

TRAVELS  
IN THE  
MOGUL EMPIRE

A.D. 1656-1668

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A REVISED AND IMPROVED EDITION BASED  
UPON IRVING BROCK'S TRANSLATION

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on the side of the court, called the *Nagar-Kanay*.<sup>1</sup> In this place, which thence derives its name, are kept the trumpets, or rather the hautboys and cymbals, which play in concert at certain hours of the day and night. To the ears of an *European* recently arrived, this music sounds very strangely, for there are ten or twelve hautboys, and as many cymbals, which play together. One of the hautboys, called *Karna*, is a fathom and a half in length, and its lower aperture cannot be less than a foot. The cymbals of brass or iron are some of them at least a fathom in diameter. You may judge, therefore, of the roaring sound which issues from the *Nagar-Kanay*. On my first arrival it stunned me so as to be insupportable; but such is the power of habit that this same noise is now heard by me with pleasure; in the night, particularly, when in bed and afar, on my terrace this music sounds in my ears as solemn, grand, and melodious. This is not altogether to be wondered at, since it is played by persons instructed from infancy in the rules of melody, and possessing the skill of modulating and turning the harsh sounds of the hautboy and cymbal so as to produce a symphony far from disagreeable when heard at a certain distance. The *Nagar-Kanay* is placed in an elevated situation, and remote from the royal apartments, that the King may not be annoyed by the proximity of this music.

Opposite to the grand gate, which supports the *Nagar-Kanay*, as you cross the court, is a large and magnificent hall, decorated with several rows of pillars, which, as well as the ceiling, are all painted and overlaid with gold. The hall is raised considerably from the ground, and very airy, being open on the three sides that look into the court. In the centre of the wall that separates the hall from the

<sup>1</sup> *Nakárahkhanah*, from *nakárah* a drum, and *khanah* a room or turret chamber. The *nakárah* resembled a kettle-drum, and twenty pairs were used in the royal *nakárahkhanah*, of *karranas*, 'they never blow less than four' (*Ain*), and three pairs of cymbals, called *sanj*.

*Seraglio*, and higher from the floor than a man can reach, is a wide and lofty opening, or large window,<sup>1</sup> where the Monarch every day, about noon, sits upon his throne, with some of his sons at his right and left; while eunuchs standing about the royal person flap away the flies with peacocks' tails, agitate the air with large fans, or wait with undivided attention and profound humility to perform the different services allotted to each. Immediately under the throne is an enclosure, surrounded by silver rails, in which are assembled the whole body of *Omrahs*, the *Rajas*, and the *Ambassadors*, all standing, their eyes bent downward, and their hands crossed. At a greater distance from the throne are the *Mansebdars* or inferior *Omrahs*, also standing in the same posture of profound reverence. The remainder of the spacious room, and indeed the whole courtyard, is filled with persons of all ranks, high and low, rich and poor; because it is in this extensive hall that the King gives audience indiscriminately to all his subjects: hence it is called *Am-Kas*, or audience-chamber of high and low.

During the hour and a half, or two hours, that this ceremony continues, a certain number of the royal horses pass before the throne, that the King may see whether they are well used and in a proper condition. The elephants come next, their filthy hides having been well washed and painted as black as ink, with two large red streaks from the top of the head down to the trunk, where they meet. The elephants are covered with embroidered cloth; a couple of silver bells are suspended to the two ends of a massive silver chain placed over their back, and white cow-tails<sup>2</sup> from *Great Tibet*, of large value, hang from the ears like immense whiskers. Two small elephants, superbly caparisoned, walk close to these colossal creatures, like slaves appointed to their service.

<sup>1</sup> The celebrated *Jharokah*, still to be seen at Delhi.

<sup>2</sup> The tails of the Tibetan ox or yak, called chowries, still in common use in India.

As if proud of his gorgeous attire and of the magnificence that surrounds him, every elephant moves with a solemn and dignified step; and when in front of the throne, the driver, who is seated on his shoulder, pricks him with a pointed iron, animates and speaks to him, until the animal bends one knee, lifts his trunk on high and roars aloud, which the people consider as the elephant's mode of performing the *taslim* or usual reverence.

Other animals are next introduced;—tame antelopes, kept for the purpose of fighting with each other;<sup>1</sup> *Nilgau*,<sup>2</sup> or grey oxen, that appear to me to be a species of elk; rhinoceroses; large *Bengale* buffaloes with prodigious horns which enable them to contend against lions and tigers; tame leopards, or panthers, employed in hunting antelopes; some of the fine sporting dogs from *Usbec*, of every kind, and each dog with a small red covering; lastly, every species of the birds of prey used in field sports for catching partridges, cranes, hares, and even, it is said, for hunting antelopes, on which they pounce with violence, beating their heads and blinding them with their wings and claws.<sup>3</sup>

Besides this procession of animals, the cavalry of one or two *Omrahs* frequently pass in review before the King; the horsemen being better dressed than usual, the horses furnished with iron armour, and decorated with an endless variety of fantastic trappings.

The King takes pleasure also in having the blades of cutlasses tried on dead sheep, brought before him without

<sup>1</sup> The Emperor Akbar was very fond of this sport, and in the *Ain* (pp. 218-222) will be found full details regarding the kinds of fighting deer, how they were fought, together with elaborate regulations as to the betting allowed on such encounters.

<sup>2</sup> Literally 'blue cows,' the Hindostanee name being *Nilgau*. See page 364, footnote <sup>3</sup>, also page 377.

<sup>3</sup> See the illustration of a *Barkút* eagle attacking a deer, from Atkinson's *Siberia*, at p. 385, vol. i. of Yule's *Marco Polo*, second ed., 1875, and the chapter (xviii. same vol.) on the animals and birds kept by the Kaan for the chase.

the entrails and neatly bound up. Young *Omrahs*, *Mansebdars*, and *Gourze-berdars*,<sup>1</sup> or mace-bearers, exercise their skill, and put forth all their strength to cut through the four feet, which are fastened together, and the body of the sheep at one blow.

But all these things are so many interludes to more serious matters. The King not only reviews his cavalry with peculiar attention, but there is not, since the war has been ended, a single trooper or other soldier whom he has not inspected, and made himself personally acquainted with, increasing or reducing the pay of some, and dismissing others from the service. All the petitions held up in the crowd assembled in the *Am-Kas* are brought to the King and read in his hearing; and the persons concerned being ordered to approach are examined by the Monarch himself, who often redresses on the spot the wrongs of the aggrieved party. On another day of the week he devotes two hours to hear in private the petitions of ten persons selected from the lower orders, and presented to the King by a good and rich old man. Nor does he fail to attend the justice-chamber, called *Adalet-Kanay*, on another day of the week, attended by the two principal *Kadis*,<sup>2</sup> or chief justices. It is evident, therefore, that barbarous as we are apt to consider the sovereigns of *Asia*, they are not always unmindful of the justice that is due to their subjects.

What I have stated in the proceedings of the assembly of the *Am-Kas* appears sufficiently rational and even noble; but I must not conceal from you the base and disgusting adulation which is invariably witnessed there. Whenever a word escapes the lips of the King, if at all to the purpose, how trifling soever may be its import, it is immediately caught by the surrounding throng; and the chief *Omrahs*, extending their arms towards heaven, as if to receive some

<sup>1</sup> *Gurz-burdar*, from *gurz*, a Persian word, signifying a mace or war-club.

<sup>2</sup> *Kadí*, the Arabic word for a judge, colloquially *Kázi*.