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**An introductory and analytical study of Majma- ul-Bahrain
By Dara Shikoh**

Abstract: *Dara's name is most important in the History of Mughals due to his scholarly work, which he has presented in his different books. Islam, Hinduism, literature and Mysticism were his favorite field of interest. He had a close interaction to, Mystics and saints of different religions . He often uses sayings of these mystics and saints as references in his books. His deep knowledge of Quran and Hadees also shows his quest for knowledge. This article is the study of his literary contribution in general and "Majma-ul Bahrain" in specific.*

Aurangzeb Alamgir finally intended to execute Dara Shikoh, for he thought, it was pronounced apostasy on his part. If we accept this hypothesis, we have to look in to his life, education, teachings, mysticism, his relationship with saints, friends and lastly the research work which he had done. Moreover, we have to launch a free inquiry and take analytical review of his books in order to dig into the veracity of allegations against him. Dara was Shahjan's favorite eldest son and born in 1615 after many prayers and visits to the Mazar (Mausoleum) of Hazrat Khawaja Moeen-ud-Din Chisthi by his father.

Dara Shiko got his early Education from Abdul Latif Saharan puri and Hazarat Akhund Mirak. They taught him Arabic and Persian literature, Tefseer and Fiqah. Later he grown up and on his father advised he was taught, Greek, Roman and Persian. The education, he always felt pride was spiritual, which he got from different Muslim mystics and Hindu saints. Among them Hazarat Mian Mir and Baba lal Beragi had a most significant role to play. Shah Jahan had a great desire that his son should begin his carrier as a second Alexander But the son wanted to be a thinker, mystic and poet. When he declared his son 'Wali Ehed' (successor) he gave him the title of 'Shah Buland Iqbal' which means the king of great fortune. In the court of Shah Jahan there always had been a separate throne for him as a sign of king-to-be.

But unlike his father he was not good in the art of statecraft. According to V.D Mahajan:

'He was nervous, sensitive, impulsive creature full of fine feelings. He might have been a poet or transcendental philosopher, he could never become a ruler of India'(1)

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Dara was a sound scholar of comparative studies of religions (Islam and Hinduism). He was also a poet, philosopher, mystic and calligrapher. There was no law of succession and on the false news of Shahjan's illness, all his four sons prepared to fight for throne. A question arises had Aurangzeb become captive in the hands of Dara, what would he do with his brother? The whole Mughal history tells us the story that, what they did for the throne. When Dara became captive, Lane Poole describes:

“At last after few welcomes and many rejections the crown prince and would be emperor of India was betrayed into the hands of his enemy. He was paraded through the streets of Dehli dressed in the meanest clothes, on a wretched elephant covered with filth.; and the tumult which this barbarous humiliation stirred up among the people nearly amounted to a rebellion”(2)

When he was paraded in the streets of Delhi people were weeping. Aurangzeb saw the sympathy for Dara. He called a council of ulema for speedy Execution. At night a meeting of ulema held to look in to this matter seriously. He was found guilty and charged with heresy, and finally executed in 1069. In his last night he wrote a letter to his Brother Aurangzeb for sympathy and asked him to give him a Haveli (House) where he could spend rest of his life in peace. But Aurangzeb did not agree and wrote a verse of Holy Quran at the back of the Letter and returned it(3). He was found guilty of crime against the Islamic faith. The ulema gave fatwa of apostasy against him upon which the king considered it necessary to execute him for safeguard of true spirit of Islam and betterment of the country. Aurangzeb ordered Nazar Baig to bring Dara's head. At night his dead body was buried in the tomb of Humayun.

He showed his great love to Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani that made him use the title of Qadri in his poetry.

Dara was so eager to explain his mystic contribution that he wrote his first book *Sefina-tu-Awiliya* (1049 Hijra) just in the age of twenty-five. This book is consisted of Eight chapters and is the authentic description of the whole salasil (chains) of Islam from Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to Bibi Jamal Khatoon the sister of Hazarat Mian Mir. In the introduction he wrote that he studied the lives of mystics but got disappointed because their life phases are scattered in different manuscripts, however he could manage to produce them in order. His second book *Sekina-tul-Awliya* have been written in 1052 Hijra, however different changes have been made time to time till 1058 Hijra. This book has eight chapters where he discussed the life and superiorities of his Murshid (spiritual guide on the path of mysticism) Mullaha Shah Badkhshi. Dara Shikoh described the whole life of Hazarat Mian Mir and this is the best description of his life. In this book he gave seventy references of Quran and almost thirty-six of Hadees which shows his relation to Quran and Sunnah. *Risla-i-Haq Numa* is third book of Dara which was completed in 1056 Hijra. This book has been written purposely for the guidance of the people who want to seek truth. He claimed that he presented almost the entire actions of

Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) in the contents of this book. This book has six chapters in which he gave different steps to reach God spiritually. In his another book *Hasanat-ul-Arifin* or the Aphorisms, completed on 1064 Hijra contains the sayings of one hundred and seven saints and mystics of various religious orders. To him mystic's spiritual sayings in the state of ecstasy and enthusiasm is the source of sublime knowledge. In this state a mystic is not answerable to anybody because he is experiencing the ultimate reality. He wrote that he is not satisfied with the religion of present Ulemas because they have narrow thinking about religion. "They are imposters although they wear the face of Christ and Moses and the followers of Prophet"(4) He started writing this book in 1062 Hijra in the age of 28 and finished in 1064. With the help of the sayings of Holy Prophet (SAW), four Khalifs and mystics, he wanted to prove that in a state of ecstasy if a mystic says something which is against Shariat (Legalism) he may not be held accountable for that. *Sirr-e-Akbar* (The great secret) is another book of Dara Shikoh is the Persian translation of fifty-two Upanishads. It was completed in six months in the year of 1067 Hijra. We know Upanishad is the basic philosophy of Vedas which means sitting down near the teacher to seek confidential knowledge. This book has five chapters. In the preface he wrote the reasons of writing *Sirr-i-Akbar*, besides his spiritual experience. We can derive the following points from it:

- a) Four Vedas; Rig-Veda, Sam Veda, Yajur-Veda and Atharva-Veda are heavenly books, descended upon the prophets of those times and earlier in time among them was Barhma or Adam Safeullallah. The conclusion of these books are Upanishads. This can also be ascertained from the verse of Holy Quran that there is nation with a prophet and without a revealed scripture. (5)
- b) The commentaries of Vedas have been written by prophets and pundits of that time.
- c) Upanishads are the treasure of monotheism.
- d) The Upanishads are the hidden books and ocean of unity and Quranic verse about the "Protected book" refers to these ancient books. In order to support his arguments, he gave different references from Holy Quran.

There is no doubt that, we can disagree with his arguments, his elaborations might be wrong but we should not condemn his sincere efforts to search for truth in the different religions. He has not been guilty just because of this that he established his arguments for searching elements of Tauheed (monotheism) in Vedas. He became guilty, apostate and infidel because of his contempt of Indian Muslim Theologists (Ulema-e-zahir-o-batni) of ancient school who had been hiding the truth of God in different religions. Beside these books, he has also *Biaz-e-Dara Shikoh* (Diary of Dara Sihkoh), *Bhagavad Gita* (The religious books of Hindus, translated from Sanskrit into Persian), *Makateeb* (These are different letters of Dara Sikoh written by him time to time to theologian (Ulema) mystics for religious research), *Deebacha-e-Murraqa* (The manuscripts of hand writings of different calligraphers), *Risala-e-Muarif*, *Masnavi*, *Deewan-e-Dara Shikoh* which is

known as Akseer-e-Azam is also the depiction of his Mystic Philosophy and comparative religions.

Majma-ul-Bahrain (the mingling of the two oceans)is his last book written in 1065 Hijra in which he was consequently charged with heresy and finally executed.

Majma-ul-Bahrain” firstly edited and published by Prof. Younis Shah in 1983. He wrote in his preface that the first edition of this book has been edited by professor Mehfuz-ul-Haq and published by Royal Asiatic Society Calcutta in 1929. It was an English version. Luckily, he found the Persian manuscript in his fore-fathers’ collections. According to his claim, it is oldest from above said version and in Persian. He published this manuscript for scholars who are interested in Dara Shikoh’s life and works.

It is the work of a scholar of comparative religions who is keenly investigating the similarities between the two mystical approaches to religion by the mystics of Islam and saints of Hinduism. He clearly identified the points where the two mystical thoughts meet. This was painstaking research with great zeal and inspiration and at the end he proved that mysticism is the line of equality between two religions. Majma-ul-Bahrain has twenty-two chapters. Although every chapter is brief but compact and logical. It elaborates religious thoughts and universe. The basic contents are as under:

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| i) On the elements | ii) On the senses |
| iii) On the devotional exercise | iv) On the attributes of God |
| v) On the soul | vi) On the air |
| vii) On the four worlds | viii) On sound |
| ix) On light | x) On the vision of God |
| xi) On the names of God | xii) On Apostleship and saint ship |
| xiii) On Brahmanda | xiv) On the Directions |
| xv) On the skies | xvi) On the earth |
| xvii) On the divisions of earth | xviii) On the Barzakh |
| xix) On Resurrection | xx) On Mukti (Salvation) |
| xxi) On day and night | xxii) On the infinity of the cycles |

These topics are very important as how the world came into being. The thinkers and mystics of different sects consider them according to their own speculations. Dara has delicately drawn a thin line between the basic thoughts of Islam and Hindu Mat. According to him Hindu Mat is ancient religion and its books are divine. Hindu religion also believes in monotheism. This concept is almost included in their all books. Pantheism is observed in Muslim mystics and as well as in Hindu religion and the basic philosophy of Upanishad is Pantheism. According to it, there is a universal spirit which can be felt in the whole universe. The material things around us are merely an illusion. There is only one ultimate reality behind the whole things and that is the supreme spirit called God. In this sense the spirit in human has not a separate identity. We feel the difference because of material world around us. This creates illusion externally in this world. To feel the spirit of one God is the ultimate reality, called Pantheism. So it is the basic necessity of human being to shake off the superficial outer layer and unite himself

to the ultimate spirit. This concept had been prevalent in Muslim mystics, Hindu saints and thinkers and philosophers of other religions. This is basic philosophy of Mohyuddin-ibne-Arbi and the renowned mystic poet of Persian Fakhruddin Iraqi who is considered to be the first mystic poet of Persian. Dara Sikoh, in his book *Majma-ul-Bahrain* described the same concept about God and the universe. He did not try to impose his views at all and also did not try to point out the difference between these two groups which could create hatred. He just drew attention of the mystics of both religions towards commonalities of religious thought on which he had been declared heretic. There is no doubt that Aurangzeb was Pious, orthodox and brave general. His kingship qualities were matchless but it is not justified for a Person to kill his brother in mercilessly especially when he did not commit any crime. *Majma-ul-Bahrain* and other Vedas translations are his curiosity, and thrust for knowledge. He never broke his relationship with Islam.

There was a clear difference of opinions in the approaches of Dara and Aurangzeb towards Islam. Dara practiced Sufism and Aurangzeb followed more orthodox Islam. Dara made close interaction to other beliefs and saw what will be best for his beliefs. He looked, for which he considered, was better for himself and the society. In this connection he was like his great forefather Akbar the Great. There is no difference between the tolerance and universal brotherhood of Akbar and Dara, rather it was a difference of opinion in their religious beliefs. Dara had deep concerned in the study of Hindu religious books and mysticism .He just wanted to search the truth. He was a free inquirer but firmed believer in Almighty. His every book starts with the glorification of all mighty Allah and the last Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Moreover, he had quoted Quranic verses and Hadees which shows his keen interest in Islam. He wanted to research the truth as described in the Holy Quran. He accepted that Miraj-e-Nabvi of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was physical not spiritual. Besides accepting the tradition of Sufism, he started saying prayer and fasting, After the Bait (allegiance) of Mulla Shah Badakshi. He considered Vedas as heavenly books. He did not attempt to form any religion like Akbar. While Akbar did not accept the concept of heavenly books while Dara's all books are his quest for truth in different religions. He wrote in the preface of *Majma-ul-Bahrain* and in some other writings also that his research is for scholars and himself not for ordinary people. He did not show any concern for Ulema (theologians). Aurangzeb did not accept his scholarly works due to his stern and unyielding beliefs. His ideas gave rise to new orthodox Islam which was the complete departure from the concept of social unity and tolerance.

Dara Shikoh for his quest for knowledge and seeking truth had written a series of works that were quite pain taking and inspiration of his own. He was true believer of Almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad (SAW). He read Holy Quran and other sources of Islamic belief with great zeal and commitment. This led him to search the concept of monotheism in other sources like Vedas etc. Due to his long discussion with Muslim mystics, Hindu saints and through the insightful study of the both religions and their sources he concluded that there is mere a difference of words. The concept of one God is

same in both religions. When he tried to bridge the gap between the two religious thoughts of Islam and Hinduism. His dream got scattered by his untimely death due to the charges of heresy. He was the true believer of the brotherhood of all faiths and unity of mankind. Perhaps he realized that the stern policies of Ulema would not be helpful to run a vast multicultural continent like India. Whatever the reason of his research was, there is no denying that he gave the lesson of mutual tolerance and respect to the believers of other religions. In present scenario the world became a global village. The human beliefs are striking different to each other. We need a scholar like Dara to bring them together under universal brotherhood through his research. He taught a lesson that statesmen should be like that.

Reference

1. V.D Mahajan "Mughal Rule in India" new Delhi S chand and company P-147-148.
2. Lane peole "Medival India under Muhammad Rule, Lahore P-349.
3. (10:91) (Thereupon came the response): 'Now you believe, although you disobeyed earlier and were one of the mischief-makers.
4. Dara shikoh "Majma-ul- Behrain" edited by Syed younis shah al gilani publishers Abbottabad 1983page 47
5. Nor do We chastise until We raise an apostle (Qur'an: XVII, 13-15)

