

Audio Tales : Akbar wanting to be praised

Everyone knows that the Emperor Akbar had nine ministers to advise him, who were called his 'navaratna' or nine jewels - soldiers and statesmen chosen for their exceptional wisdom and ability. Their skills helped Akbar rule his empire, and sometimes, helped them out of difficulties with Akbar himself.

Birbal Raja was one of these ministers, and once it happened that Akbar, looking to be praised, asked him, "Birbal, who is greater, me or God?"

Imagine being asked such a question! But without hesitation, like the warrior that he was, Birbal responded firmly, "You are, your majesty."

Naturally, Akbar was flattered, but he said, "How can that be?"

"It is in this way, majesty – if you become displeased with someone, you have the power to exile that person from your kingdom."

Akbar nodded in agreement. "Yes, I have that power."

"But," said Birbal, "this is something God can never do. His kingdom has no limits, so one can never be cast out from it. And in that way," he concluded, "you are greater."