CHAPTER VI

CULTURAL CONTEXT

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. 1

With such apprehensions, mass female education was practically unknown. Arrangements to impart a little of primary education were made. The girls were sent to maktab with a ceremony. 2 This ceremony was common for both boys and girls and they studied together in the same class. Due to

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 Idí (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 up to 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. 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. 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. In addition, they were taught Shaikh Sadi's Gulistan and Bostan along with books on morals. 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.

260
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 Quran which she could do with correct pronunciation, as affirmed Ferishta. She was also perfect in her military training. 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. She herself was a poetess and composed verses under the pen name of 'Shirin'. 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. 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.

7 Ferishta, I,p.121; also Ashraf, p.170.
9 Shushtery, p.586.
called *Atun Mama*. They have been mentioned by the contemporaries frequently in their narrations. Akbar opened a school in his palace at Fatehpur Sikri. The school was for the education of princesses and had learned women, particularly Persians, to teach them. Aurangzeb was very particular about training his daughters in the doctrines of religion and pious virtues. 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. 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


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).


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...." To prop up her interest in studies, she maintained a big personal library with rich collection gathered from different parts of the country.

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. The latter founded a college near the tomb of her husband.

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’.


17 GHN, p.76; Law, pp.201-02; Shelat, J.M., Akbar, II, p.341.

18 Bazm, p.439.

She had great love for books and for that she not only maintained a personal library, but freely used Akbar’s library as well. 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.

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 ‘Makhtfi’. She was adept in composing

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.


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).

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. .
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.

265
Jahanara Begam was regarded one among the two best representatives of the literary talent of the Mughal dynasty, the other being Dara. 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. She learnt many other disciplines including the science of medicine. She also wrote Munis-ul-Ar wah, a biography of Hazrat Chisti of Ajmer. 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. She is said to have established a madrasa in the Jama Masjid of Agra.

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.

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.

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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:

33 Bazm, p.448; Ila Mukherji, p.103.

266
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. 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." 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. 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.

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", JBOARS, 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. Her language was so polished that her letters written in literary style were highly appreciated by Aurangzeb. She left behind a collection of her letters entitled Zeb-ul-Manshat for the posterity. Her brilliance can be judged from the fact that besides poetry, she attained mastery in Mathematics and Astronomy. 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 Quran Tafsir-i-Kabir was translated from Arabic to Persian by Mulla Safi-ud-din Ardbeli and was entitled Zeb-ut-tafasir after her name. She was wholly dedicated to the cause of knowledge and the distinguished educators 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.
44 Magan Lal, p.8.
poetess and wrote her own epitaph. Similarly, Nur-un-nisa, the wife of Prince Shah Alam was a Hindi poetess.

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. 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 Quran. 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. Another distinguished lady in this field was Hafiza Mariyam. She was wife of Mirza Shukr-ullah of Kashmir and mother of

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.
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. Zeb-un-nisa had so much regard for her that she exhorted her father to give an office to her son Inayatullah.

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.

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. The mother of Amir Khusrau was an educated lady and wrote frequently to her son. 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. She was known for her generosity towards

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.
learned men.56 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".57 Such examples, nonetheless, were not very many since early marriages of ladies thwarted their pursuits for higher learning.58

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.59 Hafiza Khadija, daughter of Mir Sayid Abdul Fattah - a liberal and learned man - mastered the Quran, 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.60 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.

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.

271
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 madrasa. Bibi Bahat of the same time and disciple of Shaikh Nur-ud-din, the patron saint of Kashmir, was also famous for her learning.

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. Abul Fazl ignored to include them in the list of fifty top-most Persian poets of his time. 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'. 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.
63 Ibid., p. 388.
64 Lal, Harem, p. 111.
65 Ain., I, pp. 617-80.
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. Similarly, they made beautiful country blankets called Kathas from worn out clothes and also embroidered them with pictures of flowers, leaves or different animals.

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

68 Ibid., p.197.
helped by an attendant who sits facing her holding the mirror. 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. 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. She was adept in this art and painted with expertise. 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. In place of peshwaz (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

69 Qaiser, A.J., *The Indian Response to European Technology and Culture*, Pl.7a (from Khamsa, BM.or.12208, f.206a).
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. She also invented new patterns and designs for the gold ornaments. 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.

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. 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.

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

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.


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. There, her vakil built a lofty house and garden at Nur Sarai. There were still others called *Nur Manzil* and *Nur-afshan* gardens which belonged to her. 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 Achchol 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.

Mumtaz Mahal was responsible for Mughal gardens in Delhi and Agra. 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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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 86, Surat 87 and Achchol. 88 In addition, she owned many gardens, either inherited or received as gift by her. 89 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. 91 Zeb-un-nisa also planted her own garden at Lahore where she was ultimately buried. 92 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

84 Lal, Harem, p.96; Stephen, p.256.
85 Lahori, I, Pt.II, p.27; Kambo, II, p.36.
87 Thevenot, pp.35-36.
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).
91 Stuart, pp.103-05.
92 Ibid., p.135; Latif, p.190.
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

93 Latif, pp.188-90; Stuart, pp.134-35.
96 Thevenot, p.57.
97 Tuzuk, I, pp.232-33. It was probably situated near Agra.
98 Ibid., II, p.64.

278
also built a mosque at Lahore in 1641 A.D. (1023 A.H.) .

His wife Nurjahan got sarai built at Sikanderabad and also Nur Mahal ki Sarai at Agra . Some authorities believe that she got Jahangir's tomb built at Lahore . She got her own mausoleum also built at Lahore . 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. 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 .

Shah Jahan's daughter Pur Hunar Banu Begam got built her own mausoleum where she was buried after her death . Jahanara Begam constructed a mosque in Agra at a cost of five lac rupees . Shah Jahan himself was interested in building

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.
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. She built a rabat (monastery). 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. 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, Uzbeg and other foreign merchants were allowed to stay there. She got built another famous caravanserai at Kirka near Bayana (Behana). For herself, she built house at Achchol with gardens and fountains. She also built her own tomb in her life time.

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107 Lahori, I, Pt. II, p. 252; Ain., I, Tr. note, p. 375.
108 Lahori, II, p. 469.
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.
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

114 Norris, p.236 (he confirmed to have visited one of these caravanserais when he arrived at Navapur).
116 Stephen, pp.274-75.
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, were distinguished mainly by their *salwar* (trousers) and shirt or tight tunic with belt and half-length sleeves and a *dupatta* (scarf) 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. 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).


122 Ojha, North Indian, p.30.
satisfied with the coarser cloth like cotton, the women of upper strata used costly gilded and jewelled items. The aristocratic ladies had some exclusive dresses like *qabas* (a long coat), *kulahs* (a high cap) and *lachaqs* (a head dress). 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. 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*).


127 Ibn Batuta, pp.122 (slave girls being awarded ornaments), 179, 202 (women of down South, though scantily dressed yet, fond of ornaments); *Liazi-Khusravi*, V, p.127 (public women fond of ornaments); *Nuh-Sipihr*, VII, p.379.
materials like silver, brass, iron, copper, ivory, glass and cowries. 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. Likewise, the rich dresses, precious ornaments and pungent perfumes came to be regarded as "signs of respectability and good breeding". 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. 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. Because of excessive use of ornaments, Khusrau advocated against it. He cautioned that beauty-aids brought defame to the person. He exhorted the need for cultivating beauty in chaste character and pious deeds rather than in physical looks. Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq forbade the use of gold and silver for making ornaments.

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

131 For enumeration of ornaments and toilets, see Matla-ul-Anwar, pp.225,228; Nuh Sipihr, 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.


135 Matla-ul-Anwar, p.194; Hasht Bahisht, pp.29,31.

136 Futuhat, (Text), rule 14, p.11.
Khizr Khan, his mother visited Mecca in 1327 A.D.137 The mother of Muhammad Shah Bahmani I (1358-77 A.D.) went for the *hajj*.138 Sultanam, wife of Nizam-ud-din Ali Barlas Khalifa along with Gulbarg Begam, her sister-in-law, went to Mecca.139

Mahchuchak Begam, wife of Kamran undertook pilgrimage along with her husband.140 Akbar arranged for the *hajj* of Bega Begam (Haji Begam). She is reported to have undertaken this journey twice.141 Gulbadan Begam accompanied by Salima Sultan Begam, Gulzar Begam (daughter of Kamran), Sultan (Sultanam) Begam (Wife of Askari), Kulsum Khanam (granddaughter 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.142 After the reign of Akbar, such journeys were discouraged because of disturbances caused by the Portuguese in Arabian Sea.143 Dai Lado, a wet nurse of Emperor Jahangir, performed this pilgrimage in the fourth year of Shah Jahan's reign.144

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.
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.  

Inspired by the Qur'anic 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. Maham Begam, after Babur's funeral, made "allowance of food twice daily". Bega Begam spent her widowhood in distributing alms and supporting five hundred poor people. Alms were also distributed by

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. 150 She had collected many maid-servants in the palace whom she got married to ahdis (gentleman troopers) and chelas. She distributed three thousand rupees as alms on prescribed days of bath. 151 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. 152 Jahanara distributed a lot of money in charity on different occasions. 153

Aurangzeb's daughter Zinat-un-nisa was known for her piety and charity. 154 Jahanzib Banu, daughter of prince Dara, was also famous for her generosity and liberal attitude. 155

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.


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.

288
In the later Mughal period, Lai Kanwar was known for generous charity of food and money which she distributed among the poor and the needy. Hazrat Qudsia Begam (Udham Bai) was also known for her generosity.

Many notable women were totally devoted to religion and became joginis (lady ascetics), renowned saints and mystics. 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. Baba Farid, taking pity on a poor man, recommended a man for the marriage of his daughter. 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 Momin', because of her sincere and sweet nature.

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

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.
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.  

The Sufis readily accepted women as their murid (disciples) without making any discrimination on the basis of sex. 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.

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. Bibi Auliya of the time of Muhammad bin Tughlaq was a famous saint of her time, deeply revered by the public. 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...

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.


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. Qarsum Bibi, mother of Baba Farid, was equally enlightened and exalted. 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. 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.

169 Ibid., on the authority of Sivar-ul-Arifin, p.32 and Fawaid-ul-Fuad, pp.121-22; also Rizvi, I, p.401.
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." 171 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. 172 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. 173

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. 174 The ladies continued to visit them with full devotion. Firoz Shah Tughlaq ordered

171 Nizami, Farid-ud-din, p.65; Rashid, p.139.
173 Rizvi, I,p.403.

292
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

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.).