

# The Shocking Practice of the Child Widows of India of Hurling Themselves on the Burning Funeral Pyres of Their Husbands Has Broken Out Again, in Spite of the British Government's Warnings.

THE British Government in India is much disturbed over the failure of all its efforts to stamp out the horrible Hindu practice of suttee—the burning alive of a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband.

Such an example was made a year ago of seven of the principal convicted offenders in this barbarous religious rite, each other. The wife personally attended her sick husband, refusing to take rest while he still lived. When, after a few days, he died, she seemed dazed. She watched vacantly the preparations for cremation. As far as the officers could learn, no one urged her to immolate herself.

In fact, she did not accompany the body to the pyre. It was only when the wood had been lighted that her slight figure, all swathed in white, suddenly rushed upon the scene. Those near her noticed that her garments were saturated with kerosene; also that she had tightly bound up her lower jaw, as though she were already a corpse. This was probably for the reason that she feared that the agony of the flames might cause her to cry out in spite of all her resolution.

**Garments Saturated With Oil.**

In her eyes, according to the testimony, was the half-mad light of her resolve to join her husband in the other world, where he would still be her lord, and thus to escape the disgrace which widowhood on earth would bring to her among the Hindu fanatics.

Without pausing for an instant the child widow of Chunder Mookerjhar threw herself beside her husband's corpse in the midst of the flames. As her oil-saturated garments blazed up she sprang to her feet for an instant, raising her eyes heavenward, with arms upraised, and then sank back stifled and unconscious, soon to be only a cinder.

At the very moment when this awful ceremony was in progress the accessories to the suttee of Chaudhri Missir's widow were being appealed to the court for a mitigation of their prison sentence, and promising to crown upon the forbidden practice thenceforth. They were Juggernath Missir, a son, sentenced to five years of rigorous imprisonment; Balishun Misir, Dewarka Misir, Ram Charan Misir, Somar Choudkhar and Gunga and Dilehand Chaudhary, near relatives, sentenced to terms ranging from three years down to nine months.

The testimony given in court, covering the most minute details, showed this instance of suttee to have been performed with the most elaborate ceremony. Chaudhri Missir was a high caste Brahmin, of influence, living in the village of Sanchari, near Bihar. He died and arrangements were made for the burning of his body on a hillside on the banks of a small river, called "Devil Stian."

Under the direction of his eldest son, Juggernath, some of his humble retainers dug shallow trenches in the form of a St. Andrew's Cross and over this piled the wood of the pyre. In the cutting of the wood—which is a part of the funeral ceremony—Juggernath Missir, the eldest son, assisted. Being a Brahmin gentleman he had no axe of his own. Ram Lal Barhi, a carpenter of the village, lent him his. Many of the villagers assisted, too, while others gathered about as spectators.

When the villagers saw the widow of Chaudhri Missir, bathing in the river the whisper ran from one to another: "Suttee! Suttee! The widow of Chaudhri Missir will be Sati!"

The cremation of a dead Brahmin was an ordinary occurrence, but Sanchari Village had known no Suttee in half a century. Soon while Juggernath Missir continued to cut wood and arrange it upon the pyre, hundreds were joining the crowd on the hillside. Chunder Mookerjhar, a skilled laborer of Cawnpore, his fifteen-year-old widow voluntarily gave up her life. There were

## IF YOUR HUSBAND DIES - YOU MUST BE BURNED ALIVE



together. Soon they were but ashes mingled with the ashes of the pyre.

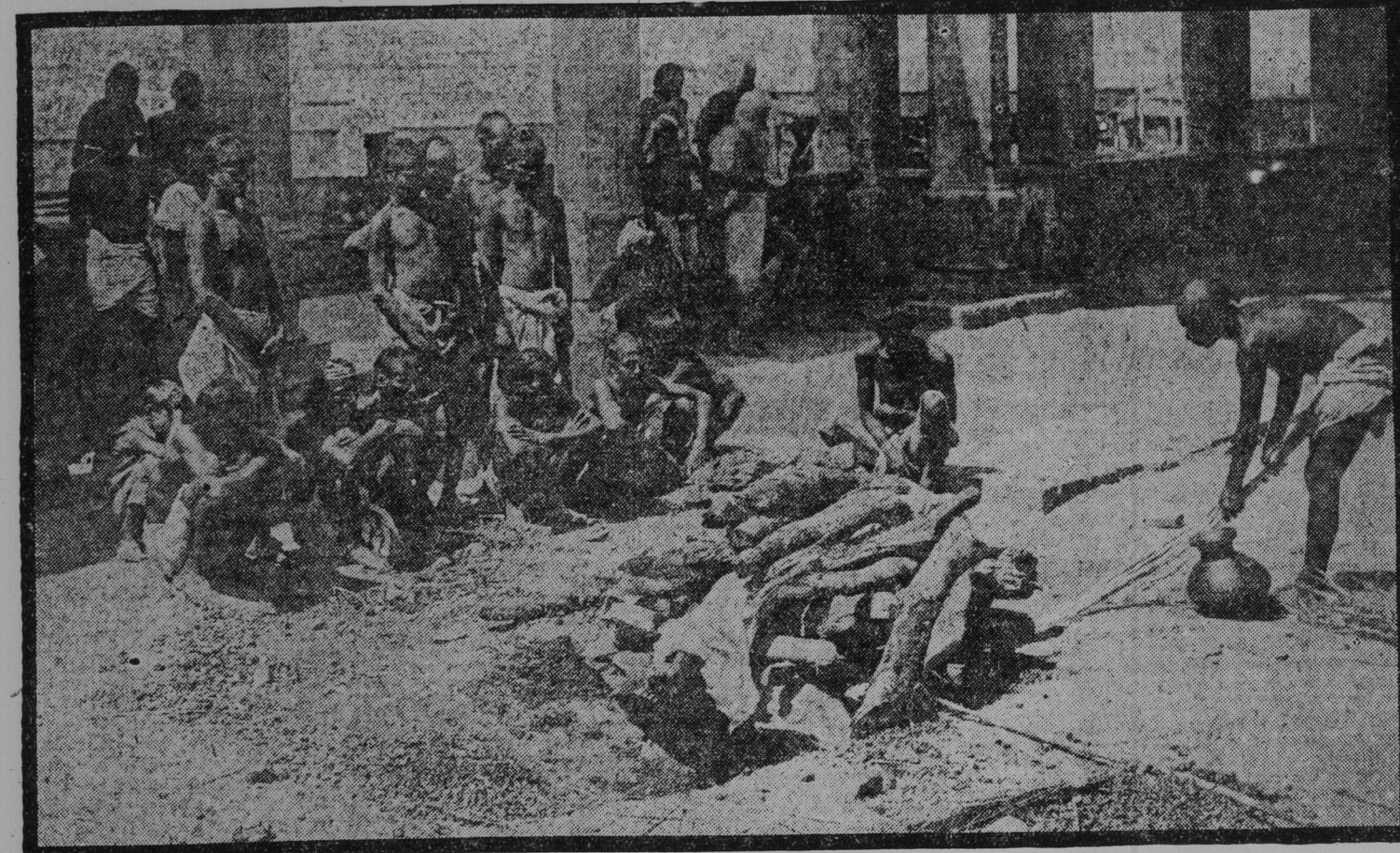
Now that this second instance of suttee has come to light, when the English officials believed that the widely reported threat and sentences of those implicated in the burning to death of Chaudhri Missir would have the effect of wholly stamping out the practice, it is not likely there will be any mitigation of those punishments. The government has issued orders that isolated Hindu communities are to be closely watched to guard against secret commissions of this demoralizing crime.

The most shocking feature of this recrudescence of the ancient rite is that it particularly menaces wives who are hardy more than children—for marriages of Hindu girls at thirteen, twelve, and eleven years of age, are not uncommon.

When the husbands of these mere children die, the attitude of friends, relatives and neighbors toward the poor little widows changes immediately. Will they be "Sati"? Will they throw themselves into the flames and thus prove themselves "good women" and "faithful wives," or will they accept the alternative of the lowest form of degradation during all the years to come?

The young widow cannot fail to observe the looks of inquiry directed at her, the already growing coldness of even her near relatives. First, despair at her vision of the future assails her, then comes mad fanaticism for the old religion, and, unless restrained by those who fear the law of their English masters, she runs wildly to the pyre where her husband's body is being consumed and gives herself to the flames.

The British Government, striking at the root of the matter, encourages the missionaries in their efforts to teach these Hindu fanatics that a good wife who becomes a widow through no fault of her own is as worthy of respect as any other woman and has the same right to continue an honored member of society. But these sporadic revivals of the practice of Suttee indicate how difficult is the task.



Photograph of Completed Preparations for the Burning Alive of the Widow of a Hindu Working Man—On Such a Pyre the 15-Year-Old Widow of Chunder Mookerjhar Died in the Flames At Cawnpore a Month Ago.

### The Funeral Pyre of a Rich Hindu, Like That on Which the Widow of Chaudhri Missir Was Burned Alive With her Husband's Body.

Lifted her arms and turned her face toward the setting sun. Above the din of the drums and cymbals the crowd could be heard shouting from the Hindu ritual: "Sat Ram! Sita Ram! Sati Mai Kai Jai!"

The pyre was now a roaring furnace. At once, amid the beating of the drums and the clang of the cymbals, the body of the widow fell upon the corpse of her husband and the two seemed to dissolve together.

### Some Valuable Hints for the Nursery.

Twice cooked meat should never be given to children. Remember the younger the child is when he gets any illness—above all, an infectious illness—the greater the danger. Keep all when the children are playing the pores of the children out of reach of all infectious diseases as long as you possibly can. When putting baby to bed see that his face is not entirely covered with the bedclothes, or he will run the chance of being choked. Feather beds are condemned by doctors as unhealthy for children to sleep on. Children should have at least twelve hours' sleep every night, and, in addition to this, small children should have a nap either in the morning or afternoon. This helps a great deal toward keeping them bright and healthy. As an attack of croup is threatened, have ready plenty of hot water. In case a bath may be required. In this disease delay may mean death. If the nursery is kept too close and hot the children are playing the pores of the skin are kept too open, and therefore the little ones are very liable to take cold or going into cold air, or even into a colder room. A few grains of permanganate of potash dissolved in a little water makes a strong disinfectant and deodorizer for the sick-room. It may also be used as a mouth wash and gargle in cases of diphtheria, etc. Always wash baby's mouth and gums every morning with water in which you have put a pinch of borax. It keeps the mouth fresh and sweet and prevents that uncomfortable affliction, a sore mouth, with which so many poor babies are troubled when their mouths are not kept perfectly clean.

### A Hindu Propitiation to the Gods in Time of Cholera.

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