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Role of Royal Women in the politics During Sultanate Period: An overview

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Abstract:

There was hardly an all-out ban on women in politics. From "behind the veil," talented women strove to influence governmental decisions. Mediaeval India was distinct from preceding epochs in Indian history. The political structure of India was drastically altered when Islam was introduced there. It's hard to pinpoint exactly how Islam influenced women's political engagement in India, but there's no denying that things have improved. The purpose of this research is to examine women's participation in politics during Babur's reign and to open a dialogue on their participation in politics throughout Akbar's reign and beyond. The research shows that despite social pressure, women did not remain out of politics and instead made significant contributions in a number of fields.

Keywords: Mediaeval India, Political Structure, Women, Cultural Influence.

Introduction:

The Delhi Sultanate was an Islamic kingdom that spanned a sizable portion of the Indian subcontinent and had its capital in Delhi. There were five distinct dynasties that took turns ruling the Sultanate: the Mamluks, the Khaljis, the Tughlaqs, the Sayyids, and the Lodis. Although extensive records on the ruling Muslim and local Hindu kingdoms have been uncovered over their more than three hundred years of dominance, little details on the lives of women have survived. Despite the sources' clear bias towards politics, they provide a picture of the social order of the time that helps shed light on women's roles in the past. Women in Turkey during the Sultanate seem to have had more freedom than their counterparts in many indigenous tribes in India because they brought with them the nomadic customs of their ancestors, who moved from place to place over the grazing fields of Central Asia. This is because, as you will see in this subsection, most of the local communities maintained a number of social prohibitions against women. However, polygyny was commonly accepted and practised, particularly among the nobility and the upper classes. In addition to spouses, a man may have had many concubines who were considered legitimate sexual partners but who were not married to him. Women who were concubines often came from lower social classes, and they lost many privileges, including the right of their male heirs to vie for the crown. Slaves and wet nurses were commonplace in the residences of the affluent and powerful.

The Moroccan explorer Ibn Battuta tells us in his account of his time in India that female enslavement was widespread in the era of the Sultans. Wartime capture, gifts, and purchases all played roles in the acquisition of enslaved women. A girl's links to her family were broken when she was taken into slavery, and she became the exclusive property of her master. There were two types of female slaves: those who did household and menial labour and those who were brought as concubines or for other sorts of sexual servitude to their lords. The latter had a more privileged and even dominant position in the ruler's home as a result of their close relationship with the monarch. Due to their lack of education and skills, the former were forced to serve as servants and spies for their ruler. According to the Lekhapaddhati papers from early mediaeval Gujarat, female slaves were expected to do a wide variety of tasks around the home, including but not limited to: grinding, cutting, cleaning the floor, sweeping the floor, fetching water, milking animals, farming, etc.

Review of Literature:

Shivani Rawat (2016) The focus of this article will be on women's political engagement in the Middle Ages. In broad strokes, it outlines the history of women in politics and administration from various eras. Primary and secondary sources will be used to compile information for this project. The research will shed light on how their competence and foresight contributed to the politics and revival of the sultanate dynasty.

Mrs. Bindu,(2015) claimed that women were not kept in isolation and that child marriage was not mentioned at the time. In this era, women had the same rights as males. They were able to participate fully in society. Some of them, including Apala, Shakshi, and Mudra, were so well-versed in the Vedas that they wrote down their own mantras. After becoming married, women were given positions of authority and often had decisive say over family decisions. Her attendance was required at every religious rite. When they reached adulthood, only then did they start getting married. They had prestigious roles in society as daughters, wives, and mothers.

Dilip Maity & Dr. Vandana Varma,(2021) Since paintings provide the observer with visual information, they have traditionally been regarded as reliable resources. The beautiful Indian paintings are a terrific resource for learning about the many roles women played in the Sultanate of Delhi, which is relevant to our present research study. Women are lauded when they conform to the stereotypical feminine roles of beauty, humility, and chastity. However, we also find children engaged in more serious activities, such as distilling sorbet, creating perfume, preparing bread and cakes, and carrying water in a pitcher. These works of art take us back in time, illuminating not just the painters' techniques and subject matter, but also the prevailing aesthetics of the era. Because art in India flourished during the Mughals, few works date back to the Sultanate era. On the other hand, we do have an impressive collection of Sultanate paintings dedicated to the study of women at the moment.

Statement of the Problem:

New people appeared on the Indian scene with the spread of Islam. In their own country, Muslim women were expected to wear full veils at all times. Naturally, more importance was attached to it in a foreign nation like India. During this time, women's rights suffered a serious setback. Aamir Khusro's comments to his daughter, found in 'Hast Bahist' and Matla-Ul-Anwar, capture the spirit of the age. Starting his speech with, "Would to God that you should have been in the will of non existence or could have been a male child or were born in the eighth month (so as to die)" is typical of his style. The ladies of the royal family had significant influence in politics throughout the sultanate era. They manipulate events to work in their benefit. Although women may have had a significant part in politics, their socioeconomic situation was poor. Unlike their Arab counterparts, Muslim women in India did not enjoy any special status. They were considered property of their husbands, who were permitted under the Shariah to have many wives. No Muslim woman could ever call herself "mistress" of her home. Since the virginity of women was seen to reflect favourably on the family's reputation, Muslim women were treated nicely. Strict Purdah was observed by everybody.

Upper-class Muslim women never left the house without their Burkas. Women of the upper classes were educated in the religious texts of the Quran and other faiths. Despite the constraints of their social status, they were able to demonstrate their competence and intellect. The available records show that various opinions were held towards women. Some people claimed that women were intrinsically incapable of doing jobs of any significance. A lady of brilliance had to learn her place in the world. She was expected to acknowledge that her physical limitations rendered her dependent on men. Women's roles and the extent of their impact in Indian society are little understood. A person's social and cultural standing in a certain time period might be inferred from details about them that are communicated only by way of omission. Therefore the problem stated is "Role of Royal Women in the politics During Sultanate Period: An overview"

Objectives:

The present study has been carried out with the following objectives-

- I. To study the position of women at work during Delhi Sultanate.
- II. To discuss the influence of royal women in the politics during sultanate period

Women in the Politics During Sultanate Period:

Society in India is skewed towards men. Patriarchy has been supported and reinforced in many ways throughout history by the region's religious practices, social mores, legal systems, cultural values, and mores. But patriarchy is not and has never been a fixed system. It is both adaptable and ever-present, making it one of the world's most dynamic systems. Nonetheless, the fundamental concept of men's recognized superiority over women remains unchanged. The fact that women play an equally important role as males in maintaining patriarchy is another source of its dynamic nature. Women are complicit in the subversion of women's roles within a culture because to the idea of patriarchy, which originates from religious and societal acceptability.

Modernity has given rise to a new awareness of the pervasive subordination of women and the gender gap. In bygone eras, men almost had unchecked power and dominance in every facet of social and familial life. This was also true throughout the Middle Ages. Men were seen to have no business being involved in politics or holding positions of power. Being controlled by women was seen as beneath the dignity of males in premodern India. On few occasions, Indian society disputed this bias. The political involvement of women was not entirely eradicated. From "behind the veil," these strong, talented women sought to influence governmental decision-making. India throughout the Middle Ages was distinct from the country's prior eras. The spread of Islam has far-reaching effects on India's governmental system. While it is impossible to pinpoint exactly how Islam influenced women's political engagement in India, there was definitely a shift in attitude. Of all things, a contradiction exists in this. Unlike in the cases of Raziya Sultan and Nur Jahan, Maham Anaga, etc., who were able to openly participate in politics or exert political influence after Islam came to India, women in India were forced to wear the headscarf.

The city of Delhi and the Sultanate of Delhi What is now known as the Delhi Sultanate was ruled by the Mamluk dynasty, which was distinct from India's earlier governing powers in several ways. It was the pioneering Islamic monarchy in India, however one that was not Sharia-driven. Freed slave soldiers from earlier dynasties also served as kings of this dynasty. Consequently, the three pillars of hierarchy upon which Indian polities had hitherto rested were somewhat weakened. In addition to being the only dynasty to do so, it was notable for elevating a female monarch to the position of throne under a historically male-dominated political climate. Factional politics and the fact that she was a woman both contributed to the brief duration of Raziya's reign, which was preceded by a contentious process to choose her as Iltutmush's successor and later ruler. Now we will examine Raziya Sultan's case in great depth as she was the first female sovereign of Delhi.

Raziya Sultan Iltutmush fortified the Mamluk monarchy that Qutb-ud-Aibak had established. From 1210 until 1230, he was king. Iltutmush was a father of four-three boys and a girl. Although Iltutmush had designated Nasir-ud-din Mahmud as his successor, the oldest son passed away unexpectedly while serving as governor of Bengal. It was clear to Iltutmush that his other sons were not up to the task of becoming king. As a result, he started thinking of his daughter Raziya as a potential monarch. She has innate talent and a solid academic background. While on his Gwalior campaign, Iltutmush put her to the test by entrusting her with the administration of Delhi. As a result of her diligent work, Raziya was honoured by her father with honours. Iltutmush anointed Raziya as his successor at once, and commemorative coins bore their names (Habib & Nizami, 230-231). It was not an easy journey to the throne, however, even after the king publicly announced her succession. One of Iltutmush's sons, Ruknuddin Firuz, was elevated to the throne by the influential group of provincial officials soon after his death. Regarding the succession question, there is substantial disagreement around the late king's final desire. According to Barani, Iltutmush appointed Ruknuddin as his successor rather than Raziya as he lay dying. After him came his officers, the majority of whom were slaves that Iltutmush had personally brought up (Habib & Nizami, 232). It is important to keep in mind, however, that Barani's narrative is biassed and that he dislikes women in politics and Raziya as a ruler in particular.

With support from the amirs and his mother, Ruknud din succeeded his father. His mother was too controlling, and he was too careless to become king. In the wake of his cruel treatment of his other brother and other amirs, uprisings broke out across the realm. At this period, Raziya, who had the backing of the Delhi army and amirs, deposed her brother and proclaimed herself queen of Delhi. Just seven months after his father passed away, Ruknud din was beheaded (Habib & Nizami, 236,). An analysis of Raziya's accession by Mohammad Habib and Khaliq Nizami revealed the following notable details:

- 1. The people decided who would be king on their own. The people of Delhi wholeheartedly backed Raziya.
- 2. The people and the monarch entered into a kind of agreement with her accession. They may fire her if she failed to provide protection or deliver as promised.
- 3. Despite their open opposition to Raziya, the theologians of the period were rendered impotent and worthless when she was elevated to the king (Habib & Nizami, 237).

There was resistance from many quarters throughout Raziya's reign. Even though she had the backing of Delhiites, her father's organisation of slave officers, the Turkan-i-Chihalgani, were her biggest opponents. An prominent and competent nobleman who would eventually become king of Delhi, Balban, led this party. The Chihalgani nobility are mentioned by both Barni and Minhaj-us-Siraj. Although Barni states that there were forty of them, his story focuses mostly on Balban and only mentions twenty-five of them (Habib & Nizami, 232). However, that number of nobles is significantly lower than what is meant by "minhaj" (Habib & Nizami, 234). After the Iltutmush era, the Chihalgani nobility sought more authority and were mostly stationed in the provinces as Iqtadars. But they were unable to expand their influence under Raziya's tyrannical authority. Furthermore, upon assuming authority, Raziya started to stand up for herself. She broke with convention by ending the Purdah, the practice of keeping women out of public view. Purdah made it more difficult for her to accomplish things like meet new people and run her kingdom on a daily basis. She started donning a kulla (a top hat) and qaba (a cloak) like the Sultanate's male monarchs instead. There was no one who dared to challenge the obvious declaration of Raziya's authority. Meanwhile, she started elevating her own aristocracy by stripping the previous Chihalgani nobles of their authority and duties. The slave nobility saw this as an attack on their authority and began plotting her downfall as a result. She was plotted toppled by a number of provincial governors. She reorganised the administrative apparatus and effectively put down these uprisings. But her demise came from her refusal to give her father's nobility a fair portion of the kingdom's authority and wealth. The fact that Raziya was married to the governor Altunia,

among her many ties with these nobility, did not save her from loss. The tragic conclusion to the illustrious reign of the only female ruler of the Delhi Sultanate came in 1240, when both of them met their demise.

If you believe Minaj She had every laudable quality and qualification expected of a monarch. However, her biggest flaw was that she was a woman. On the other hand, contemporary academics disagree with this evaluation. The inability of Raziya to establish an alliance with the Chihalgani, the most influential branch of the aristocracy, was attributed to her by Mohammad Habib and Khaliq Nizami. The Chihalgani, not her gender, is the one who deserves the responsibility for her failure, according to Satish Chandra (101). The Chihalgani continued to sow discord even after Raziya's rule ended, when Balban imposed his tyrannical rule. During her rule, Raziya shown great political acumen, determination, and bravery, in her estimation. She quested several insurrections and formed vital alliances, but her primary goal was to depose the Chahilgani nobility, not to share authority with them. She spared her country from plunder in part because she stayed out of the Mongol war. Her limits were well-known to her.

The Mughals: With unrivalled legitimacy in Indian history, the Mughals founded the largest empire in mediaeval India. In 1525–1526, Babur conquered Delhi, laying the groundwork for the Empire. In India, the Mughals established institutions and norms that would last for generations. It was Akbar, Babur's grandson, who oversaw the expansion of the empire's territory and culture. A lot has changed since his dictatorship ended, some for the better and others for the worst. Additionally, women's participation in Mughal Empire politics was distinctive in many respects. We may split the Mughal period in two halves, before Akbar and after him, according to this question. The Imperial government became more formal and inflexible during Akbar's rule. Later on, we'll talk about the many reasons for this. The political climate was far more open and dynamic before Akbar came around, however, since Babur and Humayun were both plagued by the unrest of a nomadic lifestyle and engaged in near-constant conflict for their own political and personal survival. The women of that era were able to effortlessly transition into powerful and influential political positions, such as administrators and mediators, because to this flexibility.

Babur's Period: Politics was a major arena for women under Babur's reign, particularly mothers, foster mothers, and sisters. They served as the king's principal mediators and advisors on major political issues. During this time, Babur's attempts to reclaim his ancestral kingdom of Farghana were repeatedly thwarted by his own relatives, after his expulsion from the realm. His role was changing. Sovereignty claims and counterclaims erupted in ceaseless battle. The ability to negotiate was crucial in many circumstances, but military might and resources were also essential throughout this period. The common ancestry of the Chingizi and Timurid families (uzbek, etc.) included all claims to Central Asian realms. Additionally, these competing claims were closely related to one another by marriage. This set the stage for women to get involved in politics. There were periods when males were not allowed to negotiate at all. Babur saw these ladies as crucial to his political survival, and Gulbadan Begum names a number of them.

Isan Dawlat Begum: Babur's grandma had a reputation for being a master tactician. Upon Babur's father's passing, she assumed control of the administration and all political matters. The age of Babur was around eleven at the time. Despite dealing with intrigues against Babur, she devoted her life to rescuing his country (Lal, 135; Mukherjee, 115-116). Every assignment's officers were hand-picked by her, and she had final say over any reorganisation. The tales she told Babur about Timur and Chengiz Khan served to inspire him and teach him about military strategy. According to Babur's memoirs, "my grandmother was very wise and farsighted, and most affairs of mine were carried through under her advice." He goes on to remark, "few among women will have been my grandmother's equal for judgement and counsel" (Mukherjee, 116).

Even his mother, Qutluq Nigar Khanum, was there for him. With an army of around 1500 men under her command, she was renowned for her bravery, perseverance, and strength (Mukherjee, 116). In every battle and expedition, she was by Babur's side. While he was a nomad monarch, Babur says that she endured tremendous suffering for his benefit. Without seeing her son's achievement as king, she passed away in 1505.

Maham Begum: During the reigns of Babur and Humayun, she rose to prominence as Babur's beloved wife. She assisted Babur in strengthening political relations with Iran and was a member of the Shia faith. In addition to accompanying Babur on his journeys to Balkh and Badakshan, she also participated in his struggles (Mukherjee, 118). After her coronation by Babur, she became known as Padshah Begum.

Khanzadeh Begum, In 1501, when Babur was helpless, his older sister married his stronger adversary Shiabani Khan, saving him from certain death. In order to escape the besiegement of Samarkand, Babur had no choice but to give Shiabani Khan his sister in exchange for his own life (Mukherjee, 117). According to Mughal sources, Khanazadeh Begum's actions were seen as a "Sacrifice." As a result, she was not only welcomed with open arms upon her return to her brother in 1511, but she was also given a unique status inside the Mughal household (Lal, 224). She was the head of the Harem and bestowed the esteemed title of Padshah Begum by Humayun. As a peacemaker and mediator, she kept advising the Emperor on political matters. Her participation was crucial in a number of instances, one of which was when Mirza Hindal wanted the Khutba recited in his name rather than Humayun's. In mediaeval states, the Khutba represented the crown. Only the Emperor's name could be used to read a Khutba. It was a defiance on Hindal's part to persist. Khanzadeh Begum was sent by Humayun to negotiate with Hindal on behalf of Humayun's authority, apprise him of the danger posed by the Uzbeks, and stress the need of unity among Babur's sons. She was instrumental in finding a solution to the problem. She died in 1545 after many attempts to reconcile Humayun with his warring siblings, Hindal, Kamran, and Askari (Mukherjee, 122).

Hamideh Banu Begum: She was Humayun's beloved wife, and she reluctantly married the Emperor after considerable prodding from him (Lal, 235). "I shall marry someone, but he will be a man whose collar my hand can touch, not one whose skirt it did not reach," she added, according to Gulbadan Begum's account. Her rise to prominence in the Harem began when she became Akbar's mother. Furthermore, she was entrusted with the responsibility of the Empire during Humayun's absence due to her astute political acumen (Lal, 235-236). While Akbar was king, she was an invaluable counsellor. Maryam Makani was bestowed upon her. Until her death in 1604, she also served as the first lady of the empire.

Several women, like these, were instrumental in the early Mughal emperors' survival and the maintenance of the empire under Babur and Humayun. After Akbar As we saw in the last section, women played a crucial political role in helping males retain their kingdom. There have been major deviations from this tradition since Akbar's ascension. Although there were a number of causes for this breach, the three most important ones are as follows. Unlike the domains of Babur and Humayun, which were constantly expanding and contracting, Akbar's became a fixed territory with defined geographical borders. Although it retained certain characteristics with central Asia, it also took on a very Indian flavour. One important aspect in this regard is the Rajputization of the Harem. The central Asian clans were also no longer involved in the familial relationships. The scope of Mughal domestic ties was limited to the families who moved with Babur and Humayun.

Despite this, the status of the female members of the royal family remained unchanged. As a matter of fact, the Mughal Harem became more rigorous and revered than before. It was painstakingly constructed and guarded since it became an object of pride and a symbol of Mughal dominion (Lal, 140 and later). Even if these changes were modest, they altered the political roles of women inside the Mughal system. Indirectly or directly, women's voices nevertheless reached the Emperors. Official Mughal sources do not describe any other women as having direct influence, with the possible exception of Nur Jahan. Notably absent from these narratives are the names of the mothers of the emperors. However, thanks to the diligent work of contemporary researchers, we may uncover the hidden political power of a few brilliant women.

Nur Jahan: Nur Jahan was the most famous and influential queen of the Mughals. She supposedly had total dominion over her husband, Jahangir, the emperor, who was essentially a puppet. Based on what we know

now, this version is wrong. Following in the footsteps of his predecessors, Jahangir was a formidable emperor who dutifully carried out his royal responsibilities. Nur Jahan's political responsibilities extended beyond the drudgery of overseeing the Harem and providing counsel to the King; still, she was a remarkable woman. There she was, a member of The Junta, as described by Beni Prasad. Nur Jahan herself, her brother Asaf Khan, Jahangir's most competent son Khurram, and Itmad-ud-daula, who was both Nur Jahan's father and prime minister, made up the four most influential and intimate members of the royal family and court. All four of them were members of the same family, and with the exception of Khurram, they held positions of great authority and influence inside the court. Ellison Findlay and Beni Prasad both believe that NurJahan became very strong in the Empire due to this group. Nurul Hasan, on the other hand, disputes the Junta's authority and maintains that Jahangir had absolute control throughout his reign (Hasan, 342-35).

NurJahan had remarkable success throughout her lifetime. Her financial acumen, generosity, and level of education were all noteworthy. She engaged with Europeans, Portuguese, and Dutch in her abroad commerce investments involving her ships. When negotiating trade licences with Jahangir, the English also looked to Elizabeth for protection and assistance. During Jahangir's reign, she had the same level of ostentation as her husband. She did things like give public audiences on her own, circulated currency stuck in her name, and participated in political decision-making (Sharma, 8-9). Additionally, she was granted the authority to issue the Parvanahs and Hukms, which are typically given to royal princes. At the height of Mahabat Khan's uprising, which occurred at the end of Jahangir's reign, her skills as a politician and soldier were on full display. In 1626, Jahangir's trusty and devoted nobleman Mahabat Khan rose up in rebellion. For reasons he could not fathom, he despised Nur Jahan and her meddling in official affairs. As Jahangir set their camp on the banks of the Jhelum, this event occurred. After receiving an insult from Nur Jahan, Mahabat Khan decided to settle scores by imprisoning the Emperor. He hoped that by shackling the emperor, he might bring Jahangir back from the clutches of Nur Jahan and make him a great again. In order to be near the Emperor, Nur Jahan surrendered to Mahabat Khan after a hard-fought fight. Following her capitulation, Jahangir followed her advice and pretended to think that Mahabat Khan had a favourable impression of Nur Jahan, leading him to assume that Mahabat Khan would now oversee the affairs of the Empire. After quietly gaining Mahabat Khan's trust, Nur Jahan started purchasing his men one by one and secretly instructed her attendants to gather an army to confront him. Mahabar Khan had no choice but to flee once she had her troops under her control. Even though the Emperor did not harshly punish him for this betrayal of devotion and obedience, he was unable to reclaim his place in Jahnagir's court. Nur Jahan's strengths as a leader, politician with the ability to strike at the right time, and organiser who faced a massive uprising on his own are all on display in this episode (Findlay, 260-274). While Nur Jahan was the most powerful woman in the Mughal empire, there were other women who had considerable influence as well.

Maham Anagha: She had a significant impact on Akbar's early life as his principal wet nurse. The Mughals were fully involved in the rearing of the baby prince and had a practice of hiring wet nurses to take care of him. The women's devotion and love for the princes was immense. They risked their lives to protect the princes entrusted to their care, as Maham Anagha exemplified. One hundred and forty-one of these nurses served Akbar. Mainly, Maham was the nurse. Once Akbar was able to escape Bahram Khan's control, she assumed the role of main counsellor and administrator to Akbar. The Mughal Harem was also placed under her supervision. Adham Khan, her son, betrayed Akbar, and she fell from favour. Both he and Maham died shortly after he was murdered by Akbar.

Mariyam-us-Zamani was the main queen of Akbar and Jahangir's mother. She made a name for herself in the business world and on the Hajj journey as a ship sponsor. In addition to other public utility structures, she also constructed mosques.

Mumtaz Mahal: She was not only politically engaged, but also the principal queen of Shah Jahan. She oversaw the Harem and was given the title Mallika-i-Zaman. Her care was the regal seal of the Empire, which bore the name of the Emperor. In order to have the seal attached, the Emperor's commands had to go

via her. Shahjahan sought her advice on affairs of state. Paravanas and Hukums might also be issued by her (Sharma, 9–10; Mukherjee, 147).

Jahanara: Perhaps the last of the great Mughal ladies, she was Shahjahan's oldest daughter. Like him, she was intelligent and competent. A poet and Sufi, she had all the customary abilities of a member of the royal dynasty. Dara Shikoh, her older brother and the heir apparent, held a special place in her heart. Her influence with her father made her a key player in the succession conflict among Shah Jahan's sons. Following her father's death in 1631, Jahanara assumed full responsibility for his private life. Additionally, she was appointed the head of the Harem. Like her predecessors, she took use of royal privileges and engaged in international commerce. Although her influence waned with Aurangzeb's accession, her political clout eventually earned her a unique place in the courts and the home.

Conclusion: Conclusion: It is clear that throughout mediaeval India, masculine monarchs predominated. But contrary to what was expected of them at the time, women made significant contributions to politics in a number of different ways. Women's involvement in politics was most prevalent and valued when they served in an advising capacity. Regents existed as well; they were military capable and managed countries administratively, but they were never crowned kings or queens. Political power in mediaeval India was seen as something that could only be held by males. No females were allowed. At least they had a tougher time of it fighting for their lives than men do.

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