

Attitude Towards Women in The Timurid Empire

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Received: 17 February 2025; **Accepted:** 15 March 2025; **Published:** 16 April 2025

Abstract: This article examines the attitude towards women during the reign of Amir Temur and their role in society. In the Timurid era, women were actively involved not only in household duties but also in politics, social life, and even military affairs. Amir Temur valued women not only for their physical beauty but also for their intellect and social roles. The article highlights Temur's political respect for women and their involvement in the development of society and governance. It also explores how women maintained their place and dignity in society during the Timurid period.

Keywords: Amir Temur, Timurid period, women, militancy, politics, oriental women, historical appreciation.

Introduction: A woman is the cornerstone of the family and society, the beauty and essence of life. Our lives are beautiful and meaningful because of them. Women symbolize compassion and loyalty. In the East, women are often compared to angels, as angels are considered the purest and most innocent beings created by Allah. Respect for women is embedded not only in religious but also in cultural and historical values.

During the reign of Amir Timur, women had their place in society as well. Thousands of women were recruited for military service and were taught the art of war. Ibn Arabshah writes: "Among Timur's soldiers, there were women who demonstrated bravery in battle. They were skilled in spear fighting, swordplay, and archery, sometimes outperforming men in these areas. If any of them became ill while traveling, they would step aside, and once treated, they would return to the battlefield."

The Timurid Empire (14th–15th centuries), founded by Tamerlane (Amir Timur), was deeply influenced by Islamic, Mongol, and Persian traditions. While it was a predominantly patriarchal society, women—especially those from the royal family—were not entirely excluded from public life. In fact, some elite women played influential roles in governance, education, and the cultural development of the empire.

One of the most remarkable examples is Gawhar Shad, the wife of Shah Rukh, Timur's son. She was a prominent political figure and an active patron of architecture and the arts. Gawhar Shad sponsored the

construction of mosques, madrasas, and libraries in Herat, which later became a leading center of Islamic learning and culture. Her influence demonstrates that elite women could exercise significant soft power and contribute to the empire's intellectual and artistic achievements.

Moreover, women in the Timurid court often received high-quality education. Royal daughters were sometimes involved in diplomacy through strategic marriages and correspondence with foreign courts. These examples suggest that, while ordinary women had limited roles, women of noble birth had opportunities to shape the political and cultural landscape of the empire.

The heroism of women on the battlefield during the Timurids period is truly remarkable. Particularly, the ability of women, who had lost their sight, to return to battle swiftly after receiving medical attention is striking. Since Amir Timur was a person of high moral and ethical values, this aspect played a significant role in his army. The Timurids era also witnessed the important role of women in society, which was highly respected and valued.

Amir Timur greatly respected his wife, Saroymulkhonim. Saroymulkhonim was one of the most noble, intelligent, and discerning women of her time. Before marrying her, Timur chose her over all other princesses and gave her the title "Katta Khonim" or "Bibikhonim." Saroymulkhonim was deeply involved

in the political, economic, and social life of the state, offering wise counsel on state matters. She played an active role in the state's affairs with her clever and thoughtful ideas.

After Timur's return from his campaign in India in 1399-1404, he had the Bibikhonim Mosque built in Samarqand for Saroymulkhonim. This mosque is a symbol of the high art of the Timurid era and reflects the respect for women during that time.

During the Timurid era, women not only had political importance but also held a significant social standing. Even when receiving foreign diplomats, the queen would sit next to the ruler. This further confirms that queens were highly regarded in society.

Amir Timur valued his family greatly. He was meticulous in choosing brides, taking into account their ancestry, health, and physical condition. He believed that the process of selecting a bride was just as important as state affairs. He wrote: "I paid great attention to finding a suitable bride for my sons, grandsons, and close relatives. I checked their family lineage, their health, and their physical condition. I ensured they had good character and were free from any defects before arranging the marriage. If a bride met these requirements, a grand ceremony would be held."

According to Article 58 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, men and women have equal rights, which are protected by law in their social, economic, and political activities.

The respect afforded to women of royal or noble lineage can also be seen in the emphasis on female education within the elite. Timurid princesses were often literate and well-versed in Islamic theology, Persian poetry, and statecraft. Some participated in literary production themselves or served as patrons to poets and scholars. This suggests that cultural attitudes towards elite women, at least, were progressive in certain aspects compared to contemporary societies in both the East and West.

However, it is important to recognize the limits of this inclusiveness. The status and influence of women were often tied to their familial connections and their proximity to the ruling class. Ordinary women in the Timurid Empire likely led more restricted lives, bound by the norms of Islamic law and local customs that emphasized domestic roles. Nevertheless, women played critical roles in economic life as well, participating in textile production, market trade, and artisanal work in urban centers.

The Mongol legacy, which had a significant impact on Timurid political culture, may have also contributed to

more flexible gender norms in the court. Mongol traditions allowed women, especially within the ruling family, to exercise political power and public visibility. This influence, blended with Islamic and Persian norms, created a unique environment in which certain women could rise to prominence.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the attitude towards women in the Timurid Empire was neither entirely progressive nor wholly repressive. It was shaped by a confluence of cultural, religious, and historical influences that created space—albeit limited—for female agency. While the vast majority of women likely remained marginalized in formal structures, a few exceptional figures managed to break through societal barriers and leave lasting legacies. Their stories serve as a reminder that gender roles in historical Islamic societies were more diverse and complex than often assumed.

Even the process of selecting a bride was governed by specific laws and customs, emphasizing the value placed on women in society. Women during the Timurid era actively participated not only in family matters but also in politics, economics, and society. Their strength, agility, and courage in battle earned them respect. Truly, the woman is the happiness of both our people and society. This principle has been upheld from our ancestors through to future generations. Regardless of the time or situation, Eastern women have always been honored, respected, and cherished.

Moreover, we can see the continued respect for women through figures such as Tomaris, Bibikhonim, Zulfiya, Uvaisiy, and Nodirabegim, whose legacy continues to shine in our blood.

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