

Q "Widow Remarriage Act was, in many ways, a logical sequel to the abolition of Sati." Comment

In the beginning the British adopted the policy of non-interference in religious & social matters of the natives for the fear of upsetting the orthodox class. But this changed with the coming of William Bentick. The inhumane practice of Sati drew his attention. The burning of the widow on the funeral pyre of her husband was a practice widely prevalent particularly in Bengal & Rajasthan. The practice was certainly barbaric.

Some liberal Hindu social reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy & Devendranath Tagore pleaded to ban it by law. Bentick after getting assured that there was no possibility of any rebellion if a law was passed against the practice, declared the practice of Sati illegal in 1829. The law applied to Bengal first but then in 1830 the governments of Madras & Bombay also passed the law declaring Sati as illegal.

But just the abolition of Sati did not make the lives of Indian women easier. If someone's husband dies then she had to face a lot of hardships & discrimination. The widows were not allowed to remarry. The sufferings of Hindu widows aroused humanism in Shwar Chand Vidya-sagar, who waged a long struggle in favour of widow remarriage. To improve their lot he started a powerful

movement. Later in 1855 a large number of petitions from Bengal, Madras, Bombay & other cities of India were presented to the government asking it to pass an act legalising the remarriage of widows. Thus, the Widow Remarriage Act was passed in 1856. The first lawful Hindu widow remarriage among the upper castes was celebrated in Calcutta on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1856 in the presence of Ashwan Chand Vidyasagar.

Thus, the passing of Widow Remarriage Act was a logical sequel to the abolition of Sati. These legislations definitely helped to improve the condition of women in the pre-independence era.