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# ‘Mothers Have Become Monsters’: Danger, Distress and Deviance in British Evangelical Depictions of Indian Motherhood, 1757-1857.

**Abstract**

Images of maternal distress and maternal deviance were frequently invoked in colonial and evangelical accounts of early-nineteenth-century India. They were used both to vilify Indian socio-religious practices and to mobilise British women in support of her ‘heathen’ sisters overseas. These early colonial critiques of Indian motherhood provide a backdrop to the later 'nationalist resolution of the woman question' and symbolic reclamation of Indian women as ‘new woman’, idealised mother, and Bharat Mata in the early twentieth century. These developments are often presented as a direct response to the denigration of Indian women as degraded victims in early British accounts. Yet colonial and evangelical discourses on Indian women were neither homogenous, nor internally consistent in the early nineteenth century. Instead they incorporated a range of voices and perspectives, offering varied interpretations of Indian maternity and its relation to emerging Victorian ideals of motherhood. This paper analyses these often-discordant representations by exploring ideas of danger, distress and deviance as they appeared in depictions of Indian motherhood in the period of East India Company rule (1757-1857). By looking at these ideas across a range of issues, including childbirth, infanticide, sati (widow-burning), and famine, it reveals tensions in complex colonial understandings of maternal relationships in India and challenges one dimensional views of the Indian woman as quintessential victim within gendered constructions of the ‘civilising mission’. In doing so it suggests more ambivalent attitudes on the part of early colonial reformers, missionaries and philanthropists and provides a more nuanced understanding of the historical precursors that underpinned the later politicisation of Indian motherhood.

**Keywords: India, Motherhood, Sati, Childbirth, Infanticide, Slavery, Famine.**

The appropriation and politicisation of Indian motherhood by imperialists, nationalists and social reformers in late colonial India is now well established and has received considerable attention from scholars. As Cecelia Van Hollen notes, conditions of maternity, childbirth and infant welfare emerged as key issues in colonial and nationalist discourse in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century India, mirroring similar trends in other colonial settings.[1] This reflected both the socio-political imperatives of anti-colonial mobilisation, pseudo-scientific developments like eugenics, and shared anxieties about depopulation and racial and national degeneration. In India, the age, condition, and competence of Indian

mothers became a powerful political device, as claims to protect the interests of vulnerable women and infants were made on behalf of both the colonial state and Indian nationalists.[2] This was epitomised by the controversy surrounding the publication of Katherine Mayo's Mother India in 1927. An American imperial apologist, Mayo blamed the degraded social, political and physical condition of India on the Hindu male's 'manner of getting into the world and his sex-life thenceforward', attacking reproductive practices that took 'a girl child twelve years old, a pitiful physical specimen in bone and blood, illiterate, ignorant, without any sort of training in habits of health' and 'force[d] motherhood upon her at the earliest possible moment'.[3] The result, Mayo argued, was a race of men who were 'poor and sick and dying', whose 'hands are too weak, too fluttering, to seize or to hold the reins of government'.[4] It caused a storm of protest and debate from the Indian political elite, as reformist nationalists couched arguments for reform of marriage customs, sexual norms and birth practices in terms of the physical strength and social advancement of the incipient nation state.[5] Mrinalini Sinha sees the publication of Mother India and the subsequent passing of the Child Marriage Restraint, or Sarda Act in 1930 as a 'a tipping point for debates about the nature of British colonial rule in India', as Indian nationalist reformers publicly challenged the colonial state's claim to be the transmitter of modernity in India, and appropriated that title for themselves.[6] Debates about maternity in the late-colonial India were thus focused primarily on the physical aspects of conception, pregnancy and birth, their impact on the welfare of both mother and child, and their implications for the emergent nation. Controversies over age of consent, marriage and conception, the professionalization of midwifery and other healthcare services, and prescriptions for the ideal modern mother were thus discussed in the context of the imposition of colonial modernity, and development of Indian reformist thought.[7]

Debates about Indian motherhood in late-colonial India also found expression in a valourised image of the mother that became synonymous with the nation as 'Bharat Mata'.[8] Indian nationalists' symbolic appropriation of maternal imagery reflected longstanding regional social, cultural and religious constructions of motherhood, including mother goddess worship. Samita Sen, among others, suggests that it also represented a reaction against pre-existing, deeply embedded colonial discourses that denigrated Indian women as one-dimensional signifiers of 'cognisable social evils' and passive victims whose position could be read as an 'index of social malady'.[9] Such an approach was certainly observable, most notably in James Mill's History of British India, yet early-nineteenth-century depictions were often more complex and multi-tonal than such interpretations imply.[10] By exploring early colonial and evangelical representations of Indian motherhood across a range of contexts in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, this article argues that even on this most iconic of issues, early colonial discourse was often ambivalent, containing significant tensions both between and even within individual accounts.

The use of Indian women's supposed oppression to vilify Indian society and Hindu religion in early-nineteenth-century colonial and missionary accounts is well documented. Discussion of Indian motherhood was a common theme within these accounts, though they tended to focus on the 'moral' impact of Indian socio-religious practices on family structures, rather than the physical health and wellbeing of mothers. Despite their importance to later nationalist and imperialist treatments of gender issues, surprisingly little attention has been paid to these early-nineteenth-century colonial constructions of Indian motherhood. This article seeks to redress this by exploring early colonial British ideas about Indian motherhood across a range of contexts – childbirth, infanticide, sati (widow-burning), and famine – during the century of East India Company (EIC) rule between 1757 and 1857. Though all have been studied individually, these issues have rarely been brought together to trace specific themes around the presentation of Indian women.[11] By looking at ideas of maternal danger, distress, and deviance as they emerged across these inter-related debates, it will argue that while ideas of motherhood helped to structure British discourses of colonial philanthropy in various ways, depictions of Indian mothers within these debates were often multivalent and contested. There were, of course, significant differences in tone and perspective over time, and between different kinds of colonial accounts (official, missionary, personal, ethnographic etc.), as well as between authors who supported intervention in Indian socio-religious life as 'civilising mission', and those who opposed such interference. Even more telling, perhaps, are the incongruities that existed within various strands of colonial discourse; this paper will focus primarily on the internal tensions within and between evangelically inflected texts.

Gayatri Spivak's famous formulation 'white men saving brown women from brown men' has long remained standard for understanding the 'rescue fantasy' underpinning colonial constructions of Indian women. Yet a closer look at early colonial discourse on Indian motherhood presents a more nuanced picture, in which 'brown women' were sometimes also perceived as perpetrators of acts of socio-religious violence, or as having complex relationships with seemingly oppressive customs and practices.[12] By revealing contradictions within colonial understandings of maternal relationships in India, this paper challenges the view that Indian women were presented as one-dimensional victims within gendered constructions of the 'civilising mission' and suggests a more nuanced reading of these accounts. Mindful of Felicity Nussbaum's warning that 'the potential to reproduce colonial binaries is particularly acute if victim and agent are the only categories available for women', it looks beyond the dichotomies of perpetrator and victim that often structure both colonial discourse and post-colonial analysis, to explore more multivalent attitudes on the part of early colonial reformers, missionaries and philanthropists.[13] To do this, it will look

at three key themes - physical danger, emotional distress, and moral deviance – as they appear in depictions of maternal experiences and relationships across a range of texts and contexts.

**Evangelicals, Colonial Philanthropists, and Second-Generation Orientalists**

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century saw the rapid expansion of British colonial control in India, as the East India Company shifted its operations from those of a trading company to those of a territorial ruler. Imperial expansion brought with it what Andrew Porter describes as a 'many-sided reassessment of Britain's imperial responsibilities', terms of both the nature of colonial governance and the role of public opinion in effecting social and religious change.[14] The emergence of the Protestant missionary movement in the late eighteenth century led to a focus on India's socio-religious shortcomings among evangelicals in Britain, while the colonial state increasingly sought to determine the extent of its authority, influence, and responsibility for Indian social, religious and domestic practices. Though colonial attitudes to India were never homogenous, the result was a general shift in focus away from the relative tolerance and intellectual curiosity of the mid eighteenth century, to a more critical approach to Indian society and culture. The examples used in this piece are drawn from an eclectic source base, but many come from authors Andrew Rudd might describe as 'second-generation orientalists'.[15] These late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century 'India specialists' – men like Baptist missionary William Ward, EIC chairman and Clapham Sect member Charles Grant, and EIC writer and artist James Forbes – combined their accounts of Indian society and religion with a providentialist worldview that was less accommodating than that of their predecessors.[16] Influential at the time and since, these writers played an important role in shaping nineteenth-century British attitudes towards Hindu India and Britain's purpose there.[17] Their accounts were inflected by a shared support for proselytising Christianity and 'civilising mission', yet they also reveal uneven and ambivalent attitudes to Hindu gender relations that disrupt the idea of a homogenous colonial category of 'Indian women'.

A powerful emotive tool, maternal imagery was widely used to elicit support for humanitarian and evangelical campaigns, especially as British women's involvement in colonial philanthropy increased in the early nineteenth century. The role of British 'maternal imperialists' in late colonial India has been explored by scholars like Barbara Ramusack and Antoinette Burton, yet discussions of this ideology's ambivalent functioning in the first half of the nineteenth century are more limited, and tend to focus on specific movements, such as the missionary and anti-slavery campaigns.[18] Esme Cleall, for example, has demonstrated the ubiquity of the language of kinship in framing relationships both within the 'missionary

family' and between missionaries and their target audiences, while Clare Midgley has shown how women's role as mothers was mobilised in support of anti-slavery.[19] In both cases, the gendered bond that supposedly existed between British benefactor and her less fortunate sisters overseas was invoked to inspire empathy, and was a key rationale for female entry into this charitable public sphere. As one anonymous pamphleteer put it: 'Ye Christian women! What has the benign influence of the Gospel done for you? It calls upon you, in a special manner, to exert all your sympathies in behalf of your sisterhood in heathen lands'.[20] Whether of the slave woman cruelly separated from her child by an unfeeling master, or the Hindu widow whose soon-to-be-orphaned infants were torn from her arms on the way to the pyre, images of maternal distress provided a powerful rhetorical tool imbued with all the pathos of the cult of sentiment.[21] Such examples resonated with middle class ideals about motherly love and evangelical domesticity that were gaining strength in Britain at the time, as women were increasingly defined by their natural procreative function and position as moral centre of the family home. Raising children was a social duty and full-time occupation that was incompatible with economic activity outside the home, making ideal motherhood a touchstone of feminine identity among some strata of society.[22]

Shared experiences of motherhood were represented as a point of connection between British women and their Indian and African counterparts, as the common experience of bearing and nurturing children created bonds of empathy across continents and cultures. Yet accounts of Indian motherhood also included a dark inverse – the deviant mother who neglected, rejected, or even destroyed her child. Discourses on Indian society, religion and culture were shot through with examples of supposedly abhorrent maternal behaviour. On these occasions – and in contrast to comparable tropes of Indian women as sisters, daughters, or widows – the Indian woman as mother was cast not as victim, but as perpetrator of acts of socio-religious violence. These callous acts underlined her socially and culturally encoded deviance from the ideals of evangelical domesticity and Christian maternity. Motherhood could thus also act to reinforce the differences between the Indian (Hindu) woman and her Christian counterpart, just as it did those between respectable middle-class mothers and their more 'disreputable' counterparts at in Britain. Industrialisation had fuelled concerns about working class mothers' failure to conform to ideals of maternal care, while delinquent middle-class women were vilified as a 'foul blot on the moral escutcheon of the mothers of England'.[23] In this respect, fascination with acts of maternal deviance in India represented a displacement of concerns about the changing reality of motherhood in Britain, as well as a commentary on the assumed nature of Indians, even as images of maternal distress were simultaneously used to evoke sympathetic charity. Such accounts underlined the urgency of socio-religious reform in India to redeem these unnatural mothers, even as they reinforced European women's 'right to dominance over the other

women of the empire.'[24] Significantly, these two conflicting interpretations of motherhood in India did not correlate neatly to different debates, issues, or types of publication, nor did they evolve in a linear or coherent fashion over time. Rather they coexisted within and between texts, creating telling tensions, contradictions and elisions within early colonial discourse on Indian women.

**Mothers in Danger**

Whether from neglect, misadventure, or socially or religiously sanctioned violence, the image of the Indian woman in peril is a well-known trope in colonial accounts of Indian society. On one level, this reflects British preoccupations with India as a lethal location, epitomised by the 'gothic horrors' of Hinduism.[25] Images of dead and dying Hindus abounded in British colonial texts, with evangelical observers commenting on their indifference to death and suffering, and the physical and moral dangers inherent in their religious practices. As Daniel Grey argues, Hindus were represented as 'not only in thrall to 'idolatry' but as potentially murderous when seeking to appease their gods.'[26] Sati, female infanticide, various forms of religious suicide, human sacrifice, and 'ghat murders', among other practices, were viewed as distinctly 'Hindu' crimes that both placed family members in peril and underlined the perverting power of Hinduism. As 'A. Christian' put it in 1813, Hindus often displayed an 'utter want of natural affection', and 'at one time parents, at another, children, become the victims of these barbarous systems of superstition.'[27] Meanwhile, the quotidian hazards of life in India were exacerbated by more mundane social and religious expectations that increased the likelihood of death, especially for women.

Becoming a mother was a dangerous process anywhere in the early-nineteenth-century world. In India the perils of childbirth were exacerbated by a range of culturally specific practices deemed antithetical to 'modern' medical practice and maternal well-being. In late-colonial India the impact of early maternity, purdah, and traditional birth practices on female reproductive health – and the apparent deviance of these practices from western standards of modern medicine – were the subject of fierce debate, leaving the bodily process of childbirth increasingly open to scrutiny. In comparison, discussion of the physical aspects of Indian childbirth were relatively rare in the early nineteenth century. Ethnographic surveys, missionary publications and travel narratives tended to focus on the socio-cultural significance of birth as a life cycle rite or community event, and on the status conferred on the mother of sons, rather than on the physical aspects of labour. The zenana (women's quarters) largely existed outside the colonial field of vision at a time when British state and non-state actors were just beginning to penetrate Indian domestic space. Thus, most early colonial accounts focused on the public face of birth as a life rite, and refer only obliquely to the

physical dangers it posed to mother and child. Baptist missionary William Ward, for example, followed usual practice by describing the ceremonies that attend a birth: the worship of the goddess Shashti, the distribution of parched peas and grains among the village children, the drawing of horoscopes for the infant, and the ritual seclusion of the mother after the birth (twenty-one days for a son, one month for a daughter).[28] Yet while his account did not attempt to lift the veil on events within the anteghur (the outhouse where women gave birth to avoid ritual pollution of the home), it did hint at high mortality rates due to a lack of 'professional' care. 'A Hindoo woman exceedingly dreads the hour of childbirth, especially at the first birth after marriage' he told his readers. 'So great is this dread, that is has received the proverbial appellation 'the hundredfold to be dreaded' and the relations of such a female, considering how doubtful her passing through that period with safety is, to show their attachment, present her with various farewell gifts.'[29]

Concerns about high mortality rates for both the mother and child were central to later debates about childbirth practices and instrumental in opening the anteghur to public scrutiny. The removal of the labouring women to the anteghur was regularly criticised as unhygienic, callous, and contrary to western conceptions of care. Dr. J. Jackson, writing in 1860, noted that 'the poor creature is considered an outcast at this particular time; and instead of having every tenderness and affection lavished upon her, as in this country, she is placed during the pangs of labour in the meanest hovel in the yard…'[30] In fact, the labouring woman was secluded but not isolated during labour, as she was usually attended by numerous relatives and female friends, as well as the traditional midwife, or dai – something which contrasted markedly with the relative solitude of increasingly medicalized European births.[31] Unlike later accounts, Ward did not specifically condemn the methods of native midwives, but did note that they were low caste women, and lamented that 'If a female have a difficult delivery, she suffers extremely for want of that assistance which a skillful surgeon (did Hindoo manners admit of his services) would be able to afford: many perish.'[32] His reference to 'Hindoo manners' obliquely hints at an idea expressed more directly in other contexts – that Hindu socio-religious norms, customs and rituals put Indian mothers in physical danger.

The perceived vulnerability of Indian purdah women to substandard (read non-western) medical care underpinned an upsurge in medical missionary activity and a proliferation in female doctors in the late nineteenth century.[33] Yet as Sean Lang notes, concern with the dangers posed to Indian mothers began earlier than is usually assumed, with the first dispensaries and 'lying-in' hospitals in India opening as early as the 1840s.[34] From the outset the dangers posed by deficiencies in Indian practice were used to prove the need for European intervention. Thus the Madras Lying-in Hospital's prospectus reported in 1840 that 'The great mortality of females in parturition from the barbarous treatment of Native practitioners is appaling

(sic) to humanity, and calls forth the best feelings of those who have witnessed the sufferings of their fellow creatures, which might be obviated by the introduction of European treatment and practices.'[35] Likewise, the Lancet and other medical publications noted the deficiencies in Indian practice and the need for 'modernisation' from the late 1820s onwards. Thus, early critiques of Indian medical practice ran alongside critiques of socio-religious customs, with both perceived as exposing the labouring mother to an unnecessary degree of danger.

Descriptions of childbirth as a difficult and dangerous process were embedded in discourses of both race and class. The difficulty and dangerous births attributed to high-caste women were notably at odds with common orientalist tropes about Asian and African women's fecundity. In a footnote, Ward reported that unlike their high-caste counterparts, whose recovery and ritual seclusion after a birth could last a month, poor women were 'known to attend to the business of their families the day after the delivery' and that 'sometimes a mother is delivered while at work in the field, when she carries the child home in her arms, and returns to her work there the next day.'[36] Jackson explained such easy births in terms of 'The relaxing character of the climate and the looser fibre it engenders [which] seem to prevent...those lingering and tedious labours which are of such frequent occurrence in cold climates', adding 'it is astonishing how quickly [the poorer classes] recover from the effects of the labour, being able to go about their household work on the third day.'[37] Such accounts reflected not only contemporary thinking about the influence of the climate on physical outcomes, but also class-based assumptions that drew parallels between the differential experience of elite versus working women in both cultures. The 'mother in danger' was the high-caste Hindu woman, whose status was the subject of so many evangelical and reformist accounts, and whose position most closely correlated with their female middle-class audience back in Britain. The tendency to extrapolate all Indian women's experience from that of certain high-caste communities with whom the British had contact helps to explain the paradoxes within colonial accounts of Indian motherhood.

High-caste mothers were not only imperiled by 'barbaric' practices surrounding childbirth, but were also subject to other dangers relating to their socio-religious status. Sati (widow-burning) was perhaps the most notorious of the 'family, fireside evils' that William Wilberforce claimed were endemic to Hindu society, and which served to 'embitter the domestic cup of almost every family'.[38] Accounts of sati had been filtering through to Europe in travel narratives, letters, and memoirs since the late sixteenth century, but concern with the custom increased dramatically in the 1800s. The colonial debate on sati has been extensively studied, with perhaps the most influential analysis being Lata Mani's contention that it functioned as a site on which the parameters of colonial control were tested, and the relationship between

religion, the colonial state and the indigenous elite renegotiated.[39] Andrea Major has argued that representations of sati reflected not only shifting political relationships in India, but also contemporaneous changes in metropolitan British society, as issues as diverse as religious toleration, barbaric justice, mental illness, suicide and gender relations converged to shape responses to sati.[40] Sati invoked particular horror because it distorted familial relationships, turning adult sons into the executioners of their widowed mothers, and orphaning infants. Rev John Hawtrey, for example, reported of a sati case in 1791:

> In the midst of the smoke she contrived to slip from the pile; but it was presently seen that there was but one victim. She was sought for and found in the jungle by her own son. She begged, she wept, she entreated her son, whom she had brought forth, to whom she had given suck, and whom she had nourished and supported, to spare her; but all was to no purpose: he pleaded that is he did not sacrifice her he would lose his caste, his religion and his reputation; and the inhuman monster took his own mother, tied her hands and feet, laid her upon the pile and burned her to ashes.[41]

In this account, as in many others, the son assumes the unnatural position of matricide, and the mother becomes the unequivocal victim of sati, underlining the idea of India as a land in which even motherhood was imperilled by socio-religious practice. Other accounts were more ambivalent, however, presenting the widow as potentially complicit in her own fate, and orphaned infants as the only truly innocent victims of sati.

By the early nineteenth century, the impact of sati on family structures had become an important trope in sentimental anti-sati accounts. Official and popular attention increasingly focused not only on the danger posed to the widow, but also on the harm done to her offspring, and the implications of orphaned children for the community and the colonial state. The data on sati collected by the EIC between 1813 (when they started formally recording immolations) and 1829 (when sati was prohibited in Bengal) recorded a range of information about the widow, including how many children she had, their age, and who had agreed to care for them. When asked to clarify the scriptural position, the pundits of the Nizam Adalat declared that 'a Hindoo woman having a child within three years of age, should not be allowed to burn herself with the body of her deceased husband, unless some person will undertake to provide a suitable maintenance for the child'.[42] As a result, after 1815 it was made mandatory that no widow with infant children should burn unless a relative provided a 'written engagement in duplicate on stamped paper' stating

that they would support her children.[43] In this way the EIC sought to offset the danger to society posed by the death of the mother, even if it was not yet ready to intervene to remove the danger to the woman herself.

The EIC's concern with sati orphans was pragmatic, and reflected their unwillingness to assume the financial and bureaucratic burden of supporting orphaned children. Their data on sati was published as Parliamentary Papers, which were in turn used by those campaigning against the custom on moral and humanitarian grounds. John Poynder's speech on sati at East India House, for example, used the sati returns to estimate the number of children left bereft of 'their only remaining, perhaps most valuable, parent.'[44] Such concerns were particularly resonant in the early nineteenth century, as industrialisation and urbanisation in Britain broke down traditional familial networks, leading to concerns about 'multitudes of children' who were left unsupervised, and thus at risk from disease, idleness, moral depravity, and criminal experience while their mothers worked in the factories.[45] Unprotected, orphaned children were endangered morally, even as their mothers were endangered physically by practices such as sati. The invocation of infant distress was thus used to appeal to the maternal instinct of British women and thus mobilise them in the anti-sati cause.[46] William Ward, for example, extolled his female readers to make abolishing sati the common cause 'of every Christian mother', asking 'Will you not become the guardians of these Ten Thousand orphans surrounding these funeral piles, and endeavouring to put out these fires with their tears?'[47]

**Maternal Distress**

The examples discussed above focus on the potential for maternal bonds to be endangered by death. Equally influential were ideas of maternal distress, in which well-intentioned mothers were rendered unable to provide the requisite levels of care for her children. On these occasions, Indian women were presented as naturally devoted parents, and maternal shortcomings were explained as resulting from external forces such as religion or environment, rather than inherent deficiencies in affection or instinct. 'The Hindoo woman is, for the most part, a pleasant, gentle creature,' Jackson wrote, 'very fond of her children, and very grateful for anything that is done for them, or for herself, which she testifies in such a manner as the state of subjection in which she lives will allow.'[48] Likewise, missionary Priscilla Chapman reported in 1839 that 'Dark as is this picture of the state of society, we are often rejoiced by a demonstration of genuine parental affection, which is so much at variance with the evils actually existing, that the heart is warmed to the work of convincing them of truth. There are many pleasing scenes in India, of the poor delighting in their children…'[49] Thus as Van Hollen points out for the early twentieth century, if Indian women were bad mothers it was usually assumed to be 'because they [were] ignorant, not because they [were] immoral.'[50] In

early colonial evangelical accounts, this 'ignorance' was specifically located in socio-religious impositions that limited opportunities for female education, and 'indoctrinated' women with a set of 'false beliefs' and 'superstitions' that were constantly in conflict with her natural inclinations as a mother.

For evangelical observers, sati epitomised the unnatural relationships fostered by the Hindu system, causing the widowed mother both emotional suffering and physical pain. Sati, as Catherine Hall points out, 'evoked both horror and pity, sentiments which effectively raised money.'[51] It also provided an appropriate arena for female involvement in colonial philanthropy, being focused on issues of family.[52] Indeed, much anti-sati literature relied on an explicitly 'feminine' domestic ideology and affective morality that identified women as 'naturally' more emotional and spiritual. In doing so, it used sentimentalised images of violated motherhood to legitimate women's participation in public debates.[53] Missionaries and anti-sati campaigners frequently invoked the widow's trauma at being separated from her children. The following poem by Mrs. Phelps, written in 1831, capture the sentimental tone of these accounts, which were designed to provoke sympathy and empathy in the man or woman of feeling:

> But what arrests her steps with that dread start,
> What sudden anguish rends her broken heart?
> …She feels a little hand within her own,
> And hears her tender infant's plaintive moan;
>
> 'Tis more than human nature can withstand,
> The tender pressure of that little hand;
> And the poor baby's weak and mournful cry,
> Awakes the mother's bitterest agony.
>
> She wildly turns, and on each cherub face
> Imprints, in frenzy, one farewell embrace;
> While the stern Priests her kind attendance chide,
> And bid them take the babes and quickly hide
>
> Them from her gaze; as none may dare to stay
> The wretched suttee on her destined way…[54]

Such accounts represented the widow as an unwilling victim in the sacrifice. If she appeared determined, this was used to suggest that she was not compos mentis, for a rational woman would never abandoned her infants. British attempts to prevent sati thus frequently involved an appeal to the widow's maternal instinct, as the only emotion strong enough to overcome her religious fanaticism. The Times, for example, reported on a sati in December 1823, noting that the widow's '…last wish to see her child was refused, perhaps it was feared that her maternal feelings would have destroyed her fatal resolution, and thus have deprived the Hindoos of the enjoyment of witnessing her being burnt alive.'[55] Maternal instincts and religious conviction thus appear in constant tension in these accounts.

Images of Indian motherhood were also mobilised for more secular purposes, as representations of maternal distress were invoked to portray not only the spiritual, but also the material poverty of India. Famines and subsistence crises were common occurrences throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, leading to the death and displacement of millions of human beings. The first, and most infamous was the terrible Bengal famine of 1770, in which up to 10 million people died. Further major crises punctuated the nineteenth century, with serious famines recorded in different parts of India in the 1780s, 1790s, 1830s, 1860s, 1870s, 1890s, 1900s, and 1940s. Official British responses to famine in India were embedded in what Upamanya Pablo Mukherjee has referred to as the justificatory discourse of palliative imperialism, which emphasised the role of British 'improvement' in ameliorating the impact of India's capricious climate.[56] Meanwhile, the colonial state eschewed any suggestion of culpability in causing, or exacerbating the disasters and favoured a laissez faire approach to famine relief, intervening only when the death toll rose too high, and then only to offer opportunities to labour on 'works of public utility' in return for food.[57] Those who were incapable of physical exertion remained reliant on private charity and alms-giving as their only means of support. Such arrangements were inadequate to the task posed by major famine events and mass mortality was common under British rule.

Under famine conditions people made traumatic choices to survive, turning to unorthodox food sources, such as rodents, insects, leaves and bark, and bartering away property and even family members in return for food. There was a direct correlation between famine and distress sales into slavery, as parents sold children during times of famine, or gave them away to anyone who would undertake to support them.[58] In 1785, for example, Mr Day (the EIC representative in Dacca) noted that 'poor creatures reduced to skeletons' were selling their children to secure a subsistence and that boats travelling from Dacca to Calcutta were 'loaded with children of all ages'.[59] Likewise, in September 1787 the Calcutta Gazette reported that excessive rains had caused flooding and renewed famine, and that 'parents sell their children

as slaves for a few Rupees, an incontrovertible proof of extreme misery and want.'[60] Commenting on these distress sales in 1789, Orientalist scholar and East India Company Judge Sir William Jones remarked that such children had been 'saved perhaps from a death that might have been fortunate, for a life that seldom fails of being miserable'.[61]

Images of maternal distress recur frequently in colonial accounts of famine. Images of mothers unable to nourish their babies because their milk had run dry, children scrabbling in the dirt for a few fallen grains, and infants destroyed, sold, given away, or even devoured recurred in colonial accounts of famine from the late eighteenth century onwards. 'We hear almost daily of mothers deserting their children on the highways;' the Oriental Herald reported in 1838, '[and] of infants crawling around the granaries to pick up the grains of rice accidentally scattered during the process of distribution at the doors'.[62] Margaret Kelleher has referred to these gendered representation of hunger, which she explores in the context of the Ireland in 1845 and Bengal in 1943, as the 'feminisation of famine'.[63] The haunting imagery surrounding the Irish Famine had a deep impact on British ideas about motherhood in this context, but gendered images of famine long predate 1845, being observable in many earlier British depictions of starving India. Describing the Agra famine of 1837-8, Daniel O'Connell lamented 'If there was a love stronger than another in this world, was it not the love of a mother for her offspring? To what miserable state must a mother be reduced before she in the night took her dear child and deprived it of life, so that she might not have the torture of seeing it die of starvation in the morning?'[64] Descriptions of maternal distress abounded in press reports of the famine, as the mother unable to nourish her child became an icon for devastating want. Images of male famine victims raised questions about the deserving and undeserving poor that were inflected both by Victorian Britain's fear of the 'study beggar', and orientalist assumptions about the characteristic indolence and passivity of the Indian. The focus on women and children, on the other hand, drew on existing strategies within humanitarian discourse that sought to mobilise public support by tapping into the sympathetic/empathetic concern of the man (or woman) of feeling for the helpless and vulnerable. Similar approaches were used during the anti-slavery, anti-sati and missionary campaigns to mobilise support, particularly among British women, who were considered the natural champions of their less fortunate sisters overseas. As Catherine Hall notes, the 'suffering bodies of enslaved women and their children evoked a compassion that came to be understood as a moral imperative – the personal body that bore children, suckled and nourished them, was a 'common bond between those who suffered and those who would help.'[65] Emily Eden captured this sense of both shared maternal feeling, and racial hierarchy in her account of a starving baby that she fed while passing through the famine stricken regions near Kanpur in 1838, reporting that she had

> …found such a miserable little baby, something like an old monkey, but with glazed, stupid eyes, under the care of another little wretch of about six years old. I am sure you would have sobbed to see the way in which the little atom flew at a cup of milk, and the way in which the little brother fed it. Rosina has discovered the mother since, but she is a skeleton too, and says for a month she had no food to give it. Dr. D. says it cannot live, it is so diseased with starvation, but I mean to try what can be done for it.[66]

Later she reported 'My baby is alive, the mother follows the camp, and I have it four times a day at the back of my tent, and feed it. It is rather touching to see the interest the servants take in it, though there are worse objects about, or else I have got used to this little creature.'[67] The use of the possessive 'my baby' and the relegation of the Indian mother to camp follower reinforces the racial hierarchies inherent in ideas of 'global sisterhood' and 'maternal imperialism' – even as the shared act of motherly care for the starving infant creates a point of connection and empathy between the two women. 'I am sure there is no sort of violent atrocity I should not commit for food,' Eden admitted, 'with a starving baby'.[68]

**Deviant Mothers**

If the statements by Eden and O'Connell reflect the affective power of maternal distress, they also contain more problematic suggestions of potential maternal deviance. As Kelleher has argued, starving mothers and their children could be both the quintessential victims of subsistence crises, and the embodiment of starvation's distorting power.[69] As the 'primal shelter' of maternal care collapses, darker possibilities emerge of abandonment, infanticide, and even cannibalism.[70] George Thompson, speaking at the same event as O'Connell, invoked increasingly well-established images of maternal distress, but also noted that 'Mother's deserted and destroyed their children, leaving them on the highways, or throwing them at night into the Jumna.'[71] In Bengal in 1770 it was whispered that the living fed on the dead, and similar dark rumours resurfaced with subsequent famines. In Vellore in 1833, for example, the Madras Gazette reported that 'the horrible and disgusting sight of a dead infant partially devoured by its own mother. This unhappy woman had been for several days without sustenance whatever, and when death released her babe from misery, satisfied the cravings of hunger by preying on her lifeless child.'[72]

Famines thus saw extreme, but understandable acts of 'deviance', yet some colonial observers questioned the alacrity with which Indian parents parted with their children in times of hardship. James

Forbes, for example, noted that 'astonishing' numbers came to the Malabar port of Anchuthengu (Anjengo) to sell themselves, or their children as slaves. 'During my residence at Anjengo there was no famine,' he reported,

> …nor any unusual shortage of grain, but during the rainy season many were weekly brought down from the mountains to be sold on the coast. They did not appear to think it so great a hardship as we imagine; what may be their usual degree of filial and parental affection I pretend not to determine… I must and do think the feelings of a Malabar peasant and those of a cottage family in England are very different; the former certainly part with their children apparently with very little compunction, the latter are united by every tender and sympathetic tie.[73]

The sale of children was difficult to reconcile with eighteenth-century ideas of filial and parental affection, the importance of the biological family as the basic unit of society, and the 'belief that childhood was a time of innocence during which children should be nurtured in families.'[74] Indian parents' willingness to part with their children cast doubt upon affective bonds and reinforced ideas of their essential 'otherness'. The absence of familial affection was presented as an inherent feature of a Hindu socio-religious system that stifled individualism and fostered apathy. In 1792 Charles Grant, in his Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, commented that 'filial and paternal affection appears equally deficient among them…', citing as evidence the apparent indifference with which Indian mothers sold, gave away, or otherwise disposed of their infants in times of scarcity, even when other sources of subsistence were available.[75] Grant's essay, which was written to persuade EIC Directors of the need to evangelise India, used the Indian mother's supposed unnatural lack of parental affection to emphasise Hindu social and religious degradation and the need for Christian intervention.

Even sati, the rite which more than any other epitomised Hindu women's oppression for western observers, was not always interpreted sympathetically. For some observers, the child was not torn from the widow's breast, but deliberately deserted. The Calcutta Journal reported of a sati in 1820 that 'The devotee…on this occasion, as on many others, regardless of maternal feeling, had left an infant child at home to come to the awful pile.'[76] In this context sati could be read as an act of maternal deviance indicative of the degrading power of religious 'fanaticism'. 'I endeavoured to awaken the maternal affections, conceiving them to be the strongest that rise in the human mind;' a reporter for The Times wrote in 1811, 'but superstition had extinguished even them.'[77] Motherhood was considered a social duty, and the sati

could be perceived as 'doing an injury to society by leaving her child unprotected.'[78] The tensions between the image of the widow who deliberately deserted her child and the one who was torn from it underpinned ambivalent depictions of the widow struggling between the natural bond of maternal affection and the false weight of superstition. A report in the Calcutta Journal in 1820 described on such struggle:

> …she evinced the most poignant anguish that can be conceived. With a look of wild and pitiable distraction she said 'Speak not of my child - Why do you wound my bosom with the idea?' Then relapsing into superstitious ravings she added 'But that child no longer belongs to me - I am not its mother…' – so powerful is bigotry over the nobler emotions of nature.[79]

Colonial accounts of sati thus oscillated between depicting maternal distress as another layer of suffering imposed on the widow, and the idea that in mounting the pyre she was guilty of the deviant act of abandoning her child.

Infanticide was perhaps the most obvious example of maternal deviance in colonial accounts of India, although it was far from unique to the subcontinent. The English Poor Law Commissioner's Report of 1834 maintained that 'in no civilized country, and scarcely in any barbarous country, has such a thing ever been heard of as a mother killing her child in order to save the expense of feeding it', yet numerous historians have pointed to growing Victorian alarm about infanticide among the working classes, for whom an unexpected pregnancy could mean both financial ruin and social stigma.[80] As Padma Anagol has pointed out, the colonial state's treatment of women who attempted to conceal sexual impropriety by destroying illegitimate or unwanted infants shifted over the course of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of the 'infanticidal woman' as the archetypal female criminal from the 1870s onwards.[81] Though there was more scope for sympathy in the earlier period, low caste women were still likely to receive harsh punishments (including transportation and death), as their unwanted pregnancies were considered the direct result of acts of moral deviance such as promiscuity or adultery. High-caste widows were occasionally treated with more leniency, as victims themselves who had been forced to resort to desperate measures by the socio-religious constraints associated with their position.[82] In 1859, for example, an account appeared in the Female Missionary Intelligencer of a widow who gave birth to a daughter and was arrested after she contemplated murdering the child by abandoning her under a tree. After the child had been delivered to a female boarding school in Machilipatnam, Mrs Sharkey, the missionary who ran it, lamented 'Who can tell the miseries of India's widows? Their cup is a bitter one indeed.'[83] The problem of high caste widowhood in India partially explained, if it did not excuse some forms of infanticide, while poor women in both

societies continued to be vilified as morally deviant if they committed sexual indiscretions, or attempted to destroy the unwanted infants that resulted.

Other forms of infanticide appeared to be more culturally specific. Although outlawed, the ritual sacrifice of infants featured prominently in evangelical accounts of India throughout the early nineteenth century. Baptist missionary William Carey famously encountered 'a basket hung in a tree in which an infant had been exposed; the skull remained the rest having been devoured by ants.'[84] At Saugor Island, mothers were said to cast their infants into the river in propitiation of a vow, or in hope of a boon from the deity. The image of mothers thus destroying their own children became an important trope in missionary accounts, which blamed the deadening force of Hindu superstition for this deviance from maternal ideal. As one anonymous pamphlet put it 'Yes; while we see the cow butting with her horns, and threatening the person who dare approach her young, we see WOMAN in India throwing her living child to the outstretched jaws of the alligator.'[85] In a harrowing passage, Ward described mothers who casting 'their living offspring among a number of alligators; standing to gaze at these monsters quarrelling for their prey, beholding the writhing infant in the jaws of the successful animal, and standing motionless while it was breaking the bones and sucking the blood of the poor innocent!'[86] Such voluntary sacrifices of children provided an evocative inverse to the loving African families of abolitionist discourse, who were torn apart by vicious slavers and indifferent masters.[87] 'When the child is two or three years old,' William Ward reported, 'the mother takes it to the river, encourages it to enter as though about to bathe it, but suffers it to pass into the midst of the current, when she abandons it and stands, an inactive spectator, beholding the struggles, and hearing the screams, of her perishing infant.'[88] Ward presents this act of maternal deviance as an indictment of the dehumanising power of Hindu religion, asking 'What must be that superstition which can thus transform a being, whose distinguishing quality is tenderness, into a monster more unnatural than a tiger prowling through the forest for its prey?'[89] Such accounts position Indian woman not as the victims, but as the perpetrators of religious 'crimes', suggesting more complex colonial understandings of complicity of women in perceived acts of parental violence.

Religious sacrifice of children at Saugor was banned in 1802, and while its memory lived on, there is little evidence that the practice survived legislative intervention.[90] More intangible was the problem of female infanticide among certain Rajput communities in north India. This socio-economic form of infanticide was linked to 'clan honour', hypergamy, and excessive wedding and dowry costs, and was debated at length by EIC officials, and reported in sensationalist terms by missionaries.[91] As Satudru Sen points out, female infanticide was seen to thrive in the hidden recesses of the Indian home, leading the

colonial state to implement methods of surveillance from the mid nineteenth century onwards.[92] On one level female infanticide offered 'strong corroborative proof of the low estimation in which even the lives of females are held in India', underlining the degraded position of women in Hindu society.[93] Yet official and missionary accounts of female infanticide rendered the mother's role ambivalent, noting both her relative powerlessness and her potential complicity. 'And does no mother interpose her tender entreaties to spare her daughter?' William Ward asked. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the infant of her womb?' Alexander Walker, the Resident of Baroda, reported that though mothers occasionally succeeded in saving their infant daughters, 'these instances of maternal solicitude are either infrequent, or but seldom successful...' He attributed this to the fact that although the women came from castes who did not practice infanticide 'they are betrothed at an early age they imbibe the superstitions of their husbands, and some of them appear even as advocates for the custom.' The female infant might be unequivocally be 'victim, but the female as mother's position was more complex, being potentially even 'the executioner of her own offspring.'[94] The proximity of the mother to female infant death is reflected in the reported techniques, which included rubbing opium on the mother's nipple before breastfeeding, suffocating the new-born with the umbilical cord, or simply leaving it on the floor to die.[95] As Supriya Gupta notes, British observers conceived the anteghur, where these births and deaths took place, as the murkiest recess of the zenana.[96] We have already discussed it as a space in which labouring mothers were endangered by socio-religious custom and 'inferior' medical practices. The perpetration of infanticidal acts within the anteghur provides an alternative interpretation, shifting the focus from dangers posed to the labouring mother, to the threat she herself posed to her new-born infant daughter. As Jane Haggis notes, in evangelical accounts 'The inmates of these zenana prisons are portrayed as innocent and passive victims of a merciless system that uses and abuses them as daughters and, especially, as wives.'[97] The absence of figure of the mother from Haggis's description is significant; the female infant and even the child-wife might represent quintessential victims, but the position of the mother (and indeed mother-in-law) was more ambivalent, with mature women sometimes being portrayed as actively complicit in crimes against their own gender. The zenana was thus more than a 'prison' for women, it was a potential site of social and moral deviance, hidden criminality and political intrigue in which women played multiple and sometimes contradictory roles.

**Conclusion**

Discussing the ideal of womanhood espoused by Indian reformers and women's organisations in the early twentieth century, Judy Whitehead notes that she was expected to be 'an educated mother aware

of home science and hygiene' who 'combined the self-sacrificing traditional mother image, the education autonomy of the Vedic woman, and hygienically informed 'modern' motherhood.'[98] The emphasis on modern maternity and the symbolic significance of idealised motherhood have often been seen as a reaction to the denigration of Indian women as victims within an earlier colonial discourse that used their supposed oppression as an indicator of India's social and political backwardness. Yet as this article has demonstrated, early colonial debates did not automatically assume that all Indian women were victims, but rather presented a more complex interpretation which could depend of the women's age, status and position. Images of maternal danger and distress were used to mobilise charity and support among British colonial philanthropists, but its dark inverse was also embedded in these accounts. Acts of maternal deviance were highlighted the supposed iniquity of Hindu socio-religious customs, even as they reflected deep seated concerns about the realities of motherhood in industrialising Britain. Thus, while the nationalist valorisation of the Indian mother was in part a reaction to her denigration in colonial discourse, that discourse itself was more multifaceted than is often assumed. Far from being a one-dimensional victim of socio-religious oppression in colonial and evangelical discourse, Indian women was represented in varying complex and ambivalent ways, depending the context and on their status as daughters, wives, widows, mother-in-law, and mothers.

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[1] Celia van Hollen, Birth on the Threshold: Childbirth and Modernity in South Asia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 37.

[2] Van Hollen, Birth on the Threshold, p. 37.

[3] Katherine Mayo, Mother India (New York, Blue Ribbon Books, 1937), pp. 22, 16, 32.

[4] Mayo, Mother India, p. 32.

[5] For more see Mrinalini Sinha, Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire, (London, Duke University Press, 2006); Liz Wilson, 'Who is authorized to speak? Katherine Mayo and the politics of imperial feminism in British India.' Journal of Indian Philosophy 25.2 (1997): 139-151; Andrea Major, 'Mediating modernity: Colonial state, Indian nationalism and the renegotiation of the 'civilising mission' in the Indian Child Marriage Debate of 1927-1932', Carey Watt and Michael Mann (eds), From Improvement to Development, (London, Anthem Press, 2011).

[6] Sinha, Specters of Mother India, p. 68.

[7] See, for example, Sarah Hodges (ed) Reproductive Health in India (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2006).

[8] See Jasodhara Bagchi, 'Representing Nationalism: Ideology of Motherhood in Colonial Bengal' Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 25, No. 42/43 (Oct. 20-27, 1990), pp. WS65-WS71; Indira

Chowdhury-Sengupta ‘Mother India and Mother Victoria: Motherhood and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Bengal’ in South Asia Research, 12:1, 1992, pp. 20-37; Gupta, Charu. ‘The Icon of Mother in Late Colonial North India:' Bharat Mata','Matri Bhasha' and 'Gau Mata'.’ Economic and Political Weekly (2001): 4291-4299; Samita Sen, ‘Motherhood and Mothercraft: Gender and Nationalism in Bengal.’ Gender & History 5.2 (1993): 231-243.

[9] Sen, ‘Motherhood and Mothercraft’, p. 232.

[10] James Mill, History of British India, Vol. 1 (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1817), p. 293.

[11] An exception is Daniel Grey, who brings discourses on sati, thuggee and infanticide together to explore colonial constructions of the ‘problem Hindu’. Daniel Grey, 'Creating the ‘Problem Hindu’: Sati, Thuggee and Female Infanticide in India, 1800–60' in J. de Groot and S. Morgan (eds) Sex, Gender and the Sacred: Reconfiguring Religion in Gender History, (Wiley, 2014).

[12] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Can the subaltern speak?’ in Rosalind Morris (ed.) Can the subaltern speak? Reflections on the history of an idea (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 279.

[13] Felicity Nussbaum, Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality and Empire in Eighteenth Century English Narrative (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994), p.11.

[14] A. N. Porter, Religion Versus Empire: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 39.

[15] Andrew Rudd, Sympathy and India in British Literature, 1770–1830 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 121.

[16] Rudd, Sympathy and India, p. 121.

[17] For more on the influence of Ward, Grant and others, see Brian K. Pennington, Was Hinduism Invented?: Britons, Indians, and Colonial Construction of Religion (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 42 and 85.

[18] See Antoinette Burton, Burdens of History, (University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Barbara N. Ramusack ‘Cultural missionaries, maternal imperialists, feminist allies: British women activists in India, 1865–1945’ in *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 13:4, 1990: 309-321.

[19] Esme Cleall, Missionary Discourses of Difference: Negotiating Otherness in the British Empire, 1840-1900, pp 29-31. Clare Midgley, Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 38-40.

[20] Anon, Deplorable Effects of Heathen Superstition, Cheap tracts, no. 13 (2nd edition), (Dunfermline: John Miller, 1828), p. 5.

[21] See Andrea Major, Slavery, Abolitionism and Empire in India (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), pp. 268-72.

[22] Interestingly, Samita Sen argues that these Victorian ideals of motherhood were also internalised in late-nineteenth-century Indian prescriptive literature, informing campaigns to produce better mothers and stronger children for the incipient nation, despite their incompatibility with the reality of childcare within both the joint/extended family and the working-class home. Sen, 'Motherhood and Mothercraft'.

[23] Jill Matus, Unstable Bodies (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 163.

[24] Nussbaum, Torrid Zones, p.11.

[25] See David Arnold, 'Deathscapes: India in an age of romanticism and empire, 1800–1856', Nineteenth-Century Contexts, 26.4, 2004: 339-353.

[26] Daniel Grey, 'Creating the 'Problem Hindu', p. 498.

[27] 'A. Christian', A Letter to a Friend on the Duty of Great Britain to Disseminate Christianity in India. Occasioned by the Proposed Renewal of the Charter of the East India Company (London: Sold by J. Hatchard and L. B. Seeley, 1813).

[28] William Ward, History, Literature and Religion of the Hindoos, Vol 3 (London: Parbury and Allen, 1820), p. 156.

[29] Ward, History, Literature and Religion of the Hindoos, p. 155.

[30] J. Jackson, 'Midwifery in the East', Transactions of the Obstetrical Society of London, II (1860), p. 43.

[31] Gupta ''The Best Swadeshi': Reproductive Heath in Bengal, 1840-1940' in Sarah Hodges (ed) Reproductive Health in India (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2006).

[32] Ward, History, Literature and Religion of the Hindoos, p. 155.

[33] See, for example, Antoinette Burton 'Contesting the Zenana: The Mission to Make "Lady Doctors for India," 1874-1885', Journal of British Studies, 35:3, 1996: 368-397.

[34] See Seán Lang, 'Drop the Demon Dai: Maternal Mortality and the State in Colonial Madras, 1840–1875', Social History of Medicine, 18:3, 2005, pp. 357-378

[35] Cited in Lang, 'Drop the Demon Dai', p. 365

[36] Ward, History, Literature and Religion of the Hindoos, p. 156.

[37] Jackson, 'Midwifery in the East', pp. 38, 43.

[38] Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, Vol 26 (London: Hansard, 1813), p. 856.

[39] Lata Mani, Contentious traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[40] Andrea Major, Pious Flames: European Encounters with Sati, 1500-1830, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[41] Missionary Notices, June 1819, p. 83.

[42] Parliamentary Papers on Hindoo Widows, Vol. 18, 1821, paper 739 (hereafter PP. 18), Nizamat Adalat to the Vice President in Council, Fort William, 4th Oct. 1814, p. 34.

[43] PP. 18, Draft of instructions to magistrates, 21st Mar. 1815, p. 42.

[44] John Poynder, Human Sacrifices in India (London: 1827), p.71.

[45] See Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes (Hutchison: London, 1987), p. 421.

[46] Ward, Farewell Letters, p. 75.

[47] Ward, Farewell Letters, p. 82.

[48] J. Jackson, 'Midwifery in the East', p. 44.

[49] Priscilla Chapman, Hindoo Female Education (London: RB Seeley and W. Burnside, 1839) pp. 12-13.

[50] van Hollen, Birth on the Threshold, p. 50

[51] Catherine Hall, Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867. University of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 304.

[52] See Clare Midgley, 'Female emancipation in an imperial frame: english women and the campaign against sati (widow-burning) in India, 1813–30.' Women's History Review 9.1 (2000): 95-121.

[53] Jeanette Herman, 'Men And Women Of Feeling: Conventions Of Sensibility And Sentimentality In The Sati Debate And Mainwaring's The Suttee.' Comparative Literature Studies 42.2 (2005), p. 243.

[54] Mrs. Phelps, The Suttee (Oxford: H. Bradford, 1831).

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[56] See Upamanya Pablo Mukherjee, Natural Disasters and Victorian Empire: Famines, Fevers and the Literary Cultures of South Asia (London, 2013).

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[63] Margaret Kelleher, The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible? (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

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[68] Eden, Up the Country, p. 66.

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[70] Kelleher, The Feminization of Famine, p. 23.

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[87] Jamie Bronstein notes that this sentimental emphasis on families torn apart was also observable in accounts of industrial accidents in the early nineteenth century. See Jamie Bronstein, Caught in the machinery: Workplace accidents and injured workers in nineteenth-century Britain, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

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[94] Parliamentary Papers on Female Infanticide, vol, 426, 1824 (hereafter PP 24), p. 35-36. For a fuller discussion of women's involvement in female infanticide, see Padma Anagol, 'Languages of Injustice: The Culture of 'Prize-Giving' and Information Gathering on Female Infanticide in Nineteenth Century India', Cultural and Social History, 14:4, 2017, p. 441.

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