

# LESSON 5



## AKBAR MEETS BIRBAL

### Stage 1

### Pre-reading

#### Activity 1.

#### Talking about the topic

The teacher asks :

1. Have you heard the names of Akbar and Birbal ?
2. Who was Akbar ?
3. Why is Birbal famous ?
4. How was he related to Akbar ?

The teacher then tells the children that they are going to read a story about Akbar and Birbal.

#### Activity 2.

#### Listening to the story

The teacher reads out the first two paragraphs of the story while the children listen. This is done to create interest in the story which the children are going to read on their own.

(There is no chorus reading for this lesson.)

## AKBAR MEETS BIRBAL

### Part 1

1 This is a story about the great Moghul Emperor Akbar, who ruled over the whole of India about 500 years ago. His capital was Agra.

2 Akbar could not read or write, but he was one of the best and wisest kings that ever ruled India. Although he had no education, he had great respect for learning. He invited some of the greatest scholars from different parts of the country to come to his



court and help him to rule the country. He chose nine of these wise men to be his close advisors and followed their advice in all matters. These nine wise men were known as the 'Nava Ratna', or the Nine Gems of Akbar's court.

3 The most famous of the Nine Gems was Raja Birbal, who was always at the Emperor's side. Birbal had a great sense of humour and often said things which made Akbar laugh. Whenever Akbar felt sad, he called Birbal to tell him a joke or a humorous story. Birbal never failed to make Akbar laugh. But although his stories were funny, there was great wisdom in them. Akbar respected him and loved him like a brother.

4 There are hundreds of stories about Akbar and Birbal, which are known to children all over India. But in this story, you will learn how Akbar and Birbal met for the first time.



## Stage 2. Reading

### Activity 3 Reading silently

The teacher now asks the children to read the story silently. The story has been divided into 3 parts for convenience. The children read each part, answer a few questions based on it, and then go on to the next part. All three parts are to be read by the children silently. About 15 minutes may be devoted to the reading of each part.

### Activity 4. Knowing the key words

<i>wise (para 2)</i>	A wise person is one who makes good decisions and gives right advice.
<i>scholar (para 2)</i>	a highly educated person who is fond of books
<i>gem (para 2)</i>	a costly stone (e.g., a diamond)
<i>sense of humour (para 3)</i>	the ability to laugh and make others laugh

### Activity 5. Comprehension

1. Who was Akbar ?
2. What was unusual about Emperor Akbar ?
3. Who were the 'Nine Gems' ? Why were they called by this name ?
4. Why did Akbar respect Birbal ?

## Part 2

5 Emperor Akbar was very fond of hunting and often went into the jungles around Agra to hunt. One day, he went hunting with some of his men. After sometime, they saw a huge tiger, and the Emperor and a few of his men chased the tiger on horseback. They rode so fast that the others were left far behind. The Emperor and his party were lost in the jungle. They did not know how to get back to Agra.

6 That evening, they came to a place where three roads met. Akbar turned to his men and asked "Which way should we go ? Which of these roads leads to Agra?"

7. But no one could give him the answer. All three roads looked the same. It was hard to tell which road led to Agra. Just then, they saw a young man, walking alone through the forest. Although the forest was full of wild animals, the young man seemed to have no fear. Akbar's men called out to him. Akbar said "Tell us, young man, which of these roads goes to Agra ?"



8 The young man smiled. He said, "Huzoor, everyone knows that roads cannot move. Then how can this road go to Agra, or to any other place ?" The young man laughed at his own joke.

### Activity 6. Comprehension

1. Why did Akbar go into the jungle ?
2. How did he get lost ?
3. What was the question that Akbar asked the young man ?
4. What was the young man's reply ?
5. Who do you think this young man could be ?

### Part 3

### Activity 7. Knowing the key words

*stare* to look at someone in surprise or anger for a long time.

*to hold one's breath* to wait nervously for something to happen.

[As both these expressions relate to bodily actions, the teacher should use actions to help children to understand their meanings. Appropriate situations should be created to explain when and why one 'stares' or 'holds one's breath'.

*stare* : the teacher stares angrily at a child who has forgotten to do his homework.

*to hold one's breath* : a child has done something foolish and the Headmistress calls the child to her office to ask for an explanation. The other children 'hold their breath', to know how the Headmistress will punish the child.]

9 Akbar stared angrily at the youth. His men held their breath. They knew Akbar's temper. Nobody dared say a single word. The young man went on. "People go here and there, but roads always stay in the same place, huzoor."

10 “No, they do not,” Akbar said suddenly, and he began to laugh. “What’s your name ?” he asked the young man.

11 “Mahesh Das,” came the reply. “And what is *your* name, huzoor?”.

12 “ You are speaking to Mohammad Jalal-ud-din Akbar, Emperor of Hindustan,” the Emperor replied. “Come to our court in Agra. We need fearless men like you”.

13 Akbar then took off one of his costly rings and gave it to the young man. He said “ When you come to Agra, show this ring to the guards at the palace gates, and they will let you in at once”.



14 Mahesh Das went to Agra. Akbar gave him a high position at the court. Later, he became one of the Nine Gems of Akbar’s court. Mahesh Das was none other than Birbal the Wise.

### Stage 3. After Reading

### Activity 8. Comprehension

1. Why did Akbar stare angrily at the young man ?
2. In paragraph 9, we are told that “Akbar’s men held their breath as they knew Akbar’s temper.”  
What did they expect Akbar to do ?
3. Why did Akbar laugh (paragraph 10) ?

4. When Akbar asked the young man what his name was, the young man asked Akbar the same question.  
Was this action surprising ? Why, or why not ?  
How did Akbar reply to the question ?
5. Why did Akbar ask Mahesh Das to come to Agra ?
6. What does this story teach us ?

### **Activity 9. True or False**

**Say whether the following statements are True or False.**

1. Akbar was a good student when he was a boy.
2. Akbar had great respect for scholars.
3. Akbar did not like any physical exercise.
4. Akbar had a good sense of humour.
5. Akbar and Birbal met for the first time in a forest.
6. Akbar lost his temper easily.

### **Activity 10. Speaking**

The teacher asks two children to read out the following conversation.

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Akbar  | Birbal, does this road go to Agra ?                      |
| Birbal | No, huzoor. The road cannot go anywhere. It has no legs. |
| Akbar  | You are wrong, Birbal. This road <i>does</i> go to Agra. |
| Birbal | How is that possible, huzoor ?                           |
| Akbar  | Well, you see this road here, don't you, Birbal ?        |
| Birbal | Yes, huzoor.   |
| Akbar  | And you can see the same road in Agra. Right ?           |
| Birbal | That's true, huzoor.                                     |
| Akbar  | That means the road goes from here to Agra.              |
| Birbal | Very true, huzoor,                                       |
| Akbar  | So roads <i>can</i> go from one place to another place.  |

Birbal Yes, huzoor. I should have thought of that,

This activity of playing roles can be practised by a few other pairs of children.

### Activity 11. Usage (contracted forms)

Read out the sentences below :

- 1 a He cannot speak English.
- b He can't speak English.
- 2a My sister does not go to school these days.
- b My sister doesn't go to school these days.
- 3a Our children do not watch television at night.
- b Our children don't watch television at night.
- 4a I have not seen the Taj Mahal.
- I haven't seen the Taj Mahal.

In sentences 1a, 2a, 3a and 4a, "not" is written as a separate word, but in sentences 1b, 2b, 3b and 4b, "not" is shortened to **n't**.

The short form **n't** is more commonly used when we speak.

Now read out the dialogue below. Make sure you use the short forms of words. *I'm* is pronounced as **aIm** (ଆଇମ୍) , *I've* is pronounced as **aIv** (ଆଇଭ୍) and *I'd* is pronounced as **aId** (ଆଇଡ୍).

Sibu Tutu, I'm going to the market. Would you like to come with me ?

Tutu I'd love to, Sibbu, but I'm afraid I can't. I've got a lot of work to do and I haven't finished it yet. Maybe we could go tomorrow.

Sibu Tomorrow's Sunday and the shops don't open on Sundays.

Tutu Will you be taking the bus to the market ?

Sibu                The bus doesn't stop at the market. I've got to walk.  
Tutu                Well, you mustn't waste time then. You'd better go now.

### Activity 12. Writing

The sentences below tell you one part of the story that you have already read. Some words and sentences are missing. Fill in the blank spaces.

1. One day, Akbar went hunting with some of his men.
2. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Akbar and his men chased the tiger on horseback.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ and did not know how to get back to Agra.
5. They came to a place where three roads met.
6. \_\_\_\_\_.
7. They met a young man in the forest.
8. Akbar asked the young man : " \_\_\_\_\_ ?"
9. The young man replied : " No huzoor, \_\_\_\_\_. Roads cannot move."

### Activity 13. Reading the story aloud

After all these activities have been done, the teacher asks the children to read out the story aloud. Each child reads a small part of the story, so that many children get a chance to read aloud.

