

zenas of India have never learned that each one of them has a soul that must live forever either in happiness or in misery. They are taught that their whole duty is to obey their husbands, receive their frequent beatings without a murmur, and to hope if they are very good and patient, each one may be born over again and become a man! Daily they burn incense before their idols. They think nothing is too great a sacrifice if these gods will only be pleased with them. The one great dread of their lives is that their husbands may die, and then these poor little brides will be widows. O such sad lives as theirs will be then! I am so sorry that they do not know Jesus Christ, our dear Saviour, who died to save them!

THIRD.

Well may the women of India dread the name of widow! A little bride is taught that the greatest punishment the gods can send to her is to take away her husband! For then, though she might never have lived with him, or spoken to him, she would be hated and despised as the cause of his death. Shall we visit a home in India where the husband is dying? See the poor little wife sitting on the floor in a corner alone! Full well she knows that as soon as he dies, a life worse than death will begin for her. Do you see that group of savage-looking women watching her with longing eyes? They are the wives of the native barbers, hired to strip this little child of all her ornaments. As soon as her husband draws his last breath, they pounce upon her, snatching away in the most cruel manner the jewels which are so precious to the women of India. The rings in her ears and nose are often pulled out in such haste that the blood flows freely from the wounds made. If her bracelets and anklets do not come off easily, the limb they encircle is stretched on the ground and hammered with stones until the metal is broken. Who cares for her suffering? Is she not a sinner, a vile wretch, a thing to be treated with contempt as long as she lives?

See the funeral procession! The poor little widow comes last of all, the barbers' wives going before her, and crying out to all women to keep back from the accursed one, for if her shadow should fall on them, they, too, may become widows. She must henceforth be clad in sackcloth, eat only one meal a day, and that of the coarsest food. She must never sing, laugh or even look happy. Her own mother dare not speak to her, or even give her a kind look or smile, lest the curse of the gods fall upon her also.

Just think of twenty-one millions of these widows, many of them only little children, condemned to such lives of misery! Do you wonder that they often regret that the laws of the land no longer allows them to be burned alive with the dead bodies of their husbands? Then they died quickly in the flames, and were praised by all as dutiful wives; now, their lives are but a lingering death, in hopeless misery and pain.

Our good Queen Victoria, when she heard of their sad lot, said she had no idea it was so bad, and that she wished it to be known that her sympathy was with every effort made to relieve their suffering.

My heart aches for these poor little widows, our sisters in India! May the dear Lord comfort them as only He can! May they soon be led to know and worship Him!

SISTER BELLE.

Ottawa, April 4th, 1898.

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