



Social Condition of Women in the Sultanate Period: A Study

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ABSTRACT:

New people appeared on the Indian scene with the spread of Islam. In their home country, Muslims generally adhered to a strict veiling policy for females. Naturally, more emphasis was placed on it in a foreign nation like India. During this time, women's rights suffered a serious setback. The purpose of this research is to examine the status of women in the Delhi Sultanate through the lenses of their access to formal education, marital status, and cultural norms. Various secondary sources, such as books, journals, etc., have been consulted by the researcher. The necessary data has also been gathered from online sources. The research shows that sexually exploitative practices like as female enslavement, polygamy, Sati, and prostitution were commonplace.

Keywords: *Muslim Women, Formal Education, Strict Veiling Policy.*

Introduction:

Women have always held prominent positions in the cultural and social spheres of every given society. They ran the home and took care of the family. At weddings, church services, and other celebrations, they played an important part. Women have made significant contributions to society in the areas of education and learning, as well as other cultural pursuits. Motherhood was seen as a sacred and noble role for women in mediaeval culture. She shows her unselfish love for her children by the hardships she endures during childbirth and the sacrifices she makes for their upbringing. By declaring that no child is born without a mother, Amir Khusrau elevated the role of mothers in society. A child's first classroom is his mother's lap. A mother's influence is crucial in shaping her children's personalities. She's the best educator in the school. It seems to reason that if a woman is nice and nurturing and reverent of God, her offspring will be the same (*Jagroop Kaur, 2005*).

Women did not live in complete freedom from discrimination and isolation, but neither did they spend their whole lives within the home. Women ventured out from their houses to take part in a wide range of activities. The palanquin or dola and chariots were their most common means of transportation. Both sexes would ride to their destinations in a palanquin. The one transporting ladies, however, sported a velvet curtain that represented the age of Purdah and women's isolation.

Significance of the Study:

The position of women of the sultanate period brings to focus the pleas of respect given to them in Muslim society and the concern of the contemporary rules and other section of the society for betterment of their social position. It appears that they participated in socio cultural activities and contributed to academic life in their some ways though there were some religious restrictions on their activities outside their home.

Objectives of the Study:

The present study aims to study the social condition of the women as depicted in the Delhi Sultanate with reference to the education, marriage, customs prevalent in the society.

Education: Muslim women in India during the Sultanate era were unable to reach the same level of perfection as their foremothers elsewhere in the Islamic world. Many royal women of the later Mughal era were endowed with exceptional intelligence. Salima Sultan, the niece of Humayun, was also highly educated; Maham Anga, Akbar's wet nurse, established a college in Delhi; and Gulbadan Bano Begum, the daughter of Babur, composed Humayunnamah.

There were places where both boys and females may go to school. Were madrassas and maktabas. Both boys and girls received their first education in Maktabas. They functioned like elementary schools, with students learning the basics of Arabic and Persian script. In India, elementary schools for females were referred to as maktabas. The migration of people from the numerous cities and towns in central Asia to different areas of India led to the development

of makhtabs in those regions. They introduced the culture of Islam to the area. The youngsters were taught to read and write by the master who lived there.

The purpose of madrasas was to provide an advanced education. In his book *Masalikul Absar*, Shihabuddin Al Umari claims that there are one thousand madrasas in the Indian capital of Delhi. He extols the Sultans of Delhi for their financial support of the makhtabs and explains that the diwans provide living expenses for the thousands of faqih who have been assigned there. Qirat was the major focus, and students were also instructed in the fundamentals of writing. Most of the kids there didn't have parents (*Bilal Ahmad Haroo, Dr.M.C. Dubey, 2019*).

Both imparting and gaining knowledge were held in high esteem. We learn that during the time of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khilji, women were actively pursuing higher education. Ghiyasuddin Khilji believed that women's education was crucial to the development of the kingdom, thus he founded madrasas just for them. Both Mohammad bin Tughlaq and his father Mohammad Ghori saw it as their sacred mission to spread education over India. His first efforts to disseminate Islamic instruction were initiated at a few schools and seminaries he founded in Ajmer.

Firozshah Tughlaq was the most influential king of the Sultanate era and one of its most notable advocates for education. He was a renowned educator who played a key role in staffing classrooms throughout India. He restored the historic madrasas. He not only gained praise for having existing madrasas rebuilt, but also for founding new institutions and universities that included on-campus dorms for students.

However, in reality, education was a pursuit that was primarily reserved for the privileged, and the people had restricted access to it. The daughters of the masses did not have access to madrasas. Some females did attend male-only schools (madrasas) at an early age. A little girl attending an elementary school in the Malwa area is seen in a Persian lexicon from the fourteenth century. Evidently, girls and boys both used to attend public elementary school (*Daljit Singh, 2003*).

Marriages in the Sultanate:

Marriage between men and women is essential to society because it increases the population. Marriage is a significant component of society since it is the most prevalent method for a man and a woman to get united. There are several components that come together to form a marriage ceremony. We'll attempt to take a look at the many kinds of marriages that existed in society under the Sultanate, as well as the issues that arose from them.

The Sultan, the head of state, saw it as his primary responsibility to ensure that destitute females were able to be married. Poor parents were more concerned when their daughters reached puberty since they had no way to set up weddings for them. Perhaps this was the reason why some families reacted negatively to the arrival of a daughter. The writings of Afif show that young couples were urged to wed. The tradition of getting married young was commonplace in Hindu culture. The age of consent was not mandated. Marriage at a younger age is encouraged by both Hindus and Muslims (*Mohammad Jaisi, 2015*).

When a marriage was set in stone, the dowry was taken care of, but where to find a suitable partner remained an open subject. Finding a compatible partner was the first priority for the parents. A hadith from the Prophet (PBUH) is cited at the chapter's outset for background. For the average person, a marriage was arranged with their parents' approval, but for the Sultans, it might be for any number of reasons. It was common for Sultans to have many wives.

Marriages between commoners were more common than those between members of the royal family. According to Ibn Battuta, the Samira prefer to marry within their own tribe and do not marry outside of it. Family history was taken into account, and genetic compatibility was prioritised above other factors.

Customs and ceremonies related to marriage:

The parents of the bride and groom have finally reached an agreement on the wedding. A minor ritual known as a "mangni," or betrothal ceremony, sealed the deal. After this legal approval, the wedding's date was set and extensive planning started.

The barat, consisting of the groom and his family and relations, leaves for the bride's home after everyone has arrived and final preparations have been made. There, weddings take place in a friendly setting among numerous rites including the Nikah. Following the last song, the bride and groom leave the bride's home. In cases when the bride was too young for the marriage, she would go back to live with her parents for a while until the final ruksat was set.

Divorce:

Even though it was legal in pre-Islamic Arab society, the Prophet (PBUH) strongly disapproved of divorce and regarded it one of God's greatest pet peeves. He said again and over that God was very happy about the abolition of slavery but quite unhappy about marriage and divorce.

People divorced their spouses for a variety of reasons, some of which were unrelated to the grounds for divorce listed in the Quran. One of the wives of the famous Sufi saint Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki was divorced shortly after the wedding because, in his opinion, her presence interfered with his regular prayer schedule. Unless the husband has a valid basis (such as adultery of wife) behind the desire for divorce, the Prophet (PBUH) held that divorce was

the most repulsive and unwanted deed in the verses of the Quran and regarded it prohibited. Divorce was uncommon throughout the Sultanate era, and the reasons for it varied from person to person.

Polygamy:

Polygamy refers to many marriages between the same guy and different women. Polygamy was widely accepted not just in Arabia but also in its neighbouring nations. Other nearby nations, like as Persia, practised polygamy; western European kingdoms were not an exception.

Many additional women besides the principal queen (the Sultan's first wife) served as his consort throughout the reign of the Sultanate. Both Hindu and Muslim monarchs had one supreme queen whose offspring ascended to power. In addition to her other rights, she was the rightful guardian of a small boy who was heir to the crown. There was no hard and fast rule for choose a queen, mistress, or concubine over another.

It is now abundantly obvious that the Sultans practised polygamy. There were numerous spouses among royalty as well. Even though he was already married, Prince Khizr Khan had an ongoing romance with the Hindu princess Deval Rani, and they eventually tied the knot.

It was acceptable to look the other way when a sultan had several wives. Some of these husbands may have had many wives because they were particularly sensual, while others may have married several princesses to pacify or subjugate other areas. However, it is not easy to determine why Sufis practised polygamy.

Position of Widows in Society

According to A.S. Altekar, the role of widows in society is one of the most pressing issues that the historian of women must address and clarify. According to Amir Khusrau, if a man marries a widow, the lady will have anything she wants in the home. The widows of Nizamuddin Auliya were given a certain stipend. Understanding the poet's perspective on widows and their place in society is aided by the foregoing description of Amir Khusrau's point of view. A Muslim widow cannot commit ritual suicide by setting herself on fire as a Hindu widow may. A Muslim widow's life was just as hopeless as everyone else's, but she was forbidden to take her own life. Widows of the Hindu faith who lived in Rajgir devoted their life to the worship of the gods. These ladies would come to the temples, which were surrounded by thorny trees, fast for at least 10 days before accepting death by standing still with their hands clasped. The Sultans of the Sultanate recognised that widows were a vulnerable demographic and instituted programmes to provide for their financial needs. He started with the powerful Iltutmish and gave the widows the right to inherit the iqta that had previously belonged to their husbands. Sultan Balban decided it was inappropriate for women to own iqta, so he had them all taken away and replaced with allowances. Even though Sultan Balban removed widows' iqta, he treated them well and instituted allowances for them (*Flender K. Sudan, 2004.*).

Moral Values and women

Throughout history, society's moral standards have deteriorated. The immoral behaviour is shared by both sexes. Amir Khusrau believes that when a woman partakes in immoral behaviour, she brings shame upon herself, her family, and her community. Women were expected to be without any impure motives or actions. This suggests that women of the time shared with males a propensity for immorality and vice, an issue that Amir Khusrau addresses in his works *Matlaul Anwar* and *Hasht Bihisht*.

Ornaments, Cosmetics and Dresses of Women

Women have always used decorations and cosmetics to enhance their appearance, thus the two are inextricably linked. There were adornments for use on hair, ears, neck, shoulders, and elsewhere. According to K.M. Ashraf, the affluent have access to more resources to make themselves and their children more appealing. Both accessories and cosmetics may be used to enhance one's appearance. Women of all socioeconomic backgrounds like wearing it. Ornaments, whether worn by men or women, have always played an essential role in the adornment of the human body. Women wore a variety of jewellery, including necklaces, earrings, anklets, bracelets (worn around the wrists and legs), nose studs, and bangles. One parent discusses his or her daughter's ear perforation.

Incredible, priceless jewellery was created in the era. During the reign of Sultan Sikandar Lodi, a noble and learned man named Mian Taha Farmuli is discovered to have crafted a unique pair of earrings for Ahmad Khan's wife. In addition to his other skills, he was an expert ivory carver. For the wife of a nobleman named Ahmad Khan, he fashioned an earring out of ivory. The earring looked like a little water lily flower. Inside the blossom, he positioned a fake black bee carved from ebony (a dense black wood). The earring seemed as a bud as long as the woman didn't turn her head, but when she did, the flower bloomed and a bee flew out and started buzzing around her eye.

Conclusion:

The position of the women deteriorated with the passage of the time from bad to worse. The Muslim rule to some extent was responsible for it. It was with advent of the Islam that 'purdah' system became very prominent. The position of the women on the whole was not very satisfactory. Most of the

practices like female slavery, polygamy, Sati, prostitution were a part of society in both the eras. There were rare women administrators also in some regional kingdoms of Sultanate and the only woman who ruled at the Sultanate was Razia but ancient society was familiar with women administrators.

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