

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS OF THE MEDIEVAL MUSLIM ELITE

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By

NANDINI MATHUR

CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110 067

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जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067

CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI

DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled "Marriage Customs of the Medieval Muslim Elite" submitted by Nandini Mathur is in fulfilment of twelve credits out of twenty six credits for the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University and is her own work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

R. Champakalakshmi
Chairman

Shruti
Supervisor

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Nandini Mathur

Nandini Mathur.

INTRODUCTION

In this study, an attempt will be made to highlight the customary practices followed by the Indian medieval elite society, when they married. By 'elite' is meant the nobility and, the members of the royalty. The relevance of this research lies in the fact that marriage is a key social institution, which constitutes a centrifugal force in the life of every human being; it has the capacity to mould an entire lifestyle. As such, marriage affects different facets of life. In studying the evolution of a set pattern of marriage customs in the medieval Indian context, we gain an insight into the nature of the contemporary society, its ways of thinking, as well.

This study is an overview of the entire medieval period, which is seen to spread from the 8th century to the 18th. century; while, the area is restricted to Northern India. However, it must be pointed out that a region-wise study would bring out a wide variety of localised marriage customs which have not been dealt with here. We are concerned with the customs practised in the very core of medieval society, living within or around the royal court.

The primary sources studied for gathering the evidence, can be divided into three basic categories: (a) Traveller's accounts, (b) Court chronicles, and (c) Mughal paintings taken. Together, these sources are filled with information on this topic.

In the first chapter of this thesis, we will look into the ideology behind marriage, as perceived by the travellers and chroniclers. We will also take into account the official network involved in the marriage procedure during both the Sultanate and Mughal periods. The second chapter will deal with the nature of marriage customs and practices, among the medieval elite; the procedures, stage-wise, have been highlighted, to show a slow but sure evolution of a final, set marriage pattern for the Indo-Muslim elite class by the end of the Mughal period. The final chapter is concerned with the nature of political, matrimonial alliances, which are seen to have been a useful tool in statesmanship since early medieval days.

Two basic points have been looked into via this research: (a) the process of 'Indianization' and assimilation which the Indo - Muslims went through, by adapting several Indian, Hindu, customs into their own culture, and, (b) the manner in which a set pattern of Indo - Islamic marriage tradition evolved over time. A

comparision with modern - day practices, concerning marriage, is also attempted, wherever necessary. When we have noted that the ideal Muslim marriage, from early Arabia, was practically bereft of any other ceremonies except for the Nikah and the Walima feast, the richness of ceremony and customs in the Indo - Islamic medieval marriage causes one to think of their evolution within the Indian medieval setting.

CHAPTER - ONE

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS, OF THE MEDIEVAL ELITE

SOCIAL JUSTIFICATIONS, IDEOLOGY BEHIND MARRIAGE

'According to the ancient lawgivers' like Manu, marriage constitutes a necessary part of a man's life, while for the woman it is a primary function. It is considered to be the foremost of the Hindu **sanskaras**. The formal reason given as to why one must marry are three in number; a man (this injunction was directed at the male members of the populace) married to fulfill three ends : **dharna, praja, and rati**, i.e. for moral and dutiful considerations, for progeny especially male issue, and for sexual pleasure. It is to be noted here that sexual satisfaction comes in third in the list of priorities; however, it must also be seen that the sexual drive could not be suppressed and for keeping it controlled, marriage was deemed a necessity. Originally, it is said, that the sage Svetaketu devised the marriage system, and his reasons for doing so were to put a stop to indiscriminate sexual behaviour and to "promote the chaste sexual unions."

1. Saroj Gulati, Women and Society : Northern India in the 11th and 12th centuries. p.12.
2. Alchilshivar Jha, Sexual Designs in Indian Culture, p. 57.

Somewhere between the lines written in invisible ink, in the pages of the lawgivers' and the legend writers, was the deep-seated perception that unbridled passions are anaethma to society. In fact, if regularised and socially sanctioned sexual unions were not there, other social functions were hampered. For instance, without a legal marriage and legitimate heirs, the question of inheritance of property could not be settled without strife. This is just one practical example of the need for creating matrimonial bonds in a society based primarily upon land and agriculture. As we enter into the medieval centuries, we find the idea of civilized sexual behaviour is repeated, with added favour. Al-beruni, for instance, has this to say in support of marriage :

"No nation can exist without a regular married life, for it prevents the uproar of passions abhorred by the cultivated mind, and it removes all those causes which excite the animal to a fury
"3
always leading to harm.

3. Qeyamuddin Ahmad, trans. India: Al-Beruni, p.238.

He goes on to take the example of animals which live in pairs, helping each other, and protecting one another from the lustful advances of other members of the species. Seeing these advantages, he felt that matrimony, especially monogamous unions, were a 'necessary institution' in any society.

In Al-Beruni's assesment, there was a need to regularise sexual passions which, if left alone, led to sexual tensions. These were harmful for the 'nation'. It is noteworthy that an Arab traveller, while visiting India, felt necessitated to write on this particular subject; the observations of a traveller, whilst visiting a new country, are mostly seen to be those which are startling, odd, or contrary to the traveller's own experience. These tend to get recorded. Therefore, perhaps Al-Beruni gauged a certain laxity in sexual morals, which induced him to write about the sanctity and need for matrimony. There is enough evidence in the writings of early Arab travellers accounts and other contemporary works which tells us about the commonplace occurrence of female prostitution, selling of women slaves, taking of concubines, etc. Infact, it is recorded that prostitution in urban centres was actually encouraged by the state as it brought in sizeable revenues. The other reason given for promoting this otherwise condemned practice was to serve the needs of

'libidinal unmarried soldiers' who would otherwise have
4
worried the respectable female subjects.

One has to take into consideration that the period in which Al-Beruni visited India was one of strife and war; under such circumstances, the society was functioning in such a manner as to adapt itself to abnormal needs. During this early medieval period, when the process of territory consolidation was in progress, there was the problem of dealing with large batches of female captives, brought in after every war Sultan Mohammad-bin-Tughlak used to hold a massive darbar every now and then, and distributed these ladies, batch-wise and beauty-wise, to different ranks of his nobility, his
5
relatives, his chief slaves, etc.

The point being made is that during this early period, the availability of female companions (prostitutes, concubines, slave-girls etc.) far surpassed the demand for them. Therefore, there is seen to be an attendant inertia to restrict oneself to a single, formalised sexual union. Extra-marital arrangements,

4. Q. Ahmad, trans. India i Al-Beruni, p.241

5. Mahdi Hussain, trans, Rehla, p. 63.

as with concubines, ladies wed by mutah marriages (i.e. temporary marriages), female slaves, courtesans etc., was a part of life for the menfolk; whether this was equally acceptable to the ladies remains to be seen.

Ibn Batuta, himself a Qazi, is known to have contracted several easy marriages, for social and economic betterment.⁶ And in his case, the ladies from the higher social bracket, willing to marry him, were quite a few; he was at liberty to choose, though once his suit was rejected. It would, thus, be correct to say that the manner in which sexual relations were viewed in early medieval times was quite different from our present day perceptions of the same. There was a certain amount of freedom of expression in this field, helped considerably by the easy availability of a surplus (slave or captive) female population, which was helpless in determining its own fate. It would be wrong to assume that formal marriages did not take place; but these were not seen to be sexually exclusive or restrictive; besides the wife or wives, it was possible for a man to find pleasure in different female companions as well.

6. Mahdi Husain, trans Rohla, p.211-213. He married the step-daughter of Wazir Abdullah, while another wazir's daughter refused him. Then he married yet another wazir's daughter, plus the wife of Sultan Shihab-ud-din. By these marriages he bettered himself economically as well as status-wise. One marriage secured for him the post of qazi, whilst another brought him property. According to Ibn Batuta,

The prevalence of temporary, or mu'tah, marriages was also there. What is surprising, by the modern way of thinking, is that the women did not object to contracting such short-lived unions. Of course, Ibn-Batuta's reference to the acceptability of this institution by Indian women, can be taken as less than the gospel truth since it was in his own favour to write such a thing, for he himself was guilty of the offence many times over. This much is fact, however, that the women did not refuse to marry for short periods. It cannot be said for sure that the reason behind this was that they condoned such an arrangement (which was to their disadvantage), there could be other societal pressures such as family considerations, social reckoning, the need for security etc., which are not actually mentioned in the texts studied.

Abul Fazl furthers Al-Beruni's justification for the institution of marriage by adding a point or two. He gives four reasons for the encouragement of this social institution. ⁷ he says.

"Every care bestowed upon this wonderful tie between men is a means of preserving

contd.

"After I had become connected by marriage with the above-mentioned people, the vozir and the islanders feared me, for they felt themselves to be weak".

7. H. Blochmann, trans. Ain - i - Akbari, Vol. 1., p.287. The 4 reasons are highlighted in the direct quote given below.

the stability of the human race, and ensuring the progress of the world; it is a preventive against the outbreak of evil passions; and leads to the establishment of homes. Hence this majesty inasmuch as he is beningn, watches over great and small, and imbues men with his notion of the spiritual union and the equality of essence which he sees in marriage".

In this manner, we find that the state also promoted marriage, which was seen to be a stabilizing force conducive to 'progress'. The formation of homes was considered a good thing. That the state had to put forth such an ideology means that the reality left a lot to be desired. Therefore, the Emperor had to step in and put into a formalised, written form the ideal and expected mode of behaviour. In another place, Abul Fazi mentions that the monarch did not condone child marriages because they "bring forth no fruit".⁸ A saying attributed to Akbar gives the advice that a man should not have relations with women when moved by

8. H. Blochmann, trans. Ain, Vol. 1., p. 287.

passion alone, or with women who were either too young, too old, pregnant, or menstruating, though the reason is not given but can be surmised Akbar was known to have believed in the Hindu maxim : putrārtha Kriyate Varya, i.e. "A man takes a wife with the object of having sons".⁹ Progress in this society, therefore, was still inextricably linked with the continued building of homes and family. The reasons behind this continuation of an ideology from ancient times is that the Mughals were in need of a stable family life in their empire. They needed manpower to work the great Mughal war machinery; therefore, the birth of male children remained important. Secondly, the Mughals depended upon the economic surplus from the working of the land. A stable homefront affected agricultural production positively, since the labour put in often came from within the family itself, if the family relationships were well grounded, the work of agricultural production went on smoothly.

In the Mughal period, as well, we find the parallel placement of marital with extra-marital relationships.

9. Col. H.S. Jarett. trans. Ain, Vol. III, p. 449.

Manucci gives us evidence for both. According to him, the Hindus placed marriage in a priority position because for them it consisted of "one of the greatest felicities of human life".¹⁰ Yet, at the same time, he mentions that prostitution was an established and old profession; Aurangzeb enjoined these women to either get married or go elsewhere. In Shahjehan's reign, 'female dancers and public women' had enjoyed 'great freedom and popularity due to which their numbers (and earnings !)' were large. After Aurangzeb's advent, their numbers dwindled when some of these ladies married, went away,¹¹ or made themselves less conspicuous.

Similarly an early Arab traveller tells us that whilst prostitution was found in each and every town of India, "the Indians seriously believe in chastity and self-control."¹² If adultery was committed with a woman who was not a prostitute, it was considered a punishable offence. Any woman 'not included among, the prostitutes officially registered, and found to be sexually promiscuous was also liable for punishment.'¹³

10. William Irvine, trans. Storio Do Mogor, Vol. III, p 51

11. Ibid Vol. II, p.6.

12. & 13. I.H. Siddiqui & Qazi Mohammad Ahmad, A Fourteenth Century Arab account of India, p. 67. **A**

It is to be noted that in medieval India, there were two parallel ways of looking at marriage :

(a) that it was an irrevocable bond and imbued with sacred elements, and, (b) that there could be sexual liaisons (mostly for the men) outside of marriage. These were accepted modes of behaviour. While these two trends appear to be contradictory, they can be easily explained. The former was the ideal and largely believed in, but the latter was the reality. However, a further clarification is that the latter was more true for the elite, economically advanced classes, who could afford to maintain large retinues of women. For the masses, whether Hindus or Musium, it was not morally, socially and economically viable to maintain multiple sexual relationships outside of marriage.

Besides the economic factor, for Hindus caste proved to be a barrier as well. Members of different castes were allowed different liberties in this field. A Brahmin could take more than one wife and from castes other than his own, a Ksatriya and Vaisya could marry more than once, but a Sudra was to be monogamous. While this was the traditional understanding, it is seen that inter caste and multiple marriages were still considered harmful to the good of the society. Abul Fazl writes that Akbar enjoined his subjects to accept monogamy as it was conducive to a tension-free

home atmosphere; marrying more than one wife was a privilege to be enjoyed by some only. The state's encouragement of monogamy, from the time of Akbar onwards, proves that the acceptance by society of multiple marriages, extra-marital relationships prostitution etc. was beginning to pall. Upon marrying himself, Abul Fazl found that it gave my outward person credit and was a leading rein to my

unruly spirit. By the former he meant that having married well, into a family distinguished for learning and enjoying the society's respect, he was able to increase his social weightage. The advantages of making a good marriage thus made the prospect of marrying more attractive. Lastly, it is important to note that in Islam marriage was a must for every true believer and celibacy was condemned by the Prophet

himself.

14. H. Blochmann, trans. Ain, Vol.1, p.288.

15. Col. H.S. Jarrett, trans. Ain, Vol III, p.52.

16. G.A. Herklots, trans. Islam in India, p.56.

OFFICIAL PROCEDURES & OFFICERS INCHARGE OF MARRIAGES.

From the medieval sources examined, it becomes evident that the early Delhi Sultans and the Mughals believed in organisation even in the field of marriage. While we find the presence of religious personell, like priests or Qazis, being involved in the cermonials of a wedding, there were other secular officers there as well, appointed by the monarch himself.

According to an Arab traveller, an officer called MUHTASIB¹⁷ was incharge of putting a stop to illegal marriages and other 'acts of indecency'. The need for this officer to do this further supports the argument given above about the laxity in sexual mores which had taken root in early medieval India, making manogamous marriage nearly obsolete. This same officer was also incharge of other civic functions as well.

Ibn Batuta mentions the role played by Malik Fath Ullah, who was the Shu Nawis or 'officer incharge of marriage deeds'. During the marriage of Mohammad-

17. M. Zaki, ed. Arab Accounts of India during the Fourteenth Century, p.62.

bin - Tughlak's sister with an Arab nobleman, Malik Fath Ullah was appointed by the Sultan to take care of the marriage feast and its ensuing expenses he organised the putting up of the Pandals, the recruitment of special cooks, waiters, musicians etc. and after the wedding was finalized, he was the one to give out the presents set aside for the lady guests. ¹⁸ In all probability, he also penned the marriage deeds, as is obvious in his title itself. Ibn Batuta, a Qazi, by vocation, was appointed by the Sultan to act as the bride groom's best man. Amir Ghadda, the groom, was new to the Indian customs, and it was supposed to be Ibn Batuta's duty to guide him, and be in personal attendance throughout the days of festivities. He was of assistance when time came to tie the sohra on the groom's forehead. ¹⁹

For the Mughal period, Abul Fazl mentions that Akbar had appointed two 'sober and sensible' personnel; their task was to make inquiries into the 'circumstances' of both the parties wanting to marry - one checked out the bride's family etc. and the other did the same in

18. Mahdi Husain, trans. Rehla, p. 80

19. Ibid, p.79.

the groom's case. By this was probably meant that the financial, social, family, and age considerations had to be looked into by these officers. Their title was Tu - i - begi or masters of marriages.²⁰ This was a way by which the Emperor kept a check and surveillance of his subjects; Once the Mughal had a say even in the marriages made by his populace, this control added considerably to his power and prestige as monarch. It was also a way of monitoring and registering legal unions, which were being encouraged by the state.

For the common people, permission for marrying had to be sought at the office of the local Kotwal. There the young couple were subjected to stares by the Kotwal's men. This was done to disconcert them, which was the chief objective. Then the officers would put

20. H. Blochmann, trans. Ain, Vol.1., p.288.

down on paper their respective ages. The lower ranking personnel at the Kotwal's office made it difficult for those who wished to marry to procure the needed written permission; it is stated by Badayuni that this function provided these officers with a fine opportunity to make money and gain 'advantages' from this piece of information provided by Badayuni, it is seen that even if done to trouble the common people, and extract bribes from them, there was an effort on the part of the state to see to it that legally resgistered marriages took place after a certain respectable age had been reached Abul Fazi notes that for marriage, Akbar wished boys to be above 16, and girls to be above 14, years of age; those who married below these set ages were to be condemned.

21. George S.A.Ranking, ed, Mustakh Abul Tawarikh Vol.II, p.391.

22. Ashok Kumar Shrivastava, Hindu Society in the Sixteenth Century, p.28.

Besides the illegal bribes taken by the Kotwal's men from the commoners, there were certain officially condemned taxes being charged from both parties upon marriage. Abul Fazl notes that such a tax was asked from both the boy's and the girl's families, 'to enable them to show their gratitude'.²³ However, there was no compulsion to pay this remittance. It was supposed to be more of a joyous and charitable benefactions, the giving of which was regarded as auspicious - Whilst taking this tax, it was enjoined upon the administrators to take special care to look into the financial capabilities of the father of the bride, Thus, even in Akbar's region, the consciousness was there that in a marriage, the financial burden upon the father of the bride was excessive compared to that of the groom's father. Hence, due regard had to be given to see whether or not such a tax could be afforded by the brides father or not. This also shows that by this time the expenses incurred by the bride's family had reached new limits, so much so that it was thought possible that a mild tax such as this, demanded for auspicious reasons, could²⁴ prove burdensome in certain cases.

23. H. Blochmann, trans. Ain, Vol.1., p.288

24. Ibid, p. 288. Further, this tax was paid by the people as per their rank, a mansabdar commanding 5 to 1000, paid 10 muhrs, whilst one commanding a mere 40, paid 1 muhr. Commanders paid 1 dam, and, middle class paid one rupee. This was, thus, a progressive taxation.

Two documents, from the time of Humayun and Jehangir respectively, tell us more about certain other marriage fees which were being collected. In the first document, a farman issued by Humayun, there is the appointment of a Qazi to the gasba of Machhiwara; alongwith him, a Khatib was also posted to the same place. The farman further orders the officials already operating in the gasba to cooperate with the new appointees and to allow them to discharge their civic functions. These included drafting of judgements, etc. Besides these duties they also had to take charge of enactment of marriages all the dues and fees accruing from these functions were to be handed over to these
25
two officials for personal use.

The second document is a sale deed signed by five witnesses, which makes over the incorporated rights to the collection of marriage fees from 58 marriages to one person, Ervad Mihirvan Kaikobad. He could now "celebrate and receive the fees of altogether 58 marriage
26
age vivaha jaminas and ghagharanas." This was done because Ervard had earlier on paid the revenue debts of the four vendors of marriage deeds, who were probably of

25. S.A.I. Tirmizi, Mughal Documents (1526-1627), p.85. Ascending to this document, a vivaha Jamna was marriage between a virgin and bachelor, whilst ghagharama was one between a widow and bachelor.

26. Ibid, p.142.

the official or priestly class incharge of making the same deeds. In return for payi g their debts, Ervad received his payment revenue via the right to collect marriages fees due to the four vendors. From this transaction, which was done on paper and before eye-witnesses, we learn that the right to collect marriage dues was alienable, and also that it was quite lucrative as well.

CHAPTER - TWO

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS OF THE MEDIEVAL ELITE

Procedures of selection :

Marriages were not self-arranged in medieval India. Love affairs were not unheard of, but they rarely led to marriage. There were strict procedures and selection criteria laid down and followed in the matter of selecting a match.

In early medieval times, the parent from both sides arranged the match. The consent of the young people was not considered important. The parents reached a consensus as to the reciprocal exchange of gifts, and thereafter, the couple were considered betrothed. At a later date, in Akbar's time, we find that the Emperor wished the consent of the bride and bridegroom to be taken into consideration as well.²⁷ However, alongwith this, it was "absolutely necessary" to have parental consent. Therefore, a change was creeping in from absolutely no say in marriage matters to some degree of involvement in this crucial decision making, by the young people concerned.

27. H. Blochmann, trans. Ain Vol.1, p.228

The marriage of Feroz Khunda, sister of Mohammad-bin-Tughlak, with Saif-ud-din Ghadda, an Arab noble man who had immigrated to India, was arranged by the Sultan himself. It was well-known that for his inability he was fond of recruiting Arabs, whose merits as able statesmen, he recognized well. For this reason in particular, Mohammad-bin-Tughlak honoured Amir Ghadda with gifts of horses and other riches; in this manner he raised the Amir's position in society considerably, by picking him out for bestowal of honours. Later, he ordered the betrothal of his sister to the Arab Amir.

In this case, where royalty was concerned, it was the bride's side which initiated the making of the match. But, in normal course, as we shall see, it is the boy's side which undertakes the first step, as a matter of marriage custom and etiquette. The bridegroom's family had to do the asking (for the bride) and it would have been insulting to them if the girl's people had come to their house. However, in marrying

28. Mahdi Husain, trans. Rohla, p.78.

29. G.A. Herklots, trans. Islam in India, p.62-64. In certain parts of India (the Deccan, for example), the 'asking' forms a special rite, in itself.

Feroz Khunda, a royal princess, the Amir made a considerable upward move along the social ladder; he was now on an equal footing with the Sultan himself, as his brother-in-law.

Later on, during the wedding festivities, we notice the constant and necessary involvement of the elderly, and a few younger, ladies from the royal harem; they were the ones guiding the ceremonies which took place. Further, the Sultan had ordered his own stepmother to act as the Amir's mother, another lady was requested to be his sister, and still others filled in as paternal and maternal aunts. This play - acting was done because the Amir's family was not with him, as he was a foreigner to India. Even so, for the Sultan to put together a make - shift family for the Arab groom highlights the fact that the involvement of family, especially mothers, sisters and aunts was deemed crucial to the Indo-Muslim wedding ceremony.

During the Tughlak wedding, the ladies were prominent in making the occasion joyous by full

30. J. Herklots. trans. Islam in India, p.58; Abrar Hussain, Marriage Customs Amongst Muslims, pp.90-91, pp 98. In this account of Muslim Custom the author tells in that the ladies acted as go-betweens went about gossiping, taking on the guise of door to door sales women. They collected the relevant information regarding girls marriagable age. They were consulted by the boy's side only when a match could not be found in the immediate circle of family, friends and acquaintances. The negotiations as to the dowry customs to be followed, etc., were decided by the senior ladies of both houses after the selection was made. contd.

31. Mahdi Husain, trans. Rehla p.78.

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participation in dancing and singing. While professional dancers and singers had also been called in, the ladies from the family and other well-wishers from the nobility, sang special songs probably in keeping with the nature of the occasion; they were singing for the couple's future happiness. In the groom's party, the ladies were involved in the mehendi ceremony (in which they applied a henna paste on his hands and feet); at the bride's place the gathered womenfolk were numerous, much more in number, than the men. They were involved in merry-making, singing and dancing, besides providing the bride with moral support. Their participation and help was recognized and rewarded with appropriate presents by the Sultan.

32

The role played by important personages in the royal harem, in deciding a match for the monarch cannot be ignored. The elderly dowagers, aunts and mothers were especially active in match-making. Usually, if the family of an eligible woman desired to make a marriage alliance with the royal family, they had to make their interest clear first.

33

According to Abrar Hussain the elderly ladies of a family are always the match makers and negotiators. Besides them friends, relatives, and even servants, vendors, and the barber's wife are consulted as they have access to intimate family matters. Alongside these people, a working woman called mushatta, was also involved in marriage negotiations; the mushatta helped in young girls' toiletries and makeup, and in this way was able to find out relevant details about girls family.

32. Mahdi Husain, trans. Rehla, p.80.

33. M.A. Ansari, Social life of the Mughal Emperors, p.75-76.

This interest was relayed to the dowagers; the monarch did not arrange his own marriages. This was the duty of the elderly ladies of the family ; even if the monarch was interested in a party for himself or for his sons or daughters, he first asked these ladies, in deference to their age and experience. Following this policy, Babar first consulted his elder sister Khanzada Begum about the suitability of two Princes', who were the ninth and tenth sons of Ahmed Khan, for his daughters Gul-rang and Gul-Chihra.³⁴ Though he had already decided on these young men to be his future sons-in-law, Babur thought it prudent to consult Khanzada Begum, as well as his paternal aunts. Later on, Khanzada Begum was the one to choose the appropriate time for the marriages to take place and she also guided the Emperor in the appropriate ways of greeting when meeting with future sons-in-law.³⁵

If the elderly ladies of the royal household did not initiate a match, the fathers of both sides took up the task of selection. Besides the task of match-making, the royal ladies were equally involved in

34. Annette, S. Beveridge, trans. The History of Humayun, p.106.

35. Ibid, p.107.

arranging the marriage feast, giving advice on customs and practices, putting together of the dowries, and other wedding preparations. It is seen that at the time of Mirza Hindal's wedding, Khanzada Begum was again instrumental in prodding Humayun into action; till then, no date had been fixed for the marriage feast. On her reminding him, Humayun gave the go-ahead for the festivities to begin, and he asked his sister to supervise the functions. During the feast itself, women were prominently seated on the left and right hand side of the monarch. The King's mothers, sisters aunts and other blood-relations, noble women, children of foster siblings, wet nurses etc. were seated on the Kings's left hand side.

In the settlement of the marriage, dowry, and collection of gifts to be given at the time of marriage, there was the full involvement of ladies of the harem. Khanzada Begum, being the self-appointed gaurdian of Mirza Hindal's bride-to-be, had put together a dowry and trousseau for her ward. In Shahjehan's reign, while Mumtaz Mahal was alive, she prepared the wedding presents to be given; when she died the on us

36. Annete S. Beveridge, trans. The History of Humayun, p.117

37. Ibid, p.118.

38. Ibid, p. 126-129.

went on Jahanara Begum, who was actively involved in the weddings of several of her siblings and grand-nephews and nieces. In Dara Shikoh's marriage, she completed the wedding preparations that were begun by Mumtaz Mahal.

As per Pelsaert, the suitability of a match was decided upon by the parents of the bride and groom; the latter two had no say. If the parents were unable to make a match, the decision was taken by other friends of the family. The general rule for setting a marriage was to marry according to vocational groupings; thus, a soldier liked to marry a soldier's daughter and so on. In case the family circle proved inefficient in finding a match, then female marriage brokers were called in. 'Birth and present position' were looked into before coming to any conclusion. Then the mother or near friends took up the rest of the negotiations of betrothal, and later, marriage. ⁴⁰ This account comes closest to the description of Muslim customs of marriage by Herklots some centuries later. We see the stabilizing of a visible, set trend in Indo - Islamic marriage customs now.

39. M.A. Ansari, Social Life of the Mughal Emperors, p.87

40. Pelsaert, Jehangir's India, p.81.

According to Manucci, when a match was to be decided, the boy's parents went over to the house of the prospective bride. They examined her all over for any marks or other visible defects which could be 'in auspicious'. If she passed this test, they sent her a token cash present, which symbolized their acceptance of the match.⁴¹ The other criteria for suitability as a bride included 'birth position and individual eligibility'.⁴² Widows and women with uneven, sharp temperament were to be avoided when choosing a life-partner. In fact, disobedience and bad temper were seen to be sufficient grounds for a divorce.⁴³ Sultan Hussain Bariqara had five Begums, and one of them, Baiqa Sultan Begum was divorced by him because she was very cross-tempered and made the Mirza endure much wretchedness.⁴⁴ This was in Babur's time.

As far as restrictions on marriage are concerned, it is seen that inter-community marriages were generally disliked amongst the Mughal elite classes. From one study of marriages among Mughal Emperors and their nobility, the trend seen is that royal brides were

taken from all ethnic groups (Irani, Turani, Indian

41. William Irvine trans. Storie do Mogor, Vol. III, p.147.

42. G.A. Herklots, trans. Islam in India, p.58.

43. M.A. Ansari, Social Life of the Mughal Emperors, p.87.

44. Ibid. p.75.

Muslims, Rajputs, Deccani rulers, etc.) except for the
45
Afghans. The Mughal Emperors were, however, quite
particular about the status of the noble family they
married into. Rajput brides were taken only from ruling
families of Rajasthan ; non-Muslims and ordinary Rajput
nobles did not qualify as suitable for making
matrimonial alliances with the royal house. The
preference was usually for Irani, Turani, or Rajput
brides, of high upbringing and descent. Amongst the
Mughal nobility, the study is based on a sample of 145
marriages, out of which very few were inter-ethnic or
inter-racial.¹² Turani bridegrooms married Irani brides;
5 Iranis married Turani brides, 3 Irani took Shaikhzada
women as brides, and one Indian Muslim married a Turani
woman. Apart from these, 66 Iranis took brides from
their own community, while 9 Turanis wed Turani
46
brides.

For the nobles to enter marriage without taking
permission from the Emperor himself was impossible. It
is seen that the nobles made politically based
matrimonial alliances, which could have undermined the
Emperor's position. This was there from Sultanate days.

45. Afzal Hussain, 'Marriages among Mughal Nobles as an
Index of Status and Aristocratic Integration' in
P.I.H.C., (1972), p-306.

46. Ibid, p.308.

Apart from these considerations, before a marriage took place, even amongst Muslims, certain prohibited degrees of consanguinity, affinity, and fosterage had to be studied. These were not as complex as that of the Hindus. Under consanguinity were: mother, grandmother, sister, niece, aunt, etc.; affinity: mother-in-law, step daughters, grand-daughters, etc.; and the wife's sister could not be married without the wife having passed away or divorced. Another person's wife could be married only after the period of probation.⁴⁷ Polytheists could not be married. Secondly, Muslim marriage custom came to include the matching of horoscopes by astrologers;⁴⁸ further, the setting of an auspicious hour for the nuptials to take place became part of the pre-wedding procedure as well. Before all these things were decided, the actual wedding ceremony did not take place.

47. G.A. Herklots, trans. Islam in India, p.56

48. Ibid, p.59.

PRE-NUPTIAL CEREMONIES :

Initially, the Sultanate period presents us with a very simple marriage ceremony. Before the actual nuptials, there were not many ceremonies followed, except for the mehendi ceremony. As we reach the later Mughal period, there is the inclusion of several practices followed prior to the actual wedding, which were not followed so strictly before. In fact, one notices the slow evolution of a set marriage pattern which acquires a traditional rigidity along the way. By Shahjehan's period, we see that there is the practice of presenting the royal bride-to-be before the Emperor, in all probability to gain his blessings and also as a sign of acceptance of the match on his part. When Mohammad Shah Shuja was to marry A'zam Khan's daughter, she was invited to the court by Shah Jehan. The bride to be was sent there, chaperoned by her mother and brothers. Similarly, when Prince Murad was betrothed to Shahnawaz Khan's daughter, she had been sent to the court in the company of her mother only because Shahnawaz Khan was, at that time, away in Orissa. It was after this formal visit was over, that Shah Jehan invited the bride's people to the nuptials celebration. One month

49. W.E. Begley & Z.A. Desai, ed. The Shahjehannama of Inayat Khan, p.255.

50. Ibid, p.295.

before the actual wedding between Sultan Sulaiman Shikoh with the daughter of Amar Singh took place, the Emperor had personally invited the lady to the royal harem, and further, even read out 'the form of betrothal.'⁵¹ This event was made momentous by the bestowal of rich gifts upon the bride - elect. These three examples all come from the later Mughal period. Once a royal bride was selected, it had become customary to bring her before the august presence of the reigning Emperor, who as the eldest and most important male member of the royal family, was required to give his official acceptance and blessings on the occasion. Patriarchal elements can be traced here in this ceremony. Mughal marriages, it is seen, followed a slightly different pattern than Hindu or Hindustan⁵² marriages, according to Pelsaert.

BETROTHAL :

A betrothal ceremony, as such, is not to be found in any concrete form in the early medieval period. The Arab travellers mention that the selection of a bride being completed, there was a mutual exchange of gifts

51. W.E. Begley & A.A. Desai, ed. The Shahjehannama of Inayat Khan, p.497.

52. Pelsaert, Jehangir's India, p.61.

between the two parties. Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq also bestowed gifts of houses and other riches to his future brother-in-law, prior to the wedding itself.

From records of Shahjehan's and Jehangir's reigns, we find mention of formal betrothals. For example, Pelsaert informs us that when a match was arranged and settled in Agra, the boy sent a ring to the chosen girl; in turn, the girl sent back some auspicious betel leaf alongwith a handkerchief, probably sent as a personal token. From this moment onwards, the couple were considered betrothed, and both parties felt free to begin the wedding merry-making. A fortnight from this day, a day was set for the nuptials.

As mentioned above, we have one instance in which the Emperor himself reads out certain betrothal rites upon the engagement of Sultan Sulaiman Shikoh to a Rajput princess.

The importance attached to the giving of betel-leaves upon betrothal, or after any important wedding

53. Dr. M. Zaki, ed. Arab accounts of India during the 14th century, p.27.

54. Mahdi Husain, trans. Rehla, p.78.

55. Pelsaert, Jehangir's India, p.81

ceremony, is not without meaning. "Betel is supposed to possess mystic powers, swearing on it is equivalent to an oath on the Koran, and Rajputs were in the habit of eating betel as a solemn pledge of loyalty before a battle."⁵⁶ This custom is one introduced by Indian Muslims into their tradition. Betel, thus, sealed the pact, and was served at all festive occasions. At times, instead of offering betel, the Fatiha was read⁵⁷ out, and the reader then declared the couple betrothed; the person reading was not necessarily a man of the cloth or any official. Other rites were performed by the Qazi or law officer, the Khatib or preacher, the Naib-i-Qazi, or assistant law officer, a Mashaikh or reverend man, or by a Mulla/Maulavi or doctors of law.

SACHAQ :

Part of the betrothal process was formalised into the sachaq ceremony. This is witnessed in full form during the many wedding accounts described in the Shahjehannama, and was carried out prior to the hina-

56. G.A. Herklots, trans. Islam in India, p.62.

57. Ibid, p.63.

bandi or mehendi ceremony. In modern times the Sachaq or sanchaq ceremony is one in which jewels and costly clothing is sent by the bride-groom to the bride for use during the actual nuptial and post-nuptial ceremonies. Besides these main items, make-up, garlands, a sweet preparation, dry - fruits etc. are also sent. In Shahjehan's reign, the sachaq ceremony was followed in every royal wedding. During this occasion, which was considered the start to formal marriage celebrations, (from which day the bride and groom were called Dulha-Dulhin) the practice was to send a wedding present and trousseau to the bride's home as a gift from the bride-groom's family. Usually the sachaq present consisted partly of goods and partly cash. The goods were gems, jewelled vessels, rich clothes etc. Describing this gift, Inayat Khan adds : "----- these articles constituted the customary presents which are sent prior to the marriage ceremony." Hence, we see that the sachaq ceremony had become customary by late Mughal times, whereas during the Sultanate there is no mention of any formalised giving of gifts prior to the nuptials. It can be said that the exchange of gifts

58. Sheikh Abrar Husain, Marriage Customs among Muslims in India, p.109.

59. G.A. Herklots, trans. Islam in India p.65.

60. Begley & Desai, ed. The Shahjehannama of Inayat Khan, p.203.

prior to the actual wedding, during the early medieval period, was left to the good-will and ability to give, of the two parties involved; there was no fixed proportion of cash plus goods which had to be given, as we witness later on.

HINA-BANDI OR MEHENDI :

The other important pre-nuptials ceremony was that of hina-bandi or mehendi. We find a mention of this ceremony in Ibn-Batuta's account of a royal Tughlak wedding. It is seen that this custom in modern day India is still observed at times in both the Hindu and Muslim communities; it is called manjha in Northern India.⁶¹ Even amongst the Shiite Muslims today, this ceremony is often observed prior to the Nikah⁶² ceremony. Yellow clothing is worn by the couple when they are annointed with a ground mustard seed paste (BUTNA); while being annointed the bride and groom are in their respective parental homes. The barber and his wife are called in to apply the paste, on the groom and bride respectively.⁶³

61. Mahdi Husain, trans Rehlar.xivii

62. Sheikh Abrar Husain, Marriage Customs among Muslims in India, p.108.

63. ibid

In the medieval Muslim custom of mehendi which comes after the Sachaq ceremony is over, (i.e. after the betrothal is complete) a paste of henna (LAWSONIA ALBA) or turmeric plus mustard oil, is applied on the limbs of the betrothed couple while each is in his or her own home. In fact, "this rubbing with henna, saffron, or turmeric seems to be partly a form of initiation, partly protective and stimulating or fertilizing, and when the condiment used by one of the pair is sent to be used in anointing the other it is a charm to promote union". This rite is seen to be borrowen, by the Indian Muslims from their Hindu brethren, as part of the process of Indianization which they went through.

On the day when mehendi was applied to Amir Ghadda, i.e. Mohammad Tughlak's future brother-in-law, the ladies specially appointed by the Sultan to act as the Amir's surrogate family first placed him on a special seat. Then they applied the henna paste on his hands and feet, while the rest sang and danced. During this ceremony, the special role played by sisters and sisters-

64. G.A. Herklots; trans. Islam in India, p.65

65. ibid p.69.

66. Mehdi Husain, trans. Rehla, p.78.

in-law, in applying the auspicious paste, is well
67
recognized.

This same custom, in a more developed form, is found during Mughal times as well. After the sachaq gifts have been received by the family of the bride, the next day they come over to the bridegroom's home, in a festive, bright, and joyous procession. According to custom in Agra, the bride's people brought with them the mehendi paste, and "a representation made of cotton, satin, and paper, in the form of ships or boats," which contraption was later placed on the roof of the house
68
till it fell apart naturally. In another account, this ship structure is set upon floatable materials (such as earthen pots or bamboos), a lamp is lighted within, and it is set afloat. When this happens, there is
69
the distribution of food amongst the needy.

All of this occurs on the same day as when the bridegroom is annointed with the henna paste brought invariably from the brides home. His hands and feet are reddened with the paste; then there is much feasting. The following day is the day of the nuptials.

67. Ibid, p.xivii.

68. Pelsaert, Jahengir's India, p.82.

69. G.A. Herklot, trans, Islam in India, p.67.

In the reign of Shahjehan, several of his sons and other members of the royal house, were married. At the time of Dara Shikoh's wedding, the henna paste was brought from the home of Prince Parwiz (whose daughter Dara was to wed), and the anointing was done with pomp and ceremony in the royal ghusalkhana, amidst bright lights and music. Then, as per custom, "girdles of gold thread were distributed among those present, and trays filled with conserve of roses, pan and argaja essence, and condiments and fruits of different kinds were brought into the assembly by the imperial domestics. At the close of the day, numerous frameworks set up by the future bride's relatives were ignited. Thus, during the sachaq ceremony, the bridgroom's people went in a procession to the bride's home, bearing gifts; then they stayed there for a meal and after much festivity, they came back. Next day, there was a reverse, visit, by the bride's people, carrying the mehendi paste and other gifts. They, too, stayed and partook of the hospitality offered by the groom's people. In this manner, due to these formal visits, reciprocal gift's exchange, and shared festivity, the two parties came closer; and, there was a publicity of the

70. Begley & Desai, ed. The Shahjehannama of Inayat Khan, p.91

71. Ibid

72. Pelsaert, Jehangir's India. p. 82.

coming together of the two families before society. The processions to, and from, the houses of the bride and groom, witnessed by friends, family, and the general public, announced to the world that these two parties were coming together in a matrimonial alliance. ⁷³ This was part of the process by which marriages were legitimized in this society.

Even though we have references to a rudimentary sort of registration of marriages at the Kotwal's office, this was far from comprehensive. Whether or not all the commoners were supposed to follow this practice is not certain; further, there is no mention of the elite classes of both the Hindu and Muslim communities being covered by this rule. Therefore, when there was no official record of when marriages took place, and between whom, then the only way to make them publicity acceptable and above social reproach was by making the entire nuptials process boisterous, noisy, and visible to the public eye.

Besides Dara Shikoh's hina-bandī ceremony, We have descriptions of similar festivities taking place

73. S. Abrar Hussain, Marriage Customs Among Muslims in India, p.107.

during Prince Muhammad Shah Shuja's wedding to the
 daughter of A'zam Khan; ⁷⁴ during the marriage of Prince
 Murad Bakhsh to the daughter of Sultan Shahnawaz Khan, ⁷⁵
 during the pre-nuptial celebrations of Sultan Sulaiman
 Shikoh ⁷⁶; and, during the wedding festivities of Sultan
 Sulaiman Shikoh when he married the daughter of Amar
 Singh ⁷⁷. Thus, the huma-bondi ceremony had become an
 important prerequisite to the Nuptials celebration in
 Mughal days. Even when the royal prince was to wed a
 Rajput princess, this same ceremony was carried out.

This goes to show that a set marriage pattern of
 ceremonies and rites was followed by the Mughal
 emperors, which was carried out in all cases, even when
 the Bride happened to be of Hindu background. Secondly,
 after each important ceremony, the serving of the
 auspicious betel as well as certain essences was also
 customary. In this way, after the completion of each
 ceremony, the two parties repeatedly sealed the pact, as
 it were, every time they accepted the offering of pan
 etc. and this was done in the midst of friends and

74. Begley & Desai, ed. The Shahjahanⁿama of 'Inayat Khan' p.93.

75. Ibid, p.295.

76. Ibid, p.460.

77. Ibid P. 497.

family who became witness to the coming together of the
78
two families.

BRIDEGROOM'S PROCESSION

On the day after hinna-bandi, the royal bridegrooms had to follow another set practice. They had to present themselves formally before the Mughal Emperor, who was the eldest male patriarch of their family. The bride-to-be had to be formally introduced as well, as we have already seen. Thus, Dara Shikoh, accompanied by his brothers and other noblemen in a procession, went before Shahjehan on the day of his wedding. Once before the august presence", Dara was well-received and laden with all sorts of gifts, such as a robe of honour, horses, a rosary of pearls, etc. The noblemen accompanying him were also honoured. After these formalities were over, the Emperor commanded that all the lights be put on, the fireworks lighted, and the music plus dancing to begin. Then, at the propitious hour, the Qazi was called in to perform the nikah ceremony, before the
79
Emperor himself.

78. G.A. Herklots, trans. Islam in India, p.72. "The procession of the bridegroom known as 'nocturnal' (Shabgasht) or 'dawn of day procession' (sargasht, sargami the last a Sind term) leads up to the actual wedding". This was the same as the modern-day baraat.
79. Begley & Desai, ed. The Shahjehannama of Inayat Khan, p.91-92.

In another instance, when Prince Murad Baksh married Shahnawaz Khan's daughter, the nuptials did not take place in the royal premises. Instead, after the Prince had visited the Emperor, and received the due honours, he proceeded ahead, in a bright procession, to the house of Shahnawaz Khan. The Emperor Shahjehan himself went in that procession, after having tied on Prince Murad's forehead 'a tiara of pearls, strung with Rubies and emeralds'. This 'tiara' was none other than the sehra, which Amir Ghadda, to Arab bridegroom chosen for the Tughlak princes Feroz Khamda, also had to wear prior to proceeding to the bride's place on the nuptials day. Dara Shikoh, in a painting depicting this marriage procession, is also seen to be wearing such a headgear. This sehra was not known to the Turks when they came into India; they adapted it into their custom after seeing it practiced in Hindu tradition. The word sehra is of Sanskrit extraction and therefore, has an ancient origin.

MOCK-FIGHT

The tying of the sehra, serving of pan and other essences, and the marriage procession or barat, are

80. Ibid, P.295-296.

81. See Mughal painting of Dara's marriage procession, illustration No.1, p.at the back of the thesis.

82. Mahdi Husain, trans. Rehla, p. xivii-xiviii.

three Indo-Islamic adaptations; in adopting these customs, the incoming Turks sought to blend in within their new surroundings and society. Besides this, these ~~customs~~ customs served a special social function each. With the sehra, the bridegroom was set apart from the rest and easily recognizable as the one who was going out to marry; the pan, served to all the guests and marriage party members, served to highlight the fact that this marriage was being formalised before them, and the eating of the pan signalled the sealing of this union on a note of trust; last of all, the baraat procession, led through the main streets of the town and before the houses of notables, made the whole procedure of marriage very public.

With the barat party which Sultan Mohammad -bin- Tughlak put together for the Amir, the bridegroom, set apart from all others in his jewelled, ornate robe (a gift from the Sultan) and the sehra on his forehead, set out for the bride's place. There, we witness a mock confrontation between those accompanying the groom, and

83

the bride's people. During this bout, the groom got a chance to prove his mettle. It can also be surmised

83. Mahdi Husain, trans. Rehla, p.79.

that invariably the groom was allowed to emerge the superior warrior, who received as a reward, the hand of bride. This mock battle hails back to old Indian, Rajput, warrior tradition, whence brides were often carried off or gotten after warfare. Toned down, this warrior tradition often takes on the form of a mimic fight with flowery sticks. Such horseplay adds to the general gaiety and helps break the ice between the two marriage parties. It also helps build a joyous wedding ambience.

Such a farcical battle was also known to have taken place during Muslim marriages in Aurangzeb's time. The bride's people would show resistance by throwing fruit and vegetables at the aggressors, i.e. the baraat party. However, the groom was not harmed in any way, during the tussle. Finally, someone from the bride's side called a truce and then the groom's party was allowed to enter after paying some money as a bribe. Before the groom was allowed to come near the bride, he had to face a groups of women as well.

84. S. Abrar Hussain, Marriage Customs among Muslims in India, p. 107.

85. Ibid

86. William Irvine, trans. Storio Do Mogor, Vol. II, p.143.

NIKAH

At this juncture, the actual nuptials ceremony takes place. In traditional Muslim terms, this is called the nikah. In the medieval Muslim marriages studied we find that the chronicles and travellers do not use the term nikah very often, but what they describe closely resembles this ceremony.

During the Tughlak period, we do come across a mention of the nikah ceremony. Mohammad-bin-Tughlak was instrumental in marrying the two daughters of his wazir Khawaja Jahan, to the sons of another nobleman, Khudawan-
87
dzada Qiwam-ud-din. . The chief justice (qazi-ul-
guzat) performed the ceremony. He first fixed the dower money before witnesses. All this while the Sultan kept standing, since it is a custom, observed even today, that until the nuptials are over, the father or guardian
88
of the bride remains standing.

In the other Tughlak royal wedding, when Amir Ghadda proceeded to where his bride to be was seated, she greeted him with a betel leaf offering. This

87. Mahdi Husain, trans. Rehla, pp. 81-82.

88. Mahdi Husain, trans. Rehla, p.82. please see footnote number 2 on this page in the Rehla

he accepted and then sat one step below from where she stood upon a raised platform. The only ceremony which followed was that gold dinars were showered upon the groom's entourage, then songs were sung, and drums, biguls and flutes were played upon. Following this, the groom arose and stepped down from the platform, with his bride's hand in his own. He rode on horseback while his bride followed in a palanquin, upto his palace. The day after the wedding, the Amir's new bride presented his friends with gifts, as did the Sultan. The others involved in the festivities ladies, musicians, nobleman etc., were also thus honoured and a charitable feast was organised for the general laity. This marked the close
90
of wedding festivities.

We find in the above account no mention of any nuptial ritual akin to a nikah. The only clue we have is that Malik Fath Ullah, who was put incharge of organizing the wedding festivities, held the position of shu-nawis or 'incharge of marriage deeds' Perhaps such a deed was written out during the nuptials day, but Ibn Batuta did not write about it, taking it for granted; he

89. Ibid, P.79.

90. Mahdi Husain, trans. Rehla, p.80.

probably felt it more necessary to describe the festivities rather than the actual recording of the marriage before the gazi and other witnesses. Whatever may be the explanation for this lapse, it is evident that during the early medieval period the nature of the nuptials ceremony was as yet in an evolutionary state. What was considered important was that before a large gathering, the groom claimed the bride as his life-partner.

During the reign of Akbar and Jehangir we find that often a religious personage, such as a Qazi or a Mullah, was called in at this stage, even when the bride was a Rajput princess. What he did was to (a) settle the dower money or mihr, and (b) performed the necessary rites (which are not always described) of nuptials,⁹¹ "according to the revered law". The silence of the chronicles on the exact nature of the actual marriage ceremony has led to the development of much controversy. According to one scholar, if a nikah was actually performed, it could only have been between two⁹² Muslims; therefore, he asks, were the Rajput

91. A.Z.Khan, 'Mughal Marriages :a Politico-Religious and legal study', in Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, Vol.34 No. 1-3, 1986. p.98-99.

92. ibid, p.100

princesses converted to Islam before such an Islamic ceremony was performed .

First of all, the evasion on the part of the Mughal sources as to the name and nature of the nuptials ceremony, especially in the case of royal weddings, speaks volumes. It could be that the Mughal Emperor on purpose did not follow the strict Muslim practices in the case of marriage ceremonies, especially when they were consciously seeking to ally themselves with the Rajputs via matrimonial alliances. Secondly, we find mention of certain Hindu ceremonies being performed alongside the Muslim ones, in Rajput-Mughal marriages, such as the lighting of a sacred fire. ⁹³ Therefore, even if a strong mention of a nikah is missing, the descriptions of the ceremony performed shows that something similar did occur; in the case of Rajput brides, the Qazi was present but the Rajput ladies were allowed to perform traditional Hindu rituals as well, after the qazi had completed his job, even though the Emperor did not participate in them. In fact, from the earliest medieval times, we find that in seeking

93. A.Z. Khan, op.cit, p.99-100.

female companionship, the ruling Muslim elite preferred Indian women (who were often brought in as captured war booty), because they were 'talented and winsome.'⁹⁴ From these accounts, we do not have any reference of the incoming Muslims being particular about the women being first converted to Islam. During the Sultanate period, the Khaljis were the first to contract marriages with Hindu women. Alauddin Khalji married Kamla Devi, the wife of Rai Karan Baghala of Gujarat; he also wed the daughter of Ram Chandra Dev, and his son married Deval Devi, the daughter of Rai Karan. Feroz Tughlak⁹⁵ and Sikander Lodi are said to have had Hindu mothers.

From the Shahjehannama we get one strong reference to religious intolerance. In a locality called Bhimbar, there was a Guru whose teachings were practiced by the people living there. They had decided amongst themselves (after being influenced by the Guru) "that if an infidel gave away his daughter in marriage to a Musalman, she should at her death be buried like a true believer; and if again a Musalman united his daughter to a heretic,

94. I.M. Siddiqui & Qazi Mohammad Ahmed, A Fourteenth Century Arab account of India, p.51.

95. Rekha Misra, Women in Mughal India, p.11-12.

she should be burned after her death, in accordance with
96
her husband's religious prejudices". To be noted here
is that this toleration extended to daughters; the sons,
it would seem, were not covered under this ruling.

When the situation in Bhimbar was brought to the
Emperor's notice, he issued an ordinance whereby an
infidel with a Muslim wife could keep her only upon his
own conversion to Islam, and a remarriage as per "the
prescribed forms". If he did not do this, the
offender's property was to be fined and his wife
forcibly separated from him. Thereafter, the zamindar
of Bhimbar, and others converted to Islam, because they
had Muslim wives; whether or not they re-married as per
Muslim custom is not recorded. For his cooperation, the
zamindar was honoured with a title (of Raja) by the
Mughal Emperor. The latter further ordained that
wherever in the Punjab there were Muslim women married
to Hindu men, the latter had to either convert, be
fined, or ultimately lose their wives. In one instance
200 Muslim women were taken away from their 'heretic
husbands' and wed to others who were of the same
97
faith as them. Muslim slave-girls were also freed.

96. Begley & Desai, ed. The Shahjehanamma of Inayat Khan, p.139.

97. Begley & Desai, ed. The Shahjehanamma of Inayat Khan, p.140.

It is evident from the above account that, (a) inter-religious marriages, as between Hindus and Muslims, were not unknown, especially in the Punjab; (b) that the marriages itself did not take place after one or the other partner converted to the other's faith. After becoming man and wife, they maintained their separate religious identities, and (c) that the problem pointed out in Bhimbar was expressly brought to the Emperor's notice, and only then did he pass the ordinances demanding conversion. Perhaps the reason for being harsh with the Bhimbar people was also due to the fact that they had followed the advice of a Guru, countermanding the will and authority of the Emperor, and secondly, they had set up a system of marriage rules independent of the wishes of the monarch. It could also be that the Bhimbar zamindar was being put in his place via the ordinances; in this manner, he was taught that the mighty Mughal Emperor was his superior to the extent that he could even interfere in the petty zamindar's marital affairs. A political reprimand cannot be ruled out, as reason for these harsh measures, for other localities were threatened with similar consequences but the threats were not converted into action. However, even a bluff threat from the Mughal would have made an impact upon other errant zamindars of the neighbourhood. Secondly, after his conversion to Islam, the Bhimbar zamindar was honoured by the

Emperor, and thus brought into the fold as a political-ly. The giving of the title of Raja to the Bhimbar zamindar supports the theory that in actuality the winning over of this particular zamindar actuated the intolerance shown to the people of Bhimbar by the Emperor.

We see, then, that often there were hidden reasons behind the conversions to Islam, asked for by the Mughal Emperors. Following from this discussion, we can say that the silence of the medieval sources on the subject of the exact nature of the nuptial rites is understandable. Whether or not it was called a nikah cannot be said; but a qazi was present, he did settle the amount of dower money, and he did perform some ceremony which made the couple man and wife in the eyes of the medieval society.

Getting back to the descriptions of the nuptial rite, we find that Pelsaert describes it in detail. A religious personage is called in and he "makes a prayer" and in the absence of the bride, who sits in purdah, unites the couple in wedlock. The ceremony only

98. Pelsaert, Jehangir's India, p.83

consists of a registration of the marriage in the Qazi's ledger. After this, the formalities are deemed over and there is music, singing and dancing throughout the night. In describing these rituals, Pelsaert points out that this was the Hindustani way, as different from the Mughal and Hindu ways of enacting a marriage.

But, for the Mughals, the nuptial ceremony was little different. A Qazi was called in here as well, and he read out the "marriage service" before the Emperor's presence.⁹⁹ He simultaneously performed the task of fixing a dower for the bride. What exactly the marriage service consisted of is not described. Manucci, in describing Muslim marriage customs, in general, says that a man of religious learning makes the couple man and wife after setting the dower conditions, in case of a divorce.¹⁰⁰ All this was penned down on paper.

For the fixing of the wedding day, when the nuptials were to take place, there was much deliberation beforehand. An auspicious hour had to be chosen for this major ceremony; the other rites then fell into

99. Begley & Desai, ed. The Shahjehannama of 'Inayat Khan, pp.92-93 ,208, 246, 497, 528, 532. All the recorded royal wedding accounts speak of the Quzi coming in to preside over the actual nuptials ceremony.

100. William Irvine, trans. Storio do Mogor, Vol.III, p.144.

place before or after that main ceremony. According to tradition, the day and hour of nuptials were decided by the guardian of the couple. For the Shias, the months of Rajab, Shaban after the tenth of Id-ul-Zuha, and the second half of Rabi-ul Awwal were considered right for marriages to take place. The banned months were those coinciding with Moharram, Safar, and the first eight days of Rabi-ul-Awwal. The month of Ramzan, when there is fasting, is also considered impractical for holding weddings. Consulting astrologers or Qazis is also known to happen, especially in connecting horoscopes, by the later centuries (18th-19th century).

The concern for choosing an appropriate time and hour for the actual nuptials is evident from the accounts of marriages recorded in the Shahjehannama.

- (a) It is seen that Dara Shikoh's marriage was set for a "chosen moment" of the month of Jumada 1, 1042 (or November/December, 1632)
- (b) Prince Mohammad Shah Shuja's nuptials were speeded up as Ramzan was approaching, and at that time there could be no wedding. Neither was the interval between the two Ids considered an auspicious time for solemnizing marriages.

101. S. Abrar Hussain, Marriage Customs Among Muslims in India, p.100.

102. Ibid, p.101.

103. G.A. Herklots, trans. Islam in India, p.61.

104. Begley & Desai, ed. The Shahjehannama of Inayat Khan,

Therefore it was decided that the propitious moment was Friday night, the 23rd of the month of Sha'ban 1042, ¹⁰⁵ (i.e. 5th March, 1633) ;

- (c) Prince Mohammad Aurangzeb Bahadur's marriage was fixed for Saturday night, the 23rd of Zi'l- Hijja 1046, (19th May, 1637), "when there were four gharis remaining till morning". ¹⁰⁶ This shows that the calculations were done beforehand down to the exact hour day & month .
- (d) Prince Murad Bakhsh was wed on 22nd of Rabi II, 1052 ¹⁰⁷ (i.e. 20th July, 1642).
- (e) Prince Sulaiman shikoh was married on the night of 26th ¹⁰⁸ of Rajab, (15th of July, 1651).
- (f) Prince Mohammad Sultan was married on the morning of ¹⁰⁹ 18th of Junanada II, 1066, (13th of April, 1656).
- (g) Sultan Sulaiman Shikoh was married on the 17th of the ¹¹⁰ month of Muharram, 1067 (5th of November, 1656). The Mughals, being of Sunni faith, did not observe the ban on the month of Moharram for solemnizing marriages.

After the wedding nuptials were over, a feast was often organized. It was considered essential as the

105. Ibid, pp.92-93. 106. Ibid, p.207.

107. Begley & Desai, ed. The Shahjehannama of Inayat Khan, p.296.

108. Ibid, p.460

109. Ibid, p.527

110. Ibid, p.532

Walima feast was held by the Prophet upon the marriage
of his daughter Hazarat Fatima Zehra. ¹¹¹

DOWRY AND DOWER :

In Indo-Islamic tradition, there came to be two main settlements between the families of the bride and groom. First was the dower or mihr, which was to be given by the husband to his wife. This cash settlement, which has antecedents in the pre-Islamic days when a bride-price was paid, ¹¹² was decided by the Qazi on the Nuptials day itself, before reading out the ritual services. The dower money was not any fixed amount and differed from case to case. It could even consist of any object or service that has value in the eyes of the law. If the value could not be decided then the Qazi fixed an average bridal gift as the mihr.

Among the Mughals, a study of five royal weddings shows us that the settlement was usually around four lakhs of rupees. ¹¹³ When the heir apparent, Dara was to wed the daughter of Prince Parwiz, the settlement exceeded 4 lakhs; and when sultan Sulaimn Shikoh married the daughter of Bahram, it dropped to 2 lakhs. Thus, the

111. S. Abrar Hussain, Marriage Customs among Muslim in India, p.113.

112. Ibid p.119.

113. See table at back, p.83. We notice that dowry was asked for by the royal bridegroom only when marrying into royalty; When a nobleman's daughter was wed, the royal bride groom did not take a dowry. In such cases, doweries are not recorded.

status of the groom had an effect on the quantity of dower settled ; an heir apparent could afford more than others. The question was also of maintaining one's social image by settling a dower which matched ones' social standing.

As per Islamic tradition, the fixed mihr could be at once, or else (as was the practice) a portion could be paid before the consumption of the marriage, and the rest at its dissolution due to a divorce or untimely death.

Distinguished from the mihr, which a husband settles on his wife on the day of nuptials, we have the jahez or dahez, i.e. the dowry which consists of "articles provided by the bride's family.... to procure for their daughter a husband of equal or higher rank than her own". This settlement is the property of the woman during her lifetime; upon her death, it goes to her children, or in case of no issue, to her relatives.

Traditionally, the dowry paid by the girl's parents was to be nominal, as there was no financial

114. Encyclopedia of Islam, ed. H.A.R. Gibb, pp.447-448.

115. G.A. Herklots, trans. Islam in India, p.71.

pressure placed upon the girl's family. However, what developed was not this. The dowries paid by the girl's side far exceeded even the dower settlements. In this, the impact of the Hindu traditional system, in which high dowries were common, can be said to have played a major role. Initially, the incoming Turks did not follow any set system of dowry taking. Mohammad-bin-Tughlak did not set aside any fixed amount of cash and goods for his sister upon her marriage. Instead, he gave Amir Ghadda gifts of riches, horses, and the right to administer certain territories in his empire. ¹¹⁶ These gifts he gave at random, whenever he wished. However, with the Mughals, the system of dowry-taking amongst the Indo-Muslim, came to acquire a concrete shape.

Humayun's sister Khanzada Begum, as the guardian of Sultanam Begum (who was to wed Prince Hindal), went to great lengths, preparing an assortment of items to be given to the bride and groom. There were household effects, furniture, embroidered and jewelled clothing, towels, pillows, jewellery etc. The bride's brother, Mahdi Khwaja gave horses with jewelled and golden

115. G.A. Herklots, trans. Islam in India, p.71.

116. Mahdi Husain, trans. Rehla, p.78.

embroidered saddles and bridles, vessels of gold and silver, more horses, baggage animals, slaves, elephants and rich textiles. ¹¹⁷ Mohammad-bin-Tughlak also gave horses to his future brother-in-law. There is no mention of a dowry as such, and the gifts given were meant primarily for practical purposes, intended to help the young couple set up a new establishment. Besides this there was no stipulation that only the bride's people were to give rich gifts, Khanzada Begum as the self-proclaimed guardian of the bride, collected as many items for giving as did the bride's brother; and the Begum was the real sister of the groom-Mirza Hindal. Therefore, the notion of dowry as something given only by the bride's family, had not evolved as yet.

In stark contrast, we find that the later Mughal period sees the development of an organised dowry system. Pelsaert says that after the Qazi performed the marriage services, and the night was passed in merry making, the groom's party "pack up the bride's belongings, that is to say, whatever she brings to the marriage is displayed and carried away". ¹¹⁸ Manucci

117. Annette S. Beveridge, trans. History of Humayun, p.129.

118. Pelsaert, Jahangir's India, p.83.

also mentions that after marriage, the groom takes away
his bride alongwith her dowry. ¹¹⁹ By this time, the
taking of dowry had become an integral part of the Indo-
Islamic marriage custom, and it had become a matter of
prestige to provide a substantial dowry. For instance,
when Dara Shikoh received the daughter of Prince Parwaz,
he received 8 lakhs in dowry, and Prince Mohammad
Sultan, on marrying the daughter of Qutb-al-Mulk,
received Rs.10 lakhs in gems and other articles.
However, whenever the brides-to-be were not from the
royal family, but belonging to the high noble houses,
there is no mention of the taking of huge sums as dowry.
Probably, Mughal royalty did not take dowry from those
not of any royal house or inferior in social status; it
would have hurt their dignity to do so. The opulence
attached to gift-giving during a Mughal royal wedding
went on increasing from the days of Humayun. In fact,
when Dara Shikoh was getting married, the wedding
preparations were done by Jahanara Begum. Before she
took charge, some amount of cash had been accumulated by
Mumtaz Mahal for this very purpose. However, Jahanara
felt that the amount gathered by the late Queen was

119. William Irvine, Storio do Mogor, Vol. III, p.144.

inadequate, and she added to it; all told, the amount of cash and property gathered before Dara's wedding was valued at 16 lakhs of rupees. Fearing public censure, Jahanara had added to what was already a handsome amount put together by Mumtaz Mahal; further, these gifts were put on display in the Public Audience Hall. Similarly, the bride's mother put together a 'suitable dowry' valued at 8 lakhs of rupees, and this was submitted for approval before the Emperor.

EXPENDITURE

The expenses of an elite wedding in medieval India were always heavy. The festivities connected with Mohammad Tughlak's sisters wedding continued for full 15 days. Cooks, bakers, fryers, confectioners, cup-bearers, betel-leaf holders, musicians, dancers, etc. were in constant attendance. All who were involved in these festivities were fed for a full fortnight. According to a 15th century historian who gives an account of expenses incurred during the marriage of Prince Ghiyath-al-din, son of Sultan Alaud-din Mohammad Shah Khalji of Malwa (in 1442 A.D.), the celebrations

120. M.A. Ansari, Social Life of the Mughal Emperors, p.90

121. Begley & Desai, ed. The Shahjehannama of Inayat Khan, p.90

122. M.A. Ansari, Social Life of the Mughal Emperors, p.87

123. Mahdi Hussain, trans. Rehla, p.

celebrations lasted for full 22 days. The royal darbar was decorated with richly embroidered, printed, silken curtains which were studded with costly stones. The throne was decorated with jewels and so were the umbrellas placed around it. The corridors were made green and lush with artificial potted plants. Dancers and musicians were called in to lighten the atmosphere. The guests were looked after by special cooks and confectioners who made varied delicacies for them. They were served beverages in golden cups brought in by handsome boys. For afterwards, betel leaves were served upon golden trays.

Marriages were occasions for rewarding the needy. In charity, the deserving were awarded robes, money and gifts for services rendered. The nobility was honoured with robes upon the 12th day of the festivities. On the 22nd day the marriage services took place. The streets and roads of the city were lighted up with torches, lamps and candlesticks. On the same day a fancy firework's display was also arranged.

The nobility remained only a step behind in wedding extravagance. When the son of one of Ibrahim Lodi's

124. I.H. Siddiqui, 'Life & culture in the Sultanate of Delhi. During Lodhi Period'. (1451-1526.AD), in Islamic culture Vol.56 (1-4), 1982, pp.178-179.

nobility was to be married, the festivities went on for several days. This was not out the ordinary or unusual. The singers alone were paid 70,000 tankas, and, when the bride was brought to her husband's home, her father-in-law generously distributed 150 horses, 4 elephants, and 20 asses, loaded with cloth, which included silken fabrics. In addition to this largesse, several lakh tankas were donated in charity. This generosity appears to have waxed or waned directly proportionate to the economic and social status of the donor. In giving away gifts, a nobleman refurbished his social standing. Besides, these acts also helped make the marriage public, and was an indirect way of seeking public approval and social sanction; it was a way of socializing the marriage. That wedding expenses were rising, is evident. For Dara's marriage, as we have seen, both Mumtaz Mahal and then Jahanara, put aside resources and materials. This collection had started much before Dara's marriage was actually arranged. In the end analysis, a total of 32 lakhs of rupees were spent during his wedding. The thought of public decision and notions of social standing often pushed the expenses over the normal level.

125. I.H. Siddiqui, Islamic Culture, Vol.56 (1-4), 1982, p.179.

126. Beglery & Desai, ed. The Shahjehannama of 'Inayat Khan', p.92.

POST NUPTIAL CEREMONIES :

After the wedding ritual was over and the feasting had taken place, it was time for the groom to take his bride away to his own home. There was some light-hearted tomfoolery, at the expense of the groom, by the elderly matrons, at this juncture.¹²⁷ They also blessed the couple in song. Then they accompanied the bride to her new home in a procession.

The customary practice for the wedding night was that the ladies from the family of the groom tastefully decorated and carpeted the bridal chamber from beforehand.¹²⁸ Once escorted inside, the couple were left alone, for it was deemed necessary that the marriage be customary at once.

127. William Irvine, trans. Storie do Mogor, Vol. III, p.144.

128. Mahdi Hussain, Rehla, p.78.

The matronly ladies waited nearby, and would come to check if the consummation had been successful or not. If there was failure, the groom stood disgraced and the old women sent him a spinning wheel. Otherwise, in case of success, they would spread the news and rejoice in song. Then their participation over, the ladies would leave, having received gifts from the couple. Manucci adds that on their wedding night, the girls would often cry out for help and the people would pretend not to hear because this was 'the general custom in India.'

In the Shahjehannama, we get references to two post nuptial ceremonies which are not heard of earlier. There were followed in the royal weddings. The first of these was the pa-a-ndaz ceremony. This occurred a week or so after the wedding celebrations were completed. When Prince Dara Shikoh performed this ceremony, he "laid down all sorts of costly materials to form a carpeted pathway stretching all the way from the imperial apartments to his own mansion." The other ceremony, that of nisar, consisted of a 'scattering about' of gold, silver, gems etc. plus the bestowal of other presents on the Emperor and other noblemen.

129. Pelsaert, Jehangir's India, p.84.

130. William Irvine, trans. Storie Do mogor, Vol.III, p.117.

131. Begley & Desai, ed. The Shahjehannama of 'Inayat Khan', p. 92.

132. Ibid, p.93.

For the pa-andaz and nisar ceremonies, the royal bridegroom was supposed to send out a special invitation to the Emperor 'to pay a visit to his domicile.'

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133. Begley & Desai, ed. The Shanjehannama of 'Inayat Khan, p. 93.

CHAPTER - THREE

POLITICAL MATRIMONIAL ALLIANCES

Since time immemorial the politically motivated alliance of two parties via matrimony has been recognised as a useful tool. This kind of marriage is popular because it "is an expression of shared identity and also rank by both parties involved." Thus, if party 'A', which is of a higher social status, married their son to the daughter of Party 'B' it established a link of shared identity between the parties. By this marriage, Party 'B' would move up in hierarchic rank by making a linkage with a well-established family. For the taker of the bride, in this case party 'A', there would be an acknowledgement of the groom's family's superior status, which the bride giver could only try to equal but never rise above. Therefore, such marriages proved fruitful for both sides in political matters and social image improvement.

134. Michael H. Fisher, 'Political marriage alliances at the Shi'i Court of Awadh'. In, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol.25 (1-4), 1983, p.594.

During the early medieval period we see the utilisation of this political tool. Mohammad-bin-Tughlak gave his sister Feroz Khunda's hand in marriage to a budding Arab statesman, Saifuddin Ghadda. The Sultan was, as a matter of policy, encouraging the induction of
135
Arabs into his nobility. Due to this reason, a Tughlak princess was given away ; by the time of the Mughals, it is seen that a policy developed not to allow the Princesses to marry. For one thing, it meant a loss of status for the Mughal to give away a bride rather than receive one, and the other reason was that for political considerations it was better that they
136
remained single. However, the Sultanate, being in a state of evolution as a political entity, did not have as established a social image which could be hindered by the loss of status incurred in giving away a royal bride; in fact, here political allies were being sought through matrimonial alliance.

Another sister of Mohammad Tughlak was married to a nobleman called Mughis. Both of his sisters proved unlucky in their choice of husbands. While Amir Ghadda was imprisoned for one night as punishment for striking

135. Mahdi Husain, trans. Rehla, p.78.

"--- the sultan was particularly fond of the Arabs whom he preferred to all others, and he acknowledged their merits."

6. Tavernier, Travels in India, Tr. Ball, ed. Crooke, p.313 also, Bernier, Travels in the Mogul Empire, tr. Irving Proc, p.12.

a highly placed court noble, Mughis was to be exiled by the Sultan because he was informed that his sister died at the hands of her husband, as Mughis had maltreated her. Even so, because these were his brothers-in-law, the Sultan gave them a lot of consideration. For what Amir Ghadda had done, the actual punishment would have been capital punishment, which was not meted out. Instead, the territories of Malwa, Gujarat, Cambay, and Nahrwala which had been awarded to him for administering, were taken back; he was not exiled but put under the service and guidance of another nobleman, Amir Malik Qabula of Lahore. After 4 years of service with this Amir, the Sultan called back his brother-in-law and reinstated him with full honours.

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The above account shows us that the status rise which accompanied the receiving, rather than giving away of the bride, was known even at this time. Despite the crass behaviour of his brothers-in-law, the Sultan was not able to use his might as monarch to put them straight; he had to be lenient and considerate. Amir Ghadda he received back into his own court after some time.

137. Mahdi Husain, trans. Rohla, p.80-81.

Political manoeuvrings, using conspiracies, allies, matrimonial links, became common place in the overthrow of kings and establishment of new rulers. A case in point is that of Alauddin Khilji. He was the son of Jalaluddin Khilji's sister and he married his uncle's daughter. Alauddin's brother, Almas Beg, married another daughter of Jalaluddin. Upon his marriage, Alauddin was elevated to the position of governor over Kara and Manikpur which were rich, agricultural, and commercial areas, producing grains sugar, and fine cloth. ¹³⁸ However, Alauddin's ambitions were not

satiated for he was known to be "ingenious, brave, victorious and successful; and love of kingship was ingrained in him". ¹³⁹ Despite the fact that the marital

relationship between Alauddin and his wife remained strained and later, worsened, he stayed steadfast in his ambitions. Ultimately, he was able to conspire for the assassination of his uncle, the Sultan, and himself seized the throne. Thus, even though his marriage proved to be a personal failure, it did provide him with the necessary status upliftment, political position and economic clout with which he furthered his goals. Almas

138. Elliot & Dowson, Vol. III, p.62-63.

(Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi by Barani)

139. Mahli Husain, trans. Rehla, p.40.

Beg, however, did not do as well as his brother even though he, too, was a royal son-in-law. Therefore, alongwith the politicially sound matrimonial alliance, the incentive, motivation, and qualities needed to rise further had to be there as well.

Alauddin Khalji's son, Qutubuddin, carried on the tradition of matrimonial alliances. He married the daughter of an established nobleman. Malik Dinar, titled Zafar Khan, who belonged to the old gentry. The Malik was an able statesman. Upon becoming father-in-law to the Sultan, he was raised to the position of governor of the rich province of Gujarat. ¹⁴⁰

The early Mughals were also conscious of the uses of matrimonial alliances with rulers of strategic areas, even though their early marriages were restricted within the royal family itself. In fighting the Uzbek chiefs, to get Samarqand, the Mughal ruler Babur had to resort to a pacifying matrimonial linkup; he offered his sister, Khanzada Begum, in marriage to the Uzbek ruler Mohammad Shah Bakht Khan Uzbek, so as "there might be ¹⁴¹ peace and a lasting alliance between us". Babur

140. Elliot & Dowson, Vol. III, p. 136.
(Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi by Barani)

141. Annette S. Beveridge, trans. History of Humayan, p.65.

married Bibi Mubarika, a princess of the Yusufzai tribe (in 1519 A.D.) in Afghanistan. After his conquest of Kabul, Bibi Mubarika's father, Malik Sulaiman Shah had come to Babur seeking exile. Babur gave him shelter, riches, and married his daughter. In return he asked the Yusufzai chief to "go and bring men and labourers etc., to your native land and cultivate it." ¹⁴² In this manner, Babur opened out a new avenue from whence to get men and materials.

Alliances with the Uzbegs and Yusufzais were followed by similar matrimonial pacts with the Janjuah chief Hast Khan, and the Gakhar chief Hati Khan due to these new relationships, the troublesome tribal elements in the crucial frontier region were subdued, and the Punjab emerged a zone of peace. These developments allowed the Mughal to muster up his resources for the achievement of the foremost goal, the conquest of ¹⁴³ Delhi. The tribal chiefs gave military support, and what was more important, assured him that they would not rise in revolt whilst his back was turned. Humayun furthered this trend when he married Hamida Bano

142. ibid., p. 91-92.

143. A.Z. Khan, 'The Mughal Marriages : a politics-Religious and legal Study' in Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, Vol.34. No. 1-3, 1986, p.88.

Begum, a Persian princess, he received much military aid from his new relatives in Persia, with which he bolstered up his Second attempt to recapture his lost monarchy.

One notices that during the Sultanate and early Mughal period, Princesses from the royal house were being given in marriage to these political powers provinces from whom military assistance or the assurance of peaceful co-existence, and acceptance of the Mughal as supreme, was sought. The making of a matrimonial connection with the Mughal softened the blow of subordination for the lesser political powers. It was not as humiliating to be a royal son-in-law as it was to be annihilated on the battlefield by Mughal forces. For the early rulers, the giving of their daughters and sisters as brides in order to make political allies was necessary for the process of consolidation of the empire. If the areas which were conquered were constantly in revolt, the Mughals would have had a hard time progressing further into India. On the other hand, for the Mughal allies there were rich rewards in the form of land grants, high court positions, social betterment, etc.

With Akbar's reign, a change becomes noticeable. Firstly, there is the prominent policy of seeking Matrimonial alliances with the powerful Rajput houses, like that of the Kachhawas. Secondly, Akbar pronounced

that Mughal princesses could not be married as their husbands were then in a position to accumulate enough political power at court to counter the Mughal authority itself. ¹⁴⁴ Now the Mughals received brides and did not give their daughters and sisters away as brides. The other two recorded reasons for royal princesses remaining single are that there were hardly any worthy suitors around and secondly, when the princesses married, they became, 'the rulers of their husbands', and approached the Emperor upon any occasion when their husbands did not do as they pleased. ¹⁴⁵

The first Rajput-Mughal marriage occurred in 1562-63 with the royal house of Amber; after a gap of 10 years, other alliances were forged with Bikaner and Jaisalmer. According to Akbar's personal secretary, "His Majesty forms matrimonial alliances with the Princes of Hindustan (N. India) and of other countries; and secures ¹⁴⁶ by these ties of harmony the peace of the world." In fact, the Kachhawa family rose into prominence due to its political and personal connections with the Mughal. Otherwise a weak, minor chief, Raja Bharmal was able to

144. Bernier, Travels in the Mogul empire, tr. Irving Brock p.12.

145. Tavernier, Travels in India, tr. Ball, ed. Crooke, p.313

146. H. Blochmann, trans. Ain, Vol.1, p.45.

maintain his position and protect his territory from threats posed by Mewar, after having allied himself to the Mughals.

Families of good background and lineage, coming into India from the land of the Ilbari Turks, found that making matrimonial alliances with the Royal house or into the Mughal Nobility was a good way of putting down roots in their adoptive land. A study shows that the inflow of such peoples was a constant feature throughout the medieval period. It was in this way that the families of Rustam Qandhari and Mirza Musaffar Hussain Safavi came to settle in India. Similarly, the families of Mirza Sulaiman and Mirza Shahrukh rose to prominence because of matrimonial connections with the royal family. Aurangzeb is seen to have cajoled an exiled Arab prince, Islam Shah Khan, known to have considerable wealth and horses, to accept in marriage the daughter of Murad Bakhsh. When the Arab refused, Aurangzeb conspired against him.

The Mughal emperors did not always marry for political ends. In one case, Akbar wanted to marry the

147. Afzal Hussain, 'Marriages among Mughal nobles as an Index of status and aristocratic integration', in P.I.H.C. 1972, P.308.

148 & 149. Ibid P. 305.

150. William Irvine, trans. Storia do Mogor, Vol II, p.175

daughter of Mirza Abd-Allah Mughal because he was
151
attracted to her. However, Bairam Khan disapproved of
this match because it was serving no political purpose,
as such. In fact, since the bride's family was also
connected by marriage to Mirza Kamran's family (which
was the enemy camp), Bairam Khan wanted to prevent the
union. But, Akbar went ahead with the match, it proved
fruitful in the long run, since this new matrimonial
alliance, being stronger politically, was able to wear
away support from Karman's camp into Akbar's own circle
of allies.

Matrimonial connections for political betterment
were made right upto the end of the Mughal period. The
Rajputs, however, are seen to have nearly stopped the
giving of their daughters in marriage to the mughals,
unless compelled, because a weakened Mughal power did
not serve them well. This decline in Rajput alliances
with the Mughal household, once Mughal power was low,
can be explained by taking a look at a study done on
Awadh in the 18th to 19th centuries.

At Awadh, the study shows that matrimonial
alliances were still practiced in the time of Sa'daat
Khan, the Mughal governor appointed there.

151. Husain, Afzal, Marriages among Mughal nobles as in
index of status and aristocratic intergeration in
P.I.H.C., 1972, p.89.

The reasons for making these alliances are examined and the findings show "changing patterns of partner choice exhibited by this dynasty as its identity, place in the social hierarchy and goals shifted over time." ¹⁵² The bride giver, in relation to the bride-acceptors were considered either equal or inferior in social standing; never were they superior. Such matrimonial links also established a connection between two families which made possible a certain amount of socially upward mobility and political benefits for the bride's family. In Awadh, during the 18th, century, the Shiite governor, Sa'adat Khan was followed by Safdar Jang, in 1739. Sa'adat Khan hailed from Nishapur in Iran. His family had served the Safavids. When he came to India, and joined the Mughal nobility, he was already married once to his patrilateral parallel cousin. But upon his arrival in India, he added 3 wives to his harem. These women belonged to families well established in Mughal service. Their fathers were high ranking Irani officials who had been, or were, governors of areas ¹⁵³ which Sadat Khan was to govern later on. Though not

152. Michael. H. Fiser, 'Political marriage alliances at the Shi'i court of Awadh, in Comparative studies in Society and History, Vol. 25 (1-4), 1983, p.593.

153. Michael H. Fisher, Comparative Studies in Society and History Vol. 25 (1-4), 1983, p.599.

all of his officers were thus related, on essential core of them were; on this body of related officials, he could completely rely upon for full support. Ultimately, his most trusted son-in-law, who happened to be his nephew, i.e. Safdar Jang, emerged as his successor since Saadat Khan had no direct heir.

In turn, Safdar Jang was determined to reach new heights in Mughal service. He rose to be Chief Minister of the Empire; this rise was partly due to his link up with some of the most notable personages at the Delhi court. He married his own son, Shuja-ud-daulah to the daughter of a noble who was much favoured by the Emperor.¹⁵⁴ While Safdarjang's new family members received opportunities for employment in Awadh, as well as the assurance of riches, they gave to Safdarjang their loyalty and support. The next generation in Safdarjang's family continued this policy of matrimonial alliances.

With the turn of the century, the perception of the Awadh rulers of being of the part of the Mughal bureaucracy altered. They now considered themselves to be hereditary rulers in Awadh.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, status

154. ibid, P. 602.

155. ibid, P. 603-604.

became linked with birth and any connections with the royal family led to a superior social status. For instance, the consanguine and affinal relations of the Awadh ruling house were awarded land grants on an extensive basis, with achievement and skills taking a backseat to the criteria of birth and geneology. ¹⁵⁶

Ghazi-al-din Hayda, the Awadh ruler, coronated himself in 1819, and to establish his monarchical right, traced out an impressive ancestry all the way back to Timur and Chingez Khan. This claim was meant to put him on ¹⁵⁷

par with the Mughals. Secondly, he also made a connection with the Prophet himself to convince all of his legitimate right to rule. At this juncture the Mughals were suffering a decline in power, with the Emperor being a mere puppet in the hands of the British. Arising out of this change in political balances, a marriage was made between the Awadh heir and a daughter of Sulayman Shukuh, the Mughal emperor's brother. The Prince had to go through with this alliance, which could never have materialised at the height of Mughal power, because the Awadh ruler had allowed him a pension and political asylum in Lucknow;

156. Ibid, P.604.

157. Ibid, p. 605-606.

on top of this, he had also saved him from a
158
disgraceful public condemnation. Much against his
will, therefore, the Mughal prince had to accede to the
Awadh ruler. Following closely on the heels of this
affront to the Mughal dignity, there was a second
uneven match made, which added insult to injury; a
second Mughal princess was given away to a courtier of
Awadh. When Sulayman Shukuh showed his reluctance to
marry the Mughal princess, he was threatened with the
cutting off of his allowance from the East India
Company; this was his sole means of survival. Under
pressure, therefore, and bowing before the weight of
obligations, the Mughal house had to bring themselves
down a great deal, when marrying off a princess of the
royal house to a lowly courtier of Awadh. The Awadh
ruler himself was brought on par with the Mughals, by
his marriage. With this high watermark being reached in
marriage alliances, the Awadh rulers discontinued this
policy.

Looking back to the start and coming to the finish
of the Awadh system of matrimonial alliances, we see
how it was utilized for social, economic, and career
advancement; as they rose higher socially, the Awadh

158. ibid. p. 607.

rulers made better and better alliances. Whilst at first the number of marriages were more and status of the wives of a middle level, later the attempt was to make fewer but qualitatively better marriages (like Shujaudulah's marriage to the daughter of a highly placed court dignitary), leading ultimately to the desired goal, i.e. the taking of a Mughal bride.



Illustration No. (i):
Marriage Procession of Dara Shikoh. (Req. No. 58-
58/387, National Museum, New Delhi.)



Illustration No. (11) :

A Couple in Dalliance (Req. No. 48-8/58, National
Museum New Delhi.)

From : The Shahjehannama of 'Inayat Khan, ed. Begley & Desai.

MARRIAGE	SACHAQ	MIHR	DOWRY
	FIGURES	FIGURES	FIGURES.
1. Dara Shikoh weds d/o Prince Parwiz (pp.90-92)	(a)Rs. 1 <u>Lakh</u> in (b)Rs. 1 <u>Lakh</u> cash	Rs. 5 <u>Lakhs</u>	Rs. 8 <u>Lakhs</u>
2. Prince Mohd. Shah weds d/o Mirza Rustam (p.92093)	(a)Rs.1 <u>Lakh</u> plus Rs.60,000, cash (b)Rs.1 <u>Lakh</u> worth of goods	Rs. 4. <u>Lakhs</u>	-
3. Prince Mohd. Aurangzeb Bahadur weds d/o Shahnawaz Khan (p. 203 & pp.207-8)	(a)Rs.1 <u>Lakh</u> in goods. (b)Rs.60,000 cash	Rs. 4 <u>Lakhs</u>	Rs.1 <u>Lakh</u> was given to the Emperor as a gift when he came to the Khan's house Dowry not recorded.
4. Prince Murad Bakhsh weds d/o Shahnawaz Khan (pp. 295-296)	(a)Rs.1 <u>Lakh</u> in goods. (b)Rs. 40,000 in cash.	Rs. 4 <u>Lakhs</u>	-
5. Prince Mohd. Sultan weds d/o Deccan Ruler Qutb-al-Mulk (pp.527-528)	-	-	Rs. 10 <u>Lakhs</u> in gems and other articles.
6. Sultan Sulaiman Shikoh weds d/o Bahram. (p. 532)	-	Rs. 2 <u>Lakhs</u>	An offering of gems was made to the Emperor by the groom's father for gracing the occasion. Dowry not recorded.

Table showing sachaq, mihr, and dowry figures in different royal weddings.

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