CHAPTER VI

DEPICTION OF COURTESANS

Miniaturists of medieval Deccan in the creation of themes related to women produced themes of reality, sensuality and fantasy, among which depiction of courtesans constituted an important part. These paintings give us a glimpse into the life-style of the courtesans and their role in Golconda and Hyderabad kingdoms during 17th and 18th centuries.

A Courtesan is a lady who is associated generally with wealthy, aristocracy or nobility as a prostitute or dancer who entertains them. Concubines are those ladies who cohabit with a man without being legally married to him, a mistress or a secondary wife to a certain extent. Both courtesans and concubines played a prominent role in medieval kingdoms. The life styles of these women almost remained the same, both being the representatives of sensuality and attractiveness with beauty to entertain the sultan and his nobility to fullest extent. They remained within harem and noble houses and such harem scenes with royalty became one of the themes for artists to depict these courtly beauties and aesthetic figures in royal courts. The miniatures paint them amidst dark, vaulted cellars, huge halls, fountains and tanks which constituted one of the most striking styles of architectural excellence combined with artistic perfection.

In the miniatures depicting courtesans, we find a fusion of European, Persian and indigenous elements mainly during Golconda phase. During the Hyderabad school of paintings, the synthesis of Mughal and Deccani styles gave a new direction to these paintings.

A variety of lively and playful paintings were executed under the patronage of Qutb Shahis and Nizams with a typically Deccani swing. Gestures and glances exchanged among personages in paintings established a psychological personal coherence with thrusting vitality. Rich glowing colors too appeared giving glazing outlook. The pictures of courtesans were illustrated mainly with royalty within harem and few depicted individual beauties of these courtly sensual figures in
palace-frontiers and outdoor-settings.

These miniature paintings throw light on the luxury and cultivated leisure of the sultans and the importance given to courtesans in royal houses of the time and also by the artists of the times, who depicted them.

**PART -1**

At Golconda a miniature painting of a courtesan dated (c1630-1650 A.D) depicts her enveloped in orange and purple scarves, which is a virtual translation of Isfahani work into Indian terms. Here Persian elements persisted in less assimilated form in the Deccan, seen in blue and white bottle and in the curly courtesan's hair. The azure background, violet and pink rocks and fluttering veils reveal the naked flesh of courtesans till waist. These are derived from European style of painting. The vermilion, crimson, yellow-green, blue and violet colors are combined in the frenetic and textile like border is artfully related to the circular patterns of the flowers in the foreground of the miniature and to the trees on the horizon. The jungle-like border breaths of life and fertility.

An artist working at Golconda atelier painted a picture of courtesan deriving from Islamic, Indian and Chinese sources." In it, the courtesan wears diaphanous robes of pink, while her veil and border of the painting are green-like foliage. She holds a little bird, in her delicate left hand and wears necklaces made of pearls. Her dress decorated with roses is an oriental symbol of beauty

A miniature painting of Bhagmati depicts her standing elegantly holding a rose in her right hand. She wears flowing robes of Deccani style and was depicted with simple-ornamentation. Another painting depicts Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah meeting with Bhagmati with Golconda fort in the background. This painting is an artist's view of the romantic episode of the royalty with a courtesan Bhagmati, who later on became the mistress of Muhammad Quli. Her name given to the city and capital of the kingdom that was named Bhagyanagar. Later on, when the Sultan married her and bestowed on her the title of 'Haider Mahal' it was named Hyderabad. It depicts Bhagmati with broad features, sensitivity and delicacy. She was depicted dressed in a mixture of Hindu and Muslim fashion, with long designful skirt and dupatta over head, which covers her bodies. She was depicted
wearing slippers, a rare feature of Deccani painting.

Similar painting depicts Bhagmati standing under a branch of a tree with a maiden. She wears transparent skirt and seems to be enjoying the natural-beauty and sip of wine, which her maiden offered. A miniature painting of Deccani style depicts another courtesan Taramati seated on a terrace listening to a musician. She was dressed in typical Hyderabadi style with a turban and textile-pattern. The musician has a Hindu look with large big eyes and elegant features.

In another painting of a courtesan Premamati, she was depicted swinging with her attendants with a beautiful Deccani spring background. Among her attendants there are musicians with tambura who are entertaining her. Two maidens' help her in swinging. Premamati was the favorite mistress of sultan Abul Hasan Tana Shah, the last of Qutb shahis.

An interesting beautiful miniature depicts Premamati enjoying the fragrance of a small flower, which she holds in her right hand. She stands facing right in profile, with garments and jewelry typical of Golconda. It is apt to point out here that there was a distinction in the dress worn by women of the Qutb Shahi and Asaf Jahi periods. From the pictures of Qutb Shahi period, it appears that women wore narrow pyjama and a broad jama, sometimes the portion of the chest was open. Asaf Jahi ladies wore slightly narrow pyjama choli, kurta on which gold and silver laces were stitched and khada dupatta was used. The Khada Dupatta continues to be worn today by the Muslim bride on the day of her wedding. Besides Muslims, this dress was prevalent among the families of Hindus of the upper classes, as this dress is combination of the Islamic style and the sari of the Hindus.

Miniature paintings though less evocative and more conventionally pretty covering the four sides of a small lacquered papier-mache box, perhaps a jewel casket, depict various scenes of princess and courtesans of which one side depicts a courtesan dancing. She wears typical Golconda dress of jama, veil and bodice and has curly shapes with broad features of a dancer. Meticulous draughtsmanship and restrained colors creates a mood of delicate sensuality. It was signed by Rahim Deccani. By that time Indian lacquer was beginning to influence Iranian lacquer ware. The other side of the casket depicts a prince with three courtesan's.

The miniatures are in mellow tones and reveal the Golconda craftsmen in their poetic
mood.

PART - II

A painting during transitional phase depicts a young prince seated on a throne in a garden surrounded by beautiful women, most probably courtesans of the time." A painting during transitional phase depicted around (C1700-1725 A.D) depicts ladies enjoying wine. It is an excellent picture of courtesans in a harem enjoying exotic life and pleasures of palace. A color-scheme of blue sky, orange and yellow flowers, pink flower-filled carpets, yellow, pink, brown garments, etc, can be perceived in the painting. The women have beautiful facial features mainly of Hindu look, while the maiden with morchhal depicted has a Muslim look. The picture also depicts musicians entertaining these ladies. (PLATE-XXXII). Hence, the courtesans used to have their own courts complete with wine and entertainment and copied the Sultan. The scene is one of the luxury and well. Beautiful carpets are spread along with cushions and a large number of wine bottles lay scattered. The illustration of the cat seated is another common feature of Deccani painting.

This painting illustrates the sporting of courtesans who charming on account of their hirsing as if struck water from syringes discharged by naughty gallants. These lovely women under the exhilaration of wine generally seize royalty. The quarters in which courtesans were depicted gives the feeling of swelling wild music and fragrance of their aesthetic bodies. The general entertainment aspects of royalty included singing and dancing by artists and courtesans, who are involved in these artistic pursuits, as if entwined under the gulf of love. Such depictions of courtesans are visual images of human affinity and create gay ambiance suffusing pleasure and enticement.

Another miniature painting of early 18th century depicts prince playing holi in harem with princess, musicians, courtesans and dancers. ' (PLATE XXXIII). Holi is a festival of spring and god of love and a festival, which occurs at the time on the full-moon day also known as Holika or Holaka. In this particular painting, the sultan seems to be playing Holi with his ladies of harem, while the floors are rendered with yellowish red with a mass of fragrant powder scattered all about. Holi is a festival of colour, quatting of wine in mixed gathering of men and women.
While the prince and his courtesans are involved in playing Holi, there are musicians who are entertaining them.

In such circumstances, the royalty are directly engaged in the ritual of throwing powder and musk, as a part of culture, which often delimits itself by its traditions and customs. The king being historically the functional and theoretically the representative of social order and prosperity of citizens in the social system and hence as symbolic overseer of the festival articulates that order and as conveyor establishes the legitimacy of the celebration in which the ladies are the main source of enjoyment.

In other words such depiction of festivals responds to a broad spectrum of human concerns, in the sphere of politics, it can be turned to account to celebrate and reinforce the power of sultan and in the social sphere it is a time of entertainment and merry making indicative of the annual renewal of society and in the sphere of religion, it celebrates the exploits of the gods and human worship of rejuvenation and renewal and the relationship between nature and humanity and in particular of men and women in which courtesans derived full length spirit at harem contributing their love and feelings to royalty.

Another painting during transitional phase depicts prince adored by courtesans of his harem. These ladies have Hindu way of dressing style and seem to be happy with the visit of the prince. Different patterns of printed textile formats and ornamental decoration of these women can be perceived in the painting. It was illustrated around 1700 AD.

PART - HI

Similarly few bewitchingly beautiful portraits of courtesans were painted at Hyderabad school under Nizam's patronage, which were resuscitator of Deccani independence. These painting represent the idealized tenderness and gentle eroticism of courtesans.

One miniature painting depicts the leisure life led by these ladies in a garden, where they are depicted engaged in various pursuits like gossiping, drinking wine, listening to music, relaxing, moving-about, etc. This painting of courtesans carousing in the garden was executed about first half of 18th century. A palette of
mauve, white and green charm our senses. (PLATE XXXIV).

Another painting of same style was executed during first half of 18th century.¹⁷ It depicts ladies mainly courtesans carousing under a garden-tent. There is a pond next to the tent where the ducks are swimming. There are rich carpets strewn around and the courtesans are being served by a number of maidens. Arrangement of figure groups, their easy postures and typical Hyderabadi costumes served as an ideal for the Deccani painting in the following decades. A depiction of courtesan smoking *huqqa* reflects alluring courtesans enjoying the life on a terrace with pigeons and natural beauty.¹⁸

A miniature painting depicts a prince with his ladies of court of courtesan look, seated on a terrace. While two ladies surround him, other two ladies kneel on corner of the orange carpet. It was executed around 1740 AD.¹⁹

Another fantastic and excellent painting of 18th century medieval Deccan depicts a royal harem containing several features like courtesans decorating themselves enjoying wine and nature, conversing, etc.²⁰ Architectural excellence with designs and curves of palace structures can be perceived in the background. A palette of gold, green, orange, white are richly used. It contains almost all features related to royal harem like the feelings and movements of courtesans, furnishing, fountains and flowing garments. (PLATE XXXV).

Hence few themes depicting such scenes of harem with courtly beauties were illustrated in the kingdoms of Golconda and Hyderabad.

Even literary sources of the time referred to these courtesans and concubines. For instance an observation of William Methwold, in charge of the English factory at the chief port Machilipatnam from (C1618-1622 A.D) remarked that many talented courtesans of Golconda wore at their necks many chains of small pearl and coral. These features are visible even in the miniature paintings on courtesans. Methwold in his relations also remarked that the king used to have four wives and thousand concubines. He said that all meat except cow's flesh is common to them, and they themselves are common to all and avert music and dance had become the monopoly of the prostitute's."

The best among them had to dance before the sultan or other provincial governor's at least once a year. They were also invited to sing or dance not merely
at social functions such as wedding or circumcision but also when large vessels arrived at a port and even at the celebrations of religious festivals such as the month long celebrations of the Prophet birthday.

They were also the devadasis attached to Hindu temples whose profession was to dance before the idols. To the foreigners these temple dancers were not greatly different from the public women. There were cases when a woman's children did not survive, then she would take a vow that if the newborn girl were to live, she would make her a devadasi probably meaning that she would dedicate her to the life of the temple.

Tavernier who visited Hyderabad during Qutb Shahi period giving description and procession scenes remarked that. Courtesans nearly ten to twelve preceded procession scenes followed by elephants, horses, camels etc. and who await the nobility at the end of the bridge, leaping and dancing before him up to the square.\textsuperscript{2j}

He also noted that courtesans enjoyed considerable amount of status in the Golconda society. He states that there were nearly twenty thousand courtesans in the Golconda kingdom."" They became a source of revenue to the state for they paid tax to the State. Some of them were expected to dance in the court regularly. They were a potential source of income and a perpetual source of enjoyment to the people and rulers in the kingdom. Most of the artists depicted these portraits of courtesans mainly for sale to European and other foreign travelers.

Thevenot who visited India and Golconda in (C 1665 - 1666 AD) also remarked that publick women are allowed in the kingdom, so that no body minds it, when they see a man eo to their houses and they are often at their door well dressed to draw in passengers. But they say most of them are spoiled."\textsuperscript{3} He also remarked that no stigma was attached to those who frequented the rooms of these whores.

Literary sources also mentioned about the famous courtesans Bhagmati, Taramati and Premamati. For instance regarding the historicity of Bhagmati, it was said that Hyderabad was also known Bhagyanagar or Bhagnagar named after a lady Bhagmati, popular courtesan of that time and the name was given by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah in (C 1590 - 1591 AD)

There are controversial views among histonans and foreign travelers regarding the veracity of Bhagyanagar being named after Bhagmati. While few historians
liked to call her as courtesan or mistress of Muhammad Quli, others called her as his beloved wife. However majority of historians affirmed that Muhammad Quli built the city and named it after Bhagmati who he married. She also embraced Islam in 1605 AD, and higher Hayat Bakshi was their daughter. 

Faizi, the imperial resident of the Deccan between (C 1590 - 1593 AD) writing about Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah and Bhagmati remarked that, Ahmad Quli steeped in Shiaism and has built a city Bhagyanagar by name after Bhagmati. the old whore (Fahisha - i - Kuhna) who has been his mistress for a long time (Mashnqa - i- Qadim)

Nizamuddin Bakshi, a panegyrist of the imperial court in his chronicle *Tabaqat - i - Akbar Shahi* written in 1594 AD said that Muhammad Ali Qutb Ul - Mulk, Son of Ibrahim succeeded his father. He became so enamoured of a Hindu prostitute (Patare) Bhamgasi by name that he founded a city which called Bhagyanagar after her and ordered that one thousand horseman should always accompany the whore (Fahisha).

Another well-known historian Ferishta mentioning about Bhagmati and Bhagnagar in (C1609 - 1610 AD) remarked that, the Sultan was greatly fascinated by a whore (Fahisha) named Bhagmati. He ordered that whenever she came to the court a thousand-horse man should attend her so that she should not be inferior to any one of the big nobles. About this time the climate of Golkonda had become so bad that it was for this reason that the Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah founded and populated a city four Kroh away which became unequalled throughout the length and breadth of India for its planning as well as for its cleanliness he called it Bhagnagar at first but later changed the name to Haidarabad .

There is another legend, which says that Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah loved a girl named Bhagmati, who lived on the other side of the river Musi. in a village called chichlum. She was beautiful and an accomplished dancer. Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah used to go across the river to meet her. His passion for her was so strong that on a stormy night when the river was in spate, he jumped his horse into the river unmindful of the risk to his life just to keep his rendezvous. The incident was duly reported by the spies to his father Ibrahim Qutb Shah, who ordered a bridge to be built across the river. '
According to another version, as a punishment for this dare-devilry the young Prince was confined to his quarters and provided with a bevy of international beauties to lure him away from his infatuation for a rustic commoner. After the death of Ibrahim, Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah became the king. He bestowed honors upon her and later married her. After he founded the new city he called it as Bhagyanagar after her and later when she was given the title Hyder Mahal, the name of the city was also changed to a Haiderabad.

The other historians who referred to Bhagmati episode were Abdur-Rahim Khan Khani-i-Khanan, the Maathir-i-Rahimi and Khafi Khan in his Munlakhab-id-Lubab, Nihawandi, Qader Khan Munshi in his Tareekh-e-Qutb Shah, and Gullzar-e-Asafi, Hadiqatal Alam, Dr. Nazir Ahmad Syed Hussain Bilgrami, C Willmott and others. Apart from these direct references to Bhagmati in historical works, there is an allegorical reference to her in poet Wajhi’s long romance Qutb-Mushtari. In this work the hero is supposed to be Quli himself while the character of the heroin is based on Bhagmati. Thus the romance of the young Prince Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah and the pretty charming courties had firm roots in history. Bilgrami writes that she was courties and resident of Chenchulam village, now known as Shalibanda.

Bernier, the physician of ShahJahan also said that Bhagnagar was named after Bhagmati. Francoise G Careri who came to this city in 1695 AD also called this place as Bhagnagar. The commentators and Editors of the travels of Thevenot and Careri recorded that Bhagmati was the favorite mistress of the Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah and Bhagnagar was named after her.

Regarding Bhagmati’s social status Sri Jagannadham asserts that she was an Arundhatiya damsel. The place Chinchalam, where Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah encountered Bhagmati was a devotional place, where cult of Mathangi or dedication of young girls as devadasis to temple was a religious custom of the day and community. Hence Bhagmati could be from a sect of courties. Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah charmed with her beauty nourished it and took her to the palace as courties, who later turned to be his royal mistress. The tradition of adopting such girls by royalty and nobility as slaves and courties existed during this period and such women who were beautiful did enjoy a high status and were sometimes even

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given as gifts to royal personalities or monarchs. Children born to such women were generally legitimized through Nikah marriages by kings. Many Muslim historians called such legally wedded Hindu ladies as courtesans or sometimes as prostitutes in derogatory terms.

Tavenier also remarked that the grand father of the present King Abdullah Qutb Shah founded Bagnagar. Here the king had very fair gardens———Bagnagar or the garden of nagar. 32 He asserts that Bagnagar stands for the city of gardens or Bagnagar, as a new capital was replete with gardens and groves.

Even Moreland in his Relations of Golconda stated that, every year in the month of April, the prostitutes of the whole kingdom have to travel to Bagnagar whether they are summoned by amaldaer, (a sort of tip staff) to dance in celebration of the death of the first Moslem king, a thing which seems to be very strange. He explained Bagnagar as Hyderabad, the new capital of Golconda. Abbe carre in 1672 AD also referred to city as Bagnagar and founded full of strangers and merchants. Bernier also mentioned about Bagnagar in 1667 AD.

On the whole regarding the historicity of Bhagmati, it is inevitable that in hands of story - tellers, some embellishments would have been added to the core of historical facts. This Baghnagar became Bhagyanagar only to add romantic element to the name and reveal the love - episode of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah and Bhagmati.

Bhagmati was even equated with Mushtari, the heroine of Wajhi's purely imaginary romance, Qutb - Mushtari. But this story has neither a historical nor a realistic value except the fact that it was woven around the dynastic title of the Sultan i.e. Qutb or the pole - star. The story of Qutb - Mushtari comes close to reconciliation between intellect and love. According to the compromise, intellect becomes minister of love. Wajahi believes that though love is supreme it should be kept in check by intellect.

In another poem written by Wajahi's, Sabras or the story of beauty and heart written in 1634 AD," also mentions about the allegory of love and the characters involved were named as beauty, heart, love, intellect and various parts of human body. The theme is the natural attraction of heart and beauty, the difficulties that stand in their way and how they manage to come together.
Such description is very much related to the relationship between the royalty and the courtesans, which became a theme for miniaturists. Two other prominent concubines of the time were Taramati and Premamati.\textsuperscript{34} They must be Hindu converts to Islam and later on were regularly married to Abdullah Qutb Shah and Abul Hasan Tana Shah respectively. Both of them were buried in regular Muslim graves in the royal meccropolis and their tombs have shapely domes. The sarcophagus of Premamati is inscribed with two verses of the Quran, the\textit{Shite Durad} and a chronogram indicated 1662 AD as her death. The inscription reads, from all eternity Premamati was a flower of paradise.\textsuperscript{35}

As per Taramati she was builder of a Mosque right in the center of the apartments of the Golconda forts which go by her name and further, the pavilion above described is the very symbol of the Shia sect of Islam. Neither of them could have been merely, temporary wives of the Sultan or perhaps exclusive occupancy of the palace. It was observed that Abdullah Qutb Shah used spend his leisure hours, listening to the music of these two ladies, carried over the distance by the wind.\textsuperscript{36}

Tarabati Baradari, the stately pavilion during Qutb Shahis days in particular used to reverberate with music and dance when eve Taramati entertained. This lady is said to have seen her days as a royal mistress during the reign of Abdul Qutb Shah and Abul Hasan Tana Shah roughly from (C1626 - 1687 AD). This beautiful courtesan was an accomplished singer and musician. According to popular lore, Taramati, on moonlit nights used to dance on a tight rope that extended from her pavilion all the way to the Golconda fort.\textsuperscript{7}

Architectural evidences reveal such women were given importance gleaned from the facet that they also constructed Mosque after their names. They were buried along with the dead royal ladies within the\textit{Longer - e - fours e} (compound of the Qutb Shahi tombs). For instance the tombs of Premamati and Taramati were buried in close vicinity of grand Tomb of Hayat Bakshi Begum.

Even literature of the time described about the courtesans constituting social fabric. For instance Kandakuri Rudrakavi, the court poet of Ibrahim Qutb Shah, in his \textit{work Nirankuso Pakhyanamu} describing the accomplishments of courtesans, remarked that, these ladies who without themselves loving any one evolved love in their clients by pleasing each one in a particular way.
Similarly during Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah’s reign Sarangu Tammaya Mantri, Karnam of Golconda wrote *Vaijayanti Vilasamu* in which he mentioned about two courtesans Madhuravani and Devadevi.\(^{38}\) These two sisters who were prostitutes by profession lay a wager to entice a Brahmin youth, Vipranarayana. One of them, Devadevi succeeds in her attempts and the youth fell in disrepute and finally was saved due to his faith in Sriranganatha.

These kavyas though mainly served the interests of the aristocracy, yet, indeed gave a picture of decadent morals of the society during this period. Particularly in relation to the condition of courtesans and their life styles in medieval period.

Hence, keeping in view of the prominence of their role in society and at royalty court, the artists depicted themes related to them. Such paintings illustrating these royal beauties gave additional pleasure to the royal taste of aesthetic artistic pursuits and patronage and paintings represented the same tendency of interaction.

Tavernier who visited Golconda in 1648 and 1652 AD observed that there were nearly twenty thousand women who entered into this profession and were obliged to go every Friday with their governess and their music to present themselves before king in the square in front of the balcony. He appears to have visited their locality and remarked that, in the cool of the evening, they stand before doors of their houses, which are for the most part small huts and when the night comes, they place at the doors a candle or a lighted lamp for a signal, who also sells tari or toddy indicating women and "wine go together.

Muhammad Quli poetry also talks about extensively about courtesans, their dressing-patterns and features. With great ease and felicity he composed many *rubais, masnavis, ghazals, jnarsiyas, and qasidas*.\(^{39}\) His descriptive nature gives a world of woman in the realm of *courtly atmosphere* and harem with pleasant nature of seasons, gardens, parks, fruits and flowers and festivals of culture of love and season.

Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah’s poetry in Dakhni language mainly Diwan in particular consists admiration of Hafiz of Persia. Some of its poems were lavishly
illustrated. For instance Diwan of Hafiz contains miniatures of sultan enthroned watching dance performances at his royal court, among which scenes of courtesans engulfed in wine and dance are also depicted.

Among his Urdu poetry, ghazal (love lyrics) and mathnavi (romance) were popular. In these he talks about variegated aspects of which sings of the pleasure of physical love with courtesans and candor also constitute an important part. Religion does not inhibit him from enjoying himself nor describing the pleasure he has derived from his indulgences. There is no difference between a Hindu and Muslim in these respects. For example his poetry consists few lines like,

"What is the heathen's path, what the Muslim's even practice
Is based on the secret of love"

"I am where you are my dear,
I have nothing to do with any one else.
I am bothered neither about the temple nor about the Mosque."

This is the reason why the royal harems of the time generally consisted of both Hindu and Muslim women and in particular many Hindu courtesans as evident from the miniature paintings. He described of the intoxication of wines, which multiply his enjoyment with the ladies in the harem, about union of sexes, and of the beauties of his palaces, which make both these possible

In harem atmosphere real merry-making, complete abandons, full enjoyment and indulgence of the senses are main aspects which are even depicted in miniature paintings like prince carousing with his ladies in a garden, prince embracing a lady, etc. Regarding courtesans Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah's poetry contained lines like:

" Having put on resplendent ornaments
They come jingling and in a moment embrace the sultan
The young damsels are high
And so have become unsteady in their gait"

"My beloved made herself up
in all her coyness came to my palace
Then she with all her love and life poured me a drink"

"The mouth of the beloved is the dish of jewels,
Lips are rubies, chin is shining bright
On the golden breast are the jewels of boobs, what a woman"

It was observed that few miniatures revealed such features and individual naked portraits of beautiful courtesans upto waist, etc. Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah gave excellent description of women, their types, nature, dress and ornaments. He wrote specially about his twelve beloved's, some of the names being Nannhi (The young one) Sanwali (The dark one), Kanawali (Lotus), Gori (The fair one), Lala, Lalan, Mohan, Mushtari (Jupiter), Sundar, Sajjan, Padmini, Bahamni Hindu, etc. He wrote poems in praise of these women in romantic sentiment.

He also mentioned about their dressing patterns and features. For instance the spoke of sari and equated features of these women like teeth are like nuts of Chiranja Ja Sapida, lips are kernel of coconut, beads of perspiration are poppy-seeds, eyes are drunkards sleeping under the arches of Mosques, the long hair of the beloved spread on her white breast are dark clouds ascending a mountain, regarding black nipple on the white breast of the beloved, he wonders how the sun has arrested night within itself. The candle melting before the beauty of the beloved is like hailstones, which vanish before the sun.

Similes and metaphors of such refreshing originality describing of his beloved's are natural related to the courtesans of the time, rather than the royal ladies and one can even perceive such fantastic features even in miniature paintings of the time illustrating harem scenes with courtesans surrounding the royalty and of glazing individual personalities of them.

For instance he remarked that Nanhi is coquettish, Sanwali is good natured like a cuculus, Kanwah stands holding a cup in her hand and her eyes are already heavy with drink, Gori is unequalled in her beauty, Chhabeli is the women without whom he cannot live a moment, Mohan is Coy, and feels for her like Majnum for Laila, and is full of virtues, Bilquis is a houri from heaven, Rangeeli takes the cake and she is sweet - tongued and gives him a sweet drink, her eyes betray the languor of the nocturnal, vigil and the way she walks, and he is a slave of Bahamni Hindu.

These love - lyrics through light on royal - enjoyments and features of courtesans who constituted an important part of their entertainment and pleasure in
palace frontiers and of his revelries, amours and intimacies and of harem life of oriental rulers which constituted women irrespective cast or creed.

On the whole Muhammad Quli Qutb Shahs amours constituted the raw material of experience for much of his poetry, which in one way indicates his royal prerogative rein forced by poetic license. These love - lyrics and poetic - styles indeed throw light on social trends particular in relation to the life of courtesans and supports the miniature paintings executed during this period representing them indicating that courtesans constituted a part and parcel of royal life and hence poets and artists of the time depicted them along with royalty and few individual portraits signifying their place and status attained in medieval kingdoms of Deccan.

Courtesans and dancing girls also played a major role in the life of Nizams, Nawabs, Jagirdars and people of Hyderabad. Famous among them were Kaminiji, Muradji and Muneeraji. They used to get a monthly salary from Nizam and nobles. From the records of Kanchan kacheri, it can be said that they were exempted from tax and payment of Nazarana in the city and districts. The nautch girls of Qutb Shahis on other hand to register but paid no tax for their professions.

The Asaf Jahis established an office known as Daftar - e- Nishat or Kanchan Kacheri. The superintendent of this office was lady called Mama Sharifa, who held a high status in the palace and society. And was very influential among all Mamas of the palace during Nizams VI reign. A Jamaldar and four other subordinates assisted her. All cases relating to prostitutes were presented before Mama Shafira.

The patronage leading to respectable and prosperous life for these dancing girls of Hyderabad attracted many such women from Northern India; the increase in their numbers changed their position and the profession no longer respectable, later on they adopted prostitution.

Nawab Rafat Yar Jung Bahadur turned his attention towards this evil, which none of his predecessors had ventured to face in the past and raised his voice against this evil practice. Nautch women adopted girls with the immoral motive of benefiting by them in later years. The Nawab first ascertained whether such girls related to the nautch women or were obtained during famine or in any other way. According to the information obtained, he compelled them to deposit securities where by they was forced to bring them up in a decent manner and later arranged
for their marriages with worthy persons. On marriage, they were given a few useful articles, clothes and a little cash to start their fresh lives.

However this profession continued both at societal and royal levels and in particular they remained as an important components of royal harem, with whom royalty passed their leisure hours and hence, the paintings of the time depicted such themes highlighting the activities, features, garments and ornaments of these women, who remained as part of sexual life of royal sphere.

Another famous courtesan of Hyderabad was Mahalaga Bai Chanda. She was a poet and a signer also. She uses to wear heavy and priceless jewelry. She entertained Nawab AH Khan Asaf Jah II, Nawab Secundar Jah, Meer Alam and Raja Chandulal.\(^{42}\)

During the reign Nizam II, families of highly cultured courtesans migrated to Hyderabad, one of them being Mahalika Chanda Bibi. She was an outstanding poetess and an expert dancer who patronized and entertained by Nizam.\(^{43}\) She was a favorite of the Nizam due to her performance of poetry, dance and magic. Among women she was considered as par with Muhammad Quli, the founder of the city for her proficiency in poetry. Her elder sister who also equally well versed in fine arts was reported to have married the Prime Minister, Ruk - Nad - daula. She had a jagir conferred on her by Nizam II near about the Moula - Ali Gutta.

Among Salarjung Begums Janaba Hazrata Zinatunnissa Begum, mother of Salarjung wrote to Sarver - ul - Mulk, asking that concubines of late Nawab Mukhtar ul Mulk Bahadur (Salarjung - I) be granted enhanced pensions. 19 concubines were listed in the letter and these included Wazir - un - Nisa Qanum (mother of Imad - ul - Salamat, Salarjung - II ) and Amir - un - nisa Qanum (mother of Munir - ul - Mulk, his younger brother). The other concubines had endearing names like Nurafza Buwa, Dilruba Buwa, Khush - Kadam Buwa and Nanhi Bi, which indicates that Salar Jung did not follow the custom of Nikah or wedding ceremony and entered into marriage bond at all.

Thus this analysis of depiction of courtesans in miniature paintings in comparison with the literary sources reflect the presence of courtesans and their passionate role at Deccani courts. The pictures depicted arouse elusive feelings with elemental passion which resurrect the liberties of sleep and integrate the intimate
yearnings into moment which is the quintessence of all moments into an image which is the part of many heightened images which are melting in our own sensibilities.

The illustrations reveal their slender and charming personalities with transparent and attractive draperies and sensitive facial features. They indeed depict their placement at royal courts and their intimate domestic engagements.

The miniatures painted highlight that at Qutb shahi courts, poetry and mystic love of nature comes through a cultured delicate aroma of new confrontation of themes related to courtesans and at Nizam's court, the new luxury makes for decorativeness and sensibility of women beyond the egoism of political power with depiction of pictures with hot colors and flowers. A brilliant black replaces the gold as foil to the Deccan palette in few paintings and in some gold, violet and rose finery with small delicate flowers and glinting creepers, softly lit the charm feminine beauties depicted, leading to matutinal freshness of miniatures.

The Harem scenes were painted in an idiom and atmosphere of contemporary Deccan with swinging movements and gorgeous colors. Moreover the popular memory of the beautiful courtesan Bhagmati continued when the Nizam of Hyderabad inherited miniature painting tradition, with a fresher and a more romantic echo, particular when related to women paintings.

Few paintings depicted retained warmth, intensity of the figures and sophisticated expressions of royal court. While in Golconda painting width and monumental adjustment of figures with sweeping movement and lavish use of gold coloring for gorgeous costumes marked the paintings, at Hyderabad school lyrical quality with a background of variety of clouds and trees with rich coloring and compact compositions remained the main features of paintings on courtesans.

In totality these themes retained local atmosphere with Deccani color scheme with imposing marvels of architectural excellence and grandeur and glory of Golconda and Hyderabad schools, coupled with beauty of standing courtesans and harem scenes. These paintings indeed reflect the social order of courtesan's life at royal court and signify that that indeed they were apart of Golconda and Hyderabad politico - socio structure.
References:


6. Ibid

7. Ibid

8. Ibid, p.68.


13. Ibid, p.211.


   It is in private collection.
29 It is the present location of Charminar.
31 It is presently called Puranpul or old bridge. It took two years to complete at a cost of Rs. 100,000.
37 *Ibid*, p.76.
38 Chandraiah.K, *Hyderabad-400 Glorious Years*, Suraj Printers and packagers,


