

SOURCE 4

Nawab Sikandar Begum

Taken From:

Lambert-Hurley, S. (2008). *A Princess's Pilgrimage: Nawab Sikandar Begum's A Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Illustrated ed.). Indiana University Press. Pg 29 – 30.

I am speaking now of what I observed myself, but I learned the following particulars (i.e. of the manners and customs of the inhabitants) from an old attendant of mine, by name Husen Khan, who accompanied me on the pilgrimage: - every native of India who lands at Jeddah has a dollar or half dollar, according to his condition in life, extorted from him. There is no kindness of disposition among the inhabitants, but they are characterized by a large amount of cruelty and oppression. They consider it a meritorious act to oppress the native of India—just as a heretic considers it a meritorious act to persecute the true believer. To steal their property or to maltreat them is looked upon as no offense at all.

The manner of buying and selling is after this fashion:--whenever anyone looks at an article admiringly, or asks any question about it, it is immediately handed to him by the seller, and the price demanded; however much he may protest that he was only looking at it, he is not heeded, and if he disputes any further, they spit in his face and insult him. In transactions of this nature the tradesmen are all in collusion, one supporting the other. In short the manners of these people resemble those of the Gonds in India of former days, who were rough mountaineers that lived by rapine and deeds of violence.

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In Mecca the people can neither sing nor dance, but most of the women whistle, clapping their hands and snapping their fingers as an accompaniment. On the occasion of wedding, ladies sing comic songs and dance, but they do both so badly, that one has not the slightest pleasure in hearing or seeing them, but is rather disgusted than otherwise.

Amateurs of the kind of music we have in India, practice it stealthily in their houses.

When the Sherif goes out, he is accompanied by people playing kettle-drums. In the Turkish regiments they use large drums, but do not play upon them in the English fashion.

No one but Mussulmans are allowed to practice their religious rites publicly.

There are Indian and Turkish medical practitioners in Mecca, and also dispensaries, in which the medical systems of their respective countries are followed.

The etiquette of paying and receiving visits is the same as in India, but most people only exchange them from self-interested motives; wealthy persons seeking for introductions with the expectation of making money thereby,--there is no interchange of sincerity and friendship. Every one is well off, but they are all miserly and covetous; it is no disgrace to any one to beg; high and low, young men and old, women, boys and girls of all grades, are more or less beggars. Give them what you will, they are never satisfied. Even when work-people are paid for their labour, they do nothing satisfactorily, and demand their pay before their work is complete. The employers also, on their part, cheat as much as they can.

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Having left Jeddah in the ship from Calcutta, which had been engaged for me by the Consul, I arrived at Aden, where we remained one day to take in coal, and then proceeded to Bombay.

Notwithstanding that the Pasha and Sherif made an outward show of politeness towards me, in their hearts they were displeased with me. I can imagine two reasons for their dislike, one of which was that they had both heard a great deal of my loyalty to the British Government during the time of the mutiny, from the late Nawab (lit. "who is now in Paradise"), Faujdar Mahomed Khan, as well as from those people who had been driven away from India during those troublous times. The other reason was, that I one day remarked (being astonished at the habits of people in Mecca, and the dirty condition of their houses), "The Sultan of Turkey gives thirty lakhs of rupees a year for the expenses incurred in keeping up the holy places at Mecca and Medina. But there is neither cleanliness in the city, nor are there any good arrangements made within the precincts of the shrines. Now if the Sultan would give *me* those lakhs, I would make arrangements for the Government of Bhopal to be carried on by my son-in-law and daughter, and you would see what a state of order and cleanliness *I* would keep the august cities in, and what arrangements *I* would make for the proper maintenance of the holy shrines; so that the sultan would find out that dishonest people had been diverting his money from its legitimate uses, and had not kept a single thing in order; while I, in a few days, would effect a complete reformation!".