



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Fauna, Flora and Jahangir as Depicted in *Tuzuk-I-Jahangiri*

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Abstract:

The Emperor Jahangir had a genuine interest in serious subjects like Botany, Zoology and Medicine. His autobiography is a testimony to his exemplary knowledge of various subjects and also his great keenness, curiosity and thirst for knowledge. He was fond of the beauties of nature, flowers, foliage, brooks, rivers, valleys and mountains. He was too keen to describe the flowers, vegetables and fruits which came across in his tours and journeys. The emperor's affection for animals is validated in the initial portion of the work itself. The elephants and horses played an important role in his empire. Elephants occupied an important place in the Mughal Indian army and were also used to carry guns on their backs. Jahangir, a lover of beauty and nature, has been described as the prince of artists and also most fastidious critic of art. He admired the beauty, softness and delicacy of both the fruits and paintings. It was said that if there were similar portraits completed by several artists, he could point out the painter of each. His vivid accounts of birds and animals are as accurate as that of a specialist in Zoology. Hence the above study lent us to conclude that the emperor Jahangir was a man of great literary taste with love of poetry, architecture, music, dance, painting and other fine arts.

The Emperor Jahangir had a genuine interest in serious subjects like Botany, Zoology and Medicine. His autobiography is a testimony to his exemplary knowledge of various subjects and also his great keenness, curiosity and thirst for knowledge. He was fond of the beauties of nature, flowers, foliage, brooks, rivers, valleys and mountains. He was too keen to describe the flowers, vegetables and fruits which came across in his tours and journeys. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* or *Memoirs of Jahangir*, the autobiography of the Emperor Nuru-d-din Jahangir, starts with this word: "in the name of God, the merciful, the clement..." As it gives a lively picture of India in the early decades of the seventeenth century, it is considered as a valuable supplement to the *Akbar nama* and other writings of the time. There are many descriptions of cities, towns, villages, gardens, expeditions, conquests, invasions, recreations, games, leisure, fairs, festivals, religious practices, beliefs, customs, rites, rituals etc. in this work. This work on the one hand gives a clear indication of Jahangir's affection of plants, fruits, birds, animals, precious stones, gardens etc. being an admirer of beauty. But on the other hand, he himself admits his weakness of hunting being an expert in hunting. Endless and frequent descriptions of hunting of animals and birds are found place in the work. Anyhow, we have to admit that he was having proper knowledge of the ideal climate required for particular type of plants and trees. "Jahangir's innate fondness for pleasure was developed by Nurjahan to a perilous extent, and if Jahangir's reign forms an inglorious period in the annals of Mughal dynasty, she must share the responsibility," says Ishwari Prasad.ⁱ George Dunbar summarizes his reign as "the ship of the State was kept on an even keel with Nur Jahan at the helm holding to the course laid down by Akbar."ⁱⁱ

In the first part of his biography, he writes that till his father was twenty-eight years old, no child of his father lived and hence, he was continually praying for the survival of a son to dervishes and recluses, by whom spiritual approach to the throne of Allah was obtained. It is from this work we realize that his father Akbar, who was very submissive to dervishes, visited a dervish by name Shaikh Salim, a man of ecstatic condition, who had his abode on a hill near Sikri, a village of Agra. The people of that neighbourhood had complete trust in him. Shaikh told Akbar that the Giver will bestow three sons on him. In reply, Akbar remarked that "I have made a vow that, casting my first son on the skirt of your favour, I will make your friendship and kindness his protector and preserver."ⁱⁱⁱ So when his Rajput consort, a Jaipur princess by name Maryam-uz-Zamani came near the time of her delivery, Akbar sent her to the Shaikh's house that his first son might be born there (30th August 1569).^{iv}

Jahangir writes: "After my birth they gave me the name of Sultan Salim, but I never heard my father, whether in his cups or in his sober moments, call me Muhammad Salim or Sultan Salim, but always Shaikhi Baba."^v When he became emperor it occurred to him to change his name and so he gave himself the name of Nuruddin Muhammad Jahangir Padshah Ghazi (world-seizer) and made his title of honour (laqab) Nuru-d-din. He continues, "My revered father, considering the village of Sikri, which was the place of my birth, lucky for him, made it his capital. In the course of fourteen or fifteen years that hill, full of wild beasts, became a city containing all kinds of gardens and buildings, and lofty, elegant edifices and pleasant places, attractive to the heart."^{vi}

The emperor's affection for animals is validated in the initial portion of the work itself as it deals with the city of Agra. He even knew which climate was suited or unsuited for a particular species of animals. It is understood from the details given by him that the air of Agra was warm and dry and hence unsuited to most temperaments, except to the phlegmatic and melancholy, which were safe from its bad effects. For these reason animals of this constitution and temperament, such as the elephant, the buffalo, and others, thrive in this climate. This also indicates emperor's knowledge of climate, weather and fauna.

In the first part of the work itself he refers to mangoes, melons and other fruits grow well in Agra and its neighbourhood. Of all fruits he says that he was fond of mangoes. He even says that in the reign of his father (*Arsh-ashyani*) many fruits of other countries, which till then were not to be had in India, were obtained there. Several sorts of grapes, such as the *sahibi*, the *habshi* and the *kishmishi* became common in several towns; for instance, in the bazaars of Lahore every kind and variety that may be desired can be had in the grape season. Among fruits, one which they called *anana* (pineapple), which was grown in the Frank ports, was of excessive fragrance and fine flavour. Many thousands of pineapples were produced every year then in the Gul-afshan garden at Agra. Of other fruits, produced in abundance, there were several kinds of apples, apricots and *beh-alu* (some kind of plum), together with a variety of fruits brought from Kabul and other parts of the west, which were unfamiliar to this land and climate, are now cultivated largely.

Let us see the descriptions of apples given by the emperor:^{vii} Mahabat Khan had sent apples from Bangash by runners (*dak-choki*). They were very fresh with excellent flavour and hence he was greatly pleased to eat them. He felt that those apples cannot be compared with the *sib-i-khub* (the best apple of Kabul) which he had eaten there or with the Samarkand apples that were brought there every year. For sweetness and delicacy of flavour they were far better that they cannot be compared with either of the latter. He remarked that he had until then never seen such delicate and delicious apples. From the people he got the information that in Upper Bangash there was a village called Siv Ram, in which there were three trees of those apples, and although they have made many trials, they have never found so good ones in any other place. He offered a dish of those apples to Sayyid Hassan, an ambassador of his brother Shah Abbas with a hope that he might tell him if there were any better apples in Iraq. But he replied that in the whole world of Persia the apples of Isfahan were preferred, and they were of the same quality as that apple.

He writes that on a Thursday the grandson of Abul Fazal was promoted to the mansab of 700 personal and 350 horses and on this day he went to see the garden of Gul-afshan, on the bank of Jamuna. On the way rain fell heavily and also he found many pineapples. His love for flowers is vivid as he quoted the verses of Anwari in an appropriate place:

This is a day of mirth and jollity
 A daily market of flowers and odours;
 The earth- heaps are suffused with ambergris,
 The zephyr sheds rose-water from his skirt
 From contact with the morning breezes the pool
 Is roughened and pointed, like the edge of a file.

Jahangir's love of flowers reflects in his work. He writes: "From the Excellences of its sweet-scented flowers one may prefer the fragrances of India to those of the flowers of the whole world. It has many such that nothing in the whole world can be compared to them." We get a list of several flowering plants from this work. The first one was the *champa* (*Michelia champaca*), which was a flower of exceedingly sweet fragrance; shape of saffron flower and colour of yellow inclining to white. The tree was very symmetrical, large and shady with full of branches and leaves. When in flower one tree will perfume a garden. *Keora flower* (*Pandanus odoratissimus*), whose shape and appearance were singular, and its scent was strong and penetrating that it did not yield to the odour of musk. *Rae bel*, whose scent resembled white Jessamine, also was described by him. A very graceful, symmetrical and shady tree called *mulhari* (*Mimusops elengi*),^{viii} whose pleasant fragrance was always praised by Jahangir. *Ketaki* (*Pandanus inermis*) of yellow colour and *chambeli* (*Jasminum grandiflorum*), which was the white Jessamine of *wilayat* (Persia or Afghanistan), extract sweet scented oils. He says that there were other numerous flowers to mention and this statement shows the presence of various flowering plants in his kingdom. Then he refers to the trees like the cypress (*sarw*), the pine (*sanubar*), the *chanar* (*Platanus orientalis*), the white poplar (*safidar*, *Populus alba*) and the willow (*bid mulla*) which were plentiful. Sandal tree (*Santalum album*) also was grown in the garden. The finest inflorescence according to the emperor was that of the almond and the peach. He also writes about the beauty of blue Jessamine. We came to know that he used to visit the saffron fields frequently. He really enjoyed the beauty of autumn and many times he expressed his gratitude to God for giving beauty to the spring. His love for plants and animals is validated in his beautiful descriptions of the physique of Akbar. He described his father like this: he was the hue of wheat...he was lion-bodied.^{ix}

A detailed account of Kashmir garden also is given in this work. He writes: Kashmir garden was of eternal spring, a delightful flower-bed and a heart expanding heritage for dervishes. According to him its pleasant meads, enchanting cascades, running streams and fountains were beyond all description. There were verdure and running water. In the fields there were all types of flowers and sweet scented herbs such as the red rose, the violet, the narcissus etc. which were beyond calculation. See how nicely he described the garden: In the soul enchanting spring, the hills and plains were filled with blossoms; the gates, the walls, the courts and the roofs were lighted up by the torches of banquet adorning tulips. He wonders that how can he describe the wide meadows and the fragrant trefoil? Let us see the verse found in the work:

The garden nymphs were brilliant,
 Their cheeks shone like lamps;
 There were fragrant buds on their stems
 And under their rind
 Like dark amulets on the arms of the beloved.
 The wakeful, ode-rehearsing nightingale
 Whetted the desires of wine-drinkers;
 At each fountain the duck dipped his beak
 Like golden scissors cutting;
 There were flower-carpets and fresh rosebuds,
 The wind fanned the lamps of the roses,
 The buds tied a knot in the heart.

From his account we can realize that the Muslims were fond of perfumes and scents. Under the supervision and efforts of the mother of Nurjahan Begam a perfume called *Itr-i-fahangiri* was first manufactured out of rose water. It was extremely a wonderful perfume that if one drop was rubbed on the palm of the hand it scented a whole assembly and it appeared as if many rose-buds had bloomed at once.^x The sprinkling of rose water, so popular at private social gatherings of the gentry, appears to have been a hilarious modification of the Timurid ceremony of *Gulabpashi*, mentioned by Jahangir in connection with his court festivals.^{xi} The meeting of Admiral Watson and other English officers with the Nawab of Arcot is given below: "The Nawab, upon this occasion, ordered rich perfume of what is called the Otta of roses to be brought to him, a few drops of which he put into his hand, and having himself opened the bosom of Watson's shirt, he rubbed the same over the admirals breast. This was intended as the highest honour he could confer upon. He afterwards did the same to Admiral Pocock; and his' Bakshi or treasurer performed the like ceremony on all the other officers.... Betel-nut and chunam were then most plentifully distributed, and showers of rose water fell upon all."^{xii}

The influence of flowers in the festival is clearly understood when we hear of the celebration of a Persian festival called, *Ab-pashan* or *Gulab pashi* (rose water scattering) which was held on 13th Tir in memory of a rainfall on this date that put an end to a famine. The people amused themselves with sprinkling rose water over each other.^{xiii} The festival of Khwaja Khizr, popularly known as Khizri, was celebrated in honour of the mythical Khwaja Khizr, a water spirit identified with the Prophet Elisha. People on every Thursday put a few flowers and some sugar in a leaf plate (*dona*) and launch it in the water in the of Khwaja Khizr. Mirza Nathan, the author *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* writes about the rituals related to the birth of a male baby. Among them one was scattering of saffron on all and sprinkling of the Otto of roses.^{xiv} Even during the occasions of marriage and death flowers, leaves of plants and some animals were used. It is understood that pan or betel leaves were distributed as a token of acceptance of the proposal by the members of bride's family. The henna or *mehndi* (*Lawsonia inermis*) with other customary articles was brought and the ceremony of *henna-bandi* was held when the bridegroom's hand and feet were dyed red with henna by ladies concealed behind the curtains.^{xv} On the day of marriage the bridegroom finely clad, with a gold network fixed to his head and falling down his chest, being also decorated with various flowers according to the season^{xvi} will go to the house of bride on horse-back accompanied by his kindred and friends.^{xvii}

We see that animals especially elephants and horses played an important role in his empire. Elephants occupied an important place in the Mughal Indian army and were also used to carry guns on their backs. Elephants were generally kept at the back to avoid trampling at the time of retreat. They were used in peace and war for displaying standards and ensigns in marches and processions and also in the battlefield. His concern of animals and birds is understood from his descriptions that in the neighbourhood of Lahore, such bad air was created that numerous birds that had their nests in trees all fell down and died and that wild beasts (beasts of the plain, perhaps cattle) came and threw themselves on to the cultivated fields, and, rolling about on the grass, gave up their lives. In short, many animals perished.^{xviii} Moreover we get a picture of his keenness in implementing afforestation as we gathered information that by the order of him trees were planted on both sides from Agra as far as the river of Attock. But on the contrary his another statement in the same page creates doubts as he has written that when he was employed in hunting for a few days, forty-seven heads of antelope, male and female, and other animals were killed.

We even see that Jahangir was particularly partial to the flesh of fish, especially that of *rohu* (*Labeo rohita*), which was deemed best in Hindustan.^{xix} In *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* Jahangir writes: "I eat no fish but those that have scales, but not because the professors of the Shia faith look on those without scales as unlawful, but the cause of my aversion is this, that I have heard from old men, and it has become known to me by experience as well that fish without scales eat the flesh of dead animals and fish with scales do not eat it."^{xx} As far as the Pathans were concerned they lived on badly cooked cow's flesh of low quality known as *khichri*, which was plentiful and cheap.^{xxi}

Jahangir, a lover of beauty and nature, has been described as the prince of artists and also most fastidious critic of art. He admired the beauty, softness and delicacy of both the fruits and paintings. It was said that if there were similar portraits completed by several artists, he could point out the painter of each. Even if one portrait was finished by different painters, he could identify the names those who had drawn different portions of that portrait. He was able to identify by whom the eyebrow or eyelashes were drawn or if someone touched the painting after it was completed by the first painter. There were painters in animal portraiture, who produced the

paintings of birds, animals, beasts and flowers. Their attachment to the nature and the popularity of flower studies indicate the encouragement given by the emperor to such. On the other hand, it was also notable that hunting scenes became popular in those days. At Lahore fort, the buildings inside were decorated with the elephants and lions in the brackets and peacocks at the friezes which were similar to the Jahangir Mahal at Agra. His great delight was may be in laying out gardens, as he established as many as gardens in Kashmir, Lahore, Udaipur, Agra, Hassan Abdal etc.

In the times of Jahangir, the Dutch traveller Pelsaert remarked: "In the palaces of the lords dwells all the wealth there is, wealth which glitters indeed, but is borrowed, wrung from the sweat of the poor."^{xxii} He also observed that in the lower sections of the population, caste was functioning as a hereditary corporation of craft because a workman's children can follow no occupation other than that of their father, nor can they inter-marry with any other caste.^{xxiii} For home consumption both in agriculture and industry India was self sufficient and foreign traders had to exchange Indian goods for gold. Captain Hawkins remarked: "India is rich in silver, for all nations bring coin, and carry away commodities for the same; and the coin is buried in India, and goeth not out."^{xxiv} Jahangir issued coins which were remarkable for their beauty, although they indicate his addiction to intoxicants, disregard of orthodoxy, affection for Nur Jahan etc.

His fame has been eclipsed by the transcendent glory of his father and dazzling splendour of his son. His memory has suffered from the implicit faith reposed in historical forgeries and travellers's tales. His carrier has been viewed and judged in isolated passages.^{xxv} To quote Sidney Owen, "On the whole Jahangir seems to have been by no means a bad king, judged from a European point of view; and very much above the average of oriental sovereigns; while the disturbances of his reign were episodic, and of short duration."^{xxvi} His anxiety over the prevalence of *sati* system is clear from his descriptions of the women who performed it: Some women burnt themselves along with their husbands' bodies and were put into the graves along with their dead husbands. He says that he heard that a girl of ten or twelve years old was put alive into the grave along with her dead husband of the same age. He continues: When a daughter was born to a man without means, they put her to death by strangulation. Hence he gave an order that hereafter they should not do such things, and whoever was guilty to them, should be capitally punished.^{xxvii} On the one hand, "Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jehan were great collectors of books and the nobles both Hindu and Muslim followed the fashion of the court," says Panikkar.^{xxviii} But on the other hand, they were very courageous and were very expert in animal fighting. When Prince Aurangzeb has shown great courage in the combat of elephants, Shah Jahan by praising his courage gave him the title Bahadur or hero. After witnessing the event "the courtiers cried out that the boy had inherited his father's reckless courage, and reminded each other how Shah Jahan in his youth had attacked a wild tiger with a sword in hand before the eyes of Jahangir."^{xxix}

His vivid accounts of birds and animals are as accurate as that of a specialist in Zoology.^{xxx} Hence the above study lent us to conclude that the emperor Jahangir was a man of great literary taste with love of poetry, architecture, music, dance, painting and other fine arts. To quote A.A. Macdonell, "He was the only Muhammadan ruler of India who placed his portrait on his coins." From the above discussion multi characteristics of Jahangir is clearly understood. He was a strong compound of tenderness, stubbornness, cruelty, kindness, justice, caprice, refinement and brutality, good sense and childishness. Beni Prasad writes: "Jauntily to dismiss him as a hard-hearted, fickle-minded tyrant, soaked in wine, and sunk in debauch, as more than one writer has done, is at once unscientific and unjust." To quote Sidney Owen, "On the whole Jahangir seems to have been by no means a bad king, judged from a European point of view; and very much above the average of oriental sovereigns; while the disturbances of his reign were episodic, and of short duration."

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