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978-1-108-05513-0 - A Translation of the Memoirs of Eradut Khan: A Nobleman of Hindostan, Containing Interesting Anecdotes of the Emperor Aulumgeer Aurungzebe, and of his Successors

Translated by Jonathan Scott

Excerpt

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M E M O I R S
O F T H E
M O G U L E M P I R E,
B Y
E R A D U T K H A N W A Z E H.

I SHALL begin my narration from the time of my removal from the command of the fortrefs of 'Imteeauz Gur. For the duties of that office I had entertained numerous followers, a tenth of a tenth of whom, the suddennefs of my recall rendered me incapable of paying; but, as my life was yet to remain, I made my ² escape from among them in the best manner I could, with my family.

On account of my distressed circumstances, and the great distance of my late command from the Imperial camp, in order that I

¹ An important fortrefs in Dekkan, or the southern part of Hindostan. It is called Oodneh by the Hindoos, and is now in possession of the Mharattas, who retook it soon after the death of the Emperor Aulumgeer.

² To be obliged to fly from their own troops, is frequently the case with the nobles of Hindostan, on recall from office, or other emergency, as they generally keep up more than they can pay with regularity.

B

might

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might take some repose, his majesty had conferred upon me the government of ¹ Ahffunabad Koolburgah, where I remained one month; and then, leaving my dearest son, ² Huddaiut Oolla, as my deputy in that station, I proceeded with a few followers to the ³ Stirrup. I had the honour of an audience in ⁴ Pargur, while his majesty was engaged in the reduction of ⁵ Kundaneh. He shewed me much favour, nor had any change taken place in his esteem and regard towards me. I was stationed, during the siege, four cofs distant from the camp, on the only road of communication then left, as I had been successfully employed on the like service, since the commencement of the reduction of Dekkan, at ⁶ Becjapore, ⁷ Hyderabad, and other places. Though the enemy now was very numerous, and plundered even to the skirts of the camp, yet, by the divine assistance, I maintained my post with a very trifling force. For this service, I was honoured with much applause by his majesty, and my reputation with the public became high. Additional rank was also conferred, as a reward, on my dearest son, and other relations, at Koolburgah.

¹ A city, formerly the capital of the Bhamenee sovereigns of Dekkan, Ferishta's History of whom, and the succeeding Dynasties, has been translated, and will one day be offered to the public, should their approbation await this attempt. It is now of little note, and in possession of the Nizam.

² Anglicè, directed by God.

³ Meaning the emperor's person, when travelling.

⁴ A fortress in Dekkin.

⁵ Another in ditto.

⁶ Once the capital of the Adil Shawee Sultans of Dekkan, and celebrated for its magnificence. It was reduced by Aulumgeer, with all the dependencies, except what the famous Mharatta chief, Sewajee, who was a rebellious vassal of this monarchy, had wrested from it. It is now ruined, and in possession of the Mharattas. Europeans have generally written it Vissapour, but the Mussulmauns as above.

⁷ This city was the capital of Golconda and Kootub Shawee sultans, the last of whom was taken prisoner by Aulumgeer, and his kingdom reduced. It is now one of the capitals of the Nizam, who is however obliged to share the revenues with the Mharattas.

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After the reduction of ¹ Kundaneh and ² Raujegur, the emperor moved to another quarter. He had desired several of the principal nobility to accept the command of the latter, as it was of importance, and but newly conquered; but it being a post only of difficulty, they had all requested to be excused. One evening therefore he sent for me, and my son ³ Moraud Khan, and when I had entered the presence, said, “ I wish to send thee to Raujegur, art thou willing to go ? ” I replied, that his slave was ready; upon which he gave me part of the coffee before him, and ordered that, having drank it in the ⁴ Aubdar Khauneh, I should come back, and receive my dismissal. When I returned to the presence, his majesty gave me his blessing, two hundred mhors, and one coin weighing one hundred ⁵ mhors, with two horses to me and my son, and five for my bretheren. Two hundred bullock loads of grain were also ordered with me; and the following day, after morning prayer, I departed. At taking leave, his majesty promised that I should be relieved before the rainy season, then about two months distant.

By the auspices of the divine blessing, I arrived in safety at my station in eight days, and remained there forty; during which, from the solitude and romantic situation of the place, my leisure passed in pleasingly enthusiastic contemplation. ⁶ Munsoor Khan was then

¹ A fortrefs in Dekkan.

² Another in ditto.

³ Anglicè, object of desire.

⁴ The place in which water, sherbets, &c. are cooled in ice or saltpetre.

⁵ Golden coins, of this and greater weight, were often given as marks of favour. Silver coins, of several hundred rupees value, were also in use; and there is one of them now in the British Museum, of which the ingenious Mr. Richardson has given a very full description, in his very learned work, the Persian and Arabic Dictionary.

⁶ Victorious. It is, perhaps, not yet quite unnecessary to mention, that every proper name or title of persons, in the Persian, and frequently in the Hindoo language,

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then sent to relieve me, and his majesty wrote with his own hand on the firmaun of recall, that, agreeably to his promise, he commanded me to the presence; to which were added many gracious assurances of favour. I left Raujegur with the same force I had come; but as it was a great distance from the camp, and parties of the enemy were hovering abroad, at several places I was much pressed. On my arrival at the presence, I was received with great favour.

Being now again in the same situation as when I quitted Imteeauz Gur, (for my jagheer had been ruined by various depredations,) I was much distressed in my affairs, when his majesty, who was informed of every thing public and private, sent ¹ Ameer Khan to me with a message, importing, that, as distress had invaded my affairs, I had better seek a little repose in some settled office, and that he would confer upon me the ² Kelladaree and ³ Fojedaree of ⁴ Mandou, then held by ⁵ Nowazufh Khan, who, though an ameer of three thousand, was unequal to the post.

My attachment and regard to his majesty were so great, that, observing his life verging to the close, I did not wish to quit the

is an epithet descriptive of some quality in them on whom it is conferred, or the donor supposes them to possess: but, of late years, titles of honour are become so common, as to lose their respect; and there are many victorious lords of Hindostan, who never saw a battle, or drew a sword against an enemy.

¹ Noble.

² Command of a garrison.

³ Military authority in a district, under which are the criminal courts of justice.

⁴ A very extensive fortress in the province of Malwa, of which it was the capital under the Patan sovereigns. It is now much decayed, and in possession of the Mharattas.

⁵ Possessing affability.

presence,

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preference, fearful of never beholding him more, and therefore declined the offer; but, when my son and the women of my family heard of the refusal, they became immerfed in grief, for the Soubah of Malwa was to them dear as their native place. The difappointment of my fon was fuch, that he privately refolved to give up the fervice, and leave me; and my whole family were heartlefs and in defpair. At length, overcome by their fituation, and indeed they had juftice on their fide, I, in fpite of my own grief, faid to my fon, “ The power is in thy hands; I refign myfelf as a ranfom for “ thy happinefs.” The foul of my life went the fame evening to Ameer Khan, and informed him of my acceptance of this office. As that minifter was pleafed with my confenting on many accounts, he reprefted it to the emperor the fame night, when the affair was fettled. Alas! how can I exprefs what paffed within my own breaft? The following morning, at the affembly of juftice, his majefty beftowed upon me a horfe and ² khelaut, and the fame upon my fon and grandfon. It was alfo allowed me, at my particular request, to come daily to pay my refpects at the prefence, till the grants of my new office could be prepared; and though my pofts of ³ Meer Tozuk and ⁴ Darogah of the Dekkan cavalry were given to others, yet, from his majefty’s gracious favor, I was permitted to exercife the duties of them till I left the camp.

¹ It was a cuftom of the Mogul emperors to fit daily once, for the purpofe of hearing and redreffing the complaints of the people, and often twice; but this noble ufage was difcontinued by the fucceffors of Aulumgeer, which tended greatly to lofe them the refpect of their fubjects.

² An honorary drefs given always to perfons entering into office, and frequently by a fuperior to an inferior, as a mark of efteem. It is varied, in richnefs of materials, and number of garments, according to the rank of the receiver.

³ A marfhal, whofe bufinefs it is to preferve order in a proceffion, or line of march, and to report abfentees.

⁴ Superintendant, who examines the number of men and horfes, to check falfe mufters.

On

6 MEMOIRS OF THE

On the evening before my departure, the emperor opening the window of his sleeping apartment, called me to him, and said, "Absence now takes place between us, and our meeting again is uncertain. Forgive, then, whatever willingly, or unwillingly, I may have done against thee, and pronounce the words, *I forgive!* three times, with sincerity of heart. As thou hast served me long, I also forgive thee whatever knowingly, or otherwise, thou mayest have done against me." Upon hearing these expressions, my sobs became like a knot in my throat, so that I had not power to speak. At last, after his majesty had repeatedly pressed me, I made shift to pronounce the words, *I forgive!* three times, interrupted by heavy sobs. He shed many tears, repeated the words, and, after blessing me, ordered me to retire. Sorrow lay so heavy upon my mind, that, upon my arrival at ¹ Aurungabad, I was seized with a violent illness; but, as my borrowed life was not yet required, the soul and body did not separate. Until my arrival at Mandou, I was unable to move, without help, from my bed to my seat. My son remained in the fort with me only one night, and then departed for his command at ² Koterree Perrayeh. I remained one year immersed in the same grief and sorrow.

The prince Mahummud ³ Bedar Bukht being appointed to the government of Malwa, I paid my respects to him at ⁴ Oojein. In

¹ A considerable city, founded by Aulumgeer before his accession to the throne, near the celebrated fortrefs of Dowlutabad in Dekkan. He named it Khojesteher Boonnaud, or The Happy Mansion; but the people called it Aurungabad, in compliment to his title of Aurungzebe, by which Aulumgeer was distinguished before he seized the empire.

² A district in Malwa.

³ Signifying wakeful star, or propitious fortune. He was the eldest son of Azim Shaw.

⁴ Supposed to be one of the oldest cities in India, and is at present the capital of Malwa, and of Mahajee Sindia, a principal Mharatta chief.

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a short time, such a friendship grew between us, that a greater between a prince and subject cannot be conceived. He would not be an instant without me: he would not eat of any thing, but he sent me part of it: he did nothing of importance without asking my advice, and considered my opinion as religiously decisive. In short, the particulars of his favour are beyond relation; but, on this account, I became envied by all his dependants.

Soon after this, the illustrious prince Mahummud ¹ Azim Shaw, coming from Guzarat to visit the emperor, passed through Malwa, on his route to ² Ahmednuggur. From the favour he had beheld me in with his father, my attention to himself, and the unbounded praises of his son Bedar Bukht, he behaved to me in such a gracious manner, as to relate would occasion prolixity. When he had gone through Malwa, the government of Guzarat was conferred on Bedar Bukht, who departed for that province, and took me with him as far as the frontiers, beyond which I dared not pass without leave from the emperor. How shall I express his manner of parting? He made me promise to write him weekly, and said, that he would favour me as often with letters under his own hand, including every important occurrence, in order to have the benefit of my advice for his conduct. This sort of correspondence was kept up between us regularly, till the life of his majesty shadow ³ of God arrived at an end. I must now relate some particulars of that important event ⁴.

A.H. 1118.
A.C. 1707.
Feb. 21st.

The

¹ Signifying great king. He was the third by birth, but second surviving son of Aulumgeer.

² A considerable city of Dekkan, once the capital of the Nizam Shawee sultans, reduced to the Mogul yoke under Shaw Jehaun, but now under the Mharattas.

³ An epithet common to majesty, with all the orientals.

⁴ It may not be amiss to insert here two letters written by Aulumgeer to his sons, Azim Shaw and Kaum Bukht, a few days before his death.

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MEMOIRS OF THE

The emperor, a few days before his death, with a strictness of command seldom to be enforced by monarchs at such a season, dispatched

To SHAW AZIM SHAW.

HEALTH to thee! My heart is near thee. Old age is arrived: weakness subdues me, and strength has forsaken all my members. I came a stranger into this world, and a stranger I depart. I know nothing of myself, what I am, and for what I am destined. The instant which passed in power, hath left only sorrow behind it. I have not been the guardian and protector of the empire. My valuable time has been passed vainly. I had a patron in my own dwelling, (conscience,) but his glorious light was unseen by my dim sight. Life is not lasting; there is no vestige of departed breath, and all hopes from futurity are lost. The fever has left me, but nothing of me remains but skin and bone. My son, (Kaum Buksh,) though gone towards Beejapore, is still near; and thou, my son, art yet nearer. The worthy of esteem, Shaw Aulum, is far distant; and my grandson, (Azeem Ooshaun,) by the orders of God, is arrived near Hindostan. The camp and followers, helpless and alarmed, are, like myself, full of affliction, restless as the quicksilver. Separated from their lord, they know not if they have a master or not.

I brought nothing into this world, and, except the infirmities of man, carry nothing out. I have a dread for my salvation, and with what torments I may be punished. Though I have strong reliance on the mercies and bounty of God, yet, regarding my actions, fear will not quit me; but, when I am gone, reflection will not remain. Come then what may, I have launched my vessel to the waves. Though Providence will protect the camp, yet, regarding appearances, the endeavours of my sons are indispensably incumbent. Give my last prayers to my grandson, (Bedar Bukht,) whom I cannot see, but the desire affects me. The Begum (his daughter) appears afflicted; but God is the only judge of hearts. The foolish thoughts of women produce nothing but disappointment. Farewell! farewell! farewell!

To the Prince KAUM BUKSH.

MY son, nearest to my heart. Though in the height of my power, and by God's permission, I gave you advice, and took with you the greatest pains, yet, as it was not the divine will, you did not attend with the ears of compliance. Now I depart a stranger, and lament my own insignificance, what does it profit me? I carry with me the fruits of my sins and imperfections. Surprising Providence! I came here alone, and alone I depart. The leader of this caravan hath deserted me. The fever, which troubled me for twelve days, has left me. Wherever I look, I see nothing but the Divinity. My fears for the camp and followers are great; but, alas! I know not myself. My back is bent with weakness, and my feet have lost the powers of motion.

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dispatched the prince Azim Shaw towards Malwa, and Kaum Buksh to his government of Beejapore. His reason for this proceeding was, that no feuds might arise upon his death, in an enemy's country, between his sons, to endanger the repose of his subjects. Had the two princes remained together in the camp, such would have been the case, as occurred afterwards on the death of Shaw Aulum, whose four sons were together in the camp, when, though not in an enemy's country, the families, fortunes and honour of a world became plunged in the depth of ruin.

Azim Shaw, though knowing the dangerous illness of his father, dared not disobey the orders of march. He departed from the camp, but his motions were slow and cautious; nor did the emperor press him to expedition, after the three first marches. He

The breath which rose, is gone, and left not even hope behind it. I have committed numerous crimes, and know not with what punishments I may be seized. Though the Protector of mankind will guard the camp, yet care is incumbent also on the faithful, and my sons. When I was alive, no care was taken; and now I am gone the consequence may be guessed. The guardianship of a people is the trust by God committed to my sons. Azim Shaw is near. Be cautious that none of the faithful are slain, or their miseries fall upon my head. I resign you, your mother and son, to God, as I myself am going. The agonies of death come upon me fast. Bahadur Shaw is still where he was, and his son is arrived near Hindostan. Bedar Bukht is in Guzarat. Hyaut al Nissa, who has beheld no afflictions of time till now, is full of sorrows. Regard the Begum as without concern. Odiporee, your mother, was a partner in my illness, and wishes to accompany me in death; but every thing has its appointed time.

The domestics and courtiers, however deceitful, yet must not be ill-treated. It is necessary to gain your views by gentleness and art. Extend your feet no lower than your skirt. The complaints of the unpaid troops are as before. Dara Shekkoh, though of much judgment and good understanding, settled large pensions on his people, but paid them ill, and they were ever discontented. I am going. Whatever good or evil I have done, it was for you. Take it not amiss, nor remember what offences I have done to yourself; that account may not be demanded of me hereafter. No one has seen the departure of his own soul; but I see that mine is departing.

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even said to ¹ Hummeed ad dien Khan, to whom he had committed the charge of his funeral rites, “ Three days after my death, one “ of my sons will arrive in camp, and send my remains to Aurun- “ gabad in a proper manner.” On Friday the twenty-eighth of Zeekaud, his majesty performed his morning devotions in company with his attendants ; after which, as was frequently his custom, he exclaimed, “ O that my death may happen on a Friday, for “ blessed is he who dieth on that day !” Soon after, he had occasion to retire. Upon his return towards his bed, he had begun the ² tiummum, as was always his custom till water for the ³ wuzzoo could be brought, and had made one sprinkling, when suddenly his most pure spirit fled from the narrowness of corporeal confinement, to the boundless expansion of the Most High. We are from God, and to God we must return. His hands remained clasped, and in motion, for some time after he had ceased to breathe. How can I express my own feelings ? This much I know, that the kindness, favour and distinction, for fifty years, of that atom-cherishing sun to me, his humble slave, his great actions, his glory, his piety, his perseverance in virtue from youth to age, the revolutions of his reign, and all the wonderful events of time, rushed upon my memory at once in a sea of grief, and overwhelmed my heart, so that I forgot myself, and knew not what passed around me.

Azim Shaw, being informed of the event by his agents, and the nobles who affected to embrace his interest, arrived on the third

¹ Anglicè, Aider of the faith.

² A purification by sprinkling of dust over the body, ordered by Mahummud for the convenience of his followers inhabiting the dry deserts of Arabia, where water is too valuable for the poor to use on slight occasions.

³ Ditto with water.