

Classic Poetry Series

Abdul Rahim Khan-I-khana

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Abdul Rahim Khan-I-khana (17 December 1556 – 1627)

Khazada Mirza Khan Abdul Rahim Khan-e-Khana also known as Rahim, was a composer in the times of Mughal emperor Akbar, and one of his main nine ministers (Diwan) in his court, also known as the Navaratnas; he is most known for his Hindi couplets and his books on Astrology. The village of Khankhana, named after him, is located in the Nawanshahr district of the state of Punjab in northwest India.

Biography

Mirza Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khana was the son of Akbar's trusted caretaker, Bairam Khan who had Turkic ancestry. When Humayun returned to India, from his exile, he is asked the nobles in court to forge matrimonial alliances with various zamindars, feudal lords, across the nation. While Humayun himself married the elder daughter of Jamal Khan of Mewat (present Mewat district of Haryana), he asked Bairam to marry the younger daughter.

Gazetteer of Ulwar states:

Soon after Babar's death, his successor, Humayun, was in A.D. 1540 supplanted by the Pathan Sher Shah Suri, who, in A.D. 1545, was followed by Islam Shah. During the reign of the latter a battle was fought and lost by the Emperor's troops at Firozpur, in Mewat, on which, however, Islam Shah did not lose his hold. Adil Shah, the third of the Pathan interlopers, who succeeded in A.D. 1552, had to contend for the empire with the returned Humayun.

In these struggles for the restoration of Babar's dynasty Khanzadas apparently do not figure at all. Humayun seems to have conciliated them by marrying the elder daughter of Jamal Khan, nephew of Babar's opponent, Hasan Khan, and by causing his great minister, Bairam Khan, to marry a younger daughter of the same Mewatti.

Maternal Lineage

Khanzadahs, the royal family of Muslim Jadon (also spelt as Jadaun) Rajputs, accepted Islam on their association with the Sufi saints. Khanzadah, the Persian form of the Rajputana word 'Rajput', is the title of the great representatives of the ancient Jadubansi royal Rajput family, descendants of Krishna and therefore of Lunar Dynasty. They are the Mewatti Chiefs of the Persian historians, who were the representatives of the ancient Lords of Mewat.

Khanzadah, or "the son of a Khan" is precisely the Muslim equivalent to the Hindu Rajput or "son of a Raja" ...

—From Punjab Castes by Denzil Ibbetson

Abdul Rahim was born in Lahore (now in Pakistan) on 14th Çafar 964

After Bairam Khan was murdered in Patan, Gujarat, his wife and young Rahim were brought safely to Ahmedabad, from they brought to Delhi and presented to the royal courts of Akbar, who gave him the title of 'Mirza Khan', and subsequently married him to Mah Banu, sister of Mirza Aziz Kokah, son of Ataga Khan, a noted Mughal noble.

Later, Bairam Khan's wife became the second wife of Akbar, which made Abdul Rahim Khan-e-Khan his stepson, and later he became one of his nine prominent ministers, the Navaratnas, or nine gems.

Although a Muslim by birth, Rahim was a devotee of Lord Krishna and wrote poetry dedicated to him. He was also an avid Astrolger, and the writer if two important works in Astrology Khet Kautukam and Dwawishd Yogavali are still popular.

He is well known for his strange manner of giving alms to the poor. He never looked at the person he was giving alms to, keeping his gaze downwards in all humility. When Tulsidas heard about Rahim's strange method of giving alms, he promptly wrote a couplet and sent it to Rahim:-

"Sir, Why give alms like this? Where'd you learn that?, Your hands are as high as your eyes are low"

Realizing that Tulsidas was well aware of the truth behind creation, and was merely giving him an opportunity to say a few lines in reply, he wrote to Tulsidas in all humility:-

"The Giver is someone else, giving day and night. So they won't give me the credit, I lower my eyes."

His two sons were killed by Akbar's son Jehangir and their bodies left to rot at the Khooni Darwaza because Rahim was not in favor of Jehangir's accession to the throne at Akbar's death.

His tomb is situated in Nizamuddin on the Mathura road ahead of Humayun's Tomb in New Delhi, it was built by him for his wife in 1598, and later he was himself buried in it in 1627. Later, in 1753-4, marble and sandstone from this tomb was used for the making of Safdarjung's Tomb, also in New Delhi.

Popular Couplets of Rahim

"The truly great never reveal their worth. Nor do those who are truly worthy of praise, praise themselves. Says Rahim, when does a diamond reveals its value."

"Says Rahim, when you are introduced to an important/rich person, do not ignore or forget your poor friends. For if, for example, you need a needle to successfully complete a job, of what use is a sword!"

"Says Rahim, don't allow the (delicate) thread of love (between individuals) to snap. Once it snaps, it cannot be rejoined and if you do rejoin it, there is a knot in it."

"Says, Rahim, this mind (body) is like a sieve (winnowing fan), sort out your friends through it. Let the light (bad) ones and go (fly in the wind) and carefully keep the heavy (good) ones."

"To cure a bitter cucumber,we cut its head off and rub in salt. Says Rahim to cure a bitter mouth we should apply the same remedy"

"Says Rahim, How will evil corrupt, he who has an excellent character? After all does the sandalwood become poisonous by having snakes lie around its trunk?"

"Says Rahim, people will find many many ways to be related to fortune. But only he is a true friend, who stands by you in misfortune"

"Says Rahim, he who has to beg is no longer a man. But those who refuse were never men to begin with."

Works:

Various 'doha' (Hindi Couplets)
Khetā Kautukama (Astrology Treatise)
Dwawishd Yogavali (Astrology Treatise)
Baburnama (Translate book of Babar's memory)

Says Rahim

Says Rahim do not snap ever
the thread of love
once broken, it does not unite
if it does, knots appear.

Says Rahim do not spurn the trivial
seeing the weighty
when you need a sewing needle
of what use a sword.

Says Rahim keep your sorrow
to your own heart
others will taunt you
none willing to share.

Says Rahim a man with no education
wisdom, religion and generosity
an animal without a tail or horns
futile is his birth in this world.

Says Rahim pleased I am not
being offered ambrosia without respect
better to die with dignity
drinking poison.

Says Rahim a dilemma indeed
when you speak out the truth
worldly ties break
with lies you don't ever reach God.

Says Rahim the sun rises with glowing rays
it sets with equal grace
so does a good man
living through ups and downs.

Body, a paper toy
turns into pulp in a trice
strange, so says Rahim
yet filled with much pride.

How will the weak ever live
fighting the strong?
Says Rahim like being at war
with the crocodile while in water.

A tree does not eat its own fruits
no pond drinks up its own water
a good man saves for others' needs
so says Rahim.

Blessed is the love the fish has for water
lifeless without it

says Rahim a bumble bee is different
hopping flower to flower.

Blessed is the swamp
insects thrive on
says Rahim so vast the sea
yet everyone comes away thirsty.

Says Rahim my Lord's image is embedded in my eyes
there is place for none else
like a traveller turning away
from a full caravanserai.

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