

The Menagerie of the Peshwa—its site and description given in contemporary Records

(between A.D. 1778 and 1794)

BY

P. K. GODE, M.A., CURATOR, B. O. R. INSTITUTE, POONA.

IN a note published in the Proceedings⁽¹⁾ in the Bharata Itihasa Samshodhan Mandal, Poona, Sardar G. N. Mujumdar, C.I.E., has identified the place of Peshwa's menagerie (*Sikarkhana*) in the City of Poona on the strength of a sale-deed of property dated *Saka 1700* = A.D. 1778. According to this identification the site of the Peshwa's menagerie is now occupied by (1) the house of one Mr. N. R. Gunjal and (2) the temple of Sri Narahari. Sardar Mujumdar is of opinion that this temple of Narahari is not an ancient one but constructed during the last days of the Peshwa's rule.

In view of the above identification of the site of the Peshwa's menagerie as proved by a document of A.D. 1778 we are curious to know if there are any contemporary descriptions of this menagerie by foreign visitors or other writers of the time. But this problem may better be left to the expert historians of the Peshwa period of the Maratha history. I shall, however, record here the description of the above menagerie as given by Edward Moor⁽²⁾ about A.D. 1790 and recorded by him in his *Narrative* published in London in A.D. 1794. This description reads as follows:—

Page 366 of Moor's Narrative—

1 See *Itivrtta* of the B. I. S. Mandal, Poona, p. 8—The house of Sardar Mujumdar is situated at present in the Krishna Peth, Poona City, House No. 207. The site of this house was purchased by the grand father of the grand father of Sardar Mujumdar of the name *Naro Nilakantha* from its owners (1) *Shivaji Shunkar* and (2) *Narasingrao Ballal* of the *Mandavagane* family of Poona. On this site a house was constructed by the forefathers of Sardar Mujumdar viz. *Naro Gangadhar* and his son *Nilkantha Narayana*. In the sale deed of this site the boundaries are mentioned as follows—
“To the East *Malhar Ram Bapat*, to the South *Mairal Narayan Gajcup*, to the west the menagerie (*Sikarkhana*) of the Sarkar (=Peshwa), beyond that a road, to the North a lane and beyond that *Bhatambhat Dhure* etc.”

The sale deed is dated *Saka 1700, vilambi nama Saimvatsara, Asvina, Suddha 1*.

2. For biographical details of Edward Moor vide page 313 of *Annals* (B. O. R. Institute) Vol. XIX which contains my paper on the Hindu Nose-ornament.

“ The Peshwa has a *menagerie*⁽¹⁾ of wild animals but is not a large, nor a very select collection. It consists of a *rhinoceros*, a *lion*, several royal *tigers*, *leopards*, *panthers* and other animals of the Cat kind,—An extraordinary *camel* is by far the most curious creature in the collection. It is of that species called, we believe, the Bactrian Camel,⁽²⁾ and has two humps of such unwieldy dimensions, that when lying down it cannot easily rise from their enormous weight. It is quite white, with very long hair, a characteristic of its species, about its head and neck. The animal is of course a *lusus naturæ*. It was, as well as the *rhinoceros*, a present from Scindia. The *lynx* is a delicate animal, called in India and Persia from its black ears *seeah-goosh*,⁽³⁾ Sir Charles Malet⁽⁴⁾ has all these animals, with others, represented in clay by a Brahmin,⁽⁵⁾ who has great merit in his modellings⁽⁶⁾ :

1 *Rajavyavaharika* composed by order of Shriwaraj the Great by Raghunatha Pandita contains the following verses about *Sikarkhana* —

‘ शिकारवर्ना पर्वक्षिशाला शिकारी मृगयुर्मत ’ ॥२१ ॥

जनावरै पक्षिणस्यु शिकारे मृगयुर्मतः ॥

हमनाकः पक्षिरक्षा व्याघ्रः शेर इति स्मृतः ।

स्यार्द्धापिपालाश्चित्रवान चित्रातु द्वीपिनामक ॥ २२ ॥

— भोग्यवर्ग

On 22nd July 1754 some expenditure on Peshwa's *Sikarkhana* is recorded in connection with a “ जवादी मांजर ” (vide *Peshwa Daftar* XXII,—No 152, p. 95)

2 The Bactrian Camel is represented on the reverse of the coin of the Indo Greek ruler Kadphises I (about 20 A D). In the 12th Century A D the Bactrian Camel with two humps was still bred in Upper Sindh (vide p 236 of *Early History of India* by Vincent Smith, Oxford, 1914—*J A S B* 1892, p 224 of Vol IXI, Part I). Ibid p 134 footnote 2—*Mahabharata* mentions asses, Camels and mules in association. Kautilya in his *Arthashastra* mentions diet for mules, asses, cows, buffaloes, and Camels (vide p 145 of Sham Sastry's Trans 1929)

The clay prison of Esarhaddon dated 673—2 B C found at Nineveh in 1929 refers to Bactrian Camels in the following line —

“ Their riding horses, cattle, flocks (and) Bactrian Camels ” (vide p 21, line 51 of the *Prisons of Esarhaddon* etc., London 1931)

3 What is the Persian equivalent of “ Seeah-goosh ”? The Hindustanee name of lynx (from the Persian) is *Sihagosh* or “ black ear ”. It was employed in chase by Akbar (*Ain*, p 290) vide pp 375—376, of Bernier's *Travels* (Constable, 1891)

4 British Resident at the Poona Court

5 This Brahmin artist needs to be identified

6 I wonder if these modellings have been preserved. Moor (pp 363—364 of *Narrative*) describes the residence of Malet at Sangam in Poona together with its garden containing a vine yard, apple and peach trees, cypress etc as also his collection of horses from Arabia and Persia, not to say several elephants used for state visits. He also refers to the extensive markets of Poona and a “ long street in which are displayed a great variety of English finery such as looking-glasses, globe lamps etc. The police of Poona were uncommonly well regulated ”.

the placid serenity of the *camel*, and the ferocious confidence of the *tiger* he is happy in hitting.”⁽¹⁾

In connection with the foregoing description of Peshwa's menagerie of C. A. D. 1790 I may note here the interest of Raja Shahu of Satara (A. D. 1682-1749) in curious animals from the Himalayas. In a letter⁽²⁾ addressed by him to the Peshwa he had ordered the following animals for his menagerie.—

(1) Iraqui horse from Lahore, (2) *Vanagai* and (3) *Kasturi Mrga* from Shrinagar and (4) *Hum paksi*.

There are other letters⁽³⁾ in this Peshwa Daftar selection referring to Shahu's interest in several animals and the efforts made by

1 In a Marathi work called *Mestaka Pustaka* composed between A. D. 1690 and 1700 the *Sikarkhana* is described as follows —

“ सिकारखाना चिन्ते । बाग रिसें वानरे कुन्ते । हरिण
सांघे चील निरुने । घोरपडा आणि जवादो ॥ ६८ ॥ राही
खबुतरे खुळगे रावे सारिका बदके गव्हे । दुराज तिनर
निकर लव्हे मैना ससाणे ॥ ६९ ॥ लगडकुहिका काक कव्हे ।
कोले बाउल सुरुग गवे । बेडके मयुर पारवे । मुंगस चुवे बनगायी ॥ ७० ॥
भोगराज शाहामृग मनाहर । सारस गेंडे माहाथोर । ऐसे नाना जिनसी अपार ।
दडदेहीं ॥ ७१ ॥ मृग नाना जातिचे । पक्षी हि तैसेच
पर्वतिचे । ते आवघे शिकारखानिचे । नेमें जाणा
(Vide p. 49 of भा. इ सं मडळ, इतिवृत्त)

When was the “शाहामृग” or *Ostrich* first introduced into Indian menageries? According to Molerworth the word “शाहामृग” is of Persian origin

2. Letter No 22 of *Peshwa Daftar Selection* No 7 (A. D. 1707-1720).

3 *P. D. No 7* contains the following letters regarding Shahu's interest in animals —

Letter No 25 (1740?)—Amarsing Bundele sent to Shahu *Baja, Jure* and a pair of *dogs*

Letter No 27—Nilo Ballal Chitnis sends *खबुतबाज* (expert in training *खबुत* birds or quails) together with some quail birds for Shahu

Letter No 28—Reference to the purchase of two *hawks* (*बाजजुरे*) for Rs. 5000 for king Shahu.

Letter No 15—Order to procure good *pups* and *dogs* for Shahu.

Letter No 6—Order to purchase *Camels* and *horses* for Shahu

The ‘*Hum Paksi*’ ordered by Shahu in *Letter No 22* is identical with the bird ‘*Humma*’ celebrated in Iran. There is a belief among the Persians that a person who is touched by the shadow of this bird becomes a king. A model of this bird in gold and jewellery formed part of Tipu Sultan's throne. In A. D. 1799, Marquise of Wellesley sent this model to the Directors of the East India Company in London for being presented to His Majesty King George III. Since this time it is in the Royal Museum.

It is reported that this bird was presented to Lord Wellesley in A. D. 1840 in honour of all his services to Govt. Friends of Wellesley gave currency to a story that there was a nest of a *Humma* bird in a banyan tree under which Wellesley used to sit during summer prior to his expedition against Mysore. The shadow of this bird must have touched Wellesley at this time and as a result of this touch he became successful in his Mysore expedition.

For more particulars about this *Humma* bird vide *Itihas Sangraha*, Ed. by Parasnis —“*Note on Tipu's Throne and other royal emblems*,” Vol. III Nov 1910, pp. 10-11. My attention was drawn to this note by Mr. S. N. Sanadi, B.A. (Hons.) of the B.O.R. Institute, Poona.

him to procure them from Northern India and elsewhere. Shahu was a keen *shikari* and devoted to all kinds of sports. He tried to get for his menagerie dogs, horses, rare birds, yaks, leopards, musk deer and other rare animals. Rao Bahadur G. S. Saidesai referring to these letters aptly observes —

“A Maratha to the core, the idle years spent in the Mogul Zenana failed to impair his love of an open-air life. Through all these letters breathes an air of simplicity, which he inherited from his illustrious grand-father (Shivaji) and which is a national trait of the Marathas.”

I am inclined to believe that the menagerie of the last Peshwa described by Capt. Edward Moor C. A. D. 1790 owes its inspiration to the Maratha rulers like Shahu and Shivaji though the Peshwas as successors of these early Maratha rulers might have maintained their menagerie perhaps as an ornamental feature of their pomp and glory rather than from a genuine love of animals, so characteristic of King Shahu as we have seen above.

About the lynx (or *seeha goosh*) noticed by Capt. Edward Moor in the Peshwa's menagerie C. A. D. 1790 at Poona we may record here that Abul Fazl (C. 1590 A. D.) refers to it in his *Ain-i-Akbari* as follows —

“His Majesty (Akbar) is very fond of using this plucky little animal for hunting purposes. In former time it would attack a hare or fox, but now it kills black buck” (*Ain* p. 290)

This mode of hunting has been graphically described by Capt. Alexander Hamilton in his *New Account of the East Indies* (2 Vols.—Edinburgh, 1727) Vol. I, p. 124 as follows —

“Deer, Antelopes, Hares and Foxes are their wild game, which they hunt with Dogs, Leopards, and a small fierce creature, called by them *Shoe goose*. It is about the size of Fox, with long prickt Ears like an Hare, and a face like a cat, a grey back and sides, and Belly and Breast white. I believe they are rare for I never saw more than one. When they are taken out to hunt an Horseman carries it behind him hood-winkt, and their Deer and Antelopes, being pretty familiar, will not start before horses come very near. He who carries *Shoe goose* takes off the hood and shows it the game, which with large swift springs, it soon overtakes, and leaping on their Backs, and getting forward to the shoulders, scratches their eyes out and gives the hunters an easy prey”.(1)

¹ Vide footnote on p. 376 of Bernier's *Travels* (London, 1891) where the Editor quotes *Ain* and Alexander Hamilton.

I shall now close this short paper on the *Shikar-khana* of the Peshwa by inviting the attention of the readers to the interesting description of the "field sports of Aurangzeb" recorded by Bernier in his letter dated *14th December 1664* from Delhi to Monsieur de Meville. In this letter Bernier records the following points about sports.—

- (1) Hunting carried on by Aurangzeb with one *lac* of his troops in Kashmir
- (2) Uncultivated land reserved as game forest near Agra and Delhi and along both sides of the road leading to Lahore
- (3) Field sports carried on under the supervision of the Grand Master of the Hunt
- (4) Description of the manner in which antelopes are chased with tame leopards
- (5) Mode of hunting the *nil-ghaux* or grey oxon, which are a species of elk
- (6) Use of Hawks for catching Cranes.
- (7) Hunting the lion with a *musketoon*—Killing a lion considered as a favourable omen—Escape of a lion considered as an evil omen—Record of the lion's size etc in the royal archives—(Compare *game book* of Akbar in which a complete account of game killed was recorded—Jehangir in his *Memoirs* gives details of his hunting exploits between the age of 12 to 50. He shot 17,167 head of all kinds, including 86 tigers, 41 sparrows, 376 crows (1) and alligators)
- (8) Opium given to the ass which is kept as a prey to attract the lion to be shot.

It would be worthwhile reconstructing the *history of Indian field sport* from the most ancient times to the present day. For this purpose several monographs would be necessary with a view to recording the available data on the subject in detail. In studying this subject we shall have to observe closely what Indian sport owes to foreign contacts from Greece, Rome, Persia, etc in ancient times and from the Muhammedans and Europeans in medieval and modern times. I would like to know from our Muslim friends what special treatises on hunting are available in Persian or Arabic. There is much scattered material on *mrgya* or Hunting in Sanskrit sources but it needs to be exploited by lovers of the history of Indian sport.

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

DECCAN HISTORY CONFERENCE

FIRST (HYDERABAD) SESSION

1945