

A K B A R
THE GREAT MOGUL
1542-1605

BY

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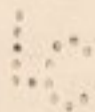
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πλέον ἤμισυ παντός.—Hesiod



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Forests.

A few particular, though rather desultory observations may be made to illustrate the actual condition of various parts of India in Akbar's time and to emphasize the contrast with present conditions.

'Pergunnahs [parganas]', as Oldham correctly states, 'are now subdivisions of a district, containing a large number of villages, and called by a fixed name. In the early days of the Mahomedan empire they appear to have been clearings or cultivated spaces in the forest, occupied generally by a single, but sometimes by more than one fraternity or clan.

'The Emperor Baber, in his Autobiography, mentions that the pergunnahs were surrounded by jungles, and that the people of the pergunnahs often fled to these jungles to avoid paying their revenue.¹

'In the days of the Emperor Baber, the rhinoceros abounded in the country adjacent to the Ghogra; and wild elephants, first met with in numbers at Karrah, now in the Futtehpour² District, became more common as a traveller proceeded eastward. We may, therefore, fairly conclude that the Ghazee poor District, which is situated on the Ghogra, and far east of Karrah, must have been in a great degree a forest, swarming with herds of elephants and rhinoceros, three or four hundred years ago.'³

I lived in that District more than forty years ago, and can testify from personal knowledge that no large game was then to be found anywhere in or near it. Even the black buck was rare, and there was practically no shooting to be had except wild-fowl.

Increase
in cultiv-
ated
area.

The area under cultivation undoubtedly has increased vastly almost everywhere during the last three hundred years. It is not possible to give general comparative statistics, and attempts to work out the figures for any individual modern administrative District are difficult and yield indeterminate results. In certain cases, as in that of Sarkār Mungir (Monghyr) in Bihār, the *Āin* omits the figures of area altogether, and in a hundred other ways obstacles beset the path of the inquirer who seeks to map out the

¹ The same state of things continued to exist in Oudh until the annexation in 1856. See Sleeman, *Tour in Oudh*, 1858, *passim*, with

reference to the facts as in 1849-50.

² *sic*; read 'Allāhabad'.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 51.

Sarkārs of Akbar and compare them with modern Districts. Elliot, Beames, and many local officers have attempted the task and attained partial, but admittedly only partial success.¹ The proportionate extension of the cultivated area has, of course, varied infinitely in different localities. For instance, Mr. Moreland estimates that in the Fatehpur District, United Provinces, as a whole, the tillage has about doubled, but in different parts of the district the increase varies between 50 and 400 per cent. Oldham, writing in 1870, estimated the cultivated area of the Ghazipur Sarkār in the east of the United Provinces to have been one-sixth of the total area in the reign of Akbar, as against more than five-sixths when he was writing. All such estimates are merely rough approximations, and it is not worth while to pursue the subject in further statistical detail.

The range of the *Rhinoceros indicus* or *unicornis* is now restricted to the forests of the Himalayas and the swampy tracts at the base of the mountains, but the great beast was hunted by Bābur in the neighbourhood of Peshāwar as well as on the banks of the Gogra.

Wild
beasts.

Akbar captured wild elephants in many places where now one would be as likely to meet a mammoth, and he shot tigers near Mathurā.

In ancient times the lion used to be found throughout the greater part of North-western and Central India. At the present time it is almost extinct, only a few specimens surviving, it is believed, in Kāthiāwār.

But in 1615, when Terry was encamped at Māndū in Central India, now included in the Dhār State, lions troubled the camp as they do at the present day in parts of Africa.

‘In those vast and extended woods’, Terry writes, ‘there are lions, tigers, and other beasts of prey, and many wild elephants. We lay one night in that wood with our carriages, and those lions came about us, discovering themselves by their roaring, but we keeping a good fire all night, they came not near enough to hurt either ourselves or cattle;

¹ For Sūbas Agra, Allahabad, (Awadh) and Bihār, Beames in and Delhi see Elliot, *Supplemental J. A. S. B.*, part i, 1884, pp. 215–32; and 1885, pp. 162–82, with *Glossary*, ed. Beames, 1869, vol. ii, pp. 83–146; and for Sūbas Oudh maps.

those cruel beasts are night-walkers, for in the day they appear not.'

At the same place, a little later :

'One night, early in the evening, there was a great lion, which we saw, came into our yard (though our yard was compassed about with a stone wall that was not low); and my Lord Ambassador having a little white neat shock that ran out barking at him,¹ the lion presently snapt him up, leapt again over the wall, and away he went.'

Jahāngīr and his courtiers used to ride down lions, and kill them 'with their bows and carbines, and launces'.² It would be easy to give further illustrations of a like kind, but so much may suffice.

Gardens. The benefits conferred on India either directly by the Mogul emperors or in their time were not confined to the administrative reforms already noticed or to the developments of art and literature to be discussed in the next chapter.

Bābur grumbled much at the deficiencies of the burning plains of India in comparison with the delights of his pleasancess at Samarkand and Kābul. He missed nothing more than the gardens with their murmuring streams to which he had been accustomed, and did his best to make a colourable imitation of them by the help of wells and brick water-courses. Whenever he settled for a time at any place, his first thought was a garden, and he straightway set to work to make one. So at Agra, across the river, he built a garden palace, where, after four years of sovereignty in India, his restless spirit passed away. He left directions that his body should be transported to Kābul, and there laid to its final rest in 'the sweetest spot of the neighbourhood', a lovely garden at the foot of a 'turreted mountain' beside a tumbling cascade.

Akbar inherited his grandfather's love for gardens and flowers, and made many 'paradises', as the old English monks called such retreats. The scene of his accession was set in a well-planned garden, and other similar abodes of

¹ 'Shock' or 'shough', a long-haired, or shaggy dog.

² Terry, pp. 182, 184, 403.