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*Mis Society*

DESCRIPTION

OF THE

CHARACTER, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS

OF THE

**PEOPLE OF INDIA.**



VOL. I.

1871

DESCRIPTION  
OF THE  
CHARACTER, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS  
OF THE  
**PEOPLE OF INDIA;**  
AND OF  
THEIR INSTITUTIONS,  
RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL.

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BY THE ABBE J. A. DUBOIS,  
MISSIONARY IN THE MYSORE.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH MANUSCRIPT.

~~~~~  
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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*PHILADELPHIA.*

PUBLISHED BY M. CAREY AND SON,

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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*THE French Manuscript, of which a translation is here offered to the public, was meditated and composed in the midst of the people whom it describes. The absolute retirement of the author from European society, for a series of years, well qualified him for penetrating into the dark and unexplored recesses of the Indian character; but it has also veiled himself, in an equal degree, from the curiosity of his readers.*

*The little that is known of him in this country may be collected from the following dispatch of the Governor in Council at Fort St. George, of the 24th December, 1807, to the Honourable Court of Directors of the East India Company, which they have been pleased to allow the translator to publish:*

“ We request your reference to the minutes noted in the margin relative to a work which has been lately compiled by the Abbé Dubois, a gentleman of irreproachable character, who, having escaped from the massacres of the French revolution, sought refuge in India, and has since been engaged in the zealous and pious duty of a missionary, in the performance of which he has acquired a degree of respect among both the European and native inhabitants that we believe to have been rarely equalled in persons of his sphere. It is amongst natives, however, that the time of this missionary has been chiefly passed, and he has availed himself of the long intercourse, to compile a distinct account of the Hindoo Customs and Manners. In order that you may be particularly informed of the character of the work, we have

“ inserted the following extract of a letter from Major Wilks,  
 “ late Acting President at Mysore, in which country the  
 “ Abbé Dubois has chiefly resided, addressed to the Military  
 “ Secretary of our late President :

“ “ The Manuscript of the Abbé Dubois on Indian  
 “ Casts, was put into my hands by the author early in the  
 “ year 1806, and so far as my previous information and  
 “ subsequent inquiry have enabled me to judge, it con-  
 “ tains the most correct, comprehensive, and minute ac-  
 “ count extant in any European language of the Customs  
 “ and Manners of the Hindus. Of the general utility of  
 “ a work of this nature, I conclude that no doubt can be  
 “ entertained. Every Englishman residing in India is  
 “ interested in the knowledge of those peculiarities in  
 “ the Indian casts which may enable him to conduct with  
 “ the natives the ordinary intercourse of civility or bu-  
 “ siness without offending their prejudices. These pre-  
 “ judices are chiefly known to Europeans as insulated  
 “ facts, and a work which should enable us to generalize  
 “ our knowledge, by unfolding the sources from which  
 “ those prejudices are derived, would, as a manual for  
 “ the younger servants of the Company, in particular,  
 “ be productive of public advantages, on which it seems  
 “ to be quite superfluous to enlarge.

“ “ Being desirous of obtaining for the work the ad-  
 “ vantage of a testimony to its merits of greater weight  
 “ than any which I could presume to offer, I submitted  
 “ it to the perusal of a gentleman of high literary emi-  
 “ nence, who returned it to me with a eulogium which  
 “ more than justified the opinion I had previously form-  
 “ ed, but without the permission (which had been the  
 “ chief object of my communication) to make a public  
 “ use of his name.’

“ The Manuscript was communicated to Lord William Ben-  
 “ tinck previously to his lordship’s departure, and Mr. Petrie  
 “ has explained, in a separate minute, the reasons which pre-

“vented the subject from being earlier noticed. The Abbé  
 “Dubois having no means of editing the work at his own  
 “charge, and it being obviously of public importance that so  
 “useful a compilation should not be withheld, it became ne-  
 “cessary to decide on the most proper mode of effecting the  
 “publication of it.

“After full consideration, we decided to purchase it on  
 “account of the Company for the sum of two thousand pago-  
 “das, which, though a moderate sum for a work which must  
 “have been attended with considerable labour, it was ascer-  
 “tained would be acceptable to the author. We beg at the  
 “same time to observe, that it is probable that this sum will  
 “be fully repaid by the sale of a publication which may be  
 “expected to excite considerable interest.”

*The prior consultations of the Madras government on this subject have been also communicated to the translator, and shew the importance that was attached to the work, and the active zeal with which it was patronized. Lord William Bentinck, after his retirement from the government, in laying the Manuscript before the Governor in Council, thus speaks of it:*  
 “It is described by Sir James Mackintosh as being the most  
 “comprehensive and minute account extant, in any European  
 “language, of the manners of the Hindoos.”

*It was generally understood that Sir James Mackintosh felt his own judgment, on this occasion, confirmed by its coincidence with that of Mr. W. Erskine of Bombay, a gentleman of distinguished talents, and conversant equally with the Mythology, Literature, Manners, and Institutions of India.*

*My Lord William Bentinck sums up his own opinion as follows:* “The result of my own observation during my resi-  
 “dence in India is, that the Europeans generally know little  
 “or nothing of the customs and manners of the Hindoos.  
 “We are all acquainted with some prominent marks and  
 “facts, which all who run may read; but their manner of  
 “thinking, their domestic habits and ceremonies, in which  
 “circumstances a knowledge of the people consists, is I fear

“in great part wanting to us. We understand very imperfectly their language. They perhaps know more of ours; but their knowledge is by no means sufficiently extensive to give a description of subjects not easily represented by the insulated words in daily use. We do not, we cannot associate with the natives. We cannot see them in their houses, and with their families. We are necessarily very much confined to our houses by the heat; all our wants and business which would create a greater intercourse with the natives is done for us, and we are in fact strangers in the land. I have personally found the want of a work to which reference could be made for a just description of the native opinions and manners. I am of opinion that, in a political point of view, the information which the work of the Abbé Dubois has to impart might be of the greatest benefit in aiding the servants of the government in conducting themselves more in unison with the customs and prejudices of the natives.”

*In the continuation of Major Wilks's letter, that gentleman, so advantageously known to the world by his own writings, suggests, in liberal criticism of the Manuscript, that, “though absolutely divested of all political matter, it contains for example a variety of opinions on the utility of the subdivision of the casts, on the origin of the Hindoo system, &c. which, like all speculative opinions, are liable to be questioned, and may perhaps be left to find their own supporters and opponents, the public having only to do with the facts; and in the general arrangement of the matter, I believe few faults or errors will be found. But if it should be deemed expedient to divest the work of any of the opinions to which I have adverted, the most convenient mode would probably be in the first instance to purchase the manuscript.”*

*The work was accordingly brought over, and remained for a considerable time in the Company's Library, accessible to the curious, until the beginning of the present year, when the*

*translation was commenced under the sanction of the Honourable the Court of Directors, Charles Grant, Esq. M. P. being then Chairman, and Thomas Reid, Esq. Deputy Chairman of the Court. It is now submitted to the public without any attempt to alter or improve the speculations of the author. His candour, sincerity, piety, and high sentiment are so uniformly conspicuous and expressive, that no danger is likely to attend any of his doctrines or theories. And if his zeal may at any time betray him, in argument, to conclusions apparently a little at variance, it would have been found but an ungrateful service to interrupt the reader with notes for the purpose of exposing small incongruities, or in attempting to reconcile them. The scientific portions, and whatever would require the aid of a library to compose, will not be harshly criticised in an author undoubtedly of an ingenious and cultivated mind, in the midst of a reserved and bigotted people, drawing his whole materials from the recollections of his early studies, and having no other resort, as he tells us, than his Bible.*

*But in the great and important object of the work, the delineation of the people and whatever distinguishes them from other nations, books would have been comparatively of no great avail. Little, from that source, could have been added to the brief though correct outline of Herodotus and the few excellent inquirers and good writers of more modern times, who, during the last century, have been but little known. Here our author, following the only path that has ever yet led to any invention or discovery in human concerns, has eagerly studied, collected, and arranged the phœnomena which a persevering curiosity and rigid self-denial had brought within his observation.*

*In communicating his stores, he generally exhibits that fervour which perhaps is inseparable from a mind conscious of imparting something before unknown. From this cause redundancies may sometimes arise; which might be easily pruned, though not perhaps without injury to the flavour and raciness of the fruit.*

*A work on Manners and Customs is, in some measure, a boe*

*of Natural History; which, with the beauties of nature, must also describe what is unseemly and offensive. The grossness and indecency of the Indian character under many circumstances, it was impossible to overlook, and it would have been dishonest to conceal. But the indignant appeals of the author to true modesty, and the veil afforded by our own language, it is not doubted, will protect the most delicate sensibility from a wound.*

*The author rarely appears in his own person throughout the book, but a single anecdote which we have before us, from another authentic source, will suffice to leave a pleasant impression of him on the mind: "Of the history and character of the author," Major Wilks subjoins in his letter to the Madras government, "I only know that he escaped from one of the fusillades of the French Revolution, and has since lived among the Hindoos as one of themselves; and of the respect which his irreproachable conduct inspires it may be sufficient to state that, when travelling, on his approach to a village, the house of a Brahman is universally cleared for his reception, without interference, and generally without communication to the officers of government, as a spontaneous mark of deference and respect."*

*London, Dec. 2, 1816.*

## PREFACE.

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THOUGH Europeans have been in possession of regular and permanent establishments among the people of India for more than three hundred years, it is wonderful to observe how little authentic information they have collected respecting the various nations which inhabit that vast region.

We possess many details concerning several of the savage tribes of Africa, and also concerning the hordes of beings in the shape of man that are scattered over the vast continent of the new world; a race apparently formed by nature, nurture, and manners, to humble and degrade the whole of the human species. Yet a certain nation exists, cultivated from the earliest ages, the only one perhaps in the universe which has never sunk into barbarism, and which, of all ancient nations, may most deserve to fix the attention of the philosopher; one which attracted the admiration of antiquity by its successful cultivation of the sciences and arts, and by the admirable system which it invented for the maintenance of subordination in the community as well as of good order in private life. This nation spread its renown over the whole extent of polished antiquity, compelled the most enlightened of all people to confess its pre-eminence by alluring into its bosom the wisest of the philosophers of Greece. These, in spite of their pride and high pretensions, felt not degraded by pursuing a long and dangerous journey into India to consult the wisdom of its Brahmans, who had flourished there in long succession, and to acquire from them a knowledge of the phi-

losophy and the sciences which they had cultivated until their fame extended even into Europe. How wonderful, then, that such a nation remains almost unknown to the Europeans, who dwell in the midst of it, and who bear rule over a large portion of its soil!

The greater part of the ill-informed and often contradictory narratives that have been left us by travellers and other modern authors respecting the nations of India, has deservedly fallen into discredit and contempt. This has, in a great measure, been brought about by the literary associations which have been established in the country itself, consisting of a great number of persons of real judgment and learning, who have made a particular study of the language, the religion, the manners, education, and domestic economy of these people. They have had access to the first sources of information, and have been able to avail themselves of numerous interesting documents, derived from sources, or drawn from records held in high and sacred estimation by the native sages of the country.

Still, though what we have yet learned with certainty concerning the people of India is but little in comparison with what remains to be known on so interesting a subject, it is not to be concealed that all the writings and documents to be met with amongst the Hindus are unfortunately blended with the most extravagant fables; so that there is little hope of our being able to draw from such authorities a true and connected history of the country and of the various nations that inhabit it.

Among the ancient historical works still to be found in the country, the most esteemed and the most generally known are the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavata*, and the *Maha-Bharata*; but the history which these books give us of the epochs of the dynasties of kings, of the series of wars, of battles, and of heroes, in the various revolutions which the country has undergone, as well as what relates to the introduction of arts and sciences, are so enveloped in darkness and intermixed

with innumerable fables, each more incredible than the preceding, that the most skilful author would in vain attempt to avail himself of such faithless guides.

We shall see in the course of this work, how incredibly far the Hindus carry their love of the marvellous. Their early historians, and especially their poets, in their enthusiasm, took advantage of this disposition of the people in writing their narratives, because they well knew they could not interest their readers, or fix their attention without recounting abundance of wild and surprising adventures; and accordingly they sacrificed all regard for truth to the desire of raising a name by humouring the taste of the public. Succeeding writers outdid their predecessors by constantly adding to the ancient fables innumerable inventions still more absurd.

Now, however, the attention paid to the Eastern tongues by the many learned Europeans who reside in the country, the progress they have made in Indian literature, the successful researches they are continually making into the books and other ancient remains of the nation; together with the ample means which a liberal and enlightened government possesses for collecting together the documents furnished by many well-informed individuals who labour under its direction, the encouragement and rewards which it holds out to persons of every class who have it in their power to discover authentic and interesting memorials: all these considerations would lead us to hope that we may at last behold the reality of Indian history through the thick clouds which still obscure it. We may at least be enabled to separate what is credible from the mass of absurdity and fable with which the Indian authors abound; and an able compiler may surely find sufficient materials to construct a full and authentic history of a nation, whose undoubted antiquity, the success with which it cultivated the arts and sciences in the remotest times, the wise domestic controul which it established at its origin, through which it has to this hour maintained an admirable police, ren-

der it an object of the highest interest, independently of the peculiar nature of its idolatry and superstitious rites.

But while such a work is only hoped for, I may be allowed, though incompetent for so great a task, to offer the present details, which will be found to contain many interesting particulars that are but imperfectly known to most readers, and may even be useful to any author who shall undertake a more methodical and comprehensive history of the Indian nations.

It was chiefly with this view that I was led to collect the numerous details of which this work is composed; for I aim not at the rank of an author, which is neither suited to my talents nor the secluded state to which my profession confines me amongst the natives of the country.

It will be readily perceived by the reader that the arrangement of the various subjects on which I have treated, was formed before the commencement of those last revolutions by which the people of the peninsula have been delivered from the iron yoke of that long succession of tyrants who oppressed them for so many ages, and before they had passed under the rule of a nation distinguished throughout the world for its beneficence, its moderation, its generosity, and above all, for its impartial administration of justice to all classes of people who live under its sway.

The spirit of justice and of prudence with which that nation rules the people of India who have become its subjects, and particularly the inviolable respect which she has constantly shewn for the customs and prejudices, civil and religious, which are inherent in every district and cast, together with the impartial protection which she extends alike to the feeble and the strong, to the Brahman and the Pariah, to the Christian, the Mahometan, and the Pagan; have more exalted her name and established her power in the east than even her victories and her extensive conquests.

The wonderful revolution effected of late years for the advantage of the people of the south of the peninsula has not induced me to alter the original plan of my work, where I

treated of them as living under the arbitrary government of their despotic princes.

It is a number of years since I first formed my design, in consequence of notices in the public papers calling for authentic documents regarding these people, for the use of the historiographers of the Honourable Company engaged in writing a history of India.

From that period, I have employed my leisure in accumulating materials and authentic documents for my work. My information has been drawn from the diligent study of some of the works in greatest estimation among the Hindus, and some detached memoirs that accidentally fell into my hands, the veracity of which I am well assured of by personal observation. But I am chiefly indebted to an exact and regular system of inquiry which I was enabled to maintain by a residence of between seventeen and eighteen years among the people whom I describe, and a close and familiar intercourse with persons of every cast and condition of life through the great number of districts which I have traversed.

During the long period that I remained amongst the natives, I made it my constant rule *to live as they did*, conforming exactly in all things to their manners, to their style of living and clothing, and even to most of their prejudices. In this way I became quite familiar with the various tribes that compose the Indian nation, and acquired the confidence of those whose aid was most necessary for the purposes of my work.

My great object was to gain authentic information; which I here communicate in a style simple and unadorned. If, in the great variety of subjects on which I treat, I have at any time ventured to hazard an opinion of my own, and to enter upon discussions which neither my abilities nor opportunities of investigation qualify me for, I entreat my readers not to impute such digressions to ostentatious vanity, or to any affectation of learning, in which I feel my deficiency, but merely to the desire which I entertain of affording to other authors,

better qualified than myself, occasional hints on subjects fit to exercise the genius of the profoundest inquirer.

The work would have been more complete and more satisfactory to most readers, if I had had the means of referring to the ancient authors, or to their European commentators, with regard to the quotations I make, and the comparisons I draw between the Indians and other ancient nations as to their religious and civil customs. But here I found myself destitute of all help but what I received from my Bible, or some modern authors whom chance rather than preference put into my hands ; or finally, in the imperfect traces, which my memory supplied of books I had consulted in my early years.

I hope my readers will be indulgent to me in this particular, and attribute the inaccuracies they will discover in my references, and the imperfect parallels I sometimes attempt to draw, to my exclusion during so many years from every resource but what my limited understanding could supply.

In my description of the Indian casts, I must be understood to have in view chiefly those that people the southern provinces of the peninsula, within the Krishna. It is not unlikely that the habits and customs on this side of that river may differ from those beyond it, or that the provinces of the north may have some peculiar to themselves.

The religious and civil regulations which I describe in this work form a general bond of social union among the Hindus in the south of the peninsula ; and nearly the whole of them are of indispensable observance.

But there are also many other rules peculiar to each several cast, people, and district. Indeed there is no tribe of Hindus that has not, in addition to the general rules of the society, some domestic usages peculiar to itself. Some have customs that are merely local and followed only by a few. A perfect acquaintance with such customs is not to be attained, because they differ in every part, and are brought to no standard by the natives themselves.

A more interesting and a more useful study than that of

the peculiar usages of the casts, would be to trace the various nations that people the vast empire of India; for, although these nations are all united together by the bands of the same religion, and also by those of the same education, as far as good behaviour and decent intercourse in society go, yet great differences appear amongst them, in language as well as in character, in manners, inclinations, and habits. A good observer will remark, under all general points of resemblance, as much difference between a Tamul and a Telinga; between a Canara and a Mahrata, as one would perceive in Europe between an Englishman and a Frenchman, an Italian and a German.

There are some countries in India peopled from time immemorial by different nations, who, though mixed together in the same province and even in the same district, still preserve their distinct language, character, and national spirit. On the Malabar coast, for example, within a space of forty or fifty leagues from north to south, from Telichery to Onore or to Nagara, there are no less than five different nations peopling that small territory; and all of them appear to have been settled there upwards of a thousand years. These five nations are the *Nairs*, or *Naimars*, the *Kurga* or *Kudagu*, the *Tuluwu*, the *Kaunguni*, and the *Canara*. These are not merely names of casts, as might be supposed, but they distinguish five different nations, each of which is divided, like all other Indian nations, into a variety of casts; and although these five races dwell in the same district, each has its peculiar language, by which it is as much discriminated as by its national customs, spirit, and character.

In every country of the peninsula great numbers of foreign families are to be found whose ancestors had been obliged to emigrate thither, in times of trouble or famine, from their native land, and to establish themselves among strangers. This species of emigration is very common in all the countries of India; but what is most remarkable is, that in a foreign land, these emigrants preserve from generation to gene-

ration their own language and national peculiarities. Many instances might be pointed out of such foreign families settled four or five hundred years in the district they now inhabit, without approximating in the least to the manners, fashions, or even to the language of the nation where they have been for so many generations naturalized. They still preserve the remembrance of their origin, and keep up the ceremonies, the usages of the land where their ancestors were born, without ever receiving any tincture of the particular habits of the country where they live.

Under all the circumstances that have been mentioned, there is nothing to be seen but the most absolute toleration amongst the aboriginal inhabitants of every district ; and so long as the stranger settled amongst them conforms to the accustomed rules of decorum, each may follow his own national customs, preserve his native language in his family, and in all things follow the usages of his ancestors, without any man attempting to find fault with the singularity of his manner of living.

The facility of intercourse which the Europeans now enjoy with the different nations which people the peninsula of India, will no doubt soon afford us interesting details on the various subjects which do not fall within the scope of this work, and which indeed would require the labour of more than one author.

In attempting a description of the Indian casts, and of the customs and usages which unite them together, I have been most solicitous to pourtray that discriminating peculiarity, which, though the most curious of all, is still the least understood. Those who have visited India will appreciate the difficulty of holding any communication with the Brahmans. They know the vast distance at which this class holds itself from the rest of the community. They know their hatred and sovereign contempt for all strangers, but particularly for Europeans, their close reserve and their jealous caution to prevent the mysteries of their religion, or of their science, or

even of their domestic discipline from being divulged to other men.

By various means I surmounted many of the obstacles which have effectually opposed other authors in this career. If my details on the Brahmans and the other casts of Hindus, are not in general so full as many readers would desire, and as I myself would have expected, if I could have had all the aid I required, I have yet the vanity to think they will appear interesting, and even satisfactory to many readers who have learned nothing on the subject but from ill-informed authors.

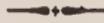
I have subjoined to the whole an Appendix, containing a brief account of the sect of the Jainas, of their doctrines, the principal points of their religion, and their peculiar customs. Other writers, possessing more information than I do, will hereafter instruct us more fully concerning this interesting sect of Hindus, and particularly respecting their religious worship, which probably, at one time, was that of all Asia, from Siberia to Cape Comorin, north to south ; and from the Caspian to the Gulf of Kamtchatka, from west to east ; and which was probably one of the earliest kinds of idolatry which appeared on the earth, at the time when men, forgetting the idea of their Creator, deified the stars, the elements, and other striking objects, and even mortals like themselves ; fashioning images to preserve their memory by clothing them with a visible form.



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A  
DESCRIPTION  
OF  
*THE PEOPLE OF INDIA.*

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PART I.

GENERAL VIEW OF SOCIETY IN INDIA.

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CHAP. I.

*Division and subdivision of casts.—Distinction of right hand and left.*

THE word *Cast* is a Portuguese term, which has been adopted by Europeans in general, to denote the different classes or tribes into which the people of India are divided. The most ordinary partition, and at the same time the most ancient, is that which arranges them in four principal tribes. The first and most distinguished of all is that of *Brahmana* or the *Brahmans*: the second in rank is that of *Kshatriya* or *Rajas*: the third the *Vaisya* or *merchants* and *cultivators*, and the last that of *Sudras* or *cultivators subordinate to the others*.

Each of these four principal tribes is subdivided into several more, of which it is difficult to determine the number and the sort; for this division varies in the different countries, and several casts known in one province do not appear in another.

Among the Brahmans, for example, there is one for each *Vedur*. They admit also of several subdivisions among them, which prevent them from making a close union with each other in many cases, and particularly in that of marriage.

The tribe of Rajas and that of Merchants are likewise split into many divisions and subdivisions : but the tribe of Sudras is that in which they are multiplied most of all. I have never found any man in the provinces where I have lived, able to fix with precision on the number and the species of them, although it is often, and indeed proverbially repeated, that there are eighteen chief subdivisions, and one hundred and eight others.

The most numerous of the four principal tribes, then, is that of the Sudras or cultivators, and I think it no exaggeration to reckon them to amount at least to five sixths of the population of India.

Most of the professions, and almost all the trades, with the arts and employments which are indispensable to civilized society, belong to the tribe of the Sudras : and as, by the prejudices of the country, no cast and no individual can be of two trades, a particular tribe being exclusively set apart for each occupation and each trade, so it is not surprising that the divisions and subdivisions of the casts should be so exceedingly numerous in this tribe, or that it should stand so high in point of number in the general scale of society.

But there are several casts of cultivators not known but in particular countries. Of those elsewhere unknown, the country of Tamul appears to me to have the most subdivisions. There are not nearly so many even in the Decan, nor in the Mysore, nor on the coast of Malabar. In none of those parts have I found any casts

corresponding to those in the territory of Tamul, known in their dialect, under the names of Mandeli, Agambadeya, Nattaman, Udyan, Totiyar, Ventuven, Valeyen, Upiliyan, and several others.

It is to be observed however, that the tribes of the Sudras, to which those employments belong, which are every where indispensable, must necessarily be found in all the countries, under the different appellations used in their respective tongues. The most considerable of the casts that are universally spread are the following: The *Herdsmen* who keep the cows; the *Shepherds* who tend the sheep; the *Weavers*, the *Panchalas*, meaning the five casts of artizans, which comprehend the carpenters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, stone-cutters, founders, and in general all workers in metals; the *Barbers*; and the *Utarans*, whose chief employment is to excavate tanks, repair their banks, erect mud walls, and the like.

These last kinds of labour, with some others, being equally required in all places, the casts which exercise them, and upon whom they are exclusively imposed, are of course found in every country. These employments descend from father to son, from one generation to another; and in no case can the son renounce the cast of his father or take up a profession different from that of his ancestors.

The casts which we have enumerated belong entirely to the tribe of the Sudras: but the several casts of the cultivators take precedence of the rest, and look down with contempt on the tribes of tradesmen and labourers.

In some districts, casts are to be seen that cannot be met with elsewhere, and which are to be distinguished from all others by singular peculiarities.

I am not aware, for example, that the very remarka-

ble cast of *Naimars* or *Nairs*, in which the women enjoy a plurality of husbands, is to be found any where but in the forests of the coast of Malabar.

The cast of *Calaris*, or Robbers, who exercise their profession without disguise, as their birthright, is found but rarely beyond the *Marava*, a territory bordering on the fishing coast. The princes of this little state belong to the tribe and profession of *Robbers*, and conceive their calling no way discreditable to themselves or their tribe, as having legitimately descended to them by right of inheritance. So far from shrinking at the appellation, if one of them be asked who he is, he will coolly answer that he is a robber. Indeed the tribe is accounted one of the most distinguished among the Sudras, in the province of Madura, where it flourishes.

There is another cast in the same province, called the *Totiyars*, in which brothers, uncles, nephews, and other kindred, when married, enjoy the wives in common.

In the east of the Mysore there is a tribe known by the name of *Morsa-Hokula Makulu*, in which when a mother gives her eldest daughter in marriage, she herself is forced to submit to the amputation of the two middle fingers of the right hand, as high as the second joint; and, if the mother of the bride be dead, the bridegroom's mother must submit to the cruel ceremony.

In many other districts there are casts famous for practices no less irrational than those we have mentioned.

In general it may be remarked that, in addition to those customs and ceremonies, civil and religious, which are constant and invariable, and unite the whole race in things essential, there is no tribe that does not exhibit some particular and local varieties of its own by which it is discriminated from the rest. Some distinguish

themselves by the cut and colour of their clothes, some by the manner in which they put them on. Others are remarkable for some particular shape of their trinkets, and others for the arrangement of them on different parts of the body, in particular modes. In some you will observe certain peculiar forms in celebrating the ceremonies of marriage or of mourning; and in others the decorations and the flags of various colours which are their distinction on similar occasions.

Extravagant, however, as many of their modes and customs are, they never draw down from casts of the most opposite habits and fashions the least appearance of contempt or dislike. Upon this point there is, through the whole of India, the most perfect toleration, as long as the general and universally respected laws of good behaviour are not infringed. With this exception every tribe may freely and without molestation follow its own domestic course, and practice all its peculiar rites.

There are, however, certain customs to be noticed in some districts, which, though they are universally practised amongst them, are so decidedly contrary to the laws of decency and propriety observed in other countries, that they cannot be alluded to without feelings of disgust and even of horror. It will scarcely be credited that the invariable practice amongst the greater number of the casts of the whole of the South of the Mysore, subjects the women to what, in other parts, would be considered the foul indignity of attending upon all visitors and strangers, as well as those of the family, when they go forth upon the call of nature. The female waits, and, when it is time, she advances with her bason of water, performs her task of ablution, and withdraws with the air of having well acquitted herself in a graceful accomplishment.

The use of intoxicating liquors, which is rigorously forbidden by all the good casts in other parts, is permitted by the inhabitants of the forests and mountains on the coast of Malabar. There, the best casts of Sudras quaff, openly and without shame, the arrack and toddy; and wives and children follow the example. Each inhabitant in those parts has his toddy dealer, who regularly brings him the daily supply, and takes in return an equivalent in corn when the harvest comes round. But a practice so opposite to all the notions of decency and virtue, entertained in the other districts, exposes these unhappy people to the opprobrium and scorn of the whole nation.

The Brahmans and Lingamists, who inhabit these districts, are prohibited from the use of toddy or arrack under the penalty of exclusion from their cast or sect. But they supply the defect by opium, the use of which is universally interdicted, but not held so much in detestation as that of the toddy and other inebriating liquors.

The inhabitants of these moist and unwholesome countries no doubt have perceived that the moderate use of spirits and opium is necessary for the preservation of their health, by correcting the noxious vapours they are constantly obliged to inhale. Nothing indeed but absolute necessity could have overcome the shame and the remorse of breaking down one of the most venerable barriers of Hindu civilization.

There are likewise certain usages purely religious, which are observed only by particular casts, or in particular territories. For example, it is but in the districts on the west of the Mysore that I have observed Monday in every week kept nearly in the same manner as Sunday is among Christians. On that day the inhabi-

tants abstain from labour, and particularly from that which requires the use of oxen and kine, and from tillage. It is a day of rest for their cattle rather than for themselves. It is consecrated to *Baswa* or the Bull, and set apart for the special worship of that deity.

This practice however does not subsist universally excepting in the districts where the Lingamists, the followers of Siva, rule. That sect paying more particular homage to the Bull than the other Hindus, keep up in the districts where they predominate the strict observance of the day which they have consecrated to their divinity, and compel the other casts to respect it also, by making it a day of rest to their cattle.

Independently of the divisions and subdivisions common to all the casts, and the migration from one tribe into another through all India, a farther distinction arises from one family making alliance with another. This distinction is still more to be attended to in the case of intermarriage. For the Hindus of good casts avoid as much as they can any new alliance, and the heads of families use their utmost endeavours to dispose of their children amongst families with whom they are already connected either by consanguinity or affinity. Marriages are more easily contracted in proportion as the parties are more nearly related. A widower re-marries with the sister of his former wife : the uncle espouses his niece, and the cousin his cousin. Persons so related possess an exclusive privilege to intermarry, upon the ground of such relationship : and, if they choose, they can prevent any other union, and enforce their own preferable right. But there is one singular exception from the rule ; for the uncle will take to wife his sister's daughter, but by no means his brother's : the children

of a brother will intermarry with those of the sister, but not the children of two brothers or of two sisters.

This distinction is invariably kept up through all the casts, from the Brahman to the Pariah. And however remote the persons related are from the original stock, so long as the memory is preserved of their springing from the same root, although in the fiftieth generation, or in the twentieth degree of relationship, the male line retains its right in all cases to connect itself with the female; but never can the children of the male line intermarry with each other, nor those of the female line unite.

Agreeably to this distinction, a custom has arisen, which, as far as I know, is peculiar to the Brahmans. They are all supposed to know the *Gotram* or root from whence they spring; that is to say, they know who was the ancient *Muni* or devotee from whom they descend; and, in order to avoid intermixture with a daughter or descendant of this original stock, they find a reason for marrying into a different *Gotram*.

The Hindus who cannot form a suitable connection among their relations are still bound to marry in their own cast, and even in that branch of it, to which they belong. In no case will any pretext avail them for contracting a marriage with a stranger. Neither can the Sudra casts of a country form an alliance with the *Gollovahron Talugu*, although these two casts make but one, which is that of the herdsmen differently denominated in the respective dialects. The *Hokula-Makula-Canara* will on no account marry with the *Valyalar Tamuls*, although these two casts differ only in name: and the case is the same with other tribes.

The most distinguished amongst the four great tribes into which the Hindus were originally separated by their

first legislators, is that of the Brahmans, as we have already observed. The next are the Rajas. The superiority of rank is more contested between the Sudras or Cultivators and the Vaisya or Merchants. But the precedence seems to be universally denied to the latter excepting in the Hindu books, where they are uniformly placed before the Sudras. This cast, however, in all the transactions of life hold themselves high above the Vaisya, and consider themselves entitled in most cases to shew their superiority over them by demonstrations of contempt.

The Brahmans however do not hold the highest rank in society undisputed. The *Panchalas* or five casts of artisans who have been already mentioned, obstinately refuse, in several districts, to acknowledge the superiority of the Brahmans, although these five casts themselves are considered to be of very low rank among the Sudras, and are held in great contempt. And the Brahman ascendancy is still more warmly disputed by the *Jainas*, of whom we shall speak hereafter.

With regard to the particular subdivisions of the tribes, it would be difficult to determine which exceed the rest in dignity, because some casts which are decried in one part are frequently esteemed in another according as they conduct themselves with propriety, or exercise the more reputable employments. Or if it should happen that the prince of a district belongs to a particular cast, although otherwise of the least consideration, it rises to distinction, and all its members partake in the lustre of its chief.

After all, the public opinion is the only sure ground of superiority among the casts; and a very slight acquaintance with the customs of a province, and with its

inhabitants, will suffice for fixing the station which each cast has acquired by common consent.

In general, it will be found that the tribes which are most attentive to propriety of demeanour, in the rigid sense in which it is understood by Hindus; who are constant in their ablutions; who abstain from animal food; who are exact in the rules prescribed for family alliance; whose wives are the most recluse, and most vindictively punished when they err; those who most resolutely maintain the customs and privileges of their order: such are the casts that are reputed the most noble.

Of all the Hindus, the Brahmans strive the most to keep up the feeling of outward and inward purity. Hence their ablutions are most frequent, and their abstinence most rigorous, not only from all kinds of food that has had the principle of life, but even from many of the simpler productions of nature which their superstitious prejudices lead them to consider as impure or capable of communicating defilement. It is chiefly this unfailling sentiment of propriety which raises that high cast into the respect and reverence which they enjoy in the world.

Amongst the different tribes of the Sudras, on the other hand, those who allow to widows the privilege of marrying again, are considered as beneath the other tribes, and have almost sunk into contempt. Excepting the tribe of the *Pariahs*, I hardly could name one where such marriages could be openly celebrated, or obtain the countenance of the cast.

The division into casts is the paramount distinction amongst the Hindus; but there is still another division; that of *Sects*. The two best known, are those of *Siva* and *Visnu*. These two great sects are subdivided into

a vast number of subordinate ones, which shall be afterwards considered.

There are several casts, too, that may be distinguished by certain symbols or marks which they assume and exhibit in some way peculiar to each. It is in this way that the Brahmans of the North of the peninsula, called *Utrasa Brahmana*, are recognized in public, by a perpendicular line which they draw on the middle of the forehead with a paste made of sandal-wood. The Brahmans of the farming provinces are known by a line or stripe horizontally drawn on the same part, while those in the south, being for the most part attached to the sect of Vishnu, take for their mark the figure called Naman, which will be described hereafter.

Of the four great tribes, the three first, namely, the *Brahmans*, the *Rajas*, and the *Merchants*, distinguish themselves from the various casts of Sudras by a narrow belt of thread, which they always wear suspended from the left shoulder to the opposite haunch like a sash. But being borne also by the Jainas and even by the Panchalas, or five casts of artisans, the mark is rather equivocal.

From what has been said it will appear after all that the name of a cast forms its best discrimination. The tribes of Israel were so distinguished. The names of several of the Hindu tribes have a known meaning; but in general they are so ancient that it is now impossible to trace the meaning, if they ever had any.

There is another division of the different tribes still more general than those that have been yet mentioned. It is that of *Right-hand* and of *Left-hand*. It appears to be but a recent invention, as it is not mentioned in any of the ancient books of the country; and I have

been assured that it is almost unknown in the north, and is indeed confined to a part of the southern provinces.

But although there is reason to think that this distinction of *right-hand* and *left* never entered into the contemplation of the wise men who gave laws to the Hindus, yet they have afforded us no stronger proof of their sagacity than in conceiving the division of the people into several casts.

This particular distinction, however, which we have alluded to, by whomsoever invented, has turned out to be the most baneful that could have been imagined for the tranquillity of the state, and the most injurious to the peace of the citizens. It has proved the perpetual fountain of disturbance and insurrections amongst the people, and a continued principle of endless jealousy and animosity amongst all the members of the community.

The greater number of the Hindu casts belong either to the *left hand* or to the *right*. The first division consists of the whole tribe of the *Vaisya*, of the *Panchala*, or five casts of artisans, and of some other mean tribes of the Sudras. This hand also includes the most infamous of all casts, that of the *Cobblers* or *Chakili*, who are reckoned to be its principal support.

The *right-hand* has, among its partisans, the most distinguished casts of the Sudras. That of the *Pariah* forms its strongest bulwark, as a proof of which they still glory in the title of *Valangay Mongattar*, or friends of the Right-hand.

The fiercest opposition arises out of this separation; and of all the contests to which the people are accustomed, the battles between the two *Hands* always produce the greatest alarm and the severest evil.

The Brahmans, the Pariahs, and several tribes of the

Sudras are considered neutral, and enjoying all the privileges and honours attached to both *Hands*, they take no part with either. These neutral casts are frequently called upon to arbitrate in the fierce disputes between the two parties of the *Hands*.

The opposition between the *Right-hand* and the *Left-hand* arises from certain privileges to which they both lay claim : and when any encroachment is made by either it is instantly followed by tumults which frequently spread over whole provinces, accompanied with every excess, and generally with bloody contests. Gentlest of all creatures, timid under all other circumstances, here only the Hindu seems to change his nature. There is no danger that he fears to encounter in maintaining what he terms his right, and rather than yield it he is ready to make any sacrifice, and even to hazard his life.

I have repeatedly witnessed instances of these popular insurrections excited by the disputes between the two *Hands*, and pushed to such an extreme of fury that the presence of a military force under arms had no effect to quiet them, nor even to allay their clamours, or stop their outrageous course in what they conceive the rightful cause.

I have known instances of attempts made by the magistrates to sooth these uproars by remonstrances and other means of conciliation, and when these have produced no effect they have been obliged to resort to measures of compulsion. Some shots of musquetry would then be tried, but neither this nor the certainty of its being followed up with stronger measures, has the slightest effect in abating their insolence. Even when an overwhelming military force has fully put them down, it is only for the moment ; and whenever an op-

portunity occurs they are instantly up again, without reflecting on the evils they formerly suffered, or shewing the smallest tendency to moderate their impetuous violence.

Such are the excesses to which the timid, the peaceable Hindu, sometimes abandons himself; whilst his bloody contests spring out of motives which, to a European at least, would appear frivolous and trifling. Perhaps the sole cause of the contest is about his right to wear pantoufles; or whether he may parade in a palanquin or on horseback, on the day of his marriage. Sometimes it is the privilege of being escorted by armed men; sometimes that of having a trumpet sounding before him, or the distinction of being accompanied by the country music at public ceremonies. Perhaps it is the ambition of having flags of certain colours, or with the resemblances of certain deities displayed about his person on such great occasions. These are some of the important privileges, amongst many others not less so, in asserting which the Indians do not scruple occasionally to shed each other's blood.

As it not unfrequently happens that one of the *Hands* makes an attack on the privileges of the other: this occasions a quarrel which soon spreads and becomes general, unless it be appeased at its commencement by the prudence or the vigour of the magistrate.

I may perhaps be thought to have said quite enough of the effects of this direful distinction of right-hand and left. But I may be permitted to relate one instance at which I myself was present. The dispute was between the cast of Pariahs and the Cobblers, or Chakili, and produced such dreadful consequences through the whole district where it happened, that many of the peaceable

inhabitants had begun to remove their effects and to leave their villages for a place of greater safety, with the same feelings as when the country sees an impending invasion of a Mahrata army, and with the same dread of savage treatment. Fortunately in this instance, matters did not come to an extremity, as the principal inhabitants of the district seasonably came forward to mediate between these vulgar casts, and were just in time, by good management, to disband the armed ranks on both sides that only waited the signal of battle.

One would not easily guess the cause of this dreadful commotion. It arose forsooth from a Chakili, at a public festival, sticking red flowers in his turban, which the Pariahs insisted that none of his cast had a right to wear.

## CHAP. II.

*Advantages resulting from the division of casts.*

THERE are many persons that have thought so little about the genius and character of the different nations that people the earth; of the influence of education, of religion, of climate, of food, upon their manners, desires, and customs; that they are astonished how beings radically of the same nature and of the same feelings, should so exceedingly differ from each other. Such men are trammelled by the prejudices of education. They can see nothing well ordered but in the police of their own country. Every thing there being in good method, they desire to put all nations of the earth on the same footing; and whatever does not fall within their limits, is denounced by them as barbarous or ridiculous. They will not consider that, though the nature of man is universally the same, it is nevertheless subject to be modified by the circumstances of the country, by the climate, the education and prejudices incident to each people; and that the rules laid down and followed in one nation would be subversive of another.

I have heard many individuals, otherwise of great judgment, so full of the prejudices they had brought with them from Europe, as to decide most erroneously (according to my opinion) on the subject of the division of the Hindus into casts. This distinction appeared to them, not only as not promoting the good of society,

but also as ridiculous, and calculated merely to oppress the members of the state, and to disunite them.

For my part, having been in a situation to observe the character of the Hindus, and having lived amongst them for many years, as a brother and a friend, I have formed an opinion upon this subject altogether opposite. I consider the institution of casts amongst the Hindu nations as the happiest effort of their legislation; and I am well convinced that if the people of India never sunk into a state of barbarism, and if, when almost all Europe was plunged in that dreary gulf, India kept up her head, preserved and extended the sciences, the arts, and civilization; it is wholly to the distinction of casts that she is indebted for that high celebrity.

To establish the justice of this opinion, it is only necessary to cast our eyes on the various races of men who live under the same latitude with the Hindus, and to consider what they have always been, and what they now are, whilst their natural dispositions are not yet corrected and purified by the benign influence of the revealed religion. Let us reflect on the condition of the nations most contiguous to them both in the Peninsula and beyond the Ganges, as far even as China. *Her* temperate climate, indeed, and a government particularly adapted to the genius of a people that has no resemblance to any other on earth, have produced the same effect as the division of casts has operated on the Hindus.

In reflecting on this subject, I have found out no cause that can have prevented the Hindus from falling into the barbarous state in which all the nations bordering on them, as well as almost all others that are spread over the globe under the torrid zone, remain, unless it

be the division into casts ; which, by assigning to every individual in the state his profession and employment, by perpetuating the system from father to son, from generation to generation, prevents the possibility of any member of the state or his descendants giving up the condition or pursuit which the law has assigned him for any other. This has been the ruling, and perhaps the only means that the most clear-sighted prudence could invent to maintain civilization amongst a race formed with such natural dispositions as the Hindus are.

We have it in our power to form some judgment of what the Hindus would degenerate to, if the restraint of the division, the rules and the police of casts were abolished, by considering what the *Pariahs* of India are ; who, being exempt from all restrictions of honour and shame, which so strongly influence the other casts, can freely and without reserve abandon themselves to their natural propensities.

Every man who carefully considers the character and conduct of such a class of men as this, being the most numerous of all, I think will agree with me, that a state consisting entirely of such members could not long endure, and could not fail to decline very quickly into the worst degree of barbarism. For my own part, who know the inclinations and sentiments of this species of men, I am persuaded that a nation of Pariahs, left to themselves, would speedily become worse than the hordes of cannibals that wander in the desarts of Africa, and would soon fall to the devouring of each other.

I am no less convinced, that the Hindus, if they were not restrained within the bounds of decorum and of subordination by means of the casts, which assign to every man his employment, and by regulations of police suited to each individual ; but were without any curb fit to check

them, or any motive for applying one, would soon become what the Pariahs are, or worse; and the whole nation sinking of course into the most fearful anarchy, India, from the most polished of all countries, would become the most barbarous of any upon earth.

The legislators of India, whoever they may have been, were far too wise and too well acquainted with the nature and disposition of the people for whom they prescribed, to leave to the discretion or fancy of every individual, in what manner the sciences were to be cultivated, as well as the various professions, and the different arts and trades necessary to maintain the existence of a state.

They set out from that grand principle which has been recognised by all the ancient legislators, that no man is to be permitted to be useless to the commonwealth. But they saw, at the same time, that the people for whom they acted were naturally so indolent, and that this propensity was so greatly aggravated by the climate, that unless every individual had a profession or employment rigidly imposed, the state could not exist, but must quickly tumble into the most deplorable anarchy, and end in savage barbarism.

Those legislators, being also well aware of the danger of all innovations in matters political or spiritual, and being desirable to establish durable and inviolable rules for the different casts into which they divided the Hindu people, could find no surer basis of an orderly government than the two grand foundations of religion and policy.

Accordingly we find hardly any of their civil observances that are not combined with some religious mixture, either as the motive or the object. Every thing, in short, is blended with superstition; whether it be the

manner of salutation, the mode of dress, the shape and colour of the clothes, the placing of their trinkets and other ornaments, the manner of erecting their houses and other buildings; the side where the fire-place is to stand, or where the household utensils; and even the rules of civility and politeness which they are called on to observe.

I have been closely viewing their customs and observances for more than fifteen years, and I have scarcely remarked any one, however simple or indifferent, or, I may add, indecent, that had not something religious either for its motive or end.

It is thus that the Hindus hold all their customs as sacred and indispensable, because being united with religion they partake of its sacred and inviolable quality.

This contrivance of dividing the people into different casts or tribes, did not exclusively belong to the Hindu legislators. The wisest and most celebrated man of ancient times, Moses, availed himself of the same institution for managing an intractable and rebellious race.

The same distinction of casts existed among the Egyptians as amongst the Hindus; and in both, the trade or employment was immutable from father to son, and no man, in either country, could exercise two professions.

There was this difference, however, between the Egyptians and the people of India, that amongst the former, all employments, to the very lowest, were held equally in esteem, and it would have been highly censurable in any man to treat contemptuously persons in any trade that contributed to the general good: whereas, amongst the Hindus, there are certain employments to which prejudice or perhaps more powerful reasons have attached such ignominy, that those who practise them

are universally despised and looked down upon by the casts that move in a higher sphere.

It must be remarked, however, that the four great employments without which a civilized state could not exist, namely, the soldier, the agriculturist, the merchant, and the weaver, are held in honour through India. All casts, from the Pariah up to the Brahman, may exercise any one of the three first without disgrace ; and even the last is not despised by the better casts amongst the Sudras.

This same division of the people into tribes which we observe among the Hindus, subsists to the present time among the Arabs, and probably may have been common to all nations in ancient times.

Several other ancient legislators seem to have employed the division of the people into tribes as the groundwork of the civilization which they wished to introduce. Cecrops divided the people of Athens into four tribes or classes, which were afterwards subdivided into ten more. The great legislator Solon respected this division, and confirmed it in many particulars.

Numa Pompilius saw no better method of quieting the jealousies and animosities which subsisted amongst the people whom he governed, composed chiefly of Romans and Sabines, than the division of the whole into classes or casts. This division had the desired effect ; and those two communities, when combined into one national mass, forgot their discordant interests, and thought no longer but of what concerned the cast or class.

Those who were admirers of this plan of dividing a people into tribes could not but perceive that in proportion as the distinction into classes is firmly established in any society, so much the more completely may order

and good arrangement be introduced amongst them, together with the facility of directing them and the preservation of good morals.

And in truth it is the influence of this artificial order, and the separation into casts amongst the Hindus, which make the whole tribe feel the faults of one member as reflecting disgrace on the rest as long as they remain unpunished. The cast is thus obliged to take justice into its own hands, for the purpose of avenging its honour, and to restrain within the bounds of good order all the individuals that compose it. For every cast has its ancient customs, agreeably to which, like the patriarchs of old, it can inflict the severest punishment upon the guilty.

Thus, in several tribes, adultery is punished with death. Young women and widows who allow themselves to be seduced, and the seducers also, suffer the same punishment.

The magnificent temple of *Canjavaran*, in the Carnatic, an immense structure, is said to have been erected at the charge of a very wealthy Brahman who was convicted of intercourse with a woman of the tribe of the Pariahs. His own cast condemned him to expiate his crime by this enormous sacrifice; although it was not inflicted so much to punish the crime as the meanness of condescending to so unworthy a partner.

There are many other faults of a scandalous nature on which the cast has a right to determine, and not only against the perpetrator but all those who may have been his abettors: so that it may be affirmed that it is the influence of custom in the cast that preserves morality among the Hindus, represses their vices, and prevents the nation from sinking into barbarism.

The good police and the wise sentiments inculcated on the greater number of the tribes, form not only a powerful rampart to keep up the Hindu nation in a state of civilization, but serve to counterbalance in a certain degree the evil effects which a religion that encourages vice and the depravity of morals by all its ceremonies would certainly occasion, if it were not counteracted by the sentiment of the people.

In India, where the Princes live in extreme indolence, and take little pains to make their people happy by the reign of justice and good morals, there are no other means of attaining this end and of preserving good order but by the authority and customs of the casts. The worst of it is that in many cases this authority is not sufficiently extensive, while in many others it is employed in animadverting upon transgressions of frivolous rites rather than in extirpating real crimes, for which a culpable indulgence is too frequently shewn.

This authority of the casts likewise forms a defence against the abuses which despotic princes are ready to commit. Sometimes one may see the traders through a whole canton shutting up their shops, the farmers abandoning their labours in the field, the different workmen and artisans quitting their booths, by an order from the cast, in consequence of some deep insult which it had suffered from a governor or some other person in office.

The labours of society continue at a stand until the indignity is repaired or the injustice atoned for, or at least till the offended cast has come to an accommodation with the persons in power.

Another important advantage arising from the division into casts is the continuation of families, and of that spe-

cies of nobility peculiar to the Hindus, which consists in never contaminating its blood with any foreign mixture. Each individual must unite only with one of his own family, or at least of the cast from which he sprung. In India the reproach will not hold, which is so often made in Europe, of families becoming debased and degenerate by unsuitable and ignoble connections. A Hindu of a good cast, without pedigree or any other tables of genealogy but the fact of his being born of the cast, can point backward to his extraction for two thousand years, if he pleases, without fear of contradiction or the slightest suspicion of a blot in his pedigree. He may also, with no other recommendation than that of being a member of the cast, and in spite of poverty, aspire to advancement; and wherever he goes he will be better received and more courted for an alliance than others in easier circumstances, but of blood less pure.

There are some districts and tribes, undoubtedly, where the purity of alliances is not so narrowly scrutinized. But this laxity is considered as derogatory, and as an open violation of propriety: and it is so universally condemned that those who are guilty of it conceal it as far as they are able, that they may avoid the public shame it would bring upon them.

I might be justified in asserting farther, that it is by the division of casts that the arts are preserved in India; and there is no reason to doubt that they would arrive at perfection there, if the avarice of the rulers did not restrain the progress of the people.

It was with this view that the Egyptians were so strictly divided into tribes, because (as Bossuet observes) their wise legislators perceived that by such means all the arts and trades would arrive at perfection; and

that a person would learn to do that well which he had always had before his eyes, and which he had been constantly practising from his infancy.

This high perfection in art and manufacture would undoubtedly be attained by a people so patient and industrious as the Hindus, if it were not perpetually checked by that avarice of their great men which I have before alluded to. For as soon as it is known that an artist of great skill exists in any district, he is immediately carried off to the palace of the ruler, where he is shut up for life, and compelled to toil without remission and with little recompense.

This practice, which is common through all the provinces of India that are subject to princes, cannot fail to extinguish all industry and to deaden emulation. It may therefore be considered as the principal and perhaps the only cause which has kept the Hindu people so far behind other nations whom they have for so many ages preceded in civilization: for their artists and workmen are endowed with dexterity and industry, perhaps in a superior degree to the Europeans.

In the countries that are under the government of Europeans, where the workmen are paid according to their merits, I have seen many articles of furniture executed by the natives so exquisitely that they would have been ornamental in the most elegant mansion. Yet no other tools were employed in the manufacture but a hatchet, a saw, and a plane, of so rude construction, that a European artisan could not have used them.

In those parts, I have known travelling goldsmiths, who, with no implements but what they carried in their moveable booth, consisting of a small anvil, a crucible, two or three hammers, and files, would execute with so

simple an apparatus, toys as neat and well finished as any that could be brought from distant countries at a great expence. To what perfection might not such men arrive, if they were instructed from their infancy under fit masters, instead of being guided by the simple dictates of nature?

In order to form a proper idea of what the Hindus are capable of, in arts and manufactures, if their natural industry were properly encouraged, it is only necessary to go into the work-shop of one of their weavers, or painters on cloth, and to attend minutely to the humble machinery with which they execute those beautiful muslins and matchless cloths which are every where admired, and constitute the finery of Europe. In performing those ingenious labours, the workman employs his feet as much as his hands.

On the other hand, the weaving loom, the whole apparatus for spinning the thread before it is woven, and all the utensils necessary for his trade, are so few and simple, that altogether they form no heavy load for a man to carry; and it is no uncommon thing to see one of those artisans who manufacture the splendid works we have mentioned, moving from one village to another, bearing on his back every thing that is necessary for commencing his work the moment he arrives.

Their paintings on cloth, which are not less admired than their works of the loom, are performed with means as little complicated. Three or four bamboos to stretch the cloth, two or three pencils to apply the colours, a few bits of a broken dish to hold the paints, and a piece of stone to grind them, are the only implements of the cloth painter.

I will now venture one political reflection on the ad-

vantages produced by the division into casts. In India, paternal authority is but little respected; and the parents, partaking of the indolence so prevalent over all the country, are at little pains to inspire into their children that filial reverence which is the greatest blessing in a family, by preserving the subordination necessary for domestic peace and tranquillity. The affection and attachment between brothers and sisters, never very ardent, almost entirely disappears as soon as they are married. After that event, they scarcely ever meet, unless it be to quarrel.

The ties of blood and relationship are thus too feeble to afford that strict union, and that feeling of mutual support which are required in a civilized state. It became necessary therefore to unite them into great corporations, where the members have a common interest in supporting and defending one another. And, to make this system effectual, it was requisite that the connection which bound them together, should be so intimate and strong as that nothing can possibly dissolve it.

This is precisely the object which the ancient legislators of India have attained by the establishment of the different casts. They have thus acquired a title to glory without example in the annals of the world; for their work has endured even to our days, for thousands of years, and has remained almost without change through the succession of ages and the revolutions of empires. Often have the Hindus submitted to a foreign yoke, and have been subdued by people of different manners and customs. But the endeavours of their conquerors to impose upon them their own modes have uniformly failed, and have scarcely left the slightest trace behind them.

The authority maintained by the casts has every where preserved their duration. This authority in some cases is very large, extending, as we have already observed, to the punishment of death. A few years ago, in a district through which I was passing, a man of the tribe of Rajaputras, put his own daughter to death, with the approbation of the people of his cast, and the chief men of the place where he resided. His son would have shared the same fate if he had not made his escape; but no person imputed any blame to the Rajaputra.

There are several other offences, real or imaginary, which the casts have the power of punishing capitally.

A Pariah who should disguise his real cast, and, mixing with the Brahmans or even with the Sudras, should dare to eat with them or touch their food, would be in danger of losing his life. He would be overwhelmed with blows on the spot, if he were discovered. But a capital punishment, inflicted under such circumstances, would not be considered as a judicial act, but rather as proceeding from an immediate feeling of indignation, as a burst of zeal or noble fanaticism; of which we have some examples in the history of the Jews.

But, though the punishment of death is authorised in certain cases by some of the casts, it is inflicted but seldom. Ignominious punishments are more common; such as shaving the heads of lewd women. Sometimes the criminals are forced to stand for several hours in presence of the chiefs of the cast assembled, with a basket on their heads filled with earth; sometimes they are set upon an ass with their face towards the tail. On some occasions their faces are smeared with cowdung; or the cord is stripped from those who have the right to wear it. At times they are expelled from the tribe; or some other mark of ignominy is inflicted.

## CHAP. III.

*Expulsion from the Cast.*

OF all sorts of punishment, the most severe to a Hindu is that of being cut off and excluded from his cast. The right of inflicting it belongs to the *Gurus*, of whom we shall afterwards speak ; or, where there are none, it is assumed by the chiefs belonging to the body. These may generally be found in every district of moderate extent, and recourse is had to them in all cases relating to the police of the cast. They are assisted in their office by the elders or principal men of the place where they are consulted.

Expulsion from the cast, which is the penalty inflicted on those who are guilty of infringing the accustomed rules, or of any other offence which would bring disgrace on the tribe, if it remained unavenged, is in truth an insupportable punishment. It is a kind of civil excommunication, which debars the unhappy object of it from all intercourse whatever with his fellow creatures. He is a man, as it were, dead to the world. He is no longer in the society of men. By losing his cast, the Hindu is bereft of friends and relations, and often of wife and children, who will rather forsake him than share in his miserable lot. No one dares to eat with him, or even to pour him out a drop of water. If he has marriageable daughters, they are shunned. No other girls can be

approached by his sons. Wherever he appears, he is scorned and pointed at as an outcast. If he sinks under the grievous curse, his body is suffered to rot on the place where he dies.

Even if, in losing his cast, he could descend into an inferior one, the evil would be less. But he has no such resource. A Sudra, little scrupulous as he is about honour or delicacy, would scorn to give his daughter in marriage even to a Brahman thus degraded. If he cannot re-establish himself in his own cast, he must sink into the infamous tribe of the Pariah, or mix with persons whose cast is equivocal. Of this sort there is no scarcity wherever the Europeans abound. But, unhappy is he who trusts to this resource. A Hindu of cast may be dishonest and a cheat; but a Hindu without cast has always the reputation of a rogue.

The exclusion from the cast is frequently put in force without much ceremony; sometimes even out of hatred or caprice. These cases happen when individuals, from whatever motive, refuse, in whole or for the greater part, to assist at the marriages or funerals of any one of their relations or friends, or to invite, on such occasions of their own, those that have a right to be present. Persons excluded in this way never fail to commence proceedings against those who have offered them the insult, demanding reparation for their wounded honour. Such instances are commonly terminated by arbitration, and in that case the exclusion is not attended with the hateful and ruinous consequences before described.

It is not necessary that offences against the usages of the cast should be either intentional or of great magnitude. It happened to my knowledge not long ago that some Brahmans who live in my neighbourhood, having

been convicted of eating at a public entertainment with a Sudra, disguised as a Brahman, were all ejected from the cast, and did not regain admission into it without undergoing an infinite number of ceremonies both troublesome and expensive.

I witnessed an example of this kind more unpleasant than what I have alluded to. In the cast of the Ideyars, the parents of two families had met and determined on the union of a young man and girl of their number. The usual presents were offered to the young woman, and other ceremonies performed which are equivalent to betrothing among us. After these proceedings, the young man died, before the time appointed for accomplishing the marriage. After his death, the parents of the girl, who was still very young, married her to another. This was against the rules of the cast, which condemned the betrothed girl to remain in a state of widowhood, although the husband for whom she was destined dies before marriage. Accordingly all who had assisted at the ceremony or who had been present at it, were cut off from the cast, and no one would afterwards form any connection with them. Long after this happened, I have seen some of the individuals, advanced in age, who remained in a solitary state for this reason alone.

Another incident of this kind occurs to me, which was rather of a more serious complexion than the preceding. Eleven Brahmans, in travelling, having passed through a country desolated by war, arrived at length, exhausted by hunger and fatigue, at a village, which, contrary to their expectation, they found deserted. They had brought with them a small portion of rice, but they could find nothing to boil it in but the vessels that were

in the house of the washer-man of the village. To Brahmans, even to touch them would have been a defilement almost impossible to efface. But being pressed with hunger they bound one another to secrecy by an oath, and then boiled their rice in one of the pots, which they had previously washed a hundred times. One of them alone abstained from the repast, and as soon as they reached their home, he accused the other ten before the chief Brahmans of the town. The rumour quickly spread. An assembly is held. The delinquents are summoned, and compelled to appear. They had been already apprized of the difficulty in which they were likely to be involved; and when called upon to answer the charge, they unanimously protested, as they had previously concerted, that it was the accuser only that was guilty of the fault which he had laid to their charge. Which side was to be believed? Was the testimony of one man to be taken against that of ten? The result was, that the ten Brahmans were declared innocent, and the accuser, being found guilty, was expelled with ignominy from the tribe by the chiefs, who though they could scarcely doubt of his innocence, yet could not help being offended with the disclosure he made.

From what has been said, it will no longer be surprising that the Hindus should be as much attached to their casts as the gentry of Europe are to their rank. Prone to abusive altercation, they use the most unmeasured language to each other, and instantly forget it: but if one should say of another that he was a man out of cast, it would be an injury that could admit of no pardon.

From this attachment to cast arises that which they entertain for their customs, which may be said to constitute their whole police. It is an attachment which is

often more powerful than the desire of life; and in certain cases death would appear the lighter evil; as, for example, in eating food dressed by the Pariahs. I have seen examples of this feeling; and if I have met with still more instances of the contrary, these were at least concealed.

Upon the same principle, we are to account for the hatred and contempt which the Hindus bear to all other nations and particularly the Europeans. These, from being but little acquainted with the usages of the natives, or out of carelessness, openly violate them upon all occasions. They never shew the smallest desire to conciliate the regard of the people among whom they live, by making any sacrifice to their prejudices. But what the Hindu conceives to be the greatest indignity is their taking Pariahs for their servants, or keeping women of that abominable cast. The proud Hindu, on observing this, immediately concludes, as his habits and education lead him to do, that master and servant, husband and wife are all of one tribe, and that all Europeans are of the vile cast of the Pariah; because, according to their notions, Pariahs alone would admit other Pariahs into their service. Their principles, however, do not hinder them, upon this point, to act with the lowest submission when their interest requires it.

## CHAP. IV.

*Restoration to the Cast.*

AFTER exclusion from the cast, the individual may be reinstated, in several cases. When the exclusion has proceeded from his relations, the culprit, after gaining the principal members, prostrates himself in a humble posture before his kindred assembled on the occasion. He then submits to the severe rebukes which they seldom fail to administer, or to the blows and other corporal chastisement to which he is sometimes exposed, or discharges the fine to which he may be condemned; and, after shedding tears of contrition, and making solemn promises to efface, by his future good conduct, the infamous stain of his expulsion from the cast, he makes the *Sashtangam*, or prostration of the eight members, before the assembly. This being completed, he is declared fit to be reinstated in his tribe.

As we shall often have occasion to make mention of the *Sashtangam* in the course of this work, it is now proper to give a definition of the word. It signifies literally, *with the eight members of the body*; because, when it is performed, the feet, the knees, the belly, the stomach, the head, and the arms must touch the ground. This is the greatest mark of reverence that can be given. It is used no where but in the presence of those to whom an absolute and unlimited deference is due. This reve-

rence is made only before the highest personages, such as kings, gurus, and others of lofty rank. A child occasionally performs it before its father; and it is common to see it practised by various casts of Hindus in presence of the Brahmans.

This sign of reverence is not confined to the Hindus, but is common to several other nations of Asia; which is confirmed by the most ancient of all books, the Bible, where this extraordinary mark of reverence is called by the name of *adoration*, even when it is applied to mere mortals. It is said in the book of Genesis that Abraham ran to meet them from the tent-door, “and bowed himself toward the ground\*.” Lot also, “rose up, and bowed himself with his face toward the ground†.” In the interview with his brother Esau, Jacob “bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother‡.” In the history of Joseph the same obeisance is more than once described§. There are many other passages in scripture where this salutation is alluded to, from which it appears that this extraordinary degree of respect was employed amongst the Chaldeans, Egyptians, and other ancient people commemorated in the sacred writings, under circumstances and for purposes exactly similar to those in which it is still employed to this day in India.

When a man is expelled from his cast for reasons of great moment, they sometimes slightly burn his tongue with a piece of gold made hot. They likewise apply to different parts of the body iron stamps, heated to redness, which impress indelible marks upon the skin. In

\* Gen. chap. xviii. 2. † Gen. chap. xix. 1.

‡ Gen. chap. xxxiii. 3. § Gen. chap. xlii. 6, chap. xliii. 26, chap. l. 18.

other parts they compel the culprit to walk on burning embers ; and, last of all, to complete the purification, he must drink the *Panchakaryam* ; a word which literally signifies the *five things* ; which are so many substances that proceed from the body of the cow, namely, milk, butter, curd, dung, and urine, all mixed together. This is a term not to be forgotten, as it will frequently occur in the course of this work. The last of the five things, namely the urine of the cow, is held to be the most efficacious of any for purifying all imaginable uncleanness. I have often seen the superstitious Hindu accompanying these animals when in the pasture, and watching the moment for receiving the urine as it fell, in vessels which he had brought for that purpose to carry it home in a fresh state ; or catching it in the hollow of his hand to bedew his face and all his body. When so used it removes all external impurity ; and when taken internally, which is very common, it cleanses all within.

The ceremony of the *Panchakaryam* being closed, the person who had been expelled must give a grand entertainment. If he be a Brahman he gives it to the Brahmans, who flock to it from all parts ; or if he belong to another cast, those that belong to it are his guests. This finishes the whole ceremony, and he is then restored to all his privileges.

There are certain offences, however, so heinous in the eyes of Hindus as to leave no hope of restoration to those who have been excluded from their cast for committing them. Such would be the crime of a Brahman who had publicly married a woman of the detested tribe of the Pariah. If the woman were of any tribe less base, it is possible that, after repudiating her, and disclaiming all his children by her, many acts of purification and a

large expence might at length procure his restoration. But very different would be the case of one who should be so abandoned as to eat of the flesh of a cow, supposing the idea of such enormous wickedness to enter into the heart of a Brahman or any other Hindu of respectable cast. If such a portentous crime were by any possibility committed, even by compulsion, the abhorred perpetrator would be beyond all hope of redemption.

When the last Musalman prince reigned in Mysore, and formed the ambitious desire of extending his religion over all the peninsula of India, he seized a great number of Brahmans and had them circumcised. Afterwards he made them eat cow's flesh, in token of renouncing their cast and their customs. After the war which liberated that people from the yoke of the tyrant, I know that not a few of those who had been forced to become Musalmans, made every effort, by offering large sums of money, to be re-admitted into their cast, which they had not abandoned but through force. Assemblies were held in different parts for examining into this business, and the heads of the cast out of which they were formed decided unanimously that, after many ceremonies and expensive purifications, those who petitioned for re-admission might be cleansed from the complicated pollution contracted in their communication with the Moors. But when it was ascertained that those who were circumcised had been also under the necessity of eating cows' flesh, it was decided with one voice, in all their assemblies, that a pollution of that nature and such a prominent crime could by no means admit of forgiveness; that it could not be obliterated by presents, nor by fine, nor by the Panchakaryam. This decision was not confined to the cast of the Brahmans; for I know well

that many Sudras in the same situation had no better success, and were all obliged to continue Musalmans.

The Rajaputras, as well as the good casts among the Sudras, are still more difficult than the Brahmans in receiving back those who have been expelled. Amongst the former, indeed, this degrading punishment is not inflicted but upon grave offences; whereas among the latter it is the punishment of slight breaches of their customs.

But whatever the cast may be from which one has been expelled, much cost and many ceremonies are required to reinstate him. Even when he has regained his place, he never overcomes the scandal. The blot continually remains; and in any altercation he may fall into, his former misfortune is sure to be commemorated.

## CHAP. V.

*Antiquity and origin of the casts.*

NOTHING in the world appears to be of greater antiquity than the casts of the Hindus and the customs which pertain to them. The ancient Greek and Latin authors who have made mention of India, speak of those institutions as the ground work of Hindu civilization established from time immemorial. The inviolable attachment of that people to their customs is a strong evidence of their antiquity. They are bred in the principle of invariably clinging to their customs, so that any new habit is a thing unheard of among them; any man attempting to introduce one would rouse the whole nation and would be proscribed as a dangerous innovator. So difficult would it be, that I believe it has never yet entered into the imagination of any intelligent Hindu. Every thing relating to their customs proceeds evenly, and is transacted with inflexible uniformity, and the minutest particulars are treated as of the utmost importance; because they have been taught that it is by the strict nicety with which small matters are attended to that the most momentous concerns are sustained. Accordingly there is no nation on the earth that can boast of having kept up for so long a time its domestic rules and customs without any perceptible change.

Some modern philosophical writers among them, such as Vamana, who has written his performance in the language of Telingana; and Tiruvaluven, who has written his in the Tamul, are distinguished highly, and have made the Hindu customs the subject of their satire, throwing the sharpest ridicule upon the religion and habits of the country. But while these authors are exercising all their skill and raillery in ridiculing the religious ceremonies established in the nation, they never fail to recommend the practice of them, and are strictly attentive to it themselves. The works of the two authors I have named are always read and quoted with delight by all intelligent Hindus, although there be not a page in their writings that does not contain satirical reflections aimed at their gods and the worship and rites of the country.

One of the most artful contrivances made use of by the early Hindus for preserving their customs, has been that of cloathing them with ceremonies, which make a strong impression on the senses, and communicate something holy to the practice. These ceremonies are rigorously observed. It is never permitted to any one to treat them as matters of form which may be practised or omitted at pleasure. The omission of any, even of the least important, would not be allowed to pass unpunished.

Some of their most important tenets are not peculiar to them, but are common to all ancient nations. The rule of marrying within the family is of this sort. We find in the holy Scripture that Abraham married his niece; and it is probable that it was a general custom among the Chaldeans. Farther, he sent to a far country to bring a kinswoman for his son Isaac. Rebecca could not pardon her son Esau for giving her strangers

for her daughters-in-law, that is to say Canaanites ; and she sent her best beloved son Jacob to marry in their own family, distant as it was. It had passed into a custom therefore, with them, as well as with the Hindus, to intermarry with their own kindred. Of the latter people, when settled in a strange country, it is the usual practice, to send perhaps upwards of a hundred leagues to the place of their nativity for wives and husbands to their sons and daughters. As to the distinction of casts, Moses introduced it among the Israelites, as we have elsewhere remarked. Besides having the command of God, he must have seen this division of the people into tribes while he sojourned in Egypt. He was educated there, and must have perceived the advantage which that system produced in maintaining good order ; and therefore, in legislating for the people of God and establishing amongst them the division into tribes, he adopted and improved the political system of the Egyptians and Arabians.

But the origin of the casts amongst the Hindus goes back to a much higher æra than that of any other people, if credit be given to their ancient books, in which it is written that the whole was the work of the God Brahma, when he replenished the earth with inhabitants. From this head sprung the Brahmans ; the Kshatriya or Rajas, from his shoulders ; the Vaisya or merchants from his belly ; and the Sudras or farmers from his feet.

It is easy to perceive that this tale is a pure allegory, alluding not only to the rank which the casts maintain in relation to each other, but also the different functions of those who compose them. The Brahmans, no doubt, being generally engaged in the spiritual concerns of life, must have burst from the head of the Creator. Power

being the attribute of the Rajas who were ordained to the arduous duties of war ; from whence could their origin be derived but from the shoulders and arms of Brahma? The Merchants, solely occupied in providing food, cloathing, and other necessaries of life, were no less appropriately drawn from the belly of the god : and the plodding Sudras, doomed to the humble drudgery of the field, were shaken out of his feet.

Dropping this fabulous origin of the casts, which is familiar to every Hindu, their writers give countenance to another, which refers that establishment to the remote æra of the subsiding of the universal deluge : for this awful event, which made a new world, was almost as distinctly known to the Hindus as to Moses.

We will revert to this subject hereafter ; but in the mean time we may observe that a famous personage, distinguished by the Hindus under the name of *Manu* was saved from the flood by the aid of a bird, together with the seven famous penitents who will be mentioned in the next chapter. After the flood, this new renovator of the human race discriminated men, as Hindu authors say, into the different casts which still prevail in India.

The name *Manu* deserves notice. Whatever may be the etymology of the word, the similarity of sound seems to point out *Manu* to be the same as the *Menes* of the ancient Egyptians, and the great *Noah* of the Scripture, who stands the highest in consideration and the most venerable of mankind after *Adam*.

## CHAP. VI.

*The fabulous origin of the Brahmans. On their name and original founders.—Conjectures on their real origin.*

THE true origin of the Brahmans, as well as that of the other Hindu tribes, is not distinctly known; and we are therefore reduced to fables or mere conjecture.

The fabulous tradition which is most current among them is that which derives them from the head of Brahma; and they draw their name from his. The other casts, having sprung from the same stem, would seem entitled to bear the same appellation. But the Brahmans being the first, and emanating from the noblest part of their common father, consider themselves exclusively entitled to that sacred name.

They also produce other claims to establish their sole right to this venerable title. The Brahmans, they say, were the first to comprehend Brahma in perfection; and having the clearest conception of this great being, it pertains to them only to explain his nature and attributes to the other tribes. They alone have the distinguished privilege of perusing the books that treat of this divinity; and, for these and many other reasons not less conclusive, they assume the name of Brahmans.

But, however well founded their pretensions may be to this great distinction, certain it is, that they derive it from

the word Brahma. In the scientific languages of the country, they are called *Brahmana*, from which the name Braçmanes used by the Latin authors is undoubtedly derived.

A *Brahman* is in a very different situation from a *Raja*, a *Vaisya*, or a *Sudra*. These are born in the condition in which they continue to live. But a Brahman becomes such only by the ceremony of the Cord, which will be afterwards fully explained. He is till then only a *Sudra*; and by birth he possesses nothing that raises him above the level of other men. It is after this rite that he is called *Dwija* (twice born). The first birth admits him to the common rank of mortals; the second, which he owes to the ceremony of the triple cord, exalts him to the lofty rank of the tribe to which he belongs.

The seven casts of the Brahmans have for their special origin the seven famous *Rishis* or penitents. Two of these were not originally of that rank; but they practised so long and so severe a penance, that they obtained the remarkable favour of being raised to it by the ceremony of the cord. From penitent *Rajas* they became penitent Brahmans; and their rise was from a still lower rank, if we believe what is sung upon the subject by the philosophical poet Venanah.

These seven *Rishis* or penitents, of whom frequent mention will be hereafter made, are highly celebrated in the annals of the country. They are the holiest and most venerated personages that the Hindus acknowledge. Their names are held sacred and are invoked by all the people. They are inculcated on their children; and are as follows: *Kasyapa*, *Atri*, *Bharadwaja*, *Gautama*, *Viswamitra*, *Jamadagni*, *Vasishtha*. It was *Vasishtha* and *Viswamitra* that were considered worthy, from the rigour

of their penance, to be admitted into the cast of the Brahmans.

It is certain that these seven Rishis were of great antiquity, since they must have existed prior to the Vedas, which make mention of them in many passages. They were favoured by the gods, and particularly by Vishnu, who preserved them at the time of the flood from the universal destruction, by making them, and their wives embark in a ship in which he himself acted as the pilot.

Some of the gods have suffered not a little from incurring their displeasure; for even against them the wrath of the Rishis would pursue evil conduct and infamous debauchery.

The seven penitents, after giving an example on earth of all the virtues, were translated into heaven, where they still hold their place among the most brilliant of the stars. Those who have a desire to see them, have only to look up to the seven stars in the great bear: for these are no other than the seven famous Rishis themselves; not emblematically, but in strict reality. And it is believed that, without ceasing to sparkle in the firmament, they can descend, and actually do pay an occasional visit to the earth to know what is going on.

If the fabulous stories which are told of the origin of certain great families in Europe shed a lustre upon them by proving their antiquity; how much more reason has the Brahman to vaunt his noble pedigree? and if the honour of being sprung from an illustrious family, sometimes leads its descendants to look down with contempt upon the lower ranks, we cannot surely wonder at the arrogance and haughtiness of the Brahman, and the high disdain which he shews to every cast but his own.

The idea of preserving the memory of their great men

and of making them immortal, by assigning them a place among the constellations which shine in the sky, appears to be common to all ancient tribes. The worship of the stars accordingly seems to have been universally and most religiously observed amongst all idolatrous nations ancient and modern. This species of idolatry being the least unreasonable of any, and of the longest duration, the lawgivers of antiquity and the founders of false religions, perceiving the powerful hold which it had already acquired over the human mind, made use of it as the most efficacious means of perpetuating the memory of their heroes and other great men; for, by thus transforming them into stars, they set them up as objects always to be seen, and always to strike the observer. It was in this way that the Greeks and Romans consecrated their chief divinities and most celebrated heroes; and it was for the same purpose that the Hindus placed their seven famous Rishis in the brightest zone of the starry sphere; being sure that this was the infallible method of keeping up their memory amongst a people insensible to all objects but those that strike vividly on their senses.

But there is at least one thing which is not fanciful in this question; which is that in the countries situated to the north-east of Bengal, beyond the Ganges, there were neither casts nor Brahmans till within these four or five hundred years. The people who inhabited those provinces, beginning then to see that it would be of advantage to them to adopt the customs of their neighbours, demanded to have Brahmans. The order was soon created by selecting and setting apart a number of their youths, who were trained up in the manners of that cast; into which they were duly embodied by the ceremony of the cord. From that period, they have been considered as

true Brahmans, and hold equal rank with those who are of a far more ancient order.

In the southern countries they do not like to be reminded of this anecdote, although they are obliged to admit its authenticity, as well as that of the two penitents who were at first only Rajas.

There is a puzzling objection frequently urged against the Brahmans. If it be the ceremony of the cord, it is asked, that creates you Brahmans, how come your wives, who do not undergo that ceremony, to be any thing but Sudras? You are therefore married to wives not belonging to your cast; a principle held sacred and inviolable amongst all Hindus.

Their solution of this difficulty is an answer that has been continually made to all their antagonists; namely, that they are guided in this particular by the usage of the cast from time immemorial.

After reporting what the fables of India afford respecting the origin of the Brahmans, I wish to offer, with deference, what appears to me no improbable suggestion. What I am going to say may perhaps appear of little weight to most of my readers: but I give my opinion without arrogance, or the vain pretension of forming a connected system, where all the documents that can be had, are founded only on the most extravagant fables. My view of it may be tolerated by those who in the midst of the thick darkness in which the origin of nations is obscured, would rejoice in one spark that might serve to guide their steps, and assist them in discovering what at least approaches most nearly to truth.

It appears tolerably certain, that India has been peopled from the earliest times, and not long after the deluge, which converted the earth into a vast desert. It is

close to the plains of Shinar, where the descendants of Noah remained fixed for a long time. Its happy climate and fertile soil would naturally retain the wanderers who settled there. I need say nothing of the subsequent conquests of Hercules, Bacchus, and Osiris. The best authorities hold them to be entirely fabulous, though some are inclined to admit their history to be fundamentally true, and content themselves with rejecting its extravagant embellishments.

The history of Sesostris, though also abounding in fable, is evidently more connected and better founded. The few monuments of antiquity that have descended to us, represent this celebrated hero as the greatest, and indeed the only warrior that pacific Egypt can boast of during its long career as an independent nation, extending to more than sixteen hundred years. He is also described as the most extensive conqueror that ever existed on earth; for the boundaries of his empire embraced the enormous sweep between the Danube and all the nations which then inhabited the provinces of India; but his conquests there turned out to be neither more secure nor more permanent than those that were made, long after, by his competitor in glory, Alexander the Great.

The establishments which were made by the Arabians in India, as they are represented by some modern writers, appear more plausible to superficial minds. The restless disposition of that people, the wandering life which they have always led, together with their vicinity to India, would seem to give a colour of probability to this opinion. Nay, its supporters may even add that it is from the Arabs that the Hindus derive their division into casts, and that it still subsists among the people of Arabia. But, in order to give weight to the supposition,

it would be necessary to prove that the division into casts has not existed amongst all ancient nations, and equally to the Arab and the Hindu.

It is not therefore through the channel of Egypt or Arabia that I am inclined to introduce the Brahmans into India. I do not conceive them to be the descendants of Shem, but of Japhet. I think it supposable that they penetrated into the country by the north or the north-west, and that we must seek for their origin in the long chain of mountains, known in Europe by the name of Mount Caucasus.

Their books make frequent mention of two celebrated mountains situated in the middle of *Jambudwipa*, (which is their name also for the habitable world,) remotely situated beyond the most northern boundaries of India. One of these mountains is designated by the name of *Maha Meru*, or Great Meru, and the other by that of Mount Mandara. Frequent allusions to these two mountains, or, as I conceive, to the same under different names, are made in the prayers of the Brahmans, in their religious and civil ceremonies, and in the principal occurrences of life. According to them and their books, this mountain is situated in the remotest quarter of the north, and from its bosom they still agree that their ancestors took their origin. This country, they tell us, is so far distant, that its precise situation is unknown to the modern Brahmans; and that is not very surprizing in a country whose inhabitants have so little knowledge of practical geography, that the utmost reach of it extends only to the countries between Kasi and Cape Comorin.

It is in these retired regions of the north that they fix the residence of the seven famous penitents of whom we have spoken, whom they consider as the first of their an-

cestors; and from them proceeded those descendants who gradually penetrated into the southern provinces of India.

This notion of the first origin of the Brahmans deduced from the Hindu books, and kept up to this day by the members of that cast, is confirmed by the manner in which they treat one another. Those of the north of India consider themselves to be more noble and of higher distinction than those of the south; on the ground of their being less distant from their original seat, and consequently their descent from the great fountain being less dubious.

The Seven Penitents, or Philosophers of the north, from whom they spring, may have been the seven sons of Japhet, who, with their father at their head, at the time of the dispersion of men, carried with them the third part of the human race towards the west. The whole of that family did not go over to Europe. Many of them having approached its boundaries, turned towards the north, under the direction of Magog, the second son of Japhet, and advancing through Tartary as far as Mount Caucasus, formed considerable colonies in that wide region.

I am stating nothing here that is not conformable to the sense of Scripture and the interpretation of judicious commentators; out of whose works it would be an easy matter to raise a vast pile of erudition. Indeed I should have occasion to go no farther than to what Bochart and Calmet have written on the subject.

The name of Magog may be traced among the Seven Penitents, from whom the Brahmans say they are descended. It seems to arise from that of *Gauta Maha. Ma* or *Maha* signifies *great*, and *Gauta* is the same as

*Got* or *Gog*, the *a* before a vowel and the final *a* being both elided in Sanscrit words : so that *Gauta* *Maha*, signifies the great *Got* or *Magog*, *Magoth*.

The history of other ancient people would supply me with conjectures for supporting the opinion I have embraced on the origin and antiquity of the Brahmans. The learned acknowledge several *Prometheuses*. The most famous was the *Prometheus* of Greece, whom they consider to be son of *Japhet*. He formed men from the soil, in imitation of the gods, and animated them with the fire which he stole from heaven. This boldness irritated *Jupiter*, who bound him to *Mount Caucasus*, where a vulture constantly devoured his liver as it grew. This grievous punishment continued till *Hercules* slew the vulture, and so delivered the son of *Japhet*.

Was not *Brahma* the same as *Prometheus*? The Indian god is also called *Brahma*, and *Prumé* in some dialects. These names well accord with the *Prometheus* of the Greeks. That is to say, the god *Promé* or *Prumé* is the same as *Brahma*. The latter as well as the former, is regarded as the author of the creation of men, who sprung from various parts of his body. He was their lawgiver, by the *Vedas* which he wrote with his own hand. He had more than once occasion for the aid of *Vishnu*, as *Prometheus* had for that of *Hercules*, in order to be delivered from his enemies.

This claim of the Indian *Prometheus* to be recognized as the creator of men and as a god, has descended, at least in part, to the Brahmans, his eldest born. They denominate themselves without ceremony, and take the title, without any offence to their modesty, of the *Gods Brahmans*, the Gods of the Earth; and on certain occa-

sions they receive the homage of being adored on bended knees, like deities.

Moreover, many learned authors, sacred and profane, have supposed that Prometheus, who wished to be accounted the creator of men, was no other than Magog himself. It is scarcely credible that at a period so near to the flood, the oblivion of the true God should have been so complete, as that the grandson of Noah should desire to pass for a god, but there is nothing improbable in supposing that his descendants might give him that title when idolatry had spread over the earth.

It was Magog that went to Tartary to establish himself there with such as chose to accompany him, when he had separated from the other sons of Japhet. From thence, he or his sons, extended not only to India, but to other countries which were the inheritance of Shem and his posterity. Thus was accomplished the prophecy of Noah, when he announced to Japhet that his posterity should be the most numerous, and that he should establish himself in the territory of Shem. "God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem." Gen. ix. 27.

But, granting that the original natal soil of the Brahmans was Tartary, or the environs of Mount Caucasus, it will not be easy to determine the exact epoch of their establishment in India. It appears, however, that they were there, and in a flourishing condition, more than nine hundred years before the Christian æra; for it is recorded that, about that time, Lycurgus went to visit them. The high reputation they had already acquired for learning, and particularly their skill in the occult sciences, had spread even into Europe, and appears to have at that distance determined one of the wisest and most profound

philosophers that antiquity boasts of, to undertake a voyage into India to profit by the lessons and the example of those wise Brahmans, who had been settled there for ages. It is pretty clear that such a personage as Lycurgus was not likely to risk so painful and tedious a voyage if the reputation of the philosophers whom he went to consult had not been established long before.

The Brahmans of those remote ages were indeed very different in their principles and conduct from those of modern days. The former are represented in the Hindu books chiefly (if not exclusively) in the light of penitents or philosophers, devoted wholly to the culture of sciences, or to a life of contemplation and the practice of the moral virtues. They did not at that time form a tribe wholly intolerant and exclusive, like the hermits of the present days. Neither could penitents of a different origin become Brahmans, and be initiated into their cast, by the ceremony of the *Dakshina*, or the investment of the triple cord : of which various proofs may be shewn in the Hindu books.

The simple and innocent manners of those early Brahmans, their contempt of honours and wealth, their moral virtues, and above all their temperance, raised them into respect amongst kings and people. For, even the monarch did not conceive himself degraded by paying such homage to them as he would not have exacted from his own subjects for himself.

Those philosophers, secluded as they were, had wives, and multiplied exceedingly. The Brahmans of our days are their descendants. The present race, though altogether degenerate from the virtues of their ancestors, still preserve a great deal of their character and habits ; inasmuch as they shew to the present day a predilection

for retirement and seclusion from the bustle of the world, selecting for their residence villages quite retired, into which they permit no person of any other cast to enter. Those villages, inhabited by none but Brahmans, are in great numbers in the present different divisions of the peninsula, and are generally described under the name of the *Agragrama* or superior villages.

The modern Brahmans approach nearer to the manners of their ancestors, by their frequent feasts, their daily ablutions, and the manner, nature, and subject of their sacrifices; and above all their scrupulous abstinence not only from meat, and all food that has ever had the principle of life, but also from many other productions of nature to which their prejudices and superstition have attached some idea of impurity.

The religious system of the modern Brahmans, and the irrational theology which they have introduced into India, appear to me to be the particulars in which they have chiefly departed from the rules and precepts of their primitive founders. I am far from believing that the wise legislators who prescribed laws for the Hindus could ever have formed an idea of introducing among them a species of worship so abominable and so ridiculously absurd as that which we see in use amongst them at the present time.

Their mythology and the external objects of their worship were at first mere allegories, represented under visible shapes, for the purpose of engraving them more vividly on the memory of a people who appeared quite insensible to all objects that did not make an immediate impression on the senses. But men of a gross, indolent, careless, and superstitious disposition would naturally

soon forget what the worship signified, and attach themselves exclusively to the material objects represented in corporeal shape ; so that all perception of a latent meaning would gradually vanish.

But I shall have occasion to return to this subject in the course of the work. I shall only remark at present that, in my humble opinion, the worship which prevails in India, as well as the mythology on which it is founded, without excepting even the *Trimurti*, and the long tissue of absurdities which accompany it in the books where they are detailed, such as the *Four Vedas*, the *Eighteen Puranas*, and other sacred compositions, are not of very ancient date. So far from ascribing to any of them that high antiquity which modern writers have assigned to them, I believe that the fables on which the present religious worship of the Hindus is founded are of later invention than those of the Greeks.

The primitive religion of the ancient Brahmans appears to have been altered and almost wholly perverted by their successors. The first species of idolatry into which all nations fell as soon as they forgot the traditions of their first ancestors, concerning the unity of God, and the sole and exclusive worship which he requires from all his creatures, was the adoration of the stars and of the elements. It appears that this was the worship that prevailed amongst the eremitical Brahmans or Penitents, from whom those of the present day take their rise. It was not till long after their time, that their descendants, falling into the last stage of idolatry, fashioned images or statues, which at first were merely typical of the objects of their religion, but which an ignorant race began at last to worship. It was then that India split into various schemes of religion, which subsist to

the present times, and that one set embraced the fables of the Trimurti, and another the doctrines of Buddha.

These two sects are probably of equal date. The one may have been a corruption of the other: or both may have been drawn from the purer religion of the ancient Brahmans. Some modern authors have imagined that the religion of *Buddh* or *Buddha* was anciently that of all India and probably of all Asia, from Siberia to Cape Comorin and the Streights of Malacca, and from the Caspian Sea to the Gulph of Kamtchatka. But, be this as it may, the worship of *Buddh* or *Buddha* appears fully as ancient as that of the Trimurti. It is well known that the former species of idolatry is still in vigour and prevails in Tartary, in the two Thibets, and in China. It was introduced there from Siam and not through Cape Comorin, as La Loubere has demonstrated in his account of the kingdom of Siam. It is practised almost exclusively in the kingdoms of Pegu, of Las, of Camboya, of Japan, and probably in all the countries beyond the Ganges. It extends also to the island of Ceylon.

Besides the worship of the Trimurti and that of Buddha, the two predominant religions in India, there exists a third, which, till lately, had been but little known. It is that of the *Jainas*, which keeps aloof from the rest, and equally detests the Brahmans and the Buddhists and their respective doctrines.

The Jainas maintain that the Trimurti and Buddhism, are both modern innovations, of evil tendency, and corruptions of the primitive religion of India, which they insist is exclusively maintained by themselves. They affirm that they are the only successors of the ancient Brahman devotees, whose practice and doctrine

they preserve; whilst the modern Brahmans and the Buddhists are sadly tainted and disfigured by the introduction of monstrous innovations which have overrun the country.

These innovations of the Brahmans in matters of religion were not introduced without a long and violent opposition on the part of the Jainas. The latter assert, and the Brahmans admit, that the Brahmanical worship at present professed in the country was not received till after a long and bloody war, in which the Jainas were subdued and reduced to the cruel necessity of submitting without reservation to whatever conditions their enemies the Brahmans chose to prescribe. The Brahmanical system thus acquired the ascendant, and perverted the popular faith.

But whatever may be the pretensions of the Brahmans, the Jainas, and the Buddhists, concerning the antiquity of their religion and the various points of doctrine in which they disagree, it appears extremely probable that all three derive their origin from the same source. The fundamental dogma of the metempsychosis, which is common to all the three, and the worship which they equally pay to images, not dissimilar in form, and which appear to be nothing else than allegorical representations intended to pourtray to the external senses the object of their original devotion; exhibit a striking resemblance among them. Their religious institutions also consist alike of priests, monks, and religious devotees; they offer up in most cases the same species of sacrifice; and the language used by the priests in the discharge of their functions is also similar. This language is called *Pali*, and is unquestionably employed by the Bonzes or priests of Buddha in the king-

dom of Siam, and derived from the Sanscrit, the only idiom used by the Brahmans and Jainas of the peninsula in their ceremonies. These and many other points of coincidence among the three religions seem to leave little doubt of their origin being the same.

The sect of the Jainas, though much spread over several provinces of the South of the peninsula, being but little understood by Europeans till of late, I propose, in an Appendix to this work, to give a short sketch of their doctrines and the principal points in which they differ from their enemies the Brahmans. I would have been likewise desirous to add a similar account of the doctrine of the Buddhists; but not having succeeded in obtaining authentic documents concerning that sect, it is out of my power to satisfy the curiosity of my readers on that subject. Persons residing in the island of Ceylon, where the religion of Buddha prevails, might supply the defect which such an omission occasions in my work.

## CHAP VII.

*Of the different kinds of Brahmans.*

THE tribe of Brahmans is divided into seven branches, each of which recognizes as its chief one of the famous penitents of whom we have spoken in another chapter ; and each Brahman knows from which of the seven he is descended.

Another and a more general division separates them into four distinct classes, each of which appertains to one of the four *Vedas*. These *Vedas* are four books held by them in such reverence that no eye of any other cast has ever perused them. The Brahmans are so jealous about this privilege, or rather they have so great an interest in preventing the other casts from learning what these books contain, that they have invented a story, which obtains universal belief all over the country, that if a Sudra or any other of the profane should make an attempt to read even the title of these sacred books, his head would instantly cleave asunder. They conceal them with the utmost care, and never read them but in a low voice, and never but where they are sure to be unseen. The least punishment that a Brahman would undergo who should have the boldness or indiscretion to shew these sacred volumes to profane eyes, would be the expulsion from his tribe without hope of ever re-

gaining it. We shall afterwards resume the subject of these books.

There are Brahmans denominated *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda*, *Rick Veda*, and *Atharvana Veda*. Of the last species there are very few, and many people suppose they no longer exist. But the truth is, they do exist, though they conceal themselves with more caution than the others, from the fear of being suspected to be initiated in the magic mysteries and other dreaded secrets which this work is believed to teach. Any one saying that he had it in his possession, would not fail, on that ground alone, to be branded with the detested name of a magician.

At the great sacrifice of the *Yajna* to be afterwards described, Brahmans of all the four Vedas assist.

The prayers which the members of this tribe are bound to repeat three times daily, are taken from those sacred books. They differ somewhat, according to the Veda from which they are taken; each Brahman extracting from the Veda to which he is attached.

But in the intercourse of life, they appear to pay little attention to this distinction of Brahmans by the Veda, nor to give the preference to one Veda over another. Perhaps they are right in this; for if there be any truth in what the author of the *Bhagavata* says, (a poem famous over India,) there was formerly no distinction of one Veda from another, and the whole composed but one work. It was the penitent Vyasa who divided them into four books. This same author of the *Bhagavata* has supplied an introduction and commentary to render the text more intelligible. He ascribes also to Vyasa the eighteen *Puranas*; which, it is well known, are eighteen rhapsodies, each more ridiculous than an-

other, giving a detail of the grossest fables of Hindu idolatry.

Another race of Brahmans widely spread over the south of the peninsula, is formed of individuals of that tribe who profess a particular veneration for Vishnu, and who bear imprinted on their foreheads the mark of his particular worship, which is formed of three perpendicular lines joined at their base, and thus representing the figure of a trident. The middle line is red or yellow, and those on each side are painted with a piece of white earth, called *Nama*: and it is from this that the whole figure goes by the name of *Nama*. Several casts of the Sudras professing to do particular honour to Vishnu, also wear the *Nama* inscribed on their foreheads in the same manner as the Brahmans.

Those of the latter cast who bear the mark, are very numerous in the southern provinces of the peninsula within the Krishna, where they are generally known by the name of *Vishnavans*, which signifies “devotees of Vishnu.” They are desirous of assuming an air of superiority over the other casts of Brahmans, with whom they refuse to eat or to form alliances; but it is in fact the other casts that reject them as being of a lower degree, on account of their associating themselves with a particular sect. This is displeasing to the Brahmans in general, who being of a more liberal and tolerant disposition, give equal honour to the three great divinities of India, without preferring one to the others. We shall speak farther respecting this species of Brahmans in the following chapter.

The Brahmans called *Saiva* are the most despised of any belonging to this tribe. They appear to make a distinct band among themselves, and to admit the supe-

riority of the others. They are employed in many places as servants in the temples, to wash the idols, and bring up the offerings of incense, of flowers and fruits, of boiled rice and other things which are presented by the devout, and form the materials for the sacrifice.

In many pagodas the Sudras are employed in the same manner, as sacrificers. This office is assigned to them exclusively in the temples where fowls, sheep, hogs, buffaloes, and other living creatures are immolated. It is probably by exercising this kind of service in the temples, that the Saiva Brahmans have fallen into such contempt. A servile office, which even a simple Sudra has the right to perform, is degrading in their estimation. The employment of *Pujari* or sacrificer to a temple is not held very honourable amongst the Hindus, and the occupations carried on by such individuals are considered as purely servile. But where there is no other resource, a man has no choice. "To serve his belly, a man will play any game." Such is the favourite proverb of the Brahmans, which serves them for an excuse under all circumstances where their conduct is opposite to their principles, and particularly in the case before us.

I will say nothing of those who are called in derision *Flesh Brahmans* and *Fish Brahmans*. I have been assured that, in the north of India, and even on the Malabar coast, there are some of them who would eat of both, publicly and without scruple. And it is added, that this conduct brings no reproach upon them from the Brahmans who abstain. But whether this be so or not, it is certain that if Brahmans who eat meat and fish were to appear in the southern provinces, and were detected, the Brahmans of the place would peremptorily refuse to eat with them, and would expel them out of their

society. Whether those in the south have refined on the practice, or whether the others have degenerated from the rules of their early ancestors, I will not attempt to decide. The second supposition, however, would appear to be the more probable, because the usages of the Brahmans, particularly as relating to abstinence from flesh meat, are less difficult in the observance in the warm countries of the south than they are in the cold or temperate regions of the north.

## CHAP. VIII.

*Of the Sects of Vishnu and Siva.—Causes of the opposition of the Ordinary Brahmans to the Vishnu Brahmans and other sectaries.*

THE great body of Hindus profess to pay equal honours to all the gods of the country, particularly the three principal ones, *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, and *Siva*, without any preference of one to another. But great shoals of sectaries are likewise found among them, of whom some attach themselves exclusively to the worship of Vishnu, and some to that of Siva. The former are very generally known by the appellation of *Vishnu Bater* or *Bhaktaru*, which signifies *devotees* of *Vishnu*, and the other by that of *Siva Bhaktaru* or devotees of Siva. These are also called *Lingadhari*, and the devotees of Vishnu, *Namadhari*. These last appellations are taken from the marks of distinction which each of the parties bears. That of the Vishnuvites is the Nama and is traced on the forehead, as has been described in the preceding chapter. On the other hand, that of the partisans of Siva is called the Linga, which they wear sometimes stuck in the hair or attached to the arm in a small tube of gold or silver; but it is more frequently seen hanging by a riband from the neck, and deposited in a silver box which dangles on the breast.

Nothing can be imagined more infamous than this

abominable token. We shall not describe it here, as we shall have occasion to notice it in another chapter, and as we are unwilling to stain the pages of our work by the repetition of impudent fooleries, which disgust good sense, and inflict a wound on modesty.

In place of the *Nama*, some devotees of Vishnu content themselves with drawing in a particular way a single perpendicular line of red down the middle of the forehead; and instead of the *Linga*, some of the devotees of Siva are satisfied with rubbing the forehead and some other parts of the body with the ashes of cow dung.

Vishnu's worshippers are met with in great numbers in all the provinces of the peninsula of India, and are known by the several names of Andhra, Dasaru, Purushutama, Ramanuja, Bhikhari, and some more.

Besides the *Nama*, the least ambiguous mark of this sect, the greater number of its members may be discovered by the fantastic dress which they wear. Their clothes are always of the deepest yellow, bordering upon red. Many of them wear across their shoulders for a cloak, a kind of particoloured garment formed of patched work of all colours. The turban with which they cover the head is likewise made up of cloth of three or four tints, braided with each other. Some, instead of the clothing we have mentioned, hang a tiger's skin over their shoulders, which reaches the ground. The most of them adorn their necks with several rows of necklaces of black beads of the size of a nut.

Besides their ridiculous dress, which frequently resembles that of Harlequin in a European pantomime, the disciples of Vishnu, when they travel or go a begging, equip themselves with a round plate of brass,

about a foot in diameter, and a large shell called *Sankha* shaped like a sea conch ; with either of which they can make a sufficient noise to announce their approach from afar. With one hand they beat upon the brass plate with a stick, which makes a sound like a bell, and at the same time they apply the *sankha* to their mouth with the other hand, and by blowing into it they raise a sound sharp and always monotonous. These two last mentioned articles, the *sankha* and the circular plate of brass, are always seen in the hands of that portion of the devotees of Vishnu who make it their profession to solicit alms, and indeed are a sort of religious mendicants.

These religionists of Vishnu, also, for the most part, wear a plate of copper on the breast, on which is engraved the image of *Hanuman*, or some one of the *Avatars*, or incarnations of their god. Besides this, many of them have numbers of little bells hung from their shoulders, and sometimes fastened on their legs, the tinkling of which announces their approach from a distance. Some of them add to all this apparatus an iron ring which they carry on their shoulders, at each side of which a chafing dish of the same metal is suspended, for the purpose of carrying the fire which they use in burning the incense when they sacrifice.

The principal business of the devotee of Vishnu is to seek alms. It is a privilege inherent in the sect ; and in general, throughout India, every person of the religious calling exercises that profession as matter of right.

It is chiefly when they go on a pilgrimage to some holy place that these religious beggars make use of this right. Sometimes one meets them in troops of more than a thousand : and in the districts through which they pass, they spread themselves in the different villages,

where each of the inhabitants gives lodging to several of them; by which means they save the expence of travelling. In other circumstances, also, they generally go in bands to solicit alms, but not in such numbers as in their travelling excursions.

In all cases they demand alms with insolent audacity, and often with threats, as a matter which is their due. When they are not readily served they redouble the uproar, setting up shouts all at once, beating on the sonorous plate of brass, and exciting harsh and shrill sounds from their sankha. If all this fails of success, they sometimes enter into the houses, break the earthen dishes, and overturn every thing within their reach.

It is commonly in a dance that these religious beggars apply for alms, singing hymns in honour of their gods, and still more frequently indecent songs.

The devotees of Vishnu, and particularly the religious beggars of that sect, are detested by the people in general, chiefly on account of their intemperance. One would imagine that they give themselves up to that vice from a spirit of contradiction to their opponents the Lingamites, whose extreme moderation in eating and drinking equals, if it does not surpass, that of the Brahmans, in imitation of whom they abstain from all animal food. The sectaries of Vishnu, on the contrary, eat publicly of all sorts of meat, excepting that of the cow, and drink toddy, arrack, and all other liquors that the country supplies, without shame or restraint.

They are reproached also with other vices of this sort, and in particular with being the chief promoters of that abominable sacrifice known by the name of *Sati* or *Sakti-puja*, of which we shall more hereafter.

Among the objects of worship held in the highest ve-

neration by the Vishnu devotees, are the Ape, the Monkey, the bird called Garuda, and the serpent Capella. One would expose himself to serious consequences who should be imprudent enough to kill or even to maltreat in their presence any of those animals. A man so offending would be forced to expiate his crime by the ceremony or sacrifice called the *Pahvahdam*.

The *Pahvahdam* is known to very few, as I believe, and is therefore entitled to a short description. It is a ceremony peculiar to the sect of Vishnu, and they resort to it only in circumstances of the weightiest kind, such as the necessity of expiating the crime of causing the death of any of the animals which are the objects of their worship ; or for obtaining reparation for some breach of honour occasioned by any deep injury which an individual of their tribe may have received from some other person, and which would be felt as redounding to the disgrace of the sect if it remained unpunished. The *Pahvahdam* is a ceremony of the most serious kind, since it demands no less than the sacrifice of a human victim, and its resuscitation afterwards.

As soon as it is publicly known that any one has given occasion for the *Pahvahdam*, by any of the crimes that have been mentioned, or by any deep insult cast upon the sect, the votaries crowd from all quarters to the place where the culprit resides, and having assembled to the number sometimes of more than two thousand, each bringing his sounding plate of brass, and his *sankha* or great shell, they proceed to the ceremony. The first step is to arrest the person who is the cause of their assembling, and then they spread a tent at a small distance, which is immediately encompassed with several ranks of partisans assembled for the occasion.

The chiefs having selected from the multitude a fit person who consents to become the victim for sacrifice, exhibit him to the crowd of people collected from all parts to witness the sight. A small incision is then made on his belly deep enough for the blood to flow; upon which the pretended victim shams a fainting fit, tumbles on the ground, and counterfeits death. He is then carried into the tent which is fitted to receive him, and is there laid out as a corpse.

Of the great concourse of people gathered together, part watches night and day round the tent, which nobody is suffered to approach; while another division surrounds the house of the individual who has given occasion for the ceremony. Both parties raise continual cries and frightful howlings, which being mixed with the clanking sound of the brazen plates and the shrill squeak of the *sankha*, produce a confusion and uproar in the midst of which it is almost impossible to exist. This overwhelming disorder continues without interruption till the person who was the cause of it pays the fine imposed upon him, which generally exceeds his means.

In the mean time the inhabitants of the village and of the neighbourhood finding it impossible to live in the midst of the confusion and disorder occasioned by the fanatical crowd, come to terms with the chiefs, and pay at least a part of what has been required of the culprit, in order to obtain a speedy termination of the *Pahvadam*, and to induce the great multitude to go to their homes.

The chiefs, when satisfied, repair to the tent to conclude the ceremony, which is effected by restoring to life the pretended dead man, who lies stretched out before them. For this purpose they chuse one of their number,

and, making an incision on his thigh, they collect the blood which runs from it and sprinkle the body of the sham corpse, which being restored by the efficacy of this simple ceremony, is delivered over alive to those who assist at it, and who have no doubt whatever of the reality of the resurrection.

After this ceremony, for effacing all traces of the crime or the affront which had been complained of, the fine is laid out in a grand entertainment to all the persons present; and when that is over, the whole of them quietly return to their homes.

It is not very long since the Pahvaldam was celebrated in a solemn manner in the village next to that where I lived. The cause from which it originated was, that an inhabitant of that village had cut down (without being aware of it, as it is said) a tree or shrub called *Kahkiay-mara*, which produces yellow flowers, and to which the sectaries of Vishnu offer up adoration and sacrifices.

The sect of Siva is not less widely spread than that of Vishnu. It bears rule over several provinces of the peninsula. On the west, to the whole extent of that long chain of mountains which make the separation between the countries called by the Europeans by the generic name of Malabar and Coromandel, the Lingamites or devotees of Siva compose at least half the population, over a space of two or three hundred miles from north to south.

This sect has several customs peculiar to itself. In common with the Brahmans, it will on no account partake of animal food or of any thing that has enjoyed the principle of life, such as eggs, or of many of the simple productions of nature. They agree with the greater part of the other tribes in burying their dead and not

burning them. But they differ from the most of them in not admitting the principles so generally adopted among all the other Casts respecting uncleanness, and particularly that which is incident to women by child-birth, and periodical occurrences, or by the death and funeral of any relation ; as well as in some other domestic regulations particular to themselves, in which they seem to be at variance with the manner of living and the customs generally observed by the other Hindus.

Their disregard of the rules regarding uncleanness and the decent propriety of conduct, so religiously observed among all the other tribes, has given rise to a proverb which circulates in the country, the meaning of which is *that there is no river for a Lingamite* ; alluding to the people of that sect hardly in any case acknowledging the merit and virtue of the ablutions practised by the other Hindus.

The Lingamites, as well as the Vishnavites, have amongst them a great number of religious beggars under the names of *Pandahram, Wodyaru, Jangama*, and several others. The greater part of these devotees of Siva have no other means of living but by alms, which they demand in bodies ; with the exception of a few who live retired in *Matas*, which are a species of convents usually having some lands attached to them, the produce of which, together with the offerings brought by the devotees of their sect, serve them for sustenance.

The dress of the penitents of Siva scarcely differs from that of the devotees of Vishnu, both being clothed in a way equally fantastical and ridiculous. The colour of their garments is also the *Calvy* ; that is, a very deep yellow inclining to red. This colour is worn in general not only by the devotees of Siva and Vishnu, but also

by all those who make religion a profession ; by the Fakirs, Gurus, and all the Indian clergy as uniformly as black is worn by the clergy of Europe.

The devotees of Siva have, nevertheless, some particular marks of distinction, (independent of the Linga which they always wear) by which they are easily known. Of this kind are the strings of large beads called Rudraksha, of the size and nearly of the shape and colour of a nutmeg, which they suspend at their necks, and the ashes of cow-dung with which they daub the forehead, the arms and several other parts of the body.

Among the objects of their worship, the two principal are the Linga and the Bull, of which we shall afterwards speak at greater length.

Although the children commonly embrace the sect of their fathers ; yet they are not by right of birth alone, entitled to become Vishnuvites or Lingamites ; they are not admitted into the sect of their parents until a certain age, and they are then associated by the Guru of the sect, who administers to the candidates the ceremony of the *Díkshá*, which means *initiation*. This solemn ceremony of the *Díkshá*, is a species of baptism amongst the Hindus ; and, indeed, the Christians in India give baptism the name of *Jnána Díkshá*, or spiritual initiation. The ceremony we have been describing consists in pronouncing over the novice several *Mantras* or prayers, adapted to the occasion, and in whispering in his ear certain secret instructions. But the whole is done in a language generally not understood by the Guru himself who presides at the ceremony. After the *Díkshá*, the newly initiated acquire a perpetual right to all the privileges belonging to the sect into which they are admitted.

Persons of any cast may be admitted into the sect of Vishnu, and then they may bear the *Nama* on the forehead, which is its distinguishing mark. Even the Pariahs, or any of the vilest tribes belonging to them, will not be rejected.

I conceive also that all persons without distinction, may be permitted to join with the sect of Siva; but as those initiated there must renounce for ever all animal food and inebriating liquors, a condition too hard to be easily submitted to by the low casts who are accustomed to those indulgencies, we do not often see in the sect of Siva any other than the best casts of the Sudras. There are some Pariahs in certain places, but they are very few in number. It is a common thing to see apostates going over from one of these sects to the other, as their interest prompts them; and some from spite or caprice.

Either of these casts will admit freely and without any examination such of the extraneous Hindus as shew a desire to be incorporated with them.

In some casts of the Sudras a singular peculiarity in this respect may be observed, where the husband belongs to the sect of Vishnu and bears the mark of the *Nama*, while the wife adheres to the sect of Siva and shews the *Linga*. The husband eats animal food; while the woman is absolutely debarred from it. But this difference of religion between the husband and wife, disturbs in no degree the peace of the family or their conjugal happiness. Both follow quietly their separate modes of religion, and adore in their own manner the god they have severally chosen, without any disposition to contend with each other on the subject.

In other cases we see the two sects striving to exalt

the respective deities whom they worship and to revile those of their opponents. The followers of Vishnu maintain that it is to the providence of their god that we owe the preservation of whatever exists in the universe. They say it is to him that Siva owes his birth and being, and that Vishnu has preserved him in many perils, which would otherwise have involved him in utter perdition. They vehemently insist that he is far superior to Siva, and is alone worthy of all honour.

The disciples of *Siva*, on the contrary, no less obstinately affirm that Vishnu is nothing, and has never done any acts but tricks so base as to provoke shame and indignation. They confirm these assertions by some particulars in the life of that deity, which their adversaries cannot deny, and which certainly do not redound to his credit. They hold that *Siva* is the only sovereign lord of all things that exist, and that he alone is entitled to our praises.

According to the Vishnuvites, one cannot fall into a deeper sin than by wearing the Linga or mark of Siva: while, according to the votaries of this god, all who bear the Nama shall be tormented in hell, when they die, with a three-pronged fork in the shape of that emblem.

It is a very common thing to see disputes and altercations amongst these sectaries, of great vehemence, respecting the pre-eminence of their respective gods. These religious quarrels are generally fomented by the bands of vagabond fanatics, those religious mendicants who are to be found in crowds through the whole extent of the country.

In the throngs in which they frequently assemble to support the dignity of their respective gods, their fanaticism on some occasions rouses them to such a pitch that

when they are tired out with pouring every species of abuse upon each other, and voiding the most abominable blasphemies against the deity they oppose, they sometimes come to blows, and the religious controversy ends in a fight, in which there is rarely much spilling of blood, but a good belabouring with fisticuffs on both sides, the scattering of many turbans, and the tearing of much apparel into rags. Thus the fray generally ends, without spirit on either side to carry it to extremities.

But it is in the naturally timid and indolent character of the Hindu that we are to seek for the true cause why these holy wars do not overspread the whole land, or produce the dreadful excesses of every kind which religious phrenzy has occasioned in Europe, and in other regions, for so many ages. Or perhaps there is a still more powerful reason to be found in the indifference of most of the people to all forms of worship, which allows them to give equal honour to Vishnu and to Siva, without any concern about either, and at the same time disposes them to interfere between the religious combatants, and to mitigate the disputes in their origin.

But, nevertheless, if we are to give any faith to a tradition, very general in many provinces, it is scarcely to be doubted that, even in recent times, there have been waged in many parts of the peninsula, general wars upon religion, excited by vast numbers of fanatics who overran the country, and fomented also, as it is believed, to the utmost of their power, by the Rajas and other princes, who supported sometimes the once sect and sometimes the other, as their interest required, and became Vishnuvite or Sivite, and mounted the Linga or the Nama, as best suited their temporal concerns.

Those who are acquainted with the nature of the

*Vairagi* and of the *Gosain* in the north of the peninsula, of the *Dasaru* and the *Jungama* of the South, will readily believe that it would still be an easy matter for two ambitious princes to arm, in the name of the gods and of religion, those bands of fanatics, from one end of the country to the other, impelling them to deluge the land with blood, unfurling the standard of *Hanuman* on one side, and that of *Baswa* on the other, and persuading them that they were cutting each other's throats for the interest of religion.

In the more limited contests about religion which actually take place, the Vishnuvites appear the most violent and most bigotted. They are almost always the aggressors; and the Sivites in general appear more peaceable and tolerant.

The generality of the Hindus, and above all the Brahmans, take no part whatever in those religious dissensions. The system of the latter is to hold in equal reverence the principal divinities of the country; and although, upon the whole, they appear more inclined to the worship of Vishnu, they never pass a day without offering up in their houses a sacrifice to the Linga, the idol of Siva.

The Vishnuvite Brahmans, making profession of honouring Vishnu, if not exclusively, at least with a visible partiality, and upon many occasions expressing their contempt for Siva, it is not surprising that the tolerant party should look down upon them with eyes of contempt as a set of men that, by a marked adherence to such a sect, appear to place themselves on a level with the offscourings of the Sudras.

That which lessens them the most in the esteem of persons of their own tribe is the affectation of appearing in

public with the figure of Nama engraved on their foreheads, which we have already seen is the distinctive badge of the followers of Vishnu. This symbol is uniformly adopted by all the members of this sect, whatever their cast or origin may be. But, to assume for an ornament a token which persons of the lowest extraction, without excepting even the Pariahs, may wear, seems to the true Brahmans a self-abasement and a voluntary degradation to the level of those who are otherwise so much beneath them.

The same distance which the tolerant Brahmans observe towards the Vishnuvite Brahmans would be extended also to the Lingamite Brahmans if there were many of that persuasion. For my own part, I have never met with any of them, and I do not believe that there are any to be found in the south of the peninsula, from the banks of the Krishna to Cape Comorin. Yet I have been informed (though not in a way to put the matter out of all doubt) that there are certain cantons in the North of the peninsula where *Sivite* Brahmans are to be found, bearing the mark of the Linga like all other individuals of the cast.

The *Vishnuvite* Brahmans are not met with but in the Southern provinces of India situated on this side of the Krishna. None are seen beyond that river.

The contempt which the tolerant Brahmans manifest for the Vishnuvite Brahmans is not wholly confined to them: the same feeling of aversion being universal against this class of Brahmans, whom I never heard mentioned but in terms of reproach and contempt. I do not conceive, however, the feeling of dislike for them on the part of the Sudras can have arisen out of the special attachment of that class of Brahmans to the sect of

Vishnu ; but that it is rather to be ascribed to their extreme haughtiness and their insolent behaviour to all other tribes. And though the vices imputed to them are common to the whole Brahmans, yet it is universally observed that they belong to the Vishnuvite cast of them in a higher degree than to the others.

But, however that may be, it is certain that this sect of Brahmans stands aloof from the rest. The tolerant Brahmans do not admit them to their tables or to their ceremonies : and they, in their turn, are excluded under the same circumstances, by the Vishnuvites. The estrangement and distrust which they mutually entertain is visible in the whole intercourse of society. The tolerant Brahmans, when in power, invest the Vishnuvite Brahmans with no employments of trust, and they again, when they have the superiority, associate exclusively with each other.

Besides the general division into the sect of Siva and that of Vishnu, each of these is farther divided into several others, which the Hindus include under the general appellation of *Matam* or *Matamcharam*. In the sect of Vishnu, for example, may be distinguished the *Vashtumah*, the *Tadvati*, the *Ramanuja*, the *Chahny*, the *Dasa*, and a great many more.

Several of these are again subdivided into other sects ; as, for example, the *Vashtumah*, whom I have named first, is split into the *Vashtumah Tirumulah*, the *Kahndahla*, the *Nallahry*, and others.

An equally extensive subdivision appears in the sect of Siva, in which we can distinguish the *Yogi*, the *Jan-gamah*, the *Wodyaru*, the *Viracta*, the *Bolujangamah* and several more.

Each of these different sects has its peculiar system,

its secrets, its Mantras, its sacrifices, and a difference in its practice as well as its faith.

Their heads never unite nor associate together. They have frequent disputes upon the points of doctrine which disunite them. They combine, however, forgetting all subordinate quarrels, when it becomes necessary to protect the general interests of the sect in the controversies which sometimes break out between the Vishnuvites and the Sivites.

It is exactly thus in the two great divisions of the Christian world, the Catholic and the Protestant. The Protestant communions, Lutherans, Calvinists, Church of England men, Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Methodists, and many more, although far from agreeing together in matters of religion, yet understand how to overlook the points of controversy which separate them, and to unite in one body for the purpose of attacking the Church of Rome, with reproaches of apostacy, of idolatry, of corruption, and of other abominations, which they never cease to level at her; thus repaying with interest the anathemas which she, on the other hand, thinks herself empowered to launch against them.

The same division of sects founded on particular systems of faith is also to be found among the Brahmans as a body; for it would be too much to expect to find them all of one opinion in religion. Besides the Vishnuvite Brahmans already mentioned, who are considered as separate from the rest, and are excluded as obstinate and incorrigible heretics, there are among the tolerant Brahmans the sects of the *Smarta* Brahmans, of the *Tadvati*, *Dwitam*, *Adwitam*, and several others. In the sequel of this work, an inquiry will be made into the principles of the sects, and occasion will then be taken to examine the particulars in which they differ.

## CHAP. IX.

*On the Gurus or Priests of India.*

THE word *Guru* properly means *master*; whence fathers and mothers are sometimes called *Maha-gurus*, or great masters of their families; kings the Gurus of the kingdom, and masters Gurus of their servants.

But the appellation is specially applied to certain persons of distinguished rank who attain a character of sanctity, which invests them with power both spiritual and temporal. The latter consists chiefly in a superintendance over the different casts, by enforcing their due observance of their general and particular customs, and punishing the refractory. They have also the power of expelling from the tribe, and of restoring those who had been expelled.

Besides this temporal authority, which is never called in question, they possess an equal extent of spiritual jurisdiction. The *sashtangam*, or prostration of the eight members, is made before them, and when followed by their benediction, or *asirvadam*, is effectual for the remission of all sins. The look even of a Guru has the same efficacy. Their *prasadam*, or present, which they confer upon their disciples, consists in some matter otherwise of small value, such as a portion of cow-dung ashes, to beautify the forehead, flowers that were previously offered up to the idols, the crumbs from their meals, or

the water in which they had washed their feet, which is preserved and sometimes drunk by those who receive it. These and other things of the like nature, or indeed whatever comes from their holy hands, possess the virtue of purifying body and soul from all uncleanness.

But if the benediction of the Gurus and the other little tokens of their favour, which they bestow on their disciples, have so wonderful an influence in attracting the respect and reverence of the silly populace; their curse, which is not less powerful, fills them with terror and awe. The Hindu is persuaded that it never fails to take effect, whether justly or unjustly incurred. Their books are full of fables which seem invented for the express purpose of inspiring this belief; and, to add greater force to it, the attendants of the Guru, who are interested in the success of the impostor's game, do not fail to recount many marvellous stories respecting him, of which they pretend to have been eye-witnesses; and to avoid any possibility of detection, they lay the scene of the miracles in some distant country.

Sometimes they tell of a person struck dead on the spot by the curse of the Guru: sometimes of one suddenly seized with a shivering through every joint, which goes on, and will never cease until the malediction is stayed. At other times it is a pregnant woman whom they describe as miscarrying by it; or a labourer, perhaps, that was doomed to see all his cattle perish in a moment.

Nay, I have heard from these men stories still more ridiculous, and given with the utmost gravity; of a man, for example, being changed into a stone, and of another converted into a hog by their Guru's malediction.

The silly Hindu gives implicit credit to such tales,

and therefore it is not surprising that he should carry his dread and reverence for his Guru to the most extravagant pitch. He naturally avoids whatever may be displeasing to him; and rather than incur the awful danger of his anathema, a Hindu has been known to sell his wife or one of his children, having nothing else to part with, to procure for his Guru the tribute or presents which he unmercifully exacts.

Each cast and sect has its particular Guru. But all of them are not invested with an equal degree of authority. There is a gradation among the Gurus themselves, according to the dignity of the casts they belong to, and a kind of hierarchy has grown up among them, which preserves the subordination of one to another. In short there is an inferior clergy, very numerous in every quarter, while each sect has its particular high priests, who are but few in number. The inferior Gurus pay them obedience, and derive their power from the superior authority of the priests, who can depose them at pleasure, and appoint others in their room.

The place of residence of the Hindu Pontiffs is commonly called *Singhasana*, which signifies a *throne*. There are several of these episcopal sees, as they may be called, in the different provinces of the peninsula. The different casts, and each sect, have their own *Singhasana* and their particular pontiffs. Thus, for example, the Brahmans of the sect called *Smarta* submit to one, and that of *Tadvati* to another, and that of the Vishnuvite Brahmans to a third.

In the sect of Vishnu and in that of Siva the higher and lower clergy are innumerable. Each subdivision of the two sects has its pontiff and corresponding Gurus. Among the Vishnuvites, the single sect of *Sri-vashtumo*

has no less than four Singhasanas or episcopal sees, and seventy-two *Pithas* or *Pondams*, places of residence of the inferior Gurus; without reckoning a great number of a lower rank, who spread over the country to extend their visits to every place within their bounds.

The other subdivisions of the same sect have in like manner their Gurus in great abundance.

In the sect of Siva, also, each subdivision has its Singhasana or episcopal seat and its *Pitha* or places of residence of the inferior clergy. The Gurus of this sect are known by the names of *Pandahram*, *Jangamas*, and others, according to the different idioms of the places.

The pontiffs and all the clergy of the sect of Siva are taken out of the tribe of Sudra; but the greater part of the high Gurus of Vishnu are Brahmans of Vishnu, who ordain the inferior clergy pertaining to the sect.

It is the Brahmans also who are most frequently the pontiffs among the tolerant Hindus, that is to say, such as are attached neither to the sect of Vishnu nor that of Siva.

The pontiff or Guru of a cast or sect has no authority out of it. In any other sect they would disregard his *Prasadam*, his blessing and his curse. There are but few instances therefore of any attempts at such an intrusion.

Besides the Gurus that pertain to the different tribes and sects, great personages, such as kings and princes, have them of their own, attached to their households and accompanying them wherever they go. Every day they present themselves before their Guru, and receive his blessing and *Prasadam*. When they are engaged in any dangerous enterprize, the Guru generally tarries behind. On such occasions he contents himself with load-

ing the great man with blessings and offering him some little hallowed gifts, which are received and kept as a precious relic, having the power to avert all evils that might otherwise happen in the absence of the Guru.

The princes take a pride in entertaining these associates (whom they call their chaplains) with the greatest magnificence. They invest them with a splendour which sometimes eclipses their own. Besides the presents which they frequently bestow, for the support of their rank and dignity, they also assign them land estates of considerable revenue for their ordinary expences.

The great Gurus never appear in public without the utmost degree of pomp; but it is when they proceed to a visitation of their district that they are seen surrounded with their whole splendour. They commonly make the procession on the back of an elephant, or seated in a rich palanquin. Some of them have a guard of horse, and are surrounded with numerous troops both cavalry and infantry, armed with pikes and other weapons. Several bands of musicians precede them, playing on all the instruments of the country. Flags in all the varieties of colour wave round them, adorned with the pictures of their gods. Some of their officers take the lead, singing odes in their praise, or admonishing the spectators to be prepared to pay the mighty Guru, as he comes up, the honour and reverence which are due to him. Incense and other perfumes are burnt in profusion; new cloths are spread before him on the road. Bouglis of trees, forming triumphal arches, are expanded in many places on the way through which he passes. Bands of young women, or the dancing girls of the temples, relieve each

other, and keep up with the procession, enlivening it with lewd songs and lascivious dances\*.

This pompous shew attracts a crowd of people, who throng to prostrate themselves before the Guru. After paying their adoration, they join in the train, and make the sky resound with their shouts of joy during the whole course of the ceremony.

I shall not be understood to mean that every Guru meets with a reception like this, as it is only the pontiffs or Gurus of the first order that are accompanied with this extraordinary state. Those of inferior degree proportion their pomp to their narrower means. The common Gurus of the sect of Vishnu, known by the name of *Vashtimah*, are generally mounted on a sorry horse, and some are even reduced to the necessity of travelling on foot. The wealthiest of the Gurus of the sect of Siva, called *Jangama* or *Pandahram*, sometimes go on horseback and sometimes in a palanquin. But the greater number are mounted on bullocks, the favourite animal of this sect.

\* The custom of having Criers on such solemnities to make their proclamations of praise before all great personages when they appear in public is common through all India. They repeat with a loud voice, or sing, the renown of their masters, with a long display of their illustrious birth, exalted rank, unbounded power, and high virtues, and counsel all who hear them to pay the honours due to such illustrious men.

It appears from sacred and profane authors that a custom still prevalent amongst the great in India was in use amongst other ancient people. Gen. xli. 43. Among the honours paid by Pharaoh to Joseph, "he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee." In Esther, vi. 8. "Bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour."

The Gurus, in general, rank as the first and most distinguished order of society. Those who are devoted to this great dignity, receive, in most cases, marks of reverence or rather of adoration which are not rendered even to the gods themselves. But this is not surprising when it is understood that the power of controuling the gods is generally attributed to them, by which it is supposed they have the means of obtaining whatsoever the deities can bestow.

The Gurus generally make a tour from time to time among their disciples, perhaps in a circle of two hundred leagues round their place of residence. During this visitation, their principal, and I may say their only object, is to amass money. Besides the fines which they levy from persons guilty of offences or any breach of the ceremonies of the cast or sect, they often rigorously exact from their adherents a tribute to the utmost extent of their means. This method of collecting money they denominate *Pada-Kanikai*, which signifies an offering at the feet. Nor can any person, however distressed, evade the payment of the *Pada-Kanikai* to the Guru. There is no affront or indignity which the Gurus are not disposed to inflict on any disciple, who fails, either from inability or unwillingness, to produce the sum at which he is rated. Rather than relax in the smallest degree from their extortion, they compel them to approach in a humiliating attitude, load them with reproach and abuse before the multitude, and order mud or cow-dung to be flung in their faces. If this ignominious treatment does not succeed, they insist on being supplied with a person to work for them during a certain period, or till the sum is paid. Gurus have been known, in cases where a man was unable to pay the amount of his tax, to force him to

deliver up his wife, to be kept for their use or given to some of their dependants.

In the last resort, they threaten to inflict the *curse*; and such is the credulity of the timid Hindu, and such his dread of the evils which would spring from the malediction of a Guru, that this extreme denunciation seldom fails to extract the payment.

In addition to these ordinary requisitions levied for the support of the Gurus, they have several other sources of revenue under the name of *Guru-Dakshina*, which are imposed on the occasion of a birth, of the Diksha or initiation into the sect, or of the marriage or death of their disciples.

The casts, however, being obliged to defray the expense of the visits of their Gurus, the pomp and splendour of which, particularly in the case of the grand Gurus or Pontiffs, would be ruinous if often repeated, it is sometimes a long while before they are renewed. Some do not traverse their district more than once in three years, and some in five years or even less frequently.

Some of the Gurus are married; but in general they live in celibacy. The latter, however, are not reputed to be very strict in the observance of the virtue of continence which they profess. They are the less to be trusted in this respect as they can keep a woman or two, without being remarked, in the character of servants or cook-maids. For it is a matter admitting of no dispute in this country, that for a man to keep a woman in his house as a servant and to have her for a concubine, are precisely the same thing; because the Hindus are all convinced that there can be nothing innocent in the free and familiar intercourse between man and woman.

But the foolish vulgar, who believe that their Gurus are moulded of a better clay than other mortals, and that they are not subject to fall into evil, look upon this arrangement without scandal. People of understanding deplore it, and, without attempting a charge, endure it as a necessary evil, and say they must lay to the charge of human weakness what even Gurus themselves are not exempt from.

Although the Brahmans style themselves the Gurus of every cast, and claim the exclusive right to that title and to the honours which attend it, there are nevertheless many Sudras elevated to that dignity. The Brahmans, indeed, will on no account recognize their right. But they disregard that, and take the full enjoyment of the honours and profits belonging to the title among the cast or sect which is willing to acknowledge them.

Excepting during their visitations, the Gurus live in retirement. They commonly reside in a kind of monasteries or insulated hermitages, generally called *Matam*, and shew themselves but seldom in public.

Some of them reside in the neighbourhood of the great Pagodas; but the chief Gurus or Pontiffs, who require greater convenience for their supply and that of their household, generally live in the towns.

In their different retirements these Gurus give audience to great numbers of their disciples, many of whom come from a great distance to pay them their adorations, to receive their blessing and gift, to offer them a present, to consult with them, to carry to them complaints of the infraction of customs of the cast, and many other similar purposes.

The Hindus, in presenting themselves before the Gurus, make the Sashtangam, or prostration of the eight

members. The sect of Siva, after rendering this first mark of reverence to the *Jangamas*, as their Gurus are called, immediately proceed to a ceremony which deserves to be noticed. It consists in washing the feet of the Jangama, and receiving the water as it falls down into a vessel of copper. They pour a part of this water over their heads, and drink the remainder. This practice is general among the sectaries of Siva, and is not uncommon with many of the Vishnuvites, in regard to their *Vashtuma*. Neither is it the most disgusting of the practices that prevail in that sect of fanatics, as they are under the reproach of eating as a hallowed morsel the very ordure that proceeds from their Gurus, and swallowing the water with which they have rinsed their mouths or washed their faces, with many other practices equally revolting to nature.

From their *Matam*, the Gurus annually send out one of their agents delegated with their authority to collect the *Pada-Kanikai*, and the *Guru-Dakshina*, or tribute which they impose, and the fines inflicted on those who have committed any offence, as well as the gifts which it is the custom to present them with.

After discharging all the duties which their profession requires of them towards their disciples, and performing their daily sacrifices and ablutions, the Gurus are bound by the rules of their order to employ what remains of their time in meditation, and the study of the sacred writings.

The dignity of Guru descends, when married, from father to son: but upon the death of one who has lived single, a successor is appointed by some one of the grand Gurus, who, in the exercise of this power, generally nominates one of his own dependents. The Pontiffs, on the

other hand, commonly assume coadjutors in their lifetime, who succeed to them at their death.

In the sects of Siva and Vishnu they admit a kind of priestesses, or women specially ordained to the service of their deities. They are different from the dancing-women of the temples; but they follow the some infamous course of life with them. For the priestesses of Siva and of Vishnu, after being consecrated, become common to their sect, under the name of spouses to these divinities: they are for the most part women who have been seduced by the Jangama and the Vashtuma, that is, by the priests of Vishnu and Siva, who, to save their own credit and the honour of their families, whom they have thus disgraced, lay the crime to the charge of their respective gods, to whom they impute the deed. They devote these women to the divine service by the use of certain ceremonies, after which they are declared the wives of the god of the sect to which they belong; and the priests of that sect may then, without scandal, make use of them, in the name and stead of the god whose ministers they are.

Those who are consecrated in this manner in the sect of Vishnu have the name of *Garuda-Bassivy*, or women of *Garuda*, and bear upon their breast as a mark of their dignity, an impression of the form of Garuda, which is the bird consecrated to Vishnu.

The priestesses of Siva are known in public by the appellation of *Linga-Bassivy* or women of the *Linga*, and have the seal of the *Linga* imprinted on the thigh, as the distinctive badge of their profession.

These women are held in honour in public by their own cast; although in reality they be nothing better than the prostitutes of the priests and the other chiefs of the sect.

## CHAP. X.

*Of the Purohitas or Masters of the Ceremonies.*

TO prognosticate what are good and what are evil days for beginning any affair, or for putting it off; to avert, by the Mantras or prayers, the pernicious effects of maledictions or of the influence of malign constellations; to assign the name to new born children and calculate their nativity; to bless new houses, wells, or tanks; to purify temples and consecrate them, to give life to the statues and other inanimate objects of an idolatrous worship, and to imbue them with the divine essence: all these ceremonies, and many others of smaller importance, are the province of the Brahmans called *Purohitas*, whose office it is to preside over and conduct them.

The most important of their ceremonies are those of Marriage and Burial. They are so complex that an ordinary Brahman would be found incapable of performing them. A regular study is necessary for the exactness and precision which they require; and the forms of Mantras or prayers are also requisite, with regard to which the greater part are ignorant. The Purohitas alone are accomplished in the management of these rites, the detail of which they have in writing, in certain formularies, which they permit nobody to see, not even the other Brahmans. Indeed the principal Mantras that are used are not reduced into writing, from the fear that some other

Brahmans might acquire them, and so become their rivals, to the diminution of their exclusive profits. The father teaches them to his son, and thus they pass from generation to generation in one family. This shews that it is self-interest rather than superstition which occasions this reserve. By hindering the other Brahmans from learning these ceremonies and the corresponding Mantras, the Purohitas render themselves more necessary to the people and to the Brahmans themselves, who cannot dispense with their services on many occasions.

The Purohita Brahmans not being numerous, those who are of that rank are often brought from a great distance. They attend the summons with alacrity, particularly when they are certain that the person who calls them is capable of recompensing their labours in a liberal way. And when they cannot undertake the journey themselves, they send some one of their family whom they have trained up to the duty by teaching them the Mantras which are necessary for the due solemnization. At times their place is supplied by ordinary Brahmans, especially among the Sudras, who are much more brief in regard to ceremonies than the Brahmans: and although the substitute be not acquainted with the true Mantras which pertain to each ceremony, he does not desist on that account, but pronounces an unmeaning string of Sanscrit words, which appear more than sufficient to the stupid Sudras, who understand nothing of the matter. But abuses of this kind never fail to excite fierce disputes between the real Purohitas and those intruders, whom they treat as sacrilegious usurpers of their functions and of the rewards which would attend them.

One of the highest privileges attached to the profession of the purohita is the exclusive right of publishing

the Hindu Almanack. The greater number of them being unable to compose it, they are under the necessity of purchasing a copy every year from the Brahmans, who make the calculations. There are but few who are found capable of this; perhaps one or two in a district. It is not upon a knowledge of the motions of the stars that the Hindu almanack is compiled, but upon the approximation and agreement of tables and formulæ of great antiquity, and extremely numerous; and therefore the calculation is very complicated, and requires much time, attention, and labour to arrive at exact conclusions.

This book is absolutely necessary to the Purohita, to instruct him not only respecting good and evil days, but also the favourable moments in each day; for it is in such moments only that the ceremonies which they preside over can be commenced. They are often consulted respecting the happy or unfortunate issue of matters in the most ordinary occurrences of life. Neither is it the populace only that are addicted to this species of superstition; for the princes are more entangled with it than the people themselves. They have always as least one Purohita retained in their service at their palaces, who comes every morning to wait upon them, and to announce what the almanack contains for the day. But the most ridiculous part is, that he afterwards proceeds to perform the same service to the Prince's elephant and the idols. The Purohita is consulted many times every day upon the most ordinary occurrences of life. The Prince will not go a hunting nor take a walk, without his decision whether it will be for his health or otherwise. Neither will he receive visits from strangers without the same precaution; and if there be the least ambiguity in the augury, he will wait for a more favourable moment, or put off his excursion to another day.

The Hindu Calendar is called *Panchángam*, which signifies the *five members*, because in truth it contains five principal heads, namely, the days of the month, the sign in which the moon is each day to be found, the day of the week, the eclipses, and the place of the planets. It likewise marks the good days and the evil; those on which one may journey towards any of the four cardinal points; for each point of the compass has its lucky and unlucky days; and a person who might to-day travel very successfully towards the north, would expose himself to some grievous danger if he took a southward course. It farther contains a vast number of predictions of all sorts which would be too tedious for this place.

On the first day of the year the Purohita assembles the principal inhabitants of the place where he lives. In their presence he announces, by sound of trumpet, who is to be king of the gods for that year, and who is to be supreme over the stars; who are to be the ministers and generals of the people; who is to be god of the crops; what sort of grain will thrive the best. He determines also the quantity of rain and of drought, and whether the locusts and other destructive insects will devour the plants, or if the repose of men is to be greatly disturbed by bugs and fleas. He foretells, in short, whether it is to be a year of health or of disease; whether the deaths or the births shall predominate; whether a war is impending, from what side it will break out, and who shall gain the advantage: together with many other contingencies of equal importance.

There are many who care little about these predictions, and appear to hold them in derision. But even among these some will be found consulting the almanack, and even the very man who invents and publishes it, espe-

cially when a war, famine, or other great calamity really seems to approach : so irresistible is the power of superstition over the minds of those even who affect to be liberal thinkers and elevated above the vulgar.

Finally, we may remark, that nothing appears to be more ancient in India than the establishment of the Purohitas. They are noticed in all the Hindu books, and if we can give credit to their authors, the highest honours were paid to them in ancient times. They strive above all others to maintain the usages and customs of the casts, and raise their voice the loudest against those who infringe or neglect them. Their interest may prompt them to this: but it is to them that we owe the chief part of the books of science that exist among the Hindus. They have preserved them in the midst of the revolutions which have so often subverted the nations.

This class of persons is carefully to be distinguished from the Gurus described in the last chapter, although it belongs to both to watch over the observance of the customs of their casts. In other points they greatly differ, as in the profession of celibacy. All the Purohitas are married. Indeed I believe it is held absolutely necessary that they should be so, to qualify them for the performance of the ceremonies ; and a widower, who did not remarry would not be endured, as his presence would be thought to bode misfortune.

## CHAP. XI.

*Of the Mantras, or Forms of Prayer.*

THE *Mantras*, so celebrated in all the Hindu books, are nothing more than certain forms of prayer, or words of efficacy, which (to borrow a Hindu expression on the subject) have such virtue as to be able to *enchain* the gods themselves. They are of various sorts, invocatory, evocatory, deprecatory, conservatory. They are beneficent or hurtful, salutary or pernicious. By means of them, all effects may be produced. Some are for casting out the evil spirit and driving him away; some for inspiring love or hatred, for curing diseases or bringing them on, for causing death or averting it. Some are of a contrary nature to others and counteract their effect; the stronger overcoming the influence of the weaker. Some are potent enough to occasion the destruction of a whole army. There are some even whose awful summons the gods themselves are constrained to obey. But I should never finish if I attempted to enumerate in detail the whole of the pretended virtues of the Mantra or Mantram.

The Purohitas, of all the Hindus, understand them best. They are indispensably necessary to them for accompanying the ceremonies which it is their office to conduct. But, in general, the whole of the Brahmans

are conversant with these formulæ, agreeably to this Sanscrit strophe, which is often in their mouths :

Devádínám jagatsarwam,  
Mantrádínám taddevatá,  
Tanmantram Bráhmañádínám,  
Bráhmaña mama Devatá.

Which may be translated : “ all the universe is under the power of the gods ; the gods are subject to the power of the Mantras : the Mantras are under the power of the Brahmans ; the Brahmans are therefore our gods.” The argument is regular in form, and the conclusion technical ; and accordingly in many books, as I have elsewhere mentioned, they are called *the terrestrial gods*. They assume these names to themselves, and listen with pleasure when they are applied to them by the other casts.

To place the efficacious virtue of the Mantras in a clear point of view, I will only refer to the following quotation from the *Brahmottarakhanda*, a well known Hindu poem written in honour of *Siva* : “ Dasara, King of Mathura, having espoused Kalavati, daughter of the King of Kasi or Benares, this princess, on the very day of the marriage, apprized him that it would be absolutely necessary for him to abstain from making use of the right which his title of husband gave him, because the Mantram of the five letters, which she had learned, had penetrated her with a purifying fire which would permit no man to come near her, without the risk of perishing, unless, before familiar intercourse, he should have been purified from his sins by the same means which she herself had practised : that, being his wife, she could not point out to him this purifying Mantram,

because in doing so she would become his Guru, and consequently his superior.

“The following day, they went together in quest of the great Rishi, or penitent, *Garga*; who having learned the purpose of their visit, ordered them to fast a whole day, to wash themselves in the river Ganges on the day following, and then to visit him again. This being complied with, and the prince having returned, the penitent made him sit down upon the ground with his face turned towards the east. *Garga* sat down beside him with his face towards the west, and secretly whispered these two words in his ear, *Nama-Sivaya*. That is the Mantram of five letters, or five syllables, and signifies, ‘health to Siva.’ As soon as *Dasara* had learned these two wonderful words, he perceived that he was excited by their purifying fire, and at the same moment, there sprung out from all parts of his body a multitude of crows, which flew up into the sky and disappeared. These were the sins committed by the prince in preceding generations.

“This history,” says the author, “is certain. I had it from my Guru, *Vedavyasa*, who had learned it of *Para-Brahma*. The king and his spouse, thus purified, lived together for many years, and retired at last to re-unite with *Para-Brahma* in the abode of bliss, without being obliged to be re-born any more upon earth.”

When the Brahmans are rallied upon the present state of their Mantras, wholly divested of their boasted efficacy and power, they answer, that this loss of their influence is to be attributed to the *Kaliyugam*, which means that age of the world in which we now live, the true iron age, the time of evil and misfortune, in which every thing has degenerated. Nevertheless, they subjoin, it is

still not uncommon to see the Mantras operate effects as miraculous as formerly ; which they confirm by stories not less authentic than such as we have already reported.

Of all the Mantras, the most celebrated, and at the same time the most effectual for blotting out all sins, and of such potency as to make the gods themselves to tremble, as the Hindu books affirm, is that to which they give the name of *Gaitry*, or as some write it, *Gayatri*, which signifies the Mantram of the twenty-four letters or syllables. It is so ancient and so powerful as to have given rise to the *Vedas*. The Brahman when about to recite it, makes a previous preparation by prayers and the deepest meditation. Before pronouncing a word, he closes all the apertures of his body, and keeps in his breath as long as it is possible to retain it ; and then he recites it in a low voice, taking good care that it shall not be intelligible by the Sudras and the rest of the profane. Even his wife, especially at certain periods, is not allowed to hear it.

This famous Mantram consists of the following words :

“ Tat Savitu varenyam swarga-devasya  
“ Dimahi diyo yo no prachodayet.”

This then is the celebrated Mantram of four and twenty letters or syllables ; and it appears to be addressed to the Sun, one of whose appellations is *Savita*. The meaning is very dark, and unintelligible to the Brahmans themselves. I have never met with any one who could give me a tolerable explication of it. Such as it is, it would be a horrible sacrilege and an unpardonable crime in any Brahman to communicate it to any profane or foreign ears. We may add that there are other Mantras

which bear the name of *Gayatri*, but they are of much lower repute than this.

Although the Brahmans alone are held to be the true depositaries of the Mantras, yet there are many persons of other casts who scruple not to pronounce them. There are professions also in which it is indispensable. The Physicians themselves, who are not Brahmans, would be considered as ignorant beings and unworthy of the public confidence, however much entitled to it in other respects, if they were unacquainted with the Mantras suited to each disease as regularly as with the medicines which are applied in the cure. The cure is considered as arising from the Mantras as much as from the medical applications. One of the principal reasons for which the European physicians are held in such discredit in India, as far as regards their profession, is, that they administer their medicines without any accompaniment of Mantram.

The Midwives are called in some parts *Mantra-Sari*, or women who understand the Mantras; and never can those holy prayers be more necessary than at that crisis when, according to the notions of the Hindus, a tender infant and a newly-delivered mother are particularly liable to the fascination of evil eyes, to the malign conjunctions of the planets, the influence of unlucky days, and many other dangers, each more perilous than another. A skilful midwife, stored with good and serviceable Mantras, pronounced at the proper moment, provides against all such fears and dangers.

But those who are considered to be the most skilful in this kind of knowledge, and at the same time the most dangerous, are the persons who deal in the Occult Sciences; such as Magicians, Sorcerers, and Soothsayers.

It is this sort of practitioners who pretend to be possessed of the true Mantras which can strike with sudden death, cure and inflict diseases, call up or lay the fiends, discover thefts, concealed treasures, distant objects, or future events. Such persons will always abound in a country where ignorance, superstition, and quackery so universally prevail.

The *mischievous magicians* being very much dreaded and hated, never fail to be punished when they are believed guilty of having brought down evil upon any one by their spells. The ordinary way of punishing them on such occasions is by drawing the two front teeth of the upper jaw, which prevents them from speaking plainly, and is supposed to mar their utterance of the evil Mantras. Now, the slightest imperfection or defect in pronouncing the Mantram is so offensive to their god or demon, for both are invoked in their magical rites, that if it occurred he would infallibly turn upon themselves the whole evils which they imprecated upon others.

Among the numbers who thus lose their teeth in the cause of magic, I knew one individual, who came to me the very day on which the cruel operation was performed, and threw himself at my feet mumbling his innocence, and imploring my counsel and assistance to procure reparation for the injustice they had done him in knocking out his front teeth, and in imputing to him the hateful practices of a magician. The poor man seemed to me to have very little of the appearance of a conjurer; but having neither the power nor the inclination to interfere in the affair, I got rid of him as I best could.

All the magical Mantras are hard to pronounce : and it is this difficulty which gives them all their importance, because if a sorcerer pronounces a single syllable amiss, the whole evil he was invoking would fall upon himself.

The Mantram on which this art chiefly depends cannot easily be expressed in European characters ; *Om, srim, hsan, hgita, Ramaya namah.* The four first are barbarous words and without meaning. The two last signify " Health to Rama."

I believe no nation on earth is so infatuated as the Hindus are with these notions of magic. The greater part of the cross accidents that befall them in life are attributed to the jealousy of some enemy who has had recourse to this wicked art for the purpose of injuring them. If they lose a wife or children by premature death ; if a contagion breaks out among the cattle ; or if a married woman continue unfruitful : none of these occurrences is believed to have had a natural cause, but they are all ascribed to preternatural arts employed by some secret enemy of their prosperity. Diseases, particularly such as are of long endurance, are attributed to the same cause, and if they should happen to take place while any quarrel or law-suit subsisted between the parties, the whole is laid to the charge of the opponent, who is accused of having devised it by magical contrivance. So serious a charge, to be sure, is not in general very patiently borne by the party accused ; and thus a new cause of dissention is engendered.

It is to counteract the effects of this Wicked magic that a vast number of vagabonds roam over the country, calling themselves *Beneficent Magicians*, who are supposed to possess the Mantras that have power to heal the disorders and other evils occasioned by the *Sapanam*

or malignant magic, to render barren women fruitful, to cast out devils from those who are possessed with them, to check the murrain among cattle, to destroy the insects which ravage the fields, and to produce other beneficial effects. After reciting all their Mantras and carefully performing their whole ceremonies, they give amulets to their patients, on which are inscribed some unmeaning words. These sacred symbols they direct to be worn about their persons, as having virtue to complete the cure which the Mantram had begun. They then take their fee and go in quest of fresh dupes.

But as this delusion will be discussed more largely hereafter, we now return to the subject of the *Mantras*. There is one species of them differing from any we have yet mentioned, and capable of much more wonderful effects. It is called *Bijaksharam*, or *Radical Letters*; such as *shrum*, *craoom*, *hrim*, *hroom*, *hroo*, *hoo*, and others of the like sound. Those who understand their true pronounciation, combination, and application, may perform prodigies as fast as he pleases. Let us take the following example.

Siva chose to communicate the knowledge of them to a bastard boy, the son of a widow of the Brahman cast, who, on account of the ignominy of his birth, had the mortification to be excluded from a wedding feast. He took his revenge by merely pronouncing two of the radical syllables at the door of the apartment where the guests were assembled, and by the power of the two syllables the viands on the table were instantly turned into toads. Such an accident would naturally occasion much confusion in the party. None of them doubted but that it was the little bastard who had played them such a trick, and that, if they still kept him out, he

might go on with his pranks. Accordingly they opened the door for him, and upon entering the room, he pronounced the same syllables, only reversing their order, when immediately the toads changed again into what they were at first, and the different dishes took their original form.

I must leave it to men skilled in antiquity to point out any thing in their researches equal in extravagance to this of the Hindus, or which could possibly have served them in it for a model.

## CHAP. XII.

*Of the ceremonies practised on the Brahman women when brought to bed, and on infants of tender age.*

WITHOUT stopping at present to enumerate the many ceremonies practised with regard to the wives of the Brahmans when in a state of pregnancy, from the time when it is first ascertained to that of parturition, some of which shall be noticed elsewhere, I will content myself with describing a few which are never omitted to be used towards the mother, and to the child after it is born.

A *Brahmani* or *Brahmanari*, the wife of a Brahman, is pronounced to be unclean for ten days after her lying-in, and the stain is in some measure communicated to every person in the house where she is brought to bed. On the eleventh day they send all the linen she has used to be washed, and the house is thoroughly cleaned in the Hindu manner by smearing the floor with cow-dung moistened with water, and then marking it with broad stripes of white. The Purohita being now called to celebrate the ceremonies of the purification, makes her sit down on a little stool, holding the child in her arms. Her husband being seated beside her, the Purohita commences by sacrificing to the god *Puliyar* or *Vighneswara*. He then consecrates some water, and pours a little into the hand of the husband and the wife, who drop a part of it on their heads and drink the rest. The house is

afterwards sprinkled over with the holy water, and what remains is thrown into the well.

By this ceremony all that dwell in the house are deemed to be purified, and may then mix with the world. The newly-delivered woman alone is not perfectly clean till the end of a month from the time of her lying-in. During the whole period of her uncleanness she must be kept in a detached place, and must not touch any of the furniture or vessels in the house. The time being expired, she may then return to her usual place in the family.

This practice a good deal resembles that of the Israelitish women under the same circumstances, as may be seen in the twelfth chapter of Leviticus. But the sequel of the Jewish ceremony is quite different, as in India no regard is paid to the sex of the infant in relation to the uncleanness of the mother, which continues equally long whether she brings a boy or a girl.

Twelve days after the birth, the child receives its name, which is imparted in this manner. The father, and the mother with the infant in her arms, being seated, the Brahmans who are invited form a circle round them. A plate with rice, raw but free of husks, is brought in, upon the surface of which the father inscribes the day of the month when the child was born, with the name of the ruling star of that day. He adds the name which he wishes to be given to the child, which has been previously chosen out of the calendar of their saints with many long and trifling combinations. Each ceremony is accompanied with several Mantras of the Purohita, who pronounces them, holding a gold ring in his hand. I ought not to omit that the whole is preceded by the sacrifice of the *Homam*, which will be afterwards describ-

ed. In this case it is offered to the nine planets. At last, the whole ceremonies being ended, the father calls the child three times by the name which has been given to it, and the whole is concluded with a sacrifice to the god of the house. Dinner is then served to the Brahmans, who, after receiving *betel*, and some pieces of money or other presents, take their leave.

When the child has attained the age of six months, they begin to give him solid food; and this gives occasion for a new entertainment to the Brahmans. The house where it is given, having been first neatly cleaned within and without, in the Hindu fashion, the door is decorated with garlands of mango leaves. In the court a *pandal* or shed is constructed, under which a little bank of earth is raised, which is used for several purposes. The Brahmans, who have been previously invited, having placed themselves under the *pandal*, the mother of the child goes thither also, and carrying it in her arms sits down on the little bank of earth. The Purohita commences this, as well as the former ceremony, by offering the sacrifice of the *Homam*. When it is over, the married women, but not widows, draw near, and, singing all together, perform over the child the ceremony of the *Arati* or *Alati*.

As this ceremony will be frequently alluded to in the course of this work, it will be proper here to give a short account of it. Upon a plate of copper they place a lamp made of a paste from rice flower. It is supplied with oil and lighted. The married women, but not widows, for their presence would be unlucky, take hold of the plate with both hands, and, raising it as high as the head of the person for whom the ceremony is performed, de-

scribe in that position a number of circles with the plate and the burning lamp.

Sometimes, in place of the rice lamp, they fill the plate with water, coloured red with a mixture of saffron and other ingredients ; and with this describe their circles, raising it as high as the head of the person who is the object of the ceremony.

The intention of this ceremony is to avert fascination by the eye, and to prevent the accidents which arise out of I know not what evil impression occasioned by the jealous looks of certain persons. The credulity of the Hindus respecting this sort of injury is carried to excess : and it is for that reason that the ceremony of the *arati*, which is considered to have the virtue of preventing the effect of those glances, is so common and so universal among the Hindus, and especially among persons of high rank, who, being more observed and having more enemies than private individuals, are more exposed to the evil influence of malevolent or jealous looks. When such persons therefore appear in public, the first thing that is done on their return home, is to perform this ceremony of the *arati* over them, as an antidote to the ill designed looks which may have been cast upon them. For the same reason princes have the ceremony repeated several times in a day.

The gods themselves are not considered out of the reach of malicious glances of the eye ; and therefore when they are carried in processions in the streets, or in any other way exposed to public veneration, the ceremony of the *arati* is always celebrated when they are taken back to their places, to efface the evil they may have sustained by such wicked looks. The girls of easy virtue who daily attend at the temples of the

idols to chaunt hymns in their praise, never fail, at the conclusion, to light the lamp of rice paste, and to go through the ceremony of the arati, elevating it to the idols' heads, and whirling in the accustomed circles.

This sort of superstition or idle observance is by no means peculiar to the Hindus. I have seen cantons in France, (and I suppose it is not different in many other countries,) where the people were scarcely less infatuated. I have known decent villagers who would not have dared to shew their young children to people they did not know, or to persons of bad appearance, lest their invidious or ill-boding look should occasion some mischief to befall them.

The bad consequences arising from the eye or look were not unknown to the ancients. We read in Virgil,

“ Nescio quis teneros *oculus* mihi fascinat agnos.”

The Hindus call this evil glance *drishti-dosham*, or evil which comes from looks; upon which their notions are altogether extravagant. But let us resume our subject.

The ceremony of *arati* being made upon the child by the married women present, they continue their song and go in a body to seek the god of *the Plate*, who is nothing else than a new vessel of brass given for a present by the maternal uncle of the infant. This dish has been turned into a god by virtue of the Mantras of the Purohita. The women, proceeding to the place where it is deposited, cast into it a small quantity of an earth called *Pramanam*; after which, each clasping her hands, the whole at once make a devout obeisance to the god of the Dish, and place him beside the child; for whom at

the same time they offer up their wishes that he may become great and strong, and enjoy good health and long life. Then they rub his lips with boiled rice, prepared expressly for the occasion, and gird round his middle a little cloth, which is likewise brought out with abundance of ceremonies.

The women having retired, leave room for the men, who put some *akshata* upon the infant's head as well as on their own. The *akshata*, of which frequent mention will be hereafter made, are nothing but grains of rice tinged with a reddish hue.

This ceremony and the preceding one being accomplished, the whole is finished by a feast given to the persons invited.

When the infant attains its second or third year, they shave its head; and this is also made the subject of a feast. Preparations are made for this important ceremony as on former occasions. On the earthen bank raised under the pandal or shed, in the way before mentioned, they trace a square, in the middle of which they deposit a measure of rice in the husk. In the same square they place the idol *Puliyar* or *Vighneswara*, to whom they make an offering of cocoas, sugar, and betel. The barber then shaves the head of the child, to the sound of musical instruments, leaving only a small tuft of hair, such as the Hindus always permit to grow on the crown of the head. All who have been invited look on, and are obliged to continue standing until the barber finishes his operation. As soon as it is over, he lays hold of the measure of rice which stands in the little square, takes his payment, and retires. The Brahmans then perform the sacrifice of the Homam to the nine planets.

The Purohita presides at all these ceremonies, and

accompanies them with the Mantras. As in former cases, they are closed with a repast provided for the Brahmans that are invited.

About the same time they pierce the ears of the children of either sex; for the Hindu men as well as the women wear pendants at their ears, though of a different shape. They are always of gold, and it is not allowed to wear on the head trinkets of any other metal; only that sometimes the women employ a silver one to bind the hair at the neck.

The ceremony of piercing the ears of the children is not without its entertainments any more than the antecedent ones. It is attended with nearly the same practices, which it would be tedious any more to describe. The jeweller bores them, to the sound of musical instruments, with a very fine gold wire. The hole is gradually widened from time to time by inserting a substance of greater thickness. It is more enlarged in the girls, for the purpose of suspending a greater proportion of ornaments. But in some provinces of the peninsula it is so enormously extended, both in men and women, as to equal at least the size of a Spanish dollar.

I have studiously abridged the account of these ceremonies, as nearly the same will recur in those of the *triple cord*, of marriage, and of burial; where they will be more minutely detailed.

However frivolous and superstitious these ceremonies may be, they possess one advantage at least, that of compelling the Brahmans to assemble frequently together, and to make their duties reciprocal, which greatly contributes to render the individuals of their society much more refined than those of the other Hindu casts amongst whom these practices do not prevail.



A  
DESCRIPTION  
OF  
*THE PEOPLE OF INDIA.*

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PART II.

OF THE FOUR STAGES IN LIFE OF THE BRAHMANS.

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CHAP. I.

*State of Brahmachari.*

THE Brahmans divide their progress through life into four stages: the first is that of a young man of the cast, when he has been invested with the triple cord, and is then called *Brahmachari*. The second is when the Brahman becomes a married man. In this condition, and particularly when he is the father of children, he obtains the appellation of *Grihastha*. He reaches the third stage when, being satiated with the world, he resolves to retire into the desert with his wife; and then he receives the name of *Vanaprastha*, which signifies "an inhabitant of the wilderness." The fourth and last stage is that of *Sannyasi*, at which he arrives when he devotes himself to a life of solitude, with no wife; and in a still higher degree of seclusion than the *Vanaprastha*.

It will be proper to consider these several degrees in their turn, with the duties belonging to each. In the

first place, then, we shall speak of the *Brahmachari*, and the manner in which he is instituted into this condition.

All the Brahmans wear a Cord over the shoulder, consisting of three thick twists of cotton, each of them formed of several smaller threads. It is called *Dandiam* in the *Telinga*, *Punul* in *Tamul*, and *Janivaram*, or *Yajnopavitam*, in *Canara*. The three threads are not twisted together, but separate from one another, and hang from the left shoulder to the right haunch. When a Brahman marries, he mounts nine threads in place of three.

This number, *three*, followed, and it may be said, consecrated in this particular circumstance as well as in many others no less important, must contain some mysterious meaning; and I have no doubt it refers to the three principal divinities of India; Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva.

The children of Brahmans are invested with the Cord when they come to the age of seven or nine years. It is not obtained but at a considerable expence; and Brahmans who are poor are therefore, in order to acquire it, obliged to resort to a contribution; and Hindus of every cast believe they perform a meritorious act in contributing to the charges of the ceremony. It is called *Upa-nayana*, or, *the Introduction to the Sciences*; for the privilege of studying them all belongs only to the Brahmans, the other casts being permitted to learn but a small number.

The Cord which is given to the young Brahmans must be made with much care and with many ceremonies. The cotton of which it is formed ought to be gathered from the plant by the hands of Brahmans only, in order to avoid the pollution which would pass from

the impure hands of men of other casts. For the same reason it should be carded, spun, and twisted, by persons of the tribe, and be always kept exceedingly pure.

I had some difficulty in bringing myself to detail the whole of this ceremony of the Upanayana, it is so filled with minute and trifling superstition. But I considered that those who would wish to know and to compare together the ceremonies of various ancient nations, would probably be pleased with a regular summary of the true genius of the Hindu superstitions. I have taken that which I here present from the *Directory* or *Ritual* of the Purohitas. The father of the Brahmachari commences by selecting, agreeably to the rules of Hindu astrology, the month of the year, the week, the day of the week, and the minute of the day, most favourable for that ceremony. Part of what is necessary is laid down in the Hindu almanack. The Purohita is charged with what remains; and it is no trifling affair, so intricate are the calculations and combinations which he has to undertake.

The father of the young Brahman is in the first instance required to make an ample provision of rice, peas, pumpkins, and all other vegetable food, of curdled milk and melted butter, of cocoa and the various kinds of fruit which can be found, to be the ground work of the entertainment to be given to the Brahmans. It is necessary above all things that he should be provided with betel, and good store of money in silver and copper, together with some pieces of new cloth. All these articles must be distributed to his guests at the close of the ceremony, which continues four days. He must also provide a new dish of copper or brass, and several earthen

vessels which have never served for any such purpose before, and must never be used again.

Every thing being in readiness, the ceremony of the first day begins. An invitation is given to all the Brahmans, their relations, and friends; to those who live in the place, and those who gave invitations on similar occasions of their own. In general, if any one were overlooked of those who have the right or the expectation of being invited, such a neglect would occasion disputes and animosities between the parties concerned, that would rarely terminate but with life.

The *Purohita* is called before all the others. He brings, on the day that is indicated, the belt itself, mango-leaves, the sacred herb *Darbha*\*, and an antelope's skin to sit upon; the skin of this animal, as well as that of the tyger, being deemed extremely pure and becoming, as no uncleanness arises from handling or sitting upon them.

When all the guests are assembled, the *Purohita* begins by invoking the god of the house, which must have been previously well purified and set in order according to the customs of the Hindus, by rubbing the floors and inside walls with cow-dung diluted with water, while the outside walls are adorned with broad perpendicular stripes in red earth.

The greater part of the ceremonies are performed under a *pandal* or alcove, previously set up for this purpose

\* The herb *Darbha* or *Darbee*, which is also called *Kusa*, is a sacred plant employed in most of the ceremonies of the Brahmans. It will be fully described hereafter. In the mean time it may be sufficient to remark the resemblance which the name of this plant, *Darbha*, the growth of which resembles the common grass or hay, bears to the Latin noun *Herba*.

in the yard, with great care and useless rites. It is supported on twelve pillars of wood, erected by the hands of the Brahmans themselves. For to them alone, and to the persons connected with the *Right Hand*, belongs the privilege of fixing twelve pillars; those of the Left Hand being limited to ten or to eleven at most.

While the Purohita is beginning to recite his mantram, they place the Puliyar or Vighneswara under the pandal. They are often contented, however, with setting up a cone made of mud or cow-dung to represent that deity, which, by the virtue of the Purohita's mantram, becomes a god. He then offers him a sacrifice of incense, of burning lamps, and akshata, or grains of rice tinged with red. This god *Puliyar* is of a disposition much addicted to wrath and contradiction; as his appellation *Vighneswara* imports, meaning *the God of Obstacles*. For this reason, in all public ceremonies, they begin with invoking him first, that he may not interpose any troublesome obstruction to their happy progress.

The married women (widows being excluded from all scenes of cheerfulness) being purified by bathing; some of them go to prepare the feast, whilst others return to the place of assembly, and having made the young Brahmachari sit down on a little stool, they rub him well with oil, then wash him, hang a new cloth to his belt, adorn him with several trinkets, and do not fail to put round his neck a string of coral beads, and bracelets of the same material on his arms. They forget not to stain the rim of his eyelids with black. This last is very commonly used by the Hindus, and is known to have been usual in former times with other nations.

The father and mother of the young man who is the subject of the ceremonies, make him sit down between

them in the midst of the assembly, and the women who are present, perform upon him the ceremony of the *Arati*, which was described in the last chapter. Then they join their voices in chanting praise to the gods, or good wishes for the young man.

This ceremony is followed by an offering which is made to the god of the house ; for every house has its own deity, male or female according to the fancy of the votary. The sacrifice consists in offering up a little boiled rice with a portion of different kinds of food prepared for the feast, and some betel. This offering is not thrown away, being afterwards eagerly devoured as a sacred morsel yielding happiness.

The principal ceremonies of the first day being thus concluded, all the people are made to sit down in several rows, the women being separated from the men in such a manner that they may not be looked at. The women of the house wait upon the guests, and, with their fingers (spoons and forks being entirely unknown amongst the Hindus) serve out the rice and other dishes prepared for the occasion. Each receives his portion on leaves of the banana or other trees, sewed together, which can only serve once. The entertainment being over, they distribute betel among the guests, who then withdraw for the day.

Next day, early in the morning, the father of the young Brahman, having purified himself by bathing, waits the proper time, and as soon as it comes, he goes, as he had done the day before, to invite his relations and friends to attend and accompany him to the ceremonies of the second day. He takes with him the *Akshatas* in a sort of cup, to present them to the persons he has invited. And indeed the offer of such presents to those

who assist at these ceremonies is a part of Hindu politeness; and the guests, as a proof of their taking it in good part, pick up a few of the red grains and stick one or two on their foreheads as an ornament.

The assembly being formed, the Brahmachari, with his father and mother, all ascend the pile of earth thrown up beneath the *pandal*, and seat themselves on three little stools. In the mean time the young man is bathed in the same manner as on the former day; they deck his brows with sandal and akshata, and gird his loins with a pure cloth, that is to say, a cloth not handled since it was washed\*. All these ceremonies are accompanied with the songs of the women, the same as on the preceding day. But on this occasion they do not use the ceremony of the *Arati*.

These introductory ceremonies being accomplished, the Purohita enters, carrying fire in an earthen vase, which he places upon the pile; and by means of the mantram, he makes this fire a god. The father of the Brahmachari then advances and makes the sacrifice of the *Homam* in honour of the fire; this is succeeded by nine similar sacrifices in honour of the nine planets. The Hindus reckon them nine, because, in addition to the seven which we admit with them, they add the increasing and waning moon as two distinct planets. These nine are considered as malevolent deities; and they are generally sent by the magicians on the errand of tormenting the objects of their resentment. On the pre-

\* It is not in this case only that pure cloths must be used by the Brahmans; for whenever they wash themselves they must employ no other; and it is for this reason that, after bathing, they always wash their towel to remove its impurity, and then wait till it is dry before they put it up.

sent occasion, as well as on many others, the design of the sacrifice of the Homam is to render them propitious.

The sacrifice of the Homam heretofore repeatedly mentioned, and to which we must again frequently return, is one of the most meritorious. The Brahmans alone have the privilege of offering it. Their method is to kindle a fire of the wood called *Ravi*, or some other kind consecrated to the same purpose, and then to cast on the fire some boiled rice bedaubed with melted butter. This sacrifice, so simple and easy, is nevertheless very famous and in very frequent use.

Those sacrifices made by means of fire, are followed by one made to the Fire itself, to which as a deity they offer incense, with burning lamps and certain viands. The fire thus consecrated is afterwards carried into a particular apartment of the house, and kept up day and night with great care until the ceremony is ended. It would be considered a very inauspicious event, if, for want of attention or by any accident, it should happen to go out\*.

The following ceremony conducted by the women will not be thought the least ridiculous of the festival. Having procured a large copper vessel, well whitened over with lime, they go with it to draw water, accompanied with instruments of music. Having filled the vessel with water, they place in it perpendicularly some leaves of mango, and fasten a new cloth round the whole, made yellow with saffron water. On the neck

\* All the sacrifices to fire or made by means of fire, indicate a species of idolatry very striking, but by no means peculiar to the Hindus. It is well known to what a pitch the Chaldeans, Persians, and some other ancient nations carried their superstition in this particular.

of the vessel, which is narrow, they put a cocoa nut stained with the same colour as the cloth. In this trim they carry it into the interior of the house, and set it on the floor upon a little heap of rice. There it is still farther ornamented with women's trinkets; after which the necessary ceremonies are performed to invite the god, and to fix him there. This perhaps is not the same as the god of the house; or rather it is the apotheosis of the vessel itself that is made in this case, for it actually becomes a divinity, receiving offerings of incense, flowers, betel, and other articles used in the sacrifices of the Brahmans. Upon this occasion only, women act and perform the deification; and it appears that the divinity which is resident in the vessel is female. But, however this may be, the mother of the Brahmachari, taking up in her hands this new divinity, goes out of the house, accompanied by the other Brahman women, visits the festival, preceded by musical instruments, and makes the circuit of the village, walking under a sort of canopy which is supported over her head. Upon returning home she sets the *vessel God*, which she has in her hands, where it was formerly stationed under the *pandal*; and with the assistance of some of the other women, she fixes, in honour of the god, two new cloths on the pillars of the alcove near which it is placed.

The following ceremony is also, at least in a great measure, performed by women. They go in search of mould from a nest of *karias*, which are a species of white ants very common in India and very troublesome. With this they fill five small earthen pots, in which they sow nine sorts of grain, which they moisten with milk and water. When they have finished, the Brahmans approach, and by the power of their mantras they con-

vert the five earthen pots into as many gods. After offering to these new divinities the accustomed sacrifice of incense, rice, and betel, they are placed upon a little dish and set down under the pandal, near the female god of whom we have just spoken. When they are put by her side, the whole party join in a profound inclination of the body in sign of adoration. They make another to the gods of their ancestors, whom they invoke to be present at the feast. Then turning to the young man who is the object of the whole, they tie a piece of bastard saffron to his arm with a yellow cord. The barber once more shaves his head; he is bathed, his brows are decorated with sandal leaves, and his loins are girt with a *pure* cloth.

The ceremony is immediately succeeded by the *feast of the young men*, particularly provided for the young Brahmans who had been previously invited to partake of it with the new candidate.

This repast is followed by a ceremony more imposing than the preceding. The father of the new Brahman having made the company retire to some distance, whilst he and his son are concealed behind a curtain, sits down upon the ground, with his face turned towards the west, and making his son sit down beside him with his face towards the east, he whispers a deep secret in his ear out of the mantras, and gives him other instructions analogous to his present situation. The whole is in a style which probably is little comprehended by the listener. Among other precepts I am informed, the father, on one occasion, delivered the following: "Be mindful, my son, that there is one God only, the master, sovereign and origin of all things. Him ought every Brahman, in secret, to adore. But remember also that this

“is one of the truths that must never be revealed to the vulgar herd. If thou dost reveal it, great evil will befall thee.”

In the evening, at the time when the lamps are lighted, the Brahmachari being made to take his seat in the alcove under the branches, the women, with songs, go in quest of the consecrated fire we have mentioned, which it was a sacred duty to keep alive, and place it close by the youth. The Purohita, drawing near, recites some mantras over the fire; after which the young Brahman makes, for the first time, the sacrifice of the *Homam*, which has been already described; and this he has acquired the right to do by the distinction of the Cord. While he is employed in the sacrifice the women continue their singing, inharmonious as it is; and the instruments make the air resound with sharp and discordant notes. The *Homam* is followed by a sacrifice to the holy fire which was recently brought by the women; after which they take it back to its original station. They quickly return, and once more perform the ceremony of the *Arati* to the newly-initiated disciple. After this they receive betel, as well as the other guests. And thus conclude the ceremonies of the second day.

When all is ended, the father of the Brahmachari distributes amongst the assistants what remains of the money which he destined for the charges of the feast. He orders the pieces of cloth which were provided to be brought in, and he distributes them also. Those that are wealthy give cloth of higher price, and some add the present of trinkets or a cow. The Brahmans, always skilful in the art of adulation, extol such liberal donors, idolize their generosity, and assign them a place already with Para-Brahma as the reward of their kindness to

the Brahmans. Those to whom such flatteries are directed listen to them with the utmost complaisance, and think them ample remuneration for the extravagant expences which their folly has occasioned.

Besides the Brahmans (as we have formerly mentioned) there are some other Hindu casts who wear the Dandiam or Yajnopavitam, that is to say, the triple cord: and in particular the Jainas, who will be mentioned afterwards. The *Kshatriya* or Rajas, the *Vaisya* or Merchants, and, amongst the Sudras, the five casts of artisans in wood, stone, and metals, have also the right to wear this badge: by which means it ceases to be a distinction and occasions ambiguity. The cast of the Rajas receive the cord from the hand of a Purohita Brahman; but he makes no other ceremony at its reception than the sacrifice of the *Homan*. After being invested he must give a great entertainment to all the Brahmans who have honoured the ceremony with their company, and make them presents. Before he departs, he presents himself before the assembly and makes the prostration of the eight members, whether for the purpose of thanking the Brahmans, of whom it is composed, for the honour they had conferred upon him in giving him the cord, or whether as a mark of his adoration of those gods of the earth. This ceremony, however, does not bear the name of *Upanayana*, because the Rajas do not acquire through it the right of learning all the sciences. They have not, for example, that of perusing the Vedas.

It is thus at the present time, that it is conferred on the five casts of artisans. But it is not by the hands of a Brahman that they receive it, because, like the Jainas, they will not admit them to be superior to themselves. It is the Guru of their own cast that confers it.

## CHAP. II.

*Of the Conduct expected from the Brahmachari, and the Rights he acquires by receiving the Cord.*

THE condition of Brahmachari continues from the *Upanayana* or ceremony of the Cord to the time of Marriage, which is about the age of sixteen. This is not too early a time to marry, because the spouse is a child of four or five years old. This custom of marrying the girls so soon, and indeed as early as possible, though common to all the casts, is most strictly observed by the Brahmans; to such a degree even, that a marriageable girl would scarcely find a husband among them. In this cast, there is often the most disgusting inequality of age between the parties; for it is not at all uncommon to see old widowers of sixty or seventy remarrying with children of six or seven years of age, and giving a preference to them over adult and really marriageable women, whom they will not endure to hear mentioned, although these poor victims of the prejudices of their cast may have uniformly led an irreproachable life. Whence can such an abuse have arisen? The husband, of course, generally dies long before the wife, and frequently even before she has attained the age at which the real objects of marriage can have begun. She finds herself a widow when she has but just grown into a woman; and, according to the customs of her cast, she cannot marry

again. Hence disorders arise which tend to the dishonour of all the tribe. The evil is striking, but the idea of curing it, by allowing young widows to remarry, never enters the mind of any Brahman. In every circumstance that can occur, they are willing to support the utmost inconvenience rather than abolish or even alter the most ridiculous of their absurd prejudices.

The proper business of the young Brahman, before marriage, is held to be a course of study, of rigorous submission and conformity to the severe discipline of all the rules of the cast. This is the meaning of his appellation of Bramachari. It enjoins ready obedience to the orders of his superiors, the utmost deference to his father and mother. But as far as relates to his equals, and to real politeness towards the rest of the world, the sequel of our enquiries will shew what regard is paid to those rules of conduct, when the indolence of parents drops the rein which should keep their children in order.

The young Brahman is to commence by learning to read and write. He is then taught the Vedas and the Mantas, which he gets by heart. He then advances to other sciences according to the degree of his docility and quickness of capacity. If he has the means of paying teachers, the study of the various idioms of India, and above all the *Hinduvi*, at least in the southern provinces, occupies the greater part of his leisure. During this immature period, he is not to use betel, nor put flowers in his hair, nor ornament his body or forehead with sandal. Neither must he look at himself in a mirror. He must bathe daily, and offer the sacrifice of the Homam twice a day. In short, his whole attention must be oc-

cupied in forming himself upon the true model of the institutions of his cast.

It is not easy for children to live under such restraint ; and accordingly very few are found who follow all that is prescribed to them. Nothing is more common, for example, than to see them with their foreheads decorated with sandal, and their mouths full of betel. And it is not likely that other rules, which are prescribed on the points of form, should be better observed.

Although a young Brahman, from being incapable of affording the expences necessary, or from whatever other cause, has not been able to enter into the state of matrimony at the time prescribed, they no longer treat him as a Brahmachari, after attaining the age of eighteen or twenty : neither does he acquire the name of *Grihastha*. But, whatever be his age or condition, as soon as he has obtained the Cord, he is intitled to the six privileges of the cast, of which the Hindu books so often speak. These six privileges are as follows.

To read, and to get read, the Vedas ; to make, and to cause to be made, the sacrifice of the Yajna ; and, lastly, to receive alms and to give presents to the Brahmans. The Sudras have only the last of these privileges, namely, that of giving alms or presents to the Brahmans, who affect to confer an honour by receiving them at their hands. I shall speak but briefly upon these privileges.

The right to read and learn the Vedas is so exclusively appropriated to them, that the slightest penalty which a Brahman would incur by rashly or imprudently lending these sacred books, or communicating their contents to persons of a different cast, would be, as we have elsewhere mentioned, to be ignominiously driven from his cast, without any hope of being admitted again. It

does not follow from this, that these books contain any thing important or rational. In fact, they have nothing but their antiquity to recommend them. As to any thing farther, they include all the absurdities of Hindu paganism, not only such as it has originally been, but also the pitiful details of fables which are at present current in the country, relating to the fantastical austerities of the Hindu hermits, to the metamorphoses of Vishnu, or the abominations of the Lingam. I could easily prove this assertion by many passages extracted from these books if my limits allowed me. The fourth of them called *Atharvana-veda*, is the most dangerous of all for a people so entirely sunk in superstition, because it teaches the art of Magic, or the method of injuring men by the use of witchcraft and incantation.

It is from these books that the Brahmans have filched their principal *Mantras*, so famous and so beneficial to them ; and it is for that reason, no doubt, that they hold them so precious. But whatever may have been affirmed, we are intitled to conclude, that, however great the antiquity of the Vedas may be, they are posterior to the present religion of the Hindus, in which we find the whole details, even to the institution itself of the Brahmans.

Those who profess the study of science must learn these books by heart. This qualification gains for its possessors the name of *Vaidika*. But, in devoting themselves to this study, they cannot expect to reap any benefit in point of instruction ; because the language in which they are composed is so ancient, and the errors which have crept in by the carelessness of copiers are so multiplied in the manuscripts that still remain, that they are nearly unintelligible to the Brahmans themselves,

who are considered to be most conversant in that branch. We must, however, except some interpolations, more recent and more intelligible, which were foisted into these books by the penitent Vyasa, as it is said, with the design of explaining the text, and giving the true sense ; but they have been awkwardly blended with the text itself.

The greater part of the Brahmans, who devote themselves to this study, understand neither the one nor the other, because they have not yet attained a sufficient acquaintance with the *Sanscrit*, the parent language of India, in which the books are written. Their utmost proficiency has been to read it tolerably, by which they are enabled to learn it mechanically and get it by rote, without understanding its meaning. They may be compared to the peasantry in the Catholic countries of Europe, who learn to read Latin that they may be able to chaunt the Psalms on Sundays at church.

In some parts, however, Brahmans are to be met with, who are well versed in this mother tongue, although they are in no great number. There are some of them even who are so disinterested as to teach the Vedas gratuitously to their disciples. But the greater number are too closely attached to their private interests, or too poor to imitate them. It does very well for a wealthy Brahman to be at such an expence, and to encourage others in the same studies by rewards. Accordingly, some of them act upon this plan, and fancy they are performing meritorious works of charity. They have paid the compliment to the cast of Rajas, to associate them with themselves in the right of having the Vedas read to them ; that is to say, in paying the masters who teach them ; and I am well persuaded they would not refuse the same

favour to any other person that would contribute to so good a work, even were it a Sudra.

It is not to be understood, however, that there is any great degree of emulation among them in regard to this sort of study. Poverty prevents the greater number from engaging in it; and the apathy and indolence so characteristic of all Hindus keep back the rest from a study sufficiently repulsive in itself.

The third and fourth privilege of the Brahmans consists in making the sacrifice of the Yajna and in causing it be made. But, as I propose to detail the principal circumstances in this famous sacrifice when I treat of the Vanaprastha Brahmans, I will omit them here.

It appears that the Yajna as well as the Homam, of which we have already spoken, is to be understood as being a sacrifice made to the *fire* already consecrated by the Mantram, and into which the Brahman to whom alone it belongs to make it, casts the boiled rice de-daubed with melted butter. By the word *Yajna* is understood, in a more extended sense, all the sacrifices accompanied by Mantram.

The fifth privilege of the Brahmans is that of giving alms and presents; which it may be supposed they indulge in less willingly than in the sixth, which consists in the right of receiving them. But it must be allowed that there are a great number of people of this cast who practise hospitality and exercise other works of charity. Yet, as in the eyes of all the members of this sect, every other man is an object of indifference and even of contempt, we may be allowed to lay it down as a general remark, that generosity and compassion are virtues not natural to the Brahmans.

Among the presents which they permit to be made them, there are some which they particularly approve. These are gifts of gold, or in land; gifts of clothing, of grain, and of cows. Milk being their chief article of food, the last sort of gift is one of the most agreeable. Donations of land are extremely common in many places, from the generosity of the princes, who exempt them from the tribute paid by other landholders. These lands descend, with their immunities, from generation to generation. They do not themselves cultivate them, unless poverty compels them, but they keep farmers under them who take the management, for which they receive one half of the produce for their pains. The villages which are thus exempted from all taxation, and inhabited by Brahmans are called by the name of *Agram* or *Agravaram*; an expression composed of two words which signify a *portion of ground*. There are many such in the various provinces of the peninsula.

Besides receiving the revenue of these lands, the Brahmans discharge the various functions of worship in the greater part of the temples. They engross the principal part of the income of the lands assigned to defray their expenses, as well as the offerings made by the Hindus to the idols. These two last sources of wealth are very abundant.

There is also a work of charity which greatly prevails in this country, which consists in giving them great entertainments, which are often followed with presents of money or cloth. But we shall leave this source of their income till we come to treat of the public festivals called *Samaradahnam*.

The Brahmans, in asking and receiving alms or donations, seem to proceed upon their right. They have no

shame in taking or asking for what they are in want of. When they ask, they do it boldly, but not with insolence, as the Moorish fakirs and the Vishnuvite mendicants do. Nor do they, like the latter, the *Dasaru* or *Andhras*, make a trade of begging by asking alms from door to door.

But if you will not give to the Brahmans, you must not amuse them with vain promises. This, they say, would be a heinous sin, and would assuredly draw down a severe chastisement upon him who should attempt it. One of their authors proves this by the following illustration.

“Karta! Karta!” screamed an ape, one day, when he saw a fox feeding on a rotten carcass: “thou must, in a former life, have committed some dreadful crime, to be doomed to a new state in which thou feedest on such garbage.” “Alas!” replied the fox, “I am not punished worse than I deserve. I was once a man, and I then promised something to a Brahman, which I never gave him. That is the true cause of my being regenerated in this shape. Some good works which I did have obtained for me the indulgence of remembering what I was in my former state, and the cause for which I have been degraded into this.” The silly Hindu gives such a story his implicit faith; and the wily Brahman knows well how to profit by his credulity.

Another privilege which they very generally enjoy is an exemption from the taxes imposed on houses. They are also free from the tolls levied upon goods in the districts which are subject to the princes. And they are rarely subjected to any corporal punishment, however atrocious their offences may be.

The murder of a Brahman for any cause whatever, is

one of the five great crimes acknowledged by the Hindus, which would without doubt draw down some signal and awful calamity over the whole land where it should be committed.

It is thought quite sufficient to condemn a Brahman to restitution and heavy fines, when he happens to be guilty of malversation in office and embezzles the public money ; which frequently occurs.

However, under the dominion of the Europeans and Mahometans, where their sacred and inviolable character is not so much respected, they must undergo, like other Hindus, the punishments due to their crimes. The Moors sometimes have them cudgelled to death, unless they redeem themselves at a large price in money, of which their oppressors are still more covetous than of blood. But the Brahmans are so attached to their wealth, or rather they are so well acquainted with the character and disposition of those who desire to rob them of it, and know so well that if they once were seen to yield to any torture in the smallest degree they would never be free from it, while any property remained to them ; that they prefer to suffer patiently whatever can be inflicted rather than submit to the smallest exactions.

I know from good authority that the last Musalman prince who reigned in the Mysore, being very desirous to seize upon the wealth which certain Brahmans of his country possessed, a measure which was very customary with him wherever he suspected a man to be rich ; those men set all his cruelty at defiance for the space of eighteen months, in which time he was unable to extract any thing from them. Yet during that whole period he had employed threats, imprisonment, chains, and every kind of bodily punishment which the agents of his

cruelty were able to invent. But all was unavailing. They bore all those savage trials with the most heroic firmness. At length, their persecutors were obliged to yield, and to let them go, with the shame of having tortured men for no cause, and without the gain of one farthing, although it was afterwards ascertained that they had considerable wealth.

When the Brahmans find themselves involved in troubles like these, there is no falsehood or perjury which they will not employ for the purpose of extricating themselves. Nor is this to be wondered at, since they are not ashamed to declare openly that untruth and false swearing are virtuous and meritorious deeds when they tend to their own advantage. When such horrible morality is taught by the theologians of India, is it to be wondered at that falsehood should be so predominant among the people?

## CHAP. III.

*Of the exactness with which a young Brahman must shun External Defilement, and the different practices in this respect.*

ALL Hindus, in general, pay the most scrupulous attention and care to avoid whatever can, in their imagination, defile their person or apparel. It is more than probable that the Brahmans have communicated to them these habits, being themselves more deeply tinctured with them than the Hindus belonging to other casts. In their conduct and the whole intercourse of life, the Brahmans have nothing so much at heart as Cleanliness; and as it is this quality, influencing their whole manners, that gives them in a great measure the superiority which they assert over the other tribes, I shall treat of it fully in this chapter; more especially as it is one of the principal objects of a Brahmachari to cultivate at an early age those habits which in their estimation form a part of good education.

A human dead body inspires horror in every country. It cannot be touched but with the greatest repugnance; and it excites some feeling of uncleanness afterwards. But the Hindus feel this sensation if they have but assisted at a funeral. When the ceremony is over they instantly immerse themselves in water, and no person can return home from such a duty until he be purified in

that manner from the uncleanness which he is thus supposed to have contracted. Even the news of the death of a relation, though at a hundred leagues distance, has the same effect; and a person hearing such tidings would be considered impure by all around him until he had bathed; although it is the near relations only and not strangers that would be so contaminated\*.

Agreeably to the same feeling, a Hindu is no sooner dead than they hasten to inter the body; and until it is carried away, neither those in the house nor any in the neighbourhood can either eat or drink or go on with their occupations. I have seen the ceremonies at a temple where many were assisting, stopped suddenly and suspended until a corpse in the same street should be buried.

It is not thought sufficient to perfume merely the apartment in which a person has died. A Purohita Brahman must necessarily purify the house and remove the stain by means of the Mantram and his holy water; and until this is accomplished no person must enter.

Child-birth and periodical changes render a woman unclean. For a month after lying-in she must touch none of the earthen vessels of the house nor the clothes of any one; far less their persons. When the period expires, she washes herself by plunging into the river, if there be one near; or more commonly by having water poured over her body and head.

To efface the periodical stain, they wash themselves

\* This sort of defilement, occasioned by the death of any one, was recognized among the Israelites. Numbers, ix. 6, 7, and 10. and xix. 11 and 18. Their manner of purifying themselves from the stain occasioned by a dead body was very nearly the same as among the Hindus.

in the same manner on the third day, when they return to their home, from which they were excluded for the three days of their uncleanness. Houses of moderate convenience have places separate and distinct, for their reception during that period; but the poor, who have not this advantage, turn their women into the street, to a little corner set apart for that purpose, where they stay the time allotted, without communication with any one.

In the two cases we have mentioned, it would by no means be sufficient to wash in plain water the clothing which the woman then wore; but it is necessary to send it to the bleacher to be scoured. Even when brought home from this last operation, the Brahmans are not satisfied till they have again passed it through water. This last practice, which they always follow even when they provide themselves with *new* clothes, arises from the consideration that the bleacher and weaver being Sudras, will necessarily have affected them with a stain which the use of water is necessary to remove.

The wives of the sect of Siva, under like circumstances, have a practice quite peculiar to themselves, and on that account deserving notice; for they think they sufficiently efface a periodical uncleanness by rubbing their foreheads with ashes; after which easy ceremony they are held to be pure. They call it *Bhashmasnanam* or the bath of ashes. Thus it has happened that, in the one party, frivolous and excessive attentions have degenerated into superstition; and in the other, superstition has occasioned the neglect of a practice perhaps necessary in a hot climate.

It is not, as many authors seem to believe, a prejudice quite confined to the Hindus, to consider an earthen vessel as much more susceptible of pollution than one of

copper or any other metal. The latter may be purified merely by washing it, while the former becomes quite unserviceable and must be broken in pieces. The same rule is prescribed to the Israelites in Leviticus, ii. 32, 33. Among the Hindus, while the earthen vessels are new, and in the hands of the vender, any person may handle them; but from the moment they have been put in water, they can serve the person only who has employed them, or those with whom he can eat according to the rules of his cast. The Brahmans carry their nicety and delicacy on this point so far as not to permit Sudras and other strangers to enter their kitchen, or to have any other means of seeing their earthen vessels. A look from them would defile them, and make it necessary to break them. This custom, I imagine, may proceed from the earthen vessels in India being unglazed, which leaves them with open pores, and may lead to the conclusion that they easily attract what is unclean.

It is the same with clothes as with dishes; some being susceptible of being soiled, and others not. Of the latter kind are stuffs made of silk, and clothes of certain vegetable substances. It was on this account that all the ancient Brahmans of the solitary order, were always clothed with the last mentioned fabrics, and many of the Brahmans of the present time clothe themselves in the former, in many cases, particularly at their meals. Some physicians of their cast will not feel the pulse of a sick Sudra but through a shred of silk to prevent immediate contact with his skin. With regard to cotton, it is unfortunately subject to contract impurity from the touch of persons of an inferior cast, and particularly by that of Pariahs or Europeans. A Brahman who piques himself on his delicacy, shews, in a case of this kind, a thousand

squeamish tricks, and in the intercourse of life is obliged to move under perpetual constraint. Finding it utterly impossible, in towns and other frequented places, to avoid an accidental contact with people of all degrees, the very delicate Brahmans shun such places and retire into the villages. But those amongst them in whom self-interest predominates over the desire of acquiring the fame of a zealous observance of their rules, relax a little in this observance, and get off by shifting their clothes as soon as they get home. They tumble what they take off into the water, and thus the whole uncleanness is got rid of.

Leather and every kind of skin, except those of the tyger and the antelope, are held to be very impure. They must never touch with their hands the pantoufles and sandals which they wear on their feet. A person who rides on horseback must have some stuff to cover the saddle, the bridle, and stirrup leathers, to avoid all contact with skin. The most disagreeable of all European fashions in their eyes is that of boots and gloves; and they hold a man to be extremely unrefined who does not shrink to touch the slough of a carcase.

A Brahman who is particular in his delicacy must attend also to what he treads upon. It would cost him a washing if he should touch a bone with his foot, or a broken pot, a bit of rag, or a leaf from which one had been eating. He must likewise be careful where he sits down. Some devotees always carry their seat with them, that is, a tyger or an antelope's skin, which are always held pure. Some are contented with a mat: the rich take a carpet; but one may even squat on the ground without defilement, provided it be newly rubbed over with cow-dung. This last specific is also

used as a daily purification of the Hindu houses from the defilement occasioned by comers and goers. When thus applied, diluted with water, it has the farther advantage of destroying the insects which would otherwise annoy them.

Their mode of eating their meals also requires much circumspection and gravity. However numerous the company may be, it would be unpolite to address conversation to any person during dinner. They eat in silence, and no conversation begins till they have ended the repast and washed their hands and mouths. The left hand, on this occasion, as we noticed when speaking of the Grihastha Brahmans, must not be employed, unless to hold the vessel of water from which they drink. This last operation is performed not by applying the vessel to the lips, but by pouring the water from on high into the mouth. This is the Hindu practice universally; and it would be considered a piece of gross impropriety to drink as we do by touching the vessel with our lips. In eating, great care must be taken that nothing drops upon the plate, or on the leaf when one is eating apart. If a single grain of rice should fall, his meal would be at an end; else he must cast away the plate so defiled, and bring another, with a fresh supply of food, in its place.

The reason of this extreme fastidiousness is founded on the Hindu notion that the saliva is the most filthy and impure secretion that proceeds from the body, and consequently held in the utmost horror. It is therefore never permitted to any one to spit within doors. If he has occasion, he must go out.

The fragments of the repast are given neither to the domestics nor to the poor, (unless they be Pariahs, who

accommodate themselves to any thing,) but are cast to the crows or dogs. The poor are served with alms of boiled rice in a proper state, untouched by any one. But they who follow the usages of their cast, and who must not eat with those who give them the alms, receive it raw ; and it is in this state only that Brahmans will take it from persons of another cast.

They rarely eat their food from plates ; and when they do so, it is only at home. It would be indecorous to use them elsewhere in public. The rice and other articles are served on bits of Banana leaf or some other leaves sewed very neatly together. They serve but once, and when they have done eating they take them to a distant place and throw them away. To offer a Brahman any thing to eat on a metal or porcelain plate which others had used, however well it may have been washed, would be considered as the grossest affront.

With the same feeling, they will use neither spoon nor fork when they eat ; and they are astonished how any one, after having once applied them to their mouths and infected them with saliva, should venture to repeat it a second time. When they eat any thing dry, they throw it into their mouth, so as that the fingers may not approach the lips.

A European once gave a letter of introduction to a Brahman who had come from a great distance to receive it ; and having sealed it with a wafer, which he moistened by putting it on his tongue, the Brahman who observed this, would not touch the letter, and chose rather to forego any advantage he could derive from the recommendation than to carry a thing so polluted.

The touch of most animals, particularly that of a dog, is a stain to the person of a Brahman. It is amusing to

see the methods they take to shun the touch of one, when they see it approaching. If the dog should actually come in contact with them, they would be obliged instantly to plunge into the water, and wash all their clothes, in order to get free of such a stain.

The dog, nevertheless, is one of the divinities that the Hindus pay honour to, under the name of *Vahira* or *Bhairava*; and the image of it may be seen in several of their temples.

There are a thousand other ways by which a Brahman may receive an outward stain; but what we have already stated is sufficient to shew their feelings in that particular. It is principally for the purpose of purification from all such uncleanness that the bath is so common amongst them. There are certain rivers and ponds which are esteemed to have a particular virtue of this kind, and all the Brahmans of the neighbourhood repair thither regularly every day to bathe. Those who, by residing too far from such privileged places, are out of the reach of such an advantage, must content themselves with the tank or well of their own village. In many parts, the other casts are not admitted either to bathe or draw water from the places set apart for the ablutions of the Brahmans. If they should trespass, their audacity would bring down a prosecution upon them. But, in places where they are not absolute masters, they are obliged to be somewhat more forbearing.

A Brahman rarely passes a day without bathing; and such as desire to attract the particular regard and esteem of the public, by the strict observance of their customs, practise it three times every day.

It is the general practice of the Indians to rub their head and body well with oil before they bathe; and they

remove the grease by applying the juice of certain plants, and then having warm water poured over all their body. This last ceremony is never omitted with regard to the dead, before they are taken to the grave or the pile; and it belongs to the nearest relations to perform it.

## CHAP. IV.

*Of the Interior Defilement of the Body ; of the Abstinence of the Brahmans, and the particular Horror of the Hindus for the Flesh of the Cow.*

BESIDES the external pollution which goes no deeper than the skin, the Brahmans and the greater part of the Hindus admit another sort which penetrates into the body, and exists there until it is removed by some remedy adequate to that effect. It is difficult to dispute that there is some foundation for their notions on this subject of inward uncleanness. The excessive perspiration of some, and the sort of diseases which many others are affected with, appear distinctly to shew that, from some cause inherent in warm climates, or in the nature of the bodies of those that inhabit them, the blood of most of them is impure. The Brahmans, setting out upon this principle, have restricted themselves to certain practices by which they pretend that the body is defended from impurities, many of which are caught by infection. The attention to be paid to this consideration is therefore not without foundation, although they have strayed beyond it in an infinite number of silly observances which common sense derides.

Water is the ordinary drink of the Brahmans. It must be drawn and carried with care, and by none but persons of the cast. To drink what had been drawn or

carried by Sudras would be considered an extraordinary offence, and would cause an internal taint, requiring much time and many ceremonies to purge. Yet in many cases the Brahmans and Sudras are obliged to draw their water from the same well. They must be careful, however, that the pitcher of the one does not touch that of the other; for if they should come into contact, the Brahman would infallibly be obliged to break his, if an earthen one, or if made of metal, to have it well scoured with sand and water. To avoid this inconvenience, the Brahmans, wherever they are supported, interdict the Sudras from approaching their wells. This prohibition is still more strongly enforced on the Pariahs, who, when hard pressed for water, are seen bringing their pitchers half way and entreating the Sudras to give them a supply. Where the Mahometans bear sway, indeed, it is common to see Brahman, Sudra, and Pariah all drawing from the same well, regardless of all distinctions. Nor are they much better observed in some European provinces, though I myself can bear witness to an insurrection occasioned by a Pariah woman who irregularly ventured to draw water at the common well.

There is a kind of beverage very prevalent and in great request in India, which is a preparation of curds beat down in water. It is thought to be a wholesome and refreshing drink even although the makers and vendors are Sudras, and that it is often no better than water with a slight dash of white. The Brahmans drink it greedily, and when reproached for swallowing, without scruple, water brought by Sudras, they assert in their vindication that the mixture of curd, the product of the cow, purifies the whole. Thus, where their convenience

is concerned, they are at no loss to discover a justification.

But they have a great aversion to a liquor called *Callu* in Tamul, which is drawn by incision from the cocoa, palm, and some other species of trees. It is sweet and refreshing when newly extracted from the tree, but when drunk to excess it inebriates. By distillation, it is converted into a sort of brandy, which is no less prohibited by the Brahmans and all other good casts than the *Callu* itself. All intoxicating liquors occasion internal uncleanness, which requires a great number of ceremonies to efface.

Drunkenness is in general very much detested among the Hindus. A notorious drunkard cannot escape with a gentler punishment than the degrading infamy of being expelled from his cast. There are scarcely any but the vile Pariahs who drink such liquors openly; and their conduct in this only adds to the universal contempt in which they are held. Some Brahmans, however, it must be confessed, especially in the European establishments, exceed a little on this score; but they take all possible precautions to keep secret so enormous a breach of their customs.

The air one breathes may also communicate inward uncleanness in certain cases. This would decidedly happen if some whiffs of smoke should reach a Brahman from a funeral pile where a body is consuming.

In some districts the Pariahs are obliged to make a long circuit when they perceive any Brahmans in the way, that their breath may not infect them or even their shadow fall upon them as they pass. The Sudras are obliged to keep at a certain distance when they speak to them, and even then they are bound in good manners

to hold their hands over their mouths to prevent their breath from being offensive.

The horror of a Pariah, which has been inspired into them from their infancy, is so great, and the defilement from touching them is so much dreaded, that an instance seldom occurs of youthful passion impelling a Brahman to an intercourse with women of that vile cast. It is to be wished, for the honour of the Sudras, that as much could be said for them.

But the most striking example of the pains taken by the Brahmans to avoid internal defilement, is the abstinence from meat, which they all profess. This is to be understood not as relating to all living creatures merely, but to whatever has had the animating principle, such as eggs of all kinds, from which they are as much restricted as from flesh. They have also retrenched from their vegetable food, which is the great fund of their subsistence, all roots which form a head or bulb in the ground, such as onions; and those also which assume the same shape above ground, like mushrooms and some others. Or, are we to suppose, that they had discovered something unwholesome in the one species, and proscribed the other on account of its fetid smell? This I cannot decide, all the information I have ever obtained from those amongst them whom I have consulted on the reasons of their abstinence from them, being, that it is customary to avoid such articles, together with all those that have had the germ of the living principle. This is what is called in India, *to eat becomingly*. Such as use the prohibited articles cannot boast of their bodies being pure, according to the estimate of the Brahmans. I am aware that, amongst these also, some secret infractions of the rule have occurred; but the secrecy with which

it is violated proves that it is generally observed ; and it may be fairly assumed that the great body of the Brahmans rigidly abstain from all sorts of animal food, as well as from whatever has had the principle of vitality.

The history of the world furnishes no example of abstinence so long persisted in as in the case of the Brahmans, and so religiously and universally observed. This practice, followed by the noblest part of a great nation, by people living in this manner with their wives and children, without ever forming a thought of departing from it in the most grievous diseases, has probably endured amongst them several thousands of years, affording in my judgment a convincing proof of their great antiquity. I conceive it to be the continuation of the life which men led before the flood ; in those times when the juices of the earth had not yet suffered any change, and the nourishing herbs and succulent fruits yielded all the nourishment that was required. Men, in that era, even after their corruption, still gave proofs of some remains of their pristine innocence and of the gentleness of their original nature, by the horror which they so long kept up at the shedding of blood. ~ And, in all probability, it was the forbearance from every living thing, and the simple use of the vegetable productions, that contributed in part to the long life of the primitive patriarchs. It was not till after the flood, that men, grown more cruel and voracious, or perhaps no longer finding in the fruits of the earth the same nourishing properties they had formerly possessed, fell into the habit of shedding blood, committing murder, and covering their tables with dead carcasses.

The Brahmans, or those rather from whom they derive their origin, separating in good time from the rest

of the original descendants of Noah, before the practice of eating flesh had become common, adhered to the first practice of their fathers, and transmitted to their posterity that dread of the effusion of blood which was common to all men before the deluge, and which the Brahmans alone have kept up unaltered even to our times. Is it *their* nature that has degenerated, or is it *ours*?

So far from our having any reason to believe that this rigorous abstinence of the Brahmans has declined or is falling into disuse, we see that, even amongst the Sudras, the better classes follow the same custom; and the observance of it raises them in the estimation of the public. It is said of persons, when one intends to do them honour, that they are *people who abstain from meat*; and those who aspire through this practice, to inward purity, are also remarked to become more attentive to their exterior cleanliness by more frequently bathing and wearing more decent attire.

This abstinence, universal among the Brahmans, and which has for its constituent principle interior purity, is still maintained, as we have already remarked, by those Hindus who are particularly addicted to the worship of Siva. No person who wears the Lingam must eat any thing that has had vitality. But as, with all this care about inward purity, the Lingamites are remarked for external slovenliness, they lose on one side what they gain on the other, and their abstinence does not raise them above the other Hindus who eat meat without scruple. It is a particular reproach to the Lingamites that they allow their women to remain within their houses and to go about their ordinary affairs at the time of periodical uncleanness; that they do not compel them to wash when it is over; and even that they do not enforce

proper precautions when they are in child-bed, which in warm climates are no less conducive to health than to purity.

The practice of *eating as is becoming*, as the Hindus express it, by abstaining from whatever has had life, imparts to those who observe it a sensibility of smell by which they can distinguish the fetid odour of persons who have ate flesh four-and-twenty hours before. This is a fact which I have often witnessed, and which may probably be owing in part to the great perspiration which the heat of the climate produces.

In some casts, they make a curious distinction with regard to abstinence from animal food, by permitting it to the men and denying it to the women.

It is owing in a great measure to the notion of considering as impure those who eat of animal food, that the separation between the *Pariahs* and the other casts has become so extremely wide. They will eat not only animals killed on purpose, but also such as die naturally. Oxen and buffaloes which perish from old age or disease belong to them of right, and they carry home and greedily devour the tainted carrion which they find on the highways and in the fields.

To kill an ox or a cow is considered by the Hindus as an inexpiable crime, and to eat their flesh as a taint that can never be effaced. The disgust which they all have for such a species of food is so great that the mere proposal of such a thing would excite many to sickness; and there is absolutely no instance of a native of any cast, except the Pariahs, who has ever shewn the desire to taste it.

This rigorous prohibition to kill cows, oxen, and buffaloes, and to feed on their flesh, may proceed in a great

degree from superstition, on the idea that all these animals, particularly the cow, are divinities. I believe, however, that its true origin is a motive more powerful in its influence upon the human mind than any that flow from religion itself, I mean interest. The early legislators well knew the extreme value of those animals, in a country where every thing they yielded, even to the dung, serves for the use of man; where there is no other resource for the labours of agriculture, for the carriage of goods and other merchandize from one place to another, and for many other services indispensable to civilized life. But, on the other hand, what would become of the poor inhabitants, who feed only on insipid vegetables, if they were deprived of the rich and wholesome nourishment derived from the teats of the cow? What then might happen if the number of these animals, in other respects so difficult to keep up in the country, should be daily diminished by putting their lives at the discretion of a race which, in all its actions, conducts itself uniformly without reflection, and never thinks of any thing beyond its immediate wants and desires; a people regardless of any evils to which they may be subject to-morrow by the abuse of what they enjoyed to-day?

Another motive not less powerful than those we have mentioned, and which no doubt has also contributed to prescribe this species of food, is the desire of preserving health. It is certain that beef is an aliment too rich and heavy in warm climates, especially for the feeble stomachs of the natives. The custom of eating it would speedily have ruined their health. I know Europeans who, having been accustomed to make it the chief part of their food when in Europe, abstained from it wholly when

they came to India, from observing that as often as they fed upon it they were tormented with indigestion.

These observations, and perhaps many more of the same nature, probably occurred to the penetration of those who gave laws to India. On the other hand they knew too well the character of the people to whose discretion they committed the life of the most useful, of the most precious of animals. They knew further that a prohibition would soon be forgotten or violated unless founded on supernatural authority; and so many motives concurring to require their preservation, they made them deities, that a man who slew them might be held as a sacrilegious monster, and he who ate of their flesh should be tainted with pollution not to be effaced.

To kill a cow is a crime which the Hindu laws punish with death. The Pariahs can eat only of the flesh of such of those animals as die naturally. This is not visited upon them as a crime, but they are considered to be wretches as filthy and disgusting as their food is revolting. Indeed the virtuous feeling of indignation is carried to excess against them: but it is the natural disposition of the Hindus to do nothing of any sort in moderation. There are, however, some epidemic maladies, chiefly cutaneous, which I have often seen affecting the Pariahs exclusively, while their neighbours the Sudras were exempt from them; which seems to corroborate the opinion that the blood of the former is corrupted by the unwholesome and disgusting food which they use; and this justifies in some degree the treatment which they receive from the other tribes.

What has contributed to render the European name hateful to the Hindus, and indeed to sink it in their private thoughts beneath the Pariahs themselves, is the use

which they undisguisedly make of the flesh of the cow to satiate their gluttony. I am not at all surprised that the first European invaders who penetrated into India should have shewn so little regard for the most sacred and most universally established prejudices of that people, because they were not then aware of their origin and motive. But I am really astonished that the behaviour of the Europeans, when, upon first setting their feet on the boundary of India, they began to slaughter the oxen and the cows, did not excite a universal insurrection, or that one single man of the sacrilegious invaders escaped the indignation which must have burned in the breasts of the Hindus, on the murder of those sacred creatures, whom they rank in the number of their principal divinities.

So enormous a sacrilege, such positive deicide, would have been ample motive with any other nation to exterminate every individual who was concerned in it, and to render for ever execrable the memory of a people that would thus sport with the lives of creatures who stand amongst the dearest objects of their worship. The forbearance and patience of the Hindus, who have seen, for upwards of three hundred years, a handful of Europeans established amongst them, sacrificing every day to their voracious appetites the divinities whom they adore, will paint the gentle, the soft, the lenient character of these people more vividly than the pencil of the most eloquent historian.

The Egyptians and many other ancient nations have not been so patient under similar circumstances.

The principal reason that the people of God had, when captives in Egypt, for soliciting permission from Pharaoh to retire far into the desert in order to offer their sacrifices to the Lord without restraint, was un-

doubtedly the fear of being all massacred or stoned to death if they had dared to celebrate them, according to the invitation of Pharaoh, on the spot where they dwelt. This was in the midst of the idolatrous people of Egypt, who paid adoration to some of the animals which must have been used by the Israelites as burnt offerings. "And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. And Moses said, it is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: *Lo shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?*" Exodus, viii. 25, 26.

Cambyses rendered himself more detestable to the people of Egypt by slaying the bull Apis, than he had done by the innumerable cruelties and all the acts of tyranny which he had exercised upon them. Amongst that people, to kill, even unintentionally, one of the animals held sacred, was the greatest of crimes. The culprits could not be redeemed from death. A Roman soldier was torn in pieces by the people, notwithstanding the terror of the Roman name, for accidentally killing a cat. Diodorus, who relates this fact, adds that, during a famine, the Egyptians, rather than eat these animals, devoured one another. The Hindus follow the same course. To whatever extremities they might be reduced, the greater part of them would much rather suffer themselves to perish with hunger than support their lives by slaying and eating the flesh of the cow.

The Europeans, who commit both of these enormities without remorse, have by that means rendered their name for ever hateful to the Hindus; and if their con-

duct has not stirred up a universal insurrection amongst that people, it must, as we have already said, be imputed to the soft and timid character of the natives, as much as to the far spread terror of the European name. The feeble Hindus content themselves with silently weeping over this sacrilegious abuse and horrible violation of their most sacred customs; the trampling down of which they bitterly deplore in secret. In those parts where idolatrous princes still reign with absolute sway, the murder of a cow would on no pretext whatever be pardoned. An act so foul and execrable in the eyes of the Hindus could never be tolerated or endured but in the provinces where Europeans or Mahometans are the rulers.

To purify the body from all internal defilement which it can have contracted, no remedy is accounted more efficacious than the *panchakaryam*, or five substances which proceed from the cow, and have been already mentioned. This remedy would be of indispensable necessity for one that had fallen under the last degree of uncleanness; as if, for example, a Brahman under any circumstances that could exist, had drank water that had been drawn by a Sudra.

As to ordinary stains, from which no care can at all times defend the most wary, there are many modes of removing them, which I shall by and by describe; and if they have the virtue to purify the soul, how much more efficacious must they be when applied to the stains of the body?

## CHAP. V.

*On the Defilement of the Soul, and the remedies used to efface it.*

IT is a doctrine taught in Hindu books, maintained by the philosophers of that nation, and even sometimes promulgated by the Brahmans, that the principal, and indeed the only pollution of the soul proceeds from Sin; and that it is the perverseness of the Will that is the cause of it. One of their poets, Vemana, expresses himself in this manner: "it is the water that brings the mud; and it is the water that washes it away: the will is the cause of sin; and the will alone must remove it." Such a doctrine as this, however badly followed up in practice, proves at least that the Hindus are not ignorant that the change of the will is an essential condition for obtaining the remission of sins and purifying the soul.

But the lights of nature, which reason will never suffer to be wholly extinguished, even in the thickest darkness of gross idolatry, have been much obscured by the passions to which the Brahmans have become enslaved. These have persuaded them that, without renouncing sin and giving it up from the heart, there is a way of purifying the soul by divers remedies, which from their extreme facility, are calculated only to diminish the abhorrence of it, and to lull the guilty in fatal security. The *Panchakaryam*, which we have already noticed,

serves for the “*remission of all sins committed with a perfect knowledge.*” These are the express words of a Brahman author. The remedy would appear to us to be of a disgusting nature; but the Hindus think otherwise, and both recommend and practice the frequent use of it, without shewing any repugnance.

As they consider sin under the notion of an impurity of the soul, it is not wonderful that they should have thought bathing the proper means of purifying it. There are certain places of bathing which have the most complete efficacy. Those who wash their bodies in the Ganges, the Indus, the Cavery, the Krishna, and some other rivers, whose waters are sanctified by superstition, restore the soul and the body from all sins and corruptions which they may have contracted. Even the distance of those rivers may be obviated, and their benefits obtained without stirring from home; it being quite enough to direct your imagination to their waters, and to think of them while you are performing your purifying ablutions.

There are also a great many springs and pools consecrated by superstition, and much renowned for the spiritual effects which they communicate to those who bathe in them. In some of them it is only every twelve years that remission of sin can be found. Such is the case with the lake of *Kumbhakam* in the Tanjore. Some have this virtue every third year. Of this kind is the stream that runs from the mountain of *Tirtha-malay* in the Carnatic. There are still many other privileged spots which possess a periodical virtue for purifying soul and body from uncleanness.

When the year and the day arrive for bathing in those sacred waters, a crowd of people almost without num-

ber, who have been previously apprised of it by messengers sent to all parts by the Brahmans. who are interested in propagating the superstition, assemble as pilgrims and arrange themselves all round the water at the happy time. They wait for the favourable hour and moment of the day; and on the instant of the astrologer's announcing it, all—men, women, children, plunge into the water at once, and with an uproar that is not to be imagined. In the midst of the confusion some are drowned, some suffocated, and still more meet with dislocated limbs. But the fate of those who lose their lives is rather envied than deplored. They are considered as martyrs of their zeal; and this happy death lets them pass immediately into the abode of bliss, without being obliged to undergo another life upon earth.

The period of an Eclipse is also a privileged time for washing away the impurity of the soul. Wherever the bathing takes place, it is effectual at that time; but particularly when made in the sea. When performed at the solstices, or the equinox, on the eleventh day of the moon, and some other particular epochs, the virtue is also great. The disembouement of one river, or the confluence of two, are likewise considered very favourable situations. But it would be altogether endless to pursue this subject.

The Mantras, the mere sight of great men, particularly of Gurus, the thinking upon Vishnu, are not less effectual than bathings for cleansing the soul. Pilgrimage to certain temples or other places, become famous by the superstition of the country, the mere view of the summit of very high mountains, will procure the pardon of sin. One of these privileged mountains exists in the district of Coimbetur in the Carnatic, called *Nilagiri*.

*malay*, which is supposed to be the loftiest in the province : and upon that ground alone, the Hindus, whose principle it is to deify whatever is extraordinary in nature, have converted it into a sacred place. The access to the summit being very difficult, the mere sight of it, which may be had at a great distance, is sufficient to effect the forgiveness of sins in those who visit it with the intention of obtaining this favour. And the visits to it are therefore not unfrequent.

A Brahman once, after pursuing a dog four times round a temple of Siva, killed him with one stroke of his cudgel at the gate of the temple ; and for this achievement he obtained the pardon of all his sins, and the distinguished honours of being transported to the *Kailasa* or Paradise of Siva. Admission into the *Vaikuntha* or Paradise of Vishnu, was granted to a great sinner for pronouncing, though in a blasphemous way, the name of *Narayana*, one of the appellations of Vishnu.

All these anecdotes are taken from Indian books. But, even through the thick darkness with which idolatry has overspread the mind of the Hindus, we may discern a ray distinctly pointing to the fall and corruption of human nature, and the necessity of some remedy for repairing its errors and restoring it to its original state.

Besides the sins committed in his present life, which a Brahman has to atone for as far as he is able, he must also attend to the expiation of those which he had committed in preceding lives. To be born a Brahman is no doubt the most blessed of all regenerations, and is bestowed only on the accumulated merit of a long course of good deeds performed in preceding states of existence. But a new birth is itself a proof that some faults remained unexpiated, else the soul would have been transported

at once to the residence of bliss, and delivered from the punishment of revolving from one generation to another.

Good works, such as giving alms to the Brahmans, erecting places of hospitality on the highways, building temples, contributing to the expenses of worship, digging tanks, and many other meritorious acts of charity, when united to the various remedies already described, greatly enhance their efficacy, and contribute exceedingly to the cleansing of the soul from recent stains, as well as from those which have adhered to it from its former existence.

I will not say any thing here of the obstacles which the soul continually experiences in its progress towards purification, from its family connection, its cast, perverse disposition, and many other sources of sin which occur in the course of life : but I will return to the subject hereafter.

## CHAP. VI.

*Conjectures respecting the Origin of the Rites of the Brahmans concerning Uncleanness and Purity.*

THE conduct and the manner of thinking of the Hindus respecting uncleanness and the means of purification, are so different from any thing to be seen in other nations, that it would be very desirable if we could discover some evidence to enable us to discern with certainty what has given rise to those rules of conduct which they so invariably pursue. Something approaching to their customs is perceivable in several parts of the books of the Old Testament; in the conduct of Jacob, for example, who, in proceeding to offer sacrifice to God, at Bethel, commanded his family to “be clean and change their garments\* ;” in the aversion of the Egyptians for shepherds†, in their hatred of strangers; and above all in the law prescribed to the children of Israel, through Moses, which directs them in the course to be followed with regard to several real and formal impurities‡. The rules on this subject, minutely laid down in Leviticus, are in many respects the same with those which are now in full vigour among the Brahmans.

The learned, I believe, agree almost unanimously that

\* Gen. xxxv. 2.

† Gen. xlvi. 34.

‡ Levit. v. xi. xii. xiii. xiv. xv.

Moses, in prescribing laws on this subject to the people of God, did no more than to regulate and fix the notions of the Jews on many points already established and observed. I suspect, even, that by the rules which he laid down on the subject of different sorts of uncleanness, he sought to moderate the excess which they ran into in such matters in Egypt, as well as in most parts of Asia. In after times the Israelites did not confine themselves to the instructions laid down by their holy legislator; but, as far as appears, exceeded his rules; and probably it is from their extreme eagerness in this respect, acquired in Egypt, that many of the practices of the Jews of the present day have been deduced, for which there is no authority in their own ancient law.

Although, in comparing the rules of the one with those of the other, many of the Jewish rites correspond with those of the Brahmans; yet, in many others, the difference and even the opposition is so striking, as to make it impossible that the one could have proceeded from the other by any communication. And as I have never seen any thing in the history of the Egyptians and Jews that could induce me to believe that either of these nations or any other on the face of the earth, have been established earlier than the Hindus and particularly the Brahmans; so I cannot be induced to believe that the latter have drawn their rites from foreign nations. On the contrary, I infer that they have drawn them from an original source of their own. Whoever knows any thing of the spirit and character of the Brahmans, their stateliness, their pride and extreme vanity, their distance, and sovereign contempt for every thing that is foreign, and of which they cannot boast to have been the inventors,

will agree with me that such a people cannot have consented to draw their customs and rules of conduct from an alien country.

But if it is not by communication with other nations, as old as themselves, that the Hindus have acquired customs and rules which subsist among them to the present day, and unite them indissolubly in a national mass, from what source do they derive them?

On so obscure a subject we can only offer conjectures; and mine, I hope, will not be wide of probability.

Even before the flood, men distinguished, in the sacrifices which they offered to God, between clean animals and unclean; things that were pure and things that were impure. The Lord approved that distinction, and commanded Noah and his children to observe it when they introduced the various living creatures into the ark. (Gen. chap. vii.) And, although God, after the deluge, authorised the human race, who had been, up to that epoch, nourished by the simple productions of the soil, to use thenceforth more solid food, by substituting the flesh of animals, which were then solemnly submitted to the dominion of man (Gen. chap. ix.); it is nevertheless probable that this distinction between clean and unclean animals, and things pure and impure, remained long engraven on the minds of the first men who lived after the flood. Their impressions on this subject were probably deepened by the ordinance of God which allowed them to eat the flesh of the living creatures, but forbade them expressly to taste their blood. (Gen. chap. ix. 4.) At any rate, it appears beyond all doubt that the notions about defilement, founded on the distinction between things clean and unclean, existed before the deluge. It is probable, therefore, that the practices of the Hindus

upon pollution and purity proceed from that original source, and that their tenets on this subject were transmitted to them, at least in part, by their first legislators, who lived soon after the flood.

It is well known that many other ancient nations, in common with the Hindus, entertain those opinions respecting bodily and spiritual uncleanness, and, like them, have recourse to water or fire, and sometimes to both, for purification. While the people of India were consecrating the memory of the Ganges and the Indus, the waters of the *Phasis* were also regarded as having the virtue to purify the body and the soul from all uncleanness, not only by the inhabitants of Colchis or Mingrelia, but by all who sailed to the mouth of that river; and the Egyptians attributed the same quality to the Nile.

When the Flood was but lately gone by, and mankind still formed but one people, they would naturally turn their attention to the means of preserving health. Cleanliness would at once strike them as serviceable in this respect; and as they could not then procure it by a frequent change of clothing, they would have recourse to the constant use of the bath. In spite of this, diseases would be more common than they had ever been before the deluge, as every thing in nature had degenerated. It would be remarked that many of those diseases were occasioned by the improper food which they took. This would accordingly be proscribed as impure. Many remarks on the subject would occur, some good and others bad, which would spread, and lead to conclusions respecting what was useful and what pernicious, and to distinctions between the clean and the unclean. Nevertheless, in such times, when medicine, like every other

science, was in its cradle, it is probable that cleanliness and the bath would long continue to be the universal remedy for all evil, and every species of corporeal impurity.

But, being compelled to separate, and to spread population over the various countries of the earth, they carried with them, under their different leaders, the arts necessary for society, with the customs already established with a view to the preservation of health. The warmth of the climate of India, which probably was one of the first countries inhabited, would incline its original colonists to make strict regulations for the exact observance of the necessary practices. Among the new race, or their immediate successors, men would arise, having authority, but superstitious and extravagant in their notions, who would carry much farther than their ancestors had done, the notions respecting filth and purity. Observing, at the same time, that in the country which had fallen to their lot, every thing tended to carelessness and hurtful indifference, they established severe laws upon the minutest observances. But in their wish to promote the good of the people and prevent a fatal decline, they plunged them into an abyss of error, which has been rendered impassable by the absurd imaginations of their poets.

At the same time, if we have good reason to reproach the Brahmans with their outrageous strictness in point of purity; are they to be condemned, on the other hand, for manifesting horror at the excessive beastliness of many of the Europeans who come in their way? What ought they to think on seeing the disgusting appearance of those who compose the crews of our

ships, or when they observe our soldiers, when not on duty, drunk perhaps, and deprived of reason, rolling in the dirt in presence of the multitude, and scarcely retaining the appearance of men ?

## CHAP. VII.

*Of Marriage among the Brahmans.*

MARRIAGE is to a Hindu the great, the most essential of all objects ; that of which he speaks the most and looks forward to from the remotest distance. A man who is not married is considered to be a person without establishment, and almost as a useless member of society. Until he arrives at this state he is consulted on no great affairs, nor employed on any important trust. In short, he is looked upon as a man out of the pale of nature. A Brahman who becomes a widower is likewise held to have fallen from his station ; and nothing is more urgent upon him than to resume the marriage state.

The case is quite different with respect to Widows. It never enters into their view to procure a new establishment, even when they lose their husbands at the age of six or seven : for it is not rare to see widows no older, particularly among the Brahmans (as has been already mentioned) where an old man of sixty or upwards takes for his second wife a child of that tender age. Their prejudices, however, on this subject, have taken such firm root in their minds, that the bare mentioning of remarrying these young widows would be considered by their relations and by themselves as the greatest of insults. Yet they are despised through all India. The very name of widow is a reproach ; and the greatest pos-

sible calamity that can befall a woman is to survive her husband ; although to marry with another would be held a thousand times more to be dreaded. From that moment she would be hunted out of society, and no decent person would venture at any time to have the slightest intercourse with her.

Though Marriage be considered the natural condition of man, yet Celibacy is not unknown in India. It is even a state respected ; and those of their Sannyasis who are known to lead their lives in perfect celibacy, receive, on that account, marks of distinguished honour and respect. But this condition cannot be embraced excepting by those who devote themselves to a life of seclusion from the world, and of perpetual contemplation, such as that class of enthusiasts do ; or by such as are bound by their profession to discharge the duties of religion towards their neighbours, such as the Gurus. The Hindus seem to have felt that the duties of Penitent and Guru were incompatible with those of the master of a family, and that a man ought to be free from the embarrassment and anxiety of one of these stations to be fully able to acquit himself properly of the other. This was perhaps the chief reason for allowing the Sannyasis and the greater part of the Gurus to live in a single state.

The greater number, however, are bachelors only in name. No virtue is less familiar to them than chastity. It is publicly known that they keep women, and commit breaches of that virtue which they profess, that would disgrace the most profane. But their sacred title of Sannyasi or Guru raises them above the attacks of the wicked ; and such human failings, if not carried to great excess, scarcely diminish the outward reverence and respect which they receive from the silly vulgar.

At the same time, I cannot but believe that the small number of real Sannyasis or Penitents who are still found living in woods and deserts, wholly retired from the world, and who, through vanity or fanaticism, condemn themselves to all sorts of privations, and inure their bodies to the harshest austerities, actually live in celibacy and altogether unconnected with women. The severe life which they lead scarcely allows the body to war against the spirit. But, as far as concerns the Gurus and Sannyasis, who scour the country to live on the public credulity, or those who shut themselves up in a sort of monasteries and lead a lazy and voluptuous life, with no other occupation than that of receiving the presents and offerings which their numerous votaries, deceived by their false reputation for sanctity, bring to them from all quarters; such men are to be considered as mere impostors, or knaves, who abuse the credulous populace, under the guise of celibacy, while they are revelling in every species of luxury. All that I have heard from various persons who have lived in their service as domestics, and have been admitted to familiar intercourse with them, confirms me in the opinion which I have always entertained, that nothing is more foreign to them than that virtue which they chiefly affect.

Although the state of celibacy be allowed to those who devote themselves to a life of contemplation, it is not so with regard to any class of women. They cannot profess virginity, however much they may be attached to that condition. In ancient times, however, it seems to have been known among the Hindus: as frequent mention is made in their books of the *five celebrated Virgins*, who are almost as famous as the seven celebrated *Rishi*. The Hindu authors speak in lofty terms of commendation

of the care with which they preserved themselves spotless, and of the inflexible firmness with which they resisted the solicitations of some powerful seducers, who used every means to overcome them. Even the most powerful of the gods tried to corrupt them, and were foiled. Many other particulars of these five virgins may be found in the *Bhagavata* and some other Hindu books.

Now, however, it is not permitted to women to embrace this holy profession. The state of subjection and servitude in which they are held in India cannot admit of their following any employment which would make them independent and place them beyond the power of the men. It is an established national rule that women are designed for no other end than to be subservient to the wants and pleasures of the males. Accordingly, all females without exception, are obliged to marry when husbands can be found for them. They always try to bring it about before they become really marriageable; and those who arrive at that period without finding a husband, seldom preserve their innocence long. Constant experience proves that Hindu girls have neither sufficient firmness nor discretion to resist, for any length of time, the solicitations of a seducer; which is no doubt a strong reason for disposing of them in marriage so soon.

Those who cannot find a husband fall into the state of concubinage with those who choose to keep them, or secretly indulge in those enjoyments which, if known, would expose them to shame.

I have taken great pains to learn what is the real spirit of Hindu jurisprudence on the subject of Polygamy, and the indissolubility of marriage; and although I have not arrived at any absolute certainty, all that I have observed appears to demonstrate that the former is prohi-

bited and the latter established. Persons well acquainted with the usages of the country have confirmed me in this conclusion, and have assured me that if there be many instances of polygamy, particularly among the great, who are suffered to have a plurality of wives, yet it is really an abuse and an open violation of the customs of the Hindus, amongst whom marriage has been always confined to couples; though in all places the powerful will set themselves above the law.

The custom or law in India which limits marriage to one pair has been followed by the principal divinities whom the Hindus acknowledge. They were married but to one lawful wife. They have given *Saraswati* only to Brahma; *Lakshmi* to Vishnu; and *Parvati* to Siva. *Sita-devi*, the wife of *Rama*, having proved unfaithful to him, was carried off by the giant *Ravana*; but he did not repudiate her on that account, nor marry another wife. He went in pursuit of the ravisher, and commenced a long war against him, in which, after sustaining defeats and gaining victories, he at last subdued his enemy and regained his consort.

All these stories, and many more of the same kind which I could adduce, seem to prove that a plurality of legitimate wives was in ancient times unknown and rejected. It is clear that conjugal fidelity was not one of the attributes of those fabulous gods; but it is no less certain that they never assign to them more than one woman under the appellation of wife. Even in modern times polygamy is not tolerated; although, as we have already remarked, kings and persons of high rank are permitted to take two wives, sometimes three, and in some instances as many as five. Still, this is consider-

ed an abuse, although it is not safe to complain against authority.

Where persons in private life are seen to live with several women, they are only concubines; one only being married to him and bearing the title of wife. The children from her alone are considered legitimate. The rest are bastards; whom the law would exclude from any share of their father's property, if he died without a will.

I know of one case only, where a man already married may lawfully espouse a second wife; which is, when the first, after long cohabitation, is pronounced barren. But even in this case, the consent of the first wife is necessary, and she always continues to be considered as the man's principal wife, and as superior to the second. Neither is this second marriage conducted with half the ceremony as the former.

It was for this reason, and for the purpose of raising up a progeny, that Abraham espoused Hagar, in the life-time and with the consent of his first wife Sarah. The troubles which were brought upon this holy patriarch by bringing two legitimate wives into his house are recorded in the sacred Scriptures (Gen. xxi.). The same inconveniences and still worse occur amongst the Hindus who marry two women. It is not therefore an enviable privilege; and the greater number of those who have barren spouses, choose rather to abandon the hopes of children than to be obliged to live with two wives.

The indissoluble nature of marriage is also, as far as I can judge, equally well established among the Hindus as that of the marriage of a couple of persons. A man cannot divorce his wife on any ground whatever. If there are any examples of an opposite kind, it is only

amongst people of the lowest casts, or of disreputable lives; or because the previous marriage had been attended by such impediments as to render it invalid by the laws of the country. But marriages legally solemnized can never be dissolved amongst persons of a reputable cast, particularly amongst the Brahmans.

If the husband insists on a separation from his wife on account of adultery, it can only be effected, as with us, *quoad mensam et torum*; and the marriage is not dissolved by it. The woman, after being so discarded, continues to wear the *tahli* or symbol of marriage, and is not treated otherwise than as the lawful wife of the man from whom she is separated. He also is obliged to support her as long as she lives; and, during that time, he can have no other woman but as a concubine.

After these general remarks upon the marriage state, let us now attend to the ceremonies and pageantry which the Hindus employ in the celebration of this solemn contract, which elevates both parties into their proper sphere, and, by connecting them with sacred and indissoluble bands, keeps up the renovation of the world. But, of the great variety of ceremonies which precede and accompany the celebration of marriage, the most important and solemn circumstance in life, we shall content ourselves with tracing the most prominent.

The father of a young *Brahmanari*, if he be rich and liberal, takes upon himself all the expense of the marriage of his daughter. Some divide the burthen with the father of the intended husband; but in general they take from him a considerable sum of money in return for having given him their daughter, and oblige him besides to bear the whole charge of the marriage.

To marry, or to buy a wife, are synonymous terms in

this country. Almost every parent makes his daughter an article of traffic, obstinately refusing to give her up to her lawful husband until he has rigorously paid down the sum of money which he was bound for, according to the custom of the cast. This practice of purchasing the young women whom they are to marry, is the inexhaustible source of disputes and litigation, particularly amongst the poorer people. These, after the marriage is solemnized, not finding it convenient to pay the stipulated sum, the father-in-law commences an action, or more commonly recalls his daughter home, in the expectation that the desire of getting her back may stimulate the son-in-law to procure the money. This sometimes succeeds; but if the young man is incapable of satisfying the avarice of his father-in-law, he is obliged to leave his wife with him in pledge. Now, there is time for reflection; and the father-in-law, finding that the sum cannot be raised, and that his daughter from her youth is exposed to great temptations which might lead to the disgrace of all his family, relaxes a little, and takes what the son-in-law is able to pay. A reconciliation is thus effected, and the young man conducts his wife quietly home.

Men of distinction do not appropriate to their common purposes the money thus acquired by giving their daughters in marriage, but lay it out in jewels, which they present to the lady on the wedding day. These are her private property as long as she lives, and on no account can be disposed of by her husband.

In negotiating a marriage, the inclinations of the future spouses are never attended to. Indeed it would be ridiculous to consult girls of that age; and accordingly the choice entirely devolves upon the parents. Those

of the husband attend principally to the purity of the cast; while those of the wife are more solicitous about the fortune of the young man, and the disposition of the intended mother-in-law of their daughter.

When a man, with this view, casts his eyes on a young girl, he begins by satisfying himself through some friend, concerning the inclinations of her kindred. When he has ascertained that he is not likely to suffer the affront of a refusal, he selects a fortunate day to visit them, and to solicit her in form, carrying with him a piece of new cloth for women, a cocoa nut, five bananas, some saffron and other articles of that nature. If he should meet upon his way any object of evil omen; if a cat, for example, or a fox, or a serpent should cross the road before him, so as to intercept his progress, he would instantly return home, and postpone the journey to a more fortunate day.

All the Hindus have their minds so filled with these silly superstitions, that, however necessary any expedition or journey may be, they will surely defer it, if at the first outset they should be crossed by any of the creatures above mentioned. I have repeatedly seen labourers take back their cattle to their stalls, and spend the whole day in idleness, because, in setting out in the morning, they found that a serpent had crossed their road.

After the young man's father has solicited the girl, and offered the presents he takes with him, her own father defers his answer until one of those little lizards, which creep on the wall, making now and then a small shrill cry, gives a favourable augury by one of its chirps. As soon as the lizard has *spoken* (as the superstitious Hindus express themselves) and given a favourable

prognostic by its assent, the father of the girl declares that he will voluntarily bestow her in marriage on the son of him who asks her ; after which a great number of ceremonies are performed, answering to our betrothment, and communicating to the future husband a right to the girl, which prevents her from being given to any other. These ceremonies are followed by an entertainment ; after which a fortunate month and day are selected for the marriage, upon due consultation with the astrologer or the Purohita.

There are, properly, but four months in the year in which marriage can be celebrated : namely, March, April, May, and June. Nuptials for the second time, may indeed be solemnized in the months of November and February ; but, in these two months, so much attention must be given to the signs of the zodiac and many other matters, each more trifling than another, that it is not easy to find a day in which all the favourable circumstances combine.

The custom of restricting marriages to those four months, arises, like almost all the other customs of the Hindus, from superstition. But I conceive that the principal motive which originally induced them to fix on those four months as a fortunate time for marrying was, that the country labours being then all closed or suspended, on account of the excessive heat, and the preceding harvest furnishing the means of supplying what the ceremony requires, they look upon that period as affording more leisure and better resources for this important concern than any other season of the year.

The ceremony of marriage lasts five days. In the course of it, all those rites are exhibited which have been described in speaking of the ceremony of the triple cinc-

ture. These we need not repeat; and such as are peculiar to the wedding festival, not being in a better taste, we shall content ourselves with mentioning the most important of them.

The bridegroom and bride are first of all placed under the *Pandal*, or alcove with twelve pillars, as formerly described. This is a common and very useful appendage to the principal houses in India, being erected before the principal door, and covered with boughs of trees, so as to shelter the house from the heat of the sun, and at the same time to afford a convenient recess for strangers who come upon any business with the owner of the house, when perhaps it is not convenient, nor even admissible, for him to enter into the dwelling.

The *Pandal*, being on this occasion decorated in the most superb manner, the young couple are seated under it upon the little mound of earth, with their faces turned towards the east. The married women then advance, performing before them the rites of the *Arati*, as they have been already described.

It being desirable to render all the gods, and even the lowest of them, propitious, the whole of them are invited to the wedding, and they are besought to remain there during the whole entertainment of five days. The same prayer is preferred to the *God's ancestors*; and the grandfathers, whom they have seen, are entreated to seek and bring with them their more ancient progenitors, whom they themselves could not have known.

A particular sacrifice is then offered to *Brahma*; which is the more remarkable that this god, in consequence of a curse denounced against him by some penitents of former times, has no temple and no regular worship in any part of India.

I ought not to omit that, before any thing is undertaken, they take care to place under the Pandal *Vighneswara*, the god of obstacles. He is greatly honoured, as has been mentioned, because he is greatly feared. And although the extreme ugliness of his appearance has hitherto kept him without a wife, they never fail to pay him the utmost attention in all public ceremonies, lest his displeasure should cast some impediment in the way of their happy accomplishment; which is the more to be apprehended from his being so prone to take offence.

As it is necessary, in circumstances so important, that the bridegroom should be pure and exempt from all sin, he is called upon to offer a free gift, on the second day, of fourteen flags to one of the Brahmans, in expiation of the faults he has committed since his investiture with the Cord.

This act of charity is followed by a sort of interlude, which appears very absurd after the progress they have made. The bridegroom shams an eager desire to quit the country, upon a pilgrimage to Benares, to wash himself there in the sacred waters of the Ganges. He equips himself as a traveller, and, being supplied with some provisions for the journey, he departs with instruments of music sounding before him, and accompanied by several of his relations and friends, in the same manner as when a person is really proceeding on that holy adventure. But no sooner has he got out of the village than, upon turning towards the east, he meets his future father-in-law, who finding the object of his expedition, stops him, and offers him his daughter in marriage, if he will desist from his journey. The pilgrim

readily accepts the conditions, and they return together to the house.

After many other ceremonies, the recital of which would be tedious, they fasten on the right wrist of the young man and on the left of the girl, the *Kankanam*, which is merely a bit of saffron ; and this particular ceremony is conducted with more state and solemnity than any other during the whole course of the festival. It is succeeded by another not less remarkable. The young man being seated, with his face turned towards the east, his future father-in-law approaches, and looking steadily on his countenance, fancies that he beholds in him the great Vishnu. With this impression, he offers to him a sacrifice ; . and then, making him put both his feet in a new dish filled with cow-dung, he first washes them with water, then with milk, and again with water ; accompanying the whole with suitable Mantras.

This being finished, he must direct his fixed attention and thought to all the gods united ; then name each of them separately, one after another, as far as his memory can serve. To this invocation of the gods, he subjoins that of the seven famous penitents, the five virgins, the ancestor gods, the seven mountains, the woods, the seas, the eight cardinal points, the fourteen worlds, the year, the season, the month, the day, the minute, and many other particulars which must likewise be named and invoked.

He then takes the hand of his daughter and puts it into that of his son-in-law, and pours water over them in honour of the great Vishnu. This is the most solemn of all the ceremonies of the festival, being the symbol of his resigning his daughter to the authority of the young man. She must be accompanied with three gifts ;

namely, with a present of one or more cows, with some property in land, and finally with a *Salagrama*, which consists of some little amulet stones in high esteem among the Brahmans, worn by them as talismans, and dignified even with the homage of sacrifices.

This ceremony, which appears to be the foundation of the marriage, is succeeded by another but little less in importance. All married women in India wear at their necks a small ornament of gold called *Tahly*, which is the sign of their being actually in the state of marriage. When they become widows this ornament is removed with great form, as will be afterwards described. There is engraved upon it the figure of *Vighneswara* or *Lakshmi*, or of some other divinity in estimation with the cast; and it is fastened by a short string dyed yellow with saffron, composed of one hundred and eight threads of great fineness. Before tying it round the neck of the bride, she is made to sit down by the side of her husband; and, after some slight preliminary ceremonies, ten Brahmans make a partition with a curtain of silk, which they extend, from one to another, between them and the wedded pair, whilst the rest are reciting the Mantras, and invoking *Brahma* with *Saraswati*, *Vishnu* with *Lakshmi*, *Siva* with *Parvati*; and several more; always coupling each god with his consort. The ornament is now brought in to be fastened to the neck of the bride. It is presented on a salver neatly decked and garnished with sweet smelling flowers. Incense is offered to it, and it is presented to the assistants, each of whom touches it and invokes blessings upon it. The bride then turning towards the east, the bridegroom takes the *Tahly*, and, reciting a mantram aloud, binds it round her neck.

Fire is then brought in, upon which the bridegroom offers up the sacrifice of the *Homam*; and, taking his bride by the hand, they walk thrice round the fire while the incense is blazing.

Last of all, he lays hold of her ankle with his right hand, and brings it into contact with a little stone which he holds in his left, and which is called the stone of *Sandal*, doubtless because it is a kind of paste formed out of that odoriferous wood. In going through this ceremony, the bridegroom must have his thoughts fixed on *the Great Mountain of the North*, the native place of the ancestors of the Brahmans.

The meaning of the ceremony we have described is not difficult to divine. By the preceding one, we see the surrender of the girl to her intended husband by her father. Here, the acceptance of her is signified by the bridegroom binding the *tahly* round the neck of the bride. The *Homam* and the three circuits which the young couple make around the fire, indicate the ratification of a mutual engagement between them, as there is nothing more solemn than what is transacted over this element; which, among the Hindus, is the most pure of the deities, and therefore the fittest of all others to ratify the solemn oaths of which it is the most faithful memorial.

We have now gone through the principal ceremonials appertaining to marriage, with the omission of not a few of smaller importance. But perhaps we ought to subjoin the following one, which is considered by some to rank as high as the preceding.

Two baskets, made of bamboo, are placed close together; this species of wood being preferred, on account of its being thought more pure and less subject

to be defiled by handling. The new married pair go each into one of the baskets, standing upright. Two other baskets are brought, filled with ground rice. The husband takes up one with both hands and pours what it contains over the head of his spouse. She does the like to him in her turn. They repeat this till they are weary, or till they are admonished that it is enough.

In other casts, it is the assistants that sprinkle the heads of the new married couple; and perhaps it signifies only the abundance of temporal blessings which are implored on their behalf. It was practised in other nations with corn; and it still, in some measure, exists among the Jews. In the marriage of great princes, pearls are sometimes used in place of rice or corn.

On the evening of the third day, when the constellations appear, the Purohita, or astrologer, points out to the new married pair a very small star, close to the middle one in the tail of *Ursa Major*, and directs them both to pay it obeisance; for it is *Arundhati*, he says, the wife of *Vasistha*, one of the seven famous Penitents.

Next day, before dinner, the bride rubs the legs of her husband with saffron water; and then he rubs hers in the same manner. I know not the meaning of this ceremony, or indeed whether it has any. Ceremonies of some kind the Brahmans must have; and they appear to have found nothing more serious than this to fill up the present interval.

While the assembled guests are dining, the bridegroom and bride also partake, and eat together from the same plate. This is a token of the closest union; and two persons the most intimately connected cannot shew a more evident mark of their friendship than this. Well may the woman now continue to eat what her husband

leaves, and after he has done ; for they will never sit down again to a meal together. That is never permitted but at the wedding feast.

On the last day, a ceremony is practised remarkable for its singularity. When the husband offers the sacrifice of the *Homam*, and when, in the usual form, he is casting into the fire the boiled rice sprinkled with melted butter, the bride approaches and does the same on her part with rice that has been parched. This is the only instance that I know where a woman may take part in this sacrifice, which is the most sacred and solemn of all, excepting the *Yajna*.

All these ceremonies, with many others which it would be tedious to detail, being concluded, a procession is made through the streets of the village. It commonly takes place in the night, by the light of torches and fire-works. The new married pair are seated in one palanquin, with their faces towards each other. They are both highly dressed out ; but the bride in particular is generally covered over with jewels and precious stones, partly the gifts of her father and father-in-law ; but the greater part are borrowed for the occasion.

The procession moves slowly ; and their relations and friends come out of their houses, as they pass ; the women hailing the new married parties with the ceremony of the *Arati*, and the men with presents of silver, fruits, sugar, and betel. Those who receive such presents are obliged, under the like circumstances, to repay them in their turn. I have sometimes seen these marriage processions truly magnificent, though in a style so extremely remote from ours.

Thus ends the solemnity of marriage among the Hin-

dus. The pomp which attends their elevation to this state shews the importance which they attach to it, and also the respect which they entertain, or at least once entertained, for the sacred bands which inseparably unite the husband and the wife.

I will say nothing of the entertainments mutually given by the relations of the two parties after their marriage. Those by whom they are given, and the ceremonies which accompany them, differ so little from what I have already described, in speaking of the admission to the *Triple Cord*, that I forbear to repeat them. But there is one thing well deserving of remark; that, amongst the almost infinite variety of ceremonies made use of on the occasion of marriage, there is not one that borders on indecency, or has the slightest allusion to an immodest thought. This is particularly to be noticed amongst a people, who in all other circumstances in life, where feasts and shews occur, make a merit of openly and unreservedly violating the rules of modesty and decorum.

The marriage festival being over, the young spouse is taken back to her father's house, which continues to be her principal abode until she has grown up into a state fit to discharge all the duties of matrimony. This epoch is a new occasion for joy and feasting. The relations attend to celebrate it in the same manner as the marriage, and the greater part of the ceremonies then practised are now repeated. It is notified to the father and mother of the young man that their daughter-in-law has now become a woman, and is qualified to live with her husband. Then, after completing the ceremonies to which this occasion gives rise, she is conducted in triumph to the house of her father-in-law, where she is detained for a

while to accustom her to the society of her husband ; and after a month or two her own parents return and take her home with them.

The residence of the young woman is thus, for the first and even the second year, divided between the house of her husband and that of her father. This is accounted a mark of good understanding subsisting among them. It is, however, a concord, which most probably, alas ! will too soon be dissolved ; when this same young wife, beaten by her husband and harassed by her mother-in-law, who treats her as a slave, shall find no remedy for ill usage but in flying to her father's house. She will be recalled by fair promises of kinder treatment. They will break their word ; and she will have recourse to the same remedy. But at last, the children which she brings into the world, and other circumstances, will compel her to do her best, by remaining in her husband's house, with the shew of being contented with her lot.

In general, concord, the union of minds, and sincere mutual friendship are rarely found in Hindu families. The extreme distance kept up between the two sexes, which makes the women absolutely passive in society, and subject to the will and even the caprices of the men, has accustomed these lords of their destiny to regard them as slaves, and to treat them on all occasions with severity and contempt. It is therefore in vain to expect, between husband and wife, that reciprocal confidence and kindness which constitute the happiness of a family. The object for which a Hindu marries is not to gain a companion to aid him in enduring the evils of life, but a slave to bear children and be subservient to his rule.

## CHAP. VIII.

*Of the second Degree of Brahmans ; that of Grihastha, and the Duties which it imposes.*

THE second state of a Brahman is that of *Grihastha* ; a name given to those only who are married and have children. A young Brahman, upon his marriage, ceases indeed to be a Brahmachari ; but neither is he considered to be a true *Grihastha*, while his wife, on account of tender age, remains with her parents. The Grihasthas compose the body of the cast, maintain its rights, and settle the disputes which arise. It belongs to them also to watch over the observance of the Brahmanical rules, and to recommend the practice of them by their precept and example.

A Grihastha Brahman should rise in the morning an hour and a half before the sun. On getting up, his first thoughts should be directed to Vishnu. About an hour before sun-rise, he walks out of the village, intent upon a business of great importance to a man of this cast, that of attending to the calls of nature. The place is chosen with great circumspection, and decency requires of him to put off his clothes and slippers.

The demands of nature being discharged, he washes himself with his left hand ; which, on account of this impure use of it, is never employed in eating, nor allowed to touch the food. The number of times they must

wash, and what particular parts of the body, with the kind of water and earth which they must use in purifying, and many other observances which decency prevents me from enumerating, are detailed in the ritual of the Brahmans. One of their devotees, called *Vashista*, has drawn up a digest of the rules to be followed on the occasion, long enough to fill half a dozen pages. Amongst his admirers, the great King of Lippa is spoken of as one of the most zealous.

In alluding to the indispensable use of water to remove the impurities of nature, it may be remarked that, of all the customs of the Europeans so opposite to theirs, there is none that appears to the Brahmans so abominable as their use of paper for that purpose. They never speak of it among themselves but with horror, and with expressions of the utmost contempt for those who use it. Many of them are unwilling to believe that even a European could be guilty of an act so abominable. Next in degree, they hold the other European practice of blowing the nose, and stuffing the filth, as the Hindus say, into their pockets.

I must not omit to notice a particular ceremony, which is never forgotten by a Brahman, on the occasion alluded to; namely, that of putting the *Cord* over his right ear, which is supposed to have the virtue of purifying from corporeal stains. According to the principles laid down in their writings, the water, the Vedas, the sun, the moon, and the air, are all contained in the ears of the Brahmans; and it is upon this notion, that in discharging the function alluded to, they put the cord over the ear, as a means of purification. By the same rule, after sneezing, spitting, blowing the nose; after sleep, or being in tears, and in many similar cases, they seldom fail

to touch the right ear in order to purify themselves from the uncleanness which these acts occasion.

We have before observed that exterior cleanness of the body, kept up in the Hindu way, is a higher recommendation than any other quality whatever. Greatness and dignity are supposed to exist wherever it is conspicuous. This feeling has led to the study and invention of a thousand minute and trifling practices, which are more systematically pursued by the Brahmans than by the other casts: and it is upon this superiority that they chiefly plume themselves, and think themselves entitled to look with contempt on all that neglect it.

After obeying the mandate of nature, the next care of the Grihastha Brahman is to wash his mouth. This is no trifling matter to him. The care with which he must select the little bit of wood with which he rubs his teeth, the choice of the tree he must cut it from, the prayer he must address to the deities of the woods for permission, and many other ceremonies prescribed for the occasion, make a part of the education of the Brahmans, and are described at great length in their books of ceremonies.

The scrupulous attention with which they perform this operation every morning, with a piece of wood always fresh cut from the tree, leads them to make a comparison very unfavourable to the Europeans, many of whom altogether neglect the practice; and those who most regularly adopt it, add to the horror of the Hindu, when he sees them rubbing their teeth and gums with brushes made of the hair of animals, and using them again and again, after being soiled with the pollution of the mouth and the saliva.

Happy is he who, after the cleansing of his mouth, can wash himself in a running stream. It is more salu-

tary to the soul and the body than the water he could find at home, or in a standing pool. An affair of so great importance is necessarily accompanied with many rites, as frivolous in our eyes as they are indispensable in theirs. One of the most essential is to think at that moment of the Ganges, the Indus, the Krishna, the Cavery, or any other of the rivers whose sacred waters possess the virtue to efface sin ; and then to implore the gods that the bath they use may be no less available to their souls than one of those nobler streams would be.

While in the water, it is necessary to keep their thoughts fixed stedfastly upon Vishnu and Brahma ; and the bathing ends by three times taking up handfuls of water, and, with their faces towards the sun, pouring it out in libations to that luminary.

When he comes out of the water, the Grihastha Brahman puts on his clothing ; which consists of one piece of cloth, uncut, of about a yard in width and three yards in length. It has been already soaked in the water, and thus made pure from all the stains it had contracted. He then completes his dress by rubbing his forehead with a little of the ashes of cow-dung, or with the paste made of sandal wood. He then drinks a small quantity of the water which he has taken out of the river ; and the remainder he sprinkles around, three times, in honour of all the gods, mentioning several of them by name, with the addition of the earth, the fire, and the deities who preside over the eight cardinal points ; and he concludes the whole by a profound reverence to the whole circle of the gods.

It would be tedious to describe the variety of gestures and movements which the Brahman exhibits in such cases. But we may select one particular, namely, the

signs of the cross, which he distinctly makes as a salutation to his head, his belly, his right and left shoulders: For, after saluting all external things, he commences with the particular salutation of himself in detail. Every member has its particular salutation. Even the fingers are not forgotten, as he touches each of them all round with his thumb. All these actions are accompanied with prayers or the *Mantras*, of which we shall speak in the following chapter.

It would now seem to be time for the Brahman to go home, after his leisure has been so long occupied with ceremonies; but he has still a prayer to offer to the tree *Ravi*, consecrated to Vishnu. He implores the tree to grant him remission of his sins, and then walks round it seven or fourteen or twenty-one times, always increasing by seven.

In going home, he always takes with him a little pitcher of water and some flowers, both of which are necessary for the sacrifice which he is obliged to offer soon after his return to his house. When he enters, he must read some of the *Puranas*, or hear them read. He then makes the *Homam*; after which he may attend to his private affairs.

He orders dinner about mid-day. This is provided by the women; though the ordinary Brahmans value themselves on their skill in cookery. The great object here is absolute cleanness in the preparation. Many precautions are necessary for this. The clothes of the women employed must be newly washed, their vessels fresh scoured. The place must be neat, and free from dust; and the eyes of strangers must not pervade it.

While dinner is preparing, the Brahman returns a second time to the river. He bathes again, repeating

almost all the ceremonies in the same order as in the morning. But the anxious care is in returning home, lest he should happen to touch any thing on the way that might defile him ; such as by treading on a bone, on a bit of leather, or skin, on an old rag, broken dish, or any other thing of that nature. Upon these points, however, it must be allowed, they are not all equally scrupulous.

This extraordinary purity appears to him necessary, on account of the sacrifice which he is about to offer to the idols which he keeps in his house. Every man has them of his own ; and on the present occasion, the offering consists of flowers, some boiled rice, fruit, and a small portion of the dishes provided for dinner. What is thus offered is not lost, but distributed after dinner, and eaten as something sacred.

The Brahman being seated on the ground, his wife lays before him a banana leaf, or some other leaves sewed together, and sprinkling them with a few drops of water, she serves the rice upon this simple cover ; and, close by it and on the same leaf, the different things that have been provided ; all of which consist of the simple productions of nature, or of cakes. The rice is seasoned with a little clarified butter, or a kind of sauce, so highly spiced that no European palate could endure its pungency.

The manner of serving up all this would appear very disgusting to us, as it is entirely performed by the hand ; unless where the woman, to save her fingers, is obliged to take a wooden spoon. But this rarely happens, as the Hindus generally have their food cold and their drink hot.

The viands being before him, the Brahman, before he

touches them, sprinkles some drops of water round his plate ; but, whether to attract the dust that might blow over his rice, or whether as a sacrificial libation to the food, I know not. But, before he puts a morsel into his mouth, he lays upon the ground a little of the rice and the other things set before him ; and this is an offering to the *progenitors*, and their portion of the meal.

At length he begins to eat ; and he has generally some poor Brahmians with him as guests, and, more particularly, strangers belonging to the cast, if his means permit him to entertain them. Hospitality is greatly recommended among the Brahmans ; but they are bound to exercise it only towards persons of their own cast.

The repast is quickly finished, as in swallowing they have neither the bones of fish nor of flesh to dread. They rise immediately, and wash both hands, although one only has been soiled ; for the left being reserved for other purposes, as we have already mentioned, cannot even be employed in washing the right, and the lawful wife of the Brahman alone can pour water over it for that purpose.

After washing his hands, he rinses his mouth twelve times. He never uses a toothpick ; at least he never uses one twice, thinking that none but such as are inured to filth and beastliness could put up, for another occasion, a thing that had once touched their mouths and been polluted with slaver.

To procure a good digestion, the Brahman, after his meal, chews some leaves of *basil*, that had been some time before offered in sacrifice. This is a plant consecrated to Vishnu ; and, if he thinks of the famous penitent Agastya while he is chewing it, or of the giant

Kumbhakarna, his digestion will be improved, and will keep him free from every sort of distemper.

Before going out upon his affairs, or to visit his friends, his wife brings him betel ; and the interval between dinner and sun-set is quite at his disposal. He commonly employs it in going into company. But, in mixing with the world, he is required, above all things, to attend to the great precept ; never to covet the goods or the wife of another man. Such a doctrine, though but ill observed, is nevertheless a proof that the Hindus have not forgotten the principles of natural morality.

When the man has finished his repast, the wife begins hers, on the same leaf which has served him. As a mark of his attention and kindness, he is expected to leave her some fragments of his food ; and she, on the other hand, must shew no repugnance to eat his leavings : as an illustration of which I will here quote a story which I have read in one of their books.

“ An old Brahman was so corroded with the leprosy, “ that one day, whilst he was at dinner, a joint of one of “ his fingers fell off and dropped into his plate. His “ wife, who sat down in her turn, to eat what he had “ left, contented herself with moving a little to one side “ the fragment of her husband’s finger, and eat up the “ rest without betraying the least disgust. Her husband, “ who was looking on, was so highly pleased with her “ conduct, that he bestowed the warmest praises upon “ her for such a mark of her attachment, and asked what “ recompense she would desire to have for it, in this “ world. ‘ Alas !’ cried she, bathed in tears, ‘ what re- “ compense can I look for ? Though young, I have no “ children, and have no hope of having any ; and I am like- “ ly soon to be placed in the wretched class of widows.’

“‘No,’ replied the Brahman, in a firm tone, ‘thou shalt not be without a reward for so meritorious an action. I will provide for thy happiness.’ And as he was a man beloved by the gods and full of good works, notwithstanding his leprosy, he obtained the boon of being regenerated in this world, with his wife, for as many generations as they themselves should desire, with the possession of every thing that was good. They prospered accordingly, in this manner, as husband and wife, during three generations, with every temporal enjoyment; and their happiness was crowned with a numerous progeny. Satiated, at length, with the blessings of life, the good woman desired that she might not be renewed any more. So she died, and her husband also; and they were both translated to the *Satyaloka*, or Paradise of Brahma.”

But to return to the daily duties of the Grihastha Brahman. About half an hour before sunset, he returns a third time to the river, and goes through nearly the same ceremonies as on the two preceding occasions of that day. He then goes home, offers the sacrifice of *Homan*, and reads the *Bhagavata*, a book written in honour of Vishnu, metamorphosed into the person of Krishna, and other books of that nature.

The Hindus divide both day and night into four equal parts, called *Shanam* or *Yama*; each watch consisting of three hours. The time of going to bed is towards the close of the first watch of the night, or about nine o’clock. The Brahman visits the temple in the house where he resides, and must carry thither some offering; such as oil, fruit, incense, or even betel, if he is very poor. He walks round the temple four times, if it be

dedicated to Vishnu ; thrice if to Siva ; and only once if it be a temple of Vighneswara or Puliyar. When he bows in adoration of this last divinity, he holds his right ear with his left hand, and his left ear with the right.

## CHAP. IX.

*The Triple Prayer of the Brahmans.*

THE Triple Prayer of the Brahmans, called *Sanddhya*, will be best illustrated by giving extracts from it, which, though they contain nothing but absurdities, will serve to unfold more fully the nature of the Hindus and the spirit of that idolatry to which they are devoted.

Each *Veda* has its *Sanddhya*; and every Brahman employs that which belongs to his *Veda*. The following extract is taken from the *Yajurveda*. The Brahman thus commences his introduction to the prayer.

“ If he that is pure or not pure, in whatever trouble he may be, thinks upon him who has the eyes of the *Nilufar*, he shall be pure within and without.”

The *Nilufar*, it will be observed, is the lily of the ponds, and extolled by the Hindus as the most beautiful of flowers. There are several species of it, having different colours. He who has the eyes of the *Nilufar*, is *Vishnu*.

The original expressions may be thus translated, word for word, into the language of the learned.

<i>Ahavitra</i>	<i>havitrah</i>	<i>sarvavastum</i>	<i>gatopiva</i>
Impurus	purus	in quâcumque necessitate	repertus
<i>Yasmaret</i>	<i>Pankaruhikaksha</i>	<i>Sabahirabhyantara</i>	
qui meminerit	oculos lili aquatici habentem	hic intrâ, intus	
	<i>Suchi.</i>		
	purus (est.)		

This stanza will probably sound harshly in the ear of a European; but I thought it not unmelodious when I heard it pronounced by a Brahman, with strong utterance, and without omitting any aspiration.

He then invokes the *seven superior worlds*, the names of which are *Bhu, Bhuva, Swarga, Maha, Jana, Tapa, Satya*. The first is the earth, and the last the world of Brahma, the most elevated of all. They are commonly enunciated by joining to each name the word *Loka*, which signifies *world*, or more properly *place*, and bears a close resemblance to the Latin word *locus*.

In pronouncing those sacred words *Bhuloka, Bhuvuloka, Swargaloka*, the Brahman shuts his nostrils and every other opening, sinks apparently into profound meditation, and separating each word by a short pause from the next, he fills up the interval with the sacred and mysterious monosyllable *Om*; a word pronounced with as much awe and reverence by him, as the holy name *Jehovah* amongst the Jews.

It evidently appears, by all the circumstances under which this mysterious monosyllable is used, and the manner in which it is uttered, that it carries with it the idea of a supreme being, one and indivisible, like the sound *Om*.

Both in beginning and ending the reading of any Veda, or when listening to any sacred composition, the Brahman must always pronounce this monosyllable silently, but distinctly, within himself.

In like manner it is always prefixed in pronouncing the words which represent the seven superior worlds, as if to shew that these seven worlds are manifestations of the power signified by the word *Om*.

In an old Purana we find the following passage: "All

the rites ordained in the Vedas, the sacrifices to the fire, and all other solemn purifications shall pass away; but that which shall never pass away is the word *Om*; for it is the symbol of the Lord of all things."

Although the interest of the Brahmans induces them to conceal the true meaning of this mysterious word, of which many of them indeed are ignorant, and all pronounce with the utmost secrecy; I think it can scarcely be doubted that it was invented to represent the idea of the only true God.

The following prayer, which they always recite at their morning bath, has the greatest power of any: "May the Sun, may sovereign Will, may the Gods who preside over our Will, and chiefly thou, O Moon! pardon the sins I have this night committed, by my will, by my memory, by my speech, by my hands, by my feet, by my belly."

To this prayer he adds the following words: "Fire has Brahma for its Face; Vishnu for its Head; and Rudra for its Heart. The origin of the Earth is from on high. From smoke is engendered water, into which it is resolved; and from the water is produced the Earth, as a sediment."

At the end of the prayers, the Brahman salutes the winds lodged in various parts of his body; of which they reckon ten, as follows:

1. *Prana*; a wind which originates at the anus, and pervading the body to the crown of the head, descends from thence to the nostrils, and is the cause of the respiration which issues out of these organs for twelve inches, of which one-third escapes, and the remaining two-thirds are inspired again into the body by breathing.

2. *Apana*. This wind resides in the region of the

navel, and forces out the solid and liquid excretions, as well as the accompanying wind, through their proper channels below.

3. *Vyana*, or the wind which aids digestion and escapes backwards.

4. *Samana*, a wind which keeps all the rest in regular equipoise.

5. *Naga*, the wind which occasions hickup and vomiting.

6. *Kurma*, which causes the tremor of the eyelids.

7. *Kriditam*, which produces phlegm, cough, and sneezing.

8. *Devata*, which occasions stitches, shootings, and convulsions.

9. *Mukha Malarndu*, which excites to laughter and weeping.

10. *Jananjaya*, which resides in the head. At death, all the other winds dissipate, and this alone remains in the corpse for three days. On the third day it inflates the whole body, bursts the head, and escapes through the cleft.

All these winds are severally saluted by the Brahman when he prays during bathing; but those that he most frequently addresses himself to are the *Apana* and *Vyana*, the winds which depart by the mouth and otherwise.

In the last chapter I mentioned the salutation paid to the fingers, to the two thumbs, the two fore-fingers, and so forth, by the Brahman, when in the act of prayer. The hands, the heart, the stomach, the belly, and all the other parts of the body are saluted severally in the same manner. He then salutes the four cardinal points of heaven, by turning towards each, and bowing submissively before it.

Heaven, earth, himself, are all objects of his salutation.

He implores the elements, living or not living, to be witnesses of his prayer, and to answer it.

Particular salutation is paid to the famous Mantram *Gayatri*, and to *Saraswati*, who is the wife of Brahma, but here taken only as a personified word.

Lastly, he salutes his prayer itself; and ends his devotions by saluting the whole of the Gods and Penitents in a body.

In the prayer towards the south, they salute "the excellent Brahmans who have extended their career to the four seas." They reckon but four on this occasion, although they generally admit the existence of seven; namely the Salt Sea, the Juice of the Sugar Cane, Arac, Liquid Butter, Curds, Milk, and Pure Water.

One of the most striking passages in the *Sandhya* consists of a sort of Litany, comprising the twenty-six names of Vishnu, under which he is thus saluted: "Hail, *Kesava!* hail, *Narayana!* hail, *Govinda!*" &c. But let it not be imagined that these epithets convey any honourable distinctions in favour of the deity to whom they are addressed. *Kesava* signifies one who has a fine head of hair; *Narayana*, one who makes the waters his abode; *Govinda*, him who keeps the cows; and so on of the rest. All those appellations have a reference to fables related concerning Vishnu; which fully demonstrates what we have already suggested, that the Vedas, from which all their prayers are taken, are of a later date than the fables and the idolatry existing among the Hindus.

The prayer which the Brahman addresses to the Sun contains less absurdity than the preceding. It runs thus:

“Thou art Brahma, when thou risest ; Rudra (or Siva), in thy middle course ; Vishnu, at thy setting : Thou art the precious stone of the air ; king of day ; observer of our deeds ; the eye of the world ; the measure of time ; Lord of the nine planets ; he that blotteth out the sins of those who honour him, and expels the darkness on the return of sixty Gadis\* ; he who, in his chariot, bounds over the mountain of the north, which stretches ninety millions five hundred and ten Yojanas† ; thee will I praise with my utmost strength ; and do thou, in thy mercy, forgive all mine iniquities.” This prayer is closed with twelve, twenty-four, or forty-eight obeisances to the Sun.

The tree *Ravi* (called *Arassamara* in Tamul) is thus addressed in prayer ; “Thou art the king of the trees, Thy root resembles Brahma ; thy branches are like Siva ; thou grantest the remission of sins and a blessed world, after death, to those who have honoured thee in their lives by the ceremonies of the Cord and of Marriage ; to those who have offered thee sacrifices, have gone round about thee, have saluted and honoured thee. Destroy my sins, and grant me a happy world after I die.”

This prayer is followed by several turns round the tree, which is sacred to Vishnu. Indeed Vishnu, according to the Hindu fables, is sometimes metamorphosed into this tree : and at the grand ceremonies of the Cincture and marriage, a branch of it, as we have seen, is always placed under the alcove, and sacrifices are offered to it.

\* A Gadi is twenty-four minutes ; and sixty make twenty-four hours.

† A Yojanam is equal to three leagues.

The following prayer is believed to be no less efficacious than the preceding: "As the wearied man leaves the drops of sweat which issue from his body, at the foot of the tree where he reclines; as the bather in a sacred river is cleansed from his impurity; as the holy oblation is sanctified by the blessed herb Dharba: so may this water absolve me from all sin."

When bathing, the Brahman pronounces, with slow utterance, the *Narayana Nama*, or salutation to Vishnu, and also the Mantras of five letters, *Nama Sivaya*, or salutation to Siva. These two prayers, though extremely short, possess great virtue to purify both body and soul.

The whole of these, and some other prayers, so dark and unintelligible that I could never comprehend their meaning, are always used by the Brahman while bathing; and a few after it is over.

On the spot where they recite them, they spread one of the cloths which form their dress, and to one end of it they fasten a brass pitcher filled with water, before which they prostrate themselves. Then they sit down and make several gesticulations. Sometimes they seem to be musing. Some of the prayers are uttered with a loud voice, and others in so low a tone that persons who are moved by curiosity to listen, cannot at all understand them. Their manner of praying resembles that of a schoolboy rapidly repeating by rote a lesson which he has learned. In general one cannot suppose, from their outward appearance, that they have any inward feeling of what they are employed in; so much do their prayers, as well as their other ceremonies, appear to be a matter of routine.

## CHAP. X.

*Of the Fasts and Festivals of the Brahmans.*

THE Brahmans are bound to keep frequent fasts through the whole year, from the time that they are invested with the Triple Cincture. Age, infirmity, and even disease, unless in extreme cases, afford no exemption from this duty.

The two first days of the new moon, the eleventh, and when it is full; the time of the solstices and equinoxes; the period that precedes and follows their numerous feasts; the time of an eclipse,—are all attended with fasting. It is not so rigidly observed, however, as formerly, or as it is by some other nations. It consists in making, upon those days, the usual ablutions and other practices with more exactness, and with more scrupulous care, than on ordinary occasions, and in abstaining till sunset from all prepared food. But they may eat fruits, or take milk, without prejudice to the fast. This is not called a meal; nor are they supposed to have had dinner unless boiled rice has been served up with its usual seasoning.

After those times of mortification they try to get something more dainty than usual,—but, above all things, liquid butter; of which they are so fond as to drink it like water; and, when dinner time arrives, they replenish

their stomachs so heartily as to make up sufficiently for their former privations.

These fasts have for their object two purposes, which would do credit to a religion more pure than that of the Brahmans. The first is to obtain by this act of penitence the forgiveness of their sins; and the second to avert the malign influence of the stars.

A prudential motive may also have originally tended to the establishment of their frequent fastings, as conducing to their bodily health. The Brahmans, in general, add to their other numerous vices that of gluttony. When an opportunity occurs of satiating their appetite, they exceed all bounds of temperance. Such occasions are frequent, on account of the perpetual recurrence of their rites and ceremonies, all of which are followed by a repast, at which they load their stomachs with an excess of nourishment. This necessarily brings on frequent ailments, in a climate where all the bodily organs are so relaxed that excess of any kind, particularly intemperance, has the most serious effect. To obviate these consequences, and no doubt also to insinuate themselves into the esteem and good opinion of the public, they have adopted those periods of abstinence which attract the observation of the people, and afford their own stomach the necessary intervals for recovering its tone and natural energy.

Besides the Brahmans, all the other casts who are entitled to wear the Cord, and also several tribes of Sūdras, who do not wear it, but who wish to make a respectable appearance in public, observe the greater part of the fasts. When the days of abstinence arrive, they lay aside all servile work. The tradesmen shut their shops; the labourers repose, and give rest to their cattle: the me-

mechanics suspend their toil, and the manufacturers quit their looms.

These occasions return so frequently that they amount to a considerable space of time in the course of the year, and are therefore attended with a heavy loss. But, in a country where industry is so little encouraged, this loss of time is not much regarded; and the lazy Hindu finds more leisure than he wants for his simple and uniform round of occupation. Perhaps the love of idleness and the want of rest may have contributed a great deal to the introduction of a custom which affords so good a pretext for relaxation.

The usages and customs which we have hitherto described are so opposite to ours, and the greater part of them appear to us so troublesome and ridiculous, that we find it difficult to conceive how so great a nation, a people so old in civilization, should have adhered to them so obstinately as to preserve them to our times without any alteration. The attachment is so powerful that it has never yet entered into the imagination of any one of them to attempt a reform or change. Several of their philosophers, particularly *Vemana*, *Agastya*, *Patanatupulai*, *Tiruvaluven*, and others, have indeed ridiculed them in their writings. But these authors, no doubt, considered the danger of innovation, in matters of religion, as well as in government; and while they made the worship and civil usages of their country the subject of their raillery, they recommended a strict compliance with both, and religiously conformed to it themselves.

It is worthy of remark that, amongst the philosophical writings found in this country, where the authors are pleasant and satirical on the subject of religion and ceremonies, there is not one, as far as I know, which has

been written by a Brāhman. All that I have seen or heard of are the works of Sudras. Among these I might again mention *Tiruvaluven*, a Pariah, *Agastya*, and *Patanatu-pulai*, who have composed their poems in the Tamul language, *Saruvigny-Murti*, a Lingamite, who has adopted the Canara tongue. One of the most celebrated in the whole country is *Vemana*, whose poems were originally written in Telinga, and now translated into many other dialects. It is affirmed that this philosopher lived within these one hundred and fifty years, and was born in the district of *Kadapa*, of the cast of Reddi. His poems, of which I have seen several extracts, are truly interesting, and written in a style altogether philosophical.

It is also material to observe that all the philosophers who have turned the religion and customs of the country into ridicule, are modern authors, at least as far as I have been able to obtain correct information. There may have been ancient authors who have treated such subjects as philosophers, but their works have perished; and I am led to believe that all the earlier works that tended to expose the absurd worship of the Hindus have been destroyed by the Brahmins of late times, in order to arrest the progress of infidelity. They shew themselves equally earnest to discourage the circulation of the modern philosophical writings.

There is so wide a difference between our religion and education and those of the Hindus, that it is not wonderful that we should at the first glance feel so much dislike to their ridiculous and senseless ceremonies. But, in their judgment, ours are infinitely worse. The European manners, they think, would disgrace a barbarous people; and they cannot at all comprehend how a race, possess-

ed of qualities so eminently above other nations, should retain, in the intercourse of life, manners so low, so coarse, and so remote from theirs.

With respect to the bondage in which we suppose they are kept by these usages, it is not perceived by those who have been trained from their infancy to practise them. They perceive, likewise, that their neglect of them would bring public disgrace upon themselves; as every eye would be upon them, and as respect and esteem are paid only to the zealous observance of the ceremonies; while on the other hand a disregard of them would bring down public and private disgrace. But usages also grow into a habit, and the nature of a people so regularly accustomed to the daily practice of them renders them easy and familiar.

At the same time I have found individuals among the Brahmans reasonable enough to admit that some of their customs were inconsistent with good sense, and that they practised them merely out of respect to public opinion, and to live like other people. I have also been informed that, in many particulars, there is no rule for their conduct, and that the greater number of the Brahmans did not so strictly confine themselves to the observance of their customs, but because others practised them, and because they feared their own neglect would be animadverted upon.

The regular observance of all their rites depends very much upon the degree of affluence in which they are placed. The liberality of the princes, as has been observed, endows many of them with villages and considerable territory, for which they make no returns. These villages, called *Agragrama*, are inhabited only by Brahmans. The labourers who cultivate their lands reside

wholly apart from them, in the adjoining villages. Those who live on the *Agragrama* being thus under the inspection of one another, are compelled, in common decency, to conform to the customs of their cast. Yet I would except such of them as are possessed of so small a piece of ground that they are obliged to cultivate it themselves, in order to procure a livelihood; for their labours in the field occupy them so completely as to afford no leisure for those tedious ceremonies, the rules of which they frequently do not understand. But they are despised on that account by their brethren, who look upon them as degenerate Brahmans; while they themselves are enabled to be more faithful to their rules by the abundance of leisure which they enjoy and the amusement which the ceremonies supply to divert their lassitude; independently of the credit they derive from their regularity, and the public favour which it conciliates.

The Brahman Gurus are obliged, and have a right from their station, to watch over the observance of the rules prescribed to the cast. Those who are remiss, and notoriously negligent, do not always escape with the severe reprimands or public affronts put upon them by the Guru, when he visits the district, but in most cases have a fine imposed upon them proportioned to their criminality and their means.

The Purohitas are also compelled, for the sake of giving a good example, and in order to avoid the contempt which their negligence in this respect would draw upon them, to be very rigid with regard to the prescribed observances, and their interest also prompts them, to enforce the practice on others, as it is the means by which they live.

Ceremonial precision appears most conspicuously at the *Samaradana*, or public feasts, which are often given to the Brahmans. Those who are at the expence of the entertainment consider it as one of the most meritorious of their deeds. They are given on various grounds ; as on the dedication of a new temple, to expiate by so good a work the sins of the dead, or to obtain success in time of war ; sometimes to avert an evil constellation ; to procure rain in a great drought ; to celebrate the birth or marriage of a great prince or other high personage, and for other purposes of the same kind ; but chiefly founded on the superstition of the country. It is unnecessary to add that the Brahmans, feeling the benefits they derive from such institutions, zealously urge their adoption, and assign to them the highest-rank in the order of good works.

When a *Samaradana* is announced, a general concourse of men and women assemble at the place from seven or eight leagues around, with appetites well disposed to take every advantage that the generosity of their entertainer can yield them. Sometimes, above a thousand people will attend ; and as they must all be Brahmans, and naturally keeping a strict watch upon each other, all the ceremonies of the cast are observed with the most scrupulous nicety, and every one studies to surpass the rest in the exactness with which he can perform them.

Being now seated on the ground in long rows, the women distinct from the men, they are prepared for dinner. Sometimes one and sometimes another sings a Sanscrit hymn in honour of their gods, or an obscene song ; and when it is finished, the whole company, ma-

ny of whom understand not a word of it, roar out in loud approbation, "Hara, hara, Govinda!"

He who gives the entertainment is not permitted to sit down with his guests unless he be a Brahman himself. If he belongs to any other cast, he does not shew himself in the assembly until the feast is over; and then he prostrates himself before these "gods of the earth," whom he has had the honour to entertain; and they, in their turn, give him the *asirvadam* or benediction.

If, in addition to the entertainment, the benefactor makes a present of money or cloth, he is trumpeted forth by the Brahmans who share it, and exalted above the gods; and this is a sufficient reward for his profusion.

The Hindus in general, have the keenest relish for the most barefaced adulation and the most fulsome praises. There is a whole cast of them, consisting entirely of flatterers, called the cast of the *Bhats*, whose only employment is to sneak with base servility into the presence of persons of distinction, reciting or chaunting some verses in their praise, which they have got by heart, filled with the most enthusiastic praise. The great man listens patiently to the sycophant, and has even the vanity to imagine that he is deserving of the lofty compliments which he hears, and rewards them with suitable liberality.

The ceremonies and other practices of the Brahmans are so numerous and so frequently repeated, that they occupy the whole time of those who sincerely discharge them. But, as we have observed, the greater number content themselves with performing the principal ones, or such as in their opinion cannot be omitted without an open violation of the laws of decorum.

There are but few among them, for example, who bathe oftener than once in the day, and repeat the whole of the long prayers prescribed ; and the same is the case with regard to the fasting and abstinence from certain aliments which must never be eaten or touched. They conform to all their customs, while they are seen, but they are not so scrupulous when in their retirement. Hence comes the proverb so general among them : “ An entire Brahman at the Agragrama ; half a Brahman when seen at a distance ; and a Sudra when out of sight.”

But the attachment to these customs subsists in its fullest vigour, and they hold in sovereign contempt any one amongst them that would shew himself indifferent in any particular.

## CHAP. XI.

*Of certain prohibited sorts of Food amongst the Brahmans; and their secret and nocturnal Sacrificés.*

THERE are three articles of living particularly interdicted to the Brahmans : the eating of whatever has had the principle of life ; the use of inebriating liquors, and the touching of food that has been dressed by persons of a different cast.

The habit they acquire, from their infancy, of never eating flesh, and the aversion instilled into them for this species of food, grows up into such a degree of horror, that the sight of any person using it would induce in many of them the re-action of the stomach. It is not therefore more difficult to such persons to abstain from meat, than to a Jew or Musalman to renounce the flesh of the hog.

This abstinence prevails not only among the Brahmans, but, as we have often had occasion to mention, among the various casts who are desirous of conciliating public esteem, and who, being educated in this particular in the same prejudices, keep up an equal aversion to all sorts of animal food. They likewise preserve the same abhorrence of all liquors and drugs that intoxicate, and they would take it as the highest insult if it were proposed to them to taste any thing of that nature. An instance can hardly be found, in their settlements, of any transgression occurring amongst them ; and among the Brahmans it is unheard of.

It is not quite the same with those who reside in secluded places and are less exposed to observation. Not long ago a fire broke out in a village of Tanjore in the house of a Brahman, the only individual of that cast who lived there. All the neighbours came running, and removed the effects which they found in the house. With other things they discovered a large jar filled with pickled pork, and another half full of arrack. If the accident of the fire afflicted the distressed Brahman, the discovery made in the house was scarcely less overpowering, although it was long kept up as a diverting joke by the inhabitants of the village as well as of the neighbourhood, through all parts of which the story spread. It may be fairly surmised that this was not the only person of his cast that was guilty of such a breach of its rules.

Transgressions of this kind are still more common in the great towns, where it is more easy to procure the proscribed articles, and to enjoy them without detection. I have been credibly informed that some Brahmans in small companies, have gone very secretly to the houses of Sudras whom they could depend on, to partake of meat and strong liquors, which they indulged in without scruple. I also know of instances where these same Sudras were permitted to sit down with them, and to join in the same secret abomination. The forbidden dishes which they used in common had been dressed by the Sudras; and to touch any food prepared by persons of another cast is a violation of the rules of the Brahmans, still more abhorred than that of eating with them in common.

An inconvenience which frequently attends these secret debauches is that the cook-maid is not always to be

relied on for keeping the secret. I knew a young Brahman wench who was inveigled one day by the arts and importunities of a Sudra woman, whom she frequently visited, to eat of a ragout which the Sudra woman had dressed. Some time after, they had a quarrel, and this sad indiscretion of the poor Brahman girl could not be expiated by all the shame and confusion with which the detection overwhelmed her.

The secret use of intoxicating drink is still less uncommon than that of interdicted food, because it is less difficult to conceal. Yet it is a thing unheard of to meet a Brahman drunk in public. It may be allowed, therefore, that some individuals amongst them occasionally infringe their rules in secret, on this important point ; but it must be added that the great majority obeys them ; and it would be an injustice to their extreme sobriety if we hesitated to believe that the Brahmans in general abstain from strong liquors and other inebriating substances, keep up a perpetual fast, and touch nothing that belongs to animals but milk.

The punishment of offences of this class belongs to the Gurus. When they make their circuit, and pass through any place where an offender is detected, he is brought before them, and after hearing the charges against him, he is heavily amerced or corporally punished, or even excluded from the cast when the crime is very flagrant.

But, of the great numbers accused, many are acquitted on the good repute in which they are held, and sometimes to avoid too much publicity. Various other reasons are found to palliate the faults of delinquents, and a Guru allows himself to be easily gained over, by presents, so as to refuse to take cognizance of the charge,

or to find some other means of nullifying it. I was an eye-witness of the following instance of such connivance.

Being at *Dharmapuri*, a small town in the Carnatic, while a Guru Brahman was making his visitation of the district, one of the cast was accused before him of having openly violated the rules respecting food, and even of turning them publicly into ridicule. The accusation was as well founded as it was important. The culprit was brought up before the Guru, who had previously taken the evidence against him, and now decreed that he should be divested of the Cord. At this awful moment, the man, apparently unmoved under so grievous a punishment, advanced to the middle of the assembly where the Guru was seated, and, after performing the sashtangam in the most respectful way, addressed his judge nearly in the following terms :

“ So you, with your council, have decided that I am  
 “ to be divested of my Cord. It will be no great loss  
 “ to me. Two bits of silver will get me another. But I  
 “ desire to know what your motive can be for degrading  
 “ me in this public manner. Is it because I have eaten  
 “ meat? If that is the only reason, why does not the  
 “ justice of a Guru, which ought to be impartial, extend  
 “ its severity alike over all offenders? why should I be  
 “ the only person accused out of so great a number of  
 “ delinquents? I look on one side, and there I see two  
 “ or three of my accusers, with whom I joined not long  
 “ ago in devouring a good leg of mutton. Here, on the  
 “ other side, I turn my eyes, and I see some more of  
 “ them whom I dined with the other day, at the house of  
 “ a Sudra, where we cut up an excellent pullet. Allow  
 “ me only to give in their names; and I will also accuse  
 “ many others whose consciousness has detained them

“from appearing at this assembly. But, if you will allow me, I will instantly bring testimony of the facts, and justify my accusation.”

The Guru was evidently puzzled how to proceed, after a discourse on so delicate a subject, and delivered with so much intrepidity. But, recovering himself, he cried out, with much presence of mind: “Who has brought this prattler hither? Don’t you see the fellow is mad? Turn him out, and let us be no longer tormented with his nonsense.” And in this happy way the Guru extricated himself from considerable embarrassment.

But there are instances of more impious infractions of the laws on which we are treating than these, inasmuch as they have been conducted in secret, and consecrated by magical rites and Occult Sacrifices in honour of the gods. It is not very long ago that some magicians, real or pretended, held their nocturnal orgies in secret, in a place which I know. In these they gave themselves up to excesses of every sort. The chief mover was a Brahman. Some Sudras were his accomplices, who were previously initiated in the mysteries of darkness which were there solemnized. They eat and drank of all forbidden things; and they closed the ceremonies of each day by some unknown magical sacrifices. The effects of such preparation were so much dreaded by the neighbourhood, that they were about to require the aid of the government to put down such dangerous combinations. But when the gang found they were discovered, they skulked away of their own accord.

But there is one of these Occult Sacrifices in existence, and known to many, secret and abominable as it is. I mean the sacrifice to the *Saktis*; a word which signifies

*force or power.* Sometimes it is the wife of Vishnu, and sometimes the wife of Siva that the votaries pretend to honour by this sacrifice ; but the primary object appears to be the worship of some certain invisible force represented by the emblems of *Power* and *Strength*. It is always celebrated with more or less secrecy, and is more and more wicked, in proportion as those who assist at it are deeply initiated in its attendant mysteries of darkness.

The least detestable of the sacrifices made to the *Saktis* are those in which the votaries content themselves with eating and drinking of every thing, without regard to the usage of the country ; and where men and women, huddled promiscuously together, shamelessly violate the sacred laws of decency and modesty.

These abominable sacrifices are principally conducted by the *Namadharis*, or those who exclusively profess the worship of Vishnu. In the meetings which they hold all casts are invited, without excepting even the Pariahs. All distinctions are abolished, and the Pariah is as welcome as the Brahman.

They bring before the idol of Vishnu all sorts of meat that can be procured, without excepting that of the cow. They likewise provide abundance of arrack, the brandy of the country ; of toddy ; of opium, and several other intoxicating drugs. The whole is presented to Vishnu. Then he who administers, tastes each species of meat and of liquor ; after which he gives permission to the worshippers to consume the rest. Then may be seen men and women rushing forward, tearing and devouring. One seizes a morsel, and, while he gnaws it, another snatches it out of his hands, and thus it passes on from mouth to mouth till it disappears, while fresh mor-

sels, in succession, are making the same disgusting round. The meat being greedily eaten up, the strong liquors and the opium are sent round. All drink out of the same cup, one draining what another leaves, in spite of their natural abhorrence of such a practice. When the liquors are exhausted, they have nothing left but to scramble for the leaves of betel. On such occasions they regard not the pollution that must ensue when they eat and drink in a manner so beastly and disgusting.

When arrived at a state of drunkenness, men and women being all indiscriminately mixed, there is no restraint on any sort of excess. A husband sees his wife in the arms of another man, and has not the right to recall her, or to find fault with what is going on. The women are there in common. All casts are confounded, and the Brahman is not above the Pariah.

In some varieties of these mysteries of iniquity, still more occult than those we have alluded to, the conspicuous objects of the sacrifice to the *Saktis*, are a large vase filled with arrack, and a young girl, quite naked, and placed in the most shameful attitude. He who sacrifices calls upon the *Sakti*, who is supposed, by this evocation, to come, and take up her residence in those two objects. After the offering has been made of all that was prepared for the festival, Brahmans, Sudras, Pariahs, men, women, swill the arrack which was the offering to the *Saktis*, regardless of the same glass being used by them all, which in ordinary cases would excite abhorrence. Here, it is a virtuous act to participate in the same morsel, and to receive from each other's mouths the half-gnawn flesh. The fanatical impulse drives them to excesses, which modesty will not permit to be named.

It cannot well be doubted that these enthusiasts en-

deavour by their infamous sacrifices, to cover with the veil of religion the two ruling passions, lust and the love of intoxicating liquor. It is also certain that the Brahmans, and particularly certain women of the cast, are the directors of those horrible mysteries of iniquity. Fortunately the great expense of these ceremonies prevents their frequent recurrence.

The Greeks, the Romans, and other ancient nations likewise had their secret and abominable orgies, as well as the Hindus. *Vice* was honoured amongst them, and considered essential to the adoration of their gods and the gratification of the worshippers. It still raises our astonishment to perceive how far the wisest and most accomplished of all nations carried its indulgence in tolerating, and even sanctioning, the excesses of every sort that were introduced at the feasts instituted in honour of Bacchus. And we are compelled to blush when we think of Greece, in her highest state of refinement, enduring the abominable mysteries celebrated at the festivals, and in the temple of Venus.

Ancient authors have transmitted some account of the execrable rites practised by the Persians, in honour of their God Mithra; and we also know the infamous ceremonies which the Egyptians adopted in honour of Osiris.

The sacred Scripture also recounts, in part, in different books, the irregularities and crimes committed in honour of Baal. It likewise alludes to the detestable worship of Moloch as practised by the Moabites and Ammonites; which brought upon these races a dreadful vengeance.

It is thus that the genius and progress of idolatry have been always the same, and that ignorance and fanaticism have in all ages led to similar results.

## CHAP. XII.

*The different avocations of the Brahmans.*

IF the Brahmans lived strictly according to the primitive rules of their cast, they would keep themselves retired in the remote villages, occupying themselves with their ceremonies, attending to the management of their families, and particularly to the education of their children; and what leisure remained should be devoted to reading, study, and meditation. But a life so philosophical is not compatible with the poverty of some of them and the ambition of the rest.

Their real practice has been to insinuate themselves, by art and address, into the courts of the princes of the country; to conciliate their affection and confidence, and to gain possession of the highest offices. Brahmans are almost always the chief ministers of those indolent kings who are sunk in pleasure and effeminacy, and have no other employment than the search after new delights and delicacies, for the gratification of their perverted appetites. The happiness of their people, and the good government of their country, are objects foreign to their care. Women, baths, and perfumes occupy all their leisure, and they are surrounded by those only who have learned to administer to their round of sensuality, or who can offer any fresh object of pleasure or new mode of voluptuous enjoyment. The cares of government

are devolved upon the Brahmans, to whom they delegate all their authority, and the power of appointing to every office.

It may be easily imagined that, in this exalted sphere, they do not forget their relations and friends, but on the contrary, attach to their interests such persons of their cast as may aid them, by close union, in maintaining their authority.

As they have more talent and address than the ordinary race of Hindus, then are become necessary even to the Moorish princes, whose harsh and inflexible authority they well know how to employ in plundering the people, and in extorting their money by the most vexatious methods, not even omitting the rack. At the same time they never possess the same confidence and power under those sovereigns, as are conceded to them by the Pagan princes. For they are retained by the former in their employments, until by a thousand acts of injustice, authorised by their masters, they have accumulated a fortune. Then they are arrested, divested of their authority, and stripped of their ill-gotten wealth, by the same methods of severity and torture which they themselves had employed in acquiring it.

But, as the servants of such masters must be aware that sooner or later, they will be called upon to disgorge, they take previous opportunities of disposing of some portion of their plunder out of the reach of the despot whom they serve.

It is unnecessary to remark that Brahmans thus exalted in rank, must be above their proper condition. Engaged in governing a kingdom or a province, they have neither the time nor the inclination to undergo the tedious course of their ceremonies. But having power in their

hands, and being the source of punishments and rewards, no person can venture to reproach them with the dereliction of their usages as a crime. Their rank places them out of the reach of the laws.

It is a favourite proverb with them, that “*for the belly one plays many tricks.*” And indeed it would be difficult to reckon the number of methods they take to acquire a living. Some practise medicine, and, it is said, not unsuccessfully. Others go into the army; and there are many of these in the Mahrata cavalry. But a Brahman army will never be very formidable. Courage and valour were never their attributes, and the manner in which they are bred must necessarily disqualify them from becoming good soldiers.

Some devote themselves to commerce, particularly in the province of Gujrat; and they are considered intelligent merchants. But this is a profession in no estimation with the cast; though I conceive the contempt they have fallen into is rather owing to their remissness with regard to ceremonies than to the profession itself.

The collectors of revenue, custom-house officers, writing-masters, village accomptants, and teachers of schools, are generally Brahmans.

They are very fit to be employed on messages, as they are never stopped by any body. And it is on this account that many merchants, in the countries ruled by native princes, keep them in pay in the quality of *culies*, or porters, because the officers of the customs are commanded to search nothing which they carry.

This last sort of employment is the more lucrative to those who follow it, that they can travel any where, almost without expense. For nearly every stage on the highways has a lodge or house of charity, called *Chhatra*,

erected for Brahman travellers. They alone can be received, and the keeper of the lodge is not allowed to charge them any thing for their entertainment, being well repaid for all that he lays out by the large endowments and abundant contributions that support these hospitable establishments.

The facility with which they can every where pass renders them excellent spies in war time, when there is any reason to hope that they will not take part with both sides in the contest.

Poverty, or avarice, makes them frequently descend to occupations of a very low sort, and to professions very contemptible in their own eyes. Some of them are dancing-masters to the loose girls that belong to the temples of the idols. Others profess cookery; and, of these the rich Brahmans always have one in their kitchens. Neither do they object to perform this office in the service of Sudras; though this incongruity arises out of it, that the master, being of an inferior cast, must not touch the dishes which his domestic uses for his cookery. Neither, on the other hand, will the prejudices of the domestic permit him to withdraw from the table the plates which he had served up. What he has prepared is pure for his master; but what his master has touched is pollution to him.

In the countries under the government of Europeans, they frequently enter into their service, and become their *Dobashis* or upper servants; and, when we take their prejudices into account, this last condition of life must appear to a Brahman the lowest in which he can be placed; because waiting on his master forces him continually to break his own rules, and exposes him to defilement in its utmost degree. Those who are far

removed from the neighbourhood of Europeans cannot imagine how people of their cast can be induced, by hire, so completely to divest themselves of all shame, as to become the menial servants of men whom they consider as of the lowest and most grovelling manners. Those, however, who comply, justify themselves by their old maxim: "for the belly, one will play many tricks."

The superstition, which reigns without controul in India, is a never failing resource for the Brahman to supply all his wants. Any malady, dispute, journey, or other undertaking; any bad omen or unpleasant dream, or any of a thousand other things that continually happen in life, makes it necessary to have recourse to them, to learn what evil or good is to follow. In all cases where they are consulted, they resort to the Hindu Almanac, of which each has a copy, where are inscribed the good days and the evil, propitious and unpropitious moments, fortunate and malign constellations. Upon these they pretend to calculate, and give their dupes an answer, more or less favourable, in proportion as they are paid.

Going on in the mountebank way, they have a cure for every disease, and have always an answer ready to suit every occasion. When a matter comes before them that will pay well, they give all possible importance to their response by inventing some fine story that will exactly apply to it. And, in short, wherever imposture and deception can avail, they are never at a loss.

"What is a Brahman," I was one day asked, in a jocular way, by one of that cast with whom I was intimately acquainted: "he is an ant's nest of lies and impostures." It is not possible to describe them better in so few words. All Hindus are expert in disguising the truth; but there is nothing in which the cast of Brah-

mans so much surpasses them all as in the art of lying. It has taken so deep a root among them, that, so far from blushing when detected in it, many of them make it their boast.

I had once a long conversation on the subject of religion, with two Brahmans, who came to visit me. They were of that sort who live on the popular credulity. Our conference ended by their frankly confessing the truth of the maxims of the Christian religion, and its excellence when compared with the absurdities of Paganism. "What you say," they repeated to me, over and over again, with the appearance of conviction: "what you say is true." "Well!" I answered, "if what I say is true, that which you teach to your people must be false; and you are no better than impostors." "That is true also," they replied: "we lie, because we gain our bread by it; and, if we preached to our people such truths as you have now inculcated so fully, we should have nothing to put in our bellies."

Flattery is another of their prime resources. They are by nature of an insinuating turn; and whatever may be their vanity and pride on other occasions, they make no scruple to cringe in the most fawning way before persons from whom they expect any favour. They likewise attach themselves very eagerly to great merchants or other wealthy persons; and all Hindus being extremely vain, the Brahmans who thoroughly know them, skilfully take advantage of this disposition in persons who can afford to make it worth their while, and lavish upon them the utmost profusion of praise. They well know how to adapt their flattery to the particular taste of the individual, sometimes by composing verses in his praise, sometimes by publicly relating anecdotes

or incidents in his life, true or false, if they are to his advantage. Sometimes they overwhelm him with blessings; tell him his fortune, and give him assurance of the enjoyment of temporal delights for many years. Such flatteries and encomiums, ridiculous as they are, give infinite pleasure to those who receive them, as the blazon of their merits; and the flatterer whose invention has been roused by want or some other cause, receives an ample reward.

## CHAP. XIII.

*Of the Toleration of the Brahmans in Religion, and their Bigotry in Political Affairs.—Their Contempt of Strangers.*

I HAVE elsewhere observed, that it is a principle among the Brahmans in general, to honour all the Gods of the country, as there are none of them in direct opposition to the rest; and that the wars and disputes which have occasionally arisen out of that circumstance have not been of long duration, nor hindered them from soon returning to a state of amity. I have also mentioned that, in consequence of this principle, the greater number are displeas'd with those sectaries who are so closely attached to the worship of any particular deity as to disregard all others, or at least to look on them as inferior and subordinate to him whom they prefer.

But, are those tolerant Brahmans the less attached, on that account, to the religion of their country and the worship of their idols? What I am going to say on this subject may appear paradoxical; but it is by no means uncommon with them to speak in the most contemptuous style of the objects of their worship. They appear in the temples without the least symptom of attention or respect for the divinities who reside there. Indeed, it is not a rare thing to see them chuse these places in preference, for their quarrels and fights. And, in general, the prostra-

tions they make to their gods of brass and stone do not appear to proceed from any pious impulse.

Their faith and their devotion are sometimes excited by human interests and motives. They exhibit a great reliance on those gods through whom they get their bread; but when they have nothing to gain, or when they are not observed by the profane, they seem to care little about them.

The legends concerning the Pagan gods are universally so trifling and absurd that it is no wonder the people should sicken at the ridicule of addressing them in worship. It is not a dangerous thing to laugh at them; for they will frequently join in the joke and carry it farther. Many of them have songs or scraps of rhymes, abusive of the gods whom they outwardly adore; and these they sing or recite publicly, and with glee, without any apprehension of moving the anger or vengeance of the impotent beings to whom they are applied. The Sudras, who are more simple and credulous than the Brahmans, would not be so tolerant; and it would be very unsafe for any one to turn into ridicule the deity whom they profess chiefly to revere.

What mainly contributes to the contempt which the Brahmans really feel for the gods whom their interest, education, and general custom lead them outwardly to adore, is the clear and distinct knowledge they possess of a God eternal, the author, and first cause of all things; of a Being infinite, all-powerful, extending through all, immaterial, existing of himself, boundless in understanding, who knows all things, who guides all things, infinitely wise, of a purity which excludes all passion, propensity, division, or mixture. This is the idea they entertain, and which their books declare of *Parampara-*

*vastu*, *Para-Brahma*, *Paramatma*; and it is the literal signification of the preceding expressions which the Brahmans employ to explain the nature and the attributes of the Supreme Being.

These expressions, extracted from their books, and several more which I may likewise produce, signify the perfections of God, to which I have alluded. But the evil is, that the principal part of those high attributes, which only pertain to the Supreme Being, the creator and sovereign master of all things, have been prostituted to the fabulous deities of India, mixed with a number of others, accommodated to the vices and passions of men; and which therefore can have no effect but to degrade and vilify the nature of the true God.

But can it be credited that the Brahmans, holding opinions so lofty of the Deity, should descend to give the appellation of God to that innumerable multitude of living or inanimate creatures which are worshipped by the illiterate crowd? They must, at another æra, have confined their adoration and homage to the supreme and only God, whom they now appear to know but in speculation. Him alone the Hindus in remote times seem to have adored.

But custom, interest, appearances, and all the other feelings by which human nature is corrupted, begin to prevail. They exist no where more powerfully than in the hearts of the Brahmans; for they have kept the light from their own eyes; they have stifled the cry of their consciences, by substituting for the worship of the only and true God the absurd and irrational adoration of lifeless idols. "Professing themselves to be wise they become fools." God, whose image they have disfigured by their abominations, has justly visited them with that

severe judgment which the holy Apostle Paul has informed us fell upon certain philosophers of his time, who shunned the light, as the modern Brahmans do, and has delivered them up in the same manner, "giving them over to a reprobate mind." These are the words of the Apostle in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; the whole of which, from the eighteenth verse, may be perused as an eloquent description of a community sunk into an abandoned state of manners, to be compared only with the worst part of society in India.

The philosophers of India, however, do not stand alone in the guilt of suppressing that truth which is of all others the most important to man. That great truth, the existence and the unity of the true God, was not unknown at Athens; but the wisest of her philosophers, Socrates, who had almost as clear conceptions of the nature of the Godhead as we have derived from revelation, never durst reveal it to the people; and although he well understood the absurdities of Paganism, he assumed for his maxim, that it was proper to conform to the religion of one's country.

Plato, his disciple, who beheld Greece and all the world abused with a silly and scandalous worship, and who knew the true God as well as his master, contents himself with saying that there are some truths which must not be divulged to the multitude.

At the time when those two philosophers flourished, the whole world was overspread with the same error; and truth durst not appear. The followers of the true God were shut up in a narrow corner of the earth, and his worship was publicly exercised only in the temple of Jerusalem.

But there is this vast difference between the ancient philosophers and the modern sages of India, that the former were too few in number to influence the public mind, and had not sufficient support to combat successfully the errors into which the multitude had fallen ; whereas the Brahmans, from their numbers, and the high consideration in which they are held, if they seriously desired it, and if their interest and passions did not run the other way, might throw down, by a single effort, the whole edifice of idolatry in India, and substitute without difficulty, in its room, the knowledge and worship of the true God ; of whom they themselves still preserve the loftiest conceptions.

But, to return to the religious toleration of the Brahmans, we add, that they carry it much beyond the universal adoration of all the deities of their own country. It is a principle established and taught in their books, and maintained by themselves in discourse, that, in the world, there must be an endless diversity of laws and of worship (expressed by their word *anantaveda*, which signifies an infinity of religions) not one of which they can condemn.

They would respect Muhammadanism, such as it is professed in India, with all the trappings and superstitious additions of ceremonies with which the Moorish Hindus have overloaded it : but the weight of the yoke which its propagators have imposed on their necks, with an utter disregard of their laws, has brought both them and their religion into abhorrence.

The Christian religion, in itself, is not disliked by them. They admire its pure morality ; but they perceive also that it would not be easy for a plain Hindu to conform to some of its precepts. The Christian religion

condemns and abjures the greater part of their usages, on account of the superstition with which they are tainted; and thence, in some districts particularly, it becomes quite insupportable. The Hindus who embrace it appear no longer to be branches of the same national family with themselves, having renounced the usages which the adherents of the ancient faith consider as the only sacred bond which can unite them indissolubly together.

I have often thought, however, that interest was a good deal concerned in their hatred of the Christians, as they must perceive that, if that religion gained ground, it must be to their prejudice; and that, if it ultimately triumphed, they would be left destitute of the means of subsistence.

Upon the whole, we must conclude that the tolerant spirit of the Brahmans, in regard to religion, arises from indifference about it; most of them holding their own worship in contempt.

They have been thought intolerant in their religious practices, because they do not open the gates of their temples to Europeans, but refuse to admit to their ceremonies such of them as are attracted by curiosity to see them. But the reserve which the Hindus maintain in such cases by no means proceeds from an intolerant feeling with regard to religion, but wholly from a dislike of the unprepared condition and the uncleanness in which, according to their prejudices, the Europeans continually live. If these strangers would cease from taking Pariahs into their domestic service; if they would abstain from eating the flesh of cattle, give up their offensive dress, with their boots, gloves, and whatever is made of animal skin, and accommodate themselves, in however small a

degree, to the other leading usages of the country, they would experience from the Hindu the most perfect and unbounded toleration.

Having sometimes in my travels come up to a temple where a multitude of the people were assembled for the exercise of their worship, I have stopped for a while to look on; and the Brahmans, who direct the ceremonies, have come out, and, upon learning who I was, and my manner of living, have invited me to go in and join them in the temple; an honour for which I always thanked them unfeignedly, as became a person of my profession to do.

But if the Brahmans manifest that it is agreeable to their principles to shew indulgence in whatever immediately concerns their religion, the case is very much altered in regard to their Civil Institutions. In this particular they are the most intolerant of men. Nothing appears to them well ordered but their own customs. In the world there are no really civilized men but themselves; and the habits and manners of the strangers, who are now become their masters, and live in the midst of them, they consider to be worthy only of a barbarous people.

This pride and vain prejudice in favour of their customs and practices are so deeply rooted in their nature, that all the mighty revolutions to which they have been exposed, have not effected the slightest visible alteration in their manner of living. Several times have they been subdued by conquerors, who have shewn themselves superior to them in courage and bravery; but they have always regarded their vanquishers as infinitely beneath them in civilization, education, and accomplishments.

After being subdued by the Moors, in modern times,

that fierce people, who could not tolerate any religion but their own among a race whom they had conquered, used every effort to impose their religious, as well as civil institutions on the Hindus, who had all submitted without resistance to the stern invaders. But all endeavours were in vain. The Hindus, who had surrendered to them all they had valuable on earth, who saw their wives and their children carried away, and made no resistance; who beheld the fierce plunderers ravage their whole land with blood and fire, and yet rested quiet; shewed a spirit never to be subdued, when any attempt was made to change their customs and to substitute those of a foreign people. Even the long residence of their conquerors among them, during which every art of seduction has been employed, without intermission, to entice their new subjects to comply with their modes of life, has produced no visible alteration in the old customs of the country. The lure of wealth and honours held out by the Moorish invader to all who would conform to his religion and rules, and the harsh treatment and contempt reserved for those who persevered in their own worship and forms; were all too feeble to move the Hindus, particularly the Brahmans; who have preferred a state of vassalage, with the use of their own rites, to all the dignities and honours which would have been the reward of their compliance. After a long struggle, the haughty conqueror has been obliged to yield, and even, in some measure, to adopt the religious and civil customs of the vanquished people.

It must also be admitted that the harsh and tyrannical system employed by the Muhammadan invaders in the government of a race of men so gentle, so submissive, so pacific as those they found in India, was but ill adapt-

ed to conciliate affection, or to abate the prejudices which, in all times, they have entertained against strangers and their customs.

The period of their emancipation from the iron yoke imposed upon them by those tyrants, and which they have endured for several ages without daring to complain, cannot now be far off. But the poor Hindu, though apparently insensible to the evils of life, cannot easily forget the numberless miseries which he has suffered for several hundreds of years from those cruel oppressors ; who, after subjugating an unresisting and obedient race, that never ventured to dispute their dominion, appear to have studied as a science the art of inflicting calamity and woe.

The Moors in India are disliked by the Brahmans, both on account of the tyranny which they exercise over them, without any respect to the imaginary *lords of the earth*, and also for the small regard they shew to their ceremonies and customs in general. But they also find amongst these strangers, persons who equal or perhaps surpass themselves in haughtiness, in pride, and vain glory, and in most of the vices which are familiar to either race : so that the one is never likely to coalesce with the other.

There is this difference, however, that the Moor on his part maintains but an empty pride, which has no other foundation than the office which he holds, or the dignity with which he is invested ; whereas the Brahman has the consciousness of his own excellence, which never forsakes him, but enables him to support his rank under all circumstances of life. Rich or poor, in prosperous or adverse fortune, he regulates himself continually by the sentiment which tells him, that he is the noblest and

the most perfect of all created beings, that all other men are beneath him, and that there is nothing on earth so well ordered and so becoming as his usages and customs.

He is likewise well convinced that there is nothing human in which he does not surpass the strangers who live in his country; particularly in whatever relates to science. For, as to the arts, he considers them as greatly beneath his dignity, and suited only to the degraded casts, who are not permitted to soar into the sublime regions of knowledge, accessible only to the Brahmans.

The profound ignorance in which the Moors in India live, being incapable even of dipping into the almanac, for which they are compelled to have recourse to the Brahmans, tends very much to strengthen the good opinion which the latter entertain of themselves; which no beings in the world carry so far. But, if they were impartial, they would descend a good deal from this self-conceit, when they perceive how far the Europeans, with whom they now live in familiarity, leave them behind in all the branches of knowledge which they cultivate in common.

Nevertheless, a Brahman will always refuse to own that any European can be as wise as he is. He holds in sovereign contempt all the sciences, arts, and new discoveries which such a teacher could communicate, in the injudicious conceit that any thing not invented by himself can be neither good nor useful. And he is persuaded that every thing human that either can or ought to be known, is already contained in his books, while on the other hand, whatever he himself has not found out is suspicious, and ought to be rejected without farther examination.

Such is the education of a Brahman, and such the principles in which he is universally and invariably trained up; and it would be labour lost to attempt to correct his prejudices or to alter his notions on such affairs.

One frequently sees amongst them some individuals whom interest or other motives have induced to acquire the European tongues, and who understand them very well. But they are rarely seen with a European book of science in their hands; and it would be somewhat difficult to convince them that any such work contained an atom of which they are ignorant, or that is not already to be found in books of their own.

At the same time, although the Brahmans will not allow that the Europeans equal them in the high departments of knowledge, they confess their superiority in some other respects. In particular they love to talk of the humanity with which they carry on war, of the moderation and impartiality with which they govern the people under their controul; and, if it were possible for this singular cast to become familiar with any foreigners, it would certainly be with the Europeans; whose good qualities of benevolence and humanity they acknowledge. But among the bright virtues which adorn them, they descry the darkest taints. They see them addicted to habits so gross and abominable according to their notions, so completely opposite to their own education and breeding, as well as to their institutions, that they quickly forget the favourable impressions which their beneficence, moderation, and spirit of equity had left, and view them in no other light than as a part of the barbarous nations.

The Europeans would have rapidly advanced in the esteem and affection of the people of India, had they chosen at their first appearance, if not to accommodate themselves entirely to the customs and prejudices of the country, at least to have done so in the leading points. If they had yielded somewhat in those observances, the breach of which is most offensive, and is indeed regarded by all casts of Hindus as the most enormous wickedness, or as outrageous rudeness, it would have cost them but little. Perhaps the adoption of some of the customs which they found established in the country might have been beneficial to their health, and at all events would have procured them an advantage which they have for ever lost, in the love and confidence of those nations.

I cannot see, for my part, what the Europeans would have lost by abstaining, in tenderness to the prejudices of the people, from the flesh of the cow; which, in hot climates, is but an insipid and unwholesome food. Neither do I perceive that it would have been a great sacrifice for them, in chusing their servants, to have avoided the infamous and detested sect of the Pariahs.

Let us but candidly consider how a Brahman, or a Hindu of any other cast, can attach himself with affection to a European; an individual who, in his whole conduct, affronts their most sacred and inviolable institutions.

How can a Brahman repress the horror and the hideous disgust which must arise within him, when he sees Europeans feeding upon the flesh of the cow: he, to whom the murder of one such animal is more appalling than manslaughter, and the use of its flesh more horrible than to gorge on a human carcase?

In what estimation can he hold men who admit Pariahs into their domestic service, or keep women of that vile tribe, as servants, or in a more criminal capacity : he, who feels a stain and must immediately wash, if even the shadow of such a being pass athwart him ?

What respect can he have for men who debauch themselves in public, who appear to consider the detestable act of drunkenness as a gallant feat : he, who has been taught to view it as the most infamous of all vices, and the most debasing to human nature ; he, who, if he once offended in that way, would be consigned to the most degrading punishment ?

What idea can he form of Europeans, when he sees them bring their females to mix in their intemperance, and beholds women shamelessly laugh, play, and toy with the men, and even join them, without blushing, in the dance : he, whose wife dares not sit down in his presence, and who has never known nor imagined that persons of that sex, with the exception of the common girls and prostitutes, could take it in their heads to amble and caper ?

Another peculiarity which is nearly as shocking to the Hindus, is that of the European dress. It is so different from theirs, and, in other respects, so cumbersome and incommodious in a warm climate, that it is not surprizing they should think it fantastical and ridiculous.

But what disgusts them most of all is the boots and gloves. In their imaginations, leather and all kinds of skins of animals are of so impure a nature that they must wash after touching them ; and they do not understand how Europeans can handle, and even put on, without horror, the offals of a beast.

## CHAP. XIV.

*Of the Manners of the Brahmans.*

TO complete our knowledge of the character of the Brahmans, it will be necessary to draw an outline of their manners. Those who are most intimately acquainted with this cast of people, I believe, will generally agree that an exact and faithful portrait of them will not be much to their advantage. I do not intend to enter very minutely into the subject of this chapter; and the greater part of what I have to say will apply, not to the Brahmans only, but to Hindus of all other casts.

Amongst the vices peculiar to them, we may place in the first rank their extreme suspicion and duplicity. These feelings appear very prominent wherever their interest is in any degree committed. But, in general, the reserve of the Hindus, in all the circumstances of their lives, makes it very difficult to discover what is at the bottom of the heart; and the skill which they possess in counterfeiting what best suits their interest takes away all confidence in their most solemn protestations.

I do not suppose, however, that these vices are innate, or that they spring from any natural bias to be rogues and dissemblers. I rather suppose they proceed from the influence of the tyrannical governments under which they have existed for so many ages. Till of late, they have been habituated to live under the rule of a great

number of petty and subordinate tyrants, whose sole object appeared to be to emulate each other in the art of trampling on the people whom they governed; which end they could most easily attain by the constant use of shifts and evasions. The feeble and timid Hindu had no other means of warding off so much injustice and vexation, but by opposing trick to trick, and practising in his turn the duplicity and dissimulation which were employed against him. Thus he grows expert in the practice of those arts. They are his defensive armour against despotism, and they are so often called into use that they have become his natural protection.

One of the principal ties that bind human creatures together, the reverence we feel for those from whom we derive our existence, is almost wholly wanting among them. They fear their father, while they are young, out of dread of being beaten; but from their tenderest years they use bad language to the mother, and strike her even, without any apprehension. When the children are grown up, the father himself is no longer respected, and is generally reduced to an absolute submission to the will of his son, who becomes master of him and his house. It is very uncommon, in any cast whatever, to see fathers preserving their authority to the close of their lives, when their children are mature. The young man always assumes the authority, and commands those who are the authors of his being.

At the same time, when these have acquired absolute authority in the house, they are not deficient in attention to their fathers, mothers, and relations; and, when grown old and infirm, they do not suffer them to be in want of any thing.

No where in the world do parents shew more tenderness and attachment towards their offspring than those of India. But this fondness shews itself only in the most absolute indulgence of them, in every thing, whether good or bad. They have not sufficient courage and resolution to correct their faults, nor to repress the growing vices. The experience of how little gratitude a foolish father receives from his spoiled children, has no effect upon them, and makes them neither more severe nor more vigilant.

As no pains are taken to curb the passions of these indocile infants, their minds are left exposed to the first impressions that assail them, which are always of an evil tendency. From their earliest years, they are accustomed to scenes of impropriety, which, at such an age might be supposed incapable of imprinting any image on their fancies: but it is nothing uncommon to see children of five or six years old already become familiar with discourse and actions which would make modesty turn aside. The instinct of nature is prematurely awakened by the state of bare nakedness in which they are kept for their first seven or eight years, and excited by the loose conversation which they frequently hear, the impure songs and rhymes which they are taught as soon as they can speak, and the lewd tales which they constantly listen to, and are encouraged to repeat. Such are the sources from whence their young hearts imbibe their first aliment, and such the earliest lessons which they learn!

It is superfluous to add that, as they grow up, incontinence and its attendant vices increase with them. Indeed the greater part of their institutions, religious and civil, appear to be contrived for the purpose of nourish-

ing and stimulating that passion to which nature of itself is so exceedingly prone. The stories of the dissolute life of their gods; the solemn festivals so often celebrated, from which decency and modesty are wholly excluded; the abominable allusions which many of their daily practices always recal; their public and private monuments, on which nothing is ever represented but the most wanton obscenities; their religious rites, in which prostitutes act the principal parts: all these causes, and others that might be named, necessarily introduce among the Hindus the utmost dissoluteness of manners.

It is probably with the view of guarding in some measure against this dreadful depravity, that they hasten to marry their children so soon. But marriage itself is but a feeble restraint in many cases on the evil consequences of so profligate an education. Nothing is more usual than for a married man to keep one concubine, or several, out of his house, when he is able to afford the expence. This occurs most frequently in the towns, from the facility they afford of concealing it from the lawful wife, so as to avoid the family discord and quarrels which would so naturally arise if it were known. Yet, even in the most retired situations, the jealous vigilance of the wife seldom restrains the libertinism of her husband. Seeing the small effect produced by her prayers and threats, she probably forms the resolution to leave him and betake herself to her relations. She is soon recalled by promises of amendment and fidelity in future. These are soon broken, and she is at last reduced to the necessity of seeing and hearing her injuries, and of enduring them.

Domestic discord cannot fail to be prevalent in a country where the youths are trained so early to licentious-

ness, where the number of young widows is so great, and where abortion is so common from most of them knowing the means of procuring it, and from believing it to be a smaller evil to cause the death of an unborn infant than to put to hazard the reputation of a frail matron. But many of these misled women, whose minds do not shrink from the crime of infanticide, and who use ingredients to destroy the innocent victim, become the sacrifice to their wickedness ; for it frequently happens that the deadly drug extinguishes the life of the mother after that of the child.

When the remedy does not take its intended effect, and when there is no way of concealing the consequences of their frailty, the Brahman women, to prevent as far as they can the shame which their condition would bring upon their family, give out that they are about to make a pilgrimage to Benares, a solemn undertaking as common in the Brahman cast for women as men to engage in. With the assistance of some confidential person whom they have admitted into the secret, they begin their journey, pretending to take the way to *Kasi*, but go no farther than some neighbouring place, to the house of some relation or friend, where they remain in privacy till they are disencumbered of their load. This being arranged, and the child disposed of in a private way, they quietly return to their families.

Besides the sources of corruption already noticed, which are common to all the Hindus, there is one of a peculiar kind, known in several districts, though chiefly among the Brahmans, and some other classes of Hindus the most distinguished for licentious habits. Many of them possess a detestable book which is known under the name of *Kokwa Sastra*, and *Padinetu Karnam*, in

which the greatest lewdness and most infamous obscenities are taught, in regular method, and upon principle. I know not whether this abominable work exists in the various countries of India, and whether it be written in their several idioms; but I know it is extant in writing, in the *Tamul*, and that it is met with in the districts where that dialect is used.

This abominable book, it is said, describes various modes of sexual congress, and teaches many opprobrious modes of lascivious enjoyment, independent of that intercourse, which decency does not permit to be named. It pretends also to give indubitable marks to determine whether the virgin zone has been unloosed: and proceeds to other inquiries which can be perused only by the most dissolute. Still some trace of modesty seems to pervade the general depravity of manners, for those who possess the book dare not publicly exhibit it, nor shew it at home but to persons worthy of being admitted to such disgraceful confidence.

The mere connexion with unmarried women is not considered as an offence by the Brahmans; and those men who attach the idea of sin to the violation of the most trifling ceremony, see none in the greatest excesses of profligacy, such as the institution, contrived for their gratification, of the dancing girls, or prostitutes, attached to the idolatrous rites in the different temples. They are often heard repeating a scandalous line, which attributes merit to such vague connexions.

It greatly tends to keep up domestic misrule amongst them, that adultery, on the woman's side, although infamous and reprobated, is not so severely punished here as in several of the other tribes. They pay no great attention to it when kept private, and even if it becomes public, as every Brahman must have a woman, and as he

cannot possibly find another in the room of her who has dishonoured his bed, in any other capacity than as a concubine, the shortest way for him is to retain his wife, with all her failings, and to correct them in the best manner he can.

The disgrace, infamy, and shame which are the consequences of an erring wife, and which even extend to all her family, serve as a restraint upon many, and retain them in the path of duty, or put them upon finding the best means of cloaking their frailty, so that it may escape the eyes of the public. Those who are not so fortunate as to escape publicity, must expiate their errors by submitting to be received in public with reproach and insult; and, in a country where no prosecutions take place on account of verbal abuse, when they have any dispute with other women, their slip is most certainly the first thing to be brought up. The confusion into which they are thus publicly thrown is a good lesson to others to be more careful in preserving their honour, or at least in saving appearances.

But it will appear almost incredible that, notwithstanding this state of corruption and the relaxation of manners so widely diffused over all India, external propriety of behaviour is much better maintained amongst them than amongst ourselves. The indecent prattle and fulsome compliments which our fops are so vain of, and study as a science, are here entirely unknown. The women, shameless and dissolute as they are in other respects, would not join in such impertinent gossiping in public. A man who should talk in a familiar way with his wife would be thought an unpolished ridiculous person. One is never asked how his wife does. Such an inquiry would be considered impertinent, and be felt by the hus-

band as an insult. It is still more requisite that when one visits his friends he should never shew any desire to see the wife, or even speak to her if they met, unless they be near relations.

In no country is there a just medium in this respect. Our error is an excess of familiarity. The fault of the Hindus is too much reserve.

The austere behaviour of the Hindus towards the fair sex arises from the opinion, in which they have been nurtured, that there can be nothing disinterested or innocent in the intercourse between a man and a woman; and, however Platonic the attachment might be between two persons of different sex, it would be infallibly set down to sensual love. They have not therefore been yet able to familiarize themselves with the European manners in this particular. The politeness, attention, and gallantry which the Europeans practise towards the ladies, although often proceeding entirely from esteem and respect, are invariably ascribed by the Hindus to a different motive; and they cannot see a European conducting a lady under his arm but they conclude she must be his mistress.

But this habit of reserve which they keep up towards the women of their own nation, together with the other reasons alluded to, and the severity with which they punish those who are guilty or are strongly suspected of such conduct, have the effect to render the violation of honour much more rare, than it would otherwise necessarily be, in a country where the men are, so early in life, accustomed to licentiousness, and where there are so many young widows who have it not in their power to re-marry.

To all these motives for continency, we ought to add

that the Hindu women are naturally chaste. In this respect they are undoubtedly of a very different character from what is attributed to them by some authors, who have but imperfectly observed their dispositions, and who have, no doubt, been deceived by the dissoluteness of some females of the nation, who connect themselves with Europeans, or of the still greater number who follow the armies. From these particular instances, they have ventured to brand them in general with the odious imputation of unchastity. I believe their opinion to be erroneous, and I am confident that any person who shall inquire closely, and with impartiality, into their habitual conduct, as I have done, will join with me in revering their virtue.

I am unable to decide whether their continence proceeds from the education they receive, the spirit of reserve which is instilled into them from their early years, the seclusion from the males, which their customs impose invariably, or from the influence of climate and food. But, whatever may be the true cause, certain it is that they have not that natural propensity to transgress the rules of honour which the sex is remarked for in some other countries. But if this inclination actually exists amongst them, it is at least a fire concealed under ashes, which, if it be not roused, does not burst into a flame.

Having said so much of the methods taken by the Brahmans to encourage and stimulate that passion which of itself exercises a power sufficiently absolute over the human heart, I will say a few words on their mode of resenting any injury or affront which is offered to them. No creature whatever retains longer than they do the

spirit of rancour. When they have nourished a feeling of hatred against any one, it often passes from generation to generation, and becomes hereditary in families. They counterfeit a reconciliation, when their interest requires it; but it is never sincere; and it is nothing uncommon to see a man taking vengeance for an injury offered, many years before, to his father or grandfather.

In their view of obtaining satisfaction, a duel would be sheer folly. Assassinations, and even fisticuffs, beyond a gentle blow or two, are almost unknown among them. Their disposition, naturally timid and cowardly, does not admit of methods of revenge so dangerous and bloody. In cases of deep offence, the Brahman prefers to avenge himself by the means of some evil-engendering *Mantram*, or by having recourse to some famous magician, who, by his spells and enchantment, may strike his enemies with terror, or infect them with some incurable disease.

Their manner of shewing their wrath is, by scolding stoutly and bandying the grossest and most infamous abuse; in which accomplishment the Brahmans are not surpassed by any other cast. They will try also to ruin their adversary by calumnies and other secret attacks; in which, sooner or later, they will succeed.

Homicide and suicide, though held in particular horror by the whole of the Hindus, and though less frequent among them than in many other nations, are however not unknown. It is the women chiefly who resort to self-slaughter, in moments of despair, almost always brought on by the harsh and tyrannical manner in which they are treated. They put an end to their life by hanging themselves, or plunging into a pond or river; and

the general cause of this desperate end is, as we have just mentioned, family discord.

Besides that great connecting link of human society, filial reverence, a virtue so little appreciated among the Hindus, the Brahmans are likewise destitute of the other high moral sentiments which infuse the spirit of mutual agreement and union into the social body, moulding it into a large community of brothers, aiding one another in every difficulty, and mutually contributing whatever is in their power to each other's welfare.

The Brahman lives but for himself. Bred in the belief that the whole world is his debtor, and that he himself is called upon for no return, he conducts himself in every circumstance of his life with the most absolute selfishness. The feelings of commiseration and pity, as far as respects the sufferings of others, never enter into his heart. He will see an unhappy being perish on the road, or even at his own gate, if belonging to another cast; and will not stir to help him to a drop of water, though it were to save his life.

He has been taught from his infancy to regard all other classes of men with the utmost contempt, as beings created for the purpose of serving him, and supplying all his wants; without any reciprocal duty on his part, to shew his gratitude, or make any other return.

Such are the principles on which the education of the Brahmans is invariably and universally founded. And, after such a description, shall we be at all surprised at their haughtiness, their pride and self-love, or at their contempt of all other men, of whom they never speak amongst themselves without the addition of some ignominious epithet or expression of scorn?

## CHAP. XV.

*Of the Exterior Qualities of the Brahmans and other Hindus ; their Bodily and Mental Weakness ; of their Language, their Dress, and their Houses.*

THAT nothing may be wanting to our description of the Brahmans, I will add a few words concerning their gait, physiognomy, and other characteristical peculiarities, the greater part of which is applicable in degree to the other casts.

There are among them, as in all other nations in the world, men of every degree of stature and figure. But one hardly ever sees in India certain bodily deformities which are common in Europe. The humpback, for example, is rarely to be seen. But to balance this deficiency, there is a far greater proportion of blind than in Europe. The extreme heat of the climate, the usual practice of the poor to go with their heads and bodies almost bare, under the strongest influence of the sun, may unquestionably contribute to impair the organs of sight. To guard against this evil the people have a custom of rubbing the head with an ointment composed of several ingredients.

The colour of the Hindus is tawny, lighter or darker according to the provinces which they inhabit. That of the casts who are constantly employed in the labours of agriculture, in the southern districts of the peninsula, is

nearly as dark as that of the Caffres. The Brahmans, and people whose profession admits of their working in the shade, such as painters, and many other artisans, are of a lighter hue. A dark-coloured Brahman and a whitish Pariah are looked upon as odd occurrences; which has given birth to a proverb common in many parts of India, "Never trust to a black Brahman or a white Pariah." The tint of the Brahman approaches to the colour of copper, or perhaps more nearly to that of a bright infusion of coffee. I have seen people in the southern parts of France as dusky as the greater number of Brahmans, and perhaps more so. Their women, who are still more sedentary and less exposed to the rays of the sun, are still lighter in their complexion than the males.

There are some wild hordes on the hills and in the thick forests on the coast of Malabar, who are much less deeply tinged than any of the casts that have been mentioned. In the woods of the Coorga country there is one of these communities, called Malay Koodieru, who do not yield, in point of complexion, to the Spanish or Portuguese. I can divine no other reason why those savages who inhabit the mountains should be of a whiter hue, but that they are continually under the shelter of trees which protect their complexion.

But, in all casts, without exception, the Hindus have the sole of the foot and the palm of the hand much whiter than the rest of the body.

It is no uncommon thing to meet with a class of individuals amongst them who are born with a skin much whiter even than that of Europeans. But it is easy to perceive that it is not a natural colour, because their hair is altogether as white as their skin; and, in general,

their whole exterior appearance is unnatural. They have this distinguishing peculiarity, that they cannot endure the light of the broad day. While the sun is up, they cannot look steadily at any object ; and, during all that time, they contract their eye-lids so as apparently to exclude vision. But, in return, they are gifted with the faculty of seeing almost every object in the dark.

There can be no doubt that this is the same variety of the human species which the celebrated naturalist Buffon, in his Natural History, describes under the name of *Blafards* ; who, according to that author, are found in great numbers in the Isthmus of Darien, in America. He also remarks that this same species is met with in the various parts of the world, which are situated under the same latitude as the Isthmus, and in a similar climate. The description which he gives corresponds exactly with the individuals here alluded to, whom the Europeans in India call *Chakrelas*.

But I do not think it foreign to my subject to digress a little, in order to clear up a doubt which that intelligent writer appears to have entertained respecting the *Blafards* whom he describes, considering them as a class of beings degenerate, and entirely out of the regular course of nature, and as therefore incapable of the reproduction of their species.

It has not fallen under my observation to determine whether two of this sort, a male and a female, united together, would have issue, but I am perfectly convinced that they are capable of procreation when they mix with other individuals. A few years ago, a young child was brought to me for baptism, the fruit of a connection between a *Chakrela* woman and a European soldier, with whom she cohabited. And, truly, without the

courage and intrepidity of a soldier, he could not have encountered so disgusting an object.

In India, these beings are looked upon universally with horror. Their parents, even, who have brought them into the world, abandon them. Their colour is supposed to arise from leprosy; and indeed the name they are known by signifies *lepers by birth*. It is reasonable to conclude that so remarkable a deviation from the ordinary course of nature, as the birth of a white infant from black parents, must actually proceed from some disease contracted within the body of the mother; and it may be a kind of leprosy, as that disease, it is said, does not hinder those who are affected with it from arriving at an advanced age.

When they die, their bodies are neither buried nor burnt, but cast upon the dunghill. This custom is founded on a notion arising out of the superstition of the country, which interdicts from the honours of interment all who die under any cutaneous or eruptive disorder. If they did otherwise, the Hindus firmly believe that a general drought, or some other public calamity would break out that year, over the whole land.

Agreeably to this opinion, the Chakrelas, and those who have white spots on their skin, such as are often seen on the soles of the feet and the palms of the hands of some Hindus, together with those who die of small-pox or other eruptions, or have any ulcer on the body when they die, and pregnant women dying undelivered of the fœtus; in all such cases, the dead bodies are exposed in the open fields to be devoured by wild beasts and birds of prey.

I have, more than once, been in districts afflicted with grievous drought, where the inhabitants, becoming des-

perate from there being no prospect of rain, and imagining that the defect arose from some corpses, such as we have described, being secretly interred, have gathered in crowds to open the suspected graves. These they dig up, and carefully inspect the bodies which have perhaps lain for months, drag them from their sepulchre, and throw upon the dunghill such as they imagine to have been interred illegally. This horrid custom, of thus rudely violating the ashes of the dead, is very common in those parts where the Lingamites are numerous, as that sect follows the practice of burying their dead, in place of burning them, which is the general custom among the Hindus.

But we will here drop the subject of the Chakrelas, the smallness of their number making them of little importance, and proceed with our description.

In general, the Hindus have the forehead small, the face thinner and more meagre than the Europeans; and they are also very much inferior to them in strength and other physical qualities. They are lean, feeble, and incapable of supporting the labours and fatigues which the other race are habituated to. The Brahmans, in particular, scarcely ever attempt any laborious effort of the body; and when they do, it is but momentary. This feebleness is, no doubt, occasioned by the nature of the climate, as well as by the quality of the food to which the greater number of Hindus are restricted. In general, they eat nothing but seeds, or such insipid matters; for, though most of them cultivate rice, which appears to be a production of nature in the highest degree suited to the use of man, and well adapted to sustain his vigour, the mass of the people do not use it for their ordinary fare. They are obliged to sell it, to get what is

necessary for paying their taxes, to procure clothes, and supply their other domestic wants. After disposing of their crop of rice, they nourish themselves, for the rest of the year, in the best way they are able, upon the various sorts of small seeds, similar to what are given in Europe to pigs or chickens : and it were to be wished that every Hindu had even this sorry fare at his command.

The same debility and tendency to degenerate, which is so visible in the Hindus themselves, appear to involve all animal existence in that country, from the plant up to the human species. The grass, vegetables, and fruits, are all sapless ; at least, the greater part are devoid of the nourishing qualities inherent in the same productions of nature in other countries.

The domestic and wild animals, with the exception of the elephant and the tiger, are there found in a degraded state, both as to native vigour and nutritive properties. All eatable things, of the most succulent nature elsewhere, are insipid here. Nature seems, in this region, to have fashioned all her productions, animate or inanimate, on a scale proportioned to the feebleness of the people. What she has provided for the use or the service of a debilitated being, she has lowered in a corresponding degree.

The imbecility of the mind keeps pace with that of the body. There is no country, I believe, where one meets with so many stupid or silly creatures ; and, although in India there are to be found numbers of persons of good sense and moderate talents, and even some who, by means of a good education, have distinguished themselves advantageously amongst their countrymen, yet I think it very doubtful whether, during the three centuries in which the Europeans have been settled in the coun-

try, they have ever discovered among them one true genius.

What they are, in point of courage, is well known; their natural cowardice being every where proverbial.

Neither have they sufficient firmness of mind to resist any application that may be made to them on their weak side. Praise and flattery will induce them to part with any thing they possess.

They are not less devoid of that provident spirit, which makes other mortals think of their future wants and well-being, as much as of the present. Provided the Hindu has just enough to support the vanity and extravagance of the day, he never reflects on the state of misery to which he will be reduced on the morrow, by his ostentatious and empty parade. He sees nothing but the present moment, and his thoughts never penetrate into an obscure futurity.

From this want of foresight, chiefly, proceed the frequent and sudden revolutions in the fortunes of the Hindus, and the rapid transitions from a state of luxury and the highest opulence to the most abject wretchedness.

They support such overpowering shocks of fortune with much resignation and patience. But it would be erroneous to ascribe their tranquillity, under such circumstances, to loftiness of spirit or magnanimity; for it is the want of sensibility alone that prevents their minds from being affected by the blessings or miseries of life.

It was probably with an intention to make some impression on their unfeeling nature, and to stimulate their imagination, that their histories, whether sacred or pro-

fane, their worship and laws, are so replenished with extraordinary and extravagant conceits.

We must also ascribe to their phlegmatic temper, more than to any perverseness of disposition, the want of attachment and gratitude with which the Hindus are justly reproached. No where is a benefit conferred so quickly forgotten as among them. That sentiment which is roused in generous minds by the remembrance of favours received, and which repays in some measure the liberal heart for the sacrifices which its desire to oblige so often requires it to make, is quite a stranger to the natives of India.

But we shall here drop the subject of their mental faculties, in which they do not appear to great advantage, and return to the exterior qualities of the Brahmans.

It is easy to distinguish a member of this cast, by a certain free and unembarrassed air, something more easy and independent than is in general to be met with in the other tribes. Without betraying any appearance of affectation, their manner and movement sufficiently indicate the consciousness they feel of their superiority in rank and origin. One may recognize them also by their language, which is exempt from the low and vulgar expressions in use among the other casts. Besides its superior purity and elegance, it is more tinged with the Sanscrit. They have particular phrases also, not employed by the Sudras. In private conversation their discourse is diversified with proverbial turns and allegorical allusions, briefly expressed. Possessing a great copiousness of phrase, it often happens that, after learning their language tolerably well, one is provoked to find

that he cannot understand a word that passes between any party of them, when conversing familiarly with each other. In their talk, as well as in their letters, they introduce a thousand graceful flights which they know very well how to apply. Indeed they rather exceed just bounds in this respect, as they have no moderation in the extravagance of their compliments. They make no scruple to elevate above all the gods those to whom they direct their flattery ; and truly this is but the first step in their fulsome adulation.

But, to reverse the picture, and turn to their horrid and execrable foulness of language and imprecations ; they must be admitted to have a more unbounded supply of these flowers of speech than of the courteous sort. For, although the Brahmans pride themselves on their politeness and good education, they forget them both when their passion is roused. On these occasions, such a torrent of the most indecent and obscene expressions issues from their impure mouths, that one would be tempted to suppose they had made a particular study of the language of invective and insult.

Nothing can be more simple than their primitive dress. A single piece of cloth, uncut, about three yards long and one in width, was formerly, and in general still continues to be their only apparel. Being wrapped round the loins, one end passes between the thighs, and is fastened behind, while the other end, after being cast into several folds in front, is allowed to hang down in a negligent, though not ungraceful way. This is the habit of those, in particular, who pride themselves the most on propriety and purity. Bathing gives little trouble, with such a garment ; and they have generally a spare one

for a change, which sometimes they spread over their shoulders.

Many of them provide themselves with a piece of woollen cloth, to wrap themselves in during the night, or in the cool of the morning.

Since the European manufactures have become general in the country, many Brahmans and other Hindus have bought themselves a piece of scarlet, with which they make a great shew.

It appears that they were accustomed to have the head uncovered, or merely with the cloth thrown over it which serves to protect their shoulders. At present, the greater number wear a turban; an ornament which they have borrowed from the Moors, consisting of a long piece of very fine stuff, sometimes twenty yards in length, by one in breadth; and with this they encircle the head in many folds.

Those who are employed in the service of the Europeans or of the Musalman princes, besides their ordinary dress, wear a long robe of muslin or very fine cloth; which is also an imitation of the Moors, and formerly unknown in the country. The Brahmans, however, keep up a distinction between themselves and the Musalmans, by fastening it to the left side, in place of the right; and they sometimes wear, above this dress, a cincture of very fine texture passing several times round the body.

The wealthy amongst them do not dress differently from the rest; but the vesture they wear about their loins, is generally of a finer cloth, and ornamented with a fringe of red silk.

Almost all the Hindus wear golden ear-rings, of larger or smaller size, and of different shapes, according to

the custom of the various countries. We shall hercafter describe this species of finery.

The plainness of their houses corresponds with that of their dress. They are commonly constructed of earth, and thatched with straw, especially in the country. Those who live in towns are for the most part better accommodated.

The inside of the house is like a small cloister, with a court within it, and a gallery, from which, all round, there are entrances into small chambers, very dark, the use of windows not being known to the Hindus, and the interior of the house receiving no light but from a narrow passage.

The kitchen is situated in the most retired part of the house, and quite out of the view of strangers, who might happen to come on a visit or any other purpose. In the houses of the Brahmans, particularly, the kitchen door is always barred; a precaution which they use lest even the gaze of strangers should pollute their earthen vessels for preparing their food, and oblige them to break them in pieces.

The hearth is almost always placed on the south-west quarter, which is denominated the side of the *god of fire*, because they say this deity actually dwells there. Each of the eight points of the compass has its divinity that presides over it.

As men, here, never visit the women, unless they be near relations, and as the females are always occupied with household affairs in the inner apartments which strangers do not generally approach, the fashion is to construct, at the gate of entrance, verandahs or alcoves, both within and without, where the men assemble, and

sitting cross-legged, carry on their conversation, talk of business, dispute on religion or science, receive their visitors, or pass their time in empty talk.

Besides private houses, there is generally one or more of public erection in places of any considerable size, known to the Europeans under the name of *choultries*, and which merely consist of a vast empty hall, open on one side the whole length. They serve not only to shelter travellers, but are also used as courts of justice, where the chiefs of the district assemble to discuss the affairs of the village, or to decide differences and accommodate disputes. They likewise serve for temples, in places where there is no other edifice set apart for religious worship.

## CHAP. XVI.

*Of the Rules of Politeness in use among the Brahmans and other Hindus.—Of their Visits and Presents.*

IT would be useless and tiresome to detail the whole rules of politeness which the Hindus observe with regard to each other. It will be sufficient to mention some of the principal, which will show their particular turn on this point.

The Hindus have many modes of *salutation*. In some parts, they manifest it by raising their right hand to the heart: in some, by simply stretching it out towards the person who is passing, if they know him. For they never salute those whom they are not acquainted with. In many parts, there is no shew of salutation whatever. When they meet any of their acquaintance, they content themselves with saying a friendly word or two in passing, and then pursue their way.

They have likewise borrowed the Musalman *salam*; and they salute both Moors and Europeans with this ceremony, which consists in raising their hand to their forehead. When they address persons of distinction and high rank, they give them the *salam* thrice, touching the ground as often with both hands, and then lifting them up to their foreheads. Sometimes they more nearly approach the person whom they wish to distinguish by their attentions; and, instead of touching the ground

three times, they touch his feet as often with their hands, which they afterwards raise to their forehead.

The other casts salute the Brahmans by offering them the *namaskaram*. This salutation consists in joining the hands and elevating them to the forehead, or sometimes over the head. Such a mode of saluting implies great superiority on the part of him to whom it is paid. It is accompanied with these two words, *andam ariya*; which signify, "Hail! respected Lord!" The Brahmans, in return, stretching out their hands half open, as if they wished to receive something from the person who pays them homage, answer with this single word, *asirvadam*, "benediction!" When people do not intend to carry their reverence to the utmost, they limit it by raising their hands no higher than the breast.

I have translated this word by the term *benediction*, because it is a mysterious expression, composed in fact, of three terms of blessing, which import many happy wishes in favour of the person to whom they are addressed. The Brahmans and Gurus alone have authority to return the *asirvadam*, or to pronounce this sacred word over those who treat them respectfully, or make them presents.

Another very respectful mode of salutation consists in lowering both hands to the feet of the person to be honoured, or even in falling down and embracing them. This homage is sometimes paid by a son to his father, and sometimes by a young man to his elder brother, when they have met after a long separation: but in general children pass their parents hundreds of times every day without paying them the slightest attention.

Of all forms of salutation, the most striking and the most respectful is the *sashtangam*, or prostration of the

eight members, elsewhere mentioned, which consists in throwing themselves at their whole length on the ground, and stretching out both arms over their heads. This is practicable before the Gurus or other high personages, and in presence of an assembly, when they appear before it to solicit the pardon of any misdeed.

When relations come in a body from distant parts to pay a visit of ceremony, they make a pause near the place to which they are going, and send a messenger to apprize their friends of their approach. These immediately go in search of them, and conduct them home with the sound of music. But it is not customary to embrace on such occasions, or on any other; with the single exception, that in some places, visits of condolence on the death of some very near relation admit of it; but, in the closest embrace, they always avoid touching each other's faces. And, in no case whatever, is a man permitted to embrace a woman. It would be considered a monstrous impropriety. A husband, even, cannot in public, use such familiarity with his own wife, nor a brother with his sister, nor a son with his mother.

Relations who have been long separated testify their joy, when they meet, by clinging closely together, chucking each other under the chin, and shedding tears of joy.

The Brahmans and other Hindus, in quitting an apartment, follow the same rule of politeness that we do, by letting the visitor walk first. They differ in this from the Spaniards and Portuguese, who shew their civility by doing quite the reverse. The object of this practice is to avoid turning their back on their guest; who, on his part, declines it also, as far as he is able, by going

side by side with his entertainer until they are both out of doors.

Agreeably to this usage, when a person retires from the presence of great men, he steps backwards or sidelong to a certain distance ; and by the same rule, a servant attending his master on foot or on horseback, never goes before him.

To tread in the footstep of any one, even by accident or inadvertency, demands an immediate apology ; which is made by stretching both hands towards the feet of the party offended.

To receive a blow is not considered a great matter, whether inflicted by the fist or the bare foot : but when aimed at the head, so as to make the turban fall off, it becomes a serious insult.

But by far the greatest of all indignities, and the most insupportable, is to be hit with a shoe or one of the pantoufles which the Hindus commonly wear on their feet. To receive a kick from any foot with a slipper on it, is an injury of so unpardonable a nature, that a man would suffer exclusion from his cast who could submit to it without receiving some adequate satisfaction. Even to threaten one with the stroke of a slipper is held to be criminal, and to call for animadversion.

One of the reasons which make them dislike to serve the Europeans is the great terror they are under of being kicked by their master with his boots or shoes on ; a sort of discipline, it must be owned, not unexampled.

The women, as a mark of their respect, turn their backs to the men, whom they hold in estimation. They must at least turn their faces aside, and cover them well with their veils. When they go out of doors, they must keep on their way without noticing goers or

comers. If they meet a man, they must hold down their head or avert their countenance. They never are permitted to sit in the presence of men. A married woman is not indulged in this privilege, even in the presence of her husband.

Any person whatever must turn aside when he meets a person of much superior rank. If on foot, he must go off the path, so as to leave it unincumbered; and, if on horseback or in a palanquin, he must light and remain standing, till the great personage has passed, and got to some distance.

In speaking or saluting a superior, he must cast off his slippers. He must do it also when he goes into his house. One is not permitted to enter into a cow-shed even, with leather shoes on his feet. Wherever he has occasion to go, he must invariably leave his slippers at the door. If he were to pass the threshold of his own house, or of any other, with any integument of leather, it would be considered on all hands as an enormous impropriety.

In addressing any person of note, they must in politeness preserve a certain distance from him, and cover their mouths with their hands while they are speaking, lest their breath or a particle of moisture should escape to annoy him.

It is only among equals that reciprocal salutations are admitted; and superior persons, when they receive this mark of respect from their inferiors, are not required to return it. The Brahmans, when accosted with the *namas-karam*, content themselves with giving back the *asirvadam*. They behave differently indeed to the Europeans and Moors, when their interest engages them to shew their manners. Unless they have some motive of that

sort, either of hope or fear, they never salute foreigners in any way; but under those circumstances, they perform their *salam* in one of the modes described already. But they do not hesitate to make their different salutations, even the *sashtangam* itself, to their Gurus or the Sannyasis of their cast.

It is the custom in several of the southern provinces of the peninsula for the men to uncover their shoulders and breast, when addressing any person for whom they have respect. It is also observed by the women of certain casts, particularly of that which is known in the country of Tamul by the name of *Malamai*, who always, when under the necessity of speaking to a man, uncover the upper part of the body from the head to the girdle, and wrap round their middle the part of the clothing which usually covers the shoulders and chest. They act in the same way when speaking to their husbands, or other persons at home, whom they are bound to reverence. It would be thought a want of politeness and good breeding to speak to men with that part of the body clothed.

When the Hindus visit a person of consideration for the first time, civility demands that they should take with them some present, as a mark of deference and respect, or to shew that they come with a friendly intention, especially if their object be to ask some favour in return. But, in any case, to approach respectable people with empty hands would be considered as an act of presumption. When the means of offering presents of value are wanting, they carry with them, on their visits, sugar, bananas, cocoa nuts, betel, milk, and other simple offerings.

Some visits are held to be indispensable, such as

those of *condolence* and of *Pongol*, which shall be afterwards explained. They commence on the first day of the return of the sun, when that luminary, according to the Hindu calculation, enters the tropic of Capricorn, and begins his approach, infusing, as it were, a new life into all nature.

The festival to which this epoch gives rise is celebrated with unusual pomp and solemnity in the Tamul territory. The day itself and the two that follow it are distinguished above all others for the presents which friends and relations mutually offer, consisting of new earthen vessels, on which certain figures are drawn with chalk; of ground rice, slips of bastard saffron, and various fruits. These presents are carried with much solemnity, with the sound of musical instruments. A present of this sort is of most indispensable obligation from a mother to a married daughter. If it were neglected, the mother-in-law would resent the omission to her dying day.

With regard to the visits in cases of mourning, they never can be represented, as they often are with us, by letters of condolence. Some one of the family must go in person, although at a distance of thirty or forty leagues. Indeed hardly any difficulty can be offered as an excuse for the non-performance of this duty.

## CHAP. XVII.

*Of the Decorations worn by the Hindus, and the different Emblems with which they adorn their Persons.*

EVERY Hindu, without excepting those even who engage in the profession of penitence and renunciation of the world, wears ear-rings of gold. The penitents, indeed, or Sannyasis, who were supposed to have overcome the three great lusts of women, honours, and riches, have them made of brass instead of the more precious metal.

These pendants are of different sorts and shapes ; but most commonly of an oval form. They are sometimes large enough to admit one's hand to go through them. For the most part they are made of a slender ring of copper, round which gold wire is twisted so as to cover it entirely. People of ordinary condition ornament it with a pearl or precious stone, which is attached to the centre of the pendant and adds to its beauty.

This species of ornament, of a size sometimes so preposterous, will not appear improbable to those who have attended to the practice in the remotest antiquity, as described in the antient writings, sacred and profane. At times they load their ears with four or five pairs, particularly during the ceremony of marriage.

Some likewise wear, at the middle of the ear, a little golden trinket, to which they attach a precious stone ;

whilst others fix this ornament to the upper part of the cartilage.

The poor people have small pendants of little value dangling at each ear; and, in whatever distress they may be, the universal fashion requires that this organ should not be without its ornament.

Some people of distinction and wealth wear round their necks gold chains, or a species of chaplets of pearls which descend to the bosom.

Many of them are seen with rings of gold and of silver, in which precious stones are set, of very high value. They frequently add to these several ornaments large bracelets of maasy gold, of more than a pound weight each. The men, likewise, after they are married, generally wear silver rings upon their toes.

But there is an ornament quite peculiar to the people of India, and which seems to be unknown to other polished nations in modern times, although it appears to have been used in early ages by the nations of antiquity. It consists of various marks or emblems inscribed on the forehead and other parts of the body. The simplest of all, and at the same time the most common, is that to which they give the name of *Pottu*, being nothing more than a small circle of about an inch in diameter, stamped on the middle of the forehead; of a red colour, or sometimes black, or yellow. This last colour is procured by rubbing sandal wood on a flat stone, from whence a liquid odoriferous paste is formed, with which they impress the sign on the middle of the forehead.

Some, instead of the *Pottu*, draw between the eyebrows three or four horizontal lines. Others describe a perpendicular line which descends from the top of the forehead to the root of the nose.

Some northern Brahmans apply this liquid paste of sandal to either jaw, with much effect. Others again use it to colour the neck, the breast, the belly, the arms, with various images and figures; and some have their whole bodies besmeared with it. Many of them mix the paste with vermilion or other ingredients, according to the colour which they prefer.

The Vishnuvite Brahmans, as well as the other Hindus who are particularly devoted to the worship of Vishnu, adorn their foreheads with the figure called *Nama*, which has been already described to be a line, generally red, drawn perpendicularly on the middle of the forehead, and two white lines collaterally, which unite at the base with the middle line, and give to the whole the appearance of a trident, producing an extraordinary and at times a ferocious air in those who are so conspicuously marked. Some devotees of the sect have it imprinted, likewise, on the arms, the shoulders, the breast, and the belly.

The marks which the disciples of Siva bear on their foreheads and other parts of the body are always put on with the ashes of cow-dung, or the ashes gathered where dead bodies have been burned. Some devotees of this sect have their whole skin thus speckled from head to foot. Others draw large bars, not only across the forehead, but on the arms, breast, and belly.

A great number of Hindus, who are not connected with any sect, likewise rub their foreheads with the ashes. The Brahmans never lay them on in that manner upon any part of the body, but occasionally, in the morning, draw a small horizontal line over the middle of the forehead, to denote that they have bathed and are pure.

The Hindus adopt a great variety of other marks, of

various shape and colour. Some are peculiar to certain casts ; others are in use in some particular countries only, but the most of them denoting the exclusive devotion they entertain for some sect.

It is difficult to explain the origin and meaning of many of these symbols, the greater number of those who use them being ignorant of it themselves. Some may be found who consider it merely as a matter of ornament ; though, certainly, the great majority have superstition only for their end and aim.

But, whatever the motive may be, the custom and fashion require that every man should have his forehead adorned with some one of the marks used in the country. To have it bare, is the token of being in mourning, or it signifies that they are yet unbathed and have not broken their fast ; and it is as inconsistent with decorum for any one to present himself in that unseemly condition before any company or any individual of respectability, as it would be in Europe to go into polite society with matted hair and disordered apparel.

The women are by no means so attentive to this kind of decoration as the men. They content themselves in general with exhibiting the little circle on the middle of the forehead, of red, black, or yellow, called *Pottu*, which we before described. Sometimes they draw a single red line horizontally or perpendicularly, and rub a little of the ashes on it, according to the custom of their cast. But to make up for their negligence in this species of decoration, they frequently rub the face, legs, and all the parts of the body that are exposed, with a water made yellow by the infusion of bruised saffron. They expect, by that contrivance, to set off their beauty, and make their dark skin fair ; though such a specific tends

to make them more dingy, and even disgusting, in the eyes of Europeans.

One finds it difficult to believe that the people of India can imagine such bedaubing and other devices, so ridiculous in our eyes, to be ornamental, and to augment their charms ; but to them, on the other hand, it is matter of great astonishment and ridicule, to see a young European, perhaps twenty years old, with his hair powdered, and made as white as the hoary locks of a decayed man of eighty. They cannot reconcile to themselves how rational beings can thus degrade the principal ornament of the human frame by changing its native qualities.

But they are most of all disgusted with the wigs made up of hair, shorn sometimes from a leprous skull, sometimes from that of a prostitute, or perhaps even of a putrid carcass. A bald head, to be sure, is no misfortune in so warm a country ; but, at all events, they would think it preferable to the dreadful alternative of covering the crown with such disgusting and abominable offal.

Væ tibi ! væ nigræ !

Dicebat cacabus ollæ.

PHÆDR.

## CHAP. XVIII.

*Of the Married Brahman Women; their Dress and Ornaments.*

WHAT I have to relate concerning the *Brahmanari*, or Brahman women, will equally apply to other individuals of the sex in different casts. Yet there is but little to be said concerning the Hindu women, from the small consideration in which they are held; always treated as if they were created for the mere enjoyment of the men, or for their service. They are supposed to be incapable of acquiring any degree of the mental capacity which a greater ascendant in society would surely confer upon them, by rendering them of more importance in the affairs of life. But they are so low in estimation that, when a man has done any thing reprehensible, it is quite proverbial to say, that he has acted in the spirit of a woman. She, on the other hand, as an excuse for any fault, lays all the blame on the natural inferiority of her sex.

Agreeably to this mode of judging of the fair sex, the education of the women is utterly neglected. They never cultivate, in any degree, the understanding of the young girls; though many of them are naturally ingenious, and would shine under the advantages of education. It is thought quite sufficient in India that a woman can grind and boil their rice, or attend to the other

household concerns, which are neither numerous nor difficult to acquire.

The immodest girls, who are employed in the worship of the idols, and other public prostitutes, are the only women taught to read, to sing, and to dance. It would be thought the mark of an irregular education if a modest woman were found capable of reading. She herself would conceal it out of shame. As to the dance, it is confined entirely to the profligate girls, who never mix in it with the men. In singing, the modest women, in some places, join; but it is only at marriages or other ceremonies among their relations, and never in the company of strangers.

The work of the needle is generally unknown to a Hindu female. Almost all the inhabitants make use of clothing in the piece, uncut; and therefore there is no occasion for employing the art of sewing. For the same reason they are ignorant of knitting; but they are all skilled in spinning cotton. This labour occupies almost all their leisure, and affords to many of the poor the means of living. There are few houses that are not provided with one or more of the little machines used in this domestic art.

We have before observed, that as the Brahmans marry their daughters extremely young, they make them return to their paternal home as soon as the ceremony is completed, where they continue till they arrive at a marriageable age; and fresh ceremonies take place on this new occasion.

When the event which marks this epoch takes place, it is speedily communicated to the husband, and published with the sound of trumpets; and, before the days of purification from this first stain are ended, the relations

assemble to festivals, and celebrate the various rites particularly described in the chapter on Marriage.

Undoubtedly, the principal motive for this festival is the near prospect which the parents of the young couple have now before them of a new generation about to spring from their immediate descendants. For no people in the world have so ardent a desire, as the Hindus manifest, to perpetuate their lineage.

This festival has the name of *Marriage complete*. The young woman who is the object of it cannot appear in it, as her uncleanness requires a purification of several days, during which she is not admitted into the presence of men, but must remain secluded in a place of retirement.

When the purification is completed, she returns into the family ; and the women make her undergo the greatest part of those ceremonies which have been described, particularly such as are designed to counteract the fascination of spells and evil glances. Some days afterwards she is conducted with pomp and state to the house of her father-in-law, where she is trained to live with her husband.

When a woman, particularly of the Brahman cast, becomes pregnant, the ceremonies which she undergoes have no end. There are some applicable to every one of the months of gestation. It is also absolutely necessary that she should lie-in at her father's house. For this purpose, her mother demands her about the seventh month, and she is not allowed to return until she is perfectly recovered. But on no consideration will she go home, unless her mother-in-law or some other near relation attends to conduct her. This is a general and invariable rule in every cast. Very frequently a discon-

tented wife forsakes her husband ; and though it may be for no other reason than a transient fit of ill humour or caprice, and a matter entirely of her own seeking, yet will she never return to her mother-in-law, unless she receives from her the first advances.

These domestic discords, and the consequent flight of the lady to her paternal home, are very common. They generally originate from the extremely harsh and domineering manner in which their mothers-in-law conduct themselves towards them, looking on them as slaves purchased with money. They embroil the husband and wife with false reports, lest they should live too lovingly, and lest the wife, by being too much caressed, should cease to be obedient. Yet this is but an imaginary danger, as the husband looks on his wife merely as his servant, and never as his companion. He thinks her entitled to no attentions, and never pays her any, even in familiar intercourse.

The women, on the other hand, are so accustomed to the austere manners of their husbands, that they would disapprove a contrary behaviour, and despise their husbands if they treated them with easy familiarity. I have seen a wife in a rage with her husband for talking with her in an easy strain. “ His behaviour covers me with “ shame,” quoth she, “ and I dare no longer shew my face. “ Such conduct amongst us was never seen till now. Is “ he become a Paranguay\*, and does he suppose me to “ be a woman of that cast ?”

But, degraded as the Hindu women are in private life, it must be allowed that they receive the highest respect

\* Paranguay is a term of reproach by which they designate the Europeans. It is derived from the word *Frank franquy* ; and was introduced into India by the Moors.

in public. They certainly do not pay them those flat and frivolous compliments which are used amongst us, and which are the disgrace of both sexes, but, on the other hand, they have no insults to dread. A woman may go wheresoever she pleases; she may walk in the most public places (must I except those where the Europeans abound?) and have nothing to fear from libertines, numerous as they are in the country. A man who should stop to gaze on a woman in the street, or elsewhere, would be universally hooted as an insolent and a most low-bred fellow.

We have said enough on the subject of women, in a country where they are considered as scarcely forming a part of the human species. But we shall add something concerning their dress and their manners.

The dress consists of a simple piece of tissue used only by women. It is about nine or ten yards in length, and sometimes more, and its breadth is above a yard. It may be seen, in every variety of quality and price, and of all colours. They are bordered at the ends with a colour different from that of the robe. Each extremity is wrapped round the body two or three times forming a sort of tight petticoat, falling in front as low as the feet; but not so far behind, because the end of the web, passing between the thighs, is tucked up to the waist, and leaves the legs uncovered behind, as high sometimes as the ham. But this fashion of dress is limited to the Brahmanaris. The women of other casts fasten the web in a different manner, so as to form a completer and more modest covering than the former. Another part of the cloth passes over the head, shoulders, and breast, in the districts where those parts are habitually covered.

The dress of the women, therefore, is of an entire piece as well as that of the men; and, for that reason, it is extremely convenient for bathing; a practice which the rules of purity require from the females of the tribe as much as from the males; and they are no less addicted to it.

In some parts, they wear a sort of jacket, which does not reach so high as the shoulders; but this is a foreign custom borrowed from the Moors.

I have seen Brahman women, on the coast of Malabar, who, together with the women of the other casts of that country, always appeared with their bodies half naked; I mean quite uncovered down to the girdle. This appears to have been the ancient mode of dressing all over the peninsula, and is still retained in the mountainous parts, where many other customs are preserved in primitive vigour.

The Hindu women paint on the arms of their young daughters various figures, chiefly of flowers. It is done by slightly pricking the skin with a needle, and inserting into the punctures the juice of certain plants. These marks are never effaced, and continue imperishable on the skin during life. Where the complexion is not very dark, they also decorate the face, by this art, in various places, particularly the chin and the cheeks. These spots resemble the patches sometimes put on by the European ladies to set off their beauty. But, when the skin is very dark, they are considered as useless.

Besides the yellow tincture made with saffron water, already mentioned, which is used chiefly by the Brahman women, to stain the face and other uncovered parts of the body, they paint with black the border of the

cyc-lashes, particularly while they are young. It relieves the white of the eyes, and adds to their lustre.

As to their hair, to give it a sleek and glossy appearance, they frequently rub it over with oil; and, separating it into two equal clusters from the forehead to the crown, one on the right and the other on the left, they unite them together behind, and, rolling them up in a particular way, form a copious bunch which is fixed over the left ear.

The Hindu women, in general, have beautifully black hair, and never of any other colour. But it is wholly different from that of the negroes, being as fine and as smooth as our own. They ornament it with sweet-scented flowers, and frequently with trinkets of gold. For, silver embellishments are not permitted to be worn on any part of the body, except a single buckle on the braid behind, which serves to tuck up the hair.

The ornaments of silver are appropriated to the arms, but more commonly to the legs and feet. Those on the legs are truly fetters, weighing sometimes two or three pounds.

Each toe has its particular ring, so broad above as to conceal the whole toe.

The trinkets for the arms are of various kinds. The bracelets are sometimes formed globular and hollow, and more than an inch in diameter; while others have them flat, and perhaps two inches in breadth. Some wear them round the wrist, and others above the elbow. They are either gold or silver, and of various shape, according to the fashion of the country and the cast. The poor have them of brass; and some are seen with more than half the arm covered over with a number of large rings of glass.

Round their necks are hung several chains of gold or silver, and strings of large beads of gold, pearl, coral, or glass, according to the ability of the wearer. Some have collars of gold, an inch broad, set with rubies, topazes, emeralds, and other precious stones. With such ornaments all of them are bedecked; each, according to her fancy or means.

There are a great number of other decorations, the names of which it would require long study to acquire. They differ in shape in the various districts. I know eighteen or twenty species of ornaments for the ears alone.

But, as if all these toys were not sufficient, the women, in several districts at least, wear another of a particular form on the right side of the nose, where it is suspended through a little hole purposely bored at the extremity of the nostril. It hangs sometimes as low as the under lip. This last embellishment, the form of which is also varied in the different casts, is scarcely met with in the country of Tamul, but is universally seen in those of Canara and Talugu.

It raises our wonder to see a woman who is invested with all this finery, bearing a pail of water on her head, grinding rice, and performing the other household labours. The wives of the Brahmans themselves never scruple to discharge those domestic duties.

It would, however, be too much to suppose that every woman was possessed of all the fine things we have enumerated, their wealth of this kind depending on the riches of their parents and husbands. But it is always a stipulation, in a contract of marriage, how much of this precious commodity is to be contributed by the father-in-law, and how much the bride is to carry with her from

home. The jewels, thus obtained, become their inalienable property ; which they never fail, when they become widows, to vindicate as their own.

The children of either sex are likewise ornamented with various trinkets of the same form, though smaller than those of grown persons. They have also some that are peculiar. As all children in India go perfectly naked till they are six or seven years old, the parents of course adapt the ornaments to the natural parts of the body. Thus, the girls have a plate of metal suspended so as to conceal, in some measure, their nakedness. The boys, on the other hand, have little bells hung round them, or some similar device of silver or gold, attached to the little belt with which they are girt. Amongst the rest, a particular trinket appears in front, bearing a resemblance to the sexual part of the lad.

## CHAP. XIX.

*The state of Widowhood. Second Marriages not permitted.*

THE happiest lot that can befall a woman of India, and particularly one of the Brahman cast, is to die in the married state. Their books pronounce that such an exit is the reward of good deeds done in a preceding existence.

When the husband dies first, just before his parting breath, the wife flies to her toilet; and, for the last time in her life, adorns herself with all her jewels and her finest attire. She is no sooner dressed than she returns, with marks of the profoundest grief on her countenance, and throws herself on the body of her dead husband, which she embraces with loud shrieks. She continues to clasp him fast in her arms, until the relations, who are generally quiet spectators of what is going on, thinking she has acquitted herself sufficiently of this first demonstration of grief, attempt to take her away from the body. She will not yield, however, to any thing but force, and appears to make violent efforts to disengage herself from their restraint so as to precipitate herself again upon the corpse. But, finding herself overpowered, she must be contented with rolling upon the ground, as if she were bereft of reason, striking her bosom violently, tearing off her hair in handfuls, and giving several other

proofs of the sincerity of her sorrow. She is compelled to act in this manner, were it only in dissimulation, and to save appearances; as it is all in conformity with custom, and appertains to the ceremony of mourning.

After exhibiting these first evidences of despair, she gets up; and, assuming a more composed appearance, approaches the body of her husband. Addressing it, in a style rather beyond the limits of real affection, she demands—"Why hast thou forsaken me? What evil have I done that thou hast left me at this untimely age? Had I not always for thee the fondness of a faithful wife? Was I not attentive to household affairs? My pretty children, whom I have brought thee! what will become of them, and who will protect them, now thou art dead? Did I not neatly serve up thy rice? Did not I devote myself to provide thee good eating? What did I leave undone? and who henceforward will take care of me?" Such pathetic appeals as these she utters in a sad and lamentable tone; and, at each demand, she pauses, to allow scope to her grief, which then breaks forth in violent screams, and with torrents of blasphemies against the gods, who have deprived her of her protector. The women who are attending wait till she has finished her lamentations, which they re-echo nearly in the same dismal tone.

She continues to apostrophize her husband in this manner, till her wearied lungs can no longer afford her the means of making her afflictions audible, or till her exhausted eloquence has spent all its stores. It is then time for her to withdraw, that she may enjoy some repose, and meditate upon some new harangues to be ad-

dressed to the dead body, when they are preparing for its obsequies.

The more vehement the expression of the widow's grief on such occasions, and the louder her exclamations, so much the more is she esteemed for her intelligence and sentiment. The young women who are present listen to every word she speaks, and diligently observe all her gestures; and, when they are struck with any thing that appears new or interesting in either, they diligently treasure it up in their memory, to be used at some future time when, in their turn, they are brought into the same predicament.

It would be highly discreditable to a woman, under such circumstances, to forbear these expressions of violent sorrow. I was once appealed to by some relations of a young widow, whose stupidity was so gross, they said, that at her husband's death she had not a word to say; but only wept.

These ceremonies, wailings, and lamentations have been continued from high antiquity. Very distinct traces of this are visible in the Holy Scripture; in that passage, for example (Gen. ch. 23.), which relates to the death of Sarah the wife of Abraham; and, still more (ch. 50.), where this kind of ceremony was practised by Joseph at the interment of his father: "And they  
" came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond  
" Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very  
" sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his  
" father seven days. And when the inhabitants of the  
" land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of  
" Atad, they said, this is a grievous mourning to the  
" Egyptians; wherefore the name of it was called Abel-  
" mizraim;" that is, *the mourning of the Egyptians*.

It is well known that the Romans hired mourners to attend their funerals, who were paid well, in proportion to the apparent vehemence of their sorrow.

In like manner, it is the custom in India to engage women for pay, to assist on such occasions, to add to the solemnity of the mourning by their tears and lamentations. These weeping hirelings, when sent for, instantly assemble about the deceased, with hair dishevelled and half their bodies bare, and commence by setting up the loud shout of lamentation in unison; then weep in gentler cadence, and beat time to the measure by thumping their bosoms with both hands. Sometimes, in mild apostrophe, they reproach the dead for his cruelty in departing; and sometimes join in high eulogium on the virtues and good qualities which he exhibited in his life. Each, in her turn, pours out her measure of reproof and commendation. Their assumed grief disappears as soon as the body is carried to its obsequies. They receive their wages, and mourn no longer.

The widows, who, in the learned tongue, are called *Vidhava*, which bears a great resemblance to the Latin *Vidua*, are less regarded than any other women, especially if they are without children; in which case they are spurned by all the world. They are then called *Munda*, a term of derision and even of abuse, as it signifies *shaved head*; which was, indeed, their allotment by the old law, though it be not enforced at present, any more than that which prohibits them the use of betel.

They cannot now wear any ornaments, excepting one of a plain sort, which is fastened round the neck. Coloured clothing is interdicted. In most parts they are allowed *white* only. Neither are they permitted to stain

their faces with saffron water ; nor even to imprint on their foreheads any of the symbols formerly described. They are excluded from all ceremonies of joy ; such as that of marriage, where their appearance would be considered an evil omen.

A woman is constituted *widow*, some days after the death of her husband, by a particular ceremony. The relations and near connexions of her own sex, being assembled in the house of the deceased, after partaking of a repast, which has been prepared for them, encircle the widow who is the object of their meeting, and exhort her to be reconciled to her unfortunate destiny. Having joined with her for some time in weeping over it, they make her sit down ; and her nearest female relation, after an exordium of some frivolous ceremonies, cuts the thread by which the *Tahly* is suspended, that little golden ornament which all wives in India wear at their necks as the symbol of their marriage. Then the barber is called, who shaves her head. By these two ceremonies she instantly sinks into the despised class of widows ; of which, being conscious, she fails not to make the air resound with her cries while they are going on, and with bitter curses of her unhappy lot.

We have formerly had occasion to remark that, however young or beautiful the widow may be, a new union is altogether impossible, by reason of the invincible customs of the country, which forbid it.

It has also been remarked, that, as the progress of libertinism, in our hemisphere, has counteracted the propensity to wedlock, and made Europe the region of single women ; so India, from its peculiar habits, has become that of widows. The cast of the Brahmans is in this respect pre-eminent. The disorders engendered

by the prohibition of second nuptials are real, but not so frequently felt as might be supposed; which must, in a great measure, be attributed to the gravity of the widows, and the naturally chaste temperament of the Hindu women, which is certainly far beyond what is conceded to them by some ill informed writers.

We may enumerate also, among the causes of their reserved behaviour, the constant vigilance and attention which the parents of the young women and widows exert to prevent them from ever being alone; as well as the system of the country, which admits of no familiar intercourse between males and females, but punishes severely the slightest offences against decorum, on the acknowledged ground that they quickly degenerate into greater abuses.

I was formerly accustomed to inveigh against the cruel usage which restricts the young widows from a second marriage; and I have even made myself enemies amongst the natives, by using too much freedom on that subject. But I have completely changed my opinion, after mature reflection on both sides of the question, and particularly after observing the great proportion of young girls that remain in a single state in some of the inferior casts which permit the remarrying of widows. And, seeing it is necessary that, in the ordinary course of society, a part of the women must be without husbands, the question is, whether it be not more reasonable that this unprovided class should consist of those who have once experienced the happiness or misery of living with a husband, than of others who have never stood in a relation so congenial to our nature. Those should have their turn also, that a trial may be afforded to each, of her ability to make that state permanently happy. In no

view does society lose any thing by this restraint; and on a great scale, it is of little importance whether it be by the marriage of young maidens or of young widows, that children are produced to the state.

## CHAP. XX.

*Rules and Precepts for the conduct of Married Women.*

I CANNOT better exhibit the manner of thinking adopted by the Hindus concerning the conduct to be expected from wives, than by copying what is prescribed on that subject in the *Padma purana*, one of the books of highest authority which they possess.

The author introduces, as the speaker, one of the celebrated seven penitents, who was ordained to prescribe the rules which we are about to adduce, and which were compiled for the purpose of attaching every woman to her husband and to the duties of her condition.

I pretend not to approve the whole. Some of them appear to me absurd, or at least useless, and some others injurious to the welfare of society; and the greatest number seem intended to reduce the women to a state of the most abject slavery. But one does not wonder to find here some mixture of the follies of Hindu superstition, which are never wanting in all cases whether grave or unimportant.

I should have been pleased to find a little more of order and connection in the institutes of our author. This portion of his work, although one of the most interesting, is not the best composed. But I shall give it as it is: an authentic model of Hindu diction.

- “ Hear me attentively, great king of Lippa ! I will ex-  
“ pound to thee how a virtuous and affectionate  
“ woman ought to conduct herself towards her  
“ husband. So said the great penitent Vasishta.
- “ A woman has no other god on earth than her hus-  
“ band. The most excellent of all the good works  
“ she can perform is to gratify him with the strict-  
“ est obedience. This should be her only devo-  
“ tion.
- “ Her husband may be crooked, aged, infirm ; offen-  
“ sive in his manners. Let him also be choleric  
“ and dissipated, irregular, a drunkard, a gambler,  
“ a debauchee. Suppose him reckless of his do-  
“ mestic affairs, even agitated like a demon. Let  
“ him live in the world destitute of honour. Let  
“ him be deaf or blind. His crimes and his infir-  
“ mities may weigh him down ; but never shall his  
“ wife regard him but as her god. She shall serve  
“ him with all her might ; obey him in all things,  
“ spy no defects in his character, nor give him any  
“ cause of disquiet.
- “ In every stage of her life, a woman is created to  
“ obey. At first, she yields obedience to her father  
“ and mother. When married, she submits to her  
“ husband, and her father and mother-in-law. In  
“ old age, she must be ruled by her children. Dur-  
“ ing her life, she can never be under her own con-  
“ trol.
- “ Diligent she must always be in her domestic la-  
“ bours ; watchful over her temper ; never covetous  
“ of what belongs to another. She must avoid  
“ dispute. She must persist in her task, till her  
“ husband bids her desist. Her deportment and  
“ her mind must be always serene.

- “ She may see things she would be delighted to possess ; but let her not seek to obtain them, without the consent of her husband.
- “ If a stranger insinuates himself, and woos her with the most impetuous passion ; if he offers her the richest garments, and jewels above all price :— by the gods ! she will spurn him from her presence.
- “ When a passenger shews a desire to look at her, she must shun him with downcast looks, and walk on in utter disregard of him, meditating only on her husband. Never will she look in the face of any other man. Thus acting, she will receive the applause of the world.
- “ If her husband laugh, she ought to laugh. If he weep, she will weep also. If he is disposed to speak, she will join in conversation. Thus is goodness of her nature displayed.
- “ She never notices whether any other man be young or well made, nor holds conversation with him. So let her act, and she shall have the praise of a faithful wife !
- “ And equally high in reputation shall she stand, who, seeing before her the most beautiful of the gods, shall view him with disdain, as unworthy of being compared with her husband.
- “ What woman would eat till her husband had first had his fill ? If he abstains, she will surely fast also. If he is sad, will she not be sorrowful ; and, if he is gay, will she not leap for joy ?
- “ In the absence of her husband, her raiment must be mean.

- “ Holding in low estimation her children, her grand-  
“ children, and her jewels, in comparison with her  
“ husband ; when she dies she will burn herself with  
“ him ; and she will be applauded by the whole  
“ world for her attachment.
- “ Her father-in-law, her mother-in-law, and her hus-  
“ band, are all entitled to her affection ; and if she  
“ sees them squandering away all the substance of  
“ the family, she shall not complain of their acts, far  
“ less oppose them.
- “ The labours of the household she must be always  
“ ready and diligent to discharge.
- “ Carefully let her perform her daily ablutions, and  
“ the colouring of her body with the saffron dye.  
“ Let her attire be elegant ; her eye-lids be tinged  
“ with black on their edges, and her forehead co-  
“ loured with red. Her hair also shall be combed  
“ and beautifully braided. Thus shall she resemble  
“ the *Akchimi*.
- “ Sweetly let her words distil from her mouth ; and  
“ more and more to please her husband be her only  
“ aim.
- “ When he goes out for a supply of wood and leaves ;  
“ for the purpose of prayer or bathing, or for what-  
“ ever other cause ; she ought to watch the mo-  
“ ment of his return, be ready to go before him,  
“ to introduce him to an apartment, to find him a  
“ seat, and to serve him with the food that he re-  
“ lishes.
- “ She should remind him of any thing that is wanting  
“ at home, and whatever he supplies she must man-  
“ age with care.

- “ Prudent in speech, she must converse with the Gu-  
 “ rus, the Sannyasi, with strangers, servants, and  
 “ every one besides, in a way becoming herself and  
 “ agreeable to them.
- “ In using the authority which her husband has com-  
 “ mitted to her at home, she will conduct herself  
 “ with prudence and mildness.
- “ Whatever money she receives from him, she must  
 “ faithfully expend, with no reservation for herself  
 “ or her friends, not even for charitable purposes  
 “ unauthorised by her husband.
- “ She must meddle in nothing that passes. She must  
 “ listen to no tales, whether lively or sad.
- “ Never let her yield to anger, or bear malice against  
 “ others.
- “ She will abstain from whatever food her husband  
 “ dislikes. She shall not anoint her head or her  
 “ body with oil, when he forbears to use it.
- “ When he goes abroad, if he bids her go with him,  
 “ she shall follow. If he bids her stay, she shall  
 “ stir no where during his absence. There shall  
 “ be no bathing, nor rubbing with oil. She shall  
 “ not clean her teeth or pare her nails, nor eat oftener  
 “ than once a day. She shall not recline on a couch,  
 “ nor wear her new attire, nor deck her head.
- “ A woman, when the complaints of her sex occur,  
 “ shall hide herself in a place detached from the  
 “ dwelling, as if she were a Pariatta, or as if she had  
 “ slain a Brahman. During that time, she must  
 “ see nobody, not even her children, nor the light  
 “ of the sun. On the fourth day she shall go forth  
 “ to bathe. Twelve times shall she plunge into the  
 “ water, and then twenty-four times ; observing all

“ the usages that pertain to ablution, and which  
 “ were ordained before the *Kala-yugai*.” (Here  
 the Penitent Vasishta describes the whole of those  
 ceremonies with a minuteness and an indecent  
 plainness which we must not imitate.)

- “ When a woman becomes pregnant, she must con-  
 “ form to all the rites that are usual on the occasion.  
 “ She must shun the company of women of du-  
 “ bious virtue, and of those whose children have  
 “ all died. She shall not ruminate on unpleasant  
 “ thoughts; nor look at frightful objects. She  
 “ shall avoid tales of distress, and abstain from  
 “ food difficult to digest. By adhering to these  
 “ rules, she shall bring forth beauteous children;  
 “ but abortion will follow if she disobeys.
- “ A woman, when her husband is from home, should  
 “ strictly conform to his parting counsels. She  
 “ must forsake all vain decoration, and must even  
 “ refrain from rites which would at other times be  
 “ grateful to the gods.
- “ If a man keep two wives, the one shall in no wise  
 “ intermiddle with the other, nor speak good or  
 “ evil respecting her companion. She must not  
 “ allude to the beauty or deformity of her children :  
 “ but they ought both to live together in good ac-  
 “ cord, without a disobliging expression passing  
 “ between them.
- “ When in the presence of her husband, a woman  
 “ must not look on one side and the other. She  
 “ must keep her eyes on her master to be ready to  
 “ receive his commands. When he speaks she  
 “ must be quiet, and listen to nothing besides.

- “ When he calls her, she must leave every thing  
“ else, and attend upon him alone.
- “ When her husband sings, she must be in ecstasy.  
“ If he dances, she views him with delight. If he  
“ speaks of science, she is filled with admiration.  
“ When in his presence, she must be always gay.  
“ There must be no gloom or discontent.
- “ She ought above all things to shun domestic quar-  
“ rels, whether on account of her relations, or of  
“ any other woman that her husband may keep, or  
“ on account of any unpleasant words that may  
“ arise. To leave her house for reasons such as  
“ these, would expose her to public derision, and  
“ give occasion for many evils.
- “ Her husband may sometimes be in a passion ; he  
“ may threaten her : he may use imperious lan-  
“ guage ; nay, he may unjustly beat her. But,  
“ under no circumstances, shall she make any re-  
“ turn but meek and soothing words. Laying hold  
“ of his hands, she should entreat his forgiveness.  
“ There shall be no exclamations ; no thoughts of  
“ deserting her home.
- “ But, to retort upon her husband ; to say to him, you  
“ have insulted me with rude language ; you have  
“ beaten me ; I shall speak to you no more ; I will  
“ look upon you as a father ; and you may treat me  
“ as an elder sister ; I will meddle no more with  
“ your affairs, and do you let mine alone ; I will have  
“ nothing more to do with you : such taunting dis-  
“ course must never fall from her lips.
- “ If her relations shall invite her to any festival, on oc-  
“ casion of a wedding, the ceremony of the Cord,  
“ or the like ; she shall not go without leave from

- “ her husband, or unaccompanied by some elderly  
 “ woman, She will be absent as short a time as  
 “ possible ; and, on her return, she shall faithfully  
 “ recount to her husband every thing she has seen,  
 “ and cheerfully return to her domestic labours.
- “ When her husband is from home, she must sleep  
 “ with one of her relations, but never alone. She  
 “ must often inquire after his health. She must  
 “ urge him to make a speedy return ; and she will  
 “ intercede for him with the gods.
- “ Let all her words, her actions, and her deportment  
 “ give open assurance that she views her husband  
 “ as her god. Then shall she be honoured of all  
 “ men, and be praised as a discreet and virtuous  
 “ wife.
- “ If her husband dies first, and she resolves to die  
 “ with him ;—glorious and happy shall she be in  
 “ that world into which he has passed.
- “ But, whether she die the first, or survive her hus-  
 “ band ; a virtuous woman will assuredly enter in-  
 “ to the enjoyment of every blessing in the world  
 “ to come.
- “ A woman has no true enjoyment but through her  
 “ husband. From him she derives children ; he  
 “ provides her with fine apparel, decorates her  
 “ with jewels, supplies her with flowers, with san-  
 “ dal, saffron, and every thing her heart can desire.
- “ It is, moreover, by means of his wife, that a man  
 “ enjoys all earthly happiness. This is the perpe-  
 “ tual counsel of all our books of wisdom. It is  
 “ by the aid of the wife that he performs his good  
 “ works, that he acquires riches and honour : and  
 “ under her auspices all his measures are prosper-

“ous. A man without a wife is an imperfect being.”

These dogmas may appear to bear too heavily upon the females; yet are they kept up in full vigour to this day in many particulars. Nay, in some tribes, they are still more severe. I might give an example of this from some districts under the *Vaishnava* Brahmans, where the wife is not permitted to speak to her mother-in-law. When any task is prescribed to her, she shews her acquiescence only by signs. But it sometimes happens that, though deprived of the privilege of words, they can make their gestures so expressive and significant as to put the old woman in a rage.

It is said that the same practice of imposing silence on the young women, in presence of a mother-in-law, or a step-dame, is established in Armenia: a contrivance well adapted for securing domestic tranquillity; dearly purchased, however, by degrading the most useful and interesting portion of the fair sex into the condition of slaves.

## CHAP. XXI.

*Of the custom of Women allowing themselves to be Burned with the Corpses of their Husbands.*

THE ancient and barbarous custom which imposes it as a duty on women to die voluntarily, on the funeral pile of their husbands, although still in force, is by no means so general or frequent as it was in former times. It is also more rare in the peninsula than in the northern parts of India; where it is by no means uncommon, even in the present times, to see women offering themselves up as the willing victims of this horrid superstition, and devoting themselves, out of pride or vanity, to this cruel death. It is confined to the countries under the government of the idolatrous princes; for the Muhammadan rulers do not permit the barbarous practice in the provinces subject to them; and I am persuaded the Europeans will not endure it where their power extends.

As this awful rite was chiefly an appendage to regal and princely state, it has been considered as honourable in itself, and as reflecting additional lustre on the cast and family to which the magnanimous victim belonged. In very old times it was considered an affront to the memory of the deceased, and as an evident mark of the want of that ardent devotion which a woman owes to her

husband, when she shewed any reluctance to accompany his body to the pile.

A few years ago, I myself was witness to the influence which these false notions retain even in modern times. It was in the case of the wife of the son of a Polygar, or Prince, of Kangendy, in the Carnatic; upon whom neither entreaties nor threats nor reproaches were spared, in order to induce her to allow herself to be burned alive with the body of her deceased husband; and, more especially, as she was of a family celebrated for several generations, for heroic resolution in that splendid devotion. The funeral was long delayed, in hopes that the woman would at length resolve to prefer so glorious and honourable a death to a remnant of life, to be dragged out in contempt and infamy. But threats and entreaties, long continued as they were, had no influence upon her. She stubbornly resisted all the attacks of her relatives; and her husband was obliged to go unaccompanied to the other world.

The wretched condition of widows, on one hand, and vanity on the other, inspiring the hope of renown, are the principal inducements with those who embrace the dreadful proposal. And, certainly, they are canonized after death; vows are paid to them, and recourse is had to them in diseases and other casualties of life, in the faith that a miraculous deliverance will be effected by their intercession. After the fire has consumed her body, they collect the remnants of the bones which have resisted the fire; and erect over the spot little pyramids or monuments, to transmit to posterity the memory of so illustrious a victim of conjugal attachment. This distinction is the more striking that a grave-stone is a thing almost unheard of in India. The ceremony being

over, the woman who has submitted to this glorious death is considered in the light of a Deity. Crowds of votaries daily frequent her shrine, imploring her protection, and praying for deliverance from their evils.

To these inducements, which are sufficient in themselves to make a powerful impression on an enthusiastic and fanatical mind, let us add the solicitations of relatives; who if they observe the slightest tendency in the widow to devote herself, never fail to prompt and encourage her to come to a final determination. And to accelerate this object, they sometimes ply her with drugs, which confuse the intellect, and make her easily submit to any thing that is required of her. Her relations are pleased with the result, well knowing that so splendid a death will redound to the everlasting honour of their family.

Some authors who have mentioned this inhuman practice, have taken upon themselves to pronounce that it was introduced from a dread on the part of the husbands, that their discontented wives might seek occasion secretly to procure their death. But I can assure my readers that, after the perusal of the writings of native authors, and the long intercourse I have had with many very enlightened individuals in the country, I can find no ground whatever to justify such an insinuation. Indeed, it must appear evident, from the nature of the thing, that a dying husband can entertain no jealousy of his wife surviving him, inasmuch as she is doomed, after his demise, to perpetual widowhood. The most discontented of wives would have more to gain by submitting to the severest husband, than she could expect by becoming a widow, at the expense of such a crime, which

could lead to no hope of improving her situation by a new engagement.

Nor, on the other hand, can we ascribe these voluntary deaths to conjugal affection, although it forms the most ostensible pretext, and although the lamentations and demonstrations of despair manifested by the women, at the death of their husbands, might lead one to suppose that it might really be the motive to such a sacrifice. But all their external expressions of grief may be safely ranked under the head of grimace, of which the Hindus, under all circumstances of life, are the most absolute masters. During the long period of my observation of them and their habits, I am not sure that I have ever seen two Hindu marriages that closely united the hearts by a true and inviolable attachment.

The Brahman women no longer continue the practice of burning themselves alive with the bodies of their husbands. This custom is relinquished to other casts, as well as many others which require the endurance of bodily pain. That which we are speaking of is now almost confined to the tribe of Rajas. But though the Brahmans have found pretences for absolving their women from this dreadful penalty, they still continue to preside exclusively at such tragical proceedings, and to direct the performance.

When a woman of any other cast than their own, declares, gravely and deliberately, that she is desirous of being consumed alive by the side of the dead body of her husband, the matter is conclusive. She cannot afterwards draw back. Her revocation would be disregarded; and if she refused to go to the pile with good will, she would be carried thither by force.

It is a prevailing superstition through all India, that if a woman, after taking that resolution voluntarily, shall refuse to fulfil it, the whole country in which she lives shall be visited with some dreadful calamity. To inspire her, therefore, with adequate courage, the Brahmans, and all her kindred, visit her in turn, complimenting her on her heroism, and the immortal glory which she will derive from a mode of dying which must exalt her in dignity to the gods. They excite her fanaticism by every means which cruel superstition can suggest, and keep up the phrenzy of her imagination, until the hour arrives when she is to be led to the funeral pile.

Then is she bedecked with all her jewels, and dressed in her finest apparel. Her brow is adorned with the sacred symbol of her cast. Her body is tinged with the yellow infusion of sandal and saffron. Every thing is prepared. Her spirits are roused and kept up to the highest pitch of exaltation that fanaticism and superstition can impart. The procession begins, and she is led to the pile on which she is soon to expire.

Before describing the rest of the ceremony, I ought to observe that, in cases where a husband has several wives, which often happens in the cast of Rajas, they dispute with each other for the honour of accompanying their common husband to the pile, and to be burnt with him. The Brahmans who preside at the ceremony determine which of them shall have the preference. An instance of this kind I will here extract from the *Bharata*, a work of great authority among the Hindus.

“*Pandu*, the King, retired, with his two wives, into the forest, to pursue a course of penitence. He had also entered into a solemn vow, under the curse of in-

“stant death, that he should hold no commerce with  
“either of them. The youngest was extremely beau-  
“tiful, and her charms were so powerful as to overcome  
“the terrors of perdition. For a long time she resisted  
“his solicitations, and reasoned with him on the danger  
“of yielding to them; for she was unwilling to incur  
“the imputation of being the cause of his death.—  
“But all was in vain, her refusal only serving to in-  
“crease the violence of his passion. He was at length  
“driven to the gratification of it; and immediately the  
“curse fell upon him with full effect.

“Being now dead, a question arose, which of the two  
“wives ought to follow him to the funeral pile; and a  
“sharp altercation took place between them for the pre-  
“ference. An assembly of Brahmans was held to de-  
“cide the dispute; when the elder of the two wives in-  
“sisted, that her rank, as his original consort, gave her  
“a precedence above any posterior one; and farther ob-  
“served, that her competitor had several young chil-  
“dren, whose education absolutely required the prolong-  
“ation of her life.

“The second wife then addressed the assembly, ad-  
“mitting the superior rank of her opponent, but insist-  
“ing that, as she was the immediate instrument of their  
“husband’s death, and the fatal cause which brought  
“down the malediction upon him, that she alone ought  
“to endure its consequences. ‘And, as to the bring-  
“ing up of the children,’ quoth she, turning tenderly  
“towards her rival, ‘are they not yours as well as mine?’  
“Besides, what sort of education could they expect from  
“a young inexperienced girl like me? Believe me, it  
“will better suit with your gravity and years.’”

In the Bharata, the debate is carried on to much greater length; but it will be sufficient to relate that, notwithstanding the eloquence of the younger lady, the court gave the preference to the other, and “admitted “her,” says the author, “to the distinguished honour “of being consumed alive with the body of her husband.”

In some other casts of Hindus, where the custom of burial prevails, instances have occurred of women being interred alive with their dead husbands. The ceremonies are nearly the same in either case; and in the following detail of them I have it in my power to present a more exact and faithful picture than I have yet seen from any other hand.

The first instance that fell under my observation was in the year 1794, in a village of Tanjore, called *Podupettah*. A man of some note there, of the tribe of *Komati* or *Merchants*, having died, his wife, then about thirty years of age, resolved to accompany him to the pile, to be consumed together. The news having quickly spread around, a large concourse of people collected from all quarters to witness this extraordinary spectacle. When she who occupied the most conspicuous part had got ready, and was decked out in the manner before described, bearers arrived to bring away the corpse and the living victim. The body of the deceased was placed upon a sort of triumphal car, highly ornamented with costly stuffs, garlands of flowers, and the like. There he was seated, like a living man, elegantly set out with all his jewels, and clothed in rich attire.

The corpse taking precedence, the wife immediately followed, borne on a rich palanquin. She was covered over with ornaments, in the highest style of Indian taste and

magnificence. As the procession moved, the surrounding multitude stretched out their hands towards her in token of their admiration. They beheld her as already translated into the paradise of Vishnu, and seemed to envy her happy lot.

Their progress being very slow, the spectators, particularly the women, went up to her in succession, to wish her joy, and apparently desiring to receive her blessing, or at least that she would pronounce over them some pleasing word, and predict their future fortunes. She tried to satisfy them all ; telling one that she would long continue to enjoy her temporal felicity, and another that she would be the mother of many beautiful children. She assured one that she was destined to live many years in happiness with a husband that would doat upon her. The next was informed that she would soon arrive at great honour in the world. These and equally gracious expressions she lavished upon all that approached her, and all departed with complete assurance of enjoying the blessings which she promised them. She likewise distributed amongst them some leaves of betel, which were eagerly accepted, as relics, or something of blessed influence.

During the whole procession, which was very long, she preserved a steady aspect. Her countenance was serene and even cheerful, until they came to the fatal pile, on which she was soon to yield up her life. She then turned her eyes to the spot where she was to undergo the flames, and she became suddenly pensive. She no longer attended to what was passing around her. Her looks were wildly fixed upon the pile. Her features were altered ; her face grew pale ; she trembled with fear, and seemed ready to faint away.

The Brahmans, who directed the ceremony, and her relations, perceiving the sudden effect which the near approach of her fate had occasioned, ran to her assistance, and endeavoured to restore her spirits. But her senses were bewildered; she seemed unconscious of what was said to her, and replied not a word to any one.

They made her quit the palanquin: and her nearest relations supported her to a pond that was near the pile, and having there washed her, without taking off her clothes or ornaments, they soon reconducted her to the pyramid on which the body of her husband was already laid. It was surrounded by the Brahmans, each with a lighted torch in one hand and a bowl of melted butter in the other, all ready, as soon as the innocent victim was placed on the pyramid, to envelope her in fire.

The relatives, all armed with muskets, sabres, and other weapons, stood closely round, in a double line, and seemed to wait with impatience for the awful signal.

This armed force, I understood, was intended to intimidate the unhappy victim, in case the dreadful preparations should incline her to retract; or to overawe any other persons who, out of false compassion, should endeavour to rescue her.

At length the auspicious moment for firing the pile being announced by the Purohita Brahman, the young widow was instantly divested of all her jewels, and led on, more dead than alive, to the fatal pyramid. She was then commanded, according to the universal practice, to walk round it three times, two of her nearest relations supporting her by the arms. The first round she accomplished with tottering steps; but, in the second, her strength wholly forsook her, and she fainted away in the arms of her conductors; who were obliged to com-

plete the ceremony by dragging her between them for the third round. Then, senseless and unconscious, she was cast upon the carcase of her husband. At that instant the multitude making the air resound with acclamations and shouts of gladness, retired a short space, while the Brahmans, pouring the butter on the dry wood, applied their torches; and instantly the whole pile was in a blaze.

As soon as the flames had taken effect, the living sacrifice, now in the midst of them, was invoked by name from all sides; but, as insensible as the carcase on which she lay, she made no answer. Suffocated at once, most probably, by the fire, she lost her life without perceiving it.

The other instance which I alluded to is of a more recent date. It was at the death of the late Raja of Tanjore, in the year one thousand eight hundred. He left behind him four lawful wives, whom he had espoused, agreeably to the Hindu custom, which tolerates in Princes the abuse of Polygamy.

The Brahmans having decided that two of the wives should be burnt with their husband, and having selected the devoted individuals out of the four; these received the information with much apparent joy. It would no doubt have been a matter of everlasting shame to themselves, and of the deepest ignominy to the manes of the deceased, had they hesitated in their compliance. They had also reason to believe that means would be fallen upon to procure their assent, whether voluntarily or not; and therefore they made a virtue of necessity, and put on this semblance of consenting with a good grace.

The brief account which I here present of this awful ceremony was communicated to me by a person, of veracity to be completely relied on, who was sent on purpose to the place, to take an account of all the circumstances. His detail extends to four and twenty pages of writing, in which are included several particulars exactly resembling those described in the preceding example, which therefore I will not repeat; nor shall I be tedious upon those that were different.

One day only was required to make the necessary preparations for the obsequies; which were conducted in this manner.

In a field, three or four leagues from the royal residence, they made an excavation of no great depth, about twelve or fifteen feet square. Within it they constructed a pyramid of the sweet-smelling wood of the sandal, the only species of timber used in this barbarous rite. On the middle of the pyramid, a scaffold was erected to the elevation of a few feet, constructed in such a manner as that the props could be easily withdrawn; by which means the structure would give way at once. On the four corners of the platform large jars were placed, filled with melted butter, to smear the pyramid, that it might be the more easily set on fire.

This was the order of the procession. It was headed by a great number of soldiers under arms. They were followed by a multitude of musicians, chiefly trumpeters, who made the air re-echo to their melancholy sounds. Next came the body of the king, upon a splendid palanquin richly decorated. This was surrounded by the nearest relations, and by the Guru of the deceased. They were all on foot, and without their turbans, in token of mourning. A large party of Brahmans

formed round them, as an immediate escort. The two wives, who were to be burned with the corpse of the King, came next, each borne on a palanquin quite open. They preserved, during the journey, a calm appearance and a cheerful air. The escort of troops kept off the immense crowds who were assembled from all quarters, some from motives of interest, and others out of curiosity.

The two queens were attended by some of their favourite women, with whom they occasionally conversed. They were loaded, rather than decorated, with jewels; which were not stripped from them, as commonly happens to women of ordinary rank, when they ascend the pile. They were accompanied by their relatives of both sexes, to many of whom they had made presents before leaving the palace. Thousands of Brahmans, collected from all parts, made up the rest of their retinue; and an innumerable multitude of persons of all ranks followed in the rear.

When they arrived at the ground where the sacrifice was to take place, the two victims were made to descend from their palanquins, for the purpose of purification, and of performing the other preparatory ceremonies. They went through the whole, without hesitation, and without shewing the least embarrassment; but, towards the close, their countenances began to betray them, and the three circuits round the pile were not accomplished without considerable efforts to sustain their equanimity.

During this interval, the body of the king had been deposited on the scaffold over the platform. The two Queens were also laid down beside the corpse, one on the right hand and the other on the left; and they join-

ed hands by stretching them over the body. The astrologer or Purohita having then declared that the happy instant was come for finishing the ceremony, the Brahmans recited several Mantras in a loud voice, and consecrated the pile by sprinkling it with their *tirtham* or holy water. These brief ceremonies were hardly over, when, on a signal given, the pillars, which supported the pyramid and the scaffold, were suddenly withdrawn, and the women were instantly overwhelmed by the falling mass of timber, which tumbled over them with a crash. At the same instant the whole edifice was kindled in all its parts. On one side the nearest of kin to the King applied his torch, and opposite to him the Guru; while the Brahmans, in every quarter were pouring jars of melted butter on the flames, creating so intense a heat as must have instantly consumed the victims. Then the multitude shouted for joy; and the kindred, approaching the pile, also set up a loud cry, calling upon them by their names. They fancied they heard a voice in answer pronouncing *Enn? What?* but the fall of the platform and the immediate bursting out of the flames must have stifled them at once.

Such was the miserable end of those unhappy victims of a cruel and barbarous superstition; and such are the ceremonies with which it is accompanied, varying in different districts, but fundamentally the same.

Two days after, when the fire was completely extinguished, they dug out from amongst the ashes some portions of the bones which were not wholly consumed, and inclosed them in urns of red copper, which were sealed with the signet of the new King. Soon afterwards, thirty of the Brahmans set out with them for *Kasi* or Benares, to cast them into the holy waters of the

Ganges. The reward which was to be paid to them, upon depositing the relics at Kasi, was previously agreed upon, and was paid them when they returned with certificates from that holy city.

A small portion of these bone-ashes was pounded and swallowed by twelve Brahmans, who mixed it as an ingredient with some other food. This act, so revolting to our nature, was believed to be expiatory of the sins of the three parties deceased. But as it is understood that this can be effected only by transferring those sins into the bodies of the Brahmans, the lucre which they derive from so unnatural an act is not believed to be attended with much ultimate advantage to them.

There were also found among the ashes some small pieces of gold, formed, no doubt, from the trinkets of the queens, which the violence of the heat had fused.

It then became a question what recompense the Brahmans should share who had borne a part in the obsequies, or had honoured them with their presence. The King's Guru received a present of an elephant. The three palanquins, which had served to transport the corpse and the two Queens to the pile, were allotted to the three principal Brahmans. Amongst the rest a distribution was made, in cloth and money, to the amount of about twenty-five thousand rupees, besides several bags of small coin scattered among the crowd, in the course of the procession. Finally, twelve houses were built, which were given to the twelve Brahmans who had the courage to swallow the pounded bones of the deceased, and by that means to take upon themselves all their sins.

Some days after the funeral, the new King made a pilgrimage to a temple a few leagues distant from his capital. After bathing in a privileged pond in its neighbourhood, and being here thoroughly cleansed from all the impurities contracted during the previous ceremonies of the mourning, he made some further presents to the Brahmans and to the poor of the other casts.

On the spot where the funeral pile was erected, on which the King and his two unhappy Queens were consumed, a round mausoleum has been built, about twelve feet in diameter, terminating in a dome. Here the present Prince generally stops, when he happens to go out in that direction, and prostrates himself before the tombs of his predecessors.

A great number of votaries of all casts continually repair thither to offer their vows to these new divinities, imploring their help and protection in all the vicissitudes of life. When I was last there, in 1802, a great variety of pretended miracles were current, as having been performed by their intercession.

India is not the only nation in which the abominable practice of sacrificing the wife on the pile of her husband has been adopted. Ancient authors speak of it as not unknown in early times amongst other civilized nations. Herodotus, in particular\*, speaking of the Crestonæans, asserts that the women dispute with each other for the honour of dying with their husband. She who was esteemed to have been his favourite, had the preference, and was slain on his tomb. The rest, to whom this honour was refused, and who were only permitted to be

\* Terpsichore.

present at the ceremony, returned from it abashed and in confusion. The Indians, however, seem to be the only people in the universe who keep up the abominable custom to the present day.

## CHAP. XXII.

*Of Adoption among the Brahmans and other Hindus.*

WHEN a Brahman finds himself without male issue, whether from the barrenness of his wife or the premature death of the children she may have brought him, he is empowered, nay required to procure a son by means of adoption, in order to fulfil the obligation which they believe all men to be under, of providing for the succession of society. Besides, as the perfect state of a Brahman consists in being married, he falls short of that perfection when he is without offspring, particularly males, *to perform his obsequies*. This defect alone is supposed to exclude him from a blessed world after his death.

These notions prevail so strongly among the Hindus, that I have known women not only consenting to their husband taking another wife, but finding him one, when they happened to have daughters only. Yct they could not but foresee the great inconvenience that would result to themselves from the introduction of another wife, who being young and likely to bring male children to her husband, would naturally presume on these claims of superiority over the lawful wife.

We have before remarked, that polygamy was an abuse not publicly tolerated and admitted, excepting in favour of the princes, to whom the the Brahmans granted the indulgence of marrying as many as five wives in

the accustomed way of matrimony. But when persons of ordinary station appear to have other wives besides the legitimate one, it may be inferred that they are merely hired concubines, or wives intended to supply the sterility of the real one. And even, in this last case, the domestic troubles which almost universally spring from it, give a general preference to the practice of adoption.

The Brahman, who is destitute of male issue, looks out amongst his nearest relations, such as his brothers, or uncles, for a youth whom he may adopt. If he cannot find one in that class of relatives, he goes to his wife's kindred. He may even adopt the children of his own daughter. Those who have several male children very willingly part with one of them to a relation who has none, particularly if he be rich ; by which means the property is retained in the family. But if he does not find a proper young man, among his own relations or those of his wife, he has recourse to some poor Brahman, overloaded with children ; and, if he be in tolerable affluence himself, he is not likely to meet with much repugnance in such a quarter. The fundamental rules of adoption are the following :

The adopted son wholly renounces all claim on the property of his natural father, and acquires an unlimited right of succession to all that belongs to his adopted father. From him he is entitled to maintenance and education, as if he were his own son ; and to receive, through his means, the advantages of the Triple Cord, and of being settled in marriage. The adopted son is obliged, on his part, to take care of his acquired parents in their old age, and attend to their funeral when they die. Afterwards he enters into possession of their pro-

perty ; enjoys whatever is of value, and is obliged to pay the debts.

He farther enters into the *Gotra* or lineage of him by whom he is adopted ; and is considered as descended from the same ancient stock.

When the ceremonies of adoption commence, the new parents perform one which is held to be the most important and essential of any, by tying round the loins of the youth that little string which every male child in India is ceremoniously invested with at the age of two or three years, and which serves to fix the bit of cloth that is always used to cover those parts of the body. If the ceremony has been previously performed by the natural parents, the adopted ones break the cord, in token of dissolving the *Gotra* from which the child descended ; and put on a new one, as the sign of his being called to theirs.

On this, as on all other solemn occasions, their first care is to select an auspicious day, and the fortunate moment of the day, by help of the rules of their astrology.

It is unnecessary to enter at large into the remaining ceremonies, as they closely resemble what are used in other solemnities. The *Pandal* or artificial bower over the door, or in the court before the house, is not omitted. The *Toranam*, of which it is chiefly composed, are easily adapted to that or any other situation, being merely lines stretched in proper directions, thickly strung with mango leaves. When a prince or the governor of a province is expected to pass through a town or village, the streets are decorated in this manner, as if with triumphal arches ; and, simple as the contrivance is, the effect is exceedingly beautiful.

Within the house, or under this pandal, the whole relations and friends assemble. The Purohita commences the ceremonies by offerings or sacrifice to the patron god of the house, and to the *God of obstacles*. He then produces the holy water, of which the adopted son takes a little in the hollow of his hand and drinks it. Some is sprinkled about the house and the pandal, and over those who are present; and the rest is poured back into the well.

The sacrifice of the *Homan*, which follows, is made here with some variation, being offered to the *nine planets*, which the Purohita, by virtue of his evocatory mantras, compels to attend at the ceremony. An offering is also made to them of two measures of rice, in a raw state, which are divided into nine portions. As many Brahmans, chosen for the purpose, perform the Homam, with sweet-scented wood; and, after invoking the God of Fire, spreading the rice and sprinkling the liquid butter, they make him a profound obeisance with closed hands, and retire.

The sacrifice being over, the adopting father and mother sit down on a little stool placed under the alcove; when the natural mother of the child, after receiving a hundred or perhaps five hundred small pieces of money and a new garment, as her *wages for nursing*, approaches the adopter, who asks her with a loud voice in presence of all the assembly, whether she delivers him her child to be brought up: to which she answers, *I do deliver him to you to bring up*. This phrase is held distinctly to import, that she gives up her son, not as a slave who is sold, but to be reared as a child of the family.

This ceremony applies more particularly to the mother than to the father, as children among the Hindus until

grown up are always considered to belong to her; and if, for any reason, she parts from her husband, she always takes the children away as her own. For this reason the delivering over of the child, in adoption, belongs to its mother; while the reception of it appertains, with equal propriety, to the adopting father.

A dish is then brought in, filled with water, made yellow by the infusion of saffron. It is consecrated with mantras by the Purohita; and the mother taking the dish, delivers it to the adopter, and at the same time invoking the fire to bear witness, she thrice repeats these words: "I give thee this child; I have a right to him  
"no more." The adopter takes the child, and seating him on his knee, he addresses the relations present, saying: "This child has been given me, and the fire adjured as a witness of it; and I, having drank of the  
"saffron-water, promise to rear him as my own son.  
"He enters into all that belongs to me; my property  
"and my debts."

Then he and his wife, pouring a little saffron-water into the hollow of their hands, and dropping a little into that of the adoptive child, pronounce aloud before the assembly: "We have acquired this child to our stem,  
"and we incorporate him with it." Upon which they drink the saffron-water, which they hold in their hands, and, rising up, make a profound obeisance to the assembly; to which the officiating Brahmans reply by the word *Asirvadam*.

It is unnecessary to add that the ceremony is terminated by a repast given to the Brahmans, for which they prepare by bathing; and that the whole concludes with the distribution of betel and pieces of money: for this is the termination of all their festivals.

The circumstance of using saffron-water in this ceremony has given rise to a common appellation for adopted children, who are often called the *water-of-saffron children* of such an one, without meaning it as a term of ridicule or reproach. In this it differs from the nicknames frequently bestowed on individuals there, the most of which are taken from some odd particulars in their lives, and often from some mental or bodily defect.

The Sudras add one peculiarity to the ceremony, the adopting father and mother pouring on the feet of the child the water from the pitcher, which they hold in one hand; and, catching it with the other hand, and drinking it. In other respects they follow the same customs as the Brahmans, but they abridge them.

It is not always upon young children that the rite of adoption is performed. Great lads sometimes receive it also, when it suits the interests of their families.

Adoption admits of being effected, in a simpler way, and one better accommodated to the circumstances of people in the humbler situations of life. She who surrenders the child, and he who accepts it, do it in presence of the fire; which they appeal to as being witness to the adoption; and this suffices to render it valid and legal.

Those who inhabit the banks of the Ganges, may perform the act of reddition and acceptance, by taking the river to witness the mutual agreement; and this stands in the place of other ceremonies.

Another species of adoption arises from the wayward circumstances of some of the poorer and meaner Brahmans; who, finding it difficult to support the cost of the ceremony of the Cord and other rites, are reduced to make over the whole or part of their children to rich-

er Brahmans, who take charge of them ; and by this act alone the children are incorporated into the Gotra, and considered as adopted.

The same thing likewise takes place in respect to marriage. A father and mother, unable to support the expence of the ceremonies, give up their son to a man who has girls only. He accepts of him, and gives him one of his daughters for a wife. By this process he is considered as adopted into the family, and enters accordingly into all its privileges and obligations.

But in whatever way adoption is consummated, the adopted child loses all right to the property of his natural parents, and is not at all answerable for the debts they may leave behind them.

The adoption of girls is rare, though not without example.

In the account I have given of the ceremonies used in Adoption, as well as in the preceding ones of Marriage and the Triple Cord, I have been guided by the Directory or Ritual of the Purohitas. That book also solves some difficulties respecting the division of the effects ; of which we shall now treat.

## CHAP. XXIII.

*Partition of Property in certain cases.*

IN the Ritual above mentioned, the case is put of a man who, after adopting a son, unexpectedly has six children by his wife; four boys and two girls. Two of the boys die, while one of the daughters and the adopted son are severally married. There remain in a single state, two boys and one girl; and provision must also be made for the subsistence of the mother. The question is, how the effects of the deceased ought to be divided.

The answer given, is to the following effect. First, there must be a sum set apart, sufficient for the expence of the funeral rites of the deceased to be performed in a decent and creditable way; and also for the marriage of the three children who are not yet established. The sum required for this purpose must be deposited in safe hands.

Secondly. What remains must be divided into six portions and a half. The adopted son takes one portion, with a quarter of the half share. The eldest brother takes as much; after which the remainder shall be divided in equal parts amongst the other brothers and the mother.

If the mother were dead, the division would be into five parts and a half; unless all the brothers should agree

to provide their unmarried sister with trinkets out of the share which would have fallen to the mother. If she, at her death, chuses to leave her part of the succession to her daughters, their brothers cannot oppose it. If she does not, the brothers will divide amongst themselves whatever remains of her property, after the charge of her burial.

This decision, laid down by the Brahmans, appears to vary from the general custom of the Hindus; by which, in the division of the paternal property, no more is allowed to the elder brothers than to the younger. The mothers, on the other hand, have no share whatever of the property of their husbands, the children being strictly bound to provide for them during their lives.

It may happen that a man who has no children, by reason of the barrenness of his wife, may take another to remedy this defect. If the latter should have a son, the father's estate would descend to him exclusively, and the lawful wife would have nothing whatever at the death of her husband, were the son not obliged to provide for her during her life. If the *great wife*, as the first is called, does not chuse to live with the *little one*, the relations are called in, and a provision is assigned her adequate to her wants.

A rich man, whose wife was unfruitful, being desirous to have progeny, took a second. For the same reason he married a third. The whole proved barren, so that he died without leaving issue. He had an elder brother, and also a younger, as well as several cousins, the sons of his paternal uncles. None of these, however, had been living with him, having long before received their portions, and each maintaining a separate es-

tablishment. The question to be determined was, Who is the true heir of the deceased?

The answer given is, that the true heir is the younger brother. As the youngest, the duty of conducting the funeral falls upon him, by the usage of the country; and he who performs the obsequies is held in all cases to be the successor of him to whom he renders those honours. In becoming the principal at the interment, he also becomes the head and master of the house. He will therefore take on himself the maintenance of the three wives left by his deceased brother; and if any of them should wish to return to her relations, she will be free to do so, and to take with her the jewels which she had received from her husband. Besides this, an assembly of the relations will determine upon the allowance which her brother-in-law, the heir to her husband, shall be bound to afford her. If she incline to remain in the house that was her husband's, and to have an establishment there, apart, she will be indulged in her wish; and in that case her brother-in-law would not be under the necessity of assigning to her any considerable income. She would make it up by begging alms; a profession not disgraceful in such a case, being one of the six privileges of her cast.

The brother-in-law is also obliged to bear the expence of the funerals of the three widows, if they die before him.

If there were no junior brother, it would be the elder alone who would have every right centred in him, whether regarding the obsequies or the succession; and in default of both, they will pass to the nearest relation on the father's side.

The book from which I have quoted does not enter

more deeply into the division of property in difficult cases. The relatives assembled decide any dispute, according to the rules of the country or the cast, and more frequently still according to the wealth and generosity of him who best rewards them for a favourable decision. This, of course, leads, in such popular courts, to innumerable intrigues, and perversions of justice.

From what has been remarked, it will be seen that the right of succession and that of performing the obsequies are inseparable. When a rich man dies, without issue, or other direct descendants, a crowd of remote relations appear, who dispute with each other the privilege of conducting the obsequies. The contest is often prolonged till the corpse becomes putrid in the house. But the case is very different when a poor man dies under the like circumstances. Nobody contends for the right of disposing of his body. On the contrary, all his relations keep aloof; knowing that he who took charge of his funeral would also have the burden of his debts.

There is still another rule respecting succession among the Hindus, that differs wholly from ours, and which would appear to us somewhat irreconcilable with the principles of public justice, which ought to be observed in all civilized nations.

A father dies, leaving several male children, who, from negligence, or perhaps unwillingness to separate, or from his having left nothing, have none of his property to divide. Some of them, by industry, application, and economy, acquire considerable wealth, while the rest becoming vagabonds, thoughtless and dissolute, sink into difficulties and debt. After scouring the country for many years, these probably discover that some of their brothers, by industry and good conduct, have

acquired some degree of opulence ; and from them they confidently claim an equal share of what has been acquired by the sweat of their brows, and devolve upon them a proportion of the debts which they themselves have contracted by debauchery and misconduct. If this be refused, the creditors come forward, and, by the process of law, compel the industrious part of the family to make good the waste of the prodigals.

If brothers, for the reasons we have alluded to, or any other, neglect to make a partition of property ; when they die, the community of effects and debts attaches to their children : and, if these are equally negligent, it descends to their posterity.

Accordingly, it is by no means rare to see cousins of the fourth or fifth degree, engaged in law-suits concerning the division of goods, founded on the right thus transmitted from their great grandfathers. It is not difficult to imagine, that, under such circumstances, the thriving part of a family are frequently molested by their poorer relations ; or that, in a country where there is no public system of law, and where custom, as various as the tribes, regulates every thing, there should be abundance of litigation and chicanery.

There is one advantage, however, arising from this singular custom, which in some measure compensates for its bad effects ; namely, that it gives brothers and other relations who are liable to be affected by the law of partition, the right to watch over the conduct of each other, and to restrain the debauchery and extravagance of those whose misconduct might involve them all in distress.

In no case, have daughters a title to share in their fathers' property. When a man dies, leaving girls only,

they are entirely excluded from the inheritance : and all the effects of the deceased pass to his nearest male relations. They are obliged, no doubt, to rear and maintain the young women, and to dispose of them in marriage when grown up. But this last is no burden, as they receive money on such occasions, instead of paying any. A contract of marriage in India can be only considered as a bargain and sale, by which a father, or any other owner of a girl, disposes of her at a certain price, to any person who is willing to buy a wife.

## CHAP. XXIV.

*Of the Literature of the Brahmans, and particularly their Poetry.*

IT is not to be doubted that from the earliest times the sciences have been cultivated by the Hindus, or rather by the Brahmans, who have been in all ages, as it were, the depositaries of them. They have always considered them as a property exclusively their own; and perceiving the ascendant which their learning gave them over the other casts, and the reputation which it acquired them, they have always made a mystery of it to the vulgar, and taken the greatest pains to prevent its spreading among other classes of men.

But, have they themselves cultivated the sciences with success, or have they made any advancement in them? This we must answer in the negative, if we judge from the scientific remains of their ancient authors, compared with their present literary men. I do not believe that the modern Brahmans have made the smallest progress in any branch of learning which they cultivate, beyond their ancestors of the era of Pythagoras and Lycurgus. That long space of time, between epochs so remote, during which so many barbarous races have emerged from the darkness of ignorance to the brightest splendour of civilization, and have extended their intellectual researches beyond the natural sphere of the human mind,

has been employed to no purpose by the Hindus. They have continued on the very spot where they stood more than two thousand years ago. During that period half the world has become enlightened; but, amongst the Hindus, one can trace no improvement in the sciences or arts; and the most partial observer must admit that they are now far behind many communities who were not so soon inscribed in the roll of cultivated nations.

The sciences which rendered them most famous amongst external nations, in times of superstition and ignorance, and which conciliated at the same time the awe and reverence of their own countrymen, were Astronomy, Astrology, and Magic. The first shall be considered hereafter. The other two have been discussed in a treatise by the late P. Pons, missionary in the Carnatic, published in the Memoirs of the Academy of Sciences, and copied by the Abbé Lambert into his *General History of All People*. The treatise of Mr. Pons is literally copied into either work. I see nothing that can be added to what he has written on these subjects, and there is but little to correct, if we except his high-strained eulogiums on the academies of India.

The truth is, no comparison can be drawn between the schools of science in that country and those established in Europe. All that can be pretended is that in some large towns, or in the precincts of some large temples of their idols, certain Brahmans, learned or affecting to be so, teach gratuitously what they themselves know to such as are willing to take lessons from them; while some others do so with more attention to their own interest. But the whole is carried on without method, without any place for study, without discipline. He may learn who has a mind, and as long as ever he chuses; but

there is nothing in their institutions which can excite the student to emulation, or encourage the teacher ; no examinations to undergo, no places to gain, no premiums to contend for, no privilege held out to those that excel. The reputation of wisdom, to be sure, draws reverence from all the world ; but this is not a motive sufficiently powerful to stimulate the Brahmans. It would be necessary that they should taste more frequently than they do of the liberality of their Princes. But these great men are too much lulled by pleasures, and too deeply immersed in ignorance to be able to appreciate the value of science, or to feel the least impulse of generosity towards those who cultivate it.

So much, then, for the course of study, the universities and the literati of India.

The works to which I have referred the reader, being scarcely accessible to those for whom I have designed this account, I had resolved to give at least a summary of the Hindu astronomy. But having met with what the *Asiatic Society* of Calcutta had inserted on that subject in their interesting *Researches*, and also what the French have communicated in the works already cited, I have thought fit to drop that intention, and to confine myself to another branch of science which has been but briefly handled by others. I mean the Hindu poetry. Having acquired some knowledge of it, and feeling it to be a subject likely to interest most readers, I will enlarge a little on this point ; and those who find me tedious will lay the book aside.

*On the Poetry of the Hindus.*

I suppose there is no country on earth where Poetry was more in vogue than it was in former times in India. It seemed impossible for them to write but in verse. They have not a single ancient book that is written in prose; not even the books on medicine, which are said to be numerous in the Sanscrit tongue. All Hindu books that are not in verse are modern. The translators of the eighteen Puranas from the original Sanscrit into the other idioms of India, have all written in verse. At least I know it is so in the Tamul tongue, the Talagu and Canara; and I have no doubt it is the same in the other dialects of the country.

The *Tamul* Poetry has been chiefly cultivated by the Sudras, who, by labouring to preserve the turn of the Sanscrit Poetry, have so multiplied the rules of their rhyme that is very difficult to make correct verses in their language.

The Poetry in the Talagu and Canara has been principally cultivated by the Brahmans; and it has such a resemblance to the Sanscrit, even in prosody, that I do not believe the Sudras had meddled in these two dialects. Of the Sanscrit poetry itself I shall endeavour to give some idea, such as may apply generally to the various sorts, as they exist in the several idioms of India.

I shall consider, 1. The various Species of their Poetry. 2. The long and short *Letters*. 3. The *small Feet* of the measure. 4. The *large Feet*. 5. The Rhyme. 6. The Versification. 7. The style or taste of Hindu Poetry. But, having no intention to compile a Hindu Prosody, which would be little amusing to my readers,

I shall say but a few words on each of those heads, and merely what may be necessary to give a general view of the subject.

### 1. *The different Species of Poesy.*

There are five sorts ; namely, *Padam*, *Padyam*, *Dwipada*, *Danduka*, *Yakshakanam*. Another kind has been specified under the name of *Padya*, but as it is not composed of feet, we do not include it with the others.

Under the the head of *Padam*, they comprehend the odes in honour of their Princes and other great men ; songs of gallantry and lewdness ; libertine addresses to the gods and goddesses ; lines composed by adulators in honour of those whom they wish to flatter, or upon more ordinary occasions. This species of poetry is likewise called *Sringaram* or *ornamented*, because it is often the vehicle of eulogiums on women, and the ornaments they wear on various parts of their dress.

Amorous songs are likewise denominated *Sittimbam*, or the *Joy of Pleasure* ; a name no doubt derived from the licentious. Of this sort there is an infinite variety. They are chanted by beggars when they carol from door to door for alms. The more indecent and gross the allusions, the dissolute audience are the better pleased.

The hymns in honour of the gods are also called *Kirtana* or *Praise*, being intended to glorify the divinities of the land.

The word *Padam* is likewise used for the *strophe* of a poem.

The second species of Poesy, called *Padyam*, comprises the great poems, composed in honour of the gods,

the kings, and other mighty personages. This kind is formed of several stanzas, like the *Jerusalem Delivered* of Tasso; but they are not uniformly constructed. There are at least thirty sorts, which may be successively used or intermixed at pleasure in the course of the poem.

The *Padam*, or *Stanzas*, are also employed on subjects of morality and satire. The Poet Vemana, who wrote in Talagu, and Tiruvaluvo, who wrote in Tamul, distinguished themselves in this measure, to which we shall afterwards return.

The species called *Dwipada*, or *two-footed*, is much less rigorous than the other kinds, and is indeed merely a measured prose, written in poetic fashion. It has been employed by the authors of little histories, or local exploits, whether true or imaginary.

From these three examples, the other sorts belonging to this class may be imagined, without farther illustration.

## 2. *The long and short Letters.*

The Hindu verses, like the Latin and Greek, are composed of short and long syllables. From these simple feet, are formed hemistichs; by combining which, the full verses are evolved.

I have mentioned that the *short feet* were composed of *Letters*, because in the Indian languages Letters are actually Syllables. Every consonant carrying its vowel along with it, they pronounce Ba, Be, Bi, &c. Da, De, Di, &c. but never B, D, mute, or separate from a vowel. Even a double syllable, such as Bra, Dla,

Ksha, Rma, &c. in many dialects, is considered as making but one letter.

Of the Letters, some are short and called *Laghuva Akshara*. The others are long, and called *Guru Akshara*, alluding no doubt to the slow and solemn gait of a Hindu Guru. Even in familiar writing, they seldom fail to distinguish the long and short letters with their particular marks. It is still more regularly attended to in pronunciation ; and, in verse, it is quite indispensable.

In Hindu Poetry, as well as in Latin, a long letter is equivalent to two short, and two long to four short. Thus the word *Mātā* is equal in quantity to *Kālagādū*, composed of four shorts. But there are letters which, though short in writing and in ordinary discourse, become long in verse, by position. Thus the *A* which begins the word *Akcharam*, though short in general, becomes long in versification, as being placed before two consonants *K* and *Cha*. In the same manner the letter *Ka*, though naturally short, is long in verse, in such a word as *Karman*, on account of the two consonants which follow it. Two examples of this occurring to me from Virgil, in the lines, “*Brontesque Stero-  
pesque et nudus membra Pyracmon,*” and—“*date tela,  
scandite muros ;*” I expressed my doubt one day to a Brahman, who was explaining to me the rules of Poetry. His vanity and self-conceit had been already a little humbled by finding that a foreigner could so easily comprehend matters which he thought quite sublime ; but when I started my difficulty, he stood fixed for a while in astonishment, and stared me in the face without speaking. At length he answered, “You are right ; but I am astonished how such a thought could have entered into your mind, knowing so little as yet of our

“Poetry.” I told him that the Poetry of my own country bore some resemblance to that of his; and that my acquaintance with the former led me to the observation I had made. These words served to increase his astonishment, as he had always supposed, till then, that no creatures on earth knew any thing of Poetry but the Brahmans. This prejudice made me easily pass with him for a man of wonderful penetration. This at least I gained by it, that he became more diffident in our future intercourse.

The last letter of a verse may be of any quantity, at pleasure; but the distinction must always be marked in pronunciation. The Latins took the same licence; and it is likely that Horace, when he said “*Sic te Diva potens Cypri,*” pronounced the last syllable short, and in the verse “*Amice propugnacula,*” long; because in the one the last foot is a dactyl, and in the other an iambus.

As, in an idolatrous nation, every thing tends to superstition, the poets of India hold some letters to be *amritam*, or *ambrosial*, and others to be *Visham*, or *poisonous*. The one are of good omen, and the other mischievous. This distinction is not regarded in poetry relating to the gods, who are supposed incapable of being affected by the good or evil qualities of letters; but, in verses which concern human beings, the case is very different, and particular care must be taken never to begin any thing, addressed to them, with a *visham*, or unlucky letter. The letter which has the sound of *Ke*, and that which sounds *Ki* are of that quality in some idioms, because their form in writing is such that the point turns down towards the ground. The *Ko*, on the contrary, is fortunate, because the point of that letter turns up on high.

3. *The small Feet in Verse.*

There are two kinds of feet in verse, the small and the large; the latter being composed of the former. The small feet have the name of *Ganam*, of which there are two kinds, the simple *Ganam* and the *Upaganam*. The first are eight in number and are expressed by the technical word *Mabajasanarayala*, viz. 1. *Maganam*; 2. *Baganam*; 3. *Iaganam*; 4. *Saganam*; 5. *Naganam*; 6. *Raganam*; 7. *Yaganam*; 8. *Laganam*. The first consists of three longs; the second of a long and two shorts. The marks by which they are represented are :

III I UU UU UU UU UU UU UU UU

There are also eight *Upaganams* expressed in the word *Garahanagamana*: the *Gaganam*, which is composed of two longs, like our spondee; the *Haganam*, composed of a long and a short, as the trochee; the *Vaganam*, of a short and a long, or iambus; the *Nalam*, of four shorts; the *Galam*, two shorts; the *Malagu*, three longs and one short; the *Nagam*, three shorts and a long; the *Latam*, two longs and two shorts. These different *Upaganams* are represented by the following marks :

II UU IU UUUU UU IIIU UUUU UU

The Hindu poets discover a certain relation between the *Ganam* and the *Upaganam*; one or the other causing good or evil, according to the god who presides over

it. Those that fall under the rule of the Moon, which is, in India, the emblem of cold, are deemed favourable; while those, on the contrary, which are governed by the Sun, are injurious. Agreeably to this superstition, a copy of verses must not begin with a malign *Ganam*. The Hindu prosodies are very diffuse on this subject.

#### 4. *The long Feet.*

The *Ganams*, then, are the true materials from which the *Feet* of the verse are made, which are called *Padam* or *Charanam*; both which words signify *Feet*. They may be compared to the hemistichs of pentameter lines, or the pause which we make in the middle of the verses of ten and twelve syllables, in French and English. They enumerate a variety of these *Padams*, according to the number of *Ganams* they contain; some having three, five, seven, or more.

As in pentameter verse, two dactyls or two spondees may be put in the first hemistich; so also, in certain *Padams*, they may use one *Ganam* or another at pleasure, provided the number of shorts and longs is preserved. This mixture, however, must be managed without affectation, to avoid the appearance of pedantry.

But every species of *Ganam* is not equally admitted into all sorts of poetry; some of which require certain fixed *Ganams*. On this point the Hindu prosody enters into a great variety of particulars not very important. The case is nearly the same in the Latin Ode, where a rigorous restriction to certain

feet is required, and where others, though on the whole equal in quantity, cannot be admitted.

The *Long Feet*, in Hindu verse, have each their particular name; as the Elephant, the great Tiger, the Serpent Capella, and so forth.

### 5. *The Rhyme.*

The Hindus have a two-fold Rhyme in their verses. The one sort falls on the first letter or syllable of the line, and is called *Yety* or *Vadi*. Thus, in two verses, where one begins with the word *Kirti* and the other with *Kirtana*, *Ki* is the *Yety* or Rhyme. The other sort falls on the second letter or syllable from the beginning of the line, and is called *Prasam*. In two lines, one beginning with the word *Capagny* and the other with that of *Dipantram*, *pa* is the *Prasam*.

Although they are unacquainted with blank verse, yet they are not very rigid in point of metre. For the *Yety*, they make *Ka*, *Ksha*, *Kta*, all rhyme together; or *Pe*, *Pte*, and so forth. There is still more license in the Rhyme of the *Prasam*, in which nothing is positively required but to attend strictly to the consonant, without any regard to the vowel. Thus, for example, *Da*, *De*, *Di*, *Do*, *Du*, all rhyme together. But these metres are avoided as far as possible; and the lines that have the *Yety* and the *Prasam* exactly to correspond, are most admired. The nearer this resemblance is attained so much the more palatable to the Hindu; though, to us, such sort of chimes would appear ridiculous play, like the comical line of Ennius so often in the mouths of schoolboys as very ludicrous—  
 “*Tu tibi, Tite Tati, mala tanta, tyranne, tulisti.*”

The only thing remarkable in Hindu prosody, with regard to rhyme, is this complete opposition between our custom of putting the rhymes at the ends of the lines and theirs of placing them at the beginning; which also adds to the difficulty of their composition of verses.

### 6. *Of the Verse.*

*Padams*, or feet, arranged artfully with regard to quantity and rhyme form the *Padyams*, which are sometimes called *Slokams*, and may be compared to the stanzas or strophes of some Latin odes, such as those of Horace beginning, "*Jam satis terris nivis atque diræ,*" &c. and "*Pastor cum traheret per freta navibus,*" &c.

The Hindu poets have several species of *Padyams*, each of which has its particular name. In the simple *Cawdapadyam*, certain feet, and no other, can be introduced; in the same way as in the hexameter verse, dactyls and spondees only can be used. But a single *Ganam* may sometimes compose a whole verse, such as *Devaki*, *desaki*, *Camsudu*. There are a great many minute instructions to be attended to on this subject, which are too minute to detail.

It will appear from what has been said, that the Hindu versification is by no means easy; and accordingly, though great numbers in every cast dabble in rhymes, there are but few who make them correct or conformable to the strict rules that are laid down. Their poets, however, possess an advantage which does not attend most of the European tongues, and

particularly the French, in the numerous synonymes with which the Indian languages abound.

There are five authors who are principally esteemed as writers on the Hindu prosody, as having laid down fixed and unalterable laws for the art of making verses. The author I have followed has so arranged his work, that every rule is comprised in one verse, which serves for an example of what the rule prescribes.

### 7. *Of the Taste and Style of Hindu Poetry.*

The poetical expression of the Hindus perhaps offends by too great loftiness and emphasis. One may understand their books and conversation in prose; but it is impossible to comprehend those in verse, until diligent study has rendered them familiar. Quaint phrases, perpetual allegories, the poetical terminations of the words, contracted expressions, and the like, render the poetical style obscure and difficult to be understood, excepting to those who are inured to it.

One of the principal defects of the Hindu poets, at least when compared with our taste or our prejudices, is that their descriptions are commonly too long and minute. For example, if they are describing a beautiful woman, they are never contented with drawing her likeness with a single stroke, as a European would generally do in similar cases; saying, perhaps, that she possessed all the charms that nature could confer. Such an expression would not be strong enough for the gross comprehension of a Hindu. The poet must be more exact; he must particularise the beauty of her eyes, her forehead, her nose, her cheeks, and must expatiate on the colour of her skin, and the manner

in which she adorns every part of her body. He will describe the turn and proportion of her arms, legs, thighs, shoulders, chest, and in a word, of all parts, visible or invisible; with an accurate recital of the shape and form which best indicate their beauty and symmetry. He will never desist from his colouring till he has represented in detail every feature and part in the most laboured and tedious style, but at the same time with the closest resemblance.

The epithets, in their poetical style, are frequent, and almost always figurative; which makes them approach very nearly to the Latin poetry.

The brevity and conciseness of many modes of expression in the Hindu idioms, does not hinder their style, upon the whole, from being extremely diffuse.

Their verses, in many of their dialects at least, would appear harsh and inharmonious to a European ear, on account of the frequent aspirations to which many of the letters or syllables are subject, which in many cases seem incapable of being joined together. Yet this mode of pronunciation has a certain firm and masculine tone, which makes up for its uncouthness. The observation, however, does not apply to the poetry in the Tamul language, in which many of the poets write; because that dialect has no aspirations.

To give an exact idea of the different species of Hindu poesy would not be much relished by the greater number of readers, so different is their manner from ours. All their little pieces that I have seen are in general very flat.

I know not whether they have any regular dramatic pieces, all that I have seen of this nature being mixed

with songs and dialects of which I can give no distinct idea, never having taken the trouble to study any of them.

As to epic poems, they have several. The two most celebrated are the *Ramayana*, which contains a rapid sketch of the history of *Rama*, or of *Vishnu* metamorphosed into the shape of that hero, and the *Bhagavata*, which relates chiefly to the adventures of *Vishnu*, under the name of *Krishna*. These two poems are of an unconscionable length. Their authors have introduced into them all the fables on which the religion of the Hindus is founded. Their narratives of the same story are often at variance; and they do not at all adhere to the rule of Aristotle, who confines the duration of the epic poem to the period of one year; for the *Bhagavata* takes up its hero before his birth, and does not leave him till after he is dead.

The extraordinary and marvellous adventures which are related in the *Eneid* of Virgil and the *Iliad* of Homer do not in any degree approach to the incredible prowess and the wonderful achievements of the Indian heroes, whose exploits are celebrated in these books. All that ancient story hands down of Enceladus and his terrific companions, cannot bear a comparison with what is here related of the giants, who sometimes fought against Rama, and sometimes on his side. Tasso himself is feeble in the description of mighty feats, when compared with these transcendent fabulists.

## CHAP. XXV.

*The Epistolary Style of the Brahmans.*

THE epistolary style of the Brahmans and of the other Hindus in general is in many respects different from ours. I cannot better explain it than by adducing examples taken from their own letters.

I have selected the three following specimens, to shew, by the first, how a Brahman addresses a person who is his inferior; by the second, one who is his equal; and, by the third, a person who is above him.

*Letter to an Inferior.*

“They, the Brahman Soubaya, to him Lakshmana, who has all good qualities, who is true to his word, who by the services he renders to his relations and friends, resembles the\* Chintamani; Asirvadam.

“Year of Kilaka, the fourth day of the month Phalgun, I am at Banavara, in good health. Send me news of thine. As soon as this letter shall have reached thee, thou shalt go to the most excellent Brahman Anantaya, and prostrating thyself at all thy length at his feet, thou wilt offer him my most

\* This is an imaginary stone which was supposed to procure every thing good to its owner. The word *asirvadam* means a blessing.

“humble respect, and then, without delay, thou shalt  
 “present thyself before the Shely” (that is, the  
 merchant) “Rangapa, and declare to him that if he  
 “shall now put into thy hands the three thousand ru-  
 “pees which he owes me, with interest at twenty-  
 “five per centum, I will forget all that is passed, and  
 “the matter shall then be at an end. But if, on the  
 “contrary he makes shifts and continues to defer the  
 “payment of the money, tell him that I am acquaint-  
 “ed with a method of teaching him that no person  
 “shall safely break his word with a Brahman, such  
 “as I am. This is all I have to say to thee. Asirva-  
 “dam.”

*Letter to an Equal.*

“To them the Lord, to the Lord Ramaya, who  
 “possesses all the good qualities which can render a  
 “man esteemed; who is worthy to obtain all the fa-  
 “vours which the gods can bestow; who is the be-  
 “loved of beautiful women, who is the particular  
 “favourite of Lakshmi; who is great as the Mount  
 “Meru, and who has a perfect knowledge of the Ya-  
 “jur veda: the Brahman Subaya; Namaskaram”  
 (respectful greeting).

“The year Durmati, the fifteenth of the month  
 “Phalguna, I am at Bailore, where I and all the  
 “members of my family enjoy good health. I shall  
 “learn, with great gladness, that it is the same with  
 “you; and I trust you will inform me particularly of  
 “all the subjects of satisfaction and contentment  
 “which you experience.

“ On the twenty-second of the month above mentioned, being a day in which all good omens unite, we have chosen that the marriage of my daughter Vijaya Lakshmi shall be celebrated. I beg you will honour the ceremony with your presence, and be here before that day with all the persons of your household, without excepting any. I expect you will put yourself at the head of the solemnity, and that you will be pleased to conduct it.\* And if there is any thing in which I can be of service to you, have the goodness to let me know it. This is all I have to apprise you of. Namaskaram.”

*Letter to a Superior.*

“ To them the Lord†, to the Lord Brahman, to the great Brahman Anantaya, who are endowed with every virtue and all good qualities; who are great as Mount Meru; who possess a perfect knowledge of the four Vedas; who, by the splendour of their good works, shine like the Sun; whose renown pervades the fourteen worlds: I, Kishenaya, their humble servant and slave, keeping my distance, with both hands joined, my mouth closed, mine eyes cast down; wait, in this humble posture, until they shall vouchsafe to cast their eyes on him who is nothing in their presence. After obtaining their leave, approaching them with fear and trembling, and prostrating myself at my whole length

\* This is an expression used out of politeness to every one who is invited under similar circumstances.

† A superior is always addressed in the plural, both in speaking and writing.

“before the flowers of Nenuphar\*, on the ground  
 “where they stand; and, thus submissive, with res-  
 “pectful kisses, will I address their feet with this  
 “humble supplication;

“The year Vikari, the twentieth of the month  
 “Paushya, I, your humble servant and slave, whom  
 “your Excellence has deigned to regard as something,  
 “having received with both hands the letter which you  
 “humbled yourself by writing me; after kissing it  
 “and putting it on my head, I afterwards read with the  
 “profoundest attention, and I will execute the orders  
 “it contains, without departing from them the breadth  
 “of a grain of Sesamum. The affair on which your  
 “Excellence has vouchsafed to command me is in  
 “good progress, and I hope that, by the efficacy of  
 “your benediction, it will soon terminate to your en-  
 “tire satisfaction. As soon as that happens, I, your  
 “humble servant and slave, shall not fail to present  
 “myself (agreeably to the orders of your Excellence)  
 “at the flowers of Niluphar of your holy feet. I now  
 “entreat your Excellence to impart to me the com-  
 “mands and instructions necessary to enable me so  
 “to demean myself as to be agreeable to their will,  
 “and that you will clearly point out to me in what  
 “manner I may render myself most acceptable to  
 “your blessed feet. For this, it will suffice, if I re-  
 “ceive from your bounty a leaf of betel† indented with  
 “your nail, in care of some confidential person, who

\* The same as the Lily of the Lakes.

† A person dispatched on a verbal message, is frequently sup-  
 plied with no better credentials than a betel leaf with the print  
 of the nail.

“can verbally explain the orders of your Excellency.  
“Such is my humble prayer.”

The style of these letters strikes us at first as extraordinary, and very remote from what we use in similar circumstances. But, if we attentively consider the epistolary forms that still prevail in Europe, and analyse the letters which Europeans often write to their equals, generally concluding with soliciting as an honour to be favoured with admission in the number of their *most humble and most obedient servants*, it will not appear so easy to determine which style of the two is the more ridiculous and servile. The principal difference, perhaps, is that, in their letters the fulsome compliments are inserted at the beginning, and in ours at the end.

It is not to be denied that the fawning, tumid and bombastic phrases which the Hindus use, appear to be arrayed with too much affectation; and we ought to admit still more readily that, in our translations, we come far short of the expressive vigour of the Indian terms. The simple structure of the European tongues does not succeed in translating them literally.

The compliments with which all letters between man and man in India commence are often much longer and more extravagant than those we have adduced. I have seen epistles in which the complimentary effusion covered a whole sheet. But it is chiefly when writing to persons of great dignity of rank, or when some object is expected to be gained, that the full plenitude of complimentary blandishment is drawn out. The real source of all is to be

found in the eager and passionate desire for praise and adulation, which all Hindus feel.

In letters, written by one Hindu to another, one never sees respects or compliments offered to their wives. Such an attention would be misplaced, and would be considered not only ridiculous but as a gross breach of politeness. They can only be mentioned under particular circumstances, such as condoling with a man on the death of his wife. Then the woman might be praised for her excellent qualities, and wishes might be expressed that the husband might soon find another wife of equal merits. For it is not singular to see a Hindu widower marrying fifteen days or a month after the death of his wife.

When there is occasion to communicate to any one the decease of a relation, the custom is to singe a little the point of the palm leaf on which the afflicting news is written. This has a like import as the black seal used by us in such cases. The same practice takes place when one serves another in writing with a severe rebuke. The application of fire to the palm leaf shows that he who sends it entertains a feeling of resentment.

When a superior writes to his inferior, he puts his own name before that of the person to whom he writes; and quite the reverse when he writes to his superior. Indeed it would be considered as the grossest rudeness if he happened to set his own name first.

Having treated of the language of Poetry and of the Epistolary style among the Hindus, I will now offer some remarks that I have made on their writing.

## CHAP. XXVI.

*On the Hindu Hand-Writing.*

THE learned of Europe have made innumerable researches into the origin of writing; on the manner by which it has been transmitted by one people to another; on the different characters used; on the tablets and different sorts of paper employed for writing on; and many other questions relating to it. Some have carried their inquiries as far as to the Chinese, and are willing to assign their writing to a Phœnician origin. I am surprized that they have not paid more attention than they seem to have done to what might have been collected amongst the nations of India, which would have furnished them with more grounds of conjecture than can be found amongst any other nations.

Although I have not the vain presumption to imagine that what I am about to say can be made the foundation of a theory capable of elucidating the origin of this ingenious art, yet I conceive my remarks will be read with some interest by those who study the curious contrivances invented by men to supply their various wants, and also by those who delight in tracing the simplicity of early times in the vestiges which still remain.

Were the Hindus the first inventors of writing, or did they borrow it from some other nation? Might

not the whole of the Hindu tribes have drawn it from the same source, that is to say from the children of Noah? The historian Josephus supposes it was older than the flood; because, according to him, the principles of all science must have been inscribed on pillars of stone, as otherwise they could never have been transmitted to the post-diluvian race. The restorers of the human kind, who communicated to their descendants the knowledge of the arts invented before the flood, would scarcely omit to instruct them in one so useful to society. If this fact were sufficiently verified, it would be mere waste of time to follow the learned in the profound researches and vast display of erudition which they have expended on this subject.

The Hindu books attribute the invention to the great Brahma, the creator of man and author of his destiny. Each individual carries his doom inscribed on his forehead by the hand of God himself. The sutures of the head, seen on a skull, are the handwriting of Brahma; and the letters there impressed contain the future lot of the individual. This is a fable, no doubt; but it must be also admitted that it is one of very great antiquity, and sufficiently proves, at least, that when it was invented, they had already the knowledge of writing in India; otherwise how could they imagine traces of writing in those marks?

That this knowledge existed amongst the Hindus, in the most ancient times, is proved by another authority of as old a date as the former. The four Vedas are attributed to Brahma, who wrote them on leaves of gold. These books, which contain the detail of the idolatrous ceremonies which this people practises, are

the most sacred of all, and at the same time the most ancient which they acknowledge. Their other books, of which many are, without contradiction, very old, speak of these as of a far earlier date. The language also in which they are written has become unintelligible, in many places, from desuetude by age.

Here, therefore, we find books, and consequently the use of writing, among the Hindus, in times extremely remote.

One of the principal articles of the Hindu faith is that which relates to the ten incarnations of Vishnu. The first and earliest of the whole is the change of this god into a Fish. And what was the cause of it? It was the loss of the four books which contained the four Vedas. Brahma, under whose care they were left, fell asleep; and a giant, his enemy, took that opportunity of stealing the sacred volumes. Having escaped unperceived, he flew to the sea, with his precious booty, which he swallowed and deposited in his bowels, the better to secrete it. Vishnu, metamorphosed into a fish, went in pursuit of his enemy; and, after a long search, discovered him at length, in the deepest abyss of the ocean. Having attacked him there, fought him and vanquished him; he tore him in pieces, plucked the concealed books from his lowest entrails, and restored them to him who was their author and guardian.

Books, therefore, are the subject of one of the oldest fables of India. Let the European critics who can find nothing ancient but in the Pentateuch of Moses, or in Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, point out in these authors any traces of this fable from which it

could have been borrowed; and then they may talk of its modern date.

The Fourth Veda of the Hindus teaches *Magic*; and thence probably all ancient nations derived their Occult Arts. There are practices in India very much resembling those that the soothsayer Balaam employed against the camp of the Israelites, as detailed in the twenty-second and two following chapters of the book of Numbers. This wicked science, having been cultivated, from very early times, by the Egyptians (who might have acquired it from the Brahmans of India), may have spread, in the same manner, to the nations bordering on Egypt. And it was, no doubt, from that country that the false prophets, or magicians, who so frequently made their appearance among the Jewish tribes, drew their instruction. But, however this may be, Idolatry and Magic are twin sisters, who are seldom found separate. The Hindu idolatry has so much the higher claim to antiquity, that it does not appear, like that of the Greeks and Romans, to have been borrowed from any foreign source, and that some of the writings which contain its details are perhaps the most ancient of any that exist in the world.

I know that the greater part of the literati of Europe, who have been willing to find the mythology and the divinities of India in those of the Egyptians and Greeks, will not agree with these conclusions. But are their researches on that subject decisive, and their reasons demonstrative? What they have laid down in the most positive way, and what has been most applauded by those that support them, has produced no conviction in the mind of an actual obser-

ver in India. But I shall have occasion hereafter to dilate on this subject; my only intention at present being to show that the *certain* antiquity of a book on magic in India is also evidence of the early use of writing in that country.

Some of the native authors ascribe the invention to a famous penitent called *Agastya*; so short, that he was not a hand's breadth in stature. He is one of the oldest authorities to which they refer, having been contemporary with the Seven Penitents who were saved from the flood in the vessel of which Vishnu was the steersman: the whole being probably nothing else, as we have already observed, than the story of Noah and his family, disfigured by the fables of idolatry.

All these proofs on which I found the antiquity of writing among the Hindus, I shall be told, are nothing more than a tissue of fables, so absurd that no reasonable conclusion can be drawn from them. Let it be so: but, at least, the whole world must confess that these same fables, however absurd, are of high antiquity; and that their existence, in such ages, necessarily implies the existence of writing also in those very early times.

But it is clear it can be no fable, that in the times of Lycurgus, nearly a thousand years before the Christian æra, there were philosophers in India who were more eagerly sought after than those of Egypt, and who would have been unheard of by the Grecian literati, if they had been recent, or of ordinary repute. Such philosophers therefore, who were also astronomers, must have been long accustomed to the art of

writing, which such sciences as these essentially presuppose.

Having premised so much on the origin of writing in India, let us now consider its present state. Our observations here will be directed to the characters which the Hindus use in writing; the material on which they inscribe them; their mode of writing; and, finally, the form of their books, and of the letters which they address to each other.

### 1. *The written Characters.*

It is said there are eighteen living languages used in India; and though some of them bear a resemblance to others, yet the characters of the greater number are quite dissimilar. What resemblance, for example, between the letter *Ḥ* (*a*, short) and *Ḥ̄* (long *a*) of the Tamul tongue, and the corresponding letters of the Telinga, *Ḥ*, *Ḥ̄*. The difference is not less striking in every other letter of the alphabet; and the same diversity, as between these two, exists in almost all the rest. Different, however, as they are in the signs which they employ in writing, there is a wonderful similarity in the idioms, in the turn of their phrases, and the arrangement of the words, which scarcely admit of any inversion. In these last particulars, they differ widely from the European languages; which, with a general resemblance in the idiom and the character, are altogether unlike in the particular turn, cast and arrangement of the style.

Notwithstanding the diversity of the written characters in the several dialects, there is an affinity between the languages themselves; so that a person

who has learned one, may easily understand those of the contiguous districts: and it is very common to meet with Hindus who speak fluently seven or eight languages, or more.

But, what is most remarkable here, and makes it almost impossible to describe the difference of character among the various dialects, is first, that all the languages of the country that I am acquainted with have the same arrangement of letters in the alphabet; 2. that all the letters are double, each having a long and a short; 3. that the short and long vowels are always placed at the beginning of the alphabet, and before the consonants, as *ă ā, ĭ ī, ŭ ū*, &c. 4. that these vowels are letters purely initial, which are never so written but at the commencement of a word, and vary their form when used in the middle or after a consonant; 5. that each consonant has a vowel combined, and forms a syllable; thus, one never pronounces *b* or *d* mute, but *ba*, *da*. A slight change in the character will make the *a* vanish, and substitute another vowel according to its new shape. Thus, in the Canara tongue, the consonants *ω* (*ba*) and *ω̄* (*da*) undergo the following change of sound by the slight alteration of the shape of the letter:

<i>ω</i>	<i>ω̄</i>	<i>ω̂</i>	<i>ω̃</i>	<i>ω̄</i>	<i>ω̂</i>	<i>ω̃</i>
ba	be	bi		da	de	di

How is it that there is so great a resemblance in the idioms of these languages, as well as in the structure of the composition, and so wide a discrepancy in the signs and characters? The mother language of all

that are spoken in India, from which each derives a common idiom and method, having an alphabet so arranged as we have seen; how comes it that the daughters should have adopted a character so different from that of their common parent?

The like difference is observable in the form of their ciphers, or arithmetical figures, as in their alphabet; and indeed in this case the aberration is greater. For though they all follow the decimal scale, they have different modes of expressing it. In the Tamul language, they do it by a single sign; thus:

୫	୩	୩	୫୩
1	10	100	1000

In the Talinga language and the Canara, they follow exactly the same process which we have adopted from the Arabians, expressing the units by a single sign, the tens by two signs, the hundreds by the three, and so on. Their arithmetical scale approaches still nearer to ours, by their employing our cypher, and even giving it the same form of a circle, as will be seen in the following example:

1	2	10	11	20	22	100	104
୩	୨	୩୦	୩୩	୨୦	୨୨	୩୦୦	୩୦୫
120	1000	1001	1020				
୩୨୦	୩୦୦୦	୩୦୦୩	୩୦୨୦				

Such is the *Talinga* arithmetical notation, corresponding very nearly with what was communicated to Europe by the Arabs, at the end of the tenth century.

Such a coincidence can hardly have arisen from chance, and it is therefore extremely probable that the one must have been taken from the other.

The *Tamul* notation seems to have greater resemblance to the Roman mode than to the Arabian; for they express the arithmetical signs by letters of their alphabet, and use but a single letter to denote unity, ten, a hundred, and so forth.

But different as the Hindus are, in this particular in their several divisions; they are still farther removed from the characters used by other ancient nations, which have come down to us; such as the Phœnician, the Syriac, the Arabic, the Greek. The notation differs no less than the mode of arrangement, seeing that two of the last mentioned nations wrote from right to left, while the Hindus write as we do.

## 2. *The Material on which they write.*

Paper is not unknown to the Hindus. They manufacture it, not from cotton, as is generally believed, but of old bags made of the rind of a plant, having first separated the coarser filaments which supply the place of hemp. I believe, however, that the use of this coarse paper is modern in India, and posterior to the invasion of the Moguls, who are acquainted with no substitute for paper, and still follow the Persian mode of writing. Some Hindus, particularly such as live in the provinces where it is difficult to find palm leaves, also use paper; but more generally black tablets, on which they write with a white crayon. The ordinary practice, however, is to use the palm leaves, both in common writing and for books. The palm tree is a

generic name, which is extended by Europeans to the cocoa tree and the date tree, though the leaves of neither of these be at all adapted for writing on. What they actually employ are those of the Latanier; at least the descriptions I have seen of that tree exactly agree with this from which the Hindus take their leaves for writing. They are of two species, the greater and the smaller; of which the latter is the most common, and affords the best leaves. They are in breadth about three fingers, and two feet long. Each of them will admit of seven or eight lines; and they are thicker, stiffer, and stouter than double paper, so that after writing, or rather engraving on one side, they turn to the other, without at all injuring what is on the reverse.

The other species of palm-tree or Latanier is much taller than the genuine one; and it bears no fruit, which the Hindus regret, though according to my taste, they are no great losers. The leaves of this species are larger but not so firm, for which reason they are not used for writing but when no other can be found. They are sometimes taken, however, out of ceremony, when a person of distinction is to be addressed.

The island of Ceylon produces the first species of leaves in such prodigious abundance that an English halfpenny would purchase paper enough for copying out a whole volume in folio.

Quintus Curtius relates, that the Indians, when they were invaded by Alexander the Great, wrote with an iron point on the smooth and tender bark of trees. I cannot help thinking, however, that the Latanier leaves, which are soft and polished, must have

been taken by that author for the rind of a tree; more especially as one can see no trace in India of any writing being done upon bark.

The Cumæan Sybil in the *Eneid* is conjured not to write her oracles on the leaves of trees, which the wind would speedily disperse :

“ ———— Tantum foliis ne carmina manda,  
Ne dispersa volent rapidis ludibria ventis.”

Whence could the idea have arisen of the prophecies of the Sybil being inscribed on leaves? Those of the Latanier, from their density, are not much subject to be the sport of the wind. What leaves, then, can Virgil allude to? But this I will leave to the commentators of the Prince of Latin poets to determine.

### 3. *The Hindu method of writing.*

They execute it with an iron spike, sometimes six inches long, the upper end of which is commonly formed into a cutting edge to trim the sides of the leaves, so as to make them all straight. In writing with the spike, neither chair nor table is wanted. The leaf is supported on the middle finger of the left hand, and is kept steady by being held between the thumb and the forefinger. The right hand, in writing, does not slide upon the leaf, according to our practice in writing on paper; but, after finishing a word or two, the writer fixes the point of the spike in the last letter, and pushes the leaf from the right hand towards the left, so as to enable him to finish his line. This be-

comes so habitual and easy, that one often sees a Hindu writing as he goes along.

As this species of penmanship is in fact only a sort of faint engraving, the strokes of which are indistinct and not easily read, especially by weak eyes, sometimes they besmear the leaf with fresh cow-dung, rubbing the surface well, so as to leave nothing behind but the finer parts that adhere to the engraved lines. This they afterwards tinge with black, and thus the writing becomes more visible, and easier to read.

This mode of writing is undoubtedly more simple and easy than ours, for small occasions. Neither does it require, like ours, the apparatus of table, chair, ink-stand, and so forth. But I own that ours has the advantage when we have to do with large affairs, or the keeping of journals and ledgers.

The Hindu writing is not exempt from the great inconvenience which attends our old manuscripts, by the absence of points and marks, as well as of the separation between the words and sentences. Besides, their orthography is so extraordinary and complicated, in some dialects, that the best reader cannot decypher what he has before him without hesitation, and without close attention to the subject, especially when it is not set down according to the rigorous grammatical principles, which the greater number are ignorant of or neglect. This difficulty is most severely experienced in the Tamul tongue.

When the Hindus write on paper, they do not use a pen; the fowls which furnish the quill, such as geese and swans, being unknown in most districts of their

country. They use for the purpose, a *Calam* or reed, somewhat thicker than our pens, and cut in the same manner: this word *Calam* is remarkable on account of its resemblance to the Latin *Calamus*; from which the Hindu word must be derived, as I conceive the use of paper in that country is not old.

4. *The manner in which their Books and Letters are made up.*

In making up a book of several leaves of palm tree, there is no occasion for a bookbinder. A small hole is bored at each extremity of the leaves, through which they are strung together by a small cord. Two thin boards are then applied, the one above and the other below, of the same length and breadth as the leaves, so as to form a cover to the book. These are likewise pierced at the extremities, and small pieces of wood or iron are passed through the holes in the boards and the leaves, so as to connect the whole together. A long string is fastened to each end of the bits of wood or iron; and by wrapping it several times round the book the whole is kept shut. If this mode be simple, it certainly is not commodious; for, as often as one consults the book, he must unlace the string, take out the pegs and throw the whole volume into disorder.

The Hindu manner of writing, as well as the binding of their books, approach nearly to the customs of the Romans on the same occasions; for we are informed by Seneca that the ancient Latins wrote on plates of wood, which they strung together and form-

ed into a *Caudex*; from whence, as he observes, is derived the Latin word *Codex*.

I have spoken already of the epistolary style of the Hindus. With regard to the form of their letters, they content themselves with rolling up the leaves of palm on which they are written, and enveloping the whole in an outer leaf, upon which they write the address. Care must be taken about the due length and breadth of the leaves, as well as the manner of putting them up in the outer case, in proportion to the rank of the party addressed.

We are not to judge of the antiquity of writing in India by the dates which we find inscribed on some pagodas or temples of idols; because it has been a trick of the Brahmans to put up such dates, as, though evidently recently written, would make the origin of the building ascend to the commencement of the *Kali-yuga*. I have seen temples which have been erected within these few years, bearing inscriptions that would carry them as far back as the flood; and that too in the presence of those who had helped to build them, some of whom are still living. Such is the Hindu abhorrence of falsehood!

The gradual change in writing, which takes place in some countries in the lapse of time, is not a safe ground of conjecture as to the age of Hindu manuscripts. I have seen an act of donation written on a plate of gold, in Canara characters, more than two hundred years ago; the letters of which are perfectly legible, and exactly like those at present in use. No

alteration has therefore taken place in that great interval of time.

In some inscriptions, however, of very high antiquity, characters are found not now in use, although they resemble letters employed in writing in other idioms of the country. Some are also found in various places, where the characters are evidently foreign and wholly unknown. It is probable that such inscriptions have been cut by artists brought from distant parts to embellish the edifices on which they appear, and who, being jealous of their architectural fame, would not leave it at the mercy of those who had employed them, or who had assisted them in the labour. By these they might have been robbed of all the praise, if the writing had been made in the ordinary characters.

The remarks I have made concerning the dissimilarity of the letters, and the resemblance of style, in the writing of different districts in India, may be equally applied to the *Siamese* dialect. The alphabet, and particularly the vowels, are there arranged, in the same manner as in the Hindu idioms: *a, ee, oo, e, ai, o, au, am, ah*. In some languages of India, the point or mark which denotes the vowel that always accompanies the consonant, is placed before it; as in the Tamul syllables *ḅ Ḍ, te*, and *ḅ Ḳ, pe*, the sign *ḅ* prefixed to the consonant represents the *e*, pronounced after it though placed before it. The same practice is followed in the Siamese writings in several letters; which can scarcely have been fortuitous, and rather indicates that these two different dialects spring from the same source.

The *Pali* language, or learned tongue of Siam, is a corrupted Sanscrit. It is not to be doubted that the people of that country anciently spoke this primitive language of the Hindus. It would even appear to have extended much farther, as I have had several Sanscrit words pointed out to me in the Malay tongue.

The shape of the characters of the Siamese writing, at least as far as I have seen, is indeed altogether different from that of the Hindu. But the same dissimilarity is remarked among the different idioms of India; and it may be farther observed that the Siamese follow the Hindu mode of writing from left to right, and not from right to left, as the Arabs do, nor from top to bottom, like the Chinese. Though they appear therefore, to have a strong affinity to the latter race in the features of the face, as well as in their religious and civil ceremonies, their language and manner of writing seem to approximate them more closely to the people of India, and to assign them the same origin.

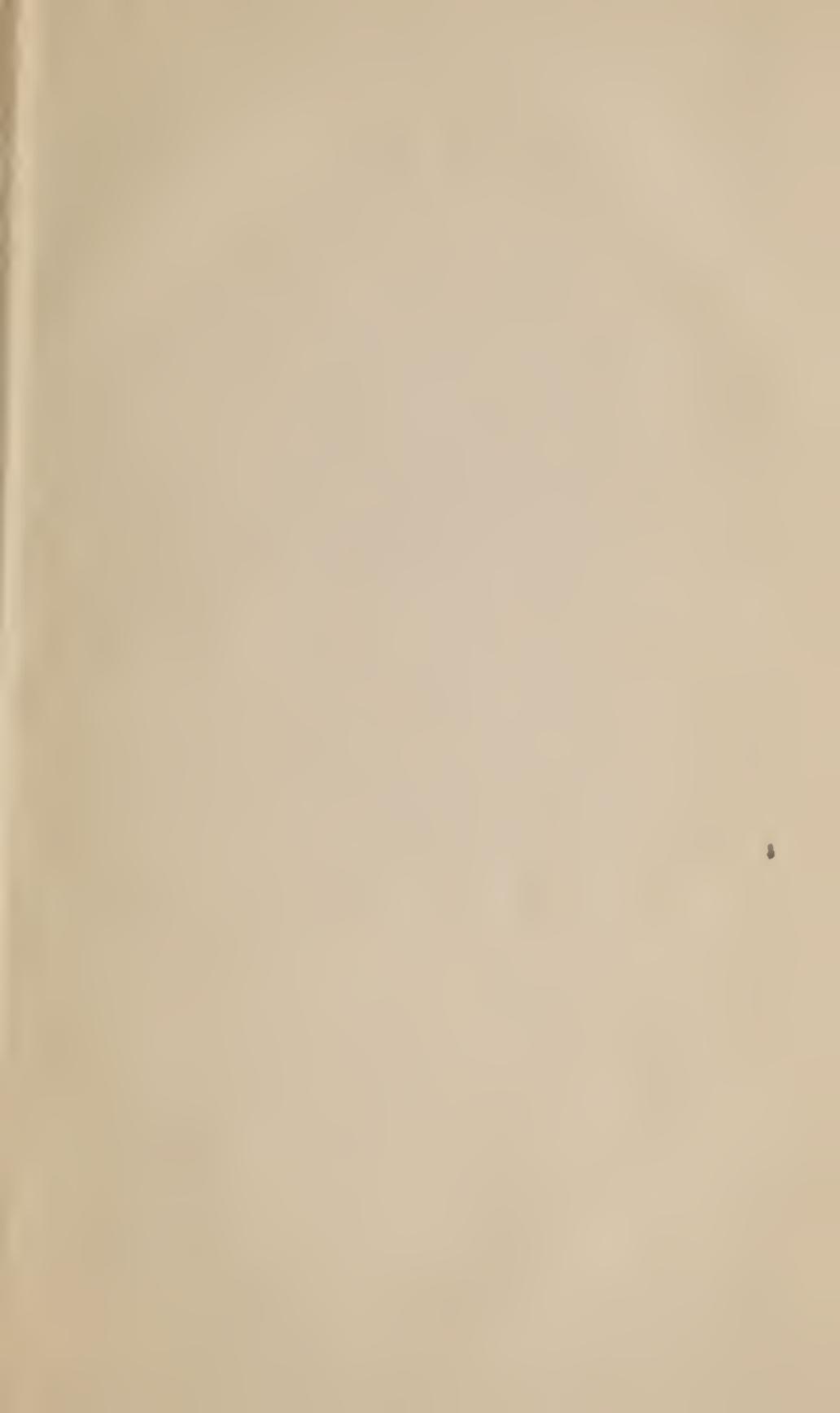
The stupendous miracle that took place at the tower of Babel, soon after the flood, in multiplying the languages of men, probably produced an equal variation in their writing, if writing was then invented. In language, the change does not appear to have been so absolute as not to leave some words in common; and the written languages, also, in their divergency, may have retained, in their alphabets, some traces of their common origin.

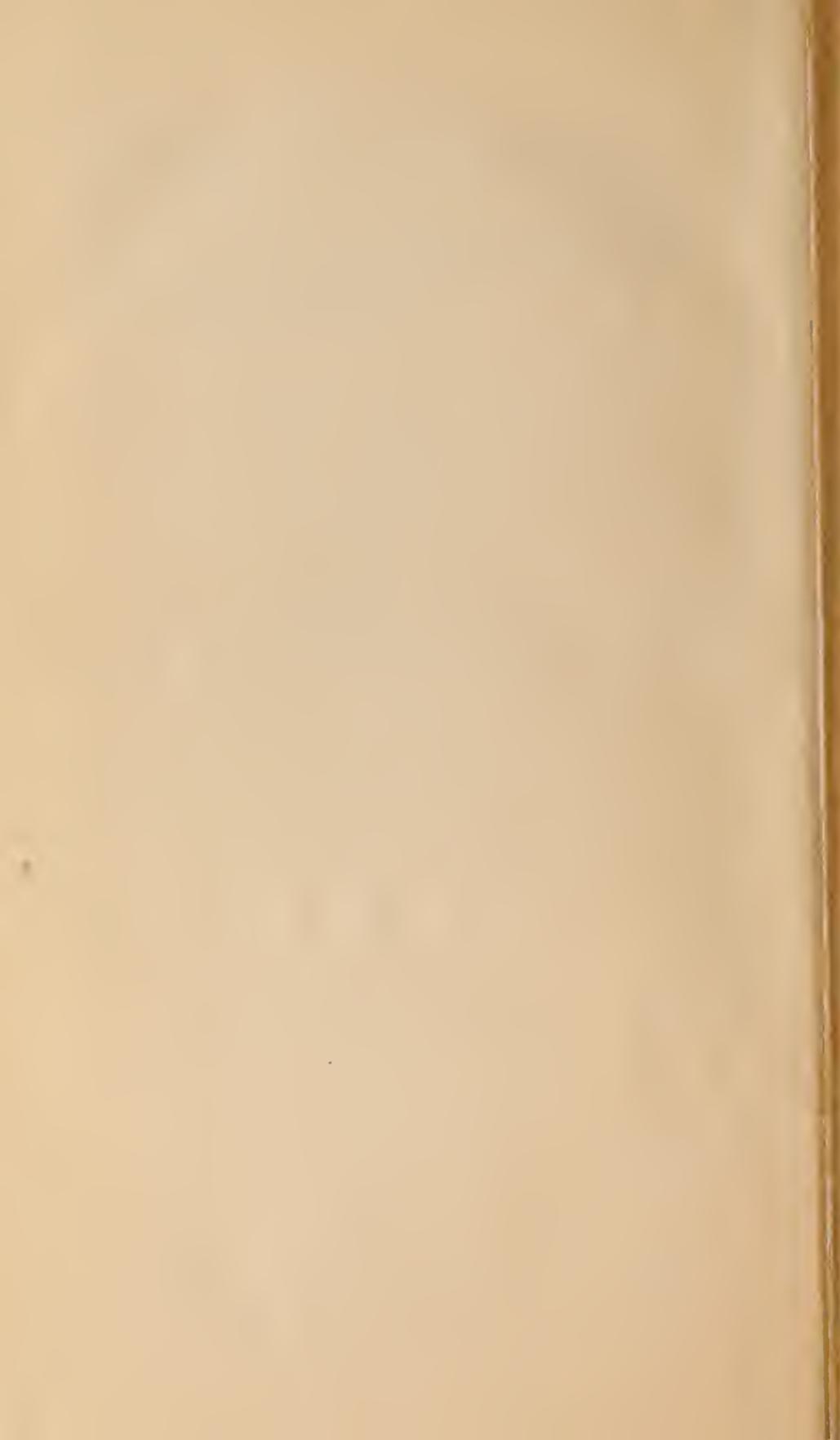
Besides this primitive alteration, in the age of the flood; the subsequent dissemination of the religion, the science and the commerce of nations with one

another, the wars and irruptions of conquerors, and a thousand other causes, have served to introduce into writing, as well as oral discourse, those important changes which make it so difficult to ascertain whence many languages are derived.

END OF VOL. I.

*D. W. B.*











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