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Harriet Murray Aynsley  
Excerpt  
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## OUR VISIT TO HINDOSTAN, KASHMIR, AND LADAKH.



### CHAPTER I.

ARRIVAL AT BOMBAY—THE PARSÍS—BOMBAY—ITS PUBLIC BUILDINGS—  
SAUGOR — FESTIVAL OF THE MOHURRUM — AGRA — SLIGHT SKETCH OF  
THE HISTORY OF THE MOGHUL EMPIRE IN INDIA FROM TAMERLANE TO  
AURUNGZEBE.

HAVING for some years had a great desire to visit our Indian possessions, at length one or two circumstances combined made my husband and myself resolve to put this long-cherished plan in execution ; and, accordingly, we left England early in October 1875, and after the usual uneventful journey through France, embarked at Genoa, in the Rubattino s.s. Arabia, on the 24th of that month. We reached Bombay at an early hour on 18th November, and landed at once. On our way into the harbour we passed close to the Serapis and the Osborne, and the other vessels escorting the Prince of Wales ; this was all we saw of H.R.H., as that evening he and his suite left Bombay to go down the coast.

The view of Bombay, as seen on entering the harbour,

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is not very striking, for one of its great features, the cocoa-nut palms, only appear a confused mass from thence; but once landed, everything is so new to one fresh from Europe, natives from all parts of Hindostán being seen in their various distinctive costumes: amongst these, however, the Parsís, with their quaint head-gear, form by far the largest proportion.

The Parsís, including those of Yezd and Kirman in Persia, number about 105,500 souls. Their numbers have dwindled in an extraordinary manner; the cause has not been ascertained. It is not that many converts have been made from amongst them either to Christianity or Mohammedanism, though many of the more enlightened members seem deeply impressed with the excellence of the Christian religion and our general civilisation; but some who have gone into the subject consider that their rapid diminution is owing to their mode of life, which is so sedentary: they occupy themselves solely with desk-work, or become shopkeepers, and never invest in land, or become cultivators of the soil. I have been told, too, that they live almost entirely upon farinaceous food, and use much oil and *ghi* (or clarified butter) in their cooking; but, however this may be, I have rarely, if ever, seen a muscular-looking Parsí, or one with well-knit limbs. Both men and women have, as a rule, a shuffling rolling gait, and badly-proportioned figures.

In Western India the Parsís number about 100,000, and are divided into two parties—Conservatives and Liberals—who are both equally attached to the old faith, but differ in their modes of life. The Conservatives adhere to the good old mode of eating seated on the floor, and use their fingers instead of knives and forks;

whilst the Liberals have adopted European customs and appliances.

According to the Parsís, the world is to last 12,000 years, which they divide into four periods. During the first 3000 years the world was created; during the second, man lived by himself without suffering from attacks of evil; during the third, war began between good and evil—between Ormuzd and Ahriman—and raged with the utmost fierceness; this will gradually abate during the fourth period, which must be completed before the final victory of good over evil. They say they do not *worship* fire, and much object to be called “fire-worshippers,” but admit that they are taught from their youth to face some luminous object whilst praying to God, and that they look upon *fire*, as upon other natural phenomena, as an emblem of divine power, but never ask assistance or blessings from it.

The Parsís abstain from smoking, and will not blow out a candle if they can help it; thus they would appear to look upon fire with great reverence, much as we Christians regard the symbol of the Cross. All their prayers and services are in the old Zend language, which none understand, not even their priests. They have a most imperfect translation of the Zend Avesta, which was not made from the original, but from a Pehlvi paraphrase; they do not recognise this as an authorised version. Thus, owing to this repetition of the words of their sacred writings without any attempt at understanding their meaning, each one is left to pick up his religion as best he may. They believe in one God, and address their prayers to Him. A priest must be the son of a priest, but all priests' sons need not necessarily follow their father's profession.

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There are possibly other reasons why they should be unwilling to change their faith ; but the three given by Professor Max Müller seem at least plausible ones : 1st, The conciseness of their belief ; 2d, The great antiquity and former glory of their religion ; 3d, The feeling that, in relinquishing this, they would be giving up the heirloom they have received from their remote ancestors and their own fathers, thus showing a want of filial piety to those whose memory they cherish as precious and sacred. They teach that morality consists of three things—pure thoughts, pure words, and pure deeds.

The European part of the town of Bombay contains some very fine public buildings, for the most part designed by an officer in the Royal Engineers ; and these combine excellence of form and design with the necessary requirements of arrangement for a hot climate. One of the native quarters is most curious and interesting to a stranger—the fronts of most of the principal shops being carved in the style of the well-known Bombay black-wood furniture, and for the most part coloured in green, red, and yellow. Byculla is separated from Bombay by the Chinese quarter. The Celestials are the great workers in bamboo, and make chairs, couches, baskets, and boxes of this material.

The climate of Bombay is said to be at all times of the year hot and unpleasant ; and even at that season we were glad to leave it after two or three days' stay, and started off up country by rail to Kureli, a distance of 550 miles, where we were met by relatives.

From this point began our first experience of Indian palanquin travelling, as our destination was Saugor, in the Central Provinces, distant about 75 miles from the railway, and possessing no regular service for the

conveyance of travellers to and fro. We went chiefly by night, resting during the day. Each palanquin had twelve bearers, or *kahars* as they are called, and an additional man to act as torch-bearer, who ran alongside all the way. Early in the morning of the second day we reached our relations' house in Saugor, and saw the mode of life pursued in an Indian station, which has been so often described that it is unnecessary to detail it here.

Our stay at Saugor was limited to about three months, which enabled us to pick up a few words of the language, and also in some degree to realise how vast the country was which we had come to visit, and to learn what inexhaustible subjects of interest it contained, whether as regards its various peoples or its ancient monuments and history.

During our stay in Saugor the Mohammedan festival of the Mohurrum occurred. It is celebrated every year in memory of the first alleged martyred Shiachs, Hassan and Hussain, who were the sons of Ali the cousin, and Fatima the daughter, of Mohammed. These men, after the murder of their father Ali, moved from Kufah, the capital, to Medina. Hassan, the elder, abdicated voluntarily, but was afterwards poisoned. After some years' interval his brother Hussain was invited to return, the government having been seized in the meanwhile by Abi Safr, the first of the Omniades, and his son Yesid, who succeeded him; but on Hussain's arrival he was murdered, and his eldest son alone escaped of all his retinue. The murder of these two brothers is the subject of the ten days' wailing.

The Mohurrum begins when the moon of the first month becomes visible. Each family, according to

their means, makes or provides themselves with what is called a *tarboot*, or representation of their tombs, which is more or less ornamented. Some of the best we saw were covered with thin sheets of talc, sprinkled over with gold leaf, which gave them a brilliant and dazzling appearance. At the expiration of twelve days (though the fast lasts ten days only) these *tarboots* are all carried in procession through the bazaar; and if, as in the case at Saugor, there is a lake, or large piece of water, the *tarboots*, after being stripped of the best of their decorations, are carried out in a boat some little distance and cast into the water; or, where no water is at hand, a large pit is dug, we were told, in which they are placed, and then burned.

On 1st March 1876 we again set forth on our travels, accompanied by our nephew J., who was thenceforward our companion for some months; and in due course we visited Jubbulpore and its marble rocks, with which we were disappointed, as we had expected grander scenery; but on a second visit to them by moonlight, more than a year later, I much changed my opinion, and should probably have admired them much more the first time had my expectations not been too highly raised by previous descriptions of them.

We passed hurriedly through Allahabad (so I will reserve all description of that place till after our second visit), and went on to Agra. Before proceeding to give a description of the buildings at Agra, it will be necessary, in a short historical sketch, to trace the rise of the so-called Moghul dynasty in Hindostán.

The empire of Persia was governed by petty princes till Timur-Bec, commonly known as Tamerlane, obtained possession of the kingdoms of Zagatay, which compre-

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hended Transoxiana, and the provinces of Cabul, Zabulistán, and others towards the Indus. After conquering Northern Tartary, Timur turned his arms against Persia, and entered Khorassan seven years before the death of Feroze, the Patán Emperor of Hindostán. He completed the conquest of Persia in less than five years, and when Feroze died was employed in subduing the provinces on the Euphrates. Timur-Bec, hearing of the commotions and civil wars in India consequent on the death of Feroze, began his expedition into that country A.D. 1397.

During the eight previous years, Timur had extended his conquests all over Western Asia, reduced Northern Tartary, and spread his ravages into Siberia as far as the Arctic Circle. He now advanced southwards, plundering towns and villages, and massacring their inhabitants, burning what supplies of grain he found after reserving sufficient to feed his army. On reaching Delhi, he divided his forces; and himself, at the head of 700 men only, crossed the river to reconnoitre the citadel

Mahmood III., the then King of Delhi, and his minister Eckbal, seeing such a small force opposed to them, issued forth with 5000 men and 27 elephants. Sillif, an *omrah* (or noble) of repute, led on the attack, was repulsed, and taken prisoner. Timur, having made the observations he intended, repassed the river and rejoined his army. He found that his generals and princes had taken upwards of 100,000 people captive, whom he caused to be put to death with great barbarity; and this act gained for him the name of *Hillak Chan*, or the destroying prince. He shortly afterwards again forded the river with his whole army, and not encountering any opposition, Timur encamped on the plains of Feroze, near Delhi, gave battle to its

king, Mahmood III., and Eckbal, routed them with great slaughter up to the very gates of Delhi, and there fixed his quarters.

Disturbances in Persia, and his ardent desire to extend his conquests to the extremities of Asia on the north and west, deterred Timur from making further progress in India, which he felt he could at any time reduce. On his return from Hindostán he settled the affairs of Persia, and reduced Syria, Egypt, and Asia Minor. When planning the conquest of China he died A.D. 1405, on his march thither, and was succeeded by his son Sharoch.

Mahmood III. died A.D. 1413, and Delhi was ruled in succession by six different princes; under the last of whom, Ibrahim II., the country was invaded by Baber the Tartar, who overthrew Ibrahim in a battle at Paniput, and thus transferred the empire to the family of Tamerlane, Baber himself being the fourth in descent from Timur.

In A.D. 1531 Baber was succeeded by his son Humaion, whose tomb will be mentioned in the description of the monuments at Delhi. The kingdom during Humaion's reign was convulsed by insurrections, and in 1541 he was obliged to fly, being defeated by Shere Shah, a native of India, of Patán descent, the word Patán signifying a highlander from beyond the Indus.

Shere's father had been governor of Jounpore. On the death of Shere in 1545, his eldest son, Adil, being absent, the government was usurped by the younger, named Jellal, generally known as Selim.

Selim dying in 1552, was succeeded by his son Feroze, a lad of 12. He had only reigned three days when he was assassinated by a nephew of the late



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## HUMAION.

9

Emperor Shere, who mounted the throne under the name of Mahomed VI.

The following year the king's cousin and brother-in-law raised an army, possessed himself of the city of Delhi, mounted the throne, marched to Agra, and reduced the adjoining provinces. Mahomed, finding himself not strong enough to oppose him, fled towards Chinar, and contented himself with retaining the eastern provinces.

Humaion, since his deposition from the throne—viz., from the year 1544 to this period—had retired to Persia, where Tamasp was the reigning emperor. His sister, the Sultana Begum, favoured Humaion, and pleaded his cause with Tamasp, who told her that if Humaion were to become a Shiah, and enforce that doctrine in India, he would assist him to recover his empire.

The Shiahhs hold Ali to be the only successor to Mohammed in his apostolic functions; but the Sunnis hold that there were four, adding Osman, Omar, and Abubeker to Ali.

Humaion, accompanied by his son, the young Prince Akbar, marched through Peshawur, caused the Patán governor to evacuate the new fort of Rhotas, and pursued the Patán troops as far as Lahore, from whence they also retreated, and the king peaceably entered it.

One final decisive battle was fought before Sirhind, in which Humaion was victorious, and this finally decided the fate of the empire, which for ever fell from the Patáns; and thus Humaion found himself reinstated on his throne after an interval of ten years.

A year later Humaion was killed by a fall, and in 1556 he was succeeded by his son, the afterwards

renowned Akbar, who may be called a child of the desert, having been born on its confines in the year 1542.

Before he was a year old he became a captive in the hands of an uncle with whom his father was at war, and when a mere child was barbarously exposed on the ramparts of Cábul, when it was besieged, in order that the besiegers' cannon might kill him. After many hair-breadth escapes he was sent into the Punjaub in command of an army, at which time he could have been but a mere boy, as he was already in command when at the age of fourteen he lost his father.

He was at once proclaimed successor to the throne. He had very formidable enemies in Sikunder Sur, in the Punjaub, who tried to seize Delhi; in Mirza Soliman of Budukshan, who made a sudden irruption and seized Cábul; and also in the minister of the pretender Adil, who was advancing towards Agra.

His officers advised him to retreat in face of the superior force opposing him, but he resolved to risk an encounter, and fought a battle at Panniput, a place where the fate of India has more than once hung in the balance—Akbar's grandfather, as we have already seen, having gained an important victory there. Akbar then marched on to Delhi, and entered it without opposition. He erected buildings at Allahabad, Agra, Secundra, Futtehpore, Sikri, and Delhi.

Akbar had been bred up in all the strictness of the Mohammedan faith, but either with a design to choose his own religion, or perhaps from curiosity, he made it his business to inquire into most of the various systems of divinity. He caused himself to be instructed in Christian tenets by missionaries from Portugal, and was