

Sati: A Controversial Practice from India and Nepal's Past



Sati, also known as widow burning, was a funeral practice observed in some parts of India and Nepal. This custom involved a widow immolating herself on her deceased husband's funeral pyre, supposedly as an ultimate act of devotion and fidelity.

Origins and Meaning

The term "sati" comes from Sanskrit and means "virtuous woman" or "good wife." The practice had its roots in the belief that a woman should remain faithful to her husband even after his death. In Hindu mythology, the goddess Sati immolated herself to protest against the dishonor done to her husband, the god Shiva, by her father.

The Reality of the Practice

Although sati was presented as a voluntary act of devotion, the reality was often much darker:

1. Social pressure: Widows often faced intense pressure from their family and society to conform to this tradition.
2. Manipulation: In some cases, women were drugged or forcibly pushed into the fire, turning this supposedly voluntary act into disguised murder.
3. Economic motivations: Sometimes, the practice was encouraged to avoid sharing the inheritance with the widow or to avoid the financial burden of her maintenance.

Prohibition and Persistence

Sati was officially banned in India in 1829 under British administration, thanks to the efforts of social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy. In Nepal, the practice was banned in 1920. However, isolated cases continued to occur until the late 20th century, mainly in remote rural areas.

Cultural Impact and Contemporary Debate

Sati remains a subject of debate in the Indian subcontinent:

- For some, it symbolizes the historical oppression of women and the ongoing need to fight for gender equality.
- Others view it as an example of extreme devotion, although most condemn its practice.
- The topic raises questions about the conflict between cultural traditions and universal human rights.

Sources

- fr.wikipedia.org

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