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8. **Bharatiya Chit Manas Kala** (in Hindi) 1991. Also in English with an introduction and glossary by J. K. Bajaj, Centre for Policy Studies, Madras, 1993. Also published in Kannada from Rashtrathan, Bangalore.
9. **Bharat ka Svadharma**, Ilihas Vartaman aur Bhavishya ka Sandarbha (in Hindi) Vagdevi Prakashan, Bikaner, 1994.

Despoliation and Defaming of India

DHARAMPAL

# Despoliation and Defaming of India

The Early Nineteenth Century  
British Crusade

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BHARAT PEETHAM, WARDHA  
OTHER INDIA PRESS, GOA

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OF INDIA**

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BRITISH CRUSADE

# **DESPOLIATION AND DEFAMING OF INDIA**

**THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY  
BRITISH CRUSADE**

with some narration of India as it was before the British  
imposition, and also as Britain was around 1800 A.D.

by  
Dharampal

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OTHER INDIA PRESS, GOA**

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## Preface

In the mid-1920s Miss Katherine Mayo, hailing from the United States of America had made a long visit to India, was feted by the British Viceroy, and looked after by his administration in her travels around India, and, sometime later, she came out with a book titled *Mother India*. The book was felt as an outrage, there was an alround public condemnation of it in India, and perhaps elsewhere too, and Mahatma Gandhi called it "Drain Inspector's Report". \*

The materials, speeches, and writings by the great Englishmen on India Mr. William Wilberforce (1813), Mr. James Mill (1817), and Mr. T. B. Macaulay (1835, 1843), which are being included in the present work are far far more virulent, than *Mother India*, in their observations on India, and paint India in the darkest possible hues. The question which may be asked by many will be what is the relevance of publishing them, 150 years after they were written. And even if it were useful to know what they said, and how they said it, would it not have a demoralising effect on many of the readers, and would not they possibly, be more terrified and overwhelmed by closer acquaintance with such narratives.

But we at present live in the age of the west and, in a way, in their orbit. If we had sagacity, confidence, and courage after we became politically free, the past decade or two, could have seen more freedom, fearlessness, and initiative in the less powerful

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\* Collected Work of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 34, pp 539-549, from Young India, 15.9.1927. It seems that by the mid-1920s the British created images of India as depraved, ignorant, and wretched had got worn out. Hence the need for similar but newer presentation on India. Therefore, Miss Mayo's *Mother India*, and a large number of similar works were written and published in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

countries. Instead what in fact has happened is that they face far greater control and threats from the international power cliques—certain governments, international financial institutions, world trade organisations, and international scientific and industrial combines. For the healthy survival of most of the world these institutions and tendencies need to be countered and curbed effectively. Such countering can really begin when we understand the nature of these tendencies in their historical context. Further we have to realise how such countering has to be organised both externally and far more within our own societies.

About 90 years ago Mahatma Gandhi tried to tell us, in his *Hind Swaraj*, and later through other writings and actions, that if we wished to be free of such threats and control we have to create a world of our own and institutions relevant to it. His wisdom and leadership did ignite a spark amongst our people, and they began to stand up, gain initiative, and far more importantly, courage. But these by themselves did not seem sufficient to Mahatma Gandhi by 1925. Discussing the drain of wealth from India and the impoverishment it led to through the Indian use of foreign cloth, and other foreign manufactures, he stated that by themselves these could be ignored for some time. But what hurt India much more was our lethargy (*alasya*) and lack of togetherness (*parasparata*)\*. It will, perhaps, be true to say that in every thing Mahatma Gandhi said and did the main aim was to remove our lethargy, and to lead us to togetherness.

The presentation and reflection on these texts, it is hoped, will be helpful in our understanding the origins of our basic problems. Our induced low or disoriented images of ourselves and the consequent continuation of institutions and beliefs—especially the near fatal system of education we have long been saddled with—seem to be the main blocks which keep us, by

\* Charkha Sangh ka Itihas (in Hindi), Gandhiji's speech, 1925

now, in the long- pervading state of public and private sloth. If we begin reflecting on how these characteristics actually arose and have led us to our present *tamasic* lethargy, and away from togetherness, given appropriate effort, we should soon be restored back to health.

Many readers may find the material published unpleasant reading, and even frightening. While unpleasant it certainly is, if we understood its thrust and consequences, it should take away our fright, and lead us all, of whatever belief or religious persuasion any of us may belong to, to a regained fearlessness, and a state of confidence and courage.

Many friends have seen much of this material over the past 30 years. Its present assemblage has been greatly assisted by Pradeep Dixit, Meenakshi Chaudhary, Shiv Dutt Mishra, Krishna Kumar, Kanak Mal Gandhi, and T. M. Mukundan. Without their support this work could not have been presented in the present form.

The work is divided into six chapters. Chapter I gives an account of the Christianisation debate; chapters II and III provide the text of the two speeches of Mr. William Wilberforce in the House of Commons during the debate; chapter IV reproduces a chapter from Mr. James Mill's "History of British India" on the manners and civilization of India; chapter V publishes two extracts from Mr. T. B. Macaulay's writings on Indian Education (1835), and a speech he delivered in the House of Commons (1843); and chapter VI provides a note on British society around the 18th century.

Sevagram,  
Hanuman Jayanti, March 31, 1999

Dharampal

# Introduction

The present work, in the main, presents three important British statements and views on India the *first*, in 1813 in the British House of Commons during the debate on the Christianization of India by a leading statesman, reformer, evangelical, also known as father of the Victorians, Mr. William Wilberforce; the *second* is by Mr. James Mill, a leading scholar, intellectual and later the major administrator of the East India Company, who achieved great celebrity in 1817 by his voluminous work the "History of British India" (1817), he could also be termed a leading utilitarian and humanist. The *third*, and last are extracts of two pronouncements of Mr. Thomas Babington Macaulay. the first in 1835 on Indian Education, and the second in 1843 in a debate on India in the British House of Commons.

These were the major presentations on India by three influential British citizens who swayed their countrymen for generations, and whose views mattered to a large number of British citizens, and perhaps to a segment of the Indian citizens too, even to this day. Further, the influence they wielded and the capacity and foresight they had was to create institutions, beliefs, and modes of conduct amongst those who ruled and managed India for Britain till 1947, and many of us still carry these views and opinions in the running of present-day India.

While each one of them was expressing himself from seemingly different viewpoints, and appeared to have different aims, all the three subscribed to the belief of the great inferiority of India as a civilization, and treated it as degraded, sunk in superstition and wretchedness. They condemned every thing

Indian manners, beliefs, religious systems and philosophies, Indian art and architecture, the manner Indian society was organised in communities and jatis, and thought that its fine manufactures could only be the creation of effeminate beings. In brief for them India knew neither manliness, nor the great European art of war.

For all three of them, and certainly for Mr. James Mill, the people of India could best be compared with the indigenous people of the Americas, only they were somewhat more skilled and prosperous but more depraved and sunk in superstition.<sup>1</sup> So, for him and the others, if most of the people of India were to disappear, like the people of the Americas did, it would have been no loss and perhaps a great good.

But, before we proceed we need to understand the British background. The British were a product of various conquests of Britain, historically beginning with the Roman conquest of Britain just before the Christian era, and ending with the conquest, occupation, and total subjugation of Britain by the Normans from mid 11th century A.D. This latter conquest expropriated the earlier inhabitants, estimated at about one million, of 95% of all their resources, confirmed the dispossession by the establishment of what is called the "rule of law" and by establishing a steep hierarchy. The British, therefore, considered their later incursions, plunder, conquest, and domination, first in Ireland, and from the 16th century onwards all around the world, as legitimate.

The British further could not generally conceive of coexistence of people of different ethnic backgrounds, or even of different religious backgrounds, as for instance, with the people of Ireland. The conquered in their view, had ultimately to disappear, if not wholly physically, at least as a culture and civilization. In Australia, and Newzealand practically all the local inhabitants were wiped out soon enough; in North America near complete elimination happenned, over 300-400 years, and in Ireland only partially. The

indigenous population of the Americas has been estimated at 112 to 140 millions in 1492.<sup>2</sup> In India a large number perished by British brutality and deliberate creation of famines, violation of persons bodies and dignity; in Palnad in Andhra, half of the population was said to have perished every ten years, during several decades after the subjugation of the area by Britain. There are no clear estimates of Indian mortalities caused by British rule. The period 1748-1947 can truly be called as a 200 years war between British power and the people of India. The Indian casualties— through famines, disease, slaughter by the British, and sheer emaciation— may be conjectured at 200-500 millions over the period. One does not know the British casualties. These must be large, mostly through disease, particularly in the first 100 years. Perhaps one in ten of all adult British males had been to India as members of the British army or navy.

Much could be said about the practices of European and British society during the centuries. This is however not the place to narrate them in any detail. But two of these practices may briefly be mentioned here. One of them, the more known, was witch-burning during the 15-16-17 c. which led to the burning of several million men and women in Europe, and around 1,00,000 or more in Britain. Some persons were still burnt as witches in Britain at the end of the 17th century. The other wide-spread practice, perhaps beginning around the start of the christian era and continuing till the 18th century, was the abandonment of 20% to 30% of all European children by their parents. A large proportion of children so abandoned, died soon after in the very places they were exposed. A proportion were taken to be adopted in families, another proportion taken by the christian church to later become monks and nuns, a few of whom reached high status in the christian heirarchy, and the rest taken by other people and turned into slaves, prostitutes and the like. To illustrate what used to happen we may

quote the 18th century European philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau :

"My third child was thus deposited in a foundling home just like the first two, and I did the same with the two following: I had five in all. The arrangement seemed to me so good, so sensible, so appropriate, that if I did not boast of it publicly it was solely out of regard for their mother.... In a word I made no secret of my action .... because in fact I saw no wrong in it. All things considered, I chose what was best for my children, or what I thought was best....."

[Confessions : Paris, 1964, page 424.]<sup>3</sup>

## II

As an Indian preface to the observations of Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. James Mill, and Mr. Macaulay about the degradation, wretchedness, etc, of India, the following pages try to describe, mostly from British records, how India was around 1750 (or in areas unaffected by British domination till later), how it began to be disrupted, and to what level it got reduced. Before beginning this description I give a brief account of how I got concerned with the finding of these facts.

From about 1950 I had begun to have major doubts, about our knowledge of our people, their manners and capacity. After a stay in Britain and Israel during 1949 I had felt that as regards intelligence and hard work our people in general were equal to the people of Britain, Western Europe, or Israel. It seemed to me that it were their circumstances and the British created institutions, which ruled over them, that almost invariably inhibited initiative and innovative capacity of our people in practically all spheres of public life. By about 1960 I began to realise that it was not as if

they had no public life at all. Even around 1960 if we conversed with them and explored deeper one found that by themselves they were engaged in a multiplicity of corporate life, but as we considered them ignorant and individualistic, we stayed ignorant of it. On further exploring the subject I learnt that a century or more earlier, such corporate life was far more extensive and lively. And by 1964-65 I became aware that the early British record on India had more detailed information on many aspects of India's life and institutions and it was then that I had my first acquaintance with a few of these records in the Tamilnadu State Archives at Madras (now Chennai).

This slight acquaintance with bits of our past at the Tamilnadu State Archives led me in 1966 to Britain to look at material on the state of Indian society during the early stages of the encounter between Britain and India. Since then, over a number of years, I visited some 30-35 major and minor archives in Britain which had material relevant to India.<sup>3a</sup> The major ones which I visited, more frequently, were in London, or Edinburgh, or Oxford. Later on, from 1980 onwards, I also tried to look at specific material in the Tamilnadu State Archives. Earlier on I had also seen some material in the Bengal State Archives in Calcutta during 1971, the Uttar Pradesh State Archives at Lucknow and Allahabad in the 1970s, and the Bombay State Archives around 1970. I also looked at material at the National Archives of India, Delhi, especially material on the system of forced labour and impressment throughout India during 1780-1930, and on the anti- kine-killing movement, aimed basically against the large-scale British killing of cows and bullocks for beef, mostly relating to the period of the 1880s and 1890s. The material I thus collected was on somewhat disparate subjects and periods. But for me it opened different facets of India's life and polity and how it was reduced to ignorance, wretchedness, to the neglect of its natural resources, agriculture and industry

built over thousands of years. Its great knowledge systems were made to become **disoriented** and dead, and it was institutionally, economically, culturally disrupted and its people as well as animal and plant life was so enfeebled through malnutrition and ill treatment as to take them generations to recoup. The implications of the modern western term "Triage"<sup>4</sup> seems to have had a full play in India over the last 250 years, and this play still goes on, mostly because of external pressures but also because the elite of our split society no longer has much feeling for the larger society. The larger society despite its disorientation, the induced lack or feebleness of its own institutions, and great lack of resources still carries on; but till now it largely somehow keeps itself alive for a future which it expects holds hope.

### III

The material which is being reproduced here is not really so much about India, as it was lived by the Indians, but about the British 'visions' or 'imaginations' of India— often much heated— after Britain had conquered and dominated much of it. It seems as if the intellectuals and leaders of Britain hated India, and felt outraged that in spite of all their brutalities, smashing of Indian institutions, high extortions, and tortures, men-made famines and expropriation of Indian resources to the British state, and thus the all round breakdown of Indian society, the Indians on the whole, could not be wiped out that easily.

British policies and actions led to chaos, made Indian militia men and police into dacoits as early as the 1770s,<sup>5</sup> and broke down Indian institutions by depriving them of their resource base. Indian agriculture got smashed by expropriating most of the agricultural produce to the new state, it in turn smashed the localities infrastructure, and consequently, in time, destroyed Indian

industrial manufactures.

In the India dominated by Islamic rulers the actual exchequer receipt of a king like Jahangir was around 4% of what was computed as revenue of the empire,<sup>6</sup> and in the times of the more demanding and powerful Aurangzeb such receipt never seem to have exceeded 20% of the computed revenue of the empire. The 80% to the 95% of the revenue resources were utilised at the local and intermediate levels for maintaining the socio-cultural-economic infrastructure. India thus seemed a desirable, tolerant, and comfortable country not only to Hazrat Ali<sup>7</sup> (7th century Islam) but to all those around the world who had seen it or heard of it.

To give their brutality, violence, and policies, legitimacy the British began exploring long ignored Indian texts, and texts on India as those of Tamerlane, or Allahuddin Khilzi, or the Greeks etc. and made the Indian elite believe as if they were, for the first time, learning about what they themselves and India was. Their digging of forgotten texts began, in time, to be termed Indology, which began to provide an image of Indian ignorance, deceit, perfidy, wretchedness, its being sunk in darkness, and Indian effeminacy, to the elites of India and to other Indians who came in contact with them, and to the world at large.

By the time of the 1813 Christianization debate, Britain had been conquering, dominating, brutalising India for some 65 years. But the people of Surat had a taste of the British by 1618. This is what Sir Thomas Roe, the British ambassador to the court of Jahangir, had said then:

**"It was useless to attempt to win the friendship of the Indians by kindly treatment; 'they are weary of us.... Wee have empoverished the ports and wounded all their trades'; the only dependence was upon 'the same ground that wee began, and by which wee subsist, feare.' 'Assure yow,' he wrote, 'I knowe these people are best treated with the**

**swoord in one hand and caducean in the other'; and if his demands were not complied with to his satisfaction, he intended to seize the Indian shipping 'and make those conditions bee offered which now I seeke with despayre'."**<sup>8</sup>

The above however is not to say that the Portuguese, the Spaniards, the Dutch or the French were any less brutal, or cruel in their dealings with the people whom they attacked and who came under their subjugation.

## IV

Within 12 years of the British entrance to Bengal and Bihar a man-made famine was created by the British in 1769, in which according to them one-third of the people perished. Yet so little were the British affected seeing corpses lying around them that Calcutta informed their masters in London that despite the famine the land revenue was fully collected. One can well imagine the state of Bengal and Bihar then.

Some 20 years later came the preposterous British doctrine that the land belonged to the conqueror and he could ask whatever rent or revenue he wished for allowing people to cultivate but on a temporary basis. The rationale for the temporary tenancy was that this was the practice in late 18th c. Britain, and if the British cultivator could be turned out at short notice the Indian peasant could not possibly have a superior right.<sup>9</sup>

The British fixed the land rent at fifty percent of the gross produce of the land, the average to show fairness worked out over several years, and the rent was converted into cash. The result was that the rent so fixed, was about four times to what it used to be before the British,<sup>10</sup> and as depression followed depression, the prices went down, and in many areas of India, especially in Andhra, Tamil Nadu, etc., the peasantry that had

survived despite the enforced break up of their society especially because of the rack-renting and extortions, had often to pay 80% and more of the gross produce to meet the revenue. At times the total produce could not pay the revenue, and so a large part of the most fertile lands, lying just below the irrigation channels, went out of cultivation.<sup>11</sup> There was large-scale use of torture to recover the revenue<sup>12</sup> (torture must have taken place for long in Europe for such recoveries and hundred other purposes), and as early as 1804 Lord Bentinck, Governor of the Madras presidency, said to London, "The general tenor of my opinion is that we have rode the country too hard, and the consequence is, that it is in a state of the most lamentable poverty. Great oppression is I fear exercised too generally in the collection of the revenues."<sup>13</sup> Such statements were repeated again and again, the board of revenue of Madras admitted rack-renting, extortions, etc., by them because of constant demands for money and threats to the Board, by London.<sup>14</sup>

The same rack-renting and extortions went on in other regions of India too, and it was said by British officers that one of the major causes of the great Indian revolt of 1857-58 was the exorbitant nature of what the state took as land revenue and that it was mostly collected at the point of the bayonet.<sup>15</sup>

As far as the ordinary Indian peasantry was concerned this process of raising revenue at the point of the bayonet went on in many areas till about 1940, when a continued inflationary pressure in prices and a sense of some security in land tenure, provided by the new Indian provincial governments, made the peasant economically better off, much less oppressed and more confident.

The greatly celebrated landlords of the Bengal permanent settlement of 1793 to begin with had a piteous time. Many of them were old rajas and some were bankers, adventurers, etc. They were allowed 10% of what the government received and 2 1/2 % for expenses.<sup>16</sup> Within a few years they everywhere had to be

supported by revenue battalions to help realise the exorbitant revenue, for it was no easy task to raise a revenue which was four to five times of what it had been only a few decades before. In the Bengal Presidency most of these landlords, created around 1793, were bankrupt by about 1805 and their zamindaris auctioned to other bidders. This process of bankruptcy and auctions continued in most zamindaris for several decades. It was only after about 1850 that the British created zamindars began to prosper, but the weight of their earlier suffering also got added to the burden of the already resourceless, insecure and half-starved existence of the peasantry.

## V

Once the British ruling class had wholly subordinated—what the British called the lower orders of Britain (perhaps some 90% of British population) and this subordination lasted fairly intact till about 1900—from the 16th c. A.D it became a world conquering class and it seems to have assumed that its conquest was absolute. That it had become master and owner of living beings in the conquered territory, and the people there if they could not be subordinated and made useful as slaves, serfs, or impressed labour, they should over a time be helped to become extinct. This was not only a British outlook and objective, though the British seem to have pursued it to the end, but a shared west European and christian outlook and objective. And it did become reality in most of America (though over 300-400 years), in Australia, New Zealand, many regions of Africa, and in some of the South East Asian countries.

Thus the British knew, or had a foreboding, from their knowledge of British and European history, and from the more intimate knowledge of the consequences of European conquests

from 1492 onwards, that conquest almost invariably led to the extinction of the conquered civilization. This seemed to them an inevitability, and it is from such a belief that Europe gave the world the term "survival of the fittest", and made it look as if it was a great truth of science and nature. Holding such outlook and views the British ruling class therefore expected most of the society and people of India to become extinct after their conquest by Britain and the creation of a British order and structure in India. Prof. Macnochie of Edinburgh, and perhaps other scholars too, implied such an expectation in his memoranda, letters, etc. of the 1780s, and desired the collection of information exotic or otherwise which was then available about India as such information may after a time become extinct.<sup>17</sup> Information of various sorts did get collected, and there was a collection of much exotic information by men like Capt Wilford from Varanasi, where he resided some 25-30 years. Later in 1806 Wilford was to inform the Governor General Minto that he had been greatly misled by the Varanasi pundits, but most of what he had learnt had already been published in the *Asiatic Researches*, published by Sir William Jones Asiatic Society in Calcutta. One of these exotic stories was that the Indians looked upon the British isles as the *sweta-dvipa* mentioned in Indian literature. The information which he claimed could be relied on, and which he communicated to Lord Minto, was that Savai Man Singh had been to Indonesia and other South East Asian areas and perhaps several times.<sup>18</sup>

While Mr. Charles Grant, for long during the latter 18th c. a senior merchant in Bengal and later several times chairman of the East India Company and a prominent member of the Evangelicals whose leader was Mr. William Wilberforce, and numerous Christian missionaries, and Governors General Cornwallis, Shore, etc, and various judges of judicial courts in India were the source of information and judgement for Mr. William Wilberforce and the

1813 christianisation of India debate in the British House of Commons, for Mr. James Mill, Captain Wilford became a major source to state that India was at the lowest level of civilization, and both- "nations [India and China] were good at imitation. Both were extremely defective in invention." Mr. Mill further stated that both the Chinese and Indians, "are to an equal degree tainted with the views of insincerity, dissembling, treacherous, mendacious, to an excess which surpasses even the usual measure of uncultivated society."<sup>19</sup>

## VI

India like China, and perhaps like other South East Asian countries too, had been accustomed to a low rate of tax on land. As the British found, in many districts of south India there was no land tax at all. Wherever there was a land tax about 1/3 of the Indian agricultural land, from ancient times, paid no revenue to government at all, and what such land paid was to some local institutions, temples, mathams, persons belonging to the local infrastructure, and for local police and militia purposes. Additionally, in most areas, about thirty percent of the total produce was given to local infrastructure and persons (at places there were 50-60 of them), and to great mathams, great temples of the region and to local temples and shrines and wherever they existed to Muslims religious places.<sup>20</sup> Incidentally, a survey which the British carried out in Bengal during the 1770s found out that 90% of the religious and cultural land allocations there were for Hindu institutions and persons, and only some 10% for Muslim institutions and persons.<sup>21</sup> The long Islamic domination of Bengal, from about A.D. 1200 onwards, had not, it seems, much affected the pre-1200 A.D. allocations. Many of the great mathams and temples of India like those of Jagannath Puri and Tirupati received such allocations

of land and crops also from places as distant as Peshawar or Nepal.

Though it needs investigation it seems that the non-agricultural part of the Indian economy contributed similarly to the functioning of local polities, and for the mathams, temples, irrigation works and the like.

India, as can be realised, did not subscribe to the hypothesis that any despot or emperor, or conqueror was the owner of the Indian land and other Indian resources. The owners, if any, were local communities, who allowed certain proportions for the expenses of the intermediate and apex authorities. While everyone, ie, all beings and not only human beings, were enabled to have access to food which each one required, and human families had a right to a house site and backyard in the locality each lived in, the idea of ownership, so high in European priorities, had quite a low value in the Indian polity.

## VII

The primary unit of India was its locality, sub-village, villages, towns, nagarams, and the chief nagarams of every region. Besides, there were the major cultural and metropolitan centres like Varanasi, Prayag, Navadweep, Jagannathpuri, Madurai, Dwarka, Kanchipuram and many others, which at times might have been seats of great rulers, but by far more, places of high learning, of pilgrimage, and were often great marts of the exquisite products of India, and of some products coming from non-Indian areas. Each of these localities had a government or administration of its own, in which all sections of those who resided in it had a say and a role and there was extensive infrastructure which served each locality, and the locality was also linked with larger cultural,

religious, economic and administrative persons and institutions in the region in which the locality was situated, and some times with places far more distant.

The infrastructure, depending on the size of the locality was quite extensive. It included the local temples and shrines and many great temples and mathams of the area. Each locality, even a habitation of some 200 houses, seems to have had a poet, singers, musicians, dancers, temple priests, calendar pundit, vaidyam, school teacher, here and there maha-pandits, water-pandal keepers, Registers and account keepers ( Karnams of south India), members of the militia, locality police personnel, and further those who formed the technical and economic services —the maintenance of irrigation works, the iron-smith, the carpenter, the potter, the washermen and several others. Most of these had some large or small assignment of land which either they cultivated themselves or it was cultivated by some one in the peasantry and their share given to them. Practically all of them had a share of the agricultural produce—the gram devata had the first claim on it, and such distribution to the infrastructure as mentioned above amounted to around 30% of the gross locality produce.<sup>22</sup> There were also other categories like weavers, oil-men, shopkeepers and the like who resided in the locality but did not seem to share in the land assignments, or the crop distribution, in Southern India in the latter part of the 18th c.

There were also localities without much agriculture but with a single or multiple industrial activity. There were habitats of weavers— one such in 1770 Chengalpattu near Chennai had 400 houses of weavers;<sup>23</sup> of iron smelters, of potters (a very large one still functions near Jaggannath Puri), of oil pressers, and it may be assumed for many other industries.

It were such infrastructural arrangements, and their receiving appropriate shares of production that made the localities look

lively, prosperous, and places of rejoicing, but well organised. The larger localities were organised at times in 2-3 sub-localities, and the main locality divided into clusters of 10-15 houses, each with its own water-pond or tank, a shrine or two, and other needed facilities. The residences of people, seem to have generally been located together on the basis of profession, kula, jati, or common religious belief. But the community of the locality was the over all decision making body, and constituted a primary polity. These polities were linked with neighbouring polities—perhaps in the way conceived by Mahatma Gandhi in his observations on the oceanic circle polity<sup>24</sup>—and the neighbouring polities all together formed the region, and the region loosely linked with the other regions of India.

## VIII

In polities so arranged and functioning, literacy and education were thus provided for and were considered an important task. The British did many surveys on it in the late 18th and the early 19th century, and it was their conclusion that some 1/3rd to 1/4th of the school age boys were then attending schools.<sup>25</sup> There were only some girls in schools— but in Malabar a large number of muslim girls attended school around 1820 but their number shrank to about half 60 years later around 1880— and it was stated that most of the girls received their education at home.<sup>26</sup> The boys in school came from all jatis, and in some of the southern districts of India about half of them were stated to come from jatis below the sudras. In all, in the tamil area, some 70% of the school going boys were from the "sudra" and "those below the sudra" categories, and only some 30% from amongst the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Musalmans.<sup>27</sup> It is possible that most of the boys from among the Brahmins, etc., were going to school while from

amongst the sudras and those below them many, for whatever reasons, did not attend school. The sudras and those below them were also found in schools in Bengal and Bihar though in a smaller proportion. But in Bengal and Bihar many of the teachers belonged to sudra and below sudra jatis.<sup>28</sup>

Besides, the schools there were colleges. The Madras Presidency (Tamilnadu, districts of coastal Andhra, some districts of Karnataka, Canara and Malabar) had 1,000 of them around 1820, and some 250 of these were in Rajahmundry area.<sup>29</sup> In these the teachers and the scholars were largely Brahmins but the subjects they specialised in were various. While no details are available on the specialisation in higher education in the Madras Presidency, in the five surveyed districts of Bengal and Bihar, out of 2,524 scholars, 1424 studied Grammar, 378 Logic, 336 Law, 120 Literature, 82 mythology, 78 Astrology, 19 Rhetoric, 18 Medicine, 13 Vedum, 5 Tantra, 2 Mimansa, and 1 Sankhya.<sup>30</sup> Similarly Navadweep in Bengal was a great centre of higher learning and had several thousand students and hundreds of teachers till the latter part of the 18th c.<sup>31</sup>

But all this had begun to crumble after the starting of British rack-renting, and extortions, and so the picture given above is from a period of relative decay. According to a British Collector in 1823, the Collector of Bellary, education was in a poor state, especially as the area had been reduced to impoverishment **by the draining of the wealth of the area** to out side places. In his letter to government he wrote: "I am sorry to state that this [ie the extensive impoverishment leading to decline of education] is ascribable to the gradual but general impoverishment of the country. The means of the manufacturing classes have been, of late years greatly diminished, by the introduction of our own European manufactures, in lieu of the Indian cotton fabrics.... the transfer of the capital of the country, from the native governments, and their

officers, who liberally expended it in India, to Europeans ..... [is] daily draining it from the land, has likewise tended to this effect which has not been alleviated by a less rigid enforcement of the revenue due to the state." <sup>32</sup>

## IX

The sense of individual and group dignity in India had always been high. In discussions and decisions on any subject concerning a group, locality, or larger region, all expected to express themselves and be listened to. According to Francis Buchanan, in the Karnataka- Kerala region around 1800, the Indians were given to discussing matters in public, and if the discussion particularly concerned some person, who was not present, the matter was not discussed till the person was there.<sup>33</sup> The coronation of rajas or political chiefs had to have the participation of representatives of all sections of the people in the territory to which the raja's rule extended. In Rajasthan this practice seems to have continued till very recent times and it is said that the Minas, considered low today in social and jati structure, were the first to initiate the coronation ceremony.

As the people coronated a raja, in the same way, when they became quite disappointed with him, it were they who raised a protest, started some form of non-cooperation, and if matters did not improve, finally revolted, and dethroned the raja, and replaced him with another, perhaps ordinarily from the same kula. This overthrowing of Indian rajas by their people is well brought out by Mr. James Mill, by 1832 perhaps much more knowledgeable and experienced, in his evidence to a British Parliamentary Committee on the role of British political residents who directed and controlled the so called native rulers who had come under the protection of the British from 1748 onwards, but at a far speedier

rate after 1800. Mr. James Mill said that in India, the Indian rulers had stood in awe of their subjects. Whenever the subjects got wholly dissatisfied they brought down the ruler and replaced him by some other. But after the British became dominant, and the rulers became their subsidiaries, this practice had stopped as the people were in no position to challenge British power.<sup>34</sup>

But it was not only in relation to a raja that such action or non-cooperation took place. Such protest and non-cooperation took place at all levels whenever a person, or group, felt wronged. It took various forms especially of dharna, and traga (preparing to die in front of the oppressor or wrong-doer). One of the major occurrences of it was in the Varanasi and Bihar regions in 1810-1811 in protest against a tax on houses imposed by the British. The whole of Varanasi was completely shut up for 2-3 weeks, and it is said that some 2,00,000 persons sat in dharna there, and that even the dead could not be cremated and their bodies were placed in the Ganga. Ultimately the people lost, but even after this the people of Varanasi did not agree to pay the tax willingly. Instead they let their properties be sequestered by the British.<sup>35</sup>

In Hind Swaraj, which he wrote in 1909, Mahatma Gandhi refers to this tradition. According to him whenever the people were greatly dissatisfied with a ruler, they threatened to quit his territory. This threat made the ruler see sense and he went to them and reconciled them and solved the problem.<sup>36</sup>

## X

India then had its industry, the famous extensive cotton cloth industry (spinning, weaving, dyeing, finishing, etc.) producing cloth for ordinary wear, as well as for exquisite purposes. Further, there were the great building industries run by high professionals like

experts in Vastu-sastra, also those who constructed tanks and irrigation channels and maintained them, and people who looked after the roads and the rivers. There were the great cartiers like the Banjaras, the transporters who were said at times to have travelled on the roads in caravans of 10,000 carts. Then there were the boats and ships in the rivers and on the seas, and those who built them, and those who sailed them in the rivers and seas around India, and to places in South East Asia and to East and South Africa.<sup>37</sup>

Most parts of India produced very fine iron and steel from very early times. Around 1700-1800 it was perhaps the best steel in the world and distant countries like the Netherlands and Britain imported it and used it for special purposes. We of course used it for our agricultural purposes, and in tool-making, and in great temples as well as in great iron pillars, like the one in Delhi. Our annual potential of iron and steel production, around 1800, is estimated at 2,00,000 tons. The furnaces which manufactured such iron and steel were found in practically all regions of India, and were made by the iron-smelters themselves, used ores available locally, and charcoal made from specific trees, and the furnaces could be carted from place to place.<sup>38</sup>

There were scores of large and small industrial and other manufacturing enterprises even till A.D. 1800 and in many areas till much later. Around 1770 it was found that ice was manufactured from water by a man-made process in the Allahabad region. This was wholly unknown in Britain, and perhaps in Europe too, and so details of the process were conveyed to the British Royal Society in London by the British commander in chief of the Bengal army. The details were tested and analysed in Edinburgh by one Prof. Black, probably Edinburgh was the main centre for understanding the process. Prof. Black found that the Indian process worked in his laboratory too,<sup>39</sup> and the confirmation of it, in due

course must have led to the founding, patenting etc. of the earlier forms of modern-day refrigeration.

Incidentally, it seems that ice was made in India from water (and perhaps by the same or similar process) in the early 7th c A.D. in the days of the celebrated Harshavardhana of Kannauj. This is referred to in the Harsha-Charitra by the great poet *Bana Bhatta*.<sup>40</sup>

Contrary to what the British assumed, especially Mr. James Mill, the historian of British India (1817), India seems to have been well endowed in the matter of the treatment of the body, largely through Ayurveda and its regional versions, and in surgery. Indian surgeons, disciples of the ancient Susruta, did surgery for many things including the removal of the cataract of the eye in Bengal (c. 1790)<sup>41</sup> and in mending noses, and perhaps, other limbs. The news of the process of the mending of noses reached the British Royal Society from Pune, and may be from other places also. There seems to have arisen some amazement, a sort of unbelief, but the details of the surgery were studied, and by 1810 Dr. Carpue of London was able to build up the technique of a new plastic surgery derived and based on the Indian method.<sup>42</sup>

There must be many more such instances of export of knowledge, processes, and techniques, in multiple fields which came to Britain, and perhaps to some other European areas, from 18th and early 19th century India. There were the details of the practice of inoculation conveyed firstly around A.D. 1732, and later in much greater detail in 1765 to the British College of physicians by Mr. Holwell, who was also a surgeon.<sup>43</sup> Similarly the practices of Indian agriculture were described to London from various areas, and some Indian tools, particularly drill ploughs, were sent to Britain to help improve the British agricultural implements, all in the latter part of the 18th century.<sup>44</sup>

A Dutch scholar around 1935 claimed an Indian origin of

16th-17th century European furniture, and published several articles on it in the Burlington Magazine, London. As this claim got contested by a couple of British scholars the magazine found it more politic to terminate publishing the series.<sup>45</sup> There must be many instances of this kind.

It may be of use; much surprise to the readers of this work to know that, according to recent estimates of world-wide industrial manufactures, 73% of world manufactures were done in the Chinese and the Indian regions around 1750. Even around 1820 these two regions produced some 60% of world manufactures.<sup>45a</sup>

## XI

But this import of knowledge, processes and techniques from areas of Asia to Europe was nothing new. Much of basic knowledge and techniques, it is admitted today, had been imported into Europe and Britain from China, and the Arab countries since the 11th and 12th century. The four major items which are said to have ushered in the modern age—the mariners compass, paper, the process of printing, and the materials which went into the making of gun powder are all to day admitted to have arrived in Europe in the 12-13th centuries from China. Much more of higher sophistication was conveyed from China to Europe in the 16-17-18th centuries. These related to matters of design whether in landscape, laying of gardens, buildings, etc; but of far greater and lasting importance to Europe were the patterns and details of the Chinese administrative system, and the Chinese philosophical and political concepts.

It is only during the last few decades, especially after the work of numerous scholars on China, including the great work of Prof. Joseph Needham of Cambridge and his team on "Science

and "Civilization in China" (some volumes of it are yet to be published) that it began to be accepted by European scholars that what Europe had acquired in the field of science and technology by A.D. 1850 was already known to the Chinese, some 2,000 years earlier, around 150 B.C. Why China did not proceed further, in the direction the modern west did from about 1850 onwards, is a much deeper question relating to fundamental differences in understanding the created world and its meaning, and how men in different civilizations have been shaped by the totality of their existence. Such facts and logic would have been unbelievable, at least publicly, for western thinkers and opinion makers, like Mr. William Wilberforce, Mr. James Mill, and Lord Macaulay.

There was nothing wrong in the British or Europeans having borrowed various ideas and techniques from India, China, the Arab world, or elsewhere. The wrong was in not acknowledging the borrowing, and in pretending as if its origin lay in some mystery, as Francis Bacon and others seem to have done in the matter of the mariners compass, paper, etc, or in claiming that it was their own original creation. All borrowing however, to be of any serious use to the borrower has first to be understood from its first principles, and then adequately internalised and modified according to the borrower's preference and requirement. This point the Europeans and the British seem to have well understood. In our own times the Japanese and the Chinese seem to have understood it equally well. We in India, it seems, have yet to comprehend this point, and it is only then that anything we borrow from outside may be of any significant value to our people and society. It may be that many other communities and countries in Asia and Africa are also in the same situation of being mere imitators and users and have not adequately comprehended the principles and detailed structuring of what they have mechanically taken from others in the world.

## XII

The apparent theme of the 1813 house of Commons debate was that it was the duty of Britain to Christianise India, and a resolution to that effect was adopted at the end of the debate. But as would be seen from the resume of the debate (chapter I), and from Mr. Wilberforce's two long speeches (chapter II & III ), the main outcome of the long debate was to paint a picture of India's depravity, ignorance, superstitions, and wretchedness. It is possible that Mr. Wilberforce and the large number who supported him, actually felt horrified by the manners and customs of India, and thought that christianising India would alleviate India's situation. But it seems to me that while the christianisation theme was seriously meant, the main objective of the public display in the British House of Commons was to justify, sanction, and legitimise the destruction of Indian society and institutions which had been wrought till then, and the steps which were to be taken in subsequent years towards completing it. The justification and legitimacy for what had happened and was to be further pursued required a newer presentation of India and its people. If one granted that India was civilized, had been enlightened and prosperous only a few decades earlier, the case for the British conquest and rule was bereft of all morality and legitimacy. Stating that India was different but civilized, which Thomas Munro and Alexander Walker, major conquerors of several regions of India, and two of the founders of the later steel frame did say, was for the British not good enough. So, the requirement was to paint India in the darkest possible hues. The task was carried further, a few years later, by Mr. James Mill in cold print. To him the Indians, as mentioned above, were not only depraved, ignorant and wretched but they were also "tainted with the vice of insincerity; dissembling, treacherous, mendacious to an excess." Mr. Mill's History of British India thus led to a more public and effective denunciation of India, and within a decade or so the Encyclopaedia Britannica revised its long article on India

and published a new piece based on the new images provided by the House of Commons debate and Mr. James Mill.

From thence the task became easier, and Mr. T.B. Macaulay could even perform it with some humour and great hyperbole as he did in his views on Indian Education in 1835. In 1843 Mr. Macaulay went even further while condemning the Governor General Ellenboro for bringing back the alleged gates of the temple of Somnath from Ghazni to India. He then said:

"But we have, I am sorry to say, sometimes deviated from the right path in the opposite direction. Some Englishmen, who have held high office in India, seem to have thought that the only religion which was not entitled to toleration and to respect was Christianity. They regarded every Christian missionary with extreme jealousy and disdain; and they suffered the most atrocious crimes, if enjoined by the Hindoo superstition, to be perpetrated in open day. It is lamentable to think how long after our power was firmly established in Bengal we, grossly neglecting the first and plainest duty of the civil magistrate, suffered the practices of infanticide and Suttee to continue unchecked. We decorated the temples of the false gods. We provided the dancing girls. We gilded and painted the images to which our ignorant subjects bowed down. We repaired and embellished the car under the wheels of which crazy devotees flung themselves at every festival to be crushed to death. We sent guards of honor to escort pilgrims to the places of worship. We actually made oblations at the shrines of idols. All this was considered, and is still considered, by some prejudiced Anglo-Indians of the old school, as profound policy. I believe that there never was so shallow, so senseless a policy. We gained nothing by it. We lowered ourselves in the eyes of those whom we meant to flatter. "We led them to believe that we attached no importance to

the difference between Christianity and heathenism. Yet how vast that difference is! I altogether abstain from alluding to topics which belong to divines. I speak merely as a politician anxious for the morality and the temporal well being of society. And, so speaking, I say that to countenance the Brahminical idolatry, and to discountenance that religion which has done so much to promote justice, and mercy, and freedom, and arts, and sciences, and good government, and domestic happiness, which has struck off the chains of the slave, which has mitigated the horrors of war, which has raised women from servants and playthings into companions and friends, is to commit high treason against humanity and civilisation." <sup>46</sup>

Thus it may be inferred that the main argument of these texts is not in their advocating the christianisation or westernisation of India, but in their bringing down the hitherto presented model of India as something to be envied and aspired to, and instead was to replace it as a thing of horror and depravity. In that the west seems to have been fairly successful. What for Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. James Mill, and Mr. T. B. Macaulay was basically rhetoric began to be taken as reality not only by world opinion but by the elites of India itself. It is the self- detestation, created by their imagery, which over a century led to our over- romanticising of India's ancient past on the one hand, and the widespread loss of initiative, innovativeness, courage and confidence, amongst ourselves, on the other.

### XIII

Despite being defeated, and over-awed by British strategy and power, the people of India, in the various regions, continued constantly to resist or non-cooperate with the British imposition. The peasantry seem to have showed such resistance much more

frequently than the urban areas. But the urban centres also arose against what they considered unbearable imposition, as they did in Varanasi, Bhagalpur, etc., in 1810-1811, or in Surat in the 1840s against an increase in the tax on salt. But most such resistance continued to be local or limited to a region. Only when the people felt inordinately aroused by issues which were highly emotive and violated their basic outlook, as during 1857-58, or during the anti-kine killing movement of the 1880s and 1890s, or the Swadeshi movement of 1905, did the resistance become pan-Indian. Yet all these organisationally were unequal to match British strategies and skills, and their killing instinct.

The situation began to alter after 1915 in favour of India with the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in India's public life. He perhaps understood Europe and Britain, and their strategies and organisational skills, far better than any other Indian till then, or thereafter.

It would perhaps be true to say that amongst several others, admiral Angarey of Maharashtra around 1750, Aliverdi Khan of Bengal around 1755, and Hyder Ali Khan in the Karnataka region around 1770s could see through European and British aims and strategies. But they did not seem to know adequately the means to counter them. Mahatma Gandhi seems to have understood the problem, and instead of countering British power according to its rules and game-plans, brought forth skills rooted in the Indian past but he transformed them to meet the challenges and impositions of the British and of the west. In that he had the instantaneous support and instinctive understanding of the Indian people. It seems that before his entering India's public life there was a lack of spontaneous communication between the people of India and its national leaders. The leaders over time had become alienated from their Indian roots and moorings. The people and the leaders had ceased to comprehend one another.

Gandhiji was asked what was it that he did that had transformed the Indian situation from abject subservience to noticeable courage and sense of being free. Gandhiji had then said that he really had not performed any miracle but what he did was that he gave voice to what the people thought and felt but were unable to voice it themselves.<sup>47</sup>

The nationalist leaders of India who came under his umbrella from about 1919 onwards, seem to have realised this link between the people of India and Mahatma Gandhi. Yet, most such leaders themselves had over time been alienated from their roots, and though aspiring for national independence had got attracted and bound by European thought and institutions. This situation obviously was a harvest which got gifted to us by the images of India created by men like Mr. William Wilberforce, Mr. James Mill, and Mr. T. B. Macaulay. And later, also by Karl Marx. Practically all those educated under institutions and texts created by the British, or those who had enjoyed some privilege or prosperity under British rule had by the time they became adults been transformed into Mr. Macaulay's black Englishmen.

The following passage seems to illustrate such transformation well :

"I neither think that the so-called *Ramaraj* was very good in the past, nor do I want it back. I think that western or rather industrial civilization is bound to conquer India, may be with many changes and adaptations, but none the less, in the main, based on industrialism. You have criticized strongly the many obvious defects of industrialism and hardly paid any attention to its merits. Everybody knows these defects and the utopias and social theories are meant to remove them. It is the opinion of most thinkers in the west that these defects are not due to industrialism as such but to the capitalist system which is based on exploitation of others."

Earlier on the writer had said :

"You misjudge greatly, I think, the civilization of the West and attach too great an importance to its many failings. You have stated somewhere that India has nothing to learn from the West and that she had reached a pinnacle of wisdom in the past. I certainly disagree with this viewpoint." <sup>48</sup>

The above would seem to suggest that these views were of someone high up in the British system in India or he was a diehard Indian toady.

But readers may find it as an unpleasant surprise that these passages were penned in a long letter by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru to Mahatma Gandhi in January 1928. Soon after, at the end of 1929, Pandit Nehru was made the President of the Indian National Congress. The letter however was not made public, though Gandhiji offered to share it with the people at large, by publishing it in *Young India*, his weekly journal, or publish it in some revised form agreeable to Pandit Nehru. But Pandit Nehru reluctant about any such thing being publicly shared, sent a letter to Gandhiji about it, and Gandhiji in reply told him through a telegram "have no desire publish anything from you." <sup>49</sup> Nearly 18 years after, a similar situation arose— a major clash of views on what India was to be like after independence—and again Pandit Nehru did not wish Gandhiji to communicate Nehru's views to the larger public.

This was perhaps natural. None of the westernised— the black Englishmen, and they must have been a few hundred thousands by 1945— had any wish at all to face India's people in such a straight forward manner. Even the most sophisticated and patriotic among them, ie Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru seems to have got frightened at any open country-wide discussions on the issue of the shape of India's freedom, the structures of governance and the manner of reconstruction. He was still for the western type of planning, modelling, etc, and in this period became much closer to men like Colonel Albert Mayer of the USA, an architect by

profession, but initiator of the Uttar Pradesh Etawah pilot development programme. This a few years later led to the enunciation and structuring of the community development programme in 1952, but directed by Delhi. From his letters to and about Mr. Mayer, it appears as if Pandit Nehru felt that Mr. Mayer knew more about the need of Indian villages than Mahatma Gandhi.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru being given to altogether contrary aims and views, why Gandhiji did not press for a public discussion with Pandit Nehru and with those whom he represented— largely the westernised elite and perhaps most of the administrators and military officers— has remained till now an unsolved enigma. It is said that he was too dear to Gandhiji, for Gandhiji to hurt him in public, or he was considered to represent a large section of the educated youth of India. The main reason, perhaps, was that as Gandhiji had always stood for a unified platform of all Indian opinions, and the westernised seemed to him more vocal, controlling opinions as well as private and state resources and institutions, and as they or their representatives acted as his spokesmen in communications with the British authority, and world opinion, he did not at any cost wish them to split from the national platform and go over to the British.

Mahatma Gandhi seemed to be certain that after independence he, or the people of India, would be able to make all such persons give up their alien positions and engage themselves in Indian solutions to India's problems. But it seems that he underestimated the pressures of world forces on India and especially on the westernised in India. As mentioned earlier President Roosevelt of the USA wished India to remain in the western orbit. Others may have had their own designs. But without Mahatma Gandhi, his followers, and the most educated and capable of them in matters of public life, wholly lost their nerve, and were swept hither and thither by Western or Marxist tides. The people of India, deliberately made to return to their private

lives, had practically no way of putting pressure on them. It seems, that all of us, even Gandhiji, had underestimated the pressures which the present-day world forces could put on us and deflect us from our path. If we had reflected on the nature of world politics and on the unlimited ambitions of the powerful we could have devised ways and means to repulse or at least check such pressures. But we seem to have done no such thing possibly because we had become unacquainted with matters political for at least two centuries.

Such a situation of split had existed in the Indian national movement several times: in 1923-25 at the time of the Birkenhead proposals for a sort of dominion status which he was discussing with Sri C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru, and which Mahatma Gandhi seems to have torpedoed; in 1942 when the Russians had joined the great European war on the side of Britain, France, USA, and some others and which made the so called progressives in the Congress feel that they should join the war on the side of Britain and Russia, and which again Gandhiji sidelined; and lastly during 1945-46 when the negotiations for independence had actually started. There was a time in mid-June 1946 when the negotiations between Indians and the British seemed to be breaking down. The British policy-makers in London then had suggested that in the last eventuality the British should immediately quit Hindu India—ie. India south of the Vindhyas, concentrating British forces in the west and the east (ie the Punjab and the Bengal ) and watch what happened. But for whatever reasons the break in the talks was avoided and we moved towards the partition of India, and instead of full freedom to immediately starting the reshaping of India's polity, we were offered and we accepted what the British termed "India : The Transfer of Power", ie, that we kept the status-quo intact, and practically everything, for the time being at least was left as it was. Perhaps, the only department of the Indian state which had to disappear was the 1813-created Ecclesiastical

department, with its archbishop, numerous bishops, and a large network of Anglican churches, and a dispenser of financial and other support to other Christian denominations. However the abolition of the Ecclesiastical department does not seem to have led to any hard time for christian institutions, but contrarily led to a gradual new upsurge in them.

Such upsurge by itself need not have caused any concern or fear amongst the Indian people, but this upsurge became a handmaiden of European and American Christianity, and it began to transform the Christian community not into devout, but into black christian Englishmen, or Americans, or Germans, Scandanavians and similar others. Thus the black (Hindu) Englishmen got a new ally. One who perhaps could be asked to face any unpleasant music but would be supported and backed by the Indian black Englishmen. This is exactly what was also happening in the black Englishmen's loud but empty support to the musalmans of India hitherto.

The task, therefore, is that we try to get rid of these images imposed on us by Britain, throw them away as soon as possible, and destroy them effectively. When that can be done we need to create newer healthier images of India and transform them into reality. Once that begins to happen it would assure our people that there is equity and fair-play in India for all; that all sections have a proper say and participation in the reconstruction and management of the respective localities, regions and of the nation as a whole. If this were to happen most of our black Englishmen whether Hindu, Musalman, Christian, or any other may without much reservation join the Indian mainstream. We would then finally get rid of our bad-dream, the 200 hundred years of British domination of India and the demoralisation it created. We can then send back to them the gifts we have received from them during the period. Lord Willingdon, then Governor of Bombay,

had told Gandhiji in 1915, that his people (Indians) accept anything that is offered to them. That they do not know how to say that they did not require it. Gandhiji is said to have been very hurt by these observations as he would have realised their significance. It is time that we learnt a lesson in these matters, and returning British and Western gifts would be a right beginning.

### **References:**

1. James Mill: reproduced in this work, Chapter IV.
2. Current Anthropology, Vol. 7, No. 4, Oct. 1966, pp 395-449, N. F. Dobyns, "Estimating Aboriginal American Population."
3. John Boswell: *The Kindness of Strangers*, the abandonment of children in western Europe from late antiquity to the renaissance; Vintage Books, New York, 1990; the Rousseau quote is on p. 3. There are references to this practice in many other works also.
- 3a. Names of archives visited in Britain are
  1. India Office Library and Records
  2. British Museum (Printed Books, Newspapers, European MSS)
  3. Public Record Office, London
  4. Royal Society, London
  5. Royal Society of Arts, London
  6. British Museum of Natural History
  7. Scottish Record Office
  8. Archives Edinburgh University
  9. National Library of Scotland
  10. National Library of Wales
  11. Bodlein, Oxford
  12. Archives, University of Nottingham
  13. John Rylands Library, Manchester
  14. Department of Paleography and Diplomatic, Durham
  15. School of Oriental Studies (?), Durham
  16. Archives, Leeds Public Library
  17. Archives, Leeds University

18. Archives, Public Library, Sheffield

19. County Archives at:

19) Bedford, 20) Lincoln, 21) Shrewsbury, 22) Taunton,

23) Newcastle on Tyne, 24) North Allerton.

4. *Triage* is an old expression used for separating sheep for culling etc. During the last few decades it is being used in relation to human beings also. The term divides them into three groups, *firstly*, those who can manage on their own (implying, perhaps, the people of most of Europe and North America); *secondly*, those who cannot much be helped (and therefore implying that they may be allowed, or even assisted in becoming extinct); and *thirdly*, those who can be saved with moderate assistance. It was rumoured in the late 1970s that the Indian Planning Commission had a perspective planning paper, some 30-40 years ago, which stated that some 20% of India's people could not be helped at all. With the turn of events in the last 20 years or so, it looks very likely that most of the people of south and south-east Asia, of most parts of Africa and of other deprived and impoverished areas appear expendable to those who have come to manage the affairs of the present-day world. See also various recent Encyclopaedias; also GAIL W. Finsterbusch: *Man and Earth: Their changing relationship*, BOBBS-MERRILL, Indianapolis, 1977
5. B.L.: Warren Hastings Papers, Add Ms 29207, ff. 38r-40r; 96r. Warren Hastings, around early 1773, stated, " The resumption of the Chaukeeran Zemeen, or lands allotted to the tannadars and pykes for their service in guarding the villages and larger districts against robbers. Many of the people thus deprived of their livelihood have themselves turned decoits." In the 1880s the Viceroy Dufferin while explaining, in the context of Burma, the term decoit to his father equated them with freedom-fighters.
6. B.L. (No. 14779.a.14) Letter of the Emperor Aurangzebe to his son, his grandson, etc, translated by J. Earles, Calcutta, 1788. 130 pp; in his letter to his grandson Aurangzebe stated, that the exchequer receipts of Jahangir were Rs. 60,00,000 and the expenditure of his government was Rs. 1,50,00,000. He met the deficit by using the wealth Akbar had left. Shahjehan brought Rs. 1,50,00,000 into the exchequer and reduced the expenditure to Rs. 1,00,00,000.
7. Personal communication , sometime in 1993, from Madame Uzramma of Hyderabad.

8. W. Foster (ed): *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India 1615-1619*, 1926; pp li, 475-480.
9. B.L.: Fifth Report of the British House of Commons on India, 1812; also proceedings of the Bengal Board of Revenue, 1790, 1792 in IOL : p 52-23, pp 370-81; p/52-47, pp 601-18.
10. IOL : Factory Records: G/6/4, Proceedings of Burdwan Council, 24.5.1775, Mr. Higginson on Beerbhoom. He said that the rent which the cultivators had to pay earlier was 4-6 annas per bigha, while the British began charging 12 annas to a rupee and a half. According to Thomas Munro, "the cultivator though he receives 45 percent in the division of the crop, gets in reality only 36 percent of what it ought to have been (Anantpur, 25.8.1805)".
11. TNSA: Madras Board of Revenue on irrigated lands out of cultivation due to excessive revenue, Madras Revenue Consultations, 4.7.1854, pp 3854-4490; Minutes of Governor Harris, "There are portions of lands of this presidency and those some of the richest and finest soils which have been thrown out of cultivation in consequence of the impossibility of paying the excessive assessment charged on them, that in consequence improvement is at a stand still and the population in actual want of the necessaries of life."
12. TNSA: Madras Public Consultations, Aug 1854 onwards. Amongst others reports on the practice of torture in Madras Presidency; also Report on the practice of torture, House of Commons Papers.
13. Nottingham University: Bentinck Papers, Pwjb 722: Bentinck to Castlereagh, President Board of Commissioners for the affairs of India, 18.10.1804.
14. TNSA: Minute of the Madras Board of Revenue, 5.1.1818, para288. Later London ordered that this and certain other paras should be expunged from the minute.
15. Leeds Public Libraries Archives: Lord Canning Papers: military secretary's papers on miscellaneous subjects: No. 289, "A few suggestions" by Major G.T. Haly.
16. B.L.: Fifth Report.

17. National Library of Scotland MS 546; and Scottish Record Office : GD 51/3.617/1-5 Prof. Machnochie's Memorandum, Correspondence, etc. regarding India.
18. National Library of Scotland: Minto Papers, M 191, Capt. Wilford to Lord Minto. 31.3.1813
19. James Mill, reproduced here in chapter IV.
20. The information in this and the following section, is based on a vast collection of information on rural India as it was, and how it began to alter and decay, in the revenue records of Bengal, Madras, U. P., and other areas, from around 1760-1830. Especial detailed collection is of material written in English pertaining to a survey of around 2,200 localities in the district of Chengalpattu during the period of 1767-1774. This material is held in the Tamil Nadu State Archives in Madras. Many more details relating to a number of these localities are still available on palm leaf manuscripts now kept at the Tamil University at Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu. A detailed analysis of this data is presently being done by *Centre for Policy Studies*, Chennai.
21. B.L.: Add Ms 29086, 29087, 29088 have the report on Amin Accounts, details of Bazee Zameen and Chakram assignments, 1778.
22. TNSA: Tamil University: Chengalpattu data; also importantly Alexander Dalrymple: *A short Account of the Gentoor Mode of Collecting the Revenues on the Coast of Coromandal*, London 1783.
23. Chengalpattu data, as describe at 20.
24. CWMG (Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi), volume 85: pp. 32-34 titled " Independence". Gandhiji spells out here his basic meaning of Oceanic Circle polity.
25. Dharampal: *The Beautiful Tree: Indigenous Indian Education in the Eighteenth Century*, Biblia Impex, 1983. Minute of Madras Presidency Governor Sir Thomas Munro, 10.3.1826, p. 248.
26. *ibid.* pp. 37-40, 248.
27. *ibid.* pp. 20-23.

28. *ibid.* pp. 315-319.
29. *ibid.* pp. 27-32.
30. PPST Bulletin, Madras, No. 7, June 1984; review of *The Beautiful Tree*, by M. D. Srinivas, and G.S.R. Krishnan, pp. 20-63; subject-wise numbers of scholars in higher learning on pp. 49-50.
31. Navadveep was one of the numerous ancient centre of higher learning, situated in Bengal. It was still functioning till the end of the 18th century. Sir William Jones called it as his third university. There was much writing about it in the 1790's in Britain.
32. *The Beautiful Tree*: letter from Collector of Bellary, 17 8 1823, pp. 178-189; quotation from pp. 182-83, para 18.
33. Francis Buchanan : A journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar, 3 Vols, London 1807, Vol. I, pp. 322-3.
34. B.L.: House of Commons Papers, 1831-1832, Vol. XIV, evidence of Mr. James Mill.
35. Dharampal: *Civil Disobedience and Indian Tradition*, with some early nineteenth century documents, Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi, 1971; pp. 44-45, report of Collector, Banaras, dated 28 12 1811 on the people allowing their properties to be sequestered for realising the tax for " they could not resist but they would not concur".
36. CWMG, Vol. X , *Hind Swaraj*, pp 6-68; the passage on non-cooperation is on p. 51.
37. Solvyns, *Les Hindous*, 4 Vols; also others.
38. Dharampal: *Indian Science and Technology in the Eighteenth Century* : some contemporary European accounts, Impex India, Delhi, 1971; xlix-liv, 49-54, 215-219, 220-248, 249-263.
39. *ibid.* pp. xlviii-xlix, 169-173
40. *Harshacharitra*: the work in two different places mentions the use of ice to bring down the very high fever which the king had. This

was in Kannauj far away from the Himalaya only where snow could have been available.

41. L.O.L.: MSS Eur F/95/1 ; some remarks on the western side of the river Hoogly, by Col. Kydd, ff 81r; also B.L.: Add Ms 33979, 33980, 35262; Dr. H. Scott to Sir Joseph Banks.
42. Indian Science and Technology : pp. xliii-xliv, 270; more importantly the report by Dr.J. C. Carpue, FRS: An account of two successful operations for restoring a lost nose from the integuments of the forehead, London, 1816, especially pages 36-63.
43. *ibid*, pp. xliv-xlvii, 141-142, 143-163.
44. *ibid*, xlvii-xlviii, 179-209, 210-214.
45. Burlington Magazine, London, Indian Period of European Furniture by Vilhelm Slomann, vol. lxxv, Sept. 1934, pp. 113-126; Oct. 1934, 157-171; Nov. 1934, 201-214; Dec 1934, 273-279, 296 (criticism); vol. lxxvi, Jan. 1935, pp. 21-26 (rejoinder by Slomann); Feb. 1935, 94-95 (criticism adding that we will "discuss the matter further elsewhere").
- 45a Paul Bairoch: International Economic levles from 1750 to 1980, in the Journal of European Economic History, Vol 11, No. 1, spring 1982, pp. 269-333, Table of Manufacturing production on p. 275; also Economist, London.
46. T. B. Macaulay , 1843, given in chapter V.
47. Sushila Nayyar: *Bapu Ki Karavas Kahani* in Hindi, Sasta Sahitya Mandal Prakashan, Delhi 1950.
48. CWMG: vol. 35, appendix X, pp 540-544, J. Nehru to Mahatma Gandhi, Jan. 11, 1928.
49. *ibid*, p. 546.

## Chapter 1

### THE BRITISH DEBATE ON CHRISTIANISATION OF INDIA 1813

The moral and spiritual state of the people of India was discussed, as if threadbare, by the British House of Commons in June-July 1813.<sup>1</sup> It can be said that this debate has been the high point of British interest in India during nearly 200 years of the British-India encounter. Despite some differing views, as articulated by quite a few members of the British parliament, the overall picture which emerged from this debate was of the Indian people being “deeply sunk, and by their religious superstitions fast bound, in the lowest depths of moral, and social wretchedness and degradation?”<sup>2</sup>; Further, it was said that “their minds are totally uncultivated”<sup>3</sup>; That “of the duties of morality they have no idea”<sup>4</sup>; That “they possess a great degree of that cunning which so generally accompanies depravity of heart”<sup>5</sup>; that “they are indolent and grossly sensual”,<sup>6</sup> that they are “cruel and cowardly, insolent and abject”,<sup>7</sup> that “they have superstitions without a sense of religion”<sup>8</sup> and that “in short, they have all the vices of savage life” but “without any of its virtues”<sup>9</sup>. The long debate thus was not so much for the Christianisation of India as to paint India's past and its people in the darkest possible hues.

## II

The chief vocal architect of this debate was Mr. William Wilberforce, later known as “Father of the Victorians”, who in a major way shaped British opinion about the world, especially

about the non-christian world, and British opinion about Britain itself and its policeman's role in the world.

Countering the claimed "probity and superior morality of the natives of India" Mr. Wilberforce came out against such an impression not only with the authority of Robert Orme, Holwell, Luke Scrafton (c.1760), Robert Clive, Verelest (c.1760), John Shore (c.1790), John Macpherson (c. 1780) Cornwallis, James Mackintosh (c. 1800), the judges of the British Indian Courts but also of Bernier and Tamerlane.<sup>10</sup>

According to Orme Indians were a "tricking, deceitful people in all their dealings", according to Holwell they were "utter strangers to the idea of common faith and honesty" and were "dangerous and wicked", Robert Clive found them without any "attachment to any obligation", John Shore characterised them without any "pretensions to humanity" and believing in "imposture, fraud and deception" as "meritorious accomplishments". Mr. Wilberforce stated that Cornwallis, "never reposed any trust in any one of them, nor placed a single individual, either Hindoo or Mohammedan, about his person, above the rank of a menial servant". For Shore, "to lie, steal, plunder, ravish, or murder, are not deemed sufficient crimes to merit expulsion from society" and in India, "The nation is wholly devoid of virtue".<sup>11</sup> Summing up this general characterisation. Mr. Wilberforce said, "upon the whole, we cannot help recognizing in the people of Hindustan a race of men lamentably degenerate and base, retaining but a feeble sense of moral obligation; obstinate in the disregard of what they know to be right; governed by malevolent and licentious passions, strongly exemplifying the effects produced on society by great and general corruption of manners; sunk in misery by their vices, in a country peculiarly calculated by its natural advantages to promote the happiness of its inhabitants".<sup>12</sup>

Besides touching on the general unhappy state of India's

moral wretchedness Mr. Wilberforce dwelt in this debate (he spoke at the beginning and also at the end) on several 'alleged' specific aspects of the Indian condition, including female infanticide,<sup>13</sup> the practice of Sati (10,000 immolations a year in Bengal alone according to him),<sup>14</sup> of women being spoken of "in the most disparaging and even contemptuous terms", and of the practice of polygamy,<sup>15</sup> 1,00,000 persons a year killing themselves at the celebrations at the temple of Jagannath at Puri.<sup>16</sup> of "indecent exhibitions" at religious places, people "dancing and making indecent gestures", of "theatrical or pantomimical entertainment of the most shockingly indecent kind",<sup>17</sup> of "a material alliance between obscenity and cruelty",<sup>18</sup> and of "the various obscene and bloody rites of [Hindu] idolatrous ceremonies, with all their unutterable abominations".<sup>19</sup> According to Mr. Wilberforce, Hindu "divinities are absolute monsters of lust, injustice, wickedness and cruelty. In short, their religious system is one grand abomination".<sup>20</sup> It may be mentioned here that subsequent enquiries on the practice of Sati in India estimated the number of widow immolations at about 500-800 a year,<sup>21</sup> and it was stated by British officials administering the Puri area around 1820 that they had not known of any people killing themselves at Puri for the previous ten years or more<sup>22</sup>.

### III

Several members of the British House of Commons disagreed with Mr. Wilberforce. Sir Henry Montgomery, a British officer in India for 20 years, stated that the commitment for crimes in London alone were 150-200 times of those in the Deccan where he had served, and felt that his co-members of the House of Commons could be engaged far better if they only attended "to the number of loose women that they would see in the streets" of London every night.<sup>23</sup> Mr. P. Moore contended "that there was

not a chaster or more meritorious set of men than the inhabitants of India.”<sup>24</sup> Mr. Lushington stated “it was asserted that the literature in India was destitute of morality”, but he “had never found it so; on the contrary, the books which he had read in that country were perhaps too much taken up with lessons of morality. Moral sentences intervened so often, even in their books of amusement”.<sup>25</sup>

“With respect to the charge made against the Hindoos, of the infidelity of the sexes towards each other”, Mr. Lushington believed “their moral sentiments with respect to the conduct of women, were as good as ours, and their general practice, better”. Mr. Lushington believed that stealing and murder were quite uncommon in India and felt “that their vices are the fault of their government, not of their religion”. He added, “if we were placed in the same situation, I doubt, whether we should be better”.<sup>26</sup> Mr. Forbes and several other members felt that the clause on “propagation of Christianity in India” was fraught with much danger as the Indians would take it as an interference with their religion and customs.<sup>27</sup> Sir T. Sutton felt it would “irritate and alarm the feelings of the people of India” and was of the view that “if too open and avowed efforts were made to propagate Christianity” the natives of India might say, “you have taken from us our territories, you have seized upon our revenues; and not content with taking our country from us, you wish to deprive us of our religion. But our religion you shall not take from us”.<sup>28</sup>

Mr. Marsh, who spoke at nearly as much length<sup>29</sup> as Mr. Wilberforce did, when presenting the case for the propagation of Christianity in India, was wholly opposed to the clause. He himself felt that the stability and maintenance of British rule in India rather required “a solemn declaration, that the inviolability of the religion of the natives ought to be the basis of whatever political system it may be expedient to provide for them”.<sup>30</sup> He added that, “Neither reason nor history tells us, that the adoption of a new religion is a

necessary consequence of the old",<sup>31</sup> and thought that Indian customs and religion "have been the very foundation of your empire in India".<sup>32</sup> Mr. Marsh stated that "The religion of the Druids was extirpated from this island [Britain] by the ancient Romans, because, its institutions were too intractable and unyielding, to give them quiet possession of their conquest".<sup>33</sup> But he argued that "The superstitions of the Druids inspired a spirit of resistance to the civil and military yoke of their conquerors" while on the other hand "that of the Hindoos makes them the passive, unresisting subject of theirs".<sup>34</sup>

#### IV

Mr. Wilberforce obviously could not let such arguments against the state-approved propagation of Christianity in India pass. To him "the question was now put on its true basis", and was clearly "no other than this, whether, as Christianity is the religion of the British empire in Europe, the religion of Brahma and Vishnoo is not to be the acknowledged system of our Asiatic dominions".<sup>35</sup>

Obviously any defence of Indian religion and customs incensed Mr. William Wilberforce and he asked "Is it in a British House of Commons, above all other places, where such a doctrine as this [defending Indian religion and manners] is maintained? Are we so little sensible of the value of the free constitution and religious liberty which we enjoy, and so little thankful for them, as to tolerate such propositions? No sir, I trust we shall be protected by our feelings, no less than by our understandings, against being carried away by any such delusions. No Sir, the common sense of mankind, in this country at least, is not to be so outraged, and, in truth, we find the morals and manners of the natives of India just as we might have been led to expect from a knowledge of the

dark and degrading superstitions, as well as of the political bondage, under which they have been so long bowed down".<sup>36</sup>

## V

The view that the people of India could be enlightened, moral and happy was wholly inconceivable to Mr. Wilberforce and the increasing and vocal following he had. It is not as if he would have seriously disputed that a large proportion of the Indian people were literate, most of them economically well off, and all had an enjoyable and aesthetic life. In fact having such a life without a knowledge and faith in Christianity was what went against them. This only proved that such people were indeed under the spell of evil. In a way Mr. Wilberforce was engaging in a perennial argument used by peddlers of new ideologies, whether religious or secular. It has been used in our day by European rationalism, capitalism and Marxism against their adversaries, and it may be assumed was employed by Christianity and Islam from the time of their origin onwards against the non-Christian, non-Islamic world. In the early and middle 19th century, after its use by William Wilberforce, such argument was employed by James Mill, T.B. Macaulay, Karl Marx, to name the more well-known, in running down Indian civilization. There would be numerous other instances, worldwide, of the use of this argument.

The argument as put forth by Mr. Wilberforce was, "If the principles and morals of our East Indian fellow-subjects were indeed so admirable, if they were better than our own, it would be a fact that would belie the experience of all other times and countries. When was there ever yet a nation on which the light of Christianity never shone, which was not found in a state of the grossest moral darkness, debased by principles and practice and manners the most flagitious and cruel? Is not this true of all the

most polished nations of antiquity [i.e. Greece and Rome]? Did not more than one practice prevail among them, sanctioned often by the wisest and best among them, which in all Christian countries would now be punished as a capital Crime? But, sir, have not moral causes their sure and infallible effects? Is it not notorious that the nations of India have, from the very earliest times, groaned under the double yoke of political and religious despotism? And can it then be maintained, that these must not have produced a proportionate degradation of their moral character?"<sup>37</sup>

## VI

It had taken William Wilberforce twenty years and more to reach the historic 1813 House of Commons debate on the state-promoted propagation of Christianity in India. He had brought a similar motion 20 years earlier, in 1793, before the House of Commons. But it was bypassed at that time. In between he had organized a powerful evangelical movement in Britain and its colonial possessions, and encouraged the presentation of innumerable petitions from different parts of Britain asking the House of Commons to approve and legislate on the propagation of Christianity in the vast Indian possessions of Great Britain. But knowing his country, and the hesitancy of the British Government of the day on this clause, only three days before the beginning of the debate he had on June 19, 1813, written to another influential member of the British parliament seeking his help and support for the Christianisation clause. In this letter he had written to Mr. Whitbread, "I see symptoms of shrinking in some whom I deemed our friends which renders it the more necessary to call to our aid all who are really of that number", and added, "you know the importance of the question".<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps, the previous government of Prime Minister Percival, who was assassinated and succeeded by Lord Liverpool in 1812, was much more inclined to favour the Christianisation Clause. Writing to the President of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India on 30th December 1811 (the Board was set up by parliamentary statute in 1784 and every detail of policy and instruction to the subordinate British governors in India had to have the full approval and detailed clearance of this Board from 1784 to 1858), Percival had said, "I wish to know a little more of the Jagannath sacrifices, before I can satisfy myself that we are not actually instrumental in the human sacrifices which are there celebrated. As I understand the fact from Dr. Buchanan's representation, which may be exaggerated, but I think must, to a very considerable degree, be correct, the great ceremony consists in the procession of the Jagannath Car and that it is part of the worship of this Idol, for some of its devoted worshippers to precipitate themselves under the wheels of this car and absolutely to be crushed to death before his admiring worshippers, and in the sight also of the civil and military magistrates who superintend these ceremonies for the purpose of preserving the peace. The Revenue in question also which is collected by our officers, defrays the expense of preserving and repairing this horrid car, and of moving it in its bloody progress. I say nothing of all its indecent emblems and the shocking immoralities which it excites and encourages, though possibly much more might be said on them. I am on the point of the human sacrifices, and I really feel so strongly upon the national guilts which I conceive to be incurred by these proceedings, if I am rightly informed upon them, that I most anxiously wish that you enable me to procure as accurate information upon these facts as you can. My own impression, as at present informed, being that unless the procession of this Idol could be so regulated as to prevent these sacrifices of human

beings, there are no considerations of policy whatever, that can justify us, while we have the power of the state in our hands, in abstaining from directing at whatever extremity, the discontinuance of such murderous rites, most especially when we have a clear power of preventing the ceremony". Even Percival however was not averse to an increase of the state taxes on pilgrims, like the ones at Jagannath Puri, if it implied a net increase to general revenues. Earlier on in this long letter he expressed the view that if the British government in India "actually derives revenue from the observances of idolatry, and the increase of the idolatry would furnish an increase of such revenue and a diminution of it, a loss - It must become an object if not a duty, with such revenue servants of the Company as have any superintendency over the collection of that revenue, to keep alive and countenance the extension, rather than rejoice and to connive at the gradual decay of such idolatry". He felt that interference in the religious practices and customs of India should be according to each specific case and that the British should not "attempt, beforehand, to describe in what cases they would authorise and recommend similar interference in future".<sup>39</sup>

One may assume that Mr. Wilberforce had contacted many others, as he did Mr. Whitbread, and that such lobbying had a major impact on the British government. Starting the discussion on this clause on June 22, 1813, Lord Castlereagh, the government spokesman, was somewhat on the defensive about it and said that the clause did not imply "an unrestrained and unrestricted resort of persons, with religious views" especially as such unrestrained admission would not be, "consonant with the tranquility, and security of British dominion in India". He hoped that the clause "would be discussed discreetly and temperately".

<sup>40</sup> Mr. Wilberforce's lobbying and oratory however won the day and 89 voted for the clause and only 36 against it.<sup>41</sup> Though the voting somewhat went down, it was 54 votes for 32 against on

July 1.<sup>42</sup> The discussion remained quite trenchant and the christianisation tide was fully on. At this time Mr. Whitbread came out openly for the clause and asked, "why was this Christian country to abjure its doctrines in India" and thought "that the dangers [of christianisation] had been exaggerated and the Hindoo character mistaken by the enemies of this clause".<sup>43</sup>

But as may be noticed while the purpose and programme was of Christianisation, by persuasion or by coercive means, the clause itself camouflaged this programme by the term "that such measures ought to be adopted, as may tend to the introduction among them of useful knowledge, and of religious and moral improvement".<sup>44</sup> It is in the context of this wording that the post-1850 British reports on India were stated to be on India's "material and moral improvement".

## VII

The clause was soon made into policy and led to the formation of Ecclesiastical Departments at the centres of British governance in India at Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Allahabad and in due course at subsequently created provincial capitals. The Ecclesiastical Departments were at par with the earlier military, Revenue, or Political Departments and continued to exist till after the British left India in 1947. Their function was to financially and administratively look after the formally established (c. 1816 AD) Church of England establishments in India and to facilitate the admission and expansion of innumerable Christian missions and individual missionaries from various Christian denominations not only from Britain but also from Europe and the USA. The term 'religious neutrality' used thereafter did not imply any abstaining from support to the propagation of Christianity or even supporting

innumerable Christian establishments financially and morally but rather the British Indian state being a sort of an appeal court, and more often indifferent even hostile, in relation to non-Christian beliefs and religions which had existed in India from long before British rule.

The propagation of Christianity over conquered India, as stated in the 1813 debate, and elsewhere earlier and later, was no doubt seen as a duty for a Christian state like Britain. In fact even today it would be treated as such not only by Britain, which even formally continues to be a Christian state, but also by most sections of opinion in the USA and Europe.

However, while the issue of Christianising India was the ostensible purpose of this debate, the main consequence and objective of it was the presenting of India, its people and culture in the way narrated above. Their continued subjugation required such a public spectacle and the debate gave high-level legitimacy and sanction to a multipronged attack on India, its civilization and its past and to the British extortions, plunder, and to the deliberate smashing of Indian institutions, and disorienting the mind of the Indian elite who had by stages begun to collaborate with British rule, and become the instruments of silencing and tormenting the people of India. It can perhaps be inferred that the views of Mr. James Mill (1817) and Mr. T. B. Macaulay (1835, 1843), though seemingly having somewhat different aims, were a natural sequence to the presentation of India by Mr. William Wilberforce and his friends, and concurred in, then and later by countless other British men and women. What Mr. Wilberforce said in 1813 has become the accepted image of the Indian people and has been presented time and again over the past 185 years.

## **Footnotes**

1. This debate was held over five sittings on June 22, June 28, July 1, July 2, and July 12 and reported in the Hansard of 1813 on cols. 827-873, 923-956, 1017-1082, 1095-1100, and 1184-1196. As the two speeches of Mr. Wilberforce (cols. 831-872, 1051-1079) and of Mr. Marsh (cols. 1013-1051) had been published separately at the time, these were reported more fully but perhaps were not a verbatim record. The other speeches were seemingly in summary form. The debate was preceded by the introduction of the India Charter Bill 1813, of which clause 13 related to the propagation of Christianity in India, on June 3, 1813 (cols 555-563). In the previous 20 years or more numerous petitions asking for facilities and statutory provisions for the propagation of Christianity had been presented to the British Parliament and to various other British authorities. Some of the petitions presented immediately before this debate are given in Hansard on May 13, 1813 (col. 105-106), May 18, 1813 (col. 238-239) and June 3, 1813 (col 528).
2. Hansard, 22,6,1813, col.834
3. *ibid*, col.848
4. *ibid*, col.848
5. *ibid*, col.848
6. *ibid*, col.848
7. *ibid*, col.848
8. *ibid*, col.848
9. *ibid*, col.848
10. *ibid*, col.842-850
11. *ibid*, col.843-845
12. *ibid*, col.845
13. *ibid*, col.858
14. *ibid*, col.859
15. *ibid*, col.858
16. *ibid*, col.858

17.     ibid, col.859
18.     ibid, col.858
19.     ibid, col.862
20.     ibid, col.864
21.     British Parliamentary Papers.
22.     Commissioner of the Puri region to Bengal Government.
23.     Hansard, 22.6.1813, col.829-30
24.     ibid, col.872
25.     Hansard, 23.6.1813, col.945
26.     ibid, col.946-947
27.     Hansard, 22.6.1813, col.872
28.     Hansard, 1.7.1813, col.1017-18
29.     Hansard, 1.7.1813, col.1013-1051
30.     ibid, col.1027
31.     ibid, col.1029
32.     ibid, col.1029
33.     ibid, col.1034
34.     ibid, col.1035
35.     Hansard, 1.7.1813, col.1079
36.     Hansard, 22.6.1813, col.841
37.     ibid, col.840-841
38.     County Record Office, Bedford (UK): Whitbread papers:  
W 1/5116, W. Wilberforce to Mr. Whitbread, June 19, 1813.
39.     John Rylands library, Manchester, Eng MS 684/1260/A-O Percival  
to Melville 30.12.1811.
40.     Hansard, 22.6.1813, col.827-828.
41.     ibid, col.873.
42.     Hansard, July, 1813, Col, 1082.
43.     ibid, Col, 1081.
44.     Hansard, 3.6.1813, Col, 562-3, clause 13.

## Chapter 2

### **HOUSE OF COMMONS BRITISH PARLIAMENT DECIDES ON CHRISTIANISATION OF INDIA**

#### **SPEECHES OF WILLIAM WILBERFORCE \***

**JUNE 22, 1813**

Mr. Wilberforce rose and spoke as follows :

I have listened with no little pleasure to the hon. gentleman, who, for the first time, has been just delivering his sentiments; and I cordially congratulate him on the manifestation of talents and principles which, I trust, will render him a valuable accession to this House, and to his country ; but before I proceed to the more direct discussion of the question before us, he will allow me to express my dissent from his opinion, that it might be advisable to employ our regular clergy as missionaries. It was a proposition, indeed, which naturally recommended itself to the mind of any one, who, like my hon. friend and myself, being attached, on principle, to the church of England, and being deeply impressed with a sense of the blessings which we ourselves derive from it, are of course desirous of communicating the same blessings to others of our fellow subjects.

I grant that it is much to be regretted, and among the Roman Catholics it has been the reproach of the Protestant churches, that they have taken so little interest in conversion of the

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\* Taken from Hansard: June 22. 1813, Columns 831-872; (From the Original Edition, printed for J. Hatchard, Piccadilly.)

heathen nations; and I may take this opportunity of declaring it as my opinion, that it is much to be regretted, that our excellent church establishment contains within itself no means of providing fit agents for the important work of preaching Christianity to the heathen. Nor is this a new opinion : on the contrary, I had the honour of stating it many years ago to two venerable and most respected prelates, the late archbishop of Canterbury and the late bishop of London ; and they expressed themselves favourably of a proposition which I submitted to their consideration, that there should be a distinct ordination for missionaries, which should empower them to perform the offices of the church in foreign countries, but should not render them capable of holding church preferments, or even of officiating as clergymen in this kingdom. It is obvious, that the qualifications required in those who discharge the duties of the ministerial office in this highly civilized community, where Christianity also is the established religion of the land, are very different from those for which we ought chiefly to look, in men whose office it will be to preach the Gospel to the heathen nations, which they will find unacquainted with the first principles of religion and morality ; from the qualifications which we should require in instructors who will probably be cast among barbarians, and, besides having to encounter the grossest ignorance and its attendant vices, will also have to endure great bodily hardships and privations. But this is not the time for enlarging farther on this point, or on the suggestion of my hon. friend. It will not, I know, escape him, passing over other objections to the measure, that it necessarily implies, that the missionaries who are to officiate in India, are to be expressly commissioned and employed by the state, or by the East India Company ; whereas, I am persuaded, we shall all concur in thinking, that it ought to be left to the spontaneous benevolence and zeal of individual Christians, controuled of course by the discretion of government, to engage

in the work of preaching the Gospel to the natives in our Indian territories ; and that the missionaries should be clearly understood to be armed with no authority, furnished with no commission, from the governing power of the country.

Allow me, Sir, before we proceed farther, to endeavour to do away a misconception of the thirteenth Resolution, which appears generally to prevail, that the only object it has in view is, to secure, to such missionaries as the Board of Controul shall sanction, permission to go to India, and to remain there, so long as they shall continue to exercise the duties of their office in a peaceable and orderly manner. This undoubtedly is one object of the Resolution, but by no means the only, perhaps not the principal, one. I beg you to observe, that the very terms of the Resolution, expressly state, that “we are to enlighten and inform the minds of the subjects of our East Indian empire.” And after much reflection, I do not hesitate to declare, that, from enlightening and informing them, in other words, from education and instruction, from the diffusion of knowledge, from the progress of science, more especially from all these combined with the circulation of the Holy Scriptures in the native languages, I ultimately expect even more than from the direct labours of missionaries, properly so called.

**By enlightening the minds of the natives, we should root out their errors, without provoking their prejudices ; and it would be impossible that men of enlarged and instructed minds could continue enslaved by such a monstrous system of follies and superstitions as that under the yoke of which the natives of Hindostan now groan. They would, in short, become Christians, if I may so express myself, without knowing it.\***

Before I enter further into the argument, more especially

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\* Emphasis, wherever its occurs, has been added by the Compiler.

after what we have lately heard from several of my opponents, it is due to myself, as well as respectful to the House, to state, that though I cannot, like them, speak of India from my own personal observation, yet that I do not presume to address them on this important question, without having studied it with the most strenuous and persevering diligence. That my attention has been long directed to the subject, will indeed sufficiently appear, when I remind the House, that I had the honour, in 1793, of moving the Resolution of late so often referred to, which declared it to be the duty of the legislature, to diffuse among our East Indian fellow-subjects the blessing of useful knowledge and moral improvement; a Resolution which, with little or no opposition, was repeatedly sanctioned by the approbation of the House : and I can truly declare, that I have never since lost sight of this great object, though various circumstances concurred in preventing my again bringing it before the House : above all, that of my being, for almost the whole of that period, engaged in the pursuit of an object of a kindred nature.

Before I enter into the argument, let me also clear away another misconception which has sometimes prevailed, by distinctly and most solemnly assuring the House, that, in the work of conversion, I abjure all ideas of compulsion ; I disclaim all use of the authority, nay, even of the influence, of government. I would trust altogether to the effects of reason and truth, relying much on the manifest tendency of the principles and precepts of Christianity to make men good and happy, and on their evident superiority in these respects, more especially when the minds of the natives shall become more enlarged and instructed than they are at present, over the monstrous and absurd superstitions of their native faith.

**And now, Sir, let me enter into the discussion, by assuring the House, that there never was a subject which better deserved the attention of a British parliament than**

that on which we are now deliberating. Immense regions, with a population amounting, as we are assured, to sixty millions of souls, have providentially come under our dominion. They are deeply sunk, and by their religious superstitions fast bound, in the lowest depths of moral and social wretchedness and degradation. Must we not then be prompted by every motive, and urged by every feeling that can influence the human heart, to endeavour to raise these wretched beings out of their present miserable condition, and above all to communicate to them those blessed truths which would not only improve their understandings and elevate their minds, but would, in ten thousand ways, promote their temporal well-being, and point out to them a sure path to everlasting happiness ?\*

But our opponents confidently assure us, that we may spare ourselves the pains ; for that the natives of Hindostan are so firmly, nay, so unalterably, attached to their own religious opinions and practices, however unreasonable they may appear to us, that their conversion is utterly impracticable.

I well know, Sir, and frankly acknowledge, the inveterate nature of the evils with which we have to contend ; that their religious system and customs have continued with little alteration, for perhaps thousands of years ; that they have diffused themselves so generally throughout all their institutions and habits, as to leaven, as it were, the whole mass both of their public and private lives : but, nevertheless, Sir, **I boldly affirm, that this position, that their attachment to their own institutions is so fixed that it cannot be overcome, is a gross error, abundantly falsified by much, and even by recent, experience\***. I beg the House to attend to this point the more carefully, because it serves as a general test by which to estimate the value of the opinions so confidently promulgated by the greater part of those gentlemen who have

spoken of Indian affairs, both in this House and out of it, from personal experience. This is a persuasion universally prevalent among them ; and if it can be disproved, as easily, as it will shortly I trust appear to you to be, it will follow, that those gentlemen, however respectable where their understandings have fair play, in point both of natural talents and acquired knowledge (and no man admits their claim to both more willingly than myself), are here under the influence of prejudice, and are not therefore entitled to the same degree of weight as if they were free from all undue bias.

And first, Sir, it might afford a strong presumption against the absolute invincibility of the religious principles and customs of the Hindoos, that great and beneficial reforms have been effected in various other most important instances in which their existing systems were, so far as we know, equally dear to them, and which were conceived to be equally unchangeable ; for even in these, their religion was more or less implicated, because as I before remarked, it has been most artfully diffused throughout all their other institutions.

In proof of this assertion, it may be sufficient to specify **that mighty change introduced about twenty years ago, by which the British government granted to all classes of landholders an hereditary property in their estates ; a privilege till then unknown in Asia : the rents to be paid to government, which, as sovereign of the country, was proprietor of the soil throughout all India, were equitably and unalterably settled ;\*** and I ought not to omit to state, that care was taken to secure to the inferior occupants, no less than to the great chieftains, the secure possession of their properties without any increase of their rents.

Again : the most important reforms have been introduced into the judicial system ; and in the military, even the most confirmed

religious principles and habits have in some particulars been quietly overcome, and have fallen into disuse, with little or no observation. Nay, the general spirit of our government, as it respects the natives, has for some time been such, as even that passionate lover of liberty, Sir William Jones, dared not to anticipate in the case of the natives in India ; whom with pain, he, but a few years before, had pronounced to be given up to an unmitigated and unalterable despotism.

But it is not only where their religion has been indirectly concerned, that it has appeared that their institutions are susceptible of the same changes which have taken place in every other country ; but also, in many instances in which religion has been directly in question. How else can we account for that immense number of Mahometans, estimated at from ten to fifteen millions, scattered over India, most of whom are supposed by the best judges to be converts from the Hindoo faith ? And let me remind you of the stern and persecuting spirit of Mahometanism, and of the increased difficulty which would be thereby occasioned ; since it is now an established truth, that persecution counteracts her own purpose and promotes the prevalence of the religion she would suppress.

Again : what shall we say of the whole nation of the Seiks [Sikhs], so numerous, as to be supposed able to raise 200,000 horse, who within a few centuries have forsaken the Hindoo faith, and freed themselves from its burthensome restrictions\* ?

The followers of Budha also, who reject Caste, are very numerous ; and within the pale of the Hindoo faith itself, different sects spring up from time to time as in other countries. Mr. Orme

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\* Sir J. Malcolm's highly interesting publication concerning the Seiks, suggests many most important considerations respecting the mischiefs which, if not provided against by timely precautions, may hereafter result from the galling and severe pressure of the system of Castes on the lower orders of India.

says, "Every province has fifty sects of Gentoos, and every sect adheres to different observances."

But we have still surer grounds of hope ; we have still better reasons than these for believing, that there is nothing in the nature or principles of a Hindoo which renders it impossible for him to become a Christian; for it is notorious, that from the earliest times there have been many churches of native Christians in India. For the whole of the last century, the work of conversion has been going on with more or less success; and at this moment, there are hundreds of thousands of native Christians in the East Indies.

But here again, in justice to my argument, I cannot but remind the House of the signal example which this instance affords of the utter ignorance of our opponents on the subject we are now considering : for a gentleman of high character, of acknowledged talents and information, who had passed thirty years in India, and who having fairly made his way to the first situations, possessed for full ten years a seat in the Supreme Council in Bengal, stated at your bar, that he had never heard of the existence of a native Christian in India, until after his return to England; he then learned the fact, to which, however, he seemed to give but a doubting kind of assent, from the writings of Dr. Buchanan. Can any thing more clearly prove, that gentlemen, instead of seriously turning their minds to the subject, and opening their eyes to the perception of truth, have imbibed the generally prevailing prejudices of men around them, without question, and have thus suffered themselves to be led away to the most erroneous conclusions.

Let me mention also another circumstance, which well deserves consideration. If the assertion of our opponents were correct, that the sensibility of the natives of India in all that regards

their religion, is so extremely great that they can scarcely listen with temper or patience to any arguments that are urged against it, it would naturally follow, that the Christian missionaries, if, even from the dread of punishment, their lives should be safe, would be universally regarded with jealousy and detestation ; whereas, as if on purpose to confute the unreasonable prejudices of our opponents, the most zealous, laborious, and successful missionaries have commonly been, among all classes of the natives, the most esteemed and beloved of all the Europeans ; and, let me repeat it, this is not only true of the ever memorable Swartz, but of Gerick'e, of Kolhoff, &c., as well as of Ziegenbalg and his colleagues, the missionaries of a preceding generation. Swartz's eulogium it is unnecessary for me to pronounce, because our opponents themselves are loud in his praise. And it is acknowledged that, during his long and laborious ministry, he was among the natives, from the greatest to the least, an object of the highest respect and warmest affection.

But an hon. baronet rather insinuates, that Mr. Swartz's popularity among the natives might arise from points in his character which were less estimable in a religious view. Swartz, says the hon. baronet, was a politician. Yes, Sir ; I thank the hon. baronet for reminding me of it ; Swartz was a politician, but not a volunteer in that service : he became a politician at the earnest and importunate intreaty of the East India government ; because, having to negotiate with Hyder Ally, they could find no one in whose integrity and veracity that chieftain would confide, but Swartz the missionary ; he therefore became a politician, and an accredited envoy, because as a missionary, he had secured to himself the universal confidence both of Mahometans and of Hindoos.

But even Swartz's converts, it is alleged, were all of the lowest class of the people, wretches who had lost caste, or were below it; and the same assertion is generally made concerning the

native Christians at this day. This again, Sir, is one of those wretched prejudices which receive easy credence, because they fall in with the preconceived notions of the receiver, and pass current from man to man without being questioned, in spite of the plainest and most decisive refutation. Even our opponents themselves will refer to Mr. Swartz's own authority ; and that excellent man having happened to read in India much such a speech concerning missionaries as the hon. baronet has this day uttered, which had been made in the India-House the year before, by Mr. Montgomery Campbell, he positively contradicted all those stale assertions in disparagement of the missionaries and their followers, which had been so generally circulated; among the rest, this of the low degraded quality of their converts ; by stating that if Mr. Campbell had even once attended their church, he would have observed, that more than two thirds were of the higher caste, and so it was, he said, at Tranquebar and Vepery. In like manner, Dr. Kerr, who was officially commissioned by the Madras government, in 1806, to visit the Malabar coast, for the express purpose of obtaining every possible information in regard to the establishment, &c. of the Christian religion in that part of the peninsula, after stating, that the character of the native Christians, whose numbers, according to the best accounts, are estimated at from 70 to 80,000, is marked by a striking superiority over the heathens in every moral excellence, and that they are remarkable for their veracity and plain dealing, adds, "They are respected very highly by the Nairs" (the nobility of the country), "who do not consider themselves defiled by associating with them, though it is well known that the Nairs are the most particular of all the Hindoos in this respect ; and the Rajahs of Travancore and Cochin admit them to rank next to Nairs\*."

Again: a letter from a respectable gentleman in India to

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\* See Dr. Kerr's Report to the Madras government, dated November 3, 1806.

the venerable and justly honoured dean of Westminster, Dr. Vincent, published in the Report of 1799 of the Society for promoting Christian knowledge, mentions the almost universal prevalence of the grossest misconceptions, concerning the native converts to Christianity, and strongly opposes them. After stating that the number is very considerable, he adds; "That they consist of the lower or Pariahs is a vulgar error; and instead of being, as is often asserted, despised and contemptuously treated by their fellow natives, they are universally respected." He proceeds, however: "You may ask five gentlemen out of six, who return from India, their opinion of the state of the native Christians; their reply will probably be, that they see no use in the endeavours to propagate Christianity there; and this will be followed by a repetition of the common place idea, transferred from one to another without examination, 'What can a black fellow know about Christianity?'" I dwell the more, Sir, on this topic, because, how little soever deserving of notice these prejudices may appear to the eye of truth and reason, they are in fact the most powerful enemies with which we have to contend. Dr. Vincent's correspondent truly remarks; "It is from this sort of cant and jargon of ignorance and indifference, that false ideas respecting the native converts have been instilled into the minds of many at home." Miserable, however, as this jargon may be in the estimation of Dr. Vincent's correspondent, it is not to be despised, when its tendency is to detain an immense region of the earth in darkness and degradation. What we have heard in this House may convince us, though it is with pain and shame that we witness the anomaly, that men of excellent understandings and of liberal and well-informed minds can be misled by these groundless prepossessions. Even the excellent historian, Dr. Robertson, did not escape this contagion. Though commonly he is most justly to be respected for the accuracy of his statements, he seems, though reluctantly, to admit the

impracticability of converting the natives of India; and states, that in 200 years, the converts amount but to about 12,000 in number; whom also, if I mistake not, he represents to be of the very lowest of the people, and, in direct contradiction to the most decisive testimony, to be, even after their conversion, a disgrace to the Christian name. I could multiply facts and arguments; but I trust, Sir, I have already decidedly established, that this notion of its being impracticable to convert the Hindoos is a vain and groundless theory; and that, in maintaining the opposite position, my friends and I stand on the solid and sure ground of abundant and indisputable experience.

But our opponents encouraging one another in their error, take still higher ground, and affirm, that **if it were practicable to convert the Hindoos to Christianity, it is not desirable. The principles of the Hindoos are so good, their morals are so pure; better than our own, as we are told by more than one hon. gentleman; that to attempt to communicate to them our religion and our morality, is, to say the least, a superfluous, perhaps a mischievous, attempt.\***

This, by the way, is no new doctrine; but, considering its origin, it is not altogether without shame, as well as grief, that I find it receiving any countenance in this assembly. It sprang up among the French sceptical philosophers, by whom it was used for the purpose of discrediting Christianity, by shewing, that in countries which were wholly strangers to its light, the people were in general more gentle and peaceable, and innocent and amiable, than in those countries which had for the longest period professed the Christian faith. After the practical comment, however which a neighbouring kingdom has afforded of the doctrines of the French philosophers, the opinions of our opponents will not experience a more favourable reception in this House, or in this country, on

account of their issuing from such a source.

But really, Sir, I can only say, that if the principles and morals of our East Indian fellow-subjects were indeed so admirable, if they were ever better than our own, it would be a fact that would belie the experience of all other times and countries. **When was there ever yet a nation on which the light of Christianity never shone, which was not found in a state of the grossest moral darkness, debased by principles and practices and manners the most flagitious and cruel ? Is not this true of all the most polished nations of antiquity ? Did not more than one practice prevail among them, sanctioned often by the wisest and the best among them, which in all Christian countries would now be punished as a capital crime ? But, Sir, have not moral causes their sure and infallible effects ? Is it not notorious that the nations of India have, from the very earliest times, groaned under the double yoke of political and religious despotism ? And can it then be maintained, that these must not have produced a proportionate degradation of their moral character ? And is it in a British House of Commons, above all other places, where such a doctrine as this is maintained ? Are we so little sensible of the value of the free constitution and religious liberty which we enjoy, and so little thankful for them, as to tolerate such propositions ?**\* No, Sir: I trust we shall be protected by our feelings, no less than by our understandings, against being carried away by any such delusions. No, Sir : the common sense of mankind, in this country at least, is not to be so outraged; and, **in truth, we find the morals and manners of the natives of India just such as we might have been led to expect from a knowledge of the dark and degrading supersitions, as well as of the political bondage, under which they have been so long bowed down.**\* To which

I may add, that, such is the nature of their institutions and customs, that not religion only, but common humanity, should prompt us to exert all legitimate methods for producing the discontinuance of them.

But honourable gentlemen have read us passages from their religious books, some of which breathe a strain of pure and even sublime morality. The Institutes of Akbar also have been quoted upon us, and a learned work by a Bengal officer has been published, resting almost entirely on this basis, with large extracts from the sacred writings of the Hindoos.

Let me beg the attention of the House, while I ask such of our opponents as urge this argument, whether they did or did not know that which is an undeniable fact (I refer to Mr. Halhed's translation of the Hindoo laws), that if a Soodra should get by heart, nay, if he should read, or even listen to the sacred books, the law condemns him to a most cruel death. If our opponents were ignorant of this, it shews how little they are qualified to be safe guides to us in the road we are now travelling: if they knew it, was it candid, nay, Sir, was it fair, to quote these passages of sublime morality, in proof of the superior moral state of the bulk of the East Indian population? Why, Sir, it is much the same in India (only worse) as it was among the most polished nations of the Pagan world. There, they had their exoteric and their esoteric doctrines; and while, in the writing of their philosophers, we meet with passages of high moral excellence, we know, that the moral opinions and practice of the bulk of the people were such as would appear to us at this day almost insufferably depraved, absurd, and monstrous. Where can we find more elevated strains than in the lofty speculations of the imperial philosopher Antoninus? And in return for the Institutes of Akbar I might name those of Tamerlane, justly declared by one of our opponents to be one of

the most bloody tyrants that ever disgraced a throne, which are yet declared by Mr. Gibbon to form one of the most perfect systems ever published on the basis of absolute monarchy.

The topic we are now considering is of so great importance, that in justice to my argument, I must be permitted to enlarge upon it; though, after all, I must leave much unsaid, in order that I may not trespass on the indulgence of the House too largely; and as the authority of several gentlemen, long resident in India, is urged upon us in proof of the probity and superior morality of the natives of India, I must beg leave to bring forward my authorities also. And when the House shall have heard all I have to adduce, I am confident, that not a doubt will remain in their minds, that my representation of the moral character of the natives of India is borne out by an irresistible weight of unobjectionable testimony. And first, Sir, let me quote to you some general opinions of the moral state of the Hindoos, which have been given by authors of established credit, as well as by others whose authority is still higher, persons who held high stations in the Company's service for many years, and who, from having lived so long, and having had so much intercourse with them, must be supposed to have been perfectly acquainted with their real character. Several of the passages which I am about to read to you, are contained in a most valuable document lately laid before the House, the work of a dear and most honoured friend of mine, member of this House\*, whose excellent understanding and acknowledged worth entitle

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\* I refer to a memoir, by Mr. Grant on the Moral State of India, the causes which have produced, and suggestions for improving it. The memoir was principally written as long ago as 1792, soon after his return from India, and was laid before the Court of Directors in 1797. It contains within a small compass, a large store of most valuable information concerning the religion and laws, the social and moral state and character, of the Hindoos. It is earnestly to be hoped, that his great modesty may not prevent his publishing to the world this valuable document, and thereby obtaining for it a more general perusal.

all his opinions to be received with the utmost deference, and whose long residence in India and familiar acquaintance with its inhabitants have rendered him peculiarly competent to form a correct judgment on the point which we are now considering.

The first witness I shall bring forward is the traveller Bernier, an author of such established credit that his work was allowed to be received as evidence at Mr. Hastings's trial. He, who travelled among the natives about one hundred and fifty years ago, places the character of the people in general, and more especially that of the brahmins, in the most unfavourable light; but as he nowhere gives a summary view of it, I will only refer generally to his high authority. The same unfavourable character of them, and more especially of the brahmins, is also expressed by Mr. Sraffton\*, whose instructive work was published about fifty years ago; and Mr. Orme, the excellent historian of the Carnatic, leads us to form a still lower estimate of their moral qualities. "Were not the Gentoos infamous for the want of generosity and gratitude in all the commerces of friendship; were they not a tricking, deceitful people in all their dealings; their charity could not be deemed to arise from the influence of superstition."—Orme's India, vol.4.4to.p.434.

"Every offence is capable of being expiated by largesses to the brahmins, prescribed by themselves according to their own measures of avarice and sensuality."

Orme's character of the East-Indian Mahammedans is still more unfavourable than that of the brahmins. "A domineering insolence towards all who are in subjection to them, ungovernable wilfulness, inhumanity, cruelty, murders, and assassination, perpetrated with the same calmness and subtlety as the rest of their politics, and insensibility to remorse for these crimes, which are scarcely considered otherwise than as necessary accidents in

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\* Reflections on the Governments of Hindostan, by Luke Sraffton, esq.

the course of life; sensual excesses, which revolt against nature; unbounded thirst of power, and a rapaciousness of wealth equal to the extravagance of his propensities and vices!" "This is the character of an Indian Moor." -Orme, on the Manners, & c. of the Indian Moors, Ibid. p.423\*.

Governor Holwell gives a summary account of the native East-Indian character in such clear terms that his own words shall be quoted; and let it be remembered that Holwell's mind, to say the least, was not in any degree biassed by his attachment to the Christian system, as compared with that of the natives of India:- "A race of people, who, from their infancy, are utter strangers to the idea of common faith and honesty. The Gentoos in General are as dangerous and wicked a people as any race of people in the known world, if not eminently more so, especially the common run of brahmins. We can truly aver, that during almost five years that we presided in the judicial cutcherry court of Calcutta, never any murder or other atrocious crime came before us, but it was proved in the end, a brahmin was at the bottom of it."

Lord Clive's\*\* testimony is given in the same clear and compendious language:- "The inhabitants of this country we know, by long experience, have no attachment to any obligation."

An equally unfavourable character of them is given by governor Verelst\*\*\*, especially in respect of avarice, treachery, and ingratitude.

Mr. Shore\*\*\*\* (now Lord Teignmouth) paints their character in still darker colours:- "The natives are timid and servile: individuals have little sense of honour, and the nation is wholly

\* Well might Mr. Orme exclaim, after so humiliating a picture of human depravity, "How grateful, how noble, are the reflections inspired by such a retrospect, in favour of the cause of Christianity, and in favour of the cause of liberty!" —Orme's India, vol.4,p.430.

\*\* See Bolt's Considerations, vol.3.

\*\*\* See Verelst's View of the English Government in Bengal.

\*\*\*\* See the Parliamentary proceedings against Mr. Hastings.

void of public virtue. They make not the least scruple of lying, where flasehood is attended with advantage. To lie, steal, plunder, ravish, or murder, are not deemed sufficient crimes to merit expulsion from society.”

“With a Hindoo all is centered in himself; his own interest is his guide.” With other particulars of a similar complexion.

Sir John Macpherson, who was governor-general between twenty and thirty years ago, commenting on the foregoing description, thus confirms the accuracy of the delineation: “I am afraid that the picture which he (Mr. Shore) draws, and the low ebb at which he states the popular virtues of the Bengalese, are not fictitious representations.”

Lord Cornwallis proved by his conduct that he considered the natives as unworthy of all confidence; for, contrary to the general usage of men occupying such stations as he filled, he never reposed any trust in any one of them, nor placed a single individual, either Hindoo or Mahomedan, about his person, above the rank of a menial servant.

It is not, perhaps, unworthy of notice, that a character equally unfavourable of the natives of Hindostan, was given four hundred years ago by their great conqueror Tamerlane. “The native of Hindostan”, he says, “has no pretensions to humanity but the figure; whilst imposture, fraud, and deception are by him considered as meritorious accomplishments.”— The foregoing compilation of authorities is closed by my hon. friend, with the following compendious delineation of the native Indian character.

**“Upon the whole, we can not help recognizing in the people of Hindostan a race of men lamentably degenerate and base; retaining but a feeble sense of moral obligation; obstinate in the disregard of what they know to be right; governed by malevolent and licentious passions; strongly exemplifying the effects produced on society by great and**

**general corruption of manners; sunk in misery by their vices, in a country peculiarly calculated by its natural advantages to promote the happiness of its inhabitants.”\***

But we are far from having laboured through the long and melancholy succession of witnesses, who attest the moral degradation of the natives of India. Several of the passages I have already recited are accounts of earlier times; and it might perhaps be hoped, that the moral character of the natives has been improved, in consequence of their having lived so long under our government. Alas, Sir! grieved I am to be under the necessity of stating, that this is by no means the fact. I might, I fear, go still farther, and affirm, that the moral standard of the natives has been even deteriorated of late years. The first witness whom I shall call in proof of the present depraved state of the natives of India, is a gentleman well known in this House for his talents and his eloquence, and whom there is reason, I trust, to believe, that we shall shortly have the honour of including in our number: I scarcely need explain, that I am speaking of Sir James Mackintosh. He, it is well known, lately presided on the bench of justice in Bombay; and in a charge to the grand jury at Bombay, delivered in the year 1803, he thus expressed himself: “I observe, that the accomplished and justly celebrated person, Sir William Jones, who carried with him to this country a prejudice in favour of the natives, which he naturally imbibed in the course of his studies, and which in him, though not perfectly rational, was neither unamiable nor ungraceful, I observe, **that even he, after long judicial experience, reluctantly confessed their general depravity. The prevalence of perjury which he strongly states, and which I have myself already observed, is perhaps a more certain sign of the general dissolution of moral principle than other more daring and ferocious crimes, much more horrible to the imagination,**

**and of which the immediate consequences are more destructive to society."**

Again, at a subsequent period, he remarks; "An offence, of the frequency of which I formerly spoke from information, but can now speak from large and deplorable experience, I mean perjury.—"

A melancholy proof of the low standard of morals in the East was afforded on one of the occasions which drew from Sir James Mackintosh the above remarks. A woman who was one of the witnesses, having prevaricated shockingly, was asked by the Recorder, "Whether there was any harm in false swearing?" she answered, "that she understood the English had a great horror of it, but there was no such horror in her country." See the Bombay Law Reports, given in the Asiatic Register for 1804.

But, perhaps, the most decisive proofs of all are contained in the answers to certain interrogatories concerning the moral state of the natives, which were sent round by Lord Wellesley, when governor-general. Lord Wellesley, wishing to obtain the most authentic and complete information, would of course consult such persons as he conceived to be best qualified from the situations which they occupied, to give him the intelligence which he desired. He therefore applied to the judges of circuit, and also to magistrates permanently settled in the different provinces. A vain attempt, indeed, has been made to do away the effect of this testimony, by asking what judgment we should form of the moral character of our own people, if we were to take our estimate of it from the criminals who fill our gaols. I must say, I wonder that the hon. gentlemen who held this language, were not checked by recollecting that they were in reality reflecting strongly on the discretion of Lord Wellesley himself, for having applied for information to description of persons which he ought to have known not to be qualified to supply it. But, Sir, you will observe, that it is concerning

the general character of the natives that the gentlemen interrogated by Lord Wellesley were questioned; and I cannot conceive that there can be any set of men better qualified in all respects to form a correct opinion of the general character and conduct of the natives, than such of the Company's servants as are resident magistrates. I will not weary the House with the whole of the melancholy detail; but a few of the answers I must lay before them. The first shall be the statement of Mr. Edward Colebrook, second judge of the Patna Court of circuit, dated Patna, 21st April, 1804. "Another not less heinous offence attaching to those affrays is perjury, to which recourse is invariably had, both for the prosecution and defence of such charges. To such a pitch of audacity has this crime long since reached in this province, that a total distrust of human testimony, on every occasion, is the consequence. No rank, no caste, is exempt from the contagion. A zemindary dewan, a brahmin, who had circumstantially sworn to the nature and number and to the authors of the wounds on two of his cutcherry amla, alleged to have been murdered in an attempt to dispossess him from the cutcherry, scarcely blushed when the two men were produced alive and unhurt in court, and merely pleaded that had he not sworn as directed, he should have lost his employ."

Let me now read an equally humiliating extract from the answers of Mr. J.D. Paterson, judge of Decca, Jellelpore, & c. to the president & c. members of the police committee, 30th Aug. 1799. "As a picture of human degradation and depravity can only give pain to a reflecting mind, I shall be as brief as possible, consistently with the necessity of furnishing the required information. **Their minds are totally uncultivated; of the duties of morality they have no idea; they possess in a great degree that low cunning which so generally accompanies depravity of heart. They are indolent and grossly sensual; they are cruel and**

**cowardly, insolent and abject. They have superstition without a sense of religion ; and in short they have all the vices of savage life, without any of its virtues.\*** If we look a step higher, we find the same total want of principles with more refined cunning, no attachment but what centers in self, for the ties of relationship seem only to render inveteracy more inveterate."

"Even the honest men," say the judges of circuit, in a report made on terminating their session: "Even the honest men as well as the rogues are perjured. The most simple and the most cunning alike make assertions that are incredible, or that are certainly false."

"In the course of our judicial duties," says the report from Moorshedabad, court of appeal and circuit (26th Jan. 1802), "we still meet with the same barefaced disregard of truth which always characterised the natives of India."

"No falsehood," says judge Stracey, "is too extravagant or audacious to be advanced before the court of circuit. Perjury is extremely common." —5th Report of Committee on East India Affairs.

"They are probably somewhat more licentious than formerly. Chicanery, subornation, and fraud and perjury are certainly more common." —Judge Stracey's Answer to Interrogatories, 30th Jan. 1802.

"The lower classes are in general profligate and depraved. The moral duties are little attended to by the higher ones. All are litigious in the extreme, and the crime of perjury was never, we believe, more practised amongst all ranks than at present." —Answers of Magistrates of the 24 Pergunnahs to Interrogatories, & c.

But perhaps the House may, with the least trouble, form a summary opinion of the result of the answers alluded to, by hearing an extract from a judicial letter from the court of directors to Bengal, dated 25th of April 1806, which will shew the impression which

the information they had received had made on their minds; and I beg leave to recommend it the rather to the attention of the House, because it will shew what was then the court of directors' opinion of the moral character of the natives of India, however some of them may now have been led, I must rather say misled, into forming different sentiments. **"The nefarious and dangerous crime of perjury we are much concerned to find continues to prevail in all directions, and even increases to such a pitch as to baffle and perplex the judicial proceedings of the courts, so that the judge receives all oral testimony with distrust, and is frequently obliged to investigate the character of the witness more closely than that of the criminal."**\* The directors very judiciously go on to remark on the probable cause of this low state of moral principle: - **"The little obligation attached by the natives to an oath seems to proceed, in a great degree, from the nature of their superstitions and the degraded character of their deities, as well as the almost entire want of moral instruction among them; and this points to the necessity of other remedies, as well as to the most rigorous punishment of a crime so hurtful to society as perjury."** \*

If such be the moral state of the natives in general, we might well expect, at least it would be expected by all who have a just sense of the intimate connection between virtue and humanity, and on the contrary between depravity and cruelty, that the crimes of actual violators of the laws, and not of an individual criminal, but of the class of robbers in general, would be extremely shocking; but I quote the following passage from Mr. Dowdeswell's Report on the Police of Bengal, in order to counteract that strange and most unjust persuasion, which has been attempted to be diffused, that the Hindoos are a gentle and humane people. "Were I to enumerate only a thousandth part of the atrocities of the Decoits (a set of hereditary robbers), and of the consequent sufferings of

the people, and were I to soften that recital in every mode which language would permit, I should still despair of obtaining credit solely on my own authority for the accuracy of the narrative." — Mr. Dowdeswell's Report on the General State of the Police of Bengal, p.603.

"Robbery, rape, and even murder itself, are not the worst figure in this hideous and disgusting picture. Volumes might be filled with the recital of the atrocities of the Decoits, every line of which would make the blood run cold with horror". Ibid.

I could corroborate my general representation of the moral degradation of the Hindoos, by still farther extracts, selected from that massy volume on the table\*. But I will adduce but one more taken from a document I have already referred to, the letter to the venerable dean of Westminster, Dr. Vincent. Speaking generally of the morals of the natives, his correspondent says; "The state of morality among the natives is very low indeed. I have had transactions with many of those who have the character of most respectable men, rich, and of good credit. I declare to you, I never met with one who had any idea of the obligation of an oath, or who would not break it without scruple, provided the crime could be effected without discovery and punishment, and produce to him a pecuniary profit. There may be natives of a different character; all I can say is, that I never met with one. I am speaking of those who are not Christians. Now I am clear, that no man, in the course of his dealings in England with various characters for some years, could truly make a similar assertion."

Before we dismiss the long and melancholy train of witnesses whose estimate of the moral character of the natives of India I have been laying before you, let me beg that you will attend carefully to two considerations, which are applicable to almost all the opinions which I have adduced. These are, first, that the

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\* Fifth Report from the East India Committee.

statements you have heard, are all of them the opinions of intelligent and respectable men, formed and given, without reference to any particular question, which happened for the time to interest and divide the public mind; and still more, that they are the opinions of men who were upon the spot when those opinions were formed, and whose attention had been specially called to the subject of them, while the natives were actually under their view. These considerations, Sir, deserve the more attention, because, when we find conflicting testimony among men, all of whom we respect, we naturally look for circumstances which may explain the discrepancies which we witness. Without presuming to take upon me to estimate how much weight is to be assigned to this consideration, I am persuaded that our opponents themselves will frankly acknowledge, that in the two important particulars which I have just now noticed, they are oppositely circumstanced to the individuals whose testimony I have been laying before you. First, the favourable opinions of the people of India which they deliver, are such as occur to them in this country; which must render them peculiarly subject to the influence of that common cause of erroneous judgment of nations, the drawing of general inferences from individual instances; and secondly, they will not deny, that from the infirmities of our common nature, they cannot but be liable to have their opinions in some degree, though imperceptibly, biassed by the particular occasion on which they are led to form them.

And now, Sir, after the decisive weight of testimony which I have laid before you in proof of the general depravity of the people of Hindostan, what must we think of the soundness of the judgment pronounced by our opponents, that their morals are in general equal, nay, even superior, to those of the people of this country. We have been long accustomed, Sir, to read different characters of the same people from different travellers, of the

intentions of all of whom, to speak the truth, we have entertained not the slightest suspicion; but a difference like this, I never before witnessed. In fact, however, Sir, we are relieved from our difficulty, by the very extent to which the assertion of our opponents is pushed. Had it been merely attempted to soften the colours in which we had painted the native character, you might have been more at a loss which was the correct representation. But when, instead of the dark hues which we have assigned to it, our opponents give it almost the fairest and loveliest tints of moral colouring, we are led infallibly to conclude that our opponents are either ill-informed, or that they are under the influence of prejudice; and happily, we are furnished, in the course of our discussion, with such flagrant instances of prejudice on this particular topic of religion, as to furnish a pretty clear explanation of those opinions of our opponents which would otherwise appear the most inexplicable as well as extravagant.

I have already had occasion to shew, Sir, in one notable instance, that on this subject alone of religion and morals, as connected with the East Indies, men the most able and the best informed on all other topics are strangely and lamentably ignorant. There is a sort of inaptitude, if I may so term it, in what regards the subject of religion, which we discover in the generality of the Anglo Indians, which causes their judgments, however valuable on other occasions, to fail them egregiously in this. We have a curious illustration of this remark in the Fifth Report, which I quote the rather, because I understand the character of the writer to be excellent, and his authority beyond exception in all other matters. I speak of Mr. Dowdeswell. After that shocking account of the state of the police which I lately read to the House, suitably impressed with a sense of the evils of which he had been speaking, and very justly remarking also, that these dreadful practices must be severely punished, “but that a great deal more must be done in

order to eradicate the seeds of those crimes, the real sources of the evil lying in the corrupt morals of the people," he adds, (and let me beg, that gentlemen will observe that Mr. Dowdeswell very justly ascribes the perpetration of such crimes to general and moral causes, not merely to individual and accidental depravity;) "if" says he, "we would apply a lasting remedy to the evil, we must adopt means of instruction for the different classes of the community; by which they may be restrained, not only from the commission of public crimes, but also from acts of immorality, by a dread of the punishments denounced both in this world and in a future state by their respective religious opinions. The task would not, perhaps, be so difficult as it may at first sight appear to be. Some remains of the old system of Hindoo discipline still exist. The institutions of Mahomedanism of that description, are still better known. Both might be revived, and gradually moulded into a regular system of instruction for both those great classes of the community."\*

We are led irresistibly, by this passage, to a conclusion, which, I confess, has been suggested to me by various other circumstances, that in the minds of too many of our opponents, Christianity and India are inconsistent, totally incompatible, ideas. We cannot but be reminded of the expression of a former ornament of this House, (a name of high authority in this country), that "the Europeans were commonly unbaptized in their passage to India." I will not presume to adopt so strong a position; but Mr. Burke himself could not have desired a stronger confirmation of his assertion, than some with which we have been supplied in the course of these discussions, more especially with this, wherein we find that a gentleman of intelligence and respectability, long resident in India, bewailing such a dissolution of the moral principle as

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\* Fifth Report on East-India Affairs, p. 617. Mr. Dowdeswell's Report on the Police of Bengal, Sept. 22. 1809.

rendered it difficult for the frame of society to hold together, and looking round solicitously for some remedy for the evil, never so much as thinks of resorting to Christianity, but proposes to resort to the revival of Hinduism and Mahomedanism, as the only expedient to which it is possible to have recourse.

Agreeing with him in my sense of the virulence of the disease, I differ entirely with respect to the remedy; for, blessed be God, we have a remedy fully adequate, and specially appropriate to the purpose. That remedy, Sir, is Christianity, which I justly call the appropriate remedy; for Christianity then assumes her true character, no less than she performs her natural and proper office, when she takes under her protection those poor degraded beings, on whom philosophy looks down with disdain, or perhaps with contemptuous condescension. On the very first promulgation of Christianity, it was declared by its great Author, as "glad tidings to the poor," and, ever faithful to her character, Christianity still delights to instruct the ignorant, to succour the needy, to comfort the sorrowful, to visit the forsaken. I confess to you, Sir, that but for my being conscious that we possessed the means of palliating, at least, the moral diseases which I have been describing, if not of effecting a perfect cure of them, I should not have had the heart to persevere in dragging you through the long and painful succession of humiliating statements to which you have been lately listening. For, believe me, Sir, though I trust that to many in this House, I scarcely need to vindicate myself against such a charge, that it is not to insult [exult ?] over the melancholy degradation of these unhappy people, or to indulge in the proud triumph of our own superiority, that I have dwelt so long on this painful subject: but it is because I wish to impress you with a just sense of the malignity of their disease, that you may concur with me in the application of a remedy: for, I again and again declare to

you, a remedy there doubtless is. God forbid that we should have only to sit down in hopeless dejection, under the conviction, that though these evils exist they are not to be removed. Sir, such a supposition would be absolute blasphemy; to believe that the Almighty Being, to whom both we and our East Indian fellow-subjects owe our existence, has doomed them to continue for ever, incurably, in that wretched state of moral depravity and degradation, in which they have hitherto remained ! No, **Sir, Providence has provided sufficient means for rescuing them from the depths in which they are now sunk, and I now call on you to open the way for their application; for to us, Sir, I confidently hope, is committed the honourable office of removing the barrier which now excludes the access of Christian light, with its long train of attendant blessings, into that benighted land, and thus, of ultimately cheering their desolate hearts with the beams of heavenly truth, and love, and consolation.\*** And therefore, Sir, I indignantly repel the charge which has been unjustly brought against me, that I am bringing an indictment against the whole native population of India; and “what have they done to provoke my enmity ?” Sir, I have lived long enough to learn the important lesson, that flatterers are not friends: nay, Sir, they are the deadliest enemies. Let not our opponents, therefore, lay to their souls this flattering unction, that they are acting a friendly part towards the Hindoos. No, Sir: they, not I, **are the real enemies of the natives of India, who, with the language of hollow adulation and 'mouth honour' on their tongues, are in reality recommending the course which is to keep those miserable beings bowed down under the heavy yoke which now oppresses them. The most able of our opponents has told us, that some classes of the natives are as much below others as the inferior animals are below the human species. Yes, Sir, I well know it;\*** and it is because I

wish to do away this unjust inequality, to raise these poor brutes out of their present degraded state to the just level of their nature, that I am now bringing before you their real character, and explaining to you their true condition. And am not I, therefore, acting the part of the real friend ? For true friendship, Sir, is apprehensive and solicitous: it is often jealous and suspicious of evil; often it even dreads the worst concerning the objects of its affection. from the solicitude it feels for their well being, and its earnestness to promote their happiness.

Animated, Sir, by this unfeigned spirit of friendship for the natives of India, their religious and moral interests are undoubtedly our first concern: but the course we are recommending tends no less to promote their temporal well being, than their eternal welfare; for such is their real condition, that we are prompted to endeavour to communicate to them the benefits of Christian instruction, scarcely less by religious principle than by the feelings of common humanity. Not, Sir, that I would pretend to conceal from the House, that the hope which, above all others, chiefly gladdens my heart, is that of being instrumental in bringing them into the paths by which they may be led to everlasting felicity. But still, were all considerations of a future state out of the question, I hesitate not to affirm, that a regard for their temporal well-being would alone furnish abundant motives for our endeavouring to diffuse among them the blessings of Christian light and moral instruction.

**And surely it cannot be necessary for me to attempt in this place to prove, that though much of the large mass of comforts which we in this country enjoy, beyond those, I believe, of any other nation in ancient or in modern times, is owing to our invaluable constitution, yet that it is in no small degree, also, to be ascribed to our religious and moral**

**superiority; for it is with gratitude alike, and with pleasure, that I declare my firm persuasion, that the influence of Christianity is greater in this country than in any other upon earth.\***

But surely, Sir, after the account we have received of the low state of morals among the natives of India, it cannot be necessary for me to prove by a reference to their various institutions, or to the circumstances of their social condition, that their situation is such as to interest every humane mind in improving it. For certainly such an enlightened assembly as this need scarcely to be reminded, that the moral Governor of the universe has established a never failing and inseparable connection between vice and misery, though for a time they may appear dissevered, and vice may seem even to have associated herself with happiness. Sir, the evils of India are not merely such as a despotic government never fails to introduce and continue. In countries, great countries especially, groaning under the most absolute despotism, there may often be much domestic and even social happiness. It was to the condition of the subjects of an absolute government, that our great poet beautifully alluded when he observed,

“With secret course, which no loud storms annoy,

“Glides the smooth current of domestic joy.”

And truly in the main, though somewhat too broadly and strongly shaded, he adds,

“Of all the ills that human hearts endure,

“How few, that courts or kings can cause or cure.”

**But the evils of Hindostan are family, fireside evils : they pervade the whole mass of the population, and embitter the domestic cup, in almost every family. Why need I, in this country, insist on the evils which arise merely out of the institution of Caste itself; a system which, though, strange to say, it has been complimented as a device of deep politi-**

**cal wisdom, must surely appear to every heart of true British temper to be a system at war with truth and nature; a detestable expedient for keeping the lower orders of the community bowed down in an abject state of hopeless and irremediable vassalage\*.** It is justly, Sir, the glory of this country, that no member of our free community is naturally precluded from rising into the highest classes in society. And, in fact, we have all witnessed instances of men who have emerged out of their original poverty and obscurity, and have risen to the highest level by the inborn buoyancy of their superior natures; our free constitution, to which such occurrences are scarcely less honourable than to the individuals who are the subjects of them, opening the way for the developement, and Providence favouring the exercise of their powers. Even where slavery has existed, it has commonly been possible, (though in the West Indies, alas ! artificial difficulties have been interposed,) for individuals to burst their bonds, and assert the privileges of their nature. But the more cruel shackles of Caste are never to be shaken, as well might a dog, or any other of the brute creation, it is the honourable gentleman's own illustration, aspire to the dignity and rights of man. I will not think so injuriously of our opponents as not to be persuaded, that they would indignantly spurn at the very idea of introducing such a system into this country. And are not the natives of India, our fellow subjects, fairly intitled to all the benefits which we can safely impart to them? And if there be any which we cannot as yet venture to communicate, should we not at least be longing with eager and almost impatient expectation for the time when we can render them partakers of the best blessings which we ourselves enjoy? And here, Sir, in justice to my cause, I cannot but animadvert upon the spirit and tone with which our opponents have descanted on the impossibility of making the natives acquainted with the truths of Christianity, and of thereby effecting the moral improvement

which Christianity would produce. I should have expected, Sir, if they were unwillingly compelled to so unwelcome a conclusion, as that all hopes of thus improving the natives of India must be abandoned as utterly impracticable, that they would form the opinion tardily and reluctantly, and express it with the most manifest concern. I need not remind the House with what an air of cheerfulness, not to say of levity, the declaration has been made. But it is fair to say, that one of the hon. members supplied the explanation, by plainly intimating, that in his opinion, **all religions were alike acceptable to the common Father of the universe; - the same truth, a little differently expressed, as was taught by one of the brahmins, who stated to one of our missionaries, that heaven was a large palace, to which there was a number of different roads, and that each nation or individual might choose his own at pleasure. But, as I have already stated, our opponents should remember, that Christianity, independently of its effects on a future state of existence, has been acknowledged even by avowed sceptics, to be, beyond all other institutions that ever existed, favourable to the temporal interests and happiness of man: and never was there a country where there is greater need than in India for the diffusion of its genial influence\*.**

**In reasoning concerning the happiness, no less than the virtue, of any people, all who consider how many of the charities of life, how large a portion of the greatest and best of our earthly comforts, arise out of our domestic relations, will think it difficult to overrate the sum of the evils produced, and the happiness impaired and lost, from the single circumstance of the prevalence of polygamy\*. Here again, to prove the effects of polygamy, I would refer to one who had no peculiar zeal for Christianity; though his understanding was too**

enlightened, and his mind too well informed, for him not to recognize its superior excellencies; I mean, to the president Montesquieu. Would we see a lively picture of the jealousies, the heartburnings, the artifice, the falshood, the cruelty, the rage, and the despair of which polygamy is the fertile source, let us look to that great writer's Persian Letters. And here also, Sir, we may find a decisive settlement of the question, concerning which there has been some difference of opinion, as to the rank in the scale of being which is assigned to the female sex among the natives of India. An hon. friend of mine (Mr. Smith) has quoted some passages from their great lawgiver, which speak of women in general in the most disparaging and even contemptuous terms. We see the same estimate in many of the Hindoo customs and institutions; but this system of polygamy alone might have sufficed to prove, that the female sex could not possess in India that equality, in point of nature and rank, with ours, to which it is considered to be entitled in every Christian country, and on which, in fact, so much of the real dignity and happiness as well as so many of the benefits of the married state essentially depend.

Again in India, we find prevalent that evil, I mean infanticide, against which we might have hoped that nature herself would have supplied adequate restraints, if we had not been taught by experience, that for our deliverance even from this detestable crime, we are indebted to Christianity. For it is not to Philosophy, it is not to civilization; it is not to progress in refinement, or in the arts and comforts of social life; it is not even to liberty herself, that the world is indebted for this emancipation. The friends of Christianity may justly glory in the acknowledgment of one of its greatest enemies, that infanticide was the incorrigible vice of all antiquity; and it is very striking, that both in India and in China, where the light of Revelation has never penetrated, this detestable crime still asserts its superiority over nature itself, no less than over virtue.

To this, in India, is added, the destruction of the sick and the aged, often by their nearest relatives.

**There is another practice on the prevalence of which it is the rather necessary for me to insist,\*** because it has been conceived by many gentlemen, otherwise well-informed on East Indian topics, that whatever may have been formerly the case, the practice now exists in a very inconsiderable degree. **The House must have anticipated my mention of the burning of widows on the funeral pile of their deceased husbands.\*** A writer of great authority, Mr. Dow, many years ago, stated the custom to have become almost extinct. But sorry I am to say, that this is so far from being the truth, that the practice, which Bernier states to have been greatly discouraged, though not absolutely prohibited, by the Mahometan government, and which, in consequence, had considerably declined, **has increased since the country came under our dominion\*.** Great pains were taken by the missionaries, a few years ago, to ascertain the number of widows which were annually burnt in a district thirty miles round Calcutta, and the House will be astonished to hear, that in this comparatively small area, 130 widows were burnt in six months. In the year 1803, within the same space, the number amounted to 275, one of whom was a girl of eleven years of age. I ought to state, that the utmost pains were taken to have the account correct; certain persons were employed purposely to watch and report the number of these horrible exhibitions; and the place, person, and other particulars were regularly certified. After hearing this, you will not be surprised on being told, that **the whole number of these annual sacrifices of women,\*** who are often thus cruelly torn from their children at the very time when, from the loss of their father, they must be in the greatest need of the fostering care of the surviving parent, **is estimated, I think, in the Bengal provinces, to be**

10,000;\* the same number at which it was calculated, many years ago, by a gentleman whose uncommon proficiency in the native languages gave him peculiar advantages in his inquiries on this subject, the highly respected brother of the late Sir Robert Chambers.

Nor must we dare to flatter ourselves, though it would in truth be a wretched consolation, that, as has been sometimes stated, these sacrifices are spontaneous. Not to mention what Bernier himself relates from his own personal view, that the women are always carefully fastened down, sometimes with strong green bamboos, at others with thick strong ropes thoroughly soaked in water; which is done, as Mr. Marshman was frankly told, lest on feeling the fire they should run away and make their escape; Bernier goes on, "When the wretched victims drew back, I have seen those demons the brahmins thrusting them into the fire with their long poles." **Sometimes, indeed, the relations and friends of the widow, exerting their utmost influence with her, succeed in persuading her to live; but too commonly, the poor wretches are forced into these acts of self-immolation by the joint influence of their hopes and fears.\*** Their fears, however are by far the more predominant of the two: and while the brahmins delude them with the hopes of glory and immortality if they consign themselves to the flames, their only alternative is a life of hard fare, and servile offices; in short, a life of drudgery, degradation, and infamy.

Such, Sir, is the number of these human sacrifices, and such the principle on which they are made. As to their nature -I should shock the feelings of the hardest heart, if I were to read to you the authenticated statements of the horrid scenes of this kind which are continually taking place; to which the people are so accustomed, that as I lately learned from a private friend of my own, who witnessed one of these dreadful transactions, a great

concourse of spectators even in populous districts is not collected; and what is worse than all, the horrible scene is beheld with as much unconcern, and even levity, as we see among the lower orders in this country, when the destruction of one of the inferior animals is the subject of their savage mirth. But I will spare you the disgusting recital;\* and yet I well remember what was said nearly in the place where I now stand on an occasion not dissimilar, by a right hon. gentleman now no more, (Mr. Fox), “ that true

\* It would scarcely be justifiable to forbear inserting, what perhaps I was culpable in not reading to the House, the following account of one of these horrible scenes, at which the missionary, Mr. Marshman, was present a few years ago. I will extract his own words only adding, that he is a man of the most established integrity, in the veracity of whose account *entire* reliance may be justly placed. “A person informing us that a woman was about to be burnt with the corpse of her husband, near our house, I, with several of our brethren, hastened to the place : but before we could arrive, the pile was in flames. It was a horrible sight. The most shocking indifference and levity appeared among those who were present. I never saw any thing more brutal than their behaviour. The dreadful scene had not the least appearance of a religious ceremony. It resembled an abandoned rabble of boys in England, collected for the purpose of worrying to death a cat or a dog. A bamboo, perhaps twenty feet long, had been fastened at one end to a stake driven into the ground, and held down over the fire by men at the other. Such were the confusion, the levity, the bursts of brutal laughter, while the poor woman was burning alive before their eyes, that it seemed as if every spark of humanity was extinguished by this accursed superstition. That which added to the cruelty was, the smallness of the fire. It did not consist of so much wood as we consume in dressing a dinner: no, not this fire that was to consume the living and the dead! I saw the legs of the poor creature hanging out of the fire while her body was in flames. After a while, they took a bamboo ten or twelve feet long and stirred it, pushing and beating the half consumed corpses, as you would repair a fire of green wood, by throwing the unconsumed pieces into the middle. Perceiving the legs hanging out, they beat them with the bamboo for some time, in order to break the ligatures which fastened them at the knees, (for they would not have come near to touch them for the world). At length they succeeded in bending them upwards into the fire, the skin and muscles giving way, and discovering the knee sockets bare, with the balls of the leg bones: a sight this which, I need not say, made me thrill

humanity consists, not in a squeamish ear, but in feeling for the sufferings of others, and being forward and active in relieving them." And, Sir, I am perfectly sure, that people could not make up their minds to the quiet toleration of these practices ; they would not suffer them, I mean, to go on, without using every lawful effort to put a stop to them; but for our having not yet learned to consider India as a part of the British empire, and its inhabitants as our fellow-subjects. The vast distance also of the scene of these barbarities tends considerably to deaden the impression which they would otherwise produce. If these transactions took place in any part of England, instead of the indifference with which they have been too long regarded by men, I am sensible, not inferior in humanity to ourselves, the public zeal would be called forth, and every possible endeavour would be used to put an end to them. But here again, Sir, we see the effects of that strange delusion by which our countrymen are led into adopting one set of morals, and principles and even feelings, for this country, and another for India. And, although, after the proofs of the abilities of the Anglo-Indians which have been exhibited to this House in the course of this very inquiry, the grossest prejudice alone would deny that they are men of superior talents and intelligence; yet, I

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with horror, especially when I recollected that this hapless victim of superstition was alive but a few minutes before. To have seen savage wolves thus tearing a human body, limb from limb, would have been shocking; but to see relations and neighbours do this to one with whom they had familiarly conversed not an hour before, and to do it with an air of levity, was almost too much for me to bear.

"You expect, perhaps to hear, that this unhappy victim was the wife of some brahmin of high cast. She was the wife of a barber who dwelt in Serampore, and had died that morning, leaving the son I have mentioned, and a daughter of about eleven years of age. Thus has this infernal superstition aggravated the common miseries of life, and left these children stripped of both their parents in one day. Nor is this an uncommon case. It often happens to children far more helpless than these; sometimes to children possessed of property, which is then left, as well as themselves, to the mercy of those who have decoyed their mother to their father's funeral pile!"

must say, this very consideration, that they have one rule of judging for India, and another for Great Britain, renders them judges against whose competency I must except, when the question is concerning the introduction of British religion, British morals, and British manners, among the inhabitants of British India.

And now, Sir, I shall do little more than allude to another class of enormities, which by that very enormity, are in some measure shielded from the detestation they would otherwise incur: **I allude to the various obscene and bloody rites of their idolatrous ceremonies, with all their unutterable abominations.\*** A vain attempt has been made in a single instance to do away this charge; but had the endeavour succeeded, instead of utterly failing, as it certainly did, what would it avail when the obscene and bloody nature of the Hindoo superstitions is established by a cloud of witnesses; and I will add, **when from our more intimate acquaintance with the language, books, and institutions of the natives, the light of day is at length beginning to shine into these dens of darkness, and to expose their foul contents to our disgust and abhorrence.\*** We might easily anticipate, that the people's being accustomed to witness the most disgustingly indecent exhibitions,\*\* in broad day, must have the effect of destroying all that natural modesty which the Almighty has implanted in us for the most beneficial purposes.

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**\*\*** I will give one instance only, as a specimen. It is related by an unexceptionable witness "I suppose, 2,000 men, women, and children, might be assembled. I observed, that one of the men standing before the idol in the boat, dancing and making indecent gestures, was stark naked. As the boat passed along, he was gazed at by the mob; nor could I perceive that this abominable action produced any other sensation than those of laughter. Before other images, young men, dressed in women's clothes, were dancing with other men, making indecent gestures. I cannot help thinking, but that the vilest mob in England would have arisen on these impudent beasts, and have almost torn them in pieces. I have seen the same abominations exhibited before our own door". Ward's Account of religion, & c. of Hindoos. 4to, Note p.306.

And such is in truth the fact : and a gentleman, whose name, if it were mentioned, would at once establish the undeniable truth of any statement which is made on his authority, has assured me, that whole families of both sexes and different ages, will witness together a sort of theatrical or pantomimical entertainment of the most shockingly indecent kind. Lord Cornwallis, much to his honour, shortly after his arrival in India, declined an invitation to an amusement of this indecent kind, to which he had been asked by the native of the highest rank in the settlement. Indeed, to all who have made it their business to study the nature of idolatrous worship in general, I scarcely need remark, that in its superstitious rites, there has commonly been found to be a natural alliance between obscenity and cruelty ; and of the Hindoo superstitions it may be truly affirmed, that they are scarcely less bloody than lascivious; and as the innate modesty of our nature is effaced by the one, so all the natural feelings of humanity are extinguished by the other. Hence it is, that, as in other instances, as well as in that of the burning of widows, we often read and hear of spectacles and incidents, which would deeply interest the feelings of most Europeans, being witnessed by the natives with utter insensibility. Were all considerations of humanity to be left out of the question, the consequence of some of the prevalent enormities would deserve our attention, even in a political view, on account of the numbers which fall victims to these pernicious superstitions. A gentleman of the highest integrity, and better qualified than almost any one else to form a correct judgment in this instance; I mean Dr. Carey, the missionary, has calculated, **that, taking in all the various modes and forms of destruction connected with the worship at the temple of Jaggernaut in Orissa, the lives of 100,000 human beings are annually expended in the service of that single idol.\***

It has often been truly remarked, particularly I think by the historian of America, that the moral character of a people may commonly be known from the nature and attributes of the objects of its worship. On this principle, we might have anticipated the moral condition of the Hindoos, by ascertaining the character of their deities. If it was truly affirmed of the old pagan mythology, that scarcely a crime could be committed, the perpetrator of which might not plead in his justification, the precedent of one of the national gods; far more truly may it be said, that in the adventures of the countless rabble of Hindoo deities, you may find every possible variety of every practicable crime. Here also, more truly than of old, every vice has its patron as well as its example. **Their divinities are absolute monsters of lust, injustice, wickedness and cruelty. In short, their religious system is one grand abomination.\*** Not but that I know you may sometimes find, in the sacred books of the Hindoos, acknowledgments of the unity of the great Creator of all things; but just as, from a passage of the same sort in Cicero, it would be contrary alike to reason and experience to argue, that the common pagan mythology was not the religion of the bulk of mankind in the ancient world; so it is far more absurd and groundless, to contend that more or fewer of the 33,000,000 of Hindoo gods, with their several attributes and adventures, do not constitute the theology of the bulk of the natives of India. **Both their civil and religious systems are radically and essentially the opposites of our own. Our religion is sublime, pure and beneficent. Theirs is mean, licentious, and cruel. Of our civil principles and condition, the common right of all ranks and classes to be governed, protected, and punished by equal laws, is the fundamental principle. Equality, in short, is the vital essence and the very glory of our English laws. Of theirs, the essential and universal pervading character is inequality;**

despotism in the higher classes, degradation and oppression in the lower. And such is the systematic oppression of this despotism, such its universal predominancy, that, not satisfied with condemning the wretched Soodras for life to their miserable debasement, (nay, death itself does not mend their condition), and endeavouring to make that degradation sure, by condemning them to ignorance as well as humiliation, the same inequalities pursue and harass their victims, in the various walks and occupations of life\*. If they engage in commerce, they are to pay 5 percent interest for money, while a bramin pays 1%, and the other two castes 2% and 3 percent. Their punishments are far more severe than those of the higher classes, for all crimes; although, with any but a Hindoo legislator, their inferior measure of knowledge might be held to extenuate their guilt. And are these systems which can meet not merely with supporters, but even with panegyrists, in a British House of Commons? But, Sir, I verily believe, nay, I am fully persuaded that our opponents would think and speak less favourably of the religious and moral system of the Hindoos if they knew it better; and when their eyes shall at length be irresistibly and fully, though tardily and reluctantly, opened to its real character, by that growing developement of its enormities which is daily effecting from the increased and increasing light cast on the subject by new publications, they will, I doubt not, be shocked to reflect of what a system they have been unwarily led to applaud the merits, and even contend for the continuance. I beg the House, Sir, to observe, that in all the statements I have made either of the moral character of the natives of India, or of the nature of their superstitious principles and observances, I have not grounded any of my assertions on the authority of Dr. Buchanan; and that, because I knew that endeavours had been diligently, I hope not successfully, used, to call in question the accuracy of his representations; and

therefore, if I could establish my positions by other witnesses, against whom no such prejudices prevailed as had been excited in Dr. Buchanan's instance, prudence suggested to me the expediency of preferring them. But, Sir, I should be shamefully wanting to the cause of justice and of truth, as well as of friendship, if I were not to protest against the prejudices to which I have alluded, as utterly groundless. I beg the House to mark my assertion, that although Dr. Buchanan's statements have been scrutinised with jealous eyes, I am yet to learn one single instance in which any of his statements have been proved erroneous. But his character shall be laid before the House by a less questionable authority than my own. Lord Wellesley has publicly recorded his estimate of Dr. Buchanan's merits, not merely by selecting him for the important office of vice- provost of the College of Calcutta, but by the terms which he used in communicating to the Directors his having appointed Dr. Buchanan to that important office: "I have also formed," says his lordship, "the highest expectations from the abilities, learning, temper, and morals of Mr. Buchanan, whose character is also well known in England, and particularly to Dr. Porteus, bishop of London; and To Dr. Milner, master of Queen's college in the University of Cambridge."

I will not affirm that Dr. Buchanan is exempt from the ordinary infirmities of our common nature; and that he who has published so much, of course in some cases, on the authority of others, may never have been misinformed, or may never have been betrayed into the slightest inaccuracy : but this, Sir, I say, and I will even leave it to be determined by those who entertain the strongest prejudices against Dr. Buchanan, and who may complain the most loudly of the supposed inaccuracy of his statements, whether, at least, his conduct was not that of one who was the most anxious and impartial inquirer after truth, and whether they themselves could have suggested any method by which the

correctness or incorrectness of his statements could be more decisively ascertained than that which he adopted. He did not wait, as his opponents have done in calling in question his supposed inaccuracies, till his return to England; but he published his chief work while yet in India. In order to draw more attention to it, he presented it to government; and it was in usual circulation for three years before he left Calcutta, on the very spot, and among the very people, whose opinions, institutions, and practices, were the subjects of his publication.

To those who have known as long, and as well as myself, the unblemished integrity of Dr. Buchanan in private life, this attestation to his character will be superfluous; but it is no more than paying a debt of justice to a man to whom India, I trust, will one day know, and I doubt not, acknowledge, the unspeakable obligations which she owes him, for the degree of zeal and perseverance, scarcely to be paralleled, with which, in contempt of misconstruction and obloquy, he continues to promote her best interests, and to render her services, the amount of which no human language can adequately express.

And now, Sir, I am persuaded, that in all who hear me, there can be but one common feeling of deep commiseration for the unhappy people whose sad state I have been describing to you; together with the most earnest wishes that we should commence, with prudence, but with zeal, our endeavours to communicate to those benighted regions, the genial life and warmth of our Christian principles and institutions, if it can be attempted without absolute ruin to our political interests in India. And if we were compelled by any irresistible urgency of political necessity, to abstain from the attempt, however cautiously and prudently it might be made, we should at least require this necessity to be clearly and indisputably established. For my own part, I confess,

that nothing but absolute demonstration could convince me of the existence of such a necessity. For I should deem it almost morally impossible, that there could be any country in the state in which India is proved, but too clearly, now to be, which would not be likely to find Christianity the most powerful of all expedients for improving its morals, and promoting alike its temporal and eternal welfare. And I rejoice, Sir, in being able to assure you, that **if we proceed with that prudence and caution with which all such measures should be conducted, the endeavour to communicate to our fellow-subjects in India, the benefits of Christian light and moral improvement may not only be made without danger, but what is more, that there is no way whatever by which we should be so likely to promote our political interests in India; because there is no other way by which we should so greatly strengthen the foundations of our government in that country. Here, Sir, as in the whole of our case, we stand on the sure and stable ground of fact and experience\*.**

Our opponents represent the natives of India as of such a jealous sensibility, wherever their religion is concerned, that on the most reserved and cautious endeavours to convince them of the errors of their system, and to bring them over to our purer faith, their passions would be at once inflamed to madness, and some violent explosion would infallibly ensue. If this, Sir, were true, how is it then that, for more than a century, Christian missionaries have been labouring in India, sometimes with considerable success, and yet we not only have heard of none of these tumults, but, as I before remarked, the missionaries themselves, who, admitting the statement of our opponents to be correct, must necessarily be supposed to be the objects of universal jealousy and even antipathy, have been, on the contrary, not only the most esteemed, but the most beloved and popular, individuals

in the country. No longer ago than in the year 1803, the missionaries of the venerable Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, as we learn from its report for that year, were eminently successful. Yet we heard of no insurrection, nay, of no discontent, in that part of the country; in short, we only knew of the proceedings at all from the correspondence published by the Society.

In that only instance in which our opponents have been enabled to find any just matter of complaint against any of the missionaries, or rather against any of the converts of the missionaries, (for it is only to them that any blame can be imputed), the transaction, taken altogether, and with all its consequences, tends strongly to confirm our conclusions, and to invalidate those of our adversaries. The story is this-- One of the native converts of the Baptist missionaries, translated into Persian, and printed without the knowledge of the missionaries, a sort of life of Mahomet, containing many abusive and highly objectionable passages. Of this book, 2,000 copies were struck off, and 300 got into circulation in and about Calcutta, that is, in the very district, where, of all others, the thickness of the population, and the consequent intercourse of the natives with each other, must naturally favour the diffusion of any popular discontent. Yet what was the result? Did the circumstance transpire in consequence of some sudden insurrection? Of all the three hundred copies, one alone was ever heard of. And what became of that? It was brought by the son of a native merchant to one of the Mahometan professors in the college at Calcutta, with a request that he would write an answer to it, and vindicate the honour of their prophet and the truth of the Mahometan faith. Could any thing indicate less of that headlong violence which we are told we are to expect from the natives, whenever we attempt to call in question the tenets of their religion, or to inculcate our own? Here was a case in which I grant there was imprudence; yet so far from producing

any commotion, it scarcely excited the smallest attention; and in the only instance in which it was noticed, it was in that temperate and cool way of reason and argument, which can never tend to the disturbance of the public peace, or to the endangering of our political interests. **The true conclusion, Sir, from the incident, would be, that the natives were so tolerant and patient in what concerns their religion, that even the grossest imprudence could not rouse them to anger\***. But I ought not to close my account of this transaction without remarking, that no such incident can ever take place again; for it was settled, and indeed willingly conceded by the missionaries themselves, that all publications should in future be inspected and licenced by a government officer, appointed for that purpose, before they should be sent into the world. Neither ought I to dismiss the subject, without remarking, that the whole conduct of the missionaries on this occasion was in the highest degree honourable to their Christian character, and such as could not but obtain for them, as it did, the warm approbation of their superiors.\* In truth, if they had behaved on this occasion otherwise than as they did, they would have acted in a manner wholly inconsistent with their own deliberate purpose; for among other general resolutions for the regulation of their conduct, into which they entered previously to their commencing their professional labours, there is one, the good sense and prudence, as well as the Christian meekness of which, ought to cover with shame those who speak of them as a set of hairbrained fanatics. A part of it is as follows: "It is necessary," they say "in our intercourse with the Hindoos, that, as far as we are able, we abstain from those things which would increase their prejudices

\* "We observe, with great satisfaction the temperate and respectful conduct of the Society of Missionaries, in the discussions which took place on the subject of the publications to which your attention was directed, and of the measures which you felt yourselves called upon to adopt," &c.— Letter of Aug. 1808, from the Court of Directors to their Presidency at Fort William in Bengal.

against the Gospel. Those parts of English manners which are most offensive to them should be kept out of sight; nor is it advisable at once to attack their prejudices by exhibiting with acrimony the sins of their gods; neither should we do violence to their images, nor interrupt their worship."\*

In truth, Sir, these Anabaptist missionaries, as, among other low epithets bestowed on them, they have been contemptuously termed, are entitled to our highest respect and admiration. One of them, Dr Carey, was originally in one of the lowest stations of society; but, under all the disadvantages of such a situation, he had the genius as well as benevolence to devise the plan which has since been pursued, of forming a society for communicating the blessings of Christian light to the natives of India; and his first care was to qualify himself to act a distinguished part in that truly noble enterprise. He resolutely applied himself to the diligent study of the learned languages; after making a considerable proficiency in them, he applied himself to several of the oriental tongues, more especially to that which I understand is regarded as the parent of them all, the Shanscrit: in which last, his proficiency is acknowledged to be far greater than that of Sir William Jones himself, or of any other European. Of several of these languages he has already published grammars, of one or two of them a dictionary, and he has in contemplation still greater literary enterprises. The very plan of one of them would excite the highest admiration and respect in every unprejudiced literary mind. All this time, Sir, he is labouring indefatigably as a missionary with a warmth of zeal only equalled by that with which he prosecutes his literary labours. Merit like this could not escape the distinguishing eye of lord Wellesley, who appointed him to be professor of the Shanscrit, and of another of the native languages in the college at Calcutta. Another of these Anabaptist missionaries, Mr. Marshman, has established a seminary

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\* See Baptist Missionary Society's Report.

for the cultivation of the Chinese language, which he has studied with a success scarcely inferior to that of Dr Carey in the Shanscrit.

On more than one occasion, at the annual examinations at the college at Calcutta, the highest eulogium was pronounced both on Carey and Marshman, by the governor general and the happiest consequences were predicted from the prosecution of their literary laborours.\*

It is a merit of a more vulgar sort, but to those who are blind to their moral and even their literary excellencies, it may perhaps afford an estimate of value better suited to their principles and habits of calculation, that these men, and Mr. Ward also, another of the missionaries, acquiring from 1,000 [pound sterling] to 1,500 [pound sterling] per annum each, by the various exercise of their talents, throw the whole into the common stock of the mission, which they thus support by their pecuniary contributions

\* I ought not to omit the honourable testimony which has been borne to these extraordinary men by the rev. Dr. Marsh of Cambridge. After some account of their literary labours, he proceeds: "Such are the exertions of those extraordinary men, the missionaries at Serampore, who in the course of eleven years from the commencement of 1800, to the latest accounts, have contributed so much to the translation and dispersion of the Scriptures in the Oriental languages, that the united efforts of no society whatever can be compared with them. These are the men who, before the Bible Society existed, formed the grand design of translating the Scriptures into all the languages of the East; these are the men who have been the grand instruments in the execution of this stupendous work; these are the men who are best qualified to complete the design so nobly begun, and hitherto so successfully performed, who in the knowledge of language which they themselves have acquired, - who in the seminary at Serampore, designed for the education of future translators, - who in there extensive connection with men of learning throughout the East, - who in the missionary printing office, so well supplied with type of almost every description, - and who in the extensive supplies afforded by the Baptist Society, augmented by their own noble contribution, are in possession of the means which are required for that important purpose. These are the men, therefore, who are entitled to the thank of the British public."

only less effectually than by their researches and labours of a higher order. Such, Sir, are the exertions, such the merits, such the success, of these great and good men, for so I shall not hesitate to term them.

The hon. gentleman concluded with apologising to the committee for the time he had occupied, and declaring that he should cordially support the Resolution.

**SECOND SPEECH OF MR. WILBERFORCE\***

*Mr. Wilberforce* rose for the purpose of making a few observations in answer to the speech of the honourable member who had just sat down.

With the well-founded claims, (said Mr. Wilberforce,) which, on a former evening, I stated the missionaries to have to your respect, it will not, I trust, be very injurious to them, to have this-night received in this House the contemptuous appellations of Anabaptists and Fanatics. For my own part, I have lived too long to be much affected by such epithets, whether applied to others or to myself. But I confess, Sir, that it was not without some surprize, as well as concern, that I heard these missionaries spoken of in a style like this, by a gentleman whose eloquent exhibition this day, certainly indicates a liberal education and an instructed mind. It has been truly stated by perhaps the greatest philosopher as well as one of the ablest writers of the present day,\*\* that to have the mind occupied with little blemishes where they are associated with real and great excellencies, is by no means an evidence of superior intellectual or moral acuteness or refinement, but that it rather indicates a contracted understanding, and a vitiated taste. And I confess, Sir, that if there had been any little foibles or infirmities (of none of which however I am aware) in men of such exalted merit as those of whom I am now speaking, it might have been expected that the eye of every generous observer would be so filled and captivated with their excellencies, as to have no power, no leisure, to perceive their defects. But what shall we say? What estimate shall we form of the judgement of

\* Taken from Hansard: July 1. 1813, Columns 1051-1080.

\*\* Mr. Dugald Stewart.

some of our opponents in this cause, and of their candour towards those who support it, when in the want of any defect in character, or even in conduct, to be imputed to the missionaries, such terms as Anabaptist and Fanatic are applied to them. It has justly been said to be a sign that men begin to find themselves lacking in arguments, when they begin to call names. But I own, Sir, I should have conceived, that let the consciousness of that want have pressed ever so severely, the missionaries would have been shielded against such attacks as these, from any assailant of a cultivated mind, by their having conceived, and planned, and in the face of much opposition undertaken, and so long persevered in carrying on, at a vast expence of time and study and money, such dignified, beneficial, and disinterested labours.

Anabaptists and Fanatics! These, Sir, are men not to be so disposed of. Far different was the impression which they produced on the mind of the marquis Wellesley; far different the language he has bestowed on them. While in India, he patronised their literary labours; and very lately, in another place, publicly and on a solemn occasion, after describing, with a singular felicity of expression which must have fixed his words in every hearer's memory, their claim to the protection, though not to the direct encouragement of government, he did them the honour of stating, that though he had no concern with them as missionaries, they were known to him as men of learning. In fact, Sir, the qualifications which several of them have exhibited are truly extraordinary. And while the thoughts of a Christian observer of them, and of their past and present circumstances, would naturally dwell on that providential ordination by which such uncommon men had been led to engage in that important service, and would thence perhaps derive no ill-grounded hope of the ultimate success of their labours; even a philosophical mind, if free from prejudice, could not but recognize in them an extraordinary union of various,

and in some sort contradictory, qualities;— zeal combined with meekness, love with sobriety, courage and energy with prudence and preseverance. To this assemblage also, I may add another union, which, if less rare, is still uncommon, - great animation and diligence as students, with no less assiduity and efficiency as missionaries. When to these qualifications we superadd that generosity which, if exercised in any other cause, would have received as well as deserved the name of splendid munificence; and when we call to mind that it is by motives of unfeigned, though it had been misguided, benevolence, that these men were prompted to quit their native country, and devote themselves for life to their beneficent labours; is there not, on the whole, a character justly entitled at least to common respect? And may I not justly charge it to the score of prejudice, that the hon. gentleman can here find only objects of contempt and aversion? For my part, Sir, I confess the sensations excited in my mind are of a very different kind, and I would express them in the words, if I could recollect them with accuracy, which were used by a learned prelate (bishop Hord) on a similar occasion, by acknowledging, that I can only admire that eminence of merit which I despair myself to reach, and bow before such exalted virtue.

But of all the ground that has been taken by our opponents, that on which they appear to conceive themselves the strongest is, **the mutiny at Vellore**.\* On no subject has there ever prevailed more gross, and, among our opponents, more obstinate misconception. For I hesitate not to declare, that this sad transaction, fully reviewed and fairly considered, will shew, like the circumstance which I lately mentioned of the obnoxious Mahometan pamphlet, that the natives are very far from being as jealous and resentful of the most distant approaches towards any interference with their peculiar institutions as our opponents have

represented them to be. Let me however entreat you always to bear in mind, that it is no rude attack on their native superstitions which we are meditating, but only that prudent and gradual communication of light and truth which will cause the natives themselves spontaneously to abandon them.

The leading particulars of the Vellore mutiny are so generally known, that I need not give you the pain you would suffer from hearing a fresh recital of the melancholy detail. Indeed, from motives of delicacy towards justly respectable individuals, I wish to forbear entering minutely into particulars; the most detailed inquiry into which, however, would only serve to strengthen my conclusions.

But before I proceed to touch lightly on this melancholy subject, permit me to remark, that it has been the common infirmity of our species in all uncivilized and uneducated nations, to overvalue their own peculiar customs and institutions, and sometimes to be devoted to them with such an excessive fondness of attachment, that a degree of power which has been sufficient to sway the people at its will in more important matters, has been forced in these to feel and acknowledge its own inferiority. Peter the Great, we know, in all the plenitude of his power, in vain endeavoured to force the Muscovites into the shaving of their beards; and the page of history furnishes other instances which inculcate the same lesson. But where the force of religion also intervenes, the principle becomes still stronger and more efficient. Indeed, in addressing an assembly so enlightened as this, I scarcely need remark, that men in general, in proportion as they have been uneducated and uninformed, have commonly been found to feel an extravagant attachment to the exterior symbols and observances of their various systems of religion; and, in truth, that the religion of the bulk of mankind has too often consisted altogether in these exterior ceremonies. **Hence it would be the part of true wisdom, and I am sure, for I say it on the authority of**

**Scripture, of true Christianity also, in communicating to any people the principles of a purer faith, to leave them in quiet possession of these petty distinctions, instead of attacking or outraging them, reasonably trusting, that when the judgments of their converts should be convinced of the falsehood of their old principles, these distinctive characteristics of them would drop off of themselves. \***

If this be true, nay, indisputable reasoning, verified by the experience of all times and all countries, what a comment on them shall we find in the proceedings which led to the fatal mutiny at Vellore! Though in the progress of that unhappy affair, the deposed family of Tippoo Sultan were found very naturally to have fomented the disaffection which prevailed, yet I have the highest authority, that of the governor of Madras himself, confirmed also by the deliberate judgment of the Court of Directors, pronounced after a full investigation of the whole business, for saying, "that whatever difference of opinion the dispute respecting the more remote or primary causes of the mutiny may have occasioned, there has always prevailed but one sentiment respecting the immediate causes of that event. These are, on all hands, admitted to have been certain military regulations, then recently introduced into the Madras army." These regulations were, the ordering "the sepoys to appear on parade with their chins clean shaved, and the hair on the upper lip cut after the same pattern; and never to wear the distinguishing marks of caste, or ear-rings when, in uniform," and "the ordering, for the use of the sepoys, a turban of a new pattern."\*\*

\*\* It is due to the highly respectable officer, who was at that time first in command in the carnatic, to state, that he appears to have been misled by the erroneous judgment of some officers of long experience in the Indian army, as well as (in the instance of the new turban) by a Court of Inquiry, into conceiving that no bad consequences would result from the new regulations; and having once commanded them to be introduced, it became a matter of extreme doubt and difficulty to decide whether it would be best to retract or enforce the orders.

Such were the new regulations; and how were these obnoxious regulations enforced? How was the rising discontent treated which these changes began to produce? Was it by argument and persuasion, the only weapons in the missionary armoury? The refractory non commissioned officers were ordered to be reduced to the ranks; nineteen of the ringleaders (privates) were condemned to receive severe corporal punishment, and to be dismissed the Company's service, as turbulent and unworthy subjects; the greater part of these offenders, shewing strong signs of contrition, were indeed forgiven; **but the sentence was executed in front of the garrison on two of them, each receiving 900 lashes\***. Can we wonder at the sequel? Though the flame appeared for a while to be smothered and suppressed, the fire burnt in secret with only the greater vehemence. Can we be surprised that secret oaths began to be administered, and secret engagements to be made? While to these religious discontents, combined

with all those bad passions which raged the more violently because they durst not shew themselves but raged in secret, was superadded a political cause of powerful efficiency. The adherents of the deposed sovereigns of Mysore, who were in custody in that part of the country, fanned the rising flame, and used every method for increasing the general discontent. For a time the volcano burnt inwardly, until at length, on the 10th of July, the fatal eruption took place, the dreadful circumstances of which are too well known to need enumeration. Can we wonder, Sir, that such causes as I have stated should have produced such effects? That which may more justly excite our wonder is, that such discontents as these were so easily quieted. But so it was; for, though the obnoxious regulations, strange to say, being still persisted in, a repetition of mutinies, followed perhaps by the same dreadful consequences, appeared likely to ensue, yet no sooner were the offensive

alterations abandoned, than all was order and obedience. "About the 21st of July the same regulations were ordered to be introduced in the subsidiary force as Hyderabad, when the turban, the orders respecting the marks of caste, ear-rings, and whiskers, threw the whole of that force, amounting to 10,000 men, into the utmost disorder. They resolved not to submit to the new regulations, and every thing was ripening for an open revolt, when by the revocation of the orders the tumult was instantly allayed, and the troops resumed their obedience." "The tranquillity," says the governor of Madras, "which at that place instantaneously followed a revocation of the orders, sufficiently marked the true cause of disaffection. The revocation, as I have been assured by an eye-witness, operated on the troops with the suddenness and efficacy of a charm."-- That when the troops were on the very point of breaking out into open mutiny, the revocation of the obnoxious order should in a moment calm the storm, is a decisive proof that the men who in such circumstances could at once hear and obey the voice of reason, were men of well-disposed and temperate minds, who had been slowly and with difficulty urged into resistance, rather than that they were men of the quick and eager, and irritable spirit which the natives of India are alleged by our opponents to display whenever their peculiar opinions and institutions are ever so temperately opposed.

Though for many reasons I wish not to enter more particularly than is absolutely necessary into the various circumstances which followed and were connected with the Vellore mutiny, yet in justice to the great cause for which I am contending, it is fit that I should state, that after the Vellore mutiny, an undue and unreasonable degree of suspicion and distrust prevailed for some time throughout all that part of India. This was naturally produced by the suddenness of the explosion, combined with a consciousness that it was commonly supposed that there had been

a great if not a faulty want of vigilance and attention to various circumstances which preceded its actually breaking out, and ought to have suggested the necessity of precautionary measures for preventing that catastrophe. "Till that period," says the governor of Madras, "the confidence of the European officers in the affection of their sepoys had been literally unlimited, and indeed found more than its justification in a fidelity which had stood the proof of a series of years, and of a vast variety of fortune. In the midst of this security a mine was sprung. The mutiny at Vellore overthrew all reliance on received principles, and produced a violent though not unnatural transition from the extreme of confidence to that of distrust. The officers were tortured by the conviction of a general plot; and, from the detached manner in which the Indian troops are cantoned, found themselves left to the mercy of traitors. All was suspense and horror; and in one instance, the agony of these emotions actually ended in insanity."

The noble writer himself illustrates the state of mind of which he is speaking, by another still more general and more lasting delusion, the Popish Plot. "The progress of the alarm created by the apprehension of the Popish Plot in the reign of Charles the second, as described by Hume (vol.6, p. 275), corresponds to a degree of curious exactness with the public feeling at Madras. Hume writes, 'while in this timorous and jealous disposition, the cry of a plot all of a sudden struck their ears. They were wakened from their slumber; and, like men affrighted in the dark, took every shadow for a spectre. The terror of each man became the source of terror to another. And an universal panic being diffused, reason and argument, and common sense and common humanity lost all influence over them.'" These generally prevailing apprehensions very naturally led to measures, which might have produced the very worst consequences if the native troops had been less attached to us at heart than they really were.-- Many useful reflections, and

of a nature highly favourable to our cause, will be suggested to the considerate mind by the preceding statement of Lord William Bentinck. I will only put it to every unprejudiced mind to declare, whether the above transactions do not account for the prevalence of a somewhat morbid degree of sensibility in many both of the civil and military gentlemen of India and their connections, when the probability and amount of the danger of interfering with the religious opinions of the natives are in question. That danger may perhaps have been estimated at too low a rate, and have been too little regarded, previously to the Vellore mutiny. If so, nothing can be more natural than that overweening confidence should be succeeded by feelings of a contrary nature. We all know the proneness of the human mind to pass from one extreme to its opposite.

And now, Sir, I have stated to you from the first authority the nature and causes of the Vellore mutiny; and, in the first place, may I not ask, if there was ever any attempt more atrociously unfair than to charge that event on there having been a greater number of missionaries than before, or on any increased diligence in the circulation of the Holy Scriptures? Yet, strange to say, such is the force of prejudice even in sagacious and honourable minds, that to these causes it has been in a considerable degree attributed.\* To disprove this assertion I might refer even to military authority, from which it would appear that there had been no such increased measure of attention to the propagation of our religion in that part of India, as to have had any share whatever in the production of the effect. "In no situation," says the respectable officer who was then commander-in-chief of the forces under the

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\* It is clearly proved in a pamphlet, written by Lord Teignmouth, and published in 1808, on the practicability, duty, and expediency of endeavouring to diffuse Christianity throughout India, that there had been no increase in the numbers of the missionaries or of the translation of the Scriptures.

Madras government (general Sir John Cradock), "have so few measures been pursued by British subjects for the conversion of the people to the religion which we profess. No Englishmen have hitherto been employed on this duty in the provinces of the peninsula; and from the almost total absence of religious establishments in the interior of the country, from the habits of life prevalent among military men, **it is a melancholy truth, that so unfrequent are the religious observances of officers doing duty with battalions, that the sepoys have not, until very lately, discovered the nature of the religion professed by the English.**"\*\*

And now, Sir, let me again ask you, after your having heard this brief account of the unhappy transactions connected with the Vellore mutiny, and I will confidently put the question to every unprejudiced mind, whether they afford any reasonable foundation for the inference which has been so precipitately drawn from them, that the morbid irritability of the natives in all that concerns their peculiar opinions and institutions is so great, as to render it infinitely dangerous to endeavour, even in the most temperate and guarded manner, to propagate among them a purer system of religion and morals. Be this however as it may, you will at least

\*\* It is right to state, that this neglect of the common offices of religion was by no means chargeable on the military gentlemen themselves; and to the honour of the military character it should be stated, that general Macdowall addressed a letter to the Madras government for the purpose of effecting a reform in that particular. In this letter he stated as his opinion, that **the indifference manifested by the European inhabitants of India in the adoration of the Supreme Being, which was ascribed to the want of places exclusively appropriated for divine service, was so far from being favourable even to our political interests, that the constructing of convenient chapels at a moderate expence, at all stations where European troops might probably be quartered, would render the British character more respected by the natives, and would be attended by no evil consequences.** \*\*

see, I am confident, and I beg it may be carefully kept in mind, that the persuasion of this morbid irritability did not exist in the minds of our military officers, when they issued their new regulations. Those ordinances rather indicated a persuasion of directly opposite sort;—that the natives were, even in their peculiar usages, so patient of provocation as to be very tardily and with great difficulty roused into resistance. But have we no reason to believe that this last impression, rather than that which now possesses the minds of our opponents, prevailed among the civil servants of the Company also, till their views were lately changed by their extravagant dread of missionaries? For has not my hon. friend (Mr. W. Smith) stated to you an incident which is decisive to this point; that they were not afraid of seizing the car and the idol of Jaggernaut himself for the payment of a deficient tribute? And as my hon. friend truly remarked, are we, after this transaction, to hear with patience, men, who in the way of business, when the raising of some paltry tax was the object in question, could treat thus contemptuously the most sacred religious usages of the natives, and that in the very moment and circumstances in which the insult would be most keenly felt:—can we, I repeat it, with patience hear the same class of men speaking the language we now hear, of the tender sensibility of the natives, in all that concerns their religious opinions and practices, being such, that our opposing them even by argument and persuasion, would be too hazardous to be attempted; and this, when the object in view is no less than that of rescuing sixty millions of our fellow-subjects from the lowest depths of moral degradation! There is a grossness of inconsistency here which would be beyond all precedent ridiculous, if the serious effects to be apprehended from it were not such as to excite in us the graver emotions of indignation and astonishment. I have dwelt the longer on the Vellore transactions, because I am convinced that, though most groundlessly, they have operated very powerfully

in producing, in the minds of many well-disposed persons, strong prejudices against the question for which I am now contending.

But the fair statement of these Vellore transactions, combined with the seizure of Jaggernaut and his car, will by no means have produced its just and full effect, if, besides dashing to the ground that superstructure of unjust prejudices which has been raised on the basis of this particular incident, it does not also contribute powerfully to strengthen the persuasion, which so many other circumstances concur to produce in us, that our opponents are absolutely run away with by their prejudices and prepossessions on this subject of Christianizing, if for brevity's sake I may so term it, the natives of India. In every controversy, it is highly important to be furnished with a standard, by which to judge of the soundness and correctness of the reasonings of the contending parties respectively. Now it fortunately happens, that in the Vellore business, on which our opponents have rested so much of their case, we are able to ascertain on what foundations they ground their opinions, to discover from what premises they draw their conclusions; and, as in this instance, in which that foundation and those premises can be scrutinized, we plainly see, that their opinions and conclusions are altogether unwarranted, we may fairly conclude it to be highly probable, that in other cases also, in which we have not the same opportunity of closely examining the grounds of their persuasions, those persuasions are equally unwarrantable. In short, Sir, our opponents shew us, that though, in other cases, men even of superior understandings and intelligence, we ought, on this subject, to except against their authority, because they are not so much under the guidance of their reason, as of their passions and their prejudices. Hence, like all men who are under the influence of prejudice, though otherwise reasonable and intelligent, they draw conclusions from slight and insufficient premises; they shut their eyes to unquestionable facts, and are led into gross errors and

inconsistencies. In truth, we see good reason to suspect, that when this contest commenced, our opponents were almost wholly unacquainted with the subject; that their minds were never called to it, till it had become a strongly-contested question, in which, as men are apt to do, they then took their side from the influence of their preconceived opinions.

But, Sir, as if to do away every remaining doubt which might still adhere to the most apprehensive minds, respecting the reasonableness of the alleged danger of our endeavouring, even temperately and cautiously, to enlighten and improve the natives of India, we are happily furnished with some particular instances in which the pernicious institutions of the natives have been combated and overcome. Indeed, the many improvements we have introduced among them, whether in our civil, judicial, financial or military system, are all examples of this kind; for in all these we had to contend against that formidable principle of unchangeableness, which attaches to all the Indian institutions, and has been supposed to indicate their sacred source, and to forbid our presuming to question their wisdom or expediency. But there are two remarkable instances of our successful endeavours to root out inveterate and pernicious practices, which from their being complete within themselves, and being therefore more detached than those which are parts of a large and complicated system, may be more advantageously brought under our review. For a more minute detail of the cases I am about to lay before you, I refer to the papers on the table.

In the first of the instances which I am about to mention, I am happy to state, that the benefactor of India was a noble man whom I may take the liberty of calling my noble friend (the marquis Wellesley). That nobleman, who, greatly to his honour, in the midst of all his political and military concerns, found leisure to attend to

the internal improvement of his government, and who, as if eager to avail himself of an opportunity of inculcating the real superiority of the honour to be obtained in bloodless victories over ignorance and error to those laurels that are reaped in the field of battle, founded the college at Calcutta, as a trophy to commemorate his success in the Mysore war. **The marquis Wellesley was informed, that a practice prevailed of sacrificing, at the change of every moon, many victims, chiefly children, to the river Ganges\*.** He wished to put an end to this horrid practice: but he was conscious, as all men of sense must be in such cases, that he must feel his way cautiously and tenderly. To those who had adopted the principles of our opponents, it would have been sufficient, I fear, to make them acquiesce in the continuance of this practice, to be told, that it had subsisted for many hundreds, perhaps even for thousands, of years. But my noble friend consulted no such advisers : he took counsel with his own excellent understanding, and humane heart; and the consequence soon followed—the practice was at an end. He conferred with some of the learned natives who were attached to the college, concerning the origin and principle of these horrid murders, and ascertained, that they were prescribed by no ordinance of religion, and that, probably, no objection would be made, no discontent produced, if they should be prohibited. They had gone on, from time immemorial, from the habit which had prevailed in India of suffering all such wicked and cruel practices to prevail, without question or opposition. A law therefore was issued, by the governor-general in council, declaring the practice to be henceforth murder punishable by death. **The law was obeyed, without a murmur : and not only have all the wretched victims, who would otherwise have been sacrificed, been since saved to the state;\*** but this cause at least has been taken from the number of those which injure the community in India more than in proportion to the direct loss of life they occasion, by their hardening and

depraving effects on the hearts and practice of the whole population.

But the second instance in which we are able to speak of a conquest already achieved over the native superstitions and cruelties of India, is of a still more striking nature, and where originally the obstacles were of a far more formidable character. It is now more than twenty years since Mr. Duncan, afterwards governor of Bombay, then resident at Benares, **learned that a custom existed, among a tribe of the natives in that neighbourhood, of murdering their female infants;\*** and he was able, through the influence of the British government (for the influence of government was in that instance used not only innocuously but successfully), to prevail on the tribe (the Rajkumars of Juanpore) to enter into a positive engagement, to abstain in future from such detestable acts; and that any of their number who should be guilty of them, should be expelled from their tribe.

**Thus the practice was abolished in Juanpore\*.** But it had been suggested by captain Wilford to Mr. Duncan, in his former inquiries concerning infanticide in India, that the Greek historians had stated it to prevail in the neighbourhood of Guzerat. Accordingly, recollecting the success of his former humane endeavour, he was animated by the benevolent desire of extending in that quarter also the triumphs of humanity. **After some inquiry he ascertained, that the practice of murdering the female infants was very general among the tribes of Jarejah and Cutch.\*** And so firmly had this detestable custom rooted itself, and so powerfully was it established, as to have overcome the strongest of the human instincts, a mother's love of her infant. Not only did these mothers assist in destroying their offspring, but even when the Musselman prejudices (Musselman prejudices observe, Sir! it is with shame that I pronounce the words!) occasionally interfered to preserve their offspring, they held these females in

the greatest contempt, calling them by a name which indicated that their fathers had derogated from their military caste, and were become pedlars. Governor Duncan's humane designs against this horrid practice were most ably and effectually furthered, and at length accomplished, by the resident, colonel Walker, who displayed on this occasion a sagacity, address, and firmness, as well as humanity, which are beyond all praise. The whole progress of this admirable enterprise is published to the world; and the leading particulars in Moor's Hindoo Infanticide, are now, on my motion, upon your table. Observe therefore, Sir, that here, as in other instances, I ground my arguments on attested, indisputable facts, and undeniable experience. Colonel Walker's attempt, at first, wore a very unpromising aspect. In return to a letter which he wrote to one of the chieftains of the tribe, reasoning with him on the cruelty of the practice, and urging him to discontinue it, he received an answer which would have been sufficient not only to discourage, but to intimidate, a less zealous, and, I may add, a less able adventurer. He was told, that it was "notorious that the Jarejahs had ben in the habit of killing their daughters for 4,900 Years; and that no doubt he was aware that all of God's creation, even the mighty emperors of Hindustan, Shah Jehan, Aurengzebe, and Akbar, had always preserved friendship with his court, and had never acted in that respect (female infanticide) unreasonably. Even the king of the world had never once thought of putting a stop to the custom which prevails amongst the Jarejahs, of kiling their daughters."

After much more in defence of the practice, he concludes with a declaration, which if somewhat ambiguously mysterious in its outset, is clear enough as to its meaning before it ends :—"God is the giver, and God is the taker away; if any one's affairs go to ruin, he must attribute his fortune to God. No one has until this day wantonly quarrelled with this Durbar, who has not in the end

suffered loss.”

“This Durbar wishes no one ill, nor has ever wantonly quarrelled with any one.”

“Do not address me again on this subject.”

Such, Sir, was the reception of colonel Walker’s first application to the chieftains of the Jarejahs. And even one of the mothers returned him an answer of the same hopeless tenor.

Now, Sir, let me fairly put it to the House, whether such an answer as this, to any application which had been made for putting an end to any instance of native superstition, would not have been deemed such a decisive proof that it was dangerous to proceed in the attempt, that any one who had advised that the endeavour should be still persevered in, would have drawn upon himself the epithets of fanatic and enthusiast : and it would perhaps have been thought, even by candid and humane men, that an excess of zeal only could prompt any one to a continuance of efforts which appeared not only hopeless, but even highly dangerous. Colonel Walker might even have obtained the praise of having engaged and done his best, in this work of humanity, though he had not been able to achieve it. But colonel Walker, Sir, was not so easily to be disheartened: colonel Walker’s humanity was not satisfied with enjoying this barren and unprofitable triumph: he persevered, but by the only prudent, the only just and legitimate, means : he took frequent occasions of discussing the subject in the court of justice, and of exposing the enormity of so unnatural a practice : and, that I may hasten to so welcome a conclusion, within twelvemonths of the day on which the letters which I lately quoted had been written, the very writers of those letters, together with the Jarejah tribes in general, formally abjured for the future the practice of infanticide, and declared themselves highly satisfied with the engagement which they made to that effect. To a man of principles and feelings such as colonel Walker’s must be, how

delightful must have been the recompence which about two years afterwards he received ! He took the opportunity afforded by his being in that neighbourhood, of causing to be brought to his tent, some of the infants which had been preserved : and let all who are now opposing us, listen to colonel Walker's account of the scene. "It was extremely gratifying on this occasion, to observe the triumph of nature, feeling, and parental affection, over prejudice and a horrid superstition : and that those who but a short period before would (as many of them had done) have doomed their infants to destruction without compunction, should now glory in their preservation, and dote on them with fondness. The Jarejah fathers, who but a short time back would not have listened to the preservation of their daughters, now exhibited them with pride and fondness. Their mothers and nurses also attended on this interesting occasion. True to the feelings which are found in other countries to prevail so forcibly, the emotions of nature here exhibited were extremely moving. The mothers placed their infants in the hands of colonel Walker, calling on him and their gods to protect what he alone had taught them to preserve. These infants they emphatically called 'his children.' And it is likely that this distinction will continue to exist for some years in Guzerat."

Why, Sir, with but one such incident as this, with but one such cordial to cheer us on our progress, we should be indeed faint-hearted, we should be indeed chargeable with being wanting in the zeal and spirit of perseverance which such a cause as ours inspires, if we could faint by the way, and not determine to go forward in the face of every obstacle, prudently indeed and cautiously, but firmly and resolutely, pressing on towards the great object of our endeavours. In fact, Sir, here, as in other cases, when you are engaged in the prosecution of a worthy end, by just and wise means, difficulties and obstacles disappear as we proceed; and the phantoms, not to call them bugbears, of ignorance

and error, melt away before the light of truth.

Had the noble lord, whom I have already mentioned, continued in India, it is highly probable that he would have achieved other conquests over the cruel practices of the natives of India. It is highly probable that he would have been able to put an end to the barbarous custom of widows destroying themselves; a custom which has been the disgrace of India for above two thousand years. But had the doctrines of our opponents continued to govern the practice of all the East India Company's servants in India, those two barbarous practices, the termination of which has been already effected, would still have carried on their destructive ravages. For let me ask our opponents, were these practices in any degree less firmly established, or of a later date, than various others which still continue? And with these instances before our eyes, in which the success of the efforts of humanity has been more rapid and more complete than probably our most sanguine expectations could anticipate, shall we suffer all the other detestable practices of India to prevail without the slightest attempt to put a stop to them? **And shall we at once admit the assertions of those who thus, in defiance alike of reason and experience, inculcate on us that it is infinitely dangerous, though ever so prudently and cautiously, to endeavour to substitute the reign of light and truth and happiness, for that of darkness, delusion, and misery?\***

**But, Sir, it is time to speak out, and to avow that I go much further than I have yet stated, and maintain, not only that it is safe to attempt, by reasonable and prudent methods, to introduce into India the blessings of Christian truth and moral improvement, but that true, aye, and imperious and urgent, policy, prescribe to us the same course\*. And let me not be misunderstood on this subject : I do not mean that I think our Indian empire rests on such firm foundations as to be shaken by no convulsions, and that therefore we may incur the risk of**

popular ferments with impunity : no, Sir; I frankly acknowledge, that I have long thought that we hold our East Indian possessions by a very precarious tenure. This is a topic on which it would be painful to expatiate, and perhaps imprudent to be particular; but the most cursory survey of the circumstances of our East Indian empire must be sufficient, in the minds of all who are ever so little read in the page of history, to justify the suspicion which I now intimate.

**On the most superficial view, what a sight does that empire exhibit to us! A little island obtaining and keeping possession of immense regions, and of a population of sixty millions that inhabit them, at the distance of half the globe from it! of inhabitants differing from us as widely as human differences can go! differences exterior and interior-differences physical, moral, social and domestic-in points of religion, morals, institutions, language, manners, customs, climate, colour, in short in almost every possible particular that human experience can suggest, or human imagination devise ! Such, Sir, is the partnership which we have formed; such rather the body with which we are incorporated, nay, almost assimilated and identified. Our oriental empire indeed is now a vast edifice; but the lofty and spacious fabric rests on the surface of the earth, without foundations. The trunk of the tree is of prodigious dimensions, and there is an exterior of gigantic strength. It has spread its branches widely around it, and there is an increasing abundance of foliage and of fruit; but the mighty mass rests on the ground merely by its superincumbent weight, instead of having shot its roots into the soil, and incorporated itself with the parent earth beneath it. Who does not know that the first great storm probably would lay such a giant prostrate? \***

**This, Sir, I fear, is but too just a representation of the state of our East Indian empire. Various passages in the papers on the**

table clearly illustrate and strongly confirm this position; sometimes they distinctly express it. In truth, Sir, are we at this time of day still to be taught that most important lesson, that no government can be really secure which does not rest on the affections of the governed; or at least on their persuasion that its maintenance and preservation are in some degree connected with their own well-being? And did we want the papers on the table to inform us, as, however, in more than one place, they do inform us, that notwithstanding the vast improvements we have introduced among the people of India, and the equity and humanity with which our government is administered, the native population is not attached to us? It might easily be shewn also, that many of the peculiar institutions of India, more especially that of its castes, greatly favours the transference of dominion from one conqueror to another. Then, the situation and neighbourhood of India ! Regions which have been again and again the prey of those vast Tartar hordes which at different times have descended like some mountain torrent, and have swept all before them with resistless fury ! Sir, would we render ourselves really secure against all such attacks, as well as against any, less perhaps to be dreaded, which our great European enemy may make upon us in that quarter, **let us endeavour to strike our roots into the soil, by the gradual introduction and establishment of our own principles and opinions; of our own laws, institutions, and manners; above all, as the source of every other improvement, of our religion, and consequently of our morals.\*** Why, Sir, if it were only that we should thereby render the subjects of our Asiatic empire a distinct and peculiar people; that we should create a sort of moral and political basis in the vast expanse of the Asiatic regions, and amidst the unnumbered myriads of its population, by this change we should render our East Indian dominions more secure, merely from the natural desire which men feel to preserve their own institutions, solely because they are their own, from invaders who would destroy

them. But far more than this;—are we so little aware of the vast superiority even of European laws and institutions, and far more of British laws and institutions, over those of Asia, as not to be prepared to predict with confidence, that the Indian community which should have exchanged its dark and bloody superstitions for the genial influence of Christian light and truth, would have experienced such an increase of civil order and security; of social pleasures and domestic comforts, as to be desirous of preserving the blessings it should have acquired; and can we doubt that it would be bound even by the ties of gratitude to those who had been the honoured instruments of communicating them? \*

Here again, Sir, we can answer this question from experience. We have a case precisely in point; by which, on a small scale, we are enabled to judge what would be the effects of the same experiment tried upon a larger. All around me have heard of the great Albuquerque, one of those extraordinary men who, nearly 300 years ago, raised to the highest pitch the glory of the Portuguese name in India.\*\* The commentaries of his son Bras de Albuquerque contain the following curious passage. “When Alf. de Albuquerque took the kingdom of Goa, he would not permit

\*\* For the above curious fact I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Southey, who has also been so obliging as to furnish me with the following curious and important fact, which from forgetfulness I omitted to mention in the House of Commons. When Joane de Barras wrote (a man who, for the extent of his researches, is worthy to be ranked with Herodotus), a fourth part of the population of Malabar consisted of native Moors; and the reason which he assigns for their rapid increase is, that they had obtained privileges from the king, and put themselves upon a level with the high castes, “for which reason many of the natives embraced their faith.” He says in another place, that “the natives esteemed it a great honour when the Moors took their daughters to wife.” The above fact plainly shews what has been abundantly confirmed to me by private testimony, that the real cause which renders the natives of India afraid of losing caste is not any religious scruple, but merely the dread of the many and great temporal evils which proceed from the loss.

that any woman from thenceforward should burn herself; and although to change their customs is equal to death, nevertheless they rejoiced in life, and said great good of him, because he commanded that they should not burn themselves." It is added, in proof of the veneration in which this great man was held by the natives, "that long after his death, when a Moor or Hindoo had received wrong, and could obtain no redress from the governor, the aggrieved person would go to Goa, to Albuquerque's tomb, and make an offering of oil at the lamp which burned before it, and call upon him for justice."

**And now, Sir, if I have proved to you as I trust I have irrefragably proved, that the state of our East Indian empire is such as to render it highly desirable to introduce among them the blessings of Christian light and moral improvement; that the idea of its being impracticable to do this is contrary alike to reason and to experience; that the attempt, if conducted prudently and cautiously, may be made with perfect safety to our political interests; nay, more, that it is the very course by which those interests may be most effectually promoted and secured; does it not follow from these premises as an irresistible conclusion, that we are clearly bound, nay, imperiously and urgently compelled, by the strongest obligations of duty, to support the proposition for which I now call upon you for your assent\*. But what is that proposition? Its only fault, if any, is, that it falls so far short of what the nature of the case requires. Is it that we should immediately devise and proceed without delay to execute, the great and good and necessary work of improving the religion and morals of our East Indian fellow-subjects? No; but only that we should not substantially and in effect prevent others from engaging in it. Nay, not even that; but that we should not prevent government having it in their power, with all due discretion, to give licences to proper**

persons to go to India and continue there, with a view of rendering to the natives this greatest of all services. Why, Sir, the commonest principles of toleration would give us much more than this. Where am I standing ? Where is it, and when, that I am arguing this question ? Is it not in the very assembly in which, within these few weeks, nothing but the clearest considerations of political expediency were held sufficient to justify our withholding from the Roman Catholics the enjoyment of the fullest measure of official as well as political advantages, and when you yourself, Sir,\*\* thought you felt yourself bound to continue some few official disabilities, acknowledged that it was with reluctance and even with pain ? And shall we now lay the religion which we ourselves profess under such a restraint in any part of our own dominions ? No, Sir: it is impossible : you will not, you cannot, act thus. But, in addition to what I have already said, it deserves well to be considered, that if we should fail in our present endeavour, and if Christianity should be, as it then would be, the only untolerated religion in the British dominions in India, the evil would not stop here. The want of toleration would not be merely a negative mischief; the severest persecution must infallibly ensue. For, assuredly, there are, and by God's help I trust there ever will be, both European and native teachers prepared in the face even of death itself, to diffuse the blessed truths of Christianity.

But let it never be forgotten, it is toleration only that we ask : we utterly disclaim all ideas of proceeding by methods of compulsion or authority. But surely I need not have vindicated myself from any such imputation. The very cause which I plead would have been sufficient to protect me from it. **Compulsion and Christianity ! Why, the very terms are at variance with each other : the ideas are incompatible. In the language of inspiration itself, Christianity has been called "the law of liberty." Her service, in the excellent formularies of our**

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\*\* The Speaker. See p. 321.

**Church, has been truly denominated “perfect freedom;” and they, let me add, will most advance her cause, who contend for it in her own spirit and character.\***

I have often been reminded, Sir, during the course of these discussions, of the similarity of the present case to another great contest of justice and humanity, in which, with many confederates far abler than myself, I was perseveringly and at length, blessed be God, successfully engaged some years ago. The resemblance I see is acknowledged by my hon. friend near me (Mr. William Smith), who is still faithful to the great principles which animated us in our former struggle, during the whole of which he was among the ablest as well as the most zealous and persevering of my associates.

**On that occasion, let it be remembered, it was our ultimate object, by putting an end to those destructive ravages, which, for centuries, had produced universal insecurity of person and property along a vast extent of the coast of Africa, and had thereby protracted the reign of darkness and barbarism in that quarter of the globe, to open a way for the natural progress of civilization and knowledge; of christian light and moral improvement :\*** so now, likewise, we are engaged in the blessed work of substituting light for darkness, and the reign of truth and justice and social order and domestic comfort, of substituting all that can elevate the character or add to the comfort of man, in the place of the most foul, degrading, and bloody system of superstition that ever depraved at once, and enslaved, the nature, and destroyed the happiness of our species. In the case of the slave trade, as well as in this, we had the misfortune to find ourselves opposed by many of those whose means of local information were certainly considerable, but whose notions of facts were so obscured or warped by prejudices or prepossessions, as to be rendered strangely

inaccurate and preposterous.

There, likewise, owing no doubt to the strange prejudices and prepossessions I have noticed, our opponents maintained, that there was no call whatever for the exercise of our humanity : that the slave trade, whatever our English notions of comfort might suggest to us, like the superstitious practices in India, added to the sum of human happiness, instead of lessening it; or at the least, we were wishing to make men happier against their will : and that so far from there being any need for our interference to improve the condition of the slaves in the West Indies, already they were as happy as the day was long; nay happier, for they danced all night. Consistently therefore with these opinions, they called upon us, just as we have been called upon this evening, to find some other and better selected sphere, for the exertions of our humanity. Really, the similarity of the two cases runs almost on all fours: for on that occasion, as well as now, we were assured that we should infallibly produce insurrections; while it might be truly affirmed in both cases, that the language of our opponents themselves was far more likely than ours to produce the apprehended evil. Happily, the West Indian predictions have been so far from verified in this particular, that I scarcely recollect any other period of the same length as that which has elapsed since we commenced our abolition-proceedings in which there had not been some insurrection or other. Sir, allow me to hope that the resemblance, which I have shewn to exist between the two cases with so striking an accordance, will be completed, by our finding, that notwithstanding the different views and expectations which different gentlemen have formed of the effects of this measure, we shall all rejoice over it together ere many years shall be completed, and find all the fancied mischiefs apprehended by our opponents disproved by the event. I beg, however, that it may be observed, that the resemblance which I have been describing is not merely

an illustration : it is an argument; and a very powerful one too it will appear to all who remember that we had then the misfortune to number many considerable men among our opponents; inasmuch as it shews how possible it is for men of eminent attainments to be misled, not merely into tolerating as an unavoidable evil, which it is only fair to confess was the argument of some of our opponents, but into supporting and panegyriizing, as warranted by the principles of justice and humanity, a cause, that now, after a few short years have expired, not a single man can be found to lift up his voice in its favour .

And now, Sir, if we suffer our imaginations to follow into its consequences the measure in which we are now engaged, and to look forward to the accomplishment of those hopes which I trust will be one day realized, what a prospect opens on our view ! **In the place of that degrading superstition, which now pervades those vast regions, Christianity, and the moral improvement which ever follows from its introduction, shall be diffused with all their blessed effects on individual character, and on social and domestic comfort. Surely, we here see a prize which it is worth contending for, at any cost of time and labour. And I can assure our opponents, that they are greatly deceived, if they imagine that we are likely to give up the contest, even if we should fail in our present attempt. Happily, Sir, it appears from the unprecedented number of petitions now on your table, that the importance of the question is duly appreciated by the public mind. And let it not be imagined that these petitions have been produced by a burst of momentary enthusiasm; that the zeal which has actuated the petitioners is a mere temporary flame, which will soon die away, and be exhausted. No, Sir: I am persuaded, that in proportion as the real condition of our Asiatic fellow-subjects shall be more generally known, the**

**feeling which has already been so forcibly expressed, will prevail still more extensively. If, therefore, our opponents really apprehend the greatest evils from discussing the subject, in common consistency with this opinion, they should suffer our question to pass, as the only way by which that discussion can be terminated. For they may be assured, that otherwise the public voice will call upon this House still more loudly than even it has now done. And assuredly, my friends who are associated with me in this great cause are animated with the same determination as myself, never to abandon it, either till success shall have crowned our efforts or till it shall appear utterly unattainable.\***

But after all, Sir, at the very moment when my friends and I were ready to raise the shout of victory, a proposition has been made to us by an hon. baronet, of which, though offered to us in the language, and by him, I do not deny, with the meaning of good will to our object, I must confess I am more afraid than of all the other modes of opposition we have experienced in the course of these discussions. I am the more afraid of it, because the plausible and specious appearance with which it comes forward is likely to render its hostility so much the more efficient and destructive. It accosts us with a language of this sort-- "We all mean the same thing: we all wish Christianity and moral improvement to be communicated to the natives of India: but we are afraid of the effects which will be produced in India by the appearance of your proposed clause on the statute book. Government may grant licences to persons to go over to India for religious purposes, as well as any others, under the general powers to be granted to them by the Bill. We must, therefore, resist your clause."

If what has been already stated to the House should not have sufficed for dispelling any apprehensions of a dangerous ferment being produced in the public mind of India, by the existence

in the statute book of the clause we have now proposed, all such fears will, I think, be removed, when I shall have read an extract from one of the volumes on your table, concerning the extreme difficulty that is experienced in India, in diffusing the most interesting intelligence throughout the mass of the people. Our opponents will assign more weight to the extract, because it is taken from Judge Strachey's Answers to Lord Wellesley's Interrogatories, "I take this opportunity," says he, "of remarking, that to render generally known any penal law, is extremely difficult, particularly among the lower orders of the people. Till they see the effect of it, they remain ignorant of it; and this in spite of advertisements and proclamations. News and information of all kinds are, in Bengal, slowly and inaccurately transmitted from one to another. Among us, events obtain publicity through the means of periodical prints, of epistolary correspondence, and of verbal communication. Among the natives, there is nothing of the two first, and even of the other hardly any."\*

After hearing the above extract, the House will not, I think, participate in the apprehensions which some gentlemen seem to entertain, that the mere insertion of this clause into our statute book may produce a dangerous commotion among the native population of India. Besides, Sir, as has been well remarked by my noble friend, (Lord Castlereagh) who, in truth, has treated the whole of this subject with extraordinary discretion and ability, the natives, if they should read the clause, which, however, is a highly improbable occurrence, will find in it, and find I believe for the first time expressed in terms, a clear recognition, an effectual security, of their right to preserve their religious principles and institutions sacred and inviolate. The clause thus framed, will therefore produce satisfaction among them rather than discontent, on that very subject of religion.

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\* Answer from Judge Strachey to Interrogatories, 30th Jan, 1802.

But, Sir, it is an additional argument, and with me I confess a very powerful one, for retaining this clause, that though the general power of granting licences with which the friends of the hon. baronet's motion would have us be satisfied, might provide sufficient openings for the sending over of missionaries to India, and for the employment of them there, so long as they should conduct themselves properly; which, however, I utterly deny; yet I beg the House ever to bear in mind, that my friends and I have far more in view in the measure we have been recommending, than merely the sending over and maintenance of missionaries. I beg they will recollect what I stated in one of the first sentences which I addressed to you, that **it is not merely for the purpose of enabling government to grant licences to missionaries that I support the present clause, but because, especially when taken in conjunction with the Resolution on which, according to the usage of parliament, it is founded; by affirming the duty of enlightening the minds and improving the morals of our East Indian fellow-subjects, it establishes the principle; it lays the ground for promoting education among them, and for diffusing useful knowledge of all kinds. When truth and reason, so long excluded from that benighted land, shall once more obtain access to it, (and we are this day engaged in the great work of breaking down that barrier which has hitherto substantially and practically excluded them), the understandings of the natives will begin to exert their powers; and their minds, once enlightened, will instinctively reject the profane absurdities of their theological, and the depraving vices of their moral system. Thus they will be prepared for the reception of Christianity, for "Christianity is a reasonable service," and then, we may appeal to the moral superiority of Christian Europe in modern times, in comparison with that of the most polished**

**pagan communities, for the blessed effects which may be expected to follow on their moral, their social, and, above all, their domestic comfort. \***

But, Sir, to return to the question concerning the necessity of retaining our clause; I cannot but hope, after all we have heard in the course of our discussions, and more especially after what has passed subsequently to the hon. baronet's motion for leaving out our clause; after all this, I repeat it, I cannot but indulge the hope, that all those at least, who were disposed to leave our clause out of the Bill, on the ground of its being unnecessary, if not dangerous, will at length discover, that some such clause as this is absolutely indispensable for accomplishing the desire, which they profess in common with us, of furnishing the means of introducing Christianity into India. Indeed, it ought to open their eyes to the real practical effect of their own amendment, that they who are the most decidedly hostile to the introduction of Christianity into India, so readily assent to it, or rather so warmly support it.

But, Sir, let me ask, do they not see that if the clause be left out, the act of parliament will contain no mention whatever of religion or morals? no recognition of its being our duty to endeavour to communicate to our East Indian fellow-subjects the blessings of Christian light and moral improvement? That recognition will still, I grant, be contained in the resolution of the House of Commons, as well as in that of the House of Lords; but let me ask, will not this be precisely the situation in which the clause has stood, and stood, alas! to no purpose, for the last twenty years? For on the renewal of the charter in 1793, both Houses of Parliament, as has been repeatedly stated, passed, and have ever since kept on their Journals, a Resolution similar to that which we have now adopted. But, as was unanswerably urged in defence of the Court of Directors, by one of the ablest and most active opponents of all attempts to convert the natives of India, this recognition, being

only contained in the Votes of the two Houses, but not in the act of the legislature, the executive body, whose business it was to carry into execution what parliament had prescribed by that Act, could not be chargeable with neglecting any duty which that statute had ordained, when, so far from favouring, they rather thwarted and hindered the attempts of the missionaries. The guilt, as was irresistibly argued by the writer just alluded to; the guilt, if any, of not having favoured the endeavours of individuals to convert the natives of India, was not justly chargeable on the East India Company's directors, nor yet on the Board of Controul, but on the legislature, **which prescribed to both the principles on which the government in India was to be conducted, but said not one syllable about religion or morals.\*** And if the present Act, like the former, were to leave religion and morals unmentioned, the same inference might fairly be drawn from the silence of the legislature; but with greatly increased force, since the enemies of East India missions would truly state, that the subject, which had formerly attracted little attention, had now been long under the consideration of parliament; and that, in the House of Commons especially, it had occasioned much debate. They would allege, that the advocates for religious and moral improvement of India had maintained, that the moral degradation of our East Indian fellow- subjects, and their pernicious and cruel institutions, rendered it eminently desirable that we should endeavour to impart to them a purer system of faith and morals; that the attempt was perfectly practicable, and that it might be made with safety, nay even with advantage to our political interests;—that, on the other hand, our opponents had maintained, that we were bringing forward an unnecessary, nay a most pernicious project; that the principles of the Hindoo religion were eminently pure, their practice superior to our own; but, were this more doubtful, that the endeavour could not be made without endangering the very existence of our empire

in India. Such, I say, it would be alleged, had been the state of the argument, and it would be added irresistibly, that parliament had shewn, by rejecting the clause which had been offered by the advocates for Christianity in India, that it disapproved the project they had proposed.

If any thing more could then be needed to supply additional force to the above argument, it would be the language which has at length been used by the ablest of our opponents. For happily, Sir, in the progress of our discussions, they have warmed in their course, one of them especially, to whose abilities and eloquence I pay no unwilling testimony, though **I must say that he has imposed on himself a task which exceeds his, or indeed any human abilities, in undertaking to reconcile the manifest inconsistency, of feeling the highest respect for Christianity, and of preserving at the same time any measure of reverence for the Hindoo religion, which, both in its theology and its morals, Christianity utterly abjures and condemns.\*** The hon. gentleman, however, has spoken out; (I thank him for it;) and has relieved the question from all ambiguity,—speaking in terms of high admiration of the excellence and sublimity of the Hindoo religion, and pretty plainly intimating that we, who are endeavouring to substitute Christianity in the place of it, are actuated by a zeal the most fanatical and absurd. Indeed, he frankly acknowledged to us, that he had it once in contemplation to move a clause, expressly forbidding all further attempts of Christian missionaries, leaving us to conclude that he abstained from so doing merely on prudential grounds. All this may be right, or it may be wrong; but after such sentiments have been uttered, and after the exulting approbation with which they were received by our opponents in general, let it no longer be said that we are all of one mind, all wishing alike for the diffusion of Christianity in India, but only differing as to the mode of accomplishing that desirable event.

**No, Sir; the question is now put on its true basis, and it clearly appears to be no other than this, whether, as Christianity is the religion of the British empire in Europe, the religion of Brahma and Vishnoo is not to be the acknowledged system of our Asiatic dominions.\***

I beg pardon, Sir, for having trespassed so long on the indulgence of the House : but the subject is one, the importance of which can scarcely be over-estimated. If, Sir, a British judge and jury, the former often at an advanced period of life, after a long course of professional labours, will sit patiently for more than an entire day to decide whether the life of some criminal shall be forfeited to the offended laws of his country; nay, even to settle some doubtful question of property; how much less will you grudge, even to me, a still larger portion of your time and attention than I have presumed to occupy, when you consider, that the question which we are now deciding involves not the prosperity, not the life merely of an individual, but the religious and moral interests, the temporal at once and the eternal wellbeing, of 60 millions of our fellow creatures!

## Chapter 4

# BRITISH AND EUROPEAN NEWER IMAGES OF INDIA AFTER IT'S CONQUEST AND SUBJUGATION

INDIA CLASSED AS LOW AND DEGRADED IN  
EARLY 19TH CENTURY BRITAIN

### **General Reflections on the Hindoos\***

by  
**James Mill**

To ascertain the true state of the Hindus in the scale of civilization, is not only an object of curiosity in the history of human nature; but to the people of Great Britain, charged as they are with the government of that great portion of the human species, it is an object of the highest practical importance. No scheme of government can happily conduce to the ends of government, unless it is adapted to the state of the people for whose use it is intended. In those diversities in the state of civilization, which approach the extremes, this truth is universally acknowledged. Should any one propose, for a band of roving Tartars, the regulations adapted to the happiness of a regular and polished society, he would meet with neglect or derision. The inconveniences are only more

\* History of British India (3 vols, 1817), vol I, Chapter 10. The History has been reprinted time and again till about 1940. It is said that it was essential reading for civil and military officers of the British Raj in India, and perhaps also of all western educated Indians. From around 1850 the History began to be published with innumerable footnotes, and also supplemented by an account of some later years by H. H. Wilson. The text reproduced here had 118 footnotes by Mr. Wilson. These are not included here.

concealed and more or less diminished, when the error relates to states of society which more nearly resemble one another. **If the mistake in regard to Hindu society, committed by the British nation, and the British government, be very great, if they have conceived the Hindus to be a people of high civilization, while they have in reality made but a few of the earliest steps in the progress to civilization, it is impossible that in many of the measures pursued for the government of that people, the mark aimed at should not have been wrong.\***

The preceding induction of particulars, embracing the religion, the laws, the government, the manners, the arts, the sciences, and literature, of the Hindus, affords, it is presumed, the materials from which a correct judgment may, at last, be formed of their progress toward the high attainments of civilized life. That induction, and the comparisons to which it led, have occupied us long, but not longer, it is hoped, than the importance of the subject demanded, and the obstinacy of the mistakes which it was the object of it to remove.

**The reports of a high state of civilization in the East were common even among the civilized nations of ancient Europe.\*** But the acquaintance of the Greeks and Romans with any of the nations of Asia, except the Persians alone, was so imperfect, and among the circumstances which they state so many are incredible and ridiculous, that **in the information we receive from them on this subject, no confidence can be reposed.\***

Of the modern Europeans, the individuals who first obtained a tolerable acquaintance with any of the nations of the East, were the popish missionaries, chiefly the Jesuits, who selected China for the scene of their apostolical labours. Visiting a people who already composed a vast society, and exhibited many, though fallacious, marks of riches, while Europe as yet was everywhere

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\* Emphasis, whenever it occurs, has been added by the Compiler.

poor; and feeling, as it was natural for them to feel, that the more they could excite among their countrymen an admiration of the people whom they described, the greater would be the portion of that flattering sentiment, which would redound upon themselves, these missionaries were eager to conceive, and still more eager to propagate, the most hyperbolical ideas of the arts, the sciences, and institutions of the Chinese. As it is almost always more pleasing, and certainly far more easy, to believe, than to scrutinize; and as the human mind in Europe, at the time when these accounts were first presented, was much less powerful, and penetrating, than it is at present, they were received with almost implicit credulity. The influence of this first impression lasted so long, that even to Voltaire, a keen-eyed and sceptical judge, the Chinese, of almost all nations, are the objects of the loudest and most unqualified praise. The state of belief in Europe has, through the scrutiny of facts, been of late approximating to sobriety on the attainments of the Chinese, and a short period longer will probably reduce it to the scale of reason and fact.

It was under circumstances highly similar, that the earliest of the modern travellers drew up and presented their accounts of Hindustan. The empire of the Moghuls was in its meridian splendour. It extended over the principal part of India; and the court, the army, and the establishments of Akbar or Aurangzeb, exhibited that gorgeous exterior, that air of grandeur and power, which were well calculated to impose upon the imagination of an unphilosophical observer.

It was unfortunate that a mind so pure, so warm in the pursuit of truth, and so devoted to oriental learning, as that of Sir William Jones, should have adopted the hypothesis of a high state of civilization in the principal countries of Asia. This he supported with all the advantages of an imposing manner, and a brilliant reputation; and gained for it so great a credit, that for a time it

would have been very difficult to obtain a hearing against it.

Beside the illusions with which the fancy magnifies the importance of a favourite pursuit, Sir William was actuated by the virtuous design of exalting the Hindus in the eyes of their European masters; and thence ameliorating the temper of the government; while his mind had scope for error in the vague and indeterminate notions which it still retained of the signs of social improvement. The term civilization was by him, as by most men, attached to no fixed and definite assemblage of ideas. With the exception of some of the lowest states of society in which human beings have been found, it was applied to nations in all the stages of social advancement.

It is not easy to describe the characteristics of the different stages of social progress. It is not from one feature, or from two, that a just conclusion can be drawn. In these it sometimes happens that nations resemble which are placed at stages considerably remote. It is from a joint view of all the great circumstances taken together, that their progress can be ascertained; and it is from an accurate comparison, grounded on these general views, that a scale of civilization can be formed, on which the relative position of nations may be accurately marked.

Notwithstanding all that modern philosophy had performed for the elucidation of history, very little had been attempted in this great department, at that time when the notions of Sir William Jones were formed; and so crude were his ideas on the subject, that the rhapsodies of Rousseau on the virtue and happiness of the savage life surpass not the panegyrics of Sir William on the wild, comfortless, predatory, and ferocious state of the wandering Arabs. "Except," says he, "when their tribes are engaged in war, they spend their days in watching their flocks and camels, or in repeating their native songs, which they pour out almost extempore, professing a contempt for the stately pillars and solemn buildings

of the cities, compared with the natural charms of the country, and the coolness of their tents: thus they pass their lives in the highest pleasure of which they have any conception, in the contemplation of the most delightful objects, and in the enjoyment of perpetual spring.” “If courtesy,” he observes, “and urbanity, a love of poetry and eloquence, and the practice of exalted virtues, be a just measure of perfect society, we have certain proof that the people of Arabia, both on plains and in cities, in republican and monarchical states, were eminently civilized for many ages before their conquest of Persia.” We need not wonder if the man, who wrote and delivered this, found the Hindus arrived at the highest civilization. Yet the very same author, in the very same discourse, and speaking of the same people, declared, “I find no trace among them till their emigration of any philosophy but ethics;” and even of this he says, “The distinguishing virtues which they boasted of inculcating, were a contempt of riches and even of death; but in the age of the seven poets, their liberality had deviated into mad profusion, their courage into ferocity, and their patience into an obstinate spirit of encountering fruitless dangers.” He adds: “The only *arts* in which they pretended to excellence (I except horsemanship and military accomplishments) were poetry and rhetoric.” It can hardly be affirmed that these facts are less than wonderful as regarding a people “eminently civilized;” a people exhibiting “a just measure of perfect society.”

Among the causes which excited to the tone of eulogy adopted with regard to the Hindus, one undoubtedly was, the affectation of candour. Of rude and uncultivated nations, and also of rude and uncultivated individuals, it is a characteristic, to admire only the system of manners, of ideas, and of institutions to which they have been accustomed, despising others. The most cultivated nations of Europe had but recently discovered the weakness of this propensity: Novelty rendered exemption from it a source of

distinction: To prove his superiority to the prejudices of home, by admiring and applauding the manners and institutions of Asia, became, therefore, in the breast of the traveller, a motive of no inconsiderable power.

The nations of Europe became acquainted, nearly about the same period, with the people of America, and the people of Hindustan. Having contemplated in the one, a people without fixed habitations, without political institutions, and with hardly any other arts than those indispensably necessary for the preservation of existence, they hastily concluded, upon the sight of another people, inhabiting great cities, cultivating the soil, connected together by an artificial system of subordination, exhibiting monuments of great antiquity, cultivating a species of literature, exercising arts, and obeying a monarch whose sway was extensive, and his court magnificent, that they had suddenly passed from the one extreme of civilization to the other. **The Hindus were compared with the savages of America; the circumstances in which they differed from that barbarous people, were the circumstances in which they corresponded with the most cultivated nations; other circumstances were overlooked; and it seems to have been little suspected that conclusions too favourable could possibly be drawn. \***

The progress of knowledge, and the force of observation, demonstrated the necessity of regarding the actual state of the Hindus as little removed from that of half-civilized nations. The saving hypothesis, however, was immediately adopted, that the situation in which the Hindus are now beheld is a state of degradation; that formerly they were in a state of high civilization; from which they had fallen through the miseries of foreign conquest, and subjugation.

This was a theory invented to preserve as much as actual observation would allow to be preserved, of a pre-established

and favourite creed. It was not an inference from what was already known. It was a gratuitous assumption. It preceded inquiry, and no inquiry was welcome, but that which yielded matter for its support.

To this purpose were adapted the pretensions of the Brahmans, who spoke of an antecedent period, when the sovereigns of Hindustan were masters of great power and great magnificence. It was of importance to weigh these pretensions; because the rude writers of rude nations have almost always spoken of antecedent times as deserving all the praise with which their powers of rhetoric or song could exalt them. If the descriptions of antiquity presented by the Brahmans bore the consistent marks of truth and reality, a degree of intrinsic evidence would be attached to them. If these descriptions flew wide of all resemblance to human affairs, and were nothing but wild unnatural fictions, they would be so far from proving an antecedent state of knowledge and civilization, that they would prove the reverse. And, had the Hindus remained fixed from the earliest ages in the semibarbarous state, it is most certain that the Brahmans would have given to us just such accounts of antiquity as those we have actually received at their hands.

**As the Hindus have enlightened us by no record of antecedent events, and we thus have no immediate proof of their state of civilization, in the times that are past, the only sure ground of inference is the laws and institutions which they framed, the manners they adopted, and the arts and sciences to which they attended.\*** If these great circumstances were at variance with the existing state of society, but adapted to one more advanced, the inference would certainly be a probable one, that to a period when society was in that improved condition, they really owed their birth. But in regard to the Hindus, their laws and institutions are adapted to the very state of society which

those who visit them now behold. **They are laws and institutions which, so far from importing any more perfect state of society, seem entirely inconsistent with it; such as could neither begin, nor exist, under any other than one of the rudest and weakest states of the human mind.\*** As the manners, the arts and sciences, of the ancient Hindus are entirely correspondent to the state of their laws and institutions, every thing we *know* of the ancient state of Hindustan conspires to prove that it was rude.

It is another important fact, that, if the Hindus had ever been placed in this pretended state of civilization, we know of no such period of calamity, as was sufficient to reduce them to a state of ignorance and barbarity. The conquest of Hindustan, effected by the Mahomedan nations, was to no extraordinary degree sanguinary or destructive. It substituted sovereigns of one race to sovereigns of another, and mixed with the old inhabitants a small proportion of new; but it altered not the texture of society; it altered not the language of the country; the original inhabitants remained the occupants of the soil; they continued to be governed by their own laws and institutions; nay, the whole detail of administration, with the exception of the army, and a few of the more prominent situations, remained invariably in the hands of the native magistrates and officers. The few occasions of persecution, to which, under the reigns of one or two bigoted sovereigns, they were subjected on the score of religion, were too short and too partial to produce any considerable effects.

When we look for the particulars of those pretended reigns of mighty kings, the universal lords of India, under whom science flourished, and civilization rose to the greatest height, we meet with nothing but fable, more wild, and inconsistent, and hyperbolical, than is anywhere else to be found. From this no rational conclusion can be drawn, except that it is the production

of a rude and irrational age. Bharat, or Bharata, is said to have been the first universal sovereign of India, which from him derived its name; India, in the language of the natives is *Bharat Varsha*. In this, however, as usual, the Hindu accounts contradict themselves, since Bharat is represented as preceding Rama, the son of Kush, who, according to Sir William Jones, might have established the *first* regular government in India. Yudhister is another of these universal sovereigns; but of him even the origin is allegorical; he is the son of Dharma, or the god of justice, and he reigned 27,000 years. The name, with which, chiefly, the idea of the universal sovereignty of India, and the glory of art and science, is combined, is that of Vikramaditya. Of him, let us hear what is represented; and then we shall be enabled to judge. "The two periods," says Captain Wilford, "of Vikramaditya and Salivahana are intimately connected; and the accounts we have of these two extraordinary personages are much confused, teeming with contradictions and absurdities to a surprising degree. In general the Hindus know but of one Vikramaditya; but the learned acknowledge four; and when, at my request, they produced written authorities, I was greatly surprised to find no less than eight or nine.—Vikramaditya made a desperate *tapasya*, in order to obtain power and a long life from *Kalidevi*, and as she seemingly continued deaf to his entreaties, he was going to cut off his own head, when she appeared, and granted him undisturbed sway over all the world for one thousand years, after which a divine child, born of a virgin, and the son of the great TAKSHAKA, carpenter or artist, would deprive him both of his kingdom and of his life. This would happen in the year of the *kali yuga*, 3101, answering to the first of the Christian era. The history of these nine worthies, but more particularly when considered as a single individual, is a most crude and undigested mass of heterogeneous legends, taken from the apocryphal gospel of the infancy of Christ, the tales of

the Rabbis and Talmudists concerning Solomon, with some particulars about Mohammed; and the whole is jumbled together with some of the principal features of the history of the Persian kings of the Sassanian dynasty. Thus Vikrama is made contemporary with Solomon; and like him, he is said to have found the great *mantra*, spell or talisman; through which he ruled over the elements, and spirits of all denominations, who obeyed him like slaves. Like Solomon, he had a most wonderful throne, supported and adorned with lions, who are endued with reason and speech. We read in the *Vetala-pancha-vinsati*, that it was through the assistance of the great Vetala, or devil, that two Vikramadityas obtained the empire of the world, a long life, with unlimited sway. They performed the puja in his honour, offered sacrifices, and in short dedicated or gave themselves up to him.” On this foundation of historical matter is built the magnificent fabric of a great and universal monarchy, the reign of the arts and sciences, all that embellishes human life, and augments the human powers. Such being the premises, and such the conclusion, are they not admirably adapted to one another? The legend speaks, and that loudly, and distinctly, what it is; the creation of a rude and uncultivated fancy, exerting itself to rouse the wonder of a rude and uncultivated age, by a recital of actions, powers and events, swelled beyond the measure of human nature; profiting by all the hints which the legends or history of other nations supplied to furnish out its story, and by appropriating the wonderful deeds of all the world to gratify the barbarous vanity of the people to whom the story was addressed. If the historian gave to his hero a reign of a thousand years; it was quite in the same temper, and conducive to the same end, to give him the sovereignty of all India; and not only of all India, but, as we see was the fact, the sovereignty of the whole world. This is precisely the course which a wild and ignorant mind, regarding only the wonder which it has it in view to excite,

naturally in such cases, and almost universally pursues. Such legends, if they existed in myriads, are no more a proof of a monarchy common to all India, which they do not assert, than of the universal monarchy of the whole world, or of the thousands or the myriads of years to one reign, which they expressly assert.

The very lists which are found in the books of the Hindus, filled up with the names of successive monarchs, Mr. Wilford assures us, are the creation of the fancies of the writers, and are formed without any reference to facts. In enumerating the authorities, from which he drew his materials, in the essay on Vikramaditya and Salivahana, he says, "The fourth list has been translated into all the dialects of India, and new-modelled at least twenty different ways, according to the whims and preconceived ideas of every individual, who chose to meddle with it. It is, however, the basis and ground work of modern history among the Hindus; as in the *Khulasetul Tuwarie*, and the *Tadkeratussulatin*. The latter treatise is a most perfect specimen of the manner of writing history in India; for, excepting the above list, almost everything else is the production of the fertile genius of the compiler. In all these lists the compilers and revisers seem to have had no other object in view, but to adjust a certain number of remarkable epochs. This being once effected, the intermediate spaces are filled up with names of kings not to be found any where else, and most probably fanciful. Otherwise they leave out the names of those kings of whom nothing is recorded, and attribute the years of their reign in some among them better known, and of greater fame. They often do not scruple to transpose some of those kings, and even whole dynasties; either in consequence of some pre-conceived opinion, or owing to their mistaking a famous king for another of the same name. It was not uncommon with ancient writers, to pass from a remote ancestor to a remote descendant; or from a remote predecessor to a remote successor,

by leaving out the intermediate generations or successions, and sometimes ascribing the years of their reigns to a remote successor or predecessor. In this manner the lists of the ancient kings of Persia, both by oriental writers, and others in the west, have been compiled: and some instances of this nature might be produced from Scripture. I was acquainted lately, at Benares, with a chronicler of that sort; and in the several conversations I had with him, he candidly acknowledged, that he filled up the intermediate spaces between the reigns of famous kings, with names at a venture; that he shortened or lengthened their reigns at pleasure; and that it was understood, that his predecessors had taken the same liberties. Through their amendations and corrections, you see plainly a total want of historical knowledge and criticism; and sometimes some disingenuity is but too obvious. This is, however, the case with the sections on futurity in the *Bhagavat*, *Bhavisya* and *Brahmanda Puranas*, which with the above lists constitute the whole stock of historical knowledge among the Hindus; and the whole might be comprised in a few quarto pages of print."

Such is the mode, in which the authors of the *Puranas* supply themselves with a convenient quantity of *ordinary* kings: Mr. Wilford affords most satisfactory information with regard to the manner in which they further supply themselves with *extraordinary* ones. "The propensity," says he, "of the Hindus, to appropriate everything to themselves, is well known. We have noticed before their claims to Bahram-Gur and his descendants; and in the same manner they insist that Akbar was a Hindu in a former generation. The proximity of the time, in which this famous emperor lived, has forced them, however, to account for this in the following manner. There was a holy Brahman, who wished very much to become emperor of India; and the only practicable way for him was to die first, and be born again. For this purpose he made a desperate *Tapasya*, wishing to remember then every

thing he knew in his present generation. This could not be fully granted; but he was indulged with writing upon a brass plate a few things which he wished more particularly to remember; then he was directed to bury the plate, and promised that he would remember the place in the next generation. Mukunda, for such was his name, went to Allahabad, buried the plate, and then burned himself. Nine months after he was born in the character of Akbar, who, as soon as he ascended the throne, went to Allahabad, and easily found the spot where the brass plate was buried. Thus the Hindus claim Mohammed and Akbar as their own; exactly like the Persians of old, who insisted that Alexander was the son of one of their kings; so that after all they were forced to submit to their countrymen only."

The account of the claim to Bahram-Gur, mentioned in the beginning of the preceding passage, is extremely important on the present occasion as it shows us that Vikramaditya, whom the legend makes sovereign of the world, and the believers in the great Hindu monarchy take for emperor of Hindustan, was in reality a King of Persia, borrowed by the Brahmans, from their propensity to appropriate every thing remarkable which they heard of in the world. "One of these Vikramas," says Mr. Wilford, speaking of the different persons in whom this Vikramaditya appears, "was really a Sassanian Prince: and the famous Shabour or Sapor, of that dynasty, who took the emperor Valens prisoner." The story is as follows; "In Gurjjara-mandalam are the Sabarmati and Mahi rivers; between them is a forest, in which resided Tamralipta-rishi, whose daughter married King Tamrasena. They had six male children and one daughter called Mandava-rekha. The King had two young lads, called Devasarma and Havisarma, whose duty chiefly was to wash, every day, the clothes of their master, in the waters of the nearest river. One day, as Devasarma went, by himself, for that purpose, he heard a voice, saying, Tell King

Tamrasena to give me his daughter; should he refuse me he will repent it. The lad on his return mentioned the whole to his master; who would not believe it, and the next day sent Havisarma to the river, who heard the same voice also, with the threats in case of a refusal. The King was astonished; and going himself heard the voice also. On his return he assembled his council; and after consulting together, it was agreed, that the King should go again, and ask him who he was. The supposed spirit, being questioned, answered, I am a *Gandharva*, or heavenly choirister; who, having incurred Indra's displeasure, was doomed to assume the shape of an ass. I was born in that shape, in the house of a *kumbhakara*, or potter, in your capital city; and I am daily roving about in quest of food. The King said that he was very willing to give him his daughter; but that he conceived that such an union was altogether impossible while he remained in that shape. The *Gandharva* said, Trouble not yourself about that; comply with my request, and it shall be well with you. If, says the King, you are so powerful, turn the walls of my city, and those of the houses, into brass; and let it be done before sun-rise tomorrow. The *Gandharva* agreed to it, and the whole was completed by the appointed time; and the King of course gave him his daughter. This *Gandharva's* name was Jayanta, the son of Brahma. When cursed by Indra, he humbled himself; and Indra, relenting, allowed him to resume his human shape in the night time; telling him that the curse should not be done away, till somebody had burned his ass-like frame. The mother of the damsel spied them once in the night; and, to her great joy, found that the *Gandharva* dallied with her daughter in a human shape. Rejoiced at this discovery, she looked for his ass-like form, and burned it. Early in the morning, the *Gandharva* looked for this body of his, and found that it had been destroyed. He returned immediately to his wife, informing her of what had happened, and that his curse being at an end, he was obliged to

return to heaven, and leave her. He informed her also that she was with child by him, and that the name of the child was to be Vikramaditya." After the statement of some other particulars, Mr. Wilford says; "This is obviously the history of Yesdegird, son of Bahram-Gur, or Bahram the ass, King of Persia: the grand features are the same, and the times coincide perfectly. The amours of Bahram-Gur, with an Indian princess, are famous all over Persia, as well as in India." Such are the accounts of Vikramaditya, from which we are called upon for our belief of an universal monarchy, and a period of civilization and knowledge.

**Our experience of human nature, and the phenomena which are exhibited under the manners, attainments, and institutions of the Hindus, are the only materials, from which a rational inference can be drawn.\*** It is by no means impossible for a people, who have passed but a small number of stages in the career of civilization, to be united, extensively, under one government, and to remain steady for a great length of time in that situation. The empire of China is one conspicuous proof; the ancient kingdom of Persia, which for several ages stood exempt from revolution, is another. The Ottoman empire may be considered as a similar instance. And the Russians, a barbarous people, have long formed a very extensive monarchy. It would, therefore, be far from evidence of any higher civilization, among the Hindus, than what they now manifest, had the existence of a great monarchy been proved. Among uncivilized nations, however, it is most common to find a perpetual succession of revolutions, and communities in general small; though sometimes a prince or individual with uncommon talents arises; and, acquiring power, extends his authority over several of those communities; or even, as in the cases of a Charlemagne, over a great number; while after his death, the large empire which he had erected gradually dissolves, till the whole, or the greater part, is re-divided into small

communities as before. **Every thing which the Europeans have seen in Hindustan, conspires to prove that such an alternation of communities, and occasional and temporary extensions of power in particular hands, have composed the history of that country.\*** The Mahratta empire affords a striking example of those changes which seem natural to the circumstances in which the people are placed. Within the period of the modern intercourse of the Europeans with Hindustan, an aspiring individual was enabled to extend his authority, partly by persuasion, partly by force, first over one district, and then over another, till at last he united under his command an extensive empire, composed chiefly of the separate and disjointed communities, who occupied the mountainous districts in the western and central parts of Hindustan. Soon was this empire broken into several different governments, the owners of which hardly acknowledged even a nominal homage to the throne of Sevagee [Shivaji]; and had they been left to themselves, free from the irresistible operation of the British power, the empire of the Mahrattas, in all probability, would have been resolved, ere this time, into its primitive elements. Even the empire of the Moghuls, itself; though erected on firmer foundations than it is reasonable to suppose that any Hindu monarchy ever enjoyed; though supported by a foreign force; and acted upon by peculiar motives for maintaining undivided power had no sooner attained its greatest extension by the conquests of Aurangzeb, than it began immediately to fall to pieces; and a single century beheld it in fragments.

The monuments of the ancient state of Hindustan conspire in giving indication of a troubled scene. Every ancient writing, which bears any reference to the matter of history, the historical poems, the *Puranas*, hold up to view a state of society, the reverse of tranquil; perpetual broils, dethronements, injustice, wars, conquests, and bloodshed. Among the most important of all the

documents of antiquity found in Hindustan, are the inscriptions, declaratory of grants of land, made by the ancient princes of the country. These princes are so far from appearing to have presided over a peaceful land, that they are all represented, as victorious warriors; and as having been surrounded by enemies, over whom they have triumphed, and whom they have severely chastised. Almost all the princes mentioned in these inscriptions, princes in all the parts of India, and not pretended to have been more than the sovereigns of some particular district, are described as the conquerors and sovereigns of the whole world.

Of the unsparing and destructive cruelty which accompanied the perpetual wars and conquests of the Hindus, among other proofs, the following may be considered as strong. In the inscription found at Tanna, part of the panegyric bestowed upon the donor Prince, is in these words; "Having raised up his slain foe on his sharp sword, he so afflicted the women in the hostile palaces, that their forelocks fell disordered, their garlands of bright flowers dropped from their necks on the vases of their breasts, and the black lustre of their eyes disappeared; a warrior the plant of whose fame grows up over the temple of Brahma's egg (the universe) from the repeated watering of it with the drops that fell from the eyes of the wives of his slaughtered foe." It would be in the highest degree absurd to reject this, were it even a solitary instance, as evidence of a general fact; because the exterminating ferocity is described as matter of the highest praise; and panegyric, to be what it is, must be conformable to the ideas of the people to whom it is addressed.

The picture which Major Rennel, looking only to a limited period, drew of the state of Hindustan, may be taken, agreeably to every thing which we know of Hindustan, as the picture of it, to the remotest period of its history. "Rebellions, massacres, and barbarous conquests, make up the history of this fair country,

(which to an ordinary observer seems destined to be the paradise of the world.)— the immediate effect of the mad ambition of conquering more than can be governed by one man.” “Revolutions,” (says Sonnerat, directing his attention to the coast of Malabar, which had been little affected by foreign conquest) “have been more rapid in this than in any other part of the globe. A daring robber, possessed of policy and courage, in a short time gives laws to the whole coast, but in his turn becomes tributary to a bolder villain, who marching in the same path, subjects him to that lot he had inflicted on others.”

Notwithstanding, in other respects, the extreme scantiness and uncertainty of the materials for any inferences except the most general, in regard to the ancient state of Hindustan, there is a great body of evidence to prove the habitual division of the country into a number of moderate, and most frequently, petty sovereignties and states. In the dramatic poem *Sakuntala*, the daughter of the hermit asks the royal stranger, who had visited their consecrated grove; “What imperial family is embellished by our noble guest? What is his native country? Surely it must be afflicted by his absence from it?” The question undoubtedly implied that there were more royal families than one to which he might belong; and these at no remarkable distance; since the stranger was known to have come into the forest in the course of a hunting excursion. In the *Hitopadesa* mention is made of a variety of princes. Thus in the compass of a few pages, we are told; “In the country of Kalinga is a prince, named Rukmangada, who, advancing with preparations to subdue the adjacent regions has fixed his station near the river Chandrabhaga.” Again, “In the country of Kanyakuja is a prince named Virasena.” And further, “There is near the Bhagirathi a city, named Pataliputra, in which lived a prince named Sudarsana.” In the inscription, formerly quoted, found at Monghir, and bearing date 23 years B. C. there is sufficient proof of the division of

Hindustan into numerous kingdoms. Gopal, the prince or the father of the prince by whom the grant is made, is panegyricized as the conqueror of many princes; and his son is, "He, who marching through many countries, making conquests, arrived with his elephants, in the forests of the mountains Beendhyo, where seeing again their long-lost families, they mixed their mutual tears; and who going to subdue other princes, his young horses meeting their females at Komboge, they mutually neighed for joy: —who conquered the earth from the source of the Ganges as far as the well-known bridge which was constructed by the enemy of Dosaesyo, from the river of Luckeecoool as far as the ocean of the habitation of Booroon." If this prince overran the peninsula, and conquered a multitude of princes, the peninsula must have been possessed by a multitude of princes before. And we may form an idea of the exaggeration used in the account of his victories, when we are told that his father Gopal was king of the world, and possessed of two brides, the earth and her wealth. **The conquests by those princes, even when they took place, were but inroads, never, to any considerable extent, effecting a durable possession. This prince himself, we are told, "when he had completed his conquests, released all the rebellious princes he had made captive; and each returning to his own country laden with presents, reflected upon this generous deed, and longed to see him again."** The laws frequently afford evidence to the same purpose. The penalty, so frequently imposed, of banishment from one kingdom to another, proves the vicinity of different kingdoms. The following is another instance in point: "If a lender of money says to a person, a debt due to me is outstanding in your hands, and that person denies the debt, if at that time the bond is not in the lender's hands but should be in some other kingdom, then, until he brings the bond from such other kingdom, the suit shall not be determined."

In the *Code of Manu* is a series of rules for behaviour to neighbouring princes: sufficiently proving, that Hindustan was in that state of subdivision which rendered these rules pertinent and useful. These articles, to which there is nothing whatsoever opposed, but the absurd fables of the Brahmans, constitute a degree of evidence to which we may with sufficient confidence attach our belief.

**We have already seen, in reviewing the Hindu form of government, that despotism, in one of its simplest and least artificial shapes, was established in Hindustan, and confirmed by laws of Divine authority. We have seen likewise, that by the division of the people into castes, and the prejudices which the detestable views of the Brahmans raised to separate them, a degrading and pernicious system of subordination was established among the Hindus, and that the vices of such a system were there carried to a more destructive height than among any other people. And we have seen that by a system of priestcraft, built upon the most enormous and tormenting superstition that ever harassed and degraded any portion of mankind, their minds were enchained more intolerably than their bodies; in short that, despotism and priestcraft taken together, the Hindus, in mind and body, were the most enslaved portion of the human race.\*** Sir William Jones, in his preface to the translation of the *Institutes of Manu*, says, that this code exhibits “a system of despotism and priestcraft, both indeed limited by law, but artfully conspiring to give mutual support, though with mutual checks.” The despotism and priestcraft of the system were, it seems, too glaring to be mistaken or denied; but, in order to palliate the deformity, Sir William is betrayed into nonsense. A despotism, he says, limited by law; as if a despotism limited by law were not a contradiction in terms; what is limited by law, so far as so limited,

being not a despotism. A priestcraft, he also says, limited by law: A law of which the priests themselves were the sole makers, and the sole interpreters! A despotism, and a priestcraft, he says, with mutual checks. Yes, truly: it was the interest of the priestcraft to check the despotism, in all encroachments on the priestcraft; and it was the interest of the despotism to check the priest craft, in all encroachments on the despotism: But who checked the despotism and the priestcraft in oppressing the people? Alas! no one. It was the interest of the despotism and the priestcraft to join together in upholding their common tyranny over the people; and it must be allowed that so commanding a motive had all the influence upon their conduct which it might be expected to have. Apply this remark of the splendid orientalist to the Turks: *There* is a despotism and a priestcraft, limited, (if we may so abuse the term,) and still more strictly limited, by law; for the Moslem laws are more precise and accurate than those of the Hindus: *There*, too, the despotism and priestcraft check one another: But has all this prevented the Turkish despotism and priestcraft from being the scourge of human nature; the source of barbarity and desolation?

**That the Hindu despotism was not practically mild, we have a number of satisfactory proofs. We have seen the cruelty and ferocity of the penal laws; itself a circumstance of the highest importance.** "A thunderbolt," says the author of the *Hitopadesa*, "and the power of kings, are both dreadful! But the former expendeth its fury at once whilst the latter is constantly falling upon our heads" Some of the observations are so comprehensive, and pointed, as to afford the strongest evidence. "In this world," says the same celebrated book, "which is subject to the power of one above, a man of good principles is hard to be found, in a country, for the most part, *governed by the use of the rod.*" "Princes in general, alas! turn away their faces from a man endowed with good qualities." "The conduct of princes, like a

fine harlot, is of many colours: True and false; harsh and gentle; cruel and merciful; niggardly and generous; extravagant of expense, and solicitous of the influx of abundant wealth and treasure.” “An elephant killeth even by touching, a servant even by smelling, a king even by ruling.” All the general maxims of the Hindus import the extreme degradation of the great body of the people. “The assistance, O king, which is rendered to those of low degree, is like endeavouring to please bears. A low person should never be placed in the station of the great. One of low degree having obtained a worthy station seeketh to destroy his master.” “The Hindus,” says Dr. Buchanan, “in their state of independence, exacted deference from those under them with a cruelty and arrogance rarely practised but among themselves. A Nair was expected instantly to cut down a Tiar or Mucua, who presumed to defile him by touching his person; and a similar fate awaited a slave, who did not turn out of the road as a Nair passed.” In *Sakuntala*, Dushyanta is represented as a king who possessed every virtue, and made happiness flourish as in the golden age. Yet we have a specimen of the justice and legality which prevailed during this happy reign, in the passage relating to the innocent fisherman. He was found, by certain of the king’s officers, offering to sale a ring with the king’s name upon it. They instantly seize him, and drag him away to justice: all the while beating and bruising him; and loading him with opprobrious epithets. The victim of this brutal treatment offers only the most humble entreaties, making statement of the facts, and protestation of his innocence. Upon the sight of the ring, the king acknowledges that he is innocent; and orders him a sum of money, equal in value to the ring. Of this reward he is obliged to resign a half to the very men who had abused him, “to escape,” it is said, “the effects of their displeasure.”

The laws for guarding the authority of the magistrate exhibit a character of extreme severity, and indicate an habitual state of

the most rigid domination. "If a man speaks reproachfully of any upright magistrate, the magistrate shall cut out his tongue, or, having confiscated all his effects, shall banish him from the kingdom." By this law even the privilege of complaint was taken from the wretched Hindu. The victim of oppression was bound, under ferocious penalties, to suffer in silence.

The following is a law by which every act of despotism is legalized. "If a magistrate, for his own good, hath passed any resolutions, whoever refuses to submit to such resolutions, the magistrate shall cut out that person's tongue." If every resolution which the magistrate chooses to pass for his own good, is, by the very circumstance of his passing it, obligatory under violent penalties, the state of the government is not doubtful.

"If a man makes complaint before the magistrate against the magistrate's counsellor, without any real fault in him, or performs any business or service for the magistrate's accuser, the magistrate shall put him to death." Under the operation of this law, the magistrate had little to fear from accusation. There could be no remedy for any grievance; because the existence of any grievance could hardly ever be told. If the magistrate was willing to hear of his own misconduct, or that of his servants, in that case he might hear of it; where he was unwilling, in that case it was death.

Though all peaceable applications for the redress of grievances were thus precluded, any violence offered to the person of the magistrate, was punished in a manner which none but the most savage people ever endured. "If a magistrate has committed a crime, and any person, upon discovery of that crime, should beat and ill-use the magistrate, in that case, whatever be the crime of murdering one hundred Brahmans, such crime shall be accounted to that person; and the magistrate shall thrust an iron spit through him, and roast him at the fire."

The notices afforded us of particular sovereigns are

exceedingly few. But, such as they are, most of them declare the mis-government and cruelty of the individuals to whom they relate. "According to Plutarch, in his life of Alexander, Chandra Gupta (I use the words of Mr. Wilford) had been in that prince's camp, and had been heard to say afterwards, that Alexander would have found no difficulty in the conquest of Prachi, or the country of the Prasians, had he attempted it, as the King was despised and hated too, on account of his cruelty."

As the Hindu manners and character are invariable, according to their admirers; these admirers cannot consistently reject their present, as proof of their ancient, behaviour; and all men will allow that it affords strong ground of inference. "It is a remark," says one of the best informed observers of Hindustan "warranted by constant experience, that wherever the government is administered by Gentoos, the people are subject to more and severer oppressions than when ruled by the Moors. I have imputed this to intelligent Gentoos, who have confessed the justice of the accusation, and have not scrupled to give their opinions concerning it." The opinions of these Gentoos are as favourable to themselves as, suiting the occasion, they could possibly make them. "A Gentoo," say they, "is not only born with a spirit of more subtile invention, but by his temperance and education becomes more capable of attention to affairs, than a Moor; who no sooner obtains power than he is lost in voluptuousness; he becomes vain and lordly, and cannot dispense with satiating the impulses of his sensual appetites; whereas a Gentoo Prince retains in his Durbar the same spirit which would actuate him if keeping a shop." Mr. Orme adds, "Avarice is his predominant passion; and all the wiles, address, cunning, and perseverance, of which he is so exquisite a master, are exerted to the utmost in fulfilling the dictates of this vice; and his religion, instead of inspiring, frees him from the remorse of his crimes; for whilst he is harassing and plundering the people by the

most cruel oppressions, he is making peace with the gods by denying nothing to their priests." Mr. Orme exhibits an impressive example. "The present King of Travancore (an Hindu prince whose dominions had never been subject to a foreign government) has conquered or carried war into all the countries which lay round his dominions, and lives in the continual exercise of his arms. To atone for the blood which he has spilt, the Brahmans persuaded him that it was necessary he should be born anew: this ceremony consisted in putting the prince into the body of a golden cow of immense value, where, after he had laid the time prescribed, he came out regenerated and freed from all the crimes of his former life. The cow was afterwards cut up and divided amongst the Seers who had invented this extraordinary method for the remission of his sins." No testimony can be stronger to the natural tendency of the Hindu religion, and to the effects which their institutions are calculated to produce.

Among other expedients for saving the favourite system, it has been maintained that the petty states and princes in Hindustan were but subordinate parts of one great monarchy, whose sceptre they acknowledged, and mandates they obeyed. There is no definable limit to gratuitous suppositions. If we are to be satisfied with opinions not only void of proof, but opposed by every thing of the nature of proof, attainable upon the subject, we may conjure up one opinion after another; and nothing, except physical impossibility or a defect of ingenuity, can set bounds to our affirmations. In the loose mode of thinking, or rather of talking without thinking, which has prevailed concerning Indian affairs, the existence of feudal institutions in modern Europe has constituted a sufficient basis for the belief of feudal institutions in India; though it would have been just as rational to conclude that, because the Saxon language forms the basis of most of the languages of Europe, therefore the Saxon language forms the basis of the language in

India.

There are two modes in which the subordination of a number of petty princes to a great one may take place. The inferior states may exist merely as conquered, enslaved countries, paying tribute to a foreign government, obeying its mandates, and crouching under its lash. A second mode would be, where the inferior states were connected together by confederacy, and acknowledged a common head for the sake of unity, but possessed the right of deliberating in common upon common concerns. It may with confidence be pronounced that in neither mode is the supposed effect compatible with the state of civilization in Hindustan.

To retain any considerable number of countries in subjection, preserving their own government, and their own sovereigns, would be really arduous, even where the science of government were the best understood. To suppose it possible in a country where the science of government is in the state indicated by the laws and institutions of the Hindus, would be in the highest degree extravagant. Even the Romans themselves, with all the skill which they possessed, retained their provinces in subjection, only by sending thither their own governors and their own armies, and superseding entirely the ancient authorities of the country. **The moderation of conquering, without seizing, is a phenomenon so rarely exemplified in the most civilized times, that to suppose it universal in India, is to make a supposition in contradiction to the known laws of human affairs, and even to particular experience.** Wherever an Indian sovereign is able to take possession, he hastens to take it. Wherever he can make a plundering incursion, though unable to retain, he ravages and destroys. Now it sometimes happens that a neighbouring prince, too weak to prevent or chastise these injuries, endeavours to purchase exemption from them by a composition. This, in the language of the Mahrattas, who, in modern times, have been almost

the only people in India in a situation to exact it, is called *Chout*, of which the standard is a fourth part of the revenues of the district liable to be over-run. It has in several instances, and these abundantly recent ones, been payed for certain districts by the British government itself, without the most distant idea of any lordship paramount in the Mahrattas. It is abundantly evident that this species of subordination, if subordination it can be called, never could have extended far; never could reach beyond the countries immediately contiguous to that from which the chance of mischief arose.

A confederation of princes, similar to that which was exemplified in Germany, and which no combination of circumstances has elsewhere produced, is a supposition, still more opposed to experience. Of all the results of civilization, that of forming a combination of different states, and directing their powers to one common object, seems to be one of the least consistent with the mental habits and attainments of the Hindus. It is the want of this power of combination which has rendered India so easy a conquest to all invaders; and enables us to retain, so easily, that dominion over it which we have acquired. Where is there any vestige in India of that deliberative assembly of princes, which in Germany was known by the name of the Diet? Where is there any memorial of that curious constitution by which the union of the German princes was preserved; or of those elections by which they chose among themselves him who should be at their head? That nominal homage, which the Mahratta chiefs paid to the throne of Shivaji, was a temporary circumstance, entirely of a different nature. These chiefs were not subordinate princes, but revolted subjects, in a dismembered empire. There was among them no confederacy. When at war with Scindia, the British were at peace with the Peshwa and Holkar; when they were at war with Holkar, they were at peace with the rest. They acknowledged a

subordination to the primary seat of government, only because their subjects had been accustomed to look to it; and because they were not yet secure of their obedience.

Those, who affirm the high state of civilization among the Hindus previous to their subjugation to foreigners, are so directly in opposition to evidence, that wherever the Hindus have been always exempt from the dominion of foreigners, there they are uniformly in a state of civilization inferior to those who have long been the subjects of a Mohamedan throne.

It is in no quarter pretended, that the Hindu superstition was ever less gross than it now appears. It is remarkable, that in any quarter it should not be recollected, that superstition necessarily gives way, as civilization advances. Powerful, at an early age, among the Greeks and Romans, it finally ceased to have almost any influence; and Goguet had long ago declared, with philosophical truth, that “we wanted no evidence to prove the ignorance and rudeness of the Greeks in the heroic times; their credulity and their respect for oracles are proofs, more than sufficient. This species of superstition has no force or dominion, but in proportion to the gross ignorance of the people: witness the savages, who do not undertake any thing till they have previously consulted their divines and their oracles.”

So many regulations are found in the Hindu codes of law respecting seasons of calamity; seasons when it is supposed that a great portion of the people are without the means of subsistence, that those dreadful visitations must be very frequent. From which soever of these two great causes, famine, or the ravages of war, the frequency of those calamities arose, it equally bars the supposition of good government and high civilization.

If we apply the reflection, which has been much admired, that if a man were to travel over the whole world, he might take the state of the roads, that is, the means of internal communication

in general, as a measure of the civilization; a very low estimate will be formed of the progress of the Hindus. "In India", says Rennel, "the roads are little better than paths, and the rivers without bridges." "In Malabar", says Dr. Buchanan, speaking of the wretched state of the roads, "even cattle are little used for the transportation of goods, which are generally carried by porters." The Emperor, Shah Jehan, constructed certain roads in Bengal, which were celebrated as prodigies; but the remains of them, Dr. Tennant remarks, sufficiently manifest that they can never have been good, and the admiration they excited proves nothing except the wretched condition of every thing, under the name of road, which had been known in India before. Another fact, of much importance, is, that a Mahomedan sovereign was the first who established Choultries; that is, Caravanserais, or houses of reception for travellers upon the road, of which, till that period, they had no experience. "This fact," says Mr. Forster, "also recorded in Dow's history, is well known amongst the natives."

Among the pretensions received without examination, that of enormous riches found in India, by the first Mahomedan conquerors, requires particular attention. If those accounts had not far exceeded all reasonable bounds, it would have been a matter of difficulty, to prove the falsehood of them: except to those who were capable of estimating one circumstance, in any state of society, by its analogy with the rest. As the amount, however, stated by those authors whose testimony has been adopted; by Ferishta, for example, followed by Dow; far exceeds the bounds not of probability only, but of credibility; and affords decisive evidence of that Eastern exaggeration which in matters of history disdains to be guided by fact, the question is left free of any considerable difficulty. These accounts refute themselves. We have, therefore, no testimony on the subject; for all that is presented to us in the shape of testimony betrays itself to be merely fiction. We

are left to our knowledge of circumstances, and to the inferences which they support. **Now if the preceding induction, embracing the circumstances of Hindu society, is to be relied on, it will not be disputed, that a state of poverty and wretchedness, as far as the great body of the people are concerned, must have prevailed in India, not more in the times in which it has been witnessed by Europeans, than the times which preceded.** A gilded throne, or the display of gold, silver, and precious stones, about the seat of a court, does not invalidate this inference. Only there where gold and silver are scarce, can the profuse display of them about the monarch's person either gratify the monarch's vanity, or dazzle by its rarity the eyes of the multitude. **Perhaps there are few indications more decisive of a poor country, and a barbarous age, than the violent desire of exhibiting the precious metals and precious stones, as the characteristic marks and decorations of the chief magistrate.\***

The science of political economy places this conclusion on the ground of demonstration. For the people to have been rich in gold and silver, these commodities must have circulated among them in the shape of money. But of gold and silver in the shape of money, no nation has more, than what is in proportion to its exchangeable commodities. Now that ever the people of Hindustan were profusely supplied with commodities, every thing in their manners, habits, government, and history, concur to disprove. There is, besides, a well established fact, which ascertains the impossibility of their having abounded in gold and silver. Their commodities were not exchanged by the medium of the precious metals. The traffic of India, as in the rudest parts of the earth, was chiefly a traffic of barter; and its taxes, as already seen, were paid in kind. It was not till the time of Akbar that gold or silver was coined for circulation in the principal part of India; antecedently to

that period small pieces of copper were the only coin. Up to the present hour, when the real signs of riches and civilization are but just beginning to be understood, nothing has been more common with rash and superficial travellers, than to set down lofty accounts of the riches of almost every new country to which they repaired.

**As rude nations, still more than civilized, are incessantly harassed by the dangers, or following the gains of war, one of the first applications of knowledge is, to improve the military art. The Hindus have, at no period, been so far advanced in knowledge, as even to be aware of the advantage of discipline, of those regular and simultaneous movements, upon which, in skilled warfare, almost every thing depends.** "In the Hindu armies", says Francklin, "no idea of discipline ever existed." "The rudeness of the military art in Indostan," says Mr. Orme, "can scarce be imagined but by those who have seen it. The infantry consists of a multitude of people assembled together without regard to rank and file."

**Even medicine and surgery, to the cultivation of which so obvious and powerful an interest invites, had scarcely, beyond the degree of the most uncultivated tribes, attracted the rude understanding of the Hindus.** Though the leisure of the Brahmans has multiplied books, on astrology, on the exploits of the gods, and other worthless subjects, to such a multitude, "that human life," says Sir William Jones, "would not be sufficient to make oneself acquainted with any considerable part of Hindu literature," he yet confesses, there is "no evidence that in any language of Asia, there exists one original treatise on medicine, considered as a science." Surgery, says an author, who believes in the high civilization of the Hindus, is unknown among that people. In the case of gunshot, or sabre wounds, all they did was to wash the wound, and tie it up with fresh leaves; the patient,

during the period of convalescence, eating nothing but the water gruel of rice.

In comparing them with other people, it cannot, in one word, be declared, with which of the nations, more familiar to Europeans, the Hindus, in point of civilization, may be regarded as on a level; because, in comparison with those whom they most nearly approach, while inferior to them in some, they are superior, in other respects. **Should we say that the civilization of the people of Hindustan, and that of the people of Europe, during the feudal ages, is not far from equal, we shall find upon a close inspection, that the Europeans were superior, in the first place, notwithstanding the vices of the papacy, in religion; and notwithstanding the defects of the schoolmen, in philosophy. They were greatly superior, notwithstanding the defects of the feudal system, in the institutions of government and in laws. Even their poetry, if the observance of nature, if the power of moving the affections, or even ingenuity of invention, be regarded as the marks of excellence, is beyond all comparison preferable to the poetry of the Hindus. That, in war, the Hindus have always been greatly inferior to the warlike nations of Europe, during the middle ages, it seems hardly necessary to assert. In some of the more delicate manufactures, however, particularly in spinning, weaving, and dyeing, the Hindus, as they rival all nations, so they no doubt surpass all that was attained by the rude Europeans. In the fabrication, too, of trinkets; in the art of polishing and setting the precious stones; it is possible, and even probable, that our impatient and rough ancestors did not attain the same nicety which is displayed by the patient Hindus.\* In the arts of painting and sculpture, we have no reason to think that the Europeans were excelled by the Hindus. In architecture, the people who raised the imposing structures which**

yet excite veneration in many of the ancient cathedrals, were not left behind by the builders of the Indian pagodas. The agriculture of the Europeans, imperfect as it was, surpassed exceedingly that of the Hindus; for with the climate and soil of most of the countries of Europe, agriculture, so imperfect as that of India, could not have maintained the population. **In point of manners and character, the manliness and courage of our ancestors, compared with the slavish and dastardly spirit of the Hindus, place them in an elevated rank. But they were inferior to that effeminate people in gentleness, and the winning arts of address. Our ancestors, however, though rough, were sincere; but, under the glosing exterior of the Hindu, lies a general disposition to deceit and perfidy. In fine, it cannot be doubted that, upon the whole, the gothic nations, as soon as they became a settled people, exhibit the marks of a superior character and civilization to those of the Hindus.\***

No one can take an accurate survey of the different nations of Asia, and of their different ages, without remarking the near approaches they make to the same stage of civilization. This gives a peculiar interest and importance to the inquiry respecting the Hindus. There can be no doubt that they are in a state of civilization very nearly the same with that of the Chinese, the Persians, and the Arabians; who, together, compose the great branches of the Asiatic population; and of which the subordinate nations; the Japanese, Cochin-Chinese, Siamese, Burmans, and even Malays and Tibetians, are a number of corresponding and resembling offsets.

With regard to former ages, it is true, that the religion and several circumstances in the outward forms of society, have been altered in Persia, since the days of Darius; but the arts, the sciences, the literature, the manners, the government, concur to prove, in a

remarkable manner, the near approach of the two periods to the same points of civilization. The ancient Persians too, there is reason to believe, were placed in nearly the same state of society with the people whom they succeeded; the Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Babylonians. In contemplating, therefore, the state of Hindustan, curiosity is very extensively gratified. **As the manners, institutions, and attainments of the Hindus, have been stationary for many ages; in beholding the Hindus of the present day, we are beholding the Hindus of many ages past; and are carried back, as it were, into the deepest recesses of antiquity.\*** Of some of the oldest nations, about which our curiosity is the most alive, and information the most defective, we acquire a practical, and what may be almost denominated a personal knowledge, by our acquaintance with a living people, who have continued on the same soil from the very times of those ancient nations, partake largely of the same manners, and are placed at nearly the same stage in the progress of society. By conversing with the Hindus of the present day, we, in some measure, converse with the Chaldeans and Babylonians of the time of Cyrus; with the Persians and Egyptians of the time of Alexander.

A judicious observer of Asiatic manners declares that “The leading customs of the various nations of Asia are similar, or but weakly diversified. When they sit, the legs are crossed or bent under them; they perform topical ablutions before and after meals, at which no knife or spoon is used, unless the diet be wholly liquid; they invariably adopt the like modes of performing natural evacuations.”

The account which Gibbon presents us, from Herodian, and Ammianus Marcellinus, of the art of war among the Persians, in the time of the Roman emperors, is an exact description of the art, as practised by the Persians and Hindus, and by most of the other nations of Asia at the present day. “The science of war, that

constituted the more rational force of Greece and Rome, as it now does of Europe, never made any considerable progress in the East. Those disciplined evolutions which harmonize and animate a confused multitude, were unknown to the Persians. They were equally unskilled in the arts of constructing, besieging, or defending regular fortifications. They trusted more to their numbers than to their courage; more to their courage than to their discipline. The infantry was a half armed, spiritless crowd of peasants, levied in haste by the allurements of plunder, and as easily dispersed by a victory as by a defeat. The monarch and his nobles transported into the camp the pride and luxury of the seraglio. Their military operations were impeded by a useless train of women, eunuchs, horses, and camels; and in the midst of a successful campaign, the Persian host was often separated or destroyed by an unexpected famine.”

In the system of Zoroaster, and in that of the Brahmans, we find the same lofty expressions concerning the invisible powers of nature; the same absurdity in the notions respecting the creation; the same infinite and absurd ritual; the same justness in many ideas respecting the common affairs of life and common morality; the same gross misunderstanding in others; but a striking resemblance between the two systems, both in their absurdities and perfections. The same turn of imagination seems to have belonged to the authors of both; and the same aspect of nature to have continually presented itself; the deformities however of the Hindu system being always the greatest.

The Persians, in the time of Cambyzes, had judges, select sages, who were appointed for life; and whose business it was, according to pre-established laws, to terminate all disputes, and punish crimes. This, like similar circumstances in the state of the Hindus, presents part of the forms of a legal government. These judges, however, when consulted by the king if he might perform

an act, on which for fear of popular odium he hesitated to venture, gave a solemn opinion, *that for the king of the Persians it was law, to do whatsoever he pleased.* "This constitutional maxim," says Gibbon archly, "was not neglected as an useless and barren theory."

"Like Brimha, the Fo of the Chinese has various times become incarnate among men and beasts. Hence he is represented in his temples as riding upon dragons, rhinoceroses, elephants, mules, and asses; dogs, rats, cats, crocodiles, and other amiable creatures, whose figures he fancied and assumed. There are in some of these pagodas, a thousand of these monstrous statues, all most horribly ugly, and ill represented, and unlike any thing in heaven or earth, or the waters under the earth."

Under the reign of credulity, it is instructive to mark the inconsiderateness of a reflecting writer. After many praises of the Chinese husbandry, such as those which we have often heard of the agriculture of the Hindus, Lord Macartney adds, "The plough is the simplest in the world, has but one handle, is drawn by a single buffalo, and managed by a single person without any assistance." And Mr. Barrow says, "Two thirds of the small quantity of land under tillage is cultivated with the spade or the hoe, without the aid of draught cattle".

Even of the principle route from Peking to Canton, Lord Macartney remarks; "For horse and foot the road is excellent, but admits of no wheel carriages." Mr. Barrow more explicitly declares, "that except near the capital, and in some few places where the junction of the grand canal with navigable rivers is interrupted by mountainous ground, there is scarcely a road in the whole country that can be ranked beyond a foot path." Even the grand canal itself was opened by the Tartar conqueror Gingis Khan, in the thirteenth century; "and that solely with a view to convey the taxes, paid in kind, from the southern part of the empire to the capital, a great part of them having been always lost by

the unskilfulness of Chinese navigation, when conveyed by sea.”

Like the Hindus, before the improvements introduced among them by the Moghuls, the Chinese have no coin; above a small one of copper; and the taxes of that immense empire are paid in kind.

**Lord Macartney remarks that the Chinese have no natural philosophy; no medical or chirurgical skill; that a fractured leg is usually attended by death.**

**In the sciences and arts of the Hindus and Chinese there is manifested a near approximation to the same point of advancement.\*** In respect to government and laws, the Chinese have to a considerable degree the advantage. As they are a busy people, however; and have no idle class, whose influence depends upon the wonder they can excite by pretended learning, they have multiplied, far less than the Hindus, those false refinements, which a barbarous mind mistakes for science. Both have made greater progress in the refinement of the useful arts, than in the advancement of science. But in these too the Chinese appear to have the superiority; for though it may be doubted whether the Chinese manufacture of silk rivals in delicacy the cotton manufacture of the Hindus, the latter people have nothing to set in competition with the porcelain of the Chinese; and in the common works in wood and iron, the Chinese are conspicuously preferable. In the contrivance and use of machinery both are equally simple and rude.

In the state of the fine arts, there is a striking resemblance between the two nations. “The architecture of the Chinese,” says Mr. Barrow, “is void of taste, grandeur, beauty, solidity, or convenience; their houses are merely tents, and there is nothing magnificent in the palace of the emperor.” **Both nations were good at imitation. Both were extremely defective in invention.\*** In painting and sculpture they were ignorant of perspective, of attitude, and proportion.

**Even in manners, and in the leading parts of the moral character, the lines of resemblance are strong. Both nations are to nearly an equal degree tainted with the vices of insincerity; dissembling, treacherous, mendacious, to an excess which surpasses even the usual measure of uncultivated society. Both are disposed to excessive exaggeration with regard to every thing relating to themselves. Both are cowardly and unfeeling. Both are in the highest degree conceited of themselves, and full of affected contempt for others. Both are, in the physical sense, disgustingly unclean in their persons and houses.**

With respect to the inhabitants of another quarter of Asia. Turner, in his account of the embassy to Tibet, informs us, that the deportment of the Raja of Bhutan was exceedingly urbane, and his sentiments breathed that sort of humanity which seems to flow from the belief of the metempsychosis. "My food, said he, consists of the simplest articles; grain, roots of the earth, and fruits. I never eat of any thing which has had breath, for so I should be the indirect cause of putting an end to the existence of animal life, which by our religion is strictly forbidden."

Though frequent ablutions are performed for religious purposes, the same author informs us, that the people in their persons are extremely unclean.

"Bhutan presents to the view nothing but the most misshapen irregularities; mountains covered with eternal verdure, and rich with abundant forests of large and lofty trees. Almost every favourable aspect of them, coated with the smallest quantity of soil, is cleared and adapted to cultivation, by being shelved into horizontal beds; not a slope or narrow slip of land between the ridges lies unimproved. There is scarcely a mountain whose base is not washed by some rapid torrent, and many of the loftiest bear populous villages, amidst orchards, and other plantations on their summits and on their sides. It combines in its extent the most

extravagant tracts of rude nature and laborious art.”

Yet they have no discipline in their armies. In their mode of warfare, stratagem is more practised than open assault.

The appearance of the capital Teshoo Loomboo was in a high degree magnificent, and together with the palace afforded proofs of a progress in the arts which vied with that of Hindustan and China.

The inhabitants of the great Peninsula, to the eastward of the Ganges, discover, as far as known, the uniform marks of a similar state of society and manners. The Cochin-Chinese, for example, who are merely a separate community of the Chinese race, appear by no means in civilization behind the Chinese and Hindus. A traveller from whom we have obtained a sensible though short account of some of the more striking phenomena of the country, both physical and moral, informs us, that it is “one of the most fruitful in the world. In many parts,” he says, “the land produces three crops of grain in the year. All the fruits of India are found here in the greatest perfection, with many of those of China. No country in the East produces richer or a greater variety of articles proper for carrying on an advantageous commerce, cinnamon, pepper, cardemoms, silk, cotton, sugar, Agula wood, Japan wood, ivory, &c.”

The following paragraph describes an important article of accommodation, to which no parallel can be found in all China and Hindustan. “In this valley we passed through three or four pretty villages pleasantly situated, in which, as well as on other parts of the road, were public houses, where tea, fruits, and other refreshments are sold to travellers. At noon we alighted at one of them, and partook of a dinner, which consisted of fowls cut into small pieces, dressed up with a little greens and salt, some fish, &c.”

The appearance of the king’s court was not only splendid but decorous; and even the little of the country which the travellers

saw discovered to them large cities, with streets, laid out on a regular plan, paved with flat stones, and having well-built brick houses on each side.

The people on the western side of that Peninsula, whether known by the name of Birmans, Peguans, Assamese, or Siamese, partake strongly of the Hindu character, and exhibit only a variation of the religion, laws, institutions, and manners which prevail on the other side of the Ganges. The great difference consists in their having adopted the heresy, or retained the primitive faith of Buddha; and rejected the distinction of castes. But nothing appears among them which would lead to an inference of any inferiority in their progress towards the attainments of civilized life.

The Birmans, we are told by Symes, call their code generally *Derma Sath* or *Sastra*; it is one among the many commentaries on Manu. "The Birman system of jurisprudence," he adds, "is replete with sound morality, and in my opinion is distinguished above every other Hindu commentary for perspicuity and good sense. It provides specifically for almost every species of crime that can be committed, and adds a copious chapter of precedents and decisions, to guide the inexperienced in cases where there is doubt and difficulty. Trial by ordeal and imprecation are the only absurd passages in the book."

"There is no country of the East," says the same author, "in which the royal establishment is arranged with more minute attention than in the Birman court; it is splendid without being wasteful, and numerous without confusion."

Their literature appears to be as extensive and curious, as that of the Hindus. They have numerous, and copious libraries; the books, says Colonel Symes, are "upon diverse subjects; more on divinity than on any other; but history, music, medicine, painting, and romance, had their separate treatises."

Of the kingdom of Assam we possess not many accounts; but what we have yield evidence to the same effect. In the

Alemgeernameh of Mohammed Cazim, is a description of Assam, which has been translated by Henry Vansittart, Esq. and presented to us in several publications. We are there told that the country, at least in many places, is "well inhabited, and in an excellent state of tillage; that it presents, on every side, charming prospects of ploughed fields, harvests, gardens, and groves."

"As the country is overflowed in the rainy season, a high and broad causeway has been raised, for the convenience of travellers from Salagereh to Ghergong, which is the only uncultivated ground to be seen; each side of this road is planted with shady bamboos, the tops of which meet and are entwined." And this is more than seems to have been known in Hindustan, before the improvements introduced by the Mohammedan conquerors.

"The silks are excellent, and resemble those of China. They are successful in embroidering with flowers, and in weaving velvet, and tautband, which is a species of silk of which they make tents and kanauts."

The bigotted and intolerant Mussulman, however; who finds no excellence where he finds not his faith; discovers no qualities but evil in the minds of the Assamese. "They do not adopt," he says, "any mode of worship practised either by heathens or Mahomedans; nor do they concur in any of the known sects, which prevail amongst mankind. They are a base and unprincipled nation, and have no fixed religion; they follow no rule but that of their own inclinations, and make the approbation of their own vicious minds the test of the propriety of their actions." Such are the distorted views presented to an ignorant mind, through the medium of a dark and malignant religion, respecting a people cultivating the ground to great perfection, and forming a dense population. Among other particulars of the vileness which he beheld in them, is the following: "The base inhabitants, from a congenial impulse, are fond of seeing and keeping asses, and buy and sell

them at a high price." Yet he speaks in lofty terms of the royal magnificence of the court. "The Rajas of this country have always raised the crest of pride and vain glory, and displayed an ostentatious appearance of grandeur, and a numerous train of attendants and servants." And **he expresses himself with mingled horror and admiration of the prowess and superiority of the Assamese in war. "They have not bowed the head of submission and obedience, nor have they paid tribute or submission to the most powerful monarch; but they have curbed the ambition, and checked the conquests, of the most victorious princes of Hindustan."** Several armies from Bengal, which had been sent to conquer them, having been cut off, of some of which scarce even tidings had ever been received, "the natives of Hindustan consider them wizards and magicians, and pronounce the name of that country in all their incantations and counter-charms: they say, that every person who sets his foot there is under the influence of witchcraft, and cannot find the road to return."

The admiration which the Greeks, no very accurate observers of foreign manners, expressed of the Egyptians, and which other nations have so implicitly borrowed at their hands, not a little resembles the admiration among Europeans which has so long prevailed with regard to the Hindus. The penetrating force of modern intelligence has pierced the cloud; and while it has displayed to us the state of Egyptian civilization in its true colours, exhibits a people who, standing on a level with so many celebrated nations of antiquity, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Arabians, correspond in all the distinctive marks of a particular state of society, with the people of Hindustan. The evidence has been weighed by a cool and dispassionate judge, in the following manner: "I see nothing," says the President Goguet, "in the Egyptians that can serve to distinguish them in a manner very advantageous; I even think myself authorized to refuse them the greatest part of the

eulogies that have been always so liberally bestowed upon them. The Egyptians did invent some arts and some sciences, but they never had the ingenuity to bring any of their discoveries to perfection. I have exposed their want of taste, and I venture to say, of talent, in architecture, in sculpture, and in painting. Their manner of practising physic was absurd and ridiculous. The knowledge they had of geometry and astronomy was but very imperfect. Their discoveries are far enough from entering into any comparison with those which the Greeks made afterwards in those two sciences. In fine, the Egyptians have had neither genius, ardour, nor talent, for commerce, or for the marine and military art.

“As to civil laws, and political constitutions, the Egyptians had indeed some very good ones; but otherwise there reigned in their government a multitude of abuses and essential defects authorized by the laws and by their fundamental principles of government.

“As to the manners and customs of this people, we have seen to what a height indecency and debauchery were carried in their religious feasts and public ceremonies. The public cult which a nation fixes to honour the Deity, bears the stamp of that nation’s character. Neither was the morality of the Egyptians extremely pure; we may even affirm, that it offended against the first rules of rectitude and probity. We see that the Egyptians bore the highest blame of covetousness, of ill faith, of cunning and of roguery.

“It appears to me to result from all these facts, that the Egyptians were a people industrious enough, but, as to the rest, without taste, without genius, without discernment; a people who had only ideas of grandeur ill understood; and whose progress in all the different parts of human knowledge never rose beyond a flat mediocrity; knavish into the bargain, and crafty, soft, lazy, cowardly, and submissive; and who, having performed some exploits to boast of in distant times, were ever after subjected by whoever would undertake to subdue them; a people again, vain

and foolish enough to despise other nations without knowing them: Superstitious to excess, singularly addicted to judicial astrology, extravagantly besotted with an absurd and monstrous theology. Does not this representation sufficiently authorize us to say, that all that science, that wisdom, and that philosophy, so boasted of in the Egyptian priests, was but imposture and juggling, capable of imposing only on people so little enlightened, or so strongly prejudiced, as were anciently the Greeks in favour of the Egyptians."

The sagacity of Adam Smith induced him, at an early period of his life, to deny the supposed proof of any high attainments among those ancient nations, and to declare, though with hesitancy, his inclination to the opposite opinion.

"It was in Greece, and in the Grecian colonies, that the first philosophers of whose doctrine we have any distinct account, appeared. Law and order seem indeed to have been established in the great monarchies of Asia and Egypt, long before they had any footing in Greece: Yet after all that has been said concerning the learning of the Chaldeans and Egyptians, whether there ever was in those nations any thing which deserved the name of science, or whether that despotism which is more destructive of leisure and security than anarchy itself, and which prevailed over all the East, prevented the growth of philosophy, is a question which, for want of monuments, cannot be determined with any degree of precision." To leave the subject even in this state of doubt was but a compromise with popular opinion, and with his own imperfect views. The circumstances handed down to us, compared with the circumstances of other nations, afforded materials for a very satisfactory determination. The opinion by which he supports his disbelief of the ancient civilization of Asia is at once philanthropic and profound; That "despotism is more destructive of leisure and security, and more adverse to the progress of the human mind, than anarchy itself."

**T.B. MACAULAY ON INDIA 2.2.1835\***

The argument which I have been considering, affects only the form of proceeding. But the admirers of the Oriental system of education have used another argument, which, if we admit it to be valid is decisive against all change. They conceive that the public faith is pledged to the present system, and that to alter the appropriation of any of the funds which have hitherto been spent in encouraging the study of Arabic and Sanscrit, would be downright spoliation. It is not easy to understand by what process of reasoning they can have arrived at this conclusion. The grants which are made from the public purse for the encouragement of literature differed in no respect from the grants which are made from the same purse for other objects of real or supposed utility. We found a sanatorium on a spot which we suppose to be healthy. Do we thereby pledge ourselves to keep a sanatorium there, if the result should not answer our expectation? We commence the erection of a pier. Is it a violation of the public faith to stop the works, if we afterwards see reason to believe that the building will be useless? The rights of property are undoubtedly sacred. But nothing endangers those rights so much as the practice, now unhappily too common, of attributing them to things to which they do not belong. Those who would impart to abuses the sanctity of property are in truth imparting to the institution of property the unpopularity and the fragility of abuses. If the Government has

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\* From Minute of Education in India.

given to any person a formal assurance; nay, if the government has excited in any person's mind a reasonable expectation that he shall receive a certain income as a teacher or a learner of Sanscrit or Arabic, I would respect that person's pecuniary interests—I would rather err on the side of liberality to individuals than suffer the public faith to be called in question. But to talk of a Government pledging itself to teach certain languages and certain sciences, though those languages may become useless, though those sciences may be exploded, seems to me quite unmeaning. There is not a single word in any public instructions, from which it can be inferred that the Indian Government ever intended to give any pledge on this subject, or ever considered the destination of these funds as unalterably fixed. But had it been otherwise, I should have denied the competence of our predecessors to bind us by any pledge on such a subject. Suppose that a government had in the last century enacted in the most solemn manner that all its subjects should, to the end of time, be inoculated for the small-pox : would that Government be bound to persist in the practice after Jenner's discovery? These promises, of which nobody claims the performance, and from which nobody can grant a release; these vested rights, which vest in nobody; this property without proprietors; this robbery, which makes nobody poorer, may be comprehended by persons of higher faculties than mine.— I consider this plea merely as a set form of words, regularly used both in England and in India, in defence of every abuse for which no other plea can be set up.

I hold this lac of rupees to be quite at the disposal of the Governor- General in Council, for the purpose of promoting learning in India, in any way which may be thought most advisable. I hold his Lordship to be quite as free to direct that it shall no longer be employed in encouraging Arabic and Sanscrit, as he is to direct that the reward for killing tigers in Mysore shall be

diminished, or that no more public money shall be expended on the chanting at the cathedral.

We now come to the gist of the matter. We have a fund to be employed as Government shall direct for the intellectual improvement of the people of this country. The simple question is what is the most useful way of employing it?

All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India, contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are, moreover, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. It seems to be admitted on all sides, that the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can at present be effected only by means of some language not vernacular amongst them.

What then shall that language be? One-half of the Committee maintain that it should be the English. The other half strongly recommend the Arabic and Sanscrit. The whole question seems to me to be, which language is the best worth knowing?

I have no Knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic. —But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. **I am quite ready to take the Oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the Committee who support the Oriental plan of education. \***

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\* Emphasis, whenever it occurs, has been added by the Compiler.

It will hardly be disputed, I suppose, that the department of literature in which the eastern writers stand highest is poetry. And I certainly never met with any Orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanscrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations. But when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded, and general principles investigated, the superiority of the Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable. **It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say, that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same. \***

How, then, stands the case? We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands preeminent even among the languages of the west. It abounds with works of imagination not inferior to the noblest which Greece has bequeathed to us; with models of every species of eloquence; with historical compositions, which, considered merely as narratives have seldom been surpassed, and which, considered as vehicles of ethical and political instruction, have never been equalled; with just and lively representations of human life and human nature; with the most profound speculations on metaphysics, morals, government, jurisprudence, and trade; with full and correct information respecting every experimental science which tends to preserve the health, to increase the comfort, or to expand the intellect of man. Whoever knows that language has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth, which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations.

It may safely be said, that the literature now extant in that language is of far greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together. Nor is this all. In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of Government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East. It is the language of two great European communities which are rising, the one in the south of Africa, the other in Australasia; communities which are every year becoming more closely connected with our Indian empire. Whether we look at the intrinsic value of our literature, or at the particular situation of this country, we shall see the strongest reason to think that, of all foreign tongues, the English tongue is that which would be the most useful to our native subjects.

The question now before us is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach this language, we shall teach languages in which, by universal confession, there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared to our own; **whether, when we can teach European science, we shall teach systems which, by universal confession, whenever they differ from those of Europe, they differ for the worse; and whether, when we can patronise sound Philosophy and true History, we shall countenance, at the public expense, medical doctrines, which would disgrace an English farrier,—Astronomy, which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school, —History, abounding with kings thirty feet high, and reigns thirty thousand years long, —and Geography, made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter.\***

We are not without experience to guide us. History furnishes several analogous cases, and they all teach the same lesson. There are in modern times, to go no further, two memorable instances of a great impulse given to the mind of a whole society, — of prejudices

overthrown,—of knowledge diffused, of taste purified,—of arts and sciences planted in countries which had recently been ignorant and barbarous.

The first instance to which I refer, is the great revival of letters among the Western nations at the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. At the time almost everything that was worth reading was contained in the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Had our ancestors acted as the Committee of Public Instruction has hitherto acted; had they neglected the language of Cicero and Tacitus; had confined their attention to the old dialects of our own island; had they printed nothing and taught nothing at the universities but Chronicles in Anglo-Saxon, and romances in Norman-French, would England have been what she now is? **What the Greek and Latin were to the contemporaries of More and Ascham, our tongue is to the people of India. The literature of England is now more valuable than that of classical antiquity. I doubt whether the Sanscrit Literature be as valuable as that of our Saxon and Norman progenitors.\*** In some departments, —in History, for example, I am certain that it is much less so.

Another instance may be said to be still before our eyes. Within the last hundred and twenty years, a nation which had previously been in a state as barbarous as that in which our ancestors were before the crusades, has gradually emerged from the ignorance in which it was sunk, and has taken its place among civilised communities. I speak of Russia. There is now in that country a large educated class, abounding with persons fit to serve the state in the highest functions, and in no wise inferior to the most accomplished men who adorn the best circles of Paris and London. There is reason to hope that this vast empire, which in the time of our grandfathers was probably behind the Punjab, may, in the time of our grandchildren, be pressing close on France

and Britain in the career of improvement. And how was this change effected? Not by flattering national prejudices: not by feeding the mind of the young muscovite with the old women's stories which his rude fathers had believed : not by filling his head with lying legends about St. Nicholas : not by encouraging him to study the great question, whether the world was or was not created on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September: not by calling him 'a learned native' when he has mastered all these points of knowledge : but by teaching him those foreign languages in which the greatest mass of information had been laid up, and thus putting all that information within his reach. **The languages of Western Europe civilised Russia. I cannot doubt that they will do for the Hindoo what they have done for the tartar.\***

And what are the arguments against that course which seems to be alike recommended by theory and by experience? It is said that we ought to secure the co-operation of the native public, and that we can do this only by teaching Sanscrit and Arabic.

I can by no means admit that when a nation of high intellectual attainments undertakes to superintend the education of a nation comparatively ignorant, the learners are absolutely to prescribe the course which is to be taken by the teachers. It is not necessary, however, to say anything on this subject. For it is proved by unanswerable evidence that we are not at present securing the co-operation of the natives. It would be bad enough to consult their intellectual taste at the expense of their intellectual health. But we are consulting neither, —we are withholding from them the learning for which they are craving, we are forcing on them the mock-learning which they nauseate.

This is proved by the fact that we are forced to pay our Arabic and Sanscrit students, while those who learn English are willing to pay us. All the declamations in the world about the love

and reverence of the natives for their sacred dialects will never in the mind of any impartial person, outweigh the undisputed fact, that we cannot find, in all our vast empire, a single student who will let us teach him those dialects unless we will pay him.

I have now before me the accounts of the Madrassa for one month,— the month of December, 1833. The Arabic students appear to have been seventy - seven in number. All receive stipends from the public. The whole amount paid to them is above 500 rupees a month. On the other side of the account stands the following item: Deduct amount realized from the out-students of English for the months of May, June and July last, 103 rupees.

I have been told that it is merely from want of local experience that I am surprised at these phenomena, and that it is not the fashion for students in India to study at their own charges. This only confirms me in my opinion. Nothing is more certain than that it never can in any part of the world be necessary to pay men for doing what they think pleasant and profitable. India is no exception to this rule. The people of India do not require to be paid for eating rice when they are hungry, or for wearing woollen cloth in the cold season. To come nearer to the case before us, the children who learn their letters and a little elementary Arithmetic from the village school-master are not paid by him. He is paid for teaching them. **Why then is it necessary to pay people to learn Sanscrit and Arabic? Evidently because it is universally felt that the Sanscrit and Arabic are languages, the knowledge of which does not compensate for the trouble of acquiring them. On all such subjects the state of the market is the decisive test.\***

There is yet another fact, which is alone sufficient to prove that the feeling of native public, when left to itself, is not such as the supporters of the old system represent it to be. The committee

have thought fit to lay out above a lac of rupees in printing Arabic and Sanscrit books. Those books find no purchasers. It is very rarely that a single copy is disposed of. Twenty-three thousand volumes, most of them folios and quartos, fill the libraries, or rather the lumber-rooms, of this body. The Committee contrive to get rid of some portion of their vast stock of oriental literature by giving books away. But they cannot give so fast as they print. About twenty thousand rupees a year are spent in adding fresh masses of waste paper to a hoard which, I should think, is already sufficiently ample. During the last three years, about sixty thousand rupees have been expended in this manner. The sale of Arabic and Sanscrit books, during those three years, has not yielded quite one thousand rupees. In the mean time the School-book Society is selling seven or eight thousand English volumes every year, and not only pays the expenses of printing, but realises a profit of 20 percent on its outlay.

The fact that the Hindoo law is to be learned chiefly from Sanscrit books, and the Mahometan law from Arabic books, has been much insisted on, but seems not to bear at all on the question. We are commanded by Parliament to ascertain and digest the laws of India. The assistance of a law commission has been given to us for that purpose. **As soon as the code is promulgated, the Shasters and the Hedaya will be useless to a Moonsiff or Sudder Ameen.\*** I hope and trust that before the boys who are now entering at the madrassa and the sanscrit college have compelled their studies, this great work will be finished. **It would be manifestly absurd to educate the rising generation with a view to a state of things which we mean to alter before they reach manhood.\***

But there is yet another argument which seems even more untenable. It is said that the Sanscrit and Arabic are the languages in which the sacred books of a hundred millions of people are

written, and that they are, on that account, entitled to peculiar encouragement. Assuredly it is the duty of British government in India to be not only tolerant, but neutral on all religious questions. But to encourage the study of a literature admitted to be of small intrinsic value, only because that literature inculcates the most serious errors on the most important subjects, is a course hardly reconcilable with reason, with morality, or even with that very neutrality, which ought, as we all agree, to be sacredly preserved. **It is confessed that a language is barren of useful knowledge. We are to teach it because it is fruitful of monstrous superstitions. We are to teach false History, false Astronomy, false Medicine, because we find them in company with a false religion. We abstain, and I trust shall always abstain, from giving any public encouragement to those who are engaged in the work of converting natives to Christianity. And while we act thus, can we reasonably and decently bribe men out of the revenues of the state to waste their youth in learning how they are to purify themselves after touching an ass, or what text of the vedas they are to repeat to expiate the crime of killing a goat?\***

It is taken for granted by the advocates of Oriental learning, that no native of this country can possibly attain more than a mere smattering of English. They do not attempt to prove this; but they perpetually insinuate it. They designate the education which their opponents recommend as a mere spelling book education. They assume it as undeniable, that the question is between a profound knowledge of Hindoo and Arabian literature and science on the one side, and a superficial knowledge of the rudiments of English on the other. This is not merely an assumption, but an assumption contrary to all reason and experience. We know that foreigners of all nations do learn our language sufficiently to have access to all the most abstruse knowledge which it contains,

sufficiently to relish even the more delicate of our most idiomatic writers. There are in this very town natives quite competent to discuss political or scientific questions with fluency and precision in the English language. I have heard the very question on which I am now writing discussed by native gentlemen with a liberality and an intelligence which would do credit to any member of the Committee of the Public Instruction. Indeed it is unusual to find, even in the literary circles of the continent, any foreigner who can express himself in English with so much facility and correctness as we find in many Hindoos. Nobody, I suppose, will contend that English is so difficult to a Hindoo as Greek to an Englishman. Yet an intelligent English youth, in a much smaller number of years than our unfortunate pupils pass at the Sanscrit college, becomes able to read, to enjoy, and even to imitate, not unhappily, the compositions of the best Greek Authors. **Less than half the time which enables an English youth to read Herodotus and Sophocles, ought to enable a Hindoo to read Hume and Milton.\***

To sum up what I have said, I think it clear that we are not fettered by the Act of parliament of 1813; that we are not fettered by any pledge expressed or implied; that we are free to employ our funds as we choose; that we ought to employ them in teaching what is best worth knowing; that English is better worth knowing than Sanscrit or Arabic; that the natives are desirous to be taught English, and are not desirous to be taught Sanscrit or Arabic; that neither as the languages of law, nor as the languages of religion have the Sanscrit and Arabic any peculiar claim to our engagement; that **it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars, and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed. \***

In one point I fully agree with the gentlemen to whose general views I am opposed. I feel with them, that **it is impossible for**

**us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.\*** To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.

I would strictly respect all existing interests. I would deal even generously with all individuals who have had fair reason to expect a pecuniary provision. But I would strike at the root of the bad system which has hitherto been fostered by us. I would at once stop the printing of Arabic and Sanscrit books, I would abolish the Madrassa and Sanscrit college at Calcutta. Benares is the great seat of Brahmanical learning; Delhi, of Arabic learning. If we retain the Sanscrit college at Benaras and the Mahometan college at Delhi, we do enough, and much more than enough in my opinion, for the Eastern languages. If the Benaras and Delhi colleges should be retained, I would at least recommend that no stipends shall be given to any students who may hereafter repair thither, but that the people shall be left to make their own choice between the rival systems of education without being bribed by us to learn what they have no desire to know. The funds which would thus be placed at our disposal would enable us to give larger encouragement to the Hindoo college at Calcutta, and to establish in the principal cities throughout the Presidencies of Fort William and Agra schools in which the English language might be well and thoroughly taught.

If the decision of his Lordship in Council should be such as I anticipate, I shall enter on performance of my duties with the

greatest zeal and alacrity. If, on the other hand, it be the opinion of the Government that the present system ought to remain unchanged, I beg that I may be permitted to retire from the chair of the Committee. I feel that I could not be of the smallest use there—I feel, also, that I should be lending my countenance to what I firmly believe to be a mere delusion. I believe that the present system tends, not to accelerate the progress of truth, but to delay the natural death of expiring errors. I conceive that we have at present no right to the respectable name of Board of Public Instruction. We are a Board for wasting public money, for printing books which are of less value than the paper on which they are printed was while it was blank; for giving artificial encouragement to absurd history, absurd metaphysics, absurd physics, absurd theology; for raising up a breed of scholars who find their scholarship an encumbrance and a blemish, who live on the public while they are receiving their education, and whose education is so utterly useless to them that when they have received it they must either starve or live on the public all the rest of their lives. Entertaining these opinions, I am naturally desirous to decline all share in the responsibility of a body, which, unless it alters its whole mode of proceeding, I must consider not merely as useless, but as positively noxious.

## T.B. Macaulay on India 9-3-1843

The Great majority of the population of India consists of idolaters, blindly attached to doctrines and rites which, considered merely with reference to the temporal interests of mankind, are in the highest degree pernicious. In no part of the world has a religion ever existed more unfavourable to the moral and intellectual health of our race. The Brahminical mythology is so absurd that it necessarily debases every mind which receives it as truth; and with this absurd mythology is bound up an absurd system of physics, an absurd geography, an absurd astronomy. Nor is this form of Paganism more favourable to art than to science. **Through the whole Hindoo Pantheon you will look in vain for anything resembling those beautiful and majestic forms which stood in the shrines of ancient Greece. All is hideous, and grotesque, and ignoble. As this superstition is of all superstitions the most inelegant, so is it of all superstitions the most immoral. Emblems of vice are objects of public worship. Acts of vice are acts of a public worship. The courtesans are as much a part of the establishment of the temple, as much ministers of the god, as the priests. Crimes against life, crimes against property, are not only permitted but enjoined by this odious theology.\*** But for our interference human victims would still be offered to the Ganges, and the widow would still be laid on the pile with the corpse of her husband, and

burned alive by her own children. It is by the command and under the especial protection of one of the most powerful goddesses that the Thugs join themselves to the unsuspecting traveller, make friends with him, slip the noose round his neck, plunge their knives in his eyes, hide him in the earth, and divide his money and baggage. I have read many examinations of Thugs; and I particularly remember an altercation which took place between two of those wretches in the presence of an English officer. One Thug reproached the other for having been so irreligious as to spare the life of a traveller when the omens indicated that their patroness required a victim. 'How could you let him go? How can you expect the goddess to protect us if you disobey her commands? That is one of your North country heresies.' Now, Sir, it is a difficult matter to determine in what way Christian rulers ought to deal with such superstitions as these. We might have acted as the Spaniards acted in the New World. We might have attempted to introduce our own religion by force. We might have sent missionaries among the natives at the public charge. We might have held out hopes of public employment to converts, and have imposed civil disabilities on Mahometans and Pagans. But we did none of these things; and herein we judged wisely. Our duty, as rulers, was to preserve strict neutrality on all questions merely religious: and I am not aware that we have ever swerved from strict neutrality for the purpose of making proselytes to our own faith. **But we have, I am sorry to say, sometimes deviated from the right path in the opposite direction. Some Englishmen, who have held high office in India, seem to have thought that the only religion which was not entitled to toleration and to respect was Christianity. They regarded every Christian missionary with extreme jealousy and disdain; and they suffered the most atrocious crimes, if enjoined by the Hindoo superstition, to be perpetrated in open day. It is lamentable to think how**

long after our power was firmly established in Bengal we, grossly neglecting the first and plainest duty of the civil magistrate, suffered the practices of infanticide and Suttee to continue unchecked. We decorated the temples of the false gods. We provided the dancing girls. We gilded and painted the images to which our ignorant subjects bowed down. We repaired and embellished the car under the wheels of which crazy devotees flung themselves at every festival to be crushed to death. We sent guards of honor to escort pilgrims to the places of worship. We actually made oblations at the shrines of idols. All this was considered, and is still considered, by some prejudiced Anglo-Indians of the old school, as profound policy. I believe that there never was so shallow, so senseless a policy. We gained nothing by it. We lowered ourselves in the eyes of those whom we meant to flatter. We led them to believe that we attached no importance to the difference between Christianity and heathenism. Yet how vast that difference is! I altogether abstain from alluding to topics which belong to divines. I speak merely as a politician anxious for the morality and the temporal well being of society. And, so speaking, I say that to countenance the Brahminical idolatry, and to discountenance that religion which has done so much to promote justice, and mercy, and freedom, and arts, and sciences, an good government, and domestic happiness, which has struck off the chains of the slave, which has mitigated the horrors of war, which has raised women from servants and playthings into companions and friends, is to commit high treason against humanity and civilisation.\*

Gradually a better system was introduced. A great man whom we have lately lost, Lord Wellesley, led the way. He prohibited the immolation of female children; and this was the

most unquestionable of all his titles to the gratitude of his country. In the year 1813 parliament gave new facilities to persons who were desirous to proceed to India as missionaries. Lord William Bentinck abolished the Suttee. Shortly afterwards the Home Government sent out to Calcutta the important and valuable despatch to which reference has been repeatedly made in the course of this discussion. That dispatch Lord Glenelg wrote, —I was then at the Board of Control, and can attest the fact,—with his own hand. One paragraph, the sixty-second, is of the highest moment. I know that paragraph so well that I could repeat it word for word. It contains in short compass an entire code of regulations for the guidance of British functionaries in matters relating to the idolatry of India. The order of the Home Government were express, that the arrangements of the temples should be left entirely to natives. A certain discretion was of course left to the local authorities as to the time and manner of dissolving that connection which had long existed between the English Government and the Brahminical superstition. But the principle was laid down in the clearest manner. This was in February, 1833. In the year 1838 another despatch was sent, which referred to the sixty-second paragraph of Lord Glenelg's despatch, and enjoined the Indian Government to observe the rules contained in that paragraph. Again, in the year 1841, precise orders were sent out on the same subject, orders which Lord Ellenborough seems to me to have studied carefully for the express purpose of disobeying them point by point, and in the most direct manner. You murmur: but only look at the orders of the Directors and at the proclamation of the governor General. **The orders are, distinctly and positively, that the British authorities in India shall not decorate those temples, shall not pay any military honor to those temples. Now, Sir, the first charge which I bring against Lord Ellenborough is, that he has been guilty of an act of gross**

**disobedience, that he has done that which was forbidden in the strongest terms by those from whom his power is derived.\*** The Home Government says, Do not interfere in the concerns of heathen temples. Is it denied that Lord Ellenborough has interfered in the concerns of a heathen temple? The Home Government says, Make no presents to heathen temples. Is it denied that Lord Ellenborough has proclaimed to all the world his intention to make a present to a heathen temple? The Home Government says, Do not decorate heathen temples. Is it denied that Lord Ellenborough has proclaimed to all the world his intention to decorate a heathen temple? The Home Government says, Do not send troops to do honor to heathen temples. Is it denied that Lord Ellenborough sent a body of troops to escort these gates to a heathen temple?

We all know that this temple [of Somnath] is in ruins. I am confident that Lord Ellenborough knew it to be in ruins, , and that his intention was to rebuild it at the public charge. That is the obvious meaning of his words. But, as this meaning is so monstrous that nobody here can venture to defend it, his friends pretend that he believed the temple to have been already restored, and that he had no thought of being himself the restorer. How can I believe this?

He ought to have known, without any instructions from home, that **it was his duty not to take part in disputes among the false religions of the East;\*** that it was his duty, in his official character, to show no marked preference for any of those religions, and to offer no marked insult to any. But, Sir, he has paid unseemly homage to one of those religions; he has grossly insulted another; **and he has selected as the object of his homage the very worst and most degrading of those religions, and as the**

**object of his insult the best and purest them. The homage was paid to Lingamism. The insult was offered to Mahometanism. Lingamism is not merely idolatry, but idolatry in its most pernicious form.\*** The honorable gentleman, the Secretary of the Board of Control, seemed to think that he had achieved a great victory when he had made out that his lord ship's devotions had been paid, not to Vishnu, but to Siva. Sir, Vishnu is the preserving Deity of the Hindoo Mythology; Siva is the destroying Deity; and, as far as I have any preference for one of your Governor General's gods over another, I confess preserving to the destroying power. Yes, Sir; the temple of Somnath was sacred to shiva, and the honorable gentleman cannot but know by what emblem Siva is represented and with what rites he is adored. I will say no more. The Governor General, Sir, is in some degree protected by the very magnitude of his offence. I am ashamed to name those things to which he is not ashamed to pay public reverence. This god of destruction, whose images and whose worship it would be a violation of decency to describe, is selected as the object of homage. As the object of insult is selected a religion which has borrowed much of its theology and much of its morality from Christianity, a religion which in the midst of Polytheism teaches the unity of God, and in the midst of idolatry, strictly proscribes the worship of images. **The duty of our Government is as I said, to take no part in the disputes between Mahometans and idolaters. But, if our Government does take a part, there cannot be a doubt that Mahometanism is entitled to the preference. Lord Ellenborough is of a different opinion. He takes away the gates from a Mahometans mosque, and solemnly offers them as a gift to a Pagan temple. Morally, this is crime. Politically, it is a blunder.\*** Nobody who knows anything of the Mahometans of India can doubt that this affront to their faith

will excite their fiercest indignation. Their susceptibility on such points is extreme. Some of the most serious disasters that have ever befallen us in India have been caused by that susceptibility. Remember what happened at Vellore in 1806, and more recently at Bangalore. The mutiny of Vellore was caused by a slight shown to the Mahometan turban; the mutiny of Bangalore by disrespect said to have been shown to a Mahometan place of worship. If a Governor General had been induced by his zeal for Christianity to offer any affront to a mosque held in high veneration by Mussulmans, I should think that he had been guilty of indiscretion such as proved him to be unfit for his post. **But to affront a mosque of peculiar dignity, not from zeal for Christianity, but for the sake of this loathsome god of destruction, is nothing short of madness.\***

## Chapter 6

### A SUMMARY VIEW OF BRITAIN TILL THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY \*

Speaking in the British House of Commons initiating the debate on the Christianization of India in 1813, Mr. William Wilberforce proceeded to describe the blessings of Christianity and observed that “much of the large mass of comforts which we in this country enjoy, beyond those, I believe, of any other nation in ancient or in modern times, is owing to our invaluable constitution”. What was this “invaluable constitution” of Britain like? A brief idea of it may be given here.

1. *Electorate*: In 1831, just before the enactment of laws which extended the electorate of Britain to 7.1% of the then adult male population, the number of adult males eligible to vote was 438,000 in an adult population of over ten millions, a percentage of 4.4%. It may be presumed that the position in 1813 was no different to 1831.

2. *Incomes*. Regarding the comforts and prosperity enjoyed by the British people at this time (and in fact till about a century later) the people of England of this period may be divided into four economic categories. A survey of the position was made in 1812 by Mr. Patrick Colquhoun a much quoted authority. He computed the gross national income of Britain at 430,521,372 pound sterling in 1812. This he divided amongst the various categories of the population according to a (calculated) income per family under each head. The following is from his data and grouped here under 4 main categories.

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\*Based on a note by the compiler of these narrations, 1970.

	<i>No of heads of Families</i>	<i>Average annual Computed share of income per family (in pound sterling)</i>
<i>The first consisted of the following:</i>		
Temporal Lords	516	£ 10,000
Spiritual lords (Archbishop & Bishops)	48	5,010
Baronets	861	3,510
Knights & Esquires	11,000	2,000
Gentlemen & Ladies living on incomes	35,000	800
Eminent Bankers & Merchants in all	3,500	2,600
	50,925	

<i>The second:</i>		
Higher Civil and Military servants	50,880	£ 980- 200
Eminent Clergymen	1,500	720
Lesser Clergymen	17,500	200
Judges, Barristers, Attorneys etc.	19,000	400
Physicians, Surgeons, Apothecaries	18,000	300
Artists, Sculptors, Engravers	5,000	280
Freeholders of land of the better sort	70,000	275
Lesser Merchants	22,800	805
Engineers, Surveyors, Master Builders	8,700	300
Owners of ships, various manufacturers	54,150	£ 904- 600
University Teachers	874	600
In all	2,68,404	

	<i>No. of heads of Families</i>	<i>Average annual Computed income per family (in pound sterling)</i>
<i>The Third:</i>		
Lesser Freeholders and Farmers.	4,90,000	£ 120- 100
Minor Manufacturers like Tailors, Milliners etc.	43,750	180
Shopkeepers and Retail Tradesmen	1,40,000	200
Clerks and Shopmen and Retail Tradesmen	95,000	70
Inn-keepers and Publicans	87,500	100
School-owners and Teachers employing some capital	35,000	204
Dissenting Clergymen	5,000	100
Actors in Theatres etc.	875	200
In all.	8,97,125	

*The Fourth*

Half Pay Officers.	6,500	100
Common Soldiers.	2,80,000	35
Seamen and Marine	1,71,540	42
Army Pensioners etc.	42,000	15
Labouring People in Agriculture, Mining etc. (including earnings of the Females )	7,42,151	45
Aquatic Labourers in the Merchants' service, fisheries etc.	1,80,000	45

	<i>No. of heads of Families</i>	<i>Average annual Computed income per family (in pound sterling)</i>
Umbrella and Parasol Makers, Lace workers, Launderers etc.	70,000	50
Artisans, Mechanics, Labourers in Manufac- tories, Building work etc.	10,21,974	48
Pedlars Hawkers etc.	1,400	45
Persons in Prison for Debt	3,500	30
Paupers, producing from their own labour in miscellaneous employment	3,87,100	10
In all	28,99,665	

The income of royal personages ranged from 172,000 pound sterling to 18,300 pound sterling. There were several amongst the nobility, eminent merchants, bankers etc. whose annual incomes were higher than the latter figure. Mr. Wilberforce himself is said to have had an income of 30,000 pound sterling a year.

### 3 *Land Ownership*

In 1813 England was still largely an agricultural country. The following indicates the position of land ownership about this period:

	No of Families	Income Range	Proportion owned of cultivated land
1. Great Landlords	400	£ 50,000 to 5,000	20-25%
2. Gentry:			
(a) Wealthy	700-800	£ 5,000 to 3,000	50-60%
(b) Squires	3,000-4,000	£ 3,000 to 1,000	
(c) Gentlemen	10,000-20,000	£ 1,000 to 300	
3. Freeholders:			
(a) Better Sort	25,000	£ 700 to 150	15-20%
(b) Lesser Sort	75,000	£ 300 to 30	

Over a million other families who were wholly engaged in agriculture were either landless labourers or tenants. The position sixty years later, in 1873, was only marginally different.

	No of owners	Extent in Acres
Peers and Peeresses	400	5,728,979
Great Landowners	1,288	8,497,699
Squires	2,529	4,319,271
Great Yeomen	9,585	4,782,627
Lesser Yeomen	24,412	4,144,272
Small Proprietors	2,17,049	3,931,806
Cottagers	7,03,289	151,148
Public Bodies	14,459	1,443,548
Waste		1,524,624
	9,73,011	34,523,974

#### 4. *Governmental Expenditure*

The prevailing socio-economic structure is correspondingly reflected in governmental expenditure. Till the 1850s, during years in which Britain is not engaged in major wars which are paid out of its own state revenues, the 'Interest and Management of the Public Debt' consumes about half or more of the total state revenue. Of the remaining, two-thirds goes on army, navy and ordinance, and about one-third on civil government. Upto 1800 the sums appropriated under civil government mainly comprised of the privy purse of the ruler and allowances of members of the royalty, salaries of ambassadors abroad, secret service money, and expenses of the judiciary, mint etc. Any expenses on account of education, the sciences, the arts etc. begin to have any share of governmental revenue only well after the 1820s. The following gives the main divisions of the budget for a number of years between 1772 and 1868-9.

	Debt Charges	Army,navy, Ordinance	Civil Govt.	TOTAL
1772-3	£ 4,649,064	£ 3,694,699	£ 1,633,115	£ 9,976,880
1801	£ 18,481,281	£ 33,691,812	£ 6,467,916	£ 58,641,010
1830	£ 29,118,859	£ 13,914,677	£ 8,984,081	£ 52,018,617
1868-9	£ 26,611,419	£ 31,891,545	£ 16,987,945	£ 75,490,909

#### 5. *State Employment*

As may be concluded from the above data on state expenditure the large majority of employment was in the army, navy and ordinance. The recruitment to the higher ranks of the army etc. was priced. In 1808 the commission of a Lt. Colonel cost between £ 5000 - £ 7000, that of Major and Captain around £4000, the rank of a Lieutenant around £ 1500, and that of a cornet about £ 1200. In 1857 the prices, fixed by a regulation of 1821, were appreciably higher. The recruitment as common soldiers etc. was obligatory for certain categories of men, around 1800.

As regards the posts in the civil government the higher ones were ordinarily sinecures. According to a recent study "in 1809, the annual net value of the principal sinecures was £ 356,555 and these were held, almost without exception, by members of the aristocracy. They ranged from positions like Keeper of the Privy Seal for Scotland to that of Sweeper of the Mall in the Park, the latter place being, for a time, the proud possession of a baroness." The same writer states that "the pension roll, too, was crowded with the representatives and dependants of the great families", and that even as late as 1830, "a total of £ 339,809 was being drawn annually from the public treasury by a little group of 42 pensioners and placemen including 15 higher peers." According to this writer "the selling of offices" both civil and military, "was elevated into a principle" during the period 1689-1830.

The smaller posts, like those concerned with the collection of customs and similar revenue, were usually farmed, the person taking the job receiving a commission or paying a stipulated sum to the state and keeping the rest himself. The Duty on tea, a very large source of revenue, producing three to four million pounds sterling annually, was however collected at little cost through the East India Company.

## 6. *Education*

Most of the elementary schools of Britain are the products of the early 19th century when a new system of schooling was first adopted in Britain. The following from the Directors of the E.I.Co to their Governor General in Bengal is worth quoting regarding this new system:

20. "The mode of instruction that from time immemorial has been practised under these masters" has received the highest tribute of praise by its adoption in this country, under the direction of the Reverend Dr. Bell, formerly chaplain at Madras; and it is now become the mode by which education is conducted in our national establishments, from a conviction of the facility it affords in the acquisition of language by simplifying the process of instruction."

*(Public Despatch 3.6.1814 HL Papers, 1852-3.26)*

Before the introduction of this system, the number of children in elementary schools is estimated at around 40,000 in 1792. The number of secondary schools in 1818 was around 500 with some 10,000 students. Oxford and Cambridge were the only two universities in England at this period. The number of students at these two is estimated at 3,200 in 1851.

### *7. Judicial Punishments*

Till the early years of the 18th century the rates of maximum wages for labourers were fixed by statute. Receiving above this maximum was criminal. Besides, till about this period the movement of a labourer from one county to another was only possible with prior permission. Most of such laws and regulations however were either replaced or not enforced after the 1750s.

But penal provisions of the criminal law were another matter. According to a parliamentary committee there were some 200 capital offences in 1818. Stealing any thing worth five shillings or more was punishable by death. Around this time a change in the law made this and similar offences no longer liable to the death penalty but to transportation for 14 years. Flogging as a punishment in the army and navy was common practice at least till the middle of the 19th century. It was not uncommon to inflict several hundred strokes on an individual so punished. Some times up to 2,000 lashes were awarded.

### *8. Productivity and Wages in Agriculture*

In the early 19th century the productivity of British agriculture was very low. According to the journal *Edinburgh Review* (Vol. 4, July 1804) it was only one-third per acre of that of wheat in the Allahabad region in India. Further the wages of the British agricultural labourer was also lower than of his counterpart in India. Here is what the Review wrote:

“It appears, that the quantity of seed sown in each country is nearly the same, while the produce is nearly treble in India. The

circumstance most worthy of attention, is the high wages of the Indian. According to the usual calculations, a man in England consumes a quarter of wheat per annum, and the inhabitants overhead 6 bushels. Out of the remaining 7 quaters he has to pay for his house, his clothes, taxes, and a variety of other things which custom has rendered necessary to his existence. The Indian labourer (for the ryut is by no means so well off) receives without one quarter of as high wages as the English peasant, without having any of those out goings to diminish his income. If the fact is as here stated, (and it agrees with what the author himself states relative to the wages near Benares), we are at a loss to find a reason for such a singular circumstance. The labourer receives a certain allowance at certain periods of the year, entirely independent of his regular wages. From the largeness of that allowance, there is reason to think that it was fixed in a period of great prosperti, or adopted for the purpose of making the regulation of wages more easy. This custom prevails also in the southern part of the peninsula.”

#### *9. British Science and Technology versus British hierarchy*

The Great London Exhibition in the early 1850s had amazed all of Europe and visitors from other areas. The exhibition established that Britain was far ahead of every country in science and technology. But about a decade later the British found that France, Germany, etc, had in the interval gone ahead of Britain in these fields. After exploring the matter, through parliamentary committees, etc, the British found that it was the equitable nature of the education system of France, Germany, and others which had enabled them to go forward. The British however did not wish to alter their own system based on pronounced social inequality. The relative equalisation in Britain started gradually only after about 1920.

#### 10. *Privateer Ships*

A few lines perhaps may be added here about the British Navy and its complement the "Privateer Ships." The other major countries of Europe also had these privateers. The following from a high-power British document of the late 18th century. [B.L.: Add MS 38351, ff 3-93; from Lord Hawkesbury (later 1st Earl Liverpool) to Prime Minister, W.Pitt, 12.10.1791]

"The naval forces of Great Britain in the time of war is of two sorts.

First King's ships of war, commonly called privateers. These Privateers receive their commissions from the admiralty, which the Lord High Admiral, or the Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty are obliged to give at the request of the owners, by the directions of an act of parliament.

In a naval war it is not the Government alone that carries it on; the nation itself may be said to take a part in it, and such a spirit ought certainly not to be discouraged. *The king and the two houses of parliament are of this opinion*, for the king has in every war given up his right to all the capture made by private ships of war, and parliament has enacted many excellent provisions for their encouragement.

The ships belonging to the King are supported at public expense.

Privateers are supported, not at the public expense, but by the profits derived from the captures made by them.

In proportion as you diminish the chance of making captures, you discourage the fitting out of private ships of war; and if you so far restrain the right of making captures, that the Amateurs, or those, who are disposed to fit out private ships as their charge and risque, you in fact,

annihilate this branch of the public force. In time of war, the ships of his majesty's navy, attack and destroy the ships of war belonging to the enemy, and thereby make Great Britain mistress of the sea. It is then, that private ships of war, begin to act with success, and they have a great share in destroying the commerce of the enemy."

Further:

"It is well known, that the fortunes of all our great naval officers have been made, not so much by the emoluments of their professions, as by the capture of merchantmen, taken by ships under their command. If you deprive therefore, the officers of the British navy of this prospect, to improve their fortunes, or even diminish it to a considerable degree, you thereby take away, one great encouragement to active service."

It is these privateers who had been active in the Indian seas, particularly along the western coast of India, in the 17th and 18th century and led to the British quarrels with Indian rulers. It is also under such legal provisions that the British navy had a share "in the division of any plunder, which may be made in India," like the sharing after the capture of Calcutta by Admiral Watson and Colonel Robert Clive.

#### 11. *Christianity, Church, people*

Christianity had begun to spread, first in Rome, from about the end of first century A.D. It made such powerful impression in some 200 years that by the early 4th century A.D. the Roman Emperor, Constantine, had converted to Christianity, and with him his whole empire was treated as having become Christian. However European scholars on the subject seem to think that it is only by the 15th c. that Europe may be treated as a wholly Christian area.

In the early 16th c. there is a major split between the church

of Rome, and those who began to be known as various denominations of Protestants. This split led to major wars in Europe for several decades. Finally, around 1564, the treaty of Augsburg, decided that the faith of the subject of a king will be the same as that of the king. This led to large scale migration, many Catholics moving to areas of Catholic kings, and those of various protestant denominations to the realm of a king of the relevant Protestant denomination.

At the end of the 18th c., a law was also passed in Britain for the proper observance of the Sabbath, when all public and most private activity had to cease; perhaps all Britain attended their respective church on Sunday. But most churches had only limited pews (sitting space) and these had been purchased by the wealthier believers beforehand. So, it is reported, that a majority of the people stood outside the church at the time of the Sunday service.