiefs was to bring them closer to

the Mughal throne by contracting matrimonial alliances. Akbar thus, made it a principal plank of his policy to secure the co-operation of the Rajputs. The pro-Rajput policy of Akbar gave him a great benefit of ensuring his position all the more strongly as a safety valve to check-mate the menacing intrigues and conspiracies of his Muslim nobility by playing off one against the other. Another consideration that encouraged Akbar to follow a pro-Rajput policy was their unbounded chivalry and the total absence of their fear of death. Akbar made the best use of this in his plan for his territorial expansion.

In following this pro-Rajput policy Akbar received invaluable assistance from Raja Birbal who had spent his early career at the two respective courts of Raja Bhagwan Das of Ajmer and Raja Ramchand of Rewa and knew much of the Rajput traits and habits. Over and above the matrimonial alliances as being a constituent element in fostering this Rajput policy of Akbar, the Great Mughal Emperor encouraged the Rajput rulers and chiefs who had accepted his suzerainty to enter the Imperial Services, both civil and military, by assigning them mansabs according to their status.

With this background of Akbar's diplomacy with special reference to his Rajput policy, it may be interesting to appreciate Raja Birbal's role in it. The stray references made by Abul Fazl, and at times corroborated even by Badaoni, show that Raja Birbal was entrusted with very important diplomatic missions, but unfortunately his role has not received proper recognition and appreciation by the historians.

The stray references, which are many and important, have been pieced together and arranged in chronological order and they present a complete picture of his role as a successful diplomat of the age of Akbar the Great who was himself a diplomat par-excellence.

The first recorded diplomatic feat of Raja Birbal is dated as early as 1563, when his intercession in Raja Ram Chand's case made the Raja retain his territory. The incident, though very minor, had its historical significance. Abul Fazl describes
it in his Akbar Nama thus, "In the beginning of the 8th year (March 1563) Khawaja Abdul Majid ‘Asaf Khan’ obtained a victory over Raja Ram Chand¹ and Ghazi Khan Tannuri, and the country of Pannah was conquered. The Rajah was defeated and took refuge in the fort of Bandho which was the strongest fort in that country. Immense spoils fell into the hands of the victors."² At this time, at the intercession of the famous Rajah (Birbal), who had obtained favour by long service, an order was issued that Rajah Ram Chand had put the ring of servitude in his ear, and had done homage, now included among the servants of the threshold and his territories were not to be interfered with. In consequence of these orders, Asaf Khan returned to his fief.³

The role of Raja Birbal in the case of Ram Chand was significant from many points of view. It establishes beyond doubt that by 1563 he had become quite an important courtier.⁴ Besides, he had shown his loyalty to his old master, and even against the wishes of the important general, Asaf Khan, he could secure from the Emperor sympathetic considerations for the Raja, and this wise policy proved fruitful. Ram Chand was among the famous Rajas of India and he was gained over as a tributary ally of the Emperor. The gain of the Empire was great, but greater was the enhancement in the prestige of Raja Birbal as a successful diplomat—both in the eyes of the Emperor and also amongst the Hindu Rajas of India. His first achievement paved the way for many more important diplomatic assignments.

¹. Ram Chand was among the famous Rajahs of India, and his forefathers had ruled over that country for generations. He had given shelter to Ghazi Khan Tannuri. Asaf Khan first sent his advice to submit, but he turned a deaf ear to his advice and made himself ready for war. The brave men of both sides fought a great battle. (Akbar Nama trans. Beveridge II, p. 282).
². Akbar Nama (Beveridge) II, p. 282.
³. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) II, p. 283.
⁴. Infra. Chap. II.
One of the occurrences (of the year 1569) was the arrival of the ambassador of the Raja of Kajli, a province of India near Malabar. He was for a long time in attendance at the Court, but could not get an introduction. At last, he was introduced through Raja Birbal.

Raja Birbal’s mission to Dungarpur was purely of a diplomatic nature. It was in the year 1576 that the mission of Raja Birbal and Rai Lunkaran was sent to Dungarpur. Giving a brief account Abul Fazl writes, “The Rajah of that place had from his good fortune petitioned through some intimates of the court, that his daughter—who was one of the distinguished of the age for chastity and wisdom—might be included among the political servants (that is, might be married to Akbar). In this way a rare jewel would find its proper place, and also a great help would be given to his (Raja’s) relation. His Majesty had regards for his loyalty and granted his requests. Those two confidential servants were given order that they might convey in a choice manner the secluded one to the harem of the fortune. It has been further narrated that subsequently they returned and conveyed the chaste pearl to the holy harem. Society was adorned and the spiritual world ornamented. The unique pearl arrived at the treasury of the truth and a great support was provided for the family.”

M. H. Azad has also referred to this Dungarpur incident in depicting the career and achievement of Raja Birbal. According to him, the Raja felt certain hesitations and difficulties about sending his daughter to the royal harem. Raja Birbal went there and after convincing the Raja brought the lady to the royal harem. Dungarpur was one of the important Rajput kingdoms, and the details of the matrimonial alliance, as given by Abul Fazl, throw some light on this aspect

1. ‘It seems not improbable what Cochin is meant. The native name is Kochchi (I.C)’, Akbar Nama (Beveridge.) II, p. 499 F.N.
2. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) II, p. 278.
3. Ibid, p. 278.
4. Ibid., p. 295.
of diplomacy. The marriage-diplomacy of the Emperor was succeeding not only because of the Emperor's anxiety to rope in the important rulers in matrimonial ties but the Rajput rulers themselves were eager enough to establish such relationship with the Emperor, both for the fortune of their daughters and imperial support for themselves and their relations. This factor can be said to be of immense importance in the political, and even more so in the cultural history of the time.

Just one year after this, in the year 1579, Raja Birbal finds mention in connection with the rebellion of Bhupat Chauhan at Etawah. From Bengal "that wicked one went again to his home in Etawah and took to robbery and oppression of the peasantry." Kokaltash who was the sief-holder of the place, went to guide him to the right path, but he failed in his mission, and "he (Bhupat Chauhan) came to the camp of fortune and sought protection from Raja Todarmal and Raja Birbar" and requested them for their intercession on his behalf and for securing forgiveness from His Majesty, the Emperor. But he was insincere and was contemplating mischief. The matter was reported to the court and S.S. Ibrahim summoned him, so that he might be won over and appointed to some duty. The Sheikh agreed to his proposals, but at the time of the presentation in the court his men drew up daggers in December 1579 and he was killed at once.

The exact role of Raja Birbal in this incident is not clearly depicted, but it may be presumed that Bhupat might have agreed to present himself in the court on the advice of Raja Birbal, who had enough of personal influence at the court and the Chauhan chief might have expected that he would secure forgiveness through the intercession of the Raja. But unfortunately the matter suddenly took a bad turn and the rebel had to pay with his head. Dr. Tripathi, commenting on the diplomatic role of Raja Birbal, has written that the Raja had succeeded in bringing a rebel like Bhupat Chauhan also to the

1. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) III, p. 407.
ROLE IN AKBAR’S DIPLOMACY

This much is clear that Raja Birbal did play an important role when such delicate and difficult problems came up for solutions.

One of the important missions assigned to him was in the year 1581, when he was sent to conciliate Masum Khan Farankhudi. He was an officer under Todarmal, but because of the harsh treatment at the hands of Shah Mansur, he had left Todarmal’s service and had raised the banner of revolt at Jaunpur. It as a critical moment because of the invasion of the Punjab by Muhammad Hakim. Akbar sent Peshrau Khan with instructions to appease him. He even appointed Masum Farankhudi as the governor of Oudh. As a further assurance, Birbal and Quli Khan Mahram were sent to Oudh to appease him and win over. In order to appease him, the Emperor also removed Shah Mansur from the post of Diwan. But Masum was bent upon the path of rebellion and all efforts to conciliate him proved futile. He even gave impudent replies to the messenger of reconciliation sent by Birbal and Quli Khan Mahram. Raja Birbal’s mission had practically failed, but all efforts to win him over and appease him by the Emperor himself had met the same fate. He was courted without success by Shabbaz Khan Kamboh on January 22, 1581, but he again fled to Ayodhya and ultimately obtained pardon through the intervention of Hamida Banu, the queen-mother. He was killed one night while returning from the Court. It is said that Akbar got him killed by Sikandar Qalmaj, a trusted supporter, and thus, ended his inglorious career.

One of the important incidents in the latter part of Akbar’s reign was the execution of Shah Manaur in 1581. This year may be regarded as the most critical one in the life of Akbar

2. “Masum Khan, who had such a quality of war material that to use a hyperbole, he could have withstood the kings of Iran and Turan, both at once.” Badaoni (Lowe), II, p. 298.
4. Akbar Nama, (Beveridge), III, p. 484.
5. Ibid., 566-567.
because of Muhammad Hakim’s impending invasion, supported by some of the disgruntled nobles at the Court. The Emperor had come to suspect that Shah Mansur was also involved in the threatened invasion by his brother. His letters to Muhammad Hakim were intercepted and at first he was let off with a warning, but he plunged himself into deep conspiracy. Monserrate who was with the Emperor, holds that he was guilty of treason, and as such he was hanged.  

There is considerable difference of opinion amongst contemporary Muslim historians about the genuineness of the letters on the basis of which Mansur was hanged. Nizamuddin who was also in the expedition, believes that the intercepted letters were forgeries, that Karamullah, the brother of Shahbaz Khan, had colluded with others in concocting letters; and that he had forged the last letter also on the evidence of which Shah Mansur was executed. After this was discerned, the Emperor regretted the execution of the Khwaja. According to some, Karamullah was the tool of Todarmal, while some others maintained that Akbar did not like to hang Mansur, but was induced to do so by Birbal and others.

These views, however, are not supported either by Abul Fazl or Fr. Monserrate, though both of them were in the expedition, and the former had played a very important part in the execution of Shah Mansur.

Badaoni who generally follows Nizamuddin, alleges that the letters were forged by the Amins but does not either name Birbal or Todarmal as having had any hand in the conspiracy. Had there been even a rumour about their complicity, Badaoni would not have missed the opportunity of accusing and condemning them. Besides, the Emperor also did not pursue the matter after his return to the capital. If Akbar had been

3. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) III, p. 505.
Badaoni. (Lowe), II, p. 345.
convinced of the fact that Shah Mansur was a victim of the conspiracy of some nobles, he could not have left the nobles without awarding punishment. It can be said that the allegations against the Hindu nobles, Birbal and Todarmal, were nothing but mischievous fabrication and had no basis of truth in them.

Raja Ram Chand, the ruler of Pannah, was famed throughout India. He represented himself as one of the obedient rulers and sent his eldest son to do service; but on account of short-sightedness he did not attend the court personally, giving as an excuse the length of the journey. When the Shahinshah was at Allahabad and Ram Chand had not taken care to present himself at the Court, an order was issued that an army should march to awaken him. His son represented that his father's failure to come was not due to arrogance or disobedience but because of his attitude of aloofness and unsocial nature and prayed for the dispatch of some important courtiers to bring him. Inasmuch as the Shahinshah considered the sword as the last remedy against refractoriness, the representation was accepted, and on the 24th Kokaltash and Raja Birbal, who was personally known to Raja Ram Chand, were sent off to Bhatta to bring him in.\(^1\) Meanwhile, Akbar had left for Fatehpur Sikri, and the Raja travelling all the way to the capital, was received at the latter place in February 1584. He made a present of valuable articles which included a few rubies of which one was valued at 50,000/- rupees, and also 120 elephants.\(^2\) Akbar confirmed the restoration of the Raja's fort and his territory, and gave him 101 horses.\(^4\) In fact, Akbar's relation with Raja Ram Chand since 1563 till the Raja's death in 1584 had been determined and influenced by Raja Birbal who always enjoyed the personal esteem of the Rewa Court, whose interest he invariably tried to safeguard at the Imperial Court.

Raja Birbal held not only an eminent position in the Court but was also popular amongst the Hindu rulers. He had his

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2. Ibid., (349); Akbar Nama III (Beveridge), pp. 624.
past associations with the Amber and the Rewa courts. As a poet also, he had earned a great reputation, and he himself maintained a lavish court, where poets and musicians flocked from distant places and enjoyed his patronage. The Hindu rulers and the Hindi poets considered Raja Birbal as the protector of Hindu interests and supporter of their cause at the Imperial Court.

According to a popular tradition, Akbar had once imposed a fine of one crore of rupees on Indrajeet Singh of Orchha and ordered him to send him famous courtesan, Rai Pravin, to the Imperial Court. The famous poet of Orchha Darbar, Keshava Das, who was the teacher and preceptor of Rai Pravin, approached his poet-friend, Kavi-Rai, Raja Birbal and through his intercession got the heavy fine on Indrajeet Singh remitted, though Rai Pravin had to appear at the Imperial Court.

This Rai Pravin incident, though not corroborated by historical sources, has been referred to in some contemporary literary sources. Even Keay in his ‘History of Hindi Literature’ says “It was Keshava-Das who, through Raja Birbal’s instrumentality, got Akbar to excuse Indrajeet from a heavy fine he had imposed on him, and Keshava Das was greatly honoured by Indrajeet.” Keshava Das was a contemporary poet and fortunately most of his works are dated. Hence, the episode cannot be brushed aside as merely a legend.

In brief, a clear analysis of the different assignments given to Raja Birbal shows that he was not merely a court wit, but was rather a talented person and had many facets to his

2. Rai Pravin was the famous courtesan of Indrajeet Singh of Orchha and was famed for her beauty, loyalty and intelligence. She was also a poetess and composer of good verses.
3. Keshava Das (1555-1617 A.D.) was a court poet of Orchha and was a contemporary of Akbar. He received great patronage from Birbal and we have many verses by the poet in praise of Birbal’s liberality.
character. His administrative ability and diplomatic distinctions were factors which drew him closer everyday to the Emperor. He held a prominent position in the Court. If, however, a comparative estimate of Raja Birbal as an administrator and as a diplomat is made, it can be said that he was more of a diplomat than an administrator, and it was as a diplomat that he distinguished himself because of his natural traits.
Raja Birbal’s Religion and His Role in Influencing Akbar’s Religious Policy

To understand Raja Birbal’s religion and his role in influencing Akbar’s religious policy, it becomes a sine qua non to know first, about the contents of Akbar’s religious views in proper perspective. Akbar was essentially, by temperament, a mystic, possessed of intense religious passion to know the truth, wherever it may lie. He, thus, was an eclectic in the field of religion, knowing no frontiers except regards for the unshackled truth and the reasons to account for it. One may call him the father of the comparative religions, to comprehend the truth in its all out universalistic form, where the milk of humanism alone is the dominant hall-mark and where there is no room for sectarianism and the churches to alloy the truth.

With such attitudes and affiliations of Akbar’s approach in the field of religion, this great Mughal Emperor was always out in search for ‘Physicians of the soul’, who may serve him as guide to tread the path of truth. And in this effort Akbar found in Birbal the best companion. That Birbal, on most of the occasions, accompanied the great Mughal Emperor, in the course of latter’s visit to men of realisation, is evident from the different varta literature of the Vaishnavas. And this indicates
the normal contributions of Birbal in influencing and moulding the contents of Emperor Akbar’s religious thought.

And here it becomes imperative to speak a few words on the antecedents of Raja Birbal’s religious thoughts and affiliations. In his early life he worshipped Shakti-cult, this was followed by the development of his close association with the Vaishnava School of Vallabhabhacharya, as is evident from the perusal of the Varta literature, particularly the ‘Do Sau Bawan Vaishnavon ki varta (252 citations) and more specially from the Birbar Ki Bettu Ki Varta’, over and above, what one gleans from ‘Chhit Swami Ki Varta’ Rag Manjari and Chhatapa’s Ki Varta. In one of the Sanskrit letters of the Gosainjhee (Vithalnath), Birbal is mentioned in very respectable terms and his close association with his religious school is also affirmed.¹ We also read of Birbal’s early contact with this Vaishnava School in the ‘Chowrasi Vaishnavon Ki Varta’. (84 Vartas) when he went to Gokul (Mathura) to meet Vithalnath. It was the time when a conflict had arisen between Vithalnath and Krishna Das who was the Chief Priest of the temple at Gokul. Birbal had used his influence in support of Vithalnath and his son Giridharjee.² It is definitely mentioned in the Chhita Swami Ki Varta that Chhitaswami (One of the Ashtachhaps) was the family priest (guru) of Birbal, which of course, means that he was duly initiated in the Vaishnava sect of Vithalnath. Birbal met Vithaleswars again when he was staying at Gadha in the territory of Queen Durgavati. “He was blessed by Vithaleshwara by giving his own waist coat.”³

Thus, Birbal’s contact with ‘Pushtimarg Vaishnavism’ is well established on the basis of the contemporary Vaishnava literature, popularly know as Vartas. Strange as it may appear, Akbar also showed great interest in the Vaishnava saints and tried to establish contacts with them.

¹ Tandon, Harinath, Varta Sahitya, Bharat Prakashan Mandir, Aligarh, p. 298.
² Mittal, Prabhu Dayal, ‘Ashtachhap Parichai’ pp. 149-150.
On the basis of the Varta known as *Birbal Ki Betti Ki Varta*, it is said that Akbar had personally gone to see Vithalnath, and Birbal had accompanied him to Gokul.¹ Akbar had also met Nand Das which is referred to in another Varta, and on that occasion also Birbal is said to have been with him.² Once on the occasion of Janamashtami, Akbar went to Gokul, incognito, to have the Darshan of Sri Nathjee but he was recognised by Vithalnath. It was in the year 1576-77 that Akbar invited Vithaleshwara for an elucidation of the nature of the Supreme Being. So gratified he was that he looked to the Acharya ask for a gift. To secure a permanent place for his deity, Vithaleshwara asked for Gokul to be bestowed on him as Inam land. The grant was made.³ Four years later, another farman, dated March 3, 1581, was issued by the Emperor permitting his cows to graze without any hindrance in the Khalsa and Jagirs lands.⁴ In 1583, the village of Jaitpure was conferred upon him as free grant.⁵ Even after Vithalnathji's death in AD 1585. Imperial farmans cotinued to be issued in his name, giving many privileges to his successors.⁶ Not only Akbar himself, but his mother, Hamida Banu Begam, developed a liking for the Vaishnava School, and she also issued a Sanad in the name of Vithalnathji.⁷

Thus Birbal’s role in introducing the Emperor to the Vaishnava saints and sages is evident on the basis of the contemporary religious literature. The Nirguna School of Philosophy has become quite important in the time of Akbar, and it is said that “Dadu’s fame as a man of deep spirituality reached the ears of Emperor Akbar, who was his contemporary, and Birbal, it is said, prevailed upon the saint to have an interview with the Emperor in response to an invitation from him.” Rajjab

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1. Do sau Bawan Vaishnavon Ki Varta, pp. 131-132.
2. Rup Manjari Ki Varta, p. 462.
4. Ibid., Farman, No. 2.
5. Jhaveri, K.M., Imperial Farman, No. 3.
6. Ibid., Farman No. 4.
7. Ibid., Farman No. 5.
Das (Dadu's disciple) refers to this event in one of his couplets. This religious discussion between the Emperor and Dadu is said to have continued for forty days and Dadu left a deep impress on the mind of the former.

In short, the prevailing atmosphere of Vaishnavism and Raja Birbal's important role in bringing the Emperor in closer contact with its main principles and its principal teachers proved to be a significant factor in the evolution of Akbar's religious policy and the inauguration of an era of social and religious reforms which helped the process of synthesis in the 16th century.

The personal influence of Birbal on the Emperor is evidently recognised by Badaoni also, but he has confined his attack on Birbal by holding him responsible for drawing the Emperor towards Sun-worship. Badaoni getting annoyed at the developments and changes in the religious outlook of the Emperor, writes thus in his Tawarikh:

"During this year, there arrived at Court Hakim Abul Fath, Hakim Humam and Nuruddin, who as poet is known under the name of Qarari. They were brothers and came from Gilan near the Caspian Sea. The eldest brother, whose manners and address were exceedingly winning, obtained in a short time great ascendancy over the Emperor. He flattered him openly, adapted himself to every change in the religious ideas of His Majesty or even went in advance of them, and thus became, in a short time, a most intimate friend of the Emperor. Soon after, there came from Persia Mulla Muhammad of Yazd who got the name of Yazdi, and attaching himself to the Emperor commenced openly to revile the Sahabah (companions of Muhammad), told queer stories about them and tried hard to make him a Shah. But he was soon left behind by Bir Bar—that Bastard—and by Shaikh Abul Fazl and Hakim

1. श्रिकबर साहि बुलाइया, गौर दादू को ज्ञाप।
   साथ सुनि ब्योरी हुम्मा, तब रहूंयो नाम परताप।

Pittamber Datta Barthwal, Nirguna School of Poetry. p. 259.
Abu-l-Fath, who successfully turned the Emperor from Islam, and led him to reject revolution, prophetship, the miracles of the prophet and of the saints, and even the whole law, so that I could no longer bear their company."\(^1\) It is strange that Badaoni condemns Hakim Abu-l-Fath, Hakim Humam, Birbal and others, but he himself records stories which prove that Akbar was skeptic of the Muslim traditions. "One night the Emperor in Fathullah’s presence," writes Badaoni, "said to Birbar, ‘I really wonder how anyone in his senses can believe that a man whose body has a certain weight, could, in the space of a moment, leave his bed, go up to heaven there have 90,000 conversations with God, and yet, on his return, find his bed still warm.’ So also was the splitting of the moon ridiculed, ‘why’ said His Majesty, lifting up one foot, ‘it is really impossible for me to lift up the other. What silly stories men believe’. And that wretch (Birbar) and several other wretches—whose names be forgotten—said ‘Yes, Your Majesty is right’, and chirped in confirmation."\(^2\) He again records in the same book thus, "In this year, Sheikh Mubarak of Nagor said in the presence of the Emperor to Birbar: ‘Just as there are interpolations in your holy books, so there are in ours; hence it is impossible to trust either.’"\(^3\)

The above extracts from Badaoni prove beyond doubt the critical and rational nature of the Emperor and throw sufficient light on the free and frank atmosphere prevailing in the Court, besides Birbal’s active participation in such discussions. Surely the invectives and abuses used for Birbal and other learned companions of Akbar by Badaoni seem to be unjustified, and they go to prove only the bigoted nature of the Mullah himself.

Now let us examine the facts about the Sun-worship of the Emperor and the exact role of Birbal in this context. Badaoni refers to it in details thus, "The accursed Birbar tried to persuade the Emperor that since the Sun gives light to all and

3. Ibid., p. 322.
ripened all grains, fruits and products of the earth, and supports the life of all mankind, therefore, that luminary should be the object of worship and veneration; that the face should be turned towards the rising and not towards the setting sun (i.e. towards Mecca); which is the west; that man should venerate fire, water, stones, and trees, and all natural objects, even down to cows and their dung, that he should adopt the sectarian mark, and Brahmanical thread. Several wise men at Court confirmed what he said by representing that the Sun was the ‘greater light’ of the world, and the benefactor of the inhabitants, the patron of kings, and that kings are but his vicegerents. This was the cause of the worship paid to the Sun on the Nauroz-i-Jalali, and of his being induced to adopt that festival for the celebration of his accession to the throne. Everyday he used to put on clothes of that particular colour which accords with that of the regent-planet of the day. He began also, at midnight and early dawn, to mutter the spells, which Hindus taught him, for the purpose of subduing the Sun to his wishes.”

J.M. Shelat, writing about the role of Raja Birbal, observes: “He took active part in the discussions in the Ibadat Khana, where the Emperor exploited his ready wit and sharp repartee against the orthodox party. Deeply devoted to Vaishnavism and the cult of Sun-worship, his personal sway over the Emperor helped Mahervanj Rana, the Zoroastrian theologian, to induce the Emperor to worship the Sun and the fire.” It is not improbable that it was at the instance of Birbal that the Hindu spiritualists like Purushottam and Debi were invited to explain the principles of their religion. M.L. Roy Choudhary in his Din-i-Ilahi gives a plan-sketch of the Ibadat Khana in which Birbal’s seat has been shown on the north-east corner in the inner conclave, whereas Faizi is on the north-west and Abul Fazl and Abdur Rahim are seated in the south-east and south-

west, respectively.\textsuperscript{1} E.B. Havell also accepts the active participation of Birbal in the debates, when he writes that the chief spokesman of the Sunni faction, Mukhdum-ul-Mulk, who “Zealously persecuted heretics, and was the inveterate enemy of Sheikh Mubarak and his sons became Akbar’s pet aversion and the butt of Birbal’s jests in the philosophical debates.”\textsuperscript{2} Birbal’s closeness to the Emperor and his role in influencing Akbar’s religious policy is acknowledged by Badaoni also. Nizamuddin has described him as Akbar’s spiritual companion.\textsuperscript{3} Monserrate also says that Birbal (Biliballus) was quite close to the Emperor.\textsuperscript{4} In view of all these contemporary evidences, Birbal’s presence, rather his active participation, in the discussions of the Ibadat Khana can be safely admitted, where there was a regular battle of wit also.

Din-i-Illahi or the Divine Faith was the natural culmination of the religious discussions at the Ibadat Khana. Akbar held the religious discussions at the Ibadat Khana, for he, finding none of the prevalent faiths appealing to him in its entirety, rightly put that truth was not a monopoly of any one religion. Akbar in fact wanted to have a religion that might possess the excellence of all the existing creeds and the defects of none.

Thus, after holding an intensive discussion, among the representatives of various religions and seats at the Ibadat Khana, Akbar inaugurated his Din-i-Illahi and here Raja Birbal had his own role to play.

Now as regards Raja Birbal’s joining the Din-i-Illahi, it has generally been mentioned in such a form and context as to give the impression that he was the only Hindu who could be easily available for the membership of the new faith, and other Hindu nobles declined the offer. “Of the eighteen principal members of the order mentioned by Badaoni,” observes E.B. Havell, “all were Muhammedans except Raja Birbal, who belonged to an

\textsuperscript{1} Roy Choudhary, M.L., Din-i-Illahi. p. 71.
\textsuperscript{2} Havell, E.B. Aryan Rule in India. p. 456.
\textsuperscript{3} Tabaqat-i-Akbari, III, 732.
\textsuperscript{4} Monserrate, Commentary, (Hoyland and Bannerjee).
inferior class of Brahmans.”¹ Blochmann goes a step further and says; “Akbar’s disciples were chiefly Muhammadans with the exception of Birbal, who was a man of profligate habit. No name of Hindu is mentioned. Bhagwan Das, Man Singh and Todarmal remained staunch Hindus.”² V.A. Smith has also echoed the same sentiment that “the new creed was accepted by a few time-serving courtiers”.³ All these remarks of the scholars seem to be based upon the disparaging remarks of Badaoni, who could never mention the name of Birbal without an invective and without sneering at him. Birbal was a member of a Brahman Bhat family and they are never considered as an inferior class of Brahmans.⁴ Birbal was a man of religious temperament, closely associated with the Vaishnava School of Vithalnath and even Badaoni has confirmed that Birbal was responsible for the Sun-worship of the Emperor and it was he who had influenced him towards Hinduism and converted him to Hindu practices. Akbar’s long letter quoted in Insha-i-Abul Fazl is full of appreciation of Birbal’s religious and ideal character. Akbar had once said, “The difficulty is to live in the world and to refrain from evil, for the life of a recluse is one of bodily ease.”⁵ Raja Birbal’s character exactly reached to that high standard, as in the letter (Insha-i-Abul Fazl) it is clearly mentioned: “In spite of the earthly bonds, he (Birbal) was essentially a non-worldly man in his attitude; and though apparently fettered he maintained complete freedom.”* Dr. Ishwari Prasad has rightly appreciated the point and has thus observed, “The only Hindu to join was Raja Birbal whose cosmopolitan views won for him the confidence and

4. This question has been discussed in detail in Chapter I of this Thesis.
5. Ain, III. The Sayings of His Majesty. p. 430.
affection of the Emperor.\textsuperscript{11} R. Krishnamurti has also affirmed that "Birbal was obviously a liberal-minded individual."\textsuperscript{2} It is, indeed, strange that eminent historians have blindly accepted the version of Badaoni about Birbal and his association with the Din-i-Ilahi, without carefully analysing the traits of Birbal’s character, especially when Badaoni’s hostility both against Birbal and the Din-i-Ilahi of the Emperor is evident and well known.

The Din-i-Ilahi was by no means a new religion nor a new sect. It was as Dr. P. Sharan has rightly emphasised, "As an earnest and intense endeavour in search of a formula which would satisfy all but hurt none and contain all that was good and true and beautiful in the great faiths of the world."

Din-i-Ilahi was an eclectic pantheism, containing the good points of all religions and the combination of mysticism, philosophy and nature worship. Its basis was rational, and it upheld no dogmas. If one, therefore, judges the association of Raja Birbal with Din-i-Ilahi\textsuperscript{1} in its true perspective, it unfolds and brings to light Birbal’s character of religious eclecticism, a feature which was quite common in character with that of Akbar in the field of religious thinking.

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1. Dr. Tarachand has very correctly observed that ‘Akbar’s Din-i-Ilahi was not an isolated freak of an autocrat, who had more power than he knew how to employ, but an inevitable result of the forces which were deeply surging in India’s breast, and finding expression in the teachings of man like Kabir. Circumstances thwarted that attempt, but destiny still points to the same goal’.

CHAPTER VII

Raja Birbal as a Friend, Courtier and Boon Companion of the Emperor

Unlike the companionless monarchs in history Akbar had several intimate friends and associates. Prompted by the desire to make his court a ‘centre of culture’, he attracted and collected talents around him. Abul Fazl rightly credits him with a discerning eye. He carefully chose his circle of friends. “The companions of King”, writes Abul Fazl, “who are the ornaments of the Court by the light of their wisdom, the ray of their sharp-sightedness, their knowledge of the times, their intimate acquaintance with human nature, their frankness and polite address.”¹ He did not like the company of low and vulgar people and mere flatterers. He chose his companions wisely from distinguished, able and worthy persons. “A king should not be familiar in mirth and amusement with his courtiers”,² was not merely an idle saying but he also tried to live up to it. The wise Emperor was conscious of the fact that “Men through attachments to their association acquire their disposition, and much of good and evil thus results to them.”³ Writing about the ‘the associates of Akbar’, Dr. S.R. Sharma

3. Ibid., p. 427.
comments, "They were talented men like the 'nine gems,' of Vikramaditya's court—representing a variety of interests. But unlike their ancient counterparts, they were drawn from different countries, nationalities and religions."[2]

Among them were uncommon idealists like Faizi and Abul Fazl, bigots like Badaoni, witty comrades and intimate friends like Birbal, Mulla Do Piyaza[3] and Hakim Humam, Hakim

1. The conception of Nine Gems is purely Aryan. It is traditionally associated with the name of Vikramaditya of Ujjain. The expression 'nine gems' as applied to Akbar was equally a creation of popular fancy started after his death, possibly by Hindu Pandits of Shahjahan and Dara Shikoh's court like Jagannath Rai and Kavindracharya. ('The nine gems of Akbar's Court', Roy Rao Bahadur G.S. Sardesai in Modern Review) August, 1943.

'The Navratna or nine Jewels' 'writes Smith,' meant nine friends, namely, Raja Birbal, Raja Man Singh, Raja Todarmal, Hakim Humam, Mullah Du Piyaza, Faizi, Abul Fazl, Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khankhanan & Tansen (V.A. Smith, Akbar the Great Mogul' p. 260 F.N.).

There is also a Navaratna picture in the Victoria Memorial Collection, Calcutta.


3. (i) The name of the Mulla is not found in any contemporary work. But references about him are found in Subh-i-Sadig, a work written in the time of Jahangir. There is also a small manuscript in the library of the A.S. Bengal that is attributed to Mulla Do Piyaza (R.P. Tripathi, Some Aspects of Muslim Administration 2nd Edn., p. 144).

(ii) Pairamal in his interesting article (on Mulla Do Piyaza) (Modern Review—July 1910) has given the details of his life on the basis of Sawant Umri Abul Hasam Mulla Do Piyaazas (a work in Hindustani—Lahore 1891) which is No. 14109, A 27 in the British Museum Catalogue).

His real name was Abul Hasam, who was born in 1541 in the city of Taif in Arabia, and was the son of Abu-us-Muhasin, a great Sheikh. He had a wonderful memory. Mulla came to India with Humayun's army and was present in the battle of Machiwara in 1556. He settled down in Delhi.

He got his nick name because of his fondness for the variety of Pilau popularly known as Do-Piyaza (double fried). Mulla was with Akbar in the Ahmadnagar campaign in 1599 and he suddenly fell ill and died in 1600 A.D. Akbar was greatly distressed and personally attended his funeral. He was buried in a small place called Handia. A comic poet composed the verse. "Well done mulla Do Piyaza, even after thy death thou hast chosen Handia to lie in," which alludes to his love of Pilau (See Also Prof. H. Mahmud Shirani's learned article in Oriental College Magazine, Nov. 1930, for full details).

(iii) "The caricatural figure of the Mulla, nick name 'Do-Piyaza' (one of the Navratnas) recurs more than once in the London albums. The Mulla, a native of Arabia, came to India in the train of Humayun's generals and obtained Akbar's favour as a wit and eccentric (V.A. Smith, Akbar the Great Mogul, p. 362).
Abul Fath, loyal Rajas like Bhagwan Das and Man Singh, financiers and statesmen like Todarmal, musicians like Tan Sen, poets like Abul Rahim Khan Khanan, Jesuit priests like Monserrate and Aquaviva, Parsi Dastur like Meherji Rana, and Jain Yati like Hira Vijay Suri. Akbar was, indeed, very liberal in selecting his friends and courtiers. The selection was done without any prejudice or predilection of caste, colour or race. "The unique feature of Akbar's relations with all of them was the freedom each enjoyed in his respective role, a splendid mark of true friendship."²

Raja Birbal has been called the 'brightest jewel' of Akbar's court, who outshone all the other illustrious associates of the great Emperor, Raja Bhagwan Das, Raja Man Singh, Raja Todarmal, Tansen, Abdur Rahim Khan Khankhanan, Abul Fazl and Faizi, to name some of them in the Imperial Court. Raja Birbal was one of the dearest friends of Akbar and his closest courtier.

The fact seems to be that Raja Birbal was in the position of a personal friend and confidential adviser of the Emperor. Akbar reposed full confidence in him, and his advice was sought on all matters. It was because of his sincere, wise and ready solutions to problems that Akbar always loved to have him in his close company. V.A. Smith's explanation that "Akbar loved to have Birbal by his side, that he might enjoy his witty conversation,"² seems to be inadequate if not disparaging. Even in the life of an ordinary person there are certain moments when one would relish entertainments only in shape of lovely conversations or anecdotes. Akbar was generally grave and reserve by nature and had a busy schedules in shape of all kinds of problems. He had neither the time nor the patience to hear to the stories and jokes as some writers would like us to believe. The clue to Birbal's popularity and intimacy with the Emperor does not lie only in his witty conversations, tales and anecdotes. He had surely some deeper

and sounder foundation to stand on, from where he kept up his height and his position unshakable in spite of the constant court conspiracies and violent storms of protests by the Mallas. This foundation-rock was Raja Birbal’s personal character, sagacity and capability for work. He was a man of tested loyalty without any personal motive or political interest whatsoever. He was interested only in matters which might be called the true interest of the Emperor and his realm. With this unbounded royal favour and patronage at his back, he could have risen to any rank, got any assignment and appointment just for his asking. But Birbal was above all those personal temptations for rank and position, wealth and power. His greatest treasure was the confidence that his sovereign reposed in him; his proudest position was the place he enjoyed beside the Emperor. The true test of a friendship is always the element of sacrifice and not that of acquisitions. There is much truth in Badaoni’s saying that the two personalities had become merged in one. The shadow and the substance had mixed and mingled together. Akbar on his part always took personal care of him and once, under the impulse of true friendship risked his own life as a true friend to save Birbal when he was about to be killed by a ferocious elephant. There is authentic evidence to prove the unbounded love and affection of the Emperor for his friend and courtier, Raja Birbal.

Royal favours were manifested in those days in grants of titles, Jagirs, cash awards and royal visits. A visit of the Emperor to any noble was always considered a matter of extraordinary favour and fortune. A noble’s prominence and influence was generally judged by the title he had received from the Emperor, and if he could persuade the latter to pay a visit to him. Raja Birbal was extremely fortunate in all these respects.

1. Badaoni writes:
‘He (Birbal) was honoured with the distinction of becoming Emperor’s confidant, and it became a case of, ‘Thy flesh is my flesh and thy blood my blood’.

Like many of his contemporaries, Raja Birbal had been the recipient of many titles since his early career at the court. At the very beginning he was given the title of ‘Kavi Rai’ (King of poets) and subsequently he was ennobled and given the title of Raja and of Bir-Bar, more correctly Vira Var, meaning (bravest of the brave). He was given the Jagir of Kangra and had also Kalinjar and Karra as his Estate. Abul Fazl says that the Emperor got a stone palace built for Birbal at Fatehpur Sikri and ‘the Birbal-Palace’ still commemorates his memory.

As a mark of friendship and favour, Akbar paid four royal visits to Birbal and which must be said to be unique. There are references of the royal visits to other courtiers also. But none had more than two occasions to receive the Emperor. The details of the visits offer an interesting study.

The first visit of Akbar was in the year 1574 when, while on his march to Allahabad, he graced Birbal’s house at Akbarpur by his royal presence. Abul Fazl, in his Akbar Nama, while describing the ‘March of Royal Standard to Allahabad’ records thus, “On the 17th they cast anchor opposite the town of Etawa. Zain Khan Koka had a delightful residence and garden there and begged for the royal visit. H.M. granted his request and stayed there for a while. On the 22nd he came near Kalpi. Next day (i.e., 23rd June, 1574) he arrived near Akbarpur at the residence of Raja Birbar. By going to his house he gratified a long standing wish of his.”

The passage is also important because it settles the controversy regarding the native place of Birbal (near Akbarpur) which was Tribikrampur or Tikwapur.

The second royal visit to Raja Birbal has again been recorded in Akbar Nama in January 1583, when the stone-palace for Birbal at Fatehpur Sikri was ready. “Also at this time,” writes Abul Fazl “Raja Birbar’s abode was made illustrious by

1. Whenever the Emperor wanted to raise a commoner to the rank of a noble, he conferred upon him the title of Khan in the case of a Muhammadan, and Rai or Raja in that of a Hindu. (R.P. Khosla. Mughal Kingship and Nobility, p. 284).
the advent of Shahinshah. He was among the intimate associates. For him, His Majesty had ordered the erection of the stone palace. When they were finished, he expressed a wish that they might be glorified by the advent of Shahinshah. On 7 Bahman (January 1583) there was a splendid feast and by the Shahinshah’s graciousness his wish was gratified.”

Besides describing the royal visit, the passage corroborates the intimate association of the Raja with the Emperor and throws sufficient light on Raja Birbal’s mahal at Sikri, about which there has been much controversy amongst the historians.

Abul Fazl, while recording the third royal visit in the 29th year, writes, “on the 21st Mihr, 991, the house of Raja Birbar was made glorious by the face of Shahinshah. His wishes were gratified, and there was a great feast.”

In the same year on 16 Azar divine month, the house of Raja Todarmal was also illumined by the advent of the Shahinshah, who had for a long time cherished his desires. Towards the end of the same year Akbar again honoured Birbar by accepting entertainment at his residence. Raja Birbal arranged a splendid feast in honour of the royal guest.”

There are references of the Royal visits to other nobles and courtiers also, like the visit to Mirza Aziz Kokaltash in 1571, to Raja Bhagwan Das at Lahore in 1581, to Raja Todarmal in 1584, the visit to Faizi at his death-bed in 1595, to Abdur Rahim in 1590 and others. But the repeated visits to Raja Birbal can be surely taken as a mark of special favour to his famous courtier, and goes in support of his great intimacy and closeness to the Emperor.

Akbar not only loved and honoured Birbal, but also showed personal concern in him. There is a reference to an incident

1. Ibid, p. 587.
2. Ibid., p. 657.
3. Ibid., p. 438.
of the year 1583 when in Chaunagan\textsuperscript{1} match Raja Birbal suddenly fell down from his horse and became unconscious. Akbar went to the Raja, and graciously relieved him by his breathings.\textsuperscript{2} Birbal recovered his senses in a short time and offered thanks to the Emperor.\textsuperscript{3} This incident significantly points out the personal esteem and affection which Birbal always received from the Emperor.

Akbar's unbounded love for his friend is still more prominently manifested by another incident in the 29th year which finds due mention in the Akbar Nama. "One of the occurrences," writes Abul Fazl, "was Raja Birbal's having a renewal of life. The Chaunagan had been filled up and there was an elephant fighting.\textsuperscript{4} Suddenly the elephant cacar (Chachar) which was

\begin{enumerate}
  \item The native historians record that in those times of peace (1566) his (Akbar's) great delight was to spend the evening in the game of chaunagan. Chaunagan is the modern polo, which was carried to Europe from India. But Akbar, while playing it in the day-time in the manner in which it is now played all over the world, devised a method of playing it on dark nights. For the purpose he had balls made of pala wood—which is very light and which burns for a long time, and set them on fire. He had the credit of being the keenest chaunagan-player of his time'. (Malleson. Akbar, p. 102).
  Polo was a popular imperial game in its several forms polo, water polo, night polo with ignited balls.'
  S.R. Sharma ('Mughal Govt. & Administration p. 9) in Ain., Vol. I. pp. 305-309). It is recorded that a courtier was punished for the slackness at the game.
  \item His Majesty teaches wisdom, heals dangerous diseases and applies remedies for severest sufferings' Ain, Vol. I, p. 175.
  \item Akbar Nama (Beveridge) Vol. p. 615.
  \item Akbar was very fond of elephants. The Mughal Emperors took much delight in elephants and elephant-fight was an important royal pastime. The 'elephant fights were viewed from the Jarokha and 'ordering an elephant fight was considered an exclusive prerogative of the king. (Khosla, R.P., Op. Cit., p. 77-78).
  Monserrate also testifies to it. It is interesting to note in this context that Mithiraga of Kashmir used to delight in sending his elephants rolling down the mountain side. The Mughal Emperors limited themselves to seeing the elephant-fight in their presence. (S.R. Sharma—'Mughal Government and Administration, p. 27).
\end{enumerate}
unique for violence and for the killing of men, rushed to kill a foot passenger, but then passed him by, and turned towards the Raja. He was nearly killing him with his proboscis. The Shahinshah from his general benevolence and special kindness (for Birbar) and with great courage, urged on his horse and came between the monster and the Raja, the enraged brute rushed at the cavalier of the arona of courage, and a cry went up from mankind and the livers of iron hearted men became like water. All at once it stood still, overcome by the majestic 'Avanant' (Durbash). Amazement seized the beholders."

The passage needs no further comment. The 'special kindness' to Birbal is evidently accepted and acknowledged. Akbar's uncommon venture was a great feet. He had really given a renewal of life to Birbal by endangering his own. There could be no greater test of his sincerity, love and friendship for Birbal. There have been examples of men dying for their masters, but the example of the king throwing himself forward to save his courtier was an unparalleled one.

Akbar always loved to keep Birbal closest to him, and when the new city of Fatehpur Sikri, 'a reflex of the mind of the great man' who built it, was being planned, the Emperor had ordered, as Abul Fazl says, "the erection of a stone palace for him." and when they were completed, the Emperor attended the inaugural ceremony in January 1583. "The beauty and lavishness of the decoration testify to the intensity of Akbar's affection for the Raja." In the houses meant for Birbal, one of the most charming of the domestic buildings erected in A.D. 1572, the rich decorations, with the exception of some insignificant coloured bands, is confined to sand stone carving, in which Hindu and Muhammadan elements are combined with much ingenuity and excellent effects. The architect did not hesitate to crown an essentially Hindu building with two Pathan domes. The names of the accomplished draughtsmen—

2. Fergusson, Edn. 19'0, p. 297.
'Bhairav Baksh' and 'Fazl-ud-din, deserve commemoration.' There was not only a separate palace built for Birbal but a close study of the general plan of Sikri reveals that there were nine gates to the city, and one of them was known as Birbal's gate.

Thus there are numerous instances of love, affection and special royal favours shown to Raja Birbal, which testify to the ties of personal friendship between him and the Emperor. Negatively also, it can be asserted that Birbal presented a rare example of a noble, who was never censured and punished or who even temporarily fell from royal favour. Akbar ruled for nearly half a century and Birbal amongst his courtiers remained constantly close to him for about thirty years, till death finally separated the two friends. In course of these long thirty years Birbal led expedition, accompanied the Emperor in his brilliant campaigns in Gujrat and Bengal, managed administrative and executive assignments and went on difficult and delicate diplomatic missions; but all through his long career he gave no occasion to his royal companion for any kind of dissatisfaction or displeasure. This wonderfully clean record of service, almost completely free from royal displeasure, was neither just on account of personal intimacy nor a matter of sheer good luck. A study of Akbar's reign makes it clear that he was hard taskmaster and nobody, howsoever close or friendly, could bank upon his favours permanently. He was quick to show favour but was quicker still to withdraw them, and never hesitated to punish people for their negligence of duty. 'He was very strict in the matter of implementation of his regulation'.

There was hardly any minister or captain who was not censured on account of his failure in implementing his schemes of carrying out his orders. "His greatest captains and most favourite advisers like Bhagwan Das, Man Singh, Abul Fazl and others, including his own son and heir, prince Salim" remarks Dr. A. L. Srivastava, "were sometimes forbidden to come to the

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2. Ibid., pp. 318 and 320.
Court or demoted, according to the gravity of their mistakes in carrying out the royal projects.” Monserrate also observes thus, “The king’s severity towards errors and misdemeanours committed by officials in the course of government business is remarkable, for he is most stern with offenders against the public faith. Hence all are afraid of his severity and strive with all their might to do as he directs and desires. For the king has most precise regard for right and justice in the affairs of government.”

Akbar was very strict and stern in administering justice and had no regard for birth or rank of individuals. “If I were guilty of an unjust act”, he once said, “I would rise in judgement against myself; what shall I say then, of my sons, my kindreds and others.”

A careful scrutiny of the long reign of Akbar furnishes several illustrations to show that this remark of the Emperor was not a mere boast but a maxim that he strictly executed in practice. Illustrious men of high standing like Bairam Khan, whom Akbar called Khan Baba, as a mark of respect shown to him for being his regent in the period of his minority was ultimately dismissed from his exalted office by the Great Mughal Emperor. Khawaja Muazzam who was a half brother queen mother Hamida Banu Begum was seriously punished in A.D. 1564. Raja Todarmal fell a victim to Imperial displeasure for his failure to dislodge the Uzbekis in A.D. 1565, Raja Bhagwan Das was also reproved in A.D. 1576 for withdrawing hastily and without previous orders against the Rana. Raja Man Singh, the hero of Haldighat was censured in A.D. 1576 for his failure to pursue and capture the Rana. The famous Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan suffered royal censure in A.D. 1589 and twice in A.D. 1598. Both Abul Fath and Zain Khan Koka were forbidden to do kornish because of their failure in the Yusufzai campaign in 1586. Even Abul Fazl, for sometime,

fell into disgrace in 1598 and was excluded from the Kornish for some days. Amongst the princes, Danial was reprimanded for his drinking habits and Salim was more than once censured and twice forbidden to come to the Court (A.D. 1589 and A.D. 1597).

Thus we see that no individual, however high ranking and howsoever closely related to the Emperor escaped royal displeasure and censure. We come across only three rare exceptions Faizi, Tansen and Raja Birbar. No contemporary historian, Abul Fazl, Nizamuddin or even Badaoni mention any occasion when Birbal fell from favour. The foreign travellers especially Monserrate who records even small incidents with care, do not mention any occasion when Birbal was punished. It was not merely good luck but uniformly good behaviour which can account for this exceptional merit of Birbal’s career. Judged in the wider context as examined above it may be said to be a unique achievement on the part the Raja and a significant feature of his character and his loyalty, devotion and sincerity to Akbar and his government.

Akbar was stricken with profound grief, when the news of the Yusufzai disaster reached him. The death of Birbal caused him deep and genuine anguish and he did not touch food and drink for two days and nights. He did not attend State duties or make his appearance in the Jharokha, an unusual omission on his part. Badaoni records the grief of the Emperor over Birbal’s death and writes, “He never experienced such grief at

2. Instances of Akbar’s absence from State business:
   (i) The King fell from an elephant during his tour, fourth year (Akbar Nama, III, p. 57).
   (ii) Attacked by a deer-injured, remained in bed for 29 days. 41, St. Year (Akbar Nama p. 713).
   (iii) Grief at the death of Raja Birbal—30th year, (Akbar Nama III, p. 2).
   (iv) Grief at the murder of Abul Fazl, 47th Year (Akbar Nama III, p. 813).
   (v) Illness before death—(Akbar Nama III, p. 841).
the death of any Amir as he did at that of Birbal.”1 Akbar’s laments and mournings,2 testify to his great love and affection for Birbal.

Raja Birbal was really one of the most intimate personal friends of Emperor Akbar, his closest courtier and constant companion. It is idle to think that Akbar always kept him by his side to hear his jokes and stories. All accounts go against this popular version of the story. Akbar, who was generally sober and serious by nature, was always busy with the work of administration. We know that the busy life of the Emperor was routined and regulated, and he strictly followed them. It is no doubt true that Raja Birbal was his constant companion in Court, camp and most of his military campaigns. There might have been moments when they indulged in witty conversations, but generally the relationship between the two may be said to have been of a king and his confidential adviser. Akbar reposed full confidence in him and sought his advice both in his personal and state matters—a fact lamentably missed by historians. Raja Birbal with his vast wit and wisdom had always ready-made solutions for his most delicate and difficult problems. Birbal was an intensely religious man and did not care for worldly rewards and royal grants; and the Emperor, in his letter to the Khan Khanan writes about him thus; “In spite of the earthly bonds, he (Birbal) was essentially a non-worldly man in his attitude, and though apparently fettered, he maintained complete freedom from worldliness.”3 Naturally, the Emperor was convinced that his advice was never underlined by any personal or political motive. These naturally indicate that most of the Imperial principles and policies, political or religious, carried the impress and impact of the ideals of Raja Birbal. Badaoni’s main grudge against the Raja was his over-whelming influence over the Emperor which had helped his liberal tendencies.

2. For details see Chapter VIII. p. 77.
3. ‘Ba wajude taaluqi dunyawi be talluqat dasht, Wo Ba girafaria Zahiri raqm-i-Azadi nigasht.’—Insha-i-Abul Fazi. p. 51.
4. See Chapter VI for detailed discussion on this point.
His role, thus may be deemed to be a factor in shaping the history of the century.

The proverbial friendship between Akbar and Birbal is a glowing example of mutual love, loyalty and faithfulness. The friendship got due popularity in the legends and traditions of the period though the historians tried to overlook it. The 'Akbar-Birbar' episode of history is a great example of religious and cultural synthesis and an amalgam of the best that was in Hinduism and Islam.
CHAPTER VIII

Last Days of the Raja and his Descendants

The life of Raja Birbal right from obscurity to prominence until his sudden death and disappearance in his Yusufzai campaign in A.D. 1586 carried an element of accident and sheer irony of fate.

Raja Birbal was in his 58th year when lots were cast between him and Abul Fazl for heading the auxiliary expedition against Yusufzais and the Raja by winning the lot, lost his life in the campaign. Originally it was Abul Fazl who had been nominated for the assignment. It is said that when it was decided that "another army should be sent under the charge of an experienced servant," writes Abul Fazl, "he represented to His Majesty that although his serving in his presence was the elixir of fortune yet he wished to make a trial of foreign service which was the testing place of loyalty. His Majesty perceived in my demeanour the marks of sincerity, and accepted my prayer."1 "At the end of the day, when it was the time for taking leave" writes the Court historian, "His Majesty said it had occurred to him that lots should be cast between me and Raja Birbar, so that without reference to eithers' wishes the

1. Akbar Nama (Beveridge), III, pp. 718-719.
divine decree might be elicited. The cast was thrown and it brought the name of Raja Birbal. Both of us entered into a prolonged sorrow and that man (Raja Birbar), who was fitted both for battle and for banquet (ba bazm-o-razm) went off by heaven's decree on the 21st January 1586." Thus, chance and fate conspired together to send Birbal on the frontier from where he never returned.

It is evident from the study of his career that Birbal had fallen on evil days, and during the last few years the evidence of bad luck had manifested itself more than once. On October 8, 1583 he had a dangerous fall from his horse-back in the Chaugan field and had become unconscious. The Emperor by his special kindness, cured him and brought him to senses by his breathings. Again in the 29th year (1584), he narrowly escaped when he was attacked by the ferocious elephant Cacar and was in imminent danger of losing his life. But the "Shahin-shah from his special kindness and great courage, urged on his horse and came between the monster and the Rajah, and Birbal had a renewal of life." It is strange that the Emperor, who himself believed in superstitions, did not take note of these bad omens and risked Birbal to the chances of lottery. Perhaps God had willed otherwise, and both the Emperor and his courtier fell a victim to the 'decrees of fate.'

The disaster of the Yusufzai campaign was caused more by the mutual dissensions among the generals and the consequent lack of unity of plan and action than by the lack of bravery or military talents in them. In fact, the Moghul army had gained considerable successes in the earlier stages. "A larger part of the area had already been conquered and occupied and the Afghans had taken shelter in the hills" so writes the Emperor in his letter to the 'Khan-i-Khanan'. But, suddenly because of certain disorganisation in the army and lack of good faith

1. Ibid., p. 719.
3. Ibid., p. 615.
4. Ibid., p. 654.
5. Insha-i-Abul Fazl, Daftar 1. p. 52.
amongst the generals, the retreat became a rout and Birbal became a victim of the betrayal of other generals which led him into the dangerous defile which ultimately proved to be his ‘Death Valley’. The Yusufzai disaster proved to be one of the worst calamities of the reign with heavy losses and casualties.¹ The news of the disaster, which reached the royal camp the next day plunged Akbar into grief.

The death of loyal servants, and especially the death of Raja Birbal, his “Spiritual companion”, comments the court historian, “Grieved him exceedingly and his heart turned from everything.....for two days and nights he did not take his daily food and drink.”² It was by the efforts of Maryam Makani (the Queen mother) and the lamentations of his faithful servants that he was prevailed upon to take food and resume his normal life. Badaoni, while describing the grief of the Emperor, writes, “He never experienced such a grief at the death of any Amir as he did at that of Birbar. He used to say “Alas; that they could not bring his body out of the defile, that it might have been committed to the flames.” But afterwards, they comforted him with these words: “since he is freed and delivered from all the bonds of mortality, the light of the sun is sufficient purifier for him, although indeed he did not require any purification.”³ He censured Hakim Abul Fath and Zain Khan for what he called their betrayal to Birbal.⁴ He wanted to go there in person to punish the wicked tribe and avenge the death of Birbal but at the entreaty of his loyal followers he refrained from this. “Akbar himself is said to have remarked”, writes the author of Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh “that his death was the greatest grief he had experienced since coming to the throne.”⁵ It is fully corroborated by the six-page long letter

¹. Details of disaster have been examined in Chapter III.
⁵. Tabaqat-i-Akbari (De), II, p. 733. F.N.
to Khan-i-Khanan found among Abul Fazl’s letters in which Birbal’s death is bewailed:

"By this heart rending mishap" wrote the Emperor, "the memory of the pleasures of his lofty company has become very bitter and this sudden calamity has greatly afflicted my heart."¹ After expression of praise and mention of loyalty he says, "Alas, a thousand times, that the wine of this wine-vault has become polluted with less, and that fine sugar of this sugarcane refinery has become a deadly poison. The world is a deceptive and thirst-exciting mirage, and a station full of heights and hollows. Crapulousness follows the drinking at this feast. Some obstacles have prevented me from seeing the body with my own eyes, so that I might testify my love and affection for him."² The Emperor also expressed his feelings in the following verse:

"Kudam dil ke azeen waqia jigar khoon neest.³
Kudam dida ke azeen hadisa jigar khoon neest."

which would mean,

"What heart is there that bleeds not for the sorrow,
whose eyes are not blood-shot from such griefs?".

Akbar is also said to have given vent to his feelings in a Hindi couplet which has been invariably quoted by almost all the authors of the history of Hindi literature as a specimen of Akbar’s Hindi composition. The Sorthas are:

Deen dekhi sab din, ek na dinho dusah dukh,
So ab ham kan din, kachhahun nahin rakhio Birbal.⁴

Meaning—'He saw the poor and gave them all but Birbal never distributed sorrows. Now, that even (sorrow) he has given it to me, Birbal kept nothing for himself'.

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1. Insha-i-Abul Fazl, Kanpur, 1950, p. 51.
2. Ibid., p. 50.
3. Ibid., Daftar I, p. 52.
Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji also confirms that, 'Akbar composed distiches in Braj Bhasha and as a specimen quotes the following lines composed by the Emperor in his old age in honour of his intimate friends, when they had all passed away leaving him sad and lonely in the world. The lines are:

'Pithal so majalisa gai, Tansena so raga,
Hansibau, ramibauh, bolibao gai Birbal sath:'

[With Pithal (Prithviraj of Bikaner) the assembly had departed, with Tansen musical modes have gone; and laughter and pleasures of conversation have gone with Birbal.]

Akbar was so much overwhelmed that he neither appeared on the Jharoka for many days, nor granted audience to the waiting ambassador from Turan. Taking a seat of solitude, he went on bewailing the death of his friend. Not only the Emperor, but the entire royal court and Birbal's contemporaries mourned his death. The contemporary poets, Gang and Keshva Das, wrote verses in the memory of their 'Kavi-Ray'. We find many such verses in the works of Keshava Das, who had been personally attached to him. But there were quite a few at the court, besides Badaoni, who could not conceal their malice against the dead courtier. They had been jealous of him from the very beginning because of the numerous favours bestowed upon him by the Emperor. There were others who resented that Akbar should show so much grief over the death of Birbal alone, when a number of other officers had lost their lives in that very campaign. 'Many Grandees', wrote Badaoni, "were killed in this disaster, but His Majesty cared for the death of no grandee more than that of Birbar.' Indeed, Raja Birbal dead had proved himself mightier and more important than Birbal living. The ghost of Birbal continued to haunt

2. Akbar Nama (Beveridge) III, p. 487.
3. Ibid, p. 735; Tabaqat-i-Akbari (De) II, p. 613.
the Emperor and the legend of Birbal lived for more than a year or so after his death.

Badaoni writes that "among lying rumours, which are one step beyond absolute impossibilities, the report was this year promulgated that the ‘accursed Birbal’ was still alive; after that he was safely located in the lowest grade of Hell". While giving the summary of the rumours after Birbal’s death, he continues the story and says, "when the malignant Hindus perceived that the inclination of the heart of the Emperor was fixed on that unclean one and saw that through his loss he was in trouble and distress, everyday they circulated a rumour that people had seen him at Nagarkot, in the northern hills, in the company with Jogis and Sannyasis, and that he was walking about. And his High Highness believed that it was not improbable. ...Birbal who had become detached from the attraction of the world, should have assumed the garb of a faqir, and on account of shame for the misfortune he had sustained at the hands of the Yusufzais, should not have returned to the Court. And the foolish people in the Court believed this report and told all sorts of stories about him in Lahore. But after an Ahadi had gone to Nagarkot and investigated the matter it turned out that the report was nothing but an idle tale."

So strong was the attachment that Emperor Akbar bore to Birbal that even the wildest rumours spread about the reappearance of Birbal in Kalinjar once again, aroused a flicker of hope, as if Birbal was still alive. But a thorough investigation, once again dashed the hope to the ground leaving the Emperor in mourning for a second time.

Thus the loss of Birbal and the current rumours about him persisted for about a year and Akbar cherished the memory of his departed friend, mourned and lamented his death, continued to keep an uneasy mind and carry a heavy heart fondly believing in the rumours that he might get back his lost friend. But there was no doubt that Birbal had become a martyr in

the Yusufzai campaign when he was ambushed and killed fighting with his brave soldiers. The entire story about the rumours after his death, described in detail by Badaoni and corroborated by Abul Fazl in his Akbarnama, at least reveals the close personal attachment of the Emperor with Birbal. His fondness for Birbal was so great that his heart was not prepared to accept the unpleasant reality, and his mind was ready to believe in the current rumours about his escape from the disaster and his becoming a yogi.

Before the close of this chapter, some reference to his descendents, his sons and daughters, deserve mention, who really kept up the name of their illustrious father fresh in the minds of the people. Unfortunately, however, none of them could rise to the heights of the glory attained by their father, and very little is known about their personal merits and talents.

In the contemporary history we find mention of two of the sons of Raja Birbal—Lala and Har Har Rai. Abul Fazl writing about the eldest says "on the 29th (Mihr) 1601, Lala took leave to return into private life. He was the eldest son of Raja Birbar. From violent passions and self-will he was extravagant and formed wide desires. Failure led him further astray, and he got this idea (of relieving) into his head. His Majesty regarded this severance as the remedy for his bewilderment." But we read in the Iqbal Nama that he ostensibly left in order to retire from the world, but in reality he went to Allahabad and entered the service of Prince Salim. He was a commander of 200. He had been employed as a mansabdar in the fortieth year of Akbar's reign.

We find the name of another son, mentioned in the 48th year of Akbar's reign. Abul Fazl writes, "Har Har Rai, the son of Raja Birbar, brought the petition of Prince Danial. It represented that he had left off drinking for six months and it offered excuses for his not coming."}

2. Ibid., p. 1200 (Foot Note)
Besides Lala and Har Har Rai, we find mention of two more of Birbal's sons, Kalyanmal and Dhira-bal, in the contemporary literary sources.

Shesh Krishna who flourished in the 16th century in the reign of Akbar, wrote a very learned commentary on the famous Sanskrit grammar known as Prakriya Kaumudi of Ramchandra. Krishna's commentary contains 46 introductory verses. In these he gives an account of how he undertook to write his commentary on Prakriya Kaumudi. "It was undertaken to teach Kalyan, son of Birbar (Bribal) son of Ganga Das, son of Rupadhar etc." Thus, very indirectly but in an authentic contemporary sources, we get the name of the third son of Birbal as Kalyanmal who must have shown special aptitude for Sanskrit learning.

The contemporary Hindi poet, Keshava Das, gives the name of another son of Birbal as Dhirabal in his famous historical epic work entitled 'Jahangir Yash Chandrika.' Thus Birbal can be said to have four sons, Lala, Har Har Rai, Kalyanmal and Dhirabal. Though none of them could attain to high rank and position like their father yet the first two find mention in the contemporary historical works, and the remaining two were distinguished enough to attract the attention of the poets and scholars of those days.

Besides the four sons, we get the name and reference of a distinguished daughter of Birbal in the contemporary Vaishnava literature of the time, popularly known as 'Varta Sahitya.' Both in the Chaurasi Vaishnavon Ki Varta and Do so Bawan Vaishnavon Ki Varta we read about Birbal's daughter, who was closely attached to Gosain Vithalnathjee and frequented his place to hear his preachings. She is said to have been very

1. Prakriya Kaumudi of Ramchandra. Part, I, by K.P. Trivedi, 1925. Published under Bombay Sanskrit and Prakrit Series No. LXXVIII.
2. Ibid., p. XX, Introduction, p. XX.
3. One of the famous poets of Akbar's Age, who was attached to Orchha Court.
5. Ibid., p. 132.
wise and intensely devoted to the Vaishnava teacher. She used to discuss religious problems with her father too, and once it was on her advice that Birbal arranged an interview of the Emperor with the Vishnava Saint.\textsuperscript{1} It was not only Birbal's daughter but Birbal himself, who was closely attached to this Vaishnava sect, and through his influence the Emperor also visited Swami Vithalnath at Gokul (Mathura).

A popular tradition mentions that one day, after Birbal's death the Emperor asked his eldest son, who was also a scholar of Sanskrit literature, as to how many Ranis become Sattee (martyr) with Raja Saheb? He replied that Virta (bravery) Udarta (benevolence) Budhimata (wisdom) the three queens became martyr, but the fourth Kirti (goodname) remained behind. The Emperor was very much pleased by the answer and accepted the truth in it.\textsuperscript{2} The story based on tradition may not be true but there is every possibility that the Emperor must have had a talk with his son to offer consolations to the family. The aspects of Birbal's character referred to in the above story are also corroborated by historical sources, especially the letter of the Emperor himself written to Khan-i-Khanan which is found in Insha-i-Abul-Fazl.\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid. pp. 132-133.
\textsuperscript{2} Munshi Devi Prasad, 'Raja Birbal'. Pt. II. p. 18.
\textsuperscript{3} Insha-i-Abul-Fazl. pp. 51-52.
CHAPTER IX

Raja Birbal’s Contribution to Literature

Raja Birbal’s memory is cherished even now amongst almost all classes of people in the country. It is true that he was a man of parts and represented a rare combination of talents of a successful courtier, an able and impartial administrator, a distinguished diplomat, a brave warrior and a loyal and affectionate friend. But with all these political acquisitions and proud privileges, he was essentially a man of literary accomplishments and refined taste. It was this that gave him a permanent place in the hearts of the people. It is mainly as a ‘Nava Ratna’ of Akbar’s court that people still remember him by recollecting his Hindi verses, quoting his anecdotes and witty retorts, and thus, they enjoy and appreciate the talents of the man. The numerous nobles of the period, who by their military skill and administrative talents won coveted distinctions have relatively been forgotten. But Abul Fazl, Faizi, Birbal, Rahim and Tansen because of their contributions to language and literature, art, music and poetry as well as for their patronage of fine arts will continue to be cherished in our memory for ever.

1. Raja Birbal as a Courtier, military general, administrator, diplomat and as a loyal friend and boon companion has been dealt with in details in Chapters II, III, IV, V and VII respectively.
Raja Birbal commenced his career as a ‘singing bard’ and ‘versifier’ and it was his poetic talent that had earned him the patronage of the Jaipur and Rewa Courts\(^1\) and finally attracted the notice of the Emperor. He rapidly rose to prominence and became one of the ‘Nine Gems’ of Akbar’s Court.\(^2\) His unusual talent as musician, poet, story-teller and conversationalist very soon earned for him high favours with the title of ‘Kab-Rai’ (or Hindi poet-laureate).\(^3\) The contemporary historian Nizamuddin, mentions that “he was distinguished above all his comppeers for his skill in celebrating the achievements of great-men, and he used to make excellent Hindi verses”.\(^4\) Blochmann writes thus: “Birbar was as much renowned for his liberality as for his musical skill and poetic talent. His short verses, bon-mote and jokes are in the mouths of the people of Hindustan”.\(^5\) Even Badaoni confirms that “he was possessed of a considerable amount of capacity and genius; and he crept day by day more into favour until he attained to high rank. He first received the title of Kab-Rai meaning ‘Prince of Poets’ and afterwards that of Raja Birbar, meaning ‘Renowned warrior’”.\(^6\) The poetic talent is, thus recognised on all hands, but very little is known about this important aspect of his career. Not only amongst the scholars of History, but also in Hindi literature he has not received his due share of recognition.

Dr. S.P. Agrawal has done a commendable work in bringing out the important poets of the 16th century in a clear perspective. He has also carefully analysed the literary contributions of Raja Birbal\(^7\) and other important Hindi poets attached to Akbar’s Court. The 16th century witnessed a remarkable renaissance in Hindi literature and art as well as an

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1. See Chapter II.
3. Ibid., p. 171.
5. Ain, (Blochmann), I. p. 405.
equally great religious revival, both of which were made possible by the tolerant and liberal policy of the Emperor.

Among the poets permanently attached to the royal court of Akbar, the names of Narhari (Mahapatra), Birbal (Braham Kavi), Tansen, Gang, Rahim, Surdas, Madan Mohan, Raja Todarmal, Raja Prithvi Raj, Raja Aaskarn, Chaturbhuj Brahman and Manohar can be cited. The list of Hindi poets who occasionally visited the Court and were recipients of royal favours contains the names of Holrai, Kumbhan Das, Surdas, Chandrabhan, Keshava Das, Kurnesh and Dursa. But amongst the Nine Jewels Raja Birbal, Raja Man Singh, Tansen, Rahim and Raja Todarmal were recognised talents of Hindi Poetry. We find in Sib Singh Saroj, the following verse which beautifully enumerates the names of some more poets of Hindi, who were also associated with Akbar’s Court, and who enriched Hindi by their contributions.

पाई प्रसिद्ध पुरावर ‘ब्रह्म’ सुबारस समूह समृद्धबानी।
गोकुल, गोप, गोवाल, गोस्वाम, गुन गुन सागर गंगा सुभानी।
ब्राह्म, जयमन, जगी, जयदीश, जगम जग जगत दे जानी।
कौर ‘प्रकबर’ सी न कबी, इतने मिलि के कविताजु बखानी।

Indeed, never before in the history of Muslim rule in India had so many scholars, poets and philosophers gathered round a king and enjoyed his patronage.

In this brilliant background and in such an eminent literary circle Birbal held a respectable position, which could not have been possible without real worth in the poet. Dr. R.P. Tripathi rightly holds that Birbal’s unrivalled position among the poets

3. Ibid., p. 7.
of the Court like Abul Fazl, Faizi, Rahim and Fathullah Shiraji was certainly not an ordinary achievement. There can be no doubt, he concludes, that his poetry had some special features which earned him the title of Kab-Rai, when Gang, Narhari, Rahim and many other distinguished poets were already present in the Court.¹

Now let us examine his extant literary works and try to assess his main contribution to Hindi literature. Birbal, who generally wrote under the pen-name of ‘Braham’, was a distinguished poet of Hindi. But it was a pleasant surprise to me, when in course of my researches I discovered some of his prose writings also which do not find mention in any of the books of Hindi literature. It is indeed unfortunate that none of his works has been published so far. They remain preserved in their manuscript forms and find mention in the survey reports (Khoj Vivaran) published from time to time. Some of his popular verses have often been quoted in books on literature of his poetic talent. Among these, Kavitā Sangrah (कविता संग्रह) and Sudama Charitra (सुदामा चरित्र) are his poetic works but the Anuwad Bhagwat Gītā (अनुवाद भागवत गीता) and some stories and latifas (witty sayings) like Birbal Padshah Ki Baat (बिरबाल पादशाह की बात) are valuable contributions to Hindi prose. Besides these, many of his stray verses are found collected in different anthologies and books of the kind. It is necessary to examine, very briefly, the details and descriptions of the manuscripts discovered.

Sudama Charitra (सुदामा चरित्र)

The renowned scholar of Hindi Sri Agarchand Nahta has mentioned two manuscripts of the above title in his famous contribution entitled Rajasthan Me Hindi Ke Hastalikhita Granthon Ki Khoj², which has been published in four volumes. Both of them are credited to Birbal. One of them is available

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in the collections known as Motichandji Khazanchi Sangrah. While the other is to found in the famous Anup Sankrit Library at Bikaner. Though almost similar in their contents, the manuscript at Bikaner library runs into 23 pages, whereas the other one has got only 6 pages in it. It is just probable that the smaller one might be an abridged form of the original. The theme as in the Sudama Charitra, centres round the characters of Lord Krishna and his school friend, Sudama. ‘Krishna-Sudama’ theme has come down in popular legend as an ideal of friendship in the Indian literature.

The Sudama Charitra begins thus:

**प्रावि—**

कविता

माघीजी के गुन गाय गाय सुख पाय पाय धौरनि सुनायः
हुँस नाम हूँ से हारे हैं।

महिमा न जाने सुक नारद भ्रो बालमीक ताके
कहियः के कौन मानत विचारे हैं।

जैसी मति भेरी कथा सुनी है गुराण करि
ज्योकर सुदामा तब धारिका सिंधारे हैं।

तंदुल ले चले के हूँ हरि हूँ सो मिले
पुनि कैसे फिरि जाय भिनु बाँरिक बिचारे हैं।

and its concluding lines are as follows:

**प्रति—**

जाके दरबार कवि ब्रह्मा व्यास बालमीकि
कहाँ हा हा हूँ हरि मायत सु कैसे के रिचायः बृहस्पतिः
वृह श्रे महात्मागारी नारद से बीनारी
रंभासी निरंतकारी सुक से पद्यः बृहस्पतिः
बृहस्पति नवासी श्रे प्रनव भेरो ब्रह्मासी
स्वाम राधिका रमन कवि बरन सोह गाइयो।

सुदामा चारित्र वितामणि सव सावधान
कठ के पियार, राजि सारनि सुनायः।

इति श्री: बीरबल कृत सुदामा चारित्र संसूनः।

प्रति—पुत्रकार। पत्र 2.3 * 40.13। भष्कर 11
(स्थान—प्रनुष संक्षु पुत्रकार, बीकानेर) साईज 41 416।

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1. Ibid., pp. 32-33.

The theme of Sudama-Charitra had been very popular in the Mediaeval period. It had attracted the attention of the poets of Hindi, (Contd.)
The lines quoted above also illustrate Birbal’s fascination and devotion for Lord Krishna, which had become very popular in that age.

Kavitta-Sangrah¹ (कविता संग्रह)

This manuscript finds mention in the Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha’s Khoj Report (for 1923 A.D.). The credit for its discovery goes to the late Rai Bahadur Dr. Hira Lal. The details as given in the report, describe it as running into 8 pages which in all contains 77 chhandas. It was then in the possession of Sri Badri Nath Bhat of Lucknow University.

The specimens quoted from this manuscript show that the verses are mostly of Shringar Ras which reflect love and erotic sentiments. Just one specimen, which is oft-quoted, will serve as an illustration of Birbal’s poetic fancy.

सखि भोर उठी बिन कुचुकी कामिनी,
कास्तूर से कानि केलि घनी
कबि ब्रह्म मने छबि देखत हैं,
कहि जात नहीं मुख से बरनी।
कुछ प्रभु नक्षत्र भत दियो,
सिर नाह निघरत है सजनी।
शसि शेखर के शिर से समनो
निहुरे बिधु लेत कला धरनी।²²

Bengali, Marathi, Gujrati and even Dravida literature. (For details See Dr. Siya Ram Tiwari’s book, ‘Haldhar Krita Sudama Charitra, Bharati Bhawan, Patna, 1966. p. 31).

In the 16th century, Surdas, Narottam Das, Haldhar Das, Birbal, Ganga and many others tried their pens on this theme. There are more than 18 works on this theme. Details may be seen in Dr. S.R. Tiwari’s work, ‘Hindi Ke Madhya-Kalin Khand Kavya.’


2. Ibid.
These illustrations show the skill of the poet. It can be said that he excelled in describing both the pleasures of union (संयोग) and the pangs of separation (वियोग)—the two main aspects of the 'Shringar Ras' poems. The images drawn and the Upama (illustrations) cited are of great poetic heights.

Besides these two collections there are references to innumerable stray and scattered verses credited to Birbal. The writer of Sib Singh Saroj claimed possession of many of Birbal’s compositions in his library.1 Acharya Chatur Sen has referred to a collection of hundreds of Birbal’s Kavitta at Bharatpur.2 According to Mishra brothers,3 Shri Maya Prasad Yajnik possessed a very good collection of Birbal’s compositions. Fortunately, some of them have been lodged in the Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha’s manuscript section. Dr. Bhawani Prasad Yajnik of Lucknow still holds some rare specimens in his own possession. Dr.R.P. Tripathi in his learned article on ‘Raja Bir Bar’ has given thirteen (13) selected specimens of Birbal’s poetic compositions.4 Dr.S.P. Agrawal in his commendable work entitled Akbari Darbar Ke Hindi Kavi, has collected about one hundred verses of Birbar in his book as well as in the appendix.5 The writer of Hindi Me Niti Ka Vikas, has listed some of his verses relating to Niti. The famous Bihar poet (of Dumraon) Pt. Nakchhedi Tiwary in his collections entitled Vichhitro Upadesh6 popularly known as Bharua Sangrah has quoted some satirical verses of Birbal to which Dr. Shyama Nand Prasad7 has added many more in his recent research work on Pt. Nakchhedi Tiwary and his literary contributions. The famous works Kavya-Nirnai by Bhikhari Das8 and Sundari

Tilak\(^1\) by Bhartendu contain some good specimens of Birbal’s Kavitta.

Thus, a very good collection of Birbal’s verses can be made available to the readers and lovers of Hindi poetry. On the basis of the few specimens which could be collected for this Chapter, the verses can be classified as (i) Devotional (Bhakti), (ii) Morals (Nittiupadesh); (iii) Erotic (Shringar), (iv) Satires (Bharus); (v) Nature description; (vi) Enigmas and Puzzles (Paheli), and last but not the least, his extempore verses on the basis of a given line on a particular theme for the purpose of expanding and elucidating the idea which is known as Samasya Poorti exactly on the lines of Tarahi Shairi in Persian and Urdu poems. This form of poetry was quite popular in those days and formed the real test of a poet’s talent. The above classifications need a little more elucidation with a few illustrations also for getting a clear and critical estimate of Birbal’s contribution to Hindi poetry.

The Bhakti Verses (devotional) reflect not only the religious trend of the poet but also the manifestation of the religious atmosphere of the 16th century with more emphasis being given to love and devotion for a personal God, which had already passed through two phases of Nirgun and Sagun form of worship. Even in Sagun form, he was more drawn to the Karishna cult than being a devotee of Rama. It has already been pointed out that he had very close associations with the Pushtimarga school of Vaishnavism established by Swami Vithalnath and followed by the eight famous discipies popularly known as Astachhap. One of them, Chhit Swami was his family priest. It may not be out of place to mention here that the followers of this school were all singers of devotional songs. The devotional path led the disciple to the ideal of ‘complete surrender’ of the self. It was the search of God in his ownself and not outside self, and that too not by the mind with its power of reasoning but by heart and the feeling of intense

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 125.
devotion. God dwells in us just as the air permeates in the water:

ऐसे ही नाथ, निरस्तर साथ रहिये तन में मन में मनु मारे।
ँज्यो पानी में पाबक को प्रति बिना न ब्राह्मि जरूर न बुझे जल दारे।

Birbal believed in the unity of Godhead, who always remains unequalled and unparalleled. He says:

इसरो ब्राह्मि न इसरो देखिए
इसरो मानिए एक विसारे।

Like Sur and Tulsi Birbal also reflects on the illusions of human life. The worldly life, like the golden chain, first attracts us and then binds us to the trammels of existence. He cries out in agony and prays for his deliverance:

किसा करि मोहि छुड़ािये नाथ जी कर्म नरियें की पंड पर्यो हो।

Besides his devotion to Lord Krishna, Birbal sometimes remembers Rama and Raghuvar also. Like his contemporary Bhakti poets Surdas, Tulsidas, and even Rahim, he also sings the praises of the Ganges. In fact, this trend can be marked out from the very beginning of Hindi poetry; the specimen of his Ganga Astuti clearly illustrates it:

गंगा-स्तुति—
ए मेि तीरथ ए मेि देब सु ए मेि माता पिता मेि एई
स्तुति है मुख के मुख जाय नहीं बपु जानु पनी नहीं ब्रजमंदोई
बावन के पद पावन बाते हैं ताते में दिव्य तरंग निसेई
‘ब्रह्म’ मेि ब्राह्मि श्रवनावत ब्राह्मि पार लगाई हों देई।

‘The Sudama Charittra’ and the ‘Anubad Bhagwat Gita’ are good illustrations of his devotional poems.

Nitti-Upadesh (Morals)

In the later part of one’s life, when the shades of evening begin casting their dark shadows, a man falls into a repentant

2. Ibid., p. 346.
4. Ibid., p. 348.
mood. He naturally becomes philosophical, laying more emphasis on ethics and morals. Birbal, the author of love and erotic verses, also pours forth his feelings of repentance for having wasted the valuable moments of his life after the worldly pursuits, forgetting the Creator Himself. He gives a graphic description how men idle away their whole existence till they fall in eternal sleep. Here are a few illustrations which beautifully bear out the point:

पेट में पौठे के पौठे मही पर,
पातन प्रीढ़ के बाल कहाये।
ब्रह्म जब तहानाई थ्रिया संग,
सेज पे पौढ़ के रंग मचाये॥
छीर समुद्र के पोढ़न्हार को
ब्रह्म कबो चित ते नाहि ध्याये।
पौठत पौठत पौठत ही सो
चिता पर पोठन के दिन प्राये॥¹

(The babe commences his life in a lying posture in its mother's womb; remains lying on the ground and in the cradle in his infancy; wastes his youthful years in his couch lying with his wife; but never remembers God Vishnu lying in the milkful ocean, the whole career of lying will finally close when he will be put lying on the funeral pyre).

Another illustration of the same type is equally interesting and illustrative. From the image of 'lying', the poet marks the 'ascending stage' in human career. He says:

गर्म चढ़े पुनि रूप चढ़े,
पलना पे चढ़े, चढ़े गोद घना के।
हाथी चढ़े पुनि घोड़ा चढ़े।
सुखपल चढ़े, चढ़े जोम घना के
बरी प्रोर मित्र की चिता चढ़े
कवि ब्रह्म भने दिन बीते मना के।
ईश कुपाल तो जानों नहीं भ्रम
कांगे चढ़े चले चार जना के॥²

¹. Tripathi, R.P. 'Raja Birbar', p. 10.
Meaning—
(One begins by rising up in the womb, ascends the cradle, then gets the loving lap of his beloved. In his later career, he rides horses and elephants, draws the admiration of his friends, and becomes an eye-sore to his enemies. But the futility of life comes in the end when he has to be carried for the cremation after his death on the four shoulders of his relations).

At more than one place, and in more than one way, Birbal emphasises the eternal bond of man with his Creator. All worldly attachments of wife, son, friends and associates have just come into our lives as a temporary phase and nobody knows when he will be separated from them, but the bond with the Creator is of permanent nature.

Dr. Ram Swaroop Sastri ‘Rasikesh’ has classified Birbal’s verses on morals (Nitti) into—(i) Personal, (ii) Family relationship, (iii) Social and economic and (iv) some verses of mixed type.¹

Amongst the first group, like all the poets writing on Nitti, he also condemns man’s ever increasing anxiety for filling his stomach in utter forgetfulness of the Lord.

पेट से खायो तु पेट को धावत हास्यो न हेतु धामस्थ छाहि।
× × × ×
पेट को काज फिरे दिन रात्रि भु पेटहि से परमेश्वर नाहि। ॥

There are some excellent verses which preach the significance of humility and good behaviour in life. It is only dry wood and foolish men who break but do not bend.

A few of Birbal’s Nitti verses are social in their nature emphasising the special traits of the different classes, and thus, are significant from the point of view of the social history of the time.

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He has covered some more classes in the second verse:

Birbal reflects on the social traits of the Brahmans, the Vaishya, the Kayasthas and other classes. Diplomats, administrators, doctors, nobles and courtiers have also not escaped his notice. In family and social life, sons, wives, friends, neighbours, guests and domestic servants have also been described by him with their requisite traits of character.

Shrinagar Ras (Love & Erotic)

Birbal belonged to the Bhakti period of Hindi poetry. If Surdas was regaling his audience with the outpouring of his devotional songs for Lord Krisna, Tulsi was singing the praise of the ideal character of Rama. Birbal in spite of the limitation and literary trend of the age, had the versatility to write verses of Srinagar Ras, which in their beauties and niceties can be

compared with the best of the verses of the poets of the Riti age. Though flourishing in the Bhakti period he, by his special talents, comes under the wider fold of the poets of the Riti-age. We can certainly trace and attribute the writing of such verses to Akbar’s period of peace and plenty and the growing luxury and magnificence of the Royal Darbar.

The poets of the Riti period had specialised in the art of describing the beautiful features of the beloved. They gave minute and lovely descriptions of the lady of their fancy from the nails to the lovely locks of hairs on the head (Nakh-shikh Varnan). Birbal also indulged in the same kind of fancy but with the protective cover of giving it a devotional colour by describing the romance of Krishna with the Gopis and his consort, Radha. But he was closer to the Riti poets in giving preference to describing the attractive and lovely face of the beloved than following the Bhakti pattern of progressing slowly from the feet to the description of the upper limbs (Nakh-shikh Varnan). There are illustrations where he reversed the entire process, and began from the hair locks, and then came to the lotus feet. Those who remember the famous lines of Surdas.

‘मुगल कमल पर गज पर श्रीदत तापर सिहू करत धनुराण’

Can also relish almost identical lines of Birbal-

‘गिरजा की बाहन सो कबली बिरख पर कबली कमल पर
ब्रह्म कवि यहू कसि’

Both of them make use of similar images. But Birbal instead of directly bringing the name of सिहू (lion) brings in a religious colour by using the term ‘Girja Ko Bahan’ with excellent effects, of course.

On the pattern of the famous poet Bihari Lal, Birbal also describes with rich imageries the bright and shining body of the beloved, the two golden vessels (the busts), which, the ladylove tries to cover up with her moon-like face.

3. Ibid., p. 349.
‘कंचन कुंच के भयन को भूकि भंजत चंद भलकल प्राै’

Love and romance and their impact on the beloved have all been described with rich imageries and appropriate illustrations, which can naturally be best enjoyed in their original forms. The intensity of the burning pangs of separation have been depicted in such a style which would appear fantastic and ridiculous in the pangs of the flaming body which would ‘set fire in the wood’ or (boil) the milk ‘without putting it on the oven.’

While covering the course of romance and love, he also describes some of the seasons. There is a very graphic description of the terrible heat. The images drawn are really wonderful, and the verses can be compared with similar description in any literature. It surely needs to be illustrated:

उछरि उछरि भेकी भरूँ उग्र पर,
उग्र ये केकिन की लपर्ण लहुकि है।
केकिन की सुरति हिर्ये की ना कहूँ है भये,
एकी करी केहरी न बोलत बहु कि है।।
कहे कबि ब्रह्म वारि हेरत हरि फिरे,
चेकर बहुत बहे जोर सों जहुकि है।।
तरनि के तामन तवासी मरे भूमि रही,
दसहू दिसान मैं दवारि सी बहु कि है।।

Samasya Poorti

This form of composition in which poets had to write on a set-pattern and fixed rhymes was a special feature of the royal courts. Besides being a ready entertainer, it was a good test applied to court poets. Only real talents could excel and receive rich rewards.

Birbal has got a number of such verses to his credit, and some of them are quite popular even today.

The sun disappears on cloudy days, and the moon on Amavas. The kite hides when there are rain drops, and the fishes hide in deep waters. The thieves disappear with the advent of morning as the peacocks hide themselves with the beginning of Falgun. But, however one may try to cover in veils, the playful eyes cannot escape notice.

Another illustration of the same type is not only interesting but also instructive and idealistic:

(When the sugarcane is crushed we get sugar and Misri, and the sweets prepared from it serve as offerings to God; when the cotton flowers burst out, we get cloths to cover our shame and keep our dignity. When the jute plant rots, we get paper on which Koran and Puran are written. Kavi Braham says, ‘Hear, Oh, Shah Akbar’. The downcast, broken and rotten in society, can be thus, raised and reformed).

The illustrations also reflect the ideals of social reforms of Birbal. He, thus, combind the poetic fancy with his zeal for social reforms. His verses of Samasya- Poorti are of Sringar, Bhakti and Niti type.

Birbal was not only an accomplished poet but he had also earned recognition as a story-teller, conversationlist and a ready-wit. His riddles, puzzles, and anecdotes were great

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2. Ibid., p. 356.
source of recreation and entertainment. Both Badaoni and Nizamuddin write about Birbal’s talents for wit and humour.

It is also clear from the contemporary evidences that the royal court patronised such talents, and they were called ‘Nadim-i-Musharraf’ (boon companions). Besides Birbal and Mulla Do Piyaza, who were amongst the ‘Nine Gems’ of Akbar’s Court, Naqib Khan also was ‘one of the witty men of the Emperor’s Court.’ Jalal Khan Qurchi’s sweet words always gave pleasure to the minds of his Majesty, and Shimal Khan Qurchi ‘was a boon companion’. Mulla Lutfi, the astrologer, ‘spoke extempore verses beautifully and in one sitting he recited up a thousand couplets.’ He was also a boon companion and a good mimic. Raughani had many satires to his credit, and Hashim was a good story-teller. Similarly, Saiyyed Muhammad Fikri, the garment weaver, distinguished himself in the writing of quatrains and became celebrated as Mir Ruba’i (master of quatrains). Mir Haider was a muamma’i (enigma writer). Judged in this perspective, Birbal proved to be the ‘joyous epitome of wit and laughter’ in the Royal Court. There were many occasions when Birbal narrated stories and pleased the Emperor and the Court with his ‘witty sayings’. The Emperor himself occasionally indulged in witty retorts, which have been recorded by Abul Fazl.

Though we do not get the stories and anecdotes of Birbal from the pen of the Court chroniclers, yet they have come down to us from the literary sources. Some of them are still in the manuscript form. Unfortunately, Birbal’s stories and latifas have become so popular, and with the lapse of time so much has

1. Tabaqat-i-Akbari. (De), II, p. 678.
2. Ibid. p. 677.
3. Ibid., p. 678.
4. Ibid. p. 678.
5. Ibid. p. 730.
6. Ibid. p. 730.
7. Ibid. p. 741.
8. Ibid. p. 724.
been added and adulterated to the original stock that it has become difficult to distinguish the real from the fake ones. After a thorough scrutiny, some selected specimens have been made available to us, which remain in their original forms and have come down to us along with his Hindi verses. Dr. S.P. Agrawal in his remarkable work entitled Akbari Darbar Ke Hindi Kavi, gives some examples of his riddles (Paheli) :

कर बोले कर ही सुने थबन सुने नही ताहि,
कहः पहेली बीरबल सुनिये दकबर साहि।।

(The hand speaks and it is hand that hears, the ears do not listen. Hear Oh! Emperor: this is the riddle of Birbal—the answer is, ‘pulse’.)

रांगी तो गलती नहीं बिन रांगे गल झाड़ि
कहः पहेली बीरबल सुनिये दकबर साहि।।

(What is that which left uncooked quickly decays, but when burnt lasts longer?—brick)

जदः रङ्ग बेसन की नहीं बताते हैं
खाने की नहीं बस्तु है, पर खाते हैं।।

(What is that yellow substance—not Besan, ? Though it is not edible, we still do consume it.)

‘Asharfi’ (gold).

‘मारो तो वह जी उठे, बिन मारे मर जाये
कहः पहेली बीरबल, मुर्दा भ्रांटा खाय’

(Mridang)

(By striking it comes to life, but by leaving it is dead; it is a puzzle that this dead one eats—flour—Antra).

2. Ibid. p. 357 (Chhand No. 86).
M.H. Azad in his Darbar-i-Akbari quotes a Paheli credited to Birbal:

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'दी में गर्म सब्बाड़ में मिट्टा, बिन भेलन यह बेला है,
कहे बीरबल सुने धकबर यह भी एक पहेला है'  
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Pt. Ballava Bhat in his biography of Birbal quotes many such anecdotes, which are in the form of questions and their replies. The puzzles were put by the Emperor and the replies were given by Birbal. Just one specimen will suffice:

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'कौन चाहें है बरसना, कौन चाहें है धूप ?
कौन चाहें है बोलना, कौन चाहें है बूप ?
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The reply was given in the same rhymes:

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माली चाहें जो बरसना, घोबी चाहें धूप
वादशाह चाहें जो बोलना, चोर चाहें चूप ?
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Such instances can be added to, but only those have been selected and given here which can be really ascribed to him and have been quoted as illustrations in the books on Hindi literature.

Amongst the legends and stories of his ready-wit and impromptus, one such has been cited by Manucci in *Storia Do Mogor*.

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"One day the King asked him (Birbal) why he had been so long in making his appearance at Court? 'Sir', said the poet, 'I was busy quieting an infant.' 'What' retorted the King, 'Do you want all that time to satisfy a baby?"
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The story as depicted is a long one, where Birbal by playing the role of an infant, with his peculiar obstinate demands, proves that it is really very difficult to satisfy and quieten a child. It must have served as a good entertainment to the Court. The Emperor is reported in the story to have said, 'You are too clever for me', and he put another question to Birbal, "Tell me, if you please, what is the greatest consolation

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that man has in this world?" "Ah: Sir," retorted he without a
pause, "it is when a father finds himself embraced by his son."1

Another very good example of Birbal’s quick-wit has been
recorded by Munshi Devi Prasad in his book on 'Birbal'. The
story is given thus:-

'Sheikh Faizi had written a commentary of the Holy
Quran (Saurat-ul-Ilham—now published by N.K. Press,
Kanpur) in which he had used not a single alphabet which
carried dot. This composition was a masterpiece, showing his
command over the language. In Arabic and Persian, there
are only 15 alphabets which are without dots and the rest 98
are dotted. But the difficulty with him was about the beginning
like-"Bismillah" without which he could not do. He was in
great anxiety and, by the way, he consulted Bisbal. Birbal,
without even a pause, advised him to write down his ‘Kalima’
in place of 'Bismillah', which is completely 'Be Nuqat' (with-
dot) dots). Faizi was highly impressed by his ready-wit.2

Another anecdote assigned to him has been referred to by
Sri Agarchand Nahta, which is in a manuscript form in
Abhai Jain Granthalaya, Bikaner. The specimen quoted by
Sri Nahta in his survey report is given thus:

पादशाह तेमुर समरकन्द की फँठ फँठ करी वहां एक ब्रज़ी लुगाई कैद में
भाई। पादशाह पूँछी तेरा नाम क्या है? लुगाई कही मेरा नाम भोलति
है। पादशाह कही, भोलति भी ब्रज़ी होती है, लुगाई कही भोलति ब्रज़ी
न होती तो तुम सरीखे लंगड़े के घर में क्यू भावति।3

(Arbhai Jain Granthalaya-Bikaner)

But in spite of all the cares taken in selecting the specimen,
as none of them are recorded in the contemporary sources,
they can not be finally taken as authentic. The circumstantial
evidences, however, are quite in their favour, and atleast those
of them, which have come down to us along with his verses on
Samasya-Poorti can be legitimately assigned to him. Birbal was

1. Manucci, Storia do Mogor (Tr. Irwine), Volume III. p. 299.
3. Nahta, Agarchand, ‘Rajasthan Me Hindi Ke Hastalikhit Granthon
surely making a contribution to Hindi literature by taking recourse to such a popular method of stories, anecdotes and riddles. As they made the author popular amongst his contemporaries and drew him closer to the Emperor, who was ready to appreciate his wit and wisdom, a reference to them here is useful from the point of view of his biographical sketch. The Emperor in his letter quoted in Insha-i-Abul Fazl refers to this popular and endearing aspect of his career thus:

Birbal was “the first among the matchless ones; the one who knew the subtleties of knowledge; a companion who charmed the inner circles; the one who talked interestingly about love and affection; the one who was a centre, so to say, of circumference formed by intellectuals; the first in an assembly of speakers, and affectionate friend and a companion in holy solitude.”

This is what Akbar felt and expressed about Birbal and this does not need any further elucidation to prove the talent, wit and wisdom that he possessed. Drawing a final estimate of Birbal’s accomplishments, it may be emphasized here that he formed the link between the poets of Bhakti period and the later period which is famous as Riti Kaleen Yuga. From the point of view of language he generally wrote his composition—both prose and poetry—in Brajbhasa, the most popular form of Hindi literature in those days, not only because he himself belonged to the area called “Braj-Desh” (the area round Mathura, in the Agra Subah) but also because of the theme of his devotional compositions which generally centred round the life and character of Lord Krishna. The hero of the Braj-lok was praised in the dialect of the place, giving him more of popularity. If the language of his composition was Brajbhasha, the most popular metre of his composition was Muktak or Kavita, Chhand, though there are some specimens of Dohas and Sawaiyas also.

2. For detailed distinction between Doha, Chaupai, Sawaiyya and Kavitta etc. See F.E. Kasy’s, ‘A History of Hindi Literature,’ Chapter, I. p. 6.
Excepting Sudama-Charitra, he does not seem to have written any epic-poem, for a very busy court life hardly give him time for such an undertaking. But even the Kavitta and stray verses are well-worth evidences of his poetic genius, and his contributions, not yet properly emphasised, cannot however, be forgotten, and sooner or later they are bound to attract some scholars of Hindi literature for special study. Birbal’s verses are also important for the study of the social, cultural and religious life of the period. Literature is the mirror which best reflects the social and economic conditions of a particular age.

As emphasised earlier, the Mughal Empire had been firmly established, and it had inaugurated an era of religious toleration and a synthesis of Hindu-Muslim cultures. The very fact that Akbar could and did allow the Hindu poets in his Court to sing the praises of Krishna and Rama and hear the Ganga Astuti\(^1\) composed and sung by Birbal, Ganga and Abdur Rahim go to show the real spirit of the time. Birbal was a poet of keen intellect and an acute observer. In his stray verses, we get glimpses of the social pattern of the age.

Hindu social order was based on varna classifications, and Birbal has also commented on the main traits of the different social classes like, the Brahman, merchants and the Kayasthas, and the lower section like the peasants, artisans, cobblers, weavers, and others have also not escaped his attention. By means of satires, he has emphasised the true traits of their character, where he brings ‘ambassadors’, the Brahmins, the Kayasthas, merchants, corrupt and dishonest servants, doctors, courtiers and artists all under his purview.

Moreland says that, “bribery was almost universal in India at that time, and the suitors knew that even a good case must be supported by bribery or by influence of some description.”\(^2\) Slavery was a recognised institution, and it is referred to in many of the stray verses of Birbal.

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1. Poems written in the praise of the sacred river Ganges, Rahim’s poem on this theme is quite famous.
Birbal’s erotic verses, which also describe the dress, ornaments, and cosmetics of the beloved, depict the affluent society of the age. The ornaments worn by his Naika (heroine) were many—from the fingers of the foot to her hair locks. Besar, Nath, Hasr, Bazuband, Gajrah, Arsi, and many others bedecked every limb of the bodies of the ladies.¹

Ornaments and jewellery had and still have special attraction for ladies. The toilets had become very important for women and gradually Shringar Ras recognised Solah Shringar, which Abul Fazl refers as sixteen graces.² Applying colyrium to eyes, staining the hands with Mehdi, and eating Pan to redden the lips’ have been referred to in the verses of Birbal,³ which also find corroboration from historical sources like Abul Fazl’s description and the accounts of the foreign travellers. Birbal’s verses, like the ‘Nagar Sobha’ of Rahim, describe the socio-economic life of the 16th century and can serve as important corrective to the descriptions given by some of the casual foreign travellers.

But the society in those days was also roughly divided into two main categories of the rich and the poor. As Moreland points out ‘the broad fact remains that the majority of the nobles were steeped in luxury and the mass of the people were miserably poor.’ The economic position of the artisans was bad enough. Rich men had gardens, ponds and fountains within their walls. The common people lived in huts and hovels.⁴ Thus, the poorer section remained discontented and often a victim of the local tyrannies of the nobles and the Jagirdars. A single verse of Birbal sums up the prevailing condition:

‘इक छत्र की छाहू में विनोद करे।
इक घान के काज फिरे जु हुकारी।’⁵

2. Ibid., pp. 22-26.
(Whereas, a section of the people indulged in luxurious entertainments under the canopy of the court, another is a helpless wanderer in search of subsistence.)

Birbal as a poet was a curious mixture of idealism and realism. He could indulge in the luxury of describing his Naika (heroine) in all the details and niceties, but was also quick to turn to his devotional songs and could not also shut his eyes to the problems of the society and its various classes.
CHAPTER X

Resume

Raja Birbal, originally Mahesh Das, was a man of extraordinary qualities. Born in S.V.1585 (1528 A.D.) in a middle class Brahman Bhat family at Tribikrampur (Tikwapur) in the Kalpi Sarkar (now in the Kanpur district) he was an inquisitive and intelligent child and showed signs of a promising future. His father, Ganga Das, died prematurely and Mahesh Das was left to himself to plan out his future and mould his destiny. Receiving his early education at his maternal uncle's place he soon learnt Hindi, Sanskrit and Persian and distinguished himself in composing extempore verses, which he used to sing in a melodious voice. He was also gifted with remarkable sense of wit and humour and excelled in the art of story-telling. He soon attracted attention by his skill in repartee and ready-wit. His qualities made him very popular and he received the patronage of the rulers of Kalpi and Kalinjar. His fame as a poet crossed the bonds of the locality and he was picked up as a court poet by Raja Bhagwan Das of Jaipur. His poetic genius bloomed there and he composed beautiful verses under the pen name of Brahma Kavi. His poetic name became so popular that it took the place of his original—Mahesh Das. The Orchha Court which had become a centre of talents gave an honourable place to Brahma Kavi, and it was from this Rewa Court of Rama Chandra that he joined the Imperial Court of Akbar in the early years of his accession. His name and fame had already
reached the ears of His Majesty, the Emorer, and he was
summoned to join the Court for which, of course, he himself
must have been very eager.

Mahesh Das, who had become popular as Brahma Kavi
impressed the Emorer by his pleasing traits of character and
Akbar honoured him with grant of Jagirs and bestowed on him
the titles of Raja, Kavi-Rai (Poet Laureate) and Birbar (ren-
owned warrior). He soon rose to honour and distinction and
was given the high rank of a Mansabdar of 2,000.¹ For about
thirty years he remained, 'a constant companion' and an
'intimate associate' of the Emorer. His rise from an obscure
position to a prominent place in the Court was as much due to
his own merit and talents as to the royal patronage. Akbar
liked and loved him immensely. The mutual love and esteem
had taken the form which Badaoni describes thus: 'he was
possessed of a considerable amount of capacity and genius,....
he crept day by day into favour until he attained the high rank
and was honoured with the distinction of becoming the
Emperor's confidant, and it became a case of 'Thy flesh is my
flesh and thy blood my blood'.² The evidence of the hostile
witness, Badaoni, proves beyond doubt the personal merit of
the man and the eminent position he held in the royal court.
But this was not, and could not be, just because of his art
of pleasing the whims of the Emorer, as some historians seem
to suggest.

Birbal, from the very beginning of his career at the Court,
had displayed a rare combination of the talents of a poet,
musician, and a brave warrior. The Emorer was impressed
by his administrative talents and more than once sent him on
diplomatic missions to the Courts of the Hindu Rulers and the
refractory Muslim rebels. As a brave warrior and seasoned
soldier, he was sent to the Punjab, he participated in the Kangra
campaign, accompanied the Emorer in his famous Gujrat and
Bihar expeditions. His last Military assignment, the Yusufzai
campaign, proved a disaster where he laid down his life fighting

¹. Tabaqat-i-Akbari (De), Vol. II, p. 674.
². Badaoni (Lowe), II. p. 164.
bravely. His military talent finds confirmation in the titles of ‘Birbar’, and ‘Sahib-us-Saif-o-Qalam’ (master of sword and pen) which were conferred upon him. Even Abul Fazl refers to him as a ‘man who was fitted for battle and for banquet (Ba Bazm-e-razm), in his Akbar Nama. It has wrongly been held that Birbar was just a poet and a court-wit and did not possess the qualities of a soldier.

In the field of administration also he occupied a prominent position in the political set up of the period. Raja Birbal, like Abul Fazl, performed most of the functions of a minister, without actually ever holding the post. His position may be compared with the ‘minister without port-folio’ in recent time. Besides his management of his Jagirs, he is recorded to have performed many kinds of executive jobs. He was sent to enquire into the case of the Mathura Brahmin in 1577; he was sent to Jallundhar to supervise the distribution of Madad-i-Maash (1578); he was appointed also as a member of an agency to regulate the price and sale of cattle and buffaloes; and he successfully controlled and regulated the prices, and for sometime, he held the charge of that department. In 1582 his suggestions for reforms regarding the appointment of some right minded and energetic men as inspector of places to represent impartially the condition of oppressed people and seekers after justice was well received. And last but not the least, then the Emperor in 1582, re-organised the central government, “the administering of justice to complainants was made over to Raja Birbar. Qasim Khan, Hakim Humam, Shamsher Khan and even Abul Fazl were attached to his office.” In view of these definite evidences Raja Birbal’s role in the administration cannot be denied though, unfortunately, it has not received proper appreciation as yet.

Raja Birbal was an able administrator, but he distinguished himself better in the field of diplomacy. Akbar himself was a

3. Akbar Nama (Beveridge), III, p. 599.
'consummate diplomatist' of his age and he always tried diplomacy before resorting to force of arms. "Men like Todarmal and Birbal", rightly remarks, Dr. Ishwari Prasad, "who joined his service, impressed him with genius and ability of the Hindus, and the Emperor became more and more inclined to extend his favour to them and to make them sharers in developing the grandiose plan of an empire". Birbal’s main role as a diplomat was in serving as an intermediary between the Mughal Emperor and the Hindu rulers, who were generally Rajputs. The Brahma Bhati enjoyed special position of respect and influence, and Birbal was personally known to the important chieftains. His accomplishments as a poet and witty conversationist contributed greatly to the success of his political missions. He played a definite role in the Emperor’s Rajput policy and is recorded to have gone to Dungarpur in 1576 to bring the Rajput princess to the royal harem. There are stray and scattered references in the chronicles of the time which show that he was entrusted with very important diplomatic negotiations. As early as 1563, it was on his intercession that the territories of Raja Ram Chandra were not interfered with. In 1569, he introduced the ambassador of the Raja of Cochin; went in mission to Dungarpur (1576), and succeeded in bringing Bhupat Chauhan to Court. Impressed by his diplomatic successes the Emperor sent him to conciliate Masum Khan Farankhudi (1581) though Birbal did not achieve the desired success in this case but his mission to bring Raja Ram Chandra of Bhatta in 1584 was a great success. Raja Birbal, in fact, was looked upon by the Rajput chieftains as the protector of the Hindu rulers and their political interest in the Royal Court.¹ Whenever any difficult and delicate matter cropped up, it was Birbal, who was approached to sponsor the cause of the aggrieved party, and with his vast wit and wisdom he generally got favourable orders passed. He was not only popular but was also feared and respected by the important nobles both Muslims and Hindus.

1. See Chapter, V for details.
Akbar was convinced of his sense of loyalty and devotion, and he was always considered as an impartial and responsible officer. He was renowned for his sense of justice and fairness, and in his anxiety to promote the welfare of the people, he always pleaded for benevolent measures of reforms, which were generally accepted and implemented by the Emperor. The administration of law and justice was one of the most important features of Mughal Government, and it was in this field that he particularly specialised himself. Many of the stories and legends associated with Birbal have been drawn to reflect this aspect of his character, and the different stories, though they may not be true in toto, surely have some historical basis. His honesty, impartiality, devotion to duty and loyalty to the Emperor and his Government have been duly recognised by the Court historians and "was appreciated even by the Emperor himself.\(^1\) It was by his merit that he had risen to high position, and it was again by his intrinsic worth that he always maintained that high position, in spite of the jealousies of the orthodox Muslim clique working against him.

The most important aspect of his personality was his catholicity and sense of liberalism. He was a sincerely religious man,\(^2\) and believed like Akbar himself, that there was some elements of truth in every religion. Like his royal master, he was essentially a rationalist. He generally accompanied the Emperor in his visits to the saints and sages; he always supported the cause of liberalism in the discussion of the Ibadat Khana, and when Din-i-Ilahi was enunciated he became its true disciple. He accepted the discipleship of the new order not to please his patron or just to flatter him, but he sincerely believed in its principle. But he remained a good Hindu all through his life. He believed in the essence of religion and morality and was never dogmatic and hide-bound in his principles. Even Badaoni accepts, though indignantly, the important role that he had in shaping and moulding the religious principles and

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2. See his devotional verses in Chapter IX of this work.
thought of the Emperor. This was certainly no mean achievement on his part. Though himself attached to the Vaishnava school of Swami Vithalnath, he was essentially a spiritualist and preserved implicit faith in God, the Almighty. His devotional verses well illustrate his philosophy of life. He was a true representative of the prevailing note of the century, which preached against all the forms and formalities of religion and simply emphasised the essential bond with the Creator as the essence of all religions.

Raja Birbal was a man of an ideal character. He was one of the closest courtiers and the ‘talented wit’, but he was not a sycophant or a time-server. During his long career of about thirty years, he never showed any inconsistency in his character. Abul Fazl has been called a ‘sedition monger’, and Badaoni goes to the extent of calling him a ‘flatterer beyond all bounds’, but Birbal’s sincerity and loyalty was never questioned or even suspected by any historian including Badaoni himself. In matters of loyalty and faithfulness he proved better than Man Singh, Rahim, Mirza Aziz and others whom Jahangir calls, ‘old wolves of the State’.

Badaoni, however, makes two important allegations against him, and they require a critical examination for forming a critical estimate of his personal character.

While writing about the establishment of ‘Shaitanpura’ to isolate the growing number of prostitutes in the capital, and the Emperor’s method to put a check on it, he says ‘And a number of well-known prostitutes he (Akbar) called privately before him, and enquired who had seduced them. And after learning their names, several important Amirs were severely reprimanded and punished and imprisoned for a considerable time.’ It is here that Badaoni adds, “Among them one mentioned the name of Raja Birbar who had become a disciple of His Majesty’s religion and had made such progress in the four

1. See Chapter VI for details.
degrees, that he had become conspicuous as endowed with the essentials of four virtues,\(^1\) and scarcely ever left the society of his own daughters." At this time he happened to be in the Pargana of Karrah in his own Jagir. When news of this reached the veil of his door, he wished to become a Jogi. But on the Emperor's sending for him in reassuring term he came to the Court.\(^2\)

In the passage above Badaoni thus, levels two kinds of charges against Birbal—that he had been found guilty of prostitution, and the second, which was more heinous, that he had incest with his own daughter. The passage itself abounds in contradictions and the malice is apparent against Birbal, who on all evidence was one that Badaoni always hated. He just mentions that 'one of them (prostitutes) mentioned the name of Raja Birbar'; but he does not even say whether or not it was a false allegation to tarnish his image and malign him. Badaoni himself writes that all other Amirs were severely reprimanded, punished or even imprisoned for sometime. But he does not explain why Birbal was left out, and the Emperor, sent a reassuring letter to him. It is evident that the allegation, even if made, was proved to be false and mischievous. This news about Birbal must have caught the attention of other writers; but it is not corroborated by any other source. It is true that Birbal was a great favourite of the Emperor, but the King's severity towards errors and misdemeanours is well known. Even Monserrate writes that "Seducers and adulterers are either strangled or gibbeted. The king has such a hatred of debauchery and adultery that neither influence nor entreaties nor the great ransom which was offered would induce him to pardon his chief trade commissioner—Jalala, who had debauched a well-born Brahmin girl."\(^3\) It is, thus, clear that the allegation against Birbal was false and fabricated, intended only to malign him.

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1. Ibid., p. 312. The four virtues, viz. hikmat (wisdom), shaijaat (fortitude), iftat (chastity) and adalat (justice).
2. Ibid., p. 312.
As regards his relationship with his own daughter, the charge appears still more fantastic. His daughter was a talented lady, and was a distinguished disciple of Swami Vithalnath. There are many references of her religious devotion to the Vaishnava saints in the Varta literature of the time. The father and the daughter, no doubt, went together to the Vaishnava saints and Mulla Badaoni has mistaken their ‘spiritual closeness’ and makes it a ground to cast the heinous aspersions on him. Badaoni was a type of man, who could not understand and appreciate the basis of different kinds of relationship in the world. Even M. H. Azad who relies mostly for his information on Badaoni, expresses his disapproval of the bad taste of his language.\(^1\) Birbal was never known for his excesses, and his private life was marked by a standard of morality that was rare in that age.

If we reflect on the personal character of the man, it had brighter shades than his political career and achievements. He was an intensely religious man and was renowned for his liberality and benevolence. He often gave away large sums of money to supplicants, particularly to those who wrote verses.\(^2\) We get from Maasir-ul-Umara that Raja Birbar was among the singular of the age for liberality and generosity and was famed for his gifts.\(^3\) The contemporary Hindi poets, Keshava Das, Gang Kavi, and Holrai have all sung high praises of his generosity and munificence. As a great patron of learning he bestowed lavish rewards on the poets. He is said to have given a hundi of six lacs to Keshava Das,\(^4\) who has written many verses praising his munificence. His poetic assembly (Majlis) was a renowned centre, and Gang Kavi has sung high praises of the majesty and grandeur of his court (Majlis). Both Keshava and Gang Kavi were his close friends and great admirers. An anonymous poet of Akbar’s court gives a comparative estimate of the important poets by writing:

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“Gang excels in sonnet; and Birbal in the Kavitta metre; Keshava’s meaning is ever profound, but Sur possesses the excellence of all the three.”

Besides being a poet and patron of learning he was also a great musician and possessed a fine taste of art and architecture. He is credited with the building of a fine temple known as Bihareshwar (Radha Krishna Temple known as Bihareshwar) in his village home Tikwapur. He also founded the town of ‘Akbarpur’ which still commemorates him and the Rang Mahal at Burhiya (Haryana) and Birbal Ka Chatta at Narnaul are also assigned to him. But historical evidences are still lacking and hence we cannot accept them finally has his contribution. But as his house at Fathpur Sikri was specially built for him, he may have had a say in its plans, designs and decorations, which is still famous for its artistic beauty and as a synthesis of Indo-Islamic architecture.

The most attractive aspect of his personality was his overwhelming popularity. He was one of the closest courtier of Akbar, a great supporter of the Hindu rulers, a famous patron of the poets and artists, and a man enjoying great popularity among the general people. The contemporary poet Keshava Das writes:

टोडरमल तुम मित्र मरे, सब ही सुख सोचो ।
मोरे हित बरतीर बिना तुक दीननि रोचो ।।

6. Sunder, Pad Kavi Ganga ke, Upasa me Balki ।
7. Keshav Prabha Gamiir ko, Suur Teer Guna Bhair ।।
(Ram Chandra Sukla, Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihas. p. 175).
1. Nagendra, Dr., Hindi Sahitya Ka Brihat Itihas, Part VI., p. 421.
Badaoni preserves a couplet about Todarmal which shows his unpopularity and corroborates the version of the Hindi poet. The verse is:
‘A dog of a Raja is better than Muzaffar Khan, although a dog is hundred times better than Raja’. Badaoni (Lowe), II. p. 65.
(Todarmal died, everybody had peaceful sleep. But in absence of my friend Birbal all poverty stricken people wept bitterly.)

The legendary popularity of Birbal had, thus, a sound historical basis, and Birbal was a man of extra-ordinary talents, and not merely an ordinary court-wit and jester. He was a remarkable personality of his age and the 'brightest jewel' among Akbar's Nau Ratna.
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**B—Sanskrit**


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(4) A Sanskrit letter of Swami Vithalnath in the name of his disciples. The letter is a valuable contemporary evidence and directly reflects on the religious character of Raja Birbal and his close association with the Vaishnava school. This letter has been quoted by Dr. Harinath Tandon in his thesis, *Varta-Sahitya* (Bharat Prakashan Mandir, Aligarh, 1960).

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(k) मूंगार रस ग्रंथरुप-सौंदर्यः

झाँजि ऐसो प्रचरज को तमाशी देखो,
पलन के माये उयो, पूरन पून्यो की ससि
सारंग है मीन कीर, कोहिला के कलरव,
सुपक सुरंग बिम्ब, सुनदर सरस अर्थि
तिन पर बिम्ब समु कनक की ग्रामा धरै,
तिन पर बिन्दला बने हैं यों बने हैं मसि
गिरजा को बाहुं सो कदली विरं दर,
कदली कमल पर ब्रह्म कवि यह कवि हैं।।

(1) एक सम हृ दि यो रति मानि के प्रात गयी सरिता मधि खोरनि
मंजन लाई ब्रव्हाई गुलाल सो लीर खारी कच लागि निचोरनि
यों कवि ब्रह्म बनी उपमा जल के कनुका खुब्बे बार के छोरनि
माहु चंद्रहि चूसत नाग ग्रहि निकस्यो वहि पुछ की ब्र्होरनि।।

(2) सज ले ठाड़ि भई उठि बाल लई उठटी षांगे राय जम्हाई
रोम की राजी विराजी विशाल मिटी मिली ग्रह पीठ खिलाई

1. बब्रवाल, भक्तबरी दरबार के हिन्दी-कवि, पू १५२, लखनऊ, १६६०
2. बहे, पू ३४६-४६
बैठी परी पण उपर पाखे ते भ्रां यहे उपमा उर भ्रां लोक विलोक के आज़िबे कारण सोने की काम कमान चढ़ाई॥११॥

एक समय गृहवास वुता मुख सेवज्ञे ते उठी बाहर भ्रां भ्रां कंजुकि हार उतारी परयो विष्रेहि हिय मध्य की कोमलताहि लिङ्गी ब्रीसर लातन भ्रां गये उपमा कबि भ्रां भ्रां नहीं जारे कवित्व कुम्रभ की भरान को मुझे भंजू चंद भ्लसकान्त भाई॥२१॥

गोरे से गात शुलेल शुचान भरी भ्रमिया रंग केरसर बोरे वेनी बड़ी भ्रां छोटी सी भ्रां छई छवि सी मुख गोरे नैनति की प्रहनाई कहूँ कहूँ प्रजनन दे द्रीव कल्जन जोरे भ्रां मन् यहूँ को ही तिया जु चली सवी भ्रांगन भ्रांग मरोरे॥३१॥

सलि भोर उठी विन कंजुकि कामिनी,
कान्हुर ते करि केलि चनि।
कबि भ्रां मन् छवि देलत ही,
कहि जात नहीं मुख ते बरनी॥४१॥

बाहर जार्ज़ूं तौं बाहर ही पर भ्रां

1. झों, पृ० १४५
2. प्रामोर, पृ० २० के हि० कवि, पृ० १४६
3. झों, पृ० २४५
4. रिपोर्ट 'शब्द बीबिल', हिन्दुस्तानी, नवरात्रि, १६६१ पृ० ११
5. नामदेव प्राचीन समा, बोध रिपोर्ट२०६१
6. प्रामोर, पृ० २० के हि० कवि, पृ० ४५६
उपदेश: दो शिष्य 

चतुर्वेदी दो शिष्यो न हेतु चार छोटी बहु प्रेम ब्रह्म भी दो छोटी बहु प्रेम ब्रह्म भी। छोटी बहु प्रेम ब्रह्म भी मेरे सोहद ब्रह्म भी दो छोटी बहु प्रेम ब्रह्म भी दो। दोबारा सोहद ब्रह्म भी दो।

तिथि: यह चतुर्वेदी दो शिष्यो न हेतु चार छोटी बहु प्रेम ब्रह्म भी कहा हाद सबकी नहीं है। जब दौड़ा ले लोग दूसरी दूसरी सोहद ब्रह्म भी दो, ब्रह्म भी कहा हाद सबकी नहीं है।

लेखक: राजा नरेंद्रदेव त्रिसंतानी

**भविष्य**

नमः तुर्यी ब्रह्म भी कहा हाद सबकी नहीं है।

नमः ब्राह्मण ब्रह्म भी कहा हाद सबकी नहीं है।

नमः ब्राह्मण दो ब्रह्म भी कहा हाद सबकी नहीं है।

नमः सुधिव जन चूदा दो ब्रह्म भी कहा हाद सबकी नहीं है।

नमः सुधिव जन चूदा दो ब्रह्म भी कहा हाद सबकी नहीं है।

कुंडल हिम कस्यो नमः, वजन ब्रह्म भी कहा हाद सबकी नहीं है।

पुष्प सुखा कांटा ब्रजक नर, भाज पढ़े पर नहीं कहा हाद सबकी नहीं है।

(भविष्य)

जो तुम ब्रह्म भी कहा हाद सबकी नहीं है।

जो तुम ब्रह्म भी कहा हाद सबकी नहीं है।

जो तुम ब्रह्म भी कहा हाद सबकी नहीं है।

1. **प्रतापाल, ब्र० ६० के हि० कवि, प० २४६**
2. **बहु, प० २४६**
3. **बहु, प० २४६**
4. **विपाली, राजा ब्रजनर, हिमज्जलानी प० ११**
5. **प्रतापाल, ब्र० ६० के हि० कवि, प० २४६**
APPENDIX—A

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प्राण बढ़ाय के जो करो कहा काहें करो वरत पुंज विसाला
देहः तपायः तपायः पचागिन काहें सहूः बन बैठि कसाला
ब्रह्मा विवारत जो हियः में सोइः रूप धरे नर को इहि काला
जाहिः सयें फिन वा नन्दरायः के प्राणः खेरल नन्दः को लाला ||२१।

dूसरो ब्रह्मि न दूसरो देविए दूसरो मानिए एक विसारे
वहै प्रवलोकी सोईः पर काम ये ब्रह्मा विवेक विवारे विवारे
एसे ही नाय निरत्तर साथ रहे तन में मन में मनु मारे
ज्यों पानी में पावक को प्रतिविम्बः न भागि जरैः न दुखे जलु बारे ||३१।

(घ) समस्या पूर्तिः:

सूर छिये प्रवरी बदरी ग्रह चंद छिये है प्रमावस प्रायः
पानी बूंद पत्थर छिये ग्रह मीन छिये हुका जल पाये
मोर मधः पर चोर छिये ग्रह मोर छिये रितु फागून प्रायः
शोट करो सत पूर्णा को पर चंचल तैन छिये न छियाये ||१९।

एक सैनि पति लंक को रावण ग्राहि हुरी सिय राम की रानी
कौति चढ़े द्रवः के नन्द ब्रजनि पूत भयो भ्रमरानी
वाणिं लंगोट कुंहूर चढ़यो ग्रह लंक जरी धरती भ्रकुलानी
जाय समुद्रः में पूछु बुधी इहि कारन प्रात मनुष्य है पानी ||२२।

dूसे पर ईक ताकी मिस्त्री गुद्र कंद करो ताको लै प्रसादः देव देविए चढ़ाइये
फूटे के कपास पत पत राखत है प्रालम की ताके हीत वसत कह्री लों गिनाइये
सौः जब सन ताके स्वेत बर्न बागक की तापर कुगान ठी पुरानः लिखाइये
कह्री कवि ब्रह्मण गुरूः प्रकर बदसाहु दूसे पूटे सड़े ताको या विष सराहिये।||१५।

पेट में पोड़ि महोर पर पालन पोड़ि के बाल कहाए
आई जबे तत्त्वाई तिया संग तेजः पौड़ि के रंग मचाए
छोर रामः में सपन्हार को ब्रह्मा कहो चित्ते नहीं व्याए
पोड़ि-पोड़ि पोड़ि ही सो चिता पर पोड़ि के विन प्राए ||३०।

1. वही।
2. वही, पूः १४६
3. वही
4. प्रावास, पूः २० के हिंदू कवि, पूः ३५६
5. वही, पूः १४६
6. वही।
गर्म चढ़े पुनि सूप चढ़े पलना पे चढ़े चढ़े मोह घना के 
हृदय चढ़े फिर अवश्व चढ़े चढ़े जोग घना के 
बैरी ऐसी मिट्टा के चित चढ़े कवि ब्रह्मा भाने दिन बीते पना के 
ईस नियमलु को जानो नहीं ब्रह्म फांड़े चले चढ़े चार जना के

काम कबूतर तापस तीतर, ग्यान गुलेल मार गिराये 
पालंड के पर दूर किये ब्रह्म मोह के अर्थिय निकासित दराये 
मजम कांटि मसालो विचार को साधु समाज ते ताहि हिलाये 
ब्रह्म हिलाये लेकि के बाबर वैधन होत कबाब के लाये

(च) अतु वर्णन:

उछरि उछरि मेकी भचपट उरण पर, 
उरण पे चिटिन की लचपटे लहक हि। 
चिटिन की सुरत हिये की ना कछू हि समे। 
एकी कारी चेहरि न बोलत बहहे हि। 
कहे कवि ब्रह्मा वारि हेरत हरिन फिरे, 
बैहर बहहत बड़े जोर सी जहक हि। 
तौरन के तालवन तवासी भई मूमि रही, 
दसही दिशान में दवासि सी बहहे हि।

(छ) पहेली:

(१) कर बोते करही खुने अभन खुने नहीं ताहि 
कही पहेली भीरबल सुनिये ब्रकबर साहि 
(ताहि) 

(२) रांघी तो गली नहीं बिन रांघी गल जाहि 
कही पहेली भीरबल सुनिये ब्रकबर साहि 
(इंट)

1. बही, पृ. १५७
2. बही
3. विषाठो, राजा भीरबर, पृ. १२-१४
4. भ्रमवास, भ. २० के हि. कवि, पृ. १५७
5. बही
(१) मारो तो वह जी उठें, बिन मारे मर जाय।
कहे पहली बीरबल, मुर्दा प्राटा खाय।

(मूर्षं)¹

(४) कौन चाहे है वरसना, कौन चाहे है धूप कौन चाहे है बोलना, कौन चाहे है धूप
उत्तरः
माली चाहे बरसना, धोरी चाहे है धूप शाह जो चाहे है बोलना, चोर चाहे है धूप²

1. सिपाही, राम मनोहर, कविता कोपुरी, खंड—२, पृ० २२६
2. ठाकुर, रामचन्द्र, 'बीरबल', बम्बई, १६४१ पृ० ७०
Specimen of Birbal’s prose

नागरी प्रचारिता पत्रिका

(संवत् 2011 वि.स.)

काशी नागरी प्रचारिता सभा
पश्चिमार्ग विश्वविद्यालय के भ्राजाद पुस्तकालय में संरक्षित कलियाद हिन्दी पांडुलीपियाँ।

शैलेश जेवरी

(१) प्राचीन भाषाओं में भाषा की आवश्यकता—

प्राचीन भाषा की आवश्यकता के लिए एक प्राकृतिक रंग को दर्शाते हुए, सुनहरे, सुफेद, सीले, लाल, इत्यादि भ्रमनेर रंगों में लिखा गया है। कुल १६० पृष्ठ हैं। मुस्लिम युनिवर्सिटी के लिए पुस्तकालय ने इसे १६५५ में २५०) हो में काय बाल कर गया था। फिर किसी भी खोज रिपोर्ट में इसका विवरण नहीं मिलता। हिन्दी भाषा के नाम प्रेमाकार का बहुत प्रथम महत्वपूर्ण है।

प्राची—

जब पंडित के दो पुत्र और घृतराष्ट्र के पुत्र महाभारत के युद्ध को कुलक्षण को चले तब घृतराष्ट्र ने कहा कि युद्ध का रंग देखा हूँ भी चलत हूँ।
APPENDIX—B

तब वामुदेव जी गोविन्द जी चौरसीक भक्तार जिनमें दुरान महाभारत और
बहुत ग्रन्थ संसार के कथायण के निमित्त गिन परलग किये हैं ऐसे जो
बने श्री बामुदेवजी जी तो राजा घृतराष्ट्र को बहा कि है राजा तेरे तो नेत्र
नाहीं, नेत्रों बिना जुड़ का कौसल किये दे दिख हैं तब राजा कहा कि प्रमुखी
dेखों नाहीं तो अबन द्वारे सुनूंगा।

भव्य,

भर्जुन के बचन मुतकर श्री कुष्ण भगवान बोलत भये। श्री कुष्ण भगवान
उवाचा है भर्जुन में सबों तें परे हूँ और भवनाकी हूँ इस कारण से मेरा
नाम ब्रह्म है, यादि व्यास जो मेरा नाम है तसका यह सुन मुक्त को धरने
ही प्रताप कर प्रताप है और धरने ही जानकर ज्ञान और धरने प्रकाश कर
प्रकाश और जिनने बहुत भावी हैं हृदया तें यादि लेकर जेते प्रभुत तिन्हुँ सबों
प्रतापों तें परे यादिक लिस कारण हैं मेरा नाम प्रभुत बल है। प्रभु जो
मुक्त को कर्म कहते हैं सो सुन। सबों का उस्मतिकर हैं ही हूँ और यादि-
जेसे किसी के समस्त कर्म की रेखा लिखता हूँ धरना ही तसको होता है।
इस कारण से मेरा नाम कर्म है। प्रभु जो मेरा प्रदूषत नाम है तसका
धर्म सुन। भूत नाम भूमित है यादि मेकर जो है पारों तन तिन्हुँ मूर्तों
का जो है। यादिकारी ठाकुर भवनाकी लिस कारण हैं मेरा नाम यादिक है।
देव है और एक मेरा नाम यादिक जुग है तसका धर्म सुन, जेते जुग हैं
जो देवता के निमित्त कीजिये और किसी के निमित्त कीजिये तिन्हुँ सबों
जुग जरों का यादिकार हैं हूँ।

श्रंति-

……….प्रभु राजा मेरी और बात सुन जिस और जोमेटेण्डो के ईसर श्री
भगवान है और जिस और पारी जु है भर्जुन कांदूं नमुक का धारणहारा
जिस और है भगवत भक्तार हैं तिसे और लक्षिमी जिस और जी मेरे भिन
पहुँची करे तेरे पुत्र धर्मी हारागे। परमेश्वर के मत पुन्मात्रमा पाठी जैसे
के परम ईसर की कुपा लें।

लिपिकाल-११६५ हिंदुर, मुताविक संवत १७५०
लिपिकाल-बोलत राम
Birbal's praises as sung by contemporary Hindi poets

A. Poet Gang attaches to Akbar's Court. depicts Raja Birbal thus:

(1) भावत हुतो श्रीम सिंध-सारल तें गिरिसा जावे,
   मिल्यो हुतो मौहि जहां सागर सगर को।
   कबिन को रसना की पलकी पै बड़ों मानान,
   संग सोंहं राघवे प्रत्याप तेज बर को।
   कबि गंग पूछयो हुम को हों खिल जहां, उन
   कह्यो मोरी हृदि के संदेही बाही बर को।
   जस मेरो नाम, मौकों दसो विस्ति काम, मेरो
   कहियो प्रनाम, हों गुलाम बीरबर को।॥३१६॥१

(इस कविता में गंग ने बीरबर के यश से हुई भ्रपनी बातों का निवेदन
किया है। बीरबर का यश हिमालय से लेकर बंगाल तक फूला है और
कविगण बराबर उसका गान करते रहते हैं।)

(2) तान-हुड़ म्यां तानसेन, बुढ़-हुड़ बलबीर।
   साह को साहु प्रकाश्वरा, टोड़मल्ल बजीर।॥२६५॥२

1. गंग कविता, बंधाक, बट्टकम्य, नागरी प्रबन्धाति समा, भाराण्त, संवत २०१३ वि० प० ६७
2. वही, प० ६६
(१) दान कृपान सुजानपर्यावर धू जिह्वान को जीतव जीतव ग्राहो।
गंग कहे सब साहिबी के श्रंग से ही मनो पुख्त पठायो।
बीरबरनुप तेरी बराबरि, प्रोर बिरबंध बिवो न बनाओ।
श्री मुकुट चन्द्री तेरी को सोज, सियाह के शाप मं तो सो न जायो।

(४) भए सुदामा कृपा हे, गंग बीरबल फेर।
ता दिन में तंडुल हुले, यही दिनन में बृह।

(कविता)
मालती, संकुलता सी, हे को काम कंदला सी,
हाजिर हुज़ार चाष नही नौल नागर।
ऐल फैल फिरत सबास बास प्रासपास,
चौवन को बहुल, गुलाबन की गागर।
ऐसी मजलिस तेरी देशी राजा बीरबर,
गंग कहे गूढ़ी हूवो की रधी हे गिरा गर।
मग रहूयो मागध न गीत रहूयो स्वालियर,
गौरा रहूयो गोर ना बागर रहूयो गागर।

(सर्वशय)
एक बच्ची सुरपति को हुर्श बियो बलिवंड बच्ची नहिँ कीनो।
प्रोर सबै बकसे बरबीर रहें रचि के रचि के जूह दोनो।
गंग कहे कर उन्नत देखि घरें तपेश टर भुजि भीनी।
लंक सुमेत छुटाइ बयो जु रहूयो मुख सालगराम कें सीनी।

(गंग-प्रविष्टि)
सुन्दर पद कबि गंग के उपमा को बरबीर।
केसब अर्थ संभिर को सुर सीन गुन धीर।

1. यही, पृ० ६५
2. यही, पृ० ६७
3. यही, पृ० ६८,
4. यही पृ० ६९,
5. चहुद्रुप गिरि मण्ड्रीत भाषा संरक्षा, पृ० १२६
होलराय कवि

दिल्ली ते न तजत्, बलत ना मांगल कैसो
हवेंहै ना नगर कहूं ब्राह्मण नगर ते
गंगा ते न गुणी ताज़ेशन ते न तानबंद
मान ते न राजा भी न दाता बीरबर ते।
कान खालीनामा ते न नर नरहृर ऐसो।
हृ है न दिवान को ऊ टोड़र टबर ते।
नवो खंड सात दीप सातहूं समुद्र बीच
हृ है ना जललवीन साहु प्रकबर ते॥१६॥

केसबवास

(१) इंघरेजी लातो कहघो मांगन मांक प्रयाग
मांघो सब दिन एकरस कीजे कुपा सभाग॥१८॥
यों ही कहघो जू बीरबर मांघी जू मन में होई
माघो तब दरबार में मोहि न रोकी कोई॥१६॥

बीरबलू को बान-(सब्वा)

(२) पाप के पूंज पक्षावज 'केसब' लोक के संश्च सुने झुपमा में।
भूल को माफि बड़े डर के वक, धारमा जुगन जानी जमा में।
बेच की भैर, गलीक के मूलिक, कौँतुक हो कल के दुःखमा में।
जुम्हा ही बलबर वो वहु वारिक के रवार बमं में॥७६॥

(३) पापक पश्चिम पसू नगनग नवी नद लोक रघ्यो दस बारी।
केसब देख ब्रजवेश रघ्यो नरवेश रघ्यो रघना न निवारी।
रघ नरराहु बली बलबर भयो कुश्वाय महा ब्रतारी।
दे करतापन ब्रजपन ताहि दियो करतार सुख कर तारी॥१४॥
टोड़रमल तुष सं वे सब्ही सुख सोखा।
मोरे हित बलबर बिना तुष कीमि रोखा॥१६॥

1. गंग कविता, बटेइक्षण, पृ० १६५
2. केसब प्रमाण्य, खंड, १, पृ० १००
3. यही
4. यही
5. केसब प्रमाण्य, खंड, १, पृ० १०२
(१) बीरबर:
कार्य कामदुष्यां निधिनंदन्यजुष्यां कंसा नलो विद्विषाय वह शाकी विद्विषाय गुरु गुरुज्यां पार्थि धनुषपारिणामु। लीलावासगृह जलाकुलजुष्यां कर्ण: सुर्खभिनं श्रीमान्वीर: शिलाहरवर्य वर्णित सर्वोपरि।।१८५।।

(सुगंधरियों के लिए कामदेव, नीतियों के लिए निधि, शब्दुस्त्रों के लिए कालसिन, विद्वानों के लिए कल्युक, गुरुजियों के गुर, धनुषपारियों के लिए प्रजु, कलाद्रिमियों के लिए क्रिहास्वल, धनाशियों के लिए कर्ण महाराज श्रीरवर सबसे श्रेष्ठ शोभित होते हैं।)

जमदग्नि कृष्ण प्रकाशशकरी स्वन्ह समाधारिनी नीत्योद्विशेषणी तति: खलजन-श्रेणी पत्रगांवकृत। माजीद्राकशरशिलीवर मनविकलिखकारापाठ्य यथा कोनियकेराजदिखित दीपोपमा लेखनी।।१८६।।

(जमदग्नि को प्रकाशित करनेवाली, स्वन्ह-श्रीमा की धारिणी, नीतियों से पूर्ण विचार उद्धरण करनेवाली, खल-पत्रों को राख करनेवाली, मानवी इतिहास प्रकाश को मानसिक विन्दा के अनुसार को दूर करनेवाली जिस महाराज (श्रीरवर) की लेखनी दीप की तरह है।)

---

1. यही
2. सुभाषितकला मंदिरास, कामीनाय शर्मा, चलवर्ष संस्करण, लाका, १६२६ पृ १६
APPENDIX-D

Illustrations

I. Photo Copy of Darbar-i-Nao-Ratna Akbari
II. Photo Copy of Birbal’s House at Fathpur Sikri,
III. Photo Copy of Articles of worship of Raja Birbal,
IV. Photo Copy of Rang Mahal of Raja Birbal at Burhiya (Haryana)
V. Map sketch of Fathpur Sikri showing Birbal’s House and Birbal’s Gate.
By Courtesy: Victoria Memorial Hall, Calcutta.
Birbal's House
at
Fathpur Sikri

By Courtesy: Archaeological Survey of India,
N. Circle, Agra.
'Rang Mahal'
of
Raja Birbal
(AL. Burhia—Haryana)

By Courtesy: Prof. Kamla Saini,
Jamuna Nagar (Haryana)
Based on the sketch given in V.A. Smith’s Akbar the Great Mogul.
خیال ہے، کہ عظمت عزاء تمہارے ذرائعوں دی ہوئی اور انسانیابی سمیت نہ ہو۔ نہ انسانیابی سمیت کہ جو متعلقہ موضوعات میں عالمی ذرائعوں دی کئی سالوں کا تارک ہوئے۔

کہ عظمت عزاء، ہمارے ذرائعوں سے متعلق پہلی حاضری میں سب سے پہلے حاضری اور انسانیابی سمیت کہ جو متعلقہ موضوعات میں عالمی ذرائعوں دی کئی سالوں کا تارک ہوئے۔

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کہ عظمت عزاء، ہمارے ذرائعوں سے متعلق پہلی حاضری میں سب سے پہلے حاضری اور انسانیابی سمیت کہ جو متعلقہ موضوعات میں عالمی ذرائعوں دی کئی سالوں کا تارک ہوئے۔

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مختصر از حوزه علمیه

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