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The Role of Royal Women in the Establishment of Adil Shahi Sultanate of Bijapur (1489-1534)

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Abstract

The role of women in politics has remained an area of interest, but there is still a dearth of research the documents of such participation. Given the dominance of patriarchal values, it has generally been accepted that there was little scope for women to participate in public/political life. However, history does throw up a few names of queens like Raziya Sultana, Nur Jahan, Chand Bibi, Jijabai, Tarabai, and Ahilyabai Holkar, who must, however, be seen as rather exceptional cases. This does not mean that there were no women in politics other than these. An attempt is made in this paper to throw light on the role of women in the establishment of the Adil Shahi dynasty of Bijapur. The establishment period (1489-1534) was the period of the first three sultans. During these 45 years the mother of the founder Sultan Yusuf Adil Shah, his foster sister Dilshad Agha and Queen Bubuji Khanum played an important role, which helped to establish the Sultanate on a firm foundation.

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1 INTRODUCTION

When talking about the role of women in the pre-modern period, the tendency has been to focus on a few 'great' women, while ignoring the large majority of women who played different roles in society, economy and polity. Such writings have also tended to focus on the queens of the Delhi Sultanate (like Raziya) or the Mughal Empire (Nur Jahan in particular). This emphasis can be seen even when one comes to the Deccan, where the focus is primarily on the 17th century, on great women like Jijabai, Tarabai, and then on women of power like Ahilyabai Holkar, or, more rarely, Chand Bibi. The 'great women in history' is a paradigm that is now being less used; still, it remains important when studying dynasties and kingdoms which are still under-researched. This paper is an attempt to focus on the role

of women in the establishment of the Adil Shahi dynasty of Bijapur.

As said above, the role of women in politics has been seen as being almost nil during the entire medieval period. However, one must make a distinction between visibility and inactivity, for during critical conditions women had contributed something for and to the state. While studying the sources of medieval Indian history only a few names emerge. This situation was more or less similar during the rule of Delhi Sultanate, Mughal Empire, Bahmani Sultanate and Vijaynagar Empire. Women have shown remarkable competence in other aspects of life such as art, literature, music, religion, etc., and have influenced politics directly or indirectly; but their direct participation in the political scene was not encouraged. The study shows that no woman had

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become a ruler of the state but there are several occasions when they played a major role in the political affairs of the state. This paper attempts to study the role of royal women in the establishment of Adil Shahi Sultanate. Adil Shahi Sultanate was established by Yusuf Adil Shah in 1489 at Bijapur and was in existence for a period of nearly 200 years. The royal women namely Bubujee Khanum, Dilshad Agha, Chand Bibi, Badi Saheba, Shah Bano Begum, etc. played valuable roles in this period and even showed willingness to sacrifice everything for the Sultanate.

The present paper proposes to, (a) study the role of royal women in the Adil Shahi Sultanate during the foundation period (1489-1534); this was the period of the first three sultans (b) analyze the contribution of the royal women to the political affairs of Adil Shahi Sultanate during the state building phase. The present work is primarily based on historical method (archival study).

For a long time the historiography of the Adil Shahi Sultanate of Bijapur was characterized by an over emphasis on the political, cultural or diplomatic history and neglect of social aspects, particularly the role of women, of Adil Shahi Sultanate. A significant reason for this imbalance was the availability of rich source materials on the former and relative lack of information on the latter. The earliest works on the Deccan was the two volume work of J.D.E. Gribble, *History of the Deccan*, was a brief political history of Deccan including a section on Adil Shahi Sultanate, where the story of Queen Chand has been narrated. P. M. Joshi's Ph. D. thesis entitled "The Kingdom of Bijapur" and jointly edited work in two volumes with H. K. Sherwani "*History of Medieval Deccan, 1295-1724*" throws light on political and cultural history of Adil Shahi Sultanate. D. C. Verma, in his work *History of Bijapur*, gives a concise history of Adil Shahi Sultanate. M. A. Nayeem's work '*External Relations of the Bijapur Kingdom, 1489-1686*', put light on external relation of the Bijapur kingdom with the other contemporary regimes. R. M. Eaton's master work, entitled "*Sufis of Bijapur 1300-1700*," provides the life of various Sufi's in Bijapur. The first volume of '*The Cambridge Economic History of India*', edited by Tapan Raychaudhari and Irfan Habib, provides general economic picture of Medieval South India and Deccan. Sinnappah Arasratnam's book entitled '*Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1650-1740*', gives some of the economic activities of the Adil Shahi Sultanate on the Coromandel Coast in the second half of the seventeenth century. B. S. Shastri's article, "The Portuguese Commercial Relations with Bijapur in the Seventeenth Century", throws some light on Bijapur's commercial relations with Portuguese. Hiroshi Fukazawa's book entitled '*The Medieval Deccan: Peasants, Social System and States*', describe the life of Kunbina, i.e. female labor during eighteenth century Maharashtra. Richard M. Eaton's work *The Social History of the Deccan 1300-1761*, narrates the

life of Queen Tarabai (1675-1761) from socio-political perspective. Afzal Ahmad's work entitled '*Indo Portuguese Diplomacy during the 16th and 17th Centuries (1500-1663)*', provides some economic causes underlying the diplomatic relations between the Portuguese and Bijapur. Abdul Gani Imaratwale's work '*History of Bijapur Subha 1686-1885*', provides some information of the revenue collection in Bijapur Subha. Therefore, an attempt has been made here to throw some light on the feminist aspect of Adil Shahi Sultanate; hence the political contribution of royal women during the first 45 years is analyzed here. Persian sources and their translations are useful to understand the socio-political background of the sultanate. Travel Accounts, various Gazetteers, and other secondary sources have also been consulted for this study.

2 SURVIVAL OF YUSUF ADIL SHAH

The Adil Shahi Sultanate was established by Yusuf Adil Shah in 1489 at Bijapur. During the period of 200 years of the Sultanate, on many occasions the royal women contributed to the sustenance of the state. First among these royal women were the Queen of Constantinople and the mother of Yusuf Adil Shah. The Queen played a very important role in the survival of Yusuf's life. 'Yusuf was the younger son of Agha Morad, Sultan of Constantinople (1421-1451). He was born about 1443. In the family of Agha Morad, it was the custom to allow only one male child to survive. Therefore, Yusuf's elder brother "Salim" later named as Muhammad-II became Sultan, ordered the destruction of his entire brothers (Joshi, 1958: 12). Our major source for the period, the account of Ferishta, says that the Queen urged that Yusuf's life be spared, but her request was refused therefore, she was determined to save him. Turning to a Persian merchant named Khwaja Imad-ud-din, she enquired whether he had any male slaves for sale. At the time the merchant had five Georgians, and two Circassian male children. From among these she selected and purchased a Circassian boy, as he bore some resemblance to the Prince and committed Yusuf to the merchant's care. The next morning, the ministers came to the door of the Queen's apartments and demanded her son. She found one minister somewhat reliable therefore frankly informed him of the deception and bound him to favor her plan by large gifts. The dummy Yusuf was accordingly strangled, his body being brought out, wrapped in a shroud, by the minister, whose integrity was not suspected, and it was interred without examination (Briggs, 2006:1-2).

The Queen gave the boy Yusuf to the care of the merchant, and exacted a promise from him that he would protect him through life. Khwaja Imad-ud-din kindly fulfilled his promise. According to Fuzuni Astrabadi, 'she has promised Khwaja to give large amount of money and jewels. And produced a box full of jewels and diamonds which could be of use and sufficient not only for him but even for many generations of his family. She added that wherever he

might remain, he would annually get one lakh Altoon, a Turkish currency (Joshi, 1958: 14).

Ferishta provides the details about how Khwaja takes care of Yusuf. 'He took the boy with him first to Ardbeel, where he enrolled him among the disciples of the venerable Sheik Suffy and then to Sava in Persia. Khwaja 'made known to him the secret of his birth and carefully attended to his rearing and training' when he was seven years of age. The next year the Queen sent a person to Sava to know Yusuf's welfare; and the messenger, after an absence of more than two years returned to the Queen and presented her with a letter written by Yusuf. Later on, the Queen sent Yusuf's nurse, with her son Ghuzunfar Beg and her daughter Dilshad Agha to Sava, accompanied by her former messenger, and also a large sum of money for the use of Yusuf. They seem to have never afterwards quitted him. Yusuf remained at Sava till he was sixteen years old' (Briggs, 2006:2). Being a teenager Yusuf's stay at Sava was risky and it appears that Dilshad Agha was with him for a period not less than four years. Thus as a foster brother and sister they both Dilshad and Ghuzunfar Beg took great care of Yusuf.

This is perhaps the most detailed account of Yusuf's early life, as given by Ferishta. How much of this is genuine and how much fabricated, in order to claim a higher lineage for the new king, is difficult to determine. The existence of the Queen and of the merchants involved in the slave trade, as well as the areas from which the slaves were procured, is, however, factual, as is the description of the many networks of contact that the merchants had across Persia, Turkey, and India.

3 YUSUF'S SAFE ARRIVAL IN THE BAHMANI SULTANATE

But Yusuf's stay at Sava became risky as a whisper got abroad that a prince was in Sava. According to Ferishta, "Some careless words of the nurse made known the secret of Yusuf's survival, and they were forced to bribe the Turkish governor heavily before they were allowed to leave Sava. They fled to Kum-Isphahan and from there to Shiraz. Here Yusuf, warned in a dream, set out for India and in 1461 reached the port of Dabhol in Ratnagiri district. He was then about seventeen, handsome, of pleasing manner, and well educated. A Persian merchant who had come to Dabhol for trade invited him to accompany him to Bidar, then the capital of Bahmani Sultanate. Here Yusuf was sold, nominally it may be supposed, to the minister Mahmud Gawan (Briggs, 2006:2-3). According to Rafi-ud-din Shirazi, the founder of the Bijapur Sultanate, Yusuf Adil Khan (r. 1490-1510) had himself been brought to the Deccan by an Iranian merchant, Khwaja Zainal Abidin Simnani, who had been sent out to the Persian Gulf by Mahmud Shah Bahmani to procure ghulams (Subrahmanyam, 1992). 'Here, after an exacting apprenticeship, he rose from position to position and became a confidant of Mahmud Gawan. That great minister recognized

Yusuf's capacity as a soldier and statesman and entrusted him with responsibilities till he was elevated to the position of a *tarfdar* or Governor' (Sherwani and Joshi, 1973:291). Thus, Yusuf got an opportunity to prove himself in the Bahmani Sultanate. Initially Muhamud Gawan appointed him as a governor of Daulatabad and on Mahmud's death transferred him to Bijapur (Duff, 1826:52). In 1482, on the accession of Mahmud Shah II (1482-1518), Adil Khan visited Bidar. This visit seems to have been as much a demonstration of strength as a compliment; all the foreign troops looked to him as their leader and encamped with his troops outside of the city. The management of the kingdom was then in the hand of Nizam-ul-Mulk Bahri who had been the principal leader behind the murder of Mahmud Gawan (Bombay Gazetteer Karnatak: 404). Now Nizam-ul-Mulk started planning to remove Yusuf and replace Adil Khan Dakhni as governor of Bijapur. He initiated the massacre of the Turks. It is estimated that as many as four thousand were killed in cold blood. Yusuf now fully realized that Bidar was not the place for him and he left for Bijapur leaving Nizam-ul-Mulk in full control (Sherwani, 1985:247). Though nominally submissive, Yusuf was pleased that he had nothing to expect from the king. He returned to Bijapur and never revisited the capital.

4 ESTABLISHMENT OF ADIL SHAHI SULTANATE

After the visit to Bidar, Yusuf returned to Bijapur with some decision. He governed his province as a half-independent chief, till in 1489, when he threw the last remnant of the allegiance and assumed the signs of royalty. He possessed himself of the country from the Bhima to Bijapur, fixed on Bijapur as his capital, and began constructing a fort on the old site of Bichkanhali (Bombay Gazetteer Karnatak: 404-405). The role of Yusuf's mother and his sister Dilshad Agha was very important for the survival of his life and ultimately this survival drove him towards the establishment of a new kingdom, i.e. the Adil Shahi Sultanate of Bijapur. Another woman who played an important role in Yusuf's life was his wife, Bibiji Khanum. She was the daughter of a Maratha noble. Verma (1974) described Bibiji Khanum's entry in Yusuf's life, 'During the course of an expedition, he had defeated a Bahmani Maratha noble, Mukund Rao, and his brother, and the booty that had fallen into his hands had included a sixteen-year old young girl of considerable beauty and intelligence. Yusuf converted her to Islam, gave her the name of Bibiji Khanum and married her. She bore him four children, a son and three daughters. The three girls born of the Bibiji Khanum were decently married into neighboring royal houses. The eldest, Maryam, had been married to Burhan Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar, the second Khadija, to the Berar ruler 'Ala' al-Din 'Imad Shah and the third, Bibi Sati, to the crown Prince Ahmad, the son of the Bahmani ruler Mahmud' (Verma, 1974:16-17).

Yusuf Adil Shah was seen as just and merciful to his subjects of all creeds and classes. Colonel Meadows Taylor argued that 'it is probable that his marriage to a Hindu lady, the daughter of a Maratha chieftain, his only wife, may have given him more sympathy with his Hindu subjects than was at all common at that time' (Cousens, 1889:20). However, this is a rather problematic statement to accept, for it echoes the ideas of colonial rule and the deep-rooted enmity of the two communities; it is significant, however, that Taylor attributes the attitude to his wife. While it is probably true that there would have been greater acceptance of a new king if he were seen to honor and accept the existing elites, especially among the common people, to state that it was only because of the alliance that he was accepted is rather difficult to accept. On the other hand, to say that the fact of his wife having only her religion to recommend her, is also problematic, for it denies her any role but that assigned through religion. Bibiji Khanum, according to the sources, certainly provided valuable support to the Adil Shahi rule during the foundation stage. Bibiji Khanam contributed for the Sultanate even after the death of Yusuf Adil Shah (1510). Yusuf had one son, Ismail, and three daughters. No information was available about their contribution to the Adil Shahi state during Yusuf's reign as a daughter or even as a sister during the early and crucial years of her brother Ismail's rule. Only some references about their marriages are to be found in the contemporary sources. Henry Cousens informs about their marriages, 'The latter were Khadijah Sultana, married to Alla-ud-din Bada Ruwala, son of Imad-ul-mulk of Berar, Mariam or Karima Sultana, married to Sultan Burhan Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar, and Bibi Sati, who was married to Ahmad Shah, son of Sultan Mahmud Bahmani of Bidar' (Cousens, 1889:84).

5 THREAT DURING THE MINORITY OF ISMAIL

Prince Ismail ascended the throne when he was only 5 years old. 'After the death of Yusuf Adil Shah, Prince Ismail a boy of five, succeeded to his father at Bijapur with Kamal Khan as regent. Kamal Khan was very ambitious and not satisfied with the power of the regent and aspired to possess the crown. As he was a believer in Sunni rites, he discontinued the Shia form of Islam, which was inaugurated by Yusuf Adil Shah, and substituted it by Sunni rites. He suppressed the Afaqi nobility in the capital, (Sherwani and Joshi, 1973:305) and planned and fixed a day, 30th of May 1511, to depose Ismail (Bombay Gazetteer Karnatak: 410). Ferishta and Bombay Gazetteer gives the account how the plan of killing Kamal Khan was executed, 'as the astrologer advised Kamal Khan that certain days of present month were unfavorable to his design, therefore he delayed his plan and confined himself to his palace giving out that he was ill'. Bibuji Khanam and Ismail had learnt about Kamal Khan's plan and this delay gave Bibuji Khanam, the chance of attempting to free Ismail. Using Kamal Khan's isolation against him, she

contacted Yusuf Turk [Also known as Yusuf Gilani, Joshi, 1958: 58], the king's foster father, and convinced him to kill Kamal Khan. She further used a spy in her household, an old woman, to further her plans. Sending the old woman with an offering of money to the Regent, as sign of her good wishes, she also told the messenger that Yusuf Turk was keen on making pilgrimage to Mecca and wanted the Regent's permission to do so. The old woman consented; and going first to Kamal Khan, delivered the Queen's offering and message in such a manner that the Kamal Khan was highly pleased, and gave orders to admit Yusuf Turk. Yusuf approaching, according to custom, with great respect and humility, made Kamal pleased, who calling him nearer and stretched out his hands to give him a '*pan*¹'. Yusuf took this opportunity and stabbed Kamal Khan consequently Yusuf Turk was cut into pieces by the attendants of Kamal Khan (Briggs, 2006:23; Bombay Gazetteer Karnatak: 410-11). Though Kamal Khan was killed, the task was not over for the Queen. Now Kamal Khan's mother, with Kamal Khan's son Safdar Khan, led the situation. Ferishta clearly described this event, "She commanded the attendants to avoid crying and shouting, gave out that Kamal Khan was wounded and not dead. To support this story, she placed the body, supported by pillows in a balcony of the palace window overlooking the palace court as if to receive the salutation of the people. Taking advantage of the anger caused by the attempted assassination, and knowing that every moment's delay helped the royal party to complete their arrangements for defense, Safdar Jang, as per the instructions of his grandmother, hurried with a body of armed men to the citadel and attacked the palace to seize Ismail Adil Shah and his mother along with other relatives. To see the enemy near by the apartment, the Queen apprehending that Yusuf Turk failed in his attempt, and that Kamal Khan out of resentment had hastened his operations to dethrone her son, thought it prudent to pretend ignorance of Yusuf's design, and to attempt to turn away the storm by peaceful talk and surrender. But Dilshad Agha, Ismail Adil Shah's foster aunt, remarked, that "in such a crisis as the present, valour and the fortitude would be of more avail than surrender. She instantly ordered the palace-gates to be shut, and sent out her eunuch, Mallik Sandul, to the few of Turks, who were on duty in the outer court of the seraglio, informing them, that Kamal Khan, with a view of deposing Ismail Adil Shah their sovereign, was advancing to assassinate him and the whole of the royal family. She entreated them, therefore, that if they were men, they would not regard the superiority of the enemy, but valiantly assist their Prince against the traitor, who, by the divine blessing, would be overwhelmed in the enormity of his accursed ingratitude. The foreign guards declared their resolution to defend their young Adil Shah, and both Dilshad Agha and Bibuji Khanam now came out, dressed as men, and clad in *armour*, with bows and arrows in their hands, attended by the young Ismail, who had the yellow

umbrella of his father held over him by a Turkish female, Moortufa” (Briggs, 2006:23-24).

Meanwhile Safdar Jang tries to utilize the anger caused by the attempted assassination of his father. As he knows that every moment's delay would help the royal party to prepare their defense, 'hurried with a body of armed men to the citadel and attacked the palace' (Bombay Gazetteer Karnataka: 411). But he was checked there by the royal force though they were less in number. Ferishta elaborated on this action, "Sufdur Khan, was opposed by the Turks with arrows from the palace wall under the supervision of Ismail and the royal women. But as he was superior in numbers, therefore, the party of brave Turks had little chance. Many of them were killed and the rest withdrew. This created a painful situation. At this instant, Moostafa Khan and Sikandar Khan Koomy, whom Kamal Khan, treated as insignificant and expelled from the charge of citadel, hastened with fifty Deccany matchlock-men to the palace wall and joined the royal party. The enemy, though now kept in check, could not effectually be repulsed. Many soldiers continued to fall from both sides. Dilshad Agha now sent a servant privately over the wall in to the city, to inform all the foreigners of the danger to which their king was exposed, entreating them to hasten to his assistance, promising them to admit them over a bastion behind the palace. The rebels not having secured this spot, many of the King's friends ascended by the ropes thrown over to them by this enterprising female for the purpose, till at last the party in the palace amounted to one hundred and fifty foreign archers, fifty matchlock-men, nineteen Turkey slaves, and twenty-five Abyssinians. Dilshad Agha, with a veil on her head, fought with them, and by animating speeches encouraged their exertions, promising that the King would reward them all with high honors. Safdar Jang, perceiving that the numbers within increased, secured the approaches to the palace to prevent more from entering, and made a desperate attack with five hundred men, bringing a cannon also to batter down the walls. Many of the besieged people fell at this time, and almost all the Deccanies and Abyssinians threw themselves over the battlements and fled. The foreigners now concealed themselves and remained silent behind the parapet wall. Safdar Jang, concluding they had fled, broke open the outer gate of the palace, and entered the court, but while attempting to force the inner door the gallant Dilshad caused a volley of shot and arrows to be discharged from the terrace, which did great execution, killing and wounding some of the principal men of the Kamal Khan's party. An arrow also pierced the eye of Safdar Jang, who ran under a wall over which the King himself was standing; and the royal youth, knowing his person [i.e. enemy], rolled down a heavy stone from the terrace, which crushed him to death as he lay couched to avoid the shot (Briggs, 2006:24-25). Meadows Taylor also visualized the leading role of Dilshad Agha and Bubuji Khanam to the traveler in his description of Bijapur court, 'The court which the devoted Dilshad Agha, and her royal mistress Booboojee Khanam,

Queen of Yusuf Adil Shah, clad in armour, and fighting among their soldiers, defended against the attempts of the treacherous Kumal Khan to murder the young king Ismail; the place where the son of Kumal Khan stood, when the young king pushed over a stone from the parapet above, which crushed him to death; the window where the dead body of Kumal Khan was set out, as if alive, to encourage the soldiery in their brutal assault; the place on the ramparts where Dilshad Agha threw over the ropes, and the faithful band of Persians and Moghuls ascended by them and saved the Queen and her son (Cousens, 1889:3-4).

Elimination of Safdar Jang was the crucial victory to the royal party. It was decided to take the psychological advantage of the victory and the news communicated to the people. 'At the suggestion of Dilshad, the heads of Kamal Khan and Safdar Khan were sent on with a guard by sally port, to be displayed through the streets of the city, for the information of the people (Briggs, 2006:25-26). After the death of Safdar Khan the leaderless *Dakhnis* fled for safety and the royal cause triumphed. Never again during the rule of Ismail Adil Shah were the *Dakhnis* encouraged or allowed to enter royal service. Dilshad Agha called upon to the captain of *afaquis*, 'Muhammad Lari', who was rewarded with the title of Asad Khan, to display his administrative acumen and in consultation with him and other prominent nobles she established the old order, i.e. Shia form of religion, in the kingdom, which had been put aside by the *Dakhani* ascendancy (Sherwani and Joshi, 1973:307). Dilshad Agha played an important role in Ismail's education. 'Ismail Adil Shah was founder of Turkish and Persian manners music and language than of those of the Deccan and rarely made use of Deccan tongue. This was owing to the education he had received from his aunt Dilshad Agha, who, by his father's desire, and also due to factional politics, kept him as much as possible from the company of Deccanis, so that he had little relish for their society (Briggs, 2006:44). After getting settled on throne Ismail played an important role in the expansion and wellbeing of the kingdom. He died in 1534. But surprisingly no contemporary text of the period mentions any more contribution of these royal women during the post settlement of Ismail Adil Shah on the throne.

6 UNWORTHY RULE OF MALLU ADIL SHAH

It was Ismail's dying wish that the rightful heir, Mallu, his eldest son, should succeed him, and this he desired Asad Khan to see too (Cousens, 1889:93). After the death of Ismail Adil Shah in 1534, Asad Khan placed Mallu on the throne. But Mallu Adil Shah proved a disgrace to his dynasty. He 'abandoned himself to excess as to women, wine, music, dancing, and low vices; in the indulgence of which he spent the whole of his time, leaving the direction of his state of affairs to a few profligate favorites. According to the sources, such activities antagonized many of his nobles. Particularly, offensive to them was his practice of taking children of some of his people by force to his court, and 'using

them for shameful purposes'. One such noble, Yusuf Khan retired to his *jagir* with his family rather than succumb to demands of this kind. His example was followed by other nobles as well' (Briggs, 2006:46). Now, Bubuji Khanam, also hurt by the shameful and dishonorable conduct of Mallu Khan and she decided to depose him. "She wrote to Yusuf Khan, that as Mallu Adil Shah was unworthy to reign, she wished he would assist her in dethroning him, and in elevating his younger brother Ibrahim to the throne. Yusuf Khan informed the whole matter to Assad Khan by sending one of his friends to Belgam and after his favorable reply sent back Queen's messengers with assurances of implicit compliance with her commands; and shortly after, on a day fixed on between them, he arrived at Bijapur, and suddenly entered the citadel with two hundred soldiers. Mallu Adil Shah was seized, and blinded, by orders of his grandmother, together with his youngest brother, Allu Khan, after an inglorious reign of only six months. Prince Ibrahim was immediately raised to the throne under the title of Ibrahim Adil Shah (Briggs, 2006:46; Parasnis, 1968:46-47). After a short reign of seven months he was accordingly set aside and blinded, and his younger brother Ibrahim was hailed king in his stead. Thus Bubuji Khanam played very important role in the dethronement of Mallu Adil Shah.

7 CONCLUSION

Yusuf Adil Shah (1489-1510), Ismail Adil Shah (1510-1534) and Mallu Adil Shah (1534-35) were the first three sultans of Adil Shahi Sultanate. This period was the foundation phase of the sultanate; it went through various ups and downs. On many occasions, the sultan and the sultanate itself was in danger. As mentioned above, Yusuf Adil Shah's mother, his foster sister Dilshad Agha saved Yusuf's life from his brother Muhammad-II (Sultan of Constantinople), later on Yusuf's Queen Bubuji Khanam and Dilshad Agha played a very important role and participated in the Adil Shahi politics during this period; they also saved Ismail's life from Kamal Khan. Bubuji Khanam, played very important role to save the sultanate from internal threat and dethrone of Mallu Adil Shah to end his unworthy reign. These 45 years was the setting period of the Sultanate; it was therefore, was important from the foundation point of view. The Sultanate after this solid foundation stood for next 150 years. Apart from the royal side there was another woman, i.e. the widow of Kamal Khan; she herself led the opposite front after the death of Kamal Khan. Her activities were also noteworthy from a feminist point of view. Thus, during their contribution to these activities the talent, physical and mental abilities, skills and other qualities of these royal women were tested. They showed great temperament equal to the men's, 'who performed the role as rivals of the throne', and even sometime surpassed them in the abilities and tactics. Thus, these royal women served for the survival of the state and sometimes put their lives in danger, even though none of them ever showed any motive to claim their share in the

political affairs; they rather worked for the patriarchal values.

As said at the beginning, one of the early paradigms in women's studies has been that of 'great women'. In a seminal work, Maitreyi Krishnaraj asked whether this was to do with "writing women's history, or writing women into history" (Krishnaraj, 2005). One answer that she herself provided was that it was necessary to do both. 'Great women' as a category of analysis does not need to refer only to those women who have been politically active, even though this is the way it has been understood; and while this is the lens utilized in this paper, we are aware that there are other ways of examining the role of women. The women studied above did have agency, which was manifested in the different spheres of their own activities. Perhaps we could then argue that these women, in their time and space, occupied positions that both fitted into, and questioned the norms of behaviour of that time. They did not occupy 'public' positions, in the sense in which we understand the term today, but they definitely occupied positions of power, and upheld both power and privilege in their many activities.

NOTES

1. The presentation of betel leaf called as pan by the king on taking leave was a common practice during those days.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This paper has no conflict of interest.

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