

How many crows?

Birbal ^{is} the cleverest of Emperor Akbar's nine advisors. There seemed to be nothing he ^{not know}. And so, from time to time, Akbar ^{amuse} himself by putting Birbal's wisdom to the test.

One evening, the emperor ^{walk} with Birbal in the palace gardens. It ^{be} a hot day, and a number of crows ^{splash} about in the fountains. "I ^{have} a question for you, Birbal," ^{say} Akbar, twirling his moustache mischievously.

"At your service, sir," ^{answer} Birbal with a bow.

"How many crows ^{live} in my kingdom?"

^{ask} the emperor. He ^{smile} to himself – surely even Birbal ^{be} able to answer this question.

Without pausing to think even for a moment, Birbal ^{not hesitate}, "Seven thousand, four hundred and thirty-eight."

"Come now, Birbal," ^{look} the emperor. "What if I have somebody count them and find out there ^{be} more than that?"

"Well, sir," said Birbal solemnly. "I can't account for crows from other kingdoms coming to visit."

"And if there are fewer?" ^{laugh} Akbar.

^{shrug} "I can't account for crows going away on trips either, sir,"

Birbal, without even the hint of a smile.

^{have} "Honestly, Birbal," said Akbar, laughing, "you really do an answer for everything!"

