

After a more thorough inquiry about this singular place, I learned that the salt stream flows towards a slight depression situated in the north-east; its bottom is occupied by an extensive salt crust 2 feet thick, of the same kind as on the Jandak and Turut roads; a smaller area of this salt crust has sunk into the underlying mud (*furu mired*), and in this way the "hole in the ground" has come into existence. It is in this hole that the stream disappears, that is to say, the surface of the water always stands at the same level in the salt ruts. That no flooding takes place is easily explained by reference to the level of the ground-water around. On the other hand, nothing is known of any salt lakes in the Kevir on this track. The route is now, as already said, abandoned, and those who wish to travel from Khur to Halvan follow the eastern edge of the desert.

I had intended to set out on February 16, but when Mirza reminded me that this day was Friday and therefore a *sengin rus*, or a bad day for a start, we decided to devote twenty-four hours more to Khur. I therefore had an opportunity of adding to my portrait-gallery, and sat for four hours surrounded by an inexhaustible supply of models, among which I had only to make my choice. The drawing was both an agreeable rest and also a source of great satisfaction, and by listening to the conversation of the spectators I obtained a lesson in their language gratis. One interested onlooker made the flattering remark that a portrait was more like than the original. Another said that my hand only held the pencil and followed its movements, but that it was the pencil which traced on paper the features of the original—an unusually witty remark to come from Khur. But sometimes things went wrong. Thus, I had drawn several men and wished to immortalise some of the ladies of Khur, and Gulam Hussein had undertaken to find models. The first was a girl of nine years named Khanum. She sat quite still, and I had nearly finished when her mamma, well wrapped up in her long white veil, came fluttering by like a ghost, screaming, and complaining that a *ferengi* (European) was bewitching her daughter with his evil eyes. The latter, of course, joined in the shrill wailing, but the drawing was finished, and tears did not appear in the portrait.