

# Historical Hunts

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ALMOST all kings shared a common pleasure in killing of animals. They called it a royal privilege but their motives, mode and mood of hunting produced mixed results. Frivolous among them returned with brides, sharp shooters carried their gamebook to record their precise facts and figures, inquisitive monarchs made it an opportunity to mix freely with his army, nobles and to enquire into the condition of the people, ambitious among them designed their games in order to marshal their armies and the not so lucky kings often returned with first aids!

In the long list of Indian rulers, hunting has always remained a priority. Among early medieval rulers, Ilutmish's fondness for hunting has been widely recognised. Balban praised for his skill and Alauddin Khilji's passion was no less. For these sultans their hunting expedition lasted not more than four months but with the advent of Firoz Shah Tughlaq, he pursued the chase all round the year.

Firoz is said to have stayed in his capital only for 13 days during the first seven years of his reign. His hunting excursions had become proverbial, as Barni records, "If I were to write a complete account of Firoz's hunts, I will have to write a Shikar Nama-i-Firoz Shahi." Firoz normally hunted for two weeks at a stretch and he himself planned and organised the hunting rings. One of his hunting innovations was the revolving cauldron with ten iron legs to be carried in the royal train for cooking the flesh of the hunted animals. The stables of Firoz were replete with animals of variety and his hunting department was an ever expanding affair. Besides hunting in the jungles he loved watching lion-elephant fights and when the combat would be in full swing, he would side with the elephant by shooting an arrow at the lion.

In one of his hunting expeditions, Firoz was separated from the main party and overtaken by night he took shelter in a village. He was entertained by a family where a young girl served wine and food. Firoz was romantically disposed and tended to jest with the girl and the following day he asked for the girl's hand. She gladly agreed and they together came to Delhi where marriage was

solemnised amidst much pomp and ceremony.

In and around Delhi, Firoz had constructed numerous hunting lodges. Although they were built at higher altitudes they were shrouded in solitude and deprivation. Some of these are Malcha Mahal, now occupied by the Begum of Oudh in the middle of the jungle, approached from Sardar Patel Road; Bhuli Bhatyari ka Mahal lies idle in the Woodland Park near Panchkutin Road; Kushk Mahal is neatly preserved within the compound of Teen Murti House; the three arched Mahal together with a large bund at Mahalpur and finally the Kushk-i-Shikar, known by various names and associated with numerous stories lies within the Hindu Rao Hospital complex. Historical records suggest that the hunting lodges of Firoz were well supplied with water in shape of a baoli or a river bund.

Royal Pigeon House at Tughlaqabad and the Pigeon Tower in Firoz Shah's Kotla remind us of pigeon popularity during the pre-Mughal days. A much later monument known as Pigeon House can be seen at Mehrauli. Little is known about this roofless octagonal building built in rubble masonry, south the east of Qutb Minar. Mughals too had a fancy for pigeons. Umar Shaikh Mirza, father of Babur, was so fat and devoted to these birds that his weight brought down the pigeon house built out over the steep cliff. Akbar had 20,000 pigeons and he loved watching their

antics. One of his tutors was dismissed for being more inclined to teach his pupil the art of pigeon flying rather than the rudiments of letters.

At Hashtsal, close to Uttam Nagar, is an interesting hunting landmark of the Mughals believed to be the shooting tower of Shah Jehan. The brick built minar, resembling the third storey of Qutb Minar, stands on a double platform. The lower one has been lost to the surrounding buildings. The remaining height being provided alternatively with angular and semi-circular flutings. The villagers believe that originally the minar was seven storeys tall and covered by a canopy but today the structure is reduced to a skeletal 17 metres devoid of its upper storeys and the buried base. About 100 metres to its north west are the remains of a double storeyed pavilion, called Hathi-Khana (elephant house). It is believed that Shah Jehan had, built it as his hunting lodge.

Hunting was not all fun for everyone. Alauddin Khilji's favourite recreation proved to be disastrous in the very first year of his reign. Benighted from his hunting camp, Alauddin seated on a stool, was alone with his slave awaiting some game. Alauddin's nephew, in search of his uncle, arrived at the spot and finding him in a defenceless position ordered his archers to shower arrows at him. The solitary sultan defended himself with his stool and was bravely defended by his negro slave. Ambitious nephew, considering his uncle to be dead, rushed to the camp court and declared himself king. Luckily for Alauddin, his wounds were dressed and his soldiers arrived in time to save him from the situation.

For Slave King, Ghyasuddin, Balban, his hunting expedition started early in the morning before dawn and lasted till midnight the following day. Halagu, a contemporary rival and ruler of Baghdad, observed, "Balban in fact went out to hunt but his motive was to exercise his men and horses so that they may not prove wanting in times of danger and

war." The Mughals were equally fond of hunting but each ruler had his own set of rules. Besides, they were guided by precise instructions laid down by their ancestors. For instance, the younger had to surrender his share of the hunt to his elder in case the latter was also taking part in the chase; no one was allowed to carry a quiver in his hand; anyone entering a royal hunting ground was made a slave; hunting a lion was a royal prerogative and the escape of the beast was considered inauspicious for the king and the state.

hunting procession. Akbar, with a keen sense of observation, travelled incognito and loved to enquire about the welfare of his subjects during hunting expeditions. Once when he was made to learn that one of his huntsman had stolen a pair of shoes, he ordered the legs of the offender to be chopped off. In one of his excursions Akbar killed a snake and using the same arrow he shot a deer, which fell dead instantly. Inquisitive monarch was surprised and on closer examination discovered that the venom of the snake was responsible

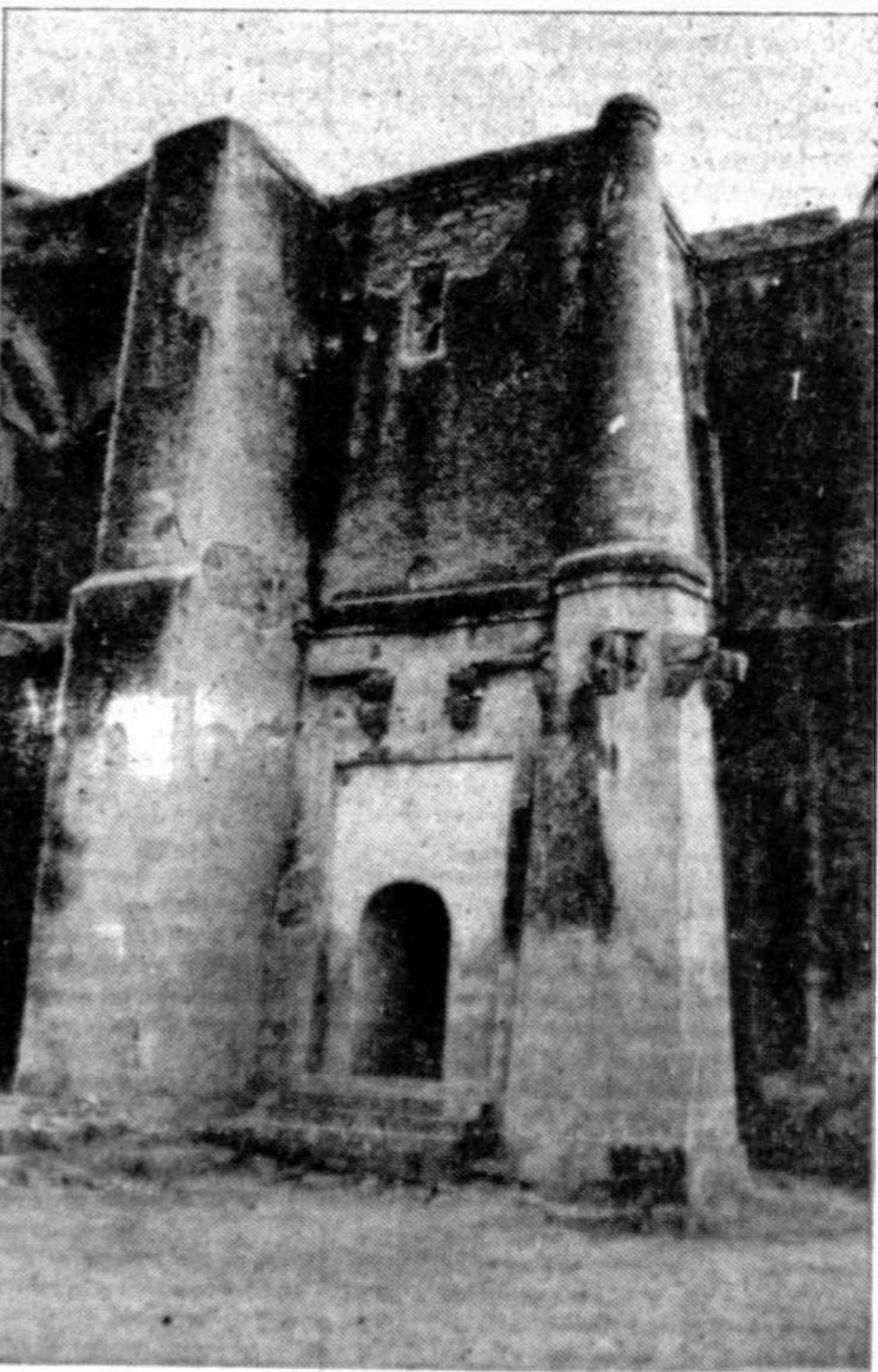
showed his compassionate side by abandoning the hunt while the shikar was in full swing. He ordered the nets to be lifted and the animals set free. The same happened with Jehangir when at the age of fifty he vowed never to hunt again, once he had missed his game and for reasons unknown had remained senseless for two hours. However, in his court he did not hesitate to shoot down one of his brave soldiers for the reason that he was wearing a tiger skin in the court where Jehangir kept a lion. The same emperor was generous enough to order for sheep skin for 600 wolves in order to save them from cold during emperor's stay in Kashmir where his sleep was disturbed by the howling of wolves.

Jehangir would have been a good contributor to Guinness Book of World Records, for the book owes its origin to a hunt-

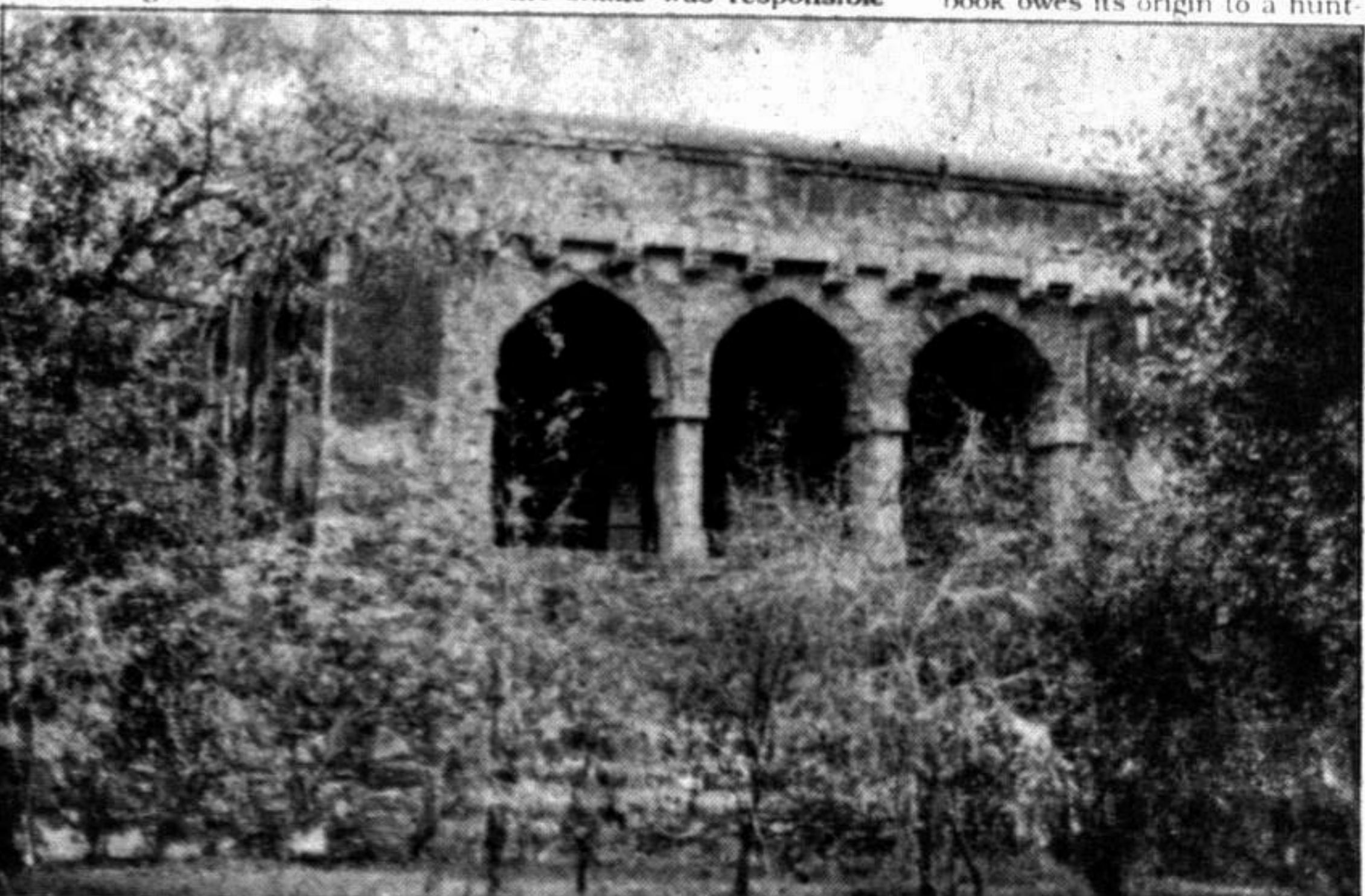
accurately and its dimensions recorded. Simultaneously emperor's score card was updated. Jehangir, by the age of 50 had killed 28, 532 animals, which included 86 tigers, 1372 deer, 90 wild boars... he often fished but never retained the catch. Every fish caught was let loose after being provided with a royal token of pearl necklace. He was the rare Mughal to have taken interest in alligator hunting and Rhino was the favourite game of Babur. Nur Jehan was probably the only Mughal lady to have taken active interest in shikar, whose dexterity with gun is vouched by a marksman like Jehangir. The emperor awarded her a pair of diamond necklace for shooting two tigers from the top of an elephant.

Shah Jehan considered hunting to be the business of the idle and so did his son Aurangzeb, who preferred conquering fortress and subduing rebels. At an early age of 14, Aurangzeb withstood the charge of an elephant while witnessing the elephant combat during the court show. His brothers fled while Aurangzeb used his spear firmly. Shah Jehan presented a lakh of rupees as propitiatory offering for the prince.

Aurangzeb often reprimanded his sons for indulgence in hunting when affairs of the state was being neglected. He was not totally against hunting but preferred the duties of the crown. Once he was tired of hunting and was reposing under the shade of a tree. He was accompanied by only one huntsman, who was formerly in the service of Dara Shikoh (arch rival and eldest brother of Aurangzeb). The emperor was talking to his accomplice on various subjects and thus encouraged, he asked the Mughal emperor why he had ordered Dara to be beheaded. Such a question at such a place put the royal person into a fairly good deal of fear. Aurangzeb somehow made a pacifying reply but on returning to the palace he ordered the huntsman never to appear before him. Later when Aurangzeb lost his favourite wife, he set out hunting alone in a melancholic mood but soon returned back when re-monitored by his closest aide. Aurangzeb replied, "Lamentation in the house cannot relieve the heart, in solitude alone one can cry to his heart's content."



Jahannamah/Pir Ghulam around Hindu Rao Hospital



Kushk Mahal within the compound of Teen Murti House

The traditional Mughal style of hunting was Qamargah, where a hunting circle was formed around the shikargah and the animals in the surrounding were driven towards the centre. However, diverse methods were adopted for different animals. Usually the leopards were employed for hunting deer and Akbar even used the shikari dogs. These hunting animals wore jewelled collars and were subject to rank with royal drum beat as and when they entered the

for the deer becoming motionless instantly. He preserved the dead snake and since then a special Mughal officer was commissioned to collect and preserve poison for instant use. The tradition was maintained by the later Mughals who never showed irritation against the gondees, rajas or princes but secretly silenced them.

As Akbar grew older and the empire settled, hunting took the place of battles but strangely like Ashoka, Akbar

ing trip in 1951, when Sir Hugh Beaver (head of the Guinness Brewing Co.) shot at but missed a golden plover. Wondering whether the bird was the fastest flying species in Europe, Sir Hugh scanned his references but in vain. Next, he started his office for collection of facts and figures.

Jehangir's gamebook was not very much different. Once he shot an animal, it was packed sealed and brought to the royal tent where it was measured

## The Year that was and the Year that is The British Economy

Sagar Chaudhury writes from London

In the special supplement entitled "1994: The Year In Retrospect" published with this paper on January 1, 1995, I attempted a review of the major economic events of the year, touching upon, among others, the current trend towards privatisation and de-regulation in various parts of the world. Now, speaking about privatisation and de-regulation of public enterprises, Britain may well be branded the world leader in this respect. Its conservative government claims to have started the trend in the early 1980's — a trend that now has a global momentum. Thus, an overview of what has happened to the British economy in 1994 is certainly called for.

FOR one thing, economic growth in Britain has been higher than expected — more than 2 per cent in fact. Inflation reached its lowest point in nearly thirty years. Unemployment also came down, albeit only a little. But the government got scant credit for these developments. The "feel-good" factor that wins elections remains elusive. Good economic news has not been sufficient to generate noticeable support for government policies. The first setback for the government came right at the beginning of the year with the news that Rover, the country's last British-owned volume car-maker, was to be bought by the German car-maker, BMW. The decision to sell was taken by British Aerospace, which in the 'eighties had purchased Rover from the government under a privatisation deal. Apart from the question marks over a former nationalised company being bought by a foreign competitor so soon after privatisation, the deal was seen as a betrayal of the Japanese car-maker Honda, which had built up a close working relationship with Rover and helped the British company to develop new models. Government ministers came under severe pressure in the House of Commons. The Labour Oppositions industry spokesman Robin Cook said point-blank that the deal was a "rip-off" of the taxpayer, although the industry Minister Tim Sainsbury defended the deal in the House of Commons by saying that BMW's making this very substantial investment in Britain was evidence of the dramatic improvements in competitiveness achieved by the British vehicle industry.

The Rover workforce, however, did not seem too concerned and many of them felt that BMW's investment in the company made their jobs more secure. Incidentally, Tim Sainsbury is no longer in the government — he resigned a few weeks ago as part of a medium scale cabinet reshuffle by the Prime Minister, John Major. One important argument the Conservative government failed to win in 1994 was over their proposed privatisation of the Royal Mail — the Post Office. It was to have been a key element in their legislative programme for the new session of Parliament. But the postal workers were strongly opposed to this and they had the backing of the Labour Party and even a number of conservative MPs. The government, realising it could not get a majority, backed down. This was seen as a personal defeat for Michael Heseltine, the minister who had drawn up the plans for Post Office privatisation and almost succeeded in toppling the government.

The utility company British Gas was successfully moved from the public to the private sector in the mid-1980's. In November this year, the Chief Executive of the company, Cedric Brown, was awarded a 75 per cent increase in his annual salary from £200,000 to over £400,000. At the same time, British Gas was finalising plans for making a substantial number of its workforce redundant on grounds of cutting down its overheads and finding additional capital for streamlining service to its customers. The trade unions, led by British Gas's main union GMB, have been negotiating a wage deal for their members with

British Gas very hard throughout the year and all they succeeded in getting for them was 2.9 per cent by way of annual increase in their salaries. So naturally, not only the trade unions but also the British public, including shareholders of the company are enraged at what has been widely seen as an obscene increase in the Chief Executive's remuneration. Thousands of British Gas workers at the moment are being asked to accept huge cuts in pay and holiday entitlement to "market levels". These could amount to average cuts of as much as 16 per cent. The argument given by the company is that its "cost base has become too high." Meanwhile, Mr Brown is due to appear in the House of Commons next week to face a grilling by a number of MPs for accepting what they consider to be an "over-heated" pay increase.

Some observers viewed 1994 as the year when the British public finally fell out of love with the great dream of the Thatcher era — privatisation. Evidence of this is reflected in the lukewarm reception of the government's announcement that a billion pound sell-off of one of the last great public monopolies, Rail Track, would go ahead before the election. Eight of British Rail's twenty-five passenger businesses have already been put up for sale as of Wednesday, 14th December, in the first stage of the franchising. The government proposes to sell off more than half the network by April 1996. In fact, public disillusion with privatisation is linked to the very high salaries that the directors of privatised companies have been awarding themselves. This also reflects more deep

seated changes within the society. Most people — those not enjoying the very substantial increases in income that the top levels of management are enjoying — are feeling rather left out of it all. An in spite of the fact that some significant improvements in output are visible in these sectors, many people are not seeing the benefit of this in terms of their everyday living standards. Increasing inequality, just as much as historically high levels of unemployment and less job security, may be one other factor inhibiting the return of that elusive "feel-good" factor, as the British economy is trying desperately to recover from recession. And this being an era of high rewards for the few and low returns for the many, this is perhaps the best climate for introducing one of the last and most spectacular business initiatives of 1994 — the National Lottery! The scheme was launched throughout Britain on 20th November with the promise of raise millions for charity and make at least one new millionaire every week. The draw takes place on Saturday evenings and the result is announced live on BBC television. The whole nation has become hooked, and that's no surprise, with the top prize beyond the wildest dreams of the common man — and woman — in the street. In the draw held on Saturday, 10th December, the Jackpot prize of nearly 18 million pounds — £17,880,003 to be precise — was bagged by a single individual, an Asian factory worker. Subsequent Jackpot takings have not been as large, however, and there have been accusations from many quarters including some

## Music and Musical Instruments of India

THE antiquity of Indian music is beyond our racial memory. We know almost nothing of the music of the Indus Valley civilisation, although it has left some of its musical instruments to us — the hour glass and cylindrical drums, castanets and cymbals. Perhaps, primitive man did not speak, he sang or made musical sounds like birds and animals. According to Darwin, music had its origin in the calls and cries of birds and animals. Our own theories support this view. Legend has it that Narada, exponent of the Gandharva tradition, thought that the source of musical tones was the cry of birds and animals. The Chinese, too, imitated birds and animals.

India was the first to evolve a musical system based on philosophic and metaphysical notions. According to Hindu theory, sound (nada) appears as Nada Brahma (sound as God). Among the sacred primal sounds are OM and the sound of the Damaru the drum of Shiva. Sound is a product of ether (Akasa), the first of the five elements.

Jagore says: "For us, music has, above all, a transcendental significance. That is why music remains sacred. The flute of Krishna and the veena of goddess Saraswati have metaphysical associations.

Indian classical music had its origin in the chanting of the Vedas. The chanting, based on the rules of Sama Veda, by a single priest gave rise to melody. (Congregational singing in Christian churches gave rise to harmony). India had the Gandharva (folk) and tribal traditions too. They interacted with each other, to produce richness and diversity.

From top pitch to low pitch — this was how the Sama was sung. Variations in pitch conveyed a message — of wedding or funeral. It also expressed various emotions. In similar way, variations in tones in a recitation of the Rig Veda avoided monotony. First, there were three notes — Udatta, anudatta, svrita. Later, recitation of Sama employed seven notes. In these, we find the slow evolution of Indian music. India is rich in folk dance, dramatic and classical music. Music is considered supreme. It is the supreme art and sur-

passes other arts like architecture, sculpture and painting. The Raga-Tala system is India's unique achievement. It was the first to evolve a sol-fa system. Indian sol-fa letters (sa re ga pa dha ni) are as old as the Upanishads. There has been no change. The Western sol-fa system is only a thousand years old.

The Nattiyasrastra (3rd C BC) of Bharata was the codification of an already highly developed

tion has not been bettered. The twang of the bow gave ideas of its potential as a musical instrument. The earliest instruments were Dhanuryantra, the harp, etc. Today India has a huge variety of stringed instruments, especially the species of Veenas. Many of these instruments are played with a bow. The Villadi-vadhyam (or Villu kottu) of the south is a folk adaptation (villu, bow).

itive man. The drum connotes the primeval sound (nada) at the origin of creation. The art of drumming in India has now reached a high degree of sophistication.

The cymbal, the Chintpa of Punjab and Kartals are examples of Ghana instruments. The wind instruments use air directly or indirectly. Perhaps the whistling sound produced by bamboo forests must have given rise to the venu made of bamboo, reed or cane, described in Vedic literature. The bansuri and nadaswaram are popular wind instruments. The horn amplified the human voice.



Ravishankar and Allarakha with the 'sitar' and 'tabla' respectively

Between 1000-1400 AD, there was a fusion of Hindu and Persian-Arabic music in north India, which gave rise to Hindustani music. The South retained the old tradition — the Carnatic music. Amir Khusro is said to have introduced the composite mode of singing — a mixture of Indian and Persian. He is also said to have adapted the Persian Sitar to India. New ragas were composed at this time (yaman, turushka, todli), new styles adopted (khyal, tappa) and new instruments made (rabab, sarangi).

The establishment of the 12-tone scale was the most significant development of this period.

Unfortunately, the harp and dulcimers disappeared during this period. Fingerboard instruments became popular. frets, which were movable, became fixed. The South did not remain free from these influences, although it resisted changes.

With technological developments — gramophones, radio, recorders and players, TV, satellite transmission etc — Indian music is being exposed to new and varied systems of culture.

The violin and harmonium, have become part of the Indian musical scene. While the Western brass band is a must for army and police ceremonial marches, the orchestra is extensively used by the film industry.

On the other hand, Indian music and instruments have influenced both East and West. Men like Ravi Shankar have made a Uma Shankar Mishra, Continued on page 11