

Episodes in the Life of
AKBAR

Contemporary Records and Reminiscences

Translated and Edited by
SHIREEN MOOSVI



NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA

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Cover: Akbar's adventure on his elephant Hawai.
Painting by Basawan & Chitar, Akbarnama.
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SUMBER MOON

Preface

Akbar has a lasting place in our history as empire-builder, upholder of religious tolerance, creator of an innovative cultural tradition and a man who recognised India not only as his own but as a country with a distinct political and cultural personality. It happens too that, largely owing to his own interest in history as well as his accessibility to so many people, he remains the person in India most intimately described by contemporaries before modern times.

As part of the national celebrations of the 450th anniversary of his birth, it was decided to make a selection of the numerous contemporary pen portraits of Akbar and reports of episodes of his career. In this selection that is now presented to the reader, eye-witness accounts are generally preferred. It is hoped that he will be able to see at close quarters not only what Akbar was like, but what the times were like.

The passages are taken mainly from Persian texts, published and in manuscript. A bibliographical note on these sources and the mode of translation is provided at the end, where a short list for further reading will also be found.

Full references are also furnished in the notes preceding the excerpts.

Now for acknowledgements: I am grateful to Professor Irfan Habib who made many suggestions for improvement throughout. Professor Iqtidar Alam Khan gave me references to some passages. Professor S.P. Verma and Mr S. Ali Nadeem Rezavi have helped me in locating reproductions of contemporary miniatures. Mr Suhail Ahmad has word-

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Introducing Akbar— A Brief Biography

It may be helpful to the reader to have some basic facts about Akbar's career before he begins his reading of the contemporary narratives presented in this book.

Akbar's grandfather Babur, the fugitive prince from Ferghana and founder of the Mughal dynasty in India, has his own place in history as the author of his wonderful memoirs. His empire was lost within ten years of his death (1530) by his son Humayun; and it was when Humayun was in flight that he married Hamida Banu (1541), and Akbar was born (1542). The infant Akbar was separated from his parents who fled to Iran; he passed into the custody of his uncles, first at Qandahar, and then from 1545 at Kabul. His uncles' hostility to Humayun meant that he was little better than a captive, but he was himself well-treated, even pampered. Humayun recovered his son along with the Kabul fort at the end of 1545, and, henceforth, but for a short interval when Humayun lost Kabul again to his brother Kamran (1545-46), Akbar remained with his parents. They tried to give him the best education, but the boy remained wayward and little inclined to conventional learning. His later claims to 'illiteracy' were, however, only true to the extent that he never wrote himself. Later in life he loved to have books read out to him and was an excellent judge of calligraphy.

Humayun's dogged persistence at last paid off, and he was able to return to India (1555), though death soon overtook him at his capital Delhi (1556). Akbar, a boy of fourteen,

was now crowned at Kalanaur in the Gurdaspur district of the Punjab. The Mughal empire extended from Kabul to just Delhi, and it was threatened by a reorganised Afghan opposition under Hemu. The task of saving it was largely performed by Akbar's 'guardian' Bairam Khan. He controlled the administration during the first four years of the reign (1556-60), but then Akbar carried out a coup and dismissed him. From now on Akbar was his own master, a fact which took many people some time to recognise. He overcame serious difficulties, such as the tumult upon the murder of Shamsuddin Atka Khan (1563), the Uzbek revolt (1564-65), and the revolt of the Mirzas (1566-67). He imaginatively began to enlarge the ranks of his nobility by bringing in the Rajputs (beginning with the famous settlement with Amber, 1562) and Indian Muslims, and promoting Iranian immigrants. His first measures of religious tolerance (abolition of pilgrim tax, 1563, and of *jizya* or poll-tax on Hindus, 1564) indicated that he was also prepared to give a new turn to Mughal polity.

What dazzled the contemporaries was the spate of spectacular conquests and military successes. Malwa was occupied in 1561 and Gondwana in 1564. Chittor the famous fortress was stormed in 1568, and the rapid subjugation of Rajputana followed. Gujarat, north India's western gateway to the sea, was added to the empire in 1572. Soon afterwards the eastern campaigns went underway and Bihar and parts of Bengal were annexed (1574).

Akbar's rapidly-won fame as conqueror was, however, rivalled by that of his achievements as patron of art and culture. In 1565 he began to build the massive Agra fort at his capital, and Humayun's tomb at Delhi, the first two major monuments of Mughal architecture. In 1569 began the construction of his new capital city, the celebrated Fatehpur Sikri, where his innovativeness and taste produced a new masterpiece. In the 1560's he also began to patronise the formation of the Mughal school of painting with the preparation of the *Dastan Amir Hamza* illustrations. The

school was marked by an increasing element of realism clearly fuelled by Akbar's own inclinations. As his empire extended, Akbar paid increasing attention towards developing a regular taxation system, rigorous military organisation and centralised administration. From the mid-1560's Muzaffar Khan, Turbati and Todar Mal worked as his major finance ministers. The most crucial set of measures came in 1574-75. The revenue rates began to be calculated afresh to be permanently fixed in money; the *jagirs* (territories under temporary assignment to nobles) were resumed; every noble and officer placed on numerical 'ranks' (*mansabs*) which determined, through separate schedules, his pay and military obligation; and the maintenance of military contingent enforced by the promulgation of the 'brand' (*da'gh*). In 1580 the entire empire was subjected to a new system of territorial division, the highest division being the *suba* (province); and the officers at the head of administration of each of the initial twelve *subas* were made answerable to the ministers of corresponding jurisdictions at the centre. The shape was thus given to the centralised Mughal administration of the next one-and-a-half centuries. The Mughal currency system, with its standard, uniform coins in three metals (gold, silver and copper), was also perfected during these years.

In the late 1570's Akbar began to evolve his religious views, for which too he is so well remembered by posterity. His interest in sufism, shown in the excessive veneration of the Ajmer shrine, led him on to the 'pantheistic' philosophy of Ibn al-Arabi, from whom came the notion of *Sulh-i Kul*, 'Absolute Peace', i.e. tolerance for all. At the same time his increasing attachment to things Indian, aided no doubt by Rajput queens and friendship with Birbal, made him take greater interest in Hindu beliefs. Akbar took to meditation and established a House of Prayer (*Ibadat Khana*) for holding discussions on religious matters, first with Muslim divines but later with representatives of other religions (Hindus, Jains, Parsis and Christians). It preceded, by three hundred years and more, the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. In

1579, there was a passing attempt at establishing Akbar's position as a judicial authority among Muslims through a statement (*mabzar*) by Muslim divines (miscalled the 'Infallibility Decree'). But this proved abortive, partly because Akbar tended to lose all faith in all institutional religions. In the 1580's he increasingly took the position of a spiritual guide himself, with a band of select disciples, through whom the principles of *Sulh-i Kul* and religious tolerance, along with a rigorous monotheism were to be propagated. He had no intention to found any religion (let alone a *Din-i Ilahi*, a name which occurs nowhere in official records). Abu'l Fazl was his principal counsellor here, and in the *A'in-i Akbari*, he provides the most authoritative statement of Akbar's views.

Akbar's humanitarianism found its expression as early as 1562 when he prohibited enslavement through capture. Now in 1582, he liberated his own slaves, and reimposed restrictions on slave trade (1594). He condemned *sati* and rescued a Rajput widow himself (1583). Akbar's inquisitive mind was not ready to accept any conventional taboos; he gave the title of Khidmat Rai to a man belonging to a Chandal caste and appointed him head of his own palace-guard. He had an unconventional syllabus drafted for his son Salim, where special care was taken to exclude all learning not based on rationalism.

In 1585, Akbar left Fatehpur Sikri and transferred his capital to Lahore. The immediate cause was his occupation of Kabul, upon the death of his younger brother Mirza Hakim. A new cycle of conquests now began: Kashmir and Sind were annexed in 1586 and 1589, and Qandahar in 1592. Akbar's western frontiers were now firmly set on the Hindukush. Orissa was seized in 1592, and Akbar's great Rajput noble Man Singh succeeded in occupying much of Bengal.

While at Lahore, the work of translating ancient Sanskrit texts into Persian that had begun as early as 1573 was continued with vigour. The *Mahabharata* was translated as well as illustrated. The Emperor had these translations read

out to him. Technology continued to attract his interest. He invented a device to bore guns, and built sea-going ships at the bank of river Ravi.

At Lahore too Akbar's own concern for history achieved its fruition. In 1586 he asked Abu'l Fazl to write a detailed and accurate history of his reign, the *Akbarnama*, the concluding portion of which was to consist of an account of Akbar's administration, empire and Indian culture (now known as the *A'in-i Akbari*); it was completed by 1598 but added to almost till the author's assassination in 1601. For this work, the enormous archives of the empire including presumably the records of the Office of Current Events created in 1574, as well as especially commissioned memoirs were placed at Abu'l Fazl's disposal.

Leaving Lahore in 1598 he turned his attention to the south. Berar had been annexed in 1596; and now came the turn of Ahmadnagar (1598-1600) and of Khandesh (1600). The military enterprise southward would have continued, but for the trouble caused by Akbar's eldest son Salim who began to challenge his authority. This forced Akbar to make his final return to Agra in 1601.

Akbar achieved a settlement with Salim (the later Jahangir), who was made to come to Agra and submit to his father; he was in turn confirmed as heir-apparent. A frame, exhausted after years of constant hard work, at last surrendered to a short illness, and Akbar died at Agra in October 1605. He was buried in the splendid mausoleum he had built for himself (and completed by Jahangir) at Sikandra, near Agra.

Humayun's Marriage with Hamida Banu (1541)

Gulbadan Banu Begum (1522-1603) was Akbar's aunt, being a half-sister of Humayun. She wrote her memoirs of Humayun's reign at Akbar's request, to provide material for Abu'l Fazl's great history, the Akbarnama. She was present at the many events she describes. She was full sister to Mirza Hindal, and Dildar Begum was their mother. Humayun courted and married Hamida Banu, late summer and autumn 1541, while the whole royal entourage was in Sind, fleeing after the defeat at the hands of Sher Shah.

Gulbadan Begum's memoirs, the Humayun Nama, survive in a unique but incomplete MS in the British Library, Or. 166. It has been published by A.S. Beveridge with a translation as A History of Humayun, London, 1902. The following passage occurs on text, pp.51-3. Our translation is directly made from the text, owing to various inaccuracies in Mrs Beveridge's translation (pp.149-51).

In the meantime Mirza Hindal [Humayun's younger brother] crossed the river [Indus], so that people thought he was going to Qandahar. His Majesty on hearing this sent some people to the Mirza to ask him about the rumour that he was headed towards Qandahar. When they asked this of the Mirza, he said a wrong report has been made to His Majesty. Hearing this, His Majesty paid a visit to my mother. The women of the Mirza's household and all his people attended on His Majesty at this visit. Seeing Hamida Banu Begum, he asked, "Who is she?" My mother replied, "She is the daughter of Mir Baba Dost." Khwaja Muazzam [Hamida

Banu's brother] was standing in front of His Majesty. She said of him, "This boy is a relation of ours", and of Hamida Banu Begum, she also remarked, "She too is a relation of ours".

In those days Hamida Banu Begum was often at the Mirza's camp. The next day His Majesty again came to meet my mother Dildar Begum. He said, "Mir Baba Dost is our kinsman; it would be befitting if you betroth his daughter to me." Mirza Hindal offered excuses, saying, "I regard this girl in the same light as a sister or daughter. His Majesty is the King; suppose he does not make adequate provision, so that there is some vexation later?" His Majesty became angry, got up and left.

Afterwards my mother wrote a letter to His Majesty to the effect that the mother of the [betrothed] daughter always takes airs. It is strange that His Majesty took exception to such few words and left. In reply the King wrote, "This explanation has been very pleasing to us — Whatever airs you assume, I will subject myself head and heart to them. As far as the provision [for the bride] is concerned, of which you have written — God willing — it shall be such as is wished. I await your response." My mother, going to His Majesty, brought him over [to her house], and they held a reception that day. His Majesty then returned to his own residence. The next day, His Majesty came to my mother and asked her to send someone to Hamida Banu Begum to bring her. My mother sent for her, but she did not come and replied, "If the intention is that I should attend on His Majesty, I have had that honour on that day. For what else should I come?" His Majesty thereupon sent Subhan Quli to Mirza Hindal and asked him to send the Begum. The Mirza said, "Despite whatever I have said she does not go; you yourself should go to her and ask her." Subhan Quli went and asked her. [Hamida Banu] Begum answered, "For the kings to see [a woman] once is lawful, the next time she becomes a stranger, seeing whom is unlawful. I will not come." Subhan Quli who heard these words from the Begum

conveyed these to His Majesty. His Majesty remarked, "If she is a stranger (*na-mabram*), we will [marry her to] make her accessible (*mabram*)!"

Thus for forty days efforts and coaxing went on to persuade (Hamida Banu) Begum, but she would not consent. At last my mother, Dildar Begum, admonished her, "After all, you will be given [in marriage] to someone; better it is the King who receives you." The Begum retorted: "Yes, but let me be given to someone whose collar my hand can reach, rather than that I be given to a man, whose skirt, as I know well, my hand will not reach." The last time my mother admonished her greatly. So, after forty days, in the month of *Jumada I* 948 [23 August-21 September 1541] at the place called Patar, on a Monday, at midday, which His Majesty determined by holding the astrolabe in his own hand, and choosing the auspicious hour, he called Mir Abu'l Baqa to perform the marriage rites. He gave two lakh [*tankas*] to Mir Abu'l Baqa as the marriage fee. He stayed on there for three days after the wedding. Then he boarded a boat and went to Bhakkar.

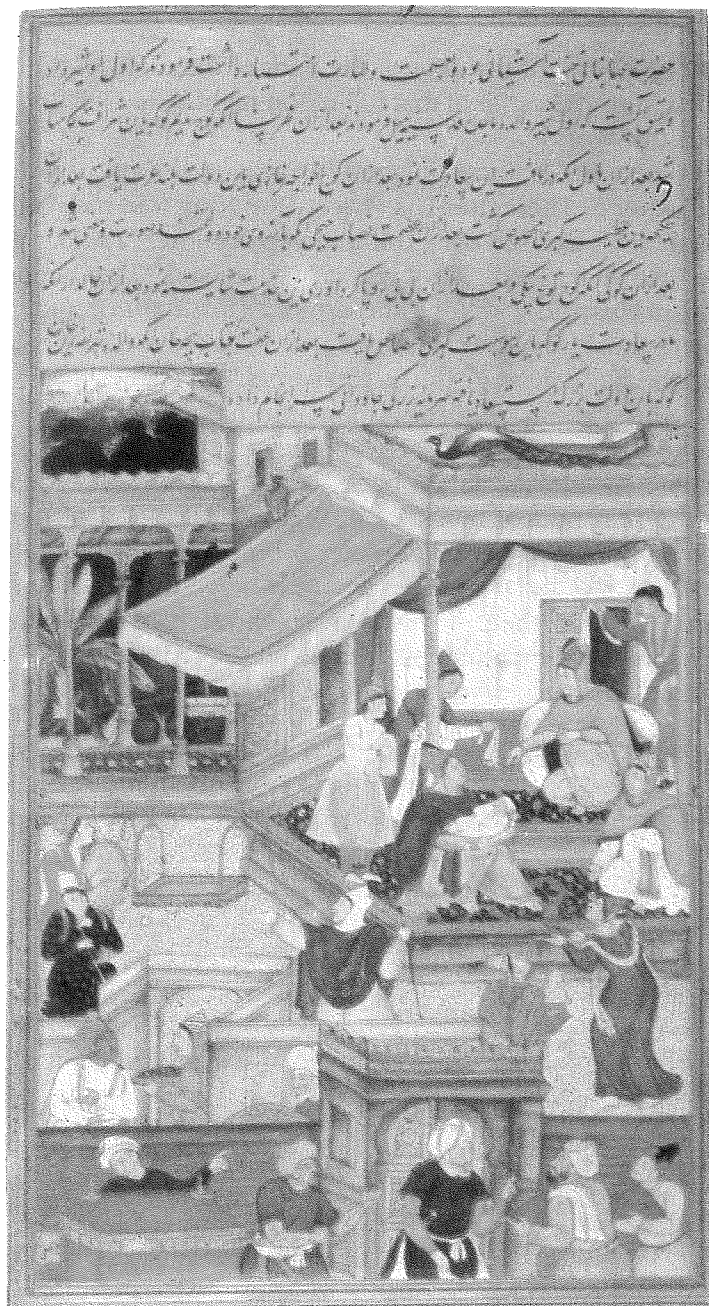
The Birth of Akbar (1542)

Jauhar, the Aftabchi (ewer-bearer) of Humayun, wrote his memoirs, the Tazkirat-ul-Waqi'at, in 1586-87. Jauhar was in attendance on Humayun when during his flight from Marwar he received the news of the birth of his first son Akbar, from Amarkot where he had left his wife Hamida Banu Begum in the care of Rana Prasad. The account is first hand, though Jauhar appears to make a slip in the date of Akbar's birth, since the date given by Gulbadan Begum is 4 Rajab 949 (14 October 1542), and Abu'l Fazl the night of 5 Rajab (15 October).

Jauhar's memoirs are still unpublished. The following passage is based on British Library MS Add. 1671, ff.55a-b. The translation of the passage in C. Stewart, Tezkireh al-Vakiat, London, 1832, pp.44-5, proved too defective to be used.

While His Majesty [Humayun] had encamped on a tank, at the break of morn, at the time of prayer, a messenger arrived from the fort of Amarkot and offered congratulations to His Majesty the King, reporting that God Almighty had bestowed upon him a son, a guest of this world [verse omitted]. His Majesty was greatly pleased at hearing the news. The Prince was born on Saturday, the night of the fourteenth of *Sha'ban* [23 November 1542].

The moon of the fourteenth is called *badr*. Thus did Prince Muhammad Akbar, the conqueror (*ghazi*), the full moon of the World and Faith, illuminating both the worlds, come into the world and was named Jalaluddin, which is the same as Badruddin (full moon of the Faith), and there is no



Baby Akbar being placed in the care of the nurses by his mother Hamida Banu Begum. Painted by Sanwala, *Akbarnama*.

Courtesy : British Library

light in any night like that of the light of the night of the full moon; thus the virtue of that full-moon night is that it illumines both the worlds.

When His Majesty finished his prayer, the nobles came and saluted. Thereafter His Majesty the King told me, Jauhar Aftabchi, "I had left something in your charge?" I said, "Yes, sire." He then asked, "What was it?" I submitted, "Two hundred *shabrukhis* and a silver hand-armour (*dastwana*), and one pod of musk. By Your Majesty's orders, I gave the *shabrukhis* and the hand-armour to the treasurers." His Majesty said, "I had gifted these *shabrukhis* and the hand-armour to you; why did you give them back?" I repeated, "By Your Majesty's orders, these were given back." His Majesty then ordered, "Bring that pod of musk." I brought out the pod of musk. The King ordered a china-plate to be brought, opened the musk-pod, called the nobles and distributed the musk among them. He told them, "This is in celebration of the birth of our son that God Almighty has given us." All those present offered their good wishes and congratulations.

Childhood at Kabul (1545)

Humayun fled along with Hamida Banu Begum from his camp at Mastung (south of Quetta) towards Seistan in 1543. Akbar fell into the custody of his uncle Askari, who took him to Qandahar. Now that, returning from Persia in 1545, Humayun advanced to take possession of Qandahar, Askari sent away Akbar to Kabul to the custody of the other uncle Kamran. Here Gulbadan Begum was present to record the event as an eye-witness.

Humayun Nama, text, ed. A.S. Beveridge, pp.73-4. Translation made directly, but see Beveridge's tr., p.174.

On hearing that the King [Humayun] having departed from Iran was coming towards Qandahar, Mirza Askari sent away Prince Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar to Kabul to be with Mirza Kamran. Mirza Kamran handed him over to my Aka Jan, that is, Khanzada Begum, who is our aunt [being a sister of Babur]. At that time Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar was two-and-a-half years old. Aka Jan, receiving him, took great care of him, lavishing much affection on him, kissing his hands and feet and saying, "These look exact replicas of the hands and feet of my brother King Babur to whom he bears great resemblance."

Wins a Toy by Force (1545)

The incident narrated below occurred when Akbar was in his uncle Kamran's custody at Kabul in 1545. It is described by Abu'l Fazl in his usual stately style, with an open bias against Kamran. Since he had access to Akbar himself and the testimony of several eye-witnesses, the incident is probably genuine. The Shab-i Barat in that year fell on 1 November, and so it can also be precisely dated. Akbar was to be reunited with his father only seventeen days later. As for Kamran's action in directing that Akbar be weaned, it may be recalled that he was already three years of age.

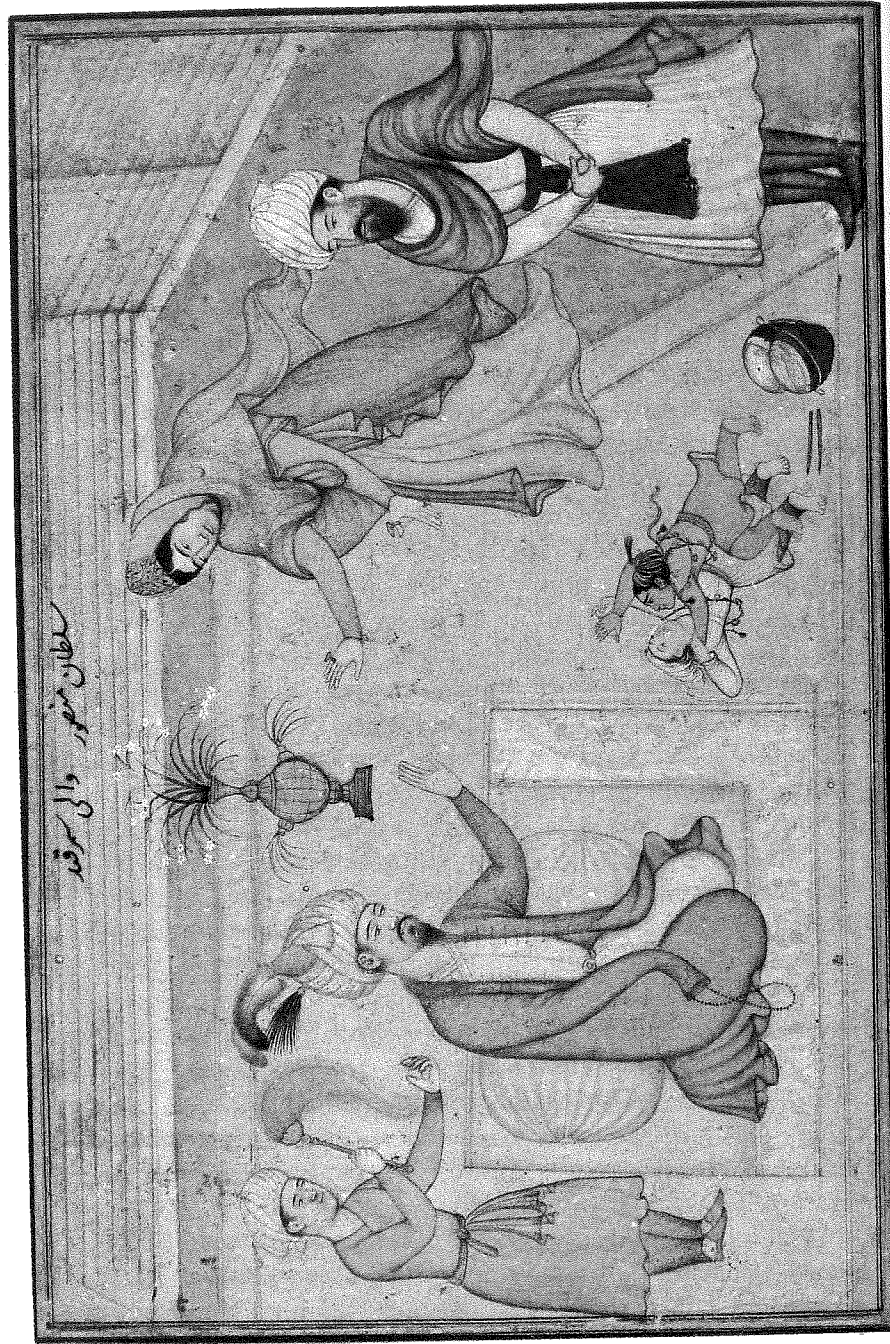
The passage occurs in Akbarnama, I, ed. Ahmad Ali, Calcutta, 1877, pp.226-7; tr. H. Beveridge, 1897, pp.455-6. Beveridge's translation has been adopted, but with very considerable revision.

When Mirza Kamran beheld that true cypress of fortune's rosarium [Akbar] in the Shahr-ara garden, he was, from the lucklessness of his fate, confused and astonished at the sight of His Majesty's [Akbar's] lustrous forehead whence streamed the glory of eternal dominion and success. And as God the World-Adorner always willed the joy of the sovereign and the spiritual and temporal defeat of the Mirza, whatever the latter thought to be source of satisfaction, proved to be materials of vexation. For instance on a day when the Mirza [Kamran] held a feast and had for his own honour sent for His Majesty the Emperor [Akbar], it chanced that on the occasion of the *Shab-i Barat* they had, according to custom, brought a decorated kettle-drum for his son Ibrahim Mirza. His Majesty the Emperor Akbar, in anticipation of the kettle-

drum of sovereignty sounding in his name in future, took a fancy to it. The disloyal Mirza did not wish to let him have it, and reflecting that Mirza Ibrahim was the older of the two and apparently the stronger, he made the taking of the drum subject to a trial of strength and a wrestling match: whoever won, was to have the drum.

Aided by Heaven, and sustained by Eternity, His Majesty did not pay any attention to the pomp of Mirza Kamran nor to the superior age of Ibrahim Mirza and rejoiced on hearing the condition, imposed by the Mirza for his own enjoyment. He became a cause of augmenting the Mirza's sorrow, for despite his tender years, which made such actions very surprising, he, by divine inspiration and instruction, without hesitation girded up his loins, and rolled up his sleeves, and with strong arms, strengthened by Eternal Power, stepped bravely forward. He grappled with Ibrahim Mirza according to the canons of the skilful masters of wrestling and putting his hand behind the waist, so lifted him up and flung him to the ground that a cry burst forth from the assemblage, and shouts of "Bravo" arose from far and near. This was the first sound of that drum of victory and conquest of His Majesty the Emperor, the Shadow of God, which came to be beaten everywhere above the earth and below the sky.

Mirza Kamran, who had thought of this wrestling bout as a test of the issue of his contest with His Majesty Jahanbani [Humayun], took a bad omen from the result and became dejected, while the well-wishers and intimates of His Majesty the Emperor [Akbar] expanded with joy and took it as a happy omen. His Majesty [Akbar] beat the drum which he had gained by the strength of his arm, and the joyous sound gladdened the hearts of the royal servants. The Mirza, as things had turned out adversely, and the incident revealed an omen contrary to his desire, gave way to evil designs against the altar of Fortune [Akbar], one of these being that he ordered His Majesty to be weaned, though the time for weaning had not yet arrived. He was oblivious of the fact that he who drew milk from the breasts of the divine favour



and obtained nutriment from a celestial nurse could come to no harm from such acts, and that he who had the True Protector for his guardian could receive no detriment from these hostile designs.

Akbar and His Stepmother (1548)

Akbar himself is the authority here. The incident recounted, occurred during his second reunion with his parents after Humayun took Kabul on 27 April 1548. Abu'l Fazl professes to record the incident in Akbar's own words. Akbarnama, ed. Ahmad Ali, Calcutta, III, pp. 77-8. H. Beveridge's translation, pp. 107-8 has been used, but checked and revised.

One of the joyful occurrences of this glorious year [1573-74] was the auspicious arrival of the noble lady Hajji Begum [Akbar's stepmother]. After she had returned from the holy places [Mecca and Medina] she had, in spite of the ties of love between her and His Majesty [Akbar], chosen Delhi as her place of abode. She had taken up her residence in the neighbourhood of the tomb of His late Majesty Humayun and devoted herself to works of charity. At this time, when the victories of Gujarat occurred, and there were great feasts, she came on the day of Wednesday, 29 *Dai Ilabi* [20 January], to offer her congratulations. His Majesty [Akbar] went out to welcome her. She was [also] the daughter of the maternal uncle of the late King Humayun's mother. Alaman Mirza was their child. His late Majesty Humayun had a great respect and regard for her. I have heard the Emperor [Akbar] say: "The kindness and affection which she showed to me, and my love for her are beyond description. Every one who did not know the real facts thought that she was my own mother. When I was in my sixth year I was distracted by toothache. She said she had a tested medicine, and went off to get it. My mother [Hamida Banu] out of vigilance and caution was

in agony lest she should give me that medicine [and it be poison], and yet she did not venture to say anything out of respect for His late Majesty Humayun; so she tried to take me away to her own house, but I would not leave my attendance on Hajji Begum. Just then the latter brought the medicine, and, as she knew the real state of affairs, out of her love for me, she first took some of the medicine herself, without saying anything, and then rubbed the medicine on my teeth. The minds of those present were set at rest, and also my pain was soothed."

Evading Lessons (1551)

Bayazid Bayat served Humayun as well as Akbar. In 1591-92 he dictated his memoirs to Abu'l Fazl's clerk, while supervising the Imperial kitchen. He informs us, at the end, how he had this anecdote from Akbar's own lips in 1571-72.

In 1551 Akbar was at Kabul, and receiving his lessons rather indifferently. Mun'im Khan was not only a high officer under Humayun but rose later to be the highest minister (wakil) under Akbar.

The passage has been translated from Bayazid Bayat, Tazkira-i Humayun-o-Akbar, ed. M. Hidayat Hosain, Bib. Ind. Calcutta, 1941, pp.147-8.

In that year [958 A.H. 1551] Prince Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar Mirza used to take his lessons from Mullazada, son of Mulla Husamuddin — Mulla Husamuddin had no equal in his time at Samarqand — in a tent in the grove of Her Highness Hamida Banu Begum. Mun'im Beg offered obeisance to and took leave [from His Majesty King Humayun] in order to offer salutations to the Prince. The Prince told Adham, the Prince's foster-brother (Koka), "Tell Mun'im, to make us free today [from the lessons]." In compliance with the Prince's instructions, he [Mun'im Beg] made the request to Mullazada. Since Mun'im Beg was all the time in position of *wakil* (vicegerent) of His Majesty King Humayun, and his words were respected both by the soldiers and ordinary subjects, Mullazada accepted his request and let the Prince off to play. This information reached the King. Next day, as Mun'im Beg, according to his habit, waited upon the King, Shamsuddin

Atka brought the Prince to offer obeisance to the King. His Majesty told the Prince: "Yesterday you asked Hajji Muhammad Sultan to obtain leave for yourself from your tutor. Don't do it again."

Afterwards when the Prince went away to his lessons (*maktab*), His Majesty said: "Mun'im, I had heard that you had released him from the lessons. I instead mentioned Hajji Muhammad's name to him on purpose, since the Mirza [Akbar] is still young. It may not happen that he thinks Mun'im Beg, having released him from lessons, has also informed the King; and when I am no more, let it not happen that, on this score, he sets out to harm you. On the other hand, Hajji Muhammad is a discourteous fellow; whatever harm he may come to, he would well deserve it." This story was told by His Majesty to Qasim Ali Khan at Jaunpur in 978 [1571-72], in front of Mun'im Khan Khan-i Khanan, who had had for years before this the privilege of being addressed as 'Khan Baba' by His Majesty — Bayazid having been appointed to *sarkar* Banaras [was present there] to attend the consultations for the Bengal campaign.

Learning to Paint (1552-54)

Akbar's education also included learning to paint. This is brought home to us from a passage in Jahangir's Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, ed. Syud Ahmud, Ghazipur and Aligarh, 1863-64, p.18. This portion of Jahangir's memoirs was written within one or two years of Akbar's death in 1605. Bayazid, pp.68, 176-7, tells us that Abdu's Samad reached Humayun's court at Kabul in Shawal 959/September-October 1552, and accompanied Humayun to India in 961/1554. The lessons in painting that Akbar recalled later must therefore have been given to him in 1552-54, when he was 10-12 years of age. Hemu was the general of the Sur army, killed in 1556 at the battle of Panipat.

The translation of the passage has been made independently of the translation of Jahangir's Memoirs by A. Rogers and H. Beveridge, London, 1909-14, I, p.40.

His Majesty [Akbar] used to relate: "In Kabul one day I was learning to paint under the care of Khwaja Abdu's Samad Shirin Qalam, when my brush painted a form, whose parts were all separated from each other and scattered. One of those near asked, 'Whose picture is this?' I said, 'It is Hemu's'."

Akbar at Ten (1552)

Just ten years of age, Akbar was taken by Humayun with him in his campaign against the Ghakkars in November-December 1552. The incident described here by Jauhar took place at Pharhala in the Salt Range. Rafiq was the personal attendant of Akbar, and he would appear again below in the narration of Akbar's encounter with Adham Khan after the murder of Atka Khan.

The translation is made directly from Jauhar Aftabchi's Tazkirat-ul-Waqi'at, Add. 1671, ff.128b-129a.

At that place [Pharhala], His Majesty [Humayun] ordered me, Jauhar, to present to him the Prince [Akbar] telling me to bring His Highness after giving him a bath and dressing him up. Acting on His Majesty's command, I, Jauhar, went and told the Prince, "His Majesty has called you to his presence. Kindly take bath and get dressed and come to His Majesty." The Prince said, "I cannot be nude in your presence. I feel embarrassed at showing myself naked." I, Jauhar, said, "If you agree I may call Rafiq." The Prince replied, "Do so." After Rafiq came, His Highness took bath and got dressed. I, Jauhar, took him to His Majesty. His Majesty seated himself facing Mecca, made the Prince sit in front of him, and every time he recited something, he kept blowing on his face. His Majesty [Humayun] showed himself to be immensely pleased...

The Break with Bairam Khan (1560)

Akbar was enthroned at Kalanaur in 1556 in the midst of a crisis. During the first four years of his reign, the reins of authority remained largely in the hands of his ataliq (advisor) Bairam Khan. Akbar shook off the tutelage in 1560. Muhammad Arif Qandahari, who was an official of Bairam Khan and remained with him till his assassination in Gujarat on 31 January 1561, gives a first-hand account of the event, and quotes a letter from Akbar, of March 1560. Abu'l Fazl gives an entirely different and very formal text of this letter.

Arif Qandahari wrote the Tarikh-i Akbari, a history of Akbar's reign down to 1579. The excerpt below is taken from Tarikh-i Akbari, ed. Muinuddin Nadwi, Azhar Ali Dihlawi and Imtiyaz Ali Arsbi, Rampur, 1962, pp.57-9.

Owing to this, His Majesty, availing himself of the opportunity, in the month of *Jumada II* 967 [28 Feb.-27 March 1560], left the capital city of Agra with a few confidants, and marching, as if on chase, proceeded towards Delhi. The next day, hearing of the news of His Majesty's departure, Bairam Khan became very agitated and sending representations petitioned that he may have another opportunity of treading the path of loyalty so that he may mend his errors. For this purpose he sent Khwaja Jahan, Hajji Muhammad Khan, who was his *wakil* [agent], and Tarsun Muhammad Khan, his seal-keeper, to the Imperial camp. But his plea was not accepted, wholly or partly, and the party that had come on the mission on his behalf did not return [verse omitted].

Day and night, commanders and soldiers in groups after groups left the capital city of Agra and proceeded to the

Imperial camp, so that a whole army gathered under the Imperial banners. At this time His Majesty Emperor Akbar wrote the following missive to Bairam Khan:

“My Khan Baba! Let him read our letter of affectionate greetings and message of love, and know that, previous to this, owing to certain facts and circumstances we have encamped at Delhi. When we heard that you were coming to wait on us, we sent Tarsun Beg [to say] that, since we had received much grief and hurt from you, it is not proper that you should at this time wait on us, but should remain as you are and deal with affairs as require attention. If the need arises, we will come to Agra. You may go in advance to Gwalior and that territory, so that whenever we summon you, you can wait upon us. For reassuring you, we had written that though there may arise a quarrel between father and son, yet neither can be indifferent to each other. Since you are our Khan Baba, the same relationship applies between us. In spite of this grief and hurt and improper and unworthy acts [from you], we hold you in our affection, and favour and love you. We still call you and recognise you as ‘Khan Baba’ as in the past. We deem it proper that since, at present, a meeting between us and you has to be kept in abeyance, you may prepare to proceed on pilgrimage to the holy places (*hajj*) as requested by you in your petition. Send someone who should collect the wherewithal for presents that you had, in the form of money, left in Sirhind and Lahore, and loading it, carry it to them (?). Dated...”

Reading this, Bairam Khan became [still more] agitated, and leaving the capital Agra on 9 *Rajab* of the same year [17 April 1560], even before he could meet [Sayyid] Najibuddin Habibullah, came out and went to Bayana like a man who has lost his wits....

Youthful Eccentricities (1560-61)

Bayazid Bayat, our authority for the incident narrated below, was then himself at Agra. Shamsuddin Muhammad Atka Khan was Governor of Punjab till November 1561. We may remember that Atka Khan was the husband of Akbar's wet nurse Jiji Anga and thus the Emperor's foster-father.

The passage is translated from Tazkira-i Humayun-o-Akbar, p.22.

At that time [968 A.H./1560-61] His Majesty was much interested in the rearing of cocks and in cock-fights. He accordingly ordered that whosoever came to offer obeisance must bring a fighting cock with him. One day Shamsuddin Atka, who during those days was the Governor of *Sarkar* Punjab came from Lahore. He received an order on the way that he should have his head shaved. Hair on his head had not grown long enough for this. His Majesty asked him, "We have ordered and you have not yet got your head shaved." By way of conviviality Shamsuddin answered, "The hair on my head had grown too little [to be shaved again]. When I reach Mathura I will get it shaved there in the manner of the Hindus of that place." His Majesty expressed amusement at this.

At Popular Festival (1560-61)

The event recorded by Abu'l Fazl under the 6th RY (1560-61) was related to him by Akbar himself.

The passage is from Akbarnama, II, pp.145-6, tr.II, pp.223-4. Beveridge's translation has been used, with considerable modifications.

In the town of Bahraich is the grave of Salar Mas'ud Ghazi who was one of the martyrs of the armies of Ghaznin. It is a custom in India for people to make flags of various colours in different places and convey them along with numerous presents to that place. Accordingly a large contingent starts from the capital city of Agra for this rendezvous and stays and celebrates for a night in the neighbourhood of the city [Agra]. There is a great concourse, and both the good and the bad assemble there. Abu'l Fazl, the writer of this auspicious record, one day heard from the sacred lips of His Majesty that one night when there was a very large assemblage of this kind near Agra, he, according to his excellent habit, went to the celebrations incognito. He was engrossed in observing the various sorts and conditions of humanity present, when "suddenly some ruffian recognised me and said so to one another. When I became aware of this, I without the least delay or hesitation rolled my eyes and squinted and so made a wonderful change in my appearance. In a way that they could not imagine I, as a spectator, was observing the devices of Fate. When those people looked closely at me, they, on account of the change in my appearance, could not recognise me, and said to one another:

"These are not the eyes and features of the King.' I quietly moved away from the scene and went to my palace." While telling the story, His Majesty showed us what he had done, and so made our wonder the greater. In truth, it was a very strange performance.

In an Elephant Fight (1561-62)

One of Akbar's favourite pastimes was taming and riding elephants and unruly horses. The incident described below, here narrated by Abu'l Fazl, is also reported by Jahangir on the authority of Akbar himself. Akbar said that he was only pretending to be drunk, but once the pretence was adopted, he could not show himself to be sober even when the danger was so obvious! (Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, pp.246-7, tr., Vol.II, p.41).

Beveridge's translation (Vol.II, pp.232-4) of the passage in the Akbarnama text, Vol.II, pp.50-3 has been adopted, with considerable modification.

Among the occurrences of this time was His Majesty the Emperor's mounting the elephant Hawai and engaging it in a fight. The elephant Hawai was a mighty animal and belonged to the Imperial stables. In rapid pace, proneness to anger, fierceness and wickedness he was a match for the world. Expert and experienced drivers, who had spent a long life in riding similar elephants, mounted him with difficulty, so what could they do in the way of making him fight? The heroic and brave Emperor one day without hesitation mounted this elephant, in the very height of its musth and excitement, in the polo-ground which he had made for his pleasure, outside the fort of Agra, and executed wonderful manoeuvres. After that he pitted him against the elephant Ran Bagha which nearly approached him in his qualities. The loyal and the experienced who were present were in a state such as should never happen to anyone.

As the courtiers who were witnesses of this dangerous scene were agitated by its prolongation and were unable to

remonstrate, they in their desperation thought that there might be a remedy if Atka Khan, who was the main minister at the Court, was brought, and if he, by prayers and entreaties, could dissuade His Majesty from pursuing this dreadful occupation, the contemplation of which turned the gall-bladder of the lion-hearted to water. When Atka Khan arrived in all distraction and saw the state of affairs, he dropped from his hand the thread of self-control and bared his head. He cried and lamented like oppressed suppliants for justice. Great and small raised hands of entreaty and implored God for the safety of the sacred person, the fountainhead of peace and tranquillity for mankind. When His Majesty chanced to see Atka Khan's perturbation, he said to him, "You must not make all this lamentation. If you don't stop, I'll at once throw myself down from the elephant." When Atka Khan saw His Majesty's firm determination in the business, he at once obeyed and from deference outwardly composed his internal agitation.

The lion-hearted Emperor calmly went on with his terrifying pursuit until the elephant Hawai, by the strength of spiritual power and divine fortune, obtained victory over his opponent. Ran Bagha let fall the strong cable of steadfastness and turned to flee. Hawai looked neither this way nor that and, disregarding ups and downs of the ground, went like the wind in pursuit of the fugitive. His Majesty, a rock of firmness, continued to sit steadily, as a spectator of the ways of fortune. After running a long way the elephants came to the edge of the river Jamna, and to the head of the great bridge of boats that had been constructed over the river. Ran Bagha in his confusion went on to the bridge and Hawai with the Imperial Hero on his back came upon the bridge behind him. Owing to the great weight of those two mountain forms, the pontoons were by turns submerged and lifted up. The royal servants flung themselves into the water on both sides of the bridge and went on swimming until the elephants had traversed the whole bridge and got to the other side. At this time when the spectators were



People watching and praying for Akbar while he is riding the elephant Hawai on boat-bridge (the other half of illustration reproduced on cover of this volume). *Akbarnama*.

Courtesy : Victoria and Albert Museum

looking on at the wonderful affair, the Emperor in a moment restrained Hawai, who was like fire in disposition and like wind in swiftness. Ran Bagha ran off, for dear life.

Now life, too, came to the world, and distraught hearts were composed. Some thoughtless, short-sighted ones imagined that perhaps there was some drunkenness in the head of His Majesty and that what he had been doing was the result thereof. They now gave up this baseless idea and perceived that it is one of his arts of reason to bring into evidence a specimen from the wondrous inner gallery and summon the astray in the wilderness of ignorance to the King's highway of knowledge, so that the blind may be favoured with sight, and the eyes of the seeing be anointed with impearled collyrium.

The Pardoning of an Errant Official (1561-62)

Muzaffar Ali Turbati for whom the King's pardon was sought had been an aide of Bairam Khan. He later rose to be a minister and high noble of Akbar with the title Muzaffar Khan. Bayazid was a participant in the event he describes. The excerpt has been translated from his Tazkira-i Humayun-o-Akbar, p.238.

When the next day Khankhanan (Mun'im Khan) was leaving for the house of Maham Begah [Akbar's foster-mother], I, Bayazid, reminded him [of his promise to obtain pardon for Khwaja Muzaffar Ali Turbati, an officer of Bairam Khan]. When the Begah received him, she said, "What an honourable thing it would be for you to get his fault pardoned, and, sending someone to Durwesh Uzbek's house, get Muzaffar Ali out of his prison-house!" Khankhanan said, "When such is your view, a plea should be made to His Majesty the King." The Begah said, "I will do so."

When they were discussing this matter, His Majesty the King came to the Begah's apartment and taking out a fine needle from the sewing-kit of Dastam Khan's mother, sat down to remove the thorns that had stuck to his feet while hunting in the wastes of Hissar. While he was doing this, the Begah begged for the forgiveness of Khwaja Muzaffar Ali's fault at the plea of Khankhanan. The King accepted the plea and remarked: "People say he is an elegant writer. If you [Khankhanan] need him, you may employ him."

The Unconventional Young King (1560-64)

I

Rafi'uddin Shirazi was a Persian who came to India in 1559-60 as a merchant. He spent some time in Agra during 1560-64 and went to the Deccan thereafter. His reminiscences of Akbar of that time occur in his historical work, the Tazkiratu'l Muluk, completed by him in 1608-12, Br. Lib., Add. 23883, ff.172b-174b. Translation ours.

When His Majesty Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar ascended the throne of Caliphate and sovereignty, owing to the great natural intrepidity that His Majesty possessed, he was seized with the urge to go on hunting and chase and often spent long spells in the wild. He had great love for hunting animals such as dogs, cheetahs, hawks, falcons and royal white falcons. Very large numbers of such animals were collected in his hunting stables (*shikar khana*). His Majesty had designed a special hunting dress which he wore at chase, the dress being green with a yellow tint, so that the animals might think from a distance that it is some young shoots of plants and not be frightened. Similarly, all his companions and servants were to dress in that fashion. Whenever the prey came within his shooting range it was impossible for it to escape His Majesty's grasp. He hunted sometimes with the bow-and-arrow, sometimes with the musket and sometimes with the sword. Often it so happened that His Majesty went in chase for three or four *farsakhs* all alone. The orders were

that nobody should follow him in the chase so that the prey should not get alarmed. One day by chance he had to chase the prey for two or three *farsakhs* before the deer was finally killed. He did not consider it auspicious to leave it and opened its abdomen and cleaned the insides. Carrying the dead deer on the shoulders, with the cheetah chained to his hand, he betook himself back to the camp.

On another occasion it so happened that having chased the prey a long way, he reached a village whose inhabitants were of a rebellious bent. They seized His Majesty and asked: "Who are you?" His Majesty replied, "I am a servant of Khan-khanan [Bairam Khan]." Out of mischief they put His Majesty in a cattle-pen. When His Majesty did not return to camp, the soldiers, searching for him, reached that village. Pir Muhammad Sherwani, coming with troops and besieging the village had him released. Such captures of His Majesty's person took place twice.

Once afterwards, pursuing the prey, he reached another village, overcome by hunger and thirst. Since there was a house of a *bhatiyari* (female inn-keeper), His Majesty ate there and rested. In this country a *bhatiyari* is one, who... [break in the original text] on roads used by people at every *farsakh* or half *farsakh*, notables of this country have founded and left behind in trust *sarais*, where persons of the caste of *bhatiyaras* reside so that whenever the travellers arrive, they can on payment stay there and give provisions for food to the *bhatiyari* who then cooks the food according to their taste and takes her wage. Thus His Majesty also ate at the *bhatiyari's* house and was resting when a group of travellers arrived at the inn and took him for a penniless and needy person, and expected him to offer them salutation. When His Majesty paid no attention to them, this indifference annoyed them and they gave him a few lashes and told him to get out of the place. His Majesty, finding himself alone, bowed to circumstances and quitting the place went his way. Thereafter, the inn-keeper told the travellers that this was a disgraceful act they had done, since he was King

Akbar, who in pursuit of game had come far away from his camp and arrived at this place. Discovering this, the travellers were ashamed and took to flight.

II

Another passage from the same work, ff.173b-174a. Since Sayyid Beg, envoy of Shah Tahmasp came to Agra in 1562-63, this event, of which Rafi'uddin Shirazi was again an eye-witness must have taken place that year. This passage has also been translated by Iqtidar Alam Khan in Studies in History, Vol.II, No.1 (1980), p.48; but the translation below is made independently.

The present writer had come to Agra from Gujarat for purpose of trade and begun doing business there. It became my ambition to have a sight of the King of this place. It so happened that at that time Sayyid Beg, son of Ma'sum Beg, who was a confidant of Shah Tahmasp, came as an ambassador. For receiving him, a high and large royal tent was erected in the King's garden, and a place of assembly was there arranged with perfect decor and elegance. The nobles also had set up their tent-enclosures in a proper manner. The people of the town used to go there daily for sight-seeing. Seeing this, I too was seized by the desire to go there and look at the spectacle. Having accordingly gone there, I was standing in a tent-enclosure amidst a crowd, when all of a sudden the cry of "God save the King!" (*Badshah Salamati*!) went up. I realised, that the King had arrived. But however much left and right I looked, I did not see anyone who by appearance gave any signs or marks of royalty. When I looked behind I saw that a youth of twenty years was leaning on a favourite, with his hand resting on the other's shoulder. I guessed that he must be the King. But the people went on standing shoulder to shoulder with me and performed no courtesies or salutations to him. I moved a little away to observe this mode of conduct. I was greatly surprised, and I asked of those people whether at this Court

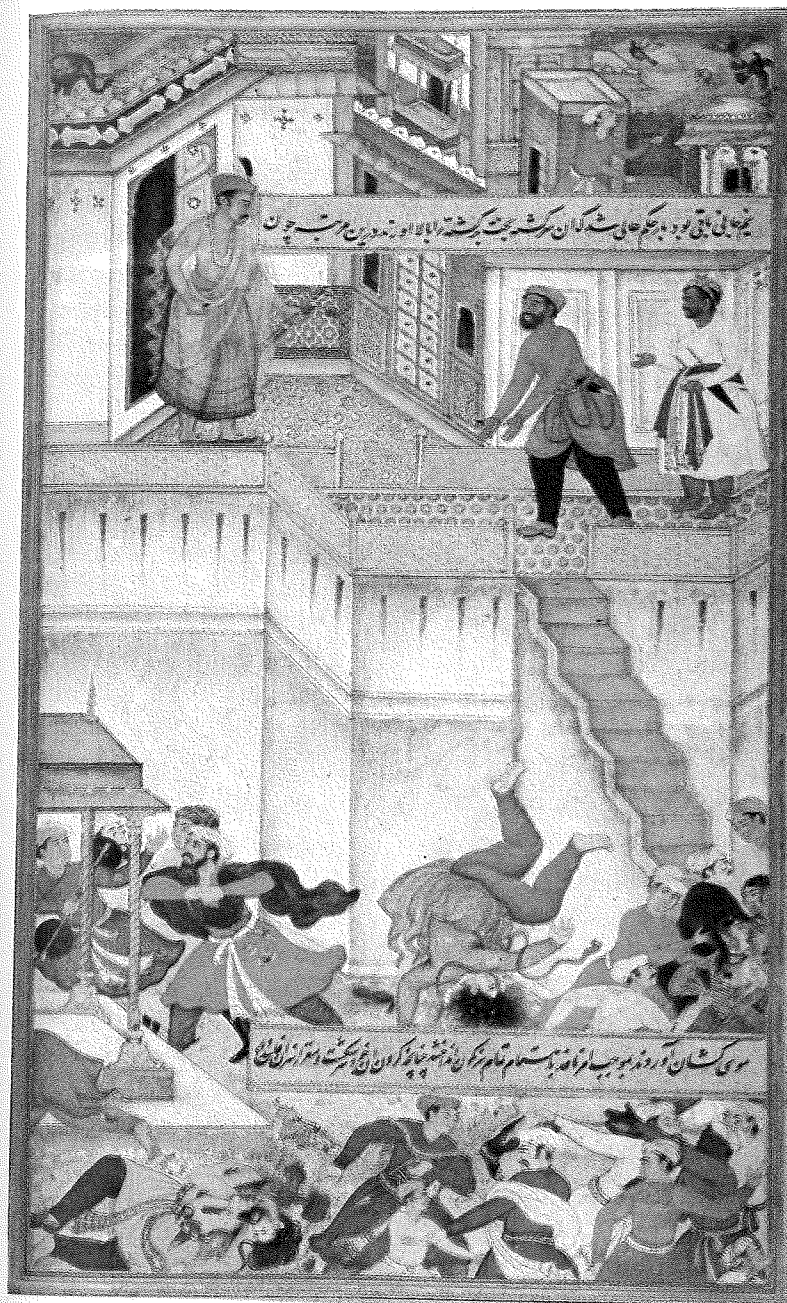
there is no tradition of paying respects to the King so that people offer him proper salutations. They said, "The etiquette for courtiers and salutations at this Court is much more elaborate than in those of other rulers; but the King himself is most informal. Often he comes out in ordinary dress and mixes with his confidants and makes no distinction between companions and strangers. In such a situation, how is it possible all the time to offer him salutations?" Indeed, once I saw him flying a kite on the roof of his own palace; his head was bare and he was wearing a loin cloth (*lungi*). From this I was convinced that His Majesty was of an open bent of mind and extremely informal.

The Execution of Adham Khan, Foster-Brother (1563)

In 1561 Shamsuddin Atka Khan was appointed the main minister, in which capacity we see him described in episode 12. This led to much resentment in the rival faction and led to his murder by Akbar's foster-mother Maham Angah's son Adham Khan in 1563. Bayazid Bayat, close as he was to Mun'im Khan, a rival of Atka Khan, provides us with an account of the whole episode.

The passage has been translated directly from Bayazid's Tazkira-i Humayun-o-Akbar, pp.251-2.

This year because of the misrepresentations of-calumniators, a quarrel arose between Atka Khan [Shamsuddin, Akbar's *atka* or foster-father] and Adham Khan Koka [Maham Angah's son, Akbar's *koka* or foster-brother]. It went to such lengths that Adham Khan and Khasm and Ala Bardi, the Koka's servants, attacked the *atka* in the open hall of the Diwan with swords and martyred him. His Majesty was then in his palace. When the news reached him, he at once put on the sword and tying on a loin-cloth, came out. Seeing the *atka*'s dead body, he asked, "Whose body is this?" Rafiq, *Charmansab* (Four-ranked), who had been the hereditary servant of Her Highness Khanzada Begum, sister of His late Majesty King Babur, said: "My King, it is your *atka*." The King asked, "Who killed him?" He replied, "Adham Khan." Adham Khan, who was then at the foot of the stairs, started up towards His Majesty, who was coming out [of his apartments]. His Majesty asked in the Hindustani dialect, "*Gandu* (sodomite)!"



Adham Khan, murderer of Atka Khan, being thrown down on Akbar's orders. Painted by Miskin and Shankar, *Akbarnama*.

Courtesy : Victoria and Albert Museum

Why have you killed our *atka*?" He answered, "He was disloyal." His Majesty stretched his hand and took hold of Adham Khan's hair. No need arose for him to use his sword. He then hit his [Adham Khan's] temple with his fist with such force that he could not speak again. His Majesty ordered him to be thrown from the top of the stairs. Mehtar Sukhai, whom His late Majesty King Humayun had favoured with the title of Farhad Khan, during the time of [Humayun's] seat of government at Lahore, was close by, and he and a few others who were near threw him from the top of the stairs, so that his head was broken; but he was still alive. The King ordered him to be brought up again and thrown down. When the order was carried out the second time, the Koka was at last dead.

All people of the palace, out of fear of consequences of this incident, fled, each in a different direction. His Majesty went to the apartment of Maham Begah [Maham Angah] and said, "*Mama*, Adham has been put to death." The Angah, out of the loyalty she had, did not at all let her maternal love for Adham colour her feelings. She said, "Your Majesty has done well. I and my other sons belong to you. He had committed an offence. You have done justice; and he has received punishment."

First Steps Towards Central Control (1563)

The following passage relates something Akbar said in his 7th regnal year (1562-63). Khwaja Mu'azzam was Akbar's maternal uncle (Hamida Banu's half-brother). He was punished by Akbar for killing his wife. Abu'l Fazl was later to underline the significance of the Atka clan's dispersal and claim that it was an important product of Akbar's administrative acumen (Akbarnama, II, p.332).

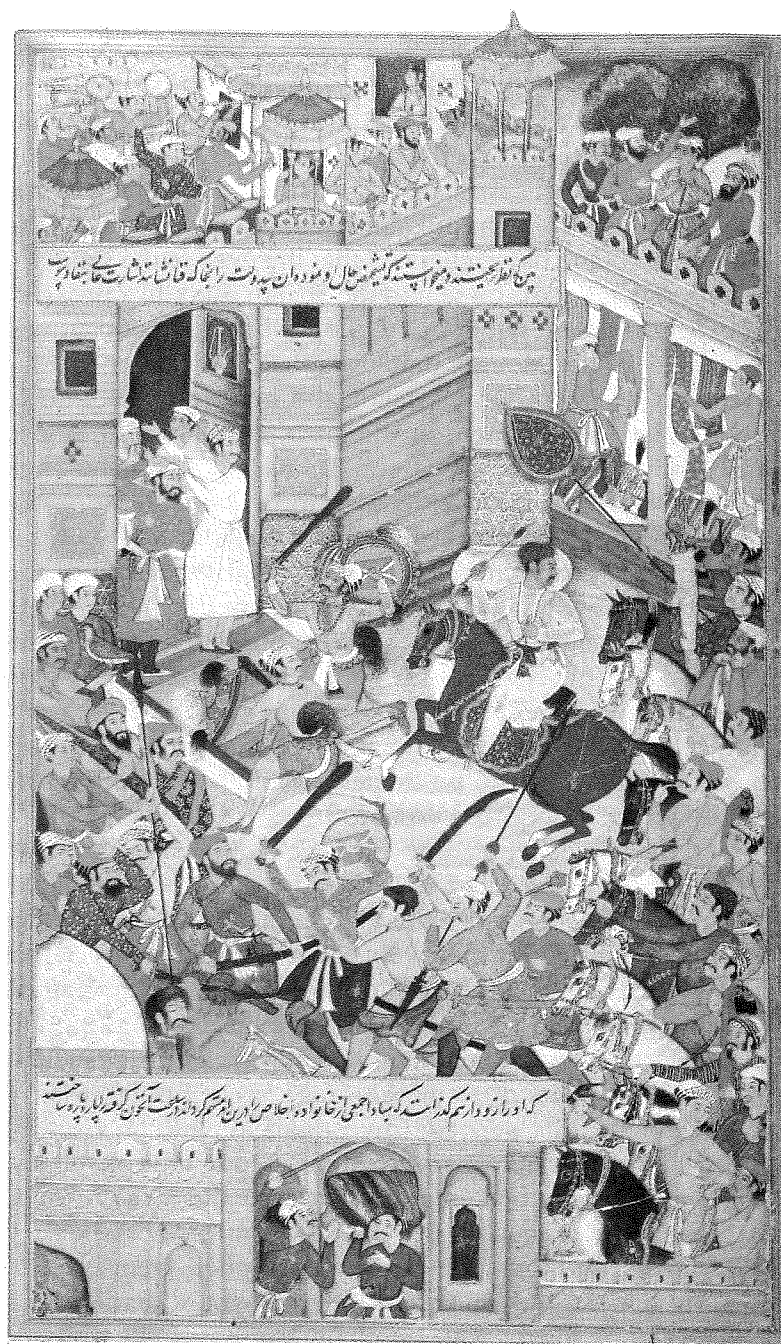
The excerpt is translated from Bayazid Bayat, Tazkira-i Humayun-o-Akbar, p.253.

One day His Majesty asked Mun'im Khan Khankhanan, "What do people say of my royal government?" Khankhanan replied, "May my King live for a hundred and twenty years. Ever since you have ordered Adham killed for murdering Atka and Mu'azzam for killing the daughter of Bibi Fatima, people praise you much; and it was the work, indeed, of perfect justice." His Majesty told Khankhanan: "We have done better things than these. It is surprising that nobody talks about those. But you do know of them; you do not mention them, because they may hurt the feelings of some people." Khankhanan said, "How can it be that I know something and would not yet state it before Your Majesty so as not to hurt some people's feelings?" The King said, "Better than these deeds is that I have brought out the clan of the Atkas from Lahore and like stars dispersed them, giving to each one of them a *jagir* in various corners of Hindustan." One can see the degree of sense of justice and administrative ability in this great King from such manners of observations.

A Scandal and an Attempted Assassination (1564)

Akbar stayed in Delhi in January 1564. Towards the end of his sojourn, there was an unsuccessful attempt at assassinating him (Abu'l Fazl, Akbarnama, text II, pp. 200-3). According to Abu'l Fazl the arrow pierced deeply into Akbar's shoulder; Abdu'l Qadir Badauni, a critic, not only says the injury was slight, he also attributes it to Akbar's scandalous conduct at Delhi. What follows is a translation of the passage in Badauni's Muntakhabu't Tawarikh, ed. Nassau Lees and Ahmad Ali, Calcutta, 1865, II, pp. 60-2. W.H. Lowe's translation of Vol. II, Calcutta, 1884-98, pp. 59-61, has been used, but subjected to heavy revision.

And it was at that place [Delhi] that His Majesty's intention of marrying into families of the notables of Delhi was first broached, and smooth-speaking intermediaries and eunuchs were sent into [private] palaces for the purpose of selecting virgin daughters and of investigating their condition. It was the seductive suggestion of Shaikh Buddh and Lahrah, two divines of Agra, which set in motion this train of events. The circumstances are as follows: A widowed daughter-in-law (*kelan*) of Shaikh Buddh, Fatima by name, though unworthy of such an honourable appellation, through evil passions, avarice and excess of idleness, which bear the fruits of wantonness, by the means of her tire-women entered into a temporary marriage with Baqi Khan, elder brother of Adham Khan, whose house was near hers. And this adultery was afterwards changed into marriage. She began to take along with her to nuptial and festive gatherings, another



A hired assassin shoots at Akbar. *Akbarnama*.

Courtesy : Victoria and Albert, Museum

daughter-in-law of Shaikh Buddh, who had a husband living, whose name was Abdu'l Wasi. And the story of the pious cat, which is told in the beginning of the Anwar-i-Suhaili, came true. Now this woman, whose husband was still living, was wonderfully beautiful, and without peer among the comely sex. One day it chanced that the eyes of the Emperor fell upon her, and so he sent to the Shaikh [Buddh] a proposal of union, and held out hopes to the husband of that charmer. It is a law of the Mongol emperors that, if the ruler cast his eye with desire on any woman, the husband is bound to divorce her, as is shown in the annals of Sultan Abu Sa'id and Amir Choban and his son Damashq Khwajah. Then Abdu'l Wasi, reading the verse: "God's earth is wide", for [as the adage goes] "To a master of the world the world is not narrow", pronounced three divorces upon his wife, and went to the city of Bidar in the country of the Deccan, and so was lost sight of; and that virtuous lady entered the Imperial harem. Then Fatima, at the instigation of her own father-in-law, urged that the Emperor should also marry into the families of other notables of Agra and Delhi that they may all appear to be treated equally, and there be no need for any undue preference.

At this time, when one day the Emperor was on an outing and had reached the vicinity of the School of the Begum, a boy named Faulad, whom Mirza Sharafuddin Husain, when he fled and went to Mecca, had set free, shot an arrow at him from the top of the balcony of the School, which happily did no more than graze his skin. Taking this incident to be an admonition from the divine and a miraculous work of the saints of Delhi, although some nobles wished that time be allowed for investigation with a view to discovering what persons were implicated in the conspiracy, His Majesty did not agree and ordered the wretch to be expeditiously executed. His Majesty went on horseback to the fortress, and there the physicians applied themselves to treating him, so that in a short time his wound had healed, and mounting his royal sedan-chair (*singhasan*) he took the road to Agra.

Reward for a Cheetah (1572)

During his first expedition to Gujarat in 1572, while passing through Rajasthan, Akbar went on hunt near Sanganer, to the south of Amber, in July 1572. Reported by Abu'l Fazl in Akbarnama, II, p.371: Beveridge's translation, II, p.539, has been adopted, in a revised form.

His Majesty was at this time much devoted to hunting with cheetahs and, after assigning cheetahs to numerous parties, he went off himself to hunt with some special attendants. It chanced that they loosed a royal cheetah called Chitrnanjan at a deer in the hunting grounds. Suddenly there appeared in front of them a ravine which was twenty-five yards broad. The deer leapt into air to the height of a spear and a half and conveyed itself across. The cheetah in its eagerness took the same course, and, quick and alert, cleared the ravine and seized the deer. On beholding this astonishing occurrence the spectators raised a cry of amazement and there was much surprise and delight. The Emperor raised the rank of that cheetah, making him the head of all cheetahs. He also ordered that as a special honour, and a pleasure to men, a drum should be beaten in front of that cheetah.

Imitating Rajput Heroics (1573)

This episode occurred in March 1573 soon after the fall of Surat during the first conquest of Gujarat. It is recorded by Abu'l Fazl in Akbarnama, III, p.31. Beveridge's translation, III, pp.43-4, has needed much revision.

One night His Majesty held a select drinking-party. Discourse fell upon the bravery of the heroes of Hindustan, it being claimed that they put no value on their lives. For instance, some Rajputs would hold a double-headed spear, and two men, who were equally matched, would run from opposite sides against the points, so that the latter would transfix them and come out at their backs. That divine warrior of the world [Akbar], for the sake of screening his own wisdom, or for testing men, or from the melancholy engendered by his success in this physical world, fastened the hilt of his special sword to a wall, and placing the point near his sacred breast declared that if Rajputs were wont to sell their valour in their way, he too could rush against this sword. A strange condition descended upon those who were present at the feast, and none had the power to utter a word, nor even to breathe. Just then Man Singh, running with the foot of fidelity, showed alertness, and gave such a blow with his hand that the sword fell down and made a cut between His Majesty's thumb and his index-finger. Those present took away the sword and His Majesty angrily flung Man Singh on the ground and began beating him. Saiyid Muzaffar, unthinking, tried to free him from the grasp of that tiger of

God and, by thoughtlessly twisting His Majesty's wounded finger, released Man Singh. This worsened the wound, but, by divine protection, it soon healed.

As Military Organiser and Commander (1573)

Akbar's brilliant feat of marching to Ahmadabad from Agra in just eleven days to quell the rebellion in Gujarat (August-September 1573) is well known. The following description is from Nizamuddin Ahmad's Tabaqat-i Akbari, Vol. II, ed. B. De, Calcutta, 1913, pp. 263-73. B. De's translation (pp. 406-20) has been adopted, but with heavy revision.

Nizamuddin rose to be an important official and was the Bakhsbi of Gujarat, 1584-93. He was therefore in a position to know the details, though he does not appear to have accompanied the expedition himself.

As the petitions of the Khan-i A'zam [from Ahmadabad] asking for relief arrived in rapid succession, His Majesty the Emperor summoned the various administrative officials, and ordered them to prepare the equipages for the expedition. As the previous expedition [to Gujarat] had lasted for a year, and the victorious troops had, on account of the prolonged period of marches, become destitute of resources, and they had not had so much time since their return, that they could collect money from their *jagirs*, and repair the deficiencies in their circumstances, His Majesty opened his liberal hand, to disburse much money, in the shape of salary and rewards, from his full treasury among the Imperial army, and he also bestowed much attention in providing the means of war.

He sent Imperial advance tents in charge of Shuja'at Khan, and making every arrangement for marching quickly, he made over some of the Imperial horses to Khwaja Aqa

Jan, so that these also be taken along with the advance tents. He also gave orders to the Imperial *diwani* officials, that they should be very prompt in arranging all matters connected with the troops, who were to accompany the Imperial stirrup, on this expedition. And of the nobles, whoever was assigned to the expedition, the marshals (*sazawals*) marched him out of the city, and conveyed him to the Imperial advance tents the very same day. It was repeatedly stated by His Majesty, that although he was making all this effort in arranging and sending forward the troops, no one would arrive at the scene of action before him; and, indeed, so it happened exactly.

....

His Majesty mounted an easy-pacing swift she-camel at early meal-time on Sunday the 24th *Rabi' II*, 981 A.H. [23 August 1573], corresponding with the 18th year of the *Ilahi* era. The attendants of the threshold, and the Court, mounted on fast-moving dromedaries, rode by his side. He did not draw reins that day, till he reached the town of Toda and had his dinner there; and giving the reins of his rapid march to the guidance of God, early on the morning of Monday, he rested for a moment at Hans Mahal. He then again moved swiftly, and one *pahar* (three hours) of the night of Tuesday had passed, when he arrived at the village of Mozabad. As a certain amount of fatigue had its effect on His Majesty, and some of his attendants had fallen behind, he waited there for a short time, in order to get rid of the fatigue. After the attendants had rejoined him, he mounted a swift-moving carriage and travelled all night; and on Wednesday, the 26th day of the month, full of the dust of the road, he arrived at the tomb of the great saint Khwaja Mu'inuddin Chishti, may God sanctify his soul! where he performed the duty of circumambulation, and then so satisfied the attendants of the paradise-like tomb, and, in fact, all the inhabitants of the country of Ajmer [by his rewards] so as to free them from the need of begging and asking. He rested for a time

in the splendid mansions, which he had built for his own residence.

He started from Ajmer in the evening, and continued his march. Among the attendants of the threshold, Mirza Khan, son of Khankhanan Bairam Khan, who, now, by inheritance as well as fitness and merit, is honoured with the great title of Khankhanan, and Saif Khan Koka and Zain Khan Koka and Khwaja Abdullah Kujak and Khwaja Mir Ghiyasuddin Ali Akhund, who to-day in the knowledge of history and in that of biography has no equal in the inhabited earth, and is honoured with the title of Naqib Khan, and Mirzada Ali Khan and Dastam Khan and Mir Muhammad Zaman, brother of Mirza Yusuf Khan, and Saiyyid Abdullah Khan, and Khwaja Ghiyasuddin Ali Bakhshi, who after the victory was honoured with the title of Asaf Khan, were present at the time His Majesty mounted horse under the shadow of the world-conquering umbrella. His Majesty, like the full moon, traversed an immense distance in the night. At the time of the true dawn, Shah Quli Khan Mahram, and Muhammad Quli Toqbai, who had been sent off in advance from Fatehpur [Sikri], obtained the honour of offering homage. At the time of mounting, scouts brought the news that the victorious troops, who had marched ahead, had halted at the town of Pali, which was in that neighbourhood. His Majesty conferred honour on Khwaja Abdullah and Asaf Khan Bakhshi and Raisal Darbari, and took them with him.

On the 2nd of *Jamada II* 981 [30 Aug. 1573], corresponding with the 18th *Ilabi* year, he arrived at the town of Disa, which is twenty *karohs* from Pattan in Gujarat. Shah Ali, the son of Bakhshi Lanka, who was the *shiqqdar* of the town of Disa, on behalf of Mir Muhammad Khan Kalan [the *jagirdar*], ran out, and placed his face of service and devotion on the dust of the Imperial threshold. His Majesty then sent Asaf Khan, the Mir Bakhshi, to Mir Muhammad Khan, that he might bring the latter with any troops, which he might have ready and present, to come and join the auspicious

camp at the town of Balisana, about five *karohs* from Pattan. At midnight he started for Balisana. He turned off from the road to Pattan, and at the time of breakfast, the plain opposite to the town of Balisana became the camping ground of the grand army. About the time of the arrival of the sublime standards, Mir Muhammad Khan with his army, and a number of the nobles, and the servants of the Imperial threshold, such as Vazir Khan and Shah Fakhruddin Khan Mashhadi, who had the title of Naqabat Khan and Taiyib Khan, son of Tahir Muhammad Khan, Governor of Delhi, and a number of great Rajput chiefs such as Khangar, nephew of Raja Bhagwan Das, who had before this started from Fatehpur, to reinforce Khan-i A'zam, but who had not been able to advance beyond Pattan, came to the Imperial threshold and obtained the honour of tendering their services.

At this halting place, an inviolable order was issued that the victorious army completely armed and equipped should attend in the great muster ground, like the assemblage of the Day of Resurrection. The great nobles brought their troops in battle array, and young warriors, tried in battle, marched to the muster-ground as the damascening of sword is set in iron. His Majesty inspected the victorious troops with great care, and although he placed complete reliance on heavenly help and victory, and aid from the angels of the spiritual world, still looking at things from a material point of view, he entrusted the command of the centre (*qalb*) of the army which is also called the *qaul*, and which is the place of the commander-in-chief, to Mirza Khan, the son of Khankhanan Bairam Khan, who was in the prime of life, and whose nobility was evident and clear from his frank countenance. He also placed Saiyyid Mahmud Khan Barha, who exceeded his contemporaries in courage and bravery, and Shuja'at Khan and Sadiq Khan and a number of others in the centre; and the command of the right wing, and the supervision of that division, was given to Mir Muhammad Khan Kalan. The command of the left wing was entrusted to the good management of Vazir Khan.

Muhammad Quli Khan Toqbai and Tarkhan Diwana, with a number of brave warriors, were placed in the advance guard. His Majesty himself, accompanied by divine help and victory, and with a hundred chosen horsemen, selected out of thousands upon thousands of horsemen, stood arrayed, with this end in view that if among any [division of the] army there was trouble, he should personally move to check it.

After the arrangement of the troops, an Imperial order was issued that no one should separate from his own contingent. Notwithstanding that no more than three thousand were assembled under the shadow of the sky-like standards, and the number of the hostile army was estimated at twenty thousand, His Majesty placed the rein of determination in the hand of divine favour; and in the closing hours of the day started from the town of Balisana towards Ahmadabad. He sent scouts to Khan-i A'zam [besieged by the rebels of Ahmadabad], so that they might give him the good news of the approach of the victorious standards. Travelling all night, on Tuesday, the 3rd of *Jamada I* [31 August] the Imperial army arrived in the vicinity of the town of Kadi, which is twenty *karohs* from Ahmadabad. The scouts brought the news that a large body of the enemy, on seeing the dust raised by the hoofs of the horses of the army, had supposed that a detachment was coming from Pattan to make an attack, and had come out fully armed from the town, and were ready to give battle. The order was given that a detachment of the victorious army should march to destroy that doomed band. They were to drive them away from the road, but not attempt to capture the fort [of Kadi]. As soon as the victorious troops encountered those ill-fated ones, the latter came forward to meet their doom in battle; immediately in the twinkling of an eye the Imperial troops purified the earth of the contamination of the existence of those impudent ones. A few who escaped from the hand of death threw themselves into the fort. As an order had been given that they should not attempt to take the fort, the army advanced five *karohs* beyond the town of Kadi. When they arrived there, His

Majesty ordered a halt, to give some repose to the animals and the men; and having rested till the morning, at about the first rays of the dawn, again took the road.

The Imperial *bakshis* having arrayed the troops, they started under the shade of the auspicious sun-like umbrella, and did not draw rein till they were within three *karohs* of Ahmadabad. At that fortunate place, an order of His Sublime Majesty was issued that the soldiers should put on their accoutrements, and the royal arsenal was spread out before them, so that every one who had made any slip in bringing his accoutrement, or had any defect in them, would have the proper articles bestowed on him from it. Khwaja Ghiyasuddin Asaf Khan was sent to give information of the arrival of the Imperial army, and to bring Khan-i A'zam to join it. Now, the Imperial army was to unleash a storm of bloodshed in the plain of Ahmadabad.

As His Majesty had, in the space of nine days, arrived from Fatehpur to the bank of the river of Ahmadabad, in the manner recorded, he reined up, to obtain the information that the enemy was up to that time in a state of intoxication, immersed in heedlessness and neglect. Yet His Majesty said, with his inspired tongue, that "it is not the practice of brave men to attack men unawares. We should wait till they are ready." Thereafter, upon hearing the sound of the drum, and the wailing of the trumpets, the enemy in great confusion and anxiety ran to their horses. [The rebel] Muhammad Husain Mirza, then, with two or three horsemen, came to the bank of the river to ascertain the truth. It so happened that Subhan Quli Turk had also with two or three horsemen gone to the bank of the river from this side. Muhammad Husain Mirza called out, "O soldier, what army is that?" Subhan Quli said, "This is the army of the Emperor, which has come from Fatehpur to exterminate those who have been faithless to their salt." Muhammad Husain Mirza said, "My spies only fourteen days ago left the Emperor at Fatehpur. And if it is the Imperial army, where are the Imperial elephants, which are never allowed to be separated from the Imperial stirrup?"

Subhan Quli said, "How could the musth elephants with mountain-like bulk traverse four hundred *karohs* with the army in the space of nine days?"

Muhammad Husain Mirza, astounded and bewildered, went among his men, arrayed his troops, and turned towards the field of battle. He sent Ikhtiyarul Mulk with five thousand horsemen with orders not to allow Khan-i A'zam to come out of the fort. When the time of waiting was prolonged, the Emperor ordered the advance guard to cross the river; and, as at this time, one of the common soldiers threw the head of one of the enemies at the foot of the Emperor's horse. His Majesty took it as a good omen, and an order was issued that Vazir Khan with the left wing should also cross the river. His Majesty with the soldiers placed under the shadow of the Imperial umbrella, also crossed the river.

[Couplets]

At the time of crossing the river, the order of the troops fell into some confusion; and they all went into the water together. They had gone only a short distance forward, when a large body of the hostile army appeared in sight. Muhammad Husain Mirza, with fifteen hundred Mughals, every one of whom was dedicated to him, came in advance of the others, and, while on the march, attacked the vanguard [of the Imperial army] which was under the command of Muhammad Quli Khan Toqbai and Tarkhan Diwana. Immediately after this the [rebel] Abyssinians and the Afghans attacked the lines under Vazir Khan, and the soldiers of the two armies mingled in a hand-to-hand fight.

[Couplets]

When His Majesty saw signs of weakness and distress in the vanguard, he like an angry tiger fell on the hostile army, and a number of life-sacrificing Imperial soldiers, raising the war-cry "Ya Mu'in" to the highest heaven, attacked the lines of the rebel army. Saiyid Khan Koka made a fruitless attack, and after fighting bravely attained martyrdom. [The rebels] Muhammad Husain Mirza and Shah Mirza, after showing much bravery and exertion, scattered the dust of

misfortune on their heads, and, turning their faces from the field of battle, fled. The victorious Imperial army, coming from behind, spread around much slaughter. His Majesty, then with a few men, drew rein and stood aside.

Muhammad Husain Mirza, who before this, had been wounded, for fear of death made great haste in taking to flight; but a thorn-bush came in front of him as he went, and he tried to make his horse jump over it. However, death caught him by the neck, and hurled him on the ground. A Turk of the name of Gada Ali, one of the Imperial retainers, who was pursuing him, threw himself from his horse, and seized him. Vazir Khan, who was the commander of the left wing, exerted himself with great devotion and fought bravely. The [rebel] Abyssinians and Gujaratis however stood firm, and made repeated attacks, until they heard of the defeat of Muhammad Husain Mirza and Shah Mirza; they then turned their backs on the battle-field. Mir Muhammad Khan, who was the leader of the right wing, by the strength of his arm, routed the sons of Sher Khan Fauladi, and from the strokes of his life-scorching sword, the wretched rebels buried their ill-starred faces in the wastes of disgrace.

[Couplet]

When the sun of the good fortune [of the Emperor] shone on the battle-field, from every side, rays of victory and lightning flashes of triumph began to corruscate. His Majesty possessed of victory and good fortune, dismounted on the top of an embankment, which was on one side of the battle-field. He was occupied with offering thanks (to God), when Gada Ali Badakhshi and another man from amongst the retainers of Khan Kalan brought before him Muhammad Husain Mirza, who was wounded. Each one of them claimed to have seized him. Raja Birbal, a little about whom has already been recorded, asked him, "Which of these men captured you?" Muhammad Husain Mirza said, "The salt of [loyalty to] His Majesty has captured me." And indeed it was truth that he uttered. His Majesty with gentleness and courtesy reproved him a little, and made him over to

Rai Singh. Among the prisoners in the field of the trial of bravery was a mendicant named Shah Madad, who called himself the foster-brother (*koka*) of [the former rebel] Ibrahim Husain Mirza. His Majesty, with the spear which he held in his auspicious hand, cast him down to his death, and he was cut to pieces by blows of the sharp-edged swords of the Imperial retainers. Later, it was found that it was he who in the battle of Sarnal had slain Bhupat, the brother of Raja Bhagwan Das.

After the victory an hour had not passed that a hostile army appeared in battle array, and this alarmed people [on the Imperial side]. Scouts brought the news that it was Ikhtiyarul Mulk Gujarati, who had been blockading the road of Khan-i A'zam, but who now, on hearing the news of the defeat of Muhammad Husain Mirza, had come out of the lanes of the city, and had turned his face to the open country. His Majesty ordered that a detachment should go forward, and by shooting their life-scorching arrows turn the enemy back. Immediately after this order, as Ikhtiyarul Mulk came in sight, a few blood-spilling horsemen rushed forward, raising the cry of "Ya Mu'in"; and they hurled the men who were coming in front of the rebel army down to dust and blood. Ikhtiyarul Mulk in great terror turned in flight towards the embankment where the Imperial standards had been set. He passed along the two sides of it in great disgrace and indignity. He fled in such extreme confusion that the brave soldiers of the victorious army shot his men with arrows plucked out of their own quivers.

At this time a Turkman of the name of Suhrab Beg recognised Ikhtiyarul Mulk, and pursued him. The latter, coming to a thorn-bush field, wanted to make his horse leap over. But the angel of death threw down his horse. Suhrab Beg, dismounting from his horse, seized him. Ikhtiyarul Mulk said, "You look like a Turkman. Turkmans are slaves (followers) of Murtaza Ali, may God be gracious to him! I am of the Saiyids of Bukhara. Slay me not." Suhrab Beg said, "I recognised you, and have pursued you. You

are Ikhtiyarul Mulk." He said this, and striking off his head from his body with a blow of his ruthless sword, turned back that he might again mount his horse. Someone else had however taken his horse away. So he wrapped up Ikhtiyarul Mulk's head in the skirts of his garments, and made his way.

At the time when Ikhtiyarul Mulk turned his face in flight towards the embankment, which owing to the presence of the Emperor, rubbed its head in pride with the sky of honour, the Rajputs of Rai Singh, who were in charge of Muhammad Husain Mirza, brought him down from the elephant on which he had been placed, and killed him with the blows of their spears.

After the victory, Khan-i A'zam and the nobles, who had fortified themselves in the city, came and received the honour of kissing the (Imperial) feet. His Majesty, from his extreme graciousness, took Khan A'zam in an affectionate embrace, and distinguished him by showing him various favours.

[Couplet]

Each one of the nobles received grace and favour in accordance with his rank and status. The Emperor had not yet finished with questioning them, when Suhrab Beg Turkman came and threw the head of Ikhtiyarul Mulk at the foot of the auspicious steed. His Majesty seeing this great gift [of God] again carried out the rites of thanksgiving and the duty of praise. He gave the order that a minaret should be constructed of the heads of the rebels, which were lying on the battle-field, and which exceeded two thousand in number, so that it might strike the spectators with terror.

From that place, in victory and triumph, he went to the capital city of Ahmadabad, and took up his residence in the palaces of the Sultans, which are situated in the citadel of Ahmadabad; and the great and noble and the various classes of the people and the various grades of artisans carried out the custom of offering presents and gifts, and the ceremony of congratulations and felicitations. Having spent four days

of his precious time in that place, in pleasure and enjoyment, he went to the house of I'timad Khan, which was situated in the centre of the city; and first of all he conferred favours on those, who in this expedition, and especially on the day of the battle, had rendered services. He ordered that each one of them should in relation to his condition and services be honoured with promotion in rank and increase in salary. He also gave orders that eloquent writers should occupy themselves in writing victory proclamations, and sent them to the various territories of the Imperial dominions. The heads of Muhammad Husain Mirza and Ikhtiyarul Mulk were taken to the capitals of Agra and Fatehpur and were suspended from the gates.

His Majesty now busied himself personally in winning the hearts of the people and all the residents of Ahmadabad, and gave them a place in the cradle of peace and safety.

Vision and Action: Constructing the Apparatus of Empire (1574-75)

In the 19th regnal year (1574-75) Akbar introduced a series of important measures to reshape the entire apparatus of his administration. The mansab (numerical rank) system by which all Mughal officers were integrated into a single service, the imposition of branding to enforce regular maintenance of troops, the wholesale resumption of jagirs (territorial revenue assignments) into directly administered territories (khalisa), and the land measurement and collection of fiscal data to enable fresh formulation of land-revenue rates, were parts of this sweeping new administrative enterprise.

Below are given two contemporary accounts of these measures. The first, constituting the official version, is from Abu'l Fazl's Akbarnama, III, pp.116-8, and the second, a bitter critique, is from Abdul Qadir Badauni's Muntakhabu't Tawarikh, II, pp.189-91. Both have had to be translated independently of the existing translations, owing to the technical terms and phrases employed.

The Official Accolade (Abu'l Fazl)

His Imperial Majesty does not let a month or year pass without devising good regulations or without providing the source of tranquillity to the world through his far-seeing wisdom that mirrors truths, earthly and divine. At this time he cast his eyes far and wide to arrange better the conditions of the army and peasantry and secure the extension of the empire and enlargement of the Imperial resources, and instituted [for the purpose] wonderful regulations and firm

rules. [The first] of these is the practice of branding (*dagh*). It is not concealed from just-minded observers that man is continually dominated by avarice and ill-temper. The power of lust or wrath covers with dust the bright lamp of the understanding of the wise and mature, should there happen to be [on their part] a little carelessness or neglect; so what can happen in the case of those who are not possessed of wisdom. At a time when, given these circumstances, justice and humanity were rare or rather non-existent, and when His Majesty the World-Lord had assumed the veil of indifference, assuredly there was bound to be widespread avarice and insincerity on the part [respectively] of the commanders and retainers. The commander of troops (*tabin-bashi*) satisfied his avarice by withholding from the retainers, what he received from the Court, and the retainers resorting to disloyalty, every now and then joined another [master], and, wherever he was, was oppressed by the master's greed and avarice. Whoever, out of personal integrity and regard for justice, turned away from this crowd of unjust and straying ones, took the path of just dealing and chose contentment and honesty, became the target of calumny.

Though at the beginning of this year [1574], before he undertook the expedition to the eastern provinces, His Majesty had applied his mind to this subject, and the Imperial officers had begun to work on it, yet the organisation of this great task took shape after the Imperial standards returned to the capital. The elucidation of this matter [regulation of branding] and the fixation of grades of *mansabs* having been determined, these were put into effect. Furthermore, with a view to closely administering the empire and securing the happiness of the peasantry, His Majesty resumed the entire land of the Imperial dominions to the *khalisa* (directly administered territory). At the time when His Majesty by placing himself behind a veil was testing men, the Imperial officials immoderately increased the estimated revenues (*jama*) [which were deemed equal to assignees' salary] of the territories, cities, townships and villages and opened the hand of

embezzlement in diminishing and raising them. Whoever bought their favour gained his ends, and whoever was not inclined to bribe them became a loser. Also whoever was so favoured, since it was out of unfairness and avarice, remained ungrateful; and whoever received less, went on complaining, out of discontentedness and disaffection. Now that the Imperial good fortune was morning-bright in glory and His Majesty was casting off the veil, he gave some of his attention to this subject and, first, made the entire Imperial dominions into the *khalisa*. All nobles and other officers of the Court were put on cash pay (*ulufa-i naqd*) and suitable ranks were assigned to them in accordance with the degree of their loyalty, and the contingents mustered by them.

Able and trustworthy persons were appointed to bring the vast territories of Hindustan under measurement (*zabt*) and fix the current revenue (assessments) (*hal-i hasil*) so that all at once the oppressive ones be prevented from pursuing the path of greed. But the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Gujarat were, from prudence and wisdom, left as they were, and Kabul, Qandahar, Ghazni, Kashmir, Tatta, Swad, Bajaur, Tirah, Bangash, Saurath and Orissa, had not been conquered, one hundred and eighty-two revenue collectors (*amils*) of integrity were deputed to take charge of the *khalisa* lands. As every *amil* was appointed over an extent of territory which was estimated to yield a crore of *tankas*, he came popularly to be known by the name of *karori*.

At this time, the leading officials in service. Shahbaz Khan, Khwaja Ghiyasuddin Ali Asaf Khan, Rai Purkhotam and Rai Ram Das, having due regard for Imperial orders, faithfully carried them out. And so in this excellent manner, the troopers received good wherewithal and the country proper government, while at the same time there was a safeguard against trickery and embezzlement.

Furthermore, His Majesty gave his attention to establishing an accurate means of measurement (*jarib*), in the interest of securing greater prosperity of the empire. In the past it was made of a rope which varied in [actual] length when

dry and wet, and so gave an opportunity for dishonesty. His Imperial Majesty invented a measuring rod made up of reeds of bamboo which in Hindi is called *bans* (bamboo), and which were joined together by iron rings. By this truth-securing device, men's minds were quieted, the cultivation of the country increased, and the path of fraud and falsehood was closed.

A great measure [also] undertaken was the establishment of [the system of] news recording and the appointment of intelligent clerks well-versed in accountancy. It was at this time of smiling fortune that His Majesty thought of this, and by an Imperial order this administratively important system was put into effect. It was ordered that whatever after penetrating scrutiny and abundant reflection was expressed by His Majesty in the Court, should be put on record, so that the officials of the empire might receive proper guidance.

Praised be God, whatever had been conceived in the mind of His Blessed Majesty, came out fully in the realm of practice. The implementation of this excellent set of measures was a choice way of worshipping the Creator. The detail of these Imperial regulations are given in the final volume [*A'in-i Akbari*].

The Critic's View (Abdu'l Qadir Badauni)

This year [A.H. 982/A.D. 1574-75] conceiving of an innovation for increasing the cultivation of the country and welfare of the peasantry, His Majesty brought the entire country, comprising city and mountain and rivers, wastes, jungles, tanks and wells under the measuring rod—though

In the grief-stricken eyes of a croaking man
A double-headed snake is better than a measuring rope—

so that as much land as after being cultivated would yield one crore *tankas* was set apart and given over to a trusted

person, whether known or unknown, along with a clerk (*karkun*) and treasurer (*fotadar*), who was designated *karori*, so that he should get all of the uncultivated land cultivated within a space of three years, and remit the increased revenues to the Imperial treasury. From each of them, surety was taken. The measurement began from Fatehpur Sikri in all the four directions, the first [tract to yield] a crore being called Adampur, the next Shispur, Ayyubpur, etc., arranged according to the names of the blessed prophets, the surveyors (*zabitan*) being sent to each. In the end these regulations were not implemented as they should have been. Most of the country became desolate owing to oppression committed by the *karoris*. Selling away their wives and children [to pay the revenue], the peasants scattered in various directions, and the *jama* (assessed revenue) fell overboard. Thereupon the *karoris* were trampled underfoot by the strict audit of Raja Todar Mal. Many good men died under the strokes of the whip, and the torture of the rack and pincers. Others died in unending imprisonment in the Court hall of the Finance Department (*diwan-khana-i kachehri*) without the executioner's services being required; nor did they receive a grave or shroud. Their case was like that of the Hindu devotees in the country of Kamrup who dedicate themselves to a god-image, and for one year live easily doing whatever they like and exempted from everything. Thereafter, at the appointed season, they are assembled in the temple of the idol-god and are killed by being drawn one by one under chariot-wheels, their head being offered to the idol-god.

Since all the territories, except those kept in the *khalisa*, were held by the nobles in *jagir* and owing to lust and debauchery and excess of expenditure on their household and hoarding of treasure, they did not have the leisure to keep retainers or pay attention to the conditions of the peasants, so at the time of battle they appeared alone or only with some slaves and servants of the Mughal race. A battleworthy soldier was just not to be found anywhere. Shahbaz Khan, the *Mir Bakhshi*, reminded His Majesty of

the custom and practice of branding and record of physical features (*dagb-o-muhalli*) which had been a regulation of Sultan Alauddin Khalji and thereafter a measure taken by Sher Shah. This was now put into effect. It was settled that first a noble would be awarded the *mansab* of [say] *bisti* (twenty) so that he may attend with his retainers (*tabinan*) in the duty of guard to the place or fort to which he may be posted. When he has presented those twenty horsemen (*sawar*) to the brand (*dagb*), he may then be made a *sadi* [*mansabdar of 100*], etc. He had to keep elephant, horse and camel according to his *mansab* by the same regulation. When he brought this number of horsemen to the muster, he could obtain favour according to his capacity and condition and rise to the *mansab* of *bazari* (1,000), *do bazari* (2,000) up to *panj bazari* (5,000), above which there is no higher rank. If he does not fulfil the requirements, he would fall from his rank to a lowlier position.

Under this regulation too the poorer soldier lost everything. For the nobles, looking after their own interests, brought their own personal servants and hired horsemen (*bargiran*) in the guise of soldiers, to the muster and had their *mansabs* confirmed. Then getting their *jagirs* in accordance with their *mansabs*, they sent away the hired horsemen until the time of work came again, when, according to the need, they would engage fresh hired troopers, and, after the business was over, saying "God is (your) refuge", would dismiss them. Thus the *mansabdars'* treasure and income and expenditure remained as before; only dust was received in his bowl by the hapless soldier, who the next time could not gird his waist to do anything. Wherever there were artificers like weavers, cotton carders, carpenters, or tradesmen, Hindu and Muslim, they hired horses and accoutrements and took them to the brand and received *mansabs*, or became *karori* or *abadi* (Imperial trooper) or *dakhili* (troopers paid by Imperial treasury and assigned to the *mansabdars*). After some days no trace remained of the imaginary horse and the non-existent accoutrements; thus in the expedition one had

to go on foot. It often happened that while passing in review before His Majesty at the Imperial Court, in His Majesty's own presence, the trooper was weighed, bound hand and foot with his dress [and weapons] and found to weigh but two-and-a-half *mans* or three *mans*, more or less. After enquiry, it was found that he too was hired, and the dress and accoutrements were also borrowed. His Majesty used then to observe: "We give these people something knowingly, so that they may have the means to live." After some time His Majesty allowed *abadis* to have two horses, one horse and [even] half a horse, so that [in the last case] two horsemen had one horse between them, and shared the pay of the *barawardi* trooper, which used to be six rupees [per month].

Behold! Look into my fate, and don't ask anything. This market became brisk, while the shop of soldiering lost custom heavily. And yet, owing to His Majesty's good fortune, wherever there was a foe, he was destroyed, and no need remained of such a numerous soldiery. The nobles too obtained release from the improper airs of the retainers (*qalaqchis*).

Akbar and Theologians at the *Ibadat Khana* (1575-76)

Akbar built the Ibadat Khana (House of Worship) at Fatehpur Sikri in A.H. 983 (1575-76) to benefit from discourses with Muslim divines. Why he built it, and what ensued after he assembled theologians and scholars there, is described in his lively fashion by Badauni, who was one of the invitees and so present at the assemblies. Makhdumu'l Mulk Abdullah Sultanpuri was then the most influential mystic-theologian at Akbar's court; his fall came first. Akbar subsequently began to lose his confidence in the Muslim theologians and opened the Ibadat Khana to discussions with representatives of other religions as well.

The following passage occurs in Badauni's Muntakhabu't Tawarikh, text, II, pp.200-3. Lowe's translation, II, pp.203-6, has been used, but extensively corrected.

In the year nine hundred and eighty-three (983) [1575-76] the building of the *Ibadat Khana* was completed. The intention behind its construction was this: In these previous years the Emperor had gained in succession remarkable and decisive victories, the empire had grown in extent from day to day, everything had turned out well, and no opponent was left in the whole world. His Majesty had become acquainted with ascetics and the disciples of his late Reverend Mu'in Chishti [of Ajmer] and passed much of his time in discussing the word of God and the word of the Prophet, and in engaging in talks on mysticism, scholarly discourses and enquiries into philosophy and law. His Majesty spent



Akbar holding discussion in the *Ibadat Khana* with divines (including Jesuits). Painted by Narsing, *Akbarnama*.

Courtesy : Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

whole nights in praising God; he continually occupied himself in pronouncing "O He [God]" and "O Guide", in which he was now well versed. His heart was full of reverence for Him, the true giver; and for offering thanks for his past successes he would sit many a morning alone as a suppliant and penitent on a large flat stone in an old cell which stood near the palaces apart from habitation, and occupied himself in meditation, gathering the bliss of the early hours of dawn. For he had heard that Sulaiman Kararani, ruler of Bengal, used every night to offer prayers in the company of some 150 persons consisting of renowned Shaikhs and 'Ulama (mystics and scholars), and used to remain in their society till the morning listening to commentaries and narrations [of the Prophet] and then, after offering the morning prayers, would occupy himself in State business, and the affairs of the army and of his subjects; and that he had his appointed time for everything and never wasted it. News now circulated also of the coming from Badakshan of Mirza Sulaiman, who was a prince of mystic tendencies, and had become subject to ecstasy and had enrolled disciples. For all these reasons and motives, His Majesty had the very cell of Shaikh Abdullah Niyazi Sirhindi (who had formerly been a disciple of Shaikh Islam Chishti, but had afterwards joined the circle of Mahdavis, as has been briefly recorded) rebuilt, and he built spacious porticoes on all four sides of it. He also finished the construction of the tank called *Anup Talao*. He named that cell the *'Ibadat Khana* (Hall of Prayer), which by degrees really became *'Iyadat Khana* (Hall of Sickness Visits).

On Fridays after prayer His Majesty would go from the new hospice of Shaikh Islam, and hold a meeting in that prayer-hall. Shaikhs, Ulama, and pious men, and a few of his own companions and attendants were the only people who were invited by His Majesty. Discussions were carried on upon all kinds of instructive and useful topics. One day Jalal Khan Qurchi, who was my patron, and the means of introducing me to the Court, in the course of conversation and discussion, stated before the Emperor, "When I went to

Agra to see Shaikh Ziyaullah, son of Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus, I found that poverty had taken such a hold on his people, that one day at a meeting he asked for some *sers* of pulse. Part of it he used for his own food, part he gave to me, and the other part he sent to the people of his household." The Emperor was much affected on hearing this. He sent for Shaikh Ziyaullah with a view to showing him kindness, and assembled a party in his honour at the *'Ibadat Khana*. Every Friday night [i.e. the night preceding Friday] he invited Sayyids, Shaikhs, Ulama, and nobles. Since ill-feeling arose among this band about their seats, and the order of precedence, His Majesty ordered that the nobles should sit on the east side, the Sayyids on the west, the Ulama on the south, and the Shaikhs on the north. His Majesty would go from time to time among these various groups, and converse with them, and discuss the truths of beliefs. Quantities of perfume were brought, and large sums of money were distributed as rewards of merit and ability among the worthy people who obtained an entry through the favour of the Emperor's courtiers. Many fine books which had belonged to Itimad Khan Gujarati, and, having been acquired in the conquest of Gujarat, had been placed in the Imperial library, were now distributed personally by the Emperor among the learned and pious. Among some books he gave me was one called *Anwar-ul-Mashkut*, in amplification of one section of the *Mashkutu'l Anwar*. Whatever books were left he gave to the nobles by way of pay, which was called *irmas*, i.e. 'destruction of enemy'.

[This continued] till one night the vein of the neck of the Ulama of the age swelled up, and there were loud voices and tumult. His Majesty got very angry at this behaviour and said to me, "In future report any of these people whom you find talking nonsense, and I shall expel him from the assembly." I said in low tones to Asaf Khan, "If I carried out this order, most of the Ulama would have to be expelled." His Majesty asked what I had said. I conveyed to His Majesty what I had actually said. He was highly pleased, and

mentioned my remark to those sitting near him. He used to summon Makhdumu'l Mulk Maulana Abdullah Sultanpuri to that assembly, in order to annoy him, and would set up to argue against him Hajji Ibrahim and Shaikh Abu'l Fazl, then a new arrival, but now the prime leader of the New Religion and Faith, or rather the Infallible Guide and Representative with full powers, with several other newcomers. They used to contest every statement of his (Abdullah Sultanpuri's). At this time, through a hint (from the Emperor), some of the courtiers too would come up with queries and effort to belittle him and snipe at him; they would [also] tell queer stories about him. The verse of the Quran, 'And some of you shall have life prolonged to a miserable age', came to be appropriate to his case.

Akbar's Agitation over an Execution (1577)

Badauni records a discussion between the Emperor and theologians which took place in 1577, at Fatehpur Sikri, upon the execution of a Brahmin of Mathura by Shaikh 'Abdu'n Nabi, a noted theologian and minister in charge of revenue grants. Badauni himself participated in the proceedings.

The following passage occurs in Badauni's Muntakhabu't Tawarikh, text, III, pp.80-7. Haig's translation, III, pp.127-30 has been followed, with some corrections.

One of the major reasons for his [Shaikh 'Abdu'n Nabi's] fall from grace was this, that when the King returned from Banswara to take up residence at Fatehpur [Sikri], Qazi Abdur Rahim, the Qazi of Mathura, laid a complaint before the Shaikh, to the effect that a wealthy and defiant Brahmin of that township had carried off the materials which he, the Qazi, had collected for the construction of a *masjid*, and had built of them an idol-temple, and that when the Qazi had attempted to prevent him, he had, in the presence of witnesses, opened his foul mouth to curse the Prophet (on whom be peace!), and had shown his contempt for Muslims in various other ways. When the Brahmin was called upon to appear, he disobeyed the Shaikh's summons. The Emperor sent Birbal and Shaikh Abu'l Fazl, and they brought him; Shaikh Abu'l Fazl reported to the Emperor what he had heard of the case from the people, and stated that his blasphemy was proved. Some of the Ulama were of opinion that he should suffer

death, while others were in favour of his being publicly humiliated and fined. The Ulama were thus divided into two parties and the question was argued at length. How much the Shaikh sought the Emperor's permission to execute the Brahmin, notwithstanding his importunity, no explicit sanction was given, and the Emperor said in private, "Punishments for offences against the holy law are in the hands of you, the Ulama; what do you require of me?" The Brahmin remained for some time in custody on the charge, and the ladies of the Imperial harem busied themselves in interceding for his release, but the Emperor's regard for the Shaikh stood in the way. At last, when the Shaikh's importunity exceeded all bounds, the Emperor said, "Our answer is that which we have already given you. You know of it." No sooner had the Shaikh now reached his lodging that he issued orders for the execution of the Brahmin.

When this matter was reported to the Emperor he was greatly agitated. The ladies of his harem complained inside and the Hindu courtiers outside, saying, "You have pampered these *mullas* till their insolence has reached such a pitch that they pay no heed to your wishes, and, merely to display their own power and authority, put men to death without your orders." They plied His Majesty with such arguments to such an extent that he could endure it no longer, and the leaven of designs which had long been working in his mind at length fermented and overflowed. One night at the tank known as *Anup Talao*, he set forth the whole case, and asked certain opportunistic *muftis* (jurists) and stirrers-up of strife for a decision on the question. One of them said, "The witnesses who have been produced prove that he [the Shaikh] has committed an offence and transgression." Another said, "The strange thing is that Shaikh 'Abdu'n Nabi should claim to be a descendant of Abu Hanifa (may God have mercy upon him!) according to whose school of theology the cursing of the Prophet by unbelievers who have submitted to the rule of Islam gives no ground for any breach of agreement by Muslims, and in no way absolves Muslims

from their obligation to safeguard infidel subjects. This question has been extensively treated in works of Hanafite jurisprudence and it is hard to understand how the Shaikh can have so opposed himself to the principles of his ancestor."

All at once the Emperor's glance fell from afar on the compiler of this work of select narratives. Turning to me he summoned me to him, saying, "Come forward." I advanced, and he asked, "Have you heard that, supposing there are ninety-nine traditions for awarding the punishment of death for a certain offence, and one tradition in accordance with which the accused person may be set at liberty, *muftis* should give preference to that one tradition?" I said, "Yes, it is just as Your Majesty has said; and this question is governed by the [Arabic] maxim 'Verily legal punishments and inflictions are set aside by doubts'," and I translated the maxim into Persian. The Emperor said, with evident sorrow, "Perhaps Shaikh 'Abdu'n Nabi was not aware of this ruling, that he put the unfortunate Brahmin to death. Yet how could it be so?" I replied, "The Shaikh is, beyond all doubt, a learned man, and he must have had some wise purpose in view, in knowingly giving an order contrary to this tradition." The Emperor said, "What purpose can he have had in view?" I said, "The closing of sedition and the uprooting of the germs of insolence from the minds of the common people." I also brought to His Majesty's notice the tradition of Qazi Ayyaz on the remedies of evils, which tradition I had come across in reference to this case. Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort said, "Qazi Ayyaz was a Maliki, and his decision can have no weight in a land of Hanafis." The Emperor said to me, "What do you say to this?" I said, "Although he was a Maliki, it is yet permissible by the law for a learned *mufti* to pass sentence in accordance with his decisions." The question was argued at length [by me], and those present observed that the Emperor's moustache now bristled like the whiskers of a tiger, and those who were standing behind him gave signs to me to desist from argument. All at once the Emperor, censuring me, said, "What you say is nonsense."

I immediately made my bow and retired to my place in the assembly and, from then on, eschewed forwardness and the disputation sessions, preferring retirement, and saluting the Emperor from afar.

From this time onwards the fortunes of Shaikh 'Abdu'n Nabi began to decline.

Spending Nights in Peasants' Homes (1577)

This incident of December 1577 is excluded by Abu'l Fazl from his final version of the Akbarnama though he records it in his earlier version that survives in a unique MS of the Akbarnama, British Museum, Add. 27,247 (Nizamuddin Ahmad also mentions it in his Tabaqat-i Akbari, II, p.363). The passage translated here is from Add.27,247, f.292b.

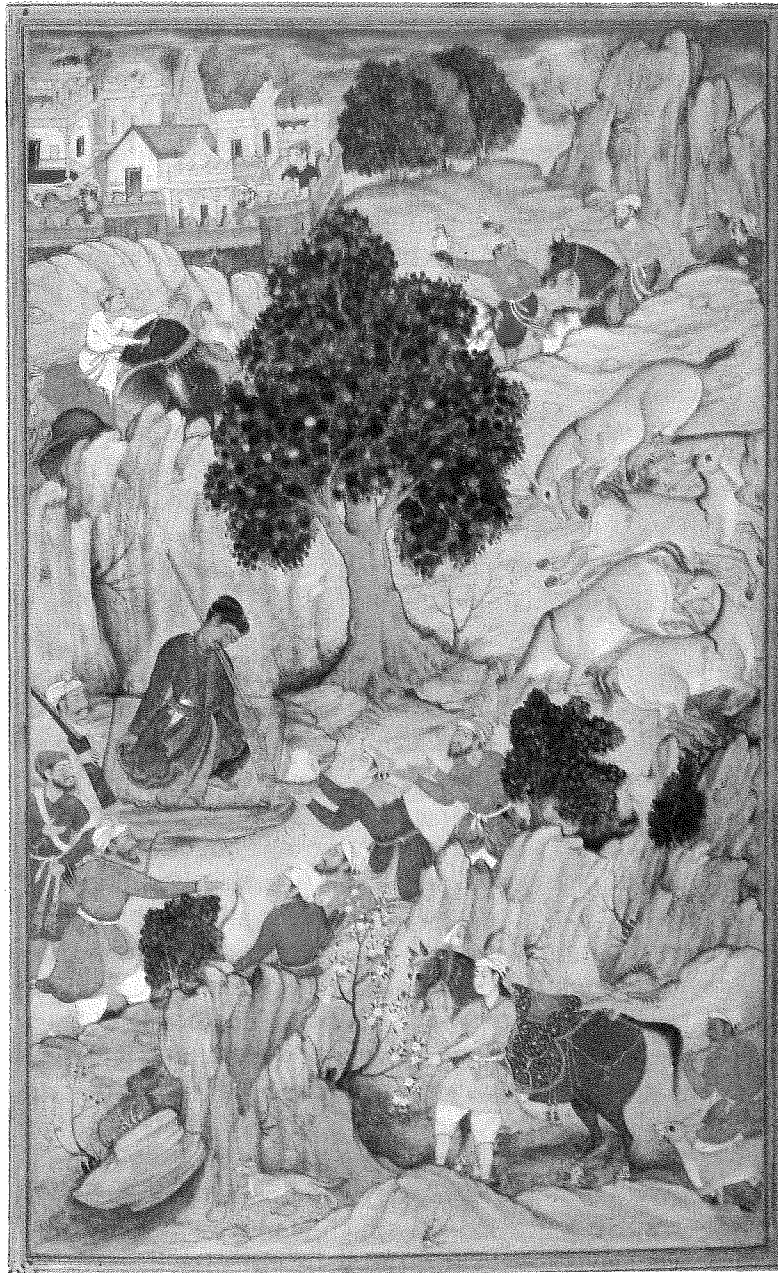
On Saturday, 17 *Dimah*/17 *Shawal* [29 December 1577], His Majesty went to village Lalna in the jurisdiction of Palam [near Delhi], for hunting and spent the night in the house of Bhura, the headmen of that village. He went on to hunt in the morning, and ordered that whichever headman obtains such privilege [of having His Majesty as his guest] the land cultivated by his family should be reported by the news-writer to His Majesty so that some grant be made to him, the *farman* for this to be prepared by the news-writer himself.

A Singular Spiritual Experience (1578)

Akbar underwent a strange experience in the early summer of 1578, while in the vicinity of the Salt Range. He was obviously undertaking a large-scale military exercise (disguised as a vast Imperial hunt) on the right bank of the Chenab river, possibly because of political difficulties with his brother Mirza Hakim, then ruling Kabul. All of a sudden, Akbar called off the great hunt when it had barely started. The incident made a greater impression at the time; the earliest report is by Arif Qandahari (Tarikh-i Akbari, p.235). But the most detailed account is in Abu'l Fazl's first version of the Akbarnama; Add. 27,247, f.2949, which is translated below.

When the Imperial standards reached the vicinity of Bhera on Wednesday, 12 *Urdibibisht/14 Safar* [22 April 1578], the Emperor thought of organizing a *qamargha* hunt. The Imperial encampment was on this [left] side of the river; the Emperor crossed to the other side of the river. From the bank of (the river at) Garjhak to old Bhera, (in an arc of) approximately twenty-five royal *karobs*, the Imperial soldiery drove the various animals from different sides. For this purpose, on Friday, 15 *Urdibibisht/17 Safar* [25 April 1578], Mirza Yusuf Khan, Naurang Khan and Asaf Khan left for making these arrangements. The great nobles and all *mansabdars*, in accordance with the Imperial orders, left group by group, contingent by contingent, till on Sunday, 17 *Urdibibisht/19 Safar* [27 April 1578], the Baluch chiefs, Jata Khan, &c., came and paid obeisance at the sacred threshold, receiving

Imperial favour. The Imperial *bakhsbis* were ordered also to assign this group a place in the hunting-circle. Since the Emperor was paying special attention to this hunt, due arrangements were made, and in the space of ten days the hunting-ring was established and an enormous number of game was herded up. On Sunday, 24 *Urdibibisht/26 Safar* [4 May], when the time of hunting down the game approached, a divine flash of light was received by His Majesty, a strong emotion swept over him and a strange condition appeared. How can its significance be grasped by traditional ones of narrow vision when those who have the capacity of perceiving spiritual ecstasy can comprehend only little of that condition?... Some alert courtiers thought that His Majesty, a master of physical and spiritual affairs, had had a session with his own enlightened heart, the seat of manifestation of divine light, without paying any attention to physical circumstances, so that whatever the heart demanded would be offered to it. Some others of the perceiving ones of the Court imagined that His Majesty had held an affectionate intercourse with invisible beings who are so clothed in disinterest as not to appear before people. Other discerning members of the Imperial circle held the belief that His Majesty had received a superabundance of light of truth from the spiritually firm ones [recluses] of the forests. Other far-sighted one from amongst the honoured [of the Court] fancied that the speechless animals had in an unspoken tongue or in conventional speech conveyed to him divine secrets... In token of thanks for this great gift [from God], the many thousands of animals, which had been trapped within the hunting ring, were ordered to be released. Quick-witted fast messengers ran in all directions so that no one should be guilty of even killing a sparrow, and all species of animals be allowed to go. By the blessed Imperial orders several thousand animals were granted safety. By his worldly resolve and wisdom, which is always a part of his nature, His Majesty cut short the hair of his head. Many of his companions shortened their long hair in their urge to



Akbar abandons hunt near Bhera. *Akbarnama*.

Courtesy : Victoria and Albert Museum

follow him. Glory be to God, a few days before this, His Majesty had chanced to say, "In the early years of our reign, owing to an inclination towards the sincerely loyal Indians, we let our hair grow, whence I learnt to love having long hair, contrary to the traditions of our ancestors. It is, therefore, not impossible that my feeling for long hair should cool after some time, and Indians, imitating me therein, may cut short their hair." Verily, those who live in the world of knowledge [as His Majesty] have no past nor future [constraining them]. Whatever has passed, and they want it back, all of it, in their far-sighted eyes, reappears and comes into existence.

Personal Enquiry into Land Grant (1578)

Shaikh Iahdad Faizi Sirhindi whose competence for retaining a land-grant of 700 bighas Akbar personally enquired into, wrote a history of Akbar's reign, known as the Akbarnama (so far unpublished). The passage here translated occurs in Br. Lib. MS, Or.619, ff.148a-b.

When His Majesty arrived in the vicinity of Sirhind, and on the way went for hunting, he happened to pass by the village containing the grant-land of the author of this history, Iahdad Faizi Sirhindi. Near that village there was a tank full of water with trees of all kinds spreading shadows around. His Majesty walking leisurely enjoyed the greenery and by sitting down in that grove, made it the Garden of Eden and the tank the Pool of Heaven. The headman of that village came to attend and was favoured with reward. His Majesty enquired of him as to whom this tank and these trees belonged. The headman answered, "Mulla Ali Sher was a learned man and he had laid these out." At this time His Majesty wished to know the truth about Shaikh 'Abdu'n Nabi's affairs, as will presently be described; and so, when departing, he asked the headman, "From the drift of your statements it would seem that the village was assigned to one of the divines who has passed away. Now, tell me the present position of this village; how much land in it is under cultivation and to whom it is assigned?" He represented, "Sire, it has one thousand *bighas* of land, out of which seven hundred *bighas* are under cultivation and are in the grant of his son." His Majesty said, "You have informed us that

his father was a *mulla*; what is his own position and who has given him this much of land?" The headman said, "People say that in learning he is like his father; and the *sadr* has assigned him this much of land."

When His Majesty went from that place to the royal camp, Qazi Jalaluddin who was the *qazi* of the army, came to offer obeisance. His Majesty asked, "Do you know Mulla Ali Sher Sirhindi and his son?" He answered, "I know that he was a very competent man and was the [leading] *mulla* of this area. I have not met his son, but I have heard that he has good competence." In the meantime Hajji Ibrahim Sirhindi paid obeisance to the Emperor. His Majesty said, "Swear by the dust of our feet, that setting aside the feeling of attachment to persons belonging to the same city, you will speak the truth! What was Mulla Ali Sher Sirhindi like and what abilities does his son possess; and how much land should be given to him?" He represented: "The father was truly a *mulla*, and his son has also the deserts to merit a grant of six hundred or seven hundred *bighas* at the most." His Majesty observed, "This much of land he already has."

Sermon Blues (1579)

In June 1579 Akbar seeking to claim legal authority over Muslims tried to read out the Friday sermons, in imitation of the Caliphs. The misadventure is described with much malice by Abdu'l Qadir Badauni. Muntakhabu't Tawarikh, II, p.268, Lowe's translation (pp.276-7) has been adopted with minor changes.

In this year the Emperor being anxious to unite the spiritual to the secular headship, for he held it to be an insufferable burden to be subordinate to any one, heard that the Prophet (God be gracious to him, and give him peace!), and the pious Caliphs, and some of the most powerful kings, as Amir Timur Sahib-qiran, and Mirza Ulugh Beg Gurgan, and several others, had themselves read the *khutba* [Friday sermon], he resolved to do the same, apparently in order to imitate their example, but in reality to make public his claims to *ijtihad* (religious innovation). Accordingly, on the first Friday of *Jumada I* of the year nine hundred and eighty-seven [11 July 1579], in the chief mosque of Fatehpur, which he had built near the palace, His Majesty began to read the *khutba*. But all at once he stammered and trembled, and, though assisted by others, he could scarcely read three verses of a poem which Shaikh Faizi had composed, but came quickly down from the pulpit, and handed over the duties of *imam* (prayer-leader) to Hafiz Muhammad Amin, the *khatib* (sermon-reader). These are the verses [he had read]:

The Lord, who gave to us sovereignty,
 Who gave us a wise heart, and a strong hand,
 Who guided us in awarding equity and justice,
 And drove from our thoughts all save equity,
 His description is higher than the range of thought,
 Exalted is He, God is Great (*Allahu Akbar*)!

Akbar and the Arts (1579)

Arif Qandabari closed his Tarikh-i Akbari in 1579, though he added a passage in 1581. As a long-serving officer he had occasion to be presented to Akbar and was conversant with affairs of the Court. He summed up Akbar's many achievements in an early section of his work, from which the following passages on Akbar's contribution to architecture, textile crafts and painting are extracted.

The translation has been made directly from Tarikh-i Akbari, pp. 42, 45-6.

His Majesty is the builder of edifices, who by way of clothing his glories and symbolising his greatness, has built excellent buildings at Ajmer, and grand edifices at Fatehabad [Fatehpur] Sikri, and a fort of red stone of excessive strength in the capital city of Agra and one entirely of *pucca* brick in the city of Lahore, and buildings in many cities of India. The designs of these wonderful structures, with novel forms, marvellous engravings and quality of minute details, are such that a much travelled observer would not see in all the seven climes.

.....

He has such a mastery of subtleties that he has introduced into India silken cloth, brocade, tapestry, and carpet of silk and brocade. He has so trained excellent masters in that art that work in India has become much better than that of Persia and Europe. He has so designed patterns [of cloth] that if Mani [the celebrated painter-prophet of the Manicheans]

had been alive, he would have been astonished at these patterns and colours.

He has such an eye for novel things, that he has ordered that every story out of the three hundred and sixty stories of Amir Hamza be illustrated along with their episodes. Now a hundred unrivalled painters, gilders, limners, and binders are working on that book. The size of that book is one-and-a-half *shar'i gaz* [in height], and its paper coloured, all bound together, its margins flower-ornamented, and muslin (*chautar*) cloth inserted between every two sheets for better preservation, all pages bearing pictures and gilded. His Majesty ordered that excellent stylists, in sweet tongue, should rewrite every story of that tale in fluent and rhythmical prose, and calligraphers of stately and lively hand should write it out. In spite of this effort, it takes two years to prepare a volume, and each volume entails an expenditure of about two lakh copper *tankas*.

In Jesuit Impressions and Reminiscences (1580-81)

The Jesuit mission, comprising Rudolf Acquaviva, Francis Henrique and Anthony Monserrate, arrived at Akbar's Court at Fatehpur Sikri in February 1580, and then accompanied the Court to beyond the Indus. Monserrate has left a long account that has been translated from the Latin original under the title The Commentary of Father Monserrate by J.S. Hoyland, London, 1922. The letters written at that time by the Jesuit fathers, including Monserrate, have been collected and translated by John Correia-Affonso, Letters from the Mughal Court, Heras Institute, Bombay, 1980.

The passages that follow Nos.I and III are from Monserrate's Commentary, pp.43, 196-7; and No.II is from Letters from the Mughal Court, pp.21-2 (a seeming misprint on p.22 corrected).

I

The Fathers' First Interview (Monserrate's Commentary)

At length they were taken before the King, who having looked at them from his high dais, ordered them to come nearer to him, and asked them a few questions. Thereupon they presented to him an atlas, which the Archbishop of Goa had sent as a present. This he graciously received. He was greatly pleased to see them, but was not too warm in his greeting, and shortly afterwards withdrew, partly in order to hide his true feelings and partly to preserve his dignity. Having retired for a short time into an inner apartment, he

ordered them to be conducted to him there (i.e. to the hall which is known as *Kapur Talau*), in order that he might exhibit them to his wives. Then he took them to another courtyard called the *Daulat Khana*, where he seized the opportunity presented by a sudden rain-storm and put on Portuguese dress — a scarlet cloak with golden fastenings. He ordered his sons also to don the same dress, together with Portuguese hats. This he did in order to please his guests.

II

Akbar's Mode of Dealing with Business (Henrique's letter, 6 April 1580)

We held some discussion with the *mullas* in his presence, but it was he who replied to our most searching queries, on behalf of his *mullas*, thereby relieving them of much bother and embarrassment, he being naturally gifted with every good sense and understanding, but he did this with the excuses and explanations he could best find, so as not to convince them fully. This matter is going ahead slowly, and not quite purposefully, because of his preoccupations which are many and very weighty, since almost everything must be routed through him, which is quite a lot, and this [is done] with great calmness and tranquillity without any sign of disquiet.

He is very simple and courteous towards everyone, and always cheerful, but with a dignity such as one expects from a very great king. He is much loved as well as feared by his people, and is very hard-working; to the end he is never idle, he knows a little of all trades and sometimes loves to practise them before his people either as a carpenter or as a blacksmith or as an armourer, filing, and even quite often bleeding some of his captains in public, as he once expertly bled a captain, who needed it, before us and his people. He is a good shot and an expert horseman capable of training wild horses, which are the ones he enjoys riding.

III

**The Person and Ways of Akbar
(Monserate's Commentary)**

This Prince [Akbar] is of a stature and of a type of countenance well-fitted to his royal dignity, so that one could easily recognize, even at the first glance, that he is the King. He has broad shoulders, somewhat bandy legs well-suited for horsemanship, and a light-brown complexion. He carries his head bent towards the right shoulder. His forehead is broad and open, his eyes so bright and flashing that they seem like a sea shimmering in the sunlight. His eyelashes are very long, as also are those of the Sauromates, Sinae, Niphones [Scythians, Chinese, Japanese] and most other north-Asiatic races. His eyebrows are not strongly marked. His nose is straight and small, though not insignificant. His nostrils are widely opened, as though in derision. Between the left nostril and the upper lip there is a mole. He shaves his beard, but wears a moustache like that of a Turkish youth who has not yet attained to manhood (for on reaching manhood they begin to affect a beard). Contrary to the custom of his race he does not cut his hair; nor does he wear a hat, but a turban into which he gathers up his hair. He does this, they say, as a concession to Indian usages, and to please his Indian subjects. He limps in his left leg, though indeed he has never received any injury there. His body is exceedingly well-built and is neither too thin nor too stout. He is sturdy, hearty and robust. When he laughs, his face becomes almost distorted. His expression is tranquil, serene and open, full also of dignity, and when he is angry, of awful majesty. When the priests first saw him he was thirty-eight years of age.

It is hard to exaggerate how accessible he makes himself to all who wish audience of him. For he creates an opportunity almost every day for any of the common people or of the nobles to see him and converse with him; and he endeavours to show himself pleasant-spoken and affable rather than

severe towards all who come to speak with him. It is very remarkable how great an effect this courtesy and affability has in attaching to him the minds of his subjects. For in spite of his very heterodox attitude towards the religion of Muhammad, and in spite also of the fact that Musalmans regard such an attitude as an unforgivable offence, Akbar has not yet been assassinated. He has an acute insight, and shows much wise foresight both in avoiding dangers and in seizing favourable opportunities for carrying out his designs. Yet all these fine qualities both of body and mind lose the greater part of their splendour because the lustre of the True Faith [Christianity] is lacking.

Akbar is greatly devoted to hunting, though not equally so to hawking. As he is of a somewhat morose disposition, he amuses himself with various games. These games afford also a public spectacle to the nobility and the common people, who indeed are very fond of such spectacles. They are the following: polo, elephant-fighting, buffalo-fighting, stag-fighting and cock-fighting, boxing contests, battles of gladiators, and the flying of tumbler-pigeons. He is also very fond of strange birds, and indeed of any novel subject. He amuses himself with singing, concerts, dances, conjuror's tricks and the jokes of his jesters, of whom he makes much. However, although he may seem at such times to be at leisure and to have laid aside public affairs, he does not cease to revolve in his mind the heavy cares of state. He is especially remarkable for his love of keeping great crowds of people around him and in his sight; and thus it comes about that his Court is always thronged with multitudes of men of every type, though especially with the nobles, whom he commands to come from their provinces who reside at Court for a certain period each year. When he goes outside the palace, he is surrounded and followed by these nobles and a strong bodyguard. They have to go on foot until he gives them a nod to indicate that they may mount. All this adds greatly to the wonderful majesty and greatness of the royal Court.

Consults on Punishing his Finance Minister (1581)

Hakim Abu'l Fath Gilani came to Akbar's Court in 1575-76 and rose to become a trusted confidant of Akbar. He accompanied Akbar in 1581 when he was marching against his younger brother Mirza Hakim, who had invaded the Punjab. In two successive letters to his younger brother Hakim Humam, first written at Shahabad on 22 Muharram (26 February 1581) and the second at Pail (near Sirhind), at the end of Muharram (5 March 1581), Abu'l Fath describes the inner consultations which led to the execution of Shah Mansur, Akbar's finance minister, on the charge of treason. Akbar later seems to have regretted the action, saying, according to Abu'l Fazl, that the ardour in financial administration 'cooled' after Shah Mansur's death (Akbarnama, III, p.344).

The excerpts from Abu'l Fath Gilani's letters are translated from Ruq'at-i Hakim Abu'l Fath Gilani, ed. M. Basbir Husain, Lahore, 1968, pp.13-4, 19.

I

The matter of Khwaja Mansur is like this. A *farman* addressed to him from Muhammad Hakim [Akbar's rebel brother] was discovered, to the following effect: "Your letter has been received, and your loyalty to me has become known," and many other similar matters were recorded there. His Majesty gave the letter to me to be read aloud. After the letter [was read out], His Majesty began an account of the battles that servants of the State had seen during this time: they had

now brought it [to His Majesty]. Those present, of whom, Hindus and Muslims, there were no more than six or seven, unanimously gave judgement for his execution. There was no scope for anyone to say anything in opposition. I could only submit this, that repeatedly I had heard from His Majesty himself that it is the custom of the practitioners of *real politik* that whenever there are two sides confronting each other, they compose and despatch letters from a leader of one side to that of another [to cause dissension in the other side], "Whatever," [I said] "strikes His Majesty's wise heart in this case would be right." His Majesty observed that there was no question as to the genuineness of this [letter], and expressed grave censure of such conduct. He ordered Shah Mansur to be handed over to Zain Khan Koka, and all his goods to be distributed among the household departments (*bayutat*). That he was left alive, despite that censure, is solely owing to His Majesty's sense of mercy. In any case, he is alive as of today. One hopes that God would do whatever is best for his welfare.

II

I had written previously about the matter of Shah Mansur. To be brief, hearts are greatly weighed down by it, for [verse]

Until the heart of a brave man comes to harm,
God has never dishonoured a nation.

The path of calumniators had become open and a *parwana* of Muhammad Hakim, in the form of a *parwancha* of Hakimul Mulk, addressed to him, was discovered, and he was killed.

Getting an Important *Farman* Drafted (1581)

An excerpt from Abu'l Fath's letter from Pail (near Sirhind), end of Muharram (5 March 1581), when he was accompanying the Imperial camp. It is addressed to his younger brother Hakim Humam.

Translated from Ruq'at-i Hakim Abu'l Fath Gilani, pp.18-9.

His Majesty shows me constantly greater attention these days, and assigns me different duties. The day before yesterday, when the news of Muhammad Hakim Mirza's flight arrived, he ordered me to prepare, without fail, the draft of a *farman* containing certain matters. That very night, according to how I had understood the points, I composed a neatly arranged text. The next day I was privileged to offer obeisance. His Majesty observed: "Tonight there was so much rain — heavier than during the rainy season. Did you draft that *farman*, or go to sleep?" I informed him of what I had done, took out the writing from my underarm pocket and read it aloud. He heard it out with full attention, from beginning to end, and observed, "It has been well written." That night His Majesty had slept very little, and he said, "Now, I am going to retire to sleep." In the meanwhile Shaikh Abu'l Fazl, who had also written out those very points, submitted his draft. His Majesty said, "Hakim Abu'l Fath has prepared a good draft. If there is anything which has not been included, you should indicate it, so that he may incorporate it." The Shaikh came over to me, and some matters, which ought to have been included, were incorporated in my draft.

Taking Counsel for People's Welfare (1582)

In 1582 Akbar conceived the novel idea of inviting suggestions from his close confidants for introducing some measures for people's welfare. He held a session at Fatehpur Sikri in which he himself set the ball rolling with a radical proposal. Abu'l Fazl, being one of those present and consulted, gives us a first-hand account in the first version of his Akbarnama (Add.27,247, ff.327b-328a). In the final text (III, pp.379-80) the report also occurs, but in an abridged form.

The passage below is translated directly from Add.27,247.

On Thursday, 28 *Isfandarmurz*, 12 *Safar* [8 March 1582], His Majesty held a session with his sincerely loyal courtiers. It occurred to His Majesty: "God the Creator has brought me into this world for pursuing the great truths. It is necessary to give suitable pause to reflect so that such action is thought of as may enter annals of endeavours pleasing to God." His Sacred Majesty further said: "These loyal ones whose spiritual lamps have derived light from our illuminating flame, may for the present cleanse the slate of their minds from any trace of flattery, and submit proposals of substantial value. They should turn to the one Lord and ponder deeply on good works. Whatever would come to the minds of the loyal ones nourished by the light of this Court, I would deem to be gifts that God has bestowed on this obedient slave of his. I will duly put them into effect so that they may be a blessing for this world and the spiritual world may receive freshness therefrom." Some of these works of

welfare that were proposed in that session are recorded here so that seekers may derive due information. Not a day passes when His Majesty does not engage himself in such grants of favours and acts of welfare. [In that session] His Majesty stated, "We order to be released all the Imperial slaves, who exceed several thousands. It is beyond the realm of justice and good conduct for me to consider as my slaves those whom I have captured by force." The God-knowing Emperor from that day designated his slaves as *chelas*, and a strict order was issued that henceforth these captive persons should not be called slaves. It was further ordered that each of the slaves be allowed to go wherever he wished; and any one of those who wished to stay should be given wages according to his circumstances and be put to some work. His Highness the Prince [Salim] was then honoured (by being asked to offer a proposal). He resorted to repeating what His Majesty had [previously] elaborated, namely, that until a boy and girl do not cross the age of twelve, they should not be married, for there is no gain from it and much possibility of harm. His Majesty praised the far-sightedness of the Prince and this measure was promulgated in this very manner.

Khan-i A'zam (Mirza Aziz Koka) submitted to the Emperor that Governors do not have sufficient wisdom to distinguish between the true and untrue in investigating cases and offences so that in capital matters, which relate to divine-given life, they should not, on the basis of their own judgement, impose the [death penalty] and not be [so] unwise [as to do so]. Until after full enquiry an Imperial order is issued by the Imperial Court, none should venture to take such an extreme action. An Imperial justice-oriented order was issued to this effect.

Mirza Khankhanan submitted that if an order is issued that catching of small animals, such as sparrows and small fish, be restricted it would be most suitable. Raja Todar Mal made the request to the Imperial threshold that all the Imperial nobles should, according to orders, distribute alms every week. Raja Birbal prayed that a set of persons of chosen

professions, without motives of their own, be always posted at the gates of the royal palace so that whenever any victim of oppression comes for redress, they should represent the facts to His Majesty without the influence of any personal interest.

Muhammad Qasim proposed that at camping stations and on routes, inns should be built to provide further comfort to travellers over land and sea. Shaikh Jamal represented that there are numerous persons of deserts and need; and so disinterested men, capable of judging men's qualities, be appointed to the duty of ensuring that the indigent people should not remain in the realm of disappointment with regard to benefits from the universal generosity of the Emperor. Shaikh Faizi submitted that in the bazar and cattle and horse markets some experienced and competent persons be posted so that the prices may not be inflated and the simple ones not suffer great loss. Hakim Abu'l Fath prayed for the construction of a hospital and arrangements for its maintenance. The writer of the present work requested that officers in charge of each city should record the circumstances and [names of] inhabitants of that place, person by person, and investigate those who enter and leave that [place] so that no thief should be able to come into the city fraudulently.

I used to wait on the Emperor and record statements [made by him] in every session. Nothing struck me at that time. But when I paused for consideration and looked into His Majesty's utterances, I found that all the ten persons, such as His Highness the Prince, had without any difference or change, stated what His Majesty had already expressed in speech at various occasions previously.

Testing a Theory of Speech (1582)

Akbar's curiosity led him to an experiment with newborn infants, to test whether the power of speech followed from the capacity of hearing. Abu'l Fazl describes it in Akbarnama, III, p.383, tr.III, pp.581-2. See also Badauni, Muntakhabu't Tawarikh, II, p.288, tr.296. Jerome Xavier (Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1888, p.77, cited in Beveridge, Akbarnama, II, tr., p.582) suggests Akbar was seeking to find the natural or divine tongue.

One of the events was the testing of the non-dumb silent ones. In the 24th RY[1574-75] an exalted assembly was held and different matters of knowledge were explored. It passed His Majesty's lips that the knowledge of speech was gained by every group from continuous listening and learning from each other. If right from birth they grow up in such a way that they are not able to give ear to conversations of the people of the world, they would not acquire the capability of speech. If still the fountain of speech springs forth from such a one, this should be accepted as the divinely-sanctioned language and be followed by all. Since the signs of doubt appeared on the faces of some of the listeners, His Majesty, in order to satisfy them, laid out a hostel (*sarai*) at a site where no sound from any inhabited place could reach. Some newborn infants were lodged in that place of experiment. Honest and hard-working guards were appointed and for sometime only dumb wet-nurses were allowed to be in the company of these young ones. Since the doors were closed to speech this place was popularly called *Gung Mahal* (Place

of the Dumb). On the 27th *Amardad* [21 August 1582] His Majesty went out for hunting and spent the night at Faizabad. The next day His Majesty accompanied by enlightened counsellors, went to visit that testing place of mystery. Not a sound was emitted from the silent house nor any speech came out from that place of residence. In spite of the fact that the children were four-years old they were not acquainted with the art of speech. They displayed nothing beyond the usual gestures of the dumb. Whatever His Majesty had, in his wisdom, realised some years earlier, now became clear to the superficial worldly ones, and it became a source of enlightenment to a large number of people.

Akbar and the Religious Grantees (1585)

Akbar's religious policy created a certain attitude of aloofness, if not open opposition among the theologians. This is illustrated by a minor incident that occurred during Akbar's march to Kabul in 1585. The reporter is an eye-witness Faizi Sirhindi who describes it in his Akbarnama, Br. Lib., Or. 169, ff.185a-b.

Having arrived at Delhi [on his way to Kabul] His Majesty paid visits to the tombs, notably that of his father. He started off from there after Id. When he reached the territory of Sirhind, he told Shaikh Abu'l Fazl: "Since the city of Sirhind is the battle-field where His late Majesty [Humayun] had won his victory, let someone go to the land-grantees [or divines, *makhadim*] to give them the good news of our arrival so that they may come and wait upon us. The disloyal ones, from some evil intentions of their own, have planted fear in the hearts of these weak people, and caused delay in their coming." Yet till the time His Majesty encamped in the beautiful garden of Hafiz Rakhna, which causes envy to Paradise and is situated in the vicinity of Sirhind, [no one came]... [digression in praise of the garden]. As he sojourned in the garden, the abstention of these people [grantees] from coming to welcome him was reported to His Majesty, who observed: "We wished to honour these luckless ones; but their good fortune did not come to their assistance." Out of annoyance, he ordered the said Hafiz Sultan [Hafiz Rakhna?], *Karori* (Collector) of the town, who was present, not to

release any land of the grants, until the grantees obtained fresh documents (*sanad*). The few days that His Majesty stayed there, five or six persons presented themselves before him; and His Majesty conferred a reward on them, according to the condition of each. In case of most of them, recommendations for favour were made with the assistance of Shaikh Abu'l Fazl. The next day, *Maliku'sh Shu'ra* (Poet Laureate) Shaikh Abu'l Faiz Faizi, the elder brother of Shaikh Abu'l Fazl, paid a visit to my house, and offered comforting words, saying: "Let the grantees not be disheartened. The interest of everyone is being looked after, just as it has been in your case. God willing, there would be favour shown to the people. As the adage is: When the burden is on those who can bear it, the task is easy." At last, I too accompanied the Imperial Camp till the Indus river, getting my tract of commentary on the *tafsir* of Qazi Baizawi reported [to the Emperor] en route, and so became elevated above some other divines (*makhadim*).

Replies to his Son's Questions (1591)

In 1591 Akbar's second son Murad was appointed Governor of Malwa. He sought instructions on varied points. These instructions in the form of his queries and Akbar's answers are given in their original form in the earlier text of the Akbarnama, preserved in Br. Lib., Add. 27,247, ff.401b-404b. Many of the questions and answers concern administrative matters. Four of these questions and answers have been selected here as they seem best to reflect Akbar's personality and views. Professor Iqtidar Alam Khan has generously allowed his translation of the document to be used here, with some variations.

I

- Q. If one or two volumes of books approved by the exalted mind [Akbar's] that might promote the intellect and discourage traditionalism (*taqlid*) are given [to me], it would be a cause, heightening of [my] education (*bidayat*).
- A. In the marshy land [*sburistan*] of tradition such a book is rarely to be found. But out of regard for him [Murad] the translation of *Mahabharata*, which is a strange tale, just now become available, has been sent.

II

- Q. If Mahtar Yari and Bahadur could be [sent to] accompany [me], they shall be made to perform certain services.

- A. We have despatched Mahtar Yari. With regard to the request for Bahadur, the reply is that Bahadur's wife is not agreeable to his going [there]. If presently we persuade her, we shall send [Bahadur as well]. Otherwise, after a few days we shall depute him to carry a *farman* by *dak-chauki* (riding post-horses). Then you may detain him [there].

III

- Q. If I notice someone in my camp imagining, in the manner of traditionally-inclined theologians, that the worship of the matchless God, which actually belongs to the spiritual world and is performed in the picture-gallery of the heart, consists of body movements, which they call *namaz*, and avoiding food from morning to night, which they call *roza*, for they think that these body exercises (*jismaniat*) are the worship of God, which in reality is free of the body and body movements, what is the direction [regarding such a person]? Should I forbid him or leave him to his ways?
- A. Multiplicity of groups of people is a manifestation of divine power. That which is dictated by the principles of reason and suits the circumstances of the rulers and the managers of affairs of the multitude is that they should practice 'Absolute Peace' (*Sulh-i Kul*) with the entire world and mankind. Wishing well and admonishing is excellent in the case of every person. Every one who comes to the path of reason may be fortunate. And every one who remains miserable in the barren land of tradition is an invalid. Every person recognising and worshipping God in whatever way is [however] welcome. Preventing that insensitive simpleton, who considers body exercise to be divine worship, from [practising] this form of worship would amount to preventing him from remembering God [at all].

IV

- Q. If I hear about a *durwesh*, *jogi*, or *sanyasi* or some other [type of] *faqir*, what is the direction about meeting him?
- A. Meeting this group is the sign of [an urge] to seek God. Do meet them. But in meeting these ecstatic ones, i.e. those who attracted by divine grace, have renounced the worldly concerns, care should be taken. If it is ascertained that his terror-inspiring attributes are prominent, avoid meeting him. And if it is established that his benevolent attributes predominate, do meet him.

36

Poet and Critic (1593)

In Akbarnama, Vol.I, which was probably completed in 1593, Abu'l Fazl makes claims for Akbar's literary abilities in Persian and Hindi.

The following passage is from the Akbarnama, text I, pp.270-1 (independently rendered).

The inspired nature of His Majesty is strongly drawn to composing poems in Hindi and Persian. He also engages in criticism and detailed scrutiny of the finer points of poetical reflections. Among books of poetry, he recites extempore Rumi's *Masnavi*, and the *Diwan* of Hafiz and takes delight in their verities and beauties. The following weighty verse is a product of His Majesty's reflection:

This is not the chain of insanity on the neck of the afflicted Majnun.

It is the hand of affection that love has laid on his neck.

He has also put in Hindi verse colourful conceits, that can be regarded as masterpieces of this art.

The Shipbuilder (1594-97)

Akbar had only once been to the sea-coast, during his conquest of Gujarat (1572). Yet this was enough to ignite a recurring interest in seagoing vessels. In 1594 he built a ship at Lahore, apparently to exploit the advantage of proximity to Himalayan timber. The ship was sent down some 650 miles of the Indus river system to Lahri Bandar, from where it was sent to the Red Sea (Tahir Muhammad Sabzwari, Rauzatut Tahirin, MS Br. Mus., Or.168, ff.556a-b).

A second vessel was built in 1596. The construction of this ship was particularly notable because of the use of a barge on which it was built in order to carry it down to the sea over river shallows. The barge thus served as a ship's camel, whose invention so far is ascribed to Dutch shipwrights of the late seventeenth century. Abu'l Fazl's descriptions of the construction of the two vessels and the display of his interest in galley in Kashmir (Akbarnama, III, pp.651, 2, 715-6, 727-8) are translated directly from the text.

1594:

On the 30th *Khurdad* [21 June 1594] the construction of a ship reached completion, on the bank of Ravi river [at Lahore]. The length of its keel, that is the wooden beam on which this wooden structure is raised, was 35 *gaz-i Ilahi* [over 93 feet]. Two thousand nine hundred thirty-six large planks of *sal* and pine-wood and 462 *mans 2 sers* [258,944 lbs avdp.] of iron were used. Two hundred and forty carpenters, ironsmiths and others were employed in the work. His Majesty went to enjoy the sight of the ship. A thousand people laboured with the help of various machines to pull it, and

still it took ten days for it to be put into water. It was sent down to Lahri Bandar [seaport in Sind]. Owing to deficiency of water it was taken there with great difficulty.

1596:

At this time the building of a noble ship reached completion. On the first occasion, owing to the shallowness of water, there had been great difficulty in sending the ship down the river. It came to His Majesty's mind that the new ship should be built upon the deck of a big pontoon, capable of carrying a brethren of 1500 *mans* [370 metric tons] so that the ship may conveniently be taken to its destination [the seaport of Lahri Bandar]. Construction began on 4 *Tir* [26 June 1596] and was completed on 28 *Azar* [21 December 1596]. The ship was 37 *gaz* [about 99 feet] in length. A sum of Rs 16,338 was spent on it. The ship was easily conveyed to Bandar Lahri, and spectators were struck with astonishment.

1597:

At this time according to the will of the Emperor a vessel modelled after a seagoing galley was built [in Kashmir] and young and old were all struck with wonder. On 20 *Tir* [13 July 1597] His Majesty boarded the vessel and went sight-seeing on the river Bihat [Jhelum].

Drink and Diet (1595)

Abu'l Fazl's A'in-i Akbari, completed, in the main, in 1595, is a detailed account of Akbar's mode of administration, the revenues and geography of his empire, and the culture of India. Its contents are well known through the translations of H. Blochmann, Vol.I, and S. Jarrett, Vols.II and III. The personality of Akbar is, however, smothered here by either routine detail or a great stylist's rhetoric. Some passages are selected here, evidencing Akbar's high esteem for water from the Ganges, in which he was followed by his successors, and describing his eating habits, including regular abstention from meat.

The passages are translated from the A'in-i Akbari, text, ed. H. Blochmann, Vol.I, pp.51-2. Blochmann's translation (I, p.57-9, 64-5) has been used, but with much modification.

Whether at the camp or on march, His Majesty drinks Ganges water. Some trustworthy persons are stationed on the banks of that river, who carefully draw water and the pitchers come sealed. During the time when the Court was at the capital Agra and Fatehpur [Sikri] they used to bring [Ganges water] from the township of Soron. Nowadays when His Majesty is staying in the Punjab [Lahore] they bring it from Harduar. In the cooking of food, water from the Jamna, and Chenab and rain-water is used, mixed with a little of Ganges water.

Today, when His Majesty holds leadership of both the groups [temporal and spiritual], he never orders what food to prepare. In the course of night-and-day he takes his meal but once and leaves off before being fully satisfied. There

is no fixed time for the meal, but the officials so arrange that immediately upon food being asked for, a hundred dishes are made ready within an hour. Whatever is the food to be prepared for the ladies of the harem, cooking of it commences in the morning, and goes on till night.

His Majesty cares very little for meat, and often expresses himself to that effect. It is indeed from ignorance and cruelty that, although various kinds of food are obtainable for man, he is bent upon injuring living creatures, and does not draw back from killing and eating. He seems to have no eye for the beauty inherent in the prevention of cruelty, but makes himself a tomb for animals. If His Majesty had not the burden of the world on his shoulders, he would at once totally abstain from meat; and now it is his intention to quit it by degrees, for the time conforming a little to the spirit of the age. First, His Majesty abstained from meat for some time on Fridays, and then also on Sundays. Now he has added to these the first day of every solar month, Sundays, on solar and lunar eclipses, on days between two fasts, the Mondays of the month of *Rajab*, the feast-day of every *Ilahi* month, the whole month of *Farwardin*, and the month in which His Majesty was born, viz. the month of *Aban*.

Keeping Watch on Translators (1596)

Akbar ordered the translation of the Mahabharata, and Badauni was given the duty of putting parts of it into Persian after it had been rendered into Hindi. It took a long time, but Akbar had it read out to him from time to time. This led to the embarrassing incident which Badauni now describes.

Lowe's translation, pp.413-4, of the text, pp.399-400, has been accepted after revision.

On the ninth of the month of *Rajab* of this year [9 March 1596] the entrance of the sun into Aries took place, and the fortieth year—from the accession began. The customary assembly was held in the same manner as in former years. Two days before the entrance of the sun into Aries, the Emperor called to me from the *jharoka* in the *Diwan-i Khas* o' *Am*, and said to Shaikh Abu'l Fazl, "We thought that so-and-so (meaning the writer of these pages) was an unworldly youth of Sufi tendencies, but he appears to be such a bigoted theologian that no sword can sever the jugular vein of his bigotry." The Shaikh enquired, "Sire, in what book has he thus written, that Your Majesty says this of him?" His Majesty replied "Why, in the *Razm-nama* (which is a name for the *Mahabharata*); and last night I called Naqib Khan to be witness to this matter." The Shaikh agreed, "He has committed a fault." I was obliged to make my appearance, and humbly submitted that I was a translator, nothing more, and that whatever the sages of India had represented therein, I had translated without alteration, but that if I had written anything myself, it would be a fault on my part, and I would have

acted wrongly. The Shaikh supported me, and the Emperor was silent.

The cause of this censure was as follows: I had translated in the *Razm-nama* a certain story in which it is narrated that one of the sages of India, when on the point of death, said by way of advice to those present: "It is right that a man should step out of the limits of ignorance and negligence, and should first of all recognise the peerless Creator, and should pursue the path of knowledge; and not be satisfied with mere knowledge without practice, for that yields no fruit, but should choose the path of virtue, and as far as lies in him, withdraw his hand from evil action, and should know for a certainty that every action will be enquired into." And on this passage I wrote this hemistich:

Every action has its reward,
And every deed its recompense.

This passage His Majesty considered as referring to [the two angels] Munkir and Nakir, the General Resurrection, and the Last Judgement, exact accounting of deeds, &c., things contrary to his own fixed tenets, not believing in anything but metempsychosis, and so suspected me of theological bias and bigotry [in attributing Islamic beliefs to Hindus].

How long reproach me for my weeping eyelashes,
Let me for once have also the sympathy of the dark eye.

Eventually I impressed upon all the courtiers the fact that all the people of India believe in reward and punishment of good and bad actions. Their belief is as follows: when a person dies, the scribe, who writes the chronicle of the deeds of mankind throughout the course of their lives, takes it before the angel, who is the seizer of souls, and is called the King of Justice. After he has examined their good and bad actions, and has seen which has the preponderance, he

says, "This person has his choice." Then he asks him: "Shall I first, for thy good actions, take thee to Paradise, that thou mayest there enjoy to the full delights in proportion to thy good actions, and after that send thee to Hell to expiate thy sins, or vice versa?" When that period comes to an end, then he gives orders that the person should return to the earth, and entering a form suitable to his actions should pass a certain period here. And so on *ad infinitum*, until the time when he attains absolute release, and is freed from coming into and leaving the world. So [explained] that affair passed off safely.

Meeting Guru Arjan (1598)

This account of Akbar's visit of Guru Arjan on his final departure from Lahore in 1598 is from Abu'l Fazl's Akbarnama, III, p.746. Abu'l Fazl's inaccuracy in treating Guru Arjan as a Brahmanical divine may be explained by his own absence from the Court at this time, which meant that he was reporting the meeting second-hand, presumably on the basis of a news report.

Translation is made directly from the text.

On 13 Azar [4 November 1598] His Majesty crossed the river Beas on an elephant near Govindwal, while the troops crossed over a boat bridge. On this day the house of Arjan Guru received fresh lustre by a visit from His Majesty. His forefathers have been, one after the other, the leaders of a Brahmanical sect, and he has great love [for God]. Since his hope [for a visit from His Majesty] arose out of [sincere] devotion, His Majesty accepted his invitation.

His only Smoke (1604)

An officer under Akbar, Asad Beg Qazwini has left his memoirs (untitled, but often called Waqa'i 'Asad Beg). Asad Beg returned from an official mission to Bijapur in 1604 and presented to Akbar a hookah, well and truly made. His own account of the occasion is translated below. It may be remembered that Khan-i A'zam was the title of Akbar's foster-brother and high noble Aziz Koka; and Hakim Ali was the physician who was to treat him during his last illness.

Text unpublished. MS Br.Lib., Or. 1996, f.21a-b, used. Translation by Elliot & Dowson, VI, pp.165-7, has been partly adopted, but it has needed to be heavily revised.

In Bijapur the use of tobacco had spread. Never having seen it in [northern] India, I brought some with me, and prepared a handsome pipe of jewel work. The stem, the finest to be procured at Achin, was three cubits in length, beautifully coloured and dried, both ends being adorned with enamel. I happened to come across a very handsome mouthpiece of Yemen cornelian, oval-shaped, which I set to the stem; the whole had a very handsome appearance. There was also a golden burner for lighting it, as a proper accompaniment. Adil Khan had given me a golden box of very superior workmanship filled with betel leaves; this I filled with fine tobacco, such that if one leaf be lit, the whole would continue burning. I arranged all this elegantly on a silver tray. I had a silver tube made to keep the stem in, and that too was covered with two folds of quality velvet.

His Majesty was pleased at receiving my presents, and expressed much praise. He asked me how I had collected

so many strange things in so short a time. Then his eyes fell upon the tray with the tobacco-smoking apparatus; he expressed great surprise, and examined the tobacco-bowl which was so well made; he inquired what it was, and of what use. Nawab Khan-i A'zam replied: "This is tobacco: it is widely used in Mecca and Medina, and a physician had once brought it as a medicine for Your Majesty." His Majesty looked at it, and ordered me to prepare the bowl and put it before him. The moment he took it to draw smoke, a physician approached and forbade his doing so, not allowing him to smoke. But His Majesty was graciously pleased to say he must smoke a little to gratify me, and taking the mouthpiece into his sacred mouth, drew two or three breaths. The physician was in great agitation and would not let him do more. His Majesty took the pipe away from his mouth, and bade Khan-i A'zam try it, who took two or three puffs. His Majesty then sent for his druggist, and asked what were its peculiar qualities. He replied that there was no mention of it in the books on medicine; but that it was a new invention, and the stems were imported from Achin, and the European doctors had written much in respect of it. Hakim Ali said, "In fact, this is an untried medicine, about which the doctors have written nothing. How can we prescribe for Your Majesty's use things whose properties are not known? It is not fitting that Your Majesty should try it." I said, "The Europeans are not prevented from knowing all about it; there are wise men among them who seldom err or commit mistakes. Without having tried it and found out all its qualities, how would they prescribe it for rulers, kings and men, low and high? They must have judged its good or bad qualities; otherwise they would not have acted thus." Hakim Ali replied, "It is not necessary for us to follow the Europeans, and adopt a custom, which is not sanctioned by our own wise men, without experiment or trial." I said, "It is a strange thing, for every custom in the world has been new at one time or other; from the days of Adam till now, they have been invented by and by. When a new thing is introduced

among a people, and becomes well known in the world, every one adopts it; wise men and physicians should determine according to the good or bad qualities of a thing; may be, the good qualities are not known to them. Thus the China root, not known anciently, has been newly discovered, and is useful in many diseases." When the Emperor heard me dispute and reason with the physician, he was astonished, and being much pleased, wished me God's favour, and then said to Khan-i A'zam, "Did you hear how wisely Asad spoke? Truly, we must not reject a thing that has been adopted by people of the world, merely because we cannot find it in our books; or how shall we progress?" The physician was going to say more, when His Majesty stopped him and called for the Christian father. The father having come, he ascribed many good qualities to it [tobacco], but no one could persuade Hakim Ali, who was a good physician.

As I had brought a large supply of pipes and tobacco, I sent some to several of the nobles, while others sent to ask for some; indeed, there was none who did not want some. It became so popular that the merchants began to bring it, and sell it to profit. The addiction spread everywhere. However, His Majesty did not smoke again.

Father and Son (1604)

Relations between Akbar and his eldest son Salim (Jahangir) deteriorated towards the close of his life. The following account of Akbar's encounter with his son is from the anonymous supplement (takmila) of the Akbarnama. Mu'tamad Khan in his Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri, written at the orders of Jahangir, records the event with essentially the same facts, but his version is less uncomplimentary to the Prince. He is shown as having offered to remain in confinement himself, and the cell in which Salim was kept is designated 'Ibadat Khana.

The passage is from Akbarnama text, III, p.833; tr., III, p.1248. Our rendering is independent of Beveridge's.

One of the events was the coming of Prince Sultan Salim to attend on the Emperor. Having come to know about the intention of the Emperor to proceed towards Allahabad [the Prince's seat] and the postponement of the expedition owing to the death of the Queen Mother (Maryam Makani), the Prince used the offering of condolences to His Majesty as the reason for his proceeding to the Court. On Thursday, 4 *Azar Ilabi* [9 November 1604] he put his forehead in prostration and put his head at the feet of [his father] his Temporal Lord and Spiritual Guide. The benign Emperor, out of affection, drew the Prince in an embrace. The Prince made an offering of a diamond, costing one lakh of rupees, nine *mubrs* of 100 *tolas* each, two hundred of fifty *tolas*, four of twenty-five *tolas* and three of twenty *tolas*. He also presented two hundred elephants. Payinda Muhammad Khan, Makhsus Khan, Khwajgi Fathullah and other officers, who

had accompanied the Prince, also had the good fortune of presenting themselves and having their offerings accepted. Since the Emperor, possessed of laudable qualities, had been displeased by the Prince's unwisdom, devious ways, defiance, self-opinionatedness, destructive designs and other blameworthy qualities, and despite the fact that many times, out of his own large-heartedness, he had overlooked the Prince's actions and what he had heard about him, the Prince, out of evil companionship and self-indulgence, did nothing to win commendation from the Emperor. His Majesty now decided to subject that merry head of youthful pride to the education of the school of imprisonment, so that he may awaken from his slumber of arrogance, and take hold of the thread of awareness and sobriety, and that the ebullience from the wine of wilfulness may also subside. Moreover, this could serve as medicinal collyrium for the short-sighted ones of evil heart, who did not properly see the majesty of the Emperor, and those who saw everything correctly might find in it a source of further enlightenment.

In this wise manner and with this excellent design, His Majesty took the Prince to the royal inner apartments. There he first gave expression to his complaints in terms of sarcasm and rebuke. He recounted the Prince's lapses, and much was spoken in words of anger. The Prince lowered his eyes to the ground and was immersed in sweat. He replied with tearful eyes and took recourse to humility and lamentation. Thereafter, His Majesty signified to the palace attendants to take the Prince to a cell and not to provide him with wine, of which he was an addict. The most severe punishment indeed was for him to be kept away from wine. Immense agony was caused to the Prince and much sorrow had to be borne. Their Highnesses, his sisters, started visiting him and gave him sympathy and consolation. They then conveyed the Prince's supplications and repentance to an Emperor prone to accept excuses. After ten days, paternal affection and natural kindness won out, and a *farman* was issued for the release of that free-moving cypress of the Royal Garden.

At His Majesty's orders he went to his own palace. The Emperor wished that the Prince should continue to be kept in isolation in this manner. But since he had no hopes from the side of [his other son] Sultan Daniyal [then seriously ill from drink], he concluded the punishment [for Prince Salim's] conduct in this way, and restored his previous *mansab* and *jagirs*.

The Last Illness (1605)

The description of Akbar's last illness early in October 1605 is taken from Nuru'l Haqq Diblawi's Zubdatu't Tawarikh, a work written at the instance of an important minister of Akbar, who continued to hold high office under Jahangir, Shaikh Farid Bukhari Murtaza Khan. Since Shaikh Farid died in 1616, Nuru'l Haqq's account must have been written within a few years of Akbar's death, and undoubtedly derived its details from Shaikh Farid who, as Mir Bakhsbi, was an eye-witness, and is indeed mentioned prominently in Nuru'l Haqq's narrative. He omits to give the exact date of Akbar's death, which occurred on Tuesday night, 26 October 1605.

Nuru'l Haqq's book has not been published, and the passage which follows does not seem to have been translated before. The present translation has been made after collating two MSS in British Library, Add. 10,580, ff.247b-250a, and Or.1650, ff.267b-270b.

Towards the end of *Jamuda I* 1014 A.H. [early October 1605] weakness came over His Majesty's person, and indigestion ensued. His Majesty described his condition to *bakim* Ali Gilani, who, versed in various sciences, was unique in the knowledge of medicine, in which he was the Galen of his age. The *bakim* having examined the pulse and symptoms, said: "Today it is best for Your Majesty to fast, so that your body may expel the gases in the stomach. Tomorrow when your physical condition returns to normal, a treatment to strengthen your body would be undertaken." His Majesty spent the day fasting. The next day, the *bakim* prescribed broth without *ghee*. When His Majesty did not find this diet

sufficient, he suddenly retired distracted to the female apartments. There was neglect in looking after the needs of the body, and His Majesty's physical condition passed from constancy and normalcy to weakness and emaciation. The next day, all the physicians who all their lives had obtained royal patronage were assembled together. A difference of opinion developed over the diagnosis of the illness and treatment of the patient between *bakim* Ali and *bakim* Jalaluddin Muzaffar, both of whom were experts in both the medical and pharmaceutical arts. Each set forth arguments to bolster his case, and gradually their voices became louder and louder. When His Majesty was informed of this altercation, since he placed full reliance on the diagnosis and knowledge of *bakim* Ali, who had also been constantly familiar with his physical condition, he said: "We have entrusted our person to *bakim* Ali. Let him do what he thinks right." The latter girded his loins to be of service. But how much skill, treatment and novel remedies that he tried with all due care; no success resulted. A burning fever and diarrhoea gripped His Majesty's body, and his physical person practically became devoid of life. Since the cup of life had become full, no effort seemed to help and no endeavour yielded success. How much potent medicines the *bakim* gave, these [couplet]. "were fated to increase a tear-like yellow liquid in the belly; and the almond oil [when administered] produced dryness."

So long as His Majesty could speak and was conscious, the affairs of the empire were conducted by issuing *hasbu'l bukms* [orders issued upon the Emperor's instructions] based on the record-of-orders (*risala*) maintained by the high nobles. But when His Majesty became detached and unconscious of the cares of the world [through weakness], the condition of the empire began to diverge from normalcy, and peace and order disappeared over the roads, and the border regions became disturbed. The great nobles became indifferent to the treatment [of His Majesty], and began to think of other designs, so that differences arose among them: everyone entertained his own thoughts, and evil designs were hatched.

During the space of these developments, persons loyal to His Highness Prince Sultan Salim suggested that he should visit His Majesty to ask after his health, but many ill-wishing nobles objected to this. At this time His Excellency Shaikh Farid Bukhari... [went to Prince Salim, greeting him as the King designate and posted guards at the fort]. The next day, the young King [Salim], favoured by fortune, impelled by filial affection, and carried away by love, betook himself to His Majesty's sick-bed, and was privileged to have a sight of him. By chance, His Majesty's condition improved somewhat, and he obtained great joy from seeing that Light of Divine Joy [Salim]. Tears came to His Majesty's eyes, and he gave a sign from the head of the sandal-wood couch that his own sword, representing the key to peace and order [i.e. sovereignty], be handed over to the Prince. Since the whole world had become powerless from the news of this heart-breaking event, and the loyal ones did not propose a longer sojourn for the Prince in that place, he came out grieving and of heavy heart and went to his palace. He did not meet his father again. When the inevitable end came [couplets omitted], after clothing the body in the funeral shroud, the young King of good fortune [Salim] put one of the four feet of the bier on his own shoulder, the other three feet being held aloft by other princes, till it was carried to the gate of the fort. From there, loyal officers carried the bier, passing it from shoulder to shoulder, till they reached Sikandra, one *farsang* from the Agra fort; and here he was buried.

Akbar's Death and the Common Man (1605)

A poet and petty merchant of Agra, Banarsi Das (b.1586), wrote a versified autobiography, Ardh Kathanak. The Hindi text has been translated and published by Mukund Lath, Half a Tale, Jaipur, 1981.

At the time of Akbar's death in October 1605, Banarsi Das was at Jaunpur. He describes the effect of the news on himself, and on his faith in verses 246-64 (Appendix II, pp.242-4), Mukund Lath's tr. pp.38-40. An earlier abridged version by R.C. Sharma had appeared in Indica, Vol. 7, 1970, pp.105-20. Mukund Lath's translation, being fuller, has been adopted here.

In *Vikram* 1662 [A.D. 1605] during the month of *Kartik*, after the monsoon was over, the great Emperor Akbar breathed his last in Agra. The alarming news of his death spread fast and soon reached Jaunpur. People felt suddenly orphaned and insecure without their sire. Terror raged everywhere, the hearts of men trembled with dire apprehension, their faces became drained of colour.

I was sitting up a flight of stairs in my house when I heard the dreadful news, which came as a sharp and sudden blow. It made me shake with violent, uncontrollable agitation. I reeled, and, losing my balance, fell down the stairs in a faint. My head hit the stone floor and began to bleed profusely, turning the courtyard red. Everyone present rushed to my help. My dear parents were in utter agony. My mother put my head in her lap and applied a piece of burnt cloth to my

wound in order to stop the flow of blood. I was then quickly put to bed with my sobbing mother at my side.

The whole town was in a tremor. Everyone closed the doors of his house in panic; shop-keepers shut down their shops. Feverishly, the rich hid their jewels and costly attire underground; many of them quickly dumped their wealth and their ready capital on carriages and rushed to safe, secluded places. Every householder began stocking his home with weapons and arms. Rich men took to wearing thick, rough clothes such as are worn by the poor, in order to conceal their status, and walked the streets covered in harsh woollen blankets or coarse cotton wrappers. Women shunned finery, dressing in shabby, lustreless clothes. None could tell the status of a man from his dress and it became impossible to distinguish the rich from the poor. There were manifest signs of panic everywhere although there was no reason for it since there were really no thieves or robbers about.

The commotion subsided after ten days, when a letter arrived from Agra bringing news that all was well in the capital. The situation returned to normal. Let me give you the gist of the news the letter carried. Akbar had died in the month of *Kartik*, in the year 1662 *Vikram*, after a reign of fifty-two years; now Akbar's eldest son Prince Salim had been enthroned as King to rule from Agra, like his father. Salim had assumed the title of Sultan Nuruddin Jahangir; his power reigned supreme and unchallenged throughout the land.

This news came as a great relief and people heartily hailed the new King.

To the joy of my parents, I, too, soon regained my health. We celebrated the end of the days of gloom with much festivity, distributing alms to the poor and gifts to friends and relations.

Soon after these events I went alone one day to my room at the roof-top and sat down to think and reflect. I began seriously to question the state of my faith and belief.

"I have been an ardent devotee of Siva," I said to myself,

"but when I fell down the stairs and was severely hurt, Siva did not come to my aid." This thought nagged me constantly and made me neglect my daily ritual to Siva. My heart was no longer in it, and one day I simply put the Siva conch away.

A Jesuit Obituary (1605)

Father Pierre du Jarric (1566-1617) compiled a history of Jesuit missions down to 1606, drawing (ultimately) on information in letters from Jesuit missionaries. The portion of du Jarric's work dealing with the missions to the Mughal Court, notably the third mission under Fr. Jerome Xavier (1595 onwards), has been translated by C.H. Payne, Akbar and the Jesuits, London, 1926. While describing Akbar's death, du Jarric gives us the following picture of Akbar (pp.205-8) which would seem to be based mainly upon information supplied by letters of members of the third mission.

Thus died Echebar, or Aquebar, but now the terror of the east. And 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 the 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 decreed 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.

Amongst his great nobles he was so predominant that none dared lift his head too high; but with the humbler classes he was benevolent and debonair, willingly giving them audience and hearing their petitions. He was pleased to accept their presents, taking them into his hands and holding them to his breast (which he never did with the rich gifts brought to him by his nobles), though often with prudent dissimulation he pretended not to see them. At one time he would be deeply immersed in state affairs, or giving audience to his subjects, and the next moment he would be seen shearing camels, hewing stones, cutting wood, or hammering iron, and doing all with as much diligence as though engaged in his own particular vocation. He ate sparingly, taking flesh only during three or four months of the year, his diet at other times consisting of milk, rice, and sweetmeats. With great difficulty he spared three hours of the night for sleep. Twice at least in each day he gave audience to his subjects, showing himself at a window, from which he listened to all who sought speech with him.

He had a wonderful memory. He knew the names of all his elephants, though he had many thousands of them, of his pigeons, his deer, and the other wild animals which he kept in his parks, and of all his horses to which names had been given. Each day, a certain number of these animals were brought before him for his inspection. He watched these from his window, and as each animal passed him, its name and that of the person responsible for feeding it was read out to him. He noticed if it had grown fat, or become thin, and increased or decreased the salary of its keeper accordingly.

Though he could neither read nor write, he knew everything that took place in his kingdom, for from every quarter his captains wrote to him monthly, informing him of anything new they had seen or heard of. These letters were read to him after he had finished his other business, or before he retired to sleep. After the lights had been lit, he used to sit in a great hall, surrounded by numerous people whose duty it was to read books to him, or narrate

stories. Here, too, he received strangers, who came for the first time to this Court, questioning them concerning their King or Prince, the nature of their country, customs, trade, and similar matters, and remembering all that they told him.

Amongst other books which he had read to him was the life of our Saviour, which Father Xavier had composed in Persian, for he had a great admiration for Jesus Christ, of whom he always spoke with reverence, and whose images he treated with profound respect. But he would sometimes say that he believed our Saviour performed His miracles, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, &c., by human means, since He was a great and wonderful physician. This idea was put into his mind by the Saracens.

Echebar was one of the most fortunate monarchs of his time. Everything came to him that he wished for. He greatly extended the territories which his father had bequeathed to him; for he conquered the new kingdoms of Caxemir, Sinde, Guzarate, Xischande [Khandesh], a great part of the Deccan, and the whole of the country of Bengala. Scarcely ever did he engage in an enterprise which he did not bring to a successful conclusion; so that 'as fortunate as Echebar' became a common saying throughout the east. But he missed the greatest thing of all: the knowledge of the true God and His only Son Jesus Christ, who came to save mankind; so that, in spite of all his worldly prosperity, he was unable to escape everlasting torment.

A Son's Reminiscences (1607)

In his memoirs, Akbar's son and successor Jahangir has given us some touching and intimate glimpses of his father along with an assessment of his achievement. The memoirs began to be written by Jahangir soon after his accession (1605) and the portions here selected were probably written out before the close of 1607. (See the printed text of the Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, ed. Syud Ahmud, Aligarh, 1864, pp.1, 14, 16. Beveridge's translation, pp.2, 36-8, has been adopted, with considerable amendment throughout).

In A.H. 977, on Wednesday, 17th *Rabi I* [31 August 1569], when seven *gharis* of the day had passed, when *Libra (Mizan)* had risen to the 24th degree, God Almighty brought me into existence from the hiding-place of nothingness. At the time when my venerated father was anxious for a son, a mystic of the name of Shaikh Salim, a man of ecstatic condition, who had traversed many of the stages of life, had his abode on a hill near Sikri, one of the villages of Agra, and the people of that neighbourhood had great faith in him. As my father was attached to mystics, he also visited him. One day, when waiting on him in a state of ecstasy, he asked him how many sons he would have, the Shaikh replied, "The Giver who gives without being asked will bestow three sons on you." My father said, "I have made a vow that, casting my first son on the skirt of your favour, I will make your friendship and kindness his protector and preserver." The Shaikh accepted this proposal, and said, "I congratulate you, and I will make him my own namesake."

When my mother came near the time of her delivery, he [Akbar] sent her to the Shaikh's house that I might be born there. After my birth he gave me the name of Sultan Salim, but I never heard my father, whether in my childhood or after my coming of age, call me Muhammad Salim or Sultan Salim; he always addressed me as *Shaikhu Baba*.

My revered father, considering the village of Sikri, which was the place of my birth, lucky for him, made it his capital. In the course of fourteen or fifteen years that ridge and jungle, full of beasts of all kinds, became a city containing all kinds of gardens and buildings, and lofty, elegant edifices and pleasant palaces, attractive to the heart. After his conquest of Gujarat, this [erstwhile] village was named Fatehpur.

After the birth of Daniyal, a daughter was born to Bibi Daulat-Shad whom they named Shakru'n-nisa Begum. As she was brought up in the skirt of my revered father's care, she turned out very well. She is of good disposition and naturally compassionate towards all people. From infancy and childhood she has been extremely fond of me, and there can be few such relationships between brother and sister. The first time when, according to the custom of pressing the breast of a girl-child to make a drop of milk come out, my sister's breast was pressed and a drop of milk appeared, my revered father said to me: "Baba! drink this milk, that in truth this sister may be to you as a mother." God, the knower of secrets, knows that from that day forward, after I drank that drop of milk, I have felt love for my sister such as children have for their mothers.

After some time another girl was born to Bibi Daulat-Shad, and he [Akbar] named her Aram Banu Begum. Her disposition is on the whole inclined to heat and quickness of temper. My father was very fond of her, so much so that he treated her acts of rudeness as within bounds of good manners and in his august sight they, from his great love, did not appear bad. Repeatedly he honoured me by addressing me, and said: "Baba! for my sake be as kind, after me, as I am to this younger sister, who in the Hindi phrase is my

ladla (spoilt child). Bear her presumptions, and pass over her impolitenesses and impudences."

The good qualities of my revered father are beyond the limit of approval and the bounds of praise. If books were composed with regard to his commendable ways, then without any trace of exaggeration and, even forgetting and setting aside a son's feelings for a father, only a little out of much could be said.

Notwithstanding his kingship and his treasures and hoards, which were beyond the scope of counting and imagination, his fighting elephants and Arab horses, he never by a hair's breadth placed his foot beyond the base of humility before the throne of God, considered himself the lowest of created beings, and never for one moment forgot God [Verse].

Always, everywhere, with everyone, and in every circumstance,

Keep the eye of the heart secretly fixed on the beloved.

The professors of various faiths had room in the broad expanse of his incomparable sway, contrary to the practice in all other realms of the world for Shi'as have room in Iran only, and Sunnis in Turkey, India and Central Asia.

As in the wide expanse of the divine compassion there is room for all classes and the followers of all creeds, so, on the principle that the shadow must have the same properties as the light, in his Imperial dominions, which on all sides were limited only by the sea, there was room for the professors of opposite religions, and for beliefs, good and bad, and the road to intolerance was closed. Sunnis and Shias met in one mosque and Christians and Jews in one church to pray. He consistently followed the principle of 'Absolute Peace' (*Sulh-i Kul*). He kept company with the good ones of every sect and every religion and faith, and conferred attention on each according to the degree of his ability and comprehension. His nights were passed in wakefulness; and in the day too he slept very little, so that the total period of

sleep in night-and-day did not exceed four-and-a-half hours. He treated wakefulness at night as something gained out of the given life-time. His bravery and courage was such that he rode elephants that were in musth... My father always associated with the learned of every creed and religion, especially with Pandits and the learned of India, and although he was illiterate, so much became clear to him through constant intercourse with the learned and wise that from his conversations with them, no one could take him to be illiterate, and he was so well acquainted with the niceties of verse and prose compositions that such deficiency could not be imagined.

In his august personal appearance he was of middle height, but inclining to be tall; he was of wheatish complexion, his eyes and eyebrows were black and his features were more refined than [merely] handsome, he was slender-waisted with a broad chest, and his hands and arms were long. On the left side of his nose he had a fleshy mole, very agreeable in appearance, of the size of half a common pea. Those skilled in the science of physiognomy considered this mole a sign of great prosperity and exceeding good fortune. His august voice was very resonant and in speech and discourse was very well modulated. In his actions and movements he was not like the people of this world, and the light of God emanated from him.



Akbar reflecting: a contemporary sketch, c. 1605.

Courtesy : British Library

The Reflections of Akbar

At the end of the A'in-i Akbari, Abu'l Fazl collected together the 'Heart-winning Sayings of His Majesty' (A'in-i Akbari, ed. Blochmann, II, pp.227-44; tr. Jarrett, III, pp.424-52). A selection is offered here, Jarrett's translation being used, but closely checked and corrected.

There exists a bond between the Creator and the created which cannot be brought within the space of language.

.....

Most worshippers of God are intent on the advancement of their own desires, not on His worship.

.....

Commendation of the pursuit of reason and rejection of traditionalism shines far above this suppliant's [i.e. Akbar's] arguments. If following tradition was commendable, the prophets would have merely followed their predecessors.

.....

Ordinary people seize upon reports of happenings contrary to nature; but the wise demand good proof.

.....

It was my object that begging should disappear from my dominions. Many persons were plentifully supplied with money, but owing to the disease of avarice, it proved of no avail.

.....

To be a *pir* (mystic guide) should mean to have the power of recognising sorrow and providing its relief, *not* letting the beard grow, wearing out the robe and raising a tumult through worldly talk.

.....

An artisan who rises to eminence in his profession has the grace of God with him. Holding him in honour amounts to worship of God.

.....

Children are the young saplings in the garden of life. To love them is to turn our minds to the bountiful Creator.

.....

When I am guilty of an unjust act, I rise in judgement against myself; what of my sons, my kindred and others?

.....

By the bounty of God I found no great minister; otherwise people would have considered my measures had been devised by him.

.....

I have heard no good reason from the Indians for the sounding of the gong and blowing the conch at the time of worship. It must be for the purpose of warning and recollection.

.....

In the Muslim religion, a smaller share of inheritance is allowed to the daughter, though owing to her weakness, she deserves to be given the larger share. This is because of the consideration that since the daughter goes away to her husband, one's property would pass on to a stranger.

.....

In India no one has ever claimed to be a prophet. The reason is that claims to divinity are customary.

.....

When any one is said to be of a good, or base origin, what is meant is that one of his ancestors attained to spiritual or temporal distinction, or was known to fame from connection with some city or profession. It appears to me that good breeding should involve good works.

.....

The Indian sages say that for the garnering of good works, one should have death constantly in view, and, placing no reliance on youth and life, never comfort the self. But to me it seems that in the pursuit of virtue, the idea of death should not be thought of, so that without any hope or fear, one should practise virtue simply because it is good.

.....

It is very strange for men to insist on the necessity of the ceremony of circumcision for children who are otherwise excused from the burden of all [religious] obligations.

.....

If the reason of the prohibition of swine [as food] be due to the beast's vileness, the flesh of tiger and the like should be held lawful.

.....

It is not right that a man should make his stomach the grave of animals.

.....

A city may be defined to be a place where artisans of various kinds dwell, or a population of such an extent that a voice of average loudness will not carry at night beyond the inhabited limits.

.....

A river (*darya*) is one which is perennial.

.....

Kingdoms are separated from each other by rivers, mountains; deserts or languages.

.....

A wise man was asked the reason of the long life of the vulture and the short existence of the hawk. He replied, "The one injures no animal, and the other hunts them."

.....

Ever since I have used nitre [for cooling water], I have come to recognise the respect for salt [fidelity] in water also.

.....

The marriage of a young child is displeasing to God for the object which is intended is still remote, and there is immediate possibility of injury. In a religion which forbids the re-marriage of the widow, the hardship is much greater.

.....

It is an ancient custom in India for a woman to burn herself on her husband's death, how much unhappy she may have been with him, and to give up her priceless life with a cheerful countenance, conceiving it to be a means of her husband's salvation. It is a strange commentary on the magnanimity of men that they should seek their deliverance by means of their wives.

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Pierre du Jarric, *Akbar and the Jesuits*, tr., C.H. Payne, London, 1926.

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All translations cited above have been used so far as possible. But in every case, much modification has been found necessary to preserve accuracy and ensure the closest representation of nuances. It may be mentioned that many standard translations contain misleading renderings, a few illustrations of which are offered here:

"Girl's mother is using persuasion" (A.S. Beveridge) instead of the correct "the mother of the bride takes airs." (Extract 1)

"Exalted is His Majesty, *Allabu Akbar*" (Lowe) instead of "Exalted is He [God], *Allabu Akbar*." (Extract 27)

"...Removed the custom and the practice of begging" (B. De) instead of "so satisfied [them, by his rewards] as to free them from the need of begging and asking." (Extract 20)

"The first physician said" (Elliot) instead of "Hakim Ali said." (Extract 47)

"Hindu" (Jarrett) instead of "Indian". (Extract 43)

"I never heard my father, whether in his cups or in his sober moments, call me Muhammad Salim" (Rogers and Beveridge) instead of "I never heard my father, whether in my childhood or after I came of age, call me Muhammad Salim." (Extract 46).

Such instances could be multiplied. While these should not lessen one's gratitude to the earlier translators, who were often pioneers and often dependent only on manuscripts, there is no doubt that in using their work, constant vigilance is always necessary.

The reader who wishes to know more about Akbar may consult:

A.L. Srivastava, *Akbar the Great*, 3 vols., Agra, 1962: very detailed work, based on original Persian sources but contains inaccuracies.

I.H. Qureshi, *Akbar, The Architect of the Mughal Empire*, Delhi, 1978: an interesting Pakistani point of view.

J.M. Shelat, *Akbar*, 2 vols., Bombay, 1959: a readable biography though claiming no originality.

V.A. Smith, *Akbar the Great Mughal*, Oxford, 1917: a full history, mainly based on translations of Persian accounts and now largely out of date.