



Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al Madinah and Meccah: Volume 1

Richard Francis Burton

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From Reader Review Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al Madinah and Meccah: Volume 1 for online ebook

Don Voorhees says

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Ashleigh Hebert says

So interesting. Written in diary format with the occasional sketch.

Vasu says

Very engaging and extremely detailed and informative. I enjoyed this book very much. Except for his usage of phrases and quotes in languages other than English, I never felt clueless about anything he wrote of, thanks to his footnotes and descriptions. I wish more travel/adventure books were like this, allowing the reader to get a higher degree of immersion and to come out of a book with a new understanding of people, places, cultures and so much more.

Nancy Laney says

Vol. 1

Ean says

Humans on earth are interesting

Sharon says

As a huge fan of Sir Richard Burton, I've snapped up every book of his I can get my hands on. The two volumes detailing his 1853 pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina is the perfect place to start. Burton is most famous for this pilgrimage and his account does not disappoint if you are interested in Arab life of the time period, exploration, ethnography, or details of the Hajj itself. This is a must-read for anyone curious about one of the greatest explorers in history.

Mike Edwards says

It tells us more about Richard Burton and the era in which he lived, than it does about the Hajj (the pilgrimage that all Muslims are supposed to take once during their lifetimes, if they can)--although it's still worth reading to learn about both of those things.

Torben says

Burton is one of the great characters of the Victorian age. Brave and adventurous like many of his contemporaries but with a personal attitude that was very different from the hypocritical and puritanical attitude commonplace in Victorian society.

This book tells of how Burton made the Hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca, in disguise. A thoroughly dangerous undertaking as any Non-Muslims entering the holy cities would likely have been killed if discovered. Burton tells his story with an eye for detail and a great sense of humour. His descriptions of the characters, savoury and unsavoury, he meets on the way are excellent. He very much comes across as an intelligent man with a great thirst for knowledge. If you are interested in Islam, Arab life or Burton himself then I couldn't recommend this book enough.

Minci (Ayurveda) Ahmetovic says

I recognize no man`s right to interfere between a human being and his conscience.

"In rice strength, in Indian manliness" - in the Arabic muruwat - generosity, noble part of human nature.

Caste in India arises from peculiarly sociable nature of the native mind..nothing can be more terrible to a man than expulsion from caste...

The Blessed month upon true believers is to darken their tempers into positive gloom...

(stroll through old Cairo by night) ..briefly the whole view is so strange, fantastic, ghostly, that it seems preposterous to imagine that in such places human beings like ourselves can be born, and live through life, and carry out command "increase and multiply" and die.

It is not to be believed that in a town garrisoned by Turkish troops full of travelled Hajjis, the primitive virtues of the Arabs could exist. The Meccans, dark people, say of the Madani, that their hearts are black as their skins are white. This is of course exaggerated.

...to assert that pride, pugnacity, a peculiar point of honor and a vindictiveness of wonderful force and patience, are the only characteristic traits of Arab character which the citizens of Medinah habitually display.

"Amongst the men of Madinah I remarked a considerable share of hypocrisy. Their mouth were as full of religious salutations, exclamations and hackneyed quotations from the Koran, as of indecency and vile abuse - a point in which they resemble Persians."

"The Madani are like the Meccans, a curious mixture of generosity and meanness, of profuseness and penuriousness. But the former quality is the result of ostentation, the latter is characteristic of the Semitic race, long ago made familiar to Europe by the Jew. The citizens will run deeply in debt, expecting a good season of devotees to pay off their liabilities, or relying upon the next begging trip to Turkey; and such a proceeding, contrary to the custom of the Moslem world is not condemned by the public opinion. " Above all their qualities, personal conceit is remarkable. They show it in their strut, in their looks and in almost every word.

At length in the reign of AlWalid AH90 the cupola, niche and the minaret made their appearance, what is called Saracenic style became forever the order of the Moslem world. The Hindus I believe to have been the first who symbolised by an equilateral triangle their peculiar cult, Yoni Linga - in their temple architecture it became either conoid or perfect pyramid.

The Hindus paint their pagodas inside and outside, and rub vermilion in token of honour over their deities

Origin of Arabesque ornament must be referred to one of the principles of al Islam

The Arabs are the strictest of Misiconists

Perhaps no Eastern city affords more numerous or more accessible specimens of Mosque architecture than Cairo. 300-400 places of worship....

Hijaz in particular has been inundated with books from Egypt.

The Azhar is the grand collegiate mosque of this city - the Christ Church in fact of Cairo - once celebrated throughout the world of AlIslam. It gradually increased by Wakf (entailed bequests) of lands, money and books and pious rulers made point of adding to its size and wealth.

After learning to read the holy volume, some savans are ambitious enough to wish to understand it - under these circumstances they must dive into the Ilm alTafsir.

Al Mantic (logic) is little valued. Hikmat (philosophy) once so ardently cultivated by Moslem savans, indeed it is now all but impossible to get books upon these subjects.

I cannot agree with the Dr Bowring when he harshly says upon the subject of Moslem education: The instruction given by the Doctors of Law in the religious schools for the formation of the ;Mohammedan priesthood is of the most worthless character. " His opinion is equally open to objection with that of those who depreciate the law itself because it deals rather in precepts than in principle, in ceremonies and ordinances rather than in ethics and aesthetics. Both are what Eastern faiths and training have ever been - eminently adapted for the Oriental mind.

Even in the 7th century Omar forbade Amru to cut the Isthmus of Suez for fear of opening Arabia to Christian vessels.

VII

You are bound also to meet even your enemies in the most friendly way

I wonder that it is not made universal in the cities of India where so much iniquity is perpetrated under the

shadow of night.

Now the native powers have no jurisdiction over strangers, nor can the police enter their houses.

He shows signs of over wisdom.

But the sequel will prove how der Mensch denkt und Gott lenkt, and as the boy Mohammed, eventually did become my companion throughout the Pilgrimage.

Meccah taught him to speak excellent Arabic, understand literary dialect, to be eloquent in abuse, and to be profound at Prayer/Pilgrimage.

Turks/Egyptians always go pilgrimage with a large outfit as notably as East Indian cadet of the present day Suez was place of obstacles to pilgrims I was obliged to look elsewhere for protection.

The Consular dragoman is one of the greatest abuses I know.

I lost my reputation by a little misfortune that happened in this wise.

Khan is a title assumed in India and other countries by Afghans/Pathans, descendants simple as well as gentle

Conceal, says Arab proverb "Thy Tenets, thy Treasure and Thy Travelling"

VIII

It is strange how the mind can be amused by scenery that presents so few objects to occupy it.

Desert views are eminently suggestive, they appeal to the future not to the past, they arouse bc they are by no means memorial.

To the solitary wayfarer there is an interest in the wilderness unknown to Cape seas and Alpine glaciers, even to the rolling Prairie - its effect of continued excitement on the mind stimulating its powers to the pitch.

Man's heart bounds in his breast at the thought of measuring his puny force with Nature's might, of emerging triumphant from the trial. This explains Arab proverb: Voyaging is victory.

Wildness and sublimity of the scenes around you stir up all the energies of your soul whether for exertion, danger or strife. Morale improves, you become frank/cordial, hospitable/single-minded. Senses are quickened, they require no stimulant but air/exercise

Sand heaps are found in every desert, sand plains are local feature, not the general face of the country.

Nature returns to a man, however unworthily he has treated her. Once your tastes have conformed to tranquility of such travel, you will suffer pain returning to turmoil of civilization. You will anticipate bustle/confusion of artificial life, luxury/false pleasures, with repugnance. Depressed in spirits, for a time, will feel incapable of mental/bodily exertion. Air of cities will suffocate you, care-worn/cadaverous countenances of citizens will haunt you like a vision of judgment.

Incredible Indian improvidence.

I sat for an hour admiring charms of Desert. Eye never tires of such loveliness of hue, memory of hideousness of this range, when a sun in front exposed each gunt/barren feature supplied evening view with another element of attraction.

IX - Shaykh Nur, my Hindi servant played me false.

Egyptian with all his good humour, merriment/nonchalance, is notorious for doggedness when as the popular phrase is his "blood is up". When the head, not hands is required, he notably fails

X - Voyage is intolerably slow.

As is the case under all despotic governments nothing can be more intentionally offensive than the official manners of a superior to his inferior in Egypt. Indians charge their European fellow subjects with insolence of demeanour/coarseness of language.

Eastern shore was dotted with little grove of palm-tress which clusters around Uyun Musa/Moses Walls Sea of Sedge is Hebrew name of this part of Red Sea.

XI -With one look at certain little star to north under which lies all that makes life worth living through -

surely it is a venial superstition to sleep with your eyes towards that Kiblah - you fall into oblivion.
He called himself Pathan/Afghan settled in India. These fellows are always good detectors of an incognito.
Word Jabal is applied by Arabs to any rising ground/heap of rocks, must not always be translated Mountain.
Gibraltar is Jabal alTarik.

XII

Miyani is Hindustani word for Sir

I would silver my dagger - in idiomatic Hijazi means I would raise myself in the world.

XIII - Recognising traveler's guest-right to call milk gratis. No one will at present day even at civilized Meccah sell this article for consumption, except

Egyptians people supposed to be utterly without honor. General rule in Hijaz, milk abounds in spring, at all other times it is difficult to be procured.

Arabic Misyal is Indian Nullah, Sicilian Fiumara.

He indulges in sweet recollections of Indian lakes beautiful with Lotus, Persian plains upon which Narcissus is the meanest of grasses.

Nothing renders the Arab thief so active as the chance of stealing a good weapon.

It is a silly practice to salve the wound which requires the knife

IX -Samum never kills a man.

Duke of Wellington's dictum about healthiness of India to an abstemious man does not require to be quoted.

He who renders warfare fatal to all engaged in it will be the greatest benefactor the world has yet known.

Old Arabic proverb is "A greater wiseacre than the goat of Akhfash" it is seldom intelligible to the vulgar.

Al-Harratayn is a holy ground - for the Apostle spoke of it. Ibn Jubayr considers the Harim or sacred precincts of al Madinah is the space enclosed by three points: Zul Halifah, Mount Ohod, Mosque of Quba. To the present day pilgrims doff their worldly garments at Zul Halifah.

Arabs divide the world in two great bodies: themselves/Ajami (all that are not Arabs). Similar are Hindus/Mlechhas, Jews/Gentiles, Greeks/Barbarians.

I now understand full value of the phrase in the Moslem ritual: And when his (pilgrim) eyes shall fall upon the Trees of Madinah, let him raise his Voice/bless the Apostle with the choicest of blessings"

XV - In the most Easterly part of the city remarkable from afar, is the gem of Madinah, 4 tall substantial towers/flashing green Dome under which the Apostle's remains rest.

foully dirty as an Indian en voyage always is

To the plague of strangers succeeded that of children.

He left me to the society I most desired - my own.

XVI - Wahabbis rejecting Intercession of the Apostle on the Day of Judgment, considering grave of mere mortal unworthy of notice, highly disgusted by idolatrous respect paid to it by certain foolish Moslems, plundered the sacred building with sacrilegious violence, forbade visitors from distant countries to enter Madinah (1807). we entered celebrated spot called Al-Rauzah after saying of the Prophet: Between my tomb and my pulpit is a Garden of Gardens of Paradises.

I only admire how al-Islam does not follow Wahabbi example and summarily consign them to oblivion. Rauzah is the holiest spot.

None but the Prophet and Ali entered it when ceremonially impure without being guilty of deadly sin Performed single Sajdah in gratitude to Allah for making it my fate to visit so holy a spot.

The Garden is the most elaborate part of the mosque. Little can be said in its praise by day when it bears the same relation to a second-rate church in Rome as an English chapel of ease to W.Abbey.

In Moslem theology, Salat from Allah means mercy, from the angels intercession for pardon, from mankind blessing. When a Moslem blesses Mohammed at Madinah his sins are not written 3 days allowing ample margin for repentance by the recording angel.

"May Allah's wrath fall heavy upon the People who make the Tombs of their Prophets places of prayer"

Wahabis consider it blasphemy to assert that a mere man can stand between the Creator and the creature on the last day

It is said that Mohammed prayed long for conversion of Omar to Al-Islam knowing his sterling qualities spare place-single grave is reserved for Isa bin Maryam after his second coming

Mahbat Jibrail is place of descent of the Archangel Gabriel with the Heavenly Revelations or simply Al-Malaikah

"People of garment" the Apostle wrapped his cloak around himself/daughter/son-in-law, 2 grandsons, thereby separating them in dignity from other Moslems

as we began with the worship of the Creator..

Tradition of the Apostle declares that "Acceptable is Devotion in the Garden and the Orchard"

Stoa/Academia/Prophet's city

Arabs, like all orientals, are exceedingly curious about water

In offering the above remarks, I am far from wishing to throw a doubt upon an established point of history.

XVII - when describing Ohod, I shall have occasion to allude to Aron's dome which occupies the highest part. Few authorities believe that Aron was buried there; his grave under a small stone cupola, is shown over the summit of mount Hor in Sinaitic Peninsula, much visited by devotees.

Israelites fell away from worshipping one God who raised up against them Arab tribes Aus/Khazraj, progenitors of modern Ansar.

It is popular boast in Hijaz that with exception of Jeddah there is not a town in the country harboring an infidel.

It is also related to prove how Madinah was predestined to high fate, nearly 3 centuries before siege of town by Abu Jubaylah

XVIII

celebrated Khandak, Moat or Torres Vedas of Arabian History

The best kind of date tree is Al-Shelebi, packed in skins sent as presents to remotest parts of the Moslem world

Ajwah date is eaten but not sold, tradition of Prophet declares that whoso break fast with 6/7 of these fruits need neither poison nor magic.

Third kind is Al-Hilwah large date, derives name from its exceeding sweetness: of this palm the Moslems relate that the Prophet planted a stone which in a few minutes grew up and bore fruit.

Next comes Al-Birni of which was said: It causes sickness to depart and there is no sickness in it.

One of the reasons for the excellence of dates in Madinah is quantity of water they obtain: each garden/field has well, even in the hottest weather Persian wheel floods the soil every 3rd day

Mosque of Al-Kubba was the first place of public prayer in Al-Islam. Mohammed laid the first brick, and with Anzah marked out direction of prayer

The first assures all Muslims that prayer at Kuba is equal to a Lesser Pilgrimage at Mecca at religious efficacy

XX

Moslem divines be it observed, ascribe to Mohammed miraculous authority over animals, vegetables, minerals, as well as over men, jinns and angels.

According to old Persians, the sphere has an active soul

Hamzah - Lord of Martyrs

On topmost pinnacle, Kubbat Harun, dome erected over Aron`s remains (upon pinnacle of 7 hills)

"The man must be a ruffian who climbs up to Aaron`s dome"

Hamzah`s Mosque like Harim Al Madinah is a Mausoleum as well as fane

I quoted the verses: "He is a man who benefits his fellow men,

Not he who says why? and wherefore? and how much?"

I was Forced to take part in stuff that totally contradicts my heart

Narok village

keep studying the school of life

get into the groove of something basic

Sensible substitutions are more sustainable than drastic behavior changes. Giving up long-established habits is difficult, but modifying habits to promote health can be a useful strategy

Theo Logos says

Richard Francis Burton was a multi-talented man - linguist, swordsman, explorer, proto-anthropologist - yet one talent he sorely lacked was editing. His journey disguised as an Afghan dervish setting out from Egypt to do the Hajj to Al Madinah and Meccah was a high risk, fascinating adventure filled with punishing terrain, colorful characters, dangerous bandits, and the constant possibility of being unmasked as an infidel and killed. So this book could have been an absolutely thrilling tale. Parts of it are. When he is describing his interactions with those he meets in Egypt, or his travels with his fellow pilgrims the book is first rate. Yet those passages make up all too little of this book.

Burton had a burning curiosity for knowledge about cultures other than his own. He amassed impressive amounts of information on dress, customs, superstition, history, legends, food, terrain, disease, etc.; there was simply nothing about the cultures that Burton observed that did not catch his interest. The problem with his book is that he included it all. After commenting on some dates he ate, he takes multiple pages to describe all the various kinds of dates that can be found in the region, the different names by which they are called, their medicinal uses, and various ways that the natives prepare them. Ditto multiple pages on diseases, and many other items where a peek rather than an exhaustive examination would have made for

more interesting reading.

While I can appreciate the breadth of knowledge that Burton displayed, and the fact that his interest and dogged logging of cultural information made him a forerunner of the modern discipline of anthropology, I regret that his writing falls far short of being as interesting as his actual life. Still, there are passages here that reward slogging through the endless detail, so I will be continuing on to read his second volume.
