

ALEXANDER BURNES'S TRIP TO BUKHARA SHARIF AND HIS RELATIONS WITH THE BUKHARA KUSHBEGI

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Abstract

In the 19th century, the clash of interests between the Russian Empire and Great Britain in Central Asia created political competition between the two empires. This rivalry led to efforts by both empires to gather valuable information about the area. Therefore, both empires began to send their spies to this region in the guise of travelers, merchants, and travelers. Of course, to embark on such a difficult journey, a traveler must be able, courageous, brave, patient, knowledgeable, and intelligent. One such traveler was Alexander Burnes (1805-1841), a native of Scotland. He was fluent in Persian, Arabic and Hindi. He wrote a work called "Travels into Bokhara," meaning "Journey to Bukhara." In this book he describes the difficulties encountered on the way, the social, political, religious and ethnic events of the peoples, and this book brings Alexander Burnes great fame in Great Britain. This book also contains valuable information about the Bukharan Emirate.

Keywords W. Moorcroft, Mohan Lal, Buyuk Britaniya, Hindiston, Rossiya, Ark, O'zbek, Registon, Central Asia.

Introduction

On June 27, 1832, he arrived in Bukhara Sharif along with his companions, James Gerard, a doctor who was very eager to travel, and Mohan Lal, a Kashmiri. Before entering the territory of Bukhara, he wrote a flattering letter to the Bukharan Kushbeg. The message was as follows. "He expresses his desire to witness the beauty of the famous city of Bukhara and in his letter glorifies Kushbeg as "the pillar of Islam" and "the pearl of religion."¹ The letter, full of flattery, was liked by the Kushbegs of Bukhara, and he sent a messenger to invite them to the city. To avoid attracting people's attention, they change their clothing to local ones, following the laws and customs of Bukhara. On the same day, they were invited to the Bukhara arch. Because his companions were ill, Alexander Burnes was forced to go to the ark himself. He presents Kushbegi with a silver watch and a Kashmiri dress, but Kushbegi refuses to accept the gift as a slave of the Tsar. The conversation between Kushbegi and Alexander Burnes lasted about two hours. When Qushbegi asked him about the reason for his visit to Bukhara Sharif and what he brought with him, he replied with a false story about his departure from India to his native

¹ Peter Hopkirk, "The Great Game." 1990. p. 146.



Great Britain, and that the popularity of Bukhara among the peoples of the East led him to visit it, and he showed Qushbegi the letter he received from the Governor-General of India.

When the Prime Minister asked him what his profession was, he replied that he was an officer of the Indian Army. When Kushbegi asked about his luggage, Alexander Burnes was concerned that his luggage would be searched, stating that he had a compost and that he was interested in stars and celestial bodies. (In fact, this device was essential to their secret work.) The Prime Minister then asks for information about the positive combinations of the planets and what the price of grain will be next year. The Prime Minister will be disappointed when he says that our astronomical knowledge is not sufficiently predictive. In fact, the Prime Minister was pleased with him and took him under his protection and forbade them to use paper and ink while in Bukhara. Because if they were reported to the Emir as spies, it would cost them dearly. He also said that the road to the Caspian Sea through Khiva had been closed last year, and if they wanted to go to Russia they would either have to cross the road north of Bukhara or go through the Turkmen desert below Urgench to Astrabad on the Caspian coast. Two days after the interview, the minister sent for him again, because he had not completely recovered from his suspicions. The vizier told him jokingly, I think you wrote about Bukhara. He said that he had come to see the wonders of Bukhara, that he had viewed the city with the permission of the vizier, and that he had seen the gardens outside the city walls. The minister is pleased with her sincerity and says she is glad to see him always in the evening.

When Alexander Burnes told the Minister, who was curious about everything, that he had a slightly new and beautiful composition that interested him. The vizier had forgotten that he was a slave of the Shah and could not take anything from him. When the vizier tried to negotiate the price of the compost, he interrupted him with a guarantee, hearing of his zeal for religion, and knowing that the compost could show him the qibla of the huge mosque he was building in Bukhara, he said that he had brought the compost to him from India as a gift. Alexander Burnes mainly rested in the Bukharan Registan in the evening, as the Registan opened in the evening. On the other two sides of the Registan were large buildings and a student college, and on the fourth of it was a fountain filled with water in the shade of huge trees. Alexander Burnes also provided valuable information about the population of the Bukharan Emirate and the peoples bordering it. In particular, in his work "Travels into Bokhara," he said the following about the different nationalities and peoples of Bukhara. "The Khivans have their own kind of toughness, and they are distinguished from other peoples by their caps that are a foot high,"² he said. The Russians, on the other hand, faced the pitiful conditions of slavery. Instead of a small square hat and a belt, a string is worn that distinguishes Hindus from Muslims. The Jew is a creature like the Hindu: he wears a slightly different dress and a cone-shaped cap. However, no sign stands out as well as the well-known features of the Hebrew people. In Bukhara, they are a very beautiful race, and I saw several Rebekahs³ during my travels. Their characteristic features are the rings of beautiful curly hair hanging from their cheeks and neck. There are about 4,000 Jews in Bukhara, immigrants from Mashhad, Iran, who are mainly engaged in dyeing fabrics. They are treated the same way as Hindus, and there are very few wandering

² The foot (English: foot - foot) is a British, American, and ancient Russian unit of measurement of distance, equal to 30.48 centimeters.

³ A female name of Jewish (biblical) origin, one of the forms of the name Revekka.



Armenians in Bukhara. In addition to these exceptions, a stranger sees beautifully dressed Turkestan Muslims in the bazaars. A large white turban and a dark chogha and three or four other similarly depicted garments are common garments. The Registan leads to the palace, and the Uzbeks are pleased to go to the Shah in a colorful silk dress called "udrus," sewn in the brightest colors, which is intolerable to anyone except the Uzbek. Several high officials wore suzani, and their positions can be distinguished by their clothing. They rode into the castle, and the rest dismounted at the gate. Almost every person who visits the ruler is seen as his slave. Most of them are Persians or their descendants, and their appearance is strange.

It is said that three-quarters of the population of Bukhara is of slave origin, as there were those who were generally not inclined to return home for the very few centuries brought from Iran. Most Bukharians appear on horseback; but, whether on horseback or on foot, they wear boots, pedestrians walk in high-heeled and low-heeled shoes, which made it difficult for me to walk and even stand. They are about one and a half dyuym⁴ high, and its apex is less than a third of its diameter. This is the national footwear of Uzbeks. Some high-ranking men wear boots on top of their boots, which they take off when they enter the room. I must not forget the women in the census. They usually ride on horseback as men do, and a few walk on foot, and all in black paranja. However, no one should speak to them here; if any of the Emperor's harem passes, you are advised to look in the other direction, and if you ignore this advice, you will be in trouble. The righteousness of "Holy Bukhara" is so sacred.⁵

Alexander Burnes describes the bazaars of Bukhara in this way. "In the middle of the square, seasonal fruits are sold under the shade of a square cloth mounted on a single pillar. The incredible work of farmers in growing grapes, melons, apricots, apples, peaches and plums is amazing - they always have a customer. It is difficult to cross the street, and this is only done by someone riding a horse or donkey. The donkeys are very delicate and the riders move at a fast pace with their luggage. Light carts move up and down because the streets are not too narrow for wheelchairs to move. In every market place, instead of teapots, hot tea is brewed in a large European cup and an iron samovar, and this tea is kept hot. Bukharan people like to drink tea because they drink it anytime and everywhere and in half a dozen ways: with and without sugar, with and without milk, with butter, with salt. From these hot beverage sellers, you can buy "rahut i jon" or the flavor of life - grape jam or syrup mixed with crushed ice. The abundance of ice is one of the biggest delicacies of Bukhara, and you can find it until cold weather begins. Ice is stored in winter and sold at a price that even the poorest people can afford.

In Bukhara, no one even thinks of drinking water without freezing it. Even beggars can be seen buying ice when they ask for charity from passengers, expressing their helplessness. When the temperature reaches 90 degrees, it is a very pleasant sight to see huge ice blocks stained in different colors, crushed and stacked in heaps like snow. Suffice it to say that almost anything can be purchased in Registan: European jewelry and crockery, Chinese tea (which is rather

⁴ The dium (Dutch: duim - from thumb) is a unit of measurement of distance in some non-metrical European measurement systems. Usually equal to 1/12 or 1/10 ("decimal inches") of the corresponding country's foot. Today, the term "inch" refers to the English inch of 2.54 cm.

⁵ Travels into Bokhara Volume I by Alexander Burnes London, Published 1834, by John Murray, Albemarle Street. 173,174 pages



coarse, however), Indian sugar, Manilla spices. As the evening approaches, this crowded scene closes, the King's drum is played, which is repeated by others in every corner of the city, and at a certain hour no one is allowed to go out without a light. These regulations are great for the city police, and large sets of fabrics on every street are left in stores at night with complete security."⁶ Describing the Uzbeks, he said, "Uzbeks are a simple people, and even if they speak to you in a tone of hatred or anger, it is easy to get along with them. They never greeted us in any form among Muslims; but there are several other greetings, the most common of which are "May your lives grow" (doulut zyada) or (oomr duraz) "Long live." Nevertheless, before sitting down with us, they stretched out their hands, stroked their beards, and recited a fatwa or prayer from the Koran"⁷

He advises travelers to collect such knowledge before traveling to eastern countries. He must be aware of trade, art, science, religion, medicine, and, in fact, everything, and that any answer is better than a negative one, because in these countries, ignorance is interpreted as real or purposely concealed. He said this, describing the slave market. "I took this opportunity to see the slave market in Bukhara, which is held every Saturday morning. Uzbeks manage all their affairs primarily through slaves brought by the Turcomans from Iran. In thirty or forty shops these poor creatures are put up for sale, and the buyer examines them like cattle. When I went to the market in the morning, there were only six unfortunate slaves, and I saw how they were being abandoned. If they are Muslims, that is, Sunnis, they will be questioned first of all about their parents and their capture, because Uzbeks do not consider Shias to be true believers; like early Christians, they consider the sect to be more repulsive than unbelief. Then, when the buyer is satisfied that the slave is a disbeliever, he examines his body, in particular, whether he has recovered from the leprosy common in Turkestan, and then begins to haggle over its price. Three Persian youths were sold for thirty gold. It was amazing to see how satisfied the poor people were with their prices.

I heard one of them tell me how he had been captured while shepherding sheep in the south of Mashhad. But I have been convinced that slaves are treated kindly in all parts of the country; and the fact that many of them have been in the country since their liberation confirms this fact. The markets of Bukhara are mainly supplied by Urgench. Russians and Chinese are rarely sold."⁸ He also provides information about those who committed crimes against religion. "That morning I went from the slave market to the big market, and my attention fell on those who committed crimes against religion. Four of them fell asleep during the prayer, and another boy was smoking in a public place, and then he started running with his pipe. There you can buy tobacco products openly, but if you smoke in a public place you will be punished immediately, or you will be ridden on a donkey as an example to others and publicly condemned. If a man catches a pigeon flying on a Friday, he shall have a dead bird on his neck and a camel on his back. If he is seen on the street during prayer and is guilty of such neglect, a fine and imprisonment are imposed."⁹

⁶ Travels into Bokhara Volume I by Alexander Burnes London, Published 1834, by John Murray, Albemarle Street. 175,176 pages

⁷ 177 pages of the same book

⁸ That same book is 177,178 pages

⁹ 178 pages of the same book



He also touched upon the social situation of the Indians in Bukhara. "Bukharan Indians are not allowed to build temples, idols and to ride horses inside the fortress, and their wearing of their own uniforms shows them as an persecuted race. They paid a jizya tax ranging from 4 to 8 rupees per annum, and they were never to abuse Islam. When the king passes through the part of the city where they live, they must gather and wish him health and well-being; When they are riding outside the city, if they encounter a ruler, they must get off their horses. They cannot buy slaves, because the infidel defiles the believer; None of them could bring their families across the border. Apart from the above, Hindus in Bukhara have equal rights with Muslims. I didn't encounter cases of forced conversion to Islam, on the contrary, three or four people had changed their faith for many years. However, they talk loudly about their benefits, and they are pleased that they are making a lot of money. There are about 300 Indians in Bukhara, who live in their own caravanserai. They are mainly from Shikarpur in Sindh, and their number has increased significantly in recent years."¹⁰

The Prime Minister had a long conversation with Alexander Burnes on trade issues related to Bukhara and Britain, and expressed his deep concern about strengthening ties between the countries, and he asked A. Burnes to return to Bukhara as a trade ambassador and to bring one good pair of spectacles on his return. Alexander Burnes took the opportunity to express to the minister his wish to perform his duty to the Tsar. The minister refused, saying, "I am as good as the Emir." Nevertheless, Alexander Burnes decides to see the king, and on the following Friday at noon, he describes him as seeing his majesty and his palace praying. "The king was not thirty years old, and his face was not peculiar. His eyes were small, his face pale and pale. He was wearing a silk cloak of udrus, wrapped in a white turban, and sometimes feathers decorated with diamonds. The Quran was raised before him; In front of him and behind him were two bearers of gold lace, who shouted in Turkish: "Pray to Allah, that the commander of the believers may act justly!" His party did not exceed a hundred. Most of them were dressed as Russian brokers and wore gold-plated swords - I should call them knives - a mark of distinction in this country. His present grandeur is better than any of his predecessors, and when he passed, people gathered by the roadside, stroking their beards, and wishing him peace, and I did the same. When the character of this king, Bahadur Khan, rises to the throne and stands high among his compatriots, he gives away all his wealth. He is strict in his religious rites, but less conservative than his father, Amir Haydar. He acts in accordance with the Qur'an in all cases; it seems that he even lives on the per capita tax levied on Jews and Hindus. It is said that the revenues of the country are mainly spent on mullahs and mosques, but this young king is ambitious and militant, and I think he spends his treasures on his troops and on increasing his power.

The life of this sovereign is less than the life of free men. Water for the ruler was brought in a leather mesh under the supervision of two officers. The vizier opens it, first his men, then himself drinks it, and then, sealed again, sends it to the Emperor. The ruler's daily food is shipped in a locked box and checked by the vizier, who first eats the food and waits for an hour to see how the food affects. The Governor and the Minister have one key. Fruits, sweet meats,

¹⁰ 178 pages of the same book



and every meal passes the same test."¹¹ Alexander Burnes also touched upon the water supply of Bukhara. "About twenty caravanserais house merchants from different nations, and about a hundred ponds and fountains built of rectangular stone provide water for its large population. The city is crossed by ditches that bring water from the Samarkand River. Bukhara is very poorly supplied with water, the river is about six kilometres away, and the canal opens once every fifteen days. In summer, the population sometimes misses good water for months, and when we were in Bokhara, the canals had been unloved for sixty days. The snow had not melted on the high ground of Samarkand, and the trivial water of the river had not reached Bukhara and was wasted. After all, it is said that the water is bad and the cause of the heguinea worm, this disease is very common in Bokhara, the local people say that the disease originated from water, and they add that these worms are the same as the worms that infected the body of the Prophet Job¹².

Another English traveler, W. Murckforth, who arrived in the Bukharan Emirate in 1825 as a horse trader, also provided information about these intestinal worms. "Bukhara has long been known for the existence of a unique unpleasant intestinal worm that kills both humans and animals. Although Moorcroft did not dare openly conduct his own investigation, he was convinced that the reservoirs and canals in Bokhara were to blame. He was struck by the contrast between the city's clean streets and stables, its stinking and dirty water supply. He was quite right. Had Kushbegi followed Moorcroft's rules of hygiene, Bokhara would have recovered from the plague that had killed and crippled thousands of citizens for more than a century. Because W. Murckforth is a veterinary doctor, he cannot be indifferent to these events. He gave his advice to the barber-surgeon Mirza Umar and his wife, known in Bukhara as the "worm-killer." He also carefully examined some of the caterpillars, some were 1 meter long and came from the bodies of the mirza's patients."¹³

In addition, Mohan Lal, who traveled to Bukhara with Alexander Burnes in 1832, also provided information in his work. "Bukhara residents are very worried about worms. It resembles a string and comes out of every part of the body, sometimes it breaks into pieces and makes the suffering person lie in bed for four or five months, during which time he experiences the most awful pain. Birds, cats, dogs, and all kinds of quadrupeds suffer from the same disease."¹⁴ During Alexander Burnes's one-month stay in Bukhara, the Prime Minister called him several times and asked him questions. In particular, he states this. "He wanted to know our general conceptions of religion, whether we believe in God or not. I told him that we believe in the inequality of God, that He is everywhere, that He has sent prophets to the earth, and that there is a Day of Judgment, Hell, and Paradise. "Do you worship idols?" continued the minister, but I refused. He asked me to uncover my breast in order to prove to him that I did not wear a cross, and I immediately showed him that I did not wear a cross, and the Minister smiled and invited us to drink tea, saying that they were people of the book, better than the Russians. Now

¹¹ That same book is 182,183 pages

¹² The same book contains 187,188 pages

¹³ "Beyond Bokhara The life of William Moorcroft Asian Explorer and Pioneer Veterinary Surgeon 1767-1825" by Garry Alder. Published by Low Price Publications Delhi-2012. 351 page.

¹⁴ "Travels in the Panjab, Afghanistan, & Turkistan, to Balkh, Bokhara, and Herat; and a visit to Great Britain and Germany. By Mohan Lal, London-1846, 131 page.



the minister wanted to hear our attitude towards the Hindu and Muslim population of India. I told him that we respected both of their superstitions, that we repaired their mosques and temples, spared the peacocks, cows and monkeys because they liked it. "Is it true that these people worship these animals?" I said they either did it or they respected it. Astafrullo. 'May God have mercy on us!' he answered. A cunning religious man now asked me if I ate pork. I told him that poor people consume it a lot. "What does it taste like?" he said, "I've heard it looks like beef."¹⁵

When Alexander Burnes informed Kushbegi that he wanted to return to his country, he offered to move in a caravan of two hundred camels on their way to Russia, informing Kushbegi that they wanted to return to their homeland through the Caspian Sea, to the territory of Iran, and from there to their homeland, as the route was being traversed by a Russian mission. On July 21, 1832, during their farewell to the Bukharan Minister, the Minister asked them to return to Bukhara as "trade ambassadors" and establish wider trade relations with Bukhara. The prime minister summoned the leader of the Turcomans, the caravan leader and protector of the caravan, entrusting them with the safety of these European tourists, and handing them a royal decree, advising them not to use it until they needed it. Then the vizier gives them a gown to keep them from leaving empty-handed, and he gets up to bless them, and the travelers thank the vizier and continue on their way. In conclusion, it can be said that Alexander Burnes's trip to Bukhara Sharif was successful. Under the protection of the Qushbegi, their safety was ensured, they were able to collect the information they needed, a journey that would bring Alexander Burnes fame in London. In addition, Alexander Burnes emphasized the hospitality of Uzbeks: "Uzbek people have a very unusual custom, because the host becomes a servant and gives each dish personally, and he doesn't touch anything until each guest has eaten. They're kind people, and if fanaticism is their main drawback, it's the fault of education"¹⁶ said. The fact that Alexander Burnes was well acquainted with the work "Baburnama" can be seen from the following sentences. "There are few cities in the world where one can live," says Babur, "which are as beautiful as Samarkand."

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¹⁵ Page 194 of the same book

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