

WOMEN IN POLITICS DURING SLAVE DYNASTY

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The Sultanate's political structure and the ruling elite did not encourage women to participate in politics. In spite of all this we get references when females of the royal household exercised authority in political sphere due to their ambitious disposition. The patronage which the institution of harem enjoyed under Sultanate of Delhi, gave women of royalty enough impetus to further their ambition in carrying out administration, leading contingent of troops to the battle field, dispatching and receiving envoys, signing treaties. And dealing sternly and tactfully all the disruptive forces arising in Sultanate. Contemporary accounts are sparse to elaborately narrate the achievements and failures of such women who indulged in politics. But whatever references available, they throw adequate light on the issue. Women period during Sultanate possessing political ambition can be easily grouped into two broad categories one who interfered politics matters behind the curtain and other who actively participated in political activities sitting on the throne. In the former group were Sultan's sister, mother the or wife while in latter, only notable example is that of Razia who occupied the throne and as her father Iltutmish declared her as his successor but had to face opposition.

The earliest reference of a lady who participated in political activities in the Sultanate period is that of Khudavanda- i- Jahan Shah Turkan. She was originally a Turkish female slave who rose to the status of chief queen of Sultan Iltutmish by dint of her merit and charm. During the reign of Sultan Iltutmish, she patronized men of letters and gave liberal gifts and grants to Maliks, and to religious and saintly men This made her popular not only in the social circle but also made her effective in political arena. She enjoyed the

support of a section of nobility. It was with their active cooperation that she succeeded in laying aside the "will" of Sultan Iltutmish thereby, winning the throne for her son, Ruknuddin Firoz. Apart from her ambitious and intriguing nature she stepped into prominence because of incompetence and pleasure-loving temperament of her son. The Sultan indulged himself in life of merry making with wine and girls and ignoring completely the state affairs. This situation gave Shah Turkan an opportunity to actively participate in administrative activities. She now, concentrated all powers in her hands and started even issuing Royal Farman's in her name. She now started harassing the ladies of the royal household just out of sheer jealousy. Not-only this on the pretext of personal grievances she brought about the assassination of several co- wives of Sultan Iltutmish. This enraged the state officers who began to oppose both, the mother and son. The primary objective of Shah Turkan was to keep the throne safe and secure for her son Ruknuddin Firoz. The mother brought her in conflict with the son of Sultan Iltutmish Qutubuddin. It was at her instigation that prince Qutubuddin was blinded and put to death. This further antagonized not only the state officers but also the provincial governors of Sultanate who broke out in Malik Ghiyasuddin Mahmud the governor of Awadh, Malik Izzuddin, Mohammad Salari, the Governor of Multan and Malik Alauddin, the Governor of Lahore presented a united opposition to the Sultan. Each resolved to throw off his yoke with the Sultanate.

In order to secure her position, she had to deal with Raziya, the eldest daughter of Sultan Iltutmish. Raziya deepened the crisis by inciting the masses of Delhi against the oppressive measures of Shah Turkan. The latter sought it to imprison Raziya

to curb her activities. But Shah Turkan failed miserably the population of Delhi at Raziya's instigation brought an end to Sultan. Ruknuddin Firoz's short reign by taking Shah Turkan in Confinement. When Sultan was busy in suppressing the revolt at Kilukhari. The sultan's return could not revive his power, for Raziya was already elevated to throne. Shah Turkan had exalted her son to the throne but unfortunately her intriguing nature made his revile un popular tyrannical. She was also responsible for bring her regime to an end, by her undesirable acts and created favourable condition for Raziya and her succession to the throne. The next- lady who played important role in during sultanate time was Raziya.

The accession of Raziya to the throne in 1236. A begin a new era in in the politics of Delhi Sultanate. It asserts the claims of women to the office which was earlier considered to be the monopoly of the males. Raziya acquired the throne solely on her merits and talents. Her major achievement's lay not is crushing apposition and disruptive forces but-in creating an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity. She toned up the administration and provided a. new vigour to the Turkish empire. It was in the midst of chaos and confusion that Raziya asserted her claims for the throne The Delhi Sultanate was facing internal as well as external crises. The power of nobility reached to its height after its creation of core of forties by Sultan Ilutmish. This group intervened in every issue of political importance, especially in the question of succession. It was this class which constantly created or hurdles for Raziya. The financial condition Sultanate was deplorable as Sultan of Ruknuddin Firoz had drained and the state treasury by his extravagance. The provincial nobles, taking full advantage of the weak sultan grew rebellious and threw off their yoke plunging the entire sultanate into a state of civil war. The menace of Mangols of was always felt the sultanate on the frontiers Raziya with her firm determination and diplomacy climb the ladder of success. Her military skills coupled with her

administrative ability established her firmly on the throne.

The demise of Sultan Ilutmish not only created a political vacuum but also an atmosphere of uncertainty Sultan had already decided the question of succession in favour of her eldest daughter Razija. He found his sons incompetent and saw in her qualities befitting for a ruler. When Sultan was on his Gwalior expedition in 1201 AD, he entrusted Raziya with the task of administration of state. During this interim period, she carried out her duties in most appropriate manner. Sultan was also watching all this and was very happy when he returned from expedition he asked Tajul Mulk Mahmud, the Mushrif-i- Mamalis to issue a for man putting Raziya's name as heir to the throne. Raziya's nomination was not questioned by the ulema's but opposed by nobility and the close associates of sullen. After the death of sullen, the tussle for crown gained momentum. The nobles and mother of Ruknuddin Firoz Shah conspired against Raziya and tried to imprison and kill her but failed.

Raziya dressed in red robes addressed the masses on Friday near Juma Masque at Daulat Khan to gain popular support. She reminded them of her father's will and pleaded them to be rational and compassionate to one who would help relieve them of such oppressive regime of Rukruddin Firoz. With the support of masses and a section of nobility, Malik Nuswoadin Taysi, the governor of Awadh, Malik Kabir Ikhtiyaruddin Aitikin, Malik Izzuddin Kabir Razia successfully ruled till 1240AD. The biggest opposition which threatened her to capture the throne came from Nizam-ul-Mulk Junaidi, Malik Allauddin Jani, Malik Kochi, Malik Kabir Khan, and Malik Salari who besieged the city of Delhi. Several skirmishes took place but with no positive results. Finally, it was the treacherous act of Malik Izzazuddin Mohamad Salari and Malik Kabir Khan which brought situation in favour of Raziya. These two nobles were pillars of the opponent group camps and hate the secretly joined Raziya's conspiracy we Sultan against the erring with the This act of theirs paralysed the

whole resistance which shattered in no times. Malik Jani was stained near a village called Payal whereas Malik Kochi and his brother, Fakhruddin were taken into captivity and finally put to death. Nizam-ul-Mulk, the arch and stubborn opponent of Raziya took shelter in the sirmur hills, where he met an un heroic death. Finally, Razia's path was cleared not only by providence but by her calm endurance, valour and tact. After this she focused on consolidating her position. For this she assigned important posts and provinces to her loyal. Kabir Ikhtiyarudin Aitkin was given the province of Badawn and later made him Amir-i-Hajib. Malik Izzaudin Kabir was made governor of Lahore; Hindu Khan was appointed governor of Uchch and Malik Taysi a governor of Awadh. Khwaja Muhazzabuddin was bestowed the title Nizam-ul-Mulk and was entrusted. Of - the office of Vazir. Malik Saifuddin Aibak was appointed as the commander in-chief of the army with the little Qutlugh khan. In appointment of the official she gave due consideration to the reaction of masses, loyalty of nobles and also avoided concentration of power in the hands of one section nobility. She also patronized non - Turkish nobles who helped her in times of political crises. Jamaluddin Yaqut was made Amir-i- Akh Akhur. But her this act was opposed by Turkish nobles who were deprived of power and position and latter her this act led in her down fall.

The next step of Raziya was to establish peace and order with in Sultanate for this she tried to end rebellious Rajputs of Ranthambore region and deputed for this task to Hasan Gori. Hasan Gori was just able to free the Muslims held up in the fort but Vagbhatt's influence could not be checked by Raziya. Raziya then turned to bring some revolutionary changes in her mode of living thereby setting a new pattern. She became the martyr of purdah, wore Kaba (robe) and Kullah (turban) instead of usual feminine dress. She openly rode on elephants. Raziya presided over the proceedings of the court and dispensed justice in the most impartial and appropriate manner. It was at this juncture Raziya elevated Jamaluddin Yaqut,

to the office of Amir-i-Akhur primarily in planting non-Turkish nobles and in curbing the power of Turkish echelons. Yaqut advised her, assisted and accompanied her on various occasions. Being a blind supporter of his mistress, and a well -wisher he became quite close to her. Minhaj, the contemporary historian speaks nothing about the intimacy between the two, while Isami casts a slur upon their relationship. The later historians followed the footsteps of Isami and exploited the theme further, fabricated it into the so called "Yaqut and Raziya affair". But this seems to be far from the truth, however when Yaqut enjoyed the place of pride in the court, the Turkish nobles grew jealous and schemed to bring Raziya's fall for now she asserted herself in every possible way.

Another important campaign during the reign of Raziya was undertaken against Gwalior in March 1238 A.D. The siege proved to be a long-drawn-out affair without any results. During the combat, Minhaj along with other prestigious personalities joined Raziya's camp. On 19th March 1230 A.D. it was through the mediation of Minhaj that a settlement was finally reached between the two combatting parties. The Sultan thereby assigned the post of Qazi in Gwalior¹ to Minhaj who was also entrusted as the Deen of the Madarsa-i-Nasiriya, at Delhi. Raziya was soon called upon to deal with Malik Izzuddin Tughril Tughan Khan who defied the royal authority. Being an ambitious noble, he broke all his connections with the Sultanate and declared himself as an independent ruler at Lakhnavati. Raziya cowed down to his desires and bestowed the royal Khilat, Chatr and Baton. This recognition on the part of Raziya could not satisfy the lust of Tughril Khan for power, who sacked Tribute and swept away a large booty. The Sultan being engrossed in a number of problems could do nothing at the moment to restrict the activities of the ambitious Malik.

In 1239-40 A. D. the governor of Lahore Malik Izzuddin Kabir Khan came out in open conflict with the Sultan. Raziya once crushed his uprising with all her might and the erring noble again accepted her suzerainty. Now the province of

Multan which was under the super- vision of Malik Karakush was entrusted to Malik Izzuddin Kabir Khan. This arrangement clearly showed that Raziya had for- given the noble for his foul act and to ensure peace in the Sultan- ate entrusted him the province of Multan. After making this arrangement on 15th March 1240 A. D., she returned back to the capital.

Hardly, she reached Delhi once again she had to recourse the force of her arms to suppress the revolt of Altuniya, the governor of Tabarhindah. On 3rd April 1240 A. D.4 with elaborate arrangements, she moved ahead to badly cornered meet the rebel. But she was as Yaqut her arch supporter was slain and nobles and state officers secretly helped the rebel, Altuniya. Against these heavy odds Raziya could not stand for long. She was finally defeated and imprisoned in the fort of Tabarhindah. Her imprisonment proved a boon for the ambitious and intriguing nobles who elevated Bahram Shah³ as the Sultan on 21st April 1240 A. D.4 They distributed the fruits of victory amongst themselves by occupying offices of importance ignoring completely the services and sacrifices of Altuniya, who was shocked at such a treatment. Sultanate Capitalising on the situation Raziya consoled the shocked and grieved Altuniya and offered to marry him. The proposal of marriage on the part of Raziya seems to be a purely political move, which might, ensure the revival of her lost prestige with Altuniya's support she became more confident and aggressive. For Altuniya this matrimonial alliance was an opportunity to avenge his insult at the hands of the nobles. Thus, Altuniya freed Raziya from the fort of Tabarhindah, married her, and made preparations to regain the lost glory. The Jats and Khokhars were recruited in their army. Izzuddin Mohammad Salari and Malik Women Karakush once again fought for the cause of Raziya¹ but could get no success against the royal army. Their attempt store gain the lost power proved futile as both Altuniya and Raziya were captured and stained by the Hindus near Kaithal on 13th Nov., 1240 A.D.

The reign of Raziya which lasted for 3 years, 6 months 6 days witnessed as an incident of religious anarchy which was successfully quelled. The so called Kiramatha (a secret sect of Islam having faith in the theory of bloodshed of Sunnis) and Mulahidah (unreligious people) were incited by Nuruddin, a Turk to gain their objectives. Nur Turk enjoyed complete support of blood thirsty heretics who swarmed Delhi and at his instigation, and brought about the most bloody and glaring incident in the name of religion. On Friday 5th March 1237 A.D. a horde of about 10002 such heretics fell like white hawks upon the unguarded innocent people who had gathered in Jami Masjid at Delhi to offer congregational prayer. One section of the heretics entered from the northern gate of the Jami Masjid while the other came through Muzzi College gate mercilessly massacring the devotees.

Nasiruddin Aitamar Balarami and Amir Imam Nasir showed tact and courage by herding a group of people armed them with bows and spears to combat the heretics. The act of theirs infused courage and strength amongst the ones inside the mosque who too petted stones and bricks at the heretics, The latter now ran in panic in Delhi Sultanate for shelter but most of them were trampled or slain. Thus, law and order were established by the active participation of the masse in co-ordination with the administration. In order to ascertain whether the uprising was political or religious in character, we have to first reconsider the character of Nur Turk, the leader of the heretics. In view of these facts, it appears that this uprising was not undertaken to create political upheaval during the reign of Raziya.

Raziya exhibited skill and competence in handling day to day administration; she was well versed in the art of warfare. She led contingents of troops to battlefields and exhibited signs of valour and skill. Realising the significance of well organised army, she was particular in recruiting men of courage in the army. The Khokhars and Jats of the Punjab too were recruited as soldiers in the army. The office of Naib-i-Lashkar in the army

received prominence but after her death it lost its significance. It was the Naib-i-Lashkar who led the contingent with the same zeal, courage and enthusiasm in the absence of the Sultan. Raziya was very particular about the welfare of the soldiers. She often gave liberal gifts to the soldiers in order to keep them happy and contented. Malik Saifuddin and after his demise, Qutbuddin Hasan Ghorî occupied the office of Naib-i-Lashkar and carried out their duties with perfection.

Unfortunately, in spite of such elaborate arrangement the defences of the North-West frontier were neglected as the Mongols often turned up at the outskirts of the Sultanate and had under their sway the region up till Chinab during the reign of Raziya. She dispensed justice without discrimination, along with Qazi. Raziya issued silver coins at Lakhnnavati bearing official title Jalaluddin. This was her maiden contribution in the realm of numismatic. Indeed, Raziya was a talented and intelligent lady. She seems to have taken keen interest in education also. She was fond of music and gave musicians' royal patronage. She herself composed verses under the no deplume of 'Shirin'. Raziya could recite Quran and all other prayers in the proper manner. Thus, being a woman of intellectual aptitude, she stood for the encouragement of education during her regime. She patronised men of letters. Minhaj was entrusted the task of supervision of Madarsa-i-Nasiriya which became a centre of learning in her reign.

The Delhi Sultanate was beset with numerous problems when Raziya took up the reigns of the state. Through her tact and perseverance she overcame her difficulties and controlled the situation. She succeeded in establishing peace and order in the Sultanate. Her feminine sex in no way was an impediment to her success. For Raziya achieved her objective because of her determination and courage. True, in certain spheres, she could not achieve complete success as in the case of the defences of North-West frontier or campaigns against Gwalior and

Ranthambhor. But for these failures, circumstances were also responsible to a great extent and Raziya cannot be blamed alone. The aggressive attitude which she adopted towards the nobility was largely responsible for her fall. She dealt with the elite group of the court strictly and I tried to counter balance the power of the Turkish nobles by encouraging non-racial nobles. This hostile policy strained the relationship between the Sultan and nobility. The latter's co-operation was essential in running the administration, but in order to keep themselves as an active force they conspired to overthrow the regime of the Sultan. Despite of her best efforts ultimately, she fell into their trap. Her marriage with Altuniya was Raziya's last attempt to revive the lost prestige, but she failed miserably. The intriguing nobles and provincial governors of the far-flung provinces of the Sultanate were reluctant to accept her authority who resolved to overthrow her regime. In this tussle Raziya lost, for it was beyond her faculties to control them. It is surprising that Raziya did not find a place in the list of Sultans which was prepared by the orders of Sultan Firuz Shah Tughluq. This omission by Sultan Firuz Shah in no way undermines her contribution in stabilizing the Turkish Empire in India. Raziya stands as the only example of a woman who wielded royal power during the Sultanate Period.

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