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The History Of Hindostan; From The Earliest Account Of Time, To The Death Of Akbar; Translated From The Persian Of Mahummud Casim Ferishta Of Delhi

Together With A Dissertation Concerning the Religion and Philosophy of the Brahmins ; With An Appendix, Containing the History of the Mogul Empire, from its Decline in the Reign of Mahummud Shaw, to the present Times ; In Two Volumes

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Section III. The History of the Reign of Ahmed Shaw.

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SECTION III.

The History of the Reign of AHMED SHAW.

A. D. 1747.

UPON the 17th of Ribbi ul Sani, in the year 1160 of the Higera, AHMED SHAW, the son of Mahummud, mounted the throne of Delhi. The first act of this reign, was the appointment of Seifdar Jung, the irresolute suba of Oud, to the vizarit. This fellow was originally a merchant of Persia, known there by the name of Abul Munfur. He travelled to India to sell his commodities; and was retained there as an accomptant, by the famous Sadit Chan, governor of Oud. He behaved so much to his master's satisfaction in that station, that he advanced him to a command in the army, and conferred upon him his daughter in marriage. His alliance with Sadit so much raised his interest at the court of Delhi, that, upon the death of his father-in-law, he was raised to the subaship of Oud. Though he was a very bad soldier, such was the smoothness of his tongue and plausibility of behavior, that he passed upon the weak as a man of considerable parts; which, together with some knowledge in the finances, paved his way to the high employ of vizier. Ghazi ul Dien continued bukshi; and no other material changes in the administration happened upon the accession of Ahmed.

The war with Abdalla, which was now carried on in Punjab by Meer Munnu with various success, ingrossed the attention of the court of Delhi; for the greatest part of the imperial army was employed in that service. Advices, in the mean time, arrived from the Decan, of the death of the famous Nizam ul muluck, in the one hundred and fourth year of his age; and that

that his second son, Nasir Jung, acceded to the government. A. D. 1747.
It may not, perhaps, be out of place here, to give a short sketch of the character of the Nizam, who for a long time made so great a figure in India.

The Nizam, though no great warrior, was reckoned a consummate politician, in a country where low craft and deceit, without any principles of honor and integrity, obtain the appellation of great parts. The dark designs of his mind lay always concealed behind an uncommon plausibility and eloquence of tongue. His passions were so much under his command, that he was never known to discover any violent emotion even upon the most critical and dangerous occasions: but this apathy did not arise from fortitude, but from deep dissimulation and design. It was with him an unalterable maxim to use stratagem rather than force; and to bring about with private treachery, what even could be accomplished with open force. He so habituated himself to villainy, that the whole current of his soul ran in that channel; and it was even doubtful whether he could for a moment divert it to honesty to bring about his most favored designs. If the Nizam shewed any tendency to virtue, it was by substituting a lesser wickedness for a greater. When fraud and circumvention could accomplish his purpose, he never used the dagger or bowl. To sum up his character in a few words; without shame, he was perfidious to all mankind; without remorse, a traitor to his king and country; and, without terror, a hypocrite in the presence of his god. *

* Nasir Jung, the Nizam's son, having rebelled, was at the head of a great army. The deceitful old man counterfeited sickness so well, and wrote such pathetic letters to Nasir, requesting to see him before he died, that the young fellow was taken in the snare, visited his father, and was imprisoned.

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A.D. 1748. When the news of Nizam ul muluck's death came to Delhi, Ghazi ul Dien, who was his eldest son, applied to the king for his subaship. But Nasir Jung, being possessed of his father's treasure, raised a great army, and marched from Aurungabad towards Delhi; not on pretence of war, but to pay his respects to the emperor. Ahmed dreaded nothing more than this ceremonious visit from a man at the head of so great a force. He judged that Nasir Jung, under that specious pretext, covered a design to extort from him a confirmation of the subadary of the Decan. He therefore durst not favor the pretensions of Ghazi to the provinces of the Decan, and consequently was reduced to the necessity of confirming Nasir Jung in his usurpation. Thus the storm was diverted, and the new Nizam returned to Aurungabad.

In the year 1161, Caim Chan Bunguish, jagierdâr of Ferochabad, having differed with Ali Mahummud, a neighbouring Zemindar, they both drew out their vassals and dependents, and fought about ten crores above Ferochabad, and Caim Chan was defeated and slain. Seifdar Jung, the vizier, being informed of these transactions, sent orders to Raja Nevil Roy, his deputy in the province of Oud, to confiscate the estate of Caim Chan. The deputy rigorously executed the vizier's orders. He seized upon Caim Chan's five sons, together with five of his adopted slaves, confined, and afterwards assassinated them at Allahabad. Ahmed Chan, another son of Caim Chan, remained still alive; and, in order to revenge the death of his brothers, raised the Patan tribe, of which he was now acknowledged chief, and marched against Nevil Roy, who had collected all his forces to oppose him.



In the beginning of the year 1162, the two armies met at a place near Lucknow, called Callinuddi. The Patans were scarcely four thousand strong; but the army of the deputy of Oud consisted of at least twenty thousand. The Patan chief, inspired by revenge, and vigorously supported by his friends, attacked in person Nevil Roy in the very center of his army, and slew his enemy with his own hand. The army of Nevil Roy, seeing him fall, immediately quitted the field. Their artillery and baggage, and soon after almost the whole province of Oud, fell into the victor's hands. A. D. 1748.

When the news of this disaster arrived at Delhi, Seifdar Jung, the vizier, talked in a very high strain, and requested of the emperor, that he might be permitted to lead an army against Ahmed Chan. The sultan consented; but the season being far spent before the army was levied, the expedition was deferred till the solstitial rains should be over. In the month of Mohirrim, 1163, the vizier, with an army of eighty thousand men, marched from Delhi; and, without distinction of age, sex, or condition, put all the Patans he could find to the sword. Ahmed Chan was not intimidated by this great force. With scarce twelve thousand men he marched from Ferochabad, and met the imperialists at Shuru Sahawir, near that city.

The day happened to be very windy, and Ahmed improved that circumstance to his own advantage. He wheeled to windward, and the dust flew in such clouds in the face of the imperial army, that they did not discover the motions of Ahmed; but ascribed the darkness which involved themselves to the effects of a whirlwind, common at that season of the year. The enemy, however, like a thunderbolt, issued from the bosom of this storm, and at once struck the Moguls with terror and dismay.



A. D. 1749. The Patans made such good use of their swords, that they soon covered the field with dead; and the cowardly Seifdar Jung, without making one effort, was the first of his army who fled. The Jates and Rohillas, though thus shamefully deserted by their general, made head against Ahmed Chan, and found means to carry off the greatest part of the artillery, which consisted of twelve hundred pieces of various bores. But neither of those tribes returned the guns to the king: they carried them to their own forts, to strengthen themselves against his authority.

This overthrow was a dreadful stroke to the tottering empire. The greatest part of the province of Oud was lost; the Jates, a numerous tribe of Hindoos, who possessed a large territory near Agra; and the Rohillas, a Patan nation, who inhabited the greatest part of the country between Delhi and Lucknow, seeing the whole imperial force baffled by a petty chief, began to throw off their allegiance. Seifdar Jung, in the mean time, arrived with a small part of his army at Delhi; and Ghazi Chan advised the king to put him to death for the disgrace which he had drawn upon his arms. This punishment would not have been too severe for the vizier's bad behaviour: but that minister had strengthened his interest by a coalition with Juneid Chan, the chief eunuch.

The queen-mother, Begum Kudfia, being a woman of gallantry, had, for want of a better lover, fixed her affection upon the chief eunuch. She had the address to direct the weak monarch in every thing, and to keep him in leading-strings upon the throne. Juneid Chan, though in no public employ, by means of Kudfia's favor, held the helm of government; and, by his influence, not only saved the vizier's life, but continued him in his office.

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In the course of the same year, a treaty was concluded with the Mahrattors, who were spreading their devastations over the southern provinces. The Chout was stipulated to be regularly paid by the empire to those troublesome barbarians. Ahmed Shaw ordered an army to be levied, to recover the province of Oud; and it was soon compleated by the accession of forty thousand Mahrattors, who enlisted themselves in the imperial service. But instead of putting himself at the head of his forces, the weak emperor, by the advice of his mother and her gallant, gave the command of it to his vizier, that he might have an opportunity to retrieve his lost honour.

Raja Sourage Mull, prince of the Jates, by the acquisition of the Mahrattors to the imperial army, judged it prudent once more to join the vizier with all his forces; so that the minister's army now consisted of no less than one hundred thousand men. Seifdar Jung marched from Delhi, in the year 1164, against Ahmed Chan: but the Raja of the Jates, instead of aiding him, found means to frustrate all his designs. Having spent a whole campaign without coming to action, he patched up a very dishonorable peace, and returned to Delhi with the Mahrattor mercenaries at his heels, mutinous for want of their pay.

The demand of the Mahrattors amounted to fifty lacks of roupees, which the government was in no condition to pay: and the sum gradually increased with the delay. Ghazi ul Dien, who had been for some time soliciting for a royal commission for the subaship of the Decan, promised to pay off the Mahrattor debt, upon condition he should receive from the emperor that appointment. Ahmed Shaw was glad upon any terms to get rid of those clamorous and dangerous mercenaries, and accordingly issued out the imperial sunnuds to Ghazi. That Omrah having

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satisfied



A. D. 1751, satisfied the Mahrattors in their demands upon Ahmed, engaged them immediately in his own service; and having added to them a great army of other troops, obtained his own office of buckshi for his son Ghazi, a youth of fifteen years of age, and marched towards the Decan.

The elder Ghazi's brother, Nasir Jung, suba of the Decan, and his son Muziffer, who had succeeded him in the government, were both dead. Sillabut Jung, the third son of the old Nizam, now sat upon the Musnud, which Ghazi claimed by the right of primogeniture. In the month of Zehidge, 1165, he, with an army of one hundred and fifty thousand men, arrived in the environs of Aurungabad. The forces of his brother, Sillabut Jung, the reigning suba, were somewhat inferior in number, but they were strengthened by a body of French mercenaries, which, in all probability, would insure to him the victory. Sillabut Jung, however, was afraid of the issue of a general battle; and, after some slight skirmishes, he found means to prevail with his uncle's wife to take off his competitor with poison. Thus did the perfidious Sillabut Jung secure to himself the empire of the Decan, without a rival.

But to return to the transactions of the court of Delhi: Seifdar Jung, the vizier, finding that his own influence declined, and that Juneid Chan, the favorite eunuch, carried all before him, invited him to an entertainment, and, contrary to the laws of hospitality, and altogether forgetful that he owed to Juneid his own life and fortune, assassinated him by the hands of Ihmaiel Chan, one of his adopted slaves. Ahmed Shaw, being informed of this presumptuous villainy, flew into a violent rage, degraded Seifdar Jung from the vizarit, and banished him the court. This was the effect of a fit of passion; for the unfortunate king was
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in no condition, in fact, to exert so far his authority. The perfidious vizier, finding that he had nothing to hope from submission, broke out into open rebellion. He soon after, by the assistance of the Jates, advanced to Delhi, and besieged Ahmed Shaw and young Ghazi, the buckshi, in that city. A.D. 1751.

The son of Kimmir ul Dien, who, in the reign of Mahummud, held so long the vizarit, was raised, under the title of Chan Chanan, to the vacant employ of Seifdar Jung, and began to shew some abilities in his new office. Young Ghazi, who was a youth of extraordinary parts, defended the city with great resolution for three months. The rebels were at last so dispirited, that Ghazi ventured to attack them in the field, and gained a complete victory. Seifdar Jung fled towards his former subaship of Oud, and left his allies, the Jates, under Raja Sourage Mull, to extricate themselves from the perilous situation to which he had brought them.

The rebellion of Seifdar happened in the year 1166. The Jates being deserted by him, were in no condition to keep the field against Ghazi. They fled before the imperial army under Akebut Chan, to their own territories near Agra. That general invested the strong fortress of Billemgur, which he took by capitulation; but so little did he regard his plighted faith to the garrison, that he put them all to the sword. The Jates, in the mean time, came before the imperial army; but diffident of their own strength in the field, they separated their forces, and shut themselves up in their forts. The imperial general also divided his army into detachments, and laid at once siege to the two strong forts of Dieg and Combere, lying in the territory between Agra and Delhi.

Ghazi



A. D. 1752. Ghazi ul Dien, in the mean time, to carry on more effectually the war against the Jates, obtained permission from the emperor, to call in forty thousand Mahrattors, under their two chiefs, Jeiapa Malhar Raw, and Raganut Raw. By this acquisition of strength, the imperialists were enabled to carry on the sieges with vigor. At Delhi, young Ghazi and the new vizier contended for the command of the army. This contest was afterwards fatal in its consequences; but for the present Ghazi ul Dien prevailed. He marched with a reinforcement from Delhi; and, upon his arrival in the country of the Jates, took the command of the imperial army.

The sieges continued two months after the arrival of Ghazi, and the garrisons were reduced to the last extremities. The imperialists, in the mean time, had expended all their ammunition; and Ghazi was, upon that account, obliged to dispatch Akebut Mahmood to Delhi, with a good force, to bring him the necessary stores. The vizier seeing that the strong holds of the Jates must soon fall into the hands of Ghazi, should he be supplied with ammunition, and being extremely jealous of any thing that might throw honor upon his rival, poisoned the mind of the weak king against his buckshi, by means of forged letters and villainous insinuations, that the young Omrah aspired to the throne. The enterprising genius, and great abilities of Ghazi, gave some color to suspicions of that kind; and the unfortunate Ahmed, instead of promoting his own cause against the Jates, took every measure to prevent the success of Ghazi.

The king accordingly began to levy forces in Delhi, and wrote a letter to Raja Sourage Mull, the chief of the Jates, to make an obstinate defence, and that he himself would soon relieve him: that, under pretence of joining the army under Ghazi, he would
attack



attack that general in the rear, and at the same time display a signal to the Raja, to sally from the fort of Combere.---Thus the king, as if infatuated by his evil genius, planned his own ruin. His letter fell into the hands of Ghazi, whose friends at court had informed him of the intrigues of the vizier. Struck with the king's ingratitude, and urged on by self-defence, he immediately resolved upon open hostility. He raised the sieges, and crossed the Jumna, to oppose Ahmed Shaw and his vizier, who were marching down between the rivers.

A. D. 1752.

The king, hearing of Ghazi's approach, halted at Secundra, and endeavoured, by fair promises, to bring back that Omrah to his duty. Ghazi, in answer to the king's message, returned to him his own letter to Raja Sourage Mull. He wrote him, at the same time, that "he could place no confidence in a man, who plotted against his life, for no crime; if to serve the state was not one. What mercy," continued Ghazi, "can I expect from Ahmed, in the days of rebellion, when he treated me as a traitor, in the days of loyalty and friendship? A prince, that is weak enough to listen to the base insinuations of every sycophant, is unworthy to rule over brave men; who, by the laws of God and nature, are justified to use the power which providence has placed in their hands, to protect themselves from injustice."

The king perceived, by the strain of this letter, that Ghazi was resolved to push him to the last extremity. He, however, durst not engage him in the field. He made the best of his way to Delhi, and was so closely pursued by Ghazi, that that Omrah possessed himself of one of the gates; upon which Ahmed Shaw and the vizier shut themselves up, with a small party, in the citadel. Ghazi immediately invested the place; and the

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king.



A. D. 1753. king, after a faint resistance, surrendered himself. Ghazi, after reproaching him for his intentions against his life, committed him and the vizier to the charge of Akebut Mahmood. The unfortunate sultan was deprived of sight, the next day, by the means of an hot iron. It is said, by some, that this was done by Akebut Mahmood, without orders, to shew his zeal for the service of his patron; but, from the general character of Ghazi, we have no reason to doubt his being concerned in this crime.

Thus ended the reign of the unfortunate Ahmed Shaw: a prince, who, in his first exploits, appeared with some lustre. When he mounted the throne, as if action degraded royalty, he altogether gave himself up to indolence. To save the trouble of thinking, he became the dupe of every specious flatterer, and at last fell the unlamented victim of his own folly. He possessed all the clemency of the house of Timur; but that virtue was now, in some measure, a vice, in a country so corrupt, and in an age so degenerate. Though Ahmed was not defective in personal courage, he may truly be said to be a coward in mind: dangers appeared formidable to him, through a troubled imagination, which, upon trial, he had fortitude to surmount.---He sat upon the throne of Delhi seven lunar years and one month; and was deposed in the month of Jemmad ul awil, in the 1167 of the Higera.

The power and extent of the empire were very much diminished in the reign of Ahmed Shaw. All the provinces, except those between the frontiers of the Jates, a few miles to the east of Delhi, and Lahore to the west, were, in fact, dismembered from the government of the house of Timur, though they paid a nominal allegiance. The rich kingdom of Guzerat was divided between the Mahrattors and a Patan tribe, called Babbé; the

Decan



Decan was usurped by the Nizam ul muluck's family; Bengal, A. D. 1753. Behar, and Orissa, by Aliverdi Chan, and his successors; Oud, by Seifdar Jung; Doab, by Ahmed Chan Bunguish; Allahabad, by Mahummud Kuli; and the countries round Agra, by Raja Sourage Mull, the chief of the Jates.---Budaon, and all the provinces to the north of Delhi, were in the hands of Mahummud Ali, Sadulla Chan, and other chiefs of the Rohilla tribe of Patans. A number of petty Rajas started up into independent princes in Malava: Bucht Singh seized upon the extensive territory of Marwar, and Madoo Singh reigned in the provinces round Joinagur and Amere.

The gallant Meer Munnu still opposed the torrent of invasion from the north. He maintained the war with success, against Abdalla, for the provinces of Moultan and Punjab, and, for a short space of time, supported the declining empire. Every petty chief, in the mean time, by counterfeited grants from Delhi, laid claim to jagiers and to districts: the country was torn to pieces by civil wars, and groaned under every species of domestic confusion. Villainy was practised in every form; all law and religion were trodden under foot; the bands of private friendships and connections, as well as of society and government, were broken; and every individual, as if amidst a forest of wild beasts, could rely upon nothing but the strength of his own arm.

