

A Century of Natural History

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The Moghul Emperors of India as Naturalists and Sportsmen

[1927]

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The title of this paper is somewhat misleading, hence it may be advisable at the outset to indicate its scope. The term 'Moghul Emperors' here represents only the Big Six, from Babur—the illustrious founder of the dynasty—to Aurangzebe, with whose death the great empire launched on a career of steady and rapid decline.

The 'Naturalists' of the title also needs qualification. It stands here only in respect of animal life, though it is well known that the Moghuls were great lovers of Nature in all its other aspects as well.

The wonderful gardens¹ built by them all over Northern India remain to this day to bear testimony to their love for flowers and trees, and the genuine delight which Babur and his great-grandson Jehangir felt in the natural objects they saw around them cannot help impressing anyone who wades through the inimitable memoirs left us by these two sovereigns.

To avoid repetition of lengthy titles of works which I have most frequently quoted, I propose to use the following abbreviations:-

Babur = *Memoirs of Zahiruddin Mohomed Babur*, translated from the Chagatai Turki by John Leyden, M.D. and William Erskine in two volumes, annotated and revised by Sir Lucas King, C.S.I., LL.D., F.S.A.

Jeh. = *Tuzuk-e-Jehangiri* or *Memoirs of*

Jehangir, written by the Emperor himself and translated in two volumes from the Persian by Alexander Rogers, I.C.S. (Retd.) and H. Beveridge, I.C.S. (Retd.)

Ain. = *Ain-e-Akbari* by Abul Fazl, translated by Blochmann (first volume) and Jarrett (second and third volumes).

Names of other works quoted from occur in full in the text.

Though it is not my purpose to go into the history of the rise and fall of this great house, the following few remarks concerning each of the six sovereigns may not be out of place for introducing my subject.

BABUR

One of Babur's first cares after his victory at Panipat in A.D. 1526 was to describe at length the land of his acquisition, its peoples, customs, animals, fruits and flowers: to compile in fact a comprehensive Gazetteer of Hindustan. The outstanding feature of his accounts is their extreme truthfulness and accuracy. If there is anything of which he is not positive at the time of writing, he does not omit to make special mention of the fact, and hearsay of the veracity of which he is not convinced is likewise duly recorded as such.

Whether engaged in weighty affairs of state, or in marching against a foe, Babur always had his senses wide awake to objects around him beyond the pale of his immediate con-

¹ For descriptions of the gardens see C. M. Villiers. *The Gardens of the Great Moghuls*.

Satim Ali: Moghul Emperors as Naturalists and Sportsmen



A LION HUNT WITH BUFFALOES
Reproduced by the courtesy of the Trustees of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay from a Moghul painting
Photo: Sadashiv Gorakshkar

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cern. A new flower or bird or beast never failed to excite in him a feeling of the profoundest interest. He made a careful mental note of the object, and reproduced it faithfully in his memoirs whenever he found a temporary respite from the arduous duties of kingship in a newly conquered and unsettled country. For example, the Pied Myna (*Sturnopastor contra**) finds a place in his memoirs thus: "When I threw a bridge over the Ganges and crossed it, driving the enemy before me, I saw in Lucknow, Oudh and these countries, a species of Sharak which has a white breast and a piebald head with a black back. I had never seen it before. This species probably does not learn to speak at all."

Of the larger mammals of Hindustan, the rhinoceros was one that must have seemed altogether strange and unnatural to the conquerors, and Babur took great delight in hunting the beast. In his memoirs he gives the following account of a hunt. (This was at the time of his final march against Hindustan which ended successfully at Panipat.):—

"We continued our march till we came near Bekram (Peshawar) and then halted. Next morning we continued halting in the same station, and I went out to hunt the Rhinoceros. We crossed the Siah-ab (i.e. Black river—perhaps another name for the Bara) in front of Bekram, and formed our ring lower down the river. When we had gone a short way, a man came after us with notice that a rhinoceros had entered a little wood near Bekram and that they had surrounded

the wood and were waiting for us. We immediately proceeded towards the wood at full gallop and cast a ring round it. Instantly on our raising the shout the rhinoceros issued out into the plain. Humayun and those who had come from the same quarter (i.e. from Turkestan) never having seen a rhinoceros before, were greatly amused. They followed it for nearly a bes, shot many arrows at it and finally brought it down. The rhinoceros did not make a good set at any person or any horse. They afterwards killed another rhinoceros. I had often amused myself by conjecturing how an elephant and rhinoceros would behave if brought to face each other; on this occasion the elephant-keepers brought out the elephants so that one elephant fell right in with the rhinoceros. As soon as the drivers put their beasts in motion, the rhinoceros would not come up but immediately ran off in another direction."

Further on Babur mentions, "In the course of my expeditions into Hindustan, in the jungles of Peshawar and Hashnagar I frequently killed the rhinoceros. It strikes powerfully with its horn, with which in the course of these hunts, many men and horses were gored. In one hunt it tossed with its horn a full spear's length, a young man named Maksud, whence he got the name of "Rhinoceros Maksud" (i.e. Rhino's aim)."

It appears truly remarkable that a man in Babur's situation, faced with innumerable and ever-recurring practical and administrative difficulties in a foreign and unsettled land,

pite its bulk and strength the rhino is as a rule quiet and inoffensive. Owing to the nature of the terrain they inhabit, elephants are almost always used in rhino hunting in India. As a rule the mounts remain indifferent in the presence of the enemy though occasionally one takes fright and bolts.

* Now *Sturnus contra*.

† Captain Williamson in his *Oriental Field Sports* recounts several incidents of the deadly enmity that is supposed to exist between the rhinoceros and the elephant and the stories copied from this not over-veracious source have subsequently found their way into European works on Natural History. Des-

with the prospect of rebellion within and invasion without perpetually staring him in the face—with marked discontent amongst his troops and following to boot—should have found time to devote himself so earnestly to minor pleasures which would probably have had no appeal for lesser natures than his own.

HUMAYUN

On the death of Babur, his son Humayun ascended the throne of Hindustan. Unfortunately he appears to have kept no memoirs of himself and the chief contemporary records available to us are the *Tazkereh-alyakeaat*¹ (or private memoirs of the Emperor Humayun) written by his confidential domestic Jouhar, and the delightful *Humayun Nama*² of his sister Gulbadan Banu Begum.

These tell us extremely little of the aspect of Humayun's nature that concerns our paper, but however suffice to establish the fact that he had inherited in full measure his father's love of nature and fondness for sport.

That Humayun was naturalist at heart is evident from just this one little passage that appears in the *Tazkereh*. To realize the true significance of the incident it must be remembered that it happened at a time when defeated by Sher Shah and deprived of his kingdom, he was fleeing for his life and liberty through the inhospitable desert of Sind—a harassed refugee—subjected to the greatest hardships from hunger and thirst, and accompanied only by a mere handful of his faithful adherents. At Amerkote, '... the king undressed and ordered his clothes to be washed, and in the meantime

wore his dressing gown. While thus sitting a beautiful bird flew into the tent the doors of which were immediately closed and the bird caught. His Majesty then took a pair of scissors and cut some of the feathers off the animal; he then sent for a painter and had a picture taken of the bird and afterwards ordered it to be released.'

A temperament capable of being roused from the gravest anxiety and concern to light-hearted pleasure and interest at the mere sight of a strange and insignificant bird, surely proves a more than ordinarily deep-rooted love for Nature.

AKBAR

Akbar, rightly called 'the Great' reigned over Hindustan from 1556 to 1605. Summing up his character Dr. Richard von Garbe³ states: 'Akbar was very fond of flowers and perfumes and especially enjoyed blooded doves (pigeons) whose care he well understood. About 20,000 of these peaceful birds are said to have made their homes in the battlements of his palace.' His historian (Abul Fazl) relates, 'His Majesty deigned to improve them in a marvellous manner by crossing the races which had not been done formerly.'

'Akbar was passionately fond of hunting and pursued the noble sport in its different forms, especially the tiger hunt and the trapping of wild elephants, but he also hunted with trained falcons, and leopards. He was not fond of *battue*; he enjoyed the excitement and exertion of the actual hunt as a means of exercise and recreation for training the eye and quickening the blood. Besides chess, cards and other games, fights between animals may be specially mentioned, of which elephant fights were the most common but there were also contests between camels, buffaloes, cocks and even frogs, sparrows and spiders.'

¹ Translated from the Persian by Major Charles Stewart of the Hon. East India Company's Service.

² Translated by Mrs. Annette S. Beveridge.

³ *Akbar, Emperor of India*. A Picture of Life and Customs from the sixteenth century.

Akbar was passionately fond of animals and the Royal Menagerie was a very extensive one comprising of, as Abul Fazl states, 'Animals of all kinds from Persia, Turkestan and Kashmir, whether game or other which had been brought together to the admiration of beholders.' Bernier mentions that the inmates of this menagerie were led past under the royal window where the monarch 'at every day about noon, the procession commencing with the horses and elephants. Other animals are next introduced' continues the writer, 'tame antelopes kept for the purpose of fighting with each other; Nilgau or grey oxen that appear to me to be a species of elk; rhinoceroses; large Bengal buffaloes with prodigious horns that enable them to contend against lions and tigers; tame leopards or panthers employed in hunting antelopes; some of the fine sporting dogs from Usbec of every kind and each dog with a small red covering; lastly every species of birds of prey used in field sports for catching partridge, cranes, hares and even it is said, for hunting antelopes on which they pounce with violence beating their heads and blinding them with their wings and claws.'

Abul Fazl informs us that Akbar paid great attention to the selection and breeding of elephants, camels, cows, mules and horses and that through his encouragement of the last, the breed of horses produced in Hindustan was as fine as those of Irak or Arabia.

One of the modes of hunting most frequently employed by the Moghul emperors was the *Qamarzahi* or 'Ringing-in' method. Vast tracts of country were surrounded by the armies which gradually worked their way

towards the centre driving in and collecting the game. On account of the area over which operations extended, very often hundreds of square miles, the processes occupied several months. The various divisions of the army were placed under command of their proper officers, and the whole thing was really in the nature of what are now known as Army Manoeuvres. As the favourite plan of campaign of the Moghuls was to surround an enemy first and then gradually close in upon him, these *Qamarzahi* hunts provided the means of keeping the soldiery in the necessary training and practice in times of peace.

One such 'drive' that took place under orders of the Emperor Akbar in the year 1567 is remarkable for the magnitude of the scale on which operations were carried out. On this occasion 50,000 beaters were employed and, according to Abul Fazl involved all the country 'from near the mountains on the one side and from River Bihat (Jhelum) on the other.' The historian proceeds: 'Each district was made over to one of the great officers and Bakhshis, Tawacis and Sazawals were appointed to every quarter. Several thousand footmen from the towns and villages of Lahore Province were appointed to drive the game. A wide space within ten miles of Lahore was chosen for the collecting of the animals.'

This drive occupied a whole month. When all the arrangements were completed, 'His Majesty the Shah (Akbar) went to the hunting ground and viewed it from the circumference to the centre. Every one of the Grandees and other servants who had exerted themselves in this delightful service was gratified by H.M.'s approbation. Then he placed the foot of dominion in the stirrup of auspiciousness and made his tiger-like steed career in pursuit of the prancing deer. He used the arrow, the sword, the lance and the musket.

¹ The Emperor Akbar was particularly fond of this sport and in the *Un.* pp 218-22 are to be found full details regarding the kinds of fighting deer, how they fought together, and elaborate regulations as to the betting allowed on such encounters.

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THE CLOSE OF A QAMARGAH HUNT

Reproduced by the courtesy of the Trustees of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay from a Moghul painting
Photo: Sadashiv Gorakshkar

JEHANGIR, 1605-1627

At the beginning the hunting ground was ten miles in circumference, but day by day the *Qamargah* was pushed on and its area lessened....'

Akbar had a special Game Department and caused an account to be kept of all the animals hunted with measurements and the minutest details concerning them.

Besides shooting with the gun Akbar also did a good deal of hunting with the bow and arrow, and several instances are on record of his tackling tigers with these weapons.

He was possessed of remarkable observational powers and it is said of him that he could at once tell by seeing the hide, to what hunting ground a particular deer belonged.

Besides the cheetas (it is asserted to the number of 9,000) and lynxes which largely constituted his hunting establishment, Akbar was extremely fond of good hunting dogs, and imported them from all countries. 'Excellent hunting dogs come from Kabul,' says Abul Fazl, 'especially from the Hazara District (north of Rawalpindi). These dogs will attack every kind of animals, and more remarkable still, they will attack a tiger.'

European bloodhounds were also imported by the Portuguese, which helped them greatly to maintain favour at court.

With regard to the birds employed in the chase, the historian says, 'H. M. is very fond of these remarkable animals and often uses them for hunting purposes. Though he trains the Baz (*Astur palumbarius*), Shahin (*Falco peregrinator*) Shunqar (either *Falco cherrug* or *F. milvipes*) and Burqat falcons (probably the Golden Eagle—*Aquila chrysaetus*) and makes them perform wonderful deeds, H.M. prefers the Bashah (Sparrow Hawk—*Accipiter nisus*), to which class of hawks he gives various names.

If Akbar was the greatest monarch of the Moghul dynasty, it cannot be denied that Jehangir was far and away its greatest naturalist. His profuse and engrossing memoirs are a veritable natural history of the animals that came under his notice, and a record of the most searching observations concerning them.

It has been rightly said of Jehangir that had he been head of a Natural History Museum he would have been a better and happier man. Besides a passion for justice the outstanding features of his character were his love of nature and his powers of observation.

Extensive game preserves were maintained and frequently the emperor hunted accompanied by the ladies of his zenana. His beautiful and accomplished queen Nur Jehan was his constant companion on such occasions. She was an excellent horsewoman and possessed remarkable dexterity in handling a gun. Jehangir gives the following account of a hunt where Nur Jehan killed four tigers in quick succession '...the huntsmen marked down four tigers and I went out to hunt them with my ladies. When the tigers came in sight Nur Jehan Begum submitted that if I would order her she herself would kill the tigers with her gun. I said "Let it be so." She shot two tigers with one shot each and knocked over the two others with four shots. In the twinkling of an eye she deprived of life the bodies of these four tigers. Until now such shooting was never seen that from the top of an elephant and inside of a howdah, six shots should be made and not one miss, so that the four beasts found no opportunity to spring or move. As a reward for this good shooting I gave her a pair of bracelets of diamonds worth one hundred thousand rupees and scattered 1,000 *ashraffs* (gold mohurs) over her.'

It is unnecessary here to dilate upon Jehangir's qualities as a naturalist. His descriptions of animals bespeak his interest and proficiency in unmistakable language.

Like his father, Jehangir also caused minute records to be kept of his hunts with particulars as to the bag, etc. The registers showed that from the twelfth year (1580) of his age to his fiftieth lunar or forty-eighth solar year, 28,532 animals had been taken in his presence, including 17,167 which had been killed by the Emperor himself.

SHAH JEHAN

Shah Jehan ruled over the Moghul Empire from 1627 to 1665. Gifted with the love of nature and artistic temperament of his distinguished ancestors, his name is however best associated with architecture. The palace-fort at Delhi and the peerless Taj at Agra are living tributes to his magnificent regime.

Compared with his father, Shah Jehan's fondness for sport was moderate. He preferred hawking and hunting with cheetas to the actual shooting of game.

The following is an account of one of Shah Jehan's tiger hunts written by Manucci, who lived at his court for a number of years. 'His ordinary amusement,' says the writer,¹ 'was tiger hunting, for which he kept ferocious buffaloes with very big horns. These fought with each other or with tigers, and they are very brave animals, and skilful in the sport above referred to.

When the king desires to go out hunting the huntsmen are warned. These men see to the finding of the tigers and send out into the jungle asses, cows, sheep and goats to pre-

vent the tigers from changing their haunts. The king goes out on his tallest elephant and the other princes likewise on elephants acquainted with the requirements of this sort of fight. They sit in uncovered howdahs, each one with his matchlock. Then they encircle the jungle with high nets, leaving only one opening, through which the king and huntsmen enter. Around the net on the outside stand a number of soldiers, who cannot wound the tiger when it comes near the net, nor can the tiger injure them, for in no manner can it break the net and get out. The order in which the king moves is as follows: In front go the buffaloes, sometimes more than one hundred in number, all in a row. On each one is mounted a man with his legs guarded by leather, and having a broad sword in one hand and holding with the other the reins, which are passed through the buffaloes' nostrils. Behind them comes the king on an elephant, and after the king the princes and the men in highest favour. When they get into the jungle where the tigers are, the buffaloes advance slowly in the formation of a half moon, until the tigers are in sight. After locating the tigers by sight and smell, a circle is formed, leaving them in the centre. In this way, the tigers finding themselves caught, search for an exit. Unable to get away, each one makes its spring in the direction that it sees best. When this spring takes place the man who is mounted on top jumps off with agility, and the buffaloes seize the tigers on their horns with great dexterity and, shaking their heads tear them to pieces. If any one of the tigers escapes the horns or refuses to stir from its place, the king fires his gun and kills it, or gives an order to kill it.

Sometimes they go out to these hunts without taking any buffaloes, but riding on elephants as I have before said. This way of hunting has much more risk for the hunters.

¹ *Storia do Mogor or Mogul India, 1653-1708*, by Niccolao Manucci, translated with introduction and notes by William Irvine, B.C.S. (Retd.), vol. i, p. 191.

Once it happened to King Shah Jehan that a badly wounded tiger bounded up and hung on with its claws fixed in the elephant's head. The elephant-driver fell to the ground from fright. The king seeing himself in this urgent danger, clubbed his matchlock and hit the tiger on the head with it, but the tiger did not let go, and the elephant finding he could not make use of his trunk, ran furiously till he found a tree, against which he crushed the tiger. It was on this account that Shah Jehan gave orders for the head of the elephants to be protected in future down to the end of the trunk with a covering of thick leather, studded with sharp nails. In addition to the huntsmen, there is always an official present whose business is to take possession of the tiger's whiskers; and therefore as soon as the tiger is dead, they put on his head a leather bag, coming down as far as the neck. Having tied the bag the officer attaches to it his seal. After this the tiger is carried in front of the entrance to the royal tents, when the official appears who has charge of the poisons, and removes the whiskers which are employed as venom.'

AURANGZEBE, 1665-1707

The circumstances under which Aurangzebe came to the throne of Hindustan are well known and no doubt supply the basis for the character in which this Emperor has been painted by most historians of the past.

He was fond of the chase and occasionally indulged in hunting with cheetahs and hawks. Hunting the lion was his favourite sport. The method of hunting most commonly in use at this period also was the *Qamargah* as will

be seen from the following account by Bernier,¹ who was physician at the Court for a number of years: 'I could never conceive how the Great Mogul could hunt with an army of one hundred thousand men, but there certainly is a sense in which he may be said to hunt with 200,000 or with any number of which his army may consist. In the neighbourhoods of Agra and Delhi, along the course of the Jumna reaching to the mountains, there is a large quantity of uncultivated land covered either with copsewood or with grasses six feet high. All this land is guarded with the utmost vigilance; and excepting partridges, and quails and hares, which the natives catch with nets, no person, be he who he may, is permitted to disturb the game which is consequently very abundant. Whenever the monarch is about to take the field, every game keeper near whose district the army is to pass is called upon to apprise the Grand Master of the hunt of the various sorts of game under his particular charge, and of the places where they are in the greatest plenty. Sentries are then stationed at the different roads of that district to guard the tract of ground selected, which extends sometimes four or five leagues; and while the army is on its march, on one side or the other, so as to avoid that tract, the king enters it with as many Omrahs and other persons as have the liberty to do so, and enjoys leisurely and uninterruptedly the sports of the field, varying them according to the nature of the game.'

Bernier then goes on to describe the various methods of hunting, such as with cheetahs, tiger hunts and so on.

The order followed in the arrangements of the descriptions and notes concerning of the animals of Moghul Hindustan is that adopted in the Fauna of British India series.

¹ Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, A.D. 1656-1668 (A. Constable).

THE LION

In his Fauna of Hindustan Abul Fazl mentions the lion as being numerous.

Jehangir describes a lion hunt of his father, the Emperor Akbar, in a jungle in the neighbourhood of Lahore 'which was known to be infested by these fierce and ferocious quadrupeds to the number of twenty, male and female.'

Jehangir shot a lion while encamped at the village of Giri in the Subah of Malwa about which he remarks: 'As the braveness of the lion (*Shir babar*) has been established, I wished to look at his intestines. After they were extracted it appeared that in a manner contrary to other animals, whose gall-bladder is outside their liver the gall-bladder of the lion is within its liver. It occurred to me that the courage of the lion may be from this cause.'¹

The shooting of another lion is recorded by the same Emperor in the neighbourhood of Shakkar Tank (now locally called 'Sagan Sea' tank) within the famous fortress of Malwa on about March 25, 1617. On this occasion the lion charged his retinue and mauled ten or twelve persons, whereupon Jehangir 'finished his business with three shots from my gun, and removed his evil from the servants of God.'²

Another lion was shot by him in the neighbourhood of the pergana of Rahimabad (probably in the Bari Duab). This appears to have been a particularly large animal and Jehangir writes of it as follows: 'Of all the tigers (? lions) I have shot from the time I was a prince I never saw a tiger (?) like this for

size and majesty, and the symmetry of its limbs. I ordered the artists to take its portrait according to its real form and body. He weighed 8½ Jehangiri maunds. His length from the top of his head to the end of his tail was 3½ cubits (?) and 2 tassu.'

What has been rendered as cubit here is 'Dara' or 'Zara' in the text. A 'tassu' is 1/24 of a yard, and the length of this lion would therefore be about 10 ft. 3 in.

All translations of this work erroneously state that the animal of this adventure was a tiger, while the painting reproduced in the frontispiece and obviously depicting this very hunt proves conclusively that it was a maneless lion.

'It is related,' says Percy Brown³ 'that Jehangir and his courtiers used to ride these beasts down and kill them with bows, carbines and lances. In all the shikar scenes of the Moguls, the animal is represented as the animal of their choice, pictures of tigers being extremely rare.'

Sir Thomas Roe who visited Jehangir's court as ambassador from James I of England, mentions how a lion and a wolf broke into his quarters one night while encamped at Mandu, and fell upon some sheep in the courtyard. He says, 'I sent to ask leave to kill them: for in that country none but the king may hunt a lion. Leave being granted I went out in the court: the lion quitted his prey and fell upon a little Irish mastiffe.'

THE TIGER

The tiger is also mentioned in Abul Fazl's chapter on the Fauna of Hindustan as being plentiful. He describes several methods of hunting the animal, the following of which were most commonly employed:—

1. Cage with sliding door and goat bait.

¹ *Jehangir*, vol. i. p. 350.

² *Ibid.*, p. 371.

³ *Indian Painting under the Moguls*.

⁴ 'Sir Thomas Roe's Voyage to India,' *Pinkerton's Voyages*, vol. viii. p. 14.

2. Poisoned arrows from bows set on trees on the tiger's path.

3. Bait surrounded with glued straw in which the tiger got more entangled the more he attempted to extricate himself, till at last the hunters came up and finished him off.

The faithful Abul Fazl adds that 'His Majesty (Akbar) from straightforwardness, dislikes having recourse to such tricks and prefers with bows and matchlocks openly to attack this brute which destroys so many lives.'

Yet another method, apparently not in common use is thus described: 'An intrepid experienced hunter gets on the back of a male buffalo and makes it attack the tiger. The buffalo will quickly get hold of the tiger with his horns and fling him violently upwards, so that he dies. It is impossible to describe the excitement of this manner of hunting the tiger. One does not know what to admire more, the courage of the rider or his skill in standing (?) firm on the slippery back of the buffalo.'

The killing of a man-eater by Akbar in the neighbourhood of Ajmer in the year 1572 is thus recorded in Abul Fazl's picturesque words: 'On the way the scouts reported that there was a powerful tiger there that always lay in wait for travellers and killed them. Inasmuch as the extirpation of causers of evil is one of the duties of sovereignty, the prince went forward to destroy him, and did so.'

THE LEOPARD OR PANTHER (*Felis pardus*¹)

Abul Fazl mentions this animal as occurring in the Sarkar of Kashmir where it was tracked. It is possible that the Snow Leopard is referred to. The tracking of this animal in the snow is still considered very good sport.

¹ *Panthera pardus*

² *Acinonyx jubatus*

In the chapter on the Fauna of Hindustan, the animal is stated by the same author to be 'numerous'.

Jehangir relates that on his return march from Kabul, from one of his periodical tours of inspection, a female panther (*yuz*) fell into their hands in the course of a hunt between the Garden of Wafa and Nimlah, in the neighbourhood of Jelalabad. 'The zamindars of that place,' he continues, 'Laghmanis, Shali and Afghans came and said that they did not remember, nor had they heard from their fathers that a panther had been seen in that region for 120 years.'

THE CHEETAH OR HUNTING LEOPARD (*Cynaeulrus jubatus*²)

The Moghul emperors were extremely fond of this animal, large numbers of which were kept at court for hunting purposes.

With regard to the capture of cheetahs, Abul Fazl observes: 'The ordinary pitfalls were liable to injure the animals severely and sometimes these managed to jump out and get away. Akbar invented a special sort of trap-door which closed when the cheetah fell into the hole. This pit was three gaz deep (about eight feet). Falling through the trap-door the animals were never hurt. On one occasion seven leopards—six males following a female—fell into a pit of this kind.'

Akbar was said to be able to train wild cheetahs in a much shorter time than was ordinarily required, and Abul Fazl relates an instance where 'a newly captured cheetah followed the emperor about without collar or chain to the astonishment of his court.'

The following account of a hunt with cheetahs is interesting inasmuch as it conveys some idea of the depth of interest Akbar took in this form of sport. Abul Fazl writes that '...at

the time the army was encamped at Sanganiir. His Majesty according to custom engaged in hunting. He was at this much devoted to hunting with cheetahs, and assigning cheetahs to numerous parties, he went off himself with some special attendants. It chanced that they loosed a special cheetah called "Chitr Najan" at a deer. Suddenly there appeared in front of them a ravine which was twenty-five yards (gaz?) broad. The deer leapt into the air to the height of a spear and a half and conveyed itself across. The cheetah in its eagerness took the same course, cleared the ravine and seized the deer. On beholding this astonishing occurrence the spectators raised a cry of amazement and there was great rejoicing and astonishment. The khedive raised the rank of that cheetah and made him chief of the cheetahs. He also ordered that as a special honour, and as a pleasure to men, a drum should be beaten in front of the cheetah.'

Fr. Monserrate, a Jesuit, who sojourned at Akbar's court for a considerable time refers to the Emperor's love for this form of sport and to the method of hunting, in the following words: 'Zelaldinus (Jelaluddin Akbar) spends enormous sums in keeping countless hunting panthers, for hounds such as those of the Gallic and Alan breeds are unknown in this country. The panthers are drawn by horses under care of the keepers to the place where the game is feeding. They are blindfolded so

that they may not attack any one on the way. When they are freed they dash ravenously upon the quarry; for they are kept in a state of starvation.'

Speaking of the various kinds of animals in the albino phase that had come under his notice, which included hawks, quails, flying squirrels, black buck, chinkara and others, Jehangir mentions a white cheetah which was brought to him at Agra by one Raja Bir Singh Deo. He states that he had never seen a white cheetah before and describes the animal thus: 'Its spots which are usually black were of a blue colour, and the whiteness of the body was also inclined to bluishness.'

The breeding of a pair of cheetahs in captivity is recorded by Jehangir in the year 1613. This is a valuable record. Blanford¹ says that they do not breed in captivity. 'It is an established fact,' writes the Emperor, 'that cheetahs in unaccustomed places do not pair off with a female, and my revered father (Akbar) once collected together 1,000 cheetahs.² He was very desirous that they should pair, but this in no way came off. At this time a male cheetah, having slipped its collar, went to a female and paired with it, and after two and a half months, three young ones were born and grew up. This has been recorded because it appears strange.'

Writing in the time of the Emperor Aurangzebe, the traveller Mons. de Thevenot³ states: 'There are a great many Forests about Ahmedabad where they take panthers for hunting, and the Governor of the Town causes them to be taught that he may send them to the king. The Governor suffers none to buy them but himself, and they whose care it is to tame them in the meidan where from time to time they stroke and make much of them that they may accustom them to the fight (?) of men.'

¹ Fauna British India (1890).

² The *Iqbal Nama* (p. 70) has 9,000. It says that Akbar was so keen on their pairing in captivity that he even allowed some cheetahs to run about in the gardens without collars, letting them walk about and hunt after their fashion, but all to no purpose.

³ *Travels into the Levant*, licensed December 2, 1686.

THE ELEPHANT (*Elephas maximus*)

Of all the animals Babur found in his new kingdom, the one that appears to have excited the utmost wonder and amazement in himself and his Tartar hordes was the elephant. It is possible that neither he nor his followers had ever beheld an animal before of such gigantic proportions, possessing such power behind his push, such a faithful ally in battle, and withal so tractable and docile. All of Babur's descendants shared with him this special regard for the elephant, and it has always figured prominently in all their State functions, peaceful and otherwise.

Babur thus describes the animal: 'As for the animals peculiar to Hindustan, one is the elephant. The Hindustanis call it Hathi which inhabits the district of Kalpi¹ and the higher you advance thence towards the east, the more do the wild elephants increase in number. That is the tract in which the elephant is chiefly taken. There may be thirty or forty villages in Karran² and Manikpur³ that are occupied solely in the employment of taking elephants. They account to the Government for the elephants that they take. The elephant is an immense animal and of great sagacity. It understands whatever you tell it, and does whatever it is bid. Its value is in proportion to its size. When they arrive at a proper age, they sell it, and the largest brings the highest price. They say that in some Islands the elephant grows to a height of ten gaz (25 ft.). I have never in these countries seen one above four or five gaz (10 or 12½ ft.). The elephant eats and drinks entirely by means of its trunk. He cannot live if he loses it. On the two sides

of its trunk, in his upper jaw, he has two tusks: it is by applying these teeth and exerting all his force that he overturns walls and tears up trees; and when he fights or performs any operation that requires great exertion, he makes use of these tusks which they call 'ai' (ivory). The tusks are highly valued by the Hindus. The elephant is not covered by hair or wool like other animals. The people of Hindustan place great reliance on their elephants; in their armies every division has a certain number with it. The elephant has some valuable qualities: it can carry a great quantity of baggage over deep and rapid torrents, and passes them with ease; gun carriages which it takes four or five hundred men to drag, two or three elephants draw without difficulty. But it has a great stomach and a single elephant will consume the grain of seven or fourteen camels.'

Sanderson found by experiment that a full-grown elephant consumes between 600 and 700 lbs of fodder per day.

The measurements given by Babur are also in keeping with actual facts. There is a skeleton of an Indian elephant in the Calcutta Museum which measures 11 ft. 3 in. so that its owner must in life have stood quite 12 ft. in height. This is the largest Indian elephant known.

As regards the sagacity of the elephant, Babur's description falls short of Aelian's who in his attempt to endow the elephant with unusual mental perception, relates that an elephant after carefully watching its keeper wrote after him with his trunk letters upon a board.

Both Blanford and Sanderson agree in believing that the intelligence of the elephant has been greatly overrated, its extreme docility being confounded with intelligence. From a comparison of the development of its brain it

¹ A town of great historic interest on the right bank of Jumna in the Jalaun District. U.P.—*King*.

² A town on the left bank of the Jumna in Allahabad District.—*King*.

³ A town in Partabgarh District. Delhi.—*King*.

is assumed that an elephant is probably of lower intellectual capacity than other ungulates.

Babur had probably never seen a newly born elephant for it is an interesting fact that the young of both the Indian and African elephants have a complete coat of fairly long hair which disappears in a few weeks.

Only once does Babur make an allusion to the sport of elephant hunting. It is doubtful whether this refers to the killing of elephants with bows and arrows or other weapons, or to the trapping of the beasts. Elephant trapping was an ancient practise necessitated by the extreme utility of the captures to the possessors, and Aristotle's descriptions show that the methods of capturing then differed little from those in vogue at the present day. Then as now, tame elephants were used as decoys.

Abul Fazl mentions that 'Garha' is a separate state abounding with forests in which are numerous wild elephants... and again that 'in the Sarkar of Bijagarh there are herds of wild elephants.'

He also describes an elephant hunt from which it appears that there were several methods employed at the time for capturing these beasts. On the occasion referred to, Akbar's army which was encamped at Gwalior marched to Narwar where the elephant forests were. Arrangements for hunting were made and servants divided into several bodies. To each of them a great officer was appointed and several tame elephants assigned. Strong ropes too were provided for dragging purposes, and in case of need for nooses. An order was issued that whenever wild elephants were found, the tame one should follow it until it lost power of movement from weariness. Then

from each side of the wild elephant, the drivers who were seated on the tame elephants should cast one end of the rope round the neck of the wild elephant and the other round the neck of the tame one. In this way to be brought to captivity and dragged along. Every day they were to tame him more and more and throw fodder before him till they could mount on him. This to occupy a short time. The real method of training every wild animal is gentleness and the exhibition of everything that is agreeable to him, such as grass, grain and water. On rational grounds this mode of hunting seems to be the best plan for hunting elephants: for the wild elephant is great of body and powerful, and is subdued by elephants more powerful than or like himself, the hunters avert his malignity from themselves and gain the victory over him....'

The historian recounts that on the third day of this hunt, as Akbar was on horseback at early dawn, he came across a herd of over seventy elephants. These were ordered to be driven into a dense forest where the foot of each was secured to a tree. Watchers were stationed over each animal till the tame elephants with ropes arrived from camp, when under Akbar's direction the elephants being firmly bound each between two of the royal elephants, were conveyed to the camp by evening.

Abul Fazl enumerates the methods of capturing elephants as under:—

1. Kheddah. This method was practically the same as now employed.
2. Chor Kheddah. Here a driver lay flat on the back of a tame female which was driven into a herd of wild elephants. The driver secured a wild one by throwing a rope round its foot.
3. Gadh—Pitfalls.
4. Bar.

¹ Ancient capital of the Gond dynasty of Garha of Mandla—*Imp. Gazetteer*.

Regarding the last he states: 'From times of old people have enjoyed elephant hunts by any of the above modes. His Majesty has invented a new manner which admits of remarkable finesse. In fact all excellent modes of hunting are inventions of H.M. A wild herd of elephants is surrounded on three sides by drivers, one side alone being kept open. At it several females are stationed, from all sides male elephants will approach to cover the females. The latter then gradually go into the enclosure whither the males follow. They are now caught.'

With regard to the period of gestation and the birth of an elephant, Jehangir records: '... a female elephant in the private elephant stud gave birth to a young one in my presence. I had repeatedly ordered them to ascertain the period of their gestation; at last it became evident that for a female young it was eighteen months and for a male nineteen months. In opposition to the birth of a human being, which is in most cases by a head delivery, the young elephants are born with their feet first. When the young one was born the mother scattered dust upon it with her foot and began to be kind and pet it. The young one for an instant remained fallen and then rising made towards its mother's breasts.

The following account of a hunt given by Jehangir is interesting more particularly in the fact that the locality where it took place has long since gone out of the wild elephant's range of distribution. Writing from camp at the village of Sajra (Sajwara?), eight kos from Dohad, now in the Panchmahals District (Bombay Presidency), the Emperor says: 'I went to hunt elephants with a body of my servants. As the grazing place of elephants is in a hilly country, with elevations and depres-

sions, a passage is obtained with difficulty by one on foot. Before this, a large body of horse and foot had surrounded the jungle after the manner of a qamargah, and outside the jungle on a tree they had prepared a wooden platform for me. On all sides of this they had arranged seats on other trees for the Amirs. They had got ready 200 male elephants with strong nooses and many female elephants. On each elephant there were seated two elephant drivers of the tribe of Jarga, whose special employment is the hunting of elephants, and it had been arranged that they should bring the wild elephants from the jungle into my presence, that I might witness the hunt. It happened that at the time when the men from all sides entered the jungle, in consequence of the thickness of the forest and the heights and hollows, the chain was broken and the order of the qamargah did not remain perfect. The wild elephants in bewilderment turned in every direction, but twelve males and females came to this side (i.e. where Jehangir was). As the fear was that they might escape, they drove in the tame elephants and tied the wild elephants up wherever they found them. Although many elephants were not caught at least two excellent ones were captured, very handsome in shape, of good breed and perfect marks. As there is a hill in the jungle where the elephants were, called "Rakas (Rakshas) Pahar" or "Demon Hill"; I called the two elephants "Ravan Sar" and "Pavan Sar", these being the names of two demons.'

The hill referred to is, as suggested by Rodgers and Beveridge, doubtless Pavagarh, a hill-fort in the Panchmahals District which is 2,800 ft. above sea level.

Jehangir left the place while the khedda operations were still in progress, and soon after he mentions that a report was received from Gajpat Khan, Superintendent of the ele-

: *Jeh.*, vol. i, p. 265.

phant stables, and Baluch Khan the chief Huntsman that upto this time sixty-nine elephants male and female had been caught. Whatever took place after this would be reported. I ordered them to beware not to take old or small elephant, but with this exception they should catch all they saw, male and female.¹

With regard to the size of elephants Jehangir² says, 'In the elephant stables of His Majesty Akbar the largest elephant I saw was "Durjan Sai". It was long the premier elephant. Its height was four yards (dara) and 3½ quarters of the ilahi gaz, which is eight yards and three fingers of the ordinary gaz. At present among the elephants of my establishment the largest athlete is "Alam Gajraj" which H. M. Akbar himself had caught. It is the chief of my special elephants. Its height is 4½ yards (dara) or 7 yards 7 fingers of the ordinary yard. The ordinary gaz (yard) has been fixed at twenty-four fingers' breadths of an average sized man and the ilahi gaz is forty fingers' breadths.'

This would make the height of 'Alam Gajraj' about 11 ft. and that of 'Durjan Sai' about 12½ ft.

Jehangir mentions that one of his private elephants Gajpati by name and a female that was with him in the stables were both bitten on the foot by a mad dog. The symptoms and effects of the bite recorded by him as follows are interesting: He writes, 'When a month and five days had passed after this event, one day when it was cloudy, the growling of thunder came to the ear of the female elephant that was in the act of eating, and it all of a sudden raised a cry and its limbs began to tremble. It threw itself on the ground

but rose again. For seven days water ran out of its mouth, and then suddenly it uttered a cry and showed distress. The remedies the drivers gave it had no effect and on the eighth day it fell down and died. A month after the death of the female they took the large elephant to the edge of a river in the plain. It was cloudy and thundering in the same way. The said elephant in the height of excitement all at once began to tremble and sat down on the ground. With a thousand difficulties the drivers took it up to its own place. After the same interval and in the same way as had happened to the female elephant this elephant also died.' The Emperor concludes this account with 'Great amazement was caused by this affair, and in truth it is a matter to be wondered at, that an animal of such size and bulk should be so affected by such a weak creature.'

Two records of African elephants being brought to India are to be found in Jehangir's *Memoirs* (p. 323). One was a young individual brought as an offering by the Governor of Gujarat to the Emperor Akbar which we are told was very fiery and bad tempered when it grew up. The other was a small elephant presented to Jehangir in 1616 by one Muqarrab Khan which had been brought by sea from Abyssinia. Regarding these Jehangir observes that: 'In comparison with the elephants of Hindustan it presents some peculiarities. Its ears are larger than the ears of the elephants of this place, and its trunk and tail are longer.'

THE GREAT ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros indicus*)²

Babur, as we know, frequently hunted this animal which he describes as follows:

'The rhinoceros is a huge animal. Its bulk

¹ *Jeh.*, vol. ii, p. 18.

² *Rhinoceros unicornis*

is equal to that of three buffaloes. The opinion prevalent in our countries that a rhinoceros can lift an elephant on its horn is probably a mistake. It has a single horn over its nose, upwards of a span¹ in length, but I never saw one of two spans. Out of one of the largest of these horns, I had a drinking vessel made,² and a dice box, and about 3 or 4 fingers' bulk of it might be left.'

'Its hide is very thick. If it be shot with a powerful bow drawn up to the armpit with much force, and if the arrow pierces at all, it enters only 3 or 4 fingers' breadth. They say however, that there are parts of its skin that may be pierced and the arrows enter deep. On the sides of its two shoulder blades and of its two thighs are folds that hang loose, and appear from a distance like cloth housings dangling over it. It bears more resemblance to the horse than to any other animal. As the horse has a large stomach, so has this; as the pastern of a horse is composed of a single bone, so also is that of the rhinoceros. It is more ferocious than the elephant and cannot be rendered so tame and obedient.'³

As regards the distribution of the rhinoceros, Babur says: 'There are numbers of them in the jungles of Peshawar and Hashnagar, as well as between the rivers Sind and Behreh in the jungles. In Hindustan too they abound on the banks of the Saru (Gogra).'

Towards the end of Humayun's reign, in

about the year 1556, a Turkish admiral of Suleiman the Great, by name Sidi Ali Reis, who by the exigencies of war and weather, had found himself obliged to travel overland from Surat to Lahore and thence across all the intervening lands to Turkey⁴ records that his party came across two rhinoceros near Peshawar, an event' as Mrs. Beveridge observes 'which makes one wonder whether there still remained a part of the ancient lake of the plain of Peshawar to serve as habitat for the huge now vanished beasts.'

Compare the above distribution with the present sadly diminished territories of the animal, which are Burma, Assam and the Nepal Terai, nowhere of which can it be said to be really plentiful, except perhaps in the last named, where owing to its being strictly preserved as Royal Game, the rhinoceros is still to be found in fair numbers. In parts of Assam, too, owing to strict protection, its numbers are slightly on the increase.

The belief in the efficacy of the rhinoceros's horn against poison remained in England even upto the time of Charles II. In his *Science from an Easy Chair*, Sir E. Ray Lankester mentions that at that time a cup made of rhinoceros horn was handed over to the Royal Society for experiment, with the result of entirely disproving the superstition. The belief however, still exists in certain parts of India and in Oriental countries generally. In Texas-

¹ A span would be equal to 8½ or 9 inches. The record horn of *R. indicus* given in Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game*, 7th ed. is 24 inches length on front curve or equal to 3 spans of Babur. It will be noticed here how guarded Babur is regarding the measurements he gives.

² In commenting on this Sir Lucas King observes as follows: 'The rhinoceros's horn was supposed to sweat on the approach of poison, a quality which fitted it in a peculiar manner for being made into a drinking cup for an Eastern king.'

³ *Babur*, vol. ii, p. 210.

With regard to Babur's comparison of the animal to a horse, Mrs. Beveridge in her translation of the *Memoirs* notes 'The anatomical details by which Babur supports this statement are difficult to translate, but his grouping of the two animals is in agreement with the modern classification of them as 2 of the *Ungulata vera*, the third being the Tapir *F.B.I., Mammals*, pp. 467-8, Blanford.'

⁴ Vambery, *Travels and Adventures of Sidi Ali Reis*, Luzac & Co., 1899.

serim, where both *R. sondaicus* and *R. sumatrensis* are found, the Chinese pay big prices for the horn. The blood, urine and other fluids of the body are likewise preserved and greatly valued. The blood is believed to possess tonic and aphrodisiac properties and sells at about Re. 1 per tola dried. The animal when killed is turned on its back with its feet in the air. The viscera is carefully removed so as not to lose any of the precious fluids, and all the blood, etc., which flow down into the body cavity are scooped out and collected in hollow bamboos, or in the guts of the animal in the form of sausages, and smoke-dried. It is said that a dead rhino is worth anything from Rs. 900 to 1,200 to its hunters. Professional Siamese hunters, presumably having exterminated the rhinoceros in their own country, formed themselves into small roving bands and crossed over into British territory in the Mergui and Tavoy Districts of Lower Burma, and carried on the merciless slaughter of this animal on an extensive scale, and it was on this account that the Government of Burma had to pass legislation to protect it, making poaching a serious offence, and to appoint patrols in areas inhabited by these species.

Writing in the reign of the Emperor Akbar, his chronicler Abul Fazl states regarding the Sarkar of Chambal: "There is game in plenty and the rhinoceros is found. It is an animal like a small elephant without a trunk, and having a horn on its snout with which it attacks animals. From its skin, shields are

made, and from its horn finger-guards for bow-strings, strings and the like." The same author includes this beast in his Fauna of Hindustan where it is described thus: "The rhinoceros is a stupendous creature: he is twice the size of a buffalo, and much resembles a horse in armour. His feet and hoofs are like those of an elephant and his tail similar to a buffalo's, and he has a pastern joint like a horse. On the point of his snout he carries a single horn, and his hide is so thick that an arrow will not pierce it. Of this breast-plates and shields and the like are made, and he is bold enough to charge a man on horse-back."

The above description, as will be noted, closely resembles Babur's account, and may have probably been taken from his Memoirs.

The record Indian rhinoceros shot in Nepal measured 6 ft. 4 in. at the shoulder. A good sized bull buffalo measures 5 ft. or a few inches above.

The Emperor Jehangir mentions that one day he was hunting the rhinoceros from an elephant in the Kul Nuh Ban (Forest) in the neighbourhood of Aligarh. He says "A rhinoceros appeared and I struck it with a bullet on the face (mana) near the lobe of the ear. The bullet penetrated for about a span. From the bullet it fell and gave up its life. It has often happened in my presence that powerful men (*jawanans*) good shots with the bow, have shot 20 or 30 arrows at them and not killed." This took place about the year 1622 A.D. It has been stated that this animal was a wolf, but this is obviously incorrect. In Persian *Gurg* is a wolf and *Kurg* a rhinoceros. A wolf certainly would not require 20 or 30 arrows to kill it.

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. iii.