

## § I

*How the Rája of Hind sent the Game of Chess to  
Núshírwán*

Since this discourse, which so delighted thee,  
Hath reached its end let chess our next theme be.  
Thus said the archimage : The Sháh one day  
Adorned his throne with the brocade of Rúm,  
And hung the crown above the ivory throne—  
A throne compact of teak and ivory.

The palace seemed all throne, the throne all Sháh,  
And all his court an army. All the palace  
Was occupied by marchlords and archimages  
From Balkh, Bukhárá, and from every side.  
The monarch of the world received these tidings,  
Brought by his vigilant intelligencers :—

C. 1720

“The envoy of the king of Hind hath come  
With elephants, with parasols, with horsemen  
Of Sind and laden camels fifty score,  
And seeketh to have access to the king.”

The watchful Sháh, on hearing this, forthwith  
Sent certain troops to go and welcome him.  
The envoy of that famed and puissant prince,  
On coming to the great king's presence, did  
Obeisance, as the use of nobles is,  
With praises of the Maker of the world,  
And gave the Sháh abundant gems as gifts,  
With earrings, elephants, and parasols.  
These Indian parasols were decked with gold  
With many sorts of jewels set therein.  
He oped the bales within the court itself,  
And brought their whole contents before the Sháh.  
There were much gold and silver in the bales  
With musk, fresh aloe-wood, and ambergris,  
Gems, diamonds, and burnished Indian swords ;

The Rája had amassed from every hand  
The products of Kannúj and Máí. They laid them  
Before the throne. The prince of sleepless fortune  
Viewed and dispatched to his own treasury  
All that the Rája had so toiled for. Then  
The envoy brought a letter which the Rája  
Had written upon silk to Núshírwán,  
And also, what had made a treasury void,  
A chess-board wrought with cunning workmanship.  
The man of Hind thus gave the Rája's message :—  
“Mayst thou abide so long as heaven endureth !  
Bid those much travailed in the quest for knowledge  
To place this board, used in the game of chess,  
Before them and set all their wits to work  
To find out how that goodly game is played,  
To find out what the name is of each piece,  
The way to move it and its proper square,  
To find out footman, elephant, and host,  
Rukh, horse, and how to move wazír and king.  
If they discover all this goodly game,  
And prove themselves the betters of the wise,  
Then, as the Sháh commandeth, I will send  
Full tribute to his court with all good will ;  
But if the nobles of the Íránian folk  
Have not the knowledge to resolve the point,  
Then, since their knowledge is no match for ours,  
Let them not seek for tax and tribute hence,  
But rather pay a tribute unto us,  
Since knowledge is of all famed things the best.”

Both heart and ear gave Núshírwán to him  
That on this wise discharged his embassy.  
They set the board and men before the Sháh,  
Who looked upon the pieces for a while.  
Half of the set was made of ivory  
And bright, the other half of teak. The Sháh,  
Whose fortune never slumbered, then inquired

About the pieces' shapes and that fair board.  
 The envoy thus replied : " 'Tis all, O king !  
 An emblem of the art of war, and thou  
 Wilt see, when thou hast found it out, the tactics,  
 The plan, and order of a battlefield."

The Sháh said : " I require a se'nnight's space :  
 The eighth day we will play right willingly."

They had a pleasant residence prepared  
 To lodge the ambassador, and then the chiefs  
 And archimages that were counsellors  
 All came before the Sháh and with the chess-board  
 In front of them considered it at large,  
 Examined it, tried every device,  
 And played with one another in all ways.  
 One spake and questioned, and another heard,  
 But none discovered how the game was played,  
 And all departed louting. Búzurjmíhr  
 Came to the Sháh, perceived him vexed and  
 troubled,

And saw ere he began the task its end.  
 " O great king," thus he spake to Núshírwán,  
 " World-lord and vigilant whose word is law !  
 I will discover all this goodly game,  
 Employing wisdom as my guide therein."

The Sháh replied : " Be this affair thy task,  
 And thine moreover health and happiness,  
 Else now the Rája of Kannúj will say :—  
 ' The Sháh hath not a single counsellor,'  
 Which were a mighty slur upon the archimages,  
 Court, throne, and men of wisdom."

Búzurjmíhr

Then took away with him the board and men,  
 And sat down with his thoughts intent thereon.  
 He tried to play the game in every way,  
 And sought to find the place for every piece.  
 He found the game out in one day and night,

Then hastened from his palace to the Sháh,  
And said : " O Sháh whose fortune triumpheth !  
These pieces and this goodly board have I  
Well studied and I understand it all,  
Helped by the fortune of the world's great king.  
'Tis fitting that the king of kings should be  
The first to see it played. Thou wilt declare :—  
' It is indeed a battlefield ! ' Then call  
The Rájá's envoy and spectators also."

The king joyed at his words, saluted him  
As prosperous and fortunate, then bade  
The archimages, nobles, and famed sages  
Attend. He called the envoy of the Rájá,  
And seated him before the famous throne.  
Said Búzurjmíhr, that man of eloquence :—  
" Priest of the Rájá of the sunlike face !  
What were the words thy monarch said to thee  
About those pieces ? Wisdom be thy mate."

C. 1722

" The illustrious Rájá," he replied, " when I  
Was quitting him said thus to me : ' Convey  
These teak and ivory pieces to the throne  
Of him that is the master of the crown,  
And say : " Assemble to thee thine archimages  
And counsellors, and set before them these.  
If they find how to play this clever game  
In the appoven way, and master it,  
We will dispatch unto thee purses, slaves,  
And tribute to the utmost of our powers.  
The king's worth will arise from knowledge then,  
Not from his treasures, men, and lofty throne ;  
But if he and his wise men fail herein,  
As being dark of counsel, then must he  
Demand no tribute from us and no treasure.  
His knowing soul then will regret past toils,  
Since, realising our shrewd hearts and counsel,  
He will dispatch still greater wealth to us.' ' "



Then Búzurjmíhr brought and set up before  
 The throne of him whose fortune never slept  
 The board and men, and said to archimage  
 And chief : " Ye sages pure of heart and wise !  
 Heed well his words and his shrewd lord's proposal."

The sage then fashioned him a battlefield,  
 Whereon he gave the kings the central place,  
 And drew their forces up to left and right,  
 The footmen eager for the fray in front.  
 Beside the king his prudent minister  
 Was posted to advise him in the fight.  
 The warrior-rukhs impetuous on their steeds  
 Were at the wings and fought on right and left.  
 Adjoining these the battle-chargers stood,  
 So that the great king proved the Rája's match,  
 And then the elephants of war arrayed  
 On either side both eager for the fight.  
 When Búzurjmíhr had thus disposed the host  
 The whole assembly stood amazed thereat,  
 The ambassador of Hind was sorely vexed,  
 And marvelled at that man of sleepless fortune,  
 He marvelled at that warlock of a man,  
 And thus his musings ran while plunged in thought :—  
 " He never saw the board and game of chess,  
 Or heard about it from the adepts of Hind !  
 How hath he learned the fashion of the game ?  
 None else could take his office."

Núshírwán

So treated Búzurjmíhr that thou hadst said  
 That fortune had unveiled its face before him.  
 The king thereafter gave commands to fill  
 A cup with royal gems. This and a purse,  
 Dínárs and steed with saddle on, gave he  
 To Búzurjmíhr and praised him mightily.