

CHANGING STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL INDIA UPTO 1761

**A THESIS
RE - SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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EXPLANATORY NOTE ON THE REVISED THESIS

The Panjab University office provided me with a detailed extract from the examiner's report to revise the thesis. I have carefully noted all the objections, suggestions and comments offered by the examiner, and endeavoured hard to incorporate them as far as possible, depending upon the availability of evidence. The major revision and re-drafting is as under :-

The overwhelming focus on women belonging to royalty, royal court and nobility has been due to the availability of data in the chronicles. The data on common and lower strata women is meagre and whatever has been found in literary and other sources has been made use of. The title of the thesis would, therefore, have to be '**Changing Status of Muslim Women**' in a general sense.

Correction of English Language and expression has been made wherever suggested. The various generalizations found wanting in evidence have been deleted.

References to the diverse social customs of immigrant Muslims into India with their diverse cultures has been added. The Arabs restricted to Sind. The information about them beyond Sind is not forthcoming in the contemporary sources. Hence, there is little discussion on them in the subsequent portion of the thesis.

So far as the lengthy discussion on Mohammad and the

Qoran is concerned, I find it difficult to exclude or even abridge it. Prophet Mohammad and Qoran, theoretically remained a standard-bearer to different sections of the Muslim society from whatever social stock they might have come. Qoranic precepts were looked upon as ideals and they are still looked as such despite so many deviations and practices.

Peter Hardy's Historians of Medieval India : Studies in Indo Muslim Historical Writing, has been consulted by the author. However, it helps only in grasping the context of the Sultanate period on account of limited number of historians covered by Hardy.

The origin of purdah has been added at page 59.

The repetition in respect of narrative on divorce has been deleted.

The reference to Persian saying at page 43 has been shifted to a foot note suggesting the then prevalent Persian attitude towards the social status of women. The description about Mongols has been expanded with more evidence and examples. About Hebrews, evidence of Ameer Ali has been discarded and more authentic material has been added from Webster's Family Encyclopedia. Simultaneously reference to Egyptian scene in respect of women has been included. Reference to the Afghan heritage has also been brought in as Afghans formed a part of Central Asiatic heritage entering India.

The phrase great women in Islam upto 13th century has been removed. I have also incorporated the unhealthy aspect

of the position of women to meet the objection of the examiner pertaining to my description at page 50 with regard to positive side of the women which gives the impression of being exaggerated. A one sentence conclusion to chapter I has been expanded to a paragraph.

The prevalence of infanticide among Muslims has been qualified in a foot note no.4 at page 65. On account of lack of evidence, the surmise that the custom of killing of daughter was due to Rajput influence has been eliminated.

The mention of the phrase 'later period' not defined and supported by evidence has been deleted.

The reference to *sati* at page 73 has been removed and a separate foot note has been added under the heading '**Sati and Jauhar**'.

The discussion on polygamy has been revised and the contradiction in argument has been removed. So far as the praise of mother is concerned, no change could be made as the narrative is based on evidence. Even the negative examples thereof have been mentioned on the basis of evidence.

The suggestion of prostitution by dancing and singing women has been deleted.

The propaganda like description of Firoz Shah Tughlaq's refusal to invade Mabar on the ground that it would disgrace Muslim women has been deleted.

The citation about Baluch families during the 19th century, being irrelevant, has been deleted.

A paragraph by way of summary has been added at the end

of chapter III.

The digression on purdah has been deleted and the description is restricted to practice only in Indian conditions.

The description of King as evergreen bridegroom has been deleted. The phrase "social purging" has also been deleted. This concept was not prevalent in medieval time.

The role of lineage groups jockeying for power has been accepted in a foot note.

Lines 7-9 at page 250 have been deleted.

The confusing expression about the different clothing between wealthy and common women has been done away with.

The generalization that many remained sexually unsatiated is based on evidence found in travel accounts discussed at length under the head 'Unsatiety and Reaction' in chapter IV at page 196. More evidence on this has been adduced from foreign travellers' observations.

The conclusion is only a summary of the thesis and , as such, was kept brief to avoid repetition. Now it has been expanded a little.

I must place on record my thanks to the examiner for offering scholarly insights and guidelines for the revision of the thesis. It has meant a substantial improvement on the previous manuscript.

Chandigarh

Dated : *September 13, 1993.*


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PREFACE

Woman, along with man, forms an integral and vital force of social structure. She plays a central role in the development of society. The term 'status' refers to the position of woman as a person in the social structure, defined by her designated rights and obligations. Each 'status-position' is explained in terms of a pattern of behaviour expected of the incumbent. The role and status assigned to women in society has always been a yardstick to assess the level of progress of a particular civilization.

The literature on women during medieval period is scanty and, therefore, the studies on Muslim women are only a few. Some authors deal with individual aspects and problems of Muslim women in contemporary India, like Mazhar-ul-Haq Khan, Social Pathology of Muslim Society ; Shibani Roy , Status of Muslim women in India ; Jamila BrijBhushan , Muslim Women in Purdah and Out of It . The study of their status in medieval India had, more or less, remained peripheral in the contemporary chronicles and the modern works. Since Muslim women remained in seclusion, public reference to them was avoided unless some one played a significant role in politics, literature or any other field. Whatever references are found, have to be interpreted and analysed in the light of the background and limitations of the contemporary chroniclers. Only ladies of royalty and nobility were in a position to create an impression. Modern work like Rekha Mishra , Women in

Mughal India is primarily concerned with political role of women connected with Mughal royalty and nobility . Their contributions in other fields are barely mentioned. The thesis is an attempt to analyse the changing socio-economic-politico-cultural status of Muslim women of all classes in medieval India (13th-18th centuries).

I have had the privilege of writing this thesis under the able guidance of my esteemed teacher Dr. R. C. Jauhri, Professor of History, Panjab University, Chandigarh. I have no words to acknowledge my deep sense of gratitude to him for his consistent guidance, meticulous supervision and perennial inspiration.

My sincere thanks are due to Dr. Madhukar Arya of Persian Department, Panjab University, Chandigarh, who taught me Persian for the Certificate Course. This knowledge helped me in understanding the original sources. I am indebted to Dr.K.L. Sachdeva, formerly Lecturer at D.A.V.College, Jalandhar, for allowing me an access to his rich personal library. I offer my grateful thanks to Dr. Mohammad Afzal Khan, Lecturer of History, Aligarh Muslim University, who extended his generous help not only during my sojourn at Aligarh but also thereafter. I got assistance from a galaxy of other distinguished scholars during the course of this study. I offer my warm gratitude to all of them.

I am grateful to the authorities of Aligarh Muslim University; National Archives, New Delhi ; Indian Institute of Islamic Studies , Tughlaqabad ; Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public

Library , Patna ; U.P. Archaeological Department, Lucknow; Panjab University, Chandigarh; Dwarka Dass Library, Chandigarh; Vishveshwara Nand Library, Hoshiarpur; Government College, Hoshiarpur; Lajpat Library, D.A.V. College, Jalandhar; Doaba College, Jalandhar; Lyallpur Khalsa College, Jalandhar and host of other institutions, for permitting me to use their libraries for collecting the research material.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not express my gratefulness to Sh. G.N. Gupta and Sh.T.N.Pandey, the then Chairmen, Central Board of Direct Taxes and all the concerned authorities who sanctioned study-leave of twenty months for undertaking this research work.

My husband, Sh. S.M. Sharma, provided me moral support. I cannot forget my infant children, Himani, Garima and Kinshuk, who smiled away the deprivation of motherly care during this research.

Thanks are due to Sh. Virender Sharma and Sh. Lekh Raj for typing the thesis.

Chandigarh
Dated : March 24, 1992 .


SUDHA

ABBREVIATIONS

(A) BOOKS AND AUTHORS

- Abbas : Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi.(1)
- Abdulllah : Tarikh-i-Daudi.(4)
- Adab : Adab-i-Alamgiri. (32)
- Afif : Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi.(74)
- Ahmad Yadgar : Tarikh-i-Shahi.(14)
- Ain. : Ain-i-Akbari.(11)
- A.N. : Akbar Nama.(12)
- Ashub : Tarikh-i-Shahadat-i-Farrukhsiyar-Wa-Julus-i-Muhammad Shah Badshah.(59)
- ATKB : Adi Turk Kaleen Bharat.(376)
- Augustus : The Emperor Akbar--A Contribution Towards the History of India in the 16th Century.(97)
- Aurangzib : History of Aurangzib.(312)
- Badaoni : Muntakhabu-T-Tawarikh .(6)
- Barani : Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi.(88)
- Barbosa : The Book of Duarte Barbosa.(98)
- Bayazid : Tazkirah-i-Humayun-wa-Akbar.(35)
- Bazm : Bazm-i-Taimuria.(382)
- Bernier : Travels in the Mogul Empire.(99)
- B.N. : Babur Nama.(86)
- Bowrey : A Geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal.(100)
- De laet : The Empire of the Great Mogol.(103)
- Della Valle : Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India.(104)
- E & D : History of India as Told by its Own Historians by Elliot and Dowson.(185)
- English Factories : The English Factories in India.(109)

- Faruqi : Jahandar Nama.(69)
- Ferishta : Tarikh-i-Ferishta.(63)
- Fryer : A New Account of the East Indies and Persia.
(111)
- Futuhāt : Futuhāt-i-Firoz Shahi.(39)
- GHN : Humayun Nama by Gulbadan Begam.(42)
- Haig : Cambridge History of India.(205)
- Hamilton : Account of the East Indies.(112)
- Ibn Batuta : The Rehla of Ibn Batuta.(114)
- Isami : Futuh-us-Salatin.(51)
- Ishwar Dass : Futuhāt-i-Alamgiri. (48)
- Jourdain : The Journal of John Jourdain.(115)
- Kambo : Amal-i-Salih. (64)
- Kazim : Alamgir Namah.(55)
- Khafi Khan : Muntakhab-al-Lubab.(62)
- KKB : Khalji Kaleen Bharat.(377)
- Lahori : Badshah Nama.(3)
- M.A. : Maasir-i-Alamgiri.(66)
- Mandelslo : Mandelslo's Travels in Western India.(116)
- Manrique : Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique.(117)
- Manucci : Storia Do Mogor. (118)
- Marshall : John Marshall in India.(119)
- Mirza Nathan : Baharistan-i-Ghaybi.(56)
- Monserrate : The Commentary.(120)
- M.U. : Maasir-ul-Umara.(72)
- Mundy : The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and
Asia.(121)
- Muraqqa : Muraqqa -e-Delhi.(37)
- Mushtaqi : Waqiat-i-Mushtaqi.(71)

Niamatullah	:	Makhzan-i-Afghana.(68)
Oriental Records	:	A Calender of Oriental Records.(94)
Orme	:	Historical Fragments of the Moghul Empire. (124)
Ovington	:	A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689.(125)
Pelsaert	:	The Remonstrantie. (126)
Pyrard	:	The Voyage of Francois Pyrard of Laval.(127)
Qazwini	:	Padshah Nama.(45)
Religion and Politics	:	Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During the Thirteenth Century.(272)
Roe	:	The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of The Great Mughal. (128)
Roe & Fryer	:	Travels in India in the Seventeenth Century.(129)
Rukkat	:	Rukkat-i-Alamgiri.(33)
Saracens	:	A Short Histroy of the Saracens.(145)
Shahnama	:	Shahnama Munawwar Kalam.(77)
Sikander	:	Mirat-i-Sikanderi.(46)
Sirhindi	:	Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi. (82)
Siyar	:	Siyar-ul-Mutakherin.(40)
Stavorinus	:	Voyage to the East Indies.(130)
T.A.	:	Tabaqat-i-Akbari.(52)
Tavernier	:	Travels in India by Jean Baptiste Tavernier.(131)
TKB	:	Tughlaq Kaleen Bharat.(378)
T.N.	:	Tabaqat-i-Nasiri.(13)
Tuzuk	:	Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri.(70)
Umari	:	Masalika-L-Absar Fi Mamalik-L- Alamsar.(73)
UTKB	:	Uttar Taimur Kaleen Bharat.(379)
Zafar-ul-Waleh	:	Zafar-ul-waleh be Muzaffar Wa Aaleh. (5)

(B) OTHERS

A.D.	:	Anno Domini (after Christ).
A.H./H.	:	Al-Hijra / Hijra.
Amb.	:	B.P.Ambashthya.
AMU	:	Aligarh Muslim Universiy.
ann.	:	Annotated.
Ap.	:	April.
Art.	:	Article.
ASB	:	The Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.
Bev.	:	Beveridge , H. and A.H..
Bib. Ind.	:	Bibliothica Indica.
BM.	:	British Museum.
Cat.	:	Catalogue.
Co.	:	Company.
Chap.	:	Chapter.
Com.	:	Compiled.
CR	:	Calcutta Review.
Corp.	:	Corporation.
CU	:	Calcutta University.
D.	:	Document.
Dec.	:	December.
Deptt.	:	Department.
ed.	:	Edited , edition ,editor.
Eng.	:	English.
esp.	:	especially.
et.al.	:	and others.
etc.	:	et cetera (and the rest).

Feb.	:	February.
fig.	:	figure.
Fr.	:	Farman.
fol(s). or f.	:	folio(s).
Govt.	:	Government.
IAD	:	Idarah-i Adabiyat-i-Delli.
Ibid.	:	in the same place.
IC	:	Islamic Culture .
IESHR	:	The Indian Economic and Social History Review.
IHRC	:	Indian Historical Records Commission.
IHQ	:	Indian Historical Quarterly.
ICSSR	:	Indian Council of Social Science Research.
Jan.	:	January.
JASB	:	Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal.
JBORS	:	Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society.
JIH	:	Journal of Indian History.
JPBS	:	Journal of Punjab Historical Society.
JRAS	:	Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, London.
MIQ	:	Medieval India Quarterly.
MS.	:	Manuscript.
MUJ	:	Muslim University Journal.
Mst(s).	:	Musammāt.(s)
n.	:	Note.
nn.	:	Notes.
N.M.	:	Nota Manus.
Nov.	:	November.
No.& no.,Nos.& nos.	:	Number (s).

Oct.	:	October.
OPL	:	The Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna.
p.	:	Page.
pp.	:	Pages.
Per.	:	Persian.
PIHC	:	Proceedings of Indian History Congress.
Pl(s).	:	Plate(s).
Prt.	:	Print or Printing.
Pt.	:	Part.
Pub.	:	Publication
Pw.	:	Parwana.
QJPHS	:	Quarterly Journal of Pakistan Historical Society.
rev.	:	revised.
rpt. or Rpt.	:	reprint.
resp.	:	respectively.
RASB	:	Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal.
S & A	:	I.H. Siddiqui and Qazi Mohammad Ahmad.
s. & d.	:	Shilling & Pence
Sr.	:	Serial.
UPHS	:	United Provinces Historical Society.
Tr.	:	Translation/Translator.
Vol. or vol.	:	Volume.
V.S.	:	Vikram Sambat.
1st, 2nd, 3rd etc.	:	First, Second, Third etc.

CHAPTER 1

THE BACKGROUND : ISLAMIC HERITAGE

ISLAM - THE RELIGION

The changing status of Muslim women in India cannot be discussed without considering the tenets of Muslim religion as also the Middle-Eastern ethos which existed during the contemporary period . In Islam , the Qoran is a perennial source of reference for interpretation and validity of almost every conceivable human act and situation . It is the code which contains all procedures and practices , be they religious , political, civil , commercial , military or judicial - all which are of importance to a Muslim . It regulates everything ; from the elaborate ceremonies of religion to mundane activities of daily life ; from the salvation of the soul to the health of the body ; from the rights of the community to those of each individual ; from morality to crime ; from punishment here to that in the life to come.¹

As Islam moved out beyond the borders of Arabia , the people of varied cultures joined its fold . This brought in
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1 Davenport , John, Mohammad and Teachings of Qoran, ed. Mohammad Amin , pp.45-46 ; Baig , M.R.A. , The Muslim Dilemma in India , p.18 ; Roy , Shibani , Status of Muslim Women in Northern India , p.3 ; Ward, Barbara E.(ed.),Women in the New Asia, pp.67-68.

its trail new ideas as also new problems. Consequently, to meet the demands of the changing times, the simple early dicta of the Qoran were subjected to new interpretations and additions. The new issues were solved with the help of the 'traditions' of the Prophet, known as *hadith*, rules of law deduced from the *hadith* called *sunna*, the consensus of the scholars called the *ijma* and the analogical deductions known as the *qiyas*. Prophet Mohammad was realistic enough to foresee that Islam and its followers must keep pace with the changing times if it had to continue till eternity. According to a *hadith*, Muadh, on being appointed ruler of Yemen, was questioned by Mohammad as to how would he do justice; "I will judge matters according to the book of God", replied Muadh. "But if the book of God contains nothing to guide you?", asked Mohammad; "Then", replied Muadh, "I will act on the precedent of the Messenger of God"; "But", persisted Mohammad, "if the precedents fail?" ; "Then I will endeavour to form my own judgement", was the answer. On hearing this, Mohammad is reported to have expressed the greatest satisfaction.<sup>2</sup> In the *fatihah*, the very opening chapter of the Qoran, the Muslims pray to the Almighty to "guide us on the right path", indicating concern for the future eventualities. Had it not been so, Muslims would not pray for future guidance but would offer thanks for guidance already received. Some of the laws made by the Prophet were later on annulled or modified according

2 Baig, p.ix.

to the needs of the time . Inter-marriages with non-Muslims , for example , were first permitted but as the war-tension increased, such marriages were prohibited.<sup>3</sup> Prophet Mohammad's vision of future is best reflected by Ameer Ali :

The great Teacher, who was fully conscious of the exigencies of his own time , and the requirements of the people ... foretold that a time would come when the accidental and temporary regulations would have to be different from the permanent and general . Ye are in an age, he declared ,in which , if ye abandon one - tenths of what is ordered ye shall be ruined . After this , time will come when he who shall observe one-tenth of what is now ordered will be redeemed.<sup>4</sup>

#### STATUS OF WOMEN IN PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIC SOCIETY

In pre-Islamic Arabia , women had exalted position . They enjoyed great freedom and exercised much influence over the fortune of their tribes . They were not the symbol of weakness, but the embodiment of strength and action . It was the young bride of Haris bin Auf , the powerful chief of the Banu Murra , who brought about the settlement of a long standing feud between the two rival tribes of Abs and Zubjan.<sup>5</sup> The women accompanied the warriors to battle and inspired them to heroism . The cavaliers fought singing the praises of sisters,wives or ladies-love . The chastity of

3 Nizami, K.A.(ed.),Politics and Society During the Early Medieval Period , I , p.35.

4 Ameer Ali , Syed, The Spirit of Islam , p.183. Hereafter cited as Spirit.

5 Khuda Bukhsh , Studies : Indian and Islamic , pp.80-81 on the authority of Aghani , IX,pp.149-51 ; Imtiaz Ali (ed.) , Ameer Ali on Islam , p.51.

women was honoured the most . An insult inflicted on a woman of a tribe set in flame the desert tribes from one end to the other of the peninsula . The 'Sacrilegious Wars' which continued for forty years before Mohammad brought them to an end, had the root cause in an insult to a young girl at one of the fairs of Okaz.<sup>6</sup>

Such chivalrous customs continued for quite some time among some of the nomads of Arabia . The condition of women among the Arabs settled in the cities and villages , who had adopted the loose notions of morality prevalent among the Syrians , Persians and Romans , gradually deteriorated to an abysmal level with the contemporaneous political degeneration. Ultimately , the portrait of free , courageous woman with an independent will of her own , vanished and in its place the image of women as captives of the harem , immersed in toilet, trifles , sensual pleasures and short of all dignified pride, emerged.<sup>7</sup>

In the tribal society , loyalties were totally for the interests of the kinship groups , tribes and class . Theirs was the patriarchal society . As such , in the social set up , as it developed with the passage of time,women came to have no recognized place.<sup>8</sup> The birth of a daughter came to be regarded as a matter of shame . The custom of female

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6 Ameer Ali , Spirit , p.253.

7 Khuda Bukhsh , p.79.

8 Mazhar-ul-Haq Khan, Social Pathology of the Muslim Society, pp.1-17.

infanticide crept in.⁹ Even when a girl was allowed to live, she was forced to get married at an early age of seven or eight. A form of endogamy, expressed in the marriage of cousins, prevailed amongst a majority of Arabian tribes. A man's father's brother's daughter was as a rule, his first wife who remained mistress of the household even when other women, who might be greater favourites, were introduced into it. Such a marriage within the tribe was preferred

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 9 The Qoran, Tr. M.Pickthall, The Meaning of the Glorious Quran, 16 :58-59 :

When if one of them receiveth tidings of the birth of a female, his face remaineth darkened, and he is wroth inwardly. He hideth himself from the folk because of the evil of that whereof he hath had tidings, ( asking himself ) : Shall he keep it in contempt, or bury it beneath the dust! Verily evil is their judgement.

As per the acknowledged authorities on the social order of Islam, the root cause of female infanticide was the poverty of the parents. There was also fear of the possibility of disgrace and loss of prestige in having one of their flesh and blood married to a stranger. The prevalence of female infanticide among the Arabs seemed to be guided more by the latter factor than by economic considerations. The rough geographical conditions forced them to become nomadic and indulge in constant fight for survival. Under such life of perpetual struggle, these Bedouins desired sons especially when the size and strength of the male members of a tribe determined its status and well-being. In their social order, marriage by capture was common and it was considered honourable to take away the wives and concubines of the enemies. Contrarily, seduction of their women was considered a great disgrace. Their intense feeling in this regard can be gathered from the prevalent sayings like the ones which said 'the grave is the best bridegroom' and that 'burial of daughters is demanded by honour' (Smith W.R., Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia, p.279; Levy, Reuben, The Social Structure of Islam, pp. 91-92; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, M., Muslim Institutions, pp. 127-30).

probably to keep control over the bridegroom, to prevent the loss of any property to the tribe and to keep their children within its fold.<sup>10</sup>

Different forms of marriage prevalent at that time were: marriage by capture<sup>11</sup>, marriage by purchase<sup>12</sup>, *beena* marriage<sup>13</sup>, *baal* marriage<sup>14</sup> and *muta* marriage.<sup>15</sup>

Another type of marriage prevalent was one in which a man desiring noble offspring would ask his wife to send for a great chief and have intercourse with him. During the

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10 Levy, p.102.

11 Gallichan, Walter, Women Under Polygamy, p.212.

12 In such marriage, a sum of money (known as *mahr*) was made to the father or nearest Kinsman of the woman he wished to marry and other sum (the *sadaq*) to the girl herself (Moganan, Tatiel, E.T., The Arab Woman, p.36).

13 In *beena* marriage, a number of men ten or less would be invited by a woman in her tent to have intercourse with her. If she conceived and delivered a child, she had the right to summon all the men and they were bound to come. She would then say, "O, so and so, this is your son." This established paternity conclusively and the man had no choice to disclaim it. The children were brought up by the clan of the wife (Siddiqi, M.M., Women in Islam, p.143; Gallichan, p.209).

14 It substituted *beena* marriage by which women lost their independence and supremacy of man was established. In *baal* marriage, the wife used to come to husband's house and her children were given the name of father's clan. The Hebrew word *baal* denoted 'lord', 'master' or 'possessor' and the term was used in the Old Testament for 'husband' (Levy, p.115, n.2).

15 *Muta* marriage was totally personal arrangement for temporary fixed period between the two parties without any intervention on the part of woman's kin. At the end of the period both the parties were free, without any further ceremony, to part provided that the woman had received the dower or fee due to her (W.R. Smith, pp.67-69; Levy, p.115; Gallichan, p.209; Ameer Ali, Spirit, p.227).

period of such intercourse, the husband would stay away and return to her after pregnancy was well advanced.¹⁶ Above all, common prostitutes were well known. If a prostitute conceived, the men who frequented her house were assembled and the physiognomists decided to whom the child belonged.¹⁷ Most of these conjugal relations, however, could hardly be termed as marriages. They were like legalized prostitution or common sexual behaviour recognized by custom.¹⁸ Even polyandry was practised by some of the tribes.¹⁹ In all such arrangements, woman was never a free agent to make a choice. It was the *wali*, the father or the male guardian, who gave her in marriage and her consent for the same was of no importance. There was no limit to the number of wives a man could have, besides having a number of concubines.²⁰ In fact, wife was looked upon as a kind of chattel. She could even be lent to a guest as a mark of hospitality for which the Arabs were well known.

The powers of divorce possessed by the husband were also unlimited.²¹ Hence, divorces were common. A man, having purchased his wife, could be discharged of his total

16 Kapadia, K.M., Marriage and Family in India, pp.187-88.

17 Levy, p.118 ; M.M.Siddiqi, pp. 142-43.

18 Fyzee, A.A.A., Outlines of Muhammadan Law, p.8.

19 Levy, p.91.

20 Ameer Ali, Spirit, pp.lxv, 222 ; Zaidi S.M.H., Position of women Under Islam, p.151.

21 Ameer Ali, Spirit, p.243 ; W.R.Smith, p.83.

obligation to her by payment of portion of the *mahr* that might remain due to her father or *wali* and be rid of her by pronouncement of the formula of dismissal . This required that he should repeat his intention of divorcing his wife three times at one go or at intervals.²² A woman did not have corresponding right of divorce except in case of marriage by purchase where she could buy her freedom from the husband by relinquishing her *mahr* to him . This kind of divorce was known as *khul*.²³

Closely linked with subject of marriage is the veiling and seclusion of women . Regarding veiling , customs appear to have varied between the Arab nomads and the city dwellers. While the women of the desert dwellers went unveiled associating themselves freely with men , women in the cities were veiled.²⁴ Amongst the Prophet's own tribes of the Quraish , veiling was the rule , in general . In ancient Mecca , according to historian Fakihi , the citizens used to dress their daughters and female slaves beautifully and parade them unveiled around Kaba with a hope of attracting some suitors or buyers . If they succeeded in their mission then the women used to resume their veil again.²⁵ Possibly , a reference of this also appears in a passage of the Qoran where Mohammad exhorted his wives to remain in their houses

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22 Levy , p.121.

23 W.R.Smith , p.92 ; Ameer Ali ,Spirit, p.241.

24 Levy, p.124.

25 Ibid..

and not to go out decked in public as in the 'time of barbarism'.<sup>26</sup>

In the Arabian Law of Inheritance , a female could not inherit ; the usage was that only he could inherit who could ride on the back of the horse and take the field against the enemy . Even among males , only agnates could inherit while the cognates (males through females) were debarred from succession.<sup>27</sup> A woman formed an integral part of the estate of her husband or her father and the widows of a man descended to his eldest son by right of inheritance , like any other portion of his patrimony . There are references of matrimonial unions between step-sons and step-mothers.<sup>28</sup> Some of the old Arabian proverbs speak eloquently as to how the Arabian women were regarded as malign beings and greatly inferior to men.<sup>29</sup>

#### ISLAM AND WOMEN

With the advent of Islam in Arabian peninsula , the

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26 The Qoran , 33:33 :

And stay in your houses . Bedizen not yourselves with bedizenment of the Time of Ignorance .

27 Fyzee , p.10 ; Muhammad Ali, Maulana , The Religion of Islam, p.640 (hereafter cited as Religion); also Levy, pp.95-96.

28 Ameer Ali , Spirit , p.228.

29 "Women are the whips of Satan."
"Trust neither a king , horse nor a woman."
"Our mother forbids us to err and runs into error."
"What has a woman to do with the councils of a nation ?"
"Obedience to a woman will have to be repented of."
(Hughes , T.P. , Dictionary of Islam, p.677).

social institution of the *Jahiliya* (The Age of Ignorance) underwent significant changes . For restoring the dignity of women, one of the laudable acts of the Prophet was to denounce the practice of female-infanticide and to forbid it strictly through the authority of the Qoranic injunctions.³⁰ He went a step further and within a short time , succeeded partly in removing poverty , which was one of the main causes of such practice , by making *zakat* (alms-giving) compulsory and worthy of praise . Such collections were to be used for specific purposes including for the poor and the needy.³¹ The birth of a daughter was not to be regarded as unwelcome . It was ordained that for a man who brought up daughters , the latter would become a covering against Hell.³²

The Prophet raised the status of the mother also and declared that paradise lay at the feet of the mother . He reminded his followers of the child-bearing pain a mother undergoes and the way she nurses the child with her milk for

30 The Qoran ,
 6:140 : They are losers who besottedly have
 slain their children without
 knowledge... They indeed have gone
 astray and are not guided.
 6.151 : ...ye slay not your children because
 of penury- We provide for you and for
 them....
 17:31 : Slay not your children , fearing a
 fall to poverty . We shall provide
 for them and for you.
 81:8-9 : And when the girl-child that was
 buried alive is asked.
 For what sin she was slain.

31 Ibid., 98:5 ; 9:60.

32 Maududi, S.A.A., Purdah and the Status of Woman in Islam, p.159 ; M.M.Siddiqi , pp.15-16.

thirty months . Hence , the man should be thankful and kind to her.³³ Checking the pre-Islamic custom , he forbade marrying mothers.³⁴ He also raised their economic status by giving mothers a share in the inheritance.³⁵ A well known 'tradition' of Al-Bukhari clearly shows the exalted position to which mother was raised by the Prophet . A man came to the Prophet and asked him as to whom should he be kind to . The Prophet replied, "Your mother." "Who next ? "; "Your mother", was the reply . The man asked again , "Who after that ?" He again said , " Your mother." And only when he asked this again for the fourth time that the Prophet replied , "Your father."³⁶

The Qoran enjoined the pursuit of knowledge by all Muslims regardless of their sex .It repeatedly commanded all readers to read , to recite , to think , to contemplate as well as to learn the signs (*ayat*) of *Allah* in nature . The very first revelation to the Prophet concerned

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33 The Qoran, 46 :15-17,17:23-24. Also see Mahmudunnasir , Syed , Islam , lts Concept and History , p.395 ; Shushtery ,Outline of Islamic Culture,p.529 ; Kidwai,S.M.N. , Women Under Different Social and Religious Laws , p.78 .

34 The Qoran , 4: 22-23.

35 Ibid. , 4:11-12 .

36 Maududi, p.159 .

knowledge.<sup>37</sup> Commands for the equal rights of women and men to pursue education can be found in the *hadith* literature . It , however , made a difference with regard to the type of education meant for a man and that for a woman . A woman's sphere of activity was the home ; she should be trained primarily in those branches of knowledge which make her more useful in the domestic sphere.<sup>38</sup>

The Prophet also upgraded the woman's position in society by bringing many improvements in marriage rules . As per 'traditions', the *muta* marriage was forbidden in the third year of Hijra.<sup>39</sup> Marriage was made not only a contract but a sacred covenant . Being a contract , it gave the man no power over the woman's person beyond what the law defined . Nevertheless , it was regarded as an institution which led to the upliftment of man and was a means for the continuance of the human race . Hence , marriage was considered to be essential for everybody.<sup>40</sup> Spouses were enjoined to honour and love each other.<sup>41</sup> Mohammad asked men to see their

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37 The Qoran , 96 : 1-5 :

Read : In the name of thy lord who createth ,
Createth man from a clot .
Read : And thy lord is the Most Bounteous ,
Who teacheth by the pen ,
Teacheth man that which he knew not .

38 Maududi , p.156.

39 Ameer Ali , Spirit , p.229.

40 The Qoran , 4:1, 24 :32.

41 The Qoran , 49 :13 ,30:21.

brides before marrying them.⁴² He taught that nobility of character was the best reason for marrying a woman.⁴³ He observed , "It is not lawful for you forcibly to inherit the women (of your deceased Kinsmen)...."⁴⁴ He exhorted women to be very careful in choosing a suitable partner for themselves: "Vile women are for vile men, and vile men for vile women . Good women are for good men and good men for good women...."⁴⁵ It was imperative to seek " free consent" of the lady for solemnizing a marriage . No person , a relative or otherwise , could compel her to marry a person against her will.⁴⁶

As an economic obligation , a husband was obliged to pay his wife a some of money known as *mahr* or marriage settlement.⁴⁷ Such money was supposed to provide for her in difficult times , besides preventing the husband from a thoughtless and capricious divorce . The significance attached by the Prophet to this aspect is evident by his repetition of the idea at several places and during different times. He went to the extent of commanding that *mahr* should

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42 Muhammad Ali , A Manual of Hadith , No. 7,p.271 .

43 Ibid., No.11,pp.272-73.

44 The Qoran , 4:19.

45 Ibid., 24:26.

46 Moganan , p.38,n. 2 ; Ameer Ali , Spirit , p.256 .

47 The Qoran , 4:4 :

And give unto the women, ( whom ye marry )  
free gift of their marriage portions....

be paid even to a captive married woman and maids taken in wedlock by a Muslim.<sup>48</sup> He emphasized that the dower ( *mahr* ) of her marriage should belong to her alone . Thus , *mahr* and *sadaq* of Arabian times became inter-changeable terms . The Qoran forbade husband from taking back his gifts save in exceptional circumstances like *khul* divorce or a case where the wife was guilty of "flagrant lewdness".<sup>49</sup> In *surah* 2, *ayat* 237 , he has described the act of forgoing the dower as that nearer to piety . Since any religious woman could aspire to do a pious act, *mahr* was likely to be given up by her almost as a sacred duty . Further , he laid down that the wife might remit all or part of it , if she so desired, "... but if they of their own accord remit unto you a part thereof, then ye are welcome to absorb it ( in your wealth)." <sup>50</sup>

Another important reform was to restrict the number of

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48 The Qoran ,

4:24 : And all married women are forbidden unto you save those (captives) whom your right hands possess ... And those of whom ye seek content (by marrying them), give unto them their portions as a duty.

4:25 : And whoso is not able to afford to marry free , believing women , let them marry from the believing maids ... so wed them ... and give unto them their portions in kindness

49 Ibid. , 2:229 , 4:19,4:21.

50 Ibid. , 4:4.

lawful wives to four with an overriding clause that such plurality of wives was possible only in a case when the four were treated alike materially as well as emotionally.⁵¹ Such absolute justice in matters of feelings was impossible which even Mohammad believed.⁵² It tantamounted , in reality , to a prohibition of polygamy.⁵³

There was no age-limit for marriage in Islam. The Qoran held it to be a time when a person was capable of exercising his/her choice in the matter of sexual liking or decision . Accordingly , he/she was in a position to take a decision before giving 'consent' for marriage.⁵⁴ Child marriage though not enjoined in the Qoran or the 'tradition' , was in vogue ; Mohammad himself had married Ayisha when she was just nine

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51 The Qoran , 4:3 .There was also a universally accepted *hadith* which proclaimed that a husband should not show greater preference for one wife or another ( Wensink , A.J. , A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition , Chapter on Marriage ) .

52 The Qoran , 4:129 :

Ye will not be able to deal equally between (your) wives, however much ye wish (to do so).

53 Ameer Ali, Spirit , pp.229-30 ; Cooper , Elizabeth , The Harem and the Purdah , p.28 ; Mazhar-ul-Haq Khan ,pp.27-28 ; Shushtery , pp.523-24 ; Hughes, p.462.

54 The Qoran , 4:6; Muhammad Ali , Religion , pp.618-20. See also Levy , pp.107-08 . As per him it was not the age but the physical fitness for matrimony which was the decisive factor.

years of age.<sup>55</sup>

The Prophet gave to women many rights within the family frame-work . In his behaviour towards his wife , the Qoran directed the man :

O Ye who believe ! it is not lawful for you forcibly to inherit the women (of your deceased kinsmen) , nor (that) ye should put constraint upon them that ye may take away a part of that which ye have given them , unless they be guilty of flagrant lewdness.<sup>56</sup> But consort with them in kindness....

The Qoranic expression- "retain them in kindness or release them in kindness "- appeared several times in relation to the conduct of the husband towards his wife.<sup>57</sup> These *ayats* were interpreted to mean that a husband should make a choice between two alternatives when he embarked on marriage ; either he must retain his wife honourably and with fairness or let her go kindly . These Qoranic phrases were revealed in connection with divorce and the period of *iddat* (waiting period) . However , *hadith* show that the phrase was taken as a general rule as it was used in circumstances other than

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55 Bevan,V.R. & L. Jones, Women in Islam : A Manual with Social Reference to Conditions in India , p.91 ; Ameer Ali, Spirit , p.234 (as per him , she was only seven at that time).

56 The Qoran , 4:19 .

57 Ibid. , 2:229, 2:231 .

iddat or divorce also .58

The Qoran gave the wife the right of maintenance from her husband as a part of his legal obligation :

Men are in charge of women ... because they spend of their property (for the support of women).⁵⁹

A wife had a right to sexual relation. An oath of sexual abstinence, consequently, was vehemently condemned in Islam :

O ye who believe ! Fobid not the good things which *Allah* hath made lawful for you , and transgress not.⁶⁰

The women were obliged to make the married life a success. They were to obey the husband and guard their

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58 One such *hadith* in Al Kafi , (Vol.5 , p.502) related about Imam Sadia having said that whenever a man wanted to marry , he should say , " I acknowledge the promise which God has taken from me , that , I will retain the woman honourably or shall set her free with kindness". Another *hadith* from Prophet Mohammad illustrated Prophet's emphasis on treating one's wife courteously . He declared to the Muslims , "O people , keep *Allah* in mind and fear him in respect to women because you have taken them as a trust from *Allah*. " (" Marriage in Islam ", Mahjubah, Vol.4, No.7, Jan.-Feb. 1986,p.31). Still another 'tradition' of Ibn-i-Majah mentioned that once Hazrat Umar complained against the women having grown insolent and sought permission to have resort to beating to set them right . The prophet granted this permission . As a result , 70 women got thrashing from their husbands . These women represented against this treatment to the Prophet . At this , the Prophet declared , "The best among you are those who are good to their wives and kind to their people ." One of Al-Bukhari's 'traditions' brought out how the Prophet highlighted women's emotional nature and stressed on kind treatment to them . He had said, "The woman is like a rib . If you try to straighten her , you would break her . But if you employ her usefully , you will benefit from her inspite of her crookedness . " ; also M.M.Siddiqi , pp. 56-58 ) .

59 The Qoran , 4: 34 .

60 Ibid. , 5:87.

chastity in his absence, "So good women are the obedient , guarding in secret that which *Allah* hath guarded."<sup>61</sup> She was expected to give sexual company to her husband at all reasonable times and appropriate places consistent with her health and decency . She was obliged to reside and live with her husband at his abode and also follow him to any place unless there was a reasonable cause for contrary conduct . She was responsible for keeping and running the house of husband and was answerable for the conduct of her duties.<sup>62</sup>

Mohammad had emphasized the inter-dependence of husband and wife for the smooth marital life . The wife and husband were likened as garments of each other<sup>63</sup> and as mates living and dwelling in tranquillity.<sup>64</sup> Men and women were directed to compliment each other and not to compete with each other . They were , thus , made the protectors of each other.<sup>65</sup>

Islam prohibited adultery by declaring , " And all married women are forbidden unto you save those (captives)...."<sup>66</sup> As for the rest of women , practising adultery was a hateful activity , " And come not near unto adultery . Lo ! it is an abomination and an evil .....

61 The Qoran, 4:34.

62 Maududi , p.149 on the authority of Al. Bukhari .

63 The Qoran , 2:187.

64 Ibid. , 33:21, 7:189.

65 Ibid. , 9 : 71 .

66 lbid. , 4:24.

way."67 For adulterer and adulteress both , Mohammad provided the punishment of hundred stripes each , once the guilt was proved .68 He also laid down that an adulterer could marry an adulteress or an idolatress alone and no one else and *vice versa* .69 There was , however , another *surah* whereby only adulterous wives were mentioned and they were to be kept confined to houses until they died.70 For the slave girls , this punishment was reduced to half.71 However, lest this power was misused , he commanded that those who accused honourable women of adultery , must bring four witnesses in support , failing which they would be punished by eighty stripes. Further , the testimony of such persons would not be accepted afterwards except of those who repented and made amends.72 Such witnesses were practically impossible to collect. And by recommending forgiveness for them in case of repentance , Mohammad allowed such persons to go scot free . But , when a husband accused his wife of

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67 The Qoran , 17 : 32.

68 Ibid. , 24 : 2 .

69 Ibid. , 24 : 3 .

70 Ibid. , 4 : 15. Explaining this , the commentators say that in early days of Islam , adulterous ladies were literally imprisoned which later on was changed to stoning to death (Levy , p.120). However , according to Muhammad Ali, (Religion, p.753), death was never prescribed by the Qoran since in such a case , how could the punishment be made half for the slave girls as was stipulated .

71 The Qoran , 4 :25 .

72 Ibid. , 24: 4-5 ; also Hughes , pp. 476-77 ; Levy , p.119.

adultery but had no witness except himself , his testimony was to be taken equivalent to that of four persons and alongwith this he had to invoke the curse of *Allah* on him if he was telling a lie . The wife could avert punishment in such a case only if she bore a witness before *Allah* four times that the charges levied by her husband on her were false and by further invoking wrath of *Allah* upon her if her husband was speaking truth.⁷³ Here again , the woman was discriminated against. While the man was given the privilege of being equivalent to four witnesses in case of charge of adultery on wife , no such privilege was given to the wife in case of charge of adultery on the husband. Above all , if the man was unhappy with his wife, then , by levying such charges , he was capable of hurting her emotionally.

The Prophet prohibited those men and women from marrying each other who were bound by nature to live together in close relationship . The following relations could not marry each other : mother and son , father and daughter , brother and sister, paternal aunt and nephew , paternal uncle and niece , maternal aunt and nephew , maternal uncle and niece, step father and daughter, step mother and son , mother-in-law and son-in-law , father-in-law and daughter-in-law , wife's sister and brother-in-law (during sister's life time) and foster relations.⁷⁴

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73 The Qoran, 24 : 6-9.

74 ibid. , 4:22-23.

The Qoran legitimized husband's pre-Islamic right to divorce his wife , without assigning any cause , which undermined the position of women.<sup>75</sup> The Prophet was, however, liberal in conceding divorces to the ladies too , at their initiation. He allowed divorce even on grounds of mental incompatibility . The ugly Sabit-bin-Qais was repulsive to his wife , the beautiful Jamila. She went to the Prophet and said, " I am not annoyed with my husband nor do I see anything objectionable in his conduct but I don't love him." She was granted a divorce.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless the Prophet did not favour it and emphatically stated that of the many things which God made permissible for men , the most displeasing to Him was divorce.<sup>77</sup> But considering conjugal differences , it was considered better to wreck the unity of the family than to wreck the future happiness of the couple. Under strained conditions , it was most relieving for the wife to get a separation from the husband. The Prophet , therefore , made a new departure by giving wife the power to seek divorce on reasonable grounds, say, impotence of the husband , cruelty perpetrated by him on the wife or his inability to pay her *mahr* amount or to provide for her maintenance. For all this, she had to forgo her dower unless she showed solid

75 The Qoran, 2:226,228 ; also Roberts,Robert , The Social Laws of the Qoran , pp.20-21 ; Kapadia , pp. 191-92.

76 BrijBhushan , Jamila , Muslim Women in Purdah and Out of IT , p.66.

77 Ameer Ali, Spirit , p.243 ; Hughes , p.87.

grounds for demanding the separation.<sup>78</sup>

A man could break the marriage ties by pronouncing *talaq* thrice . But the process of this pronouncement was made complicated , spreading it over a period of roughly three months (once every month ) known as period of *iddat* or waiting.<sup>79</sup> This served the dual purpose of allowing tempers to cool down and for pregnancy to be established . If, during this period , intercourse took place even once , the divorce was annulled . In the case of pregnancy , this period of waiting extended till the birth of the child or termination of pregnancy.<sup>80</sup> But if the husband decided to repeat *talaq* third time too , then he was ordained to free the woman with kindness and retain them " not to their hurt".<sup>81</sup> Under such circumstances , maintenance of wife during the period of waiting was the duty of husband.<sup>82</sup> Besides , since mothers were required to suckle their children for more than two years , the duty of feeding and clothing a nursing mother rested upon the father of the child. For nursing his child , he was required to provide for

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78 Ameer Ali , Spirit , p.245 ; Levy , pp.122-23 ; Menon , Indu , Status of Muslim Women in India , p.75.

79 The Qoran, 2:228. *Iddat* is an innovation made by Islam. In the *Jahiliya* (age of darkness), the divorced woman could remarry immediately after divorce even if she was pregnant and such a child belonged to the new husband (Levy , p.122, n.2; Ameer Ali , Spirit , p.246).

80 Ibid., 65 : 4 , 2 :228.

81 Ibid., 2 : 231.

82 Ibid., 65 : 1 .

the maintenance of his divorced wife too.⁸³ The Prophet went to the extent of saying that even if the marriage had not been consummated or a *mahr* fixed , the husband should "Provide for them, the rich according to his means , and the straitened according to his means , a fair provision".⁸⁴ For those , whose marriages were not consummated but where a portion was fixed , he directed to pay "half of that which ye appointed , unless they (the women) agree to forgo it, or he agreeth to forgo it in whose hand is the marriage tie".⁸⁵ Thus , Muslim law made divorce a financial burden on the husband requiring him to maintain his wife in prescribed manner at least for a limited period .

To discourage indiscriminate divorces it was provided that once a man divorced a woman , he couldn't take her back lawfully until she married another man , the marriage consummated and then the second husband divorced her . Remarriage in this case could take place after she had three 'courses' following her second divorce from her second husband.⁸⁶ The Prophet also laid down that for a widow , the period of *iddat* was four months and ten days and in case of a pregnancy , till the birth of the child . After that , like a divorced woman , she became free to do any thing she liked,

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83 The Qoran, 2 : 233.

84 Ibid., 2 : 236.

85 Ibid., 2 : 237.

86 Ibid., 2 : 230.

including getting authority to remarry.<sup>87</sup> Towards the end of his life , Mohammad made a further change . He forbade the exercise of the power of divorce by men without the intervention of arbiters or a judge.<sup>88</sup>

The economic right conferred on women raised their status . Meeting their necessities was the responsibility of father before marriage and of husband after marriage . However wealthy the wife might become , the husband was , in no case , absolved of this responsibility . Mohammad also called upon dying husbands to leave behind some wealth for their widows so that they could support themselves even if they didn't get remarried.<sup>89</sup>

The Qoran granted women very extensive rights of inheritance. After the battle of Uhad , in which one Aws Ibn Samit had fallen , his widow complained to Mohammad that two cousins of her husband claimed his estate and that if they were permitted to have it then she and her three young daughters would be left destitute . Thereupon , the Prophet received the revelation :

Unto the men (of a family) belongeth of a share of that which parents and near kindred leave , and unto the women a share of that which parents and near kindred leave , whether it be little or much -a legal share.<sup>90</sup>

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87 The Qoran, 2 : 232 , 234.

88 Ibid., 4 :35 ; Also see Ameer Ali, Spirit , p.244; Kapadia, p.190.

89 The Qoran , 2 : 240.

90 Ibid., 4:7 ; Levy , pp. 96-97 on the authority of Baydawi.

Further instructions were given in the same chapter for disposal of the property of a man dying intestate :

Allah chargeth you concerning (the provision for) your children: to the male the equivalent of the portion of two females , and if there be women more than two, then theirs is two thirds of the inheritance, and if there be one (only) then the half . And to his parents a sixth of the inheritance if he have a son ; and if he have no son and his parents are his heirs , then, to his mother appertaineth the third ; and if he have brethren , then to his mother appertaineth the sixth , after any legacy he may have bequeathed, or debt (hath been paid).⁹¹

Surahs 4 : 12 and 4 : 176 also referred to this aspect. After payment of bequests and debts , the son inherited half of the total property and the rest was divided among other relatives . If there were two or more daughters , two-thirds of the property was to be divided equally between them . If only parents survived the deceased , the father would inherit two-thirds of the property and the mother one-third. If , however , there were living children , each of the parents would inherit one-sixth of the property and the remainder would go to the children . If there were no surviving children but only brothers , sisters and parents , then the mother received one-sixth instead of one-third. The wife got one-eighth of her husband's property if there were children and one-fourth , if there were none. Regarding succession of wife's property , the husband was entitled to a half of what his wife left behind if she had no child , otherwise he got only one-fourth. If either of the husband or the wife left behind neither parents nor children but distant sister or a

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91 The Qoran , 4 : 11.

brother (from mother's side ) , then each of them shared one-sixth and if they were more than two, then all of them shared one-third.<sup>92</sup> When there were no issue nor parents , then a single sister ( of a male deceased ) or brother ( of a female deceased ) was entitled to one-half , two or more sisters to two-thirds and if brother also existed , then they inherited the whole property , the male having double the share of the female.<sup>93</sup> The privilege of making testamentary bequests was provided to women also alongwith men, though it was limited only to one-third of the total heritage.<sup>94</sup>

From all these Qoranic injunctions, many fundamental principles regarding inheritance have been drawn.<sup>95</sup> The husband or wife was made an heir . Females and cognates were made competent to inherit . Parents and ascendants were given the right to inherit even when male descendants existed . As a general rule , female , might be wife or daughter , was given one half of the share of a male . In other words , wife got half of the share of husband and daughter half of that of the son . No distinction was made between movable and immovable property . Right of will upto limited level was given to women also. There was no concept of the birth right, the right of inheritance arose only on the death of a  
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92 The Qoran, 4 : 12.

93 ibid.,4:176. Also Muhammad Ali, Religion, p.708, see also pp . 702-07.

94 The Qoran, 4 : 12.

95 Fyzee , pp. 381-84 ; Tyabji,F.B., Muhammadan Law , pp.603,822.

certain person . There was no community of property between husband and wife . He retained full possession and control of his belongings and she of hers . Nobody - her father , husband or any other relative - could interfere in her financial matters . If she invested her money in business or earned with her own hand , she was the sole owner of the fruit of her labour. Similarly each woman was absolute master of her share of inheritance . The fact that women were entitled only half of what their men-folk got was taken as an example of low status of women in Muslim society . Nonetheless , this distribution was not considered inequitable by some of the writers.⁹⁶ They argued that women had the right to be maintained throughout their life while a man always had the obligation to support her alongwith other dependants . Besides , since it was almost a matter of religious obligation for every woman to marry, she received inheritance from many sources . She would not only have half as much property as her brother , but would also inherit from her husband , offsprings and other near relatives besides having her own self-acquired property. Thus , she would enjoy a much higher financial standing than her brother. In her husband's property also , she had the right to enjoy whereas a husband had no legal power to touch his wife's money or property . If she let him use any part of it , it was only at her instance . In view of all in Islam that

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96 Maududi , pp.154-55 and n.1 ; BrijBhushan, Muslim Women, p.84; M.M.Siddiqi , pp.48-49.

more often than not , she was better off , this , the economic position of a woman had become so secure economically , than her husband.

In the religious domain , the Qoran propounded male-female equality in matters such as origin of humanity , religious obligations and rewards and punishments . There is nothing in the Qoran to show that the first woman created by God was a creature of lesser worth . Instead, the first human couple was made from a single soul to complement each other . It was envisaged that the noblest creature would be the one who , irrespective of sex , conducted himself the best.<sup>97</sup> Being born equal, it implied equal treatment wherever possible with regard to reward and punishment . It was observed that God could observe even the smallest good or evil deed done by male or female and the value of every person was based on his/her own actions.<sup>98</sup> All persons doing good works , irrespective of sex , would be rewarded and those doing evil works would not be acquitted.<sup>99</sup>

In the realm of worship , the obligations of Muslim men and women were identical . There were five 'pillars' of Islam . The first three were made obligatory for Muslims , rich and poor , male and female . These were : confession of faith , the five compulsory prayers performed daily and fasting ( *roza* ) in the month of *Ramzan* . The remaining two

97 The Qoran, 7:189 , 49:13 , 4:1.

98 Ibid., 33:35 , 3:195.

99 Ibid., 4:124 , 16:97 , 40:40 , 24:2.

'pillars' were made compulsory only for the rich ;they were: the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca ) and *zakat* (giving of alms). Since the Qoran recognized women's independent rights over property , they were expected to pay alms on their own behalf. Regarding *hajj* , a woman could not go there alone but if she had resources , she could arrange to be accompanied by a male relative . However , she should not mix with men , as far as possible , while moving around the Kaba. Maududi has narrated many 'traditions' which revealed that during Prophet's time women used to go to Kaba at early hours of the day when it was still dark . Also , when women moved around the Kaba alongwith men , they did not mix with the latter.<sup>100</sup> With regard to prayers , the Qoran did not forbid women from praying in mosques . There are many 'traditions' which bring out this fact.<sup>101</sup> According to an early 'tradition' , Mohammad himself was not averse to allowing women to pray in his company . He declared that they could go to the mosques regularly if their husbands permitted.<sup>102</sup> This is corroborated by another 'tradition' in which the Prophet was depicted disapproving any hurdle placed in the way of women who wished to pray in the mosque.<sup>103</sup> According to these 'traditions' , however , many conditions were laid down which

100 Maududi , pp.211-12.

101 Muhammad Ali , Religion, pp.390-91.

102 Levy , p.131 on the authority of Al Bukhari, X, pp. 161 , 166.

103 Levy , p.131 on the authority of Al Bukhari ,XI,p.13 and Tabari , I, 2649.

needed to be observed by women.<sup>104</sup> Firstly, the women were required to go to mosques during 'Night Prayers' and 'Dawn Prayers'. According to Ibn Umar, the Prophet said, "Let the women come to the mosque at night." (Al-Tirmizi; Al-Bukhari). Secondly, women were to avoid adoration and perfuming themselves while coming to mosques. Otherwise, the Prophet was reported to have declared that their prayers would not be rewarded by *Allah* (Muaata, Muslim and Ibn Majah). Thirdly, they should stand separately behind the rows of men, the place considered best for women by the Prophet (Al-Tirmizi, Al-Bukhari and Nasai). Hazrat Umar even provided separate doors for women in the mosques (Abu Daud). Fourthly, they should not raise their voice during prayers. Even if *Imam* was to be told about an error, while the men were to say " *Subhan Allah* ", the women could only tap their hands (Al-Bukhari and Abu Daud). Fifthly, though the Prophet himself used to take his daughters and wives to the *Id* congregations, yet the *Id* and Friday prayers in mosques were made optional for women (Al-Tirmizi, Ibn Majah and Abu Daud). All these restrictions show that the men were given preferential treatment. Even amid the serene atmosphere of a mosque, a woman was not regarded as a devotee but only as a woman.<sup>105</sup>

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 104 Maududi, pp.210-12.

105 Roy, p.113. There are writers who don't subscribe to this view. Thus, Bevan, Jones, (p.250) quoting Mohammad as having said that "Best Mosque for women is their own houses", comment that women were not allowed to go out of their houses even for prayers, much less for anything else.

In Mohammad's days , women participated openly in congregations . His own wife Khadija played decisive role in early Islam . It was she , who stood at the fountain of this 'Faith' , supported her husband , kept alive his enthusiasm , consoled him in defeat and rejoiced with him in success.¹⁰⁶ Fatima , the daughter of Mohammad , was another protagonist. She lectured openly to the mixed gatherings of both sexes , often in the courtyard of her house and some times , in the public mosque.¹⁰⁷ Ayisha , another wife of Mohammad played an important role in the propagation of his religion . It is said that two-third of the 'Faith' was narrated by her which was incorporated in the form of *hadith*.¹⁰⁸ Thus , theoretically , within the sphere of religion equal status was granted, to men and women in Islam.

The Qoranic position on purdah (veiling of women) is ambiguous. Did Mohammad advocate purdah at all , as we take it today , and if so , was the veiling of women meant only for the female relatives of the Prophet or it was an essential attire for all pious Muslim women ? Relevant *ayats* are :

O ye who believe ! Enter not houses other than your own without first announcing your presence and invoking peace upon the folk thereof . That is better for you , that yet may be heedful.¹⁰⁹

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106 Imtiaz Ali(ed.) , p.52.  
 107 Ameer Ali, Spirit , p.250 ; De Souza, Alfred(ed.),Women in Contemporary India , p.114.  
 108 Levy, p.132.  
 109 The Qoran, 24 : 27.

And if ye find no one therein , still enter not until permission hath been given . And if it be said unto You; Go away again , then go away for it is purer for you.<sup>110</sup>

Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them.<sup>111</sup>

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest , and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent , and to draw their veils over their bosoms , and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers or husbands' fathers or their sons , or their husbands' sons, or their brothers or their brothers' sons or sisters' sons , or their women, or their slaves , or male attendants who lack vigour or children who know naught of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment.<sup>112</sup>

As for women past child-bearing , who have no hope of marriage, it is no sin for them if they discard their (outer) clothing in such a way as not to show adornment. But to refrain is better for them.<sup>113</sup>

O , ye who believe ! Enter not the dwelling of the Prophet for a meal without waiting for the proper time, unless permission be granted you . But if ye are invited... when your meal is ended , then disperse. Linger not for conversation... And when ye ask of them ( the wives of the Prophet ) anything , ask it of them from behind a curtain.<sup>114</sup> That is purer for your hearts and for their hearts.

It is no sin for them (thy wives) (to converse freely) with their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or the sons of their sisters or of their own women , or their slaves.<sup>115</sup>

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110 The Qoran, 24 : 28.

111 Ibid., 24 : 30.

112 Ibid., 24 : 31.

113 Ibid., 24 : 60.

114 Ibid., 33 : 53 .

115 Ibid., 33 : 55 .

O Prophet ! tell thy wives and thy daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them (when they go abroad) . That will be better, so that they may be recognised and not annoyed.¹¹⁶

These *ayats* indicated that a woman must not exhibit her adornments, except those which were apparent, to anybody other than her near relatives which were identified and described therein . Men and women should look downwards while speaking with members of other sex . Both men and women should be modest in their behaviour . The women were to cover their bosoms. The list of men, a married woman could converse with, was given . All of them were incorporated within prohibited degree , as per the Qoran for purpose of marriage except the eunuchs and children too young to be conscious of difference of sex . No man other than a near relative was entitled to step into a house either when there was no response to call or when he was asked to go away . Whenever a woman was to go out of the house , she was to cover herself with a cloak so that she would be recognized as a respectable woman and not a lewd one and therefore , nobody would think of molesting her. But it was not necessary for a middle-aged woman to cover herself , since her youth and charm were on the decline , provided she did not have the desire of showing her adornment. Besides , regarding himself , the Prophet requested his followers not to make familiar use of his house and not to enter it except by his permission. If they had any request to make to his wives, they were to ask it from behind a
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116 The Qoran, 33 : 59 .

veil.117

After going through these *ayats* , Maulana Abul Ala Maududi held that *purdah* was established by the Prophet in his own days as an Islamic institution even though the word *naqab* (veil) is not mentioned in the Qoran.<sup>118</sup> He ordered both sexes to hide the parts of the body called *satr*.<sup>119</sup> Above all , he enjoined on women to hide their faces from the other people through a veil , which was made regular part of their dress outside the house, to obviate sexual anarchy and emotional dispersion in the society . However , uncovering of face under genuine need , say , visiting a doctor , appearing before *Qazi* for witness or in the case of a fire or war, was permitted . The Prophet had not given the woman an absolute command in respect of covering the face as in respect of covering the *satr* and hiding the decorations because such covering did not restrain her from attending to the needs of life . It seems that veiling and segregation of women developed out of the Qoranic precepts , though their subsequent forms and rigidity were not in consonance with the original intent .

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117 Baydawi 's comment is , " It is related that Umar said, O Apostle of God there come into thy house men who may be simple or wicked . It were well if you commanded the veil for the mothers of believers . This verse was then revealed." (Levy , p.125).

118 Maududi ,pp.184-203 ; The Qoran , 33:59 , 24:60.

119 *Satr* means that part of the body which is to be kept covered. For men it is the part of the body between the pit of the stomach and the knee . For women , it is the whole body except the face and hand (Maududi , p.177).

The other important institution resulting from the seclusion of women is the harem . The Arabic word 'harem' simply means the 'women's quarters' . It denoted the apartments in the house or the palace reserved for the female members and children of the family.¹²⁰ The *zanana* or harem was unknown during Mohammad's time. The houses or dwellings of the early Muslims were not divided into male and female units within a kinship cluster of families . Such an idea was totally inconceivable and impracticable in the tents of the nomadic desert dwellers . Their houses consisted of a room or two around a common space, open or roofed , the latter being used by the clan for congregations and deciding important matters. It is considered that the early Muslim institutions like *shura* came into being out of such social background only.¹²¹ But , the Prophet's sayings regarding veiling contained within them the germs of future genesis of harem as an institution.¹²²

Mohammad found slavery as an essential element of society of his times . He struck at the very root of it by dispensing with the practice of keeping prisoners of war . According to his command , when the war ceased and peace was established , all war-prisoners would have to be set free.¹²³ Then, like a free man , the slave, on his marriage, was

120 Cooper , pp.25-27; also Hughes, p.163.

121 Mazhar-ul-Haq Khan , pp.34-35.

122 Subbamma , Malladi, Islam and Women, Tr. M.V.Ramamurty, pp. 104-05.

123 The Qoran , 47 : 4 ; Muhammad Ali , Religion , p.586.

required to provide for the *mahr* which he must earn by his own labour . Such a *mahr* would become the property of the wife's owner if she was a slave . The Qoran gave permission to the free Muslim man to marry his own slave girl , if she was of his own faith , with the permission of her folks . He should also give her *mahr* in kindness.¹²⁴ In fact, by making marriage compulsory for slave girls , as was for free women , Mohammad checked two pre-Islamic evil practices viz. sexual misuse of slave girls by masters and forcing them into prostitution for monetary gains.¹²⁵ The reflection of the abolition of prostitution appeared in the very Qoranic *ayat* .

The Prophet said :

Force not your slave girls to whoredom that ye may seek enjoyment of life of the world , if they would preserve their chastity.¹²⁶

The interpretation of this *ayat* is a subject of controversy as to whether prostitution was abolished or not.¹²⁷

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124 The Qoran, 4:25,3 . On the authority of Aghani, XIV , p.110 , Levy , (pp.111-12) opined that in such a case , the man had to emancipate her first before seeking her " free consent" which was a pre-requisite for marriage.

125 Ibid. , 24 : 32.

126 Ibid. , 24 : 33.

127 From the qualification attached with the word 'if' appearing in this *ayat* , Levy, (p.118), opined that in Arabia "Prostitution was too firmly established to be at once removed". However , Muhammad Ali, ( Religion, p.662, n.1) considered it total " misinterpretation of the Quranic word". As per him , "This would lead to the evident conclusion that if they do not desire to keep chaste , they may be compelled to prostitution which is self-contradictory ." He , therefore , interpreted the *ayat* to mean that since "it is the very nature of woman, whether free or slave , that she would remain chaste, slave girls who are under the control of their masters, should not be compelled to prostitution by not allowing them to marry".

Nonetheless , the plain reading of this alongwith *ayat* 24:32 makes it clear that by giving the injunction for slave girls to get married , the Prophet indicated that he was against prostitution .

Connected with it was the question of concubinage ; a regular connection with a female who did not possess the legal status of a wife . The Qoranic expressions in some *ayats* indicate its existence.<sup>128</sup> But these expressions were early Mecca revelations and were superseded by the reforms introduced at Madina. When the clear injunction was given that all slaves should be married , the practice of concubinage died its own death. Later on, the Prophet himself made concubinage unlawful for men :

And so are the virtuous women of the believers and the virtuous women of those who received the Scripture before you (lawful for you ) when ye give them their marriage portions and live with them in honour , not in fornication , not taking them as secret concubines.<sup>129</sup>

It was provided that if a master took his own slave for a concubine by virtue of his right of ownership and she begot children from him , she was then termed as *Umm Walad* and her children by him were free , though her children , if any , from any other man continued to be slaves and property of her master.<sup>130</sup> It was also provided that he could not sell ,

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128 The Qoran ,23 : 5-6,70:29-30.

129 The Qoran ,5 :5 ; see also Ameer Ali, Spirit , p.247.

130 Before Islam , the usage followed was "The child followed the womb " . It was the sweet will of the master to recognize such children as his own or not. If he accepted them, then they were free. Otherwise, they too continued to be his slaves (Levy, pp.78-79 and n.8). See also Hitti , P.K, History of the Arabs , p.76. For definition of *Umm Walad*, see Hughes,p.655.

pledge or give her away as a gift . He could demand service from her and could give her in marriage to another man even against her will.¹³¹

The Qoran and the *hadith* made it a commendable act for masters to free slaves as a penalty for certain misdeeds done by themselves or as a fulfilment of the desire of slaves to be free, if they were worthy of it.¹³² The *Umm Walad* became free alongwith her children from him on the death of the master.¹³³ The slave who became possession of one with whom he was related, either through ascendant or descendant , was free . For example , if a father who was a free man got his slave son by a master's bequest , then the son was free. A slave could also be freed by the promise of the master, verbal or in writing , to free him/her after his death . Such slaves were classified as *Mudabbar* .¹³⁴

With all these rights to woman , the Prophet still placed the man at a higher pedestal and maintained man's supremacy over woman . He propounded that basically a man was made superior to a woman by *Allah* .¹³⁵ He was made the provider of the family with responsibility to earn a living

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131 Levy ,pp.80 ,111 on the authority of the Khalil Ishaq and E. Sachau .

132 The Qoran , 4 : 92 , 5 : 89 , 24 : 33.

133 Levy , p.80 on the authority of Khalil Ishaq and E. Sachau ; Banaji , D.R., Slavery in British India, pp.228-29.

134 Levy , p.80 ; Banaji , p.228.

135 The Qoran , 2 : 228.

for the family and arranging for it the necessities of life . Hence , a man was superior to a woman.<sup>136</sup> He was given authority to admonish and punish his wife. He was also given the unilateral power to divorce while a woman was allowed this only in exceptional circumstances and that too , after sacrificing her *mahr* rights. The property rights of a woman were half of those of a man . In the matter of marriage , a man was allowed polygamy , while the woman had to follow monogamy . Besides, a man could marry a non-Muslim ( *Kitabia*) while a woman could not do so.<sup>137</sup> A wife was to obey her husband implicitly.<sup>138</sup> As testimony before a *Qazi* , the evidence of two women was taken as equal to that of a man. The supremacy was also expressed clearly in the description of paradise . In the material heaven prepared for the men of this faith , even the poorest man was rewarded with seventy two beautiful brides , termed as *hurras* . Besides possessing these heavenly spouses , a man might renew his marriage with

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136 The Qoran , 4 : 34 . In interpreting this passage , commentator Baydawi of the thirteenth century , whose word is held valid by Sunnites to the present day , enumerated different ways men were considered superior to women . Men were superior in mental ability , good counsel , in their power for performance of duties , for carrying out divine commands . Hence , to men had been confided prophecy , religious leadership , saintship , pilgrimage rights , the giving of evidence in law courts , the duties of the Holy war , worship in mosque on Friday , in having privilege of electing chiefs , in having bigger share in inheritance and an upper hand in divorce (Levy , pp.98-99 ,132 on the authority of Ibn Khaldun) .

137 The Qoran,5:5, 60 :10.

138 The Qoran, 4 : 34.

the wives who had preceded him into elysium (in Greek Mythology , place of ideal happiness) . To the Muslim women, paradise offered no such allurements . She would dwell, as she dwelt on earth , one of many wives.¹³⁹

The Qoran gave a special treatment to the Prophet and his family. Against allowing maximum four wives to a Muslim man , in general , he himself married ten more women after Khadija , his first wife and also sought Qoranic sanction for the same.¹⁴⁰ He repudiated a long established custom of regarding an adopted son as equal to a real son in all respects , when he married Zeyd , the divorced wife of his own adopted son.¹⁴¹ He ordained that nobody should marry his widows though he wanted his followers to marry widows and protect orphans.¹⁴²

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139 Gallichan , pp.44-45 .

140 The Qoran , 33: 50. Different reasons were given by the supporters for such action on the part of the Prophet . As per E.W.Lane , ( Modern Egyptians, Chapter III , "On Civil Laws"), this might be because of Prophet's desire to have a son . See also The Qoran,33 : 40. According to W. Sheowring C.W.Thies ,( Religious Systems of the world , p.256 ) , this might be because of the magnanimity of the Prophet to protect the widows of his persecuted followers . Ameer Ali, (Spirit , pp.233-38), besides giving both these reasons , further wrote that by marriage alliance , the Prophet united the warring tribes and brought within them some degree of harmony .

141 The Qoran , 33:4, 33:37 . Also see Levy , pp.100-01 ; Baig , p.8.

142 Ibid. , 33:53.

## SPREAD OF ISLAM

Mohammad took to arms and brought the whole of Arabia under his sway before his death in 632 A.D.. After him , Islam embarked on an era of change. The conquests in battles transformed a small religious community into a mighty political empire. People of different races came within the fold of Islam ; a majority of them were Arabs, Persians, Turks, Mongols, Hebrews, Romans, Egyptians and Afghans . Along with them , they brought their respective beliefs and customs as well.

Persian women had very low social status .<sup>143</sup> They had degraded moral values . There was no recognized law of marriage and even if there was any , it was mostly, ignored . In the absence of any fixed rule in the Zend Avesta with regard to the number of wives a man could possess , the Persians practised polygamy besides keeping a number of concubines.<sup>144</sup> Adultery was common and it was not considered a crime which would attract penalty.<sup>145</sup> Term marriages or temporary unions,like *muta* marriage, were also prevalent.<sup>146</sup> Seclusion of women was in vogue. They were guarded very closely in their harems. Even in the

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143 The prevalent Persian saying like 'women and dragon are dangerous creatures, fit only to be destroyed' is suggestive of their attitude towards women [Afif, (Text),p.352]

144 Ameer Ali , Spirit , pp.xxxiii , 222-23 , 227; Holt, P.M.et.al.(ed.),The Cambridge History of Islam,II,p.515.

145 Gallichan , p.237.

146 Gallichan , pp.209,236-37.

inscriptions and sculptures of ancient Persia , reference to a woman was avoided.¹⁴⁷ The Persians were notorious for sodomy.¹⁴⁸ The only positive attitude, however, was towards the mothers and grand-mothers who were greatly respected.¹⁴⁹

The Turks , in general, gave their women a fair measure of freedom.¹⁵⁰ Marriage in ancient Turkey was a matter of negotiation and arrangement and not of capture as was among the Arabs and some Eastern tribes . But they too were polygamous ; like all the martial races of the ancient times which sought pleasure in warfare , extension of territory , capture of women , slaves and spoils.¹⁵¹ The respect for mother was observed by them also.¹⁵²

The Society of the Mongols was based on patrilinear clans (*obok*). Different clans from a common ancestor were considered as kin. Inter-marriages among such clans were not

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147 Ameer Ali , Spirit , pp.248 ;Rawlinson , H.G., Five Great Monarchies , III ,p.222 ; Levy , p.129,n.5; Hyder Qurratulain , "Muslim Women in India",in Devaki Jain (ed.) , Indian Woman , p.191; Mikhail, Mona N., Images of Arab Women, p.3; Siddiqi,M.Z.,Sir Abdullah Memorial Lectures,pp.66-67.

148 Khuda Bukhsh , p.102.

149 Rawlinson , III , p.220 ; Gallichan , p.217.

150 The Turks alongwith Mongols and Manchus are known as Tartars. For detailed study see Erskine , W.,History of India under the Two First Sovereigns of the House of Taimur, I , pp.9-11 , 533-36.

151 Gallichan , pp.139,161; Abbott , Jacob , Makers of History - Genghis Khan-Life and Conquests , p.55.

152 Gallichan , p.151.

permitted. A group of kindred clans was known as *yasun*. Clans of different *yasun* mutually agreed for exogamous marriage. At times exogamy was observed by forcefully taking a girl of other *yasun* as bride.<sup>153</sup> Polygamy was practised by those who could afford it and they kept concubines too.<sup>154</sup> But the first wife of a ruler was the chief wife. She enjoyed a special status. She alone had the right to sit on throne by the side of the ruler. Only her children had the right to inherit the ruler's worldly empire.<sup>155</sup> In matters of legitimacy, the children of a concubine had the same status as those of a legal wife.<sup>156</sup> When fathers died, the sons took over their widows except their own mother. Similarly, the living brothers took over the widows of the deceased brothers. But this rule was not followed always.<sup>157</sup> Adultery was punishable with death.<sup>158</sup> The women were not

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153 Phillips, E.D., The Mongols, p.26. Also see Morgan, David, The Mongols, p.40.

154 Yesukai, father of Changez Khan had two wives, Yulun Eke and Suchigil. Changez Khan himself had five wives besides five hundred 'accessory wives and servant-maids' (Prawdin, Michael, The Mongol Empire, pp.28,61,229; also Hoang, Michel, Genghis Khan, pp.91-92,97; Kennedy, Pringle, History of the Great Moghuls, p.42).

155 Changez Khan's first wife Bortei enjoyed this privilege (Prawdin, pp.63,86,88; Morgan, p.40).

156 Phillips, p.27.

157 Han-Sadeh, the widow of Taimur's son, Jahangir was remarried to Miran Shah, her brother-in-law. But Changez Khan's mother Yulun Eke remarried to Munlik, her husband's friend, an outsider after Yesukai's death [Prawdin, pp.51,485; also Phillips, p.23].

158 Kennedy, p.42; Prawdin, p.94.

confined to houses and enjoyed quite a bit of freedom and authority. They lived the same outdoor life as their male counterparts. The highest duty of women was to work for the upliftment of their husbands. They were solely responsible for management of their households including family-flocks, herds and possessions. This duty included works like milking cows and preparing milk products, cooking, preparing stores for winter ,driving carts,setting up and dismantling tents, sewing clothes and footwears, upbringing and educating children. Another important duty was to keep their respective husbands' things always ready to enable them to march to the battle field in no time at the call of the Khan.¹⁵⁹ The women were also expert riders and learnt the art of shooting with bow.¹⁶⁰ They accompanied their husbands in wars and worked as their auxiliaries.¹⁶¹

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159 Prawdin,pp.94-96; Morgan,p.40; Spuler, Bertold, The Mongols in History,p.9.

160 Phillips,p.32.

161 For Changez Khan's mother and wives in the battle field, see Abbott,pp.54-55,237. Also see Ameer Ali, A Short History of the Saracens, p.383 (hereafter cited as Saracens); Spuler,p.9.

They played significant role in politics as advisers, regents or as participants in court machinations supporting the cause of their respective wards.<sup>162</sup> Being the martial race, however, the Mongols showed no compassion towards the ladies of their enemies. They not only inflicted insults but also did not spare them in the merciless killings which followed each of their victory, might be in Khwarizm, Balkh, Ghazni, Herat, Persia, Baghdad or any other place.<sup>163</sup>

The Hebrews had patriarchal society where the women were legally under the control of their husbands. They had no right of inheritance. They were debarred from commercial and

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162 Changez Khan was frequently advised by his mother Yulun Eke and wife Bortei in many of his political moves. Turakina, widow of Ogatai, worked as regent from 1241-46 A.D. till she succeeded in getting her son Kuyuk Chosen as Khakan. From 1248-51 A.D. Kuyuk's widow Ogul Gaimish worked as regent. Suyurkuk Teni, widow of Tuli (youngest son of Changez Khan), showed great political acumen. She manoeuvred to snatch the Khanate from family of Ogatai when her son Mongu was chosen the Khakan in 1251 A.D. and regent Ogul Gaimish was executed (Prawdin, pp.28-30,43,64-66,91-92, 98-99, 275-78, 286-88,290-93,297,487-88; also Spuler,pp.19-21; Morgan,p.40; Phillips,p.85; Kennedy,p.22).

163 Kennedy,pp.13,15,16,28,41-42,74-75. He has also quoted that once Changez Khan was asked as to what, in his view, was the greatest happiness of life. His reply was, "...to vanquish your enemies, to chase them before you, to rob them of their wealth, to see those dear to them bathed in tears, to ride their horses, to clasp to your bosom their wives and daughters." (Ibid., p.20). In another incident, Ogatai once intended the Uirats to marry their daughters to men of other tribes. But Uirats immediately betrothed them. At this, Ogatai ordered all girls above seven of that tribe, including those married during the year, to be collected. They numbered 4000. He chose best of them for himself, his officers and the brothels, the remaining were sent to his soldiers to be scrambled for in front of their fathers, husbands and brothers (Ibid.,p.22). See also Hoang,pp.229,240,247.

political activities. They were required to cover their bodies fully and also to support veil. A Hebrew husband could divorce his wife for any reason while the wife did not have any right to seek divorce. However, except for some pressing reasons, such as adultery or sterility, the Hebrew community did not favour divorces. They disapproved adultery, especially on the part of married women for which they prescribed death penalty. Sex relations on the part of the bachelors were also considered a sin. Virginity was a must for a 'bride-to-be'. Violation led to severe punishment including death penalty. Virtually for all sex offences, infringement by women was viewed more seriously than that committed by the men. 164

The women among other Eastern nations like Assyrians, Athenians and Romans were equally degraded. 165 But, in Egypt, she enjoyed very respectable and high position. She moved freely without purdah. Marriage appeared to be a legal contract where all her rights were guarded. She had right to divorce. Monogamy was generally practised except among the royalty. She was free to follow any career. All properties descended on the female line and she could manage them of her own as per her own wish. 166

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164 Humphrey, Edward et.al.(ed.), The Webster Family Encyclopedia, VII, pp.33-34.

165 Ameer Ali, Spirit, pp. 222-23, 242,253; Gibbon, Edward, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, II, pp.83-86.

166 The Webster Family Encyclopedia, VI, p.322; Downey, Douglas W.et.al.(ed.), New Standard Encyclopedia, XVII, p.278; M.Z.Siddiqi, pp. 15-16.

The social life of the Pathans of Afghanistan revolved round the family, the clan and the tribe. *Pukhtunwali* or *Pushtunwali* i.e. the code of Pathans guided their way of life. They were very proud people and were very sensitive with regard to their *Zan* i.e. women. Chastity and seclusion of women was rigidly observed. So much so that they avoided talking of women, whether of their own or of anyone else. The women were totally confined to their houses and were a part of the background only. They had no role to play in the daily life of the community. It was taken as a dishonour for a married Pathan woman to work, for whatever reason, for any one else other than her husband. The Pukhto proverbs like 'For a woman either the house (*kor*) or the grave (*gor*)' and 'Husband is another name for God' summed up the secluded and dependent life of the Pathan women. The women were conceptualized in two types, *mor* or mother and *tor*, literally meaning 'black'. The *mor* or the mother held high respect in that society. On the other hand, where the chastity of a woman was compromised and the honour of her close agnatic kin - father, husband or brothers - was at stake, she was considered a *tor*. In such a case, both the actors, particularly the woman, were killed by the closest male kin as per the Pathan code. The tribal custom of 'money for the head' (*sar paisey*) or 'bride-price' suggest that the daughters were literally bought and sold. Another tribal custom shows that a boy's mother booked a girl at the time of her birth and it was considered to be a formal engagement. Backing out from this at a later date involved all revenge

and *for* consequences as if the girl were actually married.<sup>167</sup>

In the beginning , Arabs dominated the Islamic fold. Later on , the Persian influence transformed character of Islam . Slowly ,the cultural heritage of Persia percolated into every facet of Muslim life. During the eleventh century, Persian influence was replaced by the Turkish ascendancy .

The need of the hour was to adapt the Islamic ordinance to new conditions which were not contemplated by the Prophet. The first effort in this regard was the collection of the 'traditions' of the Prophet practised during the time of four Caliphs with the intention to get solutions to most of the problems out of them.<sup>168</sup> A woman once came to Abu Bakr claiming her share of inheritance from her deceased grandson. The Caliph pronounced the judgement that as per the Qoran , she could not receive any share . Thereupon , Mughira , son  
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167 Ahmed, Akbar s.,Discovering Islam :Making Sense of Muslim History and Society, pp.187-89 ; Spain,James w., The Way of the Pathans , pp. 46.143-52 ;The Webster Family Encyclopedia ,1,p.106.

168 There were six popular books of 'traditions' : (1) Abu Abdullah Mohammad bin Ismail Al Bukhari, a Persian who collected 6,00,000 'traditions' of which he rejected all but 7276 . (ii) Muslim bin Hajjaj of Khorasan (204 A.H. to 260 A.H.) who collected 3,00,00 of them but kept only 4000 'traditions'. (iii) Abu Daud of Seistan (202 A.H. to 275 A.H.) having 4800 'traditions' (legal 'traditions') (iv) Kitabus Sunan of Ibn-i-Majah (209 A.H. to 333 A.H.) , 4000 'traditions' (legal 'traditions') . (v) Jammy by Abu Mussa Mohammad Trimidhi of Tirmidh (vi) Al-Mujtaba by Abu Abdur-Rehman Nasai of Khorasan (214 A.H. to 303 A.H.) whose 'traditions' were about rituals . These 'traditions' were so important that throughout the reign of Seljukides and decline of Abbasids , particularly in India and Iran , they superseded even the Qoran (Ahmad, S.M.(com.),Islam in India and the Middle East, pp.146-51).

of Shoba , got up and said , " I have seen the Prophet granting one-sixth share to a grandmother." This was recorded and accordingly , judgement was delivered.¹⁶⁹ The *Shariat* was elaborated and interpreted theoretically , by different schools of interpretations, keeping in mind the requirements of the people and the necessities of the time.¹⁷⁰ The judgements delivered by *Muftis* (Juris Consults) were accepted as rules for *Qazis* for deciding similar cases in future.¹⁷¹ Two groups, Shia and Sunni, emerged within Muslim community with distinct approaches towards Islamic developments.¹⁷²

The different schools explained the Qoranic commands regarding women in their own way . For example , *muta* marriage was forbidden by all schools except the Akhbari Shias.¹⁷³ Similarly , the minimum dower fixed by different schools did not tally with one another . While Shafiites and

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169 Shushtery , p.461.

170 There were four main Schools basing their interpretation on different Principles, viz. Abu Hanafi on *istehsan* (equity) , Malik on *istislah* (consideration of public interest ) , Shafi on *qiyas* (analogy) and Hanbal on 'traditions'. Besides these , there were many other schools but they did not become popular (Shushtery , pp.464-66 ; Levy , pp.165-86).

171 Imtiaz Ali (ed.) , p.224 ; Hyder,p.190.

172 Husain , Sheikh Abrar , Marriage Customs Among Muslims in India, pp.4-5 ; Ahmad Ali , Meer , Husain , the King of Martyrs , p.216 ; Levy , p.171.

173 Ameer Ali , Mahomedan Law , pp.317-18,398-404; Levy, p.247 ; Fyzee , pp.112-13,115. It is asserted that the Qoran (4:24) , regulated and sanctioned the practice of *muta* marriage.

Shiites had no fixed minimum , the Malikis fixed it at three *dirhams* and the Hanafis at ten *dirhams* .<sup>174</sup> The minimum dower fixed by the law could hardly be deemed to be an adequate provision for the wife . Hence the check which dower was supposed to have on the reckless divorces by husbands , lost its meaning . Regarding slave girls , inspite of the Qoranic acceptance of the marriage of a free man with a female slave, the Hanafi code forbade a free man from marrying his own or his son's female slave and a (free) woman from marrying her male slave.<sup>175</sup> When a wife swore of chastity against the charge of adultery levied by her husband, the marriage was still considered annulled as per Shafiites, though, as per Hanafis , this was a case which would be decided by a judge.<sup>176</sup> There was wide difference between Sunnite and Shiite laws of inheritance also. While the Sunnite law of inheritance kept intact the ancient tribal structure and made agnates the most important heirs , the Shiite law placed cognates on an equal footing.<sup>177</sup> The

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174 *Dirham* is a word derived from Greek . It is the name of the silver coin , 2.97 grams in weight (Houtsma , M.T. et.al.(ed.),Encyclopaedia of Islam ,I,p.978 . 10 *dirhams* have been valued at 6S.8 d. and 3 *dirhams* at 2S.(Fitzgerald ,V,Mohammaden Law , An Abridgement,p.63).

175 Levy, p.105.

176 Ibid. , pp.120-21 and n.1.

177 Tyabji, pp.898,926-29 ; Fitzgerald, p.145. An agnate is a person related to the deceased through male links only i.e. son's son or son's daughter , father or father's father (Fyzee, p.395). A cognate is a person related to the deceased through one or more female links i.e. the daughter's son or daughter's daughter , mother's father or father's mother's father (Tyabji , pp.605(5) and (6) . Also see Fyzee , p.396).

Shiites, thus, raised the position of daughter's children from class III to class I.¹⁷⁸ Imam Husain was son of Prophet's daughter. Therefore, the Shiite law, apparently, paid special attention to this relationship and made the interpretation such that all females, howsoever remotely related, inherited on the analogy of inheritance by a daughter or a sister. This right to women was, probably, the most important legal reform introduced by Islam.¹⁷⁹

Notwithstanding the incorporation of non-Arab practices and changing interpretations of different schools affecting the position of women adversely, there were examples of great women in every walk of life from the early days of Islam. The roles played by Khadija and Fatima are well known. Similarly, Aiysha (grand daughter of Caliph Abu Bakr and niece of the Prophet's wife Ayisha) never wore the veil even though her husband insisted on it.¹⁸⁰ There was no check on remarriages of women. Aiysha (niece of Ayisha) got married thrice, each time getting a big amount of dower. Atiga, belonging to one of the noblest families of Mecca also married three times. Sukaina, a grand-daughter of Fatima married several

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178 For example, if there are daughter's son, father's mother, and full brother, as per Hanafi law, the daughter's son being a uterine heir is excluded; the father's mother, as a Qoranic heir takes 1/6th and the full brother, as agnatic heir, takes 5/6th. But in Shiite law, daughter's son being of class I, succeeds in preference to the other two, who belong to class II (Mulla, D.F., Principles of Mahomedan Law, Illustration No. (a), p.88.

179 Tyabji, p.926.

180 Khuda Bukhsh, p.82 on the authority on Aghani, X, p.54.

times and made complete freedom of action a condition- precedent to her marriages.<sup>181</sup> She was the leader of fashions and set the tone for cultured society of her age . Her house was the meeting place for poets , scholars , jurists and other distinguished people of both sexes . Her overflowing generosity towards learning and her appreciation of scholarly pursuits left deep impact on the intellectual development of the Islamic people.<sup>182</sup> Women enjoyed freedom of choice of husband . There is a case, on record, of a widow of the Caliph (Saffah) who married a private gentleman of distinguished lineage, though poor.<sup>183</sup> The freedom of divorce was also there . Umm Salma left her husband when she found that he had connections with a slave girl.<sup>184</sup>

The women had freedom of education . They flocked to the sermons of the Caliphs and other disciples.<sup>185</sup> They studied Theology and Law and many of them educated their children without any outside help . Rabia-ur-Rai , one of the greatest jurists of early Islam was educated by his mother.<sup>186</sup> The right of women to pray in the mosques continued to be recognized till the third century A.H.. Afterwards , it fell  
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181 Khuda Bukhsh, pp.82-83.

182 Imtiaz Ali (ed.), p.54 ;Ameer Ali, Saracens , pp.201-02.

183 Khuda Bukhsh , p.83 on the authority of Aghani,IV,p.89.

184 Levy , p.93 on the authority of Aghani , IV , p.89.

185 Umar is said to have appointed Qoran-reader especially for ladies at public worship (Levy , p.126 on the authority of Tabari,I,2649 ;[imtiaz Ali (ed.), p.53) .

186 Imtiaz Ali (ed.) , p.53.

into disuse.¹⁸⁷ The jurists expressly acknowledged the woman's right to bind her husband, before marriage, not to take a second wife during her life-time.¹⁸⁸ The famous Sufi saint Rabia was so popular that she invited the jealousy of men who argued, "since a woman on the path of God becomes a man, she can't be called a woman".¹⁸⁹ Shuhda, another lady, was known for her profound knowledge of *hadith*.¹⁹⁰ The narration of the 'traditions' at the time of their compilation was mainly done by the ladies. Among the Prophet's widows, Hafsa, daughter of Umar, the second Caliph, narrated 60 pieces; Ayisha, 164 pieces (Bukhari and Muslim, while Raw gave credit to her for 2200 pieces); Zainab, several other pieces and Safiyya and Umm-Salma narrated 10 and 378 pieces respectively.¹⁹¹ Umm-ul-Khair Fatima and Umm Ibrahim Fatima Alyezdani taught Theology and the 'traditions' to men as well as women. Shafi, one of the great interpreters of Muslim Jurisprudence, learnt the elements of Jurisprudence from a lady named Syeda Nafisa.¹⁹²

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187 Khuda Bukhsh, p.83. The reason for this were two fold: firstly, the disapproval by the *Qazi* as Von Kremer held and secondly, because of apprehension of father and husband lest their women-folk should, by some lapse of conduct, disgrace them amid the degenerating social values (Levy, p.131).

188 Khuda Bukhsh, p.83.

189 Levy, p.132 on the authority of Farid-al-Din Attar's Tadhkirat-al-Auliya, ed. Nicholson, I, p.59.

190 Ibid., p.133; Ameer Ali, Spirit, p.255.

191 Shushtery, p.461.

192 Imtiaz Ali(ed.), p.59.

In the field of public affairs , their influence was evident. During Umayyad's time , Umm-ul-Banin , the queen of Walid I, possessed great influence over her husband and frequently interfered in affairs of the state. During the early Abbasids , women wielded great influence on the state-affairs . Umm-Salma, the queen of Abul Abbas Saffah , the first Abbasid Caliph , had such an influence over her husband that he decided nothing without her advice. Khaizuran , the consort of Mahdi , the third Abbasid Caliph , had so much influence that courtiers , powerful dignitaries , ministers , poets and scholars flocked to her . She was revered for her generosity towards the poor and the needy . Zubaida , the wife of Harun-al-Rashid , had much influence in administration and her tomb is venerated even to this day . Qatr-un-Nada , mother of Caliph Muqtadar , held the reigns of government with perfection as the mother-regent.<sup>193</sup>

In cultural sphere , many women were keenly interested . They remained engaged in poetry , singing , dancing , fashions and games for their own amusement . Princesses and ladies of rank gave musical programmes.<sup>194</sup> The famous singers of the time were Baze, a contemporary of Harun-al-Rashid ; Neem and Ubayadah-at-tamburia , of the times of Mamun besides Mutasim, Olayya, Zatul, Khal, Rayya, Soda and Sahiqa, who were adept musicians of the Abbasid dynasty.<sup>195</sup> Ladies

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 193 Imtiaz Ali(ed.) , pp.55-58. For other instances, see Holt et.al.(ed.),I,pp.188,209-10,349,408-11.

194 Ameer Ali,Saracens , pp.203,246,456-57,459.

195 Ibid. , pp.456-57 ; Shushtery , pp.590-91.

influenced the world of fashion too. Zubaida , as referred to earlier , introduced jewelled girdles , jewelled shoes and sedan chair. Olayya , the half sister of Harun-al-Rashid, introduced head dress.¹⁹⁶ Women of the middle class also were, culturally , awakened . They used a head ornament , a kind of fillet set in jewels . They also used anklets and bracelets. Different types of cosmetics were also in use.¹⁹⁷ Women played different kinds of games and thus kept them amused.¹⁹⁸

The women of this period possessed military skill as well . For instance , Zainab , the grand-daughter of Hazrat Ali and sister of Husain , showed her skill while guarding her nephew from the Umayyads after the butchery at Karbala.¹⁹⁹ During battles , they helped in various ways . At times , they fought actively in battles . During Mansur's time , two of his lady cousins fought in the Byzantine war clad in mail. Safaih , Umm-Salet , Umm-Saleem were some of the ladies who distinguished in this field.²⁰⁰ Apparently, there existed some sort of military training for women . They were taught not only the use of arms but also horse

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196 Ameer Ali, Saracens , pp.454,459 . Also Hitti , pp.339-40.

197 Ameer Ali, Saracens , pp.454-55 ; Hitti , pp.302-03 , 334.

198 Zaidi , S.M.H. , The Muslim Womenhood in Revolution , p.15.

199 Ameer Ali , Spirit , p.250.

200 Imtiaz Ali(ed.),pp.58-59; Ameer Ali, Saracens, pp.143,246 ; Kidwai ,p.159.

riding.<sup>201</sup>

Turkhan Khatun , the wife of Saad II , *Atabeg* of Shiraz, was known for her accomplishments . After the death of her husband in 1260 A.D., she ruled the principality as mother-regent for her infant son with wisdom and tact . She patronized art and learning and made her court "one of the most polished and cultured in that unhappy age when the gloom of night had settled on Western Asia".<sup>202</sup> Another princess of the *Atabeg* family was Aiysha Khatun . She ruled Shiraz soon after Turkhan Khatun. She encouraged poets and scholars. These two ladies , Turkhan and Aiysha did a lot for beautifying and embellishing Shiraz.<sup>203</sup> Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Encyclopaedia is full of instances of women belonging to the lower ranks of society , reading , reciting and improvising .

Simultaneous to this exalted position, the condition of Muslim women also suffered a successive degradation. This downfall became quite glaring by the thirteenth century. There were many factors responsible for this .The foremost among them was the negative role of the theologians of Islam.<sup>204</sup> Though themselves having well-stocked harems, yet,

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201 Ameer Ali, Saracens , p.455.

202 Imtiaz Ali(ed.) ,p.60. A number of petty feudal lords ruling in Western Asia as Prince-Governors were known as *Atabegs*.

203 Ibid..

204 Caliph Umar is usually credited with having been the first to appoint *Qazis* to assist him in discharging duty of settling disputes(Levy , p. 338).

outside their little paradise , they showed contempt for the worldly things and the 'levity of the fair sex'.²⁰⁵ They interpreted many of the Qoranic commandments related to women against the interests of the women and in favour of men. They also twisted the meaning of the *hadith* deliberately so as to depict women as down-trodden and mean and hence , for the most part , fit only for hell.²⁰⁶

The gradual decline of the old Arab aristocracy also dealt a serious blow to the dignity of Muslim women. The mixed race which replaced them lacked both purity of descent and the refinement of feelings. There is not a single instance in the beginning of the Caliphate , of a son of a concubine succeeding to the Caliphate. But , mother's descent was totally ignored subsequently. Consequently , the rule of the mistresses and courtesans set in over-shadowing the legitimate wives.²⁰⁷ The slave trade also led to the degradation of the position of women. After the shifting of the Caliph's seat to Baghdad , numerous girls were brought to Baghdad to be sold as slaves. It became a profitable business to purchase young women , to train them in music and

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205 Khuda Bukhsh ,p.85.

206 Ibid. Baydawi , while commenting on *surah* 16:11 of the Qoran, adduced a *hadith* and explained thereby that while innumerable men had attained religious perfection with the resultant reward of paradise, only four women have ever done so(Levy , pp. 129-30).

207 Khuda Bukhsh,p.85.

dance and then to sell them at fabulous prices to rich merchants. The house of such merchants became dens of sensual pleasures.<sup>208</sup> Simultaneously, the Persian vice of sodomy gradually expanded to an extent that by the time of Caliph Harun-al-Rashid, it no longer was taken as a vice at all. It is informed that a boy, who became the centre of jealousy between his sons, had to be shut up in the seraglio, fearing his abduction.<sup>209</sup>

The emergence and expansion of the institutions of polygamy, purdah and harem also led to the degeneration of the status of Muslim women. The Arabs conquered large territories. In order to control these multitude of vanquished races, they required large military establishments. For this, they needed to enlarge their population rapidly. Consequently, they propounded polygamy resulting in marriages even with non-Arab women. This not only destroyed the purity of the race but also resulted into an effeminate race of bastards and rule of mistresses and concubines.<sup>210</sup> With such moral laxity all around, the Muslim men of the age insisted on the fidelity of their women and sought to get that by force by putting restrictions on them.

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208 Khuda Bukhsh, pp. 89-90.

209 Ibid., p. 103; Thomas, P., Indian women through the Ages, p. 249.

210 Khuda Bukhsh, 93, also see pp. 90-92, 94, 95.

This resulted into the gradual development of purdah 211 and harem.²¹² Al-Mutawakkil (847-861 A.D.), the last of the Abbasids, decreed the segregation of the sexes at feasts and public ceremonies.²¹³ Finally Abbasid Caliph Qadir (991-1030 A.D.) forbade women's entry to mosques, colleges or to

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211 P.Thomas, p.249. There are different views about the origin of purdah. To some, purdah owes its origin to Al-Hakim, the Fatimid Caliph of Egypt who made the wearing of veil compulsory for the women in his kingdom. Since he swayed spiritual power in Persia too, it became a permanent injunction throughout the Muslim world including India [S.M.Ahmad (com.), p.145]. Qurratulain Hyder, on the other hand, considered its origin during the reign of Umayyad Caliph Walid II (743-749 A.D.) when the Arab ruling class was thoroughly corrupted and the respectable citizens began to segregate their women. According to her, it was the difference between the professional entertainer and the responsible housewife which laid the foundation of system of purdah (op.cit., p.191). Still another authority opines that purdah took form in the second century of the Islamic era, first among the rich and the powerful as a status symbol and then percolating among the less affluent through emulation. He relates the development much to the influence of Byzantine and Persian customs, with whom the Arabs came in contact in the new territories conquered by them (Mikhail, Mona N., Images of Arab women, p. 3 ).

212 No precise date can be given for origin of the system of the harem. Khuda Bukhsh considered its origin sometimes between the end of the Umayyad rule and the Caliphate of Harun-al-Rashid. Levy seemed to be agreeing to this view since as per him, the system was fully developed by the time of Caliph Harun. Lal also agrees to this. According to Qurratulain Hyder, it originated during the reign of Umayyad Caliph Walid II (743-49 A.D.). As per Mikhail, like purdah, the system found its origin in second century Hijra. ( Khuda Bukhsh, p.87 ; Levy, p.127; Lal, K.S., Early Muslims in India, p.141( hereafter cited as Early Muslims); Qurratulain Hyder, p.191 ; Mikhail, p.3 ).

213 Mazhar-ul-Haq Khan, p.32 ; Imtiaz Ali (ed.), p.51.

appear in public without supporting a *burqa*. 214 By the end of the Abbasid Caliphate in the middle of the thirteenth century, the segregation of women was so complete that the propriety of public visibility of female hands or feet was hotly discussed by the *Ulema*.<sup>215</sup>

The foreign Muslim immigrants to India during medieval period comprised of the Arabs, the Turks, the Afghans, the Mughals and the Persians.<sup>216</sup> They were further joined by a multitude of Indian Muslims who were the Hindu converts to Islam and formed the majority of Muslim population in India.<sup>217</sup> The different immigrant groups had their own distinct cultures as also concept about women, as already discussed above. They retained their racial and tribal identities and ethnic customs and traditions, and also imbibed the traditions of the other group, in due course, because of pressures, promiscuity and interactions. The Indian Muslims also did not change their social set up and outlook with the change of

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214 Mazhar-ul-Haq Khan ,p.33 ; Imtiaz Ali (ed.),p.59.

215 Ibid. ,p.33; Imtiaz Ali (ed.),p.51.

216 Yasin , Mohammad , A Social History of Islamic India, pp.1-13.

217 Ahmad, Imtiaz (ed.),Caste and Social Stratification Among Muslims in India,p.13; Lal,K.S., Growth of Muslim Population in Medieval India,p.204, also Early Muslims,p.114.

their religion. 218 The position of Hindu women was no good during the time and the Hindu converts carried with them their general attitude towards women to the Muslim fold. 219 The immigrants tried to adjust the social and religious structure of Islam to Indian conditions. These new interactions on the Indian soil led to further adjustment and emergence of the Indianized Muslim culture. 220

Thus, Islam came to India in a changed form, after being influenced by the Persian, Turkish and other foreign ideologies. The general status of Mohammadan women was on the wane at that time .The ensuing assimilation of Hindu-Muslim cultures under Indian conditions did not promise much change for the better in the status of the Muslim women in India.

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218 Compare Mandelslo's statement : "All the Mahumetans (Muslims) of these parts ( i.e. of Hindustan) may be said to profess the same Religion; but they have among them certain superstitions, and particular Manners of life , whereby they are distinguished into several sects , though it may be also alleged , that they are to be accounted rather so many Nations than (than) different sects." (p.65) Also see Yasin , pp.3,14.

219 For the condition of Hindu women Altekhar , A.L., The Position of women in Hindu Civilization and Thomas, P., Indian Women Through the Ages, provide a good reading

220 Yasin, pp. 87-93 ; Holt et.al. (ed.) , II ,pp. 67,569 ; Hasan ,Mushirul, "Some Aspects of the Problems of Muslim Social Reform", in Zafar Imam (ed.), Muslims in India ,p.217.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SOCIAL STATUS

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#### AN OVERVIEW

The social status of the Muslim women underwent many changes as a result of their interaction with Indian environment. Since both, Hindu and Muslim cultures, existed simultaneously in the same region, the values and norms of one got assimilated into the other. The Muslim married Indian girls. They also converted Hindus into their fold. These factors resulted in infiltration of Hindu thought into Muslim mind and brought a change in their thinking about their own ladies. In cases, Muslim adopted *sati* and *jauhar* and began abstaining from re-marriages and divorces. They also started mourning the very birth of a female child. The status and public respectability of women also underwent change with the changing moral values of the society. Since these values came down to the lowest ebb during the time of later Mughals, the dignity of womanhood also suffered most during that period. The changing policies of different rulers also affected their status. While Sultan Qutb-ud-din Mubarak Shah's fondness for the company of harlots provided an environment favourable to the prostitutes, the honour and regard shown by Sher Shah Suri or Akbar towards womanhood gave a positive standing to the women of their respective times. The status of Muslim ladies belonging to different social classes also changed differently. Since the upper class was most affected by the degenerating values, the women

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of this strata suffered most in their social standing over the period of time . For the women belonging to middle and lower classes , the change was not so marked .

Barring the respectability of motherhood or female blood-relations and individual examples of marital affinity, women, as a class, suffered discernible discrimination vis-a-vis men , from birth till death . They were regarded not only subservient to men but also as second-rate citizens. Having been cut off from the outer world , they were confined within the four walls of harem (separate compartments for women) with duties to bear and rear children and to perform all sorts of household chores . Right from their unwelcome birth, different social customs and ceremonies , besides the social response they got , made them conscious of their subordinate position. In the contemporary perspective some of the ladies might have carved out a place for themselves by dint of their own qualities, but the very fact that their recognition depended on their appeal to their masters , shows that the Muslim women of that time were destined to play a secondary role in the contemporary social set up and remained an object of neglect and despise .

#### **UNWELCOME BIRTH**

The life of the girl began with an unwelcome note .The birth of a girl was considered something inauspicious . Amir Khusrau lamented over the birth of his daughter , " I wish you were not born and if you were , it would have been better if you had been a boy. " Amid such moroseness , he

consoled," But my father was born of a woman and I am also born of a woman."<sup>1</sup> His craving brings out the psyche of his times. This becomes all the more glaring when contrasted with his equally intense desire to have a son ; a desire which was universal not only among the common people but also among the royalty and nobility. For instance, at the time of Sultan Muzaffar of Gujarat, one of his confidants Malik Allah Dia (Faridi read it as Mli-Kul-Hidaya) was very sad because he did not have any son .<sup>2</sup>

In medieval society of warring factions when men were required to fight the battles, the longing for a son could be visualized. Equally understandable was the undesirability of a daughter, a *pardah nashin* female whose very presence was a constant security hazard and a permanent liability on her kith and kin. Equally marked was the sensuality of the age. During this period, the mutual assimilation of Hindu-Muslim cultures was also taking place. Hindus always craved for sons

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1 Amir Khusrau, Hasht Bahisht , pp.26-27; Matla-ul-Anwar, p.223. For understanding the mental make up and context of early contemporary chroniclers, Peter Hardy, Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo Muslim Historical Writing, has been helpful. He has very ably analysed the treatment of History by Minhaj, Barani, Amir Khusrau, Afif and Sirhindi and is inclined to find that according to these contemporary chroniclers, History is but a spectacle of 'Divine Ordination'.

2 Sikander , p.371; also Mushtaqi, (Rizvi, UTKB, Pt.II), pp.564-65. See also Rice, C. Colliver, Persian Women and Their Ways , pp.123-24. He informed how the Muslims dressed their sons after their birth, like girls to avoid the evil eyes and jealousy of the people . That shows as to how much the baby-girl was an ignored lot of society .

in preference to the daughters and the birth of a female child had come to be considered as a misfortune , especially after the advent of the Muslims. In some of the sections of the Rajputs , whenever a girl was born , she was killed soon thereafter or during her infancy.³ The practice was imbibed by some sections of the Muslim population also. Jahangir confirmed its prevalence among the Mohammadans of Rajaur who were basically Hindu converts.⁴ Thus , under the impact of negative attitude towards female child of both the communities , even after the Muslim rule was established and matters were quite settled with the coming of the Mughals , the desire for having a son and despise for a female child did not decrease.⁵ The mothers , who gave birth to daughters in succession were discriminated against and even divorced

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3 A verse in the Atharva-Veda echoes the general longing for a sons : स्त्रैषु यमन्यत्र वधत् पुमांसमु दधदिह  
(May he put elsewhere woman birth, but may he put here a male) (Atharvaveda , Kand VI, Sukt 11, Mantra no.3, Eng.Tr. W.D. Whitney, Atharvaveda Samhita, p.289); Tod, J., Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, I , pp.636-39; Ain, ,III, p.242.

4 Tuzuk,II ,p.181. Infanticide among Muslims was not practised when they came to India. No migrant group - Turk, Afghan, Mongol, Mughal, Persian- was familiar with this evil and therefore, it did not become common among them even after their settlement in India.

5 GHN, Introduction,p.9 (for Babur's eagerness for a boy before Hindal was about to be born); A.N., (Bev.),II,pp. 510-11 and Tuzuk,I,pp.1-2 ( for Akbar's vow to undertake journey on foot to the shrine of Muin-ud-din Chisti at Ajmer in the event of the birth of a son and he kept his vow); Hasrat,Bikram Jit,Dara Shukoh, Life and Works,pp.1-2(for Shah Jahan's journey to the tomb of Chisti for praying for the birth of a son). See also Jafar Sharif, Qanun-i-Islam, (Tr.),p.17.

and the innocent daughters were, in some cases killed .<sup>6</sup>  
Social undesirability of girls had become common to both, Hindus and Muslims .

Social discrimination against girls and in favour of boys was very open . The only ceremony enjoined upon by Prophet Mohammad at the birth of a child was *aqiqah* and the celebration of it began with a discrimination. On this day, goats were sacrificed , two for the boy but only one for the girl.<sup>7</sup> There were many other ceremonies which owed their origin either to the 'traditions' or other Mohammadan works on ethics or to the local customs of India . Many of them were meant only for the boys . The rejoicings and festivities which followed these celebrations were marked only if the child was a male and not otherwise . There are innumerable instances of rejoicings and feasting on the birth of a son, an invariable occurrence in every blessed house , but there were no such rejoicings on the birth of a daughter. In the royal households, only women rejoiced and feasted on the birth of a daughter while the whole court participated in the

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6 The mother of Amir Saif Khan had only daughters and when he was still in womb , his father had threatened to divorce his mother if she again got a daughter . Akbar showed his displeasure when the matter was reported to him . Luckily a son, Saif Khan was born then (A.N. ,(Bev.),III,pp.82-83 ; Ain. , I,Tr. note, p.375).

7 *Aqiqah* literally means 'the hair of the new-born' and it referred to the shaving sacrifice usually observed on 6th or the 7th day (Hughes, op.cit.,pp.50-51 ; Hastings, James (ed.) , Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics , II ,p.659 ; Jafar Sharif, p.38 and n.5. It was observed on 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th or 35th day after birth).

celebrations when a prince was born. 8 But, when Akbar ordered general rejoicings on the birth of Affat Banu, daughter of prince Salim, it surprised all including Abul Fazl, since this was "contrary to the custom of contemporaries".⁹

Under such conditions, every married woman, in spite of the fact that she bore equal pain for the birth of a girl or a boy, always yearned for becoming the mother of a son, which added to her respectability instantly.¹⁰ Conversely, the birth of a daughter, saddened her instinctively. The birth of a girl was, however, not universally condemned as a curse by Muslims in the beginning. Social norms of Islam which were still existing and liberal attitude of persons like Akbar and Nurjahan were mainly responsible for this. Tapan Raychaudhuri points out that the institution of bride-money, though increasingly considered not altogether laudable, had not yet been totally replaced by system of dowry.¹¹ But with the increase in dowry-demands by the Muslims also, daughters' birth became undesirable. Besides, as the moral values of the

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8 Manucci, II, p.320, also III, pp.142-43 (for a rich man's rejoicings on the birth of a son). A.N., (Bev.), II, p.503; T.A., (De), II, p.358 (rejoicings at Salim's birth). Mirza Nathan, II, pp.735-36 (celebrations of birth of Murad Bakhsh). There are many paintings depicting rejoicings at the birth of a prince. Refer Chopra, P.N., Life and Letters Under the Mughals, p.197, nn.54-55; Lal, K.S., The Mughal Harem, pl.VI (hereafter cited as Harem).

9 A.N., (Bev.), III, p.816.

10 Meer Hassan Ali, Observations on the Mussulmauns of India, II, pp.3-4.

11 Raychaudhuri, Tapan, Bengal Under Akbar and Jahangir: An Introductory Study in Social History, p.14.

society fell, the honour of a woman was always in peril. Consequently , the birth of a girl became woeful and a matter of great concern for the Muslim parents as well.

### EARLY MARRIAGE

In such an unfavourable atmosphere, the girl was not destined to enjoy the parental care for long. Born and brought up under the close parental supervision , the greatest worry of her guardians was to get her married off as soon as possible and thus make her security a responsibility of the husband's house . Mushtaqi has narrated an incident of the time of Bahlol Lodi wherein a Sayyid begged of help for getting his daughter married and visualizing his worry a person named Jamal Khan gave the Sayyid a horse , his only possession .<sup>12</sup> The event shows the worry of a daughter's father to get her married . As such , child marriage became almost a universal feature with the Muslims like that with the Hindus . Girls seldom crossed the age of nine or ten and the boys sixteen or seventeen before they were tied in wedlock during the Sultanate and early Mughal periods .<sup>13</sup>

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12 Mushtaqi , (Rizvi,UTKB,Pt.I),pp.100-01.

13 During the time of Firoz Shah, the girls got married at *Khurd salgi* i.e. very early age (Afif, (Text) , pp.180,292) . The King is reported to have laid down the age of marriage of girls at nine (Ashraf, K.M.,Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan , p.179,n.2). The Bahmanis in the South followed the custom of early marriage both for the princes and princesses . Nizam Shah (1461-63 A.D.) and Muhammad III (1463-82 A.D.) got married very early . Prince Ahmad aged 14 , the son of Mahmud Shah Bahmani (1482-1518 A.D.) got married to the infant daughter of Sultan Adil Khan (Ferishta ,II,pp.293, 295,335-36).

This age came further down as the laxity in social norms increased. Terry (1616-19 A.D.), writing during the times of Jahangir, mentioned, "They marry for the most part at the ages of twelve or thirteen." But Manucci, writing at a later date, reported a girl of Sind giving birth to a male child when she was only nine years of age.¹⁴ For the Mughal princesses, the marriageable age was a little higher. They, generally, got married at fourteen or fifteen though there are examples when they got married even at five.¹⁵ The average age for marriage of the princes was also low, ranging between sixteen to eighteen.¹⁶ However, the royalty considered themselves fit to marry the tender girls at any age. Humayun was thirty three when he married Hamida Banu, aged fourteen.¹⁷ Alamgir II, at the ripe age of sixty and with a shattered health, was fascinated by Hazrat Begam, daughter of Muhammad Shah, who was just sixteen, and

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14 Terry, Edward, ed. William Foster, Early Travels in India, pp.320-21; Manucci, I, p.201. Also see Careri, ed. S.N.Sen, Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri, p.248; Thevenot, ed. S.N.Sen, p.117 (gave this age as four to six); A.N., (Rev.), III, p.791; Jafar Sharif, p.58; Meer Hassan Ali, I, pp.346-47 (she gave this age as 13 or 14); Bamzai, P.N.K., A History of Kashmir, p.468 (for early marriages in Kashmir).

15 Aesha got married to Babur at the age of five (B.N., (Rev.), I, p.35). Babur's daughters Gulchehra Begam and Gulrang Begam got married at 14 and 15 resp. (GHN, Tr. note, pp.231-32); Hamida Banu to Humayun at 14 (Ibid., pp.150-51, (and Tr.note) 240); Humayun's daughter Bakshi Banu Begam got betrothed at 10 (Ibid., Tr.note, p.214).

16 Manucci, II, p.324. He gave the age as 16 years.

17 GHN, p.150, n. 1.

demanded her hand for himself. She, however, declined the offer replying, " I prefer death to (such a ) marriage ... I regard you as my father and you too should look upon me in the same light ... " and for that she had to suffer the punishment of forced isolation.<sup>18</sup> The like of her were only exceptions . By and large, in their eagerness to get them married off , their parents often compromised with the age of the groom . They sought justification in that Prophet Mohammad also married Ayisha , who was just nine , when he himself was fifty years old .

The arrangement of marriage was totally a parental affair. They were constrained by many considerations like family status, traditions, social honours, interests, reports, similar trade and the like before taking a decision in this regard .<sup>19</sup> As such , marriage being more of a family question than a personal concern of the marrying couple , it was arranged even at the cost of the interests and feelings of the latter. The greatest sufferer , invariably , was the girl. She was supposed to go like a dumb-driven cattle behind the bridegroom irrespective of his unsuitability . The only respite society could offer for these helpless girls was that even after the marriage was

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18 Sarkar , J.N., Fall of the Mughal Empire , II , p.3.Hereafter cited as Fall. Similarly , at the time of their first marriage , Salim was 16 (Badaoni , II , p.352) ; Murad was 17 (A.N., (Bev.), III, p.791); Muhammad Azam was about 14 and Kam Bakhsh was about 13 (M.A., (Tr.), pp.31,103, (and for Kam Bakhsh) 40,126).

19 Terry , p.321 ; Pelsaert , p.81; Manucci , III , p.145; Bernier , p.259 ; Meer Hassan Ali , I, pp.339-40.

solemnized , they allowed some more years to lapse before they were allowed to enter the actual conjugal life . During this period , they remained under the care of

Child-marriages were bound to affect both the physical and mental development of the girls . Because of early marriage, they became mothers of many children at a very young age , which resulted in the deterioration of their health and aging before time .²¹ In the inquisitive age of learning and playing , they were dumped into the four walls of in-laws , burdened with the heavy responsibilities , to bear and rear children , to run the house and to be attuned to the commands of all elders present in the husband's family . Consequently , the growth of their own personality got restricted and their individuality was nipped in the bud. No doubt , a boy was also married at an early age, but in that man-dominated society , his status remained unaffected since he was always to remain the master of his house . Women were considered as emotionless machines to procreate , to satisfy the sensuality of their masters and to rise to each command they were given .

Emperor Akbar , philanthropist and far-sighted as he was, realized the injustice done to the female children by these arranged early marriages . He , therefore ,
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20 The daughter of Sultan Adil Khan , though married as an infant to prince Ahmad Bahmani, was delivered to him only at the age of 10 (Ferishta , II , p.336 ) ; Raychaudhuri, pp.12, 230 (for similar practice among Muslims of Bengal). See also Meer Hassan Ali, I, pp.346-47.

21 Thevenot, p.117; Stavorinus, I, p.440.; Orme, p.301.

promulgated many regulations which recommended the minimum age of marriage for girls and boys as fourteen and sixteen years respectively . He recorded openly his abhorrence for the child-marriage and also for the early marriage of Ayisha with Mohammad .<sup>22</sup> He also made the consent of the bride and the bridegroom and the permission of the parents absolutely necessary in marriage contracts . He appointed two officers named *Tu-i-begi* (Master of Marriages) in order to investigate the circumstances of the bride and the bridegroom before the marriage was actually solemnized.<sup>23</sup> However , since social habits die hard , this regulation could not create any impact except in increasing corruption.<sup>24</sup> Nor could the other orders , about the consent of the boy and the girl , have any relevance since the brides and bridegrooms were too young to have any decisive power . The innocent bride would have done nothing except giving her consent for marriage , as the Qoran envisaged , by following the dictates of her *wali*. Marriage had come to be regarded as the be end and all end of the lives of these tiny helpless females before the period of Akbar and even after him.

#### THE DOWRY

Not sanctioned in the Qoran , the system of dowry reduced the importance of women further . Because of their close association with the Hindus , dowry became a part of

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22 Badaoni , II, pp.315,349; Ain., I, pp.213, n. 287.

23 Ain. , I , pp.287-88.

24 Badaoni , II , p.405.

Muslim society as well . It was popularly known as *jahaj* among them .²⁵ It comprised of cash , pearls and jewels, animals like elephants and horses with golden saddles and strings , valuable robes and vessels , territories and many more articles besides male and female slaves and singing and dancing girls . There are numerous instances showing that the Sultans and Mughal Emperors gave and took dowry in the marriage of their daughters and sons respectively . The only difference was that as compared to the Sultanate period, it had become very extensive and ostentatious during the time of the Mughals , though it varied according to the status of bride's guardians . The dowry of Devaraya's daughter to Firoz Bahmani comprised of pearls, fifty elephants, cash indemnity, territory of Bankapur and two thousand boys and girls skilled in singing and dancing .²⁶ But , it got settled at a figure of two crore *tankas* in the marriage of Man Bai with Jahangir which included a hundred elephants , several strings of horses , all sorts of golden vessels set with jewels and precious stones , utensils of gold and silver and all sorts of stuffs the quantity of which was beyond all computations, besides male and female servants of Indian , Circassian and Abyssinian origin . Alongwith this , all the nobles who were members of the imperial party were presented with Persian , Turkish and Arabian horses

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25 Shaikh Muhammad Kabir , "Afsana-i-Badshahan" , I, fol.39.

26 Ferishta , II , pp.238-39.

with golden saddles . 27 Since the Kings and the nobles were the leaders and ideals of society , the system of dowry percolated down to the general public .<sup>28</sup>

In order to save the poor girls from forced celibacy for want of dowry and getting them married in time , many of the nobles , Sultans and royal ladies came to their rescue by extending them financial help for this purpose . Some of the noteworthy among them were Fakhr-ud-din of Balban's time, Sultan Firoz Tughlaq , Amir Zain-ud-din of Sikander Lodi's period and Nurjahan . Fakhr-ud-din , *Kotwal* of Balban, was estimated to have provided dowry to about one thousand poor girls every year .<sup>29</sup> Sultan Firoz Tughlaq established a department for this purpose named *Diwan-i-Khairat* . It examined the genuine financial needs of each case and accordingly , gave them grants of fifty , thirty or twenty five *tankas* each as per the three grades of grants  
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27 T.A.,(De), II , p.599 ; Badaoni , II,p.352 ; Sujan Rai Bhandari, Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh, pp.375-76 . Also Badaoni , III, p.99 (for dowry given by Sultan Ali Khan of Kashmir in his daughter's marriage) ; Amir Khusrau , Dewal Rani Khizr Khan ,(Rizvi, KKB), p.172 (for huge dowry given in this marriage) ; Bernier , pp.21-22 and n.1 (for Aurangzeb's son prince Sultan Muhammad getting fortress of Ramgiri in dowry while marrying the princess of Golkunda) ; M.A., (Tr.) , pp.73 , 129-30 (for dowries in the marriages of prince Muhammad Akbar and Kam Bakhsh, sons of Aurangzeb) ; Iqbal Nama , p.4. (for dowry of Rs. 50 lac cash besides 10 elephants with litters studded with gold and silver worth Rs. 50 lac and 50 horses of Iraqi and Arabian breed with gold and silver trappings in Farrukhsiyar's marriage with daughter of Ajit Singh).

28 Norris, in,The Norris Embassy to Aurangzib, by Harihar Das an S.C. Sarkar , p.161 ; Manucci, III, pp. 144-45.

29 Barani , (Text) , p.117.

provided therein . 30 It is reported about Zain-ud-din that whosoever asked him for financial help for daughter's marriage , he gave him all items of dowry including clothes, beds and even *palki*.³¹ As for Nurjahan , she met the expenses of marriage and dowry of five hundred girls during her sixteen years of authority and power .³²

Dowry brought great financial burden on the parents and guardians of the girls . It had a bearing on the social status of the family and therefore, the guardians of the brides had to manage dowry even beyond their capacity . Being worried about the welfare of their daughters and aspiring for a better deal for them from their in-laws, the girls' parents tried their best to fulfil the capricious demands of the bridegrooms and their families. The girls came to be regarded as a burden under such circumstances . Men , rich and poor, were found marrying ladies much older than their age for the sake of monetary gains .³³ The greed for dowry had become a social menace and a scandal because of which Emperor Akbar had to pass regulations against

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30 Afif , (Text) , pp.180, 349-51 ; also Jauhri , R.C.,Firoz Tughluq , p.129. *Tanka* was a coin of copper with a small silver alloy (Richards , J.F.(ed.), The Imperial Monetary System of Mughal India, p.139).

31 Mushtaqi , (Rizvi , UTKB , Pt.I) , p.139.

32 Muhammad Hadi , Tatimma-i-Waqiat-i-Jahangiri , p.399; Mutamad Khan, Iqbalnama-i-Jahangiri,p.405.

33 Sher Shah at 44 married Lad Malika almost of his mother's age for the sake of her property (Abbas , (Amb.), pp.205-06. See also Qanungo , K.R. , Sher Shah and His Times, pp.96-97 , n.1).

it . 34 Dowry-demand was less in the beginning . But as the time passed and the moral values of the society became lax , the avarice of the people and their audacity to seek more and more dowry also increased . Consequently , the status of women suffered deterioration . The discrimination of the society against women was apparent even when Akbar thought of bringing regulations against unmatched marriages of old heiresses with young destitute boys but did not feel concerned about the menace of old and invalid men tying nuptial knots with innocent young girls.

### THE DIVORCE

The Qoran provided the right of divorce to Muslim women with some limitations . It also put many restrictions on husbands to check the thoughtless use of divorce provisions. The study of contemporary history shows that though there were instances of divorce , but such occurrences were only few and far between . Barbosa confirmed about the prevalence of divorce among the Mohammadans of Cambay and that the Muslim women also enjoyed the same liberty in this regard .<sup>35</sup> The son of Qazi Nasir-ud-din divorced his wife at her request. She was the sister of Sultan Muizz-ud-din Bahram Shah.<sup>36</sup> Similarly , the daughter of Ali Khan , the

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34 Badaoni , II,p.405.The regulation ordained that if a woman happened to be older than her husband by 12 years, such marriage was to be considered void.

35 Barbosa , I,p.121 and n.2.

36 T.N., (Raverty),I,P.650 and n.4; Sirhindi,P.26.

rule of Kashmir (1563 -78 A.D.), also sought divorce from her husband Shaikh Arif-i-Husaini for which she even asked back her dowry .³⁷ Among the Mughal ladies , some instances of divorce were those of Aesha Sultan Begam (Babur's wife), Khanzada Begam (Babur's sister) and Gulbarg Begam (Humayun's wife after first divorce) .³⁸ From the description of Badaoni it appears that even women from among the general public moved to the *Qazi* for seeking divorce from their spouses. He wrote :

If woman prayed for a separation from her husband on the ground of his absence from her, he (Shaikh Muin, *Qazi* of Lahore) would provide her with means of livelihood to the extent of his ability , and would say , 'take this much for your subsistence and await your husband's return : do not separate from him'.³⁹

The lesser number of divorces, in no way reflected any respect or reverence shown towards women . It depicted only their helplessness to use their legal power in order to assert against social disregard of their selves, interests, emotions and feelings. Had it not been so, then the whole lot of sensual masters of those times would have been brought within the ambit of these provisions. In the higher strata the ladies, with few exceptions, always remained in the waiting for their
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37 Badaoni , III , p.99.

38 GHN, Tr.note , pp.209 , 250-51, 230 . It is reported that Aesha left Babur . Similarly , Gulbarg Begam left her previous husband , Shah Husain Arghun before re-marrying Humayun .

39 Badaoni, III, p.147. Badaoni was a religious zealot and hence, praised Shaikh Muin for such an attitude. For his concern for *Shariat*, see Hasan, Mohibbul(ed.)Historians of Medieval India, pp.106-09.

masters who were maintaining large harems and indulging in extra-marital relations. But no one ever divorced them on this ground. Humayun's wife Bega Begam, being beloved of the Emperor, once gathered courage to convey the resentment of the harem-ladies for his absence from the harem. For this, not only had she to face a shut up call but all ladies were also made to give in writing that they would not make such complaints in future. The ladies obeyed his commands and never thought of divorcing him for this reason.<sup>40</sup> None of the wives of Shah Jahan was ever reported having divorced him. Such dominance, in fact, was maintained by males of all strata of society. Thus, Badaoni's reference that ladies also sought divorces can be construed only as an exception and not the rule. As for men, they didn't have the necessity to have recourse to a divorce because once the ladies became their stooges and their personality got suppressed, the harmonious family-life got ensured. For the richer few, it was perhaps not required at all. Not recognizing the sanctity of religion, they had as many wives as they wished without having any need of divorcing the earlier ones in order to restrict their number to four. Even within the religious sanctions, they could fulfil their desire through *muta* marriages or concubinage. If still some religious clause came in the way of their desire, then they would divorce the earlier one to be in a position to marry a new woman. For instance, an aunt and her niece could not be co-wives as per the Qoran. But Shaibani Khan, in order to get

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40 GHN, pp.130-31.

married to Khanzada Begam , sister of Babur , divorced her maternal aunt Mihr Nigar Chaghtai .⁴¹ Under such conditions and with the successive moral degradation , the institution of marriage lost its significance and so did the divorce . Though, as per Qoranic principles , a woman became free after the period of *iddat* , but , because of the weakness of women , in some areas , she was forced to stay with the divorced husband even beyond that period . Ibn Batuta wrote about the prevalence of the practice of keeping the divorced wives in the houses of their erstwhile husbands until they got remarried, in the Maldive Islands . He ,as *Qazi* of the place , claimed to have abolished this practice by granting severe punishment , of whipping and parading in the bazar , to such men who indulged in it .⁴² For the general Muslim public ,the assimilation of Hindu way of life also worked as a deterrent.⁴³

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41 GHN, Tr.note , p.250.

42 Ibn Batuta , pp.211-12.

43 Observing about this in 1892 A.D., Thomas wrote : "Whereas the law permits to the faithful as many as four wives , and provides facilities for divorce on easy terms , monogamy as in India the prevailing rule and divorce is almost unknown. " (Thomas , F.W., Mutual Influence of Muhammadans and Hindus in India , p.77). This impact during the period of this study also couldn't be less . The Census Report of 1901 elaborated still another reason for lesser divorces . It wrote , "People are often married among their own relations . A wife who is divorced brings the greatest possible shame on all her people who happen to be the people of her husband. " (Burn , R.,Census of India (1901) Report, XVI ,p. 104 ) .The Report , though , of much later period , yet the facts were equally relevant during the period of this study too with marriages in close relations and with deep sense of clannish attachment.

## REMARRIAGE

One redeeming feature of the Muslim society was the permission to the widows and the divorcees of both, rich and poor classes, to remarry. In this respect they were much better off compared to their Hindu counterparts. No social stigma was attached to remarriage. The only condition required was to wait till the time of *iddat* (period of waiting) expired .<sup>44</sup> There are many instances to show as to how easily these ladies entered into fresh wedlocks after the old ones were broken by divorce or death. Mother of Sultan Nasir-ud-din Mahmud, who was widow of Iltutmish, married Qutlugh Khan when her son became the Sultan and she herself the *Malika-i-Jahan*.<sup>45</sup> The daughter-in-law of *Qazi* Nasir-ud-din, after being divorced, got remarried to Ikhtiar-ud-din.<sup>46</sup> Among the Mughals, though they had discontinued the custom of *yangalik*<sup>47</sup>, yet many royal

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44 In Multan , however , this period of *iddat* was not observed by all and some people even married women who were not divorced by their previous husbands (Rashid, A. , Society and Culture in Medieval India , p.134).

45 T.N. , (Raverty) , I, p.701; Ferishta , I , p.133.

46 Sirhindi , p.26.

47 '*Yanga*' means 'aunt by marriage' or 'wife of an elder brother'. As per this a younger brother was to marry the widow of elder brother. As examples, after the death of Saniz Mirza , one of the Daughlat *amirs* , his widow was married to Muhammad Haider Mirza, the younger brother of the deceased. Haider Mirza was grand-father of Mirza Haider, the author of Tarikh-i-Rashidi and the cousin (maternal aunt's son) of Babur . (Mirza Haider, Tarikh-i-Rashidi, (Tr.) , p.251 , n.3). Also GHN, Tr.note, p.291 (for Sultan Nigar Khanam, daughter of Yunus Khan, on her husband Awiq's death, being married to his brother Qasim). But, when under this custom, Aurangzeb wished to marry Rana Dil, Dara's widow, she refused to agree and the marriage did not materialize (Manucci, I, pp.342-43).

ladies remarried. Mahdi Khwaja was the third husband of Khanzada Begam; the first husband Shaibani Khan having divorced her and the second Saiyyad Hada having died.⁴⁸ Humayun got Gulbarg Begam in remarriage after she divorced her first spouse Shah Husain Arghun. Akbar's sister Bakshi Banu Begam was married to Mirza Ibrahim and after his death to Mirza Sharif-ud-din.⁴⁹ There were many more examples.⁵⁰ Akbar himself married Salima Sultan Begam, the widow of Bairam Khan, and Jahangir to Nurjahan, the widow of Sher Afgan.⁵¹ If Tarikh-i-Salim Shahi is to be believed, it is reported that when prince Daniyal died, his harem of three hundred women was placed under the charge of prince Salim. The latter sent a word to these ladies that if any one of them desired to marry, they should inform him alongwith the name of the noble to whom they wanted to get married.⁵² Akbar is reported to have ordered that the widows should not

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 48 B.N., (Bev.), I, p.18, II, p. 704; Mirza Haider, (Tr.), pp. 175, 239, 400 (he named the second husband as Hadi not Hada).

49 A.N., (Bev.), II, p.197 and n..

50 Humayun's daughter Fakhr-un-nisa Begam first got married to Abul Ma'ali and after his death to Khwaja Hasan. (A.N., (Bev.), II, pp.318 and n., 364-65; M.U., II, Pt. I, p.153). Muhammad Muqim's daughter, Haji Begam got married thrice, first to Qasim Koka, then to Muhammad Hasan and after that to Muhammad Isa (A.N., (Bev.), II, pp.526-27); Humayun's widow Mahchuchak Begam, in all probability, remarried to Haider Qasim (GHN, Tr.note, p.63); Badaoni, II, p.59 for another example. Also M.U., II, Pt.II, p.819.

51 Ain., I, Tr.note, pp.321-23; Augustus, II, p.321.

52 Price, David, Memoirs of the Emperor Jahangueir Written by Himself, pp.107-08. The work is considered to be of doubtful authenticity (E & D, VI, p.257; Beni Prasad, History of Jahangir, pp.387-88).

be forbidden to remarry, though a widow whose menstruation cycle had ceased should not wish to have a husband.<sup>53</sup> The prevalence of re-marriages and their acceptability in society can be judged from the fact that the Hindu widows desirous of remarriage, got converted either into Christianity or to Islam.<sup>54</sup> However, the assimilation of the Hindu practices within the Muslim fold had begun to weaken the position of the Muslim ladies. Gradually, the Muslim psyche underwent a change in matters pertaining to remarriage and this practice fell into disuse.<sup>55</sup>

### POLYGAMY

The Qoran was taken to have given sanction for keeping upto four wives. The Muslim men of the medieval period particularly of the richer class, enjoyed the luxury of a polygamous life. The royalty often indulged in having a number of legal wives (more than the Qoranic sanction) besides many others contracted through *muta* marriage. This was in addition to a number of concubines and slave-girls whom they possessed.<sup>56</sup>

The nobility too was polygamous. Ibn Batuta, for

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53 Badaoni, II, p.367.

54 Careri, pp.249-50.

55 Manucci, III, p.145. Muhammad Ayub Qadri, Majmua-i-Wasiya (collection of Wills), Per. Text, point 7, p.52, Urdu Tr., p.82; also Baljon, J.M.S., Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi, p.199 (for will of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi wherein he exhorted that it was improper to hold divorce as prohibited and refuse to give Muslim widows in marriage, a bad impact of the Hindus. It pertains to later Mughal period).

56 For details, see Chap. IV.

instance, was never without wives or slave-girls, whom he considered indispensable. Wherever he went, he managed them for himself. He confirmed about the prevalence of *muta* marriage in Maldivian Islands and he himself entered into such wedlocks four times over there. At the time of leaving the Islands in 1345 A.D., he divorced all. After that, he again married two girls in the Island of Muluk where he stayed just for seventy days.⁵⁷ In general, however, the nobles maintained three to four wives, the senior-most being the most honoured one (*Harem-i-muhtaram*). She had precedence in all matters of dignity and management of the household except in matters of getting the love of her master where the juniors could be better placed.⁵⁸ The richer class of the society also followed this practice. Referring to the Moors of Cambay, Barbosa wrote, "They have very beautiful, white women, very well clad, and they may marry as they can maintain, in accordance with the law of Mafamedo; so many of them have four or five, all recognized and maintained."⁵⁹ Similarly, it is reported that in Bengal during the early seventeenth century, the rich Muslim merchants kept separate wives with complete establishments in each town they visited for their business.⁶⁰

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57 Ibn Batuta, pp.106,122,200,208,212-16. Also see Chap.IV.  
 58 Pelsaert, p.64; De Laet, pp.90-91; also Monserrate, p.202; Norris, p.267; Careri, p.247; Meer Hassan Ali, I, pp.340-41.  
 59 Barbosa, I, p.120.  
 60 Raychaudhuri, pp.8-9, 231 (on the authority of Schouten, a European traveller).

Polygamy had become a way of life of the higher strata of society . Even to the extent that in order to meet their desires and intentions , the religious zealots gave new interpretations to the Qoranic injunctions, to suit their purpose. The discussion in *Ibadat Khana* regarding the legal number of wives at the time of Akbar can be the best example where the Qoranic *ayat* (4:3) was interpreted as permitting nine wives. Some *Mujtahids* calculated eighteen as the sanctioned number. Being the employees of Akbar and knowing fully well that the Emperor wanted to find a religious sanction for his plurality of wives, they gave these new interpretations. The ultimate consensus reached at was that a man might marry any number of wives by *muta* marriage but only four by *nikah*.<sup>61</sup> Mirza Aziz Koka remarked tersely, "A man should marry four wives a Persian woman to have somebody to talk to; a Khurasani woman , for his housework; a Hindu woman for nursing his children and a woman from Mawarannahr (Transoxiana) to have some one to whip as a warning for the other three."<sup>62</sup>

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61 Badaoni,II,pp.211-12.They reached at the figure of 18 by multiplying each number given in the *ayat* by 2 i.e. $2 \times 2 + 3 \times 2 + 4 \times 2 = 18$ and at the figure of 9 by adding them i.e. $2 + 3 + 4 = 9$. During this discussion, it also came to light that taking recourse to such interpretations,one *Qazi* himself had nine wives.

62 Ain.,I,Tr.note,p.346. See also Jafar Sharif,pp.85-86, wherein by quoting Burton, he had given in not so-serious but very suggestive explanation for having four wives, "one quarrels with you; two are sure to involve you in their quarrels; when you have three, factions are formed against her you love best; but four find society and occupation among themselves, leaving the husband in peace."

Akbar realized the bad effects of polygamy on health and family peace, and so, propounded monogamy. He introduced the practice that a man should have a single legal wife unless he had no child. ⁶³ Such a regulation was bound to have no impact, particularly on the upper class with whom polygamy had become a second nature and who considered it a symbol of their dignity. Akbar himself never adhered to it. Thus, polygamy remained the order of the day with the wealthy Mohammadans, only the number of wives differed according to means, the state of necessity and the fancy of the man.

From the observations of the contemporary European travellers, it can be construed that among common Muslims, the practice of having more than one wife was followed. Nicoli Conti wrote:

The inhabitants of central India are only allowed to marry one wife, in the other parts of India polygamy prevails generally, except among those Christians who have adopted the Nestorian heresy, who... confine themselves to one solitary mate. ⁶⁴

His specific association only of the Christians and those of central India with monogamy shows that during the early part of the Muslim period, the Muslim population followed polygamy. Terry confirmed the prevalence of polygamy during the time of Jahangir. ⁶⁵ Thevenot and Careri also wrote about

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63 Ain., I, p.288 ; Badaoni , II, p.367.

64 Nicoli Conti , p.23.

65 Terry , p.320.

the plurality of wives of the Mohammadans in general.<sup>66</sup> Gradually, polygamy came to be discouraged by the Muslims.<sup>67</sup> People of lower classes even among the Muslims were normally monogamists. They could not afford the luxury of maintaining several wives with their inadequate economic resources.<sup>68</sup>

The position of women was undermined by the prevalence of polygamy. The permission of four wives itself was discriminatory and humiliating for women. The enhancement of number by flouting this rule became all the more derogatory. Confined within the female quarters and lost in their mutual bickerings, theirs was a wretched life without much importance which deteriorated further with the presence of concubines and slave-girls. These illegal mates often stole the show by becoming the cynosure of the eyes of their masters and thus gained precedence over the legal wives. Since their impact increased as the high-ups in society degraded morally, the plight of the lawful wives became deplorable successively.<sup>69</sup> Compared to the harem-ladies, women of middle and lower classes had a better status. They had rarely any rival in their homes. Indirectly

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66 Thevenot , p.117 (he wrote , "...a Gentile ... cannot have several Wives at a time as the Mahometans have...") ; Careri , p.248 (he wrote, "...the Idolaters ...may not have several Wives at once like the Mahometans... ") .

67 F.W. Thomas , p.77.

68 Chopra, Life and Letters , p.112 ; Ojha, P.N. , North Indian Social Life During Mughal Period , p.132; Sahu , K.P. , Some Aspects of North Indian Social Life , p.197.

69 For details , see Chap. IV .

though, they were also affected adversely by the polygamy among the higher strata. Their self-respect and modesty were susceptible to the greedy eyes of lustful masters, perpetual saturnalia being the be end and all end of their lives, in the later Mughal period .

WOMAN AND HOUSEHOLD

In marriage and family life, the woman was man's possession like any other commodity.⁷⁰ According to a reference of the time of Al-ud-din Khalji, a husband even sold off his spouse in order to pay off taxes and such practices continued even during the Mughal period.⁷¹ The women were subjected to all sorts of ethical rules. Amir Khusrau wrote that a girl who had any reflections cast on her chastity could never expect to find any respectable person to marry her even though the charges levelled might prove to be totally baseless later on. The poet, therefore, cautioned them that in case they took to life of vices, their death alone would be able to purify them. He advised people against telling secrets to such women who were prone to evil acts.⁷² Even for the married women, the social restrictions were so strict that except with their husbands, they could not remain alone in the company of any other male person including their brothers or fathers.⁷³

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70 Matla-ul-Anwar, pp.117,192; Norris, p.162; Stavorinus, I, pp. 440-41.

71 Barani, (Text), p.340; Badaoni, II, p.192; Yusuf Mirak, Mazhar-i-Shahjahani, p.21.

72 Matla-ul-Anwar, pp.198, 330.

73 Ibid., p.228; Hasht Bahisht, pp.27-30; Terry, p.320.

Ibn Batuta, praising one of his wives, the step mother of Sultana Khadija of Maldives, wrote:

She was one of the best women, and her society was delightful to such an extent that whenever I married another woman, she showed the sweetness of her disposition still by anointing me with perfumed ointment and scenting my clothes, smiling all the time and betraying no sign of ill humour.<sup>74</sup>

The ideals laid down for women were to consider their husbands as Gods on earth, follow their instructions, tolerate all their excesses and manage the household within the income that their husbands earned.

The women were conscious of their subservient position. They showed all devotion towards their spouses and tolerated all mental and physical tortures perpetrated on them by their husbands or their relations at home. For instance, the wife of Sultan Nasir-ud-din Mahmud was so devoted towards him that she herself did all household work and cooked food for the Sultan. Once she pleaded to the Sultan for a maid servant because her fingers were burnt while baking bread, but the Sultan did not provide the same. His wife never complained thereafter.<sup>75</sup> At times, women were also subjected to torture.

The sister of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq was tortured to death by her husband Mughis, son of Malik-ul-Muluk.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Khwaja Muazzam, brother of Hamida Banu, was notorious for ill-treating his wife Zahra Agha, whom he finally killed.<sup>77</sup>

74 Ibn Batuta, p.211.

75 Ferishta, I, p.136.

76 Ibn Batuta, p.81.

77 GHN, Tr.note, pp.65-66; A.N., (Bev.), II, p.336; Augustus, I, p.104.

During the Mughal period, the womanly devotion, particularly in the higher strata, was shaken. They developed extra-marital relations and some of them even killed their husbands.<sup>78</sup> However, women in general did not change much. Born and brought up in their ordinary environment, trained and moulded from the very childhood by the authoritative mothers-in-law and living always under the cover of purdah and domestic restrictions, such recalcitrant behaviour was just not expected of them. They remained docile all through and lived and died like the stooges of their husbands or the servants of their families. Family-peace was maintained not because of any sense of comradeship and love between husband and wife but because of the perfect understanding of the subservient role by the wife .

Some women had a personality of their own . They exercised considerable influence on their husbands in their private and public lives. Malika-i-Jahan, Shams Khatun, Bibi Ambha, Bibi Raji, Hamida Banu Begam, Salima Sultan Begam, Maham Begam, Nurjahan, Mumtaz Mahal, Aurangabadi Mahal can be cited as examples. They enjoyed a status much better than that of other ladies of their times.

#### THE MOTHER

The position of woman as a mother was most respectable. Both , the rulers and the ruled , followed exhortations of Islam in this regard . Poet Amir Khusrau eulogized mother in his poems for all the pains she bears in

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 78 Pelsaert , p.66 ; Manucci , II , pp.329, 435-36 . Ain. , I, Tr. note, p.389 (Ismail Quli Khan being poisoned by his 1200 women for his ill-treatment) .

child-birth and the dominant role she plays in moulding the character of the child .⁷⁹ During the Sultanate period , the royalty not only showed regards towards their mothers but also allowed them to play prominent role in the state politics. Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq , for instance, held his mother Makhduma-i-Jahan in high esteem. Once she travelled alongwith him and he returned a little earlier to her. Later when his mother arrived, he proceeded to her, got down from his horse and kissed her feet in public in order to pay his humble regards.⁸⁰ She was his permanent counsel and was allowed to spend as much as she wanted for her charity. He mourned her death for ten days before resuming his march to Multan.⁸¹ Similarly, Syed Sultan Mubarak Shah, who was on his way to his expedition to Samana when he heard about the illness of his mother Makhduma-i-Jahan in 1432 A.D. , came back immediately leaving his army and baggage in the charge of the *amirs* and *maliks* .His mother died a few days after his return. The Sultan stayed for ten days in order to observe her funeral rites and rejoined his army only after that.⁸² It is only because of the exclusive place enjoyed by them that the mothers like Shah Turkan (son , Rukn-ud-din Firoz) , Malika-i-Jahan (mother of Sultan Rukn-ud-din Ibrahim Khalji) , Dudu Begam

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79 Hasht Bahisht , pp.208-09.

80 Ibn Batuta , p.118.

81 Sirhindi, p.101; Barani, (Text), pp.482-83,506; Muhammad Bihmad Khani,Tarikh-i-Muhammadi, pp.353, 355.

82 Sirhindi , p.234.

(mother of Sultan Jalal-ud-din Lohani of Bihar ), Makhduma-i-Jahan ( mother of Sultans Nizam Shah Bahmani and Muhammad Bahmani, III ) played crucial roles in politics as mother regents, safeguarding the interests of their sons.<sup>83</sup> There were some unhappy examples too. Sultan Shihab-ud-din, son and successor of Ala-ud-din Khalji, showed disrespect towards his step-mother (mother of Khizr Khan) Malika-i-Jahan and imprisoned her confiscating her valuable possessions.<sup>84</sup> Mothers who killed their children for selfish ends are also mentioned by the contemporaries. In one such instance, during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin of Kashmir, a lady killed her own child and threw his dead body in the house of the lady living in her neighbourhood because she had a grudge against the latter and wanted to get her punished by involving her in the murder of her child.<sup>85</sup> Such references, however, did not reflect the normal behaviour.

With the coming of the Mughals , the position of mother was exalted to its zenith . Step - mothers, foster-mothers and even enemies' mothers were equally respected. Babur showed all reverence towards the mother of his enemy Ibrahim Lodi by giving her mansion, a *Pargana* with an annual revenue of seven lac rupees besides allowing to retain her

83 Abbas, (Amb.), p.108 ; GHN, Appendix A, p.226 (for Dudu Begam) . Ferishta, II, pp.286-88, 294, 303-04,; Sastri, K.A.N. A History of South India , pp. 253-54 (for Makhduma-i-Jahan). For others, see Chap.V.

84 T.A., (De), I , p.119 ; Ferishta , I, p.219 . He named the Sultan as 'Oomur' Khalji .

85 T.A., (Rizvi, UTKB, Pt.II), p.518 , also (De), III, Pt.II, p.656 (he represented the second lady as servant of the complainant). See below, pp. 119-20 for another example.

servants and slaves inspite of the fact that her son was his arch rival whom he had killed . It is reported that he used to call her 'mother' and requested her to take him just like her deceased son .<sup>86</sup> Babur's regard for his own mother Qutlugh Nigar Khanam was well known . Mirza Haider wrote that during difficult days , Babur had only one horse suitable for a person of his rank and that was used by his mother .<sup>87</sup> She remained a constant guide and consoler of her son, during all his tribulations, till her death in 1505 A.D.<sup>88</sup> Humayun had great regard for his mother Maham Begam. Gulbadan, step-sister of Humayun , also loved her intensely for the care with which she had reared her up . She often referred to her as *akam* or 'my lady' and also as 'royal angel of goodness' with love and regard .<sup>89</sup> Gulbadan spoke very high of her real mother Dildar Begam as well.<sup>90</sup>

Hamida Banu was held in highest esteem by Akbar . His going out of the city to receive her whenever she returned from a journey<sup>91</sup>, his abrupt coming back from his hunting trip on hearing about her indisposition<sup>92</sup>, his carrying her palanquin on his own shoulders once, during her journey  
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86 B.N. , (Bev.), II , pp.477-78 ;GHN , p.108.
 87 Mirza Haider , (Tr.) , p.176.
 88 B.N., (Bev.), I, pp.147; also GHN, Tr. note, p.272.
 89 GHN , pp.103-04 , 112-113, (and Tr. note) 256-58 .
 90 GHN , pp.161 , 178 , 182, (and Tr. note) 225-26.
 91 A.N. , (Bev.), III , pp.348,547.
 92 T.A. ,(De), II , p.237 ; M.U. , II , Pt. II,p.846.

from Lahore to Agra 93, his heart-felt mourning at her death when he shaved off his head and beard and removed all ornaments and took her bier on his shoulders for a pace 94, all betray his respect for his mother. His regard extended to his step mother like Haji Begam and foster mothers like Maham Anaga and Jiji Anaga. 95 On account of it he showed deepest attachment even to their sons and husbands known as *kokas* and *atkas* respectively. Aziz Koka, son of Jiji Anaga, for instance, offended Akbar often with his impetuosity, yet, he rarely punished him. He used to say, "Between me and Aziz is a river of milk which I cannot cross." 96 Even after Akbar, the foster mothers continued to be given kind and considerate treatment in the royal household. 97

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93 Coryat, ed. W.Foster, p.278.

94 Inayatullah, Takmila-i-Akbar Nama, p.113; Augustus, II, p.415.

95 He was so much attached with Haji Begam that many people, as Akbar himself confirmed, mistook her to be his real mother and confused her with Hamida Banu (A.N., (Bev.), III, pp.107-08, also p.547; Smith, V.A., Akbar: the Great Mogul, p.89, n.3. Badaoni called her "second mother to the Emperor" (Badaoni, II, p.308). To Maham Anaga, he used to call *walida* i.e. mother. She enjoyed the greatest influence on Akbar as well as in the court (A.N., (Bev.), II, pp.183, n.5, 230; M.U., I, pp.145, 384-85). See also Chapter V. For reference of other *anagas*, see A.N., (Bev.), I, pp.130-31; Badaoni, II, p.49, n.4.

96 Ain., I, Tr.note, p.343. Another example of this favour was Shams-ud-din Atka Khan, husband of Jiji Anaga being made the Prime Minister after the fall of Bairam Khan (Badaoni, II, P.49; Augustus, I, p.94).

97 Tuzuk, I, pp.78, 84-85; Rukkat, (Bilmoria), pp.30, 173.

Jahangir was equally respectful towards his mother . Lunar and Solar weighing of the Emperor and many royal marriages took place in her palace .<sup>98</sup> During important festivals, the Emperor visited her palace to pay his respect. Hawkins mentioned about one of such visits during *Nauroz* when each of the nobles accompanying the Emperor presented her a jewel according to his respective estate.<sup>99</sup> He had such great reverence for his mother that in order to perform *kornish*, *sijdah* , and *taslim* to her he travelled all the way to Dahr (near Lahore) where she was staying.<sup>100</sup> Such was his regard for mothers that when once Pahar , son of Ghaznin Khan, killed his mother because she had prevented him from evil doings, Jahangir punished him to death.<sup>101</sup> Prince Muhammad Azam , son of Aurangzeb , also had great regard for his mother .<sup>102</sup>

Even during later Mughal period , when the society witnessed general degradation in moral values, to which mother were no exceptions, the reverence for mother remained untarnished. Udham Bai , the mother of Emperor Ahmad Shah , was morally lax and had objectionable relations with eunuch

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98 Tuzuk ,I,pp. 81,145.

99 Hawkins , ed. W.Foster , p.118.

100 Tuzuk, I , p.76 . See also Randhawa, M. S., Indian Miniature Painting ,pl.4 (painting showing Jahangir paying respect to his mother).

101 Tuzuk ,I, p.353.

102 Hamid-ud-din, Ahkam-i-Alamgiri, (Tr.) , p.67.

Javed Khan . 103 Still , she was most revered by her son . She was *de facto* administrator of his empire . It is reported that during the Maratha attack on the imperial camp , while running away from Sikandrabad , Ahmad Shah took alongwith him his mother besides his son Mahmud Shah , favourite wife Inayetpuri Bai and half sister Sahiba Begam, leaving all other queens and princesses at the mercy of his enemies . 104

The Mughal mothers played important role as mediators also . Some of them who took an active part in the administration of the empire were Qutlugh Nigar Khanam , Maham Begam , Hamida Banu , Salima Sultan Begam , Mahchuchak Begam , Udaipuri Mahal , Sahiba Nishwan and Udham Bai . 105 The universal respect given to the mothers has also been confirmed by Badaoni . He himself availed of the services of his mother once in an effort to settle his differences with Muqarrab Khan , a chief of the *amirs* of the Deccan. 106

FEMALE RELATIONS

The Qoran propounded justice , kindness and due consideration towards near relations. 107 The Muslims , in general, followed these ethical rules . During Sultanate

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103 Tarikh-i-Ahmad-Shah, (Tr.), pp.113-14; Sarkar ,Fall,I, pp.209-10.

104 Sarkar ,Fall, I,pp.332-36.

105 For detail see Chapter V.

106 Badaoni, Nijat-ul-Rashid, p.34 ; Badaoni, II, pp.87-88.

107 The Qoran ,16:90.

period some deterioration in their position came about and alongwith the instances of respect and kindness towards the near relations, those of disrespect and intrigues against them were also observed. The period while witnessed the brothers of Razia Begam working against her interests, also saw Khudavandzada , the sister of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, being held in great regard by the latter.

The position of female relations became much better under the Mughals . Babur's respect for his grand mother Ehsan Daulat Begam , sister Khanzada Begam and for his aunts is abundantly testified in Babur Nama , Humayun Nama and Tarikh-i-Rashidi . After the conquest of north India he invited his aunts , *begams* and *khanams* from Kabul to Agra . In all, ninety six of them arrived and all were given presents. A comfortable living was arranged for them. Babur himself visited them on every Friday and continued to do so even after Maham's forbidding because of hot season . 108 Mrs. Beveridge observed , " Apropos of the aunts of frequent mention , it may be said that both Babur and Haider (Mirza Haider) convey the opinion that deference to elder women was  
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108 GHN, pp.97-98, also pp.89, 100-01 ,103 (for Babur's daily visits to the house of his aunts at Kabul and his coming bare-foot to receive Maham Begam and his "honourable reception" to Khanzada Begam , both ladies returning from Kabul at two different occasions); Mirza Haider , (Tr.) , p.200 (for description of Babur's warm meeting with his maternal aunt Mihr Nigar Khanam) and p.196 (for Babur's welcome to his lady-relations inspite of his mourning at his mother 's death); A.N., (Bev.),I, pp.230-33 (for Babur's pardon to rebel Khan Mirza at the intercession of Mihr Nigar Khanam).

a permanent trait of their age and set ." 109

Humayun followed his father . His love for his sisters was so much that during his illness he remembered them the most . He often visited them and cared for their welfare.¹¹⁰ He looked after other elderly lady-relations also which even aroused the jealousy of his wives .¹¹¹ Akbar and Jahangir were equally respectful to lady-relations . Akbar showed all kindness towards the wife of Mirza Muhammad Hakim, his cousin sister and so did Jahangir towards his sister Shukr-un-nisa.¹¹² Aurangzeb's love for Roshanara and Jahanara is well known . He favoured both of them . He rejoiced at Jahanara's recovery from her burns .¹¹³ Aurangzeb showed regard for Qamar-un-nisa , the daughter of his maternal aunt and the Prime Minister Asad Khan . He cared for her comforts inspite of the fact that he confined her son Mirza Tafakhur for his rowdyism in molesting a Hindu woman.¹¹⁴ Even during the later period , this regard and love for the female relations continued. One could visualize the good fortune of these Mughal lady-relations in contrast to the position

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109 GHN, Tr. note, p.20.

110 Ibid., pp. 104 , 110-11.

111 Ibid. , pp.110, 130-31.

112 Tuzuk , II , p.91 , also I, p.36.

113 For details of their role see Chapters V & VI. Also for Jahanara's burns, see Sarkar, J.N.,History of Aurangzib, I, pp.39-41. Hereafter cited as Aurangzib.

114 Hamid-ud-din , pp.97-98.

prevalent in the neighbouring country . Thevenot found that the King of Persia killed his grand-mother because she opposed the occupation of Qandhar from the Mughals during the time of Shah Jahan . Mughal women never faced such brutality.<sup>115</sup>

The respect that the female relations of the royalty got from the nobility was noteworthy . While the Kings maintained their hold , the nobles couldn't meet the royal ladies directly . Moreover ,they dismounted from their horses at a distance and bowed if they happened to pass their way . They showed all respect to the royal ladies and if they were offered betel leaves by them through their eunuchs , the nobles received that with a bow thus expressing their regard for them.<sup>116</sup> However , in the later period of weak Mughal Emperors , all such reverence vanished. The royal guards caricatured Udham Bai's relation with Javed Khan . They tied up a young ass and bitch at the palace gate and when the nobles and courtiers came to attend *darbar* , they audaciously asked them to bow to these two first because the ass represented Javed Khan entitled *Nawab Bahadur* and the bitch Hazrat Qudsia (Udham Bai) , the queen-mother.<sup>117</sup>

The observance of these ethical principles did not change in Muslim households , in general. Muslim homes remained the abodes of love and regards for the elders and

115 Thevenot , pp.78-79.

116 Manucci , II , pp.330-31.

117 Sarkar, Fall , II , pp.209-10.

other female relations .118

### TREATMENT TO WIDOWS

The widows among the Muslims had a better life than their counter-parts among the Hindus . There was no restriction of remarriage for ladies after the period of *iddat* in the Qoran and they were frequently re-marrying . Those who didn't remarry, were well provided for. 119

Many Sultans were generous in providing for the livelihood of Muslim widows . Iltutmish introduced *iqta* system under which tracts of land were distributed among the followers and officials of the Sultan . After the death of the *Muqta* (one who held charge of an *iqta* ) , in many cases , the widows continued to hold those lands considering them as *inams* given to their husbands and thus had a good living . Balban confiscated many of them but he provided allowances to the widows for their living. 120

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118 Ikram, S.M., Muslim Civilization in India , p. 230. He writes, "... the character of the average Indian or Pakistani home and the socio-ethical ideas which influence it have not undergone any fundamental change."

119 For details, see Chap. I.

120 Tripathi , R.P. , Some Aspect of Muslim Administration, pp.244 , 249-50. In this system, the *iqtas* were generally given to the military men for a number of years or for the life time of the grantee who was expected to collect the revenue and after deducting from it the amount granted to him , he was to remit the balance to the Central Govt. As such, the *iqta* holder tried to conceal his real income from his *iqta* which led to a constant tussle between him and the Central Govt. It was to curb such practices and also realizing that the system had out-lived its utility that Balban reduced and resumed many of them from which full or proper service was not forth coming (Ibid. , pp.244-46; Nizami , K. A. , Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During the Thirteenth Century, pp.128-32 (hereafter cited as Religion and Politics); Habib, Irfan, " Agrarian Economy", ed. Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, The Cambridge Economic History of India ,I , pp. 68-75.

Balban's consideration for them could be gauged from his judgement against one of his slaves Haibat Khan , who had murdered the husband of a woman. Visualizing the intense grief of the lady , the Sultan handed over the murderer to her , of course after giving five hundred lashes, to stab him with her own hands . The lady forgave the slave but felt redeemed at heart for having received the justice . 121

Muhammad bin Tughlaq had set up alms-houses to help widows financially . 122 He was kind to the widow of Sultan Qutb-ud-din Mubarak Shah . He addressed her as sister and also placed her in the company of female members of his own household. Later on , he got her remarried to Ibn Qazi Misr. He also paid a visit to her every Friday . 123 Sultan Firoz Tughlaq conferred stipends upon widows for their maintenance . 124 If widows wanted to get remarried, the King's *Muhatasibs* recommended their cases to their guardians. 125 Sultan Sikander Lodi assigned the *jagir* of Kalpi , hundred twenty horses and fifteen elephants to Jalal Khan for comfort of Niamat Khatun, widow of Qutb Khan

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121 Barani , (Text), pp.40-41.

122 Law, N.N., Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammedan Rule ,p.45.

123 Ibn-Batuta ,p.140.

124 Moinul Haq, S.,Barani's History of the Tughlugs,p.98.

125 Barani , Fatawa-i-Jahandari , (Tr.) , p.6.

Lodi.<sup>126</sup> During the reign of the Mughals, efforts to help the widows continued. Jahangir established a fund for helping the widows.<sup>127</sup> Aurangzeb maintained separate palaces for them known as *suhagpura*.<sup>128</sup> These measures made widowhood less painful.

### SATI AND JAUHAR

There were two peculiar practices of Hindus influencing the Muslims in India -the primitive custom of *sati* i.e. burning of the widow along with the dead body of the husband and *jauhar* i.e. self-immolation of the ladies in view of the impending widowhood on the defeat and death of their husbands in the battle.<sup>129</sup> *Sati* was highly extolled in Hindu community.

126 Abdullah, p.279 ; Niamatullah , (Roy) ,p.89; Badaoni , I, p.423 and n.2.

127 Price, p. 106. See also Tuzuk, I, P.172 (for Jahangir's help to a widow whose daughter had been forcibly taken away by one of the attendants of Muqarrab Khan , a *mansabdar* at Cambay).

128 Manucci,II,p.118 and f.n.133.

129 *Sati* was originally a *Kshtriya* (name of a caste) custom and was mainly followed by the ruling and the warring classes upto about thirteenth century. Thereafter it came to be adopted by the commoners as well throughout India. Nevertheless, not all Hindu widows committed *sati*. Such cases were both voluntary and coercive. It was a highly venerated custom [For detailed study see Altekar,pp.115-42 (as per his estimation, when the prevalence of this custom was at its highest, among Rajputs, about 10% and among general population, about one in a thousand widows committed *sati*);Datta, V.N., Sati,pp.1-15;Ashraf,pp.186-89;Sahu,pp.200-05;Tod,I,pp. 266,633-35,II,pp.461-62,469,497,499,623,654,745,752]. *Jauhar* was mostly confined to Rajputs (for detailed references, see Tod, I,pp.265,311,594,639-40,II,pp.251, 253-54,763; Ashraf, pp. 192-93; Sahu, pp.205-06). The practices were not known to other Muslim communities outside India. It is just like the conclusion drawn by Imtiaz Ahmad about caste system among the Muslims in India in his Caste and Social Stratification Among Muslims in India (pp.13-15). He opines that it "owes itself directly to Hindu influences".

Since it was related with the single-minded devotion of the lady towards her husband, even poets like Amir Khusrau praised it and suggested that if his religion permitted this, then many of his co-religionists would die eagerly in that manner.<sup>130</sup> When a rebel Ain-ul-Mulk was rumoured to have been killed, his wife refused to save her life by running away alongwith her other relations. She showed her inclination to be burnt alive like a Hindu widow in case his death was confirmed.<sup>131</sup> During the reign of Jahangir, The Muslim population of Rajaur, converts from Hindus, were practising it in their own novel way. They, instead of burning the widows, buried them alive alongwith the bodies of their deceased husbands. Jahangir recorded, "I heard that recently they (the people of Rajaur) put alive into the grave a girl of ten or twelve alongwith her (dead) husband, who was of the same age".<sup>132</sup> Such novel burial continued even thereafter.<sup>133</sup> However, the practice didn't become popular among the Muslims and it remained limited only to those who had

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130 Amir Khusrau, Nuh-Sipihr, III , pp. 191-95 . See also Hughes, p.47 for Qoranic injunction.

131 Ibn Batuta , p. 109.

132 Tuzuk , II , p.181 . Aurangzeb , in his last letter to Kam Bakhsh wrote , "Udaipuri , your mother was with me in my sickness. She intends to accompany me (after my death i.e. she will soon die after me like a Hindu Sati)." (Rukkat , (Bilmoria) , p.74). From this Tod, (I, Chap. XI, "Annals of Mewar", p. 378, n.(a)) inferred that she desired to burn herself and showed that she was a Rajput . But J.N. Sarkar contradicted it since Hindu queen , after been married to Muslim King , received Islamic burial . Therefore , as per him, Udaipuri meant to kill herself "in passionate grief" on the expiry of Aurangzeb (Aurangzib, I, p.35n.).

133 Thevenot, p.120 ; Careri, p.249.

a Hindu origin or who lived in Hindu environment.

As for *jauhar* , it attracted some followers from among the Muslims too. At the time of the invasion of Timur, Kamal-ud-din, the Governor of Bhatnir and his retainers burnt their women alive along with their property before going to the battle-field.¹³⁴ Humayun thought of killing all his female kith and kin after his defeat at Kanauj. He repented later, for not having killed Aqiqa Bibi with his own hands who got lost during the battle of Chausa.¹³⁵ Mirza Nathan, the author of *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, wrote that like Rajputs, the Muslims killed their women and children before going to fight the battle.¹³⁶ During his own fight with the Assamese, this author ordered Sadat Khan to stay at the gate of his harem and as soon as he heard about his attaining martyrdom in the battle-field, he should perform the rites of *jauhar* "with all the inmates of the mahal, big and small and take your (his) journey to the Kingdom of Heaven with eternal honour".¹³⁷ However, like *sati*, *jauhar* also didn't become popular among the Muslims.¹³⁸

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134 Sharafu-d-din Yazdi, *Zafar Nama* , (Tr.) , p.495.

135 *GHN* , p. 143.

136 Mirza Nathan , I , pp.141 , 193 , 440 . See also II, pp. 596 , 599 in this regard.

137 *Ibid.* , II , pp. 594-95.

138 Yasin,(p.90),is of the view that *jauhar* was frequently resorted to by the Muslims as the last weapon to save the honour of their family. However, since there are not very many references of Muslim ladies undergoing it as those of the Rajput ladies in the contemporary works, it appears that though having an impact, yet, it was not very popular when they considered the shedding of female blood a heinous crime.

## POSTHUMOUS CEREMONIES

A look at the ceremonies for the dead brings to light the discrimination made in their observance with regard to women. The Qoran provided for similar funeral and after-death rites for both, men and women.<sup>139</sup> Similar prayers were recited for both at the time of laying the body to rest in the grave and then similarity observed in the rituals that followed. One of the important ceremonies, for instance was *siyum* or the ceremony of the third day or the *phool* ceremony. On this day, the friends and relatives gathered at the grave of the dead to recite the Qoran for the benefit of the departed soul. Ibn Batuta narrated in detail as to how this ceremony was performed for his deceased daughter. A large gathering collected at her grave, the Holy Qoran was read, flowers, dry fruits, coconut and a cloth were placed upon her grave and all the mourners were served with sugar-candy drinks and betel leaves thereafter besides being sprinkled with rose water.<sup>140</sup> With the passage of time and the fall in the status of women, some of the ceremonies for them were dropped. Manucci has narrated , " In the case of women they do not call out the commendations to Muhammad as is done for men, for they declare that women have no entry into heaven."<sup>141</sup> This social discrimination against women was against the Qoranic promise

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139 Muhammad Ali , Religion ,pp.444-50 ;Hughes ,pp.44-46.

140 Ibn Batuta , pp.120-21.

141 Manucci , III , p.145.

of equal treatment for both the sexes with regard to reward and punishment. Apparently the status of women in society had declined.

FEMALE SLAVES

A large number of slaves and maids existed in medieval society.¹⁴² The slave-girls were called *bandis* or *khawas* or *paristar*.¹⁴³ They were treated like commodities.¹⁴⁴ They were purchased and sold in the market; their price varied according to their physique, personal charm and sensual appeal. There were markets for them in India and other countries like China, Persia, Turkistan, Moka and Arabia.¹⁴⁵ During Ala-ud-din Khalji's time, they had fixed prices in the market. The price of an ordinary working female slave ranged from 5 to twelve *tankas* and for a charming beauty between twenty to forty *tankas*. Their prices couldn't be bargained nor could they be
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142 Ala-ud-din alone had 50 thousand slaves. Muhammad bin Tughlaq had so many that as per Ibn Batuta, he set apart three days of the week during *Id* celebrations to manumit some of them and to get them married. As per Afif, he kept a day of the week for this purpose. During the time of Firoz Tughlaq, their number had risen to 1.8 lac (Afif, (Text), pp 267-73); Ibn Batuta, p.63. Also see Jauhri, pp.126-28; Ashraf, pp.58-59.

143 Lal, Harem, p. 31; Aurangzib, I, p.37.

144 Ibn Batuta, pp.123,150. See also Ashraf, P.105. He, on the authority of Mohammad Awfi, Jawami-ul-Hikayat showed how a slave as a property was widely recognized. Hence, a Sultan was asked to pay proper compensation if he desired to get released a slave from the custody of a master; Habib, Irfan, "Non-Agricultural Production and Urban Economy", ed. Raychaudhuri and Habib, I, p.92.

145 Barani, (Text), p.322; Ibn Batuta, p. 230; Ferishta, I, pp.207-08; Bernier, pp. 134-36, 426; Karim, Abdul, Social History of Muslims in Bengal, p.196.

displayed like other commodities. Even the presence of brokers in their case was prohibited.<sup>146</sup> During the fourteenth century, another set of prices prevailed for the female slaves in Delhi. An ordinary female slave was priced eight *tankas*, fifteen *tankas* for one who was kept as mistress and even twenty thousand *tankas* for an accomplished one. It is also informed that their prices were less outside Delhi.<sup>147</sup>

Women of the enemies were also captured in the battle fields. This was not only to inflict a great humiliation on the enemy but also to get beautiful damsels for varied purposes.<sup>148</sup> Akbar tried to be more humane by banning the practice of capturing prisoners of war.<sup>149</sup> However, the salutary impact of this measure got eroded when he and his successors openly asked for the daughters and other female relations of the vanquished for their harems as a part of the peace treaty.<sup>150</sup> As a result, alongwith these ladies hundreds of their slave-girls and maid-servants accompanied the brides. They served their mistresses and were to be the 'joy-toy' for the new masters. An interesting story was that

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146 Barani ,(Text) ,p. 314.

147 Umari,(Rizvi,TKB,I),p.325;Abu Al Abbas Qalqashandi, Subh al Asha, (Tr.), pp.55-56. See also Ibn Batuta, p.123. He informed about the general low price of the slave-girls.

148 Ibn Batuta , pp. 63, 123 ; Barani ,(Text), p. 322 ; Sikander, (Tr.) , p.272 (narrated how Hoshang , the Sultan of Malwa captured slaves and slave-girls after his victory over Sultan of Sonkhera); GHN, pp.94-95 (Babur's capture and distribution of Ibrahim Lodi's harem).

149 A.N.,(Bev.) , II, pp.246-47.

150 Ain., I,p.45; Tuzuk, I,pp.82,87,160; Aurangzib,I,p.133.

of Ganna Begam. She was an accomplished poetess and exemplary beauty. Her hand was sought by the highest of nobles like Shuja-ud-daulah , the Nawab of Bengal and Imad-ul-Mulk, the imperial *Wazir*. When she was on her way to get married to Shuja , she was surrounded by a contingent of Jawahar Singh Jat. Some how she escaped capture. Thereafter, her mother married her to Imad-ul-Mulk. Her marriage offended Mughlani Begam whose daughter Umda Begam had been betrothed to Imad-ul-Mulk in her childhood. When Abdali captured Delhi in 1757 A.D., Mughlani Begam, being in Abdali's good books, ensured that Imad-ul-Mulk married Umda Begam and forced Ganna Begam to serve as a bond-maid to her for the rest of her life. The poignancy of this lady has been vividly engraved in the epitaph on her grave which reads "*Ah, Gham-i-Ganna Begam*" (Alas ! weep for Ganna Begam).¹⁵¹

Slave-girls and maid-servants formed a part of the dowry or were offered as gifts as a mark of respect and love.¹⁵² They were even exchanged mutually. Aurangzeb exchanged Zainabadi for his concubine Chatter Bai.¹⁵³

The peasant women alongwith their men and children were enslaved for non-payment of land revenue .¹⁵⁴ During the Mughal period , it was the practice that if any robbery took

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 151 Sarkar, Fall, II, pp.75-76; Ganda Singh, Ahmad Shah Durrani, pp.160,169. He called her Gunna Begam); Irvine, W., "Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Indian Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk (1752-58)", Indian Antiquary, Vol.36, Feb.,1907, pp.46-49; Gupta, H.R., Studies in Later Mughal History of the Panjab, pp.127,136.

152 Ibn Batuta , pp.63,73, 122-23, 150 ; GHN , pp.94-95.

153 Hamid-ud-din , pp. 36-38.

154 Pelsaert, p.47 ; Bernier, p.205 ; Manrique , II, p.272.

place within the jurisdiction of a *Jagirdar* or a *Faujdar*, he was required either to trace out the culprit and recover the loot or compensate for the loss himself . It was under this pretext that these officials sacked any village they chose. They killed the men-folk and carried away their women and children whom they sold as slaves. <sup>155</sup>

The female slaves were broadly of two types, those kept for menial and domestic work and the others who , because of their talent and beauty , were meant for company and pleasure . The former were ill-treated and the latter were treated with kindness . <sup>156</sup> At times , slave-girls occupied a dominating position in the household . Many of them became concubines and few even rose to the level of their legal wives . Shah Turkan was a Turkish maid turned concubine of Iltutmish . <sup>157</sup> Mewajan , the wife of Humayun was initially a domestic maid of Gulbadan's retinue . <sup>158</sup> Three , *kaneezes* (slave-girls) became lawful wives of Hasan , Sher Shah's father . <sup>159</sup> Zainabadi Mahal , the love of Aurangzeb's youthful days was the slave-girl of Mir Khalil ,

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155 Habib, Irfan , The Agrarian System of Mughal India , p.323, n.25 (he described about a woman having been seized in one of such raids by a *Faujdar* and was given to one of his troopers in lieu of his pay. The latter, however, sold her for Rs. 40).

156 Amir Khusrau ,Ijaz-i-Khusravi, IV , pp. 169-70 , 334 ; Ashraf , pp. 103-04 on the authority of " Fiqh-i-Firuz Shahi".

157 T.N. , (Raverty) , I, pp. 630 ,644.

158 GHN , p. 112 .

159 Qanungo , Sher Shah,p.13.

Emperor's maternal uncle , 160 and Udaipuri Mahal was his slave-girl turned concubine . 161

THE PROSTITUTES

Another class of women who catered to the public need of pleasure and entertainment were the prostitutes . They were , generally, proficient in dance and music . In that age of sensuality , prostitution had come to stay as a part and parcel of the social life . An anecdote of Ferishta shows how they had become very popular by the time of Ala-ud-din Khalji . Once a courtier named Ain-ud-din Bijapuri pointed out to the Sultan his neglect in regulating the most popular commodity i.e. prostitutes though he had fixed the prices of other items . 162 It is also recorded that once an ordinary citizen complained to Delhi *Kotwal* about the disturbance of public peace , one of the reasons for which was the opening of a brothel beside his house . 163 Writing about Calicut , Nicoli Conti observed , "... public women are everywhere to be had , residing in particular houses of their own in all parts of the cities who attract the men by sweet perfumes and ointment by their blandishments, beauty and youth for the Indians are much addicted to

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160 M.U., I , p. 806 (he depicted her as mistress of Mir Khalil) ; Hamid-ud-din , pp. 36-38 ( he named the noble as Saif Khan ) ; Manucci , I , p.222. See also Aurangzib , I, pp.35-37.

161 Aurangzib , I, p.34 ; Faruki , Zahir-ud-din , Aurangzeb and His Times, p. 545. As per him, she was his wife not concubine.

162 Ferishta , I, pp. 204-05.

163 Nizami (ed.) , I, pp. 82-83.

licentiousness."164 Abdur Razzaq , who visited Bijapur in the middle of fifteenth century, intimated about the presence of brothels in the form of a bazar in that city.<sup>165</sup> By the time of Akbar , their number had risen to such an extent that it was difficult to count them . <sup>166</sup> Their number continued to increase and by the end of seventeenth century , in the city of Lahore alone , six thousand houses were occupied by the public women . <sup>167</sup> During the time of later Mughals , it became a fashion to patronize a prostitute . <sup>168</sup> The literary writings of the time make frequent references to prostitution, thus showing the popularity this institution had gained in the society.<sup>169</sup>

The financial consideration was the major factor for women joining prostitution. Those having lost their modesty while their husbands were alive were forced to join this profession for their maintenance . <sup>170</sup> In second half of the

seventeenth century , some of the provincial Governors also forced a few of the unmarried ladies , both Hindus and  
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164 Nicoli Conti , p.23.
 165 Abdur Razzaq , Matla-us-Sadain ,pp.111-12.
 166 Badaoni , II, p.311.
 167 Manucci , II, p. 173.
 168 Lal , Harem ,p. 198.
 169 Jayasi ,Padmavat , Khand 2 , Chhanda 38 ,pp. 44-45; Rahim, Rahim Bilas , Doha 81 , p.35 and Ratnavali , Doha 81,p.34.
 170 Manucci , III, p. 57. He mentioned this in connection with the Hindu women. But , it was equally true of Muslim women too.

Muslims , to join prostitution and live alongwith the other public women in areas earmarked for them . 171

The institution of public women was considered essential for social health but the prostitutes were held in low esteem . Once any lady joined this profession , all her family ties were broken and she was totally deprived of family affinity and love . Such double standards existed in the society.¹⁷² As the time moved on , the public stigma attached to visiting brothels, gradually, disappeared . The society developed tolerance for the harlots and the profession of the prostitution remained no more a disgrace.¹⁷³ They got the patronage of the royalty and nobility all through in varying degrees . Accordingly , their status and recognition also oscillated up and down . Kaiqubad , for instance , was so much given to unrestrained pleasures and debauchery that following his example , the

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171 Bowrey, p. 206.

172 Barani , Fatawa-i-Jahandari ,(Tr.) ,p.138 (he wrote that Sayyid Nur-ud-din Mubarak Shah , a saint of the time of Iltutmish , considered prostitution necessary in order to save the modesty of pious women , but, he wanted that such women should carry on their trade in a quiet and subdued manner) ; Amir Khusrau , likewise , considered it essential for the diversion of youth and the soldiers (Qiran-us-Sadain , p.107 ). But , being averse to them , he treated prostitute Bibi Tabha very shabbily . She was made to sit on an ass and was taken around the city to see whether any body claimed her and when none came forward , he took her finally to the *Hakim* for necessary punishment . He also showed his surprise as to why these ladies were not satisfied with one man and preferred to be the favourite of the masses (Ijaz-i-Khusravi, V,pp.151-52). See also Umari,(S&A), p.67 (for their seclusion from family . They needed to be officially registered).

173 Terry,p.320 ; Thevenot , p.136 ; Stavorinus , I,p.409.

whole society suffered fall in moral values resulting in an increase in demand of such women . Ferishta wrote :

His own pursuits soon became the fashion at court , and in short time licentiousness and vice prevailed to such an extent , that every shady grove was filled women and pleasure...so that even magistrates were seen drunk in public and music was heard in every house .<sup>174</sup>

Qutb-ud-din Mubarak Shah had so much become a part of them that he often dressed like a female and went around the city in the company of harlots and even danced in the houses of the nobles .<sup>175</sup> They enjoyed the patronage of Emperors like Shah Jahan and those of later Mughals and also of their morally corrupt nobility .

It is of interest to note that except Aurangzeb, no Monarch ever thought of abolishing it altogether . Since public women were required to pay a fixed amount of money in the form of a tax , it was a source of revenue for them.<sup>176</sup> Ala-ud-din Khalji classified them into three categories and fixed their charges accordingly, ordering thereby that none should charge above the fixed rates .<sup>177</sup> He ordered all

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174 Ferishta , I,p.152.

175 Thomas , p., Indian Women Through the Ages , p.251 ; Thomas , E., The Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi , p.139.

176 Umari , (S&A) , p.67; Abdur Razzaq , pp.111-12 ; Manucci , I,p.189 ; Bowrey ,p.206 ; Stavorinus , I,pp.409-10.

177 Ferishta, I,pp.204-05 ; see also Lal , K.S.,History of the Khaljis , p.264 , n.15 (hereafter cited as Khaljis). He disbelieved the division of prostitutes into categories .

public women to get married within a fixed period .178 In spite of this strictness , their appeal to the public did not dwindle . Even Maulana Shams Asadi , a respectable religious leader, has been reported to be visiting such women regularly. ¹⁷⁹ Akbar, in order to check their rising popularity , secluded their habitation outside the capital which was called *Shaitanpura* (the 'Devils' Quarters). He also appointed state officials , a keeper , deputy and a secretary , for supervising the affairs of these quarters . It was required that whosoever wanted to visit the place or wanted to take any lady from their to his house had to register his name and other particulars with them . In case any well-known noble wanted to deflower a virgin , the prior permission was required to be taken from the Emperor . Akbar privately enquired from the well known prostitutes about the persons visiting them . He reprimanded and even punished such persons afterwards. ¹⁸⁰

Aurangzeb was the first Muslim Monarch who thought of striking at the very root of the institution of prostitution. In order to abolish it , he ordered that the public women must either marry or leave his empire . He banned music and closed the public houses , the facilities which were essential for the profession of these ladies .

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178 Amir Khusrau, Khazain-ul-Futuh, p.11;also Ashraf,p.265.

179 Ijaz-i-Khusravi , IV , p.206.

180 Badaoni , II,pp.311-12.

But this order was also not very effective . 181 So , he issued another order and asked the censors to check this flesh trade . 182 These measures did seem to have an immediate impact . Manucci testified :

This was the cause that the palaces and great enclosures where they dwelt went to ruin little by little ; for some of them married and others went away or , at least concealed themselves . 183

But , in the long run, his efforts also proved abortive. In the later part of his reign , Ovington found a large number of prostitutes living in the city of Bombay . 184

These public women were also responsible for the growing moral indecency and laxity . In the early part of the period under study, they still seemed to have some norms of their profession . Once they had contract with somebody , they didn't entertain another person under any pressure. 185

During the time of Iltutmish, a prostitute named Gauhar, at the instigation of conspirator Nizam-ud-din Sughra who held the post of *Shaikh-ul-Islam* , charged Shaikh Jalal-ud-din Tabrizi , Sufi saint of repute , of adultery . Luckily , the conspiracy failed . 186

Describing about the prostitutes of Jaunpur , poet Vidyapati wrote that they flocked the market

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181 Manucci, II, pp.3-6; Norris, p.149 ; M.A., (Tr.), p.45.

182 Ali Muhammad Khan , Mirat-i-Ahmadi , pp.222, 250-51 .

183 Manucci, II, pp.5-6.

184 Ovington , I,p.63; Norris , pp.149-50.

185 Ijaz-i-Khusravi , V,p.130; Umari, (S&A) , p.67.

186 Religion and Politics , pp.163-64 on the authority of Siyar-ul-Arifin , pp.167-69.

and openly induced young damsels to join their trade. 187

According to him :

Their shyness was unnatural and their youth was artificial . For the sake of money , they pretended love so as to covet other . They were greedy to better their fortunes. Deprived of husbands , the vermilion on their foreheads symbolized their ill repute.¹⁸⁸

DANCERS AND SINGERS

Another section of public women was that of dancers and singers .¹⁸⁹ The Muslim population kept alive their folk songs and dances which they usually displayed in festivals.¹⁹⁰ Gradually , dancing and singing became an

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187 Vidyapati, Kirtilata, Pallava 2, Chhanda 24, Doha 138, p.85.

188 Vidyapati, Kirtilata , Pallava 2 , Chhanda 22, Dohas 132-33, pp.82-83 . He referred thus:

*Lajja kittim kapat tarunna  
Dhan nimitte dahae prem,  
Lobhe binaa saubhage kaman  
Binu svami sindur para parichaya apaman.*

See also Ijaz-i-Khusravi , V, pp.148-49 (how a dancing girl , busy in entertaining the guests , attended the call of nature in front of all present ) ; Withington, ed. W.Foster, pp.208-09 (how they openly offered themselves for sharing the bed).

189 Ibn Batuta , (pp.28,171) , mentioned about a separate market for singing girls in Daulatabad called Tarababad. Asad Beg , (Wikaya-i-Asad Beg , p.164) , confirmed about their establishments in the market in Bijapur during Akbar's reign . See also Nuh Sipihr, pp.379-81, 383 ; Della Valle , in M.A. Ansari, European Travellers under the Mughals , p.109 (for public performance of dance and music by Muslim women at Cambay ) ; Terry , p.310 ; Manucci , I, p.189; Muraqqa , Introduction , p.xxxii ; Ahmad, Najma Parveen, Hindustani Music, Introduction & Historical Background, pp.7,9,10.

190 Ashraf , pp.222,245-46 . Also see Abbas, (Amb.) , p.445 (for Afghan dances on the eve of coronation of Sher Shah , also Tr. Imamuddin , (p.104 , n.2) Surmised this to be *Khatak* dance of the Afghans ).

independent profession. 191 The scope of the development of art of these ladies and also their material gains depended mainly on the patronage of the upper class.

The contemporary sources and visual materials like the paintings demonstrate that female dancers and musicians were patronized . 192 The Kings and the nobles maintained their own troupes of female dancers and musicians to add colour to occasions of enjoyment and mirth . Among the Mughals , the royal ladies also maintained their separate entertaining groups of Muslim dancing and singing girls . 193 Shah Jahan showed special favour towards the dancing girls called *kanchanis* . 194 Bernier wrote that they were not the prostitutes seen in bazar , but those of a more private and

191 Ain. , III, pp.271-73 ; Mundy , II, p.216; Pelsaert, p. 83.

192 Hasht Bahisht, p.34; Ibn Batuta, pp.78-79; Abbas, (Amb.), pp.723-24; B.N., (Bev.), II , p.634; T.A. ,(De), I, P.73; Ain., III, pp.272-73; Downton, pp.53-54 ; Finch, ed. W.Foster, p.183; Manrique , II, p.161; Thevenot , pp.33,67 ; Stavorinus , I, p.437. For paintings , see Ibn Batuta, facing p.56; Lal , Harem , Pls.7,8,12,VI; Devee , Maharani Sunity , The Beautiful Mughal Princesses , facing p.2 (showing a slave-girl playing on violin while the queen is engrossed in this) , also painting facing p.94; Brown, Percy , Indian Paintings under the Mughals , pls. XXXI, XLVII, LVII, fig. I; Godden , Rumer , Gulbadan - Portrait of a Rose Princess at the Mughal Court , p.47. ; Randhawa , Pl.26 (Faizabad painting showing women amusing themselves with music and dance). See also Rashid, pp. 115-21; Prasad, Ishwari, A History of the Qaraunah Turks in India , I, p.309 (hereafter cited as Qaraunah Turks); Banerjee, J.M., History of Firuz Shah Tughlaq, p.167.

193 Manucci , II, pp.313-14.

194 *Kanchani* was the name given to them by Akbar (Ain., III, p.272). It is derived from the word *kanchan* i.e. 'a dancing girl' . See also Crooke , W., The Tribes and Castes of the North Western Provinces and Oudh, IV , p.364 for the Kanchan caste.

respectable class , who attended the grand wedding of *omrahs* and *mansabdars* for the purpose of singing and dancing . Most of these *kanchanis* were beautiful and well-dressed and sang to perfection ;and their limbs being extremely supple , they danced with wonderful ability and were always correct with regard to time .<sup>195</sup> During Shah Jahan's reign , these *kanchanis* were under obligation to visit the court twice a week in order to give their scintillating performance and when they came , the Emperor kept them in the palace for the whole night for amusement.<sup>196</sup> The dancing girls were also patronized by the princes and nobles .<sup>197</sup> Aurangzeb had a secret liking for them .This is revealed from the special names that he conferred on such ladies in the harem .<sup>198</sup> Aurangzeb's infatuation for a dancing girl Zainabadi is well known . He is reported to have agreed to have a cup of wine at her asking which she offered to test his love for her .<sup>199</sup>

The sway of these ladies reached its zenith during the  
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195 Bernier , pp.273-74; Manucci , I,p.189;Thevenot,p.71 ; Ovington , I,p.114.

196 Manucci, I,p.189. He also narrated that when once Shah Jahan took one of them as concubine and nobles objected a woman of that rank being kept in the palace , the Emperor replied," *Mithai nek har dukan kih baashad.*" (Sweetmeats are good , whatever shop they may come from).

197 Ibid.,p.213 (Dara's love for Rana Dil); Bernier ,pp.7,8 (Shuja's liking for them) ; Bowrey ,p.207 (patronage by the nobles).

198 Manucci , II,pp.312-13.

199 M.U. , I,pp.806-07.

reign of later Mughals. Lal Kanwar, a dancing girl turned wife of Emperor Jahandar Shah is well known. So much was her influence that the locality of her birth was named *Lal Kuan* ; *Qila-i-Mubarak* , *Qila-i-Mualla* or *Qila-i-Shahjahanbad* came to be called *Lal-Qila* ; her mosque as *Lal Masjid* and her burial place as *Lal Bangla*.²⁰⁰ The contemporary Dargah Quli Khan has identified nineteen prominent women artists in dance and music of Emperor Muhammad Shah's time like Khushali Ram Jani , Behnai-Feel Sawar, Ad Begam , Chamani , Saras Roop , Nur Bai , Chakmak Dahni , Kali Ganga , Zeenat , Gulab , Razmani , Rehman Bai, Panna Bai , Kamal Bai , Uma Bai , Panna and Tanu . Out of them , Nur Bai , Chamani , Chakmak , Kamal Bai and Panna were Favourites of Muhammad Shah and enjoyed his patronage.²⁰¹ Except a few nobles like Murshid Quli Jafar Khan , Alivardi Khan and Safdar Jang, none could escape their evil influence.²⁰² Professionally , such ladies received a great boost but morally , they stooped to the lowest ebb.

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 200 Stephen , Carr , Archaeology and Monumental Remains of Delhi , pp.216,279-80; for details of her influence see Chap. V.

201 Muraqqa , pp.99,100,104-11,115-25. See also Tarikh-i-Ahmad Shah, pp.113-14 (for Hazrat Begam (Qudsia Begam) , another dancing girl turned concubine of the Emperor ). Also Bach , Hilde ,Indian Love Paintings , Pl.37 (showing late-night musical parties of Muhammad Shah's reign ).

202 Riyazu-s-Salatin , p.281 (for Murshid Quli Jafar Khan). Orme , p. 272 ; Datta , K.K. , Alivardi and His Times , p.170 (for Alivardi Khan) ; Srivastava ,A. I., The First Two Nawabs of Awadh, pp.241-42 (for Safdar Jang).

## WOMEN AND MORALITY

The Muslim women of the medieval times were subjected to all sorts of social restrictions and bondages with a view to preserve their chastity . There are numerous references in the works of contemporary poets and writers showing how the common Muslim women safeguarded their chastity . Amir Khusrau has narrated the story of a lady who was sought by a King . Finding herself helpless , she took out both her eyes with her fingers and sent them to the King . Moved at this and realizing her determination, the King left her.<sup>203</sup> Manucci has narrated that a man coveting a girl charged her with adultery . It was with great astuteness that she not only saved her modesty but also proved it so .<sup>204</sup>

The other side of the morality can be gauged from an anecdote of the Lodi period . It has been reported that a soldier's wife developed an affair with another man while her husband was away on an official assignment . The man started visiting her house frequently . One night , finding her crying child a hindrance in their amorous act, the woman strangulated him to death . She made the man dig out a grave for the child inside the house itself and when he was busy doing so , she hit him from the back and killed him also there and then. She buried both of them together over there. In the morning , she spread the story of her child having been taken away by wolf and also shed crocodile tears . When

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203 Matla-ul-Anwar , p.231.

204 Manucci , I,p.192-93 . See also Iqbal Nama , pp.7-9 for other examples of the time of Farrukhsiyar's reign .

her husband returned, a neighbour narrated the true story to him . The husband, pretending that some treasure was buried by him inside the house, wanted to open the grave to know the truth. The lady became sceptical. She asked him to bring the digging instrument from inside the room and when he went in, she closed the door from outside and put the house on fire burning her husband also alive . The lady was ultimately given death penalty by the *Qazi* for the triple murder . 205

The Muslim women were also found indulging in anti-social activities . Ibn Batuta narrated about the presence of enchantresses called *kaftars* in the Malabar area. They indulged in gruesome activities of killing persons by a mere look .²⁰⁶ The ladies were members of the gangs of dacoits also. They not only allured the customers by their

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205 Mushtaqi , (Rizvi , UTKB,Pt.I),pp.179-81 : Abdullah, pp.251-53: Ahmad Yadgar, pp.349-51. There is a little variation here and there in their narration , Besides , the first two writers considered the incident of the time of Bahlol Lodi , while as per the third , it was of the time of Ibrahim Lodi.

206 Ibn Batuta , pp.164-65 and n.5. *Kaftar* literally means a hyena who digs up and devours. Hence , this metaphoric expression was used for such ladies . It was believed that if the chest of a person dying at their mere look was cut , one would find the heart missing . They believed that it was eaten up by the enchanter / enchantress . He also narrated an incident of a child killed by a *kaftar*. Though he did not specify the religion of these *kaftars*, however , the fact that Muslims also learnt this art leads to the conjecture that some of those *kaftars* must be out of the Muslim community.

beauty and tricks but even put the nooses around the necks of their preys themselves .<sup>207</sup>

The other sign of degradation was the habit of drinking among ladies. Amir Khusrau vehemently opposed drinking of wine by the ladies. He pleaded that drinking was the root cause of destruction and the breaking of the family bond.<sup>208</sup> This habit increased during the Mughal times. Aurangzeb counted names of only two persons , one of himself and other of his chief *Qazi* Abdul Wahab, who were teetotallers. He didn't include the ladies in his list.<sup>209</sup> To check adultery, Ala-ud-din Khalji introduced harsh punishment, of castration for the adulterer and death for the adulteress .<sup>210</sup> Barani pleaded for the Qoranic death-punishment for committing adultery with a married woman.<sup>211</sup> The existence of sects like *Mulahidan* and *Ibahatiyan* during the Sultanate period spoke volumes of the immorality that had crept into the society . The followers of these sects were allowed to have sex with any woman they got hold of in the darkness of the

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207 Mushtaqi , (Rizvi , UTKB , Pt.I) , pp.181-82 ; Thevenot, p.58. See also Manucci , I,pp.193-94 for another example.

208 Matla-ul-Anwar ,pp.194,226;Nuh-Sipihir,VII, p.379.

209 Manucci, II,pp.3,139-40. Interestingly, he mentioned that the chief *Qazi* also drank in secret .

210 Barani, (Text),pp.295,386; Khazain-ul-Futuh , pp.10-11. Ibn Batuta,(pp.85-86), mentioned about stoning to death of the mother of Masud Khan , the brother of Muhammad bin Tughlaq for her confession of adultery . She was daughter of Sultan Ala-ud-din Khalji.

211 Fatawa-i-Jahandari, p.59.

night when all lights were extinguished.²¹² During the Mughal period, with the moral values falling still further, the social evil of adultery spread unabated and the administrative efforts also could not contain it. ²¹³ Jahangir, therefore, openly expressed his doubts about the fidelity of the Muslim women and the contemporary European travellers corroborated his view. ²¹⁴

GENERAL SOCIAL ATTITUDE

A careful study of the developments reveals that the public behaviour towards women varied vastly depending upon the particular situations they were placed in. Within the house, a woman was no more than a slave catering to the needs of all and bearing all sorts of treatments she was subjected to. Her fidelity still remained doubtful in the eyes of her husband.

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212 Khazain-ul-Futuh, p.12; Futuhat, (Text), pp.7-8 ; Barani, (Text), p.336 ( he only testified to the existence of the sect during the reign of Ala-ud-din Khalji but did not explain their activities). See also Jauhri, pp.143-44, nn.27-28, 197-199 for detailed discussion in this regard . They were probably the Karmithians who were found in great numbers in western India during those days . Ala-ud-din persecuted them mercilessly . But , they emerged again and Firoz Tughlaq had to take severe action against them.

213 Thevenot,p.95. See also Badaoni , II,p.59; Riyazu-s-Salatin ,p.284.

214 Tuzuk , I,p.150 ; Thevenot , p.66 ; Ovington , I,p.93.

The women were totally dependent on their men-folk and considered them their saviours. Men looked upon their women as the honour of the house and considered it their moral duty to safeguard them. It is understandable, in this context, why Babur condemned Ghazi Khan of Milwat for becoming fugitive after leaving his women-folk at the mercy of his enemy.<sup>215</sup> Similarly the nobles of Humayun pleaded strict punishment for Kamran, who was notorious for defiling women, and they wanted that a check should be put on this so as to ensure security to their women.<sup>216</sup> One of the reasons why Mahmud Shah bin Nasir Shah (1511-1531 A.D.), Sultan of Malwa, dismissed his Rajput minister Medini Rai was that the latter forcibly took away Muslim women and made them slaves and dancing girls. Ultimately, he had to seek pardon. He was ordered to free Muslim women and not to be cruel to them in future.<sup>217</sup> Even conversion of a Muslim lady was taken as an attack on the honour of the Muslims and was dealt with severely by the rulers.<sup>218</sup> There are instances where

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215 B.N., (Bev.), II , pp.460-61.

216 GHN ,pp.200-01 .

217 T.A., (De), III , Pt.II, pp.596-98; Haig,III,p.368.

218 It is reported that during Jahangir's time , death punishment was given for taking a Muslim girl in marriage to a Hindu though Hindu girls could be married by Muslim youths (Haig, IV,p.181) . Also , one of the reasons for Shah Jahan's action against Portuguese in 1629 A.D. was reported to be an incident wherein a Portuguese attacked a Mughal lady near Dacca whom he first baptized and then married. (Ibid.,p.191;Saksena,B.P.,History of Shahjahan of Dihli ,pp.105-06).

community as a whole rose against the disrespect shown to a single Muslim lady of their race. It is known that Mubarak Khan, a nephew of Sher Shah and Governor of Roh, fell for the beautiful daughter of one Alahdad Sambal and wanted to marry her. But her father declined the proposal under the excuse of difference in their social standards. He was of pure race and would not marry his daughter to Mubarak Khan, a son of a slave-girl. In his frustration, the latter perpetrated atrocities on the Sambalis, pillaged their villages and took away the daughter of one Khairo, the *Kotwal* among the Sambalis, to his house. The Sambalis collectively turned to the Governor and asked him to return the girl or face the consequences. They declared, "If you will turn your eye towards our women, we will kill you and in return for atoning your murder, Ser (Sher) Khan will slay some of the chiefs of the Sambalis to the utmost." And they did kill him, though, in retaliation, the forces of Sher Shah slew most of their men.²¹⁹ There was a similar rising when Masud, minister-regent (1673-83 A.D.), betrothed Shahr Banu (Padishah Bibi), the sister of infant Sultan Adil Shah of Bijapur, to prince Azam in order to buy peace from the Mughals. It was only after promising that this clause would not be observed that Masud could pacify the uprising.²²⁰ The honour of the women was such a sensitive matter and so sure was it to arouse the Muslim feelings that many of the opportunist Kings frequently

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219 Abbas, (Amb.), pp.778-86.

220 Haig, IV, pp. 274, 277.

took the pretext of saving the honour of Muslim women so as to justify their attacks on others' territories or other political moves.<sup>221</sup>

Attitude towards women was totally different when they were the relations of an enemy or an opponent or a rebel. The community and religious affinity relegated to the background then. All sorts of atrocities and insults were meted out to them. Innocent women were made to suffer for the wrongs of their men.<sup>222</sup> How helpless these ladies were

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221 Puran Mal of Raisin, for instance, was a political challenge to Sher Shah as Abbas himself narrated. Still he justified Sher Shah's attack on that territory on the plea that the Muslim ladies of Chanderi (Raisin was a part of it), had complained the Sultan against atrocities hurled on them by Puran Mal (Abbas, (Amb.), pp.603-09; Qanungo, Sher Shah, pp.383-85). See also Haig, IV, p.59 (for how Islam Shah Sur called back noble Khawas Khan, who had supported the cause of Adil Shah against the Sultan, from the shelter of the King of Kumaon by pleading that he needed his help against Rana of Mewar who had carried away Muslim women).

222 Riyazu-s-Salatin, p.83; Ferishta, I, pp.147-48 (for Balban's capture and torture of women and children of adherents of rebel noble Tughral of Lakhnauti whom he wanted to chastise); Sirhindi, pp.86-87 (how after murdering Sultan Qutb-ud-din Mubarak Shah, Khusrau Khan humiliated his women by marrying his widow himself and distributing the rest among his nobles, *Patwaris* and Hindus), also p.119 (how Muhammad bin Tughlaq tortured women and children of those victims whom he punished illegally or otherwise); Ibn Batuta, pp. 227-28 (for atrocities of Ghias-ud-din, the King of Mabar on the wives of his opponent); A.N., (Bev.), I, pp.509-10 (for atrocities of Kamran on the women of Humayun's supporters). Among foreign invaders, for cruelty of Timur (Timur, Malfuzat-i-Timuri, (Tr.), pp.405, 425-28; Zafar Nama, (Tr.), pp.503-04); for Nadir Shah (Siyar, (N.M.), I, 316, also (Briggs), p.285; Irvine, Later Mughals, II, pp.367,369). For Ahmad Shah Abdali (Sarkar, Fall, II, pp.69-73, 83-84, 86-87, 89-90).

can be judged from the condition of Hazrat Begam . She was the maiden daughter of Emperor Muhammad Shah and had rejected the offer of marriage to Emperor Alamgir II. She was captured by Abdali and was forced to marry him . Abdali was "of grand-fatherly age , whose two ears had been docked and nose was rotting from a leprous carbuncle".²²³

Some of the rulers did display a positive attitude towards women. Humayun , for instance , had great respect for womankind and any immodesty or cruelty shown to them annoyed him . When he found that Rukayya Begam was subsisting on beef , he exclaimed in anger , "O Kamran ! was it the mode of your existence and did you feed the Asylum of Chastity on the flesh of cows ! Could you not keep a few goats for her subsistence ?" ²²⁴ Sher Shah's honourable attitude towards women is well known . During the period when he managed the *jagir* of his father , he took strict action against the recalcitrant *Muqaddams* for which he used to take away their property and even women . However, while he distributed other confiscated property among his soldiers, he kept the women-folk under his careful control so that none mis-behaved with them . ²²⁵ His respectful return of the

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223 Sarkar, Fall , II,p.89.

224 Prasad , Ishwari , Life and Times of Humayun , p.371 . Hereafter cited as Humayun .

225 Qanungo , Sher Shah , pp.53-54 . Sher Shah also didn't allow his son Jalal Khan to mis-behave with Mihr Sultan who refused to marry her daughter to him inspite of the latter's desire . (Abbas, (Amb.), pp. 254-55).

women of Humayun's camp is seen as a token of his highest regard for womanhood. Emperor Akbar , Alivardi Khan and Husain Ali Khan , one of the Sayyid brothers, are some other examples of such persons .<sup>226</sup> There were Kings like Bahlol Lodi , Jahangir and Shah Jahan who paid greatest regards to their wives. Among the general public also , there were some examples of good behaviour towards women . Ovington has narrated the story of a Muslim porter who was employed in the English factory at Surat . He asked for leave and some money from his employer every Thursday so that he could go to his wife and show his love and kindness towards her by taking some gifts for her .<sup>227</sup> However , women, in general, were considered synonymous with cowardice, inaction, incapability, helplessness, short-sightedness and instruments of sensuality.<sup>228</sup>

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226 Riyazu-s-Salatin, p.358, n.2 and Siyar, (N.M.), II, pp.58-59 (for Alivardi's respectful treatment with the women of rebel Sham Sher Khan and of other Afghans) and I , pp.122-24 , also (Briggs), pp.108-09 (for Sayyid brother Husain Ali's respect for women) . Akbar's punishment even to his own maternal uncle for his ill-treatment to his wife stands already discussed.

227 Ovington, I, p.175.

228 Price, p.45 (a coward warrior running away from the battle field was compared to a woman): Abbas, (Amb.), pp.202-03 (for how Lad Malika was regarded incapable of ruling because she was a woman); Hamid-uddin, p.71 (for male chauvinism, vis a vis considering women second-rate); Rukkat, (Bilmoria), p.72 (for Aurangzeb equating women with short-sightedness); M.U., II, Pt. II, p.1078 (for decrying women as having defective understanding); Manucci, II, pp.9-11 (for *Mullas* of lower rung enticing ladies in the name of religion to satisfy their lust).

CHAPTER III

ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES

Theoretically , the Muslim women were bestowed with abundant economic rights and privileges . The Qoran elaborated rules for the entitlements of a Muslim woman , to her maintenance and to *mahr* . It bestowed on her property rights through inheritance and through other means.

RIGHT TO MAINTENANCE

Women were considered to be the honour of the family and as their movements were restricted by purdah and seclusion , it was not considered honourable for any family to allow them to go out for earning their livelihood .¹ As was also provided in the Qoran , both rich and poor , considered it their duty to provide for the basic needs of their women-folk .The women of the commoners,who had to undertake different economic activities or seek a job outside for their maintenance, were not given a respectable place in society . The upper class ladies who remained confined within the four-walls of their

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1 "The ability" , writes Jeffery Patricia , "to keep women in seclusion and uninvolved in economic activity outside the home is an important index of relative wealth and ... of a family's worth in an economic sense , but it also becomes indicative of their social worth , or their honour . " She has written this in context of the present position of the Muslim women but it was very much applicable on the family psychology of the medieval times ( Frogs in the Well, Indian Women in Purdah , p.25).

harem became their ideals and the symbol of social honour. Whosoever had sufficient resources for maintaining his family, his first concern was to stop ladies of the house from going out for a job. The rich people who maintained large harems would also make provision for them on priority. Sultan Ghias-ud-din of Malwa who had fifteen thousand ladies in his harem, Akbar who had five thousand women in his seraglio and prince Shah Alam who had two thousand women to support, all tried to maintain them in a dignified way. Each female in the harem was given an allowance according to her position.<sup>2</sup> Elaborate arrangements were also made for the upkeep and comfortable living of royal and noble widows and other women attached to them, for which they maintained separate widow-houses.<sup>3</sup>

The expenses incurred by the royalty on their harems varied according to their financial resources. Since the Mughals were much wealthier than their counterparts in the Sultanate period, their ladies got more allowances than the  
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2 Jahangir, for instance, enhanced the allowances of all the *pardah nashin* ladies of the royal harem from 20% to 100% according to their condition and relationship and all the domestics by 20% soon after his accession (Tuzuk, I, p.10). Also Manucci, II, p.310.

3 A.N., (Bev.), III, p.107 (care of Humayun's widow); Finch, p.186 (for maintenance of Akbar's widows). M.U., II, Pt.II, p.1078; Latif, S.M., Lahore, Its History, Architectural Remains and Antiquities, p.58 and Ain., I, Tr.note, p.574 and n. (for allowance of Rs. two lac p.a. provided to widow Nurjahan. Elphinstone by mistake wrote it as two lac p.m.); M.A., (Tr.), p.23 (Hamida Banu, the widow of Khalilullah Khan, *Subedar* of Lahore, being provided with an annual stipend of Rs. 50 thousand by Aurangzeb); Manucci, II, pp.118, 286.

royal ladies of the earlier period. Some among them were specially privileged.⁴

The bestowal of maintenance grant in the form of *jagirs* and *inams* was a common feature with the Mughals. Usually, out of their total allowance, half was paid in cash from the royal treasury and the other half in the form of these *jagirs* or land-rents. The collection from these land-rents always yielded more than the amount in exchange for which they were granted.⁵ Babur had assigned houses and lands to ninety-six *begams* and *khanams*. Sher Shah gave a grant of some villages to Bibi Fath Malika, widow of Mustafa Farmuli, for her maintenance.⁶ Nurjahan held so many *jagirs* spread all over the empire that on the basis of her rights she could be conferred with the title equivalent to that of Commander of 30000. She held the *jagir* of Ramsar located about twenty miles south-east of Ajmer.⁷ She was also bestowed with the

4 Mumtaz Mahal's annual allowance of Rs. 10 lac (Lahori, Vol.I, Pt.I, p.96); for Jahanara's annual allowance starting from Rs.six lac p.a. by Shah Jahan then raised to 12 lac p.a. and was further enhanced to 17 lac p.a. by Aurangzeb (M.A., (Tr.), p.36; Saksena, pp.63-64. Latif, (p.58) by mistake, has written her allowance as Rs. 60 lac p.a. during Shah Jahan's time); For Lal Kanwar's annual allowance of Rs.two crore besides jewels and clothes (Haig, IV, p.326; Irvine, William, Later Mughals, I, p.194). For a modern estimation of expenses on cash allowance and wages on Akbar's harem worth 3.50 lac *dams* annually i.e. 42% to total harem expenditure (Moosvi, Shireen, The Economy of the Mughal Empire, pp.248-50, 276. *Dam* was a copper paise / coin (Richards, pp.20, 173).

5 Mishra, Rekha, Women in Mughal India, p.61.

6 Abbas, (Amb.), p.254. Also refer (E&D), IV, p.355 wherein grant of two *parganas* has been mentioned.

7 Tuzuk, I, p.342; Ain, I, Tr.note, p.574.

jagir of Toda , on the occasion of Khurram's Deccan victory in 1617 A.D., which had an annual revenue of two lac rupees.⁸ Similarly , Haji Hur Parwar Khanam, Nurjahan's maternal aunt (and also her sister-in-law since she was married to her brother Ibrahim Khan Fath Jang) who lived upto the middle of Aurangzeb's reign , held Kol Kalali as *altamgha* .⁹ Jahanara Begam was the greatest beneficiary. She owned the villages of Achhol¹⁰ Farjahara¹¹ , Safapur¹² , Doraha¹³ , Medina¹⁴ and Panipat. From Panipat alone she was getting an income of one crore *dams* .¹⁵ Such was her luxury that while Doraha was given to her for the maintenance of her gardens , the revenue of Surat , one of the biggest commercial centres of the time , was
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8 Tuzuk, I,p.380 and n.1.He referred to it as Boda which seems to be a mistake . See Ain. ,I, p.294 for reference of Toda.

9 Ain., I,Tr.note , p.575 . *Altamgha* was a 'Grant in Seal',a special tenure introduced by Jahangir in which "the grant was to be made under a particular form of seal and was not to be altered or resumed so that by contrast with the other tenures of the period , it may be regarded as permanent , though, an absolute Emperor couldn't be prevented from annulling it " (Moreland , W.H. , The Agrarian System of Moslem India , pp.127,270) .

10 Lahori , I,Pt.II,p.51 ; Qazwini , III, fol.626 . The village is named as Shahabad by the former and Begamabad by the latter.

11 Lahori ,II , p.582.

12 Lahori ,I,Pt.II,p.27.

13 Rukkat , (Bilmoria) , p.77.

14 M.U. , II , Pt.II , p.701 and n.1.

15 Kambo , III , p.109.

granted to her to meet out her betel expenses.<sup>16</sup> In the later Mughal period, Qudsia Begam possessed full estate of her own including *jagirs* around Ujjain.<sup>17</sup>

Some of the Kings showed concern for the maintenance of their female subjects of all classes. During the time of Iltutmish, the widow of the *iqta* holders continued to retain the *iqtas* for their upkeep and when, at a later date, Balban confiscated many of them, he compensated those ladies by giving them necessary allowances for their living. During the time of Firoz Tughlaq, in case of separation, the wife of a respectable person was entitled to a maintenance allowance which was estimated according to the standard diet taken by that class.<sup>18</sup> During the Mughal period, because of the escheat system, all belongings of a deceased noble would automatically become the property of the state. But in practice, the Emperors ordered to leave behind a lot for the widows and children of such nobles.<sup>19</sup> For the needy Muslim women, the help rendered by the Kings like Firoz Shah Tughlaq and the royal ladies like Makhduma-i-Jahan, mother of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Maham Begam, Nurjahan, Mumtaz Mahal

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16 Kazim, pp.134-35; Manucci, I, pp.63,208.

17 Malik, Zahir-ud-din, The Reign of Muhammad Shah, pp. 294, 322. Hereafter cited as Muhammad Shah.

18 Ashraf, p.219, n.7 on the authority of "Fiqh-i-Firuz Shahi".

19 M.U., I, p.293 (Shah Jahan distributed Rs. 20 lac out of the wealth of deceased Asaf Khan among his sons and daughters). Hawkins, p.112; Tavernier, I, p.15. See also Raychaudhuri, Tapan, "The State and the Economy", ed. Raychaudhuri and Habib, p.183.

needs special mention.²⁰ Because of this, many of the destitute women could maintain themselves.

One noteworthy contribution of Mughal royalty was their patronage of the women who were without any means of livelihood. They gave them *suyurghal* grants or donations of land as assistance for their livelihood.²¹ Help in the form of *wazifa* (subsistence allowance) was given before the Mughals. About Sher Shah, Abbas Sarwani wrote :

He gave money in cash as pension ... to those of its residents who in matter of their requirements had been incapacitated to earn their livelihood with their own hand, such as the blind, the old and the infirm, the widow, crippled and the sick²²

The help in the form of *madad-i-maash* seemed to be an innovation of Mughals. Abul Fazl's classification of the persons being covered for this grant did not contain any

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20 For details see Chapter VI.

21 This was a charitable grant given to needy, learned, religious or destitute men and women and was given in the form of land or subsistence allowance. The latter, paid in cash was called *wazifa* and the lands bestowed were known as *milk* or *madad-i-maash* (*Ain.*, I, p.278). *Suyurghal* is a Turki word and is translated by Arabic word *madad-i-maash* or *madad-o-maash*. Smith, (p.148), however considered it Persian word. It means 'assistance of livelihood' and its equivalent is *milk* (property). It denoted lands given for benevolent purpose (*Ain.*, I, p.280). Badaoni called such grants as *aymah* and also used the term, at times, in the sense of *aymah-daran* i.e. holders of grant lands (Badaoni, II, pp.207, 261). See also Datta, K.K.(ed.), Some Mughal Farmans, Sanads, Parwanahs Etc., Introduction, pp. iii, iv).

22 Abbas, (Amb.), p.770.

separate category of women grantees. However, his narrations reveal that needy women were covered under one of the four specified categories with a preference and special privileges to the Irani and Turani women.<sup>23</sup> Yusuf Mirak mentioned about *Musammati* grants whereby all the recipients were women.<sup>24</sup>

These were hereditary grants and differed from the

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23 The grant holders were habitual of encroaching on other's lands . Akbar made a rule that in case of grantees holding more than 100 *bighas* , the excess of land above 100 *bighas* , which was not found specified in the *farmans* was reduced to 2/5th , 3/5th being confiscated by the state (Ain.,I,p. 279 ; Badaoni , II , pp.261,282). Mentioning about this rule, Abul Fazl wrote , "Irani and Turani women alone were excepted from this rule." The statement points at : (a) Turani and Irani women were definitely holding such grants. (b) This was a special privilege to these ladies . After all, they were foreign Muslims belonging to the ruling class and , hence , had a higher status in society as compared to the Hindustani Muslims. (c) Nonetheless , it didn't deny the women other than Irani and Turani origin the right of possession of such grants . This rule was applicable only to grantees having more than 100 *bighas* . Such big chunks of land only the women of Irani and Turani origin might be receiving and the rest of the lower strata Hindustani Muslim women having only smaller chunks . Might be , because of this that Abul Fazl incorporated the names of Irani and Turani women only while mentioning about this special privilege . The author,therefore , tends to differ from learned modern writers like Rekha Mishra, (p.136 n.7) and Rafat Bilgrami, " Women Grantees in the Mughal Empire " , QJPHS, Vol. XXXVI , July ,1988,Pt.III ,p.207 (hereafter cited as "Women Grantees") who tend to draw from this that only Irani and Turani women held these grants during Akbar's time.

24 Yusuf Mirak , p.158 . He listed two categories of grants, one held by men which was known as *Muzakkarati* and other held by women known as *Chakha-i-Musammati* .

jagirs which were conferred for specified period.²⁵ The women heirs were not only the co-sharers in such inheritance but their holdings also passed on to their heirs after their deaths . There is a *parwana* of the tenth year of the reign of Alamgir I (1667 A.D.) according to which 20 *bighas* of land was settled in Shaikh Bhikham as *madad-i-maash* by Jahangir . After his death , the land passed on to Shaikh Habiullah and Musammat Salima Khatun. When both of them died , the

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25 It appeared that during the time of Akbar and Jahangir , this inheritance was not well defined . As per a *farman* of renewal of the year 1575 A.D. , the *madad-i-maash* grant given originally in 1559 A.D. was taken away by the state after the death of the initial recipient . His heirs had to approach the Emperor afresh for its restoration which was done through this *farman* (Srivastava , K.P., Mughals Farmans , I,pp.5-6 ). Thereafter , during the period when Mr.Fathullah was the *Sadr* (1585-89 A.D.), another order was brought. As per this , if a co-sharer, wherein the shares were undefined, died , his share in such land was taken away by the state and was restored to his heirs only after they applied afresh (Ain. , I,p.280) . The first regulation allowing the heirs to inherit directly a part of such grants was heard of during the time of Shah Jahan when, as per the order of fifth year of his reign , all grants of 30 *bighas* or less were to be wholly distributed among heirs on the death of the grantees . Out of grants larger than that , half was to be distributed among the heirs and the other half was resumed back by the state unless the heirs , by presenting themselves before the court , obtained *sanads* for the same too . A new order was brought by him on his eighteenth year vide which it was propounded that only in case of the grant documents containing the word " with his offspring " after the name of the grantee that half of it was to be allowed to the heirs . Otherwise , the whole of the grant was escheated. Aurangzeb lifted this condition and in his third year , practically brought back the condition to that of Shah Jahan's order of fifth year with the difference that the limit of whole grant passing in inheritance was brought down from 30 to 20 *bighas* above which half was resumed as before unless the heirs could manage this half too from the court (Habib , Agrarian System ,pp.305-06 ; Shaikh Abdur Rashid, "Suyurghal Lands Under the Mughals", ed. H.R. Gupta, Essays presented to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, pp.313-22) .

land was given to their heirs Inayatullah and Musammat Zainab.<sup>26</sup> In another *parwana* of the year 1676 A.D. the claim of Sayyid Muhammad as heir of Bibi Shaha over the *madad-i-maash* land possessed by her during her life was confirmed.<sup>27</sup>

No uniform set of rules prevailed for the division among the heirs of the grantees. Usually, the heirs abided by the Muslim law of inheritance.<sup>28</sup> Aurangzeb, for the first time, laid down code of inheritance for *madad-i-maash* lands in 1690 A.D.. The Emperor declared such lands as *ariyat* (given on loan). He overlooked *Shariat* rules with regard to them: (a) If a married daughter was a co-sharer with a son in the grant of their deceased father and she had property from her husband's side also, then, she was debarred from inheritance. If the said daughter was a widow without any source of income and there were other female heirs also, then the son was responsible for their maintenance out of the income of the grant land. (b) If a daughter was the only child of the deceased and there were other agnatic heirs also, the daughter's succession to the whole grant was to be recognized in elimination of other heirs. (c) If a grantee died childless, it was wife's privilege to enjoy the grant during her life

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26 Datta (ed.), Pw. no.503, pp.110-11.

27 Oriental Records, III, D. no. 1201, pp.16-17, also D.no. 1202, pp.2-3; II, D.nos.44, 55, pp. 44-45, 88-90; I, D.no. 44, pp.19-21.

28 Bilgrami, "Women Grantees", p.210 (mentioned about two *farmans* or the time of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb respectively whereby the property division had been made as per *Shariat*).

time and only after her death would it pass on to the heirs of her husband . In case there were no surviving relations of the husband , then it would pass on to the relatives of the wife. (d) If a mother , grandmother or some female Qoranic heirs survived the grantee , whose maintenance was a charge on him , then the property was to pass on to them.

A plain reading of these rules shows that these regulations were twisted , at times in favour of [(b) and (c) above] and at times against [(a) above] the ladies concerned . The main consideration seemed to be the extent of need of the different female heirs of the grantee.²⁹ Irrespective of these set rules , in the later Mughal period , they were not always followed.³⁰

The granting of such lands to the needy women , both in individual and joint names , continued throughout the Mughal period . Under Jahangir , the policy was quite liberal because of the influence of Nurjahan . It was ordained that all such land grants to the ladies should be made at the orders of Nurjahan . Some available *farmans* of her time , where the grantees were ladies , do contain her reference indicating

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29 Mughal Farmans , I, Sr.no.XLIII , pp.70-71.

30 Oriental Records , I, D.no.44, p.19 (where Qazi Abdur Razzaq's only surviving heir was a daughter named Bakhi and the latter's only surviving heir , again , was a daughter named Man Bai. But Malik Bhikari , a nephew of Abdur Razzaq was considered a co-sharer with Man Bai being an agnatic heir and thus point (b) of Alamgir's rules , as discussed above , got ignored) .

thereby that the lands were granted at her behest.<sup>31</sup> Jahangir created a new post of *Sadr-un-nisa* to deal exclusively with the matters of land grants of ladies.<sup>32</sup> Only ladies could hold this post.<sup>33</sup> It was expected that the department of *Sadr* (dealing with religious and charity matters) would hold good all grants made under her signatures. Out of the documents available, only a few bear the seal of *Sadr-un-nisa*.<sup>34</sup>

There are many grant documents available which stand testimony to the generous grant of lands to destitute ladies during Jahangir's time. In 1616 A.D., *Musammat Bibi Sandal* and others were given 100 *bighas* of land as *madad-i-maash* which was renewed in 1616 A.D..<sup>35</sup> In the same year,

31 Mughal Farmans, I, Sr.nos.XV, XVI, XVIII, XIX, pp.24-26, 28-31. She has been referred to as *Nawab Mahd Uliya* in all these documents.

32 Blochmann, (Ain., I, p.574), named this post as *sadr-i-anas* while Rafat Bilgrami, ("Women Grantees", p.207), called it *Sadr-i-inath*. In M.U., Dilarani has been referred to as *Sadr-i-Anath* (II, Pt.II, pp.1077-78) while Sati-un-nisa and Fatima Begam (of the time of Aurangzeb) as *Sadr-un-nisa* (I, pp.295,355). Sarkar named it as *Sadr* or 'Superintendent of the harem' (Sarkar, Studies, p.24).

33 Haji Kuka was the first incumbent of this post. Then came Dilarani, Nurjahan's favourite servant followed by Sati-un-nisa (Muhammad Hadi, p.398; Intikhab-i-Jahangir Shahi, p.447; M.U., I, pp.260-61, also II, Pt.II, pp.1077-78).

34 Oriental Records, II, D.no.161, p.34 (bore seal of Haji Kuka); Mughal Farmans, I, Sr.nos.XV-XIX, pp.24-31 (issued through the *risala* of Haji Kuka); Farman-i-Salatin, D.31 (it referred to at its back *Ismat Wa Iffat Dastgah Haji Kuka*. Perhaps it was a recommendation of this lady because of which a grant of 30 *bighas* was made to Adar Banu.

35 Oriental Records, II, D.nos.161,162, pp.34-35; also D.no. 163, pp. 33-34 for another such grant.

Musammat Zohra and others were bestowed with 200 *bighas* of such grants.<sup>36</sup> By an another *farman* in the same year, eight needy ladies of different families were jointly bestowed with 200 *bighas* of land , each having her specified share in the same .<sup>37</sup> Shah Jahan followed the policy of Jahangir . In 1642 A.D. , 100 *bighas* of arable land was granted to Musammat Bibi Suhbat and others as *madad-i-maash* .<sup>38</sup> There is another *parwana* of 1643 A.D. vide which 100 *bighas* of rent-free land worth cultivation in village Buhauddin Chak in *pargana* Chausa was given to Musammat Bibi Aulia.<sup>39</sup> We have still another document according to which 100 *bighas* of land , granted to Bibi Jiu and others , was consolidated in 1653 A.D..<sup>40</sup> Aurangzeb continued bestowing such grants . In the year 1677 A.D., he gave 100 *bighas* of cultivable land to Musammat Zahra and others , each with a specified share.<sup>41</sup> Some other documents testify that 200 *bighas* of rent free land, granted to Bibi Niamat and others, were brought under consolidation.<sup>42</sup> And there are many more such

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36 Oriental Records , I,D.no.750 , p.86.

37 Mughal Farmans , I,Sr.no.XIX, pp.30-31 . See also Sr.no.XV-XVIII, pp.24-29 for other grants.

38 Oriental Records , II , D.no.156 , p.59, also D.nos. 158, 159 , 160 , pp.36-38 for other examples.

39 Datta (ed.), Sr.no.289 , p.70.

40 Oriental Records , III ,D.no.874, p.26 , also I,D.no.759, p.80 (for grant of 210 *bighas* of such land to Mst. Bibi Saha and others in *Pargana* Hisampur, *sarkar* Bahraich).

41 Mughal Farmans , I, Sr.no.XL, pp.66-67.

42 Oriental Records , III, D.no.881 , pp.28-29.

documents.43

During the later Mughal period , many such grants were conferred upon needy women . Bahadur Shah I , during his second year of reign (1708 A.D.) granted village Sultan in *pargana* Ander in the name of Musammat Fatima and others , heirs of Shaikh Abdul Hamid and got it released in the same year. 44 Farrukhsiyar released 200 *bighas* of rent free land to Bibi Aulia and 220 *bighas* of such land to Musammat Bibi Sahaba in the year 1716 A.D. and 1718 A.D. respectively.⁴⁵ Similarly , he granted 85 *bighas* at Kol to one Aisha and another 2 *bighas* at Jalali to Shah Bibi.⁴⁶ In the year 1729 A.D. Muhammad Shah bestowed grant of village Chak Wali as *madad-i-maash* on Musammat Hafiza and her sons.⁴⁷ We have documents at hand whereby Shah Alam II gave grant of village Bhatoria in *sarkar* Purnea to Musammat Peari Bai and 201 *bighas* of rent-free cultivable land in village Kojri in the district of Purnea to

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43 Oriental Records ,II,D.no. 165, p.46 ( for giving 250 *bighas* of land in *pargana* Haveli of *sarkar* Bahraich to Mst. Hamirah and others as *madad-i-maash* ); "Aligarh Farmans" ( *Farmans* preserved in AMU , Aligarh), nos. 212,213 & 220 ( for grant of 70 *bighas* of rent free land at Kol to Mst. Khatoon and 45 *biswas* of land at the same place to Mst. Maham) ; Datta, (ed.) , Sr.nos.77,79,82,90,373, pp.17,18,,19,85 ( for grant of 100 , 200,150, 300 , 120 *bighas* of land worth cultivation to Msts. Banga Jani , Saleha , Aesha , Fatima and Zainab etc. resp.).

44 Datta (ed.),Sr.no.82 , p.34.

45 ibid., Sr.nos.311 , 310 , pp.73-74 resp. ;see also Sr.no.84, p.18.

46 "Aligarh Farmans" , nos.195, 196 , also Fr.nos.176, 198, 201, 205,207,209,216,221,223-225, 238 , 246 ,255 in this regard.

47 Datta (ed.),Sr.no. 484,p.107 ; also Sr.no.246, p.63.

the widow of Muhammad Masoom. 48

It was observed that at times, instead of land , a portion of the land-revenue of a particular piece of land was bestowed as grant . We have two documents of the third year of the reign of Alamgir II whereby grant of 27,000 *dams* each were made from *parganas* of Nizamuddinpur and Gadh Chaund in exchange of daily allowances to Musammats Khair-un-nisa and Amin-ul-Fatima as *madad-i-maash* .<sup>49</sup> There are two other documents of the sixth year of his reign which stipulated the release of the grant of 1,30,490 *dams* in *pargana* Kasmar as gift to Saiyada Karim-un-nisa and 37,000 *dams* from *pargana* Saraisa , *sarkar* Hajipur , *suba* Bihar to Musammat Mehr-un-nisa.<sup>50</sup>

Many release orders were issued by these Emperors from time to time . Whenever there was delay in implementation of their *farmans* making such grants , *parwanas* followed for enforcing them . A study of the available documents revealed that while some of them were issued soon after the issue of the *farman* , there were others which were released after years of gap between them and in some other cases, the *farman* was issued by one Emperor and release order was passed by another . There is *parwana* dated January 10 , 1643 A.D. of Shah Jahan's reign for the release of 100 *bighas* of rent-free cultivable land in village Bahuddin Chak to Musammat Bibi

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48 Datta (ed.) , Sr.nos.345 , 343 , pp.79-80 resp..

49 Ibid. , Sr.nos. 545,546 , pp.118-19.

50 Ibid. , Sr.nos. 126 , 424 , pp.42,95.

Aulia in accordance with the *farman* issued three years earlier, in 1640 A.D..⁵¹ Another *parwana* of the twentieth year of Aurangzeb's reign (July 13 , 1677 A.D.) was for the release of 40 *bighas* of rent-free land to Noor Bibi in accordance with the *farman* issued twelve years earlier in the eighth year of the Emperor's reign.⁵² For the *farman* of Alamgir II for grant of 27,000 *dams* each in the names of Khair-un-nisa and Amin-ul-Fatima , the release orders were passed by Emperor Shah Alam II in 1765 A.D..⁵³

The women grantees were not free from such corrupt practices as were generally associated with men grantees , lamented Abul Fazl.⁵⁴ The practice of annual verification and scrutiny were followed when the land grant of a deceased was to pass on to his / her successors . The grant was confirmed or renewed accordingly.⁵⁵ In case of any disorder , it was reduced

51 Datta (ed.),Sr.no.289 , p.70.

52 Ibid., Sr.no.77, p.33.

53 Ibid., Sr.no.548 , p.119. For other release orders, see Sr.nos.296 , 328 , pp.71,76.

54 They not only encroached upon the neighbouring lands but also changed their own lands , at times , with some more fertile piece in some other area. For details see Ain. , I, pp.279-80 and Tr. note , pp.281-82; Badaoni , II, pp.261, 282,379.

55 Mughal Farmans , I, Sr.no.XXX , pp.48-49 ; Datta (ed.), Sr.nos. 102 , 105 , pp.37,110 ;"Firangi Mahal Documents", nos. 7,5,16,18 (for examples of confirmation of grants of women) . See also Mughal Farmans , I,Sr.no. XXXVIII , pp.62-63 ; Datta (ed.), Sr.nos.241,246-248 ,496,pp.62,63, 109 ; Oriental Records , II ,D.no.166,169 , pp.47,41-42 resp. (for cases or renewal of grants of women).

or confiscated . Aurangzeb reduced ,at his own will , a grant from 150 to 100 *bighas* of Musammât Shahi and six other ladies,at the time of its renewal in 1666 A.D. and also revised the share of each co-sharer accordingly.⁵⁶ Sometimes , on an application , the old grants merged with the *khalsa* land, were again revived in favour of the ladies after proper verification.⁵⁷

The verification required personal presence of the grantee. During the reign of Jahangir , exemption from verification and personal presence were made.⁵⁸ Yusuf Mirak wrote that some *zamindars* of Sind acquired *madad-i-maash* land by buying *musammâti farmans* .⁵⁹ later on,the scrutiny of all such cases, including those of women , became more and more strict . By the time of Aurangzeb , it was only after an on-the-spot enquiry or / and the production of any reliable evidence that a renewal and confirmation of a previous grant and the exemption from annual verification was given to women grantees . They had to prove that they had no means of

56 Mughal Farmans , I,Sr.no. XXVIII , pp.62-63. See also Oriental Records, III , D.no.789,p.14 (for reduction of grant of Jauhar Jahan from 200 to 190 *bighas* at renewal by Shah Jahan) .

57 Datta (ed.), Sr.nos.81(1631 A.D.), 399 (1661 A.D.) , 379 (1718 A.D.), pp.17-18 , 399 ,379 resp..

58 Mughal Farmans , I,nos.XV, XVI, XVIII, XIX , pp.24-26 , 28-29.

59 Yusuf Mirak , p.191.See also Lahori , II, pp.365-66 (for people getting grants without being presented) and pp.165-66 (showing how one of the complaints against Musawi Khan , one of the *Sadrs* of the time of Jahangir, was that he made grants without bringing the grantee before the Emperor's presence) . It is because of this that he was removed from office during the time of Shah Jahan (M.U..II , Pt.I, p.327).

livelihood . For instance , Musammats Bibi Hafiza and others , heirs of late Muhammad Omar and others , produced not only the reliable witnesses but an on-the-spot enquiry was also made for ascertaining their genuineness and financial conditions before their application for renewal of previous grant of 420 *bighas* of land was accepted in 1695 A.D..⁶⁰ Bibi Jan and others , the heirs of Sayyid Ahmad, produced not only reliable witnesses but also a certificate from the previous *Sadr* to the effect that they had no means of livelihood and that they were already in possession of the land . It was only after this that the renewal of this grant of 220 *bighas* of land was granted to the applicants.⁶¹

At times , personal presence of women grantees was also pressed upon . However, for old ladies and those in *pardah*, representation through *vakil* was allowed . There is an interesting case in this regard. Musammats Kasban , Rabiah and Khayrun had received 100 *bighas* of land in *pargana* Sahali from Jahangir . They did not come personally to the court for the confirmation in 1651 A.D. (Document 7) . But , when they required such confirmation again just three years later (Document 5) and again during third year of Alamgir's reign , they had to personally present themselves in the court (Document 16) . Twenty years later , during twenty-third year of Alamgir's reign, they were too old to be personally present. Hence a *vakil* was sent on their behalf for such verification

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 60 Oriental Records , II, D.no.166, p.47.

61 Oriental Records, II,D.no.169, pp.41-42 ; also III , D.nos.1228,815-1, 2, 816-1, 2, pp.4-5 , 19-20.

(Document 18).<sup>62</sup>

*Madad-i-maash* grants were non-proprietary in nature since they could not be sold or transferred except through inheritance. There is a judgement to that effect of the time of Aurangzeb (1666 A.D.). The hereditary share of Bibi Lajyat out of the *madad-i-maash* grant of her father Sayyid Muhammad was usurped by one Sayyid Usman on the plea that the former had transferred the ownership of the land to him alongwith other property . On this , the order was issued that since such grant was not alienable , the land had to be restored to Bibi lajyat.<sup>63</sup> But , before the passing of the judgement, such lands were subjected to partition and transfer . In a partition deed dated 1629 A.D. , Sayyid Afzal divided his *madad-i-maash* land measuring 75 *bighas* in five equal parts , two portions , out of which were given to Musammat Ghammu and one portion jointly to Bibi Man and Bibi Shah.<sup>64</sup> In another deed of the year 1679 A.D., 115 *bighas* of rent free land of Sayyid Afzal was divided into five equal parts out of which one portion was transferred jointly to Bibi Man and Bibi Khumar and two portions to Bibi Chaheti.<sup>65</sup> In the eighteenth century, due to the weakening of the Mughal empire , the legal position of the

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62 "Firangi Mahal Documents" , nos. 7,5,16,18. The documents were calendared by Iqbal Husain , PIHC , Aligarh , 1975 (Bilgrami, "Women Grantee" , p.210) . Also see Oriental Records , III , D.nos. 815-1, 2, 1189, pp.19, 69 (for representation through *vakil*) .

63 Oriental Records , III, D.no.1189,p.69.

64 Ibid., D.no.895 , p.52.

65 Ibid., D.no.1210, p.54.

un-alienability could not be enforced and such grants came to be freely sold.⁶⁶

Apparently , such legal security of maintenance created an impression that Muslim women were privileged . Later historical developments reveal as to how heavily they had to pay for such a privilege . Since a man was considered superior to a woman because he provided for the latter's necessities of life , an element of subordination among women was evident.

The *madad-i-maash* grants brought only some relief to a few destitute women of the lower strata . Because of the prevalent corruption and the checks on their free movements , they had to face many odds. For instance , it was stipulated with regard to these grants that half should be comprised of tilled land and the other half of cultivable land. But , this rule was rarely followed , particularly with regard to women. In the beginning , major portion (3/4th) of the grants comprised of fallow lands.⁶⁷ But in the later period , most of the grants made to them comprised of barren lands .⁶⁸ These lands were

66 Oriental Records , II, D.nos.457, 439 , pp.1-3 (showing exchange of *zamindari* rights in a plot of land received as *madad-i-maash* for a residential plot . Though no lady was involved in these cases , but they showed that such lands were alienated in later period . These documents pertain to 1763-64 A.D.). See also Alam, Muzaffar , The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India; Awadh and the Punjab, p.223 and nn.62-65.

67 Oriental Records , II , D.nos.161 , 162, pp.34-35 ; Mughal Farmans , I,nos.XV,XVI, XVIII, pp.24,25, 28. All these documents pertain to Jahangir's time.

68 Ibid., D.no.163 , p.33(Jahangir's time) ; D.nos.158-160, 156 ,pp.36-38,59 (Shah Jahan's time) ; Datta (ed.), Sr.nos.77,79,98 ,296, pp.17,19,71 (Aurangzeb's time) , Sr.no.246, p.63 (Muhammad Shah's time) .

exempted from government demands and taxes , yet the *zamindars* and *jagirdars* did not lag behind in extracting money from them in different forms,like charging of *muqarrari* and land revenue, under threat.⁶⁹ Yusuf Mirak , who himself belonged to the *aymah* (grantee) class had narrated some cases wherein such grantee women sought redress from the appropriate authorities . He reported the extortion of money by the revenue officials from the *madad-i-maash* lands in Sind. When the matter was brought to the notice of Jahangir , due confirmation of their lands was granted to the complainants.⁷⁰ Similarly , during the Governorship of Ahmad Beg Khan in Sind, his brother Mirza Yusuf fixed exorbitant land-revenue on all the *Musammati* as also on some of the *Muzakkarati* grants. Once he did not give any respite even at the time of natural calamity during the *rabi* crop . The matter was reported to Shah Jahan . On his orders , due consideration was shown and whatever was collected during the *rabi* crop was returned.⁷¹ Such cases were only a few as it was difficult for women to visit the court for lodging complaints.

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 69 Yusuf Mirak , p.146 (for charging money in the form of land revenue) ; Oriental Records , I,D.no. 5,pp.34-35; 11,pp. 35-36 (for charging a fixed amount known as *muqarrari-i-aymah* . This document mentioned about the charge of 1/2 rupee per *bigha* from one Begam Birlas on her land measuring 476 *bighas* and one *biswa*. This *muqarrari* was later on abolished by Shah Jahan in two instalments) ; Datta (ed.), Sr.no. 78 , p.17 ( for the payment of *muqarrari* by one Mst. Sajidah having land grant of 250 *bighas* ) .

70 Yusuf Mirak ,pp.146-47 ; also Datta (ed.), Sr.no.78,p.17 (Mst. Sajidah as referred to in preceding f.n. could get rid of forced *muqarrari* only after getting written exemption from Alamgir I,in 1695 A.D.) .

71 Yusuf Mirak , pp.158-61.

## MAHR AS ECONOMIC RIGHT

In Islam , marriage was a contract and the *mahr* was the price of it and hence a pre-requisite before the consent of the girl was taken for entering into a wedlock . If the husband died without paying it then , legally, the wife's claim took precedence over his other heirs.<sup>72</sup> Its payment might, however, be prompt or deferred for a later date . In India , it was mostly the deferred promise which met the condition of law of Muslim marriages , though instances of prompt payment of *mahr* were also available.<sup>73</sup> Observing about Mohammadans of Cambay , Barbosa wrote , "They can divorce themselves whenever they wish on paying to the wife certain moneys which they promise her at the time of marriage,if they changed their minds after a certain time."<sup>74</sup> Ibn Batuta confessed that while returning from the Maldive Islands , he had to pay the full amount of the *mahr* to his Maldivian wives when he had to divorce them as was the prevailing custom of the area.<sup>75</sup>

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72 M.M.Siddiqi , op.cit., p.48.

73 Ibn Batuta ,pp.81-82 (prompt payment of *mahr* in the marriage of two sons of Khudavandzada (he accompanied Ibn Batuta) to the two daughters of the *Wazir* Khwaja Jahan); pp.211, xxvi (for prompt *mahr* in Ibn Batuta's own marriages) ; GHN, p.151 (wherein she reported that when Humayun got married to Hamida Banu , he "gave the mir two laks of ready money for the dower". Mir was Mir Abul-baqa who conducted the marriage ceremonies); Price, p.46 (for the description of Jahangir-Nurjahan marriage and the dower of Rs.7.2 crore. He wrote that eight lac *asharfis* of five *methkals* , which sum Nurjahan "requested as indispensable for the purpose" and hence , was given without any grumblng).

74 Barbosa , I,p.121.

75 Ibn Batuta , p.214.

Manucci wrote , "He (*mulla*) makes them husband and wife on condition that if there is any divorce the bridegroom will have to pay the bride so many millions."⁷⁶ All these statements refer to the deferred *mahr* only . In such *mahr* , the point that remained to be seen was whether anything substantial passed to the lady or not, in the event of divorce or death of the husband . Ibn Batuta did pay this price. There are a few documents of the Mughal period wherein the widows were granted a share in family properties and holdings in lieu of their *mahr* deferred partly or fully . According to a *tamluk-nama* (deed of transfer) of 1625 A.D., Musammat Bibi Sappo had a share in a plot of land in village Sama-ud-Dinpura which she inherited from her husband as part of the dower debt.⁷⁷ In another case even the *zamindaris* (villages) were received by the women in payment of the *mahr* .⁷⁸ In view of these examples, Rafat Bilgrami dismissed the erstwhile belief that *mahr* was mere "matrimonial ritual" and a symbol of "bridegroom's status " and not an amount which anybody expected to be paid.⁷⁹

A scrutiny of the cases quoted by Bilgrami reveals that these were the cases of the widows who seemed to have been given share in property out of sympathy . They have not

76 Manucci , III , p.144.

77 Oriental Records , II,D.no.326 , p.11.

78 "Shamsabad and Bilhaur Documents" , p.70.

79 Bilgrami , Rafat , "Property Rights of Muslim Women in Mughal India", PIHC , 48th session , Goa , 1987 , pp.261-70 . For erstwhile belief see Hughes , p.91 ; Kozlowski, Gregory C., "Muslim Women and the Control of Property in Northern India", IESHR, 24,2 (New Delhi, 1987), pp.163-64.

elaborated the method of evaluating and working the family property and the share of women in this. If she happened to be a joint holder of the family property alongwith other members of the family , her individual rights were subjected to so many restrictions. In such a case , she did not have any right to alienate her share separately . Management of the joint property always remained with the men-folk who took all decisions about it including that of selling it. Regarding *mahr* on divorce , it appears to have been honoured more in breach than following . The contemporary European travellers like Barbosa and Manucci have not discussed any instance of dower having been paid to any lady at the time of divorce or otherwise . Pelsaert has given a full description of the ceremonies of a Muslim marriage , but he has not mentioned *mahr* at all. According to him : "The ceremony consists merely in the registration in the *qazi* book , showing that such and such a person has acknowledged taking such and such a woman as his wife."⁸⁰ The conspicuous absence of the mention of *mahr* of Lad Malika on her marriage with Sher Shah Suri by a Muslim author like Abbas Sarwani, particularly when he has given great details of her presents to him , is not without significance.⁸¹

In the beginning of medieval period , the amount of dower fixed was small and so , it was easy to pay . But with the passage of time , the amount of dower increased beyond the
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80 Pelsaert , p.83.

81 Abbas , (Amb.) , pp.205-06.

paying capacity of the husband.<sup>82</sup> Consequently , high amounts of *mahr* announced at the time of marriages became mere promises. Abul Fazl has written, "His majesty disapproves of high dowries ; for as they are rarely ever paid , they are mere sham ;but he admits that the fixing of high dowries is a preventive against rash divorces." <sup>83</sup>

The royalty and nobility did not pay much attention to the directives of the Qoran and broke the tenets in different matters including *mahr* and marriage rules. The Qoran gave power to the woman to forgo her *mahr* and this was considered a very pious act. In the face of such provisions , it was not difficult for authoritative husbands to get a remittance of the *mahr* amount from their voiceless and suppressed wives . Under such circumstances , the best course for the ladies was not to put forth their claim of *mahr* . Doing so , they not only protected their maintenance by their husbands but also became pious in the eyes of the religion . There was yet another method to get rid of the wives and still avoid the payment of *mahr* . A man could torture his wife to such an extent that the latter would be forced to initiate a divorce even at the cost of losing her right of *mahr* .<sup>84</sup> The promise

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 82 Hodivala , S.H., "The Dirham-i-Sharai", JASB , New Series, Vol.XIII, 1917, pp.47-48 (for abortive efforts of Aurangzeb to abolish the demand and payment of extravagant sums as dower which as per him, had become customary in those days. But he gave no example of *mahr* actually paid to any lady).

83 Ain. , I,p.288.

84 The practice is prevalent even in the modern times . See Fyzee, pp.335-36; ICSSR , Status of Women in India,p.15. Refer also supra , discussion on divorce , Chap.II.

of high marriage portion , therefore , could only give some mental solace to the ladies .

The *mahr* varied from lady to lady depending on latter's social worth . For instance , while Jahanzib Banu , daughter of Dara and a pet of Jahanara was promised a marriage portion of six lac rupees while marrying prince Azam , Zubdat-un-nisa , Aurangzeb's daughter, got it at four lac rupees while marrying Sipihr Shukoh, Dara's son. Shahr Banu , the princess of Bijapur but a war captive , was promised only five hundred *dirhams* while marrying prince Azam.⁸⁵

Thus *mahr* , which was supposed to be paid to the women , in prompt and deferred way,lost its practical significance and it failed to bring the desired financial support to women and deterrence to men against rash divorces.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Muslim women enjoyed definite inheritance rights. The Qoranic rules of property-division were very complex. It recognized several classes of heirs and claims of some of them had a priority even to the total exclusion of others . These

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85 M.A., (Tr.), pp.49,77,129. See also pp.73,103 (for marriage portion of Rs. five lac and two lac at the time of Salima Banu Begam marrying prince Muhammad Akbar and Khwaja Yaqub marrying daughter of Murad Bakhsh resp.) . Also Lahori , II, p.305 ( for *mahr* of Rs. one lac for Sakina Banu while marrying prince Murad) ; Saksena , p.312 (for *mahr* amounts of Rs. five lac and four lac for the brides of Dara and Shuja resp.) ; Irvine, I,p.304 (*mahr* of one lac gold coins fixed for marriage of Ajit Singh's daughter with Farrukhsiyar. Shahnama,(p.6 and n.21) , however , mentioned this figure at Rs.50 crore ) ; Ibid. ,II, p.124 (for *mahr* of Rs. 50 lac fixed for marriage of Farrukhsiyar's daughter with Emperor Muhammad Shah in 1721 A.D.) ; Ishwar Dass , p.179 (for *mahr* of Rs. two lac for Sahia at the time of her marriage with prince Bidar Bakht).

rights came into force only after the death of the person whose property was to be divided and not before that. It was in their position as wife of the man or mother or daughter of the deceased person that, theoretically, women could never be excluded from inheritance. A number of instances revealed that women, both of upper and middle classes, inherited property in the form of houses, lands, *zamindaris*. During the time of Firoz Shah Tughlaq, the practice was that when an *amir* died, his position was taken by his son, son-in-law, slaves and near relations in the order of succession and when none of them existed, only then his wife was taken as his successor. She was not given the post but only the grants attached to the post.<sup>86</sup> It has also been reported by the author of Mirat-i-Sikanderi that Sultan Mahmud Begrah of Gujarat had ordained that when any of his *amirs* or soldiers died fighting or otherwise, then his *jagir* should be bequeathed to his son and in case he had no son, then half of it should go to his daughter and in case he had no daughter also, then it should be distributed among his relatives. It is interesting to note that once, when a person pointed out about the son of an *amir* not being worthy of holding a *jagir*, the Sultan retorted that the *jagir* would make him worthy of that.<sup>87</sup> During the reign of Sultan Muzaffar II of Gujarat (1511-26 A.D.), the Qoranic principles of inheritance were reported to be followed regarding *aima* grants and a woman got half the share of that of a man.<sup>88</sup>

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86 Futuhāt, (Text), rules 25, 26, p.18; Afif, (Text), pp.96-97.
87 Sikander, pp.301-02.
88 Ibid., p.375-76. These grants were given to men of piety and learning.

During the Mughal period , women inherited a share in the family property or in the property of the husband . From some of the documents at hand , it has been brought out that in some communities and families of the *suba* of Awadh , such inheritance by women was a set practice . But , it is not clear from these documents whether the women received the legal share or not.⁸⁹ The will of Hamida Banu , mother of Akbar, stipulated that her large treasure should be divided among her male descendants.⁹⁰ Similarly, after the death of Mumtaz Mahal, half of the property left by her comprising more than a crore of rupees was inherited by Begam Sahib (Jahanara) and the other half was divided among her other children including daughters.⁹¹

Shariat law of inheritance was not followed while determining women's share . It was subjected to adjustments because of the personal influence of the ladies,as happened in

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89 Oriental Records , II , D.nos.325,366,415, 459,471 , pp.75,79, 80, 88, 84, 82, 15 resp. (showing daughters of Sandnagar family of *Qasba* of Sandila inheriting their share . Their daughters-in-law were also given a share in the property of their deceased husbands) ; "Bilgram Documents", nos. 46,78 ( showing recognition to women's property rights in Sayyid family of *Qasba* of Bilgram. As per D.no.46 , the wife inherited land from her husband. These documents pertain to the years 1734 and 1732 A.D. resp. ; "Sharaif-i-Usmani Documents" , nos. 157-159 ( showing Shaikh families of *Qasba* of Bilgram recognizing women's property rights) ; Oriental Records, III ,D.no. 1241 , p.55 ( for wife inheriting from her husband ) , also II , D.nos. 319 , 322, 429, 467, 460, 408, pp.60,61, 62, 65, 69, 73 resp.( for other references in this regard) .

90 V.A. Smith, pp.229-30.

91 M.U. , I,p.295.

the case of Jahanara, or because of the local customs. However, the Monarch had the over-riding power. He had unlimited authority to take away any property and to distribute it in any way he liked. There was, for instance, a noble named Mian Muhammad, son of the sister of Sultan Bahlol, who held *jagirs* under Bahlol, Sikander and Ibrahim Lodi and amassed great wealth. He had a daughter, Fath Malika besides a son named Mian Niamu from a slave girl whom he had acknowledged as his son. When he died during the reign of Ibrahim Lodi, the Sultan ignored the inheritance of his son and daughter. After taking possession of his resources he declared Shaikh Mustafa, husband of Fath Malika, as his successor and bestowed majority of his property on him, except some *parganas* which were given as *jagir* to Niamu.<sup>92</sup> Though, indirectly, majority of the wealth came to the possession of Fath Malika, daughter of the deceased, but the Sultan did not allow it to happen in natural course according to *Shariat* law. Similarly, after the death of Itimad-ud-daulah, his daughter Nurjahan was given all his property and establishments inspite of her having other brothers and sisters.<sup>93</sup> Muslim women often did not receive their share unless there were no close male relatives or the

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92 Abbas, (Amb.), pp.250-51.

93 Tuzuk, II, p.228; also Ain., I, Tr.note, p.576 (for pedigree table of Itimad-ud-daulah).

parents were very wealthy.⁹⁴ They were not in a position to assert for their rights also. They could not afford to affront their fathers or brothers on whom they depended for their maintenance in the event of their widowhood or divorce.

There have been some cases where women moved to the court for their property rights . In one case , Musammat Banu, wife of Jahan and also of Fattu, filed a suit against Abdul Halim Chaudhary in 1656 A.D. for appropriating her *sattari* (*zamindari*) dues from village Karna Chaura which she had inherited from her husbands. The *Qazi* , however , decided the matter against her on the evidence that her husbands had relinquished their rights on the property in favour of Chaudhary during their life time. ⁹⁵ In another case , a widow Musammat Maham filed a petition against her step-son Buddan from another wife in 1666 A.D. for not releasing half share in her husband's property which the latter had given to her during

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94 Fyzee , pp.335-36; Bevan , Jones, pp.242-44; Eglar , Z., A Punjabi Village in Pakistan, pp.45,186-99. See also Levy, (op.cit., pp.245-46), wherein he wrote , "In most lands of Islam , it is the exception rather than the rule for daughters to inherit , inspite of Koranic prescription . Accounts of the customary laws prevalent amongst the communities of... Muslim India show that where there are sons or sons' sons, female children and often both parents too , are excluded from succession to property, particularly if it consists of land or other immovable possessions."

95 Oriental Records , II, D.no.359 , pp.15-16 , also I,D.no.44 , pp.14-21 and II , pp.88-89 for other reference ; "Shamsabad and Bilhaur Documents" , p.47 ; "Bilgram Documents" , nos. 1,42,49.

his life time . The matter was decided in favour of the lady.<sup>96</sup> But such instances were only a few. In most of the cases , an illiterate *pardah-nashin* Muslim woman could hardly take to such a recourse . Some times , exploiting the weakness of sisters , the brothers appropriated more productive parts of land for themselves leaving the less fertile portion for them.<sup>97</sup> In view of such instances , Orme observed :

No property land admits of disputes concerning them. The slavery to which the rights of parent and husband subjects the female ... abolishes at once all suits of dowries, divorce, jointures and settlements ....<sup>98</sup>

Notwithstanding the above , the women did enjoy full ownership rights which entailed independent holding of the property, its control and management and the right to alienate it. They held properties independent of all males including their husbands.<sup>99</sup> Besides, they were also found their

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96 Oriental Records , I,D.no. 47,p.3 and II , pp.17-18.

97 "Shamsabad and Bilhaur Documents",D.no.48, p.63.

98 Orme , p.281. See also Suri , Pushpa , Social Conditions in Eighteenth Century Northern India , p.237.

99 Oriental Records ,III, D.no.1211,p.65 (for Sharifa Banu and Zahida Banu holding village Diwanpur as *Jagir* in lieu of their salaries in 1679 A.D.; also "Bilgram Documents", nos.31, 34.

properties through bequeathal,¹⁰⁰ gift,¹⁰¹ mortgage¹⁰² and transfer.¹⁰³ There were numerous cases of sale of *zamindari* and land owned by a lady individually or jointly with other co-owners. Musammat Shaubha Nau, for instance, sold her land comprising of one third of village Debidaspur in 1681 A.D..¹⁰⁴

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- 100 "Bilgram Documents", nos. 37, 77 (showing a family of Bilgram bestowing its entire property. Women were also co-sharers in this, also no. 44 (for bequeathal of property by a lady on her grand son); "Shamsabad and Bilhaur Documents", no. 39, p. 54 (showing the widow of Nawab Rashid Khan bequeathing whole or her property during Aurangzeb's time).
- 101 "Bilgram Documents", n. 42 (for gift of family land, in which women also were co-sharers, to Abdul Wahab during Akbar's time); Oriental Records, III, D. no. 1241, p. 55 (for gift of village Antura Buzurg by Bibi Achhi, in favour of Nur Muhammad, the adopted son of the bestower, in 1732 A.D.).
- 102 "Aligarh Farmans", no. 52.
- 103 Oriental Records, II, D. no. 326, p. 11 (*tamluk-nama* of 1625 A.D. on behalf of Mst. Bibi Sappo for voluntarily transferring all her rights in a plot of land to Abdul Halim), also III, D. no. 1191, p. 58 (informing about Mst. Lodhiyan having transferred half of the village Sikandarpur to her grand son Muhammad Qaim).
- 104 Oriental Records, III, D. no. 1216, pp. 35-36. For other cases of individual sale, see Ibid., II, D. no. 452, p. 79 (for Bibi Ujyali selling her share in residential plot held jointly), nos. 322, 344, pp. 61-62 (for Bibi Haibat selling the house inherited by her from mother, one half to Abdul Hamid in 1626 A.D. and other half to Muhammad Jafar and Muhammad Sharif in 1643 A.D.), no. 429, pp. 61-62 (for wife of Mian Omar selling land measuring 2 *bighas* and 5 *biswas* to Mian Saiduddin in 1634 A.D.), no. 464, p. 62 (Bibi Shah Jahan selling her land for Rs. four and 50 *tankas* in 1645 A.D.); "Aligarh Farmans", nos. 2, 22 and 49, 57 (for showing Bibi Rakhi, Sukhi and Saba selling their respective lands through the representation of husband, a *vakil* and son respectively).

In another case, Muhammad Mahmud and Bibi Baghi , joint owners, sold 4 *biswas* of land in *mauza* Kahjari.<sup>105</sup> It is interesting to note that during those days , before a transfer of property actually took place by whatever way , the three things were generally verified viz. the source from where the property was acquired (purchase , inheritance or in case of women even *mahr* ) ; whether it was in possession and use of the owner at the time of transfer and the ownership duly witnessed to the effect that he/she was the real owner . Clearly , the women who sold their properties during this period were the legal owners of such properties . In these property transactions , some Muslim women even signed the documents of their own.<sup>106</sup>

Gifts also added to the immovable properties of the ladies. On certain occasions, some women got such gifts from the state. One such lady was Musammat Nija , a prostitute , who was bestowed with a grant of 900 *bighas* of rent free land as gift through a *sanad* of the reign of Aurangzeb (1662 A.D.).<sup>107</sup>

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105 Oriental Records , II, D.no.319 , p.60. For other cases of joint sales , see D.nos.290 (1710 A.D.) , 467 (1712 A.D.) , 460 (1753 A.D.), 458 (1764 A.D.),470 (1747 A.D.), pp.65--66,69, 77-78 resp..

106 Ibid.,D.no.319 , p.60 (1579 A.D.) ; 458 , p.77 (1746 A.D.) .

107 Datta (ed.) , Sr.no. 309,p.73 . See also Shahnama , p.129 (for gift of a part of deceased Hazrat Begam's property to Mihr Pawar Begam . Hazrat Begam is shown as the daughter of Aurangzeb. She must be Zinat-un-nisa Begam who died in May , 1721 A.D. . All the other daughters of Aurangzeb died during his life time (Aurangzib , I, pp.37-39) .

Sometimes , in order to safeguard the shares of the females in the property from being encroached upon by some male members, some families singled out their female members and by writing *tamlīk-nama* (bestowal deed) gifted properties to them.¹⁰⁸

WOMEN AND FAMILY ECONOMY

Being confined within the house , the foremost economic activity of the Muslim women, except those of higher strata , remained the household work like cooking , weaving , sewing , spinning and fetching water . In fact , home was considered the right place for women and the contemporaries vehemently propounded women's engagement in the domestic activities alone.¹⁰⁹ Even though house management entailed a constant hard labour , still it was not given any importance because it could not be measured in terms of tangible economic gains .

The women belonging to the agricultural and labour class were always a helping hand to their men-folk in their economic activities like agriculture , animal husbandry , spinning , weaving and tailoring . They were equal partners in supplementing their economic resources . For their products , village was the ready market. They supplied their goods and services on customary basis and took in return a share in the agricultural produce.¹¹⁰ In the cities , the artisans supplied

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108 "Shamsabad and Bilhaur Documents" , no.70,p.92 (late seventeenth century ) ; "Bilgram Documents" , nos.31, 34.

109 Isami , (Text) ,p.129 ; Matla-ul-Anwar , p.255; Hasht Bahisht , pp.28-29; Hamid Qalander , Khair-ul-Majalis , ed. K.A.Nizami , p.93 .

110 Habib , Irfan , "Non-Agricultural Production" , ed. Raychaudhuri and Habib , p.279.

articles to meet the luxury needs of the royalty , nobility and the well-to-do . According to Orme, in the coast of Coromandal and in the province of Bengal , it was difficult to find a village where every man , woman and child was not engaged in making a piece of cloth . He recorded how at Dacca in Bengal , which supplied a major part of fine linen and silk for the King and his seraglio , the women of these artisans did all the primary work upto weaving with expertise . About the silk industry he wrote :

The women wind off the raw silk from the pod of the worm. A single pod of raw silk is divided into twenty different degrees of fineness ; and so exquisite is the feeling of these women , that whilst the thread is running through their fingers so swiftly that their eye can be of no assistance , they will break it off exactly as the assortments change , at once from the first to the twentieth , from the nineteenth to the second.<sup>111</sup>

Similarly , about the acrobatics of the jugglers , English ambassador Norris has narrated how the female members of the family also displayed accuracy , fineness and perfection in giving their shows . He recorded his appreciation for items like woman sitting at the top of five earthen pots placed on the head of her man or a woman climbing at the top of a stick about a yard and a half high placed on the head of the man and showing different types of risky tricks or a girl of ten years climbing at the top of a rod measuring twenty six yards high  
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111 Orme , pp.263,265. See also p.303(for women's contribution in agricultural processes) . Also Desai, Neera and Krishnaraj Maithreyi , Women and Society in India , p.53 ; Datta, Alivardi , p.249.

and showing her gymnastic tricks over there.¹¹² It was because of this close economic association of lower class Muslim women with their men-folk that they remained free from practice like purdah and did not suffer seclusion .

SERVICE

Muslim women of the economically backward class were engaged in varied jobs for financial gains . Some of the women of the higher class also took up these jobs after they were captured in the wars . These workers were mainly of two types viz. those who worked for wages and those who followed their independent professions for earning their living .

For those who worked for wages , the houses of the economically well-off and the harems of the royalty and nobility were the main places of their employment . Besides being a good help in household activities , they did all sorts of jobs for the rich ladies . Within the seraglio of Sultan Ghias-ud-din of Malwa , there were two corps of amazons of five hundred each , one of Abyssinian origin and the other of Turkish slave-girls who flanked the throne from two sides in public audiences . From among the fifteen thousand ladies in his harem , there were women trained in different trades and they were organized in different departments. There were lady musicians, singers , dancers, teachresses , goldsmiths , blacksmiths, shoemakers, weavers, potters, tailors, makers of bows, arrows and quivers, carpenters, wrestlers and
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112 Norris , pp.166-67. See also Ashraf , p.248 (about rope tricks shown by juggler-women) .

jugglers.<sup>113</sup> Many ladies were working in the administration also. They performed duties as *Hakima*, *Mahaldars*, *Darogas* and *Tahwildars* or as one among the hundreds of workers and slaves posted under them. They worked as guards of the harems also. There was universal employment of dancing and singing girls to rejoice the masters and mistresses.<sup>114</sup> There were also lady mimics to amuse the aristocratic and well-to-do class.<sup>115</sup>

The ladies were paid according to their ranks. Sultan Ghias-ud-din made payment of fixed salaries to his lady employees of the harem. He paid daily two *seers* of grain and two *tankas* of copper to each individual working therein.<sup>116</sup>

Abul Fazl wrote that during Akbar's time, among the lady employees, the highest rank received between Rs. 1028/- to Rs. 1610/- per month. For the rest of the servants, the salaries ranged between Rs.2/- to Rs.51/-. These payments were not made at random. If a woman employee wanted anything within the limits of her salary, she applied to one of the *Tahwildars* (cash-keeper) of the seraglio. The latter, a lady officer, then, sent the memorandum to the accounts officer who, after checking

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 113 Ferishta, IV, p.143; Zafar-ul-Waleh, (Rizvi, UTKB, II), pp.162-63; Abdul Baqi Nahavandi, Maasir-i-Rahimi, p.145; Haig, III, p.362.

114 See infra, Chap.IV; supra, Chap. II.

115 Randhawa, Pl.29 (Painting showing women mimics in front of Lucknow Nawab).

116 Ferishta, IV, p.143; Haig, III, p.362. Also Umari, (Rizvi, TKB, Pt.I), p.316 (he informed that Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq paid his slaves a daily ration of three *seers* of meat together with other necessaries and a monthly ration of two *mans* of wheat and rice. Besides, they were paid 10 *tankas* per month and four suits of clothes every year).

sent it to the general treasury where the payment was made in cash.¹¹⁷ By the time of Aurangzeb , these salaries had been revised upwards . According to Manucci , the Matrons , Superintendents of music and their women-players received, generally, between Rs. 300/- to Rs. 500/- per month while the other slaves and servants received between Rs. 50/- to Rs. 200/-. As compared to the other official of the empire , these harem employees were more regularly paid and did not face so much inconvenience as others would face.¹¹⁸ All these ladies were paid in ready money.¹¹⁹

The salaries were greatly supplemented by the daily awards and presents they received from their lavish masters and mistresses . The quantity of such bounties depended on the extent of pleasure and satisfaction the employer class derived from their services.¹²⁰ Being near the royalty and their confidants , many of the ladies working in the royal harem made a lot of extra money through gratifications or otherwise. Once , when the assets of a maid were confiscated for committing the crime of kissing an eunuch , they amounted to one lac and sixty thousand rupees in cash and jewellery on evaluation.¹²¹ Similarly, out of the vast accumulations made by

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117 Ain. , I,p.46.

118 Manucci , II,pp.308,315,366.

119 ibid. , p.351.

120 Ain. , I,p.46;Manucci,II ,pp.308,310.

121 Ansari, M.A.,Social Life of the Mughal Emperors, p.71, n.57.

the favourite maid of Jahangir, who served him for thirty three years , Aqa Aqayan built a garden, a *sarai* and her tomb.<sup>122</sup>

Outside the harem , the women were engaged in important jobs, particularly in the work of spying for the royalty . Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq had infiltrated slave-girls in the house of the *amirs* who passed all information about them to the Sultan. He engaged female sweepresses who had free access to the houses of the nobles for sanitation . With the connivance of the slave-girls-cum-spies already present there, they gathered secret information and passed it on to the King.<sup>123</sup> Women spies were actively engaged within the Mughal harems also. A lady named Aqa-i-Sarvkad was in the harem of Babur, Humayun and Akbar . She worked as spy against Abdur Rahim Khan-Khana and other *amirs* of the time.<sup>124</sup>

The second category was that of the self-employed women . Many of them adopted the profession of midwifery . They worked within their own circles which were well demarcated .A lady in this job would get a definite number of households in inheritance from her mother-in-law . In fact , the profession had become so popular that in due course, a separate exclusive caste of ladies was found practising it and they were having their special uniform too. They could be recognized by the

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122 Tuzuk, II, pp.110-11.

123 Ibn Batuta, p.105.

124 Bayazid , p.290 . See also Srivastava , Nawabs of Awadh ,p.203 (for *Wazir* Safdar Jang infiltrating eight women spies in royal seraglio to keep a watch on queen mother Udham Bai) .

"tufts of silk on their shoes or slippers, all others wearing plain".¹²⁵ There were women who made bracelets (*churigars*).¹²⁶ Others made veils and scarfs out of muslin.¹²⁷ Still others earned money by unknitting woollen and silken fabrics after their colours got faded.¹²⁸ The job of wet nurse was also very popular, who were paid ten *tankas* for suckling a child during the time of Amir Khusrau.¹²⁹ There were many who worked as domestic slaves. Being attached to the households, they did not require to be paid any wages. However, the employer had to ensure their maintenance.¹³⁰

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

The women of the lower classes were found running shops wherein they sold different merchandise. For instance, Chamoo, a common woman had a shop in Delhi where she sold opium.¹³¹ Sultan Ghias-ud-din of Malwa had a women's market within his seraglio where all vendors were women.¹³² At times, royal

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125 Roe, Thomas & John Fryer, Travels in India in the Seventeenth Century, p.281; Gupta, S.S. (ed.), Women in Indian Folklore, p.267 n..

126 M.U., I, p.532.

127 Tavernier, I, p.42.

128 Chopra, P.N. Some Aspects of Society and Culture During the Mughal Age, p.122. Hereafter cited as Some Aspects.

129 Ijaz-i-Khusravi, II, p.152. See also Kabiraj, Shibnarayan, "Hindu and Muslim Women in Folk Customs, Rites and Traditions", ed. S.S.Gupta (ed.), p.271.

130 Hamid Qalander, p.138.

131 Matla-ul-Anwar, pp.57-58.

132 Zafar-ul-Waleh, (Rizvi, UTKB, Pt.II), pp.162-63.

ladies, following the austere behaviour of their King involved themselves in some sort of selling and earned their living. The royal women of Firoz Shah Bahmani's time (1397--1422 A.D.) supported them by selling the garments embroidered by them.<sup>133</sup> Badaoni referred to a woman running a wine shop during Akbar's reign.<sup>134</sup> Jahangir's mother, Mariyam-Zamani sent ship-loads of commodities for sale to outside countries. She also had her own ships.<sup>135</sup> Finch has recorded that once in 1610 A.D., her agents were out to buy indigo from the Bayana market in order to send it for sale to Mecca. Meanwhile, Finch gave bid against her agents and bought whole of indigo. This annoyed her and she complained to the Emperor. As a result, Hawkins ( Finch worked under him ) fell into disfavour and had to be called back by the East India Company.<sup>136</sup>

Nurjahan maintained a number of ships and traded in indigo and embroidered cloth and made huge profits. The volume of her trade was so much that she hired other high-land ships also for the purpose. It is known that in 1622 A.D., the English seized many Indian ships returning from Mecca. Out of them,  
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133 Sastri, op.cit., p.246.

134 Badaoni, II, p.311.

135 Foster, W., Letters Received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East, II, p.213 (for her owning a Junk. Junk was warship of Chinese make with bow and stern shaped alike); Jourdain, pp.155-56, 209 (he called her ship as 'Rahimi' though, at times, he called it 'Beheme' too (pp.186,191, 209).

136 Finch, pp.123, 129, ; Jourdain, pp.155-56.

the goods loaded in one of them belonged to Nurjahan.¹³⁷ Her ship-men paid customs to Portuguese who controlled the Arabian sea. She granted tax rebates to the English.¹³⁸ She also secured *farmans* conferring concessions on them.¹³⁹ She preferred English ships to those of Portuguese for sending her goods.¹⁴⁰

Jahanara Begam had a number of ships and carried on trade.¹⁴¹ She had friendly relations with the Dutch and the English with the help of whom she extended her commercial activities and earned huge profits.¹⁴²

INCOME FROM GIFTS AND PRESENTS

Gifts and presents in cash , jewellery or other movable assets received at different occasions contributed a lot to the resources of the royal ladies . They received these gifts from their male or female relations , the nobility , the public and even from the foreigners . But , among all of them , the

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137 Mukerjee , R.K.,The Economic History of India , p.83.

138 Farhat , Hasan, "Two Official Documents of Jahangir's Reign , Relating to the English East India Company ", PIHC , 46th session , Amritsar , 1985 , p.334 (for *Hukum* of Nurjahan of June 13 , 1627 which made it incumbent upon the officials of her *jagirs* between Akbarabad and Surat to obey Jahangir's *farman* of 1624 A.D. . This *farman* exempted the English from *zakat* (road tolls) and other cesses once they paid usual customs at Surat or Bharoach. She forbade levying *zakat* and other unauthorized cesses on the English).

139 Roe and Fryer, p.144.

140 Pant, D.,Commercial Policy of the Mughals , p.165.

141 Ibid. , p.211.

142 English Factories, (1642-45), p.148;(1646-50), pp.219-20; (1651-54), pp.11,50,112.

King remained the greatest donor . Every Sultan gave away something to somebody for any excuse and almost every day. Ladies , invariably , enjoyed his bounty . These royal gifts were magnificent both in quality and in value. Muhammad bin Tughlaq was known for his lavish gifts. <sup>143</sup>

The Mughal Emperors surpassed the Sultans who preceded them . Not only the gifts they gave became of fabulous amounts but they also added many more occasions for the distribution of regular gifts,like the garden parties or weighing ceremonies of the Emperors etc.. Babur's gifts to his lady-relations , all other ladies of the harem and also to the ladies of his kinsmen and officers after his victory in the battle of Panipat are well known . To each *begam* , he gave one gold plate full of jewels , two small mother-of-pearl trays full of *asharfis* (gold coins) , two trays of *shahrukhis* and all sorts of stuff besides a dancing girl.<sup>144</sup> In the mystic feast , Humayun distributed gifts of *asharfis* and *shahrukhis* to the *begams* present on the occasion . <sup>145</sup> Akbar, with all the grandeur of his empire,continued this practice on all occasions of mirth and gaiety.<sup>146</sup> The occasion of such gifts increased more and

143 Barani , (Text), pp.460-62; Muhammad Bihmad Khani, p.353; Umari , (Rizvi , TKB , Pt.I) , p.322. See also Ibn Batuta, pp.80,122.

144 GHN ,pp.95-96; also T.A.,(De),II,p.25 . *Shahrukhi* was a coin of silver of one *misqal* weight (about 4.6 grams). It was commonly in use during the time of Babur and Humayun. Its minting in India was stopped in 964 A.H. (Richards , p.14).

145 GHN, p.125 ; T.A.,(De),II, p.365.

146 See for Akbar's gifts to Hamida Banu , Gulbadan Begam and others on the occasion of *Nauroz* festival (T.A., (De), II,pp.559-60).

more during the time of his successors. Jahangir's Memoirs make frequent references to such gifts and presents on different occasions . On the occasion of marriage of Khurram in 1612 A.D., presents were made to the *begams* .<sup>147</sup> Similarly , in recognition of the invention of a new *itr* (perfume) named *itr-i-Jahangiri* in 1614 A.D. , a string of pearls was gifted by Jahangir to Esmat Banu Begam , his mother-in-law.<sup>148</sup> Khurram presented two lac rupees to Nurjahan and sixty thousand each to other *begams* at the time of celebrating his Deccan victory in 1617 A.D..<sup>149</sup> At the time of his marriage with the daughter of Jagat Singh , Jahangir presented to his bride eighty thousand rupees as part of her *sachaq*.<sup>150</sup> Shah Jahan spent one crore and sixty lac rupees in his coronation . Out of this , only thirty lac were gifted to the nobles , the rest were spent on presents to the members of his family. Mumtaz Mahal alone got a gift of two lac *asharfis* and six lac rupees (silver) besides an annual allowance of ten lac rupees ; Jahanara Begam was given one lac *asharfis* and four lac rupees besides an annual allowance of six lac rupees and Roshanara and Surayya Begam were to share an amount of three lac and fifty thousand rupees with Murad and Lutfullah.<sup>151</sup>

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147 Tuzuk , I, pp.224-25.
 148 Ibid., pp.270-71.
 149 Ibid., p.401.
 150 Ibid. , p.144. *Sachaq* was pre-marriage presents given to the would be bride by the would be bride-groom.
 151 Lahori , I, Pt.1, pp.96-97 ; Tripathi , R.P., Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire , p.420.

During the *Nauroz* which followed immediately after his coronation , besides other costly gifts, he distributed an amount of twenty five lac rupees among his sons and daughters except Jahanara who was separately given an amount of twenty five lac rupees and ornaments.¹⁵² During the marriage of prince Murad Bakhsh with Sakina Banu in 1642 A.D., the latter was given jewels and ornaments worth one lac rupees and cash gift of forty thousand rupees besides costly dresses and other articles as part of her *sachaq* .¹⁵³ When once, his aunt Shukr-un-nisa Begam came from Akbarabad to felicitate him on his victory at Balkh , he showered his magnanimity on her by giving her a *lal* (precious stone) worth forty thousand rupees besides cash of one lac rupees as present.¹⁵⁴

Aurangzeb, notwithstanding his austerity , was also zealous in bestowing presents on the royal ladies . Maasir-i-Alamgiri and other contemporary authorities have given a number of instances of such gifts bestowed on different occasions. At the time of his second coronation in 1659 A.D. , he awarded five lac rupees to Padshah Begam (Roshanara) in recognition of her services to him. Of his four daughters , he gave rupees four lac to Zeb-un-nisa , two lac to Zinat-un-nisa, one lac and sixty thousand to Badr-un-nisa and one lac and fifty thousand

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152 Lahori, I, Pt. I, 191-92 ; Khafi Khan, (Text) , Pt. I, p. 400 (who, however, stated that Rs. two lac were given to Jahanara and Rs. five lac were distributed among other royal children ).

153 Lahori, II, p. 305; also Quamruddin , M. , Life and Times of Prince Murad Baksh , p. 49.

154 Khafi Khan, (Text) , Pt. I, p. 646.

to Zabab-un-nisa The royal maids were also rewarded.<sup>155</sup> On the eve of *Id* in 1666 A.D., he gave one lac gold coins along with enhancement in annual pension to Begam Sahib (Jahanara) and one lac rupees each to Pur Hunar Banu Begam and Gauharara Begam, daughters of Shah Jahan.<sup>156</sup> On the eve of Muhammad Azam's marriage with Jahanzib Banu Begam (daughter of Dara Shukoh), the latter was given one lac and sixty thousand rupees as *sachaq*.<sup>157</sup> During the later Mughal period, the depleted treasury could not afford lavish gifts. Yet, Lal Kanwar received huge gifts. On the occasion of marriage of Emperor Muhammad Shah with Badshah Begam, valuable presents were made to his mother Qudsia Hazrat Begam.<sup>158</sup>

The generosity of the Kings aside, these ladies received presents from the foreign entrepreneurs, nobles and the public as well. Mughal ladies like Nurjahan, Jahanara and their lady employees got frequent presents from the foreign entrepreneurs.

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 155 Khafi Khan, (Text), Pt. II, p.77; M.A., (Tr.), pp.13-14; Aurangzib, II, p.385; Kazim, p.368.

156 M.A., (Tr.), p.36.

157 Ibid., p.47, also p.49 (for present of one elephant worth Rs. 15 thousand to Begam Sahib (Jahanara) and two elephants to Jahanzib Banu on the occasion of marriage of Azam in 1669 A.D.). In 1617 A.D., on the eve of *Id*, Pur Hunar Banu Begam and Gauharara Begam were presented with five thousand *mohars* each (Ibid., p.67). Getiara and Iffatara Begams, the daughters of Muhammad Azam were presented with ornaments worth Rs. eight to ten thousand, each on the occasion of their visit to the court (Ibid., p.306). On the recovery of Jahanara from her burns in 1644 A.D. Aurangzeb gave her jewels worth Rs. 10 lac (Aurangzib, I, p.41). Also Jshwar Dass, p.179 (for Aurangzeb's gift worth Rs. two lac to Sahia, bride of prince Bidar Bakht).

158 Irvine, II, p.125.

Hawkins presented jewels to Shukr-un-nisa Begam and Nurjahan, Jahangir's sister and wife respectively.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, Robert Covert, another Englishman gave a ruby-studded gold whistle to Jahangir at the time of his departure in 1611 A.D. from Agra which the Emperor "gave to one of his great women "(in all probability to Nurjahan).¹⁶⁰ Thomas Roe also presented Nurjahan many things, chief among them being an English coach, a mirror chest and many toys.¹⁶¹ Jahanara Begam received presents from the Dutch who sought her favour to settle their problems.¹⁶² The English gave her numerous gifts in the form of perfumed oils, broad and embroidered cloth, mirror and cabinets.¹⁶³ Gifting, in fact, had become such an accepted vice that while giving the guide-lines for the establishment of French factories in the Mughal empire and realizing the weight which Roshanara could carry with Aurangzeb, Bernier wrote on March 10, 1668 A.D. from Surat: "Roshan Ara Begum is so much in favour that it would perhaps be better to give her a few presents." However, he suggested, at the same time, to be cautious while doing so.¹⁶⁴

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 159 Hawkins, p.94 and n.3.

160 Ibid., p.67, n.1.

161 Roe, II, pp.324, 384-86, 427, 458.

162 English Factories, (1651-54), pp.11, 50, 112; (1646-50), pp.219-20.

163 Ibid., (1646-50), p.304; also JASB, 1911, pp.453-54.

164 Ray, Anirudha, "Last Memoir of Francois Bernier from Surat : March 10, 1668", PJHC, Bodhgaya, 1981, pp.241-57, esp. p.246.

When Jahangir visited his mother's apartment alongwith the nobles, the latter offered gifts to the queen mother.<sup>165</sup> Similarly when Itimad-ud-daulah threw a royal entertainment in honour of Jahangir in 1619 A.D., he offered gifts worth one lac rupees in jewelled ornaments and clothes to the *begams* and other ladies of Jahangir's harem.<sup>166</sup> These different sources brought fabulous amounts in possession of the royal ladies. The individuals, however, had wealth varying according to their economic and political involvement, their closeness to the King and also according to the period to which they belonged. There is no doubt that such women, in general, were wealthy.

To sum up, the maintenance of Muslim women was well cared for during the period. The state provided for them in the form of *jagirs*, retention of *iqtas*, *suyurghal* grants, cash *wazifa*, grants of villages and right of collection of land revenue. Many among the royalty and nobility undertook philanthropic activities aimed at helping the women. The *mahr*, her Qoranic right, was, paid only in the early years when the *mahr* amount used to be low. With the increase in the amount, it came to be reduced to be a mere promise. Some of them inherited property, enjoyed ownership rights and even went to courts to defend them. But the *pardah-nashin* ladies were handicapped, as all property transactions remained mainly the handi-work of their

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165 De laet, p.101.

166 Tuzuk, II, p.80.

men. The upper-strata Muslim ladies of Mughal time were engaged in lucrative trade while the common Muslim women undertook different occupations outside as salaried employees, slave-girls or independent professionals. The ladies of agricultural and labour class provided a helping hand in their family bread-earning activities. Muslim women, of both upper and lower classes, got a lot of money through gifts and gratifications from different sources. On the whole , the ladies of the Mughal period were richer than their counterparts in the Sultanate period.

Chapter IV

THE HAREM AND PURDAH

A. THE HAREM

The term ' Harem ' denoted the segregated place of residence of ladies within a house and included its female inmates. Harem consisted of wives , concubines , mothers , sisters , daughters and other female relatives , female slaves, the eunuchs and the attendants .¹ The pivot of the harem was the Sultan , the Emperor or the noble who maintained it . The seraglio existed for them and the whole life within the seraglio revolved around them.

In the pre-Mughal period , a large harem was a status symbol . The size denoted the dignity and the status of the ruler . It was to maintain this "singularity of status , pride and aloofness " , wrote Barani , that these Sultans of Delhi , like the Sassanid Kings of Iran , had the desire to build lofty palaces and to maintain harems with large establishments of domestics and attendants .² Qazi Mughis-ud-din advised Sultan Ala-ud-din Khalji to increase the expenses of his harem ten fold with the set purpose that a big and splendid harem would generate awe and resultant respect for the King in the minds of the people.³ Imitating Kings, some of the *Wazirs* also had huge

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1 Umari, (Rizvi,TKB,Pt.I ),p.314; Ashraf, pp.55, 171; Houtsma, M.T. et.al., Encyclopaedia of Islam, II,p.268.

2 Fatawa-i-Jahandari , (Tr.) , p.40.

3 Barani , (Text) , p.294.

harems . Khan Jahan Maqbul, the *Wazir* of Firoz Shah Tughlaq had two thousand women in his harem including the beauties , not only from within the country but also from Rum and China .<sup>4</sup> The provincial Kings like Feroz Shah Bahmani and Ghias-ud-din of Malwa also maintained large harems.<sup>5</sup>

The harems of Babur and Humayun were small in size , not exceeding more than two hundred members each .<sup>6</sup> With the coming of Akbar , the practice of large seraglio was re-established . His own harem contained more than five thousand women .<sup>7</sup> Jahangir had three hundred wives besides other inmates in his harem.<sup>8</sup> The harem of Shah Alam had two thousand women .<sup>9</sup> Akbar's policy of seeking peace and strengthening relations by matrimonial alliances , which was also followed by his successors , was a major factor .<sup>10</sup> Each campaign, generally, brought in as its consequence a girl of the vanquished ruler in marriage tie with the Emperor or the prince. The entourage of these ladies and also of Rajput princesses who joined Mughal harems added to the number of the harem-inmates.

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4 Afif, (Text) , p.400.

5 Ferishta , II,pp.227-28 ; IV,pp.143-44 ; Mushtaqi , (Rizvi, UTKB, Pt.II) , pp.134-36,138 ;Zafar ul waleh, (Rizvi , UTKB ,Pt.II),p.162.

6 Lal,Harem , p.20.

7 Ain.,I,p.46; also V.A. Smith , pp.260-61 . See also Fitch, p.17 (for his 800 concubines).

8 Hawkins ,p.101; Beni Prasad, p.26.

9 Manucci, II,p.320.

10 Ain.,I,p.45;A.N., (Bev.), II,pp.351-52, 518-19.

ACCOMMODATION

To accommodate such large establishment , many palaces were built from time to time . These palaces invariably had separate female apartments .¹¹ Dwelling was provided to all inmates of the harem . Separate , spacious and splendid houses were the privilege of a selected few. The serving class lived in humble dwellings of mud and bamboo with thatched roofs , the ladies of lower rank in verandas and dormitories , more important queens in magnificent rooms and only some special women in exclusive palaces .¹²

When the Mughal Emperors were on the move , a part of their seraglio also moved along with them . Mini palaces were built at different places for the moving harem . Akbar built many women's apartments at every few miles from Agra , each of which accommodated sixteen ladies with servants .¹³ These royal journeys, consequently, led to scattering of the inmates of harem which lessened the pressure of habitation at one place.

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11 Afif, (Text), pp.100-01; Ashraf , p.204.

12 Some of the exclusive *mahals* of the time were Jodha Bai Palace at Fatehpur Sikri for Akbar's queens and Mariyam's palace at the same place (Haig, IV,p.542) ; *Khas-Mahal* of Jahanara in Shah Jahan Fort ( *Ibid.*, p.561 ; *M.U.*, II,Pt.I, p.268 ; Bernier , pp.267-68) ; separate dwellings of Shahzadi Khanam , Rukayya Sultan Begam and Gulziar Begam in Agra (Pelsaert, pp.2-3 ; De Laet, pp.37-39 and n.50 ) ; *mahal* of Shah Begam (Finch , p.164).

13 De Laet, p.44; Finch, p.149.

Houses of the nobles and the rich were divided into two distinct parts , *Diwan Khana* or the men's quarters and the *Zanan-Khana* or the ladies' apartments .<sup>14</sup> The women's apartments were in the centre and one had to pass through two or three big courts and a few gardens before reaching there.<sup>15</sup> Sufficient provision of water , air and gardens were made within these palaces .<sup>16</sup> These houses were scattered in every direction , generally away from the royal harem , to avoid court intrigues .

#### INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION

To maintain and control such a multitude of women , a system of internal administration was required . This organizational arrangement was all the more important because of their sensitivity towards women .

The first concern of the administration was the security of the seraglio . During the Sultanate , the security of the harem from outside was entrusted to the eunuchs called *Khawajah Sara* .<sup>17</sup> They were in such a demand that their supply was met out by castration and also by importing them from the

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14 Pelsaert , p.67; Finch , p.151.

15 Tavernier , I,p.313.

16 Pelsaert , pp.1-2,66; Finch,pp.164-66, 182, 185 ;
Bernier , pp.247-48.

17 Barani , (Text) ,pp.375,506.

neighbouring countries.¹⁸ These eunuchs worked as messengers and were a link between the harem and the outside world . They also served the Sultan in his private chambers. Therefore, their selection was made with great care and only really capable and dependable eunuchs were assigned this task . As a second line of internal defence, in the inner pavilions and halls situated outside the female apartments , there was another guard called *Sara-purdah-daran-i-khas* , headed by some reliable noble who was entitled *Purdahdar-i-Khas* .¹⁹ There was still another officer called *Uhdahdar-i-darha* or the officer of the gates whose duty was to ensure the proper closure of the gates and their supervision at night .²⁰ When the Sultans moved out for hunts , processions or

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18 I.H.Qureshi, The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, pp.63-64) of the view that since Prophet had prohibited human castration , their demand was met out of imports only. But the facts speak otherwise. Purchase of eunuchs in markets continued throughout the Muslim period . Castration also seemed to be common practice. It was very much prevalent during the Sultanate period (Lal, Harem , p.26). Barbosa and Abul Fazl mentioned about this being commonly practised in Bengal particularly in Sylhet (Barbosa , II , p.147, n.1; Ain. , II,p.136 ). Jahangir informed that in Sylhet it became a custom with the people to castrate a few of their sons and give them to the Governor in lieu of their revenue demands . This practice was followed in other provinces too , so much so that the Emperor passed orders to check it (Tuzuk, I,pp.150-51,168). The practice , however, continued even thereafter and Aurangzeb brought injunctions against it (Ali Muhammad Khan , p.251; Manucci , II,p.72; Bernier, p.135 ; M.A., (Tr.),p.48;Aurangzib , III,p.61). The Practice continued even thereafter .

19 Afif, (Text), p.279; Abul-Fadl-Baihaqi , Tarikh-i-Baihaqi, p. 817 ; also Ibn Batuta , p.80 (he called them *Amir-i-Pardahdaria* ) .

20 Barani , (Text) , p.406.

otherwise , there was another pocket of infantry , comprised mainly of slaves who defended the royal entourage.<sup>21</sup> There were other officials named *Mufrads* who performed the guard duty.<sup>22</sup> All this team guarded the Seraglio so zealously that it became almost impregnable . It is known that once rebel Ikat Khan , the nephew of Ala-ud-din Khalji , tried to enter the Sultan's harem . But Malik Dinar , who was in-charge of the security , stood like a rock on his way and did not allow him to enter the harem insisting that till he brought the head of the Sultan, he would not be permitted to do so .<sup>23</sup> Similarly , relying on the tight security of the harem , Prince Mubarak Khan , son of Ala-ud-din Khalji , fearing an attack from Malik Naib , took refuge in the female apartment and came out only after the murder of the latter .<sup>24</sup>

A *Hakima* or Governess was appointed to look after the internal management of the harem during the Sultanate period . She herself belonged to a noble family . the wife of Nizam-ud-din held this post during the time of Kaiqubad .<sup>25</sup> The *Hakima* was assisted by many minor women officials , who not only did the guard duty or maintained the records of the income and expenditure of the harem but were also engaged in performing

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21 Barani , (Text) , p.273.
 22 Qiran-us-Sadain , p.140.
 23 Lal, Khaljis , pp.104-05.
 24 Sirhindi , p.81.
 25 Barani, (Text), p.134.

varied duties within the seraglio.²⁶

Some of the Sultans took keen interest in the management of their harems to make the living therein more harmonious and comfortable . In order to avoid any confusion or irregularity , Feroz Shah Bahmani (1397-1422 A.D.) framed rules which were to be strictly observed by the inmates of the harem . He allowed maximum three attendants to a lady who were always of the same nation and spoke the same language as that of the mistress . He divided his attention to them so equally that each lady fancied herself to be the most loved by the King . He liked his ladies to be away from the gaze of the strangers and therefore , harem-rules were observed strictly .²⁷ For the convenience of his ladies , Sultan Ghias-ud-din of Malwa established a separate market within his harem in which all the necessary items of requirement were made available . In fact, organization-wise , his harem was a 'kingdom in miniature' .

Babur and Humayun could not do anything worthwhile. Khwandamir wrote that Humayun made the gradation of the ranks of his officials by distribution of arrows . There were total twelve orders or arrows , the twelfth and eleventh arrows belonged to the King and his relations respectively . In this ranking , sixth arrow was awarded to the harems and to the well behaved female attendants , fifth to young maid-servants , fourth to treasurers and stewards , second to the menial

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26 Halim, Abdul, History of the Lodi Sultans of Delhi and Agra, p.229.

27 Ferishta , II,p.228.

servants and first to the palace guards , camel drivers and the like .<sup>28</sup> With the coming of Akbar, great improvement took place . According to Abul Fazl, the imperial harem and household were "in the best order".<sup>29</sup>

At the outermost cordon of the security of the seraglio were posted the nobles, Rajput guards , *ahadis* and other troops.<sup>30</sup> This practice of appointing Rajput contingents originated with Akbar and continued till the beginning of eighteenth century. Rajputs were considered to be devoted towards their duties. During Aurangzeb's reign , when the Marathas attacked Jahan Banu Begam's camp , these Rajputs defended her devoutly and as a reward for this, the Begam gave her pearl necklace to their commander Anurudh Singh.<sup>31</sup> Next to the Rajput guards , on the outer fringe, were placed eunuchs . These eunuchs were organized in hierarchical order . A number of them were under a senior eunuch called *Nazir* who was under a chief *Nazir* with the title *Itimad Khan* or *Aitbar Khan*.<sup>32</sup>

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28 Khwandamir , Humayun-Nama , (E&D, V),p.123 ; see also Tr. Raini Prashad , pp. 31-32, and nn.1-3 (his translation with regard to sixth and fifth ranking is different from that of E&D . It runs : "The sixth was assigned to the heads of clans and the good tempered Uzbegs and the fifth was given to young volunteers." He considers the terms "young maid servants" as an incorrect translation).

29 Ain. ,I.p.45.

30 Ibid. ,p.47; Mundy, II,p.201; Bernier ,p.258.

31 Ansari, Social Life , p.71.

32 Ain., I,p.47; Manucci , II, pp.326-27. He gave a list of 38 *Nazirs* of the time of Aurangzeb , each having a separate title given by the Emperor.

Within the harem , this hierarchy of eunuchs was of great importance . The chief *Nazir* was highly respected by the King . He was not only in-charge of all the palace expenditure on linen , precious stones, jewellery , but also of every thing that went into or came out of the palace.³³ *Nazirs* were the persons of great confidence. One Aitbar Khan accompanied Akbar's mother and other *begams* from Kabul to Hindustan in 1558 A.D. ³⁴ Another eunuch entitled *Itimad Khan* escorted the daughter of Miran Mubarak Shah , King of Khandesh (1555-66 A.D.), to the harem of Akbar. ³⁵ Each queen , princess or other lady of the royalty had a *Nazir* in-charge of her property, lands and income . ³⁶ In the later period , particularly after Farrukhsiyar, their importance increased still further. They were made in-charge of *Gulalpara* (incense and perfume department) and also the steward of the household. ³⁷

All the major officials , slaves and servants were obliged to submit a report of their activities to the *Nazir* . The eunuchs under them not only worked as messengers but also as guards at the palace gate . Everybody, including doctors and unknown ladies, were put to thorough investigations and search before he/she was allowed to go inside the harem. All items

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 33 Manucci , II, p.328.

34 Ain. , I,p.442.

35 A.N., (Bev.) , II, pp.351-52.

36 Manucci , II, p.328.

37 Siyar , (N.M.) , I , pp.146-47, also (Briggs), p.131.

were also scrutinized thoroughly to check smuggling of intoxicants or other objectionable articles . As a part of vigilance , they also closed all the gates of the palace at sunset by bolting them from outside and torches were kept burning the whole night .<sup>38</sup> In spite of such tight security , there were incidents of surreptitious entrance of men-folk inside the harem . Jahanara and Roshanara were reported to have managed smuggling of men to their respective rooms .<sup>39</sup>

Inside the harem , sober and active women were posted as armed guards known as *Urdu Begis* . The most reliable were placed near the royal apartments . Abyssinian , Tartar , Turki, Uzbek, Kashmiri and Pathani women were generally posted on such duties. They were tough and good at use of lance , arrow and sword .<sup>40</sup> Their cadre was constantly replenished through imports . Aurangzeb , for instance , was reported to have purchased Uzbek and Tartar women from the Balkh envoys who visited him in 1661-62 A.D. and put them on such duties .<sup>41</sup> So strong were these ladies that Aurangzeb did not come to meet Shah Jahan during war of succession lest he would get killed by these Tartar ladies.<sup>42</sup> Similarly , in 1719 A.D. when Farrukhsiyar took shelter in his harem for fear of his

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38 Manucci, II,p.328.

39 Bernier , pp.12-14,132 ; Tavernier, I,p.300; Manucci , II,pp.30-32, also p.177,reporting Roshanara Keeping nine youths in secret . But this is discredited by J.N.Sarkar (Aurangzib , III,p.39).

40 Ain. ,I,pp.46-47 ; Manucci , II,p.328.

41 Manucci, II,p.38.

42 Bernier , p.65.

opponents , these Abyssinian and Turkish women were determined to fight in order to check their entrance to the harem.⁴³ Even when the royal seraglio was on the move or in camps , these women guards , alongwith the eunuchs, performed their duties zealously and anybody trying to come too near the royal procession or tent had to face their wrath.⁴⁴

For the general administration within the harem , there were all women officials who were divided into three sections- the high (*Mahin Banu*) , the middle (*Paristan-i-hudur*) and the low (*Paristar* or *Bandis*) . The first two grades consisted of superior staff while the third one of the menial servants and slaves . The highest female official who was overall in-charge of the harem was *Mahaldar* . She was the chief supervisor of the harem . The author of Ahkam-i-Alamgiri narrated two incidents bringing forth the importance of these ladies in contemporary harem life. Hamida Banu , *Mahaldar* of the harem of prince Muhammad Muazzam spied for Emperor Aurangzeb . She wrote her confidential notes in a memorandum book . The Emperor had ordered her that she or her deputy Sharf-un-nisa should be personally present whenever the prince wanted to see her pen-case and memorandum book . The prince made it a practice to take them in his private chamber where his ladies also used to be present . As per etiquettes , the *Mahaldar* could not go inside . So , she reported the matter to the Emperor and sought his fresh instructions . Aurangzeb once

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43 Khafi Khan , (Text) , Pt.II, pp.814-16.

44 Bernier , pp.373-74 ; Manucci , II,p.437.

again ordered her not to leave these things with the prince. *Mahaldar* Nur-un-nisa had a tussle with prince Muhammad Azam , because the latter expelled her from his assembly . When reported , Emperor Aurangzeb supported the *Mahaldar* and believing complaint of Bahroz Khan, the *Nazir* of the prince that the prince had mis-behaved with Nur-un-nisa, he asked the prince to beg pardon of her and fined him fifty thousand rupees.<sup>45</sup>

Under *Mahaldar* , there were *Darogas* or Matrons . They were in-charge of general administration and also controlled the maid servants and the dancing girls . A group consisting of ten menial staff formed a section and each *Daroga* or Superintendent was in-charge of a section or a group of sections of the subordinates.<sup>46</sup> *Darogas* or Matrons were appointed by the Emperor himself on the basis of merit and trustworthiness of the lady . Since it was considered to be a prestigious post , many ladies of high families and nobles, like the mother of Nurjahan, were also appointed for this post.<sup>47</sup> They read out the reports of *Waqia Nawis* and *Khufia Nawis* to the King . The officials outside also received through them the orders of the Emperor issued from within the harem . They worked as spies for their masters . At times , some educated Matrons also worked as tutors to the princesses .

45 Hamid-ud-din , pp.58-59, 64-65, see also pp.63,73.

46 Ain.,I,p.46; Manucci , II,pp.308,312-13. He referred to them as Matrons while to the in-charge of sections of the dancers and singers as Superintendents . He has also given list of the names of some important Matrons and Superintendents of Aurangzeb's time.

47 Tuzuk,II,p.216 ; Ain. , I,pp.45-46.

Sati-un-nisa was one of them who tutored Jahanara . 48 Other lady officials were *Tahwildar* , the in-charge of the accounts and *Waqia Nawis* and *Khufia Nawis* who kept all the details about the harem . There were also female store-keepers called *Ashraf* who took charge of the supplies and accounts and put forth estimates of the expenditure for the next year. 49

The harems of the nobles were equally well guarded. They also kept eunuchs and Bengali slaves for the safety of their wives and to ensure that they were not exposed to any other male . If any eunuch failed in his duty , he was severely punished. 50

Thus , the harems segregated the women from the outside world . Manucci was not far from the truth when he likened them to virtual "prisons". 51

#### TITLES AND EPITHETS

Many ladies were given high titles by the Kings to show their reverence and to satisfy their ego . Shah Turkan was entitled as *Khudawandah-i-Jahan* . 52 The title of *Malika-i-Jahan* was bestowed on the wives of Jalal-ud-din Khalji , 53 Husain Shah Sharqi, 54 and the mothers of Sultan Nasir-ud-din  
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48 Manucci , II,pp.308-09, 311; Sarkar, Studies , pp.21-26.

49 Ashraf , p.57.

50 Pelsaert , p.66.

51 Manucci , II,p.326.

52 T.N., (Raverty) , I,p.630, n.3.

53 Barani , (Text) , p.221.

54 Ferishta , IV , p.218.

Mahmud Shah 55 and Muhammad Shah Bahmani I . 56 The mother of Muhammad bin Tughlaq was adorned with the title *Makhduma-i-Jahani* .⁵⁷ One of the wives of Ala-ud-din Shah Bahmani II (1435-57 A.D.) was given the title of *Perichehra* (fairy face).⁵⁸

Akbar's mother was given the title of *Mariyam Makani* (the Mary of both the worlds or dwelling with Mary).⁵⁹ Jahangir's mother enjoyed the title of *Mariyam-Zamani* (the Mary of the universe) .⁶⁰ Shah Jahan's mother was entitled *Bilqis-Makani* (the lady of pure abode).⁶¹ Jahangir's favourite wife Mehr-un-nisa received the title of *Nur Mahal* (the light of palace) in 1611 A.D. which was , later on , replaced by the title *Nur Jahan* (the light of the world) .⁶² The title of *Shah Begam* was given to Man Bai, the Rajput wife of Jahangir and to Roshanara Begam, the sister of Aurangzeb .⁶³ The title of *Padshah Mahal* was given to Saliha Banu Begam , a wife of Jahangir.⁶⁴ Zinat-un-nisa , the second daughter of Aurangzeb

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55 T.N. , (Raverty) , I,p.676.

56 Ferishta , II,p.185.

57 Barani , (Text) , p.483 ; Ibn Batuta ,p.118.

58 Ferishta , II,p.262.

59 A.N., (Bev.) , III, pp.1222-23 ; GHN, Tr.note, p.83, n.2.

60 Tuzuk , I,p.76.

61 Qazwini , I,f. 49a.

62 Tuzuk , I,p.319;Mutamad Khan, p.405; Muhammad Hadi ,p.398.

63 Tuzuk , I,p.56 ; Kazim , p.368; Tavernier , I,pp.299-300.

64 Tuzuk , II,p.86 n.; M.U. ,II,Pt.II, p.926 ; Ain., I, Tr. note, p.401.

was entitled *Padshah Begam* .<sup>65</sup> Shah Jahan's wife Arjumand-Banu Begam enjoyed the title of *Malika-i-Jahan* and was popularly known as *Mumtaz Mahal* (exalted one of the palace ), a title bestowed on her by Shah Jahan on his accession .<sup>66</sup> Jahanara Begam enjoyed the title of *Begam Sahib* . She was also give the titles of *Padshah Begam* , *Nawab Qudsia* and *Sahibat-uz-Zamani* . The last title was bestowed on her death.<sup>67</sup> Aurangzeb's wife Dilras Banu was entitled *Rabia-ud-daurani* and another Rahmat-un-nisa as *Nawab Bai*.<sup>68</sup> In the later period, Lal Kanwar was conferred with the title of *Imtiaz Mahal* (the chosen of the palace) .<sup>69</sup> Muhammad Shah's mother was entitled *Hazrat Begam* (the exalted lady ) or *Nawab Qudsia* or *Qudsia Begam* .<sup>70</sup> His chief wife Badshah Begam was having the title of *Malika-uz-Zamani* (queen of the world).<sup>71</sup> His another wife Udham Bai , the mother of his son and successor

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- 65 Hamid-ud-din , p.64; M.U. , II,Pt.II , p.646; Irvine , I,p.2.
- 66 Lahori , I,Pt.J,pp.92,96.
- 67 Manucci , II,pp.118,175 ; Tavernier , I,p.299; Latif , S.M., Lahore, its History, Architectural Remains and Antiquities , p.58 (all for *Padshah (Badshah) Begam* ) . Ishwar Dass , pp.93,137 ; Syed, A.J., Aurangzeb in Muntakhab-al Lubab , pp.26,100 (for *Qudsia (Qudsi) Begam*). M.A., (Tr.) ,p.131 (for *Sahibat-uz-Zamani* ). See also Aurangzib , III , pp.37-38.
- 68 Aurangzib, I,pp.33-34; Ishwar Dass, p.93 (for *Nawab Bai*).
- 69 Faruqi , f.37a ; Irvine , I,p.193.
- 70 Ashub , I,f.27b ; Irvine , II,p.125 (for *Hazrat Begam* ); Siyar, (N.M.) , I,p.146 and n.130; Shahnama , p.120 ; Irvine , II,p.264 ; Malik , Muhammad Shah , pp.56-58 (for *Qudsia Begam* ).
- 71 Ashub , I, f.20b ; Irvine , II,p.124.

Ahmad Shah was given the titles of *Bai-Jiu Sahiba* ' *Nawab Qudsia* . *Sahiba-uz-Zamani* , *Sahibjiu Sahiba* , *Hazrat* and *Qibla-i-Alam*.<sup>72</sup>

At times , many epithets were also added to the names of the ladies to denote their class or to show respect to them. During the Sultanate period , the epithets of *Khatun* and *Bibi* were generally found like Nusrat Khatun (famous singer of Jalal-ud-din Khalji's reign ) , Shams Khatun (chief queen of Bahlol Lodi ) , Bibi Ambha ( Hindu wife of Sultan Bahlol Lodi ) , Bibi Mattu ( wife of Islam Khan Lodi of Bahlol's time ) , Bibi Bai (wife of Islam Shah Suri ) . The Mughals used the epithets of *Begam* , *Khanam* and *Mahal* with the names of their ladies. *Begam* was most frequently used.<sup>73</sup> At times , the nature of job and consequent status was also depicted by such words. During Aurangzeb's time, the names of the Matrons of the kingdom ended with *Banu* and those of dancers with *Bai* .<sup>74</sup> In the later Mughal period, since many of the ladies rose from their ranks even to become queens , we find these epithets used even with the names of queens and their relations. Muhammad Shah's mother was known as Udham Bai, his favourite wife as

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72 Sarkar , Fall , I,p.210 ; also Stephen , p.274 (for *Qudsia Begam*) . She also received title of *Mumtaz Mahal* after the accession of her son (Malik , Muhammad Shah , p.407 , n.1).

73 Manucci , II,pp.310-11 (giving the list of names of these ladies of Aurangzeb's time).

74 Ibid. , pp.312-13. A list of their names has also been given by him.

Inayetpuri Bai and his wife's niece (sister's daughter) as Dilafroz Banu.⁷⁵

POMP AND MAGNIFICENCE

Cut off from the general society, the majority of the inmates of the harems passed their lives in extravagant festivities, meaningless intrigues, vocal jealousies and showy vanity which effected the status of women adversely. These ladies spent their time by enjoying the pleasure of possessing and spending money. They lived a life of luxury, pomp and magnificence. Everything related to them -their persons, houses, food, dresses, mannerism, habits -smacked of luxury and licentiousness.

TOILETS AND ADORNMENTS

With the aim of remaining attractive for their master, the King or the noble, the ladies of royalty and nobility spent a major portion of their time and money in toilets and personal adornments. Sixteen constituents of Hindu women's toilet were adopted by the Muslims. Amir Khusrau, Malik Muhammad Jayasi and Abul Fazl referred to them. Manucci gave a vivid and true-to-life description of the beautification of these ladies.⁷⁶ Everything fine, gilded, silvered, jewelled, precious-stone-studded and scented attracted their attention.

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75 Sarkar, Fall, I, p.334. Paradoxically, the title of *Begam* and *Khanam* came to be attached with the names of the dancers as was done in the case of lady-accompanists of Nur Bai, the famous dancer of Muhammad Shah's time (Muraqqa, p.111).

76 Jayasi, M.M., Padmavat, Khand 27, Doha 296-300, pp.346-51; Hasht Bahisht, p.31 (referred to *Hapth-wa-nuh*); Ain., III, pp. 342-43; Manucci, II, pp.316-18.

Their clothes were embroidered with gold threads and laces and so were their shoes gilded and studded with jewels and covered with silver and golden flowers. Muhammad bin Tughlaq kept four thousand manufacturers of golden tissues weaving gold brocades which were worn by the ladies of the royalty and also gifted by them to *amirs* or their wives.<sup>77</sup> According to Manucci, the shoes of the wife of Khalilullah Khan (*Subedar* of Lahore) were worth three million rupees on account of the precious stones studded in them.<sup>78</sup> The cloth of their attires was so finely woven that one could see through it. This is reflected in the paintings of Mughal harem also.<sup>79</sup> Their shawls were so thin that they could be passed through a small finger-ring and so were their dresses too. Tavernier mentioned about a kind of muslin named *Sironj* which was totally transparent. It was manufactured exclusively for the use of Mughal seraglio in the summers. When Aurangzeb reprimanded his daughter for wearing scanty dresses, the princess replied that she was wearing seven garments made of muslin known as *Ab-i-ravan*.<sup>80</sup> In spite of their being so expensive and exquisite, these dainties

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77 Umari, (Rizvi, TKB, Pt.I), p.316, also see (E&D,III), p.578 (he gave the number five hundred instead of four thousand). See also Barani, (Text), p.157 (for dresses of slave girls embroidered with gold thread); Afif, (Text), p.363 (for gold and silver brocaded dresses of the dancing girls costing even up to 40 thousand *tankas*); Roe and Fryer, p.384; Manucci, II,p.318.

78 Manucci, I,pp.186-87. See also Bhushan, Bhushan Granthavali, Kavitt 5-6 (for costly shoes of the royal ladies).

79 Lal,Harem, Pls.I,III,V,2,8.

80 Tavernier, I,p.47 and n.1.

would put them on only once after which they gave them away to their servants.⁸¹ This extravagance was visible even in the head-gear worn by some of the ladies with special permission of the King . It was a sheet of cloth studded with gold pieces or a turban with an aigrette having pearls and precious stones all around.⁸²

The ladies were fond of a variety of costly ornaments . The list of ornaments given by Abul Fazl and the detailed discussion of Manucci show that these ladies were laden with ornaments from head to toe . Each princess owned six to eight sets of jewels alone besides other sets . They vied with one another to possess a costlier item . Nurjahan , for example , wore a necklace containing forty beads , each bead costing forty thousand rupees. This necklace was presented to her by Shah Jahan.⁸³

Similar was their fascination for perfumes . Their hair had scented oil. They also used costly *itr* (scent) extracted from flowers and other sources for their bodies and dresses.⁸⁴ The consumption of these scents was so much that Akbar even opened a special department for it under the name *Khushbu Khana* with Shaikh Mansur as its in-charge.⁸⁵ During the time of

81 Manucci , II , p.318 ; Bernier , p.259.

82 Manucci , II, p.318 ; Abdul Aziz, Arms and Jewellery of the Indian Mughals , pp.212-13.

83 Price , p.46 . See also Tuzuk, II,p.74 (for Nurjahan's another string of pearl and rubies , each ruby costing Rs.10 thousand and each pearl was worth Rs.one thousand).

84 Ain.,I , pp.78-81 ; Manucci , II,p.318.

85 Ain., I,p.78; T.A. , (De), II, p.494.

Jahangir , the experts working in this department worked hard to invent "exciting perfumes and efficacious preserves".⁸⁶ Esmat Banu Begam invented an essence named *Jahangiri Itr* and Nurjahan discovered another from rose water .⁸⁷

They used all sorts of make-ups for body-decoration. Besides floral adornments , the frequent use of soap, *ghasul* (a liquid soap) *opatnah* (mixture of butter , flour , some colour and scented oil) , pounded sandal-wood , hair-dyes, *kazal* , *missia* (a sort of black powder for blackening between the teeth), *anjan* (antimony) for darkening their eye lashes , *mehndi* for colouring their feet , hands and nails, betel leaf for reddening their lips besides making different hair styles find repeated mention in the contemporary writings,literature and paintings.⁸⁸

INTERIOR DECORATION

The interior decoration of their apartments was another example of their pomposity . These houses were decorated with exotic carpets , splendid paintings , valuable porcelain vases and flower pots, grand mirrors, gold, silver and stone studded pillars and ceilings . The surviving example of this is Shah Jahan's Delhi Fort . The *Diwan-i-Khas* attached with the royal

86 Pelsaert , p.65.

87 Tuzuk , I,pp.270-71 . About Esmat Banu's scent , he wrote,"There is no other scent of equal excellence to it. It restores hearts that have gone and brings back withered souls . " See also Manucci ,I, pp.158-59.

88 Ain., III, p.342 , also I,pp.79-80 ; Manucci , II,p.318; Jayasi, Padmavat, Khand 41, Doha 47, p.603 (*missia* referred to as *masi*). See also Prataditya Pal, Court Paintings of India, fig. M 67 (showing a lady colouring her feet . It is of later Mughal time); Lal, Harem,Pl.14.

apartment and used by the Emperor mainly for recreation with royal ladies was resplendent with gilded decorations and ceiling and pillars studded with gold, silver and precious stones. There was an inscription in one of the walls : "if there is a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this" -a couplet which matched the life style of these harem-inmates. The residential portion of this was equally magnificent with its gilt domes, hanging balconies, inlaid colourful and gilded carvings, marble-paved floors, ornamental fountains and beautiful paintings. Even the very names of the buildings like *Hira Mahal*, *Moti Mahal*, *Rang Mahal* and of canals like *Nahr-i-Bahisht* (stream of Paradise) sounded affluence and "breathed the very spirit of romance".⁸⁹

A recent excavation done by Aligarh Muslim University under professor R.C.Gaur at Fatehpur Sikri near the *Samosa Mahal* revealed harem buildings which were internally decorated with "dado paintings in black, flanked by red lines"; another room with all paintings and still another with mural paintings. The water channels had shallow pools at regular intervals; the ornamental gardens were divided into six parts with walk-ways made of rubble stones and "the whole have been knitted into one single harmonious whole with an octagonal tank".⁹⁰

The interiors of the apartments of the ladies of nobility

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89 Haig, IV, pp.556-58; Bernier, pp.256-58. The Persian text of the couplet is :

*Agar Firdaus bar rue zamin Ast,  
Hamin ast hamin ast wa hamin ast.*

90 Lal, Harem, p.40.

were equally glittering . They might not be having as big establishments as those of the Kings , nevertheless , they did not lag behind in extensive use of gold and silver and costly decorations of carpeting , curtains , wall paintings , exquisite flower pots and vases , comfortable mattresses and the like . Even their bedsteads , wrote Pelsaert, were "lavishly ornamented with gold and silver".<sup>91</sup> Sultan Firoz Tughlaq's order against the use of silver and gold plated and ornamented ewers and goblets , cups and other articles of use in the houses, shows that such articles were in common use during the Sultanate period as well.

#### KHUSHROZ

The Mughals introduced a peculiar celebration named *Khushroz* (joyful days). It began with Humayun ; Akbar modified it and Shah Jahan made it most elaborate . During these days , a special market known as *Meena Bazar* (fancy fair) was held.<sup>92</sup> It was meant for the amusement and enjoyment of the harem-inmates of royalty alone . Hence , no male except the Emperors and princes were permitted to enter this bazar. It was organized at different intervals<sup>93</sup> and for many days at a

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 91 Pelsaert , p.67; also Bernier , pp.247-48.

92 GHN,p.126; Khwandamir, (Baini Prashad),pp.138-39; Coryat, p.278 ;Mundy , II, p.238 ; Manucci , I,p.188; Bernier , pp.272-73; Thevenot , pp.70-71.

93 Ain. , I,p.286 (once in a month); Badaoni, II,p.350 (every year on New Year day) ; Bernier , pp.272-73 (Initially sometimes during festivals but with Shah Jahan, on every festival). Manucci , I,p.188; Coryat, p.278 (once in a year).

stretch.⁹⁴ Bernier called it a "whimsical kind of fair". In this fair, beautiful ladies of all classes, high and low, rich and poor put their stalls of different items. Their purchasers were the King, the princes, the *begams*, the princesses and other distinguished ladies of the seraglio. The way the Emperor haggled with these beautiful ladies for each penny created a lot of fun and frolic. The gaiety enhanced further during the time of Shah Jahan, who specifically appointed dancing and singing girls known as *kanchanis* for this occasion. Their main duty was to entertain the King, the *begams* and other ladies by singing and dancing the whole night.⁹⁵

For the Kings, this bazar served as the best opportunity to satisfy their carnal desires.⁹⁶ Manucci aptly remarked

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94 Manucci, I, p.188 (for eight days); Thevenot, p.71 (for five days); Tod, I, p.344 (for nine days).

95 Bernier, pp.273-74; Thevenot, p.71.

96 Abul Fazl, (*Ain*, I, p.287), tried and understandably so, to attach a sublime motive to Akbar behind arrangement of this fair when he wrote, "His majesty uses such days to select any articles which he wishes to buy or to fix the price of things and thus add to his knowledge. The secrets of the empire, the character of the people, the good and bad qualities of each office and workshop, will then appear. "But this seems to be defence of a court poet. Otherwise, many other contemporaries are one to hold the sensuality of these Kings behind the genesis of this fair. Badaoni, (II, p.350) wrote, "And the important affairs of those who were outside the harem, and marriage contracts and betrothals of sons and daughters were transacted in those assemblies." Tod was more vocal when he wrote, "The ingenuous Abul Fazl thus softens down the unhallowed purpose of this day... there is not a shadow of doubt that many of the noblest were dishonoured on the *Noroza*." (I, pp.344-45). Manucci, (I, p.188) was equally candid to write that it was Shah Jahan's constant "search for women to serve his pleasure" that this function was organized. See also Bishan Bahadur, "Akbar as Depicted by Prominent contemporary Hindu Poets", *PIHC*, 45th session, Annamalainagar, 1984, pp.461-63; Bernier, p.273.

that for the ladies who sold goods in those stalls , "the best piece of goods she could produce was her own body".<sup>97</sup> The ambitious ladies , therefore , made it a point that their young daughters accompanied them to the fair with the hope that they might be selected by the King to be fit for being in his harem. Tod narrated that when the eyes of Emperor Akbar fell on the wife of Rai Singh in one of such fairs , she returned to her house only after her chastity was despoilt . Wife of Prithviraj Singh , younger brother of Rai Singh , could save her chastity with great difficulty.<sup>98</sup>

#### FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

The public celebrations of *Nauroz* (the Persian New Year day ) brought pompous enjoyments for many days.<sup>99</sup> The queens and the princesses witnessed this from separate enclosures. They celebrated it themselves also inside the harem . For this , the ladies of the nobility of the court were required to attend the royal harem . They brought presents for the royal ladies and in return , received robes of honour . They remained within the seraglio till the celebrations lasted . They were entertained by dancing and singing girls . Ultimately , they

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97 Manucci , I,p.188.

98 Tod , I,pp.345-46. These incidents were , however , discredited by A.L. Srivastava, (Studies in Indian History , pp.135-36).

99 Religion and Politics , p.94 , n.3 on the authority of Fawaid-ul-Fuad ,p.127 (celebrations for four days); GHN, p.179 (for 17 days) . Hawkins, p.117; De Laet , p.100 (both for 18 days).Ain. ,I,p.286; Tuzuk , I,pp.48-49(for 19 days). Monserrate , p.175 ; Manrique , II,p.192 ; Thevenot , p.71 (for nine days) . Manucci , II , p.322 (for six to nine days) .

departed with presents known as *khichri* (mixture of gold and silver coins and precious stones).¹⁰⁰ Even the religious festivals like *Shab-i-barat* and *Id* had less of serenity and more of pomp and grandeur in their celebrations by the royal harem . While state banquets , rejoicings and exchange of gifts marked the *Id* celebrations , the celebration of *Shab-i-barat* was conspicuous by the extensive fire work.

RECREATION

Enjoying more freedom as compared to that of their counterparts in the Sultanate period , the Mughal ladies whiled away their time in outdoor recreations like sight-seeing , picnics , boating , garden-parties and even hunting.¹⁰¹ During his sojourn in Gujarat, Jahangir was entertained for some days by one of his queens named Khair-un-nisa Begam in the garden of her father. There was sumptuous feasting . The King was presented with jewels , pieces of richest fabric , horses of highest value , all valuing not less than four lac rupees . The King in return , gave her a chaplet of pearl valuing five lac rupees.¹⁰² Shah Jahan laid out many gardens - *Anguri Bagh* in

100 Manucci , II,pp.322-23 ; T.A., (De) , II, pp.559-60 ; also Monserrate, pp.175-76 ; Thevenot , pp.70-71.

101 GHN,p.104 (Babur's excursion with harem-ladies to Dholpur) and pp.190-91 (for their excursion with Humayun). Humayun , in fact is credited with the introduction of river picnics (Ashraf , p.232) . A.N. , (Bev.) ,III ,pp.543 , 889 (their excursion to gardens with Akbar) ; Tuzuk , I,pp.106-07 (their sojourn to Kabul with Jahangir and merriment at *Shaharara Bagh*), also pp.384-86 and II,p.199 ; Bernier , pp.350-51 , 361 (for Aurangzeb's journey to Kashmir and Lahore with Roshanara and other ladies) .

102 Price , pp.202-04.

Agra Fort, *Shalimar Bagh* at Lahore and another at Badli Sarai - for the enjoyment of the harem-ladies.¹⁰³ They went along with the Emperor on his hunting trips also. Nurjahan herself was a very good shot. She killed many tigers on different occasions. Her success in hunting brought her costly presents from her husband.¹⁰⁴

Another amusement of these ladies was to lighten large torches made of wax or oil at night. As per Manucci's estimation, the expenses on this amounted to more than one lac and fifty thousand rupees.¹⁰⁵ People used to illuminate the bazars (*Ain-bandi*) to mark the days of festivity. The practice was made more extensive by Maham Begam, wife of Humayun. At her initiative the King's palace, the houses of the nobles and also the residences of the soldiers were illuminated. After this, such illuminations became common in India.¹⁰⁶

MODE OF TRAVEL

Purdah and inaccessibility was the yardstick of their respectability. Hence, these ladies, generally, travelled by

103 Lahori, I, Pt. II, pp. 240-41; Latif, pp. 140-41 and n. (for *Shalimar Bagh*).

104 *Tuzuk*, I, pp. 129-30, 203-04, 348, 375, also II, pp. 73-74. Also Chittraman Kayath, "Chahar Gulshan", fol. 156; Mulla Kami Shirazi, "Fateh Nama-i-Nurjahan Begam", fols. 31-32.

105 Manucci, II, p. 318.

106 *GHN*, p. 113, n. 3.

veiled palanquins and covered wagons. There were other modes called *dolas* or *hindolas* , *palkis* and *dolis*.¹⁰⁷ Ibn Batuta described the *dolas* of ladies as having the shape of a cot , knitted with silken threads , covered by bent stick and overhung with silken curtains.¹⁰⁸

It is revealed from the writings of the contemporary European travellers that the Mughals introduced new modes , besides the old ones , for the travel of their ladies . They were *chaudol* , *khajwah* (capacious litters suspended between two camels or elephants) , *hauda* (used for elephant ride) *mikdembers* (a type of *hauda*) and *amaris* (a covered *hauda* or litter) which suited their showy behaviour . There was another carriage with wheels pulled by female attendants . It carried the princesses inside the houses of the nobles after they alighted from the palanquins at their gates . Nurjahan , in her exquisite style , used an English coach which was presented to her by Sir Thomas Roe . A number of camels ,

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107 Palanquins were covered litters carried on shoulders by six or eight men . They were used for long distances. *Hindolas* and *dolas* were like palanquins and were used for short distances . See Ibn Batuta , p.79 ; M.A. , (Tr.) , p.103 ( for *palki doli* and *dola* ) . Thevenot , p.76; Mundy, II, pp.189-91; Ovington , I , p.113 ; Della Valle, I , p.31 (for palanquins ) . Manucci , II, pp.330-31 ( for covered seats with peeping windows having netting of gold) ; Sarkar , Fall, I , p.334 ( for covered wagons ) .

108 Ibn Batuta , p.122 and n.1.

elephants and horses were maintained by the Emperors for this purpose .<sup>109</sup> The striking feature with regard to all of them was their scintillating decoration with gold, jewels, precious stones and looking-glass-carvings, gold or silk nets, velvet cushions, embroidered tapestries , beautiful fringes and tassels and so on and so forth . The animals were decked with bells , rich trappings and multi-coloured mantles that brought out vividly the grand living style of these ladies.<sup>110</sup>

A royal lady moved in a grand group, surrounded by eunuchs, female guards , prominent nobles on elephant , horse or camel backs or on foot, making frantic efforts to guard her from any intruder, to clear the way by shouting , pushing and jostling people and also by getting water sprinkled in front to lay the dust . Describing Roshanara's journey to Kashmir alongwith Aurangzeb in 1664 A.D., Bernier wrote :

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109 Mundy , II, p.191 (for *khajwah*) ; Bernier , pp. 371-73 (for description of *chaudol*, *khajwah* and *mikdember*); Monserrate, p.79 (for *hauda*) ; Tavernier , I , p.313 (for special wheeled carriage) ; Della Valle , I, pp.31, 62 (for elephants and coaches) ; Manucci , II , pp.66-67 (for elephant litter . He called it *pitambar*).M.A., (Tr.) , p.103 (for *chaudol*). Nijat-ul-Rashid ,p.460 ; Careri, pp.227, 370, n.77 (for *amaris*). Roe , II, p.324 (for Nurjahan's coach). After Jahangir, the use of coaches seemed to have become out of fashion.

110 Bernier, pp.371-72; Monserrate, p.79; Tavernier , I, p.313; Manucci , II, pp.66-67.

Stretch imagination to its utmost limits and you can conceive no exhibition more grand and imposing than when Rauchenara Begam , mounted on a stupendous 'Pegu' elephant and seated in a *Mikdember* , blazing with gold and azure ... followed by five or six other elephants...nearly as resplendent as her own and filled with ladies attached to her household ...(then) chief eunuchs , richly adorned and finely mounted a troop of female servants, Tartars and Kachmerys, fantastically attired and riding handsome pad horses ...several eunuchs on horseback , accompanied by a multitude of Pagys ... for ... clearing the road... followed by...fifteen or sixteen females of quality... with a grandeur of appearance , equipage and retinue more or less proportionate to their rank...Their is something very impressive of state and royalty in the march....

Manucci's elaboration of Jahanara's going to court is equally high sounding ; with "much cavalry and infantry and many eunuchs" ; with sprinkling of water on the roads ; with her *palki* decked with rich cloth or net of gold , sometimes ornamented with precious stones ; with eunuchs driving away flies with the help of peacock feathers having handle adorned with gold and silver and shouting for clearing the way and so on.¹¹² Such were the etiquettes of the time that if any nobleman happened to pass that way , he stood with hands crossed out of respect. In case the princess wanted to honour him, then she sent *pani* to him wrapped in gold brocade bag.¹¹³ The wives of the nobles imitated the ladies of royalty .

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111 Bernier, pp.372-73 ; Manucci , II,pp.66-67.  
 112 Manucci , I,p.212 ; also Monserrate , p.79 (for general description) .  
 113 Manucci , I,p.212.

## UNSATIETY AND REACTION

Inspite of all luxuries and resources at their command , the harem-women were an unsatiated lot. According to Pelsaert:

These wretched women wear indeed ... the most expensive clothes , eat the daintiest food and enjoy all worldly pleasure except one and for that one they grieve saying they would willingly give everything in exchange for a beggar's poverty.<sup>114</sup>

Such unsatiety is more revealing in the writings of contemporary chroniclers of the Mughal period. There are many examples which show that majority of these ladies maintained only an outward docility while they were always on the look out to satisfy their natural desire. Manucci was the physician of the royal harem. He has narrated about one Dil-jo, a female servant of Shah Alam's harem suffering from a strange disease which got cured after she got married to a male-slave on his recommendation. After that he found many other fellow maid-servants pretending to be ill and imploring him to suggest the same remedy.<sup>115</sup> He mentioned about harem ladies getting the vicarious satisfaction by his mere touch. When he extended his hand behind the curtain to feel their pulse for diagnosis, they pressed and kissed it and even softly bit it. At times they applied it to their breasts too.<sup>116</sup> Coryat, writing at the time of Jahangir, mentioned about the checks being imposed on entry

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114 Pelsaert , p.66.

115 Manucci,II,pp.372.

116 Ibid.,pp. p.329.

of virile objects inside the harem for fear of their 'unnatural abuse'. Writing fifty years hence, Manucci corroborated the same being followed in the Mughal harem.¹¹⁷

There are references of secret love-affairs of these ladies when messages were sent through slave girls.¹¹⁸ The travellers also mentioned about smuggling of men inside the harem as referred to earlier.¹¹⁹ Ghasiti Begam, the daughter of Alivardi Khan (*Nawab* of Bengal) was notorious for her sensual pursuits. Her husband Newazish Mahmud Khan was given to feminine joy. Hence Ghasiti Begam was always ready to listen to petition of any good looking man. It was believed that she used to send invitations and messages and a "stout, handsome man was not always safe in the streets".¹²⁰ They freaked out, at times, under some pretext. In one of the readings of the time of Aurangzeb, twelve nobles went to Dilkush garden in Delhi for flirting. One of them was caught red-handed because the woman he was teasing, turned out to be his wife. Interestingly, the lady herself was an adulteress and had gone there with the same

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117 Coryat, pp.278-79; Manucci,II, p.329.

118 Manucci,II pp.200-01, 176(for his own love affair with the widowed daughter of Dindar Khan and secret love affairs of daughter of Chief *Qazi* respectively. He even solemnized her marriage without knowing about it).

119 Refer supra, p.185 and f.n.39. Though the authenticity of many of such scandals cannot be tested since they were based on hearsays, nonetheless, the very fact that they became the talk of the public, they indicate the sexual unsatiety of these ladies.

120 Siyar, (N.M.),I, p.422 and n.23.

motive.<sup>121</sup> References also appear of these ladies having unnatural relations with eunuchs or the prevalence of lesbianism.<sup>122</sup> Jahanara was even scandalized of having incestuous connection with Shah Jahan.<sup>123</sup> In the later Mughal period, *Khanazads* and *Salatins* provided good substitutes for these ladies to gratify their desires. *Khanazads* were men like foster-brothers who were born and brought up within the harem.

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121 Manucci, II, pp.435-36. See also Ovington, I, pp.93-94 for a similar narration.

122 Compare Mandelslo, who observed, "They (women) have also a great kindness for the Eunuchs in whose custody they are, to engage them to afford their more liberty in their restraint, which they brook so ill, that in those parts a man would think polygamy should rather be permitted to women than (than) the men." (p.64). Also Pelsaert, p.66; Manucci, II, p.74. See also Elliot, H.M., "Institutes of Jahangir", in E&D, VII, Appendix, p.505 (for two incidents of amorous affairs with eunuchs during Jahangir's reign); Hilde, op. cit., pls. 33,34 (Showing paintings of lesbianism of Jahangir's time); Tarikh-i-Ahmad Shah, (E&D, VIII), pp.113-14, (for Javed Khan as gallant of Qudsia Begam, mother of Emperor Ahmad Shah). For Mughlani Begam's objectionable relations with eunuchs and others, see Ganda Singh, p.142; H.R.Gupta, op.cit., pp.122,141,154; Sarkar, Fall, II, pp.35-37.

123 Bernier tops in scandalizing this affair (Bernier, p.11). Manucci, termed Bernier's statement totally wrong considering it to have been founded on the talk of low people (Manucci, I, pp.208-9). So is the view of Catrou who considered it "a popular rumour which never had any other foundation than in the malice of the courtiers." (Bernier, p.11, n.1). Tavernier (I, p.275) also made reference of the prevailing suspicion of her having improper relation with her father, though he did not give his own view. But, his translator V. Ball (I, p.276 f.n.1) considers it a mere court gossip, so does B.P. Saksena (op.cit., pp.338-42). Richard Temple also regarded it "scandalous gossip". (The Indian Antiquary, 1915, pp. 111-12). But V.A. Smith, relying on the evidence of De Laet and Thomas Herbert, held, "Although it may be reasonably regarded as improbable, it cannot be dismissed summarily as incredible." (The Indian Antiquary, 1914, pp.240-44).

Salatins were the descendants of the earlier Emperors, going back to the time of Shah Jahan. Since many of them were married to princesses, they were confined within the palace so as to check the possibility of their being used by ambitious nobles. Because of their familiarity these *Khanazads* and *Salatins* were an easy excess for the harem ladies.¹²⁴

Under Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs',¹²⁵ the social need, which entails the desire for social recognition, comes only after the fulfilment of basic and security needs. Sex was the basic need unfulfilled for these ladies. Thus, deprived of the basic need, these ladies neither craved for having a social recognition for themselves nor did they try to achieve one.

Drinks and other intoxicants provided a good diversion to the craving hearts of these harem-ladies. The ladies of Sultanate period were also not free from these vices but, they became more pronounced during the Mughal period. Writing about the time of Jahangir, Pelsaert observed :

In the cool of the evening, they (the noble ladies) drink a great deal of wine, for the women learn the habit quickly from their husbands and drinking has become very fashionable in the last few years.¹²⁶

The addiction became worse and the ladies called for these intoxicants stealthily. So much so that during the time of
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124 Lal, *Harem*, pp.181,199; Manucci, I, p.210 (about Jahanara-Dulera affair. The latter was a *Khanazad*).

125 Maslow is the renowned human behavioural scientist of the twentieth century.

126 Pelsaert, p.65.

Aurangzeb , the eunuchs had tough time in checking intoxicants like wine , opium , *bhang* , nutmegs and drugs being smuggled inside the harem.<sup>127</sup> Manucci wrote about the excessive drinking of Udaipuri Mahal and Jahanara . Jahanara virtually had to be lifted to her bed after drinks . In order to replenish her quota , she not only distilled wine herself but also imported it from Persia , Kabul and Kashmir. <sup>128</sup> In the later Mughal period , Lal Kanwar's losing senses because of excessive drinking is well known.<sup>129</sup> There are numerous paintings of the time which also throw ample light on their drinking habit and other addictions . <sup>130</sup>

The enjoyment of material pleasures in the most magnificent and lustrous way became the only aim of the life of most of the harem-ladies . Pelsaert summed up their life like this :

Their Mahal are adorned internally with lascivious sensuality , wanton and reckless festivity , superfluous pomp , inflated pride and ornamental dainties . <sup>131</sup>

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- 127 Manucci , II,p.328.
- 128 Ibid.,pp.99-100 (for Udaipuri) and I,p.211(for Jahanara).
- 129 Khafi Khan , (Text) , Pt. II , p.690.
- 130 Goetz , Herman , Art and Architecture of Bikaner State, pp.174-75 ; Lal, Harem , Pl. 8; Randhawa , Pls. 26,28 (showing women smoking *hookah* ).
- 131 Pelsaert , p.64.

Equally revealing is Manucci's description who observed :

Thus the women , being shut up with this closeness and constantly watched , and having neither liberty nor occupation , think of nothing... but malice and lewdness... If they have any other thought , it was to regale themselves with quantities of delicious stews ; to adorn themselves magnificently , either with clothes or jewellery , pearls etc. , to perfume their bodies with odours and essences of every kind... to enjoy the pleasure of the comedy and the dance, to listen to tales and stories of love, to recline upon beds of flowers , to walk about in gardens , to listen to the murmur of the running waters <sup>132</sup> to hear singing , and other similar pastimes.

In short , with all this glamour , lethargy and relaxation , they pined to bring the heaven down to the earth . But destined to be only *harris* for the enjoyment of the Kings , princes and the nobles , they themselves remained a starved lot and at times , they even stooped too low for the satisfaction of their basic desire . Amidst such a life style of self-conceit and petty pursuits , barring a few exceptions , they remained the objects of sensual pleasure of the harem owners .

#### NEGLECTED LIFE

In the whole set up of harem system , the society did not seem to have ever felt that women too could have an emotional world of their own , an urge to be free and yearning to be exclusive claimant of their master's love . Their sentimentality seemed to have been buried so deep under the layers of social apathy and negation that women of the harem themselves appeared to have accepted the subordination they

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132 Manucci , II,p.329.

were subjected to, as their *fait accompli* .

A life of luxury and pomp without any worthwhile capability cannot provide, to anybody, a permanent social status. The life of the harem-ladies provided a testimony to this . It is too well known how the harem of the last Sultanate King Ibrahim Lodi became a part of war-booty-distribution-spree undertaken by Babur . These ladies were still lucky since they found Mughals as the successor to their master and hence , got a secure place to live in , though most of them became dancing or slave girls. But the ladies of the later Mughal period had neither any capability to fend for themselves nor any powerful King to look forward to for a safe haven. They could not maintain their superficial awe in the society because of the declining power and the diminishing resources of their masters.¹³³ The plunder by the invaders like Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali and reckless squander of royal treasury by the King and his harem-inmates brought the resources to almost a total depletion .¹³⁴ Therefore , in 1757 A.D., during the reign of Alamgir II (1754-59 A.D.) , when the kitchen did not run for three days , the princesses , unable to bear the starvation , rushed out of the palace to the city in
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133 Tarikh-i-Alamgir Sani, (E & D , VIII), p.142 ; Sarkar , Fall, II , pp.149, 174-75; Spear , Percival , Twilight of the Mughals , pp.28,60-61 ; Lal , Harem , p.152.

134 Jourdain , p.165; Hawkins , p.104;Bernier , p.222 ; Manucci, II,pp.315-16; Moosvi , p.268 (all for huge harem expenses) . Lockhart , L.,Nadir Shah , p.152, n.5 ; Anand Ram Mukhlis , Tazkira , (Tr.) ,pp.88-90; Sarkar ,Fall ,I,p.3; Irvine , II,pp.371-73; Haig, IV, pp.362-63 (for loot of Nadir Shah) . For Abdali's plunder , see Sarkar , Fall , II, p.91.

total disregard of purdah . Luckily , the fort gates were closed and hence , they remained in men's quarters for a day and a night . It was with great persuasion that they could be prevailed upon to return to their quarters . <sup>135</sup> It was clear that it would not be possible to keep a large number of women and eunuchs confined , hungry and naked , within the harem enclosures for long . The day showed its face very soon when , at the fall of Abdullah , one of the Sayyid brothers in 1720 A.D. , as soon as the news of the his captivity reached Delhi , his large harem was in dismay and barring a few , a majority of the ladies made best of the opportunity . They seized whatever they could and disguising themselves under the cover of veils and sheets , ran away before the royal guards arrived.<sup>136</sup> Such incidents of the ladies coming out of the harem continued even after that . Since these ladies had not learnt any skill or developed any vocation to fall back upon in rainy days, they could not earn a decent living for themselves. They did not stand a chance of a decent marriage either. The only way left for them was to change the course of history and instead of dancing girls and prostitutes visiting the royal palaces, it was now the royal ladies who , out of their sheer helplessness , joined the profession of dance and prostitution. The eunuchs took to dancing and singing as *bhands* at the same time . Thus , the vast harems of the royalty and nobility got lost in the crowd. This explains the preponderance of *bhands*,  
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135 Sarkar , Fall , II, p.26.

136 Khafi Khan , (Text) ,Pt.II , pp.933-34.

pimps ,procurers and prostitutes in Delhi and other cities of northern India after the decline of Mughal power.¹³⁷

B. PURDAH IN PRACTICE

The Qoranic theory behind purdah has already been discussed in the first chapter. Here an attempt is made to describe its practice.

DEVELOPMENT

In the Indian conditions , purdah among the Muslim women became common . A girl started observing seclusion near her puberty and generally , continued to adhere to it till her death. Though the tenets of the Qoran allowed her to dispense with it after she passed the child bearing age , but by that time she got so much used to it that she felt more comfortable living in seclusion than out of it .¹³⁸

Two factors were mainly responsible for this . Firstly , since the royalty and nobility religiously practised it to maintain their exclusiveness , it came to be regarded as a symbol of respectability . It percolated down but only to the extent the lower classes were able to afford it . Secondly , the threat of invaders and also the sensual laxity and outrages perpetrated by the Muslim royalty and nobility of the Sultanate and the Mughal periods had instilled a sense of insecurity among the Muslim subjects , as also among the Hindus.

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137 Lal,Harem , p.198.

138 Meer Hassan Ali , I,pp.322-23.

Consequently they relegated their women meekly behind the purdah so as to save them from the lustful eyes of these masters.<sup>139</sup> The more was the slackening of the morals, the stricter became the rules of women-seclusion.

A majority of the Muslim population of India were the Hindu converts. These Neo-Muslims were more zealous in following the tenets of the 'Faith' embraced than those to whom it came as a matter of course. Such persons enforced the purdah norms most assiduously upon their women-folk.

There was a direct nexus between the rules of Muslim marriage and purdah. The Qoran has prescribed the list of prohibited relations with whom one can not enter into matrimonial alliance. Such persons are called *mahrims* (forbidden). Purdah from such persons was only a matter of routine and not strictly enforced. All others i.e. those with whom matrimonial alliance can be established are called *na-mahrims*. Purdah was strictly propounded from such persons. The contemporary society tried to compensate itself for the weakening moral values of the men-folk by over-emphasizing the chastity and morality of a girl. Purdah was taken as the safest instrument to avoid contact with the *na-mahrims*. Under the conditions, the men-folk not only refrained from giving social freedom to their women but also abstained from marrying the ladies who enjoyed such liberties.<sup>140</sup>

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139 Meer Hassan Ali, I, pp.317-18.

140 Ashraf, p.175.

OBSERVANCE

From the beginning , the royal and aristocratic classes were more rigid in adhering to the rules of purdah . Not only the walls of the harem became higher and stronger with the passage of time , the restrictions imposed also increased successively . So strict was their seclusion that even when they fell ill , the attending doctors were not allowed to touch and feel their pulse. Therefore , for their examination , a handkerchief was first wrapped all over the body of the patient , this cloth was then dipped into a jar of water and it was through its smell that they were required to diagnose the disease and prescribe the medicine .¹⁴¹ Later on , some selected physicians like Bernier and Manucci were allowed to feel the pulse of the harem-ladies . But such special privilege was given to them only after an established familiarity and a long testing . They were also subjected to surprise checks . Manucci narrated that once when he stretched his hand inside the curtain to feel the pulse of a lady-patient, it turned out to be the hand of Shah Alam himself.¹⁴² Nonetheless , these physicians were not permitted to see the ladies . Whenever their services were required inside the harem , their heads were covered by the thick shawl hanging

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141 Marshall , pp.327-28.

142 Manucci , II,p.373.

down to their waist or feet and were led in and brought out like blind men by the eunuchs.<sup>143</sup> The ladies too were such touch-me-nots that if they were to show some ailing part of their body to the doctor they would see to it that he could see only that part . Even the old mother of Shah Alam , who needed to be operated upon for gout twice a year, would put her arm out from the curtain , only uncovering two fingers wide of the affected part and the rest of it would be carefully covered with cloth .<sup>144</sup>

The whole outer world was inaccessible for these ladies . If ever they moved out , it was in covered *palkis* and *dolas* surrounded on all sides by alert guards . So much so that if they were to travel on elephants , they would ride them inside a tent pitched near the palace gate. Even the mahouts of the elephants covered their heads so that they could not see the royal ladies while they rode the animals. On the elephant - backs they sat inside covered *haudas* .<sup>145</sup> Their slave girls were also made to move in covered conveyances. The slave girls of Tatar Khan , a noble of Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq were reportedly carried in locked conveyances lest the eyes of *na-mahrans* would fall on them.<sup>146</sup>

Purdah , in-fact , had come to be regarded as a symbol of honour. The worst punishment they could think of for their

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143 Manucci , II , pp.328-29,333; Bernier , p.267.

144 Manucci , II , p.331.

145 Ibid., p.311.

146 Afif, (Text), pp.393-94.

enemies was to parade their women-folk unveiled and best honour they could extend to a person was by asking their harem-ladies to unveil themselves before him.¹⁴⁷

The stress on observance of purdah differed during different periods. Muhammad bin Tughlaq , for example , was so scrupulous in this regard that when he entered his harem , he was careful that his eyes did not fall on a *na-mahram*.¹⁴⁸ But such strictness was not found during the time of the Mughals . With their Turkish bent of mind , the first two Mughal Emperors relaxed undue restrictions of purdah on the harem-ladies . "It appears probable " , wrote Annette Beveridge , "that there was no complete seclusion of Turki women from the outside world. The ladies may have veiled themselves but...they received visitors more frequently" She noted how the senior nobles and officers of Babur regaled harem-ladies in Kabul with interesting stories about India.¹⁴⁹ According to Gulbadan, the ladies of royal harem of Humayun mixed freely with their friends and visitors ; went out dressed like males at times ; enjoyed picnics and music with their mates ; played polo and so on and so forth . In *Meena Bazar* , all ladies appeared without purdah following the principle, as narrated by the author of Qanun-i-Islam , that "Women need not be veiled

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147 T.A. , (De) , III , Pt.II , pp. 804-05 ; Zafar-ul-Waleh , (Rizvi , UTKB , Pt.II) ,pp.445-46 ; Tuzuk , I,p.351 . See also P.Thomas , p.252.

148 Barani , (Text) , p.506 ; Zafar-ul-Waleh , (Rizvi , UTKB, Pt.II) , pp.445-46.

149 GHN , Introduction , p.7.

before the king or a bridegroom , both known as Shah".150

There are , at least , two clear examples , those of Razia<sup>151</sup> and Nurjahan <sup>152</sup> , when a lady came out of the covering of the *burqa* and discharged the administrative responsibilities like their male counterparts. Nurjahan even came to the balcony for *Jharokha-Darshan* . Rajput queens in the Mughal harems did not observe purdah on many occasions.<sup>153</sup> Similarly , the Kashmiri women guards of the palace were, generally, found without purdah .<sup>154</sup> The lively painting of Maham Anaga in Akbar-Nama with her impressive facial contours and white and yellow robes, clearly indicates that it could not be the work of imagination but of some one who had observed her closely.<sup>155</sup> In the later Mughal period , Mughlani Begam looked after administration of Panjab without observing any purdah.<sup>156</sup> On the other hand , their are examples like that of Chand Bibi who , inspite of her active political career, supported a veil.<sup>157</sup> Similarly, Zeb-un-nisa

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150 Jafar Sharif , p.80.

151 T.N. ,(Raverty) , I,pp.638,643 ; Ferishta , I,p.121 ; "Tarikh-i-Haqqi", Per.Ms.No.89, Cat.No.537, OPL , fol.8a. She broke the purdah norms in the later part of her career . Sirhindi , (p.25) , however, confirmed about her coming out but "with veils on ".

152 Beni Prasad , p.159.

153 Tod , II,p.355.

154 Manucci , II,p.328.

155 Geeti Sen, Paintings from the Akbar Nama , Pls. 16-18.

156 Sarkar ,Fall , II,p.42.

157 Ferishta , II,p.168.

helped Aurangzeb in administration and court discussions and yet appeared in purdah .¹⁵⁸ Taj Mahal, the chief queen of Emperor Muhammad Shah was so strict in her observance of purdah that she would not take a male child in her lap and would cover her face even before a boy of four . Even when she was on her death bed , she permitted no doctor to feel her pulse.¹⁵⁹ As a general rule , since the harem was inhabited by women only, no purdah was needed within the harem except when persons like physicians , goldsmiths , jewellers , artisans and masons visited the seraglio on asking . But , in the later half of seventeenth century and after when *Khanazads* , *Salatins* and other *na-mahram* relatives also started staying within the palace , the contact among them was discouraged by the observance of purdah within the harem also.¹⁶⁰ In the later Mughal period , because of moral laxity , political disorder and financial constraints the purdah-norms for the ladies of royalty and nobility also got slackened . When prince Jahan Shah made a surprise attack on his brother , Emperor Jahandar Shah , the Emperor ran away covered under a *burqa* while his lady Lal Kanwar fled with the crowd without any veil.¹⁶¹

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158 Magan Lal , Dewan of Zebunnisa , p.13.

159 Zahir-ud-din Azfari , Waqia-i-Azfari , p.26.

160 Lal, Harem , p.115 ; Ovington , I,p.92 (for women of Aurangzeb closely guarded and not visible to anybody except the Emperor and the eunuchs ).

161 Siyar, (N.M.) , I,pp.31-32, also (Briggs ) , p.28.

Among the Muslims , in general , purdah was a common practice. The contemporary writers like Isami and Amir Khusrau vehemently advocated total seclusion of women so that they were free from all types of suspicions and allegations regarding their chastity . Khusrau , in his metaphoric expression, compared a free woman with a bitch in his Hasht Bahisht . Similarly , stressing the importance of *dupatta* ( an upper covering like a scarf ) in his another poem Matla-ul-Anwar , he likened it to the crown of a Sultan . He considered an unveiled face just like an uncovered food open for cats and dogs to smear. 162

Firoz Tughlaq enforced purdah on his subjects for the first time and forbade the Muslim women from visiting the tombs of the saints , considering this practice as un-Islamic.<sup>163</sup> Sultan Sikander Lodi continued these restrictions.<sup>164</sup> Akbar made the rule still harder . According to Badaoni , he ordained :

And if a young woman was found running about the streets and bazars of the town , and while so doing did not veil herself , or allowed herself to become unveiled ,... she was to go to the quarter of the prostitutes , and take up the profession .<sup>165</sup>

It was directed that a woman should live within the four walls

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162 Hasht Bahisht, pp.27,29; Matla-ul-Anwar ,pp.224 , 226 ; Isami, (Text) , p.130.

163 Futuhāt , (Text), rule 10 , pp.8-9 . Also Afif, (Text), pp.373-74 ; T.A., (De) , I, pp.259-60 .

164 Ferishta , I,p.343.

165 Badaoni , II,p.405.

of her house , keep herself covered with *chadar* , use covered *amari* while on journey and travel only under the supervision of a man.¹⁶⁶

Numerous references of observance of purdah are found in the writings of the contemporary foreign travellers . Barbosa wrote that the Mohammadans of his time kept their women carefully guarded.¹⁶⁷ Thereafter , a number of them - Terry and Della Valle of the time of Jahangir , De Laet of the time of Shah Jahan , Manucci of the time of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb , Ovington , Thevenot , Careri , Fryer and Marshall of the time of Aurangzeb and Hamilton of the period of Aurangzeb and beyond (1666-1732 A.D.) - confirmed this view.¹⁶⁸ Many of them described categorically that purdah had come to stay as a symbol of decency , status and modesty and only women of easy virtues or of the poor families were seen out moving without veils .¹⁶⁹ The practice prevailed not only in the Delhi empire but also within the territories of other Muslim states in

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166 Nijat-ul-Rashid , p.460.

167 Barbosa , II, p.147, also I , p.121.

168 Terry , p.309 ; Della Valle , p.411 ; De Laet , p.81 ; Manucci , I,p.61 ; Ovington , I ,p.93 ; Thevenot , p.53 ; Careri , p.248 ; Fryer , II,pp.117-18 ; Marshall , p.328; Hamilton , I, p.163.

169 Terry , p.309 (he wrote , "The Mahometan women , except they bee dishonest or poor,come not abroad ."); De Laet, p.81 (he informed , "The Mahometan women do not come out into public unless they are poor or immodest; they veil their heads...") ;Careri , p.248 ( as per him , "The Mohometan women do not appear in publick , except only the vulgar Sort , and the leud Ones.").

India.<sup>170</sup> To maintain the sanctity of purdah , instructions were issued that elephants should not pass by the houses where ladies lived , without permission.<sup>171</sup> In another anecdote of the time of the *Nizamat* of Nawab Jafar Khan , an English factory chief wanted to construct two and three storeyed buildings near Hugli . Since high buildings endangered the privacy of the women of nearby houses , there was great opposition to this from the Muslim population . As a result , the Nawab had to issue orders to stop the construction.<sup>172</sup>

The women of the lower strata were comparatively freer from the restrictions of this seclusion . The women of agricultural and working classes lent a helping hand to their husbands in outdoor activities as well. Such women could not afford and so, did not support elaborate *burqa* . For them, covering of their head and a part of their face with their *dupatta* or other head dress, when they passed a stranger, was sufficient . There are abundant references to the common sight of women water-carriers walking along the street without purdah.<sup>173</sup>

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170 Bamzai , p.467 (for purdah in Kashmir excepting lower classes) ; Sastri , p.316 (he quoted Varthema (1505 A.D.) having written about the Muslim ladies of Bijapur that they "go with their faces quite covered according to the custom of Damascus").

171 Mirza Nathan , II,p.523.

172 Riyazu-s-Salatin , pp.31-32.

173 Barani , (Text),p.56 ; Ain-ul-Mulk Abdullah , Insha-i-Mahru, Letter No.94 ,p.179 ; Ovington , I,p.142. See also Lal, Early Muslims,p.149.

IMPACT

Purdah , as an institution and in the form it was adopted by the Muslim society , did a great harm to the Mohammadan women and their standing in society. The conservatives might support its observance as a part of the social need of the time. But the very fact that it curtailed woman's freedom of growth and advancement and made her subservient to the will of man was a great blow to her independent status in society.¹⁷⁴ It segregated the whole gamut of social life into two exclusive spheres, outdoor and indoor. The male dominant society closed the gates of outer world of action and challenges for the woman and confined her within the four walls of the house. The closed and dingy atmosphere within was not conducive for her physical and mental growth. Not only her health suffered but her mental development also became circumscribed. She had to satisfy herself with the roles of a serving mother, docile wife and tolerant daughter-in-law forbearing the pangs of torture and neglect and of consciousness of being an unwanted and second-rate member of the society. She was denied the enlightenment of education and the upliftment of her personality . Thus, groping in the darkness of *zanana* with equally ignorant inmates and having been denied the company of men or the exposure to a wider horizon, superstitions, taboos and prejudices became a part of her life. In the long run, her development was

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174 Mazhar-ul-Haq Khan, p.19.

obstructed and she became totally dependent on man for meeting out even her basic needs.

The rigours of purdah were a little less stringent for the ladies of the higher strata. They had the facility of private coaching and exclusive entertainments. They were, however, deprived of the knowledge of the outside world and the experience of a mixed society.<sup>175</sup>

With the observance of purdah, Muslim women were destined to a life of prisoners suffering from feeble health, dulled senses, ignorance and prejudices.

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175 P.Thomas , P.252.

CHAPTER V
POLITICAL PROFILE

Prophet Mohammad had exhorted his wife Ayisha at the time of his death that women should not interfere in public affairs, yet she was instrumental in opposing Hazrat Ali's election to the Caliphate . Since then ,Muslim women have taken part in politics whenever opportunities appeared , despite disapproval and criticism from moralists , zealots and other vested interests. The Muslim women in India were no exception .Their role in the Politics of Delhi Sultanate and Mughal empire has been a well researched subject in various monographs dealing with various rulers and dynasties. A concise account is presented here for a fuller understanding of the status of Muslim women.

AN OVERVIEW

The Turks brought along with them the Perso-Arabic heritage and gradually, assimilated indigenous Indian traditions. They allowed women's participation in politics and accepted their right to sovereignty, drawing inspiration from the Iranian tradition .¹ The Afghans also allowed their ladies to have some say in political affairs . The Mughals permitted their ladies to enjoy political clout without a

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1 Two daughters of Khusrau Parvez - Puran Dukht and Arjumand Dukht - ascended the throne of Persia one after the other in the seventh century ( Habibullah , A.B.M., "Sultanah Raziah" , IHQ, Vol. XVI, No.1, March, 1940 , p.753).

right to sovereignty .2

The Muslim women influenced the politics of their respective times in three ways : a. actively participating in political activities as a sovereign ; b. working as regents of minor Kings or incapacitated Monarchs ; c. operating behind the scene as political manipulators . This influence of the women varied from time to time according to their personality, family connections , political situation and the character of Sultan or Emperor . The nature of this impact on the state also varied from time to time according to the motive and insight of the lady at the helm of affairs. At one time, by virtue of their intelligence, diplomacy and tact, they strengthened the empire but , at the other , by their intrigues and selfishness , they created more problems and weakened the fabric of political life. Right from the rule of Turks till the reign of Aurangzeb, the ladies of high birth , royalty and nobility participated in the political arena . In the post-Aurangzeb period , instead of queens , princesses or ladies of high birth , concubines and dancing girls of low origin became prominent in the power-politics. Being upstarts, they tried to grasp both power and pelf through their nefarious designs and intrigues, without any concern for the prestige of the state .

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2 Once Shah Begam of Badakhshan wrote to Babur that she being a woman could not attain sovereignty while her grand-son , Mirza Khan could hold it (Mirza Haider , (Tr.), p.203).

THE SULTANATE PERIOD

The earliest instance of a lady interfering in political activities in the Sultanate period was that of Shah Turkan .³ She was the wife of Iltutmish and mother of Rukn-ud-din Firoz. From a Turkish slave-maid she rose to the status of chief queen of Sultan Iltutmish .⁴ She wanted her son Rukn-ud-din to succeed while Iltutmish had nominated Razia as heir-apparent . She won over a section of nobility and with their support manipulated her son's succession.

Rukn-ud-din Firoz was totally incompetent . Shah Turkan concentrated all political authority in her hands and issued royal commands . she utilized her authority for settling her personal scores and exterminating her son's opponents . She tortured the inmates of the harem and executed some of them . She got Qutb-ud-din , another son of Iltutmish, blinded and ultimately killed . She conspired to eliminate Razia. Her reckless behaviour antagonized the nobles and provincial Governors . They rose in revolt and ultimately , she was overthrown . Rukn-un-din , in all

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3 Ahmad, M. Aziz (Political History and Institutions of the Early Turkish Empire of Delhi , p.191 ), name her Turkan Khatun. But as per T.N., ((Raverty), I, p.638), Turkan Khatun was the name of Razia's mother and not of this lady.

4 T.N., (Raverty) , I, p.630, 631, n.4 . He depicted her as "head" of the Sultan's harem while at p.638, he referred Razia's mother as "greatest" of the ladies . In the original text , the word used for Shah Turkan is "مهتر" (Mahtar) at p.181 and that for Razia's mother is "بنرگتر" (Bujurgtar) at p.185. Since the status for both could not be the same , it appears that Shah Turkan was his first concubine in point of time and age while Razia's mother was his chief wife . See also Isami, (Text) , p.128; Nigam, S.B.P., Nobility Under the Sultans of Delhi , p.28; Aziz Ahmad , p.188. Both these modern authors support Raverty's view.

probability , was also put to death .5

Razia <sup>6</sup> succeeded Rukn-ud-din Firoz . Her accession heralded a new epoch in the history of Muslim women in India and established woman's right to sovereign power. Her administrative qualities were visible even during the reign of her father . Since the late Sultan noticed in her indications of sovereignty and high spirit , inspite of her being a daughter , he groomed her to be his successor .<sup>7</sup> He made all efforts to give her proper training in administration . He allowed her to exercise authority in the affairs of the state. When he left Delhi for an expedition to Gwalior in 1231 A.D., she was left behind to manage the affairs at Delhi which she did with perfection . Therefore , when the Sultan returned from Gwalior-conquest , he directed Taj-ul-Mulk Mahmud , the *Mushrif-i-Mumalik* (Secretary of State) to draw a decree naming

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- 5 T.N., (Raverty) , I,pp.631-36; Sirhindi , pp.21-23; Ferishta , I,pp.120-21;T.A.,(De), I, pp.72-74; Badaoni , I,pp.97-98. Strangely , Isami totally overlooked her fair and foul activities.
- 6 Raverty in his translation of T.N., converts Razia into Raziyyat by contending that Raziyyat has a meaning while Razia does not have . But , it is not necessary that a name should have a meaning . Since she is famous in history as Razia , the same has been used in this study .
- 7 T.N.,(Raverty) , I,p.638. It is said that he even struck a coin in Razia's name to lend her popularity among the masses (Habibullah ,A.B.M.,The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India,p.114). Nelson Wright, (Coins and Metrology of the Sultans of Delhi ,p.40,n.161A), opined that Razia as Queen herself issued it and dated it 1237 A.D..

her as his heir-apparent .8

Theoretically and constitutionally , the Turks were not opposed to Razia's nomination nor did any Muslim jurist question its legality .⁹ However , they were men of the 'Man's' age and did not like a lady to rule them . They represented against this nomination to the Sultan . The Sultan silenced them explaining the incapability of his sons and the competence of Razia : "After my death , it will be seen that not one of them will be found to be more worthy of the heir-apparentship , than she , my daughter . "¹⁰ After the Sultan's death , they side-tracked her and raised Rukn-ud-din to throne . When Rukn-ud-din's indolence and Shah Turkan's reign of terror annoyed the nobles , she rose to the occasion and sought their support . It is said , she addressed the army from the *Jama Masjid* at Daulat Khan , reminded them of her father's good reign and his 'Will', promised to relieve them of the oppressive regime and resolved to abdicate if she failed to keep her promise. They lent support and elevated her

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8 T.N., (Raverty), I, p.638; T.A., (De), I, p.74; Isami, (Text), p.126 ; Ferishta , I, p.121. It is opined by some authors that he later on cancelled Razia's nomination and opted for Rukn-ud-din Firoz (Yusuf Ali, Medieval India, Social and Economic Conditions , p.76). This view is not supported by any of the contemporary authorities.

9 It was only 400 years later that Shaikh Abdul Haq expressed his surprise at the conduct of jurists and Shaikhs in giving this tacit approval to Razia's succession to throne, (Religion and Politics , p.172; Schimmel , A., Islam in the Indian Subcontinent , p.12 (hereafter cited as Islam).

10 T.N. , (Raverty) , I, pp.638-39 , n.4; also T.A. , (De) , I, pp.74-75; Isami, (Text), p.126.

to the throne .11

Her work as a sovereign is too well known to need mention . However, her attempt to organize a group loyal to her only proved her undoing . Malik Hindu Khan, a slave of Iltutmish and of Indian origin , continued to be her treasurer besides being in-charge of the fort of Uchh.<sup>12</sup> She appointed Jamal-ud-din Yaqut , an Abyssinian slave, to the high post of *Amir-i-Akhur* (the master of the imperial stables). Isami , followed by Sirhindi , Nizam-ud-din Ahmad, Ferishta and Badaoni charged Razia of too much intimacy with Yaqut and considered it an important factor leading to her fall .<sup>13</sup> Minhaj , with all praise for her qualities of head and heart,  
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11 Ibn Batuta, p.34; Isami, (Text), pp.126-27; T.N. , (Raverty), I, p.636; also Religion and Politics , p.136. As per Isami, she addressed the people and it was a people's rising . T.N. did not narrate about her having addressed to the people but indicated about people's rising . Nizami also considered it so basing his view on these authorities. As per Ibn Batuta , she addressed the *annas* who after listening to her agreed to appoint her as their ruler . The word *annas* literally means 'mankind' . This signified army or soldiers and not the people in general. This meaning is supported by the word *asakar* meaning 'armies' used in the very next line which runs: "When Rukn-ud-din was killed the armies (*asakar*) agreed unanimously to appoint his sister Raziya as ruler." *Asakar* is the plural of *askar* , the Arabic form of the Persian word *lashkar* meaning 'army' (Ibn Batuta , p.34, nn.2-4, 99, 104). This is a convincing view since the concept of people's rising for the political upheaval was unknown during those days . It must be the rising of the soldiers and *amirs* . In fact, Minhaj's description in very next para in the same page also points at this wherein he described how the soldiers and the *amirs* dethroned the King and Shah Turkan thereafter.

12 T.N., (Raverty) , II, pp.745-46. Imad-ud-din Raiham was another officer of Indian origin (Aziz Ahmad , p.200, n.1).

13 Isami, (Text), pp.130-31 ; Sirhindi , p.25; T.A., (De), I, p.73; Ferishta, I, pp.122-23; Badaoni , I, p.120.

lamented,"... but as she did not attain the destiny , in her creation , of being computed among men , of what advantage were all these excellent qualifications unto her ."14

Another lady participating in court politics was the wife of Malik Nizam-ud-din , a noble during the reign of Kaiqubad. She was the daughter of Fakhr-ud-din , the *Kotwal* of Delhi . She gained a complete hold on the administration of the royal harem and came to be regarded as queen-mother of the Sultan. Simultaneously , she also furthered the cause of her father and husband in the administration .15

Malika-i-Jahan , the wife of Jalal-ud-din , the mother of Rukn-ud-din Ibrahim and the mother-in-law of Ala-ud-din Khalji , played politics in the capacity of these three relations . During her husband's reign , she had complete sway over the administration . So much so that when once the King wished to be entitled *Al Mujahid Fi Sabilulah* (the fighter in the path of the Almighty) and thought that the proposal should come from the nobles , he sought her help. Malika-i-Jahan had such influence upon the nobility that she manoeuvred them to sponsor the proposal . However , the Sultan changed his mind and declined to accept the same .16 She could sense Ala-ud-din's plans and constantly warned her husband . Her

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14 T.N. , (Raverty), I, p.638, also (E&D, II), p.332. His translation is more clear : "...but she was not born of the right sex and so in the estimation of men all these virtues were worthless."

15 Barani, (Text) , p.134; Ferishta , I, p.154.

16 Barani , (Text) , pp.196-97 ; T.A., (De), I, pp.139-40.

influence embittered the relations between them .<sup>17</sup> She goaded her daughter to have a nagging attitude towards him .<sup>18</sup> After Jalal-ud-din's death in 1296 A.D., Sultan's eldest son Arkali Khan , a reputed soldier , could be best choice as his successor . He was at Multan . The queen neither waited for him nor did she consult any of the nobles and declared her infant son Rukn-ud-din Ibrahim as the next Sultan with herself as regent. She tried to win over the *amirs* by lavish gifts . However , her machinations failed and Ala-ud-din routed her . She fled to Multan. She realized her mistake and even sought Arkali's pardon .<sup>19</sup>

Ala-ud-din Khalji's despotism left little room for women's role in politics . Amir Khusrau recorded that his attack on Gujarat was partly due to the solicitation of Kamla Devi.<sup>20</sup> His chief queen Mahru intrigued for her brother Alp Khan. She managed the marriage of his two daughters to her two sons, prince Khizr Khan and prince Shadi Khan.<sup>21</sup> When Ala-ud-din fell ill , she conspired with her brother for securing the

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 17 Ferishta , I,pp.171-72.

18 Lal, Khaljis, pp.42-43; also Ibn Batuta , p.40. The author of Zafar-ul-Waleh ,(Rizvi,KKB,P.230), however, considered that Ala-ud-din's secret love for Mahru marred his domestic peace. Ala-ud-din married her later on.

19 Barani, (Text),pp.238-39; also T.A.,(De),I,p.152; Ferishta, I,p.182; Khazain-ul-Futuh , p.38.

20 Dewal Rani Khizr Khan ,(Rizvi, KKB) ,p.173;Lal, Khaljis, pp.297-98.

21 Dewal Rani Khizr Khan , (Rizvi , KKB) ,p.173; also Mirza, pp.101,119; Haig,III,pp. 118-19.

throne for her son Khizr Khan . Her plan misfired and consequently , Khizr Khan was imprisoned, blinded and then killed. ²² Mahru was also imprisoned .

Among the Tughlaqs , the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq is important for ladies' participation in court politics . It is surprising that none of his wives is mentioned in the historical chronicles. The very fact of his marriage is shrouded in mystery . From a passing reference of Afif, it appears that he did marry in early part of his father's reign.²³ But no details about this are recorded . The contemporary authorities mention the role played by his mother and sister . While the mother's role provided sublimity to women's participation , the sister , once again , drew it back to the narrow circles of selfish intrigues.

Makhduma-i-Jahan's direct interference in politics and the measures taken by Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq is nowhere mentioned . But Sultan had immense regard for her political acumen. Her counsel was an important factor for granting clemency by the Sultan to the rebel nobles like Ain-ul-Mulk , Ali Shah Kar , Hushang and Nusrat Khan .²⁴ Besides, she participated in day to day court life, received envoys (like Ibn Batuta) and royal guests and exchanged gifts with them.²⁵

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22 Ibn Batuta , pp.42-43. He named her Mahhaq instead of Mahru. See also Barani,(Text),pp.367-68 (he, however, wrote that Ala-ud-din himself had declared Khizr Khan as his heir-apparent).

23 Afif, (Text),pp.49,54.

24 Haig,III,p.160.

25 Prasad , Qaraunah Turks, I,p.310.

Khudavandzada , a sister of the Sultan appeared on the political scene after the death of Muhammad bin Tughlaq . She raised the claim of her son Dawar Malik for succession but the impending danger of Mongol invasion silenced her . Firoz Shah Tughlaq succeeded with the help of the nobles . He tried to keep her in good humour and got himself coronated through her. He visited her every Friday and discussed the issues of importance with her . In spite of this magnanimity shown towards her, the lady hatched a conspiracy to kill him . Luckily , the conspiracy was exposed and the Sultan escaped . She was imprisoned , her vast wealth was confiscated and her husband Khusrau Malik was banished.<sup>26</sup>

Among the Lodis, the ladies played varied political roles. While Shams Khatun was an instigator, Bibi Mattu held the command in the war field and Bibi Ambha was involved in succession politics .

Shams Khatun was chief queen of Bahlol Lodi . Her brother Qutb Khan was imprisoned while Bahlol Lodi was fighting against Mahmud Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur in 1457 A.D. . Meanwhile, Mahmud died and was succeeded by Muhammad Shah Sharqi. A peace was signed between the latter and Bahlol .But, when Bahlol was still on his way back , he received a letter from Shams Khatun asking him not to relax till her brother was freed . Her message was sufficient for the Sultan to retrace his steps and re-attack Jaunpur with greater force.<sup>27</sup>

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26 Afif, (Text), pp.45-46,100-04;also Jauhri,pp.10,15,38-39.

27 Niamatullah, (Roy), p.38; T.A., (De), I, p.343; Ferishta, I, pp.323-24; Abdullah, p.249; Halim, p.27; MUJ, Vol. No.2, Oct.,1938,pp.54-55.

Bibi Mattu, wife of Islam Khan Lodi, showed her heroism and leadership during the time of Bahlol Lodi in 1452 A.D.. Bahlol was away to Sirhind and there were only a few males in the fort of Delhi. Mahmud Sharqi of Jaunpur besieged the fort. Unnerved, Bibi Mattu rose to save the fort. She made the ladies to dress like men and take positions on the rampart of the fort. She gave guidance for each and every detail and then ordered beating of the drum, giving the semblance of victory for her forces. All this led Mahmud to raise the siege.²⁸

Bibi Ambha²⁹, another wife of Sultan Bahlol Lodi, was daughter of a Hindu goldsmith. After the death of Bahlol in 1489 A.D., among the hordes of contenders for the throne, she pressed the claim of her son Nizam Khan. Isa Khan, nephew of Bahlol and one of the contenders of throne, rebuked the lady telling her that a goldsmith's son was not worthy of throne. She won over the nobles and raised her son Nizam Khan to the throne under the title Sultan Sikander Lodi.³⁰

Ibrahim Lodi's mother played a negative role by poisoning Babur to avenge the death of her son.³¹

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28 Abdullah, pp.246-47; Ahmad Yadgar, p.311; Mushtaqi, (Rizvi, UTKB, Pt.I), pp.95-96 (he called her Bibi Mastu); also Halim, p.21 (he depicted her as widow of Sultan Shah Lodi and mother-in-law of Bahlol Lodi).

29 Niamatullah, (Roy), Introduction, p.xxiv; Ferishta, I, p.328 (named her Bibi Zeina). Haig, (III, p.235), named her Ziba; Ahmad Yadgar, (p.315), called her Hema; Halim, (p.58), called her Bibi Sonari. It seems that Bibi Ambha was competing on account of weak lineage as compared to lineage of other claimants. It will not be out of place to mention that different lineage groups jockeyed for power and influence from time to time.

30 Ferishta, I, pp.328-29; Niamatullah, (Roy), Introduction, p. xxiv; Halim, p.59; Lal, K.S., Twilight of the Sultanate, p.163.

31 B.N., (Bev.), II, pp.541-43.

## THE MUGHAL PERIOD

During Babur's time three generations of ladies - his maternal grand-mother , mother and wives - were actively involved in politics . Babur was only eleven years of age when his father died . Surrounded from all sides by enemies and rivals , it was through the wisdom and far-sightedness of his grand-mother Ehsan Daulat Begam that he steered clear of the rough political weather. "Few amongst women , "Babur himself wrote, "will have been my grandmother's equal for judgement and counsel . She was very wise and far-sighted and most affairs of mine were carried through under her advice . "32 Acting as the real head of affairs , she managed the administrative complexities with all tact and sagacity . She also foiled the conspiracy of Hasan to dethrone Babur .<sup>33</sup>

Babur's mother Qutlugh Nigar Khanam always shared her son's political vicissitudes and wanderings advising him in need and supporting him in adversity."She was", wrote Babur, "with me on most of my guerilla expeditions and throneless time... Few of her sex excelled her in sense and sagacity."<sup>34</sup>

Babur's Shia wife Maham Begam stood by him through all odds.<sup>35</sup> It was at her instance that Mir Khalifa's conspiracy fizzled out .<sup>36</sup> After Babur's death , she continued taking

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32 B.N., (Bev.), I, p.43.

33 Williams, R.,An Empire Builder of the Sixteenth Century, pp.34-36.

34 B.N. , (Bev.), I, p.21.

35 Ibid., p.358.

36 Prasad, Humayun ,pp.33-34,36,38; also Williams,pp.171-72.

active part in contemporary politics till her death .³⁷ In order to win over Yusufzai tribe ,³⁸ Babur married Bibi Mubarika of this tribe in 1519 A.D. .She helped him in ending the bitterness with Yusufzais .³⁹

Humayun's wives took active interest in the affairs of the state. Bega Begam's brother-in-law Zahid Beg was favoured when he was appointed Governor of Bengal which the latter declined . Humayun wanted to punish him but she interceded , though in vain, to seek the Emperor's pardon for him.⁴⁰ Hamida Banu kept him informed about the political developments during his illness .⁴¹ She interceded to save her recalcitrant brother Khwaja Muazzam .

Mahchuchak Begam , another wife of Humayun,was active at Kabul. Humayun had appointed Muhammad Hakim , her three years old son,as the nominal Governor of Kabul under the regency of Munim Khan. This arrangement was irksome for the lady and she contrived to free her son from the control of the regent . Munim Khan left for the court in 1561 leaving behind Ghani Khan , his son,as regent and helped by Abul Fath Beg . The new regent was weak . Mahchuchak conspired with other three nobles

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37 Banerji , S.K.,Humayun Badshah , II,p.314.

38 This was one of the most ferocious among the nomadic clans of the time. They inhabited the mountainous region north of Kabul river and stretched west from the Indus. They created a lot of problems for Babur (Augustus, II, pp.167 , 171).

39 B.N., (Bev.), I ,p.375; S.K. Banerji,II,p.322.

40 Prasad, Humayun,p. 123 and n.2; A.N., (Bev.),I,p.341.

41 Prasad, Humayun, p.257.

viz. Fath Beg , his father Fazl Beg and Wali Atgah . When once , Ghani Khan was temporarily absent from the town , she got the gates of the city closed for him with the help of these three nobles . Thereafter , she got exterminated Fath Beg and Fazl Beg . About the third counsel Wali Atgah , it was rumoured that he had a love-affair with Mahchuchak. So, Akbar sent Munim Khan with a force to set things right. But the royal forces were routed at the hands of this lady and Munim had to flee for life . She then put all those, who were suspected of infidelity , to death . Wali Atgah was one of them . Haider Qasim became her new advisor to whom, it is learnt, she got married later on .<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, Abul Ma'ali, a rebel , being pursued by the imperial forces , took refuge at Kabul . Impressed by his affirmations of faithfulness , she married her daughter to him . But the latter proved treacherous . He murdered both Mahchuchak and Haider Qasim and usurped all authority . Thus he "fixed a term to the sanguinary deeds of this terrible woman " .<sup>43</sup>

Khanzada Begam , a sister of Babur, was divorced by her first husband Shaibani Khan for her favouring Babur in disputed matters .<sup>44</sup> During Humayun's time, she was made the principal lady of the palace after Maham's death in 1532-33 A.D.. Her help was frequently sought by Humayun and his

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42 GHN , Introduction , p.63.

43 Augustus, I, pp.101-02; A.N., (Bev.), II, pp.288-93, 317-19; M.U., I, pp.134-39 ; also V.A.Smith , pp.46-47 ; Haig , IV, p.85.

44 GHN , Tr.note , p.251.

brothers . In a tussle over Qandhar between Hindal and Kamran, Emperor Humayun engaged her to bring about the reconciliation between the two.⁴⁵ Later on in 1545 A.D. , when Humayun's forces had besieged Qandhar and Askari was holding the fort , Kamran sent a secret message through this lady that he should hold on till his arrival . When the fall of the fort became imminent , Askari sent her to negotiate peace pleading a mild treatment for him . Dildar Agacha Begam , mother of Hindal, tried to dissuade him from disloyalty towards Humayun .⁴⁶

In the early part of Akbar's reign, Maham Anaga and other ladies endeavoured to control and run the administration . It is a matter of controversy as to what extent was Akbar under the tutelage of Maham Anaga.⁴⁷ Her role in the fall of Bairam

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45 GHN, pp.160-61 ; also Prasad , Humayun , p.216 .The Begam , however , did not succeed in her mission .

46 A.N. , (Bev.) , I,pp.338-39 ; Prasad , Humayun , p.129.

47 Augustus, (I,p.94) ; Haig , (IV , pp.79-84) and V.A.Smith, (p.35), considered Akbar totally under their control. Smith wrote , "Akbar Shook off the tutelage of Bairam only to bring him under the 'monstrous regiment ' of unscrupulous woman . " But Tripathi , (Rise and Fall, p.183); S.R.Sharma , (Mughal Empire in India , p.119 ); A.L.Srivastava , (Akbar the Great , I,pp.71- 72 ) ; Ishwari Prasad , (A Short History of Muslim Rule in India,pp.343-44); Rekha Mishra, (p.29) did not agree to this . The influence of the group was only for a short time . All these authorities, pro and against , agreed that their influence remained only upto 1562 A.D. except V.A.Smith , (p.36) and Haig , (IV , p.78) who extended it upto 1564 A.D..

Khan is also controversial .48 When Akbar went out of Agra for hunting , Maham Anaga and party managed to bring the Emperor to Delhi under the pretext of illness of his mother . At Delhi they complained about the authoritative power of Bairam Khan and that Akbar would not get real power in his hand till he remained in authority . Maham Anaga and Shahab-ud-din even offered to proceed to Mecca .<sup>49</sup> Akbar, already dissatisfied with Bairam Khan , utilized the opportunity and dismissed him.

In the state of confusion that prevailed after Bairam Khan, Maham Anaga along with Shahab-ud-din Ahmad Khan started functioning like *de facto* Prime Minister . But over-ambitious as Maham was , she wanted to make shahab-ud-din merely her tool. This arrangement failed and she, therefore, got Shahab-ud-din removed and brought Bahadur Khan Uzbek in his place. This arrangement also did not click because of her over-assertiveness. So , she won over Bahadur Khan's supporters and thereafter not only got him removed as Prime Minister but also sent him to Etawah . Munim Khan joined her

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48 Badaoni , (II,pp.30-31) ; Augustus , (I,pp.78-84); Haig , (IV, pp.78-79) and Nizam-ud-din Ahmad , (T.A. , (De), II, pp.237-38) held 'harem-party' responsible for this while Abul Fazl , (A.N. , (Bev.) , II,pp.141,161-67) ; Tripathi , (Rise and Fall, pp. 178-83) ; Srivastava , (Akbar, I,pp,40-42); Elphinstone , (pp.431-33) opined that Khan-Khana's own actions concerned Akbar personally and paved the way for his dismissal. M.U., (I,pp.372-73), also held Maham Anaga and party mainly responsible for perverting Akbar's feelings toward him though Bairam's highhandedness gave the final blow.

49 T.A. , (De), II,pp.237-38 ; Ferishta , II,p.119 ; M.U.,II, pt.II, p.846 ; Haig , IV, p.77; V.A.Smith , pp.32-33 ; Augustus , I,p.83. The last author considered that Akbar went to Delhi of his own .

as Prime Minister in September 1560 A.D.. He found it difficult to run the administration without Maham's help . Akbar appointed Shams-ud-din Atka Khan , his foster father, to succeed Munim Khan in November , 1561 A.D.. Since he did not toe Maham's line, he was murdered by Adham Khan , Maham's son.

Furthering the cause of her son Adham Khan , Maham Anaga managed for him to head an army against Baz Bahadur of Malwa so that he got an opportunity of acquiring wealth and glory . Simultaneously , she sent Pir Muhammad along with him as his counsellor and thus , very tactfully, removed "an inconvenient rival from court ". Adham Khan defeated Baz Bahadur in 1561 A.D.. All his treasures and the harem fell into his hands . After the victory, he sent only a few elephants to the Emperor and kept back the rest of the treasure and also the beauties with him . This enraged Akbar and he personally marched towards Malwa . Maham Anaga , as a shrewd politician , sent a message to her son fore-warning him about the Emperor's march and herself started towards Malwa along with royal seraglio . But Akbar reached earlier and took Adham by surprise . Adham Khan submitted but it was only after the arrival of Maham Anaga and at her intercession that, ultimately, the Emperor pardoned him . Adham Khan presented whole of the war-booty to Akbar but again kept back two of the beauties of Baz Bahadur's harem for himself. When this was discovered, Maham, with all brutality, got those girls killed . This crime was detected but Akbar ignored it.⁵⁰ Immediately after returning

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50 A.N., (Bev.), II, pp.214,218-21; M.U., I, p.146; Augustus , I, pp.90-94 ; Haig , IV, pp.79-81 ; V.A.Smith , pp.36-38.

from Malwa , Akbar recalled Adham Khan . Later on , when he murdered the Prime Minister Atka Khan , the Emperor did not leave him and imparted the severest punishment of being thrown from the palace parapet till death . Akbar himself broke the news of his death to ailing Maham Anaga . She simply murmured, "You did well" and not being able to bear the shock , died just forty days after the death of her son.<sup>51</sup>

Hamida Banu Begam , Akbar's mother, also took interest in politics . She was a party to Maham Anaga in bringing about the downfall of Bairam Khan . Salima Sultan Begam mediated between Akbar and Salim (Jahangir) . On Salim's rebellion at Allahabad , she along with Hamida Banu and Gulbadan Begam brought rapprochement.<sup>52</sup> It is noteworthy that Akbar's Rajput wives have not been mentioned for having played any active political role.

In the very first year of Jahangir's reign , his eldest son Khusro revolted . His mother Shah Begam (Man Bai), Jahangir's favourite queen ,tried to restrain Khusro assuring him Jahangir's kindness and affection. Failing in her attempt, she committed suicide hoping that "her fate would bring her undutiful son to contrition". Khusro's revolt was suppressed . At the intercession of his step-mothers ,sisters and Mahabat Khan , Jahangir pardoned him and allowed audience in the  
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51 A.N. , (Bev.) , II,pp.235,268-75 ; M.U. , I,pp.147-48; Haig , IV,p.81 . Also Yasin , p.128. He opined , "Maham's failure to rise above the weakness of a mother made her unworthy of rule."

52 A.N. , (Bev.) , III,pp.1222-23 ,1228,1230.

darbar .⁵³ Khusro's supporter Mirza Aziz Koka was also pardoned at Salima Sultan Begam's recommendation .⁵⁴

"No incident in the reign of Jahangir" , wrote Beni Prasad , "has attracted such attention as his marriage with Nur Jahan. For full fifteen years that celebrated lady stood forth as the most striking and most powerful personality in the Mughal Empire ." ⁵⁵ Good or bad , her influence was discernibly felt in every sphere. She was almost the *de facto* ruler .

The salutary impact of Nurjahan improved the health of the Emperor and made him more serene in his public behaviour.⁵⁶ With her qualities of wisdom , drive, hard-work, presence of mind, resourcefulness, bravery and leadership , she proved herself to be an able administrator and a capable commander of her army.⁵⁷ Her aesthetic taste and philanthropic pursuits brought splendour and benevolence .⁵⁸ Later on, when her parents died and Jahangir's health failed, the scene changed dramatically . Her desire to remain at the helm of affairs even after Jahangir died , led to well known revolts

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53 Tuzuk , I,pp.55-56, 252 ; Wakiat-i-Jahangiri , pp.294-95, 336-37.

54 M.U. , I,p.328; Ain. , I,p.345.

55 Beni Prasad , p.147.

56 Lanepoole , Stanley , Mediaeval India Under the Mohammedan Rule , p.298.

57 Mutamad Khan , p.405 ; Beni Prasad , p.159. See also Tirmizi, S.A.,Edicts of the Mughal Harem, pp.20-53 (for Nurjahan's extent of influence in administration).

58 See also Chapter VI for details.

of prince Khurram and Mahabat Khan . "The issue was perfectly clear ", wrote Beni Prasad , "Nur Jahan must either soon retire from public life or supersede Shah Jahan by a more pliable instrument ." <sup>59</sup> Out of the other three sons of Jahangir, Khusro was already dead and Parvez was a spent force. Shahryar , a lad of sixteen and *nashudani* (good for nothing) , was Nurjahan's choice . She got her daughter Ladli Begam married to him . She also got the fiefdom of Dholpur bestowed on him as against Khurram's asking for it . <sup>60</sup> With the intention of sending Khurram out of India, she obtained Jahangir's order appointing him for Qandhar campaign . Khurram put many conditions and was declared a rebel . After three years of miserable life , Khurram's rebellion ended in utter failure . Nurjahan forced him to surrender the forts of Rohtas and Asirgarh and send his two sons Dara and Aurangzeb as hostages . He was left with Balaghat only .

Mahabat Khan could be another challenge to Nurjahan . He was an officer who had opposed her sway over Jahangir and , with his usual frankness , had impressed upon the Emperor to free himself from the petticoat bondage . <sup>61</sup> She was apprehensive of Mahabat Khan joining hands with Parvez. Both had worked together in quelling Shah Jahan's revolt . Nurjahan asked Mahabat Khan to send war booty collected during Shah

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59 Beni Prasad , p.274.

60 Tuzuk , II,p.235; Riyazu-s-Salatin , p.181 ; English Factories , (1622-23), p.99; Haig , IV , p.171 ; Beni Prasad , p.300.

61 Intikhab-i-Jahangir Shahi , pp.451-52 ; Beni Prasad , pp.338-39.

Jahan's revolt . Her designs were evident to Mahabat Khan and he rose in revolt . It was a novel rebellion wherein, without harming the Emperor , he just imprisoned him and separated him from the company of Nurjahan. Nurjahan was able to free the Emperor tactfully and Mahabat's rebellion failed .

On Jahangir's death at Lahore , Nurjahan called a meeting of the nobles . Asaf Khan, who was supporting the cause of his son-in-law Shah Jahan , did not allow it to be held . Nurjahan managed to send a message to Shahryar to collect army and come to Lahore. Asaf Khan , on the other hand , declared Dawar Bakhsh , son of Khusro , a make-shift Emperor till Khurram came from the South. He sent an army against Shahryar . Shahryar was defeated and blinded . After the arrival of Shah Jahan , Dawar Bakhsh was removed and Shah Jahan ascended the throne . Nurjahan retired from the politics .⁶² So complete was her political eclipse that according to the records of English Factories , within a few months of her husband's death , all rupees bearing her stamp were called in and "were not to be uttered " at Agra .⁶³

During Shah Jahan's time, his wife Mumtaz was the centre of attraction . She became the chief lady of the harem and was frequently consulted by her loving husband in the matters of the state.⁶⁴ She was entrusted with royal seal to be put on

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62 Mutamad Khan , pp.435-38; M.U. ,I , pp.289-92; Beni Prasad , pp.368, 370-73; Haig , IV,pp.183-84; Saksena, pp.56-62 .

63 English Factories, (1624-29), p.241.

64 Chowdhuri, J.N., "Mumtaz Mahall" , IC, Vol. XI, 1937, p.377.

the state documents after they were finally drafted.<sup>65</sup> Saif Khan, her brother-in-law, was removed from the Governorship of Gujarat and was ordered to be arrested because of his dubious conduct during Emperor's march from Gujarat to Delhi. It was at the intercession of Mumtaz that Shah Jahan ordered Sher Khan, the new Governor, not to inflict any injury on him.<sup>66</sup> During this march, Shah Jahan had looted the rich Hindu merchants of Ahmedabad. The officials continued the looting even after Shah Jahan's departure. It was at the interference of Mumtaz and her sister that the Emperor forbade the plunder.<sup>67</sup> The trouble with the Portuguese was initiated at her instance as they had carried away two of her slave girls.<sup>68</sup> The persecution of the Portuguese was the outcome.

After the death of Mumtaz Mahal, Shah Jahan's eldest daughter, Jahanara Begam, popularly known as Begam Sahib, took over the role of principal lady. Bernier wrote :

... her ascendancy in the court of the Mogol should have been nearly unlimited ; that she should always have regulated the humours of her father, and exercised a powerful influence on the most weighty concerns.<sup>69</sup>

As such, she was the most respected lady of the court. In the

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 65 Sarkar, Studies, p.9; Yazdani, G., "Jahanara", JPHS, Vol. II, 1912, p.153.

66 Khafi Khan, (Text), I, p.393 ; Qazwini, II, fols. 227, 277 ; M.U., II, Pt. II, pp.689-91; English Factories, (1624-29), p. 206 ; also Saksena, p.61 ; Commisariat, M.S., A History of Gujrat, II, pp.107-08. Saif Khan was married to Malika Banu, real sister of Mumtaz Mahal.

67 English Factories, (1624-29), pp.189, 191.

68 Manucci, I, p.176; Saksena, pp.106-07, n.10.

69 Bernier, p.11; Manucci, I, p.208 ; Tavernier, I, p.15.

administrative sphere, her hold was so pervading that all matters passed through her. The Governor of Thatta was to be punished for his tyranny and extortion. Since he pleased her with presents, the punishment was forgiven. He was rewarded with the Governorship of Allahabad.⁷⁰ Similarly, Prithi Chand, the King of Kashmir took the help of Jahanara to please Shah Jahan.⁷¹ Aurangzeb, the then Viceroy of Deccan attacked Qutb-ul-Mulk, the ruler of Golkunda in 1656 A.D. for non-payment of arrears of tribute. When the prince was about to annex it, the Emperor asked him to call off the siege after realizing the indemnity. Jahanara, in connivance with Dara, was responsible for this.⁷²

Several letters written to or by Jahanara showed the recommendations made by or to her in favour of a specific person for a specific appointment.⁷³ The records of English

70 Tavernier , I, pp.14-15.

71 Qanungo , K.R., Dara Shukoh , I, pp.136-37.

72 Aurangzib, I, pp.130-31, 208; also Bernier, pp.20-21; Qanungo, I, pp.137-38; Tripathi Rise and Fall, pp.468-72 (he considers their impact only partly true. Shah Jahan himself did not want to entangle his forces in a prolonged fight).

73 "Adab", fols.197a,b,200a,b; "Rukkat", (Aligarh), fols. 200a,b, 201b , 198b, 199a . Vide "Rukkat" , fol. 200a and "Adab" , fols. 197a,b, Aurangzeb recommended the case of Murtaza Quli Khan for appointment. Vide "Rukkat" , fols. 200a,b and "Adab" , fols. ,200a,b, Jahanara recommended Muhammad Nabi to open a *karkhana* in Burhanpur and Machlipattam . Vide "Rukkat" , fols. 200b and 201b , Aurangzeb requested Jahanara to help him in getting back the fort of Asirgarh which was handed over to Murad after being taken away from him . Vide "Rukkat" , fol. 198b , Jahanara recommended Aurangzeb to appoint Mir Nasir in place of Multafit Khan which Aurangzeb promised to do. Vide "Rukkat", fol.199a , Jahanara wrote to Aurangzeb about the claims of Aatish Khan to which Aurangzeb replied that her wish would be carried through . Also M.U. , II,Pt.II, pp. 1021-22 (Jahanara recommending Zahid Khan Koka for promotion to one of the princes).

Factories testified as to how foreigners in India sought her favour to promote their interests . Dutch traders frequently approached her through her *Diwans* and maids to get her *nishans* so as to facilitate the recovery of their debts.⁷⁴

She supported the cause of Dara in the war of succession. She tried to persuade her brothers to avoid the battle and proposed a partition of the empire . She also tried to arrange a meeting between Aurangzeb and Shah Jahan. After her failure, she joined Shah Jahan in confinement .⁷⁵ She entreated the captive Shah Jahan thrice to forgive Aurangzeb and succeeded ultimately to get a formal pardon for him .⁷⁶ Aurangzeb held her in great esteem . He restored her all powers and made her head of the harem .⁷⁷ Sipihr Shukoh and Izid Bakhsh , sons of Dara and Murad respectively, were released at her instance and rewarded with suitable *mansabs*.⁷⁸ She counselled Aurangzeb against re-imposing *jazia* .⁷⁹ She

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74 English Factories , (1646-59) , pp.219-20 ( mentioned how one Hakikat Khan assured the Dutch to procure a *nishan* from Jahanara for helping them to recover their debt from Chattarsal) ; (1651-54) , p.50 (about David's visit to Jahanara to pay respect to her immediately after landing in India) ;(1655-60) , pp.15, 73-74 (how with the help of her *nishan* ,Dutch could recover their insurance money).

75 Aqil Khan Razi , Waqiat-i-Alamgiri , pp.16-17, 28 ;Ishwar Dass ,pp.36-37; Tavernier,I,p.299; Aurangzib ,II,pp.258, 264 ; Bernier , pp.61,64.

76 Khafi Khan ,(Text), Pt.II,p.188 ; Aurangzib ,III , p.36.

77 Tavernier, I,p.299;Manucci,II, pp.117-18; Aurangzib,III, p.37.

78 Ishwar Dass , pp.93-94.

79 Manucci ,III,pp.275-76.

remained effective till her death in 1681 A.D.. Aurangzeb deeply mourned her death and ordered her name to be entered in all official papers in future as *Sahibat-uz-Zamani* or 'the mistress of the age'.<sup>80</sup>

Some of Shah Jahan's mistresses also exercised influence in contemporary politics. Farzana Begam, wife of Jafar Khan was one of them. In order to get her, Shah Jahan wanted to eliminate her husband. But it was at her asking that not only did the Emperor shelve this idea but he also sent her husband as the Governor of Bihar.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, when Khalilullah Khan was punished for teasing a *kanchani*, it was at her recommendation that Shah Jahan pardoned him.<sup>82</sup>

Aurangzeb's favourite sister Roshanara helped him during the war of succession and handed him over all the gold and silver she possessed.<sup>83</sup> While arranging a meeting between Aurangzeb and Shah Jahan, Jahanara had conspired to arrest the former with the help of Tartar women. It was Roshanara's spying that Aurangzeb came to know of this conspiracy and did not visit Shah Jahan.<sup>84</sup> After the arrest of Dara, she demanded capital punishment for him.<sup>85</sup> After his accession,

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80 Aurangzib, III, p.38.

81 Manucci, I, p.186.

82 Ibid., p.189.

83 Tavernier, I, p.299.

84 Bernier, p.65.

85 Ibid., p.100.

Aurangzeb kept the seal of the empire under her care . The signet with which it had to be impressed was kept back by him to ensure that the princess did not make use of the instrument to promote any sinister design .⁸⁶ She fell from favour during Aurangzeb's illness in 1662 . She misused the royal seal in her possession for writing letters to Governors and Generals seeking support for Sultan Azam , Aurangzeb's nine years old son, in the event of Emperor's death . This enraged Aurangzeb and led to her eclipse .⁸⁷

Aurangzeb's daughter Zeb-un-nisa was adept in politics. She frequently attended the court and helped her father.⁸⁸ Her correspondence with Aurangzeb shows her administrative participation like making appointments , disbursing salaries , dismissing and promoting officials .⁸⁹ Shah Nawaz khan, her maternal grand-father was released at her

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86 Khosla , p.44.

87 Bernier , p.123; Manucci,II,pp.49-51, 54-55;Aurangzib, III,p.38; Tavernier, I,p.300 . The last author considered the smuggling of a young man by the princess into her compartment for 15-20 days as the reason for their strained relations .

88 Magan Lal , p.13.

89 "Rukkat", (Aligarh) , fols.313a,b(whereby Aurangzeb wrote to her suggesting a particular name for a particular post, adding , however , that the final choice lay with her); fol.312b(she asked Aurangzeb for disbursement of the pay of some official to which Aurangzeb informed having sent necessary instructions to the clerk concerned. Aurangzeb also wrote to her that if Hakim Abdulla was not dependable then he should be replaced by Kokazada after being promoted ); Rukkat , (Bilmoria) , p.160,n.1(at her asking , Muhammad Ibrahim , the pay-master was raised to the post of *Seh-Hazari* with a title of *Mirza Khani* and a present of Rs. two thousand).

intervention.<sup>90</sup> Her secret correspondence with her rebel brother Muhammad Akbar brought about her fall . She was deprived of her property and pension and imprisoned at Salingarh where she died in 1702 A.D..<sup>91</sup>

Zinat-un-nisa played a reconciliatory role in the family. She secured interview with the Emperor for erring princes Kam Bakhsh and Azam .<sup>92</sup> She was entrusted with the task of looking after the Maratha captives, Yesu Bai , widow of Shambhaji and her son Shahu . She developed soft corner for them and helped in their release from the Mughal control .<sup>93</sup> She managed her father's household in Deccan for a quarter of a century till her death .<sup>94</sup>

Among Aurangzeb's wives Udaipuri Mahal managed pardon many a time for Kam Bakhsh .<sup>95</sup> Nawab Bai got her two sons Muhammad Sultan and Muazzam pardoned. When Muhammad Sultan was imprisoned for his rebellion , his mother managed his release and a *mansab* of 8000 + 2000 for him from the Emperor.<sup>96</sup> During the expedition against Rana of Chittor , the Rajputs

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90 Hamid-ud-din,p.43.
91 M.A. ,(Tr.),p.126;Ishwar Dass , p.182; Aurangzib, III,p.35.
92 M.A. , (Tr.),p.217;Aurangzib, V,p.73; Hamid-ud-din, pp.64-65.
93 Sardesai , G.S.,New History of the Marathas,I,pp.350,355.
94 Aurangzib ,I,p.38;Haig,IV,p.302.
95 Aurangzib ,I,p.35;Manucci,II,pp.296,438.
96 Ishwar Dass , p.93.

instigated Muazzam to rebel but Nawab Bai dissuaded him .97

Jahandar Shah's mistress Lal Kanwar played significant political role . Her worthless relatives and friends were raised to dignity with *mansabs* , titles and presents . Her brother Khoshal Khan received a *mansab* of 7000 and her uncle Niamat Khan of 5000. Khoshal Khan also coveted the Viceroyalty of Akbarabad to which the Emperor agreed . However, such usurpations were highly resented to by the nobles and Zulfiqar Khan very aptly and sarcastically brought it to the notice of the Emperor . He delayed the preparation of the *farman* in this regard and asked for a bribe of five thousand guitars and seven thousand trimbels . The matter was reported to Lal Kanwar, who conveyed her resentment to the Emperor . The latter called for the explanation of the *Wazir* and wanted to know the reason for such a demand. To this , the *Wazir* replied that since the high positions had already been occupied by the dancers and singers , he wanted these musical instruments to be distributed among the dispossessed Governors and Generals to learn them so that they could fill the vacancies created by the dancers and singers, in order to earn their living. Khoshal Khan could not get the *Subedari* nor

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97 Khafi Khan , (Text),Pt.II,p.264; But at other occasions , she could not check her sons from rebellious inclinations. Muazzam was even arrested for this [M.A., (Tr.),pp.63,178-79, (and for Muhammad Sultan ) 17,74 ; also Aurangzib , I,p.34].

could the Emperor punish the *Wazir* .98

Many of the lowly placed acquaintances of Lal Kanwar were highly favoured . Zahra or Zohra, a vegetable seller, rode an elephant magnificently decorated and surrounded all around by her people who were equally insolent and insulting to the passers-by. In one of her journeys , when Chin Qulich Khan (afterwards Nizam-ul-Mulk) , the ex-commander-in-chief, happened to pass her way , without any provocation , she called him 'the son of a blind man' and then complained against him to Lal Kanwar. It was his good luck that at the behest of the *Wazir* , the matter was ultimately dropped .<sup>99</sup>

Farrukhsiyar's daughter Malika Zamani managed the support of Husain Ali Khan , one of the Sayyid brothers , with the help of other harem-ladies.<sup>100</sup> Thereafter , his mother Sahiba-i-Nishwan fully ensured his favour through her negotiations.<sup>101</sup> With the help of Sayyid brothers ,

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98 Siyar, (N.M.), pp.36-37, also (Briggs), pp.31-32; Faruqi, ff. 37a, 37b (Niamat Khan depicted as brother of Lal Kanwar and pining for Governorship of Multan); Khafi Khan , (Text), Pt. II, pp.689-90 (held Khoshal Khan's *mansab* as 5000 + 3000 . His narration too differed a little bit . As per him , Zulfiqar Khan explained to the Emperor that he wanted the bribe of guitar players and drawing masters (*ustad-i-nakkashi*) in order to make the nobles to learn their art and be fit for high offices which the Emperor had started bestowing on such persons). See also Irvine , I, pp.193-94 ; Satish Chandra , p.72.

99 Siyar, (N.M.) , I , pp.37-39, also (Briggs) , pp.32-34; Irvine, I, pp.194-95.

100 Siyar, (N.M.) , I, pp.42-43 .

101 Ibid., p.47, also (Briggs), p.41; Satish Chandra, pp.91-92; Irvine , I, p.206; also M.U., I, p.710.

Farrukhsiyar ultimately succeeded to the throne of Delhi. During the reign of Muhammad Shah, his mother Qudsia Begam (Fakhr-un-nisa) was instrumental in getting the throne for her son and also in the downfall of Sayyid brothers.¹⁰²

Another woman was Rahim-un-nisa, the daughter of a *dervesh* and popularly known as Koki Jiu. She came into prominence after the fall of Sayyid brothers and death of Amin Khan, the *Wazir*. She became a confidant of the Emperor and was entrusted with the royal seal with authority to imprint it on the state documents.¹⁰³ She was a corrupt woman and accepted gratifications. Muhammad Khan Bangash paid her one lac rupees on his being appointed to the government of Malwa.¹⁰⁴ She formed a clique with Roshan-ud-daulah Zafar Khan, the *Bakshi*, eunuch Khwaja Khidmatgar, a close companion of the Emperor and Abdul Ghafur, a *dervesh* who became popular in the harem through his art of magic. This group collected a lot of money as *peshkash*.¹⁰⁵ Nizam-ul-Mulk the *Wazir* was an eye sore for them and was forced to withdraw from the scene

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102 Malik, Muhammad Shah, pp.57-59; Irvine, II, pp.3-4, 57, 60-61; Satish Chandra, p.157.

103 M.U., II, Pt. II, p.606; Irvine, II, p.265; Satish Chandra, p.171; Malik, Zahir-ud-din, A Mughal statesman of the Eighteenth Century, p.54.

104 Irvine, II, p.265.

105 Khafi Khan, (Text), Pt. II, pp.940, 951; Siyar, (N.M.), I, p.244, also (Briggs), p.223; M.U., II, p.606. See also Irvine, II, p.265; Malik, A Mughal Statesman, pp.49-50; Satish Chandra, p.213 (as per him, Khwaja Khidmatgar was averse to bribery, hence, he fell from the group).

and leave for Deccan .106 Her influence lasted till 1732 A.D..

During the reign of Ahmad Shah, his mother Udham Bai (Nawab Qudsia) had great political sway. Her brother Man Khan, a male dancer, was raised to a *mansab* of 6000 along with a title of *Mutaqad-ud-daulah* because of her influence. Eunuch Javed Khan , her gallant , became all powerful in administration by her backing. After the murder of Javed Khan, Ahmad Shah left administration to her, himself relegating to pleasures . She became *de facto* administrator transacting all the state business . She was actively involved in the factional court rivalries of the time and conspired infructuously with Turani group headed by Intizam-ud-daulah to kill the then *Wazir* Safdar Jang . The conspiracy failed because it was leaked out to the *Wazir* by Malika-uz-Zamani, the other widow of Muhammad Shah.<sup>107</sup>

Away from the Delhi politics , in the far flung provinces of the Mughal empire , some ladies showed interest in the political activities of their husbands and relations . In Bengal , after the death of the Governor Murshid Quli Jafar Khan, there was a tussle for Governorship between his son-in-law Shuja-ud-din Muhammad Khan and latter's son Serferaz Khan. It was through the mediation of the widow of Murshid Quli Jafar Khan that Serferaz Khan agreed to submit in

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106 Khafi Khan, (Text),Pt.II,pp.946-47; Irvine, II,pp.131-33; Satish Chandra ,p.174; Malik, A Mughal Statesman , pp.19-20,49.

107 Sarkar,Fall,I, pp. 209-12, 286-87; Srivastava, Nawabs of Awadh, pp. 208-13.

favour of his father.¹⁰⁸ Thereafter, Alivardi Khan , the then Deputy Governor of Bihar , having an eye on the Governorship of Bengal , tried to create dissensions between Serferaz Khan and his step brother Taqi Khan . Though the Governor could bring reconciliation between his sons,yet being angry with Taqi Khan for his behaviour, he forbade him from coming to see and salute him. It was at the intercession of Zinat-un-nisa Begam, mother of Serferaz Khan that the matters were settled between them .¹⁰⁹ When Alivardi Khan was given the Deputy Governorship of Azimabad , she , on her own, conferred on him not only rich *khilat* but also the government of Bihar from her side.¹¹⁰ Nafisa Begam , sister of Serferaz Khan was responsible for furthering the cause of her son Murad Ali Khan. It was at her asking that her son was married to the daughter of Serferaz Khan , the Governor of Bengal after Shuja-ud-din , and was gradually raised from the post of Superintendent of the *Nawarah* (war-vessels) to the Deputy Governor of Jahangirnagar (Dacca).¹¹¹ So important was she that when Alivardi Khan became the Governor of Bengal

108 Riyazu-s-Salatin , p.288; Stewart, C.,The History of Bengal ,p.414; Sarkar, J.N.(ed.), History of Bengal, p. 423. Jafar Khan died in 1727 A.D./1139 A.H. (Yusuf Ali, Ahwal-i-Mahabat Jang, p.13) . But Stewart, (p.413) gave this date as 1725 A.D..

109 Riyazu-s-Salatin ,pp.297-98. Zinat-un-nisa was the daughter of Murshid Quli Jafar Khan (Siyar, (N.M.), I, pp.274-75 ; Stewart , p.445).

110 Siyar , (N.M.), I,pp.281-82.

111 Riyazu-s-Salatin ,pp.304-05 and nn.1,3; also Siyar, (N.M.),I,p.340 (he referred to her not as sister,but as the mother of Serferaz Khan).

after killing her brother , off he went to her for begging pardon and allowed her to retain her personal estate yielding more than one lac rupees per annum .¹¹² Durdanah Begam, another sister of Serferaz Khan, was a great instigator . She was married to Murshid Quli Khan , the Governor of Orissa . Alivardi Khan , after getting the *Nizamat* of Bengal, attacked Orissa . Murshid Quli Khan wanted to patch up but Durdanah Begam wanted to avenge the death of her brother and insisted on her husband to fight .¹¹³

Alivardi Khan's wife, Nawab Begam Sahib, moved along with her husband on an elephant in the battle field and counselled him even in critical moments .¹¹⁴ During the battle with Marathas under Raghoji Bhosla , she played the role of supreme political officer . The Begam sent a political mission to Raghoji's camp for a peace treaty .¹¹⁵

Ghasiti Begam , daughter of Alivardi Khan , was also active politically . After Alivardi , Siraj-ud-daulah , the son of his youngest daughter Anna Begam and also his heir-apparent, succeeded him . Ghasiti Begam opposed his succession and appointed Mir Nazar Ali as Commander of her vanguard and Nawab Bairam Khan as General of her army . But on the
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112 Yusuf Ali , Ahwal , pp.89-90; Riyazu-s-Salatin, pp.320, n.2, 339,n.1;also Sarkar (ed.) ,p.442:Datta, Alivardi , p.36.

113 Siyar , (N.M.), I,pp.349-50; Stewart , p.449.

114 Riyazu-s-Salatin,pp.329 and n.1,339,n.1;Datta, Alivardi, pp.246-47.

115 Yusuf Ali, Ahwal, p.116; Siyar , (N.M.), II,p.11; Sarkar, Fall ,I,pp.76-77.

## CHAPTER VI

### CULTURAL CONTEXT

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In the domain of culture , the common Muslim women had little to contribute because of their educational backwardness. The cultivation of fine arts , education and other aesthetic pursuits remained the privilege of the ladies of high society. The queens , princesses and the wives of nobles played a significant role in these spheres.

#### EDUCATION

By the time Muslim came to India , the prevalence of early marriage and purdah had already weakened the position of women . Women understood marriage as their highest goal. House-keeping and submission to their husbands were greatest virtues . Education was a threat to blissful innocence and exposed the womenfolk to undesirable literature . <sup>1</sup>

With such apprehensions , mass female education was practically unknown . Arrangements to impart a little of primary education were made . The girls were sent to *maktabs* with a ceremony . <sup>2</sup> This ceremony was common for both boys and girls and they studied together in the same class. Due to

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1 BrijBhushan, Muslim Women, pp.98-99; Law, op.cit., p.200, Jaffar, S.M., Education in Muslim India ,p.187; Billington, M.F., Woman in India ,pp.21-22.

2 The teacher wrote an *Idi* (a verse on something relating to festival *Id*) or a blessing for the child on a coloured paper known as *Zarfishani* which she was made to read to her parents . After this , the parents gave some presents to the teacher (Jafar Sharif,op.cit.,p.52).

purdah , the co-education was limited upto the primary level. The girls shifted to the higher schools exclusively meant for girls. In the schools, they learnt practical arts concerning household duties like cooking , sewing , nursing children and spinning from some elderly ladies .³ At times , the *maktabs* were run in private houses by elderly ladies, especially widows, of the middle class families who imparted education to poor girls , considering it an act of piety .⁴ While a number of educational institutions were opened by the state , both during the Sultanate and Mughal periods , for the boys , the schooling of the girls remained more or less a private affair in the Delhi empire as also in the adjoining Muslim principalities .

The women were taught limited subjects. Mostly their study began and ended with the Qoran. When they finished the reading of the Qoran, the occasion was celebrated with great enthusiasm. The teacher was given presents by the parents and a half-day holiday was granted to the whole *maktab* .⁵ In addition, they were taught Shaikh Sadi's Gulistan and Bostan alongwith books on morals.⁶ The education of the ladies of the

3 Jaffar , Education ,pp.8,191n.7 ; Some Cultural Aspects of Muslim Rule in India ,p.85; Godden , op.cit., p.34,also p.35 (for painting of joint studies of boys and girls of the royal family at Kabul and also a teachress teaching a boy); Sarkar,Studies, p.302(he opined that there were no mixed classes even for very small children).

4 Yusuf Husain,Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture,p.91.

5 Jafar Sharif , pp.51-52.

6 Yusuf Husain , p.91.

higher strata was arranged within the harem .

The Kings of Sultanate period were conservative and therefore , not many of their ladies made a mark. Only two women, Razia and Bibi Raji, were known figures. Razia was proficient in reading the Qoran which she could do with correct pronunciation , as affirmed Ferishta . She was also perfect in her military training.⁷ Besides , she was also known as a great patron of men of letters . She entrusted Minhaj-us-Siraj with the task of looking after the *Madrasa-i-Nasiriya* at the capital . It was under her reign that Muizzi college at Delhi became a flourishing centre of learning .⁸ She herself was a poetess and composed verses under the pen name of '*Shirin*' .⁹ Bibi Raji of Jaunpur was known for her patronage to learned men and for encouraging the cause of education . She not only opened a number of *madrasas* and colleges , but also provided stipends to the students and teachers.¹⁰ It was due to her efforts that Jaunpur became a centre of education during her life time .

The Mughals were keen on educating their women . The girls of the palace assembled together at one place within the palace to receive rudimentary knowledge . Sometimes , the school mistress and the governess were combined in one person

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7 Ferishta , I,p.121 ; also Ashraf , p.170 .

8 T.N., (Raverty) , I,pp.637, 644 ; Law , p.21; Day , U.N., Some Aspects of Medieval Indian History , p.151 ; Jaffar, Education , p.40; Rafiq Zakaria , p.87.

9 Shushtery ,p.586.

10 Law , p.101 , Jaffar, Education , p.128; Yusuf Husain,p.77.

called *Atun Mama* . They have been mentioned by the contemporaries frequently in their narrations.<sup>11</sup> Akbar opened a school in his palace at Fatehpur Sikri.<sup>12</sup> The school was for the education of princesses and had learned women, particularly Persians, to teach them .<sup>13</sup> Aurangzeb was very particular about training his daughters in the doctrines of religion and pious virtues .<sup>14</sup> Since most of the Mughal princesses remained unmarried , they had sufficient time for learning .

Many princesses excelled in educational field . The first known lady with literary pursuits was Gulbadan Begam . Well versed both in Persian and Turki , she had a poetic temperament and composed many verses .<sup>15</sup> Her fame rested on her Humayun Nama. Written in simple Persian , It is immortal as a piece of historical work . "The book is its sole  
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11 B.N., (Bev.),I , pp.148,n.4,407, n.1; GHN, p.121; Manucci, II,p.308; Banerji, S.K.,"Some of the Women Relations of Babur" , IC, Vol.IV, 1937-38 , p.53.

12 Law , pp.202-03 (Smith in his 'Architecture in Fatehpur Sikri ' and Havel in his 'Hand Book to Agra and the Taj ' have given the plan of this school . Law has taken it from Smith).

13 Sarkar , Studies ,p.301; Law,p.206 ,Pl.I(Showing a painting of Mughal Princess taking her lessons).

14 M.A. , (Tr.),p.318 ; Bakhtawar Khan , Mirat-i-Alam, p.162.

15 GHN,pp.76,79; Abdur Rahman ,Syed Subah-ul-din, Bazm-i-Taimuria ,p.436(hereafter cited as Bazm); Madhavanand and R.C.Majumdar (ed.), Great Women of India ,p.383; Chopra , Life and Letters ,p. 322; S.K.Banerji ,II,pp.318-19; Schimmel , Islam , p.78; also CR ,vol. CVI, 1898 , Art.No.viii,p.346 (she is described as a "pen woman").

witness", wrote Beveridge and further praised her literary accomplishments by remarking , "It is not only her book that lets us know she had a lively mind , but the fact of its composition at an age when wits are apt to be rusted by domestic peace . Only a light that was strong in childhood would have burned so long to guide her unaccustomed pen after half a century of life"¹⁶ To prop up her interest in studies , she maintained a big personal library with rich collection gathered from different parts of the country .¹⁷

Two other ladies of Gulbadan's time known in the educational field were Gulrukh Begam , Babur's second daughter and Bega Begam , the wife of Humayun . The former was an accomplished poetess .¹⁸ The latter founded a college near the tomb of her husband .¹⁹

Another distinguished lady was Salima Sultan Begam . Proficient in Persian , she was an accomplished and renowned poetess of her time under the pen name of '*Makhfi*'

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 16 GHN ,pp.76,22 resp.. The book was considered superior to Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri and Rukkat-i-Alamgiri in its "inimitable spontaneity , short and pithy sentences and colloquial touch " (Nizami , K.A.," Persian Literature under Akbar", MIQ, Vol. III, Nos.3&4, Jan. and Ap.,1958, p.317).

17 GHN , p.76; Law,pp.201-02 ; Shelat , J.M.,Akbar, II,p.341.

18 Bazm , p.439.

19 S.K.Banerji , II,p.317.

(concealed). 20 She had great love for books and for that she not only maintained a personal library , but freely used Akbar's library as well . 21

Next in line was Maham Anaga who was well educated and a great patron of learning. She built a *madrasa* (college) called *Khair-ul-Manzil* which also had a mosque attached to it. 22

Taj Begam , the wife of Akbar and Begam Badshah Mahal, wife of Jahangir were reported to be well versed in Hindi poetry. 23

Next important lady in this regard was Nurjahan . Well versed in Persian and Arabic languages, she had great fascination for Persian poetry and was herself a poetess under the pen-name of '*Makhfi*' . She was adept in composing

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20 M.U. , I,p.371 . It also quoted one of her verses :

In my passion I called thy lock the "thread of life"
I was wild and so uttered such an expression.

See also B.N.,(Bev.),II ,p.713 (wherein she is referred to as a woman of charm and literary accomplishments); GHN, Tr.note, pp.58,279; Ain. ,I,Tr.note, p.322; Beni Prasad , "A Few Aspects of Education and Literature under the Great Mughals", IHRC , Vol.V,1923 ,p.48.

21 Bazm , p.440 (for library) . Badaoni , II,p.389; GHN ,p.76 (for her love of books).

22 Law ,p.202 ; Jaffar , Education ,p.194; Shelat . II, pp.341-42; S.K.Banerji , II,p.324; Yusuf Husain ,p.82; Stephen, pp.199-200 . For a photo of her *madrasa* , see Law , p.166; Stephen , p.199. S.K.Banerji refuted Brown's view that the *madrasa* was meant for girls . As per him, because of purdah , the medieval Muslim women did not move out of the house ("The Historical Remains of Early Years of Akbar's Reign" , UPHS , Dec. 1942 , Vol. XV, Pt.2,p.89, n.5).

23 Pandauri , Rattan , Hindi Ke Mussalmaan Shora , pp.220-23,253 .

extempore verses . 24 She was fond of reading books and maintained a rich library of her own . 25 Beni Prasad Wrote:

Nature had endowed her with a quick understanding , piercing intellect , a versatile temper and a sound common-sense . Education had developed the gifts of nature in no common degree . She was versed in Persian literature and composed verses , limpid and flowing , which assisted her in capturing the heart of her husband . 26

And with all her accomplishments, she rendered great service to the development of education during her time. 27

Mumtaz Mahal was equally adept in Persian and Arabic as well as in writing poetry , besides being a patron of the learned and scholars. 28 She utilized her knowledge as a mother by taking keen interest in the studies of her children. 29

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24 Sujan Rai, p.449; Chittraman Kayath , f.16a; Khafi Khan , (Text) , Pt. I, 270-71 (he has also quoted her verses at P.270) ; Law , p.202 ; Jaffar, Education, p.194; Shelat , II, p.342. For poetic contest between Nurjahan and Kalim , a poet of Jahangir's and Shah Jahan's court, refer to Sahay , B.K. , Education and Learning under the Great Mughals , p.90, n..

25 Bazm , p.443; Ojha , P.N., Some Aspects Of Northern Indian Social Life , p.132.

26 Beni Prasad , pp.157-58; Jaffar, Education , pp.194-95.

27 Many of her courtiers were able poetesses and were patronized by her , one of them being Mehr Harwi (Hardi) (Mishra , p.89, n.7).

28 Law , p.202 ; Jaffar , Education , p.195; Chowdhuri , op.cit. , IC , Vol.XI, 1937 , p.374; Chaudhury J.B., Muslim Patronage to Sanskrit Learning , I, p.77 (Vansidhara Mishra, a renowned Sanskrit poet of the time, was a favourite of the queen).

29 Mukherji, Ila, Social Status of North Indian Women, p.102.

Jahanara Begam was regarded one among the two best representatives of the literary talent of the Mughal dynasty , the other being Dara. <sup>30</sup> Trained under the able guidance of Sati-un-nisa and Nazir , she not only learnt the Qoran and Persian , but became one of the most accomplished among the galaxy of poets of her time . <sup>31</sup> She learnt many other disciplines including the science of medicine . <sup>32</sup> She also wrote Munis-ul-Arwah, a biography of Hazrat Chisti of Ajmer. <sup>33</sup> So popular was she for her generosity in patronizing men of letters and helping the cause of education that Mir Muhammad Ali Mahir , entitled *Murid Khan* , wrote a *masnavi* ( a long poem) eulogizing her trait. <sup>34</sup> She is said to have established a *madrasa* in the *Jama Masjid* of Agra. <sup>35</sup>

Zebinda Begam , the fourth daughter of Shah Jahan was also well educated and gifted poetess . She made her mark in the field of writing mystical poems. <sup>36</sup>

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30 Schimmel ,A.,Islamic Literatures of India ,p.25.

31 Law ,pp.203-04;Jaffar , Education ,pp.195-96 ;Bazm,p.448; Ila Mukherji, p.103 , also for Jahanara's self-written epitaph which runs :

Let no one cover my grave with anything but green grass
For the covering of the grave of a lonely person should
be only green grass.

32 Lahori , II,pp.629-30 .

33 Bazm , p.448; Ila Mukherji , p.103.

34 Ansari ,M.A., "The Harem of the Great Mughals" ,IC ,Vol. XXXIV,1960 ,p.119.

35 Yusuf Husain Khan , "The Educational System in Medieval India" , IC, Vol. XXX, No.I,Jan.1956,p.117.

36 Jaffar , Education , p.196.

The most spectacular of all , however , was Zeb-un-nisa Begam , the eldest daughter of Aurangzeb . Brought up under the able guidance of Aurangzeb himself and also of the renowned scholars of the time-Hafiza Mariyam,Mulla Said Ashraf Muzanddrani (a great Persian poet) and Shah Rustam Ghazi - she came out to be one of the greatest educationists of her time . She was so talented that she became *hafiz* (one who knew the Qoran by heart) at the tender age of seven for which she was awarded thirty thousand gold coins by her father.³⁷ A gifted poetess , she wrote poems in Arabic in early youth which were so good that an Arab scholar remarked , "...it is a miracle for a foreigner to know Arabian so well."³⁸ Later on , she started composing in Persian under the pen-name of '*Makhfi*' and won great laurels not only for the high standard of her poetry but also for being unrivalled in *mushaira* .³⁹ One of the most popular collection of poems attributed to her is entitled Diwan-i-Makhfi . If it is genuine in its present form,it contains 421 *ghazals* ,some of them of rare beauty.⁴⁰

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37 M.A., (Tr.) ,p.322 ; Sarkar , Studies ,p.79.

38 Magan Lal , p.9.

39 Ibid. ,p.10. *Mushaira* is a wit war where one poet questions and other answers in poetic language using same metre and rhyme .See also Macnicol . M.(ed.), Poems by Indian Women , pp.77-78, for her poems .

40 Diwan-i-Makhfi , Kanpur , 1345H./1926; Magan Lal for Tr. of 50 poems . Some modern authors doubt her authorship of this book and consider it to have been written by a Khurasani poet under this pen name (Ahmad ,Hafiz Shams-ud-din , "Zeb-un-nisa Begam and Diwan-i-Makhfi" , JBORS ,Vol.XIII , Pt.I,1927, p.53; Khan Sahib A.Muqtadir , Cat. III, O.P.L., Bankipur , M.S.No.422 , pp.250-52) . See also Sarkar , Studies ,p.80.

She excelled in the field of Calligraphy and could write Persian in *nastaliq* , *naskh* and *shikasta* with perfection.<sup>41</sup> Her language was so polished that her letters written in literary style were highly appreciated by Aurangzeb.<sup>42</sup> She left behind a collection of her letters entitled Zeb-ul-Manshat for the posterity.<sup>43</sup> Her brilliance can be judged from the fact that besides poetry , she attained mastery in Mathematics and Astronomy.<sup>44</sup> She emerged as one of the greatest patrons of knowledge and the learned . After establishing a big library , "the like of which no man has seen " , wrote Must'ad Khan , she took up the work of translation of classical books. It was at her instance that Fakhr-ud-din Razi's commentary on the Holy Qoran Tafsir-i-Kabir was translated from Arabic to Persian By Mulla Safi-ud-din Ardbeli and was entitled Zeb-ut-tafasir after her name.<sup>45</sup> She was wholly dedicated to the cause of knowledge and the distinguished educationists and scholars of her time looked towards her for rewards and recommendations .

Zinat-un-nisa , another daughter of Aurangzeb was proficient in the tenets of Islam . She was also a great

41 M.A. , (Tr.) ,p.322 ; Sarkar, Studies , p.79; Madhavanand and Majumdar (ed.), p.388 ; Law ,p.204;Bazm ,p.456.

42 Ansari , op.cit.,IC, Vol.XXXIV,1960, p.119.

43 Hafiz Shams-ud-din Ahmad , op.cit.,p.42 ; Jaffar , Education, p.197.

44 Magan Lal , p.8.

45 M.A. , (Tr.),p.322; Sarkar , Studies , p.79 ; Yusuf Husain , p.193 ; Jaffar , Education , p.197 ; Bazm , p.456 ; Madhavanand and Majumdar (ed.), p.389.

poetess and wrote her own epitaph .46 similarly , Nur-un-nisa , the wife of prince Shah Alam was a Hindi poetess.<sup>47</sup>

The Mughals were also liberal in giving due respect and recognition to scholarly and learned ladies irrespective of the class to which they belonged . As a result , many other ladies got chance to distinguish themselves . Dai Lado , Jahangir's foster mother, established a school in the Dai Lado mosque (her grave is situated there) in Lahore which was presided over by Maulvi Asmatullah, a learned scholar of that place .<sup>48</sup> There was a Persian lady named Sati-un-nisa in the service of Mumtaz Mahal who was a versatile genius . She was an expert in Persian language as also in Persian poetry and the recitation of the Qoran. She possessed profound knowledge in medicine . Her mistress recognized her talent and appointed her as the instructress of princess Jahanara . She held the post of *Sadr-un-nisa* also . It was at her recommendation that Mumtaz distributed grants and donations to the daughters of poor scholars , theologians and pious men.<sup>49</sup> Another distinguished lady in this field was Hafiza Mariyam. She was wife of Mirza Shukr-ullah of Kashmir and mother of

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46 M.A., (Tr.), p.323 ; also Macnicol (ed.) ,p.79 for her poems and epitaph :

In my grave the grace of God is my only help
It is enough if the shadow of the cloud of mercy
covers my tomb.

47 Aurangzib , IV, p.309.

48 Latif , p.206.

49 M.U., I, pp.260-61 ; Sarkar , Studies , pp.21-22,24; Chowdhuri , op.cit., IC , Vol.XI.1937,p.378 ; Jaffar, Education, pp.196-97 ; Law ,p.204.

Inayatullah Khan who was one of Aurangzeb's nobles . It was in recognition of her great knowledge in different branches of learning including the art of reading the Qoran, that Aurangzeb appointed her as the tutoress of Zeb-un-nisa.⁵⁰ Zeb-un-nisa had so much regard for her that she exhorted her father to give an office to her son Inayatullah.⁵¹

Another lady Koki Jiu has been referred to earlier . She obtained proficiency in letters and also in handwriting and composition to such an extent that she excelled her brother . It was through her educational training only that she played an important role in Mughal politics.⁵²

Following their royal masters , the nobles also paid due attention towards the education of their women-folk. The wife of noble Tughral was great scholar of Astrology.⁵³ The mother of Amir Khusrau was an educated lady and wrote frequently to her son.⁵⁴ Janan Begam , the daughter of Abdur Rahim Khan-Khana, was a great educationist . She wrote commentary on the Qoran for which she was given a reward of fifty thousand *dinars* by Akbar.⁵⁵ She was known for her generosity towards

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50 M.U., I,p.681; Sarkar , Studies ,p.79; Sufi, G.M.D.,Kashir , II,p. 391 ;Bazaz ,p.162.

51 M.U., I,p.681;Rukkat , (Bilmoria) , p.60,n.5; Sufi,II, p.391.

52 Irvine , II,p.264.

53 Isami , (Text) , p.164. Tughral was Governor of Lakhnauti during the time of Balban .

54 Mirza , op.cit., p.73.

55 Bazm , p.442; Shushtery , p.589 ; Chopra , Some Aspects, pp. 123-24 .

learned men.<sup>56</sup> Another lady was Sahibji . She took active part in the political and financial matters of Kabul and showed "excellent sense in the conduct of business".<sup>57</sup> Such examples, nonetheless , were not very many since early marriages of ladies thwarted their pursuits for higher learning.<sup>58</sup>

Some of the ladies of upper strata of the Muslim society in the states adjoining to the Delhi empire also made their mark. Gul Khatun, wife of Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin of Kashmir was a great patron of education. She was credited with building a *madrasa* and another for the study of medicine.<sup>59</sup> Hafiza Khadija , daughter of Mir Sayid Abdul Fattah - a liberal and learned man - mastered the Qoran , the *hadith* , the *fiqh* and Arabic and Persian literature . Being married to an equally great scholar named Zain-ud-din Mufti , she got an impetus for her pursuits of knowledge . She lives in history as a great teacher , full of zest for imparting education to the women of her homeland . She opened a *madrasa* at her own expense where she used to invite intelligent girls and teach them .<sup>60</sup> Habba Khatun , wife of Sultan Yusuf Khan (1579-86 A.D.) earned a name in history as a great poetess besides being a melodious singer and efficient administrator. She introduced *Lol* lyric in Kashmiri

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56 Bazm , p.442.

57 M.U. , I,p.250.

58 Sarkar , Studies , p.301.

59 Sufi , II,p.389 ; Bamzai , p.506.

60 Sufi,II,p. 391; Bazaz,pp.162-63.

poetry.⁶¹ Lachhma Khatun, wife of Malik Jalal-ud-din, a minister of Sultan Bad Shah of Kashmir was known for her learning. She also founded a *madrassa*.⁶² Bibi Bahat of the same time and disciple of Shaikh Nur-ud-din, the patron saint of Kashmir, was also famous for her learning.⁶³

Most of these ladies wrote under the assumed name of '*Nihani*' or '*Makhfi*' i.e. the hidden. Perhaps the society would not have accepted them in their original personality as women.⁶⁴ Abul Fazl ignored to include them in the list of fifty top-most Persian poets of his time.⁶⁵ Badaoni made a list containing hundred and sixty eight names. It contains only one name of a poetess but in that case also her actual name is not known since it appears under the name '*Nihani*'.⁶⁶ Women who had literary achievements to their credit formed a microscopic minority. It may be added that the women themselves were responsible for such a social apathy. Many of the princely ladies with their vast resources patronized learning and also distributed grants and allowances to men of letters. But, none of the royal ladies of the Sultanate or the Mughal period ever tried to promote the cause of women education exclusively.

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61 Sufi, II, p. 390; Bamzai, p.52; Schimmel, Islam, p.47.  
 62 Sufi, II, pp.388-89.  
 63 Ibid., p.388.  
 64 Lal, Harem, p.111.  
 65 Ain., I, pp.617-80.  
 66 Badaoni, III, pp.239-537 esp. p.494 and nn.3&4.

## ARTISTIC CREATIVITY

The Muslim women were engaged in artistic pursuits. There was a gap between the extent of their achievements and the recognition they received in the society. The common women practised arts like cooking, sewing, embroidery, decorations as a part of their household routine. They attracted no notice of society. The women in Bengal were expert in a special type of painting known as *Alipana* in which a kind of drawing was made on the floor with the paste of rice powder.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, they made beautiful country blankets called *Kathas* from worn out clothes and also embroidered them with pictures of flowers, leaves or different animals.<sup>68</sup>

About the aristocratic class of the Sultanate period, hardly anything is known. However, the historians have adequately focussed on the aristocratic women of the Mughal period. Painting was a popular pastime of the ladies of the Mughal harem. But Abul Fazl has not noted the name of any female painter in his list of hundred painters of Akbar's time. There are so many Mughal paintings that show in detail the different facets of the harem life. Since ladies of the harem were unapproachable, it seems, some of these paintings of the ladies must have been painted by the lady-artists within the harem. There are evidences to show that these ladies practised this art. For example, there is a Mughal miniature depicting a lady painting her own portrait and being

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67 Das Gupta, T.C., Aspects of Bengal Society, Introduction, p.xxxvii.

68 Ibid., p.197.

helped by an attendant who sits facing her holding the mirror.⁶⁹ Of late, a painting preserved in the Wantage Bequest in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, belonging to the Mughal times, has also come to light which is signed by a woman painter named Sahifa Banu.⁷⁰ Nurjahan shared interest in painting with her husband. There is a painting wherein one Hasan Ghulam is showing a portrait to her in *darbar* which she is examining.⁷¹ She was adept in this art and painted with expertise.⁷² Unfortunately, her creations are not available.

In the aesthetic decorations and adornments, the Mughal ladies were far ahead of their counterparts of Sultanate period. Nurjahan excelled in many fields. She was expert in needle work and was also credited with having introduced many new designs and styles in dresses and decorations replacing the old ones. For the bride and the bridegroom, she invented a full set of garments known as *Nur Mahali* which cost only twenty five rupees.⁷³ In place of *pehwaz* (gowns) , she brought *dudami* weighing just two *dams* and in place of *orhnis* (veils) , she brought *pachtoliya* weighing only five *tolas* . She also developed new designs for making carpets. Her *farsh-i-chandani* or carpets of sandalwood colour along with

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69 Qaiser ,A.J. , The Indian Response to European Technology and Culture, Pl.7a( from *Khamsa*, BM.or.12208 , f.206a).

70 Enakshi Bhavnani , "Creative and Fine Arts" ,ed. Tara Ali Baig , Women of India, p.166.

71 Mishra,p.92,n.5(basing on Ivan Stchoukine's Pl.vii).

72 Lal , Harem ,p.77

73 Beni Prasad , p.158.

her new fashion in *badla* (brocade) and *kinari* (lace) were popular not only during her own times but also a century later.<sup>74</sup> She also invented new patterns and designs for the gold ornaments.<sup>75</sup> The Muslim women of higher strata and of royalty were, in general, very adept in embroidery work for which they were also given regular training.<sup>76</sup>

One exclusive contribution of some of the Mughal ladies was the vast and beautiful gardens they laid out or maintained. Jahangir mentioned in his Memoirs about the gardens which were built by different Mughal ladies like Bika Begam, the widow of Babur, Mariyam Makani, Jahangir's grandmother and Shahr Banu Begam (daughter of Mirza Abu Said), who was Babur's aunt.<sup>77</sup> He also mentioned about a garden of his own mother Mariyam Zamani at the *pargana* of Jusat and another gifted by him to Rukayya Sultan Begam, his step mother.<sup>78</sup>

Nurjahan was credited with designing and inspiring the construction of many pleasure resorts and beautiful gardens full of natural flora and fruit trees. She built a garden

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74 Ain., I,Tr.note,p.574; Khafi Khan , (Text) , Pt.I,p.269; also Beni Prasad ,p.158; Pool, J.J.,Famous Women of India, p.99. Khafi Khan informed that once she herself prepared covers for elephants with exquisite designs of flowers and leaves and Jahangir praised her highly for this proficiency in needle work .

75 Ain. , I,Tr.note,p.574; Hendley , T.H.,Indian Jewellery , I,p.10.

76 There were teachresses called *Atuns* who trained Mughal princesses in embroidery (CR , Vol.(CVI,1898,pp.346-47). Also S.K.Banerji , II,p.310.

77 Tuzuk , I,p.106;also Thevenot ,p.57(for Hamida Banu's garden on the road from Agra to Bayana).

78 Tuzuk , II,p.64 ;I,p.48 resp..

called *Dilamez* or *Dilkhusha* at Shahdara near Lahore.⁷⁹ Her *vakil* built a lofty house and garden at Nur Sarai.⁸⁰ There were still others called *Nur Manzil* and *Nur-afshan* gardens which belonged to her.⁸¹ Since Jahangir used to spend half the year in Kashmir, she showed her creativity in laying out gardens there. Her garden called *Begmabad* (*Sahibabad*) at Achhol with gushing springs and fruit laden trees, was very romantic. It was highly praised by Bernier :

The garden is very handsome, laid out in regular walk, and full of fruit-trees... Jets-d'eau in various forms and fish-ponds are in great number, and there is a lofty cascade which in its fall takes the form and colour of a large sheet, thirty or forty paces in length, producing the finest effect imaginable; especially at night, when innumerable lamps, fixed in parts of the wall adapted for that purpose, are lighted under this sheet of water.

He also praised the beauty of another garden at Vernag which is reported to have been designed and laid out by Nurjahan.⁸²

Mumtaz Mahal was responsible for Mughal gardens in Delhi and Agra.⁸³ Her daughter, Jahanara Begam was equally fond of gardens. She got a garden called *Begam ka Bagh* built outside the Delhi Fort which became a rendezvous for

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79 Mundy, II, p.214; Latif, pp.104, 106-07, 250; Stuart, C.M.V., Gardens of the Great Mughals, pp. 130-31. Jahangir's Mausoleum existed in this garden.

80 Tuzuk, II, p.192; Mundy, II, p.78; Latif, p.49.

81 Tuzuk, II, pp.76, 199.

82 Bernier, pp.413-14, n.; also Bamzai, p.365; Stuart, pp.184-85.

83 Enakshi Bhavnani, p.166.

friends and lovers in her own time . 84 Besides , she had three gardens namely *Bagh-i-Aishabad* , *Bagh-i-Nur Afshan* and *Bagh-i-Safa* laid out in Kashmir under the supervision of Jawahar Khan Khwajasra . 85 She got gardens laid out at Ambala<sup>86</sup> , Surat<sup>87</sup> and Achchol.<sup>88</sup> In addition , she owned many gardens, either inherited or received as gift by her.<sup>89</sup> Shah Jahan's other daughter Roshanara Begam also built the famous *Roshanara Bagh* in Delhi . 90

Shah Jahan's wife Akbarabadi (A'azz-un-nisa) built a splendid garden in imitation of *Shalimar Bagh* of Kashmir at Lahore at a high cost of two lac rupees.<sup>91</sup> Zeb-un-nisa also planted her own garden at Lahore where she was ultimately buried.<sup>92</sup> The famous *Charburj Bagh* of Lahore also belonged to her . But the princess gifted it to her favourite female attendant Mian Bai who had supervised its construction . The fact about this gift was recorded in the Persian verses on its  
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84 Lal , Harem , p.96 ; Stephen , p.256.

85 Lahori , I,Pt.II,p.27; Kambo , II,p. 36.

86 Lahori , I,Pt.II,p.7 and II,p.115; Qazwini,III, f.584.

87 Thevenot , pp.35-36.

88 Lahori , I, Pt.II,p.51.

89 Ibid. , II, p.99 (for her inheritance of *Bagh-i-Jahanara* from her mother after the latter's death), p.587 (for *Bagh-i-Shaharara* having received by her from her father).

90 Stuart , p.108 ; Stephen ,pp.260-61; Haywood , S., "The Emperors and Their Gardens" ,in The Gardens of Mughal India, p.184.

91 Stuart , pp.103-05.

92 Ibid. ,p.135 ; Latif ,p.190.

gateway.⁹³

Some of these ladies immortalized themselves by raising many edifices in the form of *sarais* , *khankahs* , mausoleums , mosques and other buildings, a few of which serve as monuments in their memory even to this day . Mother of Muhammad bin Tughlaq built many *khankahs* for free distribution of food to the travellers .⁹⁴ During Mughal times , the first lady to have contributed to the field of Architecture was Bega Begam (Haji Begam) , the wife of Humayun . She got the mausoleum of Humayun built under her supervision after his death . Besides, she also built an *Arab Sarai* for the accommodation of Arab travellers and merchants.⁹⁵

Akbar's mother Hamida Banu built a royal house on Agra-Bayana road .⁹⁶ His wife Salima Sultan Begam built her own tomb with an attached garden.⁹⁷ Jahangir's mother constructed a *baoli* (step-well) at a cost of twenty thousand rupees in the *pargana* of Jusat the beauty of which was praised by her Emperor son. He wrote, "Certainly the *baoli* was a grand building , and had been built exceedingly well ."⁹⁸ She

93 Latif , pp.188-90; Stuart , pp.134-35.

94 Ibn Batuta ,p.118. *Khankahs* are religious establishments popularly known as monasteries for the holy men like Sufis and *derveshes* (Steingass, F.,A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary ,p.443; Platts, J.T., A Dictionary of Urdu,Classical Hindi and English,I,p.446.

95 S.K.Banerji,II,p.317; Monserrate,p.96; Stephen,pp.198-99.

96 Thevenot ,p.57.

97 Tuzuk , I,pp.232-33. It was probably situated near Agra .

98 Ibid. , II,p.64.

also built a mosque at Lahore in 1641 A.D. (1023 A.H.) . 99
 His wife Nurjahan got *sarai* built at Sikanderabad¹⁰⁰ and
 also *Nur Mahal ki Sarai* at Agra . 101 Some authorities
 believe that she got Jahangir's tomb built at Lahore . 102 She
 got her own mausoleum also built at Lahore . 103 She built a
 mosque called *Pathar Masjid* on the left bank of Jhelum in
 Kashmir. It is considered to be the largest of the surviving
 Mughal buildings in Kashmir. Built of polished grey limestone,
 it is constructed in a magnificent style with "massive stone
 arches " and "handsomely ribbed and vaulted" roof.¹⁰⁴
 Jahangir's wet nurse Dai Lado built her own grave at Lahore
 where she was buried after her death in the first year of
 Aurangzeb's reign .¹⁰⁵

Shah Jahan's daughter Pur Hunar Banu Begam got built her
 own mausoleum where she was buried after her death . 106
 Jahanara Begam constructed a mosque in Agra at a cost of five
 lac rupees . Shah Jahan himself was interested in building

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99 Latif , p.131.  
 100 Pelsaert ,p.4.  
 101 Mundy , II,pp.78,159.  
 102 Haig,IV,p.184. But as per Latif, (p.107 and n.), the  
 mausoleum was got built by Shah Jahan.  
 103 M.U. , II,Pt.II,p.1079 ; Latif ,pp.56,109.  
 104 Bamzai ,p.537. He wrote that this mosque with all its  
 magnificence , yet did not become popular because of the  
 insulting remark of the queen , who , when asked about  
 the cost of the construction , was said to have replied ,  
 pointing to her jewel studded slipper ,"as much as this".  
 105 Latif , p.206.  
 106 M.A. , (Tr.) ,p.90.

this mosque . But , at her asking , the Emperor allowed her to do the same out of her personal allowances . <sup>107</sup> She built a *rabat* (monastery) . <sup>108</sup> Catering to the needs of both, the rich and poor , she built many more buildings . For the poor , she built a house at Srinagar at a cost of twenty thousand rupees. <sup>109</sup> For the well-to-do , she made a magnificent caravanserai called *Begam Sarai* in Delhi which impressed even the foreigners . Bernier , for instance , compared it to the 'Palace Royal' in Paris . The *sarai* had lovely gardens and reservoirs of water and also arrangements of "perfect security , the gates being closed at night" . Only great Mughals and rich Persian , Uzbek and other foreign merchants were allowed to stay there . <sup>110</sup> She got built another famous caravanserai at Kirka near Bayana (Behana) . <sup>111</sup> For herself , she built house at Achchol with gardens and fountains . <sup>112</sup> She also built her own tomb in her life time . <sup>113</sup>

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107 Lahori, I,Pt.II,p.252; Ain., I, Tr.note,p.375.

108 Lahori, II, p.469.

109 Khafi Khan , (Text),Pt. I,p.706.

110 Bernier ,pp.280-81; Thevenot, p.60;Manucci,I,p.213. He wrote , "This is the most beautiful sarae in Hindustan , with upper chambers adorned with many paintings , and it has a lovely garden,in which are ornamental reservoirs." As per him , even the Emperor was all praise for the *sarai* . Also see Stephen ,p.247 . The *sarai* was raised to the ground after 1857 revolt and at present the site is occupied by Queen's Gardens (Fanshawe, H.C.,Delhi Past and Present,p.52).

111 Tavernier , I,p.41,n.1.

112 Lahori , I,Pt.II,p.51.

113 Stephen , p.109.

Zinat-un-nisa Begam, the daughter of Aurangzeb built fourteen caravanserais .¹¹⁴ She constructed *Zinat-ul-Masjid* (*Kuari Masjid*) at her own expenses and was buried there after her death .¹¹⁵ Qudsia Begam , mother of Emperor Ahmad Shah, built on the banks of Jamuna (in 1748 A.D.) a garden named *Qudsia Bagh* which also contained a big palace .¹¹⁶

Beyond Mughal ladies, there is reference of Begam Saliha, the wife of King Muhammad Shah of Kashmir, who was also interested in Architecture . She rebuilt *Khankah-i-Shah Hamdan* on the bank of Vitasta. For meeting its expenses, she did not ask for any state help but sold her own jewellery . Her creation is considered to be a "precious specimen" of the Muslim architecture of the medieval times .¹¹⁷ Lachhma Khatun also founded a *khankah* .¹¹⁸

These activities enhanced the social status of women . Such creative pursuits provided outlet for their smothered faculties and helped them add charm to the family life . Their presence was felt within their closed social circle . It was , however , unfortunate that the artistic pursuits of aristocratic ladies gradually petered out. After the reign of Aurangzeb , artistic contributions of the Mughal ladies

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 114 Norris , p.236 (he confirmed to have visited one of these caravanserais when he arrived at Navapur ) .  
 115 Aurangzib , I,p.38; III, p.35; Stephen,pp.261-63; Schimmel, Islam ,p.102.  
 116 Stephen , pp.274-75.  
 117 Sufi , II,p.389.  
 118 Sufi , II,p.389.

vanished . In the decayed social milieu , economic bankruptcy and constant political upheavals , the ladies had neither the zeal nor the capability for creative art .

### DRESS AND ADORNMENTS

The Muslim women, with the exception of those of the South<sup>119</sup>, were distinguished mainly by their *salwar* (trousers) and shirt or tight tunic with belt and half-length sleeves<sup>120</sup> and a *dupatta* (scarf)<sup>121</sup> to cover their head and upper part of the body. They wore their usual *burqa* (veil).

*Ghanghara*(long and very loose shirt)was also popular among the Muslim women .<sup>122</sup> the material of which they were made like cotton, silk or the stone-studdings , gold embroidery and brocading they had , varied according to the socio-economic background of the user . While the common women were

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119 Ibn Batuta , pp.179,202,212 . He informed about Muslim women in Malabar coast only wrapping "unsewn garments" covering their down portion with one extreme and the upper portion upto head with the other . In Maldive Islands , there was no purdah nor any covering of the upper part . Ibn Batuta as *Qazi* of that place , tried to quell the practice but failed . But Pyrard , visiting these Islands in early 17th century found the Maldivian women keeping their breasts covered (Pyrard , II,p.446).

120 Thevenot ,p.53 and portrait facing p.50; De Laet , p.80 (talked of tunic) ;Terry ,p.308; also Sahu,p.78.During Aurangzeb's reign, orders forbidding Muslim women from wearing tight fitting trousers were passed but they did not seem to have much impact (Manucci , II,pp.139-40).

121 Manucci,(II,p.318) referred to it as a "sheet of cloth"; Badaoni, (I,p.503) as "*Chadar*" ; Meer Hassan Ali, (I,pp. 108-09) as "*dupatta*" . See also Bernier, p.170 for a portrait.

122 Ojha , North Indian , p.30.

satisfied with the coarser cloth like cotton, the women of upper strata used costly gilded and jewelled items .¹²³ The aristocratic ladies had some exclusive dresses like *qabas* (a long coat),¹²⁴ *kulahs* (a high cap)¹²⁵ and *lachaqs* (a head dress).¹²⁶ During the Mughal times , some of the princesses even wore turbans with the permission of the King. The poor women moved about barefoot . The rich ladies used shoes of varied designs and colours, often adorned with costly embroidery and studdings .

There was universal craze for the beauty aids and women were accustomed to putting on ornaments from their early childhood.¹²⁷ But the rich upper class did maintain a difference in that they used costly ornaments which were also better in quality and variety. While their ornaments were made of gold and studded with jewels, pearls, diamonds and other precious stones, the poorer people used ornaments of cheaper

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 123 See above, Chapter IV. For details of dresses , see Sahu, pp.77-78 ; Ila Mukherji , pp.55-57 ; Chopra , Some Aspects , pp.11-14.

124 T.N., (Raverty), I, P.643 (for *qaba* of Razia) ; Manucci, II,p.318 ; Thevenot , p.51 (from his narration it appears that *qaba* had become a common dress by his time and the women too were using it ) .For similar dresses of men and women , see Ibid. , p.53 ; De Laet , p.80 ; BrijBhushan , Jamila , The World of Indian Miniatures , p. 116.

125 T.N. , (Raverty) , I , p.643 (for Razia Sultan wearing *kulah* ) .

126 GHN , p.138, n.6; Chopra , Some Aspects , p.13.

127 Ibn Batuta , pp.122 (slave girls being awarded ornaments), 179, 202 (women of down South , though scantily dressed yet, fond of ornaments ) ; Ijaz-i-Khusravi , V,p.127 (public women fond of ornaments ) ; Nuh-Sipih , VII , p.379.

materials like silver, brass, iron, copper, ivory, glass and cowries. <sup>128</sup> The bracelets or precious ring of the right thumb with a looking glass and pearls studded around it and the sweet smelling perfumes of different varieties were the distinct privileges of the ladies of upper and royal classes. <sup>129</sup> Likewise, the rich dresses, precious ornaments and pungent perfumes came to be regarded as "signs of respectability and good breeding". <sup>130</sup> The one who looked different from the common women in attires and adorations, received an automatic social distinction. In that age of sensuality and ostentation, glamour gained an upper hand and the ladies of higher class vied with one another to look more glamorous. Confined within their houses, these women did not have much else to achieve. So, such pursuits of self-adoration brought piquancy and zest in their dull, drab and secluded lives. The vast variety of ornaments they used for head, arms, nose, ears, fingers, neck, waist, thigh and numerous cosmetics and toilets they applied on their face, hands, feet and hair go to show that from head to toe no part of their

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128 Fryer, II, p.117. He wrote, "The rich (women) have their Arms and Feet Fettered with Gold and Silver, the meaner with Brass and Glass and Tuthinag, besides rings at their Noses, Ears, Toes and Fingers." For ornaments of different materials, see Fitch, pp.13,22-23,28 (for silver, copper, tin, ivory, amber stone ornaments); Careri, p.248 (for gold nose ring set with stone); Thevenot, p.53 (for silver and gold ear and nose rings and finger ring with looking glass set in it); Stavorinus, I, p.416 (glass and cowry ornaments); Ovington, I, p.143.

129 Manucci, II, pp.317-18. See also above, Chapter IV.

130 Ashraf, pp.215,217.

body remained undecked . 131 Since physical charm had the greatest attraction as a method for getting recognition in society , there was craze to use all kinds of devices to look young and charming . Even the ladies whose youth had long past,were no exception.¹³² Because of excessive use of ornaments, Khusrau advocated against it.¹³³ He cautioned that beauty-aids brought defame to the person. ¹³⁴ He exhorted the need for cultivating beauty in chaste character and pious deeds rather than in physical looks.¹³⁵ Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq forbade the use of gold and silver for making ornaments.¹³⁶

RELIGIOUS PURSUITS AND BELIEFS

The women were , generally , religious minded and observed prescribed ceremonies and festivals . *Hajj* pilgrimage was popular among the ladies having means . After the death of

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- 131 For enumeration of ornaments and toilets , see Matla-ul-Anwar , pp.225,228; Nuh Sipahr , VII,pp.383,560; Hasht Bahisht , pp.30-31; Ibn Batuta,pp.79,122; Ain.,III, pp.341-45; also Ila Mukherji , pp.63-78; Chopra, Some Aspects , pp.21-28; Ojha , North Indian , pp.36-45; Sahu, pp. 81-85.
- 132 Matla-ul-Anwar, pp.186-94 (described how a middle aged woman tried hard to retain her faded beauty by use of cosmetics) and p.173 (for his ridicule of dying of hair). See also Ashraf , p.215.
- 133 Dewal Rani Khizr Khan , (ed. Ansari) , p.223.
- 134 Matla-ul-Anwar , p.225; Hasht Bahisht , pp.30-31.
- 135 Matla-ul-Anwar , p.194; Hasht Bahisht , pp.29,31.
- 136 Futuhāt, (Text) , rule 14 , p.11.

Khizr Khan , his mother visited Mecca in 1327 A.D..<sup>137</sup> The mother of Muhammad Shah Bahmani I (1358-77 A.D.) went for the *hajj* .<sup>138</sup> Sultanam , wife of Nizam-ud-din Ali Barlas Khalifa along with Gulbarg Begam, her sister-in-law, went to Mecca.<sup>139</sup>

Mahchuchak Begam , wife of Kamran undertook pilgrimage along with her husband .<sup>140</sup> Akbar arranged for the *hajj* of Bega Begam (Haji Begam) . She is reported to have undertaken this journey twice.<sup>141</sup> Gulbadan Begam accompanied by Salima Sultan Begam ,Gulzar Begam (daughter of Kamran ),Sultan (Sultanam) Begam (Wife of Askari) , Kulsum Khanam (grand-daughter of Gulbadan) , Gulnar Agacha besides Bibi Safiya , Bibi Sarv , Shaham Aga (the royal servants of Humayun ) undertook this journey in 1575 A.D. . They returned in 1582 A.D. when Akbar personally came at Kanwah to receive them.<sup>142</sup> After the reign of Akbar , such journeys were discouraged because of disturbances caused by the Portuguese in Arabian Sea .<sup>143</sup> Dai Lado ,a wet nurse of Emperor Jahangir , performed this pilgrimage in the fourth year of Shah Jahan's reign .<sup>144</sup>

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137 Ibn Batuta , p.45.

138 Ferishta , II,p.185.

139 GHN,p.159 , also Tr.note, p.230.

140 GHN, Tr.note , pp.49,260.

141 A.N. , (Bev.) , II,pp.366-67 ; GHN, Tr.note, p.220.

142 Bayazid , p.355; A.N., (Bev.), III,pp.205-06, 363 , 369-70 and n.1; GHN , Introduction, pp.69-70.

143 Payne , C.H., Akbar and the Jesuits ,pp.153,269-70.

144 Latif , p.206.

The presence of females in congregational prayers at the mosques , though not popular , was prevalent in the early medieval period . Islamic norms subjected the women visitors to certain restrictions . In the prayer , the *Imam* stood at the head. In the rows , men stood first of all , followed by children , eunuchs and finally women . Women could not speak lest this would divert the attention of men. But this order did not seem to have been followed strictly, as is also evident from the narrations of Mushtaqi wherein he described women devotees praying by the side of men in the mosques . ¹⁴⁵

Inspired by the Qoranic dictum , many of Muslim ladies undertook acts of piety and charity . The mother of Muhammad bin Tughlaq had a generous bent of mind and Barani considered none equal to her in charitable matters . She maintained a number of hospices where she made provisions for feeding the wayfarers . She distributed grants and gifts liberally and many families thrived on her help alone . A separate department was organized to meet out these expenses and also to keep a record of the same. ¹⁴⁶ Maham Begam, after Babur's funeral , made "allowance of food twice daily" . ¹⁴⁷ Bega Begam spent her widowhood in distributing alms and supporting five hundred poor people . ¹⁴⁸ Alms were also distributed by

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145 Mushtaqi , (Rizvi , UTKB , Pt.II) , p.563.

146 Barani , (Text) , pp.482-83 ; Ibn Batuta ,pp.118, 127.

147 GHN , p.111.

148 Monserrate , p.96.

them or on their behalf while they were on *hajj* . 149

Nurjahan brought relief to the destitute and the poor through her liberal grants . "She was an asylum for all sufferers and helpless girls ", wrote Muhammad Hadi, and thousands benefited from her generosity .<sup>150</sup> She had collected many maid-servants in the palace whom she got married to *ahadis* (gentleman troopers ) and *chelas* . She distributed three thousand rupees as alms on prescribed days of bath .<sup>151</sup> Mumtaz Mahal was also very generous . Helped by her *Nazir* Sati-un-nisa , she managed the marriages of many poor girls by arranging for their dowries.<sup>152</sup> Jahanara distributed a lot of money in charity on different occasions.<sup>153</sup>

Aurangzeb's daughter Zinat-un-nisa was known for her piety and charity.<sup>154</sup> Jahanzib Banu, daughter of prince Dara, was also famous for her generosity and liberal attitude .<sup>155</sup>

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149 A.N. , (Bev.) , II,p.484 (for distribution of such alms by Haji Begam); Monserrate ,p.205 (for distribution of alms by Akbar on Gulbadan's return from *hajj*).

150 Muhammad Hadi , p.399;also Mutamad Khan ,p.405 .

151 M.U. ,II,Pt.II,p.1078.

152 Sarkar , Studies , pp.11-12; Kambo , I,p.249; also Qazwini,II,f.277 who informed that on her recommendation, Hakim Rukna Kashi was given Rs.24 thousand ; Chowdhuri , op.cit. , IC , Vol.XI , 1937 , p.378.

153 Manucci , II,p.117 (for her sending two thousand gold coins to be distributed among the poor after the death of Shah Jahan).

154 Aurangzib , I,p.38; M.A. , (Tr.),p.323;also Schimmel , Islam , p.102.

155 Manucci , IV, p.185.

In the later Mughal period , Lal Kanwar was known for generous charity of food and money which she distributed among the poor and the needy .¹⁵⁶ Hazrat Qudsia Begam (Udham Bai) was also known for her generosity .¹⁵⁷

Many notable women were totally devoted to religion and became *joginis* (lady ascetics) , renowned saints and mystics.¹⁵⁸ Sufism was responsible for such a development . Sufis treated women with more respect and consideration and opened the doors of religious upliftment for them . When a girl was purchased by one of the servants of Sufi saint Amir Hasan, the latter purchased her back and handed her over to her parents .¹⁵⁹ Baba Farid , taking pity on a poor man , recommended a man for the marriage of his daughter.¹⁶⁰ They treated even their maid-servants and female-slaves with kindness. One of the maid servants of Shaikh Jamal-ud-din Hansi used to carry letters of her master to Baba Farid . The latter called her 'mother of Momins' , because of her sincere and sweet nature .¹⁶¹ Maulana Fakhr-ud-din and his guru Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya had great difficulty once, when the former wanted to lead a life of celibacy while his mother

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156 Ashub , I,f. 35b.

157 Ibid. ,f.36a ; Sarkar , Fall ,I,p.209.

158 Goetz, Herman,The Art and Architecture of Bikaner State , p.172 (showing a painting depicting a *jogini* in the company of the court ladies ).

159 Rizvi, S.A.A., A History of Sufism in India , I,p.166.

160 Hamid Qalander , p.87, also see p.218.

161 Rashid,p.130 on the authority of Siyar-ul-Auliya, pp.180-81.

was after getting him married . They did not want to hurt the feelings of the mother by being adamant . So , the Shaikh took recourse to his mystic power to save his disciple from marriage . His mother did not force marriage on him thereafter.<sup>162</sup>

The Sufis readily accepted women as their *murid* (disciples) without making any discrimination on the basis of sex .<sup>163</sup> The initiation ceremony was almost similar and so were the restrictions and obligations required to be observed, for all. Rather , the Sufis depicted a softer corner for the ladies and rules were made less rigorous for them in some respects considering their weak constitution .<sup>164</sup>

Bibi Zulaikha, the mother of Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya , possessed unique intuitive power of foreseeing the future in her dreams . With deep faith in God , all her prayers were fulfilled.<sup>165</sup> Bibi Auliya of the time of Muhammad bin Tughlaq was a famous saint of her time, deeply revered by the public.<sup>166</sup> Bibi Sara , mother of Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Abul Muid, also possessed mystic powers. It is narrated that the Shaikh even brought rains for Delhi after it had suffered long  
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162 Hamid Qalander ,pp.63-65; See also Rizvi , I,pp.401-02 (for Nizam-ud-din Auliya's and Baba Farid's regard for their mothers).

163 Rizvi,I,p.401 on the authority of Akhbar-ul-Akhyar,p.295.

164 Hamid Qalander , pp.68,134.

165 Nand, L.C.,Women in Delhi Sultanate,pp.147-48;Rashid, p.138.

166 Nand,p.149 on the authority of Akhbar-ul-Akhyar,p.283; Rizvi , I,p.403.

dry spell, by praying after taking a thread from a garment worn by his mother.¹⁶⁷ Qarsum Bibi , mother of Baba Farid , was equally enlightened and exalted .¹⁶⁸ She used to pray throughout the night . There are numerous anecdotes popular about her piety and devotion . In one such case , when she was engrossed in her prayers one night , some thieves trespassed her house but were so much overwhelmed by her charismatic saintliness that they became changed persons and led honest lives thereafter.¹⁶⁹ She left indelible impression on the mind of her son and was responsible for giving him the spiritual bent of mind . Another known lady was Bibi Fatima Saam . She acquired a respectable place among the Sufi saints of the time not only because of being an accomplished poetess but also because of her virtues, devotion to God and charitable nature. It is narrated that once Shaikh Najib-ud-din was visited by some guests and he had nothing to offer to them . At such a time Bibi Fatima Saam came to his help by sending him some bread . She kept on helping the family of the Shaikh off and on.¹⁷⁰ For his daughter Bibi Sharifah , Baba

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167 Rizvi , I,p.401 on the authority of Akhbar-ul-Akhyar, p.294.

168 Nizami, K.A., The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-ud-din Ganjishakar , p.15 on the authority of Akhbar-ul-Akhyar , pp.287-88, Siyar-ul-Aqlats, pp. 163-64 and "Maarij-ul-Walayat" (MS.). Hereafter cited as Farid-ud-din .

169 Ibid., on the authority of Siyar-ul-Arifin , p.32 and Fawaid-ul-Fuad , pp.121-22; also Rizvi,I,p.401.

170 Religion and Politics , p.200 on the authority of Fawaid-ul-Fuad , p.245 and Siyar-ul-Arifin , pp.101-02 ; also Rashid , p.138.

Farid used to say, "Had it been permitted to bestow *Khilafat Namah* of the Shaikh and his *Sajjadah* to a woman, I would have given them to Bibi Sharifah." He also observed, "If other women had been like her, women would have taken precedence over men." <sup>171</sup> In Kashmir, Taj Khatun, the wife of Mir Muhammad Hamdani, son of famous saint Shah Hamdan and Lalla Arifa, also a contemporary of Shah Hamdan, were the known lady-saints of the time. <sup>172</sup> Nevertheless, the female Sufis were hampered in many ways. They were never allowed spiritual succession and hence, were never incorporated in *khankahs* and 'orders'. Thus, in spite of lack of encouragement from their male counterparts and Islam in general, some of them were still committed in their individual capacities to the cause of mysticism. <sup>173</sup>

The visits to the shrines and tombs of the saints was one of the most popular practices. It was generally believed that prayers at the graves of the martyrs and saints were spiritually blissful and efficacious in averting ailments and misfortunes. When Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya's mother fell ill, she sent her son to the tombs of many martyr saints in order to pray for her recovery. <sup>174</sup> The ladies continued to visit them with full devotion. Firoz Shah Tughlaq ordered

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171 Nizami, Farid-ud-din, p.65; Rashid, p.139.

172 Sufi, II, pp.383-87.

173 Rizvi, I, p.403.

174 Religion and Politics, p. 300 on the authority of Fawaid-ul-Fuad, p.59.

women not to visit the tombs in the vicinity of Delhi. Sikander Lodi also tried to enforce these regulations, but their efforts proved abortive . *Urs* or annual anniversaries of mystic saints were celebrated with great enthusiasm in which women participated . On every Thursday or at some places on Friday , women along with men went to pay a visit to the *mazars* of the *pirs* . 175

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175 Badaoni,II,p.320 (for Gulbadan and other ladies visiting the shrine of Chisti after their return from the *hajj*). A.N., (Bev.), II, pp. 476-77;Pelsaert,p.70(for ladies visiting tomb of Chisti along with Akbar).Tuzuk,I,p.110 (Hindal's daughter, Rukayya Sultan Begam visited her father's tomb at Kabul and Jahangir along with his harem to the tomb of Babur)and II,pp.101,109(Jahangir along with harem ladies visiting tomb of Humayun, Akbar and Chisti resp.). Kambo, II,p.422 (for Jahanara's visit to Chisti tomb after recovery from her burns in 1644 A.D.) .

## CONCLUSION

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The foregoing study highlights the social, economic, political and cultural dimensions of Muslim womanhood in medieval period of Indian history. The analysis takes into account the Islamic heritage on one hand and the impact of Hinduism and its evil practices on the other. The changing status of Muslim women, both, in ideology and in practice, emerges clearly.

In the social context, the overall position of Muslim women was dismal. Barring her role as a mother where she commanded universal respect, she had a subservient position in social hierarchy. In those warring times, there was universal craving for a son. Daughters were a security risk and a liability for the Muslims. Birth of a daughter was, therefore, unwelcome for the Muslims, both rulers and the ruled. They were married at very early age, though this age was slightly higher for the aristocratic classes. Child marriage retarded physical and mental development of the women. They were discriminated against even in celebrations of birth and death. The Muslims also adopted the dowry system of the Hindus. Daughters, therefore, became undesirable. The permission of divorce by Muslim society and its practice brought respite to some Muslim ladies. However, not many of them moved to courts for seeking divorce because of their weak social position. The male dominance and general social set up dwarfed their personality. On account

of the prevailing polygamy, the women had to bear with neglect and apathy even if they were not divorced by their husbands. There were instances when divorced wives were also kept by their erstwhile husbands even after the period of *iddat*. The institution of divorce, therefore, lost its value. It became rare under the Hindu impact. The practice of re-marriage, as allowed by Islam, was followed in the beginning. Gradually, it also relegated to the background under the influence of Hinduism. Polygamy was a way of life with the affluent class, the number only varying according to the means, the requirement and the fancy of the man. The agricultural and labour class practised monogamy. Among other Muslim population, polygamy though followed, yet came to be discouraged gradually. The Hindu practices of *sati* and *jauhar* made inroads into the Islamic practices, but they were not popular.

A woman within the house was considered man's possession. She was even sold for paying off taxes. Confined within her home, she had no other vocation in life except bearing and rearing of children and managing the home. Many restrictions were placed on them which became stricter with increasing moral degradation of the society. Too many checks on them caused aberrations in their behaviour and deterioration in their moral values. Such tendencies grew more as the restrictions imposed on women increased over a period of time. The common Muslim women generally safeguarded their chastity. The general sensual appeal

brought a thriving business for the prostitutes and dancing and singing girls. Prostitution was taken as a necessary evil, yet the profession was not considered honourable. Gradually the society developed tolerance for the harlots and they came to be patronized by the royalty and the aristocracy. The dancers and singers also enjoyed this patronage. They acquired proficiency professionally, but morally they had to go down because of moral decline of their patronizing masters. The menial female slaves were not treated well. But those, who were kept for entertainment, tried to catch the fancy of their masters. Some of them succeeded and were able to rise to become centre of power in the later Mughal period. As for widows, they had soft corner. The Kings, queens and nobles provided for their living. The general behaviour towards the female relations was, more or less, good. Women were considered the honour of the house and the man was to defend her. At times, she was also equated with social honour. However, the Muslim rulers were generally harsh towards the ladies of their opponents, irrespective of religion. There were some instances of good treatment meted out to them but this reflected only the individual mood and not the general attitude of the society towards women. In general social estimation, they ranked very low and were considered helpless, dependent, short-sighted, cowardly and fit only for sensual entertainment.

The right of maintenance provided to the Muslim women by the Qoran was followed by the Muslim society of medieval

India. Some of the Kings provided for the needy women by way of bestowal of *jagirs* , *suyurghal* grants (*madad-i-maash*), *wazifa*, land grants and right of collection of land revenue. *Madad-i-maash* grants originated with Mughals and could not be sold or transferred except through inheritance. They were so extensive that Aurangzeb laid down a code of inheritance. The Kings along with many nobles and royal ladies extended help to the destitute women financially . The ladies getting maintenance generally obeyed their masters. Such a surety of maintenance led to a sense of complacency among women which smothered their quest for higher attainments.

*Mahr* was another economic right of Muslim women provided by the Qoran. In the early medieval period, the *mahr* was fixed at a low amount and hence, was paid in practice also. But gradually, as the *mahr* amount became high, the practice lost its importance and *mahr* became just a phony promise seldom fulfilled .

As regards the property rights, Muslim women owned and inherited property during this period. Some of the Sultans followed *Shariat* law in this regard, but mostly Islamic rules were disregarded. The inheritance depended on the influence of the lady concerned or on the local customs. Often they did not receive their share unless there were no close male relatives or the parents were very wealthy . They could not afford to be assertive because of their weak position. Even those who inherited , their rights were, generally, infringed and women were not in a position to

defend them. In most of the cases wherein courts were approached for redressal, it was done mainly by their male guardians or male relatives. The society considered it worthy of a woman to remain in seclusion rather than to have economic independence. Many lower and middle class ladies came out of their houses for earning their living by working with others or through independent professions. They could not get a social standing for themselves in spite of their economic viability because of prevalence of purdah. The Mughal ladies involved themselves in high-stake trades. But, the society did not look at it disparagingly. Their economic affluence and social aloofness generated awe and respect. The ladies also collected wealth through gifts and gratifications, their possessions varying according to their economic and political involvement, closeness to the ruler and the period to which they belonged. The Muslim ladies of the Mughal time were much richer than their counterparts in the Sultanate period.

The men of royalty and nobility maintained harem. In the pre-Mughal period large harem was considered a status-symbol. The Sultans and nobles maintained big harems to enhance their prestige. Some of the Sultans even framed rules for harmonious living within their harem and also for safeguarding its seclusion. During Mughal times, Babur and Humayun had small harems. With the coming of Akbar, the practice of keeping large harems was restored. He greatly improved upon the existing harem-management and organization. Dwelling was provided to all inmates of the

harem, the size and type of accommodation depended upon the position of a particular lady within the seraglio. These women in harem had a very circumscribed life. They were lavishly provided. They squandered their time and money in wearing costly clothes, using various toilets and adornments, celebrating fairs and festivals and involving themselves in interior decorations, feasting, music, dance and other recreations. The Mughal ladies found time for going on excursions. They had fun in the celebration of *Khushroo*. They preferred everything fine, gilded, silvered, jewelled or precious stone-studded. In all their activities, ostentation was conspicuous. They enjoyed high sounding epithets to be added to their names. Such pomp and show was more marked during the time of the Mughals than that of the Sultanate period; particularly during the reign of Shah Jahan onwards till the depletion of royal treasury in the later Mughal period. The male master remained the pivot of their activities. It was their constant endeavour to remain ever-attractive for him. Women in harem were not sure of conjugal fidelity. They indulged in drinking and other vices. In short, they had all glamour and luxury. Yet, they could not carve out a permanent social standing for themselves. Whatever status they enjoyed, depended either on their affluence or on the social position of their master. Any variation in these two factors led to a change in their social recognition. At last, when both, power and pelf, deserted the royalty, their ladies also lost their

position. The nobility, dependent on the royalty for its affluence and power also faded away with the passage of time.

Purdah and seclusion of women had become a part and parcel of Muslim society. It was considered a symbol of social prestige and a sign of modesty and decency. The women of higher strata of society were, therefore, very rigid about its observance. Purdah norms were generally strict during the Sultanate period; became relaxed during the time of Babur and Humayun; again became stringent from the reign of Akbar and were severest during the reign of Aurangzeb. In the later Mughal period, purdah came to be observed within the harem also because of presence of *Khanazads*, *Salatins* and other *na-mahram* relations. The ladies of economically backward classes never observed purdah. They had to come out in order to earn their living. They only observed *ghunghat* (covering of head and a part of the face with *dupatta* or any other cloth) whenever they met a stranger. The other Muslim women, by and large, supported veil. The contemporary chroniclers eulogized purdah. Some of the Kings, both of Sultanate and the Mughal periods brought ordinances to ensure observance of purdah and seclusion of the women. The practice proved most damaging for the overall development of the Muslim ladies. They were deprived of education and were prevented from mixing with the outside world. This retarded their mental growth, damaged their physical health, blunted their faculties, limited their horizon and made them susceptible to all

sorts of superstitions and taboos.

The Muslim women of royalty and nobility influenced the politics of the time. The early Turks accepted the sovereignty of Razia outwardly because of the impact of Persian norms which recognized a lady-sovereign. But, inwardly, they remained averse to the idea of a lady ruling them. The Afghans, generally kept their women in the background, yet allowed some participation. The policy of the Mughals was different. They never allowed the right of sovereignty to a lady. Even Jahangir guarded it jealously. But, beyond this, they were much more liberal than their counterparts in the Sultanate period. In the Sultanate period, except for Razia and a few others, the ladies mostly acted through their husbands or wards and were mainly involved in succession feuds or as reconciliators or instigators. During the Mughal time, many ladies were involved in active politics and administration and many others in reconciliatory role. The extent of this influence varied from one lady to the other depending upon the thrust of their individual personalities and the outlook of the reigning King. The nature of their impact, good or bad, also depended on the upbringing and insight of the lady concerned. In the early medieval period, the ladies of royal blood dominated the scene. But, during the later Mughal period, the dancing and slave girls outwitted the royal ladies. They exploited the prevailing licentiousness among the royalty and came to the fore-front in the political

field. They indulged in nepotism , court machinations and open gratification. They caused great harm to the decaying Mughal empire.

Muslim women remained backward in the sphere of education . They were mainly taught the tenets of Islam and the practical arts like cooking, stitching , embroidery concerning their household duties. Only a few of the privileged ladies from among the royalty and nobility, particularly during the Mughal period, were fortunate to get education in subjects other than these . Razia and Bibi Raji patronized education during Sultanate period. Among the Mughals, many ladies maintained big libraries and were proficient in Persian and Arabic, Calligraphy, tenets of Islam, composition of Hindi, Persian and Arabic poetry. They also patronized men of letters . The Kings of the Sultanate period were more conservative in their outlook and no mention is found about any general system of educating harem ladies. The Mughals started a regular system of imparting rudimentary knowledge to the ladies of the royal harem through the person of the school mistress called *Atun mama* . They also recognized the talents of the ladies not born in high families. Education of the common Muslim ladies remained, largely, a private affair and the state did not pay much attention towards it. Even none of the ladies of royalty , who otherwise worked for general educational development of men , ever thought of working exclusively for the promotion of the education of the fair sex. Consequently, educational opportunities for the Muslim

ladies remained deficient.

Within the family sphere, the common women practised folk art and craft and, at times, their creations were of great artistic value. Yet, they could not attain the desired social recognition. The ladies of higher strata got wider opportunities and large resources for their cultural pursuits. Their achievements in the Sultanate period are not known. But some of the Mughal ladies produced works of creative art. They introduced new fashions and designs in dresses and ornaments, invented new perfumes, wrote books, constructed magnificent buildings and developed majestic gardens. Such pursuits earned for them a status in society and a name in history. In the religious field, the ladies of well-to-do class undertook *hajj* though such pilgrimage was discouraged after Akbar due to Portuguese threat in the Arabian Sea. The visits to *mazars* of the *pirs* was also popular among Muslim ladies of all classes and clime. There were also Muslim ladies turning *joginis*. Sufi fold was the only exception wherein women were given equal opportunities, along with men, for spiritual attainments. There were many lady mystic Sufi saints who got highest regard and recognition in society. However, Sufism did not allow spiritual succession to women.

Economic affluence, *purdah* and the class to which one belonged were the three factors which had direct effect on the status that the Muslim women enjoyed in society. Since money was mainly concentrated in the hands of the upper

class of society, the ladies of this class were rated high in the scale. Similarly, the ladies who could maintain their seclusion, earned social respect for themselves. Others, who came out because of their economic need, became an object of social apathy. As a class, the women of the royalty and nobility got the highest social recognition till they possessed pelf and position. Even breaking of purdah norms by some of them was overlooked by the society. Their involvement in trade-activities was also not viewed adversely. Their commercial activities were of a high order and remained beyond the reach and comprehension of common Muslim folks.

Purdah, lack of proper education and over-sensuality of that period left a permanent mark on the development of the Muslim women and affected adversely their social status. Their seclusion and educational backwardness rendered them helpless and dependent. The prevailing polygamy and over-sensuality of the people made them mere instruments of sexual gratification. The result was that the purdah rules were made stringent. The very birth of a girl became unwelcome and their existence a burden. This brought in its trail the evil practices like early marriages, premature maternity, untimely aging and growing female mortality. Some of the Muslim rulers like Ala-ud-din Khalji, Firoz Shah Tughlaq, Sher Shah Suri, Akbar and Aurangzeb made some efforts to ameliorate the condition of women. Their impact was negligible.

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### (A) BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The study of Muslim women of medieval India is handicapped by the scanty and sketchy information available about them from the writings of the contemporary historians. A researcher has to gather relevant information from stray references appearing here and there in such literature.

The first important primary source of information is Minhaj's Tabaqat-i-Nasiri. The author provides an account of the political role of the royal ladies and brings to light the social conditions of the harem ladies and their cultural activities till 1259 A.D.. Barani takes up the thread from him and carries it further to 1356 A.D.. He is the most informative author for the history of the Khaljis and the Tughlaqs. His narration of the events which took place around that time and his personal comments thereupon, as contained in his Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi and Fatawa-i-Jahandari, throw ample light on the condition of Muslim women of that period. Equally important is Afif's Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi. It covers the entire reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq (1351-88). Apart from the information about the lives of the harem ladies, he throws light on common Muslim women and the burning issues like child-marriage, dowry, dancing girls and the position of slaves as well. Sirhindi's Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi gives the most authentic

account for thirty five years from 1400 to 1434 A.D.. One gets glimpse of the lives of the ladies in harem , in this work. Isami's Futuh-us- Salatin ( The history of Muslim conquerors and rulers of India from the Ghaznavites to the date of its composition in 1350 A.D.), Firoz Shah's Futuhati- Firoz Shahi , Rizkullah Mushtaqi's Waqiat-i-Mushtaqi ( a detailed anecdote of the times of Lodi and Sur dynasties) and Sikander's Mirat-i-Sikanderi are also important.

Amir Khusrau's writings are specially helpful. Being a sensitive member of the society, he has vividly brought out the prevailing customs and practices regarding Muslim women and has elaborated all aspects of contemporary feminine life. His works viz. Hasht Bahisht , Ijaz-i-Khusravi,Matla-ul-Anwar,Khazain-ul-Futuh (a history of reign of Ala-ud-din Khalji from his accession in 1296 to 1311 A.D.), Nuh-Sipihr ( a poetic description of the court of Qutb-ud-din Mubarak Shah alongwith important events of his reign), Qiran-us-Sadain and Dewal Rani Khizr Khan, all provide useful information about different aspects of Muslim ladies.

For the Mughal period, the autobiographies of the members of the royal families are full of minute details of the harem activities. Babur's sentimental details about his female relatives like grandmother, mother, sisters , wives, daughters and others in his Babur Nama, provide precious knowledge. Gulbadan Begam's Humayun Nama is much better. Being a lady and an inmate of the harem, her attention was essentially focused on things feminine and she

wrote lucidly about them. The most important, however, is Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, the autobiography of Emperor Jahangir. Being the master of the harem, his knowledge about it was intimate and hence his account is very informative and authentic. He deals at length on the celebrations of *Nauroz* festival, weighing ceremonies, excursions with ladies, liberal allowances made to them, their clothes, their past-times, about Nurjahan and his other wives and lady-relations and on many other subjects of interest.

Among the historians, Abul Fazl's Ain-i-Akbari and Akbar Nama and Nizam-ud-din Ahmad's Tabaqat-i-Akbari are valuable sources. They give concise account of Akbar's harem and its activities. Besides, the political roles played by ladies like Maham Anaga, Hamida Banu, Salima Sultan Begam and others find detailed mention in their writings. Abul Fazl also described events like Akbar's regard for his mother, his marriages with Indian princesses, his excursions with ladies and pilgrimages undertaken by these ladies. Badaoni's critical remarks about Akbar's reign in his Muntakhabu-T-Tawarikh balance the flattering observations made by Abul Fazl, a court historian. Tarikh-i-Ferishta completed by Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah, better known as Ferishta, at the fag end of Akbar's reign (1606-07 A.D.), is a general history of India from the earliest times to the date of its composition and is an important source to know about the activities of the Muslim ladies in different fields and also about their status in society.

As regards the period of Jahangir, Mutamad Khan's Iqbalnama-i-Jahangiri and Muhammad Hadi's Tatimma-i-Waqiat-i-Jahangiri complete Jahangir's Tuzuk and throw light on different facets of Nurjahan's activities. Qazwini and Abdul Hamid Lahori are among the main sources of the time of Shah Jahan. They bring into focus the artistic pursuits and other activities of the Muslim ladies as also their economic resources. Therefore, Qazwini's "Padshah Nama" and Lahori's Badshah Nama (an official history of Shah Jahan from 1628 to 1647 A.D.) become important. Mirza Nathan's Baharistan-i-Ghaybi throws light on the *jauhar* committed by the Muslim ladies during the reign of Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

During the period of Aurangzeb, though restrictions were placed on writing official history, yet the Persian chroniclers continued writing about the ladies and at times, gave very saucy descriptions about the women in the harem. Hamid-ud-din Khan's description of Aurangzeb's attraction for Zainabadi in his Ahkam-i-Alamgiri and Khafi Khan's details of Jahandar's infatuation for Lal Kanwar are some of the examples. Hamid-ud-din also delved in the political role of the Muslim ladies. Khafi Khan, however, has the distinction of being a non-commissioned, non-official contemporary source for more than a century (1630-1732) and described in his Muntakhab-Al-Lubab, not only political role of Muslim ladies but also the lavish living of the ladies and the fashions of the time. Must'ad Khan's Maasir-i-Alamgiri (the history of last forty years of Aurangzeb's

reign with a prefix and a sketch of first ten years abridged from Alamgir Nama of Muhammad Kazim) is a useful source for varied information about the ladies of Aurangzeb's harem. Rukkat-i-Alamgiri (a collection of letters of Aurangzeb) and "Adab-i-Alamgiri" (a collection of letters written in the name of Aurangzeb by Munshi-ul-Mamalik Abul Fath entitled Qabil Khan and collected by Sadiq Multalibi) also give information about political activities of Mughal ladies of Aurangzeb's time.

In the later Mughal period, since many royal and noble ladies came out of purdah and many of the dancing and singing women rose high in position, a number of chroniclers wrote first hand account of these ladies. Thus Gholam Hussein's Siyar-ul-Mutakherin brought out political role of Muslim ladies as also other aspects of their lives like slackening of purdah rules, slackening of moral values and diminishing status of women. Shiv Das Lakhnawi's Shahnama Munawwar Kalam, a history mainly of Farrukhsiyar's reign, also confirms the degenerating values among women. Mirza Muhammad Bakhsh Ashub's Tarikh-i-Shahadat-i-Farrukhsiyar Wa-Julus-i-Muhammad Shahi Badshah is full of valuable details about the reign of Muhammad Shah and the harem activities. Dargah Quli Khan, through his personal diary entitled Muraqqa-e-Delhi, gave detailed account of the different lady singers and dancers of Muhammad Shah's time. Among the regional histories, Ghulam Husain's Riyazu-s-Salatin, Yusuf Ali's Ahwal-i-Mahabat Jang and Karam Ali's Muzaffarnamah are important for Bengal and

Tahmas Nama of Tahmas Beg Khan Bahadur Miskin for Panjab.

A number of European travellers who happened to come to India, provide valuable account of Muslim women. Many of them lived in India for a long time, travelled widely and also remained in service of Kings and nobles. Some of them were also favoured by the Emperors and had an access to their harems. Akbar once provided special protection to Monserrate from the wrath of the Muslim courtiers. Jahangir insisted on Hawkins to remain at his court as Resident Ambassador. Manucci and Bernier, doctors of the ladies of their Mughal masters, had an access to their harems. They acquired first hand knowledge about the way of life of the Muslim women which they penned down in their writings. These Europeans were not constrained to write with caution lest they would hurt the vanity of any sovereign nor did they need to write in a way so as to please and pamper any monarch. Hence, they wrote frankly and fearlessly.

These travellers are often charged of being gossipy, concocting stories and maligning the fair image of royalty and nobility or denigrating Muslim social life by considering themselves superior. Such charges cannot be accepted on their face value. They can not be suspected of deliberately indulging in sensational writings because none of their accounts was designed for publication which is clear from the lack of proportion in them. It should also be kept in mind that though the court historians could not write any thing disparaging to the King, yet, such incidents did become the talk of the town and were whispered about all

around. European travellers did not invent scandals and they wrote what they saw or heard. Consequently, the accounts of these Europeans are important from the point of supplementing the records of the Persian writers and thus, completing the picture of the harem life. Also, while the Persians chroniclers wrote mostly about the harem, the Europeans depicted different aspects of life of the Muslim women in their narrations. Therefore, their writings are of immense value for having a complete view of the life of Muslim women of that period.

Among the travel accounts, Ibn Batuta's Rehla is a mine of historical information. It gives an eye-witness account of the Muslim women and their social worth. Monserrate wrote about education and journeys of the Mughal princesses. Hawkins described the financial resources of Mughal ladies and narrated the *Nauroz* celebrations. Finch gave details about commercial activities of the queens and princesses. Terry, Manrique, Thevenot, Careri, Tavernier, Bowrey and Stavorinus wrote about different aspects of the life in the harem. Among the travellers, Pelsaert, Manucci and Bernier wrote elaborately on subjects pertaining to feminine activities.

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