

## **Jauhar : As Narrated By Colonel Todd's Annals And Antiquities Of Rajasthan, 1920**

**Suman Kumari ,Research Scholar**

### **Abstract:-**

Colonel James Todd was an officer of the British East India Company. He was an officer but his amateur interests led him to create a series of works about the history and geography of India, especially Rajputana which Todd referred to as Rajasthan. In his work *Annals And Antiquities Of Rajasthan* his image of the Rajput women that perform Jauhar as the heroic equivalent of the Rajput warrior was one of that caught the public imagination. In this book he extensively writes on incidents of Jauhar that happened in Rajputana geographical area. Jauhar was the medieval act or practice of mass self immolation and often connotes Jauhar-immolation by women and girls in the Indian subcontinent to avoid multiple rapes, capture, torture and enslavement. Most Jauhar in recorded history occurred in Rajput kingdom of Rajasthan. Therefore accounts of Colonel Todd play an important role in knowledge of practice of Jauhar in Rajasthan.

**Keywords:-** Jauhar, Jaisalmer, Chittor, Padmini, Allauddin Khilji, Shahjahanabad.

### **Introduction:-**

Leutenant Colonel Todd's *Annals And Antiquities Of Rajasthan* is a very important source of history of Rajasthan. Scholars say that he depicted the history of Rajasthan unbiasedly and he achieved the objective to a possible extent. Colonel Todd was a British East India Company officer and also an oriental scholar. In 1818 he was appointed political agent for various states of Western Rajputana roughly modern Rajasthan of India. He created series of works about the history and geography of India specially the Rajputana which Todd referred to as Rajasthan. His most notable work was *Annals And Antiquities Of Rajasthan* which was based on materials collected during his travels across Rajasthan. In this book he described the contemporary geography and history of Rajput clans who ruled over most of the area that time. According to David Arnold this book was a "Travel Narrative". Historian Crispin Bates describes Todd as "a romantic historical and anecdotal account" (1). Todd collected information from Jagas (traditional genealogy keeper for Royal houses in north west India), folklores, folksongs. Colonel Todd's work is in three volumes and the first edition of this book published in 1920.

### **Jauhar in Historiography:-**

*Annals And Antiquities Of Rajasthan* is an extensive work by Colonel Todd where he explains various functions, customs, acts, rituals of Rajasthan where he focuses on practice of Jauhar that happened in that geographical area and time. Most of occurrence of Jauhar noted in Rajasthan, thus this book is important for describing events of Jauhar. "The Jauhar where the females are immolated to preserve them from pollution or captivity. The funeral pyre was lighted within the great subterranean retreat, in chambers impervious to the light of day" (2). According to Ila Mukherjee "Jauhar was one of the most significant and awful practices during the period under review. It was confined mostly to the gallant Rajput tribe. One of the bravest expressions of the caste character of Rajput women to found in their performance of Jauhar Brata" (3). According to Veena Oldenberg, the roots of this practice "almost certainly" lie in the internecine warfare among different Rajput kingdoms (4). In contrast, according to Kaushik Roy, the Jauhar custom was observed only during Hindu-Muslim wars, but not during internecine Hindu-Hindu wars among the Rajputs (5).

### **Nature of Jauhar:-**

Jauhar was collective self immolation by royal women and women of Royal army in order to escape capture, rape and forcing into slavery by invaders when defeat was imminent. This practice was

accompanied by saka ritual. During the Jauhar, which was said to take place during night, Brahmin priests would chant Vedic mantras , and the Rajput women ,wearing their wedding dresses, would commit suicide with their children via self immolation. On the morning after the Jauhar, the men would carry out Saka , after taking a bath ,the men would wear saffron clothes ,smear the ashes of their wives and children on their foreheads ,and put tulsi leaf in their mouths. Then , they would sally out either to annihilate their enemies or be annihilated by them. Nature of Jauhar described differently by contemporary scholars. According to Abul Fazl `` it is custom of Indian rajahs to bring the women and burn them willing and unwilling ''(6). In contrast according to Amir Khusrau `` no doubt magical and superstitious, nevertheless they are heroic ''(7). On the other hand Mughal Emperor Jahangir describes Jauhar as ``Fire of fame and modesty , so that the hand of no unlawful person should touch the skirt of their chastity''(8).

### **Incidents of Jauhar:-**

In this book Colonel Todd deals mainly with the five cases of Jauhar namely

1. Jauhar of Jaisalmer , 1294 A.D. involving Alauddin Khilji as invader.
2. First Jauhar of Chittor , 1303 A.D. involving Queen Padmavati as victim and Alauddin Khilji as invader.
3. Second Jauhar of Chittor , 1528 A.D. involving Queen Karnavati as victim and Bahadur Shah,ruler of Gujarat as invader.
4. Third Jauhar of Chittor , 1567 A.D. involving Akbar as invader.
5. Jauhar of Shahjahanbad ,Delhi,1680 A.D. involving Aurangzeb as invader against Marwars.

Brief introduction to the above five episodes , as described by Todd, could be presented as below:

The very first incident of Jauhar that colonel Todd noted in his description was Jauhar of Jaisalmer. Jaisalmer is a region of western Rajasthan. At that time Jaisalmer comes under the rule of Bhati kingdom. The Jauhar of Jaisalmer occurred in 1294 AD, during the reign of Turkic ruler of Delhi Allauddin Khilji. Allauddin get angry at Ghata rulers because they raided on the massive treasure caravan that was going to Delhi. Allauddin Khilji was so outraged that his army marched upon Jaisalmer. Rawal Jethsi, that time Jaisalmer ruler sent many people together with some troops to refugee in the desert and build up a massive store of food within the fort. According to local folktales Bhatias defended their fort for eight years which the forces left outside of the walls occupied themselves attacking the supply lines of the besiegers. During this siege Rawal Jethsi died, and his body was burned inside the fort. After that his son Mulraj ascended the gaddi surrounded by foes. Bhati's ammunition and food exhausted soon. The Bhatias facing certain defeat, Mulraj approached his brother Ratansi and asked what was fit to be done. He replied " there is but one path open: to immolate the females, to destroy by fire and water whatever is destructible, and to bury what is not; then open wide the gates, the sword in hands rush upon the foe, and thus attain swarga." (9) Mulraj and Ratansi then repairs the palace for their queens and told them to take the sohag and to be prepare to meet their sohag in heaven. The Jauhar commenced, and around twenty four thousands females, from infancy to old age surrendered their lives. Most of the females committed the practice on a funeral fire though some were killed by the swords of their male relations when the pyre proved too small. After that around three thousand eight hundred warriors prepared to die with their chiefs. The royal garrison kept possession of the castle during two years. According to historian K.S.Lal in his work ' History of Khaljis' "The date of Alauddin's invasion of Jaisalmer given by the bards is doubtful as Alauddin had not even ascended the throne in 1295. But Tarikh-i- Masumi , probably the only Persian history which refers to this invasion, mentions that the army of Alauddin raided Jaisalmer on its way to Gujrat." (10).

The second incident of Jauhar that Colonel Todd noted on his work is first Jauhar of Chittor by Rani Padmini. In 1303 A.D. ruler of Delhi sultanate Allauddin Khilji attacked Chittorgarh for siege. According to Colonel Todd Allauddin limited his demand to possession of Padmini. Allauddin Khilji laid siege of Chittor to obtain Padamavati. When facing a defeat against Khilji before Chittor was captured, Rani Padmini and thousands of females immolated themselves from captivity and for their modesty and honor. The funeral fire was lighted within a chamber impervious to the daylight. "The fair Padmini closed the throng, which was augmented by whatever of female beauty or youth could be tainted by the attacker's lust". (11) Among the incidents of Jauhar that took place in history, the Jauhar of Rani Padmini is the most controversial. According to Satish Chandra "Many modern historians do not accept this legend because it is mentioned for the first time more than a hundred years later." (12) Further he says "Alauddin closely invested Chittor. After a valiant resistance by the besieged for several months, Alauddin stormed the fort. The Rajput's performed Jauhar and most of the warriors died fighting". (13)

The third incident of Jauhar noted by Colonel Todd was second Jauhar of Chittor in 1567 A.D. This practice of Jauhar led by Rani Karnvati of Mewar. Rani Karnvati was a princess of Bundi Rajasthan. She was married to Rana Sanga of Mewar. She was mother of next two Ranas, Rana Vikramaditya and Rana Udai Singh. Rana Sanga died in 1528 C.E. after the battle of Khanwa. After that Mewar came under the regency of Rani Karnvati. In 1534 A.D. ruler of Gujrat Bahadur Shah attacked her territory, she fiercely defended her territory with a small contingent of soldiers. But after realizing that defeat was imminent, Karnvati and other noble ladies of the court immolated themselves in Jauhar on March 8,

1534 A.D. The infant Udai Singh placed in a safe place and put on saffron robes on him. The materials of Jauhar were prepared. "The bravest had fallen in defending the breach, now completely exposed. Combustibles were quickly heaped up in reservoirs and magazines excavated in the rocks, under which gunpowder was strewed. Karnvati, mother of the prince, and the sister of Arjun Hara, led the procession of willing victims to their doom, the thirteen thousands females were thus swept at once from the record of life".(14) According to historian A.L.Srivastava "After a valiant fight, Chittor fell. The women were burnt to ashes in the flames of Jauhar and the city looted for three days."(15)

In Annals And Antiquities Of Rajasthan, Colonel Todd noted his fourth practice of Jauhar that was third Jauhar of Chittor in 1567 A.D. Akbar besieged Sisodiya capital of Chittor and declared it as a Jihad against the infidels. Rana Udai Singh was the ruler of Chittor that time who moved to another territory of his region and placed the fort under the command of Jaimal Rathore. Colonel Todd described the brave story of Jaimal and Patta. According to him "The name which shine brightest in this gloomy page of the Annals of Mewar, which are still held sacred by the bard and true Rajput and immortalized by Akbar's own pen are Jaimal of Badnor and Patta of Kelwa, both of the sixteen superior vassals of Mewar".(16) When Rajputs saw there was no ultimate hope of salvation, the northern defences being entirely destroyed the fatal Jauhar was commanded. "Nine queens, five princes, with two infant sons, and the families of all the chieftains not at their estates, perished in the flames or in the assault of their ever memorable day".(17) Colonel Todd noted in his description that Akbar destroyed Chittor in the name of his religious ambition or Jihad. He noted that when he entered Chittor after the battle, thirty thousands of its inhabitants became victims of his thirst of conquest, the temples, the palaces were dilapidated.

Annals And Anquities Of Rajasthan noted fifth incident of Jauhar by Rajput clan. Jaswant Singh the ruler of Marwar died at Jamrud in December 1678 A.D. At that time Jaswant Singh's two wives were pregnant, but there being no living male heir, the lands in Marwar were converted into the territories of Mughal Empire by the Emperor Aurangzeb. The queen was delivered a boy named Ajit Singh. Durgadas Rathore, senior officer of former ruler of Jaswant Singh led a delegation to Shahjahanbad and pleaded to recognize Ajit Singh as ruler of Marwar. But Aurangzeb refused and offers a condition as Ajit Singh being brought up as a Muslim. When they refuse to the condition, Aurangzeb sent a force to capture queens and Ajit Singh from Rathore Mansion of Shahjahanbad. Durgadas Rathore led the small troop of Rathors to prevent the captivity of Ajit Singh. "When these brave men saw that nothing short of the surrender of all that was dear to a Rajput was intended by the fiend like spirit of the king, their first thought was the preservation their prince, the next to secure their own honor and that of their late master". (18) The females of the deceased Rajput army gathered in an apartment that filled with gunpowder and torch of light. Soon after their wives and daughters immolated in the ashes of honor. Colonel Todd declared that day as a sacred day in the calendar. In the midst of this furious battle Mughal army finally the prince was saved and eventually escaped from the city to Jodhpur.

### **Conclusion:-**

Todd doesn't limits him around cases and occurrence of Jauhar. He critically analyze the position of women in Rajput society. He examine each stage of life of Rajputni and awfully stated that all stages of life death is always ready to claim her. He praises Rajput men and women as brave and their modesty to prevent themselves to degradation and enslavement. Sadly the fate of civilians in war has often been harsh. Men would invariably be killed and children were often sold into slavery. As for

the women, they might be raped and then killed or sometimes taken as prize by the victors. Rajputs women in order to prevent such fate commit Jauhar.

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