

Henry Beveridge and Annette Beveridge: late nineteenth century Scholars of the early Mughal Period

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British Colonial rule was dependent on the young British men who were picked up early in their careers. They were to apply for employment before they were sixteen year of age.¹ They were either prepared for the service in College of Fort William in Calcutta, or East India College in Hertfordshire (later at Hails bury)² and sent out in the huge Indian country to rule. Thus a huge number of district officer, judges and police officers were required to be selected in Britain, brought over by ships to India. There was a fashion in young men from seventeenth to early nineteenth century in Britain to join East India Company or the Indian Colonial Government for ‘get- rich-quick tendency’³. All the young men of the families migrated to earn abroad, like five Fraser brothers of Inverness.⁴ The young women followed the men mainly for finding their husbands. The major trend in the men was to earn to support their large families in Britain, and later in life or at retirement to come back and have a comfortable life in Britain. While in India their efforts were to carry out the Colonial orders of their superiors to letter and spirit. It is indeed very rare to see a British colonialist who would defy their rulers, wrote against their own injustices and support Indian wishes making effort to promote uplifting of Indian masses. Henry Beveridge was such a man, who suffered from his own; not only for defying, but also writing about it, and preserving Indian history by translating and editing major Indian works. It is thus not unfair to go through his story and appreciate the efforts he made and also to his wife who on his persuasion, took part in the same effort, both concentrating on early Mughal period in India.

Beveridge is a common name in Scotland. In the town, Kirkcaldy, where I live we have a Beveridge park. Henry belongs to a town called Dunfermline ten miles from Kirkcaldy and fifteen miles from Edinburgh,

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the capitol, across the river Forth. The Beveridges were involved in many professions and trades but this Beveridge family was academic. Henry's father (1799-1863), an advocate, wrote a voluminous 'Comprehensive history of India, Civil, Military and Social' in three volumes, published from 1858-62. Henry was born in 1837. Talks at home continually turned to India. His elder brother Allie, a medical doctor went to India and started sending remittances. Henry entered an open competition to join Indian Service, and in 1858, a year after the war of Independence in India, followed his brother to India as District and Session Judge.⁵

AnnetteAkroyd was an English woman born in Stourbridge, Worcestershire. She was born in 1842 and educated in Bedford College, London. At the college she developed commitment to women's education. Here she was acquainted and influenced by Keshab Chander Sen, a leader of Brahma Samaj, a Hindu reformist organisation.⁶ He visited England in 1872 and wanted to request an Englishwoman to come to India. Annette in 1872 at the age of 29, still unmarried responded to the call and took a ship from Gravesend to Calcutta. She was associated with the girl's school in Calcutta until 1875, though soon after arrival in India she fell from Keshab Chander Sen, who was preaching against girl's marriage in childhood, but when it came to himself married his own daughter as a child to be wife of a boy.

Annette travelled to India on a boat and in the same cabin, in which was travelling the mother of first wife of Henry Beveridge (Jeanie). Jeanie unfortunately died in Bengal in 1873 in childbirth in which the new born also perished. Annette met Henry during the events of these personal disasters. After five brief meetings she got married to Henry in 1875. The marriage was not for love but circumstantial as Annette accepted herself to her son who wrote; (my mother) 'never really loved my father till after she married him and as she got gradually to know him'.⁷

Both Henry and Annette had gifts of expression, and books were a substantial world, both were bibliophiles. It was the essence of their contract that each partner has the absolute unfettered right and duty of expression in private and in public of any honestly held opinion. Annette would insist her children to go to church on a Sunday while Henry insisted on them not going to Church.

Henry was always reading and writing. He started writing on the injustices of the British in India like; Patna massacre, Warren Hastings and Nand

Kumar, which he subtitled as 'Judicial murder'⁸, on administration of Justice in Bengal. He always felt injustice of England's domination of India. He did nothing to make himself safe from his seniors. He thought badly of High Court. He insisted on seeing more Indians in the high Court. He was always thought as an unsafe man. When one of his juniors was promoted over him, it became clear to him that he is not going to go higher. He retired as District and session judge after working for 25 years in 1893. He lived for 35 years after his retirement. His posting was mostly in small town like Rangpur, Bankipur and Faridpur. When he started works on his major works he must have realized his shortcoming of not viewing the major historical centres of north India. Six years after his retirement in England he decided that he must visit India on a mission of 'discovery and collection of manuscripts' for his scholarly works. He came out not as an alien ruler but as a wandering scholar. He visited from Umarmokot to Calcutta. He went to Lahore, Patiala, Gawalior, Jaipur, Alwar, Benaras, and Patna. He visited Plassey, the battleground on his bicycle. He found Bombay wholly blank for manuscripts; however he was delighted to meet a young Muslim in Bombay who recited an ode to Hafiz, the great Persian poet. He met an old Muslim on Bombay tram who described his age as 'four twenties and two' on which Henry quoted his age as 'three twenties and two'; the old man retorted, you are a '*bachcha*'. He was welcomed everywhere because of his knowledge of Persian. He for the first time sat down at the table with Muslims to eat with Nawab of Amroha who called all his local nobilities and asked them to bring their manuscripts. He saw Taj Mahal by moonlight. He visited graves of Anarkali, Abul Fazal and Badayuni. In Calcutta he met Ameer Ali, the author of History of Saracens. In some journeys he travelled in third class compartments of trains and at other places in *Shigram*, drawn by a small pony. 'What fear of storm says Sadi when Noah is the pilot' he wrote to Annette? He collected at least £100 worth of manuscripts to take with him; many others might have been gifted to him. He left India in Feb 1900.

Annette Beveridge left the school she came to establish in India for girl's education within a year of her marriage, having found her groom. Within first year of her marriage she had infection in her ears and on her honeymoon back in England she was a patient of an ENT surgeon. By the age of 35 she was hard of hearing and began to use trumpets. She had surgery on her nose and ears but hearing did not improve. By the age of 44 she was completely dependent on trumpets for her hearing. She became more and

more isolated because of her handicap and by her old age the husband and wife use to communicate by writing. She was utterly undefeated by her deafness. She gave birth to four children, two boys and two girls. She came to India as a friend but while there she lost the feeling for the Indian people and lost the sense of brotherhood and sisterhood with them, mainly because of treatment of women in the country. She described her feeling as 'murderers of women and children', cares about stone idols, enjoy child marriage and seclude its women, calling Indians on the outer verge of civilization. Her conclusion included 'west and east will not understand one another'. While in Bengal she started to work on her first book *Emperor Akbar*, a translation from German by Count Friedrich Augustus von Noer. She spent some time on obtaining consent of Countess Noer before going ahead with the work. After eighteen years in India she could take no more and in 1890 she left India for England. At the time she was working on *Akbar*. Her translation was much more than a translation; it was a revised second edition. It took five years to complete. Her fourth child and first book; *Akbar*, came together in 1890. She was at the time without knowledge of Arabic or Persian. In England the couple settled down in Surrey. Annette learned Persian in her fifties while she was grieving for the loss of her younger son. Then came the translation of *Humayun Nama* of Gulbadan Begam, when she was sixty year of age. Still later she studied Turki language while working on *Babar Nama* from Babar's language. We do not know how and where she learned Persian and Turki languages? She worked on *Babar Nama* for twenty years and it was completed when she was 80 year of age in 1921. Her translation is not felicitous from a literary point of view, but the hallmark of her work- the complete indices, scrupulous footnotes and appendices on matters of fact- have made it invaluable for later scholars up to the day.

Why did Henry chose early Mughal period and involved his wife as well, is probably lies in the fact that while in Bengal and Bihar he was disgusted of the rules of Hindu rajas and he punctured their glories claimed by Hindu rulers past and present, the so called 'twelve suns of Bengal',⁹ has no alternative but to look to north India where the lingering Great Mughals have just passed away from the scene.

Henry's articles mainly appeared in *Calcutta Review* and in *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*. In his view the object of writing a book is to liberate one's mind and to fulfill a duty. He studied India as service to be

done for future. This was the service to which he gave himself wholly. He worked on the translation of *Tuzuk Jahangiri* by A. Rogers, editing and adding notes on it in two volumes which appeared in 1909 and 1914, published by Oriental Translation Fund. His major contribution was done on the request of Asiatic Society of Bengal of which he was President for 1890. He worked on translating *Akbar Nama* of Abul Fazal. This saw its first volume published when Henry was back in England in 1902 and he continued to work on it completing the third volume in 1921 but it did not get published until 1939, ten years after his death. Abul Fazal's '*musajja-muqaffa*' Persian is very difficult and tiresome to translate. He used to call Abul Fazal by the name of 'the owl' in his conversations at home. Owl in western literature is a clever and wise bird as compared to eastern literature where it is regarded as lazy and foolish. Henry never shirked his task and every hyperbole of Abu Fazal finds its counterpart in the English translation. Henry himself was interested in history of Babar and contributed three articles on the period, Babar Padshah Ghazi (1897, *Calcutta Review*), Babar's diamond (1899, *Asiatic Quarterly*) and *The Rashhat-i-Ainal-Hayat* (1916, *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*), but he must have realized early in his career that he will not be able to undertake work on both Babar Nama and Akbar Nama and thus persuaded his wife to share, and work on Babar Nama which she performed dutifully.

Annette and Henry's married life in India from 1875 to 1890 was a period in which they kept moving and living separately with each other due to posting, child births, and illnesses of Annette. It is only in England when they got together as a family. Annette died in March 1929 followed six months later by her husband.

Henry was firmly on the side of Indian aspirations, but did not leave the locals in their criticism as well. He observed about Bengalese 'they will think and talk and talk and think but they will not act' he wrote to Annette.¹⁰ He gave utterances to his views whenever possible. He wished to bring about the self government of India as rapidly as possible. He labelled the frequent changes of officers to be the greatest obstacle to improvement. He thought that the worst sad havoc to native weaving industry has been brought to east Bengal by importation of Manchester goods. He was critical of the colonists who 'bestride the poor land of India like colossi in touch with it only at the two points of Shimla and Calcutta, and sublimely regardless of all that lies in between'¹¹. He would have

liked all judicial officers in Bengal to be held by natives. When Ilbert Bill¹² of 1883 proposed that Indian District Judges may be allowed to try European criminals a storm of revolt came among the English in Bengal. Henry was for it and had severe difference of opinion with Annette who was against the bill. Both wrote about it. He would not please the Generals and was too much before his time.

The later scholars are deeply indebted to them, both for the academic work by them for posterity. How we would be lacking in our knowledge of the period from Babar to Jahangir without their efforts.

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Abstract

The article highlights the little cited academic works by Henry Beveridge and Annette Beveridge of late nineteenth century scholars on the early Mughal period from Babar to Jahangir. This article not only sheds light on the lives of the scholars but also discusses their works. Henry's father wrote Comprehensive History of India...in three volumes. The later scholars are indebted to the works of these writers. Henry was among those few colonialists who defied the rulers in the pre-partitioned India. He wrote against their injustices and supported Indians to promote their upliftment.

Keywords: Comprehensive History of India, Henry Beveridge, Annette Beveridge, Early Mughals, colonial rulers, nineteenth century India, support for Indians upliftment.