how much do we know of our national heroes?

Independent India calls for a fresh study of AKBAR—the pioneer of our national integration and social synthesis.

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Akbar The Great

S. R. Sharma

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INDIAN INSTITUTE OF
ADVANCED STUDY
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AKBAR

the great

the pioneer of our national integration and social synthesis.

HIS rich personality and unique genius demand more than a remote historical approach.

HERE is a portrait of Akbar, of the man behind the Monarch, the idealist behind the realist, a nation-builder aiming at an integration at once personal, social and national.

By the Same Author

MUGHAL EMPIRE IN INDIA

THE CRESCENT IN INDIA

THE MAKING OF MODERN INDIA

ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

OUR HERITAGE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

A BRIEF SURVEY OF HUMAN HISTORY

INDIA AS I SEE HER

WISDOM BEYOND REASON

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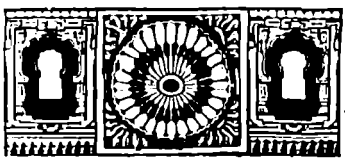

AKBAR THE GREAT

S. R. SHARMA

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THE APPROACH TO AKBAR 1

1. THE ATTRACTIONS OF AKBAR 4
2. THE ADVENT OF AKBAR 11
3. THE ADVENTURES OF AKBAR 20
4. THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF AKBAR 26
5. THE ARTS UNDER AKBAR 34
6. THE ASSOCIATES OF AKBAR 42
7. THE ASPIRATIONS OF AKBAR 48
8. THE AGE OF AKBAR 56
9. THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ABUL FAZL 62

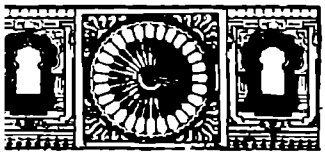
APPENDIX

1. AKBAR'S POET LAUREATE FAIZI 72
2. AKBAR'S DREAM BY ALFRED TENNYSON 78
3. SOME FOREIGN ESTIMATES OF AKBAR 85

'Truth is the means of pleasing God:

I never saw any one lost on the right road.'

—INSCRIPTION ON AKBAR'S SEAL



THE APPROACH TO AKBAR

Independent India calls for a fresh study of Akbar—the pioneer of our national integration and social synthesis. His rich personality and unique genius demand more than a remote historical approach. No Indian has so far even attempted to write a standard biography of Akbar who was one of our great nation-builders. Hence what little we know of him is derived from the lucubrations of foreigners. But the best of these fail to do Akbar the justice he deserves.

Vincent A. Smith's monumental and scholarly work on **Akbar the Great Mogul,** for instance, is unfortunately vitiated by his prepossessions—both personal and political, if not also racial and religious —leaning towards his "hostile witnesses" : Badauni and the Jesuits.

Lawrence Binyon's less pretentious but more sympathetic book on **Akbar** is written with a better understanding of Akbar's idealistic inclinations ; but it is more like a pen-and-ink drawing than a finished portrait in oils.

Tennyson's beautiful poem on "Akbar's Dream", on the other hand, reveals the mind and heart of Akbar with greater insight than any learned treatise. But the poet was no biographer. (see Appendix)

Shakespeare—the greatest English contemporary of Akbar—expressed the view that 'the good that men do is oft interr'd with their bones : the evil lives long after them.' But ' the good ' that Akbar did, or attempted to do, was not ' interr'd with his bones.' It still inspires us in our endeavours to create a New Order in our country.

In several respects, Akbar was a forerunner : the Morning Star of Renascent India. He could, of course, not attain all he aspired to achieve ; but he had the Vision which is still our Ideal : that of **Sulh-i-Kul** or Universal Harmony. It will continue to tantalise us until we are able 'to alchemise old hates into the gold of Love, and make it current.'

The outer history of Akbar's reign has been critically and almost exhaustively studied, but not so his inner personality. Closer examination of the available materials will show that Akbar the **man** was even greater than Akbar the **monarch.**

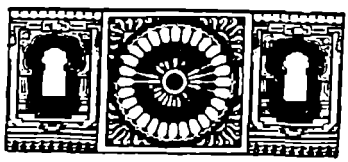
In this brief sketch I have tried to portray Akbar more vividly and intimately than is usual with conventional historians. In doing so I have freely dipped my pen into the colourful ink-pots of Abul Fazl ; for no portrait of Akbar is possible without his aid. At the same time, I have also used the blotting-pads of Badauni and the Jesuits to make sure that Abul Fazl's colours do not overspill. The result, I hope, is a likeness of Akbar true to life :

of the man behind the monarch, the idealist behind the realist, striving to harmonise his head and hands with his heart : a nation-builder aiming at an integration at once personal, social and national.

It is obvious that I am no more than a humble reaper—

> In the King's Garden, gathering here and there
> From each fair plant the bolossom choicest grown
> To wreathe a crown not only for the King ;
> But, in due time, for every Musalman,
> Brahmin and Buddhist, Christian and Parsee,
> Through all the warring world of Hindustan.
>
> —Tennyson.

S. R. S



1

THE ATTRACTIONS OF AKBAR

Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar was, from all accounts, the greatest of the Mughal Emperors of India. He is also justly ranked among the greatest monarchs in history. Sri Jawaharlal Nehru describes him as 'a symbol of India's unity' and as 'the father of Indian nationalism.' Akbar was adored in his time, by some of his subjects, almost as an **avatar.** Shivaji the Great, in his famous epistle to Aurangzeb, refers to Akbar, not merely as an 'architect of the fabric of Empire,' but also as one who 'adopted the policy of Universal Harmony **(Sulh-i-Kul)** in relation to all the sects—such as Christians, Jews, Muslims, Dadu's followers, Sky-worshippers, Materialists, Atheists, Brahmans, Jainas, etc. The aim of his liberal heart was to

cherish and protect all the people : so he became famous under the title of '**Jagat-Guru** (World Teacher).' A thoughtful English writer of our time (Pringle Kennedy) admonished his countrymen saying : " The English won India by pursuing the methods of Akbar ; let them not lose it by imitating those of Aurangzeb."

Sir William Sleeman wrote : " Akbar has always appeared to me among sovereigns what Shakespeare was among poets." To Vincent A. Smith (Akbar's critical biographer) the lure of Akbar was equally great. " The competent scholar," he writes, " who will undertake the exhaustive treatment of the life and reign of Akbar will be in possession of perhaps the finest great historical subject as yet unappropriated." He concludes his scholarly study with the remark : " He (Akbar) 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 extra-ordinary natural gifts, his original ideas, and his magnificent achievements. It is weakened, rather than strengthened, by the adulation of uncritical admirers."

Notwithstanding this precaution, Smith's own work illustrates how " admirers " of Akbar need not necessarily be " uncritical." We might add : ' What Akbar was and did shouts so loud that we cannot hear (i.e. understand) what his detractors say.'

Badauni among Akbar's courtiers, and the Jesuit priests (of various nationalities) who were at Akbar's court, were his unsparing and vigilant critics. But their combined efforts to disparage the great Emperor (because of their religious prejudices) failed to hide the light that was in Akbar under the bushels of their innuendos, insinuations and animadversions.

Father Monserrate, who accompanied Akbar in his Kabul campaign, observed that ' He was in face and stature fit for the dignity of King, so that anybody, even at the first glance, would recognise him as the King.' Another Jesuit observer declared : ' Indeed he was a great King ; for he knew that the good ruler is he who can command, simultaneously, the obedience, the respect, the love, and fear of his subjects. He was a prince beloved of all : firm with the great, kind to those of low estate, and just to all men, high and low, neighbour or stranger, Christian, Saracen, or Gentile ; so that every man believed that the King was on his side. He lived in the fear of God, to whom he never failed to pray four times daily—at sunrise, at sunset, at midday, and at midnight ; and despite his many duties, his prayers on these four occasions, which were of considerable duration, were never curtailed.

'Towards his fellowmen he was kind and forbearing, averse from taking life, and quick to show mercy. Hence it was that he declared that if he condemned any one to death, the sentence was not to be carried into effect until the receipt of his third order. He was always glad to pardon an offender if just grounds for doing so could be shown.'

Jahangir (as Prince Salim) rebelled against his father out of sheer impatience to succeed him on the throne. His portraiture of Akbar is, nonetheless, of great interest as coming from the pen of a discerning and close observer : 'His beauty was of form rather than of face,' writes Jahangir in his Memoirs, 'and he was powerfully built, with a broad chest and long arms... His voice was extremely loud, and in discourse and narration he was witty and animated. His whole air and appearance had little of the worldly being, but exhibited rather divine

majesty.' Monserrate adds : 'His eyes were vibrant like the sea in sunshine ; . . . even in his wrath, he was majestic.'

> The rank is but the guinea's stamp ;
> The man's the gowd for a'that !
>
> —Robert Burns.

Akbar's 'majesty' was the crown of his magnetic personality and did not arise from his royal eminence. He was an embodiment of all that is admirable in man. Physically robust and powerful, he possessed the wisdom of a sage and the heart of a saint. Like his grandsire Babur he displayed boundless courage and energy, combined with a spontaneous love of culture and humanity. From his father Humayun, he imbibed his conspicuous qualities of affection towards all and forbearance towards even the most recalcitrant.

Yet, for all his suavity, Akbar had in his veins the blood of the Tartars (Timur and Chinghiz Khan) as well. That accounts for some of the fierce traits in his character. He loved to ride the most vicious of horses, tame the wildest of elephants, and hunt ferocious tigers and lions, often single-handed. Paradoxically, he was also fond of the gentle pigeons and doves (of which he had 20,000 in his collection) more than the truculent hawk. He bestowed pet names on animals in his stables, and treated them like familiar friends.

What is still more noteworthy is that he could subdue his own fierce nature as he did the wild animals. Though he felt the racial urges of the Tartar and Mongol in his bones, Akbar exercised a wholesome restraint in his normal behaviour. As Peruschi, the Jesuit author, observes : 'The Prince rarely loses his temper ; but if he should fall into

a passion, it is impossible to say how great his wrath may be ; the good thing about it is that he presently regains his calmness, and that his wrath is short-lived, quickly passing from him ; for, in truth, he is naturally humane, gentle and kind.'

THERE was good deal in common between Akbar and Asoka. Both were great 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. That made them abstain from meat and prefer the vegetarian diet. Each endeared himself to the Indian masses as very few rulers have succeeded in doing.

Asoka, in a well known edict, proclaims his accessibility at all times, whether he should be in his private apartments or in his royal court. Likewise, says the Jesuit Du Jarric, 'With the small and common people, Akbar was so sympathetic and indulgent, that he always found time gladly to hear their cases, and to respond graciously to their requests.'

One striking incident in Akbar's life strongly reminds us of the conversion of Asoka after the Kalinga war. In the midst of a great hunt, involving slaughter on a colossal scale, Akbar suddenly called off the **Kamargah** or **Shikar** ordering that 'not a feather of a finch should be touched, not a living creature should be harmed !' (April, 1578).

Badauni records : 'A strange ecstasy and a strong sense of attraction to God came upon the Emperor... and at once he ordered the hunt to be stopped.' Abul Fazl adds : 'He was near abandoning everything and gathering up the skirt of his genius from worldly pomp... About this time the primacy of

the spiritual world took possession of his holy form and gave a new aspect to his beauty ; . . . . what the chiefs of purity and deliverance (i.e. the **Sufi** seers) had searched for in vain, was revealed to him . . . A sublime joy took possession of his bodily frame : the attraction of the Vision of God cast its halo over him.'

That experience was transforming. It converted Akbar into a vegetarian. "From my earliest years," declares Akbar, "whenever I ordered animal food to be cooked for me, I found it rather tasteless, and cared little for it. I took this feeling to indicate a necessity for protecting animals, and I refrained from animal food."

To begin with, he ordered abstinence from meat on Fridays and during the month of his accession ; and also that 'butchers, fishermen and the like, who have no other occupation but taking life, should have a separate quarter, and their association with others should be prohibited by fine.'

He regarded abstention from meat 'as a thanks-giving to the Almighty, in order that the year may pass in prosperity.' His sincerity is reflected in some of his sayings recorded by Abul Fazl.

'It is not right,' declares Akbar, 'that man should make of his stomach a grave for dead animals.

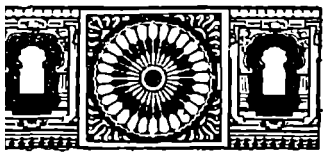
'Would that it were lawful to eat an elephant, so that one animal might suffice for many.

'Would that my body were so vigorous as to be of service to eaters of meat who would thus forego other animal life ; or that, as I cut off a piece for their nourishment, it might be replaced by another !'

"It is a strange thing," comments Jawaharlal 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."

Akbar still attracts us because, like Mahatma Gandhi in our time, he worked for a "complete national and social cohesion ;" and because of his "grand strategy of capturing the hearts of the people by love, affection and tolerance."



2

THE ADVENT OF AKBAR

The stage on which Akbar was called upon to act afforded no clue to the kind of drama about to be enacted, nor of the part Akbar was to play therein. But we know that the character of a hero is disclosed only gradually in the light of the odds he grapples with and masters in the end. The glory that surrounded Akbar, before the curtain closed on him finally, was not attained by sudden flight'.

The freaks of fortune Akbar witnessed between his birth and accession (1542-56) only indicated the precariousness and uncertainty of his future. Humayun was a fugitive in full flight when his expectant wife, Hamida Banu Begum—only fifteen years of age then—went into confinement in a tent at Amarkot in the desert of Sind. When the per-

fume of the pod of musk crushed on a porcelain plate to celebrate the event filled the apartment in which Akbar first saw the light of day (as Humayun's Hindu secretary, Jauhar reports), few could be certain—as those present hoped—that the fame of the child just born would, likewise, blossom into the renown of an Akbar : one of earth's noblest rulers.

The fugitive parents could find no better shelter for the infant Akbar immediately than to entrust him to the tender mercy of his opportunist uncles. When Humayun besieged Kabul in 1545, with Persian assistance, he was filled with consternation as he saw his child of three summers exposed on the battlements ! But Providence preserved Akbar always—then and later—unto his destined fulfilment in history. The happenings of the next ten years were full of 'stratagems and spoils', and battles bravely fought and won ; but the future of Akbar was no more assured than at his nativity in the wilderness.

There is, indeed, 'a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune'. But Humayun's case proved an exception. Few men in history have had his share of misfortunes, though his name stood for 'the lucky'. His cup was full in January 1556, when he slipped from his library stairs and 'left this world for Paradise.' In the midst of his trials and tribulations, he had earnestly prayed :

'O Lord, of Thine goodness make me Thine own ;
Make me a partner of the knowledge of Thy attributes ;
I am broken-hearted from the cares and sorrows of life.

O call to Thee Thy poor mad lover;
O grant me my release !'

God verily granted his anguished prayer; but what of his fourteen years old son? Akbar had still to make good his claim to his precarious patrimony. But he had in Bairam Khan (his guardian) the most loyal lieutenant of Humayun to guide him; as also the example of his intrepid grandsire Babur (who had declared: 'the world is his who exerts himself') to inspire him. Above all, Akbar had his own as yet unrevealed genius to urge him on.

ON Friday, 14th February 1556,—at Kalanor—Akbar was proclaimed **Padshah.** 'This is the commencement of His Majesty's reign!' declared Bairam Khan. But the challenge of Hemu and the Afghans was still to be met on the fateful field of Panipat; the valiant Rajputs, before whom even Babur's veterans had at first quailed, were yet to be subdued or won over. Nevertheless the scion of Babur (that 'football of fortune' as Ferishta calls him) possessed 'the courage never to submit or yield'; he could still carve out an Empire in Hindustan.

Babur, writes Stanley Lane-Poole, was "the link between Central Asia and India, between predatory hordes and imperial government, between Tamarlane and Akbar." To Vincent Smith Babur appeared "the most brilliant Asiatic prince of his age, and worthy of a high place among sovereigns of any age or country."

Akbar was, therefore, building on good foundations: his character was an amalgum of the best that was in Babur and Humayun.

According to a contemporary estimate, Babur possessed 'a lofty judgment, noble ambition, the

art of victory, the art of government, the art of conferring prosperity upon his people, ability to win the hearts of soldiers, and love of justice.'

Humayun, though more modestly endowed by nature, was (according to Mirza Haider—Babur's cousin) 'brave in battle, gay in feast, and very generous.' Nizam-ud-din Ahmad (another contemporary writer) states : 'All the wealth of Hindustan would not have sufficed to maintain his generosity. In the sciences of astronomy and mathematics he was unrivalled. He made good verses, and all the learned and good of the time were admitted to his society and passed the night in his company. Great decorum was observed in his receptions, and all learned discussions were conducted in the most orderly manner. The light of favour shone upon men of ability and worth during his reign.'

A golden link between the first three Mughal Emperors—Babur, Humayun and Akbar—is provided by an interesting document from Bhopal. It is regarded by some scholars as Babur's last 'will and testament' to Humayun, and well sums up the ideals Akbar constantly kept in view. It is an epitome of the principles he actually put into practice during the best part of his enlightened rule. It reads :—

'O my son ! People of diverse religions inhabit India, and it is a matter of thanks-giving to God that the King of Kings has entrusted the government of this country to you.

It therefore behoves you that—

1. You should not allow religious prejudices to influence your mind ; administer impartial justice, having due regard to the religious susceptibilities and religious customs of all sections of people.

2. In particular, refrain from slaughter of cows, which will help you to obtain a hold on the hearts of the people of India. Thus you will bind the people of the land to yourself with ties of gratitude.

3. You should never destroy places of worship of any community ; always be justice-loving, so that relations between the King and his subjects may remain cordial, and thereby secure peace and contentment in the land.

4. The propagation of Islam will be better carried on with the sword of love and obligation than with the sword of oppression.

5. Always ignore the mutual dissensions of Shias and Sunnis ; otherwise they will lead to the weakness of Islam.

6. Treat the different peculiarities of your subjects as the different seasons of the year, so that the body politic may remain free from disease.'

APART from this family heritage of a large-hearted and liberal outlook, Akbar had before him three other rulers whose statesmanlike policies, in some respects, anticipated his own. They were, in chronological order, Affonso Albuquerque in Goa (1510-15) ; Krishnadeva Raya in Vijayanagar (1509-29) ; and Sher Shah Sur at Delhi (1540-45). It is interesting to note that these great administrators, incidentally, represented respectively Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. The syncraticism of Akbar may have been derived from these among other sources to be noticed later.

Albuquerque conquered Goa in 1510. His viceroyalty there was remarkable for the social reforms he attempted. With other aspects of Portuguese colonialism we are not directly concerned here. Three things, in particular, Albuquerque

initiated as the main planks of his policy : (1) employment of Indians (Muslims and Hindus) in civil as well as military departments ; (2) encouragement of mixed marriages between the Portuguese and the Indians ; and (3) prohibition of **Sati** (or burning of widows on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands). As a corrollary, he also established schools to shape the minds of the people in conformity with his ideals. Though his perspectives were perverted by the persecution of non-Catholics by his successors, Albuquerque's basic principles in secular matters were essentially sound.

Akbar had opportunities to know of Portuguese doings in Goa, particularly through the Jesuit Missions. His first direct contact with them came about during his Gujarat campaign, when he was at Cambay, in 1572. Closer relations developed because of Akbar's keen interest in Christianity and the need of safe passage of pilgrims to Mecca. In those days the Portuguese were masters of the sea and the principal carriers of trade with Europe. They supplied Akbar and his courtiers with curios like clocks, printed books, pianos, etc. On the other hand, they also served as mercenaries (especially as gun-men) fighting against Akbar, as at Asirgarh. Their religious bigotry was the very antithesis of Akbar's enlightened eclecticism. To cite only one illustration, King John IV of Portugal sent the following directive to John de Castro, viceroy at Goa after Albuquerque :—

'Knowing what an abominable thing Idolatry is in our Eyes, the same shall in future not be tolerated in my Dominions. Being informed that in the Country about Goa the Pagan Temples are suffered and frequented, both public and private, as

well as divers sorts of Pagan Diversions, **we command you once for all to have the same demolished, burnt and rooted out**; and that all imaginable care be taken to prevent the importation of Idols, either of Wood, Metal, Earth or any other matter.'

What a contrast, not only to Akbar, but also to Babur (as in the Bhopal document cited above), and Krishnadeva Raya and Sher Shah,—as we shall presently witness.

VIJAYANAGAR under Krishnadeva Raya is described by Domingo Paes as 'the best provided city in the world'. Paes was a Portuguese traveller, and he was much impressed by that great contemporary of Babur, in whom he found 'the most feared and perfect king that could possibly be, cheerful of disposition and very merry; he is one that seeks to honour foreigners and receives them kindly, asking about all their affairs, whatever their condition may be. He is a great ruler and is a man of much justice: gallant and perfect in all things, but subject to sudden fits of rage.' How like Akbar in all these respects! and most of all in his religious tolerance, as Duarte Barbosa (another Portuguese witness) testifies: 'The king allows such freedom that every man may come and go and live according to his own creed, without suffering any annoyance and without injury, whether he is a Christian, Jew, Moor or Heathen.'

Babur, in his autobiography, speaks of Krishnadeva Raya as 'the most powerful of the Pagan princes in point of territory and army'. Akbar who got Babur's Turki **Waqiat** (Memoirs) translated into Persian, by Bairam Khan's son Abdur Rahim Khan, may be presumed to have known this. His atten-

tion must also have been drawn to the fall of Vijayanagar, in 1565, which was the most thought-provoking event of the century in India.

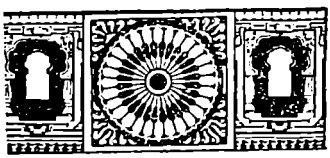
BUT nearer than Krishnadeva Raya and Albuquerque was the Afghan Sher Shah Sur who drove Humayun out of the country and usurped his throne. Akbar was building on foundations laid by the most determined enemy of his house. Besides, Raja Todar Mall, Akbar's capable Revenue Minister, served under Sher Shah earlier.

"Sher Shah", writes E. B. Havell, "showed brilliant capacity as an organiser, both in military and civil affairs. By dint of indefatigable industry and personal attention to the smallest details of administration, he restored law and order throughout Hindustan in the short space of five years." William Eraskine adds: "He had more of the spirit of the legislator and guardian of the people than any prince before Akbar". But, more than anything else, as H. G. Keene observed: "His brief career was devoted to the establishment of the **unity** which he had long perceived to be the great need of his country. Though a devout Muslim, he never oppressed his Hindu subjects .... The acts of Sher Shah are attested by his enemies writing when he was dead and when his dynasty had passed away for ever."

V. A. Smith admitted his "nice taste for architecture" attested by his noble mausoleum at Sahasram in Bihar—built in his life-time.

This well-merited praise coming from British pandits may be appropriately concluded in the words of Sher Shah's biographer Dr. K. R. Qanungo:

"Sher Shah," he writes, "may justly dispute with Akbar the claim of being the first who attempted to build up an Indian nation." Or shall we not rather say: Akbar was the fulfilment of Sher Shah's highest aspirations.



3

THE ADVENTURES OF AKBAR

Akbar's life was punctuated with adventures which readers of formal history usually miss. Born of fugitive parents at an oasis in the desert; exposed to gun-fire on the battlements of a besieged fortress when he was only three years old; betrothed to his cousin (Hindal's daughter Razia) and formally appointed governor of Ghazni at nine years of age; credited with victory at the decisive battle of Sirhind when he was thirteen; and bereft of his father the very next year;—Akbar was crowned Emperor of Hindustan when he was just entering his fourteenth year. These constituted a thrilling prolegomena to his eventful career.

Then came the crucial contest with Hemu on the fateful field of Panipat, in November 1556,

where thirty years earlier Babur had made history. Bairam Khan, Akbar's guardian, wanted his young master to become a **Ghazi** by striking off, with his own hand, the head of the fallen infidel Hemu. But Akbar would not tarnish his honour with an act of fanaticism on the very threshold of his regime. He maintained the same noble attitude towards the rebel Abul Ma'ali, a little later. Nizam-ud-in Ahmad (a contemporary chronicler) writes: 'The Khan-khanan Bairam Khan arrested Abul Ma'ali and was about to execute him (even as he did with Hemu); but the young Emperor was mercifully disposed and was unwilling that the beginning of his reign should be stained with the execution of a descendant of the Saiyid, before any crime had been proved against him.' Abdul Ma'ali was taken captive and sent to the fort at Bayana.

Towards the Khan-Khanan himself, Akbar was even more considerate. Bairam was Humayun's most trusted general: hence his choice as Guardian to Akbar. But when Akbar came of age, Bairam was very reluctant to part with power. 'His natural character was good and amiable,' writes Abul Fazl in his **Akbar-Nama**; 'but through bad company—that worst misfortune to man—his natural good qualities were overclouded, . . . and he formed some sinister designs in conspiracy with evil-minded flatterers.' Ferishta adds: 'Akbar became alarmed, and thought it necessary to curtail the Protector's authority.'

His order to the 'Khan Baba' (as Akbar affectionately addressed Bairam) speaks for itself: "As I was assured of your honesty and fidelity, I left all affairs of State in your charge, and thought only of my own pleasures. I have now determined to

take the reigns of Government into my own hands ; and it is desirable that you should make the pilgrimage to Mecca, upon which you have been so long intent. A suitable **jagir** out of the **parganas** of Hindustan will be assigned for your maintenance, the revenue of which shall be transmitted to you by your own agents."

Akbar was eignteen then. His firmness of resolution, as well as inborn magnanimity, are clearly reflected in this 'ultimatun' to the Gurdian of his nonage. But Bairam, the veteran of Sirhind and Panipat, was not disposed to obey meekly. He was prepared for a show-down, but ultimately yielded. Akbar pardoned him and sent him on his pilgrimage to the Holy City. But, as ill luck would have it, the Khan was murdered on his way, near Patan (in Saurashtra), by a personal enemy whose father Bairam had executed at Sirhind. Nizam-ud-din Ahmed adds : 'Some scoundrels then plundered the encampment of the deceased.'

When Akbar heard of the calamity, he at once took Bairam's four-year old son, Abdur Rahim, under his protection ; and in due course promoted him to the status of 'Khan-Khanan' like his father.

AKBAR'S love of sport often led him into scrapes the hazards of which he never calculated. "Like Alexander of Macedon", writes Vincent Smith in his biography of Akbar, "he was always ready to risk his life, regardless of political consequences."

Once, near Narwar on his way back to Agra, he was confronted by a tigress with five cubs. Akbar encountered the ferocious beast on foot single-handed. He killed the tigress at one blow while the cubs were finished off by his attendants.

A few months later, Akbar gave exhibition of what Smith characterises as an instance of "reckless courage, pre-eminent physical strength, and extraordinary mastery over animals." It was a fight between the vicious elephants : **Hawai** (Sky-Rocket) and **Ran Bagh** (Tiger in battle). Akbar mounted the former and put the latter to flight. In headlong pursuit, he rushed over a bridge of boats across the river Jamuna, until **Ran Bagh** ran out of sight. Akbar instantaneously brought **Hawai** to a standstill, to the great surprise and relief of his astonished onlookers.

On yet another occasion, Akbar was out to crush a rebellion at Paronkh (in Etah district). He rode his elephent, **Dil Shankar,** into the thick of the fight. Seven arrows pierced his shield, and the rider behind him toppled over. But heedless of all dangers, Akbar came out triumphant, as usual.

Commenting on this adventure, Smith remarks : "We can imagine how the reports of the young Padshah's prowess at Paronkh must have echoed through the kingdom and inspired a wholesome terror among all men who thought of defying the royal authority."

Explaining his seeming rashness on such occasions, Akbar declared to Abul Fazl : "My constant prayer to the Supreme Giver is that when my thoughts and actions no longer please Him, He may take my life, in order that I may not every moment add to His displeasure."

Only an intensely religious soul would test God's intentions towards him in the manner of Akbar.

As early as 1557—when Akbar was just fifteen —he felt a deep aversion towards worldly-minded men. He desired to be all alone, and rode away into the solitude of the jungle on his favourite Iraqi

horse **Hairan,** noted for its high mettle and vicious temper."

Lawrence Binyon's observations on this incident are illuminating: "Out of sight and in solitude, Akbar dismounted and 'communed with God' ... He remained alone, immersed in his ecstasy. But after a time, his heart refreshed and eased, he came to himself and looked around. He was in absolute silence and surrounded by silence; ... for a time he stood perplexed: then suddenly he saw his horse **Hairan** galloping out of the distance towards him. It came up and stood still beside him. The young King, astonished, mounted him, and rode back to his camp. **It seemed to him a mysterious and divine intimation that he must return to his fellows and resume his work in the world."**

This was, obviously premonitary to his unique experience in connexion with the great **Shikar** Akbar suddenly called off in April 1578.

TWO other incidents of a different character may be cited before we close.

Akbar's love of romance was not less pronounced than his passion for wild sport or his mystical inclinations. Like Harun-ul Rashid, Caliph of Bagdad, Akbar wandered about in the night, disguised, and freely mixed with ascetics, **fakirs** and bazar crowds, in order to know the minds of his people first hand. On one occasion, when he was on the point of being discovered, he quickly so 'rolled and squinted his eyes' that critical observers remarked: "These are not the eyes and features of the King" ... Then "I quietly came away from them, and entered my palace!"—reported Akbar later.

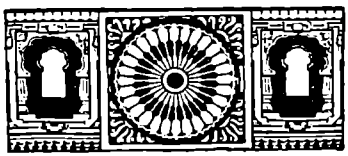
AN attempt on Akbar's life appears to have been made at Delhi, in 1563, by the manumitted

slave of a friend of Abul Ma'ali—the rebel, mentioned earlier. The arrow aimed at Akbar only wounded him on the shoulder, but did not prove more serious. Nevertheless, it is alleged by Badauni (with none else to corroborate him) that the assault was provoked by Akbar's "invasion of the honour of families" (as Smith avers on the sole authority of Badauni). Akbar is charged with having "compelled" a Shaikh to divorce his wife in favour of the infatuated Padshah. Smith, however, clinches this sorry episode with the significant remark: "We do not hear again of scandals like those which tarnished his good name at Delhi when he was one-and-twenty."

SAINTS, verily, are said to have had a past, and sinners promised a future. If Akbar, indeed, sinned on this occasion, he also repented: as appears from one of his maturer reflections. "Had I been wise earlier," declares Akbar, "I would have taken no woman from my own kingdom into my seraglio, for my subjects are to me in the place of children." He translated this paternal attitude into action when he prohibited enforced **Sati** in his dominion, and permitted willing widows to remarry.

Jaimal, a cousin of Raja Bhagwan Das, died in action at Chaunsa. His survivors (including his son Udai Singh) desired his widow to immolate herself according to custom, but against her wishes. As soon as Akbar came to know of this, he rushed to the spot post-haste and saved the lady.

"This romantic adventure of Akbar at his best," comments Smith, "shows that even when he was past forty he retained the activity and chivalrous spirit of his youth."



4

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF AKBAR

The fate of Humayun and the successors of Sher Shah clearly showed that it is easier to lose a dominion than to win it. On the contrary, Akbar had before him the inspiring examples of Babur and Sher Shah to enthuse him against all odds. At the close of his reign, Akbar's Empire was larger, stronger, and more prosperous than his precarious inheritance from Humayun.

After the dismissal of Khan Baba (Bairam Khan) in 1560, the achievements of Akbar were entirely on his own. They were not less glorious than, for instance, those of his English contemporary Queen Elizabeth whose envoys—John Newbury and John Mildenhall—he cordially received between 1583 and 1603. But the illiterate Akbar owed more to his native genius than did the Virgin Queen of

England, who earned her reputation vicariously.

Everything Akbar did, or attempted to do, was marked by his flair for organisation, originality, and punctilious attention to details. Father Monserrate who accompanied Akbar in his Kabul campaign (in 1581) observed: 'No Roman camp was more orderly or planned with more regular routine'.

Six years earlier, in 1575, Akbar led an expedition against Daud of Bengal. That expedition was marked, on the one hand, by Akbar's total defiance of weather conditions; and on the other by the pomp and luxury of its equipment. Sher Shah before him and Shivaji after him were equally indifferent to heat and rain; but they permitted no extravagance.

It was the height of the rainy season. Akbar, like Alexander of Macedon, divided his forces and sent them in two parallel lines: partly by land and partly by river. The villagers on the bank of the Ganga were astonished to see the huge vessels in procession. They had crimson sails and carried on board portable gardens diffusing fragrance of flowers, and filled the air with the sharp sounds of trumpeting tuskers. "From such pomp and luxury," observes Lawrence Binyon, "whoever might have predicted an indolent ornamental expedition would have been greatly mistaken." Indeed, Akbar combined in himself the opposing traits of the realist Sher Shah and his own ease-loving diletante father Humayun.

Of quite another sort was his second Gujarat expedition in 1573. Riding swift camels through the 'hot hell' of the desert of Rajasthan, Akbar covered a distance of 600 miles—from Fatehpur-Sikri to Ahmedabad—in nine days: 'a feat it is difficult for the pen to describe,' writes a contem-

porary chronicler with amazement. Smith adds: "Akbar's second Gujarat expedition may be described safely as the quickest campaign on record."

WE cannot dwell on Akbar's conquests in Rajasthan, Gondvana, and the Deccan, without emotion. Who can recall the first and fail to be thrilled by the heroism of Jaimal and Patta at Chitor; or by the horrors of the holocaust of Rajputnis rushing into the jaws of death through 'jauhar' or by the relentless resistance of Rana Pratap—now fighting and now hiding—unto his last breath?

Then again, to think of the two valiant ladies: Rani Durgavati of Gondvana and Chand Bibi of Ahmednagar! Of the former Abul Fazl wrote with admiration: 'It was her custom that when she heard that a tiger had made its appearance, she did not drink water till she had shot him; . . .and she did great things by dint of her far-seeing abilities.' Chand Bibi, too, was 'a good shot with the gun and arrow'; she led and supervised the gallant defence of Ahmednagar besieged by the Imperial forces. Both made history for the women of India —the one a Hindu and the other a Muslim—by their heroic sacrifices at the altar of purity and patriotism.

In the midst of these glorious exemplars of noble heroism we find ourselves at a loss to choose between our idols for admiration. Akbar's martial exploits, described earlier, fade out of view when we think of the dauntless heroes and heroines who fought against his aggressions. Yet, Akbar does not stand totally ecclipsed, because of his redeeming qualities: his chivalry in general and his genuine appreciation of heroism, even of his enemies.

Rani Durgavati and Chand Bibi had chosen the role of men, and both were soldiers—warriors—not less determined than himself 'to do or die'. It was a case of 'Greek meeting Greek' : no quarter to be sought or given. Akbar was realist no less than idealist.

Nevertheless, when the heat and excitement of war were over, he erected statues to Jaimal and Patta—the gallant defenders of Chitor—at his palace entrance, as Bernier who saw them testifies. Jaimal and Patta, writes the French observer in Shah Jahan's reign, 'chose rather to perish with their mother in sallies against the enemy (i.e. Akbar) than submit to an insolent invader. It is owing to this extraordinary devotion on their part, that their enemies have thought them deserving of the statues here erected to their memory.'

THE **Ain-e-Akbari** gives very interesting details of Akbar's military and civil administrative organisation :

'When His Majesty had fixed the ranks of the army, and enquired into the quality of the horses, he ordered that upright **Bitikchis** should make out descriptive rolls of the soldiers and write down their peculiar marks ; their ages, the names of their fathers, dwelling-places and race, were to be registered. A **Darogha** was also appointed whose duty it was to see that the men performed their duties without receiving bribes or demanding perquisites.'

An illustration of the care bestowed on the civil administration is found in the duties of the **Kotwal** who was the most important local official under Akbar :

He was to look after the safety of the roads, maintain a register of the houses and their inmates, check the accuracy of the weights and measures

Akbar) was based on the 'first principles' noticed above. Akbar's 'Manual of Instructions' to his revenue officers stated :— 'Encourage the ryots to extend the cultivation and carry on agriculture with all their heart. Do not screw everything out of them. Remember that the ryots are permanent... Report bad or dishonest **amils** to the Government, so that better men may be appointed to replace them... See that no official exacts any forbidden **abwabs** (cesses) from the peasants.'

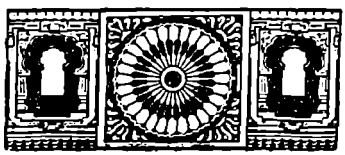
In 1563-64 Akbar visited Mathura. There he witnessed the hardships suffered by the piligrims on account of the exaction of the piligrim-taxes and the **jiziya.** Akbar's liberal heart was awakened, and he ordered that, despite the great loss it meant to the State revenues, the invidious and hateful taxes should be forthwith abolished throughout his dominions. He expressed the view that 'it was contrary to the will of God to tax people assembled to worship the Creator—even though their forms of worship might be considered erroneous.'

IN spite of loss to the revenues, and the rapidly increasing expenditure due to the construction of costly edifices (like those of Fatehpur-Sikri and Agra), Moreland points out, revenues in cash were accumulated under Akbar,—thanks to his 'good management of the finances' and the growing prosperity of the people. According to the Flemish traveller, De Laet (1593-1649), Akbar's accumulated reserves at the time of his death amounted to Rs. 34 crores, 82 lacs, and 26,386.

Despite the fact that Akbar was "illiterate", as Jahangir testifies, his treasures included,—besides specie and other articles of great value—a collection of works (mostly manuscripts) by eminent writers,

—numbering 24,000 volumes, beautifully bound, and estimated to have cost Rs. 6,463,731.

We shall review Akbar's achievements as a social reformer in a later chapter dealing with his aspirations.



5

THE ARTS UNDER AKBAR

Akbar was 'a gem of the purest ray serene', and the flower of his genius was not 'born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert air.' The perennial fountain of his energy flowed into a soil that awaited inundation, and its fertilisation brought forth a golden harvest in due season. The hundred years which elapsed between the accessions of Akbar and Aurangzeb (1556-1657) proved one of the most creative epochs in our history. The relative sense of security and freedom that Akbar's arms and administration created in the country, and the galvanising power of Akbar's personality, inspired the people to give of their best in the evolution of a New Order.

"In Akbar," observes V. A. Smith, "the peoples

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 his duty a means of pleasing God' ; he 'opened the gate that leads to the right path and satisfies the thirst of all that wander about panting for Truth.'

Like Shelley, Akbar saw in Life 'a dome of many-coloured glass staining the white radiance of Eternity.' He could, therefore, find 'light in all, with more or less of shade in all'—as Tennyson puts it in his beautiful poem on "Akbar's Dream".

The artistic achievements of Akbar's reign were not less impressive than in other walks of life. His magnificent monuments at Fatehpur-Sikri and Agra still evoke admiration from lay observers and expert critics of art and architecture alike. Time has not diminished their appeal through the succeeding centuries, nor has the memory of man failed to do justice to their 'romance in stone.' "Taking the site as a whole," writes V. A. Smith, "enough survives to enable the visitor to realise with a considerable degree of vividness the former magnificence of the mass of buildings, during the brief period when they were the abode of the richest monarch and the most splendid court in the world." Oertel declared at the East India Association in 1913 : 'The best model on which to work is the style used by Akbar who has claims to be regarded **as the founder of a really national Indian style,** combining the best features of both Hindu and Muhammadan architecture.'

Akbar not only supplied the means and the inspiration, but also personally worked with the artisans and craftsmen, to guide and encourage them. 'His Majesty,' says Abul Fazl, 'plans edifices and dresses the work of his mind and heart in the gar-

ment of stone and clay.' Sir James Fergusson found in Abul Fazl's remark "the sober truth" of Fatehpur-Sikri being "a reflex of the mind of the great man who built it." Smith affirms: "It is certain that Akbar not only mastered every detail in the working of his Public Works Department, but supplied ideas which were carried out by the able architects he gathered around him."

The entire city was built with lightning speed, between 1570 and 1585,—a feat analogous to Akbar's second Gujarat expedition referred to before —"inconceivable and impossible," says Smith, "at any other time or in any other circumstances. Nothing like Fatehpur-Sikri ever was created before or can be created again."

Abul Fazl pays a just tribute to the craftsmen who worked on those marvellous edifices when he declares that they 'chiselled marble and sandstone more skilfully than any turner carves wood.' He also refers to the 'masterly sculptors and cunning artists of form who fashioned the architectural models of Bengal and Gujarat in earlier times,' from whom Akbar derived his inspiration.

TO name, rather than describe, a few of the most outstanding edifices built under Akbar, the Tomb of Humayun at Delhi was one of the earliest. Connoisseurs have found in it the proto-type of the world-renowned Taj Mahal—that 'dream in marble', or 'tear-drop on the cheek of Time', as Rabindranath Tagore called it. In the opinion of Percy Brown, "the tomb of Humayun introduces a new era into the history of architecture in northern India."

We might enter Fatehpur-Sikri through the Buland Darwaza which is the biggest archway in

India ; then hasten to see the exquisitely carved House of Birbal—looking like a colossal casket or huge Christmas cake ; and, since we have little time, finish with the marble tomb of Shaikh Salim Chisti —so riotously ornamental in all its carvings. Its exuberance is more expressive of the emotional outburst of Akbar's grateful heart than suggestive of the Shaikh's simplicity. Prince Salim was born with the benedictions of the saint whose name was given to the future Jahangir.

To cast our glance a little away from Sikri, and turn to the fort of Agra, the Jahangiri Mahal at once arrests our attention by its beautiful blending of the Hindu and Muslim styles. Had we lingered a little longer within Fatehpur itself, we might not have missed its proto-type there ; nor overlooked other illustrations of the synthesis all over the place : Hindu features in the great Jami Masjid and Muslim features in Birbal's house and Jodhbai's palace.

Beyond Fatehpur and Agra, we see the same characteristic fraternisation—petrified in red sand-stone—in the impressive Gobind Dev Temple built by Raja Man Singh—on the road to Brindaban.

If we visited Amber—Man Singh's home city—we would find there mirror-reflections as it were of the artistic models of Akbar's times—or as Percy Brown would put it : "see in such buildings how the stone structures of the early Mughals were adapted to the more colourful requirements of the Hindu Princes."

SOME of the superb creations of Akbar's artists are happily still extant. Akbar was no less a patron of painters, musicians, poets and writers, than he was of architects. Abul Fazl mentions several distinguished painters by name : Basawan, Daswanth

and Kesu-dasa (among the Hindus); and Shaikh Abdu-s Samad Shirazi (Akbar's tutor during boyhood), Mir Saiyid Ali of Tabriz, and Farruk the Kalmak (among the Muslims, from foreign lands). Of the Hindu artists, in particular, Abul Fazl remarks: 'their pictures surpass our conception of things; few indeed in the world are equal to them.'

Akbar's own attitude towards the artist's function was characteristic of him. 'There are many who hate painting', he said; 'but such men I dislike. It appears to me as if a painter had quite peculiar means of recognising God. For a painter in sketching anything that has life, and in devising its limbs one after another, must come to feel that he cannot bestow individuality upon his work; and thus is forced to think of God, the Giver of Life,—and will thereby increase his knowledge.'

There is a rare specimen of fresco-painting on the northern wall of Akbar's parlour—**Khwab-gah**—at Fatehpur-Sikri. But book-illustrations and minatures are more abounding. "Their devotion to the delineation of likenesses", says Percy Brown, "was an outstanding feature of the Mughal artists."

The **Ain-e-Akbari** states: 'His Majesty himself sat for his likeness, and also ordered the likenesses taken of all the grandees of the realm. An immense album was thus prepared. Those that have passed away have received a new life, and those who are still alive, have immortality promised them!'

IN the world of letters: Abul Fazl was the foremost prose writer of Akbar's court. In his autobiography (reviewed elsewhere) Abul Fazl writes:

'My pen its point deep in my heart's blood dyes
To write such prose as far all verse outvies;
For prose in its degree doth verse excel,
As unbored pearls the rarest price compel.'

His elder brother, Faizi, was Akbar's poet-laureate. Among Muslim poets, he is ranked by some scholars next only to Amir Khusru of Delhi.

Birbal, Tan Sen, and Sur Das ('the blind bard of Agra') are well known. They were composers as well as practitioners of 'this enchanting art' as Abul Fazl describes music. There were also others including among them Hindus, Iranis, Turanis and Kashmiris: both men and women. The court musicians were arranged in seven divisions—'one for each day in the week.'

Akbar himself mastered some of the technicalities of the art: 'he was an excellent hand at performing especially on the **nakkarah** or kettle-drum.' Lal Kalwant—also called Miyan Lal—was Akbar's phonetic instructor, from whom (says Jahangir) Akbar learnt 'every breathing and sound that appertains to the Hindi language.'

Tan Sen came to Agra from Raja Man Singh Tomar of Gwalior, in the seventh year of Akbar's reign. He died in 1589 at the very young age of thirty-four. Abul Fazl pays him the highest tribute: 'A singer like him has not been in India for a thousand years!'

We are familiar with 'the cloying sweetness' (as Grierson calls it) of the compositions of Sur Das. His devotional songs are the 'daily bread' of many, along with those of Mira Bai and Tulasi Das. A contemporary critic spoke of the relative merits of four poets of the period thus: 'Gang excels in sonnets, and Birbal in **Kavitta** metre; Keshav's meaning is ever profound; but **Sur Das possesses the excellences of all the others'.** According to a later estimate: 'Sur is the sun, Tulasi is the moon, Keshav is a cluster of stars; but the poets of today are like so many glow-worms emitting light fitfully now and then.'

Dadu (or Daud) of Ahmedabad was a mystic after Akbar's heart. He compiled an anthology of the songs of several saints, both Hindu and Muslim (especially **Sufi**), and declared : 'When all the strings of the **Veena** are played, then verily does music become entrancing.'

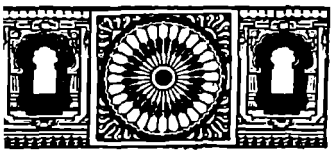
AMONG the unsolved problems of Akbar's life are his relations with two of his greatest contemporaries : Mira Bai of Rajasthan, and Tulasi Das of Banaras. About the former (who was daughter-in-law to Rana Sanga,—Babur's great adversary) tradition declares that Akbar visited her incognito and left behind him a diamond necklace as a memento. That, however, acted as a 'red rag' to Mira's persecutors.

Though verification is difficult, geographical and chronological considerations, not less than Akbar's well known propensities, lend to the legend an air of plausibility. But between Akbar and Tulasi Das there is not even a legendary link. Is that because the now famous saint and author of the **Hindi Ramayana (Rama-Charita-Manas)** lived in obscurity till Akbar was dead ? Both Raja Man Singh and Khan-Khanan Abdur Rahim Khan are known to have visited Tulasi Das ; but Akbar predeceased both, and Tulasi Das died in 1623 at the ripe age of ninety.

Abul Fazl who records the name of several other contemporary saints, had not, obviously, even heard of either Mira Bai or Tulasi Das. . . It seems a great pity.

Nevertheless, as the greatest classic of Akbar's time, and one that is still very highly esteemed, the following appreciation of the **Rama-Charita-Manas** by an Englishman, is worth noting :—

"The morality of the poem," writes Smith, "is as lofty as its theology, and there is not an impure word or idea in it from beginning to end. . . The poem is to the Hindus of northern India even more than what the Bible is to ordinary British Christians. 'In its own country it is supreme above all other literature and exercises an influence which it would be difficult to exaggerate.' That influence is all for good."



6

THE ASSOCIATES OF AKBAR

Unlike other companionless monarchs in history, Akbar had several intimate friends and associates. 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.

Among them were uncommon idealists like Faizi and Abul Fazl, bigots like Badauni, witty comrades like Birbal, loyal Rajas like Bhagwan Das and Man Singh, musicians like Tan Sen, Jesuit priests like Monserrate and Aquaviva, Parsi **Dasturs** like Meherji Rana, and Jaina **Yatis** like Hiravijaya Suri.

The unique feature of Akbar's relations with all of them was the freedom each enjoyed in his respective role,—a mark of true friendship.

With the exception of the foreign priests and other holy persons, the rest were enrolled in the official hierarchy of **mansabdars.** The highest rank open to any official was held—not by a Muslim—but by the Hindu Raja Man Singh. He was governor of several **subahs** in succession—from Cuttack to Kabul.

The religious freedom enjoyed by the fraternity is indicated by the conduct of both Man Singh and Bhagwan Das in the context of Akbar's **Din-e-Ilahi** —the newly founded eclectic cult. When invited to join it, Man Singh boldly declared: "If discipleship means willingness to sacrifice one's life, I have already carried my life in my hand. What need is there for further proof? If, however, the term has another meaning, and refers to Faith, I certainly am a Hindu. If you order me to do so, I may become a Musalman. But I know not of the existence of any other religion than these two." Bhagwan Das, too, responded identically: "I would willingly believe," he said courteously, "that Hindus and Musalmans have each a bad religion. But tell us what the new sect is, and what views they hold —so that I may believe."

Akbar did not pursue the matter further. Both Man Singh and Bhagwan Das kept their rank as well as religion. They were closely related to Akbar: Jahangir's mother was Bhagwan Das' sister, and Jahangir's wife (mother of Khusru) was Man Singh's cousin.

BIRBAL—the celebrated wit, poet, story-teller and songster—was one of Akbar's dearest friends. He was a Brahman, Mahesh Das by name—originally in the service of Raja Bhagwan Das. Akbar conferred on him the title of **Raja** with the **jagir** of

Kalanjar and the **mansabdari** rank of 2000 horse. He was popularly known at court as 'Kavi Rai'; but he died the death of a soldier near Attock, fighting against the Yusufzi (in 1586)—deeply mourned by Akbar. His charming residence at Fatehpur-Sikri (noticed in the last chapter) was built in 1572.

BADAUNI—the bigoted chronicler—was cast in a different mould. His hostility to Akbar's unorthodox ways and views in all matters was more than apparent. Nevertheless, he held the office of **Imam** or Court Chaplain; but he did not dare to publish his chronicle until after the death of Akbar. The only penalty Badauni had to suffer for his non-conformity was to be asked to translate into Persian the two epics of the infidels: **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata.** With understandable chagrin, he ruefully writes in his **Tawarikh:** 'Such is my fate to be employed on such works! Nevertheless I console myself with the reflection that what is predestined must come to pass.'

A more willing translator was found for the **Lilavati** (a mathematical treatise in Sanskrit) in Abul Fazl's brother Faizi.

Blochmann—the English translator of the **Ain-e-Akbari**—calls Faizi "the greatest poet of Muslim India since Amir Khusru of Delhi." Abul Fazl refers to him as the 'King of Poets'.

ABUL FAZL—author of **Ain-e-Akbari** and **Akbar-Nama**—stands in a class by himself. Officially he was Akbar's Secretary and **mansabdar** of 4,000 horse. But none captivated the heart of the Emperor so much as this Allama. They first met in 1574, and a tragedy separated them in 1602.

Prince Salim, in his impatience, rebelled against Akbar, and darkened the last years of his life. Abul Fazl who was then busy with the siege of Asirgarh, hastened to reach Akbar at Agra in the hour of crisis. But fate intervened in the form of Bir Singh Bundela who was Salim's hired assassin. Abul Fazl's movements were forestalled, and his head was cut off and sent to Salim at Allahabad. Bir Singh was richly rewarded when Prince Salim became Emperor Jahangir in 1605.

Abul Fazl was only fifty-two years of age when inexorable fate extinguished the flames of his life while there was tallow still left in the candle. Akbar felt deeply mortified, and shut himself up in his private room for three days—and vainly cried: "Salim might have taken my life, if such was his desire, rather than that of the Allama!"

AKBAR'S affability was not confined to his court favourites. He was equally free and intimate with the foreigners who came to him from time to time, as the Jesuit fathers testify.

Akbar met some Portuguese nationals at Cambay, during his Gujarat campaign, in 1572. His interest in Christianity—and Europeans in general—was first conceived then. He later sent for Jesuit priests from Goa, proffering cordial treatment when they came: "I shall receive most kindly and honourably the priests who will come," he declared in his invitation.

On their arrival they were put up in his palace and fed at his royal table; and, when one of them (Fr. Monserrate) fell ill, Akbar personally called on him and 'greeted him in Portuguese.'

'In personal intercourse with the priests,' Monserrate tells us, 'Akbar never allowed them to

remain uncovered in his presence. Both at the solemn meetings of his grandees and in private interviews, when he would take them inside for private colloquy, he would ask them to sit near him. He would shake hands with them most familiarly, and would call them apart from the body of ordinary retainers to indulge with them in private conversation. More than once, in public, he walked a short distance with Rudolf (Aquaviva), his arm round Rudolf's neck.'

Such intimacy encouraged the Fathers to speak to Akbar 'seriously on the faults in his regime or his conduct. . . modestly, however (Monserrate adds) and **not without first examining what mood he was in.'**

The Jesuits were allowed to preach in public, to build chapels, to conduct schools, and even to convert willing people to Christianity. 'His Majesty,' writes Badauni, 'ordered Prince Murad to take a few lessons in Christianity under good auspices, and charged Abul Fazl to translate the Gospel.'

Father Aquaviva reports, in his letter to the General of the Society of Jesus : 'The Emperor is in a more hopeful state than heretofore. He desires to know our Faith and attends to it with greater diligence than at first, showing much affection thereto,—though impediments are not also lacking ; **and the love and familiarity with which he treats us leave nothing to be desired.'**

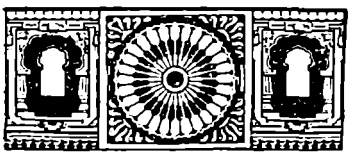
Aquaviva left Akbar finally in 1583. On his way back home, he unfortunately got killed in Goa. When Akbar heard of it, he exclaimed in anguish : 'Ah me, Father ! Did I not tell you not to go away ? But you would not listen to me ! '

WE learn from the good Father Monserrate that Akbar sincerely loved Aquaviva 'not because he

himself wished to become a Christian, but because he recognised the intense conviction of the Father in the truth of his own religion and his desire to bring others to his own way of life.' This is a true representation of the attitude of Akbar towards all men of religion, whatever the faith they professed. Hence he attracted to himself teachers so divers as, for instance, the Parsi Dastur Meherjee Rana of Nausari and the Jaina Hiravijaya Suri of Satrunjaya (near Palitana). From the former Akbar imbibed his adoration of the Sun ; and from the latter his compassion for all living creatures.

Akbar's gifts to followers of all sects are well-known. The descendants of the Dastur are even now in possession of lands donated by Akbar in the sixteenth century. Likewise, a Sanskrit epigraph in the Adisvara Temple at Satrunjaya, praising both the **'Jagat-Guru'** and Akbar, may be still read by visitors. The honorific **'Jagat-Guru'** was bestowed upon Hiravijaya Suri by Akbar. The famous Golden Temple of Amritsar, too, stands on grounds endowed by Akbar in the days of Guru Amar Das.

All this goes to corroborate Jahangir's statement in his **Tuzuk : "My father always associated with the learned of every creed and religion,** especially the Pandits and the learned men of India ; and **although he was illiterate, so much became clear to him through constant intercourse with the learned and wise, in his conversations with them, that no one knew him to be illiterate ;** and he was so well acquainted with the niceties of prose and verse compositions, that his deficiency was not thought of."



7

THE ASPIRATIONS OF AKBAR

What Akbar sought in life is more important than all he got out of it. An inscription on the Buland Darwaza—the biggest archway in India—confesses to the vanity of all human ambitions : 'The world is a bridge,' it declares, 'pass over it, but do not attempt to build on it... Do not call anything your own which is not spent in charity.' 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, except to love God,' declares the Psalmist in the Bible. Akbar laboriously, and at enormous cost, built Fatehpur-Sikri in fifteen years only to abandon it during the remaining twenty years of his life (1585-1605). This is, in a sense, symbolic of Akbar's total achievement and aspirations.

Once, in the course of a discussion with some

learned men, he quoted a Persian couplet declaring :

'Hath earth so prospered 'neath thy care
That Heaven thy vigilance must share ? '

He gathered his honey from various flowers : 'The ear,' as he put it, 'is sentinel to the voice'. Though "illiterate"—'through association with the learned' —he never, or rarely, missed anything he heard.

'Discourses on philosophy have such a charm for me,' he declared, 'that they distract me from all else, and I forcibly restrain myself from listening to them, lest the necessary duties of the hour should be neglected.' For all his interest in the discourses of the Pandits, Akbar was a man of action. 'Although knowledge in itself is regarded as the summit of perfection,' he said, 'yet, unless displayed in action, it bears not the impress of worth ; indeed, it may be considered worse than ignorance.'

Nevertheless, he could not get totally engrossed in action either. We have witnessed some of his recurring fits or moods of renunciation—as, for instance, when he rode away into solitude on his mettlesome Iraqi horse **Hairan,** in 1557, when he was barely fifteen years of age. 'On the completion of my twentieth year,' he says, 'I experienced an internal bitterness, and from the lack of spiritual provision for my last journey, my soul was seized with exceeding sorrow.' In later years he felt : 'if I could find any one capable of governing the kingdom, I would at once place the burden upon his shoulders and withdraw therefrom. . . . Although I am the master of so vast a kingdom, and all the appliances of government are at my hand, yet, since **true greatness consists in doing the will of God,** my mind is not at ease in this diversity of sects and creeds and apart from the outward pomp of circumstance, with what satisfac-

tion (in my despondency) can I undertake the sway of empire? I await the coming of some discreet man of wisdom who will resolve the perplexities of my conscience.'

IN our own time, we find an echo of this reflective mood in Pandit Nehru's **The Discovery of India :** "Often, as I look at this world," writes Nehru, "I have a sense of mysteries, of unknown depths. The urge to understand it, in so far as I can, comes to me ; to be in tune with it and to experience it in its fullness. . . Yet the urge to action was there and a real or imagined co-ordination of that action with the ideals I held. But a growing distate for politics, as I saw them, seized me and gradually my whole attitude to life seemed to undergo a transformation."

He goes on to say : **"The real problems for me remain problems of individual and social life, of harmonious living, of a proper balancing, of an individual's inner and outer life, of the adjustment of the relations between individuals and between groups, of a continuous becoming something better and higher, of social development, of the ceaseless adventure of man."**

AKBAR'S basic problem was not different, though its solution depended on his individuality and the circumstances of his time. 'There exists a bond,' he said, 'between the Creator and the creature which is not expressible in language. The existence of creatures depends on no other bond than this. Whosoever is gifted with this wisdom shall reach a higher perfection ; whosoever habituates himself to preserve this sacred relation, will be withheld from it by no other occupation.'

Akbar was, nonetheless, carved out for an imperial role—not for being a 'world-shunning' ascetic. 'From the practice of asceticism,' he said 'the transition is easy to unlawful mendicancy.' Besides, 'the grace of God is shed upon all' ; it is not reserved only for a few who seek it in a special way : 'though some from unpreparedness . . . or incapacity are unable to profit by it.'

Nor could Akbar rest satisfied with the ritualistic way of worshipping God. 'The object of outward worship,' he declared, 'is for awakening slumberers ; otherwise the praise of God comes from the heart, not the body.'

'The superiority of man,' he said, 'rests on the jewel of reason. It is meet that he should labour in burnishing it, and turn not from its instruction. A man is the disciple of his own reason. If it has naturally a good lustre, it becomes itself his director ; and if it gains it under the direction of a higher mind, it is still a guide. . . . If imitation were commendable, the Prophets would have followed their predecessors.'

THERE were spiritual guides in Akbar's time, as in all ages. But Akbar possessed the discerning eye to discriminate between the false prophets and the true. 'The office of a spiritual director,' he clearly recognised, 'is to discern the state of the soul and to set about its reform ; it does not lie in growing the locks of an Ethiop and patching a tattered robe, and holding discourses to an audience. By guidance is meant indication of the road —not the gathering together of disciples.' He further asks : 'If in ailments of the body which are visible, its physicians have made and do make such errors of treatment, in the disorders of the soul

which is invisible, and its remedies scarce attainable, what medicine will avail ? '

'ONE night,' says Akbar, 'my heart was weary of the burden of life, when suddenly between sleeping and waking, a strange vision appeared to me, and my spirit was somewhat comforted.'

It was evidently one of those mysterious moments —like the one during the great **Shikar** he called off in 1578—'when the attraction of the Vision of God cast its halo over him.' Badauni tells us that in 1575 (three years before the above incident) Akbar —returning from a series of great victories—'spent whole nights praising God. His heart was full of reverence for Him who is the true Giver ; and, from a feeling of thankfulness for his past successes, he would sit many a morning alone in prayer and meditation—on a large flat stone of an old building, which lay near the palace in a lovely spot —with his head bent over his breast, gathering the Bliss of the early hours of dawn ! '

From Jahangir, too, we learn that Akbar 'passed his nights in wakefulness and slept little in the day : the length of his sleep during a whole night and day was not more than a watch and a half (about three hours). He counted his wakefulness at night as so much added to his life.'

'UNEASY,' indeed, 'lies the head that wears a crown ; ' and the Mughal **gadi** was no bed of roses. But, as Abul Fazl tells us, Akbar saw in the performance of his duties 'a means of pleasing God : ' 'in the magnanimity of his heart, he never thinks of his own perfection,—though he is the ornament of the world.'

From Abul Fazl's faithful reporting we obtain a glimpse of the impression Akbar made on his sensitive contemporaries. 'Whenever, from lucky circumstances,' he writes, 'the time arrives that a nation learns to understand how to worship Truth, the people will naturally look to their King on account of the high position which he occupies, and expect him to be their spiritual leader as well; for a King possesses, independent of men, the ray of wisdom which banishes from his heart everything that is conflicting. A King will, therefore, sometimes observe the element of harmony in a multitude of things, or sometimes, conversely, a multitude of things in that which is one; for he sits on the throne of distinction, and is thus equally removed from joy or sorrow.'

The **Din-e-Ilahi** was the ripe fruit of Akbar's idealistic aspirations. It is astonishing to find his erudite biographer Dr. V. A. Smith, describing it as "a monument of Akbar's folly." The Jesuit writer Bartoli hit the 'bull's-eye' when he summed up Akbar's views thus: 'For an Empire ruled by one head, it was a bad thing to have the members divided among themselves and at variance one with another. . . . We ought, therefore, to bring them all into one, but in such a fashion that they should be **one** and **all,** with the great advantage of not losing what is good in any one religion, while gaining whatever is better in another. **In that way honour would be rendered to God, peace would be given to the peoples, and security to the Empire.'**

Smith lays too much store by his "hostile witnesses": Badauni and the Jesuits. Badauni was too bigoted to be able to appreciate Akbar's eclecticism; while the Jesuit priests found Akbar too elusive for their hopes to convert him to Christia-

nity. Yet, as we saw in the last chapter, Akbar treated both with understanding and magnanimity.

Akbar's idea of kingship was far above the ordinary. He thought that the monarch should be 'a cause of pre-eminent good ;' that 'sovereignty is a supreme blessing, for its advantages extend to multitudes' ; that 'tyranny is unlawful in everyone, especially in a sovereign who is the guardian of the world' ; and that 'Divine worship in monarchs consists in their justice and good administration.'

'The reform of the manners of the people'—which Abul Fazl places first in his objectives for rulers—Akbar carried out with characteristic thoroughness. No better evidence of this could be cited than Badauni's "hostile" testimony. Among the "evils" he attributes to Akbar—on account of his 'fraternising too closely with the Hindus and the exaltation of reason above faith'—are : (1) prohibition of cow-slaughter ; (2) prohibition or control of wine-drinking ; (3) prohibition of marriages between 'cousins or near relations—because such marriages are destructive of love' ; (4) permitting of reconversion of forcibly converted Hindus or Muslims ; and (5) segregation of prostitutes to a quarter of the city called **'Shaitanpura',** and their supervision and control by a **Darogah.**

Badauni, does not, however, fail also to mention reforms which irked conservatives among Hindus as well. For instance, Akbar permitted widows who desired to do so, to re-marry—'though this was against the ideas of the Hindus ;' 'a Hindu girl whose husband had died before marriage was consummated, should not be burnt' ; if a Hindu woman wished to be burnt with her husband, they should not prevent her, **'but she should not be forced ;'** boys should not marry before the age of 16, and

girls before 14—'because the offspring of early marriages are weaklings'.

But above all, Akbar laid it down that 'people should not be molested if they wished to build churches, prayer-rooms, or idol-temples, or fire-temples. **No man should be interfered with on account of his religion; and everyone should be free to change his religion, if he liked.'**

Tolerance was the key-note of Akbar's policy as a ruler, even as mysticism was his prevailing personal inclination. His royal seal bore the significant inscription:

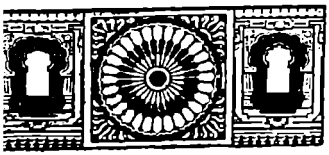
'Truth is the means of pleasing God:
I never saw any one lost on the right road.'

He was tolerant because his conception of Truth was not dogmatic or one-sided. Tennyson makes Akbar say:

'Look how the pulse of Allah beats
Thro' all this world. If every single star
Should shriek its claim: "I only am in heaven",
Why that were such sphere-music as the Greek
Had hardly dream'd of. **There is light in all,**
And light, with more or less of shade in all.'

His **Din-e-Ilahi** was, therefore, intended—

'To hunt the tiger of oppression out
From Office; and to spread the Divine Faith
Like calming oil on all their stormy creeds,
And fill the hollows between wave and wave;
To nurse my children on the milk of Truth,
And alchemise old hates into gold
Of Love, and make it current.'



8

THE AGE OF AKBAR

A century before Abul Fazl completed his monumental work (in 1598) Vasco da Gama reached Calicut on the Malabar coast (in 1498). Those were momentous times when Columbus started on his great adventure across the Atlantic, and Megallan on his maiden voyage round the world. Exploration and discovery were not, however, confined to the surface of the earth, but extended to celestial bodies in their courses, and even to anatomy under the very skin of man. 1543 stands out as "the birth-year of modern science," observes H. J. Randall in his excellent book on **The Creative Centuries,** "because it was the date of publication of two works upon widely different subjects, but **"both revolutionary in their respective spheres—De Corporis Humani Fabrica** by Vasalius, and **De Revolutionibus**

Orbium Celestium by Copernicus." These were among the first fruits of the Renaissance in Europe.

The Renaissance and the Reformation were together powerfully transforming Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As epoch-making events, these upheavals—at once intellectual, cultural, and religious—were unprecedented. Their outstanding features may be indicated by reference to some of the representative men of that age : (1) Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), (2) Erasmus (1466-1536), and Luther (1483-1546),—in the first instance.

"If we are to choose one figure to stand for all time as the incarnation of the true spirit of the Renaissance," writes Sir William Whetham, "we should point to the majetstic form of Leonardo da Vinci." Poet, artist, and scientist, his genius was directed to engineering, architecture and mathematics. He even anticipated the discovery of the airship of which he constructed models. His 'Mona Lisa' and 'The Last Supper' are world-famous works of art. Especially in his intellectual temper, Leonardo appeared to bear kinship with Akbar as reflected in some of his sayings : 'Where reason is not', da Vinci declared, 'its place is taken by clamour ; therefore, where there are quarrels, there true science is not ; because truth can only end one way.'

Erasmus was an international figure. Born a Dutchman, he lived successively in France, Italy, Germany, and England,—and died in Switzerland. He was the foremost educator of his time—'the example and envy of scholars, and the familiar correspondent of Popes, Emperors, kings and statesmen.' According to Sir R. C. Jebb : "Of all scholars who have popularised scholarly literature,

Erasmus was the most brilliant—the man whose aims were loftiest, and who produced lasting effects over the widest area . . . to prepare the fruits which each land was to bring forth in its own way." Himself a Roman Catholic, Erasmus was in sympathy with the reformist Luther, but 'too intellectual to be a partisan.'

Luther, on the contrary, was a stormy petrel and born rebel. Though a monk himself, he denounced the abuses of the church in scathing terms. His famous "95 theses" fixed on a church door at Wittenburg (Germany) led to his excommunication by the Pope in 1520. Luther publicly burned the Pope's Bull of Excommunication, and with it the books of Canon Law. The Reformation thus violently started by him very soon divided Europe into Protestant **versus** Catholic, Northern **versus** Southern, one denomination against another ; and, finally, one nation against another. The trail of religious and national wars incited by it has not yet ended, though the causes of conflict are no longer "religious" but "ideological" or economic and political. Nevertheless, **intolerance is their root-cause :** the very antithesis of the tolerance preached and practised by Akbar and Abul Fazl. As Randall says : "Protestantism in the beginning was no more tolerant than Catholicism ; in fact all men who know little and believe much are by nature intolerant."

The treatment accorded to Galileo (1564-1642) is typical of the spirit of the age of Akbar outside India. Galileo's experimental corroboration of the Copernican discovery—that the earth moves round the sun, not **vice versa**—led him into prison. The cardinals of the Inquisition who condemned him declared : "In the most holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ and His most glorious Virgin Mother Mary, we decree that Galileo's books be prohibited by

public edict; and we condemn their writer to the formal prison of this Holy Office for a period determinable at our pleasure."

Two other eminent European contemporaries of Akbar—representing the brighter side of the scene —were the Italian Michelangelo (1475-1564) and the Dutchman Hugo Grotius (1583-1645). The former, like Leonardo da Vinci, was a typical product of the age. He was the greatest of the Renaissance artists—painter, sculptor, architect and poet. "His verse is ranked among the finest examples of Italian poetry."

Hugo Grotius was the founder of modern International Law. His work in Latin entitled **De Jure Belli et Pacis** was published in France in 1625. He was an exile from Holland where he was convicted for treason and sentenced to imprisonment for life —"the penalty in those days of political opposition." Grotius was a tolerant Protestant who recognised that **'men had equal rights even if they were infidels,** and that the world of man and the empire of law extended beyond the limits of Christendom.'

Such was Europe in the Age of Akbar. Its repercussions in India, though slight, were not without significance.

We referred before to the Portuguese occupation of Goa, in 1510, and its administration under Albuquerque. We also have had glimpses of Akbar's cordial relations with some of the Jesuit fathers who visited him. There was another Jesuit in Goa, since 1579, who was a scholar from Oxford. He came from the England of Shakespeare and Elizabeth, and composed a unique work in old Marathi called the **Christa-Purana** running into 11,000 strophes. He also wrote the first Konkani grammar. But, like Tulasi Das, he had no contact with Akbar.

Besides the Jesuit priests and possibly some Portuguese laymen, three Englishmen met Akbar at Agra. Two of them were Envoys of Queen Elizabeth—John Newbury (1583) and John Mildenhall (1603). The third was Ralph Fitch, a merchant from London.

These were among the first Englishmen to arrive in India. They landed in Goa, with the exception of Mildenhall who came to Lahore **via** Kandahar by the land route. Their persecution as "heretics" at the hands of the Portuguese sharply contrasted with their cordial reception by Akbar.

Mildenhall presented to Akbar some valuable Iraqi horses as **nasrana** from Queen Elizabeth, and received in return gifts worth £500. He naively requested Akbar not to take offence if they should seize ships or goods of the Portuguese at ports belonging to the Emperor. The Jesuits retaliated by silencing the interpreters with bribes. So Mildenhall had to sweat over his Persian for six months in order to be able to speak for himself. The English were denounced by the Portuguese as a nation of disreputable scamps.

Incidentally, Fitch observed that 'Agra and Fatehpore are two very great cities, either of them much greater than London and very populous.'

CHINA, too, under its Ming rulers, was very prosperous in the era of Akbar. There was peace and good government there, and trade facilitated by the use of a paper currency. Arts and culture flourished under the Mings: splendid edifices were raised, excellent porcelain wares produced, and beautiful paintings executed. "China at the end of the fifteenth century was far ahead of Europe in wealth, industry, and culture. During the whole of the Ming period, no country in Europe or else-

where could compare with China in the happiness and artistic activity of its people." (Nehru, **Glimpses of World History**).

The entry of the Portuguese at Canton, in 1516, introduced the virus of religious discord for the first time into China. Their misbehaviour and barbarities awakened the rulers to the danger, and they felt constrained to "drive the whole lot of them out." The Portuguese realised that their methods did not pay in China and changed their tactics. In 1557—the year following Akbar's victory over Hemu at Panipat—they obtained permission to settle down peacefully at Canton.

St. Francis Xavier who had spent forty years in India was one of the Christian missionaries who went to China in those days. But he died before he was allowed to land. Two other Jesuits disguised as Buddhists secured entrance, and studied Chinese. One of them, named Metteo Ricci, acquired a great reputation for his scholarship. Through his influence the Christians secured a better footing in China.

IN India, despite their persecutions in Goa, the Portuguese were well treated. That was because of the hospitable traditions of the country as a whole, and Akbar's recent inheritance from liberal rulers like Zain-ul-Abidin of Kashmir (1417-67) and Hussain Shah of Bengal (1493-1518). Saints like Kabir and Guru Nanak—with whom Akbar's century commenced—had fostered the spirit of tolerance and synthesis.

Abidin abolished the **jiziya,** prohibited cow-killing, abstained from flesh-food, encouraged music and painting, and had Sanskrit classics translated into Persian and Arabic. He was greatly inspired in all this by Shaikh Nuruddin, the saint whose

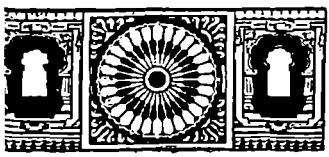
memory is still cherished in Kashmir, equally by the Hindus and the Muslims.

If Abidin was the Akbar of Kashmir, Hussain Shah was the Abidin of Bengal. "The general attitude of the rulers of Bengal to their Hindu subjects," Sir Wolseley Haig remarks in **The Cambridge History of India,** "was tolerant." A Bengali version of the **Mahabharata** was got made under the patronage of Nasrat Shah (Babur's contemporary). Krittivasa's popular Bengali **Ramayana** as well as Maladhar Basu's Bengali **Bhagavata** were also products of this age of enlightened liberalism. The **Satya-Pir** cult propagated by Hussain Shah was precursor to Akbar's **Din-e-Ilahi.**

Kabir's happy synthesis of the best in Hinduism and Islam is well known. When he was halled up before the Sultan and accused of heresy by some bigoted Hindus and Muslims alike, the saint exclaimed with joy: "Today indeed is my mission partially fulfilled : I have caused Hindus and Muslims to come together before an earthly monarch—though out of hatred ; how glorious will be that day when they will unite before the King of Kings out of Love instead of hatred !"

Guru Nanak followed closely in the footsteps of Kabir. "Religion does not consist in mere words," he said ; "he who looks on all men as equals is truly religious. Those that love God love everybody ; and there can be no love of God without active service."

The autobiography of Abul Fazl, presently to be noticed, admirably sums up Akbar's Idealism which has inspired men in all ages to dream of and strive nobly to achieve—**Sulh-i-Kul** or Universal Harmony through a conquest of hearts by Love, instead of breaking heads and hearts by hatred and violence.



9

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ABUL FAZL

Akbar and Abul Fazl were spiritual twins : we cannot comprehend the genius of either without reference to the other. Luckily for us, we have a nice introduction available to us in the autobiographical notes appended to the **Ain-e-Akbari** by Abul Fazl himself. And since Akbar and the Allama, idealists of a high order, were so 'near allied' and shared between them a common Vision, Abul Fazl's self-portraiture is invaluable as reflecting—though indirectly—the mind and heart of Akbar as well. It is a pleasure to know them at first hand in this 'double close-up.' Here we see the actor in the 'green-room', as it were, with little of the 'make-up' of the stage ; we obtain private glimpses of the

dreamer in his 'brown study', and the sculptor with his tools, actually shaping his own image.

'IT was a strange coincidence,' writes Abul Fazl, 'that I should be about the arsenal in search of a sword, while fate would force a pen into my hand; I was examining the burnish of the lance-head, while destiny was sharpening the point of the reed, in order that the ordinances of the sovereign might be reverently proclaimed in the publication of these important records.'

But he was not yet sure of his own capacity: 'I was a prey to conflicting emotions. Since I had not the capacity for this office, and my mind had no inclination to this kind of historiography, I was on the point of declaring my incompetence and standing aside, withdrawing from so onerous a task. But as I was impressed with His Majesty's knowledge of things that are hidden, and with the obligation of responding to his favours by some signal service, I was unable to decline his command. . . . In a little while, I opened my eyes to an interior illumination, and reflected that the royal command was a magic inspiration to literary effort and a talisman for the illumining of wisdom. . . . So with a sincere mind and a lofty determination this complex of sorrow and joy set his face to the duty.'

Even then, 'my chief reliance was in this: that by the Grace of Divine favour, having diligently collected the necessary facts and given a material embodiment to their spiritualised form, the eulogist of the Court of the Caliphate, the erudite scholar of the Imperial House, the First Writer of his age, the Laureate among accomplished poets, Shaikh Abul Faizi—my elder brother and superior—would graciously supervise it; and under the correction of

that master of style, a fresh texture would be hand-woven into the fabric of beauty.'

But fate willed it otherwise; for Faizi died prematurely. Hence Abul Fazl had to launch forth on his own:

'Be it unto the peoples' welfare, Lord,
Beneath the shadow of King Akbar's sway!

THE autobiography really opens with a brief recapitulation of his ancestry: 'To recount briefly, my venerable father—Shaikh Mubarak—after the manner of his ancestors, preserved an exact outward decorum and indulged not in the hearing of songs, nor the vanity of silk attire . . . Inasmuch as he troubled himself little about worldly affairs, his conversation was always regarding the essence and attributes of God; and he took heedful warning, and he led an independent life apart, and gathered the skirts of liberation of spirit, until his august health lost its elementary equilibrium.' Mubarak died in 1593.

'AT the age of seven I became a treasurer of my father's stores of knowledge and a trusty keeper of the jewels of hidden meaning, and as a serpent guarded the treasure . . . Then it was a strange thing that, by a freak of fortune, any heart was disinclined, my will averse, and my disposition repugnant to conventional learning and the ordinary courses of instruction. Generally I could not understand them. . . . Sometimes I could understand nothing at all, at others doubts suggested themselves which my tongue was incapable of explaining. Either shame made me hesitate, or I had not the power of expression. I used to weep in public and put all the blame upon myself. In this state of things I came into fellowship of mind with a congenial helper and my

spirit recovered from that ignorance of incomprehension. The truths of philosophy and the subtleties of the schools now appeared plain, and a book which I had never before seen gave me a clearer insight than anything I could read . . . The more my will was engaged, the more my mind was illumined.

'At the age of twenty, my mind cast off its former bonds and my early bewilderment recurred. With a parade of much learning, the intoxication of youth effervescing, the skirts of pretension spread wide, and the world-displaying cup of wisdom in my hand, the ringings of delirium began to sound in my ears . . .

'Meanwhile, the wise prince-regnant called me to mind, and drew me from my obscurity . . . Here my coin was tested and its full weight passed into currency. Men now view me with a different regard . . .'

IN the final reckoning, Abul Fazl's fame rests on the **Ain-e-Akbari.** As Col. H. S. Jarrett, its erudite English translator, writes : "The range and diversity of its subjects, and the untiring industry which collected and marshalled . . . the many topics of information to the minutest details, treating abstruse sciences, subtle philosophical problems, and the customs—social, political and religious, of a different race and creed—will stand as an enduring monument of Abul Fazl's learned and patient diligence."

Voluminous as the work is, the **Ain-e-Akbari** underwent five revisions, in the course of seven years, before it was presented to Akbar. Abul Fazl left no stone unturned to verify his data before committing his facts and figures to writing.

'I made various inquiries of the principal officers of State and of the grandees and other well-informed

dignitaries; and not content with numerous oral statements, I asked permission to put them into writing; and for each event I took the written testimony of more than twenty intelligent and cautious persons . . . Here was the date of an event not far distant—the actors in the transactions actually present—and I with my eyes open, observing their manifold discrepancies . . . I determined to remedy this and set my mind to work out a solution. . . .

'By deep reflection and a careful scrutiny, taking up the principal points in which there was general agreement, my satisfaction increased; and where the narrators differed from each other, I based my presentation of facts on a footing of discriminate investigation of exact and cautious statements; and this somewhat set my mind at ease. Where the event had equal weight of testimony on both sides, or anything reached my ears opposed to my own view of the question, I submitted it to His Majesty and freed myself from responsibility. . . .

'Although my first efforts were now directed to removing all superfluous repetitions and giving continuity to the easy flow of my exposition, I perceived the incomplete arrangement of my fresh materials and the due ordering of this was undertaken (for the fifth time) . . .'

Finally, 'I formed a resolution for the **sixth time** to set my mind free . . . and to exercise the most minute and fastidious criticism; but the frequent calls upon me made by His Majesty left me no time.'

With a sigh of relief, he concludes: 'Within the space of seven years, by the aid of a resolute will and a lofty purpose, a compendious survey, covering a period from Adam down to the sacred person of the prince-regnant, has been finished; and from the birth of His Imperial Majesty to this day, which is

the 42nd of the Divine Era, the occurrences of fifty-five years of that nurseling of grace have been felicitously recorded, and my mind has been lightened in some degree of its stupendous burden.'

APART from the rare historical value of the **Ain-e-Akbari** and the encyclopaedic character of its contents, it is unique for the light it throws on the Idealism of both its author and Akbar who inspired its composition. From this point of view, Abul Fazl's Preface to the **Ain-e-Akbari** is invaluable for its clear-headed diagnosis of the disease of social disharmony which afflicted humanity then, even as it does our world today. Like Akbar Abul Fazl, too, was incorrigibly philosophical.

'It was indispensable for me, therefore, to bring into open evidence the system of philosophy, the degrees of self-discipline, and the gradations of rite and usage of the Hindu race, in order that hostility towards them might abate, and the temporal sword be stayed awhile from the shedding of blood, that dissensions within and without be turned to peace, and the thornbrake of strife and enmity bloom into a garden of concord. Assemblies for discussion by science suitably convened.

'Notwithstanding that, at all periods of time, excellent resolutions and well-intentioned designs are to be witnessed, and the world is never lacking in prudent men, why does misunderstanding arise, and what are the causes of contention?

'The **first** cause is the diversity of tongues and the misapprehension of mutual purposes; and thus the alloy of ill-will is introduced, and the dust of discord arise. . . .

'Secondly, the distance that separates the learned of Hindustan from scientific men of other nationalities who are thus unable to come together. . . .

'Thirdly, the absorption of mankind in the delights of corporeal gratification; and the glitter of this deceptive world lets fall a veil of ignorance before their eyes. What must be their state, and how may grace illumine for them the lamp of guidance?

'Fourthly, men prefer ease to exertion. They will not undertake the trouble of deep investigation, and are content with a superficial view. He alone is a true promoter of wisdom who, under the guidance of assiduous research, plants his foot on the dread wilds of investigation and reaches the goal of his ambition, undismayed by countless labours, by the force of capacity on the shoulders of his ever resolute will.

'Fifthly, the blowing of the chill blast of inflexible custom, and the low flicker of the lamp of wisdom. . . .

From immemorial time, the exercise of inquiry has been restricted, and investigation and questioning have been regarded as precursors of infidelity. Whatever has been received from father, director, kindred, friend, or neighbour, is considered as a deposit under Divine sanction, and a malcontent is reproached with impiety or irreligion.

'Although a few among the intelligent of this generation admit the imbecility of this procedure in others, yet will they not stir one step in a practical direction themselves.

'Sixthly, the uprising of the whirlwind of animosity and the storms of persecution have stayed the few earnest inquirers from uniting to discuss their individual tenets, and from meeting in friendly assemblies in a spirit of sympathy, and from distinguishing commonalty of bond from vital estrangement,

under the guidance of impartiality, in order that error may be severed from truth, and the why and the wherefore weighed in the scales of sound judgment.

'Arrogance and self-interest have intervened, and occasions have been marred by perplexities. Some have taken refuge in silence, or in equivocation, while still others have saved themselves by time-serving utterances. Each one regarding his own persuasion alone as true, has set himself to the persecution of other worshippers of God, and the shedding of blood, and the ruining of reputations has become a symbol of religious orthodoxy.

'Were the eyes of the mind possessed of true Vision, each individual would withdraw from this undiscriminating turmoil, and attend rather to his own solicitudes than interfere in the concerns of others. Amidst such unseemly discords, many purposes are set aside and arguments disregarded.

'If the doctrine of an enemy be in itself good, why should hands be stained with the blood of its professors ? and even were it otherwise, the sufferer from the malady of folly deserves commiseration,—not hostility and the shedding of blood.'

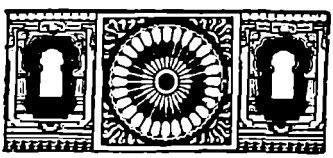
WE have referred before to the tragic end of Abul Fazl in 1602. There is a pathetic irony in the closing words of his autobiography :

'On this day, which is the last of the 42nd year of His Majesty's reign (A.D. 1598) my spirit again breaks away from its yoke, and a new solicitude arises within me.

'My songster heart knows not King David's strains;
Let it go free—'tis no bird for a cage !

'I know not how it will end, nor in what resting-place my last journey will have to be made; but from the beginning of my existence until now, the grace of God has continuously kept me under its protection. It is my firm hope that my last moments be spent in doing His will, and that I may pass unburdened to eternal rest!'

ALLAH HO AKBAR!



APPENDIX 1

AKBAR'S POET LAUREATE FAIZI

We have noticed before the eminent place occupied by Abul Fazl's brother Faizi among the close Associates of Akbar. In view of his status as Poet Laureate as well as his great influence on Akbar's idealism, we give below what Abul Fazl wrote about him in the **Ain-e-Akbari** with a few selections from his songs.

" Poets ", writes Abul Fazl, " strike out a road to the inaccessible realm of thought, and divine grace beams forth in their genius." Proceeding to describe the genius of Faizi, he continues : " He was a man of cheerful disposition, liberal, active, an early riser. He was a disciple of the emperor, and was thus at peace with the whole world. His Majesty understood the value of his genius and conferred

upon him the title of **Malikush-Shuara,** or King of Poets. He wrote for nearly forty years under the name of **Faizi,** which he afterwards, under divine inspiration, changed to **Fayyozi.** His excellent manners and habits cast a lustre on his genius. He was eminently distinguished in several branches. He composed many works in Persian and Arabic.

"He looked upon wealth as the means of engendering poverty (i.e. spiritually), and adversity was in his eyes an ornament to cheerfulness. The door of his house was open to relations and strangers, friends and foes; and the poor were comforted in his dwelling.... He was profound in philosophy; what he had read with his eyes was nourishment for the heart. He deeply studied medicine, and gave poor people advice gratis. The gems of thought in his poems will never be forgotton."

Here are a few illustrations:

1. O man, thou coin bearing the double stamp of body and spirit, I do not know what thy nature is; for thou art higher than heaven and lower than earth.
2. Do not be cast down, because thou art a mixture of the four elements; do not be self-complacent, because thou art the mirror of the seven realms (the earth).
3. Thy frame contains the image of the heavenly and the lower regions; be either heavenly or earthly, thou art at liberty to choose.
4. Be attentive, weigh the coin, for thou art a correct balance (i.e. thou hast the power of correctly knowing thyself), sight thy atoms well; for thou art the philosopher's stone.
5. Learn to understand thy value; for the

heaven buys thy light, in order to bestow it upon the planets.

6. Do not act against thy reason, for it is a trustworthy counsellor ; put not thy heart on illusions, for it (the heart) is a lying fool.
7. Why art thou an enemy to thyself, that from want of perfection thou shouldst weary thy better nature and cherish thy senses (or tongue)?
8. Be ashamed of the appearance ; for thou pridest thyself on the title of ' Sum total ', and art yet but a marginal note.
9. If such be the charm of thy being, thou hadst better die ; for the eye of the world regards thee as an optical illusion.
10. If on this hunting-ground thou wouldst but unfold the wing of resolution, thou wouldst be able to catch even the phoenix with sparrow feathers.

* * *

1. O thou who existest from eternity and abidest for ever, sight cannot bear thy light, praise cannot express thy perfection.
2. Thy light melts the understanding, and thy glory baffles wisdom ; to think of thee destroys reason, thy essence confounds thought.
3. Thy holiness pronounces that the blood drops of human meditation are shed in vain in search of thy knowledge ; human understanding is but an atom of dust.
4. Science is like blinding desert sand on the road to thy perfection ; the town of literature is a mere hamlet compared with the world of thy knowledge.
5. My foot has no power to travel on this path which misleads sages ; I have no power to

bear the odour of this wine, it confounds my knowledge.

6. Man's so called foresight and guiding reason wander about bewildered in the streets of the city of thy glory.
7. Human knowledge and thought combined can only spell the first letter of the alphabet of thy love.
8. Whatever our tongue can say, and our pen can write, of thy being is all empty sound and deceiving scribble.
9. Each brain is full of the thought of grasping thee; the brow of Plato even burned with the fever heat of this hopeless thought.
10. O that thy grace would cleanse my brain; for, if not, my restlessness will end in madness.

ADORATION OF AKBAR

He (Akbar) is a king of whom, on account of his wisdom, we call **Zufunun** (Possessor of the sciences), and our guide on the path of religion.

Although kings are the shadow of God on earth, he is the emanation of God's light. How then can we call him a shadow?

He is a king who opens at night the door of bliss, who shows the road at night to those who are in darkness.

Who even once by day beholds his face, sees at night the sun rising in his dream.

If you wish to see the path of guidance as I have done, you will never see it without having seen the king.

Thy old-fashioned prostration is of no advantage to thee — see Akbar, and you see God.

O King, give me at night the lamp of hope, bestow upon my taper the everlasting ray.

Of the light which illumines the eye of thy heart,
give me an atom, by the light of the sun.

—Faizi

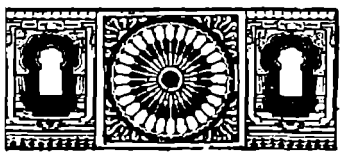
NOTE ON THE MUSICIANS at the court of Akbar :

"His Majesty," writes Abul Fazl, "pays much attention to music, and is the patron of all who practice this enchanting art. There are numerous musicians at court, Hindus, Iranis, Turanis, Kashmiris, both men and women. . . . When His Majesty gives the orders, they let the wine of harmony flow, and thus increase intoxication in some, and sobriety in others.

A detailed description of this class of people would be too difficult; but I shall mention the principal musicians : they were—

1. Miyan Tansen, of Gwalior. "A singer like him has not been in India for the last thousand years."
2. Baba Ramdas of Gwalior, a singer.
3. Subhan Khan of Gwalior, a singer.
4. Srigyan Khan of Gwalior, a singer.
5. Miyan Chand of Gwalior, a singer.
6. Bichitr Khan, brother of Subhan Khan, a singer.
7. Muhammad Khan Dhari, sings.
8. Bir Mandal Khan, of Gwalior, plays on the **Sarmandal.**
9. Baz Bahadur, ruler of Malwa, "a singer without rival."
10. Shihad Khan, of Gwalior, performs on the **bin.**
11. Daud Dhari, sings.

12. Sarod Khan, of Gwalior, sings.
13. Miyan Lal of Gwalior, sings.
14. Tantarang Khan, son of Miyan Tansen, sings.
15. Mulla Is-haq Dhari, sings.
16. Usta Dost, of Mashad, plays on the flute **(nai).**
17. Nanak Jarjee, of Gwalior, a singer.
18. Purbin Khan his son, plays on the **bin.**
19. Sur Das, son of Babu Ramdas, a singer.
20. Chand Khan of Gwalior, sings.
21. Rangsen of Agra, sings.
22. Shaikh Dawan Dhari, performs on the **Karana.**
23. Rahmat Ullah, brother of Mulla Is-haq (No. 15).
24. Mir Sayyid Ali, of Mashad, plays on the **ghichak.**
25. Usta Yusuf, of Harat, plays on the **tamburah.**
26. Qasim, surnamed Koh-bar, **" He has invented an instrument,** intermediate between the **qubuz** and the **rubab."**
27. Tash Beg, of Lipchaq, plays on the **qubuz.**
28. Sultan Hafiz Husain, of Mashad, chants.
29. Bahram Quli, of Harat, plays on the **ghichak.**
30. Sultan Hashim, of Mashad, plays on the **tamburah.**
31. Usta Shah Muhammad, plays on the **surna.**
32. Usta Muhammad Amin, plays on **tamburah.**
33. Hafiz Khwajah Ali, of Mashad, chants.
34. Mir Abdullah, brother of Mir Abdul Hai, plays on the **Qanun.**
35. Pirzadah, nephew of Mir Dawan, of Khurasan sings and chants.
36. Usta Muhammad Husain, plays the **tamburah.**



APPENDIX 2

AKBAR'S DREAM

by

Alfred Tennyson

An Inscription by Abul Fazl for a—Temple in Kashmir (Blochmann xxxii):

O GOD in every temple I see people that see thee, and in every language I hear spoken, people praise thee.

Polytheism and Islám feel after thee.

Each religion says, 'Thou art one, without equal.'

If it be a mosque people murmur the holy prayer, and if it be a Christian Church, people ring the bell from love to Thee.

Sometimes I frequent the Christian cloister, and sometimes the mosque.

But it is thou whom I search from temple to temple.

Thy elect have no dealings with either heresy or orthodoxy; for neither of them stands behind the screen of thy truth.

Heresy to the heretic, and religion to the orthodox.

But the dust of the rose-petal belongs to the heart of the perfume seller.

Akbar and Abul Fazl before the palace at Fatephur-Sikri at night

'Light of the nations' ask'd his Chronicler
Of Akbar: 'What has darken'd thee tonight?'
Then, after one quick glance upon the stars,
And turning slowly toward him, Akbar said:
'The shadow of a dream—an idle one
It may be. Still I raised my heart to heaven,
I pray'd against the dream. To pray, to do—
To pray, to do according to the prayer,
Are, both, to worship Alla, but the prayers,
That have no successor in deed, are faint
And pale in Alla's eyes, fair mothers they
Dying in childbirth of dead sons. I vow'd
Whate'er my dreams, I still would do the right
Thro' all the vast dominion which a sword,
That only conquers men to conquer peace,
Has won me. Alla be my guide!
But come,
My noble friend, my faithful counsellor,
Sit by my side. While thou art one with me,
I seem no longer like a lonely man
In the king's garden, gathering here and there
From each fair plant the blossom choicest-grown
To wreathe a crown not only for the king
But in due time for every Mussulmân,
Brahmin, and Buddhist, Christian, and Parsee,
Thro' all the warring world of Hindustan.
Well spake thy brother in his hymn to heaven:
"Thy glory baffles wisdom. All the tracks
Of science making toward Thy Perfectness
Are blinding desert sand; we scarce can spell

The Alif of Thine alphabet of Love."
He knows Himself, men nor themselves nor Him,
For every splinter'd fraction of a sect
Will clamour "I am on the Perfect Way,
All else is to perdition."
Shall the rose
Cry to the lotus "No flower thou"? the palm
Call to the cypress "I alone am fair"?
The mango spurn the melon at his foot?
"Mine is the one fruit Alla made for man."
Look how the living pulse of Alla beats
Thro' all His world. If every single star
Should shriek its claim "I only am in heaven"
Why that were such sphere-music as the Greek
Had hardly dream'd of. There is light in all,
And light, with more or less of shade, in all
Man-modes of worship; but our Ulama,
Who "sitting on green sofas contemplate
The torment of the damn'd" already, these
Are like wild brutes new-caged—the narrower
The cage, the more their fury. Me they front
With sullen brows. What wonder! I decreed
That even the dog was clean, that men may taste
Swine-flesh, drink wine; they know too that whene'er
In our free Hall, where each philosophy
And mood of faith may hold its own, they blurt
Their furious formalisms, I but hear
The clash of tides that meet the narrow seas,—
Not the Great Voice not the true Deep.
To drive
A people from their ancient fold of Faith,
And wall them up perforce in mine—unwise,
Unkinglike;—and the morning of my reign
Was redden'd by that cloud of shame when I . . .
I hate the rancour of their castes and creeds,
I let men worship as they will, I reap

No revenue from the field of unbelief.
I cull from every faith and race the best
And bravest soul for counsellor and friend.
I loathe the very name of infidel.
I stagger at the Korân and the sword.
I shudder at the Christian and the stake;
Yet "Alla," says their sacred book, "is Love,"
And when the Goan Padre quoting Him,
Issa Ben Mariam, his own prophet, cried
"Love one another little ones" and "bless"
Whom? even "your persecutors", there methought
The cloud was rifted by a purer gleam
Than glances from the sun of our Islâm.

And thou rememberest what a fury shook
Those pillars of a moulder'd faith, when he,
That other, prophet of their fall, proclaimed
His Master as "the Sun of Righteousness,"
Yea, Alla here on earth, who caught and held
His people by the bridle-rein of Truth.

What art thou saying? "And was not Alla call'd
In old Irân the Sun of Love? and Love
The net of Truth?"

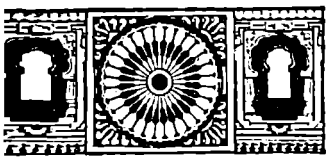
A voice from old Irân!
Nay, but I know it—**his,** the hoary Sheik,
On whom the women shrieking "Atheist" flung
Filth from the roof, the mystic melodist
Who all but lost himself in Alla, him
Abû Saîd——

—a sun but dimly seen
Here, till the mortal morning mists of earth
Fade in the noon of heaven, when creed and race
Shall bear false witness, each of each, no more,
But find their limits by that larger light,
And overstep them, moving easily
Thro' after-ages in the love of Truth,
The truth of Love.

The sun, the sun ! they rail
At me the Zoroastrian. Let the Sun,
Who heats our earth to yield us grain and fruit,
And laughs upon thy field as well as mine,
And warms the blood of Shiah and Sunnee,
Symbol the Eternal ! Yea and may not kings
Express Him also by their warmth of love
For all they rule—by equal law for all ?
By deeds a light to men ?
But no such light
Glanced from our Presence on the face of one,
Who breaking in upon us yestermorn,
With all the Hells a-glare in either eye,
Yell'd "hast **thou** brought us down a new Korân
From heaven ? art **thou** the Prophet ? canst **thou** work
Miracles ?" and the wild horse, anger, plunged
To fling me, and fail'd. Miracles ! no, not I
Nor he, nor any. I can but lift the torch
Of reason in the dusky cave of Life,
And gaze on this great miracle, the World,
Adoring That who made, and makes, and is,
And is not, what I gaze on—all else Form,
Ritual, varying with the tribes of men.
Ay but, my friend, thou knowest I hold that forms
Are needful: only let the hand that rules,
With politic care, with utter gentleness,
Mould them for all his people.
And what are forms ?
Fair garments, plain or rich, and fitting close
Or flying looselier, warm'd but by the heart
Within them, moved but by the living limb,
And cast aside, when old, for newer,—Forms !
The Spiritual in Nature's market-place—
The silent Alphabet-of-heaven-in-man

Made vocal—banners blazoning a Power
That is not seen and rules from far away—
A silken cord let down from Paradise,
When fine Philosophies would fail, to draw
The crowd from wallowing in the mire of earth,
And all the more, when these behold their Lord,
Who shaped the forms, obey them, and himself
Here on this bank in **some** way live the life
Beyond the bridge, and serve that Infinite
Within us, as without, that All-in-all,
And over all, the never-changing One
And ever-changing Many, in praise of Whom
The Christian bell, the cry from off the mosque,
And vaguer voice of Polytheism
Make but one music, harmonising "Pray."
There westward—under yon slow-falling star,
The Christians own a Spiritual Head;
And following thy true counsel, by thine aid,
Myself am such in our Islâm, for no
Mirage of glory, but for power to fuse
My myriads into union under one;
To hunt the tiger of oppression out
From Office; and to spread the Divine Faith
Like calming oil on all their stormy creeds,
And fill the hollows between wave and wave;
To nurse my children on the milk of Truth,
And alchemise old hates into the gold
Of Love, and make it current; and beat back
The menacing poison of intolerant priests,
Those cobras ever setting up their hoods—
One Alla! one Kalifa!
Still—at times
A doubt, a fear,—and yester afternoon
I dream'd—thou knowest how deep a well of love
My heart is for my son, Saleem, mine heir,—
And yet so wild and wayward that my dream—

He glares askance at thee as one of those
Who mix the wines of heresy in the cup
Of counsel—so—I pray thee—
Well, I dream'd
That stone by stone I rear'd a sacred fane,
A temple, neither Pagod, Mosque, nor Church,
But loftier, simpler, always open-door'd
To every breath from heaven, and Truth and Peace
And Love and Justice came and dwelt therein;
But while we stood rejoicing, I and thou,
I heard a mocking laugh: "the new Korân!"
And on the sudden, and with a cry "Saleem"
Thou, thou—I saw thee fall before me, and then
Me too the black-wing'd Azrael overcame,
But Death had ears and eyes; I watch'd my son,
And those that follow'd, loosen, stone from stone,
All my fair work; and from the ruin arose
The shriek and curse of trampled millions, even
As in the time before; but while I groan'd,
From out the sunset pour'd an alien race,
Who fitted stone to stone again, and Truth,
Peace, Love and Justice came and dwelt therein,
Nor in the field without were seen or heard
Fires of Súttee, nor wail of baby-wife,
Or Indian widow; and in sleep I said
"All praise to Alla by whatever hands
My mission be accomplish'd!" but we hear
Music: our palace is awake, and morn
Has lifted the dark eyelash of the Night
From off the rosy cheek of waking Day.
Our hymn to the sun. They sing it. Let us go.'



APPENDIX 3

SOME FOREIGN ESTIMATES OF AKBAR

"Akbar's great idea was the union of all India under one head.... His code was the grandest of codes for a ruler, for the founder of an empire. They were the principles by accepting which his western successors maintain it at the present day, (1908). Certainly, though his European contemporaries were the most eminent of their respective countries (Elizabeth in England and Henry IV in France), he need not shrink from comparison even with these. His reputation is built upon deeds which lived after him.... The foundations dug by Akbar were so deep that his son, although so unlike him, was able to maintain the Empires which the principles of his father had welded together.

"When we reflect what he did, the age in which he did it, the method he introduced to accomplish it, we are bound to recognize in Akbar one of those illustrious men whom Providence sends, in the hour of a nation's trouble, to reconduct it into those paths of peace and toleration which alone can assure the happiness of millions." — Col. G. B. Malleson, **Akbar.**

II. "The noblest king that ever lived in India. . . . The true founder and organiser of the Empire . . . . Represents the golden age of the Mughal Empire. . . . Assimilation of the Hindu chiefs was the most conspicuous feature of Akbar's reign. . . . The remarkable points about this expansion were, **first,** that was done with the willing help of the Hindu princes, and **secondly,** that expansion went hand-in-hand with orderly administration. This was a new thing in Indian government, for hitherto the local officials had done pretty much as it pleased them, and the central authority had seldom interfered so long as the revenue did not suffer. Akbar allowed no oppression — if he knew of it — by his lieutenants, and not a few of his campaigns were undertaken mainly for the purpose of punishing governors who had been guilty of self-seeking and speculation. Much of the improvement was due to his employment of Hindus, who at the time were better men of business than the uneducated and mercenary adventurers who formed a large proportion of the Muhammadan invaders.

"There is no name in mediaeval history more renowned in India at the present day than that of Todar Mal, and the reason is that nothing in Akbar's reforms more nearly touched the welfare of the people than the great financier's reconstruction of the revenue system. . . . Todar Mal's order (to keep all accounts in Persian), and Akbar's

generous policy of allowing Hindus to compete for the highest honours, — Man Singh was the first commander of 7,000 — explain two facts: **First,** that before the end of the eighteenth century the Hindus had almost become the Persian teachers of the Muhammadans; **secondly,** that a new dialect could arise in India, the **Urdu,** which, without the Hindus as receiving medium, could never have been called into existence." — Stanley Lane-Poole, **Mediaeval India.**

III. "Akbar has shared the fate of all great reformers in having his personal character unjustly assailed, his motives impunged, and his actions distorted, upon evidence which hardly bears judicial examination. . . . He was neither an ascetic nor a saint of the conventional type; but few of the great rulers of the earth can show a better record for deeds of righteousness, or more honourably and consistently maintained their ideals of religious life devoted to the service of humanity. In the western sense his mission was political rather than religious; but in his endeavours to make the highest religious principles the motive power of State policy he won an imperishable name in Indian history and lifted the political ethics of Islam into a higher plane than they had ever reached before.

"It does not detract from his greatness as a man and ruler that his achievements fell short of his ideals — that the Din Ilahi did not accomplish the spiritual regeneration of the ruling classes or wipe off the slate all the records of previous centuries of misgovernment, and that his schemes did not embrace a full recognition of the ancient Aryan system of self-government upon which the economic strength and political greatness of India stood firm longer than has been the case of any other

Empire in the world. But Akbar's endeavours to realise the Aryan ideal are still worthy of imitation both by British rulers of India and by all statesmen for whom politics is a religion rather than a game of craft and skill." — E. B. Havell, **Aryan Rule in India.**

IV. "There is something engaging in Akbar's faults and weaknesses, which were not petty, but rather belonged to the things which made him great. He was above all things human."—Lawrence Binyon, **Akbar.**

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Reviewing Binyon's book, **The Times Literary Supplement,** June 9, 1932, wrote :—

Re 'Akbar's religious attitude on which our estimate of his character largely depends, . . . he (Binyon) shows the great Emperor as liable from time to time to be overwhelmed by a sense of the emptiness of life, by a strong desire to find some sure abiding place, but seeking it in vain. Restlessly he turns from sect to sect in the faith in which he was reared. Finding no satisfaction in their dialectic, he summons the teachers of every religion within his call. Jain and Parsi, Brahman and Jesuit, each is heard with attention and respect; but for one reason or another each fails to hold the Emperor. The Brahman is too subtle for his practical mind; the Jesuit demands an obedience which he cannot give; the Parsi attracts him most and he finds a ghostly comfort in that ceremonial. **Those who have seen in Abkar's religious search a mere political seeking for a faith in which his people might be united have surely seen but the surface of the truth, and have not penetrated, as Mr. Binyon does, to the man himself."**