



Rajasthan After The 1818 Treaty: Prohibition Of Infanticide And Sati System

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Abstract: This abstract provides that the 1818 Treaty in Rajasthan marked a significant turning point as it led to the implementation of measures aimed at eradicating two deeply entrenched social evils in the region: infanticide and the sati system. Following the implementation of the 1818 Treaty in Rajasthan, the prohibition of infanticide and the sati system had far-reaching effects on the social and cultural fabric of the region. It brought about a significant transformation in societal norms and values. It safeguarded the rights and lives of women in the area, leading to a shift in the societal norms towards gender equality and the value of female lives. The abolition of the practice of Sati led to a newfound respect for widows and an understanding of their rights to live and contribute to society. The impact of the 1818 Treaty caused ripple effects, laying the foundation for a more equitable and humane society.

Keywords: Rajasthan, 1818 Treaty, prohibition, infanticide, sati system, societal transformation, gender equality, women's rights

Introduction :

The implementation of the 1818 Treaty in Rajasthan was a watershed moment in the region's history, bringing about a profound societal transformation that fundamentally altered the cultural and social landscape. The treaty's prohibition of infanticide and the sati was not only a legal and moral triumph but also had enduring effects on the lives of women and the broader societal structure. The practice of infanticide, which was once a deeply ingrained cultural norm, was outlawed by the treaty. (Grey, 2020) The impact of this measure cannot be overstated, as it led to a significant decrease in the number of female infanticides in the region. This shift towards gender equality was further reinforced by the treaty's ban on the sati system, which required a widow to immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre. The abolition of the sati system marked a significant turning point in the status and treatment of women in Rajasthan. (Deorala, 2007) It not only signalled the end of a barbaric tradition but also marked the beginning of a newfound respect for widows and their rightful place in society. Widows were no longer seen as burdens on their families but were granted social and economic autonomy. Furthermore, the impact of the 1818 Treaty extended beyond legalistic reforms. It permeated the very essence of social interactions and perceptions, prompting a reevaluation of the place of women in Rajasthan. The treaty fostered a growing awareness of women's capabilities and inherent worth, leading to a shift toward gender equality. This monumental shift in mindset not only safeguarded the rights and lives of women but also set the stage for a more compassionate and just society. As a result of these measures, a noticeable shift towards gender equality began to emerge, redefining women's roles and rights in Rajasthan. The once deeply ingrained norms and values undervalued female lives were challenged, laying the foundation for a more inclusive and equitable society. The abolition of the practice of Sati not only marked the end of a barbaric tradition but also signalled the beginning of a newfound respect for widows and their rightful place in

society. Furthermore, the impact of the 1818 Treaty went beyond legalistic reforms, permeating the very essence of social interactions and perceptions. It prompted a reevaluation of the place of women in (Yang, 1989)Rajasthan, fostering a growing awareness of their capabilities and inherent worth.

The legacy of the 1818 Treaty in Rajasthan is one of both legal and societal transformation. It laid the groundwork for gender equality, leading to the prohibition of infanticide and the sati system.(Kerketta & Sharma, 2006)

Female infanticide :

In history, it came into existence during medieval times; the proactive intervention of the British government through the 1818 Treaty was a watershed moment for Rajasthan. This intervention resulted in a significant decrease in the number of female infanticides in the region. The prohibition of infanticide and the sati system through the 1818 Treaty marked a crucial shift in Rajasthan. The impact of the prohibition of female infanticide reverberated far beyond the legalistic reforms. It engendered a renewed sense of hope and dignity for women, affirming their intrinsic worth and right to exist without fear of persecution. In doing so, it sowed the seeds for a more inclusive and equitable society, where the rights and lives of women were no longer subjected to the tyranny of archaic norms and prejudice. This crucial turning point not only safeguarded countless lives but also served as a beacon of hope, laying the foundation for the gradual emergence of a society that recognized and revered the value of every individual, regardless of gender.(Tschalaer, 2009)

Ibn Batuta, the Moorish traveller who came to India during the 14th century, has written Rehala in which he mentioned that a Hindu father felt so annoyed by the birth of a girl child that he killed her. It may be due to the poverty among Hindus . Ibn Batuta how that Hindu women were only capable of servicing their husbands, and there was the Mukta and Mahar talaq in Muslims (Women in Hinduism, 2001). The measures enforced by the 1818 Treaty not only led to a decrease in female infanticides but also initiated a profound shift in the treatment of women in society. The recognition of their rights and the prohibition of female infanticide in Rajasthan after the 1818 Treaty set the stage for a transformative societal shift. The once deeply ingrained norms that devalued female lives were challenged, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable society. The treaty's influence sparked a reevaluation of the place of women in Rajasthan and fostered a growing awareness of their capabilities and inherent worth. Ibn Batuta , a Moorish traveller who visited India during the 14th century, records instances of female infanticide in his writings he mentioned about the sati in ajodan . (Sharma et al., 2020)

Dr. Ishwari Prasad Mishra, a historian, also notes the impact of the 1818 Treaty in Rajasthan, stating that it played a crucial role in bringing about the eradication or substantial reduction in the practice of female infanticide in Rajasthan. he described the economic condition of an average Hindu family in these words “ The Hindus were reduced to the status of water drawers and woodcutters” (Kumar, n.d), living in extreme poverty and struggling to make ends meet. The 1818 Treaty marked a significant shift in the moral and ethical landscape of Rajasthan, challenging the deeply embedded patriarchal norms that had subjected women to systemic violence and discrimination for centuries. The prohibition of female infanticide and the introduction of measures to suppress it through the 1818 Treaty in Rajasthan brought about a profound transformation in the socio-cultural fabric of the region.

Rajasthan, once plagued by the practice of female infanticide and deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, experienced a profound societal shift following the enforcement of the 1818 Treaty. The measures enforced by the 1818 Treaty not only led to a decrease in female infanticides but also initiated a profound shift in the treatment of women in society.

Shyamaldas, Ojha , historians of Rajasthan and Col. Sutherland, captain Ludlow, Major Jackson were the British officials who described the prevalence of female infanticide in Rajasthan and the efforts made by the British to suppress it. Mainly it was practiced by higher caste communities such as the Rajputs Jats, Khattris, and Lewa Kanbis (Nath, 1973)

Shyamaldas and Ojha considered the main reason for female infanticide to dowry and Tika practice (Nandy & PANIGRAHI, n.d), which placed a heavy financial burden on families and perpetuated the preference for male offspring. also mentioned that female infanticide was prevalent among certain tribal groups like the Khonds of Orissa and the Bhils of Rajasthan. He claimed that the major reason for female infanticide was dowry demands and the social stigma associated with having daughters.

Sutherland claimed that the Tyag practice was the main form of female infanticide in Rajasthan, where newborn girls were abandoned or killed due to social and economic reasons (Kasturi, 2000). which was closely

connected to the deep-rooted patriarchy and gender discrimination prevailing in the society among charan, bhats, and dholees (Billig, 1991). They used to extract money from Rajputs at the time of daughter's marriage

The birth of a girl child became a burden for her parents; they were afraid of her modesty and future dowry expenses.

So in the 19th century now, the literate Hindus became conscious of doing away from the social evils, which attracted the attention of the British officials attention and the efforts of the British colonial authorities. Mr. Walter, who established Walter Hitkarni Sabha to create public opinion among the Rajput community against female infanticide, reported that the practice was deeply ingrained in the social fabric of Rajasthan and decided to do away with tika practice, unnecessary marriage expenditure and Mosar. The practice of Tyag was also condemned. Jodhpur and Bikaner enacted the laws against Tyag in 1841 and 1844, respectively (Taft & North, n.d)

In 1834 female infanticide declared illegal by Kota state, 1837 it was declared illegal in Bikaner Darbar and in 1843 it was made illegal in Jaipur state.

Sati system :

Originally, the practice of Sati was prevalent in Rajasthan, where widowed women would self-immolate on the funeral pyres of their deceased husbands. It was most prevalent during medieval times, especially in the sultanate period, for modesty and safety from enemy attacks. Mostly prevalent in the Rajgharanas of Rajasthan. During the 18th and 19th centuries, there wasn't any example in any of the Rajput state where all the queens and courtesan were forced into Sati after the death of the king. The practice of Sati, a Hindu funeral custom that involved widowed women self-immolating on the funeral pyres of their deceased husbands, was most prevalent in Rajasthan during medieval times, particularly in the Rajgharanas. It was believed to provide modesty and safety from enemy attacks. However, by the 18th and 19th centuries, there were no known examples of queens or courtesans being forced into Sati after the death of the king in any of the Rajput states.

Despite its prevalence, the British colonial authorities perceived Sati as inhumane and barbaric, leading to their attempts to abolish the practice. After the implementation of the 1818 Treaty, they took extensive measures to suppress female infanticide in Rajasthan. The Treaty marked a significant turning point in the treatment of widows in Rajasthan, as the Sati system, which was deeply rooted in societal norms and beliefs, perpetuated gender inequality and the notion that a woman's worth was dependent on her husband.

The Sati system marginalized widows, often leading to their coerced self-immolation upon their husbands' funeral pyres. This practice reflected the unequal status of women in society and served as a stark reminder of the oppressive patriarchy that governed social structures in Rajasthan.

After the 1818 Treaty, the British colonial authorities outlawed female infanticide and introduced laws against the practice of Sati in Rajasthan. The efforts of the British to abolish the Sati system faced opposition from some sections of the Indian society, as they considered it an integral part of their culture and tradition. However, the British persisted with their efforts, and eventually, the practice of Sati was eradicated from Rajasthan. This paved the way for the betterment of the status of widows and strengthened the position of women in society.

The efforts to abolish the Sati system extended beyond mere legal dictates. They ignited a profound shift in the societal attitude towards widows, challenging the traditional norms and emphasizing the inherent value and worth of women beyond their marital status. The abolishment of the Sati system reshaped the narrative surrounding widows, recognizing their autonomy and right to live with dignity and respect. This pivotal change not only symbolized a legal victory but also signified a transformative shift in the treatment of women in Rajasthan, paving the way for a more inclusive and compassionate society (The "Other" Culture: Craft Societies and Widow Remarriage in Early Modern India, 2007) that acknowledged and protected the rights of women.

The impact of the 1818 Treaty reverberated through the collective consciousness of Rajasthan, instigating a paradigm shift in the treatment and perception of women. It catalysed a broader cultural metamorphosis that sought to challenge deeply ingrained gender biases and inequities. Consequently, the aftermath of the 1818 Treaty bore witness to the gradual erosion of oppressive customs and the emergence of a more egalitarian society where women were accorded the rights and respect they deserved (Gender diversity in teams, 2019) . The abolishment of the Sati system through the 1818 Treaty brought about significant improvements in the status and treatment of women in Rajasthan.

The implementation of the 1818 Treaty not only marks a crucial juncture in the legal history of Rajasthan but also serves as a testament to the resilience and determination of the society to transcend antiquated practices and embrace a more just and equitable future. The abolition of the Sati system represents a seminal moment in Rajasthan's history, signifying the onset of a more enlightened and compassionate era where the inherent dignity and rights of women were acknowledged and safeguarded. The efforts to abolish the Sati system extended beyond mere legal dictates. They ignited a profound shift in the societal attitude towards widows, challenging the traditional norms and emphasizing the inherent value and worth of women beyond their marital status. The implementation of the 1818 Treaty brought about significant changes in Rajasthan, including the prohibition of female infanticide and the abolishment of the Sati system.

There were 18 states in Rajasthan during the 19th century Udaipur, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bundi, Kota, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Alwar, Kishangarh, etc. After the 1818 Treaty, the British authorities took various measures to prohibit infanticide and the Sati system in the states of Rajasthan. During medieval times, Akbar implemented a ban on the Sati system in Rajasthan as part of his efforts to promote religious tolerance and social reforms. Jahangir also continued with this ban during his reign. Sawai Jai Singh and his successor Pratap Singh also prohibited sati within their respective states (Control, 2005). After the 1818 Treaty, the British authorities in Rajasthan implemented measures to prohibit the practices of female infanticide and the Sati system (Heaphy, 2017) in order to protect the rights and lives of women. James Todd, who was a political agent of Mewar and Hadoti from 1818 to 1822, tried to stop and ban Sati. Captain A.H.E. Bouleau, who had been in western Rajasthan in 1835, tried to persuade the rulers of Bikaner and Jaipur to abolish the practice of Sati. In spite of awareness of Maharana of Mewar the people of the state noticed with regret that two Ranis six maidservants committed sati with Jawan Singh in 1836. Later, on the death of Maharana Sardar Singh, his paswan committed sati in 1842. Captain Sutherland observed that the increased number of sati is due to the reverence to the maharana and, therefore, the state of Mewar hesitated to enact the law prohibiting Sati (Kaviraj Shyamaldas, 2010) for fear of offending the sentiments of the ruling class and losing their support.

C. Richards, the political agent in Hadoti, made efforts during 1839-1840 to obtain the content of the rajas of Kota Bundi Jhalawar. The governor general and court of directors criticised Richards' work, and Sutherland advised him to discuss it with the rajas. Major Ludlow is credited with bringing about the change in the policy of sati. His discussion with members of the regency council gave favorable results. The council agreed to proclaim prohibition sati in Jaipur state in 1844 ('Foul unhallowed fires' 1: Officiating Sati and the Colonial Hindu Widow in the United Provinces, 2013). The success of Ludlow induced other states in Rajasthan also to implement the ban on Sati. Major Thorsbey played a significant role in advocating for the prohibition of female infanticide in Rajasthan in states like Udaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Kota, Jhalawar, Jaisalmer, Dholpur, Sirohi, Banswara, and other princely states. Dungarpur, Banswara, and Pratapgarh followed suit and enacted laws to abolish the Sati system in 1846. Kota and Jodhpur were prohibited in 1848 with penalty, and Udaipur state implemented the ban in 1860 (Showcasing Sati, 2005).

An opposite argument could be that the British authorities' implementation of measures to prohibit Sati in Rajasthan was a form of cultural interference and imposition of their values onto indigenous practices, disregarding the cultural context and beliefs of the local people. The example of roop kanwar can be cited, where the acquittal of individuals charged with glorifying her death as sati indicates a lack of resolve and action by the Rajasthan government in addressing the issue of sati (Khan, 2019).

Conclusion :

After the 1818 Treaty, British authorities in Rajasthan, along with influential individuals, made significant efforts to stop female infanticide and the Sati system, safeguarding women's lives and rights. Despite challenges, Sati bans were implemented in various princely states, marking a significant step towards eradicating the harmful practice. The efforts of Major Ludlow and others ultimately led to the enactment of laws that abolished the Sati system in these states. After the 1818 Treaty, British authorities in Rajasthan, along with influential individuals, made significant efforts to stop female infanticide and the Sati system, safeguarding women's lives and rights. Despite challenges, Sati bans were implemented in various princely states, marking a significant step towards eradicating the harmful practice. The efforts of Major Ludlow and others ultimately led to the enactment of laws that abolished the Sati system in these states.

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