

INDIAN LIVES OF THE OTTOMAN PRINCESSES

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ABSTRACT

Durru Shehvar Sultan and Princess Niloufer were the eminent members of the royal family of Turkey who were married to the sons of Nizam of Hyderabad. The marriage was the result of matrimonial alliance arranged to forge ties between the Caliphate and the Nizam of Hyderabad. The two Ottoman women lived during the time of great political upheaval and change which impacted their lives. While living in Hyderabad before the Indian independence the two royal women were involved in the establishment of schools, hospitals, and other charitable organizations. They were for their liberal mindset and fashion soon becoming a global icon.

Keywords: Durru Shehvar Sultan, Princess Niloufer, Hyderabad, Ottoman Empire

1. INTRODUCTION

The name of Durru Shehvar, the oldest daughter-in-law of Mir Osman Ali Khan, the Nizam of Hyderabad, is recognised for the fervent social and philanthropic activities she undertook in Hyderabad. Princess Durru Shehvar, who was born in Turkey, raised in France, and eventually married the Nizam of Hyderabad, son of the richest man in the world, decided to live out her final years in London. She modernised the Nizam's household and fought for the advancement of Hyderabad's female population. The Turkish Caliphate and the Hyderabad-based Asaf Jahis joined forces with one another through their marriage to prince Azam Jah Bahadur, the eldest son of the seventh Nizam, Mir Osman Ali Khan.

The story of Niloufer Farhat Begum portrays the life of a girl who was lost the shadow of her father at an early age, at the same time she was forced to live in exile in France. The royal family of Turkey were unable to earn a source of income for themselves, so Nizam of Hyderabad the richest man in the world helped them to sustain their lives. The matrimonial alliance was arranged between Princess Niloufer and the Moazzam Jah the younger son of Nizam of Hyderabad. She was a high spirited and radical person who soon gained popularity across the globe. She inspired the lives of many people and was recognized as 'Kohinoor of Hyderabad' or 'Mountain of Light'. All of Niloufer's projects stemmed after her marriage into the royal family of Hyderabad Her unwavering beauty, kind heart, and impeccable sense of style contributed to her popularity. Although being born in Turkey and being raised in France, she easily adopted the Indian sari and got the respect of the Indian people for doing so. As one of the first people to meld Eastern and Western cultures, Niloufer's design aesthetic was distinctively her own that she was able to westernise the Indian sari.

2. EARLY YEARS OF PRINCESS DURRU SHEVAR

The Caliphate was dissolved and the royal family was expelled in March 1924 after Turkey became a Republic. Nice, a port city on the southern French Mediterranean coast, became home to Abdul Majjid and his family. A friend of the ousted ruler, the British Red Crescent Society, pleaded with Muslim leaders across the world to support the destitute Caliph. Maulana Shaukath Ali and Maulana Mohammad Ali persuaded Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan to send the deposed Caliph a lifetime pension of 300 pounds per month in addition to allowances to several members of the family. When Durru Shehvar reached adulthood, many Muslim kings, including the Shah of Persia and the King of Egypt, were interested in marrying her so that their heirs would be represented. The Nizam was persuaded by Shaukat Ali to send a proposal to the Caliph requesting Durru Shehvar's hand in marriage for his oldest son, Prince Azam Jah. The gift from his benefactor was difficult for the ousted Caliph to refuse. The Nizam thought that the Mehr (wedding money) that the Caliph demanded for his daughter was "too great." It was 50,000 pounds. But, Shaukath Ali's intervention allowed the Caliph to suggest giving the younger son of the Nizam, Prince Mauzam Jah, the same Mehr, the hand of his brother's daughter Niloufer.

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Nizam consented without hesitation and sent his two sons to France. The wedding of Princess Durru Shehvar to Prince Azam Jah and that of Prince Mauzam to Niloufer took place in Nice, France, on November 12, 1931. It was a simple affair attended by only the Sultan's family in Nice, a few Turkish nobles and friends, as well as representatives of the Nizam—Sir Akbar Hydari and Nawab Mehdi Yar Jung, who just so happened to be in Europe at the time to attend the Round Table Conference. The rituals were carried out by the Khalifa himself. On this day, the Nizam's dominions' workplaces and educational institutions were all closed.

On December 12, 1931, the Princes and their concerts left Venice for India after a month of celebrations in Nice. Mahatma Gandhi, a well-known passenger on board the ship, was also on his way home after attending the Second Round Table conference in London. Knowing Gandhi's support for the exiled Caliph, whose restoration he fought for during his non-cooperation campaign, Shaukat Ali, who was travelling with him, set up a meeting between the young Hyderabad Royals and Gandhi on board the ship. The Hyderabad Princes and the young couples were willing to stay in Ist. class, where Gandhi was travelling, but there was a problem—Gandhi, who was travelling in III class, would not go there. Gandhi met with the newlyweds at a lounge in the II class after Shoukath Ali came up with a compromise.

3. LIFE IN HYDERABAD

Durru Shehvar quickly felt at home in Hyderabad and became one of the locals. She established a general and children's hospital at Purani Haveli, which is still operational today, out of a strong desire to provide healthcare and education for common people. With the money she gave, Bagh-e-Jahanara Junior College for women is also operated in Yakutpura. At Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), she opened the Ajmal Khan Tibbiya College Hospital. She was referred to by the Nizam as his "precious Pearl" (Nagina), and he pushed her to take an active role in Hyderabad's social scene. The proud in-law's enjoyed highlighting how Durru Shehvar was taller than his son. She rode horses, drove cars, and played tennis with her companion Rani Kumudini Devi. In 1936, Durru Shehvar also laid the cornerstone for the Begumpet Airport facility. Hyderabad's airport was previously a short strip near Hakimpet. She made sure her sons, Prince Mukarram Jah and Prince Muffakam Jah, got the best western education possible in Europe and got married to Turkish women as she had always wanted. Mukarram attended Eton, the same school where Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, had previously attended. Years later, Mukarram was appointed as Prime Minister Nehru's Honorary Aid De Camp (ADC) after being named the successor to the Hyderabad monarchy at his grandfather Mir Osman Ali Khan's suggestion! French, English, Turkish, and Urdu were all spoken with ease by Durru Shehvar, who also wrote for French publications. She fought tenaciously to have the purdah custom abolished because she thought women should be able to support themselves. Azam Jah and the Princess, however, had a wide chasm and their marriage disintegrated after only a few years. Ironically, her father, the Caliph, was the leader of all Muslims worldwide when she was born, but he was ousted and exiled before she was ever conceived. In 1948, upon her marriage, Hyderabad state was dissolved and incorporated into the Indian Union. She handled fame, power, opposition, dislocation, and pain with grace and earned the hearts of the populace.

4. LATER DECADES

With the sponsorship of her son Mukarram Jah, she donated money in 1983 to build the Durru Shehvar Children's & General Hospital in Hyderabad. She, her son Mufakkham Jah, and Princess Rain, who was Mufakkham Jah's bride, went to the Durban Dinner in 1990, which was held in London to honour Hyderabad's 400th anniversary of founding, together with the Indian and Pakistani High Commissioners. She last travelled to Hyderabad in 2004 before passing away in London on February 7th, 2006. She passed away with her two sons by her side. In Brookwood Cemetery, she was laid to rest. With the formation of the republic, she was upset by the Turkish government's treatment of her family. She belonged to the Ottoman imperial and royal dynasty, but she resisted having her body interred there because she was angry that the Turkish government had turned down her father's request to be buried in Istanbul in 1944.

5. EARLY LIFE OF NILOUFER FARHAT BEGUM

During her mother's family's reign over the Ottoman Empire, Nilüfer Hanmsultan was born on January 4th, 1916 at Istanbul's Göztepe Palace. Damad Moralzade Selaheddin Ali Bey, the son of Moralzade Mehmed Ali Bey and Zehra Aliye Hanm, was her father. She was raised by Adile Sultan, a granddaughter of Sultan Murad V and the daughter of Ehzade Mehmed Selaheddin and Tevhide Zatgül Hanm. At age two, in December 1918, she lost her father. She and her mother relocated to France, settling in the Mediterranean city of Nice, following the exile of the imperial family in March 1924. Nizam was the richest man in the world at the time, according to a New York-based Time magazine report from the era. After some time, it was suggested that the last caliph of the Turk Kingdom's daughter get married. The Nizam thought that the Turkish people during the discussion on marriage were demanding a big amount of money and setting harsh restrictions on marriage. In order to carry out this suggestion, the Nizam agreed to wed Niloufer and his younger son. The Hyderabad royal family so welcomed the following two Turkish brides in 1931.

6. LIFE IN HYDERABAD

Princess Nilofer was just 15 years old when they were married. After a few weeks, Princess Nilofer and Prince Dur Shawwar began their voyage to India by sea. The brides received training on how to dress in an Indian Sari and how to behave when the Nizam of Hyderabad visited during this time.

When they arrived in Bombay, they boarded a special train bound for Hyderabad. Nilofer exited the train and was assisted in taking baby steps as she exited the vehicle at Hyderabad Railway Station. Nilofer and her husband Hill Fort joined the search for her as everyone else did. Her spouse was an Urdu poet who used to organise almost daily poetry gatherings. He used to live a life fit for a king. In the Kingdom of Hyderabad, everything was running smoothly, and their way of life appeared to be very comfortable. One boy was born to Dur Shehwar after the year's end, and his name is Prince Mukerram Jah.

Due to a lack of access to medical services, one of the princess's maids, Rafatunnisa Begum, passed away in childbirth in 1949. The princess was terribly devastated to learn of the passing of her cherished maid. Following that, she made the decision to make sure that no mother would ever die. The issues brought about by this lack of medical facilities were explained by Niloufer to her father-in-law. As a result, in the city's Red Hills region, a specialised hospital for women and children was constructed. As a matter of fact, the hospital was given her honour by being named Niloufer Hospital, and she served as the facility's patron throughout her time in Hyderabad. The hospital is still a well-known institution and a notable icon of the Red Hills community today. Himayat Ali Mirza, her step-grandson, offers food and financial support to hospital visitors and their families.

7. LATER DECADES

Niloufer struggled to conceive for several years while her cousin gave birth to two sons. She sought the advice of several medical professionals in Europe and intended to travel to America for treatment. Moazzam Jah married Razia Begum in 1948, seventeen years after he married Niloufer. Sheoon gave birth to the couple's first child, a daughter. In order to visit her mother, Niloufer travelled to France. Four years later, in 1952, they got divorced. At age 36, she was still stunning and continued to draw media attention. She was repeatedly offered movie roles, but she declined them. Niloufer wed Edward Julius Pope Jr. in Paris on February 21, 1963. He was Mary Allaway Pope's younger brother by three years and the son of Edward Julius Pope and Mary Allaway Pope. He held positions as a corporate executive, producer, scriptwriter, and diplomat. Edward intended to make a movie about her using the papers, records, and photos that she had saved. She passed away in Paris on June 12th, 1989 and was buried at the French cemetery of Bobigny.

8. CONCLUSION

Durru Shevar Sultan was a socially active woman who laid the foundation of a general and children's hospital in Purani Haveli in Hyderabad. She quickly felt Hyderabad as her home and was a

philanthropic working for the welfare of the poor women. At Aligarh Muslim University she opened Ajmal Khan Tibbiya College for women. She was referred as 'precious pearl'[Nagina] by Nizam of Hyderabad. The Nizam encouraged her to participate in the social scene of Hyderabad. The Nizam took pride while addressing about his modern daughter to the public. She founded the Durru Shevar Foundation in Hyderabad. Which aimed to promote the cultural heritage of Hyderabad. She also founded Durru Shehvar Children's, General Hospital and Hyderabad Women's College and Princess Durru Shehvar Girl's High School.

Princess Niloufer was a patron of arts and supported the development of Hyderabad's cultural scene. She was instrumental in establishing the Hyderabad Music Foundation which aimed to promote Western classical music in the city. She also supported the Hyderabad Public School which was established by Nizam of Hyderabad. She was involved in many charitable works, establishing Niloufer Hospital in the city of Hyderabad. The hospital is functional till date providing medical aid to the poor and the needy. Niloufer was known for her impeccable sense of style and fashion. She was a trendsetter in Hyderabad and was admired for her grace and elegance.

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