

“Where Liberty is *Not*, There is my Country”
—Nineteenth Century American Abolitionist Writings on India

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To *paideia*.

Abstract

This thesis examines nineteenth century American abolitionist writings on India. My sources include abolitionist newspapers, primarily focusing on William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper the *Liberator*, but also incorporating other abolitionist newspapers, such as the *Friend of Man*, the *Principia*, and the *National Era* and publications of individual abolitionists, like Lydia Maria Child's *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations*. By looking at their writings on Christian missionary activities in India, Indian women, and British rule in India, I argue that although many abolitionists Orientalized India, they at the same time found many parallels between Indian society and the US, which blurred the boundaries between the self and the Other. Although they did not develop a full criticism towards colonialism in the antebellum period, their criticism towards Empire matured by the early twentieth century. My scholarly intervention centers on acknowledging the hitherto unknown role of abolitionist writings on India in the intellectual history of American abolitionism and the US-India transnational history. By not fully engaging India, the scholarship on US-India relations and abolitionism misses a critical dimension of abolitionist movement's intimate relationship with related causes of feminism, anti-clericalism, and anti-imperialism. Most importantly, this thesis demonstrates that abolitionist writings on India far exceeded Orientalism as the only frame of understanding.

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Introduction

*“Bridging the three or four thousand miles of land travel,
Tying the Eastern to the Western sea,
The road between Europe and Asia.”*
—Walt Whitman *“Passage to India”* (1870)

Impressed by the construction of transatlantic undersea cable (1866), Suez Canal (1869), and the first transcontinental railway (1869) in the late nineteenth century, which enabled a more convenient journey from the US to India, Walt Whitman imagined the ultimate spiritual union between the East and the West in his poem “Passage to India.” Such musings by Whitman and his friends and contemporaries, most notably, Ralph Waldo Emerson, has for long informed our understanding of intellectual connections between the US and India. However, much lesser known, antebellum antislavery activists, writing decades before Whitman’s “Passage to India,” had drawn imaginative connections between India and the US. By overlooking the rich body of abolitionist writings on India, scholars miss a novel perspective to reexamine the transnational history between the US and India, as well as to comprehend an important dimension of abolitionist political and social imagination, especially the ability of abolitionists in making connections between abolitionism in the US and other social reforms at home and the world. This thesis explores the connections between American and Indian societies portrayed by American abolitionists in the antebellum period, and in the period after the civil war when they were active in other social circles such as the Anti-Imperialist League. I will argue that many American abolitionists and their successors complicated racist and Orientalist assumptions

common even among their fellow-abolitionists by comparing American slavery as well as the treatment of women in the US with the social oppressions of caste and gender in India. Although American abolitionists did not understand fully about the British colonial exploitation and advocated reforms within the British Empire in the antebellum nineteenth century, their criticism towards empire matured in the early twentieth century.

I approached the nineteenth century American abolitionist movement, probably the most significant movement in US history, from abolitionists' writings. I encountered pamphlets of abolitionist societies, books written by individual abolitionists, and various articles published in different abolitionist newspapers, such as the *Liberator*, the *Principia*, and the *North Star*. The authors or editors came from different socio-economic backgrounds and racial identities, ranging from the daughters of the South Carolina leading planter family, the Grimke Sisters and son of Virginia genteel slaveholding family Moncure Conway to Frederick Douglass, who was once enslaved in Maryland before fleeing to the North. The ranks and credentials of these authors in the abolitionist campaign also differed, ranging from well-known Garrisonian abolitionists, the followers of the prominent abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, such as Lydia Maria Child, Parker Pillsbury, and Sarah Grimke, to mysterious anonymous writers with pen names like "the Negro Pew." Besides being affiliated with different wings of abolitionism, these authors also had other political identities, including early feminists, anarchists, and utopian socialists. Some were devout Christians, condemning slavery with a biblical language; some instead renounced their churches for the complicity of many churches in tolerating slavery. Despite all the differences, I found one common thread across many of those writings: that their vision of abolitionism was beyond merely liberating Black slaves. Instead, they built "imaginative connections" that linked diverse forms of oppression beyond slavery in the Americas. While condemning slavery in the

US, many abolitionist writers also wrote about other oppressed or discriminated groups, such as foreign migrants, Indigenous people, and women. Their writings were also extended beyond national boundaries, including groups like Irish nationalists, the British working class, and the Haitian Black Jacobins as their subjects. Among those imaginative connections across nationalities, color, gender, and class, the most unexpected groups written about by American abolitionists were Indians (in South Asia). Compared to the West Indies, Britain, or Ireland, India seemed to have much fewer connections to the US at that time. What were their purposes of writing about India?

One of the groups of abolitionists who wrote about India was abolition-feminists who studied India to support their intertwined cause of abolishing slavery and equal rights for women. The abolition-feminists were a diverse group, including male, female, working class, elites, Black, and white people, and they forged alliances between the oppressed Black people and women by diverse means like donation, public speaking, and petition. However, their visibility differed. According to Angela Davis, middle class white women who were not compelled to work were much more visible than the female workers in the abolitionist and feminist campaigns. This thesis will focus on four high-profile white middle class abolition-feminists, including female abolitionists Lydia Maria Child, Sarah Grimke, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and male abolitionists Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Parker Pillsbury. They wrote or spoke about India on various platforms ranging from books to speeches, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Address to the legislature of New York in 1854. By highlighting the deplorable conditions of women in India, these abolition-feminists intended to strike people's compassion towards American enslaved people, but also towards all women and slaves in American society who, in their view, shared the sufferings with Indian women either because of their gender or

race or both. They also aimed to construct a universal womanhood that transcended the racial lens.

Besides abolition-feminists, anti-clerical abolitionists also wrote on India.¹ Many abolitionists chose to be anonymous or use a pen name like “the Negro Pew” to criticize the segregation between Black and white people in church services. Some abolitionists like Henry Clarke Wright were part of the anarchistic wing of the anti-slavery movement that rejected any institutional domination, including the authority of Christian churches over humans. The anti-clerical stance was also reflected in some abolitionists’ open acceptance of other religious creeds, denounced as “heathenism” at that time. Higginson, for example, was a unitarian minister but championed universal humanity across all religions. Many of these individuals wrote on India to support their radical religious stance, like criticizing the self-held superiority of Christianity over other religions and championing equality across religions. By criticizing missionary activities in India, these anti-clerical abolitionists negated the moral authority of the churches that compromised with slavery. Besides the domestic agenda of abolitionism and anti-clericalism, abolitionist writings on India also commented on the ties between Christian missionary activities and the British imperial reform in India.

The majority of abolitionists who wrote on India were white. Black abolitionists focused on Africa rather than India, though few Black abolitionists like Garnet did mention Indian religion when condemning those so-called “Christian” slave traders in passing notes.² By building Black nationalism across Africa and the US, Black abolitionists formulated critiques

¹ I define anti-clerical here as opposing the clergy for its influence in political and social affairs in this thesis.

² Garnet, Henry Highland, James McCune Smith, and United States. Congress. House. *A memorial discourse: delivered in the hall of the House of Representatives, Washington City, D.C., on Sabbath, February 12, 1865*. Philadelphia: J.M. Wilson, 1865. *Sabin Americana: History of the Americas, 1500-1926*.

towards colonialism and racism.³ Unlike these Black abolitionists basing Black nationalism on transnational racial solidarity, the contemporary white abolitionists drew an imaginative connection between the US and India that transcended a shared racial identity. These abolitionists developed critiques towards British imperial rule in India, and extended their sympathy towards Indian women, indentured laborers, and lower caste people, who, in their view, shared the sufferings with slaves, women, and Southern indentured laborers in the US. In the early twentieth century, they drew compassionate parallels between Philippines under US imperial rule and British rule in India.

Transnational history between the US and India

Transnational trade between the US and India and American missionary activities in India in the nineteenth century were large sources of information for abolitionists. Nico Slate, Raj Kumar Gupta, and Michael J. Altman have discussed the nineteenth-century trade relationship between American port cities, like Salem, Massachusetts and Calcutta, India, making Indian commodities visible to New England residents.⁴ The *Boston Daily Advertiser* frequently advertised goods transported from India, and a group of mariners founded the East India Marine Society in Salem to exhibit “natural and artificial curiosities,” such as jewelry, palanquins, and figures of Hindu deities.⁵ Besides the trade relationships, nineteenth century

³ Many Black abolitionists like Alexander Crummell, working as missionaries in Africa, aimed to redeem Africa from its “heathenism;” more importantly, elevate Black people both in the US and Africa. For instance, Crummell advocated American Black entrepreneurs to conduct lawful trade that could replace the African slave trade and educate their African kinsmen about the enterprising spirit that would help advance the material growth of Africa. A stronger Africa, in turn, could serve as a base of Black national power to fight against racism in the US.

⁴ Raj Kumar Gupta. *The Great Encounter: A Study of Indo-American Literature and Cultural Relations* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1936). Michael J. Altman. “The Construction of Hinduism in America.” *Religion Compass* 10, no. 8 (August 17, 2016). Nico Slate, *Lord Cornwallis Is Dead: The Struggle for Democracy in the United States and India* (Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: Harvard University Press, 2019).

⁵ Gupta, *The Great Encounter*, 29.

American missionaries also provided home audiences with information on India.⁶ Altman points out that American missionaries in India were fond of reporting the “heathen” rituals in a violent and derogatory way to their home missionary magazines, like the official magazine of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the *Missionary Herald*.⁷ Thus, the nineteenth-century transnational US-India history on trade and religious communication has emphasized the one-directional experience of how the US interpreted, conceptualized, and ultimately Orientalized India from the gazes of American traders and missionaries.

The transnational trading hub of the Northeastern United States cradled the American transcendentalist movement, which developed between the late 1820s and 1830s in New England and included figures, such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Walt Whitman. Umesh Patri observes the importance of Hindu literature in the American transcendentalist movement, saying, “Never before in its history of two hundred years had America so widely opened its gate to the ancient world of the Orient.”⁸ Many transcendentalists extensively read Sanskrit texts translated by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, such as the *Mahabharata*, the *Code of Manu*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Puranas*. Frederic Ives Carpenter, Arthur Christy, and Patri point out the influence of Indian ancient literature on transcendentalists by finding the textual affinities between Emersonian writings and Hindu religious texts.⁹ The reading of Hindu literature also served the spiritual reform agenda of transcendentalists. As Gupta demonstrates Emerson intended to use Hindu concepts to correct imbalances in American culture, such as materialism

⁶ Sushil Madhava Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism; a Study of Their Contacts from 1813 to 1910*. (Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal 1967).

⁷ Altman. “The Construction of Hinduism in America,” 209.

⁸ Umesh Patri, *Hindu Scriptures and American Transcendentalists*, first edition (New Delhi, India: Intellectual Pub, 1987), 2.

⁹ Ibid. Frederic Ives Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), xi. Arthur Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism; a Study of Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott* (New York: Columbia university press, 1932), 48.

or, as Philip Goldberg points out, to advocate individuals to dare love God without a mediator.¹⁰ Besides the transcendentalist movement, Goldberg points out that other American religious movements, such as New Thought, Scientist Christian, and Theosophy, continued to borrow from Indian religious traditions.¹¹ As a result of such ongoing religious dialogue, Indian gurus, such as Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), went on a lecture tour on Indian spirituality in the US.¹²

The social-cultural history of American abolitionists' writings on India is essential in understanding the transnational history between India and the US, chiefly because the engagement of traders, missionaries, and transcendentalists with India gives an incomplete history that nineteenth century Americans' engagement with India was based on Orientalized stereotypes. American abolitionist writings on India made a breach in this widely held discourse. Although abolitionists inevitably embraced much of the Orientalist discourse around India, they at the same time found many similarities between India and their own society, which blurred the distinction between the Other and the self. By not engaging India in the American abolitionist movement within the frame of the US-India transnational history, India has remained as a vague religious and exotic symbol under the pen of Emerson. The scholarship on the US-India transnational history thus inadvertently repeated the errors of American nineteenth century missionaries by Orientalizing India into a sacred land. Abolitionist writings on India that came out of abolitionism and closely related feminist, anti-clerical, and anti-imperialist agitations did

¹⁰ Gupta, *The Great Encounter*, 38. Philip Goldberg, *American Veda : From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation : How Indian Spirituality Changed the West*, first edition (New York: Harmony Books, 1944), 54.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Goldberg, *American Veda*, 66-88.

not just reproduce India as an abstract and exoticized idea in the nineteenth century American consciousness.

There is no denying that many prominent transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau were abolitionists. Their readings of Hindu scriptures also supported the abolitionist agenda. Thoreau found John Brown's raid at the Harpers Ferry as an embodiment of Arjuna, a righteous warrior battling against unrighteousness.¹³ Their open-mindedness and seriousness about Eastern spirituality and various social reform projects in all probability influenced their contemporary abolitionists. Emerson and Thoreau considered other religious scriptures constituting "bibles of the world."¹⁴ Besides putting the eastern spirituality on equal ground with Christianity, Thoreau even claimed "Shakespeare seems sometimes youthfully green and practical merely," compared to the "vast and cosmogonical philosophy" of the Bhagavad Gita.¹⁵

The sources they relied on nevertheless trapped them within a similar Orientalist framework. Emerson and Thoreau understood India mainly through Indian religious scriptures. As a result, they stayed away from discussing Indian society, continuing to reduce India into a spiritual wonderland. Although the abolitionists discussed in this thesis inevitably employed the Orientalist stereotypes of India, unlike transcendentalists solely focusing on Indian religious scriptures, they also took a keen interest in Indian society. They understood India from those people who intensely engaged with Indian society, including British colonial administrators, Indian social reformers, and Christian missionaries in India. Their readings on India helped their domestic social reform agenda, including abolitionism, feminism, and anti-clericalism. However,

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Richard H. Davis, "Henry David Thoreau, Yogi," *Common Knowledge* 24, no. 1 (January 2018): 56–89.

¹⁵ Ibid.

at the same time, they extended their compassion towards Indian people who were equally oppressed by social problems like gender discrimination, caste, and imperial rule. Thus, the abolitionists discussed in this thesis were even more radical than their contemporary transcendentalists in their study of Indian society.

Some recent scholarship has to a limited extent discussed abolitionists other than Emerson and Thoreau's interaction with India. Nico Slate points out that caste was a powerful rhetorical tool for American abolitionists to denounce slavery.¹⁶ Various opinions also existed among abolitionists regarding the Indian Mutiny of 1857. According to Slate, despite some abolitionists eulogizing the fight of the British soldiers against "uncivilized" Indians, abolitionists like Frederick Douglass found similarities between the subjugation of Indian soldiers by white officers and racism faced by Black people in the US.¹⁷ In addition to the scholarship of Slate, Zach Sell also acknowledges the role of abolitionism in the transnational history between the US and India by focusing on the mediator—British abolitionism. Sell mainly focuses on the abolitionism championed by British abolitionist George Thompson that relied on the vision that "free" laborers in India could help abolitionism in the US by taking over the markets occupied by the American slave laborers.¹⁸ However, the discussion on the relationship between American abolitionism and India is still on the periphery of the US-India transnational history. Besides the obvious caste and race analogy, this thesis will show that abolitionists also discussed many other aspects of Indian society, such as Indian women, British and American missionaries in India, and Indian indentured laborers in the West Indies, to support their social reform agenda. By not engaging these aspects of abolitionist writings on India, Slate and Sell

¹⁶ Slate, *Lord Cornwallis Is Dead*.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Zach Sell, *Trouble of the World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 70.

miss how abolitionists understood India from diverse sources, ranging from writings of British bureaucrats to Bengali reformers, and even a letter from a son of a planter in the West Indies. More importantly, by limiting the scope of abolitionism as mere abolition of slavery, rather than abolishing all other forms of oppression as suggested by scholars, including Herbert Aptheker, Angela Davis, Manisha Sinha, and Jesse Olsavsky, Slate and Sell neglect how American abolitionists pondered on Indian society and history in their efforts to link abolitionism with the early feminist movement, anti-clericalism, and anti-imperialism.¹⁹

Garrisonian abolitionism

The awareness of tying their writings on India with abolitionism, feminism, and anti-clericalism largely came from Garrisonian abolitionists, the followers of William Lloyd Garrison, who linked anti-slavery agitation with other fronts of struggles worldwide. The internationalism of Garrison could be summarized in the motto that adorned the *Liberator's* masthead that “Our Country is the World—Our Countrymen are Mankind.”²⁰ Guided by the internationalist stances, Garrison also advised fellow abolitionists in the 1840s to “support every unpopular reform the world over—to pity and plead for the poor oppressed Irishmen, for all who suffer, whether at the South, or on the British shores, or in India.”²¹ Given that Garrison extended the abolitionist agenda from merely abolishing slavery in the US to abolishing all forms of oppression in the global sphere, Garrisonian abolitionists were interested in discussing India.

¹⁹ Herbert Aptheker, *Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979). Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981). Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2016). quoted in Jesse Olsavsky, *Abolitionists of the Most Absolute Abolition: Runaways, Vigilance Committees, and the Rise of Revolutionary Abolitionism, 1835-1861* (Forthcoming LSU Press, 2022), 94. Quoted with permission of the author.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 257.

²¹ Jesse Olsavsky, “American Abolitionists and Anti-Imperialism,” Unpublished Manuscript, 2018.

Garrisonian abolitionism was also well-known for its break with any toleration of slavery. Based on the belief of the impossibility of the “inferior race” integrating into American society, the American Colonization Society (ACS), was an organization dedicated to transporting free Black people to Africa. They spent considerable amounts of resources to emancipate slaves through purchase and then send them to Africa. Intolerant of the conservative stance of the ACS, Garrison advocated immediate abolitionism, instantaneous abolition without compensation, and emigration. He founded his anti-slavery newspaper, the *Liberator* in 1831 and the New England Anti-Slavery Society in 1832. Later, the society became the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) and published a weekly newspaper, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. Initially, the AASS employed moral suasion that appealed to the moral consciousness of slaveholders to end slavery. The readers of abolitionist newspapers and publications in the antebellum were mainly Northerners, chiefly in states like Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania, given that the South banned these abolitionist newspapers. However, abolitionists even faced vehement opposition in the North, ranging from riots to the 1836 Gag Rule, which prohibited discussing petitions related to slavery in Congress.²²

The AASS split between 1838 and 1840. Some abolitionists joined the Lewis Tappan’s wing of abolitionism that perceived the formation of an anti-slavery party as the only way of ending slavery.²³ Garrison and Tappan’s wings of abolitionism also differed in their perception of the status of women and church in abolitionism. Tappan’s wing believed in the moral role of Christian churches in abolitionism and the inhibition of women in the domestic sphere. Garrison and his associates took more radical stances. They challenged the orthodoxy of Christianity and

²² Stanley Harrold, *American Abolitionists*, Seminar Studies in History (Harlow, England; New York: Longman, 2001), 35.

²³ *Ibid*, 139.

endorsed equal rights for women and their participation in the abolitionist movement.²⁴ Advocating separation from white-led abolitionism, some Black abolitionists, led by Frederick Douglass, also broke with Garrisonians by the 1840s. Despite their split, Garrisonian abolitionists worked closely with factions of Douglass and Tappan.

Garrisonian abolitionism enabled women to hold positions in the abolitionist ranks and relatively liberated them from the domestic sphere. The nineteenth-century cult of true womanhood based the nature of women on their domesticity, as opposed to males who could engage in the public sphere.²⁵ As a result, female abolitionists faced social stigma. For example, the congregational clergy of Massachusetts denounced the abolitionist activities of Sarah and Angelina Grimke by urging them to embody “modesty and delicacy which is the charm of domestic life.”²⁶ However, Garrisonians’ anti-clericalism that opposed the authority of the church in social and political matters, enabled the Grimke sisters to insist on their religious convictions while rejecting clerical criticism.²⁷ Garrisonian anti-clericalism also liberated Stanton from the restraints of religious orthodoxy.²⁸ Thus, under the influence of Garrisonian anti-clericalism, other female abolitionists, including Lydia Maria Child, entered the public sphere of abolitionism and challenged the nineteenth-century concept of domesticated womanhood.

Despite being viewed as auxiliaries to the male abolitionist organization, women were economically and politically crucial in the abolitionist campaign. Abolitionist women engaged in

²⁴ Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860*, 1st ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 139.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 42.

²⁶ Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 151.

²⁷ Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women’s Movement in America, 1848-1869* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 34.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 34.

fund-raising by holding raffles and organizing fairs. The money raised by female abolitionists was vital to sustaining abolitionism because activism occupied many male abolitionists, preventing them from earning sufficient money.²⁹ Female abolitionists also engaged in political activities. Besides circulating antislavery petitions, abolitionist women also had begun to distribute campaign materials of the anti-slavery political party, the Liberty Party to voters by the early 1840.³⁰ Abolitionist women further politicized themselves by opposing the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 which required the return of slaves to their owners –even in free states – and obligated Northerners to assist in recapturing slaves. They hid fugitive slaves from recapture, sewed, and cooked for them. Protecting fugitive slaves was courageous because each time an abolitionist woman hid a fugitive, “she broke the law and defied Congress.”³¹ Thus, besides entering the public sphere by engaging in economic and political activities, Garrisonian abolitionism radicalized women to challenge the status quo and put forward their feminist demands. These abolition-feminists’ articulation of women’s rights and abolitionism was beyond the US, and the conditions of Indian women also drew their attention.

Besides restricting women in the domestic sphere, the reconciliatory attitudes of Christian churches with slaveholders accounted for Garrisonian anti-clerical stances. Nineteenth-century American Christian churches were not morally unimpeachable, given their toleration of slavery. Except for Hicksite Quakers and a few other small sects, many American denominations within the Christian tradition maintained a neutral stance towards slavery. Instead of supporting immediate abolition, many churches adopted gradualist approaches towards abolition. They advocated for voluntary manumission, ameliorating the conditions of slaves, and supporting the

²⁹ Harrold, *American Abolitionists*, 56.

³⁰ Harrold, *American Abolitionists*, 44.

³¹ Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 187.

ACS.³² Many churches also rejected abolitionists' proposals of declaring slavery as a sin to pressure slaveholders to emancipate their slaves. Instead, those churches admitted slaveholders into denominations and accepted their donations, arguing that slavery was civil rather than religious affairs, and individual slaveholders were not morally accountable for slavery as a social system.³³ Many churches were even complicit in the ideological construction of slavery based on the conviction of the inferiority of Black people by setting up "Negro pews" behind "white pews."³⁴ Thus, the silence and even complicity in slavery contradicted the moral high ground of philanthropy claimed by the American Christian churches.

Many abolitionists, especially the Garrisonians, withdrew from established churches that tolerated slavery. These "come-outers" went to the extent of rejecting any human institutions' dominance over another human and solely acknowledged the authority of God.³⁵ Also, as Jesse Olsavsky points out, abolitionists and fugitive slaves developed "creative alternatives to reactionary religion [slavery-tolerating Christianity]" that became a "Theology of Liberation."³⁶ Black minister of the Baptist church and abolitionist Leonard Grime, who kept good ties with Garrison, sheltered runaway slaves and invited all proponents of "the religion of humanity" to share the pulpit with him.³⁷ During the 1830s and 1840s, many radical abolitionists in both Hicksite and Orthodox Quaker denominations, including Garrisonian abolitionist Sarah Grimke, resigned their membership because the Quaker denomination opposed radical abolitionists

³² John R. McKivigan, *The War against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830-1865* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), 18.

³³ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁴ The Negro Pew. "Slavery." *New York Evangelist*, March 11, 1837, 44. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

³⁵ Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought*, 1st ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973), 1-5.

³⁶ quoted in Jesse Olsavsky, *Abolitionists of the Most Absolute Abolition: Runaways, Vigilance Committees, and the Rise of Revolutionary Abolitionism, 1835-1861* (Forthcoming LSU Press, 2022), 94. Quoted with permission of the author.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

members bringing Quakers and non-Quakers, men and women, Black and white people together that could be viewed as “unwise” at that time and utilizing Quaker meeting houses for abolitionist lectures.³⁸ Eventually, these radical abolitionist Quakers formed their own groups—Progressive Friends. Prominent non-Quaker abolitionists, such as Sojourner Truth, Higginson, and Garrison, joined their meetings. Focusing on social and political reform, they opposed all forms of oppression, such as slavery, denial of equal rights for women, and capital punishment. The Progressive Friends resolved their meetings would gladly admit non-Christians, such as Brahmins and Buddhists, and read passages from other religious creeds, such as the Vedas and Confucianism.³⁹ Thus, instead of merely breaking with the slavery-tolerant churches, abolitionism championed universal humanity, which blurred the boundaries between “heathens” and Christians. Unexpectedly, many abolitionists’ open-mindedness towards other religions and animosity with Christian churches provided them a different angle to examine the dynamic relationship between Christians and “heathens” whom nineteenth century American and British missionaries sought to convert.

Abolitionist discourses on India suggest a reexamination of these aspects of Garrisonian abolitionism.⁴⁰ On the one hand, abolitionists’ emphasis on women’s rights and anti-clerical attitudes shaped how they perceived Indian society. On the other, instead of serving merely as a rhetorical device, abolitionist discussion on India also expressed their hopes for social reform in both the US and India.

³⁸ Elizabeth Cazden, “Quakers, Slavery, Anti-Slavery, and Race,” *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, September 1, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199608676.013.0236>.

³⁹ Olsavsky, *Abolitionists of the Most Absolute Abolition*, 94.

⁴⁰ Besides international solidarity, feminism, and anti-clericalism, Garrisonian abolitionism also involved other ideologies and social reforms like utopian perfectionism. Focusing on these few aspects in this section is mainly for practical concerns that abolitionist writings on India mainly engaged with these three aspects of Garrisonian abolitionism.

Abolitionism and other social reforms

Abolitionism was deeply intertwined with the early feminism in the nineteenth century US. Shirley J. Yee fills the gaps of the scholarship on African American history, women's history, and abolitionist history by examining free Black women's participation in the abolitionist struggle in the US between 1828 and 1860.⁴¹ Echoing Yee's observation of the close relationship between feminism and abolitionism, Ellen Carol DuBois traces the origins of the first feminist movement in the US, the nineteenth-century women's suffrage movement, to the women's participation in the abolitionist movement that helped articulate their demands for economic and political rights and acquire political leadership skills.⁴² Unlike DuBois's argument that abolitionism kept abolition-feminists from concentrating on the primary commitment to women's rights in the antebellum period, Jesse Olsavsky's work centralizes the resistance of the enslaved women in the abolition-feminist movement. Olsavsky argues that the "creative dialogues" between female runaways and activists, particularly in the vigilance committees, resulted in a more radical feminism that dared to challenge the foundation of American patriarchal society—slavery.⁴³ This thesis will continue the discussion of Yee, DuBois, and Olsavsky on the interrelationship between abolitionism and feminism. However, instead of examining the role of Black or white abolitionist women in the abolitionist and feminist movement or the dialogue between Vigilance Committees and enslaved women, I will discuss how the abolitionist writings about Indian women also reflected the intertwined agenda of abolition-feminism. More importantly, the incorporation of Indian women into discussion adds more complexities beyond the mere interaction between Black and white women and the

⁴¹ Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*.

⁴² DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*.

⁴³ "Jesse Olsavsky, "Women, Vigilance Committees, and the Rise of Militant Abolitionism, 1835–1859," *Slavery & Abolition* 39, no. 2 (April 3, 2018): 357–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2017.1415669>.

abolition-feminism complex. By integrating Indian women in their discussion, abolitionists broadened their scope of feminism into universal womanhood that transcended not only the racial lens of understanding feminism but also the nineteenth century demarcation between “heathen” women and Christian women. Christian women could even gain the strength of feminism from their supposed degraded “heathen” sisters, and the “heathen” laws could educate Christians in terms of how to treat multi-racial children in the US. The discussion on these “Oriental” women thus suggests a reexamination of Edward Said’s discourse of Orientalism. On the one hand, abolitionists widely utilized Oriental stereotypes towards India by invoking the symbols like *sati*, the Hindu customs of a widow burning herself with her deceased husband. On the other hand, these abolition-feminists found the parallels of “heathen” Indian women in American society, including slaves, Black women, and even the seemingly privileged white women. The distinction between the Other and the self thus blurred.

Besides feminism, religion was a contentious field within abolitionism. Lewis Perry discusses the anarchist religious stance among radical abolitionists— come-outerism, which denied any institutional dominations, including church authority.⁴⁴ Contrary to the emphasis of Perry, John R. McKivigan points out that despite denouncing the slavery-tolerant denominations, abolitionists continued their endeavor of reforming northern churches.⁴⁵ Echoing the observations of Perry, Olsavsky points out that fugitives and abolitionists associated with the Vigilance Committees developed religious alternatives to the slavery-tolerant Christian churches.⁴⁶ Instead of focusing on their efforts in reforming or renouncing Christian churches,

⁴⁴ Perry, *Radical Abolitionism*.

⁴⁵ McKivigan, *The War against Proslavery Religion*.

⁴⁶ quoted in, Jesse Olsavsky, *Abolitionists of the Most Absolute Abolition!: Runaways, Vigilance Committees, and the Rise of Revolutionary Abolitionism, 1835-1861* (Forthcoming LSU Press, 2022). Quoted with permission of the author.

this thesis will broaden the scope of abolitionists' engagement with religions by discussing abolitionist writings on British and American Christian missionaries in India. Overlooking abolitionists' engagement with missionaries' activities in India, scholars miss how abolitionists' critiques of the slavery-tolerant churches could be extended to abolitionists' critiques towards British colonialism, partially justified by the spread of Christianity. Noteworthy is the extension of the abolitionists' critiques towards the Christian churches to abolitionists' acknowledgment of indigenous reforms, which counteracted the Progress brought by Christian missionaries. Abolitionist writings on Christian missionaries in India capture the extent of abolitionists' radicalism in terms of religion. Some abolitionists went to the extent of finding Christian Americans, including the missionaries, sustaining the "heathen" system. Like finding American slaves and women as in the condition of "heathen" Indian women, their critique of missionaries again narrowed the gap between the "heathen" Other and the Christian self.

Besides feminism and anti-clericalism, abolitionists also linked the cause of abolitionism with anti-imperialism. According to Manisha Sinha, abolitionists recognized that the oppression of slaves was linked to other oppressions like imperialist aggressions abroad.⁴⁷ Besides the European revolution of 1848 and the Irish Nationalist movement, as Sinha points out, Garrisonian abolitionists supported the British India Society, founded by British abolitionists including George Thompson, and linked the conditions of the American slaves with oppressed Indians.⁴⁸ Like Sinha, Olsavsky points out that radical abolitionists, from 1830 to 1860, viewed antislavery as "merely one important front in the redemption of the entire world from wrong and oppression."⁴⁹ Olsavsky argues that abolitionists found slaveholders and colonizers of America

⁴⁷ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 339-380.

⁴⁹ Jesse Olsavsky, "American Abolitionists and Anti-Imperialism," Unpublished Manuscript, 2018.

and Britain as a unified ruling class and recognized the “genocidal tendencies of colonialism,” as manifested in the famines in India and Ireland.⁵⁰ This thesis will examine the abolitionists’ solidarity with the oppressed of the world from the perspectives of American abolitionist writings on the British rule in India. This thesis aims to unravel the word “solidarity.” To what extent did the “solidarity” hold still? By not critically assessing abolitionists’ solidarity with the oppressed, Sinha and Olsavsky neglect that American abolitionists sometimes held solidarity with the British colonizers as a result of the sources of their knowledge. Also, solidarity sometimes did not necessarily intend the end of colonial rule; in many times, abolitionists proposed reforms and compensations. Not comparing “solidarity” in the antebellum period with the early twentieth century, these scholars miss how the critiques towards colonialism developed from abolitionist critiques into later anti-imperialist positions.

In the US, there also has been an ongoing debate on whether caste and race can be understood as similar. Early in 1948, Trinidadian-American sociologist Oliver Cromwell Cox pioneeringly differentiated caste from race, chiefly because unlike caste prejudice based on cultural distinction, racial distinction is based on the inalienable physical marks, which people could not give up like abandoning caste.⁵¹ More recently, Isabel Wilkerson finds the shared characteristics of the caste system across Nazi Germany, India, and the US. Wilkerson even argues that “caste” is a more accurate term than “racism” to capture white supremacy in the Jim Crow era in the American South, partially because caste better stresses the fixed hierarchy across races than the mere word “racism.”⁵² However, the debate has been focused on the civil rights struggles and the period after. Very few scholars like Slate addresses how abolitionists, like

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Oliver Cromwell, *Caste, Class, & Race; a Study in Social Dynamics*. (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1970).

⁵² Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, First edition. (New York: Random House, 2020).

Garrison, denounced slavery in the US by labelling it as caste subjugation.⁵³ Nonetheless, Slate misses that these abolitionists sometimes claimed that caste was less brutal than race. More importantly, drawing the parallels between race and caste, abolitionists denounced not only slavery but also Christian churches that tolerated the existence of “caste” in the US while sending missionaries to annihilate the caste system in India. By pointing out the moral hypocrisy of Christian churches, abolitionists challenged the moral authority of Christianity and the hypocritical demarcation between “heathens” and Christians.

Affirming abolitionists’ recognition of the agency of Indians in the nineteenth century was not only solid criticism of the British colonial construction of the passivity of Indians but also valuable lessons for the present in terms of how to deal with the history of the subaltern. Western scholarship had blacked out the Haitian Revolution until the publication of Trinidadian historian C.L.R. James’ crucial work *The Black Jacobins* (1938) in the era of anti-colonial struggles in Africa. Haitian American Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot explained that the erasure of the Haitian Revolution by the West came from the long-held perception of Black people’s inferiority as “subhuman,” and thus, a racial liberation and anti-colonial revolution led by Black people was unthinkable for the West.⁵⁴ Echoing the observation of Trouillot, Aimé Césaire lamented the prevalent “scrutinizing from the perspectives of the white” monopolized all glories to white people in history while creating “separate character” for non-white people in his *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950).⁵⁵ However, early in the nineteenth century, abolitionists have recognized the agency of Indians by acknowledging their voices and more importantly, negated the boundaries across the color line, by acknowledging that the same problems existed in the US

⁵³ Slate, *Lord Cornwallis Is Dead*, 101-118.

⁵⁴ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

⁵⁵ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: MR, 1972), 56.

and India, and sometimes even affirming in some aspects, the problems in the US was even worse than in India.

Theorizing the history of interaction between the East and the West in relation to imperial power structure, Edward Said uses the metaphor of “imaginative geography” to imply the power relationship that, “a line is drawn between two continents. Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant.”⁵⁶ Differentiating the “superior” Western self from the “degraded” East Other from gazes of Europeans, as Said points out, symbolizes not only western self-constructed superiority but also legitimization of the domination of the West over the East. In other words, the Orientalized representation of the East ultimately serves the “Western-style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”⁵⁷ Although abolitionists also employed the Orientalized stereotypes of the East, their writings did not service imperial domination. On the contrary, they found parallels of the degradation of the Orientalized East in their supposedly civilized society and ultimately negated the superiority of the West over the East.

Chapter I, “Nineteenth Century American Abolitionist Writings on Christian Missionaries,” will analyze the writings of Higginson, Wright, Child, other anonymous abolitionists, and a Hindu convert to Christianity, Joguth Chunder Gangooly, on Christian missionary activities in India. American abolitionists mocked the moral supremacy of Christian missionaries who struggled to abolish “heathenism,” the caste system in India while preserving “heathenism,” slavery in the US. Some of these abolitionists further recognized how Christianity could be a force of imperial expansion and suppressed the voices of local people. This chapter will end with a discussion on the abolitionists’ discussion on the British reform on Hindu

⁵⁶ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, vol. First Vintage books edition (New York: Vintage, 1979), 57.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 3.

religious customs and how Higginson recognized the agency of Indian social reformers, such as Rammohun Roy and Keshub Chunder Sen.

Chapter II, “Nineteenth Century American Abolitionist Writings on ‘Heathen’ Women,” will analyze the writings of Child, Sarah Grimke, Pillsbury, Stanton, and Higginson on Indian women. Comparing their writings with their contemporary American Baptist missionary Henry Lyman’s dissertation “Condition and character of females in pagan and Mohammedan countries” (1831), this chapter will argue that these writings on Indian women were closely tied to the abolition-feminist agenda. Although these abolitionists inevitably Orientalized Hindu and Muslim women, they found parallels between Indian women and American women, both Black and white, which challenged missionaries’ narratives of the superior conditions of women in the Christian countries over women in “heathen” countries.

Chapter III, “American Abolitionist Writings on Empire,” discusses how abolitionists perceived the British imperial rule in India. This chapter will discuss how American abolitionists perceived slavery in India and the indentured labor system in the West Indies and debated among themselves about different kinds of colonialism. This chapter will finally transition into the early twentieth century when Pax Americana and Pax Britannica together dominated the rest of the world. After the Civil War, abolitionists like Higginson transitioned from his anti-slavery agitation into anti-imperialist activism. The second and even the third generations of abolitionists also joined the cause of anti-imperialism. This chapter will end with a comparison between American white supremacist Katherine Mayo’s books *Mother India* (1927) and *The isles of fear: the truth about the Philippines* (1925) and the writings of Higginson and the other members of the Anti-Imperialist League on India and the Philippines. The antebellum abolitionist critique of empire evolved into full-fledged anti-colonialism in the early twentieth century.

Chapter 1 Nineteenth Century American Abolitionist

Writings on Christian Missionaries

“One should behave with the natives in a way that it seems they are minor children and immature and the whites are older and responsible.”

—British Prime Minister of the Cape Colony Cecil John Rhodes

“When the missionaries first came to Africa, the ownership of the land was ours. They said, “Let us pray.” We shut our eyes. When we opened them, we saw that we had the Bible in our hands and the land was in their control.”

—Desmond Tutu

The word “heathen” has generally been assumed to be a direct derivative of Gothic “*haiþi*,” or heath, as in “dweller on the heath.”⁵⁸ Around the tenth century, the word “heathen” began to demarcate religious differences. Old English began to use “heathen” to describe individuals who hold religious beliefs, not of Abrahamic religions. Differentiating monotheistic from polytheistic religions, “heathen” gradually became a derogatory word to emphasize the religious deprivation of the non-Christian Other. In 1627, the bishop of Lincoln, R. Sanderson, lamented about the deprivation of a “heathen” who “had not the knowledge of the true God of heaven to direct him.”⁵⁹ In contrast to the supposed moral deprivation of “heathen,” Christians were supposed to possess all the good qualities in the nineteenth century. Even a European who held compassion towards “heathens,” like British writer William Howitt persuaded Christian nations to stop plundering the “heathens” by stressing “our superior knowledge, our superior

⁵⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary*, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/85157?rskey=FOMtWT&result=2#eid>

⁵⁹ Lincoln R. Sanderson, *Serm* (1627).

refinement, our higher virtues, our nobler character.”⁶⁰ Howitt’s words nevertheless captured the ironies between the moral high ground of Christianity and its conquest of “heathens.”

Abolitionists also sensed the contradiction. In Harriet Beecher Stowe’s book *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), St. Clare insists Miss Ophelia continuing to educate Topsy, a young Black slave, saying, “if your Gospel is not strong enough to save one heathen child, that you can have at home here, all to yourself, what’s the use of sending one or two poor missionaries off with it among thousands of just such? I suppose this child is about a fair sample of what thousands of your heathen are.”⁶¹ The words of St. Clare mocked the fact that the nineteenth century missionaries assumed the role of teacher civilizing the passive multitudes of people of color abroad while neglecting domestic “heathen” within Christian America—Black people.

This chapter will discuss the tension between American abolitionists and churches by analyzing abolitionists’ critique of missionary activities amongst Indians. Instead of alienating Indians as “heathen,” American abolitionists made a breach in Orientalist discourse by arguing that slave-holding Christians in the US were not qualified to teach “heathens.” They also challenged colonialism by pointing out the imperialist nature of missionaries. Finally, some abolitionists recognized that the British colonial state and the missionaries were not the only social reformers in India. They acknowledged the role played by Indigenous people and their own epistemologies in bringing reform to their societies.

⁶⁰ William Howitt, *Colonization and Christianity: A Popular History of the Treatment of the Natives by the Europeans in All Their Colonies* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1838), 7.

⁶¹ Beecher Stowe, Harriet. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin: Or, Life among the Lowly* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group, 2014), 365.

Abolitionist knowledge of missionary activities

The aspirations for American missionary activities began when the Second Great Awakening, a Protestant religious revival in the early nineteenth century, stoked feelings of Christian philanthropy across the US.⁶² The work of British missionaries, such as William Carey and Claudius Buchanan, incited great interest among American Christians who read their pamphlets and sermons and funded their missionary works.⁶³ Caught up in missionary zeal, the students at Andover Theological Seminary (American missionary Henry Lyman whom will be discussed in Chapter 2 also graduated from this institution) offered themselves as missionaries, which pushed the inauguration of the foreign missions by American churches.⁶⁴ In 1812, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), the first American foreign missionary society, established in 1810 by New England Congregationalists, sent its first missionaries to Calcutta, India. After arriving in Calcutta, the East India Company (EIC) requested those early Protestant missionaries to leave its jurisdiction. However, in the next year, the renewed charter of the Company included the pious clause which officially allowed missionaries to come to India. Afterwards, the American mission in India developed both in the expansion of regions and numbers of denominations. The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions expanded its mission stations from Punjab to the North-Western Provinces of the country. The EIC commissioner Francis Jenkins even invited American Baptists to convert tea-growing laborers in Assam in 1836.⁶⁵ Besides the orthodox churches, some unorthodox religious

⁶² Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism*, 30.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 32-33.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 34.

⁶⁵ Anupama Ghosh, "Conversions, Education And Linguistic Identity In Assam the American Baptists Missionaries, 1830S-1890," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 72 (2011): 863–74,871. Jayeeta Sharma, *Empire's Garden: Assam and the Making of India* (Duke University Press, 2011),144.

sects, such as the Unitarians and Friends and the American Friends, also came to India. Thus, nineteenth century American missionaries' activities in India expanded under both missionary zeal in the US and British official support.

Abolitionists had long been in tension with American missionary societies because of the societies' toleration of slavery. In one instance, the ABCFM defended missionaries' independence to judge each applicant for church membership based on personal piety, making slaveholders eligible to the churches in the 1845 annual meeting in Brooklyn, New York.⁶⁶ Disillusioned with missionary societies, Christian abolitionists Lewis Tappan, George Whipple, and Simeon S. Jocelyn founded their own antislavery missionary societies, such as the Protestant-based abolitionist group, American Missionary Association (AMA) in 1846. The AMA resolved never to "receive the known fruits of unrequited labor or to welcome to its employment those who held their fellow beings as slaves."⁶⁷ Garrisonian abolitionists affirmed that the AMA provided abolitionists with a channel for contributing to Christian mission without complicity with slavery.⁶⁸ They founded missions of religious conversion in Kansas, and other western territories within North America, West Indies, and Kaw-Mendi, Africa.⁶⁹

Regardless of many missionaries' tolerant attitude towards slavery, American abolitionist newspapers keenly followed missionaries' activities. American abolitionists also extensively read on the rich publications of the British evangelists in India, such as the *Friend of India*, a Baptist missionary newspaper published in Serampore, and reprinted these materials in their

⁶⁶ McKivigan, *The War against Proslavery Religion*, 113.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 114.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 116-117.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 16. And also see "American Missionary Association." *National Era*, October 21, 1847. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

newspapers.⁷⁰ The *Liberator* published the address of Foreign Secretary of the English Baptist Missionary Society, Edward Beane Underhill, who reported the progress of conversion in the West Indies and India and confirmed “increased interest of the Hindoo mind in regard to Christianity.”⁷¹ Another article from the *Liberator* titled “Great Excitement in Calcutta” published a letter from Scottish Presbyterian missionary Alexander Duff to members of the Mission School regarding conversion in India. The letter vividly characterized the fear among the Hindu community in Calcutta towards the mass conversion of 1200 Hindu youths into Christianity, saying, “the fear that Hinduism itself was on the eve of annihilation, spread such consternation throughout the city, that the cry of *down with Christianity—down with the Missionaries—and down with the Free Church Institution*—echoed from every bazaar and every street in the city.”⁷² The *Liberator* also published the writings of Hindu converts to Christianity, such as the writings of Joguth Chunder Gangooly.

Besides a comprehensive knowledge of British and Scottish missionaries and individual converts, American abolitionists also followed the American missionary activities in India. Presbyterian anti-slavery weekly newspaper, the *New York Evangelist*, promoted the book, *Christian Brahmun; or, Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Character of the Converted Brahmun Babajee* (1836) written by an American missionary to India, Rev. Hollis Reed on his Hindu convert to Christianity, Babajee.⁷³ The official publication of the Maine Anti-slavery Society, the *Liberty Standard*, also published letters from American missionaries in India to Tappan in 1843

⁷⁰ Andrea Major, *Slavery, Abolitionism and Empire in India, 1772–1843* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 246-285. Serampore is a city of Hooghly district in the Indian state of West Bengal.

⁷¹ “Missions and Emancipation in the West Indies.” *Liberator*, August 3, 1860, 124. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

⁷² “Great Excitement in Calcutta.” *Liberator*, January 16, 1846, 12. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

⁷³ “Memoir of Babajee, or the Christian Brahmun; by Rev. Hollis Reed, American Missionary to India.” *New York Evangelist*, December 9, 1837, 198. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

that celebrated the abolition of slavery in India.⁷⁴ The open support of American missionaries for abolitionism was very few; instead, most abolitionist newspapers criticized American missionaries in India for tolerating slavery.

The missionary teachers versus “heathen” pupils

The Charter Act of 1813 stipulated that the British Empire was obligated to introduce among Indians “useful knowledge, and... religious and moral improvement.”⁷⁵ The resolution manifested the hubris of Christian philanthropy by assuming that the British Empire was not obligated to instruct its citizens in Britain but faraway Indians instead.⁷⁶ The plan of educating Indians came to be realized in 1854, when Wood’s Education Despatch gave grants to individuals and organizations to fund English education for the Indian elite classes and vernacular education conducted in the native languages, like Bengali, for the masses. Based on the criteria of promoting “modernity,” missionary schools disproportionately received more grants than the schools run by Indians.⁷⁷ Thus, although missionary education had its root in its religious conviction that basic literacy was the precondition for a well-informed conversion, it coincided with the British imperialist agenda of modernizing India. American abolitionists spotted the complicity of missionaries in imperial designs.

Instead of praising missionaries for bringing education in India, abolitionists mocked the American missionaries’ negligence of the sufferings of slaves at home. An article titled “Truism”

⁷⁴ “The Heathen of Africa are Better Men Than Many American Professed Christians! Look at the Following.” *Liberty Standard*, November 23, 1843. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

⁷⁵ Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, Social Foundations of Aesthetic Forms Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 24.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 24.

⁷⁷ Sibaji Bandyopadhyay, *The Gopal-Rakhal Dialectic: Colonialism and Children’s Literature in Bengal*, trans. Rani Ray and Nivedita Sen (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2015), 78-79.

in the *Liberator* in 1831 mocked the hypocrisy of the Northerners who “have no right to alleviate physical suffering, or illumine spiritual darkness, at the south, but they have a right to assist the Greeks, or the Hindoos, or any foreign nation.”⁷⁸ Another article titled “timidity in churches” published in *Friend of Man*, the newspaper of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, also pointed out the hypocrisy of the preachers in Northern churches in 1837. These preachers “may pray for the Hottentot and Hindoo” but “dare not send to heaven a single petition for more than two million of his fellow-countrymen, who are among the most ignorant, degraded, destitute, wretched, and oppressed of all God’s creatures.”⁷⁹ American abolitionist Henry C. Wright scathingly captured the sharp contrast between the sympathy towards “heathens” and intentional negligence of the suffering of slaves. He portrayed Southern slaveholders who “could weep over the intellectual, moral, and spiritual degradation of the Hindoo; but would punish with death all who attempt to remove the intellectual, moral, and spiritual degradation of their slaves.”⁸⁰ By revealing the preferences for Hindus over slaves among Northerners, preachers, and Southern slaveholders, these abolitionists mocked the moral hypocrisy of Christian philanthropy. On the one hand, abolitionists argued that Christians claimed their moral high ground by aiding “heathens.” On the other hand, abolitionists pointed out that these Christians refused to sacrifice their unjust personal interests, such as donations from slaveholders and profits from the toiling of slaves and lacked the courage to confront slavery. These hypocrites thus debased their Christian moral principles out of greed and cowardice.

⁷⁸ “Truisms.” *Liberator*, January 8, 1831. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

⁷⁹ “Timidity in Churches.” *Friend of Man*, January 26, 1837, 128. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

⁸⁰ Henry C. Wright, “Letter from Henry C. Wright.” *Liberator*, June 11, 1847, 95. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

Abolitionists further attacked many Christians' toleration of slavery by pointing out the similarities between slavery in the American South and the "heathenism" abroad that those missionary apologists of slavery sought to eradicate. In the *Liberator*, an author under the pen name "M" in 1845 blamed Christians who "profess[ed] so much anxiety to do away heathenism, that they nurture, sustain and defend the great heathen-making system of Slavery."⁸¹ Drawing the parallels between slavery and "heathenism," "M" appealed to the Christian consciousness for the abolition of slavery, which made the slaves "heathens," whom missionaries aimed to elevate from their deplorable conditions. Anglican missionaries adopted a similar strategy by identifying the British working class as "heathens" within British society to encourage the spread of the gospel among the working class and ultimately integrate them into Christian societies.⁸² Contradictorily, the construction of the working class as "heathen" at the same time drew a demarcation line between "heathens" and Christians by claiming exclusive possession of civilization to Christians that the "heathens" had to make themselves Christians.

"M"'s perception of morally impeccable (true) Christians versus "heathens" who tolerated human subjugation seemed to justify the stereotypes of missionaries towards Indians as students and children. For example, missionaries attributed the success of conversion to arousing the curiosity of child-like "heathens" in Christianity through the literary mode of parables and storytelling in the Bible.⁸³ Missionaries also employed the educational model of Swiss educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi's "object lesson" that consisted of using a physical object or visual aid as a discussion piece for a class. Missionaries thus aimed to cultivate in "heathens" abstract

⁸¹ M. "Reformatory." *Liberator*, February 7, 1845, 24. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

⁸² Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions & the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford, United States: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1. Brian K. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?: Britons, Indians, and Colonial Construction of Religion* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2005), 32.

⁸³ Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, 84.

thinking skills that missionaries thought would help the students to perceive the superiority of Christianity as a religion observing God over “heathenism” solely worshipping “idols.”⁸⁴ Nevertheless, one of the most popular strategies of conversion was to educate “heathens” in Western science and philosophy, by which missionaries hoped the “heathens” could expose the falsity of Hinduism and become Christians “without knowing it.”⁸⁵ The diverse strategies of conversion by education reflected how missionaries constructed themselves as the sophisticated teachers educating simple-minded “heathen” students who were even supposedly unaware that they were becoming Christians.

The self-appropriated position of the teacher silenced the agency of Indians. The biographies of native converts, mostly written by missionaries like the memoirs on the Brahmin convert to Christianity Babajee, usually narrated conversion as a one-dimensional experience, such as being horrified by the Hindu religion or impressed by Victorian ideals in the case of high caste female converts.⁸⁶ However, the narratives of the missionaries failed to show the agency of natives in interacting with Christianity. Perceiving conversion to Christianity as a symbol of a double surrender to a foreign faith and political order, Bengali Hindu conservatives forcibly teased the few cases of Christian converts in their satires.⁸⁷ Faced with the opposition from their community, many converts characterized themselves as “romantic rebels” with the political agenda of reforming Hindu society.⁸⁸ However, missionaries’ discourse on Hindu converts

⁸⁴ Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion: Missionary Education and the Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 61-80.

⁸⁵ Dhrupadi Chattopadhyay, “Of Myths and Modernities: Literature by the Christian Converts of Nineteenth-Century Bengal” (doctorate thesis, Heidelberg University, 2013), 9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 79.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 30.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 92.

reinforced the colonial stereotypes of the passive Other by silencing the myriad ways that Indians interacted with Christianity.

American abolitionists tried to acknowledge some of the native agency in conversion by giving platforms to one of such Hindu converts to Christianity—Joguth Chunder Gangooly. The *Liberator* promoted his autobiography, *Life and Religion of the Hindoos* (1860). The *Liberator* emphasized the authorship of Gangooly, who “can have no motive to misstate facts as they really exist,” in contrast to the missionaries who “often exaggerate what they attempt to describe” to collect money.⁸⁹ Gangooly points out in his biography that the fear among Hindus towards British conquests, such as his mother’s condemnation of British robbing of the “poor Runjit Serigh, the Queen of Nagpoor,” drove him to study Christianity to expose its errors.⁹⁰ Instead of being initiated by missionaries, he asked for a copy of “Sermon on the Mount” from some lower caste people and made some kites for a Brahmin boy in exchange for the *New Testament*.⁹¹ His conversion into Christianity was a conscious choice, as shown in his extensive comparison between the Hindu Gods and Christ in his autobiography. More importantly, Gangooly’s investigation of Christian scriptures made him distinguish between the bloodthirsty Christians who made colonial conquest and faithful Christians.⁹² By recommending their readers to know India from the perspective of a native Indian who converted himself into Christianity, the authors of the *Liberator* recognized the agency of Hindu converts whose voices have been suppressed by

⁸⁹ Joguth Chunder Gangooly, “New Publications.” *Liberator*, November 2, 1860. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

⁹⁰ Joguth Chunder Gangooly, *Life and Religion of the Hindoos. With a Sketch of My Life and Experience*. (Boston (U.S.A.): Crosby, Nichols, Lee, & co., 1860), 223.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 222-225.

missionaries, and mocked British converting Hindus into Christianity through colonial conquest that aroused the interest of Hindus in exposing the errors of Christianity.

Gangooly's ideas of Christianity reflected an alternative understanding of Christianity to the monopoly of civilization, refinement, and morality by white men, as prevalent in the nineteenth century. For Gangooly, the superiority of Christianity was manifested in its "search the innermost parts of his heart" rather than obsessing with symbolism and rituals as in Hinduism.⁹³ However, Gangooly also expressed disappointment at "many absurd doctrines, that pass under the name of Christian," which once caused him to leave Hinduism.⁹⁴ Gangooly also did not draw a clear distinction between "heathens" and Christians. Instead, he criticized the "injudicious" preaching of missionaries who came to India from the West who thought that "anything outside the Bible is *humbug, untrue, nonsensical*."⁹⁵ Instead, Gangooly advocated missionaries to appeal to the Hindu scriptures rather than "Isaiah, Job, or Solomon" to convert Indian masses.⁹⁶ Like his contemporary transcendentalists considering non-Christian religious scriptures as bibles of other nations, Gangooly found that some Hindu creeds also manifested a similar spirit of Christ.⁹⁷ Thus, instead of being passively converted, Gangooly sought western Christian missionaries to understand more about Hinduism. By recognizing such unique voices, abolitionists themselves exceeded the frame of equating Christianity with the West and challenged the antithetical categories of Christians and "heathens."

⁹³ Ibid, 141.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 247.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 305.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

To further challenge missionaries, abolitionists went to the extent of conjuring the voices of Indians in disapproving the moral authority of Christian missionaries and denouncing the conducts of Christian “teachers.” The *Liberator* published the speech of Minister of Acton, Massachusetts Evangelical Society James T. Woodbury before the New-England Anti-Slavery Convention in 1836. In the speech, Woodbury criticized the hypocrisy of the Virginia Bible Society:

His very Bibles, which he sends to the Hindoo, are brought with the blood and souls of his slaves...I wish it were written on every Bible sent forth by Bible societies of slaveholders—‘this was brought with the blood of our slaves, who are not permitted to read it!’ ... Sir, it is a Bible-robbing society! It begins with robbing the slave of the Bible and then takes the earnings of the slaves to buy Bibles to send to the heathen! It robs the Christian here of the Bible, to send it to the worshipper of Juggernaut in India.⁹⁸

By pointing out the irony of how the labor of slaves supported Indians reading the Bible, Woodbury negated the moral superiority of missionaries who discriminatively “robbed” the Bible from Christian slaves to “heathens.” Woodbury then imagined the response of “heathens” towards the robbed Bible that “‘Go home with your Bible, and first learn from it to free your slaves, before you send it here to teach us’ ... If this is Christianity, well might the heathen say, God defend us from such Christianity!”⁹⁹ Thus, abolitionists imagined that instead of being enlightened by Christian missionaries, Indians educated missionaries on abolitionism, thus reversing the prescribed role of missionary teachers and “heathen” pupils.

Another article published in 1840 from the abolitionist newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, criticized the committee of the ABCFM for rejecting a petition that suggested

⁹⁸ “Abolition and Reverend Woodbury,” *Action Historical Society*, February 3, 2018. <https://www.actonhistoricalsociety.org/blog/abolition-and-reverend-woodbury>

⁹⁹ “‘Hard Language:’ ‘Unsparing Denunciation!’” *Liberator*, September 8, 1837, 146. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*. “Selections.” *Liberator*, August 28, 1857. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

disallowing slaveholding agents to solicit contributions. The article pointed out that the money paid for missionaries who came to India “was procured by heathenizing the natives of the very land from which that teacher came.”¹⁰⁰ By pointing out the injustice done to the slaves, the article went on and imagined that “heathens” rejected the teachings of missionaries, saying, “Would he[missionary] not be told, if your religion tolerates such wickedness we want none of it; and if it does not, your own countrymen— aye, your own professed Christians—require your efforts for their conversion; — teach them to obey its mandates, before you come—sent by them with the price of blood—in instruct us.”¹⁰¹ By crafting the narratives of Hindus rejecting the Bibles from American missionaries, abolitionists destructed the moral superiority of many American Christian philanthropists who unjustly exploited slaves to get money for conducting conversion abroad. Also, abolitionists conjured the agency of “heathens” by imagining them opposing the teachings of missionaries. Edward Said points out in his book *Orientalism* that the Occident arrogated themselves the role of the teacher while the Orient as disciples.¹⁰² Abolitionists disputed the patronizing attitude of the West towards the East by challenging the moral authority of the teachers through voicing dissents from their stereotypically obedient “heathen” students.

However, this strategy of imagination had its limitations. To some extent, abolitionists recognized the agency of Indians by imagining them rejecting the instructions of western missionaries. Such enactment of Indian voices was nevertheless problematic as Indians were not participating in this rhetorical flourish. Abolitionists were merely imputing Indian voices to

¹⁰⁰ the Pennsylvania Freeman. “American Board and Slavery.” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, October 22, 1840. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Said, *Orientalism*, 125.

bolster their arguments against slavery in the US rather than reflecting on many Indians' concerns over Christian missionary activities like interfering with local religious faiths.

On rare occasions, abolitionist newspapers even teased out traces of what Indians were thinking from missionary sources. The *Liberty Standard* published a letter from an anonymous American missionary in India in 1846. The missionary urged the abolition of slavery in the US because “the wild Karens” (presumably people from the Karana caste in Eastern India) were afraid of becoming slaves in the US, inquiring the missionary that “If we become disciples, when you get a large number of us, you intend to entice us away and make slaves of us in your country.”¹⁰³ The words of “the wild Karens” questioned why Indians should become Christians, especially given that many white Christians committed such horrible crimes against their fellow Black Christians in the US. Thus, despite their access to limited sources, abolitionists tried to find out the voices of those “obedient” Indians whose traces of vices had been suppressed by the predominant missionary discourse.

They further challenged authority of missionary teachers by exposing missionaries' double standards of suppressing free speech in the US while championing it in India. In 1842, the *Liberator* published the resolution adopted by the meeting of the members of Garrisonian abolitionist society, the Northampton Association of Education and Industry and others for the case of T.P. Beach. At the behest of the Baptist church of Danvers and the Quaker Society of Lynn, Beach was imprisoned for disrupting their church services by advocating discussion of the slavery issue.¹⁰⁴ The resolution mocked Christian societies as the imprisonment of Beach for his

¹⁰³ “Go Back, Thou Hypocrite.” *Liberty Standard*, April 30, 1846. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

¹⁰⁴ Hutchinson Family (Singers), *Excelsior: Journals of the Hutchinson Family Singers, 1842-1846*, ed. Dale Cockrell (Pendragon Press, 1989), 94.

free speech contradicted with the frequent and free interventions conducted by missionaries in other religious ceremonies of non-Christian population in the East, saying, “this exclusive appropriation of the right of speech in religious assemblies is inconsistent with the practice of Christian missionaries in the East, sent, educated and supported by the churches of America.”¹⁰⁵ The article depicts the actual practices of how Christian missionaries intervened in Indian religious assemblies —missionaries “[drew] away the attention of multitudes from the superstitious observances in which they [were] engaged, by extemporaneous addresses and the distribution of tracts on the evidences and excellencies of the gospel, and thus exposing themselves to the contumely and insults of an ignorant and excited people, and of an interested priesthood, rendered rabid and revengeful by this interference.”¹⁰⁶ The *Liberator* pointed out the irony that missionaries arrogated themselves the role of freely intervening in Hindu rituals while opposing the motion of a fellow Christian, which was out of the moral concern of abolishing slavery. By juxtaposing the opposition of Indians towards missionaries’ intervention with the opposition of missionaries to discussing slavery in America, this article blurred the boundaries between Christian selves and “heathen” Other. More importantly, abolitionists implied that missionaries were even worse than “heathens” whom they aimed to educate because of their double standards. Thus, although the article relied on the stereotypes of how “heathens” frantically rejected Christianity, the article ultimately negated the authority of Christian “teachers.”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ “Freedom of Speech.” *Liberator*, November 25, 1842. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

Where were the missionaries for caste America?

Many missionaries perceived the Indians' fear of losing caste that could incur banishment from ones' community as the chief impediment to conversion.¹⁰⁷ The dismantling of caste was necessary, given that missionaries perceived caste as a tool of Brahmins to exploit the masses. For example, early in 1808, London evangelical periodical *Christian Observer* noted that "A Brahmin may seize without hesitation, if he be in distress for a subsistence, the goods of his Sudra slave, for as that slave can have no property, his master may take his goods."¹⁰⁸ Thus, according to many missionaries, caste along with *sati* and infanticide became the defining feature of oppressive "heathenism" that Brahmin priests could exert arbitrary power over the low castes and women in India.¹⁰⁹ Missionaries challenged the caste system by means, such as distributing anti-caste pamphlets and, more importantly, establishing mix-caste schools in India to challenge the monopoly of education by high caste men.¹¹⁰ Devoted to eradicating caste, the proof of the degraded Other, missionaries seemed to champion equality, which abolitionists found not to be the case.

Despite missionaries' efforts of abolishing the caste system in India, abolitionists found the counterpart of caste in America—racial hierarchy. A pamphlet titled "Caste" published in 1839 by the American Anti-Slavery Society found the parallels between keeping low castes out of Hindu temples and "**** seats" in the US church, and how segregated burial grounds between Black and white people corresponded to the notion of avoiding "pollution" across different

¹⁰⁷ Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2001),131.

¹⁰⁸ Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion*, 28.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 26.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 28.

castes in India.¹¹¹ An article from the New York abolitionist newspaper, the *Principia*, in 1860 found similarities between the American “caste” system and the Indian caste system, as explained by American missionary Dr. Scudder, saying:

Caste, said Dr. Scudder, is, originally and essentially a *religious* institution, responding upon the sacred books, for its authority, though protected and enforced by the civil power. This reminded us that the *American* caste system reposes on perverted interpretations of our Scriptures, and is sanctioned by a corrupted religion, otherwise it could not be maintained by the State. The Soodrahs[Sudras] like our slaves, are not permitted to read or hear the “Sacred books,” of their country, but must learn their duty only from their superiors. They may not intermarry with the higher castes, and can own no property, *except dogs* (Our slaves are not even permitted to own *them!*) The contempt of a Brahmin for a Soodrah, knows no bounds, while cows, peacocks and monkeys, are objects of adoration. (“No rights that a white man is bound to respect!”)¹¹²

According to the article, Indian low castes and Black people faced similar dilemmas of lacking property rights, facing oppression from their “superiors,” and both Hinduism and Christianity sanctioned their degradations. By pointing out how both these religions tolerated subjugation of low caste and Black people, the article aimed to strike readers’ compassion towards the Black people who were equally subjected to the American version of a caste system. Thus, although abolitionists relied on the speech of the missionary for the oppressive nature of the caste system in India, their invocation of caste was to reveal how oppressive the slavery system was in the US rather than merely criticizing the “heathen” practices. Instead of expressing the moral superiority of Christians, the article mocked the “heathen” system of caste that an American missionary sought to eradicate in India also existed in Christian America.

The irony of American missionaries criticizing the caste system in India was also well-captured by American abolitionist Charles K. Whipple. In a letter to the editors of the

¹¹¹ American Anti-Slavery Society, “Caste,” (New York: R.G. Williams, 1839?).

¹¹² “Dr. Scudder’s Lectures on India.” *Principia*, February 4, 1860, 93. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

Congregationalist in 1860, Whipple argued that “in a city and a country where black men are subjected to various contemptuous and oppressive disabilities on account of their color, while at the same time, that city and country are sending missionaries to break down the institution of *caste* in India.”¹¹³ In other words, Whipple pointed out the moral hypocrisy of missionaries who intended to abolish *caste* in India while neglecting the racial hierarchy at home. Whipple went on to question that since missionaries deemed preserving *caste* after conversion as unchristian, how could they preserve racial hierarchy in American churches. He enquired, “If a body of converts in Calcutta should form themselves into a church, adopting the creed and covenants of the Rowe Street Baptist Church, and living as nearly in conformity to those documents as the Rowe Street church-members do, with the single exception of maintaining the Hindoo system of *caste*, in theory and practice, would you call that an ‘evangelical’ church?”¹¹⁴ In other words, given that *caste* prevented “heathens” from Christianity, racial discrimination could equally prevent the churches from the Christian principles of egalitarianism. Thus, Whipple dismantled the moral superiority of Christians whose toleration of slavery made them the same as *caste* “heathens.”

Some abolitionists made a bolder claim that *caste* was much more humane than racial hierarchy by using the example of social stigma faced by freed Black people. In an article published in the abolitionist newspaper, the *New York Evangelist* in 1837, the author with the pen name “the Negro Pew,” contended that *caste* was more humane than race, by arguing, “[*caste*] would permit the aged, decrepit, deaf brother, to sit, on one side or the other, near enough to the minister to hear the sound of his voice. But not so with American *caste*. No matter how old, decrepit, or deaf, a man or woman may be, if he has a dark skin and a woolly head, he must

¹¹³ “Church-Craft in Defence of Cast.” *Liberator*, January 6, 1860, 2. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

hobble up gallery, and seat himself in the negro's corner."¹¹⁵ The argument of "the Negro Pew" that the maintenance of racial segregation in the US was much more rigid than caste segregation in India was not fully accurate. However, the comparison helped dismantle the moral superiority of Christians who never associated themselves as being more inhumane than "heathens."

Another anonymous author also lamented in the *Principia* in 1860 that "Hindoo caste vanishes, for the time being, in the Hindoo temple—in the presence of Juggernaut. American caste, in Christian Assembly, in the presence of Jehovah, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, erects her altar, the negro pew. Thus supreme, thus unparalleled, is the power of the American slaveholder, in the contrast with the power of the *Cheteree* [Kshatriya] or the *Brahmin*."¹¹⁶ By imagining the dismantling of the caste system in India but the preserving of racial hierarchy in the US, the author claimed that the power of slaveholders was even more potent than the stereotypically "despot" Brahmins. These slaveholders even overruled God by contradicting His will of equality before Him by creating a separate pew for so called inferior people. The author thus called for missionary teachers to help eliminate human oppression in the US, by asking, "where shall we find such Missionaries for the United States of America?"¹¹⁷ The author soon realized the gloomy reality of abolishing "caste" in the US as some missionaries who condemned slavery were imprisoned and even exiled from the American South.¹¹⁸ Thus, appealing to the stereotypes of the caste system and Oriental "despots" of India, some abolitionists appealed to

¹¹⁵ The Negro Pew. "Slavery." *New York Evangelist*, March 11, 1837, 44. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

¹¹⁶ "Prospectus." *Principia*, May 5, 1860, 194+. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the consciousness of American Christians who sent missionaries to India to abolish their caste system while remaking the “heathen” system in the US.

An incident narrated in the *Liberator* in 1849 also accused the rule of slavery over the gospel. A New Orleans colporteur faced criminal charges because of “simplicity of his nature, remembering that the Bible was given to the Hindoo and South African, did not dream it wrong to give the Bible to a free negro in that city.”¹¹⁹ In denying the Bible to slaves, the Judge, the article to concluded, was representing “institutions in that State which were dearer than the gospel!”¹²⁰ Like Beach who was imprisoned for proposing to discuss slavery, the colporteur was trailed for merely distributing the Bible to free Black people in the South. In revealing that “heathens” could read the Bible but Black people could not, the article pointed out how slavery compromised the moral principles of Christianity: the spread of the gospel was subjected to the material interest of slaveholders. Thus, the distortion of Christian moral principles by slavery questioned the teaching eligibility of missionaries among “heathens” who shared a similar form of human subjugation.

American abolitionists and British Reform on *sati* and infanticide in India

Disappointed by the slavery-tolerant churches, many abolitionists chose to seek alternatives to the established churches in the US and found inspiration in the reforms on religious practices in India. American pacifist, anarchist, and feminist Henry Clarke Wright (1797–1870) was one of these abolitionists. He championed radical religion, as he argued that the Revelation of God

¹¹⁹ “In Giving a Sketch of the Late Anniversary of the American Anti-Slavery Society, in the Broadway Tabernacle, the New York Evangelist says.” *Liberator*, May 25, 1849. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*. Colporteur is someone employed by a religious society to distribute Bibles and other religious tracts.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

could only be found in Human Nature.¹²¹ According to Wright, “The Bible, the Koran, the Shaster [Hindu scriptures], and all books, are true and useful, just so far as they [practitioners of the religions] accord with the teachings of that book written on the body and soul of each human being.”¹²² In other words, Wright stressed the actual faithful observance of Human Nature over disputing the differences across religious theologies. At the 1851 New England Anti-Slavery Convention, Wright determined that moral rather than theological grounds determined the eligibility of participants and welcomed all religious sects, such as Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and even Atheists, to the anti-slavery efforts.¹²³ What Wright denounced was American Christian churches that tolerated slavery, saying that he “longed to see the day when the world will loathe and abhor the religion which sanctions slavery, and the preachers of that religion.”¹²⁴ Thus, Wright held tolerant attitudes towards many religions other than Christianity and accepted morality as the determining criteria for evaluating a religion.

However, Wright could not get away from Orientalizing the practices of Hinduism. In the letter to American minister and abolitionist Amos A. Phelps in 1841, Wright argued that slavery-tolerant ministers “are no more ministers of Christ than are the priests of Juggernaut [Hindu God]” and the religion taught by those ministers “has no more affinity to that which Jesus taught, than has the religion of the Hindoo”¹²⁵ Invoking the parallels between pro-slavery Christian ministers and Hindu priests, Wright questioned the moral high ground of Christianity. Despite his affirmation of radical religion that seemed to renounce prejudice against eastern religions,

¹²¹ “Funeral Discourse by Henry C. Wright.” *Liberator*, October 15, 1852, 168. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ “Plain Language.” *Liberator*, June 20, 1851, 99. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

¹²⁵ Henry C. Wright, “Communications.” *Liberator*, May 7, 1841, 74. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

Wright's argument that slavery-tolerated Christianity resembled more with Hinduism implied that unconsciously he could not get away from the widely held perception of the superiority of Christianity over Hinduism.

Wright's assumption of human subjugation within Hinduism did not resemble the views of the British metropolitan Whigs and evangelists. Lobbying for the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act, the Whigs justified abolishing slavery in the West Indies by proposing to replace slave laborers in the West Indies with Indian "free" laborers, despite the actual existence of agricultural slaves in India.¹²⁶ I will further elaborate on the colonial labor system in Chapter 3. Instead of regarding India as a "free" soil, Wright acknowledged "slavery" in India but conceptualized it in the form of human oppression, which was similar to the metropolitan evangelical position that Hinduism as a religion was the source of enslavement in India.¹²⁷ However, unlike those evangelicals, Hinduism could also be a source of abolitionism for Wright. Wright argued that "If the Hindoo saw and worshipped God in every other human being as he does in Crishna, how soon would his contempt and wrong-doing towards all others cease!"¹²⁸ Wright then went on and criticized how slavery wronged God, who manifested in each human being, including slaves, saying, "The scorn, contempt and outrage done to the slave, by American Christians, are done to God in the same sense in which the wrongs done to Christ by Judas and Pilate were done to God."¹²⁹ By referencing Hindu scriptures, Wright equated slaves with God, thus elevating the humanity of the slaves who had been degraded. Thus, unlike the Whigs and evangelicals denying the actual existence of slavery in India or conceptualizing Hinduism as an enslaving system, Wright

¹²⁶ Sell, *Trouble of the World*, 44.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 250.

¹²⁸ Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, 77.

¹²⁹ Henry C. Wright, "Fact and Fiction in Religion." *Liberator*, July 29, 1859, 120. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

acknowledged the existence of human oppression in India but at the same time resorting to Hindu scriptures to justify the abolition of slavery. The “heathen” scriptures could also teach American Christians how they wronged slaves who shared the equal manifestations of God with them.

Wright’s affirmation of the Hindu creed did not free him from his patronizing stances towards slaves. He appropriated his role as “a Messiah, a Savior, to the slave, to redeem him from his wrongs, and to the slaveholder, to redeem him from his deep and horrid sins.”¹³⁰ By envisioning abolitionists as saviors, he denied the agency of slaves who made their efforts towards their own liberation by means like fleeing away from the Southern plantations. However, the white savior mentality might be resulted from Wright’s practical concern for utilizing religious rhetoric to eulogize abolitionism and thus stir public support.

The paternal attitude resurfaced again in his support for British reform in India. In his letter to Garrison in 1860, Wright viewed the British abolishing *sati* as a defense of humanity, saying:

It is the right and duty of every human being, and every combination of human beings, to seek the destruction of all customs and institutions, of all religions and governments, and of all churches and States, that cannot exist except by outraging our common humanity, as it is represented in the poorest and most despised and most deformed of human kind...England interfered, by law and the sword, to abolish the practice in India of burning widows on the funeral pile of their husbands, simply because it was inhuman; and all nations, even slaveholding America, said Amen.¹³¹

After revealing his anarchist stance of destroying those human institutions that outraged humanity, Wright then gave a counterexample of fulfilling the duty of “defense of Humanity” that the British abolished *sati*. Although Wight would surely condemn the British for inhuman

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Henry C. Wright, “Ho! to the Rescue---All!” *Liberator*, October 26, 1860, 172. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

practices, and his defense for the British ban on *sati* was fair, he silenced the efforts of Indian reformers like Rammohun Roy in abolishing *sati*. Crediting the social reform solely to English colonial law, Wright seemed to echo the words of British imperial poet laureate Rudyard Kipling that “It is the responsibility of white men to enable the evolution of black men” while denying the agency of Indians who seemed to rely on their colonizers for reform.¹³²

Like the accounts of Wright, another article published in 1845 in the *Liberator* by an anonymous author acknowledged the role of English Member of Parliament and abolitionist T. Fowell Buxton and Governor-General of India Lord Bentinck in abolishing *sati* in India. The author argued that the abolition of *sati* carried out by two British reformers symbolized the imperial humanism, saying:

A multitude of Hindoo women, who otherwise would have been compelled to endure the horrors of the burning pile, but have found a happy immunity from suffering under the benevolent protection of Great Britain, are in a very considerable degree indebted for that immunity to the fervent pity, determined zeal, and unwearied industry of this Christian philanthropist.¹³³

Attributing the credit for abolishing *sati* solely to the British not only indirectly bolstered claims of Christian superiority but also silenced the agency of Indians in social reform. The triumph of imperial benevolence over native cruelty also silenced why the Indian community resisted the abolition of *sati*. Hindu conservatives like the leaders of Dharma Sabha, an orthodox Hindu association formed to oppose the British ban of *sati*, did not defend *sati*; instead, their opposition to the abolition of *sati* was based on preserving Hindu religious identity against Western legal interference.¹³⁴ Thus, the imperialist narratives of two British colonial officials saved “a

¹³² Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man's Burden,” 1899.

¹³³ “Biographical Notice of the Late Sir T. Fowell Buxton, Bt.” *Liberator*, May 2, 1845. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

¹³⁴ Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, Fourth edition (New York: Routledge, 2018), 71.

multitude of Hindoo women” brutally denied the agency of Indians who seemed to accept the British reform passively.

Lydia Maria Child also solely credited the British government for abolishing *sati*. She pointed out in her book *The History of the Condition of Women* (1835) that “The English government have made great exertions to abolish this abominable practice, and it is now prohibited by law in every part of British India.”¹³⁵ Eulogizing the British law outlawing *sati*, Child, like Wright and the anonymous author, constructed the British as omnipotent guardian of India. She repeated the similar trope of the omnipotent British guardian in her description of how the British stopped infanticide. According to Child, “the natives were very stubborn in their prejudices” of “the natural inferiority of females, the great responsibility which attended their bringing up, and the expense incident upon their marriages.”¹³⁶ Finally, “aided by the influence of certain solemn sentences from some of their sacred books,” the British persuaded local Indians to abolish infanticide.¹³⁷

Then Child went on and described the result of the abolition of the infanticide:

A year or two after, many of the Jarejah fathers and mothers brought their infant daughters to his [Colonel Walker, a British officer who abolished infanticide in the Jarejah tribe] tent, and exhibited them with the utmost pride and fondness. Grateful for the change produced in their habits, the mothers placed their children in colonel Walker’s hands, called them *his* children, and begged him to protect those whom he had preserved.¹³⁸

Child’s depiction of reliance on “solemn sentences” from scriptures reinforced the stereotypes of superstitious characters of “heathens.” According to her, Indians seemed to lack moral judgment like Christians and rely on the dictation of the scriptures. Like missionaries resorting to stories and parables to educate immature “heathens,” British officials resorted to scriptures and wisely

¹³⁵ Lydia Maria Child, *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations*, vol. 1 (Boston: John Allen & Co., 1835), 117.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

manipulated Indians' "superstition" to stop the practice of infanticide. Similarly, the abolition of *sati* also relied on the British interpretation of Hindu scriptures. The British turned to the inferences of a pandit to determine the legality of *sati*, while neglecting the regionally varied and heterogeneous scriptures and interpretations.¹³⁹ Instead of respecting the traditions of Indians, as Indian feminist historian Lata Mani argues, the British officials tried to unravel the religious "truths" for the natives and help their subjects uphold religious traditions.¹⁴⁰ Although, unlike missionaries who sought to replace Hindu beliefs with Christianity, the colonial act of appropriating Indian scriptures played a similar role as missionaries by establishing the authority of the imperial rulers over its subjects.

More importantly, the story narrated by Child seemed to persuade the natives to follow the guidance of the British, who had much more wisdom than them. According to Child, only after several years did native "students" realize that their "wise teachers" saved their daughters from their ignorance.¹⁴¹ Child's narrations corresponded to "wise teachableness," coined by Bengali literary theorist Sibaji Bandyopadhyay to describe the colonialized mentality that to become equal with Europe, India had first to kill their own agency voluntarily and accept the domination of the English.¹⁴² Thus, although Wright and Child tried to abolish the human domination over another human being in the form of slavery, misguided by how social reforms carried out by the British Empire modernized Indian society, they still accepted the British colonial domination over Indians. Believing in the glory of the British reform, they overlooked how Indians themselves changed their own society.

¹³⁹ *Women and Social Reform in Modern India: A Reader*, eds. Sumit Sarkar & Tanika Sarkar (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 57-79.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 53-79.

¹⁴¹ Child, *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations*, vol. 1, 117-119.

¹⁴² Bandyopadhyay, *The Gopal-Rakhal Dialectic*, 106.

Thomas Higginson, Colonized Reformers, and Anti-colonialism

Like these American abolitionists, many colonized Indian intellectuals also accepted the role of the British reform in elevating Indians. Nineteenth-century Indian educator and social reformer, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, acknowledged the role of British colonial administrator Warren Hastings in spreading education in India, paraphrasing the words of Hastings that “the English had taken over the rule of Bharatvarsha[India] for the welfare of its citizen; therefore, it was the expedient duty of the English race to accomplish civilizing its subjects in every way.”¹⁴³ In other words, Vidyasagar seemed to support the reliance of Indian subjects on the British for enlightenment.

The language of reliance of the leading Bengali intellectuals reflected the precarious situations of Bengali *bhadralok* (middle class). Economically, cheap British manufactures crushed *bhadralok*’ entrepreneurial initiatives. They were even squeezed out of business activities, and instead, they relied on colonial government services and rents from tenants based on the Permanent settlement land grants.¹⁴⁴ British colonial education also mentally defeated the *bhadralok*. Prior to the advocacy of Whig politician Thomas Babington Macaulay, the British government had funded the Sanskrit College. However, Macaulay’s “Minute on Education” (1835) denounced the Orientalist education in colonial India and championed Western education that could “purify” the tastes of Indians.¹⁴⁵ The education plan based on the degradation of the Indian classics, as Sibaji Bandyopadhyay points out, inevitably leads to the silence of “barbarian” students who had to accept everything devotedly that “civilized” teachers dictated.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Ibid,74.

¹⁴⁴ Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernization in India (Delhi: Vikas Pub. House, 1975), 62.

¹⁴⁵ T. B. Macaulay, “Minute on Education,” 1835.

¹⁴⁶ Bandyopadhyay, *The Gopal-Rakhal Dialectic*, 67.

Bandyopadhyay was right to point out the killing of the agency of students by Western education, as Macaulay himself revealed the goal of education was to cultivate “a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes” who could help the rule of the British over Indians.¹⁴⁷ Thus, relying on the British for education and jobs, *bhadralok* seemed to lose their own agency in advancing Indian society.

Despite the circumstances, some Bengali *bhadralok* intended to regenerate Indian society by social reform. In 1828, Bengali social reformer Rammohun Roy founded a monotheistic sect of Hinduism, Brahmo Samaj. By championing the monotheistic doctrines of Vedanta, Roy aimed to reverse the prevailing derogatory image of idolatry in Hinduism.¹⁴⁸ Like the Brahmo reformer, Vidyasagar insisted the English education for Sanskrit students who thus would be “better able to expose the errors of ancient Hindu philosophy.”¹⁴⁹ While criticizing their own religious traditions, the successor of Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen advocated the New Dispensation to harmonize all religious traditions.¹⁵⁰ Thus, Bengali reformers tried to balance Western thoughts and the Hindu traditional Vedic culture rather than being Christianized or Westernized.

Instead of passively being reformed by the British, the *bhadralok* tried to reform their society. Unlike the men being “corrupted” and “defeated” by the Western culture, women within the household had preserved the traditional culture; and thus, by elevating the status of women, Bengali intellectuals hoped to regenerate Indian society.¹⁵¹ One of the advocacies was the abolition of *sati*. By finding legal supports from Hindu scriptures, such as the *Manu*, the

¹⁴⁷ T. B. Macaulay, “Minute on Education,” 1835.

¹⁴⁸ Sivanath Sastri, *History of the Brahmo Samaj*, 2d ed. (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1974), 18.

¹⁴⁹ David Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1979), 55.

¹⁵⁰ Sastri, *History of the Brahmo Samaj*, 262.

¹⁵¹ Bandyopadhyay, *The Gopal-Rakhal Dialectic*, 71, 200-201.

Yajnavalkya, and the *Harita*, Bengali reformer Rammohun Roy advocated widows to live a virtuous life rather than committing *sati*. Vidyasagar took a step further and advocated widow remarriage.¹⁵² With his efforts, the Act of 1856 finally legalized widow remarriage. Besides women's issues, these *bhadralok* were also devoted to mass education. For example, Vidyasagar wrote textbooks, such as *Barnaparichoy (An Introduction to Letters)*, for the vernacular education of the masses. However, the reform of *bhadralok* inevitably had its own problems, especially patriarchy. For example, Bandyopadhyay points out that Roy aimed to abolish *sati* by arguing that women were far more conscientious than men because some of the women voluntarily chose death by practicing *sati*.¹⁵³ Despite the biases of *bhadralok*, indigenous reforms—showed glimpses of native agency.

Abolitionists gained inspiration from these Bengali social and religious reformers, especially Rammohun Roy. Leader of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, Sarah Pugh, acknowledged her reading of “some letters of Rammohun Roy, and an account of his funeral solemnities.”¹⁵⁴ In his Indian trip between 1883 and 1884, Boston Vigilance Committee activist Moncure Conway inquired in Calcutta about the family of Roy whom Conway admired for his Brahmo reform.¹⁵⁵ Higginson quoted Roy's *Conferences on Burning Widows* (1818), translation of the *Sama Veda* (1816), and two tracts on the burnings of widows (1818, 1820) in his essays.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Sarkar, *Women and Social Reform in Modern India*, 281-285.

¹⁵³ Bandyopadhyay, *The Gopal-Rakhal Dialectic*, 198.

¹⁵⁴ Sarah Pugh, “Diary of Sarah Pugh, September 1852.” In *Memorial of Sarah Pugh: A Tribute of Respect from Her Cousins* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1888), 68..

¹⁵⁵ Moncure Daniel Conway, *My Pilgrimage to the Wise Men of the East*. (Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, 1906), 234. To Conway's disappointment, Roy's grandson was chiefly interested in his menagerie estate.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *The Magnificent Activist: The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823-1911)*, ed. Howard N. Meyer (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000).

Higginson's fondness for Roy seems due to the fact that Higginson was an American Unitarian minister, while Unitarian thoughts highly influenced Roy.

Although serving as a Unitarian minister, Higginson rejected a narrow interpretation of the Bible and instead championed universal humanity. In his sermon in 1854, Higginson mocked the dogmatic following of the scriptures, saying, "For both Hindoo and Puritan got from their sacred books the coals with which to kindle the fire around their victims [respectively widows and witches], and the 'Inner Light' might have taught them better."¹⁵⁷ Higginson then pointed out that scriptural or non-scriptural should not be the criteria of judging righteous or not; instead, judgment should be independent from scriptural authority and based on the believers' consciousness as fellow human beings. Higginson's championing of inner consciousness over scriptural authority partly responded to the appropriation of Biblical orthodoxy by slaveholders who attributed Black people as descendants of Ham while themselves as appointed executors.¹⁵⁸ Also, Higginson voiced his support for the universal humanity that transcended the narrow boundaries across religions, which decentralized Christianity. Early in his essay "The Sympathy of Religions" (1855-56), Higginson argued that all the religions in the world, ranging from Christianity to Mohammedanism was merely "Natural Religion plus an individual name" and thus mocked the exclusiveness professed by some bigoted Christians.¹⁵⁹ Later in the 1890s, Higginson invited Swami Vivekananda, who came to the US to introduce Hinduism in the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893, to lecture at Plymouth, Massachusetts, at the

¹⁵⁷ "Scripture Idolatry-a Discourse by Rev. Thos Wentworth Higginson, Minister of Worcester Free Church." *North Star*, May 26, 1854. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

¹⁵⁸ McKivigan, *The War against Proslavery Religion*, 30.

¹⁵⁹ Higginson wrote the essay "The Sympathy of Religions" in the island of Fayal between 1855 and 1856. The essay became lecture materials in a course conducted by the Free Religious Association in Boston some years later. A special edition of this essay was also printed for the "Parliament of Religions" in Chicago in 1893.

conference of Free Religious Association, a “spiritual anti-slavery society” that aimed to “emancipate religion from the dogmatic traditions it had been previously bound to.”¹⁶⁰

Unlike Wright and Child relegating the responsibility of elevating India to the British, Higginson acknowledged the agency of the Brahmo reformers and other spiritual and religious figures whom the missionaries had denounced in regenerating Indian society. Higginson recounted the story of Indian religious and spiritual figure Swaminarayan encountering Christian missionaries:

In Bishop Heber’s time, the Hindoo reformer Swamee Narain [Swaminarayan, also known as Sahajanand Swami] was teaching purity and peace, the unity of God, and the abolition of caste. Many thousands of men followed his teachings, and whole villages and districts were raised from the worst immorality by his labors, as the Bishop himself bears witness. But the good Bishop seems to have despaired of him as soon as Swamee Narain refused conversion to Christianity, making the objection that God was not incarnated in one man, but many.

Then Higginson went on and portrayed the mistreatment of Roy by missionaries that “Ram Mohun Roy...argued from the Vedas against idolatry, caste, and the burning of widows. He also refused to be called a Christian, and the missionaries denounced him.”¹⁶¹ Then Higginson described the similar injustice faced by Brahmo reformer Keshub Chunder Sen who professed the “universal and absolute religion, whose cardinal doctrines are the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, and which accepts the truths of all scriptures, and honors the prophets of all nations.”¹⁶² Although “the movement reach[ed] thousands whom no foreign influence could touch,” the Methodist missionaries denounced Sen’s advocacy of the universal religion “in the

¹⁶⁰ Swami Vivekananda, *Swami Vivekananda on Himself*, 2nd enl. ed (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2006). Bryan F. Le Beau, *A History of Religion in America: From the End of the Civil War to the Twenty-First Century* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 65.

¹⁶¹ Higginson, *The Magnificent Activist*, 371-372.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

name of Christ.”¹⁶³ Like the *Liberator* seeking alternative voices of a Hindu convert to Christianity to talk about Hinduism, Higginson resorted to Brahma reformers and spiritual figures, whom the British colonial officials and missionaries had silenced and even denounced, to understand reforms in Indian society. Higginson thus challenged the dominant colonial narratives that the British Empire and missionaries pushed forward reform; instead, Higginson argued that indigenous reformers took the lead in reforming the vices of Indian society. More importantly, by showing missionaries’ denouncement of indigenous reformers, Higginson mocked the pragmatism of missionaries who vilified the Hindu reformers only when Indian reformers challenged their conception of God, and they did not have better answers.

One might argue that it was very natural for Higginson, a unitarian minister, to have an affinity to Roy and Sen, whom the Unitarianism heavily influenced. However, Higginson also acknowledged Swaminarayan, a figure embedded in the Hindu tradition of *bhakti*, devotionalism. Swaminarayan positioned himself as the embodiment of the sovereign power and the devotional polity by regulating scripture knowledge, rules of proper living, and the organization.¹⁶⁴ Thus, compared to missionaries who denounced indigenous reformers just because those reformers rejected to become Christians, Higginson acknowledged the reforms carried out by those who held drastically different religious views from him.

The cooperation between missionaries and British reformers was partly the result of the aid missionaries had provided to the British imperial project. The Clapham Sect was a circle of British social reformers and evangelical utilitarianists who, between the 1780s to the 1840s,

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Brian A. Hatcher, *Hinduism before Reform* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2020), 160-161.

argued for Christian inspired reforms implemented via state power. Famous members included Thomas Babington Macaulay, Charles Grant, Lord William Bentinck, and William Wilberforce. In his book *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain* (1813), Grant urged the promotion of Christianity in India by pointing out that only “the superior personal conduct of Britons” could ensure the lasting British hegemony in India.¹⁶⁵ Grant’s words implied that the spread of Christianity in India could help convince the subjects of Britain’s moral superiority, which ultimately consolidated its rule. The role of Christianity in the British Empire was put bluntly by Alexander Duff, who attributed the Mutiny of 1857 to the secular policies of the government, saying, “Christianity has never taught rulers to oppress, so will it never teach subjects to rebel.”¹⁶⁶ In other words, Duff perceived missionaries as disciplining the Indian subjects for British rule. Thus, missionary and imperialist agendas intertwined together.

Higginson captured the coexistence between imperialism and Christianity. In his essay “The Sympathy of religions,” he pointed out that “Keshub Chunder Sen goes from India to England, and implores Christians to cease demoralizing the young Hindoos by teaching them the use of strong drinks. ‘Man after man dies,’ he [Sen] says, ‘and people sometimes compute the results of English education by the number of deaths that actually take place, every month and every year, through intemperance.’”¹⁶⁷ In other words, Higginson mocked how the Christian nations gave up their principles of temperance for the profits gained from exporting whisky to India. Higginson found a similar situation in China, where “men interrupted the missionaries in China...by asking them why, if their doctrines are true, Christian nations forced opium on an unwilling emperor,

¹⁶⁵ Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, 71-72.

¹⁶⁶ Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, 53.

¹⁶⁷ Higginson, *The Magnificent Activist*, 368.

who refused to the last to receive money from the traffic; and it is well known that Gutzlaff, a missionary, accompanied the English ships, as interpreter, on that occasion.”¹⁶⁸ By pointing out the sacrifice of moral principles for profitable opium trade and direct complicity in the opium trade of a Christian missionary, Higginson thus challenged the morality of Christians who seemed to aid the imperial conquest rather than upholding moral principles of temperance and benevolence.

In contrast to the negative impacts brought by Christianity, Higginson instead eulogized positive social changes brought by Islam. Higginson portrayed the spread of Islam in Africa, saying, “Wherever Mohammedanism reaches, schools and libraries are established, gambling and drunkenness cease, theft and falsehood diminish, polygamy is limited, woman begins to be elevated, and has property rights guaranteed ...”¹⁶⁹ More importantly, according to Higginson, in contrast to Christians who “have a caste of their own, and will not put converts on an equality,” “no spirit of caste” existed among Muslims.¹⁷⁰ Almost a hundred years earlier than the Black militant religious leader Malcolm X perceiving Christianity as a religion of white men to subjugate Black people and thus turning to Islam, Higginson realized that many Christian churches allowed not only the domestic subjugation of Black people in the US but also the imperial hierarchy of white Christians over the colored Christian abroad. Thus, according to Higginson, as a natural result, Islam converted “thousands” of Indians into Islam while Christianity made only a few converts in India.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 368.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 366.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 366-367.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

Similarly, instead of being convinced of the success of missionary activities in India, an article published in the *Liberator* doubted the success of converting native Indians to Christianity, given that colonialism failed to prove the morality of Christianity. The editorial article, “full of pertinent rebuke and merited sarcasm, and ‘fit like a glove,’” first published in the *New York Herald*, mocked the annual meeting of the American Board of Foreign Missions in 1849 at Pittsfield in the following words: “The English missions for India have expended, in the last twenty years...a million of pounds sterling. And what is the result?... the sum total of their[missionaries’] labors... was nineteen converts, thirteen of whom had gone back to paganism, five were preparing to back out, and there was but one solitary man left, who could not be insured over a month.”¹⁷² In other words, despite the huge investment of money and human resources, the result of conversion was still marginal. The article went on to explain this failure: “the Christian’s bayonet has been too busy with the heathen, and they distrust the Christian’s cross. What said the Peruvian chief to Pizarro? ‘You slaughter my children—you steal their lands—you rob their temples, and we cannot believe in your cross.’”¹⁷³ Echoing the sentiments of Gangooly, who studied Christianity out of aversion towards bloodthirsty British conquest, the article used the Spanish conquest in Peru to explain the futility of conversion in India. British colonial conquest had made “heathens” lose confidence in Christianity. More importantly, by drawing the imaginative lines between Peru and India, this article questioned whether Christians who launched violent imperial conquest against “heathens” across the globe occupied the moral high ground. However, as I will explain in Chapter 3, a more mature critique

¹⁷² “It is not often that we find an editorial article in the *New York Herald* that is worth copying.” *Liberator*, October 12, 1849, 164. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

of colonialism beyond religious sentiments against violent conquest would come in the early twentieth century when the US itself became a full-fledged imperial country.

Conclusion

Although American abolitionists used the derogatory term “heathen” to describe Indians, instead of Othering India, they demonstrated the dialectics of the missionary teachers versus “heathen” pupils, namely the colonial construction of missionaries as symbol of the West bringing morality and modernity to India. By pointing out that missionaries tolerated slavery at home, abolitionists negated missionaries’ eligibility to teach the non-western Other. Although Wright and Child supported British reforms in India, there were also abolitionists like Higginson, who acknowledged the agency of indigenous reformers in a time of high British colonialism that endeavored to kill the initiatives of Indians. Finally, American abolitionists also challenged colonialism by stressing the imperialist nature of missionaries.

Like American abolitionists insisting slaves as “heathens” in the society, Anglican evangelicals also found its “unchurched” working class as the “heathen” in British society in the first half of the nineteenth century, which enabled the middle class to claim their possession of civilization. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the British Congregationalists instead championed the ideal of a united Christian brotherhood behind the foreign mission cause among Congregationalists from diverse social backgrounds, ranging from the middle class to the working class. Unlike abolitionists finding the shared plight of slaves and “heathens” abroad, British Congregationalists emphasized the superiority of the working class “heathens” over the “heathens” abroad for being British freed them the sufferings of “heathens” abroad. The artificial construction of superiority served the interests of the British middle class to pacify the increasingly militant laboring poor, and ultimately subjugated people they marked as “heathens”

within their own country and Britain's empire.¹⁷⁴ Contrary to the British Congregationalists, abolitionists forged the imaginative alliance between domestic Black people and Indians abroad to condemn Christian missionaries who tolerated slavery domestically and aided imperialism abroad that betrayed the self-claimed Christian moral high ground.

Just as abolitionists used missionaries' rhetoric to condemn their double standards, Indian political leader Dadabhai Naoroji employed the rhetoric of British morality to deplore British imperial rule in India. Naoroji characterized the British rule in India as "un-British" in his book *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901).¹⁷⁵ By calling the British rule "un-British," Naoroji argued that the British rule was not only contrary to the promised liberty and justice but also "of pure despotism aggravated by the worst evils of a foreign domination."¹⁷⁶ Naoroji then directed people's attention to the despotism of the British rule, such as the drain of wealth from India to Britain and the denial of the participation of Indians in the civil services. Instead, Naoroji asked for a "British rule on British principles" that would be "vastly beneficent both to Britain and India."¹⁷⁷ Like Naoroji, many American abolitionists as the following chapters will show, employed similar rhetoric of "un-Christian"-ness and "un-British"-ness to criticize the both Black and white women's conditions in the United States, and the injustices of British colonial rule in India.

¹⁷⁴ Thorne, *Congregational Missions & the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England*. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*.

¹⁷⁵ Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*, 1st Indian ed. (Delhi : Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1962).

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 2 Nineteenth Century American Abolitionist

Writings on “Heathen” Women

“Our Country is the World—Our Countrymen are Mankind.”

—motto that adorned the Liberator’s masthead

“Though we worship on ‘Mount Zion,’ we are heathen in our heart”

—“Idol Worship” by Carrie for the Liberator

The abolitionist rebuttal against the hypocritical demarcations of “heathens” versus Christians went beyond the realm of religion; the so-called “heathen” women in South Asia whom missionaries were determined to redeem triggered the interest of abolitionists. This chapter will examine nineteenth-century antebellum American abolitionist writings from 1835 to 1861 on these South Asian women, including both Hindu and Muslim women. The abolition-feminist authors examined in this chapter are Garrisonians: Lydia Maria Child, Sarah M. Grimke, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Thomas W. Higginson, and Parker Pillsbury. I have not found any Black abolitionists’ writings on Indian women, which was probably because of the marginal participation of Black abolitionists in the feminist movement dominated by the white middle class. The writings on “heathen” women were mostly published in abolitionist newspapers, such as Garrison’s newspaper *Liberator*, and sometimes in their books and speeches. Besides these four prominent abolition-feminists, the *Liberator* also promoted writings on India by a Hindu convert to Christianity, Joguth Chunder Gangooly, whom I have discussed in Chapter 1, to demystify stereotypes propagated by the missionaries towards South Asian women.

All these abolitionist-feminist writings postdated the influential work of American missionary Henry Lyman's dissertation "Condition and Character of Females in Pagan and Mohammedan Countries" (1831). Through comparing abolitionist commentaries on Indian women with Lyman's work, this chapter will show how the intertwined agenda of feminism and abolitionism influenced abolitionists' interpretation of South Asian women. Unlike how missionaries degraded Hindu women based on their believed inferiority of "heathen" women, this chapter will show how abolitionists tried to find solidarity with Indian women and reinterpreted the derogatory images of Indian women to advance their abolition-feminist agendas. Although abolition-feminists resorted to the "heathen" stereotypes of Indian women, they refused to assume their own superiority over Indian women. Instead, abolition-feminists found parallels between "heathen" oppression of women and racial subjugation and gender discrimination in Christian America.

Henry Lyman and the influence of Missionaries' Writings on Abolitionists

Missionaries' writings constituted the principal sources for those nineteenth-century abolition-feminists' writings on "heathen" women. In the nineteenth century, most Americans were familiar with the predominantly missionary-informed picture of Hinduism that involved inhuman "heathen" practices in all areas of family life, such as polygamy, abuse of widows, and feeding one's children to crocodiles.¹⁷⁸ By highlighting the sufferings of Hindus, as American historian Michael A. Verney points out, missionaries hoped to arouse American readers' consciousness to partake in the missionary cause.¹⁷⁹ Also, as I have discussed in Chapter 1, abolitionist newspapers widely

¹⁷⁸ *Race, Nation, and Religion in the Americas*, eds. Henry Goldschmidt and Elizabeth McAlister (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 271.

¹⁷⁹ *India in the American Imaginary, 1780s–1880s*, eds. Anupama Arora and Rajender Kaur (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 41-64.

covered British and American missionary activities in India. Thus, abolitionists, in all likelihood, were intimately familiar with the derogatory image of Indian people informed by missionaries.

Henry Lyman (1809–1834), an American Baptist missionary in South Asia, wrote the influential essay “Condition and Character of Females in Pagan and Mohammedan Countries” for the Theological Seminar in Andover (a town in Massachusetts) in 1831. His “dissertation” was popular in the US—before Lyman left the US for South Asia, he delivered his dissertation, in the form of a speech, forty-two times, and the dissertation was re-published in many tracts and newspapers.¹⁸⁰ The popularity of Lyman’s dissertation lay in the fact that “the state of heathen was not then so thoroughly known as it is now.”¹⁸¹ Thus, American abolitionists were likely to have read Lyman’s work.

At the beginning of the dissertation, Lyman points out his purpose for writing: “The charity, that kindles at the tale of wo[e], can never act with adequate efficiency, till it is made to see the pollution and guilt of 600,000,000, now buried in the death-shades of heathenism.”¹⁸² In other words, Lyman hoped to make his American audiences see the miseries of Hindu and Muslim women and thus partake the cause of spreading Christianity in India. Thus, given Lyman’s a prior perception of “heathenism,” he would likely portray the condition of Hindu and Muslim women as degraded, and more importantly, as drastically different from Christian (white) women. For example, Lyman negated the existence of gender discrimination in the US. By analyzing the condition of Hindu women, Lyman concluded that “Mark upon the map of the

¹⁸⁰ Henry Lyman, *The Martyr of Sumatra; a Memoir of Henry Lyman* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1856) 199.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 199.

¹⁸² Henry Lyman, “Condition and character of females in pagan and Mohammedan countries.” Perkins & Marvin; Jonathan Leavitt, Boston: New York), 1.

world those countries where the Bible is known, and you mark at the same time the only nations in which the rights of woman are regarded.”¹⁸³ The “imaginative geography” between Christian countries and “heathen” countries reflected not only Lyman’s arrogance as a Christian but also his narrow understanding of Christian women as middle-class white women while excluding Black and working-class women from the category of “women.” Also, even though Lyman knew that women did not have western liberal political and economic rights at that time, he still employed the discourse of “rights.” Thus, the right referred by Lyman meant the fair treatment women received from men. By arguing that women’s rights “are regarded” in Christian countries, namely men treated women better in the West, Lyman denied economic and political rights as women’s rights.

Lydia Maria Child and the hypocrisy of Christian morality

Contrary to Lyman’s conservative agenda of stressing the superiority of Christianity over “heathenism” and denying women’s economic and political rights, Lydia Maria Child (1802–1880) supported a dual agenda of abolitionism and feminism. She wrote “the first American storehouse of information” on women’s history—*The History of the Condition of Women*, credited by leaders of the women’s rights movement as having “undoubtedly increased the agitation [for equal rights for women]” and inspired other feminists, like Sarah Grimke and Margaret Fuller.¹⁸⁴ However, Child downplayed her purpose in writing the book. She claimed that the book was simply to give “an accurate history of the condition of women, in language sufficiently concise for popular use.”¹⁸⁵

Carolyn L. Karcher argues that by exploring women’s conditions in transhistorical and cross-

¹⁸³ Ibid, 1.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 227.

¹⁸⁵ Lydia Maria Child, *Brief History of the Condition of Women: In Various Ages and Nations* (C. S. Francis & Company, 1845), preface.

cultural contexts, the book challenged the monolithic concept of womanhood and implored the inhumanity of Southern treatment of slaves that was worse than any other country.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, being tangled between political activism and the traditional gendered role of a woman in nineteenth century American society partly pushed Child to downplay her purpose of the book.¹⁸⁷ The conflictual stance did not make Child less influential among the abolitionist community. William Lloyd Garrison hailed her as “the first woman in the republic,” and the anti-slavery Republican Senator Charles Sumner (1811-1874) credited her with inspiring his political pursuits of racial equality.¹⁸⁸ Garrison also recruited her as the chief editor of his anti-slavery newspaper, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. Her agitation against slavery also included her book, *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833), the “first full-scale analysis of the slavery question.”¹⁸⁹

Despite their differences, Lydia Maria Child employed racist rhetoric similar to Lyman’s when portraying Hindu women. American historian Gerda Lerner points out that Child held conviction of superior condition of women in Christian countries over “heathen” countries.¹⁹⁰ For example, Child described the indolence of Hindu women, saying, “women are said to be so languidly indolent, that they will hardly stretch forth their arms to save their children from being trodden to death.”¹⁹¹ In other words, Child seemed to perceive Indian women as the Other, lacking humanity towards even their own offspring. The “imaginative geography” between self and the Other was also reflected in her outward acknowledgment of the superiority of the West

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 225.

¹⁸⁷ Carolyn L. Karcher, *The First Woman in the Republic: A Cultural Biography of Lydia Maria Child* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994).

¹⁸⁸ Ibid,173-194.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 183. For detailed biography, please look at Karcher’s book *The First Woman in the Republic* (1994).

¹⁹⁰ Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Woman’s Rights and Abolition*, First Schocken paperback edition., *Studies in the Life of Women* (New York : Schocken Books,1971), 138.

¹⁹¹ Child, *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations*, vol. 1, 91.

over the East.¹⁹² Child contrasted the condition in India, where “in no part of the world does the condition of women appears more dreary than in Hindustan” with America, where “perhaps there is no country in the world, where women, as wives, sisters, and daughters, have more influence, or more freedom.”¹⁹³ Thus, writing India from the city on a hill, where the US acted as an example for the rest of the world, Child seemed to agree with missionaries on the superiority of American women over the degraded Hindu women.

In addition to Hindu women, Child applied a similar racist rhetoric towards Muslim women. Child argued that Islam “debases woman into a machine, and regards love as merely sensual passion,” which contrasted with the chivalry spirits in the West that “exalt women into deities, and chasten passion with the purity of sentiment.”¹⁹⁴ She again drew the lines of “imaginative geography” that “Where the Mohammedan religion prevails, man’s reason is taught to bow blindly to faith, and his affection have little freedom to seek their corresponding truth; in all such countries women are slaves.”¹⁹⁵ Child’s observation corresponded to Lyman’s accusation that the Quran “direct[s] the husband to chastise his wife for any disobedience to his commands.”¹⁹⁶ Child and Lyman thus seemed to agree with the degradation of women by “heathen” religions.

However, unlike Lyman, Child drew parallels between women in “heathen” countries and slaves in the US. One example Child gave was Muslim men’s refusal to eat at the same table with their wives, by quoting the words of some Muslim men in reply to a European, “Why should such inferior creatures be allowed to eat and drink with us? If they commit faults, why

¹⁹² Said, *Orientalism*, 54.

¹⁹³ Child, *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations*, vol. 1, 116. Lydia Maria Child, *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations*, vol. 2 (Boston: Otis, Broaders, & Co., 1843) 265.

¹⁹⁴ Child, *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations*, vol. 2, 120.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 210.

¹⁹⁶ Lyman, “Condition and character of females in pagan and Mohammedan countries,” 6.

should they not to beaten? They were made to bring us children, pound our rice, make our oil, and do our drudgery; these are the only purposes to which their degraded natures are adapted.”¹⁹⁷ The abusive language towards women in the Muslim context reminded Child of its counterpart in American custom that “render it an abomination for two people of different complexions to eat at the same table.”¹⁹⁸ Given the striking similar prejudices towards women in “heathen” countries and Black people in Christian America, Child mocks that Christian Americans observes the “heathen” creed, saying, “Their own superstitious abhorrence is inculcated by the Mohammedan creed, which they regard as sacred; but our prejudice is in direct opposition to the maxims of that religion, which we profess to reverence.”¹⁹⁹ In other words, Child argued that prejudice against Black people made Christian America as degraded as “heathen” countries.

Child did not totally rebuke Islam. In a letter to the meeting of Progressive Friends, a group of dissidents who quitted the Hicksite branch of the Society of Friends (Quakers), in 1859, Child urged Christianity to learn from other religious creeds. She argues that “But, manifestly superior as it [Christianity] is to other religions of the earth, there is much that it might copy from them advantageously.”²⁰⁰ One of the takeaways of Christianity from Muslim law was that “legitimate and illegitimate children shall share equally in the division of their fathers’ estate.”²⁰¹ Although Otherizing Islam by affirming the superiority of Christianity, Child found legal superiority in domestic reform in Islamic creed.

¹⁹⁷ Child, *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations*, vol.1, 237-238.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 238.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 238.

²⁰⁰ Lydia Maria Child, “Letter from Lydia Maria Child.” *Liberator*, August 5, 1859, 124. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*.

By invoking the eligibility of the “illegitimate children” for inheritance in the Islamic context, Child aimed to humanize multi-racial children born of Black slave mothers and white slaveowners fathers in the US. Early in 1662, Virginia laws regulated that “all children borne in this country shalbe held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother.”²⁰² By forcing the children to follow the status of their mother, the act turned the children born of slave mothers and white slaveowners into the capital of the fathers, and thus inheriting their father’s property was completely impossible. The reform agenda of humanizing these children was more explicit in Child’s appeal to Southern slaveholders to learn from the customs of Moors, the descendants of Arabs in North Africa. Child argued that “If a Moor has a son by any of his black slaves, the girl is much better treated than before; her child shares equal privileges with the other children, and is acknowledged as a free fellow-citizen like themselves. In this respect Christian slaveowners might learn a useful lesson from the ignorant Moslem [Muslim].”²⁰³ By emphasizing how American slavery was much worse than forms of slavery in the non-western world, Child mocked the hypocrisy of Christian laws that tolerated slaveholders who subjected their fellow citizens, even their own children, while claiming the moral high ground.

Besides the “illegitimate children” born of enslaved Black women and white slaveowners, Child’s concern for “illegitimate children” also extended to children born in mixed race relationships between free people. Early in the *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans called Africans* (1836), Child explicitly expressed compassion towards the illegitimate children born of white women of laboring class and Black men, saying, “If by some odd chances, which not unfrequently occur in the world, their wives should become heirs to any property, the

²⁰² *A Documentary History of Slavery in North America*, eds. Willie Lee Rose (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 19.

²⁰³ Child, *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations, Vol I*, 245

children may be wronged out of it, because the law pronounces them illegitimate”²⁰⁴ In other words, Child condemned the hypocrisy of the laws that impoverished multi-racial children born of free parents. Thus, by advocating equal sharing of property between legitimate and illegitimate children, Child aimed to uplift the multi-racial children and even indirectly support the interracial marriage by criticizing the unjust anti-miscegenation laws that degraded multi-racial children into the deplorable legal status. Thus, although Child Otherized Islam and affirmed the superiority of Christianity, she at the same time advocated the Christian nations to learn from the Islamic “heathen” creed to solve domestic problems of racial oppression.

Also, Child provided important caveats to her discourse on the indolence of Indian women. In her book *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations* (1835), Child drew an example of a Mahrattas woman, Jooruor Singh, who hid her female identity and joined the army to earn money to save her jailed brother. She quoted this example from East India Company’s Bengal Army cadet Thomas Duer Broughton’s book *Letters Written in a Mahratta Camp During the Year 1809: Descriptive of the Character, Manners, Domestic Habits, and Religious Ceremonies, of the Mahrattas* (1813).²⁰⁵ The colonial biases of the book could be revealed in the dedication page— Broughton dedicated the book to the Anglo-Irish colonial administrator Marques Wellesley, “the acute detector of Mahratta wiles, the firm repeller of their insolent pretensions,” who led the campaign against the Marathas Empire in the Second Anglo-Maratha War (1803-1805).²⁰⁶ Broughton stressed how women suffered in the military

²⁰⁴ Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 37.

²⁰⁵ Child, *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations*, vol. 1, 108-109.

²⁰⁶ Thomas Duer Broughton, *Letters from a Mahratta Camp during the Year 1809: Descriptive of the Character, Manners, Domestic Habits, and Religious Ceremonies of the Mahrattas* (Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi, 1977., 1813).

camp, “which would in England have excited the liveliest emotions of pity and compassion.”²⁰⁷

Ironically, even though relying on a biased colonial account wherein Singh is mocked by Broughton as an “interesting young creature,” Child challenged the stereotypes of Indian women as indolent by acknowledging Singh as a warrior.²⁰⁸

Instead of proposing Christianity as elevating women from its degradation, Child was also aware of how Christian nations were complicit in the suffering of women in non-western countries. Child indignantly condemned the transaction of women in the aftermath of Napoleon Bonaparte’s campaign in Egypt and Syria from 1798 to 1801, saying, “The French were busily employed in selling to the British troops the women who had lived with them during their stay in the country. Several of the English soldiers bought very pretty girls for one dollar each. These scenes occurred between two Christian nations!”²⁰⁹ The transaction of “heathen” women’s flesh challenged the seemingly infallible Christian morality of kindness towards women. The violence towards women had been explicitly racialized. American political activist Angela Davis points out that in contrast to the maintenance of the “purity” of white women, slaveholders institutionalized rape against enslaved Black women to subjugate both female sex and colored race, and for a similar purpose, the US army institutionalized rape against Vietnamese women during the Vietnam War.²¹⁰ Thus, almost anticipating the observation of Davis, Child realized more than a hundred years ago that the Christian standard of respecting women did not apply to women of color.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 252.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 197.

²⁰⁹ Child, *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations, Volume I*, 229.

²¹⁰ Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981).

Sarah Grimke and Universal suffering

Unlike Child and most other female abolitionists born in New England, Sarah Moore Grimke (1792–1873) and her younger sister Angelina were born in a prominent planter family in South Carolina. Irritated by slavery in the South, they fled to Philadelphia and became and remained the only Southern white women in the abolitionist movement.²¹¹ Their involvement in abolitionism pushed them toward a feminist agenda. In an age when women's sphere was restricted at home, the sisters' New England speaking tour between 1837 and 1838 against slavery became the first public speaking tour of American-born women.²¹² Sarah Grimke was a primary theorist and pioneer of feminism. Her work *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes* (1838), characterized by women's rights activist Lucy Stone as "first rate," confirmed Stone's resolution "to call no man master" and she "preached up women's rights most nobly and fearlessly."²¹³

Sarah Grimke directly challenged Lyman's discourse on the superiority of the condition of Christian women by shedding light on the suffering of Black women in America. Lerner points out that Grimke's survey of women's status in Asia and Africa and in Western civilization leans heavily on the work of Child, which was mostly based on the conviction that the condition of women under "heathenism" was far worse than under Christianity.²¹⁴ Although there were instances in which Child's believed that "heathens" could teach Christians on issues like "illegitimate children," Lerner was still right to stress that the overall tone of Child's book Orientalized women from non-western countries. Unlike Child, who homogenized the spirit of chivalry in West that "exalt[ed] women into deities," Grimke was aware that the women in

²¹¹ Gerda Lerner, *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimké* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 158.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 158.

²¹³ Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Woman's Rights and Abolition*, First Schocken paperback edition., *Studies in the Life of Women* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 134-139.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

Christian countries were not a uniform group.²¹⁵ She pointed out the dilemma faced by Black women whose condition resembled more of “heathen” treatment of women than Christian.

Grimke argued that “Here I am reminded of the resemblance between the situation of women in heathen and Mohammedan countries, and our brethren and sisters of color in this Christian land, where they are despised and cast out as though they were unclean. And on precisely the same ground, because they are said to be inferior.”²¹⁶ By acknowledging the dilemma faced by Black women in the US, Grimke challenged the dichotomy between “heathens” and Christians who shared the same practices of subjugating women. More importantly, Grimke objected homogeneous category of privileged women in Christian countries by acknowledging the sufferings of Black women in the US.

The conscious inclusion of Black women as part of the Christian society was uncommon at a time when people throughout the Americas still treated Black people as the Other despite many Black people being Christians. Although many abolitionists opposed the agenda of the Colonization Society, which sought to migrate Black people from the US to Africa and the Caribbean, they still failed to treat Black people as part of their society. In the 1838 Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women in Pennsylvania Hall, Sarah Grimke presented a resolution that attributed the prejudice against color as the spirit of slavery and advocated abolitionists “to identify themselves with these oppressed Americans, by sitting with them in places of worship, by appearing with them in our streets, by giving them our countenance in steamboats and stages, by visiting them at their homes and encouraging them to visit us,

²¹⁵ Child, *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations*, vol. 2, 120.

²¹⁶ Sarah M Grimke. “Women in Asia and Africa.” *Liberator*, January 12, 1838. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

receiving them as we do our white fellow citizens.”²¹⁷ In other words, Grimke advocated that abolitionists should consciously integrate the Black people into American society by treating them as any other white friends and relatives. However, the resolution failed to pass, chiefly because many abolitionists considered public demonstrations against racial segregation controversial.²¹⁸ Thus, while some abolitionists consciously distanced themselves from Black people whom they aimed to uplift, Grimke instead put forward the agenda of treating Black people equally as their white friends.

Although Grimke acknowledged the degradation of women in non-western countries, unlike Lyman, she at the same time recognized the strength of those South Asian women. One example Lyman gave was that “heathenism” degraded women into menial labor. Lyman vividly portrayed the abuse of female labor in Ceylon that “strong and healthy men engaged in washing, ironing, preparing muslin dresses, and other similar employments, while slender females were carrying heavy burdens through the streets, or laboring in the fields.”²¹⁹ Lyman’s commentary on Indian men doing the works that were supposed to be done by women coincided with the British colonial construction of the “effeminate Bengali.”²²⁰ By means like characterizing Bengali men as “sweet girl graduates from Girton,” many British intended to reject the Ilbert Bill (1883) that sought to allow senior Indian magistrates to preside over cases involving British subjects in India.²²¹ Lyman’s portrait of feminine Indian men thus coincided with the British maintenance of colonial masculinity. Lyman appealed to the compassion of readers towards the

²¹⁷ Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina*, 178.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Lyman, “Condition and character of females in pagan and Mohammedan countries,” 5.

²²⁰ Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The “manly Englishman” and the “Effeminate Bengali” in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester University Press, 1995).

²²¹ Ibid.

South Asian women whose “slender” figure seemed to make them unfit for the manly work that was supposed to be done by “strong and healthy men.” In contrast to Lyman, Grimke acknowledged the strength of Indian women by recognizing the labor performed by them. Grimke argues that “where the physical strength of woman is called into exercise, there is no inferiority even in this respect, she performs the labor while man enjoys what are termed the pleasures of life.”²²² Instead of emphasizing the abuse of Indian women by making them do men’s work, Grimke affirmed no inferiority of women’s physical strength to men by acknowledging the physical strength of Indian women rather than like Lyman, portraying slender women overburdened by work.

The significance of Grimke’s argument lies in her acknowledgement of women’s work. Even in contemporary India, Mary E. John points out that the national accounting system fails to capture the productive labor performed by women.²²³ However, centuries ago, Grimke and Child acknowledged the work performed by Indian women, saying, “The Hindoo women are engaged in every variety of occupation, according to the estate of their husbands. They cultivate the land, make baskets and mats, bring water in jars, carry manure and various other articles to market in baskets on their heads, cook food, tend children, weave cloth, reel thread and wind cocoons.”²²⁴ Instead of attributing these works as an extension of family duties, Child and Grimke perceived domestic labor as a true “occupation,” that deserved equal acknowledgement as the non-domestic labor of men.

²²² Sarah M. Grimke, “Women in Asia and Africa.”

²²³ Mary E John, “Feminism, Sexual Violence and the Times of #MeToo in India,” *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies* 26, no. 2 (2020): 137–58.

²²⁴ Child, *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations, Volume I*. 90. Grimke quoted this sentence from Child’s *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations, Volume I*. in her article “Condition in Asia and Africa.” *Liberator*, January 12, 1838, 8. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

Contrary to eulogizing the physical strength of Indian women, abolitionists instead illustrated hyper-exploitation when writing enslaved Black women doing men's works. One popular image was how the fieldwork prevented enslaved women from their responsibility as mothers. The former slave Moses Grandy shared his eyewitness about those enslaved Black nursing women who "suffered much from their breasts becoming full of milk," and therefore "could not keep up with the other hands... the overseer beat them with raw hide, so that the blood and milk flew mingled from their breasts."²²⁵ Another former slave Peter Sill also remembered that a pregnant Black woman lost her child after being "compelled day after day to plow with her mule at a trot. She dared not stop, for his eye was ever on her."²²⁶ Even women's rights activist Sojourner Truth questioned "Ain't I a Woman?" and contrasted enslaved Black women who "ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns" with their white sisters who needed "to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere."²²⁷ By stressing the identity of enslaved Black women as women, abolitionists aimed to strike people's compassion towards those suffered women who were supposed to be protected instead. Differentiating enslaved women in the US and Indian women in the rhetoric was partly because American abolitionists perceived Indians as free laborers, as I will elaborate in Chapter 3. Unlike those "free" Indian women, as Walter Johnson points out, enslaved Black women had been subtracted into the capital of the slaveholders.²²⁸ Healthy adult women were "full hands" while suckling women "half-hands," and even the bodies of enslaved women had been the capital for

²²⁵ Moses Grandy and George Thompson, *Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy: Late a Slave in the United States of America*, 2nd ed. (Boston, Massachusetts, United States: O. Johnson, 1844), 18.

²²⁶ Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 175.

²²⁷ "Ain't I a Woman?" by Sojourner Truth Delivered at the 1851 Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio

²²⁸ Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 153-154.

the slaveholders to reproduce labor forces.²²⁹ Thus, given the hyper-exploitation, how could abolitionists not emphasize the sufferings of enslaved Black female laborers than make their sufferings the symbols of the strength of feminism?

Also, instead of perceiving Indian women as a specie drastically different from Black women, both narrations of Indian women capable of doing men's work and Black women suffering from the field labor were fundamentally anti-racism. By showing how Indian women engaged in various occupations, abolitionists aimed to object to the racialization of Indian women as indolent. Invoking the image of Black women overburdened by work was also anti-racist by appealing to the universal womanhood that Black women equally deserved respect as women.

By emphasizing the physical strength of women and acknowledging women's work as occupations, Grimke tried to negate the separate sphere based on gender. The theory of consigning women to the domestic sphere and men to the public sphere was in part based on the argument that women had less physical strength than men. A political satirist described the vulnerability of women by dramatizing parturition, saying, "How funny it would sound in newspapers, that Lucy Stone, pleading a cause, took suddenly ill in the pains of parturition, and perhaps gave birth to a fine bouncing boy in court."²³⁰ In other words, by imagining the pain of a leading suffragist and abolitionist giving birth to children in court, the satirist argued that the lack of physical power prevented women from entering the political sphere. Although many abolitionists used such examples to demonstrate the hyper-exploitation of Black women, urban middle-class abolition-feminists like Margaret Fuller had employed the powerful image of

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty*.17

enslaved Black women enduring fieldwork even during pregnancy to suggest that women had enough physical power to participate in the affairs of the national government.²³¹ Along the line, by reversing the stereotypes of women being physically weak in the context of India, Grimke negated the hypocrisy of sex and race as determining criteria of strength. According to Grimke, “Intellect is not sexed . . . strength of mind is not sexed; and . . . our views about the duties of men and the duties of women, the sphere of man and the sphere of woman, are mere arbitrary opinions, differing in different ages and countries, and dependent solely on the will and judgement of erring mortals.”²³² By unsexing both physical strength and intellect and acknowledging the feminist strength of women of color, Grimke aimed to liberate women from the biases against their sex and race.

However, abolition-feminists’ recognition of the physical strength of Indian women could be biased. Child gave another example of the participation of Hindu women in the military. Child argued that Rajput women “frequently follow their husband to battle, and perish by their side. Rather than fall into the power of conquering enemies, they often commit suicide or entreat their husbands to kill them.”²³³ The portrait of the militancy of the Rajput women again flipped Child’s earlier narratives of the indolence of Hindu women. However, Child did not realize that behind the seeming heroism of Rajput women, the patriarchy propelled them to sacrifice rather than fall into the hands of men other than their family members.²³⁴ By sacrificing their lives,

²³¹ Ibid, 20-21.

²³² Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina*, 137.

²³³ Child *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations, Volume I*, 90.

²³⁴ Ramya Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen: Heroic Past in India c. 1500-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).

those women were forced to prove devotion towards their husbands and preserve the honor and purity of clans.²³⁵

Besides the parallels between degraded conditions of women in “heathen” countries and the conditions of Black women in the US, Grimke also created the parallels between the seemingly privileged white women and Indian women. Lyman stressed the deprivation of education among Hindu women and portrayed Christianity as liberating “heathen” women from their ignorance, saying, “Probably throughout the whole Pagan and Mohammedan world, there does not exist a single school for the education of female, except those established by Christian benevolence.”²³⁶ What Lyman overlooked was that the lack of access to education also existed among American women. In contrast to Lyman, Sarah Grimke pointed out the want of education among both Indian and American women, saying:

Hence in Hindostan, even women of the higher classes are forbidden to read or write; because the Hindoo think it would inevitably spoil them for domestic life, and assuredly bring some great misfortune upon them. May we not trace to the same feeling, the disadvantages under which women labor even in this country, for want of an education, which would call into exercise the powers of her mind, and fortify her soul with those great moral principles by which she would be qualified to fill every department in social, domestic and religious life with dignity?²³⁷

By acknowledging the deprivation of education in both India and America, Grimke argued that American women whose country sent missionaries to educate those females from non-western countries equally needed education. Gender discrimination, particularly based on education, was a universal problem rather than a problem peculiar to India.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Lyman, “Condition and character of females in pagan and Mohammedan countries,” 2.

²³⁷ Sarah M. Grimke, “Women in Asia and Africa.”

Grimke's analysis of Indian women's condition was consistent with her claim in her letters—women were universally subjugated. In *Letters on Equality of the Sexes* (1838), Grimke named men as the cause for the subjugation of women, saying:

All history attests that man has subjected woman to his will, used her as means to promote his selfish gratification, to minister to his sensual pleasures, to be instrumental in promoting his comfort; but never has he desired to elevate her to that rank she was created to fill. He has done all he could to debase and enslave her mind; and now he looks triumphantly on the ruin he has wrought, and says, the being he has thus deeply injured is his inferior.²³⁸

By showing how men kept knowledge away from women, Grimke was able to explain that the supposed inferiority of women was a result of male-imposed restrictions on women's access to knowledge. Thus, Grimke denied the hypocritical assertion of the superiority of Christian women over "heathen" women, and instead emphasized the subjugation of females across geography and history.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the dependency of women

In addition to the lack of female education, American abolitionist and leader of the women's rights movement Elizabeth Cady Stanton also found another common problem women faced in both India and the US—the forced dependence of women on men. Personally inspired by the Grimke sisters, Stanton advocated the political independence of women.²³⁹ In the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, Stanton pioneeringly advocated the franchise of women, saying "the duty of the women of this country [was] to secure to themselves the sacred right to the elective franchise."²⁴⁰ The franchise of women was radical because it directly challenged the male

²³⁸ Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina*, 136.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 10.

²⁴⁰ DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 40.

monopoly of the public sphere by offering women a public role in making political decisions.²⁴¹

The franchise also symbolized the self-ownership because the disfranchisement of women was primarily based on the reasoning that women were economically and politically dependent on men.²⁴²

The political demand of Stanton was based on her feminist realization that men's tyranny was the cause of women's grievances. One example given by Stanton was the miseries of widowhood in the US. According to Stanton's address to the Legislature of New York in 1854, "the husband has the absolute right to will away his property as he may see fit. If he has children, he can divide his property among them, leaving his wife her third only of the landed estate, thus making her a dependent on the bounty of his own children. A man with thirty thousand dollars in personal property may leave his wife but a few hundred a year, as long as she remains his widow."²⁴³ In other words, men had the power to economically impoverish their wives even after their death in the US, in which the livelihood of widows was subject to the will of their deceased husbands. Stanton then drew parallels between widowhood in America and India, saying:

Man has ever manifested a wish that the world should indeed be a blank to the companion whom he leaves behind him. The Hindoo makes that wish a law, and burns the widow on the funeral pile of her husband; but the civilized man, impressed with a different view of the sacredness of life, takes a less summary mode of drawing his beloved partner after him; he does it by the deprivation and starvation of the flesh, and the humiliation and mortification of the spirit.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Ibid, 46.

²⁴² Ibid, 42-45.

²⁴³ *History of Woman Suffrage*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, eds. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage (Rochester; New York; London; Paris: Charles Mann, 1889), 602.

²⁴⁴ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Address to the legislature of New York adopted by the State Woman's Rights Convention, held at Albany, Tuesday and Wednesday, February 14 and 15, 1854," 13 (Weed, Parsons and Co, Albany) *Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Pamphlet Collection*.

As I have discussed in Chapter 1, *sati* is a Hindu practice, in which a widow sacrifices herself by sitting atop her deceased husband's funeral pyre. Stanton made the point that although widowhood in America seemed to be better than *sati* in India, both practices allowed men to exert arbitrary power over the widows even after their deaths. The parallel drawn by Stanton between *sati* and widowhood in America was unprecedented, chiefly because white Europeans never tied *sati* to a Western context. Pompa Banerjee points out that European observers (1500~1723) of *sati* failed to connect widow burning with the similar practice of witch-burning in Europe despite the similarities of the spectacle between these two practices, chiefly because either through repulsing *sati* as a symbol of barbarism or valorizing *sati* as the ideal of submissive wives, these travelers constructed *sati* as the Other.²⁴⁵ In contrast to European travelers constructing *sati* as the Other, Stanton found the parallels of *sati* in the US context.

Stanton's effort to find similarities between women's suffering across races was an extension of her ability to transcend the racial lens of understanding women's suffering and identify with various forms of oppression. In her address to the Legislature on women's right of suffrage in 1860, Stanton drew parallels between women and slaves, saying,

The negro has no name. He is Cuffy Douglass or Cuffy Brooks, just whose Cuffy he may chance to be. The woman has no name. She is Mrs. Richard Roe or Mrs. John Doe, just whose Mrs. she may chance to be. Cuffy has no right to his earnings; he cannot buy or sell, or lay up anything that he can call his own. Mrs. Roe has no right to her earnings she can neither buy nor sell, make contracts, nor lay up anything that she can call her own. Cuffy has no right to his children; they can be sold from him at any time. Mrs. Roe has no right to his children; they may be bound out to cancel a father's debts of honor... Cuffy has no legal existence; he is subject to restraint and moderate chastisement.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Pompa Banerjee, "Burning Questions: Widows, Witches, and Early Modern European Travel Narratives of India," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 549.

²⁴⁶ *History of Woman Suffrage*, 680.

In other words, Stanton argued that marriage legally suspended the economic and legal independence of white middle class women (given the pronoun of “Mrs.”) and made them slaves of men. Both married women and slaves belonged to the men, not owning property, their children, and even themselves. Even though white middle class women were more privileged than slaves, given that they could at least speak out on their dilemmas, Stanton’s identification of married women with slaves reflected her identification of feminism with abolitionism and criticism towards the patriarchal system that subjected both women and slaves. Later in 1863, appealing to the notion that women had moral duties to confront the evil of slavery, Stanton and other abolitionist women formed the Women’s Loyal National League. The League coordinated a petition initiative by gathering the signatures of women to ask Congress to pass an act emancipating all slaves in the US.²⁴⁷

However, conflating the suffering of Indian widows with American widows and the suffering of white middle class married women with slaves suppressed the peculiarities of sufferings. These conflation silenced the harsher dilemmas faced by the Hindu widows and slaves, given that American white women at least occupied the status of being “inferior” sex but the “superior” race. The conflation also led Stanton to a generalized conclusion in the address that “the negro’s skin and the woman’s sex are both prima facie evidence they were intended to be in subjection to the white Saxon man” while neglecting the intersectional oppression faced by Black women.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism*, 216.

²⁴⁸ *History of Woman Suffrage*, 681.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson and universal subjugation

One of the collaborators of Stanton in the feminist cause was abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823–1911). Higginson was fully compassionate towards the women’s rights movement and firmly supported the women’s franchise. In the 1853 World’s Temperance Convention, Higginson declined to serve on “a committee from which women were excluded.”²⁴⁹ Early in his speech before the Committee of the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention that considered changes to the Massachusetts Constitution in 1853, Higginson spoke on the qualification of voters and mocked the disenfranchisement of women as the “disfranchise the majority” and “a new aristocracy” of men over women.²⁵⁰ After the Civil war, Higginson continued to be devoted to the women’s franchise and became the president of the American Woman Suffrage Association and editorial staff of the association’s organ, the *Woman’s Journal*. Unlike missionaries presenting sexism as peculiar to “heathen” countries, like Grimke, Higginson historicized sexism across geographies and times. In his 1859 article “Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet?” Higginson argued that:

According to Aristotle and the Peripatetics, woman was animal occasionatum, as if a sort of monster and accidental production. Mediaeval councils, charitably asserting her claims to the rank of humanity, still pronounced her unfit for instruction. In the Hindoo dramas, she did not even speak the same language with her master but used the dialect of slaves. When, in the sixteenth century, Françoise de Saintonges wished to establish girls’ schools in France, she was hooted in the streets, and her father called together four doctors, learned in the law, to decide whether she was not possessed by demons, to think of educating women, pour s’assurer qu’instruire des femmes n’elait pas unaeuvre du demon [to make sure that educated women was not a devil’s work]²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 502.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 250-251.

²⁵¹ Thomas W. Higginson, “Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet? No. 2.” *Liberator*, February 18, 1859, 28. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

By integrating the hardships faced by Hindu women into the history of sexism across time and geography, Higginson de-emphasized the peculiar gender discrimination against Hindu women and presented sexism as a global problem.

More importantly, Higginson's words urged that men were obligated to uplift women because, throughout history, males suppressed the intellectual development of women. The example of Hindu women using the "dialect of slaves" corresponded to the fact that in Sanskrit plays, Hindu women, along with other low social status male characters, speak Prakrit, which was considered inferior, while only high-status male characters could speak Sanskrit in which religious texts were written.²⁵² Higginson implied that the male-created artificial demarcated sphere between women and men enabled men to monopolize the knowledge. As a result, Higginson called men to shoulder their historical responsibility because they had intellectually subjugated women. In the Seventh National Woman's Rights Convention in 1856, Higginson argued:

We men have been standing for years with our hands crushing down the shoulders of woman, so that she should not attain her true altitude; and it is not so easy, after we have cramped, dwarfed, and crippled her, to get rid of our responsibility by standing back at last, and saying, 'There, we will let you go; stand up for yourself. If it is true, as these women say, we have wronged them for centuries, we have got to do something more than mere negative duty. By as much as we have helped to wrong them, we have got to help to right them; by as much as we have discouraged them heretofore, we have got to encourage them hereafter.'²⁵³

Essentially, Higginson pointed out that it was wrong for males not to participate in the feminist movement. Instead, since males were at fault in the degraded circumstances of women, Higginson made uplifting women a moral obligation for men.

²⁵² Romila Thapar, *Śakuntalā: Texts, Readings, Histories* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1999), 78.

²⁵³ *History of Woman Suffrage*, 657.

By historicizing gender discrimination as a universal problem, Higginson also questioned British colonialism in India. In the 1858 “The Woman’s Rights Almanac: The History of Woman in Three Pictures,” Higginson dated the harsh laws against women back to the 2000 BC Hindu laws and perceived the contemporary English common laws as “scarcely a step beyond barbarism.”²⁵⁴ Rendering India as the start of the chronology of female history, Higginson dismantled the artificial division between Christian and “heathen” women and integrated the subjugation of Indian women into the universal problem of gender discrimination. By drawing the parallels between India and Britain, Higginson negated the superiority of Christianity that Lyman considered provided women far better conditions than those women under “heathenism.” More importantly, Higginson doubted the colonial discourse of the British Empire as bringing progress and liberation to Indian women, given that the Anglo-Saxon laws in 1848 “scarcely vary at all, in *principle*” from the preceding 2000 BC Hindu laws.²⁵⁵ He seemed to question how could British Empire improve the condition of “heathen” women if British laws discriminated against its own women in England? However, a more mature criticism of Higginson towards British colonialism came in the early twentieth century that I will further elaborate in my Chapter 3.

The draconian laws against women that existed in India, Britain, and the US emphasized for Higginson the significance of the current feminist movement as reversing the historical tide of subjugating women. Higginson stressed the importance of the year 1848, when women organized the first local Woman’s Rights Convention, because “since then every year has brought improvements, and even those who denounce the Woman’s Rights Movement, admit the value

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 864.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 863.

of these its results.”²⁵⁶ By marking the American feminist movement as a turning point in the history of the subjugation of women, Higginson was able to urge women and men to seize the moment and reverse the thousands of years of the subjugation of the female sex.

Parker Pillsbury and the crocodile tale

Missionaries had employed the image of a Hindu mother throwing her children into the river to claim how “heathen” religion infatuated Indian women and made them lack natural affection.²⁵⁷ However, the crocodile sacrifice was based on the Hindu religious belief that throwing the first-born son to the crocodiles at the Hooghly River (in West Bengal, India) would procure women additional offspring.²⁵⁸ After the British illegalized this practice in the early nineteenth century, the crocodile sacrifice continued in an artistic form of feeding a “baby” made of clay into the river.²⁵⁹ Although the practice of throwing the first-born sons into the river had ceased to exist, it remained a powerful cultural stereotype for missionaries to claim the degradation of Hindus, which possibly contributed to Child’s perception of Hindu women lacking in natural affection.

Some abolitionists discerned the biases of the missionaries’ propaganda. The *Liberator* lamented in 1860 that “How potent have been the false representations made about living human sacrifices offered to Juggernaut [the Hindu god, the “Lord of the Universe”], in collecting money for missionary purposes!”²⁶⁰ Instead, they sought alternative voices from a Hindu convert

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 864.

²⁵⁷ Lyman, “Condition and character of females in pagan and Mohammedan countries,” 10.

²⁵⁸ Asko Parpola, *The Roots of Hinduism: The Early Aryans and the Indus Civilization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 182.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Joguth Chunder Gangooly, “New Publications.” *Liberator*, November 2, 1860, 174. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

to Christianity to represent India. For example, as I have discussed in Chapter 1, the *Liberator* promoted Joguth Chunder Gangooly's book *Life and Religion of the Hindoos* (1860) to their readers in 1860. The *Liberator* published the words of Gangooly regarding how misrepresented India was in America, saying, "How often I hear the people in this country speak of strange, unfounded stories respecting the manners, customs and religious institutions of India! For instance, you all know that Hindoo mothers feed the 'crocodiles with their babies'—that devotees throw themselves as sacrifice under the solid wheels of the car of Juggernaut—that the Hindoos burn their widows or shotees, &c."²⁶¹ Instead of inspecting Hindus from the moral high ground of Christian missionaries, abolitionists narrowed their distance with the far away Indians by recommending their readers to know India from the perspective of a native Indian.

In the book *Life and Religion of the Hindoos*, the acknowledgment of the superiority of Christianity did not prevent Gangooly from correcting American stereotypes regarding Hindu religious practices. Gangooly advocated Christianity as salvation to the suffered Hindu women, saying, "As I compare a woman in Bengal with one in America or England, I see plainly the difference between Christianity and Hindooism. Nothing but the divine influence of Christianity has ennobled the female condition in Christendom."²⁶² Although Gangooly eulogized the superiority of Christianity over Hinduism regarding the treatment of women, he at the same time eloquently rejected the misrepresentation of Hindu mothers throwing their children into rivers. Gangooly argued in the book *Life and Religion of the Hindoos* that:

²⁶¹Joguth Chunder Gangooly, "Rev. Mr. Gangooly, the converted, high-caste Brahmin now travelling in this country, proposes in the following letter to refute some of the received stories of the heathen abuses in India." *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, October 22, 1859. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

²⁶²Joguth Chunder Gangooly, *Life and Religion of the Hindoos: With a Sketch of My Life and Experience*, ed. George Edward Ellis. (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, Lee, & co., 1860), 26.

Perhaps an insane woman throw her child into the water, which he interpreted as the institution of the 'heathen.' But it seems to me an unjust inference, to name the fruit of insanity as the custom of a people, to stigmatize a whole people for the folly of one, or a few even. I read in a Boston paper, that the average number of suicides in the United States is nine per week. Will it be proper for me to report in India that suicide is the custom of the American people?²⁶³

In other words, Gangooly pointed out how missionaries maliciously dramatized only a few cases of crocodile sacrifice to claim the degradation of Hindus. Thus, some abolitionists tore the boundaries between “uncivilized heathen” and the “civilized Christian” by challenging the authority of the church to represent “heathens” arbitrarily. Instead, they claimed that individual misdeeds that deviate from the mainstream society and the universal humanity existed in both America and India from the voice of a native Indian.

Besides giving the platform to a local Indian to demystify the crocodile sacrifice, abolitionists utilized the trope to criticize American society. Abolitionists drew parallels between sacrificing children to crocodiles and sacrificing humans to slavery. American minister, abolitionist, and women’s rights advocate Parker Pillsbury argued in his letter to the editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in 1861 that “The Hindoo mother, we are told, tosses her children to be devoured by the sacred crocodiles. But our government, by constitutional compromise, casts all the generations of its children, hitherto, into the merciless laws of the dragon of slavery.”²⁶⁴ In other words, Pillsbury pointed out that given the scale of sacrifice, institutionalized slavery in the US was more harmful than the crocodile sacrifice in India. Employing the language of missionaries, Child described casting children to crocodiles as “the

²⁶³ Ibid,189.

²⁶⁴ Parker Pillsbury, "The Hour without the Man." *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 6, 1861. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

extremist case of infatuated idolatry I have ever known” in her letter to *Liberator* in 1861.²⁶⁵ However, she echoed the observation of Pillsbury and conceded the utmost idolatry to the slavery-tolerant US government, saying “except that which has been manifested in the unlimited indulgence and submissive tenderness of the United States Government towards its pet crocodile, Slavery.”²⁶⁶ By arguing slavery as a mass human sacrifice as equally or even more dreaded than the crocodile sacrifice, Child and Pillsbury aimed to arouse Christian consciousness to stop the barbarous human sacrifice in the US. They also mocked the hypocrisy of slavery-tolerant churches by pointing out that they were like “heathen” whom they despised because of the same subjugation of fellow human beings.

Conclusion

Women’s participation in abolitionism helped them to articulate their abolition-feminist agenda. Some of their feminist consciousness came from their realization of the paralleled conditions between African Americans and white women. Child analyzes the comparison between (white) women and enslaved Black people that “both have been kept in subjection by physical force, and considered rather in the light of property, than as individuals.”²⁶⁷ In the letter titled “Human Rights not Founded on Sex,” American abolition-feminist Angelina Grimke also acknowledged that “investigation of the rights of the slave has led me to a better understanding of my own.”²⁶⁸ These abolition-feminists’ radical realization of the similar subjugation of women and slaves under the patriarchal system largely came from their engagement with the

²⁶⁵ Lydia Maria Child, "A Letter from Mrs. Child." *Liberator*, October 11, 1861. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Harrold, *American Abolitionists*, 47.

²⁶⁸ Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause*, 281.

Underground Railroad system that helped Southern slaves escape to the North.²⁶⁹

Communicating with the fugitive slaves—especially female slaves—enabled white female abolitionists to understand how their oppression intersected with that faced by enslaved Black women, which gave abolitionism a broader significance in protesting the American patriarchal system that exploited both the Black race and female gender.²⁷⁰

Despite their sincere efforts, many white female abolitionists failed to fully identify or understand the struggles of Black women, and so with South Asian women. Between the 1830s and 1860s, the white feminist movement was alienated from abolitionism.²⁷¹ Although white middle-class feminist leaders denounced slavery and racial discrimination, they often ignored the concerns of Black women. Few Black women, with notable exceptions such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Frances Harper, bridged abolitionism and feminism by attending white feminist meetings.²⁷² Especially after the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, some women's rights advocates, such as Elizabeth Stanton, even denounced the suffrage of Black males, claiming in her address to the Legislature of New York in 1854 that "We are moral, virtuous and intelligent, and in all respects quite equal to the proud white man himself, and yet by your laws we are classed with idiots, lunatics and negroes...our legal position is lower than that of either; for the negro can be raised to the dignity of a voter if he possess himself of \$250."²⁷³ She even reached the biased conclusion that "prejudice against sex is more deeply rooted and more unreasonably maintained than that against color."²⁷⁴ Thus, the feminist movement, at the same

²⁶⁹ Olsavsky, "Women, Vigilance Committees, and the Rise of Militant Abolitionism, 1835–1859."

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 147-151.

²⁷² Ibid, 151.

²⁷³ *History of Woman Suffrage*, 595.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 681.

time, distanced white middle class women from Black people, chiefly because of practical concerns, such as not diverting the agenda of feminism to abolitionism and societal pressures against racial equality. As this chapter has shown, abolitionists held similar contradictory stance of both identification with and alienation from Indian women.

Unlike missionaries claiming the supremacy of Christianity by constructing the “heathen” Other, some abolitionists found the parallels between the “heathen” Other and the Christian self, on issues ranging from hardships faced by widows to the denial of female education. Although most abolition-feminists reproduced missionaries’ stereotypes towards Indian women in their writings, they at the same time mocked the “superiority” of the Christian society that tolerated slavery and subjugated women, which resembled more of “heathenism.” Those non-western countries even treated women much more humane than Christian countries, and “heathen” women could also become a source of empowerment for Christian women. Abolition-feminists also rejected the dichotomy between “heathens” and Christians. Higginson and Grimke realized gender discrimination as a global and historical problem rather than a problem peculiar to non-western countries. Although most abolition-feminists uncritically accepted the stereotypes towards Indian women, some abolitionists were interested in challenging the stereotypes by giving voices to a native Indian rather than the Christian churches.

I will end this Chapter by comparing abolition-feminists with contemporary British suffragists. Both appealed to Orientalized stereotypes of the suffered Indian women, ranging from *sati* to female enslavement. Like Grimke finding the universal sufferings of women, British suffragists also championed a universal sisterhood; as suffragette British Annie Kenney puts it, “No nationality, no political creed, no class distinction, no difference of any sort divides us as

women.”²⁷⁵ However, unlike American abolition-feminists narrowing the distance between the “heathen” Other and the Christian self, British suffragists distanced themselves from their “colonial sisters.”²⁷⁶ Contrary to Higginson critically questioning how the British Empire could improve the condition of “heathen” women if British laws discriminated against its own women in England, British suffragists internalized the British colonial agenda. Uplifting “colonial sisters” became their steppingstones to fulfilling their imperial responsibilities so as to qualify themselves as British colonial rulers who deserved the right to vote. The dependence of British suffragists on patriarchal imperialism not only compromised their extent of feminism but also denied the agency of Indians by positioning Indian women as objects of the imperial patronage of British women.²⁷⁷ In the next Chapter, I will discuss that contrary to these British suffragists, many American abolitionists gradually came to realize how imperialism could be a force of subjugation rather than elevation from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.

²⁷⁵ Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 173.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 172.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

Chapter 3 American Abolitionist Writings on Empire

*“The history of our day...may be epitomized in one word—Empire; the domination of white Europe over black Africa and yellow Asia, through political power bult on the economic control of labor, income and ideas.”*²⁷⁸

—*Dusk of Dawn* by W. E. B. Du Bois

*“If civilization consists in securing peace of mind to the bulk of humanity; or in giving equal opportunities to mankind in general; or in establishing a reign of universal brotherhood, universal justice and universal love all over the world (not the European world only); then the modern civilization has ignominiously failed.”*²⁷⁹

—*The United States of America: a Hindu’s impressions and a study* by Lala Lajpat Rai

Abolitionists’ assessment of British colonial rule evolved over the nineteenth century. Although their understandings were incomplete in the antebellum nineteenth century, they formulated early criticisms towards American and British imperialism by examining slavery in India, Indian indentured laborers in the West Indies and comparing British and American colonialism. Though there was no abolitionist movement after the American Civil War, abolitionists in their individual capacities or through association with other organizations continued to develop their critiques towards Empire. In the early twentieth century, their understanding of Empire matured, partly because the US accelerated its imperial expansion at that time. In contrast to many antebellum abolitionists’ stance of supporting reform within

²⁷⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn* (New York, United States: Oxford University Press, 2007), 48.

²⁷⁹ Lala Lajpat Rai, *The United States of America; a Hindu’s Impressions and a Study* (Calcutta: R. Chatterjee, 1916), 340.

colonialism, former abolitionists like Thomas Wentworth Higginson advocated the independence of colonies by the late nineteenth century. However, the US betrayed its abolitionist and anti-imperialist legacies and joined the rank of Anglo-Saxon domination, a stance celebrated in the works of Katherine Mayo, American segregationist and an apologist of slavery's past.

The American cotton empire quickly expanded in the nineteenth century. Sven Beckert characterizes the expansion as a “military-cotton complex,” given its reliance on military conquest, such as encroaching the lands of Native Americans like the Cherokee tribes, annexing Texas, and ultimately with Civil War to expand and maintain the cotton empire.²⁸⁰ Besides, the robust health of the American slave empire partially resulted from the rapid growth of British manufacturing of textiles that required cotton as raw materials. In addition to the innovation and expansion of mechanized manufacturing, “war capitalism” chiefly helped incentivize the British demand for American cotton by capturing foreign markets through colonial conquests.²⁸¹ As a result, by the early nineteenth century, the US had become the most crucial supplier of cotton to the British market.²⁸²

Despite the complicity of the British Empire in the expansion of the American Empire, the British Empire was also a symbol of hope for American abolitionism. British abolition of slavery (in most British colonies like the Caribbean, South Africa, and Canada, except the EIC's Indian territories) in 1833 was a model for the Garrisonian movement in the early years. Garrison likened the spirit of abolition in Britain as a “contagion” that would ultimately “spread over our country with a rapidity that cannot be arrested.”²⁸³ David Child, Lydia Maria Child's husband,

²⁸⁰ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*, First edition. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 108.

²⁸¹ *Ibid*, xvi.

²⁸² *Ibid*, 104.

²⁸³ Edward Bartlett Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War, Antislavery, Abolition, and the Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 133.

also hailed the British abolition of slavery as “a noble example” for the US to follow.²⁸⁴

Learning from the success of British abolitionists, American abolitionists realized the importance of swaying the public opinions against slavery, and they printed massive quantities of antislavery materials, including newspapers, pamphlets, children’s literature, and mailed them to the South.²⁸⁵ Colonies of the British Empire, like Canada, also provided citizenship for fugitive slaves. British abolitionist George Thompson, invited by William Lloyd Garrison, had a speaking tour in the US and established over three hundred branches of the American Anti-Slavery Society.²⁸⁶ Gerald Horne points out that although abolitionism could be a geopolitical maneuver of the British Empire to gain moral supremacy over its former North American colonies, slaves and abolitionists in the US still gained hope from the British abolitionism.²⁸⁷ Frederick Douglass even envisioned British armies landing in the US and liberating American slaves who would “rally round the British at the first tap of the drum.”²⁸⁸

Despite applauding the British Empire for abolishing slavery, some American abolitionists held critical attitudes towards both American and British Empires or, more generally, Empire as a form of domination. Garrisonian abolitionists supported the Irish Nationalist movement and the liberation of Spain from France and criticized British rule in India.²⁸⁹ In contrast to most Americans viewing the Indian Mutiny of 1857 as proving the “half-devil and half-child” nature of Indians and American slaveholders’ outright support for the EIC, many abolitionists, including Garrison, sympathized with the “rebels” and instead criticized the British subjugating

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 138.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 140.

²⁸⁶ Gerald Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown: African Americans and the British Empire Fight the U.S. before Emancipation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 11.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid, 7.

²⁸⁹ Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause*.

Indians, which provoked Indians to insurrection.²⁹⁰ American abolitionist Thomas Smallwood also criticized the US as “an interventionist empire” that “arrogate[ed] to themselves the right to meddle with the affairs of others.”²⁹¹ The anti-imperialist stance of many American abolitionists continued even after the abolition of slavery. In response to the American annexation of Hawaii and the wars in Cuba and the Philippines, many former abolitionists helped found the Anti-Imperialist League in Boston, Massachusetts, the historic center of abolitionism, in 1898. Abolitionists like Thomas Wentworth Higginson and descendants of abolitionists like Garrison’s son William Lloyd Garrison Jr. were its active members. Upholding American republican ideals of self-government and non-intervention, the Anti-Imperialist League opposed the US expansion into Cuba and the Philippines and held “sympathy with every race or nation aspiring to be free.”²⁹²

Abolitionist newspapers on British imperial rule in India

American abolitionist newspapers widely published British, Irish, and Scottish abolitionists’ criticism of the British rule in India. The *Liberator* forwarded the speech of British abolitionist George Thompson on British India from the *Scottish Patriot* and the *New Liberator*, published in Glasgow, Scotland.²⁹³ The *Liberator* also published the speech of Irish nationalist

²⁹⁰ Ibid, 376. Rajmohan Gandhi, *A Tale of Two Revolts: India’s Mutiny and the American Civil War* (London: Haus Publishing, 2011).

²⁹¹ quoted in, Jesse Olsavsky, *Abolitionists of the Most Absolute Abolition’: Runaways, Vigilance Committees, and the Rise of Revolutionary Abolitionism, 1835-1861* (Forthcoming LSU Press, 2022). Quoted with permission of the author.

²⁹² Report of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Anti-Imperialist League, Nov 28, 1908.

²⁹³ “Public Meetings.” *Liberator*, November 13, 1840. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*. H. Heugh, William P. Paton, “Scotland.” *Liberator*, May 5, 1837. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*. “Grand Reception Meeting in Lynn.” *Liberator*, December 6, 1850. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

leader Daniel O'Connell on British India at the first annual meeting of the British India Society in London in 1840.²⁹⁴

From these sources, abolitionists gained a spectrum of views on British imperial rule in India. The *Liberator* published the speech of the Boroughreeve (the chief municipal officer) of Manchester, John Brooks, during the foundation of the Northern Central British India Society, an organization dedicated to bettering the conditions of India, in 1840. Brooks argued from the mercantilist point of view that improving the conditions of India would enable Indians to purchase more British manufactures, and British merchants could get raw materials, such as cotton and sugar, from India cheaply. Brooks also pointed out that the cultivation of agricultural products in India by “free” laborers could help replace the slave laborers in the US.²⁹⁵ The *Liberator* also published an article from the annual abolitionist gift book, the *Liberty Bell*, that eulogized the Irish philanthropist Richard Allen who held sympathy towards not only American slaves but also the Hindus who were “forced to grow the opium, and taxed for the support of Juggernaut, and made to worship the ‘books’ [possibly referring to collectors’ revenue collection account books] of the ‘Honorable Company’ [British East India company] Once a year.”²⁹⁶ In the *Liberator*, Irish nationalist leader O’Connell criticized the misgovernance and economic exploitation of the British Empire, such as extracting land revenues, compelling Indians to cultivate poppies, and monopolizing the sale of opium and salt. However, he supported the British colonial rule in India. Even for Ireland, O’Connell did not ask for Irish independence but

²⁹⁴ “British India.” *Liberator*, October 2, 1840. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

²⁹⁵ “British India.” *Liberator*, October 9, 1840, 162. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

²⁹⁶ the *Liberty Bell*. “Sketch of a ‘Foreign Incendiary’.” *Liberator*, January 7, 1842, 2. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

The *Liberty Bell* was an annual abolitionist gift book, edited by Maria Weston Chapman. The Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society sold or gifted the *Liberty Bell* to participants in the National Anti-Slavery Bazaar.

only representation in the British political system. Like the statement of the Northern Central British India Society, he believed that the humanity of the British towards India would, in turn, increase the demands of Indians for British goods.²⁹⁷ From the speech of Thompson in the Glasgow Emancipation Society in 1837, American abolitionists learned how imperial responsibility obligated the British to abolish slavery in India that had not yet been abolished in the Emancipation Bill of 1833: “now that the governor of Calcutta swayed the sceptre of the Great Mogul, and ruled the hundred millions of inhabitants of India—that slavery was theirs, and by them it must be taken up.”²⁹⁸

The knowledge of British rule in India gained from those British, Irish, and Scottish abolitionists were constantly challenged by the other sources of abolitionists, like the unexpected letter from a son of a West Indies planter, S.B. Slack, pointing out how the British colonial authority failed to treat its Indian indentured laborers justly. Among the diverse sources and opinions towards the British rule in India, the conditions of slavery in India under British rule interested American abolitionists the most.

Slavery in British India

The reliance on British abolitionist societies for information about slavery in India sometimes created several limitations and misconceptions about the social conditions in British ruled over India. In their estimation of slavery in India, abolitionists repeated the same fallacies that were legion in the observations of the British abolitionist societies. The *Liberator* published

²⁹⁷ "British India." *Liberator*, September 25, 1840, 154. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

²⁹⁸ H. Heugh and William P. Paton, "Scotland." *Liberator*, May 5, 1837. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

the inquiry of the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society about the conditions of slaves in India in 1841:

That the treatment of male domestic slaves, with the exception of those who are eunuchs, appears in general to be mild—that the number of eunuch slaves in Mohammedan families throughout India, appears to be considerable, implying the continued commission of unnatural and atrocious barbarities on the persons of slaves—that female domestic slaves, and are in general beyond the protection of the law; and that agrestic slaves, both male and female, are subject to much oppressive and cruel treatment, from their own masters; and from the community, without adequate protection in the enjoyment of the rights, which the law nominally secures to them.²⁹⁹

This article's perception of the condition of slavery in India ironically coincided with the views of British colonial authorities that resisted implementing abolitionism. Although domestic slaves had better conditions than downtrodden agricultural slaves from low castes and sometimes even outcastes, their conditions could not be regarded as mild, given that domestic slaves faced human trafficking, tortures, and sexual exploitation.³⁰⁰ Instead, Andrea Major points out that the mildness of domestic slavery was an intentional construction of some colonial officials who appropriated domestic slaves as “domestic servitude[s]” and even family members.³⁰¹ Driven by pragmatism to consolidate imperial rule, colonial authority thus refrained from interfering with domestic slaves who were considered as part of the private sphere of Indian households. The non-interference also pleased domestic slave-holding Indian elite families. In terms of agricultural slaves, although abolitionists realized their harsh conditions, they did not discern that the British laws in practice did not protect agricultural slaves, especially from the *pulayas* caste. Interpreting the *pulayas* caste as a hereditary enslaved caste, the colonial authority thus approved

²⁹⁹ "Paper on African Slave Trade. Statement on Slave Trade in Cuba.-Turnbull's Plan for Suppression of Slave Trade.-Report on Manuscript on American Slavery.-On the Holding of Slaves by British Functionaries.-On Articles Manufactured for the Slave Trade." *Liberator*, February 12, 1841. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

³⁰⁰ Major, *Slavery, Abolitionism and Empire in India, 1772–1843*, 183.

³⁰¹ *Ibid*, 146.

the purchase of *pulayas* as slaves in plantations. Approving enslaving *pulayas* also came from the British monetary concern for stable cultivation and revenue collection, as their enslaved labor allowed their masters to meet the revenue demands of the colonial state.³⁰² Thus, although some abolitionists tried to understand the conditions of slavery in India, their reliance on the British sources trapped them in the official colonial rhetoric.

The acknowledgement of Indian slavery by British and American abolitionists was recent. Prior to the publication of the British missionary and abolitionist William Adam's open letters, *The Law and Custom of Slavery in British India* (1840), to British parliamentary abolitionist T. F. Buxton, the existence of slavery in India remained silent among the abolitionist circles.³⁰³ Even if acknowledging the existence of slavery, abolitionists tended to argue that the practices of slavery in India were comparatively mild to sustain the argument that the free labor products of the East, along with Trinidad and British Guiana, could help replace the slave products in the US. The covering of the existence of slavery in India could also be seen in the stance of Adam that despite acknowledging the dreaded condition of slavery in India, he conceded that slavery in India was comparably a lesser evil than other forms of oppression in India.³⁰⁴ Ironically, the most robust critiques towards slavery in India came from American slaveholders like the South Carolina Senator John C. Calhoun, who intended to negate the moral authority of the British Empire in abolitionism.³⁰⁵ To maintain the honor of the British Empire and the argument of free laborers in India, abolitionist societies like the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society orchestrated abolitionist mobilization, and ultimately forced the East India Company (EIC) to

³⁰² Ibid, 201-210.

³⁰³ Ibid, 334.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Gandhi, *A Tale of Two Revolts*, 45-49.

formally legislate against slavery in India in 1843. However, the practices of slavery in India did not stop by then.

British colonial official knowledge filtered through the British abolitionist reports, shaped American abolitionists' knowledge of slavery in India. Some went to the extent of eulogizing the British role in the abolition of slavery in India. In an article in the abolitionist newspaper *National Era* in 1847, J. G. W (most likely, American Quaker poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier) emphasized the efforts of British colonial official Alexander Johnstone in urging Sri Lanka's local slaveholders, including Muslims, native Sinhalese, and white colonists, to emancipate their slaves. According to J.G.W, despite the guaranteed right of slaveholding by the terms of capitulation under which the Dutch East India company surrendered Ceylon to the English, the continued efforts of the English colonial state in changing the public opinion paid off. Ultimately, in 1816, all the slaveholders in Ceylon, except those in the Kandian (Kandyen) provinces sent to Advocate General of Ceylon, Alexander Johnston a resolution, with their names appended and declaring to "*free all children born of their slaves after that date* [italicized by J.G.W]." ³⁰⁶

Although J. G. W was right to acknowledging British efforts in the official abolition of slavery in parts of Ceylon, he did not realize that various imperial contingencies conditioned the extent of British abolitionism. The humanitarian rhetoric of the EIC against the slaveholdings or transfer of foreign nationals in India was fundamentally mercantilist because the primary concern was that the slaveowners on foreign ships would not pay indemnities to the EIC for the transaction in slaves. The geopolitical interests of the British also compromised its abolitionism.

³⁰⁶ J. G. W. "Abolition in Ceylon—Mohammedan and Hindoo Slaveholders." *National Era*, June 3, 1847. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

For instance, British officials in Baluchistan refused to aid female runaways due to the fear of tilting Baluch arms against the British.³⁰⁷ Moreover, human bondage persisted in Ceylon. After the formal abolition of slavery, as Rachel Kurian, Nira Wickramasinghe, and Alicia Schrikker point out, bonds of debt between landlords and low castes, such as Pallar and Konar, replaced slavery and subjugated those castes under similar working conditions of slavery without interventions from the British colonial authority.³⁰⁸

Abolitionists also did not comment that slavery in India differed from its US counterpart and how the British Empire instead reinforced human bondage. The concept of slavery in India differed from the bounded slaves that the British aimed to regulate. For instance, the British called for the liberation of slaves in the temples; however, many of those “slaves of the gods” were voluntary, enjoyed benefits like tax exemption, and had power over the freemen-clients.³⁰⁹ While the British Government abolished such kinds of slavery, they imposed more stringent forms of labor control by asking locals to pay fixed unpaid labor, taxation, and military services. Indrani Chatterjee points out that the colonial legalization of arbitrarily seizing people for state service was less humane than the Islamic practice of slavery in India because, according to the Islamic creed, a slave only could be owned by one person at a time, which protected slaves from

³⁰⁷ Gwyn Campbell, *Abolition and Its Aftermath in the Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London, United States: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 159-160.

³⁰⁸ *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia and Latin America, 1500-1989*, eds. William Gervase Clarence-Smith and Steven Topik (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 177-178. Nira Wickramasinghe and Alicia Schrikker, “The Ambivalence of Freedom: Slaves in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 78, no. 3 (August 2019): 497–519, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911819000159>.

³⁰⁹ *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Volume 4: AD 1804–AD 2016*, vol. 4, David Eltis et al., ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 443-459.

being used by others.³¹⁰ Thus, many abolitionists failed to apprehend how the British Empire exploited Indian laborers under the guise of abolitionism.

India laborers and the West Indies

Instead of condemning the exploitation of laborers by the British colonial authority, many American abolitionists tended to equate the British East India colonies with “free soil.” American abolitionist and leader of the American Temperance Society, William Goodell emphasized the coexistence of multiple races of different colors, including Hindus, Malays, Chinese of both “the delicate skinned native of Nankin, and the tawny emigrant from, the more southerly province of Quang-tong,” Jews including “Jew of Amsterdam...as white as the Hollander proper” and “*black Jew of Coromandel*” in Pulo Penang (Penang) under the British Empire in his anti-slavery Lecture “Prejudice in Asia—Different Races of Men” in 1837.³¹¹ By emphasizing the racial diversities in Pulo Penang, Goodell falsely refuted the existence of racial hierarchy in British Malaya, as evident in his exhortation: “Stand with me[him] at *Pulo Penang*, and tell me[him] how many distinct and separate races of men thy wisdom will please to write down? Where wilt thou draw the line of demarkation between the *white* and the *colored* man? [italicized by Goodell] ...Between the Dane and the African there is no chasm. The shades of color and the parallels of latitude very nearly correspond to each other.”³¹² The utopian vision of

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ "The following finely descriptive extract is from the pen of William Goodell, in his Anti-Slavery Lecturer." *Free American*, February 20, 1840, 2. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*. "Speech of Mr. Dodge, of Chatham." *Liberator*, November 30, 1860, 190. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*. "Prejudice against Color in America." *Colored American*, March 11, 1837. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

³¹² Ibid.

the non-existence of racial hierarchy within a multi-racial society reflected Goodell's identification of the East Indies with "free soil."

This oversight of human subjugation in the East partly resulted from the vision of free laborers in the East by George Thompson. According to Zach Sell, Thompson envisioned that the cultivation of indigo and cotton by "free labor" in India was necessary for emancipation of Black people because the agricultural products produced by free laborers could replace the slave products in the US and the Caribbeans.³¹³ As a result, the intentional negation of human subjugation and even acknowledging equality across races in the East was necessary for abolitionism in the West. Only later, when Adam's letters exposed the miserable conditions of slaves in India, Thompson acknowledged the urgency of abolishing slavery in India.³¹⁴ Also, abolitionists could be ignorant of human subjugation in the East, as Andrea Major explains, possibly resulting from English abolitionists' perception of Hinduism as cultural slavery that took precedence over actual slavery.³¹⁵ As discussed in Chapter 1, American abolitionists were already exposed to the discourse that slavery in India could be located in religion in the form of caste that subjugated low castes as "slaves" of Brahmins. Thus, for abolitionists, the cultural slavery of "heathenism" was more illustrative of the exploitation in India than actual slavery.

American abolitionists equated the East with "free soil," especially when they compared the West Indies with the East Indies. The *Liberator* published an article in its "Juvenile Department" section in 1831, describing the superior condition of Hindu free peasants over slaves in the West Indies. It eloquently claimed that "this is East India sugar: it is not cultivated by slaves, but by

³¹³ Sell, *Trouble of the World*, 41-43.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 334.

³¹⁵ Major, *Slavery, Abolitionism and Empire in India, 1772-1843*, 246-284.

the Hindoo peasants. No barbarous sounds of cracking whips remind them that, with the form and feelings of a man, they must submit to be treated as the beasts of the field; and no cruel master can part them from their wives, or sell their children from them.”³¹⁶ Contrasting the labor conditions of the West Indies with the East Indies, the *Liberator* established the moral superiority of East India sugar over West Indies sugar and thus persuaded people to contribute to abolitionism by resisting West Indies sugar. An article in the *Philanthropist* in 1841 also claimed the superiority of Hindu free laborers over slaves in the West Indies by quoting the words of Mr. Waddlestone in the Parliamentary debate on the abolition of the slave trade in 1805. Although Waddlestone acknowledged that the labor of a Hindu peasant was “subservient to the qualifications of a European Lord,” he pointed out that the Hindu peasants’ self-held superiority for their masters, saying:

He (the peasant) viewed him (the European Lord) as one of the lowest caste. He would not, on any consideration eat from the same plate. He would not suffer his son to marry the daughter of his master, even if she would bring him all the West Indies as her portion. He would observe too, that the Hindoo drank his water from his native well; that if his meal was scanty, he received it from the hand of her who was most dear to him; that when he labored, he labored for her and his offspring.³¹⁷

Thus, some abolitionists’ fascination with the free laborers from East Indies even went to the extent of eulogizing the preservation of caste as symbols of freedom and autonomy over slavery. The *Philanthropist* not only downplayed caste oppression but also remained silent on the self-constructed superiority of colonial overlords, Europeans who segregated themselves from Indians by means like occupying superior residential areas.

³¹⁶ "Juvenile Department." *Liberator*, October 29, 1831. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

³¹⁷ Vox. "Miscellaneous." *Philanthropist* [SAS], April 7, 1841. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

More importantly, the vision of free laborers across India silenced violence and economic insecurities faced by Indians. Possibly driven by the vision of abolitionism, capitalists and abolitionists envisioned that the quantity and quality of British Indian staples such as rice and cotton surpassed the US slave products.³¹⁸ As Zach Sell points out, ironically, British capitalists fashioned new disciplinary practices reminiscent of US slavery, including introducing US plantation overseers to Indian plantations.³¹⁹ Also, Hindu peasants were burdened by the fixed revenue of the British Empire regulated by the Permanent Settlement and global price fluctuations of agricultural products. Many poor landless Indian peasants sold their services and sometimes even their wives and children to meet pressing needs, especially during famines. They also sought casual employment, such as burden carriers in the ports in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. These oppressed landless people formed the early pool of emigrant laborers for the indentured system that quickly boomed after the British abolished slavery in the West Indies in 1833.

The Emancipation Bill of 1833 abolished slavery in most British colonies like the Caribbean, South Africa, and Canada, except the EIC's Indian territories. However, the demand for sugar persisted and even expanded chiefly because sugar and coffee had become the necessities of workers and their families in the early nineteenth century.³²⁰ The competition for sugar production also heightened, given that the 1840s campaign for free trade ultimately equalized the duties on colonial and foreign sugar (the equalization of duties in the West Indies was deferred until 1854). As a result, West Indian producers faced competition from other sugar plantations in places like

³¹⁸ Sell, *Trouble of the World*, 2021.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* (London, New York: published for the Institute of Race Relations by Oxford University Press, 1974), 20.

Java (Indonesia) and Cuba.³²¹ West Indies planters thus needed cheap laborers like indentured laborers from India to replace their former slaves to accelerate production.

Initially, the British Empire held skepticism towards the indentured labor system. The final report of the Dickens committee (1838-1840) concluded that the indentured system would “weaken the moral influence of the British Government throughout the world.”³²² Nevertheless, the British Empire was finally convinced by the benefits of the system and held that the legal provision, such as return passages after five years, cheap and accessible courts, authorizing Protector would ensure the welfare of the indentured laborers. Finally, the Act XXI of 1844 legalized the emigration of indentured Indian laborers to Jamaica, Trinidad, and Demerara (a region in British Guiana), but not to the Lesser Antilles. Between the abolition of slavery in 1833 and the official abolition of Indian indentureship in 1920, an estimated 500,000 Indian indentured servants have been imported and worked on the plantations in the Caribbean.³²³

In contrast to the promised provisions of British protection, Indian indentured laborers faced harsh conditions in the West Indies. The indentured system resembled much of U.S. slavery in terms of production mode, punishment for vagrancy, and supervision.³²⁴ The indentured laborers even had less freedom than ex-slaves because they could not purchase their freedom, in contrast to ex-slaves who became bounded apprentices and could purchase their liberty at an indemnity set by the magistrate. Indentured laborers could hardly go back to India after indentureship. Newcastle’s proposal (sent to the Board of Control in 1852) extended the guaranteed five-year free return passage into ten years. In Jamaica, many Indians from the arrivals of the mid-1840s

³²¹ Ibid, 51.

³²² Ibid, 93.

³²³ Lomarsh Roopnarine. “Indian Indentured Servitude in the Atlantic World.” *Oxford Bibliography*, March 30, 2017.

³²⁴ Ibid, 1-38.

could not return to India because the colony was bankrupt and could not pay to charter the ships.³²⁵

Witnessing the hardships of Indian indentured laborers in the West Indies, a son of a sugar-planter in Jamaica, S.B. Slack, voiced his opposition in the American abolitionist newspaper, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in 1858.³²⁶ Slack formulated early criticism towards the indentured system in his poem titled “The Hindoo immigrant’s Lament: A Truthful Picture of Hindoo Immigration into Jamaica, W.I.”³²⁷ At the beginning of the poem, Slack appealed to the moral consciousness of Christians and asked them to pay attention to the sorrow of a West Indies laborer called Ramah who lived under miserable conditions and separated from his beloved families:

“CHRISTIANS, to my doleful story
Listen with attentive ears,
While my famished form before ye
Loathsome to your sight appears;
Scorn ye not my plaintive moaning,
But a spark of pity show;
Days of anguish, nights of groaning
Are my hapless portion now.

Once with pleasing, soft emotion,

³²⁵ Ibid, 87.

³²⁶ Slack, S. B. “Emancipation in Jamaica.” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 24, 1858. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

³²⁷ Slack, S. B. “The Hindu Immigrant's Lament.” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 21 Aug. 1858. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

By the Ganges' sacred stream,
Zeila's love and fond devotion
Filled my heart with joy supreme;
But alas! From Zeila parted, Home and kindred left behind,
Starving, dying broken-hearted,
Where shall Ramah comfort find?

Then Slack narrated how Ramah became an indentured laborer, despite his family's arguments otherwise. He claimed that the Immigration agents cheated him. Slack was right to point out that immigration agents would sometimes use deception to attract laborers; however, Slack probably was not aware that deplorable economic conditions mainly forced those people to become indentured laborers. Hindu belief system stipulated that Hindus would lose their caste and possibly be ostracized by one's family once they crossed the sea. Thus, except in dire situations, almost no Hindus would willingly become indentured laborers.

Immigration agents sought me;
Guided to my lowly cot,
They by artful reasoning taught me
To despise my humble lot;
Tales they told of wealth and splendor,
Soon acquired across the main;
What they said sufficed to render
All my parents' counsels vain.

Slack then narrated the prayer of the devoted wife of Ramah, Zeila, to Hindu God Bramah (Brahma) with no recourse:

Zeila too to sacred Bramah

Offered many an earnest prayer,
Asked him to protect her Ramah
From the artful strangers' snare;
All in vain the fond oblation,
Cruel Bramah would not hear,
But each fervent supplication
Fell unheeded on his ear.

...

Slack contrasted the initial happiness of reaching Jamaica with the later realization of the bankruptcy of Ramah's dream of gaining wealth:

...

Soon I found a gross illusion
Had my ardent mind misled,
Soon, alas! The fond delusion
From my growing fancy fled;
Dreams of wealth and splendor vanished,
Rags became my hapless lot;
Oft I've sighed, when almost famished,
For my humble Indian cot.

In the end, Slack again appealed to the consciousness of Christians to intervene in the indentured labor system in Jamaica:

Can Christian's God with favor
Look on such a cursed deed?
Will he whom you call your Savior

For such sinners intercede?
Who for sake of golden treasure
Brought me o'er the awful main—
Who thus dare to purchase pleasure
With a fellow creature's pain.

The evocation of Hindu deities like Bramah and the construction of foreign figures of indentured laborer Ramah and his wife Zeila reflected Slack's lack of familiarity with Indian customs like the religious prohibition of not crossing the seas to foreign lands for caste Hindus. However, his compassion for the laborers transcended cultural and racial boundaries. In his letter to American abolitionist Lewis Tappan in 1858, Slack attacked the representation of Black people as lazy by pointing out the plenty of laborers competing for jobs in Railway Company, Water Works Company, and road construction.³²⁸ Unlike slaveholders degrading the indentured labor system out of nostalgia for slavery, Slack criticized the indentured system chiefly because he believed in the superiority of freed laborers who were "willing to work, when they [were] sure to obtain the reward."³²⁹ Gaining firsthand knowledge about the indentured laborers in the West Indies from Slack, abolitionists were thus able to demystify the British official narratives of the protection extended to the indentured laborers.

Abolitionists also formulated their first critiques towards the coolie system within the US after the abolition of slavery. An article in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in 1867 cautioned that the coolie laborers in the American South plantations in places like Louisiana and New Orleans had become "A slave in all but the name" who seldom rose "above the condition of a

³²⁸ *The Covenanter: Devoted to the Principles of the Reformed Presbyterian Church* (David Smith, 1859).

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

serf” and was “condemned to labor for the benefits of others, with no hope of becoming himself independent.”³³⁰ The article then lamented planters’ preference of coolies over freedmen, chiefly because the coolies, as “ignorant foreigners, who cannot even complain of oppression,” were more exploitable than the freedmen who became American citizens.³³¹ The article advocated for the protection of the coolies by the government and warned of the possible moral crisis of US coolie traffic by arguing that the indentured system of Hindu indentured laborers in Jamaica was a disgrace.³³² Thus, by learning the indentured labor system in the West Indies from a sympathetic local’s point of view, abolitionists averted the same fallacy of following colonial rhetoric as in assessing the condition of slavery in India.

British forms of imperialism in India

Besides slavery and the indentured labor system, antebellum abolitionists compared British imperialism in India to other regions of the world. The founder and editor of the *New York Tribune*, Horace Greeley was famous for his open letter “The Prayer of Twenty Millions” (1862) that called President Lincoln to abolish slavery. Besides his anti-slavery agitation, Greeley also opposed the US invasion of Mexico. Contradictorily, he supported the plan of colonization in Liberia.³³³ Similar segregationist attitudes resurfaced in his discussion on the majority in Illinois voting against Black suffrage. Greeley lamented in 1862 in the *Liberator* that “Abolitionism flourish[ed] only where negroes scare and their peculiarities unknown.”³³⁴ Greeley attributed

³³⁰ “The Coolie Trade in the South.” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, August 10, 1867. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Gregory A. Borchard, *Abraham Lincoln and Horace Greeley*, Concise Lincoln Library (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2011), 13.

³³⁴ Greeley, Horace. “Stinct?” *Liberator*, July 18, 1862. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

Anglo-Saxonism that did not tolerate “any of the inferior races” as the root cause for the subjugation of Black people.³³⁵ Similarly, other people of color, including “the American Indian, the negro, the aborigines of Australia and Van Dieman’s Land, the New Zealander, and the Kaffir” either were enslaved or perished.³³⁶ However, one exception was Hindus who belong to “inferior races that have come under the domination of an Anglo-Saxon power” but “preserved from extermination or slavery.”³³⁷ The exception was chiefly because of the lack of settler colonialism,—that “Englishmen were not encouraged to settle in Hindostan [India], or own land.”³³⁸ Greeley thus constructed a misleading superior condition of Hindus over the Black people in the US based on his rationale that unlike non-settler colonialism in India, the coexistence with Anglo-Saxon worsened the conditions of Black people in the US.

To some extent, Greeley was right to point out that not opting for settler colonialism probably preserved the existence of Hindus. However, Greeley neglected the fact that the political and economic domination of the British over India functioned very differently from British colonialism in America, though both were highly exploitative. As a result of the Seven years’ War (1756–1763), the expenditures of the British outpaced its commercial profits. To preserve the aristocracy and oligarchy of the British Empire, George III had to extract more revenues overseas alternative to imposing new taxes on the necessities of life domestically that incited political radicalism in the late 1750s and 1760s. The Grenville ministry designed the Stamp Act of 1765 to impose a direct tax on the British colonies in America. To gain more control over the colony, after the repeal of the Stamp Act, the British Parliament passed the

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

Declaratory Act that declared unlimited sovereignty of the British Parliament over the American colonies. Thus, the British transitioned its colonial policy from commercial expansion to political dominion through taxation.³³⁹

Unlike American colonies gaining independence from the British Crown, India remained under the tutelage of the new imperialism that aimed to establish political and military supremacy of the British Empire. Symbolically, the first British Governor of the Bengal Presidency, Robert Clive, returned to Bengal and acquired the *diwani* (revenue administration) from the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II. Thus, unlike Greeley's perception that India was an exception to the supposed enslavement of non-white population by Anglo-Saxons, India, as a whole country became enslaved as the part of the tributary territorial empire and subordinated to the fiscal necessities and political rulings of the metropole.

Beneath the political and economic domination, the colonial rule created a mentality of rupture. British imperial historian James Mill argued that the British had to produce new knowledge to govern India and thus created a rupture transitioning India from barbarity to civilization. According to Mill, disordered impersonal relations and the absence of general rules in India were symptoms of barbarity.³⁴⁰ To address these perceived problems in India, Mill advocated codifying governing practices in written rules, as shown in his rhetoric of the ideal colonial regime as machines that acted coherently. The codification reflected that the British officials treated their heterogeneous subjects as a "picture on a wall," namely a passive object for

³³⁹ James M. Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire at the Accession of George III: The East India Company and the Crisis and Transformation of Britain's Imperial State*, Lewis Walpole Series in Eighteenth-Century Culture and History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 89-128.

³⁴⁰ Jon E. Wilson, *The Domination of Strangers: Modern Governance in Eastern India, 1780-1835*, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 136-141.

scrutiny from a distance.³⁴¹ Thus, unlike encountering their subjects as familiars, the British became “strangers” to India, characterized by Jon E. Wilson, without effectively engaging with the everyday lives of their subjects.³⁴² The alienation, as Victor Kiernan points out, was partly resulted from the intentionally constructing the superiority of the British Empire as “demi-god” through practices, ranging from rejecting contacts with Indians like the residential segregation to the early retirement age fixed at fifty-five that Indians never saw the old and feeble British officials.³⁴³ By codifying Indian laws into fixed written rules, distancing, and constructing superiority over its subjects, the British rule ultimately ruptured from the interests and concerns of its subjects.

Some abolitionists sensed the consequences of the mentality of rupture, as manifested in the subjugation of India under British interests. In an article published in the Washington, D.C. abolitionist newspaper *National Era* in 1849, H.B.S. pointed out the grievances of the British rule in India, ranging from Government monopolies even in the necessities of life, chiefly corn, rice salt, indigo, and opium, to forced labor and provisions.³⁴⁴ H.B.S thus realized the consequence of the mentalities of rupture as Frederick John Shore did in his essay “On the Government of British India” (1833) that “the fundamental principles of their government is, to make India subservient to their pecuniary interests, regardless of its own.”³⁴⁵ In other words, by

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Victor Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes to Other Cultures in the Imperial Age* (London, England: Zed Books, 2015), 57.

³⁴⁴ H. B. S. "Sketches of Modern Reforms and Reformers, in Great Britain and Ireland." *National Era*, May 3, 1849. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*. H.B.S. is presumably Harriet Beecher Stowe, but not necessarily, it could also be somebody else with the same initials.

³⁴⁵ Ibid. What Shore said was that “The chief object of the British administration in this country [India], ever since its establishment, would appear to have been, that of the exaltation of the few upon the depression of the many, that is, that the whole population of India should, by every possible means, be rendered subservient to their English rulers, and contribute exclusively to their benefit.” From Frederick John Shore, *Notes on Indian Affairs* (J.W. Parker, 1837).

alienating and abstracting Indian subjects, colonial rulers no longer cared for the welfare of the Indian Other and justified their exploitation for the benefit of the self. H.B.S then went on to challenge the righteousness of the British rule in India:

The domination of Britain, over this immense area and population, is justifiable neither by the mode in which it was obtained, nor the manner in which it has been exercised. Obtained by force, fraud, and cunning, it has been exercised in a spirit of avarice which might tingle the cheek of a Shylock with shame, and of oppression which gives verity to the fabulous tales of Oriental despotisms in the olden time.

Like the anonymous author in the *Principia* invoking the stereotypes of the Oriental “despots” to condemn the tolerance of slavery of American churches, H.B.S mocked the British colonial rule as the revival of Oriental despotism. Thus, H.B.S seemed to advocate the cease of the British colonial rule in India.

Paradoxically, H.B.S supported reform within the British Empire. H.B.S argued that “it would be unjust to suppose that all Englishmen have looked with indifference, much more with approval, on the administration of Indian affairs.”³⁴⁶ Then H.B.S. eulogized the efforts of impeaching Warren Hasting by Edmund Burke and the defense of the Rajah of Sattara by George Thompson, saying:

From the day when Edmund Burke made the old oaken arches of Westminster Hall ring with his thundering philippics against Warren Hastings, whose splendid administrative qualities for a time dazzled and drew the public eye from his gigantic crimes, down to the day when George Thompson shook the India House by lightning eloquence in defence of the deposed Rajah of Sattara, a few jealous eyes have watched the rulers of India.³⁴⁷

To some extent, H.B.S was right to acknowledge that Edmund Burke and George Thompson spoke respectively in defense of an Indian tax collector Nandakumar, unjustly hanged for minor

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

charges thanks to the ruses of Warren Hastings, and the Raja of Satara, dethroned and exiled under the fraudulent charges of treason, pressed by the first Chief Justice of Supreme Court in Calcutta, Elijah Impey.

Nonetheless, the impeachment of Warren Hasting reflected Burke's goal to consolidate the British Empire. Early in 1783, Burke charged the EIC for mismanagement in India, ranging from the drain of the wealth to the corruption and abuse of power in his Ninth Report before the English Parliament.³⁴⁸ English literary theorist Terry Eagleton points out that Burke's criticism of British rule in India was based on his philosophy of hegemony, aiming to cultivate local allegiances by developing a community of interests rather than imposing coercive power.³⁴⁹ In other words, Burke attempted to humanize the imperial hegemony rather than end its rule.

Nicholas B. Dirks even doubted the benevolent intention of Burke towards Indians. According to Dirks, his practical concern for the excess speculation of EIC servants and domestic upheavals in England incited by the French revolution urged him to rail against Hastings. His efforts to reform the Empire was a "pretence" to calm down these destabilizing factors and thus fortify imperial rule.³⁵⁰ Robert Travers echoes the observation of Dirks by arguing that both Burke and Hastings perceived the English state in India as an inheritor of the ancient Mughal constitution, even though Burke believed that Hastings had corrupted the inheritance.³⁵¹ Like Burke, Thompson justified the power of Crown rather than the EIC over India in his defense of the raja of Satara in 1841, saying, "This Company are not the proprietors of India. India is the property of the Crown

³⁴⁸ Edmund Burke, *The Works of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke: With a Biographical and Critical Introduction, and Portrait After Sir Joshua Reynolds* (Holdsworth and Ball, 1834).

³⁴⁹ Terry Eagleton, *Trouble with Strangers: A Study of Ethics* (Chichester; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Pub.,2009), 62-68.

³⁵⁰ Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, Mass. : Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006),.

³⁵¹ Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth Century India: The British in Bengal*, Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society; 14 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

and the nation, and should be managed for the benefits, first of the natives of the soil, and then for the advantage of the entire population of the British empire.”³⁵² Thus, behind the humanitarian rhetoric against the EIC, Thompson and Burke attempted to reinforce the British imperial rule in India. By eulogizing the reform agenda carried out by these two imperial figures, H.B.S. seemed to support improving the imperial rule rather than the independence for colonies that was a natural result of his/her realization of the evil of the British rule.

The words against British rule of another British bureaucrat quoted by H.B.S was the EIC official F.J. Shore. Shore went to the extent of accusing the British rule being worse than the preceding Hindu and Muslim rulers, characterizing the British Indian Government as “practically one of the most extortionate and oppressive that ever existed in India; one under which injustice has been and may be committed, both by the authorities and by individuals, (provided the latter be rich,) to an almost unlimited extent, and under which redress for injuries is almost unattainable.”³⁵³ Shore, to some extent, was aloof from the bureaucratic system of the EIC state. Instead of being fettered by fixed impersonal procedures ordained by the Cornwallis Code like other EIC officials, he mobilized the agency of Indians. For instance, when he was the first superintendent of Dehra Dun, India, Shore implemented successful public construction projects, such as wells and roads, by mobilizing local agencies like voluntary subscriptions (poor people could pay their subscription by labor). He even went to the extent of blaming the English for viewing India in the same light of “viewing Englishmen in England” for the deprivation in

³⁵² George Thompson, *The Raja of Sattara: Speech Delivered in the Court of Proprietors at the India House, July 15 1841* (London: Printed by W. Tyler, 1841), 26.

³⁵³ H. B. S. “Sketches of Modern Reforms and Reformers, in Great Britain and Ireland.”

Bulandshahr (a city in Uttar Pradesh) and urged the colonial administration not to be “dogmatic strangers” and instead adhere to the local customs.³⁵⁴

However, Shore’s affirmation of the oppressive nature of the British rule in India was developed within the British bureaucratic system. The rupture persisted between Shore and his subjects. Although Shore protected porters from being coerced by British travelers into the service as hill porters and ensured that British tourists paid Indian laborers, these practices of the colonial authority of arbitrarily mobilizing Indians into service did not fundamentally change by the individual act of Shore. Shore also could not get away from his hubris as British protector of the conquered country. Although Shore argued that Indians were not “an inferior race of people,” he appropriated his display of militancy as “being a father to his men.”³⁵⁵ Like Burke’s vision of benevolent hegemony, he did not openly question the legitimacy of foreign domination and instead endeavored to show his adherence to the principles of enlightened rule.

Like these colonial officials, although H.B.S. recognized the problem of British colonial rupture, he/she did not resolve the problem chiefly because while wishing for the independence of India from the British, H.B.S. still hoped that reform could work in the British India. H.B.S. contrasted “the stormy times of Clive and Surajah Dowlah, of Hastings and Maharajah Nuncomar” with the current days when Indians could “breathe their petitions in the ears of a listening Parliament, and through generous champions make even the great Court of the India House echo the utterance of their wrongs,” through which secured “many improvements in Indian affairs.”³⁵⁶ Despite describing the improved British rule in India, H.B.S expressed how

³⁵⁴ Dirk H. A. Kolff, *Grass in Their Mouths: The Upper Doab of India under the Company’s Magna Charta, 1793-1830*, Brill’s Indological Library; v. 33 (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston: Brill,2010), 435.

³⁵⁵ Ibid, 439.

³⁵⁶ H. B. S. “Sketches of Modern Reforms and Reformers, in Great Britain and Ireland.”

Whigs and Tories were obsessed with their British India possession, saying, “The eye of an influential party in England is fixed upon Hindostan, never to be withdrawn, till British rule ceases to vex the peninsula, or ceases wholly to exist.”³⁵⁷ In other words, H.B.S implied that the British extraction from India would not end until colonial rule ceased. Then H.B.S expressed aspirations of Indians for independence, saying, “Tens of thousands of the best minds [Indians] in the kingdom would prefer to see that rule instantly shivered in atoms, and the army, with the cowardly plunderers that throng in its train and hide behind its bayonets, driven in defeat and disgrace from India, than that it should exist for a single day, except to make atonement for past offences.”³⁵⁸ Even though H.B.S understood that British rule in India had to cease, he/she did not point out how the British rule would end. His/her logical argument of the necessity of ending the British rule contradicted with his/her previous narratives on the current improved and reform-minded British rule, in comparison to the previous “stormy times.” More importantly, “atonement for past offences” as an exception to the end of the colonial rule heightened his/her contradictory stances that the British rule could continue to exist if they could compensate Indians. Thus, despite voicing Indians’ aspiration for independence and its necessity, H.B.S. finally could not work out a way to end British imperial rule and instead, like the British imperial reformers, proposed reform and compensation within the framework of the Empire.

As early as 1841, some abolitionists questioned American and British imperialism. Using a biblical language, the *Philanthropist* affirmed the expansion of the Anglo-Saxon civilization, saying:

Anglo-Saxon, (that is the word we believe.) civilization, like the stone cut out of the mountain as seen by Daniel, is filling the whole world; that the language, and science and

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

arts of the people from whom we sprung are rapidly gaining the ascendancy in every part of the earth. There can be little doubt now, that Asia, Australasia, Africa and the largest portion of America are destined to receive the stamp of English civilization.³⁵⁹

In other words, using the rhetoric of Christian missionaries, the author observed the unstoppable trend of the spread of Anglo-Saxon civilization into the rest of the world. What the *Philanthropist* criticized was the selfish nature of imperial conquest. The author characterized the British and American governments as “entitled to no more praise than the sagacious speculator or successful adventurer” whose objects were chiefly “Gain, Territory, Power.”³⁶⁰ Then the *Philanthropist* questioned the self-claimed Progress brought by the colonial rule, saying, “Was it for the good of the savage, and the welfare of Mexico, that Americans exterminated the former and robbed the latter? Was it to do good to Hindoo, and civilize the children of the sun, that Great Britain conquered Hindostan, and compelled the submission of China?”³⁶¹ By pointing out the conquest and plunder of the American and British governments, the author negated the colonial conquest as a means for the Anglo-Saxons to spread civilization and implied an alternative of a more mild “civilizational uplift” of the Anglo-Saxons colonial rule, refraining from physical violence. In other words, the author seemed to propose an injection of Anglo-Saxon culture without colonial domination. However, as Chapter 1 illustrates, the cultural forms of domination, as manifested in the spread of western education and Christianity, served to kill the agency of Indians and established colonial domination. Thus, the anonymous author of the *Philanthropist*, along with H.B.S., did not realize the fundamental wrong of the colonial domination of the Anglo-Saxon over people of color regardless of the form of physical or cultural violence. Like their contemporary colonial officials, these abolitionists opposed the

³⁵⁹ “Foreign.” *Philanthropist* [SAS], February 10, 1841. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

exploitation and violence brought by the colonial rule rather than the colonial rule itself, despite some of them even realizing the wishes of Indians for the cease of the British colonial rule.

However, the criticism of colonialism matured in the early twentieth century.

Abolitionist legacy in the early twentieth century

Many abolitionists and their successors developed their critiques in response to evolving forms of oppression domestic and abroad. From the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, as a result of the economic crisis of the 1870s and the 1890s, the US failed to consume its production. Under the support of politically active businessmen and farmers and expansionist intellectuals, the US expanded its foreign market to export surplus like tobacco and cotton.³⁶² The desire for market evolved into the language of Divine Providence; as Senator A.J. Beveridge of Indiana put it, “Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours.”³⁶³ With the help of military coercion by the American navy, the US quickly annexed countries such as Hawaii, the Philippines, and Samoa. Given the primary need for economic expansion, the US adopted “Dollar Diplomacy,” which focused more on commercial expansion than colonial occupation.³⁶⁴ The commercial expansion proved to be fatal for the economy in those US protectorates. In countries like Cuba, the sugar industry fell into the hands of American companies while local small business owners were squeezed out of the industry.

Pax Americana now shared the pedestal of pax Britannica. Beveridge explained the “Anglo-Saxon solidarity” as “an English-speaking peoples’ league of God for the permanent peace of this

³⁶² William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, New ed. (New York : Norton, 1988). Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898*, 35th anniversary ed., Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1963).

³⁶³ Victor Kiernan, *America: From White Settlement to World Hegemony* (London: Zed Books, 2015),108.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 165-176.

war-torn world.”³⁶⁵ Beveridge’s words revealed the shared interests between the US and British Empire in expanding to the rest of the world. Early in 1823, the American government devised the Monroe Doctrine that obligated Europe to respect the interests of the US in the West Hemisphere. In 1904, the “Roosevelt corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine further justified America’s right to intervene in other nations that faced “chronic wrongdoing, or impotence which result[ed] in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society.”³⁶⁶ On the eve of the Philippine-American War in 1899, as Paul Kramer points out, the poem “The White Man’s Burden” by British imperial poet Rudyard Kipling conveyed the integration of the colonial conquest of the US in the Philippines within his vision of the domination of the Anglo-Saxon over other races.³⁶⁷

Ironically, American imperialism branded itself as more enlightened than the British while subjugating Black people domestically and carrying racial discrimination abroad. British historian Victor Kiernan characterized white Americans as “colonialist[s] at home” who, by subjugating Black people, had the “enjoyment of comforts that the ordinary European had to go to India or Africa in search of.”³⁶⁸ Racial violence on Black people multiplied. Between 1880 and 1900, more than three thousand cases of lynching were recorded.³⁶⁹ At the turn of the twentieth century, Black people became politically disqualified in many Southern states, where violence from white supremacists prevented Black people from voting. Discrimination continued in the form of racial segregation, legitimized by the 1896 Supreme Court judgment *Plessy v. Ferguson*, ruling that the racial segregation ordained by state laws did not violate the US Constitution. Paralleling the subjugation of Black people in the US, white Americans abroad viewed Filipinos as “****” or used

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Paul A. Kramer, *Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 20.

³⁶⁸ Kiernan, *America*, 149.

³⁶⁹ Ibid, 100.

the derogatory racialized terms, such as “gugu.” The racist language ultimately, as Paul Kramer points out, evolved into a racial war against Filipinos.³⁷⁰

Abolitionists and their successors continued to agitate for racial equality in post-emancipation period. Abolitionist veterans, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frederick Douglass, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, criticized the leniency of President Andrew Johnson towards the Southern ex-confederates, the denial for the equal rights for Black people like suffrage and education, and the oppression of freedmen in the South on their old platforms like the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (final issue dated April 16, 1870).³⁷¹ Abolitionists did more than criticize. Garrisonian abolitionist and the influential leader among the radicals, Wendell Phillips warned the dangers of admitting southern congressmen into the Congress, which reminded Clerk of the House Edward McPherson to exclude southern congressmen from the roll, allowing radical Republicans to proceed with their version of reconstruction plan in 1865. Alongside these old veterans, the successors of abolitionists continued to agitate for racial equality. Many of them were second and even third generations of abolitionists, as American historian James M. McPherson suggests that the roster of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an interracial civil rights organization, reads like a membership list of the old New England Anti-Slavery Society, last names including Garrison, Pillsbury, and May. One of those members of abolitionist descendants was Garrison’s grandson, Oswald Garrison Villard. When gaining control of the *Nation* in 1898, Villard intended “to make it [the *Nation*] a worthy follower of the ‘Liberator’” to crusade for racial justice.³⁷² Besides

³⁷⁰ Ibid, 35.

³⁷¹ James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964).

³⁷² James M. McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy: From Reconstruction to the NAACP* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 330.

agitating for civil rights for Black people in the US, Villard was also the one of the founders of the Anti-imperialist League.

One of Villard's mentees was ironically American anti-abolitionist, segregationist, and one of the key apologists for British and American imperialism Katherine Mayo (1867 –1940). Mayo served as a research assistant for the Villard's book, *John Brown 1800-1859: A Biography Fifty Years After* (1910).³⁷³ Despite the possible influence of the anti-imperialist stance of her mentor Villard, much of Mayo's paternalistic attitudes towards people of color stemmed from her eight-year period (starting in 1899) in Dutch Guiana (Surinam) with her father, a mining engineer.³⁷⁴ Later, with Villard's help, Mayo became part of the Committee for the State Police in New York. The police system copied the imperialist model abroad with the domestic purpose of suppressing the protest of laborers that were associated increasingly with the influence of "foreign" immigrant populations.³⁷⁵ Contrary to Villard's support for the Indian nationalist movement in the 1920s, Katherine Mayo instead tried to exploit the political dissension between Mahatma Gandhi and B. R. Ambedkar to advance her imperialist agenda. The diverging political views between Villard and Mayo affected their friendship in the late 1920s, with the *Nation* becoming extremely critical of Mayo's books.³⁷⁶

One of the books that Mayo wrote was *Mother India* (1927). Mayo wrote in the interwar period when the British Empire clashed with the self-rule aspirations of its colonies, like Ireland and India.³⁷⁷ The war debt necessitated the British exerting further control over India to extract

³⁷³ W.E.B. Du Bois published the biography *John Brown* in 1909.

³⁷⁴ Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire*, Radical Perspectives (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 68.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 69.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 281.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 19-42.

more revenues. To justify its rule through a “neutral” outsider’s lens, British officials reached out to Mayo, who celebrated Anglo-Saxon domination. Accordingly, Mayo justified foreign tutelage of India. In the chapter titled “Slave Mentality” in *Mother India*, Mayo argued the ineligibility of Indians to self-government:

Given men who enter the world [as] physical bankrupts out of bankrupt stock, rear them through childhood in influences and practices that devour their vitality; launch them at the dawn of maturity on an unrestrained outpouring of their whole provision of creative energy in one single direction; find them, at the age when the Anglo-Saxon is just coming into full glory of manhood, broken-nerved, low-spirited, petulant ancients; and need you, while this remains unchanged, seek for other reasons why they are poor and sick and dying and why their hands are too weak, too fluttering, to seize or to hold the reins of Government?³⁷⁸

Constructing Hindus as being obsessed with sex and superstitions and thus lacking vitality in comparison to Anglo-Saxons, Mayo advocated denial of political independence to Indians. The practices of constructing Indians as effeminate echoed the construction of the femininity of Indian men by the American missionary Lyman and the British colonial authority in the nineteenth century that intended to exclude Indians from political sphere.³⁷⁹ Thus, the racialization of the Other continued to serve the imperialists like Mayo to claim the supremacy of the self.

Mayo’s demands for imperial tutelage for India was rooted in her belief in imperial subjugation of people of color worldwide, especially by the US. Even before depicting the dependence of India on the British Empire, Mayo had portrayed the “yearning” for American rule by the Filipino masses. In her book *The isles of fear; the truth about the Philippines* (1925), Mayo denied the Philippine Independence on the ground that the US could protect *tao* (the

³⁷⁸ Katherine Mayo, *Mother India* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1927).

³⁷⁹ Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*. The Ilbert Bill was introduced in 1883 during the Viceroyship of the Marquess of Ripon. According to this act, Indian judges could try Europeans, which incited great opposition from European British.

masses) from the oppression of *caiques* (political elites). More importantly, according to Mayo, the Philippines needed the guidance of the US to Progress, saying, “whatever has been done for the advancement of the Filipino people in the last quarter-century has been done by America, Americans and Filipinos under American guidance. Whatever has been done to their harm, loss and oppression has been done by the Filipino himself, unguided.”³⁸⁰ In other words, Mayo again raised the nineteenth-century colonial construction of the colony as “students” that needed guidance from wise colonizing “teachers.”

The conquest of the Philippines could be traced back to 1898. After utilizing the Filipinos to fight against Spain, the US army occupied Manila and established a military government. Subsequently, the US signed a treaty with Spain to buy the Philippines for \$20 million.³⁸¹ President William McKinley then proclaimed the extension of the military government of Manila to the whole of the Philippines. Ultimately, incited by a minor incident, the war broke out between the US Army and the Filipino Army of Liberation. The US adopted unyielding approaches to conquer the Philippines, such as reconcentration, tortures like “water cure,” and massacres.³⁸² Finally, the leading anti-imperialist in Congress, George Frisbie Hoar, lamented that “we crashed the only republic in Asia”—in 1901, when the U.S. army captured leader of the independence movement Aguinaldo who surrendered the Philippines to the US.³⁸³

In the early twentieth century, American anti-imperialists had produced intellectual stances which opposed such positions purported by Mayo. One of these anti-imperialists was Unitarian

³⁸⁰ Katherine Mayo, *The Isles of Fear: The Truth about the Philippines* (New York, Harcourt, Brace and company, 1925),64.

³⁸¹ Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, First edition. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), 72.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ibid, 93.

minister Thomas Wentworth Higginson whose whole life was a “sermon on freedom.”³⁸⁴ In addition to his support for women’s rights, as an abolitionist, Higginson served in the Underground Railroad that helped fugitive slaves flee to Canada in the antebellum period. He was also a member of the “Secret Six” that helped subsidize John Brown’s campaigns in Kansas and plan his raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859. During the Civil War, he served as colonel of the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, the first federally authorized Black regiment. Even after the civil war, he continued to agitate for the equal rights of Black people. He wrote his military experience in the book *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (1870), which proved the equal capability of Black soldiers as white soldiers in the military services and became a “document in desegregation.”³⁸⁵ Higginson advocated desegregation in schools, suffrage, and land ownership for freedmen. He also cofounded Anti-Imperialist League to protest the subjugation of the Philippines by US troops in 1899.

Long before Mayo wrote the *Isle of Fear*, Higginson and the Anti-Imperialist League challenged the guardianship of the “weaker” nations under the “stronger” nations and the hegemony of Anglo-Saxonism by comparing the U.S. Empire in the Philippines with the British Empire in India. Writing in the context of the U.S. invasion of the Philippines, former abolitionists like Higginson continued to play an active role against American expansionism.³⁸⁶ In the essay “Where Liberty is Not, There is my Country,” (1899) Higginson warned fellow Americans of the consequences of the American colonial rule in the Philippines by referring to the condition of India, where “appear[ed] to be no human being for whom the British

³⁸⁴ Higginson, *The Magnificent Activist*, 1.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 21-22.

³⁸⁶ Report of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the New England Anti-Imperialist League (Boston, Mass.), November 1902. <https://archive.org/details/reportofannualme0305anti/page/n55/mode/2up?q=India+>

government has less use than for an educated Hindoo, unless he has a taste for the game of cricket.”³⁸⁷ Then Higginson attributed British distaste towards Hindus to the colonial rule by arguing, “There is no proof that the Japanese are intrinsically superior to the Hindoos, but the one race was left free by the Americans, and the other subjugated by Englishmen.”³⁸⁸ Unlike the nineteenth-century abolitionists who still hoped for reform within colonialism, Higginson argued that the superior conditions of Japanese over Hindus were simply because Japan had remained independent while India not.³⁸⁹ He thus radically identified the need to end the insurmountable rupture between the colonized and colonizers and urged for the independence of colonies.

American anti-imperialists inherited the abolitionist ideology and sensed the resurgence of racial profiling accompanied by the US imperial conquest. James M. McPherson points out that many anti-imperialists attacked both imperialism and racism. McPherson gives the example of William Lloyd Garrison, Jr. who characterized the US invasion in the Philippines as enslaving “the countrymen of Aguinaldo [Filipino military leader]” and the struggles led by Aguinaldo as “the same cause for which John Brown died.”³⁹⁰ In other words, anti-imperialist agitation revived the spirits of the abolitionist movement. Similarly, in the joint leaflet “How Should a Colored Man Vote in 1900?,” Higginson, William Lloyd Garrison, Jr. and George S. Boutwell sharply sensed that the military conquest of the US in the Philippines trained “young Caucasian soldiers the habit of thinking that the white man...rightful ruler of all other men.”³⁹¹ They gave an example of American soldiers constantly described Filipinos as “****” in their letters to

³⁸⁷ Higginson, *The Magnificent Activist*, 401.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy*, 327.

³⁹¹ Higginson, *The Magnificent Activist*, 402.

home.³⁹² Higginson then tied the independence of Filipinos with the political rights of Black people in America, saying, “The very fact of their unwillingness to give the equal political right to American negro makes them unfit to undertake the government of 10,000,000 more belonging to the colored race.”³⁹³ Tying the internal subjugation of Black people with American imperial conquest made American anti-imperialists realize that the US empire was sustained by the racial subjugation of people of color domestically and abroad.

Like the *Liberator* giving the vocal platform to the Indian local Gangooly in the antebellum period, the American Anti-imperialist League also provided an international platform for colonized people to denounce imperial rule vocally. According to the Report of the Secretary of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Anti-Imperialist League in Boston in 1905, the visit of Indian independence activist Lala Lajpat Rai and other delegates to the meeting helped “diffuse the knowledge which they are primarily intending to give to the English people of the needs of India, and to enlighten us as well as their countrymen as to what the ‘unspeakable blessings of British rule’ really are.”³⁹⁴ The visits of anti-colonial activists thus helped abolitionists gain direct knowledge of British rule rather than being mediated by the British sources. Rai wrote this travel in *The United States of America: a Hindu’s Impressions and a Study* (1916). In the book, he expressed solidarity with anti-imperialist activists who helped Cuba gain independence and “maintained a continuous agitation for the release of the islands [the Philippines] from American control.”³⁹⁵ In that same book, Rai also wrote admiringly of American abolitionists who carried on an “active anti-slavery propaganda,” which “brought slavery into prominence from the moral

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid, 403.

³⁹⁴ Report of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Anti-Imperialist League, November 25, 1905.

<https://archive.org/details/reportofannualme0607anti/page/13/mode/2up?q=Rai>

³⁹⁵ Rai, *The United States of America: a Hindu’s Impressions and a Study*, 297.

aspect, instead of the purely economic one” in the public discussion regardless that “the South tried to muzzle these through denial of free speech.”³⁹⁶

Abolitionists also came to India in the late nineteenth century. Moncure Conway wrote a memoir on his trip to India between 1883 and 1884—*My Pilgrimage to the Wise Men of the East* (1906). In the book, Conway further demystified derogatory stereotypes propagated against Indians. He explained that continuing religious tradition rather than propitiation motivated the lower classes to continue the animal sacrifices in festivals.³⁹⁷ Like Child and Pillsbury using the trope of crocodile sacrifice to condemn slavery in the US in the antebellum nineteenth century, Conway mocked the American Christian white supremacists much worse than “heathens,” saying that he would “far rather see the crowd of people in my[his] native South gathered to sacrifice kids before Kali or Cobra, than gathered to burn a living negro.”³⁹⁸

Unlike his abolitionist comrades like Child and Wright, Conway was able to discern how the imperialist rule debased Indians based on his travel experiences to India. Despite the “good sense” of England “sending out many eminent scholars and men of science to fill the chief offices, and comparatively few military men and soldiers,” Conway pointed out that “the Hindus generally did not love the English among them, nor their government.”³⁹⁹ Conway recalled what Brahma reformer Keshub Chunder Sen told him in London that British businessmen in India maltreated Hindus, and “some of them [Hindus] were struck and many insulted.”⁴⁰⁰ Even Conway himself did not like some British residents in India. He mocked their angry abuse of the Ilbert Bill “much the same as that with which some of the Southerners in America denounce the

³⁹⁶ Ibid, 22-23.

³⁹⁷ Moncure Daniel Conway, *My Pilgrimage to the Wise Men of the East*. (Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, 1906), 312.

³⁹⁸ Ibid, 234

³⁹⁹ Ibid, 309.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, 338.

provisions for negro equality.”⁴⁰¹ Drawing the imaginative connection between those British who denounced Indian judges to try Europeans and American white supremacists castigated the political rights of Black people, Conway stressed the malicious subjugation of people of color under Anglo-Saxons. In another article, “Public Service” (1905), Conway cautioned the US not to follow the path of England by asking, “what has it profited England to encircle the whole world and lose its real soul, its free-will, so that it has had to fight nearly every race—Hindu, Russian, American, French, Chinese... every war being one for which England now hangs its head for shame.”⁴⁰² Thus, being able to travel to the British colonies, including Australia, Ceylon, and India, and having interactions with locals ranging from Aborigines of Australia to Brahma reformers in India enabled Conway to disparage the Progress brought by the British rule in India.

Like Conway cautioning the US against the failures of British imperialism, many American anti-imperialist activists opposed the American expansion to the Philippines based on the failures of the British colonial rule in India. In the address of “Democracy and Imperialism” in 1908 Tenth Annual Meeting of the Anti-Imperialist League, American prison reformer Thomas Mott Osborne, son of abolitionist and women’s suffragist Eliza Wright Osborne, emphasized Indians “seething with discontent,” as evident in their violence like detonating bombs and committing murders against British officials.⁴⁰³ Osborne realized that no matter how much the British invested in India, it was futile, given that it only incurred violence from Indians. Then Osborne went on and questioned whether the US could do more for the Philippines than Great Britain had done for India. Osborne answered this himself, claiming that the US might bring about

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid,339.

⁴⁰³ Report of the Tenth Annual Meeting of Anti-Imperialist League, November 28, 1908.

“something approaching the efficiency and excellence of the Indian government, and with the same mournful result — a discontented population on the verge of a violent outbreak against its unselfish and well-meaning oppressors,” given that freedom made a “difference between the slave and man.”⁴⁰⁴ He conceptualized that the coercive power of the British over India compromised the freedom, saying, “These are our ideas of what is good for you; and we propose to civilize and educate you according to these ideas? It makes no difference what you want or don’t want, we propose to decide for you. You must submit; because we are stronger than you and can beat you, and if necessary, will beat you into submission.”⁴⁰⁵ After exposing the coercive nature of the colonial rule, Osborne proposed the US do more than England had done for India by immediately withdrawing its army from the Philippines and establishing its independence.⁴⁰⁶ Theoretically attributing the Indians’ aspirations for freedom and well-meaning but coercive British colonial rule to the failures of the British colonial rule, Osborne silenced how British colonial rule contributed to the deprivation of India.

Like Osborne, Moorfield Storey, son of abolitionist Elizabeth Moorfield and once secretary for Massachusetts antislavery Republican Charles Sumner for two years during Reconstruction, became the President of the Anti-Imperialist League and the NAACP. Besides the influence of the anti-imperialist stances of his fellow mugwumps, the abolitionist legacies also played into his opposition to the US invasion of the Philippines.⁴⁰⁷ Storey invoked his abolitionist heritage, saying, “No man of antislavery antecedents can fail to regard with horror the treatment of the colored race” in viewing the justification of the Southern Press of the violence against Black

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ “Mugwump” refers to a person who remains aloof from party politics, professing political disinterest because of the believed corruption of both parties in the late nineteenth century US.

people and the US Administration in the Philippines.⁴⁰⁸ He thus contended in 1903 that “we must for the sake of negros and Filipinos both rouse again the anti-slavery feeling.”⁴⁰⁹

In the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Anti-Imperialist League in 1909, he also cited the failures of the British rule in India, as shown in famines and plague in India, to object to the rule of the US in the Philippines. Unlike Osborne overemphasizing the nature of unfree that led to the political resistance to British rule in India, Storey exposed that the colonial rule was structurally selfish in nature and intertwined with capitalist profit making. He blamed capital for colonialism thus:

It is the capital which brought on Boer War, it is capital which led to the conquest of India, it is capital which pushed Russia into the war with Japan, it is the capital which promotes the aggression of stranger upon weaker peoples, and to the policy of improving the Philippines Islands by capital from without we are absolutely opposed.⁴¹⁰

Storey pointed out that the drive of capitalism for market and raw materials urged imperial conquest and subjugation.

Anti-imperialists’ critiques towards capitalism in colonialism continued the criticism of their abolitionist predecessors towards capitalism in the antebellum nineteenth century. Abolitionists had realized how capitalism disproportionately exploited enslaved Black people and women for the profits of white men. Abolitionists like the first abolitionist U.S. Senator Thomas Morris, condemned the alliance between capitalism and slavery because the growth of capitalism helped finance the plantation in the South.⁴¹¹ Although Garrison acknowledged that poverty was not slavery, he still found that “a Manchester factory girl” was a “rich man’s slave,” in which capital

⁴⁰⁸ McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy*, 328.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 328.

⁴¹⁰ Report of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Anti-Imperialist League, November 27, 1909.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid*, 352.

enslaved the British working class.⁴¹² The critique towards capitalism possibly led abolitionists to experiment with utopian socialism, establishing utopian societies like the Northampton Association and George Ripley's Brook Farm, which ultimately failed. However, their struggles against subtracting any humans into the capitals of others not only validated their abolitionism as abolishing various forms of oppression beyond slavery but also possibly inspired their successors like the anti-imperialists to extend critiques towards capitalism's nexus with colonialism.

Going backward from the anti-imperialist stance of Higginson and the Anti-imperialist League, Mayo's triumphalist narratives of the rule of Anglo-Saxonism reigned in the 1920s. The Treaty of Versailles that brought World War I to an end, betrayed the self-determination principle in the Fourteen Points. The colonized nations were still under the so-called "long apprenticeship of political childhood."⁴¹³ However, the abolitionist legacies of pursuing universal equality and internationalism were preserved in the continued agitation against racial discrimination and imperialism. Civil rights leader and Pan Africanists like W.E.B. Du Bois frequently referred to the NAACP as the New Abolition Movement in the official magazine of the NAACP, the *Crisis*, and continued to agitate for the rights of Black people in the US and found solidarity with people in different parts of the colonized world fighting against the color lines.

Conclusion

Many nineteenth-century American abolitionists did not realize how various imperial contingencies compromised the extent of abolitionism in the British Empire and misinterpreted slavery in India. Greeley was right to point out that people of color might be much more likely to

⁴¹² Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 349.

⁴¹³ Katherine Mayo, *The Isles of Fear*, 87.

face extermination in settler colonial societies than in non-settler colonial societies. Nonetheless, he did not realize that even in the absence of settler colonialism there could be equal or even more exploitative political and economic domination in India than in the British American colonies. H.B.S quoted the critiques of the British bureaucrats on the economic exploitation of the British Empire; however, he/she did not challenge the domination by a foreign power. Although some abolitionists produced critiques against American and British expansionism, their critiques were mainly against the violent conquest rather than the ethical and structural existence of the empire. Some abolitionists even equated the east with free soil when viewing the multi-racial British colonies like Pulo Penang and comparing with the slave laborers in the West Indies.

Soon, abolitionists were attuned to the hardships of the indentured Indian laborers in the West Indies. Shortly after the abolition of slavery in the US, some abolitionists were worried that foreign indentured labor became a new form of slavery in the American South. Similarly, the more sophisticated criticism towards imperialism came in the early twentieth century when the American Empire quickly expanded in the Western Hemisphere and Asian countries. One of the lasting legacies of abolitionism was anti-imperialism. Former abolitionists such as Higginson tied the American conquest in the Philippines with the internal violence against Black people. In contrast to the political apprenticeships of non-white people advocated by Katherine Mayo, Higginson, along with the Anti-Imperialist League, long ago had challenged the US Empire and its expansion to the Philippines by referring to the failures of the British imperial rule in India.

Conclusion

“If John Brown were still alive, we might accept him...He was a white man who went to war against white people to help free slaves.”

— *Malcolm X*

This thesis has discussed nineteenth century American abolitionist writings on India. Abolitionists wrote about missionary activities in India, wherein they repeatedly made a breach in the nineteenth century predominant construction of the superiority of Christianity over “heathenism.” They found Christian missionaries not eligible to teach “heathens” abroad because they sustained “heathenism” in the US—slavery. In particular, they challenged the missionary discourse of the degraded conditions of “heathen” women in India in contrast to the “privileges” enjoyed by Christian women in the US, by finding the parallels between the conditions of women in India and the US. In advancing these critiques, abolitionists deeply engaged with the nature of British colonial rule and indigenous social reform in India. Abolitionist attitudes towards empire evolved from advocating reforms in imperial rule in the antebellum period to championing the cause of the independence of colonies in the early twentieth century, as many of them and their successors joined the ranks of the Anti-imperialist League.

While reflecting on the continuation of white supremacy in the US, American philosopher and political activist Cornel West advocates promoting “a highly un-American quality: a sense of history,” especially the history of revolutionary movements.⁴¹⁴ One of those movements he referred to was the nineteenth century abolitionist movement that belonged to “a

⁴¹⁴ Cornel West, “A Grand Tradition of Struggle,” *English Journal, High School Edition* 89, no. 6 (July 2000): 39–44.

grand tradition of struggle” for decency, dignity, freedom, and democracy.⁴¹⁵ The struggle requires deep commitments to “revolutionary piety” and courage to “pay the ultimate cost.”⁴¹⁶ Championing the unpopular causes of abolitionism, women’s rights, and anti-imperialism at that time, these abolitionists faced defamation, mob violence, mail and even life threats. The opposition from her husband and father for her social activism afflicted Stanton with lifelong psychological insecurity.⁴¹⁷ South Carolina virtually exiled its “rebels,” the Grimke sisters who moved to the North and joined the abolitionist cause. Local gentlemen dragged William Lloyd Garrison through the streets of Boston in 1835 for the worry that the abolitionist movement would threaten their business with the South.⁴¹⁸

Abolitionists’ solidarity with the oppressed of the world was exceptional. Many of the abolitionists belonged to the privileged white middle class and could distance themselves from the suffered slaves, women, and Indians, like their contemporary missionaries and colonizers. Instead, these abolitionists chose to dismantle the vanity of the self and tried to understand the sufferings of the Other. Even nowadays, as Romila Thapar points out, until the second half of the twentieth century, most historians from the elite class did not perceive the necessity of writing the history of socially “inferior,” people including tribal groups, low castes, and women.⁴¹⁹ As early as in the nineteenth century, these abolitionists paid attention to the sufferings of such marginal groups as the Hindu widows, laboring Indian women, and low castes. Writing these subalterns into the Indian history and culture, abolitionists drew the imaginative connection with

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Cornel West, “The Trump Era: Hope in a Time of Escalating Despair,” *Transition: An International Review*, January 2017.

⁴¹⁷ DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 25.

⁴¹⁸ Nick Fauchald, *William Lloyd Garrison: Abolitionist and Journalist* (Compass Point Books, 2005), 68.

⁴¹⁹ Romila Thapar, *The Past as Present: Forging Contemporary Identities Through History* (New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2014), 264.

equally and perhaps even worse subjugated in American society —women and slaves, and stand in solidarity with the oppressed across geography, gender, and race.

Their internationalism was not always freed of an Orientalist mindset. They accepted and reproduced much of the missionary stereotypes and colonial biases, such as crocodile sacrifice, *sati*, and the representation of India as free soil. However, accepting these stereotypes did not make India become the other for the abolitionists. Instead, the imaginative geographies of the self and the other got blurred when the abolitionists located the other within their own society, America. Abolitionists found that American widowhood was as intolerable as *sati* while racial oppression in the US resembled much of the caste subjugation in India. They even went to the extent of claiming that the oppression brought by caste was more humane than that brought by race, and the missionaries who advocated the abolition of caste in India while compromising with slavery sustained “heathenism” in the US instead. Thus, the abolitionist understanding of India exceeded the frame of Orientalism accepted by most of their nineteenth century contemporaries, and deeply questioned the power structure of the “superior” West over the “degraded” East.

The understanding of India amongst abolitionists and their successors, like anti-imperialists, had a long temporal trajectory. In the early nineteenth century, despite finding the parallels of between stereotypes about India and their own society, some abolitionists regarded India as the East subject to British colonial reforms, and thus failed to comprehend the colonial exploitation in India. Although some abolitionists recognized colonial exploitation and the indigenous social reforms, they still did not question the legitimacy of the British colonial rule in India but only suggested that colonial rule be more humane or simply refrained from proposing a solution. However, in the early twentieth century, India became a venue for anti-imperialism.

Like standing with Hindus against the Christian missionaries in the antebellum nineteenth century, the anti-imperialists, many of whom were former abolitionists, again flipped the dominant narratives of progress brought by the British colonial rule by conceding the podium to the Indian independence activists like Lala Lajpat Rai. Unlike the earlier demand for a more enlightened colonial rule, anti-imperialists advocated the independence of the colonies by suggesting the failure of the British colonial rule in India. Thus, the grand tradition of abolitionism crafted its critiques in response to evolving forms of oppression and welcomed all brothers and sisters who spoke from, with or for the oppressed. I hope the readers of this thesis will cherish the breadth of their platform.

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