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Contribution of Mughal Ladies towards the Development of Persian Culture as Depicted in Tuzk-i-Jahangiri

Abstract: This paper aims at highlighting the role of royal Mughal ladies in the formation of composite culture in India with reference to Tuzk- I -Jahangir (memoirs of Emperor Jahangir).It mainly focuses on identifying some unique talents of these ladies mentioned in it that ultimately added to the development of Persian culture in India. It also analyses abilities and important contributions of Nur jahan in the field of Persian art, architecture, culture, and civilization and their demonstration in Jahangir's memoirs.

Key words: Royal Mughal ladies, Tuzk-i-Jahangiri, composite culture, unique talents, Nur Jahan, Persian art and culture.

INTRODUCTION: Mughal period in India justifiably, in terms of promotion of Persian language, literature, art, culture and civilization has been termed as the golden period by many reputed historians. Dickie in his book

writes, "Mughals were persianised Turks originated from Central Asia and bring Persian culture to India." (Dickie 1985, 128-137) Successors of Babur were inclined towards the same and continued to patronize Persian culture. The Mughal ladies were as remarkable as their male counterparts. They were educated and true patrons of art, culture and literature. There are numerous chronicles and historical accounts which illustrates the contribution of Mughal ladies in the field of art, architecture, culture, language and literature. Of which Tuzk-i-Jahangiri (memoirs of Emperor Jahangir) is one important, authentic and primary source of information. Jahangir in his memoirs has often recorded and appreciated the abilities and contribution of some of the ladies during his reign. Which include Asmat Begum, Shahr Banu Begum, saleema Begum, and of course Nur Jahan.

Status of Women as illustrated in Tuzk-i-Jahangiri:

All the imperial memoirs and historical accounts of Mughal dynasty has provided detailed accounts of their women which denotes that Mughal culture celebrated, honored, and protected its women. Analyzing Tuzk-i-Jahangiri, we find various instances to justify this statement.

Jahangir often notes his attendance on his mother in her palace or a garden. He frequently held his lunar and solar birthday weightings at her house. From which the proceeds would be passed out along the company of palace women. (Jahangir I, p131, 145). Jahangir has frequently narrated the events regarding the women of his family. He

reports the birth of a girl child enthusiastically and death with true sorrow. (Jahangir I p303) Jahangir not only imparted dignity to women in his memoirs but also records some regulations made by him to meliorate the position of women in society. He abhorred Sati(burning of wife along with his deceased husband) as he did the practice of female infanticide and forbade them under penalty of capital punishment.(Jahangir II p181)

Likewise many other records of such nature can be traced in Tuzk-i-Jahangiri which paraphrases the respectful behavior of men towards women folk and denotes honorary position of women during Mughal regime in India.

Contribution of Women as narrated in Tuzk-i-Jahangiri:

Tuzk-i-Jahangiri like other accounts and memoirs of noble administrative officials also contains some information about some women of Jahangir's life from which one can estimate the contribution of ladies during Jahangir's reign.

One of the prominent women of Jahangir's reign was Asmat Begum. She was the wife of I'timadu-d-Daulah and mother of Nur jahan. She held an influential and high place among Harem. Jahangir was very fond of her. She was the originator of one of the notable inventions of Jahangir's reign called "Itr-I-Jahangiri" a perfume. Jahangir not only liked it but also bestowed the originator with a rosary of pearls. He describes the procedure of preparing this perfume and then praises this aromatic invention of Asmat

Begum in his memoirs.(Jahangir I p252) Jahangir further writes that the name "Itr-I-Jahangiri" was given to this oil by another reputed women of the Harem "Salima Sultan Begum". She was the granddaughter of Babur and wife of Akbar. She is said to be the poetess but only single verse of her could be traced in biographies of Mughal dynasty

کاکلت را من ز مستی رشته جان گفته ام

(Ibadat,1971).مست بودم زین سبب حرف پریشان گفته ام

Besides this Mughal ladies have always been applauded and appreciated throughout the world for their architectural accomplishments. Though they were not satisfied with just building beautiful monuments but were also fond of laying exotic gardens. Some gardens were documented by Jahangir in his book. He writes how he walked through the seven gardens of Kabul and some of them were laid down by ladies. He writes the names of these gardens and praises the women and their creativity.(Jahangir I, p101).Most of the Mughal gardens had Chahar Bagh layout which was originally inspired from Iran (Gilliat ray & Byran 2010). Chahar bagh is an Islamic quadrilateral garden layout. They made the gardens in the style that represents Central Asian, Persian and Turkish style of gardens.

Contribution of Nur Jahan:

Another reputed and most influential woman of Jahangir's reign was Nur Jahan. Born as Mehr-un-Nisa in 1577 A.D to the parents Ghias beigh and Asmat Begum at Kandhar. She was well learned and embodiment of wisdom. She excelled

in different kind of arts and languages. It is needless to say of her political and literary acumen as there is ample evidence in many historical accounts of her valuable contribution. Most historians have recorded her mastery in intuitive poetry, philanthropic activities, political acumen and gallantry. Despite being so popular and contiguous of Jahangir, it is very astounding that he has not delineated her attributes in his memoirs justifiably. Rather than Jahangir other historians have thrown light on her contribution and peculiarities in a par excellence manner. Abdul Majeed Salik in his book describes her contribution to the culture and civilization, his innovation in women's dress, ornaments and cosmetics. (Abdul Majeed 1989, p333) . Ellison Findly writes about her contribution to the Mughlai cuisine. (Findly 1993, p221). Likewise contribution of Nur Jahan in different fields is so inordinate and commendable that the chronicle of Mughal dynasty is full of her legends. Having Central Asian ancestry, Nur Jahan adjoined the culture of Persia with the culture of India.

Jahangir, in his book, has mentioned her name few times but seems to be praising her hunting and decorative skills only. Jahangir records an event of hunting, where Nur jahan hunted 4 tigers in six shots that from the top of an elephant and inside of a howdah. From here after he elaborates the whole event and writes a verse about her accomplishment that a poet intuitively said.

نور جهان گر چه به صورت زن است

در وصف مردان زن شیر افگن است (Jahangir, 2017. p 219)

“Despite being a woman Nur Jahan has the attributes of gallant men”

Jahangir in Tuzk-i-Jahangiri often narrates about the zestful feasts organized by Nur Jahan. He has repeatedly praised the decorating skills of her. During the twelfth year of his reign, a feast was organized by Nur Jahan, Jahangir describes its splendor in his book with great enthusiasm.(Jahangir I, p358). Which not just portray the magnificent decorating skills of Nur Jahan but also show Jahangir’s fondness of it.

Conclusion:

Analyzing Tuzk-i-Jahangiri ,we can conclude that Mughal age saw substantial development in field of Persian culture where ladies contributed considerably.

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Contents:

- ⚙ An Analysis of Persian Influences Dr. Begum Ayesha
on Bengali Language Sultana Laskar
- ⚙ Dara Shikoh and His Comparative Dr. Mohsin Ali
Hermeneutics of Islam and
Hinduism
- ⚙ Sadiq Hedayat: An Analytical Asif Iqbal
Study of Parvin Dokhtar-e-Sassan
- ⚙ Contribution of Mughal Ladies Syed Shafi
towards the Development of
Persian Culture as Depicted in
Tuzk-i-Jahangiri

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