

THE BABURNAMA

MEMOIRS OF BABUR,
PRINCE AND EMPEROR

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Introduction by Salman Rushdie



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to Apaq Begim, I had a meeting with her. After that I knelt to Khadija Begim and did the same. We stayed for a while and, after some recitation from the Koran, went to the south madrasa, where Khadija Begim's tent had been set up. Khadija Begim's food was served. After dining I went to Payanda Sultan Begim's tent and stayed that night with her.

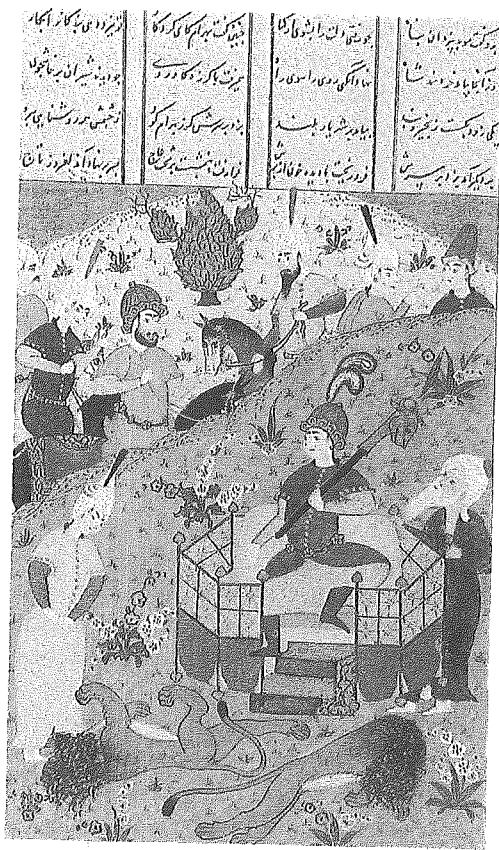
A campsite was first assigned to me in the Bagh-i-Naw, where I came at dawn. I spent one night there, but since I found it unsuitable I was assigned Ali-Sher Beg's quarters, where I remained until I left Herat. Every two or three days I went to the Bagh-i-Jahanara¹⁶⁰ and paid court to Badi'uzzaman Mirza.

A PARTY AT MUZAFFAR MIRZA'S

Several days later Muzaffar Mirza sent me an invitation to his quarters in the Bagh-i-Safed.¹⁶¹ Khadija Begim was there too. Jahangir Mirza went along with me. After dinner was served in Khadija Begim's presence, Muzaffar Mirza took us to an edifice built by Babur Mirza called the Tarabkhana,¹⁶² where a drinking party was held. The Tarabkhana was situated in the middle of a small garden. It was a modest building of two stories and rather pleasant. The upper level had been elaborately constructed. Each of the four corners had an alcove, but otherwise the space in the middle and between the alcoves was like one room. [189] Between the alcoves were things like *shabnishins* (see illus. p. 227). Every side of the room was painted; the work had been commissioned by Sultan-Abusa'id Mirza to depict his battles and encounters.

On the shahnishin on the north side two cushions were facing each other, with their sides toward the north. Muzaffar Mirza and I sat down on one of those; Sultan-Mas'ud Mirza and Jahangir Mirza sat on the other. Since we were guests in Muzaffar Mirza's quarters, he had me seated in a place of greater honor. The pleasure cups were filled and the cupbearers began to circulate and offer them to the guests, who started gulping down the clear wine as though it was the water of life. The party grew heated as the wine went to people's heads.

They thought they could make me drink and draw me into the circle. Although at that time I had not committed the sin of drinking to tipsiness, had not experienced drunkenness, and did not know the delight and pleasure of being drunk as it should be known, not only was



Babram Gur Wins the Crown, from a *Shabnama* of Firdawsi, copied by Na'imuddin Ahmad b. Mun'imuddin Muhammad al-Awhadi al-Husayni, Iran (Shiraz), January 1518, fol. 502a. Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; Purchase—Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler, S1986.58.1. A *shabnishin*, a dais or bench, often with three raised sides, is shown.

I inclined to have a drink of wine but my heart was also urging me to cross that valley. In my childhood I had no desire for wine, for I was unaware of the enjoyment of it. Occasionally my father had offered me some, but I had made excuses. [189b] After my father's death I was abstinent and followed piously in Khwaja Qazi's blessed footsteps. How

could I, who avoided suspect food, have committed the sin of drinking wine? Later, with the desires of young manhood and the promptings of the carnal soul, when I had an inclination for wine, nobody offered—no one even knew that I was interested. So, although I was willing, it was difficult to do all by oneself. It crossed my mind that since they were making such proposals, and here we had come to a fabulous city like Herat, where all the implements of pleasure and revelry were ready and present, and all the devices of entertainment and enjoyment were close at hand, if I didn't drink now, when would I? Deliberating thus with myself, I resolved to make the leap. It then occurred to me, however, that since I had not accepted a drink from Badi'uzzaman Mirza, who was the elder brother, if I took a drink in his younger brother's house, it might constitute an affront. I voiced my hesitation. Agreeing that my excuse was reasonable, they did not proffer any wine at this gathering. It was decided that Badi'uzzaman Mirza and Muzaffar Mirza should assemble in one place and that I should drink at the invitation of both mirzas together.

The entertainers at this party [190] were Hafiz Hajji, Jalaluddin Mahmud the flutist, and Ghulam Shadi's brother Shadi Bachcha, who played the harp. Hafiz Hajji, like all Heratis, recited beautifully—low, delicately, and evenly. Jahangir Mirza had one of his singers along, a Samarkandi named Mir Jan. He sang in high voice, coarsely and unevenly. In the heat of pleasure Jahangir Mirza ordered him to sing, and it was terrible. Khurasanis all lead a life of elegance. One of them blocked up his ears at this fellow's singing while another made a face. But because Jahangir was a prince, no one could tell him to stop.

Late in the evening we left the Tarabkhana and went to Muzaffar Mirza's newly established winter quarters. There Yusuf Ali Kükäldash, high as a kite, got up and danced, which he did well and with much elegance. In those quarters the conviviality really waxed warm. Muzaffar Mirza gave me a sword belt, a lambskin jacket, and a gray thoroughbred horse. Janak recited in Turkish. Muzaffar Mirza's slaves Kätä Mah and Kichik Mah were also there, and in the midst of the drunkenness they did some obscene impertinences. The party went on quite animated until late, when the gathering broke up. That night I stayed over.

When Qasim Beg heard that the mirzas were going to offer me wine, he sent somebody to Zu'n-Nun Beg, who gave the mirzas some

pretty strong admonition. Thereafter all suggestions of wine ceased. [190b]

A PARTY AT BADI'UZZAMAN MIRZA'S

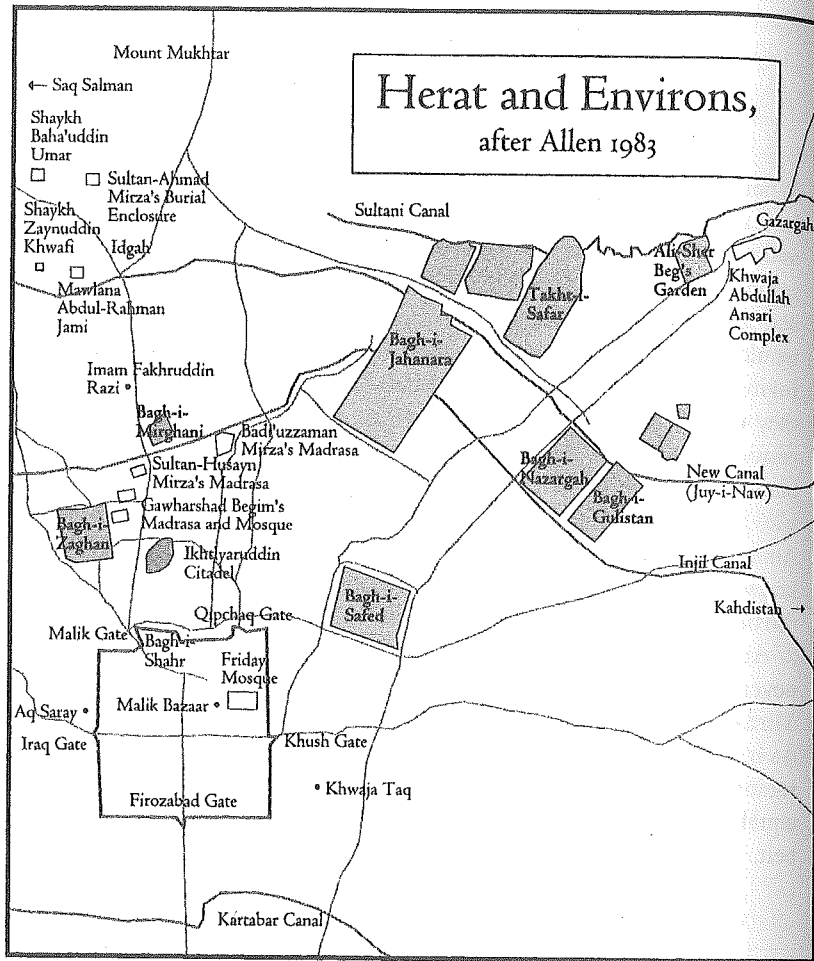
When Badi'uzzaman Mirza heard of Muzaffar Mirza's entertainment, he arranged an assembly in the Bagh-i-Jahanara in the Muqawwakhana and sent me an invitation. Some of our *ichkis* and warriors were also summoned. They could not drink in my presence out of respect for me, and when they did drink, maybe once every thirty to forty days, they would do it with the door bolted fast and with a hundred trepidations. Invited, they went, but it was difficult for them to drink. Sometimes they tried to distract me, and sometimes they held up their hands to conceal what they were doing, although all those in attendance had blanket permission from me because the party was given by someone who was like my father or elder brother. They brought in willows. Among the branches—whether they were real or artificial I don't know—were hung strips of gilded leather cut very thin the length of the branches. They looked fantastic.¹⁶³

At this gathering they placed a roast goose before me. Since I had never carved or disjointed a fowl, I did not touch it. Badi'uzzaman Mirza asked, "Do you not care for it?" I said that I did not know how to do it. Immediately Badi'uzzaman Mirza carved and disjointed it and set it before me. [191] In such things Badi'uzzaman Mirza was without equal. At the end of the entertainment he gave me a jewel-studded belt, a dagger, a *charqah*,¹⁶⁴ and a thoroughbred horse.

SIGHTSEEING IN HERAT

On each of the twenty days I was in Herat I went out on horseback to tour the places I had not seen. My guide on these excursions was Yusuf Ali Kükältash. At every place we stopped, he had me served something to eat. During these twenty days, with the exception of Sultan-Husayn Mirza's *khanaqah*, there was no place we did not see.

I saw Gazargah, Ali-Sher Beg's garden, Juwaz-i-Kaghidh, Takht-i-Asitana, Puligah, Kahdistan, the Bagh-i-Nazargah,¹⁶⁵ Ni'matabad, the Gazargah Avenue, Sultan-Ahmad Mirza's burial enclosure, the Takht-i-Safar, the Takht-i-Nawa'i, the Takht-i-Barkir, Takht-i-Hajji Beg,



Shaykh Baha'uddin Umar, Shaykh Zaynuddin's and Mawlana Abdul-Rahman Jami's shrines and tombs, the Mukhtar namazgah, the Hawz-i-Mahian, Saq Salman and Bulwari, which was originally the shrine of Abu'l-Walid, Imam Fakhr, the Bagh-i-Khiaban,¹⁶⁶ the mirza's madrasas and tombs, Gawharshad Begim's madrasa, tomb, and Friday mosque, the Bagh-i-Zaghan, the Bagh-i-Naw, the Bagh-i-Zubayda,¹⁶⁷ the Aq Saray built by Sultan-Abusa'id Mirza outside the Iraq Gate, [191b] Puran, the Suffa-i-Tirandazan, Cheragh Meadow, Amir Wahid, the

Malan Bridge, Khwaja Taq, the Bagh-i-Safed, the Tarabkhana, the Bagh-i-Jahanara, Kushk, the Muqawwakhana, the Susanikhana, the Duwazdah Burj, the great pool on the northern side of Jahanara and the four structures along its four sides, the five gates to the fort, the Malik Gate, the Iraq Gate, the Firozabad Gate, the Khush Gate, the Qipchaq Gate, the Malik Bazaar, the marketplace, Shaykhu'l-Islam's madrasa, the Maliks' Friday mosque, the Bagh-i-Shahr,¹⁶⁸ Badi'uzza-man Mirza's madrasa on the banks of the Injil Canal, Ali-Sher Beg's quarters, which were called Unsiyya, his tomb and Friday mosque, which were called Qudsiyya, his madrasa and khanaqah called Khalasiyya and Ikhlasiyya, and his bath and hospital, which were called Safa'iyya and Shifa'iyya. All these I saw in a short period of time.¹⁶⁹

Before the time of instability, Ma'suma Sultan Begim, Sultan-Ahmad Mirza's youngest daughter, had been brought to Khurasan by her mother, Habiba Sultan Begim. One day when I went to see my *aka*,¹⁷⁰ she came with her mother and saw me. Upon first laying eyes on me she felt a great inclination toward me. By secret messenger my *aka* and *yenga*,¹⁷¹ [192] as I called Payanda Sultan Begim and Habiba Sultan Begim, discussed the matter and decided that after I left, *yenga* would take her daughter to Kabul.

Muhammad Burundiq Beg and Zu'n-Nun Beg tried hard to get me to stay for the winter but were not forthcoming with good arrangements for either a place or provisions. It was now winter, and snow had fallen in the mountains between Herat and Kabul. I was getting ever more apprehensive over Kabul. In the end there was nothing else to do, although we could not say so frankly.

BABUR LEAVES HERAT FOR KABUL

On the pretext of finding winter quarters, we left Herat on the seventh of Sha'ban [December 23, 1506]. We marched, stopping a day or two at a time in the Badghis region, so that those who had gone to their estates to collect revenue and on business could join us. We halted and delayed so much that two or three days out of Langar-i-Mir Ghiyas we saw the Ramadan moon. Some of the warriors who had gone to their estates rejoined us; others came to Kabul twenty days to a month later than we, while still others stayed and joined the mirzas' service. One of these was Sayyidim Ali Darban. He remained and became an

attendant to Badi'uzzaman Mirza. I had promoted none of Khusrawshah's attendants more than him. When Jahangir Mirza left Ghazni, he turned it over to Sayyidim, and when he in turn had come away with the army, he had stationed his brother-in-law, Dost [192b] Eygi Shaykh, in Ghazni. Truly among Khusrawshah's retainers none was better than Sayyidim Ali Darban and Muhibb-Ali Qorchī.

Sayyidim was a man of good character and disposition. He was courageous with the sword. His quarters were never without a convivial gathering and hearty conversation. He was generous and amazingly organized and competent. His elegance and grace were superb, his company and conversation sweet. He was jovial, talkative, and witty. His only fault was that he practiced vice and pederasty, and also deviated somewhat in his religion. He was slightly hypocritical, a characteristic some attributed to his wit, but there was more to it than that. When Badi'uzzaman Mirza let Wormwood take Herat and went to Shah Beg, because Sayyidim Ali was duplicitous with the mirza and Shah Beg, the mirza killed him and had him thrown into the Helmand River. Muhibb-Ali's story will come in its proper place in the history.¹⁷²

Leaving Langar-i-Mir Ghiyas, we skirted the villages of Gharjistan and came to Chaghcharan. There was snow all the way from Langar to Gharjistan. The farther we went the deeper it was. Chaghcharan belonged to Zu'n-Nun Beg and was under the charge of his servant Mirak Jan Apari. We purchased all of Zu'n-Nun Beg's grain. Two or three marches out of Chaghcharan the snow was so deep it came above the horses' stirrups, [193] and in most places the horses' hooves did not reach the ground. Still it kept on snowing.

Out of Cheraghdan the road was completely obscured. In the Langar-i-Mir Ghiyas region we deliberated over which road we should take to Kabul. I and most of the others were of the opinion that since it was winter, the mountain road would be fraught with danger. The Kandahar road, although slightly longer, would be safer. Qasim Beg said that the latter road was too long and we should go by the former. In so saying he made a great mistake, but by that road we went.

Our guide was a Pashai named Sultan. Whether he was too old or fainthearted, or whether because of the depth of the snow, in any case he lost the road and could not guide us. Since it was at Qasim Beg's insistence that we had come by this road, and it reflected upon his honor,

he and his sons trampled down the snow, found the road again, and went on ahead. One day the snow was so deep and the road so obscured that no matter what we did we could not go on. There was nothing for us to do but turn back and camp in a place with firewood. I appointed seventy or eighty warriors to retrace our steps to find and bring to guide us any Hazaras who were wintering in the valley. We did not move from this camp for three or four days until those who had gone out returned. When they did return, they did not bring with them anyone who could show us the way. [193b] Trusting in God, we sent Sultan Pashai ahead and set out back down the very road where we had gotten lost. During those few days we endured much hardship and misery, more than I had experienced in my whole life. At that time I composed this line:

Is there any cruelty or misery the spheres can inflict I have not suffered? / Is there any pain or torment my wounded heart has not suffered?

For nearly a week we proceeded, unable to cover more than a league or a league-and-a-half a day. I became a snow trampler with ten or fifteen of my *ichkis*, Qasim Beg, his sons Tengriberdi and Qambar-Ali, and another two or three of their servants. We progressed on foot. One person would advance for eight to ten yards, trampling down the snow. Every time we put our foot down we would sink in to the waist or chest and pack down the snow. After going however many paces, the lead man would stop, exhausted. Then another would move to the front. Together these ten, fifteen, or twenty people could pack down enough snow for an unmounted horse to be led through. Sinking down to the stirrups or girth strap, the horse could be pulled forward for ten or fifteen paces before it gave out. It was drawn aside and another unmounted horse could be led forward. In this manner we ten to twenty persons [194] trampled down the snow, and our horses were dragged through. Then all the rest of those who enjoyed the titles of fearless warriors and begs entered the prepared, packed-down road without dismounting and proceeded with their heads hung low. It was no time to compel or insist. Anyone with stamina and fortitude will join in such a labor without waiting for an invitation. By compressing the snow and creating a road, we made it in three or four

days from that horrible place to a cave known as Khawal Quti, below what is called the Zirrin Pass.

That day there was an amazing snowstorm. It was so terrible we all thought we were going to die. The people there call the caves and hollows in the mountains *khawals*. As we arrived the storm was unbelievably fierce. We dismounted right in front of the khawal. The snow was so deep that the horses had difficulty coming across a road that had been trampled and packed down. The days were at their shortest, and it was still light when the first people reached the cave. By the prayer and nighttime they were still coming. Thereafter they dismounted where they stood. Many spent the night on horseback.

The cave seemed to be rather small. I took a shovel and cleared away enough snow at the mouth of the cave to make myself a place to sit. I dug down chest deep, and still I did not reach the ground, [194b] but it was a bit of shelter from the wind. There I sat down. Several people asked me to come inside, but I refused. I figured that to leave my people out in the snow and the storm, with me comfortable in a warm place, or to abandon all the people to hardship and misery, with me here asleep without a care, was neither manly nor comradely. Whatever hardship and difficulty there was, I would suffer it too. Whatever the people could endure, I could too. There is a Persian proverb: "Death with friends is a feast." In the midst of such a storm there I sat in a dug-out hole. By the time of the night prayer the snowstorm was still raging so much that I sat all huddled up. Four spans of snow were on my back and covering my head and ears. My ears got frostbite. At the night prayer those who had made a thorough inspection of the cave called out, "The cave is really big. There's enough room for everybody." When I heard this, I shook the snow off myself and, calling the warriors who were nearby to come in, went into the cave. There was enough room for forty or fifty people comfortably. Everyone brought out their provisions, hardtack, parched grain, and whatever they had. In the midst of such cold and such a storm, what a marvelously warm, safe, and secure place we had!

At dawn the storm stopped. We set out early and, by trampling down the snow again, made it to the top of the pass. [195] The road itself seemed to take a turn and go higher up to the Zirrin Pass. We did not follow it higher but went right down the valley bottom. It was late in the day before we reached the other side of the pass. We spent the

night at the mouth of the valley: it was bitterly cold, and spent in utter misery and hardship. Many people got frostbitten: Kāpä's feet, Sevin-dük the Turcoman's hands, and Akhi's feet. Early the next day we proceeded straight down the valley. Although we could see this was not the road, we put our trust in God and marched through the valley bottom. In places with treacherous slopes and precipices we had to dismount. It was evening when we emerged through the mouth of the valley. Not even the oldest men with the longest memory could remember this pass having been crossed with the snow so deep; it was not even known whether it had ever occurred to anyone to attempt a crossing at this time of year. Although for a few days we had experienced a great deal of difficulty, in the end it was due to the depth of the snow that we were able to get ourselves to our destination. If it had not been so deep, how could those trackless slopes and falls have been crossed? [195b] Had it not been so deep, the horses and beasts of burden would all have been stuck on the first slope.

Whatever happens, good or bad, when you look closely, you'll find that it is all for the best.

Night had fallen by the time we reached Yakawlang. The Yakawlang people had heard of our arrival and we were greeted with warm houses, fat sheep, hay and fodder for the horses, abundant water, and plenty of kindling and dung for fires. To be delivered from such cold and snow and to find such a village and warm houses, to be saved from hardship and misery and to discover bread and fat sheep—this is a comfort that only those who have endured hardships can know, a relief that only those who have undergone travails can comprehend. Easy of mind and heart we stayed in Yakawlang for one day. From there we proceeded one stage. The next day was the Ramadan feast.¹⁷³ Passing through Bamian and crossing the Shibartu Pass, we stopped before reaching Jangalak.

A RAID ON THE TURCOMAN HAZARAS

The Turcoman Hazaras were camped for the winter with their people and animals right along our path, utterly unaware of our approach. While on the march that morning, we stopped among their corrals and