

EARLY TRAVELS IN INDIA

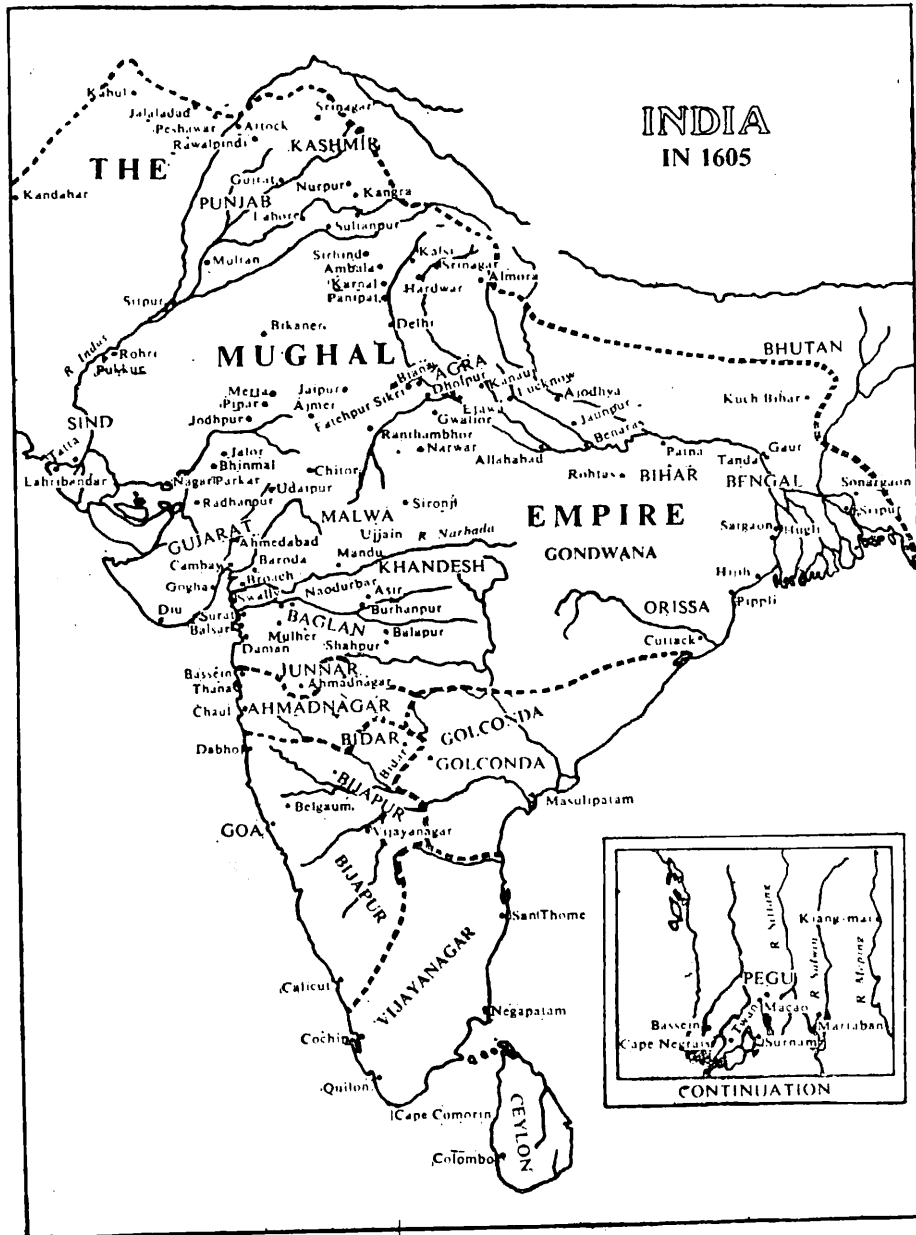
1583—1619

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pp. i-xiv, 1-551

original 1921 London, Humphrey Milford



ORIENTAL REPRINT



1921

Oriental Books Reprint Corporation
54 Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi-110055

1985

is 30 c.; a towne of great traffique for linnen and other merchandize. To Oude [Ajodhya] from thence are 50 c.; a citie of ancient note, and seate of a Potan king, now much ruined; the castle built foure hundred yeeres agoe. Heere are also the ruines of Ranichand[s]¹ castle and houses, which the Indians acknowl[de] for the great God, saying that he tooke flesh upon him to see the tamasha² of the world. In these ruines remayne certaine Bramenes, who record the namcs of all such Indians as wash themselves in the river running thereby; which custome, they say, hath continued foure lackes of yeeres (which is three hundred ninetie foure thousand and five hundred yeeres before the worlds creation). Some two miles on the further side of the river is a cave of his with a narrow entrance, but so spacious and full of turnings within that a man may well loose himselfe there, if he take not better heed; where it is thought his ashes were buried. Hither resort many from all parts of India, which carry from hence in remembrance certaine graines of rice as blacke as gun-powder, which they say have beene reserved ever since. Out of the ruines of this castle is yet much gold tryed.³ Here is great trade, and such abundance of Indian asse-horne⁴ that they make hereof bucklers and divers sorts of drinking cups. There are of these hornes, all the Indians affirme, some rare of great price, no jewell comparable, some esteeming them the right unicornes horne.

From Oudee to Acabarpore [Akbarpur, in Fyzābād district] 30 c., some 30 c. from whence lyeth Bonarce [Benares], the principall mart of Bengala goods. From Acab[arpore] to Jounpore [Jaunpur] 30 c.; seated on a small river, over which is a bridge with houses like London Bridge, but nothing so good. The castle hath beene a seat of the Potan kings, there yet remaying two faire meskites, with many other ancient monuments; the houses are like those of Amadavar; the

¹ Rāma Chandra, the hero of the *Rāmāyana*. The reference is to the mound known as the Rām Kot or fort of Rāma.

² Hind. *tamāsha*, a show or spectacle.

³ This practice is mentioned in the *Āin* (Blochmann and Jarrett's transl., vol. ii, p. 171).

⁴ Rhinoceros horn. The bucklers were made from the hide of the animal.

circuit some 8 or 10c. Hence come excellent sweete oyles, carpets, hangings embrodered with silke, all sorts of fine linnen, etc.

Thus much from Agra to Jounpore this way; from thence (returning that way to Agra) to Alabasse is 110 c.,¹ 30 c. all [of ?] which are thorow a continuall Forrest. The towne and castle stand out on the further side of Ganges pleasantly seated, called anciently Praye [see p. 19], and is held one of the wonders of the east. Divers Potan kings have sought to build here a castle, but none could doe it till Acabar layd the foundation and proceeded with the worke. It stands on a point or angle, having the river Gemini [Jumna] on the south-side falling into Ganges. It hath beene fortie yeeres abuilding, and is not yet finished; neither is like to bee in a long time. The Acabar for many yeeres had attending this worke by report twentie thousand persons, and as yet there continue working thereon some five thousand of all sorts. It will be one of the most famous buildings of the world. In this castle Sha Selim kept, when he rebelled against his father. The outward wals are of an admirable height, of a red square stone, like Agra Castle; within which are two other wals nothing so high. You enter thorow two faire gates into a faire court, in which stands a pillar of stone² fiftie cubits above ground (so deeply placed within ground that no end can be found), which by circumstances of the Indians seemeth to have beene placed by Alexander or some other great conquerour, who could not passe further for Ganges. Passing this court you enter a lesse; beyond that a larger, where the King sits on high at his dersane to behold elephants and other beasts to fight. Right under him within a vault are many pagodes, being monuments of Baba Adam and Mama Havah [Adam and Eve] (as they call them) and of their progenie, with pictures of Noah and his descent. The Indians suppose that man was heere created, or kept heere at least for many yeeres, affirming themselves to be of that religion whereof these fathers were. To this place resort many

¹ He means that the distance to Agra from Jaunpur via Allahābād is 110 *kos* (a gross under-estimate), of which the stage from Jaunpur to Allahābād represents thirty.

² The Asoka pillar in Allahābād fort. It is really only thirty-five feet in length.

the fatnesse (as I have said) of his land, no part of the world yeelding a more fruitfull veine of ground then all that which lieth in his empire, saving that part of Babylonia where the terrestriall paradise once stode; whereas a great part of the Turkes land is extreme barren and sterill, as I have observed in my peregrination thereof, especially in Syria, Mesopotamia and Armenia; many large portions thereof beeing so wonderfull fruitelesse that it beareth no good thing at all, or if any thing, there *infelix lolium et steriles dominantur avenæ*.¹ Secondly, in the conjunction and union of all his territories together in one and the same goodly continent of India, no prince having a foote of land within him. But many parcels of the Turkes countries are by a large distance of seas and otherwise divided asunder. Again, in his revenue he exceedeth the Turk and the Persian his neighbour by just halfe; for his revenues are 40 millions of crownes (of sixe shillings value) by the yeare,² but the Turkes are no more then fifteene millions (as I was certainly informed in Constantinople), and the Persians five millions, *plus minus* (as I heard in Spahan). It is saide that he is uncircumcised, wherein he differeth from all the Mahometan princes that ever were in the world.

Hee speaketh very reverently of our Saviour, calling him in the Indian tongue *Isazaret Eesa* [*Hazarat Īsa*], that is, the Great Prophet Jesus; and all Christians, especiallie us English, he useth so benevolently as no Mahometan prince the like. Hee keepeth abundance of wilde beasts, and that of divers sorts, as lyons, elephants, leopards, beares, antlops, unicornes; whereof two I have seene at his court, the strangest beasts of the world.³ They were brought hither out of the countrie of Bengala, which is a kingdom of most singular fertilitie within the compasse of his dominion, about four moneths journey

¹ This is from Virgil's *Georgics*, bk. i, l. 154.

² Presumably his informant gave the amount as 120 millions of rupees, which Coryat converted at the rate of 2s. to the rupee (the value he adopts elsewhere). Even assigning a higher value to the rupee, and supposing the figure to relate to land revenue only, it is probably too low an estimate (cf. Hawkins, *supra*, p. 99, and Thomas's *Revenue Resources*, p. 26).

³ In the original pamphlet a fanciful portrait of a unicorn is here inserted. The beasts mentioned by Coryat were of course rhinoceroses.

from this, the midland parts thereof being watered by divers channels of the famous Ganges, which I have not as yet seene, but (God willing) I meane to visite it before my departure out of this countrie, the neerest part of it beeing not above twelve daies journey from this court. The King presenteth himselfe thrice every daie without faile to his nobles; at the rising of the sunne, which he adareth by the elevation of his hands; at noone; and at five of the clocke in the evening. But he standeth in a roome aloft, alone by him selfe, and looketh upon them from a window that hath an embroidered sumptuous coverture, supported with two silver pillasters to yeeld shaddowe unto him. Twice every week elephants fight before him, the bravest spectacle in the worlde. Many of them are thirteene foot and a halfe high; and they seeme to juttle together like two little mountaines, and were they not parted in the midst of their fighting by certaine fire-workes, they would exceedingly gore and cruentate one another by their murdering teeth. Of elephants the King keepeth 80,000 in his whole kingdome at an unmeasurable charge; in feeding of whom, and his lyons and other beasts, he spendeth an incredible masse of money, at the least ten thousand pounds sterling a day.¹ I have rid upon an elephant since I came to this court, determining one day (by Gods leave) to have my picture expressed in my next booke sitting upon an elephant.² The king keepeth a thousand women for his own body, whereof the chiefest (which is his Queene) is called Normal.

I thinke I shall here after this send another letter unto you before my departure out of this countrey, by a worthy man, which is the minister and preacher of our nation in this place, one M. Peter Rogers, a man to whom I am exceedingly obliged for his singular offices of humanity exhibited unto me. Pray use him kindly for my sake. Hee understanding that there is a certaine yong gentleman, called Maister Charles Lancaster, that serveth the M[aster] of the Rolles, intreated me to desire

¹ This appears to be an exaggeration (cf. *supra*, p. 104).

² Though Coryat did not live to issue another book, the publishers of the 1616 pamphlet remembered his wish and placed on the title-page a fancy sketch of him riding upon an elephant. This illustration appears three times.