

BĀBUR - NĀMA

(MEMOIRS OF BĀBUR)

30/8/19
Hanshan Jain

Translated from the original Turki Text

of

Ẓahiru'd-dīn Muḥammad Bābur Pādshāh Ghāzī

by

ANNETTE SUSANNAH BEVERIDGE

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This is everywhere fixed :—40 *ser* = 1 *mānbān* ; 12 *mānbān* = 1 *mānī* ; 100 *mānī* they call a *mīnāsa*.¹

Pearls and jewels they weigh by the *tānk*.

(r. *Modes of reckoning.*)

The people of Hind have also an excellent mode of reckoning : 100,000 they call a *lak* ; 100 *laks*, a *krūr* ; 100 *krūrs*, an *arb* ; 100 *arbs*, 1 *karb* ; 100 *karbs*, 1 *nīl* ; 100 *nīls*, 1 *padam* ; 100 *padams*, 1 *sāng*. The fixing of such high reckonings as these is proof of the great amount of wealth in Hindūstān.

(s. *Hindū inhabitants of Hindūstān.*)

Most of the inhabitants of Hindūstān are pagans ; they call a pagan a Hindū. Most Hindūs believe in the transmigration of souls. All artisans, wage-earners, and officials are Hindūs. In our countries dwellers in the wilds (*i.e.* nomads) get tribal names ; here the settled people of the cultivated lands and villages get tribal names.² Again :—every artisan there follows the trade that has come down to him from forefather to forefather.

(t. *Defects of Hindūstān.*)

Hindūstān is a country of few charms. Its people have no good looks ; of social intercourse, paying and receiving visits there is none ; of genius and capacity none ; of manners none ; in handicraft and work there is no form or symmetry, method or quality ; there are no good horses, no good dogs, no grapes, muskmelons or first-rate fruits, no ice or cold water, no good bread or cooked food in the *bāzārs*, no Hot-baths, no Colleges, no candles, torches or candlesticks.

In place of candle and torch they have a great dirty gang they call lamp-men (*dīwatī*), who in the left hand hold a smallish wooden tripod to one corner of which a thing like the top of

¹ There being 40 Bengāl *ser*s to the *man*, Bābur's word *mānbān* seems to be another name for the *man* or *maund*. I have not found *mānbān* or *mīnāsa*. At first sight *mānbān* might be taken, in the Hai. MS. for (T.) *bātmān*, a weight of 13 or 15 lbs., but this does not suit. Cf. f. 167 note to *bātmān* and f. 173b (where, however, in the note f. 157 requires correction to f. 167). For Bābur's table of measures the Pers. trs. has 40 *ser*s = 1 *man* ; 12 *mans* = 1 *mānī* ; 100 *mānī* they call *mīnāsa* (217, f. 201b, l. 8).

² Presumably these are caste-names.

¹ The Bābur's *viz.* the "waters" known c the street. ² The usual phr of S. *dhō*. not suit t.

and the help that cometh from on high. "Every soul is prone unto evil,"¹ (and again) "This is the bounty of God; He will give the same unto whom He pleaseth; and God is endued with great bounty."²

Our motive for these remarks and for repeating these statements is that, by reason of human frailty, of the customs of kings and of the great, all of us, from the Shāh to the sipāhī, in the heyday of our youth, have transgressed and done what we ought not to have done. After some days of sorrow and repentance, we abandoned evil practices one by one, and the gates of retrogression became closed. But the renunciation of wine, the greatest and most indispensable of renunciations, remained under a veil in the chamber of deeds *pledged to appear in due season*, and did not show its countenance until the glorious hour when we had put on the garb of the holy warrior and had encamped with the army of Islām over against the infidels in order to slay them. On this occasion I received a secret inspiration and heard an infallible voice say "Is not the time yet come unto those who believe, that their hearts should humbly submit to the admonition of God, and that truth which hath been revealed?"³ Thereupon we set ourselves to extirpate the things of wickedness, and we earnestly knocked at the gates of repentance. The Guide of Help assisted us, according to the saying "Whoever knocks and re-knocks, to him it will be opened", and an order was given that with the Holy War there should begin the still greater war which has to be waged against sensuality. In short, we declared with sincerity that *we would subjugate our passions*, and I engraved on the tablet of my heart "I turn unto Thee with repentance, and I am the first of true believers".⁴ And I made public the resolution to abstain from wine, which had been hidden in the treasury of my breast. The victorious servants, in accordance with the illustrious order, dashed upon the earth of contempt and destruction the flagons and the cups, and the other utensils in gold and silver, which in their number and their brilliance were like the stars of the firmament. They dashed them in pieces, as, God willing! soon

fol. 313b.

¹ Qur'ān, Sūrah XII, v. 53.
² Sūrah LVII, v. 15.

³ Sūrah LVII, v. 21.
⁴ Sūrah VII, v. 140.

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will be dashed the gods of the idolaters,—and they distributed the fragments among the poor and needy. By the blessing of this acceptable repentance, many of the courtiers, by virtue of the saying that *men follow the religion of their kings*, embraced abstinence at the same assemblage, and entirely renounced the use of wine, and up till now crowds of our subjects hourly attain this auspicious happiness. I hope that in accordance with the saying "*He who incites to good deeds has the same reward as he who does them*" the benefit of this action will react on the royal fortune and increase it day by day by victories.

After carrying out this design an universal decree was issued that in the imperial dominions—May God protect them from every danger and calamity—no-one shall partake of strong drink, or engage in its manufacture, nor sell it, nor buy it or possess it, nor convey it or fetch it. "*Beware of touching it.*" "*Perchance this will give you prosperity.*"¹

In thanks for these great victories,² and as a thank-offering for God's acceptance of repentance and sorrow, the ocean of the royal munificence became commoved, and those waves of kindness, which are the cause of the civilization of the world and of the glory of the sons of Adam, were displayed,—and throughout all the territories the tax (*tanghā*) on Musalmāns was abolished,—though its yield was more than the dreams of avarice, and though it had been established and maintained by former rulers,—for it is a practice outside of the edicts of the Prince of Apostles (Muḥammad). So a decree was passed that in no city, town, road, ferry, pass, or port, should the tax be levied or exacted. No alteration whatsoever of this order is to be permitted. "*Whoever after hearing it makes any change therein, the sin of such change will be upon him.*"³

The proper course (*sabīl*) for all who shelter under the shade of the royal benevolence, whether they be Turk, Tājik, Arab, Hindī, or Fārsī (Persian), peasants or soldiers, of every nation or tribe

¹ *Sūrah* II, v. 185.

² These may be self-conquests as has been understood by Erskine (p. 356) and de Courteille (ii. 281) but as the Divine "acceptance" would seem to Bābur vouched for by his military success, "victories" may stand for his success at Kanwā.

³ *Sūrah* II, 177 where, in Sale's translation, the change referred to is the special one of altering a leg. cy.

A few tents had been set up; a few were in setting up when news of the appearance of the enemy was brought. Mounting instantly, I ordered every man to his post and that our array should be protected with the carts.¹

* As the following Letter-of-victory (*Fath-nāma*) which is what Shaikh Zain had indited, makes known particulars about the army of Islām, the great host of the pagans with the position of their arrayed ranks, and the encounters had between them and the army of Islām, it is inserted here without addition or deduction.²

SHAIKH ZAIN'S LETTER-OF-VICTORY.

(a. Introduction.)

Praise be to God the Faithful Promiser, the Helper of His servants, the Supporter of His armies, the Scatterer of hostile hosts, the One alone without whom there is nothing.

Fol. 316a.

¹ Here M. de C. has the following note (ii, 273 n.); it supplements my own of f. 264 [n. 3]. "*Le mot arāba, que j'ai traduit par chariot est pris par M. Leyden*" (this should be Erskine) "*dans le sens de 'gun', ce que je ne crois pas exact: tout au plus signifierait-il affût*" (gun-carriage). "*Il me paraît impossible d'admettre que Bāber eût à sa disposition une artillerie attelée aussi considérable. Ces arāba pouvaient servir en partie à transporter des pièces de campagne, mais ils avaient aussi une autre destination, comme on le voit par la suite du récit.*" It does not appear to me that Erskine translates the word *arāba* by the word *gun*, but that the *arābas* (all of which he took to be gun-carriages) being there, he supposed the guns. This was not correct as the various passages about carts as defences show (cf. Index s.m. *arāba* and carts).

² It is characteristic of Bābur that he reproduces Shaikh Zain's *Fath-nāma*, not because of its eloquence but because of its useful details. Erskine and de Courteille have the following notes concerning Shaikh Zain's *farmān*:—"Nothing can form a more striking contrast to the simple, manly and intelligent style of Baber himself, than the pompous, laboured periods of his secretary. Yet I have never read this *Firmān* to any native of India who did not bestow unlimited admiration on the official bombast of Zeineddin, while I have met with none but Turks who paid due praise to the calm simplicity of Baber" [Mems. p. 359]. "*Comme la précédente (farmān), cette pièce est rédigée en langue persane et offre un modèle des plus accomplis du style en usage dans les chancelleries orientales. La traduction d'un semblable morceau d'éloquence est de la plus grande difficulté, si on veut être clair, tout en restant fidèle à l'original.*"

Like the Renunciation *farmān*, the Letter-of-victory with its preceding sentence which I have asterisked, was probably inserted into Bābur's narrative somewhat later than the battle of Kānwa. Hence Bābur's pluperfect-tense "had indited". I am indebted to my husband for help in revising the difficult *Fath-nāma*; he has done it with consideration of the variants between the earlier English and the French translations. No doubt it could be dealt with more searchingly still by one well-versed in the Qurān and the Traditions, and thus able to explain others of its allusions. The italics denote Arabic passages in the original; many of these are from the Qurān, and in tracing them M. de Courteille's notes have been most useful to us.

O Thou the Exalter of the pillars of Islām, Helper of thy faithful minister, Overthrower of the pedestals of idols, Overcomer of rebellious foes, Exterminator to the uttermost of the followers of darkness!

Lauds be to God the Lord of the worlds, and may the blessing of God be upon the best of His creatures Muhammad, Lord of ghāzīs and champions of the Faith, and upon his companions, the pointers of the way, until the Day of judgment.

The successive gifts of the Almighty are the cause of frequent praises and thanksgivings, and the number of these praises and thanksgivings is, in its turn, the cause of the constant succession of God's mercies. For every mercy a thanksgiving is due, and every thanksgiving is followed by a mercy. To render full thanks is beyond men's power; the mightiest are helpless to discharge their obligations. Above all, adequate thanks cannot be rendered for a benefit than which none is greater in the world and nothing is more blessed, in the world to come, to wit, victory over most powerful infidels and dominion over wealthiest heretics, "*these are the unbelievers, the wicked.*"¹ In the eyes of the judicious, no blessing can be greater than this. Thanks be to God! that this great blessing and mighty boon, which from the cradle until now has been the real object of this right-thinking mind (Bābur's), has now manifested itself by the graciousness of the King of the worlds; the Opener who dispenses his treasures without awaiting solicitation, hath opened them with a master-key before our victorious Nawāb (Bābur),² so that the names of our³ conquering heroes have been emblazoned in the records of glorious ghāzīs. By the help of our victorious soldiers the standards of Islām have been raised to the highest pinnacles. The account of this auspicious fortune is as follows:—

¹ Qorān, cap. 80, last sentence.

² Shaikh Zain, in his version of the *Bābur-nāma*, styles Bābur Nawāb where there can be no doubt of the application of the title, *vis.* in describing Shāh Tahmāsp's gifts to him (mentioned by Bābur on f. 305). He uses the title also in the *farmān* of renunciation (f. 313b), but it does not appear in my text, "royal" (fortune) standing for it (*in loco* p. 555, l. 10).

³ The possessive pronoun occurs several times in the Letter-of-victory. As there is no semblance of putting forward that letter as being Bābur's, the pronoun seems to imply "on our side".

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from our camp (*aūrdū*); when we reached his camp (*aūrdū*), we sent Muḥammadi, 'Abdu'l-'aziz, 'Alī Khān and some others in pursuit of him. "There was a little slackness; I ought to have gone myself, and not have left the matter to what I expected from other people. When I had gone as much as a *kuroh* (2 m.) beyond the Pagan's camp, I turned back because it was late in the day; I came to our camp at the Bed-time Prayer.

Fol. 325b. With what ill-omened words Muḥammad Sharif the astrologer had fretted me! Yet he came at once to congratulate me! I emptied my inwards² in abuse of him, but, spite of his being heathenish, ill-omened of speech, extremely self-satisfied, and a most disagreeable person, I bestowed a *lak* upon him because there had been deserving service from him in former times, and, after saying he was not to stay in my dominions, I gave him leave to go.

(b. *Suppression of a rebellion.*)

(*March 17th*) We remained next day (*Jumāda II. 14th*) on that same ground. Muḥammad 'Alī *Jang-jang* and Shaikh Gūran and 'Abdu'l-malik³ the armourer were sent off with a dense (*qālīn*) army against Iliās Khān who, having rebelled in Between-the-two-waters (Ganges and Jumna), had taken Kūl (Kōel) and made Kichik 'Alī prisoner.⁴ He could not fight when they came up; his force scattered in all directions; he himself was taken a few days later and brought into Āgra where I had him flayed alive.

(c. *A trophy of victory.*)

An order was given to set up a pillar of pagan heads on the infant-hill (*koh-bacha*) between which and our camp the battle had been fought.

¹ Hence the Rānā escaped. He died in this year, not without suspicion of poison.

² *aichimni khālī qildim*, a seeming equivalent for English, "I poured out my spleen."

³ var. *malūk* as e.g. in I.O. 217 f. 225b, and also elsewhere in the *Bābur-nāma*.

⁴ On f. 315 the acts attributed to Iliās Khān are said to have been done by a "mannikin called Rustam Khān". Neither name appears elsewhere in the B.N.; the hero's name seems a sarcasm on the small man.

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eagerly stretched out the neck for his blow.¹ Thus went the greater number to hell.

By God's grace this renowned fort was captured in 2 or 3 *garis*² (*cir.* an hour), without drum and standard,³ with no hard fighting done. A pillar of pagan-heads was ordered set up on a hill north-west of Chandīrī. A chronogram of this victory having been found in the words *Fath-i-dāru'l-harb*⁴ (Conquest of a hostile seat), I thus composed them :—

Was for awhile the station Chandīrī
Pagan-full, the seat of hostile force ;
By fighting, I vanquished its fort,
The date was *Fath-i-dāru'l-harb*.

(1. Further description of Chandīrī.)

Chandīrī is situated (in) rather good country,⁵ having much running-water round about it. Its citadel is on a hill and inside it

¹ Bābur's account of the siege of Chandīrī is incomplete, inasmuch as it says nothing of the general massacre of pagans he has mentioned on f. 272. Khwāfi Khān records the massacre, saying, that after the fort was surrendered, as was done on condition of safety for the garrison, from 3 to 4000 pagans were put to death by Bābur's troops on account of hostility shewn during the evacuation of the fort. The time assigned to the massacre is previous to the *jāhar* of 1000 women and children and the self-slaughter of men in Medinī Rāo's house, in which he himself died. It is not easy to fit the two accounts in ; this might be done, however, by supposing that a folio of Bābur's MS. was lost, as others seem lost at the end of the narrative of this year's events (*q.v.*). The lost folio would tell of the surrender, one clearly affecting the mass of Rājput followers and not the chiefs who stood for victory or death and who may have made sacrifice to honour after hearing of the surrender. Bābur's narrative in this part certainly reads less consecutive than is usual with him ; something preceding his account of the *jāhar* would improve it, and would serve another purpose also, since mention of the surrender would fix a term ending the now too short time of under one hour he assigns as the duration of the fighting. If a surrender had been mentioned, it would be clear that his "2 or 3 *garis*" included the attacking and taking of the *dā-tahī* and down to the retreat of the Rājputs from the walls. On this Bābur's narrative of the unavailing sacrifice of the chiefs would follow in due order. Khwāfi Khān is more circumstantial than Firishta who says nothing of surrender or massacre, but states that 6000 men were killed fighting. Khwāfi Khān's authorities may throw light on the matter, which so far does not hang well together in any narrative, Bābur's, Firishta's, or Khwāfi Khān's. One would like to know what led such a large body of Rājputs to surrender so quickly ; had they been all through in favour of accepting terms ? One wonders, again, why from 3 to 4000 Rājputs did not put up a better resistance to massacre. Perhaps their assailants were Turks, stubborn fighters down to 1915 AD.

² For suggestion about the brevity of this period, see last note.

³ Clearly, without Bābur's taking part in the fighting.

⁴ These words by *abjad* make 934. The Hai. MS. mistakenly writes *Būd Chandīrī* in the first line of the quatrain instead of *Būd chandī*. Khwāfi Khān quotes the quatrain with slight variants.

⁵ *Chandīrī taurī wilāyat (dā?) wāgi' būlūb tūr*, which seems to need *dā*, in, because the fort, and not the country, is described. Or there may be an omission *e.g.* of a second sentence about the walled-town (fort).

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