



POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE RAJPUT PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

In this article I have discussed about the position of women in the Rajput society. The Rajput's women have maintained good position in the society. They got great honour and respect. The Rajput women enjoyed complete liberty in the society. They had great feeling of patriotism and chastity. They were not interest in the birth of baby girl. But however many scholars, warriors and administrators and queens were there in their society. The Sati system also followed by some of the Rajput women in the dynasty. Jauhar also existed in Rajput society. There was no Pardah system among the Rajput's.



KEYWORDS : Women, society, traditions, values.

INTRODUCTION

The Rajput's have maintained their unchallenged supremacy over northern India after the death of Harshavardhana to Turk invasion. Therefore the period 647 to 1200 AD is considered as the Rajput period. In this period they built traditions of bravery and courage even in distress. For them life was a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. They felt extreme pleasure in sacrificing their life at the altar of their motherland. They even provided refuge to their enemies and lost their lives to protect bravery and humanity that they would always be remembered by posterity. They had a great sense of pride of their race but it is, in fact, the irony of fate that in spite of their qualities, courage and bravery, they failed to save their country from the foreign invaders.¹

'Rajput' the word derived from 'Sanskrit' word 'Rajaputra'. It means "Son of a King". And they were also called as 'Thakur'. The Term Rajput covers various patrilineal clans historically associated with warrior hood. According to some modern scholars Rajput clans originated from peasant or pastoral communities.²

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To understand the condition of women in Rajput period.
2. To know the role of women in developing the society.
3. To mention the important women personalities.
4. To highlight the patriotism, chastity and devotion of woman.
5. To study the marriage and food system of the Rajput woman.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The scope of the study is restricted to the position of woman in Rajput period. How they have enjoyed their rights, how performed their duties, their honesty, devotion, brave and moral values etc. it's only limited to study the condition of women in Rajput kingdom.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY:

The Rajput women had got very high position in the society. They were treated in good and honour in the kings court. They were involved in each and every work. They look after the administration and studied very well in Sanskrit and become well known poets, warrior and administrator. Therefore this study has been considered as important in medieval age.

POSITION OF WOMEN:

In the Rajput society great honour and respect was given to the womenfolk. The Rajput women enjoyed complete liberty. They were not compelled to confine themselves within four walls of the house and had the right to select their husbands.³ There are references to the 'Svayamvara' form of marriage among the Rajput's whether they were rich or poor. Women married after attaining the age of majority. According to Allberuni, "Women were all educated and took an active part in public life. Girls could read and write and understand Sanskrit. They learned to play, dance and paint portraits."⁴

IMPORTANT POETESS AND ADMINISTRATORS

There some of the women were so much learned that they could defeat anybody in discussion. We are told that Sankaracharya, the great Brahmana scholar, was defeated by a Brahmana lady who was the wife of Mandan Mishra. Awanti Sundari, the wife of Raja Shekhar, the famous Sanskrit poet, was well-known for her scholarship. Indulekha, Marula Shila, Subhadra, Laxmi, Vijjika, Morika, Padmashri and Madalsa were very famous Sanskrit poetesses of the Rajput period.⁵

Rajput women were also well versed in warfare. They learnt how to use sword and spear. In fact, Rajput women were capable of holding pen with as much facility as the sword. Some women controlled the administration efficiently. Akkadevi, the sister of Vikramaditya, the Solanki king, was not only a great warrior but also a great administrator. She was the governor of four provinces and she led an expedition against the fort in the Belgaon District, Bombay State, and besieged it. She proved to be a great administrator. She led a military campaign and proved her worth on the battlefield.⁶ Music and dancing were popular recreations among the ladies of higher ranks of society. Daughters of kings and warriors also took lessons in horsemanship.⁷

CHASTITY AND PATRIOTISM

The Rajput women had a great feeling of patriotism and chastity. They preferred embracing death to dishonour at the hands of enemy. At the time of calamities, the Rajput women proved their mettle. They used to perform 'Jauhar' and reduced themselves to ashes by jumping into blazing fire to save their self-respect, honour and chastity.⁸

Jauhar

'Jauhar' was a mass suicide in order to escape defilement at the hands of the foreign victor which was worse than death.⁹

Sati

'Sati' was an individual act of suicide by a widow when her husband died fighting in battle. This system also prevalent among the Rajput women. On the death of her husband, a Rajput woman never liked to live in this world. They used to burn themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands. In spite of their

bravery and courage, evil practice prevailed among some Rajputs who regarded the birth of a daughter as a bad woman and such female children were killed at birth.¹⁰

Marriage

The age of marriage was growing earlier. Re – marriage was not allowed. The result was that young widows had to live a life of misery. The practice of polygamy was common. The birth of a daughter was not liked by the Rajputs as it was felt that the father of a girl would have to show himself inferior at the time of her marriage. No wonder, many girls were killed at the time of their birth. The condition of an average woman was deteriorating. She was becoming more and more dependent on her husband or his male relatives.¹¹

Normally, people used to have only wife but in case of royal families and Samantas, polygamy was in vogue. The kings used to several wives. Child marriages were also prevalent in Rajput society.

Living life

The Rajputs lived a luxurious life. The upper classes lived in palatial buildings and enjoyed all kinds of comforts. They had even slaves. There were many festivals and fairs throughout the year. Music, dancing, drama, dice hunting, chess etc., were very favourite hobbies. Both men and women used to wear costly clothes and ornaments. They were fond of various kinds of dresses.¹²

Food

The Rajput put a lot of emphasis was put on the purity of food. They took simple food. Generally, they did not eat meat, but wine was used by men and women of higher classes. Means the upper classes did a lot of drinking. The use of opium and wine was common. The use of betel leaves was popular. Smoking does not seem to have been common. People refrained from the use of meat as an article of diet.¹³

The Rajput maintained a high standard of morality and wisdom. Besides being brave and valorous the Rajputs were truthful and honest. They fulfilled their promises even at the cost of their lives. They were very hospitable. They were averse to falsehood, but believed in many types of superstitions. Irrespective of the virtues discussed above, the Rajput had many shortcomings. Lack of unity, mutual quarrels, pride, sati system, child marriage and female infanticide were evil practices rampant in the Rajput society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study followed by the secondary sources. The secondary sources like, published and unpublished books are used in writing the article. And read out the journals, magazines which are related to the article. Booth Kannada and English medium books have been used in writing the article. Some reference books used to write article. And also used some sites which are related to this topic with the help of the internet.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the condition of the Rajput woman is very much high in their society. They had freedom to serve in all field. That's what some of woman become poets, administrators and warriors in their period. They were very brave, honest and devotion towards their husbands. They had very high feeling of patriotism and chastity. The Rajput royal families used very luxuries life and common people lived with simple life.

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