

The Tazkira as Palimpsest: Reading Myth, Morality, and Memory in Nur Jahan's Portrait: Methodological paper on extracting history from layered anecdotes and biases

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Abstract

This paper looking at tazkiras as palimpsest asserts that the text are multi-dimensional, with myth, morality, and memory collaboratively constructing progressing portrayals of historical figures. The study asserts that the biases and discrepancies perceived in Indo-Persian tazkiras such as Zakhi-rat-ul Khawanin, Ma' āsir-ul Umara, and Mir' āt-ul 'Ālam are not mere flaws but tools for interpretation. By incorporating moral criticism and erasure into each narrative, biography transforms into an archive of conduct that reveals Mughal perspectives on gender and sovereignty. The research illustrates that successive layers of writing do not supplant cultural meaning; rather, they accumulate it by employing Derrida's archive logic and Foucault's archaeology of discourse as theoretical frameworks. A close reading of the texts reveals that myth and moral allegory were employed to both validate and regulate female authority. In patriarchal historiography, the feminine presence persists, as memory serves both as a means and an end in itself. Viewing the tazkira through the lens of palimpsest facilitates us to reconceptualise Mughal history as a moral imagination, wherein the act of remembrance undertakes the function of authorship and narrative bias is sustained as a testament to the emotional and ethical consciousness of the empire.

Keywords: Tazkira; Palimpsest; Mughal historiography; Nur Jahan; Gender and Sovereignty; Cultural memory; Indo-Persian Literature; Moral imagination; Archive Theory; Discourse; Discourse analysis

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Introduction

The tazkira has a special place in the cultural memory of the Mughal empire as one of the longest-lasting forms of Indo-Persian literature. It combines moral contemplation, narrative, and literary appreciation to build reputations that last beyond their historical period, rather than being a simple biography or record. Reading a tazkira is like navigating a maze of language, where memories are interspersed with evaluation, praise, and moral fantasy. This paper suggests seeing the tazkiras as a palimpsest, a multi-layered surface where memory, myth, and morality intertwine to create nuanced pictures of the past. Using this lens of interpretation, Nur Jahan becomes more than just a historical character; she is a mosaic of stories that show the Persianate world's early modern struggles over gender, authority, and authorship. A palimpsest is a good metaphor for the tazkira because it represents a text that has been written, erased, and rebuilt by many generations of people's memories. Adding to the layers of praise, gossip, and interpretation, each entry edits or corrects the one before it. Instead of a static biography, what we get is a living document of our shared memories. The need of the present shapes memory, not only remembrance, as Paul Ricoeur points out ("Memory, History, Forgetting" 2025). This approach is exemplified by the tazkira, whose writers were more like moral cartographers than modern-day historians, charting virtue and character as much as they chronicled events.

Tazkiras like *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin* by Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, *Ma'āsir-ul Umara* by Shah Nawaz Khan, and *Mir'āt-ul 'Ālam* by Bakhtawar Khan transform into texts of ingrained memory when seen from this perspective. Devotion, moral exemplariness, nostalgia, and jealousy are the interpretative coatings that each layer of writing imparts. The likeness of Nur Jahan is altered appropriately. Shhab al-Din Talish frames her power with moral ambivalence, suggesting that "her words carried the weight of royal command, yet her influence disturbed the hearts of men" (Bose 1993, 73). In Bhakkari's narrative, she is depicted as a model of generosity, doling out elephants and jewels in acts of regal munificence. In Shah Nawaz Khan's account, she is remembered as a woman of refined taste and disciplined intellect. A new layer of cultural envy or fear is etched with each iteration.

Historians face a mix of difficulties and opportunities presented by this multi-layered textuality. Disentangling events from assessments, facts from moral narratives, is the real issue. A chance to learn about Mughal ideas about gender, memory, and power presents itself in the form of moralization. "Every archive is at once shelter and exposure, preserving through concealment" (Prenowitz, Derri-da, and Eric 1995, 9) is the central theme of Jacques Derrida's archival observations. This conundrum is where the tazkira, in its palimpsest form, comes into play; it maintains historical accuracy by virtue of the prejudices that warp it. To understand how moral commentary builds a useful past, historians

must read through these prejudices rather than eliminate them. This paper's methodology is based on the work of researchers who have recently begun to see Persianate writings as living archives of cultural memory. Instead of providing factual information, authors like Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Muzaffar Alam stress the tazkira's responsibility to pass on societal values and moral principles (Alam and Subrahmanyam n.d., 45). Ruby Lal's interpretation of Mughal homes as political arenas highlights how power and intimacy persisted, even in ways that official chronicles failed to notice (Brown 2007, 577). By bringing together feminist history and these findings, the current research sees Nur Jahan's portrayals as proof that the tazkira turned women's real presence into literary and moral examples, rather than as contradictory.

Central to this investigation is a methodological claim: tazkira tales' inconsistencies are not defects but rather tools for interpretation. Reading between the lines allows historians to follow the ways in which myth and morality were used to bring female authority under control. A crucial basis for this approach is Ellison Findly's description of Nur Jahan as "an empress who ruled through design and ritual rather than decree" (Findly 1993, 142). Each inscription in the tazkiras reveals the interpretative politics of its period, accumulating meaning palimpsestically in her picture. Thus, the goal of this research is not to find one "true picture of Nur Jahan," but rather to look at how tazkira writing changes the way reality is presented. Understanding the epistemic circumstances that influenced memory in the Mughal world may be accomplished by seeing myth and morality as sedimentary layers of history. In fact, the tazkira provides its own technique, which seeks truth in story plurality, and is thus far from being an untrustworthy source. Historians might confront both Nur Jahan's memory and the moral imagination of the empire that remembered her by reading these works as palimpsests.

Tazkiras: A Conceptual and Historiographical Framework

From a literary and historical perspective, the tazkira functions more via accumulation than replacement. Its literary structure is like a palimpsest, with fresh meanings superimposed on top of earlier ones without completely deleting them. What remains in the tazkira is not an objective record but a tiered remembrance molded by consecutive acts of rewriting, according to this layered design, which further blurs the line between history and memory. So, historians have an interpretative tool in the palimpsestic tazkira: to get to the meaning, you have to peel back the layers of moral judgment, anecdotal recounting, and legendary embellishment.

When discussing historical hermeneutics, the word palimpsest is very relevant from a methodological standpoint. The tazkira's preservation-through-rewriting dynamic is shed light on by Jacques

Derrida's contemplations on textual repetition and erasure. Derrida notes in *Archive Fever* that every archive is "an act of consigning and of effacing," including the two processes of remembering and forgetting within its structure (Prenowitz, Derrida, and Eric 1995, 9). Paradoxically, the *tazkira* personifies this. Authorial interpretations that embody both devotion and criticism accrue in its form, which evolved during centuries of Persianate literary tradition. This makes it more than just a collection of life stories; it becomes a chronicle of historical awareness in motion. This form-bending is indicative of a more generalized epistemic bias in Indo-Persian history toward the importance of moral exemplars. Persian literature in Mughal India aimed to "transmit models of conduct and social refinement" rather than historical chronology, as pointed out by Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Alam and Subrahmanyam n.d., 45). Instead of recording occurrences, the *tazkira* served as a cultural archive, documenting qualities, piety, intelligence, and compassion. A palimpsest approach acknowledges that the Mughal world's history was built via moral imagination rather than fact.

Stories about historical characters like Nur Jahan best illustrate this moral imagination. Gendered memory functions as a space for the negotiation of adoration and fear, as her picture across several *tazkiras* shows. Her gifts cascade like heavenly riches, and her beauty reflects celestial order; these descriptions of her generosity are nearly biblical in nature in Shaikh Farid Bhakkari's *Zakhirat-ul Khawānīn*. Writing *Ma'āsir-ul Umara* over a century after her death, Shah Nawaz Khan moderates her flamboyance by highlighting her intelligence and moderation, implying a gradual readjustment of memory to conform to the standards of later Mughal etiquette. The palimpsest aspect of historical memory is most shown in the presence of these contradictory depictions in the *tazkira* corpus, with each text erasing and retaining remnants of prior moral judgments. Another way bias might be rethought methodologically is via the idea of the palimpsest. In contrast to the *tazkira* paradigm, which views prejudice as an inherent quality that must be eradicated, traditional historiography views bias as a defect that must be remedied. Memory takes on the texture of each author's courtly network, sectarian allegiance, and moral ideology. This multi-tiered bias is a representation of the impact of history rather than a roadblock to the truth. An important parallel is Michel Foucault's archaeology of discourse, which he draws on in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* to argue that knowledge does not arise from isolated incidents but rather from the "regularity of statements" throughout time (Foucault 1972, 131). Finding these patterns within the *tazkira*'s changing moral vocabularies, what remains after revision is reading it palimpsestically.

Using this interpretative framework, we can see how the *tazkira* connects the ethical and historical regimes of knowledge within the framework of Mughal history. Two levels of meaning emerge

from this work: first, as a moral text that records good and bad deeds for the benefit of society; and second, as a social document that preserves networks, patronage, and emotional economies that would otherwise be lost in formal chronicles. Rosalind O'Hanlon calls the tazkira's use of these registers "an archive of conduct," a place where morality serves as a tool for storytelling and a chronicle of society's history ("The Early Modern in South Asia" n.d., 12). It is the job of the historian to figure out how moral language codes past events. The material transmission of tazkiras is also conveyed via the metaphor of layering. Physical representations of the textual palimpsest, manuscript copies often included marginal modifications, changes, or substitutes made by subsequent readers. These changes make it harder to tell who wrote what, turning the book into something we all remember. In her analysis of Mughal literature, Audrey Truschke observes that the culture "thrived on revision and circulation," leading to the creation of a living corpus where copying was seen as a social commentary (Dhavan 2017, 560). According to this view, the palimpsestic cycle of reinterpretation is continued with each new tazkira, which is both an original composition and a reflection on its predecessors.

Historians studying Nur Jahan's cultural and political agency might find a methodical but adaptable framework in the palimpsest paradigm. It recognizes that every portrayal, positive or negative, shows some aspect of the narratives and perceptions of female authority. This approach takes moral distortion as evidence, rather than trying to separate the "authentic" Nur Jahan from it, seeing it as a measure of worry, respect, or patriarchal bargaining. Such emotional and symbolic registers are crucial to comprehending how women influenced imperial culture, as Ruby Lal's research on sovereignty and domesticity demonstrates (Brown 2007, 587). Therefore, a reading history, not a recovery one, is required of the tazkira as palimpsest. It forces historians to concede that the Persianate world's past was never told by a lone storyteller but rather by a mosaic of memories passed down over the ages. Rather than being obstacles to interpretation, its contrasts are what allow us to comprehend the past. Historians who follow these interlocking inscriptions do not discard morality or myth; rather, they come to see them as fundamental to the memory-work of empire.

Narrative Strategies of Legitimacy through Myth and Morality

Myth and morality serve as purposeful narrative techniques of validity inside the tazkira's tiered construction. Every narrative of Nur Jahan's life is presented as a powerful moral parable that merges ethics and power, rather than just a recounting of events. Her likeness became a moral tale of fair rule in tazkira literature by the frequent use of religious symbolism, exaggeration, and metaphor. Such tactics show the Mughal belief in the aesthetic and political legitimacy of power and the power of the ethical imagination to establish imperial rule for all time. When Nur Jahan's charitable deeds

are characterized as “bounty without measure,” as they are in Shaikh Farid Bhakkari’s *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, her generosity is compared to heavenly beneficence and takes on cosmic proportions. A century later, in *Ma’āsir-ul Umara*, penned by Shah Nawaz Khan, she is recast as the epitome of moderation and intelligence, illustrating the evolution of virtue in line with Mughal principles of refinement. In writings that needed to justify female authority, moral character stood in for monarchy, as Ellison Findly points out, “transforming womanly virtue into the rhetoric of sovereignty” (Findly 1993, 142).

Thus, a moral story turns political life into a play about ethics. The tazkira writers translated “the interior world of women into the moral vocabulary of governance,” according to Ruby Lal’s interpretation of Mughal domesticity (Brown 2007, 587). This gave domestic virtue a political function. As a result, Nur Jahan became mythologized, which served to both legitimize and discipline her authority. To maintain moral order under imperial leadership, her distribution of gifts and justice was portrayed as acts of divine balance rather than human ambition. These depictions’ ambivalence exposes the genre’s inherent ideological contradiction. According to Shihab al-Din Talish’s *Baharistan-i Ghaibi*, “her speech was law and her will the measure of all matters,” yet he bemoans the fact that her influence “disturbed the hearts of men,” showing how moral discourse may include both praise and criticism (Bose 1993, 78). “The moral as a category of historical explanation” was used by Mughal historians to maintain political unity, according to Subrahmanyam and Alam (Alam and Subrahmanyam n.d., 49). Thus, the moral allegories of the tazkira did not present a conflict but rather a balance between reverence and moderation.

The intersection of biography and moral education is what Rosalind O’Hanlon calls a “archive of conduct,” according to her (“The Early Modern in South Asia” n.d., 18). The tazkira views myth and exaggeration as means of conveying moral messages rather than as departures from reality. To exaggerate a person’s goodness is to announce her suitability for leadership, and hyperbole serves as confirmation. In Farghadani’s study of tarz and Mughal literary style (Farghadani 2022, 510), the recurring symbolism of light, scent, and purity is explained by this interpretative principle. These tropes originated in ancient Persian literature and connected aesthetic elegance with moral authority. This mythical morality is seen by modern academics as a tool of memory politics. Medieval Indo-Persian writers “to domesticate disorder and to moralize history,” as pointed out by Sunil Kumar, to restore ethical order after political upheaval (Shahbaz 2020, 220). The idea that moral portraiture served to solidify social hierarchy by incorporating virtue into preexisting social systems is borne up by Tandon’s examination of tazkiras as places of elite self-fashioning (“The Presence of the Marginalised” n.d., 214). The sanctification and containment of Nur Jahan’s power via moral storytelling

explains her portrayals' vacillation between divinization and discipline.

Anecdote and Bias: Reading against the Grain

The tale is the lifeblood of the tazkira. The structure is based less on time and more on the recurrence of memories, which are brief, impressionistic sequences that capture emotional truth or moral understanding. However, behind this seeming spontaneity is a nuanced narrative of politics. Anecdotes aren't open and honest memories; rather, they're snippets of information that show both the subject's and the author's worlds. Therefore, a strategy that takes into account their multi-layered intentions, what is spoken, what is suggested, and what is purposefully withheld is necessary to understand them as historical evidence.

Reading against the grain, as an interpretative concept, views these stories not as distortions but as miniature representations of their discursive universes. The short narrative, with slight variations between tazkiras, serves as a diagnostic tool for tracking changes in moral perception and political anxiety. Several versions of the story of Nur Jahan's participation in justice issues (such as dispersing imperial gifts or giving a pardon to a petitioner) exist, each modified to fit the ethical position of the story's author. In *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, Shaikh Farid Bhakkari praises her choice as a manifestation of divine benevolence; in *Mir'āt-ul 'Ālam*, Bakhtawar Khan reinterprets it as an instance of disciplined wisdom; and in *Baharistan-i Ghaibi*, Talish gently critiques her "commanding nature." While the storyline is unchanging, the moral tone shifts to reflect the author's stance and the prevailing ideology of his time. Such stories, according to Rosalind O'Hanlon, are "sites of social negotiation" (Davis 1992, 142) where normative behavior is defined by the convergence of individual experience and moral example. As a historian and moralist, every tazkira author encodes a pedagogical ideal of conduct inside the tale. In this way, the tale has a dual purpose: it both informs and codifies society norms. Historians may avoid writing off the moral overlay as prejudice if they acknowledge this duality and use it to their advantage.

In the tazkira tradition, bias is considered a deliberate choice. As Natalie Zemon Davis puts it, it's a reflection of "the shaping of the past by moral imagination," or how societies turn memory into example (*ibid*). Writing was a moralizing act for Mughal writers, whereas remembering was a judgmental act. Although the tazkira is subjective, it is nonetheless admissible as historical evidence; rather, it requires interpretative triangulation, or comparing and contrasting different accounts in order to trace the patterns of popular opinion. The narrative stratigraphy within Mughal historiography is shown by this comparison reading. In comparing related stories side by side, differences in detail (such as chronology, vocabulary, or emotional emphasis) might reveal how ideologies have changed

over time. By the late seventeenth century, in Shah Nawaz Khan's *Ma'āsir-ul Umara*, her influence is tamed via the language of moderation and intelligence, in contrast to early seventeenth-century writings like Bhakkari's, when Nur Jahan's power is portrayed through metaphors of plenty and kindness. Reflecting larger Mughal concerns about gender and sovereignty, the change signifies a transition from joy to moral restraint.

The story suggests a philological method that follows the flow of words and tropes as a possible approach to analysis. In Indo-Persian literature, "translation and repetition are not secondary acts but mechanisms of reinterpretation" (Dhavan 2017, 560), according to Audrey Truschke. Thus, each new rendition of Nur Jahan's tale serves as commentary and translation, building upon and erasing previous versions. "The making of history through narrative maneuvers," as Michel de Certeau puts it, is shown by this textual recursion, where the act of recounting is the historical event (Weymans 2004, 170). Silence is another way bias manifests itself. What undermines moral stability is often left out of the *tazkira*. Despite the abundance of evidence in archival sources, these writings seldom ever discuss Nur Jahan's involvement in political discussions, imperial logistical oversight, or the minting and issuing of coins and seals. They choose to interpret her public persona via aesthetic and emotional norms, such as kindness, religiosity, and grace. Limiting female writers to works of moral and artistic merit is an ideologically motivated act of selective memory. As a kind of gendered erasure, this silence validates and restricts female autonomy, according to Ruby Lal's interpretation (Brown 2007, 577). So, as a measure of social anxiety, it is the historian's responsibility to pay attention to what is missing from the text and piece it together.

Another aspect of reading critically is looking for instances of rhetorical dissonance, or when the author's style reveals discomfort. In *Baharistan-i Ghaibi*, Talish describes Nur Jahan's power using elaborate language that falls short due to grammatical errors, an excess of adjectives, and moralizing. Such hesitancy in style betrays ideological strife. According to Lisa Balabanlilar, "tension between admiration and containment through shifts in linguistic rhythm" (Sela 2013, 1166) is often conveyed in Mughal storytelling. Thus, prejudice is not revealed as a hidden viewpoint but as audible discomfort within the structure of the text when one pays close attention to the rhythm and diction. When paired with official accounts, anecdotal evidence may reveal hidden societal tendencies. Example: even if they are couched in moral terms, the numerous mentions of Nur Jahan's daily audiences suggest a regularized system of female courtesans. When a historian looks between the lines, they might see patterns where the authors perceived inconsistencies. The moral story becomes ethnographic via this reconstruction, which turns prejudice into fact.

Multiplicity as a technique is therefore accepted when one reads the *tazkira* against its own grain.

It calls for an awareness of the rhetorical work of memory and the ability to be patient with contradiction. Even if anecdotes are prone to distortion, the distortion is really a sign of interpretation, so it's not all bad. According to Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Muzaffar Alam, the Mughal Empire "narrated its truth through elegance, not empiricism," and we can only go back to that aesthetic of truth by reading carefully (Alam and Subrahmanyam n.d., 47). Doing so makes the tazkira seem less like an untrustworthy source and more like a documentary palimpsest. A moral history is built in part from each story, no matter how biased, inflated, or incomplete it may be. Comparative reading of these layers reveals the empire's self-remembering, its use of virtue as a code for legitimacy, and its methods for celebrating and controlling gendered power. The tazkira's disjointed writing transforms prejudice into an archive and narrative into the syntax of historical comprehension.

Memory as Historical Method to Recover the Feminine Archive

The tazkira is not bound by the need for historical accuracy as it is a product of memory and not record-keeping. That is why using a historical perspective means seeing memory as a tool. Merely recalling the past was not enough for the Mughals; rather, it was a moral act of authorship that molded communal identity. The outlines of what was worthwhile to remember were etched into every tale of virtue, gossip, or grief. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the historian to piece together these memory ethics and interpret them as repositories of cultural sentiment. Here, the tazkira acts out what Jan Assmann terms "cultural memory," or the way in which communities maintain their ideals via the symbolic transmission of stories passed down through generations (Assmann n.d., 23). Retelling stories like this was an ethical obligation for Mughal writers. Remembering properly meant living righteously, and writing a tazkira was a moral act of memory. Women like Nur Jahan find themselves in a difficult position inside this framework. Remembering them is like holding a party inside, a dual act of preservation and control. Historians need to acknowledge that these publications primarily preserve the memory of the woman's contribution to the moral imagination of the empire, rather than the woman herself.

However, recollection may also do evil. The fact that Nur Jahan's fame has endured for generations shows that cultural memory may endure even after political memory fades. After Jahangir's death, her influence in the chronicles diminishes, but as an ethical metaphor, it remains in the tazkiras. Paul Ricoeur calls her "a remembered figure" because of her ability to endure, and he says that her moral importance surpasses her physical appearance ("Memory, History, Forgetting" 2025). Just by saying her name over and over again, even in formulaic compliments, one is reclaiming control over the situation. Reading these echoes, the historian rescues fragments of the feminine archive that are buried behind layers of moral narrative, a secondary recovery. The mnemonic function of the tazkira

further proves that the Mughals valued literary and tangible forms of memory. The architectural undertakings of Nur Jahan, particularly the tomb of *Itimad-ud-Daula*, function as simultaneous acts of remembrance. Translating sentimental and dynastic continuity into marble and inlay, Catherine Asher reads the monument as “a physical articulation of female authorship” (Asher 1992, 75). In-scribing memory via layers and combining beauty with moral exemplarity are two structural logics shared by the *tazkira* and the monument. While the latter is preserved through words, the former is preserved through stone.

The work of Ruby Lal expands upon this concept by demonstrating how the very nature of Mughal domesticity served as a memory aid, with ceremonial care and rituals serving to uphold the moral hierarchy of sovereignty (Brown 2007, 577). The *tazkira*, then, is like an annex to that home archive in text form; it’s a literary nest where affect and authority live side by side. The writers do more than just report occurrences when they describe Nur Jahan’s calmness or compassion; they imitate the theatrical gestures that maintained royal virtue. Reinterpreting the *tazkira* as a memory jogger also shifts the focus of feminist history. Instead of trying to glean factual information about women from patriarchal sources, historians may look upon moralized memories as proof that women were present throughout history. While the subaltern does not speak directly in the *tazkira*, her image is uttered again, each recounting reinforcing the difficulty of full erasure (Spivak 1988, 271), somewhat resolving Gayatri Spivak’s problem of whether the subaltern can talk. Historiographical significance lies in the fact that Nur Jahan’s voice has survived more as an echo than a proclamation. It proves that women had an impact on the empire’s memory practices, even if they were marginalized in official discourse.

But this strategy calls for methodological modesty. Ideology permeates memory, making it opaque. When reading the *tazkira* as an archive, one must walk a fine line between being sympathetic and being skeptical, between wanting to understand and wanting to understand better. In her research on the Mughal dynasty’s memory, Lisa Balabanlilar points out that remembering served as a tool for imperial identity formation and a kind of administration in and of itself (Sela 2013, 116). As a result, remembering Nur Jahan is a kind of political memory fabrication. Texts that included her provided as a source of cultural capital and a moral compass. Historians need to exhibit critical empathy to glean historical truth from such multi-layered memories. This approach recognizes the validity of emotions without compromising analytical objectivity. When it comes to colonial archives, researcher Ann Laura Stoler contends that “the affective life of documents is as revealing as their explicit content” (Stoler 2010, 52). By applying this understanding to the *tazkira*, we may see how its tempo, rhyme scheme, and stillness reveal emotions from the past. These writings show how authority was felt,

not just documented, because of the emotional depth of their combination of veneration, fear, and adoration.

In this context, the tazkira assumes the role of a female repository for Mughal recollections. Underneath the moral critique, it maintains a record of the ways women's presence was imagined, remembered, and sometimes elevated. Through its memory-work, history is transformed from a static record into a dynamic devotional practice, where the importance of each recounting is reaffirmed. Careful reading of these materials allows the historian to piece together not only events but also the cultural logic that dictated what should be remembered. By reestablishing this line of reasoning, the tazkira shows how memory and history are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary. Despite the limitations imposed by the text, the recalled lady serves as a conduit for a society's moral imagination. By interpreting the tazkira as a memory palimpsest, one may have access to a history that is not recorded in a chronological but in an affectionate manner. Even if the empire forgets, its memory will speak via the genre's detailed recall of Nur Jahan.

Conclusion

In the tazkira, memory, morality, and imagination coexist inside a single literary framework, making it one of the most complex forms of Indo-Persian literature. Its most significant historical asset is not its layered structure, which is a defect of imprecision. Memory becomes a cultural act via the weaving together of mythical exaggeration, moral criticism, and introspection. Rather than only retrieving information, historians who study tazkiras as palimpsests get insight into the ethics of remembering.

This research presented how the tazkira turns biography into moral discourse and moral discourse into social history via an examination of Nur Jahan's image. The moral and political atmosphere of each author's period shapes how she is portrayed, resulting in a series of inscriptions that build upon each other instead of replacing them. These narratives capture the hopes and fears of the Mughal era in its paradoxes, turning a story of one person into a moral history. Her authority is characterized by her moderation, compassion, and artistic intelligence rather than by the language of decrees; these traits made sovereignty understandable from an ethical perspective. Instead of serving as obstacles to reality, myth and morality become tools of historical imagination. The tazkira narrative's metaphors, silences, and exaggerations show how a society that saw power as a moral performance saw the world. Historians may piece together the imperial consciousness's intertwining of virtue, beauty, and justice by paying attention to these symbolic acts. When bias is present, it does not invalidate the text but rather reveals its ideological underpinnings and social milieu.

The genre's many layers are eventually held together by memory. The past is not preserved by the

tazkira in its original form, but rather in how it was seen, experienced, and rethought. Figures like Nur Jahan can endure long after their political influence has diminished because of the way it turns memory into authorship via repetition. Her moral and artistic creativity is preserved in the empire's living imagination via each retelling, which renews her relevance. Historians discover a way to see history as a conversation between meaning and memory by reading the tazkira as a palimpsest, rather than a collection of facts. By analyzing the text's moral lexicon, mythological texture, and narrative paradoxes, one might get insight into the emotional and ethical existence of an empire. By delving into the tazkira, one may see firsthand how the Mughal world constructed a moral cosmos from shards of memory, a process that has persisted over the ages.

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