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Pleasure Over Politics: The Ni'matnama Manuscript Of Mandu

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to investigate the 'Ni'matnama, Book of Delights of the Sultans of Mandu' as a primary source that encapsulates the unique epicurean culture of medieval Malwa under the rule of Ghiyath Shah who commissioned the text under his very 'apolitical' reign. The text depicts recipes, aphrodisiacs as well as perfumes adored by the Sultan during that time, which also subsequently came to dominate the elite circles. It was sponsored under the royal aegis of the Sultan indulged in extreme pleasures of life leaving behind the matters of polity and bureaucracy; the latter being matters of extreme interests of his various contemporary rulers, as opposed to his. It is, therefore, my aim to assess this distinct and invaluable source in reshaping our understanding of the kingdom of Malwa during the tumultuous 16th century, an era which has been understood more politically than culturally.

Highlights:

- The paper aims to understand the manuscript of Ni'matnama as an evidence of historical insight into the 16th C Malwa.
- The paper would also help us understand the notions of pleasure in the elite circles through the culinary route.
- The paper establishes certain notions of hierarchy and food availability in different sections of society in our time of investigation.
- The paper also showcases the presence of many modern day delicacies such as Samosas, Khichidi, and varieties of meats that have been household staples.

Index Terms - Mandu, Ni'matnama, Ghiyath Shahi, Recipes, Food History, Pleasure, Samosa, Essences, Aphrodisiacs, medicinal, sexual remedies, Hunting, Muslim.

INTRODUCING THE MALWA SULTANATE

By the early years of the 15th C, the Delhi Sultanate had lost its stronghold in most parts under their control, such as our region of attention- Malwa. From at least Tughluq times, that is, the fourteenth century, Malwa was considered the last frontier of 'Hindustan', beyond which began the geologically, linguistically, and politically distinct region of 'Dakshin' (Chatterjee. 2020). An important route across history, it was the central province that had north-south-west overlapping trade routes through important centers such as Ujjain, Mandu, and Chanderi facilitating commercial and political traffic constantly. The political history of Mandu begins with the government of **Dilawar Khan**, who assumed 'the white canopy and scarlet pavilion of royalty' in the year 804 A.H. (A.D. 1401), after the disruption of the Delhi empire consequent upon the invasion of Timur (Yazdani. 1929). Under this newly emerged sultanate, the region was politically and culturally enriched under Persian and Central Asian influence. Mandu remained the political, military, as well as the cultural center in

the fifteenth and early sixteenth century; renamed Shadiabad or 'City of Joy', it represented the regional pride fostered by Malwa sultanate (Yazdani. 1929).

Dilawar Khan was succeeded by his son Alp Khan, better known as Hoshang Shah the founder of Hoshangabad. His throne was usurped by Mahmud Khalji in 1435, a powerful leader, a tolerant Muslim under whom Hindus were effectively appropriated within the administrative structure, as well master military man who had excellent expansionist political consolidating achievements. "In kingship he was like Jamshid, in justice like Naushirwan and in generosity like Hatim" (Das. 1965). Mahmud was succeeded by his son, Muhammad, famously known as Ghiyath Shah who radically changed the political course of the region. He was a soldier for his father's expansionist battles and was immersed in the administrative functioning until 30 years later when he abandoned the gore of political battles in lieu of retiring to his harem to adopted a unique conciliatory policy of peace and pleasure as he announced in a speech he gave to his court and subjects upon deciding this destiny for his kingdom. His real motive behind such a policy was that he and his subjects and the country should enjoy peace and prosperity so that all may lead a happy life (Das. 1965). This is an extremely isolated instance of abandonment of political ambitions when other regional kingdoms were trying to establish their independence after the decline of a centralized rule.

He filled his palace with musicians, cooks, painters and thousands of women, many of whom were taught an art or a skill, such as wrestling and cooking (Sen. 2015) He apparently also had an entourage of five hundred Abyssinian female slaves who formed his personal bodyguard. The cultural achievements of his reign had so much influenced the minds of the people that when Nizam-ud-Din and Firishta wrote their histories, stories associated with Ghiyath Shah were more popular than a few military activities in which his kingdom was involved (Nath.1965). His fondness for the pleasures of life is best exemplified by his commissioning of our primary source, **Ni'matnama**, as an attempt towards encapsulating his eccentric lifestyle and interests in epicurean pleasures he heavily indulged in. Thus, the case of such a text becomes all the more interesting to assess due to its presence in the climate of political histories. It brings to light a rather eccentric approach to a lifestyle that was extended not just to the higher nobilities, but also endorsed to the lowliest of the subjects, freely from the highest echelon itself- the king.

INTRODUCING THE TEXT- "NI'MATNAMA, THE BOOK OF DELIGHTS"

The Ni'matnama manuscript of the Sultans of Mandu is an excellent source of a unique culinary history written at the behest of Ghiyath Shah, the ruler who chose a life of pleasure over politics, unlike many of his contemporaries. Datable to 1495-1505, it appears to have covered the period before Ghiyath Shah's death in 1500 and the early years of the reign of his son and successor, Nasir Shah, who probably added the supplement; (Titley. 2005) after whom the text is also entitled 'Ni'matnama-i Nasir al-Din Shah.' The only manuscript that exists in the India Office Collections in the British Library was written in Naksh script and has elements of both Urdu and Persian. It has been translated by Norah M. Titley who was inspired by Robert Skelton's first investigation of the text and the manuscripts it consists in his 1969 article – 'The Ni'matnama: A Landmark in Malwa Painting.' Apart from the textual content, there are about 50 miniatures included in the manuscript that have been an area of interest for many scholars who have studied art in that age. Most of the fifty miniatures in the Book of Delights include a few of Ghiyath Shahi's companions, slaves, attendants, and cooks while he, himself, is usually shown taking a keen interest in the activities, whether it is cooking or the preparation of betel or perfumes or else leading the way on horseback out hunting (Titley. 2005). Nevertheless, my focus is more on the textual elements of this document, rather than the pictorial, to extract the notions of pleasure, gastronomy, and body-consciousness in this central kingdom during the medieval ages.

Based upon my reading of the text, I have divided the contents into three broad categories:

- A. Recipes for Food
- B. Aphrodisiacs, Medicinal Guidelines and Remedial Instructions
- C. Recipes and Instructions on Perfumes and Scents

The division is but my own as the contents within the text itself start and end abruptly in no specific order of formulation. It is difficult to decipher sometimes as the abruptness creates a disillusionment with the given material that have no step-by-step guidelines, such as modern manuals, or modern-day cookbook structuring of the material that would allow proper quantitative accounting of ratios to the tee. The text begins with, 'Take a cooking pot, either gold or silver or brass....' (Titley. 2005) without any proper introduction towards the intentions of the text or the author's identification.

ANALYSING THE TEXT- "NI'MATNAMA, THE BOOK OF DELIGHTS"**A. Recipes For Food**

The text in itself is a remarkable feat of historical accounting as it moves away from the politically-heavy genre of medieval histories, towards a specific focused attempt at a culinary history to define the culture of the time we are engaging with. Ni'matnama's feat relies in the epicurean nature of knowledge that helps us connect the dots between notions of sovereignty and pleasure-seeking in the elite cultures. The recipes can be broadly categorized on the basis of diet (vegetarian/non-vegetarian); attributed to (Ghiyath Shahi, Mahmud Shah's/ Nasir Shah's/ Ganvari, or Gharib/ Foreign); form (liquid/solid); taste (sweet/savory); etc. Techniques in the shah's kitchen include shallow- frying in ghee or oil, deep-frying, steaming, boiling, grilling, roasting on hot stones, baking on or in hot coals, and roasting in a pit (Chambers. 2020). Many recipes also bear supplementation as the compiler mentions how similar methods and ingredients can be used to treat different meats and recipes- 'By the same recipe make kababs of partridges, quails, kid, chicken and pigeon and also, by the same recipe, make rabbit kababs' (Tittley. 2005) There are also references to achaars (pickles) and preservation of Khurasani fruits that indicate the methods of alchemy related to extending the longevity of foods was also efficiently acquired by the royal households to always keep the kings' favorites within hand's reach, even during an off-season perhaps. We also see a number of recipes attributed to different types and methods of bread such as puris, nan-i taang, as well as rice dishes are differentiated as rice and bhat broadly maybe indicating to the process of distinct treatment with starch elements of the dishes; in the latter usually the starch is not washed off and it is cooked in water directly. Laddoos, firnis, and halwa seem to be favorite sweetmeats as they have several methods and recipes attributed to them as well.

One recipe that stands apart and proud as a contributory highlight of this work in the overall works on food history of India often is that of the Samosas. A delightful triangular pastry that is an intricate part of the Indian food-ways today can be traced back to the Arabs of 10th C, and also to the specific text of 13th C Baghdad, Kitab al-Tabikh (Book of Dishes), which contains three simplistic approaches to the recipe. But the Shah's version was an even more elaborate preparation of minced meat mashed with fennel, cumin, salt, cloves, coriander seeds, musk, rose water, ginger root and onions, folded into a triangular parcel, skewered and fried in sweet-tasting ghee (Ved. 2021). While some are generally noted, others seemed more preferred due to the titling 'Ghiyath Shahi...', a pattern not unique to this delicacy but is scattered across the text to give us a sense of favorability.

B. Aphrodisiacs, Medicinal/ Remedial Guidelines And Specific Instructions

The nature of the text is haphazard, as has been previously established and interspersed between recipes are certain guidelines and instructional methods that are more medicinal and remedial in nature than culinary. The most common form of medicinal recipes are attributed to sexual remedies that focus on men's reproductive issues more than women, especially related to semen-flow; men being the bearers of sexual prowess and women often times being just utilitarian this specificity of gendered approach does not necessarily surprise one. 'Also for pain, the (following) remedies produce lustful feelings and increase the flow of semen: long pepper, cardamoms, chironji kernels, fresh cow's butter, cow's ghee, sheep's milk, poppy seeds, cloves, date sugar...' (Tittley. 2005) One is attributed specifically to the Tughluq ruler Firuz Shah, maybe an attempt to establish connections with the Sultanate for this new kingdom in an extremely intimate way. However, in none of the remedies is the titular description 'Ghiyath Shahi' present, which seems like a conscious choice to not tag the ruler as impotent or even slightly sexually deficient; here links to the idea of manliness and kingliness are clearly present. Other medicinal instructions and remedies are directed towards treating fever, eye-diseases, phlegm, body ache, and headaches, at large using spices and ingredients readily present, much like household remedies endorsed today.

Other remedial instructions are to comfortably endure extremities of weathers – summers, winter and even monsoon. For summer, the instructions are very simple relating to regulation of the body temperature via clothing material (linen), fresh material such as cucumber, camphor and rose water, and also very importantly 'witty men who are his boon companions' to be presented readily to keep the head cool. Foods are also listed as necessities for each season that would be beneficial in dealing with those temperatures and environs. Another set of guidelines is on the consumption of fish where long fish that resembles snakes are asked to be avoided, and so are milk, aubergines and mast supposed to be avoided with fish. This is also followed by a

list of foods that seem permissible accompaniments to fish such as roast lentils, rice, flour, sour-orange, fenugreek, cumin, etc.

The instructions on hunting are elaborate and extremely specific in nature denoting the significance of formulaic setup of sovereignty to be maintained in areas away from the immediate capital. The instructions are elaborate on the types of medicines, tools, animals, directions, food provisions and also camping provisions, what assistance to use when hunting deer or when galloping on a horse, etc. There are specific instructions to carry ‘Mahmud Shahi’s travelling throne (takht-i ravan)’ and Ghiyath Shahi’s throne (Titley. 2005). Another unique instruction is related to the moving economy of the state as the sultan travels- ‘Another advice for hunting: put shops in the hunting jungle and organize goods and the manufacture of everything (Titley. 2005). These kinds of insights to be found within a book titled as a culinary guide provides a unique perspective. Although we might view and investigate the text as a cultural document rather than a political one, it is essential to keep in mind the tightly bound nexus of state, society and economy is clearly evident. Rather than being a purely political thesis, the guised instructions on the articles and activities that are linked to a proper administration suggest that the basic notion of historical documentation of any king’s greatest rule is not abandoned but rerouted through a largely apolitical text that wishes to move away from the battles and victories and move towards the king’s achievements in the maintenance of his grandeur, stature, and lifestyle.

One important overlap between a food article and instructive guidelines is related to the consumption of Tanbul or Paan (Betel Leaf). The consumption of paan was indigenous to India, but adopted by Muslims upon their arrivals. Thereon, it became an intricate part of the elite culture and was symbolic of hospitality, especially in the elite circles. The poet Amir Khusro (1253-1325), who was born in India and wrote in Persian and Hindustani, noted: ‘The Persians are so sluggish as not to be able to distinguish between paan and grass. It requires taste to do so’ (Sen. 2015). The Ni’matnama gives a number of methods to prepare paan, some specifically attributed to Ghiyath Shah himself, but also gives specific instructions to eat the paan properly. ‘Do not swallow the saliva that is first formed because it reveals many kinds of illnesses and do not swallow the second lot that collects as it will cause diarrhea and fever but do swallow the third lot of saliva that has collected as this is very beneficial. Equally, to achieve immortality, it is necessary to chew paan in this way’ (Titley. 2005). There are also specifications on how paan chewing can either be responsible for one’s luck as much as one’s health, such as chewing wild paan called dinat could easily drive away success.

C. Recipes And Instructions On Perfumes And Scents

‘The Book of the Ni’matnama of Nasir Shah and the Attarnama (‘Book of Perfume’) and the methods for perfumes and for chura (paste) and the methods for sweet-smelling oils and the method for cooking camphor and the method for extracting flower essences and the methods for obtaining essences of every kind and the methods for aloes and for sour-oranges and for the chief perfumes and the methods for mixing perfumes and the methods for sherbets’ (Titley. 2005). This paragraph best encapsulates the different types of essences and distillations that can be found scattered across the, but heavily towards the end pages there are specific instructions to aloes, perfumes and essences of various kinds. Certain perfumes are titled ‘principal perfumes of Ghiyath Shahi’ while we also have references to ‘Mahmud Shahi’ perfumes, both having expensive and rare ingredients as suited for the king. Emphasis is also laid on flavoring and scenting of food using citrus and spices constantly that points towards the necessity of olfactory additions to enhance recipes for the Sultan’s utmost pleasure. ‘Another recipe for flavors of all kinds as follows: flavor of palm sugar, potherbs, sugar, gum lac, mastic, civet, chanpa oil, oil of jasmine and of white jasmine and of sandal...’ (Titley. 2005). Some perfumes are directed specifically to the ‘House of Pleasures’, i.e. the Haram, to be used by the women to remain sexually attractive as they wait for their Sultan drenched in sweet smelling fragrances; as opposed to sexual remedies mentioned in the previous sections that were limited to men.

INVESTIGATING THE “NI’MATNAMA, THE BOOK OF DELIGHTS”

After reading the text, there are certain areas of interests that need to be investigated briefly. It is necessary to focus on such aspects as they help shape our understanding of the text better and perhaps help establish an argument towards supporting future inferences. I have chosen specific secondary texts that accentuate these general points into more meaningful scholarly explanations.

The Niche of “Food Related Studies”

The term ‘Food History’ is ironical as most of our understanding of food related historical analysis is situated within sociological and anthropological realms, rather than historical. A niche genre as of now, food history is comparatively new and may be included in the revisionist trends that aim to move away from the shallow unidimensional political historical analyses towards a better understanding of cultural aspects that affect historical social formations. Thus, I prefer the broader umbrella term of ‘Food Related Studies.’ Jack Goody, a pioneer in the field of food-related studies, has explained the sociological attempts by a number of individuals over time to understand how society and culture are shaped by and around gastronomical activities. While the earliest researchers focused more on religious aspects of sacrifice, totem, and acceptability of any sustenance practices, the forward-moving researches have been divided into functionalist, structuralist and cultural approaches broadly. For the functionalists, the explanation relies in the foundation of food-related activities as a social necessity to maintain the structure; while, the structuralists focus on the relevance of food-related activities into structuring social conditions such as family and kinship. There are also the cultural approaches that focus on the deeper aspects of food-related activities on the culture and their functioning within a society. Although, it is essential to note that none of the approaches are free of influences from each other, while also characterizing their individualistic aspects.

For the sake of our argument, my interest was drawn by the work of Mary Douglas who was influenced by both functionalists and structuralists of Oxford and Paris, respectively, clubbing their perspectives into her own cultural understanding. While she sees food linked to biological as well as to social facts, it is the latter aspect that interests her, particularly when she attempts to ‘decipher a meal’(Goody. 1982). Her structuralist influence comes from the work of Evans-Pitchard for whom social structure is indistinguishable to human social relations. He uses the phrase in two senses, a more restricted concrete one, which refers to ‘groups and relations between groups’, and a more analytical one, as ‘a system of separate but interrelated structures’ which included the political system (Goody. 1982).

It is this understanding of food that has also slightly influenced my approach towards the source as we witness the defining of elite gastronomie and hospitality trends that might have trickled down to the grassroots. The Ni‘matnamastands apart in recording not only recipes of the sultan’s court, but also few of the lower rungs and foreigners that influenced the former’s eating habits. Thus, establishing a symbiotic relationship between food, culture and society, at large. Although the author is largely unknown, the intentions non-existent within the text, and the text itself is haphazard in nature, it not hard to decipher that there were certain obvious implications on the society envisioned through the publication of such a unique text. It was the Sultan who symbolized pleasure-seeking lifestyle, and encourage such a particular textual adaptation of his most favored culinary delights instead of a political history in his like many of his contemporaries. Therefore, the contribution of such text within the niche of ‘food history’ is undeniably significant shaping the course of history telling in an entirely distinct manner.

Food In The Islamic Religion:

The Arabs were nomadic Bedouin tribal people before the religion swept the region and beyond, and their food habits were also minimalist in nature till then; as Jack Goody puts it – “The Arabs themselves possessed a limited culinary tradition based on Bedouin and peasant food” (Goody. 1982) However, the establishment of a religion founded on certain guidelines and norms started dictating and influencing the lives of the followers. The notions of halal and haram were closely associated to the forbiddance and acceptance of food related practices, as is the practice of fasting intimately linked to piety. It is central to religion – as symbol, as subject of prayers, as markers of sharing and unsharing, and as communion (Anderson. 2015). Articles such as pork, alcohol, carrion, blood, and intoxicants were forbidden under the established religion, although they were prevalent in pre-Islamic societies of Central Asia. Formerly, pigs were grown in the river valleys; wines (grape, pomegranate, and other), and beer-like grain drinks, were universal (Buell, P.D., Anderson E.N, et al. 2020).It was only after the indoctrination of the Quran that rules were set in words and interpreted as general norms within the religious community. For example, despite other somewhat non-controversial depictions on the consumption of alcohol, one verse Quran, 5.90 is termed the ‘decisive verse’ by Sami Zubaida (Klein and Murcott. 2014).

Islam reached the Indian subcontinent effectively under the Delhi Sultanate in the 13th C. By then, many Islamicate empires had been established across the Asian lands, and the Sultanate adopted practices of likes of Shahs of Persia in their own elite culture. The religious prescriptions of taboo and regulations of life although universally upheld but were rarely obeyed by all, especially the elite cultures that developed their own mechanisms of adab (etiquette) that set them apart from the rest of the Muslims and found loopholes in such prescriptions that were imposed on otherwise all others; a common man was much more afraid of committing sin and suffering, than an average ruler. Bina Shah in her foreword in Claire Chamber's editorial work has stated that in the Muslim culinary practices are very regularly equated to the acts of Divine, which she terms the 'fifth element.' The preparation, cooking and serving of food in Muslim South Asia, with its attendant science, rituals, folklore, superstition and occult arts, parallels the dance between alchemy and chemistry of the Islamic Golden Age (Chambers. 2020).

Even though, Ghiyath has been generally described as an elusive pleasure-seeking individual, we do not see any references to alcohol and/or intoxicants in the text itself. A recorded history of his interests doesn't specify his religiosity, piety and aversions in the name of religious observation but we do see pork and alcohol being absent from the recipes and methods explained; but there are recipes of a fermented bread drink that the Sultan did enjoy, teetering on the edge of alcoholic based on its method of preparation. Also, fish delicacies are mentioned which is generally a taboo in Muslim communities but is referred in the text with certain restrictions and guidelines of proper consumption. These are more to do with physical well-being than with religious observations it seems. . From linguistic evidence, other dishes in the Ni'matnama are of indigenous origin, and many are vegetarian (Sen. 2015); excellent example of adoption of Hindu food practices as many recipes such as that of Khichri, Bara/ Baris, Karhi, etc are noted several times across the text. We also see certain recipes that have been attributed to 'Mongols' such as yakhnis (soup) and 'Foreign' foods which are extremely simple in methodology, denoting not only global influences but also maybe their limitations in knowledge of preparation such foods that could have been passively adopted through trade channels passing through the regions. Therefore, Islam although used by rulers to establish sovereignty was manipulated conveniently when required for the pleasures and necessities of acclimating to this new land and subjecting its indigenous population to their rule.

Relations Between the Idea of Pleasure And Food:

The clearest theme one can sense from reading the text is that of pleasure. The notion of pleasure has been medically and socially studied often to explain human behaviors that seem outlandish or out of scope of general behavior patterns. Much work has been done in this regard on sexual behavior, deviant or otherwise, but pleasure has also been closely associated to other lifestyle choices such as food habits. Taste of ingredients and sense of smell are two of the most engaged senses when one is near the food, although as they proverbially say, one does eat with their eyes as well. Our text is a testament to this because its birth is reflected in the notion of enjoying the bounties of life as proclaimed by Ghiyath in his declaration of giving his throne away to his son.

Because humans are social animals, enmeshed in a social world, consumption is tied to certain meals, specific foods, and particular people (Ferguson. 2014). But even within this social structure, it is important to realize the capacity of economy while navigating the scope of pleasure in different categories/classes of people. What might be a commodity for a businessman, is often a luxury for common people. Ghiyath Shah, as established previously, was a permissive personality in terms of his experiences with the broader notion of pleasure. Nowhere is the lavishness of the Shah's cuisine more apparent than in the extensive use of three flavorings: camphor, ambergris, and musk, valued not only because of their powerful, complex scents, but also because they were rare and expensive (Sen. 2015). Also, the main difference between Ganvari and courtly recipes is the elaborate use of ingredients in the latter, again depicting the economics behind food and consumption patterns. While the former was usually simple and vegetarian such as bhurat, a form of stuffing, the latter are extremely elaborate excessive ingredient usage dishes. A list regarding perfumes explicitly states in the title – 'Another list of items that give pleasure: Ghiyath Shahi delights in perfume during battle...' (Titley. 2005) highlighting the importance of olfactory senses in the overall contentment of one's lifestyle. Even the instructions on tackling extreme weather focus on the suitability of items and precautions that enhance one's bodily pleasure during such trying times; as are the instructions and recipes for sexual enhancement clear depictions of importance of bodily well-being in the overall pleasures of lives.

Since the Caliphate was established, the notion of hierarchy had as well, affecting society into categorizations of elite and non-elite broadly, especially as the Arab trade grew and luxuries from across Asia were brought into the frontier lands. Such a development of the simple repertoire of Arab cooking clearly entailed differentiated into a 'court' and 'peasant' cuisine, the former accompanied by an elaboration of table manners, and the whole crystallised around the formal division of rank (Goody. 1982). No better support for this can be extracted but from the idea of banquets that were abundant lavish festivities organized specifically to not only denote superiority of one over another, but also to showcase extravagant resource at one's disposal (Tittley. 2005). K.T. Achaya and Claire Chambers mention the instances of banquets and culinary practices of the sultanate era given to us in contemporary records by Ibn Battuta in his account and also Amir Khusro, that seemed to have been adopted by the regional newly emerging sultanates such as Malwa as a successor state of the erstwhile centralized rule. Under the title 'The hospitality of Ghiyath Shahi' lie names of dishes of whole roasted meats (camel, beef), 'green shoots covered in gold and silver' as well as a number of fruits and desserts also decadently covered in gold when the food is brought to the 'Moon of the World' on a seven colored tray laden with gold (Tittley. 2005). This also denotes the importance of aesthetics in invoking pleasure while feeding, and how certain patterns and details enhance the experience of dining for one, as of course, one eats with its eyes as well. The most basic aesthetic sense is the pleasure derived from recognizing, understanding, and enjoying a pattern that stands out from surrounding chaos (Anderson. 2015); for instance, a whole roasted camel!

CONCLUSION

The Ni'matnama as a text has barely been explored as more emphasis has been laid on its pictorial folios by art historians. Although, it can be argued that the disorganized nature and the abruptness of the text can be intimidating as they provide no clear basis of intentionality and/or reasoning behind such records, as opposed to the much cited tarikh genre of history. However, it is necessary to appreciate such texts as they provide an alternative understanding of medieval India that has been burdened by heavy unidimensional political narratives that engulf most of our explanations and understandings. Often times, to move away from politics focus is put on art and architecture to define a political entity, which is important but incomplete. Instead this text only proves to us that food is a way of understanding symbolisms, economy, culture, politics, and even geography as a matter of fact across time; the zeitgeist of a certain time. It is a thing which is common to all, yet unique to every individual's experience. The Ni'matnama is a testament to that as it allows us to understand Ghiyath Shah in an unpolitical manner that highlights aspects of body, pleasure, gastro-politics, well-being, medicinal, and even sexual aspects helping us assess and create an image of the Sultan of this central kingdom within his own kingdom, not without. My attempt here was to extract some coherence and inferences that could explain the internal aspects of the kingdom, away from the courtly politics, that maybe defined the social space more than it has been evident to us.

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