

## Wildlife and Deer Hunt under Akbar and Jahangir

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Archaeologist started working on animal bones and through this they tried to know about habitats, ecology and climatic condition of early India.<sup>1</sup> However, we do not have any archaeologists who worked on medieval animal's bones or fossils. The Mughal sources inform us about the habitats and distribution of wild animals in Mughal Empire. According to archaeologists the faunal changes during Pleistocene consisted of the extinction and migration of animals from one place to another as per climate change. So, these activities too recorded in Persian sources of the Mughal period.<sup>2</sup>

Deer live in a variety of biomes, ranging from tundra to the tropical rainforest. While often associated with forests, many deer are ecotone species that live in transitional areas between forests and thickets (for cover) and prairie and savanna (open space). The majority of large deer species inhabit temperate mixed deciduous forest, mountain mixed coniferous forest, tropical seasonal/dry forest, and savanna habitats around the world. Clearing open areas within forests to some extent may actually benefit deer populations by exposing types of grasses, weeds, and herbs to grow that deer like to eat. Additionally, access to adjacent croplands may also benefit deer. However, adequate forest or brush cover must still be provided for populations to grow and thrive.

The evolution of deer took about 30 million years. There are not many prominent fossils to trace this evolution, but only fragments of skeletons and antlers that might be easily confused with false antlers species. Biologist Valerius Geist suggests evolution to have taken place in stages. The earliest stage featured a poorly defined omnivore of the Palaeogene that gave rise to deer-like species that lacked antlers but bore horns, such as *Protoceras*, towards the Neogene. The *Protoceras* was 1 m (3.3 feet) tall, with small horns. *Syndyceras* also shared similar features common with the deer, horse, giraffe, and antelope. Fossils dated approximately 35 million years ago, which were found in North America, show it had bony skull outgrowths that resembled non-deciduous antlers.<sup>3</sup>

Deer are for the most part inhabitants of forests or grass jungles. They are never found in desert. In the ancient time deer are found over the greater part of Europe and Asia, but unknown in Africa south of the Sahara. Variation in size in relation to different geographical areas in which they live is seen in some deer.<sup>4</sup>

Babur in his memoir recorded about the uniqueness of deer which he calls *kiyik* or *aahu*<sup>5</sup> (deer). He writes, its back is black, and white belly. And its horn longer than the hunas but more crooked. In Hindustan peoples call it *kalaharan*, which may have been originally pronounced as *kala-hiran* (black-buck). The doe is

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<sup>1</sup> B.P. Sahu, *From Hunters to Breeders: Faunal Background of Early India*, Anamika Prakashan, Delhi, 1988

<sup>2</sup> Babur, *Baburnama or Memoirs of Babur*, 2 Vols. Bound in 1, transl. from the original Turkish Text, Annette Susannah Beveridge, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 2012; Abd al Sattar ibn-i-Qasim Lahori, *Majalis-i-Jahangiri*, ed., and Annotated by Arif Naushahi & Moeen Nizami, Miras-i-Maktab, Tehran, 2006; Jahangir, *Jahangir-nama or Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, (ed.), Syed Ahmad, Sir Syed Academy, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 2007; Amin Qazwini, *Padshahnama*, transcript of MS of Rampur Raza Library, Rampur, in Centre of Advanced Study in History, Nos. 19-21, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh; Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, (ed.), Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, 3 Vols. Bound in 1, Sir Syed Academy, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 2005; Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Padshahnama*, 2 Vols. (ed.), Kabir Aldin Ahmad and Abdur Rahim, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1866-72; Enayatullah Khan, "The Ecology of Mughal India", Ph. D Thesis submitted in Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Vivek Menon, *Indian Mammals*, Hachette Book Publishing India Pvt. Ltd, Gurgaon, 2014, p. 76

<sup>4</sup> S. H. Prater, *The Book of Indian Animals*, The Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay, 1948, p. 237

<sup>5</sup> In *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, the word "aahu" is used for deer and Babur called it *Kiyik*.

light coloured.<sup>6</sup> It seems that Babur talks about black-buck. He also informs us that there is smaller *kiyik* (deer) in the hill-skirts of Hindustan.<sup>7</sup>

Abul Fazl in his *Ain* widely discussed regarding the deer fights, its method, food and categories. Akbar much pays attention to his animal, and has succeeded in training this stubborn and timid creature. He in his establishment has 12,000 deer and they are divided in different classes. He also prepared a proper regulation for different classes. Out of 12,000 deer, 101 belong to *khasa* category, each *khasa* has a name and a keeper is placed over every ten.<sup>8</sup>

Abul Fazl informs us that the Mughal Emperor Akbar so much concern regarding the foods of animals. The *Ain*-43, 51, 62, 67, and 70 deals with food allotted to elephants, horses, camels, mules, cows, buffaloes, *cheetahs*, deer and hawks.<sup>9</sup> The Emperor Akbar has made an excellent rule, known as *Pagosht*<sup>10</sup> which protect the animals from dishonest guards.<sup>11</sup> The main objective of this regulation was to determine the amount of fines which Akbar could inflict on the officers in charge of the animals belonging to the court, according to the *Ain*-43, 52, 62, 67, and 70, animals keepers was responsible to provide the respective fixed amount of foods for individual animals. It was duty of *Darogha* (store-keepers) to record the daily consumption and description of animals in *roznamchas* (daily records books). However, these *roznamchas* were produced to the special officers when they are on inspection and if the officers found any types of mistake or lackness, animals guards were charged by *pagosht*.<sup>12</sup>

The hunt of the deer was conducted by different methods, which included the *qamargah*, hunting with cheetah, employing a tamed buck to hunt wild animal of the same species, and enticing or shooting it with arrows in torch light.<sup>13</sup> Jahangir states that once he killed twenty antelopes with the arrow. Parwez, Khurram, Khan Jahan and other servants also took part in it. The *shikar* of the deer was most interesting and amusing.<sup>14</sup>

Cheetahs were trained to hunt the deer. They adopted all sorts of tricks to entice their victim. They generally went against the wind, smelling the scent of the prey. In a day one cheetah would sometimes catch twelve deer. On other occasions the cheetah were released and the prey was sighted to them. They took cover behind bushes and other natural obstacles until they came within the range of the deer. Akbar invented another method called Chatr mandal. He hunted the deer by means of cheetahs in the *qamargah* manner. A large number of deer were first encircled and then a large number of leopards were let loose from many directions. Thus in short large number of deer was caught.<sup>15</sup> The Mughals also shot deer with gun. Jahangir by the 50<sup>th</sup> year of his age had killed about 215 red deer with his gun.<sup>16</sup>

Besides the method enumerated above, many other modes of hunting deer may be traced in the annals of the period, for instance, *ghantah*, *hirah*, *thangi*, *bawkarah*, *dadawan* and *ijarah*.<sup>17</sup>

In 1573-74, he ordered the construction of a palace for travellers from Agra to Ajmer in continuous gap. Abdul Qadir informs us that so many hundreds of thousands of deer's horns, which the emperor had killed during the course of his life, were placed on these pillars as memorials.<sup>18</sup> In 1578-79, he went for a *qamargah* hunt in the neighbourhood of Nandanal. During the reign of Akbar in Tirhut in the *suba* of Bihar, it is noticed that in the rainy season gazelle, deer and tiger frequented together the cultivated spots and were hunted by the inhabitants.<sup>19</sup>

Jahangir was the first Mughal ruler to inherit an empire worthy of the name. The *Jahangir-nama* or *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* reveal him as a very humane autocrat, kind and endlessly curious regarding nature, for

<sup>6</sup> Babur, *Baburnama*, p. 491

<sup>7</sup> Babur, *Babarnama*, p. 491

<sup>8</sup> Abul Fazl in *Ain*-84 gives detail information of the deer-fight, categories, diet and about deer keeper.

<sup>9</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol. I, pp. 91, 96, 109, and 115.

<sup>10</sup> *Pagosht* means a quarter of flesh.

<sup>11</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol. I, p. 146

<sup>12</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol. I, p. 146; Enayatullah Khan, Ph. D Thesis "The Ecology of Mughal India", submitted in Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, AMU, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Browne, *Indian Paintings under the Mughals*, Oxford, 1924, Plate XXXVI

<sup>14</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 129

<sup>15</sup> Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Vol., I, p. 343, Vol., II, p. 371, trans., Vol., I, 630, Vol., II, 539. *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol., I, p. 208, trans., p. 288; *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, Vol., II, p. 40; Bernier, pp. 376-77

<sup>16</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, Vol., I, p. 369.

<sup>17</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, transl., Vol. I, p. 292

<sup>18</sup> Abdul Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab- ut Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 173. Abdul Qadir Badauni, was the critic of Akbar so his information regarding the so many hundreds of thousands of stag's horns may exaggerated.

<sup>19</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol. II, p. 332

example, once the imperial elephants shivering at their winter baths, he ordered that their water be warmed, and he also constructed a *minar* in the memory of his favourite *aahu* (deer) commonly known as *hiran minar*.<sup>20</sup>

The identity of Red Deer is uncertain. According to Jahangir they were plentiful in the hills of Rohtas and were found nowhere else in Hindustan except at Girjhak and Nandanah. The Emperor writes, I ordered them to catch and keep some of them alive in order that possibly some of them might reach Hindustan for breeding purposes.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately no further records are available regarding this proposed introduction of deer.<sup>22</sup>

In 1607, Jahangir's camp halted at Jahangirpur, which was one of Jahangir's fixed hunting places. At Jahangirpur he ordered the construction of a *minar* at the head of the grave of an antelope called *mansaraj* which was without equal in fights with the tame antelope and in hunting wild one.<sup>23</sup> The *minar* is popularly known as '*hiran minar*'. A stone was also carved by Mulla Muhammad Husain of Kashmir<sup>24</sup>, reading as "In this enchanting place an antelope came into the world, holding (Jahangiri) net of the God-know as ruler Nuruddin Jahangir Padshah. In the space of one month, having overcome his desert fierceness, he became the head of the special antelope".<sup>25</sup> In the year 1607, Jahangir informs us that between the garden of Wafa and Nimlah, a hunt took place, and nearly forty red antelope (*aahu-e shurkh*) were killed. And a female *cheetah*<sup>26</sup> (*yuz*) fell into our hands in this hunt. The *zamindars* of that place, Yaghmanis, Shali and Afghani, came and said that they did not remember nor had heard from their forefathers that a cheetah (*yuz*) had been seen in that region for nearly 120 years.<sup>27</sup> In the same year Jahangir ordered to Izzat Khan, the governor of Jalalabad for preparation of hunting ground at Arzina plain in *qamargah* (ring-hunting ground) manner. In this *qamargah* hunt about 300 animals were captured in which 95 white antelope (*aahu-e safida*) included.<sup>28</sup> In 1607 Jahangir ordered Zafar Khan to go to Baba Hasan Abdal for the preparation of hunting sports. Zafar Khan made a *shakhband* (a tying together of horns or branches) in which twenty seven red-deer (*aahu-e surkh*) and 68 white ones (*aahu-e safida*) were collected. Jahangir himself killed 29 antelopes (*aahu*) by arrows, and Parwiz and Khurram too killed many animals by arrows.<sup>29</sup> Again in the same year, Zafar Khan arranged a *qamargah* at Rawalpindi where Jahangir struck a red deer (*aahu-e shurkh*) at a long distance by arrows. He also killed thirty-four red deer and 35 black-tailed antelope (*qara-buyrugh*), which is in Hindi language, they called *chikara* and two pigs (*khok*) were killed.<sup>30</sup> After a few days another *qamargah* had been arranged within three *kos* of the fort of Rohtas by the efforts of Hilal Khan. Generally, during Mughal era women would watch hunting episodes from behind screens of curtains. Jahangir writes, "I had taken with me to this hunt those who were screened by the curtains of honour (the member of the *zanamah*)."<sup>31</sup> In this hunt two hundred red and white antelope were killed.<sup>32</sup> Another hunt again took place in the neighbourhood of Rohtas. In this hunt Jahangir's sister and other ladies also participated and about hundred red-deer (*aahu-e shurkh*) were killed.<sup>33</sup>

In 1607 at Jahangirpur, with the view of rare quality of antelope, Jahangir ordered that no person should hunt the deer of this plain, and that their flesh should be sacred to Hindus and Muslims as the flesh of cows and pigs.<sup>34</sup> He further informs us that in the hill of Rohtas red-deer were found. There is no place in the whole of Hindustan, where red-deer (*aahu-e shurkh*) was found, but with the exception of Girjhak and Nandanah. He ordered his *qarawal* to catch and keep some red-deer, alive, for the purpose of breeding in Hindustan.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 44; Stuart Carry Welch, *Imperial Mughal Painting*, p. 23; Enayatullah Khan, "The Ecology of Mughal India" Ph. D submitted in CAS, Department of History, AMU, Aligarh, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, Vol. I, p. 129

<sup>22</sup> Salim Alim, 'The Mughal Emperors of India as Naturalists and Sportsmen', *Journal of Bombay Natural History Society*, Vol. XXXII, p. 41

<sup>23</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 44.

<sup>24</sup> Chief of the elegant writers of the time.

<sup>25</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 44.; H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. VI, p. 302

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Rogers and H. Beveridge translated it as Panther, but in the text the word cheetah is recorded. See Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 60

<sup>27</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>28</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 60.

<sup>29</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 61.

<sup>30</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 61.

<sup>31</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 61.

<sup>32</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 61.

<sup>33</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>34</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 44

<sup>35</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, pp. 61-62

In 1609, near the *pargana* of Bari, Jahangir killed two male and three female antelopes. And next day he killed a female *nilgaw* and a black antelope (*aahu-e siah*) with a gun.<sup>36</sup>

In 1610, after celebrating *nauroz* near Agra, Jahangir hunted two male and a female tigers (*madah sher*). And he also rewarded the *ahadis* who had shown bravery and gone in to the tigers.<sup>37</sup> In the same year, he ordered the clerks of the hunting department to write down (a list of) all the animals that had been killed from the time of his leaving and until he (Jahangir) re-entered the city. The clerks calculated that during the period Jahangir was involved total 56 days in hunting and 1,362 animals, quadrupeds (animals having four legs), and birds had been killed, in which 51 black buck (*aahu-e siyah*) and antelope (*aahu*).<sup>38</sup>

In the same year the emperor stayed at Rupbas. It was Jahangir's fixed hunting-place and there was an order that no one could hunt in the neighbourhood of Rupbas. There, a great number of deer had come together in the desert area. Jahangir hunted for two or three days. Once again in 1611, Emperor Jahangir asked his servant to count the animals which were hunted in his 5th year reign from 31<sup>st</sup> November, to the 18<sup>th</sup> March. It was calculated that in three month and twenty days 1 deer (*aahu*), 68 black buck (*aahu-e siyah*), 31 does (*aahu-e madah*), 8 *kurara* deer, were killed.<sup>39</sup> In the same year, Jahangir reached the village of Samonagar, which was his permanent hunting place; he hunted twenty-two deer of which 16 were killed by him and others by Khurram.<sup>40</sup> In the desert plains and caught cheetahs and antelopes (*aahu*).<sup>41</sup>

In 1612, Raja of Kumaon sent rare things of the hills such as yaks (*qatas*), and skin of antelopes.<sup>42</sup> In 1612, Jahangir reached Dahr Garden near Agra before the *nauroz* festival. In the neighbourhood of Agra he hunted for about two months and twenty days during which he killed 223 deer.<sup>43</sup>

In 1613, Jahangir halted at Samonagar which was his favourite hunting-place. He killed 47 male and female antelopes within a few days.<sup>44</sup> In the same year Jahangir engaged himself for eleven days hunting at Rupbas and hunted 158 male and female antelopes.<sup>45</sup>

In 1613, Jahangir writes, Antelope had four horns, two of which were opposite the extremities of its eyes, and two finger breadths towards nape of the neck. The male had four horns and the female none. The identity of Red Deer is uncertain. According to Jahangir they were plentiful in the hills of Rohtas and were found nowhere else in Hindustan except at Girjhak and Nandaneh. The Emperor writes, I ordered them to catch and keep some of them alive in order that possibly some of them might reach Hindustan for breeding purposes.<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately no further records are available regarding this proposed introduction of deer.<sup>47</sup> He also discovered that this kind of antelope has no gall-bladder when Jahangir checked, it had a gall bladder.<sup>48</sup>

Jahangir while staying at Ajmer for about four months the emperor had killed 6 spotted deer (*chital*), 60 deer.<sup>49</sup> In 1617-18, Jahangir decided to count all the animals which were killed by him since the age of 11 years (1585) to the year of 1617. Thus, it was found that in 37 years the emperor had killed 28,532, of these, 17,167 animals he killed with his gun in which 3,203 quadruped; 35 *mhaka* (a species of antelope); 1670 male and female antelope; *chikara*, *chital*, and red deer.<sup>50</sup>

Jahangir, according to his vow, could not kill deer with his gun. He decided to capture them alive. He captured 700 of them and left them loose on the polo ground at Fathpur. The total number of deer thus captured by the retinue in the same hunt was about 1,500.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 78

<sup>37</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 80.

<sup>38</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 80

<sup>39</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 92.

<sup>40</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 98.

<sup>41</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 92; Abd al Sattar Ibn-i Qasim Lahori, *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, p. 180

<sup>42</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 106.

<sup>43</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 114.

<sup>44</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 121.

<sup>45</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 123.

<sup>46</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, Vol. I, p. 129

<sup>47</sup> Salim Alim, 'The Mughal Emperors of India as Naturalists and Sportsmen', *Journal of Bombay Natural History Society*, Vol. XXXII, p. 41

<sup>48</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 174

<sup>49</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 182.

<sup>50</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, pp. 182-83; H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. VI, p. 350

<sup>51</sup> *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, Vol., II, pp. 83-85; Mutamid Khan, *Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri*, (ed.), Maulvi Abdul Hai and Maulvi Ahmad Ali, The Asiatic Society of Bengal, College Press, Calcutta, 1865. p. 59

The Mughal emperors were very fond of hunt and to build architectural building for the making of permanent imprint in society. Akbar completed similar projects, including the distinctive elephant-tusk studded *hiran minar* at Ftahpur Sikri. Jahangir built a hunting complex and raised a *minar* at Sheikhpura in memory of a favourite captive deer.<sup>52</sup> Skins of the deer were distributed among the poor as part of present money.<sup>53</sup> Even today more than 500 species of mammals are found within Indian region. However, deer were widely distributed in almost all region of India. But, now it disappeared in most of the part of India. It is due to changes in natural habitats of animals and men's intervention in natural environment of the areas, in the form of extending agricultural lands or different more reasons. In the eastern Himalayan foothills, the deer tribe includes the *barasinga*, the sambar, the chital or spotted deer and the barking deer. In the peninsular India all the deer species of the Himalayan foothills except hog-deer are also found.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ebba Koch, 'The Copies of the Qutb Minar', *Iran*, No. 29, 1991, p. 95 and 98 as cited in Julie E. Hughes, pp. 15-16.

<sup>53</sup> *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol., I. p. 289.

<sup>54</sup> K.P. Sagreiya, *Forest and Forestry*, National Book Trust of India, New Delhi, 1994, p. 101