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Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland / Volume 1 / Issue 02 / July 1834, pp 285 - 288
DOI: 10.1017/S0035869X00142455, Published online: 14 March 2011

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0035869X00142455

How to cite this article:

Alexander Burnes (1834). Art. XXIII.—On Female Infanticide in Cutch. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, 1, pp 285-288 doi:10.1017/S0035869X00142455

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ART. XXIII.—*On Female Infanticide in Cutch, by Lieutenant ALEXANDER BURNES, F.R.S.*

[SINCE the sheet containing the former paper on this subject, by Lieutenant Burnes, was printed off, the Society has been favoured, by that gentleman, with a copy of his letter to Lieutenant-Colonel Pottinger, detailing the substance of a conversation which took place between himself and some of the *Jhárejá* chieftains, shortly after the delivery of letters from the Bombay government to the RAO of Cutch, deprecating the continuance of the practice of female infanticide in his dominions. This document is curious as explaining the sentiments of these individuals in regard to this practice, almost in their own words, and will tend to the completion of the evidence in our possession as to the existence of this inhuman custom.]

Extract of a letter from Lieutenant A. BURNES, Assistant Political Resident in Cutch, to Lieutenant-Colonel POTTINGER, Resident.
Dated 27th December, 1830.

SIR,

1. Agreeably to the instructions conveyed by you, I have delivered the two letters from the government of Bombay to his highness the RAO of Cutch. I took occasion to explain to his highness, in the most forcible manner, the deep anxiety of government for the total abolition of female infanticide, which, as he would observe in the letters now delivered, was viewed with horror by all civilised nations.

2. A few days after this occurrence, I received an intimation from the *Jhárejá* chiefs at *Bhúj* that they wished to wait upon me. I immediately invited them to my house, and found that their object was to converse with me on the subject of infanticide, towards the suppression of which the late letters of government appeared to attach more than usual importance. The names of these chiefs were, *Jhárejá* BHÓJRÁJÍ LAIDA, *Jhárejá* DOSSÁJÍ of *Kótrí*, *Jhárejá* JAIM-ALJÍ of *Nougurcha*, *Jhárejá* PRAGJÍ of *Motara*, *Jhárejá* MÁNSINGJÍ BHÍMÁNÍ of *Kerúle*, *Jhárejá* NARRAYANJÍ of *Mhow*, *Jhárejá* DIPSINGJÍ of *Púnrí*.

3. The remarks of these men I may briefly sketch as follows : they commenced by expressing solicitude that in the short space of a month, and since you left *Bhúj*, I should have made them acquainted with no less than two communications from government on female infanti-

cide, when in so many years' connexion with the country there had been no such deep anxiety evinced, and that the governor (Sir JOHN MALCOLM) had been also extremely urgent on this subject when on his late visit to Cutch ;—that it was most difficult for them to support their character (*láj*) as Rájapúts and to fulfil their engagements towards us, for how could they affiance their daughters to persons in lower ranks of life than themselves, who, from poverty, walked from village to village ?—that the British government was always liberal towards its allies, and that in this instance they hoped for its consideration and assistance in framing some plan (*sunnad*) which should be binding on all parties in affiancing their daughters, both in Cutch and *Kattyawar* ;—that it was true that the custom was greatly at variance with our received opinions, but that it had long existed in Cutch, and, from splitting the lands into fewer *appanages*, preserved the greatness of the *Jhárejá* name ;—that the chiefs of Rájputana had been proud in former years to marry a *Jhárejá* lady ; and that though there had not been much intercourse of late, a deviation from received customs would unquestionably injure the tribe in their eyes —indeed, that the *Hotí*, a tribe of *Jhárejás*, had already sunk from the rank which they formerly held by some deviations from rule. To all this they added, that the consideration of government was indeed necessary in this case ; for if the custom did continue among the few, the many were not to be blamed ; and that they were too well aware of the responsibility they had incurred in forming the treaty with the British government, which placed them in jeopardy, not to feel intense anxiety about the ultimate intentions in view by such repeated mention of infanticide ; and, further, they could only hope, that whatever steps were taken, *their* good name (*láj*) would form an object of solicitude with the honourable the Governor in Council, equal with the desire to abolish female infanticide.

4. I was deeply interested to hear from their own mouths the arguments in support of the peculiar and odious practice, and I, with much earnestness, and to the best of my power, laid open the sentiments which actuated the British government. The reasons, said I, which have been now urged are doubtless weighty, but humanity was superior to them all ; that they were indeed mistaken if they imagined the government to have been supine during its connexion with Cutch : female infanticide had ever been viewed by it with horror, and it was solely on account of the delicacy of the subject, and a regard for their (*láj*) good name, that it was not oftener brought forward ; that much reliance, and hopeless reliance too, had been placed on time and the change of circumstances in this principality from a turbulent to a tranquil state. The present,

I continued, was viewed as a most favourable period to urge the subject, *and that too, resolutely*, when a prince of bright hopes and great promise, with an acuteness of understanding beyond his years, was coming to his majority, and shortly to assume the government, an opportunity which had not been lost sight of, and which, from the interest shewn by the RAO in the objects of government, was likely to be indeed valuable. The arguments which I had now heard, I told them, were not unknown to my superiors, as it was a rule of the government which I served to make itself acquainted with customs and prejudices; but they also must be *well* aware that the custom of female infanticide was of no great antiquity after all, and grounded on no religious motive; and that I had heard the *Soda* and *Chuwan Rájpúts* of *Parkur*, and the *Nuejur*, when on my journey to Marwár last year, rejoice that it was likely to be abolished, as they would now find high-caste wives: further, that it was imperative on them to consider a sacred treaty which was so generous, that it identified the interests of some hundred chieftains with the British government purely from motives of humanity. I explained to these men the case of the slave-trade, and the horror which it had excited in Europe; and begged that they would understand the force of the same motives in our desire to abolish infanticide, which was odious all over the earth, and so unnatural that it was a constant theme of wonder in our conversation. I took the opportunity to mention to these seven chiefs (all of whom, by the by, were married men without a single daughter), that I had it on undoubted information, which I had myself collected, that in fifty-six villages the proportion of male to female *Jhárejás* children was nearly six to one, and that this was well known to government, which had, certainly, for a time, been betrayed into the fond hope that the custom was at an end, an error which the *Jhárejás* themselves had given rise to from repeated asseverations that it would cease.

5.—Much more conversation took place in this interview, which lasted about two hours, but I think that I have now given the substance and spirit of it all. I told the *Jhárejás* that I would report particularly what had passed; and whatever might be their fears about the hidden intentions of government, I could assure them that if they performed their part, you would never forget their “good name,”—and the interview terminated.

6.—The minister LUCKMIDASS stayed with me after the chiefs had gone, and repeated all the arguments which I have above stated. You are aware of his great influence among the *Jhárejás*, and I was glad to hear him condemn, in the most unmeasured terms, the practice of infanticide. He said that the abominable vices which degraded

the *Jhárejás* of Cutch, were doubtless a judgment of heaven for this unnatural practice; he rejoiced, as a *Bráhmaṇ*, he said, at having been the means of saving the children that now existed, and expressed great readiness to aid still further in these philanthropic measures. I think it creditable to him to mention, that within these three months the minister has saved, by his own positive orders, two *Rájput* children in the town of *Bhúj*, who are now alive. I had great difficulty, however, in persuading him that the sole and only aim of the late letters was to extinguish infanticide. The cause of this anxiety, on his part and that of the *Jhárejás*, is too obvious, as they are well aware that our government can quash a treaty when its stipulations (and the only ones asked on its part), have been infringed by the continuation of infanticide.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

(Signed) ALEX. BURNES.

Assist. to the Resident in Cutch.