

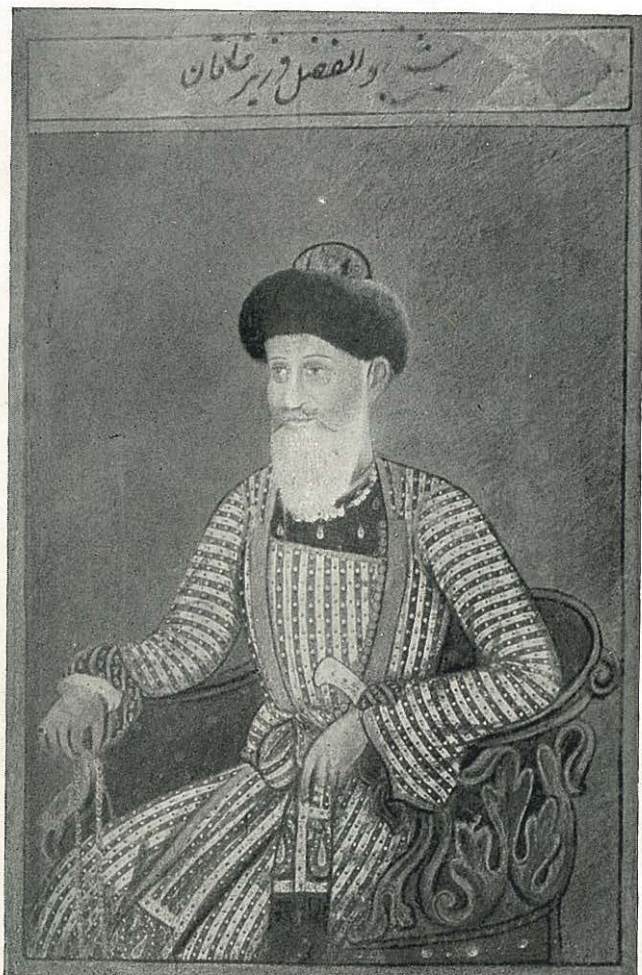
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ABUL FAZL AND AKBAR



C. JINARAJADASA



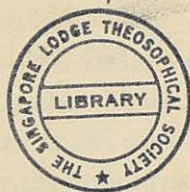
ABUL FAZL

(from the original in the Delhi Museum)

ABUL FAZL AND AKBAR

BY

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FOREWORD

THE chief value of this brief monograph—an address delivered to the Islāmic Culture Society of Madras—lies in its quotations. As a necklet of gems requires a thread to bind them, so has my enthusiasm for Abul Fazl and Akbar become as a thread on which are strung the many extracts from Abul Fazl, Badāonī and others. The works in which these extracts lie are rarely found in an ordinary library in India. I am in hopes that my little essay will show those in India who believe in “Indianisation”, and those outside India who believe in “Fraternisation”, that there lived once upon a time two great men who are among the most advanced of the moderns.

The following are the works on which my monograph is based :

1. *Akbar the Great Mogul*, 1542-1605, by Vincent A. Smith, 504 pages with index,

with 15 illustrations and 8 maps, Oxford, 1917. This work is based on all the original authorities. The author gives an extensive bibliography, and his book is a mine of historical references. He is curiously prejudiced against Abul Fazl, but this can be corrected by referring to Abul Fazl's own words in his two great works :—

2. *Akbar Nāma of Abul Fazl, (The Annals of Akbar by Abul Fazl)*, translated from the Persian by H. Beveridge, I. C. S. (Retired), in three volumes :—Vol. I, 667 pages ; errata and addenda, 32 pages ; index, 27 pages. Published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1897-99. Vol. II, pages 577 ; errata and addenda, pages 2 ; index, pages 23. Calcutta, 1905-10. Vol. III, pages 1262. Calcutta, 1910-21.

In the Persian original of Abul Fazl, the work which follows is the conclusion of the *Akbar Nāma*.

3. *The Āin-i Akbarī* by Abul Fazl 'Allāmī, translated from the original Persian. Vol. I, by H. Blochmann, *Preface* vii pages ; Book First, pages 229. Book Second, pages 231-623 ; additional notes, pages 615-622 ;

index, pages 623-678 ; with 17 plates and a genealogical table of the House of Timūr. Blochmann, pages 167-209, gives long extracts from the writings of Badāonī (Abdul Qādir ibn i Mulūk Shāh of Badāon). Published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1873. Vol. II, by Colonel H. S. Jarrett, pages 418 ; index pages, 419-458. Calcutta, 1891. Supplementary Index by William Irvine and Lavinia Mary Anstey, pages 101. Calcutta, 1907. Vol. III, by Colonel H. S. Jarrett, pages 451 ; index, pages 453-515. Calcutta, 1894.

4. *Akbar and the Jesuits*, an Account of the Jesuit Missions to the Court of Akbar by Father Pierre Du Jarric, S. J. Translated with Introduction and Notes by C. H. Payne, pages 208 ; notes, pages 209-280 ; index, pages 281-288. London, 1926.

5. Akbar's "House of Worship," or 'Ibādat-Khāna, by Vincent A. Smith, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* for 1927, pages 715-722.

It has been a task of many months to read through this voluminous material, but a pleasant task, owing to the vivid pictures which one obtains of India three centuries ago. I

hope that other enthusiasts of Abul Fazl and Akbar, after delving into these works and other allied material, will correct my errors and omissions, and describe fuller a most fascinating page in the kaleidoscopic History of India.

C. J.

ABUL FAZL AND AKBAR

LET me confess at once that I am a great admirer of Abul Fazl and Akbar. I know that Muhammadans in India do not hold them in high regard. They consider that Akbar was a renegade, though they admit he was a great Mogul; as to Abul Fazl, many of them regard him as the evil genius of Akbar. Let me explain why I admire them.

All my friends here present know that I am a Theosophist, and that I have a profound reverence for all religions. But as a Theosophist I believe that Truth is not the exclusive possession of any faith; indeed, if we desire a knowledge of the Mysteries of God, I hold it must be sought not in one religion but in all. There is a Universal Religion which exists apart from any manifestation of religion, and sometimes a manifested religion founded by a particular Teacher limits the beauties of that Universal Religion. I am therefore drawn to those who seek this

Universal Religion which is enshrined in every faith. Both Abul Fazl and Akbar were men who sought to know this Universal Religion ; I would call them the precursors of the modern Theosophists.

But there is a second reason why Akbar fascinates me ; it is because he was *the first Indian*. We are becoming used to the term "Indian," to distinguish one whose enthusiasms are not bounded by the traditions of his birth either as a Hindu or a Muhammadan, and who therefore thinks of India as one country where Hindus and Muhammadans work side by side as brothers for the uplift of one Nation. But we know that the thought underlying the word "Indian" is of recent birth ; it is not older than the Indian National Congress, and its use even by a few to-day is largely due to the fraternization in the past of the Congress and the Muslim League. But Akbar had clearly the thought "Indian" as a principle of his statesmanship. Certainly he failed in realizing his great dream, as we shall see. But all the same he was our precursor.

It is astonishing, seeing how Akbar was the greatest of the Mogul emperors, that so little

attention has been paid to him by Muhammadans in India. One European writer has said of him that he was "among sovereigns what Shakespeare was among poets". This is very high praise, but I feel it is not an exaggeration. Cæsar and Napoleon, as conquerors and statesmen, are the equals of Akbar. But Akbar had a greater dream than either, for he was what neither Cæsar nor Napoleon was, that is, a natural mystic. While Akbar was both a great general and a great statesman, he was all through an earnest striver after spiritual things. His son Jahāngīr states that his father "never for one moment forgot God". I know Muhammadans to-day look upon Akbar as one who betrayed the cause of Islām in India. I feel, however, since Islām stands for Brotherhood, that Akbar's attempt to form a Brotherhood in India, had it succeeded, would have been fully in line with the work which the great Prophet attempted for Arabia. Had Akbar's attempt succeeded, the gulf which to-day exists in India between Muslim and Hindu would have been closed long ago.¹

¹ Rājā Todar Māl, Akbar's ablest Finance Minister, though a Hindu, insisted that the Hindu clerks should learn Persian, the court language.

Akbar's policy as a statesman can be graphically described in one word which we have lately coined, to express what we would like Britain to do in India—*Indianisation*. Let us see how far Akbar went in this process, which was not attempted by any Muhammadan ruler before him, and which was only partially carried out by his son Jahāngīr, and was dropped by subsequent Mogul rulers.

Akbar had every cause to be full of pride; he was of the conquering race, he was a Muslim, and he was descended from both Timur or Tamerlane, the great Turk, and from the great Mongol Jenghiz Khān. He came to the throne when he was fourteen; while young he was surrounded by a band of conquering warriors. By the time he was twenty all had proof of his fiery valour. He had every reason to buttress himself behind his pride of race and power, and to hold the Hindus at arm's length. But he did exactly the reverse. We find him surrounding himself not only with Muhammadan nobles but also with Hindu. The greatest of these was the Rājput Rājā Mān Singh, to whom he gave a rank which we might term to-day that of a

Field Marshal, the rank of a "Commander of 7,000," a dignity reserved only to the imperial princes. Then there was Rājā Todar Māl, another Rājput, who became the Finance Minister. There were others, like Rājā Bhagwān Dās, the son of Mān Singh, Rājā Bihārī Māl of Ambar, and Birbāl, a Brahmin but given later the title of Rājā, poet and story-teller, and an intimate friend of Akbar. These are the great Hindu names which have come down in the histories, but each Rājput brought to Akbar's arms not only himself but his relations and retainers.

We find Akbar doing something more; he binds the Indian princes to him by marrying into their families. Here we must not forget what the pride of a Rājput is; he may be conquered by a stronger man, but the honour of his womenfolk is as his own honour. No Rājput prince like Rājā Bihārī Māl would have offered his daughter in marriage to Akbar merely for place or power, and least of all for fear of Akbar; there must have been something so attractive in Akbar's own personality that the seemingly unsurpassable gulf between Rājput and Mogul was bridged

by bonds of marriage. Akbar married two Indian princesses, the first of whom was a daughter of Bihārī Māl and sister of Bhagwān Dās; the second was the princess Jodh Bāi of Jodpur, the mother of the Emperor Jahāngīr.¹ When Jahāngīr grows up, we find him marrying no less than five Hindu ladies.

Then Akbar did an act which showed how he was ceasing to be communal and becoming Indian. In 1564 he abolished the *jizya* or poll tax laid on all who were not Muhammadans. We have on this Abul Fazl's account in his *Akbar Nāma* :

One of the great gifts which H. M. the Shāhinshāh made at the beginning of this year was the remission of the *Jizya* throughout India. Who can estimate the amount thereof? As the far-seeing glance of the Shāhinshāh looked to the administration of the world, he paid great attention to the issuing of this edict, which might be regarded as the foundation of the arrangement of mankind. In spite of the disapproval of statesmen, and of the great revenue, and of much chatter on the part of the ignorant, this sublime decree was issued. By this grand gift, thousands of leading-reins and lassoes were made for the stiff-necked ones of the

¹ It is an interesting sidelight on what happened after Akbar's passing that Muhammadan historians have studiously ignored that the Emperor Jahāngīr's mother was a Hindu. She was given the title Maryam-uz zamānī, "the Mary of the age". One Muhammadan writer expresses the hope "that God will receive her in His mercy; for Jahāngīr's mother, though a Hindu, could not well be sent to hell."

age. When this tax was imposed in former times by those who held outward sway, the reason for it was that they on account of heart-rooted enmity were girded up for the contempt and destruction of opposite factions, but for political purposes and for their own advantage, they fixed a sum of money as an equivalent therefor, and gave it the name of *jiziya*. Thus they both gained their object and also derived a profit. At the present day, when owing to the blessing of the abundant goodwill and graciousness of the lord of the age, those who belong to other religions have, like those of one mind and one religion, bound up the waist of devotion and service, and exert themselves for the advancement of the dominion, how should those dissenters, whose separation is founded merely on habit and imitation, and whose zeal and devotion are the real things, be classed with that old faction which cherished mortal enmity, and be the subjects of contempt and slaughter? Moreover the prime cause of levying the tax in old times was the neediness of the rulers and their assistants. At this day, when there are thousands of treasures in the store-chambers of the world-wide administration, and when every one of the servants of the threshold of fortune is rich and prosperous, why should a just and discriminating mind apply itself to collecting this tax? And why should it from imaginary advantage advance on the path of definite dissension? (*Akbar Nāma*, vol. ii, pp. 316-7.)

In 1679, Aurangzēb reimposed the *jiziya*.

Another act of Akbar, when he was only twenty years old, shows us the trend of his mind even at that early age. It was to prohibit a long established custom by which victorious troops enslaved the non-combatant relatives of those defeated in war. In the West, the rules

as to the treatment of non-combatants were finally formulated in Brussels in 1874. We see that Akbar, though an inveterate aggressor in search of conquest, had in mind the principles of humanity which now guide all nations. Once again we listen to Abul Fazl :

One of the glorious boons of His Majesty the Shāhinshāh which shone forth in this auspicious year was the abolition of enslavement. The victorious troops which came into the wide territories of India used in their tyranny to make prisoners of the wives and children and other relatives of the people of India, and used to enjoy them or sell them. His Majesty the Shāhinshāh, out of his thorough recognition of and worship of God, and from his abundant foresight and right thinking gave orders that no soldier of the victorious armies should in any part of his dominions act in this manner. Although a number of savage natures who were ignorant of the world should make their fastnesses a subject of pride and come forth to do battle, and then be defeated by virtue of the emperor's daily increasing empire, still their families must be protected from the onset of the world-conquering armies. No soldier, high or low, was to enslave them, but was to permit them to go freely to their homes and relations. It was for excellent reasons that His Majesty gave his attention to this subject, for although the binding, killing or striking the haughty and the chastising the stiff-necked are part of the struggle for empire—and this is a point about which both sound jurists and innovators are agreed—yet it is outside of the canons of justice to regard the chastisement of women and innocent children as the chastisement of the contumacious. If the husbands have taken the path of insolence, how is it the fault of the wives, and if



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the fathers have chosen the road of opposition what fault have the children committed? Moreover the wives and innocent children of such factions are not munitions of war! In addition to these sound reasons there was the fact that many covetous and blind-hearted persons from vain imaginings or unjust thoughts, or merely out of cupidity attacked villages and estates and plundered them, and when questioned about it said a thousand things and behaved with neglect and indifference. But when final orders were passed by the abolition of this practice, no tribe was afterwards oppressed by wicked persons on suspicion of sedition. As the purposes of the Shāhinshāh were entirely right and just, the blissful result ensued that the wild and rebellious inhabitants of portions of India placed the ring of devotion in the ear of obedience, and became the materials of world-empire. Both was religion set in order, for its essence is the distribution of justice, and things temporal were regulated, for their perfection lies in the obedience of mankind. (*Akbar Nāma*, vol. ii, pp. 246-7.)

It was also in 1564, when at Muttra, that Akbar did an act which was significant. His government, following ancient custom, used to collect a special tax from Hindu pilgrims coming to worship at Muttra and other sacred places.

It was brought to his notice that for a long time it was the custom in India for the rulers to take sums from the people who came to sacred spots to worship, proportionate to their rank and wealth. This (worship) was called Karma. The Shāhinshāh in his wisdom and tolerance remitted all these taxes which amounted to *crores*. He looked upon such

grasping of property as blameable and issued orders forbidding the levy thereof throughout his dominions. In former times, from the unworthiness of some, and from cupidity and bigotry, men showed such an evil desire towards the worshippers of God. H. M. often said that although the folly of a sect might be clear, yet as they had no conviction that they were on the wrong path, to demand money from them, and to put a stumbling-block in the way of what they had made a means of approach to the sublime threshold of Unity and considered as the worship of the Creator, was disapproved by the discriminating intellect and was a mark of not doing the will of God." (*Akbar Nāma*, vol. ii, pp. 294-5.)

I want to draw attention to the fact that these liberal actions of Akbar—the abolition of the *jizya*, of the pilgrim tax and of the enslavement of non-combatants—were in no way due to any influence of Abul Fazl, who played such a great role in his affairs later. The Portuguese missionaries called Abul Fazl the "King's Jonathan," when later the two were so closely concerned about the "Divine Faith" which they started; but these reforms of Akbar took place ten years before he and Abul Fazl met. Akbar was by nature liberal, and that, added to his desire to be the "Pādshāh of his whole people—Hindus as well as Muhammadans," was the main-

spring of those liberalising elements in his statecraft which were fiercely resented by his orthodox Muhammadan subjects.

But why was Akbar liberal at all, against his family tradition and against his environment ? It is the reason for this which is the clue to all the strange deeds in the life of Akbar. Whether we accept it as a clue or not depends on ourselves. I refer to the inborn mysticism which was in Akbar. To some, any kind of mysticism shows a taint either of epilepsy or lunacy ; mysticism is repellent to them. It was that to Vincent A. Smith, whose great life of Akbar is the chief documented biography in English. Every element of Akbar's mystic nature irritates him. Thus, when speaking of the most amazing action of Akbar, which fascinates all non-Muhammadans, his attempt to establish his Dīn Ilāhī or " Divine Faith ", a form of Universal Religion, Vincent Smith remarks :

The whole scheme was the outcome of a ridiculous vanity, a monstrous growth of unrestrained autocracy . . . The Divine Faith was a monument of Akbar's folly, not of his wisdom. His actions throughout his reign exhibited many illustrations of both qualities. (*Akbar the Great Mogul*, p. 222).

The matter appeared quite different to Tennyson, as evidenced by his striking poem written almost at the end of his life called "Akbar's Dream". But then Tennyson had mystical experiences of his own, and he knew that there was a larger consciousness than could be contained within the brain. To me, the clue to Akbar's attempts at Indianisation was his natural mysticism. Vincent Smith has to admit that mysticism, though he rejects the consequences of it as irrational :

Akbar was by nature a mystic, who sought earnestly, like his Sūfī friends, to attain the ineffable bliss of direct contact with the Divine Reality, and now and again believed or fancied that he had succeeded. His temperament was profoundly melancholic, and there seems to be some reason to suspect that at times he was not far from the danger of falling into a state of religious mania. His ambition and intense interest in all the manifold affairs of this world saved him from that fate, and brought him back from dreams to the actualities of human life. He was not an ordinary man, and his complex nature, like that of St. Paul, Muhammad, Dante, and other great men with a tendency to mysticism, presents perplexing problems. (*Akbar the Great Mogul*, p. 160-1.)

Even as a young man, Akbar was a "seeker". Abdul Qādir ibn i Mulūk Shāh of Badāon, usually called Badāonī, who was in Akbar's service and resented every liberalising action

of the Emperor, thus speaks of Akbar's continual seeking for truth :

His Majesty till now [986] had shewn every sincerity, and was diligently searching for truth. But his education had been much neglected ; and surrounded as he was by men of low and heretic principles, he had been forced to doubt the truth of the Islām. Falling from one perplexity into the other, he lost sight of his real object, the search of truth ; and when the strong embankment of our clear law and our excellent faith had once been broken through, His Majesty grew colder and colder, till after the short space of five or six years not a trace of Muhammadan feeling was left in his heart. Matters then became very different. (Badāonī, quoted by Blochmann in *Aīn-i Akbarī*, vol. i, p. 178.)

This is of course from a fiercely critical standpoint. But even Vincent Smith who scoffs at Akbar's mysticism says, regarding the value of Badāonī's remarks, that he " had his personal grievances against both Akbar and Todar Māl, and was embittered by the most rancorous bigotry ". He states that Badāonī " may be fairly described " as " a disappointed courtier and exasperated fanatic ".¹ Personally I prefer Abul Fazl's account of Akbar's desire to delve into the Divine Mysteries :

In virtue of the Divine purposes, and the irresistible decrees of the incomparable Deity, many of the

¹ *Akbar the Great Mogul*, p. 141.

world-adorning excellencies of this spiritual and temporal prince were concealed even from his own acuteness. I have heard this many times in the days of my childhood from my honoured father when I was engaged in acquiring knowledge. He (too) was a fountain of blessings and an assemblage of spiritual and material perfections and one who spent his days in the hermitage of retirement. And I learnt this also by myself when I came to have the bliss of serving him who is the elixir of the capabilities of the masters of wisdom. By reason of this fact, to wit, that his world-illuminating spiritual beauty was hidden from himself, he would seek from others what he should have sought for in himself and which he should have brought for the use of mankind and so been a guide to those wandering in the wilderness of error. Continually he made the pain of seeking after God, which is also capable of becoming perfect health, the hem of his heart, and kept the mobility of his holy soul. Hunting, which is a bracelet on the arm of joy, was made by him a constituent of the pain of search and made him traverse alone city and country. In his abundant carefulness he sought for truth among the dust-stained denizens of the fields of irreflection—and most of the really great study it under this disguise—and consorted with every sort of wearers of patched garments such as *jogis*, *sanyāsīs* and *qalandars*, and other solitary sitters in the dust, and insouciant recluses. From their outward ways and conversation he got at their real natures. Similarly he inquired after the Truth from the learned, and the distinguished who were bound by the chain of science and reputation, and who trick out the petty shops of schools and colleges. He recognized the adulterateness and false metal of the impostors among these classes but infolded these things in his own wide capacity. He put the dust of concealment over those deceitful Satans and did not lay bare the reputation

of those ministers of the truth. In spite of these results there was no falling-off or slackening in this world-king's quest. Rather he increased his endeavours and was more restless than ever in his search for physicians of the soul who might be guides on the path of attainment. (*Akbar Nāma*, vol. ii, p. 236.)

Akbar was liable to an uprush of spiritual force which affected him deeply. There were times when his normal consciousness broke through into a super-normal one—what Vincent Smith terms “Akbar's fit of religious ecstasy”. Two interesting instances of this are recorded. The first was in 1578. When in the Panjab, he had arranged for himself and his courtiers a huge *battue*, in which the game within a circumference of 25 kōs (about 40 or 50 miles) were slowly to be driven in by thousands of beaters towards a central point where the hunters were assembled. After the arrangements had been on foot for ten days, Akbar suddenly countermanded them :

And when it had almost come about that the two sides of the *Kamargha* were come together, suddenly all at once a strange state and strong frenzy came upon the Emperor, and an extraordinary change was manifested in his manner, to such an extent as cannot be accounted for. And every one attributed it to some cause or other ; but God alone knoweth secrets. And at that time he ordered the hunting to be abandoned :

“Take care! for the grace of God comes suddenly, It comes suddenly, it comes to the mind of the wise.”

And at the foot of a tree which was then in fruit he distributed much gold to the fakirs and poor, and laid the foundation of a lofty building and an extensive garden in that place. And he cut off the hair of his head, and most of his courtiers followed his example. And when news of this spread abroad in the Eastern part of India, strange rumours and wonderful lies became current in the mouths of the common people, and some insurrections took place among the ryots [peasantry], but these were quickly quelled. (Badāonī quoted in *Akbar the Great Mogul*, pp. 158-9.)

The second instance was earlier in Akbar's life, in his fifteenth year. Abul Fazl narrates :

One day the world-adorning Shāhinshāh felt constrained by the presence of short-sighted men, and began to chafe. The power of indignation which in a disposition innately equable is an ingredient deposited by the Lord of power broke out into anger. He became averse to the servants of fortune's threshold who always attended on his stirrup and separated from them, and issued an order that no one of his retinue should be in attendance on him. He even sent away his grooms and such like persons that the solitude of his retirement might not be contaminated by the crowd of this class of men and went out unattended and alone from the camp of fortune. In reality he was engaged in prayerful communion with his God, ostensibly he was angered with men. Among his special horses there was a noble 'Irāqī horse called Hairān which Khizr Khwāja Khān had presented to him. It had not its like for spirit and swiftness, and was also unequalled for viciousness. When he was left loose no one could

come near him, and it was with difficulty that he could be re-caught. The divine hero of the world, owing to his strength and courage, rode him constantly.

In this period of solitude he mounted upon this auspicious steed, and set off rapidly, leaving society aside and increasing his glory by the presence of God. When he had gone some distance he dismounted for some purpose, and, becoming heedless of the nature of his steed, assumed the posture of communing with his God. That swift and fiery horse acted according to its custom and rushed off rapidly so that it disappeared from the far-searching gaze of His Majesty. When his holy heart was again disposed to mount, there was no one in attendance, and no horse at his service. For a little while he was perplexed what to do, when suddenly he saw that this very horse was coming from a distance and galloping towards him. It ran on till it came back to him and stood quietly waiting for him. His Majesty was astonished and again mounted the noble animal. It must be considered as one of the strange faculties of this throne-adorning dominion that a horse, whose habit was not to allow himself to be readily mounted, and who, when he ran off, could with difficulty be re-caught, and who had gone off and disappeared in such a plain, should, merely on the attention of the Shāhinshāh being directed towards him come back of his own accord and quietly submit to be re-mounted. (*Akbar Nāma*, vol. ii, 92-93.)

I now come to Abul Fazl, whose name is inseparable from that of Akbar. For undoubtedly it was his loyal support which encouraged Akbar in his dreams of Indianisation. There are two contrasted estimates of Abul Fazl, and let me at once mention them, so as to get the matter out of the way.

Vincent Smith in his standard work on Akbar has a distinct animus against Abul Fazl; to him as an Englishman, both Abul Fazl's rhetorical style and his continual praise of Akbar and of his dreams are antipathetic.

Elsewhere too, in the course of a single paragraph referring to the weekly religious discussions to be described later, Vincent Smith talks of Abul Fazl's "bombastic terms", "rhetoric", and "verbiage."¹ He is irritated by Abul Fazl's un-British flowery language. But such speech is quite natural to certain nations, as Spanish, for instance. An Englishman feels odd when met with the polite phrase: "(I place myself) at your feet, Sir!", or "I kiss your hand," or "My house is yours!". The use of the superlative is quite natural in Italian; "illustrissimo", or "distintissimo" (most illustrious, most distinguished) is an usual appellation to put before a person's name on an envelope; in Portugal, a chairman addresses his audience as "Your excellencies". In Gladwin's *Ayeen Akbery*, dedicated to Warren Hastings, the

¹ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1917, p. 720.

translation "is most humbly dedicated by his most obliged and devoted humble servant the translator." Vincent Smith is repelled by flowery fulsome language; but such forms of speech are just as natural to certain cultures, as it is impossible to speak Italian with expression without what an Englishman laughs at as "gesticulating".

Another Englishman, Colonel H. S. Jarrett, who translated the Third Book of the *Ā'in-i Akbari*, Abul Fazl's great gazetteer of Akbar's administration and encyclopaedia of the faiths and philosophies of India, is also irritated by Abul Fazl's style. But the translator of the First and Second Books of the *Ā'in*, Professor H. Blochmann, who evidently was a German, and who probably like most Germans had a strain of the mystic and the sentimentalist, has high praise for Abul Fazl:

But it is not merely the varied information of the *A'in* that renders the book so valuable, but also the trustworthiness of the author himself. Abulfazl's high official position gave him access to any document he wished to consult, and his long career and training in various departments of the State, and his marvellous powers of expression, fitted him eminently for the composition of a work like the *Akbarnámah* and the *A'in*. His love of truth and his correctness of information are apparent on every page of the book, which he wished to

leave to future ages as a memorial of the Great Emperor and as a guide for enquiring minds ; and his wishes for the stability of the throne and the welfare of the people, his principles of toleration, his noble sentiments on the rights of man, the total absence of personal grievances and of expressions of ill-will towards encompassing enemies, shew that the expanse of his large heart stretched to the clear offing of sterling wisdom. Abulfazl has far too often been accused by European writers of flattery and even of wilful concealment of facts damaging to the reputation of his master. A study, though perhaps not a hasty perusal, of the Akbar-námah will shew that the charge is absolutely unfounded ; and if we compare his works with other historical productions of the East, we shall find that while he praises, he does so infinitely less and with much more grace and dignity than any other Indian historian or poet. No native writer has ever accused him of flattery ; and if we bear in mind that all Eastern works on Ethics recommend unconditional assent to the opinion of the king, whether correct or absurd, as the duty of man, and that the whole poetry of the East is a rank mass of flattery, at the side of which modern encomiums look like withered leaves,—we may pardon Abulfazl when he praises because he finds a true hero. (Blochmann, *Āin-i Akbari*, Preface, pp. v-vi.)

A praiseworthy feature of Abul Fazl's works lies in the purity of their contents. Those who are acquainted with Eastern literature will know what this means. I have come across no passage where woman is lightly spoken of, or where immorality is passed over with indifference. Of his love of truth and the nobility of his sentiments I have spoken in the Preface. (*ibid*, p. xxix.)

This judgment of Blochmann is upheld by a Muhammadan historian whom Blochmann

quotes, the author of the *Ma'āsiru-l Umarā*:

It has often been asserted that Abul Fazl was an infidel. Some say, he was a Hindú, or a fire-worshipper, or a free-thinker, and some go still further and call him an atheist; but others pass a juster sentence, and say that he was a pantheist, and that, like other Súfís, he claimed for himself a position above the law of the Prophet. There is no doubt that he was a man of lofty character, and desired to live at peace with all men. He never said anything improper. Abuse, stoppages of wages, fines, absence on the part of his servants, did not exist in his household. If he appointed a man, whom he afterwards found to be useless, he did not remove him, but kept him on as long as he could; for he used to say that, if he dismissed him, people would accuse him of want of penetration in having appointed an unsuitable agent. On the day when the sun entered Aries, he inspected his whole household and took stock, keeping the inventory with himself, and burning last year's books. He also gave his whole wardrobe to his servants, with the exception of his trowsers, which were burnt in his presence. (*ibid*, pp. xxvii-viii.)

I have called my essay "Abul Fazl and Akbar", because it is really the former who fascinates me, though Akbar commands my deep admiration. Abul Fazl fascinated me the moment I read his famous Prayer. It is translated by Blochmann in the *Āin*, where he gives the Persian original. Thousands throughout the world know of it now, because Tennyson quotes it in his poem, "Akbar's Dream".

Since I came across it I have made a point of quoting it in every country where I have lectured :

THE "UNIVERSAL FAITH" OF THE
EMPEROR AKBAR OF INDIA DESCRIBED
BY HIS PRIME MINISTER ABUL FAZL¹

O God, in every temple I see people that seek
Thee, and in every language I hear spoken, people
praise Thee !

Polytheism and Islām feel after Thee,
Each religion says, "Thou art one, without equal."

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

Sometimes I frequent the Christian cloister, and
sometimes the Mosque,
But it is Thou whom I search from temple to temple.

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

Heresy to the heretic, and religion to the orthodox,
But the dust of the rose-petal belongs to the
heart of the perfume-seller².

¹ This creed was written by Abul Fazl as an inscription for a temple in Kashmir. The original Persian and this translation appear in Blochmann's translation of *Āin-i Akbarī*, p. xxxii.

² "This line is Sūfistic. The longing of the heart after God is compared to the perfume which rises from the rose petals. The perfume-seller, *i.e.*, the Unitarian, is truly religious, and is equally removed from heresy and orthodoxy". (Blochmann)

Why did Abul Fazl desire sometimes to frequent the Christian cloister and sometimes the Moslem mosque? The answer leads us to many interesting facts. His father was a most learned divine, the Shaikh Mubārak. He was a Shīah, and also a Sūfī. He seems to have believed in the coming of the Imām Mahdī; and as a thousand years since the Prophet's coming were nearing their end, Mubārak evidently was attracted to ways of thought repellent to the Sunnīs. His eldest son was Abul Faizi, who was a poet; Faizi became later Akbar's poet laureate. But there was a time when the orthodox party desired to exterminate Shaikh Mubārak and his two sons, Abul Faizi and Abul Fazl. According to Badāonī, they nearly succeeded; but when the police officers came to arrest them, they found that Mubārak and his sons had disappeared. Through the intercession of friends, Akbar discovered that Mubārak was not the heretic he was made out to be, and withdrew his order against them¹. Abul Fazl seems to have been the favourite son, and he received a special training. In two

¹ Badāonī, quoted by Blochmann, *Āīn*, p. 169.

places he describes his earlier life, when he was seeking knowledge, and had moods of depression:

My honoured father practised contentment in seclusion and lived apart from the world's house of turmoil. He regarded me with more affection than he did my brothers, and from the beginning of my growth he, by the strength of precept and example, did not permit the approach of the wayward and the defiled. He always watched over me with an inward and outward purity, and instructed me with an eloquent tongue in the lessons of truth. . . .

But from my fifth year I was in a confused state, and my heart in nowise inclined to hear or speak about such things. It seems as if my temperament robbed me of that guide (*rahbar*) to the abode of perfected pupils, and of that light of the portico. The stupendous dangers of an endless desert—which make men of men to stumble—had taken possession of my soul's chamber. When my years increased and my knowledge developed, my heartfelt disgust increased also, and the truceless agitation became more intense. I withdrew from everyone, and delighted myself with the companionship of madness. I came to long for death. The secret attraction of the leader of Truth's caravan (his father) bound me, the heedless and heartless one, to the customary abode of knowledge, and in my fifteenth year, when the heavy sleep of thoughtlessness holds all men, I traversed the wide field of wisdom, and the ample space of the doctrines of many schools. The advancement of knowledge increased my arrogance, and the intoxication of enlightenment augmented my confusion. In spite of my having such a powerful guide and perpetual overseer, the turbulence of self-willed intellect increased, and egotism showed itself under various forms. By the favour of the fount of lofty ideas (his

father) the secrets of the Platōnists, the hidden treasures of the Sūfīs, and the wondrous observations of the Peripatetics were acquired by me. It was natural that so much learning and the arrogance produced by it should reduce the importance of the deceptive world. The same principle which increased self-glorification and self-worship, broke the connection with other men. I was dissatisfied with the unprofitableness of the world's booths and my heart was captivated by the anchorites. The thought of a hermitage displayed fresh vigour. There was not such madness of bewilderment that I turned away from the command of wisdom and took a pathless direction. Nor had my disorder such ungentleness that I would grieve my visible gods (*khudāyān-i-majāzī*) (*i.e.*, his parents). I spent my days in the hollow of joy and grief with a dejected mind. (Abul Fazl, *Akbar Nāma*, vol. ii, 564-6.)

It is the second reference which is more explicit, and describes Abul Fazl's spiritual wanderings :

As fortune did not at first assist me, I almost became selfish and conceited, and resolved to tread the path of proud retirement. The number of pupils that I had gathered around me, served but to increase my pedantry. In fact, the pride of learning had made my brain drunk with the idea of seclusion. Happily for myself, when I passed the nights in lonely spots with true seekers after truth, and enjoyed the society of such as are empty-handed, but rich in mind and heart, my eyes were opened and I saw the selfishness and covetousness of the so-called learned. The advice of my father with difficulty kept me back from outbreaks of folly ; my mind had no rest, and my heart felt itself drawn to the sages of Mongolia or to the hermits on Lebanon ; I longed for interviews with the lamas of Tibet or with the pādri's of Portugal, and I would gladly sit with the priests of the Pārsīs and

the learned of the Zendāvesta. I was sick of the learned of my own land. My brother and other relatives then advised me to attend the Court, hoping that I would find in the emperor a leader to the sublime world of thought. In vain did I at first resist their admonitions. Happy, indeed, am I now that I have found in my sovereign a guide to the world of action and a comforter in lonely retirement ; in him meet my longing after faith and my desire to do my appointed work in the world ; he is the orient where the light of form and ideal dawns ; and it is he who has taught me that the work of the world, multifarious as it is, may yet harmonize with the spiritual unity of truth. I was thus presented at Court. (*Āīn-i Akbarī*, Blochmann, pp. xi-xii.)

In 1574 both Abul Fazl and Badāonī were presented at Akbar's court. It was next year that Akbar, on his return from his conquest of Bihār, started the famous Thursday evening religious discussions. What led up to them, according to Badāonī, was Akbar's own inner tendencies :

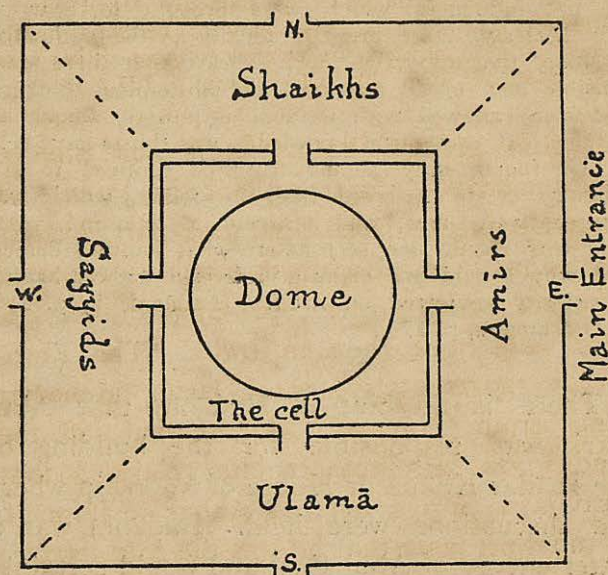
The principal reason is the large number of learned men of all denominations and sects that came from various countries to court, and received personal interviews. Night and day people did nothing but enquire and investigate ; profound points of science, the subtleties of revelation, the curiosities of history, the wonders of nature, of which large volumes could only give a summary abstract, were ever spoken of. His Majesty collected the opinions of every one, especially of such as were not Muhammadans, retaining whatever he approved of, and rejecting everything which was against his disposition, and ran counter to his wishes. From his earliest childhood to his manhood, and from

his manhood to old age, His Majesty has passed through the most various phases, and through all sorts of religious practices and sectarian beliefs, and has collected every thing which people can find in books, with a talent of selection peculiar to him, and a spirit of enquiry opposed to every [Islāmitic] principle. Thus a faith based on some elementary principles traced itself on the mirror of his heart, and as the result of all the influences which were brought to bear on His Majesty, there grew, gradually as the outline on a stone, the conviction in his heart that there were sensible men in all religions, and abstemious thinkers, and men endowed with miraculous powers, among all nations. If some true knowledge was thus everywhere to be found, why should truth be confined to one religion, or to a creed like the Islām, which was comparatively new, and scarcely a thousand years old; why should one sect assert what another denies, and why should one claim a preference without having superiority conferred on itself. (Badāonī, ii, p. 256, in Blochmann, p. 179.)

There is no hint in Badāonī that Abul Fazl was responsible for the building of the Ibādat Khāna or House of Worship where the discussions were held. Badāonī was a bitter enemy of Abul Fazl and would certainly have mentioned it. Without doubt Abul Fazl helped the scheme; that is evident. But it was Akbar's idea, not Abul Fazl's, to get the representatives of all the religions to come and expound their faiths before the Emperor. We have to note that at this time no less than

72 sects are said to have existed within the fold of Islām itself. Badāonī gives a graphic description of the scene :

For these discussions, which were held every Thursday night, His Majesty invited the Sayyids, Shaikhs, 'Ulamās, and grandees, by turn. But as the



IBĀDAT-KHĀNAH OR HOUSE OF WORSHIP

(plan by V. A. Smith from descriptions by contemporary writers)

guests generally commenced to quarrel about their places, and the order of precedence, His Majesty ordered that the grandees should sit on the east side; the Sayyids on the west side; the 'Ulamās, to the south; and the Shaikhs, to the north. The emperor then used to go from one side to the other, and make his enquiries . . . ,

when all at once, one night, "the vein of the neck of the 'Ulamās of the age swelled up," and a horrid noise and confusion ensued. His Majesty got very angry at their rude behaviour, and said to me [Badāonī], "In future report any of the 'Ulamās that cannot behave and talks nonsense, and I shall make him leave the hall." I gently said to Aḥaf Khān, "If I were to carry out this order, most of the 'Ulamās would have to leave," when His Majesty suddenly asked what I had said. On hearing my answer, he was highly pleased, and mentioned my remark to those sitting near him. (Badāonī, ii, p. 202, Blochmann, p. 171.)

Muslim divines, both Sunnīs and Shīahs, Hindu pandits, Zoroastrian mobeds, Jains, and Christian priests from Goa, took part in these discussions. No Buddhist monk is reported as ever being present, presumably because there were none then in India. The Zoroastrian representative was Dastūr Meherjee Rāna from Nausari; Rājā Bīrbal led the Hindus; as Jain authors later claimed that Hīravijaya Sūri converted Akbar to Jainism, we must presume that he was the Jain leader; another Jain teacher, Bhānuchandra Upādhyāya, remained at court. The Christian padres were an Italian, Ridolfo Aquaviva (a younger son of the Duke of Atri), and Antonio Monserrate, a Catalan Spaniard, both of whom were sent by the Portuguese Viceroy

at Goa at Akbar's request for exponents of Christianity. The Muslim leaders of the Sunnīs were Makhdūmu-l Mulk and Shaikh Abdu-n Nabī.¹

The ultimate result of these discussions was the establishment of the "Dīn Ilāhī" or "Divine Faith" which, as we shall see later, was intended to supplant Islām, Hinduism and all other faiths. We have at this stage of our record a description of events from the Christian side; it is by the Christian priest Bartoli, who summarises the reports received from the padres who were at Akbar's court. Bartoli wrote in 1714:

Akbar, after his return from Kābul, feeling himself freed from the great terror due to fears concerning the fidelity of his vassals and anxiety about the rebels in Gujarāt, began to bring openly into operation the plan which he had long secretly cherished in his mind. That was to make himself the founder and head of a new religion, compounded out of various elements, taken partly from the Korān of Muhammad, partly from the

¹ See Vincent Smith, chapter VI, "Debates on Religion", for all these names, and fuller particulars. Visitors to Fatehpur Sikri are told by the guides that the Dīwān-i-Khāss or Private Hall of Audience, with its four galleries on the first floor radiating from one central pillar, was the Ibādat Khāna. This is incorrect. The building was near the Great Mosque, and built round the cell where once lived Shaikh Abdullah, the disciple of the better known Shaikh Salīm Chisti. There is no trace now of the Ibādat Khāna. (See Vincent Smith, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1917, pp. 715-722.)

scriptures of the Brahmans, and to a certain extent, as far as suited his purpose, from the Gospel of Christ.

In order to do that he summoned a General Council, and invited to it all the masters of learning and the military commandants of the cities round about; excluding only Father Ridolfo, whom it was vain to expect to be other than hostile to his sacrilegious purpose—a fact of which more than enough proof had been given already.

When he had them all assembled in front of him, he spoke in a spirit of astute and knavish [*malvagio*] policy:—

“For an empire ruled by one head it was a bad thing to have the members divided among themselves and at variance one with the other. That is to say, he referred to the discord between the many kinds of [religious] laws observed in the Mogul territory; some being not only different from, but hostile to others; whence it came about that there are as many factions as there are religions.

“We ought, therefore, to bring them all into one, but in such fashion that they should be both ‘one’ and ‘all’; with the great advantage of not losing what is good in any one religion, while gaining whatever is better in another. In that way, honour would be rendered to God, peace would be given to the peoples, and security to the empire.

“Now, let those who are present express their considered opinion; because he would not move until they had spoken.”¹

This most famous event in Akbar’s life, the establishment of *Dīn Ilāhī*, the “Divine

¹ Quoted by Vincent Smith, pp. 211-12.

Faith " or " Divine Monotheism," for which he is naturally cursed by all devout Muslims, but which has drawn to him the attention of all historians of religion and statecraft, took place in 1582. Was it " the outcome of a ridiculous vanity, a monstrous growth of unrestrained autocracy ", as Vincent Smith says? I certainly hold it was not. Enough already has been quoted to show that Akbar was keenly inquisitive on religious matters, and that he had mystical experiences of his own. Now, no man, who has ever had a direct contact with the Invisible, who has even for a moment touched the hem of God's Garment, will bow down to the authority of a scripture or of a church. For a mystic sees for himself, and is always a spiritual rebel. I hold Akbar to be such a rebel, and therefore his attempt at a synthetic religious belief is the logical outcome of his mysticism.

But I suggest also a second reason. In the quotation from Bartoli, Akbar is stated as saying: " For an empire ruled by one head it was a bad thing to have the members divided among themselves and at variance with one another." Now, Akbar had a great dream,

that of one nation of whom he was the one ruler. I have called him "the first Indian". What stood in the way of Indianisation? The many faiths of this land, as unfortunately they still so stand to this day. There can be no full and perfect unity while religious factions divide a people violently. Of course such factions may exist, and yet there also exist at the same time a state of law and order; *but only if a foreign ruler holds the land.* That is the case in India to-day, for Britain guarantees religious neutrality, but she holds the land. Akbar held India in the beginning by the sword; but he wanted to hold his people differently, by means of a common faith, which was neither Muslim nor Hindu, neither Jain nor Zoroastrian. He believed that the attempt would be crowned with success; we know he failed.

I want to suggest a third reason still. It is, that he saw that unless he dominated the theologians, he could never be a free King. The whole history of Mediæval Europe is the struggle between the two forces of the King and the Church. For Christianity, like Islām, proclaims that the revealed law of God is

binding on kings. We know that from this principle, which many of us will accept, another principle has been deduced, which few will accept to-day, except the priests. It is, that the human repositories of Divine Law, the Mullahs, the Purohits, the Popes and the Priests, are above the Kings. In Europe there was the struggle between the Holy Roman Empire and the Holy Catholic Church, State *versus* Church. Germany fought the Roman hierarchy at the Reformation; Henry VII fought the Pope and proclaimed that he, and not the Pope, was the "Defender of the Faith". To-day, His Holiness the Pope and all his cardinals, and every Roman Catholic priest everywhere, still uphold the old claim that the Pope is the "Viceregent of God upon earth"; no marriage according to the law of the land, a "civil marriage" as it is called, where the priest does not enter, is recognised by the Roman Catholic Church as a true marriage in the eyes of God. Read the history of Italy, and you will understand what the domination of a priesthood can become, and how sooner or later a people, if it is to be a Nation, must

break the power of the priests. It has lately happened in Mexico; it has happened in Turkey too, under Ghāzī Kemal Pasha. The last nation to teach us this lesson is Spain. For centuries Spain was under the domination of a Church; only as late as 1930, though King Alfonso ruled, it was the Church that dictated policies. And even to-day, though Spain is a republic, the power of the Church is so great that, so long as its representatives dominate, all liberalising movements, like the Theosophical Society, are under a serious handicap.

A perusal of the pages of the orthodox Badāonī shows us how strong was Muslim feeling in Akbar's time. This was perfectly natural, for the Korān was above all, above even kings. But in a land where the majority were Hindus, with no inclination to become converted to Hinduism, Akbar had to choose whether he would be an orthodox Muslim ruler, a foreign ruler in a foreign land, or a ruler of a different sort to whom all faiths were divine and all his subjects the children of one God. Akbar chose the latter, and I think from then his struggle with the orthodox,

as too his defeat, were inevitable. His defeat was inevitable, because he was several centuries ahead of his true day.

We have the document with which Akbar's "Divine Faith" was instituted. It was an act of the Constitution, if I might use the phrase of a later century. For what Akbar proclaimed was that, on all matters of religious dispute, he was the final arbiter, and not the theologians of Islām. Henry VII proclaimed himself "Defender of the Faith", but never dreamed of settling matters of doctrine. The result is that within the Church of England to-day, there are some of its priests who believe, according to act of Parliament, that the consecrated Bread and Wine are only bread and wine, merely earthly substances, and that to believe otherwise is rank superstition; while other priests believe that the Bread and the Wine are only "earthly veils" thrown over the true Body and Blood of Christ, and bend the knee in adoration before them.

Akbar declared himself the source and fount of all judgment as to doctrines. In England to-day it is the Parliament composed of one

King, 756 Lords, and 615 Commoners, who finally decide what is and what is not the true Faith of the country. Akbar's plan was at least more sensible. We may hold that his attempt to synthesize religion and formulate a universal faith for India was a rash action. But it was a noble and a brave action. And had he succeeded, and the people had followed him, what might not India's position be to-day as a World Power?

The following is the wording of the document which proclaimed Akbar as the spiritual head of his people.

Whereas Hindústán has now become the centre of security and peace, and the land of justice and beneficence, a large number of people, especially learned men and lawyers, have immigrated and chosen this country for their home. Now we, the principal 'Ulamás, who are not only well versed in the several departments of the law and in the principles of jurisprudence, and well-acquainted with the edicts which rest on reason or testimony, but are also known for our piety and honest intentions, have duly considered the deep meaning, *first*, of the verse of the Qorán (Sur. IV, 62,) "*Obey God, and obey the prophet, and those who have authority among you,*" and *secondly*, of the genuine tradition, "*Surely, the man who is, dearest to God on the day of judgment, is the Imám i 'Adil: whosoever obeys the Amír, obeys Me; and whosoever rebels against him, rebels against Me,*" and *thirdly*, of several other proofs based on reasoning or testimony; and we have agreed that the rank of a *Sultán i 'Adil* (a just ruler) is higher in

the eyes of God than the rank of a *Mujtahid*. Further we declare that the king of the Islām, Amír of the Faithful, shadow of God in the world, *Abul Fath Jaláluddín Muhammad Akbar Pádisháh i gházi*, whose kingdom God perpetuate, is a most just, a most wise, and a most God-fearing king. Should therefore, in future, a religious question come up, regarding which the opinions of the *Mujtahids* are at variance, and His Majesty, in his penetrating understanding and clear wisdom, be inclined to adopt, for the benefit of the nation and as a political expedient, any of the conflicting opinions which exist on that point, and issue a decree to that effect, we do hereby agree that such a decree shall be binding on us and on the whole nation.

Further, we declare that, should His Majesty think fit to issue a new order, we and the nation shall likewise be bound by it, provided always that such an order be not only in accordance with some verse of the *Qorán*, but also of real benefit for the nation; and further, that any opposition on the part of the subjects to such an order as passed by His Majesty, shall involve damnation in the world to come, and loss of religion and property in this life.

This document has been written with honest intentions, for the glory of God, and the propagation of the Islām, and is signed by us, the principal 'Ulamás and lawyers, in the month of Rajab of the year 987 of the Hijrah. (*Aīn-i Akbarī*, Blochmann, vol. i, pp. 186-187).

The document was in the handwriting of Abul Fazl's father, Shaikh Mubāarak. Indeed, it is said that it was he who first openly urged Akbar to proclaim himself the *Imām-i-Ādil*, "the spiritual leader of the nation," the official in Islām behind whose judgment

there was no appeal. There is no doubt whatsoever that Abul Fazl was hand in glove with Akbar on this matter of the Dīn Ilāhī, the Divine Faith. There is much in Badāonī—who is very bitter over the matter—to prove it. But Akbar did not get the support of all his friends. Even Rājā Mān Singh held aloof, and we have recorded what his son Bhagavān Dās said :

“ I would willingly believe that Hindus and Musalmāns have each a bad religion, but only tell us where¹ the new sect is, and what opinion they hold, so that I may believe.” His Majesty reflected a little, and ceased to urge the Rājā.²

Among the Hindu courtiers, only Rājā Bīrbal joined. It is obvious—and Badāonī and the Christian missionaries are emphatic on the matter, and Abul Fazl himself admits it—that large numbers joined merely to curry favour with Akbar. But there must have been some enthusiasts who stood by the Emperor's dream.

The formal inauguration of the Divine Faith took place in June, 1579, at Fatehpur Sīkrī. Akbar himself led the Friday prayers,

¹ So in text, but evidently for “ what ”.

² Badāonī, p. 312, in Blochmann, p. 198.

by ascending the "reader's" throne. Now, following the custom since the Prophet's day, the "reader" had always chanted the *Fātiha*, which, after the first declaration, "There is no god but God; Muhammad is His prophet," is the statement of what Islām is as a divine revelation. Without the utterance of that prayer, a man is scarcely a Moslem. It is as follows :

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, the Beneficent, the Merciful; Master of the day of requital. Thee do we serve, and Thee do we beseech for help. Guide us on the right path, the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not of those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray.

But here Akbar made an innovation and so struck a blow at Islām, whether he intended to or not. For he dared to substitute a new *fatiha*, which put himself forward as the spiritual leader of his people. It is as follows :¹

The Lord, who gave to us dominion,
Wisdom, heart and strength,
Who guided us in truth and right,
And cleansed our mind from all but right,

¹ A more literal translation, in Vincent Smith, p. 177, is as follows :

In the name of Him who gave us sovereignty,
Who gave us a wise heart and a strong arm,
Who guided us in equity and justice,
Who put away from our heart aught but equity ;

None can describe His power or state,
Allāhu Akbar!—God is Great!

We are told that after Akbar had ascended the reader's throne and begun to say these verses composed by Abul Faizi, the poet-brother of Abul Fazl, he became overpowered with emotion and could not continue. He descended the steps and asked the Court Khatīb or reader to say them. Naturally, the orthodox held that the fear of God at the sacrilege had descended upon him and made him dumb. But another, and I think far more likely reason, is that at such a moment of the full offering of his heart, soul, and life to God and His mission as Akbar had experienced them both, some powerful spiritual experience or vision descended upon him. Others who have had such experiences—as Dr. Annie Besant for instance—will tell you that there are certain moments, even when standing as a lecturer before a public, when mystical things happen which almost shatter one's being. One such experience of which Dr. Besant tells us was at the close of a

His praise is beyond the range of our thoughts,
Exalted be His Majesty—"Allāhu Akbar!" [Great
is God!].

lecture in January, 1911, when she offered up a great prayer; the response was so powerful that, to use her phrase, her "astral body was shattered", and it was hours afterwards before she felt she was herself again. I too have had such an experience, and that is the reason for my saying that it was not fear which froze the lips of Akbar, but an overwhelming response from on high.

After the Divine Faith was inaugurated, we have the strange sight of an earthly emperor playing the role of a Guru or spiritual teacher. The Faith was not so much a religion, as a particular cult of a religious order, of which Akbar was the head. There was a ceremony of initiation into it, and Akbar formally accepted the candidate. Abul Fazl describes the ceremony :

At the above-mentioned time of everlasting auspiciousness, the novice with his turban in his hands, puts his head on the feet of His Majesty. This is symbolical, and expresses that the novice, guided by good fortune and the assistance of his good star, has cast aside conceit and selfishness, the root of so many evils, offers his heart in worship, and now comes to enquire as to the means of obtaining everlasting life. His Majesty, the chosen one of God, then stretches out the hand of favour, raises up the suppliant, and replaces the turban on his head, meaning by these symbolical actions that he

has raised up a man of pure intentions, who from seeming existence has now entered into real life. His Majesty then gives the novice the *Shaḥt*, upon which is engraved 'the Great Name', and His Majesty's symbolical motto, *Allāhu Akbar*.¹ This teaches the novice the truth that: "*The pure Shaḥt and the pure sight never err.*" (*Aīn-i Akbarī*, vol. i, Blochmann, pp. 165-6.)

Of course Akbar's disciples had a discipline. Abul Fazl's account has naturally more value here than Badāonī's.

The members of the Divine Faith, on seeing each other, observe the following custom. One says, "*Allāhu Akbar*"; and the other responds, "*Jalla Jalāluhu*".² The motive of His Majesty, in laying down this mode of salutation³, is to remind men to think of the origin of their existence, and to keep the Deity in fresh, lively, and grateful remembrance.

It is also ordered by His Majesty that, instead of the dinner usually given in remembrance of a man after his death, each member should prepare a dinner during his lifetime, and thus gather provisions for his last journey.

Each member is to give a party on the anniversary of his birth-day, and arrange a sumptuous feast. He is to bestow alms, and thus prepare for the long journey.

His Majesty has also ordered that members should endeavour to abstain from eating flesh. They may allow others to eat flesh, without touching it themselves; but during the month of their birth they are not even to approach meat. Nor shall members go near anything that they have themselves slain; nor eat of it. Neither

¹ "God is great."

² "God is omnipotent".

³ Instead of "Salām aleikum"—"Peace be with thee"—and "Aleikum salām"—"With thee peace".

shall they make use of the same vessels with butchers, fishers, and birdcatchers.

Members should not cohabit with pregnant, old, and barren women; nor with girls under the age of puberty. (*Ain-i Akbari*, vol. i, Blochmann, pp. 166-7)

Akbar was appealed to as a healer. He had no medical qualifications whatever. But it is well known—or rather, firmly believed—here in India, that Brahmins have a mysterious something about them which sometimes performs cures. It is an old belief in some parts of India—a fact or a superstition, as you will—that holy men when they touch water consecrate it. Ignorant peasants have been known in Bengal to have resort to this, and to ask Brahmins to touch water in a bowl with their big toe; the patient drinks the water afterwards as a cure.

Abul Fazl reports that people appealed to Akbar for advice on many things, when the emperor set out on expeditions :

. . . there is not a hamlet, a town, or a city, that does not send forth crowds of men and women with vow-offerings in their hands, and prayers on their lips, touching the ground with their foreheads, praising the efficacy of their vows, or proclaiming the accounts of the spiritual assistance received. Other multitudes ask for lasting bliss, for an upright heart, for advice how best to act, for strength of the body, for

enlightenment, for the birth of a son, the reunion of friends, a long life, increase of wealth, elevation in rank, and many other things. His Majesty, who knows what is really good, gives satisfactory answers to every one, and applies remedies to their religious perplexities. Not a day passes but people bring cups of water to him, beseeching him to breathe upon it. He who reads the letters of the divine orders in the book of fate, on seeing the tidings of hope, takes the water with his blessed hands, places in it the rays of the world-illuminating sun, and fulfils the desire of the suppliant. Many sick people of broken hopes, whose diseases the most eminent physicians pronounced incurable, have been restored to health by this divine means.¹

Apart from the special regulations to disciples, Akbar issued many edicts which stirred up the orthodox party. Badāonī reports many, and in accepting his account we must not forget how bitter an enemy he was of Abul Fazl, whom he declares to be "officious as he was, and time-serving, openly faithless, continually studying His Majesty's whims, a flatterer beyond all bounds." Naturally Badāonī was bitter that :

The Shīah's, of course, gained the day, and the Sunnīs were defeated; the good were in fear, and the wicked were secure.²

¹ *Āin-i Akbarī*, vol. i, Blochmann, pp. 164-165.

² Badāonī, quoted by Blochmann, p. 197.

Among the regulations, the following were enough to show what a revolution Akbar attempted :

The organization of the adherents of the *Dīn Ilāhī* was that of an Order rather than of a church. The creed, so far as there was one, inculcated monotheism with a tinge of pantheism ; the practical deification of the emperor as the viceregent of God, filled with special grace ; and the adoration of the sun, with subsidiary veneration of fire and artificial lights. The partial prohibition of animal food was due more especially to the Jain influence, already described. . . .

No child was to be given the name of Muhammad, and if he had already received it the name must be changed. New mosques were not to be built, nor were old ones to be repaired or restored. Later in the reign mosques were levelled to the ground.

The slaughter of cows was forbidden, and made a capital offence, as in a purely Hindu state. In 1583 (A. H. 991) abstinence from meat on more than a hundred days in the year was commanded. This order was extended over the whole realm, and [capital] punishment was inflicted on every one who acted against the command. Many a family suffered ruin and confiscation of property. Those measures amounted to a grave persecution of the large flesh-eating Muslim population.

Ideas concerning the millennium and the expected appearance of a Mahdī, or Saviour, being then in the air, and the year 1000 of the Hijra approaching, arrangements were made for the compilation of a history of the thousand years, and for the use on coins of a millenary (*alfī*) era.

Beards were to be shaved.

Garlic and onions, as well as beef, were prohibited, in accordance with Hindu prejudices.

The *sijdah*, or prostration, hitherto considered lawful only in divine worship, was declared to be the due of the emperor:

Gold and silk dresses, forbidden by Muhammadan rule, were declared to be obligatory at the public prayers. Even the prayers themselves, the fast of Ramazān, and the pilgrimage to Mecca were prohibited.

The study of Arabic, of Muhammadan law, and of Koranic exegesis was discountenanced, the specially Arabic letters of the alphabet were banned—and so on. (*Akbar the Great Mogul*, by Vincent A. Smith, pp. 219-21.)

That Badāonī suppressed the truth in one instance is shown in the clause that “if a Hindu woman fall in love with a Muhammadan, and change her religion, she should be taken from him by force, and be given back to her family”, he leaves out the fact that the rule applied equally to any Muslim woman who might turn Hindu. The unknown author of the *Dabistān*, who lived about 1643 or 48, supplies the suppressed clause (given in italics by Blochmann):

Should a Hindu woman fall in love with a Muhammadan, and be converted to the Islām, she should be taken away by force and handed over to her family; *but so should also a Musalmān woman, who had*

*fallen in love with a Hindu, be prevented from joining Hinduism.*¹

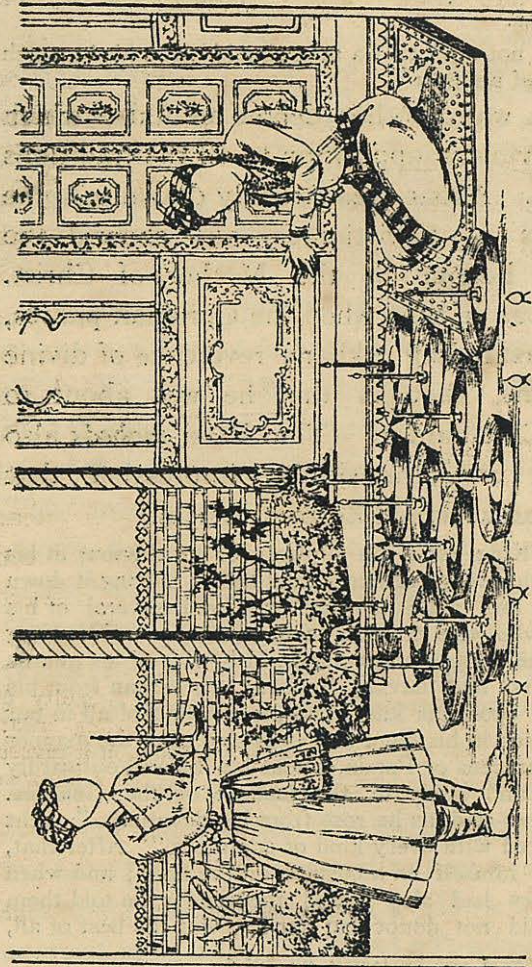
Akbar irritated the Sunnīs by his synthetic attempts at a universal worship. He revered the Sun, and light in every form. When the lights were lit in the evening, all the courtiers had to rise and salute it, as among Zoroastrians today. He celebrated the Hindu ceremony of the sacrificial fire called "Homa", "from affection towards the Hindu princesses of his Harem", "who had gained so great an ascendancy over him", as Badāonī says². He did not actually forbid the killing of cows, but he made it clear that he considered it wrong. He interdicted the use of beef, and evidently would have made all vegetarians. He says :

Were it not for the thought of the difficulty of sustenance, I would prohibit men from eating meat. The reason why I do not altogether abandon it myself is, that many others might willingly forego it likewise and be thus cast into despondency.

From my earliest years, whenever I ordered animal food to be cooked for me, I found it rather tasteless and cared little for it. I took this feeling to indicate

¹ Dabistān, quoted by Blochmann, p. 210.

² Badāonī, quoted by Blochmann, pp. 184, 193.



AKBAR AT THE CEREMONY OF FIRE WORSHIP

(The faces of the Emperor, who is seated, and of the singer, are left blank, in accordance with the Muhammadan dislike of reproducing the human face. Blochmann, *Art*, Plate VI.)

the necessity for protecting animals, and I refrained from animal food.¹

It is not right that a man should make his stomach the grave of animals.²

There was another decree of Akbar which was in violent opposition to all the traditions of Islām. Akbar was strongly drawn to some teachings of Christianity, and showed the greatest honour to the Mother of Christ. There was a time when the Christian padres, misunderstanding Akbar's reverence of divine revelations, thought that he was about to accept Christianity. (The Parsi *mobeds* also laboured under a similar impression, that Akbar had accepted Zoroastrianism.)

The King took the portrait of our Saviour in his hands with great reverence, and before putting it down kissed it, and made his children, and several of his courtiers who were present, do the same. . . . The King entered the oratory unaccompanied by any of his guards or courtiers, and having removed his turban from his head, fell upon his knees and prayed, first of all in our fashion, then in his own, that is to say, after the manner of the Saracens of Persia, whose law he still outwardly observed, and lastly in the fashion of the Gentiles. "God", he said, as he rose from his devotions, "ought to be adored with every kind of adoration." After that, he seated himself on a cushion on the floor; and when the Fathers had also seated themselves, he told them that he did not doubt that our law was the best of all,

¹ *Āīn-i Akbarī*, vol. iii, Jarrett, pp. 395-6.

² *Ibid.* p. 394.

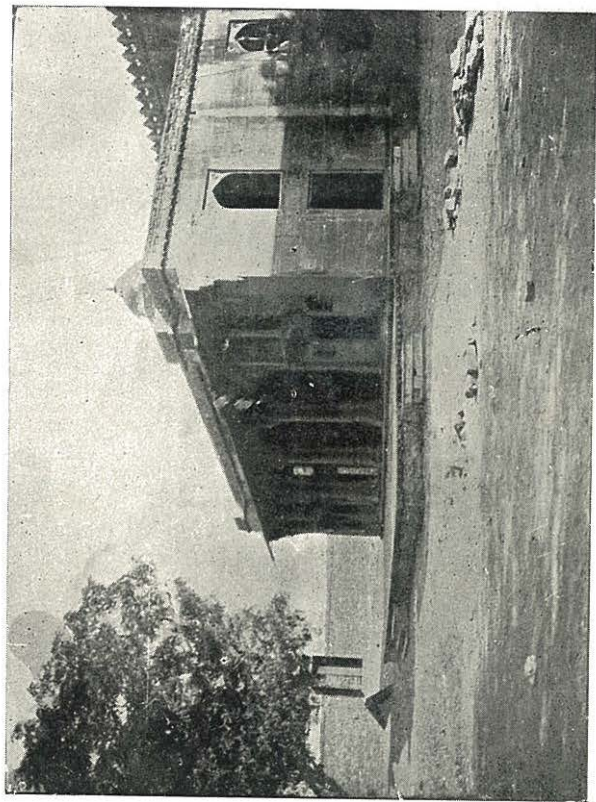
and that he beheld something more than human in the life and miracles of Jesus-Christ ; but that it was beyond his comprehension how God could have a son. . . . Before leaving, he told the Fathers that their law appealed to him very strongly ; but that there were two points in it which he could not comprehend, namely, the Trinity and the Incarnation. If they could explain these two things to his satisfaction, he would, he said, declare himself a Christian, even though it cost him his kingdom. (*Akbar and the Jesuits*, by Father Pierre du Jarric, S. J., trs. by C. H. Payne, pp. 20, 25-6, 26-7.)

Of course the Jesuits as missionaries sought converts. Under Akbar's tolerant regime there seem to have been a few who desired to be Christians, but the old Korānic law still stood that apostasy was punishable with death. The missionaries therefore desired a decree giving them the right to accept converts, in other words, to allow Muslims to become Christians openly, and without any possible punishment. In spite of fierce opposition from his courtiers, Akbar signed the decree.

Akbar forbade the marriage of girls under 14 and boys under 16. He did not abolish Sati, but enacted that if a widow did not desire to burn herself, she should be free to live. In one instance, hearing that a widow was being coerced in to Sati, he dashed off and personally prevented it.

We know that Akbar's Divine Faith came practically to an end with Akbar. Had Abul Fazl survived Akbar, it might have gained a little more permanence. But three years before Akbar's death at the age of 63, Abul Fazl was murdered on August 12th, 1602, by order of the Emperor's eldest son, Prince Salīm, who succeeded as Jahāngīr. It was a brutal murder, and Jahāngīr is very frank about the matter, in his *Memoirs*. Salīm was naturally rather tired of the long life of his father—Akbar ruled for exactly fifty years—and began a revolt against his father. At this time Abul Fazl had been sent south by Akbar to the Deccan, to look into matters there. Akbar wrote to him "a full account of the misdeeds and insolence of the prince . . . Abul Fazl saw the necessity for strong action, and replied saying that he would bring the prince bound to Court. Salīm fully understood the danger to himself on the acceptance of Abul Fazl's advice, and resolved to intercept and kill his father's dearest surviving friend".¹ Salīm's agent, the Hindu Chief Bir Singh of Orchha,

¹ *Akbar the Great Mogul*, pp. 304-5.



THE HOUSE OF ABUL FAZL
(at Fatehpur Sikri)

arranged for an ambush, and Abul Fazl and his small escort were annihilated.

Jahāngīr frankly confesses in his *Memoirs* that he wanted to get rid of Abul Fazl and had arranged for the murder.¹ As Vincent Smith says: "The cynical effrontery of that passage would be difficult to beat. The blasphemous ascription of success in the treacherous murder to the grace of God is particularly disgusting, while the avowed indifference to Akbar's feelings proves the insincerity of the writer's frequent references to his 'reverend father'."²

Abul Fazl's head was sent to Salīm at Allahabad. His headless body is buried at a spot some twenty miles from Gwalior, where a small tomb has been erected.³

The reaction on Akbar at the loss of his friend was terrible. Blochmann, who was familiar with the various records, summarises them as follows:

When the news of Abul Fazl's death reached court, no one had the courage to break it to the emperor. According to an old custom observed by

¹ See full quotation from the *Memoirs* in Blochmann, p. xxvi.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 306-7.

³ I visited the tomb in 1919.

Timur's descendants, the death of a prince was not in plain words mentioned to the reigning emperor, but the prince's vakîl presented himself before the throne with a blue handkerchief round his wrist; and as no one else would come forward to inform Akbar of the death of his friend, Abul Fazl's vakîl presented himself with a blue handkerchief before the throne. Akbar bewailed Abul Fazl's death more than that of his son¹; for several days he would see no one, and after enquiring into the circumstances he exclaimed, "If Salîm wished to be emperor, he might have killed me and spared Abul Fazl," and then recited the following verse—

My Shaikh in his zeal hastened to meet me,
He wished to kiss my feet, and gave up
his life.²

Abul Fazl was thoroughly aware that he "is at the present time the object of resentment and held up as a warning to mankind, and a strife of love and hate is kindled in his regard"; on the other hand there were others who appreciated him. His name, Abul Fazl, means "the father of bounty"; some, "the worshippers of God who seek truth", called him Abul Wahdat, "the father of Unity"; others, "the valorous in the field of bravery," called him Abul Himmat, "the father of resolution". But he seems to have

¹ Murâd.

² *Āīn-i Akbarī*, vol. i, Blochmann, p. xxvii.

specially liked another appellation, Abul Fitrat, "the father of understanding," given to him by those whom he regarded as possessing "wisdom".¹

Abul Fazl states that "some attribute worldliness to him and hold him to be one of those plunged into this whirlpool, while others regard him as given up to scepticism and apostasy, and band together in reproof and condemnation". His reply to them was :

Of me a hundred fictions rumoured fly,
And the world stares if I a word reply.
The dullard's eye to sterling merit dim,
True ring of minted gold tells nought to him.
Worth must from noble souls unhidden blaze,
As from the moon her light, from Jupiter his rays.²

Matters between Akbar and his son Salīm, later called Jahāngīr, were not much better after Abul Fazl's death. Akbar forgave Salīm, and by sending him his own turban showed clearly that Salīm was to succeed, not the younger brother Khusru. The scene of the mastering of his rebellious son by Akbar is described by Vincent Smith, and makes interesting reading; it shows that the old

¹ *Āin-i Akbarī*, Jarrett, vol. iii, pp. 450-1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 451.

Emperor was only slumbering like an inactive volcano, and could break out on occasion.¹

Akbar died on October 27, 1605. The Jesuit priest Father Pierre du Jarric thus describes the end :

Meanwhile, the King suffered the last agonies attended only by a few of his most faithful retainers, who remained constantly near him. They sought to put him in mind of their Mahomet ; but he made no sign of assent ; only it seemed that, from time to time, he tried to utter the name of God.²

Commenting on this tradition, that Akbar gave no sign of assent when the name of the Prophet was mentioned, but that several times he tried to utter "Allah", the name of God, Vincent Smith says : " Thus he died as he had lived—a man whose religion nobody could name—and he passed away without the benefit of the prayers of any church or sect."

I would make only one emendation ; I would say : " Thus he died as he had lived—a man whose religion *all* could name." But then I am a Theosophist.

MADRAS

April 2, 1933

¹ *Akbar the Great Mogul*, p. 139.

² *Akbar and the Jesuits*, by C. H. Payne, p. 205.



Walā ghālib il Allāh!
“God alone is Victor!”

These Arabic words, which make the motto of the Alhamares dynasty of Moorish kings who built the Alhambra in Spain, are used thousands of times as a decorative scroll in several of the halls, courtyards and chambers of the palace.



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