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K. K. Venugopal

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A Hindoo Cradle.

# THE WORLD

IN MINIATURE;

EDITED BY

FREDERIC SHOBERL.

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## Hindoostan,

CONTAINING

A DESCRIPTION OF THE RELIGION, MANNERS,  
CUSTOMS, TRADES, ARTS, SCIENCES,  
LITERATURE, DIVERSIONS, &c.

OF

## The Hindoos.

ILLUSTRATED

*With Upwards of One Hundred Coloured  
Engravings.*

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IN SIX VOLUMES.

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VOL. III.

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The proper study of mankind is man.—POPE.

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Hindoos throwing themselves on Mattresses  
covered with sharp Instruments.



# HINDOOSTAN

## *In Miniature.*

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### EXPIATIONS.

WE have treated of the different classes of Hindoo penitents, as well as of the voluntary mortifications to which they submit either from a spirit of religion or vanity. Besides these they have, at stated seasons, public expiations for the purpose of appeasing the divine wrath, in which these fanatics perform the principal parts. They make, in fact a kind of trade of it; inflicting on

themselves excruciating torments, rather to expiate the sins of those who pay them than to obtain pardon for their own.

The principal of these expiations is that which Solvyns calls *djhampe*. The persons of both sexes who devote themselves to this species of expiation are led in procession, with the sound of instruments, through the town or village. They are adorned with red flowers, and carry fruit which they throw as they pass among the spectators, who scramble for it with religious eagerness.

When the actors have arrived at the place of exhibition, they ascend to a greater or less height, in proportion to

their zeal and courage, on scaffolds of several stories, erected for the purpose, and thence throw themselves upon straw or cotton mattresses covered with knives, sabres, and other sharp instruments, in the manner represented in the plate.

The Bramins who hold the mattresses, generally contrive to diminish the danger by humouring the fall: for the main point is, not that the wounds be mortal, but that a good deal of blood may be spilled. The fanatics prepare themselves for this trial by abstinence and fasting for several days. This precaution, which the Bramins enforce as a religious precept, has the effect of

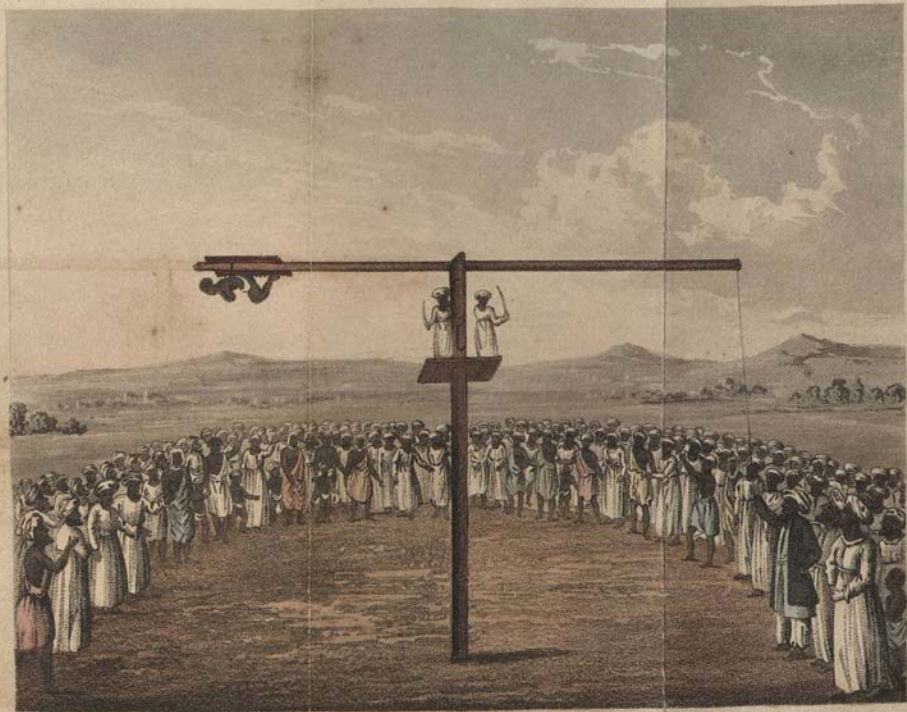
rendering wounds less injurious and facilitating their cure.

At night, when the *djhampe* is over, the persons who attended it repair to the pagodas with great ceremony, accompanied by musicians who play all sorts of instruments by the way. The penitents meanwhile are not idle. One thrusts a long needle through his tongue; another cleaves his with a cutlas or sabre; a third pierces his fingers with a sharp-pointed iron skewer: while a fourth inflicts one hundred and twenty wounds on his forehead, breast and back; for there must be neither more nor fewer than this mystic number. Lastly, there are some who perforate

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A species of Penance practised at the Festival of the Goddess Bhavani.

this torture. There are, nevertheless, people who make a trade of it, as they do of the other expiations.

During the whole of the ceremony numerous musicians continue to play upon a variety of instruments. As music accompanies all the religious festivals and ceremonies of the *Hindoos*, we shall devote the next chapter to the consideration of that subject.

## MUSIC AND MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

To judge from the works on music extant in the Sanscrit language, and from the effects ascribed by the poets to that art, which fully equal those attributed to the lyre of Orpheus, there can be no doubt that in ancient times it was farther advanced than it is at present. It was natural to impute the invention of this charming art to the gods: accordingly the Bramins suppose that mankind were taught it by Brama, and his wife Sarasswadi; and fable adds that Nareda, son of those

two deities, was the inventor of the *vina*.

Bherat, the inventor of the dramas in which singing is united with dancing, and which resemble our operas, is held to have been inspired by the gods.

Sir William Jones, in his Essay on the musical modes of the Hindoos, quotes several passages in which four systems of music invented by Ixora or Sheeva, (perhaps Osiris), Bherat, Hanooman, and Callinath, an Indian philosopher, are described. Each province of Hindoostan has moreover its particular system.

The gamut of the Hindoos comprehends seven notes, which they designate by the first syllables of their

names: *sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni*. They reckon in the octave, twenty-two fourths and thirds: they have also eighty-four modes, which are formed by the subdivision of the seven natural notes. These modes are called *raugs*, a term which signifies passion, each mode being designed to excite a particular sensation. Some writers, therefore, swell the number to sixteen thousand; while others, who are more moderate, reduce the modes which may be employed in practice to twenty-three.

The Hindoos place their seven notes under the protection of seven deities of the first order. They call the octave *grama*, a word literally signifying village; because they compare the ar-



the flesh above the hips, through which they run cords or thrust tubes of pipes and reeds.

The procession moves along to the sound of instruments, amidst the acclamations of the multitude, some of the penitents holding live coals on which perfumes are burned in the hollow of their hands. This kind of prodigy, which is undoubtedly the effect of some chemical preparation unknown to the populace, fills the pious Hindoos with astonishment and veneration.

Each of the penances mentioned above, is intended to expiate some particular sin: thus, the tongue is pierced for lying, the fingers for theft, and the

wounds on the forehead are inflicted for wicked thoughts.

The procession which lasts the whole of the succeeding day, halts from time to time to dance before the houses of those by whom the penitents are paid ; for, as we have already observed, it is to expiate the sins of the rich that the poor submit to such various kinds of torment.

These religious wounds are very easily and speedily healed : milk is employed for the tongue, and herbs for other parts of the body.

Solvyns affirms, that he was present at a festival of this kind, held with the greatest solemnity in a pagoda, three miles from Calcutta, in honour

of the god Cally, when the blood on the floor covered the feet of the spectators.

The expiatory tortures conclude with the *toharok poojah*, which consists in thrusting into the flesh at the shoulder-blades two strong iron hooks, suspended by a rope from one end of a lever, which turns upon a pivot fixed in the top of a high pole. The other end of the lever is then pulled down, and the victim, raised to the height of twenty or thirty feet, is swung round with rapidity in the presence of a concourse of spectators. While turning round, he throws down, according to Solvyns, cocoa-nuts and other fruit, for which

the crowd eagerly scramble, or lets some pigeons fly. Luillier, an ancient traveller, describes him as holding in his hand an iron rod, having burning perfumes fastened to the top, to prevent his fainting through pain. Sometimes the flesh gives way, owing to the weight of the body and the swiftness of the motion, and the sufferer would consequently run the risk of being killed by the fall, but for the precaution which is taken to bind him to the lever, by means of a linen scarf that passes round his waist, in the manner exhibited in the annexed engraving.

The reader may judge what pain the wretches must suffer who submit to

rangement of the notes with the order which prevails in that of houses.

The six principal modes are personified under the figures of handsome youths, who are the genii of music and preside over the seasons; for the Hindoos have six, of two months each. Each of these six *raugs* is attended by five *rauginis*, his faithful wives, who present him with eight *putras* or little genii, his children, whose melodious voices accompany the songs of their fathers. The six *raugs*, the *thirty rauginis* and the forty-eight *putras* form the eighty-four modes.

These modes are adapted to particular seasons of the year and particular hours of the day. This is a sin-



gularity peculiar to the Hindoos alone; and a musician who should derange this order by singing in one season an air belonging to another, or in the day-time such as are appropriated to night, would be set down for an ignoramus.

It is probable that these songs were composed in honour of the deities whose festivals were held in the seasons to which they have ever since been consecrated by tradition. Be this as it may, none of the Hindoos can now account for the origin of this custom, which seems to be lost in the obscurity of the early ages. It has been universally adopted by the Mahometans.

Whatever magic was in the touch when Orpheus swept his lyre, or Timo-

theus filled his softly-breathing flute, the effects said to have been produced by two of the six *raug*, are even more extraordinary than any of those ascribed to the modes of the ancients. Mia Tousine, a wonderful musician in the time of the emperor Akber, sung one of the night *raug* at mid-day. The powers of his music were such that it instantly became night; and the darkness extended in a circle round the palace as far as his voice could be heard.

The Hindoos have a tradition of Naik Gopaul, another celebrated musician in the reign of the same monarch, who was commanded by the emperor to sing the *raug dheepuck*, which whoever attempted to sing should be destroyed

by fire. Naik Gopaul flew to the river Jumna, and plunged himself up to the neck in water, where Akber, determined to prove the power of this *raug*, compelled the unfortunate musician to sing it. Notwithstanding his situation in the river, flames burst violently from his body and consumed him to ashes.

These and other anecdotes of the same nature are related by many of the Hindoos and implicitly believed by some. The effect produced by the *maig mulluar raug* is immediate rain. It is related that a singing-girl once by exerting the powers of her voice in this *raug*, drew down from the clouds timely and refreshing showers on the parched rice-crops of Bengal, and there-

by averted the horrors of famine from the *Paradise of Regions*. A European in that country, inquiring after performers capable of producing similar effects, is gravely told that the art is now almost lost, but that there are still musicians possessed of those wonderful powers in the west of India. If one inquires in the west, they say, that if any such performers remain they are to be found only in Bengal.

Many of the Hindoo melodies possess the plaintive simplicity of the Scotch and Irish, and others a wild originality that is inexpressibly pleasing. Counterpoint seems not, as far as has yet been discovered, to have

entered at any time into the system of Indian music.

The instrumental music is not so agreeable: it is very obstreperous, from the too great number of drums, trumpets and pipes, some of which are of such length, that the players are obliged to rest the ends on the shoulders of the musicians who go before them.

In the annexed engraving of Musical Instruments, Plate 1, fig. 1 represents the *dhauk*, an enormous and heavy drum, which must not be used without permission from the jemmidar of the place. This permission is not granted excepting on occasion of marriages, funerals or other important ceremonies. The





stunning noise of this drum delights the ears of the Hindoos. On extraordinary occasions it is adorned with feathers, horse-hair and flowers.

Fig. 2, the *doluk* or *tamtam* is another large drum scarcely differing at all from that of Europe.

The *kaura*, fig. 3, is a small portable drum, beaten with two sticks. It is commonly used on journeys to scare away wild beasts, and also in opulent houses to announce the arrival of ceremonious visitors. Another use to which it is applied is to give notice to the people of the opening of the bazars or markets.

The *doyra*, fig. 4, is an instrument very like our tambourine, surrounded

with copper rings, which the player shakes with one hand while he strikes the lower skin with the other.

The *tabla*, fig. 5, is a pair of kettle-drums, which are struck with the fingers. One is of earthen-ware, the other of wood, and both are covered with parchment. This instrument is most commonly carried by loose persons of both sexes.

Another species of kettle-drum, called the *tickora*, is shown at fig. 6. This instrument is more frequently seen in the train of Mahratta princes than in processions: it is often placed on a camel, which follows the elephant that carries the prince. The sound of this drum is any thing but melodious.

Fig. 7, the *dhourghadje*, is a drum composed of two cases of unequal size, the skin on the under part of which is beaten with the fingers, and on the upper with a stick. It is chiefly employed to mark the time.

The *nagur*, fig. 8, is also a double drum, used on occasion of festivals and processions.

The *kurtaul*, fig. 9, is a small pair of cymbals which are held in the hand. This instrument appears to have been formerly used in religious ceremonies, as many of the ancient idols are represented with it. The *kurtaul* is frequently seen in the hands of persons who affect piety, and who accompany

their singing with it in the streets and markets.

The Hindoos have a species of harmonica which they call *jultrung*, fig. 10, composed of porcelain bowls, each giving a different tone when struck with small iron rods.

The *dump*, (see Musical Instruments, plate 2, fig. 11,) is a large drum, differing from ours in its octagon form, and in being beaten with the hand only. It is chiefly used in religious festivals.

Fig. 12, the *kholé*, or *mirdeng*, is a kind of drum of baked earth, in the shape of two truncated cones joined together at their bases. The ends are covered with parchment like those of





our European drums. This is the favourite instrument of the Tadins, Yogeers and all the religious penitents.

The *djougo*, fig. 13, is a rather uncommon instrument. The sound is produced by the friction of a stick having a ball of packthread fastened to the end of it, on parchment stretched over a cylinder of baked earth. This cylinder is composed of two parts joined together, each of which is covered with a parchment which may be tightened or relaxed at pleasure, by means of a band that goes round the instrument. The player, at the same time that he rubs the stick above-mentioned on one end, strikes the other with a second.

The *surmungla*, fig. 14, a genuine Hindoo instrument, is composed of a number of bamboos split at the two ends, and held together by thin cross pieces. The performer plays by merely passing his hand over the instrument.

We now proceed to notice a few of the wind instruments of the Hindoos. Of these the *ramsinga*, fig. 15, is one of the most remarkable. It consists of four tubes of very thin metal, which fit one within another, and are generally covered with fine red varnish. It is played in the same manner as our trombone, but requires very strong lungs to draw from it a continuation of sounds.

Fig. 16, is a long pipe called *taré*, or

*pani cavaneh*, more particularly employed for the purpose of announcing the death of a person, or the offerings made by his relatives on his funeral pile. The dull, mournful tones of this instrument render it very suitable for this office.

The *baunk*, fig. 17, is a kind of trumpet, which is not only used in processions, but employed by the Mahrattas as a military instrument both for cavalry and infantry. It resembles the military trumpet of Europe.

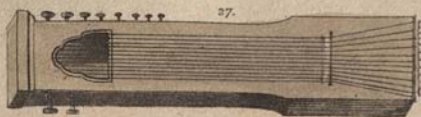
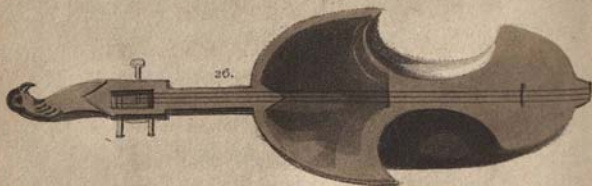
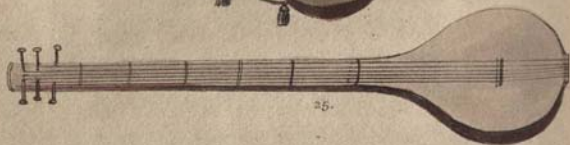
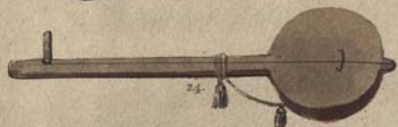
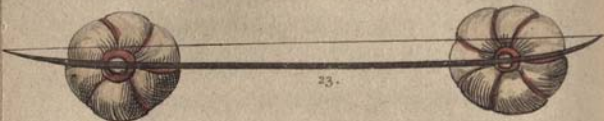
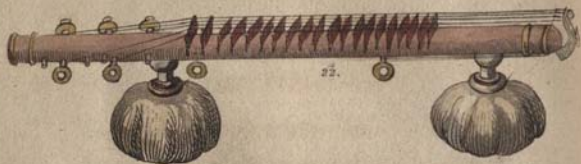
The *soorna*, fig. 18, is a sort of pipe exactly resembling our hautboy, and like the latter, played by means of a reed. Without any rule of music, the Hindoos always play it in a high key,

which produces a noise extremely disagreeable to the ear, especially when it is accompanied by the *dhauk*, the *kholé*, and the *tobri*. The *soorna* is nevertheless the principal instrument of the Hindoos : it is played in all religious ceremonies, and at the doors of all the pagodas. It forms, also, the usual accompaniment to the dances of the *devdassees*.

The *tobri*, fig. 19, is a sort of bagpipe, which has the effect of a bassoon. This instrument is played by barbers; it is used in all the pagodas, and likewise accompanies the dances of the *bayaderes* and *devdassees*.

The *bunsi*, fig. 20, is a species of pipe made of bamboo, and played with





the nose, after the manner of some of the South Sea islanders.

Fig. 21 is a conch, or shell, called *sonk*, tipped at each end with copper, into which the Bramins blow with all their might to summon the people to the temples. The shell of which the bracelets of the Hindoo women are made is commonly used for this purpose.

In the third plate are shown a few of the stringed instruments most common in India.

The *vina*, fig. 22, is a stringed instrument of the guitar kind. The handle is twenty-one inches and a half long: at a little distance from each end of it is a large calabash, and beyond these the pegs and tail which hold the

strings fast. The total length of the instrument is three feet seven inches. The first calabash is fixed at the distance of ten inches from the upper extremity, and the second seven inches and a half from the lower end. They are fourteen inches in diameter, and at their base there is a round hole about five inches in diameter. The handle is two inches thick. There are seven strings, two of steel are very near one another on the right; four, of copper, on the handle; and the seventh, also of copper, on the left.

When the vina is played, the upper calabash is rested on the left shoulder, and the lower on the right knee. The player presses the strings with the left

hand, using chiefly the first and second fingers, rarely the third, and occasionally the little finger. The fingers of the right hand strike the strings on that side; the first two strike those on the handle, the little finger those on the right, but the third finger is never used. The first and second fingers of that hand are defended by a piece of iron wire put on the ends of them in the way of a thimble, which produces a disagreeable sound when the musician plays with force: but when he plays gently, the sound of this instrument is highly pleasing to the ear.

Solvyns describes an instrument called *pennauk*, fig. 23, which differs from the *vina* in this respect, that the two cale-

bashes are connected by an iron bar, and that it has but one cord of wire tightly stretched. The performer obtains sounds from it by drawing a bow over this wire with one hand, and scraping with a stick in the other.

The *oorni*, fig. 24, is a rude species of guitar, formed of half a cocoa-nut, in which is fixed a bamboo stick with a single string, played upon with a bow, the handle of which is covered with ornaments. The *oorni* yields but two sounds, one of which is described as resembling the mewling of a cat, and the other the lowing of deer.

Fig. 25 is a kind of guitar called *sitar*, which our European players would turn to a good account. Those of Hindoo-



stan, thinking its sound too monotonous, frequently tie two iron rings to each string for the purpose of making more noise. These rings striking against one another destroy all the harmony of the *sitar*, but produce harsh jangling tones with which Indian ears are not a little delighted.

The *sarindah*, fig. 26, is an instrument which seems to belong exclusively to the common people. It is formed of a piece of wood, over a hollow in which are extended cotton strings, that are sounded by means of a bow.

The *saringee*, fig. 27, is very much like the violincello, but smaller, and has more strings, which are of cotton, and yield a sweet sound.

In a distinct engraving we have given a representation of the *nagabotte*, or great drum, which is usually carried on an elephant before the Hindoo and Mahometan princes. It is used for proclaiming their commands, both in towns and in camps. The man is here supposed to be beating it in the middle of a camp to call the soldiers together. When he has collected them, he says:—For the glory of the prince your master, you will march at such an hour to-morrow and encamp at such a place.

This drummer beats with two sticks, one of which is of iron. He is employed, on occasion of extraordinary festivals, in the pagodas.



A Mahometan beating the Nagabotte .

Thus much for the different Hindoo instruments, the endless modifications of which are applied to numberless other purposes than those above mentioned. Every penitent, every *pandaron* and *tadin*, is solicitous to procure an instrument, the new sounds of which may draw attention to him. They are frequently seen with a small drum, no thicker than a man's arm, and narrowest in the middle, like an hour-glass, singing the praises of Ravanasta and Tucinrajah. The fortune-teller, called *coudacoudoupecaren*, shakes in each hand a little drum, which is struck by two wooden balls attached to a wire fastened to the middle of the instrument, of which one of our children's toys will

afford a tolerably accurate idea. Some strike together small cymbals not larger than a man's hand; others a small *tamtam*, which Solvyns calls *kaounsy*: while others again carry a sort of guitar with four strings, termed *tambourah*. The rich, as well as the poor, frequently have in their hands a sort of castanets, or hollow copper rings, in which there are little balls of the same metal which rattle when shaken.

There is among the Hindoos a particular class of public vocal performers, called *Bhauts*, who are most numerous in the province of Guzerat, and who, like the European minstrels and troubadours in the ages of chivalry, go about singing selections from the my-



thological legends of the Hindoos, or verses of their own composition, either to praise some renowned warrior, to commemorate a victory, to record a tragical event, or to panegyrisé a present object.

Colonel Wilks, in a note to his History of Mysore, says:—*Bart, bautt, batt*, as it is differently pronounced, is a curious approximation to the name of the western bard, and their offices are nearly similar. No Hindoo rajah is without his bards. Hyder, although not a Hindoo, delighted to be constantly preceded by them, and they are an appendage to the state of many other Musulman chiefs. They have a wonderful facility in speaking *improvisato*

on any subject proposed to them, a declamation in measure which may be considered as a sort of medium between blank verse and modulated prose ; but their proper profession is that of chanting the exploits of former days in the front of the troops, while marshalling for battle, and inclining them to emulate the glory of their ancestors. Many instances are known, of bards who have given the example as well as the precept of devoting themselves for their king by leading into the thickest of the battle.

According to a Hindoo legend, it was decreed by the goddess Parvati, that the Indian poets, like their western brethren, should be ever poor.

These people, as a privileged order, are exempted from taxes, and every attempt to levy an assessment on them is succeeded by a horrid mode of murdering themselves and each other; for, were they voluntarily to submit to the imposition, those of their own tribe in other places would refuse to eat with them or to intermarry with their family. Mr. Forbes relates, that when the Peishwa Ragobah was in their country with his army, he imposed a contribution on the inhabitants of Neriad. The Bhauts refused to submit to it, and as the prince continued inexorable, the whole tribe, men, women, and children, repaired to an open space in the city, armed with daggers, and with a loud

voice proclaimed a dreadful sacrifice. They once more prayed for an exemption, which being refused they rushed furiously upon one another. One man, more cool and deliberate than the rest, brought his family to the area before the Peishwa's residence : it consisted of two brothers and a beautiful sister, all under eighteen years of age. He first stabbed the unresisting damsel to the heart, instantly plunged the dagger into the breast of one brother, and desperately wounded the other before he could be prevented. This man afterwards boasted of having sacrificed his father a few months before in the glorious cause for which he had become a fratricide.

A particular sect of Bramins claimed

the same privilege of exemption : on being refused, they likewise vowed revenge ; but acting more wisely than the Bhauts, they purchased two aged matrons of the same caste, who, having performed the duties of life, were now past the enjoyment of its pleasures, and quietly submitted to the sacrifice. These ancient ladies were sold by their daughters for forty rupees each, to enable them to defray the expense incurred by the funeral ceremonies on which the Indians all lay great stress. The victims were then conducted to the market-place, where the Bramins, calling aloud for vengeance, dispatched them to another state of transmigra-



tion. After these sacrifices, neither Bramins nor Bhauts thought it any disgrace to pay their share of the imposition.

## DANCES AND DANCERS.

Dancing is so nearly akin to music, even according to the notions of the Hindoos, that they consider Rameh, the goddess of dancing, as the daughter of Sore-soutieh, goddess of harmony and music. Among them, however, as in almost all the countries of the east, dancing is not an amusement common to both sexes. The grave Hindoo has relinquished it to the women, to a distinct class of whom it is more particularly confined ; for though the wives of the rajahs, and the numerous favourites of the Mahometan grandes, sometimes

divert their lords with dancing in the interior of the zenana, yet generally speaking, it is a profession followed only by the *bayaderes*, *devedassees*, dancing-girls belonging to the temples, or public prostitutes.

An Indian of respectability could never consent to his wife and daughter dancing in public, nor can they reconcile the English country-dances with their ideas of female delicacy. An amiable Hindoo, being taken to a veranda overlooking the assembly-room at Bombay, where a number of ladies and gentlemen were going down a country-dance, was asked by his conductor how he liked the amusement. The mild Indian replied, "Master, I not quite understand

this business, but in our caste we say, 'If we place butter too near the fire, butter will melt.'" I have often thought of this Hindoo, says Mr. Forbes, when present at some particular waltzing in France and Germany.

The dance called *nautch*, however, differs in every respect from all the dances performed by the females above mentioned. This genuine Hindoo dance is executed by three females, called *ramdjénies*, who display in their steps and attitude a grace and voluptuousness which astonish Europeans.

The dress of the *ramdjénies* consists of a stuff embroidered with gold and silver. Their lower garment is very ample, and becomes inflated like a bal-

loon when they turn quickly round ; it is of silk, laced or embroidered. Besides this, they wear trowsers of very rich stuff, and have bells fastened round the ancles.

The dancers of the other sex, termed *baloks*, one of whom is represented in the annexed engraving, are chiefly seen at the festival called *djolen-indra*. They paint various parts of the face, especially the forehead, eyebrows, and ears ; and they adorn their heads with red flowers, bunches of peacocks' feathers in the shape of a fan, and other things. The breast is covered with a plate of metal, sometimes of gold, on which are inscribed names of gods and goddesses, or religious sentences ; and





A Hindoo Dancer called Baloks .

a short mantle, of a blue, yellow, or red colour, is thrown over the shoulders. Puffings of muslin are fastened round the thighs, and the feet are covered with ornaments curiously arranged, and containing little balls, which rattle with every motion of the limbs. The dancing of the *baloks*, like that of the *ram-djenies*, consists rather of graceful gestures than difficult steps. Each of them carries a red stick in his hand.

From the remotest antiquity dancing has been associated in India with religion. The *devedassees* are young females, whom their parents have devoted from their infancy to the service of the temples, either in performance of some vow, or to spare themselves

the expense of their maintenance. In order to obtain admission they must be well-shaped, of a good constitution, and have pleasing countenances ; they must moreover not be of marriageable age nor have been promised in marriage. Their parents are also required to renounce all claims to them. When a girl is admitted, her parents conduct her to the temple, and deliver her to the *devedassees*, who, after bathing her in the *tirtha*, or tank belonging to the temple, dress her in new clothes and adorn her with jewels. The high-priest puts into her hand an image of the deity, on which she swears to devote herself for ever to his service : the lobes of the ears are then perforated,

and the seal of the temple into which she is received, and to which she thenceforth belongs, is imprinted on her with a red-hot iron. Every pagoda keeps a number of these girls proportionate to its revenues: the great pagoda of Jagernaut never has fewer than five or six hundred. The pagoda to the service of which they are attached furnishes them with subsistence, apparel and pay: but they are obliged to deliver up the articles of mere ornament, when they retire on account of age or other causes.

The Bramins instruct them in all that is requisite for their profession. They teach them among other things to read, write, sing and dance; but

above all to heighten the beauty and graces conferred on them by nature with all the most seductive arts of coquetry. They must learn by heart the history of the gods, and especially of the deity to whom they are devoted; but they are forbidden to read the *Vedas*.

The *devedassees* are subservient to the pleasures of the Bramins. It is their duty to take care of the temples; they light the lamps, and sing and dance on solemn days before the statue of the deity. Raynal says, that the Bramins are so jealous of them, that it is with great reluctance they allow them to go and amuse princes and grandees. Others, on the contrary, assert, that



they rarely refuse their favours to any one who offers to pay them well, and that the Bramins are pleased to see the revenues of their pagoda augmented by the produce of the charms of their beautiful pupils. Lastly, Haafner insists, that those travellers who have advanced that they are obliged to commence their functions by giving themselves up to the high-priest, are egregiously mistaken: they have a right, he says, to choose a lover, at pleasure, either within or without the temple, provided he be of one of the two highest castes; nay, they are even at liberty to preserve their virginity as long as they live. When the flower of their beauty fades, or the Bramins wish

to get rid of them for any other reason, they dismiss them from the pagoda. This change, however, they have no reason to dread, for they return without disgrace into society ; the honour they have enjoyed of serving the deity gives them a character of sanctity with the devout, who even marry them in preference to other females.

These dancing-girls (*see the plate*) have the bosom covered with a short corset called *rawkeh*, with very short sleeves reaching only half way to the elbow : it is not laced before, but the two lower extremities are fastened together by a button below the breast. The body is uncovered from the pit of the stomach to the navel, whence a kind of close



DEVEDASSIS or BAYADERES.

pantaloons, generally of striped silk, descend to the ankle. The cloth which is usually nine ells in length, and one and a half or two ells wide, is of cotton, muslin or silk. This the dancers wrap several times round the lower part of the body; and lest it should fall off while they are dancing, they fasten it round the waist with a silver clasp.

They wear also a veil of extremely fine, transparent stuff, which somewhat conceals the bosom, passes over one shoulder, falls down behind to the middle of the thigh and is then tucked up and fastened to the waist.

They stain the tips of the nails a red colour; and when they are going to

dance, they fasten round the ankles small bells which serve to keep time. The silver chains and bells which they wear about the legs and on the toes, make, when they dance, a measured noise which blends in a pleasing manner with the vocal or instrumental music. They dance in couples, face to face, as in our country-dance. The music which accompanies them is excessively monotonous, consisting of the simple sounds of wind instruments ; the time being kept by small drums, tambourines and silver cymbals. Such an orchestra, as it may easily be supposed, is not the most agreeable to European ears, accustomed to a very different kind of harmony.



The castanets used by the *devedassees* to mark the time, are roundish pieces of wood from six to eight inches in length.

At the end of each dance, they all turn simultaneously toward the idol, holding their clasped hands before their faces, by way of adoration. All the dancers make the same movements and gestures at once, so that they appear like puppets moved by one and the same spring.

The *cancenis*, known also by the appellation of *bayaderes*, from the Portuguese *balladeras*, form the second class of the *devedassees*. They receive the same education as the females above described, but they are not, like them,

exclusively devoted to the service of some temple, and therefore they do not confine themselves to dancing and singing before the idols. A wealthy Hindoo or Musulman does not give an entertainment, but they are sent for to display their talents for the amusement of the guests and the great concourse of people drawn together by the exhibition. They are always attended by musicians who accompany them with cymbals, the tambourine and tamtam. As these dances are a source of inexpressible delight to the Orientals, the performers are liberally rewarded by their employers. Some grandees even keep a company of *bayaderes* in their service.

Their dances are almost all pantomimes representing love-scenes, and the words of their songs relate to the same subject. These dances they execute with no despicable expression, if they are proficient in their art: for then their gestures, air and steps, are marked and appropriate. In some of their dances, even in public, modesty is not much respected by the attitudes into which they throw themselves; but in private parties to which they are called, they give themselves a great loose and have dances in reserve, in which, though without any exposure of the body, they are mistresses of such motions, looks and gestures, as are perhaps still more provoking.

The dress of these women varies according to the countries in which they live; but in all it is the most gorgeous imaginable. They are loaded with jewels, literally from top to toe, since they wear rings even to their toes. Their necks are adorned with carcanets, their arms with bracelets, and their ancles with chains of gold and silver, often enriched with precious stones. They wear also nose-jewels, which at first have an odd appearance, but to which the eye is soon reconciled. These dancing-girls, solicitous for the preservation of their charms, on which their success so much depends, have a peculiar method of managing their breasts, which at the same time makes

no inconsiderable part of their finery. They enclose them in a pair of hollow cases, made of very light wood, exactly fitted to them, linked together and buckled at the back. These cases at once confine the breasts so that they cannot grow to a disproportionably exuberant size; and from their smoothness and pliancy, they play so freely with every motion of the body, as not to crush the delicate texture of the flesh in that part. The outside of them is spread over with a thin plate of gold or silver, or set with gems, if the wearer can afford it. Owing to the profusion of jewels and ornaments, the attire of a distinguished dancer fre-



quently costs from fifteen to twenty thousand rupees.

Most of these dancing-girls, with a view to give increased expression to their eyes, surround them with a black circle, made with the head of a pin dipped in the powder of antimony. This borrowed beauty, extolled by all the poets of the east, though it had at first an odd appearance to Europeans who were not accustomed to it, has at length come to be admired by the latter.

The art of pleasing is throughout their whole lives the sole occupation of the *bayaderes*. They have nothing, says Mr. Grose, of the nauseous boldness

which characterises the European prostitutes : their style of seduction being all softness and gentleness. For this very reason they are the more irresistible ; and as they are not a whit more disinterested than the members of the frail sisterhood in other countries, they are frequently the cause of the ruin of families. Forster, in the narrative of his travels in Cachemir, where the dancing-girls surpass in beauty those of all other countries, mentions several instances of persons of great distinction being reduced to beggary, through their attachment and liberality to these seductive females. This circumstance is the less to be wondered at, since the cost of their attendance at a single

entertainment, for the diversion of guests of wealthy individuals, frequently amounts to several thousand rupees.

**CEREMONIES OBSERVED AT MAR-  
RIAGES AND THE BIRTH OF  
CHILDREN.**

The Bramins, as sprung from the head of Brama, have reserved to themselves exclusively the sacerdotal functions, and in the quality of priests they preside over all the most important acts of life. They sanctify the marriage of the Hindoo; they receive his children at their birth; and at his death they head the procession which attends him to the funeral pile.

Parents are obliged to marry their

daughters between the ages of seven and nine years, and boys between twelve and fourteen. Marriage, as we have already seen, is a duty with the Hindoos. Their delicacy in regard to virginity is carried to excess; and it is on this account that girls are married before they have arrived at puberty.

The wife must be not only of the same caste as her husband, but also of the same family: the Hindoo has in consequence a right to marry the daughter of his father or of his mother's brother, if younger than himself; and if he demands her, the parents cannot give a denial, as brothers and sisters only are restricted from intermarrying; but under that name are comprehended the



children of the father's brothers, and of the mother's sisters.

The ceremonies which precede and accompany the celebration of marriage vary in different castes and in different countries. To the higher classes and to the wealthy they are rendered very expensive by the entertainments which it is customary to give, and the cost of which is defrayed by the husband's father.

The Hindoos have several kinds of marriages, one of which, called *gandarva*, requires no ceremony whatever, but the mutual consent of the parties, who without witnesses exchange their necklaces or wreaths of flowers, the girl saying, "I am thy wife," and the

bridegroom replying, "It is true." In this manner Dusmantha marries Sacontala in the drama with that title by Calidas.

It would be too tedious to describe the various ceremonies observed at the celebration of each kind of marriage: we shall therefore confine ourselves to those that appear the most interesting. We must not, however, omit to notice a singular practice which is mentioned by Perrin, and which seems to be peculiar to one caste. In a town of the Carnatic, the name of which escaped that traveller's memory, when the young couple are solemnly conducted to the temple of the idol, the bride presents her hand to the priest, who cuts off

the third and little finger at the second joint. It was anciently the custom for each of the parties to sacrifice a finger; but as this mutilation frequently prevented the husband from following his profession, the Bramins obtained the consent of the gods that the females alone should be liable to this sacrifice, but that they should give up two fingers instead of one. Hence it is a disgrace to a woman of that caste to have all her fingers.

When a Hindoo has fixed his eyes on a girl as a suitable match for his son, he sends a stranger to sound the father, to spare himself the mortification of a refusal in case the proposal should be rejected. Should it, on the other hand,

prove acceptable, he goes and makes his application in due form. He must be accompanied by at least one married woman, by some one of his relations, and by a Bramin skilled in the art of explaining prognostics: for if they should meet with an unlucky omen by the way, such as a dealer in oil, a dog that shakes his ears, a crow flying over their heads, or a hundred other objects to which the Bramins pay great attention, they defer the visit till another day. He carries with him in general to the father of the girl the *pariam*, that is, a sum of twenty-one, or at most thirty-one *ponnes* (from four to six guineas) as the price of the bride whom he purchases for his son. When this for-





The Father of the Bride going with the Nuptial Presents to the Bridegroom.



mality is observed, the marriage is said to be by *pariam*; the other kind is by *cannigadanam*, a word which signifies *gift of a virgin*.

The father of the girl, before he gives his consent, returns his visit with the same precautions, and goes in great pomp to make the marriage presents to the bridegroom, in the manner represented in the annexed engraving.

The bridegroom presents the bride with the *pariecoureh*, or piece of silk, which she wears on the wedding-day. This garment is always of silk let the parties be ever so poor. If the *pariam* is paid in money, it is tied up in one of the corners of this robe, but instead of money opulent persons give a jewel of

some kind which is laid upon the robe. The father of the bridegroom, under the direction of a Bramin, presents some betel and the *pariam* to the father of the bride, saying, "The money is thine and the girl is mine." The father of the bride accepts both, and presenting betel in his turn, repeats after the Bramin, "The money is mine and the girl thine." The Bramin then says aloud, "This betel is a pledge that ———, daughter of ———, and granddaughter of ———, is given to ———, son of ———, and grandson of ———." He afterwards wishes the young couple every kind of prosperity, and predicts that they will be blest with a numerous progeny, abundance of cattle, corn,

money, and a house overflowing with milk.

Though the girl is considered as sold, after the performance of this ceremony, yet the match may be broken off and the *pariam* returned; but the father must have strong reasons to justify such a procedure, which is never determined upon except at a general meeting of relatives and sometimes of the whole caste. To avoid the expense of an entertainment, the *pariam* is frequently paid on the wedding-day, but some pay it a year beforehand.

When every thing is arranged, and the day fixed for the wedding, the next step is to plant the *cal*, that is, to erect one of the supporters of the *pendal*, or

bower of lattice-work, which is built in the court-yard of the house, for the occasion. This is, in fact, the commencement of the marriage ceremonies, which last two, five, nay, even thirty-one days, if they are performed with great pomp. On the erection of the *cal*, which may be considered as equivalent to the publication of the bans with us, the relations and friends pay a visit to the father; and the omission of this ceremony would be deemed a proof of enmity.

The female friends, under a canopy, carry presents of betel to the young couple. In the middle of the court is set up a stone figure of Polear, the god of marriage. The Bramins make offer-

ings of cocoa-nuts, bananas, and betel, to the deity, praying to him to be propitious to the marriage which is about to be celebrated. As soon as the *pendal* is finished, the *polear* is removed.

The bridegroom and bride, richly dressed, are carried about every day in palanquins through the principal streets, accompanied by a long train of relatives and friends, some on horseback, others on elephants, preceded by a numerous band of musicians and dancing-girls, who sing and dance before the palanquins whenever they halt, and under the *pendal* before the house of the bride. These processions commonly take place in the evening, and furnish occasion for grand illuminations



and fire-works. As long as the processions last, the dancing-girls rub the young couple, night and morning, under the *pendal*, with *naleng*, the small green seed of a plant sacred to marriage.

When the bridegroom has been conducted in great pomp to the house of the bride, in the manner represented in the annexed plate, a particular ceremony is performed, called *taking away the looks*. The Hindoos are thoroughly convinced, that there are malicious looks capable of making the most mischievous impression, and of producing serious disorders; and they believe that if any one should chance, during these processions, to envy the happiness of



The Bridegroom conducted in state to the house of the Bride.

the bridegroom in having so amiable a bride, the worst consequences would ensue, unless means were employed to prevent the baneful effects of these indiscreet looks.

The most common method of *taking away looks*, is to turn round a basin full of water, coloured red for the purpose, three times before the face of the bride and bridegroom, after which the water is thrown into the street: or to tear a piece of cloth in two in their presence, and to throw the pieces different ways: or lastly, to fasten certain mystic rings to their heads. This last method, however, seems rather designed to preserve them from the malignity of looks than to dispel its effects.

As soon as it is known that a person of distinction is going to be married, the Bramins flock to the place, from a distance of twenty miles round, sometimes assembling to the number of five or six thousand, who are entertained every day. After the wedding, each of them is presented with a cloth for a garment. Owing to expenses of this kind, marriages are frequently the ruin of families, sometimes costing 100,000 pagodas, or nearly £40,000 sterling.

On the wedding day, the bride and bridegroom sit beside each other at one end of the *pendal*, which is lighted up with a great number of lamps. The Bramins, on a raised platform of wood,

surrounded with earthen jars full of water, the two largest of which are placed by the young couple, offer up prayers, in order to bring down Sheeva and Parvati, or Vishnu and Lacshmi, according as they belong to one or the other sect, into the two great jars. They then kindle the *oman* or sacrificial fire, which is kept up with different kinds of sacred wood : repeating over it various prayers and invocations, and throwing upon it from time to time incense, sandal wood, oil, butter, rice, and other things.

When the prayers are ended, the father of the bride takes her hand, puts it into that of the bridegroom, and delivers her to him, repeating the fol-



lowing words after a Bramin, and calling Agnee, the god of fire, to witness: “ I ——, son of ——, and grandson of ——, give my daughter to thee ——, son of ——, and grandson of ——.” The Bramin then breaks a cocoa-nut in two, blesses the *tali*, which all present are required to touch, and gives it to the bridegroom; he hangs it suspended from a ribbon round the neck of the bride, who from that moment becomes his wife. The *tali* is a piece of gold of no particular form, worn by all married women, and emblematic of the conjugal union, in the same manner as the wedding ring is with us.

The bridegroom, after this ceremony,

swears before the fire and in the presence of the Bramin to take care of his wife. The Bramin then takes a little saffron and mixes it with some raw rice, at the same time repeating certain prayers: he sprinkles two handfuls over the shoulders of the husband, and afterwards over those of the wife: all present rise and perform the same ceremony, and this is the benediction they bestow on the marriage. The rest of the day is spent in diversions, and the last public procession takes place in the evening. On this occasion the husband and wife go abroad in the same palanquin. The following day the *pendal* is pulled down without loss of time, because, if it should chance to take

fire, this accident would be a very unlucky omen. If the bride be not of sufficient age for the consummation of the marriage (and in general she is not) she returns to her father's house, and there continues to reside till she arrives at puberty. At this epoch new sacrifices are made and nearly the same ceremonies performed as before: this is called the *little* or *second marriage*.

It is not till a wife becomes a mother that she is allowed to have unrestrained intercourse with her husband; till then she must obey the commands of her mother-in-law; nay, she must even slip into his chamber unperceived and by stealth. In the seventh month of her first pregnancy new festivities take

place, and the birth of a child is also accompanied with religious ceremonies.

As the house is supposed to be polluted by such an event, a Bramin and the husband sprinkle it several times with holy water: and all its inmates rub their heads with oil and wash themselves with the greatest care. The mother must likewise purify herself by bathing and drinking a certain beverage usual on such occasions. On the tenth day after the birth, the relatives and friends of the family assemble for the purpose of giving a name to the infant: but before this is done a Bramin consults his book, and examines whether the planets are favourable at the moment. If not, he endeavours by prayer

and sacrifices to avert their baleful influence. Presents are made to the Bra-  
mins, and the ceremony is succeeded  
by an entertainment and rejoicings.

Instead of swathing the infant, it is  
laid upon a piece of stuff strained upon  
a quadrangular wooden frame: it has  
thus full liberty of moving without  
running any risk of falling. The frame  
is suspended from the ceiling by means  
of four cords, that are fastened to two  
sticks, one at each end, in the manner  
represented in the frontispiece. This  
species of cradle is rocked by women  
who push it from one to the other and  
make it swing to and fro.

When the child has attained the age  
of six months, it is fed for the first



time with rice prepared with milk and sugar: a ceremony to which the relations of the family are invited.

In the inferior castes the ceremonies of marriage are much more simple, but it is not legally valid unless they take place in the presence of the chief of the tribe.

The practice varies in regard to dowry. In the superior *castes* the wife in general brings her husband a portion; but in that of the Sooders, the husband makes a present of a sum of money to his wife's father.

Before the match is concluded, great care is taken to consult the stars and to observe whether their aspect predicts a propitious or unfortunate union. Mar-

riages are not solemnized at all times of the year indiscriminately; but only in February, May, June, October, and the beginning of November.

Among the people called Garos, who inhabit a tract to the south of the Bramaputra river, the important matters of succession and union of the sexes have been arranged in a peculiar manner.

A man cannot turn away his wife on account of adultery unless he chooses to give up his whole property and children, and to this he seldom consents, unless he knows that some other woman who is richer than his wife will take him for her husband. A woman, on the contrary, may turn away her husband whenever she pleases, and in general,

marry any other person, conveying to him the whole property that her former husband possessed, and taking with her all her children: but the rank of the children arises from that of their father. A man is thus placed in a very difficult situation. If his wife chooses a paramour, the husband is terrified lest this invader should be able to persuade the woman to transfer the property of the family. It is true that, as a remedy, he may kill the lover without incurring any blame; but he is afraid not only of the revenge of the man's kindred, but of that of his wife, who, if permitted to retain her lover, might be unwilling to disturb the family in which she had lived, but who would be very apt to

avenge her lover's death by choosing a new husband. In fact, however, divorces are said to be very rare, and many wives, when they are infirm, allow their husbands to marry a second wife or to keep a concubine. When a chief dies, his heir is any one of his sister's sons that his widow, or if he has left no widow, that his surviving concubine chooses. The fortunate youth, if married, immediately separates from his wife, who takes all his private fortune and children; while he marries the old woman, and receives the dignity, fortune, and insignia of honour becoming his high rank. These insignia consist of a red turban, two bracelets of bell-metal for each arm, and a string of

beads for his neck, and are bestowed with great ceremony. These acquisitions, however, do not always compensate for the disparity of age in his bride. Mr. Hamilton, to whom we are indebted for these particulars, relates, that a boy, who had been lately elevated to the dignity, after taking a draught of wine that opened his heart, complained with great simplicity, that he had married an old toothless creature, while his cousin, although poor, had a pretty young wife with whom he could play the whole day long. When the old lady dies, he will of course take a young wife, who will probably survive him, and select a new chief from among his sister's sons. The wife of a chief may divorce him,



but she must choose her next husband from the same noble family, as its members alone are capable of being raised to that dignity.

## FUNERALS.

The funerals of the Hindoos are attended with as much pomp as their marriages. The ceremonies differ according to the castes. No sooner has a wealthy Hindoo breathed his last, than his relatives assemble for the performance of the funeral rites. They lose no time in paying this last duty, because neither his own household, nor the inhabitants of the same street, can take any sustenance till the corpse is removed.

Some of them repair to the cemetery, which is at some distance from the town or village, to prepare the funeral

pile on which the body of the deceased is to be burned. The neighbourhood, meanwhile, resounds with the cries and lamentations of the females of the house and of women hired for the occasion, who are seen tearing their dishevelled hair, beating their bosoms, and rolling upon the ground.

The Bramin who officiates at the ceremony, after bathing, ties a blade of a species of dog's grass, called *dherbeh*, which is reputed sacred, round the ring finger of the deceased. He then purifies the house with aspersions of holy water. The nearest relation offers up a prayer, after which fire is brought: some of the sacred grass is laid around the corpse; and cow-dung, dried and

pulverized, is thrown into the fire with religious solemnity. It is at this moment that the present, called the *ten gifts*, mentioned in a preceding volume, is made to the Bramin.

The latter then whispers the mysterious words of initiation into the ear of the defunct. The chief of the family and the other relatives cause their heads to be shaved, under the idea of contributing by this action to the happiness of the deceased in the other world. The Bramin exorcises the stars to avert their baleful influences, calls the soul of the defunct, and observes under what constellation his death has happened. Prayers are again offered up, to the

superior deities to be propitious to him, to pardon his sins, and to prevent the stars from doing him mischief.

When the hour of departure, for which the evening is always chosen, has arrived, a hole is made in the wall for the passage of the corpse, which is never taken out by the door: the aperture is filled up again after the ceremony. The body is placed in a sitting posture, in a kind of open sedan-chair, to which it is securely bound, as represented in the plate. The chair is borne by four Parias. The procession is headed by musicians, with *tamtams*, and a kind of trumpet six or seven feet long, from which they produce the





FUNERAL of a HINDOO.

most dismal tones imaginable. These are followed by one or two Bramins, and the relatives and friends of the deceased.

On approaching the funeral pile, they pinch the nose of the deceased, and feel his chest, to ascertain whether there are any signs of life ; they also throw water on his face and make a hideous din in his ears with drums and trumpets, for the purpose of waking him, if he is but in a trance.

After these experiments, the body, being previously stripped of every thing valuable, is laid upon the pile: this mournful duty is performed by the relatives. They throw upon the pile rice, butter, fruit, betel, and dried cowdung. The head of the family first

sets fire to it: he must then turn his back, and carry upon his shoulder a new vessel full of water. When the fire has begun to burn, he lets the vessel fall, and hastens to purify himself in the neighbouring river or pond. The other relatives then set fire to other parts of the pile, and the corpse is consumed amidst cries, the sound of instruments, and funeral songs.

When the fire is burnt out, milk is poured on the ashes, which are collected and thrown into a river or pond, and, if possible, that into which the ashes of the ancestors of the deceased were thrown. For this reason they are sometimes carried to great distances, and he esteems himself happy who can

convey those of his father to Benares, or some other sacred place. Persons who live near the sacred rivers, such as the Ganges, the Kishna, the Jumna, &c. are more commonly thrown after death into those rivers, where they serve for food to a prodigious quantity of crocodiles. Hence it is common to see corpses continually floating on the large and numerous branches of the Ganges, whose waters are supposed to wash away all sin. It is often the case, that when a Hindoo is at the point of death, his relatives and friends place him on the brink of that river, and the flowing of the tide, raising the water several feet, carries him away, and engulphs him before life is extinct. The patient,



instead of endeavouring to shun this catastrophe, employs the last remains of strength to crawl towards the sacred stream, that he may enjoy the happiness of breathing his last in its current.

Some, however, have been known to try to escape, either because they have been exposed against their will, or because the approach of death renews both their strength and the desire to live: but if they succeed, they are never readmitted into their caste, or suffered to associate with any but wretches, who, like themselves, have evaded their fate. We are assured, that near the river Hooghly, the western branch of the Ganges, there are two villages in-



habited by none but such unfortunate outcasts.

The Bramins have the power, when they find it to be to their interest, to devote sick persons to death : and this atrocious superstition annually costs an incredible number of victims their lives. An English gentleman passing through Colna, a little above Calcutta, perceived a troop of Bramins engaged in pushing into the water a youth of about eighteen, who struggled hard to get away from them. The traveller shouted, to induce them to relinquish their inhuman design ; but they coolly replied, “ It is our custom, it is our custom ; he must not live : our god has decreed that he should die.” They accomplished their

purpose, and did not retire from the spot till their victim was drowned.

It is not impossible, as Mrs. Graham observes, that greedy heirs may avail themselves of this barbarous custom, to get rid of an aged parent who lives longer than they wish. That lady informs us that she heard at Calcutta, that a young Hindoo, whose father had been ill for some time, came one day, in the greatest agitation, to an English gentleman, imploring him to save the life of his father, to whom he was tenderly attached, and whom the Bramins and his nearest relatives had already seized, with the intention of carrying him to the river, from which it was designed that he should never re-

turn. Our countryman instantly accompanied the dutiful youth, and had the pleasure to save the old man, who, for aught I know, adds the fair writer, still lives to bless his benefactor.

The inferior castes instead of burning their dead, wrap them in a coarse white sheet and bury them as we do in Europe. Mourning consists in shaving the beard, mustachios, and head, with the exception of the lock of hair which the Hindoo always wears tied at the crown; in fasting and in abstaining for some days from the use of betel.

The Gosaings, a tribe of religious Hindoo mendicants in Guzerat, do not burn their dead, but bury them, frequently before they expire. When a

patient is deemed past recovery, his friends dig a grave, and placing him in a perpendicular posture, put an earthen pot over his head, fill the grave with mould, and immediately erect a tomb of masonry over their devoted victim.



A Hindoo Widow burning herself with the Corpse of her Husband.



## SUICIDE OF WIDOWS.

The custom which dooms widows to sacrifice themselves on the funeral piles of their husbands, seems to have been formerly much more general than it is at present. Still, instances of this kind are but too frequent in some provinces, notwithstanding all the efforts of our countrymen, which have not yet eradicated this barbarous superstition.

By an account taken in 1803, it appeared that the number of victims thus sacrificed during that year, within thirty miles round Calcutta alone, was two hundred and seventy-five: and from

another report made by Hindoos, deputed for the purpose, we learn, that in six months of the year 1804, the number, in that district, was one hundred and fifteen. The account of the writings, religion, and manners of the Hindoos, by Mr. Ward, one of the Baptist Missionaries, at Serampore, states, that between Cossimbazar, in Bengal, and the mouth of the river Hooghly, seventy women sacrificed themselves in two months only of the year 1812, leaving behind them one hundred and eighty-four orphan children.

A woman who thus devotes herself, abstains from food as soon as her husband is dead: chewing betel, and re-

peating, without cessation, the name of the god of his sect. When the fatal hour arrives, she adorns herself with her jewels, and puts on her most costly attire, as if she were going to a rejoicing. She is accompanied by her relatives and friends, and by the sound of drums and trumpets. The Bramins, meanwhile, exalt the imagination of the victim, by giving her a liquid in which opium is mixed, to drink: and as they draw near the fatal spot, they strive to strengthen her resolution by songs in which they extol her heroism.

The widow must not exhibit any signs of grief or despondency as she approaches the pile: her look must be calm and serene, and such as becomes

divert their lords with dancing in the interior of the zenana, yet generally speaking, it is a profession followed only by the *bayaderes*, *devedassees*, dancing-girls belonging to the temples, or public prostitutes.

An Indian of respectability could never consent to his wife and daughter dancing in public, nor can they reconcile the English country-dances with their ideas of female delicacy. An amiable Hindoo, being taken to a veranda overlooking the assembly-room at Bombay, where a number of ladies and gentlemen were going down a country-dance, was asked by his conductor how he liked the amusement. The mild Indian replied, "Master, I not quite understand

this business, but in our caste we say, 'If we place butter too near the fire, butter will melt.'” I have often thought of this Hindoo, says Mr. Forbes, when present at some particular waltzing in France and Germany.

The dance called *nautch*, however, differs in every respect from all the dances performed by the females above mentioned. This genuine Hindoo dance is executed by three females, called *ramdjenies*, who display in their steps and attitude a grace and voluptuousness which astonish Europeans.

The dress of the *ramdjenies* consists of a stuff embroidered with gold and silver. Their lower garment is very ample, and becomes inflated like a bal-



one who is certain that she is about to rejoin her husband in a happier life. It is affirmed that previously to the ceremony, the Bramins themselves, as well as her relatives and friends, endeavour to dissuade her from the sacrifice, but that her resolution once taken is sacred and inviolable.

The day of this self-immolation, is a glorious one for the family of the widow, as well as for her husband's, and for the Bramins, who, moreover, derive no trifling profit from the ceremony. Any person is allowed to witness the spectacle, but at a certain distance. The victim affectionately embraces her friends and relations, among whom she distributes part of her jewels and or-

naments; she comforts them, while they bless and entreat her to pray to God to grant them in like circumstances the fortitude which she manifests.

These victims, in general meet death with heroic firmness and constancy; convinced, that in thus burning themselves from pure conjugal attachment, they shall feel but little pain from the flames, and that by this sacrifice, they shall deliver their husbands from the torments of the next life, whatever may be the crimes committed by them in this.

Mr. Holwell gives an account of one, who, being told of the pain she must suffer, with a view to dissuade her from

her intention, put her finger into the fire and held it there for a considerable time: after which she put fire on the palm of her hand, laid incense upon it and fumigated the Bramins who were present.

Mr. Forbes mentions the case of a female whose husband had amply provided for her by will, and, contrary to the general custom of Hindoos, had made her totally independent of his family. All was of no avail; she persisted in her determination to accompany him to a better world, and suffered not the tears nor supplications of an aged mother and three helpless infants to change her purpose. The funeral pyre was erected on the banks of

the river Biswamintree without the gates of Brodera. An immense concourse of persons of all ranks assembled, and a band of music accompanied the Bramins who superintended the ceremony. The bower of death enwreathed with sacred flowers was erected over a pile of sandal-wood and spices, on which lay the body of the deceased. After various ceremonies the music ceased, and the crowd in solemn silence waited the arrival of the heroine. She approached from a temporary retirement with the Bramins, attended by her mother and three lovely children, arrayed in rich attire and wearing the hymeneal crown, an ornament peculiar to a Hindoo bride at her marriage. After a

few religious ceremonies, the attendants took off her jewels, anointed her dishevelled hair with consecrated ghee, as also the skirts of her flowing robe of yellow muslin (the colour of nuptial bliss). Two lisping infants clung around her knees to dissuade her from the fatal purpose; the last pledge of conjugal love was taken from her bosom by an aged parent in speechless agony. Freed from these heart-piercing mourners, the lovely widow, with an air of solemn majesty, received a lighted torch from the Bramins, with which she walked seven times round the pyre. Stopping near the entrance of the bower, for the last time she addressed the fire, and worshipped the other deities, as



prescribed in the *sutty-ved*; then setting fire to her hair and the skirts of her robe, to render herself the only brand worthy of illuminating the sacred pile, she threw away the torch, rushed into the bower, and embracing her husband, thus communicated the flames to the surrounding branches. The musicians immediately struck up the loudest strains, to drown the cries of the victim, should her courage have forsaken her: but several of the spectators declared that the serenity of her countenance and dignity of her behaviour surpassed all the sacrifices of a similar nature they had ever witnessed.

On the 12th of September, 1807, a horrid tragedy of this kind was acted at

Barnagore, about three miles from Calcutta. A Koolin Bramin of Cammanhatti, named Kristo Deb Mookerjee, died at the advanced age of ninety-two. He had twelve wives\*, three of whom were burned alive with his dead body. One of these was a venerable female with

\* The Koolin Bramin is the purest of all Bramins, and is privileged to marry as many wives as he pleases. The Hindoo families account it an honour to unite their daughters with a Koolin Bramin. An account authenticated at Calcutta in 1804, states on the authority of the registrars of the Koolin caste, "that Rajeb Bonnerjee, now of Calcutta, has forty wives; that Rajchunder Bonnerjee, also of Calcutta, has forty-two wives, and intends to marry more; that Ramraja Bonnerjee, of Bickrampore, aged thirty years, and Pooran Bonnerjee, Rajkissore Chutterjee, and Roopram Mookerjee, have each upwards of

white locks, who had long been known in the neighbourhood. Not being able to walk, she was carried in a palanquin to the place of burning, and was then placed by the Bramins on the funeral pile. The two other ladies were younger; one of them had a very pleasing and interesting countenance. The old lady was placed on one side of the dead husband, and the two other wives laid themselves down on the other side; and then an old Bramin, the eldest son of the deceased, applied his torch to the pile with unaverted face. The pile being covered with combustibles suddenly blazed; and this forty wives and intend to marry more; and that Birjoo Mookerjee, of Bicerampore, who died about five years ago, had ninety wives."

human sacrifice was completed amidst the din of drums and cymbals and the shouts of Bramins.

When Rao Lacka, grandfather of the present chief of Cutch died, fifteen concubines were burned at his funeral pile; but not one of his wives sacrificed herself on this occasion. This ceremony is said to be less expected of the wife than of the concubine; and these unfortunate females conceive it a point of honour to consume themselves with their lords.

In the year 1799, a Bramin employed in the printing-office of the Baptist mission at Serampore, saw twenty-two females burned alive with the remains of Ununtu, a Koolin Bramin of Bagnu-

paru, who had more than a hundred wives. At the first kindling of the fire only three of these wives had arrived. The fire was kept kindled three days. When one or more arrived the ceremonies were gone through, and they threw themselves on the blazing fire. On the first day three were burned, and on the second and third days nineteen more. Among these women some were forty years old and others as young as sixteen. The first three had cohabited with this Bramin, the others had seldom seen him. He married in one house four sisters, two of whom were among the victims.

In May or June, 1812, another Koolin Bramin died at Chunakuli near Cal-



cutta. He had married twenty-five women, thirteen of whom died during his lifetime : the remaining twelve perished with him on the funeral pile, leaving thirty children to deplore the effects of this horrid system.

Some years anterior to the last-mentioned date, a Koolin Bramin of considerable property died at Sookachura three miles east of Serampore. He had married more than forty women, eighteen of whom survived him. On this occasion a fire extending ten or twelve yards in length was prepared, into which the remaining eighteen threw themselves, leaving more than forty children.

All the unhappy wretches who are

placed in this cruel predicament, are not equally resigned to their fate. In spite of the prejudices of education and religion nature will occasionally assert her rights.

Some, forsaken by that fortitude which at first upheld them, when they come within sight of the pile which is to reduce them to ashes, repent of the resolution which they have taken. In this case, if they attempt to turn back, they are frequently put to death by their relatives, indignant at the disgrace thus brought upon their family; or they are expelled from their caste, and, cut off for ever from all intercourse with their relations and friends, they

are thenceforward confined to the society of the abhorred class of the Parias.

The following is a case in point. About the year 1796, a Bramin of Mujilupoor, about a day's journey south from Calcutta, dying, his wife went to be burned with the body. All the preliminary ceremonies were performed ; she was fastened on the pile and the fire was kindled. The pile was by the side of some brush-wood and near a river. It was at a late hour when the pile was lighted ; the night was very dark and rainy. When the fire began to scorch this poor woman, she contrived to disentangle herself from the dead body, crept from

under the pile, and hid herself among the brushwood. It was soon discovered that only one body was on the pile. The relations immediately took the alarm, and began to hunt for the poor wretch who had made her escape. After they had found her, the son dragged her forth, and insisted upon her throwing herself upon the pile again, or that she should drown or hang herself. She pleaded for her life at the hands of her own son, declaring that she could not embrace so horrid a death: but she pleaded in vain. The son urged that he should lose his caste, and that therefore, he would die or she should. Unable to persuade her to hang or drown herself, the son

and his companions tied her hands and feet, and threw her on the funeral pile, where she quickly perished.

Most frequently the Bramins who surround these miserable victims, and who are as tenacious of their honour as of their own, abridge the ceremony, and amid the lamentable songs of the females who accompany the widow, the din of the instruments, and the shouts and bustle of the spectators, they knock down the victim and throw her upon the pile, on which the corpse of her husband is already laid; and this pile, composed of dry wood, on which oil, butter, perfumes, and other inflammable matters have been poured, is instantly in a blaze. When it is con-



sumed, the bones are carefully collected, deposited in vases, and carried to some sacred river, into which they are thrown. On the following days the Bramins perform various ceremonies on the spot where the victim has been immolated, sprinkling it with milk and consecrated water, and sometimes erecting a small chapel over it.

Under certain circumstances, wives are not at liberty to burn themselves after the death of their husbands, as for instance, when they are pregnant, or have infant children. This sacrifice is likewise forbidden in the case of Bramins who die from home: but the wives of persons belonging to other castes, who are in this predicament, are al-

lowed to give their husbands this proof of fidelity, in case the distance is not too great.

It is more rarely that the widows of Bramins sacrifice themselves in this manner, than those of the next superior caste, or the Khattries. Neither can this excite any surprise, since it frequently happens that there is very little affection between the Bramins and their wives, to whom they are sometimes married almost against their consent. Solvyns mentions an extraordinary practice, which he had an opportunity of witnessing during his residence in India. When a father of a family has a marriageable daughter, and has not the means of making a suitable

provision for her, he invites a Bramin of his acquaintance to his house, upon some pretext or other. As soon as he enters, the father presents his daughter to him : the girl respectfully offers him her hand, which the Bramin takes without suspicion. The father immediately begins to repeat the genealogy of the family, which ceremony alone is sufficient for the purpose : the marriage cannot be dissolved. It not unfrequently happens that the Bramin is unable to support his young wife ; be that as it may, the father saves her by this stratagem from the disgrace of remaining unmarried, and his daughter enjoys the honours due to the wife of a Bramin.

All women who survive their husbands, without exception, must renounce the world, and are doomed to perpetual widowhood, upon pain of infamy and expulsion from their caste. In this state they must shave the head and abstain from all ornaments; they must take no more than one meal a day, and never sleep in a bed, otherwise they would cause their husbands to lose their places in *swerga*, or paradise.

As matches are frequently concluded between families, while the parties are yet infants, if the husband should chance to die before the marriage is consummated, the wife is doomed to perpetual celibacy. This law, which has been adopted by the Mahometans

in India, produces, like all institutions contrary to nature, a totally opposite effect from that which it was intended to have: it leads to dissoluteness and immorality.

Mr. Best passing, in 1787, through one of the streets of Arcot, inhabited chiefly by Hindoo tradesmen, perceived a great crowd round one of the houses. On inquiring the cause he was told that the mistress of that house, having unfortunately lost her husband, was going to burn herself with his corpse.

The widow, a young and handsome woman, was sitting at the threshold, with dishevelled hair, in mourning apparel, and holding a green branch in her hand. Her eyes were fixed on the



ground ; she seemed to be absorbed in profound melancholy, and to take no notice of what was passing about her. While Mr. Best was surveying this victim of fanaticism and of a cruel prejudice, with deep emotion, a messenger sent by the widow to the governor to solicit permission to consummate the intended sacrifice, returned with his refusal.

The unhappy woman was quite inconsolable. She then entreated the *cutwall*, a Hindoo officer, who had also been sent to the spot, to return to the governor and renew the application. The *cutwall* assured her that it would be impossible to persuade the governor to alter the resolution which he had once

taken. The widow chanced to turn her eyes to Mr. Best, on which the *cutwall* accosted him in the Malabar language, and requested him to intercede in her favour. Our countryman declined the commission and strove to bring back the unfortunate creature to a more rational way of thinking. She returned this remarkable answer : “ I am now,” said she, “ a degraded outcast in the eyes of my relatives and of the whole world ; the cruel refusal of the governor dooms me to a life of shame and mortification. It is not without reason that I wish for death. If indeed a European would have compassion on me and take me for a mistress, I would cheerfully relinquish my intention ; for then I

should not know the misery of being excluded in my own country from the cast of the *vaisyas* to which I belong." The narrator adds that he never heard what became of this woman afterwards; but he was sure that the sentiments expressed by her on this occasion could not fail to cause her expulsion from her caste.

The consequences of the prohibition to marry again after the death of the first husband are indiscretion and suicide. This crime, says Mr. Forbes, is general among the higher classes of Hindoo widows, who have been married in infancy and lost their husbands in childhood. Many of these unfortunate females, apprehensive of bringing dis-

grace on themselves and families by their imprudence, terminate their own lives and those of their unborn infants by throwing themselves into the public wells : but, continues the author just mentioned, none of the Bramins nor any Hindoo officer took the smallest trouble to prevent these shocking occurrences. These suicides became at last so frequent at Dhuboy, where Mr. Forbes presided, that he found it necessary to issue an order, that the body of any female, found in a well or tank within his district, should be exposed naked twenty-four hours before it was taken to the funeral pile. This had so far the desired effect, that after the promulgation of the edict, either no

more suicides were committed, or they were carefully concealed, as Mr. Forbes never had occasion to make an exposure.

The self-immolation of widows is a practice of great antiquity in Hindoostan: its origin is unknown. The natives assign as a reason for it, that many ages ago, the women, either from dislike or inconstancy, frequently took away the lives of their husbands. The most excruciating torments being found inadequate to prevent the repetition of this crime, the Bramins directed that the widows should be burned together with their husbands, and by this expedient gave them an interest in the preservation of the latter.



The women of such classes as inter instead of burning their dead, also sacrifice themselves in a manner equally cruel. This practice is followed only in Orissah and the Mahratta country, by the widows of cloth-dealers and weavers, the only people among the Hindoos who bury their dead.

When a female has signified her intention to bury herself with her deceased husband, her family dig a grave from six to eight feet deep, into which the corpse is let down and placed in a sitting posture with the hands joined. The widow, escorted by a solemn procession, approaches the grave. She bathes in public, in the nearest tank without giving occasion to the slightest

scandal, being already considered, from the sanctity of the death which she has chosen, as a supernatural being. At the brink of the grave, she listens to the pious exhortations of the Bramins who accompany her, gives them her jewels, and after placing upon her head a *cudjery*, or pot filled with rice, plantains, betel and water, makes her farewell salutations to the bystanders with her hands joined. She then descends into the grave by means of a bamboo ladder, which is instantly drawn up, and seats herself by the side of her husband. At that moment all the instruments hired for the ceremony are sounded, and the relatives throw such a quantity of earth upon the un-

fortunate creature that she is soon suffocated.

We cannot, observes Solvyns, from whom this description is taken, refuse our pity to the poor Hindoo women, who are sacrificed to this ancient and barbarous custom ; but their courage, firmness, and resignation, entitle them also to some share of admiration. While their husbands live they are slaves ; when they die, their wives must be ready to resign in the most cruel manner a life, the enjoyments of which they never tasted. In no part of the world are women born to so dreary a prospect.

We are sensible of the danger of interfering, by force, with the supersti-

tious practices of a nation so numerous as the Hindoos, who compose the great mass of the population of the British empire in India, which now amounts to sixty or seventy millions. When, however, we consider that according to the positive testimony of Mr. Forbes, not one woman has burned herself on the island of Bombay for the last fifty years; “nor,” he adds, “do I believe that this species of suicide has been allowed, since the English possessed it”—we cannot help thinking, that the measures pursued there for the suppression of this inhuman custom might be introduced in the rest of the British territories with equal efficacy. In this notion we are confirmed, by the testi-

mony of an accurate observer, the philanthropic Buchanan, who emphatically expresses his conviction, that had Marquis Wellesley remained in India, and been permitted to complete his salutary plans for the improvement of that distant empire, (for he did not finish one half of the civil and political regulations which he had in view, and had actually commenced,) the female sacrifice would have been by this time abolished. The humanity and intrepid spirit of that nobleman abolished a yet more criminal practice, which was considered by the Hindoos as a religious rite, and consecrated by custom—the sacrifice of children.



## MURDER OF FEMALE INFANTS.

That the practice of infanticide should ever be so general as to become a custom with any sect or race of people, requires the most unexceptionable evidence to gain belief. This practice, as far as regarded female infants, was fully substantiated with respect to a particular tribe on the frontiers of Juanpore, a district of the province of Benares, adjoining to the country of Oude. A race of Hindoos called Rajekoomars, reside here; and it was not discovered till 1789, that the custom of putting to death their female offspring, by causing

the mothers to starve them, had long subsisted and did then very generally prevail among them. The British resident at Benares, in a circuit which he made through their country, had an opportunity of authenticating the existence of the custom from their own confessions ; all unequivocally admitted it, but all did not fully acknowledge its atrocity ; and the reason which they assigned for the inhuman practice was the great expense of procuring suitable matches for their daughters if they were allowed to grow up. The custom, though general, was not universal, as natural affection, or some other motive, had induced the fathers of some families to bring up one or more of their

female issue ; but the instances where more than one daughter had been spared were very rare. One village only furnished a complete exception to the general custom, and the Rajekoomar informant, who noticed it, supposed that the inhabitants had sworn or solemnly pledged themselves to each other to bring up their females. In proof of his assertion, he added, that several old maids of the Rajekoomar tribe then existed there, and that their celibacy proceeded from the difficulty of procuring husbands for them, in consequence of the great expenses attending the marriages of this class of people.

The question will naturally occur,

how a race of men could be continued under the existence of this horrid custom. The documents collected by government proved, that its perpetuation was owing partly to the exceptions to the general custom occasionally admitted by the more wealthy individuals, more particularly those who happened to have no male issue; but chiefly to intermarriages with other Rajpoot families, to which the Rajekoomars were compelled by necessity.

A prohibition enforced by the denunciation of the severest temporal penalties would have had little efficacy in abolishing a custom, which existed in opposition to the feelings of humanity and natural affection; and the sanction

of that religion which the Rajekoomars professed was therefore appealed to in aid of the ordinances of civil authority. In one of the Puranas it is said, that the destruction of an unborn infant is as criminal as killing a Bramin, that for killing a female the punishment is to suffer in the hell called Kat Shootul, for as many years as there are hairs on that female's body, and that afterwards, the offender shall be born again, and become a leper. An engagement, in the preamble to which this passage was introduced, and binding them to desist in future from the barbarous practice, was prepared and circulated among the Rajekoomars for their signature; and as it was discovered that the same



practice prevailed, though in a less degree, among a smaller tribe also resident within the province of Benares, called Rajebunses, measures were adopted at the same time to make them sensible of its iniquity, and to procure from them a subscription similar to that exacted from the Rajekoomars.

It was not in this quarter only that success crowned the efforts of British humanity. During the government of Marquis Wellesley, that nobleman was informed that it was a custom with the Hindoos to sacrifice children in consequence of vows, by drowning them, or exposing them to sharks and crocodiles ; and that twenty-three had perished at Saugor in the single month of January,

1801, many of whom were sacrificed in this manner. His lordship immediately instituted an inquiry into the principle of this ancient atrocity, and passed a law declaring the practice to be murder and punishable with death. The purpose of this regulation was completely effected and not a murmur was heard on the subject.

A few years afterwards, the Hon. Jonathan Duncan, then governor of Bombay, who had been instrumental in the abolition of infanticide among the Rajekoomars as before related, instructed lieutenant-colonel Walker, political resident in Guzerat, to inform himself, in a military progress through that province, of the nature and extent of the

practice which was understood to prevail among the tribes called the Jarejah. The official report of that officer, dated March 1808, established the fact of the existence of this unnatural custom to such an extent that in the provinces of Cutch and Guzerat alone, (for it is practised in several others) the number of females thus sacrificed, amounted annually by the very lowest computation to three thousand.

The mother herself was commonly the executioner of her own offspring; for though women of rank might have their slaves and attendants who performed that office, yet by far the greater number executed it with their own hands. They had various methods of

destroying the infant, but two were chiefly prevalent ; either to put some opium in its mouth immediately after the birth, or to draw the umbilical cord over the face, and thus prevent respiration.

In defence of this practice those tribes alleged, that the education of daughters is expensive ; that it is difficult to procure a suitable settlement for them in marriage ; that the preservation of female honour is a charge of solicitude in a family ; and that when they want wives it is more convenient to buy them, or to solicit them from another tribe, than to breed them themselves.

Colonel Walker, agreeably to the instructions which he had received, to

endeavour, in the name of the British government, to effect the abolition of this unnatural custom among the Jarajah, addressed them in his official character, and, as ambassador from the British nation, entreated them to suffer their daughters to live. Having the means of appreciating the private character of this officer, they respected his virtues; but in regard to this moral negociation, they peremptorily refused even to listen to it, in terms which by many would have been deemed conclusive against any farther interference.

Fortunately Colonel Walker was not to be deterred from his benevolent purpose by the obstacles he had met with, because he was animated by a sincere



desire to overcome them. He sought opportunities of informing the understandings of the people in regard to the nature of the crime; and he discovered that it was generated directly by pride, avarice, and the alleged inferiority of women. By discussing the subject frequently in the public *cutchery*, or court of justice, and exposing the enormity of the practice, as contrary to the precepts of religion and the dictates of nature, every caste came at length to express an abhorrence of infanticide. The obstinate principles of the Jarejah began to be shaken. Within twelve months, the very persons who had refused to hold correspondence with him on the subject formally abjured the

practice of infanticide, and were soon followed by the Jarejah tribes in general, whose chiefs bound themselves, in 1808, by a solemn engagement to discontinue the custom.

About the end of 1809, many of the Jarejah fathers brought their infant daughters to Colonel Walker's tent, and exhibited them with pride and fondness. Their mothers and nurses also attended on this interesting occasion. True to the feelings which in other countries are found to prevail so forcibly, the emotions of nature here displayed were extremely moving. The mothers placed the infants in the hands of the colonel, calling on him to protect what he alone had

taught them to preserve. These infants they emphatically called *his* children.

On this occasion, the government of Bombay addressed the directors of the East-India Company in a letter, from which the following is an extract :—

“ We congratulate your honourable court on the prospect thus afforded of extirpating from the peninsula of Guzerat, a custom so long prevalent and so outrageous to humanity. This object will not be lost sight of ; and trusting to the aid of divine Providence, we look with confidence to its gradual but certain accomplishment, to such a degree as may form an era in the history of Guzerat, lastingly creditable to the English name and influence.”

It has been observed in a preceding page, that the Hindoos have been accustomed to expose infants to destruction in consequence of vows. The following account, recently received in England from a British officer in India, affords an interesting illustration of this species of superstition.

At a short distance from Puchmurry, in the Goand hills, there is a celebrated natural cave, in the bottom of a solid rock. Being sacred to Mahadeo, and otherwise very famous, great numbers of pilgrims annually resort to this cave, for the purpose of prayer and ablution in a small quantity of water with which the bottom of the cave is always covered, owing to a continual dripping from the

roof. The female pilgrims, however, have other motives for their visit to this wild unattractive place of worship, and it is their zeal for increasing the native population which gives rise to one of the most cruel and murderous sacrifices that take place in India.

When a woman has been so long childless as to despair of progeny, she repairs to this place, and after performing the usual ceremonies, entreats Mahadeo to remove her sterility, concluding with a vow to sacrifice her first-born infant at his shrine, by dashing it headlong from a high and craggy rock, close to that in which his cave his situated. This dreadful act is said to be executed annually by at least one mother. A



case which occurred, says the writer, while I was there, bore a different aspect; it was that of a full-grown woman who came to destroy herself in conformity with a vow made previously to her birth by her mother, to offer up her first-born to Mahadeo. Her sterility having, as I was informed, been thereby removed, she had borne this child and several others. Either through forgetfulness, or the strength of maternal affection, she neglected to destroy this eldest proof of the god's omnipotence, and the girl grew up, and in due course of time married. Her husband, however, soon died, as did a second whom she wedded, and her father and mother soon followed him to the grave. These

accumulated misfortunes drove the poor creature nearly distracted, and for two months she had done nothing but wander about the village, eating every thing that was offered her, no matter by whom. In consequence of this she had lost her caste, and the seclusion from her own friends, which was a necessary result, completed her misery. Having taken it into her head that all these mishaps were owing to her mother's vow remaining unfulfilled, she determined to execute it in her own person.

My curiosity being greatly excited, I went in company with another gentleman to witness the whole proceeding, in the event of our not being able to put

a stop to it altogether. We found the woman sitting near the base of the rock, from which she was to cast herself headlong; having in one hand a knife and a cocoa-nut, and in the other a small looking-glass. She appeared to be about thirty, and as ugly as any woman could well be; several Bramins were near her, but she seemed to regard no one, merely exclaiming at intervals, *Deo b'hur Jee*, in a loud and disagreeable tone of voice.

Colonel Adams had humanely directed his principal hircarrah and a Bramin to accompany us, and to explain to the woman that no such sacrifices were ordered or in any way authorized by their own laws, and to use their ut-

most endeavours, excepting force, to prevent the self-destruction of the unhappy female. The Bramins, who accompanied the woman, joined us most heartily in our efforts to change her resolution. She was perfectly sensible and understood every thing we said to her; but a decided negative was the only answer we could obtain to our entreaties that she would refrain from sacrificing herself. Her Bramins told us that if she would only return, her friends would willingly and kindly receive her, and that no disgrace whatever would attach to her name, if she declined fulfilling the vow of her mother. She was likewise assured that Colonel Adams would have her conducted back

in safety, and the *soubadar* of Hurdah, where she resided, would (as the Bramins said they had offered to do before she set out) give her a pair of bullocks and a small piece of ground for her support. In short, every thing that could possibly be urged, and every advantageous offer that could be made, proved quite ineffectual in shaking, even in the least degree, her resolution of dying.

The warmth and good-will with which the colonel's hircarrah, himself a high caste Hindoo, endeavoured to save the unhappy woman, were not less creditable than surprising; and every Bramin present seconded his efforts with the most sincere good-will imagi-



nable. She was so determined, however, on taking the leap, that, instead of listening to us with satisfaction, she repeatedly ordered the music to play, so that our voices might be drowned; but a slight and silent hint from us was quite enough to insure disobedience to her orders on the part of the musicians: indeed every one present seemed heartily to wish us success. One old Bramin was so very importunate with her, that she threw the cocoa-nut at his head with such force as would, had it struck him, have very speedily stopped his rhetoric: but luckily it came against a stone and was dashed in pieces.

After remaining there several hours, during which time she very greedily ate

the sweetmeats that were offered to her in great quantities, and seeing that her resolution was not in the least shaken, I thought it useless to stay any longer ; but left the hircarrah with directions to continue his efforts, and to give me a regular account of the sacrifice, in case he found it impossible to put a stop to it. About two hours after my return to camp, I had the pleasure of seeing the woman enter, accompanied by an immense crowd, and learned, on inquiry, that after my departure, she had continued inexorable till she approached the brink of the precipice, when she fainted away, and remained senseless for a long time : that on coming to herself again, Ram Sing, the hircar-

rah, perceiving some irresolution in her countenance, took advantage of the circumstance, and falling at her feet, conjured her to abandon her horrible intention. The Bramins seconded him; and at last she was prevailed upon to come to camp, whence colonel Adams, having furnished her with money to defray her expenses, sent proper persons to conduct her home.

From the above account, for the authenticity of every part of which I can vouch, adds the narrator, it may be inferred, that these sacrifices are not encouraged by the Bramins; that no intoxicating drugs or liquors are employed to stimulate the resolution of the victim or to deaden her feelings; but

that the Bramins themselves are ready and willing to use all their endeavours to prevent so horrible a custom. The barbarous infanticide, therefore, practised at Puchmurry, is the act of the parents alone : it would doubtless be prohibited altogether if committed in the British territories ; but those hills belong to the Bhoonslah, with whom we have no right to interfere.

The indifference with which children sacrifice the lives of their parents and parents those of their children in Hindoostan, cannot perhaps be paralleled in any other country. Of this disposition we have had occasion to record in this work numerous instances, to which

we add the following, on the authority of Mr. Forbes :—

A Hindoo devotee, a man of amiable character, in the prime of life, married and the father of four children, who lived near Bombay, desired his wife one afternoon to prepare herself and her children for a walk on the beach, whence, he said, he intended to accompany them on a longer journey. She inquired whither ; and he informed her that his god had invited him to heaven and to take his family with him ; that they were to go by water, and to set out from Back Bay. Perfectly satisfied with this explanation, the wife proceeded with her children to the sacri-



fice. The parents drove the two elder children into the sea, and they were carried off by the waves; they then drowned the two younger, who were infants; the wife walked in and perished, and the husband was deliberately following her, when he suddenly recollected, that the disappearance of a whole family would occasion inquiry on the part of the English government, and might involve his neighbours in some trouble: he therefore determined to step back and inform them of the circumstance, before he completed the sacrifice. His Hindoo neighbours heard the story with their characteristic insensibility, and perhaps admired the act; but a Musulman was present, and

he observed, that the story was so extraordinary that it might be difficult to convince, and therefore the husband must accompany him to the magistrate and relate the facts himself. The enthusiast was, in consequence, tried, condemned and executed for murder; a sentence with which he was perfectly satisfied, only regretting, that it occasioned a delay in his passage to that heaven, which he promised himself as his reward.

How far this sentence accorded with the spirit of English law, which assumes the existence of malice in the mind of the perpetrator, in order to constitute the crime of murder, we leave to be determined by the tribunal

on whose authority it was carried into execution.

With reference to the abolition of infanticide in Guzerat, the Rev. Dr. Buchanan remarks, that this event affords an invaluable lesson concerning the character of the Hindoos and the facility of civilising them. "What was effected in Guzerat," continues that benevolent writer, "in regard to the murder of children, is equally practicable in Bengal, as to the burning of women, and at Juggernaut, as to self-murder under Moloch's tower. We would ask, what is there to prevent the custom of burning women alive, from being discussed in the public *cutchery* of Calcutta, and 'exposing the enormity of the

practice, as contrary to the precepts of religion and the dictates of nature?' The English nation have a right to demand an answer to this question from the supreme government of Bengal.

“ Abhorrent to natural feeling as the destruction of female infants may appear, it is certain that it is only the extreme degree of a principle common to all nations of the earth where christianity is not known,—namely, a disposition to degrade the female character. Christianity alone ever did, christianity alone ever can give due honour to the character of woman, and exalt her to her just place in the creation of God.”

## MORALS AND LAWS,

## PENAL AND CIVIL.

In all the books of the Hindoos we meet with the maxims of that pure and sound morality, which is founded on the nature of man considered as a rational and social being. The laws themselves inculcate the doctrine of future chastisements for fraud and hypocrisy; and in no country is adultery punished with such severity as in India. Its legislators have not even omitted the precepts of a less elevated morality nor the laws of mere humanity. "Insult not," says Menu, "the cripple,



the ignorant and the aged, him who has neither beauty nor wealth, or is of low birth." This maxim would not be misplaced in the rigid code of Sparta: while Athenian refinement cannot perhaps produce a parallel to this injunction of the same philosopher:—"Always tell the truth, but strive to tell it in a pleasing manner."

The invention of the apologue belongs to the Hindoos. The most ancient collection of fables is unquestionably that which has long been distinguished by the name of Pilpay, but which is now restored to its original name, Hetopadesa. The author has introduced into a series of stories, which a Bramin is supposed to relate to two

young princes, his pupils, all the precepts and maxims that can be serviceable in the government of a state, in domestic economy and in private life.

If we proceed from morals to an examination of the laws of the Hindoos, we shall find not less reason for commendation. It cannot, however, be denied that they savour of the state of civilization at the period when they were enacted. These laws are in fact of the highest antiquity; they were collected about nine hundred years before Christ; but they existed long before that remote period, being either preserved in writing or transmitted down to that time by tradition. We ought not therefore to be surprised, if we find

frivolous, trivial, nay even troublesome regulations respecting the most indifferent actions of life, mingled with institutions which equally attest the wisdom and humanity of the legislator, and convey a high idea of the ancient governments of Hindoostan.

The Hindoos have a great number of treatises on the laws of very ancient date. Many centuries ago, an author, named Raghunandam, who has been styled the Tribonianus of India, compiled a kind of Digest in twenty-seven volumes, extracted from the works of various *Menus* or holy personages: but the common people are ignorant of the very existence of these treatises, which are confined to the hands of a few Bra-

mins. The principal and perhaps the only rule of legal decisions rests on certain customs transmitted from father to son, and on cases already adjudged. In matters to which these are not applicable, and particularly in offences arising from covetousness, rapacity, and passions of that kind, the sentence depends entirely on the pleasure of the Bramin, despot or judge.

It appears from the laws of Menu, that the ancient courts of justice were held publicly by the king in person, or by judges who might be appointed from among the three superior castes. The Bramins were generally preferred. The judges are bound to decide agree-

ably to the most literal interpretation of the law. Three witnesses are required to convict. The court is open to all without distinction of classes, and even women are allowed to be present at the trials of persons of their own sex.

Justice was formerly administered without much ceremony. The majority of causes, especially if they were of no great importance, were decided in the village, the principal persons of which acted as judges, and from their sentence there was seldom any appeal. Sometimes aged men or relatives were chosen as umpires: in matters of higher importance the Hindoos referred their



disputes to the Bramins, who decided according to the laws contained in the *Vedas*.

Of late years the professors of the law have begun to cut a greater figure in Hindoostan. The Hindoos seem to have caught of the Europeans a fondness for litigation to which they were formerly strangers: for this spirit is particularly prevalent at Madras and in other large cities, where the natives have most frequent commercial intercourse with them.

In the British presidencies the natives themselves are tried in criminal cases by the laws of England, for which purpose courts are established in the principal cities.

So strong is the preference given in many instances by the Hindoos to the British administration of justice, that natives who have had cause of litigation, have been known to travel some hundred miles for the purpose of submitting their dispute to the decision of an English court.

Disputes between the Hindoos fall under the cognizance of the lay or ecclesiastical tribunals of the country. All that concerns religion, for example all suits relative to betrothal, marriage, or matrimonial contracts, are referred to a commission composed of the principal Bramins.

Ordinary causes are still decided without cost, by the chiefs of the caste :

and criminal processes are submitted to the tribunal of the nabob, rajah, or prince, in whose territory the offence has been committed.

The Hindoos, when they take an oath, raise their clasped hands over their heads, and call upon Parvati, the goddess of vengeance, to punish them if they do not speak the truth. These people suspect the testimony of the one-eyed and hunch-backed, asserting, as an established fact, that it is much easier to bribe persons afflicted with such deformities and defects than others who are free from them.

The native judges of districts or inspectors of police are called *cutwall*: it is

by them that corporal punishments are inflicted.

A judge, say the Hindoos, ought to be thoroughly acquainted with ancient customs and usages, as well as with the particular case in which he has to decide. He should be a man of integrity, because it is according to his conscience that he judges, and wealthy, that he may be above the temptation of bribes. He ought to be upwards of twenty years of age, that the indiscretion natural to youth may not cause him to decide hastily; and under sixty, because, according to their notions, at that age the mental powers begin to decline. He ought never to officiate

alone, however excellent his intentions and understanding. Lastly he ought to refuse to act, if he is a relative or friend of either of the parties.

The Hindoos still speak in high terms of one of their ancient kings, who was so careful to avoid every thing that could bias his judgment, that whenever he ascended his throne to try a cause, he had a bandage tied over his eyes before the parties were admitted into his presence; and after they had entered, he expressly forbade any thing to be said from which he might know who they were.

The punishments inflicted are, the bastinado, expulsion from the caste, confiscation of property, banishment,



amputation of the nose and ears, and sometimes, but rarely, death. Throughout all Hindoostan there are not, perhaps, ten persons annually who suffer capital punishment.

The punishment of death is inflicted by means of fire, the halter, and elephants, according to the nature of the crime. The latter method, as described by a Roman Catholic missionary, consists in laying the culprit at the feet of the elephant, which, on receiving orders to that effect, lifts him up with his trunk, throws him to a considerable height above his head ; seizing him again when he falls, and throwing him up as often as the sentence specifies, and at length dispatching him, by setting his enor-

mous foot upon the breast of the convict.

Amputation of the ears and nose is the ordinary punishment of thieves: in cases of the more heinous kinds, one hand is cut off.

Adultresses are punished by expulsion from their caste, a heavy fine, and the bastinado. It is considered a still more severe punishment to cut off their hair; which is the penalty inflicted on the vilest prostitutes, after plastering them with cow-dung, and leading them about on an ass, accompanied with the sound of *tamtams*. In some castes not only adultery, but even the intercourse between unmarried persons is punished with death; and we are assured by

M. Perrin, that in some places the two culprits are burned alive; while in others the man only is sentenced to die, unless he marries the female whom he has seduced. A still more extraordinary circumstance is, that the practice of *thouing* one another, and the liberty taken by persons of different sexes, to smoke alternately the same *chiroutte* of tobacco, are held to be proofs of cohabitation, and upon such a fact alone the parties are convicted.

In Asam, pardon may be purchased for all capital offences excepting rebellion: and the whole family of a rebel, parents, brothers, sisters, wives, and children, are involved in his fate. Offenders are put to death in various man-

ners, by cutting their throats, by impaling them, by grinding them between two wooden cylinders, by sawing them asunder between two planks, by beating them with hammers, and by applying burning hoes to different parts until they die.

The fundamental principles of the law of the Hindoos are the following:—

1. A man shall not kill any person.
2. He shall not steal.
3. He shall not seduce his neighbour's wife.
4. He shall not lie.
5. He shall abstain from all intoxicating liquors.
6. He shall not forsake his caste.

7. He shall not destroy any public building or establishment.

8. He shall not make false money.

9. He shall not wilfully hurt any living creature.

10. He shall not commit any violence upon priests, holy penitents, husbandmen, or women.

11. He shall not withhold the wages of a servant.

12. He shall not enter any temple till he has performed the prescribed ablutions.

Theft is very rare among the Hindoos, notwithstanding their covetousness of gold and silver. If a person who has been robbed, complains to the



chief of the village, he may be sure either that the rogue will be apprehended, or that the village will indemnify him for his loss.

As the Hindoos are extremely superstitious, advantage is frequently taken of their credulity for the discovery of thefts. The master of a house from whom a silver spoon had been stolen, applied to a conjuror in the hope of recovering it. The conjuror, after some mystic ceremonies, declared that the spoon was at the bottom of the tank, in the middle of the court-yard. A diver was immediately sent for, and the spoon was actually found in the situation described. It is not very difficult to account for such a fact.

As to the civil laws, they vary at present in the different parts of Hindoostan, each power having introduced its own in the provinces which it governs. The following customs, however, are universally retained, and have the force of laws:—

“ The property of families must not be divided among the individuals composing them, who all live in common.

“ The debts of the fathers must be paid by the children to the third generation; the fathers must pay those of the children.

“ The eldest male of each family governs it to the absolute exclusion of the females: he directs all its concerns as he thinks fit.

“ If a man dies without leaving any near male relations, his wife, or his mother, being incapable of paying him the last honours, is obliged to adopt a son for the funeral ceremony. From this moment the latter is considered as the heir of the family, and enjoys all the rights and prerogatives of a legitimate son.”

In the ancient kingdom of Madura, there are small savage and independent tribes, which, entrenched as it were, in a narrow valley, defy all the efforts of regular armies, and glory in the appellation of robbers. Their princes are called Polygars. These people live by plunder and the chase. When dispersed, signals for calling them to-

gether are given by a long herdsman's cornet, the sound of which is heard at a great distance.

Among these tribes the *lex talionis*, or law of retaliation, is in full force. If two persons belonging to them have a quarrel, and one puts out the other's eye or kills him, he is obliged to do the same to himself. This cruelty they extend even to their children. On this subject a missionary relates the following horrible story:—

“ Not long since, two of these barbarians having quarrelled, one of them ran to his house, snatched up a boy about four years old, and in the presence of his enemy beat his child's head to pieces between two stones. The

other, without manifesting the least emotion, laid hold of his daughter, who was nine years of age, and plunged a dagger into her heart. 'Thy child,' said he, 'was but four years old, my girl was nine; give me a victim equal to mine.'—'That I will,' replied his antagonist, and seeing his son, who was about to be married, by his side, he stabbed him four or five times with the dagger. Not satisfied with shedding the blood of his two sons, he killed his wife also, to oblige his enemy to do the same. Another little girl and an infant at the breast were slaughtered; so that in a single day seven persons were sacrificed to the vengeance of two blood-



thirsty wretches, infinitely more cruel than the most ferocious beasts.

“The women,” continues Father Martin, “carry this barbarity to a still greater length. For any slight affront, for any angry word that is said to one of them by another woman, the former will go and dash out her brains against the door of the latter, who is obliged to dispatch herself in the same manner. If one destroys herself by drinking the juice of some poisonous herb, the other, who was the occasion of this violent death, must poison herself too; otherwise her house would be burned, her cattle carried off, and she would be liable to all sorts of ill usage till satis-

faction was made." This atrocious custom prevails indeed in the caste of the robbers only: it forms a horrid contrast with the manners of people renowned for their gentleness, who are forbidden by their religion to spill blood, and who would deem it a crime to kill an insect.

The upper provinces of Hindoostan also abound with professed thieves, who are incredibly expert in stealing horses. The following fact will furnish sufficient evidence of their talents. A British field-officer, proceeding with a large detachment from Cawnpore to Bombay, had a very valuable horse, which was always picketed with great care, under charge of the sentries near

his tent. One morning, however, the favourite was missing. A handsome reward was proclaimed for its restoration; when the thief, in full reliance on English good faith, appeared with the horse which he placed in its former situation, and received the premium of his ingenious villany. The colonel, however, was at a loss to conceive how the horse could have been removed from so secure a position, and desired the thief to show him in what manner he had accomplished his design. The circle was accordingly cleared, and the artful fellow went through all his manœuvres, crouching on the ground and sliding along in various positions till he reached the horse. He explained how he

found the bridle, putting it, at the same time into the horse's mouth, and, acting as he proceeded with his detail, he loosened the head and heel-ropes with which horses are always fastened; when the animal, being quite loose, he sprung upon his back, and urging him forward with his heels, galloped away through the crowd. The colonel, highly admiring the fellow's skill, followed his course in expectation of seeing the horse turned and brought back to the pickets. The thief, however, continued his way, leaving the numerous spectators and the unsuspecting colonel in particular, divided between admiration at the neatness of the trick, and mortification at the loss. As they were in

an enemy's country, pursuit was altogether impracticable.

Previously to the year 1808, there were in the northern part of the Carnatic, and in other districts regularly organised gangs who subsisted by robbery, but who never plundered without murdering their victims. These wretches are called Phansigars. There is reason to believe that from the time of the conquest of Mysore, in 1799, to 1807 or 1808, hundreds of persons were annually destroyed by them in that part of India. Since the latter period, their inhuman practices have become known to the English courts of justice; and many of them have in consequence fled from the British territories to those



of the Nizam and of the Mahrattas, where they are said to be still numerous.

A gang of Phansigars consists of from ten to fifty or even a greater number of persons, a large majority of whom are Musulmans ; but Hindoos, and particularly those of the Rajpoot tribe, are often associated with them. Bramins too, though rarely, are found in the gangs. Emerging from their haunts, they sometimes perform long journeys, being absent from home many months ; but generally making one or two excursions every year, under the appearance of ordinary inoffensive travellers, and not unfrequently pretending to be traders. Of a numerous gang, some usually remain at home,

while the rest are engaged in the work of pillage and murder.

Their practice is first to strangle and then rifle their victims, who are almost exclusively such travellers as they fall in with on the road. It is a principle with them, to allow not one to escape of a party however numerous, that there may be no witnesses of their atrocities: nay, the very dogs of the latter are not spared by them. The only admitted exception to this rule is in the instance of boys of very tender age, who are spared, adopted by the Phansigars, and on attaining the requisite age initiated into their horrible mysteries.

Skilled in the arts of deception, they

enter into conversation, and insinuate themselves by obsequious attentions into the confidence of travellers of all descriptions, to learn from them whence they come, whither and for what purpose they are journeying, and of what property they are possessed; they propose to a stranger, under the specious plea of mutual safety or for society to travel together, or follow him at a little distance, and on arriving at a convenient place, one of the gang suddenly puts a rope or sash round the neck of the unfortunate person, while others assist in depriving him of life.

Before the perpetration of the murder some of the gang are sent in ad-

vance, and some left in rear of the place, to keep watch and prevent intrusion, by giving notice to those engaged in the act. Should any person unexpectedly appear on the road, before the body, which is previously much mangled, is buried, some artifice is practised to prevent discovery; such as covering the body with a cloth, while lamentations are made professedly on account of the sickness or death of one of their comrades; or one of the watchers falls down, apparently writhing with pain, in order to excite the pity of the travellers, and to detain them from the scene of murder.

Sometimes, when they are in a part

of the country which exposes them to the risk of observation, they will put up a screen or the wall of a tent, and bury the body within the inclosure ; pretending, if inquiries are made, that their women are within the screen. On such occasions, these obdurate wretches do not hesitate to dress and eat their food on the very spot where their victim is inhumed.

Travellers resting in the same choultry with Phansigars, are sometimes destroyed in the night, and their bodies conveyed to a distance and buried. On these occasions a person is not always murdered when asleep ; for while he is in a recumbent posture they find a dif-



ficulty of applying the cloth. The usual practice is first to awaken him suddenly with an alarm of a snake or a scorpion, and then to strangle him.

The plunder thus obtained is almost always carried home by the Phansigars; for, to prevent detection, they never dispose of it near the place where the owner was murdered, or where it is likely to be recognized.

These detestable wretches are said, from superstitious motives, to exempt from slaughter persons of the Camala caste and females, in which case the whole party to which such persons belong is spared. There are, however, well-authenticated statements, which

seem to prove that women have been sacrificed by them when they fall in their way.

The Phansigars train up all their male children to their own profession, unless bodily defects prevent them from following it. Their initiation is very gradual, and commences at the age of ten or twelve years. The magistrate of Chittur, in one of his reports observes:—I believe that some of the Phansigars have been concerned in above two hundred murders; nor will this estimate appear extravagant, if it be remembered that murder was their profession, frequently their only means of gaining a subsistence. Every man fifty years of age has probably been ac-

tively engaged during twenty-five years of his life in murder, and on the most moderate computation it may be reckoned that he has made one excursion a year, and met each time with ten victims.

The more northern parts of India and the Mahratta territories are also infested by bands of robbers called Thegs, composed of a desperate association of all castes, who are not less dangerous than the Phansigars. It is evidently to one or the other of these classes that Thevenot alludes in the following passage:—"Though the road from Delhi to Agra be tolerable, yet hath it many inconveniences. A traveller may meet with tigers, panthers,

and lions upon it, and he must be on his guard against robbers, and above all things not suffer any one to come near him on the road. The most artful robbers in the world are found in that country. They use a certain slip with a running noose, which they can cast with such dexterity about a man's neck, when they are within reach of him, that they never fail, and thus strangle him in a trice. They have also another stratagem for catching travellers. They send out upon the road a handsome woman, who with her hair dishevelled and all in tears, sighs and complains of some misfortune which she pretends to have befallen her. Taking the same way that the traveller

is going, he easily falls into conversation with her, and finding her beautiful, offers her his assistance which she accepts: but no sooner has he taken her up behind him on horseback, than she throws the snare about his neck, and strangles, or at least stuns him, until the robbers, who lie hid, come running to her assistance, and complete the business."

It is a question whether the reproach of the invention of this detestable system of pillage and murder is to be charged to the Hindoos or to the Mussulmans. In the more southern provinces which were never, or fell latest, under the dominion of Mahometans, Phansigars do not appear even yet to have established themselves: and if, as



it is said, Arabia and Persia are infested by them, it seems most probable that these murderers came to India along with the Mahometan conquerors, and accompanied the progress of their arms to the southward.

The Thegs in the Mahratta villages on the confines of the British territories, commit their atrocities more openly than the Phansigars. Early in 1816 a party of forty-two travellers, men, women, and children, were every one strangled by a large party of Thegs, between the Nagpore and Purma country.

In certain districts of the British possessions, particularly in Juanpore, there seems to exist some association for dispatching travellers in a more se-

cret manner. These wretches joining travellers and accompanying them on the road, take an opportunity of mixing the seed of the *datura* or other narcotic plant with the hooka or food of their victim, and plunder him when stupified or killed by the effects of the dose.

The constitution which bears so hard upon the lower castes, and the difficulty they find in obtaining justice, frequently oblige them to have recourse to a method which is authorised by the law and almost always succeeds, in order to obtain payment of a debt from a dishonest creditor. It has some analogy with a custom described in a preceding page, though it is of a much less odious nature.

In Hindoostan, as in other countries, a person in want of money, may borrow it at interest. The Hindoos distinguish three kinds of interest: the first, which is virtue, is one per cent. per month, or twelve per cent. per annum; the second, which is sin, is four per cent. per month, so that the principal is doubled in less than two years and a half: and the third sort, which is neither virtue nor sin, is two per cent. per month.

When a debtor refuses to fulfil his engagements, and his creditor meets him in the street, or in any other place whatever, he adjures him in the name of the rajah, minister, or other dignified person: this they term *remaining*,

and putting in *dhurna*, or arresting; because both the debtor and creditor are obliged to stop where they meet, without eating or drinking, till the former has paid the debt or at least arranged matters with the latter. It would be deemed an act of horrible impiety to violate a custom so universally respected. The very soldier is not liable to the charge of mutiny when he employs this method to obtain his arrears of pay.

This curious mode of enforcing a demand, says Broughton, is in universal practice among the Mahrattas: Scindia himself, one of the most powerful of their princes, not being exempt from it. The man who sits

the *dhurna* goes to the house or tent of him whom he wishes to bring to terms, and remains there till the affair is settled; during which time the person under restraint is confined to his apartment and not suffered to communicate with any but those whom the other may approve of. When it is meant to be very strict, the claimant takes a number of his followers, who surround the tent, sometimes even the bed of his adversary, and deprive him altogether of food; in which case, however, etiquette prescribes the same abstinence to himself: the strongest stomach of course carries the day.

A custom of this kind was once so prevalent in the province and city of



Benares, that Bramins were trained to remain a long time without food. They were then sent to the door of some rich individual, where they made a vow to remain without eating till they should obtain a certain sum of money. To preserve the life of a Bramin is so absolutely a duty, that the money was generally paid; but never till a good struggle had taken place to ascertain whether the man was staunch or not: for money is the life and soul of all Hindoos. In the Mahratta camp were many Bramins who hired themselves out to sit *dhurna* for those who did not choose to expose themselves to so great an inconvenience.

Another kind of *dhurna* consists in

the creditor stationing himself at the door of the debtor, with an enormous weight on his head, or a dagger or poison in his hand, and threatening to put an end to his life, if the master of the house quits it without paying the debt or has recourse to violence to drive him away. In this position he remains without taking any sustenance; and the debtor also is obliged to fast. Should the creditor die at the door of the debtor, the house would be levelled with the ground, the master and his family would be sold, and the money applied to the payment of the debt to the heirs of the creditor.

A poor Hindoo being unable to sup-

port his wife in a time of dearth, was necessitated to transfer her to a tailor, who, having plenty of business, could defray the expense of her maintenance. When the dearth was over, the husband was desirous of recovering his wife, but she, finding herself quite comfortable with the tailor, refused to return with him. All his remonstrances proving ineffectual, he had recourse to the *dhurna*. The tailor, equally reluctant to part with the woman, got rid of the husband by giving him a sum of money.

The last species of *dhurna* is this:— The creditor forms a pile of wood before the door of his debtor, places upon

it a cow, or an old woman, and in preference his own mother: and with a torch in his hand threatens to set fire to the pile unless he is immediately paid. The old woman meanwhile utters the most dreadful imprecations against the debtor, swearing to haunt him incessantly and to leave him no rest either in this world or the other. Motives of fear, shame, and religion, almost always induce the debtor to pay, or to enter into some compromise; and it rarely happens that the creditor is reduced to the necessity of executing his threat.

Some Pundits, or native lawyers, admit the validity of the obligations ex-

torted by means of the *dhurna*, provided what is thus obtained were legally due and unjustly refused: others deny it in every case unless the debtor, after the removal of the *dhurna*, freely and voluntarily confirms the promise that has been wrung from him.

In January 1794, Mohun Panreh, an inhabitant of a district in the province of Benares, sat down in *dhurna* before the house of some Rajpoots, for the purpose of obtaining the payment of *birt*, or a charitable subsistence to which he had a claim; and in this situation destroyed himself by swallowing poison. Some of the relations of the deceased retained the corpse for two days before



the house of the Rajpoots, who were thus compelled to forego taking any sustenance, in order to induce them to settle the *birt* on the heir of the deceased Bramin.

## ORDEALS.

Trials by ordeal, so common in Europe during the middle ages, have been customary from time immemorial in Hindoostan. Though they are not so much in vogue as formerly, yet instances still occur, and they have lost none of their authority. The Hindoos firmly believe that God would perform a miracle rather than suffer the innocent to be overcome.

There are nine species of ordeal: 1. by the balance; 2. by fire; 3. by water; 4. by poison; 5. by the *kosha*, or water

in which an idol has been washed ; 6. by rice ; 7. by boiling oil ; 8. by red-hot iron ; 9. by images.

1. In the ordeal by the balance, the accused first makes an offering to fire . he then fasts for a whole day, after which he is accurately weighed. Six minutes afterwards, he is again placed in the balance ; if he weighs more than the first time, he is deemed guilty, if less innocent, but if exactly the same, he must be weighed a third time.

2. For the ordeal by fire, a trench, nine palms in length, two in breadth, and one deep, is dug in the ground, which is filled with burning *pippal* wood or red-hot ashes. Over these the accused must walk barefoot, with-

out receiving any injury, in order to obtain an acquittal.

3. In the ordeal by water, the accused plunges his head into a river or tank, and lays hold of the foot of a man who stands in the water up to the navel. In this posture he must continue, till a nimble runner has brought back an arrow discharged at the moment of his immersion ; or, if he raises his head above the water before the arrival of the arrow, his guilt is considered as fully proved.

4. There are two kinds of ordeal by poison. In the one, the accused, after performing his ablutions and making an offering to the fire, must take the poison which is handed to him by a Bramin

and swallow it ; if he survives he is absolved. In the other, a hooded serpent is put into a vessel, into which a ring is thrown. This ring the accused is required to bring out with his naked hand ; if the serpent bites him, he is at once convicted and punished for his crime.

5. The ordeal by the *kosha* is conducted as follows. The accused drinks three draughts of water, in which the image of the sun or some other deity has been washed. If no misfortune or illness befalls him during the ensuing fortnight he is acquitted.

6. In the ordeal by rice, the accused chews a certain quantity of that grain, and spits it out. If the rice comes out



of his mouth dry, or tinged with blood, this is sufficient evidence of the crime.

7. The trial with boiling oil consists in the accused plunging his hand into that liquid ; and if he draws it out unhurt, he is declared innocent.

8. In the ordeal by red-hot iron, an iron ball or the head of a lance heated in the fire is put into the hand of the accused ; who is judged innocent, as in the preceding ordeal, if his hand is not burned.

9. The ordeal by images is thus conducted. Into a large earthen jar are thrown two images, one of silver called *Dharma*, or the genius of justice, and the other *Adharma*, or genius of injustice. The vessel is then covered, the

accused puts his hand into it, and if he brings out the silver figure he is acquitted, if the iron image, he is condemned. Sometimes this trial is made with two pieces of stuff, the one white and the other black, on each of which the figure of some deity has been painted. The accused is pronounced innocent or guilty, according as he draws out the white or the black piece.

According to the law relative to ordeals, the balance is for women, children, old men, the blind, cripples and Bramins, and fire, water and poison for the Sooders.

When the loss of the accuser does not amount to a thousand pieces of silver, the accused is not obliged to

undergo either the ordeal of the red-hot ball, or that by poison or the balance: but if the crime charged be against the monarch or of a heinous kind, he must submit to one of these trials.

We learn from the *Asiatic Researches*, that, in 1783, a man underwent the ordeal by red-hot iron in Benares, in the presence of Ali Ibrahim Khan, chief magistrate of that city. This man, steward to a person of distinction, was accused of theft, but asserted his innocence. As there was no legal evidence of his guilt he offered to submit to the ordeal by fire.

The Pundits of the court and city having paid their adorations to Ganesa,

the god of wisdom, and presented to the fire their offering of clarified butter, formed on the ground nine circles of cow-dung, and having bathed the accused in the Ganges, they conducted him to the place with his garments wet. To obviate all suspicion of deceit they then washed his hands with pure water, and next wrote a statement of the case and the words of the *muntra* (a passage in one of the *Vedas*, containing the names of certain deities) on a palmyra leaf which they fastened upon his head. Into his hands, which they opened and joined together, they put seven *pippal* and seven *djend* leaves, seven blades of *dharba* grass, a few flowers, and some barley steeped in sour milk, which they

fastened with seven threads of raw white cotton. This done they heated the iron ball, which was dropped into his hands with a pair of tongs. In this manner he walked through each of the seven intermediate circles and threw down the ball in the ninth, where it set fire to the grass that had been left. To prove his veracity he then rubbed some rice in the husk between his hands, which, on being inspected, so far from being burned, did not exhibit a single blister. He was in consequence acquitted; but the accuser was sent to prison for a week, that others might not be tempted to demand the ordeal by fire.

About the same time a man accused



of theft submitted to the seventh ordeal. He plunged his hand into a vessel full of burning oil to pick up a ring which had been thrown into it; but the result was different, for he burned his hand and was sentenced to pay the value of the property which he was charged with stealing.

The Italian author of *Letters on India* relates, that one day a young girl charged with theft was brought before him by her accusers. He was chosen, for want of another judge, because the two parties were in some measure his dependents. The accusers proposed the ordeal of boiling oil, and the girl had the courage to accept it. Every thing was ready for the trial, when the

judge, believing the age of miracles to be past, and having no wish to see the poor girl scald her hand and arm, proposed a different test. He loaded a pistol before the faces of all present, and told the accused that if she would discharge it at her breast, the result would show more speedily whether she were guilty or not. All the parties being satisfied, the girl took the pistol, and, without manifesting the least sign of fear, pointed it to her breast and fired: but the judge had unperceived adroitly changed the loaded pistol for one which was merely primed.

Mr. Forbes relates, that during his administration of justice at Dhuboy, he was sometimes obliged to admit the

trial by ordeal. On the first of these occasions a man was accused of stealing a child covered with jewels, which is a common mode of adorning infants among the wealthy Hindoos. Many circumstances appeared against him, on which he demanded the ordeal. This was a measure to which Mr. Forbes was extremely averse; but at the particular request of the Hindoo arbitrators whom that gentleman associated with him on the carpet of justice, and especially at the earnest entreaty of the child's parents, he consented. A caldron of boiling oil was brought, and after a short ceremony from the Bra- mins, the accused person, without showing any anxiety, dipped his han to the

bottom, and took out a small silver coin, without appearing to have sustained any injury or to suffer the smallest pain. The process went no farther as the parents declared themselves perfectly convinced of his innocence.

The same writer mentions a species of ordeal differing from all those previously enumerated, and seems compelled to acknowledge the success with which it was practised in two cases of theft. An English lady at Surat, residing in the same family with himself, lost a gold watch on which she set a particular value. Several modes of divination were used to discover the thief, and among others the following:—The

name of every person in the house was placed in a separate ball of paste or wax and thrown into a vessel of water : one only swam on the surface ; the rest fell to the bottom and there remained. On opening the floating ball it contained the name of an unsuspected female, who immediately confessed that she had stolen and secreted the watch.

The other case appears much more unaccountable. Being about to remove from his country-house at Baroche to Surat, Mr. Forbes had deposited an iron plate-chest for security in an inner room, near that where the family slept. This chest, the contents of which were very valuable, was stolen in the course of the night ; and from its weight three



or four persons must have been concerned in the robbery. Threats, promises, and the ingenuity of the officers of the police were of no avail for the discovery of the delinquents. "At the earnest solicitation," says Mr. Forbes, "of all our servants, Hindoos, Mahometans and Parsees, we had recourse to divination by balls in the water; our own names were included with the rest. On forming a circle round the vase, I observed a man whom I somewhat suspected to change colour and become a little agitated. On the balls being immersed in water one only rose to the surface; his confusion was then evident and still more so, when, on opening the ball, it contained the name

of Harrabhy. This man had lived with us several years as head-gardener, without our having any reason to suspect his honesty: he positively denied the robbery and we had no other proof than the ordeal, which, though fully satisfactory to all the Indians, was not so to us. They requested that neither Harrabhy nor any other person might be allowed to leave the spot, until we had gone through the rice ordeal: to this we submitted, though by no means palatable to Harrabhy. He reluctantly complied, and with all the rest of us put a few grains of unboiled rice into his mouth. It was previously intimated, that from the mouth of the innocent after mastication it would

come out a milky liquid; from the guilty a dry powder. We were all of the milky party except Harrabhy: mingling with the saliva, it became a white fluid; with him it remained a dry powder, notwithstanding a number of fruitless efforts to liquefy it. He was compelled thus to spit it out: his complexion changed from a rich brown to a sort of livid blue; his lips quivered and his altered countenance plainly indicated guilt: still he would make no confession, and on this evidence we could only put him in confinement under the court of Adawlet, until we obtained further proof." This evidence was furnished the following day, on the discovery of the chest, which had been

buried near the end of Mr. Forbes's garden, on the steep bank of the Nerbudda. When the culprit learned that the chest had been found and restored to the owners, and that he had no prospect of benefiting by its contents, he confessed that, in concert with three other men, he had carried it off in the night, while the people were asleep, and was in hopes the family would have departed without finding it.

## WITCHCRAFT AND OTHER SUPERSTITIONS.

The notion of the reality of witchcraft is general in India. Lord Teignmouth, in the first paper, addressed by him to the Asiatic Society, after his election to the President's chair, instances several very extraordinary facts respecting the Bramins, and then introduces a story from the judicial records in which five women were put to death for the supposed practice of sorcery.

In 1792, three men of the caste of Soontaar, in one of the Bengal districts,



were indicted for the murder of these five women. The prisoners, without hesitation, confessed the crime with which they were charged, and pleaded in their defence, that, with their tribes it was the immemorial custom to try persons notorious for witchcraft ; that for this purpose, an assembly was convened of those of the same tribe from far and near ; if after due investigation the charge was proved, the sorcerers were put to death ; and no complaint was ever preferred on this account to the ruling power ; that the women who were killed had undergone the prescribed form of trial ; were duly convicted of causing the death of the son of one of the prisoners by witchcraft ; and

had been put to death by the prisoners in conformity to the sentence of the assembly.

To ascertain with a degree of certainty the persons guilty of practising witchcraft, the three following modes are adopted. First, branches of the saul-tree, marked with the names of all the females in the village, whether married or unmarried, who have attained the age of twelve years, are planted in the water, in the morning, for the space of four hours and a half; and the withering of any of these branches is a proof of witchcraft against the person whose name is annexed to it. Secondly, small portions of rice, enveloped in cloths marked as above, are placed in a nest

of white ants ; the consumption of the rice in any of the bags establishes sorcery against the woman whose name it bears. Thirdly, lamps are lighted at night ; water is placed in cups made of leaves, and mustard-seed oil is poured drop by drop, into the water, while the name of each woman is pronounced ; the appearance of the shadow of any woman on the water during this ceremony proves her a witch.

In the present instance, the witnesses swore and probably believed, that all the proofs against the unfortunate women had been duly verified. They asserted in evidence, that the branches marked with the names of the five women were withered ; that the rice in

the bags having their specific names was devoured by the white ants, while that in the other bags remained untouched; that their shadows appeared on the water when the oil was poured upon it, while their names were pronounced; and farther, that they were seen dancing at midnight, naked, by the light of a lamp near the house of the sick person.

The entertaining work of Mr. Forbes also contains facts strikingly illustrative of the notions of the people of Hindoostan, and especially the Parsees, respecting witchcraft.

A record of the various superstitious ceremonies which prevail throughout Hindoostan, observes Lord Teignmouth,

in the paper referred to above, would form a large and curious volume; and his lordship proceeds to illustrate a superstitious notion respecting the sugarcane, prevalent among the people of the province of Benares.

As it is usual with the ryots, or husbandmen, to reserve a certain portion of the canes of the preceding year to serve as plants for their new cultivation, it very frequently happens that considerable portions of the old cane remain unappropriated. Whenever this happens, the proprietor repairs to the spot on the 25th *Jeyte*, or about the 11th of June, and having sacrificed to Nagbele, or the tutelary deity of the cane, he immediately sets fire to the whole



and is exceedingly careful to have this operation executed in as complete and efficacious a manner as possible.

This act is performed from an apprehension, that if the old canes were allowed to remain in the ground beyond the day above mentioned, they would in all probability produce flowers and seeds; and the appearance of these flowers they consider as one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall them.

They unanimously assert, that if the proprietor of a plantation ever happens to see a single cane in flower after the day specified, the greatest calamities will befall himself, his parents, his children, and his property: in short,

that death will sweep away most of the members, or indeed the whole of his family, within a short period after this unfortunate spectacle. If the proprietor's servant happens to see the flower, and immediately pulls it from the stalk, buries it in the earth, and never reveals the circumstance to his master, in this case they believe that it will not be productive of any evil consequence : but should the matter reach the proprietor's knowledge, the calamities before stated must, according to the prevailing ideas, infallibly happen.

In support of this belief, many of the most aged zemindars and ryots in the province of Benares recited several instances of the above nature, which

they affirmed to have actually happened during their own time ; and moreover, that they had been personal witnesses to the evils and misfortunes which befel the unhappy victims of the description alluded to.

The Hindoos seem also to have notions of a class of beings resembling the fairies of our British ancestors.

Mr. Fraser, in the account of his journey to the sources of the Jumna, inserted in the thirteenth volume of the Asiatic Researches, makes mention of ravines situated in a valley not far from that river, in one of which are seen small hills of stones resembling places of worship, supposed to be the residence of *devatas*, or spirits, who amuse

themselves with inveigling away human beings to their wild abodes. It is said, that beauty in either sex is the object of their particular predilection; that they remorselessly seize on any whom chance or imprudence may place within their power, and whose spirits become as theirs when deprived of their corporeal frame. Many instances of such occurrences were related to the traveller. On one occasion, a young man who had wandered near their haunts, being carried in a trance to the valley, heard the voice of his own father, who some years before had been spirited away and who now recognized his son. Paternal affection, it appears, was

stronger than the spell by which he was bound, and instead of rejoicing at the acquisition of new prey, he recollected the forlorn state of his family, thus deprived of their only remaining support; he begged and obtained the pardon of his son, who was dismissed with the injunction of *strict silence and secrecy*; but, forgetting his vow, he was deprived of speech, and as a self-punishment cut out his tongue with his own hand.

Several persons have approached the precincts of these spirits, and they who have returned have generally expressed the same feelings, and have uttered some prophecy. They aver that they have fallen into a swoon, and between



sleeping and waking, heard a conversation, and been sensible of impressions, as if a conversation had passed, which generally relates to some future event. Indeed this prophetic faculty is one of the chiefly remarkable attributes of the place. The officiating Bramins sometimes venture farther than the vulgar, and are favoured with communications of future import. It is said they foretold the misfortunes and death of the late rajah Parduman Sah; the loss of his kingdom and life at Dehra Dun, and the commencement, or rather completion of the Gorkha dominion. The awe and horror which the natives entertain for the place are extreme. They assert

the impossibility of penetrating the valley to any considerable height, and declare that none who attempted it ever returned without the loss of reason.

## THE KHATTRIES.

The Khattries form the second of the four original castes, comprising, as we have already observed, the rajahs and the military. Those who serve in the armies, though equally scrupulous in regard to the ceremonies prescribed to their caste, yet having more intercourse with the Mahometans and Christians, are not so superstitious as the other Hindoos. The Mahrattas themselves have in a great measure shaken off that yoke which so ill befits the military profession.

The Khattries are in general well shaped, robust, and courageous. The

women of this caste, which is the least numerous of all, are handsome and have strong constitutions.

Those who live in villages have bazars or markets before their houses, and exact a toll or duty from such persons as bring their commodities thither for sale. From this source they derive a considerable revenue. The temples or public pagodas, in which religious festivals are held, are also in general near their habitations. They have likewise guard-houses and *cutcheries*, where the public imposts are paid, and where such causes are decided as are not of sufficient importance to be referred to the superior tribunals.

The Khattries wear large ear-rings

with a pearl or precious stone in the middle of each. They also wear rings of gold or silver round the arms and legs.



## RAJAHS.

The rajahs are the Hindoo princes, as the nabobs are the Mahometan princes of Hindoostan: their rank is the same. They rule with despotic power, their will being the supreme law. They amass great wealth by their extortions; and as all the lands belong to them, they carry off the grain at the time of harvest, leaving the wretched husbandmen scarcely sufficient for their subsistence.

The rajahs are in general of the second class; yet Sooders have sometimes raised themselves to the throne,



A Rajah giving audience.

though without being able to rise above their caste. Hence there are princes whose cooks would degrade themselves if they were to sit down to table with their masters.

In the caste of the rajahs, particularly in Tanjore, the princesses of the blood-royal, when of marriageable age, choose their own husbands. For this purpose they are conducted into a hall in which a great number of persons of their caste are assembled, and there mark the man whom they select for their husband, by throwing over his head a wreath of flowers.

The annexed plate represents a rajah sitting in state in his palace. The long garment in which he is dressed,

and which is called *courti* or *djama* is not the Musulman habit, as might be supposed from its resemblance. It was commonly worn in Hindoostan before the conquest of the country by Tamerlane. The turban differs essentially from that of the Mahometans in being pointed behind. Two servants stand behind the rajah, with *tchaourys* or bunches of peacocks' feathers to drive away the flies.

The luxury of the rajahs consists in the number of their women, attendants, elephants, camels, and horses. They assemble at their courts men of science, dancers of both sexes, singers, musicians, and jugglers.

The palace of a rajah consists of se-

veral buildings, surrounding different courts or small squares: the chambers are carpeted and decorated with small mirrors and pictures. The bed is placed in the middle. The doors and windows are very small. The rajahs abide in preference in the upper apartments or on the terraces of their palaces.

The rajahs are respected in their sects in proportion to their obesity: they therefore employ all possible means to render themselves corpulent, and for this purpose eat a quantity of *ghee*, or butter melted in milk. Their complexion is a lighter yellow than that of the other Hindoos. Like the Bramins they must not touch any kind of animal food; and they are particularly



scrupulous not to suffer the water they drink to be touched by any person whatever, not even by a Bramin, though of their own sect. On this point, indeed, all the castes, not excepting that of the Sooders, which is the lowest, are extremely strict.

The rajahs bathe several times a-day, previously rubbing themselves with oil of mustard. During these frictions they repeat the *muntras*, which are texts of the Shaster or some other sacred book.

The garment worn by the wives of rajahs and other wealthy females is not mere calico, like that worn by women of the inferior classes, unless they are widows or in mourning. They wrap

themselves in the finest muslins and silks. The piece is so long that after going twice or three times round, there is enough left to form a scarf, which covers the bosom, the head, and the side; and it is so well adjusted, as to conceal the whole person excepting the hands and feet and a small part of the face and body. Some of the engravings in the preceding volume, and particularly that opposite to page 243, exhibit faithful representations of the costume of the wives of rajahs. They are barefoot, for all the Hindoo women go in that manner; and they are so accustomed to it as to feel no inconvenience from thorns, sharp stones, and the scorching heat of the ground, even

in the very long and fatiguing journeys which those of the lower castes are obliged to take.

To convey a correct idea of the manner in which they arrange the numerous jewels which they wear on the forehead, in the nose, in the ears, and on the arms and legs, we have given an engraving of the busts of two Hindoo women, whose arms and hands are adorned with bracelets and rings; and underneath, the lower part of the leg and foot loaded with ornaments. The design for this engraving was made from original drawings, as large as life, executed in Hindoostan, to give Europeans accurate notions on a matter of general interest.



Dress & Ornaments of Hindoo Ladies.

MILITARY TRIBES  
OF THE  
CASTES OF THE KHATTRIES.  
THE SEIKS.

The Seiks, the Rajpoots, and the Mahrattas are military tribes belonging to the caste of the Khattries. Having already treated of the former as sectaries, we have but few particulars to add concerning them.

The country inhabited by the Seiks is in the north of Hindoostan. They are warriors as well by condition as by inclination. This profession, however, does not prevent them from cultivating



the ground, keeping flocks and herds, and carrying on manufactures. They make very good cloth and excellent fire-arms.

Their dress, as represented in the plate opposite to page 308, consists of very short white breeches, a coloured cloth round the waist, and a shabby turban. Their chiefs, who are but military officers, wear bracelets of gold at the wrists and chains of the same metal round the turban as insignia of their rank.

The Seiks are, in general, well-shaped and robust; temperate and early accustomed to a laborious life, they are capable of enduring great fatigue, and perform incredible marches. In these excursions they carry with them neither

tents, baggage, nor any incumbrance: if it rains they wrap round them the coverings which are thrown over their saddles while they are travelling. Their horses, bred in Moultan and Lahore, are middle-sized and very gentle, but strong and mettlesome. Their weapons are matchlocks and sabres, to which they almost pay veneration. They deeply lament the loss of a horse, but rejoice and put on white when death summons away one of their companions. On the other hand, the whole family goes into mourning on occasion of the birth of a child.

The Seiks have long formed a great republic, which would be formidable if they were united; for at the conclusion

of the last century, their military force amounted to two hundred and forty-eight thousand men. The fall of the Mogul empire consolidated their power: ever since that event they have kept extending their territories, but at the same time they have divided their strength, so that they can no longer act in concert. Several states, as the Panjab, Lahore, and Moultan, are subject to them, and their distance from the British possessions has hitherto assured their independence.

## THE RAJPOOTS.

The Rajpoots, another military tribe, whose country is situated to the south of that of the Seiks, were but little known before General Thomas published his account of them. This extraordinary man, a native of Ireland, went to India in an English vessel as a common sailor, but quitted his ship at Madras, and entered into the military service of a Hindoo prince. In a short time he rose to the rank of general, and was seriously thinking of carving out a kingdom for himself, when death put an end to his schemes and adven-

tures. From his long residence in the country, he was thoroughly acquainted with the manners and customs of this extraordinary people.

The Rajpoots are divided into several branches, the principal of which are the Rajpoots of Jeypore, and those of Judpore. These alone hold the reins of government; their princes are nevertheless dependent on the more powerful chiefs of the Mahrattas. They must not follow any other than the military profession: they are excellent horsemen, and dexterous in the management of the lance, bow and arrow, but they never use sabres.

The Rajpoots of Jeypore are reputed more valiant than those of Judpore.



Thomas assigns three reasons for this difference: 1. the feudal system which degrades the people; 2. their subjection to the Mahrattas, whom they neither love, fear, nor respect; and 3. the difference of climate.

The Rajpoots are all without exception soldiers or husbandmen: they disdain commerce and manufactures. In their estimation it is no dishonour to be poor: they think, on the contrary that every man who conducts himself as he ought to do, whether rich or not, has an equal claim to consideration. They entertain the highest respect for the fair sex; a Rajpoot never forgives an insult offered to his wife or daughter, and nothing but the death of the

offender can atone for it. Notwithstanding this severity of manners, the Rajpoots are extremely sociable.

They never marry women who are not of their own caste: the issue of such an unequal match would have no right of inheritance. They are at liberty to take several wives; but the chiefs and grandees alone avail themselves of this privilege, and when they do, it is rather from political motives than from inclination.

The Rajpoots are excellent sons, husbands and brothers: they form a nation characterised by honour, integrity and fidelity. The Jauts, a neighbouring tribe, who are partly subject to them and cultivate their lands, extol

their humanity: in short, they can be charged with but one custom repugnant to nature—they put to death their new-born female children when they have no prospect of an advantageous settlement for them. Those whom they bring up are secluded in their youth from society; they are particularly careful to conceal them from the view of the other sex. Married women themselves never visit any but their nearest relatives, and a female would consider herself as dishonoured if she were to be seen in public.

The Rajpoots of Judpore who are called Rhatores, are superior in every respect to those of Jeypore; in their persons they are handsomer and more

graceful, and they manifest more bravery, generosity and independence of character; which may be in a great measure attributed to the excellent institutions established in their country by a series of good and wise princes.

The Rhatores are extremely mild in their manners, and fond of social pleasures: in their intercourse with one another they are scrupulously attentive to avoid all occasion for quarrels, to which they have the strongest aversion. Their principal diversions are military exercises, the chase, and shooting with the carbine: when tired of hunting, they seek a less boisterous recreation in the society of friends. At such parties they are fond of listening to the reci-

tation of their *bhauts*, or poets, who celebrate in heroic verses the exploits of their ancestors.

Travellers are kindly received by them. In the interior of the country, the chief does not sit down to table till he has satisfied himself that his guests have been supplied with all they want. Such is their deference to the rights of hospitality, that they not only refuse to deliver up fugitives, but even assist them to reach the nearest frontier: a practice which is not to be met with in any other part of Hindoostan.

The laws pronounce the penalty of death against murder: but it is very rarely that a Rhatore commits the crime, unless to revenge an insult; and



in this case a very ancient prejudice not only excuses but approves the deed. Robbery is punished with banishment for life, and crimes of a less heinous kind by mere reprimands; but the culprit, too proud to endure the disdain of his countrymen, commonly goes into voluntary exile, from which, however, he may in this case return after a certain time.

Among the Rhatores, as among the Rajpoots of Jeypore, the law allows polygamy, but it is only their chiefs and great men who avail themselves of the privilege from motives of policy or ambition. The mother of the eldest son enjoys the highest consideration. Wives often have the courage to burn them-

selves spontaneously with the remains of their husbands · they could not, indeed, survive them without incurring degradation and contempt.

A female would consider herself contaminated by the mere look of a man ; accordingly a girl, from the age of six years, is not allowed either to see or to speak to a person of the other sex with the exception of her father, uncle, brother, or cousin. They carry their jealousy of the honour of the sex to excess. When a Rajpoot, surrounded by enemies, has no chance of escaping, and knows that he cannot preserve the honour of his family by a voluntary surrender, he puts on a yellow dress, which is with them a sign of despair,

calls together his relatives, and repairs with them to the apartments of his women, whom they massacre without distinction; but it is more commonly the case that they dispatch themselves. Having thus placed the objects most dear to him beyond the reach of dishonour, he seeks death himself by rushing into the midst of his enemies.

The Rajpoots, who eat without scruple the flesh of the sheep, goat and other animals, refuse, from some superstitious notion or other to touch that of fowls.

These people make a black mark on the middle of the forehead, and commonly wear a coloured cap, terminating in a point. They dress in a kind of



A RAJPOOT.

robe called *cabaille*, resembling a woman's gown, with a muslin handkerchief tied round the waist, loose trousers and slippers. The annexed engraving represents a Rajpoot armed with his lance, and his bow and quiver at his back.



## THE MAHRATTAS.

The Mahratta states form a kind of military republic, the various members of which are independent of one another, though they all acknowledge the Peishwa, who resides at Poonah as their supreme head. The Peishwa is supposed to be the prime-minister to the rajah ; but the latter is merely the nominal sovereign, who, though he is treated with respect by the other chiefs, is in fact a close prisoner, and has a moderate pension assigned to him for his support. The power of the Mahrattas, whose territories are very ex-



A MAHRATTA.

tensive, was extremely formidable, till it was effectually broken and reduced during the able administration of the government of British India by Marquis Wellesley.

The Mahrattas may be divided into two great classes. One of these is composed of Bramins only, and the other comprehends almost all the inferior castes of the Hindoos, but is chiefly formed of the *aheers*, herdsmen, and *kourmees*, or husbandmen. The Bramins are all of the sect of Vishnu, and consequently eat no animal food. They are distinguished by their turbans, which are in general white, and folded in a particular way above the head. They wear muslin pantaloons which

reach down to the heels, a white robe, called *oonga*, which descends to the knees, and a shawl, or in summer, a gauze or muslin scarf, named *sela*, which falls loosely over the shoulders: for none of the Mahrattas ever wear any thing fastened round the waist, in which point they differ from all the other inhabitants of Hindoostan.

The different subdivisions of the second class have not the same prejudices in regard to food, as the other Hindoos; with the exception of beef, they eat any kind of animal food they can procure. They are very fond of poultry and onions, which the rest of the Hindoos hold in abhorrence: but their ordinary diet consists of cakes

made of a species of grain called *bajrow*, which are baked on iron plates, and eaten with *dal* (a name given indiscriminately to various kinds of split pease) boiled with salt and pepper, or *curry*, which is a mixture of pease-meal and curds.

The persons belonging to this second class, wear a flat turban that fits close to the head, a *sela* thrown over the shoulders, and short, tight breeches, called *goutinas*, which reach to the knees. In the rainy season they sometimes wear over these a short jacket of coarse stuff, in general of an olive colour.

They are fond of adorning their ears with small gold rings, and such as pos-



sess the means wear silver chains twisted together in the form of a cord, round their necks.

The two classes of the Mahrattas are not less distinguished by their personal qualities than by their caste and dress. The Bramins are in general well-shaped, of good stature, and have pleasing countenances : the others are short and squat, ill-looking, and have broad flat faces and small features : they are rapacious, cheats, liars, and traitors. The Mahratta, so far from being ashamed of these vices, conceives that their combination constitutes perfection. Accordingly, when his government is reproached with falsehood, treachery, robbery, &c. he

has no other reply to make than,—“ It is a Mahratta court.”

Mr. Broughton, who in 1809 commanded the escort of the British resident at the court of Sindia, furnishes a lively picture of a Mahratta camp, or rather town:—

On marching days the *beenee-wala*, or quarter-master-general moves off at an early hour; and on reaching the ground where the army is to encamp he plants a small white flag to mark the spot where the tents of the *muha-raj*, or prince, are to be pitched. The flags of the different *bazars*, or markets, are then fixed as they arrive, always in the same relative situation to each other, and generally in as straight a line as the

ground will admit. The shops, called *dokans*, are pitched in two lines running parallel to each other, and thus form one grand street from the front to the rear of the army. This street often extends from three to four miles; the *deooree*, or prince's tents, being situated about three-fourths of the whole length from the front, having only the market called *chuoree-bazar* in the rear. The different chiefs encamp to the right and left of the principal street; generally, however, in the neighbourhood of some particular *bazar*.

Their respective encampments are made without the smallest attention to regularity, cleanliness, or convenience: men, horses, camels, and bullocks are

all jumbled together in a mass, which is surrounded on all sides by others of a similar nature, in a continued series of comfortless confusion. This forms what is termed *bura-lushkur*, or main army; and is generally about as many hundred yards in breadth, that is, from flank to flank, as it is miles in length from front to rear: thus exactly reversing the order of encampment which obtains in the disciplined armies of Europe.

The shops, which compose the *bazars*, are mostly formed of blankets or coarse cloth, stretched over a bamboo or some other stick for a ridge pole, supported at either end by a forked stick fixed in the ground. These habitations are

called *pals*, and are of all sizes, from three to eight or nine feet high, and proportionably wide and long according to the circumstances of the owner. Under these miserable coverings not only are the goods exposed for sale, but the family of the shopkeeper resides throughout the year, and for many years together. The wealthiest merchants of the *bazars* use these *pals*; but the military men and others attached to the camp generally possess a dwelling of somewhat more comfortable description, regularly made of two or three folds of cloth in thickness, closed at one end and having a flap to keep out the wind and rain at the opposite extremity: these are dignified with the



name of *ruotees* and come nearer to our ideas of a tent. The *ruotees*, like the *pals*, are of all descriptions and sizes; and most of the chiefs of the highest rank inhabit them. Throughout the camp there are not to be found perhaps ten tents fashioned like our European marquees, even including those of the *muha-raj* himself.

After this account of the common dwellings of the Mahrattas, it will scarcely be necessary to add that they are total strangers to the comforts of domestic life. They never feel the solid and cheap comforts of a snug room, or the light of a candle; but in the cold weather they huddle round a miserable fire made of horse or cow-

dung, or dirty straw collected about their tents; and wrapping themselves up in a coarse blanket or cotton quilt, contrive, with the aid of a pipe of bad tobacco, to while away a few hours in listless indolence: when tired of smoking and chatting, they creep into their *pals*. In this way do the most sober of them pass their evenings: but such as think that life is bestowed for superior enjoyments, retire, at the approach of evening, to the rack-shop, or the tent of the prostitute, and revel through the night in a state of low debauchery.

Even these scenes of mirth and jollity are enacted in such tents as have already been described, and are exhibited to the eye through the medium

of only half a dozen wicks immersed in thick gross oil, arranged in a dirty brass cruise, and which together scarcely afford as much light as an English rush-light.

At the door of every tent is a fire, the smoke of which, being too heavy to ascend, spreads throughout the whole camp, where it serves to keep the people warm, to drive the flies away from the cattle, and to put out the eyes of all those who are unused to so gross an element.

Such is the general picture of a Mahratta camp. Sometimes, indeed, when it is known that the army is to halt for any length of time, and there happens to be abundance of grass or

trees in the neighbourhood, the people construct little huts for themselves; and enjoy comparatively a degree of comfort; the whole army then presenting the appearance rather of a rustic city than a camp.

A Mahratta army on a march, exhibits an assemblage of the most grotesque objects and groups imaginable. Women are intermixed with the men: such as possess the means accompany the army on horseback, galloping among the crowd as fearlessly as the men, and taking no more care than the latter to conceal their faces. It is common enough to see a woman riding astride behind her husband, and keeping her seat with equal gracefulness

and ease, while he urges the horse to the height of his speed.

Broughton, in his Letters just quoted, gives an interesting account of a young female who served in Sindia's army undiscovered for two or three years, during which she had acquired the favour of her superiors and the regard of her comrades, by her quiet and inoffensive behaviour and regular attention to the duties of her station. It was observed that she always dressed her own dinner, and ate it, and performed her ablutions by herself; but not the slightest suspicion of her sex was entertained, till it was discovered by the curiosity of a young comrade, who followed her when she



went to bathe. After this, she continued to serve for some months ; resolutely declining the patronage of Sindia's consort, who proposed to receive her into her own family, as well as the offers of that prince himself, to promote her in the corps to which she belonged. The affair soon became the general subject of conversation in camp ; and as Mr. Broughton expressed a strong desire to see Jooruor Singh, the name by which she went, she was brought to his tent. She appeared to be about twenty-two years of age, was very fair, and, though not handsome, possessed a most interesting countenance. She spoke freely of her profession and her immediate situation ;

but betrayed neither the affected bashfulness nor the forward boldness which such a situation was likely to have produced. To the honour of every party concerned be it recorded, that when her sex was revealed she experienced only increased respect and attention from her comrades : not an individual presuming to utter a word that might insult her, or breathing a doubt that could affect her reputation. It was at length discovered that she had an only brother confined for debt at Bopal, and that this affectionate creature had the courage to enroll herself as a common soldier, and to persist in exposing her person to the dangers and difficulties of a military life, with the generous

idea of raising money sufficient to procure his liberation. When Sindia was informed of this circumstance, he ordered her discharge to be made out, gave her a handsome sum of money, and furnished her with a letter to the nabob of Bopal, warmly recommending both herself and her brother to his favourable notice and protection.

The Mahratta women are mostly very plain and have a bold look, which cannot be said of those of any other nation in Hindoostan. Their dress consists of a long piece of printed cotton, of a dark colour, called *sari*, one half of which, after being twisted round the body, is tucked up between the legs, while the other is carelessly thrown

over the head and shoulders. The rich have a *sari* of strong gauze with a gold border : underneath it they wear a *chuli*, or silk corset, to compress the bosom ; and when they go abroad they throw over all a *chadour*, or large veil, and sometimes a shawl, which covers their whole person. The poor tie their children in a bag which they throw over their shoulders, and with this load they will follow the march for a whole day without appearing to be at all fatigued.

The Mahrattas have a particular religion, which varies considerably from that of the Hindoos. They admit among them persons of a different faith. They wear mustaches, allow

the beard to grow, and make a white spot on the forehead. Their arms are the sabre, bow and arrows: sometimes they have a carbine and pistols. (*See the engraving*).



## THE NAIRS.

The Nairs form, on the coast of Malabar, a caste nearly resembling that of the Khattries. They are cold like most of the Hindoos, but proud, obstinate, vindictive, and courageous. They are handsome in person, and agreeable in society, if well treated; but irritable and do not easily forgive an injury.

Their women are remarkable for their beauty and extreme cleanliness. These people have an extraordinary custom regarding marriage. A Nair marries a girl before she is ten years old, that he may be certain of the im-

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maculate purity of his wife. After their union he never thinks of consummating the marriage, which would be considered highly indecorous: the girl continues to live in the house of her mother, and entertains as many lovers as she pleases: nay, she prides herself on their number and their names, if they are Bramins or rajahs; but none of them must be of a caste inferior to her own, otherwise she would be immediately expelled from her caste, the severest punishment that can be inflicted on a Hindoo. A Nair detected in an intrigue with a female of the race of Shanar is put to death.

Owing to this community of women, a Nair is never affronted when he is

asked who is his father. Another singular circumstance is, that it would be deemed very unnatural in a Nair, if he were not to manifest a much stronger affection for the children of his sister than for those of his own wife. He may be sure, it is true, that the former really belong to his own blood, a circumstance purely accidental with regard to the latter.

The husband, who, as we have seen, abandons his bride immediately after marriage, and never concerns himself farther about her, cohabits, on his part, with the wife of another. For such a connexion the consent of the parties is quite sufficient: the man presents the woman with a piece of cloth for a dress:



if she accepts it, this is a proof that she agrees to live with him. They remain together as long as they please; and when they grow tired of one another they part, and endeavour to suit themselves elsewhere. The sons continue with the mother and inherit the property of their maternal grandfather; and this custom extends to the throne itself. Thus the heir-apparent to the throne of Travancore is the eldest son, not of the rajah, but of his eldest sister, who is treated as queen. The sons of the sovereign, whatever may be their number, live upon a pension that is allowed them, or upon the emoluments of some post or other which they obtain.

The Nairs, notwithstanding the licentiousness of their manners, are extremely jealous of the honour of the females of their caste. When the latter are detected in an intrigue with a European, or with a man of a different tribe from their own, the Bramins excepted, they are put to death without pity or ignominiously expelled from their caste.

The Nairs treat their mothers with the greatest respect, but scarcely ever take the least notice of their fathers, whom indeed it is scarcely possible for them to know. On the other hand they manifest a filial attachment to their uncles and aunts, and have not less affection for their brothers and sisters.

It is probably to the community of wives, which causes them all to consider themselves in some degree related, that the close union observed among them is to be attributed. When a Nair is injured or insulted by an individual of another tribe, it is then that the spirit of his caste bursts forth in all its force. Notwithstanding their pride, however, they can dissemble when they find themselves too weak to accomplish their designs, and wait a long time with apparent indifference for an opportunity of wreaking their vengeance.

It is lawful for the Bramins to take publicly the wives of Nairs and of persons of the other superior castes; the Rajpoots, for instance, as concubines.

The Nairs think themselves honoured by their choice. They welcome the Bramin who comes to demand their daughter or sister with all the respect due to his sacred character, and never refuse to comply with his desire. The Bramin, according to custom, offers a piece of cloth, betel, &c. to the female in the presence of her relatives or other witnesses.

In Travancore, during a certain festival which lasts several days, the houses of the Nairs are open to the Bramins : on their entrance the husbands are obliged to retire and to leave those lascivious priests alone with their wives. Such of the Nairs as dislike these freedoms remove from their houses

with their families till the festival is over. This privilege enjoyed by the Bramins is by no means reciprocal; for a Nair, discovered with the wife of a Bramin, would be punished with death.

The Nairs have not the same abhorrence of animal food as the Bramins. They eat the flesh of all animals excepting the cow. Those, however, who are of a distinguished class, or are restrained by religious scruples, confine themselves to fish: while the *Nambier* and *Courpu*, who are the highest classes of Nairs, make a point of imitating the Bramins in every particular.

The dress of the Nairs, like that of all the Hindoos of the Malabar coast,



consists of a piece of white linen or cotton, more or less fine, twisted round the waist and descending to the knees: some, likewise, wear a smaller piece of similar stuff round the head. People of distinction, on occasions of ceremony, and especially when they have business to negotiate with strangers, put on long robes of white muslin, which fit close at the bosom, but are wide and flowing below, and cover the head with a small turban.

The dress of the women differs from that of the men in this particular only, that a few of them wear another piece of cloth, which falls over one shoulder, and with which they occa-

sionally cover the head which is otherwise bare.

The women of the Nairs must never appear with the bosom covered in the presence of persons of superior rank; in fact, they never cover it; and this practice is general throughout all Malabar and even in the south of the Peninsula.

These females have their ears bored in their childhood, and into the hole they introduce a rolled leaf of the coconut tree, which, by its elasticity, gradually enlarges the aperture: or, to produce the same effect, they suspend from it a piece of lead, and afterwards insert small round ivory cases, which

are said to heighten, or at least not to detract from their beauty.

The Nairs, like the generality of the Hindoos, shave the head, with the exception of a lock left on the crown, which they tie in a knot. The women wear their hair tied in one place behind; or they divide it like the dancing-girls, into several tresses, which they braid very curiously. None of them have their heads shaved but widows during mourning, or females on whom this punishment is inflicted for some offence.

The Nairs alone, as the military of the nation, have a right to wear arms and to keep them in their houses.

This is the sole object of the ambition of the people of Malabar.

Malabar was anciently governed by a certain number of chiefs of the first families. In process of time this number increased; but as ambition produced dissensions among them, this kind of aristocratic government was abolished and the chiefs exalted themselves into petty independent princes, all of whom assumed the title of rajah, or king. These petty princes frequently made war upon one another with their little armies, but none of them could obtain any decisive preponderance. These hostilities, which were of short duration, but of frequent recurrence,

were undertaken rather to revenge some injury than for the extension of power. It appears, however, that all these princes acknowledged the *zamorin*, or emperor of Calicut, as their superior; but the latter was only a nominal sovereign. Enfeebled by their intestine wars, they were at length subdued by Tippoo Saib and the English.

The *Mapouls* are Mahometans, being the descendants of Arabs, who came many centuries since to Malabar in quest of a country more fertile than their own. They may be easily known by the close cap which almost all of them wear, and still more by their physiognomy, which is much harsher and less pleasing than that of the original



inhabitants. Some of these adventurers settled on the coast of Coromandel, where they are known by the appellation of *Lebeh* or *Lepch*: they are very numerous there and pursue different professions.

An implacable hatred prevails between the Nairs and the Mapouls of Malabar, and has frequently given occasion to massacres, devastations, and outrages. When a fisherman, or any other low caste Hindoo, had a certain number of children, the Mapouls obliged him to give up one or two of them to be educated in the Mahometan religion; but since the English have been in possession of Malabar, a stop has been put to this abuse.

The Mapouls have erected mosques wherever they have settled: they possess lands of great extent and other immoveable property. They are engaged in agriculture, commerce, and navigation, and many of them have by their industry acquired considerable wealth.

## SEPOYS,

OR

## NATIVE TROOPS OF HINDOOSTAN.

The *Sipapees*, or as we term them, Sepoys, are Hindoo soldiers, whom the English have trained in the European manner, and whom they retain in their pay. They constitute the principal part of our force in Hindoostan, amounting in number to one hundred and fifty thousand. All powers possessing any extent of territory likewise have Sepoys in their service.

Almost all the Sepoys are married: their children are brought up with the army, and are dressed in a white robe,

a turban, and white pantaloons with a blue sash. Till they are strong enough to bear arms, they are exercised in marching, leaping, and running; the oldest or cleverest command the others. It is delightful to see with what precision these boys will execute their manœuvres.

In each company of Sepoys there is a white officer who commands all the native officers. The latter are selected as much as possible from high caste Hindoos, chiefly Rajpoots, who are soldiers from their birth, and ought never to fly from an enemy. Care is also taken to organise the companies by castes. It must be obvious that a Paria would be misplaced by the side

of a Bramin or a Rajpoot, by whom he is considered as the vilest object in the world.

The British have pursued the same system of organisation for their regiments of native cavalry as for those of infantry, excepting that they allow a larger proportion of European officers to the former. They have selected their cavalry from among the Moorish tribes, all the men of which without exception are accustomed from their childhood to ride and manage the wildest horses without saddle.

The reader may form some idea of the immense sums which a complete and well-equipped corps of cavalry must cost in Hindoostan, when he is informed



that horses of proper size are very scarce and dear there, and that each of them requires the attendance of two men, one to rub him down and to boil for him a species of lentil called *coulou*, while the other is engaged in fetching grass, which must be pulled up by the roots, because when thus eaten it has not the purgative quality belonging to the blade alone. These two attendants are usually married and have one or two children apiece; so that there are at least nine or ten persons to a single horse.

In the next place the superior officers have each a palanquin and ten *coolees* or bearers, three or four saddle-horses, and a considerable number of

servants belonging to their kitchen. Each inferior officer also has his servants, his grooms, and from four to six *coolees* for carrying his baggage. Some of them have likewise a cart or waggon drawn by four oxen, for which one driver at least is required.

The transport of one twelve-pounder employs from twenty-four to thirty oxen, and six or eight men; and the waggons and bullocks laden with baggage, and the *coolees* carrying tents and provisions, are innumerable.

As there is no certainty of finding water fit to drink, either when encamped or on a march, a certain number of *pecaulis*, or oxen carrying leather bottles filled with water, as represented



FECALI, or Water-carrier attending the Army.

in the annexed plate, are attached to each corps. There is a driver to each of these animals who takes care to secure a fresh supply at the rivers, springs, or tanks, by the way.

In short, so great is the multitude of hangers-on, that an army of ten thousand fighting men may be estimated without exaggeration as requiring a total of one hundred thousand persons. Wherever such an army passes, the country is completely exhausted of forage and provisions to the distance of fifty or sixty miles round.

The regiments of Sepoy cavalry in the English service consist of five hundred men each. The *subadars* (captains), *jemmidars* (lieutenants), *havi-*

*dars* (serjeants), and *neilks* (corporals), are appointed from among the natives.

Their uniform is a red coat without collar turned up with yellow, having white metal buttons marked with the number of the regiment and the letters N. C. for *Native Cavalry*. Under the coat they have nothing but a close cotton shirt; their pantaloons are white and fastened round the waist with a blue girdle. They wear boots and spurs. On the head they wear a metal helmet, over which is a blue turban with a transverse white band.

Their arms are a curved sabre, with a shoulder-belt of white leather, a carbine and pistols. The horses are trained and equipped in the European fa-



shion. Instead of the turban, the officers wear a helmet and plume resembling that of the English dragoons.

Each battalion of infantry is composed of eight hundred men, and divided into eight companies, among which are one of grenadiers and one of riflemen. Each company is commanded by a European officer; and each battalion has also an adjutant, quarter-master, and serjeant-major, who are all English.

The uniform of these troops, like that of the cavalry, is red turned up with yellow, white surtout, and blue sash. The breeches of blue linen or cotton, are very short, scarcely reaching to the knees: the turban, which is

likewise blue, is not rounded like that of the cavalry, but forms two points. On the button are the letters N. I. for *Native Infantry*. (See the annexed plate.)

The arms of the infantry are the usual musket and bayonet of the English troops: the cartouch-box is black. The rifle companies are distinguished, like the dragoons, by epaulettes.

The native troops, both infantry and cavalry, are mostly of the Mahometan race or Rajpoots: but there are men of different castes among them. The trumpeters, drummers, and fifers are Parias.

The *subadars* and *jemmidars* wear the dress and sash of officers. They are



1. 2. Seapoy Officers.  
3. A private Seapoy.

always under the command of a European officer or subaltern. It is a curious sight to a stranger, to see a Hindoo officer standing with his drawn sword inactive at the head of his company, while an English serjeant is giving the word of command.

The Sepoys learn the military exercise and evolutions with astonishing facility ; but from their ignorance of the English language, they are at first at a loss to understand the word of command. For this reason a person is selected for *jemmidar*, or adjutant, who can speak English, Arabic, Malabar, and Telinga, and who repeats the word of command in the respective languages.

When marching, these troops wear shoes or rather sandals. In cantonments and in garrison they go bare-foot.

The Sepoys of Bengal are taller and stouter men than those of the presidency of Madras. The latter are, nevertheless, preferred, because they are more active and hardy. They are very brave, and rarely quit their posts while any European officers are left at their head.

The French gave their Sepoys a green uniform, (as represented in the plate.) The infantry went bare-legged, and wore the sandals of the country instead of shoes.

The Hindoos have facilities for pitch-





A SEIK.

A SEAPOY  
in the French service.

ing camps in almost every part of the immense plains that are to be found in Hindoostan. M. Perrin asserts, that he has seen camps as extensive as the city of Paris. The cavalry and infantry have each their lines, and though they might frequently have to change their position, yet no confusion is to be apprehended, because each knows the place which he is to occupy. These camps are like immense ambulatory towns, the moveable edifices of which are always to be seen in the same respective situations and distances.

The tents of the chiefs and princes are magnificent. Those belonging to each of them form as it were, a small village, surrounded by an enclosure of

canvas. They are richly furnished. The internal decorations, adds the traveller just mentioned, display galleries and colonnades lined with costly stuffs: superb carpets covered with muslin form the ceiling, and in short, they exhibit all the magnificence of palaces.

In these camps there are always *hir-carrahs* or spies, who are sent out to obtain information, and are also employed in carrying messages. Disguised in a thousand ways they introduce themselves under various pretexts into the enemy's camp, or into fortified places, and nothing escapes their penetrating eyes.

The Hindoos are not long in removing a camp. The day before they

break up, the standards are planted at one extremity of the camp, to indicate what road is to be taken. At the prescribed time the drum beats, and in less than half an hour not a vestige is to be seen of all that the evening before was subservient to the wants of two or three hundred thousand men.

Besides the regular armies, there are, in Hindoostan, great numbers of other troops raised by the rajahs or native princes, whenever they want them. They form a kind of militia, who receive pay only while on service, that is to say, in time of war.

In their armies there are also multitudes of soldiers, both horse and foot, who know nothing of the military ex-

ercise and manœuvres, but whose tactics consist entirely in carnage, plunder and devastation. They precede the main army in confused bodies, and somewhat resemble what in Europe are called *partisans*, or the Spanish *guerillas*.

The use of muskets and artillery has become general in *Hindoostan*: there are nevertheless, whole tribes, such as the *Rajpoots* who prefer arming themselves, according to the ancient fashion, with bows and arrows, swords, bucklers, lances, battle-axes, &c. There are very expert archers among the *Hindoos*; and the bow and javelin are perhaps more destructive in the hands of the *Nairs* on the coast of *Malabar* than





1. A Scapoy in the native dress.  
 2. A Hindoo soldier.  
 3. A Brighaei.

the musket would be. Instead of a sword, some wear a kind of short sabre with a broad blade, bending forward.

The ancient dress of the *bhaliah*, or soldiers of Hindoostan, consisted of a cotton jacket wadded to the thickness of two inches, which is supposed to be one of the best defences against a sword that can easily be contrived of equal lightness, and which they imagined to be proof against a musket-ball. They used matchlocks, which are still to be seen in several provinces. A cow's horn held the powder, and their sabres were more or less curved. They wore very long breeches, and extremely clumsy shoes. This costume, which is represented in the annexed plate, was

very troublesome ; it was disused soon after the first invasion of the Mahometans, so that it would now be difficult to find a Hindoo soldier thus accoutred. On the same plate are also shown a Sepoy in the ancient dress of the country; and a *brigbasi*, with the military accoutrement still common in the upper provinces of Bengal.

The cavalry, especially that composed of Mahometans, would be formidable, if it could be made to act simultaneously; but their predilection for fighting pell-mell, and just as they please, renders them incapable of resisting the joint shock of squadrons disciplined in the European manner.

Most of the Hindoo princes have en-

deavoured to introduce among their troops, especially the infantry, our tactics, discipline and uniform, in imitation of the Sepoys in the service of the East India Company. Europeans of various nations have been employed by Tippoo Saib and the Nizam, and there are still some in the armies of the Mahratta princes, the Rajah of Travancore, &c. but not in sufficient numbers to be of any great utility. One of the ablest of these officers, General de Boigne, a native of Savoy, rendered very important services to Sindia, the celebrated Mahratta chieftain. He commanded an army, raised and trained by himself according to the European method, consisting of twenty

thousand infantry, three thousand cavalry, ten thousand irregular troops, and a numerous and well-appointed artillery. For the maintenance of these troops, Sindia assigned to the general the revenues of a province, with authority to collect them himself; and this province, owing to the improved system of administration introduced by General de Boigne, produced thirty lacs of rupees instead of twenty, which it had previously yielded. He returned to his native country about twenty years ago, with a fortune of £400,000 sterling.

The troops of the native powers in general are not regularly paid; their pay being kept purposely in arrear, un-



der the idea of preventing desertion. Part of it is moreover stopped upon one pretext or other, by a multitude of treasurers, paymasters, and clerks of all kinds; while the prince, either sharing with them the produce of these impolitic extortions, or from that carelessness and confusion which prevail in all the branches of a despotic administration, tolerates, nay, even secretly approves the practices of these blood-suckers. Hence a spirit of mutiny is kept up among the soldiers, especially when they find their services are most wanted.

The high castes, as we have observed, must not take certain species of food; and on all occasions they have to ob-

serve a multitude of ridiculous ceremonies. The Rajpoots, for example, who are, perhaps, the best native troops in Hindoostan, must dress their victuals with their own hands, or they are obliged to eat them raw—a truly convenient system of legislation for the profession of a soldier!

In short, the armies of the Hindoo princes have not that spirit which combines so many different parts into a whole, animated and actuated as it were by one soul; that unity of design and action which can alone produce energy, celerity, and success in military operations. Still, notwithstanding these disadvantages, and the pusillanimity with which the Hindoos are charged, their

troops are not so contemptible as they might at first sight be supposed. On various occasions, indeed, they have exhibited traits of heroic intrepidity. They have been known, when closely besieged by an enemy whom they could not resist, to kill their wives and children, set fire to their houses, and then violently rush upon their adversaries till every one was destroyed.

Some Sepoys in the British service having been concerned in a mutiny, were condemned to be blown away from the mouths of cannon. Of these some were grenadiers, who cried out, that as they had all along had the post of honour, they saw no reason why they should be denied it now, and therefore

desired that they might suffer first. This being granted, they walked forward to the guns with the greatest composure, begged that they might be spared the indignity of being tied, and placing their breasts close to the muzzles, were shot away. The commanding officer was so much affected by this instance of heroism, that he pardoned the rest of the mutineers.

The use of fire-arms appears to have been of great antiquity in India. They are prohibited by the code of Hindoo laws, which is certainly of very ancient date. The term by which they are denominated is *agnee-aster*, or weapons of fire; and mention is also made of *shet-agnee*, or the weapon that kills

a hundred men at once. It is impossible to guess at the time when those weapons were invented among the Hindoos; but so much is certain, that in many parts of the east, which have not been frequented either by Mahometans or Europeans, rockets are almost universally employed as weapons of war. The Hindoo books themselves ascribe the invention of fire-arms to Baeshkoorkerma, who formed all the weapons in use in a war between the good and evil spirits. Fire balls, or blue lights, employed in besieged places in the nighttime, to observe the motions of the besiegers, are met with throughout all Hindoostan, and are constructed in as



great perfection as in Europe. Fireworks also are met with in great perfection, and have from the earliest ages, constituted a principal article of amusement among the Hindoos. Gunpowder, or a composition resembling it, has been found in many other countries of the east, particularly in China, Pegu, and Siam; but there is reason to believe that the invention came originally from Hindoostan.

At Kubberpore, there is a cannon 213 inches long, 66 inches round the muzzle, and 18 inches round the calibre. It has five, and had originally six equidistant rings, by which it was lifted up. This gun is called by the na-

tives *jaun kushall*, or the destroyer of life, and its casting and position are attributed to the *deoutas* or divinities, though its almost obliterated Persian inscriptions declare its formation by human means. But the most extraordinary circumstance about it is, that two pippal trees have grown both cannon and carriage into themselves. Fragments of the iron, a spring, one of the linches and part of the wood-work, protrude from between the roots and bodies of these trees; but the trees alone entirely support the gun, one of the rings of which and half of its whole length are completely hidden between and within their bark and trunks. A

cannon more firmly fixed, though by the mere gradual growth of two trees cannot well be imagined. The Indians assert, that it was only once fired, and sent the ball twenty-four miles.

END OF VOL. III.