

HUM103

Home Task-1

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Contentious Traditions

Lata Mani

THE CASE OF 19TH CENTURY INDIA: RITUALS OF SATI

***** To what extent do you think, in this context, both state laws and religious laws ensured the ethical rights of women in 19th century India within the context of the practicing of Sati rituals?**

In "Contentious Traditions," the discussion around sati, or widow burning, in colonial India is examined. Lata Mani contends that the debate was more about the definitions of Hindu tradition, the place of ritual in religious worship, the civilizing missions of colonialism and evangelism, and the appropriate role of the colonial state than it was about the women who were burned, despite the fact that the prohibition of widow burning in 1829 was celebrated as a significant step forward for women's emancipation in modern India. Mani completely revises nationalist and colonialist historiography on the social advancement of women's standing during the colonial era and explains the convoluted and contradictory nature of missionary literature on India. Widow burning has a paradoxical history.

The main three points the author illustrates here are –

- Imperialist point of view
- Pundits' point of view
- A hindu person's point of view who is against Sati practice

Through the examples and guidance provided by the Brahmin priest, the religion significantly contributed to the development, evolution, and dissemination of Sati. The most effective illustration of the Sati rite is the Hindu goddess Sati, who is also Shiva's wife.

From my perspective, this practice of Sati is undoubtedly barbaric,cruel.

When the argument had started about the abolishment of Sati,many extreme fundamentalist Brahmin groups argued for the continuation of Sati ceremony in 19th-century India. And they had more and more arguments with judges and administrators too.

From the given article written by Lata Mani, it is shown that the then religious laws of hindus were responsible for this Sati practices over the years.In 1680, the Agent of Madras Streynsham Master intervened to halt the burning of a Hindu widow in Madras Presidency. This was the initial official British response to sati.

On the contrary, being a follower of Hindu religion, Raja Ram Mohon Roy was also against this practice, and he had written a petition as well,which is the third point of the given article.

Ethically, when a man dies for whatever reason, it is not right for the woman to die with her husband. Because, what is her fault here? She deserves to live till the time she has ! It is the religion and its law which made the women of the 19th century to do that. So, religiously this practice was ethical for Hindu people. But the abolition actually applied when the British government first put a veto to this ritual. That means the state laws were against it.

Moreover, the "progressive" vs. "conservative" argument muted the voices of women; examine the connection between women, tradition, and law. Women were always treated as product. Most of the people were not bothered about listening to their thoughts, their rights, the equality between man and women.

To conclude, I think, though Raja Ram Mohon Roy was against this ritual's practice and he had some contribution to make it prohibited, religious laws were absolutely not ethical in terms of the Sati practice. Rather the state laws were in favor of women and against of Sati at that time. In the 19th century, the emergence of Raja Ram Mohon Roy from Hindu religion (but against this heinous law) and the British government's state law mainly affected the ethical rights of women positively.

