

THE SATI REGULATION, 1829

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THE ¹[*] SATI REGULATION, 1829**

Bengal Regulation XVII of 1829

[4th December, 1829]

A Regulation for declaring the practice of sati or of burning or burying alive the widows of Hindus illegal and punishable by the Criminal Courts.

Preamble

1. The practice of sati or of burning or burying alive the widows of Hindus is revolting to the feelings of human nature; it is nowhere enjoined by the religion of the Hindus as an imperative duty; on the contrary, a life of purity and retirement on the part of the widow is more especially and preferably inculcated, and by a vast majority of that people throughout India the practice is not kept up nor observed: in some extensive districts it does not exist; in those in which it has been more frequent it is notorious that in many instances acts of atrocity have been perpetrated which have been shocking to the Hindus themselves and in their eyes unlawful and wicked.

The measures hitherto adopted to discourage and prevent such acts have failed of success, and the Governor-General in Council is deeply impressed with the conviction that the abuses in question cannot be effectually put an end to without abolishing the practice altogether.

Actuated by these considerations, the Governor-General in Council, without intending to depart from one of the first and most important principles of the system of British Government in India, that all classes of the people be secure in the observance of their religious usages, so long as that system can be adhered to without violation of the paramount dictates of justice and humanity, has deemed it right to establish the following rules, which are hereby enacted to be in force from the time of their promulgation throughout the territories immediately subject to the Presidency of Fort William.

¹ The word "Bengal" was omitted by Article 6 of the Bangladesh (Adaptation of Existing Laws) Order, 1972 (President's Order No. 48 of 1972).

2. The practice of sati or burning or burying alive the widows of Hindus is hereby declared illegal and punishable by the Criminal Courts.

Sati declared illegal and punishable

3. *First.*- All Zamindars, talukdars or other proprietors of land, whether *malguzari* or *lakhiraj*, all *sadar* farmers and under-renters of land of every description, all dependent *talukdars*, all *naibs* and other local agents, all officers employed in the collection of the revenue and rents of lands on the part of the Government or the Court of wards and all *mandals* or other headmen of villages, are hereby declared especially accountable for the immediate communication to the officers of the nearest police station of any intended sacrifice of the nature described in the foregoing section; and any *Zamindar* or other description of persons above-noted, to whom such responsibility is declared to attach, who may be convicted of wilfully neglecting or delaying to furnish the information above-required, shall be liable to be fined by the Magistrate or Joint Magistrate in any sum not exceeding two hundred rupees, and in default of payment to be confined for any period of imprisonment not exceeding six months.

Zamindars, etc., responsible for immediate communication to police of intended sacrifice

Penalty in case of neglect

Second.- Immediately on receiving intelligence that the sacrifice declared illegal by this Regulation is likely to occur, the police *daroga* shall either appear in person to the spot, or depute his *muharrir* or *jamadar*, accompanied by one or more *barkandazes* and it shall be the duty of the police officers to announce to the persons assembled for the performance of the ceremony that it is illegal, and to endeavour to prevail on them to disperse, explaining to them that, in the event of their persisting in it, they will involve themselves in a crime and become subject to punishment by the Criminal Courts.

Police how to act on receiving intelligence of intended sacrifice

Should the parties assembled proceed in defiance of these remonstrances to carry the ceremony into effect, it shall be the duty of the police officers to use all lawful means in their power to prevent the sacrifice from taking place, and to apprehend the principal persons aiding and abetting in the performance of it; and in the event of the police officers being unable to apprehend them they shall endeavour to ascertain their names and places of abode, and shall immediately communicate the whole of the particulars to the Magistrate or Joint Magistrate for his orders.

How to act when intelligence of sacrifice does not reach them until after it has taken place

Third.- Should intelligence of a sacrifice declared illegal by this Regulation not reach the police officers until after it shall have actually taken place, or should the sacrifice have been carried into effect before their arrival at the spot, they will nevertheless institute a full inquiry into the circumstances of the case, in like manner on all other occasions of unnatural death, and report them for the information and orders of the Magistrate or Joint Magistrate to whom they may be subordinate.

4. [Trial of persons concerned in the sacrifice; sentence of death by Court of Nizamat Adalat.] Rep. by Act XVII of 1862.

5. [Trial of persons concerned in the sacrifice; sentence of death by Court of Nizamat Adalat.] Rep. by Act XVII of 1862.
