

THE  
HISTORY, ANTIQUITIES,  
TOPOGRAPHY, AND STATISTICS  
OF  
EASTERN INDIA;

COMPRISING THE DISTRICTS OF

BEHAR, SHAHABAD, BHAGULPOOR, GORUCKPOOR,  
DINAJEPOOR, PURANIYA, RUNGPOOR, & ASSAM,

IN RELATION TO THEIR

GEOLOGY, MINERALOGY, BOTANY, AGRICULTURE, COMMERCE, MANU-  
FACTURES, FINE ARTS, POPULATION, RELIGION, EDUCATION,  
STATISTICS, ETC.

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BY

MONTGOMERY MARTIN,

AUTHOR OF THE "*History of the British Colonies,*" &c.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

BHAGULPOOR, GORUCKPOOR, AND DINAJEPOOR.

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## CHAPTER IV.

THE NATURAL PRODUCTIONS OF THE DISTRICT OF  
BHAGULPOOR.

**ANIMALS.**—The most common monkey in this district, and the most destructive of the wild quadrupeds, or rather as the French naturalists say, of the wild four handed animals, is the Hanuman. This animal seems confined to certain territories in a manner, for which I cannot well account. On the north side of the Ganges there are none, which occasions no difficulty, as the river is too wide for them to cross; but, although they are numerous in almost every wood in the district, and are exceedingly common in the town of Bhagulpoor, there are scarcely any in Rajmahal or the low country S.E. from it, nor are there any in Mungger, Suryagarha, or the adjacent villages. There seems to be nothing in the situation of these places, that can occasion the difference. I presume, therefore, that the people of Rajmahal, Mungger, &c. resist the incursions of these destructive animals with more vigour, than the consciences of the people of Bhagulpoor, and of other sufferers would admit. The people of Mungger, indeed, deny their using any force or violence, and pretend, that when a Hanuman comes to invade their property, they merely make a noise, and use threats, but this I have seen tried very often with no effect, and I have no doubt, that more severity is used, but this is looked upon by so many as sinful, that the poor people, who defend their property, are afraid to avow their industry. I have also no doubt, that a very moderate exertion of violence might altogether expell these pests, and the havoc, which at present they commit on the crops, is very great. To destroy one of them is considered almost as great a sin as to kill a cow; and moreover it is imagined, that such an action is exceedingly unlucky, and that where a Hanuman has been killed all the people will soon die. His bones also are exceedingly unfortunate, and no house built, where one is hid under ground, can thrive. The discovery of these bones, or the ascertaining, that none such are concealed, where a house is to be

built, is one of the employments of the Jyotish philosophers of India, so highly vaunted for the purity of their science. It is perhaps owing to this fear of ill luck, that no native will acknowledge his having seen a dead Hanuman; for it can scarcely be supposed that the animals conceal their dead, as many of the natives suppose. In the town of Bhagulpoor and some villages they are far from being shy, but have no sort of tameness, and in the woods they are very noisy, but shy. They herd in considerable numbers. The short tailed monkey is also pretty common, on both sides of the Ganges.

The black bear of India (Bhal) is found in all the woods of this district on the south of the Ganges; but, except towards the southern boundary, is not very numerous, and does little harm. Sometimes, however, the bears kill a man; but they never attack cattle.

The *Ursus indicus* of Shaw is found on the hills south from Mungger, where it lives in holes under large stones or rocks. It is called Bajrabhal, or hard bear, because it may be beaten very much without being killed. These animals live in pairs or families, and eat frogs, rats, white-ants, and other insects, for which they dig. The people here have never seen this animal digging up graves, nor eating dead carcasses, as I formerly heard was its usual custom. In this district the Indian *ichneumon*, or Biji, is pretty common, and undoubtedly kills, and eats serpents, on which account it deserves the utmost protection. Had Hindu fable been directed to such a laudable purpose, it would have merited some excuse; but in general its object seems to have been to recommend whatever is useless, and often what is prejudicial. On the banks of the Ganges there are many Otters.

The Tiger or Selavagh in this district is pretty common, but it cannot be said to be very destructive. It is not beasts of prey, that are most prejudicial to mankind. Those which attack the sources of subsistence, such as monkees, hogs, deer and elephants, do much more harm. I am indeed persuaded, that the tigers, by destroying hogs and deer, do more good than harm, at least in a district, where the two latter animals are so numerous and destructive.

Of the two large spotted animals of the feline genus that are common in India, I saw only the former. The Harvagher or Harak, derives its name from eating bones; for it pos-

esses so little swiftness that it cannot overtake any living animal. It is said to resemble in size the spotted tiger or leopard; but it has about the loins a peculiar weakness, to which its want of swiftness is attributed, and it is striped like a tiger, not spotted like a leopard. It was said not to be uncommon in the southern parts of the district, where it remains the whole year; but, although I have offered ample rewards, I have not been able to procure a specimen dead or alive; and the leopard at Mungger is called Lakravagh.

The hyæna or Lakravagh in this district has acquired an uncommon degree of ferocity, is said to carry off goats, calves, and sometimes even children; for it is a bold animal, and enters villages at night, which tigers or leopards seldom do, at least with an intention of attacking the human species. The Kohiya, although I have never been able to procure a specimen, is undoubtedly an animal of the canine genus, of which I have heard reports from a great variety of places in India, and have been favoured with some drawings. It frequents the southern parts of the district; but does not breed there, nor does it come every year. It usually appears in February, coming in packs of from fifteen to twenty, and hunts in company. On its arrival, all other wild animals instantly fly; for it attacks even the tiger without fear, and is supposed to fly immediately at his eyes. It is, the natives say, like a dog, but longer in shape, has a black muzzle, and is of a red colour, without spots. The Kohiya occasionally kills calves, taking them to be deer, which are its favourite food; but the good which it does in driving away other wild animals, is ample compensation. Such is all the information that I have been here able to procure concerning this animal, which I suspect is the real *canis aureus*, or according to Buffon, the *pantheros* of the ancients; while our jackal, which has in its colour nothing red, or still less golden, seems to be the *adive* of the great naturalist of France, a name which in the dialect of Karnata merely implies any thing wild.

This jackal in some parts of the district, especially in the part which is included in Gaur, is more numerous and noisy than I have any where else observed. It is not only during night that one is there annoyed by their dismal and discordant howlings. This gave me an opportunity of ascer-

taining that it is this animal which makes the howl, resembling somewhat the word Phao, concerning which the natives are very much divided, some asserting that this noise is made by the jackal, while others allege that it is the voice of the fox. The natives allege, that the jackal is most noisy at the end of every watch (Pahar) of the night; and so far it may be allowed, that for a little they usually set up a general howl, and then for some time continue silent. So indistinct is the native nomenclature, that in Bengal this wretched animal and the powerful royal tiger are often called by the same name, Siyal. When the growling of a tiger is heard at night, a Bengalese will not say that it is the roar of a tiger, least the animal should instantly rush in and devour him; at night he always speaks of the tiger by the name Siyal; and it is only in the day that he ventures to call the animal a Vagh. The jackals, called Gidar in the Hindi dialect, are accused of being great thieves, and of carrying away clothes, money, and many other things, for which they can have no use. The fact, I believe, is, that they sometimes carry away parcels, thinking that they contain food. At Phutkipoor, a bag belonging to one of my servants, was taken out of his tent, and in the morning its contents were found scattered about at a little distance. This was attributed to the jackals, and perhaps with reason, as a thief would probably have carried away the articles, which were wearing apparel. The wolf (Hundar) is said to be sometimes but rarely seen in this district. The Indian fox (*Canis Bengalensis*, Pennant) is very common, and is a pretty harmless creature.

According to the report of the natives, all these beasts of prey may annually kill 20 people, and 250 head of cattle. The porcupine, called here Sahi, is not very common, which seems to be partly owing to its being eagerly sought after by many who eat it, and partly to the soil being too stiff. In the hills it is more common than on the plains, and finds shelter under large stones and rocks. The Indian hare (Khurgosh), is much more common, although a good many are killed for eating. In general, however, the natives seem to give a decided preference to the porcupine; although both are admitted to be pure food. In every part of the district the small striped squirrel (Gilhari Lukkhi or Kat Biral) is very common. The *Sciurus Indicus* of naturalists is

not uncommon in the woods of Mungger, where it is called Rato. Except when breeding, it is a solitary animal.

The animal of which the natives are by far the most afraid, and to which they attribute their having deserted many villages, is the elephant. This animal is, however, confined to two parts. The greatest number frequents the Rajmahal hills and their vicinity, and it is said, that it is within these 30 or 40 last years that the wild elephants have made their appearance. The stock is said to have been some that made their escape from the Nawab's stud, which is often sent for forage to the vicinity of Rajmahal. So far as I can learn, there may be in all 100 head, partly on the east, and partly on the west side of this range of hills. From the latter, small herds sometimes make excursions so far as the hills south from Mungger; but this is not usual, and hitherto these animals have in general confined their depredations to within seven or eight coss of the Rajmahal hills.

The natives, I am persuaded, greatly exaggerate the injury done by these animals; but there can be no doubt, that these herds are chiefly fed on the crops; for in many woods frequented by the elephants there is scarcely any forage that they will eat. Palms, ratans, scitamineous plants, bamboos, reeds, and marsh grass, are there very scarce, nor are the fig-trees, which the elephants eat, common any where except near villages. It seems therefore surprising that the elephants have not entirely resorted to the western hills, where the bamboo is very abundant, and where in some places there is a tree called Galgal, of which they are said to be fond. This circumstance, in my opinion, shows that the elephant is not an adventurous animal, and might be easily repelled.

The alarm that the elephants occasion is exceedingly great. One night that I lay close by the hills, although I had a guard, the men of the village close by my tents retired at night to trees, and the women hid themselves among the cattle, leaving their huts a prey to the elephants, who know very well where to look for grain. Two nights before some of them had unroofed a hut in the village, and had eat up all the grain, which a poor family had preserved in its earthen store (Kuthi). On the north side of the river, a colony of elephants, similar to that in the southern parts of Puraniya,

frequented the marshy woods of that part, and occasioned an equal alarm.\*

In most of the wild parts of the district, the rhinoceros is occasionally but very rarely seen. Formerly, in the marshes at the foot of the hills between Rajmahal and Sakarigali, there were many, and even now there are always some, but they have been so much disturbed by European sportsmen, that they have become scarce, and exceedingly shy. They never did much harm. In almost every part of the district wild hogs are to be found, and even in Mungger, its best cultivated part, they have been known to come into the fort; but in general they are neither numerous nor very destructive; and are worst on the north side of the Ganges. In the wilder parts they seem to be kept within bounds by the number of persons of low birth, who take a delight in hunting them on account of their unclean flesh.

The Indian term Harin, is difficult to explain. It includes not only the *Moschus*, *Antilope*, and *Cervus* of European zoologists, but also a wild species of the *Bos*, while it excludes the wild buffalo. The *Moschus Memina* is a pretty little animal, not much larger than a hare. Intermediate between the *Moschus* and *Cervus*, as having the tusks of the one, and the horns of the other, is the rib-faced deer of Penant, which is pretty common among the hills. The *Cervus Axis* in many parts is exceedingly common and destructive. It is perhaps the finest of the deer kind, not only on account of its beauty, but of the facility with which it is tamed.

A very beautiful animal of the genus *Antilope* is pretty numerous. It is found in all the woods of the southern parts of the district, and goes in small herds or families. It resembles very much the Nilgai, or *Antilope picta*, and may perhaps be considered as a mere variety of that fine animal; but it is much the colour of the stag, and grows to the size of a small horse. From its make, it would appear to possess both great strength and agility, and its shape, carriage, and motions are graceful.

The *Antilope Cervicapra* is the wild quadruped of which I saw the greatest number in this district, but that probably

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\* They are sometimes taken in snares by tame elephants; but a very small number survive the loss of their freedom —[En.]

was owing to its frequenting open naked plains, while the deer and hogs, in the day at least, usually conceal themselves in woods and thickets. It goes in small herds of from three to seven. I have not observed more than one male with a herd, but I have sometimes seen solitary males hovering around. I suspect, that the males, so soon as they become fit for procreation, fight until only one remains alive, or at least until all the weaker competitors are compelled to retire from the herd. It seems difficult to account for the bounding which this animal uses in running, when not hard pursued; for it very much impedes their progress, must be very fatiguing, and seems to be totally useless. I at one time thought, that it might be with a view of enabling the animal to see if any enemy was concealed behind bushes or other cover; but I have observed them to use this manner of advancing when on exceeding bare plains.

Along with musks, deer and antelopes, under the generic name of Harin, the natives class an animal of the genus *Bos*, which in the Hindi dialect is called Gaul or Gaur Harin, and in the Bengalese Gyal Harin. I could procure no specimen, except a pair of horns without the skull. The Gaur is represented as extraordinarily fierce and untameable, which is by no means the case with the Gyal of Chatigong; but I have heard from Mr. Maera, surgeon there, that in the eastern woods an animal resembling the Gyal, only of extraordinary ferocity has been sometimes found. The Gaur is said to be about the size of a buffalo, and in this district is rare; but in all the wilder parts of the south it is occasionally seen.

The wild buffalo, so common in the eastern parts of Bengal, is scarcely known here. No native of this district, it was alleged, makes hunting a sole profession; but the men of the hill tribes pass a great deal of their time in this exercise, partly from the love of sport, and partly to supply themselves with food. The boar, deer, antelope and porcupine are their common objects of pursuit, and the bow and arrow their usual implement. The arrows are in general poisoned with the root brought from Nepal. Some of the ruder tribes towards the south use the same means; but in most places the farmers have nets, with which they take these animals; and hares are so abundant, that they are knocked down with sticks, although they also are often caught in nets. In many



places dogs are trained to drive the wild animals from their cover, and in a few the matchlock is used in their destruction. On the north side of the river it is in the rainy season chiefly, that the farmers hunt. The animals then are often so surrounded by water, that even tigers fall an easy prey. In the Ganges porpoises are exceedingly numerous, and are occasionally caught in the fishermen's nets, and their oil is used for the lamp.

Birds of prey are numerous, but do little harm, carrion and wild animals giving them a copious supply of food. Some Rajahs keep tame hawks for sport. Ducks, teals, snipes and the Bageri lark or Indian Ortolan are taken; and in some places we heard that partridges and quails were caught, and fattened by the natives for their own eating. The small singing birds, which the Mirshekars catch with nets, are chiefly a species of the *Loxia*. The Aggin, a lark very much resembling the *Alauda arvensis* of Latham; but it is considerably smaller, and its note not so strong as that of the sky-lark of Europe, its manners are very similar; the Chandul is a crested lark.\* The birds that are most destructive to the crops are the crane, parakeet and peacock. The latter is exceedingly numerous, and it is good eating.

Near the Ganges, and in the larger of its branches on the north side, tortoises are very numerous; they are caught by the common fishermen and are saleable; but except among the lower tribes are in little request. Some are sent from Rajmahal to Moorshedabad, and to the mountaineers. At Mungger there are reckoned seven kinds. First, Singgiya, which is said to grow to between five and six feet in length; the other kinds vary from two feet to four feet in length. All these tortoises lay their eggs in the sand, digging a hole for the purpose, and covering them with sand. The season is from about the 1st of March to the middle of April. On other occasions the whole continue always in the river, except the Katha, which occasionally during the afternoon basks on the shore. They are supposed to feed chiefly on fish; but they are also thought to eat shell-fish, the reed called Kosala, the roots of which are inundated, and mud. Their eating the Kosala appears to me doubtful; and what the natives mean

\* See Puranya for a description of various birds.—ED.

by eating mud, must have arisen from their having seen these animals searching among the mud, for worms, snails, or such like animals.

Crocodiles, both of the Ghariyal and Boch kinds, are numerous in the Ganges, and still more so in the Tilyuga. They are occasionally caught in the fishermen's nets; but are not intentionally molested, except on the north side of the Ganges, where the low tribe Musahar pursue them with spikes, and extract the oil. The Ghariyal when caught, is eaten by the fishermen, as well as the Musahar; but by no others. The Boch is rejected by all. Some invalids, whom it was attempted to settle on the banks of the Tilyuga, assigned the number of crocodiles as a reason for having deserted their lands; but I did not hear that in the whole district these animals had ever destroyed man or beast. I have however heard of the Boch having bitten people very severely. In one tank I heard of their being tamed to a certain degree, as mentioned in my account of Puraniya. Lizards are not common. Serpents are certainly more numerous and destructive than in any of the divisions hitherto surveyed, and it was alleged, that annually from 180 to 200 persons are killed by their bites. The Maler on a hill near Paingti shewed me a hole in a rock, opening into a hollow space close by the path leading up to their village. They said, that this hole was the abode of a very large serpent, which they considered as a kind of god. In cold weather they never saw it; but in the hot season it frequently was observed lying in the hollow before its den. The people pass it without any apprehensions, thinking that it understands their language, and would on no account injure a Maler, should even a child or a drunken person fall upon it. The animal is said to be almost as thick as the body of a man, and is exceedingly slothful. How it procures food, the people cannot say; but they think that it eats deer and hogs. Several such serpents were said by the chief of the village to be in other parts of the hills belonging to this tribe.

In the interior of the country south from the Ganges, fish are very scarce; the rivers, for a great part of the year, are almost dry, and there are few marshes, ponds, or lakes. In the rainy season, however, a few are generated, and are mostly caught by the farmers, as the waters dry up. Near the Ganges again, and especially near the Tilyuga or Ghagri,

on the north side of the great river, there is a great abundance of fish; but during the floods, owing to the want of skill in the fishermen, the supply is every where scanty; and at Bhagulpoor, owing probably to some defect in the police, the scarcity prevails at all seasons, while at Mungger and Rajmahal, not more favourably situated, the supply during the dry season is uncommonly copious, and the quality tolerable.

Some fish are dried, and sent to the interior, and to the adjacent hilly parts of the Virbhum district; near the Ganges this kind of food is not in request; nor do the people there prepare the balls called Sidal, formerly mentioned. A large proportion of the fish used is far advanced in putrescence before eaten. Rahu, Katla and Mrigal, being sent to Moorshedabad in considerable quantity, sell about one-fourth dearer than the other kinds. In the dry season these valuable species sell at Mungger, for from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 payas a ser of 84 s. w. (about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  pound), 64 payas being equal to a rupee.

Some of the Banpar Gongrhis at Mungger are said to strike large fish with the Gig (Dukti) which is chiefly done in the floods. Some Kewats called Duharu or Divers are said to pursue fish under water with a spear, and I was gravely assured both at Suryagarha and Mungger, that these men could continue under water a Hindu hour (24 minutes), but two men, that I tried at Mungger, did not complete one minute, although one of them brought up a prawn. The number of fishermen stated to belong to this district was 3800 or 3900; but many of these are employed part of their time gathering tamarisks for fuel, in harvest, and in working the boats which belong to the district. The number actually employed may therefore be 7000; and allowing, that each fishes eight months in the year, and catches five rupees worth of fish monthly, the total value will be Rs. 2,80,000, of which the owners of the fisheries may be able to secure a third part. No fish, so far as I heard is sent to Calcutta. The sales are managed as in Puraniya.

The fishermen during the fishing season can clear from two to six rupees a month, that is on an average four rupees, and the people, whom I employed merely to buy such fish as I wanted, complained of four rupees a month, as being hard wages. The following is a list of some of the species\*, which

\* Dr. B. goes into a detail of many other species which it is unnecessary to give.—[ED.]

I procured: I was a good deal surprised to find so high up a fresh water river as Mungger, a species of *Raia*; but I am told, that this fish is not uncommon so high up even as Kanpoor (Cawnpore R.) This species approaches nearer the *Lymme* described by Lacepede, than to any other mentioned by that author; but may readily be distinguished by having a fin on the fore part of the under side of the tail. It does not grow to a large size, at Mungger is uncommon, but is thought very good. The Phokcha of Mungger differs from the species of *Tetrodon*, called by that name at Nathpoor. It is however very probable, that both may be called by the same name, as they have strong affinities. At Calcutta this is called Gang Potaka, from its frequenting rivers, while the other is most commonly found in marshes, tanks or ditches. The fish, which I am now describing, grows to about six inches in length; and, when irritated, does not swell near so much in proportion as the other kind. Bamach is an ugly animal, even for an eel, and may perhaps be the *Murenetchetée* of Lacepede. Europeans, who like eels, think this very good, but it is not common. When full grown it is said to be two and an one-half cubits long, and one cubit in circumference; but I strongly suspect, that the latter dimension is exaggerated, for one, which I procured, 38 inches long, was only six and one-half inches round. It is a very distinct species from the *Vamos* of the lower parts of Bengal, although the names are undoubtedly the same.

The Pathri is a species of *Lutian*, which by the Europeans at Calcutta is often called a whiting, being a fish nearly of the same size, and somewhat of the same taste with our European fish of that name, although it is inferior in quality, and in the eye of the naturalist has little or no affinity. The Kalbangs (a proper *Cyprinus*), when caught in water, that is pure, and which has a hard bottom, assumes a different colour from what it has in dirty pools, many of the lateral scales being then of a coppery hue. In this case it is called Kundhna. The Rohu, that most elegant of carps, called Rohit in Bengal, is here perhaps the most common fish; but, being generally caught in dirty stagnant pools, it is seldom very good. Excellent Rohus are, however, sometimes procured from the river. No fish seems so much to have attracted the attention of the Brahmans.

Oblong crustaceous fishes are in very great abundance through the whole course of the Ganges, and at Mungger those about the size of a prawn are remarkably well tasted. Small crabs are common in the inundated lands. Insects are very troublesome and destructive. I have not however heard, that Locusts have ever been seen; on the south side of the Ganges the white ant (Diyak) is more destructive, than in any part, that I have ever been. In Gidhaur many heaps of earth, much larger than a native hut, were shown me as the remains of their work. Flying bugs are exceedingly troublesome.

Honey bees are numerous in the woods, but no person makes a profession of gathering the honey or wax, nor is there any rent exacted. Many farmers, however, at idle times, collect both; and usually present a part to their landlord or his agents. The hill tribes gather a good deal of honey, which in general they eat; but those near the great road dispose of it to Europeans, to great advantage, under the pretence of giving presents. In the high parts of the district there are few or none of the shells, from whence lime is prepared. In the low lands they are in abundance, similar to those in Ronggopoor.

PLANTS.—This district is an excellent field for a botanist, although the plants bear so great an affinity to those of the south of India, now best known to Europeans, that I have met with much less new matter than I did in the Ronggopoor district. In most parts of this district the whole waste land is called Janggala, where covered with trees it is called Katban, where covered with thick long grass reeds or bushes, especially tamarisks, it is called Bangjar, and where small bushes are thinly scattered, the waste is called Jhangti; but these terms are not applied with much accuracy, nor are the distinctions of great use. It is estimated, that there are 585 square miles of inundated land occupied with reeds, bushes, and tree. 383 square miles of this are on the north side of the Ganges, and the greater part of the remainder is near that river. A large proportion is covered with tamarisks, about an equal quantity with reeds. A less share with stunted woods of the Kayar (Trees, No. 43), and about an equal quantity with rose trees, and finally the largest share is covered with very coarse bad grass. The woods may perhaps amount