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*Anger and Atonement in Mughal India: An alternative account of Akbar's 1578 hunt**

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Abstract

Anger as an emotion is seldom attributed to Akbar (r. 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 Vilas* ascribed anger, not only to the emperor but also to the local king, Raja Ray Singh of Bikaner, is the central issue addressed here. What little we know about the history of anger in precolonial 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. This case illustrates the historiographic value of Indic-language texts sponsored by local subordinates of the Mughals, which can provide alternative perspectives on the empire. It also suggests the existence of multiple emotional communities in Mughal India, in which the significance of anger differed.

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Introduction

One day in early May 1578, the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) got angry. His anger culminated in an unusual event that was reported in several contemporary Indo-Persian chronicles.¹ 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.² Yet an account of the anger that precipitated and preceded it appears in only one sixteenth-century text, *Dalpat Vilas*—an obscure chronicle written in a local vernacular rather than in the Persian language favoured by the imperial court.³ Its audience was more circumscribed than that of Persian histories as well, for *Dalpat Vilas* concerned the activities of a local lineage belonging to the Hindu Rajput community.

Rajput warriors had previously ruled over a number of small kingdoms in northern and western India, but had been slowly losing ground since the establishment of the Mughal empire in 1526. Beginning early in

¹ This event occurred on 4 May 1578, according to Henry Beveridge's calculations (Abu al-Fazl ibn Mubarak [henceforth, Abu'l Fazl], *Akbarnama*, vol. 3, (trans.) H. Beveridge (Delhi: Ess Ess Publications, 1977), p. 346, n. 1).

² For example: S. A. A. Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975), pp. 126–27; John F. Richards, 'The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir', in *Authority and Kingship in South Asia*, (ed.) J. F. Richards (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 291; Rosalind O'Hanlon, 'Kingdom, Household and Body: History, Gender and Imperial Service under Akbar', *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 5 (2007), p. 902; André Wink, *Akbar* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009), p. 56; and A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 140.

³ The published edition is based on the only surviving manuscript, preserved at Anup Sanskrit Library, formerly the library of Bikaner's royal family (Rawat Sarasvat (ed.), *Dalpat Vilas* (Bikaner: Sadul Rajasthani Research Institute, 1960), p. 1). I am indebted to Richard D. Saran for providing me with a copy of the text years ago, when it was very difficult to obtain, and for his generous assistance in understanding it subsequently. The text is now accessible through the Digital Library of India. For a summary of its contents, see pp. 3–16 in Dasharatha Sharma, 'Dalpat Vilas', in the published edition; as well as his 'Two Important Sources of Rajput History: "Dalpat Vilas" and Nainsi's "Jodhpur rai Gamvam ri Vigat"', in *Lectures on Rajput History and Culture* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), pp. 125–37.

Akbar's reign, a series of Rajput leaders were inducted into the Mughal nobility, where they constituted the main group of non-Muslim officers and officials serving the growing empire. These Rajputs provided a much-needed counterweight to the contentious Central Asian and Persian elites at court, along with access to local military labour. Modern Indian historiography regards Akbar's incorporation of Rajputs into the imperial service as an astute move that, combined with his tolerant attitude toward Hinduism and Jainism, made him popular with his non-Muslim subjects and contributed considerably to his success as emperor.

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 been explored in depth. Nor have they been fully accepted as legitimate forms of history-writing, with their own logic and their own sensibilities. In this article, I add to the small corpus of scholarship that has begun investigating Rajput texts in search of their representations of the Mughal emperors and their reactions to Mughal rule, along with more general insights into India's martial culture.⁴ In the case of the 1578 incident, the account in *Dalpat Vilas* is much more detailed than in any of the Persian histories and deviates considerably from them in its interpretation of Akbar's behaviour and frame of mind. The alternative perspective provided by this Rajput chronicle underscores the extent to which we typically depend on texts produced at the imperial centre in reconstructing the court's activities. My first aim in this article, therefore, is to demonstrate that the study of Rajput texts adds another dimension to our understanding of how the Mughal empire operated and how it was experienced. The contrasting narratives of what

⁴ See especially Allison Busch, 'The Poetry of History in Early Modern India', in *How the Past was Used, Historical Cultures, c. 750–2000*, (eds.) Peter Lambert and Björn Weiler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 161–79; and "'Unhitching the Oxcart of Delhi": A Mughal-Period Hindi Account of Political Insurgency', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28, no. 3 (2018), pp. 415–39; Cynthia Talbot, 'Justifying Defeat: A Rajput Perspective on the Age of Akbar', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 45, no. 2–3 (2012), pp. 329–68; and 'A Poetic Record of the Rajput Rebellion, c. 1680', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28, no. 3 (2018), pp. 461–83.

happened in May 1578 are an especially dramatic instance of difference in the construction of the past.

My second objective here is to further the study of emotions in Indian history and culture—an area of research that is still in its early stages. *Dalpat Vilas* is one of the few primary sources from Akbar's reign to describe him as enraged, or indeed as possessing notable negative qualities. Even the accounts of his Rajput subordinates routinely describe him as a powerful and righteous king in the traditional Indian mode, as an overlord who could appreciate the bravery of the Rajput lords he had conquered.⁵ Virtually all of the histories composed in Persian by scholars or scribes who were dependent on elite patronage similarly depicted Akbar in highly favourable terms, although there was occasional grumbling about his religious leanings. The ascription of anger to Akbar in *Dalpat Vilas* is striking not only because this emperor is so widely admired, but also because anger hardly figures in relation to any other ruler in Indian literature. In both the Sanskrit and Persianate traditions, anger was something kings were advised to avoid. The anger displayed by both Akbar and the local Rajput ruler in *Dalpat Vilas* thus offers us a rare opportunity to analyse the meaning of this emotion in the political culture of sixteenth-century India.

In this initial exploration of anger in the Indian past, I attend carefully to the words used to indicate emotions, since they are neither uniform nor unchanging.⁶ Following earlier historians of emotions working on the Western world, I examine South Asian norms relating to emotions as laid out in Sanskrit literature and treatises. But I place the greatest importance on a careful reading of the incidents of anger that occur in *Dalpat Vilas*, and how they are embedded in the larger narrative. That is, I ask in which specific social settings and power relations do the rulers get angry and what impact or consequences does their anger have on those around them? Scholars analysing medieval European texts suggest that royal rage could be a performance intended to convey a message, possibly even as parts of larger scripts that were well known to both actor and audience. The notion of embodied and enacted emotions is particularly apt in the case of the kinetic emperor Akbar, who could not read or write and whose 'understanding of the world

⁵ Talbot, 'Justifying Defeat', pp. 344–45; Allison Busch, 'Portrait of a Raja in a Badshah's World: Amrit Rai's Biography of Man Singh', *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55, no. 2/3 (2012), pp. 309–10.

⁶ I provide diacritical marks for these words and others that are italicized in this article, except in the case of titles of texts.

was constructed more via the medium of things and sensuous signs and less from abstract concepts and ideas'.⁷ Yet, comparison of *Dalpat Vilas*'s account of the 1578 hunt with several versions of it found in Indo-Persian histories suggests that Akbar's emotions and actions on this occasion were not easily understood by his various audiences, that this was no routine performance of a familiar script. The possibility that there were multiple emotional communities, following the thesis set forth by Barbara H. Rosenwein, the noted scholar of medieval Europe, is one explanation I advance for these divergences in the texts.⁸ For, as we will find, Akbar's anger was not visible to all.

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 R. in the Pakistan Punjab, 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 a smaller and smaller space. This type of ring-hunt, called a *qamargha* in Persian, was a Mughal favourite.⁹ Hunting was an activity popular with the Mughal emperors, often illustrated in court paintings from the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir. The specific forms of Mughal hunts like the *qamargha* had strong nomadic precedents going back to Central and Inner Asia, where hunting had implications for subsistence as well as for military purposes. Hunting had also long been considered an entirely appropriate sport for kings in India, although hunting for a living was despised. It was a means to publicly display the king's virility and prowess; thus, in addition to its practical benefits in terms of military training, hunting symbolized royal power and showcased the king's paramount status.

During the Mughal period, large entourages accompanied the emperor on his hunting expeditions, including many nobles and their armed

⁷ Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, p. 152.

⁸ Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006) and *Generations of Feeling, a History of Emotions, 600–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁹ The term ring-hunt comes from Thomas T. Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 26. *Dalpat Vilas* uses a similar term, *gherai ro sikār* or encirclement-hunt.

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.¹⁰ The double-page painting that this event's fame merited in the official history has been called the 'finest hunting scene' in *Akbarnama* (Figures 1 and 2).¹¹ It shows different kinds of creatures—deer, antelope, foxes, jackals, and the like—fleeing in panic within a circular arena, while Akbar hunts them down with both arrow and sword.¹² This striking illustration of the emperor's dominance over the world of animals also implies a similar command over humans.

By demonstrating their control over massive human and other resources while hunting, the Mughal emperors could awe the populace residing in areas distant from the centres of imperial power. Their hunting expeditions to far-flung corners of the empire were simultaneously exercises in the surveillance of local chiefs, who could be chastised for any failings and brought back into submission.¹³ Abu'l Fazl admits that hunts were a means of gathering intelligence when he states that 'the wise emperor's constant intention in hunting is to learn of events in the world without the scourge of imperial panoply or the interference of gossipy reporters ... so that he may bring down tyrannical bullies and promote obscure persons of worth'. In the case of the 1578 hunt, some recalcitrant chieftains from Baluchistan who had recently been pardoned met the emperor at Bhera, where he proceeded to 'raise them from the dust of humility' and reinstate them in the body politic

¹⁰ A. S. Pandian, 'Predatory Care: The Imperial Hunt in Mughal and British India', *The Journal of Historical Sociology* 14, no. 1 (2001), pp. 98, 106, n. 109; Allsen, *The Royal Hunt*, p. 97.

¹¹ Susan Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor: The Art of the Book, 1560–1660* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2002), p. 63. The painting is at the Victoria and Albert Museum (IS.2:55–1896, IS.2:56–1896) and is part of the first illustrated *Akbarnama*. Stronge dates it to 1590–95.

¹² Divyabhanusinh, 'Hunting in Mughal Painting', in *Flora and Fauna in Mughal Art*, (ed.) Som Prakash Verma (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 1999), p. 103. The 1567 *qamargha* is described in Abu'l Fazl, *The History of Akbar*, vol. 4, (ed. and trans.) Wheeler M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), pp. 239–43.

¹³ On Akbar using the pretext of a hunt to carry out a military expedition, see Wink, *Akbar*, pp. 36–44.



Figure 1. Akbar at the *qamargha* hunt of 1567, left-hand side. *Source*. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

by ‘assigning them places in the hunting circle’.¹⁴ In an often-cited article, Anand S. Pandian has insightfully read the imperial hunt as a metaphor for the Mughal mode of rule, which relentlessly weeded out any ‘thorns’ in the garden of empire. The Mughal hunt, in Pandian’s words, ‘took grandees, warlords and petty potentates as the preeminent objects of its

¹⁴ Abu’l Fazl, *The History of Akbar*, vol. 6, (ed. and trans.) Wheeler M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), pp. 17, 18.



Figure 2. Akbar at the *qamargha* hunt of 1567, right-hand side. *Source*: Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

fearful care, cultivating their faithful loyalty through the spectacular exercise of a predatory sovereignty'.¹⁵

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*

¹⁵ Pandian, 'Predatory Care', p. 81.

Vilas.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ When he returned to the temporary encampment where the court was staying, his lords (*thākur*) were playing *kabaddī*, a game involving the tagging of opponents for which the players wore bathing clothes (*potiyā*). The lords, who included both Muslims and Hindus, did not immediately rush back to their tents to change into court dress, thinking that the emperor might join them in play.

This proved to be a major miscalculation. 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 (*darbār*). 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 (*khijiyā*) 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!'¹⁸ My aides¹⁹ 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.'²⁰

¹⁶ The entire set of events relating to this hunt are covered on pp. 93–108 of *Dalpat Vilas*.

¹⁷ In the 1567 *qamargha*, the only hunter for the first five days was the emperor himself. Afterwards, his nobles were allowed to engage in hunting, and eventually even the lowly attendants.

¹⁸ *Pāṭisāhṅī sālāmmati*, literally 'to the emperor's well-being'!

¹⁹ *Mahsal*, the word I have translated as 'aide', means 'adviser' (*salāhkār*), according to Sitarām Lalas's *Rajasthani Sabad Kōs*. I thank Richard Saran for this information.

²⁰ *Dalpat Vilas*, pp. 97–98. All translations from *Dalpat Vilas* are mine. I am grateful to Richard Saran for sharing his translations, which I found very helpful, and for discussing certain passages with me at length. Any flaws in the translations are entirely my own.

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'? Then he said, 'Emperor, your good health! How would it be fitting that I should stop him from coming to your excellence's presence'? Then the Emperor ordered a whip be used. When a cowherder had whipped him once and stood waiting, just then the mother's brother²¹ 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 (*harāmjadā*)! And he asked for an elephant; he asked for the elephant that a tax collector²² 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.²³

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.

A better-known case of a Rajput lord stabbing himself with a dagger occurred a few years later in 1586, when the high-ranking Rajput lord Bhagwant Das of the Kachwaha family did so after his assurance of safety to an enemy was abrogated by Akbar.²⁴ The threat of suicide by dagger was a tactic used by the bards of western India, who often acted as sureties for safe passage of a caravan or the well-being of a hostage.

²¹ Prithidip's mother's brother is identified here as a Rindhirot Rajput by lineage.

²² The word used is *kiroṭī*, a Mughal revenue assessor and collector (Richard D. Saran and Norman P. Ziegler, *The Mertiyo Rathors of Merto, Rajasthan: Select Translations Bearing on the History of a Rajput Family, 1462–1660*, vol. 1 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Centers for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 2001), p. 244).

²³ *Dalpat Vilas*, pp. 99–100.

²⁴ A. L. Srivastava, *Akbar the Great*, vol. 1: *Political History 1542–1605 A.D.* (Agra: Shiva Lal Agarwala and Co, 1972), p. 325. During Jahangir's reign, the Rajput Rai Anup Singh struck a dagger in his own stomach when the emperor found fault with him (Z. A. Desai, *Nobility under the Great Mughals, Based on Dhakhiratul Khawanin of Shaikh Farid Bhakkari* (New Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 2003), p. 134).

It was effective in dissuading wrongdoers because bards were thought to possess sacred authority. Although Rajputs did not share that sacred character, they would have been familiar with the bardic practice of harming their own bodies as a form of protest. By employing it, Bhagwant Das could testify to the sincerity of his offer of refuge to an enemy and thus salvage his honour, as well as signify his grievance to the emperor who had repudiated his promise. When the tardy young Rajput's uncle stabbed himself in 1578, it was likely also a matter of honour, in an unspoken reproach for Akbar's injustice.

High-ranking nobles were seldom publicly injured or humiliated, unless they committed egregious breaches of etiquette such as appearing at court in an intoxicated state. Instead, the emperor sometimes verbally censured his nobles, and if they did not obey his commands to join a particular theatre of war or if they prosecuted a campaign poorly, he might take away territory or reduce their rank at court. However, the most common expression of his displeasure with elite officers was to forbid them from attending court. Physical punishment or public humiliation was generally reserved for subordinates at lower ranks, like Hamid Bakari, a minor court attendant, who had shot an arrow at a courtier during the *qamargha* of 1567.²⁵ When Akbar was informed of this, he handed over his sword to a nearby officer and told him to kill Hamid Bakari right there and then. Hamid miraculously remained unscathed even after two attempts to smite him, however, and so the emperor spared his life. But, according to the official history, 'in order to teach a lesson to other immoderates, his head was shaved and he was mounted on an ass and paraded around the hunting ground'.²⁶ The public shaming of this errant attendant was clearly intended as a deterrent; it was noteworthy enough to be included in both illustrated manuscripts of *Akbarnama*.²⁷

²⁵ *Akbarnama* describes him as a *yasāwal*, a 'horseman attendant upon a man of rank;—a state-messenger; an officer of parade, the mace-bearer who goes before carrying the wand of state; a pursuivant; a captain of the guard' (s.v. John T. Platts, *Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1884)).

²⁶ Abu'l Fazl, *History of Akbar*, vol. 4, p. 243.

²⁷ In the double-page painting of the 1567 hunt (Figure 2) in the first *Akbarnama* manuscript, Hamid Bakari appears in the upper right corner of the right-hand page. He is facing backwards on the ass, wearing only a lower garment, and is followed by a man with a raised staff who is clearly hustling him along and threatening violence. Hamid is just a small part of the dynamic scene at this hunt, where swirling animals were being chased by Akbar on horseback. In the second illustrated *Akbarnama*'s depiction of the 1567 hunt (Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession no. 30.95.174.8), Hamid is larger in size relative to the other figures and is placed in the foreground of

If court histories give an accurate picture overall of 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.²⁸ *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.

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.²⁹ 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 Kunwar³⁰ 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'.³¹ When the Emperor commanded thus, Man Singh carried out the

the painting rather than in the background. He looks weaker and sadder in this version, and is largely hairless, adding to his public humiliation.

²⁸ The Jesuit Father Monserrate is one of the few contemporaries of Akbar to describe him as severe in his punishment of nobles, who were held to a higher standard than others (Father Monserrate, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate*, (trans.) J. S. Hoyland and annotated S. N. Banerjee (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1922), pp. 205, 209–11).

²⁹ News that he was about to arrive at the encampment circulates among the Rajputs, who come out to formally welcome him (*Dalpat Vilas*, pp. 100–01). The information that Man Singh had come from Ajmer is found in Abu'l Fazl, *History of Akbar*, vol. 6, p. 23.

³⁰ *Kunwar* means boy or son, but was typically used in reference to high-ranking Rajputs in this era, thus denoting a young lord.

³¹ That is, 'make provisions for his cremation'. The word *khaphan* in the text (usually *kaphan*) means shroud. I thank Richard Saran for clarifying this point.

Emperor's command and went to look for him. And, from behind, the Emperor grumbled angrily (*bajariyā*).

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.³²

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*. I have been discussing anger thus far as if it were an unproblematic, universal category and, indeed, it is often considered to be one of the basic emotions that are shared by all humans, something innate and natural.³³ The universalist understanding of anger is facilitated by the fact that language used to describe the experience and manifestation of anger can often be understood across cultural boundaries and the expanse of time. Zoltán Kövecses argues, for instance, that metaphors in English, Hungarian, Chinese, and Japanese—four unrelated languages—indicate that 'all four cultures seem to conceptualize human beings as containers and anger (or its counterparts) as some kind of substance (a fluid or gas) inside the container'.³⁴ He calls this the 'pressurized container' metaphor and suggests that physiological responses to anger may contribute to the similarity in conceptual metaphors. Yet, even if we agree that many cultures share similar ways of talking about anger, we need not concede that emotions are innate

³² *Dalpat Vilas*, p. 102.

³³ The basic emotions often thought to be universal include 'happiness, anger, disgust, fear, sadness, and surprise'. The universalist stance is particularly prevalent in what Jan Plamper calls the life sciences: 'psychology, physiology, medicine, neurosciences, and related disciplines' (Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, (trans.) Keith Tribe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)), pp. 149, 8).

³⁴ Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 146; for the entire argument, see pp. 139–63. This metaphor is also called the hydraulic model.

and therefore uniform across cultures. Observations of people around the world have amply documented differences in the deployment of anger—that is, when and where and why it is permissible to be angry, and in what manner—as well as variations in the meaning or value placed on this emotion. Anger, like any other emotion, is shaped by its social context and is thus potentially highly variable according to the time, place, and other factors.³⁵

Recent approaches to the history of the emotions have sought to bridge the conceptual division between the interior experience of an emotion and the external expression of it. That is, instead of regarding the mental feeling as separate from its bodily manifestation (in a smile, frown, or speech-act, for example), scholars are increasingly viewing emotion as a combination of both. As Monique Scheer argues ‘emotions are something people experience *and* something they do. We *have* emotions and we *manifest* emotions’ (emphasis in original). This insistence on the embodiment of emotions in physical form situates them firmly in a social setting within which they interact and circulate.³⁶ Scheer’s influential approach to emotions as practice, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, focuses much attention on practices of the body, opening up a vast new range of source materials for emotion studies. Like Scheer, Margrit Pernau points out that emotions are circular in nature, ‘moving in both directions—from emotions felt to emotions expressed, certainly, but also from the expression and performance as well as the interpretation of emotions back to how a certain emotion is felt’.³⁷ The emotional-practices approach cannot be fully implemented in studies of single texts such as mine here, but its attention to bodily processes helps deepen our analysis.

Interest in South Asia’s emotional past has been late to develop, but it is now growing dramatically.³⁸ This scholarship is still appearing primarily in article-length form and much of the focus continues to be on love—a

³⁵ Barbara H. Rosenwein and Riccardo Cristiani, *What Is the History of Emotions?* (Cambridge, United Kingdom and Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2018), pp. 19–25.

³⁶ Monique Scheer, ‘Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion’, *History and Theory* 51 (2012), p. 195.

³⁷ Margrit Pernau, ‘Feeling Communities: Introduction’, *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 54, no. 1 (2017), p. 3. Pernau, a historian of nineteenth- and twentieth-century South Asia, has been by far the most active researcher into the region’s emotional history, with several books to her credit.

³⁸ For a good overview, see the appendix in Margrit Pernau, *Emotions and Modernity in Colonial India, from Balance to Fervor* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 272–85.

topic of long-standing popularity—along with a newer interest in nostalgia.³⁹ In a welcome move, some of the newest work on precolonial South Asia explores the emotional landscapes revealed in music, paintings, and gardens, as well as in poetry.⁴⁰ However, research on anger is mainly confined to a few scholars working on South Asia's recent past or its present, and not its more distant past.⁴¹ In one example, Imke Rajamani explores Bollywood films, in which 'anger in the popular public sphere' had earlier been regarded 'as a bad emotion—an uncontrollable passion that leads its bearers to commit inexcusable crimes against law and morality'.⁴² The situation changed in the 1970s and early 1980s, as the image of the angry young man, personified by the actor Amitabh Bachchan, captivated the world of Hindi cinema. The angry young man's rage was directed against corrupt politicians and greedy businessman against whom he had to fight; the popularity of films of this kind led to an expanded conception of anger that acknowledged the virtue of this emotion when it targeted social injustice, rather than viewing anger as entirely negative in nature.⁴³

Just as in Hindi films before the 1970s, so too did the Sanskrit literature of ancient and medieval India discourage the public display of anger. The

³⁹ Several special issues on emotion history have appeared in journals in the last few years: 'Space and Emotions in South Asian History', (ed.) Razak Khan, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58, no. 5 (2015), pp. 611–755; 'Emotion Concepts in Urdu and Bengali', (ed.) Margrit Pernau, *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 11, no. 1 (2016), pp. 24–106; 'Feeling Modern: The History of Emotions in Urban South Asia', (eds.) Elizabeth Chatterjee, Sneha Krishnan, and Megan Eaton Robb, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* series 3, 27, no. 4 (2017), pp. 539–680; 'Feeling Communities', (ed.) Margrit Pernau, *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 54, no. 1 (2017), pp. 1–145. In addition, South Asia is the focus of almost all of the essays in *Historicizing Emotions: Practices and Objects in India, China, and Japan*, (ed.) Barbara Schuler (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

⁴⁰ See, for example, Inke Rajamani, Margrit Pernau, and Katherine Butler Schofield (eds.), *Monsoon Feelings: A History of Emotions in the Rain* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2018); Katherine Butler Schofield, 'Learning to Taste the Emotions: The Mughal Rasika', in *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature and Performance in North India*, (eds.) Francesca Orsini and Katherine Butler Schofield (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015), pp. 407–21.

⁴¹ See, for example, Margrit Pernau, 'Male Anger and Female Malice: Emotions in Indo-Muslim Advice Literature', *History Compass* 10, no. 2 (2012), pp. 119–28.

⁴² Imke Rajamani, 'Pictures, Emotions, Conceptual Change: Anger in Popular Hindi Cinema', *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 7, no. 2 (2012), p. 69.

⁴³ The feeling of moral outrage has also been analysed by scholars of the popular politics of emotion in South Asia, who have noted the significance of anger in mobilizing collective action by 'outraged communities'. See Amélie Blom and Nicolas Jaoul, 'Introduction. The Moral and Affectual Dimensions of Collective Action in South Asia', *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal (SAMAJ)* 2 (2008).

aversion toward expressions of anger had religious roots, for desire and other strong emotions were identified in much ancient Indian thought as the culprits that bound humans to the relentless wheel of birth and rebirth. In the words of the celebrated *Bhagavadgīta*, a sermon by the god Krishna on the eve of battle:

It is desire (*kāma*) and anger (*krodha*), arising
from nature's quality of passion;
know it here as the enemy,
voracious and very evil!⁴⁴

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 *kāma* (desire or pleasure) and *krodha* (anger or wrath), and strive for self-control.⁴⁵ The premier work on statecraft, the *Arthashastra*, went so far as to state that 'this entire treatise boils down to the mastery over the senses'.⁴⁶ 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.'⁴⁷

Here, greed (*lobha*) and pride (*mān*) also figure as repugnant qualities, and we sometimes get references to other feelings that should be repressed or set aside, but *kāma* and *krodha* are the most frequently cited emotions to avoid.⁴⁸ Elsewhere in the epic, Yudhishthira's wife

⁴⁴ Verse 3.37 in Barbara Stoler Miller, *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991).

⁴⁵ See, for example, verses 7.32–52 in *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Manava-Dharmasastra* by Patrick Olivelle and Suman Olivelle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 155–56, 617–21.

⁴⁶ Kauṭilya and Patrick Olivelle, *Kīng, Governance and Law in Ancient India: Kautilya's Arthashastra, a New Annotated Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 71.

⁴⁷ Verse 12.59.110 in *The Mahabharata*, vol. 7 (*Book 11: The Book of the Women. Book 12: The Book of Peace, Part One*), (trans. and ed.) James L. Fitzgerald (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 310.

⁴⁸ On *krodha*, see Minoru Hara, 'Hindu Concepts of Anger: Manyu and Krodha', in *Le Parole e i Marmi: Studi in Onore di Raniero Gnoli nel suo 70 compleanno*, (ed.) Raffaele Torella (Roma: Istituto Italiano Per L'Africa e L'Oriente, 2001), pp. 419–44.

Draupadi chastises him for not being furious at his rival cousins, who unfairly forced them into exile in the forest. Yudhishtira, the son of Dharma (righteousness), responds with a discourse on the dangers of anger and goes on to extol the importance of self-mastery through the practice of *kṣamā*—forbearance or forgiveness.⁴⁹ By the early medieval era, behaving in a disciplined manner was enjoined not only for the rulers but for all members of the upper class.⁵⁰ The emphasis in Sanskrit courtly literature was on courtesy, modesty, aesthetic refinement, and comportment: restrained qualities that are missing from the action-oriented and violent world of the vernacular Rajput chronicle.

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 Asvatthama, 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. Asvatthama's *krodha* wells up from his inner depths,⁵¹ causing his eyes to get bloodshot and bulge out—an example of the 'pressurized container' metaphor described by Kövecses.⁵² The effects of Asvatthama's rage are compared to what happens when a fire blows through dry grass, and his own body too is 'burnt up with rage'.⁵³

The descriptions of anger here and elsewhere in India's foremost martial epic tend to be superficial, repetitive, and short—in other words, not very complex. These images of anger composed in a time and place far distant are familiar to us even today: we too burn with the anger that blazes through us, and our eyes can also turn red from rage. This makes it easy to dismiss anger as an object of analysis, for what, one might ask, can really be said about it? The contrast with our

⁴⁹ Verses 3(31)30.1–50 in *The Mahabharata*, vol. 2 (*Book 2: The Book of the Assembly Hall, Book 3: The Book of the Forest*), (trans. and ed.) J. A. B. van Buitenen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 277–79.

⁵⁰ Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁵¹ Kate Crosby (trans.), *Mahabharata Book Ten, Dead of the Night, Book Eleven, The Women* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 37.

⁵² For the former, see *ibid.*, p. 11; for the latter, see W. J. Johnson (trans.), *The Sautrikaparvan of the Mahabharata: The Massacre at Night* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), IV.20 on p. 19.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, III.28 on p. 16 and I.33 on p. 7.

scholarly attitude toward *kāma* is quite striking. We might consider ‘desire’ to be a human universal, but not so in the case of other English words we use for *kāma*: ‘pleasure’ (and not only sexual pleasure) and ‘love’. Certainly in the case of romantic love, it is not difficult to accept that an emotion can be socially constructed, that it might vary depending on when, where, and whom.⁵⁴ And we appreciate that love in South Asia comes in an array of ‘idioms’, to use Francesca Orsini’s phrasing: not just the concept of *kāma*, but also *ishq*, *prem*, and *viraha*.⁵⁵

Natyasastra, the foundational text of Indian drama, does acknowledge that anger comes in different shapes and forms, even though it associates anger most closely with warriors and warfare.⁵⁶ In this treatise, the main focus is on *rasa* or ‘taste’—an emotional state enacted by a character within a dramatic performance. These ‘tastes’ were based on one of the eight stable (*sthāyī*) emotions, or *bhāva*: desire (*rati*), amusement (*hāsa*), grief (*śoka*), anger (*krodha*), determination/enthusiasm (*utsāha*), fear (*bhaya*), revulsion (*jugupsa*), and amazement (*vismaya*).⁵⁷ These are all feelings that can be enacted visibly and therefore performed on stage, so we cannot take them as a complete list of the important emotions recognized in Indian thought. Later on, when aesthetic theory was applied to literature rather than drama, other sentiments that do not manifest themselves as obviously in physical form—like motherly love or peacefulness—also came to be regarded as emotions.⁵⁸

Despite its essentially performative orientation, the *Natyasastra* remains valuable as our primary source of information on ancient conceptions relating to the emotions. It provides ‘a comprehensive theory of emotion’, in Vinay Dharwadker’s opinion, and ‘unites the arts by placing emotion (as distinct from, say, perception and judgment) at the

⁵⁴ This is precisely what William M. Reddy has argued in his recent book, *The Making of Romantic Love: Longing and Sexuality in Europe, South Asia, and Japan, 900–1200 CE* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

⁵⁵ Francesca Orsini, ‘Introduction’, in *Love in South Asia: A Cultural History*, (ed.) F. Orsini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 1.

⁵⁶ There is some disagreement as to its date. Sheldon Pollock describes it as ‘a composite text the core of which is probably not later than the fourth century’ (‘From Rasa Seen to Rasa Heard’, in *Aux abords de la clairière*, (eds.) Caterina Guenzi and Sylvia d’Intino (Paris: Brepols, 2012), p. 192).

⁵⁷ Sheldon Pollock (trans. and ed.), *A Rasa Reader: Classical Indian Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), pp. 50–51; *The Natya Sastra of Bharatamuni*, 2nd rev. ed. (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publication, 2000), p. 71.

⁵⁸ Pollock, ‘From Rasa Seen to Rasa Heard’.

centre of aesthetic theory and practice'.⁵⁹ In discussing *krodha* or anger, *Natyasastra* lists four types of anger differentiated by the person to whom it is directed—enemy, teacher, lover, or servant—as well as a fifth category of simulated anger. Anger at an enemy was to be expressed on stage with arched eyebrows, the biting of lips, the rubbing of hands, and the actor's looking at his own arms and those of the enemy.⁶⁰ The *rasa* or 'taste' associated with the emotion of anger is the violent or wrathful, *raudra*, which is 'produced by battles, striking, wounding, killing, cutting and by violence, etc.' and 'is to be acted by using various weapons and cutting off heads, arms, etc.'⁶¹ While it acknowledges that the emotion comes in various shades, the first and foremost context for anger in the *Natyasastra* is that of violence and warfare. Others may also feel anger, but the quintessential experience of it is the warrior's.

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 (a form of Rajasthani), the same language used in the more famous *Khyat* by Munhanot Nainsi.⁶² Secondly, it is also unusual in being composed in prose instead of verse, which was far more widespread in precolonial Indian literature. As a prose work, *Dalpat Vilas* foregoes the fulsome praise and elaborate embellishment that is typical of the courtly *mahākāvya* poems, composed in both Sanskrit and classical Hindi. In contrast, *Dalpat Vilas* favours a

⁵⁹ Vinay Dharwadker, 'Emotion in Motion: The Natyashastra, Darwin, and Affect Theory', *PMLA* 130, no. 5 (2015), pp. 1381–82.

⁶⁰ Adya Rangacharya, *The Natyasastra: English Translation with Critical Notes*, rev. ed. (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1996), p. 66.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁶² John D. Smith, 'An Introduction to the Language of the Historical Documents from Rajasthan', *Modern Asian Studies* 9, no. 4 (1975), pp. 434–35.

matter-of-fact tone, straightforward 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.⁶³ The emphasis on extensive reporting gives the text a more historical feel and differentiates it from the eulogies to their patrons that were the standard fare of court poets. Yet it is important to note that *Dalpat Vilas* never presents its protagonist Dalpat in a bad light, no matter how much unsavoury activity by other high-ranking men it describes.

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 1612–13.⁶⁴ He was soon deposed by the Mughal emperor Jahangir due to his refusal to obey commands and was killed by another noble shortly thereafter.⁶⁵ 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.⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷ This means that Dalpat's male relatives and

⁶³ Dasharatha Sharma, 'Dalpatvilas: Itihas ki Drsti se Samiksan', in *Dalpat Vilas*, p. 16.

⁶⁴ Karni Singh, *The Relations of the House of Bikaner with the Central Powers* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1974), pp. 66–69. Karni Singh gives Dalpat's birth date as 24 January 1565.

⁶⁵ The exact date of his death is not known, but it must have been in either 1613 or 1614 (Z. A. Desai, *The Dhakhirat ul-Khawanin of Shaikh Farid Bhakkari* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1993), p. 159; Nur al-Din Muhammad Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*, (trans. and ed.) Wheeler M. Thackston (Washington, DC; New York: Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery; Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 155–56).

⁶⁶ The manuscript bears a stamp bearing the name Prince Anup Singh, in reference to the well-known bibliophile who became king of Bikaner in 1669 CE (Rawat Saraswat, 'Bhumika [Introduction]', in *Dalpat Vilas*, p. 1). While this might be the original manuscript that the prince collected for his private library, it seems more likely that it is a copy he commissioned that was never completed.

⁶⁷ In its first few pages, *Dalpat Vilas* describes Dalpat Singh as the heir apparent and the father of three sons. Thus, the text must have been written before 1612, when Dalpat became king, and after the middle of 1578, when Dalpat (born in 1565) did not yet have any sons.

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.

We do not know when *Dalpat Vilas* was written nor who wrote it—details that are often provided in the final pages of Indian manuscripts, sadly missing in this case. But the best estimates place its composition between 1595 and 1600—a time when Dalpat's father would still have been the Bikaner king.⁶⁸ *Dalpat Vilas* is a departure from the norm for early modern Rajasthani or Hindi (Brajbhasha) historical texts in a variety of ways, beginning with the fact that its protagonist was still a young lord rather than a king or lineage head. At 44 folios in length,⁶⁹ *Dalpat Vilas* also falls into a class of its own among prose genres in Rajasthani—it is much longer than the *vāt* or tale (typically an episode pertaining to a single individual) and much shorter than the *khyāt* or chronicle (typically an extensive work covering one or more dynasties).⁷⁰ Nor does the unknown author appear to have been a member of the bardic communities who are most often associated with the composition and recitation of both prose and verse works commemorating Rajputs.⁷¹

Dalpat Vilas's early date accounts for much of its historiographic significance, for few other texts from Rajput courts cover the 1570s, the critical period when emperor Akbar was consolidating his power in Rajasthan and Gujarat.⁷² Dalpat's lineage, the Rathors of Bikaner in north-western Rajasthan, became staunch supporters of the Mughal empire in 1570, just two years after Akbar's infamous siege and sacking of the formidable Rajput stronghold at Chittaur—an act that amply demonstrated the extent of Mughal might. Although the Bikaner Rathors never attained the prominence of the Kachwahas of Amer, who had allied themselves with the Mughals as early as 1562, they were

⁶⁸ Saraswat, 'Bhumika', p. 7. Sharma also estimates its date at *circa* 1600 ('Dalpatvilas', p. 3).

⁶⁹ The folios are 10.4" x 4.6" in size, in the traditional Indic *pothī* format derived from palm leaves, with large lettering (Saraswat, 'Bhumika', p. 1; see also the photocopies of the manuscript that immediately follow Saraswat's essay).

⁷⁰ Manohar Prabhakar, *A Critical Study of Rajasthani Literature* (Jaipur: Panchsheel Prakashan, 1976), pp. 59–62, 105–20.

⁷¹ Sharma, 'Dalpatvilas', p. 1.

⁷² According to Dasharatha Sharma, this work 'though fragmentary in character, has great value as the earliest known Rajput source for Mughal-Rajput relations' ('Two Important Sources of Rajput History', p. 125).

among the most influential of Akbar's Rajput subordinates.⁷³ In *Dalpat Vilas*, members of the Bikaner royal family are depicted as quite mobile, often being summoned to Akbar's presence wherever he might be holding court at the moment. At other times, they were stationed outside their home territory guarding a fort or on a military campaign at Akbar's behest, helping the emperor to expand his realm. Our incomplete manuscript of *Dalpat Vilas* only narrates events up to the middle of 1578; at that point in time, Akbar had control over much of northern and western India and had made inroads into eastern India.⁷⁴

Intended for a warrior audience, one might expect *Dalpat Vilas* to be replete with examples of fuming fighters yet that is not the case. Only two individuals are said to be angry more than once and they are the two most powerful men appearing in this chronicle: the Mughal emperor Akbar and Dalpat's father Raja Ray Singh, who ruled the Bikaner kingdom in subservience to the Mughals. Ray Singh had fought on Akbar's behalf in both Gujarat and Rajasthan before he ascended the Bikaner throne in 1574, and in later years would become one of the greatest lords in the Mughal empire. It is no coincidence that anger is primarily the preserve of these two rulers—a point to which I will return. Overall, however, *Dalpat Vilas* is strikingly devoid of affect, of feelings and moods. Its prose is simple and even pedestrian—full of short declarative sentences with few adjectives or adverbs and frequent repetition of verbs of motion. The following passage is typical of the chronicle's literary style:

The Emperor conquered Surat, entrusted it to Kilac Khan, and departed for Fatehpur Sikri. He left Ajj Koko in Ahmadabad and set out for Sikri. Ray Kalyanmal and Kunwar Ray Singh were in Jodhpur and went and met with the Emperor in Ajmer. There he gave Kalyanmal a robe of honour (*sirpāw*), an elephant and horses, and sent him to Bikaner. The Emperor proceeded on to Sikri.⁷⁵

⁷³ G. S. L. Devra, 'Raja, Mansab and Jagir—a Re-Examination of Mughal-Rajput Relations During the Reign of Akbar', in *Akbar and His Age*, (ed.) I. A. Khan (New Delhi: ICHR and Northern Book Centre, 1999), p. 72.

⁷⁴ Akbar was 35 years old and in the 23rd year of his reign in 1578.

⁷⁵ *Dalpat Vilas*, p. 21. In the passage quoted above, the Bikaner king and his son travel to Akbar's presence and receive honours from him after a successful military campaign in Gujarat. The use of titles in this passage clarifies the hierarchy of political power. Akbar bears the title *pātisāh*, derived from the Persian word *pādishāh*, meaning a great king or emperor. The Bikaner king bears the title *rājy*, a variant of *raja*, while his son Ray Singh (Dalpat's father) is a *kunwar*, meaning young lord or prince.

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 the almost barren emotional terrain of *Dalpat Vilas*.

Here I need to be more transparent about my own interpretive practices, for I am accepting only two terms in the original text as equivalents of the English anger or angry. There are several other words that indicate similar but less intense states: being displeased at, offended by, hostile toward, or thinking badly of someone.⁷⁶ The primary word I translate as getting angry is the verb *khijāṇau/khijāṇau*, whose modern Hindi variant (*khijnā*) implies irritation and vexation.⁷⁷ 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 all 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,⁷⁸ 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 (*khijiyā*), so much so that he would have had him killed right there.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ One example of such a word is *īv burā* with the verb 'to be' or 'to do', which could be translated as 'displeased'; another is *kumayā* with the verb 'to do', meaning something like 'antagonistic' or 'hostile'.

⁷⁷ *S.v.* *khijnā* and *khijlānā* in R. S. McGregor's *Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*; *khijnā* in Syamsundar Das's *Hindi Sabdasagar*; and *khijāṇau/khijāṇau* in Sitaram Lalas's *Rajasthanī Sabad Kōs*.

⁷⁸ This involved 'placing the back of the right hand on the ground, and then raising it gently till the person stands erect, when he puts the palm of his hand upon the crown of his head, which pleasing manner of saluting signifies that he is ready to give himself as an offering' (Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 158).

⁷⁹ *Dalpat Vilas*, pp. 48–49.

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 *khijaṇau/khījaṇau*, just as in the case of Akbar and his Rajput lords.⁸⁰

Elsewhere in the chronicle, the second term that I translate as angry is used to describe the rage Raja Ray Singh felt toward his son Bhopat.⁸¹ Relations between father and son had been tense for some time when the following episode occurred:

Then the Raja became furious (*ṛīśāṃṇā*) 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 Jasantde 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.⁸²

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 a valued military officer in the Mughal army, serving in areas as far apart as the Punjab, Bengal, Baluchistan, Sind, and the Deccan.⁸³ Despite his illustrious career and extensive

⁸⁰ The only other time the verb appears in the text is in reference to the young Dalpat Singh (*Dalpat Vilas*, p. 72). He does not follow through with physical violence, unlike his father and the Mughal emperor, but he does rebuke some older men who had just killed one of his father's brothers. For more on relationships within the Bikaner royal family, see Cynthia Talbot, 'Caught in a Conflict of Loyalties: Rathor Ramsingh's Death, 1577', *Comparative Studies in South Asia and the Middle East*, forthcoming.

⁸¹ The verb is *ṛīśanau*, from the Sanskrit root *ṛīś*; *Dalpat Vilas*, p. 34.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ For details on Ray Singh's career, see Karni Singh, *Relations of Bikaner with Central Powers*, pp. 43–65.

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. In addition to abusing his son Bhopat, the raja was also overbearing in his dealings with his own brothers, whom he would verbally chastise if their behaviour did not meet his approval. When furious at his kin, the raja might even send armed men against them, in order to ensure their obedience.

In Raja Ray Singh's angry outbursts, we witness resonances of Akbar's rage during the *qamargha*. The anger that was aroused in the emperor by the offence of insufficient subservience was repeatedly given expression through the public whipping of the offenders. Royal rage and corporal punishment are thus closely linked, with the former leading rapidly to the latter, as the indignant ruler displayed his displeasure by exercising his right to punish others. Like the furious emperor, the irate Bikaner king Ray Singh ordered the insolent Rajput warrior Kesav to be killed immediately and tried to beat his son for neglecting his princely duties. In *Dalpat Vilas*, anger was an emotion associated with rulers that could lead to physical harm and even death for the targets of their emotion.

We could read the narratives relating to both king and emperor as critiques of their lack of self-control and their excessive anger, for they clearly do not possess the kind of detachment and restraint that Sanskrit literature lauded. From our viewpoint today, both rulers acted in an arbitrary and unjust manner, displaying their flawed and even tyrannical characters. The Bikaner raja, who figures in much more of the chronicle than the Mughal emperor, is explicitly said to be feared by those around him, as was his father.⁸⁴ Even though the words 'fear' or 'afraid' appear fewer than ten times, fear is still the second most frequently mentioned emotion in *Dalpat Vilas*.⁸⁵ It is generally used to explain why a person of inferior status did not take some desirable action, due to his fear of how someone more powerful might react. Fear was aroused not only by rulers, but also by men like Dalpat's unruly and violent uncles whom his personal retinue was afraid to face in battle—it was the unpredictable and potentially extremely dangerous

⁸⁴ *Dalpat Vilas*, pp. 25, 65, 66, 76–77.

⁸⁵ In order to express the emotion of being afraid, the chronicle in most cases employs either the Sanskrit noun *bhaya* ('fear') or a vernacular verb *bhīno*, which is derived from the Sanskrit root *bhī*. See also, *Dalpat Vilas*, pp. 55, 90–91.

responses of kings and leading warriors that struck terror into the hearts of others.

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. This was congenial to the Mughals, who preferred to deal with a clearly designated leader, but since the Bikaner Rathors had submitted to the empire less than a decade earlier, Ray Singh's position was still tenuous at the time of the 1578 hunt. This meant that he could not permit practices that might have been tolerated in the past, like various incidents of looting by his brothers and Kesav's failure to be respectful to an imperial official, if he were to retain the emperor's favour. In order to maintain his status as 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.⁸⁶ Both Wink and Harbans Mukhia—no doubt influenced by Norbert Elias's emphasis on the role of court etiquette—have noted that a similar desire for control over his subordinates led to the increasingly formal procedures and protocols at Akbar's court.⁸⁷ Pandian, in his casting of Mughal rule as a form of predatory care, also emphasized their disciplining and punishment of insubordinate underlings. We could, in that light, interpret the whipping of the tardy nobles as an effort by Akbar to enforce new norms of obedience and deference.

⁸⁶ Wink, *Akbar*, pp. 38, 45.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 45–57; Harbans Mukhia, *The Mughals of India* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 72–111.

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*, strive to regulate the conduct of his family members. Furthermore, royal rage seemingly served as an explanation for the ensuing act of punishment involving physical violence. Punishment was central to the king's role in Sanskrit thought, for, without his intervention, the world would devolve into a state of chaos where the bigger fish would devour the smaller (*mātsya-nyāya* or the law of the fish). The standard word for punishment in Sanskrit treatises was *danḍa*, meaning the staff or rod used to inflict blows, which symbolized the king's legitimate use of force, without which the world could not function. Indeed, the *Arthasastra* uses the term 'administration of the staff' (*danḍa-mīti*) as a synonym for government, since the staff represented 'the theoretically constructive use of violence in service of upholding justice, preserving public order, and empowering the king'.⁸⁸ However, the king's punishment was supposed to be applied without passion, anger, or contempt; if punishment was not administered properly, it would wreak havoc on the kingdom.⁸⁹ In its depiction of royal rage preceding punishment, *Dalpat Vilas* therefore departs from the conventional stance in Sanskrit tradition.

The emperor Akbar who figures in the hunting episode of *Dalpat Vilas* is also far from the ideal ruler found in the Persian ethical literature (*akhlāq*) and 'mirror of princes' genre meant to advise rulers on proper behaviour. Persianate thought did not advocate the elimination of all emotions, unlike the injunctions against desire and anger in Indic tradition, but it sought foremost for balance. This is the message of the highly regarded work on ethics *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*; written in Persian in the thirteenth century, it circulated widely and was prescribed reading for Akbar's officials.⁹⁰ In the first section of the text, covering virtues and vices, its author Nasir al-Din al-Tusi declares: 'Anger is tyranny and a departure from equilibrium in the direction of excess.'⁹¹ He goes on to denounce angry

⁸⁸ Patrick Olivelle and Mark McClish (eds.), *Arthasastra: Selections from the Classic Indian Work on Statecraft* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2012), p. xxxix.

⁸⁹ Upinder Singh, *Political Violence in Ancient India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 113; Olivelle and Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law*, pp. 154–55.

⁹⁰ Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam, India 1200–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 61.

⁹¹ Nasir al-Din Tusi, *The Nasirean Ethics*, (trans.) G. M. Wickens (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964), p. 133.

men because they ‘constantly torment’ their friends, family, servants, and womenfolk ‘with the scourge of punishment, neither overlooking their stumbles, nor having compassion on their helplessness, nor accepting (the fact of) their being without fault’.⁹² A similar exhortation for equilibrium in one’s emotional state is found in *Mau’izah-i Jahangiri*, a Persian ‘mirror of princes’ composed at the court of Akbar’s successor, Jahangir. While ‘opportune anger’ is said to be better for rulers than too much forbearance, the author also declares that the ‘ruler who is illuminated by the light of intellect, adorned by the ornament of wisdom, and distinguished by Eternal bounty attempts to extinguish flames of rage’.⁹³

Scholarship on the moral implications of royal anger in medieval Europe suggests there was considerable variation in thought, particularly depending on the time period. While the anger of kings was regarded as a sin and a sign of deficient moral stature in much of early medieval European literature, dominated as it was by clerical sensibilities, the concept of the just anger of kings was evoked by some authors in the twelfth century, and could be linked to the righteous anger of God.⁹⁴ Even within the same time period, however, a range of attitudes can be detected. As Barbara H. Rosenwein observes, ‘an entire repertory of conflicting norms persisted side-by-side throughout the Middle Ages. Some condemned anger outright; others sought to temper it; still others justified it’.⁹⁵ Whether it was approved of or not, however, anger was an emotion that was closely linked to kings and lords in medieval Europe, just as in *Dalpat Vilas*. Rather than indicating a reprehensible loss of control, some scholars argue that royal rage was deployed deliberately in medieval Europe, for political purposes and for public consumption, with established conventions.⁹⁶ Regarding royal rage, Gerd Althoff asserts: ‘Communication in medieval public life was decisively determined by demonstrative acts and behaviors ... Many of

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁹³ Muhammad Baqir Najm-i Sani, *Advice on the Art of Governance: Mau’izah-i Jahangiri of Muhammad Baqir Najm-i Sani*, (trans.) Sajida Sultana Alvi (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p. 51.

⁹⁴ See the essays in Barbara H. Rosenwein (ed.), *Anger’s Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), especially those by Gerd Althoff and Richard E. Barton.

⁹⁵ Barbara H. Rosenwein, ‘Controlling Paradigms’, in *Anger’s Past*, (ed.) B. Rosenwein, pp. 242–43.

⁹⁶ Stephen D. White, ‘The Politics of Anger’, in *Anger’s Past*, (ed.) B. Rosenwein, pp. 127–52.

the mannerisms of medieval communication, which may appear to us overemotionalized, were bound up with this demonstrative function—especially the demonstration of anger.⁹⁷

Should we understand the anger of rulers in *Dalpat Vilas*, along the same lines, as a performance following a well-known social script, meant to legitimize the violence that followed? This vernacular chronicle consistently attributes the emotion of violent anger to the king and emperor, and to them alone, in a departure from the norms of Sanskrit literature in which anger was linked more to warriors than to their lords. For the author of *Dalpat Vilas*, royal rage was a familiar phenomenon associated with those wielding the highest political power, which caused fear in their subordinates. Yet this anger could have unpredictable and alarming consequences, as the next section of *Dalpat Vilas*'s account demonstrates. If royal rage was indeed a performance, its message was by no means reassuring to the chronicle's Rajput audience.

Accounting for Akbar's aberrant actions

When we paused in our narration of the chronicle's plot some pages ago, Akbar had just sent the Kachwaha lord Man Singh to check on the injured Rajput, who soon died. Upon Man Singh's return to Akbar's tent to report this fact, he found the emperor raving (*bakai chai*), as if he had become another man. Akbar proceeded to say and do a series of things that made little sense. First, his utterances concerned food:

'There's a cow; you Hindus should eat it. And you Muslims should eat a pig. If neither of you would customarily eat a ram, then throw the ram in a pot and cook it. If the ram should become a pig, then the Hindus and Muslims should get together and eat it. If it becomes a cow, the Hindus and Muslims should get together and eat it. If it becomes a pig, then the Muslims should eat it; if it becomes a cow, then the Hindus should eat it. Why, that will be a divine mix!' He was raving like this and began to rave about other things too.⁹⁸

Then Akbar turned his attention to his own appearance:

Removing his turban, the Emperor summoned barbers and said, 'Cut my hair'. When he spoke like this, it made all the barbers run away. Then, he pulled a

⁹⁷ Gerd Althoff, 'Ira Regis: Prolegomena to a History of Royal Anger', in *Anger's Past*, (ed.) B. Rosenwein, p. 74.

⁹⁸ *Dalpat Vilas*, p. 103.

dagger out and began to chop at his hair himself. Then Sah Phatlah grabbed the Emperor's hands. Jain Khan and Sekh Pharid grabbed the dagger from the Emperor's hands. Then Sah Phatlah said, 'if the Emperor's hair has to be cut, then it should get cut [by someone else]'. He said to all the nobles (*umrāw*), 'Get the turbans off your heads'. Then they all removed their turbans. Removing them, the Hindus and Muslims tucked the turbans under their arms. Man Singh also took his off and tucked it under his arm. The Emperor had his hair cut.⁹⁹

After this, the emperor looked at the Hindu lords and started praising some lineages while denigrating others. Eventually, half the night having passed in this bizarre manner, one of the older Muslim nobles gently led Akbar to his tent. In the morning, the Hindu lords did their prayers and prepared themselves for the worst, in case death was in store. But nothing threatening occurred the next day; instead, the emperor had his beard shaved, tore his turban into fragments, and then distributed the pieces to the various lords, saying that he would ask for them back in the future when they mounted an assault on a foreign land (*firaṅg*). He was even pleased (*rajū huyā*) by a short, whimsical conversation he had with the young Dalpat about the imaginary future campaign. At this point, Akbar decided to call an end to the hunt and ordered the release of the many animals confined within the enclosure. He then secluded himself for five days within his own quarters, before finally leaving the temporary encampment.¹⁰⁰

The chronicler makes it clear that Akbar's nobles were apprehensive, not knowing what to make of the emperor's unexpected behaviour; it was so peculiar that all the Hindu lords got prepared to die. Fearing possible danger to Dalpat, the young heir to the Bikaner throne, the influential Rajput lord Man Singh Kachwaha even tried to send him away from the camp during the night, for safety's sake. The sense that things were out of kilter, that Akbar had somehow lost his balance, is conveyed in the chronicle's reports on Akbar's inversions of normal conduct—his shouting that Hindus should eat beef and Muslims pork, his cutting of his hair, and his release of the animals that had been rounded up with so much effort for the hunt. Akbar was transgressing conventional social boundaries by calling on Hindus and Muslims to eat food that was prohibited by their religions, by adopting a more austere style of hair, and by turning the captive animal prey loose. This

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 103–04. Some Persian accounts state that Akbar's companions followed his example.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 104–08.

was so far beyond the pale that the poet abandoned his use of the verb ‘to be angry’ (*khijānau/khijānau*) and replaced it with the word ‘to rave, babble’ (*bakānau*), when describing Akbar’s emotional condition after the Rajput stabbed himself. The emperor had gone beyond the normal realm of anger into some other, extraordinary, state. From *Dalpat Vilas*’s point of view, Akbar experienced a type of madness or mental disorder. A prolonged period of royal rage had deranged the emperor and transformed him into something different (*aur rūp huyā*).

Dalpat Vilas’s interpretation of Akbar’s experience during the hunt—first rage, then remorse, and finally raving—is not shared by the official history of Akbar’s reign, the *Akbarnama*. In the respectful gaze of its author Abu’l Fazl, what Akbar underwent was a mystical vision rather than an emotional collapse. While Abu’l Fazl’s *Akbarnama* and *Dalpat Vilas* agree that something out of the ordinary happened to the emperor, leading him to set free the animals that had been rounded up for the hunt, *Akbarnama* presents the incident in these highly positive terms:

In this wilderness the seeker for the truth stepped into the wilderness of search, adorning the fray of battle with himself in the park of prey-taking and giving splendid isolation to the private chamber of worship. Since he who seeks finds, the lamp of insight was lit, and the emperor was seized with a great joy. The tug of divine cognition cast a ray. Superficial persons of limited capacity would not be able to comprehend it if it were spoken, and not every wise person of enlightened mind could understand it... How could those who quaff wine at the banquet of the imperial presence know, without downing a distillation of that wine, what ecstasy is or of what insight consists? ...

Some sharp minds who are granted audience believe that the workers of creation have placed world-adorning beauty in the splendour of his insight and that in his heart, which is intimate with the secrets of holiness, he speaks the language of heaven. Other courtiers think that he met a hermit in that wilderness and attained his desire ... Some farsighted intimates think the animals of that plain divulged divine mysteries to him either in an unspoken tongue or in some common tongue. In any case, for a long time he who penetrates into the reality of unity was drowned in the lights of divine manifestation.¹⁰¹

In these statements, Abu’l Fazl suggests that what befell Akbar was hard to describe and could not be readily understood by others. It is presented as some sort of spiritual experience involving a feeling of joy and closeness to God, not remotely related to anger.

¹⁰¹ Abu’l Fazl, *History of Akbar*, vol. 6, pp. 20–21.

Abu'l Fazl's emphasis on the religious dimensions of Akbar's anomalous behaviour at this hunt is part of his larger effort to portray the emperor as a superior man and semi-divine leader.¹⁰² This was not the first mystical vision reported for the emperor in *Akbarnama*, which also mentions an earlier incident in January 1571. As proof of the divine favour shown to Akbar, Abu'l Fazl narrates that he once got separated from his retinue when hunting in the desert, grew so thirsty that he lost the ability to speak, and went into a trance. Fortunately, on that occasion, 'the guides of the divine court led the water carriers through the trackless desert' and the emperor was successfully rescued.¹⁰³ Experiences like these are presented in *Akbarnama* as manifestations of Akbar's saintliness and spiritual authority for, as Azfar Moin reminds us, 'madness was a socially recognized station on the way to sainthood'.¹⁰⁴ The figure of the 'holy fool' (*majdhūb*), possessed by divine madness and indifferent to everyday cares, was well known in the Islamic world.¹⁰⁵ In his role as sacred sovereign, it was acknowledged that Akbar might behave in ways that deviated from the actions of regular men, precisely because he had greater spiritual insight.

Along the same lines of construing Akbar's conduct as divinely inspired, Abu'l Fazl casts the emperor's surprising decision to free the captive animals not as aberrant behaviour but as an act of gratitude for the religious blessing he had received. According to *Akbarnama*:

When the workers in the secret workshop of divine will let him down from the world of souls so that he could give order to the physical world, in gratitude for this great gift, an order was given for the salvation of several thousand animals, and fleet-footed, nimble heralds ran off in all directions to keep anyone from harming any of the animals and to let them go.¹⁰⁶

The abrupt termination of the hunt thus becomes a celebration of the emperor's special relationship with the divine in Abu'l Fazl's formulation.¹⁰⁷ The first illustrated manuscript of *Akbarnama*, presented to the emperor himself, highlights the unusual outcome of the hunt

¹⁰² Richards, 'The Formulation of Imperial Authority', pp. 296–305; Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, pp. 352–63.

¹⁰³ Abu'l Fazl, *History of Akbar*, vol. 4, p. 477.

¹⁰⁴ Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, p. 155; see also pp. 138–46.

¹⁰⁵ M. W. Dols, 'Insanity and Its Treatment in Islamic Society', *Medical History* 31 (1987), p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ Abu'l Fazl, *History of Akbar*, vol. 6, p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*



Figure 3. Akbar releasing captive animals, 1578. *Source:* British Library Board J.8,4.

(Figure 3).¹⁰⁸ Akbar is shown in the process of calling off the hunt, while courtiers look on with perplexed expressions in the foreground. Some of the antelopes and deer that had been rounded up are visible in the

¹⁰⁸ The painting is at the British Library, file no. c13640–43. It was originally part of the *Akbarnama* manuscript at the Victoria and Albert Museum (J. P. Losty and Malini Roy, *Mughal India: Art, Culture and Empire* (London: The British Library, 2013), p. 46).

upper left-hand corner, while the beaters who had accomplished that work appear to the emperor's right. In front of Akbar is a dead or injured animal, while to his side a young retainer holds a large sword that is bundled up in cloth and clearly not to be used. The spiritual implications of the episode are underscored by the seating of Akbar in an ascetic pose on a mat, with a downward gaze; he is depicted similarly, with his head facing down and his legs crossed, in the *Akbarnama* painting of his mystical interlude after getting lost while hunting in 1571.¹⁰⁹

Akbar's releasing of the captive animals in 1578 was an act that would have held much symbolic resonance for the non-Muslim population of his empire. Akbar's decision to forego hunting on this occasion was in line with the stress in Jainism and other Indian religions on *ahimsā*, or non-violence, especially in reference to the killing of animals. The corollary to *ahimsā* was a vegetarian diet, which Jains and some Hindus followed, although not the martial Rajputs. Since Akbar had begun observing occasional meatless days shortly before the 1578 hunt, he may already have felt some sympathy for the notion of *ahimsā*, although an aversion to meat-eating was not unknown among Sufi ascetics either.¹¹⁰ Indeed, M. Athar Ali has pointed out that Akbar visited several Sufi shrines while moving around the countryside for several months before arriving at Bhera in May 1578, and suggested that the emperor's Sufi leanings may have led to a distaste for killing animals at the hunt.¹¹¹ From Hindu or Jain perspectives, the freeing of his animal prey could be construed as a kind of penance on Akbar's part for the unnecessary violence he had inflicted on the Rajputs—a counter move that would ameliorate the harm he had caused¹¹²—rather than as a merciful act of gratitude as Abu'l Fazl framed it in consonance with the Judeo–

¹⁰⁹ Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, Pl. 52. The painting is at the Victoria and Albert Museum, no. IS:2-1896 84/117.

¹¹⁰ Abu'l Fazl reports that Akbar praised vegetarianism in January 1578, a few months before the *qamargha*, and had stopped eating meat on Fridays (*The History of Akbar*, vol. 5, (ed. and trans.) Wheeler M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), pp. 703–4). When discussing the various times when the emperor abstained from meat, Abu'l Fazl expressly mentions the 'ignorance and cruelty' that leads men to injure, kill, and eat living creatures (*Ain-i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 61).

¹¹¹ M. Athar Ali, 'The "Vision" in the Salt Range, 1578', in *Mughal India: Studies in Polity, Ideas, Society, and Culture* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 151–52.

¹¹² If so, it is reminiscent of the ancient Indian emperor Asoka's remorse over the many deaths during the Kalinga war, which led him to seek 'moral conquest' in the future. The *Mahabharata* hero Yudhishtira, who wanted to retire into the forest as an ascetic but was

Christian–Islamic perspective. In any case, Akbar remained fond of hunting and never gave it up entirely, although the size of his hunts became more modest in later years.¹¹³

That *Akbarnama* should diverge from *Dalpat Vilas* in presenting Akbar's experience at the hunt in such positive terms comes as no surprise. Because *Akbarnama* is fundamentally a text that aims to propagate the emperor's greatness, it consistently casts Akbar in the best possible light. According to the conventions of Persianate statecraft, just as in the Sanskrit case, anger was inappropriate for a ruler, who should ideally be judicious in his speech and actions. This was stated in no uncertain terms in the famous eleventh-century Persian treatise on governance, *Siyasatnama* (Book of Government): 'It is the perfection of wisdom for a man not to become angry at all; but if he does, his intelligence should prevail over his wrath, not his wrath over his intelligence.' Thus the bravest of heroes was the man 'who can control himself in times of anger and does no action which he will regret afterwards when he has calmed down and regret is of no avail'—advice that Akbar might have been well off in heeding, if we give credence to *Dalpat Vilas*.¹¹⁴ *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri*, composed in India in 1612, similarly condemns anger and warns the ruler of four things that 'could bring calamity to the country and danger to the empire', one of which was 'harshness, that is, excessive expression of anger and immoderation in punishment and discipline ... Thus rulers should not censure and reproach retainers on minor faults'.¹¹⁵ The kind of behaviour described in *Dalpat Vilas* would hardly have commended Akbar to a courtly audience in the Persianate world, or among those who participated in the Sanskrit cosmopolis.¹¹⁶ Hence, the absence of any allusion to anger in *Akbarnama*'s narrative is not sufficient grounds for questioning *Dalpat*

persuaded to resume his position as king instead, had to perform a complicated Horse Sacrifice as expiation for the violence committed during the bloody war.

¹¹³ Akbar gave up hunting with leopards on Fridays, according to his son Jahangir (*The Jahangirnama*, p. 281).

¹¹⁴ Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyasatnama or Siyar al-muluk*, (trans.) Hubert Darke (London: Routledge and Paul, 1960), p. 125.

¹¹⁵ Najm-i Sani, *Advice on the Art of Governance*, pp. 69–70. Its author was a newly arrived immigrant from Iran when he wrote this work; he rose quickly in the imperial service and was appointed governor of several provinces such as Multan, Orissa, Gujarat, and Delhi during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan (Sajida Sultana Alvi, 'Introduction', in *ibid.*, pp. 11–12).

¹¹⁶ Akbar's code of conduct for his officials expressly enjoins them to retain their reason even when angry and recommends that they 'instruct the wise among their servants to

Vilas's account of what happened on that day in May 1578; in this respect, it is more useful as a guide to Abu'l Fazl's conception of a perfect ruler.

Other Indo-Persian chronicles offer a less idyllic view of the 1578 hunt. Particularly important is the brief description in *Tarikh-i Akbari*, whose author Arif was in the employ of a high-ranking Mughal noble.¹¹⁷ While Arif agrees with Abu'l Fazl in interpreting Akbar's experience as 'a mysterious Divine Call', he also corroborates the Rajasthani chronicle's claim that a Rajput subordinate was punished and died in the following words: 'During the same time, the emperor ordered that one of the Rajputs who had committed a sin be flogged. After receiving two or three lashes, he lost all power to receive any more. He was a compound of ignorance, so he thrust dagger [*sic*] into his stomach and died.'¹¹⁸

Tarikh-i Akbari agrees quite closely with *Dalpat Vilas* in the details regarding the Rajput, who was whipped for some offence, stabbed himself in the stomach, and died. But—and this is a big but—Arif does not connect the dying of the Rajput with the termination of the hunt in any way; indeed, his short report on the unusual hunt occurs *before* he brings up the Rajput, as if the two events were entirely unrelated. Yet, considering the brevity of Arif's overall account of this episode, which notes the cutting of Akbar's hair but not the release of the captive animals, it is striking that he bothered to discuss the Rajput's self-inflicted wound at all. That he did so suggests that the flogging and death did in fact take place, and that something about the incident made it unusual enough to merit mention.

Abdul Qadir Badauni, a malcontent scholar who was highly critical of Akbar's religious experimentation, offers yet another version of events. Like Abu'l Fazl and Arif, Badauni reports a sudden transformation in Akbar that had no apparent external cause—there was no dying Rajput and no imperial anger involved in this surprising event. In Badauni's words:

Suddenly all at once a strange state and strong frenzy came upon the Emperor, and an extraordinary change was manifested in his manner, to such an extent as cannot be accounted for. And everyone attributed it to some cause or other; but

check them when they are full of rage or overwhelmed with grief' (Alam, *Languages of Political Islam*, p. 63).

¹¹⁷ Tasneem Ahmad, 'Introduction', in Muhammad Arif Qandhari, *Tarikh-i Akbari*, (trans.) Tasneem Ahmad (Delhi: Pragati Publications, 1993), pp. 1–2.

¹¹⁸ Qandhari, *Tarikh-i Akbari*, p. 272.

God alone knoweth secrets. And at that time he ordered the hunting to be abandoned.¹¹⁹

While ‘strange state’ and ‘strong frenzy’ are not equivalent to violent rage, this description of Akbar’s condition implies an agitation of his mind and body that was intense and bizarre. It meshes better with *Dalpat Vilas*’s account than does *Akbarnama*’s claim that the emperor had an uplifting mystical experience. Badauni also reports on the haircutting by Akbar and most of his companions; he adds the news that Akbar distributed gold at the site and ordered a building and garden to be built there. Perhaps most intriguing is Badauni’s final comment on the incident: ‘And when news of this became spread abroad in the Eastern part of India, strange rumours and wonderful lies became current in the mouths of the common people, and some insurrections took place among the ryots (peasants), but these were quickly quelled.’¹²⁰

Badauni’s statement indicates that Akbar’s actions were closely observed and widely reported, and that his erratic behaviour on the occasion of this hunt was a source of speculation and unrest among the peasantry.

Yet another chronicler from Akbar’s reign, Nizam al-Din Ahmad, covered the 1578 hunt in an affirmation of its startling and sensational nature. His Persian history, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, follows Abu’l Fazl’s general thrust in depicting Akbar’s experience as ecstatic and ineffable; it agrees with Badauni that the emperor gave away gold as alms, called for the construction of a building and garden at that site, and ordered that ‘the game that had been collected should be allowed to escape’.¹²¹ Like all the other texts I have just covered—*Dalpat Vilas*, Abu’l Fazl’s *Akbarnama*, Arif’s *Tarikh-i Akbari*, and Badauni’s *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*—this work also refers to the cutting of hair by Akbar and many of his companions. And, as in all the accounts except for the shortest one (Arif’s *Tarikh-i Akbari*), Nizam al-Din Ahmad’s *Tabaqat-i Akbari* specifies that the captive animals were set free. Both Akbar’s altered condition and the releasing of the entrapped animals were dramatic events, and understandably worth noting in a chronicle of his reign. Akbar’s haircutting is another matter. This highly visible change in his bodily appearance was perhaps seen as a testament to the magnitude of what Akbar had undergone. It was a deviation from

¹¹⁹ Badauni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh fasciculus 3*, (trans.) W. H. Lowe, Bibliotheca Indica n. s. no. 543 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1885), p. 261.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

¹²¹ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *The Tabaqat-i-Akbari of Khwajah Nizamuddin Ahmad*, vol. 2, (trans.) Barun De (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1934), p. 512.

his regular practice, in that Akbar had years earlier adopted the Indian custom of allowing his hair to grow long rather than keeping it short in the Persianate manner.¹²² Thus, the Persian-language authors may have construed both the haircutting and the freeing of the animals as inversions of the normal order that signified the emperor's state of divine madness.

Of the several Persian chroniclers, Badauni and Arif correspond most closely to *Dalpat Vilas* and its allegation about Akbar's anger, even if they do not describe it explicitly. Arif refers to an incident of flogging after which a Rajput stabbed himself and died, just as in *Dalpat Vilas*, although he does not associate that with Akbar's unusual mental condition. If we believe the Rajasthani chronicle, Akbar got so worked up with anger, and perhaps also guilt about the Rajput's death, that he went over the edge; his releasing of the entrapped animals at the hunt can then be construed as an act of atonement for how he had treated his Rajput underlings. Rather than reflecting a kind of divinely granted mystical vision, as Abu Fazl states, the 'strange state and strong frenzy' that Badauni describes may have actually been a consequence of the emperor's remorse at his victim's needless death. But my main purpose in this article is not to establish the truth of what happened at the hunt of 1578. *Dalpat Vilas's* account of the episode, which lacks any supernatural or spiritual element, may be more plausible to us today than that of Abu'l Fazl. The salient point, however, is that several commentators understood Akbar to have undergone something abnormal, even if they differed on whether the experience was positive or negative.¹²³ Whatever Akbar may have experienced, it was not an ordinary or easily comprehensible matter, for observers were clearly alarmed and unsettled by it.

Different perspectives/different emotional communities?

A close reading of these five accounts of the 1578 hunt has revealed several points of convergence between them—Akbar's temporary but intense transformation, the shortening of his hair, and the suspension of the

¹²² According to Monserrate, who was at Akbar's court just a few years later, 'Contrary to the custom of his race he does not cut his hair; nor does he wear a hat, but a turban, into which he gathers up his hair. He does this, they say as a concession to Indian usages, and to please his Indian subjects' (Monserrate, *Commentary of Father Monserrate*, p. 197).

¹²³ For an example from medieval Europe of conflicting accounts of the same event, see Lindsay Diggelmann, 'Hewing the Ancient Elm: Anger, Aborigine, and Medieval Kingship', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 40, no. 2 (2010), pp. 249–72.

hunt. Conspicuously missing in the Persian histories is any reference to anger—the emotion that is so critical to the *Dalpat Vilas* narrative. In this final section of the article, let us reflect on the reasons why the hunt episode in this Rajasthani chronicle was at such odds with the other versions of the same event. How much do these differences have to do with the authors' relative proximity to the imperial centre or the nature of their audience? Or are there other factors involved that inclined the authors to perceive not only the emperor, but also the emotional atmosphere at the hunt in dissimilar ways?

One possibility is that Akbar's anger was intentionally omitted by the Persian historians, so as to avoid any hint of a flaw in the emperor's conduct. The compulsion to praise Akbar would have been especially strong for his close confidante Abu'l Fazl, as well as Nizam al-din Ahmad, who served as head of the military department (*mār bakshī*), one of the most important administrative positions in the empire. Badauni, on the other hand, had an animus toward Akbar, whom he viewed as deviant in religion; Badauni's history had to be written in secret since he was in the emperor's employ as a scholar and translator. As one might expect, his allusion to Akbar's 'strange state and strong frenzy' at the hunt leading to rumours among the populace is the most damaging comment made. The fourth chronicler, Arif, did not move in quite as high circles as Abu'l Fazl, Nizam al-din Ahmad, and Badauni, who were frequently present at the imperial court,¹²⁴ but his patron and past vizier (chief minister) Muhammad Khan did.¹²⁵ As members of Mughal courtly society, these authors must have been highly aware of the consequences of besmirching the emperor's character.

The unknown author of *Dalpat Vilas* in contrast would have had little reason to fear imperial opprobrium. Writing in a vernacular language for a local audience rather than in Persian, the cosmopolitan language of empire, there was little chance that the emperor or his courtiers would ever encounter his chronicle. He had only to satisfy the sensibilities of local warriors, starting with the patron and hero of his text, the Rathor-clan warrior Dalpat. In 1600, the estimated date of *Dalpat Vilas*'s composition, Dalpat Singh held an imperial rank (*mansab*)

¹²⁴ These three men—Abu'l Fazl, Nizam al-Din Ahmad, and Badauni—knew each other well and their histories were all completed at about the same time, in the mid-1590s.

¹²⁵ For biographical information on these authors, see K. A. Nizami, *On History and Historians of Medieval India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983), pp. 141–60, 224–42; Harbans Mukhia, *Historians and Historiography during the Reign of Akbar* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976); Tasneem Ahmad, 'Introduction', pp. 1–6.

of 500, the lowest-ranking among the nobility (*umarā*) during Akbar's reign, and was still under the shadow of his father Raja Ray Singh, the king of Bikaner. Around that time, Dalpat had attempted to forcibly seize territory from his father, compelling Ray Singh to leave the imperial court and return to Bikaner to deal with the situation.¹²⁶ Dalpat's rebellion soured his relationship with his royal father even more than with the emperor; it may have also inspired the commissioning of a chronicle about him, as part of an effort to establish an independent, heroic identity. Dalpat's troubled relationships with his superiors may explain why his chronicler had no qualms about casting both Raja Ray Singh and emperor Akbar as angry and violent rulers. Doing so would have made Dalpat a more sympathetic character, in a literary strategy that may have been pursued throughout the entire text, whose only copy unfortunately ends shortly after the *qamargha* incident. Highlighting the anger of the rulers whom Dalpat was rebelling against would have suited the propaganda purposes of his chronicler, just as eliding any mention of Akbar's anger would serve the goals of the imperial historian-courtiers.

But what if the presence or absence of anger in these accounts was not so deliberate or instrumental in its intentions? Another possibility is that the authors of the Persian texts or their informants did not perceive Akbar's anger or did not register it as significant. Akbar might not have been angry, from their perspective; alternatively, his anger was so slight and so inconsequential that it did not merit mention. It is likely that Akbar did command the flogging of a Rajput, who subsequently stabbed himself and died, given that the episode appears in both *Dalpat Vilas* and Arif's *Tarikh-i Akbar*. Arif suggests the violence was justified since the Rajput 'had committed a sin', and that he killed himself because he could not endure any more flogging. This suicide was odd enough to be noted in brief by Arif, who completed his history less than two years after the events described. However, there is no indication that Arif understood the emperor to have been angry when he issued his order for corporal punishment, nor that Arif drew any connection between this incident and the cessation of the hunt.

This explanation for the divergences in our texts is made more plausible if we accept Barbara H. Rosenwein's notion of emotional communities. She defines an emotional community as 'a group in which people have

¹²⁶ Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 358–59; Karni Singh, *Relations of the House of Bikaner*, pp. 53–56.

a common stake, interests, values, and goals. Thus, it is often a social community. But it is also possibly a “textual community”, created and reinforced by ideologies, teachings, and common presuppositions’.¹²⁷

Rosenwein asserts ‘that there were (and are) are various “emotional communities” at any given time’ and that an individual could belong to more than one.¹²⁸ An emotional community shares not just one emotion but a whole set of them, in clusters that differentiate it from other communities. Some emotions might be shared by different emotional communities, suggesting that these communities might have some overlaps in their membership as well, in theory. In her own research on early medieval Europe, Rosenwein examines numerous texts of varied genres, ranging from funerary epitaphs, to letters, homilies, panegyrics, and more, and compares the sets of emotions that are expressed in these items. My inquiry is much more limited since I am primarily looking at a single emotion expressed in one text, and comparing it to several other texts where it is absent. One emotion is not sufficient to define a distinct emotional community, nor is one text adequate. However, the concept of emotional communities may be useful in understanding why chroniclers might differ in their perception of the presence of anger, as well as in their inclination to record it. That is, anger may have had a different significance for the emotional community in which *Dalpat Vilas* participated relative to the emotional community or communities of the authors of our Persian histories.

While little can be said in detail about their emotional concerns, the historians who wrote in Persian shared a common courtly culture that was disinclined to regard rulers as unjust in their anger.¹²⁹ Take the case of Lashkar Khan, who had held the important positions of imperial paymaster (*mīr bakshī*) and petition-receiver (*mīr ‘arzī*). In Abu’l Fazl’s words: ‘In his foolishness he appeared at court drunk in broad daylight and started a quarrel. When the situation was reported to the

¹²⁷ Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, pp. 24–25.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹²⁹ Ali Anooshahr notes that a manual on letter-writing composed in 1533 at Emperor Humayun’s court prescribes differing emotional responses depending on the relative rank of the sender of a letter and its recipient (‘Letter-Writing and Emotional Communities in Early Mughal India: A Note on the *Badayi’ al-Insha*’, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, published online 24 January 2021; DOI:10.1080/00856401.2021.1857573). The kinds of emotions that were appropriate thus varied according to where one stood in the social hierarchy.

emperor, he had him tied to a horse's tail, paraded around, and sent to prison to teach him and others a lesson.¹³⁰

Akbar did not get angry with Lashkar Khan and only punished him for didactic purposes, according to Abu'l Fazl. The less polished Arif, a bit out of step again with the inner circle, attributes anger to the emperor in reference to Lashkar Khan but only mentions the less humiliating punishment of imprisonment.¹³¹ A late eighteenth-century text, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, comments that 'the excessive punishments imposed by the Emperor may seem to savour of wrath' but goes on to reject the possibility that Akbar overreacted out of anger, stating that 'the punishment was just' in the case of Lashkar Khan, a 'pomp-loving' and mean-spirited man who deserved what he got.¹³² In other hands, the emperor may have felt the emotion of anger, but only rightfully so and in a measure that was appropriate for the crime or sin, with no breach in propriety. While there were some discrepancies within the rarefied realm of Mughal-era Persian historiography, the expectation was that rulers would act dispassionately and justly in using their punitive power. This may have led observers to overlook the possibility or discount the importance of excessive royal anger, making such incidents invisible or irrelevant to these courtiers.

Dalpat Vilas's emotional sensibilities, while muted, are markedly different. Anger is the most prevalent emotion displayed within the chronicle, and its performance in public was a royal prerogative. Here it is important to stress again that anger is expressed almost exclusively by two individuals: the Bikaner Raja Ray Singh and the Mughal emperor Akbar, who are the two most powerful people in the text. There is no particular animus against Akbar specifically, in other words, either as a person or as a Muslim. If anything, the chronicle's depiction of Raja Ray Singh is considerably more negative, for he is consistently shown to be domineering and hot-headed. Akbar, in contrast, is often mentioned briefly in a neutral fashion, as we find in the passage quoted previously in which Ray Singh and his father are said to have met the emperor in Ajmer while he was returning from the Gujarat campaign. On occasion, Akbar is even portrayed as a sympathetic character, as when he allows the young Dalpat to ride one of the imperial elephants or when he consoles Dalpat after the death of his brother Bhopat.¹³³

¹³⁰ Abu'l Fazl, *History of Akbar*, vol. 4, p. 491.

¹³¹ Qandhari, *Tarikh-i Akbari*, pp. 172–73.

¹³² Awrangabadi, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, vol. 1, p. 831.

¹³³ *Dalpat Vilas*, pp. 82–83, 89–90.

Raja Ray Singh never demonstrates such compassion or kindness to his sons, relatives, or retainers. Unlike the raja, it is only during the 1578 hunt—admittedly one of the two longest episodes in what survives of the narrative—that the chronicler describes Akbar as angry.¹³⁴ This lasts until he goes beyond anger and starts raving—the same experience that Abu'l Fazl calls a mystical vision. In *Dalpat Vilas*, therefore, anger is just for the powerful, regardless of their cultural affiliation. These were dominant people who could affirm their high status in the social hierarchy by deploying anger.

Anger is thus marked as a distinctly royal attribute in *Dalpat Vilas*—an emotion that was characteristic of, and largely limited to, kings and emperors. The anger displayed by rulers is not entirely arbitrary in this chronicle, for in each instance there was some infraction of etiquette or lack of subservience by a lower-ranking person that incited the emotion and provided a justification for punishment. In *Dalpat Vilas*, however, the wrath displayed by rulers is not commensurate with the offence, in a deviation from classical political theory in both the Sanskrit and Persian traditions, which condoned only a limited level of passion on the part of the king. Instead, the royal rage in this Rajasthani chronicle seems excessive, seemingly out of proportion to the transgressions of the subordinates. For instance, in accounting for Raja Ray Singh's verbal and physical abuse of his son Bhopat, culminating in the breaking of the queen's bangles, the chronicler apparently felt it was not sufficient simply to list Bhopat's failings. The chronicler therefore also claimed that an evil minister had prejudiced the king against Bhopat.¹³⁵ This suggests that Bhopat's actions had not been bad enough to warrant his father's treatment of him, in the chronicler's judgement. Raja Ray Singh's fury at his brother Ram Singh's retainer Kesav is another case of an extreme reaction on his part. As previously described, Kesav had been discourteous during a muster of the troops held for the imperial paymaster, leading Ray Singh to order him killed immediately. This not the first time the raja had wanted him dead, but Kesav was careful to stay physically close to his master Ram Singh, which made it impossible for the king's men to assassinate him.¹³⁶ After the incident with the troop muster, Raja Ray Singh was so incensed that he told his

¹³⁴ The entire hunting episode occupies about 16 pages of the printed text (accompanied by Hindi translation) and the events revolving around the eventual death of Dalpat Singh's uncle, Ram Singh, cover about 17.

¹³⁵ *Dalpat Vilas*, pp. 27–28, 33–34.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

men to ‘strike Kesav down [along] with Ram Singh’.¹³⁷ The king’s desire to get Kesav killed was strong enough that he was willing to countenance the death of his brother Ram Singh as a necessary corollary, but his queen intervened to prevent this command from being carried out.

Fear is another emotion found in *Dalpat Vilas* that differentiates it from the Persian histories emanating from the imperial court. Excessive royal rage was one source of this fear, for those who angered the ruler were typically chastised in a violent manner. This is articulated explicitly in relation to the Bikaner raja Ray Singh, who had assaulted his son Bhopat and ordered an insolent retainer murdered. Later in the narrative, adult men in the young lord Dalpat Singh’s armed contingent refused to step forward to prevent the killing of his uncle Ram Singh, despite Dalpat’s command to do so. ‘I am afraid (*humtā bhām*) of the raja,’ said one Rajput who knew of Ray Singh’s hostility toward Ram Singh, in defending his disobedience.¹³⁸ It was not only the king who aroused feelings of fear, for other powerful figures—including the king’s brothers and his prime minister—also made lower-ranking men afraid in this Rajput narrative. Although the use of words denoting fear is not widespread in *Dalpat Vilas*, it is noteworthy given how few emotions are explicitly cited in the work and how rare professions of fear are in early modern Rajput texts in general.

It may be that *Dalpat Vilas* occupies a unique or at least alternative social space, distinct not only from the Persian chronicles by imperial courtiers, but also from the classical Hindi (*rīti*) poems lauding mighty Rajput lords that flourished in this era, which followed Sanskrit conventions in large part.¹³⁹ Unlike these others, *Dalpat Vilas* gives a voice to the subaltern, at least occasionally; it now and then occupies the social position of the less dominant person in an interaction. The specific emotional community it represents is thus not only distinct from that of Abu’l Fazl, Badauni, and Nizam al-Din Ahmad, but also from the more ornate varieties of Rajput courtly poetry, which lavish only praise on their flawless noble protagonists. Monika Horstmann has noted that in certain Rajput texts from Jaipur, ‘heroes breach norms of courtly comportment,

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 66.

¹³⁹ On the eulogistic portrayal of Raja Man Singh Kachwaha by two poets, for example, see Busch, ‘Portrait of a Raja’, and her ‘The Classical Past in the Mughal Present: The Brajbhasha Riti Tradition’, in *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature*, (ed.) Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubbs (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 648–90.

they are depicted as governed by emotions', in a departure from Sanskrit practice.¹⁴⁰ Stylistically, these works resemble the *vāt* and *khyāt* narratives from western Rajasthan, similar in genre to *Dalpat Vilas*. These may have circulated in an emotional community whose sentiments were aligned more with the common Rajput warrior than with his overlord, the king.

Indeed, *Dalpat Vilas* never explicitly ascribes fear to the Rajput lords assembled for Akbar's hunt—warriors who are higher-ranking than the men afraid of Raja Ray Singh. Yet the atmosphere of apprehension and uncertainty that pervaded the hunting camp after the Rajput stabbed himself is unmistakable, even if it is not specifically spelled out by the chronicler. Once Akbar retreated to his own quarters, the Rajput lords (*thākur*) gather together to talk over the situation, saying: 'What has happened is bad. The Emperor is angry, who knows what he will say?'¹⁴¹ Their sense of relief when Man Singh Kachwaha shows up is palpable, for he was known for his close relations with the emperor. Later that night, the wounded Rajput dies and Akbar babbles nonsense. When the 'Hindu' lords get up early the next morning, they think 'Who knows what the emperor will do or say?' and so they prepare for the possibility of dying and wait for whatever would happen.¹⁴² This stoic attitude toward death is widely enjoined in Rajput martial narratives, which encouraged warriors to face death bravely and willingly. Fear, implying physical cowardice, would not have been a suitable emotion for the Rajput lords attending Akbar, and so the chronicler does not apply that word to them, despite their misgivings. In its characterization of the emotional state of Akbar's Rajput subordinates on this occasion, *Dalpat Vilas* reflects Rajput attitudes, as it did in its reporting of the Rajput uncle's stabbing of himself.

Pandian's metaphor of Mughal government as predatory care is particularly apt for this hunting episode, with the Rajputs cast in the role of prey. The narrative gaze of *Dalpat Vilas* is distinctly subaltern in the hunting episode, looking upward at the immensely powerful Mughal ruler from the position of the powerless. The enactment of Akbar's rage within the larger setting of an organized hunt is quite fitting in that sense, for the Rajput lords and retainers accompanying the emperor were trapped just as much as the animals. They had to wait passively in the

¹⁴⁰ Monika Horstmann, 'Aurangzeb in the Perspective of Kachwaha Literature', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28, no. 3 (2018), p. 452.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 106.

camp while Akbar was hunting by himself, the single predator among the multitude of creatures that had been assembled and detained for his sport. When Akbar returned to the encampment, he was supposed to become the sole focus of attention for the humans who served him. They were expected to intuit or anticipate Akbar's wishes without any explicit order; those who failed to do so became the targets of his rage and had to endure his punishment without complaint. These Rajputs became the human prey of the predator Akbar, analogous to the animals over whom he wielded the power of life and death. The inability of the Rajputs to resist is made amply evident when the Kachwaha lord Man Singh, whose official rank placed him at the highest level of the Mughal court, could offer no more protection to the young Dalpat than a suggestion that he leave the camp. Without any influence over how the emperor would act the next day, the Rajputs resolutely readied themselves for the worst.

This is a much darker picture of Akbar than we are accustomed to seeing, due to our over-reliance on a small body of Persian literature generated at the imperial court or by segments of the population seeking imperial favour. A highly favourable image of Akbar was also propagated in the courtly literature in Sanskrit and Brajhasha commissioned at the courts of Akbar's Rajput associates, in order to justify their allegiance to him and to proclaim their own greatness. However, my point is not that *Dalpat Vilas* embodies the sensibilities of a Hindu/Indic versus a Muslim/Persian emotional community reflected in the texts authored by imperial courtiers, nor even that it is quintessentially Rajput. To be sure, it reflects some sentiments that are commonly understood as widespread in Rajput narratives, although the emotional terrain of these works deserves much more study. In addition, once Akbar gets angry at the hunt, the chronicle depicts the Rajputs as huddling together, apart from the Muslims present, whereas they had all intermingled in sport beforehand. But this is largely happenstance in that Akbar's ire was initially directed at two courtiers who were late in attending upon him and then afterward spread to their associates, all Rajputs. One cannot deny an awareness of difference between Hindus and Musalmans, for those terms are explicitly applied to the lords awaiting Akbar's commands the morning he ordered the animals released, although rarely elsewhere in the chronicle.¹⁴³ Yet,

¹⁴³ The hunting episode accounts for all six occurrences of the word Musalman in the entire chronicle, and nine out of the 12 instances of the word Hindu. 'Musalman' figures on pp. 103, 104, and 106. 'Hindu' appears on pp. 103–07 of the hunting episode, as well as on pp. 18, 20, and 89. I am indebted to Richard Saran for sharing with me a searchable copy of the text that he created, as well as a word-count report.

overall, it is the Bikaner king, Raja Ray Singh, who is characterized more negatively in *Dalpat Vilas* and not the Mughal emperor. And some Rajputs in the narrative are said to be fearful, even though that was considered a contemptible emotion among Rajputs. The emotional community made manifest in *Dalpat Vilas*, whatever it might be, cannot be so easily assigned to any single ethnic, linguistic, or religious identity. But, by providing us with a unique angle on Akbar, this chronicle helps us to better imagine the diversity of contemporary reactions to his rule. Even the analysis of competing accounts in Persian histories reveals some discrepancies and discordant notes in elite representations of the emperor. From a historiographic perspective, this study of *Dalpat Vilas* demonstrates the need to consult a far wider range of source materials, especially those composed in vernacular languages away from the imperial centre.

This small foray into the study of Mughal-era anger also opens up possibilities for future research on the history of South Asian emotions. While both Sanskrit and Persianate traditions urged rulers to restrain their passions and administer punishment without anger, *Dalpat Vilas* rejected this model of a just ruler who disciplined his subjects with righteousness. In that respect, it diverged considerably from contemporary Persian histories, which sought to cast Akbar in the ideal mode as dispassionate and divinely blessed, as well as from Indic texts that depicted him as a superior overlord. While much work remains to be done in analysing the martial sentiments in Rajput heroic histories, what we know at present suggests that *Dalpat Vilas's* emotional registers do not entirely correspond to those in courtly poetry composed in classical Hindi (Brajbhasha). Created on behalf of a rebellious young Bikaner lord and his followers, this prose chronicle offers a more subaltern vantage point from which to view the political events of northern India in the 1570s than we commonly encounter in this era. It is this difference in perspective, reflecting a less prominent patron and audience than was the case for most early modern histories, that accounts at least partially for the ascription of anger to rulers in *Dalpat Vilas*. Kings and emperors were uniquely prone to anger, in its view, with a potential for violence that spread fear among their subjects. Royal rage could, moreover, spiral out of control and lead to unpredictable consequences as happened at Akbar's hunt. Only more investigation will tell us how widespread this chronicle's understanding of anger was, what other emotions may have been prevalent along with it, and how long this constellation of emotions may have persisted. Whatever the case, anger was a symptom of the dangerous and

unstable nature of kings for the author of *Dalpat Vilas*, who tried to forewarn those who were dependent on kings of the hazards of royal anger and the havoc it could wreak.