



ROLE OF LAXMIBAI IN JHANSI

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ABSTRACT:

Rani Jhansi bai played a very important role in the political affairs of the Jhansi. She stood up for the right of adoption to the throne against British. The Britishers interested in the political affairs of the princely states, The Britishers extended their rule towards the small princely states and want to control the revenue and military. So Jhansi Rani bai fought bravely against the Britishers to protect her kingdom.



KEYWORDS: Predecessor – rebelled – coronation – expansion – revolution – revolt – adoption – cavalry – regiment – predominant – imperial.

INTRODUCTION

Jhansi was one of the loyal states in central India, loyal towards the British. Jhansi was one of the important places where mutiny took place during the revolt of 1857. According to some historians it was so tiny state that if 1857 would not happen it would have never be known to the world. Jhansi is always remembered and related with Laxmibai for her heroic death. She has become the idol of young minds from last 100 years. Her statues and paintings are available in almost all cities and educational institutions. But the real story of the Laxmibai is quiet interesting and will give an insight towards the real nature of the revolt in general her role in particular.

History of Jhansi family : before going to Laxmibai we should peep in the family history of Laxmibai Gangadharrao Nevalkar. Jhansi was the part of the Bundelkhand and given to Bajirao-I by Raja Chhatrasal of Bundela. Later it was divided in 3 parts and Jhansi was one of them. It was loyal to the British from the beginning. Ramchandra Rao the predecessor of Gangadharrao received the title of "Maharajadhiraj Fidvi Badshah Zama Englitan" on him for the services he rendered for British. He also requested to hoist the Union Jack on the Jhansi fort. It was agreed and accepted by the Lord Bentinck. Laxmibai married with Gangadharrao in 1843 at the age of 11-12. Gangadharrao died in 1853 at the age of 58 without any heir apparent. Lord Dalhousie disallowed to continue the region on the ground of adopted son and annexed Jhansi in 1854. Laxmibai left in the town. Though she hurt of this decision but she had no alternative than accepting the situation, Still she had not ended her efforts to regain the Jhansi state. She appealed to British. She had sent 3 letters to the British. The focus of all 3 letters was loyalty of the clan, support to suppress the local mintinies. She wrote, "The services rendered by Sherao Bhau, the father of my late husband, to the British government are recorded and have been amply rewarded by the unceasing flow of benefits which his family have derived from the acknowledged favor

and projection of such mighty power.”³ The second letter sent on Feb 16 1854. She writes, “It was the good fortune of the father of my husband to be the first of the chiefs in this part of the country who tendered their allegiance to the British government. And there after also, Jhansi state was always foremost in the field when opportunity occurred for displaying its loyalty the governor general conferred for displaying its loyalty to the permanent power”.⁴

Laxmibai pleaded to sanction the adopted deed by giving all reference of the past. She accepted the privy purse of Rs. 60,000 per annum and was living in Jhansi. Though her state was taken away from her but she was never against the power and there was no unrest among the subject of Jhansi.⁵ Sheshrao More writes, “Those who lost political power in Ayodhya were Muslims and sought restoration of their rule subjects of Jhansi entertained no such sentiment and the issue was limited to the Rani individually”.⁶ All appeals made by Laxmibai were rejected and finally dismissed in 1854. She was living a normal life vesting 8-9 hours in rituals.⁷ and she had not left any political ambition. “Uprising broke at a time when Rani Laxmibai Sahib had thus renounced everything including hope of regaining her right to rule and regarding the remaining days of her earthly existence as an inevitable misfortune, completely devoted herself to God’s service’s.

Jhansi at the time of the outbreak : It is very interesting to understand the course of events that made Laxmibai a historic persons. Muslim sepoys in the fort led by Bakhshish ali, Kale Khan (Cavalry chief), Tahsildar Muhammed Hussain⁹ rebelled on 4th June 1957 with cry of ‘deen deen’¹⁰. They all marched on the prison and released all internees. All rebellions Killed Englishmen who were seeking assistance from Rani. All Britishers were besieged in the fort and deceived them by giving a false promise of releasing them by taking oath of Holy Quran, all were massacred at the Jokhanbag massacre. On the country she had secretly provided them with security and food¹².

Threats to Rani : All rebellious soldiers come to Rani and demanded 3 lac rupees and guns otherwise they will shell her palace and nominate Sadashiv Narayan on the throne. Rani gave rupees 1 lack and 2 cannons. Sepoys declared ‘Khulk Khuda Ka, Mulk Badshah ka, Hukum Laxmibai ka’ and all left for Delhi. Laxmibai wrote the entire affair to commissioner of Sagar and explained the status of anarchy in Jhansi, reported massacre of all Christians by their own soldiers. Commissioner confirmed the situation by deputing a separate commission and understands the situation and her innocence. “Describing the situation of anarchy in Jhansi, she wrote in the recent letter that it was beyond her capacity to provide security to the district because of financial constrains and requested that she might be favored with orders which she would carried out”¹³. One of the then local officer wrote about Laxmibai, “Rani with the utmost difficulty managed to save her life, but her money and property were plundered. She was not able to report this before the Commissioner or Agent since the disaffected (rebels) had stopped all Dawk communication and had guarded all the roads round Jhansi which prevented anyone from going out”¹⁴. Commissioner convinced with the explanation and allowed her to rule on Jhansi on behalf of the British. It was declared in the state that, “Be it known to all people belonging to, or residing in the government of district of Jhansi, that owing to the bad conduct of the soliders some valuable lives have been lost and property destroyed. Until officers and troops reach Jhansi, the Rani will rule in the name of the British Govt. and I hereby call on all, great and small to obey the Rani and pay the govt. revenue to her”¹⁵. “The documents establish that the Rani had remained firm in her loyalty; she had nothing to do with the revolt and that, even after the Uprising, she confirmed to command the trust that she had earlier. Otherwise it was impossible that the British could have entrusted the state administration to her after the rebellion.”¹⁶ Now, one should be clear that Laxmibai had no role in the revolt, she was loyal to the British, British allowed her to rule and collect revenue, depute army for law and order in the State. She was working under the Union Jack from June 1857 to March, 1858.

Meanwhile Nathhe Khan of Orchha state succeeded in creating misunderstanding in between Rani and the British by interrupting correspondence even pilfered letter sent by Rani. Her loyalty was beyond any doubt. Some of the sepoy leaders were living in Jhansi like Bakhshish Ali were leading the mutiny factor and compelling Rani to fight against British, Rani tried herself to prove loyal by all means

till end. When Huge Rose come closer to the fort of Jhansi to fight she wrote, "We fail to understand why the British government is insulting its old, wishing friends ! In such a situation how can we believe that there will not be breach of trust with us in your camp ? But we assure you that we do not want any dispute with you, nor we have done in the past. Therefore, if you want we are ready to send our Dewan Saheb so that we may decide with you the appropriate conditions of the treaty. Being a woman I cannot come" 17.

CONCLUSION :-

Thus the princely states failed in their attempt, to unite among themselves and fight combining forces. The Britishers praised the valour of Rani Jhansi bai. The small petty rulers suffered most at the cost of imperial rule.

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