



## ČANDRA BHĀN

**ČANDRA BHĀN** (or Čandarbhān) **BARAHMAN**, Indian poet and writer in Persian (b. Lahore, date unknown, d. Lahore 1073/1662-63; Fārūqī, 1967a, p. 79) of a family of Brahmins (hence his pen name Barahman). His father, Dharam Das, was a government official (*Čahār čaman*, fol. 99). Barahman was probably the first gifted Hindu poet and writer in Persian, a product of the Indo-Persian culture that flourished under the Mughals. He knew Hindi (*Čahārčaman*, fols. 177-78) and may have studied Sanskrit. He mastered most of the standard works of Persian language and literature under the tutelage of ‘Abd-al-Ḥakīm Sīālkotī (d. 1068/1657-58), Mīr ‘Abd-al-Karīm (*mīr-a ‘emārat* “superintendent of buildings” at Lahore), and Ja‘far Khan (‘Āseqī, fol. 90; Šafīq, p. 10; *Monša‘āt-e Barahman*, fol. 24b; *Čahār čaman*, fol. 274). Later authors also quote an Urdu *gāzal* of his composition (Śrī Rām, I, p. 575). He studied Persian calligraphy with the governor of Lahore Mollā Šokr-Allāh Afzal Khan (d. 1048/1638-39; *Čahār čaman*, fol. 299; *Monša‘āt*, fol. 30), Āqā ‘Abd-al-Rašīd, and Kefāyat Khan (*Haft qalam*, p. 55), and his skill was noted by several of his biographers (Šāleḥ, III, p. 434; *Haft-Qalam*, p. 55). Barahman served as secretary to a number of highly placed figures in the time of Šāh-Jahān (1037-68/1628-58): Āṣaf Khan (commander of the royal forces at Lahore), Eslām Khan, ‘Allāmī Sa‘d-Allāh Khan (d. 1067/1656), Mo‘azzam Khan, ‘Enāyat Khan, and Afzal Khan (Wazīr-al-Molk, d. 1048/1638). Through contact with them his own literary tastes were refined, and he developed a strong affinity for Sufis and saints, who had considerable influence on him (*Čahār čaman*, fol. 144). After the death of Afzal Khan, his nephew ‘Āqel Khan presented Barahman, along with the other dependents of the deceased, to Šāh-Jahān. The



emperor, impressed by Barahman's deep knowledge of Persian literature and by his calligraphy, appointed him court chronicler and entrusted him with his own personal diary. He even referred to him as "Persian-knowing Hindu" (*Čahār čaman*, fol. 106). On festive occasions Barahman used to recite his Persian poetry before the emperor, for which he was suitably rewarded (*Čahār čaman*, fol. 106). After the death of Šāh-Jahān Barahman continued as secretary to Dārā-Šokūh (q.v.; d. 1069/1659; 'Ašeqī, fol. 90).

The following works by Barahman are mentioned in his *Monša'āt*; only a few of them are extant.

1. A *dīvān* containing 342 *gāzals*, 36 quatrains (*robā'īs*), and some brief didactic *maṭnawīs* in Persian (Fārūqī, 1967b).

2. *Čahār čaman* (Four meadows), a historical composition (*enšā'*) written shortly after 1057/1647 (Rieu, p. 838), in four sections: a description of various festivals at Šāh-Jahān's court, including poems recited by the author on such occasions; an account of the daily affairs of the court, the qualities of the emperor, and the splendor of his court and his new capital, Šāh-Jahānābād; a brief autobiography with some of the author's letters; and a group of mystical and didactic writings.

3. *Goldasta-ye Čahār čaman*, extracts from *Čahārčaman*. 4. *Toḥfat al-wozarā'* (Gems of the viziers). 5. *Kār-nāma* (Chronicle). 6. *Toḥfat al foṣaḥā'* (Gems of literary language). 7. *Majma' al-foqarā'* (Collection of Sufi writings).

8. *Monša'āt* (Letters), a collection of 128 letters divided into five sections, according to whether they are addressed to kings, statesmen, friends, and the like, all with brief forms of address, in contrast to the normal practice of the time.

9. *Roqqa'āt* (Fragments).

10. *Mokālamāt-e Dārā-Šokūh wa Bābā Lāl*, the Persian translation of a mystical discourse between Dārā-Šokūh and Bābā Lāl, a Hindu ascetic, that took place at Barahman's residence (Dārā-Šokūh, p. 24).

Barahman's surviving *gāzals* usually consist of no more than five or six distichs, characterized by graceful diction, clarity, precision, and unity (Šāleḥ, III, p. 423; Sark'voš, p. 18; 'Abd-Allāh, p. 81; Šafā, p. 1236). Even Šā'eb Tabrīzī Ešfahānī (d. 1088/1677), a celebrated poet and contemporary of Barahman,



included some of his verses in his anthology ('Abd-Allāh, p. 82). But his literary reputation owes less to his poetry than to his prose, which is distinguished by a uniquely simple and graceful style. His well-knit sentences, his spare but elegant choice of words, and his use of homely similes and metaphors all reveal Barahman as a writer of great gifts. It was these qualities that led Mollā Monīr of Lahore (d. 1055/1645-46), himself a celebrated stylist, to honor Barahman with the epithets master (*soḥbān*) and ornament (*ḥassān*) of his age and to designate him the poet laureate of Šāh-Jahān's period (Šafīq, p. 91).

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