CHAPTER II
THE SOCIAL STATUS

AN OVERVIEW

The social status of the Muslim women underwent many changes as a result of their interaction with Indian environment. Since both, Hindu and Muslim cultures, existed simultaneously in the same region, the values and norms of one got assimilated into the other. The Muslim married Indian girls. They also converted Hindus into their fold. These factors resulted in infiltration of Hindu thought into Muslim mind and brought a change in their thinking about their own ladies. In cases, Muslim adopted *sati* and *jauhar* and began abstaining from re-marriages and divorces. They also started mourning the very birth of a female child. The status and public respectability of women also underwent change with the changing moral values of the society. Since these values came down to the lowest ebb during the time of later Mughals, the dignity of womanhood also suffered most during that period. The changing policies of different rulers also affected their status. While Sultan Qutb-ud-din Mubarak Shah's fondness for the company of harlots provided an environment favourable to the prostitutes, the honour and regard shown by Sher Shah Suri or Akbar towards womanhood gave a positive standing to the women of their respective times. The status of Muslim ladies belonging to different social classes also changed differently. Since the upper class was most affected by the degenerating values, the women
of this strata suffered most in their social standing over the period of time. For the women belonging to middle and lower classes, the change was not so marked.

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

**UNWELCOME BIRTH**

The life of the girl began with an unwelcome note. The birth of a girl was considered something inauspicious. Amir Khusrau lamented over the birth of his daughter, "I wish you were not born and if you were, it would have been better if you had been a boy." Amid such moroseness, he
consoled," But my father was born of a woman and I am also
born of a woman."¹ His craving brings out the psyche of his
times. This becomes all the more glaring when contrasted with
his equally intense desire to have a son; a desire which was
universal not only among the common people but also among the
royalty and nobility. For instance, at the time of Sultan
Muzaffar of Gujarat, one of his confidants Malik Allah Dia
(Faridi read it as Mli-Kul-Hidayat) was very sad because he
did not have any son.²

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

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

² Sikander, p.371; also Mushtaqi, (Rizvi, UTKB, Pt.II),
pp.564-65. See also Rice, C. Colliver, Persian Women
and Their Ways, pp.123-24. He informed how the Muslims
dressed their sons after their birth, like girls to
avoid the evil eyes and jealousy of the people. That
shows as to how much the baby-girl was an ignored lot
of society.
in preference to the daughters and the birth of a female child had come to be considered as a misfortune, especially after the advent of the Muslims. In some of the sections of the Rajputs, whenever a girl was born, she was killed soon thereafter or during her infancy. The practice was imbibed by some sections of the Muslim population also. Jahangir confirmed its prevalence among the Mohammadans of Rajaur who were basically Hindu converts. Thus, under the impact of negative attitude towards female child of both the communities, even after the Muslim rule was established and matters were quite settled with the coming of the Mughals, the desire for having a son and despise for a female child did not decrease. The mothers, who gave birth to daughters in succession were discriminated against and even divorced.

3 A verse in the Atharva-Veda echoes the general longing for a son:

\[\text{मनस्पुष्पु द्वारिष्टं} \]


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

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

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

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

7 *Aqiqah* literally means 'the hair of the new-born' and it referred to the shaving sacrifice usually observed on 6th or the 7th day (Hughes, *op.cit.*, pp.50-51; Hastings, James (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, II, p.659; Jafar Sharif, p.38 and n.5. It was observed on 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th or 35th day after birth).
celebrations when a prince was born. But, when Akbar ordered general rejoicings on the birth of Affat Banu, daughter of prince Salim, it surprised all including Abul Fazl, since this was "contrary to the custom of contemporaries".

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


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

**EARLY MARRIAGE**

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

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

13 During the time of Firoz Shah, the girls got married at *Khurīd salgi* i.e. very early age (Afif, (Text), pp.180,292). The King is reported to have laid down the age of marriage of girls at nine (Ashraf, K.M., *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, p.179,n.2). The Bahmanis in the South followed the custom of early marriage both for the princes and princesses. Nizam Shah (1461-63 A.D.) and Muhammad III (1463-82 A.D.) got married very early. Prince Ahmad aged 14, the son of Mahmud Shah Bahmani (1482-1518 A.D.) got married to the infant daughter of Sultan Adil Khan (Ferishta, II, pp.293, 295,335-36).
This age came further down as the laxity in social norms increased. Terry (1616-19 A.D.), writing during the times of Jahangir, mentioned, "They marry for the most part at the ages of twelve or thirteen." But Manucci, writing at a later date, reported a girl of Sind giving birth to a male child when she was only nine years of age. For the Mughal princesses, the marriageable age was a little higher. They generally got married at fourteen or fifteen though there are examples when they got married even at five. The average age for marriage of the princes was also low, ranging between sixteen to eighteen. However, the royalty considered themselves fit to marry the tender girls at any age. Humayun was thirty three when he married Hamida Banu, aged fourteen. Alamgir II, at the ripe age of sixty and with a shattered health, was fascinated by Hazrat Begam, daughter of Muhammad Shah, who was just sixteen, and

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

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

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

17 GHN, p.150, n. 1.
demanded her hand for himself. She, however, declined the offer replying, "I prefer death to (such a) marriage ... I regard you as my father and you too should look upon me in the same light ..." and for that she had to suffer the punishment of forced isolation. The like of her were only exceptions. By and large, in their eagerness to get them married off, their parents often compromised with the age of the groom. They sought justification in that Prophet Mohammad also married Ayisha, who was just nine, when he himself was fifty years old.

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

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

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

Emperor Akbar, philanthropist and far-sighted as he was, realized the injustice done to the female children by these arranged early marriages. He, therefore,

20 The daughter of Sultan Adil Khan, though married as an infant to prince Ahmad Bahmani, was delivered to him only at the age of 10 (Ferishta, II, p.336); Raychaudhuri, pp.12, 230 (for similar practice among Muslims of Bengal). See also Meer Hassan Ali, I, pp.346-47.

21 Thevenot, p.117; Stavorinus, I, p.440.; Orme, p.301.
promulgated many regulations which recommended the minimum age of marriage for girls and boys as fourteen and sixteen years respectively. He recorded openly his abhorrence for the child-marriage and also for the early marriage of Ayisha with Mohammad. He also made the consent of the bride and the bridegroom and the permission of the parents absolutely necessary in marriage contracts. He appointed two officers named Tu-i-begi (Master of Marriages) in order to investigate the circumstances of the bride and the bridegroom before the marriage was actually solemnized. However, since social habits die hard, this regulation could not create any impact except in increasing corruption. Nor could the other orders, about the consent of the boy and the girl, have any relevance since the brides and bridegrooms were too young to have any decisive power. The innocent bride would have done nothing except giving her consent for marriage, as the Qoran envisaged, by following the dictates of her wali. Marriage had come to be regarded as the be end and all end of the lives of these tiny helpless females before the period of Akbar and even after him.

THE DOWRY

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

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22 Badaoni, II, pp.315,349; Ain., I, pp.213, n. 287.
23 Ain., I, pp.287-88.
24 Badaoni, II, p.405.

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

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

In order to save the poor girls from forced celibacy for want of dowry and getting them married in time, many of the nobles, Sultans and royal ladies came to their rescue by extending them financial help for this purpose. Some of the noteworthy among them were Fakhr-ud-din of Balban's time, Sultan Firoz Tughlaq, Amir Zain-ud-din of Sikander Lodi's period and Nurjahan. Fakhr-ud-din, Kotwal of Balban, was estimated to have provided dowry to about one thousand poor girls every year. 29 Sultan Firoz Tughlaq established a department for this purpose named Diwan-i-Khairat. It examined the genuine financial needs of each case and accordingly, gave them grants of fifty, thirty or twenty-five tankas each as per the three grades of grants.

27 T.A., (De)'II, p.599; Badaoni, II,p.352; Sujan Rai Bhandari, Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh, pp.375-76. Also Badaoni, III, p.99 (for dowry given by Sultan Ali Khan of Kashmir in his daughter's marriage); Amir Khusrau, Dewal Ranj Khizr Khan, (Rizvi, KKB), p.172 (for huge dowry given in this marriage); Bernier, pp.21-22 and n.1 (for Aurangzeb's son prince Sultan Muhammad getting fortress of Ramgiri in dowry while marrying the princess of Golkunda); M.A., (Tr.), pp.73, 129-30 (for dowries in the marriages of prince Muhammad Akbar and Kam Bakhsh, sons of Aurangzeb); Ibal Nama, p.4. (for dowry of Rs. 50 lac cash besides 10 elephants with litters studded with gold and silver worth Rs. 50 lac and 50 horses of Iraqi and Arabian breed with gold and silver trappings in Farrukhsiyar's marriage with daughter of Ajit Singh).


29 Barani, (Text), p.117.
provided therein. 30 It is reported about Zain-ud-din that whosoever asked him for financial help for daughter's marriage, he gave him all items of dowry including clothes, beds and even palki. 31 As for Nurjahan, she met the expenses of marriage and dowry of five hundred girls during her sixteen years of authority and power. 32

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

30 Afif, (Text), pp.180, 349-51; also Jauhri, R.C., Firoz Tughluq, p.129. Tanka was a coin of copper with a small silver alloy (Richards, J.F.(ed.), The Imperial Monetary System of Mughal India, p.139).
31 Mushtaqi, (Rizvi, UTKB, Pt.I), p.139.
32 Muhammad Hadi, Tatinma-i-Wagiat-i-Jahangiri, p.399; Mutamad Khan, Iqbalnama-i-Jahangiri, p.405.
33 Sher Shah at 44 married Lad Malika almost of his mother's age for the sake of her property (Abbas, (Amb.), pp.205-06. See also Qanungo, K.R., Sher Shah and His Times, pp.96-97, n.1).
Dowry-demand was less in the beginning. But as the time passed and the moral values of the society became lax, the avarice of the people and their audacity to seek more and more dowry also increased. Consequently, the status of women suffered deterioration. The discrimination of the society against women was apparent even when Akbar thought of bringing regulations against unmatched marriages of old heiresses with young destitute boys but did not feel concerned about the menace of old and invalid men tying nuptial knots with innocent young girls.

THE DIVORCE

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

34 Badaoni, II, p.405. The regulation ordained that if a woman happened to be older than her husband by 12 years, such marriage was to be considered void.
35 Barbosa, I, p.121 and n.2.
rule of Kashmir (1563-1578 A.D.), also sought divorce from her husband Shaikh Arif-i-Husaini for which she even asked back her dowry. Among the Mughal ladies, some instances of divorce were those of Aesha Sultan Begam (Babur’s wife), Khanzada Begam (Babur’s sister) and Gulbarg Begam (Humayun’s wife after first divorce). From the description of Badaoni it appears that even women from among the general public moved to the Qazi for seeking divorce from their spouses. He wrote:

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

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

37 Badaoni, III, p.99.
38 GHN, Tr.note, pp.209, 250-51, 230. It is reported that Aesha left Babur. Similarly, Gulbarg Begam left her previous husband, Shah Husain Arghun before re-marrying Humayun.
39 Badaoni, III, p.147. Badaoni was a religious zealot and hence, praised Shaikh Muin for such an attitude. For his concern for Shariat, see Hasan, Mohibbul(ed.) Historians of Medieval India, pp.106-09.
masters who were maintaining large harems and indulging in extra-marital relations. But no one ever divorced them on this ground. Humayun's wife Bega Begam, being beloved of the Emperor, once gathered courage to convey the resentment of the harem-ladies for his absence from the harem. For this, not only had she to face a shut up call but all ladies were also made to give in writing that they would not make such complaints in future. The ladies obeyed his commands and never thought of divorcing him for this reason. None of the wives of Shah Jahan was ever reported having divorced him. Such dominance, in fact, was maintained by males of all strata of society. Thus, Badaoni's reference that ladies also sought divorces can be construed only as an exception and not the rule. As for men, they didn't have the necessity to have recourse to a divorce because once the ladies became their stooges and their personality got suppressed, the harmonious family-life got ensured. For the richer few, it was perhaps not required at all. Not recognizing the sanctity of religion, they had as many wives as they wished without having any need of divorcing the earlier ones in order to restrict their number to four. Even within the religious sanctions, they could fulfil their desire through muta marriages or concubinage. If still some religious clause came in the way of their desire, then they would divorce the earlier one to be in a position to marry a new woman. For instance, an aunt and her niece could not be co-wives as per the Qoran. But Shaibani Khan, in order to get

40 GHN, pp.130-31.
married to Khanzada Begam, sister of Babur, divorced her maternal aunt Mihr Nigar Chaghtai. Under such conditions and with the successive moral degradation, the institution of marriage lost its significance and so did the divorce. Though, as per Qoranic principles, a woman became free after the period of *iddat*, but, because of the weakness of women, in some areas, she was forced to stay with the divorced husband even beyond that period. Ibn Batuta wrote about the prevalence of the practice of keeping the divorced wives in the houses of their erstwhile husbands until they got remarried, in the Maldives. He, as *Qazi* of the place, claimed to have abolished this practice by granting severe punishment, of whipping and parading in the bazar, to such men who indulged in it. For the general Muslim public, the assimilation of Hindu way of life also worked as a deterrent.

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41 GHN, Tr. note, p.250.
42 Ibn Batuta, pp.211-12.
43 Observing about this in 1892 A.D., Thomas wrote: "Whereas the law permits to the faithful as many as four wives, and provides facilities for divorce on easy terms, monogamy as in India the prevailing rule and divorce is almost unknown." (Thomas, F.W., Mutual Influence of Muhammadans and Hindus in India, p.77). This impact during the period of this study also couldn't be less. The Census Report of 1901 elaborated still another reason for lesser divorces. It wrote, "People are often married among their own relations. A wife who is divorced brings the greatest possible shame on all her people who happen to be the people of her husband." (Burn, R., Census of India (1901) Report, XVI, p. 104). The Report, though, of much later period, yet the facts were equally relevant during the period of this study too with marriages in close relations and with deep sense of clannish attachment.
REMARRIAGE

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

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

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


47 'Yanga' means 'aunt by marriage' or 'wife of an elder brother'. As per this a younger brother was to marry the widow of elder brother. As examples, after the death of Saniz Mirza, one of the Daughlat *amirs*, his widow was married to Muhammad Haider Mirza, the younger brother of the deceased. Haider Mirza was grand-father of Mirza Haider, the author of *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* and the cousin (maternal aunt's son) of Babur. (Mirza Haider,*Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, (Tr.), p.251, n.3). Also GHN, Tr.note,p.291(for Sultan Nigar Khanam, daughter of Yunus Khan, on her husband Awq's death, being married to his brother Qasim). But, when under this custom, Aurangzeb wished to marry Rana Dil, Dara's widow, she refused to agree and the marriage did not materialize (Manucci,I,pp.342-43).
ladies remarried. Mahdi Khwaja was the third husband of Khanzada Begam: the first husband Shaibani Khan having divorced her and the second Saiyyad Hada having died. Humayun got Gulbarg Begam in remarriage after she divorced her first spouse Shah Husain Arghun. Akbar’s sister Bakshi Banu Begam was married to Mirza Ibrahimm and after his death to Mirza Sharif-ud-din. There were many more examples.

Akbar himself married Salima Sultan Begam, the widow of Baiream Khan, and Jahangir to Nurjahan, the widow of Sher Afgun. If Tarikh-i-Salim Shahi is to be believed, it is reported that when prince Daniyal died, his harem of three hundred women was placed under the charge of prince Salim. The latter sent a word to these ladies that if any one of them desired to marry, they should inform him along with the name of the noble to whom they wanted to get married.

Akbar is reported to have ordered that the widows should not

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

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

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


52 Price, David, Memoirs of the Emperor Jahanguir Written by Himself, pp.107-08. The work is considered to be of doubtful authenticity (E & D, VI, p.257; Beni Prasad, History of Jahangir, pp.387-88).
be forbidden to remarry, though a widow whose menstruation cycle had ceased should not wish to have a husband. The prevalence of re-marriages and their acceptability in society can be judged from the fact that the Hindu widows desirous of remarriage, got converted either into Christianity or to Islam. However, the assimilation of the Hindu practices within the Muslim fold had begun to weaken the position of the Muslim ladies. Gradually, the Muslim psyche underwent a change in matters pertaining to remarriage and this practice fell into disuse.

**POLYGAMY**

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

The nobility too was polygamous. Ibn Batuta, for

54 Careri, pp.249-50.
55 Manucci,III,p.145.Muhammad Ayub Qadri, Majmua-i-Wasiya (collection of Wills),Per. Text,point 7,p.52,Urdu Tr., p.82; also Baljon, J.M.S., Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi, p.199 (for will of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi wherein he exhorted that it was improper to hold divorce as prohibited and refuse to give Muslim widows in marriage, a bad impact of the Hindus. It pertains to later Mughal period).
56 For details, see Chap. IV.
instance, was never without wives or slave-girls, whom he considered indispensable. Wherever he went, he managed them for himself. He confirmed about the prevalence of muta marriage in Maldives Islands and he himself entered into such wedlocks four times over there. At the time of leaving the Islands in 1345 A.D., he divorced all. After that, he again married two girls in the Island of Muluk where he stayed just for seventy days. In general, however, the nobles maintained three to four wives, the senior-most being the most honoured one (Harem-i-muhtaram). She had precedence in all matters of dignity and management of the household except in matters of getting the love of her master where the juniors could be better placed. The richer class of the society also followed this practice. Referring to the Moors of Cambay, Barbosa wrote, "They have very beautiful, white women, very well clad, and they may marry as they can maintain, in accordance with the law of Mafamedo; so many of them have four or five, all recognized and maintained." Similarly, it is reported that in Bengal during the early seventeenth century, the rich Muslim merchants kept separate wives with complete establishments in each town they visited for their business.

57 Ibn Batuta, pp.106,122,200,208,212-16. Also see Chap.IV.
59 Barbosa, I, p.120.
60 Raychaudhuri, pp.8-9, 231 (on the authority of Schouten, a European traveller).
Polygamy had become a way of life of the higher strata of society. Even to the extent that in order to meet their desires and intentions, the religious zealots gave new interpretations to the Qoranic injunctions, to suit their purpose. The discussion in *Ibadat Khana* regarding the legal number of wives at the time of Akbar can be the best example where the Qoranic *ayat* (4:3) was interpreted as permitting nine wives. Some *Mujtahids* calculated eighteen as the sanctioned number. Being the employees of Akbar and knowing fully well that the Emperor wanted to find a religious sanction for his plurality of wives, they gave these new interpretations. The ultimate consensus reached at was that a man might marry any number of wives by *muta* marriage but only four by *nikah*. 61 Mirza Aziz Koka remarked tersely, "A man should marry four wives a Persian woman to have somebody to talk to; a Khurasani woman, for his housework; a Hindu woman for nursing his children and a woman from Mawarannahr (Transoxiana) to have some one to whip as a warning for the other three." 62 61 *Badaoni, II*, pp.211-12. They reached at the figure of 18 by multiplying each number given in the *ayat* by 2 i.e. $2\times2+3\times2+4\times2=18$ and at the figure of 9 by adding them i.e. $2+3+4=9$. During this discussion, it also came to light that taking recourse to such interpretations, one Qazi himself had nine wives. 62 *Ain*, I, Tr. note, p.346. See also Jafar Sharif, pp.85-86, wherein by quoting Burton, he had given in not so-serious but very suggestive explanation for having four wives, "one quarrels with you; two are sure to involve you in their quarrels; when you have three, factions are formed against her you love best; but four find society and occupation among themselves, leaving the husband in peace."
Akbar realized the bad effects of polygamy on health and family peace, and so, propounded monogamy. He introduced the practice that a man should have a single legal wife unless he had no child. Such a regulation was bound to have no impact, particularly on the upper class with whom polygamy had become a second nature and who considered it a symbol of their dignity. Akbar himself never adhered to it. Thus, polygamy remained the order of the day with the wealthy Mohammadans, only the number of wives differed according to means, the state of necessity and the fancy of the man.

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

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

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

64 Nicoli Conti, p.23.
65 Terry, p.320.

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{67} F.W. Thomas, p.77.

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

\textsuperscript{69} For details, see Chap. IV.
though, they were also affected adversely by the polygamy among the higher strata. Their self-respect and modesty were susceptible to the greedy eyes of lustful masters, perpetual saturnalia being the be end and all end of their lives, in the later Mughal period.

**WOMAN AND HOUSEHOLD**

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

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

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

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

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

At times, women were also subjected to torture. The sister of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq was tortured to death by her husband Mughis, son of Malik-ul-Muluk. Similarly, Khwaja Muazzam, brother of Hamida Banu, was notorious for ill-treating his wife Zahra Agha, whom he finally killed.

74 Ibn Batuta, p.211.
75 Ferishta, I, p.136.
76 Ibn Batuta, p.81.
During the Mughal period, the womanly devotion, particularly in the higher strata, was shaken. They developed extra-marital relations and some of them even killed their husbands. However, women in general did not change much. Born and brought up in their ordinary environment, trained and moulded from the very childhood by the authoritative mothers-in-law and living always under the cover of purdah and domestic restrictions, such recalcitrant behaviour was just not expected of them. They remained docile all through and lived and died like the stooges of their husbands or the servants of their families. Family-peace was maintained not because of any sense of comradeship and love between husband and wife but because of the perfect understanding of the subservient role by the wife.

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

THE MOTHER

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

78 Pelsaert, p.66; Manucci, I, pp.329, 435-36. Ain., I, Tr. note, p.389 (Ismail Quli Khan being poisoned by his 1200 women for his ill-treatment).
child-birth and the dominant role she plays in moulding the character of the child. During the Sultanate period, the royalty not only showed regards towards their mothers but also allowed them to play prominent role in the state politics. Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq, for instance, held his mother Makhduma-i-Jahan in high esteem. Once she travelled along with him and he returned a little earlier to her. Later when his mother arrived, he proceeded to her, got down from his horse and kissed her feet in public in order to pay his humble regards. She was his permanent counsel and was allowed to spend as much as she wanted for her charity. He mourned her death for ten days before resuming his march to Multan. Similarly, Syed Sultan Mubarak Shah, who was on his way to his expedition to Samana when he heard about the illness of his mother Makhduma-i-Jahan in 1432 A.D., came back immediately leaving his army and baggage in the charge of the amirs and maliks. His mother died a few days after his return. The Sultan stayed for ten days in order to observe her funeral rites and rejoined his army only after that. It is only because of the exclusive place enjoyed by them that the mothers like Shah Turkan (son, Rukn-ud-din Firoz), Malika-i-Jahan (mother of Sultan Rukn-ud-din Ibrahim Khalji), Dudu Begam

Hasht Bahisht, pp.208-09.
Ibn Batuta, p.118.
Sirhindi, p.101; Barani, (Text), pp.482-83,506; Muhammad Bihmad Khani, Tarikh-i-Muhammadi, pp.353, 355.
Sirhindi, p.234.
Makhduma-i-Jahan (mother of Sultans Nizam Shah Bahmani and Muhammad Bahmani, III) played crucial roles in politics as mother regents, safeguarding the interests of their sons. There were some unhappy examples too. Sultan Shihab-ud-din, son and successor of Ala-ud-din Khalji, showed disrespect towards his step-mother (mother of Khizr Khan) Malika-i-Jahan and imprisoned her confiscating her valuable possessions. Mothers who killed their children for selfish ends are also mentioned by the contemporaries. In one such instance, during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin of Kashmir, a lady killed her own child and threw his dead body in the house of the lady living in her neighbourhood because she had a grudge against the latter and wanted to get her punished by involving her in the murder of her child. Such references, however, did not reflect the normal behaviour.

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


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

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

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

Hamida Banu was held in highest esteem by Akbar. His going out of the city to receive her whenever she returned from a journey, his abrupt coming back from his hunting trip on hearing about her indisposition, his carrying her palanquin on his own shoulders once, during her journey

87 Mirza Haider, (Tr.), p.176.
88 B.N., (Rev.), I, pp.147; also GHN, Tr. note, p.272.
89 GHN, pp.103-04, 112-113, (and Tr. note) 256-58.
91 A.N., (Bev.), III, pp.348,547.
from Lahore to Agra 93, his heart-felt mourning at her death when he shaved off his head and beard and removed all ornaments and took her bier on his shoulders for a pace 94, all betray his respect for his mother. His regard extended to his step mother like Haji Begam and foster mothers like Maham Anaga and Jiji Anaga. 95 On account of it he showed deepest attachment even to their sons and husbands known as kokus and atkas respectively. Aziz Koka, son of Jiji Anaga, for instance, offended Akbar often with his impetuosity, yet, he rarely punished him. He used to say, "Between me and Aziz is a river of milk which I cannot cross." 96 Even after Akbar, the foster mothers continued to be given kind and considerate treatment in the royal household. 97

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93 Coryat, ed. W. Foster, p.278.
94 Inayatullah, Takmila-i-Akbar Nama, p.113; Augustus, II, p.415.
95 He was so much attached with Haji Begam that many people, as Akbar himself confirmed, mistook her to be his real mother and confused her with Hamida Banu (A.N., (Bev.), III, pp.107-08, also p.547; Smith, V.A., Akbar: the Great Mogul, p.89, n.3. Badaoni called her "second mother to the Emperor" (Badaoni, II, p.308). To Maham Anaga, he used to call walida i.e. mother. She enjoyed the greatest influence on Akbar as well as in the court (A.N., (Bev.)), II, pp.183, n.5, 230; M.U., I, pp.145, 384-85). See also Chapter V. For reference of other anagas, see A.N., (Bev.), I, pp.130-31; Badaoni, II, p.49, n.4.
96 Ain., I, Tr.note, p.343. Another example of this favour was Shams-ud-din Atka Khan, husband of Jiji Anaga being made the Prime Minister after the fall of Bairam Khan (Badaoni, II, P.49; Augustus, I, p.94).
97 Tuzuk, I, pp.78, 84-85; Rukkat, (Bilmoria), pp.30,173.
Jahangir was equally respectful towards his mother. Lunar and Solar weighing of the Emperor and many royal marriages took place in her palace. 98 During important festivals, the Emperor visited her palace to pay his respect. Hawkins mentioned about one of such visits during Nauroz when each of the nobles accompanying the Emperor presented her a jewel according to his respective estate. 99 He had such great reverence for his mother that in order to perform kornish, sijdah, and taslim to her he travelled all the way to Dahr (near Lahore) where she was staying. 100 Such was his regard for mothers that when once Pahar, son of Ghaznin Khan, killed his mother because she had prevented him from evil doings, Jahangir punished him to death. 101 Prince Muhammad Azam, son of Aurangzeb, also had great regard for his mother. 102

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

98 Tuzuk, I, pp. 81, 145.
100 Tuzuk, I, p. 76. See also Randhawa, M. S., Indian Miniature Painting, pl. 4 (painting showing Jahangir paying respect to his mother).
101 Tuzuk, I, p. 353.
Javed Khan. 103 Still, she was most revered by her son. She was *de facto* administrator of his empire. It is reported that during the Maratha attack on the imperial camp, while running away from Sikandarbad, Ahmad Shah took along with him his mother besides his son Mahmud Shah, favourite wife Inayetpuri Bai and half sister Sahiba Begam, leaving all other queens and princesses at the mercy of his enemies. 104

The Mughal mothers played important role as mediators also. Some of them who took an active part in the administration of the empire were Qutlugh Nigar Khanam, Maham Begam, Hamida Banu, Salima Sultan Begam, Mahchuchak Begam, Udaipuri Mahal, Sahiba Nishwan and Udham Bai. 105

The universal respect given to the mothers has also been confirmed by Badaoni. He himself availed of the services of his mother once in an effort to settle his differences with Muqarrab Khan, a chief of the *amirs* of the Deccan. 106

**FEMALE RELATIONS**

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

103 Tarikh-i-Ahmad-Shah, (Tr.), pp.113-14; Sarkar, *Fall*, I, pp.209-10.
105 For detail see Chapter V.
107 *The Qoran*, 16:90.

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

The position of female relations became much better
under the Mughals. Babur's respect for his grand mother
Ehsan Daulat Begam, sister Khanzada Begam and for his aunts
is abundantly testified in Babur Nama, Humayun Nama
and Tarikh-i-Rashidi. After the conquest of north India he
invited his aunts, begams and khanams from Kabul to
Agra. In all, ninety six of them arrived and all were given
presents. A comfortable living was arranged for them. Babur
himself visited them on every Friday and continued to do so
even after Maham’s forbidding because of hot season. 108

Mrs. Beveridge observed, "Apropos of the aunts of frequent
mention, it may be said that both Babur and Haider (Mirza
Haider) convey the opinion that deference to elder women was

108 GHN, pp.97-98, also pp.89, 100-01, 103 (for Babur's
daily visits to the house of his aunts at Kabul and his
coming bare-foot to receive Maham Begam and his
"honourable reception" to Khanzada Begam, both ladies
returning from Kabul at two different occasions); Mirza
Haider, (Tr.), p.200 (for description of Babur's warm
meeting with his maternal aunt Mihr Nigar Khanam) and
p.196 (for Babur's welcome to his lady-relations
inspite of his mourning at his mother's death); A.N.,
(Bev.), I, pp.230-33 (for Babur's pardon to rebel Khan
Mirza at the intercession of Mihr Nigar Khanam).
a permanent trait of their age and set." 109

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

109 GHN, Tr. note, p.20.
110 Ibid., pp. 104, 110-11.
111 Ibid., pp.110, 130-31.
112 Tuzuk, II, p.91, also I, p.36.
113 For details of their role see Chapters V & VI. Also for Jahanara's burns, see Sarkar, J.N., History of Aurangzib, I, pp.39-41. Hereafter cited as Aurangzib.
114 Hamid-ud-din, pp.97-98.
prevalent in the neighbouring country. Thevenot found that the King of Persia killed his grand-mother because she opposed the occupation of Qandhar from the Mughals during the time of Shah Jahan. Mughal women never faced such brutality.\textsuperscript{115}

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

The observance of these ethical principles did not change in Muslim households, in general. Muslim homes remained the abodes of love and regards for the elders and ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~\textsuperscript{115} Thevenot, pp.78-79.\textsuperscript{116} Manucci, II, pp.330-31.\textsuperscript{117} Sarkar, \textit{Fall}, II, pp.209-10.
other female relations .118

TREATMENT TO WIDOWS

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

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

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

119 For details, see Chap. I.

120 Tripathi , R.P. ,Some Aspect of Muslim Administration, pp.244 , 249-50. In this system, the *iqtas* were generally given to the military men for a number of years or for the life time of the grantee who was expected to collect the revenue and after deducting from it the amount granted to him, he was to remit the balance to the Central Govt. As such, the *iqta* holder tried to conceal his real income from his *iqta* which led to a constant tussle between him and the Central Govt. It was to curb such practices and also realizing that the system had out-lived its utility that Balban reduced and resumed many of them from which full or proper service was not forth coming (Ibid. , pp.244-46; Nizami , K. A. , Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During the Thirteenth Century, pp.128-32 (hereafter cited as Religion and Politics); Habib, Irfan, " Agrarian Economy", ed. Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, The Cambridge Economic History of India ,I , pp. 68-75.
Balban's consideration for them could be gauged from his judgement against one of his slaves Haibat Khan, who had murdered the husband of a woman. Visualizing the intense grief of the lady, the Sultan handed over the murderer to her, of course after giving five hundred lashes, to stab him with her own hands. The lady forgave the slave but felt redeemed at heart for having received the justice. 121

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

121 Barani, (Text), pp.40-41.
122 Law, N.N., Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammedan Rule, p.45.
123 Ibn-Batuta, p.140.
124 Moinul Haq, S., Barani's History of the Tughlugs, p.98.
125 Barani, Fatawa-i-Jahandari, (Tr.), p.6.
During the reign of the Mughals, efforts to help the widows continued. Jahangir established a fund for helping the widows. Aurangzeb maintained separate palaces for them known as sahagpura. These measures made widowhood less painful.

SATI AND JAUHAR

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

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

Price, p. 106. See also Tuzuk, 1, P.172 (for Jahangir's help to a widow whose daughter had been forcibly taken away by one of the attendants of Muqarrab Khan, a mansabdar at Cambay).

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

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

101
Since it was related with the single-minded devotion of the lady towards her husband, even poets like Amir Khusrau praised it and suggested that if his religion permitted this, then many of his co-religionists would die eagerly in that manner. When a rebel Ain-ul-Molk was rumoured to have been killed, his wife refused to save her life by running away along with her other relations. She showed her inclination to be burnt alive like a Hindu widow in case his death was confirmed. During the reign of Jahangir, The Muslim population of Rajaur, converts from Hindus, were practising it in their own novel way. They, instead of burning the widows, buried them alive along with the bodies of their deceased husbands. Jahangir recorded, "I heard that recently they (the people of Rajaur) put alive into the grave a girl of ten or twelve along with her (dead) husband, who was of the same age." Such novel burial continued even thereafter. However, the practice didn't become popular among the Muslims and it remained limited only to those who had

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

131 Ibn Batuta, p. 109.

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

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

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a Hindu origin or who lived in Hindu environment.

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

134 Sharafu-d-din Yazdi, Zafar Nama, (Tr.), p.495.
135 GHN, p.143.
136 Mirza Nathan, I, pp.141, 193, 440. See also II, pp. 596, 599 in this regard.
137 Ibid., II, pp. 594-95.
138 Yasin, (p.90), is of the view that jauhar was frequently resorted to by the Muslims as the last weapon to save the honour of their family. However, since there are not very many references of Muslim ladies undergoing it as those of the Rajput ladies in the contemporary works, it appears that though having an impact, yet, it was not very popular when they considered the shedding of female blood a heinous crime.
POSTHUMOUS CEREMONIES

A look at the ceremonies for the dead brings to light the discrimination made in their observance with regard to women. The Qoran provided for similar funeral and after-death rites for both, men and women. Similar prayers were recited for both at the time of laying the body to rest in the grave and then similarity observed in the rituals that followed. One of the important ceremonies, for instance was *siyum* or the ceremony of the third day or the *phool* ceremony. On this day, the friends and relatives gathered at the grave of the dead to recite the Qoran for the benefit of the departed soul. Ibn Batuta narrated in detail as to how this ceremony was performed for his deceased daughter. A large gathering collected at her grave, the Holy Qoran was read, flowers, dry fruits, coconut and a cloth were placed upon her grave and all the mourners were served with sugar-candy drinks and betel leaves thereafter besides being sprinkled with rose water.

With the passage of time and the fall in the status of women, some of the ceremonies for them were dropped. Manucci has narrated, "In the case of women they do not call out the commendations to Muhammad as is done for men, for they declare that women have no entry into heaven." This social discrimination against women was against the Qoranic promise

140 Ibn Batuta, pp.120-21.
141 Manucci, III, p.145.
of equal treatment for both the sexes with regard to reward and punishment. Apparently the status of women in society had declined.

**FEMALE SLAVES**

A large number of slaves and maids existed in medieval society. The slave-girls were called bandis or khawas or paristar. They were treated like commodities. They were purchased and sold in the market; their price varied according to their physique, personal charm and sensual appeal. There were markets for them in India and other countries like China, Persia, Turkistan, Moka and Arabia. During Ala-ud-din Khalji's time, they had fixed prices in the market. The price of an ordinary working female slave ranged from 5 to twelve tankas and for a charming beauty between twenty to forty tankas. Their prices couldn't be bargained nor could they be

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142 Ala-ud-din alone had 50 thousand slaves. Muhammad bin Tughlaq had so many that as per Ibn Batuta, he set apart three days of the week during *id* celebrations to manumit some of them and to get them married. As per Afif, he kept a day of the week for this purpose. During the time of Firoz Tughlaq, their number had risen to 1.8 lac (Afif, (Text), pp 267-73); Ibn Batuta, p.63. Also see Jauhri, pp.126-28; Ashraf, pp.58-59.


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

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

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

146 Barani, (Text), p. 314.
147 Umari, (Rizvi, TKB, I), p. 325; Abu Al Abbas Qalqashandi, Subh al Asha, (Tr.), pp. 55-56. See also Ibn Batuta, p. 123. He informed about the general low price of the slave-girls.
148 Ibn Batuta, pp. 63, 123; Barani, (Text), p. 322; Sikander, (Tr.), p. 272 (narrated how Hoshang, the Sultan of Malwa captured slaves and slave-girls after his victory over Sultan of Sonkhera); GN, pp. 94-95 (Babur's capture and distribution of Ibrahim Lodi's harem).
149 A.N.,(Bev.), II, pp. 246-47.
150 Ain., I, p. 45; Tuzuk, I, pp. 82, 87, 160; Aurangzib, I, p. 133.
of Ganna Begam. She was an accomplished poetess and exemplary beauty. Her hand was sought by the highest of nobles like Shuja-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Bengal and Imad-ul-Mulk, the imperial Wazir. When she was on her way to get married to Shuja, she was surrounded by a contingent of Jawahar Singh Jat. Some how she escaped capture. Thereafter, her mother married her to Imad-ul-Mulk. Her marriage offended Mughlani Begam whose daughter Umda Begam had been betrothed to Imad-ul-Mulk in her childhood. When Abdali captured Delhi in 1757 A.D., Mughlani Begam, being in Abdali’s good books, ensured that Imad-ul-Mulk married Umda Begam and forced Ganna Begam to serve as a bond-maid to her for the rest of her life. The poignancy of this lady has been vividly engraved in the epitaph on her grave which reads "Ah, Gham-i-Ganna Begam" (Alas! weep for Ganna Begam).151

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

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

152 Ibn Batuta, pp. 63, 73, 122-23, 150; GHN, pp. 94-95.
153 Hamid-ud-din, pp. 36-38.
154 Pelsaert, p. 47; Bernier, p. 205; Manrique, II, p. 272.
place within the jurisdiction of a Jagirdar or a Faujdar, he was required either to trace out the culprit and recover the loot or compensate for the loss himself. It was under this pretext that these officials sacked any village they chose. They killed the men-folk and carried away their women and children whom they sold as slaves. 155

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

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

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


158 GHN, p. 112.

159 Qanungo, Sher Shah, p.13.
Emperor's maternal uncle, and Udaipuri Mahal was his slave-girl turned concubine.  

THE PROSTITUTES

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

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

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

162 Ferishta, I, pp. 204-05.

163 Nizami (ed.), I, pp. 82-83.
licentiousness." Abdur Razzaq, who visited Bijapur in the middle of fifteenth century, intimated about the presence of brothels in the form of a bazar in that city.

By the time of Akbar, their number had risen to such an extent that it was difficult to count them. Their number continued to increase and by the end of seventeenth century, in the city of Lahore alone, six thousand houses were occupied by the public women. During the time of later Mughals, it became a fashion to patronize a prostitute. The literary writings of the time make frequent references to prostitution, thus showing the popularity this institution had gained in the society.

The financial consideration was the major factor for women joining prostitution. Those having lost their modesty while their husbands were alive were forced to join this profession for their maintenance. In second half of the seventeenth century, some of the provincial Governors also forced a few of the unmarried ladies, both Hindus and Muslims, to become courtesans.

164 Nicoli Conti, p.23.
165 Abdur Razzaq, Mat-la-us-Sadain, pp.111-12.
166 Badaoni, II, p.311.
168 Lal, Harem, p. 198.
169 Jayasi, Padmavat, Khand 2, Chhanda 38, pp. 44-45; Rahim, Rahim Bilas, Doha 81, p.35 and Ratnavali, Doha 81, p.34.
170 Manucci, III, p. 57. He mentioned this in connection with the Hindu women. But, it was equally true of Muslim women too.
Muslims, to join prostitution and live along with the other public women in areas earmarked for them. 171

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

171 Bowrey, p. 206.
172 Barani, Fatawa-i-Jahandari, (Tr.), p.138 (he wrote that Sayyid Nur-ud-din Mubarak Shah, a saint of the time of Ilutmish, considered prostitution necessary in order to save the modesty of pious women, but, he wanted that such women should carry on their trade in a quiet and subdued manner); Amir Khusrau, likewise, considered it essential for the diversion of youth and the soldiers (Qiran-us-Sadain, p.107). But, being averse to them, he treated prostitute Bibi Tabha very shabbily. She was made to sit on an ass and was taken around the city to see whether any body claimed her and when none came forward, he took her finally to the Hakim for necessary punishment. He also showed his surprise as to why these ladies were not satisfied with one man and preferred to be the favourite of the masses (Ijaz-i-Khusravi, V, pp.151-52). See also Umari, (S&A), p.67 (for their seclusion from family. They needed to be officially registered).
173 Terry, p.320; Thevenot, p.136; Stavorinus, I,p.409.
whole society suffered fall in moral values resulting in an increase in demand of such women. Ferishta wrote:

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

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

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

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174 Ferishta, I, p.152.

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

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

177 Ferishta, I,pp.204-05; see also Lal, K.S., History of the Khaliis, p.264, n.15 (hereafter cited as Khaliis). He disbelieved the division of prostitutes into categories.
public women to get married within a fixed period. 178

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

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

178 Amir Khusrau, Khazain-ul-Futuh, p.11; also Ashraf, p.265.
179 Iljaz-i-Khusravi, IV, p.206.
180 Badaoni, II, pp.311-12.
But this order was also not very effective. \(^{181}\) So he issued another order and asked the censors to check this flesh trade. \(^{182}\) These measures did seem to have an immediate impact. Manucci testified:

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

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

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

During the time of Iltutmish, a prostitute named Gauhar, at the instigation of conspirator Nizam-ud-din Sughra who held the post of *Shaikh-ul-islam*, charged Shaikh Jalal-ud-din Tabrizi, Sufi saint of repute, of adultery. Luckily, the conspiracy failed. \(^{186}\) Describing about the prostitutes of Jaunpur, poet Vidyapati wrote that they flocked the market

\(^{181}\) Manucci, II, pp.3-6; Norris, p.149; M.A., (Tr.), p.45.
\(^{183}\) Manucci, II, pp.5-6.
\(^{184}\) Ovington, I,p.63; Norris, pp.149-50.
\(^{185}\) *Ijaz-i-Khusrawi*, V,p.130; Umari, (S&A), p.67.
\(^{186}\) Religion and Politics, pp.163-64 on the authority of Sivar-ul-Arifin, pp.167-69.
and openly induced young damsels to join their trade. 187

According to him:

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

DANCERS AND SINGERS

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

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

Lajja kitim kapat taruna
Dhan nimitte daahae prem,
Lobhe binaa saubbage kaman
Sini svami sindur para parichaya apaman.

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

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

190 Ashraf, pp.222,245-46. Also see Abbas, (Amb.), p.445 (for Afghan dances on the eve of coronation of Sher Shah, also Tr. Imamuddin, (p.104, n.2) Surmised this to be *Khatak* dance of the Afghans).
independent profession. The scope of the development of art of these ladies and also their material gains depended mainly on the patronage of the upper class.

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

191 Ain., III, pp.271-73; Mundy, II, p.216; Pelsaert, p. 83.
192 Hasht Bahlsht, p.34; Ibn Batuta, pp.78-79; Abbas, (Amb.), pp.723-24; B.N. (Bev.), II, p.634; T.A., (De), I, P.73; Ain., III, pp.272-73; Downton, pp.53-54; Finch, ed. W. Foster, p.183; Manrique, I, p.161; Thevenot, pp.33,67; Stavorinus, I, p.437. For paintings, see Ibn Batuta, facing p.56; Harem, PIs.7,8,12,VI; Devee, Maharani Sunity, The Beautiful Mughal Princesses, facing p.2 (showing a slave-girl playing on violin while the queen is engrossed in this), also painting facing p.94; Brown, Percy, Indian Paintings under the Mughals, pls. XXXI, XLVII,LVII, fig. I; Godden, Rumer, Gulbadan - Portrait of a Rose Princess at the Mughal Court, p.47.; Randhava, Pl.26 (Faizabad painting showing women amusing themselves with music and dance). See also Rashid, pp. 115-21; Prasad, Ishwari, A History of the Qaraunah Turks in India, I, p.309 (hereafter cited as Qaraunah Turks); Banerjee, J.M., History of Firuz Shah Tughlaq, p.167.
194 Kanchani was the name given to them by Akbar (Ain., III, p.272). It is derived from the word kanchan i.e. 'a dancing girl'. See also Crooke, W., The Tribes and Castes of the North Western Provinces and Oudh, IV, p.364 for the Kanchan caste.
respectable class, who attended the grand wedding of omrahs and mansabdars for the purpose of singing and dancing. Most of these kanchanis were beautiful and well-dressed and sang to perfection; and their limbs being extremely supple, they danced with wonderful ability and were always correct with regard to time. 195 During Shah Jahan's reign, these kanchanis were under obligation to visit the court twice a week in order to give their scintillating performance and when they came, the Emperor kept them in the palace for the whole night for amusement. 196 The dancing girls were also patronized by the princes and nobles. 197 Aurangzeb had a secret liking for them. This is revealed from the special names that he conferred on such ladies in the harem. 198 Aurangzeb's infatuation for a dancing girl Zainabadi is well known. He is reported to have agreed to have a cup of wine at her asking which she offered to test his love for her. 199

The sway of these ladies reached its zenith during the


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

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


199 M.U., I, pp.806-07.
reign of later Mughals. Lai Kanwar, a dancing girl turned wife of Emperor Jahandar Shah is well known. So much was her influence that the locality of her birth was named Lal Kuan; Qila-i-Mubarak, Qila-i-Mualla or Qila-i-Shahjahanbad came to be called Lal-Qila; her mosque as Lal Masjid and her burial place as Lal Bangla. The contemporary Dargah Quli Khan has identified nineteen prominent women artists in dance and music of Emperor Muhammad Shah's time like Khushali Ram Jani, Behnai-Feel Sawar, Ad Begam, Chamani, Saras Roop, Nur Bai, Chakmak Dahni, Kali Ganga, Zeenat, Gulab, Razmani, Rehman Bai, Panna Bai, Kamal Bai, Uma Bai, Panna and Tanu. Out of them, Nur Bai, Chamani, Chakmak, Kamal Bai and Panna were Favourites of Muhammad Shah and enjoyed his patronage. Except a few nobles like Murshid Quli Jafar Khan, Alivardi Khan and Safdar Jang, none could escape their evil influence. Professionally, such ladies received a great boost but morally, they stooped to the lowest ebb.

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

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

WOMEN AND MORALITY

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

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

203 Matla-ul-Anwar, p.231.
204 Manucci, I,p.192-93. See also Iqbal Nama, pp.7-9 for other examples of the time of Farrukhsiyar's reign.
her husband returned, a neighbour narrated the true story to him. The husband, pretending that some treasure was buried by him inside the house, wanted to open the grave to know the truth. The lady became sceptical. She asked him to bring the digging instrument from inside the room and when he went in, she closed the door from outside and put the house on fire burning her husband also alive. The lady was ultimately given death penalty by the Qazi for the triple murder. 205

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

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

206 Ibn Batuta, pp. 164-65 and n. 5. Kaftar literally means a hyena who digs up and devours. Hence, this metaphoric expression was used for such ladies. It was believed that if the chest of a person dying at their mere look was cut, one would find the heart missing. They believed that it was eaten up by the enchanter/enchantress. He also narrated an incident of a child killed by a kaftar. Though he did not specify the religion of these kaftars, however, the fact that Muslims also learnt this art leads to the conjecture that some of those kaftars must be out of the Muslim community.
beauty and tricks but even put the nooses around the necks of their preys themselves.\textsuperscript{207}

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

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

\textsuperscript{208} Matla-ul-Anwar, pp.194,226; Nuh-Sipihr, VII, p.379.

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

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

\textsuperscript{211} Fatawa-i-Jahandari, p.59.
night when all lights were extinguished. During the Mughal period, with the moral values falling still further, the social evil of adultery spread unabated and the administrative efforts also could not contain it. Jahangir, therefore, openly expressed his doubts about the fidelity of the Muslim women and the contemporary European travellers corroborated his view.

GENERAL SOCIAL ATTITUDE

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

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

213 Thevenot, p.95. See also Badaoni, II,p.59: Rivazu-s-Salatin,p.284.

214 Tuzuk, I,p.150; Thevenot, p.66; Ovington, I,p.93.
The women were totally dependent on their men-folk and considered them their saviours. Men looked upon their women as the honour of the house and considered it their moral duty to safeguard them. It is understandable, in this context, why Babur condemned Ghazi Khan of Milwat for becoming fugitive after leaving his women-folk at the mercy of his enemy.215 Similarly the nobles of Humayun pleaded strict punishment for Kamran, who was notorious for defiling women, and they wanted that a check should be put on this so as to ensure security to their women.216 One of the reasons why Mahmud Shah bin Nasir Shah (1511–1531 A.D.), Sultan of Malwa, dismissed his Rajput minister Medini Rai was that the latter forcibly took away Muslim women and made them slaves and dancing girls. Ultimately, he had to seek pardon. He was ordered to free Muslim women and not to be cruel to them in future.217 Even conversion of a Muslim lady was taken as an attack on the honour of the Muslims and was dealt with severely by the rulers.218 There are instances where

216 GHN, pp.200-01.
218 It is reported that during Jahangir's time, death punishment was given for taking a Muslim girl in marriage to a Hindu though Hindu girls could be married by Muslim youths (Haig, IV,p.181). Also, one of the reasons for Shah Jahan's action against Portuguese in 1629 A.D. was reported to be an incident wherein a Portuguese attacked a Mughal lady near Dacca whom he first baptized and then married. (Ibid.,p.191;Saksena,B.P.,History of Shahjahan of Dihli,pp.105-06).
community as a whole rose against the disrespect shown to a single Muslim lady of their race. It is known that Mubarak Khan, a nephew of Sher Shah and Governor of Roh, fell for the beautiful daughter of one Alahdad Sambal and wanted to marry her. But her father declined the proposal under the excuse of difference in their social standards. He was of pure race and would not marry his daughter to Mubarak Khan, a son of a slave-girl. In his frustration, the latter perpetrated atrocities on the Sambalis, pillaged their villages and took away the daughter of one Khairo, the Kotwal among the Sambalis, to his house. The Sambalis collectively turned to the Governor and asked him to return the girl or face the consequences. They declared, "If you will turn your eye towards our women, we will kill you and in return for atoning your murder, Ser (Sher) Khan will slay some of the chiefs of the Sambalis to the utmost." And they did kill him, though, in retaliation, the forces of Sher Shah slew most of their men. There was a similar rising when Masud, minister-regent (1673-83 A.D.), betrothed Shahr Banu (Padishah Bibi), the sister of infant Sultan Adil Shah of Bijapur, to prince Azam in order to buy peace from the Mughals. It was only after promising that this clause would not be observed that Masud could pacify the uprising. The honour of the women was such a sensitive matter and so sure was it to arouse the Muslim feelings that many of the opportunist Kings frequently

220 Haig, IV, pp. 274, 277.

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took the pretext of saving the honour of Muslim women so as to justify their attacks on others' territories or other political moves.\textsuperscript{221}

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

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

\textsuperscript{222} \textit{Rivazu-s-Salatin}, p.83; \textit{Ferishta}, I, pp.147-48 (for Balban's capture and torture of women and children of adherents of rebel noble Tughral of Lakhnauti whom he wanted to chastise); Sirhindi, pp.86-87 (how after murdering Sultan Qutb-ud-din Mubarak Shah, Khusrau Khan humiliated his women by marrying his widow himself and distributing the rest among his nobles, \textit{Patwaris} and Hindus), also p.119 (how Muhammad bin Tughlaq tortured women and children of those victims whom he punished illegally or otherwise); Ibn Batuta, pp.227-28 (for atrocities of Ghaus-ud-din, the King of Mabar on the wives of his opponent); \textit{A.N.}, (Bev.), I, pp.509-10 (for atrocities of Kamran on the women of Humayun's supporters). Among foreign invaders, for cruelty of Timur (Timur, \textit{Malfuzat-i-Timuri}, (Tr.), pp.405, 425-28 ; \textit{Zafar Nama}, (Tr.), pp.503-04) ; for Nadir Shah (\textit{Sirar}, (N.M.), I, 316, also (Briggs), p.285 ; Irvine, \textit{Later Mughals}, IT, pp.367,369). For Ahmad Shah Abdali (Sarkar, \textit{Fall}, II, pp.69-73, 83-84, 86-87, 89-90).
can be judged from the condition of Hazrat Begam. She was the maiden daughter of Emperor Muhammad Shah and had rejected the offer of marriage to Emperor Alamgir II. She was captured by Abdali and was forced to marry him. Abdali was "of grand-fatherly age, whose two ears had been docked and nose was rotting from a leprous carbuncle." 223

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

223 Sarkar, Fall, II, p. 89.
225 Qanungo, Sher Shah, pp. 53-54. Sher Shah also didn't allow his son Jalal Khan to mis-behave with Mihr Sultan who refused to marry her daughter to him inspite of the latter's desire. (Abbas, (Amb.), pp. 254-55).
women of Humayun’s camp is seen as a token of his highest regard for womanhood. Emperor Akbar, Alivardi Khan and Husain Ali Khan, one of the Sayyid brothers, are some other examples of such persons. 226 There were Kings like Bahlol Lodi, Jahangir and Shah Jahan who paid greatest regards to their wives. Among the general public also, there were some examples of good behaviour towards women. Ovington has narrated the story of a Muslim porter who was employed in the English factory at Surat. He asked for leave and some money from his employer every Thursday so that he could go to his wife and show his love and kindness towards her by taking some gifts for her. 227 However, women, in general, were considered synonymous with cowardice, inaction, incapability, helplessness, short-sightedness and instruments of sensuality. 228

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

227 Ovington, I, p.175.

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