

DEVELOPMENT OF MUGHAL CUISINE UNDER BABUR AND HUMAYUN

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ABSTRACT

When Babur invaded India in 1526, he found India as a country of few charms, he did not like the Indian foods including fruits and vegetable, and continuously longed for the fruits and foods of his native country but he vividly described fruits, vegetable and animals in his autobiography *Tuzuk-e Baburi* while Humayun lost his throne in 1540 and sought refuge in Persian King Shah Tahmasp and married a Persian lady. Consequently, several Persian cooks followed him in India and Mughal cuisine was greatly influenced by the flavours of Persia since the time of Humayun.

Farghana, the land of Babur's birth was described by Babur as a beautiful country; it abounded in corn and fruits, particularly peaches, apricots, almonds, melons and pomegranates. Melons, fresh or preserved, were important items of Turkish diet. Babur considered the Akshi melons to be the best in the worlds. Babur also relished the almond-stuffed dried apricots found in Marghinan further up the valley. Khojend, where the caravan track nears the river Sir, was famous for its juicy pomegranates, and there was fine torquoise to be found in the hills. The bird, Games were plentiful. The Pheasants of Farghana were so fat that four persons could dine on one and not finish it¹. The Samarkand baker's shops were excellent and the cooks were skillful according to Babur².

Babur investigated the local fruits available in the neighbourhood of Kabul with fond memories of melons and grapes of

Farghana. He divided the yield into products of the hot and cold areas of his uphill and downhill kingdom. In the cold, grapes, pomegranates, apricots, peaches, pears, apple, quinces, jujubes, almonds and walnuts. In the hot weather, orange, citron, and sugar cane from the Indus region. Later on, he imported sour cherry trees for his orchards planted in Kabul that thrived well ³.

The melons, which he admitted, were not so good. In addition, the beehives did not yield much honey, except in the western parts⁴.

As a garden lover, Babur prides himself on having brought the *Alu-Balu*, the wild cherry of the Transoxiana into Afghanistan. On reaching Jalalabad he says, I all at once saw a new world; the vegetables, the plants, the trees, the wild animals all were different. The birds were of different plumage and even the manners and customs of the tribes were of different kind⁵.

Babur observes about his laying out of the Bagh-i-wafa: "I laid out the four gardens known as Bagh-i-wafa on rising ground, facing south and having the surkhrud between it and fort Admapur. These oranges and pomegranates grew in abundance. The year I defeated Papar and took Lahore and Dipalpur, I had plantains (bananas) brought out and planted there; they did very well"⁶.

However, Babur lamented about the lack of good fruits in India like grapes and muskmelons, there was no good food or cooked food in the bazars, no ice or cold water in Hindustan. He pined for his own land of melons and grapes.⁷

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Deprived of the Kabul melons, he continued to get their seeds from Balkh, he had from planted in the eight paradise gardens (hasht bahisht) at Agra, and when they ripened he remarked with satisfaction; "It filled my heart with content to have such grapes and melons in Hindustan"⁸.

Babur had a refined taste with regard to food and its associated aspects. He was also concerned about knife, spoon and dastarkhwan. Once he refused to eat *Qaz* (Duck) as he did not know how to cut it and eat it properly in a feast in Herat.

He was a heavy drinker but earlier, he resisted a lot to drink alcohol and was even concerned about permitted *halal* food. If anyone asked him to drink including his own father, he used to politely refuse. Once in the entertainment parties, Babur drank no wine, when it became known to Badiuzzaman; ruler of Heart, that he did not drink, he did not press him. With the wine all sorts of eatables were offered, *kabab* of fowl and goose with dishes to match ⁹. Nevertheless, he was heavily addicted till 1519 AD.

He also used to take addiction of *Arak* (Rice or date wine) and *Majun* (a form of intoxication) but not both at the same time¹⁰.

At the time of Battle of Khanwa against Rana Sanga in 1527, he vowed to quit alcohol but continued to use *Majun* and probably he was heavily addicted to Opium. In 1527 AD, he used Mercury. He praises *Kamali* and called it a good form of intoxication. He prefers *Majun* to *Arak* ¹¹. *Saqqa* term was used in Baburnama who used to offer alcohol or Water ¹².

Mango, madhuca indica (*Mahua*), khiri, jack fruit, badhal, plum, bengal currantas (*karaunda*), sycamore, gooseberry, and sunflower seeds (*chiraunji*) were described in Baburnama¹³.

Babur has differentiated among coconut, kaki and palm trees. He has also written regarding oranges and its different varieties, like galagal, janviri, sadaphal, karna, pear tree and yellow dock etc. He called *khutul*, Watermelon of Hindustan was kind of apple having sour taste¹⁴.

A hunting reference was given in Baburnama in which several deers and pigeon were killed ¹⁵. He also mentioned *kabab* of chicken (*Murg*), duck (*qaz*), and lamb ¹⁶. *Looja* (partridge), *kharchal* (Crane), spotted beaked duck and *shah murg* (comb duck) meats were very delicious according to Babur¹⁷.

He also liked fishes of Hindustan due to its taste and having very less bones. At the time of Babur camel meat was also relished by the people. He did not find peacock meat as tasty as partridge¹⁸.

Babur was a man of simple taste, which reflected his nomadic pattern of life. He did not enjoy the food of Hindustan and found cooks unreliable after the attempt to poison him at Tuglaqabad; he was served with poisonous rabbit stew at the instance of mother of Ibrahim Lodhi ¹⁹. The only food he enjoyed in Hindustan was fish else, he remained alien to Indian food. He loved food of his country, relished Turkish delights, and enjoyed the dishes of Kabul.

It is to be noted that the old Turkish food was not as sophisticated and exotic, it was simple and wholesome. Turkish food became exotic during the Ottoman Empire. Fresh vegetables and fruits, meat mixed with cereals, roasted sheep, and rice flavoured with saffron were found on his table. He missed the bread of Bukhara.

As a matter of fact, Babur in his *Tuzuk e Baburi*, very less reference were given to foods rather several references of wine, drinking parties and various drugs were given.

and got prepared and sent to his majesty and should be sent individually to all the intimates and servants of the court. Syrups of rose and lemon water tasting fine and rendered cool with *Burf wa yakh* (Ice) should be taken before him. Moreover, after the syrup jam of syrup, jam of apple *Mushkaan Mashhadi*, *Hinduannah* etc with baked breads of white fine flour as has been settled and detailed should be taken before him. And an attempt should be made that all sorts of syrups are presented before his majesty and rose and white or pale ambergis should be mixed in them so as to it turned odiferous and delicious. Moreover, five hundred trays of pure and lonely varieties of foods should be settled to be made available and served.

It was also ordered that after the eating of different *Halwas* and *Paludah*, (a kind of sweet beverages made of water, flour and honey. A mixture of grated apples with sugar and cardamom; jelly) prepared from the fine white sugar and white leaven breads and fine *murabbas*, *Rustah khitai* (A kind of paste lozenges eaten in soup) was to be made. To make it tasty and odoriferous rose musk and fine ambergris were to be added. All these food items should be brought to the assembly”²².

We get reference that in Badakshah Bayazid Bayat offered Humayun the roasted rolls of meat of partridges, quails, and wild ducks. Then he moved to Farkhar and ate the dry fruits of that place²³.

Bayazid bayat gave a tin of armayylla or sour chery jam and cooked liver to the emperor as desired to eat opium on the day of weakness²⁴. Humayun was fond of *sherbat* of lemon²⁵. One dish that he enjoed at a party in Kabul was *Bughra* (named after Bughra Khan, ruler of khwarizm), which mixed together meat, flour, ghee, chickpeas, sugar, onions and other underground vegetable, and spinach. Bughra was spiced with fenugreek, ginger,

While giving political asylum to Humayun, the King of Persia Shah Tahmasp, made suitable arrangement for his stay. He issued the following *Farman* (decree) regarding it.

“Humayun should be provided daily with delicious and finely prepared *halwas* and syrups (*sherbats*) with white *Nan* (leavened bread), fermented with clarified butter and milk and mixed with *Razyannah*, poppy and seeds, the mixing of which in the *Nan* make them delicate and beneficial, should be mixed

saffron, cloves, cardamom, caraway and peppercorns²⁶.

Humayun gave up eating flesh of animals for some months from the time he started on the campaign for reconquest of Hindustan and until he captured Delhi. He abstained from meat throughout the entire month of Ramadan. He thought that beef was not fit food for devout persons. He preferred mutton to it.²⁷

When he returned to India in 1555 AD, a great number of Persian followed him to his royal court, most important of all cooks. The Persian dishes replaced central Asian and old Turkish flavours. The table was more rich and varied. Though there were the same stuffed and roasted sheep, spit roasted chicken with herbs, koftas of different kinds, the Persian Pilau or Pulao, lamb cooked in tandoor but a certain amount of sophistication entered the royal kitchen. Use of nuts and saffron increased. Persian cooks excelled in the art of making sweetmeats, vegetables and lentils and birds were cooked in the most unimaginable ways. Sometimes, there was an all-white menu to please the emperor, which was named *Jashn-e-Mehtab*²⁸.

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- References:**
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