

DARA SHIKOH: MYSTICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

Dara Shikoh (1615-1659) was the eldest son of Emperor Shahjahan and designated crown prince. But in this discourse the objective is to explore and give an overview of his mystical and philosophical thoughts rather than discussing his royal credentials. He occupies a unique place among the Mughal princes for his comparative study of Muslim mysticism and classical Hindu philosophy. Being a follower of the Qadiri order of Sufis and a disciple of Miyan Mir, Dara believed that the mystical traditions of both Hinduism and Islam spoke of the same truth. His younger brother and main political rival for the throne of Mughal Empire in India, Aurangzeb, on the contrary held fundamentalist spiritual and religious views about Islam. Later, when he became emperor of India after the defeat and assassination of Dara Shikoh his views were clearly reflected in his policy of intolerance against Hindus and Shi'as. Dara Shikoh greatly contributed to the study of ancient Indian spirituality along with Islamic mystical traditions by highlighting commonalities between classical Hindu and Islamic Sufi teachings. Like many Muslim Sufis he was of the views that their mingling could bring about harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims subjects of Mughal Empire. Lack of tolerance is one of the main causes of current wave of sectarianism and religious extremism which is creating havoc in Pakistani society. This piece of study to some extent could be helpful in promotion of so wanted religious tolerance in our society.

KEYWORDS: Dara Shikoh, Muslim Sufis, 'Yogavasishatha', Dara Upanishads