**Nur Jahan and Her Influence on Jahangir**

**Early Career of Nur Jahan**

Nur Jahan's original name was Mehr-un-Nisa. She was the daughter of Mirza Ghias Beg, a nobleman from Tehran (Persia). Forced by adversity, Mirza Ghias Beg left his home in Persia to try his luck in India. He started on this long journey with his wife and other children without any adequate means of support. On the way, when the family reached Kabul, Ghias Beg's wife gave birth to a daughter in 1578. As they had not sufficient means to bring up the child they left her under a tree and continued their journey. The head of that caravan, Sheikh Masud, was a god fearing man and when he came to know of the incident he at once took up the expenditure of that baby on his own shoulders. When he reached India he helped Ghias Beg in getting a respectable job in Akbar's court. Now Mehr un-Nisa began to visit the royal palace along with her mother. As she grew up to a charming girl, Jahangir, the heir-apparent fell in love with her and even desired to marry her. As Akbar was not in favour of such a marriage he got her married to an Afghan noble Ali Kuli Khan (Sher Afghan) and appointed him as the Faujdar of Burdwan in Bengal.

When Jahangir came to the throne he managed somehow to kill Sher Afghan in 1607. and tried to bring Mehr-un-Nisa to his harem. For full four years she repelled all the advances of her royal lover but finding herself incompetent to reject him more she married him in 1611. Jahangir made her his chief queen and gave her the title of "Nur Mahal" (Light of the Palace) which was later on converted to the title of "Nur Jahan" (light of the world).

**Nur Jahan's Character and her influence on the Policy and Character of Jahangir**

Soon after his marriage with Nur Jahan Jahangir slowly and slowly began to come under her influence. Nur Jahan was peerless in beauty but side by side she was a master of strong intellect and quick understanding. She was highly educated and fond of music, poetry and painting, etc. Because of her accomplishments Jahangir became more or less her slave. Jahangir himself used to say, "So long as Nur Jahan is at the helm of affairs I only require half a seer of meat and a glass of wine." Her name began to appear even on the coins along with her husband and the royal Firmans began to be issued at her instance. Slowly and slowly she not only began to participate in the administration of the country but also tried to concentrate all the authority in her hands. She was in fact the real power behind the throne. It is why some historians call the period between 1611 to 1627 as the reign of Nur Jahan rather than that of Jahangir. Her father Ghias Beg and brothers Asaf Khan and Itmad Khan were raised to high positions. Historians have truly remarked that no family rose so suddenly to rank and eminence as the family of Mirza Ghias Beg. During this period (1611-27) Nur Jahan exercised a great influence on the character and policy of Jahangir.

(a) *Good influence of Nur Jahan.* Nur Jahan was both beautiful and wise, and because of her existence the splendour of Jahangir's court was greatly enhanced. She fully understood the matters of the state, and if a difficulty arose she immediately solved it. She very ably ruled the country. She was very kind and generous to the poor. It is said that she arranged the marriages of about 500 poor and destitute girls from her own personal pocket. Her father and brothers proved themselves really able men and played a great part in improving the general administration of the country. By her good arrangements Nur Jahan greatly reduced the expenditure of the royal household. In the words of **Elphinstone**, *"Nur Jahan was a woman of rare intelligence who contrived improvements in the royal furniture and jewellery and introduced female dresses more becoming than any in use before her time. Herself a poet and an artist she greatly patronised learning and art."*

Nur Jahan exercised beneficial influence not only on the policy of the state but also on the character of Jahangir. She greatly tried to reform the bad habits of her husband. It was due to her influence that Jahangir greatly reduced his excessive habits of drinking and cruelty. She looked after the emperor with great care and devotion and greatly relieved him much of his cares and worries. Her moral influence was good and it benefited the poor and the needy and the scholars and the artists alike.

(b) *Bad influence of Nur Jahan.* But the political influence of Nur Jahan adversely affected the policy and character of Jahangir. The policy of favouritism aroused bitterness and jealousies and created an atmosphere of suspicion and intrigue. Her distribution of posts of trust and responsibility to her greedy relatives, irrespective of merit and ability, greatly *undermined the efficiency of the state.* Her misuse of power made the court a hot bed of corruption and intrigues. Her marrying of her daughter Ladli Begum (from her first husband Sher Afghan) with Prince Shahryar and later on trying to get the throne for her son-in-law against Prince Khurram, who was the rightful heir to the throne, greatly added to the complications of Jahangir. Because of her arrogance, habit of suspicion and her constant desire to humble others led to rebellions and produced disorder in the country. Those officers, who were once the most faithful servants of the state, were forced to take up arms against it, and in this way the last days of Jahangir were completely darkened. Nur Jahan's influence on the political and administrative affairs of the state proved very baneful and injurious to the interests of the Mughal empire.

(1) *Loss of Kandhar, 1622 A.D.* First of all, as a result of Nur Jahan's policy of favouritism and intrigues the province of Kandhar, which the Mughals got in 1519, was lost in 1622. The Persian ruler Shah Abbas was always on the look-out for some such opportunity when he could reconquer Kandhar. He got this opportunity in 1622 when Nur Jahan and Prince Khurram fell out and neutralised the advantage which the Mughals possessed over their opponents. When Prince Khurram was asked to proceed towards Kandhar he refused to do so because he had now lost all faith in Nur Jahan who was conspiring against him and trying to get the throne for Shahryar. Thus Khandhar was lost in 1622.

(2) *Rebellion of Khurram, 1623-25 A.D.* The rebellion of Prince Khurram (Shah Jahan) was another immediate result of Nur Jahan's intrigues. In 1620. Nur Jahan married her daughter Ladli Begum to Prince Shahryar. Since then she could not think of anything else except trying to get the throne for her son-in-law by fare or foul means despite her knowledge that Khurram was the rightful heir to the throne. Such a policy led Khurram to rebel against his father. His intention was to march on Agra and seize the immense treasure stored there, but he was defeated by Prince Parvez and Mahabat Khan at Bilochpur near Delhi and fled towards South. Then amassing his resources he marched towards Bengal and Bihar and conquered them, but his further advance towards Agra was again checked by the imperialists. Mahabat Khan once again defeated him and drove him to the Deccan once again. For the next few years he wandered helplessly seeking assistances but failed. In 1625 he surrendered to his father and sent his two sons Dara and Aurangzeb, as hostages to his father. He himself remained in the Deccan till the death of his father.

(3) *Rebellion of Mahabat Khan, 1626 A.D.* Nur Jahan's intrigues and her desire to humble Mahabat Khan, the victorious general led to another serious revolt. Mahabat Khan was charged with embezzlement and was called at the court to answer the charges. The general fully knew that his recall was at the instigation of Nur Jahan and his willful brother Asaf Khan who wanted to bring him to disgrace. He, therefore, rebelled in self-defence. While the Emperor was on his way to Kabul, Mahabat Khan, by a rapid march surrounded the royal camp and captured the King. When all attempts to rescue the Emperor proved a failure, Nur Jahan resorted to cunningness and by caus ing disunity among the general's soldiers she secured the King's release. When the general found the ground slipping from under his feet he fled towards Lahore and then towards Deccan, where he was later on joined by Prince Khurram. Thus, Mahabat Khan's reign of about one hundred days was over.

**Fall of Nur Jahan**

Jahangir died on 28th Oct., 1627 A.D. After his death Nur Jahan tried to secure the throne for her son-in-law Shahryar and even declared him as the ruler of India while she was at Lahore. But his own brother Asaf Khan, who had already married his daughter Mumtaz Mahal to Prince Khurram, stood in his way and he helped his son-in-law in invading Lahore and imprisoning Shahryar and his mother-in-law Nur Jahan. Thus, with the death of Jahangir also ended the political dominance of Nur Jahan. She, no doubt, lived for another 18 years but her influence became quite in significant. She died in 1645 and was laid in a grave beside Jahangir in his tomb at Shahdara, near Lahore.