

## **Inner Call podcast #122 Birbal is brief May 18 2021**

It happened once upon a time that the great Emperor Akbar asked his courtiers if they could tell him the difference between truth and falsehood – but, he added, it must be put briefly! He demanded they tell him the difference in three words or less.

The courtiers all studied their slippers or gazed thoughtfully into the distance, stroking their beards, but none of them said anything.

Finally, Akbar turned to Birbal, his most trusted minister, and said, “Birbal? Do you have no answer? Why are you silent?”

“Majesty, I was allowing space for the others to reply.”

“But as you see, they say nothing,” observed Akbar. “So, tell me the difference between truth and falsehood – in three words or less.”

“Your majesty is generous to allow three words,” Birbal replied, “but I shall be briefer and use only two: four fingers.”

“Four fingers? That is the difference between truth and falsehood?” said Akbar.

“Exactly so, majesty. Four fingers.”

“Explain your meaning.”

“As your majesty knows well from all the whispers and rumours of court, what one hears may be true, but more often it is false, or some uncertain mixture of falsehood with a grain or two of truth.”

“Yes,” said Akbar, “you are right.”

“Whereas what one sees with one’s own eyes is true,” continued Birbal.

“Right again,” said Akbar. “But what does this have to do with four fingers?”

“The distance between eye and ear, majesty, is the width of four fingers.”