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## **A B S T R A C T**

There are very few select writings available on Dārā Shikūh. As Dārā Shikūh failed to ascend the throne scant attention has been paid to him by most of the historians. And if we talk about Indian tradition, it seems that he is remembered not so much as an Emperor's son but as a mystic philosopher. The great dream of his life – a dream shattered by his untimely death was the brotherhood of all faiths and the unity of mankind. The belief in the concept of Wahdat-ul-Wujud (unity of being) was his life long passion. He argued that in Qu'rān it has been stated that no land has been left without prophetic or scriptural guidance, so this land (India), which is full of monotheists, must've had similar true and divinely ordained scriptures, which would be the Vedas and the Upanishads. With this point in mind he argues in the introduction to Sirr-i-Akbar (translation of Upanishads done by Dārā Shikūh) that the mysteries which have been left unexplained in the Qu'rān or mysteriously hinted at, can therefore be studied in the Upanishads. With the help of Yogis and Sanyasis of Banaras he tried to comprehend the concept of 'unity of being' given in the Upanishads and simultaneously tried to unfold some of the concepts of mysticism which had been left unexplained in Qu'rān. With this kind of open-mindedness and liberal attitude it is no wonder that people like Aurangzeb labeled him a 'Kafir'.

Dārā tried to unfold the mysteries of Wahdat (unity of being) through dialogues with persons of different religions. The religious intellectual discourses which he held

with not only Muslim mystics like Miyān Mir, Mulla Shah, Muhibullah Allahabadi, Shah Dilruba, Sarmad but likes of Hindu ascetics Bābā Lal Das, Jagannath Mishra and various other pundits of Banaras. It is remarkable that he interacted not only with the creamy layer of mystic saints who were more renowned than some others but like a genuine truth seeker he interacted with Yogis and Sanyasis of 'Banaras' who did not have the privilege of being famous. He tried to comprehend their perspective of Wahdat-ul-Wujud (unity of being). It can be surmised that initially his concept of Wahdat-ul-Wujud was based on ideas expressed by Ibn-al-Arabi but later his contact with Hindu ascetics like Bābā Las Das etc; this concept became wider and he tried to assimilate the thoughts of Hindus in it.

In one of his works 'Shathiyat' (also known as Hasanat-ul-Arfin) which means ravings of Sufi saints during spiritual Ecstasy; he wrote why the statements like "An-Hal-Haqq" uttered by Mansur Hallaj should not be berated and considered as 'blasphemy'. He suggested that one should make an effort to understand the implicit meaning in it instead of just clinging on to the mere statement.

It is indeed daring that Dārā concludes this biographical account of the celebrated Muslim saints along with lives of Hindu ascetics like Kabir, Bābā Lal Das and Bābā Piyāre, whom he venerated as eminent worshippers of the only God. This reflects that he was very open minded and wanted to empathise with the idioms of the Hindu ascetics as well. For the 'Ulema class' who were not ready to relate to statements by Mansur-al-Hallaj, let alone the Hindu saints like Bābā-Lal-Das and Bābā Piyare, for them this was a sacrilege and not less than that. In their opinion Dārā Shikūh committed a 'double sin' by proceeding in this direction.

In 1657, at the age of forty-two, Dārā wrote a small tract entitled 'Majma-ul-Bahrain' (The mingling of two oceans) in which he argued that there was no basic

difference between the essential nature of Hinduism and Islam. This was the first attempt of its kind to reconcile the two apparently divergent religions. It would not be out of place if we quote Dārā Shikūh, when he remarks that “this unafflicted, unsorrowing Fakir, Muhammad Dārā Shikūh, after knowing the truth of truths and ascertaining the secrets and subtleties of the true religion of the Sufis and having been endowed with this great gift (i.e. sufistic interpretation), thirsted to know the tenets of the religion of the Indian pantheists; and having had repeated inter course and continuous discussion with doctors & perfect divines of this (i.e. ‘Hindu’) religion who had attained the highest pitch of perfection in religious exercises, comprehension (of God) intelligence and (religious) insight, I did not find any difference, except verbal, in the way in which they sought and comprehended truth”.

One is left wondering after reading this pamphlet as to why Dārā Shikūh dabbled into the domain of court-politics and bid for the throne when he was so much preoccupied with the matters like the fundamental unity of different religions and humans. Why he could not decide to carve out a separate niche for himself and not at all indulging himself in the struggle for the throne? Why this ‘Sufi mystic’ (if we could possibly use this ‘nomenclature’) chose this path? May be by acquiring throne he wanted to achieve the kind of world which would be a replica of his ‘Vision of Perfect World’ where all human beings would be speakers of only the ‘truth’ irrespective of their religion.

Destiny had something else in store for him. Contemporary European travellers like Manucci and Bernier opine that it was Majma-UI-Bahrain’ which procured a decree from the legal advisers of Aurangzeb that Dārā Shikūh had “apostatized from law and having vilified the religion of God, had allied himself with heresy and infidelity.” He was executed in the year 1659 A.D.