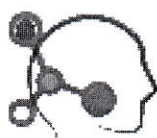


Role of Libraries in Unveiling Indian Knowledge Systems

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Chapter 55

Women Education and Libraries of Royal Ladies of Mughal Period: A Study

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Abstract

In the history of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), the education of women has undergone different ups and downs. During ancient times, the education system of women was unique. They enjoyed free education and their role in the society was significant. The women in this period held the positions of Rishis, Sages and even the experts of Vedas. In the medieval period, during the Muhamedan rule, education of women in general was neglected due to the purdah system, early marriage and many other reasons. In the Mughal Period, the education of women was regarded as less important compared to men in the middle and upper-class families by both Hindus and Muslims. Though some Mughal emperors established mukhtabs and madrasahs for the education of the girls, in the upper and noble class society, the women received higher education, and sometimes they made creditable progress in literature, music, poetry, and religious studies. The royal ladies of the Mughal Period were highly educated and accomplished, even though they possessed their personal libraries.

Considering the above, the paper will review the pertinent literature to examine both the opportunities and constraints faced by the women. Finally, the paper will highlight the nature of women education system and libraries of the women in the Mughal Period.

Keywords: Education, Libraries, Mughal Period, Royal Ladies, Women, Women Culture.

1 Introduction

From the dawn of civilization, education for women was less important than for men. History reveals that India was not different in this respect. In the ancient and medieval period status of women has undergone through many changes. In spite of some dark sides, ancient Indian culture was vibrant and the education system was also got considerable importance. In the Vedic period education of women was not neglected. They imparted certain types of Vedic and literary education to all classes of people. Women in this period also held high position in the society. There are many instances from the Vedas and Upanishads that the educated women held the position of sages, seers, politicians, administrators and teachers. Gargi, Maitreyi, Apala, Lopamudra, Khana and Lilabati were such eminent women scholars (Mookerjee, 2003). In the medieval period the education of women began to decline due to many social factors both in the Hindu and Muslim families, like in the Muslim families, Purdah System and in the Hindu families, Sati, Jauhar, in both the Hindu and Muslim families Child Marriage hindered the education of women. At the primary level, usually the Muslim girls were imparted education in the same school with the boys, or in separate madrasahs and makhtabs destined for them. However, when