

Quotable Quotes on Charan Shah's Immolation

"...While illiterate women will be led to such actions by their hearts and their beliefs, the authorities have their own duties to perform. If any action is illegal, the prime duty of the police and the administration is to prevent it if possible, or at least to take punitive action against the perpetrators of the crime or those in the family who did nothing to prevent it." ***The Sentinel (Guwahati)***

"...Above all, Charan Shah's self-immolation shows how entrenched medieval social practices are in India and how superficial is the penetration of modernity in vast social sectors." ***The Statesman (Calcutta)***

"...In a throwback to the middle ages, the woman so killed is sought to be glorified as *Sati Mata*." ***The Free Press Journal (Mumbai)***

[Above three were quoted in *The Hindustan Times*, November 22, 1999]

"...We will be forced to use our batons if any attempt is made to erect any structure at the place." (Hari Raj Singh, D.G. Police quoted in *The Indian Express*, November 15, 1999)

"...no civilised society can possibly even regard sati as a cultural tradition, and those who advocate caution, instead of uncompromising ruthless action in stamping out this barbaric practice, are in danger of falling into the trap of apologists for sati, who exist in this country even today." (Jayanthi Natarajan in *The Hindu*, December 3, 1999)

"...Apart from stern official measures, it will take years of educational effort with a pronounced bias in favour of the cultivation of a rational and scientific temper from the primary level upwards to spread an awareness against such irrational attitudes." (*The Hindustan Times*, November 16, 1999)

"...The police chief of Mahoba... said the woman had jumped onto the pyre in a fit of madness." (*The Times of India*, November 11, 1999)

"...The National Commission of Women had recommended changes in the Act, including the excellent one that wherever the word 'sati' appears in it, it should be replaced by the words, 'sati murder.' The Commission had also urged that the provision for punishing acts glorifying sati be made more stringent." (*The Indian Express*, November 15, 1999)

"...It is lethal combination of superstition, prejudice, disease and illiteracy that creates conditions which lead to women like Charan Shah dying. In addition, we are living under the dangerous illusion that women are venerated in Indian culture. This is nowhere in evidence." (*The Times of India*, November 16, 1999)

"...The ghastly occurrence of sati, this time in an Uttar Pradesh village, underlines the stark and tragic reality of the medieval conditions that still prevail in our country, particularly in the Hindi heartland." (A letter in *Indian Express*, November 22, 1999)

"...nothing short of a national shame. The attempt to impose a religious aura on what is nothing but an act of suicide is an even greater shame. It is embarrassing in the extreme that the naive religiosity of rural people continues to be exploited by the heartless custodians of the orthodoxy... Sati is illegal. It is dangerous in a secular democracy to allow religious obscurantism to keep the law of the land in suspended animation. The law must apply to all those who aided and abetted this tragic development. Any laxity in this regard on the part of the State amounts to a gross dereliction of duty." (Swami Agnivesh in *The Times of India*, November 21, 1999)

"Paradoxically, her death did not provoke instant abhorrence precisely because the old Hindu practice of burning widows — which the British banned in 1829, but which still occurs from time to time — is so hideous. India respects nothing more than self-denial and sacrifice, and the torture of self-inflicted fatality is arguably the most poignant sacrifice of all." (Sunanda K. Datta Ray in *International Herald Tribune*, December 1, 1999)

"Medieval Madness: An act of desperation by a distraught widow in the backward Bundelkhand region becomes a cause for a grand religious celebration by the people." (*India Today*, November 29, 1999)