

“*The Story of the King and the Gardener*”  
*Emperor in the Waki'ât-i Jehangiri of  
Jehangir and its Parallels.*

(Read 24th January 1918.)

In the Waki'ât-i Jehangiri, in the account of the thirteenth year of his reign, after describing the crossing of the river Mahi near Ahmedabad, Jehangir thus relates a story :—

“ On the way I passed through a field of *Juwâr*, in which every plant had no less than twelve bunches of corn, while in other fields there is generally only one. It excited my astonishment and recalled to my mind the tale of the King and the Gardener. A King entered a garden during the heat of the day, and met a gardener there. He inquired of him whether there were any pomegranates and received a reply that there were. His Majesty told him to bring a cupful of the juice of that fruit on which the gardener told his daughter to execute that commission. She was a handsome and accomplished girl. She brought the cupful of that beverage, and covered it with a few leaves. The King drank it, and asked the girl why she had put the leaves over it. The girl with much readiness replied, that she had done it to prevent His Majesty drinking too fast, as drinking of liquids just after a fatiguing journey was not good. The King fell in love with her, and wished to take her into his palace. He asked the gardener how much he derived each year from his garden. He said 300 *dînârs*. He then asked how much he paid to the *diwân*. He gave answer that he did not pay anything on fruit-trees, but whatever sum he derived from his agriculture, he paid a tenth part to the State. His Majesty said within himself, ‘There are numerous gardens and trees on my dominions; and if I fix a revenue of a tenth on them, I shall collect a great deal of money.’ He then desired the girl to bring another cup of the pomegranate juice. She was late in bringing it this time, and it was not much she brought. His Majesty asked her the reason of this deficiency, observing, that she brought it quickly the first time and in great plenty, that now she had delayed long, and brought but little. The daughter replied, ‘The first time one pomegranate sufficed. I have now squeezed several, and have

not been able to obtain so much juice.' The Sultân was astonished, upon which her father replied that good produce is entirely dependent on the good disposition of the Sovereign; that he believed that his guest was the King; and that from the time he inquired respecting the produce of the garden, his disposition was altogether changed; and that therefore the cup did not come full of the juice. The Sultân was impressed with his remark and resolved upon relinquishing the tax. After a little time, His Majesty desired the girl to bring a third cup of the same beverage. This time the girl came sooner, and with a cup brimful, which convinced the King that the surmise of the gardener was sound. The Sultân commended the gardener's penetration, and divulged to him his real rank, and the reflections which had been passing in his mind. He then asked to be allowed to take his daughter in marriage, in order that the memorial of this interview and its circumstances might remain for the instruction of the world. In short, the abundance of produce depends entirely on the good will and justice of the Sovereign. Thanks to the Almighty God, that no revenue on fruit-trees has been taken during my reign; and I gave orders that if any one were to plant a garden in cultivated land, he was not to pay any revenue. I pray that the Almighty may cause the mind of this humble-creature to entertain good pure intentions."<sup>1</sup>

Now the question is: Who is the King of the Story?

A Parallel from Emperor Jehangir does neither name the king, nor does the Shâh-nâmeh give the name of the country. I think, the King is the King Behramgour of Persia. We find the following story about him in the Shâh-nâmeh of Firdousi:—On a day in the season of spring, when the ground was covered with vegetation and had become like the garden of paradise, King Behramgour went-a-hunting. He had a good hunt. On the third day, he came across a large snake with two breasts like that of a woman. The king killed it with an arrow, and then, rending its breast with a dagger, found that the snake had devoured a young man. A few drops from the poisonous blood of the snake pained his eyes. He felt exhausted and his pain increased. He arrived *incognito* before a poor house, the land-lady of which, on his inquiring for help, welcomed him in her house. She shouted to her husband and asked him to look after the stranger. She showed herself to be more hospitable

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Elliot's History of India, Vol. VI. pp. 364-65. We find this story in the Tûzuk-i-Jahângiri with some difference here and there (The Tûzuk-i-Jahângiri, by Rogers and Beveridge. pp. 50-5-2.) For example, according to the latter, the girl said that the second time she squeezed 5 or 6 pomegranates, while the Wakîât said several.



than her husband. Behrâm rested there for the night, and the next day she produced before him all that she could afford in her rustic house. Among the dainties, there was also a dish of *harisah* ( *ہاریسہ* )<sup>1</sup>. The traveller (king) was much pleased with her hospitality. Before retiring to bed, he asked the land-lady to regale his sick and suffering mind with some refreshing stories. If she liked, she may say something of the rule of the then king. Thereupon, the land-lady complained of the officers of the king who passed through the village one way or another on business. They accused some poor people of theft and extorted money from the innocent. They accused respectable women. These small extortions did not go to the treasury of the king, but, anyhow, they were taken as coming from the King. Behramgour, who was travelling incognito, was pained to learn all this. He thought to himself: "Though I do my best to rule well, my people do not distinguish between a good ruler and a bad ruler, and, on account of the misdeeds of my officers, accuse me of bad rule. In order to give my people an opportunity to feel the troubles of a bad rule, I would really try to rule badly for some time. The people then will be in a position to compare good rule and bad rule." He entertained this evil intention of being a bad ruler during the whole night which he passed restlessly from his pain. The next morning, the land-lady went to milch her cow, taking with her the usual quantity of grain and hay for it. She remembered her God as usual: and went to her work, but could get no milk from the cow. She thereupon shouted to her husband and said:—"My husband! The mind of the ruling king has become evil. He has become oppressive. Since last time, (of milching), his good faith has left him." The husband thereupon asked for the reason to say so. She replied: "When the king becomes evil-minded, the milk gets dried in the breasts of the cows. We have not decreased her food and drink. So, how is it that her milk has gone off?"

Behramgour heard this loud conversation between the wife and the husband, and repented of his evil intention of being really oppressive for some time. He said to himself: "I would

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<sup>1</sup> Meca's Calcutta edition, Vol. III, p. 1514 l. 19. It is "a kind of thick pottage made of bruised wheat boiled to a consistency, to which meat, butter, cinnamon, and aromatic herbs are added." (Steingass). *Harisah* still forms a special dish of sweets among the Parsees, specially at the end of the *Favardegân* or *Muktâd* holidays. From the accounts of the Parsee Panchayat of Bombay of 1832, we find, that the Trustees provided that sweet dish on the above occasion at the communal expense to all those who asked for it. We find a sum of Rupees one hundred and one debited for it for several years. It was prepared at the Manockji Seth's Wadi in the Fort, from where anybody who wanted it took a portion. (*Vide* the Bombay Samachar of 14th September 1832.)

rather like to be without a royal throne than that my heart should turn away from justice.”<sup>1</sup> A short time after, the land-lady again tried to milk the cow. She began to get the milk as usual. She thanked God, saying, “O God! You have made the unjust king just again.” Thereafter, Behramgour revealed himself before the peasant couple.

It seems that it is some version of this story of King Behramgour that Emperor Jehangir refers to, as the story of the King and the Gardener.

I remember having heard, when a boy, another version of this story. It is to the following effect:—A king, feeling exhausted in a hunt, went to the hut of a gardener and asked for a drink from his wife. She went with a cup and a thorn to her sugar-cane field, and, pricking the thorn in a sugarcane, held the cup before the hole made in it. The cup was soon filled with juice. The king got refreshed with the cup and was surprised at the amazing fertility of the soil of this part of his country. On his way homeward, he thought, that the land-tax of that portion of the country was not, looking to its fertility, what it ought to be. He went home and ordered the tax to be increased. A few days after, he again went to the same hut and asked for a drink. The land lady went to her field and, pricking a sugar-cane with a thorn, held a cup before it, but no juice came out of it. She at once shouted; “The good faith of the King has changed.” It is said, that the king, seeing with his own eyes what had happened, repented of his conduct and ordered the reduction of the tax again.

#### APPENDIX.

On the report of the Society’s meeting with an outline of this paper, appearing in the public papers, Miss Dinoo S. Bastawala, a talented promising young lady, a grand-daughter of Sir Dinsha Edalji Wacha, wrote to me on 27th January 1918 and drew my attention to a version of the above story as given in the Arabian Nights. I thank Miss Bastawala for kindly drawing my attention to this version, which I give below, following Sir Richard Burton’s translation :<sup>2</sup>

اگر تاز ب گيرد دل من ز داد  
از نپس مرا تخت ساہی مباد

<sup>2</sup> Plain and Literal Translation of the Arabian Nights, by Richard F. Burton, Vol. V, pp. 87-88, 389th and 390th Nights.



“KING KISRA ANUSHIRWAN AND THE  
VILLAGE DAMSEL.”

‘The just King Kisrâ Anushirwân one day rode forth to the chase and, in pursuit of a deer, became separated from his suite. Presently, he caught sight of a hamlet near hand and being sore athirst, he made for it and presenting himself at the door of a house that lay by the wayside, asked for a draught of water. So a damsel came out and looked at him; then, going back into the house, pressed the juice from a single sugar-cane into a bowl and mixed it with water; after which she strewed on the top some scented stuff, as it were dust, and carried it to the King. Thereupon he seeing in it what resembled dust, drank it, little by little, till he came to the end; when said he to her, ‘O damsel, the drink is good, and how sweet it had been but for this dust in it, that troubleth it.’ Answered she, ‘O guest, I put in that powder for a purpose;’ and he asked ‘And why didst thou thus?’ so she replied, ‘I saw thee exceeding thirsty and feared that thou wouldest drain the whole at one draught and that this would do thee mischief; and but for this dust that troubled the drink so hadst thou done.’ The just King wondered at her words, knowing that they came of her wit and good sense, and said to her, ‘From how many sugar-canes didst thou express this draught?’ ‘One,’ answered she; whereat Anushirwan marvelled and, calling for the register of the village taxes, saw that its assessment was but little and bethought him to increase it, on his return to his palace, saying in himself, ‘A village where they get this much juice out of one sugar-cane, why is it so lightly taxed?’ He then left the village and pursued his chase; and, as he came back at the end of the day, he passed alone by the same door and called again for drink; whereupon the same damsel came out and, knowing him at a look, went in to fetch him water. It was some time before she returned and Anushirwan wondered thereat and said to her, ‘Why hast thou tarried?’ . . . . . She answered, ‘Because a single sugar-cane gave not enough for thy need; so I pressed three; but they yielded not so much as did one before.’ Rejoined he, ‘What is the cause of that?’; and she replied, ‘The cause of it is that when the Sultan’s mind is changed against a folk, their prosperity ceaseth and their goods waxeth less.’ So Anushirwan laughed and dismissed from his mind that which he had purposed against the villagers. Moreover, he took the damsel to wife then and there, being pleased with her much wit and acuteness and the excellence of her speech.”

