

EMPEROR AKBAR AS A HEALER AND HIS EMINENT PHYSICIANS

APARNA CHATTOPADHYAY*

ABSTRACT

Akbar, how ever, was himself considered to be a healer by his miraculous powers. The court physician was one of the top-most officers of the court. Hakim Humam was such a physician who was one of the nine jewels (nauratnas) of Akbar. In 1581, Akbar curtailed the powers of Sadr (or Sadr-i-Jahan, the chief Justice and Administrator of the Empire) and he divided the empire in six zones with a Sadr in charge of each. Out of these six Sadrs, five were his physicians who were Hakim Abul Fath, Shaikh Fayzi, Hakim Humam, Hakim Ali, Hakim Ain-ul-Mulk. Tobacco was introduced either in 1604 or in 1605. Hakim Abul Fath opposed its circulation but Akbar permitted it. It was Abul Fath who found out a remedy for counteracting the pernicious effects of tobacco on health. His opinion was that if the smoke of tobacco passed through water the harmful effects would be minimised. So hukka was invented by him.

Akbar, however as we learn from the sources, cured the ailing children by looking at them or giving them water over which he breathed... He would have people believe that he performs miracles, healing the sick with the water with which he washes his feet, Many young women pay vows to him to get their children cured..... (Srivastava, 1973, a). Such facts about peoples' belief in Akbars' healing Power, are supported by Abul Fazl. He writes men of all nations young and old, friends and strangers, the far and near, look upon offering a vow to His Majesty, as the means of solving all the difficulties, and bend down in worship on obtaining their desires....many sick people of broken hopes.... have been restored to health by this divine phenomena (Ain, 1965).

We learn from the accounts of the Goa Missionaries, who came to Akbar in 1595

that Akbar showed himself every morning at a window in front of which multitudes came and prostrated themselves; while women brought their sick infants for his benediction and offered presents on their recovery. (Ain, 1965,a).

The Court Physician :

The companions of the king who were the ornaments of the court included the physician... (Ain, 1965.c). Such a court physician named Hakim Humam was one of the 'nine jewels (nauratnas) of Akbars' court** The nauratna picture in the victoria Memorial Collection, calcutta, represents him (smith, 1988). This Hakim Humam was appointed Mir Bakawal or Master of the kitchen. The head of the Imperial Kitchen was the Prime Minister himself. He appointed a zealous and sincere man as Mir Bakawal... and gave him several persons as

* N-11/58-A-6-1, Ranipur, Shilnagar Colony, Motimoorgunj, P.O. Varanasi.

** ...The nauratnas or nine jewels meant nine friends, namely Raja Birbal, Raja Man Singh, Raja Todar Mall, Hakim Humam, Mulla Dupiyaza, Faizi, Abul Fazl, Mirza Abdu-r-rahim KhanKhanan and Tansen (Smith, 1988, a).

assistants (Ain, 1965, d). Humam came from Gilan* along with his two brothers Hakim Abul Fatah and Hakim Nur-Ud-din. They reached India in the 20th year of Akbars' reign (Ibid). Humams' real name was Humayun. He discreetly called himself Humayun quli or slave of Humayun, when he came to Akbars' court; but soon afterwards Akbar gave him the name of Humam. He was a personal friend of Akbar and had great influence in the court. He was sent to Turan** as ambassador. Akbar often said that he did not enjoy his meals on account of Humams' absence. He died in the 40th year of Akbars' reign (Ain, 1965, e) Humam was appointed as a Sadr by Akbar.

Fayzi, the Poet - Physician :

He was a great friend and court poet of Akbar. His acquirements in Arabic literature, art of poetry and in medicine were very extensive. He used to treat poor people gratis (Ain, 1965, f). He was also a great mathematician, theologian, diplomat and administrator.

He translated the Indian masterly work Lilawati on Mathematic into Persian. Abul Fazl says that the Lilawati..... lost its Hindu veil and received a Persian garb from the hand of my elder brother Shaykh Abul Fayzi (Ain, 1965, g).

By the order of Akbar the Hindu story of the love Nal Daman...was metrically translated by Fayzi in the masnavi metre of the Layla Majnun and came to be known every where under the name of Nal Daman (Ain, 1965, h). It contained about 4200 verses and was composed within a short space of five months. It was presented to

Akbar and it was read out to Akbar in the court (Ain, 1965, i) Badaoni has praised this work very much. He says - "...verily it is a Masnavi, the like of which for the last 300 years since Amir Khusru no poet has composed" (Al-Badaoni, 1973).

Fayzi wrote verses for Akbars' newly invented gold coins (Ain, 1965, j). Fayzi wrote a commentary of the Quran in Arabic which is altogether without diacritical points (al-Badaoni, 1973, a). Fayzi wrote this book in two years before his death (Ain, 1965, k). He composed many works in Arabic and Persian (Ain 1965, l). Akbar conferred upon him the title of Malik ush-Shuara or King of the poets (Ibid). Fayzi was profound in philosophy. He studied medicine deeply and gave treatment to poor people gratis (Ain, 1965, m), as we have already noted.

Fayzi was appointed as a Sadr by Akbar in 1581. The Sadr (Minister of ecclesiastical and judicial affairs) enjoyed great prestige and was indispensable in the Islamic state. The Sadr controlled and supervised education, as the head of the judicial department, was responsible for the appointment of Qazis and other judicial officers and was required to dispense a vast royal charity (Srivastave, 1973, b).

In October 1581 Akbar curtailed the powers of the chief Sadr and he divided the empire into six zones with a Sadr in charge of each. The provinces of Agra, Kalpi, and Kalinjar were placed under Fayzi (Ibid).

In 1591 Fayzi was the principal envoy of the four envoys of Akbar to Raja Ali Khan of Khandesh. Akbar had resolved as a preliminary measure to send missions to the

* Gilan, near the Caspian Sea (Ain, 1965, e).

** Turan - Bokhara - or Transoxiana, the region where Akbars' ancestors ruled long ago (Smith, 1988, b).

rulers of the Deccan, in order to ascertain whether or not they would be willing to accept his suzerainty without putting him to the trouble of fighting and defeating them. So Akbar despatched those four missions directed to Khandesh, Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golkonda. His first objective was Khandesh, a kingdom which included the mighty fort of Asirgarh justly regarded as one of the strongest and best equipped fortress in Europe and Asia. Fayzi the most notable of the four envoys, accordingly was sent to Burhanpur, the capital of Khandesh (Smith, 1988, c).

Though Fayzi wrote no book on medicine we have noted that in medicine he was very extensive and he treated poor people gratis.

The Five Physicians appointed - as Sadrs :

Akbar appointed honest and experienced men as Sadrs having divided the empire into six zones. Hakim Abul Fath was appointed as Sadr of the provinces of Delhi, Malwa and Gujrat, those of Agra, Kalpi and Kalinjar were placed under Shaikh Fayzi, the country from Hajipur to the Sarju was placed under Hakim Humam, Bihar under Hakim Ali, Bangal under Ain-ul-mulk and the Panjab under Qazi Ali Bakshi (Srivastava, 1973,).

So we see here that out of six Sadrs, five were physicians. We have already discussed the accomplishments of Hakim Humam and Fayzi and their position in the court.

Hakim Abul Fath :

He was the eldest brother of Hakim Humam. He came to India from Gilan with his two brothers, Hakim Humam and Hakim Nur-ud-Din. They reached India in the 20th year of Akbar's reign and they were well-received in the court (Ain, 1965,n). Abul Fath obtained in a short time great

ascendancy over the emperor and became his most intimate friend (Ibid). He was made the Sadr of Delhi as we have already seen. He had also the power of a Vakil (Ibid). He was a distinguished scholar and a poet too (Chattopadhyay 1979).

Hakim Ali :

The Sadr of Bihar came as poor and destitute from Persia to India but in course of time became a personal attendant of Akbar. He was sent as ambassador to Bijapur. In the 40th year Ali was a commander of 700 and had the title of "the Galenus of the Age" (Ain.1965,o).

In the 30th year he had built a reservoir. A stair case went to the bottom of the reservoir from where a passage led to a small room... The water of the reservoir was prevented from flowing into the room. When Akbar dived to the bottom and passed into the room he found it lighted up and furnished with cushions, sleeping apparel and a few books. Breakfast also was provided (Ain 1965, p). Ali treated Akbar before his death (Ibid). Jahangir tells us about his mastery over mathematics (Tuzuk, 1989). He also says that Ali was an unrivalled physician and had derived much profit from Arabic sciences; he had written a commentary of the Canon of Avicenna (Tuzuk, 1989,a).

About Hakim Ali's Knowledge in medicine we find the following fact. Once Akbar tried him by giving him several bottles of urine of sick and healthy people, and even of animals. To his satisfaction, Ali correctly distinguished the different kinds (Ain, 1965,q). Chattopadhyay, 1979, a).

Hakim Ain-ul-Mulk :

He was appointed as the Sadr of Bengal. He was a learned man and a clever writer. Akbar liked him very much (Ain, 1965, r). Badaoni says that he was Galen of the Age

(Al Badaoni, 1973, b). Akbar sent him to Gujrat as ambassador and then he was also sent to Bijapur (Ain, 1965, s). He was the Bakshi of Agra in the 31st year of Akbars' reign (Ibid).

Introduction of Tobacco and Invention of Hukka :

Tobacco was introduced at the end of Akbars' reign, either in 1604 or early in 1605. Though the first physician (Fatah Gilani) that is, Abul Fath was against its circulation, as it was an unknown drug but Akbar permitted its circulation. It is noteworthy that though

it was an untried drug, Hakim Abul Fath suggested that its smoke should be first passed through a small receptacle of water so that it would be rendered harmless. Thus was Hukka invented by him (Jaggi, 1977; Smith, 1988,d). Here we see that the Europeans who were acquainted with tobacco and smoked it, did not know how to check the harmful effects of tobacco. But Abul Fath soon after tobacco was brought to India, found out remedy to counter-act its pernicious effects on health.

REFERENCES

Ain, 1965 - The Ain-i-Akbari, Abul Fazl Allami, Tr. into English by Bloachman, M.A. Ed. S.L.Goomer, 1965, Published by Naresh, C, Jain for New Imperial Book Depot, 53 D, Dev Nagar, New Delhi 5, P.173. Idem, Ibid, a-p.173, fn. 1.

“ “ b-p. 173,
“ “ c-pp. 6-7; p.7, fn. 1.
“ “ d-pp. 184, 468, 59, 60.
“ “ e-pp. 184, 629.
“ “ f-p. 559
“ “ g-p. 112
“ “ H p. 114
“ “ i-pp. 28-29
“ “ j-pp. 618-619
“ “ k-p. 619
“ “ l-pp. 618-619
“ “ m-pp. 611-613, 619
“ “ n.pp. 468-469
“ “ o-p. 469 520
“ “ p-p. 520
“ “ g-p. 520
“ “ r-p. 537
“ “ s-p. 537

Al-Badaoni, 1973 - Muntukhabu-T-Tawarikh by Abdu-L-Kadir Ibn-l-Muluk Shah known as Al-Badaoni, vol II, Edited by W.H. Lowe, Academica Asiatica, Patna 6, India, 1973, p. 411

Idem, Ibid, a-p. 407

“ “ b-p. 175

Chattopadhyay, 1979- Aparna Chattopadhyay, The Physicians of the Court of Akbar as Poets, Administrators and Diplomats, Nagarjun, July 1979, p.260.

Idem, Ibid, a - p. 261

Jaggi, 1977 - O.P. Jaggi, History of Science and Technology in India, Vol. VIII, Medicine in Medieval India, Atma Ram and Sons, Delhi 110006, 1977, pp. 157 - 159.

Smith, 1988 Vincent, A.Smith, Akbar, The Great Mogul, Published by Vinod Publications, IX/ 3775 Dharam, Pura, Gandhi Nagar, Delhi-31, Edition 1988, p. 260, fn 1.

Idem Ibid a - p. 260, fn 1.

“ “ b-p. 195; p. 195, fn 3, p. 177.

“ “ c-pp. 177 - 178; p.295.

“ “ d-p. 296

Srivastava- 1973 A.L. Srivastava, Akbar the Great, Vol. I, Second edition 1973, Shivalal Agrawal and Co., Hospital Road, Agra 3, p. 475

Idem Ibid a - p. 476.

“ “ b - Akbar the Great, Vol II, Second Revised Edition, Shivalal Agarwal and Co, Hospital Road, Agra 3, 1973, p.p. 75 - 76.

Idem Ibid c-p. 80

Tuzuk 1989 The Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri or Memoirs of Jahangir Tr. by A.Rogers, Ed. by H.Beveridge. Low Price Publications Delhi -110052, p. 68 (Vol. I).

Idem Ibid a-p. 154

“ “ b-p. 154

सारांश

सम्राट् अकबर एक चिकित्सक के रूप में तथा उनके श्रेष्ठ चिकित्सक

- अपर्ण चट्टोपाध्याय

दरबारी चिकित्सक दरबार के सर्वोच्च पदाधिकारियों में एक था। हकीम हुमाम वैसा हि एक चिकित्सक था, वह अकबर के “नवरत्नों” में से एक था। अकबर ने “सदर” नामे के पदाधिकारी (न्याय और धर्म के सर्वोच्च अधिकारी) के पद को छः भागों में बांटा एवं सम्राज्य को छः हिस्सों में विभाजन करके हर एक हिस्से में एक “सदर” की नियुक्त की। इन छः “सदरों” में पांच उनके चिकित्सक थे। (हकीम, अबुल फता, शेख फैजी, हकीम हुमाम, हकीम अली, हकीम आईन-उल-मुल्क)।

भारत में १६०४ या १६०५ में तम्बाकू आया, हकीम अबुल फता ने इसका विरोध किया पर अकबर ने इसे चलाया। तम्बाकू के हानिकारक गुणों को कम करने के लिए अबुल फता ने हुक्का का आविष्कार किया। तम्बाकू का धुआं पानी के अन्दर होकर जाने से हानिकारक गुण कम होगा ऐसा उन्होंने बताया था।