

Fouzia Farooq Ahmed\*

## FEMALE SLAVES IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE DELHI SULTANATE, 1192-1526

### Abstract

*This article argues that although there is little mention of women in general and female slaves in particular in the Delhi Sultanate primary sources, these scarce references taken cumulatively create a legible portrait of female slaves. Secondly, based on primary sources of the Sultanate era, this article identifies some undercurrent themes about femininity and the social roles of female slaves. Thirdly, this article categorizes the sultanate historical sources into four genres, that are, political histories, Sufi literature, poetry and travelogues and tries to rationalize, compare and contrast the tone and treatment of female slaves in each of these genres.*

**Key Words:** Women in Medieval Muslim Societies, Female Slaves, Concubines, Harem

In the Delhi Sultanate literary sources women are less visible as they are mostly unnamed and have brusque references<sup>1</sup> This research integrates these scattered references and sketches a legible picture of the female slaves to postulate that they were double marginalized because of femininity and slavery.

Female slaves in Delhi Sultanate were of many types and categories. In elite households, while some women did become consorts, others were employed in various capacities of servitudes depending on their skills and talents. In some households exclusive categories of concubines and domestic workers might not have existed. The menial workers were wanting in education and skill and they were purchased expressly for rough domestic work. These 'invaluable commodities' were often subjected to all kinds of indignities. The concubines in many cases had a more privileged and in many cases even a dominating position in the household.<sup>2</sup> The travelogues, whose information was primarily based upon impression taken from market conversations depict such cases. For instance, Ibn-i Battuta (704-70/1304-68) mentions the case of an extremely expensive pair of shoes that was worth seven thousand Dinars. It belonged to Suhrawardi Sufi Shaikh Hud's slave woman or daughter. This shoe had emeralds and gems on it. Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq (r. 725-52/1325-51) had ordered the Shaikh to return Sultan's wealth to him. Failing to do so, according to the travelogue the

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\* Dr Fouzia Farooq Ahmed, Assistant Professor Department of History Quaid-i-Azam University  
fouzia.farooq@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> For a comparative view on silence and women in medieval Europe see, Jo Ann McNamara, "Women and Power through Family Revisited," in Mary Carpenter Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, eds. *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Cornell University Press, 2003) p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Kunwar Muhammad Ashraf, *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan (1200-1550)*, (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1978), p. 188.

Sultan had him killed.<sup>3</sup> A female slave having such extortionate possessions indicates the advantaged positions some female slaves enjoyed in their master's households.

The slave women of every age and skill were available in the markets and their prices were determined accordingly. The unskilled female slaves were inexpensive and numerous. There were some high-priced concubines that were unaffordable for many. In addition to slave girls of India, they were also imported from China, Byzantine, Persia and Turkistan.<sup>4</sup> In many harems, the presence of women from different ethnicities is humorously depicted by a Mughal noble can also be implied to the Delhi Sultanate:

Buy a Khurasani woman for her work, a Hindu woman for her capacity for nursing children, a Persian woman for the pleasures of her company and a Transoxianian for thrashing her as a warning for the other three.<sup>5</sup>

In royal harems, female slaves were in considerable numbers and were employed for service and cohabitation both.<sup>6</sup> Sultan Iltutmish (r. 607-33/ 1210-36) had numerous Turkish concubines. The first *de facto* female ruler of the Delhi Sultanate Shah Turkan (r. 633/1236) was one among them.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the *mal'ufuzat* literature also mentions a woman in the harem of Sultan Iltutmish who was his long lost sister.<sup>8</sup> Even the mother of the Sultana Radiyya (r. 633-37/1236-40), whose free or unfree status is not determined by Juzjani, was a Turk as well.<sup>9</sup> Although it is difficult to find the offices in the slave set up that would denote towards a hierarchy in the harems, cross-referencing from other Turkish royal households suggests that an administrative hierarchy of female slaves might have existed in the royal household of the Delhi Sultanate.

It was not merely the physical condition of the female slave that reflected the financial status of her master, but the numerical strength of the female slave force also defined their master. For instance, *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi* by Afif Shams Siraj, a political source of the times of Firuz Shah of Tughluq dynasty (r.752-88/1351-87), mentions the number of female slaves in order to draw the picture of affluence of their owner. Khan Jahan Maqbul, an important noble of Firuz Shah possessed no

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<sup>3</sup> Ibn-i Battuta, *Ajaib al-Asfar*, Trans. (Urdu) Muhammad Hussain (Islamabad: NIHCR, 1983), p. 154.

<sup>4</sup> Scott C. Levi, "Hindu Beyond Hindu Kush: Indians in the Central Asian Slave Trade." *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 12, Part 3 (November 2002): p. 285; R.C. Majumdar, *An Advanced History of India* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1950), p. 400; Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Royalty in Medieval India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997), p. 193.

<sup>5</sup> Quote taken from, Ashraf, *People of Hindustan*, p. 188.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn-i Battuta, *Ajaib al-Asfar*, p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> It is unclear whether Shah Turkan was an original name or a sonorous title.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Aslam, *Mal'ufuzati Adab ki Tarikhi Ahmiyat* (Lahore, 1995), p. 121.

<sup>9</sup> It seems that Juzjani uses the word Turk as a synonym of a Turkish slave. Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See Appendix "Turk". Also see, Sunil Kumar, "Service, Status and Military Slavery in the Delhi Sultanate" in *Slavery in South Asian History*, Indrani Cahatterjee and Richard M. Eaton (Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 86-9.

less than two thousand concubines of various ethnicities.<sup>10</sup> In many indigent households, the numerical strength of the female slaves was modest and no exclusive categories for maids and concubines might have existed.

The female slaves and eunuchs were also employed to guard and maintain a liaison between the inner and the outer worlds of the harems.<sup>11</sup> So large was the number of female slaves in the courts that Muhmad ibn-i Tuqhlug spent three days for presenting them as gifts to his nobles and manumitting them. Yet, another day was meant for their marriages. The sultan used these female slaves a medium to establish and strengthen relations with different members of the nobility. The account of the seven days *Eid* gala of Muhammad ibn Tuqhlug's reign presents a clear picture of this praxis.

In the first day of *Eid*, first come the daughters of rajas who are captured during that year's battles. They display their singing and dancing skills. The sultan distributes them among his friends, son-in-laws and princes. The ceremony takes place from the time of *Asar*. The second day's ceremony follows the same pattern. On the third day, the marriages of the sultan's family take place. On the fourth day, the male slaves are manumitted. On the fifth day, female slaves are emancipated. On the sixth day, the slave men and women are married. On the seventh day, alms are distributed.<sup>12</sup>

Slaves were the social outsiders. They were the individuals that were uprooted from their social environs and placed to struggle to survive in the new one. Although slavery by war captivity, abduction and fiscal default seem to be the foremost means that produced slaves in the Delhi Sultanate, yet female slaves changed many hands as an outcome of trade and gifts. There were specialized slave markets in almost all urban centers. We can infer from the *Malfuzat* of Sayyid Muhammad al-Husayni Gaysu Daraz, that there existed many slave markets in the vicinity of Delhi. One such market was inside the Palam gate.<sup>13</sup> When Barani tells about Ala al-Din Khalji's (r. 695-716/1296-1316) categorized markets for specific goods, it is easier to imagine markets that exclusively dealt with slaves.

Female slaves of every ethnicity were bought and sold in the urban centers. The presence of Chinese, African and Caucasian female slaves in the harems of nobles explains a lot about the extent of trade links between the sultanate and the outside world.<sup>14</sup> Also, there was large number of Indian slave population which filled the urban centers as menial workers, artisans and artists.

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<sup>10</sup>Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, *The Cambridge Economic History of India* vol. I: c. 1200-c. 1750 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 90.

<sup>11</sup> Nizami, *Royalty*, p. 88.

<sup>12</sup> Exact words translated in English from, Ibn-i Battuta, *Ajaib al-Asfar*, p. 108.

<sup>13</sup> Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Awraq-i-Muswvir: Ahd-i Wusta Ki Dilli* (Delhi: Delhi University, 1972), pp. 21-2.

<sup>14</sup> Levi, "Hindu Beyond Hindu Kush.": p. 285; Majumdar, *An Advanced History of India*, p. 400; Nizami, *Royalty in Medieval India*, p. 193.

The slaves from Assam were most prized among Indian slaves because of their strong physique. Ibn-i Battuta writes that a slave from Kamrup in Assam valued much more than the average Indian slave. The traveller also notices many female slaves in the province of Bengal.<sup>15</sup> One female slave that he purchased from the Bengal cost him one gold dinar.<sup>16</sup> Female and male slaves were imported from other regions including; Turkistan, China, Central Asia,<sup>17</sup> Africa, Byzantine, Persia,<sup>18</sup> Arabia, and Kherson.<sup>19</sup> The eunuchs from Bengal and Malay Islands were highly prized.<sup>20</sup> These eunuchs filled the harems and were to serve the elite women. Region of Sind had some slave markets and Ibn-i Battuta purchased slaves from there.<sup>21</sup> Slavery was a well documented practice and at some instance we find deeds for the sale and purchase of the slaves.<sup>22</sup> There were established categories of slaves and the prices of the slaves are also found in some non-Muslim sources as well. The stories of those who sold themselves or their children are not unknown in the sultanate era, for instance, a Gujarati source reports and incident about a woman who sold herself off due to poverty.<sup>23</sup> Barani also mentions people selling their family members in order to save themselves from starvation.

In most of the cases, it is the bread earner of the family who is the decision maker for its dependents. In the Delhi Sultanate, an interesting phenomena can be witnessed where some slaves were the bread earners of the family yet there is no mention of their desire for manumission. The Sufi sources refer to one impoverished Nur Turk's cotton carder slave paid him one *tanka* every day.<sup>24</sup> There were certain trustworthy slaves who would look after their master's financial affairs. The most famous example of this is Chishti Sufi Nizam al-Din Awaliya's (636-725/1238-1325) slave Iqbal who used to administer most of his financial affairs. While the saint would grace the devotees with his blessings, Iqbal would take care of the endowments extended by the latter.<sup>25</sup> According to *Khair al-Majalis*, a man whined about his poverty to Shaikh Nasir al-Din Mehmud Charagh-i Delhi (673-757/1274-1356) of Chishti order. He was unable to earn and his only source of earning was his slave who used to give him a third of the daily earnings.<sup>26</sup> However, it was not only male slaves who were helping their

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<sup>15</sup> As mentioned in, Kanhaiya Lall Srivastava, *The Position of Hindus Under the Delhi Sultanate: 1206-1526* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1980). p. 124.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Battutah, *Tughluq Kaleen Bharat*, translated by S. A. A. Rizvi, vol. 1, p. 301.

<sup>17</sup> Levi, "Hindus beyond Hindu Kush," p. 285.

<sup>18</sup> Majumdar, *Advanced History*, p. 400.

<sup>19</sup> Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Royalty in Medieval India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997), 193.

<sup>20</sup> Ashraf, *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>22</sup> Pushpa Parshad, *Famle Slavery in 13th Century Gujarat: Documents in Lekhapaddhati*, *Indian Historical Review*, Vol XV, no 1-2, 1988: p. 269.

<sup>23</sup> Pushpa Parshad, *Famle Slavery in 13th Century Gujarat: Documents in Lekhapaddhati*, *Indian Historical Review*, Vol XV, no 1-2, 1988: p. 273.

<sup>24</sup> Aslam, *Malfuzati Adab*, p. 29.

<sup>25</sup> Hamid ibn Fazalullah Jamali, *Siyar-al- Arifin*, trans. Muhammad Ayub Qadri (Lahore, 1989), pp. 122-3.

<sup>26</sup> Nasir al-Din Mehmud, *Khair al-Majalis*, ed. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami ( Aligarh: Muslim University Aligarh, n.d.), p. 33.

impoverished masters but there are examples of female slave doing so, as well. A similar instance is reported from the childhood of Chisti Sufi Nizam al-Din Awaliya (636-725/1238-1325). He lived with his mother in Badaun. The financial conditions of the family were not very good and they had to live hand to mouth. In such conditions a female slave worked besides her owner's family, to make both ends meet.<sup>27</sup>

Ibn-i Battuta (704-70/1304-68) mentions several female slave spies in his writings.<sup>28</sup> The sultans would locate their personal slaves in the service of nobles, whose responsibility was to keep the sultan updated about the activities of the nobles. Ibn-i Battuta was presented with female slaves by Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq's *wazir*.<sup>29</sup> Afif and Barni also mention this practice. Regarding the spy webs of the Delhi Sultans Ibn-i Battuta comments that,

It is the tradition of the Sultans of Hindustan that, in the household of every important or unimportant noble, slaves of the sultan are appointed, who update the sultan about the *amir*. The female slaves report to the sweepers, who inform to the investigation officers.<sup>30</sup>

The traveller mentions an incident where a noble was murdered by Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq (r. 725-52/1325-51), after gaining information of the previous night's quarrel between the noble and his lady. This news was transmitted by the chamber-maid. This woman might have been Sultan's gift to the noble whose duty was to report the everyday affairs of the noble's household to the sultan.<sup>31</sup>

The nature of slavery strictly according to the whims of the master and it was highly unlikely that the masters catered to the sensitivities towards the caste and origin of their slaves.<sup>32</sup> The rulers employed slaves in multiple types of jobs. According to Ibn-i Battuta (704-70/1304-68), in the royal palace, the slaves did most of the palace chores. He mentions slaves who sprayed rose-water in expensive gold and silver ewers on the visitors.<sup>33</sup> Out of one lac eight thousand slaves of Sultan Firuz Shah of Tughluq dynasty (r.752-88/1351-87) that Afif reports, twelve thousand were artisans. Nizam al-Din Awaliya (636-725/1238-1325) and Nur Turks's female slaves were cotton-carders and spinners as well.<sup>34</sup> In the household of the commoners many of the female slaves were employed to do domestic chores as cooking, cleaning the house, helping with the domestic animals, fetching water and farmer's aid.<sup>35</sup> Barani mentions the female slaves who used to fetch water from the well and were molested by the *mewatis*.<sup>36</sup> The historian mentions this occurrence as one of the many significant signs of mayhem

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibn-i Battuta, *Ajaib al-Asfar*, p. 176.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>30</sup> Text quotation translated in English from Ibid, p.179.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Habib, "An Essay in Interpretation," p. 294.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn-i Battuta, *Ajaib al-Asfar*, p. 108.

<sup>34</sup> Habib, "An Essay in Interpretation," p. 293.

<sup>35</sup> Pushpa Parshad, *Famle Slavery in 13th Century Gujarat: Documents in Lekhapaddhati*, Indian Historical Review, Vol XV, no 1-2, 1988: p. 269-70.

<sup>36</sup> Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, p.57

in Sultan Balban's reign. The Sultan later raided on the unruly mewatis to curtail their infidelities.

The slave concubines for the elite, due to market competition, must have been the women of exceptional talents. For instance, the famous Turkish slave of Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish (r. 607-33/ 1210-1236), mother of Rukn al-Din Firuz, Khudawand-i Jahan Shah Turkan (r. 633/1236), was a woman of cultivated religious and literary tastes. She was the in charge of the harem and had a reputation for her charities and lavish gifts to the *ulama*, sayyids and the pious people. Ambitious as she was, she had a determination to command and control. Therefore, she was able to rule the sultanate for six months in the name of her son. Thus she was the first de facto female ruler of Delhi Sultanate.<sup>37</sup>

Nonetheless, not all slave concubines were skilled or had a similar privileged life. Ibn-i Battuta mentions that the untrained female captives of war had little demand in the capital since they could not compete with the groomed female slaves that were easily available on reasonable prices.

It was this time that many women captive of war reached (to capital) as slaves. Ten from these were presented to me by the *wazir* (of Sultan Muhammad ibn-i Tughluq). I bestowed one (female slave) to the person who delivered these women but he did not accept it. My cronies took three minor female slaves from these. About rest I know naught. The female captives of war are very inexpensive in this country (India), because they are crude and uncivilized. The trained female slaves are also affordable therefore no one purchases (the untrained) female captives of war.<sup>38</sup>

Slave women were exchanged as presents among the royalties and the nobility. The Chinese Emperor presented one hundred male and female slaves to Sultan Muhammad b. Tughluq (r. 725-52/1325-51). The sultan in return, sent a hundred male slaves and a hundred female slaves that could sing and dance.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the sultan gave the slave women as endowments to his nobility.<sup>40</sup> There are frequent references available about the slave girls of the sultan who were expert and professional singers and dancers. Though in India, there were the girls of every racial stock, such as Turk, Qipchaq, Rum (Byzantine), Chinese and the like yet according to Al Umari preference was given to the attractive Indians on account of their beauty and skills. He judged the cultivated Indian girls superior to those of Turks and Qipchaq in attraction. Apart from it, their good education, training and attainment were their additional distinctions. Most of them were of golden or yellowish color.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Nizami, *Royalty*, p. 84.

<sup>38</sup> Text quotation translated from English by Ibn-i Battuta, *Ajaib al-Asfar*, p. 211.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>41</sup> Shihab al-Din abu Abbas Al-Umri, *A Fourteenth Century Arab Account of India Under Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughluq (Being English Translation of the Chapters on India from Shihab al Din al-Umari's Masalik al absar fi-mamluk al-amsar)*. Translated by Iqtidar Husain Siddiqi and Qazi Mohammad Ahmad (New Delhi: n.d), pp. 51-2.

The rich masters owned skilled female slaves. For instance, the slave women of Suhrawardiya Sufi Baha al-Din Zakaria Multani (566-666/1170-1267) were trained in religion,<sup>42</sup> and grinded wheat.<sup>43</sup> The financial worth of one Maulana Sharf al-Din Nagori's slave girl was reasonably high. Due to her consciousness about religion, and know-how of needle work, her price was around one hundred *tankas*.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, in 718/1318<sup>45</sup> a female child slave was purchased at Deogir in five *tankas*.<sup>46</sup> The fact denotes that the price for uncultivated female child was generally low. It is worth mentioning that there was a significant difference between the price of a male slave and a female slave. Menial male slaves fetched more prices, which indicate two facts. Firstly, the demand of male slaves was more than supply. The number of female captives of war must have been more than male war captives usually. Secondly, the male slaves were considered more effective and suitable for labor than their female counterparts. The prices of female slaves were at times analogous to many of the farm animals, which means that the female slaves as war captives were more in supply, thus their prices were less.

**Estimate of the Prices of Slaves and their Comparison with the Value of Live Stock**

<i>To</i>		
<i>Category</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
A female (girl) menial	5	12
A male consort	20	30
A concubine	30	40
An inexperienced servant boy	7	8
An experienced servant man	10	15
<b>Horses</b>		
A race-horse of quality from Arabia or Persia	1,000	4,000
An exceptional Tatari war horse	500	---
An ordinary Tatari war-horse	100	---
<b>Domestic Animals</b>		
A pack mule of the best class	4	5
A mule of another class	3	---
A cow for eating	1.50	2
A milch cow	3	4
A milch buffalo	10	12
A buffalo for meat	5	6
A fat sheep	10/48 of a <i>tanka</i>	14/48 of a <i>tanka</i>

<sup>42</sup> Aslam, *Malfizati Adab*, p. 27.

<sup>43</sup> Hasan Ala Sijzi, *Fuwaid al-Fuad*, trans. Muhammad Sarwar (Lahore, 1973), p. 300.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 357-8.

<sup>45</sup> Raychaudhuri and Habib, *Economic History*, p. 91.

<sup>46</sup> Aslam, *Malfizati Adab*, p. 36.

Information source: Simon Digby, *War Horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate A Study of M Supplies* (Oxford: Orient Monographs. 1971), pp. 37-8.

According to Al Umari in Muhammad ibn-i Tughluq's times the value of a menial female slave was maximum eight *tankas*. The female slave that could be used as service maids and consorts were available in fifteen *tankas*. Since Delhi was the capital therefore the prices there were more than rest of the country. The well groomed female slave fetched higher prices, sometimes as much as twenty thousand. Therefore, they were trained in various arts and skills. According to Al Umari, their grace, demeanor and sophistication had a direct relation with prices. Many of these slave girls memorized the Quran, could recite poetic verses, write, tell stories, sing, dance, play chauser and chess. The trainers and the slave girls took pride in their seductive capabilities as well.<sup>47</sup>

According to Al Umari:

One of them says: I shall capture the heart of my master within three days; the other says: I shall be the queen of his heart within a day. Third says: I shall captivate his heart in an hour; while the fourth says: what is to say about day and hour, I shall capture him in the twinkling of an eye.<sup>48</sup>

Interestingly, the literary evidences regarding the materialization of such audacious claims are sufficiently available as well. For instance, Ibn-i Battuta (704-70/1304–68) mentions a young *wazirzadah* (son of a *wazir*), who was in love with his slave girl. His last desire before being killed on the charges of an intrigue was, to eat a pan (beetle leaf) from the hand of his slave girl.<sup>49</sup> Maulana Yamini was a disciple of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Awaliya (636-725/1238-1325), who sold his slave girl due to financial restraints. Later, he discovered his love and inability to live without her. He thus strove to get her back. Sensing his keenness, the new owner raised the price of that female slave several times more. The *Maulana* could not purchase her back. Nevertheless, she was retrieved on the request of the Shaikh, as the new owner was also his disciple.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, a poet had fallen in love with a slave girl, Gul Chahra (as was the practice of renaming the slaves, the name of this girl might be attributive) amounting nine hundred *tankas*. The price was unaffordable for the poet, so he wrote an ode to her.<sup>51</sup> Ibn-i Battuta (704-70/1304–68) again quotes an incident about a trader who treasured his slave girl enormously. While she was sinking in a ship wrack, the trader proffered that, whoever would rescue his slave girl, would get ten *dinars* in reward.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Siddiqi and Ahmad, *Masalik al-Absar*, pp. 51-2.

<sup>48</sup> Text quotation from Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibn-i Battuta, *Ajaib al-Asfar*, p. 274.

<sup>50</sup> Amir Khward, Sayyid Muhammad Mubarak Alvi Kirmani. *Siyar al-Awaliyah*. Translated by Ejaz al-Haq Quddusi (Lahore: 1980), pp. 735-7.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn-i Battuta, *Ajaib al-Asfar*, p. 212.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 304.



Those who could not afford wives also compromised on slave girls. For instance, the mystics suggested their disciples to, either marry or take a *laundi* or slave concubine, for their carnal needs.<sup>53</sup> Among the nineteen disciples of Nizam al-Din Awaliya (636-725/1238-1325), one Maulana Qawam al-Din yak Dana Awadhi was cherished for his piety. He did not own a single slave all his life. However, in his old age he married a slave woman, who bore him two girls.<sup>54</sup>

Slaves were the social and cultural outsiders generally. They were natal alienated and socially dead individuals.<sup>55</sup> In the Sultanate sources there are no recorded instances where people were put to servitude within their own societies of origin. In most of the cases, being a slave women meant to start the physical and emotional relation anew altogether if even one was unwilling. According to Islamic law, the slave women were cohabitable for the Muslim men.<sup>56</sup> A majority of female slave population in the Delhi Sultanate was an outcome wars. While the political sources talk about the slave captives in generic terms and plurality in order to explain the fortunes of sultan as an outcome of success in war. The Sufi sources and the poetry do perceive them as intelligible individuals. These sources help to understand that not all female captives of war were treated as slaves. For instance Dival Rani's mother, Queen Kamla Devi who was captured during the 697/1297 campaign of Gujarat. Her status was that of a minor queen. Amir Khusraw in his *mathnavi* Dival Rani claims that the Queen had fallen in love with Ala-al-Din Khalji and wanted her daughter to be restored to her in Ala-al-Din Khalji's *harem*. The crown prince Khizr Khan was in love with the Dival Rani so much that he not only married her but also commissioned a love epic to Amir Khusraw. The love epic is not entirely factious and has a focus on some real events that can be verified by contrasting it with the other historical sources. A careful study of the source explains how Dival Rani was never perceived as a slave. The treatment of Dival Rani might be among the few happy accounts of captives of war.

The very instance of being a captive of war was perceived as abominable. As for the vanquished, sexual availability of their own women to enemy men brought great dishonor to the woman and her family. There are two instances of *jauhar*- mass immolation are recorded in the sultanate sources . Two of the recorded epics of Jauhars are from the Rajput clans. Around 1303 AD the Rani Padmani of Chitor along with other Rajput women performed *juhar* when the defeat of her husband Rana Ratan Singh and capture of the women as captives of war by Ala-al Din Khalji became inevitable future.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, the wife of Rana Hammir of Ranthambor's wife Ranga Devi also performed *jauhar* to save herself from becoming the captive of war.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Sijzi, *Fuwaid al-Fuad*, p. 373.

<sup>54</sup> Amir Khward, Amir Khurd, *Siyar al-Awaliyah*, p. 501.

<sup>55</sup> For the idea of Social Death see, Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 2-3.

<sup>56</sup> R. Brunschvig. 'Abd; *Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 13. (1986); See Tahfeem ul Qur'an by Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi, Vol. 2 pp. 112-113 footnote 44; Also see his commentary on verses [Quran 23:1]: Vol. 3, notes 7-1, p. 241; 2000, Islamic Publications.

<sup>57</sup> Lal, *History of Khaljis*, 110.

<sup>58</sup> Life and conditions of the people of hindustan, 192.

The ordeals of the ones who became captives of war are the heartrending stories of emotional and physical suffering. In *Lekhapaddhati* we find an incident of a female prisoner of war who had to sever all the links with past life, parents and husband, she was now the property of her new master *janmaagrahaka*.<sup>59</sup>

There are some moving incidents of slave owners being too overwhelmed by the plight of the female captives of war as to return them to their home. The accounts of such broken families are replete in the Sufi sources as they highlight the human dimension of pain. Hasan Ala Sijzi (651-737/1253-1336) mentions the incident of an elderly female slave from Mawasi, an area near Badaun. She was a captive of war and was purchased by Maulana Ala al-Din. Her pain and yearning to rejoin her son and family was such that her owner not only returned her to her house but also paid her some money, probably as compensation.<sup>60</sup> Hasan Ala Sijzi (651-737/1253-1336) reports a personal experience with female slavery as well. During Ala al-Din Khalji's (r. 695-716/1296-1316) campaign in Deogir, Maleeh the *mawala* (freed slave) of Hasan Ala Sijzi, purchased a young girl in five *tankas*. Later her traumatized parents presented double amount to retrieve her. Hasan purchased that girl from Maleeh in double amount- ten *tankas* and returned the child along with money to her parents.<sup>61</sup>

However, the practice of enslaving women in the Delhi Sultante was not particular to Muslims only. Just as, Muslims enslaved Hindu women of every status, that ranged from the paupers to royalties, many of whom were forced to submit themselves for cohabitation or to entertain those who could afford, with their dance and music. Similarly, many Muslim aristocratic and sayyid women enslaved by the Rajputs were taught the art of dancing and were forced to join *akharas*.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Pushpa Parshad, "Female Slavery in 13th Century Gujarat: Documents in Lekhapaddhat", *Indian Historical Review*, Vol XV, no 1-2, 1988: p. 269-70.

<sup>60</sup> Sijzi, *Fuwaid al-Fuad*, p. 324.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 379-80.

<sup>62</sup> Srivastava, *The Position of Hindus*, pp. 203- 4.