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A Note on a Unique work on Vedānta.

By CHINTAHARAN CHAKRAVARTI.

28/3/83

The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal possesses a manuscript of a unique work on Vedānta called the *Saugata-sūtra-vyākhyānakārikā* and attributed to Kumārila Svāmin. A brief account of the work is given below with a view to drawing attention of scholars.

The manuscript which is hopelessly corrupt consists of 222 verses divided into three chapters, containing respectively 66, 81 and 75 verses. The origin and nature of the work is explained both in the beginning and the end.¹ But I am afraid, the explanation does not appear to be clear and helpful in appreciating the actual position. It refers to a Śivasūtra, composed in response to questions of Sugata, on which a commentary with a metrical summary as represented by the work under review was composed by Kumārila. The work is of the type of the *Upadeśasāhasrī* of Śaṅkara and contains a number of beautiful verses (I. 63, II. 47, 74).

It begins with an obeisance to Śiva.² The object of the work is stated to be an exposition of the real nature of Self and the refutation of Dualism.³ So, the definition of Self is discussed and views of other schools including those of the Vijñānavādins are refuted (I. 29). A eulogy of *knowledge* closes Chapter I.

Chapter II speaks of Pratyagātman, Māyā and the identity of Ātman, Brahman and Paramātman.



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- 1 शिवार्थं सुगतप्रश्नं शिवो व्याकृतवान् स्वयम् ।
शिवप्रश्नः स तत्त्वत्रसारव्याख्यानमारभे ॥ I. 3.
प्रश्नं शिवार्थं सुगतस्य चक्रे यमुत्तरोक्त्या निवृतं शिवोयम् ।
स वै शिवप्रश्न इति प्रसिद्धस्तत्कारस्वरार्थनिरूपणोयम् ॥
शिवप्रसादेन विनिश्चितार्थः शिवोक्तस्वरस्य विधाय भाष्यम् ।
इमाः सुसंक्षिप्ततदर्थकारिकाश्चकार सद्बुद्धिसुदे कुमारिलः ॥ III. 74-5.
- 2 अवाङ्मनसगम्यस्य गुणान्तीतस्य वर्णनम् ।
गुणाध्यक्षतया यस्य सोऽनु[मृ]क्तात् नः शिवः ॥ I. 2.
- 3 अथात्यन्तपुमर्थान्निः द्वैताभावप्रसिद्धये ।
आत्मकामस्य सद्बुद्ध्या आत्मतत्त्वं विविच्यते ॥ I. 20.

(39)



Chapter III discusses the nature of *Mokṣa*, praises monism, refutes dualism and incidentally refers to five mental states and three sources of knowledge (III. 21-22).

Of works, authors and schools of philosophy referred to in various connections mention may be made of *Yogabhāṣya* (I. 9), *Bādarāyaṇa* (I. 16), *Sāṃkhya* (I. 48), *Brhadāraṇyaka* (II. 6), *Vyāsa* (II. 39), *Vyāsaśūtra* (II. 40), *Gautama*, *Akṣapāda* and *Kapila* (III. 8-10), *Karmamīmāṃsaka* (III. 34) and *Kāpila* (III. 39).

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**Rāja Bīrbal—A Biographical Study, and an account
of his articles of worship.**

By B. PRASHAD.

Count von Noer¹ remarked 'of the many famous sovereigns of the East, few are comparable with Akbar and to him indisputably belongs the first place among the rulers of Hindustan. Not only was he equally great as a man, a warrior, and a statesman, but his reign fell at a time fitted to afford the freest play to his eminent qualities.' Beveridge² added his testimony to the above by stating 'The many-sided Akbar was a epitome of all the great Emperors, including Augustus, Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Julian and Justinian.'

One of the great institutions of his august reign was the *Nav Ratana* (*Navaratna*) or the 'Nine Jewels'. These his 'nine friends', as Vincent Smith³ designated them, were Rāja Bīrbal or Bīrbal, Rāja Mān Singh, Rāja Tōdar Mal, Hakīm Humām, Mullā Dūpiyāza, Faiḍi, Abūl Faḍl, Mirza 'Abdur Raḥīm Khān Khanān and Tānsēn. The question has recently been discussed in an interesting contribution by Rao Bahadur G. S. Sardesai⁴ which was read at the Akbar Quarter-Centenary Celebrations at Bombay in 1942. In place of 'Abdur Raḥīm Khān Khanān he has substituted Bairām Khān, which is hardly correct, and he also includes Badā'oni in the list. *En passant* it may be noted that a very interesting painting of the *Navaratna* is exhibited in the Victoria Memorial Hall at Calcutta. Rāja Bīrbal was one of the brightest jewels of this august assemblage, and his tragic death in 993 A.H. (February, 1586) in the 30th year of the reign cast a gloom over the Court. On hearing of the death the Emperor did not take any food or drink for two days, and is reported to have remarked 'Alas! they could not even get his body out of the pass, that it might have been burned.'⁵ A court mourning was ordered, and later a second mourning⁶ was observed when an impostor's story of Bīrbal being alive proved without foundation.

¹ Fredrick Augustus Count of Noer, *The Emperor Akbar*, translated by A. S. Beveridge (Calcutta, 1890) I, Preface, p. 1.

² Beveridge, H. in *Tūzuk-i-Jahāngīrī*, translated by A. Rogers, edited by Beveridge, H., (London, 1914), II, Preface, p. 1.

³ Vincent, A. Smith, *Akbar The Great Mogul*, (Oxford, 1919), p. 359, note.

⁴ Sardesai, G. A., *Modern Review* for August, 1943, pp. 129-133.

⁵ *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh* II, translation by Lowe (Calcutta, 1924), p. 164.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 369.

Birbal's personality has unfortunately been greatly maligned at the hands of the contemporary historians. They all appear to have been extremely jealous of the very great influence which he had over the Emperor, but even so the most bigoted of them and one who probably hated him the most, Mullā 'Abdul Qādir Badā'onī could not but recognize his great merits, for he says :

ادراك بلند داشت
i.e. he had a considerable amount
of capacity and genius—and in regard to his influence over the
Emperor he added 'it became a case of "Thy flesh is my flesh and
thy blood my blood"' (لحمک لکمی و دمک دمی برده).

Surely such a position of trust and regard with an exceptionally shrewd, clever, and talented ruler, such as Akbar, would have been impossible unless it is admitted that Birbal must have been a remarkably clever, capable, accomplished and loyal officer. Vincent Smith and tradition ascribe to him the extraordinary faculty of divining his master's secrets.

Our sources of information in regard to Birbal's earlier life are extremely limited, and even for the period of his service under Emperor Akbar one has to build up from stray references in the three contemporary histories, Abūl Faḍl 'Allāmī's *Akbarnāma*, Khwāja Nizām-ud-Dīn Aḥmad Bakḥshī's *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* and Mullā 'Abdul Qādir Badā'onī's *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh*.¹ Shaikh Illādād Faiḍī Sirhindī's *Akbarnāma*, Mullā 'Abdul Bāqī Nihāvandī's *Maāthir-i-Rahīmī*², and Firishtah or Muḥammad Qāsim Hindūshāh Astrābādī's *Tarīkh-i-Firishtah* or *Gulshan-i-Ibrāhīmī* do not contain any additional information. This is not strange in view of the fact that the authors of all these works relied mainly on the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* for their accounts of Akbar's reign. From amongst the biographical works dealing with the period I have consulted the monumental book on Mughal Peerage *Maāthir-ul-Umarā*³ by Ṣamsām-ud-Daulah Shāh Nawāz Khan, completed by his son 'Abdul Ḥayy, *Tadhkirat-ul-Umarā*⁴ by Kēwal Rām, and *Darbār-i-Akbarī*⁵ by Maulānā Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād. The account in *Maāthir-ul-Umarā* is a tolerably good summary of the information available in the contemporary histories of the period, and has formed the basis

¹ *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh*, text II, p. 161 (Calcutta, 1865).

² For these works see Prashad, Preface to *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* translation III, pt. ii, pp. xxxiii-xxxv (Calcutta, 1939).

³ See Prashad's Preface to the English translation I (Calcutta, 1941) pp. 1, 2 for details of the text edition of this important publication. Birbal's biography is printed on pp. 118-122 of Vol. II of the text, and Beveridge's translation I, pp. 420-423.

⁴ See Ivanow, V. *Descriptive Cat. Persian Manuscripts in colln. As. Soc. Bengal* (Calcutta, 1924), pp. 71, 72, No. 216, for the MS in the Society's collection and references in regard to the work.

⁵ Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād, *Darbār-i-Akbarī* (Lahore, 1939, Urdu), pp. 295-310.

of the accounts of most later authors. Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād also notes that he tried to obtain further information about Bīrbal and his literary work from other sources, but without success. Blochmann's¹ account in his admirable translation of the first volume of *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* is based on *Maāthir-ul-Umarā* with some additional notes, but it unfortunately does not add to our knowledge of the life or achievements of Bīrbal.

A really important contribution on the subject, however, was the work of Grierson² (later Sir George Grierson) entitled *The Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindustan* published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1889, in which he collected most valuable information regarding the Hindi literature, particularly the works of poets, bards, etc. In this work he was able to include notes about Bīrbal's life based on Todd's *Rājasthān* and Sib Singh Segar's *Sib Singh Saroj*,³ an important anthology of the Hindi poets about whom very little information was hitherto available. This formed the basis of Vincent Smith's⁴ account of Bīrbal in his biographical work *Akbar the Great Mogul*. The interesting pamphlet entitled *Mullā Dūpiyāza and Rāja Bīrbal* (Bīrbal) by Muḥammad Tāhir⁵ in Urdu is an interesting account of these noblemen, but the details about Bīrbal's life, such as his early years, education at Lucknow, Lahore, etc. though stated to be based mainly on *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh*, are not confirmed by any historical work. His identification of Mullā Dūpiyāza with 'Abdul Qādir Badā'oni is at variance with Paimall⁶ who identified him with a Mullā of Persian descent. A few useful notes on Bīrbal have also been published by Varaj Ratan Das in his Hindi translation of the *Maāthir-ul-Umarā*⁷ in the volume dealing with the Hindū officials, and in *Umrā'ī Hunūd* by Sa'id Aḥmad.

I give below a brief outline of the life of this great Hindū diplomat of Akbar's reign based on the information in the above sources.

¹ Blochmann, H., *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* I (translation, 2nd Ed., Calcutta, 1939), pp. 442-444.

² Grierson, G. A., *Journal As. Soc. Bengal*, LVII, for 1888, pt. I, pp. i-xxx, 1-170, i-xxxv (1889). Bīrbal's account is on pp. 35, 36, No. 106.

³ Sib Singh Sēgar, *Sib Singh Saroj*, pp. 454, 455 (3rd edn. Newal Kishore Press, Lucknow, 1883).

⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 236, 237.

⁵ *Mullā Dūpiyāza and Rāja Bīrbal* (The name is Bīrbal all through the text) in Urdu, pp. 1-48 (Delhi, 1927). For a detailed account of Mullā Dūpiyāza Professor H. Mahmud Shirani's learned article in *Oriental College Magazine* for November 1939 may be consulted. I am indebted to Prof. M. M. Haq for this reference.

⁶ Paimall, *Modern Review*, Vol. VIII, pp. 86-89 (1910).

⁷ Varaj Ratan Das's Hindi translation of *Maāthir-ul-Umarā* I, (Hindū Nobles), pp. 242-250 (Benares, 1931), *Umrā'ī Hunūd*, pp. 126-139 (Aurangabad, 1932).

His real name was Mahēs Dās, but in his earlier days he apparently preferred to it his *nom-de-plume* Brahm Dat (not Brahma Das as given by Badā'oni¹, or Brahma Das as was incorrectly copied by some ignorant or bigoted scribes of the *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh*). In some works Brahm Kabī² is also given as his name, but this does not appear to be correct as he received the title of Kabī Rāy from Emperor Akbar at a later date. His father's name was Gangā Das³, and according to Sib Singh Segar⁴ and Bhūkhan Tripāthī⁵ (Bhushan Kabī of Chhatar Sāl) of Tikāmpūr (Ṭikmāpūr) in the Kānpūr (Cawnpore) district he was born in *Vikramī* sambat 1585 (1528 A.D.). The latter author also gives Tikāmpūr as the place of his birth. Sib Singh Saroj states that his ancestral place was some village in Ḥamīrpūr District in the Allāhābād division. In view of these positive statements it is incorrect to describe him as a native of Kālpi, as most authors have done. Grierson describes him as a Kanaujiya⁶ Dube Brahman, while Varaj Ratan Das designates him as a Kanykubja—(a more correct Sanskrit form of Kanaujiya or Qannaujiya as it should be if the Persian orthography is followed). The details of his early life in Muḥammad Tāhir's work are, as already noted, not to be found in any historical work. It is essential to direct attention here to an unfortunate error on the part of the Muḥammadan historians and which has been copied in some of the later historical works in English. It is stated that he was a *Bhāt* by caste, and that he was a *Bādfarōsh*. The epithet *Bhāt* in the case of Birbal was

¹ *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh*, text II, p. 161, Lowe's translation II, p. 164. برهنه داس is written wrongly as برهنه داس or the Naked Das which is absurd. Lowe has, in my opinion, incorrectly regarded Badā'oni's epithet گدايي 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 man, a mendicant or a dervish and cannot be regarded as a part of his name. Similarly his supposed *nom-de-plume* Baramba with the variant Burhiya noted by Beveridge (*loc. cit.*, p. 423) are only copyists' errors for Brahma. See also De's translation of *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* II (1936), p. 398, note 2, where a variant from another MS. has almost the same names and descriptions as in *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh*; this was apparently the work of Bādā'oni who was one of the collaborators of Nizām-ud-Din Ahmad in the compilation of the *Ṭabaqāt*, see Prashad, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.

² See Grierson, *Journal As. Soc. Bengal*, LVII, Pt. 2, Special Number for 1888, p. 35.

³ This name is given in the inscription on Aśoka's pillar at Allāhābād, vide Varaj Ratan Das's Hindi translation of *Maāthir-ul-Umarā*, I (Hindu Nobles), p. 244, footnote (1931).

⁴ Vide Grierson, *op. cit.*, p. 128, No. 595.

⁵ Vide Varaj Ratan Das, *loc. cit.* He is the same as No. 145, p. 61 of Grierson's work.

⁶ See Beame's edition of Elliot's *Memoirs on the History etc. of the North Western Provinces of India* (1869), I, pp. 146-153, and Bhattacharya, *Hindu Castes and Sects* (1896), pp. 49-51 and for *Bhats*, pp. 114, 115.

apparently used to signify his profession of a bard, a poet, and a genealogist, and not to indicate his caste. In any case, as has been remarked by Malcolm¹ and Bhattacharya, the *Bhāts* were in spite of their poverty 'the *tiers-état* in Rajasthan, and the privilege of commenting on the action of their kings, which they possessed and very often abused, was nearly unlimited'. Similarly *Bādfarōsh* should be translated as a *Kabī* or a bard, and not a sycophant or a flatterer, as is implied in the most English translations. According to Badā'oni² he was at first in the service of Rāja Rām Chand of Bhatta, now known as the Rēwah State in Baghēlkhand. A reference may also be included to a legend current in Rēwah State: 'The³ village of Ghoghra (24° 33' N., 82° 5' E.), 18 miles west of Sihāwal, in the *Īlāka* of *Kanpura*, is traditionally connected with Bīrbal, Akbar's witty favourite. The story runs that in a small temple here dedicated to Chandī Devī, one Raghubīr Rām, Brāhman of Chandainia village, daily worshipped the goddess for twelve years. He was helped by his sister's son Bīrbal, in keeping the temple clean. One day while the boy was sweeping the temple and Raghubīr Rām was away, he accidentally hurt his little finger and the blood from it stained the goddess's image. This propitiated the goddess and she promised the boy that whatever he prophesied, would turn out right. On leaving the temple the boy met a Kewat fishing. He told the Kewat that a bird was entangled in his hook and drawing up the line a bird was actually found upon it. The same night the goddess appeared to the boy in a dream and told that instead of wasting his power in such follies he should go to the Emperor's court. Accordingly the boy went to Akbar's court, where he soon rose to honour and distinction. Apart from the legend it would appear that Bīrbal was at one time an attendant at the Baghēl Chief Rām Chandra's

¹ Malcolm, *Central India*, II, pp. 113, 114. The quotation is from Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, p. 115. Also see Wilson, *Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms*, pp. 78, 79 (London, 1855).

² *Muntakhab-ul-Tawārikh*, text II, p. 335, Lowe's translation II, p. 345. De in the translation of the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* II (1936), p. 595 has a long note (No. 3) about Bhatta, which he calls 'the country of Bhatt' and has given references to various readings and works. He was unable to trace the corresponding reference in *Akbarnāma*. The references are text III, pp. 420, 427 and Beveridge's translation III, pp. 624, 636. Blochmann (*op. cit.*, p. 685) identified Bhatta or as he writes Bhatt as Panna, and following him Beveridge in his translations of the second and third volumes of *Akbarnāma* has designated Rāja Rām Chand as the Rāja of Panna State in Bundēlkhand, but the territory is what is now known as Rēwah State in Baghēlkhand, Central India, see C. E. Luard, *Rewah State Gazetteer* (Central India State Gazetteer Series IV, Lucknow, 1907), p. 1. He gives the name of Rāja as Rām Chandra, who ruled from 1555-92, and has included his detailed account on pp. 14-16. For Rām Chand Baghēlah also see *Maāthir-ul-Umarā*, text II, pp. 134-138, and for Baghēlah or Baghel Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

³ C. A. Luard, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

court.' Later, according to Todd¹ he was one of the Court poets of Rāja Bhagwān Dās of Amber or Jaipur, and this Rāja gave him as a *naẓar* (a present) to Emperor Akbar shortly after the latter's accession. Sib Singh Saroj² also mentions this in his biography. No reference to this transaction, if it may be called as such, is made in *Akbarnāma*, *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* or *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh*, but relying on Todd's statement, apparently based on his personal enquiries in Jaipur, the date of his introduction into Akbar's Court cannot be placed earlier than February, 1562, when Rāja Bihār Mal with his son Rāja Bhagwān Dās and grandson Rāja Mān Singh first came to Akbar's Court near Ajmer, and the Emperor was married to Rāja Bihār Mal's daughter at Sambhar³. Grierson, apparently on the authority of Sib Singh Segar, states that at this time he used to sign himself as Brahm Kabi in his poems. But according to the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*⁴ he was first given the title of Kabi Rāy, and later of Rāja Birbar (the Hindī meaning of this title are detailed there at length as *Bīr* meaning a brave or hero, and *bar* great, i.e., the Rāja who is brave and great) when Nagarkot was bestowed on him by Emperor Akbar as his *jāgīr* in 980 A.H.⁵ (1572-73 A.D.). Blochmann, Āzād and Vincent Smith all state that he probably never enjoyed this *jāgīr* of Nagarkot, but in the account of the 26th year's reign in *Akbarnāma* it is recorded that he welcomed the Emperor and offered his tribute at Dasūha⁶, in the Nagarkot territory, which was in fief.

Prior to this in the 14th year he already must have been a man of some influence at the Court, for he introduced to the Emperor the Ambassador or Kajli (Cochin?) who had been waiting from some time to offer as a tribute a wonderful knife on behalf of his master.⁷

In the 17th year⁸ he was sent with other officers to the Panjāb to safeguard against the threat of an invasion by Ḥakim

¹ Todd's *Rajasthan*, II, p. 390 (Calcutta edn. 1877-79).

² *Op. cit.*, p. 455.

³ *Akbarnāma*, text II, pp. 157, 158, Beveridge's translation II, pp. 243, 244.

⁴ *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*, II, De's translation, p. 399.

⁵ Nagarkōt, according to *Akbarnāma*, text II, p. 370, Beveridge's translation II, p. 538, was assigned to Birbal in the 17th year, but Nagarkot was not conquered till the following year, and even then only a hurried peace had to be arranged by Ḥusain Quli Khān owing to the impending attack of the Punjab by Ibrāhīm Ḥusain Mirzā, see *Akbarnāma*, text III, pp. 36, 37. Beveridge's translation III, pp. 51, 52.

⁶ *Akbarnāma*, text III, p. 348, Beveridge's translation III, p. 511. It is Dasūya in the Hoshiarpur District of the *Imperial Gazetteer*.

⁷ *Akbarnāma*, text II, p. 342, Beveridge's translation III, p. 500. The knife referred to was probably made of Narhwal ivory, see Rogers and Beveridge's translation of *Tūzuk-i-Jahāngīrī*, II, p. 300 for its supposed properties, etc.

⁸ *Akbarnāma*, text II, p. 370, Beveridge's translation II, p. 511.

Mirzā. In the 18th year¹ he accompanied the Emperor on his famous invasion of Gujarāt, and in the 19th year² he was with him in the expedition to Bihār. In the 30th year³ he was deputed to the Yūsufzā'i campaign. The choice of the command lay between Bīrbal and Abūl Faḍl and the question was decided by lot. Even then Akbar was reluctant about allowing Bīrbal to proceed on this campaign, but on the latter's insistence he sent him with a large army. The absence of a unified command, the inexperience and petty mutual jealousies of the commanders and finally the haphazard way in which the expedition was carried out resulted in a disastrous defeat for the imperial armies while crossing the Karākar and Malandari passes, and it was here that Rāja Bīrbal and nearly 8000 of the army were massacred by the Afghāns.

In the 21st year⁴ Bīrbal was sent to Dūngarpūr to arrange about the marriage of the daughter of the Rāja with Emperor Akbar. In the 23rd year⁵ he was deputed with Saiyid Muzaffār to Jālandhar (Jullundher) to supervise the removal of the Afghāns from the Panjāb to other areas. In the 25th⁶ year Rāja Bīrbal and Shāh Qulī Maḥram were sent to conciliate Mā'sūm Khān Farrankhūdi who had rebelled at Jaunpūr. In the 28th year⁷ he was deputed with Zain Khān Kōka for bringing Rāja Rām Chand Baghēla of Rēwah to the Court.

Bīrbal, however, spent most of the time at the Court in close attendance on the Emperor, and according to local tradition was with Khān Khānān, Abūl Faḍl and Faiḍi one of the four ministers who were favoured with attendance round the famous throne-pillar at Fatehpūr⁸ Sikri. He was constantly consulted by the Emperor, and one special occasion was in the 27th year⁹ when the Emperor asked the advice of all his leading ministers for improving the administration in the country. Bīrbal's suggestion, which was very judicious and humane was that 'some right-minded and energetic men should act as inspectors in various places and should represent impartially the condition of the oppressed people and seekers after justice and report unavoidable calamities.' In the same year¹⁰ when various leading officials were appointed to supervise sales of different

¹ *Akbarnāma*, text III, p. 49, Beveridge's translation III, p. 69.

² *Op. cit.*, text, p. 87, translation, p. 123.

³ *Op. cit.*, text, p. 478, translation, pp. 719, 720. For good accounts of the Yūsufzā'i campaign see Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan* (London, 1888), pp. 259–265, and Vincent Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 232–236. Sardesai is wrong in stating that Bīrbal was killed in the Kashmir campaign.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, text, p. 196, translation, p. 278.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, text, p. 248, translation, p. 357.

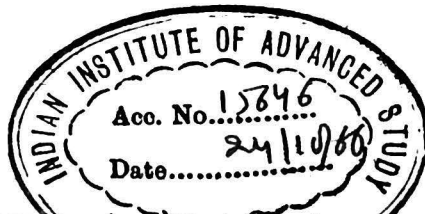
⁶ *Op. cit.*, text, p. 330, translation, p. 484.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, text, p. 420, translation, p. 624.

⁸ Vincent Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 444.

⁹ *Akbarnāma*, text III, p. 380, Beveridge's translation III, p. 559.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, text, p. 396, translation, p. 585.



commodities on a commission basis, Birbal was appointed in charge of the sale of cattle and buffaloes; the officers were to receive $\frac{1}{2}\%$ from the purchasers and 1% from the sellers, and the $\frac{1}{2}\%$ was to be their share. In the 28th year¹ he in company with Abūl Faḍl, Qāsim 'Alī Khān, Hakīm Humām and Shamsḥēr Khān Kōtwāl was appointed to 'the administering of justice to complainants'. They were not only to be 'satisfied with witnesses and oaths, but make a profound investigation'. In fact this body was established as a final appellate Court of the realm on the lines of the present day Federal Court of India. In view of the above appointments Vincent Smith's conclusion that 'he is not recorded as having held any important office' is hardly justified.

The regard which the Emperor had for him is further borne out by the fact that he had a beautiful house built for him at Faṭḥpūr Sikrī in the 27th year², and the Emperor twice attended at his house special feasts which Birbal arranged in his honour in the 27th³ and 29th⁴ years. In the 29th⁵ year the Emperor even at the risk of his own life saved him from being crushed by an elephant which had run amok. The Emperor also went to his house⁶ in the village Akbarpūr Birbal⁷, which Birbal had founded on the banks of the Jamnā some 30 miles north of Cawnpur, in the 28th year. This village was in his *jāgīr* in the Kālinjar Sarkār⁸ mentioned by Badā'onī, and whence the false report of Birbal having been seen after his death was received at the Court. Finally a reference may be included here to the identification⁹ of Salimgarh in the Agra Fort as the *bāradārī* of Birbal on the authority of some native historians who have not yet been identified.

In the above account I have not considered it necessary to refer to the religious discussions and wrangles in which he

¹ *Op. cit.*, text, p. 405, translation, p. 599.

² *Op. cit.*, text, p. 397, translation, p. 587. For a photograph of the house see Vincent Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 443 and the plate facing the page, and Percy Brown *Cambridge History of India*, IV, pp. 542, 543.

³ *Op. cit.*, text, p. 397, translation, p. 587; also see Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād, *op. cit.*, pp. 296, 297.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, text, p. 438, translation, p. 657.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, text, p. 436, translation, p. 654.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, text, p. 415, translation, p. 617.

⁷ F. N. Wright, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Provinces of India*, VI, p. 203 (Allahabad, 1881). Grierson notes that his descendants still exist in the Nārnaul quarter of the town (*op. cit.*, p. 36) and Sib Singh Segar (*op. cit.*, p. 455) records that the remains of beautiful buildings erected by him are all still to be found there, and that he founded the place at the instance of the Emperor.

⁸ See Badā'onī, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh*, text II, pp. 357, 358, Lowe's translation II, p. 369.

⁹ *North-Western Provinces Gazetteer*, VII, p. 690 (Allahabad, 1884) and Nur Bakhsh in *Annual Report Arch. Surv. Ind.* for 1903-04, p. 169 (Calcutta, 1906).

was often involved with Badā'oni and other Muhammadan ecclesiasts; these are recorded in second and third volumes of the *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārikh*. Nor have I discussed his *bon-mots*, jokes, parables and short stories which are still current in almost all parts of Northern India. All these are of no historical interest. Birbal it may be noted was a *Kabī* of no mean order, a skilled musician, and was well known for his liberality and good nature.

Two of his sons Lālā and Har Rāy held minor offices during Akbar's time, but none of them rose to any high rank.

From the above it is clear that Birbal was not merely a story-teller, and a conversationalist whom only his *bon mots* made a favourite with Emperor Akbar. He was an officer of the rank of 2000 horse ¹, and besides being attached to various military expeditions was often sent on diplomatic missions of great importance. He was certainly an exception amongst all grandees of Akbar's Court in not having been admonished for any shortcomings on any occasion whatsoever. He was the only Hindu member of Akbar's universal religion *Din-i-Ilāhī* ². It would be wrong to assert that he became a convert to this new religion simply to please the Emperor, rather it is suggested that he was fully satisfied about the soundness of its principles. In this connection it should not be forgotten that as a Brahman he was a devout Hindu as is evidenced by his articles of worship which have now come to light, and his pilgrimage to Allāhābād in 1576, while in the earlier years of the reign he was instrumental in making the Emperor take to Sun worship ³. In Akbar's regime he held a very high place being connected with the commerce department and the administration of justice. He would certainly have risen much higher but for his untimely death in the Yūsufzā'i campaign.

As an appendix to the above account I propose to include here a short description of certain articles of worship of Rāja Birbal. These articles were recently acquired by my friend Rai Bahadur Radha Krishna Jalan of Patna City from a hoard in the possession of an old family now fallen on evil days in the United Provinces. I wish here to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to him for giving me an opportunity of examining and describing this valuable find.

These articles of worship are made of solid silver inlaid with gold and copper and are excellent examples of high class Bidri work. Leaving aside the intrinsic value of gold and silver their importance lies not only in the fact that they are excellent

¹ *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*, II, De's translation, p. 674. Sib Singh Saroj, *loc. cit.*, p. 445, is incorrect in stating that he had attained the rank of 5,000.

² For a critical account see Vincent Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-422.

³ See Badā'oni *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārikh*, text II, pp. 260, 261, Lowe's translation II, p. 268.

dated specimens of Bidri-ware, nearly 400 years old, but also because they bear the name of the owner and the dates on which he acquired them, in both the Vikrimī *śamat* and the Salivāhan *śāke*. They also enable us to judge the social and material position of their owner, Rāja Bīrbal, at the time noted in the inscription.

The *pancha-pātra* (Figs. 3, 4) or the flat-bottomed basin for water used in the course of the ablutions is $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches high; and $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter. The presence of shallow depressions in the centre of its bottom seems to indicate that it was made on some type of a turning wheel or lathe, and this is confirmed by its very regular outline and shape. It has an outwardly projecting rim about half-an-inch broad along its upper edge. Both the rim and the outer surface of the basin are worked in Bidri style, and the main motive is the *Kalika* or conventionalized mango design with a branch of leaves filling up the central space. Above and below this motive are a row of heart-shaped petals with two rows of ovoidal leaf-like figures on either side. The spaces between the 8 main *Kalikas* are filled in by well-chased gold leaves. The outlines of the *Kalikas*, about $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch broad, are in gold and so are the heart-shaped motives, while the foliage and smaller leaves are of copper. The motive on the rim consists of very regularly laid out ovoidal leaves in a single row, in gold, filling up almost the entire surface.

The *tāmra-kunda* (Figs. 5, 6) or the flat-bottomed plate is $7\frac{3}{8}$ inches in maximum diameter at the top and has a diameter of $5\frac{7}{8}$ inches at the bottom; it is about an inch deep. The motive of the *pancha-pātra* is repeated on this plate, except that there is a circular stellar design in the centre surrounded by a circlet of 8 *Kalika* designs. The heart-shaped gold bits on the rim are, owing to their small size, not so well executed as those on the rim of the *pancha-pātra*.

Both these vessels bear the inscriptions 'Shrimān Mahārāj Brahm Dat, *śamat* 1608, *śāke* 1473' reproduced in photographs 4 and 6 respectively. The date according to the Christian era would be 1551 A.D. about 11 years before Bīrbal's introduction to Emperor Akbar's Court.

The *Āchamanī* (Fig. 7) or the spoon used in the course of ablutions is about 5 inches long. The spoon end, which is slightly less than an inch in diameter, is not quite circular but octagonal, and bears 8 low ridges on its inner surface, and at the bottom has a solar design in gold. The handle is fluted above and there is a bird figure on either side where it is joined to the spoon-end. The other end of the handle has an image of the god *Gaṇeśa* with a five-headed hooded cobra forming an umbrella over the image. In Madam Getty's¹ excellent monograph

¹ Alice Getty, *Gaṇeśa, A Monograph on the Elephant-faced God* (Oxford, 1936).

on *Gaṇeśa* I have not found any figure corresponding to this representation of *Gaṇeśa*. It may be noted that though gold chasing in three rows is to be found on the stem, no gold inlay has been used on the figures of *Gaṇeśa* or of the cobra.

The last item, the most interesting of the list, is a standing image of *Nṛitya-Gopāla* (Fig. 1) fitted on a beautifully executed pedestal, and a *prabhāvali* fixed by struts behind it. The pedestal (Fig. 2) underneath bears an inscription similar to those on the other vessels except for the dates, both *samat* and *śāke*, which are six years later, viz. 1614 and 1479 respectively.

The pedestal is roughly 4 inches square, and about 2 inches high with a grooved-in space in which the image is slipped in from behind, and two rectangular slots for the fitting in of the *prabhāvali* on the sides. The pedestal is ornamented with a row of inverted heart-shaped golden petals joined together by regular arcs connected with one another on the outer bases. The same design is repeated over the hollow groove for the reception of the image, while the flange next to it bears a single row of stellar petals. The main bevelled surface is ornamented with a beautifully executed foliage design in gold. It is interesting to note here that the *Kalika* design is not used in the ornamentation of the pedestal or the image.

The *prabhāvali* stands some 6 inches high with the struts about an inch long fitted into the pedestal. It is an ornamented ring, somewhat ovoidal in outline with a maximum breadth of about 5 inches, and represents a halo of flames (*ḥvālās*) shown in conventional curls round the periphery. The flames or *ḥvālās* are executed in gold, while the central ovoidal pivot about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in height bears a stellar design in gold.

The image of *Nṛitya-Gopāla* is some 3 inches in height and is standing on a *padma-pīṭha* or the conventional lotus flower base about $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter. It is an image of the young *Kṛiṣṇa* in the dancing attitude resembling in general the *Navanītanṛityamūrti* bronze figured by Rao¹. The right foot is made to rest on a *śāṅkha* to provide better attachment to the pedestal, and the hands are held in a *Kaṭaka-hasta* or pose. There is no *makūṭa* on the head and the hair are coiled into a prominent knot behind the head in the characteristic South-Indian style. The ears are large and bored in the lower lobe; they are supported by a broad lapel connected with the shoulders somewhat similar to the type reproduced in Madam Getty's figure of *Bāla-Kṛiṣṇa*.² It is a nude figure, but is embellished with ornaments, such as a necklace with an amulet in the centre worked in gold, a waistband, bangles round the wrists, and anklets on the legs and the feet.

¹ T. A. Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography* I, pt. i, p. 206, pl. lx, fig. 1 (Madras, 1914).

² Alice Getty, *op. cit.*, pl. xv, fig. b.

These articles are of a polished chocolate brown or bronze colour which appears to be due partly to oxidation during the process of manufacture, and partly to their age. These articles of worship with the name Brahm Dat inscribed on them, and the dates 1608 and 1614 *samat*, eleven and five years earlier than his introduction to Emperor Akbar's Court, indicate that Birbal at the time must have been a man of position and means, and not a mere nobody. Unfortunately very little information is available regarding the exact history of these vessels, and one must add a word of caution regarding the possibility of their being fakes, though in view of their historical value not having been realized at the time of their sale, this is hardly likely.

I have to express my great indebtedness to Rao Bahadur K. N. Dikshit, the late Director-General of Archaeology in India, for his expert advice in reference to these articles of worship and for lending me several books from his departmental library.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE.

All the figures are direct reduced photographs of the articles of worship of Rāja Birbal.

Fig. 1. The image with the pedestal and the *prabhāvali*. Front view.

Fig. 2. Pedestal from below showing the inscription of the name of the owner and the date.

Figs. 3, 4. Side view and base of the *pancha-pātra*.

Figs. 5, 6. Upper and lower views of the *tāmra-kunda*.

Fig. 7. *Āchamanī* seen from above.

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6.



2.



5.



7.



1.



4.



3.

Articles of Worship of Rāja Birbal.