

TRAVELS IN INDIA

CHAPTER XII¹

Concerning the articles of merchandise yielded by the Empire of the GREAT MOGUL and the Kingdoms of GOLCONDA and BIJAPUR and other neighbouring territories.

I CAN easily believe that those who have previously written on the condition of the Empire of the GREAT MOGUL did not feel themselves called upon to give a full list of all the articles of merchandise which it furnishes to foreigners. This I shall endeavour to do according to the information I have acquired during the long years I have passed in different journeys in these countries. The reader will, without doubt, cheerfully approve of this research which I have made with so much care, particularly if he is connected with commerce, and if he desires to know what art and nature produce that is curious, in different places, in order to subserve the human race.

It is necessary to remember here, what I have remarked at the commencement of the first book, touching the weights and measures which are used in

¹ In the English translation by John Phillips of 1684, this chapter is numbered x, the two preceding ones having been omitted.

India, where I have spoken of the *maund* and of the *seer*.¹ It is still necessary to say a word about the *cubit*.²

The *cubit* is a measure for all goods which can be measured by the ell, and there are different kinds, as we have different kinds of ells in EUROPE. It is divided into 24 *tassus*,³ and as the greater part of the goods of INDIA are delivered at SURAT, there is represented on the margin a figure of the fourth part of a *cubit* of the town of SURAT, divided into six *tassus*.

I ought to commence this list of goods with the most precious of all, namely diamonds and coloured stones; but, as that subject is somewhat extensive, and is the most important of my accounts, I shall give it separate treatment, and only mention in this chapter silks, cloths, cottons, spices, and drugs, which are the five classes which include all the kinds of merchandise obtained from INDIA.

Concerning Silks.

KÁSIMBÁZAR,⁴ a village in the Kingdom of BENGAL, can furnish about twenty-two thousand (22,000) bales of silk annually, each bale weighing one hundred (100) *livres*. The 22,000 bales weigh 2,200,000 *livres* at 16 *onces* to the *livre*. The Dutch generally took, either for JAPAN or for HOLLAND, 6000 to 7000 bales of it, and they would have liked to get more, but the

¹ See Appendix, vol. i.

² *Cubit* in the original. According to the figure here given by Tavernier of a quarter of a cubit, its length must have been $27\frac{1}{2}$ in. The ordinary *háth* of India, measured from the top of the middle finger to the elbow, is 18 in., but is sometimes increased by the width of the hand or of three fingers.

³ *Tassots* in the original.

⁴ Kasembazar in original, elsewhere Cosenbazar, for Kásimbázár.

merchants of TARTARY and of the whole MOGUL EMPIRE opposed their doing so, for these merchants took as much as the Dutch, and the balance remained with the people of the country for the manufacture of their own stuffs. All these silks are brought to the Kingdom of GUJARAT, and the greater part come to AHMADABAD and SURAT, where they are woven into fabrics.

Firstly, carpets of silk and gold, others of silk, gold, and silver, and others altogether of silk, are made in Surat. As for the woollen carpets, they are made at FATEHPUR,¹ 12 *cos*s from AGRA.

In the second place, satins with bands of gold and silver, and others with bands of different colours, and others all uniform are made there, and it is the same with the *taffetas*.

Thirdly, *patoles*,² which are stuffs of silk, very soft, decorated all over with flowers of different colours, are manufactured at AHMADABAD. They vary in price from eight (8) to forty (40) rupees the piece. This is one of the profitable investments of the Dutch, who do not permit any member of their Company to engage in private trade in it. They are exported to the PHILIPPINES, BORNEO, JAVA, SUMATRA, and other neighbouring countries.

¹ Vettapour in the original, Fatehpur Sikri, which is 23 miles W.S.W. of Agra. See vol. i, p. 89. It was founded as the Metropolis of the Mogul Empire by Akbar in 1570. Previously it bore the name of Sikri. Its magnificence is testified by the ruins of palaces and mosques, which still attract many visitors. Its industries were numerous, including silk spinning, weaving, and stone-cutting. At present the carpets produced there are of an inferior and coarse kind.

² This is from the Kanarese *pattuda*, "a silk cloth" (Yule-Burnell, *Anglo-Indian Glossary*, Art. "Patola"). Terry calls them *pintadoes*, and extols the art displayed in stitching together "fresh coloured *taffata* and *pintadoes*, and *taffata* and satin, with cotton wool between, to make quilts." (*A Voyage to East India*, London 1777, p. 127.)

As for crude silks, it should be remarked that none of them are naturally white except that of PALESTINE, of which even the merchants of ALEPPO and TRIPOLI have difficulty in obtaining a small quantity. Thus the silk of KÁSIMBÁZAR is yellow, as are all the crude silks which come from PERSIA and SICILY. But the people of KÁSIMBÁZAR know how to whiten theirs with a lye made of the ashes of a tree which is called Adam's fig,¹ which makes it as white as the silk of PALESTINE. The Dutch carry their silks and the other goods which they obtain in BENGAL by the canal which goes from KÁSIMBÁZAR to the GANGES, and this canal is nearly 15 leagues long. There remains an equal distance to descend by the GANGES to HUGLY, where they ship their goods on board their vessels.

Concerning Cotton Cloths, and first of the painted fabrics called Chites.²

The *chites* or painted cotton cloths which are called *calmendar*,³ that is to say, made with a brush, are made in the Kingdom of GOLCONDA, and especially in the neighbourhood of MASULIPATAM; but the quantity made is so small that when one places in requisition all the workers who make these cotton cloths it is with difficulty that he can obtain as much as three bales.

The *chites* which are made in the Empire of the

¹ Adam's fig is a translation of the Portuguese name for the plantain, *Musa paradisiaca*. The Muhammadans believe that its leaves were used by Adam and Eve to clothe themselves with in the Garden of Eden. Hence the name. The ash of the plantain resembles that of the potato, as it contains both potash and soda salts, and the percentage of phosphoric acid and magnesia is said to be about the same in both.

² Chintzes.

³ Properly *kalamdar*, derived from *kalam*, Hin., a pen or brush.

GREAT MOGUL are printed, and are of different degrees of beauty, both on account of the printing and the fineness of the cotton cloth. Those made at LAHORE are the coarsest of all, and consequently the cheapest. They are sold by *corges*,¹ a *corge* consisting of 20 pieces, and costing from 16 to 30 rupees. The *chites* which are made at SIRONJ are sold at from 20 to 60 rupees the *corge* or thereabouts.

All the *chites* of which I am about to speak are printed cotton cloths, of which bedcovers are made, and also *sufras* or tablecloths, according to the custom of the country, pillowcases, pocket-handkerchiefs, and especially waistcoats for the use of both men and women, principally in PERSIA.

The *chites* of bright colours are made at BURHANPUR. They are made into handkerchiefs, which are at present much used by those who take snuff, and a sort of veil called *ormis*,² which the women throughout ASIA use to put on their heads and about their necks.

The *baftas*,³ or cotton cloths to be dyed red, blue, or black, are taken uncoloured to AGRA and AHMADÁBÁD, because these two towns are near the places where the Indigo is made, which is used in dyeing, and they cost from 2 rupees the piece up to 30 or 40 rupees, according to the fineness and the gold at both ends, and in some also on the sides. The Indians know how to pass some of these cloths through a certain water which causes them to appear like a waved camlet, and these pieces are the dearest.

These kinds of cotton cloth, which cost from 2 to

¹ Probably from *korí*, Hin., a score. ² Or *ornis* (see vol. i, p. 52).

³ *Bastas* in the original, for *Baftas* (see vol. i, p. 66).

12 rupees the piece, are exported to the coast of MELINDE,¹ and they constitute the principal trade done by the Governor of MOZAMBIQUE, who sells them to the Cafres to carry into the country of the ABYSSINS and the Kingdom of SABA,² because these people, not using soap, need only simply rinse out these cloths.

Those which cost 12 rupees and upwards are exported to the PHILIPPINES, BORNEO, JAVA, SUMATRA, and other islands. The women of these islands have for their sole garment a piece of this cotton cloth, which, without cutting, one end serves as a petticoat, and the remainder is wound round the waist and head.

White Cotton Cloths.

White cotton cloths come partly from AGRA and the vicinity of LAHORE, partly from BENGAL, and some from BARODA, BROACH, RENONSARI,³ and other places. They come in a crude condition to RENONSARI and BROACH, where they have the means of bleaching them in large fields, and on account of the quantity of lemons growing in the neighbourhood, for cotton cloths can never be well bleached if they are not steeped in lemon juice.

The cotton cloths which come from AGRA, LAHORE,

¹ Or Melinda, more properly Malinda, an Arab town on the east coast of Africa in S. Lat. 3° 9'. (See for notice Yule-Burnell, *Anglo-Indian Glossary*.)

² Abyssinia and Saba which was probably the Sabœa of Strabo, occupying a large portion of Southern Arabia.

³ With reference to this place, Col. Yule informs me that it is Nosári or Navasári, and that Van Twist, in his *General Description of India* (1638), says that it was 6 Dutch miles (24 English) to the south of Surat, and produced much coarse cloth.

and BENGAL are sold by *corges*, and they cost from 16 up to 300 or 400 rupees and more, according as the merchant directs them to be made.

The cotton cloths which come from RENONSARI and BROACH are 21 cubits long when crude, but only 20 cubits when bleached. Those of BARODA are 20 cubits when crude, and $19\frac{1}{2}$ when bleached.

All the cotton cloths or *baftas* which come from these three towns are of two kinds; for there are both broad and narrow kinds, and it is the narrow of which I have just spoken, and which are sold at from 2 to 6 *mahmúdis* each.

The broad *baftas* are $1\frac{1}{3}$ cubit wide, and the piece is 20 cubits long. They are commonly sold at from 5 to 12 *mahmúdis*, but the merchant on the spot is able to have them made much wider and finer, and up to the value of 500 *mahmúdis* the piece. In my time I have seen two pieces of them sold, for each of which 1000 *mahmúdis* were paid. The English bought one and the Dutch the other, and they were each of twenty-eight (28) cubits. MUHAMMAD ALI BEG, when returning to PERSIA from his embassy to INDIA, presented CHA SEFI II¹ with a cocoa-nut of the size of an ostrich's egg, enriched with precious stones; and when it was opened a turban was drawn from it 60 cubits in length, and of a muslin so fine that you would scarcely know what it was that you had in your hand.² On returning from one of my voyages, I had the curiosity to take with me an ounce of thread, of which

¹ Sháh Safi or Safvi II. Tavernier describes him in the *Persian Travels*, Paris Ed., 1676, p. 524.

² This must have been like the famous Dacca muslins, upon which such names as *áb rawán*, flowing water, were conferred.

a *livre's* weight cost 600 *mahmúdis*,¹ and the late Queen-Dowager, with many of the ladies of the Court, was surprised at seeing a thread so delicate, which almost escaped the view.

Concerning Spun Cotton.

Both spun and unspun cotton come from the Provinces of BURHÁNPUR and GUJARÁT. The unspun cottons do not go to EUROPE, being too bulky and of too small value, and they are only exported to the RED SEA, HORMUZ, BASSORA, and sometimes to the islands of SONDE² and to the PHILIPPINES. As for the spun cottons, the English and Dutch Companies export large quantities to EUROPE, but they are not of the finest qualities; of the kinds which they send the *maund* weight is worth from 15 to 50 *mahmúdis*.³ These are the kinds which are used to make the wicks of candles, and stockings, and to mingle with the web of silken stuffs. As for the finest qualities, they are of no use in EUROPE.

Concerning Indigo.

Indigo comes from different localities of the Empire of the GREAT MOGUL, and in these different localities it is of various qualities, which increase or diminish its price.

In the first place some comes from the country of

¹ *I.e.* about £22 : 10s.

² Sunda archipelago, in the Sunda straits, where the volcano of Krakatoa is situated. (See vol. i, p. 191.)

³ *I.e.* the *maund* of 34 *livres* is worth 11s. 3d. to £1 : 17 : 6, with the *mahmúdi* at 9d.

BIANA, from INDOUA,¹ and from CORSA,² one or two days' march from AGRA; and this is considered to be the best of all. It is made also at eight days' march from SURAT, and at two leagues from AHMADÁBÁD, in a village called SHARKEJ.³ It is from thence indigo cake comes, and some of the same kind and nearly the same price comes also from the country of the King of GOLCONDA. The *maund* of SURAT, which is 42 *seers*, or $34\frac{1}{2}$ of our *livres*, is sold for from 15 to 20 rupees. There is also made at BROACH some of the same quality as this last. As for that from the neighbourhood of AGRA, it is made in small pieces like hemispheres, and it is, as I have said, the best in INDIA. It is sold by the *maund*, and the *maund* in these regions is 60 *seers*, which are equal to $51\frac{3}{4}$ of our *livres*. One pays generally for it from 36 to 40 rupees. Indigo is also produced at 36 leagues from BURHÁNPUR on the road to SURAT at a large village called RAOUT,⁴ and other small villages in its neighbourhood; and the people of the place generally sell more than 100,000 rupees worth of it every year.

There comes lastly the indigo of BENGAL, which the Dutch Company conveys to MASULIPATAM; but you can buy this indigo and that of BURHÁNPUR and AHMADÁBÁD cheaper by 30 per cent than that of AGRA.

Indigo is made from a plant⁵ which is sown every year after the rains, and which, before preparation, much

¹ Indore?

² Corsa I have not been able to identify with certainty. There are villages both to the south and north of Agra with somewhat similar names. Perhaps it is Khurjá in the Bulandshahr District.

³ Sarquesse in the original. (See vol. i, p. 69 *n.*)

⁴ Raout. This place has not been identified. It was probably not far from Sindkeir.

⁵ The indigo plant, *Indigofera tinctoria*, Linn.

resembles hemp. It is cut three times in the year, and the first cutting takes place when it is about 2 or 3 feet high; and it is cut to within 6 inches of the ground. The first leaf is without doubt better than those which follow, the second yielding less by 10 or 12 per cent than the first, and the third 20 per cent less than the second. It is classified by the colour, as seen when a morsel of the paste is broken. The colour of the indigo made from the first crop is of a violet-blue, which is more brilliant and more lively than the others, and that of the second is more lively than that of the third. But besides this difference, which causes a considerable effect on the price, the Indians manipulate the weight and quality, as I shall elsewhere explain.

After the Indians have cut the plant they throw it into tanks made of lime,¹ which becomes so hard that one would say that they were made of a single piece of marble. The tanks are generally from 80 to 100 paces in circuit, and when half-full with water, or a little more, they are filled up with the cut plant. The Indians mix it and stir it up with the water every day until the leaf (for the stem is of no account) becomes reduced into slime or greasy earth. This done they allow it to rest for some days, and when they see that all has sunk to the bottom and that the water is clear above, they open the holes made round the tank to allow the water to escape. Next, the water having been drawn off, they fill baskets with the slime, after which, in a level field, each man is to be seen near his basket taking this paste in his fingers, and moulding it into pieces of the shape and size of a hen's egg cut in

¹ The indigo vats are faced with "*chunam*" (lime), which, especially when made from shells, produces a marble-like surface.