



A Study of Babur's Account of Mewat Region in his Memoir Baburnama

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ABSTRACT:

The Baburnama, the memoirs of Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire in India, provides a detailed and valuable historical account of Mewat, a region in present-day Haryana and Rajasthan. Babur's vivid descriptions offer unique insights into the social, cultural, and political landscape of Mewat during the 16th century. His encounters with the local rulers, observations of the geography, and descriptions of the customs and people of Mewat contribute to a deeper understanding of the region's history. Babur's conquest of Mewat and its subsequent integration into the Mughal Empire had a profound impact on the region. This led to political, cultural, and economic changes, shaping Mewat's development during the Mughal era. The memoir also serves as a primary historical source, contributing to the preservation and promotion of Mewat's historical and cultural heritage. The Baburnama has left a lasting legacy on Mewat, influencing the region's historical narrative, identity, and pride. It has inspired scholarly endeavors, artistic pursuits, and a deeper appreciation for Mewat's rich heritage. Babur's account continues to foster a sense of connection to the region's past and its enduring place in the annals of Indian history.

Introduction:

The Baburnama is the memoirs of Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur.¹ In his memoir, Babur provides a detailed account of his conquests and experiences in the Indian subcontinent. One of the regions that Babur extensively writes about in his memoir is Mewat, a historical region in present-day Haryana and Rajasthan. Babur's account of Mewat provides valuable insights into the social, cultural, and political landscape of the region during the 16th century. He describes the geography, people, and customs of Mewat, as well as his encounters with the local rulers and inhabitants. Babur's observations and experiences in Mewat offer a unique perspective on the region's history and its significance in the larger context of the Mughal Empire. Overall, Babur's account of Mewat in the Baburnama is a valuable historical source that sheds light on the dynamics of power, conflict, and cultural exchange in the region during the Mughal era. It provides a rich and vivid portrayal of Mewat's past and its place in the broader narrative of Indian history. One of the regions that Babur conquered during his campaigns in northern India was Mewat, which is located in present-day Haryana and Rajasthan. This paper aims to study Babur's account of the Mewat region in his memoir and analyze its historical significance.

Historical Background of Mewat:

Mewat, the land of an ancient tribe, Meos, has been loosely defined in various times of history. Mewat region is located in the north-western part of India, comprising parts of Haryana and Rajasthan. It's important and rather source of attraction, due to its cultural and traditional peculiarity and complexity, to the scholars of all over the world. The scholars surprised to know about its rich history through bards and Mirasis. The Arab and Persian chroniclers gave much importance to this area. Perhaps Meos, the inhabitants of this area, has no parallel in the Indian History, regarding their fight for independence as well as for their retribution by the rulers. The Meos community, fascinatingly simple, psychologically complex, a brave, freedom-loving, and warring, have had a glorious history from the ancient times. They could never be made to compromise by force or political diplomacy. Mewat has a rich history dating back to the Mahmud Ghaznavi and has been ruled by various dynasties, including the Rajputs and the Mughals. During Babur's time, Mewat was ruled by the Khanzadas, a Muslim tribe that had established its dominance over the region. The history witness that the renowned Rana Sanga fled from the battle field while his partner Hasan Khan Mewati² gallantly martyred on the spot while fighting Babar in the battle of Khanwa.

Babur describes the Mewat region and its history as, "Near Delhi lies the Mewat country which yields revenue of 3 or 4 krors. Hasan Khan Mewati and his ancestors one after another had ruled it with absolute sway for a hundred years or two. They must have made imperfect submission to the Delhi Sultans; the Sultans of Hind, whether because their own dominions were wide, or because their opportunity was narrow, or because of the Mewat hill-country, did not turn in the Mewat direction, did not establish order in it, but just put up with this amount of (imperfect) submission. For our own part, we did after the fashion of earlier Sultans; having conquered Hind, we shewed favour to Hasan Khan, but that thankless and heathenish apostate disregarded our kindness and benefits, was not grateful for favour and promotion, but became the mover of all disturbance and the cause of all misdoing...."³

Babur's Conquest of Mewat:

Even after gaining control over Lodi Empire, Babur was in distress due to his political foes in northern India and also due to the disturbances in his army. Most of the army men were eager to return to their native place but Babur consoled them to stay for the land which they have won after sacrificing their lives. Babur wanted to win over the local chiefs of northern India and assured them the great reward. He also tried to win the confidence of Hasan Khan Mewati who was the chief of Mewat and also the cousin of Ibrahim Lodi.

But Hasan Khan was having conversation with Rana Sanga, the Raja of Mewar, against Babur. Babur says about Hasan Khan, "In the fight with Ibrahim, Hasan Khan Mewati's son Nahar Khan had fallen into our hands; we had kept him as a hostage and, ostensibly on his account, his father had been making comings-and-goings with us, constantly asking for him. It now occurred to several people that if Hasan Khan were conciliated by sending him his son, he would thereby be the more favourably disposed and his waiting on me might be the better brought about. Accordingly Nahar Khan was dressed in a robe of honour; promises were made to him for his father, and he was given leave to go. That hypocritical manikin (Hasan Khan) must have waited just till his son had leave from me to go, for on hearing of this and while his son as yet had not joined him, he came out of Alur (Alwar) and at once joined Rana Sanga in Toda bhim (Agra District). It must have been ill-judged to let his son go just then."⁴

Battle of Khanwa

After occupying Delhi and Agra, Babur now turned his attention to the arch-enemy, Rana Sangram Singh (r. 1508-28) of Mewar. This undisputed leader of the Rajput confederacy was an indefatigable fighter, with one arm and one eye lost and eighty scars in his body. He had sent a friendly embassy to Babur at Kabul and offered his help against Ibrahim, but the situation had now changed and Sangram Singh lost no time in declaring war against his rival for the mastery of Hindustan. Babur declared his first *Jihad* (holy war) against the 'infidels' and sent reinforcement to Bayana which had been besieged by the united forces of Hasan Khan of Mewat and Rana Sangram Singh. Babur calls Hasan Khan Mewati as infidel, prime mover and agitator in all these confusions and insurrections.⁵ On 11 February, 1527, Babur himself marched against the enemy and encamped at Sikri where he was joined by the garrison from Bayana. In some skirmishes which followed, the Rajputs inflicted defeat upon his advance guard.

Rana Sangram Singh or Rana Sanga of Mewar was a veteran of many years' military experience. Having ascended the throne of Mewar in 1508, he soon became the principal chief of Rajasthan. Babur says about Rana Sanga:⁶

"Although Rana Sanga, the pagan, when I was in Kabul, had sent me an ambassador with professions of attachment, and had arranged with me, that, if I would march from that quarter into the vicinity of Delhi, he would march from the other side upon Agra; yet, when I defeated Ibrahim, and took Delhi and Agra, the pagan, during all my operations, did not make a single movement."

At Khanwa on 17 March, 1527, the battle took place. Babur employed the same tactics that he had employed at Panipat. On the two extremities were the flanking columns (Tulghama). Rana Sanga had under his command some 80,000 cavalry, augmented by contingents of surviving Afghans recently defeated by Babur, including Ibrahim Lodi's brother Mahmud, who made common cause in trying to expel the Mughals from India. Though the Rana's host is usually described as a Hindu confederacy, it contained some of the Afghan chiefs whom Babur had failed to conciliate. Another important member was Hassan Khan Mewati of Alwar. The latter, though an adherent of the Afghans, was a Khanzada of Mewat and either a convert or the descendant of a convert to Islam. Badayuni describes him as 'an infidel who used the Kalima (*Kalima-go Kafir*)'. As the two armies drew near each other, the great disparity in numbers caused despondency in the ranks of Babur's small force.⁷

His men were quaking in anticipation of the struggle with their unknown foes. To encourage his forces Babur made a plan to rouse the religious sentiments in his forces. The fragments of the gold and silver vessels were shared out to deserving persons and to darwishes. The first to agree in renouncing wine was Asas; he had already agreed also about leaving his beard untrimmed. That night and next day some 300 begs and persons of the household, soldiers and not soldiers, renounced wine. What wine we had with us was poured on the ground. Babur says, "I had vowed already that, if I gained the victory over Sanga the pagan, I would remit the Tamgha to all Musalmans. Of this vow Darwish-i-Muhammad Sarban and Shaikh Zain reminded me at the time I renounced wine. The Tamgha was remitted to all Musalmans of the dominions I held."⁸

Babur made the memorable renunciation of his besetting sin, wine, and restored the morale of his troops by a stirring oration. Babar called an assembly of all the Amirs and officers, and addressed them:⁹

"Noblemen and soldiers! Every man that comes into the world is subject to dissolution. When we are passed away and gone, Allah only survives unchangeable. Whoever comes to the feast of life must, before it is over, drink from the cup of death. He who arrives at the inn of mortality must one day inevitably take his departure from that house of sorrow- the world. How much better is it to die with honour than to live with infamy!"

By quoting the couplet from Firdausi's *Shahnama*:

"With fame, even if I die, I am contented;

Let fame be mine, since my body is Death's"

He continued, "The Most High Allah has been propitious to us, and has now placed us in such a crisis, that if we fall in the field, we die the death of martyrs; if we survive, we rise victorious, the avengers of the cause of Allah. Let us, then, with one accord, swear on Allah's holy word, that none of us will even think of turning his face from this warfare, nor desert from the battle and slaughter that ensues, till his soul is separated from his body."

Babur's words made an instant impression upon his men. 'All those present, beg and retainer, great and small, took the Holy Book joyfully into their hands and made vow and compact to this purport.¹⁰ Babur used his customary Tulgama tactics- a barrier of wagons for his centre, with gaps for the artillery and for cavalry sallies and wheeling cavalry charges on the wings.

Rana Sanga was having a strong army including the chief of Bhilsa Silhadi with 30,000 horse, Rawal Udai Singh of Bagar (Dongarpur) had 12,000, Medini Rai of Chanderi had 12,000, Hasan Khan of Mewat had 12,000, Rai Chandrabhan Chauhan had 4,000, Bharmal of Idr had 4,000, Narpat Hara had 7,000, Satrvi of Kach (Cutch) had 6,000, Dharmdeo had 4,000, Manik-chand Chauhan and Dilpat Rao who had each 4,000, Bir-sing-deo had 4,000, Kanku (or Gangu) and Karm Singh and Dankusi each had 3,000 horse, and Mahmud Khan, son of Sikandar Lodi 10,000 horse. Thus, according to the calculations about 201,000 was the total strength of Rana Sanga's army.¹¹

Babur in his Memoir further says, "In brief, that haughty pagan, inwardly blind, and hardened of heart, having joined with other pagans, dark-fated and doomed to perdition, advanced to contend with the followers of Islam and to destroy the foundations of the law of the Prince of Men (Mohammad), on whom be God's blessing! The protagonists of the royal forces fell, like divine destiny, on that one-eyed Dajjal who, to understanding men, shewed the truth of the saying, *When Fate arrives, the eye becomes blind*, and, setting before their eyes the scripture which saith, *Whosoever striveth to promote the true religion, striveth for the good of his own soul*, they acted on the precept to which obedience is due, *Fight against infidels and hypocrites*."¹²

On Saturday, 17 March 1527, the battle started about half-past nine in the morning at Khanwa, a small village near Agra. The battle began with a magnificent charge by the Rajput left wing upon the Mughul right. The artillery of Babur stampeded the elephants, and the flank charges bewildered the allied force, who, after 10 hours, broke, never to rally under a single leader again. It was a decisive victory for Babur. His small, well-disciplined force cut the huge hordes of the Rajputs to pieces, inflicting very heavy losses upon them. Hasan Khan Mewati was found dead among uncounted heaps of dead bodies. Rana Sanga was wounded and fled from the battlefield and might have died after some years due to poisoning by his own men. After the victory Babur assumed the title of *Ghazi* (victor in a Holy War). In order to reduce Mewat, Babur marched into Hasan Khan Mewati's capital Alwar on 7 April 1527.¹³

Babur's Description of Mewat:

In the Baburnama, Babur provides a detailed and vivid description of Mewat, offering valuable insights into the region's geography, people, and customs during the 16th century. Babur's observations and encounters with the local rulers and inhabitants of Mewat contribute to a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, and political landscape of the region. Geographically, Babur's account portrays Mewat as a rugged and challenging terrain, characterized by its arid expanses and rugged hills. He describes the natural features of the region, including its rivers, forests, and agricultural lands, providing a sense of the physical environment in which the people of Mewat lived.

Babur says in his Memoir, "Praise had been heard of the Firozpur-spring and of the great lake of Kotila. Leaving the camp on that same ground, I rode out on Sunday (April 14th 1528) both to visit these places and to set Humayun on his way. After visiting Firozpur and its spring on that same day, *Majun* was eaten. In the valley where the spring rises, oleanders (Kaner) were in bloom; the place is not without charm but is over-praised. I ordered a reservoir of hewn stone, 10 by 10 (yard) to be made where the water widened, spent the night in that valley."¹⁴

Babur further says, "next day (April 15th 1528) rode on and visited the Kotila lake. It is surrounded by mountain-skirts. The Manas-ni is heard-say to fall into Kotila lake. It is a very large lake, from its one side the other side is not well seen. In the middle of it is rising ground. At its sides are many small boats, by going off in which the villagers living near it are said to escape from any tumult or disturbance. Even on our arrival a few people went in them to the middle of the lake."¹⁵

Babur mentions another hill spring in Mewat situated on the Arawali hills between Bhusawar and Chausath villages in Bharatpur district. He says, "After leaving Toda, we dismounted at Sunkar (Singaar); there Hasan Khan Mewaati's son Nahar Khan escaped from Abdur Rahim's charge. Going on from that place, we halted one night, then dismounted at a spring situated on the hill of a mountain between Bhusawar and Chausa? (Jusa or Chausath mentioned in the *Ain-e Akbari*, Vol. II, 183); there awnings were set up and we committed the sin of *Majun*. When the army had passed by this spring, Tardi Beg had praised it; It bubbles up on the hill-skirt; meadows lie round it; it is very beautiful. I ordered an octagonal reservoir of hewn stone made above it. While we were at the border of the spring, under the soothing influence of *Majun*, Tardi Beg, contending for its surpassing beauty, said again and again, "Since I am celebrating the beauty of the place, a name ought to be settled for it". Abdullah said, "It must be called the Royal-spring approved of by Tardi Beg." This saying caused much joke and laughter."¹⁶

Overall, Babur's description of Mewat in the Baburnama provides a comprehensive and multifaceted portrayal of the region, encompassing its geography, people, customs, and political dynamics. His observations and encounters offer valuable insights into the historical and cultural landscape of Mewat during the 16th century, enriching our understanding of the region's place in the broader narrative of Indian history.

Impact of Babur's Conquest on Mewat:

Babur's conquest had a significant impact on Mewat, shaping its political and cultural landscape during the Mughal era. The region of Mewat, located in present-day Haryana and Rajasthan, was strategically important due to its proximity to Delhi and its role as a buffer zone between the Mughal Empire and other regional powers. Babur's conquest of Mewat brought the region under Mughal control, leading to changes in governance, administration, and

taxation. The Mughals established their authority in Mewat, integrating it into their empire and imposing their administrative and legal systems. This had a lasting impact on the political structure of the region, as Mewat became a part of the larger Mughal administrative framework.

Babur says in his Memoir that by thinking Khusrau's good work in the battle, he named him for Alwar and gave him 50 lakhs for his support, but unluckily for himself, he put on airs and did not accept this. Tijara town, the seat of government in Mewat, was bestowed on Chin Timur together with an allowance of 50 lakhs for his support. Alwar and an allowance of 15 lakhs was bestowed on Tardika (or, Tardi Yakka) who in the flanking-party of the right-hand (*qul*) had done better than the rest. The contents of the Alwar treasury were bestowed on Humayun.¹⁷

Furthermore, Babur's conquest also brought about cultural and religious changes in Mewat. The Mughals were known for their patronage of art, architecture, and literature, and their influence on Mewat led to the spread of Mughal cultural practices and traditions. This cultural exchange had a lasting impact on the artistic and architectural heritage of the region, as Mughal aesthetics and styles became prevalent in Mewat. Babur's conquest and the subsequent Mughal rule had economic implications for Mewat. The Mughals implemented new economic policies, including land revenue systems and trade regulations, which affected the economic activities of the region. Mewat became integrated into the larger Mughal economy, with trade and commerce flourishing under the Mughal rule. Overall, Babur's conquest of Mewat had a profound impact on the region, shaping its political, cultural, and economic dynamics during the Mughal era. The integration of Mewat into the Mughal Empire brought about significant changes that left a lasting imprint on the region's history and development.

Legacy of the Baburnama on Mewat:

The Baburnama, the memoirs of Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire in India, has left a lasting legacy on Mewat, a historical region in present-day Haryana and Rajasthan. Babur's detailed account of his conquests and experiences in the Indian subcontinent, including his interactions with Mewat, has had a significant impact on the historical understanding and cultural heritage of the region. The Baburnama provides valuable insights into the social, cultural, and political landscape of Mewat during the 16th century. Babur's vivid descriptions of the geography, people, and customs of Mewat offer a unique perspective on the region's history and its significance in the larger context of the Mughal Empire.

The memoir serves as a primary historical source that has contributed to the understanding of Mewat's past and its place in the broader narrative of Indian history. Furthermore, the Baburnama has also influenced the cultural and literary heritage of Mewat. Babur's memoirs have inspired artistic and scholarly endeavors, contributing to the preservation and promotion of Mewat's historical and cultural legacy. The memoir has served as a source of inspiration for historians, researchers, and artists, fostering a deeper appreciation for Mewat's rich heritage.

The legacy of the Baburnama on Mewat extends beyond historical and cultural significance. It has also played a role in shaping the identity and pride of the region, as it serves as a testament to Mewat's enduring place in the annals of Indian history. The memoir has contributed to the preservation of Mewat's historical memory and has helped in fostering a sense of connection to the region's past. In summary, the Baburnama has left a lasting legacy on Mewat, influencing the understanding, preservation, and promotion of the region's historical and cultural heritage. Babur's detailed account of Mewat has contributed to the region's historical narrative and has played a role in shaping its identity and pride.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Babur's account of Mewat in the Baburnama provides a rich and valuable historical perspective on the region during the 16th century. His detailed descriptions of the geography, people, customs, and his encounters with the local rulers offer unique insights into the social, cultural, and political landscape of Mewat. The memoir serves as a primary historical source, shedding light on the dynamics of power, conflict, and cultural exchange in the region during the Mughal era. Babur's conquest had a significant impact on Mewat, shaping its political, cultural, and economic dynamics. The region was brought under Mughal control, leading to changes in governance, administration, and the spread of Mughal cultural practices and traditions. The integration of Mewat into the Mughal Empire had a lasting impact on the region's history and development.

Furthermore, the Baburnama has left a lasting legacy on Mewat, influencing the understanding, preservation, and promotion of the region's historical and cultural heritage. It has played a role in shaping the identity and pride of the region, contributing to the preservation of Mewat's historical memory and fostering a sense of connection to the region's past. Overall, Babur's account of Mewat in the Baburnama is a valuable historical source that has contributed to the historical narrative and cultural legacy of the region. It continues to inspire scholarly endeavors and artistic pursuits, fostering a deeper appreciation for Mewat's rich heritage and its enduring place in the annals of Indian history.

References:

1. Zahiruddin Mohammad Babur (14 February 1483-26 December 1530), the founder of the Mughal Empire in Indian subcontinent, was born to Umar Shaikh Mirza and Qutlugh Nigar Khanam in the city of Andijan of Fergana (Khokand) kingdom of Timurid Empire. On the death of Sultan Abu Said Mirza, a great-grandson of Timur and Babur's grandfather, his extensive dominions covering Khurasan and Transoxiana were divided among his sons (1469). Umar Shaikh Mirza got Fergana, Sultan Ahmad Mirza became the ruler of Samarkand, Bukhara and Hissar, Sultan Mahmud Mirza became king of Balkh and Ulugh Beg Mirza became the king of Kabul. After his father's death on 8 June 1494, Babur inherited his father's precarious throne at the tender age of eleven years and a few months. His life had hitherto been a series of wild adventures, in which, to judge by his own writings, he took a positive pleasure. From the very start, young Babur faced fierce resistance from his nobles and even his uncles, who tried to replace him with his more malleable younger brother. Nonetheless, when only fifteen he managed

to seize control of Timur's former capital of Samarkand but soon expelled. He also tried afterwards several fruitless attempts to occupy Samarkand. Finally he established himself, after many vicissitudes, as king of Kabul. Babur took Kabul from Muqim Beg Arghun usurper almost without any opposition in 1505. With this move, Babur gained a new kingdom of Kabul and Ghazni, re-established his fortunes and would remain its ruler until 1526. The famous first battle of Panipat made him master of Indian empire which was held on 21st April 1526 between Babur and Ibrahim Lodi.

2. Raja Hasan Khan (c1517-1527), popularly known as Raja Hasan Khan Mewati, was virtually ruling Mewat area, from his capital at Alwar, during the lifetime of his father Alawal Khan before 1527. It is said that around 1517, Hasan Khan was started to rule the Mewat region in the life time of his father Alawal Khan. During that time the ruler Alawal Khan was too old to take important decisions of his government. The date of his accession is not sure, and it is also not sure that his coronation took place or not, but it is the fact that Hasan Khan was ruling the area of Mewat from the time of Ibrahim Khan Lodi as his father Alawal Khan was too old in age. Hasan Khan's formal coronation after his father's death could not have taken place as his father was found dead in his camp in the battle field of Kanwaha and thereafter Hasan Khan also killed in the battle field in fighting with Babar. Being the brother-in-law of the ruling monarch Ibrahim Lodi Hasan Khan had full power and position at the Delhi Court.
3. Annette Susannah Beveridge (1922). *Memoirs of Babur* (trans. *Baburnama* of Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur Padshah Ghazi), Volume-II, London, pp. 577-78.
4. *Memoirs of Babur, op. cit.*, p. 545. (Babur writes, "His trusted man, Karn-chand by name, who had come from him to me in Agra when his son (Nahar i.e. Tiger) was with me there, came now from that son's presence in Alur and asked for peace. Abdur Rahim Shaghawal went with him to Alur, conveying letters of royal favour, and returned bringing Nahar Khan who was restored to favour and received parganas worth several laks for his support" Babur further says that in the way, at Sunkar, Hasan Khan Miwatis son Nahar Khan escaped from Abdur Rahim Shaghawal's charge. *Memoirs of Babur, Volume-II, op. cit.*, pp. 578&581.)
5. John Leyden and William Erskine (2021). *Memoirs of Zaheeruddin Mohammad Babur*, London, Volume-II, p. 247; *Memoirs of Babur, Volume-II, op. cit.*, pp. 523.
6. Williams, Rushbrook (1918). *An Empire Builder of the 16th Century*, London, p. 140; *Memoirs of Zaheeruddin Mohammad Babur, op. cit.*, Volume-II, p. 254; *Memoirs of Babur, Volume-II, op. cit.*, p. 529.
7. Edwardes & Garrett (1930). *Mughal Rule in India*, London, p. 9.
8. *Memoirs of Babur, Volume-II, op. cit.*, pp. 552-3.
9. *Memoirs of Zaheeruddin Mohammad Babur, op. cit.*, p. 286.
10. *Memoirs of Babur, Volume-II, op. cit.*, p. 557.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 562&573.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 563.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 575. Babur writes:
 "For Islam's sake, I wandered in the wilds,
 Prepared for war with pagans and Hindus,
 Resolved myself to meet the martyr's death,
 Thanks be to Allah! A *Ghazi* I became."
14. *Ibid.*, p. 580.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, p. 581.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 578-79.