

Vedas and Sati Pratha

Sati Pratha is one among the most favorite topic discussed by Hindu-bashers. There are special groups working on intellectual platform whose duty is to dishonor Hindus as one who oppress Women-hood equality and Rights. Most of these groups belongs to Christian and Islamic institutions. Surprisingly Christian's refrains from any comment on alive burning of thousands of women on name of witchcraft in Europe for centuries. While Islamic's groups refrains from any comment on their support to ill practices like Female Genitalia mutilation, Polygamy, Triple Talaq and Halala on name of Sharia. On contrary to that they judges an outdated, extinct and almost forgotten ill practice of Sati Pratha on name of Human Rights watching.

Origin of Sati Pratha is being attributed to Vedas. This is a big misconception. In reality Sati Pratha is nowhere mentioned in Hindu scriptures. There is no advice of forceful widow burning in Vedas. This confusion was created in middle ages by ignorant commentators of Vedas.

Atharvaveda 18.3.1 is mostly quoted as Vedic Mantra which supports Sati Pratha.

This mantra is interpreted as

Choosing her husband's world, O man, this woman lays herself down beside thy lifeless body. Preserving faithfully the ancient custom. Bestow upon here both wealth and offspring. [Translation by Griffith]

In this Mantra the word 'Choosing her husband's world' is often interpreted as Wife is advised to join the Dead Husband in afterlife in next world. So she must burn herself in funeral pyre of her husband.

The Correct interpretation of this Mantra is

This Women have chosen her Husband's world earlier. Today she is sitting besides your dead body. Now Bestow upon here both wealth and offspring for rest of her life to continue her afterlife in this world.

Thus, this mantra speaks about continuation of worldly affairs by Women in this world after her husband's death.

In the very next Mantra of Atharvaveda 18.3.2 the same advise is attested by the authority of the Vedas. It says..

Rise, come unto the world of life, O woman: come, he is lifeless
by whose side thou liest.
Wife hood with this thy husband was thy portion who took thy
hand and wooed thee as a lover. [Translation by Griffith]

This Mantra clearly speaks to Women to rise besides the dead body of her husband and start worldly affairs in this living world.

Even Vedas speaks of Widow Remarriage for a Widow.

Evidence from Rigveda 10:18:8

The Rigveda contains a famous passage mentioning Sati and preventing it. To a widow who is with her husband on his funeral pyre, the text says: rise up, abandon this dead man and re-join the living.

This mis-interpretation of Vedic Mantras were done in the middle ages by ignorant class of Priests. The fraud related to interpretation of Rigveda 10.18.7 was exposed by none other than Maxmuller. In this mantra widow women as was advised to go ahead (Agre) in her life rather than go in funeral pyre (Agne means fire) after her husband's death. The word Agre was mis-interpreted as Agni. Maxmuller condemned this fraud widely. He quotes ,“ This is perhaps the most flagrant instance of what can be done by an unscrupulous priesthood. Here have thousands of life be sacrificed, and a practical rebellion threatened on the authority of a passage which was mangled, mistranslated and misapplied.”

In Mahabharata Madri burned herself to death not due to custom of Sati Pratha but due to regret. She felt that it was her who was responsible for death of her husband Pandu. There is no evidence of Women performing Sati Pratha in Mahabharata post war whose husbands were killed in the Great War.

Thus it is proved that Vedas never supports Sati Pratha. Its mere a palpable falsification of a Vedic Hymn which forcibly killed thousands of innocent widows. This ill practice prevailed in middle ages only.

Vedas advise a widow to return from her Husband's corpse and live a happy life in her remarriage.

First sincere attempt to stop Sati Pratha was taken by Raja Ram Mohan Rai in 1829 with help of British Government. A special law as enacted by the Government against Sati Pratha. This law was not consummated widely by the Society. Even if it was accepted by few it lead to sudden rise in large number of Widow in country. The reason being the institution of widow remarriage was still not in practice. Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar started few attempts of remarriage. But wide acceptance of remarriage begin only in early 20th century when Aryasamaj started a crusade movement in support of Widow Remarriage. Swami Dayanand was first eminent in Modern India to support Widow Remarriage.