

THE HINDU WOMEN'S STATUS AND INFLUENCE DURING THE MUGHAL PERIOD [1526 – 1707]

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Abstract:

The picture of the Hindu women in the Mughal [1526-1707] Era that has emerged in this research is not just history, but rather an outline of a social system. The status of women was different during the reign of every ruler from Babur to Aurangzeb. Although Akbar's liberal policy was positive for women in many cases, it could not bring about any major change in the overall social system. The huge gap that existed between the lives of women in the royal palace and women in common families is clear in this research. The limitations in education and political participation that women had during the Mughal era created obstacles in their overall development. Although personalities like Harka Bai, Rani Karmavati, Jagat Gosai or Rani durgavati proved their worth, they were exceptions. Most women were bound by the chains of family and social rules. Superstitions like the widow custom, sati-pratha, and child marriage kept their lives joyless. These factors help us understand why the contribution of women at that time was not properly evaluated.

Keywords: women, social, system, royal, liberal, status, Development

Introduction

The contribution of women in Indian society has been important since the ancient period, but women's contribution has not yet been evaluated in a comprehensive manner. On one hand, there have been sporadic efforts, but they are not equal to the contemporary research by studying Indian history many times, I have had a rare experience that societies that changed the course of development of the world, were not just those who had active participation of their women, their knowledge, civilization, and the fact that they kept the future of mankind ahead, is a milestone where modern man stands, in its construction, women and in many difficulties, their wives did not leave their side. But the importance of women in this period is also visible in the texts. I see the actual position of women in his time. Akbar established the policy of sulh-i-kul (universal peace) and established friendly relations with the Rajputs, and in those friendly relations, he gave special importance to his Rajput wives, especially Jodhabai, manbai, etc. They had a prominent place. Akbar himself, in his childhood, was influenced by his stepmother, jiji anga. Akbar the great also tried to stop bad customs of the Hindu religion like sati-pratha and child marriage. He also gave special importance to women. The effect of women is seen specifically in the light of the period of Jahangir. Nurjahan was very important in the reign of Jahangir. Shah jahan had the Tajmahal built in memory of his wife. Aurangzeb, who was a staunch Muslim ruler, did not give special importance to women. At the same time, a love affair is also found regarding him. As far as Hindu women are concerned, their condition could also not be considered very good..Is an unparalleled contribution, and she is now here less than men. Along with the revelation of this fact, a complex question also arises as to what are the circumstances that the dignity of the woman working behind the scenes is being insulted.

Influence of the Hindu women

In the time of Babur, the average Indian man did not consider a woman an independent individual, but rather as his personal property. He was particularly vigilant to ensure that no one else could claim rights over this "property" or look at it with ill intent. Therefore, he made complete arrangements for her security. Before going to the battlefield, he would place his mother, sister, and wife in a safe location. In this way, half the country's human resource was considered inactive or merely an object for decoration or consumption. Of the remaining half of the population, those who went to the battlefield were more concerned about their "property" than their country. To protect their so-called honor, they would sometimes kill the women themselves or encourage them to commit Jauhar (self-immolation). The defeat of a society with this type of outlook was inevitable.¹ In Hindustan, the family tradition—the joint family—has generally been a key element in conducting organized social life since the beginning of history. Over time, it evolved and took the form of the Hindu family (wife, children, parents, and other relatives).² Upon marriage, a girl becomes a member of her husband's family.

Hindu and Muslim societies were in agreement regarding giving special priority to men over women. A son was always given priority over a daughter,³ and among sons, the eldest son was given precedence.⁴ According to the Quran, men are the protectors/maintainers of women.⁵ According to Rodwell, because of divinely bestowed superior qualities, men are superior to women.⁶ However, in the Mughal era, the joint family system hindered the personal development of women and other family members.⁷ According to the Hindu ideology prevalent during the Mughal period (from Babur to Aurangzeb), the primary duty of a woman was to give birth to a son; if they gave birth to a son, people would respect them and take care of them.⁸ While shedding light on the condition of Rajput women, Tod wrote that the fate of a Rajputani would appear terribly painful to women of other countries. Death embraced her at every stage of life. .ready to embrace death; in the dawn of life through opium, in the prime of life through flames, and as their security in middle age depended on the uncertainty of war, at any given moment, her existence was worth no more than the cost of basic necessities,⁹

In the upper classes, the Parda (veil) was a measure of honor. According to the status of their position, women remained that much more secluded.¹⁰ Relationships between Babur and the Hindus were sometimes good and sometimes bad, both types. The condition of Hindu women during Babur's time became extremely dire during times of war, as they were looted and Muslim men kept them as their concubines.¹¹ Although not much information is available regarding the relations between Babur and Hindu women, as Babur wrote very little about this, Dr.S.K.Banerjee has still presented many new facts regarding this matter¹²

Hindus held mothers in high regard. Every Hindu man considered it his duty to obey his mother's commands. Rana Sangram Singh of Mewar would only eat his meal in the morning after paying respects to his mother,¹³ At that time, both men and women consumed all types of intoxicants, and the prevalence of alcohol was very widespread. Unmarried girls also drank alcohol. However, Rajput queens were mostly free from this vice. Their personal character was also high, but when the air is filled with filth, it is difficult to say who remained unaffected by its influence.¹⁴

So much was spent at the time of marriage as if it were a rain of money.¹⁵ Hindu women wore sarees, while Muslim women wore payjama (trousers), ghaghra (skirt), and jackets, and covered their heads with a dupatta. Women used various types of pastes, especially sandalwood paste. Women applied mahaur (red dye) on their hands and feet and surma (kohl) in their eyes. Paan (betel leaf) served the purpose of modern-day lipstick. Everyone used perfumes and scented oils. Just like today, women in the Mughal period were also fond of jewelry.¹⁶

During the time of Babur, Hindu women were prepared to make the greatest sacrifices for their self-respect. For instance, the women of Medini Rai of Chanderi committed Jauhar upon realizing that defeat was imminent. However, Babur wrote about this incident differently, stating that they killed all their wives and women,

resolved to die, and then went out naked to fight.¹⁷ After the victory at Chanderi, the two daughters of the King of Chanderi fell into Babur's hands, whom he distributed between Humayun and Kamran.¹⁸

In the Mughal period, women did not have the same status in society as they did in the ancient Hindu period. Due to the influence of Islam and the misconduct of Muslim rulers and commanders, the practices of Parda (veil) and child marriage spread throughout society. Except for women of lower castes, Hindu women did not go out of their homes. Among Muslims, Parda was even stricter than among Hindus. The birth of a girl was considered an inauspicious event, while the birth of a boy was considered a source of joy. Due to child marriage, the number of widows in society increased significantly, and they did not have the right to remarry. There was no tradition of divorce among Hindus. However, even though polygamy was not prohibited among Hindus, by nature, Hindus and due to frugality, they were generally monogamous, and only a very influential person would marry more than one woman. Only Hindu kings used to practice polygamy. Despite all these evils, women received good respect in their households, and some of them even assisted their husbands in their work¹⁹

Ahmad Yadgar has written about the attack on Babur's territories by Mohan Mundher, stating that the powerful conqueror sent Ali Quli Hamadani to raid the regions of the Mundhers. However, in the name of suppression, the cycle of arrests was repeated again; thousands of women were captured, and when the captives were brought to Delhi, they were distributed among the Mughals.²⁰ During his Indian invasion, when Babur came to Gwalior, he received information about the Teli Mandir or Gujari Mandir built by Mrignayani, the Gujjar wife of the Gwalior king, Raja Mansingh. This temple was very famous at that time, but Babur did not give orders to demolish it.²¹ This makes it clearly evident that during Babur's time, women also had temples constructed. The festival of Rakhi holds great importance among Indian women. Rani Karmati (Karnavati) of Chittor also, during a time of emergency during the attack of Bahadur Shah during the time of emergency, she sought help from Humayun and, for this purpose, sent a Rakhi along with this message: that he should fulfill the duty of a brother and protect his sister (the Queen) from the clutches of the enemy.²² Nizamuddin wrote that if Humayun had helped the Queen, he would have become a permanent friend of Humayun and would have acted as a dam against Gujarat.²³

Rana Veersal (the Raja of Amarkot) gave shelter to Humayun during his time of exile. His women also treated them like guests. The Mughal women were given a respectful stay inside the palace within his fort; it was here that Akbar was born.²⁴ Sher Shah attacked Kalinjar to obtain a dancer of Raja Kirat Singh of Kalinjar,²⁵ which eventually became the cause of his death. Panna Dhai sacrificed her own son in Chittor to save the Rana's son. Banvir, after seizing power, killed King Vikramajit and then came to kill the prince who was under Panna Dhai's protection.²⁶ Abbas Khan Sarwani, while mentioning Sher Khan's attack on Purnamal of Raisen, speaks of the women affected by the attack; the few Rajput women and children who survived were captured and enslaved.²⁷ Most of Purnamal and his companions had killed the women with their own hands to save them from being humiliated.²⁸ Colonel Tod has written that Sher Shah spared the daughters to have them dance on the streets.²⁹ Even during internal conflicts between tribes, Rajputs would perform Jauhar, in which women would commit suicide by jumping into a burning fire.³⁰

During Akbar's time, Hindu women played a major role in influencing Mughal politics, administration, society, and culture. Rani Durgavati of Gondwana led the battle and, with capable administration and achieved immense fame. She also gave the Mughals a tough fight. She defeated the ruler of Malwa, Baz Bahadur, several times. She was an unerring markswoman. Abul Fazl has also mentioned her as a woman who hunted tigers. Furthermore, when Asaf Khan wanted to conquer the territory of her minor son, Veer Narayan, she fought a fierce battle at "Narhai." When the situation reached a point of being captured, she attained liberation by committing suicide. However, before doing so, she had sent her wounded son to a safe fort. Thus, her bravery, love for hunting, maternal love, and capable leadership cannot be praised enough.³¹ Rajput women were devoted to their husbands, patriotic, cherished their self-respect, obedient, and dutiful. Rajput women have always been famous for sacrificing their lives to protect their country and honor. When Kalyan Mal (Bihari

Mal) initiated talks to marry his daughter Jodhabai to Akbar, Jodhabai accepted the proposal on the banks of Sambhar Lake for the sake of the country, as an act of obedience to her father's command and to protect the nation. This led to many astonishing changes in Mughal politics. Many Rajputs began to offer their daughters to Akbar themselves; for example, the offering of the daughters of the kings of Jaisalmer, Bikaner, etc., in this marriage policy, established Akbar's control over the Rajput states automatically it was achieved. Without shedding a single drop of blood, the vast Rajputana, with its large skilled armies, great forts, and capable military commanders, effortlessly came under his control. Furthermore, the Mughal Empire received its two best successors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, only through the union with these Hindu princesses. Later, all the major events of the Mughal era were also influenced by the Rajputs. They worked like cement in strengthening the Mughal Empire. Many reform-related tasks—such as the abolition of the Jizya tax, the abolition of the pilgrimage tax, ending the policy of forcibly converting captives to Islam, stopping the Sati practice, and banning female infanticide—emerged due to the influence of Hindu women. Not only this, but the transformation of Akbar's religious fanaticism into religious tolerance, the rise of the Din-i-Ilahi religion, allowing Rajput women to build temples in their harem and perform worship, and bringing partial changes to rigid Islamic traditions were also the results of the influence of Hindu women.³² Rajput women never hesitated to commit Jauhar for the sake of their self-respect. When Akbar attacked Chittor in 1567–68, the Rajputs fought a fierce battle; ultimately, the Rajput women committed Jauhar.³³

Jahangir's mother Jodhabai, the mother of his eldest son Khusrau, Manbai (Man Singh's sister), and the mother of his successor Khurram, Jagat Gosain, were all Hindu women.³⁴ Thus, I can say that although Hindu women did not come to the forefront directly during the times of Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb, they indirectly influenced politics, religion, economy, and culture significantly. This is still proven today by observing the remnants related to many war-related incidents, rebellions, temple construction, views regarding pilgrimages, policies related to the Jizya tax and pilgrimages, as well as attire, jewelry, conduct, music, and art-related activities. The artifacts displayed in museums in Delhi, Kolkata, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Jaipur, Khajuraho, Gwalior, Aurangabad, Chittor, etc., automatically display the influence of Hindu women during the Mughal era like a motion picture.³⁵

Political, Social, and Religious Status of Hindu Women in the Mughal Period:

Even if the social condition of women in the Mughal era might have been poor, their political contribution cannot be underestimated. Many women performed such amazing or astonishing deed..influenced political situations to such an extent that even men were forced to bite their fingers in astonishment. We can simply express the political achievements of women during the Mughal era as follows—they:

1. Performed the task of giving appropriate advice.
2. Played a key role in making settlements/agreements.
3. Openly supported political schemes/intrigues.
4. Became the fate-makers for many rulers, officials, and individuals.
5. Worked as excellent administrators.
6. Had their services utilized for establishing permanent friendships.
7. Participated in war.
8. Demonstrated multifaceted talents.
9. Compelled major officials, individuals, and emperors by binding them in bonds of love.
10. Presented an ideal of serving their fathers.
11. Secretly assisted their brothers.
12. Presented an ideal of serving their fathers. [Repeated in original text]
13. Performed various other tasks, such as compelling others by showing obstinacy.

From this, it becomes easily evident that immense power and energy are hidden within women. If they desire, they can make every task possible.³⁶ The history of the Mughal period is filled with the sacrifices and

martyrdom of Hindu women. Firstly, women became victims of political brutality, as seen when Sher Shah captured the daughter of Purnamal and forced her to become a dancer.³⁷ Hindu women accepted marriage with Akbar of their own free will, turning the stained pages of history into something venerable. In 1562 AD, Jodha Bai (daughter of Bihari Mal) first accepted the proposal to marry Akbar.³⁸ This marriage provided Akbar with Rajput allies, helped in the expansion of the Mughal Empire, and provided a trustworthy class to suppress foreign rebellions. Furthermore, this marriage gave birth to the future generations of Mughal emperors. In addition to this, the contribution of Rajput women in making Akbar religiously tolerant was extremely influential.³⁹ Due to these relationships, many Rajput chieftains from Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Kota, Bundi, Dungarpur, Banswara, etc., accepted Akbar's sovereignty.⁴⁰

Kings and Maharajas respected Hindu women greatly, such as the devotion of the Rana of Mewar toward his mother, but the same Rana of Mewar...devotion, but the same Rana of Mewar was proud of the purity of his royal lineage. For instance, the women of Man Singh's family had accepted matrimonial relations with the Mughals. Therefore, the Rana of Mewar displayed very surprising behavior toward Man Singh. For example, when Man Singh came to persuade the Rana, the Rana had the ground where Man Singh sat dug up and thrown away by three feet, and then had it purified by pouring Gangajal (holy water of the Ganges). Prior to this, he had also avoided eating with him and left under the pretext of a headache. Man Singh was so offended by this that, while getting up from his dining plate, he said, "I will return soon with the medicine for your headache." Someone replied, "Yes, yes, definitely come, and bring your brother-in-law (Akbar) as well." The Rana of Chittor was angry with the Mughals due to the talk of establishing matrimonial relations with Emperor Akbar, because the royal family of Chittor had refused to send the women of their clan to the Mughals. Ultimately, the result of this was the Battle of Haldighati.⁴¹ Rani Durgavati of Gondwana established her reputation for bravery by fighting fierce battles against the Mughal armies. She gave a strong fight to the armies of Akbar's commander, Asaf Khan, in the battle at "Narhai" (located near Damoh).⁴² This Queen of Gondwana had also achieved victory in many other battles.⁴³ She thwarted the invasions of Baz Bahadur of Malwa. The entire credit for this went to this queen. To protect the independence of Mandala, Rani Durgavati sacrificed her life on the battlefield.⁴⁴ Jahangir's wife, Manbai, committed suicide due to self-reproach caused by the rebellious behavior of her son Khusrau's father towards him.⁴⁵ The rise of Shivaji was primarily contributed to by his mother, Jijabai. From his very childhood, she instilled in him a staunch Hindu identity by narrating stories of the glory of the Hindu religion, which led him, upon growing up, to establish an independent and powerful Hindu kingdom. To fulfill his mother's wish, he conquered a famous fort; in this endeavor, his renowned commander, Tanaji Malusare, lost his life, upon which he went to his mother and said, "The fort is won, but the lion is gone."⁴⁶

Yesu Bai, who was the widow of Shambhu Ji, decided to stay at Raigad herself to fight against the increasing attacks of the Mughals and advised Rajaram to go to the Vishalgad region...because he was the heir to the Maratha Empire. Eventually, Yesu Bai and her young son Shahu were taken captive. In this way, the sacrifice of Yesu Bai played a major role in strengthening the Maratha Empire.⁴⁷ Later on, Tara Bai also continued the long-term freedom struggle against the Mughals.⁴⁸ However, Raj-Sawasai [likely referring to Rajasbai] made her son Shambhu Ji the ruler and had Tara Bai imprisoned.⁴⁹ Queen Chennamma of Keladi saved the life of Shivaji's son, Rajaram, by giving him refuge. She did not waver before a ruler like Aurangzeb; she fearlessly protected those who sought refuge with her and made arrangements to safely transport Rajaram to the fort of Gingee.⁵⁰ Queen Karnavati of Mewar began governing the state as a regent on behalf of her minor son. She sought help from Humayun against Bahadur Shah and sent him a rakhi, but Humayun did not provide assistance in time; consequently, the Queen had to perform jauhar (self-immolation), and all the men died fighting.⁵¹ The social condition of women had become extremely pathetic. Women began to be kept in the harems of emperors and their officials in the thousands, who lived in the capacity of some queens and some concubines. For example, Emperor Akbar had 5,000 women, while his commander Man Singh Kachwaha had 1,500 wives and 4,000 sons.⁵²

Generally, women were neither given education, nor did they have any respect in society, nor did they have any independent existence. Instead, the growing nature of luxury among Mughal emperors, commanders, nobles, and wealthy individuals had reduced women merely to a means of fulfilling their lust. Due to the lack of protection of their honor, the status of women in Hindu society had also become low. Social evils like the parda system (veiling), child marriage, the prohibition of widow remarriage, considering the birth of a girl child as an ill omen, the sati system, and polygamy among wealthy individuals had become a part of Hindu society, and the status of women in society had become very low. The number of Hindu widows in society had increased significantly, illegitimate children were being born in large numbers, the profession of singing and dancing had become popular, and prostitution had increased. In this way, the lack of education and freedom, the entry of various social evils into society, the sense of insecurity, and the growing luxury made the condition of women in the Mughal period miserable. was. Mughal civilization was limited only to urban civilization. In villages, women held their traditional place in families. Hindu women were very fond of ornaments. In their clothing, the use of dhotis and cholis (blouses) was prevalent.⁵³ Hindu women took great interest in celebrating festivals like Holi, Deepavali, Dussehra, Basant, Durga Puja, and Ganesh Utsav. Hindu women had a special enthusiasm for fairs, festivals, and celebrations. Compared to Muslim festivals, the style or manner in which Hindu religious and social festivals were celebrated is noteworthy for that specific season in which they were observed. Ruling dynasties came and went, crises occurred, destructions took place and were even forgotten, people were oppressed and suffered, but local and common festivals remained as they were and were always celebrated with enthusiasm and joy. Even with the arrival of new sects and religious beliefs, the essence of these popular festivals did not change. The popularity of some of these remains intact even today.⁵⁴

The most popular festivals are Basant Panchami, Holi, Deepavali, Shivaratri, and other festivals related to various events in the life of Krishna. The festival of Basant Panchami was the harbinger of spring and was celebrated in the month of Magh. It was famous for singing, folk dancing, and the sprinkling of gulal (colored powder). In some contexts, Holi, for the Shudras or lower-caste Hindus...was a more important festival. This festival was celebrated on a large scale by lighting fires, singing popular songs, and scattering gulal (colored powder). Holi was celebrated in the month of Phalguna. The festival of Shivaratri arrived on the night of the 29th day of Magh. People with a religious temperament celebrated it by keeping an all-night vigil and offering prayers. The festival of Deepavali or Diwali was celebrated on the 25th day of Kartik.⁵⁵ Hindu festivals were popular among all Hindu men and women, and they remain so today.⁵⁶ All festivals were celebrated in their own distinct ways. For instance, in the festival of Basant Panchami, the worship of Mahadev (Shiva) holds a prominent place. Vermilion and gulal were scattered in such quantities that, in the words of Malik Muhammad Jayasi, "Everything from the earth to the sky became red." Young women never forgot to take offerings of fruits and flowers to Shiva temples, where they would anoint the Shivling with a paste of sandalwood and agaru (aloeswood), color it with vermilion, and pray for the fulfillment of their wishes, which also included the desire for a beloved life partner. Then, perhaps promising to offer another gift to the deity upon the fulfillment of their wish, they would return home.⁵⁷

Similarly, on the occasion of Holi, Hindus of all castes and classes used to drench everyone in saffron and colored water for three days. On the evening of the third day, perhaps the entire population would gather around a huge fire and contemplate good omens for the upcoming harvest.⁵⁸ Diwali was celebrated by common people by lighting fireworks, while more serious and religiously inclined people would keep an all-night vigil. After the collective worship of Goddess Lakshmi, people would wave torches, burning sticks, and rods.⁵⁹ In some ways, Diwali was a very pleasant and joyful festival; it is rightly called the festival of lights. Once a year, the pious departed were permitted to come to their earthly homes and familiar surroundings to establish an affectionate connection with the inhabitants of this earth. Naturally, relatives felt joy in welcoming the souls of their ancestors with enthusiasm. Lamps were lit in huge numbers everywhere—inside and outside houses, in temples, and in public buildings. The entire place appeared to be a mass of light.⁶⁰ This was an extremely popular festival among the Vaishya or merchant class and other business communities. Every person, for the sake of their fortune in the coming year, eager to contemplate the omens for their future. Therefore, as a magical means of testing their luck, they took shelter in the shagan (omens).⁶¹ Dussehra was very popular

among the Kshatriyas and the farming communities. This festival fell on the tenth day of Ashvin, which is now known as Vijayadashami, and Goddess Durga was worshipped by the aforementioned classes. Worshipping the tools of one's trade, business, or profession was also a special feature of this festival. Rajputs would decorate the heads of their horses with barley sprouts and perform their puja.⁶² Poornamasi (Full Moon) fell on the day of the full moon of Shravan and was the favorite festival of the Brahmins. Young women would tie a rakhi—a thread made of silk fibers and gold/silver lace—around the wrists of young men as a symbol of good fortune and affection.⁶³

Among the festivals of social importance, those related to the births of Ram, Krishna, Parshuram, and Narsingh are prominent. In our time [referring to the historical period discussed], the most popular deity was Krishna, and his sect was expanding rapidly. In Puri, Lord Jagannath was taken out in his chariot with great pageantry several times a year. People [revered] this form of Krishna treated him as if he were a living deity. Krishna was the embodiment of all the most sacred and supreme sentiments of the common people's minds. In Brajbhumi (near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh), where the Lord was born and where he played with his companions and the Gopis, every event of his life is celebrated with profound devotion. Jadunath Sarkar has presented a very grand description of this festival during Chaitanya's visit to Vrindavan.⁶⁴ Among pilgrimages, many journeys had become popular. Some journeys were undertaken for the tombs or relics of popular saints, and some to cities, just as they are today. During this period, the pilgrimage to river shrines was limited only to the Ganges, and this journey was especially undertaken in the early lunar months. Large groups of pilgrims would travel together for convenience and security, and would set out carrying sufficient food supplies for the long journey. Generally, these pilgrimages must have been pleasant and courageous for that era, which was characterized by arduous journeys and dangerous paths.⁶⁵

Those following the path of Bhakti (devotion) were divided into various sects. Among these, the most prominent sect was the Vaishnava sect. It was [divided into] four major divided into sects. The first sect was that of the followers of Ramanuja, who believed in the worship and devotion of Lakshmi-Narayan. The second sect was that of the followers of Chaitanya. They called Chaitanya by the name of Gauranga Mahaprabhu and believed in the worship and devotion of Shri Krishna. Their main religious activity was to become filled with emotion through bhajan-kirtan (devotional songs), raslila, etc., and to dance, sing, and remember Krishna. They composed many bhajans and kirtans in Sanskrit and Bengali languages. This sect was very popular in Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh. The third sect was that of the followers of Vallabhacharya. Vallabhacharya's son, Vitthalnath, and his son, Gokulnath, made this sect very popular. They were worshippers of Krishna and emphasized idol worship. Among the followers of this sect, there were eight excellent poets and singers, among whom Surdas and Mirabai became particularly popular. The bhajans composed by them proved to be an inspiration to millions of people. The fourth sect was that of the followers of Ramananda, who were worshippers of Ram-Sita. Their followers were divided into various small sects, and while emphasizing devotion, they taught the belief in the worship of God. Saints like Malukdas and Shivdayal were among them, and each of them established a new sect.⁶⁶

While believing in the devotion of Ram-Sita, the upper-caste Hindus remained separate from these worshippers of the Nirguna (formless) God. They were led by Tulsidas...did. By composing Ramcharitmanas and Vinaya Patrika, Tulsidas accorded a divine status to Ram-Sita and made the devotion and worship of Ram-Sita extremely popular. There were differences among these various sects, but they were all in agreement on one point: they all believed in love and devotion to God and considered it the path to attaining God or Moksha (salvation). They made the path of Bhakti the most popular in India. The Bhakti movement fostered the development of various regional languages, enriched Indian culture through the construction of philosophies, bhajans, songs, temples, etc., and presented a simple path for the common people to attain God; however, many ignorant and selfish individuals also misused it. The "Sakhi-Sampraday" considered only Krishna to be the sole male and regarded all other men as females. Their male followers began to wear women's attire and started participating in Ras-lilas with women, which led to immoral relationships between men and women. Similarly, the practice of dedicating women to the guru, considering the guru as an embodiment of Krishna, led to the

spread of misconduct. Wealth began to be squandered in temples as well. The Ras-lilas of Krishna were also used in a wrong manner, which encouraged inappropriate relations between men and women.⁶⁷ Guru Nanak, by giving birth to the Sikh sect, inspired many new religious reforms. This began among the men and women of Punjab.

Conclusion;

it is seen that even though there was a contribution of women in art, literature, and culture, it did not receive much patronage. In the field of architecture or music, the role of women was indirect. In the economy of the Mughal era, the contribution of women was limited to household work. Today, when we talk about women's economic self-reliance, those days of the Mughal era remind us of a deep crisis.

Finally, this research paper proves that women in the Mughal Era faced many social and personal adversities. Yet, the glory of their courage, patience, and sacrifice remains immortal on the pages of history. It is a message for the present generation that it is impossible to build a strong society without the combined efforts of men and women. We must build our present and future by learning from history, where women will get their deserved respect and rights.

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