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### Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan: A Persian Poet

Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, a soldier, administrator, linguistic and literary personality, all rolled into one was born on 17th December, 1556 at Lahore. He was the worthy son of Bairam Khan-i-Khanan an able administrator, warrior and guardian of Mughal King Akbar. His Mother Raj Gusain, was the younger daughter of the Jamal Khan Mewati. His ancestors were from the Baharlu tribe of the Black Sheep Turkmens at Present this tribe is in Turkmenistan. Baharlu was the name of the principle clan of the 'Black Sheep' or 'Kara Quinlu Turks. His ancestors migrated from Turkmenistan to India. In Indian history, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan usually remembered as an eminent commanders and Subedars of Mughal Period. But he was also a man of letters and one of the greatest patrons of Persian, Urdu, Hindi, Arabic, Turkish and Sanskrit poetry. He was a versatile poet, prolific writer, consummate scholar and greatest linguist of his time. Shah Abbas, the monarch of Persia said often about him 'oh I wish I would have this type of the Khan-i-Khanan and Sipahsalar, if I had got one, I would have left to him entire authority & choice in all affairs of suzerainty and would have passed by time in enjoyment and pleasure . Emperor Jahangir himself once paid

complement to him by saying, 'he was unique in his time in worth and capacity'. Akbar regime was one of the best regimes for the scholars, poets, historians, philosopher and theologians. His period was known for peace and prosperity, afforded sufficient opportunity for literary activities in India. He loved and prized the society of gens de letters, appreciated their learned discourses, enjoyed their controversies, understood the niceties and excellence of their composition and himself took an active part in their discussions. Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan got his upbringing in this environment. Akbar provided him a varied and splendid education that made him one of the finest minds of the age. He was one of the nine gems at the court of Akbar, a unique Ratna in the Ratna-mala of Hindi poetry and a munificent patron of men of letters. It is not in fitness of things to ignore the state of the society and the country and in which he was born and brought and imbibed his first ideas that molded his young mind and helped to mature his intellect to its full dynamism and prudence. Every human being is consciously or unconsciously influenced by his environments. He presented a unique synthesis of all the diverse virtues. His father Bairam Khan was also a Veteran, well versed in the art of warfare, a patron of Literature and loyal servant. It is well known that, Bairam Khan was a poet of Turki and Persian, he composed verses in Hindawai as well. His son inherited his father's love for the Indian dialect. The scope of Persian poetry widened immensely up to the time of

Akbar when Abdur Rahim flourished. Abdur Rahim was only eleven year of age when he started writing poetry in different language. It is said that he never sought the guidance of any elderly person in the field; but he could compose poems owing to his natural gift . Persian and Turki were spoken language of his family and he was silver tongued orator in them. He had a great command over Arabic and Hindi and was also a competent scholar in Sanskrit. He could narrate the stories of Turks better than one born in Turkistan. He was very fond of listening and reading of Persian and Hindi versions. He conversed with delegates from different countries in their native language. As a poet of Persian Language; he excelled many professional contemporaries at the royal court. The Mughal King Akbar made Persian an official language of India. He also composed verses in Arabic, Turkish, Sanskrit and Hindi with equal fluency and efficiency. He was himself a scholar of Arabic, Persian & Turki. He translated works from Arabic & Turki into Persian . Once Akbar received a letter from Mecca, written in Arabic they were passed on to Sheikh Abul Fazal, Hakim Abul Fatih Gilani and the Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, one each to translate into Persian. Khan-i-khanan translated the letter off hand and surprised everybody although it was written in difficult prose. He not only knew these literatures thoroughly but could also compose poems with ease and fluency. Amir Kusrau, a Persian poet and writer of 13th & 14th Century composed poems in a language which was

partly Persian and partly Hindi, Rahim Khan-e-Khanan composed slokas partly in Sanskrit and partly in Hindi. Apart from the Subedar and warrior Rahim Khan-i-Khanan was also Patron of Poets, writers and intellectuals of the Mughal Period. His hospitality was universal without any bias of religion, caste and creed. Akbar no doubt was eminent among the Asiatic monarch but as far as the literary patronage and benevolent pieces of work were concerned, he was pre-eminent. Khan-i-Khanan patronage to the men of learning and talent, the poets, scholars and artists, he seems to have surpassed even Akbar in this regard.

Shah Abbas, the contemporary monarch of Persia, directly reflecting on his patronage gives an idea of it:-

که در ایران کسی نآید پدید ار  
که باشد جنبش معنی را اخریدار  
در ایران تلخ گشته کام جانم  
بباید شد سوی هندو ستانم

The Persian work Maasir-i-Rahimi written by Mulla Abdu Baqi Nihawandi during Jahangir reign bears splendid testimony to his liberality. Faizi, the Akbar's poet laureate was impressed by the Rahim Khan-i-Khanan's patronage to poets and composed verses in his praise. Faizi, appreciate the liberal patronage of the Khan-i-Khanan in his verses;

خانمانان عهد کانعاش  
طبع را رخصت شگفتن داد  
داشت خون اعتماد بر شعرا  
صله پیش مدح گفتن داد

His generosity of spirit worked like magnet. Poets and writers of Khurasan, Kashan, Hamadan, Gilan and other places of Iran were attracted to his court. His patronage of poets and literary men was on such a large scale that even if he had not been a poet and prose writer, his name would ever had enjoyed the same repute in the world of literature as it does now. There has been no king or vassal whose praises have been sung in verses by as many poets as of Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan. More than a hundred poets obtained his bounty and many more sat at his feet for receiving lessons. His court was a rendezvous of poets, learned and talent. Persian chronicles have preserved long list of the literates whom his generosity raised above want. Persian poets such as; Mullah Shakibi Isfahani, was born and brought up in Isfahan migrated to India in 1590 and reach to the court of Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan. Shakibi dedicated his Saqinama to the Rahim Khan-i-Khanan for which he was awarded ten thousands rupees by the latter.

بیاستی آن آب حیوان بدہ  
زسرچشمہ خانخانان بدہ  
سکندر طلب کرد لیکن نیافت  
کہ درہند بوداوبہ ظلمت شتافت

Naziri Nishapuri, a prominent Persian poet of Isfahan travel to India and reached Agra in 1583. He was the first amongst the poets of Persia to find a patron in the Khan-e-Khanan. Naziri was introduced to the Akbar court by Khan-i-Khanan in 1587. He has been in several courts but he kept extra-ordinarily relation with the Khan-i-Khanan. He was first among all the contemporary poets of India and Iran. In response to the Qasida of Naziri, Rahim Khan-i-Khanan arranged his pilgrimage to Mecca. This is the first verse of Qasida;

زہنر بہ خود نگم چو بہ خم می معانی

بدر دلہاس برتن چو بجوشدم معانی

Urfi Shirazi, a Persian poet was born and brought in Shiraz, Iran but he is more popular in India and Turkey. Urfi eulogized the members of the royal family only when he was instructed by the Khan-i-Khanan to do so. Rahim Khan-i-Khanan used to give him lot of money for his poetry and Qasidas. His poetry is very much influenced with Hafiz Shirazi. Iqbal said;-

زنده از صحبت حافظ گریز

باده زن با عرفی هنگامه خیز

Muhtashim Kashani, a poet during the regime of Shah Tahmasp and Shah Ismail II and regarded as the eminent poet of Persia. He has written Qasidas in praise of Rahim Khan-i-Khanan his Qasidas;

شہ گیتی طہماسب خان کز بیم رزم او

تن پیل دمان کا حد دل شیر ژیان لرزد

Mulla Nuruddin Zahuri, was the most eminent poet of Deccan and most popular amongst the Indo-Persian writers even today. He wrote a Qasida when Abdur Rahim got the title of Khan-i-Khanan.

سجود جوش بر آورده در سحر جوشم

ز شوق خاک کف پای میرزا خانی

فزوده رتبه دیگر خطاب خانی را

چو شد ز بخت مخاطب بہ خان خانانی

Besides this lot of other poets and writers were linked to the Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan's Darbar such as Mirza Ismail Beg Unsi, Maulana Tajalli, Mulla Hayati Gilani, Maulana Muhammad Baqir, Mulla Shirazi, Mir Amani, Mulla Shaida and Mirza Muhammad Qasim Gilani etc.

Rahim Khan-i-Khanan also set up his personal library in which he

preserves the Persian manuscripts. It was a rich source of learning open to scholars. It had a large staff, composed of scholars and specialists of different arts and crafts. The scribes employed were trained by the masters of calligraphy. This also shows his interest with Persian Language and Literature. He also translated 'Tuzuk-i-Baburi' or Baburnama or Waqiat-i-Baburi, written in the purest dialect of the Turki or Chaghtai Language by the Mughal ruler Babur into Persian by the order of Mughal King Akbar. This work is the best piece of autobiography. It fully displays Babur's ambition to unite in himself courage and intellect and achieve a name in both. Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan's Persian poetic interest and his capability in this regard have been cherished by the contemporary historians like Abdul Qadir Badauni, Nizamuddin Ahmed and Abdul Baqi Nihawandi. Nahawandi and Taqi Auhadi state that he composed verses in Arabic, Persian, Turki and Hindi and made his mark as a poet of distinction in each. Since both the writers were emigrants from Iran, not conversant of Hindi poetry, they have quoted only his Persian verses in their respective works. He shown transparently in his own sphere and capitulated to none in his area. It is said that he never sought the guidance of any elderly person in the field; but he could compose poems owing to his natural gift. As he was engaged with several other political and administrative duties, he could not give full time in composing poetry. He composed poems only in leisure



time for his enjoyment or requested by the emperor or his friends. He could not compile a Diwan of his works because he never maintains regular diary of his writings even than his Persian poetry has the equal importance to his contemporary poets. His verses such as;

شمار شوق ندانسته ام که تا چند است  
جز این قدر که دلم سخت آرزومند است  
به کیش صدق و صفا حرف عهد بیکار است  
نگاه اهل محبت تمام سوگند است  
نه دام دانم و نه راز این قدر دانم  
که پای تا به سرش هر چه هست در بند است  
مرا فروخت محبت ولی ندانستم  
که مشتری چه کس است و بهای من چند است  
ادای حق محبت عنایتی است زد دوست  
وگر نه خاطر عاشق به هیچ خر سند است  
از آن خوشم به سخنه های دلکش تورجیم  
که اندکسی به اداهای عشق مانند است

The following verses show his interest and inclination towards Persian poetry. In his Persian poetry he follows the style of his contemporary poets like, Naziri Nishapur, Urfi Shirzai and Zahuri etc.

نیم فضول که جویم وصال همجو تری  
 بس است همجو منی را خیال همجو بی  
 تاب دوری از در جانان ندارند اهل دل  
 کوهکن مزدور شیرین بود مجنون هرزه گرد  
 غمت مباد چه می پرسی از حکایت من  
 دل تو طاقت این گفتگو کجا دارد

He has also composed Rubai. In his Rubai's compositions he followed the footsteps of Mir Mughit-ud-Din Mahwi Hamadani who was employed in his service. He has written a very simple and lucid Rubai. The Theme and messages in his Rubai is also very simple and clear. His Rubai such as;

دین و دل خویش را فدای تو کنم  
 در صحن سرای سینه جای تو کنم  
 چندان که ز سینه بر فشام در اشک  
 دامن دامن ثنا پای تو کنم  
 یک دیده و یک نگاه و صد اشک  
 یک دیده و یک دهان و صد آه  
 از شوق تو راه خانه تو  
 در هر قدمی در از و کوتاه  
 سرمایه عیش جاو دانی غم تو

بہتر ز ہزار شادمانی غم تو  
گفتی کہ چنین والا شیدات کہ کرد  
دانی غم توو گر ندانی غم تو

Rahim Khan-i-Khanan died in 1627. His Tomb at present situated near to Humayun Tomb, Mathura Road in New Delhi.

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