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A BRIEF SURVEY OF DARA SHIKUH'S CONTRIBUTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSIAN LITERATURE WITH REFERENCE TO HIS SANSKRIT TRANSLATED WORKS

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ABSTRACT

The chief aim of this paper is to illuminate the life and works of Dara Shikoh with reference to his Sanskrit translated works. Dara-Shikoh's father's is Shahjahan best favorite eldest son and he used to compose 'Safinat-ul-Auliya' but he was more attracted to translate Sanskrit works. He went to many Hinduism Pandits and begged for help a lot in translating the Sanskrit works. His favorite translated works Majma 'ul-Bahrain (1065 A.H.), Mukalama'-I Baba Lal wa Dara Shikoh (1062 A.H.), Yoga Vasista written at his instance (1067 A.H.), Surr-i-Akbar (1067 A.H.), Bhagavat Gita (1067 A.H.). During this year appeared the Majma 'ul-Bahrain, or the Mingling of the Two Oceans are notable one. He used to translate Sanskrit works into Persian for the study of Indian culture and development and besides these Dar also translated Akbar's Sanskrit work.

KEY WORDS: Development, Translated, Hinduism, Association, Indian Culture, Attracted.

INTRODUCTION

Dara-Shikoh who has been credited for the translation of many Hindu religious texts like Bhagavat Gita and Sixty Upanishads into Persian and his full name is Prince Muhammad Dara Shikuh, the eldest son of Shah Jahan. In the 1640s and 1640s and 1650s, the Mughal prince Dara Shikuh sponsored a series of Sanskrit and Persian encounters that was sharply distinguished from earlier Mughal projects. Dara Shikuh, the heir apparent to the Mughal crown before he was outmaneuvered and executed in 1659 by his younger brother, Aurangzeb '(1658-

1707). Prior to his demise, however, Dara Shikuh was based at the royal court and enjoyed a wealth of free time and resources to use at his leisure. During the 1640s-1650s he forged links with Indian religious and intellectual communities and supported numerous translations. Dara Shikuh also supported numerous Sanskrit intellectuals, some with strong Advaita Vedanta leanings, within his princely household. Many of these thinkers assisted with translations. One of these pundits also penned a Sanskrit letter on Dara Shikuh's behalf to a Brahmanical leader in Benares. Dara's affinity with Indian religious figures was frequently memorialized in Persian ate texts and paintings ¹.

Dara Shikuh instructed them in Sanskrit philosophy, poetry, and likely the *Yogavasishta*. He composed several works in Hindi, including a shortened version of the *Yogavasishta*. This likely functioned as an aid for tutoring Shah Jahan and Dara Shikuh or was the product of those sessions. Kavindra also wrote the vernacular *Kavindrakal palata Wish-Fulfilling Vine of Kavindra*, in which more than half the verses are dedicated to Shah Jahan. These verses also incorporate *dhrupad* songs a musical tradition based in Hindi texts that celebrate Shah Jahan ². Nonetheless, even before Aurangzeb took power; many Sanskrit intellectuals had gravitated to the princely household of Dara Shikuh. Previously, the flow had often worked in the opposite direction as Sanskrit intellectuals moved from local and sub imperial centers into the royal Mughal court ³. The primary and secondary course of Dara's studies seems to have been of the same stereotyped character as that of an average Mughal prince, who was usually taught the Qur'an, the standard works of Persian poetry and the history of Timur ⁴.

Great-grandfather Akbar, he patronized and gathered round him learned pundits, eminent Sufis and liberal Christian missionaries. He read Sanskrit and later with the help of learned pandits, made a Persian translation of the Upanishads, which was soon followed by similar translations of the *Yogavasishta* and the *Bhagavat Gita*. His deep interest in cosmogony, metaphysics and the mystic symbolisms of the Hindus is manifest from his Discourses with *Baba Lal* known as the *Mukalama*. It should not be considered, as is asserted by many, that Dara Shikuh's characteristic theosophist outlook and his leanings towards Hinduism were due to a political motive and that he made most strenuous exertions as an heir-apparent to the much-covered throne of Delhi, to overcome the difficulties which his predecessors might bequeath him to become a more popular monarch to both the Hindus and the Mussalmans. Dara Shikuh's approach towards ⁵ Hinduism was from a different point of view. It was the approach of a seeker of truth, in whose heart was a burning passion for knowledge, and who, irrespective of the basis of its source, eagerly sought it whoever he could find it ⁶.

Again he remarks that as a 'mystic enthusiast and an ardent advocate of the Unity of God,' he searched for the Reality. "And as this solicitous seeker after the Truth," he observes, "had in view the principle of the fundamental unity of the Personality and he wanted to make an exact and correct translation of the *Upanishad* into Persian; for,

it is a treasure of monotheism and there are few who are thoroughly conversant with it even among the Indians⁷. Thereby he also wanted to solve the mystery which underlies their efforts to conceal it from the Muslims.” Admitting the weight and superiority of Hinduism in point of the priority of revelation of the four Vedas, he centuries that he translated the Upanishads in the year 1067 A.D., without any worldly motive and gave it the name of *Sirr-i-Akbar* or the Great Secret, “which without doubt or suspicion, is the first of all heavenly books, in point of time, the source of the foundation of Reality and the ocean of monotheism, *in conformity with the Holy Qur’an and even a commentary*”⁸

Thereafter he emphasizes the necessity of a spiritual guide. This practice of spiritual proctorship is very common both among Hindu and Muslim mystics. The *Sirr-i-Akbar* or ‘the Great Secret’ is a Persian translation of fifty-two Upanishads by Muhammad Dara Shikuh, which was completed in six months, in the year 1067 A.H. at Delhi. The Upanishads, as we know, is the recognized name of the philosophical treatises contained in the Vedas. The etymology and meaning of the word *Upanishads* is disputed both by Indian and European scholars; but according to the view generally accepted, it is derived from the root *sad*, to sit, preceded by the preposition *ni*, down and *upa*, near, so that the whole word would express the idea of sitting down of pupils near their teacher to listen to his confidential teachings⁹. It is, however, not difficult to conclude from the above that Dara Shikuh’s title *Sirr-i-Akbar* (The Great Secret) to his translation of the Upanishads and his further explanation of the word *Upanekhat*. The *Sirr-i-Akbar* is divided into a list of the Upanishads translated. The Translation of the Upanishads is in four parts and The Upanishads from the *Rig-Veda*. And Twelve Upanishads is from the *Yajur-Veda* and on the other hand Upanishads is from the *Sama-Veda* and Thirty-six Upanishads from the *Atharva-Veda*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The establishment of Mughal rule in Delhi saw the entry of Persian and the gradual waning of Sanskrit influence. Here an attempt has been made to draw about Dara-Shikoh and his works are written for literary review. References to his works are given here, a short description is written about his translated works such as *Sirr-i-Akbar*, Upanishads, Bhagavat-Gita, Yoga Vasista, Mukalama’-I Baba Lal wa Dara-Shikoh, Majma ‘ul-Bahrain are his prominent translation works. I have gone through a limited number of books and visited some prominent libraries to study about this project.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. An overview of Dara-Shikoh’s biographical sketch
2. His contributed Works with Reference
3. Similarities between this two language and its development

4. Sanskrit works that has been translated into Persian language

METHODOLOGY

I used to read a lot of book like *Sakinat –ul Auliya, Padshahnama* but I am more passionate to go through about Sanskrit translation works of Dara-Shikoh and many more. After reading the translated works of Dara-Shikoh I know that Dara’s published works very similar to Sanskrit and Persian works from that time onwards Islam and Hinduism have not awakened anything Sanskrit language only someone from Islamic has become friends with us at that time.

DISCUSSION

Dara-Shikoh’s earlier works, as can be clearly seen, the *Safinat-ul-Awliya’* and the *Sakinat-ul-Awliya’* that has been written in between 1049 A.H. and 1052 A.H., were the outcome of his association and respect for Sufis and religious divines. The *Hasanat- ul- ‘Arifin or the Sufic A phorisms*, a supplement to these two, appeared a little later in 1062 A.H. In all these treatise Dara Shikuh has set forth in detail the lives and teachings of saints of different religious experiences. “Following the traditional method of *Sufistic* theology, he gives expression to his inner ecstasies and his ardent aspirations towards the Ineffable. The method of treatment is generally intuitive and tendency of his thought is essentially pantheistic, having for its fundamental motives the direct contact or the union of human spirit with the Divine Being and the transformation of duality into Unity.” Yet his mystic biographies are characterized with a deep undercurrent of devotional fervor ¹⁰.

Through his works, as early as 1065 A.H., do not betray his leanings towards the Hindu doctrines and he says that the *Risala* records, “without a hair’s difference the austere practices, meditations, method of sitting, moving and acting of the Holy prophet,” and that it is a compendium of the standard works on Sufism like the *Fatuhah, The Fatus, the Lawa’ih* and the *Lama ‘at* etc., yet the account of the modes and internal significance of these practices seem to have been borrowed from the Yoga system of Hindu asceticism ¹¹. The year 1065 A.H. was a turning point in his studies in religion. It marked the beginning of his examination of the system of various religions, but till 1062 A.H. he did not express his opinion. With an insatiable thirst for Knowledge and Truth he occupied himself in its acquisition. He patronized learned men of all denominations saints, theologians, philosophers, poets and mystics of every community Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Jews etc. He studied Sanskrit and got deeply interested in the *Vedanta* and *Yoga* philosophy, Hindu ritual and mythology and from the learned pundits of Benares; he learnt the secrets of Indian thought and legend and initiated himself into the practices of the Yoga by constant association with *Yogis* and *sanniyasis* ¹².

During this year appeared the *Majma 'ul-Bahrain*, or the Mingling of the Two Oceans, a work of remarkable merit and originality, wherein is made the first attempt of its own kind to reconcile the doctrines of Brahma-Vidya and the tenets of al-Qur'an. The *Majma 'ul-Bahrain*, through a treatise on the technical terms of Indian pantheism, devoid of any deep insight or spirituality, is of extreme importance to a student of comparative religion in as much as that therein Dara Shikuh has tried to bring out the points of similarity and identity between Hinduism and Islam and has endeavored to show where these two oceans of mystic thought meet. "His attempt to achieve this end clearly shows that he did not want to engraft the one on the other through a shallow eclecticism like his grandfather Akbar. He was actuated by a desire to prove that both Islam and Hinduism, in appearance so fundamentally dissimilar, are essentially the same. Both represent spiritual efforts of man to realize Truth and God."¹³

"Dara Shikuh in his later years," he remarks, "did not restrict himself to free-thinking and heretical notions which he had adopted under the name of *Tasawwuf*, but showed an inclination for the religion of the Hindus. He was constantly in the society of Brahmans, yogis, and *sannyasis*, and he used to regard these worthless teachers of delusions as learned and true masters of wisdom"¹⁴. It is no denying the fact that it was his interest in the Hindu scriptures and especially his writing of the *Majma 'ul-Bahrain*, which procured a decree from the legal advisers of Aurangzeb that "Dara Shikuh had apostatized from the law and having vilified the religion of God had allied himself with heresy." Consequently an order for his execution was given in 1069 A.H. (1659 A.D.).

In all his works, as will be shown in the following pages, there is not the slightest indication that he had renounced Islam and had become a Hindu, as is alleged by some authors. The very introductions to his works, which he has begun with the praise of God, the Prophet, his companions and descendants, will belie such presumption. With a unique idealism in view, he tried to liberate the true spirit of Islam from the dogmatism of the time. In his ambition "to supplant exoteric Islam by esoteric mysticism as a living moral force among the Muslim intellectuals," the forces of conservation and reaction termed him as an apostate and a heretic¹⁵. His attempts to prove that the ideas of the Indian cosmogony and certain other aspects of Vedanta philosophy as contained in the holy Qur'an, sought to demonstrate the essential harmony between the two great religions. His conception was that the ancient Indian philosophical thought was linked with the monotheistic ideals of Islamic religion¹⁶.

FINDINGS

Apart from Sanskrit works Dara Shikoh had also prepared Sufi works and Vedanta works. In the book of *Majma 'ul-Bahrain*, Dara translated these works into Persian and compared them to Two Seas. Dara Shikoh was

considered a scholar and a true master of knowledge. He was constantly in the society of Brahmins, Yogis and Ascetics with Dara Shikoh teaching him Sanskrit philosophy, poetry and possibly the Yoga Vasistha. Even before Aurangzeb came to power a number of Sanskrit intellectuals had been attached to Dara Shikoh's court. Dara's primary and secondary course of studies appears to have been of the same stereotypical character as that of a prince.

CONCLUSION

Dara Shikoh who was a scholar himself and was interested in the philosophy of the Upanishads remains a fascinating figure in Indian History for his liberal religious views and efforts to find common grounds between Islam and Hinduisim. His translation was to understand Hindu philosophy better and enquire if there were common meeting grounds for Islamic and Hindu philosophies. Firozeshah Tughluk commissioned translations of Sanskrit religious works into Persian, like many other rulers before and after him. These translations were done with the specific purpose of understanding another religion and to explore possible ways of better cooperation with another faith. Dara Shikoh's Famous translation works of Dara Shikoh are *Majma 'ul-Bahrain, Mukalama-I Baba Lal wa Dara Shikoh, Yoga Vasista, Sirr-I Akbar, Bhagavat Gita* has enriched the Indian history. His affinity with Indian religious figures is often depicted in Persian texts and paintings. He wrote several works in Hindi including an abbreviated version of the Yoga Vasistha. Dara Shikoh's copy of the primary and secondary course of study is a stereotyped character similar to that of a Mughal prince who was usually taught the Quran, Standard works of Persian poetry.

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