ARBiT
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## Mechanical Pencil Day

Mechanical pencils have so many uses in the workplace. People use pencils every day to calculate payroll, write letters, and complete their work. Students especially use them in schools to do their homework and get good grades. While much of the world has moved towards digital format, mechanical pencils make writing and design easier than ever before. Mechanical Pencil Day celebrates the history of these pencils and encourages people to celebrate mechanical pencils and their uses in our daily lives.

राष्ट्रदूत
TUESDAY
5 July 2022
A-B

#THEATER

# Lapat: Igniting the Fire Within

From an oppressed young girl destined to die in flames of Sati to becoming a firebrand of revolution, the play 'Lapat' through the character of Meera highlights the conditions of India in 1857, delves into the nuances of colonization and the mental tragedy it caused to the ordinary people. For the first time in the history of JKK, a theatre production was presented by underprivileged children.

Tusharika Singh
*Freelancer writer and city blogger*

July 3, 2022 became a significant day in the history of Pink City's art and culture center Jawahar Kala Kendra, as for the first time a grand theatre production was presented by underprivileged children. As many as 27 children of Sitaram Nagar Kachhi Basti performed a powerful play 'Lapat' directed by theatre artiste, Mudita Choudhary, which highlighted the conditions of the country in 1857 as well as women's contribution to the fight for independence. The play was jointly organized by Jawahar Kala Kendra and Indian Women Impact NGO, the social arm of Indian Women Blog.

### Celebrating the unsung warriors of freedom

Though India's freedom struggle saw a significant participation of women, many heroines of independence have remained invisible to this day - unknown and unsung. The few freedom fighters who made it into history books invariably came from elite or middle class backgrounds. However, there were innumerable ordinary women with no formal education, hailing from poverty-stricken and conservative homes, who got involved in the struggle with undaunted spirit and fierce passion. Through the character of Meera, the play's protagonist, the drama celebrates the forgotten contribution of such unheard warriors of freedom.

Based on Supriya Kelkar's novel 'Strong as Fire, Fierce as Flame', the play is a story of Meera and how her character evolves from an oppressed young girl destined to die in flames of sati to a firebrand of revolution.

### Play's characters & their portrayal stuns the audience

In addition to the character of Meera (played by Anjali), who is the play's protagonist, characters like Bhavani (played by Kiran) and Charan (played by Ritu) completely won the hearts of the audience. Meera's friend Bhavani is the daughter of a martyred freedom fighter. She wants to avenge the death of her father from the British. In their fight against the British, a woman named Charan, who has been a part of British Army as a man for a long time also supports her.

The character of a quintessential white 'memsaab', deftly played by Varun, left the audience completely in splits. It was only during the cast credits at the end of the show that it was revealed that the character was actually played by a boy.

### Rigorous Training Process

The children who performed in the play went through a scrupulous training process as a part of a 40-day summer camp designed for them. They learnt various aspects of theatre such as speech training, body language and voice modulation among others. Sharing her experience of being a part of the play and the training, Anjali who played the role of Meera said: "Being on such a huge stage was initially quite overwhelming and it made me anxious. But gradually I became confident and worked on my voice and body language. Now I am looking forward to participating again in theatre."

"Weekly lectures were also conducted for the children with the Head of History Department, Rajasthan University, Dr Sangeeta Sharma to help the kids immerse into the era and deliver the performance with historic accuracy."

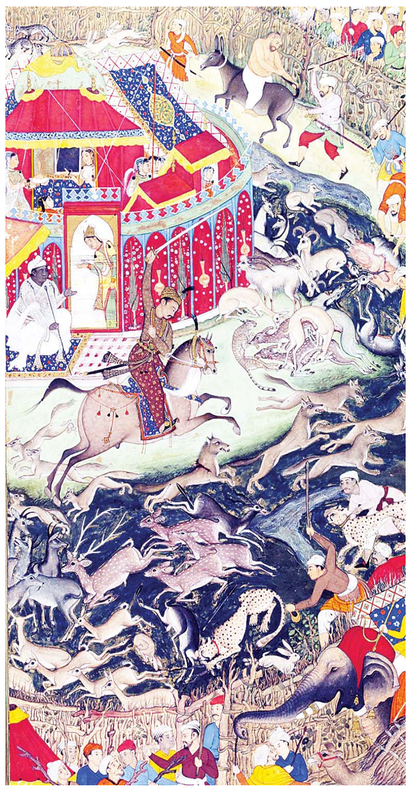
"Some stories damage your confidence but some make you more courageous. Young girls need inspiration like Uda Devi, a Dalit woman who fought against the British East India Company. Similarly, Kamladevi Chattopadhyay and Sarojini Naidu demanded valiant roles in the Dandi March. There are no archival sources or documents in which we can find such stories so we have to make an effort to make them a part of our history books, drama and art, so that the younger generation knows that both men and women made equal contributions to various movements," says Dr Sangeeta Sharma while talking about the importance of discovering unknown women's stories from history.

The play was preceded by an exhibition of the historic portraits of women freedom fighters recreated by the children of Indian Women Impact.

### 'Back to School' Programme

The play was an outcome of the never-happened before summer camp under the 'Back to School' Programme. The camp gave opportunity to 250 underprivileged children from Sitaram Nagar Kachhi Basti who availed unique workshops such as theatre, robotics, personality development, Graphic Design, French Language Program, Financial Literacy, Media Lab, Science Experiments, Film making and many others.

If court histories give an accurate overall picture about the severity of Akbar's punishments, it may be that his outrage at the lateness of the Rajputs at the 1578 hunt was excessive, even by the standards of the day. Certainly, the prideful readiness of Prithidip's uncle to hurt and even kill himself only served to further infuriate Akbar, so much so that the emperor demanded that an elephant should trample him to death right then and there. Father Monserrate, a Jesuit missionary who spent two years at Akbar's court, describes this as a punishment for those committing capital crimes. Dalpat Vilas's insinuation that Akbar had been cruel and unjustified in his treatment of these Rajputs might therefore reflect a viewpoint shared by others in imperial service. In any case, the uncle's refusal to submit to Akbar's chastisement was compounded, according to this text, by the elephant's refusal to obey the emperor's order. As is well known, Akbar prided himself on his ability to control war elephants, yet here again his mastery over others – whether human or non-human – was being challenged.



Akbar at the qamargha hunt of 1567, right-hand side.

# Emperor Akbar's Anger!! (...1)

Cynthia Talbot
*Professor, PhD, University of Wisconsin-Madison*

#AKBARNAMA

Anger as an emotion is seldom attributed to Akbar (1556-1605), the most admired of the Mughal emperors. Yet, on one notable day in 1578, he allegedly got so enraged that he almost lost his mind, according to Dalpat Vilas, an obscure chronicle composed in the vernacular. While the aftermath of Akbar's anger was reported in several Persian histories emanating from court circles, the royal rage itself was not. Why and how Dalpat Vilasas ascribed anger not only to the emperor but also to the local king Raja Ray Singh of Bikaner is a matter of interest. What little we know about the history of anger in pre-colonial India indicates it was an emotion that kings were advised to avoid in both Sanskrit and Persian literature. But from the more subaltern vantage point of Dalpat Vilas, written for a young Rajput warrior in a local dialect rulers did act angrily and not always justly.

One day in early May 1578, the Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605) got angry. His anger culminated in an unusual event that was reported in several contemporary Indo-Persian chronicles. The outcome of the emperor's wrath was considered significant enough to be illustrated in Akbarnama, the official history of his reign composed by his court poet and confidant Abu'l Fazl. Due to the insights it provides into the personality of Akbar, the secondary scholarship on this most lauded of all Mughal rulers has often mentioned the aftermath of his rage on this occasion.

Dalpat Vilas is one of a corpus of broadly historical works – genealogies, dynastic histories, battle accounts -- that were commissioned by Rajput lords of the Mughal era, who were generally granted control over their ancestral territories and regarded within them as kings. These Rajput texts have been mined for decades for their chronological and other factual details, yet rarely have other more cultural aspects of this literature has been explored in depth. Nor have they been fully accepted as legitimate forms of history-writing with their own logic and their own sensibilities.

### Akbar gets angry in Dalpat Vilas

When Dalpat Vilas's narrative begins, the emperor had been encamped for two weeks in the eastern foothills of the Salt Range near the Jhelum, waiting while preparations were being made for a major hunt. In order to trap great quantities of game for the emperor's sport, his men formed a large circle and gradually forced the animals trapped within it into very smaller space. This type of ring-hunt called a qamargha in Persian was a Mughal favourite.

During the Mughal period, large entourages accompanied the emperor on his hunting expeditions, including many nobles and their armed retainers. The scale of the hunts could be enormous, resembling an army on the move. In an earlier ring-hunt of Akbar's in 1567, one chronicler estimated that as many as 50,000 men had been employed to round up the animals. Supposedly the largest qamargha ever held; this 1567 hunt entrapped all the animals within a ten-mile circumference; the captive animals said to be about 15,000 in number provided five days of active hunting for the emperor.

Things went somewhat awry during the May 1578 qamargha however which is as well known as the celebrated hunt of 1567 but for different reasons. It begins with an episode of anger in the narrative of Dalpat Vilas. On the second day of hunting Akbar had as usual gone out on his own in the morning – that is, without any of his nobles in accompaniment. When he returned to the temporary encampment where the court was staying, his lords (thakur) were playing kabaddi. Instead of joining in their sport, Akbar headed for the river and entered the water; afterwards he headed to the encampment's place of assembly (darbar). Most of the lords had in the meantime put on their clothes and paid respects to the emperor but not the Solanki clansman Dan. (Dan, like most of the men figuring in this episode, was a member of the Rajput warrior community.) When Dan finally showed up to attend to Akbar, the emperor was furious, as the text tells us.

Meanwhile Dan [the Solanki] came there. Then the Emperor asked, "Where were you until now? Why didn't you come [more quickly]?" He said, "Sir, I had to put on clothes for the sake of propriety (adab), so I erred and got delayed." Then the Emperor got angry (khijiya) and flogged him four to five times. Just then, Prithidip [Kachwaha] arrived and the emperor said to him, "Where were you?" Then he said, "Emperor, your good-health! My aides didn't let me come."

Then the Emperor flogged him seven-eight times. And he summoned the [Kachwaha boy's] aides and had the aides beaten. He said to them, "Why didn't you bring him?" Then they said, "His mother's brother wouldn't allow him to come. As soon as he was dressed, he fell down into a ditch. Then his mother's brother said, "Let him play". So, it's not our fault. Emperor, your good health! His mother's brother didn't let him come."

Akbar's wrath did not abate, despite the whipping of two Rajputs who had been tardy in appearing as well as some of their retainers. He next turned his attention to a more consequential target – the Kachwaha boy's uncle.

Then after summoning Prithidip's mother's brother, His Majesty got angry: "Why didn't you let him come?" He then said, "Emperor, your good health! How would it be fitting that I should stop him from coming to your excellence's presence?" The Emperor ordered a whip be used. When a cow herder had whipped him once and stood waiting, just then the mother's brother drew a dagger and stabbed himself. Once, twice, three times he thrust the dagger.

Meanwhile, the Emperor was angry and said, "Kill him, kill this bastard (haramjada)!" And he asked for an elephant that a tax collector had presented as a gift. The elephant would not advance [to trample the uncle who had stabbed himself]. Then the emperor became even more angry and went into his quarters.

> In the view of Dalpat Vilas therefore -- anger is a tool for powerful lords to wield, as a means to regulate the speech and actions of their subordinates. Just as emperor Akbar sought to control the actions of his underlings, so too did Raja Ray Singh, the second most powerful man appearing in Dalpat Vilas.

We witness an escalation of events in this scene. The first man who was tardy in attendance thereby incurring Akbar's anger was punished with four or five lashes of a whip; the second one who showed up late merited seven or eight lashes, even though he was apparently still a boy. Akbar then spread the blame for this second Rajput's tardiness to his adult caretakers and then finally to the young man's uncle. After one lash of the whip, however, the uncle retaliated not by trying to harm the emperor but rather by harming himself.

If court histories give an accurate overall picture about the severity of Akbar's punishments; it may be that his outrage at the lateness of the Rajputs at the 1578 hunt was excessive even by the standards of the day. Certainly, the prideful readiness of Prithidip's uncle to hurt and even kill himself only served to further infuriate Akbar, so much so that the emperor demanded that an elephant should trample him to death right then and there. Father Monserrate, a Jesuit missionary who spent two years at Akbar's court describes this as a punishment for those committing capital crimes. Dalpat Vilas's insinuation that Akbar had been cruel and unjustified in his treatment of these Rajputs might therefore reflect a view point shared by others in imperial service. In any case, the uncle's refusal to submit to Akbar's chastisement was compounded according to this text by the elephant's refusal to obey the emperor's order. As is well known, Akbar prided himself on his ability to control war elephants yet here again his mastery over others – whether human or non-human – was being challenged.

What happened later that evening in May 1578 suggests that the emperor regretted his actions. After everyone had retreated to their separate tents in consternation for some hours, the Kachwaha lord Man Singh, who had been away in Ajmer, arrived at the hunting site to join the entourage. The emperor ordered Man Singh, his closest and most trusted Rajput subordinate, to take charge of the situation presumably because other Rajputs were involved.

When Man Singh Kunwar touched the Emperor's feet [in greeting], he said to Man Singh, "See what this Rajput bastard did he stabbed himself in the stomach. If he's living then get the wound bound up. If he's died, then provide wood and a shroud." When the Emperor commanded thus Man Singh went to look for him. And, from behind the Emperor grumbled angrily (bajariya).

In other words, Akbar used his best friend among the Rajputs as an emissary to find out what had happened to the prideful Rajput and offer the appropriate assistance in a form of amends for his earlier anger. Unfortunately, while Man Singh was checking on him, the injured man died.

### Understanding anger in the Indian context

This is by no means the end of the story of Akbar's hunt, as matters soon took a dramatically different turn. But I would like to halt the progress of the narrative momentarily in order to turn to two other issues: the question of how Indian tradition has conceptualized anger in general and more specifically the role of anger in Dalpat Vilas. In the words of the celebrated Bhagavadgita, a sermon by Lord Krishna on the eve of battle:

*It is desire (kama) and anger (krodha), arising*
*from nature's quality of passion;*
*know it here as the enemy,*
*voracious and very evil!*

The means to the supreme religious goal was by cultivating detachment and dispassion, by ridding oneself of desire and anger.

Rulers, for reasons of both righteousness and pragmatism, were expected to conduct themselves in a dispassionate manner. Ancient Sanskrit legal texts stressed that in order to be successful kings must avoid addiction to kama (desire or pleasure) and krodha (anger or wrath), and strive for self-control. The premier work on statecraft, the Arthasastra went so far as to state that 'this entire treatise boils down to the mastery over the senses'. Similarly, in India's famous martial epic the Mahabharata, king Yudhishthira is advised that a ruler's behaviour should ideally be guided by self-restraint: "The Gods and the highest seers said to him: Do without hesitation whatever is Law: having restrained yourself - having forsaken your likes and dislikes, acting the same toward every person, having put desire and anger and greed and pride far off and away."

This is not to say that anger was absent from ancient or medieval Sanskrit narratives, but the men described as angry were primarily warriors in the heat of battle and not rulers per se. Take the example of Book 10 of the Mahabharata, in which we get the most horrific episode of violence resulting from anger in the entire epic. This is when Ashvatthama, fighting on the side of the Kauravas, slaughters the sleeping warriors of the Pandava army in order to avenge the slaying of his father Drona. Ashvatthama's krodha wells up from his inner depths causing his eyes to get blood-shot and bulge out – an example of the 'pressurized container' metaphor described by Kövecses. The effects of Ashvatthama's rage are compared to what happens when a fire blows through dry grass and his own body too is 'burnt up with rage'.

> Instead of simply dismissing the actions of Akbar and Ray Singh as cruel and despotic, a more complex reading of the chronicle would note the ways in which they purportedly used royal anger to consolidate power. The late sixteenth century was a time when power was getting centralized not only in the Mughal emperor's hands, but likewise in the hands of powerful clan chiefs.

### Emotion of anger in Dalpat Vilas

If Indian rulers as distinct from warriors were indeed seldom depicted in a state of wrath in pre-modern literature, as I have argued, how do we explain the vignette of the angry Akbar in Dalpat Vilas? Why might Dalpat Vilas be rather unusual in its depiction of anger – a quality thought to be regrettable in elite Indian culture? For one thing, it is written in the vernacular rather than in Sanskrit, at a time when historical texts written down in a North Indian vernacular were still relatively rare. John D. Smith identifies Dalpat Vilas as the oldest extant chronicle in Middle Marwari, the same language used in the more famous Khyat by Munhanot Nainsi. Secondly, it is also unusual in being composed in prose instead of verse which was far more widespread in pre-colonial Indian literature. As a prose work, Dalpat Vilas foregoes the fulsome praise and elaborate embellishment that is typical of the courtly mahakavya poems, composed in both Sanskrit and classical Hindi.

Akbar releasing captive animals, 1578.

In contrast, Dalpat Vilas favours a matter-of-fact tone, straight forward narration and a detailed account of some events. The quantity of detail on places and people sets the prose Dalpat Vilas apart from the more elaborate courtly literature in verse and has led to speculation that the author was present at the major events covered.

As its title suggests, Dalpat Vilas (Adventures of Dalpat) was intended to recount the life of Dalpat Singh, a Rajput of the Rathor lineage based in Bikaner who reigned briefly over the Bikaner kingdom in 1612-13. He was soon deposed by the Mughal emperor Jahangir due to his refusal to obey commands and was killed by another noble shortly thereafter. Because the Bikaner throne was passed on to Dalpat's brother and his descendants, Dalpat has not received much mention in later historical traditions from western India. This may explain why only one manuscript of Dalpat Vilas survives, possibly a copy made in the 1650s or 1660s, which was preserved in the library of the Bikaner royal family. That is, this text presumably composed for Dalpat Singh likely did not circulate outside a small circle and was of little interest to Rajput audiences in general. The sole extant copy is incomplete, unfortunately, for it ends abruptly in the summer of 1578 when Dalpat was only 13 years old. This means that Dalpat's male relatives and other older men often play a bigger role in the episodes narrated in the chronicle than Dalpat does himself since he was still so young. However, most of the episodes do pertain to Dalpat in some fashion – he was present at Akbar's hunting camp in 1578 and witnessed the events that transpired.

Men go places, they say or do things, and then they go elsewhere- that is the general course of the narrative. Seldom is anyone pleased or happy in this chronicle, although they occasionally experience fear; as one might expect the persons who are feared are always higher-ranking than those who are afraid. But it is noteworthy that anger is the most prominent of the few sentiments appearing in almost-uniformly emotional terrain of Dalpat Vilas. Yet it is clearly something stronger in Dalpat Vilas, where it is the most frequent of the anger like terms and the only one used in reference to Emperor Akbar's feelings toward the Rajputs he had whipped. The word is also twice applied to the Bikaner king, Dalpat's father Raja Ray Singh, when he is so infuriated by the behaviour of Kesav, a warrior attached to his brother Ram Singh that he orders his men to attack and kill Kesav:

The Raja began mustering his troops for the imperial paymaster. The Raja, Turasam Khan, and Said Hasim sat down and started watching. When Ram Singh's troops were being reviewed, Ram Singh's other Rajputs [dismounted], held onto their horses, performed the taslim salutation and came back. But Kesav remained mounted on his horse. He didn't get down, didn't do the salutation. Moving forward, he made his horse gallop. The Raja observed this. Watching the Raja got infuriated (khijiya), so much so that he would have had him killed right there.

> This is not to say that anger was absent from ancient or medieval Sanskrit narratives, but the men described as angry were primarily warriors in the heat of battle and not rulers per se. Take the example of Book 10 of the Mahabharata, in which we get the most horrific episode of violence resulting from anger in the entire epic.

By refusing to dismount and salute the imperial paymaster, who was inspecting Raja Ray Singh's troops to ensure that they met the expected standards, Kesav displayed disrespect towards Bikaner's Mughal overlord and simultaneously undermined Ray Singh's authority. As a result, Ray Singh experienced an anger accompanied by violent intent denoted by the verb khijanau/khijanau, just as in the case of Akbar and his Rajput lords.

Elsewhere in the chronicle another anger is described as the rage Raja Ray Singh felt toward his son Bhopat. Relations between father and son had been tense for some time when the following episode occurred:

Then the Raja became furious (risamna) at Kunwar Bhopat. Then the Raja dispatched the Rani to summon Bhopat. Then the Rani proceeded to Bikaner, consoled Kunwar Bhopat, and fed him liquor; and when he was drunk, she seated him on a cart and took him to the Raja. Just as Bhopat touched the feet of the Raja, the Raja began to hit him on the back with a staff, with his own hand. Then Rani Jasvantde used her hands as a shield, but the blow of the stick hit her hands. Then her bangles were ruined. Meanwhile, the Munhata (minister) spoke to the Raja and intervened [so that] Bhopat was let go.

Prior to this scene Bhopat had been dispatched to Bikaner town to take care of a problem for the Raja. Although he had carried out the mission well afterwards Bhopat indulged in drink and games rather than returning promptly to Jodhpur, where his father was then stationed. When the queen brought their son to see him, the extreme anger that Ray Singh felt toward Bhopat incited him to violence, even at the cost of harming his wife along with his son.

Ray Singh Rathor was a successful leader, who governed Bikaner from 1574 until his death in 1612; and was a valued military officer in the Mughal army, serving in areas as far apart as the Punjab, Bengal, Baluchistan, Sind and the Deccan. Despite his illustrious career and extensive cultural patronage, Dalpat Vilas paints an unfavourable picture of Ray Singh as an unpleasant man who was often harsh and abusive. Raja Ray Singh's displeasure is typically focused internally, on his own family in this chronicle rather than being directed outwards towards his Rajput rivals or the empire's enemies.

Instead of simply dismissing the actions of Akbar and Ray Singh as cruel and despotic, a more complex reading of the chronicle would note the ways in which they purportedly used royal anger to consolidate power. The late sixteenth century was a time when power was getting centralized not only in the Mughal emperor's hands, but likewise in the hands of increasingly powerful clan chiefs like Raja Ray Singh. In contrast to the more egalitarian brotherhood that had earlier prevailed among the Rajput clans of western Rajasthan, Ray Singh and his counterparts elsewhere in Rajasthan favoured a hierarchical form of governance with a raja at its apex. In order to maintain his status as a ruler of Bikaner, the Raja had to rein in his brash family and followers by modifying their behaviour.

Similarly, rather than viewing Akbar as an impulsive tyrant who hurt people with little reason, we might instead regard Akbar as engaged in the disciplining of his nobles. As André Wink has pointed out, Akbarnama repeatedly employs the hunting and taming of wild beasts such as elephants as metaphors for the taming or civilizing of Akbar's rebellious Central Asian nobles. In the view of Dalpat Vilas therefore – anger is a tool for powerful lords to wield, as a means to regulate the speech and actions of their subordinates. Just as emperor Akbar sought to control the actions of his underlings, so too did Raja Ray Singh, the second most powerful man appearing in Dalpat Vilas, who strived to regulate the conduct of his family members.

*To be continue....*

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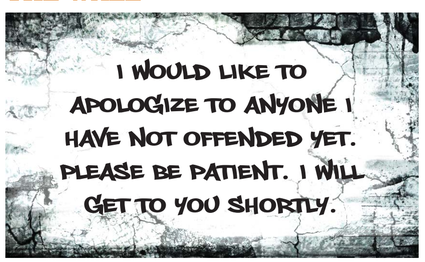
Ashwatthama propitiates Shiva before making a night attack on the Pandava Camp.

## THE WALL




## BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott


## ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman