



Dara Shikoh And His Role in Translation and Dissemination of Sanskrit Texts in Persian

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to highlight about Dara Shikoh and brief survey of his works that has been translated into Sanskrit language. He has been considered as one of the best and prominent figure that used to lead a strong message between two communities to live in brotherhood. Here an attempt has been made to come into light with his contributions to fostering understanding between Hinduism and Islam mainly throughout his translations of Sanskrit texts. For his deep, commitment and broad knowledge he came into contact with the Hinduism scholars and they used to help him a lot in translating the works. His favorite translated works like Majma '-ul-Bahrain (1065 A.H.), Mukalama'-i-Baba Lal wa Dara Shikoh (1062 A.H.), Yoga Vasista written at his instance (1067 A.H., SIRR-i-Akbar (1067 A.H.), Bhagavat Gita (1067 A.H.) and the Majma-ul-Bahrain, or the Mingling of the Two Oceans are prominent one. Dara-Shikoh used to translate Sanskrit works into Persian for the deeper study of Indian culture and its development. By gaining proficiency in Sanskrit he sought to bridge the perceived divide between faiths, emphasizing their underlying unity.

Key Words: Executive, Pre-history, Hinduism, Association, Indian culture, Attracted, Proficiency

Introduction

We know very little about Dara's early life for the Mughal historians who have primarily been the chroniclers of the political events occurring in the State give us very scanty information on the subject and the first glimpse that we get of him is at the time when he is handed over to Jahangir as a hostage on behalf of his rebel father Khurram and jealously guarded by his step-grandmother Nur Jahan. Dara was detained at Lahore up to the date of Shahjahan's accession (1037 A.H.-1627 A.D.). When Dara Shikoh returned to Agra he was about 13 years old and it must have been about this time that Sahjahan would have given earnest and serious attention to imparting higher education to him. But there is nothing on record so far as I know to show how far Dara Shikoh had progressed in his studies and what special endeavours had been made by his father to educate him in accordance with the best traditions of the Mughals 1.

Dara Shikoh's works Safinat-ul-Awliya is the first work of Dara which he wrote in his 25th year (27th Ramadan, 1049 A.H.) a particular respect for the Sufis and the religious divines and had studied their lives closely. Sakinat-ul-Awliya is Dara's second work which he wrote in his 28th year in 1052 A.H. Risala-i-Hak Numa, or 'the Compass of the Truth' is the third work of Dara Shikoh. It is a small tract of some thirty pages dealing with the various stages of spiritual development. Shathiyat or Hasanat-ul-'Arifin is a collection of Sufis aphorisms containing the ecstatic utterances of the mystics. Majma '-ul-Bahrain or 'the Mingling of the Two Oceans, is the fifth work of Dara Shikoh which he completed in 1065 A.H., namely when he was forty-two years old. Upanishads is a translation of some fifty chapters of the Upanishads or Upanikhat entitled SIRR-i-Akbar made by Dara Shikoh in 1067 A.H. or some two years before his execution. Bhagvat Gita, the Persian translation of this well-known Sanskrit work is ascribed to Dara Shikoh in the manuscript copy preserved in the India Office Library. Makhzan-ul-Ghara'ib an extremely valuable biography of Persian poets that Dara Shikoh had compiled a Bayad or Anthology. Fayyad-ul-Kawani is also another work to his credit and the author of a large number of letters which are no mean literary importance.

In addition to the works which are Dara's own composition there is a large number of books which have either been written at his instance or have been dedicated to him as a tribute to his patronage of such authors. Some of Dara's works of the former class are discussed as follows.

Mukalama-i-Baba-Lal-Wa-Dara-Shikuh- contains a summary of the questions that were asked by Dara Shikuh on the various topics of Hindu religion and ascetic life and the replies that were given to them by Baba Lal a Hindu devotee of the Panjab, Indian religion, philosophy and way of life 2.

Jug Bashist-or a Persian translation of the famous Sanskrit Yoga Vasishtha was undertaken at the instance of Dara Shikuh by one of his courtiers. Tarikh -i-Shamshir Khani-an abridgement of the Shahnama made at the instance of Dara. Krisna, as preacher of the Bhagavad-Gita (which would have been completed by the end of period) summarized all previous doctrines, twisted them all together to one common end faith in him as the supreme god. As regards the impact of Islam on Hinduism³. As he was an athlete, a husband of many goddesses and a shepherd boy at the same time, people of many originally different cults could and did, worship him. This set of rustic cults made it possible to write the Bhagavad-Gita in Krsna's name. Later, after Buddhism had faded away, the two newer worships came into violent conflict which matured in the twelfth century and was fought out without the least attention to the Muslims who opposed all Hinduism 4.

Hinduism represents the result of this new partnership between brahmin learning and popular devotionalism. The downfall of the Mughal Empire was not due to any single factor but was the result of a combination of a number of factors. According to certain scholars, the decline of the Mughal Empire was largely due to the policies and character of Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb alienated the sympathy and support of the Hindus by his religious policy towards them. He imposed Jizya on all the Hindus in the country. Even the Rajputs and Brahmans were not spared. He dismissed Hindu officials from state service and allowed only those Hindus to continue in service who were prepared to embrace Islam. An order banning the building of new Hindu temples in the areas directly under Mughal control was promulgated early in his reign 5.

Though old temples were not to be destroyed under that order, it was decreed that the temples built since that time of Akbar should be treated as newly built temples and on that plea those temples were desecrated in different parts of the Mughal Empire. Akbar's Rajput policy has won him many an admirer and detractor both amongst the contemporary and later historians 6.

Those temples included the temples of Vishwanath at Kashi and Bir Singh Deo at Mathura. In 1679 when the State of Marwar was under direct imperial control and the Rajputs prepared themselves to resist Mughal authority. The Rajput women enjoyed considerable freedom and respect in the society. Old as well as new temples were destroyed in different parts of the Empire. Thousands of artisans and labourers were employed to pull down Hindu temples and mosques were built with the material of those temples. After the death of Raja Jaswant Singh, Aurangzeb tried to keep his son Ajit Sing under his control. Durga Das Rathore managed to remove him and his mother to Rajputana in spite of all the precautions taken by Aurangzeb. That led to the Rajput War which continued from 1679 to 1681. Although peace was restored Aurangzeb could not depend upon the Rajputs. It proved to be a great handicap during his Deccan wars. Instead of depending upon the support of the Rajputs, he had to set apart Mughal troops to meet any possible trouble from them. The rajput ladies sacrificed their lives by burning themselves alive 7.

The execution of Guru Teg Bahadur was a became a strong military power under Guru Gobind Singh. Later on those very Sikhs gave trouble to the Mughal Emperors. Although Banda was captured and put to death Sikh resistance was not crushed. It kept on growing day by day and ultimately the Sikhs were able to drive out the Mughals from the Punjab. the same policy of religious persecution led to the rise of the Marathas under Shivaji. The persecution of the Hindus hardened their character and they became the bitter enemies of the Mughals. Lane-Poole writes about Aurangzeb, "His mistaken policy towards Shivaji provided the foundation of a power that was to prove a successful rival to his own Empire." According to V.A. Smith, "The powerful Hindu support of the throne won so cleverly by Akbar was weakened by the erroneous policy of Shah Jahan and in a still greater degree by the austere fanaticism of Aurangzeb."

In defence of the religious policy of Aurangzeb it is contended and he wanted to rule in accordance with the orthodox interpretation of the Holy Quran. While re-imposing Jizya, he formally abolished about 80 taxes not sanctioned by Islamic law. Aurangzeb wanted to emphasize the Islamic character of the state and to rally the Muslims more closely round the throne. However, he did not realise that his policy would lead to a strong reaction among the Hindus and alienate such sections as the Rajputs who had been generally loyal to the Mughal throne. The reign of Aurangzeb witnessed armed resistance from many quarters and able to saw and witness many revolts. The Deccan policy of Aurangzeb was also responsible for the downfall of the Mughal Empire. Aurangzeb was bent upon crushing the power of the Marathas. He found that the states of Bijapur and Golconda were a source of great help to the Marathas who were employed in large numbers in those states. They got not only money but also military training from those states. The conclusion of Aurangzeb was that if those states were annexed to the Mughal Empire the source strength of the Marathas would be stopped. Moreover, the rulers of those states were Shias and for a fanatical Sunni Muslim like Aurangzeb their very existence was intolerable. Aurangzeb annexed Bijapur in 1686 and Golconda in 1687.

About the Deccan policy of Aurangzeb V.A. Smith observe, "The Deccan was the grave of his reputation as well as of his body". Aurangzeb had to remain away from Northern India for a quarter of a century on account of his involvement in the wars in the Deccan. The result was that the whole of Mughal administration was

thrown out of gear. As the Emperor was busy 8 in the Deccan. Mahatma Gandhi who led the real bourgeois-national liberation movement to success, relied profoundly upon the Gita 9. Akbar's time Gita translated Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni Akbar had a great liking for Khurram as he was then called and considered him superior to the other sons of Jahangir. The Prince was given a liberal education such as high station deserved and in a short time stored his mind with plenty of useful knowledge. When the Prince grew to man's estate her was married in April 1612 to Arjumand Banu Begam better known to fame as Mumtaz Mahal or the lady of the Taj who was the daughter of Asah Khan one if the noblest grandees of the empire. It was a time when Nurjahan was fast rising into prominence. Prince Khurram kad distinguished himself in the Mewar campaign against the Rajputs and had succeeded in dictating terms to the valiant Abyssinian who had long defied the imperial generals these successes. Convinced Jahangir of the prince's aptitude of military generalship and to mark his pleasure he bestowed upon him the title of Shahjahan and allotted to him a chair near the throne in the Durbar a favour which Shahjahan after wards extended to his son Dara Shukoh. It was a lucky moment in Khurram's life. The emperor heartily lavished his affection on him and loaded him with honours and distinctions 10.

Literature Review

At a later period Akbar's Sulh-i-Kulh or path of uninterrupted peace in relationship with all people was carried on by Prince Dara Shikuh who translated the Upanishads from Sanskrit into Persian in order to discover Wahdat al-Wujud doctrines hidden in them. He criticised the Hindu theologians for hiding the Upanishadic truth from both Hindus and Muslims. Abul Fazal called India's three contributions to the world the game of chess the collection of folktales and animal fables called the Panchatantra. In the present work an attempt has been made to study the role of the nobility in the downfall of the Mughal empire with special reference to the position of various ethnic and religious groups in the nobility after the death of Aurangzib.

Objectives of the Study

1. Personality of Dara Shikuh
2. An Overview of Dara's family background
3. Importance of Mughal court and their rulers for various Communities
4. To investigate his contribution **and inter-religious synthesis**

Methodology

The study of the important institutions of the Medieval period has been attracting increasingly the attention of the people of Medieval Indian history. The nobility as an institution played a very important role in the growth, organization, administration structure, social and cultural life and ultimately the downfall of the Mughal empire. Mainly Mughal empire Dara Shikuh compared the Islamic Sufi concept with those of Hindu mysticism and came to this conclusion that they were identical. Through his theological discourses Dara Shikuh infused the spirit of liberalism into the medieval Indian life and expanded the horizon of Indian mind.

Discussion

The eighteenth century in India saw far-reaching changes in political organization social institutions and economic life and condition. The Mughal empire which had given a sense of unity to the country for a century and a half and led to progressive developments in many different fields disintegrated rapidly. The Mughal nobility in its institutionalized form was the outcome of a long process of historical evolution the roots of which may be traced back to political and economic developments in West Asia under Islam. Akbar and later Jahangir and Shahjahan had to face this problem. By the time Aurangzeb came to the throne a serious situation already existed. It was further aggravated by the numerous wars of Aurangzib particularly in the Deccan and the extended conflicted with the Jats, Marathas, Rajputs, Sikhs etc 11.

So far, we have described only the prose works of Dara Shikuh or such other works as have been ascribed to his authorship but have not as far as I know been traced anywhere. Now we may discuss briefly the merits of Dara as a poet. The intoxicated expressions of love and longing for unity with the immortal beloved that adorn almost every works¹². But it must be state at the outset, that the materials for such a discussion are very scanty. We know from authoritative sources that Dara Shikuh composed a Diwan entitled Iksir-i-A'zam. Dara also had a beautiful¹³ which according to the author of Khazinat-ul-Asfiya contained a mine of information regarding Tawhid and was actually perused by him. It is a pity however that such a valuable Diwan has not as yet found room in the well-known libraries of the East or the West not has seen the light of print. Dara Shikuh has been discovered and that full particulars regarding this valuable manuscript will be published in a subsequent issue of the magazine. It is difficult to hazard any opinion regarding the contents of the Diwan nor it is possible to say whether the Quatrains, which are said to be in the course of publication at Lahore are included in the Diwan or the Mathnawi which has been ascribed to him, is also included in it. Such questions can only be answered on the publication of the Diwan or a list of its contents. For the time

being at least we are to be contented with some 25 quatrains and a few Ghazals only, which have either been quoted by Dara in his prose-works or have been ascribed to him in the various Tadhkiras.

Dara Shikuh was a lover of the fine arts. Rather than belittling the beauty of Love it is an unconscious defence of a very great truth 14. He studied Calligraphy with Aka 'Abdur Rashid ad-Dailami the well-known Calligrapher at the court of Shahjahan and the last great scribe of Nasta'lik. The author of Tadhkira-i-Khushnawisan states that Dara wrote a very good hand in Nasta'lik and was the best pupil of Aka Rashid. He adds that none of the pupils of the Aka excelled him in fine penmanship. From his early years Dara manifested his keen interest in ancient Indian religious and philosophical literature. Dara fraternised with Hindu Ascetic and Gurus and each learnt to respect other's religious faith and life 15. On his demand a number of ancient Hindu religious-philosophical treatises 'Yogavasishta', Bhagavad-Gita and mystic drama 'Prabodha Chandrodhaya' were translated into Persian 16. All religions are inherently good because they all aim at the attainment of god's love. Different religions are only the different manifestations of the desire to know the truth. All men are equal and all distinctions based on caste, color and creed are to be condemned. Sufism, however, played a great part in promoting the feeling of toleration among the Muslims. It greatly encouraged the feeling of Hindu-Muslim unity. It led to the popularity of the Bhakti movement because many principles of Sufism were similar to those of the Bhakti cult. It had a great liberalizing effect on the state policy of many Indian rulers. It is absolutely incumbent to be a Muslim to be a true Sufi because Sufism methods are inoperative without Muslim affiliation. It was under the influence of Sufism that many Indian rulers like Sher Shah Suri and Akbar gave up much of their orthodoxy and began to treat all their subjects alike. The Hindus began to venerate the Muslim saints and Muslim on their part began to show respect to the Hindu gods 17. Shah Jahan was an orthodox Muslim fully devoted to his faith, the metropolis of Islam 18. He offered his prayers four times a day and observed fast for the entire month of Ramzan. Though he was a bigoted Sunni he never allowed his religious views to override the considerations of statesmanships. One of the major factors which weighed with Shah Jahan to undertake the conquest of the Deccan was the Shia religion of the rulers of Ahmednagar, Golkonda and Bijapur. As regards treatment of the Christians Bernier tells us that 'the Jesuits were severely oppressed by the Emperor. He enacted a number of discriminatory laws against the Hindus. For example in 1633 he passed orders forbidding the Hindus to dress in the Muslim style. However, it is also true that at times he paid full regard to the sentiments of the Hindus. For example we learn from Della Valle that he had passed injunctions against slaying of animals in Hindu districts 19.

The Rajput policy of Akbar proved completely a success. As he did not differentiate between his Hindu and Muslim subjects, removed Jaziya and declared Suleh-Kul he could gain an exalted place in the eyes of his Hindu and Rajput subjects and thus he consolidated the Mughal empire. Akbar being influenced by his Hindu queens began to have faith in the Hindu religion and started listening to the preachings of Hindu saints and philosophers. The marriage alliance between Hindus and Muslims also mitigated the enmity between the two rival communities 20.

Findings

The translation of various Sanskrit works into Persian in order both to satisfy their own intellectual curiosity and to increase Muslim understanding of Hinduism. There was no doubt that the Maktab Khana, a translation bureau of Akbar, helped considerably to change the Muslim perception of Hinduism. The most remarkable productions of this bureau were "the translations of the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Yoga Vashishta. Akbar thought that the translation of texts from both Hinduism and Islam would form a basis for a united search for truth and would also enable the people to understand the true spirit of their religion.

Conclusion

The discussion made above is an attempt to bridge the gap between Hindu and Islamic thought. He displayed and facilitated a deeper understanding of Hindu philosophy within Muslim world and stands as a historical example of the value of the interfaith. As a result of the translation of Sanskrit works into Persian the Muslim intellectuals became aware of the Vedanta school of Hindu philosophy. Majma'-ul-Bahrain in which a philosophical approach to the necessity of religious harmony is found. The works are the evidence of a highly cultured mind and a culmination of the religious liberalism of Akbar the Great. Prince Dara had not renounced Muhammadanism. He was not a heretic. But like Akbar he felt the necessity of maintaining communal harmony in a plural society for which he was killed by his fanatical younger brother Aurangzib. Majma'-ul-Bahrain is a brilliant manifesto of harmony and has therefore considerable historical and theological interest. Relations between the Hindu and Muslim nobles seem to have been cordial on the whole though most of the Hindus adhered strictly to caste restrictions regarding dining and inter-marrying etc. The nobility of the Mughals although it suffered from a number of internal weaknesses was on a broad view a remarkable institution which welded into a homogenous and harmonious whole, men belonging to different regions and tribes, speaking different languages and professing different religions and with differing cultural traditions.

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