STINKING QUEEN AND HER ROYAL FAMILY:
SARKAR AMMAN'S VISIT TO ENGLAND IN
MEMOIRS OF A REBEL PRINCESS

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Abstract

This paper, drawing upon the travel of the female ruler of the princely state of Bhopal, Sultan Jahan Begum (1838-1901), to England to plead with King-Emperor George V to intercede for her son, Prince Hamidullah Khan, in a Case of Succession, examines cross-cultural encounters that occurred during her stay. The focus of this paper thus is not on the details of the travel agenda; the paper assesses the interesting interplay of English and Bhopali cultures as noted by Princess Abida Sultaan, the favourite granddaughter of Sultan Jahan Begum and the narrator of this travel, in her Memoirs of a Rebel Princess (2004). During nine months of stayin England, from September 1925 to May 1926, the travelling royal party, including several women as well, came across incidents of faux pas, resistance, mimicry, and moments of embarrassment, cultural prejudices, shocks, misunderstanding, and confusion. The travel, though undertaken for specific political reasons, however, turned into a voyage of self-discovery. The tradition-oriented women of the royal family of Bhopal with their conservative way of life, encountered western ways of living. This paper attempts to analyze how this hybridity of two cultures- of the colonizer and the colonized- impacted each other at various levels.

Keywords

Orientalism, cultural encounters, hybridity, mimicry, third space, Bhopal State