

Review Paper

A Historical Study of Women Politics in India with special reference to Delhi Sultanate: A Preliminary Review

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Article history

Received: 12-08-2016

Revised: 22-08-2016

Accepted: 25-08-2016

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the women's participation in the politics especially during the medieval period. The broad narrative it sketches and seeks to explore the participation of women in the field of politics and administration in different era. This study will done on the basis of primary and secondary data collection. This study will reveal the impact of their participation in the politics and rejuvenation of the sultanate dynasty by their competency and farsightedness.

Keywords: Women Politics, Delhi Sultanate, Data Collection, Participation

Introduction

The women gender is an important part of the society because she plays a vital role in the establishment and the balancing of the society of any nation. This is a certified fact that the society where the political consciousness of the women is strong, that particular society is considered as developed society. In the pre-medieval period in India, the position of women was respectable but merely a story of living under the control of the male factor of the family and the story of conservation given by them. From the time of Manu the law provides women to be under the supervision of the male gender.

Review of Literature

The women participated in the politics before the advent of the medieval period. Women like Apala, Ghosha, Vishwatara etc. were high class women. Gargi and Matrayey played an important role in the politics of their time. In the Indian society, their respect and honour was Idealistic and limited from the ancient times. They were given equal importance as given to the male gender. They were free to perform the work of their choice and can continue doing it progress. Their role as a mother, wife and daughter-in-law in the society as well as in the family is always of great importance and honour. A woman is strongly established in Hindu society. The woman was completely free in the preliminary society of the Aryans. They were not inferior than the man. They studied the Vedas and Rigveda and memorize the verses of it. Lopamudra, Vishwa Tara, Sikta and Ghosha were such pundit women's. They without their parda participated in the philosophical debate with the male gender. In the vedic age, the condition of women was very good and they acquire high status. Women participated in the Yajna ceremony till the sutra period. Queen Kaushalya performs the yajna during the Yuvraj ceremonial of her son Ram. Matrayay, wife of Yagvalakya was a famous philosopher, took keen interest in philosophy. During the Buddha period women were literate and intelligent. They achieve popularity as a teacher. Sumedha, Shubha and Anupama were excellent in the field of Dance, Music and Painting. Poets like Rekha, Roha, Madhavi, Anulakshmi Pahaye, Budhawahi and Shashi-Prabha were famous for their competency and imagination. Beside this, if we turn back the pages of the history then we will find that some women in ancient India ruled without any guardian. Examples like the revenge of the Queen of Masag after the death of her husband against the invasion of Alexander. In the second century BC, the Satvahana dynasty's Rajmata Tapanika had ruled the Kingdom of Andhra because her son was very young. In this way the queen of Vakataka dynasty & the daughter of Gupta dynasty ruler Vikramaditya Prabhavati Gupta, Sangandh of Kashmir and queen like Didiva, Queens of the Chalukya dynasty like Makkadeshi and Bhola devi had ruled with bravery. During the Ramayan period, Rama had performed the Ashwamegha yajna with the golden statue of his wife Sita. After the death of her husband Vanraj Bali in the war, his wife Tara went to the battle field. Mandodari, the wife of Ravan also co-operate and help him in the administrative works and jumped into the battle field after his death. During this period women were the active participants and they were also given political education. During the accession ceremony of Rama, Manthara had provoked kekeiya for the accession of the throne of her son Bharat. Therefore it is clear that Manthara was trained in politics. In this way Shurpanakha had also scolded her brother Ravana by telling his political cons to him.

Observations

Therefore after viewing the active participation of the women in the politics Dr. Vidhya had written " In India, the women is given a high position in Indian society from the ancient period. However after the advents of the muslims in India, the condition of the women started changing and subsequently the women were imprisoned in the house. They were filled with the feeling of guilty. In

the medieval period, the incident of kidnapping the hindu girls enforce Purda system and child marriage.” According to Dr. K.M. Ashraj “The traditional form of Purda begins during the Muslim rule. The purda system was followed by both, the high class Muslims and the Hindus. The purda system was prevailing in the Muslim society from the beginning but the Hindu had embraced it for security reasons. But this fact cannot be rejected that there were many women in the Delhi sultanate who raised their voice against the then conservative and narrow minded tendency of the society. This starts a new era in the politics of the Delhi sultanate. During the Sultanate period, there were many women who entered the politics and challenge the Muslim society. Among these, Rajiya was the first women who ascended the throne of Delhi sultanate in 1236-1240 AD. It was not a new incident in the history of Islam for a woman to become an emperor. Muslim society was familiar with the princess of Khwarizm who were popular as Mallika & Kurkan Khatun. They ruled much more than Raziya. During the thirteenth century, the Muslim queens of Mesopotamia & Persia were ruling the states. These examples shattered the opposition of Raziya and she was accepted as the legal heir of the throne.

Findings

Rajiya's step mother was the first royal woman named as Khudanand-i-jahan Shah Turkan and a far-sighted politician and a clever conspirator. As we know that Illutmish before his death declared Raziya as his legal heir Razia as his legal heir and he educated her so well along with horse riding and trained her for the use of different types of weapon. Thus it is clear that the daughter of the rulers & Amirs were granted higher education. Few Begums and mother of the sultans of Delhi played an important role in the politics. Therefore our history tells us that they were competent by birth but the education played a vital role in the background of this competency. Khudanand-i-Jahan was not in the favour of Raziya.

Therefore after the death of Illutmish in 1236 AD, she find a solution to this by granting the throne to her incapable, lazy and incompetent son Rukn-din Firoz. Thus she took all the political rights and powers in her hands. As a result Shah Turkan herself became a ruler indirectly. Mother and her son started the persecution of the subject. This results in protest and revolts which occurred in various parts of the sultanate. Finally Shah Turkan was put to death by Raziya. Rukn-ud-Din Firuz was imprisoned and Razia was put to the throne. According to Minhaj-us-Siraj, she was a great sovereign, sagacious, just beneficent, the patron of the learned, a dispenser of justice, the cherisher of her subjects and of war like talent and was endowed with all the admirable attributes and qualifications necessary for kings. She put aside her dress as women. She gave up veil and “*donned the tunic and assumed the head dress of a man*”. She marched in person against her enemies. She was the first Sultana of the Delhi Sultanate to control the Maliks and the Amirs. Raziya was the competent daughter of a competent father. She was a powerful ruler of the Medieval age. She was the first women to disobey the tradition of Islam related to women. She decentralized the power of the kingdom in the hands of the Sultan rather distributing among the Sardars and Subedars. Like this, Raziya supported the concept of complete sovereignty laid by Illutmish.

Alike this, Mallika Khudaband-i-jahan was the second women to participate in the politics. She was the first royal women as Shah Turkan. Along with her ambition, she was famous for donation and gifts to the religious people & the Ulemas. Though she was a politician but moreover she was a conspirator too. Infact the example of Raziya worked as a source of inspiration for the other royal women and she motivates them for the active participation in the politics. Mallika-i-Jahan was one of the famous personalities of the medieval India who took active part in the then political matters. She turns the condition of her son-in-law so miserable that he left the capital in 1211 and went to Kara and became an administrator (Governor). In 1261 AD after the murder of Jalal-ud-Din did not put Ala-ud-Din on the throne of Delhi. As soon as Malika Jahan learnt about the murder of her husband, she tried to put her son Rukum-ud-Din on the throne but she failed to face the powers of Ala-ud-Din khalji. Finally Rukum-ud-Din's mother Malika Jahan was imprisoned and his friend Ahmad Chap was murdered. Khuda Band Jada, sister of Muhammad Tughlaq, was a competent and far sighted women who played a vital role in the struggle of accession of the throne during the Turk-Afghan reign. In 1351, at the death of Muhammad Tughlaq, she tried to put her son Dawar Malik on the throne. Besides she also plead against Firaz Tughlaq for being a son of a low prestige Rajput women and younger brother of Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlaq i.e. Rajab. She also claimed that Firuz do not have any close relation to Muhammad Tughlaq. On the contrary Dawar Malik being her son was a close relative of Muhammad Tughlaq and he was a muslim. But the people of Delhi want a person who was competent and mature and can protect his country from the rivals. They request Firuz to ascend the throne. Firuz Tughlaq became the emperor in such adverse conditions. Khuda Band tried to kill Firuz because she failed in her dream of putting her son to the throne but unfortunately there were no results of her efforts. In the end she was forced to agreement. If we talk about the Lodhi dynasty then we come to know that the women participation in the politics was prevalent at that time. The wife of Bahlol “*Shamsh Khatun*” requested her husband to free her brother Kutub Khan lodhi who was imprisoned by sultan Muhammad Lodhi. Bibi Ambha was a daughter of a gold smith and she was an ambitious woman alike the other wives of Bahlol. After the death of her husband Bahlol Lodhi, she claimed her son Nizam Khan popularly known as Sikandar Shah to ascend the throne. But there was some hesitation on the part of the nobles to accept Sikandar Shah as their ruler as his mother was a hindu and her son was more of a plebian than a prince. Therefore, Bibi Ambha supported the right of her son very actively and she promised to pay respect toward the nobles and the other high class officials. Finally she succeeded in acquiring the support of the nobles, vassals and the chieftains and strengthens the power of her son. She addressed the conference organized in the support of her son behind the purda. Thus she acquired success in ascending her son to the throne.

Conclusion

Thus it is clear from the above that during the sultanate period there was a great influence of the royal women in the contemporary politics. Basically they turns the incidents in their favour. Perhaps the women played an important role in the politics but there social condition was not sound. The Muslim women in India did not possess the privileged position which was occupied by The Arab women. They occupied a subordinate position and were at the mercy of their husbands who could marry at least four wives

at a time according to the Shariat. No women in Muslim household could claim to be the mistress of her house. However, Muslim women were treated well as the honour of the family was supposed to be depending upon the chastity of women folk. They observed strict Purdah. Muslim women of the upper class did not go out without a Burkah. Women of the higher classes were taught the Quran and other religious books. Though they were tied social boundations but they proved themselves with their competency and intelligence.

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