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Legal Control of Practice of Sati

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ABSTRACT:Sati was certainly a barbaric practice that needed to be eliminated, but the way it was done is something that popular books have not accurately taught us. Over the years, feminist scholars have developed a distinct body of information that describes social trends in India from the viewpoint of how women were influenced, one of them being Sati. The British East India Company, originally a trading company, eventually found its way into the Indian subcontinent's muddy politics. With their ultimate objective of absolute domination, the foothold they needed on Indian soil to do it was to be brutal, savage and in need of change by the assault on civilization that required imbibing values. Thus, this research paper discusses Sati in brief.

KEYWORDS: Ablaze, Custom, Practice, Sati, Widower.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over a 44-year period (1943–1987) in India, there were 30 cases of sati or attempted sati, the official number being 28. A well-documented 1987 case was that of 18-year-old RoopKanwar.] Additional legislation against sati practice was passed in reaction to this incident, first within the state of Rajasthan, then by the central government of India nationally.

In 2002, a 65-year-old woman named Kuttu died in the Panna district of Madhya Pradesh after sitting on her husband's funeral pyre. Vidyawati, a 35-year-old lady, reportedly committed sati by leaping into her husband's burning funeral pyre in Rari-Bujurg Village, Fatehpur district, Uttar Pradesh, on 18 May 2006.[1]

The British claimed that Sati was not performed in order to bring the husband and wife to heaven, but because after the death of their husband (through the Dayabhaga Rule in Bengal), widows, entitled to any of the family land, became a liability due to the fear that they would claim it. Coercing them onto the funeral pyre was also a good bet.

Furthermore, in the vyavashthas made for decoded texts by Pandits, phrases would sometimes be, "the author must have had those who declined to do so in contemplation," or, "From the above-mentioned passages of the Mitateshura, it would appear that this was an act suitable for all women to perform." These Pandits' interpretations were taken to be unambiguous and utter, even though they were clearly.[2]

The vyavasthas also clarified how various practices varied in cities, districts, and between castes, but these were mostly ignored-they were seen as secondary elements of Sati's 'key' act.

For many factors, this phase is fascinating. Firstly, the very basis of the British case was on the premise that religious scripture was solely practiced by the indigenous people as a way of life.

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The issue lies in the fact that, despite providing evidence that it could be otherwise, the British tried to show that aboriginal people practiced religious traditions with no guilt and changed the meanings to suit their purpose. The official dialogue on Sati became this expectation.

II.DISCUSSION

Janakrani, a 40-year-old daughter, was burnt to death on the funeral pyre of her husband Prem Narayan in the Sagar district on 21 August 2006; Janakrani had not been coerced or prompted to commit the act by anyone. On 11 October 2008, by jumping into her 80-year-old husband's funeral pyre at Checher in the Kasdol block of Chhattisgarh's Raipur district, a 75-year-old woman, Lalmati Verma, committed sati; Verma killed herself after mourners had left the cremation site.[3]

Scholars examine whether these unusual cases of widow suicide by sati are culturally related or are manifestations of mental disease and suicide such as those reported worldwide in women.

Dinesh Bhugra notes in the case of RoopKanwar that there is a likelihood that suicides may be caused by "a state of depersonalization as a result of severe bereavement" then adds that it is impossible that mental disorder and culture possibly played a role in Kanwar. Colucci and Lester, however, state that before their sati suicide, none of the women stated by the media to have committed sati had been offered a clinical examination and thus there is no reliable evidence to assess whether culture or mental disorder was the primary factor behind their suicide.[4]

Inamdar, Oberfield and Darrell note that women who commit sati are mostly "childless or old and face miserable impoverished lives" which may be the cause of a widow's suicide combined with considerable stress from the lack of only personal support.

Yang notices that the young age of the widows who committed sati appears to be underlined by several reports. Yang notes, however, that the vast majority were aging women after analyzing the British estimates from 1815 to 1828: the numbers from 1825 to 1826 were almost two-thirds above the age of 40 when committing sati.[5]

There remained a peculiar conception worth noting in the dharmashastric tradition of espousing sati as a justified and even suggested choice for ascetic widowhood, the accomplished status for a woman committing sati. She and her husband would be granted automatic, but not permanent, reception into heaven (svarga) by burning herself on the pyre, while only the wholly chaste widow carrying out her normal life period could hope for final salvation (moksha) and breaking the chain of rebirth. Therefore, realizing that executing sati only acquired an inferior otherworldly status than good widowhood could attain, when paired with a denial of the effective possibility for a widow to remain completely chaste, sati was suggested.

To conclude, in three historical times one may roughly arrange Dharmasastic writings on sahadamana. Indeed, the greatest stance taken against sahadamana since Vijnanesvara in the early twelfth century seems to be that it is an inferior alternative to brahmacarya (ascetic celibacy), as its consequence is only heaven rather than moksa (liberation). Finally, many commentators refute even this attenuated opposition to sahadamana in the third century, since they cite a previously unquoted smrti passage which explicitly mentions liberation as a consequence of the success of the rite. They thus argue that sahadamana, considering the unique acclaim it often gets, is at least as useful a choice for widows as brahmacarya and perhaps even more so.

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Sati is sometimes characterized as optional, though it may have been coerced in some situations.

The widow seems to have been drugged either with bhang or morphine in one narrative account in 1785, and was bound to the pyre that would have stopped her from surviving the fire if she changed her mind.

In 1822, 16 miles south of Calcutta, the Salt Agent at Barripore went out of his way to record a case he had encountered, in which the woman was forcefully tied down by two men by a large bamboo, to avoid any possibility of escape. A woman lowered herself into a burning pit of Cuttack and rose again as if to run, when a washerman gave her a bamboo shove, sending her back to the hottest part of the fire. There is some evidence, aside from stories of overt compulsion, that steps were taken at times so that the widow could not avoid the flames until they were lit.

Sati was not, in general, limited to being an upper class phenomenon, but spread across the classes/castes, contrary to common opinion, Anand Yang, speaking of the early nineteenth century CE, says. For instance, 41% were Brahmin, 6% were Kshatriyas, while 2% were Vaishiyas and 51% were Sudras. In Banaras, however, the upper castes were represented by less than 70% of the total for just two years in the 1815-1828 British records; in 1821, all the sati were from the upper castes there.

III. CONCLUSION

Sati was certainly a barbaric practice that needed to be eliminated, but the way it was done is something that popular books have not accurately taught us. Over the years, feminist scholars have developed a distinct body of information that describes social trends in India from the viewpoint of how women were influenced, one of them being Sati.

The British East India Company, originally a trading company, eventually found its way into the Indian subcontinent's muddy politics. With their ultimate objective of absolute domination, the foothold they needed on Indian soil to do it was to be brutal, savage and in need of change by the assault on civilization that required imbibing values. By the early 19th century, Sati had been a hot subject in colonial Bengal. The British appointed Pandits in the civil courts and Nizamat Adalats (criminal courts) to prove that Sati was a cruel practice, in order to help them create a case against it by translating religious scriptures. The British raised particular questions about the tradition and encouraged the Pandits to address them by reading texts such as the Manusmriti and other Shrutis and Smritis from scriptures.

Different reforms have been enacted after public outrage at each case, which now make it illegal to even be a bystander at a sati event. Other steps include attempts to protect the victims from being glorified, including the erection of shrines over their remains, the promotion of pilgrimages to the location of the pyre, and the derivation of the revenue from such sites and pilgrims. It must be recognized, however, that the practice of sati is still very complex in India. Incidents continue to occur every year and may be on the rise, notwithstanding the presence of state and country-wide legislation banning the act and its glorification. These activities prove, as one Indian feminist says, that firmly held and deeply valued norms will not be modified merely by enacting legislation.

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