



SATIDHAH PROTHA AS A GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the father of the Indian Renaissance. Nineteenth-century India has witnessed a dramatic shift in social perceptions in the history of India. The ancient Indian custom of "Sati", i.e., the practice of burning a widow at the funeral of her deceased husband, was abolished in India through the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. However, even in modern India, the existence of this practice is unconfirmed. The complexity of the law is playing a role behind this practice.

KEYWORDS : Sati, Ram Mohan Roy, Satidaha, India

Introduction

Ram Mohan Roy was a fearless opponent of evils such as the Sati system. According to all Shastra as well as the common science of every nation, Ram Mohan Roy openly stated that the Sati system was more than murders. Inside and outside his home, he campaigned against the Sati system. As a result, the orthodox community protested and a social boycott was established against him. His life was on the line. It is to his credit that he suggested to his time's government that Sati, which was a stain on Hindu society's good name, be formally abolished. Newspapers such as "Samachar Darpan," "Sambad Kaumudi," "Bengal Harkara," "Indian Gazette," "Calcutta Journal," and "Friend of India," among others, denounced Sati at the time. To prove women's rights in their paternal property, Ram Mohan used the Yajnavalkya Smriti, which said that women have rights in their father property. Bentinck abolished Sati by the "Bengal Sati Regulation - XVII" in 1829 A.D., thanks to the tireless efforts of Ram Mohan [1].

Concept of Sati in Hindu mythology

The legend of Sati is well-known among Indian Hindus. The Hindu goddess Sati is always associated with the term "Sati." Sati was Lord Shiva's wife who consumed herself on the holy pyre, according to Hindu mythology. This was in response to her father's refusal to invite Shiva to the Gods' assembly. She was so humiliated that she lit a yogic fire and was reduced to ashes. The original sati's self-sacrifice becomes a "Divine example of wifely devotion." The act of Sati validated the concept that a widow will be revered if she sacrifices her life for her husband. In terms of social status, Sati had a significant role in determining a woman's actual personality. Sati was a Hindu tradition in which a wife would immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre [2].

Role of Raja Ram Mohan Roy

This Sati system was strongly condemned by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He argued that this was in direct violation of a woman's human right to survive in society. It is a sort of gender violence perpetrated by married women. Lord William Bentinck passed legislation against Sati pratha in 1829. As a result, Raja Ram Mohan Roy's efforts were rewarded. Huge changes have occurred in Indian society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy is recognised as one of the founding fathers of the Indian Renaissance, and he was the first to abolish the "Sati pratha", a kind of gender violence against married women [3].

Satidaha was a cruel practice of the then Hindu conservative society. Ram Mohan Roy was permanently associated with the abolition of the "satidaha practice". He commented in the year of 1818 in his essay that women should exist as they were when their husbands were alive. No one has the right to end the life of a living woman. At that time it was thought that the chastity of women could be maintained through the practice of satidaha. So the living wife was forced to attend the funeral of

the dead husband and go to the funeral. In other words, the living wife was burnt to death and all musical instruments like dhak, dhol, karatal etc. were played. Therefore, the cry of the living wife cannot be heard in her voice. The leaders of the society think that the wife was gaining chastity and she was gaining heaven with her husband [4].

Raja Ram Mohan Roy thought that the practice of satidaha was a completely illegal and punishable crime. He opposes this evil practice as a whole. For this he adopted three strategies. First, he emphasizes the formation of public opinion. This is why he tried to explain in his writings, speeches and discussions that this evil practice is not supported by any religious discussion and government. Second, he tried to convince the administration that it was the government's responsibility to stop this evil immediately. Third, to find out the exact cause of this evil practice, what are the reasons why women are forced to go to Sahamran. However, if a woman wants to go to Sahamran voluntarily, He has nothing to say. Roy mentions that as an official, only in Calcutta at that time - 253 people fell victim to the practice of satidaha in 1815, 269 in 1818, 442 in 1818 and 544 in 1818 [4-5].

Raja Ram Mohan Roy took initiative to stop the practice of satidaha in the society of that time. Raja Ram Mohan Roy wrote two books in 1818 and 1819 entitled "Sahamran Bishwa Pravartak O Nibartakar Sangbad". In 1829, he wrote another book, "Sahamran Bisya". He showed that there is no provision in the scriptures for a woman to be chaste. Finally, in 1829, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, in collaboration with Lord Bentinck, abolished the evil practice of satidaha. William Adams spoke of Ram Mohan in a speech in Boston, USA in 1845 that is "when the death of Rammohan's elder brother made him the head of the family she (his mother) instituted suits against her son both in the king's and Company's courts, to disinherit him as an apostate and infidel, which according to strict Hindu law, excludes from the present and disqualifies, for the future possession of any ancestral property, or even according to many authorities, of any property that is self acquired" [6].

Abolish the practice of satidaha

The practice of satidaha came to an end in the 19th century when India was under British rule. William Bentinck banned the practice of satidaha in 1829, and by 1862 British India was forced to abolish the practice of satidaha [7]. The practice of satidaha was punishable by life imprisonment. This is because early Hinduism and some important communities or castes have encouraged satidaha even after it was banned. When the state banned satidaha, the society did not accept it; therefore, it causes conflict between them. Despite this, the practice of satidaha is still practiced in India. Here are some examples even after the abolition of satidaha [7-8].

At present the attitude of Indians towards Sati practice

September 4, 1987 is a shameful day in the history of India. On this day, Roop Kanwar died with her husband. This incident was a controversial event. At the age of eighteen, Roop Kanwar married a man from the village of Deorala in northern India, and her husband died at the hospital. When her in-laws were preparing for the funeral, she learned that she would be burned to death with her husband's body, so she tried to escape, but unfortunately, her husband's family caught her and forcibly took her to her husband's cheetah. Her husband's cheetah was thrown into the fire. She screamed and tried to flee, but was thrown into the fire by people in the vicinity of the funeral home around 1.30 pm that day. After all, she was burned to death at her father-in-law's house. The people involved in the incident were arrested [9-10].

In 2008, a 71-year-old woman in Chhattisgarh, India, committed suicide through the practice of satidah. Attendees noticed that she was wearing new clothes and attending her husband's funeral. When her husband's body was almost burned, and the villagers were ready to return home, she jumped on her husband's cheetah. She died with her husband and sacrificed herself. This incident is very disappointing because it was performed in the 21st century despite being illegal and prohibited by Indian law. This incident is an example of how such an unfortunate incident could happen in rural India. This was just a recorded incident, and many unregistered satidah incidents happened all over India, which we do not even know in this 21st century [10].

Conclusion

Most of the people arrested in these types of incidents were mere spectators. The burden of proof falls on them under the new law. The person accused under this law is innocent until proven guilty. In the case of satidah, where the crime is committed in public, it is not very difficult to prove the crime, but there is a lack of witnesses and evidence which is very painful. At a time when most countries are considering abolishing the death penalty because it has proved futile as a way to reduce crime, it is ironic that under the pretext of protecting women's rights, we are introducing it for a new class of crime. The ultimate failure of this law is that in its efforts to protect women's rights, the law punishes the victim.

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