

CONTRIBUTION OF NOOR JAHAN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUGHAL CULTURE

Rinki Agarwal^{1}, Rajeev Kumar Singh², Lalit Kumar Singh³*

¹Assistant Professor, Department of History, Government College, Gonda, Aligarh

²Assistant Professor, Department of History, Shri Ji Baba Institute, Mathura

³Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Government Degree College, Gonda, Aligarh

***Corresponding Author:** Dr. Rinki Agarwal, Department of History, Government College, Gonda, Aligarh, Uttar

Pradesh. E-mail: rinkiagarwal@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Nur (Noor)Jahan was one of the most influential women of her day. As favorite wife of the powerful Mughal emperor Jahangir, she found herself uniquely positioned to brilliantly utilize her skills in administration, politics, economics, and culture.

Key words: Contribution, Noor Jahan, Mughal, Culture, Development.

INTRODUCTION

Mehrunnisa was the daughter of a Persian fortune seeker - Mirza Ghias Beg, who was a commander of the emperor, and a powerful minister in the reign of Jahangir. She was 20th wife of the emperor. Noor Jahan was really responsible to the ascendance of Shah Jahan to the Mughal Throne. She was a clever politician, a good architect and a nature loving lady.

She devoted her last years of life to the building of some famous Mughal tombs and making scent by rose flowers. She learnt this art from her mother. She even gave

audience in her palace where she used to discuss the financial matters and strategies with the ministers of Mughal court.

Jahangir himself permitted coinage to be struck in her name. She was really the developer of Mughal culture and Mughal architecture. For the rise from an immigrant to become an Empress of the great Mughal Empire, Noor Jahan was one of the most influential women of her era.

METHODOLOGY

The historical research method is adopted for this study. The historical method is the induction of principles through research into the past social forces and influences which have shaped the present.

Access this article online

Quick Response Code:



www.oijms.org.in

RESULTS

Contribution of Noor Jahan (Mehrunnisa)

Empress of Mughal India, brilliant political and military strategist, architect, and diplomat, who had absolute control in the Mughal court.¹ Name variations: Noor Jahan or Jehan; NurMahal or Nourmahal; Mehr-on-Nesa, Mehrunnisa, Mehr-un-nisa, Mihm-un-Nisa, Mehrunissa, or Mehrunnisa. Born Mehrunnisa in 1577 in Qandahar, Persia (Iran); died in 1645 in Lahore, India (now in Pakistan); daughter of MirzaGhiyas Beg (a literary artist in Tehran) and Asmat Begum; educated by private tutors; studied Persian culture and language as well as tradition and languages of adopted country, India; married Ali Quli (Sher Afghan or Afkun), in 1594 (died 1607); married Prince Salim (1569–1627), later Jahangir, 4th Mughal emperor of India (r. 1605–1627), in 1611; children: (first marriage) Ladili Begum or Ladli Begum.

NurJahan's story is one of political dexterity, military competence, and cultural achievements. As cultural manifestations change, her legend has reached mythological proportions; some of the reality of her life remains shrouded in **mystery.**"

There is no denying, however, that NurJahan, as the wife of Emperor Jahangir and de facto ruler of India, made important contributions to the history of the Mughal Empire in India, working the social and cultural conventions to her advantage and taking the Mughal Empire to greater **heights.**"²

In the process of her political maneuvering, she retained her integrity, and that of the house of the Mughals, and thus she has won considerable esteem and admiration.

NurJahan became empress when the Mughals had already successfully branded Hindustan (India) with their particular seal.

India had been unified, a successful socio-political and cultural system set in place, a rich and profitable trade established. The Mughal court became the envy of all Asia and Europe. Despite the riches and fame of the Mughal royalty, the women of the imperial household were bound to the purdahsystem in keeping with the injunctions of Islam. Their identity and self extended no further than the guarded gates of the palace harem. They were seldom seen and never heard. Given this scenario, NurJahan's high profile during her husband's reign becomes even more remarkable. She broke away from the conventions and participated fully in the empire's administration.

She had traveled a long road to become the empress of Hindustan. Being a loving wife, she did care her husband very much. That's why Jahangir gave her the title of NurJahan in accordance with his name Nur-ud-din Jahangir.

Stanley Lane-Poole³ writes **"in History of India, great was the influence of this Persian princess that Jahangir joined her name with his on the coinage, a conjunction unparalleled in the history of Mohammedan numismatics. The wording on the coins, in Persian is worth quoting: Ba Hukm Shah Jahangir yaft sad zewer, / Banam Noor JahanBadshah Begum zarâ€ (By the order of Jahangir, gold attained a hundred times its beauty when the name of NurJahan, the First Lady of the court was impressed upon it)."**

Bani Prasad⁴, P.N. Chopra⁵, R.P. Tripathi⁶, R.K. Mukharjee⁷ refers that Noor Jahan was the most powerful woman in Mughal

history, able to control state affairs from behind the purdah screen. She was a woman of unusual ability. She exercised political authority with intelligence, courage and astuteness, and did it despite constraints (like purdah) imposed by life in the Moghul zenana.

"With the exception of khutba (prayer for the reigning monarch), she possessed all privileges of a monarch."⁸NurJahan exhibited great resourcefulness and bravery in rescuing her husband from Mahabat Khan's hands. When she learned that Jahangir was under the custody of Mahabat Khan, she thought means to free him. She along with some men passed the river by a ford.

"NurJahan had in her litter the daughter of Shahryar and the elephant on which she was riding received two sword-cuts on the trunk."⁹ After crossing the river, she joined Jahangir. As she suggested, Jahangir showed Mahabat Khan great favor and won over him to his side by telling him that NurJahan had some plots against him. As a result, the guard of Rajputs was diminished. Meanwhile Prince Parvez died at Burhanpur due to alcoholism in Oct 1626. Mahabat Khan was pardoned and sent to Thatta, where he joined hands with Shah Jahan.

NurJahan built a beautiful tomb for her father Itimad-ud-daula in Agra, which is the first Mughal structure to be built of white marbles. Built on the banks of River Yamuna (Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India), the tomb of Itimad-ud-daulah resembles a silver jewel box in the midst of a garden. It is believed that this building had inspired Shah Jahan to build the magnificent TajMahal. NurJahan also built NurMahal Sarai at Punjab, NurAfshan garden at Agra,

ShahdaraBagh at Lahore and her own tomb at ShahdaraBagh.

According to D. Pant¹⁰**"She was also responsible, almost single-handedly, for the many artistic, architectural, and cultural achievements of the Jahangir era".**After Jahangir's death in 1627, NurJahan was confined to spent the rest of her life in a plush mansion by her step-son Khurram, the future Shah Jahan, who married Asaf Khan's daughter, MumtazMahal.

There NurJahan spent her days constructing the magnificent Tomb of Itmad-Ud-Daulah in Agra, surrounded by lush gardens, for her beloved father. Coming from a family with strong literary background, Noor Jahan's great poetic works, along with her interests in the traditional Persian culture of perfume-making, jewellery, rich fabrics and newest designed fashionable attire, form a significant source of the Mughal's contribution to India.

They were also noted for their patronage of the arts that included innumerable paintings in traditional Mughal artistic style created in their time, along with several charming gardens, and stunning architectural works such as the NurMahal Sarai in Jalandhar.

"NurJahan can be compared with Raziyya Sultan of Slave dynasty (the first female monarch of Hindustan), but NurJahan gain power only after her marriage with the Emperor."¹¹

"What Happened to NurJahan"(Muhammad Had- I' vol.I page 399)¹² "NurJahan's influence ceased with the death of Jahangir and the imprisonment of Shahryar. Shah Jahan, upon his accession to the throne, allowed her a pension of two lacs per

annum. After Jahangir's death, she wore only white clothes, abstained from all entertainments and lived in sorrow at her palace in Lahore.”

She died at Lahore at the age of 72, in 1645, and lies buried in a tomb at ShahdaraBagh in Lahore, close to that of her husband.

Against the background of a worldwide debate on the burqa, the fact that the Grand Monarchy of the Mughals – from Babur to Aurangzeb – did not require women to wear any burqa, hijab, khimar, chador or naquab opens up a new track of research.

In a lecture-demonstration, Dr. Asok Kumar Das,¹³ an internationally known art expert showed that Muslim queens and court ladies as well as normal women in the Mughal regime did not wear anything to cover their heads, faces or bodies except beautifully embroidered, gem-studded garments. Dr. Das, who has been director of the Sawai Man Singh II Museum in Jaipur, a visiting fellow at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London and Smithsonian Institute and Metropolitan Museum of Art (both in the U.S.) in addition to holding several prestigious chairs in international institutions, is an expert in Mughal and **Rajasthan art and culture. He says, “There is a great deal of research in the miniature paintings of the Mughal era where their queens and court ladies are seen in resplendent garments with exquisite jewellery.**

The question is: Who could have had access into the harems to paint these portraits? Historical records show that among all Mughal emperors, Akbar and Jahangir were great patrons of art and most of the paintings are done during their regime. The

Akbarnama has several paintings showing women engaged in social activities.

A beautiful portrait of the powerful Queen Noor Jahan shows that women could be painted by court artists in their regal splendour or in situations where they were seen enjoying leisure activities. As one of the strongest women of the Mughal era, she built her own tomb near that of her husband Jahangir, because of whom, she held unparalleled power throughout her life.

REFERENCES

1. **Father name a, “Nurjahan Begum”** by Shairazi p-19
2. Muhammad Hadi: *Tatimma-I-Jahangiri*, Mk Press Calcutta 1965, p345-346
3. **Muatamid Khan:** “Iqbalnama-I- Jahangiri” **Waalhis Press ,Calcutta,P-224**
4. Bani Prasad: *History Of Jahangir*, Nimman Publications, Allahabad,P-351
5. Mishra Rekha: “ **Women In Mughal India”** **Munshiram Pub. Mai Sarak ,Delhi 1967,P-33-35**
6. Chopra PN ,**“Society And Culture In Mughal Era”** **Vivek Pub.,Agra,P-65**
7. **Tripathi R P. “Rise And Fall Of Mughal Empire ”PustakMahal Pub.,New Delhi, P-422**
8. *NurJahan: Empress of Mughal India*, Ellison Banks Findley, Oxford University Press, 1993. The Definitive Source.
9. Mohammad Shujauddin, RaziaShujauddin (1967). *The Life and Times Of Noor Jahan*. Caravan Book House. P. 25.
10. RenukaNath (1st January 1990). *Notable Mughal And Hindu Women In The 16th And 17th Centuries A.D.* Inter-India Publications. P. 67. Isbn 978-81-210-0241-7.

11. Mahajan, VidyaDhar (1970). "Jahangir".Muslim Rule In India (5th Ed.). Delhi: S. Chand. Oclc 33267592.
12. Pant, Chandra (1978). NurJahanand Her Family. Dandewal Publishing House.Oclc 4638848.
13. Gold, Claudia (2008). Queen, Empress, Concubine: Fifty Women Rulers from Cleopatra to Catherine The Great. London: Quercus. ISBN 978-1-84724-542-7.

