

Selection from *Narrative of the Journey of Abd-er Razzak*

About all we know of Abdur Razzaq is he was the Persian ambassador to Calicut, India, traveling there from 1442 to 1444. Calicut was a leading trading city for the spice trade from east to west, much of which traveled via the Malabar Coast of India during monsoon seasons. The spice trade was of sufficient import for the Persians to send ambassadors to ensure good relations and to monitor the trade.

Source: Major, K.H. *India in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1857), pp. 3–49.

Focus Questions:

1. What were the consequences of delay at Daralaman?
2. What were the outcomes of delay for merchants?
3. How much do you think the storm description is literary and how much factual? Why would the difference be important?

NARRATIVE OF MY VOYAGE INTO HINDOOSTAN, AND DESCRIPTION OF THE WONDERS AND REMARKABLE PECULIARITIES WHICH THIS COUNTRY PRESENTS.

Every man, the eyes of whose intelligence are illuminated by the light of truth, and whose soul, like a bird soars with fixedness of vision into the regions of knowledge, observes with certainty, and brings home to his recognition the fact, that the revolution of the great bodies which people the heavens, as well as the progress of the smaller bodies which canopy the earth, are subject to the wisdom and the will of a Creator, Who is alike holy and powerful; that the intelligence of his omniscience, and characteristic of His omniscience, are manifested alike in the nature of those beings, which resemble the atoms contained in creation, as well as in the movements and actions of them; that the bridle which guides created beings is held by the hand of a power, by that of Providence; that the proudest existences are forced; bow the head beneath the commands of a God who does everything according to His pleasure.

"If Providence were not the mover of all the events of the world, how is it that the progress of those events is so frequently in opposition to our own will?"

"In every occurrence, whether fortunate or unfortunate, it is Providence who holds the reins, and guides His creatures; the proof of this is found in the fact that the measures adopted by men are all fallacious."

The events, the perils, which accompany a voyage by sea (and which in themselves constitute a shoreless and a boundless ocean), present the most marked indication of the Divine omnipotence, the grandest evidence of a wisdom which is sublime. Hence it is that the utility of such a voyage as this has been shown in the most perfect manner in the marvelous language of the king, who is the author of all knowledge, and also that the execution of so important an undertaking cannot be either accomplished or related, but by the help of that living and powerful Being, who makes easy that which is most difficult.

In pursuance of the orders of Providence, and of the decrees of that Divine prescience, the comprehension of which escapes all the calculations and reflections of Man, I received orders to take my departure for India; and how shall I be able to set forth the events of my journey with clearness, seeing that I have wandered at hap-hazard into that country devoted to darkness. His majesty, the happy Khakan, condescended to allot to me any provisions and post horses. His humble slave, after having made the necessary preparations, started on his journey on the first day of the month of Ramazan (January 13th), by the route of Kohistan. In the middle of the desert of Kerman, he arrived at the ruins of a city, the wall of which wild four bazaars could still be distinguished; but no inhabitant was to be found in all the country round.

(I passed in the desert near ancient dwellings, none of which presented signs of anything but ruin and decay.)

This desert extends to the frontier of Mekran and Seistan, as far as the environs of the city of Damghan, and all this space presents formidable dangers to travellers.

On the eighteenth day of Ramazan (Jan. 30th) I reached the city of Kerman; it is a pleasant place, as well as one of great importance. The darogah (governor), the Emir Hadji Mohamed-Kaiaschirin, being then absent, I was compelled to sojourn in this city until the day of the feast. The illustrious Emir Borhan-Eddin-Seid-Khalil-Allah, son of the Emir Naim-Eddin-Seid-Nimet-Allah, who was the most distinguished personage of the city of Kerman, and even of the whole world, returned at this time from the countries of Hindoostan. He loaded me with attentions and proofs of his kindness. On the fifth day of Schewal (February 16th) I quitted the city of Kerman. On my road I met the Emir Hadji-Mohammed, on his return from an expedition which he had made into the province of Benboul. Continuing my journey, I arrived towards the middle of the month at the shore of the Sea of Oman, and at Bender-Ormuz. The prince of Ormuz, Melik-Fakhr-Eddin-Touranschah, having placed a vessel at my disposal, I went on board of it, and made my entry into the city of Ormuz. I had had assigned to me a house, with everything that I could require, and I was admitted to an audience of the prince.

Ormuz, which is also called Djerrun, is a port situated in the middle of the sea, and which has not its equal on the surface of the globe. The merchants of seven climates, from Egypt, Syria, the country of Roum, Azerbaijan, Irak Arabi, and Irak-Adjemi, the provinces of Fars, Khorassan, Ma-wara-amahar, Turkistan, the kingdom of Deshti-Kaptchack, the countries inhabited by the Kalmucks, the whole of the kingdoms of Tchin and Matchin, and the city of Khanbalik, all make their way to this port; the inhabitants of the sea coasts arrive here from the countries of 'I'chin, Java, Bengál, the cities of Zerbád, Tenasserim, Sokotora, Schahrinou, the islands of Diwah-Mahall, the countries of Malabar, Abyssinia, Zanguebar, the ports of Bidjanagar, Kalbergah, Gudjarat, Kanbait, the coasts of Arabia, which extend as far as Aden, Jiddah, and Yembo; they bring hither those rare and precious articles which the sun, the moons and the rains have combined to bring to perfection; and which are capable of being transported by sea. Travellers from all countries resort hither, and in exchange for the commodities which they bring; they can without trouble or difficulty obtain all that they desire. Bargains are made either by Money or by exchange.

For all objects, with the exception of gold and silver; a tenth of their value is paid by way of duty.

Persons of all religions, and even idolaters, are found in great numbers in this city, and no injustice is permitted towards any person whatever. This city is also named Daralaman (the abode of security). The inhabitants unite the flattering character of the people of Irak with the profound cunning of the Indians.

I sojourned in this place for the space of two months and the governors sought all kinds of pretexts to detain me; so that the favorable time for departing by sea, that is to say the beginning or middle of the monsoon, was allowed to pass, and we came to the end of the monsoon, which is the season when tempests and attacks from pirates are to be dreaded. Then they gave me permission to depart. As the men and horses could not all be contained in the Caine vessel; they were distributed among several ships. The sails were hoisted, and we commenced our voyage.

As soon as I caught the smell of the vessel, and all the terrors of the sea presented themselves before me, I fell into so deep a swoon, that for three days respiration alone indicated that life remained within me. When I came a little to myself, the merchants, who were my intimate friends, cried with one voice that the time for navigation was passed, and that every one who put to sea at this season was alone responsible for his death, since he voluntarily placed himself in peril. All, with one accord, having sacrificed the sums which they had paid for freight in the ships, abandoned their project, and some difficulties dis-

embarked at the port of Muscat. For myself, I quitted this city, escorted by the principal companions of my voyage, and went to a place called Kariat, where I established myself and fixed my tents, with the intention of there remaining. The merchants of the coasts designate by the word *telahi* (loss) the condition in which they find themselves: when, having undertaken a sea voyage, they cannot accomplish it, and are obliged to stop in some other place. In consequence of the severity of pitiless weather and the adverse manifestations of a treacherous fate, my heart was crushed like glass and my soul became weary of life, and my season of relaxation became excessively trying.

At the moment when, through the effect of so many vicissitudes, the mirror of my understanding had become covered with rust, and the hurricane of so many painful circumstances had extinguished the lamp of my mind, so that I might say in one word I had fallen into a condition of apathetic stupidity, on a sudden in evening met a merchant who was on his return from the shores of Hindoostan. I asked him whither he was going. He replied: "My only object is to reach the city of Herat." When I heard him utter the name of that august city I went very nearly distracted. The merchant having consented at my request to tarry awhile, I threw off the following verses upon paper.

When in the midst of strangers, at the hour of the evening prayer I set me down to weep,
I recall my adventures, the recital of which is accompanied with unusual sighs.
At the remembrance of my mistress and of my country I weep so bitterly,
That I should deprive the whole world of the taste and habit of travelling.
I am a native of the country of the Arabs, and not of a strange region.
O mighty God, whom I invoke! Vouchsafe to bring me back to the companionship of my friends.

Everything which relates to my condition, and to the tediousness and dangers against which I have had to contend, has been set forth in fair detail in this narrative. As far as regards a certain number of men and horses, which were embarked at Ormuz upon a separate vessel, I have been unable hitherto to ascertain what has been their fate. It may be that some day I shall be able to put their adventures into writing.

DESCRIPTION OF WHAT OCCURRED DURING THE TIME THAT I WAS INVOLUNTARILY DETAINED UPON THE SEA SHORE, AND OF WHAT HAPPENED TO ME IN THE ENCAMPMENT OF KARIAT, AND IN THE CITY OF KALAHAT.

At then that I was perforce sojourning in the place called Kariat, and upon the shores of the ocean, the new moon, of the month of Moharrem of the year 846 [May 1442], showed me in this abode of weariness the beauty of her disk. Although it was at that time spring; in the season in which the nights and days are of equal length, the heat of the sun was so intense that it burned the ruby in the mine and the marrow in the bones; the sword in its scabbard melted like wax, and the gems which adorned the handle of the khandjar were reduced to coal.

Soon as the sun shone forth from the height of heaven,
The heart of stone grew hot beneath its orb
The horizon was so much scorched up by its rays,
That the heart of stone became soft like wax;
The bodies of the fishes, at the bottom of the fish-ponds.
Burned like the silk which is exposed to the fire
Both the water and the air gave out so burning a heat,
That the fish went away to seek refuge in the fire;

Sons, Kojah-Masood and Kojah Mohammed, both natives of Khorassan, who had fixed their abode in the kingdom of Bidjanagar, were appointed to undertake the duties of ambassadors, and various pres-

ents and stuffs were accordingly sent to them. Fatah-Khakan, the one of the descendants of the Sultan Firouz-Schah, who had filled the throne of Delhi, also dispatched a delegate named Kojah-Djemaleddin, charged with a present and a letter.

On the day of the audience of dismissal, the king said to the humble author of this work: "It has been asserted that thou wast not really sent by his majesty Mirza-Schah-Rokh, otherwise we should have shown thee greater attentions; if thou comest back on a future occasion into my territories, thou shalt meet with a reception worthy of a king such as we are." But the author said to himself mentally: "If, when once I have escaped from the desert of thy love, I reach my own country, I will never again set out on another voyage, not even in the company of a king."

In a letter addressed to his majesty, the monarch inserted those statements so full of malignity which had been invented by the inhabitants of Ormuz, and expressed himself in the following terms: "We had had the intention of seeking the good will of the emperor by some gifts and presents worthy of a sovereign. Certain persons, however, have assured us that Abd-er-Razzak was not in any way attached to the court of your majesty." In detailing the titles which are assumed by the august Khakan, he said: "This prince unites in his person the qualities of a king, and that which constitutes the glory of a sovereign, with the purity of the prophets, and the virtues of the saints." So that the tongue of great and small, the writing of every able man, and the pen of every secretary ought to express (with respect to this monarch) the following sentiment.

Thou art a Noah, who, like Abraham, possesses the love of God; a Khidr, who holds the rank of Moses.

Thou art Ahmed, who encircles the majesty of the throne of God; thou art Jesus, whose aspect expresses the Divine Spirit, Henceforth the habitable globe shall be regarded as forming part of thine empire; it is therefore that thou holdest the equinoctial line under the line of thy authority.

As, according to the Ideas of these people, the country of Bidjanagar is placed under the equinoctial line, the expression to "hold the equinoctial line under the line of his authority," is perfectly correct.

The humble author of this work, after having completed his negotiations, set forth on his journey, and directed his homeward course towards the shores of the sea of Oman.

ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S VOYAGE ON HIS RETURN FROM THE COUNTRIES OF HINDOOSTAN. DESCRIPTION OF A STORM. HISTORY OF THE DELUGE.

The sun of the Divine Mercy displayed itself above the horizon of happiness. The star of fortune arose to the east of my hopes. The bright glimmer of joy and satisfaction showed itself in the midst of the darkness of night, in conformity to this maxim:

"God is the friend of those who hold the true faith: He will bring them forth from the darkness, and will lead them forth into the light."

Those nights of affliction and weariness, passed in the sad abode of idolatry and error, were succeeded by the breaking of the dawn of happiness, and the brilliant out-shining of the sun of prosperity; and the evening, which was full of the anxieties of weakness, became changed into days of gladness and confidence.

The duration of the night was longer than that of the day, but now the face of everything is changed. The latter has been constantly on the increase, and the former on the decrease.

As the city from which I was returning was situated at the extremity of the regions of Hindoostan, and as the whole country which I had traversed was inhabited by idolators, my travelling resources had been entirely absorbed by the troubles I had undergone. But why speak of what does not deserve to be recalled? At all events in spite of my grievous position, in place of hope I have but this maxim, as my sole provision for my voyage:

"Despair not of the mercy of God."

With a heart full of energy, and with vast hopes, I set out on my journey, or rather, I committed myself to the goodness and compassion of God. On the twelfth day of the month of Schaban [Nov. 5th, 1443], accompanied by the ambassadors, I left the city of Bidjanagar to commence my journey. After travelling eighteen days, on the first day of the month of Ramazan [Nov. 23rd, 1443], I reached the shores of the sea of Oman and the port of Maganor. There I had the honour of being admitted to the society of the Sheriff-Emir Seid-Ala-eddin-Meskhedi, who was a hundred and twenty years old. For many years he had been an object of veneration both to Mussulmans and idolators. Throughout the country his words were regarded as oracles, and no one ventured to object to his decisions.

One of the ambassadors of Bidjanagar, Kojah-Masud, had just died in this city.

Under this vault, the dwelling of evil, who knows in what spot our head will rest beneath the brink of the tomb!

After having celebrated in the port of Maganor the festival which follows the fast, I made my way to the port of Manor [Honawer] to procure a vessel, and I laid in all the provisions necessary for twenty persons during a voyage of forty days. One day, at the moment that I was on the point of embarking, I opened the Book of Fates, the author of which was the Iman Djafar-Sadek, and which is composed from verses of the Alcoran. There I found a presage of joy and happiness, for I lighted upon this verse:

"Fear nothing, for thou hast been preserved from the hand of unjust men."

Struck with the coincidence of this passage with my situation, I felt all those anxieties disappear from my heart, which had caused me alarm in the prospect of encountering the sea. Abandoning myself entirely to the hope of a happy deliverance, I embarked on the eighth day of the month of Zu'lkadah [Jan. 28th, 1444] and put to sea. While the vision of those ships, which float over the mountain-like waves of the sea, presented to my thoughts the traces of the Divine power, at the same time, in the conversation of the companions of my voyage, I collected observations respecting remarkable names and facts worthy of note, and throughout our little company peace and contentment prevailed.

The eye of sad events and of misfortunes was gone to sleep, Fortune appeared to have given herself up to indolence, and we were surrounded with happiness.

The ship, after a million of shocks, reached the open sea.

On a sudden there arose a violent wind on the surface of the sea, and on all sides were heard groaning and cries.

The night, the vessel, the wind, and the gulf, presented to our minds all the forebodings of a catastrophe. On a sudden, through the effect of the contrary winds, which resembled men in their drink, the wine which produced this change penetrated even to the vessel. The planks of which it was composed, and which by their conformation seemed to form a continuous line, were on the point of becoming divided like the separate letters of the alphabet. To our thoughts was strikingly presented the truth of that passage:

"The waves cover it, the billow rises beneath it, and above it is the cloud."

The sailor who, with respect to his skill in swimming, might be compared to a fish, was anxious to throw himself into the water like an anchor. The captain, although familiarized with the navigation of all the seas, shed bitter tears, and had forgotten all his science. The sails were torn, the mast was entirely bent by the shock of the wind. The different grades of passengers who inhabited this floating house threw out upon the waves riches of great value, and, after the manner of the Sofis, voluntarily stripped themselves of their worldly goods. Who could give a thought to the jeopardy in which their money and their stuffs were placed, when life itself, which is so dear to man, was in danger? For myself, in this situation, which brought before my eyes all the threatening terrors which the ocean had in its power to present, with tears in my eyes I gave myself up for lost. Through the effect of the stupor, and of the profound sadness to which I became a prey, I remained, like the sea, with my lips dry and my eyes moist, and resigned myself entirely to the Divine Will. At one time, through the driving of the waves, which resembled mountains, the vessel was lifted up to the skies; at another, under the impulse of the violent winds, it descended like divers to the bottom of the waters.

The agitation of the waters of the sea caused my body to melt like salt which is dissolved in water, the violence of the deluge annihilated and utterly dispersed the firmness which sustained me, and my mind, hitherto so strong, was like the ice which is suddenly exposed to the heat of the month of Tamouz; even now my heart is troubled and agitated, as is the fish which is taken out of fresh water.

May the torrent of destruction overturn the edifice of fate, which thus brings in successive waves the waters of misfortune upon my head.

Many times I said to myself, and it was in language dictated by my situation that I repeated, this verse.

"A dismal night! The fear of the waves, and so frightful an abyss! What judgment can they who are so peaceful on shore form of our situation?"

The pure water of my life was troubled by the agitation of the sea; and the brilliant mirror of my ideas, in consequence of the dampness of the water, and the putrefaction of the air, was covered with rust. Each moment that the pupils of my eyes contemplated that muddy water, it resembled, through the effect of my extreme alarm, a flaming sword. At the sight of the agitated sea, overset by the tempestuous winds, I drew from my breast an icy sigh; it was a sharp weapon, which tore my very soul.

Overwhelmed at every point, and seeing the gate of hope shut on every side against me, with an eye full of tears and a heart full of burning chagrin, I addressed myself to God with the expression of this verse.

"Oh, our Lord, place not upon us a burden which is too heavy for our strength to bear!"

I prayed to the Being, who is supremely merciful, and who never upbraideth with his benefits, to be pleased, from the immense sea of His goodness, to bedew and to bestow fresh verdure upon the little shrub of my existence and to deign, in the distribution of the water of His kindness, to wash completely and disperse from the face of my situation the dust which rendered my life a grievance to me. In the midst of this sad position, I reflected and put the question to myself: "What, then, is this catastrophe, which has made fortune in her revolution fall so heavily upon me?"

What, then, is this shame, which, through the hostility of a perfidious fate, of a base and contemptible destiny, has caused the serenity of my face to disappear? On the one side, I have been unable to snatch my precious life from the fury of the waves of death, nor have I been able, in carrying out the business of my sovereign, to bring to the surface of the water the pearl of my exertions. For a generous soul neglects nothing which can tend to the fulfillment of the obligations which it has contracted towards its benefactor, and when it becomes a question of executing the business of its master, it regards life itself, which is ordinarily so precious, as utterly valueless. If the man of sincerity casts [his loyalty to] his king

into the fire of events, his nature, like that of a gem, must show no alteration in the smallest atom; or rather the gold of his loyalty, after the manner of pure gold, becomes still more refined.

I was in the midst of these reflections, and everything about me spoke of dejection and trouble, when at length, by virtue of that Divine promise: "*Who is He who hears the prayers of the afflicted, and drives away his misery?*", on a sudden, the zephyr of God's infinite mercy began to blow upon me from that point which is indicated by these words: "*Despair not of the mercy of the Most High.*" The morning of joy began, to dawn from the East of happiness, and the messenger of a propitious fate brought to the ears of my soul these consolatory words: "Since on your behalf we have divided the sea, we have saved you." The impetuous hurricane was changed to a favourable wind, the tossing of the waves ceased, and the sea, in conformity with my desires, became completely calm. My fellow-passengers, after having celebrated at sea the feast of victims, gained sight, at the close of the month of Zu'lhidjah [middle of March, 1444] of the mountain of Kalahat, and found themselves at length in safety from all the perils of the deep. At this period, the new moon of the month of Moharrem, of the year 848 [middle of March 1444], like a beneficent spirit looked, on us with a friendly eye.

THE CLOSING EVENTS OF THE AUTHOR'S VOYAGE BY SEA. HIS ARRIVAL AT ORMUZ, UNDER THE PROTECTION OF GOD MOST HIGH.

In retracing the story of my voyage, I had reached the point at which the new moon of Moharrem showed us her shining face on the sea. The vessel still remained at sea for several days. On our arrival at the port of Muscat we cast anchor.

After having repaired the damages which the vessel had suffered through the effect of the storms, we re-embarked, and continued our voyage.

After leaving Muscat, the vessel arrived at the port of Jurufgan, where it put in for a day or two. On this occasion we felt during one night such excessive heat, that at day break one would have said that the heavens had set the earth on fire. So intense was the heat which scorched up the atmosphere, that even the bird of rapid flight was burnt up in the heights of heaven, as well as the fish in the depths of the sea. I re-embarked and set sail from the port of Jurufgan, and reached Ormuz on the forenoon of Friday, the eighth day of the month of Safar [April 22nd, 1444]. Our voyage from the port of Honawer to Ormuz had lasted sixty-five days.