

# WILLIAM SLEEMAN

RAMBLES AND  
RECOLLECTIONS OF AN  
INDIAN OFFICIAL

**William Sleeman**  
**Rambles and Recollections**  
**of an Indian Official**

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*Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official:**

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# William Sleeman

## Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official

### AUTHOR'S DEDICATION

MY DEAR SISTER,

Were any one to ask your countrymen in India what has been their greatest source of pleasure while there, perhaps nine in ten would say, the letters which they receive from their sisters at home. These, of all things, perhaps, tend most to link our affections with home by filling the landscapes, so dear to our recollections, with ever varying groups of the family circles, among whom our infancy and our boyhood have been passed; and among whom we still hope to spend the winter of our days.

They have a very happy facility in making us familiar with the new additions made from time to time to the *dramatis personae* of these scenes after we quit them, in the character of husbands, wives, children, or friends; and, while thus contributing so much to our happiness, they no doubt tend to make us better citizens of the world, and servants of government, than we should otherwise be, for, in our 'struggles through life in India', we have all, more or less, an eye to the approbation of those circles which our

kind sisters represent—who may, therefore, be considered in the exalted light of a valuable species of *unpaid magistracy* to the Government of India.

No brother has ever had a kinder or better correspondent than I have had in you, my dear sister; and it was the consciousness of having left many of your valued letters unanswered, in the press of official duties, that made me first think of devoting a part of my leisure to you in these *Rambles and Recollections*, while on my way from the banks of the Nerbudda river to the Himālaya mountains, in search of health, in the end of 1835 and beginning of 1836. To what I wrote during that journey I have now added a few notes, observations, and conversations with natives, on the subjects which my narrative seemed to embrace; and the whole will, I hope, interest and amuse you and the other members of our family; and appear, perchance, not altogether uninteresting or uninteresting to those who are strangers to us both.

Of one thing I must beg you to be assured, that I have nowhere indulged in fiction, either in the narrative, the recollections, or the conversations. What I relate on the testimony of others I believe to be true; and what I relate upon my own you may rely upon as being so. Had I chosen to write a work of fiction, I might possibly have made it a good deal more interesting; but I question whether it would have been so much valued by you, or so useful to others; and these are the objects I have had in view. The work may, perhaps, tend to make the people of India better understood by those of my own countrymen whose destinies are cast among

them, and inspire more kindly feelings towards them. Those parts which, to the general reader, will seem dry and tedious, may be considered, by the Indian statesman, as the most useful and important.

The opportunities of observation, which varied employment has given me, have been such as fall to the lot of few; but, although I have endeavoured to make the most of them, the time of public servants is not their own; and that of few men has been more exclusively devoted to the service of their masters than mine. It may be, however, that the world, or that part of it which ventures to read these pages, will think that it had been better had I not been left even the little leisure that has been devoted to them.

*Your ever affectionate brother,*  
*W. H. SLEEMAN.*

# EDITOR'S PREFACE (1893) <sup>1</sup>

The *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*, always a costly book, has been scarce and difficult to procure for many years past. Among the crowd of books descriptive of Indian scenery, manners, and customs, the sterling merits of Sir William Sleeman's work have secured it pre-eminence, and kept it in constant demand, notwithstanding the lapse of nearly fifty years since its publication. The high reputation of this work does not rest upon its strictly literary qualities. The author was a busy man, immersed all his life in the practical affairs of administration, and too full of his subject to be careful of strict correctness of style or minute accuracy of expression. Yet, so great is the intrinsic value of his observations, and so attractive are the sincerity and sympathy with which he discusses a vast range of topics, that the reader refuses to be offended by slight formal defects in expression or arrangement, and willingly yields to the charm of the author's genial and unstudied conversation.

It would be difficult to name any other book so full of instruction for the young Anglo-Indian administrator. When this work was published in 1844 the author had had thirty-five years' varied experience of Indian life, and had accumulated and assimilated an immense store of knowledge concerning

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<sup>1</sup> Certain small changes have been made.

the history, manners, and modes of thought of the complex population of India. He thoroughly understood the peculiarities of the various native races, and the characteristics which distinguish them from the nations of Europe; while his sympathetic insight into Indian life had not orientalized him, nor had it ever for one moment caused him to forget his position and heritage as an Englishman. This attitude of sane and discriminating sympathy is the right attitude for the Englishman in India.

To enumerate the topics on which wise and profitable observations will be found in this book would be superfluous. The wine is good, and needs no bush. So much may be said that the book is one to interest that nondescript person, the general reader in Europe or America, as well as the Anglo-Indian official. Besides good advice and sound teaching on matters of policy and administration, it contains many charming, though inartificial, descriptions of scenery and customs, many ingenious speculations, and some capital stories. The ethnologist, the antiquary, the geologist, the soldier, and the missionary will all find in it something to suit their several tastes.

In this edition the numerous misprints of the original edition have been all, and, for the most part, silently corrected. The extremely erratic punctuation has been freely modified, and the spelling of Indian words and names has been systematized. Two paragraphs, misplaced in the original edition at the end of Chapter 48 of Volume I, have been removed, and inserted in their

proper place at the end of Chapter 47; and the supplementary notes printed at the end of the second volume of the original edition have been brought up to the positions which they were intended to occupy. Chapters 37 to 46 of the first volume, describing the contest for empire between the sons of Shāh Jahān, are in substance only a free version of Bernier's work entitled, *The Late Revolution of the Empire of the Great Mogol*. These chapters have not been reprinted because the history of that revolution can now be read much more satisfactorily in Mr. Constable's edition of Bernier's Travels. Except as above stated, the text of the present edition of the *Rambles and Recollections* is a faithful reprint of the Author's text.

In the spelling of names and other words of Oriental languages the Editor has 'endeavoured to strike a mean between popular usage and academic precision, preferring to incur the charge of looseness to that of pedantry'. Diacritical marks intended to distinguish between the various sibilants, dentals, nasals, and so forth, of the Arabic and Sanskrit alphabets, have been purposely omitted. Long vowels are marked by the sign  $\bar{\quad}$ . Except in a few familiar words, such as Nerbudda and Hindoo, which are spelled in the traditional manner, vowels are to be pronounced as in Italian, or as in the following English examples, namely:  $\bar{a}$ , as in 'call';  $e$ , or  $\bar{e}$ , as the medial vowel in 'cake';  $i$ , as in 'kill';  $\bar{i}$ , as the medial vowels in 'keel';  $u$ , as in 'full';  $\bar{u}$ , as the medial vowels in 'fool';  $o$ , or  $\bar{o}$ , as in 'bone';  $ai$ , or  $\bar{ai}$ , as 'eye' or 'aye', respectively; and  $au$ , as the medial sound in 'fowl'. Short  $a$ , with

stress, is pronounced like the *u* in 'but'; and if without stress, as an indistinct vowel, like the *A* in 'America'.

The Editor's notes, being designed merely to explain and illustrate the text, so as to render the book fully intelligible and helpful to readers of the present day, have been compressed into the narrowest possible limits. Even India changes, and observations and criticisms which were perfectly true when recorded can no longer be safely applied without explanation to the India of to-day. The Author's few notes are distinguished by his initials.

A copious analytical index has been compiled. The bibliography is as complete as careful inquiry could make it, but it is possible that some anonymous papers by the Author, published in periodicals, may have escaped notice.

The memoir of Sir William Sleeman is based on the slight sketch prefixed to the *Journey through the Kingdom of Oude*, supplemented by much additional matter derived from his published works and correspondence, as well as from his unpublished letters and other papers generously communicated by his only son, Captain Henry Sleeman. Ample materials exist for a full account of Sir William Sleeman's noble and interesting life, which well deserves to be recorded in detail; but the necessary limitations of these volumes preclude the Editor from making free use of the biographical matter at his command.

The reproduction of the twenty-four coloured plates of varying merit which enrich the original edition has not been

considered desirable. The map shows clearly the route taken by the Author in the journey the description of which is the leading theme of the book.

# EDITOR'S PREFACE (1915)

My edition published by Archibald Constable and Company in 1893 being out of print but still in demand, Mr. Humphrey Milford, the present owner of the copyright, has requested me to revise the book and bring it up to date.

This new edition is issued uniform with Mr. Beauchamp's third edition of *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies* by the Abbé J. A. Dubois (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1906), a work bearing a strong resemblance in substance to the *Rambles and Recollections*, and, also like Sleeman's book in that it 'is as valuable to-day as ever it was—even more valuable in some respects'.

The labour of revision has proved to be far more onerous than was expected. In the course of twenty-one years the numerous changes which have occurred in India, not only in administrative arrangements, but of various other kinds, necessitate the emendation of notes which, although accurate when written, no longer agree with existing facts. The appearance of many new books and improved editions involves changes in a multitude of references. Such alterations are most considerable in the annotations dealing with the buildings at Agra, Sikandara, Fathpur-Sīkrī, and Delhi, and the connected political history, concerning which much new information is now available. Certain small misstatements of fact in my old notes have been put

right. Some of those errors which escaped the notice of critics have been detected by me, and some have been rectified by the aid of criticisms received from Sir George Grierson, C.I.E., Mr. William Crooke, sometime President of the Folklore Society, and other kind correspondents, to all of whom I am grateful. Naturally, the opportunity has been taken to revise the wording throughout and to eliminate misprints and typographical defects. The Index has been recast so as to suit the changed paging and to include the new matter.

Captain James Lewis Sleeman of the Royal Sussex Regiment has been good enough to permit the reproduction of his grandfather's portrait, and has communicated papers which have enabled me to make corrections in and additions to the Memoir, largely enhancing the interest and value of that section of the book.

# **MEMOIR OF MAJ.-GEN. SIR WILLIAM HENRY SLEEMAN, K.C.B**

The Sleemans, an ancient Cornish family, for several generations owned the estate of Pool Park in the parish of Saint Judy, in the county of Cornwall. Captain Philip Sleeman, who married Mary Spry, a member of a distinguished family in the same county, was stationed at Stratton, in Cornwall, on August 8, 1788, when his son William Henry was born.

In 1809, at the age of twenty-one, William Henry Sleeman was nominated, through the good offices of Lord De Dunstanville, to an Infantry Cadetship in the Bengal army. On the 24th of March, in the same year, he sailed from Gravesend in the ship Devonshire, and, having touched at Madeira and the Cape, reached India towards the close of the year. He arrived at the cantonment of Dinapore, near Patna, on the 20th December, and on Christmas Day began his military career as a cadet. He at once applied himself with exemplary diligence to the study of the Arabic and Persian languages, and of the religions and customs of India. Passing in due course through the ordinary early stages of military life, he was promoted to the rank of ensign on the

23rd September, 1810, and to that of lieutenant on the 16th December, 1814.

Lieutenant Sleeman served in the war with Nepal, which began in 1814 and terminated in 1816. During the campaign he narrowly escaped death from a violent epidemic fever, which nearly destroyed his regiment. 'Three hundred of my own regiment,' he observes, 'consisting of about seven hundred, were obliged to be sent to their homes on sick leave. The greater number of those who remained continued to suffer, and a great many died. Of about ten European officers present with my regiment, seven had the fever and five died of it, almost all in a state of delirium. I was myself one of the two who survived, and I was for many days delirious.'<sup>2</sup>

The services of Lieutenant Sleeman during the war attracted attention, and accordingly, in 1816, he was selected to report on certain claims to prize-money. The report submitted by him in February, 1817, was accepted as 'able, impartial, and satisfactory'. After the termination of the war he served with his regiment at Allahabad, and in the neighbouring district of Partābgarh, where he laid the foundation of the intimate knowledge of Oudh affairs displayed in his later writings.

In 1820 he was selected for civil employ, and was appointed Junior Assistant to the Agent of the Governor-General, administering the Sāgar and Nerbudda territories. Those territories, which had been annexed from the Marāthās

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<sup>2</sup> *Journey through the Kingdom of Oude*, vol. ii, p. 105.

two years previously, are now included in the jurisdiction of the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces. In such a recently-conquered country, where the sale of all widows by auction for the benefit of the Treasury, and other strange customs still prevailed, the abilities of an able and zealous young officer had ample scope. Sleeman, after a brief apprenticeship, received, in 1822, the independent civil charge of the District of Narsinghpur, in the Nerbudda valley, and there, for more than two years, 'by far the most laborious of his life', his whole attention was engrossed in preventing and remedying the disorders of his District.

Sleeman, during the time that he was in charge of the Narsinghpur District, had no suspicion that it was a favourite resort of Thugs. A few years later, in or about 1830, he was astounded to learn that a gang of Thugs resided in the village of Kandēlī, not four hundred yards from his court-house, and that the extensive groves of Mandēsar on the Sāgar road, only one stage distant from his head-quarters, concealed one of the greatest *bhīls*, or places of murder, in all India. The arrest of Feringheea, one of the most influential Thug leaders, having given the key to the secret, his disclosures were followed up by Sleeman with consummate skill and untiring assiduity. In the years 1831 and 1832 the reports submitted by him and other officers at last opened the eyes of the superior authorities and forced them to recognize the fact that the murderous organization extended over every part of India. Adequate measures were

then taken for the systematic suppression of the evil. 'Thuggee Sleeman' made it the main business of his life to hunt down the criminals and to extirpate their secret society. He recorded his experiences in the series of valuable publications described in the Bibliography. In this brief memoir it is impossible to narrate in detail the thrilling story of the suppression of Thuggee, and I must be content to pass on and give in bare outline the main facts of Sleeman's honourable career.<sup>3</sup>

While at Narsinghpur, Sleeman received on the 24th April, 1824, brevet rank as Captain. In 1825, he was transferred, and on the 23rd September of the following year, was gazetted Captain. In 1826, failure of health compelled him to take leave on medical certificate. In March, 1828, Captain Sleeman assumed civil and executive charge of the Jabalpur (Jubbulpore) District, from which he was transferred to Sāgar in January, 1831. While stationed at Jabalpur, he married, on the 21st June, 1829, Amélie Josephine, the daughter of Count Blondin de Fontenne, a French nobleman, who, at the sacrifice of a considerable property, had managed to escape from the Revolution. A lady informs the editor that she remembers Sleeman's fine house at Jabalpur. It stood in a large walled park, stocked with spotted deer. Both house and park were destroyed when the railway was carried through the site.

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<sup>3</sup> *The general reader may consult with advantage Meadows Taylor, The Confessions of a Thug*, the first edition of which appeared in 1839; and the vivid account by Mark Twain in *More Tramps Abroad*, chapters 49,50.

Mr. C. Eraser, on return from leave in January, 1832, resumed charge of the revenue and civil duties of the Sāgar district, leaving the magisterial duties to Captain Sleeman, who continued to discharge them till January, 1835. By the Resolution of Government dated 10th January, 1835, Captain Sleeman was directed to fix his head-quarters at Jabalpur, and was appointed General Superintendent of the operations for the Suppression of Thuggee, being relieved from every other charge. In 1835 his health again broke down, and he was obliged to take leave on medical certificate. Accompanied by his wife and little son, he went into camp in November, 1835, and marched through the Jabalpur, Damoh, and Sāgar districts of the Agency, and then through the Native States of Orchhā, Datiyā, and Gwālior, arriving at Agra on the 1st January, 1836. After a brief halt at Agra, he proceeded through the Bharatpur State to Delhi and Meerut, and thence on leave to Simla. During his march from Jabalpur to Meerut he amused himself by keeping the journal which forms the basis of the *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*. The manuscript of this work (except the two supplementary chapters) was completed in 1839, though not given to the world till 1844. On the 1st of February, 1837, in the twenty-eighth year of his service, Sleeman was gazetted Major. During the same year he made a tour in the interior of the Himalayas, which he described at length in an unpublished journal. Later in the year he went down to Calcutta to see his boy started on the voyage home.

In February, 1839, he assumed charge of the office of Commissioner for the Suppression of Thuggee and Dacoity. Up to that date the office of Commissioner for the Suppression of Dacoity had been separate from that of General Superintendent of the measures for the Suppression of Thuggee, and had been filled by another officer, Mr. Hugh Eraser, of the Civil Service. During the next two years Sleeman passed much of his time in the North-Western Provinces, now the Agra Province in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, making Murādābād his head-quarters, and thoroughly investigating the secret criminal organizations of Upper India.

In 1841 he was offered the coveted and lucrative post of Resident at Lucknow, vacant by the resignation of Colonel Low; but that officer, immediately after his resignation, lost all his savings through the failure of his bankers, and Sleeman, moved by a generous impulse, wrote to Colonel Low, begging him to retain the appointment.

Sleeman was then deputed on special duty to Bundēlkhand to investigate the grave disorders in that province. While at Jhānsī in December, 1842, he narrowly escaped assassination by a dismissed Afghan sepoy, who poured the contents of a blunderbuss into a native officer in attendance.<sup>4</sup>

During the troubles with Sindhia which culminated in the

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<sup>4</sup> The incident is described in detail in a letter dated December 18, 1842, from Sleeman to his sister Mrs. Furse. Captain J. L. Sleeman has kindly furnished me with a copy of the letter, which is too long for reproduction in this place.

battle of Mahārājpur, fought on the 29th December, 1843, Sleeman, who had become a Lieut.-Colonel, was Resident at Gwālior, and was actually in Sindhia's camp when the battle unexpectedly began. In 1848 the Residency at Lucknow again fell vacant, and Lord Dalhousie, by a letter dated 16th September, offered Sleeman the appointment in the following terms:

The high reputation you have earned, your experience of civil administration, your knowledge of the people, and the qualifications you possess as a public man, have led me to submit your name to the Council of India as an officer to whom I could commit this important charge with entire confidence that its duties would be well performed. I do myself, therefore, the honour of proposing to you to accept the office of Resident at Lucknow, with especial reference to the great changes which, in all probability, will take place. Retaining your superintendency of Thuggee affairs, it will be manifestly necessary that you should be relieved from the duty of the trials of Thugs usually condemned at Lucknow.

In the hope that you will not withhold from the Government your services in the capacity I have named, and in the further hope of finding an opportunity of personally making your acquaintance,

**I have the honour to be,**

**Dear Colonel Sleeman,**

**Very faithfully yours,**

**DALHOUSIE.<sup>5</sup>**

The remainder of Sleeman's official life, from January, 1849, was spent in Oudh, and was chiefly devoted to ceaseless and hopeless endeavours to reform the King's administration and relieve the sufferings of his grievously oppressed subjects. On the 1st of December, 1849, the Resident began his memorable three months' tour through Oudh, so vividly described in the special work devoted to the purpose. The awful revelations of the *Journey through the Kingdom of Oude* largely influenced the Court of Directors and the Imperial Government in forming their decision to annex the kingdom, although that decision was directly opposed to the advice of Sleeman, who consistently advocated reform of the administration, while deprecating

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<sup>5</sup> This letter is printed in full in the *Journey through the Kingdom of Oude*, pp. xvii-xix.

annexation. His views are stated with absolute precision in a letter written in 1854 or 1855, and published in *The Times* in November, 1857:

We have no right to annex or confiscate Oude; but we have a right, under the treaty of 1837, to take the management of it, but not to appropriate its revenues to ourselves. We can do this with honour to our Government and benefit to the people. To confiscate would be dishonest and dishonourable. To annex would be to give the people a government almost as bad as their own, if we put our screw upon them (*Journey*, ed. 1858, vol. i, Intro., p. xxi).

The earnest efforts of the Resident to suppress crime and improve the administration of Oudh aroused the bitter resentment of a corrupt court and exposed his life to constant danger. Three deliberate attempts to assassinate him at Lucknow are recorded.

The first, in December, 1851, is described in detail in a letter of Sleeman's dated the 16th of that month, and less fully by General Hervey, in *Some Records of Crime*, vol. ii, p. 479. The Resident's life was saved by a gallant orderly named Tīkarām, who was badly wounded. Inquiry proved that the crime was instigated by the King's moonshee.

The second attempt, on October 9, 1853, is fully narrated in an official letter to the Government of India (Bibliography, No. 15). Its failure may be reasonably ascribed to a special interposition of Providence. The Resident during all the years

he had lived at Lucknow had been in the habit of sleeping in an upper chamber approached by a separate private staircase guarded by two sentries. On the night mentioned the sentries were drugged and two men stole up the stairs. They slashed at the bed with their swords, but found it empty, because on that one occasion General Sleeman had slept in another room.

The third attempt was not carried as far, and the exact date is not ascertainable, but the incident is well remembered by the family and occurred between 1853 and 1856. One day the Resident was crossing his study when, for some reason or another, he looked behind a curtain screening a recess. He then saw a man standing there with a large knife in his hand. General Sleeman, who was unarmed, challenged the man as being a Thug. He at once admitted that he was such, and under the spell of a master-spirit allowed himself to be disarmed without resistance. He had been employed at the Residency for some time, unsuspected.

Such personal risks produced no effect on the stout heart of Sleeman, who continued, unshaken and undismayed, his unselfish labours.

In 1854 the long strain of forty-five years' service broke down Sleeman's strong constitution. He tried to regain health by a visit to the hills, but this expedient proved ineffectual, and he was ordered home. On the 10th of February, 1856, while on his way home on board the *Monarch*, he died off Ceylon, at the age of sixty-seven, and was buried at sea, just six days after he had been

granted the dignity of K.C.B.

Lord Dalhousie's desire to meet his trusted officer was never gratified. The following correspondence between the Governor-General and Sleeman, now published for the first time, is equally creditable to both parties:

*BARRACKPORE PARK,*

*January 9th, 1856.*

MY DEAR GENERAL SLEEMAN,

I have heard to-day of your arrival in Calcutta, and have heard at the same time with sincere concern that you are still suffering in health. A desire to disturb you as little as possible induces me to have recourse to my pen, in order to convey to you a communication which I had hoped to be able to make in person.

Some time since, when adjusting the details connected with my retirement from the Government of India, I solicited permission to recommend to Her Majesty's gracious consideration the names of some who seemed to me to be worthy of Her Majesty's favour. My request was moderate. I asked only to be allowed to submit the name of one officer from each Presidency. The name which is selected from the Bengal army was your own, and I ventured to express my hope that Her Majesty would be pleased to mark her sense of the long course of able, and honourable, and distinguished service through which you had passed, by conferring upon you the civil cross of a Knight Commander of the Bath.

As yet no reply has been received to my letter. But as you have now arrived at the Presidency, I lose no time in making known to you what has been done; in the hope that you will receive it as a proof of the high estimation in which your services and character are held, as well by myself as by the entire community of India.

*I beg to remain,*

*My dear General,*

*Very truly yours,*

*DALHOUSIE.*

Major-General Sleeman.

**Reply to above. Dated 11th January, 1856.**

MY LORD,

I was yesterday evening favoured with your Lordship's most kind and flattering letter of the 9th instant from Barrackpore.

I cannot adequately express how highly honoured I feel by the mention that you have been pleased to make of my services to Her Majesty the Queen, and how much gratified I am by this crowning act of kindness from your Lordship in addition to the many favours I have received at your hands during the last eight years; and whether it may, or may not, be my fate to live long enough to see the honourable rank actually conferred upon me, which you have been so considerate and generous as to ask for me, the letter now received from your Lordship will of itself be deemed by my family as a substantial honour, and it will so preserved, I trust, by my son, with feelings of honest pride, at the thought

that his father had merited such a mark of distinction from so eminent a statesman as the Marquis of Dalhousie.

My right hand is so crippled by rheumatism that I am obliged to make use of an amanuensis to write this letter, and my bodily strength is so much reduced, that I cannot hope before embarking for England to pay my personal respects to your Lordship.

Under these unfortunate circumstances, I now beg to take my leave of your Lordship; to offer my unfeigned and anxious wishes for your Lordship's health and happiness, and with every sentiment of respect and gratitude, to subscribe myself,

*Your Lordship's most faithful and*

*Obedient servant,*

*W. H. SLEEMAN,*

*Major-General.*

To the Most Noble

The Marquis of Dalhousie, K.T.,

Governor- General, &c., &c.,

Calcutta.

Sir William Sleeman was an accomplished Oriental linguist, well versed in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, and also in possession of a good working knowledge of Latin, Greek, and French. His writings afford many proofs of his keen interest in the sciences of geology, agricultural chemistry, and political economy, and of his intelligent appreciation of the lessons taught by history. Nor was he insensible to the charms of art, especially those

of poetry. His favourite authors among the poets seem to have been Shakespeare, Milton, Scott, Wordsworth, and Cowper. His knowledge of the customs and modes of thought of the natives of India, rarely equalled and never surpassed, was more than half the secret of his notable success as an administrator. The greatest achievement of his busy and unselfish life was the suppression of the system of organized murder known as Thuggee, and in the execution of that prolonged and onerous task he displayed the most delicate tact, the keenest sagacity, and the highest power of organization.

His own words are his best epitaph: 'I have gone on quietly,' he writes, "'through evil and through good report", doing, to the best of my ability, the duties which it has pleased the Government of India, from time to time, to confide to me in the manner which appeared to me most conformable to its wishes and its honour, satisfied and grateful for the trust and confidence which enabled me to do so much good for the people, and to secure so much of their attachment and gratitude to their rulers.'<sup>6</sup>

His grandson, Captain J. L. Sleeman, who, when stationed in India from 1903 to 1908, visited the scenes of his grandfather's labours, states that everywhere he found the memory of his respected ancestor revered, and was given the assurance that no Englishman had ever understood the native of India so well, or removed so many oppressive evils as General Sir W. H. Sleeman,

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<sup>6</sup> *Letter to Lord Hardinge, dated Jhansee, 4th March, 1848, printed in Journey through the Kingdom of Oude, vol. i, p. xxvii.*

and that his memory would endure for ever in the Empire to which he devoted his life's work.

This necessarily meagre account of a life which deserves more ample commemoration may be fitly closed by a few words concerning the relatives and descendants of Sir William Sleeman.

His sister and regular correspondent, to whom he dedicated the *Rambles and Recollections*, was married to Captain Furse, R.N.

His brother's son James came out to India in 1827, joined the 73rd Regiment of the Bengal Army, was selected for employment in the Political Department, and was thus enabled to give valuable aid in the campaign against Thuggee. In due course he was appointed to the office of General Superintendent of the Operations against Thuggee, which had been held by his uncle. He rose to the rank of Colonel, and after a long period of excellent service, lived to enjoy nearly thirty years of honourable retirement. He died at his residence near Ross in 1899 at the age of eighty-one.

In 1831 Sir William's only son, Henry Arthur, was gazetted to the 16th (Queen's) Lancers, and having retired early from the army, with the rank of Captain, died in 1905.

His elder son William Henry died while serving with the Mounted Infantry during the South African War. His younger son, James Lewis, a Captain in the Royal Sussex Regiment, who also saw active service during the war, and was mentioned

in dispatches, has a distinguished African and Indian record, and recently received the honorary degree of M.A. from the Belfast University for good work done in establishing the first Officers' Training Corps in Ireland. The family of Captain James Lewis Sleeman consists of two sons and a daughter, namely, John Cuthbert, Richard Brian, and Ursula Mary. Captain Sleeman, as the head of his family, possesses the MSS. &c. of his distinguished grandfather. The two daughters of Sir William who survived their father married respectively Colonel Dunbar and Colonel Brooke.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WRITINGS OF MAJOR-GENERAL SIR W. H. SLEEMAN, K.C.B

## I.—PRINTED

(1.) 1819 Pamphlet.

Letter addressed to Dr. Tytler, of Allahabad, by Lieut. W. H. Sleeman, August 20th, 1819.

Copied from the *Asiatic Mirror* of September the 1st, 1819.

[This letter describes a great pestilence at Lucknow in 1818, and discusses the theory that cholera may be caused by 'eating a certain kind of rice'.]

(2.) Calcutta, 1836, 1 vol. 8vo.

*Ramaseeana*, or a Vocabulary of the Peculiar Language used by the Thugs, with an Introduction and Appendix descriptive of the Calcutta system pursued by that fraternity, and of the measures which have been adopted by the Supreme Government of India for its suppression.

Calcutta, G. H. Huttman, Military Orphan Press, 1836.

[No author's name on title-page, but most of the articles are signed by W. H. Sleeman.]

Appendices A to Z, and A.2, contain correspondence and copious details of particular crimes, pp. 1-515. Total pages (v, +270+515) 790.

A very roughly compiled and coarsely printed collection of valuable documents. [A copy in the Bodleian Library and two copies in the British Museum. One copy in India Office Library.]

(2a.) Philadelphia 1839, 1 vol. 8vo.

The work described as follows in the printed Catalogue of Printed Books in the British Museum appears to be a pirated edition of *Ramaseeana*:

*The Thugs or Phansīgars of India: comprising a history of the rise and progress of that extraordinary fraternity of assassins; and a description of the system which it pursues, &c.*

Carey and Hart. Philadelphia, 1839. 8vo.

A Hindustani MS. in the India Office Library seems to be the original of the vocabulary and is valuable as a guide to the spelling of the words.

(3.) (?)1836 or 1837, Pamphlet.

On the Admission of Documentary Evidence.

*Extract.*

[This reprint is an extract from *Ramaseeana*. The rules relating to the admission of evidence in criminal trials are discussed. 24 pages.]

(4.) 1837, Pamphlet.

Copy of a Letter

which appeared in the *Calcutta Courier* of the 29th March, 1837, under the signature of 'Hirtius', relative to the Intrigues of Jotha Ram.

[This letter deals with the intrigues and disturbances in the Jaipur (Jyepoor) State in 1835, and the murder of Mr. Blake, the Assistant to the Resident. (See post, chap, 67, end.) The reprint is a pamphlet of sixteen pages. At the beginning reference is made to a previous letter by the author on the same subject, which had been inserted in the *Calcutta Courier* in November, 1836.]

(5.) Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, vol. vi. (1837), p. 621.

*History of the Gurha Mundala Rajas, by Captain W. H. Sleeman.*

[An elaborate history of the Gond dynasty of Garhā Mandlā, 'which is believed to be founded principally on the chronicles of the Bājpai family, who were the hereditary prime ministers of the Gond princes.' (*Central Provinces Gazetteer*, 1870, p. 282, note.) The history is, therefore, subject to the doubts which necessarily attach to all Indian family traditions.]

(6.) W. H. Sleeman. *Analysis and Review of the Peculiar Doctrines of the Ricardo or New School of Political Economy.*

8vo, Serampore, 1837.

[A copy is entered in the printed catalogue of the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.]

(7.) Calcutta (Serampore), 1839, 8vo.

A REPORT on THE SYSTEM OF MEGPUNNAISM,  
or

The Murder of Indigent Parents for their Young Children  
(who are sold as Slaves) as it prevails in the Delhi Territories,  
and the Native States of Rajpootana, Ulwar, and Bhurtpore.

By Major W. H. Sleeman.

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From the Serampore Press.

1839.

[Thin 8vo, pp. iv and 121.]

A very curious and valuable account of a little-known variety  
of Thuggee, which possibly may still be practised. Copies exist in  
the British Museum and India Office Libraries, but the Bodleian  
has not a copy.]

(8.) Calcutta, 1840, 8vo.

REPORT ON THE DEPREDATIONS COMMITTED BY  
THE THUG GANGS of UPPER AND CENTRAL INDIA,

From the Cold Season of 1836-7, down to their Gradual  
Suppression, under the operation of the measures adopted  
against them by the Supreme Government in the year 1839.

By Major Sleeman

*Commissioner for the Suppression of Thuggee and Dacoitee.*

Calcutta:

G. H. Huttman, Bengal Military Orphan Press.

1840.

[Thick 8vo, pp. lviii, 549 and xxvi.

The information recorded is similar to that given in the earlier *Ramaseeana* volume. Pages xxv-lviii, by Captain N. Lewis, describe River Thuggee. Copies in the British Museum and India Office, but none in the Bodleian. This is the only work by Sleeman which has an alphabetical index.]

(9.) Calcutta 1841, 8vo.

On the SPIRIT OF MILITARY DISCIPLINE

in our

NATIVE INDIAN ARMY.

By Major N.[sic] H. Sleeman, Bengal Native Infantry.

'Europaeque saccubuit Asia.'

'The misfortune of all history is, that while the motives of a few princes and leaders in their various projects of ambition are detailed with accuracy, the motives which crowd their standards with military followers are totally overlooked.'—*Malthus*.

Calcutta:

Bishop's College Press.

M.DCCC.XLI.

[Thin 8vo. Introduction, pp. i-xiii; On the Spirit of Military Discipline in the Native Army of India, pp. 1-59; page 60 blank; Invalid Establishment, pp. 61-84. The text of these two essays is reprinted as chapters 28 and 29 of vol. ii of *Rambles and Recollections* in the original edition, corresponding to Chapters 21 and 22 of the edition of 1893 and Chapters 76, 77 of this (1915) edition. Most of the observations in the Introduction are

utilized in various places in that work. The author's remark in the Introduction to these essays—'They may never be published, but I cannot deny myself the gratification of printing them'—indicates that, though printed, they were never published in their separate form. The copy of the separately printed tract which I have seen is that in the India Office Library. Another is in the British Museum. The pamphlet is not in the Bodleian.]

(10.) 1841 Pamphlet.

MAJOR SLEEMAN

on the

PUBLIC SPIRIT of THE HINDOOS.

*From the Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society, vol. 8.*

*Art. XXII, Public Spirit among the Hindoo Race as indicated in the flourishing condition of the Jubbulpore District in former times, with a sketch of its present state: also on the great importance of attending to Tree Cultivation and suggestions for extending it. By Major Sleeman, late in charge of the Jubbulpore District.*

[Read at the Meeting of the Society on the 8th September, 1841.]

[This reprint is a pamphlet of eight pages. The text was again reprinted verbatim as Chapter 14 of vol. 2 of the *Rambles and Recollections* in the original edition, corresponding to Chapter 7 of the edition of 1893, and Chapter 62 of this (1915) edition. No contributions by the author of later date than the above to

any periodical have been traced. In a letter dated Lucknow, 12th January, 1853 (*Journey*, vol. 2, p. 390) the author says-'I was asked by Dr. Duff, the editor of the *Calcutta Review*, before he went home, to write some articles for that journal to expose the fallacies, and to counteract the influences of this [*scil.* annexationist] school; but I have for many years ceased to contribute to the periodical papers, and have felt bound by my position not to write for them.'

(11.) London, 1844, 2 vols. large 8vo.

## RAMBLES AND RECOLLECTIONS OF AN INDIAN OFFICIAL

by  
Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. Sleeman, of the Bengal Army.  
'The proper study of mankind is man.'—POPE.

In Two Volumes.

London:

J. Hatchard and Son, 187, Piccadilly.

1844.

[Vol. I, pp. v and 478. Frontispiece, in colours, a portrait of 'The late Emperor of Delhi', namely, Akbar II. At end of volume, six full- page coloured plates, numbered 25-30, viz. No. 25, 'Plant'; No. 26, 'Plant'; No. 27, 'Plant'; No. 28, 'Ornament'; No. 29, 'Ornament'; No. 30, 'Ornaments'.

Vol. 2, pp. vii and 459. Frontispiece, in colours, comprising five miniatures; and Plates numbered 1-24, irregularly inserted, and with several misprints in the titles.

The three notes printed at the close of the second volume were brought up to their proper places in the edition of 1893, and are there retained in this (1915) edition. The following paragraph is prefixed to these notes in the original edition: 'In consequence of this work not having had the advantage of the author's superintendence while passing through the press, and of the manuscript having reached England in insulated portions, some errors and omissions have unavoidably taken place, a few of which the following notes are intended to rectify or supply.' The edition of 1844 has been scarce for many years,]

(11a.) Lahore 1888, 2 vols. in one 8vo.

RAMBLES AND RECOLLECTIONS, &o.

(Title as in edition of 1844.)

Republished by A. C, Majumdar.

Lahore:

Printed at the Mufid-i-am Press.

1888.

[Vol. 1, pp. xi and 351. Vol. 2, pp. v and 339. A very roughly executed reprint, containing many misprints. No illustrations. This reprint is seldom met with.]

(11b.) Westminster, 1893, 2 vols. in 8vo.

RAMBLES AND RECOLLECTIONS, &c.

A New Edition, edited by Vincent Arthur Smith, I.C.S.; being vol. 5 of Constable's Oriental Miscellany. The book is now scarce.

(12.) Calcutta, 1849.

REPORT

On

BUDHUK

Alias

BAGREE DECOITS

and other

GANG ROBBERS BY HEREDITARY PROFESSION,

and on

The Measures adopted by the Government of India  
for their Suppression.

By Lieut.-Col. W. H. Sleeman, Bengal Army.

Calcutta:

J. C. Sherriff, Bengal Military Orphan Press.

1849.

[Folio, pp. iv and 433. Map. Printed on blue paper. A valuable work. In their Dispatch No. 27, dated 18th September, 1850, the Honourable Court of Directors observe that 'This Report is as important and interesting as that of the same able officer on the Thugs'. Copies exist in the British Museum and India Office Libraries, but there is none in the Bodleian. The work was first prepared for press in 1842 (Journey, vol. 1, p, xxvi).]

(13.) 1852, Plymouth, Pamphlet.

AN ACCOUNT of WOLVES NURTURING CHILDREN  
IN THEIR DENS.

By an Indian Official.

Plymouth:

Jenkin Thomas, Printer,  
9, Cornwall Street.  
1852.

[Octavo pamphlet. 15 pages. The cases cited are also described in the *Journey through the Kingdom of Oude*, and are discussed in V. Ball, *Jungle Life in India* (De la Rue, 1880), pp. 454-66. The only copy known to me is that in possession of the author's grandson.]

(14.) Lucknow, 1852.

Sir William Sleeman printed his *Diary of a Journey through Oude* privately at a press in the Residency. He had purchased a small press and type for the purpose of printing it at his own house, so that no one but himself and the compositor might see it. He intended, if he could find time, to give the history of the reigning family in a third volume, which was written, but has never been published. The title is: *Diary of a Tour through Oude* in December, 1849, and January and February, 1850.

By The Resident

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. Sleeman.

Printed at Lucknow in a Parlour Press.

1852.

Two vols. large 8vo. with wide margins. Printed well on good paper. Vol. 1 has map of Oude, 305 pp. text, and at end a printed slip of errata. Vol. 2 has 302 pp. text, with a similar slip of errata. The brief Preface contains the following statements:

'I have had the Diary printed at my own expense in a small

parlour press which I purchased, with type, for the purpose. . . . The Diary must for the present be considered as an official document, which may be perused, but cannot be published wholly or in part without the sanction of Government previously obtained.' <sup>7</sup>

Eighteen copies of the Diary were so printed and were coarsely bound by a local binder. Of these copies twelve were distributed as follows, one to each person or authority: Government, Calcutta; Court of Directors; Governor-General; Chairman of Court of Directors; Deputy Chairman; brother of author; five children of author, one each (5); Col. Sykes, Director E.I.C.

A Memorandum of Errata was put up along with some of the copies distributed. (*Private Correspondence, Journey, vol. 2, pp. 357, 393, under dates 4 April, 1852, and 12 Jan., 1853.*) The Bodleian copy, purchased in June, 1891, was that belonging to Mrs, (Lady) Sleeman, and bears her signature 'A. J. Sleeman' on the fly-leaf of each volume. The book was handsomely bound in morocco or russia, with gilt edges, by Martin of Calcutta. The British Museum Catalogue does not include a copy of this issue. The India Office Library has a copy of vol. 1 only. Captain J. L. Sleeman has both volumes.

(15.) 1853, Pamphlet.

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<sup>7</sup> *The book was written in 1851, and the Directors' permission to publish was given in December, 1852. (Journey, ii, pp. 358, 393, ed. 1858. The Preface to that ed. wrongly indicates December, 1851, as the date of that permission.)*

Reprint of letter No. 34 of 1853 from the author to J. P. Grant, Esq., Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, Fort William. Dated Lucknow Residency, 12th October, 1853.

[Six pages. Describes another attempt to assassinate the author on the 9th October, 1853. See ante, p. xxvi.]

(16.) London 1858, 2 vols. 8vo.

*A Journey through the Kingdom of Oude, in 1849-50, by direction of the Right Hon. the Earl of Dalhousie, Governor-General.*

With Private Correspondence relative to the Annexation of Oude to British India, &c.

By Major-General Sir W. H. Sleeman, K.C.B., Resident at the Court of Lucknow.

In two Volumes.

London:

Richard Bentley, Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty. 1858.

[Small 8vo. Frontispiece of vol. 1 is a Map of the Kingdom of Oude. The contents of vol. 1 are: Title, preface, and contents, pp. i-x; Biographical Sketch of Major-General Sir W. H. Sleeman, K.C.B., pp. xi-xvi; Introduction, pp. xvii-xxii; Private Correspondence preceding the Journey through the Kingdom of Oude, pp. xxiii-lxxx; Diary of a Tour through Oude, chapters i-vi, pp. 1-337. The contents of vol. 2 are: Title and contents, pp. i-vi; Diary of a Tour through Oude, pp. 1-331; Private Correspondence relating to the Annexation of the Kingdom of

Oude to British India, pp. 332-424. The letters printed in this volume were written between 5th Dec., 1849, and 11th Sept., 1854, during and after the Tour. The dates of the letters in the first volume extend from 20th Feb., 1848, to 11th Oct., 1849. The Tour began on 1st Dec., 1849, The book, though rather scarce, is to be found in most of the principal libraries, and may be obtained from time to time.]

## II.—UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS

(1.) 1809.

Two books describing author's voyage to India round the Cape.

(2.) 1837.

Journal of a Trip from Simla to Gurgoohiee.

[Referred to in unpublished letters dated 5th and 30th August, 1837.]

(3.) *Circa* 1824.

Preliminary Observations and Notes on Mr. Molony's Report on Narsinghpur.

[Referred to in *Central Provinces Gazetteer*, Nāgpur, 2nd ed., 1870, pp. xcix, cii, &c. The papers seem to be preserved in the record room at Narsinghpur.]

(4.) 1841.

History of Byza Bae (Baiza Bāi).

[Not to be published till after author's death. See unpublished

letter dated *Jhānsī*, Oct. 22nd, 1841.]

(5.)

History of the Reigning Family of Oude.

[Intended to form a third volume of the *Journey*. See Author's *Letter to Sir James Weir Hogg, Deputy Chairman, India House*, dated Lucknow, 4th April, 1852; printed in *Journey*, vol. 2, p. 358.]

The manuscripts Nos. 1, 2, 4, and 5, and the printed papers Nos. 1, 3, 4, 10, 13, and 15, are in the possession of Captain J. L. Sleeman, Royal Sussex Regiment, grandson of the author. The India Office Library possesses copies of the printed works Nos. 2, 7, 8, 9, 11a, 12, 14 (vol. 1 only) and 16.

# COMPARATIVE TABLE OF CHAPTERS

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# ABBREVIATIONS

A.C. After Christ.

*Ann. Rep.* *Annual Report.*

A.S. Archaeological Survey.

*A.S.R.* *Archaeological Survey Reports*, by Sir Alexander Cunningham and his assistants; 23 vols. 8vo, Simla and Calcutta, 1871-87, with General Index (vol. xxiv, 1887) by V. A. Smith.

*A.S.W.I.* *Archaeological Survey Reports, Western India.*

Beale. T. W. Beale, *Oriental Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Keene, 1894.

C.P. Central Provinces.

E.& D. Sir H. M. Elliot and Professor J. Dowson, *The History of India as told by its own Historians, Muhammadan Period*; 8 vols. 8vo, London, 1867-77.

*E.H.I.* V. A. Smith, *Early History of India*, 3rd ed., Oxford, 1914.

*Ep. Ind.* *Epigraphia Indica*, Calcutta.

Fanshawe. H. C. Fanshawe, *Delhi Past and Present*, Murray, London, 1902.

*H.F.A.* V. A. Smith, *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, 4to, Oxford, 1911.

*I.G.* *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Oxford, 1907, 1908.

*Ind. Ant.* *Indian Antiquary*, Bombay.

*J.A.S.B.* *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta.

*J.R.A.S.*      *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, London.

*N.I.N. &*      *Qu. North-Indian Notes and Queries*, Allahabad,

1891-6

*N.W.P.*      North-Western Provinces.

*Z.D.M.G.*      *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen*

*Gesellschaft*, Leipzig.

# RAMBLES AND RECOLLECTIONS

## CHAPTER 1

### Annual Fairs held upon the Banks of Sacred Streams in India

Before setting out on our journey towards the Himālaya we formed once more an agreeable party to visit the Marble Rocks of the Nerbudda at Bherāghāt.<sup>8</sup> It was the end of Kārtik,<sup>9</sup> when the Hindoos hold fairs on all their sacred streams at places consecrated by poetry or tradition as the scene of some divine

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<sup>8</sup> *The Nerbudda (Narbadā, or Narmadā) river is the boundary between Hindustan, or Northern India, and the Deccan (Dakhin), or Southern India. The beautiful gorge of the Marble Rocks, near Jubbulpore (Jabalpur), is familiar to modern tourists (see I.G., 1908, s.v. 'Marble Rocks'). The remarkable antiquities at Bherāghāt are described and illustrated in A.S.R., vol. ix, pp. 60-76, pl. xii-xvi. Additions and corrections to Cunningham's account will be found in A.S.W.I Progr. Rep., 1893-4, p. 5; and A.S. Ann. Rep., E. Circle, 1907-8, pp. 14-18.*

<sup>9</sup> The eighth month of the Hindoo luni-solar year, corresponding to part of October and part of November. In Northern India the year begins with the month Chait, in March. The most commonly used names of the months are: (1) Chait; (2) Baisākh; (3) Jēth; (4) Asārh; (5) Sāwan; (6) Bhādon; (7) Kuār; (8) Kārtik; (9) Aghan; (10) Pūs; (II) Māgh; and (12) Phālgun.

work or manifestation. These fairs are at once festive and holy; every person who comes enjoying himself as much as he can, and at the same time seeking purification from all past transgressions by bathing and praying in the holy stream, and making laudable resolutions to be better for the future. The ceremonies last five days, and take place at the same time upon all the sacred rivers throughout India; and the greater part of the whole Hindoo population, from the summits of the Himālaya mountains to Cape Comōrin, will, I believe, during these five days, be found congregated at these fairs. In sailing down the Ganges one may pass in the course of a day half a dozen such fairs, each with a multitude equal to the population of a large city, and rendered beautifully picturesque by the magnificence and variety of the tent equipages of the great and wealthy. The preserver of the universe (*Bhagvān*) Vishnu is supposed, on the 26th of Asārḥ, to descend to the world below (*Pātāl*) to defend Rājā Bali from the attacks of Indra, to stay with him four months, and to come up again on the 26th Kārtik.<sup>10</sup> During his absence almost all kinds of worship and festivities are suspended; and they recommence at these fairs, where people assemble to hail his resurrection.

Our tents were pitched upon a green sward on one bank of a small stream running into the Nerbudda close by, while the multitude occupied the other bank. At night all the tents and

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<sup>10</sup> *Bhagvān* is often used as equivalent for the word God in its most general sense, but is specially applicable to the Deity as manifested in Vishnu the Preserver. *Asārḥ* corresponds to June-July, *Pātāl* is the Hindoo Hades. Rājā Bali is a demon, and Indra is the lord of the heavens. The fairs take place at the time of full moon.

booths are illuminated, and the scene is hardly less animated by night than by day; but what strikes a European most is the entire absence of all tumult and disorder at such places. He not only sees no disturbance, but feels assured that there will be none; and leaves his wife and children in the midst of a crowd of a hundred thousand persons all strangers to them, and all speaking a language and following a religion different from theirs, while he goes off the whole day, hunting and shooting in the distant jungles, without the slightest feeling of apprehension for their safety or comfort. It is a singular fact, which I know to be true, that during the great mutiny of our native troops at Barrackpore in 1824, the chief leaders bound themselves by a solemn oath not to suffer any European lady or child to be injured or molested, happen what might to them in the collision with their officers and the Government. My friend Captain Reid, one of the general staff, used to allow his children, five in number, to go into the lines and play with the soldiers of the mutinous regiments up to the very day when the artillery opened upon them; and, of above thirty European ladies then at the station, not one thought of leaving the place till they heard the guns.<sup>11</sup> Mrs. Colonel Faithful, with her daughter and another young lady, who had both just

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<sup>11</sup> *Barrackpore, fifteen miles north of Calcutta, is still a cantonment. The Governor General has a country house there. The mutiny of the native troops stationed there occurred on Nov. 1, 1824, and was due to the discontent caused by orders moving the 47th Native Infantry to Rangoon to take part in the Burmese War. The outbreak was promptly suppressed. Captain Pogson published a Memoir of the Mutiny at Barrackpore (8vo, Serampore, 1833).*

arrived from England, went lately all the way from Calcutta to Lūdiāna on the banks of the Hyphasis, a distance of more than twelve hundred miles, in their palankeens with relays of bearers, and without even a servant to attend them.<sup>12</sup> They were travelling night and day for fourteen days without the slightest apprehension of injury or of insult. Cases of ladies travelling in the same manner by *dāk* (stages) immediately after their arrival from England to all parts of the country occur every day, and I know of no instance of injury or insult sustained by them.<sup>13</sup> Does not this speak volumes for the character of our rule in India? Would men trust their wives and daughters in this manner unprotected among a people that disliked them and their rule? We have not a garrison, or walled cantonments, or fortified position of any kind for our residence from one end of our Eastern empire to the other, save at the three capitals of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay.<sup>14</sup> We know and feel that the people everywhere look up to and respect us, in spite of all our faults, and we like to let them know and feel that we have confidence in them.

Sir Thomas Munro has justly observed, 'I do not exactly

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<sup>12</sup> Lūdiāna, the capital of the district of the same name, now under the Punjab Government. Hyphasis is the Greek name of the Bīās river, one of the five rivers of the Punjāb.

<sup>13</sup> Railways have rendered almost obsolete the mode of travelling described in the text. In Northern India palankeens (*pālkīs*) are now seldom used, even by Indians, except for purposes of ceremony.

<sup>14</sup> This statement is no longer quite accurate, though fortified positions are still very few.

know what is meant by civilizing the people of India. In the theory and practice of good government they may be deficient; but, if a good system of agriculture, if unrivalled manufactures, if the establishment of schools for reading and writing, if the general practice of kindness and hospitality, and, above all, if a scrupulous respect and delicacy towards the female sex are amongst the points that denote a civilized people; then the Hindoos are not inferior in civilization to the people of Europe'.<sup>15</sup>

Bishop Heber writes in the same favourable terms of the Hindoos in the narrative of his journey through India; and where shall we find a mind more capable of judging of the merits and demerits of a people than his?<sup>16</sup>

The concourse of people at this fair was, as usual, immense; but a great many who could not afford to provide tents for the accommodation of their families were driven away before their time by some heavy showers of, to them, unseasonable rains. On this and similar occasions the people bathe in the Nerbudda without the aid of priests, but a number of poor Brahmans attend at these festivals to receive charity, though not to assist at the ceremonies. Those who could afford it gave a trifle to these men as they came out of the sacred stream, but in no case was it

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<sup>15</sup> *The editor cannot find the exact passage quoted, but remarks to the same effect will be found in The Life of Sir Thomas Munro, by the Rev. G. R. Gleig, in two volumes, a new edition (London, 1831), vol. ii, p. 175.*

<sup>16</sup> *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, from Calcutta to Bombay, 1834-5, and a Journey to the Southern Provinces in 1826 (2nd edition, 3 vols. 8vo, London, 1828.)*

demanded, or even solicited with any appearance of importunity, as it commonly is at fairs and holy places on the Ganges. The first day, the people bathe below the rapid over which the river falls after it emerges from its peaceful abode among the marble rocks; on the second day, just above this rapid; and on the third day, two miles further up at the cascade, when the whole body of the limpid stream of the Nerbudda, confined to a narrow channel of only a few yards wide, falls tumultuously down in a beautiful cascade into a deep chasm of marble rocks. This fall of their sacred stream the people call the 'Dhuāndhār', or 'the smoky fall', from the thick vapour which is always seen rising from it in the morning. From below, the river glides quietly and imperceptibly for a mile and a half along a deep, and, according to popular belief, a fathomless channel of from ten to fifty yards wide, with snow-white marble rocks rising perpendicularly on either side from a hundred to a hundred and fifty feet high, and in some parts fearfully overhanging. Suspended in recesses of these white rocks are numerous large black nests of hornets ready to descend upon any unlucky wight who may venture to disturb their repose;<sup>17</sup> and, as the boats of the curious European visitors pass up and down to the sound of music, clouds of wild pigeons rise from each side, and seem sometimes to fill the air above them. Here, according to native legends, repose the Pāndavas,

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<sup>17</sup> *The bees at the Marble Rocks are the Apis dorsata.* An Englishman named Biddington, when trying to escape from them, was drowned, and they stung to death one of Captain Forsyth's baggage ponies (Balfour, *Cyclopaedia of India*, 3rd ed., 1885, s.v. Bee').

the heroes of their great Homeric poem, the Mahābhārata, whose names they have transferred to the valley of the Nerbudda. Every fantastic appearance of the rocks, caused by those great convulsions of nature which have so much disturbed the crust of the globe, or by the slow and silent working of the, waters, is attributed to the god-like power of those great heroes of Indian romance, and is associated with the recollection of scenes in which they are supposed to have figured.<sup>18</sup>

The strata of the Kaimūr range of sandstone hills, which runs diagonally across the valley of the Nerbudda, are thrown up almost perpendicularly, in some places many hundred feet above the level of the plain, while in others for many miles together their tops are only visible above the surface. These are so many strings of the oxen which the arrows of Arjun, one of the five brothers, converted into stone; and many a stream which now waters the valley first sprang from the surface of the earth at the touch of his lance, as his troops wanted water. The image of the gods of a former day, which now lie scattered among the ruins of old cities, buried in the depth of the forest, are nothing less than the bodies of the kings of the earth turned into stone for their temerity in contending with these demigods in

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<sup>18</sup> *The vast epic poem, or collection of poems known as the Mahābhārata, consists of over 100,000 Sanskrit verses. The main subject is the war between the five Pāndavas, or sons of Pāndū, and their cousins the Kauravas, sons of Dhritarāshtra. Many poems of various origins and dates are interwoven with the main work. The best known of the episodes is that of Nala and Damayantī, which was well translated by Dean Milman. See Macdonell, A History of Sanskrit Literature (Heinemann, 1900).*

battle. Ponds among the rocks of the Nerbudda, where all the great fairs are held, still bear the names of the five brothers, who are the heroes of this great poem;<sup>19</sup> and they are every year visited by hundreds of thousands who implicitly believe that their waters once received upon their bosoms the wearied limbs of those whose names they bear. What is life without the charms of fiction, and without the leisure and recreations which these sacred imaginings tend to give to the great mass of those who have nothing but the labour of their hands to depend upon for their subsistence! Let no such fictions be believed, and the holidays and pastimes of the lower orders in every country would soon cease, for they have almost everywhere owed their origin and support to some religious dream which has commanded the faith and influenced the conduct of great masses of mankind, and prevented one man from presuming to work on the day that another wished to rest from his labours. The people were of opinion, they told me, that the Ganges, as a sacred stream, could last only sixty years more, when the Nerbudda would take its place. The waters of the Nerbudda are, they say already so much more sacred than those of the Ganges that to see them is sufficient to cleanse men from their sins, whereas the Ganges must be touched before it can have that effect.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The five Pāndava brothers were Yudhishthira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva, the children of Pāndū, by his wives Kuntī, or Prithā, and Madrī.

<sup>20</sup> *'The Narbadā has its special admirers, who exalt it oven above the Ganges, . . . The sanctity of the Ganges will, they say, cease in 1895, whereas that of the Narbadā will continue for ever'* (Monier Williams, *Religious Thought and Life in India*, London,

At the temple built on the top of a conical hill at Bherāghāt, overlooking the river, is a statue of a bull carrying Siva, the god of destruction, and his wife Pārvatī seated behind him; they have both snakes in their hands, and Siva has a large one round his loins as a waistband. There are several demons in human shape lying prostrate under the belly of the bull, and the whole are well cut out of one large slab of hard basalt from a dyke in the marble rock beneath. They call the whole group 'Gaurī Sankar', and I found in the fair, exposed for sale, a brass model of a similar one from Jeypore (Jaipur), but not so well shaped and proportioned. On noticing this we were told that 'such difference was to be expected, since the brass must have been made by man, whereas the "Gaurī Sankar" of the temple above was a real Pākhān, or a conversion of living beings into stone by the gods;<sup>21</sup> they were therefore the exact resemblance of living beings, while the others could only be rude imitations'. 'Gaurī', or the Fair, is the name of Pārvatī, or Dēvī, when she appears with her husband Siva. On such occasions she is always fair and beautiful. Sankar is another name of Siva, or Mahādēo, or Rudra. On looking into the temple at the statue, a lady expressed her surprise at the entireness as well as the excellence of the figures, while all round had been so much mutilated by the Muhammadans. 'They are

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1883, p. 348), See *post*, Chapter 27.

<sup>21</sup> *Sleeman wrote 'Py-Khan', a corrupt spelling of pākhān, the Sanskrit pāshāna or pāsāna, 'a stone'. The compound pāshāna- mūrti is commonly used in the sense of 'stone image'. The sibilant sh or s usually is pronounced as kh in Northern India (Grierson, J.R.A.S., 1903, p. 363).*

quite a different thing from the others', said a respectable old landholder; 'they are a conversion of real flesh and blood into stone, and no human hands can either imitate or hurt them.' She smiled incredulously, while he looked very grave, and appealed to the whole crowd of spectators assembled, who all testified to the truth of what he had said; and added that 'at no distant day the figures would be all restored to life again, the deities would all come back without doubt and reanimate their old bodies again'.

All the people who come to bathe at the fair bring chaplets of yellow jasmine, and hang them as offerings round the necks of the god and his consort; and at the same time they make some small offerings of rice to each of the many images that stand within the same apartment, and also to those which, under a stone roof supported upon stone pillars, line the inside of the wall that surrounds the circular area, in the centre of which the temple stands. The images inside the temple are those of the three great gods, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, with their primaeval consorts;<sup>22</sup> but those that occupy the piazza outside are the representations of the consorts of the different incarnations of these three gods, and these consorts are themselves the incarnations of the primaeval wives, who followed their husbands in all their earthly ramblings. They have all the female form, and are about the size of ordinary women, and extremely well cut out of fine white and green sandstone; but their heads are those of the animals in which

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<sup>22</sup> Sarasvatī, consort of Brahma; Dēvī (Pārvatī, Durgā, &c.), consort of Siva; and Lakshmī, consort of Vishnu. All Hindoo deities have many names.

their respective husbands became incarnate, such as the lion, the elephant, &c., or those of the '*vāhans*', or animals on which they rode, such as the bull, the swan, the eagle, &c. But these, I presume, are mere *capricios* of the founder of the temple. The figures are sixty- four in number, all mounted upon their respective '*vāhans*', but have been sadly mutilated by the pious Muhammadans.<sup>23</sup>

The old 'Mahant', or high priest, told us that Mahādēo and his wife were in reality our Adam and Eve; 'they came here together', said he, 'on a visit to the mountain Kailās,<sup>24</sup> and being earnestly solicited to leave some memorial of their visit, got themselves turned into stone'. The popular belief is that some very holy man, who had been occupied on the top of this little conical hill, where the temple now stands, in austere devotions for some few thousand years, was at last honoured with a visit from Siva and his consort, who asked him what they could do for him. He begged them to wait till he should bring some flowers from the woods to make them a suitable offering. They promised to do so, and he ran down, plunged into the Nerbudda and drowned

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<sup>23</sup> *The author's explanation is partly erroneous. The temple, which is a very remarkable one, is dedicated to the sixty-four Joginīs. Only five temples in India are known to be dedicated to these demons. For details see Cunningham, A.S.R., vol. ix, pp. 61-74, pl. xii-xvi; vol. ii, p. 416; and vol. xxi, p. 57. The word vāhana means 'vehicle'. Each deity has his peculiar vehicle.*

<sup>24</sup> The heaven of Siva, as distinguished from Vaikuntha, the heaven of Vishnu. It is supposed to be somewhere in the Himālaya mountains. The wonderful excavated rock temple at Ellora is believed to be a model of Kailās.

himself, in order that these august persons might for ever remain and do honour to his residence and his name. They, however, left only their 'mortal coil', but will one day return and resume it. I know not whether I am singular in the notion or not, but I think Mahādēo and his consort are really our Adam and Eve, and that the people have converted them into the god and goddess of destruction, from some vague idea of their original sin, which involved all their race in destruction. The snakes, which form the only dress of Mahādēo, would seem to confirm this notion.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> This 'notion' of the author's is not likely to find acceptance at the present day.

# CHAPTER 2

## Hindoo System of Religion

The Hindoo system is this. A great divine spirit or essence, 'Brahma', pervades the whole universe; and the soul of every human being is a drop from this great ocean, to which, when it becomes perfectly purified, it is reunited. The reunion is the eternal beatitude to which all look forward with hope; and the soul of the Brahman is nearest to it. If he has been a good man, his soul becomes absorbed in the 'Brahma'; and, if a bad man, it goes to 'Narak', hell; and after the expiration of its period there of *limited imprisonment*, it returns to earth, and occupies the body of some other animal. It again advances by degrees to the body of the Brahman; and thence, when fitted for it, into the great 'Brahma'.<sup>26</sup>

From this great eternal essence emanate Brahma, the Creator,

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<sup>26</sup> Men are occasionally exempted from the necessity of becoming a Brahman first. Men of low caste, if they die at particular places, where it is the interest of the Brahmans to invite rich men to die, are promised absorption into the great 'Brahma' at once. Immense numbers of wealthy men go every year from the most distant parts of India to die at Benares, where they spend large sums of money among the Brahmans. It is by their means that this, the second city in India, is supported. [W. H. S.] Bombay is now the second city in India, so far as population is concerned.

whose consort is Sarasvatī;<sup>27</sup> Vishnu, the Preserver, whose consort is Lakshmī; and Siva, *alias* Māhadēo, the Destroyer, whose consort is Pārvatī. According to popular belief Jamrāj (Yamarāja) is the judicial deity who has been appointed by the greater powers to pass the final judgement on the tenor of men's lives, according to proceedings drawn up by his secretary Chitragupta. If men's actions have been good, their souls are, as the next stage, advanced a step towards the great essence, Brahma; and, if bad, they are thrown back, and obliged to occupy the bodies of brutes or of people of inferior caste, as the balance against them may be great or small. There is an intermediate stage, a 'Narak', or hell, for bad men, and a 'Baikunth', or paradise, for the good, in which they find their felicity in serving that god of the three to which they have specially devoted themselves while on earth. But from this stage, after the period of their sentence is expired, men go back to their pilgrimage on earth again.

There are numerous Dēos (Devas), or good spirits, of whom Indra is the chief; <sup>28</sup> and Daityas, or bad spirits; and there have also been a great number of incarnations from the three great gods, and their consorts, who have made their appearance

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<sup>27</sup> *Brahma, with the short vowel, is the eternal Essence or Spirit; Brahmā, with the long vowel, is 'the primaeval male god, the first personal product of the purely spiritual Brahma, when overspread by Maya, or illusory creative force', according to the Vedanta system (Monier Williams, Religious Thought and Life in India, p. 44).*

<sup>28</sup> Indra was originally, in the Vedas, the Rain-god. The statement in the text refers to modern Hinduism.

upon the earth when required for particular purposes. All these incarnations are called 'Avatārs', or descents. Vishnu has been eleven times on the globe in different shapes, and Siva seven times.<sup>29</sup> The avatārs of Vishnu are celebrated in many popular poems, such as the Rāmāyana, or history of the Rape of Sitā, the wife of Rāma, the seventh incarnation,<sup>30</sup> the Mahābhārata, and the Bhāgavata [Purāna], which describe the wars and amours of this god in his last human shape.<sup>31</sup> All these books are believed to have been written either by the hand or by the inspiration of the god himself thousands of years before the events they describe actually took place. 'It was', they say, 'as easy for the deity to write or dictate a battle, an amour, or any other important event ten thousand years before as the day after it took place';

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<sup>29</sup> *The incarnations of Vishnu are ordinarily reckoned as ten, namely, (1) Fish, (2) Tortoise, (3) Boar, (4) Man-lion, (5) Dwarf, (6) Rāma with the axe, (7) Rāma Chandra, (8) Krishna, (9) Buddha, (10) Kalkī, or Kalkin, who is yet to come. I do not know any authority for eleven incarnations of Vishnu. The number is stated in some Purānas as twenty-two, twenty-four, or even twenty-eight. Seven incarnations of Siva are not generally recognized (see Monier Williams, Religious Thought and Life in India, pp. 78-86, and 107-16). For the theory and mystical meaning of avatārs, see Grierson, J.R.A.S., 1909, pp. 621- 44. The word avatār means 'descent', scil. of the Deity to earth, and covers more than the term 'incarnation'.*

<sup>30</sup> Sitā was an incarnation of Lakshmī. She became incarnate again, many centuries afterwards, as the wife of Krishna, another incarnation of Vishnu [W. H. S.]. Reckoning by centuries is, of course, inapplicable to pure myth. The author believed in Bentley's baseless chronology.

<sup>31</sup> *For the Mahābhārata, see ante, note 11, Chapter 1. The Bhāgavata Purāna is the most popular of the Purānas, The Hindi version of the tenth book (skandha) is known as the 'Prem Sāgar'. The date of the composition of the Purānas is uncertain.*

and I believe nine-tenths, perhaps ninety-nine in a hundred, of the Hindoo population believe implicitly that these accounts were also written. It is now pretty clear that all these works are of comparatively recent date, that the great poem of the Mahābhārata could not have been written before the year 786 of the Christian era, and was probably written so late as A.D. 1157; that Krishna, *if born at all*, must have been born on the 7th of August, A.D. 600, but was most likely a mere creation of the imagination to serve the purpose of the Brahmans of Ujain, in whom the fiction originated; that the other incarnations were invented about the same time, and for the same object, though the other persons described as incarnations were real princes, Parasu Rāma, before Christ 1176, and Rāma, born before Christ 961. In the Mahābhārata Krishna is described as fighting in the same army with Yudhishthira and his four brothers. Yudhishthira was a real person, who ascended the throne at Delhi 575 B.C., or 1175 years before the birth of Krishna.<sup>32</sup> Bentley supposes that the incarnations, particularly that of Krishna, were invented by the Brahmans of Ujain with a view to check the progress of Christianity in that part of the world (see his historical view of the Hindoo astronomy). That we find in no history any account of the alarming progress of Christianity about the time these fables

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<sup>32</sup> The dates given in this passage are purely imaginary. Parts of the Mahābhārata are very ancient. Yudhishthira is no more an historical personage than Achilles or Romulus. It is improbable that a 'throne of Delhi' existed in 575 B.C., and hardly anything is known about the state of India at that date.

were written is no proof that Bentley was wrong.<sup>33</sup>

When Monsieur Thevenot was at Agra [in] 1666, the Christian population was roughly estimated at twenty-five thousand families. They had all passed away before it became one of our civil and military stations in the beginning of the present century, and we might search history in vain for any mention of them (see his *Travels in India*, Part III). One single prince, well disposed to give Christians encouragement and employment, might, in a few years, get the same number around his capital; and it is probable that the early Christians in India occasionally found such princes, and gave just cause of alarm to the Brahman priests, who were then in the infancy of their despotic power.<sup>34</sup>

During the war with Nepal, in 1814 and 1815,<sup>35</sup> the division with which I served came upon an extremely interesting colony of about two thousand Christian families at Betiṃyā in the Tirhūt

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<sup>33</sup> It is hardly necessary to observe that this grotesque theory is utterly at variance with the facts, as now known.

<sup>34</sup> *The existing settlements of native Christians at Agra are mostly of modern origin. Very ancient Christian communities exist near Madras, and on the Malabar coast. The travels of Jean de Thevenot were published in 1684, under the title of Voyage, contenant la Relation de l'Indostan.* The English version, by A. Lovell (London, 1687), is entitled *The Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant, in three Parts*. Part III deals with the East Indies, The passage referred to is: 'Some affirm that there are twenty-five thousand Christian Families in Agra, but all do not agree in that' (Part III, p. 35). Thevonot's statement about the Christians of Agra is further discussed post in Chapter 52.

<sup>35</sup> The war with Nepal began in October, 1814, and was not concluded till 1816. During its progress the British arms suffered several reverses.

District, on the borders of the Tarāi forest. This colony had been created by one man, the Bishop, a Venetian by birth, under the protection of a small Hindoo prince, the Rājā, of Betiyā.<sup>36</sup> This holy man had been some fifty years among these people, with little or no support from Europe or from any other quarter. The only aid he got from the Rājā was a pledge that no member of his Church should be subject to the *Purveyance system*, under which the people everywhere suffered so much,<sup>37</sup> and this pledge the Rājā, though a Hindoo, had never suffered to be violated. There were men of all trades among them, and they formed one very large street remarkable for the superior style of its buildings and the sober industry of its inhabitants. The masons, carpenters, and blacksmiths of this little colony were working in our camp every day, while we remained in the vicinity, and better workmen I have never seen in India; but they would all insist upon going to divine service at the prescribed hours. They had built a splendid *pucka*<sup>38</sup> dwelling-house for their bishop, and a still more splendid church, and formed for him the finest garden I have seen in India, surrounded with a good wall, and provided with admirable *pucka* wells. The native Christian servants who attended at the

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<sup>36</sup> *The Betiyā (Bettiah of I. G., 1908)* Rāj is a great estate with an area of 1,824 square miles in the northern part of the Champāran District of Bihār, in the Province of Bihār and Orissa. A great portion of the estate is held (1908) on permanent leases by European indigo-planters.

<sup>37</sup> For discussion of this system see post, Chapter 7.

<sup>38</sup> '*Pucka*' (*pakkā*) here means 'masonry', as opposed to 'Kutchā' (*kachchā*), meaning 'earthen'.

old bishop's table, taught by himself, spoke Latin to him; but he was become very feeble, and spoke himself a mixture of Latin, Italian, his native tongue, and Hindustānī. We used to have him at our messes, and take as much care of him as of an infant, for he was become almost as frail as one. The joy and the excitement of being once more among Europeans, and treated by them with so much reverence in the midst of his flock, were perhaps too much for him, for he sickened and died soon after.

The Rājā died soon after him, and in all probability the flock has disappeared. No Europeans except a few indigo planters of the neighbourhood had ever before known or heard of this colony; and they seemed to consider them only as a set of great scoundrels, who had better carts and bullocks than anybody else in the country, which they refused to let out at the same rate as the others, and which they (the indigo lords) were not permitted to seize and employ at discretion. Roman Catholics have a greater facility in making converts in India than Protestants, from having so much more in their form of worship to win the affections through the medium of the imagination.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Native Christians, according to the census of 1872, number 1,214 persons, who are principally found in Bettiā thāna [police-circle]. There are two Missions, one at Bettiā, and the other at the village of Chuhārī, both supported by the Roman Catholic Church. The former was founded in 1746 by a certain Father Joseph, from Garingano in Italy, who went to Bettiā on the invitation of the Mahārāja. The present number of converts is about 1,000 persons. Being principally descendants of Brahmans, they hold a fair social position; but some of them are extremely poor. About one-fourth are carpenters, one-tenth blacksmiths, one-tenth servants, the remainder carters. The Chuhārī Mission was founded in 1770 by three Catholic priests, who had been expelled from Nepal [after the*

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*Gōrkha conquest in 1768]. There are now 283 converts, mostly descendants of Nepālis. They are all agriculturists, and very poor (Article 'Champāran District' in Statistical Account of Bengal, 1877).* The statement in *I.G.* 1908, s.v. Bettiah, differs slightly, as follows: 'A Roman Catholic Mission was established about 1740 by Father Joseph Mary, an Italian missionary of the Capuchin Order, who was passing near Bettiah on his way to Nepāl, when he was summoned by Rājā Dhruva Shah to attend his daughter, who was dangerously ill. He succeeded in curing her, and the grateful Raja invited him to stay at Bettiah and gave him a house and ninety acres of land.' The Bettiah Mission still exists and maintains the Catholic Mission Press, where publications illustrating the history of the Capuchin Missions have been printed. Father Felix, O.C., is at work on the subject.

# CHAPTER 3

## Legend of the Nerbudda River

The legend is that the Nerbudda, which flows west into the Gulf of Cambay, was wooed and won in the usual way by the Sōn river, which rises from the same tableland of Amarkantak, and flows east into the Ganges and Bay of Bengal.<sup>40</sup> All the previous ceremonies having been performed, the Sōn<sup>41</sup> came with 'due pomp and circumstance' to fetch his bride in the procession called the 'Barāt', up to which time the bride and bridegroom are supposed never to have seen each other, unless perchance they have met in infancy. Her Majesty the Nerbudda became exceedingly impatient to know what sort of a personage her destinies were to be linked to, while his Majesty the Sōn advanced at a slow and stately pace. At last the Queen sent Johilā, the daughter of the barber, to take a close view of him, and to return and make a faithful and particular report of his

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<sup>40</sup> *Amarkantak, formerly in the Sohāgpur pargana of the Bilāspur District of the Central Provinces, is situated on a high tableland, and is a famous place of pilgrimage. The temples are described by Beglar in A.S.R., vol. vii, pp. 227-34, pl. xx, xxi. The hill has been transferred to the Rīwā State (Central Provinces Gazetteer (1870), and I.G. (1908), s.v. Amarkantak).*

<sup>41</sup> *The name is misspelled Sohan in the author's text. The Sōn rises at Sōn Mundā, about twenty miles from Amarkantak (A.S.R., vol. vii, 236).*

person. His Majesty was captivated with the little Johilā, the barber's daughter, at first sight; and she, 'nothing loath', yielded to his caresses. Some say that she actually pretended to be Queen herself; and that his Majesty was no further in fault than in mistaking the humble handmaid for her noble mistress; but, be that as it may, her Majesty no sooner heard of the good understanding between them, than she rushed forward, and with one foot sent the Sōn rolling back to the east whence he came, and with the other kicked little Johilā sprawling after him; for, said the high priest, who told us the story, 'You see what a towering passion she was likely to have been in under such indignities from the furious manner in which she cuts her way through the marble rocks beneath us, and casts huge masses right and left as she goes along, as if they were really so many coco-nuts'. 'And was she', asked I, 'to have flown eastward with him, or was he to have flown westward with her?' 'She was to have accompanied him eastward', said the high priest, 'but her Majesty, after this indignity, declared that she would not go a single pace in the same direction with such wretches, and would flow west, though all the other rivers in India might flow east; and west she flows accordingly, a virgin queen.' I asked some of the Hindoos about us why they called her 'Mother Nerbudda', if she was really never married. 'Her Majesty', said they with great respect, 'would really never consent to be married after the indignity she suffered from her affianced bridegroom the Sōn; and we call her Mother because she blesses us all, and we are

anxious to accost her by the name which we consider to be at once the most respectful and endearing.'

Any Englishman can easily conceive a poet in his highest 'calenture of the brain' addressing the ocean as 'a steed that knows his rider', and patting the crested billow as his flowing mane; but he must come to India to understand how every individual of a whole community of many millions can address a fine river as a living being, a sovereign princess, who hears and understands all they say, and exercises a kind of local superintendence over their affairs, without a single temple in which her image is worshipped, or a single priest to profit by the delusion. As in the case of the Ganges, it is the river itself to whom they address themselves, and not to any deity residing in it, or presiding over it: the stream itself is the deity which fills their imaginations, and receives their homage.

Among the Romans and ancient Persians rivers were propitiated by sacrifices. When Vitellius crossed the Euphrates with the Roman legions to put Tiridates on the throne of Armenia, they propitiated the river according to the rites of their country by the *suovetaurilia*, the sacrifice of the hog, the ram, and the bull. Tiridates did the same by the sacrifice of a horse. Tacitus does not mention the river *god*, but the river *itself*, as propitiated (see [*Annals*,] book vi, chap. 37).<sup>42</sup> Plato makes Socrates condemn Homer for making Achilles behave

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<sup>42</sup> 'Sacrificantibus, cum hic more Romano suovetaurilia daret, ille equum placando amni adornasset.'

disrespectfully towards the river Xanthus, though acknowledged to be a divinity, in offering to fight him,<sup>43</sup> and towards the river Sperchius, another acknowledged god, in presenting to the dead body of Patroclus the locks of his hair which he had promised to that river.<sup>44</sup>

The Sōn river, which rises near the source of the Nerbudda on the tableland of Amarkantak, takes a westerly course for some miles, and then turns off suddenly to the east, and is joined by the little stream of the Johilā before it descends the great cascade; and hence the poets have created this fiction, which the mass of the population receive as divine revelation. The statue of little Johilā, the barber's daughter, in stone, stands in the temple of the goddess Nerbudda at Amarkantak, bound in chains.<sup>45</sup> It may here be remarked that the first overtures in India must always be made through the medium of the barber, whether they be from the prince or the peasant.<sup>46</sup> If a sovereign prince sends

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<sup>43</sup> μέγας ποταμὸς βαθυδίνης, δὺ Ξάνθον καλέουσι θεοί, ἄνδρες δὲ Σκάμανδρον. —Iliad xx, 73.

<sup>44</sup> Iliad xxiii. 140-153.

<sup>45</sup> *Mr. Crooke observes that the binding was intended to prevent the object of worship from deserting her shrine or possibly doing mischief elsewhere, and refers to his article, 'The Binding of a God, a Study of the Basis of Idolatry', in Folklore, vol. viii (1897), p.134. The name is spelt Johillā in I.G. (1908), s.v. Sōn River.*

<sup>46</sup> *Monier Williams denies the barber's monopoly of match-making. 'In some parts of Northern India the match-maker for some castes is the family barber; but for the higher castes he is more generally a Brahman, who goes about from one house to another till he discovers a baby-girl of suitable rank' (Religious Thought and Life in India, p. 377). So far as the editor knows, the barber is ordinarily employed in Northern India.*

proposals to a sovereign princess, they must be conveyed through the medium of the barber, or they will never be considered as done in due form, as likely to prove propitious. The prince will, of course, send some relation or high functionary with him; but in all the credentials the barber must be named as the principal functionary. Hence it was that Her Majesty was supposed to have sent a barber's daughter to meet her husband.

The 'Mahātam' (greatness or holiness) of the Ganges is said, as I have already stated, to be on the wane, and not likely to endure sixty years longer; while that of the Nerbudda is on the increase, and in sixty years is entirely to supersede the sanctity of her sister. If the valley of the Nerbudda should continue for sixty years longer under such a government as it has enjoyed since we took possession of it in 1817,<sup>47</sup> it may become infinitely more rich, more populous, and more beautiful than that of the Nile ever was; and, if the Hindoos there continue, as I hope they will, to acquire wealth and honour under a rule to which they are so much attached, the prophecy may be realized in as far as the increase of honour paid to the Nerbudda is concerned. But I know no ground to expect that the reverence<sup>48</sup> paid to the Ganges will diminish, unless education and the concentration of capital in manufactures should work an important change in the religious feelings and opinions of the people along the course of that river;

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<sup>47</sup> During the operations against the Pindhārī freebooters. Many treaties were negotiated with the Peshwa and other native powers in the years 1817 and 1818.

<sup>48</sup> The word in the text is 'revenue'.

although this, it must be admitted, is a consummation which may be looked for more speedily on the banks of the Ganges than on those of a stream like the Nerbudda, which is neither navigable at present nor, in my opinion, capable of being rendered so. Commerce and manufactures, and the concentration of capital in the maintenance of the new communities employed in them, will, I think, be the great media through which this change will be chiefly effected; and they are always more likely to follow the course of rivers that are navigable than that of rivers which are not.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Concerning the prophecy that the sanctity of the Ganges will cease in 1895, see note to Chapter I, ante, [13].* The prophecy was much talked of some years ago, but the reverence for the Ganges continues undiminished, while the development of commerce and manufactures has not affected, the religious feelings and opinions of the people. Railways, in fact, facilitate pilgrimages and increase their popularity. The course of commerce now follows the line of rail, not the navigable rivers. The author, when writing this book, evidently never contemplated the possibility of railway construction in India. Later in life, in 1852, he fully appreciated the value of the new means of communication (*Journey*, ii, 370, &c.).

# CHAPTER 4

## A Suttee<sup>50</sup> on the Nerbudda

We took a ride one evening to Gopālpur, a small village situated on the same bank of the Nerbudda, about three miles up from Bherāghāt. On our way we met a party of women and girls coming to the fair. Their legs were uncovered half-way up the thigh; but, as we passed, they all carefully covered up their faces. 'Good God!' exclaimed one of the ladies, 'how can these people be so very indecent?' They thought it, no doubt, equally extraordinary that she should have her face uncovered, while she so carefully concealed her legs; for they were really all modest peasantry, going from the village to bathe in the holy stream.<sup>51</sup>

Here there are some very pretty temples, built for the most part to the memory of widows who have burned themselves with the remains of their husbands, and upon the very spot where they committed themselves to the flames. There was one which had been recently raised over the ashes of one of the most extraordinary old ladies that I have ever seen, who burned

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<sup>50</sup> *Satī*, a virtuous woman, especially one who burns herself with her husband. The word, in common usage, is transferred to the sacrifice of the woman.

<sup>51</sup> The women of Bundēlkhand wear the same costume, a full loin-cloth, as those of the Jubbulpore district. North of the Jumna an ordinary petticoat is generally worn.

herself in my presence in 1829. I prohibited the building of any temple upon the spot, but my successor in the civil charge of the district, Major Low, was never, I believe, made acquainted with the prohibition nor with the progress of the work; which therefore went on to completion in my absence. As suttees are now prohibited in our dominions<sup>52</sup> and cannot be often seen or described by Europeans, I shall here relate the circumstances of this as they were recorded by me at the time, and the reader may rely upon the truth of the whole tale.

On the 29th November, 1829, this old woman, then about sixty-five years of age, here mixed her ashes with those of her husband, who had been burned alone four days before. On receiving civil charge of the district (Jubbulpore) in March, 1828, I issued a proclamation prohibiting any one from aiding or assisting in suttee, and distinctly stating that to bring one ounce of wood for the purpose would be considered as so doing. If the woman burned herself with the body of her husband, any one who brought wood for the purpose of burning him would become liable to punishment; consequently, the body of the husband must be first consumed, and the widow must bring a fresh supply for herself. On Tuesday, 24th November, 1829, I

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<sup>52</sup> Suttee was prohibited during the administration of Lord William Bentinck by the Bengal Regulation xvii, dated 4th December, 1829, extended in 1830 to Madras and Bombay. The advocates of the practice unsuccessfully appealed to the Privy Council. Several European officers defended the custom. A well-written account of the suttee legislation is given in Mr. D. Boulger's work on Lord William Bentinck in the 'Rulers of India' series.

had an application from the heads of the most respectable and most extensive family of Brahmans in the district to suffer this old woman to burn herself with the remains of her husband, Ummēd Singh Upadhya, who had that morning died upon the banks of the Nerbudda.<sup>53</sup> I threatened to enforce my order, and punish severely any man who assisted; and placed a police guard for the purpose of seeing that no one did so. She remained sitting by the edge of the water without eating or drinking. The next day the body of her husband was burned to ashes in a small pit of about eight feet square, and three or four feet deep, before several thousand spectators who had assembled to see the suttee. All strangers dispersed before evening, as there seemed to be no prospect of my yielding to the urgent solicitations of her family, who dared not touch food till she had burned herself, or declared herself willing to return to them. Her sons, grandsons, and some other relations remained with her, while the rest surrounded my house, the one urging me to allow her to burn, and the other urging her to desist. She remained sitting on a bare rock in the bed of the Nerbudda, refusing every kind of sustenance, and exposed to the intense heat of the sun by day, and the severe cold of the night, with only a thin sheet thrown over her shoulders. On Thursday, to cut off all hope of her being moved from her purpose, she put on the dhajā, or coarse red turban, and broke her bracelets in pieces, by which she became dead in law, and

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<sup>53</sup> Whenever it is practicable, Hindoos are placed on the banks of sacred rivers to die, especially in Bengal.

for ever excluded from caste. Should she choose to live after this, she could never return to her family. Her children and grandchildren were still with her, but all their entreaties were unavailing; and I became satisfied that she would starve herself to death, if not allowed to burn, by which the family would be disgraced, her miseries prolonged, and I myself rendered liable to be charged with a wanton abuse of authority, for no prohibition of the kind I had issued had as yet received the formal sanction of the Government.

On Saturday, the 28th, in the morning, I rode out ten miles to the spot, and found the poor old widow sitting with the dhajā round her head, a brass plate before her with undressed rice and flowers, and a coco-nut in each hand. She talked very collectedly, telling me that 'she had determined to mix her ashes with those of her departed husband, and should patiently wait my permission to do so, assured that God would enable her to sustain life till that was given, though she dared not eat or drink'. Looking at the sun, then rising before her over a long and beautiful reach of the Nerbudda river, she said calmly, 'My soul has been for five days with my husband's near that sun, nothing but my earthly frame is left; and this, I know, you will in time suffer to be mixed with the ashes of his in yonder pit, because it is not in your nature or usage wantonly to prolong the miseries of a poor old woman'.

'Indeed, it is not,—my object and duty is to save and preserve them [*sic*]; and I am come to dissuade you from this idle purpose, to urge you to live, and to keep your family from the disgrace of

being thought your murderers.'

'I am not afraid of their ever being so thought: they have all, like good children, done everything in their power to induce me to live among them; and, if I had done so, I know they would have loved and honoured me; but my duties to them have now ended. I commit them all to your care, and I go to attend my husband, *Ummēd Singh Upadhya*, with whose ashes on the funeral pile mine have been already three times mixed.'<sup>54</sup>

This was the first time in her long life that she had ever pronounced the name of her husband, for in India no woman, high or low, ever pronounces the name of her husband,—she would consider it disrespectful towards him to do so; and it is often amusing to see their embarrassment when asked the question by any European gentleman. They look right and left for some one to relieve them from the dilemma of appearing disrespectful either to the querist or to their absent husbands—they perceive that he is unacquainted with their duties on this point, and are afraid he will attribute their silence to disrespect. They know that few European gentlemen are acquainted with them; and when women go into our courts of justice, or other places where they are liable to be asked the names of their husbands, they commonly take one of their children or some other relation with them to pronounce the words in their

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<sup>54</sup> For explanation of this phrase, see the following story of the Lodhī woman, following note [14], in this chapter. The name is abnormal. Upadhya is a Brahman title meaning 'spiritual preceptor'. Brahmans serving in the army sometimes take the title Singh, which is more properly assumed by Rājput̄s or Sikhs.

stead. When the old lady named her husband, as she did with strong emphasis, and in a very deliberate manner, every one present was satisfied that she had resolved to die. 'I have', she continued, 'tasted largely of the bounty of Government, having been maintained by it with all my large family in ease and comfort upon our rent-free lands; and I feel assured that my children will not be suffered to want; but with them I have nothing more to do, our intercourse and communion here end. My soul (*prān*) is with *Ummēd Singh Upadhya*: and my ashes must here mix with his.'

Again looking to the sun—'I see them together', said she, with a tone and countenance that affected me a good deal, 'under the bridal canopy!'—alluding to the ceremonies of marriage; and I am satisfied that she at that moment really believed that she saw her own spirit and that of her husband under the bridal canopy in paradise.

I tried to work upon her pride and her fears. I told her that it was probable that the rent-free lands by which her family had been so long supported might be resumed by the Government, as a mark of its displeasure against the children for not dissuading her from the sacrifice; that the temples over her ancestors upon the bank might be levelled with the ground, in order to prevent their operating to induce others to make similar sacrifices; and lastly, that not one single brick or stone should ever mark the place where she died if she persisted in her resolution. But, if she consented to live, a splendid habitation should be built for

her among these temples, a handsome provision assigned for her support out of these rent-free lands, her children should come daily to visit her, and I should frequently do the same. She smiled, but held out her arm and said, 'My pulse has long ceased to beat, my spirit has departed, and I have nothing left but a little *earth*, that I wish to mix with the ashes of my husband. I shall suffer nothing in burning; and, if you wish proof, order some fire, and you shall see this arm consumed without giving me any pain'. I did not attempt to feel her pulse, but some of my people did, and declared that it had ceased to be perceptible. At this time every native present believed that she was incapable of suffering pain; and her end confirmed them in their opinion.

Satisfied myself that it would be unavailing to attempt to save her life, I sent for all the principal members of the family, and consented that she should be suffered to burn herself if they would enter into engagements that no other member of their family should ever do the same. This they all agreed to, and the papers having been drawn out in due form about midday, I sent down notice to the old lady, who seemed extremely pleased and thankful. The ceremonies of bathing were gone through before three [o'clock], while the wood and other combustible materials for a strong fire were collected and put into the pit. After bathing, she called for a 'pan' (betel leaf) and ate it, then rose up, and with one arm on the shoulder of her eldest son, and the other on that of her nephew, approached the fire. I had sentries placed all round, and no other person was allowed to approach within five

paces. As she rose up fire was set to the pile, and it was instantly in a blaze. The distance was about 150 yards. She came on with a calm and cheerful countenance, stopped once, and, casting her eyes upward, said, 'Why have they kept me five days from thee, my husband?' On coming to the sentries her supporters stopped, she walked once round the pit, paused a moment, and, while muttering a prayer, threw some flowers into the fire. She then walked up deliberately and steadily to the brink, stepped into the centre of the flame, sat down, and leaning back in the midst as if reposing upon a couch, was consumed without uttering a shriek or betraying one sign of agony.

A few instruments of music had been provided, and they played, as usual, as she approached the fire, not, as is commonly supposed, in order to drown screams, but to prevent the last words of the victim from being heard, as these are supposed to be prophetic, and might become sources of pain or strife to the living.<sup>55</sup> It was not expected that I should yield, and but few people had assembled to witness the sacrifice, so that there was little or nothing in the circumstances immediately around to stimulate her to any extraordinary exertions; and I am persuaded that it was the desire of again being united to her husband in the next world, and the entire confidence that she would be so if she now burned herself, that alone sustained her. From the morning he died (Tuesday) till Wednesday evening she ate 'pans' or betel

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<sup>55</sup> *An instance of such a prophecy, of a favourable kind, will be found at the end of this chapter; and another, disastrously fulfilled, in Chapter 21, post.*

leaves, but nothing else; and from Wednesday evening she ceased eating them. She drank no water from Tuesday. She went into the fire with the same cloth about her that she had worn in the bed of the river; but it was made wet from a persuasion that even the shadow of any impure thing falling upon her from going to the pile contaminates the woman unless counteracted by the sheet moistened in the holy stream.

I must do the family the justice to say that they all exerted themselves to dissuade the widow from her purpose, and had she lived she would assuredly have been cherished and honoured as the first female member of the whole house. There is no people in the world among whom parents are more loved, honoured, and obeyed than among the Hindoos; and the grandmother is always more honoured than the mother. No queen upon her throne could ever have been approached with more reverence by her subjects than was this old lady by all the members of her family as she sat upon a naked rock in the bed of the river, with only a red rag upon her head and a single-white sheet over her shoulders.

Soon after the battle of Trafalgar I heard a young lady exclaim, 'I could really wish to have had a brother killed in that action'. There is no doubt that a family in which a suttee takes place feels a good deal exalted in its own esteem and that of the community by the sacrifice. The sister of the Rājā of Rīwā was one of four or five wives who burned themselves with the remains of the Rājā of Udaipur; and nothing in the course of his life will ever be recollected by her brother with so much of pride and pleasure,

since the Udaipur Rājā is the head of the Rājput tribes.<sup>56</sup>

I asked the old lady when she had first resolved upon becoming a suttee, and she told me that about thirteen years before, while bathing in the river Nerbudda, near the spot where she then sat, with many other females of the family, the resolution had fixed itself in her mind as she looked at the splendid temples on the bank of the river erected by the different branches of the family over the ashes of her female relations who had at different times become suttees. Two, I think, were over her aunts, and one over the mother of her husband. They were very beautiful buildings, and had been erected at great cost and kept in good repair. She told me that she had never mentioned this her resolution to any one from that time, nor breathed a syllable on the subject till she called out 'Sat, sat, sat',<sup>57</sup> when her husband breathed his last with his head in her lap on the bank of the Nerbudda, to which he had been taken when no hopes remained of his surviving the fever of which he died.

Charles Harding, of the Bengal Civil Service, as magistrate of Benares, in 1806 prevented the widow of a Brahman from being burned. Twelve months after her husband's death she had been

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<sup>56</sup> *Rīwā (Rewah) is a considerable principality lying south of Allahabad and Mirzapore and north of Sāgar. The chiefs are Baghēl Rājput̄s. The proper title of the Udaipur, or Mēwār, chief is Rānā, not Raja. See 'Annals of Mewar', chapters 1-18, pp. 173-401, in the Popular Edition of Tod's Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan (Routledge, 1914), an excellent and cheap reprint. The original quarto edition is almost unobtainable.*

<sup>57</sup> The masculine form of the word satī (suttee).

goaded by her family into the expression of a wish to burn with some relic of her husband, preserved for the purpose. The pile was raised to her at Rāmnagar,<sup>58</sup> some two miles above Benares, on the opposite side of the river Ganges. She was not well secured upon the pile, and as soon as she felt the fire she jumped off and plunged into the river. The people all ran after her along the bank, but the current drove her towards Benares, whence a police boat put off and took her in.

She was almost dead with the fright and the water, in which she had been kept afloat by her clothes. She was taken to Harding; but the whole city of Benares was in an uproar, at the rescue of a Brahman's widow from the funeral pile, for such it had been considered, though the man had been a year dead. Thousands surrounded his house, and his court was filled with the principal men of the city, imploring him to surrender the woman; and among the rest was the poor woman's father, who declared that he could not support his daughter; and that she had, therefore, better be burned, as her husband's family would no longer receive her. The uproar was quite alarming to a young man, who felt all the responsibility upon himself in such a city as<sup>59</sup> Benares, with a population of three hundred thousand people,<sup>60</sup> so prone to popular insurrections, or risings *en masse*

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<sup>58</sup> Well known to tourists as the seat of the Mahārāja of Benares.

<sup>59</sup> 'of' in text.

<sup>60</sup> In the author's time no regular census had been taken. His rough estimate was excessive. The census figures, including the cantonments, are: 1872, 175,188; 1901,

very like them. He long argued the point of the time that had elapsed, and the unwillingness of the woman, but in vain; until at last the thought struck him suddenly, and he said that 'The sacrifice was manifestly unacceptable to their God—that the sacred river, as such, had rejected her; she had, without being able to swim, floated down two miles upon its bosom, in the face of an immense multitude; and it was clear that she had been rejected. Had she been an acceptable sacrifice, after the fire had touched her, the river would have received her'. This satisfied the whole crowd. The father said that, after this unanswerable argument, he would receive his daughter; and the whole crowd dispersed satisfied.<sup>61</sup>

The following conversation took place one morning between me and a native gentleman at Jubbulpore soon after suttees had been prohibited by Government:—

'What are the castes among whom women are not permitted to remarry after the death of their husbands?'

'They are, sir, Brahmans, Rājput̄s, Baniyās (shopkeepers), Kāyaths (writers).'

'Why not permit them to marry, now that they are no longer permitted to burn themselves with the dead bodies of their

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209,331; 1911, 203,804.

<sup>61</sup> *This Benares story, accidentally omitted from the author's text, was printed as a note at the end of the second volume. It has now been inserted in the place which seems most suitable. Interesting and well-told narratives of several suttees will be found in Bernier, Travels in the Mogul Empire, pp. 306-14, ed. Constable. See also Dubois, Hindu Manners, &c., 3rd ed. (1906), chapter 19.*

husbands?'

'The knowledge that they cannot unite themselves to a second husband without degradation from caste, tends strongly to secure their fidelity to the first, sir. Besides, if all widows were permitted to marry again, what distinction would remain between us and people of lower caste? We should all soon sink to a level with the lowest.'

'And so you are content to keep up your caste at the expense of the poor widows?'

'No; they are themselves as proud of the distinction as their husbands are.'

'And would they, do you think, like to hear the good old custom of burning themselves restored?'

'Some of them would, no doubt.'

'Why?'

'Because they become reunited to their husbands in paradise, and are there happy, free from all the troubles of this life.'

'But you should not let them have any troubles as widows.'

'If they behave well, they are the most honoured members of their deceased husbands' families; nothing in such families is ever done without consulting them, because all are proud to have the memory of their lost fathers, sons, and brothers so honoured by their widows.<sup>62</sup> But women feel that they are frail, and would often rather burn themselves than be exposed all their lives to

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<sup>62</sup> Widows are not always so well treated. Their life in Lower Bengal, especially, is not a pleasant one,

temptation and suspicion.'

'And why do not the men burn themselves to avoid the troubles of life?'

'Because they are not called to it from Heaven, as the women are.'

'And you think that the women were really called to be burned by the Deity?'

'No doubt; we all believe that they were called and supported by the Deity; and that no tender beings like women could otherwise voluntarily undergo such tortures—they become inspired with supernatural powers of courage and fortitude. When Dulī Sukul, the Sihōrā<sup>63</sup> banker's father, died, the wife of a Lodhī cultivator of the town declared, all at once, that she had been a suttee with him six times before; and that she would now go into paradise with him a seventh time. Nothing could persuade her from burning herself. She was between fifty and sixty years of age, and had grandchildren, and all her family tried to persuade her that it must be a mistake, but all in vain. She became a suttee, and was burnt the day after the body of the banker.'

'Did not Dulī Sukul's family, who were Brahmans, try to dissuade her from it, she being a Lodhī, a very low caste?'

'They did; but they said all things were possible with God; and

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<sup>63</sup> Sihōrā, on the road from Jubbulpore to Mirzāpur, twenty-seven miles from the former, is a town with a population of more than 5,000. A smaller town with the same name exists in the Bhandāra district of the Central Provinces.

it was generally believed that this was a call from Heaven.'

'And what became of the banker's widow?'

'She said that she felt no divine call to the flames. This was thirty years ago; and the banker was about thirty years of age when he died.'

'Then he will have rather an old wife in paradise?'

'No, sir; after they pass through the flames upon earth, both become young in paradise.'

'Sometimes women used to burn themselves with any relic of a husband, who had died far from home, did they not?'

'Yes, sir, I remember a fisherman, about twenty years ago, who went on some business to Benares from Jubbulpore, and who was to have been back in two months. Six months passed away without any news of him; and at last the wife dreamed that he had died on the road, and began forthwith, in the middle of the night, to call out "Sat, sat, sat!" Nothing could dissuade her from burning; and in the morning a pile was raised for her, on the north bank of the large tank of Hanumān,<sup>64</sup> where you have planted an avenue of trees. There I saw her burned with her husband's turban in her arms, and in ten days after her husband came back.'

'Now the burning has been prohibited, a man cannot get rid of a bad wife so easily?'

'But she was a good wife, sir, and bad ones do not often become suttees.'

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<sup>64</sup> The monkey-god. His shrines are very numerous in the Central Provinces and Bundēlkhand.

'Who made the pile for her?'

'Some of her family, but I forget who. They thought it must have been a call from Heaven, when, in reality, it was only a dream.'

'You are a Rājput?'

'Yes.'

'Do Rājput̄s in this part of India now destroy their female infants?'

'Never; that practice has ceased everywhere in these parts; and is growing into disuse in Bundēlkhand, where the Rājās, at the request of the British Government, have prohibited it among their subjects. This was a measure of real good. You see girls now at play in villages, where the face of one was never seen before, nor the voice of one heard.'

'But still those who have them grumble, and say that the Government which caused them to be preserved should undertake to provide for their marriage. Is it not so?'

'At first they grumbled a little, sir; but as the infants grew on their affections, they thought no more about it.'<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *Within the last hundred years more than one officer has believed that infanticide had been suppressed by his efforts, and yet the practice is by no means extinct. In the Agra Province the severely inquisitorial measures adopted in 1870, and rigorously enforced, have no doubt done much to break the custom, but, in the neighbouring province of Oudh, the practice continued to be common for many years later. A clear case in the Rāi Bareilī District came before me in 1889, though no one was punished, for lack of judicial proof against any individual. The author discusses infanticide as practised in Oudh in many passages of his Journey through the Kingdom of Oudh (Bentley, 1858), It is possible that female infanticide may be still prevalent in many Native States. Mr.*

Gurcharan Baboo, the Principal of the little Jubbulpore College,<sup>66</sup> called upon me one forenoon, soon after this conversation. He was educated in the Calcutta College; speaks and writes English exceedingly well; is tolerably well read in English literature, and is decidedly a *thinking man*. After talking over the matter which caused his visit, I told him of the Lodhī woman's burning herself with the Brahman banker at Sihōrā, and asked him what he thought of it. He said that 'In all probability this woman had really been the wife of the Brahman in some former birth—of which transposition a singular case had occurred in his own family.

'His great-grandfather had three wives, who all burnt themselves with his body. While they were burning, a large serpent came up, and, ascending the pile, was burnt with them. Soon after another came up, and did the same. They were seen by the whole multitude, who were satisfied that they had been the wives of his great-grandfather in a former birth, and would become so again after this sacrifice. When the "srāddh", or funeral obsequies, were performed after the

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Willoughby in the years preceding A.D. 1849 made great progress in stamping it out among the Jharejas of the Kathiāwār States in the Bombay Presidency. There is reason to hope that the crime will gradually disappear from all parts of India, but it is difficult to say how far it still prevails, though the general opinion is that it is now comparatively rare (*Census Report, India*, 1911, p. 217).

<sup>66</sup> A college of more pretensions now exists at Jabalpur (Jubbulpore), and is affiliated in Arts and Law to the University of Allahabad established in 1887. The small college alluded to in the text was abolished in 1850.

prescribed intervals,<sup>67</sup> the offerings and prayers were regularly made for *six souls* instead of four; and, to this day, every member of his family, and every Hindoo who had heard the story, believed that these two serpents had a just right to be considered among his ancestors, and to be prayed for accordingly in all "srāddh".'

A few days after this conversation with the Principal of the Jubbulpore College, I had a visit from Bholī Sukul, the present head of the Sihōrā banker's family, and youngest brother of the Brahman with whose ashes the Lodhī woman burned herself. I requested him to tell me all that he recollected about this singular suttee, and he did so as follows:

'When my eldest brother, the father of the late Dulī Sukul, who was so long a native collector under you in this district, died about twenty years ago at Sihōrā, a Lodhī woman, who resided two miles distant in the village of Khitolī, which has been held by our family for several generations, declared that she would burn herself with him on the funeral pile; that she had been his wife in three different births, had already burnt herself with him three times, and had to burn with him four times more. She was then sixty years of age, and had a husband living [of] about the same age. We were all astounded when she came forward with this story, and told her that it must be a mistake, as we were Brahmans, while she was a Lodhī. She said that there was no

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<sup>67</sup> For description of the tedious and complicated 'srāddh' ceremonies see chapter 11 of Monier Williams's *Religious Thought and Life in India*.

mistake in the matter; that she, in the last birth, resided with my brother in the sacred city of Benares, and one day gave a holy man who came to ask charity salt, by mistake, instead of sugar, with his food. That, in consequence, he told her she should, in the next birth, be separated from her husband, and be of inferior caste; but that, if she did her duty well in that state, she should be reunited to him in the following birth. We told her that all this must be a dream, and the widow of my brother insisted that, if she were not allowed to burn herself, the other should not be allowed to take her place. We prevented the widow from ascending the pile, and she died at a good old age only two years ago at Sihōrā. My brother's body was burned at Sihōrā, and the poor Lodhī woman came and stole one handful of the ashes, which she placed in her bosom, and took back with her to Khitolī. There she prevailed upon her husband and her brother to assist her in her return to her former husband and caste as a Brahman. No soul else would assist them, as we got the then native chief to prohibit it; and these three persons brought on their own heads the pile, on which she seated herself, with the ashes in her bosom. The husband and his brother set fire to the pile, and she was burned.<sup>68</sup>

'And what is now your opinion, after a lapse of twenty years?'

'Why, that she had really been the wife of my brother; for at the pile she prophesied that my nephew Dulī should be, what his

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<sup>68</sup> *This version of the story differs in some minute particulars from the version given ante, [14].*

grandfather had been, high in the service of the Government, and, as you know, he soon after became so.'

'And what did your father think?'

'He was so satisfied that she had been the wife of his eldest son in a former birth, that he defrayed all the expenses of her funeral ceremonies, and had them all observed with as much magnificence as those of any member of the family. Her tomb is still to be seen at Khitolī, and that of my brother at Sihōrā.'

I went to look at these tombs with Bholī Sukul himself some short time after this conversation, and found that all the people of the town of Sihōrā and village of Khitolī really believed that the old Lodhī woman had been his brother's wife in a former birth, and had now burned herself as his widow for the fourth time. Her tomb is at Khitolī, and his at Sihōrā.

## CHAPTER 5

### Marriages of Trees—The Tank and the Plantain—Meteors—Rainbows

Before quitting Jubbulpore, to which place I thought it very unlikely that I should ever return, I went to visit the groves in the vicinity, which, at the time I held the civil charge of the district in 1828, had been planted by different native gentlemen upon lands assigned to them rent-free for the purpose, on condition that the holder should bind himself to plant trees at the rate of twenty-five to the acre, and keep them up at that rate; and that for each grove, however small, he should build and keep in repair a well, lined with masonry, for watering the trees, and for the benefit of travellers.<sup>69</sup>

Some of these groves had already begun to yield fruit, and all had been *married*. Among the Hindoos, neither the man who plants a grove, nor his wife, can taste of the fruit till he has *married* one of the mango-trees to some other tree (commonly the tamarind-tree) that grows near it in the same grove. The proprietor of one of these groves that stands between

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<sup>69</sup> *In planting mango groves, it is a rule that they shall be as far from each other as not to admit of their branches ever meeting. 'Plant trees, but let them not touch' ('Ām lagao, nis lageñ nahīñ')* is the maxim. [W. H. S.]

the cantonment and the town, old Barjōr Singh, had spent so much in planting and watering the grove, and building walls and wells of *pucka*<sup>70</sup> masonry, that he could not afford to defray the expense of the marriage ceremonies till one of the trees, which was older than the rest when planted, began to bear fruit in 1833, and poor old Barjōr Singh and his wife were in great distress that they dared not taste of the fruit whose flavour was so much prized by their children. They began to think that they had neglected a serious duty, and might, in consequence, be taken off before another season could come round. They therefore sold all their silver and gold ornaments, and borrowed all they could; and before the next season the grove was married with all due pomp and ceremony, to the great delight of the old pair, who tasted of the fruit in June 1834.

The larger the number of the Brahmans that are fed on the occasion of the marriage, the greater the glory of the proprietor of the grove; and when I asked old Barjōr Singh, during my visit to his grove, how many he had feasted, he said, with a heavy sigh, that he had been able to feast only one hundred and fifty. He showed me the mango-tree which had acted the part of the bridegroom on the occasion, but the bride had disappeared from his side. 'And where is the bride, the tamarind?' 'The only tamarind I had in the grove died', said the old man, 'before we could bring about the wedding; and I was obliged to get a jasmine

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<sup>70</sup> *Pakkā*; the word here means 'cemented with lime mortar', and not only with mud (*kachchā*).

for a wife for my mango. I planted it here, so that we might, as required, cover both bride and bridegroom under one canopy during the ceremonies; but, after the marriage was over, the gardener neglected her, and she pined away and died.'

'And what made you prefer the jasmine to all other trees after the tamarind?'

'Because it is the most celebrated of all trees, save the rose.'

'And why not have chosen the rose for a wife?'

'Because no one ever heard of marriage between the rose and the mango; while they [*sic*] take place every day between the mango and the *chambēlī* (jasmine).'<sup>71</sup>

After returning from the groves, I had a visit after breakfast from a learned Muhammadan, now guardian to the young Rājā of Uchahara,<sup>72</sup> who resides part of his time at Jubbulpore. I mentioned my visit to the groves and the curious notion of the Hindoos regarding the necessity of marrying them; and he told me that, among Hindoos, the man who went to the expense of making a tank dared not drink of its waters till he had married his tank to some banana-tree, planted on the bank for the purpose.<sup>73</sup>

'But what', said he with a smile, 'could you expect from men who believe that Indra is the god who rules the heavens

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<sup>71</sup> *The chambēlī* is known in science as the *Jasminum grandiflorum*, and the mango-tree as *Mangifera Indica*.

<sup>72</sup> A small principality west of Rīwā, and 110 miles north-west of Jubbulpore. It is also known as Nāgaudh, or Nāgod.

<sup>73</sup> Compare the account of the marriage of the *tulasī* shrub (*Ocimum sanctum*) with the *sālagrām* stone, or fossil ammonite, in Chapter 19, *post*.

immediately over the earth, that he sleeps during eight months in the year, and during the other four his time is divided between his duties of sending down rain upon the earth, and repelling with his arrows Rājā Bali, who by his austere devotions (*tapasya*) has received from the higher gods a promise of the reversion of his dominions? The lightning which we see', said the learned Maulavī, 'they believe to be nothing more than the glittering of these arrows, as they are shot from the bow of Indra upon his foe Rājā Bali'.<sup>74</sup>

'But, my good friend Maulavī Sāhib, there are many good Muhammadans who believe that the meteors, which we call shooting stars, are in reality stars which the guardian angels of men snatch from the spheres, and throw at the devil as they see him passing through the air, or hiding himself under one or other of the constellations. Is it not so?'

'Yes, it is; but we have the authority of the holy prophet for this, as delivered down to us by his companions in the sacred traditions, and we are bound to believe it. When our holy prophet came upon the earth, he found it to be infested with a host of magicians, who, by their abominable rites and incantations, get into their interest certain devils, or demons, whom they used

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<sup>74</sup> There is a sublime passage in the Psalms of David, where the lightning is said to be the arrows of God. Psalm lxxvii:17, 'The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad.18. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven; the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.' [W. H. S.]The passage is quoted from the Authorized Bible version; the Prayer Book version is finer.

to send up to heaven to listen to the orders which the angels received from God regarding men and the world below. On hearing these orders, they came off and reported them to the magicians, who were thereby enabled to foretell the events which the angels were ordered to bring about. In this manner they often overheard the orders which the angel Gabriel received from God, and communicated them to the magicians as soon as he could deliver them to our holy prophet. Exulting in the knowledge obtained in this diabolical manner, these wretches tried to turn his prophecies into ridicule; and, seeing the evil effects of such practices among men, he prayed God to put a stop to them. From that time guardian angels have been stationed in different parts of the heavens, to keep off the devils; and as soon as one of them sees a devil sneaking too near the heaven of heavens, he snatches the nearest star, and flings it at him.<sup>75</sup> This, he added, was what all true Muhammadans believed regarding the shooting of stars. He had read nothing about them in the works of Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, or Galen, all of which he had carefully studied, and should be glad to learn from me what modern philosophers in Europe thought about them.

I explained to him the supposed distance and bulk of the fixed stars visible to the naked eye; their being radiant with unborrowed light, and probably every one of them, like our own

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<sup>75</sup> *'We guard them from every devil driven away with stones; except him who listeneth by stealth, at whom a visible flame is darted.'* Korān, chapter 15, Sale's translation. See post, end of this chapter.

sun, the great centre of a solar system of its own; embracing the vast orbits of numerous planets, revolving around it with their attendant satellites; the stars visible to the naked eye being but a very small portion of the whole which the telescope had now made distinctly visible to us; and those distinctly visible being one cluster among many thousand with which the genius of Galileo, Newton, the Herschells, and many other modern philosophers had discovered the heavens to be studded. I remarked that the notion that these mighty suns, the centres of planetary systems, should be made merely to be thrown at devils and demons, appeared to us just as unaccountable as those of the Hindoos regarding Indra's arrows.

'But', said he, 'these foolish Hindoos believe still greater absurdities. They believe that the rainbow is nothing but the fume of a large snake, concealed under the ground; that he vomits forth this fume from a hole in the surface of the earth, without being himself seen; and, when you ask them why, in that case, the rainbow should be in the west while the sun is in the east, and in the east while the sun is in the west, they know not what to say.'<sup>76</sup>

'The truth is, my friend Maulavī Sahib, the Hindoos, like a very great part of every other nation, are very much disposed to attribute to supernatural influences effects that the wiser portion of our species know to rise from natural causes.'

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<sup>76</sup> Nine Hindoos out of ten, or perhaps ninety-nine in a hundred, throughout India, believe the rainbow to arise from the breath of the snake, thrown up from the surface of the earth, as water is thrown up by whales from the surface of the ocean. [W. H. S.]

The Maulavī was right. In the *Mishkāt-ul- Masābih*,<sup>77</sup> the authentic traditions of their prophet,<sup>78</sup> it is stated that Ayesha, the widow of Muhammad, said, 'I heard His Majesty say, "The angels come down to the region next the world, and mention the works that have been pre-ordained in heaven; and the devils, who descend to the lowest region, listen to what the angels say, and hear the orders predestined in heaven, and carry them to fortune-tellers; therefore, they tell a hundred lies with it from themselves

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'Ibn Abbās said, "A man of His Majesty's friends informed me, that whilst His Majesty's friends were sitting with him one night, a very bright star shot; and His Highness said, "What did you say in the days of ignorance when a star shot like this?" They said, "God and His messenger know best; we used to say, a great man was born to-night, and a great man died."<sup>80</sup> Then

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<sup>77</sup> *Mishkāt* is a hole in a wall in which a lamp is placed, and *Masābih* the plural of "a lamp", because traditions are compared to lamps, and this book is like that which containeth a lamp. Another reason is, that *Masābih* is the name of a book, and this book comprehends its contents' (Matthews's translation, vol. i, p. v, note).

<sup>78</sup> *The full title is Mishkāt-ul-Masābih, or a Collection of the most Authentic Traditions regarding the Actions and Sayings of Muhammed; exhibiting the Origin of the Manners and Customs; the Civil, Religious, and Military Policy of the Muslemāns.* Translated from the original Arabic by Captain A. N. Matthews, Bengal Artillery. Two vols. 4to; Calcutta, 1809-10, This valuable work, published by subscription, is now very scarce. A fine copy is in the India Office Library.

<sup>79</sup> Book xxi, chapter 3, part i; vol. ii, p. 384. The quotations as given by the author are inexact. The editor has substituted correct extracts from Matthews's text. Matthews spells the name of the prophet's widow as Aáyeshah.

<sup>80</sup> *In Sparta, the Ephoroi, once every nine years, watched the sky during a whole*

His Majesty said, "You mistook, because the shootings of these stars are neither for the life nor death of any person; but when our cherisher orders a work, the bearers of the imperial throne sing hallelujahs; and the inhabitants of the regions who are near the bearers repeat it, till it reaches the lowest regions. After the angels which are near the bearers of the imperial throne say, "What did your cherisher order?" Then they are informed; and so it is handed from one region to another, till the information reaches the people of the lowest region. Then the devils steal it, and carry it to their friends, (that is) magicians; and these stars are thrown at these devils; not for the birth or death of any person. Then the things which the magicians tell, having heard from the devils, are true, but these magicians tell lies, and exaggerate in what they hear".'

Kutādah said, 'God has created stars for three uses; one of them, as a cause of ornament of the regions; the second, to stone the devil with; the third, to direct people going through forests and on the sea. Therefore, whoever shall explain them otherwise, does wrong, and loses his time, and speaks from his own invention and embellishes'.<sup>81</sup>

Ibn Abbās. [The prophet said,] "Whoever attains to the knowledge of astrology for any other explanation than the three

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*cloudless, moonless night, in profound silence; and, if they saw a shooting star, it was understood to indicate that the kings of Sparta had disobeyed the gods, and their authority was, in consequence, suspended till they had been purified by an oracle from Delphi or Olympia. [W. H. S.] This statement rests on the authority of Plutarch, Agis, 11.*

<sup>81</sup> *Mishkāt*. Part iii of same chapter; vol. ii, p. 386.

aforementioned, then verily he has attained to a branch of magic. An astrologer is a magician, and a magician is a necromancer, and a necromancer is an infidel."<sup>82</sup>

This work contains the precepts and sayings of Muhammad, as declared by his companions, who themselves heard them, or by those who heard them immediately from those companions; and they are considered to be binding upon the faith and conduct of Musalmans, though not all delivered from inspiration.

Everything that is written in the Korān itself is supposed to have been brought direct from God by the angel Gabriel.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p. 386.

<sup>83</sup> But the prying character of these devils is described in the Korān itself. According to Muhammadans, they had access to all the seven heavens till the time of Moses, who got them excluded from three. Christ got them excluded from three more; and Muhammad managed to get them excluded from the seventh and last. 'We have placed the twelve signs in the heavens, and have set them out in various figures for the observation of spectators, and we guard them from every devil driven away with stones; except him who listeneth by stealth, at whom a visible flame is darted' (Chapter 15). 'We have adorned the lower heaven with the ornament of stars, and we have placed therein a guard against every rebellious devil, that they may not listen to the discourse of exalted princes, for they are darted at from every side, to repel them, and a lasting torment is prepared for them; except him who catcheth a word by stealth, and is pursued by a shining flame' (Chapter 37). [W. H. 8.] Passages of this kind should be remembered by persons who expect orthodox Muhammadans to accept the results of modern science.

# CHAPTER 6

## Hindoo Marriages

Certain it is that no Hindoo will have a marriage in his family during the four months of the rainy season; for among eighty millions of souls<sup>84</sup> not one doubts that the Great Preserver of the universe is, during these four months, down on a visit to Rājā Bali, and, consequently, unable to bless the contract with his presence.<sup>85</sup>

Marriage is a sacred duty among Hindoos, a duty which every parent must perform for his children, otherwise they owe him no reverence. A family with a daughter unmarried after the age of puberty is considered to labour under the displeasure of the gods; and no member of the other sex considers himself *respectable* after the age of puberty till he is married. It is the duty of his parent or elder brothers to have him suitably married; and, if they do not do so, he reproaches them with his *degraded condition*. The same feeling, in a degree, pervades all the Muhammadan

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<sup>84</sup> The author's figure of 'eighty millions' was a mere guess, and probably, even in his time, was much below the mark. The figures of the census of 1911 are: Total population of India, excluding Burma . . . 301,432,623 Hindus . . . 217,197,213 The proportions in different provinces vary enormously.

<sup>85</sup> *See ante*. Chapter 1, note 3.

community; and nothing appears so strange to them as the apparent indifference of old bachelors among us to their *sad condition*.

Marriage, with all its ceremonies, its rights, and its duties, fills their imagination from infancy to age; and I do not believe there is a country upon earth in which a larger portion of the wealth of the community is spent in the ceremonies, or where the rights are better secured, or the duties better enforced, notwithstanding all the disadvantages of the laws of polygamy. Not one man in ten can afford to maintain more than one wife, and not one in ten of those who can afford it will venture upon 'a sea of troubles' in taking a second, if he has a child by the first. One of the evils which press most upon Indian society is the necessity which long usage has established of squandering large sums in marriage ceremonies. Instead of giving what they can to their children to establish them, and enable them to provide for their families and rise in the world, parents everywhere feel bound to squander all they can borrow in the festivities of their marriage. Men in India could never feel secure of being permitted freely to enjoy their property under despotic and unsettled governments, the only kind of governments they knew or hoped for; and much of the means that would otherwise have been laid out in forming substantial works, with a view to a return in income of some sort or another, for the remainder of their own lives and of those of their children, were expended in tombs, temples, sarāis, tanks, groves, and other works—useful and ornamental, no doubt, but

from which neither they nor their children could ever hope to derive income of any kind. The same feeling of insecurity gave birth, no doubt, to this preposterous usage, which tends so much to keep down the great mass of the people of India to that grade in which they were born, and in which they have nothing but their manual labour to depend upon for their subsistence. Every man feels himself bound to waste all his stock and capital, and exhaust all his credit, in feeding idlers during the ceremonies which attend the marriage of his children, because his ancestors squandered similar sums, and he would sink in the estimation of society if he were to allow his children to be married with less.

But it could not have been solely because men could not invest their means in profitable works, with any chance of being long permitted to enjoy the profits under such despotic and unsettled governments, that they squandered them in feeding idle people in marriage ceremonies; since temples, tanks, and groves secured esteem in this life, and promised some advantage in the next, and an outlay in such works might therefore have been preferred. But under such governments a man's title even to the exclusive possession of his wife might not be considered as altogether secure under the mere sanction of religion; and the outlay in feeding the family, tribe, and neighbourhood during the marriage ceremony seems to have been considered as a kind of value in exchange given for her to society. There is nothing that she and her husband recollect through life with so much pride and pleasure as the cost of their marriage, if it happen to be large for

their condition of life; it is their *amoka*, their title of nobility;<sup>86</sup> and their parents consider it their duty to make it as large as they can. A man would hardly feel secure of the sympathy of his family, tribe, circle of society, or rulers, for the loss of 'his ox, or his ass, or anything that is his', if it should happen to have cost him nothing; and, till he could feel secure of their sympathy for the loss, he would not feel very secure in the possession. He, therefore, or those who are interested in his welfare, strengthen his security by an outlay which invests his wife with a tangible value in cost, well understood by his circle and rulers. His family, tribe, and circle have received the purchase money, and feel bound to secure to him the commodity purchased; and, as they are in all such matters commonly much stronger than the rulers themselves, the money spent among them is more efficacious in securing the exclusive enjoyment of the wife than if it had been paid in taxes or fees to them for a marriage licence.<sup>87</sup> The pride of families and tribes, and the desire of the multitude to participate in the enjoyment of such ceremonies, tend to keep up this usage after the cause in which it originated may have ceased to operate;

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<sup>86</sup> *The word amoka is corrupt, and even Sir George Grierson cannot suggest a plausible explanation. Can it be a misprint for anka, in the sense of 'stamp'?*

<sup>87</sup> *Akbar levied a tax on marriages, ranging from a single copper coin (dām = 1/40th of rupee) for poor people to 10 gold mohurs, or about 150 rupees, for high officials. Abūl Fazl declares that 'the payment of this tax is looked upon as auspicious', a statement open to doubt (Blochmann, transl. Aīn, vol. i, p. 278). In 1772 Warren Hastings abolished the marriage fees levied up to that time in Bengal by the Muhammadan law-officers. But I am disposed to think that a modern finance minister might reconsider the propriety of imposing a moderate tax, carefully graduated.*

but it will, it is to be hoped, gradually decline with the increased feeling of security to person, property, and character under our rule. Nothing is now more common than to see an individual in the humblest rank spending all that he has, or can borrow, in the marriage of one of many daughters, and trusting to Providence for the means of marrying the others; nor in the higher, to find a young man, whose estates have, during a long minority, under the careful management of Government officers, been freed from very heavy debts, with which an improvident father had left them encumbered, the moment he attains his majority and enters upon the management, borrowing three times their annual rent, at an exorbitant interest, to marry a couple of sisters, at the same rate of outlay in feasts and fireworks that his grandmother was married with.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Extravagance in marriage expenses is still one of the principal curses of Indian society. Considerable efforts to secure reform have been made by various castes during recent years, but, as yet, small results only have been attained. The editor has seen numerous painful examples of the wreck of fine estates by young proprietors assuming the management after a long term of the careful stewardship of the Court of Wards.

# CHAPTER 7

## The Purveyance System,

We left Jubbulpore on the morning of the 20th November, 1835, and came on ten miles to Baghaurī. Several of our friends of the 29th Native Infantry accompanied us this first stage, where they had a good day's shooting. In 1830 I established here some vendors in wood to save the people from the miseries of the purveyance system; but I now found that a native collector, soon after I had resigned the civil charge of the district, and gone to Sāgar,<sup>89</sup> in order to ingratiate himself with the officers and get from them favourable testimonials, gave two regiments, as they marched over this road, free permission to help themselves gratis out of the store-rooms of these poor men, whom I had set up with a loan from the public treasury, declaring that it must be the wish and intention of Government to supply their public officers free of cost; and consequently that no excuses could be attended to. From that time shops and shopkeepers have disappeared. Wood for all public officers and establishments passing this road has ever since, as in former times, been collected from

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<sup>89</sup> Or Saugor, the head-quarters of the district of that name in the Central Provinces. The town is 109 miles north-west of Jabalpur. The author took charge of the Sāgar district in January 1831.

the surrounding villages gratis, under the purveyance system, in which all native public officers delight, and which, I am afraid, is encouraged by European officers, either from their ignorance or their indolence. They do not like the trouble of seeing the men paid either for their wood or their labour; and their head servants of the kitchen or the wardrobe weary and worry them out of their best resolutions on the subject. They make the poor men sit aloof by telling them that their master is a tiger before breakfast, and will eat them if they approach; and they tell their masters that there is no hope of getting the poor men to come for their money till they have bathed or taken their breakfast. The latter wait in hopes that the gentleman will come out or send for them as soon as he has been tamed by his breakfast; but this meal has put him in good humour with all the world, and he is now no longer unwilling to trust the payment of the poor men to his butler, or his *valet de chambre*. They keep the poor wretches waiting, declaring that they have as yet received no orders to pay them, till, hungry and weary, in the afternoon they all walk back to their homes in utter despair of getting anything.

If, in the meantime, the gentleman comes out, and finds the men, his servants pacify him by declaring either that they have not yet had time to carry his orders into effect, that they could not get copper change for silver rupees, or that they were anxious to collect all the people together before they paid any, lest they might pay some of them twice over. It is seldom, however, that he comes among them at all; he takes it for granted that the

people have all been paid; and passes the charge in the account of his servants, who all get what these porters ought to have received. Or, perhaps the gentleman may persuade himself that, if he pays his valet or butler, these functionaries will never pay the poor men, and think that he had better sit quiet and keep the money in his own pocket. The native police or revenue officer is directed by his superior to have wood collected for the camp of a regiment or great civil officers, and he sends out his myrmidons to employ the people around in felling trees, and cutting up wood enough to supply not only the camp, but his own cook-rooms and those of his friends for the next six months. The men so employed commonly get nothing; but the native officer receives credit for all manner of superlatively good qualities, which are enumerated in a certificate. Many a fine tree, dear to the affections of families and village communities, has been cut down in spite, or redeemed from the axe by a handsome present to this officer or his myrmidons. Lambs, kids, fowls, milk, vegetables, all come flowing in for the great man's table from poor people, who are too hopeless to seek for payment, or who are represented as too proud and wealthy to receive it. Such always have been and such always will be some of the evils of the purveyance system. If a police officer receives an order from the magistrate to provide a regiment, detachment, or individual with boats, carts, bullocks, or porters, he has all that can be found within his jurisdiction forthwith seized—releases all those whose proprietors are able and willing to pay what he

demands, and furnishes the rest, which are generally the worst, to the persons who require them. Police officers derive so much profit from these applications that they are always anxious they should be made; and will privately defeat all attempts of private individuals to provide themselves by dissuading or intimidating the proprietors of vehicles from voluntarily furnishing them. The gentleman's servant who is sent to procure them returns and tells his master that there are plenty of vehicles, but that their proprietors dare not send them without orders from the police; and that the police tell him they dare not give such orders without the special sanction of the magistrate. The magistrate is written to, but declares that his police have been prohibited from interfering in such matters without special orders, since the proprietors ought to be permitted to send their vehicles to whom they choose, except on occasions of great public emergency; and, as the present cannot be considered as one of these occasions, he does not feel authorized to issue such orders. On the Ganges, many men have made large fortunes by pretending a general authority to seize boats for the use of the commissariat, or for other Government purposes, on the ground of having been once or twice employed on that duty; and what they get is but a small portion of that which the public lose. One of these self-constituted functionaries has a boat seized on its way down or up the river; and the crew, who are merely hired for the occasion, and have a month's wages in advance, seeing no prospect of getting soon out of the hands of this pretended Government

servant, desert, and leave the boat on the sands; while the owner, if he ever learns the real state of the case, thinks it better to put up with his loss than to seek redress through expensive courts, and distant local authorities. If the boat happens to be loaded and to have a supercargo, who will not or cannot bribe high enough, he is abandoned on the sands by his crew; in his search for aid from the neighbourhood, his helplessness becomes known—he is perhaps murdered, or runs away in the apprehension of being so—the boat is plundered and made a wreck. Still the dread of the delays and costs of our courts, and the utter hopelessness of ever recovering the lost property, prevent the proprietors from seeking redress, and our Government authorities know nothing of the circumstances.

We remained at Baghaurī the 21st to enable our people to prepare for the long march they had before them, and to see a little more of our Jubbulpore friends, who were to have another day's shooting, as black partridges<sup>90</sup> and quail had been found abundant in the neighbourhood of our camp.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *Francolinus vulgaris*.

<sup>91</sup> *The purveyance system (Persian rasad rasānī)* above described is one of the necessary evils of Oriental life. It will be observed that the author, though so keenly sensitive to the abuses attending the system, proposes no substitute for it, and confesses that the small attempt he made to check abuse was a failure. From time immemorial it has been the custom for Government officials in India to be supplied with necessaries by the people of the country through which their camps pass. Under native Governments no officials ever dream of paying for anything. In British territory requisitions are limited, and in well ordered civil camps nothing is taken without payment except wood, coarse earthen vessels, and grass. The hereditary village potter

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supplies the pots, and this duty is fully recognized as one attaching to his office. The landholders supply the wood and grass. None of these things are ordinarily procurable by private purchase in sufficient quantity, and in most cases could not be bought at all. Officers commanding troops send in advance requisitions specifying the quantities of each article needed, and the indent is met by the civil authorities. Everything so indented for, including wood and grass, is supposed to be paid for, but in practice it is often impossible, with the agency available, to ensure actual payment to the persons entitled. Troops and the people in civil camps must live, and all that can be done is to check abuse, so far as possible, by vigilant administration. The obligation of landholders to supply necessaries for troops and officials on the march is so well established that it forms one of the conditions of the contract with Government under which proprietors in the permanently settled province of Benares hold their lands. The extreme abuses of which the system is capable under a lax and corrupt native Government are abundantly illustrated in the author's *Journey through the Kingdom of Oudh*. 'The System of Purveyance and Forced Labour' is the subject of article xxv in the Hon. F. J. Shore's curious book, *Notes on Indian Affairs* (London, 1837, 2 vols. 8vo). Many of the abuses denounced by Mr. Shore have been suppressed, but some, unhappily, still exist, and are likely to continue for many years.

## CHAPTER 8

### **Religious Sects—Self-government of the Castes—Chimney- sweepers— Washerwomen<sup>92</sup>—Elephant Drivers**

Mīr Salāmat Alī, the head native collector of the district, a venerable old Musalmān and most valuable public servant, who has been labouring in the same vineyard with me for the last fifteen years with great zeal, ability, and integrity, came to visit me after breakfast with two very pretty and interesting young sons. While we were sitting together my wife's under-woman<sup>93</sup> said to some one who was talking with her outside the tent-door, 'If that were really the case, should I not be degraded?' 'You see, Mīr Sāhib',<sup>94</sup> said I, 'that the very lowest members of society among these Hindoos still feel the pride of caste, and

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<sup>92</sup> This is a slip, probably due to the printer's reader. There are no chimney-sweepers in India. The word should be 'sweepers'. The members of this caste and a few other degraded communities, such as the Doms, do all the sweeping, scavenging, and conservancy work in India. 'Washerwomen' is another slip: read 'Washermen'.

<sup>93</sup> The 'under-woman', or 'second ayah', was a member of the sweeper caste.

<sup>94</sup> The title Mīr Sāhib implies that Salāmat Alī was a Sayyid, claiming descent from Alī, the cousin, son-in-law, and pupil of Muhammad, who became Khalīf in A.D. 656.

dread exclusion from their own, however low.'<sup>95</sup>

'Yes', said the Mīr, 'they are a very strange kind of people, and I question whether they ever had a real prophet among them.'

I question, Mīr Sahib, whether they really ever had such a person. They of course think the incarnations of their three great divinities were beings infinitely superior to prophets, being in all their attributes and prerogatives equal to the divinities themselves.<sup>96</sup> But we are disposed to think that these incarnations were nothing more than great men whom their flatterers and poets have exalted into gods—this was the way in which men made their gods in ancient Greece and Egypt. These great men were generally conquerors whose glory consisted in the destruction of their fellow creatures; and this is the glory which their flatterers are most prone to extol. All that the poets have sung of the actions of men is now received as revelation from heaven; though nothing can be more monstrous than the actions attributed to the best incarnation, Krishna, of the best of their gods, Vishnu.<sup>97</sup>

'No doubt', said Salāmat Ali; 'and had they ever had a real prophet among them he would have revealed better things to

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<sup>95</sup> The sweeper castes stand outside the Hindoo pale, and often incline to Muhammadan practices. They worship a special form of the Deity, under the names of Lāl Beg, Lāl Guru, &c.

<sup>96</sup> *No avatār* or incarnation of Brahma is known to most Hindoos, and incarnations of Siva are rarely mentioned. The only *avatārs* ordinarily recognized are those of Vishnu, as enumerated ante. Chapter 2, note 4.

<sup>97</sup> *This theory is a very inadequate explanation of the doctrine of avatārs.*

them. Strange people! when their women go on pilgrimages to Gayā, they have their heads shaved before the image of their god; and the offering of the hair is equivalent to the offer of their heads;<sup>98</sup> for heads, thank God, they dare no longer offer within the Company's territories.'

'Do you. Mīr Sahib, think that they continue to offer up human sacrifices anywhere?'

'Certainly I do. There is a Rājā at Ratanpur, or somewhere between Mandlā and Sambalpur, who has a man offered up to Dēvī every year, and that man must be a Brahman. If he can get a Brahman traveller, well and good; if not, he and his priests offer one of his own subjects. Every Brahman that has to pass through this territory goes in disguise.<sup>99</sup> With what energy did

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<sup>98</sup> *Women . . . are most careful to preserve their hair intact. They pride themselves on its length and weight. For a woman to have to part with her hair is one of the greatest of degradations, and the most terrible of all trials. It is the mark of widowhood. Yet in some sacred places, especially at the confluence of rivers, the cutting off and offering of a few locks of hair (Venī-dānam) by a virtuous wife is considered a highly meritorious act' (Monier Williams, Religious Thought and Life in India, p, 375). Gayā in Bihār fifty-five miles south of Patna, is much frequented by pilgrims devoted to Vishnu.*

<sup>99</sup> *All the places named are in the Central Provinces. Ratanpur, in the Bilāspur District, is a place of much antiquarian interest, full of ruins; Mandlā, in the Mandlā District, was the capital of the later Gond chiefs of Garhā Mandlā; and Sambalpur is the capital of the Sambalpur District. If the story is true, the selection of a Brahman for sacrifice is remarkable, though not without precedent. Human sacrifice has prevailed largely in India, and is not yet quite extinct. In 1891 some Jāts in the Muzaffarnagar District of the United Provinces sacrificed a boy in a very painful manner for some unascertained magical purpose. It was supposed that the object was to induce the gods to grant offspring to a childless woman. Other similar cases have occurred in recent years. One occurred close to Calcutta in 1892. In the hill tracts of Orissa bordering on the*

our emperor Aurangzēb apply himself to put down iniquities like this in the Rājputāna states, but all in vain. If a Rājā died, all his numerous wives burnt themselves with his body—even their servants, male and female, were obliged to do the same; for, said his friends, what is he to do in the next world without attendants? The pile was enormous. On the top sat the queen with the body of the prince; the servants, male and female, according to their degree, below; and a large army stood all round to drive into the fire again or kill all who should attempt to escape.<sup>100</sup>

'This is all very true, Mīr Sāhib, but you must admit that, though there is a great deal of absurdity in their customs and opinions, there is, on the other hand, much that we might all

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*Central Provinces the rite of human sacrifice was practised by the Khonds on an awful scale, and with horrid cruelty, It was suppressed by the special efforts of Macpherson, Campbell, MacVicar, and other officers, between the years 1837 and 1854. Daring that period the British officers rescued 1,506 victims intended for sacrifice (Narrative of Major-General John Campbell, C.B., of his Operations in the Hill Tracts of Orissa for the Suppression of Human Sacrifices and Female Infanticide. Printed for private circulation. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1861). The rite, when practised by Hindoos may have been borrowed from some of the aboriginal races. The practice, however, has been so general throughout the world that few peoples can claim the honour of freedom from the stain of adopting it at one time or another, Much curious information on the subject, and many modern instances of human sacrifices in India, are collected in the article 'Sacrifice' in Balfour, *Cyclopaedia of India*, 3rd edition, 1885. Major S. C. Macpherson, *Memorials of Service in India* (1865), and Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 3rd edition, Part V, vol. i (1912), pp. 236 seq., may also be consulted.*

<sup>100</sup> *Bernier vividly describes an 'infernal tragedy' of this kind which he witnessed, in or about the year 1659, during Aurangzēb's reign, in Rājputāna. On that occasion five female slaves burnt themselves with their mistress (Travels, ed. Constable and V. A. Smith (1914), p. 309).*

take an example from. The Hindoo believes that Christians and Musalmāns may be as good men in all relations of life as himself, and in as fair a way to heaven as he is; for he believes that my Bible and your Korān are as much revelations framed by the Deity for our guidance, as the Shāstras are for his. He doubts not that our Christ was the Son of God, nor that Muhammad was the prophet of God; and all that he asks from us is to allow him freely to believe in his own gods, and to worship in his own way. Nor does one caste or sect of Hindoos ever believe itself to be alone in the right way, or detest any other for not following in the same path, as they have as much of toleration for each other as they have for us.<sup>101</sup>

'True,' exclaimed Salāmat Alī, 'too true! we have ruined each other; we have cut each other's throats; we have lost the empire, and we deserve to lose it. You won it, and you preserved it by your *union*—ten men with one heart are equal to a hundred men with different hearts. A Hindoo may feel himself authorized to take in a Musalmān, and might even think it *meritorious* to do so; but he would never think it meritorious to take in one of his own religion. There are no less than seventy- two sects of Muhammadans; and every one of these sects would not only take in the followers of every other religion on earth, but every

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<sup>101</sup> *Hinduism is a social system, not a creed, A Hindoo may believe, or disbelieve, what speculative doctrine he chooses, but he must not eat, drink, or marry, save in accordance with the custom of his caste. Compare Asoka on toleration; 'The sects of other people all deserve reverence for one reason or another' (Rock Edict xii; V. A. Smith, Asoka, 2nd edition (1909), p. 170).*

member of every one of the other seventy-one sects; and the nearer that sect is to its own, the greater the merit in taking in its members.'<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Mīr Salāmat Alī is a staunch Sunnī, the sect of Osmān; and they are always at daggers drawn with the Shīas, or the sect of Alī. He alludes to the Shīas when he says that one of the seventy-two sects is always ready to take in the whole of the other seventy-one. Muhammad, according to the traditions, was one day heard to say, 'The time will come when my followers will be divided into seventy-three sects; all of them will assuredly go to hell save one.' Every one of the seventy-three sects believes itself to be the one happily excepted by their prophet, and predestined to paradise. I am sometimes disposed to think Muhammad was self-deluded, however difficult it might be to account for so much 'method in his madness'. It is difficult to conceive a man placed in such circumstances with more amiable dispositions or with juster views of the rights and duties of men in all their relations with each other, than are exhibited by him on almost all occasions, save where the question of faith in his divine mission was concerned. A very interesting and useful book might be made out of the history of those men, more or less mad, by whom multitudes of mankind have been led and perhaps governed; and a philosophical analysis of the points on which they were really mad and really sane, would show many of them to have been fit subjects for a madhouse during the whole career of their glory. [W. H. S.] For an account of Muhammadan sects, see section viii of the Preliminary Dissertation in Sale's Korān, entitled, 'Of the Principal Sects among the Muhammadans; and of those who have pretended to Prophecy among the Arabs, in or since the Time of Muhammad'; and T. P. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam* (1885). The chief sects of the Sunnīs, or Traditionists, are four in number. 'The principal sects of the Shīas are five, which are subdivided into an almost innumerable number.' The court of the kings of Oudh was Shīa. In most parts of India the Sunnī faith prevails. The relation between genius and insanity is well expressed by Dryden (*Absalom and Achitophel*): Great wits are sure to madness near allied, And thin partitions do their bounds divide. The treatise of Professor Cesare Lombroso, entitled *The Man of Genius* (London edition, 1891), is devoted to proof and illustration of the proposition that genius is 'a special morbid condition'. He deals briefly with the case of Muhammad at pages 31, 39, and 325, maintaining that the prophet, like Saint Paul, Julius Caesar, and many other men of genius, was subject to epileptic fits. The*

'Something has happened of late to annoy you, I fear, Mīr Sāhib?'

'Something happens to annoy us every day, sir, where we are more than one sect of us together; and wherever you find Musalmāns you will find them divided into sects.'

It is not, perhaps, known to many of my countrymen in India that in every city and town in the country the right of sweeping the houses and streets is one of the most intolerable of monopolies, supported entirely by the pride of caste among the scavengers, who are all of the lowest class. The right of sweeping within a certain range is recognized by the caste to belong to a certain member; and, if any other member presumes to sweep within that range, he is excommunicated—no other member will smoke out of his pipe, or drink out of his jug; and he can get restored to caste only by a feast to the whole body of sweepers. If any housekeeper within a particular circle happens to offend the sweeper of that range, none of his filth will be removed till he pacifies him, because no other sweeper will dare to touch it; and the people of a town are often more tyrannized over by these people than by any other.<sup>103</sup>

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Professor's book seems to be exactly what Sir W. H. Sleeman desired to see.

<sup>103</sup> In the author's time, when municipal conservancy and sanitation were almost unknown in India, the tyranny of the sweepers' guild was chiefly felt as a private inconvenience. It is now one of the principal of the many difficulties, little understood in Europe, which bar the progress of Indian sanitary reform. The sweepers cannot be readily coerced because no Hindoo or Musalmān would do their work to save his life, nor will he pollute himself even by beating the refractory scavenger. A strike of sweepers on the occasion of a great fair, or of a cholera epidemic, is a most dangerous

It is worthy of remark that in India the spirit of combination is always in the inverse ratio to the rank of the class; weakest in the highest, and strongest in the lowest class. All infringements upon the rules of the class are punished by fines. Every fine furnishes a feast at which every member sits and enjoys himself. Payment is enforced by excommunication—no one of the caste will eat, drink, or smoke with the convicted till the fine is paid; and, as every one shares in the fine, every one does his best to enforce payment. The fines are imposed by the elders, who know the circumstances of the culprit, and fix the amount accordingly. Washermen will often at a large station combine to prevent the washermen of one gentleman from washing the clothes of the servants of any other gentleman, or the servants of one gentleman from getting their clothes washed by any other person than their own master's washerman. This enables them sometimes to raise the rate of washing to double the fair or ordinary rate; and at such places the washermen are always drunk with one continued routine of feasts from the fines levied.<sup>104</sup> The cost of these fees falls ultimately upon the poor servants or their masters. This combination, however, is not always for bad or selfish purposes. I was once on the staff of an officer commanding a brigade on service, whose elephant driver exercised an influence over him that was often mischievous

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calamity. The vested rights described in the text are so fully recognized in practice that they are frequently the subject of sale or mortgage.

<sup>104</sup> The low-caste Hindoos are generally fond of drink, when they can get it, but seldom commit crime under its influence.

and sometimes dangerous;<sup>105</sup> for in marching and choosing his ground, this man was more often consulted than the quarter-master-general. His bearing was most insolent, and became intolerable, as well to the European gentlemen as to the people of his caste.<sup>106</sup> He at last committed himself by saying that he would spit in the face of another gentleman's elephant driver with whom he was disputing. All the elephant drivers in our large camp were immediately assembled, and it was determined in council to refer the matter to the decision of the Rājā of Darbhanga's driver, who was acknowledged the head of the class. We were all breakfasting with the brigadier after muster when the reply came—the distance to Darbhanga from Nāthpur on the Kūsī river, where we then were, must have been a hundred and fifty miles.<sup>107</sup> We saw men running in all directions through the camp, without knowing why, till at last one came and summoned the brigadier's driver. With a face of terror he came and implored the protection of the brigadier; who got angry, and fumed a good deal, but seeing no expression of sympathy on the faces of his officers, he told the man to go and hear his sentence. He was

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<sup>105</sup> An elephant driver, by reason of his position on the animal, has opportunities for private conversation with his master.

<sup>106</sup> *Elephant drivers (mahouts)* are Muhammadans, who should have no caste, but Indian Musalmāns have become Hinduized, and fallen under the dominion of caste.

<sup>107</sup> Darbhanga is in Tīrhūt, seventy miles NE. of Dinapore. The Kūsī (Kōsī or Koosee) river rises in the mountains of Nepāl, and falls into the Ganges after a course of about 325 miles. Nāthpur, in the Puraniya (Purneah) District, is a mart for the trade with Nepal.

escorted to a circle formed by all the drivers in camp, who were seated on the grass. The offender was taken into the middle of the circle and commanded to stand on one leg<sup>108</sup> while the Raja's driver's letter was read. He did so, and the letter directed him to apologize to the offended party, pay a heavy fine for a feast, and pledge himself to the offended drivers never to offend again. All the officers in camp were delighted, and some, who went to hear the sentence explained, declared that in no court in the world could the thing have been done with more solemnity and effect. The man's character was quite altered by it, and he became the most docile of drivers. On the same principle here stated of enlisting the community in the punishment of offenders, the New Zealanders, and other savage tribes who have been fond of human flesh, have generally been found to confine the feast to the body of those who were put to death for offences against the state or the individual. I and all the officers of my regiment were at one time in the habit of making every servant who required punishment or admonition to bring immediately, and give to the first religious mendicant we could pick up, the fine we thought just. All the religionists in the neighbourhood declared that justice had never been so well administered in any other regiment; no servant got any sympathy from them—they were all told that their masters were far too lenient.

We crossed the Hiran river<sup>109</sup> about ten miles from our

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<sup>108</sup> The customary attitude of a suppliant.

<sup>109</sup> A small river which falls into the Nerbudda on the right-hand side, at Sānkā. Its

last ground on the 22nd,<sup>110</sup> and came on two miles to our tents in a mango grove close to the town of Katangī,<sup>111</sup> and under the Vindhya range of sandstone hills, which rise almost perpendicular to the height of some eight hundred feet over the town. This range from Katangī skirts the Nerbudda valley to the north, as the Sātpura range skirts it to the south; and both are of the same sandstone formation capped with basalt upon which here and there are found masses of laterite, or iron clay. Nothing has ever yet been found reposing upon this iron clay.<sup>112</sup> The strata of this range have a gentle and almost imperceptible dip to the north, at right angles to its face which overlooks the valley, and this face has everywhere the appearance of a range of gigantic round bastions projecting into what was perhaps a lake, and is now a well-peopled, well-cultivated, and very happy valley, about twenty miles wide. The river crosses and recrosses it diagonally.

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general course is south-west.

<sup>110</sup> November, 1835.

<sup>111</sup> *Described in the Gazetteer* (1870) as 'a large but decaying village in the Jabalpur district, situated at the foot of the Bhānner hills, twenty-two miles to the north-west of Jabalpur, on the north side of the Hiran, and on the road to Sāgar'.

<sup>112</sup> *The convenient restriction of the name Vindhya to the hills north, and of Sātpura to the hills south of the Nerbudda is of modern origin (Manual of the Geology of India, 1st ed., Part I, p. iv).* The Sātpura range, thus defined, separates the valley of the Nerbudda from the valleys of the Taptī flowing west, and the Mahānadī flowing east. The Vindhyan sandstones certainly are a formation of immense antiquity, perhaps pre-Silurian. They are azoic, or devoid of fossils; and it is consequently impossible to determine exactly their geological age, or 'horizon' (*ibid.* p. xxiii). The cappings of basalt, in some cases with laterite superimposed, suggest many difficult problems, which will be briefly discussed in the notes to Chapters 14 and 17.

Near Jubbulpore it flows along for some distance close under the Sātpura range to the south; and crossing over the valley from Bheraghāt, it reaches the Vindhya range to the north, at the point where it reaches the Hiran river, forty miles below.

## CHAPTER 9

### **The Great Iconoclast—Troops routed by Hornets —The Rānī of Garhā—Hornets' Nests in India**

On the 23rd,<sup>113</sup> we came on nine miles to Sangrāmpur, and, on the 24th, nine more to the valley of Jabērā,<sup>114</sup> situated on the western extremity of the bed of a large lake, which is now covered by twenty-four villages. The waters were kept in by a large wall that united two hills about four miles south of Jabērā. This wall was built of great cut freestone blocks from the two hills of the Vindhiya range, which it united. It was about half a mile long, one hundred feet broad at the base, and about one hundred feet high. The stones, though cut, were never, apparently, cemented; and the wall has long given way in the centre, through which now falls a small stream that passes from east to west of what was once the bottom of the lake, and now is the site of so many industrious and happy little village communities.<sup>115</sup> The proprietor of the village of Jabērā, in whose

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<sup>113</sup> November, 1835.

<sup>114</sup> Sangrāmpur is in the Jabalpur District, thirty miles north-west of Jabalpur, or the road to Sāgar. The village of Jabērā is thirty-nine miles from Jabalpur.

<sup>115</sup> Similar lakes, formed by means of huge dams thrown across valleys, are numerous in the Central Provinces and Bundēlkhand. The embankments of some of

mango grove our tents were pitched, conducted me to the ruins of the wall; and told me that it had been broken down by the order of the Emperor Aurangzēb.<sup>116</sup> History to these people is all a fairy tale; and this emperor is the great destroyer of everything that the Muhammadans in their fanaticism have demolished of the Hindoo sculpture or architecture; and yet, singular as it may appear, they never mention his name with any feelings of indignation or hatred. With every scene of his supposed outrage against their gods or their temples, there is always associated the recollection of some instance of his piety, and the Hindoos' glory—of some idol, for instance, or column, preserved from his fury by a miracle, whose divine origin he is supposed at once to have recognized with all due reverence.

At Bherāgarh,<sup>117</sup> the high priest of the temple told us that Aurangzēb and his soldiers knocked off the heads, arms, and noses of all the idols, saying that 'if they had really any of the

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these lakes are maintained by the Indian Government, and the water is distributed for irrigation. Many of the lakes are extremely beautiful, and the ruins of grand temples and palaces are often found on their banks. Several of the embankments are known to have been built by the Chandēl princes between A.D. 800 and 1200, and some are believed to be the work of an earlier Parihār dynasty.

<sup>116</sup> A.D. 1658—1707. Aurangzēb, though possibly credited with more destruction than he accomplished, did really destroy many hundreds of Hindoo temples. A historian mentions the demolition of 262 at three places in Rājputāna in a single year (A.D. 1679-80) (E. and D. vii, 188).

<sup>117</sup> *This name is used as a synonym for Bheraghāt, ante*, Chapter 1, paragraph 1. It is written Beragur in the author's text. The author, in *Ramaseeana*, Introduction, p. 77, note, describes the Gaurī-Sankar sculpture as being 'at Beragur on the Nerbudda river'.

godhead in them, they would assuredly now show it, and save themselves'. But when they came to the door of Gaurī Sankar's apartments, they were attacked by a nest of hornets, that put the whole of the emperor's army to the rout; and his imperial majesty called out: 'Here we have really something like a god, and we shall not suffer him to be molested; if all your gods could give us proof like this of their divinity, not a nose of them would ever be touched'.

The popular belief, however, is that after Aurangzēb's army had struck off all the prominent features of the other gods, one of the soldiers entered the temple, and struck off the ear of one of the prostrate images underneath their vehicle, the Bull. 'My dear', said Gaurī, 'do you see what these saucy men are about?' Her consort turned round his head;<sup>118</sup> and, seeing the soldiers around him, brought all the hornets up from the marble rocks below, where there are still so many nests of them, and the whole army fled before them to Teorī, five miles.<sup>119</sup> It is very likely that some body of troops by whom the rest of the images had been mutilated, may have been driven off by a nest of hornets from within the temple where this statue stands. I have seen six companies of infantry, with a train of artillery and a squadron of horse, all put to the rout by a single nest of hornets,

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<sup>118</sup> Gaurī is one of the many names of Pārvatī, or Dēvī, the consort of the god Siva, Sankar, or Māhadēo, who rides upon the bull Nandī.

<sup>119</sup> *This village seems to be the same as Tewar, the ancient Tripura, 'six miles to the west of Jabalpur; and on the south side of the Bombay road' (A. S. R., vol. ix, p. 57). The adjacent ruins are known by the name of Karanbēl.*

and driven off some miles with all their horses and bullocks. The officers generally save themselves by keeping within their tents, and creeping under their bed-clothes, or their carpets; and servants often escape by covering themselves up in their blankets, and lying perfectly still. Horses are often stung to a state of madness, in which they throw themselves over precipices and break their limbs, or kill themselves. The grooms, in trying to save their horses, are generally the people who suffer most in a camp attacked by such an enemy. I have seen some so stung as to recover with difficulty; and I believe there have been instances of people not recovering at all. In such a frightful scene I have seen a bullock sitting and chewing the cud as calmly as if the whole thing had been got up for his amusement. The hornets seldom touch any animal that remains perfectly still.

On the bank of the Bīnā river at Eran, in the Sāgar district, is a beautiful pillar of a single freestone, more than fifty feet high, surmounted by a figure of Krishna, with the glory round his head.<sup>120</sup> Some few of the rays of this glory have been struck off by lightning; but the people declare that this was done by a shot fired at it from a cannon by order of Aurangzēb, as his army

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<sup>120</sup> *The pillar bears an inscription showing that it was erected during the reign of Budha Gupta, in the year 165 of the Gupta era, corresponding to A.D. 484-5. This, and the other important remains of antiquity at Eran, are fully described in A. S. R., vol. vii, p. 88; vol. x, pp. 76-90, pl. xxiii-xxx; and vol. xiv, p. 149, pl. xxxi; also in Fleet, Gupta Inscriptions (Calcutta, 1888). The material of the pillar is red sandstone. According to Cunningham the total height is 43 feet. The peculiar double-faced, two-armed image on the summit does not seem to be intended for Krishna, but I cannot say what the meaning is (H. F. A., p. 174, fig. 121).*

was marching by on its way to the Deccan. Before the scattered fragments, however, could reach the ground, the air was filled, they say, by a swarm of hornets, that put

the whole army to flight; and the emperor ordered his gunners to desist, declaring that he was 'satisfied of the presence of the god'. There is hardly any part of India in which, according to popular belief, similar miracles were not worked to convince the emperor of the peculiar merits or sanctity of particular idols or temples, according to the traditions of the people, derived, of course, from the inventions of priests. I should mention that these hornets suspend their nests to the branches of the highest trees, under rocks, or in old deserted temples. Native travellers, soldiers, and camp followers, cook and eat their food under such trees; but they always avoid one in which there is a nest of hornets, particularly on a still day. Sometimes they do not discover the nest till it is too late. The unlucky wight goes on feeding his fire, and delighting in the prospect of the feast before him, as the smoke ascends in curling eddies to the nest of the hornets. The moment it touches them they sally forth and descend, and sting like mad creatures every living thing they find in motion. Three companies of my regiment were escorting treasure in boats from Allahabad to Cawnpore for the army under the Marquis of Hastings, in 1817.<sup>121</sup> The soldiers all took their dinners on shore every day; and one still afternoon a sipāhī (sepoy), by cooking his dinner under one of those nests without

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<sup>121</sup> During the wars with the Marāthās and Pindhārīs, which ended in 1819.

seeing it, sent the infuriated swarm among the whole of his comrades, who were cooking in the same grove, and undressed, as they always are on such occasions. Treasure, food, and all were immediately deserted, and the whole of the party, save the European officers, were up to their noses in the river Ganges. The hornets hovered over them; and it was amusing to see them bobbing their heads under as the insects tried to pounce upon them. The officers covered themselves up in the carpets of their boats; and, as the day was a hot one, their situation was still more uncomfortable than that of the men. Darkness alone put an end to the conflict.

I should mention that the poor old Rānī, or Queen of Garhā, Lachhmī Kuār, came out as far as Katangī with us to take leave of my wife, to whom she has always been attached. She had been in the habit of spending a day with her at my house once a week; and being the only European lady from whom she had ever received any attention, or indeed ever been on terms of any intimacy with, she feels the more sensible of the little offices of kindness and courtesy she has received from her.<sup>122</sup> Her husband, Narhar Sā, was the last of the long line of sixty-two sovereigns who reigned over these territories from the year A.D. 358 to the Sāgar conquest, A.D. 1781.<sup>123</sup> He died a prisoner

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<sup>122</sup> After we left Jubbulpore, the old Rānī used to receive much kind and considerate attention from the Hon. Mrs. Shore, a very amiable woman, the wife of the Governor-General's representative, the Hon. Mr. Shore, a very worthy and able member of the Bengal Civil Service. [W. H. S.] For notice of Mr. Shore, see note at end of Chapter 13.

<sup>123</sup> See the author's paper entitled 'History of the Gurha Mundala Rajas', in J. A. S.

in the fortress of Kūrai, in the Sāgar district, in A. D. 1789, leaving two widows.<sup>124</sup> One burnt herself upon the funeral pile, and the other was prevented from doing so, merely because she was thought too young, as she was not then fifteen years of age. She received a small pension from the Sāgar Government, which was still further reduced under the Nāgpur Government which succeeded it in the Jubbulpore district in which the pension had been assigned; and it was not thought necessary to increase the amount of this pension when the territory came under our dominion,<sup>125</sup> so that she has had barely enough to subsist upon, about one hundred rupees a month. She is now about sixty years of age, and still a very good-looking woman. In her youth she must have been beautiful. She does not object to appear unveiled before gentlemen on any particular occasion; and, when Lord W. Bentinck was at Jubbulpore in 1833, I introduced, the old queen to him. He seemed much interested, and ordered the old

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B., vol. vi (1837), p. 621, and the article 'Mandla' in *C. P. Gazetteer* (1870).

<sup>124</sup> Kūrai is on the route from Sāgar to Nasirābād, thirty-one miles WNW. of the former.

<sup>125</sup> The 'Sāgar and Nerbudda Territories', comprising the Sāgar, Jabalpur, Hoshangābād, Seonī, Damoh, Narsinghpur, and Baitūl Mandlā Districts, are now under the Local Administration of the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, established in 1861 by Lord Canning, who appointed Sir Richard Temple Chief Commissioner. These territories were at first administered by a semi-political agency, but were afterwards, in 1852, placed under the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces (now the Agra Province in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh), to whom they remained subject until 1861. They had been ceded by the Marāthās to the British in 1818, and the cession was confirmed by the treaty of 1826.

lady a pair of shawls. None but very coarse ones were found in the store-rooms of the Governor-General's representative, and his lordship said these were not such as a Governor-General could present, or a queen, however poor, receive; and as his own 'toshakhāna' (wardrobe) had gone on,<sup>126</sup> he desired that a pair of the finest kind should be purchased and presented to her in his name. The orders were given in her presence and mine. I was obliged to return to Sāgar before they could be carried into effect; and, when I returned in 1835,<sup>127</sup> I found that the *rejected* shawls had been presented to her, and were such coarse things that she was ashamed to wear them, as much, I really believe, on account of the exalted person who had given them, as her own. She never mentioned the subject till I asked her to let me see the shawls, which she did reluctantly, and she was too proud to complain. How the good intentions of the Governor-General had been frustrated in this case I have never learned. The native officer in charge of the store was dead, and the Governor-General's representative had left the place. Better could not, I suppose, be got at this time, and he did not like to defer giving them.

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<sup>126</sup> All official presents given by native chiefs to the Governor-General are credited to the 'toshakhāna', from which also are taken the official gifts bestowed in return.

<sup>127</sup> By resolution of Government, dated January 10, 1836, the author was appointed General Superintendent of the Operations against Thuggee, with his head-quarters at Jubbulpore.

# CHAPTER 10

## The Peasantry and the Land Settlement

The officers of the 29th had found game so plentiful, and the weather so fine, that they came on with us as far as Jaberā, where we had the pleasure of their society on the evening of the 24th, and left them on the morning of the 25th.<sup>128</sup> A great many of my native friends, from among the native landholders and merchants of the country, flocked to our camp at every stage to pay their respects, and bid me farewell, for they never expected to see me back among them again. They generally came out a mile or two to meet and escort us to our tents; and much do I fear that my poor boy will never again, in any part of the world, have the blessings of Heaven so fervently invoked upon him by so many worthy and respectable men as met us at every stage on our way from Jubbulpore. I am much attached to the agricultural classes of India generally, and I have found among them some of the best men I have ever known. The peasantry in India have generally very good manners, and are exceedingly intelligent, from having so much more leisure and unreserved and easy intercourse with those above them. The constant habit

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<sup>128</sup> November, 1835.

of meeting and discussing subjects connected with their own interests, in their own fields, and 'under their own fig-trees', with their landlords and Government functionaries of all kinds and degrees, prevents their ever feeling or appearing impudent or obtrusive; though it certainly tends to give them stentorian voices, that often startle us when they come into our houses to discuss the same points with us.

Nine-tenths of the immediate cultivators of the soil in India are little farmers, who hold a lease for one or more years, as the case may be, of their lands, which they cultivate with their own stock. One of these cultivators, with a good plough and bullocks, and a good character, can always get good land on moderate terms from holders of villages.<sup>129</sup> Those cultivators are, I think, the best, who learn to depend upon their stock and character for favourable terms, hold themselves free to change their holdings when their leases expire, and pretend not to any hereditary right in the soil. The lands are, I think, best cultivated, and the society best constituted in India, where the holders of estates of villages have a feeling of permanent interest in them, an assurance of an hereditary right of property which is liable only to the payment of a moderate Government demand, descends undivided by the law of primogeniture, and is unaffected by the common law, which prescribes the equal subdivision among children of landed as well as other private property, among the Hindoos and

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<sup>129</sup> This observation does not hold good in densely populated tracts, which are now numerous.

Muhammadans; and where the immediate cultivators hold the lands they till by no other law than that of common specific contract.

When I speak of holders of villages, I mean the holders of lands that belong to villages. The whole face of India is parcelled out into estates of villages.<sup>130</sup> The village communities are composed of those who hold and cultivate the land, the established village servants, priest, blacksmith, carpenter, accountant, washerman, basket-maker (whose wife is ex officio the midwife of the little village community), potter, watchman, barber, shoemaker, &c., &c.<sup>131</sup> To these may be added the little banker, or agricultural capitalist, the shopkeeper, the brazier, the confectioner, the ironmonger, the weaver, the dyer, the astronomer or astrologer, who points out to the people the lucky

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<sup>130</sup> These 'estates of villages' are known by the Persian name of 'mauza'. The topographical division of the country into 'mauzas', which may be also translated by the terms 'townlands' or 'townships', has developed spontaneously. Some 'mauzas' are uninhabited, and are cultivated by the residents of neighbouring villages.

<sup>131</sup> *In some parts of Central and Southern India, the 'Gārpagrī', who charms away hail-storms from the crops, and 'Bhūmkā', who charms away tigers from the people and their cattle, are added to the number of village servants, [W. H. S.] 'In many parts of Berār and Mālwa every village has its "bhūmkā", whose office it is to charm the tigers; and its "gārpagrī", whose duty it is to keep off the hail-storms. They are part of the village servants, and paid by the village community, After a severe hail-storm took place in the district of Narsinghpur, of which I had the civil charge in 1823, the office of "gārpagrī" was restored to several villages in which it had ceased for several generations. They are all Brahmans, and take advantage of such calamities to impress the people with an opinion of their usefulness. The "bhūmkās" are all Gōnds, or people of the woods, who worship their own Lares and Penates' (Ramaseena, Introduction, p. 13. note).*

day for every earthly undertaking, and the prescribed times for all religious ceremonies and observances. In some villages the whole of the lands are parcelled out among cultivating proprietors, and are liable to eternal subdivisions by the law of inheritance, which gives to each son the same share. In others, the whole of the lands are parcelled out among cultivators, who hold them on a specific lease for limited periods from a proprietor who holds the whole collectively under Government, at a rate of rent fixed either permanently or for limited periods. These are the two extremes. There are but few villages in which all the cultivators are considered as proprietors—at least but few in our Nerbudda territories; and these will almost invariably be found of a caste of Brahmans or a caste of Rāj̄pūts, descended from a common ancestor, to whom the estate was originally given in rent-free tenure, or at a quit-rent, by the existing Government for his prayers as a priest, or his services as a soldier. Subsequent Governments, which resumed unceremoniously the estates of others, were deterred from resuming these by a dread of the curses of the one and the swords of the other.<sup>132</sup> Such communities of cultivating proprietors are of two kinds: those

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<sup>132</sup> Very often the Government of the country know nothing of these tenures; the local authorities allowed them to continue as a perquisite of their own. The holders were willing to pay them a good share of the rent, assured that they would be resumed if reported by the local authorities to the Government. These authorities consented to take a moderate share of the rent, assured that they should get little or nothing if the lands were resumed. [W. H. S.] 'Rent' here means 'land-revenue'. Of course, under modern British administration the particulars of all tenures are known and recorded in great detail.

among whom the lands are parcelled out, each member holding his share as a distinct estate, and being individually responsible for the payment of the share of the Government demand assessed upon it; and those among whom the lands are not parcelled out, but the profits divided as among copartners of an estate held jointly. They, in either case, nominate one of their members to collect and pay the Government demand; or Government appoints a man for this duty, either as a salaried servant or a lessee, with authority to levy from the cultivating proprietors a certain sum over and above what is demandable from him.

The communities in which the cultivators are considered merely as leaseholders are far more numerous; indeed, the greater part of the village communities in this part of India are of this description; and, where the communities are of a mixed character, the cultivating proprietors are considered to have merely a right of occupancy, and are liable to have their lands assessed at the same rate as those held on a mere lease tenure. In all parts of India the cultivating proprietors in such mixed communities are similarly situated; they are liable to be assessed at the same rate as others holding the same sort of lands, and often pay a higher rate, with which others are not encumbered. But this is not general; it is as much the interest of the proprietor to have good cultivating tenants as it is that of the tenants to have good proprietors; and it is felt to be the interest of both to adjust their terms amicably among themselves, without a reference to a third and superior party, which is always costly

and commonly ruinous.<sup>133</sup>

It is a question of very great importance, no less morally and politically than fiscally, which of these systems deserves most encouragement—that in which the Government considers the immediate cultivators to be the hereditary proprietors, and, through its own public officers, parcels out the lands among them, and adjusts the rates of rent demandable from every minute partition, as the lands become more and more subdivided by the Hindoo and Muhammadan law of inheritance; or that in which the Government considers him who holds the area of a whole village or estate collectively as the hereditary proprietor, and the immediate cultivators as his lease-tenants—leaving the rates of rent to be adjusted among the parties without the aid of public officers, or interposing only to enforce the fulfilment of their mutual contracts. In the latter of these two systems the land will supply more and better members to the middle and higher classes of the society, and create and preserve a better feeling between them and the peasantry, or immediate cultivators of the soil; and it will occasion the re-investment upon the soil, in works of ornament and utility, of a greater portion of the annual returns of rent and profit, and a less expenditure in the costs of litigation

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<sup>133</sup> Since the author wrote these remarks the legal position of cultivating proprietors and tenants has been largely modified by the pressure of population and a long course of legislation. The Rent Acts, which began with Act x of 1859, are now numerous, and have been accompanied by a series of Land Revenue Acts, and many collateral enactments. All the problems of the Irish land question are familiar topics to the Anglo-Indian courts and legislatures.

in our civil courts, and bribery to our public officers.

Those who advocate the other system, which makes the immediate cultivators the proprietors, will, for the most part, be found to reason upon false premisses—upon the assumption that the rates of rent demandable from the immediate cultivators of the soil *were everywhere limited and established by immemorial usage, in a certain sum of money per acre, or a certain share of the crop produced from it*; and that 'these rates were not only so limited and fixed, but everywhere *well known to the people*', and might, consequently, have become well known to the Government, and recorded in public registers. Now every practical man in India, who has had opportunities of becoming well acquainted with the matter, knows that *the reverse is the case*; that the rate of rent demandable from these cultivators *never was the same upon any two estates at the same time: nor even the same upon any one estate at different times, or for any consecutive number of years*.<sup>134</sup> The rates vary every year on every estate, according to the varying circumstances that influence them—such as greater or less exhaustion of the soil, greater or less facilities of irrigation, manure, transit to market, drainage—or from fortuitous advantages on one hand, or calamities of season on the other; or many other circumstances which affect the value of the land, and the abilities of the cultivators to

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<sup>134</sup> This proposition no doubt was true for the 'Sāgar and Nerbudda Territories' in 1835, but it cannot be predicated of the thickly populated and settled districts in the Gangetic valley without considerable qualification. Examples of long-established, unchanged, well-known rent-rates are not uncommon.

pay. It is not so much the proprietors of the estate or the Government as the cultivators themselves who demand every year a readjustment of the rate demandable upon their different holdings. This readjustment must take place; and, if there is no landlord to effect it, Government must effect it through its own officers. Every holding becomes subdivided when the cultivating proprietor dies and leaves more than one child; and, as the whole face of the country is open and without hedges, the division is easily and speedily made. Thus the field-map which represents an estate one year will never represent it fairly five years after; in fact, we might almost as well attempt to map the waves of the ocean as field-map the face of any considerable area in any part of India.<sup>135</sup>

If there be any truth in my conclusions, our Government has acted unwisely in going, as it has generally done, into [one or other of] the two extremes, in its settlement of the land revenue.

In the Zamīndārī settlement of Bengal, it conferred the

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<sup>135</sup> In recent years this task of 'mapping the waves of the ocean' has been attempted. Every periodical settlement of the land revenue in Northern India since 1833 has been accompanied by the preparation of detailed village maps, showing each field, even the tiniest, a few yards square, with a separate number. In many cases these maps were roughly constructed under non-professional supervision, but in many districts they have been prepared by the cadastral branch of the Survey Department. The difficulty mentioned by the author has been severely felt, and it constantly happens that beautiful maps become useless in four or five years. Efforts are made to insert annual corrections in copies of the maps through the agency of the village accountants, and the 'kānūngos', or officers who supervise them, but the task is an enormous one, and only partial success is attained. In addition to the maps, records of great bulk are annually prepared which give the most minute details about every holding and each field.

hereditary right of property over areas larger than English counties on individuals, and left the immediate cultivators mere tenants-at-will.<sup>136</sup> These individuals felt no interest in promoting the comfort and welfare of the village communities, or conciliating the affections of the cultivators, whom they never saw or wished to see; and they let out the village, or other subdivision of their estates, to second parties quite as little interested, who again let them out to others, so that the system of rack-renting went on over the whole area of the immense possession. This was a system 'more honoured in the breach than in the observance'; for, as the great landholders became involved in the ruin of their cultivators, their estates were sold for arrears of revenue due to Government, and thus the proprietary right of one individual has become divided among many, who will have the feelings which the larger holders wanted, and so remedy the evil. In the other extreme, Government has constituted the immediate cultivators the proprietors; thereby preventing any one who is supported upon the rent of land, or the profits of agricultural stock, from rising above the grade of a peasant, and so depriving society of one of its best and most essential elements. The remedy of both is in village settlements, in which the estate shall be of moderate size, and the hereditary property

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<sup>136</sup> The Permanent Settlement of Bengal, effected under the orders of Lord Cornwallis in 1793, was soon afterwards extended to the province of Benares, now included in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. Illusory provisions were made to protect the rights of tenants, but nothing at all effectual was done till the passing of Act x of 1859, which has been largely modified by later legislation.

of the holder, descending on the principle of a principality, by the right of primogeniture, unaffected by the common law. This is the system which has been adopted in the Nerbudda territory, and which, I trust, will be always adhered to.

When we enter upon the government of any new territorial acquisition in India, we do not require or pretend to change the civil laws of the people; because their civil laws and their religion are in reality one and the same, and are contained in one and the same code, as certainly among the Hindoos, the Muhammadans, and the Parsees, as they were among the Israelites. By these codes, and the established usages everywhere well understood by the people, are their rights and duties in marriage, inheritance, succession, caste, contract, and all the other civil relations of life, ascertained; and when we displace another Government we do not pretend to alter such rights and duties in relation to each other, we merely change the machinery and mode of procedure by which these rights are secured and these duties enforced.<sup>137</sup>

Of criminal law no system was ever either regularly established or administered in any state in India, by any Government to which we have succeeded; and the people always consider the existing Government free to adopt that which may seem best calculated to effect the one great object,

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<sup>137</sup> The general principle here stated of respect for personal substantive law in civil matters is still the guide of the Indian Legislature, but the accumulation of Privy Council and High Court rulings, combined with the action of codes, has effected considerable gradual change. Direct legislation has anglicized the law of contract, and has modified, though not so largely, the law of marriage, inheritance, and succession.

which criminal law has everywhere in view—*the security of life, property, and character, and the enjoyment of all their advantages*. The actions by which these are affected and endangered, the evidence by which such actions require to be proved, and the penalties with which they require to be visited, in order to prevent their recurrence, are, or ought to be, so much the same in every society, that the people never think us bound to search for what Muhammad and his companions thought in the wilds of Arabia, or the Sanskrit poets sang about them in courts and cloisters. They would be just as well pleased everywhere to find us searching for these things in the writings of Confucius and Zoroaster, as in those of Muhammad and Manu: and much more so, to see us consulting our own common-sense, and forming a penal code of our own, suitable to the wants of such a mixed community.<sup>138</sup>

The fiscal laws which define the rights and duties of the landed interests and the agricultural classes in relation to each other and to the ruling powers were also everywhere exceedingly simple and well understood by the people. What in England is now a mere fiction of law is still in India an essential principle. All

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<sup>138</sup> In the author's time the courts of the East India Company still followed the Muhammadan criminal law, as modified by the Regulations. The Indian Penal Code of 1869 placed the substantive criminal law on a thoroughly scientific basis. This code was framed with such masterly skill that to this day it has needed little material amendment. The first Criminal Procedure Code, passed in 1861, has been twice recast. The law of evidence was codified by Sir James FitzJames Stephen in the Indian Evidence Act of 1870.

lands are held directly or indirectly of the sovereign: to this rule there is no exception.<sup>139</sup> The reigning sovereign is essentially the proprietor of the whole of the lands in every part of India, where he has not voluntarily alienated them; and he holds these lands for the payment of those public establishments which are maintained for the public good, and are supported by the rents of the lands either directly under assignment, or indirectly through the sovereign proprietor. When a Muhammadan or Hindoo sovereign assigned lands rent-free in *perpetuity*, it was always understood, both by the donor and receiver, to be with the *small reservation* of a right in his successor to resume them for the public good, if he should think fit.<sup>140</sup> Hindoo sovereigns, or their

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<sup>139</sup> *This proposition, in the editor's opinion, truly states the theory of land tenures in India, and it was a generally accurate statement of actual fact in the author's time. Since then the long continuance of settled government, by fostering the growth of private rights, has tended to obscure the idea of state ownership. The modern revenue codes, instead of postulating the ownership of the state, enact that the claims of the state—that is to say, the land-revenue—are the first charge on the land and its produce. The Malabar coast offers an exception to the general Hindu role of state ownership of land. The Nairs, Coorgs, and Tulus enjoyed full proprietary rights (Dubois, Hindu Manners, &c., 3rd edition (1906), p. 57).*

<sup>140</sup> Amīr Khān, the Nawāb of Tonk, assigned to his physician, who had cured him of an intermittent fever, lands yielding one thousand rupees a year, in rent-free tenure, and gave him a deed signed by himself and his heir-apparent, declaring expressly that it should descend to him and his heir for ever. He died lately, and his son and successor, who had signed the deed, resumed the estate without ceremony. On being remonstrated with, he said that 'his father, while living, was, of course, master, and could make him sign what he pleased, and give land rent-free to whom he pleased; but his successor must now be considered the best judge whether they could be spared or not; that if lands were to be alienated in perpetuity by every reigning Nawāb for every dose of

priests for them, often tried to bar this right by *invoking curses* on the head of that successor who should exercise it.<sup>141</sup> It is a proverb among the people of these territories, and, I believe, among the people of India generally, that the lands which pay no rent to Government have no 'barkat', blessing from above—that the man who holds them is not blessed in their returns like the man who pays rent to Government and thereby contributes his aid to the protection of the community. The fact is that every family that holds rent-free lands must, in a few generations, become miserable from the minute subdivision of the property, and the litigation in our civil courts which it entails upon the holders.<sup>142</sup> It is certainly the general opinion of the people of India that no land should be held without paying rent to Government, or providing for people employed in the service of Government, for the benefit of the people in its defensive, religious, judicial,

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medicine or dose of prayers that he or the members of his family required, none would soon be left for the payment of the soldiers, or other necessary public servants of any description'. This was told me by the son of the old physician, who was the person to whom the speech was made, his father having died before Amīr Khān. [W. H. S.] Amīr Khān was the famous Pindhārī leader. H. T. Prinsep translated his Memoirs from the Persian of Busawun Lāl (Calcutta, 1832).

<sup>141</sup> The ancient deeds of grant, engraved on copper, of which so many have been published within the last hundred years, almost invariably conclude with fearful curses on the head of any rash mortal who may dare to revoke the grant. Usually the pious hope is expressed that, if he should be guilty of such wickedness, he may rot in filth, and be reborn a worm.

<sup>142</sup> Revenue officers commonly observe that revenue-free grants, which the author calls rent-free, are often ill cultivated. The simple reason is that the stimulus of the collector's demand is wanting to make the owner exert himself.

educational, and other establishments. Nine-tenths of the land in these Nerbudda territories are held in lease immediately under Government by the heads of villages, whose leases have been renewable every five years; but they are now to have a settlement for twenty.<sup>143</sup> The other tenth is held by these heads of villages intermediately under some chief, who holds several portions of land immediately under Government at a quit-rent, or for service performed, or to be performed, for Government, and lets them out to farmers. These are, for the most part, situated in the more hilly and less cultivated parts.

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<sup>143</sup> *These leases now carry with them a right of ownership, involving the power of alienation, subject to the lien of the land revenue as a first charge. Conversely, the modern codes lay down the principle that the revenue settlement must be made with the proprietor. The author's rule of agricultural succession by primogeniture in the Nerbudda territories has survived only in certain districts (see post, Chapter 47). The land-revenue law and the law concerning the relations between landlords and tenants have now been more or less successfully codified in each province. Mr. B. H. Baden-Powell's encyclopaedic work *The Land Systems of British India* (3 volumes: Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1892) gives very full information concerning Indian tenures as now existing, and the law applicable to them at the date of publication.*

# CHAPTER 11

## Witchcraft

On leaving Jabērā,<sup>144</sup> I saw an old acquaintance from the eastern part of the Jubbulpore district, Kehrī Singh.

'I understand, Kehrī Singh', said I, 'that certain men among the Gonds of the jungle, towards the source of the Nerbudda, eat human flesh. Is it so?'

'No, sir; the men never eat people, but the Gond women do.'

'Where?'

'Everywhere, sir; there is not a parish, nay, a village, among the Gonds, in which you will not find one or more such women.'

'And how do they eat people?'

'They eat their livers, sir.'

'Oh, I understand; you mean witches?'

'Of course! Who ever heard of other people eating human beings?'

'And you really still think, in spite of all that we have done and said, that there are such things as witches?'

'Of course we do—do not we find instances of it every day? European gentlemen are too apt to believe that things like this

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<sup>144</sup> *Ante*, Chapter 9.

are not to be found here, because they are not to be found in their own country. Major Wardlow, when in charge of the Seonī district, denied the existence of witchcraft for a long time, but he was at last convinced.'

'How?'

'One of his troopers, one morning after a long march, took some milk for his master's breakfast from an old woman without paying for it. Before the major had got over his breakfast the poor trooper was down upon his back, screaming from the agony of internal pains. We all knew immediately that he had been bewitched, and recommended the major to send for some one learned in these matters to find out the witch. He did so, and, after hearing from the trooper the story about the milk, this person at once declared that the woman from whom he got it was the criminal. She was searched for, found, and brought to the trooper, and commanded to cure him. She flatly denied that she had herself conjured him; but admitted that her household gods might, unknown to her, have punished him for his wickedness. This, however, would not do. She was commanded to cure the man, and she set about collecting materials for the "pūjā" (worship); and before she could get quite through the ceremonies, all his pains had left him. Had we not been resolute with her, the man must have died before evening, so violent were his torments.'

'Did not a similar case occur to Mr. Fraser at Jubbulpore?'

'A "chaprāsi"<sup>145</sup> of his, while he had charge of the Jubbulpore district, was sent out to Mandlā<sup>146</sup> with a message of some kind or other. He took a cock from an old Gond woman without paying for it, and, being hungry after a long journey, ate the whole of it in a curry. He heard the woman mutter something, but being a raw, unsuspecting young man, he thought nothing of it, ate his cock, and went to sleep. He had not been asleep three hours before he was seized with internal pains, and the old cock was actually heard crowing in his belly. He made the best of his way back to Jubbulpore, several stages, and all the most skilful men were employed to charm away the effect of the old woman's spell, but in vain. He died, and the cock never ceased crowing at intervals up to the hour of his death.'

'And was Mr. Fraser convinced?'

'I never heard, but suppose he must have been.'

'Who ate the livers of the victims? The witches themselves, or the evil spirits with whom they had dealings?'

'The evil spirits ate the livers; but they are set on to do so by the witches, who get them into their power by such accursed sacrifices and offerings. They will often dig up young children from their graves, bring them to life, and allow these devils to feed upon their livers, as falconers allow their hawks to feed on the breasts of pigeons. You "sāhib lōg" (European gentlemen)

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<sup>145</sup> An orderly, or official messenger, who wears a 'chaprās', or badge of office.

<sup>146</sup> On the Nerbudda, fifty miles south-east of Jubbulpore.

will not believe all this, but it is, nevertheless, all very true.'<sup>147</sup>

The belief in sorcery among these people owes its origin, in a great measure, to the diseases of the liver and spleen to which the natives, and particularly the children, are much subject in the jungly parts of Central India. From these affections children pine away and die, without showing any external marks of disease. Their death is attributed to witchcraft, and any querulous old woman, who has been in the habit of murmuring at slights and ill treatment in the neighbourhood, is immediately set down as the cause. Men who practise medicine among them are very commonly supposed to be at the same time wizards. Seeking to inspire confidence in their prescriptions by repeating prayers and incantations over the patient, or over the medicine they give him, they make him believe that they derive aid from supernatural power; and the patient concludes that those who can command these powers to cure can, if they will, command them to destroy. He and his friends believe that the man who can command these powers to cure one individual can command them to cure any other; and, if he does not do so, they believe that it arises from a desire to destroy the patient. I have, in these territories, known a great many instances of medical practitioners having been put to death for not curing young people for whom they were required

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<sup>147</sup> *Of the supposed powers and dispositions of witches among the Romans we have horrible pictures in the 5th Ode of the 6th Book of Horace, and in the 6th Book of Lucan's Pharsalia.* [W. H. S.] The reference to Horace should be to the 5th Epode. The passage in the *Pharsalia*, Book VI, lines 420-830, describes the proceedings of Thessalian witches.

to prescribe. Several cases have come before me as a magistrate in which the father has stood over the doctor with a drawn sword by the side of the bed of his child, and cut him down and killed him the moment the child died, as he had sworn to do when he found the patient sinking under his prescriptions.<sup>148</sup>

The town of Jubbulpore contains a population of twenty thousand souls,<sup>149</sup> and they all believed in this story of the cock. I one day asked a most respectable merchant in the town, Nādū Chaudhrī, how the people could believe in such things, when he replied that he had no doubt witches were to be found in every part of India, though they abounded most, no doubt, in the central parts of it, and that we ought to consider ourselves very fortunate in having no such things in England. 'But', added he, 'of all countries that between Mandlā and Katāk (Cuttack)<sup>150</sup> is the worst for witches. I had once occasion to go to the city of Ratanpur<sup>151</sup> on business, and was one day, about noon, walking in the market-place and eating a very fine piece of sugar-cane. In the crowd I happened, by accident, to jostle an old woman as she passed me. I looked back, intending to apologize for the accident, and heard her muttering indistinctly as she passed on. Knowing the propensities of these old ladies, I became somewhat uneasy,

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<sup>148</sup> Such awkward incidents of medical practice are not heard of nowadays.

<sup>149</sup> The population of Jabalpur (including cantonments) has increased steadily, and in 1911 was 100,651, as compared with 84,556 in 1891, and 76,023 in 1881.

<sup>150</sup> Katāk, or Cuttack, a district, with town of same name, in Orissa.

<sup>151</sup> In the Bilāspur district of the Central Provinces. The distance in a direct line between Mandlā and Katāk is about 400 miles.

and on turning round to my cane I found, to my great terror, that the juice had been all *turned to blood*. Not a minute had elapsed, such were the fearful powers of this old woman. I collected my followers, and, leaving my agents there to settle my accounts, was beyond the boundaries of the old wretch's influence before dark, had I remained, nothing could have saved me. I should certainly have been a dead man before morning. It is well known', said the old gentleman, 'that their spells and curses can only reach a certain distance, ten or twelve miles; and, if you offend one of them, the sooner you place that distance between you the better.'

Jangbār Khān, the representative of the Shāhgarh Rājā,<sup>152</sup> as grave and reverend an old gentleman as ever sat in the senate of Venice, told me one day that he was himself an eye-witness of the powers of the women of Khilautī. He was with a great concourse of people at a fair held at the town of Rāipur,<sup>153</sup> and, while sauntering with many other strangers in the fair, one of them began bargaining with two women of middle age for some very fine sugar-canes. They asked double the fair price for their canes. The man got angry, and took up one of them,

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<sup>152</sup> Shāhgarh was formerly a petty native state, with town of same name. The chief joined the rebels in 1857, with the result that his dominions were confiscated, and distributed between the districts of Sāgar and Damoh in the Central Provinces, and Jhānsī (formerly Lalitpur) in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. The town of Shāhgarh is in the Sāgar district.

<sup>153</sup> Rāipur is the chief town of the district of the same name in the Central Provinces, which was not finally annexed to the British dominions until 1854, when the Nāgpur State lapsed.

when the women seized the other end, and a struggle ensued. The purchaser offered a fair price, seller demanded double. The crowd looked on, and a good deal of abuse of the female relations on both sides took place. At last a sepoy of the governor came up, armed to the teeth, and called out to the man, in a very imperious tone, to let go his hold of the cane. He refused, saying that 'when people came to the fair to sell, they should be made to sell at reasonable prices, or be turned out'. 'I', said Jangbār Khān, 'thought the man right, and told the sepoy that, if he took the part of this woman, we should take that of the other, and see fair play. Without further ceremony the functionary drew his sword, and cut the cane in two in the middle; and, pointing to both pieces, 'There', said he, 'you see the cause of my interference'. We looked down, and actually saw blood running from both pieces, and forming a little pool on the ground. The fact was that the woman was a sorceress of the very worst kind, and was actually drawing the blood from the man through the cane, to feed the abominable devil from whom she derived her detestable powers. But for the timely interference of the sepoy he would have been dead in another minute; for he no sooner saw the real state of the case than he fainted. He had hardly any blood left in him, and I was afterwards told that he was not able to walk for ten days. We all went to the governor to demand justice, declaring that, unless the women were made an example of at once, the fair would be deserted, for no stranger's life would be safe. He consented, and they were both sewn up in sacks and

thrown into the river; but they had conjured the water and would not sink. They ought to have been put to death, but the governor was himself afraid of this kind of people, and let them off. There is not', continued Jangbār, 'a village, or a single family, without its witch in that part of the country; indeed, no man will give his daughter in marriage to a family without one, saying, "If my daughter has children, what will become of them without a witch to protect them from the witches of other families in the neighbourhood?" It is a fearful country, though the cheapest and most fertile in India.'

We can easily understand how a man, impressed with the idea that his blood had all been drawn from him by a sorceress, should become faint, and remain many days in a languid state; but how the people around should believe that they saw the blood flowing from both parts of the cane at the place cut through, it is not so easy to conceive.

I am satisfied that old Jangbār believed the whole story to be true, and that at the time he thought the juice of the cane red; but the little pool of blood grew, no doubt, by degrees, as years rolled on and he related this tale of the fearful powers of the Khilautī witches.

## CHAPTER 12

### **The Silver Tree, or 'Kalpa Briksha'—The Singhāra or *Trapa bispinosa*, and the Guinea-Worm**

Poor old Salāmat Alī wept bitterly at the last meeting in my tent, and his two nice boys, without exactly knowing why, began to do the same; and my little son Henry<sup>154</sup> caught the infection, and wept louder than any of them. I was obliged to hurry over the interview lest I should feel disposed to do the same. The poor old Rānī,<sup>155</sup> too, suffered a good deal in parting from my wife, whom, she says, she can never hope to see again. Her fine large eyes shed many a tear as she was getting into her palankeen to return.

Between Jaberā and Harduā, the next stage, we find a great many of those large forest trees called 'kalap', or 'Kalpa Briksha' (the same which in the paradise of Indra grants what is desired), with a soft, silvery bark, and scarcely any leaves. We are told that the name of the god Rām (Rāma) and his consort Sītā will be found written by the hand of God upon all.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Afterwards Captain H. A. Sleeman, He died in 1905.

<sup>155</sup> *Of Garhā, see ante*, Chapter 9, prior to note 10.

<sup>156</sup> *The real 'kalpa', which now stands in the garden of the god Indra in the first heaven, was one of the fourteen varieties found at the churning of the ocean by the*

I had the curiosity to examine a good many in the forest on both sides of the road, and found the name of this incarnation of Vishnu written on everyone in Sanskrit characters, apparently by some supernatural hand; that is, there was a softness in the impression, as if the finger of some supernatural being had traced the characters. Nathū, one of our belted attendants<sup>157</sup> told me that we might search as deeply as we would in the forest, but we should certainly find the name of God upon every one; 'for', said he, 'it is God himself who writes it'. I tried to argue him out of this notion; but, unfortunately, could find no tree without these characters—some high up, and some lower down in the trunk—some large and others small—but still to be found on every tree. I was almost in despair when we came to a part of the wood where we found one of these trees down in a hollow, under the road, and another upon the precipice above. I was ready to stake my credit upon the probability that no traveller would take the trouble to go up to the tree above, or down to the tree below, merely to write the name of the god upon them; and at once pledged myself to Nathū that he should find neither the god's name nor that of his wife. I sent one man up, and another man down, and they found no letters on the trees; but this did not alter their opinion on the point. 'God', said one, 'had no doubt put his name on these trees, but they had somehow or other got rubbed off. He would

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*gods and demons. It fell to the share of Indra. [W. H. S.] The tree referred to in the text perhaps may be the Erythrina arborescens, or coral-tree, which sheds its leaves after the hot weather.*

<sup>157</sup> That is to say, orderlies, or 'chaprāsīs'.

in good time renew them, that men's eyes might be blessed with the sight of His holy name, even in the deepest forest, and on the most leafless tree.<sup>158</sup> 'But', said Nathū, 'he might not have thought it worth while to write his name upon those trees which no travellers go to see.' 'Cannot you see', said I, 'that these letters have been engraved by man? Are they not all to be found on the trunk within reach of a man's hand?' 'Of course they are', replied he, 'because people would not be able conveniently to distinguish them if God were to write them higher up.'

Shaikh Sādī has a very pretty couplet, 'Every leaf of the foliage of a green tree is, in the eye of a wise man, a library to teach him the wisdom of his Creator.'<sup>159</sup> I may remark that, where an Englishman would write his own name, a Hindoo would write that of his god, his parent, or his benefactor. This difference

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<sup>158</sup> Every Hindoo is thoroughly convinced that the names of Rām and his consort Sītā are written on this tree by the hand of God, and nine-tenths of the Musalmāns believe the same. Happy the man who sees a God employed in all the good and ill that chequer life, Resolving all events, with their effects And manifold results, into the will And arbitration wise of the Supreme. COWPER. [W. H. S.] The quotation is from *The Task*, Book II, line 161.

<sup>159</sup> *Sādī* (*Sa'dī*) is the poetic name, or *nom de plume*, of the celebrated Persian poet, whose proper name is said to have been Shaikh Maslah-ud-dīn, or, according to other authorities, Sharf-ud-dīn Mislah. He was born about A.D. 1194, and is supposed to have lived for more than a hundred years. Some writers say that he died in A.D. 1292. His best known works are the *Gulistān* and *Būstān*. The editor has failed to trace in either of these works the couplet quoted. Sādī says in the *Gulistān*, ii. 26, 'That heart which has an ear is full of the divine mystery. It is not the nightingale that alone serenades his rose; for every thorn on the rose-bush is a tongue in his or God's praise' (Ross's translation).

is traceable, of course, to the difference in their governments and institutions. If a Hindoo built a town, he called it after his local governor; if a local governor built it, he called it after the favourite son of the Emperor. In well regulated Hindoo families, one cannot ask a younger brother after his children in presence of the elder brother who happens to be the head of the family; it would be disrespectful for him even to speak of his children as his own in such presence—the elder brother relieves his embarrassment by answering for him.

On the 27th<sup>160</sup> we reached Damoh,<sup>161</sup> where our friends, the Browns, were to leave us on their return to Jubbulpore. Damoh is a pretty place. The town contains some five or six thousand people, and has some very handsome Hindoo temples. On a hill immediately above it is the shrine of a Muhammadan saint, which has a very picturesque appearance.

There are no manufactures at Damoh, except such as supply the wants of the immediate neighbourhood; and the town is supported by the residence of a few merchants, a few landholders, and agricultural capitalists, and the establishment of a native collector. The people here suffer much from the

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<sup>160</sup> November, 1835.

<sup>161</sup> *Spelled Dhamow in the author's text. The town, the head-quarters of the district of the same name, is forty-five miles east of Sāgar, and fifty-five miles north-west of Jabalpur. The C. P. Gazetteer (1870) states the population to be 8,563. In 1901 it had grown to 13,335; and the town is still increasing in importance (I. G., 1908). Inscriptions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries at Damoh are noticed in A. S. R., vol. xxi, p. 168.*

guinea-worm, and consider it to arise from drinking the water of the old tank, which is now very dirty and full of weeds. I have no doubt that it is occasioned either by drinking the water of this tank, or by wading in it: for I have known European gentlemen get the worm in their legs from wading in similar lakes or swamps after snipes, and the servants who followed them with their ammunition experience the same effect.<sup>162</sup> Here, as in most other parts of India, the tanks get spoiled by the water-chestnut, 'singhāra' (*Trapa bispinosa*), which is everywhere as regularly planted and cultivated *in fields* under a large surface of water, as wheat or barley is on the dry plains. It is cultivated by a class of men called Dhīmars, who are everywhere fishermen and palankeen bearers; and they keep boats for the planting, weeding, and gathering the 'singhāra'.<sup>163</sup> The holdings or tenements of each cultivator are marked out carefully on the surface of the water by long bamboos stuck up in it; and they pay so much the acre for the portion they till. The long straws of the plants reach up to the surface of the waters, upon which float their green leaves; and their pure white flowers expand beautifully among them in the latter part of the afternoon. The nut grows under the water after the flowers decay, and is of a triangular shape, and covered with

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<sup>162</sup> *The guinea-worm (Filaria medinensis)* is a very troublesome parasite, which sometimes grows to a length of three feet. It occurs in Africa, Arabia, Persia, and Turkistan, as well as in India.

<sup>163</sup> *The Dhīmars (Sanskrit dhīvara, 'fisherman')* are the same caste as the Kahārs, or 'bearers'. The boats used by them are commonly 'dugout' canoes, exactly like those used in prehistoric Europe, and now treasured in museums.

a tough brown integument adhering strongly to the kernel, which is white, esculent, and of a fine cartilaginous texture. The people are very fond of these nuts, and they are carried often upon bullocks' backs two or three hundred miles to market. They ripen in the latter end of the rains, or in September, and are eatable till the end of November. The rent paid for an ordinary tank by the cultivator is about one hundred rupees a year. I have known two hundred rupees to be paid for a very large one, and even three hundred, or thirty pounds a year.<sup>164</sup> But the mud increases so rapidly from this cultivation that it soon destroys all reservoirs in which it is permitted; and, where it is thought desirable to keep up the tank for the sake of the water, it should be carefully prohibited. This is done by stipulating with the renter of the village, at the renewal of the lease, that no 'singhāra' shall be planted in the tank; otherwise, he will never forgo the advantage to himself of the rent for the sake of the convenience, and that only prospective, of the village community in general.

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<sup>164</sup> In the author's time the rupee was worth two shillings, or more, that is to say, the ninth or tenth part of a sovereign. After 1873 the gold value of the rupee fell, so that at times it was worth little more than a shilling. Since 1899 special legislation has succeeded in keeping the rupee practically steady at 1s. 4d. In other words, fifteen rupees are the legal equivalent of a sovereign, and a hundred rupees are worth £6 13s. 4d.

# CHAPTER 13

## Thugs and Poisoners

Lieutenant Brown had come on to Damoh chiefly with a view to investigate a case of murder, which had taken place at the village of Sujaina, about ten miles from Damoh, on the road to Hattā.<sup>165</sup> A gang of two hundred Thugs were encamped in the grove at Hindoria in the cold season of 1814, when, early in the morning, seven men well armed with swords and matchlocks passed them, bearing treasure from the bank of Motī Kochia at Jubbulpore to their correspondents at Bānda,<sup>166</sup> to the value of four thousand five hundred rupees.<sup>167</sup> The value of their burden was immediately perceived by these *keen-eyed* sportsmen, and Kosarī, Drigpāl, and Faringia, three of the leaders, with forty of their fleetest and stoutest followers, were immediately selected for the pursuit. They followed seven miles unperceived; and, coming up with the treasure-bearers in a watercourse half a mile from the village of Sujaina, they rushed in upon them and put

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<sup>165</sup> A town on the Allahabad and Sāgar road, sixty-one miles north-east of Sāgar. It was the head-quarters of the Damoh district from 1818 to 1835.

<sup>166</sup> The chief town of the district of the same name in Bundēlkhand, situated on the Kēn river, ninety-five miles south-west from Allahabad.

<sup>167</sup> Worth at that time £450 sterling, or a little more.

them all to death with their swords.<sup>168</sup> While they were doing so a tanner from Sujaina approached with his buffalo, and to prevent him giving the alarm they put him to death also, and made off with the treasure, leaving the bodies unburied. A heavy shower of rain fell, and none of the village people came to the place till the next morning early; when some females, passing it on their way to Hattā, saw the bodies, and returning to Sujaina, reported the circumstance to their friends. The whole village thereupon flocked to the spot, and the body of the tanner was burned by his relations with the usual ceremonies, while all the rest were left to be eaten by jackals, dogs and vultures, who make short work of such things in India.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> *An unusual mode of procedure for professed Thugs to adopt, who usually strangled their victims with a cloth. Faringia (Feringheea) Brahman was one of the most noted Thug leaders. He is frequently mentioned in the author's Report on the Depredations committed by the Thug Gangs (1840), and the story of the Sujaina crime is fully told in the Introduction to that volume. Faringia became a valuable approver.*

<sup>169</sup> Lieutenant Brown was suddenly called back to Jubbulpore, and could not himself go to Sujaina. He sent, however, an intelligent native officer to the place, but no man could be induced to acknowledge that he had ever seen the bodies or heard of the affair, though Faringia pointed out to them exactly where they all lay. They said it must be quite a mistake—that such a thing could not have taken place and they know nothing of it. Lieutenant Brown was aware that all this affected ignorance arose entirely from the dread these people have of being summoned to give evidence to any of our district courts of justice; and wrote to the officer in the civil charge of the district to request that he would assure them that their presence would not be required. Mr. Doolan, the assistant magistrate, happened to be going through Sujaina from Sāgar on deputation at the time; and, sending for all the respectable old men of the place, he requested that they would be under no apprehension, but tell him the real truth, as he would pledge himself that not one of them should ever be summoned to any district court to give

We had occasion to examine a very respectable old gentleman at Damoh upon the case, Gobind Dās, a revenue officer under the former Government,<sup>170</sup> and now about seventy years of age. He told us that he had no knowledge whatever of the murder of the eight men at Sujaina; but he well remembered another which took place seven years before the time we mentioned at Abhāna, a stage or two back, on the road to Jubbulpore. Seventeen treasure-bearers lodged in the grove near that town on their way from Jubbulpore to Sāgar. At night they were set upon by a large gang of Thugs, and sixteen of them strangled; but the seventeenth laid hold of the noose before it could be brought to bear upon his throat, pulled down the villain who held it, and made his way good to the town. The Rājā, Dharak Singh, went to the spot with all the followers he could collect; but he found there nothing but the sixteen naked bodies lying in the grove, with their eyes

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evidence. They then took him to the spot and pointed out to him where the bodies had been found, and mentioned that the body of the tanner had been burned by his friends. The banker, whose treasure they had been carrying, had an equal dislike to be summoned to court to give evidence, now that he could no longer hope to recover any portion of his lost money; and it was not till after Lieutenant Brown had given him a similar assurance, that he would consent to have his books examined. The loss of the four thousand five hundred rupees was then found entered, with the names of the men who had been killed at Sujaina in carrying it. These are specimens of some of the minor difficulties we had to contend with in our efforts to put down the most dreadful of all crimes. All the prisoners accused of these murders had just been tried for others, or Lieutenant Brown would not have been able to give the pledge he did. [W. H. S.] Difficulties of the same kind beset the administration of criminal justice in India to this day.

<sup>170</sup> Of the Marāthās. The district was ceded in 1818.

apparently starting out of their sockets. The Thugs had all gone off with the treasure and their clothes, and the Rājā searched for them in vain.

A native commissioned officer of a regiment of native infantry one day told me that, while he was on duty over some Thugs at Lucknow, one of them related with great seeming pleasure the following case, which seemed to him one of the most remarkable that he had heard them speak of during the time they were under his charge.

'A stout Mogul<sup>171</sup> officer of noble bearing and singularly handsome countenance, on his way from the Punjab to Oudh, crossed the Ganges at Garhmuktesar Ghāt, near Meerut, to pass through Murādābād and Bareilly.<sup>172</sup> He was mounted on a fine Tūrkī horse, and attended by his "khidmatgār" (butler) and groom. Soon after crossing the river, he fell in with a small party of well-dressed and modest-looking men going the same road. They accosted him in a respectful manner, and attempted to enter into conversation with him. He had heard of Thugs, and told them to be off. They smiled at his idle suspicions, and tried

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<sup>171</sup> More correctly written Mughal. The term is properly applied to Muhammadans of Turk (Mongol) descent. Such persons commonly affix the title Beg to their names, and often prefix the Persian title Mīrā.

<sup>172</sup> Meerut, the well-known cantonment, in the district of the same name. The name is written Meeruth by the author, and may be also written Mīrath. Ghāt (ghaut) means a ferry, or crossing- place. Murādābād and Bareilly (Barelī) are in Rohilkhand. The latter has a considerable garrison. Both places are large cities, and the head-quarter of districts.

to remove them, but in vain. The Mogul was determined; they saw his nostrils swelling with indignation, took their leave, and followed slowly. The next morning he overtook the same number of men, but of a different appearance, all Musalmāns. They accosted him in the same respectful manner; talked of the danger of the road, and the necessity of their keeping together, and taking advantage of the protection of any mounted gentleman that happened to be going the same way. The Mogul officer said not a word in reply, resolved to have no companions on the road. They persisted—his nostrils began again to swell, and putting his hand to his sword, he bid them all be off, or he would have their heads from their shoulders. He had a bow and quiver full of arrows over his shoulders,<sup>173</sup> a brace of loaded pistols in his waist-belt, and a sword by his side, and was altogether a very formidable-looking cavalier. In the evening another party that lodged in the same "sarāi"<sup>174</sup> became very intimate with the butler and groom. They were going the same road; and, as the Mogul overtook them in the morning, they made their bows respectfully, and began to enter into conversation with their two friends, the groom and butler, who were coming up behind. The Mogul's nostrils began again to swell, and he bid the strangers be off. The groom and butler interceded, for their master was

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<sup>173</sup> The bow and quiver are now rarely seen, except, possibly, in remote parts of Rājputāna. A body of archers helped to hold the Shāh Najaf building at Lucknow against Sir Colin Campbell in 1858. Even in 1903-4 some of the Tibetans who resisted the British advance were armed with bows and arrows.

<sup>174</sup> An inn of the Oriental pattern, often called caravanserai in books of travel.

a grave, sedate man, and they wanted companions. All would not do, and the strangers fell in the rear. The next day, when they had got to the middle of an extensive and uninhabited plain, the Mogul in advance, and his two servants a few hundred yards behind, he came up to a party of six poor Musalmāns, sitting weeping by the side of a dead companion. They were soldiers from Lahore,<sup>175</sup> on their way to Lucknow, worn down by fatigue in their anxiety to see their wives and children once more, after a long and painful service. Their companion, the hope and prop of his family, had sunk under the fatigue, and they had made a grave for him; but they were poor unlettered men, and unable to repeat the funeral service from the holy Koran—would his Highness but perform this last office for them, he would, no doubt, find his reward in this world and the next. The Mogul dismounted—the body had been placed in its proper position, with its head towards Mecca. A carpet was spread—the Mogul took off his bow and quiver, then his pistols and sword, and placed them on the ground near the body—called for water, and washed his feet, hands, and face, that he might not pronounce the holy words in an unclean state. He then knelt down and began to repeat the funeral service, in a clear, loud voice. Two of the poor soldiers knelt by him, one on each side in silence. The other four went off a few paces to beg that the butler and groom would not come so near as to interrupt the good Samaritan at his devotions.

'All being ready, one of the four, in a low undertone, gave

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<sup>175</sup> Then the capital of Ranjit Singh, the great Sikh chief.

the "jhirnī" (signal),<sup>176</sup> the handkerchiefs were thrown over their necks, and in a few minutes all three—the Mogul and his servants—were dead, and lying in the grave in the usual manner, the head of one at the feet of the one below him. All the parties they had met on the road belonged to a gang of Jamāldēhī Thugs, of the kingdom of Oudh.<sup>177</sup> In despair of being able to win the Mogul's confidence in the usual way, and determined to have the money and jewels, which they knew he carried with him, they had adopted this plan of disarming him; dug the grave by the side of the road, in the open plain, and made a handsome young Musalmān of the party the dead soldier. The Mogul, being a very stout man, died almost without a struggle, as is usually the case with such; and his two servants made no resistance.'

People of great sensibility, with hearts overcharged with sorrow, often appear cold and callous to those who seem to them to feel no interest in their afflictions. An instance of this kind I will here mention; it is one of thousands that I have met with in my Indian rambles. It was mentioned to me one day that an

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<sup>176</sup> 'This is commonly given either by the leader of the gang or the *belhā*, who has chosen the place for the murder.' It was usually some commonplace order, such as 'Bring the tobacco' (*Ramaseeana*, p.99, &c.). See also Meadows Taylor, *Confessions of a Thug*.

<sup>177</sup> The Jamāldēhī Thugs resided 'in Oude and some other parts east of the Ganges. They are considered very clever and expert, and more stanch to their oath of secrecy than most other classes' (*ibid.* p. 97). At the time referred to Oudh was a separate kingdom, which lasted as such until 1856. A map included in the printed Thuggee papers reveals the appalling fact that the Thugs had 274 fixed burying-places for their victims in the area of the small kingdom, about half the size of Ireland.

old 'fakīr',<sup>178</sup> who lived in a small hut close by a little shrine on the side of the road near the town of Morādābād, had lately lost his son, poisoned by a party of 'daturiās', or professional poisoners,<sup>179</sup> that now infest every road throughout India. I sent for him, and requested him to tell me his story, as I might perhaps be able to trace the murderers. He did so, and a Persian writer took it down while I listened with all the coldness of a magistrate who wanted merely to learn facts and have nothing whatever to do with feelings. This is his story literally:

'I reside in my hut by the side of the road a mile and [a] half from the town, and live upon the bounty of travellers, and the people of the surrounding villages. About six weeks ago, I was sitting by the side of my shrine after saying prayers, with my only son, about ten years of age, when a man came up with his wife, his son, and his daughter, the one a little older, and the other a little younger than my boy. They baked and ate their bread near my shrine, and gave me flour enough to make two cakes. This I prepared and baked. My boy was hungry, and ate one cake and a half. I ate only half a one, for I was not hungry. I had a few days before purchased a new blanket for my boy, and it was hanging in a branch of the tree that shaded the shrine, when these people came. My son and I soon became stupefied. I saw him fall asleep,

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<sup>178</sup> Fakīr (fakeer), a religious mendicant. The word properly applies to Muhammadans only, but is often laxly used to include Hindoo ascetics.

<sup>179</sup> *So called because the poison they use is made of the seeds of the 'datura' plant (Datura alba), and other species of the same genus. It is a powerful narcotic.*

and I soon followed. I awoke again in the evening, and found myself in a pool of water. I had sense enough to crawl towards my boy. I found him still breathing, and I sat by him with his head in my lap, where he soon died. It was now evening, and I got up, and wandered about all night picking straws—I know not why. I was not yet quite sensible. During the night the wolves ate my poor boy. I heard this from travellers, and went and gathered up his bones and buried them in the shrine. I did not quite recover till the third day, when I found that some washerwomen had put me into the pool, and left me there with my head out, in hopes that this would revive me; but they had no hope of my son. I was then taken to the police of the town; but the landholders had begged me to say nothing about the poisoners, lest it might get them and their village community into trouble. The man was tall and fair, and about thirty- five; the woman short, stout, and fair, and about thirty; two of her teeth projected a good deal; the boy's eyelids were much diseased.'

All this he told me without the slightest appearance of emotion, for he had not seen any appearance of it in me, or my Persian writer; and a casual European observer would perhaps have exclaimed, 'What brutes these natives are! This fellow feels no more for the loss of his only son than he would for that of a goat'. But I knew the feeling was there. The Persian writer put up his paper, and closed his inkstand, and the following dialogue, word for word, took place between me and the old man:

*Question.*—What made you conceal the real cause of your

boy's death, and tell the police that he had been killed, as well as eaten, by wolves?

*Answer.*—The landholders told me that they could never bring back my boy to life, and the whole village would be worried to death by them if I made any mention of the poison.

*Question.*—And if they were to be punished for this they would annoy you?

*Answer.*—Certainly. But I believed they advised me for my own good as well as their own.

*Question.*—And if they should turn you away from that place, could you not make another?

*Answer.*—Are not the bones of my poor boy there, and the trees that he and I planted and watched together for ten years?

*Question.*—Have you no other relations? What became of your boy's mother?

*Answer.*—She died at that place when my boy was only three months old. I have brought him up myself from that age; he was my only child, and he has been poisoned for the sake of the blanket! (Here the poor old man sobbed as if his heartstrings would break; and I was obliged to make him sit down on the floor while I walked up and down the room.)

*Question.*—Had you any children before?

*Answer.*—Yes, sir, we had several, but they all died before their mother. We had been reduced to beggary by misfortunes, and I had become too weak and ill to work. I buried my poor wife's bones by the side of the road where she died; raised the

little shrine over them, planted the trees, and there have I sat ever since by her side, with our poor boy in my bosom. It is a sad place for wolves, and we used often to hear them howling outside; but my poor boy was never afraid of them when he knew I was near him. God preserved him to me, till the sight of the new blanket, for I had nothing else in the world, made these people poison us. I bought it for him only a few days before, when the rains were coming on, out of my savings—it was all I had. (The poor old man sobbed again, and sat down while I paced the room, lest I should sob also; my heart was becoming a little too large for its apartment.) 'I will never', continued he, 'quit the bones of my wife and child, and the tree that he and I watered for so many years. I have not many years to live; there I will spend them, whatever the landholders may do—they advised me for my own good, and will never turn me out.'

I found all the poor man stated to be true; the man and his wife had mixed poison with the flour to destroy the poor old man and his son for the sake of the new blanket which they saw hanging in the branch of the tree, and carried away with them. The poison used on such occasions is commonly the datura, and it is sometimes given in the hookah to be smoked, and at others in food. When they require to poison children as well as grown-up people, or women who do not smoke, they mix up the poison in food. The intention is almost always to destroy life, as 'dead men tell no tales'; but the poisoned people sometimes recover, as in the present case, and lead to the detection of the poisoners.

The cases in which they recover are, however, rare, and of those who recover few are ever able to trace the poisoners; and, of those who recover and trace them, very few will ever undertake to prosecute them through the several courts of the magistrate, the sessions, and that of last instance in a distant district, to which the proceedings must be sent for final orders.

The impunity with which this crime is everywhere perpetrated, and its consequent increase in every part of India, are among the greatest evils with which the country is at this time affected. These poisoners are spread all over India, and are as numerous over the Bombay and Madras Presidencies as over that of Bengal. There is no road free from them, and throughout India there must be many hundreds who gain their subsistence by this trade alone. They put on all manner of disguises to suit their purpose; and, as they prey chiefly upon the poorer sort of travellers, they require to destroy the greater number of lives to make up their incomes. A party of two or three poisoners have very often succeeded in destroying another of eight or ten travellers with whom they have journeyed for some days, by pretending to give them a feast on the celebration of the anniversary of some family event. Sometimes an old woman or man will manage the thing alone, by gaining the confidence of travellers, and getting near the cooking-pots while they go aside; or when employed to bring the flour for the meal from the bazaar. The poison is put into the flour or the pot, as opportunity offers.

People of all castes and callings take to this trade, some

casually, others for life, and others derive it from their parents or teachers. They assume all manner of disguises to suit their purposes; and the habits of cooking, eating, and sleeping on the side of the road, and smoking with strangers of seemingly the same caste, greatly facilitate their designs upon travellers. The small parties are unconnected with each other, and two parties never unite in the same cruise. The members of one party may be sometimes convicted and punished, but their conviction is accidental, for the system which has enabled us to put down the Thug associations cannot be applied, with any fair prospect of success, to the suppression of these pests to society.<sup>180</sup>

The Thugs went on their adventures in large gangs, and two or more were commonly united in the course of an expedition in the perpetration of many murders. Every man shared in the booty according to the rank he held in the gang, or the part he took in the murders; and the rank of every man and the part he took generally, or in any particular murder, were generally well known to all. From among these gangs, when arrested, we found the evidence we required for their conviction—or the means of tracing it—among the families and friends of their victims, or with persons to whom the property taken had been disposed of,

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<sup>180</sup> The crime of poisoning travellers is still prevalent, and its detection is still attended by the difficulties described in the text. In some cases the criminals have been proved to belong to families of Thug stranglers. The poisoning of cattle by arsenic, for the sake of their hides, was very prevalent forty years ago, especially in the districts near Benares, but is now believed to be less practised. It was checked under the ordinary law by numerous convictions and severe sentences.

and in the graves to which the victims had been consigned.

To give an idea of the system by which the Government of India has been enabled to effect so great a good for the people as the suppression of these associations, I will suppose that two sporting gentlemen, A at Delhi, and B in Calcutta, had both described the killing of a tiger in an island in the Ganges, near Hardwār<sup>181</sup> and mentioned the names of the persons engaged with them. Among the persons thus named were C, who had since returned to America, D, who had retired to New South Wales, E to England, and F to Scotland. There were four other persons named who were still in India, but they are deeply interested in A and B's story not being believed. A says that B got the skin of the tiger, and B states that he gave it to C, who cut out two of the claws. Application is made to C, D, E, and F, and without the possibility of any collusion, or even communication between them, their statements correspond precisely with those of A and B, as to the time, place, circumstances, and persons engaged. Their statements are sworn to before magistrates in presence of witnesses, and duly attested. C states that he got the skin from B, and gave it to the Nawāb of Rāmpur<sup>182</sup> for a hookah carpet, but that he took from the left forefoot two of the claws, and gave them to the minister of the King of Oudh for a charm for his sick child.

The Nawāb of Rāmpur, being applied to, states that he

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<sup>181</sup> In the Sahāranpur district, where the Ganges issues from the hills.

<sup>182</sup> A small principality in Rohilkhand, between Murādābād and Bareilly (Barēlī).

received the skin from C, at the time and place mentioned, and that he still smokes his hookah upon it; and that it had lost the two claws upon the left forefoot. The minister of the King of Oudh states that he received the two claws nicely set in gold; that they had cured his boy, who still wore them round his neck to guard him from the evil eye. The goldsmith states that he set the two claws in gold for C, who paid him handsomely for his work. The peasantry, whose cattle graze on the island, declare that certain gentlemen did kill a tiger there about the time mentioned, and that they saw the body after the skin had been taken off, and the vultures had begun to descend upon it.

To prove that what A and B had stated could not possibly be true, the other party appeal to some of their townsmen, who are said to be well acquainted with their characters. They state that they really know nothing about the matter in dispute; that their friends, who are opposed to A and B, are much liked by their townspeople and neighbours, as they have plenty of money, which they spend freely, but that they are certainly very much addicted to field-sports, and generally absent in pursuit of wild beasts for three or four months every year; but whether they were or were not present at the killing of the great Garhmuktesar tiger, they could not say.

Most persons would, after examining this evidence, be tolerably well satisfied that the said tiger had really been killed at the time and place, and by the persons mentioned by A and B; but, to establish the fact judicially, it would be necessary to bring

A, B, C, D, E, and F, the Nawāb of Rāmpur, the minister of the King of Oudh, and the goldsmith to the criminal court at Meerut, to be confronted with the person whose interest it was that A and B should not be believed. They would all, perhaps, come to the said court from the different quarters of the world in which they had thought themselves snugly settled; but the thing would annoy them so much, and be so much talked of, that sporting gentlemen, nawābs, ministers, and goldsmiths would in future take good care to have 'forgotten' everything connected with the matter in dispute, should another similar reference be made to them, and so A and B would never again have any chance.

Thug approvers, whose evidence we required, were employed in all parts of India, under the officers appointed to put down these associations; and it was difficult to bring all whose evidence was necessary at the trials to the court of the district in which the particular murder was perpetrated. The victims were, for the most part, money-carriers, whose masters and families resided hundreds of miles from the place where they were murdered, or people on their way to their distant homes from foreign service. There was no chance of recovering any of the property taken from the victims, as Thugs were known to spend what they got freely, and never to have money by them; and the friends of the victims, and the bankers whose money they carried, were everywhere found exceedingly averse to take share in the prosecution.

To obviate all these difficulties separate courts were formed,

with permission to receive whatever evidence they might think likely to prove valuable, attaching to each portion, whether documentary or oral, whatever weight it might seem to deserve. Such courts were formed at Hyderabad, Mysore, Indore, Lucknow, Gwālīor, and were presided over by our highest diplomatic functionaries, in concurrence with the princes at whose courts they were accredited; and who at Jubbulpore, were under the direction of the representative of the Governor-General of India.<sup>183</sup> By this means we had a most valuable species of unpaid agency; and I believe there is no part of their public life on which these high functionaries look back with more pride than that spent in presiding over such courts, and assisting the supreme Government in relieving the people of India from this fearful evil.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> *The special laws on the subject, namely: Acts xxx of 1836, xviii of 1837, xix of 1837, xviii of 1839, xviii of 1843, xxiv of 1843, xiv of 1844, v of 1847, x of 1847, iii of 1848, and xi of 1848, are printed in pp. 353-7 of the author's Report on Budhuk alias Bagree Decoits, &c. (1849). See Bibliography, ante. No. 12.*

<sup>184</sup> *I may here mention the names of a few diplomatic officers of distinction who have aided in the good cause. Of the Civil Service—Mr. F. C. Smith, Mr. Martin, Mr. George Stockwell, Mr. Charles Fraser, the Hon. Mr. Wellesley, the Hon. Mr. Shore, the Hon. Mr. Cavendish, Mr. George Clerk, Mr. L. Wilkinson, Mr. Bax; Majors-General—Cubbon and Fraser; Colonels—Low, Stewart, Alves, Spiers, Caulfield, Sutherland, and Wade; Major Wilkinson; and, among the foremost, Major Borthwick and Captain Paton. [W. H. S.]The author's characteristic modesty has prevented him from dwelling upon his own services, which were greater than those of any other officer. Some idea of them may be gathered from the collection of papers entitled *Ramaseeana*, the contents of which are enumerated in the Bibliography, ante. No. 2. Colonel Meadows Taylor has given a more popular account of the measures taken for the suppression*

of Thuggee (thagī) in his *Confessions of a Thug*, written in 1837 (1st ed. 1839). The Thug organization dated from ancient times, but attracted little notice from the East India Company's Government until the author, then Captain Sleeman, submitted his reports on the subject while employed in the Sāgar and Nerbudda Territories, where he had been posted in 1820. He proved that the Thug crimes were committed by a numerous and highly organized fraternity operating in all parts of India. In consequence of his reports, Mr. F. C. Smith, Agent to the Governor-General in the Sāgar and Nerbudda Territories, was invested, in the year 1829, with special powers, and the author, then Major Sleeman, was employed, in addition to his district duties, as Mr. Smith's coadjutor and assistant. In 1835 the author was relieved from district work, and appointed General Superintendent of the operations for the suppression of the Thug gangs. He went on leave to the hills in 1836, and on resuming duty in February, 1839, was appointed Commissioner for the suppression of Thuggee and Dacoity, which office he continued to hold in addition to his other appointments. Between 1826 and 1835, 1,562 prisoners were tried for the crime of Thuggee, of whom 1,404 were either hanged or transported for life. Some individuals are said to have confessed to over 200 murders, and one confessed to 719. The Thug approvers, whose lives were spared, were detained in a special prison at Jubbulpore, where the remnant of them, with their families, were kept under surveillance. They were employed in a tent and carpet factory, known as the School of Industry, founded in 1838 by the author and Captain Charles Brown. If released, they would certainly have resumed their hereditary occupation, which exercised an awful fascination over its votaries. Most of the Thug gangs had been broken up by 1860, but cases of Thuggee have occurred occasionally since that date. A gang of Kahārs (palanquin bearers) committed a series of Thug murders in, I think, 1877, at Etāwa, in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. The office of Superintendent of Thuggee and Dacoity was kept up until 1904, but the officer in charge was more concerned with Dacoity (that is to say, organized gang-robbery with violence) in the Native States than with the secret crime of Thuggee. Secret crime is now watched by the Central Criminal Intelligence Department under the direct control of the Government of India, and has to deal with novel forms of evil-doing. In India it is never safe to assume that any ancient practice has been suppressed, and I have little doubt that, if administrative pressure were relaxed, the old form of Thuggee would again be heard of. The occasional discovery of murdered beggars, who could not have been killed for the sake of their property, leads me to suppose that the Megpunnia variety of Thuggee, that is to say, murder of poor persons in

order to kidnap and sell their children, is still sometimes practised. Among the officers named by the author the best known is Sir Mark Cubbon, who came to India in 1800, and died at Suez in 1861. During the interval he had never quitted India. He ruled over Mysore for nearly thirty years with almost despotic power, and reorganized the administration of that country with conspicuous success (Buckland, *Dict. of Indian Biography*, Sonnenschein, 1906). The Hon. Frederick John Shore, of the Bengal Civil Service, officiated in 1836 as Civil Commissioner and Political Agent of the Sāgar and Nerbudda Territories. In 1837 he published his *Notes on Indian Affairs* (London, 2 vols. 8vo), a series of articles dealing in the most outspoken way with the abuses and weaknesses of Anglo-Indian administration at that time. Mr. F. C. Smith was Agent to the Governor-General at Jubbulpore in 1830 and subsequent years. The author was then immediately subordinate to him. Messrs. Martin and Wellesley were Residents at Holkar's court at Indore. Mr. Stockwell tried some of the Thug prisoners at Cawnpore and Allahabad as Special Commissioner, in addition to his ordinary duties: correspondence between him and the author is printed in *Ramaseeana*. Mr. Charles Fraser preceded the author in charge of the Sāgar district, and in January, 1832, resumed charge of the revenue and civil duties of that district, leaving the criminal work to the author. The Hon. Mr. Cavendish was Resident at Sindhia's court at Gwālior. Mr. George Clerk became Sir George Clerk and Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, Governor of Bombay, and Permanent Under-Secretary of State for India; he died at a great age in 1889. Mr. Lancelot Wilkinson, Political Agent in Bhopal, was considered by the author to be 'one of the most able and estimable members of the India Civil Service' (*Journey*, ii. 403). Mr. Bax was Resident at Indore; Colonel (afterwards Sir John) Low, was Resident at Lucknow, and had served at Jubbulpore; Colonel Stewart and Major-General Fraser were Residents at Hyderabad; Major (Colonel) Alves was Political Agent in Bhopal and Agent in Rājputāna; Colonel Spiers was Agent at Nīmach, and officiated as Agent in Rājputāna; Colonel Caulfield had been Political Agent at Harautī; Colonel Sutherland was Resident at Gwālior, and afterwards Agent in Rājputāna; Colonel (Sir C. M.) Wade had been Political Agent at Lūdiāna; Major Borthwick was employed at Indore; Captain Paton was Assistant Resident at Lucknow (see *Journey through Kingdom of Oudh*, vol. ii, pp. 152-69). Besides the officers above named, others are specified in *Ramaseeana* as having done good service. *Note*.—Mr. Crooke suggests, and, I think, correctly, that the words *Megpunnia* and *Megpunnaism* (*ante*, note 20, and Bibliography No. 7) are corruptions of the Hindī *Mēkh-phandiyā*, from *mēkh*, 'a peg', and *phandā*, 'a noose',

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equivalent to the Persian *tasmabāz*, meaning 'playing tricks with a strap'. Creagh, a private in a British regiment at Cawnpore about 1803, is said to have initiated three men into the peg and strap trick, as practised by English rogues. These men became the leaders of three Tasmabāz Thug gangs, whose proceedings are described by Mr. R. Montgomery in *Selections of the Records of Government*, N.W.P., vol. i, p. 312. A strap is doubled and folded up in different shapes. The art consists in putting in a stick or peg in such a way that the strap when unfolded shall come out double. The Tasmabāz Thugs seem to be identical with the 'Megpunnia' (*N.I.N. & Qu.*, vol. i, p. 108, note 721, September 1891). General Hervey records seven modern instances of strangulation by Megpunnia Thugs in Rājputāna (*Some Records of Crime* (1867), vol. i, pp. 126-31).

# CHAPTER 14

## Basaltic Cappings of the Sandstone Hills of Central India—Suspension Bridge—Prospects of the Nerbudda Valley—Deification of a Mortal

On the 29th<sup>185</sup> we came on to Pathariā, a considerable little town thirty miles from Sāgar, supported almost entirely by a few farmers, small agricultural capitalists, and the establishment of a native collector,<sup>186</sup> On leaving Pathariā, we ascend gradually along the side of the basaltic hills on our left to the south for three miles to a point whence we see before us this plane of basaltic cappings extending as far as the eye can reach to the west, south, and north, with frequent breaks, but still preserving one uniform level. On the top of these tables are here and there little conical elevations of laterite, or indurated iron clay.<sup>187</sup> The

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<sup>185</sup> November, 1835.

<sup>186</sup> *In the Damoh District, twenty-four miles west of Damoh. The name appears to be derived from the 'great quantity of hewn stone (Hind. patthar or pāthar) lying about in all directions'. The C. P. Gazetteer (1870) calls the place 'a considerable village'.*

<sup>187</sup> *A peculiar formation, of 'widespread occurrence in the tropical and subtropical regions of the world'. It is ordinarily of a reddish ferruginous or brick-dust colour, sometimes deepened into dark red. Apparently the special character which distinguishes laterite from other forms of red-coloured weathering is the presence of hydrous oxide of alumina in varying proportions. . . . 'Though there is still a great deal of uncertainty*

cappings everywhere repose immediately upon the sandstone of the Vindhya range; but they have occasional beds of limestone, formed apparently by springs rising from their sides, and strongly impregnated with carbonic acid gas. For the most part this is mere travertine, but in some places they get good lime from the beds for building.

On the 1st of December we came to the pretty village of Sanodā, near the suspension bridge built over the river Biās by Colonel Presgrave, while he was assay master of the Sāgar mint.<sup>188</sup> I was present at laying the foundation-stone of this bridge in December 1827. Mr. Maddock was the Governor-General's representative in these territories, and the work was undertaken more with a view to show what could be done out of their own resources, under minds capable of developing them, than to supply any pressing or urgent want.

The work was completed in June, 1830; and I have several times seen upon the bridge as many as it could hold of a regiment

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*about the way in which laterite was formed, the facts which are known of its distribution seem to show that it is a distinct form of weathering, which is confined to low latitudes and humid climates; its formation seems to have been a slow process, only possible on flat or nearly flat surfaces, where surface rain-wash could not act' (Oldham, in The Oxford Survey of the British Empire, vol. ii, Asia, p. 10: Oxford, 1914). It hardens and darkens by exposure to air, and is occasionally used as a building stone.*

<sup>188</sup> *The Sāgar mint was erected in 1820 by Captain Presgrave, the assay master, and used to employ four hundred men, but, after about ten or twelve years, the business was transferred to Calcutta, and the buildings converted to other uses (C. P. Gazetteer, 1870). Mints are now kept up at Calcutta and Bombay only. The Biās is a small stream flowing into the Sunār river, and belonging to the Jumna river system. The name is printed Beese in the original edition.*

of infantry while it moved over; and, at other times, as many of a corps of cavalry, and often several elephants at once. The bridge is between the points of suspension two hundred feet, and the clear portion of the platform measures one hundred and ninety feet by eleven and a half. The whole cost of the work amounted to about fifty thousand rupees; and, under a less able and careful person than Colonel Presgrave, would have cost, perhaps, double the amount. This work has been declared by a very competent judge to be equal to any structure of the same kind in Europe, and is eminently calculated to show what genius and perseverance can produce out of the resources of a country even in the rudest state of industry and the arts.

The river Nerbudda neither is nor ever can, I fear, be made navigable, and the produce of its valley would require to find its way to distant markets over the Vindhya range of hills to the north, or the Sātpura to the south. If the produce of the soil, mines, and industry of the valley cannot be transported to distant markets, the Government cannot possibly find in it any available net surplus revenue in money; for it has no mines of the precious metals, and the precious metals can flow in only in exchange for the produce of the land, and the industry of the valley that flows out. If the Government wishes to draw a net surplus revenue from the valley or from the districts that border upon it, that is, a revenue beyond its expenditure in support of the local public establishments, it must either draw it in produce,

or for what can be got for that produce in distant markets.<sup>189</sup> Hitherto little beyond the rude produce of the soil has been able to find its way into distant markets from the valley of the Nerbudda; yet this valley abounds in iron mines,<sup>190</sup> and its soil, where unexhausted by cropping, is of the richest quality.<sup>191</sup> It is

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<sup>189</sup> Since the author's time the conditions have been completely changed by the introduction of railways. The East Indian, Great Indian Peninsular, and other railways now enter the Nerbudda Valley, so that the produce of most districts can be readily transported to distant markets. A large enhancement of the land revenue has been obtained by revisions of the settlement.

<sup>190</sup> *Details will be found in the Central Provinces Gazetteer* (1870). The references are collected under the head 'Iron' in the index to that work. Chapter VIII of *Ball's Economic Geology of India* gives full information concerning the iron mines of the Central Provinces and all parts of India. That work forms Part III of the *Manual of the Geology of India*.

<sup>191</sup> *The soil of the valley of the Nerbudda, and that of the Nerbudda and Sāgar territories generally, is formed for the most part of the detritus of trap-rocks that everywhere covered the sandstone of the Vindhya and Sātpura ranges which run through these territories. This basaltic detritus forms what is called the black cotton soil by the English, for what reason I know not. [W. H. S.] The reason is that cotton is very largely grown in the Nerbudda Valley, both on the black soil and other soils. In Bundēlkhānd the black, friable soil, often with a high proportion of organic matter, is called 'mār', and is chiefly devoted to raising crops of wheat, gram, or chick-pea (*Cicer arietinum*), linseed, and joār (*Holcus sorghum*). Cotton is also sown in it, but not very generally. This black soil requires little rain, and is fertile without manure. It absorbs water too freely to be suitable for irrigation, and in most seasons does not need it. The 'black cotton soil' is often known as *regur*, a corruption of a Tamil word. 'The origin of *regur* is a doubtful question. . . . The dark coloration was attributed by earlier writers to vegetable matter, and taken to indicate a large amount of humus in the soil; more recent investigations make this doubtful, and in all probability the colour is due to mineral constitution rather than to the very scanty organic constituents of the soil.' It may possibly be formed of 'wind-borne dust', like the loess plains of China (Oldham,*

not then too much to hope that in time the iron of the mines will be worked with machinery for manufactures; and that multitudes, aided by this machinery, and subsisted on the rude agricultural produce, which now flows out, will invest the value of their labour in manufactured commodities adapted to the demand of foreign markets and better able from their superior value, compared with their bulk, to pay the cost of transport by land. Then, and not till then, can we expect to see these territories pay a considerable net surplus revenue to Government, and abound in a middle class of merchants, manufacturers, and agricultural capitalists.<sup>192</sup>

At Sanodā there is a very beautiful little fortress or castle now unoccupied, though still entire. It was built by an officer of the Rājā Chhatar Sāl of Bundēlkhand, about one hundred and twenty years ago.<sup>193</sup> He had a grant, on the tenure of military service, of

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in *The Oxford Survey of the British Empire*, vol. ii, Asia, p. 9: Oxford, 1914).

<sup>192</sup> The land revenue has been largely increased, and the resources and communications of the country have been greatly developed during the last half-century. The formation of the Central Provinces as a separate administration in 1861 secured for the Sāgar and Nerbudda territories the attention which they failed to obtain from the distant Government of the North-Western Provinces. Sir Richard Temple, the first Chief Commissioner, administered the Central Provinces with extraordinary energy and success.

<sup>193</sup> *Rājā Chhatarsāl Bundela was Rājā of Pannā. The history of Chhatarsāl is related in I.G. (1908), vol. xix, p. 400, s.v. Panna State.* In 1729 he called in the Marāthās to help him against Muhammad Khan Bangash, and when he died in 1731 rewarded them by bequeathing one-third of his dominions to the Peshwa. The correct date of his death is Pūs Badi 3, Samvat 1788 (*Hamūrpur Settlement Report (1880)*, note at end of chapter 2). The date is often given inaccurately.

twelve villages situated round this place; and a man who could build such a castle to defend the surrounding country from the inroads of freebooters, and to secure himself and his troops from any sudden impulse of the people's resentment, was as likely to acquire an increase of territorial possession in these parts as he would have been in Europe during the Middle Ages. The son of this chief, by name Rāi Singh, was, soon after the castle had been completed, killed in an attack upon a town near Chitrakōt;<sup>194</sup> and having, in the estimation of the people, *become a god*, he had a temple and a tomb raised to him close to our encampment. I asked the people how he had become a *god*; and was told that some one who had been long suffering from a quartan ague went to the tomb one night, and promised Rāi Singh, whose ashes lay under it, that if he could contrive to cure his ague for him, he would, during the rest of his life, make offerings to his shrine. After that he had never another attack, and was very punctual in his offerings. Others followed his example, and with like success, till Rāi Singh was recognized among them universally as a god, and a temple raised to his name. This is the way that gods were made all over the world at one time, and are still made all over India. Happy had it been for mankind if those only who were supposed to do good had been deified.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Chitrakōt, in the Bānda district of Bundēlkhand, under the government of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, and seventy-one miles distant from Allahabad, is a famous place of pilgrimage, much frequented by the votaries of Rāma. Large fairs are held there.

<sup>195</sup> The performance of miraculous cures at the tomb is not necessary for the

On the 2nd we came on to the village of Khojanpur (leaving the town and cantonments of Sāgar to our left), a distance of some fourteen miles. The road for a great part of the way was over the bare back of the sandstone strata, the covering of basalt having been washed off. The hills, however, are, at this distance from the city and cantonments of Sāgar, nicely wooded; and, being constantly intersected by pretty little valleys, the country we came over was picturesque and beautiful. The soil of all these valleys is rich from the detritus of the basalt that forms or caps the hills; but it is now in a bad state of cultivation, partly from several successive seasons of great calamity, under which the people have been suffering, and partly from over-assessment; and this posture of affairs is continued by that loss of energy, industry, and character, among the farmers and cultivators, which must everywhere result from these two evils. In India, where the people have learnt so well to govern themselves, from the want of settled government, good or bad government really depends almost altogether upon *good or bad settlements of the land revenue*. Where the Government demand is imposed with moderation, and enforced with justice, there will the people be generally found happy and contented, and disposed to perform their duties to each other and to the state; except when they

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deification of a person who has been specially feared in his lifetime, or has died a violent death. Either of these conditions is enough to render his ghost formidable, and worthy of propitiation. Shrines to such persons are very numerous both in Bundēlkhānd and other parts of India, Miracles, of course, occur at nearly every shrine, and are too common and well attested to attract much attention.

have the misfortune to suffer from drought, blight, and other calamities of season.<sup>196</sup>

I have mentioned that the basalt in the Sāgar district reposes for the most part immediately upon the sandstone of the Vindhya range; and it must have been deposited on the sand, while the latter was yet at the bottom of the ocean, though this range is now, I believe, nowhere less than from fifteen hundred to two thousand feet above the level of the sea. The marks of the ripple of the sea may be observed in some places where the basalt has been recently washed off, beautifully defined, as if formed only yesterday, and there is no other substance to be seen between the two rocks.

The texture of the sandstone at the surface, where it comes in contact with the basalt, has in some places been altered by it, but in others it seems to have been as little changed as the habitations of the people who were suffocated by the ashes of Vesuvius in the city of Pompeii. I am satisfied, from long and careful examination, that the greater part of this basalt, which covers the tableland of Central and Southern India, must have been held for some time in suspension in the ocean or lake into which it was first thrown in the shape of ashes, and then gradually deposited. This alone can account for its frequent appearance of stratification, for the gentle blending of its particles with those

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<sup>196</sup> These observations are as true to-day as they were in the author's time. Disastrous cases of over-assessment were common in the early years of British rule, and the mischief so wrought has been sometimes traceable for generations afterwards. Since 1833 the error, though less common, has not been unknown.

of the sand near the surface of the latter; and, above all, for those level steps, or tables, lying one above another horizontally in parallel bars on one range, corresponding exactly with the same parallel lines one above another on a range twenty or thirty miles across the valley. Mr. Scrope's theory is, I believe, that these are all mere flowing *coulées* of lava, which, in their liquid state, filled hollows, but afterwards became of a harder texture, as they dried and crystallized, than the higher rocks around them; the consequence of which is that the latter has been decomposed and washed away, while the basalt has been left to form the highest elevations. My opinion is that these steps, or stairs, at one time formed the beds of the ocean, or of great lakes, and that the substance of which they are composed was, for the most part, projected into the water, and there held in suspension till gradually deposited. There are, however, amidst these steps, and beneath them, masses of more compact and crystalline basalt, that bear evident signs of having been flows of lava.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> *Since writing the above, I have seen Colonel Sykes's notes on the formations of Southern India in the Indian Review.* The facts there described seem all to support my conclusion, and his map would answer just as well for Central as for Southern India; for the banks of the Nerbudda and Chambal, Sōn, and Mahānadī, as well as for those of the Bām and the Bīmā. Colonel Sykes does not, I believe, attempt to account for the stratification of the basalt; he merely describes it. [W. H. S.]The author's theory of the subaqueous origin of the greater part of the basalt of Central and Southern India, otherwise known as the 'Deccan Trap Series', had been supported by numerous excellent geologists, but W. T. Blanford proved the theory to be untenable, there being 'clear and unmistakable evidence that the traps were in great part of sub-aerial formation', The intercalation of sedimentary beds with fresh-water fossils is conclusive proof that the lava-flows associated with such beds cannot be submarine.

Reasoning from analogy at Jubbulpore, where some of the basaltic cappings of the hills had evidently been thrown out of craters long after this surface had been raised above the waters, and become the habitation both of vegetable and animal life, I made the first discovery of fossil remains in the Nerbudda valley. I went first to a hill within sight of my house in 1828,<sup>198</sup> and searched exactly between the plateau of basalt that covered it and the stratum immediately below, and there I found several small trees with roots, trunks, and branches, all entire, and beautifully petrified. They had been only recently uncovered by the washing away of a part of the basaltic plateau. I soon after found some

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The hypothesis that the lower beds of traps were poured out in a vast, but shallow, freshwater lake extending throughout the area over which the inter-trappean limestone formation extends appears to be extremely improbable. The lava seems to have been poured, during a long succession of ages, over a land surface, uneven and broken in parts, 'with intervals of rest sufficient for lakes, stocked with fresh-water mollusca, to form on the cold surfaces of several of the lava-flows' (Holland, in *I.G.* (1907), i. 88). A great tract of the volcanic region appears to have remained almost undisturbed to the present day, affected by sub-aerial erosion alone. The geological horizon of the Deccan trap cannot be precisely defined, but is now vaguely stated as 'the close of the cretaceous period'. The 'steps', or conspicuous terraces, traceable on the hill-sides for great distances, are explained as being 'due to the outcrop of the harder basaltic strata, or of those beds which resist best the disintegrating influences of exposure'. The general horizontality of the Deccan trap over an area of not less than 200,000 square miles, and the absence of volcanic hills of the usual conical form, are difficulties which have caused much discussion. Some of the 'old volcanic vents' appear to have existed near Poona and Mahāblēshwar. The entire area has been subjected to sub-aerial denudation on a gigantic scale, which explains the occurrence of the basalt as the caps of isolated hills. Much further investigation is required to clear up details (*Manual of the Geology of India*, ed. 1, Part I, chap. 13)

<sup>198</sup> The author took charge of the Jubbulpore District in March 1828.

fossil bones of animals.<sup>199</sup> Going over to Sāgar, in the end of 1830, and reasoning there upon the same analogy, I searched for fossil remains along the line of contact between the basalt and the surface upon which it had been deposited, and I found a grove of silicified palm-trees within a mile of the cantonments. These palm-trees had grown upon a calcareous deposit formed from springs rising out of the basaltic range of hills to the south. The commissariat officer had cut a road through this grove, and all the European officers of a large military station had been every day riding through it without observing the geological treasure; and it was some time before I could convince them that the stones which they had every day seen were really petrified palm-trees. The roots and trunks were beautifully perfect.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> *The fossiliferous beds near Jubbulpore, described in the text, seem to belong to the group now classed as the Lamētā beds. The bones of a large dinosaurian reptile (Titanosaurus indicus) have been identified (I.G., 1907, vol. i, p. 88).*

<sup>200</sup> *Many years ago Dr. Spry (Note on the Fossil Palms and Shells lately discovered on the Table-Land of Sāgar in Central India, in J.A.S.B. for 1833, vol. ii, p. 639) and, subsequently to him, Captain Nicholls (Journal of Asiatic Soc. of Bombay, vol. v, p. 614), studied and described certain trunks of palm-trees, whose silicified remains are found imbedded in the soft intertrappean mud-beds near Sāgar. . . . The trees are imbedded in a layer of calcareous black earth, which formed the surface soil in which they grew; this soil rests on, and was made up of the disintegration of, a layer of basalt. It is covered over by another and similar layer of the same rock near where the trees occur. . . . The palm-trees, now found fossilized, grew in the soil, which, in the condition of a black calcareous earthy bed, we now find lying round their prostrate stems. They fell (from whatever cause), and lay until their silicification was complete. A slight depression of the surface, or some local or accidental check of some drainage-course, or any other similar and trivial cause, may have laid them under water. The process of silicification proceeded gradually but steadily, and after*

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they had there, in lapse of ages, become lapidified, the next outburst of volcanic matter overwhelmed them, broke them, partially enveloped, and bruised them, until long subsequent denudation once more brought them to light' (J. G. Medlicott, in *Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India*, vol. ii. Part II, pp. 200, 203, 204, 205, 216, as quoted in *C. P. Gazetteer* (1870), p. 435). The intertrappean fossils are all those of organisms which would occur in shallow fresh-water lakes or marshy ground. Besides the author's friend and relative, Dr. H. H. Spry, Dr. Spilsbury contributed papers on the Nerbudda fossils to vols. iii, vi, viii, ix, x, and xiii of the *J.A.S.B.* Other writers also have treated of the subject, but it appears to be by no means fully worked out. James Prinsep, to whom no topic came amiss, discussed the Jubbulpore fossil bones in the volume in which Dr. Spry's paper appeared. Dr. Spry was the author of a work entitled *Modern India: with Illustrations of the Resources and Capabilities of Hindustan* (2 vols. 8vo, 1838). He became F.R.S.

# CHAPTER 15

## Legend of the Sāgar Lake—Paralysis from eating the Grain of the *Lathyrus sativus*

The cantonments of Sāgar are about two miles from the city and occupied by three regiments of native infantry, one of local horse, and a company of European artillery.<sup>201</sup> The city occupies two sides of one of the most beautiful lakes of India, formed by a wall which unites two sandstone hills on the north side. The fort and part of the town stands upon this wall, which, according to tradition, was built by a wealthy merchant of the Banjāra caste.<sup>202</sup> After he had finished it, the bed of the lake still remained dry;

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<sup>201</sup> *The garrison is stated in the Gazetteer (1870) to consist of a European regiment of infantry, two batteries of European artillery, one native cavalry and one native infantry regiment. In 1893 it consisted of one battery of Royal Artillery, a detachment of British Infantry, a regiment of Bengal Cavalry, and a detachment of Bengal Infantry. According to the census of 1911, the population of Sāgar was 45,908.*

<sup>202</sup> *The Banjāras, or Brinjāras, are a wandering tribe, principally employed as carriers of grain and salt on bullocks and cows. They used to form the transport service of the Moghal armies, and of the Company's forces at least as late as 1819. Their organization and customs are in many ways peculiar. The development of roads and railways has much diminished the importance of the tribe. A good account of it will be found in Balfour, Cyclopaedia of India, 3rd ed., 1885, s. v. 'Banjāra'. Dubois (Hindu Manners, &c., 3rd ed. (1906), p. 70) states that 'of all the castes of the Hindus, this particular one is acknowledged to be the most brutal'.*

and he was told in a dream, or by a priest, that it would continue so till he should consent to sacrifice his own daughter, then a girl, and the young lad to whom she was affianced, to the tutelary god of the place. He accordingly built a little shrine in the centre of the valley, which was to become the bed of the lake, put the two children in, and built up the doorway. He had no sooner done so than the whole of the valley became filled with water, and the old merchant, the priest, the masons, and spectators, made their escape with much difficulty. From that time the lake has been inexhaustible; but no living soul of the Banjāra caste has ever since been known to drink of its waters. Certainly all of that caste at present religiously avoid drinking the water of the lake; and the old people of the city say that they have always done so since they can remember, and that they used to hear from their parents that they had always done so. In nothing does the Founder of the Christian religion appear more amiable than in His injunction, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not'. In nothing do the Hindoo deities appear more horrible than in the delight they are supposed to take in their sacrifice—it is everywhere the helpless, the female, and the infant that they seek to devour—and so it was among the Phoenicians and their Carthaginian colonies. Human sacrifices were certainly offered in the cities of Sāgar during the whole of the Marātha government up to the year 1800, when they were put a stop to by the local governor, Āsā Sāhib, a very humane man; and I once heard a very learned Brahman priest say that he thought the

decline of his family and government arose from this *innovation*. 'There is', said he, 'no sin in *not* offering human sacrifices to the gods where none have been offered; but, where the gods have been accustomed to them, they are naturally annoyed when the rite is abolished, and visit the place and people with all kinds of calamities.' He did not seem to think that there was anything singular in this mode of reasoning, and perhaps three Brahman priests out of four would have reasoned in the same manner.<sup>203</sup>

On descending into the valley of the Nerbudda over the Vindhya range of hills from Bhopal, one may see by the side of the road, upon a spur of the hill, a singular pillar of sandstone rising in two spires, one turning above and rising over the other, to the height of from twenty to thirty feet. On a spur of a hill half a mile distant is another sandstone pillar not quite so high. The tradition is that the smaller pillar was the affianced bride of the taller one, who was a youth of a family of great eminence in these parts. Coming with his uncle to pay his first visit to his bride in the procession they call the 'barāt', he grew more and more impatient as he approached nearer and nearer, and she shared the feeling. At last, unable to restrain himself, he jumped upon his uncle's shoulder, and looked with all his might towards the spot where his bride was said to be seated. Unhappily she felt no less impatient than he did, and raised 'the fringed curtains of her eye', as he raised his, [and] they saw each other at the same moment. In that moment the bride, bridegroom, and uncle were

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<sup>203</sup> See note on *human sacrifice*, ante, Chapter 8, note 8.

all converted into stone pillars; and there they stand to this day a monument, in the estimation of the people, to warn men and womankind against too strong an inclination to indulge curiosity. It is a singular fact that in one of the most extensive tribes of the Gond population of Central India, to which this couple is said to have belonged, the bride always goes to the bridegroom in the procession of the 'barāt', to prevent a recurrence of this calamity. It is the bridegroom who goes to the bride among every other class of the people of India, as well Muhammadans as Hindoos. Whether the usage grew out of the tradition, or the tradition out of the usage, is a question that will admit of much being said on both sides. I can only vouch for the existence of both. I have seen the pillars, heard the tradition from the people, and ascertained the usage; as in the case of that of the Sāgar lake.

The Mahādēo sandstone hills, which in the Sātpura range overlook the Nerbudda to the south, rise to between four and five thousand feet above the level of the sea;<sup>204</sup> and in one of the highest parts a fair was formerly, and is, perhaps, still held<sup>205</sup> for the enjoyment of those who assemble to witness the self devotion of a few young men, who offer themselves as a sacrifice to fulfil the vows of their mothers. When a woman is without children she makes votive offerings to all the gods, who can, she thinks,

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<sup>204</sup> In the Hoshangābād district of the Central Provinces. The sandstone formation here attains its highest development, and is known to geologists as the 'Mahādēo sandstones'. The new sanitarium of Pachmarhī is situated in these hills.

<sup>205</sup> It has been long since suppressed.

assist her, and promises of still greater in case they should grant what she wants. Smaller promises being found of no avail, she at last promises her first-born, if a male, to the god of destruction, Mahādēo. If she gets a son, she conceals from him her vows till he has attained the age of puberty; she then communicates it [*sic*] to him, and enjoins him to fulfil it. He believes it to be his paramount duty to obey his mother's call; and from that moment he considers himself as devoted to the god. Without breathing to any living soul a syllable of what she has told him, he puts on the habit of a pilgrim or religious mendicant, visits all the celebrated temples dedicated to this god in different parts of India;<sup>206</sup> and, at the annual fair on the Mahādēo hills, throws himself from a perpendicular height of four or five hundred feet, and is dashed to pieces upon the rocks below.<sup>207</sup> If the youth does not feel himself quite prepared for the sacrifice on the first visit, he spends another year in pilgrimages, and returns to fulfil his mother's vow at the next fair. Some have, I believe, been known to postpone the sacrifice to a third fair; but the interval is always spent in painful pilgrimages to the celebrated temples of the god. When Sir R. Jenkins was the Governor-General's representative

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<sup>206</sup> *Benares is the principal seat of the worship of Mahādēo (Siva), but his shrines are found everywhere throughout India. One hundred and eight of these are reckoned as important. In Southern India the most notable, perhaps, is the great temple at Tanjore (see chap. 17 of Monier Williams's Religious Thought and Life in India).*

<sup>207</sup> 'This mode of suicide is called Bhriḡu-pātā, "throwing one's self from a precipice". It was once equally common at the rock of Girnār [in Kāthiāwār], and has only recently been prohibited' (*ibid.* p. 349).

at the court of Nāgpur,<sup>208</sup> great efforts were made by him and all the European officers under him to put a stop to these horrors by doing away with the fair; and their efforts were assisted by the *cholera morbus*, which broke out among the multitude one season while they were so employed, and carried off the greater part of them. This seasonable visitation was, I believe, considered as an intimation on the part of the god that the people ought to have been more attentive to the wishes of the white men, for it so happens that Mahādēo is the only one of the Hindoo gods who is represented with a white face.<sup>209</sup> He figures among the *dramatis personae* of the great pantomime of the Rāmlīlā<sup>210</sup> or fight for

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<sup>208</sup> Nagpore (Nāgpur) was governed by Marāthā rulers, with the title of Bhōnslā, also known as the Rājās of Berār. The last Rājā, Raghojī, died without heirs in 1853. His dominions were then annexed as lapsed territory by Lord Dalhousie. Sir Richard Jenkins was Resident at Nāgpur from 1810 to 1827. Nāgpur is now the head-quarters of the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces.

<sup>209</sup> 'There is a legend that Siva appeared in the Kali age, for the good of the Brahmans, as "Sveta", "the white one", and that he had four disciples, to all of whom the epithet "Sveta" is applied' (Monier Williams, *Religious Thought and Life in India*, p. 80, note 2). Various explanations of the legend have been offered. Professor A. Weber is inclined to think that the various references to white teachers in Indian legends allude to Christian missionaries. The Mahābhārata mentions the travels of Nārada and others across the sea to 'Sveta-dwīpa', the 'Island of the White Men', in order to learn the doctrine of the unity of God. This tradition appears to be intelligible only if understood to commemorate the journeys of pious Indians to Alexandria, and their study of Christianity there (*Die Griechen in Indien*, 1890, p. 34).

<sup>210</sup> The Rāmlīlā, a performance corresponding to the mediaeval European 'miracle-play', is celebrated in Northern India in the month of Kuār (or Asvin, September-October), at the same time as the Durgā Pūjā is solemnized in Bengal. Rāma and his brother Lachhman are impersonated by boys, who are seated on thrones in state. The

the recovery of Sitā from the demon king of Ceylon; and is the only one with a white face. I know not whether the fair has ever been revived, but [I] think not.

In 1829 the wheat and other spring crops in this and the surrounding villages were destroyed by a severe hail-storm; in 1830 they were deficient from the want of seasonable rains; and in 1831 they were destroyed by blight. During these three years the 'teorī', or what in other parts of India is called 'kesārī' (the *Lathyrus sativus* of botanists), a kind of wild vetch, which, though not sown itself, is left carelessly to grow among the wheat and other grain, and given in the green and dry state to cattle, remained uninjured, and thrived with great luxuriance.<sup>211</sup> In 1831 they reaped a rich crop of it from the blighted wheat-fields, and subsisted upon its grain during that and the following years, giving the stalks and leaves only to their cattle. In 1833 the sad effects of this food began to manifest themselves. The younger part of the population of this and the surrounding villages, from the age of thirty downwards, began to be deprived of the use of their limbs below the waist by paralytic strokes, in all cases sudden, but in some cases more severe than in others. About

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performance concludes by the burning of a wicker image of Rāvana, the demon king of Lankā (Ceylon), who had carried off Rāma's queen, Sitā. The story is the leading subject of the great epic called the Rāmāyana.

<sup>211</sup> *The Lathyrus sativus* is cultivated in the Punjab and in Tibet. Its poisonous qualities are attributed to its excessive proportion of nitrogenous matter, which requires dilution. Another species of the genus, *L. cicer*, grown in Spain, has similar properties. The distressing effects described in the text have been witnessed by other observers (Balfour, *Cyclopaedia*, 3rd ed., 1885, s.v. 'Lathyrus').

half the youth of this village of both sexes became affected during the years 1833 and 1834, and many of them have lost the use of their lower limbs entirely, and are unable to move. The youth of the surrounding villages, in which the 'teorī' from the same causes formed the chief article of food during the years 1831 and 1832, have suffered to an equal degree. Since the year 1834 no new case has occurred; but no person once attacked had been found to recover the use of the limbs affected; and my tent was surrounded by great numbers of the youth in different stages of the disease, imploring my advice and assistance under this dreadful visitation. Some of them were very fine-looking young men of good caste and respectable families; and all stated that their pains and infirmities were confined entirely to the parts below the waist. They described the attack as coming on suddenly, often while the person was asleep, and without any warning symptoms whatever; and stated that a greater portion of the young men were attacked than of the young women. It is the prevailing opinion of the natives throughout the country that both horses and bullocks, which have been much fed upon 'teorī', are liable to lose the use of their limbs; but, if the poisonous qualities abound more in the grain than in the stalk or leaves, man, who eats nothing but the grain, must be more liable to suffer from the use of this food than beasts, which eat it merely as they eat grass or hay.

I sent the son of the head man of the village and another, who were among the young people least affected, into Sāgar

with a letter to my friend Dr. Foley, with a request that he would try what he could do for them; and if he had any fair prospect of being able to restore these people to the use of their limbs, that measures might be adopted through the civil authorities to provide them with accommodation and the means of subsistence, either by private subscription, or by application to Government. The civil authorities, however, could find neither accommodation nor funds to maintain these people while under Dr. Foley's care; and several seasons of calamity had deprived them of the means of maintaining themselves at a distance from their families. Nor is a medical man in India provided with the means found most effectual in removing such affections, such as baths, galvanic batteries, &c. It is lamentable to think how very little we have as yet done for the country in the healing art, that art which, above all others, a benevolent and enlightened Government should encourage among the people of India.

All we have as yet done has been to provide medical attendants for our European officers; regiments, and jails. It must not, however, be supposed that the people of India are without medical advice, for there is not a town or considerable village in India without its practitioners, the Hindoos following the Egyptian (*Misrānī*), and the Musalmāns the Grecian (*Yunānī*) practice. The first prescribe little physic and much fasting; and the second follow the good old rules of Hippocrates, Galen, and Avicenna, with which they are all tolerably well acquainted. As far as the office of physician goes, the natives of India of all

classes, high and low, have much more confidence in their own practitioners than in ours, whom they consider too reckless and better adapted to treat diseases in a cold than a hot climate. They cannot afford to give the only fees which European physicians would accept; and they see them, in their hospital practice, trust much to their native assistants, who are very few of them able to read any book, much less to study the profound doctrines of the great masters of the science of medicine.<sup>212</sup> No native ventures to offer an opinion upon this abstruse subject in any circle where he is not known to be profoundly read in either Arabic or Sanskrit lore; nor would he venture to give a prescription without first consulting, 'spectacles on nose', a book as large as a church Bible. The educated class, as indeed all classes, say that they do not want our physicians, but stand much in need of our surgeons. Here they feel that they are helpless, and we are strong; and they seek our aid whenever they see any chance of obtaining it, as in the present case.<sup>213</sup> Considering that every European gentleman

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<sup>212</sup> One of the tent-pitchers one morning, after pitching our tent, asked the loan of a small extra one for the use of his wife, who was about to be confined. The basket-maker's wife of the village near which we were encamped was called; and the poor woman, before we had finished our breakfast, gave birth to a daughter. The charge is half a rupee, or one shilling for a boy, and a quarter, or sixpence, for a girl. The tent-pitcher gave her ninepence, which the poor midwife thought very handsome. The mother had come fourteen miles upon a loaded cart over rough roads the night before; and went the same distance with her child the night after, upon the same cart. The first midwife in Europe could not have done her duty better than this poor basket-maker's wife did hers. [W. H. S.]

<sup>213</sup> The 'present case' was of a medical, not a surgical, nature.

they meet is more or less a surgeon, or hoping to find him so, people who are afflicted, or have children afflicted, with any kind of malformation, or malorganization, flock round them [*sic*] wherever they go, and implore their aid; but implore in vain, for, when they do happen to fall in with a surgeon, he is a mere passer-by, without the means or the time to afford relief. In travelling over India there is nothing which distresses a benevolent man so much as the necessity he is daily under of telling poor parents, who, with aching hearts and tearful eyes, approach him with their suffering children in their arms, that to relieve them requires time and means which are not at a traveller's command, or a species of knowledge which he does not possess; it is bitter thus to dash to the ground the cup of hope which our approach has raised to the lip of mother, father, and child; but he consoles himself with the prospect, that at no distant period a benevolent and enlightened Government will distribute over the land those from whom the afflicted will not seek relief in vain.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> The Hindoo practitioners are called 'baid' (Sanskrit 'vaidya', followers of the Veda, that is to say, the Ayur Veda). The Musalmān practitioners are generally called 'hakīm'. The Egyptian school (Misrānī, Misrī, or Suryānī, that is, Syrian) never practise bleeding, and are partial to the use of metallic oxides. The Yunānī physicians approve of bleeding, and prefer vegetable drugs. The older writers on India fancied that the Hindoo system of medicine was of enormous antiquity, and that the principles of Galenical medical science were ultimately derived from India. Modern investigation has proved that Hindoo medicine, like Hindoo astronomy, is largely of Greek origin. This conclusion has been expressed in an exaggerated form by some writers, but its general truth appears to be established. The Hindoo books treating of medicine are certainly older than Wilson supposed, for the Bower manuscript, written in the second half of the fourth century of our era, contains three Sanskrit medical treatises.

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The writers had, however, plenty of time to borrow from Galen, who lived in the second century. The Indian aversion to European medicine, as distinguished from surgery, still exists, though in a degree somewhat less than in the author's time. Many municipal boards have insisted on employing 'baidis' and 'hakīms' in addition to the practitioners trained in European methods. Well-to-do patients often delay resort to the English physician until they have exhausted all resources of the 'hakīm' and have been nearly killed by his drastic treatment. One medical innovation, the use of quinine as a febrifuge, has secured universal approbation. I never heard of an Indian who disbelieved in quinine. Chlorodyne also is fully appreciated, but most of the European medicines are regarded with little faith. Since the author wrote, great progress has been made in providing hospital and dispensary accommodation. Each district', or unit of civil administration, has a fairly well equipped combined hospital and dispensary at head-quarters, and branch dispensaries exist in almost every district. An Inspector-General of Dispensaries supervises the medical administration of each province, and medical schools have been organized at Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Lahore, and Agra. During Lord Dufferin's Viceroyalty and afterwards, energetic steps were taken to improve the system of medical relief for females. Pandit Madhusadan Gupta, on January 10, 1836, was the first Hindoo who ventured to dissect a human body and teach anatomy. India can now boast of a considerable number of Hindoo and Musalmān practitioners, trained in European methods, and skilful in their profession. Much has been done, infinitely more remains to be done. Details will be found in *I.G.* (1907), vol. iv, chap. 14, 'Medical Administration', The article 'Medicine' in Balfour, *Cyclopaedia*, 3rd ed., 1885, on which I have drawn for some of the facts above stated, gives a good summary of the earlier history of medicine in India, but greatly exaggerates the antiquity of the Hindoo books. On this question Weber's paper, 'Die Griechen in Indien' (Berlin, 1890, p. 28), and Dr. Hoernle's remarks on the Bower manuscript (in *J.A.S.B.*, vol. lx (1891), Part I, p. 145) may be consulted. Dr. Hoernle's annotated edition and translation of the Bower MS. were completed in 1912. Part of the work is reprinted with additions in the *Ind. Ant.* for 1913 and 1914.

# CHAPTER 16

## Suttee Tombs—Insalubrity of deserted Fortresses

On the 3rd we came to Bahrol,<sup>215</sup> where I had encamped with Lord William Bentinck on the last day of December, 1832, when the quicksilver in the thermometer at sunrise, outside our tents, was down to twenty-six degrees of Fahrenheit's thermometer. The village stands upon a gentle swelling hill of decomposed basalt, and is surrounded by hills of the same formation. The Dasān river flows close under the village, and has two beautiful reaches, one above, the other below, separated by the dyke of basalt, over which lies the ford of the river.<sup>216</sup>

There are beautiful reaches of the kind in all the rivers in this part of India, and they are almost everywhere formed in the same manner. At Bahrol there is a very unusual number of tombs built over the ashes of women who have burnt themselves with the remains of their husbands. Upon each tomb stands erect a tablet

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<sup>215</sup> December, 1835. The name of the village is spelled Behrole by the author.

<sup>216</sup> The Dasān river rises in the Bhopāl State, flows through the Sāgar district of the Central Provinces, and along the southern boundary of the Lalitpur subdivision of the Jhānsī District, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. It also forms the boundary between the Jhānsī and Hamīrpur Districts, and falls into the Betwa after a course of about 220 miles. The name is often, but erroneously, written Dhasān. It is the Sanskrit Dasārna.

of freestone, with the sun, the new moon, and a rose engraved upon it in bas-relief in one field;<sup>217</sup> and the man and woman, hand in hand, in the other. On one stone of this kind I saw a third field below these two, with the figure of a horse in bas-relief, and I asked one of the gentlemen farmers, who was riding with me, what it meant. He told me that he thought it indicated that the woman rode on horseback to bathe before she ascended the pile.<sup>218</sup> I asked him whether he thought the measure prohibiting the practice of burning good or bad.

'It is', said he, 'in some respects good, and in others bad. Widows cannot marry among us, and those who had no prospect of a comfortable provision among their husband's relations, or who dreaded the possibility of going astray, and thereby sinking into contempt and misery, were enabled in this way to relieve their minds, and follow their husbands, under the full assurance of being happily united to them in the next world.'

When I passed this place on horseback with Lord William Bentinck, he asked me what these tombs were, for he had never seen any of the kind before. When I told him what they were,

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<sup>217</sup> This emblem is a lotus, not a rose flower. The latter is never used in Hindoo symbolism. The lotus is a solar emblem, and intimately associated with the worship of Vishnu.

<sup>218</sup> *It rather indicates that the husband was on horseback when killed. The sculptures on satī pillars often commemorate the mode of death of the husband. Sometimes these pillars are inscribed. They usually face the east. An open hand is often carved in the upper compartment as well as the sun and moon. A drawing of such a pillar will be found in J.A.S.B., vol. xlvi. Part I, 1877, pl. xiv. A.S.R., vol. iii, p. 10; vol. vii, p. 137; vol. x, p. 75; and vol. xxi, p. 101, may be consulted.*

he said not a word; but he must have felt a proud consciousness of the debt of gratitude which India owes to the statesman who had the courage to put a stop to this great evil, in spite of all the fearful obstacles which bigotry and prejudice opposed to the measure. The seven European functionaries in charge of the seven districts of the newly-acquired territories were requested, during the administration of Lord Amherst in 1826, to state whether the burning of widows could or should be prohibited; and I believe every one of them declared that it should not. And yet, when it was put a stop to only a few years after by Lord William, not a complaint or murmur was heard. The replies to the Governor-General's inquiries were, I believe, throughout India, for the most part, opposed to the measure.<sup>219</sup>

On the 4th we came to Dhamonī, ten miles. The only thing remarkable here is the magnificent fortress, which is built upon a small projection of the Vindhya range, looking down on each side into two enormously deep glens, through which the two branches of the Dasān river descend over the tableland into the plains

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<sup>219</sup> *The 'newly-acquired territories' referred to are the Sāgar and Nerbudda Territories, comprising the seven districts, Sāgar, Jubbulpore, Hoshangābād, Seonī, Damoh, Narsinghpur, and Baitūl, ceded in 1818, and now included in the Central Provinces. The tenor of the replies given to Lord Amherst's queries shows how far the process of Hindooizing had advanced among the European officials of the Company. Lord Amherst left India in March, 1828. See ante. Chapter 4 and Chapter 8, for cases of satī (suttees). For a good account of the suttee discussions and legislation, see D. Boulger, Lord William Bentinck (1897), chap. v, in 'Rulers of India' Series. No other biography of Lord William Bentinck exists.*

of Bundēlkhand.<sup>220</sup> The rays of the sun seldom penetrate to the bottom of these glens, and things are, in consequence, grown there that could not be grown in parts more exposed.

Every inch of the level ground in the bed of the streams below seems to be cultivated with care. This fortress is said to have cost more than a million of money, and to have been only one of fifty-two great works, of which a former Rājā of Bundēlkhand, Bīrsingh Deo, laid the foundation in the same *happy hour* which had been pointed out to him by his astrologers.<sup>221</sup> The works form an acute triangle, with the base towards the tableland, and the two sides hanging perpendicularly over the glens, while the apex points to the course of the streams as they again unite, and pass out through a deep chasm into the plains of Bundēlkhand.

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<sup>220</sup> Dhamonī is in the Sāgar district of the Central Provinces, about twenty-nine miles north of Sāgar. The fort was taken by General Marshall in 1818. It had been rebuilt by Rājā Bīrsingh Deo of Orchhā on an enormous scale about the end of the sixteenth century. In the original edition, the author's march is said to have taken place 'on the 24th'. This must be a mistake for 'on the 4th'; as the last date, that of the march to Bahrol, was the 3rd December. The author reached Agra on January 1, 1836,

<sup>221</sup> *The number fifty-two is one of the Hindoo favourite numbers, like seven, twelve, and eighty-four, held sacred for astronomical or astrological reasons. Bīrsingh Deo was the younger brother of Rāmchand, head of the Bundēla clan. To oblige Prince Salīm, afterwards the Emperor Jahāngīr, he murdered Abūl Fazl, the celebrated minister and historian of Akbar, on August 12, 1602, Jahāngīr, after his accession, rewarded the murderer by allowing him to supersede his brother in the headship of his clan, and by appointing him to the rank of 'commander of three thousand'. The capital of Bīrsingh was Orchhā. His successors are often spoken of as Rājās of Tehrī. The murder is fully described in The Emperor Akbar by Count von Noer, translated by A. S. Beveridge, Calcutta, 1890, vol. ii, pp. 384-404. Orchhā is described post, Chapters 22,23.*

The fortress is now entirely deserted, and the town, which the garrison supported, is occupied by only a small police-guard, stationed here to see that robbers do not take up their abode among the ruins. There is no fear of this. All old deserted fortresses in India become filled by a dense stream of carbonic acid gas, which is found so inimical to animal life that those who attempt to occupy them become ill, and, sooner or later, almost all die of the consequences. This gas, being specifically much heavier than common air, descends into the bottom of such unoccupied fortresses, and remains stagnant like water in old reservoirs. The current of pure air continually passes over, without being able to carry off the mass of stagnant air below; and the only way to render such places habitable is to make large openings in the walls on all sides, from the top to the bottom, so that the foul air may be driven out by the current of pure atmospheric air, which will then be continually rushing in. When these fortresses are thickly peopled, the continual motion within tends, I think, to mix up this gas with the air above; while the numerous fires lighted within, by rarefying that below, tend to draw down a regular supply of the atmospheric air from above for the benefit of the inhabitants. When natives enter upon the occupation of an old fortress of this kind, that has remained long unoccupied, they always make a solemn religious ceremony of it; and, having fed the priests, the troops, and a crowd of followers, all rush in at once with beat of drums, and as much noise as they can make. By this rush, and the fires that follow, the bad air is,

perhaps, driven off, and never suffered to collect again while the fortress remains fully occupied. Whatever may be the cause, the fact is certain that these fortresses become deadly places of abode for small detachments of troops, or small parties of any kind. They all get ill, and few recover from the diseases they contract in them.

From the year 1817, when we first took possession of the Sāgar and Nerbudda Territories, almost all the detachments of troops we required to keep at a distance from the headquarters of their regiments were posted in these old deserted fortifications. Our collections of revenue were deposited in them; and, in some cases, they were converted into jails for the accommodation of our prisoners. Of the soldiers so lodged, I do not believe that one in four ever came out well; and, of those who came out ill, I do not believe that one in four survived five years. They were all abandoned one after the other; but it is painful to think how many hundreds, I may say thousands, of our brave soldiers were sacrificed before this resolution was taken. I have known the whole of the survivors of strong detachments that went in, in robust health, three months before, brought away mere skeletons, and in a hopeless and dying state. All were sent to their homes on medical certificate, but they almost all died there, or in the course of their journey.

# CHAPTER 17

## **Basaltic Cappings—Interview with a Native Chief—A Singular Character**

On the 5th<sup>222</sup> we came to the village of Seorī. Soon after leaving Dhamonī, we descended the northern face of the Vindhya range into the plains of Bundēlkhand. The face of this range overlooking the valley of the Nerbudda to the south is, as I have before stated, a series of mural precipices, like so many rounded bastions, the slight dip of the strata being to the north. The northern face towards Bundēlkhand, on the contrary, here descends gradually, as the strata dip slightly towards the north, and we pass down gently over their back. The strata have, however, been a good deal broken, and the road was so rugged that two of our carts broke down in descending. From the descent over the northern face of the tableland into Bundēlkhand to the descent over the southern face into the valley of the Nerbudda must be a distance of one hundred miles directly north and south.

The descent over the northern face is not everywhere so gradual; on the contrary, there are but few places where it is

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<sup>222</sup> December 5, 1835, The date is misprinted '3rd' in the original edition. See note 2 to last preceding chapter, p. 110.

at all feasible; and some of the rivers of the tableland between Jubbulpore and Mirzapore have a perpendicular fall of more than four hundred feet over these mural precipices of the northern face of the Vindhya range.<sup>223</sup> A man, if he have good nerve, may hang over the summits, and suspend in his hand a plummet that shall reach the bottom.

I should mention that this tableland is not only intersected by ranges, but everywhere studded with isolated hills rising suddenly out of basins or valleys. These ranges and isolated hills are all of the same sandstone formation, and capped with basalt, more or less amygdaloidal. The valleys and cappings have often a substratum of very compact basalt, which must evidently have flowed into them after these islands were formed. The question is, how were these valleys and basins scooped out? 'Time, time, time!' says Mr. Scrope; 'grant me only time, and I can account for everything.' I think, however, that I am right in considering the basaltic cappings of these ranges and isolated hills to have once formed part of continued flat beds of great lakes. The flat parallel planes of these cappings, corresponding with each other, however distantly separated the hills they cover may be, would seem to indicate that they could not all have been subject to the convulsions of nature by which the whole substrata were upheaved above the ocean. I am disposed to think that such

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<sup>223</sup> *A good view of the precipices of the Kaimūr range, the eastern continuation of the Vindhyan chain, is given facing page 41 of vol. i of Hooker's Himalayan Journals (ed. 1855).*

islands and ranges of the sandstone were formed before the deposit of the basalt, and that the form of the surface is now returning to what it then was, by the gradual decomposition and wearing away of the latter rock. Much, however, may be said on both sides of this, as of every other question. After descending from the sandstone of the Vindhya<sup>224</sup> range into Bundēlkhand, we pass over basalt and basaltic soil, reposing immediately on syenitic granite, with here and there beds and veins of pure feldspar, hornblende, and quartz.

Takht Singh, the younger brother of Arjun Singh, the Rājā of Shāhgarh,<sup>225</sup> came out several miles to meet me on his elephant. Finding me on horseback, he got off from his elephant, and mounted his horse, and we rode on till we met the Rājā himself, about a mile from our tents. He was on horseback, with a large

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<sup>224</sup> *The author's theory is untenable. He failed, to realize the vast effects of sub-aerial denudation. All the evidence shows that the successive lava outflows which make up the Deccan trap series ultimately converted the surface of the land over which they welled out into an enormous, nearly uniform, plain of basalt, resting on the Vindhyan sandstone and other rocks. This great sheet of lava, extending, east and west, from Nāgpur to Bombay, a distance of about five hundred miles, was then, in succeeding millenniums, subjected to the denuding forces of air and water, until gradually huge tracts of it were worn away, forming beds of conglomerate, gravel, and clay. The flat-topped hills have been carved out of the basaltic surface by the agencies which wore away the massive sheet of lava. The basaltic cappings of the hills certainly cannot have 'formed part of continued flat beds of great lakes'. See the notes to Chapter 14, ante. Mr. Scrope was quite right. Vast periods of time must be allowed for geological history, and millions of years must have elapsed since the flow of the Deccan lava.*

<sup>225</sup> In the Sāgar district. The last Raja joined the rebels in 1857, and so forfeited his rank and territory.

and splendidly dressed train of followers, all mounted on fine sleek horses, bred in the Rājā's own stables. He was mounted on a snow-white steed of his own breeding (and I have rarely seen a finer animal), and dressed in a light suit of silver brocade made to represent the scales of steel armour, surmounted by a gold turban. Takht Singh was more plainly dressed, but is a much finer and more intelligent-looking man. Having escorted us to our tents, they took their leave, and returned to their own, which were pitched on a rising ground on the other side of a small stream, half a mile distant. Takht Singh resides here in a very pretty fortified castle on an eminence. It is a square building, with a round bastion at each corner, and one on each face, rising into towers above the walls.

A little after midday the Rājā and his brother came to pay us a visit; and about four o'clock I went to return it, accompanied by Lieutenant Thomas. As usual, he had a nautch (dance) upon carpets, spread upon the sward under awnings in front of the pavilion in which we were received. While the women were dancing and singing, a very fine panther was brought in to be shown to us. He had been caught, full-grown, two years before, and, in the hands of a skilful man, was fit for the chase in six months. It was a very beautiful animal, but, for the sake of the sport, kept wretchedly thin.<sup>226</sup> He seemed especially indifferent

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<sup>226</sup> *The name panther is usually applied only to the large, fulvous variety of Felis pardus (Linn.) (F. leopardus, Leopardus varius). The animal described in the text evidently was a specimen of the hunting leopard, Felis jubata (F. guttata, F. venatica).*

to the crowd and the music, but could not bear to see the woman whirling about in the dance with her red mantle floating in the breeze; and, whenever his head was turned towards her, he cropped his ears. She at last, in play, swept close by him, and with open mouth he attempted to spring upon her, but was pulled back by the keeper. She gave a shriek, and nearly fell upon her back in fright.

The Rājā is a man of no parts or character, and, his expenditure being beyond his income, he is killing his goose for the sake of her eggs—that is, he is ruining all the farmers and cultivators of his large estate by exactions, and thereby throwing immense tracts of fine land out of tillage. He was the heir to the fortress and territory of Garhā Kotā, near Sāgar, which was taken by Sindhia's army, under the command of Jean Baptiste Filose,<sup>227</sup> just before our conquest in 1817. I was then with my regiment, which was commanded by Colonel, afterwards Major-General, G—,<sup>228</sup> a very singular character. When our surgeon, Dr. E—, received the newspaper announcing the capture of Garhā Kotā in Central India by *Jean-Baptiste*, an officer of the corps was with him, who called on the colonel on his way home, and

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<sup>227</sup> *This officer was one of the many 'condottieri' of various nationality who served the native powers during the eighteenth century, and the early years of the nineteenth. He commanded five infantry regiments at Gwālior. His 'kingdom-taking' raid in 1815 or 1816 is described post in Chapter 49. The history of the family is given by Compton in *European Military Adventures of Hindustan from 1784 to 1803* (Unwin, 1892), App. pp. 352-6. In 1911 Michael Filose of Gwālior was appointed K.C.I.E.*

<sup>228</sup> 'G—' appears to have been Robert Gregory C.B.

mentioned this as a bit of news. As soon as this officer had left him, the colonel wrote off a note to the doctor: 'My dear Doctor, —I understand that that fellow, *John the Baptist*, has got into Sindhia's service, and now commands an army—do send me the newspapers.' These were certainly the words of his note, and, at the only time I heard him speak on the subject of religion he discomfited his adversary in an argument at the mess by 'Why, sir, you do not suppose that I believe in those fellows, Luther, Calvin, and John the Baptist, do you?'

Nothing could stand this argument. All the party burst into a laugh, which the old gentleman took for an unequivocal recognition of his victory, and his adversary was silenced. He was an old man when I first became acquainted with him. I put into his hands, when in camp, Miss Edgeworth's novels, in the hope of being able to induce him to read by degrees; and I have frequently seen the tears stealing down over his furrowed cheeks, as he sat pondering over her pages in the corner of his tent. A braver soldier never lived than old G—; and he distinguished himself greatly in the command of his regiment, under Lord Lake, at the battle of Laswāri<sup>229</sup> and siege of Bharatpur.<sup>230</sup> It was impossible

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<sup>229</sup> The fiercely contested battle of Laswāri was fought on November 1, 1803, between the British force under Lord Lake and the flower of Sindhia's army, known as the 'Deccan Invincibles'. Sindhia's troops lost about seven thousand killed and two thousand prisoners. The British loss in killed and wounded amounted to more than eight hundred. A medal to commemorate the victory was struck in London in 1851, and presented to the survivors. Laswāri is a village in the Alwar State, 128 miles south of Delhi.

ever to persuade him that the characters and incidents of these novels were the mere creations of fancy—he felt them to be true—he wished them to be true, and he would have them to be true. We were not very anxious to undeceive him, as the illusion gave him pleasure and did him good. Bolingbroke says, after an ancient author, 'History is philosophy teaching by example.'<sup>231</sup> With equal truth may we say that fiction, like that of Maria Edgeworth, is philosophy teaching by emotion. It certainly taught old G— to be a better man, to leave much of the little evil he had been in the habit of doing, and to do much of the good he had been accustomed to leave undone.

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<sup>230</sup> *Bharatpur (Bhurtpore), in the Jāt State of the same name, is thirty-four miles west of Agra. In January and February, 1805, Lord Lake four times attempted to take it by assault, and each time was repulsed with heavy loss. On January 18, 1826, Lord Combermere stormed the fortress. The fortifications were then dismantled. A large portion of the walls is now standing, and presents an imposing appearance. They seem to have been repaired. See post, Chapter 62.*

<sup>231</sup> 'I will answer you by quoting what I have read somewhere or other—in Dionysius Halicarn., I think—that history is philosophy teaching by example' (Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, Letter II, p. 14 of vol. viii of edition printed by T. Cadell, London, 1770). The Greek words are ἱστορία φιλοσοφία ἐστὶν ἐκ παραδειγμάτων.

# CHAPTER 18

## Birds' Nests—Sports of Boyhood

On the 6th<sup>232</sup> we came to Sayyidpur, ten miles, over an undulating country, with a fine soil of decomposed basalt, reposing upon syenite, with veins of feldspar and quartz. Cultivation partial, and very bad; and population extremely scanty. We passed close to a village, in which the children were all at play; while upon the bushes over their heads were suspended an immense number of the beautiful nests of the sagacious 'bayā' bird, or Indian yellow-hammer,<sup>233</sup> all within reach of a grown-up boy, and one so near the road that a grown-up man might actually look into it as he passed along, and could hardly help shaking it. It cannot fail to strike a European as singular to see so many birds' nests, situated close to a village, remain unmolested within reach of so many boisterous children, with their little proprietors

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<sup>232</sup> December, 1835. The name of the village is given in the author's text as Seindpore. It seems to be the place which is called Siedpore in the next chapter.

<sup>233</sup> *The common weaver bird, Phoceus baya, Blyth. 'Ploceinae, the weaver birds. . . . They build nests like a crucible, with the opening downwards, and usually attach them to the tender branches of a tree hanging over a well or tank. P. baya is found throughout India; its nest is made of grasses and strips of the plantain or date-palm stripped while green. It is easily tamed and taught some tricks, such as to load and fire a toy cannon, to pick up a ring, &c.'* (Balfour, *Cyclopaedia*, 3rd ed., 1885, s.v. 'Ploceinae').

and families fluttering and chirping among them with as great a feeling of security and gaiety of heart as the children themselves enjoy.

In any part of Europe not a nest of such a colony could have lived an hour within reach of such a population; for the bayā bird has no peculiar respect paid to it by the people here, like the wren and robin-redbreast in England. No boy in India has the slightest wish to molest birds in their nests; it enters not into their pastimes, and they have no feeling of pride or pleasure in it. With us it is different—to discover birds' nests is one of the first modes in which a boy exercises his powers, and displays his love of art. Upon his skill in finding them he is willing to rest his first claim to superior sagacity and enterprise. His trophies are his string of eggs; and the eggs most prized among them are those of the nests that are discovered with most difficulty, and attained with most danger. The same feeling of desire to display their skill and enterprise in search after birds' nests in early life renders the youth of England the enemy almost of the whole animal creation throughout their after career. The boy prides himself on his dexterity in throwing a stone or a stick; and he practises on almost every animal that comes in his way, till he never sees one without the desire to knock it down, or at least to hit it; and, if it is lawful to do so, he feels it to be a most serious misfortune not to have a stone within his reach at the time. As he grows up, he prides himself upon his dexterity in shooting, and he never sees a member of the feathered tribe

within shot, without a desire to shoot it, or without regretting that he has not a gun in his hand to shoot it. That he is not entirely destitute of sympathy, however, with the animals he maims for his amusement is sufficiently manifest from his anxiety to put them out of pain the moment he gets them.

A friend of mine, now no more, Captain Medwin, was once looking with me at a beautiful landscape painting through a glass. At last he put aside the glass, saying: 'You may say what you like, S—, but the best landscape I know is a fine black partridge<sup>234</sup> falling before my Joe Manton.'

The following lines of Walter Scott, in his *Rokeby*, have always struck me as very beautiful:-

As yet the conscious pride of art  
Had steel'd him in his treacherous part;  
A powerful spring of force unguessed  
That hath each gentler mood suppressed,  
And reigned in many a human breast;  
From his that plans the rude campaign,  
To his that wastes the woodland reign, &c.<sup>235</sup>

Among the people of India it is very different. Children do not learn to exercise their powers either in discovering and robbing the nests of birds, or in knocking them down with stones and staves; and, as they grow up, they hardly ever think of

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<sup>234</sup> *Francolinus vulgaris*; a capital game bird.

<sup>235</sup> Canto V, stanza 22, line 3.

hunting or shooting for mere amusement. It is with them a matter of business; the animal they cannot eat they seldom think of molesting.

Some officers were one day pursuing a jackal, with a pack of dogs, through my grounds. The animal passed close to one of my guard, who cut him in two with his sword, and held up the reeking blade in triumph to the indignant cavalcade; who, when they came up, were ready to eat him alive. 'What have I done', said the poor man, 'to offend you?' 'Have you not killed the jackal?' shouted the whipper-in, in a fury.

'Of course I have; but were you not all trying to kill him?' replied the poor man. He thought their only object had been to kill the jackal, as they would have killed a serpent, merely because he was a mischievous and noisy beast.

The European traveller in India is often in doubt whether the peacocks, partridges, and ducks, which he finds round populous villages, are tame or wild, till he asks some of the villagers themselves, so assured of safety do these creatures become, and so willing to take advantage of it for the food they find in the suburbs. They very soon find the difference, however, between the white-faced visitor and the dark-faced inhabitants. There is a fine date-tree overhanging a kind of school at the end of one of the streets in the town of Jubbulpore, quite covered with the nests of the bayā birds; and they are seen, every day and all day, fluttering and chirping about there in scores, while the noisy children at their play fill the street below, almost within arm's

length of them. I have often thought that such a tree so peopled at the door of a school in England might work a great revolution in the early habits and propensities of the youth educated in it. The European traveller is often amused to see the pariah dog<sup>236</sup> squatted close in front of the traveller during the whole time he is occupied in cooking and eating his dinner, under a tree by the roadside, assured that he shall have at least a part of the last cake thrown to him by the stranger, instead of a stick or a stone. The stranger regards him with complacency, as one that reposes a quiet confidence in his charitable disposition, and flings towards him the whole or part of his last cake, as if his meal had put him in the best possible humour with him and all the world.

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<sup>236</sup> *The author spells the word Pareear. The editor has used the form now customary. The word is the Tamil appellation of a large body of the population of Southern India, which stands outside the orthodox Hindoo castes, but has a caste organization of its own. Europeans apply the term to the low-caste mongrel dogs which infest villages and towns throughout India. See Yule and Burnell, Glossary of Anglo-Indian Words (Hobson-Jobson), in either edition, s.v.; and Dubois, Hindu Manners, &c., 3rd ed. (1906, index, s.v.).*

# CHAPTER 19

## Feeding Pilgrims—Marriage of a Stone with a Shrub

At Sayyidpur<sup>237</sup> we encamped in a pretty little mango grove, and here I had a visit from my old friend Jānkī Sewak, the high priest of the great temple that projects into the Sāgar lake, and is called Bindrāban.<sup>238</sup> He has two villages rent free, worth a thousand rupees a year; collects something more through his numerous disciples, who wander over the country; and spends the whole in feeding all the members of his fraternity (Bairāgīs), devotees of Vishnu, as they pass his temple in their pilgrimages. Every one who comes is considered entitled to a good meal and a night's lodging; and he has to feed and lodge about a hundred a day. He is a man of very pleasing manners and gentle disposition, and everybody likes him. He was on his return from the town of Ludhaura,<sup>239</sup> where he had been, at the invitation of the Rājā of Orchhā, to assist at the celebration of

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<sup>237</sup> Spelled Siedpore in the author's text.

<sup>238</sup> More correctly Brindāban (Vrindāvana). The name originally belongs to one of the most sacred spots in India, situated near Mathurā (Muttra) on the Jumna, and the reputed scene of the dalliance between Krishna and the milkmaids (Gopīs); also associated with the legend Rāma.

<sup>239</sup> Twenty-seven miles north-west of Tehrī in the Orchhā State.

the marriage of Sālagrām with the Tulasī,<sup>240</sup> which there takes place every year under the auspices and at the expense of the Rājā, who must be present. 'Sālagrāms'<sup>241</sup> are rounded pebbles which contain the impressions of ammonites, and are washed down into the plains of India by the rivers from the limestone rocks in which these shells are imbedded in the mountains of the Himalaya.<sup>242</sup> The Spiti valley<sup>243</sup> contains an immense deposit

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<sup>240</sup> *The Tulasī plant, or basil, Ocimum sanctum*, is 'not merely sacred to Vishnu or to his wife Lakshmī; it is pervaded by the essence of these deities, and itself worshipped as a deity and prayed to accordingly. . . . The Tulasī is the object of more adoration than any other plant at present worshipped in India. . . . It is to be found in almost every respectable household throughout India. It is a small shrub, not too big to be cultivated in a good-sized flower-pot, and often placed in rooms. Generally, however, it is planted in the courtyard of a well-to-do man's house, with a space round it for reverential circumambulation. In real fact the Tulasī is *par excellence* a domestic divinity, or rather, perhaps, a woman's divinity' (M. Williams, *Religious Thought and Life in India*, p. 333).

<sup>241</sup> *The fossil ammonites found in India include at least fifteen species. They occur between Trichinopoly and Pondicherry as well as in the Himalayan rocks. They are particularly abundant in the river Gandak, which rises near Dhaulagiri in Nepāl, and falls into the Ganges near Patna. The upper course of this river is consequently called Sālagrāmī. Various forms of the fossils are supposed to represent various avatārs of Vishnu (Balfour, Cyclopaedia, 3rd ed., s.v. 'Ammonite', 'Gandak', 'Salagrama'; M. Williams, *Religious Thought and Life in India*, pp. 69, 349). A good account of the reverence paid to both sālagrāms and the tulasī plant will be found in Dubois, *Hindu Manners, &c.*, 3rd ed. (1906), pp. 648-51.*

<sup>242</sup> The author writes 'Himmalah'. The current spelling Himalaya is correct, but the word should be pronounced Himālaya. It means 'abode of snow'.

<sup>243</sup> The north-eastern corner of the Punjāb, an elevated valley along the course of the Spiti or the Li river, a tributary of the Satlaj.

of fossil ammonites and belemnites<sup>244</sup> in limestone rocks, now elevated above sixteen thousand feet above the level of the sea; and from such beds as these are brought down the fragments, which, when rounded in their course, the poor Hindoo takes for representatives of Vishnu, the preserving god of the Hindoo triad. The Sālagrām is the only stone idol among the Hindoos that is *essentially sacred*, and entitled to divine honours without the ceremonies of consecration.<sup>245</sup> It is everywhere held most sacred. During the war against Nepāl,<sup>246</sup> Captain B—, who commanded a reconnoitring party from the division in which I served, one day brought back to camp some four or five Sālagrāms, which he had found at the hut of some priest within the enemy's frontier. He called for a large stone and hammer, and proceeded to examine them. The Hindoos were all in a dreadful state of consternation, and expected to see the earth open and swallow up the whole camp, while he sat calmly cracking *their gods* with his hammer, as he would have cracked so many walnuts. The Tulasī is a small sacred shrub (*Ocimum sanctum*), which is a metamorphosis of

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<sup>244</sup> Fossils of the genus Belemnites and related genera are common, like the ammonites, near Trichinopoly, as well as in the Himalaya.

<sup>245</sup> *This statement is not quite correct. The pebbles representing the Linga of Siva, called Bāna-linga, or Vāna-linga, and apparently of white quartz, which are found in the Nerbudda river, enjoy the same distinction. 'Both are held to be of their own nature pervaded by the special presence of the deity, and need no consecration. Offerings made to these pebbles—such, for instance, as Bilwa leaves laid on the white stone of Vishnu—are believed to confer extraordinary merit' (M. Williams, Religious Thought and Life in India, p. 69).*

<sup>246</sup> In 1814-16.

Sītā, the wife of Rāma, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu.

This little *pebble* is every year married to this little *shrub*; and the high priest told me that on the present occasion the procession consisted of eight elephants, twelve hundred camels, four thousand horses, all mounted and elegantly caparisoned. On the leading elephant of this *cortège*, and the most sumptuously decorated, was carried the *pebble god*, who was taken to pay his bridal visit (*barāt*) to the little *shrub goddess*. All the ceremonies of a regular marriage are gone through; and, when completed, the bride and bridegroom are left to repose together in the temple of Ludhaura<sup>247</sup> till the next season. 'Above a hundred thousand people', the priest said, 'were present at the ceremony this year at the Rājā's invitation, and feasted upon his bounty.'<sup>248</sup>

The old man and I got into a conversation upon the characters of different governments, and their effects upon the people; and he said that bad governments would sooner or later be always put down by the deity; and quoted this verse, which I took down with my pencil:

Tulasī, gharīb na sātāe,  
Burī gharīb kī hai;  
Marī khāl ke phūnk se

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<sup>247</sup> 'Sadora' in author's text, which seems to be a misprint for Ludora or Ludhaura.

<sup>248</sup> *The Tulasī shrub is sometimes married to an image of Krishna, instead of to the sālagrāma, in Western India (M. Williams, Religious Thought and Life in India, p. 334). Compare the account of the marriage between the mango-tree and the jasmine, ante, Chapter 5, Note [3].*

Lohā bhasm ho jāe.

'Oh, Rājā Tulasī! oppress not the poor; for the groans of the wretched bring retribution from heaven. The contemptible skin (in the smith's bellows) in time melts away the hardest iron.'<sup>249</sup>

On leaving our tents in the morning, we found the ground all round white with hoar frost, as we had found it for several mornings before;<sup>250</sup> and a little canary bird, one of the two which travelled in my wife's palankeen, having, by the carelessness of the servants been put upon the top without any covering to the cage, was killed by the cold, to her great affliction. All attempts to restore it to life by the warmth of her bosom were fruitless.

On the 7th<sup>251</sup> we came nine miles to Bamhaurī over a soil still basaltic, though less rich, reposing upon syenite, which frequently rises and protrudes its head above the surface, which

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<sup>249</sup> These Hindī verses are incorrectly printed, and loosely rendered by the author. The translation of the text, after necessary emendation, is: 'Tulasī, oppress not the poor; evil is the lot of the poor. From the blast of the dead hide iron becomes ashes.' Mr. W. Crooke informs me that the verses are found in the Kabīrkī Sakhī, and are attributable to Kabīr Dās, rather than to Tulasī Dās. But the authorship of such verses is very uncertain. Mr. Crooke further observes that the lines as given in the text do not scan, and that the better version is: Durbal ko na satāiye, Jāki māti hai; Mūē khāl ke sāns se Sār bhasm ho jāe. *Sār* means iron. The author was, of course, mistaken in supposing the poet Tulasī Dās to be a Rājā. As usual in Hindī verse, the poet addresses himself by name.

<sup>250</sup> Such slight frosts are common in Bundēlkhand, especially near the rivers, in January, but only last for a few mornings. They often cause great damage to the more delicate crops. The weather becomes hot in February.

<sup>251</sup> December, 1835.

is partially and badly cultivated, and scantily peopled. The silent signs of bad government could not be more manifest. All the extensive plains, covered with fine long grass, which is rotting in the ground from want of domestic cattle or distant markets. Here, as in every other part of Central India, the people have a great variety of good spontaneous, but few cultivated, grasses. They understand the character and qualities of these grasses extremely well. They find some thrive best in dry, and some in wet seasons; and that of inferior quality is often prized most because it thrives best when other kinds cannot thrive at all, from an excess or a deficiency of rain. When cut green they all make good hay, and have the common denomination of 'sahā'. The finest of these grasses are two which are generally found growing spontaneously together, and are often cultivated together-'kēl' and 'musēl'; the third 'parwana'; fourth 'bhawār', or 'gūniār'; fifth 'sainā'.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> 'Musēl' is a very sweet-scented grass, highly esteemed as fodder. It belongs to the genus *Anthistiria*; the species is either *cimicina* or *prostrata*. 'Bhawār' is probably the 'bhaunr' of Edgeworth's list, *Anthistiria scandens*. I cannot identify the other grasses named in the text. The haycocks in Bundēlkhand are a pleasant sight to English eyes. Edgeworth's list of plants found in the Bāndā district, as revised by Messrs. Waterfield and Atkinson, is given in *N.W.P. Gazetteer*, 1st ed., vol. i, pp. 78-86.

# CHAPTER 20

## The Men-Tigers

Rām Chand Rāo, commonly called the Sarīmant, chief of Deorī,<sup>253</sup> here overtook me. He came out from Sāgar to visit me at Dhamonī<sup>254</sup> and, not reaching that place in time, came on after me. He held Deorī under the Peshwā, as the Sāgar chief held Sāgar, for the payment of the public establishments kept up by the local administration. It yielded him about ten thousand a year, and, when we took possession of the country, he got an estate in the Sāgar district, in rent-free tenure, estimated at fifteen hundred a year. This is equal to about six thousand pounds a year in England. The tastes of native gentlemen lead them always to expend the greater part of their incomes in the wages

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<sup>253</sup> *Deorī, in the Sāgar district, about forty miles south-east of Sāgar. In 1767, the town and attached tract called the Panj Mahāl were bestowed by the Peshwā, rent-free, on Dhōndo Dattātraya, a Marātha pundit, ancestor of the author's friend. The Panj Mahal was finally made part of British territory by the treaty with Sindhia in 1860, and constitutes the District called Pānch Māhals in the Northern Division of the Bombay Presidency. The vernacular word pānch like the Persian panj, means 'five'. The title Sarīmant appears to be a popular pronunciation of the Sanskrit srīmant or srīmān, 'fortunate', and is still used by Marāthā nobles.*

<sup>254</sup> *Ante, Chapter 16, note 6. The name is here erroneously printed 'Dhamoree' in the author's text.*

of trains of followers of all descriptions, and in horses, elephants, &c.; and labour and the subsistence of labour are about four times cheaper in India than in England. By the breaking up of public establishments, and consequent diminution of the local demand for agricultural produce, the value of land throughout all Central India, after the termination of the Mahrātha War in 1817, fell by degrees thirty per cent.; and, among the rest, that of my poor friend the Sarīmānt. While I had the civil charge of the Sāgar district in 1831 I represented this case of hardship; and Government, in the spirit of liberality which has generally characterized their measures in this part of India, made up to him the difference between what he actually received and what they had intended to give him; and he has ever since felt grateful to me.<sup>255</sup> He is a very small man, not more than five feet high, but he has the handsomest face I have almost ever seen, and his manners are those of the most perfect native gentleman. He came to call upon me after breakfast, and the conversation turned upon the number of people that had of late been killed by tigers between Sāgar and Deorī, his ancient capital, which lies about midway between Sāgar and the Nerbudda river.

One of his followers, who stood beside his chair, said<sup>256</sup> that 'when a tiger had killed one man he was safe, for the spirit of the

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<sup>255</sup> He had good reason for his gratitude, inasmuch as the depression in rents was merely temporary.

<sup>256</sup> An Indian chief is generally accompanied into the room by a confidential follower, who frequently relieves his master of the trouble of talking, and answers on his behalf all questions.

man rode upon his head, and guided him from all danger. The spirit knew very well that the tiger would be watched for many days at the place where he had committed the homicide, and always guided him off to some other more secure place, when he killed other men without any risk to himself. He did not exactly know why the spirit of the man should thus befriend the beast that had killed him; but', added he, 'there is a mischief inherent in spirits; and the better the man the more mischievous is his ghost, if means are not taken to put him to rest.' This is the popular and general belief throughout India; and it is supposed that the only sure mode of destroying a tiger who has killed many people is to begin by making offerings to the spirits of his victims, and thereby depriving him of their valuable services.<sup>257</sup> The belief that men are turned into tigers by eating of a root is no less general throughout India.

The Sarīmānt, on being asked by me what he thought of the matter, observed 'there was no doubt much truth in what the man said: but he was himself of opinion that the tigers which now infest the wood from Sāgar to Deorī were of a different kind—in fact, that they were neither more nor less than men

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<sup>257</sup> *When Agrippina, in her rage with her son Nero, threatens to take her stepson, Britannicus, to the camp of the Legion, and there assert his right to the throne, she invokes the spirit of his father, whom she had poisoned, and the manes of the Silani, whom she had murdered. 'Simul attendere manus, aggerere probra; consecratum Claudium, infernos Silanorum manes invocare, et tot invita fari nova.'*-(Tacitus, lib, xviii, sec. 14.) [W. H. S.] The quotation is from the *Annals*. Another reading of the concluding words is 'et tot irrita facinora', which gives much better sense. In the author's text 'aggerere' is printed 'aggere'.

turned into tigers—a thing which took place in the woods of Central India much more often than people were aware of. The only visible difference between the two', added the Sarīmānt, 'is that the metamorphosed tiger has *no tail*, while the *bora*, or ordinary tiger, has a very long one. In the jungle about Deorī', continued he, 'there is a root, which, if a man eat of, he is converted into a tiger on the spot; and if, in this state, he can eat of another, he becomes a man again—a melancholy instance of the former of which', said he, 'occurred, I am told, in my own father's family when I was an infant. His washerman, Raghu, was, like all washermen, a great drunkard; and, being seized with a violent desire to ascertain what a man felt in the state of a tiger, he went one day to the jungle and brought home two of these roots, and desired his wife to stand by with one of them, and the instant she saw him assume the tiger shape, to thrust it into his mouth. She consented, the washerman ate his root, and became instantly a tiger; but his wife was so terrified at the sight of her husband in this shape that she ran off with the antidote in her hand. Poor old Raghu took to the woods, and there ate a good many of his old friends from neighbouring villages; but he was at last shot, and recognized from the circumstance of his *having no tail*. You may be quite sure,' concluded Sarīmānt, 'when you hear of a tiger without a tail, that it is some unfortunate man who has eaten of that root, and of all the tigers he will be found the most mischievous.'

How my friend had satisfied himself of the truth of this

story I know not, but he religiously believes it, and so do all his attendants and mine; and, out of a population of thirty thousand people in the town of Sāgar, not one would doubt the story of the washerman if he heard it.

I was one day talking with my friend the Rājā of Maihar.<sup>258</sup> on the road between Jubbulpore and Mirzapore, on the subject of the number of men who had been lately killed by tigers at the Katrā Pass on that road,<sup>259</sup> and the best means of removing the danger. 'Nothing', said the Rājā, 'could be more easy or more cheap than the destruction of these tigers, if they were of the ordinary sort; but the tigers that kill men by wholesale, as these do, are, you may be sure, men themselves converted into tigers by the force of their science, and such animals are of all the most unmanageable.'

'And how is it. Rājā Sāhib, that these men convert themselves into tigers?'

'Nothing', said he, 'is more easy than this to persons who have once acquired the science; but how they learn it, or what it is, we unlettered men know not.'

'There was once a high priest of a large temple, in this very valley of Maihar, who was in the habit of getting himself

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<sup>258</sup> A small principality, detached from the Pannā State. Its chief town is about one hundred miles north-east of Jubbulpore, on the route from Allahabad to Jubbulpore. The state is now traversed by the East Indian Railway. It is under the superintendence of the Political Agent of Baghēlkhand, resident at Rīwā.

<sup>259</sup> This pass is sixty-three miles south-east of Allahabad, on the road from that city to Rīwā.

converted into a tiger by the force of this science, which he had thoroughly acquired. He had a necklace, which one of his disciples used to throw over his neck the moment the tiger's form became fully developed. He had, however, long given up the practice, and all his old disciples had gone off on their pilgrimages to distant shrines, when he was one day seized with a violent desire to take his old form of the tiger. He expressed the wish to one of his new disciples, and demanded whether he thought he might rely on his courage to stand by and put on the necklace. 'Assuredly you may', said the disciple; 'such is my faith in you, and in the God we serve, that I fear nothing.' The high priest upon this put the necklace into his hand with the requisite instructions, and forthwith began to change his form. The disciple stood trembling in every limb, till he heard him give a roar that shook the whole edifice, when he fell flat upon his face, and dropped the necklace on the floor. The tiger bounded over him, and out of the door, and infested all the roads leading to the temple for many years afterwards.'

'Do you think, Rājā Sahib, that the old high priest is one of the tigers at the Katrā Pass?'

'No, I do not; but I think they may be all men who have become imbued with a little too much of the high priest's *science*—when men once acquire this science they can't help exercising it, though it be to their own ruin, and that of others.'

'But, supposing them to be ordinary tigers, what is the simple plan you propose to put a stop to their depredations, Rājā Sahib?'

'I propose', said he, 'to have the spirits that guide them propitiated by proper prayers and offerings; for the spirit of every man or woman who has been killed by a tiger rides upon his head, or runs before him, and tells him where to go to get prey, and to avoid danger. Get some of the Gonds, or wild people from the jungles, who are well skilled in these matters—give them ten or twenty rupees, and bid them go and raise a small shrine, and there sacrifice to these spirits. The Gonds will tell them that they shall on this shrine have regular worship, and good sacrifices of fowls, goats, and pigs, every year at least, if they will but relinquish their offices with the tigers and be quiet. If this is done, I pledge myself', said the Raja, 'that the tigers will soon get killed themselves, or cease from killing men. If they do not, you may be quite sure that they are not ordinary tigers, but men turned into tigers, or that the Gonds have appropriated all you gave them to their own use, instead of applying it to conciliate the spirits of the unfortunate people.'<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> These myths are based on the well-known facts that man-eating tigers are few, and exceptionally wary and cunning. The conditions which predispose a tiger to man-eating have been much discussed. It seems to be established that the animals which seek human prey are generally, though not invariably, those which, owing to old wounds or other physical defects, are unable to attack with confidence the stronger animals. The conversations given in the text are excellent illustrations of the mode of formation of modern myths, and of the kind of reasoning which satisfies the mind of the unconscious myth-maker. The text may be compared with the following passage from the *Journey through the Kingdom of Oudh* (vol. i, p. 124): 'I asked him (the Rājā of Balrāmpur), whether the people in the Tarāi forest were still afraid to point out tigers to sportsmen. "I was lately out with a party after a tiger", he said, "which had killed a cowherd, but his companions refused to point out any trace of him, saying that

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their relative's spirit must be now riding upon his head, to guide him from all danger, and we should have no chance of shooting him. We did shoot him, however", said the Rājā exultingly, "and they were all afterwards very glad of it. The tigers in the Tarāi do not often kill men, sir, for they find plenty of deer and cattle to eat,"

# CHAPTER 21

## Burning of Deorī by a Freebooter—A Suttee

Sarīmant had been one of the few who escaped from the flames which consumed his capital of Deorī in the month of April 1813, and were supposed to have destroyed thirty thousand souls. I asked him to tell me how this happened, and he referred me to his attendant, a learned old pundit, Rām Chand, who stood by his side, as he was himself, he said, then only five years of age, and could recollect nothing of it.

'Mardān Singh,' said the pundit, 'the father of Rājā Arpan Singh, whom you saw at Seorī, was then our neighbour, reigning over Garhā Kotā;<sup>261</sup> and he had a worthless nephew, Zālīm Singh, who had collected together an army of five thousand men, in the hope of getting a little principality for himself in the general scramble for dominion incident on the rise of the Pindhārīs and Amīr Khan,<sup>262</sup> and the destruction of all balance of power among

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<sup>261</sup> *A fortress, twenty-five miles east of Sāgar, captured by a British force under General Watson in October 1818, For Seorī and Rājā Arjun Singh see ante, Chapter 17, text by notes 1 and 4.*

<sup>262</sup> Amīr Khān, a leader of predatory horse, has been justly described as 'one of the most atrocious villains that India ever produced'. He first came into notice in 1804, as an officer in Holkar's service, and in the following year opposed Lord Lake at Bharatpur. A treaty made with him in 1817 put an end to his activity. The Pindhārīs

the great sovereigns of Central India. He came to attack our capital, which was an emporium of considerable trade and the seat of many useful manufactures, in the expectation of being able to squeeze out of us a good sum to aid him in his enterprise. While his troops blocked up every gate, fire was, by accident, set to the fence of some man's garden within. There had been no rain for six months; and everything was so much dried up that the flames spread rapidly; and, though there was no wind when they began, it soon blew a gale. The Sarīmant was then a little boy with his mother in the fortress, where she lived with his father<sup>263</sup> and nine other relations. The flames soon extended to the fortress, and the powder-magazine blew up. The house in which they lived was burned down, and every soul, except the lieutenant [*sic*] himself, perished in it. His mother tried to bear him off in her arms, but fell down in her struggle to get out with him and died. His nurse, Tulsī Kurmin,<sup>264</sup> snatched him up, and ran with him

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were organized bands of mounted robbers, who desolated Northern and Central India during the period of anarchy which followed the dissolution of the Moghal empire. They were associated with the Marāthās in the war which terminated with the capture of Asīrgarh in April 1819. In the same year the Pindhārī forces ceased to exist as a distinct and recognized, body. My father was an Afghān, and came from Kandahar: He rode with Nawāb Amir Khan in the old Marāthā war: From the Dekhan to the Himalay, five hundred of one clan, They asked no leave of prince or chief as they swept thro' Hindusthan. (Sir A. Lyall, 'The Old Pindaree'; in *Verses written in India*, London, 1889).

<sup>263</sup> Named Govind Rāo. The proper name of the Sarīmant was Rāmchand Rāo (C.P. Gazetteer, 1870).

<sup>264</sup> Kurmin is the feminine of Kurmī, the name of a widely spread and most industrious agricultural caste, closely connected, at least in Bundēlkhānd, with the

outside of the fortress to the bank of the river, where she made him over unhurt to Harirām, the Mārwarī merchant.<sup>265</sup> He was mounted on a good horse, and, making off across the river, he carried him safely to his friends at Gaurjhāmar; but poor Tulsī the Kurmin fell down exhausted when she saw her charge safe, and died.

"The wind appeared to blow in upon the poor devoted city from every side; and the troops of Zālim Singh, who at first prevented the people from rushing out at the gates, made off in a panic at the horrors before them. All our establishments had been driven into the city at the approach of Zālim Singh's troops; and scores of elephants, hundreds of camels, and thousands of horses and ponies perished in the flames, besides twenty-five thousand souls. Only about five thousand persons escaped out of thirty thousand, and these were reduced to beggary and wretchedness by the loss of their dearest relations and their property. At the time the flames first began to spread, an immense crowd of people had assembled under the fortress on the bank of the Sonār river to see the widow of a soldier burn herself. Her husband had been shot by one of Zālim Singh's soldiers in the morning; and before midday she was by the side of his body on the funeral pile. People, as usual, begged her to tell them what would happen, and she replied, "The city will know in less than four hours"; in less

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similar Lodhī caste.

<sup>265</sup> Mārwar, or Jodhpur, is one of the leading states in Rājputāna. It supplies the rest of India with many of the keenest merchants and bankers.

than four hours the whole city had been reduced to ashes; and we all concluded that, since the event was so clearly foretold, it must have been decreed by God.<sup>1266</sup>

'No doubt it was,' said Sarīmānt; 'how could it otherwise happen? Do not all events depend upon His will? Had it not been His will to save me, how could poor Tulsī the Kurmin have carried me upon her shoulders through such a scene as this, when every other member of our family perished?'

'No doubt', said Rām Chand, 'all these things are brought about by the will of God, and it is not for us to ask why.'<sup>1267</sup>

I have heard this event described by many other people, and I believe the account of the old pundit to be a very fair one.

One day, in October 1833, the horse of the district surgeon, Doctor Spry, as he was mounting him, reared, fell back with his head upon a stone, and died upon the spot. The doctor was not much hurt, and the little Sarīmānt called a few days after, and offered his congratulations upon his narrow escape. The cause of so quiet a horse rearing at this time, when he had never been known to do so before, was discussed; and he said that there could be no doubt that the horse, or the doctor himself, must have seen some unlucky face before he mounted that morning—that he had been in many places in his life, but in none where a

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<sup>266</sup> See *ante*, Chapter 4, note 6, for remarks on the supposed prophetic gifts of sati women.

<sup>267</sup> Such feelings of resignation to the Divine will, or fate, are common alike to Hindoos and Musalmāns.

man was liable to see so many ugly or unfortunate faces; and, for his part, he never left his house till an hour after sunrise, lest he should encounter them.<sup>268</sup>

Many natives were present, and every one seemed to consider the Sarīmānt's explanation of the cause quite satisfactory and philosophical. Some days after, Spry was going down to sleep in the bungalow where the accident happened. His native assistant and all his servants came and prayed that he would not attempt to sleep in the bungalow, as they were sure the horse must have been frightened by a ghost, and quoted several instances of ghosts appearing to people there. He, however, slept in the bungalow, and, to their great astonishment, saw no ghost and suffered no evil.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> *'One of a wife's duties should be to keep all bad omens out of her husband's way, or manage to make him look at something lucky in the early morning. . . . Different lists of inauspicious objects are given, which, if looked upon in the early morning, might cause disaster'* (M. Williams, *Religious Thought and Life in India*, p. 397).

<sup>269</sup> *Dr. Spry died in 1842, and his estate was administered by the author. The doctor's works are described ante, Chapter 14, note 16.*

## CHAPTER 22

### **Interview with the Rājā who marries the Stone to the Shrub—Order of the Moon and the Fish**

On the 8th,<sup>270</sup> after a march of twelve miles, we readied Tehrī, the present capital of the Rājā of Orchhā.<sup>271</sup> Our road lay over an undulating surface of soil composed of the detritus of the syenitic rock, and poor, both from its quality and want of depth. About three miles from our last territory we entered the boundary of the Orchhā Rājā's territory, at the village of Aslōn, which has a very pretty little fortified castle, built upon ground slightly elevated in the midst of an open grass plain.

This, and all the villages we have lately passed, are built upon the bare back of the syenitic rock, which seems to rise to the surface in large but gentle swells, like the broad waves of the ocean in a calm after a storm. A great difference appeared to me to be observable between the minds and manners of the people

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<sup>270</sup> December, 1835.

<sup>271</sup> The State of Orchhā, also known as Tehrī or Tikamgarh, situated to the south of the Jhānsī district, is the oldest and the highest in rank of the Bundela principalities. The town of Tehrī is seventy-two miles north-west of Sāgar. The town of Orchhā, founded in A.D. 1531, is 131 miles north of Sāgar, and about forty miles from Tehrī. Tikamgarh is the fort of Tehrī.

among whom we were now travelling, and those of the people of the Sāgar and Nerbudda territories. They seemed here to want the urbanity and intelligence we find among our subjects in the latter quarters.

The apparent stupidity of the people when questioned upon points the most interesting to them, regarding their history, their agriculture, their tanks, and temples, was most provoking; and their manners seemed to me more rude and clownish than those of people in any other part of India I had travelled over. I asked my little friend the Sarīmānt, who rode with me, what he thought of this.

'I think', said he, 'that it arises from the harsh character of the government under which they live; it makes every man wish to appear a fool, in order that he may be thought a beggar and not worth the plundering.'

'It strikes me, my friend Sarīmānt, that their government has made them in reality the beggars and the fools that they appear to be.'

'God only knows', said Sarīmānt; 'certain it is that they are neither in mind nor in manners what the people of our districts are.'

The Rājā had no notice of our approach till intimation of it reached him at Ludhaura, the day before we came in. He was there resting, and dismissing the people after the ceremonies of the marriage between the Salagrām and the Tulasī. Ludhaura is twenty-seven miles north-west of Tehrī, on the opposite side

from that on which I was approaching. He sent off two men on camels with a 'kharītā' (letter),<sup>272</sup> requesting that I would let him know my movements, and arrange a meeting in a manner that might prevent his appearing wanting in respect and hospitality; that is, in plain terms, which he was too polite to use, that I would consent to remain one stage from his capital, till he could return and meet me half-way, with all due pomp and ceremony. These men reached me at Bamhaurī,<sup>273</sup> a distance of thirty-nine miles, in the evening, and I sent back a kharītā, which reached him by relays of camels before midnight. He set out for his capital to receive me, and, as I would not wait to be met half-way in due form, he reached his palace, and we reached our tents at the same time, under a salute from his two brass field-pieces.

We halted at Tehrī on the 9th, and about eleven o'clock the Rājā came to pay his visit of congratulation, with a magnificent *cortège* of elephants, camels, and horses, all mounted and splendidly caparisoned, and the noise of his band was deafening. I had had both my tents pitched, and one of them handsomely fitted up, as it always is, for occasions of ceremony like the present. He came to within twenty paces of the door on his elephant, and from its back, as it sat down, he entered his splendid

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<sup>272</sup> A *kharītā* is a letter enclosed in a bag of rich brocade, contained in another of fine muslin. The mouth is tied with a string of silk, to which hangs suspended the great seal, which is a flat round mass of sealing-wax, with the seal impressed on each side of it. This is the kind of letter which passes between natives of great rank in India, and between them and the public functionaries of Government. [W. H. S.]

<sup>273</sup> *Ante*, Chapter 19, after note [15].

litter, without alighting on the ground.<sup>274</sup> In this vehicle he was brought to my tent door, where I received him, and, after the usual embraces, conducted him up through two rows of chairs, placed for his followers of distinction and my own, who are always anxious to assist in ceremonies like these.

At the head of this lane we sat upon chairs placed across, and facing down the middle of the two rows; and we conversed upon all the subjects usually introduced on such occasions, but more especially upon the august ceremonies of the marriage of the Salagrām with the Tulasī, in which his highness had been so *piously* engaged at Ludhaura.<sup>275</sup> After he had sat with me an hour and a half he took his leave, and I conducted him to the door, whence he was carried to his elephant in his litter, from which he mounted without touching the ground.

This litter is called a 'nāl̄kī'. It is one of the three great insignia which the Mogul Emperors of Delhi conferred upon independent princes of the first class, and could never be used by any person upon whom, or upon whose ancestors, they had not been so conferred. These were the nāl̄kī, the order of the

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<sup>274</sup> *The Rājā's unwillingness to touch the ground is an example of a very widespread and primitive belief. 'Two of those rules or taboos by which . . . the life of divine kings or priests is regulated. The first is . . . that the divine personage may not touch the ground with his foot.' This prohibition applies to the Mikado of Japan and many other sacred personages. 'The second rule is that the sun may not shine upon the sacred person.'* This second rule explains the use of the umbrella as a royal appendage in India and Burma. (Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 1st ed., vol. ii, pp. 224, 225.)

<sup>275</sup> *Ante*, Chapter 19, note 3.

Fish, and the fan of the peacock's feathers. These insignia could be used only by the prince who inherited the sovereignty of the one on whom they had been originally conferred. The order of the Fish, or Mahī Marātib, was first instituted by Khusrū Parvīz, King of Persia, and grandson of the celebrated Naushīrvān the Just. Having been deposed by his general, Bahrām, Khusrū fled for protection to the Greek emperor, Maurice, whose daughter, Shīrīn, he married, and he was sent back to Persia, with an army under the command of Narses, who placed him on the throne of his ancestors in the year A.D. 591.<sup>276</sup> He ascertained

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<sup>276</sup> *During the time he remained the guest of the emperor he resided at Hierapolis, and did not visit Constantinople. The Greeks do not admit that Shīrīn was the daughter of Maurice, though a Roman by birth and a Christian by religion. The Persians and Turks speak of her as the emperor's daughter. [W. H. S.] Khusrū Pārvīz (Eberwiz), or Khusrū II, reigned as King of Persia from A.D. 591 to 628. In the course of his wars he took Jerusalem, and reduced Egypt, and a large part of northern Africa, extending for a time the bounds of the Persian empire to the Aegean and the Nile. Khusrū I, surnamed Naushīrvān, or (more correctly) Anushīrvān, reigned from A.D. 531 to 579. His successful wars with the Romans and his vigorous internal administration captivated the Oriental imagination, and he is generally spoken of as Ādil, or The Just. His name has become proverbial, and to describe a superior as rivalling Naushīrvān in justice is a commonplace of flattery. The prophet Muhammad was born during his reign, and was proud of the fact. The alleged expedition of Naushīrvān into India is discredited by the best modern writers. Gibbon tells the story of the wars between the two Khusrūs and the Romans in his forty-sixth chapter, and a critical history of the reigns of both Khusrū (Khosrau) I and Khusrū II will be found in Professor Rawlinson's Seventh Great Oriental Monarchy (London, 1876). European authors have, until recently, generally written the name Khusrū in its Greek form as Chosroes. The name of Shīrīn is also written Sira. With the name of Shirin and the rock of Bahistun the Persians have associated one of those poetic romances so dear to the national genius. Ferhad, the most famous sculptor of his time, who was very likely employed by Chosroes II to execute these*

from his astrologer, Araz Khushasp, that when he ascended the throne the moon was in the constellation of the Fish, and he gave orders to have two balls made of polished steel, which were to be called *Kaukabas* (planets),<sup>277</sup> and mounted on long poles. These two planets, with large fish made of gold, upon a third pole in the centre, were ordered to be carried in all regal processions immediately after the king, and before the prime minister, whose *cortège* always followed immediately after that of the king. The two *kaūkabas* are now generally made of copper, and plated, and in the shape of a jar, instead of quite round as at first; but the fish is still made of gold. Two planets are always considered necessary to one fish, and they are still carried in all processions between the prince and his prime minister.

The court of this prince Khusrū Pārvīz was celebrated throughout the East for its splendour and magnificence; and the

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bas-reliefs, is said in the legend to have fallen madly in love with Shīrīn, and to have received a promise of her from the king, if he would cut through the rock of Behistun, and divert a stream to the Kermanshah plain. The lover set to work, and had all but completed his gigantic enterprise (of which the remains, however interpreted, are still to be seen), when he was falsely informed by an emissary from the king of his lady's death. In despair he leaped from the rock, and was dashed to pieces. The legend of the unhappy lover is familiar throughout the East, and is used to explain many traces of rock-cutting or excavation as far east as Beluchistan' (*Persia and the Persian Question*, by the Hon. George N. Curzon, M.P. (London, 1892), vol. i, p. 562, note. See also Malcolm, *History of Persia*, vol. i, p. 129).

<sup>277</sup> *Kaukab* in Arabic means 'a star'. Steingass (*Persian Dictionary*) defines *Kaukaba* as 'a polished steel ball suspended to a long pole, and carried as an ensign before the king; a star of gold, silver, or tinsel, worn as ornament or sign of rank; a concourse of people; a royal train, retinue, cavalcade; splendour'.

chaste love of the poet Farhad for his beautiful queen Shīrīn is the theme of almost as many poems in the East as that of Petrarch's for Laura is in the West. Nūh Samānī, who ascended the throne of Persia after the Sassanians,<sup>278</sup> ascertained that the moon was in the sign Leo at the time of his accession, and ordered that the gold head of a lion should thenceforward accompany the fishes, and the two balls, in all royal processions. The Persian order of knighthood is, therefore, that of the Fish, the Moon, and the Lion, and not the Lion and Sun, as generally supposed. The emperors of the house of Taimūr in Hindustan assumed the right of conferring the order upon all whom they pleased, and they conferred it upon the great territorial sovereigns of the country without distinction as to religion. He only who inherits the sovereignty can wear the order, and I believe no prince would venture to wear or carry the order who was not generally reputed to have received the investiture from one of the emperors of Delhi.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> *Yezdegird III (Isdigerd), the last of the Sassanians, was defeated in A.D. 641 at the battle of Nahavend by the Arab Nomān, general of the Khalīf Omar, and driven from his throne. The supremacy of the Khalīfs over Persia lasted till A.D. 1258. The subordinate Samāni dynasty ruled over Khurāsān, Seistān, Balkh, and the countries of Trans-Oxiana in the tenth century. Two of the princes of this line were named Nūh, or Noah. The author probably refers to the better known of the two, Amir Nūh II (Malcolm, History of Persia, ed. 1829, vol. i, pp. 158-66).*

<sup>279</sup> The poor old blind emperor. Shāh Alam, when delivered from the Marāthās in 1803 by Lord Lake, did all he could to show his gratitude by conferring on his deliverer honours and titles, and among them the 'Mahī Maratīb'. The editor has been unable to discover the source of the author's story of the origin of the Persian order

As I could not wait another day, it was determined that I

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of knighthood. Malcolm, an excellent authority, gives the following very different account: 'Their sovereigns have, for many centuries, preserved as the peculiar arms of the country,[e] the sign or figure of Sol in the constellation of Leo; and this device, a lion couchant and the sun rising at his back, has not only been sculptured upon their palaces[f] and embroidered upon their banners.[g] but has been converted into an Order,[h] which in the form of gold and silver medals, has been given to such as have distinguished themselves against the enemies of their country.[i]*Note e.* The causes which led to the sign of Sol in Leo becoming the arms of Persia cannot be distinctly traced, but there is reason to believe that the use of this symbol is not of very great antiquity. We meet with it upon the coins of one of the Seljukian princes of Iconium; and, when this family had been destroyed by Hulākū [A.D. 1258], the grandson of Chengiz, that prince, or his successors, perhaps adopted this emblem as a trophy of their conquest, whence it has remained ever since among the most remarkable of the royal insignia. A learned friend, who has a valuable collection of Oriental coins, and whose information and opinion have enabled me to make this conjecture, believes that the emblematical representation of Sol in Leo was first adopted by Ghiās-ud-din Kai Khusrū bin Kaikobād, who began to reign A.H. 634, A.D. 1236, and died A.H. 642, A.D. 1244; and this emblem, he adds, is supposed to have reference either to his own horoscope or to that of his queen, who was a princess of Georgia.*Note f.* Hanway states, vol. i, p. 199, that over the gate which forms the entrance of the palace built by Shah Abbās the Great [A.D. 1586 to 1628] at Ashrāf, in Mazenderan, are 'the arms of Persia, being a lion, and the sun rising behind it'.*Note g.* The emblem of the Lion and Sun is upon all the banners given to the regular corps of infantry lately formed. They are presented to the regiments with great ceremony. A mullā, or priest, attends, and implores the divine blessing on them.*Note h.* This order, with additional decorations, has been lately conferred upon several ministers and representatives of European Governments in alliance with Persia.*Note i.* The medals which have been struck with this symbol upon them have been chiefly given to the Persian officers and men of the regular corps who have distinguished themselves in the war with the Russians. An English officer, who served with these troops, informs me that those on whom these medals have been conferred are very proud of this distinction, and that all are extremely anxious to obtain them (*History of Persia*, ed. 1829, vol. ii, p. 406). In Curzon's figure the lion is standing, not 'couchant', as stated by Malcolm, and grasps

should return his visit in the afternoon; and about four o'clock we set out upon our elephant—Lieutenant Thomas, Sarīmant, and myself, attended by all my troopers and those of Sarīmant. We had our silver-stick men with us; but still all made a sorry figure compared with the splendid *cortège* of the Rājā. We dismounted at the foot of the stairs leading to the Rājā's hall of audience, and were there met by his two chief officers of state, who conducted us to the entrance of the hall, when we were received by the Rājā himself, who led us up through two rows of chairs laid out exactly as mine had been in the morning. In front were assembled a party of native comedians, who exhibited a few scenes of the insolence of office in the attendants of great men, and the obtrusive importunity of place-seekers, in a manner that pleased us much more than a dance would have done. Conversation was kept up very well, and the visit passed off without any feeling of ennui, or anything whatever to recollect with regret. The ladies looked at us from their apartments through gratings, and without our being able to see them very distinctly. We were anxious to see the tombs of the late Rājā, the elder brother of the present, who lately died, and that of his son, which are in progress in a very fine garden outside the city walls, and, in consequence, we did not sit above half an hour. The Rājā conducted us to the head of the stairs, and the same two officers attended us to the bottom, and mounted their horses, and attended us to the tombs.

After the dust of the town raised by the immense crowd

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a scimitar in his off forepaw.

that attended us, and the ceremonies of the day, a walk in this beautiful garden was very agreeable, and I prolonged it till dark. The Rājā had given orders to have all the cisterns filled during our stay, under the impression that we should wish to see the garden; and, as soon as we entered, the *jets d'eau* poured into the air their little floods from a hundred mouths. Our old cicerone told us that, if we would take the old capital of Orchhā in our way, we might there see the thing in perfection, and amidst the deluges of the rains of Sāwān and Bhādon (July and August) see the lightning and hear the thunder. The Rājās of this, the oldest principality in Bundēlkhand, were all formerly buried or burned at the old capital of Orchhā, even after they had changed their residence to Tehrī. These tombs over the ashes of the Rājā, his wife, and son, are the first that have been built at Tehrī, where their posterity are all to repose in future.

## CHAPTER 23

### **The Rājā of Orchhā—Murder of his many Ministers**

The present Rājā, Mathurā Dās, succeeded his brother Bikramājīt, who died in 1834. He had made over the government to his only son, Rājā Bahādur, whom he almost adored; but, the young man dying some years before him, the father resumed the reins of government, and held them till his death. He was a man of considerable capacity, but of a harsh and unscrupulous character. His son resembled him; but the present Rājā is a man of mild temper and disposition, though of weak intellect. The fate of the last three prime ministers will show the character of the Rājā and his son, and the nature of their rule.

The minister at the time the old man made over the reins of government to his son was Khānjū Purōhit.<sup>280</sup> Wishing to get rid of him a few years after, this son, Rājā Bahādur, employed Muhram Singh, one of his feudal Rājput barons, to assassinate him. As a reward for this service he received the seals of office; and the Rājā confiscated all the property of the deceased, amounting to four lakhs of rupees<sup>281</sup> and resumed the whole of

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<sup>280</sup> A purōhit is a Brahman family priest.

<sup>281</sup> Four hundred thousand rupees, worth at that time more than forty thousand pounds sterling.

the estates held by the family.

The young Rājā died soon after; and his father, when he resumed the reins of government, wishing to remove the new minister, got him assassinated by Gambhīr Singh, another feudal Rājput baron, who, as his reward, received in his turn the seals of office. This man was a most atrocious villain, and employed the public establishments of his chief to plunder travellers on the high road. In 1833 his followers robbed four men, who were carrying treasure to the amount of ten thousand rupees from Sāgar to Jhānsī through Tehrī, and intended to murder them; but, by the sagacity of one of the party, and a lucky accident, they escaped, made their way back to Sāgar, and complained to the magistrate.<sup>282</sup> The<sup>283</sup> minister discovered the nature of their burdens as they lodged at Tehrī on their way, and sent after them a party of soldiers, with orders to put them in the bed of a rivulet that separated the territory of Orchhā from that of the Jhānsī Rājā. One of the treasure party discovered their object; and, on reaching the bank of the rivulet in a deep grass jungle, he threw down his bundle, dashed unperceived through the grass, and reached a party of travellers whom he saw ascending a hill about half a mile in advance. The myrmidons of the minister, when they found that one had escaped, were afraid to murder the others, but took their treasure. In spite of great obstacles, and with much danger to the families of three of those men, who

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<sup>282</sup> The magistrate was the author.

<sup>283</sup> 'That' in author's text.

resided in the capital of Tehrī, the magistrate of Sāgar brought the crime home to the minister, and the Rājā, anxious to avail himself of the occasion to fill his coffers, got him assassinated. The Rājā was then about eighty years of age, and his minister was a strong, athletic, and brave man. One morning while he was sitting with him in private conversation, the former pretended a wish to drink some of the water in which his household god had been washed (the 'chandan mirt'),<sup>284</sup> and begged the minister to go and fetch it from the place where it stood by the side of the idol in the court of the palace. As a man cannot take his sword before the idol, the minister put it down, as the Rājā knew he would, and going to the idol, prostrated himself before it

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<sup>284</sup> *The water of the Ganges, with which the image of the god Vishnu has been washed, is considered a very holy draught, fit for princes. That with which the image of the god Siva, alias Mahādēo, is washed must not be drunk. The popular belief is that in a dispute between him and his wife, Pārvaṭī, alias Kālī, she cursed the person that should thenceforward dare to drink of the water that flowed over his images on earth. The river Ganges is supposed to flow from the top-knot of Siva's head, and no one would drink of it after this curse, were it not that the sacred stream is supposed to come first from the heel of Vishnu, the Preserver. All the little images of Siva, that are made out of stones taken from the bed of the Nerbudda river, are supposed to be absolved from this curse, and water thrown upon them can be drunk with impunity. [W. H. S.] The natural emblems of Siva, the Bāna-linga quartz pebbles found in the Nerbudda, have already been referred to in the note to Chapter 19, ante, note 9. In the Marāthā country the 'household gods' generally comprise five sacred symbols, namely, the sālagrāma stone of Vishnu, the bāna-linga of Siva, a metallic stone representing the female principle in nature (Sakti), a crystal representing the sun, and a red stone representing Ganesh, the remover of obstacles. The details of the tiresome ritual observed in the worship of these objects occupy pp. 412 to 416 of Monier Williams's *Religious Thought and Life in India*.*

preparatory to taking away the water. In that state he was cut down by Bihārī,<sup>285</sup> another feudal Rājput baron, who aspired to the seals, and some of his friends, who had been placed there on purpose by the Rājā. He obtained the seals by his service, and, as he was allowed to place one brother in command of the forces, and to make another chamberlain, he hoped to retain them longer than any of his predecessors had done. Gambhīr Singh's brother, Jhujhār Singh, and the husband of his sister, hearing of his murder, made off, but were soon pursued and put to death. The widows were all three put into prison, and all the property and estates were confiscated. The movable property amounted to three lakhs of rupees.<sup>286</sup> The Rājā boasted to the Governor-General's representative in Bundēlkhand of this act of retributive justice, and pretended that it was executed merely as a punishment for the robbery; but it was with infinite difficulty the merchants could recover from him any share of the plundered property out of that confiscated. The Rājā alleged that, according to our *rules*, the chief within whose boundary the robbery might have been committed, was obliged to make good the property. On inspection, it was found that the robbery was perpetrated upon the very boundary line, and 'in spite of pride, in erring reason's spite', the Jhānsī Rājā was made to pay one-half of the plundered treasure.

The old Rājā, Bikramājīt, died in June, 1834; and, though his

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<sup>285</sup> 'Beearie' in author's text.

<sup>286</sup> Then worth more than thirty thousand pounds sterling.

death had been some time expected, he no sooner breathed his last than charges of 'dīnāī', slow poison, were got up, as usual, in the zenana (seraglio).

Here the widow of Rājā Bahādur, a violent and sanguinary woman, was supreme; and she persuaded the present Rājā, a weak old man, to take advantage of the funeral ceremonies to avenge the death of his brother. He did so; and Bihārī, and his three brothers, with above fifty of his relations, were murdered. The widows of the four brothers were the only members of all the families left alive. One of them had a son four months old; another one of two years; the four brothers had no other children. Immediately after the death of their husbands, the two children were snatched from their mothers' breasts, and threatened with instant death unless their mothers pointed out all their ornaments and other property. They did so; and the spoilers having got from them property to the amount of one hundred and fifty thousand rupees, and been assured that there was no more, threw the children over the high wall, by which they were dashed to pieces. The poor widows were tendered as wives to four sweepers, the lowest of all low castes; but the tribe of sweepers would not suffer any of its members to take the widows of men of such high caste and station as wives, notwithstanding the tempting offer of five hundred rupees as a present, and a village in rent-free tenure.<sup>287</sup> I secured a promise while at Tehrī that these poor widows should be provided for, as they had, up to that time, been preserved by

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<sup>287</sup> *On the customs of the sweeper caste, see ante, Chapter 8, following note [11].*

the good feeling of a little community of the lowest of castes, on whom they had been bestowed as a punishment worse than death, inasmuch as it would disgrace the whole class to which they belonged, the Parihār Rājapūts.<sup>288</sup>

Tehrī is a wretched town, without one respectable dwelling-house tenanted beyond the palace, or one merchant, or even shopkeeper of capital and credit. There are some tolerable houses unoccupied and in ruins; and there are a few neat temples built as tombs, or cenotaphs, in or around the city, if city it can be called. The stables and accommodations for all public establishments seem to be all in the same ruinous state as the dwelling-houses. The revenues of the state are spent in feeding Brahmans and religious mendicants of all kinds; and in such idle ceremonies as those at which the Rājā and all his court have just been assisting—ceremonies which concentrate for a few days the most useless of the people of India, the devotee followers (Bairāgīs) of the god Vishnu, and tend to no purpose, either useful or ornamental, to the state or to the people.

This marriage of a stone to a shrub, which takes place every year, is supposed to cost the Rājā, at the most moderate estimate, three lakhs of rupees a year, or one-fourth of his annual revenue.<sup>289</sup> The highest officers of which his government

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<sup>288</sup> The Parihārs were the rulers of Bundēlkhand before the Chandēls. The chief of Uchhahara belongs to this clan.

<sup>289</sup> Wealthy Hindoos, throughout India, spend money in the same ceremonies of marrying the stone to the shrub. [W. H. S.] Three lakhs of rupees were then worth thirty thousand pounds sterling or more.

is composed receive small beggarly salaries, hardly more than sufficient for their subsistence; and the money they make by indirect means they dare not spend like gentlemen, lest the Rājā might be tempted to take their lives in order to get hold of it. All his feudal barons are of the same tribe as himself, that is, Rājput̄s, but they are divided into three clans—Bundēlas, Pawārs, and Chandēls. A Bundēla cannot marry a woman of his own clan, he must take a wife from the Pawārs or Chandēls; and so of the other two clans—no member of one can take a wife from his own clan, but must go to one of the other two for her. They are very much disposed to fight with each other, but not less are they disposed to unite against any third party, not of the same tribe. Braver men do not, I believe, exist than the Rājput̄s of Bundēlkhand, who all carry their swords from their infancy.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> *The numerous clans, more or less devoted to war, grouped together under the name of Rājput̄s (literally 'king's sons'), are in reality of multifarious origin, and include representatives of many races. They are the Kshatriyas of the law-books, and are still often called Chhatrī (E.H.I., 3rd ed., pp. 407-15). In some parts of the country the word Thākur is more familiar as their general title. Thirty-six clans are considered as specially pure-blooded and are called, at any rate in books, the 'royal races'. All the clans follow the custom of exogamy. The Chandēls (Chandella) ruled Bundēlkhand from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries. Their capital was Mahoba, now a station on the Midland Railway. The Bundēlas became prominent at a later date, and attained their greatest power under Chhatarsāl (circa A.D. 1671-1731). Their territory is now known as Bundēlkhand. The country so designated is not an administrative division. It is partly in the United Provinces, partly in the Central Provinces, and partly in Native States. It is bounded on the north by the Jumna; on the north and west by the Chambal river; on the south by the Central Provinces, and on the south and east by Rīwā and the Kaimūr hills. The traditions of both the Bundēlas and Chandellas show that there is a strain of the blood of the earlier, so-called aboriginal, races in both clans. The*

It may be said of the Rājput̄s of Mālwa and Central India generally, that the Mogul Emperors of Delhi made the same use of them that the Emperors of Germany and the Popes made of the military chiefs and classes of Europe during the Middle Ages. Industry and the peaceful arts being reduced to agriculture alone under bad government or no government at all, the land remained the only thing worth appropriating; and it accordingly became appropriated by those alone who had the power to do so—by the Hindoo military classes collected around the heads of their clans, and powerful in their union. These held it under the paramount power on the feudal tenure of military service, as militia; or it was appropriated by the paramount power itself, who let it out on allodial tenure to peaceful peasantry. The one was the Zamīndārī, and the other the Mālguzārī tenure of India.<sup>291</sup>

The military chiefs, essentially either soldiers or robbers, were continually fighting, either against each other, or against the peasantry, or public officers of the paramount power, like the

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Pawār (Pramara) clan ranks high, but is now of little political importance (See *N. W.P. Gazetteer*, 1st ed., vol. vii, p. 68).

<sup>291</sup> The paramount power often assigned a portion of its reserved lands in 'Jāgīr' to public officers for the establishments they required for the performance of the duties, military or civil, which were expected from them. Other portions were assigned in rent-free tenure for services already performed, or to favourites; but, in both cases, the rights of the village or land owner, or allodial proprietors, were supposed to be unaffected, as the Government was presumed to assign only its own claim to a certain portion as revenue. [W. H. S.] The term 'ryotwar' (raiyyatwār) is commonly used to designate the system under which the cultivators hold their lands direct from the State. The subject of tenures is further discussed by the author in Chapters 70, 71.

barons of Europe; and that paramount power, or its delegates, often found that the easiest way to crush one of these refractory vassals was to put him, as such men had been put in Germany, to *the ban of the empire*, and offer his lands, his castles, and his wealth to the victor. This victor brought his own clansmen to occupy the lands and castles of the vanquished; and, as these were the only things thought worth living for, the change commonly involved the utter destruction of the former occupants. The new possessors gave the name of their leader, their clan, or their former place of abode, to their new possession, and the tract of country over which they spread. Thus were founded the Bundēlas, Pawārs, and Chandēls [*sic*] upon the ruin of the Chandēls of Bundēlkhand, the Baghēlas in Baghēlkhand, or Rīwā, the Kachhwāhās, the Sakarwārs, and others along the Chambal river, and throughout all parts of India.<sup>292</sup>

These classes have never learnt anything, or considered anything worth learning, but the use of the sword; and a Rājput chief, next to leading a gang of his own on great enterprises, delights in nothing so much as having a gang or two under his patronage for little ones.

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<sup>292</sup> For elaborate comparisons between the Rājput policy and the feudal system of Europe, *Tod's Rajasthān* may be consulted. The parallel is not really so close as it appears to be at first sight. In some respects the organization of the Highland clans is more similar to that of the Rājputs than the feudal system is. The Chambal river rises in Mālwā, and, after a course of some five hundred and seventy miles, falls into the Jumna forty miles below Etāwa. The statement in the text concerning the succession of clans is confused. The ruling family of Rīwā still belongs to the Baghēl clan. The Maharājā of Jaipur (Jeypore) is a Kachhwāha.

There is hardly a single chief of the Hindoo military class in the Bundēlkhand or Gwālīor territories, who does not keep a gang of robbers of some kind or other, and consider it as a very valuable and legitimate source of revenue; or who would not embrace with cordiality the leader of a gang of assassins by profession who should bring him home from every expedition a good horse, a good sword, or a valuable pair of shawls, taken from their victims. It is much the same in the kingdom of Oudh, where the lands are for the most part held by the same Hindoo military classes, who are in a continual state of war with each other, or with the Government authorities. Three-fourths of the recruits for native infantry regiments are from this class of military agriculturists of Oudh, who have been trained up in this school of contest; and many of the lads, when they enter our ranks, are found to have marks of the cold steel upon their persons. A braver set of men is hardly anywhere to be found; or one trained up with finer feelings of devotion towards the power whose salt they eat.<sup>293</sup> A good many of the other fourth of the

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<sup>293</sup> The barbarous habit of alliance and connivance with robber gangs is by no means confined to Rājput nobles and landholders. Men of all creeds and castes yield to the temptation and magistrates are sometimes startled to find that Honorary Magistrates, Members of District Boards, and others of apparently the highest respectability, are the abettors and secret organizers of robber bands. A modern example of this fact was discovered in the Meerut and Muzaffarnagar Districts of the United Provinces in 1890 and 1891. In this case the wealthy supporters of the banditti were Jāts and Muhammadans. The unfortunate condition of Oudh previous to the annexation in 1856 is vividly described in the author's *Journey through the Kingdom of Oude*, published in 1858. The tour took place in 1849- 50. Some districts of the kingdom, especially

recruits for our native infantry are drawn from among the Ujainī Rājput̄s, or Rājput̄s from Ujain,<sup>294</sup> who were established many generations ago in the same manner at Bhōjpur on the bank of the Ganges.<sup>295</sup>

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Hardoī, are still tainted by the old lawlessness. The remarks on the fine feelings of devotion shown by the sepoy's must now be read in the light of the events of the Mutiny. Since that time the army has been reorganized, and depends on Oudh for its recruits much less than it did in the author's day.

<sup>294</sup> Ujain (Ujjain, Oojejn) is a very ancient city, on the river Sipra, in Mālwa, in the dominions of Sindhia, the chief of Gwālīor.

<sup>295</sup> Bhajpore in the author's text. The town referred to is Bhōjpur in the Shāhābād district of South Bihār.

# CHAPTER 24

## Corn Dealers—Scarcities—Famines in India

Near Tehrī we saw the people irrigating a field of wheat from a tank by means of a canoe, in a mode quite new to me. The surface of the water was about three feet below that of the field to be watered. The inner end of the canoe was open, and placed to the mouth of a gutter leading into the wheat-field. The outer end was closed, and suspended by a rope to the outer end of a pole, which was again suspended to cross-bars. On the inner end of this pole was fixed a weight of stones sufficient to raise the canoe when filled with water; and at the outer end stood five men, who pulled down and sank the canoe into the water as often as it was raised by the stones, and emptied into the gutter. The canoe was more curved at the outer end than ordinary canoes are, and seemed to have been made for the purpose. The lands round the town generally were watered by the Persian wheel; but, where it [*scil.* the water] is near the surface, this [*scil.* the canoe arrangement] I should think a better method.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Irrigation by means of a 'dug-out' canoe used as a lever is commonly practised in many parts of the country. The author gives a rough sketch, not worth reproduction. The Persian wheel is suitable for use in wide-mouthed wells. It may be described as a mill-wheel with buckets on the circumference, which are filled and emptied as the

On the 10th<sup>297</sup> we came on to the village of Bilgaī, twelve miles over a bad soil, badly cultivated; the hard syenitic rock rising either above or near to the surface all the way—in some places abruptly, in small hills, decomposing into large rounded boulders—in others slightly and gently, like the backs of whales in the ocean—in others, the whole surface of the country resembled very much the face of the sea, not after, but really in, a storm, full of waves of all sizes, contending with each other 'in most admired disorder'. After the dust of Tehrī, and the fatiguing ceremonies of its court, the quiet morning I spent in this secluded spot under the shade of some beautiful trees, with the surviving canary singing, my boy playing, and my wife sleeping off the fatigues of her journey, was to me most delightful. Henry was extremely ill when we left Jubbulpore; but the change of air, and all the other changes incident to a march, have restored him to health.

During the scarcity of 1833 two hundred people died of starvation in this village alone;<sup>298</sup> and were all thrown into one large well, which has, of course, ever since remained closed. Autumn crops chiefly are cultivated; and they depend entirely on the sky for water, while the poor people of the village depend upon the returns of a single season for subsistence during the

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wheel revolves. It is worked by bullock-power acting on a rude cog-wheel.

<sup>297</sup> December, 1835.

<sup>298</sup> *A.D. 1833 corresponds to the year 1890 of the Vikrama Samvat, or era, current in Bundēlkhand. About 1880 the editor found this great famine still remembered as that of the year '90.*

whole year. They lingered on in the hope of aid from above till the greater part had become too weak from want of food to emigrate. The Rājā gave half a crown to every family;<sup>299</sup> but this served merely to kindle their hopes of more, and to prolong their misery. Till the people have a better government they can never be secure from frequent returns of similar calamities. Such security must depend upon a greater variety of crops, and better means of irrigation; better roads to bring supplies over from distant parts which have not suffered from the same calamities; and greater means in reserve of paying for such supplies when brought—things that can never be hoped for under a government like this, which allows no man the free enjoyment of property.

Close to the village a large wall has been made to unite two small hills, and form a small lake; but the wall is formed of the rounded boulders of the syenitic rock without cement, and does not retain the water. The land which was to have formed the bed of the lake is all in tillage; and I had some conversation with the man who cultivated it. He told me that the wall had been built with the money of *sin*, and not the money of *piety* (*pāp kē paisā sē, na pun kē paisā sē banā*), that the man who built it must have laid out his money with a *worldly*, and not a *religious* mind (*nīyat*); that on such occasions men generally assembled Brahmans and other deserving people, and fed and clothed them, and thereby *consecrated* a great work, and made it acceptable to God, and

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<sup>299</sup> Half a crown seems to be used in this passage as a synonym for the rupee, now (1914) worth a shilling and four pence.

he had heard from his ancestors that the man who had built this wall had failed to do this; that the construction could never, of course, answer the purpose for which it was intended—and that the builder's name had actually been forgotten, and the work did him no good either in this world or the next. This village, which a year or two ago was large and populous, is now reduced to two wretched huts inhabited by two very miserable families.

Bundēlkhand suffers more often and more severely from the want of seasonable showers of rain than any other part of India; while the province of Mālwa, which adjoins it on the west and south, hardly ever suffers at all.<sup>300</sup> There is a couplet, which, like all other good couplets on rural subjects, is attributed to Sahdēo [Sahadeva], one of the five demigod brothers of the Mahābhārata, to this effect: 'If you hear not the thunder on such a night, you, father, go to Mālwa, I to Gujarāt;'—that is, there will be no rain, and we must seek subsistence where rains never fail, and the harvests are secure.

The province of Mālwa is well studded with hills and groves

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<sup>300</sup> *Bundēlkhand seems to be the meeting-place of the east and west monsoons, and the moist current is, in consequence, often feeble and variable. The country suffered again from famine in 1861 and 1877, although not so severely as in 1833. In northern Bundēlkhand a canal from the Betwa river has been constructed, but is of only very limited use. The peculiarities of the soil and climate forbid the wide extension of irrigation. For the prevention of acute famine in this region the chief reliance must be on improved communications. The country has been opened up by the Indian Midland and other railways. In 1899-1900, notwithstanding improved communications, Mālwa suffered severely from famine. Aurangzēb considered Gujarāt to be 'the ornament and jewel of India' (Bilimoria, *Letters of Aurungzeb*, 1908, no. lxiv).*

of fine trees, which intercept the clouds as they are wafted by the prevailing westerly winds, from the Gulf of Cambay to the valley of the Ganges, and make them drop their contents upon a soil of great natural powers, formed chiefly from the detritus of the decomposing basaltic rocks, which cap and intersect these hills.<sup>301</sup>

During the famine of 1833, as on all similar occasions, grain of every kind, attracted by high prices, flowed up in large streams from this favoured province towards Bundēlkhand; and the population of Bundēlkhand, as usual in such times of dearth and scarcity, flowed off towards Mālwa against the stream of supply, under the assurance that the nearer they got to the source, the greater would be their chance of employment and subsistence. Every village had its numbers of the dead and the dying; and the roads were all strewn with them; but they were mostly concentrated upon the great towns and civil and military stations, where subscriptions were open[ed] for their support, by both the European and native communities. The funds arising from these subscriptions lasted till the rains had set fairly in, when all able-bodied persons could easily find employment in tillage among the agricultural communities of villages around. After the rains have fairly set in, the *sick* and *helpless* only should be kept concentrated upon large towns and stations, where little

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<sup>301</sup> *The influence of trees on climate is undoubted, but the author in this passage probably ascribes too much power to the groves of Mālwa. On the formation of the black soil see note 7 to Chapter 14, ante.*

or no employment is to be found; for the oldest and youngest of those who are able to work can then easily find employment in weeding the cotton, rice, sugar-cane, and other fields under autumn crops, and in preparing the lands for the reception of the wheat, gram,<sup>302</sup> and other spring seeds; and get advances from the farmers, agricultural capitalists<sup>303</sup> and other members of the village communities, who are all glad to share their superfluities with the distressed, and to pay liberally for the little service they are able to give in return.

It is very unwise to give from such funds what may be considered a full rate of subsistence to able-bodied persons, as it tends to keep concentrated upon such points vast numbers who would otherwise be scattered over the surface of the country among the village communities, who would be glad to advance them stock and the means of subsistence upon the pledge of their future services when the season of tillage commences. The rate of subsistence should always be something less than what the able-bodied person usually consumes, and can get for his labour in the field. For the sick and feeble this rate will be enough, and the healthy and able-bodied, with unimpaired appetites, will seek

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<sup>302</sup> *The word in the author's text is 'grain', a misprint for 'gram' (Cicer arietinum), a pulse, also known as chick-pea, and very largely grown in Bundēlkhānd. 'Gram' is a corruption of the Portuguese word for grain, and, like many other Portuguese words, has passed into the speech of Anglo-Indians. See Yule and Burnell, *Glossary of Anglo-Indian Words*, s.v.*

<sup>303</sup> 'Agricultural capitalist' is a rather large phrase for the humble village money-lender, whose transactions are usually on a very small scale.

a greater rate by the offer of their services among the farmers and cultivators of the surrounding country. By this precaution, the mass of suffering will be gradually diffused over the country, so as best to receive what the country can afford to give for its relief. As soon as the rains set in, all the able-bodied men, women, and children should be sent off with each a good blanket, and a rupee or two, as the funds can afford, to last them till they can engage themselves with the farmers. Not a farthing after that day should be given out, except to the feeble and sick, who may be considered as hospital patients.<sup>304</sup>

At large places, where the greater numbers are concentrated, the scene becomes exceedingly distressing, for, in spite of the best dispositions and greatest efforts on the part of Government and its officers, and the European and native communities, thousands commonly die of starvation. At Sāgar, mothers, as they lay in the streets unable to walk, were seen holding up their infants, and imploring the passing stranger to take them in slavery, that they might at least live—hundreds were seen creeping into gardens, courtyards, and old ruins, concealing themselves under shrubs, grass, mats, or straw, where they might die quietly, without having their bodies torn by birds and beasts before the breath had left them. Respectable families, who left home in search of the favoured land of Mālwa, while yet a

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<sup>304</sup> The author's advice on the subject of famine relief is weighty and perfectly sound. It is in accordance with the policy formulated by the Government of India in the Famine Relief Code, based on the Report of the Famine Commission which followed the terrible Madras famine of 1877.

little property remained, finding all exhausted, took opium rather than beg, and husband, wife, and children died in each other's arms. Still more of such families lingered on in hope till all had been expended; then shut their doors, took poison and died all together, rather than expose their misery, and submit to the degradation of begging. All these things I have myself known and seen; and, in the midst of these and a hundred other harrowing scenes which present themselves on such occasions, the European cannot fail to remark the patient resignation with which the poor people submit to their fate; and the absence of almost all those revolting acts which have characterized the famines of which he has read in other countries—such as the living feeding on the dead, and mothers devouring their own children. No such things are witnessed in Indian famines;<sup>305</sup> here all who suffer attribute the disaster to its real cause, the want of rain in due season; and indulge in no feelings of hatred against their rulers, superiors, or more fortunate equals in society who happen to live beyond the range of such calamities. They gratefully receive the superfluities which the more favoured are always found ready to share with the afflicted in India; and,

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<sup>305</sup> *This statement is too general. Examples of the horror alluded to are recorded in several Indian famines. Cases of cannibalism occurred during the Madras famine of 1877. But it is true that horrors of the kind are rare in India, and the author's praise of the patient resignation of the people is fully justified. An admirable summary of the history of Indian famines will be found in the articles 'Famines' and 'Food' in Balfour, Cyclopaedia, 3rd ed. (1885). For further and more recent information see I.G. (1907), vol. iii, chap. 10.*

though their sufferings often subdue the strongest of all pride, the pride of caste, they rarely ever drive the people to acts of violence. The stream of emigration, guided as it always is by that of the agricultural produce flowing in from the more favoured countries, must necessarily concentrate upon the communities along the line it takes a greater number of people than they have the means of relieving, however benevolent their dispositions; and I must say that I have never either seen or read of a nobler spirit than seems to animate all classes of these communities in India on such distressing occasions.

In such seasons of distress, we often, in India, hear of very injudicious interference with grain dealers on the part of civil and military authorities, who contrive to persuade themselves that the interest of these corn-dealers, instead of being in accordance with the interests of the people, are entirely opposed to them; and conclude that, whenever grain becomes dear, they have a right to make them open their granaries, and sell their grain at such price as they, in their wisdom, may deem reasonable. If they cannot make them do this by persuasion, fine, or imprisonment, they cause their pits to be opened by their own soldiers or native officers, and the grain to be sold at an arbitrary price. If, in a hundred pits thus opened, they find one in which the corn happens to be damaged by damp, they come to the sage conclusion that the proprietors must be what they have all along supposed them to be, and treated as such—*the common enemies of mankind*—who, blind alike to their own interests and those of

the people, purchase up the superabundance of seasons of plenty, not to sell it again in seasons of scarcity, but *to destroy it*; and that the whole of the grain in the other ninety-nine pits, but for their *timely interference*, must have inevitably shared the same fate.<sup>306</sup>

During the season here mentioned, grain had become very dear at Sāgar, from the unusual demand in Bundēlkhand and other districts to the north. As usual, supplies of land produce flowed up from the Nerbudda districts along the great roads to the east and west of the city; but the military authorities in the cantonments would not be persuaded out of their dread of a famine. There were three regiments of infantry, a corps of cavalry, and two companies of artillery cantoned at that time at Sāgar. They were a mile from the city, and the grain for their supply was exempted from town duties to which that for the city was liable. The people in cantonments got their supply, in consequence, a good deal cheaper than the people in the city got theirs; and none but persons belonging bona fide to the cantonments were ever allowed to purchase grain within them. When the dread of famine began, the commissariat officer, Major Gregory, apprehended that he might not be permitted to have recourse to the markets of the city in times of scarcity, since the people of the city had not been suffered to have recourse to those of the cantonments in times of plenty; but he was told by the magistrate to purchase as much as he liked, since he

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<sup>306</sup> No European officer, military or civil, could now venture to adopt such arbitrary measures. In a Native State they might very probably be enforced.

considered every man as free to sell his grain as his cloth, or pots and pans, to whom he chose.<sup>307</sup> He added that he did not share in the fears of the military authorities—that he had no apprehension whatever of a famine, or when prices rose high enough they would be sure to divert away into the city, from the streams then flowing up from the valley of the Nerbudda and the districts of Mālwa towards Bundēlkhand, a supply of grain sufficient for all.

This new demand upon the city increased rapidly the price of grain, and augmented the alarm of the people, who began to urge the magistrate to listen to their prayers, and coerce the sordid corn-dealers, who had, no doubt, numerous pits yet unopened. The alarm became still greater in the cantonments, where the commanding officer attributed all the evil to the inefficiency of the commissariat and the villany of the corn-dealers; and Major Gregory was in dread of being torn to pieces by the soldiery. Only one day's supply was left in the cantonment bazaars—the troops had become clamorous almost to a state of mutiny—the people of the town began to rush in upon every supply that was offered for sale; and those who had grain to dispose of could no longer venture to expose it. The magistrate was hard pressed on all sides to have recourse to the old salutary method of searching for and forcibly opening the grain pits, and selling the contents at such price as might appear reasonable. The kotwāl<sup>308</sup> of the town

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<sup>307</sup> 'The magistrate' was the author himself.

<sup>308</sup> The chief police officer of a town. In the modern reorganized system he always

declared that the lives of his police would be no longer safe unless this great and never-failing remedy, which had now unhappily been too long deferred, were immediately adopted.

The magistrate, who had already taken every other means of declaring his resolution never to suffer any man's granary to be forcibly opened, now issued a formal proclamation, pledging himself to see that such granaries should be as much respected as any other property in the city—that every man might keep his grain and expose it for sale, wherever and whenever he pleased; and expressing a hope that, as the people knew him too well not to feel assured that his word thus solemnly pledged would never be broken, he trusted they would sell what stores they had, and apply themselves without apprehension to the collecting of more.

This proclamation he showed to Major Gregory, assuring him that no degree of distress or clamour among the people of the city or the cantonments should ever make him violate the pledge therein given to the corn-dealers; and that he was prepared to risk his situation and reputation as a public officer upon the result. After issuing this proclamation about noon, he had his police establishments augmented, and so placed and employed as to give to the people entire confidence in the assurances conveyed in it. The grain-dealers, no longer apprehensive of danger, opened their pits of grain, and sent off all their available means to bring in more. In the morning the bazaars were all supplied, and every

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holds the rank of either Inspector or Sub-Inspector. Under native governments he was a more important official.

man who had money could buy as much as he pleased. The troops got as much as they required from the city. Major Gregory was astonished and delighted. The colonel, a fine old soldier from the banks of the Indus, who had commanded a corps of horse under the former government, came to the magistrate in amazement, every shop had become full of grain as if by supernatural agency.

*'Kāle ādmī kī akl kahān talak chalēgī?'* said he. 'How little could a black man's wisdom serve him in such an emergency?'

There was little wisdom in all this; but there was a firm reliance upon the truth of the general principle which should guide all public officers on such occasions. The magistrate judged that there were a great many pits of grain in the town known only to their own proprietors, who were afraid to open them, or get more grain, while there was a chance of the civil authorities yielding to the clamours of the people and the anxiety of the officers commanding the troops; and that he had only to remove these fears, by offering a solemn pledge, and manifesting the means and the will to abide by it, in order to induce the proprietors, not only to sell what they had, but to apply all their means to the collecting of more. But it is a singular fact that almost all the officers of the cantonments thought the conduct of the magistrate in refusing to have the grain pits opened under such pressing circumstances extremely reprehensible.

Had he done so, he might have given the people of the city and the cantonments the supply at hand; but the injury done to the corn-dealers by so very unwise a measure would have recoiled

upon the public, since every one would have been discouraged from exerting himself to renew the supply, and from laying up stores to meet similar necessities in future. By acting as he did, he not only secured for the public the best exertions of all the existing corn-dealers of the place, but actually converted for the time a great many to that trade from other employments, or from idleness. A great many families, who had never traded before, employed their means in bringing a supply of grain, and converted their dwellings into corn shops, induced by the high profits and assurance of protection. During the time when he was most pressed the magistrate received a letter from Captain Robinson, who was in charge of the bazaars at Elichpur in the Hyderabad territory,<sup>309</sup> where the dearth had become even more felt than at Sāgar, requesting to know what measures had been adopted to regulate the price, and secure the supply of grain for the city and cantonments at Sāgar, since no good seemed to result from those hitherto pursued at Elichpur. He told him in reply that these things had hitherto been regulated at Sāgar as he thought 'they ought to be regulated everywhere else, by being left entirely to the discretion of the corn-dealers themselves, whose self-interest will always prompt them to have a sufficient supply,

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<sup>309</sup> Elichpur (Īlichpur) is in Berār, otherwise known as the Assigned Districts, a territory made over in Lord Dalhousie's time to British administration in order to defray the cost of the armed force called the Hyderabad Contingent. Since 1903 Berār has ceased to be a separate province. It is now merely a Division attached to the Central Provinces. From the same date the Hyderabad Contingent lost its separate existence, being redistributed and merged in the Indian Army.

as long as they may feel secure of being permitted to do what they please with what they collect. The commanding officer, in his anxiety to secure food for the people, had hitherto been continually interfering to coerce sales and regulate prices, and continually aggravating the evils of the dearth by so doing'. On the receipt of the Sāgar magistrate's letter a different course was adopted; the same assurances were given to the corn-dealers, the same ability and inclination to enforce them manifested, and the same result followed. The people and the troops were steadily supplied; and all were astonished that so very simple a remedy had not before been thought of.

The ignorance of the first principles of political economy among European gentlemen of otherwise first-rate education and abilities in India is quite lamentable, for there are really few public officers, even in the army, who are not occasionally liable to be placed in the situations where they may, by false measures, arising out of such ignorance, aggravate the evils of dearth among great bodies of their fellow men. A soldier may, however, find some excuse for such ignorance, because a knowledge of these principles is not generally considered to form any indispensable part of a soldier's education; but no excuse can be admitted for a civil functionary who is so ignorant, since a thorough acquaintance with the principles of political economy must be, and, indeed, always is considered as an essential branch of that knowledge which is to fit him for public employment in India.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Political Economy was for many years a compulsory subject for the selected

In India unfavourable seasons produce much more disastrous consequences than in Europe. In England not more than one-fourth of the population derive their incomes from the cultivation of the lands around them. Three-fourths of the people have incomes independent of the annual returns from those lands, and with these incomes they can purchase agricultural produce from other lands when the crops upon them fail. The farmers, who form so large a portion of the fourth class, have stock equal in value to *four times the amount of the annual rent of their lands*. They have also a great variety of crops; and it is very rare that more than one or two of them fail, or are considerably affected, the same season. If they fail in one district or province, the deficiency is very easily supplied to a people who have equivalents to give for the produce of another. The sea, navigable rivers, fine roads, all are open and ready at all times for the transport of the superabundance of one quarter to supply the deficiencies of another. In India, the reverse of all this is unhappily to be found; more than three-fourths of the whole population are engaged in the cultivation of the land, and depend upon its annual returns for subsistence.<sup>311</sup> The farmers and cultivators have none of their stock equal in value to more than *half the amount of the annual rent of their lands*.<sup>312</sup> They

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candidates for the Civil Service of India; but since 1892 its study has been optional.

<sup>311</sup> The census of 1911 shows that about 71 per cent. of the 301,000,000 inhabiting India, excluding Burma, are supported by the cultivation of the soil and the care of cattle. The proportion varies widely in different provinces.

<sup>312</sup> This proposition does not apply fully to Northern India at the present day. The

have a great variety of crops; but all are exposed to the same accidents, and commonly fail at the same time. The autumn crops are sown in June and July, and ripen in October and November; and, if seasonable showers do not fall during July, August, and September, all fail. The spring crops are sown in October and November, and ripen in March; and, if seasonable showers do not happen to fall during December or January, all, save what are artificially irrigated, fail.<sup>313</sup> If they fail in one district or province, the people have few equivalents to offer for a supply of land produce from any other. Their roads are scarcely anywhere passable for wheeled carriages at *any season*, and nowhere *at all seasons*—they have nowhere a navigable canal, and only in one line a navigable river.

Their land produce is conveyed upon the backs of bullocks, that move at the rate of six or eight miles a day, and add one hundred per cent. to the cost of every hundred miles they carry it in the best seasons, and more than two hundred in the worst.<sup>314</sup>

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amount of capital invested is small, although not quite so small as is stated in the text.

<sup>313</sup> The times of harvest vary slightly with the latitude, being later towards the north. The cold-weather rains of December and January are variable and uncertain, and rarely last more than a few days. The spring crops depend largely on the heavy dews which occur during the cold season.

<sup>314</sup> During the years which have elapsed since the famine of 1833, great changes have taken place in India, and many of the author's remarks are only partially applicable to the present time. The great canals, above all, the wonderful Ganges Canal, have protected immense areas of Northern India from the possibility of absolute famine, and Southern India has also been to a considerable, though less, extent, protected by similar works. A few new staples, of which potatoes are the most important, have

What in Europe is felt merely as a *dearth*, becomes in India, under all these disadvantages, a scarcity, and what is there a *scarcity* becomes here a *famine*. Tens of thousands die here of starvation, under calamities of season, which in Europe would involve little of suffering to any class. Here man does everything, and he must have his daily food or starve. In England machinery does more than three-fourths of the collective work of society in the production, preparation, and distribution of man's physical enjoyments, and it stands in no need of this daily food to sustain its powers; they are independent of the seasons; the water, fire, air, and other elemental powers which they require to render them subservient to our use are always available in abundance.

This machinery is the great assistant of the present generation, provided for us by the wisdom and industry of the past; wanting no food itself, it can always provide its proprietors with the means of purchasing what they require from other countries, when the harvests of their own fail. When calamities of season deprive men of employment for a time in tillage, they can, in England, commonly find it in other branches of industry, because agricultural industry forms so small a portion of the collective

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been introduced. The whole system of distribution has been revolutionized by the development of railways, metalled roads, wheeled vehicles, motors, telegraphs, and navigable canals. Carriage on the backs of animals, whether bullocks, camels, or donkeys, now plays a very subordinate part in the distribution of agricultural produce. Prices are, in great measure, dependent on the rates prevailing in Liverpool, Odessa, and Chicago. Food grains now stand ordinarily at prices which, in the author's time, would have been reckoned famine rates. The changes which have taken place in England are too familiar to need comment.

industry of the nation; and because every man can, without prejudice to his status in society, take to what branch of industry he pleases. But, when these calamities of season throw men out of employment in tillage for a time in India, they cannot find it in any other branch, because agricultural industry forms so very large a portion of the collective industry of every part of the country; and because men are often prevented by the prejudices of caste from taking to that which they can find.<sup>315</sup>

In societies constituted like that of India the trade of the corn-dealer is more essentially necessary for the welfare of the community than in any other, for it is among them that the superabundance of seasons of plenty requires most to be stored up for seasons of scarcity; and if public functionaries will take upon themselves to seize such stores, and sell them at their own arbitrary prices, whenever prices happen to rise beyond the rate which they in their short-sighted wisdom think just, no corn-dealer will ever collect such stores. Hitherto, whenever grain has become dear at any military or civil station, we have seen the civil functionaries urged to prohibit its egress—to search for the hidden stores, and to coerce the proprietors to the sale in all manner of ways; and, if they do not yield to the ignorant

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<sup>315</sup> Since the author's time certain industries, the most important being cotton-pressing, cotton-spinning, and jute-spinning, have sprung up and assumed in Bombay, Calcutta, Cawnpore, and a few other places, proportions which, absolutely, are large. But India is so vast that these local developments of manufactures, large though they are, seem to be as nothing when regarded in comparison with the country as a whole. India is still, and, to all appearance, always must be, essentially an agricultural country.

clamour, they are set down as indifferent to the sufferings of their fellow creatures around them, and as blindly supporting the worst enemies of mankind in the worst species of iniquity.

If those who urge them to such measures are asked whether silversmiths or linendrapers, who should be treated in the same manner as they wish the corn-dealers to be treated, would ever collect and keep stores of plate and cloth for their use, they readily answer—No; they see at once the evil effects of interfering with the free disposal of the property of the one, but are totally blind to that which must as surely follow any interference with that of the other, whose entire freedom is of so much more vital importance to the public. There was a time, and that not very remote, when grave historians, like Smollett, could, even in England, fan the flame of this vulgar prejudice against one of the most useful classes of society. That day is, thank God, past; and no man can now venture to write such trash in his history, or even utter it in any well-informed circle of English society; and, if any man were to broach such a subject in an English House of Commons, he would be considered as a fit subject for a madhouse.

But some, who retain their prejudices against corn-dealers, and are yet ashamed to acknowledge their ignorance of the first principles of political economy, try to persuade themselves and their friends that, however applicable these may be to the state of society in European or Christian countries, they are not so to countries occupied by Hindoos and Muhammadans. This is a sad

delusion, and may be a very mischievous one, when indulged by public officers in India.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> The author's teaching concerning freedom of trade in times of famine and the function of dealers in corn is as sound as his doctrine of famine relief. The 'vulgar prejudice', which he denounces, still flourishes, and the 'sad delusion', which he deplores, still obscures the truth. As each period of scarcity or famine comes round, the old cries are again heard, and the executive authorities are implored and adjured to forbid export, to fix fair prices, and to clip the profits of the corn merchant. During the Bengal famine of 1873-4, the demand for the prohibition of the export of rice was urged by men who should have known better, and Lord Northbrook is entitled to no small credit for having firmly withstood the clamour. The more recent experiences of the Russian Government should be remembered when the clamour is again raised, as it will be. The principles on which the author acted in the crisis at Sāgar in 1833 should guide every magistrate who finds himself in a similar position, and should be applied with unhesitating firmness and decision.

# CHAPTER 25

## Epidemic Diseases—Scape-goat

In the evening, after my conversation with the cultivator upon the wall that united the two hills,<sup>317</sup> I received a visit from my little friend the Sarīmant. His fine rose-coloured turban is always put on very gracefully; every hair of his jet-black eyebrows and mustachios seems to be kept always most religiously in the same place; and he has always the same charming smile upon his little face, which was never, I believe, distorted into an absolute laugh or frown. No man was ever more perfectly master of what the natives call 'the art of rising or sitting' (*nishisht wa barkhāst*), namely, good manners. I should as soon expect to see him set the Nerbudda on fire as commit any infringement of the *convenances* on this head established in good Indian society, or be guilty of anything vulgar in speech, sentiment, or manners. I asked him by what means it was that the old queen of Sāgar<sup>318</sup> drove out

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<sup>317</sup> *Ante*, Chapter 24, following note [4].

<sup>318</sup> *Sāgar was ceded by the Peshwa in 1818, and a yearly sum of two and a half lakhs of rupees was allotted by Government for pensions to Rukmā Bāī, Vināyāk Rāo, and the other officers of the Marāthā Government. A descendant of Rukmā Bāī continued for many years to enjoy a pension of R.10,000 per annum (C.P. Gazetteer (1870), p. 442). The lady referred to in the text seems to be Rukmā Bāī.*

the influenza that afflicted the people so much in 1832, while he was there on a visit to me. He told me that he took no part in the ceremonies, nor was he aware of them till awoke one night by 'the noise, when his attendants informed him that the queen and the greater part of the city were making offerings to the new god, Hardaul Lāla. He found next morning that a goat had been offered up with as much noise as possible, and with good effect, for the disease was found to give way from that moment. About six years before, when great numbers were dying in his own little capital of Pithoria<sup>319</sup> from a similar epidemic, he had, he said, tried the same thing with still greater effect; but, on that occasion, he had the aid of a man very learned in such matters. This man caused a small carriage to be made up after a plan of his own, for a pair of scape-goats, which were harnessed to it, and driven during the ceremonies to a wood some distance from the town, where they were let loose. From that hour the disease entirely ceased in the town. The goats never returned. 'Had they come back,' said Sarīmant, 'the disease must have come back with them; so he took them a long way into the wood—indeed (he believed), the man, to make sure of them, had afterwards caused them to be offered up as a sacrifice to the shrine of Hardaul Lāla, in that very wood. He had himself never seen a *pūjā* (religious ceremony) so entirely and immediately efficacious as this, and much of its success was, no doubt, attributable to the *science* of

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<sup>319</sup> A village about twenty miles north-west of Sāgar. The estate consists of twenty-six revenue-free villages.

the man who planned the carriage, and himself drove the pair of goats to the wood. No one had ever before heard of the plan of a pair of *scape-goats* being driven in a carriage; but it was likely (he thought) to be extensively adopted in future.<sup>320</sup>

Sarīmant's man of affairs mentioned that when Lord Hastings took the field against the Pindhārīs, in 1817,<sup>321</sup> and the division of the grand army under his command was encamped near the grove in Bundēlkhand, where repose the ashes of Hardaul Lāla, under a small shrine, a cow was taken into this grove to be converted into beef for the use of the Europeans. The priest in attendance remonstrated, but in vain—the cow was killed and eaten. The priest complained, and from that day the cholera morbus broke out in the camp; and from this central point it was, he said, generally understood to have spread all over India.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> *The Jewish ceremonial is described in Leviticus xvi. 20-26. After completing the atonement for the impurities of the holy place, the tabernacle, and the altar, Aaron was directed to lay 'his hands upon the head of the live goat', so putting all the sins of the people upon the animal, and then to 'send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness; and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness'. The subject of scape-goats is discussed at length and copiously illustrated by Mr. Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, 1st ed., vol. ii, section 15, pp. 182-217; 3rd ed. (1913) Part VI. The author's stories in the text are quoted by Mr. Frazer.*

<sup>321</sup> During the season of 1816-17 the ravages of the Pindhārīs were exceptionally daring and extensive. The Governor-General, the Marquis of Hastings, organized an army in several divisions to crush the marauders, and himself joined the central division in October 1817. The operations were ended by the capture of Asīrgarh in March 1819.

<sup>322</sup> *The people in the Sāgar territories used to show several decayed mango-trees in*

The story of the cow travelled at the same time, and the spirit of Hardaul Lāla was everywhere supposed to be riding in the whirlwind, and *directing the storm*. Temples were everywhere erected, and offerings made to appease him; and in six years after, he had himself seen them as far as Lahore, and in almost every village throughout the whole course of his journey to that distant capital and back. He is one of the most sensible and freely

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*groves where European troops had encamped during the campaigns of 1816 and 1817, and declared that they had been seen to wither from the day that beef for the use of these troops had been tied to their branches. The only coincidence was in the decay of the trees, and the encamping of the troops in the groves; that the withering trees were those to which the beef had been tied was of course taken for granted. [W. H. S.] The Hindoo veneration for the cow amounts to a passion, and its intensity is very inadequately explained by the current utilitarian explanations. The best analysis of the motives underlying the passionate Hindoo feeling on the subject is to be found in Mr. William Crooke's article 'The Veneration of the Cow in India' (Folklore, Sept. 1912, pp. 275-306). In modern times an active, though absolutely hopeless, agitation has been kept up, directed against the reasonable liberty of those communities in India who are not members of the Hindoo system. This agitation for the prohibition of cow-killing has caused some riots, and has evoked much ill-feeling. The editor had to deal with it in the Muzaffarnagar district in 1890, and had much trouble to keep the peace. The local leaders of the movement went so far as to send telegrams direct to the Government of India. Many other magistrates have had similar experiences. The authorities take every precaution to protect Hindoo susceptibilities from needless wounds, but they are equally bound to defend the lawful liberty of subjects who are not Hindoos. The Government of the United Provinces on one occasion yielded to the Hindoo demands so far as to prohibit cow-killing in at least one town where the practice was not fully established, but the legality and expediency of such an order are both open to criticism. The administrative difficulty is much enhanced by the fact that the Indian Muhammadans profess to be under a religious obligation to sacrifice cows at the Īdul Bakr festival. Cholera has been known to exist in India at least since the seventeenth century (Balfour, *Cyclopaedia of India*, 3rd ed. (1885), s.v.).*

spoken men that I have met with. 'Up to within the last few years', added he, 'the spirit of Hardaul Lāla had been propitiated only in cases of cholera morbus; but now he is supposed to preside over all kinds of epidemic diseases, and offerings have everywhere been made to his shrine during late influenzas.'<sup>323</sup>

'This of course arises', I observed, 'from the industry of his

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<sup>323</sup> *The cultus of Hardaul is further discussed post* in Chapter 31. In 1875, the editor, who was then employed in the Hamīrpur district of Bundēlkhand, published some popular Hindi songs in praise of the hero, with the following abstract of the *Legend of Hardaul*: 'Hardaul, a son of the famous Bīr Singh Deo Bundēla of Orchhā, was born at Datiyā. His brother, Jhājhār Singh, suspected him of undue intimacy with his wife, and at a feast poisoned him with all his followers. After this tragedy, it happened that the daughter of Kunjāvātī, the sister of Jhājhār and Hardaul, was about to be married. Kunjāvātī accordingly sent an invitation to Jhājhār Singh, requesting him to attend the wedding. He refused, and mockingly replied that she had better invite her favourite brother Hardaul. Thereupon she went in despair to his tomb and lamented aloud. Hardaul from below answered her cries, and said that he would come to the wedding and make all arrangements. The ghost kept his promise, and arranged the nuptials as befitted the honour of his house. Subsequently, he visited at night the bedside of Akbar, and besought the emperor to command *chabūtras* to be erected and honour paid to him in every village throughout the empire, promising that, if he were duly honoured, a wedding should never be marred by storm or rain, and that no one who first presented a share of his meal to Hardaul should ever want for food. Akbar complied with these requests, and since that time Hardaul's ghost has been worshipped in every village. He is chiefly honoured at weddings and in Baisākh (April-May), during which month the women, especially those of the lower castes, visit his *chabūtra* and eat there. His *chabūtra* is always built outside the village. On the day but one before the arrival of a wedding procession, the women of the family worship the gods and Hardaul, and invite them to the wedding. If any signs of a storm appears, Hardaul is propitiated with songs '(J.A.S.B., vol. xlv (1875), Part I, p. 389). The belief that Hardaul worship and cholera had been introduced at the same time prevailed in Hamīrpur, as elsewhere. The *chabūtra* referred to in the above extract is a small platform built of mud or masonry.

priests, who are now spread all over the country; and you know that there is hardly a village or hamlet in which there are not some of them to be found subsisting upon the fears of the people.'

'I have no doubt', replied he, 'that the cures which the people attribute to the spirit of Hardaul Lāla often arise merely from the firmness of their faith (*itikād*) in the efficacy of their offerings; and that any other ceremonies, that should give to their minds the same assurance of recovery, would be of great advantage in cases of epidemic diseases. I remember a singular instance of this,' said he. 'When Jeswant Rāo Holkar was flying before Lord Lake to the banks of the Hyphasis,<sup>324</sup> a poor trooper of one of his lordship's irregular corps, when he tied the grain-bag to his horse's mouth, said 'Take this in the name of Jeswant Rāo Holkar, for to him you and I owe all that we have.' The poor man had been suffering from an attack of ague and fever; but from that moment he felt himself relieved, and the fever never returned. At that time this fever prevailed more generally among the people of Hindustan than any I have ever known, though I am now an old man. The speech of the trooper and the supposed result soon spread; and others tried the experiment with similar success, and it acted everywhere like a charm. I had the fever myself, and, though by no means a superstitious man, and certainly no lover of Jeswant Rāo Holkar, I tried the experiment, and the

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<sup>324</sup> The Hyphasis is the Greek name for the river Biās in the Panjāb. Holkar's flight into the Panjāb occurred in 1805, and in the same year the long war with him was terminated by a treaty, much too favourable to the marauding chief. He became insane a few years later, and died in 1811.

fever left me from that day. From that time, till the epidemic disappeared, no man, from the Nerbudda to the Indus, fed his horse without invoking the spirit of Jeswant Rāo, though the chief was then alive and well. Some one had said he found great relief from plunging into the stream during the paroxysms of the fever; others followed the example, and some remained for half an hour at a time, and the sufferers generally found relief. The streams and tanks throughout the districts between the Ganges and Jumna became crowded, till the propitiatory offering to the spirit of the living Jeswant Rāo Holkar were [sic] found equally good, and far less troublesome to those who had horses that must have got their grain, whether in Holkar's name or not.'

There is no doubt that the great mass of those who had nothing but their horses and their *good blades* to depend upon for their subsistence did most fervently pray throughout India for the safety of this Marāthā chief, when he fled before Lord Lake's army; for they considered that, with his fall, the Company's dominion would become everywhere securely established, and that good soldiers would be at a discount. '*Company kē amal men kuchh rozgār nahin hai*,'—'There is no employment in the Company's dominion,' is a common maxim, not only among the men of the sword and the spear, but among those merchants who lived by supporting native civil and military establishments with the luxuries and elegancies which, under the new order of things, they have no longer the means to enjoy.

The noisy *pūjā* (worship), about which our conversation

began, took place at Sāgar in April, 1832, while I was at that station. More than four-fifths of the people of the city and cantonments had been affected by a violent influenza, which commenced with a distressing cough, was followed by fever, and, in some cases, terminated in death. I had an application from the old Queen Dowager of Sāgar, who received a pension of ten thousand pounds a year from the British Government,<sup>325</sup> and resided in the city, to allow of a *noisy* religious procession to implore deliverance from this great calamity. Men, women, and children in this procession were to do their utmost to add to the noise by 'raising their voices in *psalmody*', beating upon their brass pots and pans with all their might, and discharging fire-arms where they could get them; and before the noisy crowd was to be driven a buffalo, which had been purchased by a general subscription, in order that every family might participate in the merit. They were to follow it out for eight miles, where it was to be turned loose for any man who would take it. If the animal returned, the disease, it was said, must return with it, and the ceremony be performed over again. I was requested to intimate the circumstance to the officer commanding the troops in cantonments, in order that the hideous noise they intended to make might not excite any alarm, and bring down upon them the visit of the soldiery. It was, however, subsequently determined that the animal should be a goat, and he was driven before the crowd accordingly. I have on several occasions been requested

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<sup>325</sup> See note 2, *ante*.

to allow of such noisy *pūjās* in cases of epidemics; and the confidence they feel in their efficiency has, no doubt, a good effect.

While in civil charge of the district of Narsinghpur, in the valley of the Nerbudda, in April 1823, the cholera morbus raged in almost every house of Narsinghpur and Kandelī, situated near each other,<sup>326</sup> and one of them close to my dwelling-house and court. The European physicians lost all confidence in their prescriptions, and the people declared that the hand of God was upon them, and by appeasing Him could they alone hope to be saved.<sup>327</sup> A religious procession was determined upon; but the population of both towns was divided upon the point whether a silent or a noisy one would be most acceptable to God. Hundreds were dying around me when I was applied to to settle this knotty point between the parties. I found that both in point of numbers and respectability the majority was in favour of the silent procession, and I recommended that this should be adopted. The procession took place about nine the same night, with all due ceremony; but the advocates for noise would none

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<sup>326</sup> Narsinghpur and Kandelī are practically one town. The Government offices and houses of the European residents are in Kandelī, which is a mile east of Narsinghpur. The original name of Narsinghpur was Gadariā Khērā. The modern name is due to the erection of a large temple to Narsingha, one of the forms of Vishnu. The district of Narsinghpur lies in the Nerbudda valley, west and south-west of Jubbulpore.

<sup>327</sup> All classes of Indians still frequently refuse to employ any medicines in cases of either cholera or small-pox, supposing that the attempt to use ordinary human means is an insult to, and a defiance of, the Deity.

of them assist in it. Strange as it may appear, the disease abated from that moment; and the great majority of the population of both towns believed that their prayers had been heard; and I went to bed with a mind somewhat relieved by the hope that this feeling of confidence might be useful. About one o'clock I was awoke from a sound sleep by the most hideous noise that I had ever heard; and, not at that moment recollecting the proposal for the noisy procession, ran out of my house, in expectation of seeing both towns in flames. I found that the advocates for noise, resolving to have their procession, had assembled together about midnight; and, apprehensive that they might be borne down by the advocates for silence and my police establishment, had determined to make the most of their time, and put in requisition all the pots, pans, shells, trumpets, pistols, and muskets that they could muster. All opened at once about one o'clock; and, had there been any virtue in discord, the cholera must soon have deserted the place, for such another hideous compound of noises I never heard. The disease, which seemed to have subsided with the silent procession before I went to bed, now returned with double violence, as I was assured by numbers who flocked to my house in terror; and the whole population became exasperated with the leaders of the noisy faction, who had, they believed, been the means of bringing back among them all the horrors of this dreadful scourge.

I asked the Hindoo Sadar Amīn, or head native judicial officer at Sāgar, a very profound Sanskrit scholar, what he thought of

the efficacy of these processions in checking epidemic diseases. He said that 'there could be nothing more clear than the total inefficiency of medicine in such cases; and, when medicine failed, a man's only resource was in prayers; that the diseases of mankind were to be classed under three general heads: first, those suffered for sins committed in some former births; second, those suffered for sins committed in the present birth; third, those merely accidental. Now,' said the old gentleman, 'it must be clear to every unprejudiced mind that the third only can be cured or checked by the physician.' Epidemics, he thought, must all be classed under the second head, and as inflicted by the Deity for some very general sin; consequently, to be removed only by prayers; and, whether silent or noisy, was, he thought, matter of little importance, provided they were offered in the same spirit. I believe that, among the great mass of the people of India, three-fourths of the diseases of individuals are attributed to evil spirits and evil eyes; and for every physician among them there are certainly ten *exorcisers*. The faith in them is very great and very general; and, as the gift is supposed to be supernatural, it is commonly exercised without fee or reward. The gifted person subsists upon some other employment, and *exorcises gratis*.

A child of one of our servants was one day in convulsions from its sufferings in cutting its teeth. The Civil Surgeon happened to call that morning, and he offered to lance the child's gums. The poor mother thanked him, but stated that there could be no possible doubt as to the source of her child's sufferings—that the

devil had got into it during the night, and would certainly not be frightened out by his little lancet; but she expected every moment my old tent- pitcher, whose exorcisms no devil of this description had ever yet been able to withstand.

The small-pox had been raging in the town of Jubbulpore for some time during one hot season that I was there, and a great many children had died from it. The severity of the disease was considered to have been a good deal augmented by a very untoward circumstance that had taken place in the family of the principal banker of the town, Khushhāl Chand. Sēwā Rām Sēth, the old man, had lately died, leaving two sons. Ram Kishan, the eldest, and Khushhāl Chand, the second. The eldest gave up all the management of the sublunary concerns of the family, and devoted his mind entirely to religious duties. They had a very fine family temple of their own, in which they placed an image of their god Vishnu, cut out of the choicest stone of the Nerbudda, and consecrated after the most approved form, and with very expensive ceremonies. This idol Rām Kishan used every day to wash with his own hands with rosewater, and anoint with precious ointments. One day, while he had the image in his arms, and was busily employed in anointing it, it fell to the ground upon the stone pavement, and one of the arms was broken. To live after such an untoward accident was quite out of the question, and poor Rām Kishan proceeded at once quietly to hang himself. He got a rope from the stable, and having tied it over the beam in the room where he had let the god fall upon the stone pavement,

he was putting his head calmly into the noose, when his brother came in, laid hold of him, called for assistance, and put him under restraint. A conclave of the priests of that sect was immediately held in the town, and Rām Kishan was told that hanging himself was not absolutely necessary; that it might do if he would take the stone image, broken arm and all, upon his own back, and carry it two hundred and sixty miles to Benares, where resided the high priest of the sect, who would, no doubt, be able to suggest the proper measures for pacifying the god.

At this time, the only son of his brother, Khushhāl Chand, an interesting little boy of about four years of age, was extremely ill of the small-pox; and it is a rule with Hindoos never to undertake any journey, even one of pilgrimage to a holy shrine, while any member of the family is afflicted with this disease; they must all sit at home clothed in sackcloth and ashes. He was told that he had better defer his journey to Benares till the child should recover; but he could neither sleep nor eat, so great was his terror, lest some dreadful calamity should befall the whole family before he could expiate his crime, or take the advice of his high priest as to the best means of doing it: and he resolved to leave the decision of the question to God Himself. He took two pieces of paper, and having caused Benares to be written upon one, and Jubbulpore upon the other, he put them both into a brass vessel. After shaking the vessel well, he drew forth that on which Benares had been written. 'It is the will of God,' said Rām Kishan. All the family, who were interested in the preservation of the poor boy,

implored him not to set out, lest Dēvī, who presides over small-pox, should become angry. It was all in vain. He would set out with his household god; and, unable to carry it himself, he put it into a small litter upon a pole, and hired a bearer to carry it at one end, while he supported it at the other. His brother, Khushhāl Chand, sent his second wife at the same time with offerings for Dēvī, to ward off the effects of his brother's rashness from his child. By the time the brother had got with his god to Adhartāl, three miles from Jubbulpore, on the road to Benares, he heard of the death of his nephew; but he seemed not to feel this slight blow in his terror of the dreadful but undefined calamity which he felt to be impending over him and the whole family, and he trotted on his road. Soon after, an infant son of their uncle died of the same disease; and the whole town became at once divided into two parties—those who held that the children had been killed by Dēvī as a punishment for Rām Kishan's presuming to leave Jubbulpore before they recovered; and those who held that they were killed by the god Vishnu himself, for having been so rudely deprived of one of his arms. Khushhāl Chand's wife sickened on the road, and died on reaching Mirzapore, of fever; and, as Dēvī was supposed to have nothing to do with fevers, this event greatly augmented the advocates of Vishnu. It is a rule with the Hindoos to bury, and not to burn, the bodies of those who die of the small-pox; 'for', say they, 'the small-pox is not only caused by the goddess Dēvī, but is, in fact, *Dēvī herself*', and to burn the body of the person affected with this disease is, in reality, neither

more nor less than *to burn the goddess*'.

Khushhāl Chand was strongly urged to bury, and not burn, his child, particularly as it was usual with Hindoos to bury infants and children of that age, of whatever disease they might die; but he insisted upon having his boy burned with all due pomp and ceremony, and burned he was accordingly. From that moment, it is said, the disease began to rage with increased violence throughout the town of Jubbulpore. At least one-half of the children affected had before survived; but, from that hour, at least three out of four died; and, instead of the condolence which he expected from his fellow citizens, poor Khushhāl Chand, a very amiable and worthy man, received nothing but their execrations for bringing down so many calamities upon their heads; first, by maltreating his own god, and then by setting fire to theirs.

I had, a few days after, a visit from Gangādhār Rāo, the Sadar Amīn, or head native judicial officer of this district, whose father had been for a short time the ruler of the district, under the former government; and I asked him whether the small-pox had diminished in the town since the rains had now set in. He told me that he thought it had, but that a great many children had been taken off by the disease.<sup>328</sup>

'I understand, Rāo Sahib, that Khushhāl Chand, the banker, is supposed to have augmented the virulence of the disease by

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<sup>328</sup> Vaccination was not practised in India in those days. The practice of it, although still unpopular in most places, has extended sufficiently to check greatly the ravages of small-pox. In many municipal towns vaccination is compulsory.

burning his boy; was it so?'

'Certainly,' said my friend, with a grave, long face; 'the disease was much increased by this man's folly.' I looked very grave in my turn, and he continued:— 'Not a child escaped after he had burned his boy. Such incredible folly! To set fire to the *goddess* in the midst of a population of twenty thousand souls; it might have brought destruction on us all!'

'What makes you think that the disease is itself the goddess?'

'Because we always say, when any member of a family becomes attacked by the small-pox, "*Dēvī nikalī*", that is, *Dēvī* has shown herself in that family, or in that individual. And the person affected can wear nothing but plain white clothing, not a silken or coloured garment, nor an ornament of any kind; nor can he or any of his family undertake a journey, or participate in any kind of rejoicings, lest he give offence to her. They broke the arm of their god, and he drove them all mad.<sup>329</sup> The elder brother set out on a journey with it, and his nephew, cousin, and sister-in-law fell victims to his temerity; and then Khushhāl Chand brings down the goddess upon the whole community by burning his boy!<sup>330</sup> No doubt he was very fond of his child—so we all are—and wished to do him all honour; but some regard is surely due to the people around us, and I told him so when he was making preparations for the funeral; but he would not listen to reason.'

A complicated religious code, like that of the Hindoos, is to

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<sup>329</sup> *Quem deus vult perdere, prius dementat.*

<sup>330</sup> The judge cleverly combines the opinions of the adherents of both sects.

the priest what a complicated civil code, like that of the English, is to the lawyers. A Hindoo can do nothing without consulting his priest, and an Englishman can do nothing without consulting his lawyer.

# CHAPTER 26

## Artificial Lakes in Bundēlkhand— Hindoo, Greek, and Roman Faith

On the 11th<sup>331</sup> we came on twelve miles to the town of Bamhaurī, whence extends to the south-west a ridge of high and bare quartz hills, towering above all others, curling and foaming at the top, like a wave ready to burst, when suddenly arrested by the hand of Omnipotence, and turned into white stone. The soil all the way is wretchedly poor in quality, being formed of the detritus of syenitic and quartz rocks, and very thin. Bamhaurī is a nice little town,<sup>332</sup> beautifully situated on the bank of a fine lake, the waters of which preserved during the late famine the population of this and six other small towns, which are situated near its borders, and have their lands irrigated from it. Besides water for their fields, this lake yielded the people abundance of water-chestnuts<sup>333</sup> and fish. In the driest season the water has been found sufficient to supply the wants of all the people of those towns and villages, and those of all the country around, as

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<sup>331</sup> December, 1835.

<sup>332</sup> *In the Orchhā State. This seems to be the same town which the author had already visited on his way to Tehrī on the 7th December. Ante, Chapter 19 note [15].*

<sup>333</sup> *Ante, Chapter 12 following note [9].*

far as the people can avail themselves of it.

This large lake is formed by an artificial bank or wall at the south-east end, which rests one arm upon the high range of quartz rocks, which run along its south-west side for several miles, looking down into the clear deep water, and forming a beautiful landscape.

From this pretty town, Ludhaura, where the great marriage had lately taken place, was in sight, and only four miles distant.<sup>334</sup> It was, I learnt, the residence of the present Rājā of Orchhā, before the death of his brother called him to the throne. Many people were returning from the ceremonies of the marriage of 'sālagrām' with 'Tulasī'; who told me that the concourse had been immense—at least one hundred and fifty thousand; and that the Rājā had feasted them all for four days during the progress of the ceremonies, but that they were obliged to defray their expenses going and coming, except when they came by special invitation to do honour to the occasion, as in the case of my little friend the Sāgar high priest, Jānkī Sewak. They told me that they called this festival the 'Dhanuk jag';<sup>335</sup> and that Janakrāj, the father of Sītā, had in his possession the 'dhanuk', or immortal bow of Parasrām, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, with which he exterminated all the Kshatriyas, or original military class of India, and which required no less than four thousand men to raise it on one end.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> *Sodora in the author's text; see ante, Chapter 19, note 11.*

<sup>335</sup> 'Bow-sacrifice.'

<sup>336</sup> The tradition is that a prince of this military class was sporting in a river with

The prince offered his daughter in marriage to any man who should bend this bow. Hundreds of heroes and demigods aspired to the hand of the fair Sītā, and essayed to bend the bow; but all in vain, till young Rām, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu,<sup>337</sup> then a lad of only ten years of age, came; and at the touch of his great toe the bow flew into a thousand pieces, which are supposed to have been all taken up into heaven. Sītā became the wife of Rām; and the popular poem of the Rāmāyana describes the abduction of the heroine by the monster king of Ceylon, Rāvana, and her recovery by means of the monkey general Hanumān. Every word of this poem, the people assured me, was written, if not by the hand of the Deity himself, at least by his inspiration, which was the same thing, and it must, consequently, be true.<sup>338</sup> Ninety-nine

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his thousand wives, when Renukā, the wife of Jamadagni, went to bring water. He offended her, and her husband cursed the prince, but was put to death by him. His son Parasrām was no less a person than the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, who had assumed the human shape merely to destroy these tyrants. He vowed, now that his mother had been insulted, and his father killed, not to leave one on the face of the earth. He destroyed them all twenty-one times, the women with child producing a new race each time. [W. H. S.] The legend is not narrated quite correctly.

<sup>337</sup> Rāma Chandra, son of Dasaratha.

<sup>338</sup> *When Rām set out with his army for Ceylon, he is supposed to have worshipped the little tree called 'cheonkul', which stood near his capital of Ajodhya. It is a wretched little thing, between a shrub and a tree; but I have seen a procession of more than seventy thousand persons attend their prince to the worship of it on the festival of the Dasahara, which is held in celebration of this expedition to Ceylon. [W. H. S.] 'As Arjuna and his brothers worshipped the shumee-tree, the Acacia suma, and hung up their arms upon it, so the Hindus go forth to worship that tree on the festival of the Dasahara. They address the tree under the name of Aparajita, the invincible goddess, sprinkle it with five ambrosial liquids, the 'panchamrit', a mixture of milk, curds, sugar, clarified*

out of a hundred among the Hindoos implicitly believe, not only every word of this poem, but every word of every poem that has ever been written in Sanskrit. If you ask a man whether he really believes any very egregious absurdity quoted from these books, he replies with the greatest *naïveté* in the world, 'Is it not written in the book; and how should it be there written if not true?' The Hindoo religion reposes upon an entire prostration of mind, that continual and habitual surrender of the reasoning faculties, which we are accustomed to make occasionally. While engaged at the theatre, or in the perusal of works of fiction, we allow the scenes, characters, and incidents to pass before 'our mind's eye', and move our feelings, without asking, or stopping a moment to ask, whether they are real or true. There is only this difference that, with people of education among us, even in such short intervals of illusion or abandon, any extravagance in acting, or flagrant improbability in the fiction, destroys the charm, breaks

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butter, and honey, wash it with water, and hang garments upon it. They light lamps and burn incense before the symbol of Aparajita, make 'chandlos' upon the tree, sprinkle it with rose-coloured water, and set offerings of food before it' (Balfour, *Cyclopaedia*, 3rd ed., s.v. 'Dasahara'). The 'cheonkul' is the *chhonkar* or *chhaunkar* (*Prosopis spicigera*, Linn.), described by Growse as follows:—'Very common throughout the district; occasionally grows to quite a large tree, as in the Dohani Kund at Chaksauli. It is used for religious worship at the festival of the Dasahara, and considered sacred to Siva. The pods (called *sangri*) are much used for fodder. Probably *chhonkar* and *sangri*, which latter is in some parts of India the name of the tree as well as of the pod, are both dialectical corruptions of the Sanskrit *sankara*, a name of Siva; for the palatal and sibilant are frequently interchangeable' ('List of Indigenous Trees' in *Mathurā, A. District Memoir*, 3rd ed., Allahabad, 1883, p. 422). Sundry leguminous trees are used in Dasahara ceremonies in the different parts of India, under varying local names.

the spell by which we have been so mysteriously bound, stops the smooth current of sympathetic emotion, and restores us to reason and to the realities of ordinary life. With the Hindoos, on the contrary, the greater the improbability, the more monstrous and preposterous the fiction, the greater is the charm it has over their minds;<sup>339</sup> and the greater their learning in the Sanskrit the more are they under the influence of this charm. Believing all to be written by the Deity, or by his inspiration, and the men and things of former days to have been very different from the men and things of the present day, and the heroes of these fables to have been demigods, or people endowed with powers far superior to those of the ordinary men of their own day, the analogies of nature are never for a moment considered; nor do questions of probability, or possibility, according to those analogies, ever obtrude to dispel the charm with which they are so pleasingly bound. They go on through life reading and talking of these monstrous fictions, which shock the taste and understanding of other nations, without once questioning the truth of one single incident, or hearing it questioned. There was a time, and that not very distant, when it was the same in England, and in every other European nation; and there are, I am afraid, some parts of Europe where it is so still. But the Hindoo faith, so far as religious questions are concerned, is not more capacious or absurd than that of the Greeks and Romans in the days of Socrates and Cicero—the only difference is, that among the Hindoos a greater

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<sup>339</sup> *Credo quia impossibile.*

number of the questions which interest mankind are brought under the head of religion.

There is nothing in the Hindoos more absurd than the *piety* of Tiberius in offering up sacrifices in the temple, and before the image of Augustus; while he was solicited by all the great cities of the empire to suffer temples to be built and sacrifices to be made to himself while still living; or than Alexander's attempt to make a goddess of his mother while yet alive, that he might feel the more secure of being made a god himself after his death.<sup>340</sup> In all religions there are points at which the professors declare that reason must stop, and cease to be a guide to faith. The pious man thinks that all which he cannot comprehend or reconcile to reason in his own religion must be above it. The superstitions of the people of India will diminish before the spread of science, art, and literature; and good works of history and fiction would, I think, make far greater havoc among these superstitions even than good works in any of the sciences, save the physical, such as astronomy, chemistry, &c.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> This comparison is not a happy one. The elements in some of the Hindoo myths specially repulsive to European taste are their monstrosity, their inartistic and hideous exaggeration, their accumulation of sanguinary horrors, and their childish triviality. Few of the classical myths exhibit these characteristics. The vanity or policy of Tiberius and Alexander in believing themselves to be, or wishing to be believed, divine, has nothing in common with the grotesque imagination of Puranic Hinduism.

<sup>341</sup> The roots of Hinduism are so deeply fixed in a thick soil of custom and inherited sentiment, the growth of thousands of years, that English education has less effect than might be expected in loosening the bonds of beliefs which seem to every one but a Hindoo the merest superstition. Hindoos who can read English with fluency, and

In the evening we went out with the intention of making an excursion of the lake, in boats that had been prepared for our reception by tying three or four fishing canoes together;<sup>342</sup> but, on reaching the ridge of quartz hills which runs along the south-east

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write it with accuracy, are often extremely devout, and Hindoo devoutness must ever appear to an outsider, even to a European as sympathetic as the author, to be no better than superstition. A Hindoo able to read English with ease has at his command all the rich stores of the knowledge of the West, but very often does not care to taste them. Enmeshed in a web of ritual and belief inseparable from himself, he remains as much as ever a Hindoo, and uses his skill in English merely as an article of professional equipment. 'Good works of history and fiction' do not interest him, and he usually fails to digest and assimilate the physical or biological science administered to him at school or college. In fact, he does not believe it. The monstrous legends of the Purānas continue to be for his mind the realities; while the truths of science are to him phantoms, shadowy and unsubstantial, the outlandish notions of alien and casteless unbelievers. These observations, of course, are not universally true, and a few Hindoos, growing in number, are able to heartily accept and thoroughly assimilate the facts of history and the results of inductive science. But such Hindoos are few, and it may well be doubted if it is possible for a man really to believe the amount of history and science known to an ordinary English schoolboy, and still be a devout Hindoo. The old bottles cannot contain the new wine. The Hindoo scriptures do not treat of history and science in a merely incidental way; they teach, after their fashion, both history and science formally and systematically; grammar, logic, medicine, astronomy, the history of gods and men, are all taught in books which form part of the sacred canon. Inductive science and matter-of-fact history are absolutely destructive of, and irreconcilable with, veneration for the Hindoo scriptures as authoritative and infallible guides. It is impossible, within the narrow limits of a note, to discuss the problems suggested by the author's remarks. Enough, perhaps, has been said to show that the many-rooted banyan tree of Hinduism is in little danger of overthrow from the attacks either of history or of science, not to speak of 'good works of fiction'.

<sup>342</sup> A 'dug-out' canoe is rather a shaky craft. When two or three are lashed together, and a native cot (*chārpāi*) is stretched across, the passenger can make himself very comfortable. The boats are poled by men standing in the stern.

side, we preferred moving along its summit to entering the boats. The prospect on either side of this ridge was truly beautiful. A noble sheet of clear water, about four miles long by two broad, on our right; and on our left a no less noble sheet of rich wheat cultivation, irrigated from the lake by drains passing between small breaks in the ridges of the hills. The Persian wheel is used to raise the water.<sup>343</sup> This sheet of rich cultivation is beautifully studded with mango groves and fields of sugar-cane. The lake is almost double the size of that of Sāgar, and the idea of its great utility for purposes of irrigation made it appear to me far more beautiful; but my little friend the Sarīmānt, who accompanied us in our walk, said that 'it could not be so handsome, since it had not a fine city and castle on two sides, and a fine Government house on the third'.

'But', said I, 'no man's field is watered from that lake.'

'No', replied he, 'but for every man that drinks of the waters of this, fifty drink of the waters of that; from that lake thirty thousand people get *ārām* (comfort) every day.'

This lake is called Kēwlas after Kēwal Varmma, the Chandēl prince by whom it was formed.<sup>344</sup> His palace, now in ruins, stood

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<sup>343</sup> *Ante*, Chapter 24, note 1.

<sup>344</sup> *This prince is not included in the authentic dynastic lists given in the Chandēl inscriptions. He was probably a younger son, who never reigned. The principal authorities for the history of the Chandēl dynasty are A.S.R., vol. ii, pp. 439-51; vol. xxi, pp. 77-90, and V. A. Smith, 'Contributions to the History of Bundēlkhand', in J.A.S.B. vol. 1 (1881), Part I, p. 1; and 'The History and Coinage of the Chandēl (Chandella) Dynasty' in Ind. Ant., 1908, pp. 114-48. A brief summary will be found*

on the top of the ridge of rocks in a very beautiful situation. From the summit, about eight miles to the west, we could see a still larger lake, called the Nandanvārā Lake, extending under a similar range of quartz hills running parallel with that on which we stood.<sup>345</sup> That lake, we were told, answered upon a much larger scale the same admirable purpose of supplying water for the fields, and securing the people from the dreadful effects of droughts. The extensive level plains through which the rivers of Central India<sup>346</sup> generally cut their way have, for the most part, been the beds of immense natural lakes;<sup>347</sup> and there rivers sink so deep into their beds, and leave such ghastly chasms and ravines on either side, that their waters are hardly ever available in due season for irrigation. It is this characteristic of the rivers of Central India that makes such lakes so valuable to the people, particularly in seasons of drought.<sup>348</sup> The river Nerbudda has

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in *Early History of India*, 3rd ed. (1914), pp. 390-4. Most of the great works of the dynasty date from the period A.D. 950- 1200.

<sup>345</sup> The long ridges of quartz traversing the gneiss are marked features in the scenery of Bundēlkhand.

<sup>346</sup> The author always uses the phrase Central India as a vague geographical expression. The phrase is now generally used to mean an administrative division, namely, the group of Native States under the Central India Agency at Indore, which deals with about 148 chiefs and rulers of various rank. Central India in this official sense must not be confounded with the Central Provinces, of which the capital is Nāgpur.

<sup>347</sup> *On this lake theory, see ante, Chapter 14, note 13.*

<sup>348</sup> During a residence of six years in Bundēlkhand the editor came to the conclusion that most of the ancient artificial lakes were not constructed for purposes of irrigation. The embankments seem generally to have been built as adjuncts to palaces or temples.

been known to rise seventy feet in the course of a couple of days in the rains; and, during the season when its waters are wanted for irrigation, they can nowhere be found within that [distance] of the surface; while a level piece of ground fit for irrigation is rarely to be met with within a mile of the stream.<sup>349</sup>

The people appeared to improve as we advanced farther into Bundēlkhand in appearance, manners, and intelligence. There is a bold bearing about the Bundēlas, which at first one is apt to take for rudeness or impudence, but which in time he finds not to be so.

The employés of the Rājā were everywhere attentive, frank, and polite; and the peasantry seemed no longer inferior to those of our Sāgar and Nerbudda territories. The females of almost all the villages through which we passed came out with their *Kalas* in procession to meet us—one of the most affecting marks of respect from the peasantry for their superiors that I know. One woman carries on her head a brass jug, brightly polished, full of water; while all the other families of the village crowd around her, and sing in chorus some rural song, that lasts from the time the respected visitor comes in sight till he disappears. He usually puts into the *Kalas* a rupee to purchase 'gur' (coarse sugar), of

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Many of the lakes command no considerable area of irrigable ground, and there are no traces of ancient irrigation channels. In modern times small canals have been drawn from some of the lakes.

<sup>349</sup> The desolation of the ravines of the rivers of Central India and Bundēlkhand offers a very striking spectacle, presenting to the geologist a signal example of the effects of sub-aerial denudation.

which all the females partake, as a sacred offering to the sex. No member of the other sex presumes to partake of it, and during the chorus all the men stand aloof in respectful silence. This custom prevails all over India, or over all parts of it that I have seen; and yet I have witnessed a Governor-General of India, with all his suite, passing by this interesting group, without knowing or asking what it was. I lingered behind, and quietly put my silver into the jug, as if from the Governor-General.<sup>350</sup>

The man who administers the government over these seven villages in all its branches, civil, criminal, and fiscal, receives a salary of only two hundred rupees a year. He collects the revenues on the part of Government; and, with the assistance of the heads and the elders of the villages, adjusts all petty matters of dispute among the people, both civil and criminal. Disputes of a more serious character are sent to be adjusted at the capital by the Rājā and his ministers. The person who reigns over the seven villages of the lake is about thirty years of age, of the Rājput caste, and, I think, one of the finest young men I have ever seen. His ancestors have served the Orchhā State in the same station for seven generations; and he tells me that he hopes his posterity will serve them [*sic*] for as many more, provided they do not forfeit their claims to do so by their infidelity or incapacity. This young man seemed to have the respect and affection of every member

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<sup>350</sup> *This pretty custom is also described, in Tod's Rājasthān; and is still common in Alwar, and perhaps in other parts of Rājputāna (N.I. Notes and Queries, vol. ii (Dec. 1892), p. 152). It does not seem to be now known in the Gangetic valley.*

of the little communities of the villages through which we passed, and it was evident that he deserved their attachment. I have rarely seen any similar signs of attachment to one of our own native officers. This arises chiefly from the circumstance of their being less frequently placed in authority among those upon whose good feelings and opinions their welfare and comfort, as those of their children, are likely permanently to depend. In India, under native rule, office became hereditary, because officers expended the whole of their incomes in religious ceremonies, or works of ornament and utility, and left their families in hopeless dependence upon the chief in whose service they had laboured all their lives, while they had been educating their sons exclusively with the view of serving that chief in the same capacity that their fathers had served him before them. It is in this case, and this alone, that the law of primogeniture is in force in India.<sup>351</sup> Among Muhammadans, as well as Hindoos, all property, real and personal, is divided equally among the children;<sup>352</sup> but the duties of an office will not admit of the same subdivision; and this, therefore, when hereditary, as it often is, descends to the eldest son with the obligation of providing for the rest of the family. The family consists of all the members who remain united to the

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<sup>351</sup> *Principalities, and the estates of the talukdārs of Oudh also descend to the eldest son. The author states (ante, Chapter 10, see text before note [10].) that the same rule applied in his time to the small agricultural holdings in the Sāgar and Nerbudda territories.*

<sup>352</sup> This statement is inexact; Hindoo daughters, as a rule, inherit nothing from their fathers; a Muhammadan daughter takes half the share of a son.

parent stock, including the widows and orphans of the sons or brothers who were so up to the time of their death.<sup>353</sup>

The old 'chobdār', or silver-stick bearer, who came with us from the Rājā, gets fifteen rupees a month, and his ancestors have served the Rājā for several generations. The Dīwān, who has charge of the treasury, receives only one thousand rupees a year, and the Bakshī, or paymaster of the army, who seems at present to rule the state as the prime favourite, the same. These latter are at present the only two great officers of state; and, though they are, no doubt, realizing handsome incomes by indirect means, they dare not make any display, lest signs of wealth might induce the Rājā or his successors to treat them as their predecessors in office were treated for some time past.<sup>354</sup> The Jāgīrdārs, or feudal chiefs, as I have before stated, are almost all of the same family or class as the Rājā, and they spend all the revenues of their estates in the maintenance of military retainers, upon whose courage and fidelity they can generally rely. These Jāgīrdārs are bound to attend the prince on all great occasions, and at certain intervals; and are made to contribute something to his exchequer in tribute. Almost all live beyond their legitimate

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<sup>353</sup> But it is only the smaller local ministerial officers who are secure in their tenure of office under native Governments; those on whose efficiency the well-being of village communities depends. The greatest evil of Governments of the kind is the feeling of insecurity which pervades all the higher officers of Government, and the instability of all engagements made by the Government with them, and by them with the people. [W. H. S.]

<sup>354</sup> *Ante*, Chapter 23, text at note [8].

means, and make up the deficiency by maintaining upon their estates gangs of thieves, robbers, and murderers, who extend their depredations into the country around, and share the prey with these chiefs, and their officers and under-tenants. They keep them as *poachers* keep their *dogs*; and the paramount power, whose subjects they plunder, might as well ask them for the best horse in the stable as for the best thief that lives under their protection.<sup>355</sup>

I should mention an incident that occurred during the Rājā's visit to me at Tehrī. Lieutenant Thomas was sitting next to the little Sarīmant, and during the interview he asked him to allow him to look at his beautiful little gold-hilted sword. The Sarīmant held it fast, and told him that he should do himself the honour of waiting upon him in his tent in the course of the day, when he would show him the sword and tell him its history. After the Rājā, left me, Thomas mentioned this, and said he felt very much hurt at the incivility of my little friend; but I told him that he was in everything he did and said so perfectly the gentleman, that I felt quite sure he would explain all to his satisfaction when he called upon him. During his visit

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<sup>355</sup> *In the Gwālior territory, the Marāthā 'āmils' or governors of districts, do the same, and keep gangs of robbers on purpose to plunder their neighbours; and, if you ask them for their thieves, they will actually tell you that to part with them would be ruin, as they are their only defence against the thieves of their neighbours. [W. H. S.] These notions and habits are by no means extinct. In October, 1892, a force of about two hundred men, cavalry and infantry, was sent into Bundēlkhand to suppress robber gangs. Such gangs are constantly breaking out in that region, in most native states, and in many British districts. See ante, chapter 23, text following note [13].*

to Thomas he apologized for not having given over his sword to him, and said, 'You European gentlemen have such perfect confidence in each other, that you can, at all times, and in all situations, venture to gratify your curiosity in these matters, and draw your swords in a crowd just as well as when alone; but, had you drawn mine from the scabbard in such a situation, with the tent full of the Rājā's personal attendants, and surrounded by a devoted and not very orderly soldiery, it might have been attended by very serious consequences. Any man outside might have seen the blade gloaming, and, not observing distinctly why it had been drawn, might have suspected treachery, and called out "*To the rescue*", when we should all have been cut down—the lady, child, and all.' Thomas was not only satisfied with the Sarīmant's apology, but was so much delighted with him, that he has ever since been longing to get his portrait; for he says it was really his intention to draw the sword had the Sarīmant given it to him. As I have said, his face is extremely beautiful, quite a model for a painter or a statuary, and his figure, though small, is handsome. He dresses with great elegance, mostly in azure-coloured satin, surmounted by a rose- coloured turban and a waistband of the same colour. All his motions are graceful, and his manners have an exquisite polish. A greater master of all the *convenances* I have never seen, though he is of slender capacity, and, as I have said, in stature less than five feet high.

A poor, half-naked man, reduced to beggary by the late famine, ran along by my horse to show me the road, and, to

the great amusement of my attendants, exclaimed that he felt exactly as if he were always falling down a well, meaning as if he were immersed in cold water. He said that the cold season was suited only to gentlemen who could afford to be well clothed; but, to a poor man like himself, and the great mass of people, in Bundēlkhand at least, the hot season was much better. He told me that 'the late Rājā, though a harsh, was thought to be a just man;<sup>356</sup> and that his good sense, and, above all, his *good fortune* (ikbāl) had preserved the principality entire; but that God only, and the forbearance of the Honourable Company, could now serve it under such an imbecile as the present chief'. He seemed quite melancholy at the thought of living to see this principality, the oldest in Bundēlkhand, lose its independence. Even this poor, unclothed, and starving wretch had a feeling of patriotism, a pride of country, though that country had been so wretchedly governed, and was now desolated by a famine.

Just such a feeling had the impressed seamen who fought our battles in the great struggle. No nation has ever had a more disgraceful institution than that of the press-gang of England. This institution, if so it can be called, must be an eternal stain upon her glory—posterity will never be able to read the history of her naval victories without a blush—without reproaching her lawgivers who could allow them to be purchased with the blood

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<sup>356</sup> *My poor guide had as little sympathy with the prime ministers, whom the Tehri Rājā put to death, as the peasantry of England had with the great men and women whom Harry the Eighth sacrificed. [W. H. S.] Ante, Chapter 23, beginning to note [9].*

of such men as those who fought for us the battles of the Nile and Trafalgar. '*England expected every man to do his duty*' on that day, but had England done her duty to every man who was on that day to fight for her? Was not every English gentleman of the Lords and Commons a David sending his Uriah to battle?<sup>357</sup>

The intellectual stock which we require in good seamen for our navy, and which is acquired in scenes of peril 'upon the high and giddy mast', is as much their property as that which other men acquire in schools and colleges; and we had no more right to seize and employ these seamen in our battles upon the wages of common, uninstructed labour, than we should have had to seize and employ as many clergymen, barristers, and physicians. When I have stood on the quarter-deck of a ship in a storm, and seen the seamen covering the yards in taking in sail, with the thunder rolling, and the lightning flashing fearfully around them—the sea covered with foam, and each succeeding billow, as it rushed by, seeming ready to sweep them all from their frail footing into

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<sup>357</sup> *The cruel practice of impressment for the royal navy is authorized by a series of statutes extending from the reign of Philip and Mary to that of George III. Seamen of the merchant navy, and, with few exceptions, all seafaring men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, are liable, under the provisions of these harsh statutes, to be forcibly seized by the press-gang, and compelled to serve on board a man-of-war. The acts legalizing impressment were freely made use of during the Napoleonic wars, but since then have been little acted on, and no Government at the present day could venture to use them, though they have never been repealed. The fleet sent against the Russians in 1855 was the first English fleet ever manned without recourse to forcible impressment: see the article 'Impressment' by David Hannay, in Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed., 1910. The work by J. B. Hutchinson entitled *The Press-gang Afloat and Ashore* (London: Nash, 1913) gives copious details of the infamous proceedings.*

the fathomless abyss below—I have asked myself, 'Are men like these to be seized like common felons, torn from their wives and children as soon as they reach their native land, subject every day to the lash, and put in front of those battles on which the wealth, the honour, and the independence of the nation depend, merely because British legislators know that when there, a regard for their own personal character among their companions in danger will make them fight like Englishmen?'

This feeling of nationality which exists in the little states of Bundēlkhand, arises from the circumstance that the mass of the landholders are of the same class as the chief Bundēlas; and that the public establishments of the state are recruited almost exclusively from that mass. The states of Jhānsī<sup>358</sup> and Jālaun<sup>359</sup> are the only exceptions. There the rulers are Brahmans and not Rājapūts, and they recruit their public establishments from all classes and all countries. The landed aristocracy, however, there, as elsewhere, are Rājapūts— either Pawārs, Chandēls, or Bundēlas.

The Rājapūt landholders of Bundēlkhand are linked to the soil in all their grades, from the prince to the peasant, as the

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<sup>358</sup> *The Brahman chief of Jhānsī was originally a governor under the Peshwā. The treaty of November 18, 1817, recognized the then chief Rāmchand Rāo, his heirs and successors, as hereditary rulers of Jhānsī. Rāmchand Rāo was granted the title of Rājā by the British Government in 1832, and died without issue on August 20, 1835 (N.W.P. Gazetteer, 1st ed., vol. i, p. 296). See post, Chapter 29.*

<sup>359</sup> The chiefs of Jālaun also were officers under the Marātha Government of the Peshwā up to 1817. In consequence of gross misgovernment, an English superintendent was appointed in 1838, and the state lapsed to the British Government, owing to failure of heirs, in 1840 (*ibid.* p. 229).

Highlanders of Scotland were not long ago; and the holder of a hundred acres is as proud as the holder of a million.<sup>360</sup> He boasts the same descent, and the same exclusive possession of arms and agriculture, to which unhappily the industry of their little territories is almost exclusively confined, for no other branch can grow up among so turbulent a set, whose quarrels with their chiefs, or among each other, are constantly involving them in civil wars, which render life and property exceedingly insecure. Besides, as I have stated, their propensity to keep bands of thieves, robbers, and murderers in their baronial castles, as poachers keep their dogs, has scared away the wealthy and respectable capitalist and peaceful and industrious manufacturer.

All the landholders are uneducated, and unfit to serve in any of our civil establishments, or in those of any very civilized Governments; and they are just as unfitted to serve in our military establishments, where strict discipline is required. The lands they occupy are cultivated because they depend almost entirely upon the rents they get from them for subsistence; and because every petty chief and his family hold their lands rent-free, or at a trifling quit-rent, on the tenure of military service, and their residue forms all the market for land produce which the cultivators require. They dread the transfer of the rule to our Government, because they now form almost exclusively all the establishments of their domestic chief, civil as well as military; and know that, were our rule to be substituted, they would be

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<sup>360</sup> *Ante* Chapter 23, note 13.

almost entirely excluded from these, at least for a generation or two. In our regiments, horse or foot, there is hardly a man from Bundēlkhand, for the reasons above stated; nor are there any in the Gwālīor regiments and contingents which are stationed in the neighbourhood; though the land among them is become minutely subdivided, and they are obliged to seek service or starve. They are all too proud for manual labour, even at the plough. No Bundēlkhand Rājput will, I believe, condescend to put his hand to one.

Among the Marāthā states, Sikhs, and Muhammadans, there is no bond of union of this kind. The establishments, military as well as civil, are everywhere among them composed for the most part of foreigners; and the landed interests under such Governments would dread nothing from the prospect of a transfer to our rule; on the contrary, they and the mass of the people would almost everywhere hail it as a blessing.

There are two reasons why we should leave these small native states under their own chiefs, even when the claim to the succession is feeble or defective; first, because it tends to relieve the minds of other native chiefs from the apprehension, already too prevalent among them, that we desire by degrees to absorb them all, because we think our government would do better for the people; and secondly, because, by leaving them as a contrast, we afford to the people of India the opportunity of observing the superior advantages of our rule.

'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,' in governments

as well as in landscapes; and if the people of India, instead of the living proofs of what perilous things native governments, whether Hindoo or Muhammadan, are in reality, were acquainted with nothing but such pictures of them as are to be found in their histories and in the imaginations of their priests and learned men (who lose much of their influence and importance under our rule), they would certainly, with proneness like theirs to delight in the marvellous, be far from satisfied, as they now are, that they never had a government so good as ours, and that they never could hope for another so good, were ours removed.<sup>361</sup>

For the advantages which we derive from leaving them independent, we are, no doubt, obliged to pay a heavy penalty in the plunder of our wealthy native subjects by the gangs of robbers of all descriptions whom they foster; but this evil may be greatly diminished by a judicious interposition of our authority to put down such bands.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Lapse of years has increased the distance and the enchantment, so that modern agitators and sentimentalists discover marvellous excellences in the native Governments of the now remote past. The methods of government in the existing native states have been so profoundly modified by the influence of the Imperial Government that these states are no longer as instructive in the way of contrast as they were in the author's day.

<sup>362</sup> *The author consistently held the views above enunciated, and defended the policy of maintaining the native states. He was of opinion that the system of annexation favoured by Lord Dalhousie and his Council 'had a downward tendency, and tended to crush all the higher and middle classes connected with the land'. He considered that the Government of India should have undertaken the management of Oudh, but that*

In Bundēlkhand, at present, the government and the lands of the native chiefs are in the hands of three of the Hindoo military classes, Bundēlas, Dhandēlas, and Pawārs. The principal chiefs are of the first, and their feudatories are chiefly of the other two. A Bundēla cannot marry the daughter of a Bundēla; he must take his wife from one or other of the other two tribes; nor can a member of either of the other two take his wife from his own tribe; he must take her from the Bundēlas, or the other tribe. The wives of the greatest chiefs are commonly from the poorest families of their vassals; nor does the proud family from which she has been taken feel itself exalted by the alliance; neither does the poorest vassal among the Pawārs and Dhandēls feel that the daughter of his prince has condescended in becoming his wife. All they expect is a service for a few more yeomen of the family among the retainers of the sovereign.

The people are in this manner, from the prince to the peasant, indissolubly linked to each other, and to the soil they occupy; for, where industry is confined almost exclusively to agriculture, the proprietors of the soil and the officers of Government, who are maintained out of its rents, constitute nearly the whole of the middle and higher classes. About one-half of the lands of every state are held on service tenure by vassals of the same family or clan as the chief; and there is hardly one of them who is

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*it had no right to annex the province, and appropriate its revenues (Journey through the Kingdom of Oude, p. 22, &c.). Since 1858 the policy of annexation has been repudiated. See Sir W. Lee-Warner, The Protected Princes of India (Macmillan, 1894), and The Native States of India (1910).*

not connected with that chief by marriage. The revenue derived from the other half is spent in the maintenance of establishments formed almost exclusively of the members of these families.

They are none of them educated for civil offices under any other rule, nor could they, for a generation or two, be induced to submit to wear military uniform, or learn the drill of regular soldiers. They are mere militia, brave as men can be, but unsusceptible of discipline. They have, therefore, a natural horror at the thought of their states coming under any other than a domestic rule, for they could have no chance of employment in the civil or military establishments of a foreign power; and their lands would, they fear, be resumed, since the service for which they had been given would be no longer available to the rulers. It is said that, in the long interval from the commencement of the reign of Alexander the third to the end of that of David the second,<sup>363</sup> not a single baron could be found in Scotland able to sign his own name. The Bundēlkhand barons have never, I believe, been quite so bad as this, though they have never yet learned enough to fit them for civil offices under us. Many of them can write and read their own language, which is that common to the other countries around them.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> A.D. 1249 to A.D. 1371.

<sup>364</sup> *The Hindi spoken in different parts of Bundēlkhand comprises several distinct dialects: see Kellogg, A Grammar of the Hindī Language, 2nd ed., 1893; and Grierson, Linguistic Survey, vol. vi (1904), pp. 18-23, where the dialects of Eastern Bundēlkhand are discussed. Bundēlī, the speech of Bundēlkhand proper, will be treated as a dialect of Western Hindi in a volume of the Survey not yet published. Sir G. Grierson has*

Bundēlkhand was formerly possessed by another tribe of Rājṣūts, the proud Chandēls, who have now disappeared altogether from this province. If one of that tribe can still be found, it is in the humblest rank of the peasant or the soldier; but its former strength is indicated by the magnificent artificial lakes and ruined castles which are traced to them; and by the reverence which is still felt by the present dominant classes of [*sic*] their old capital of Mahoba. Within a certain distance around that ruined city no one now dares to beat the 'nakkāra', or great drum used in festivals or processions, lest the spirits of the old Chandēl chiefs who there repose should be roused to vengeance;<sup>365</sup> and a kingdom could not tempt one of the Bundēlas, Pawārs, or Chandēls to accept the government of the parish ['mauza'] in which it is situated. They will take subordinate offices there under others with fear and trembling, but nothing could induce one of them to meet the governor. When the deadly struggle between these two tribes took place cannot now be discovered.<sup>366</sup>

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favoured me with perusal of the proofs, and has used materials collected by me in the Hamīrpur District nearly forty years ago. Bundēlī has a considerable literature.

<sup>365</sup> The editor was told of a case in which two chiefs suffered for beating their drums in Mahoba.

<sup>366</sup> See *ante*, Chapter 23 note 11, and Chapter 26 note 14, and the authorities there cited. The Chandēl history occupies an important place in the mediaeval annals of India. Several important inscriptions of the dynasty have been correctly edited in the *Epigraphia Indica*. Mahoba is not now a 'ruined city'; it is a moderately prosperous country town, with a tolerable bazaar, and about eleven thousand inhabitants. It is the head-quarters of a 'tahsildār', or sub-collector, and a station on the Midland Railway. The ruined temples and places in and near the town are of much interest. For many

In the time of Akbar, the Chandēls were powerful in Mahoba, as the celebrated Durgāvati, the queen of Garhā Mandlā, whose reign extended over the Sāgar and Nerbudda territories and the greater part of Berār, was a daughter of the reigning Chandēl prince of Mahoba. He condescended to give his daughter only on condition that the Gond prince who demanded her should, to save his character, come with an army of fifty thousand men

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miles round the country is full of remarkable remains, some of which are in fairly good preservation. The published descriptions of these works are far from being exhaustive. The author was mistaken in supposing that the power of the Chandēls was broken by the Bundēlas. The last Chandēl king, who ruled over an extensive dominion, was Paramardi Deva, or Parmāl. This prince was defeated in a pitched battle, or rather a series of battles, near the Betwa river, by Prithīrāj Chauhān, king of Kanauj, in the year 1182. A few years later, the victor was himself vanquished and slain by the advancing Muhammadans. Mahoba and the surrounding territories then passed through many vicissitudes, imperfectly recorded in the pages of history, and were ruled from time to time by Musalmāns, Bhars, Khangārs, and others. The Bundēlas, an offshoot of the Gaharwār clan, did not come into notice before the middle of the fourteenth century, and first became a power in India under the leadership of Champat Rāi, the contemporary of Jahāngīr and Shah Jāhan, in the first half of the seventeenth century. The line of Chandēl kings was continued in the persons of obscure local chiefs, whose very names are, for the most part, forgotten. The story of Durgāvati, briefly told in the text, casts a momentary flash of light on their obscurity. The principal nobleman of the Chandēl race now occupying a dignified position is the Rājā of Gidhaur in the Mungir (Monghyr) district of Bengal, whose ancestor emigrated from Mahoba. The war between the Chandēls and Chauhāns is the subject of a long section or canto of the Hindi epic, the *Chand- Rāisā*, written by Chand Bardāi, the court poet of Prithīrāj, of which the original MS. in 5,000 verses still exists. It was subsequently expanded to 125,000 verses (*E.H.I.*, 3rd ed., 1914, p. 387 note). The war is also the theme of the songs of many popular rhapsodists. The story is, of course, encrusted with a thick deposit of miraculous legend, and none of the details can be relied on. But the fact and the date of the war are fully proved by incontestable evidence.

to take her. He did so, and 'nothing loth', Durgāvātī departed to reign over a country where her name is now more revered than that of any other sovereign it has ever had. She was killed above two hundred and fifty years ago, about twelve miles from Jubbulpore, while gallantly leading on her troops in their third and last attempt to stem the torrent of Muhammadan invasion. Her tomb is still to be seen where she fell, in a narrow defile between two hills; and a pair of large rounded stones which stand near are, according to popular belief, her royal drums turned into stone, which, in the dead of night, are still heard resounding through the woods, and calling the spirits of her warriors from their thousand graves around her. The travellers who pass this solitary spot respectfully place upon the tomb the prettiest specimen they can find of the crystals which abound in the neighbourhood; and, with so much of kindly feeling had the history of Durgāvātī inspired me, that I could not resist the temptation of adding one to the number when I visited her tomb some sixteen years ago.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> The marriage of Durgāvātī is no proof that her father, the Chandēl Rājā, was powerful in Mahoba in the time of Akbar. It is rather an indication that he was poor and weak. If he had been rich and strong, he would probably have refused his daughter to a Gond, even though complaisant bards might invent a Rājput genealogy for the bridegroom. The story about the army of fifty thousand men cannot be readily accepted as sober fact. It looks like a courtly invention to explain a mésalliance. The inducement really offered to the proud but poor Chandēl was, in all likelihood, a large sum of money, according to the usual practice in such cases. Several indications exist of close relations between the Gonds and Chandēls in earlier times. Early in Akbar's reign, in the year 1564, Āsaf Khān, the imperial viceroy of Karrā Mānikpur,

I should mention that the Rājā of Samthar in Bundēlkhand.<sup>368</sup> is by caste a Gūjar,<sup>369</sup> and he has not yet any landed aristocracy

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obtained permission to invade the Gond territory. The young Rājā of Garhā Mandlā, Bīr Narāyan, was then a minor, and the defence of the kingdom devolved on Durgāvati the dowager queen. She first took up her position at the great fortress of Singaurgarh, north-west of Jabalpur, and, being there defeated, retired through Garhā, to the south-east, towards Mandlā. After an obstinately contested fight the invaders were again successful, and broke the queen's stout resistance. 'Mounted on an elephant, she refused to retire, though she was severely wounded, until her troops had time to recover the shock of the first discharge of artillery, and, notwithstanding that she had received an arrow-wound in her eye, bravely defended the pass in person. But, by an extraordinary coincidence, the river in the rear of her position, which had been nearly dry a few hours before the action commenced, began suddenly to rise, and soon became unfordable. Finding her plan of retreat thus frustrated, and seeing her troops give way, she snatched a dagger from her elephant-driver, and plunged it into her bosom. . . . Of all the sovereigns of this dynasty she lives most in the recollection of the people; she carried out many highly useful works in different parts of her kingdom, and one of the large reservoirs near Jabalpur is still called the Rānī Talāo in memory of her. During the fifteen years of her regency she did much for the country, and won the hearts of the people, while her end was as noble and devoted as her life had been useful' (*C.P. Gazetteer* (1870), p. 283; with references to Sleeman's article on the Rājās of Garhā Mandlā, and 'Briggs' Farishta', ed. 1829, vol. ii, pp. 217, 218). A memoir of Āsaf Khan Abdul Majīd, the general who overcame Durgāvati, will be found in Blochmann's translation of the *Aīn-i-Akbarī*, vol. i, p. 366.

<sup>368</sup> *Samthar is a small state, lying between the Betwa and Pahūj rivers, to the south-west of the Jālaun district. It was separated from the Datiyā State only one generation previous to the British occupation of Bundēlkhand. A treaty was concluded with the Rājā in 1812 (N.W.P. Gazetteer (1st ed.), vol. i, p. 578).*

<sup>369</sup> Gūjars occupy more than a hundred villages in the Jālaun district, chiefly among the ravines of the Pahūj river. The Gūjar caste is most numerous in the Panjāb and the upper districts of the United Provinces. It is not very highly esteemed, being of about equal rank with the Āhīr caste and rather below the Jāt. Gūjar colonies are settled in the Hoshangābād and Nīmār districts of the Central Provinces. The Gūjars

like that of the Bundēlas about him. One of his ancestors, not long ago, seized upon a fine open plain, and built a fort upon it, and the family has ever since, by means of this fort, kept possession of the country around, and drawn part of their revenues from depredations upon their neighbours and travellers. The Jhānsī and Jālaun chiefs are Brahmans of the same family as the Peshwā.

In the states governed by chiefs of the military classes, nearly the whole produce of the land goes to maintain soldiers, or military retainers, who are always ready to fight or rob for their chief. In those governed by the Brahmanical class, nearly the whole produce goes to maintain priests; and the other chiefs would soon devour them, as the black ants devour the white, were not the paramount power to interpose and save them. While the Peshwā lived, he interposed; but all his dominions were *running into priesthood*, like those in Sāgar and Bundēlkhand, and must soon have been swallowed up by the military chiefs around him, had we not taken his place. Jālaun and Jhānsī are preserved only by us, for, with all their religious, it is impossible for them to maintain efficient military establishments; and the Bundēla chiefs have always a strong desire to eat them up, since these states were all sliced out of their principalities when the Peshwā was all-powerful in Hindustan.

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are inveterate cattle-lifters, and always ready to take advantage of any relaxation of the bonds of order to prey upon their neighbours. Many sections of the caste have adopted the Muhammadan faith.

The Chhatarpur Rājā is a Pawār. His father had been in the service of the Bundēla Rājā; but, when we entered upon our duties as the paramount power in Bundēlkhand, the son had succeeded to the little principality seized upon by his father; and, on the principle of respecting actual possession, he was recognized by us as the sovereign.<sup>370</sup> The Bundela Rājās, east of the Dasān river, are descended from Rājā Chhatarsāl, and are looked down upon by the Bundēla Rājās of Orchhā, Chandērī, and Datiyā, west of the Dasān, as Chhatarsāl was in the service of one of their ancestors, from whom he wrested the estates which his descendants now enjoy. Chhatarsāl, in his will, gave one-third of the dominion he had thus acquired to the strongest power then in India, the Peshwā, in order to secure the other two-thirds to his two sons Hardī Sā and Jagatrāj, in the same manner as princes of the Roman empire used to bequeath a portion of theirs to the emperor.<sup>371</sup> Of the Peshwā's share we have now got all,

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<sup>370</sup> The small state of Chhatarpur lies to the south of the Hamīrpur district, between the Dasān and Ken rivers. The town of Chhatarpur, on the military road from Bānda to Sāgar, is remarkable for the mausoleum and ruined palace of Rājā Chhatarsāl, after whom the town is named. Khajurāho, the ancient religious capital of the Chandēl monarchy, with its magnificent group of mediaeval Hindoo and Jain temples, is within the limits of the state, about eighteen miles south-east of Chhatarpur, and thirty-four miles south of Mahoba. The Pawār adventurer, who succeeded in separating Chhatarpur from the Panna state, was originally a common soldier.

<sup>371</sup> *Concerning Chhatarsāl (A.D. 1671 to 1731)*, see notes ante, Chapter 14 note 9, and chapter 23 note 11. He was one of the sons of Champat Rāi. The correct date of the death of Chhatarsāl is Pūs Badi 3, Sanwat, 1788 = A.D. 1731. Hardī (Hirdai) Sā succeeded to the Rāj, or kingdom, of Pannā, and Jagatrāj to that of Jaitpur. These kingdoms quickly broke up, and the fragments are now in part native states and in part

except Jālaun. Jhānsī was subsequently acquired by the Peshwā, or rather by his subordinates, with his sanction and assistance.<sup>372</sup>

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British territory. The Orchhā State was formed about the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the Chandērī and Datiyā States are offshoots from it, which separated during the seventeenth century.

<sup>372</sup> *As already observed (ante, Chapter 26, note 29), the Jālaun State became British territory in 1840, four years after the tour described in the text, and four years before the publication of the book. The Jhānsī State similarly lapsed on the death of Rājā Gangādhār Rāo in November, 1853. The Rānī Lachhmī Bāī joined the mutineers, and was killed in battle in June, 1858.*

# CHAPTER 27

## Blights

I had a visit from my little friend the Sarīmant, and the conversation turned upon the causes and effects of the dreadful blight to which the wheat crops in the Nerbudda districts had of late years been subject. He said that 'the people at first attributed this great calamity to an increase in the crime of adultery which had followed the introduction of our rule, and which', he said, 'was understood to follow it everywhere; that afterwards it was by most people attributed to our frequent measurement of the land, and inspection of fields, with a view to estimate their capabilities to pay; which the people considered a kind of *incest*, and which he himself, the Deity, can never tolerate. The land is', said he, 'considered as the *mother* of the prince or chief who holds it—the great parent from whom he derives all that maintains him—his family and his establishments. If well treated, she yields this in abundance to her son; but, if he presumes to look upon her with the eye of desire, she ceases to be fruitful; or the Deity sends down hail or blight to destroy all that she yields. The measuring the surface of the fields, and the frequent inspecting the crops by the chief himself, or by his immediate agents were considered by the people in this light; and, in consequence, he never ventured

upon these things. They were', he thought, 'fully satisfied that we did it more with a view to distribute the burthen of taxation equally upon the people than to increase it collectively; still', he thought that, 'either we should not do it at all, or delegate the duty to inferior agents, whose close inspection of the great *parent* could not be so displeasing to the Deity.'<sup>373</sup>

Rām Chand Pundit said that 'there was no doubt much truth in what Sarīmānt Sāhib had stated; that the crops of late had unquestionably suffered from the constant measuring going on upon the lands; but that the people (as he knew) had now become unanimous in attributing the calamities of season, under which these districts had been suffering so much, to the *eating of beef*—this was', he thought, 'the great source of all their sufferings.'

Sarīmānt declared that he thought 'his Pundit was right, and that it would, no doubt, be of great advantage to them and to their rulers if Government could be prevailed upon to prohibit the eating of beef; that so great and general were the sufferings of the people from these calamities of seasons, and so firm, and now so general, the opinion that they arose chiefly from the practice of killing and eating cows that, in spite of all the other superior

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<sup>373</sup> We are told in 2 Samuel, chap. xxiv, that the Deity was displeased at a census of the people, taken by Joab by the order of David, and destroyed of the people of Israel seventy thousand, besides women and children. [W. H. S.] The editor, in the course of seven years' experience in the Settlement department, six of which were agent in Bundēlkhand, never heard of the doctrine as to the incestuous character of surveys. Probably it had died out. Even a census no longer gives rise to alarm in most parts of the country. The wild rumours and theories common in 1872 and 1881 did not prevail when the census of 1891 was taken, or during subsequent operations.

blessings of our rule, the people were almost beginning to wish their old Marāthā rulers in power again.'

I reminded him of the still greater calamities the people of Bundēlkhand had been suffering under.

'True,' said he, 'but among them there are crimes enough of everyday occurrence to account for these things; but, under your rule, the Deity has only one or other of these three things to be offended with; and, of these three, it must be admitted that the eating of beef so near the sacred stream of the Nerbudda is the worst.'

The blight of which we were speaking had, for several seasons from the year 1829, destroyed the greater part of the wheat crops over extensive districts along the line of the Nerbudda, and through Māl wā generally; and old people stated that they recollected two returns of this calamity at intervals from twenty to twenty-four years. The pores, with which the stalks are abundantly supplied to admit of their readily taking up the aqueous particles that float in the air, seem to be more open in an easterly wind than in any other; and, when this wind prevails at the same time that the air is filled with the farina of the small parasitic fungus, whose depredations on the corn constitute what they call the rust, mildew, or blight, the particles penetrate into these pores, speedily sprout and spread their small roots into the cellular texture, where they intercept, and feed on, the sap in its ascent; and the grain in the ear, deprived of its nourishment, becomes shrivelled, and the whole crop is often not worth the

reaping.<sup>374</sup> It is at first of a light, beautiful orange-colour, and found chiefly upon the 'alsī' (linseed)<sup>375</sup> which it does not seem much to injure; but, about the end of February, the fungi ripen, and shed their seeds rapidly, and they are taken up by the wind, and carried over the corn-fields. I have sometimes seen the air tinted of an orange colour for many days by the quantity of these seeds which it has contained; and that without the wheat crops suffering at all, when any but an easterly wind has prevailed; but, when the air is so charged with this farina, let but an easterly wind blow for twenty-four hours, and all the wheat crops under its influence are destroyed—nothing can save them. The stalks and leaves become first of an orange colour from the light colour of the farina which adheres to them, but this changes to deep brown. All that part of the stalk that is exposed seems as if it had been pricked with needles, and had exuded blood from every puncture; and the grain in the ear withers in proportion to the number of fungi that intercept and feed upon its sap; but the parts of the stalks that are covered by the leaves remain entirely uninjured; and, when the leaves are drawn off from them, they form a beautiful contrast to the others, which have been exposed

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<sup>374</sup> This theory is, of course, erroneous.

<sup>375</sup> *The flax plant (Linum usitatissimum)* is grown in India solely for the sake of the linseed. Linen is never made, and the stalk of the plant, as ordinarily grown, is too short for the manufacture of fibre. The attempts to introduce flax manufacture into India, though not ultimately successful, have proved that good flax can be made in the country, from Riga seed. Indian linseed is very largely exported. (Article 'Flax' in Balfour, *Cyclopaedia*, 3rd ed.)

to the depredations of these parasitic plants.

Every pore, it is said, may contain from twenty to forty of these plants, and each plant may shed a hundred seeds,<sup>376</sup> so that a single shrub, infected with the disease, may disseminate it over the face of a whole district; for, in the warm month of March, when the wheat is attaining maturity, these plants ripen and shed their seeds in a week, and consequently increase with enormous rapidity, when they find plants with their pores open ready to receive and nourish them. I went over a rich sheet of wheat cultivation in the district of Jubbulpore in January, 1836, which appeared to me devoted to inevitable destruction. It was intersected by slips and fields of 'alsī', which the cultivators often sow along the borders of their wheat-fields, which are exposed to the road, to prevent trespass.<sup>377</sup> All this 'alsī' had become of a beautiful light orange colour from these fungi; and the cultivators, who had had every field destroyed the year before by the same plant, surrounded my tent in despair, imploring me to tell them of some remedy. I knew of none; but, as the 'alsī' is not a very valuable plant, I recommended them, as their only chance, to pull it all up by the roots, and fling it into large tanks that were everywhere to be found. They did so, and no 'alsī' was *intentionally* left in the district, for, like drowning men catching at a straw, they caught everywhere at the little gleam of hope

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<sup>376</sup> Spores is the more accurate word.

<sup>377</sup> That is to say, cattle-trespass. Cattle do not care to eat the green flax plant. The fields are not fenced.

that my suggestion seemed to offer. Not a field of wheat was that season injured in the district of Jubbulpore; but I was soon satisfied that my suggestion had had nothing whatever to do with their escape, for not a single stalk of the wheat was, I believe, affected; while *some* stalks of the affected 'alsī' must have been left by accident. Besides, in several of the adjoining districts, where the 'alsī' remained in the ground, the wheat escaped. I found that, about the time when the blight usually attacks the wheat, westerly winds prevailed, and that it never blew from the east for many hours together. The common belief among the natives was that the prevalence of an east wind was necessary to give full effect to the attack of this disease, though they none of them pretended to know anything of its *modus operandi*—indeed they considered the blight to be a demon, which was to be driven off only by prayers and sacrifices.

It is worthy of remark that hardly anything suffered from the attacks of these fungi but the wheat. The 'alsī', upon which it always first made its appearance, suffered something certainly, but not much, though the stems and leaves were covered with them. The gram (*Cicer arietinum*) suffered still less—indeed the grain in this plant often remained uninjured, while the stems and leaves were covered with the fungi, in the midst of fields of wheat that were entirely destroyed by ravages of the same kind. None of the other pulses were injured, though situated in the same manner in the midst of the fields of wheat that were destroyed. I have seen rich fields of uninterrupted wheat cultivation for twenty

miles by ten, in the valley of the Nerbudda, so entirely destroyed by this disease that the people would not go to the trouble of gathering one field in four, for the stalks and the leaves were so much injured that they were considered as unfit or unsafe for fodder; and during the same season its ravages were equally felt in the districts along the tablelands of the Vindhya range, north of the valley and, I believe, those upon the Sātpura range, south. The last time I saw this blight was in March, 1832, in the Sāgar district, where its ravages were very great, but partial; and I kept bundles of the blighted wheat hanging up in my house, for the inspection of the curious, till the beginning of 1835.<sup>378</sup>

When I assumed charge of the district of Sāgar in 1831 the opinion among the farmers and landholders generally was that the calamities of season under which we had been suffering were attributable to the increase of *adultery*, arising, as they thought, from our indifference, as we seemed to treat it as a matter of little importance; whereas it had always been considered under former Governments as a case of *life and death*. The husband or his friends waited till they caught the offending parties together in criminal correspondence, and then put them both to death; and the death of one pair generally acted, they thought, as a sedative upon the evil passions of a whole district for a year or two. Nothing can be more unsatisfactory than our laws for

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<sup>378</sup> *The rust, or blight, described in the text probably was a species of Unedo. The gram, or chick-pea, and various kinds of pea and vetch are grown intermixed with the wheat. They ripen earlier, and are plucked up by the roots before the wheat is cut.*

the punishment of adultery in India, where the Muhammadan criminal code has been followed, though the people subjected to it are not one-tenth Muhammadans. This law was enacted by Muhammad on the occasion of his favourite wife Ayesha being found under very suspicious circumstances with another man. A special direction from heaven required that four witnesses should swear positively to the *fact*.

Ayesha and her paramour were, of course, acquitted, and the witnesses, being less than four, received the same punishment which would have been inflicted upon the criminals had the fact been proved by the direct testimony of the prescribed number—that is, eighty stripes of the 'korā', almost equal to a sentence of death. (See Korān, chap. 24, and chap. 4.)<sup>379</sup> This became the law among all Muhammadans. Ayesha's father succeeded Muhammad, and Omar succeeded Abū Bakr.<sup>380</sup> Soon after his accession to the throne, Omar had to sit in judgement upon Mughīra, a companion of the prophet, the governor of Basrah,<sup>381</sup> who had been accidentally seen in an awkward position with a lady of rank by four men while they sat in an adjoining apartment. The door or window which concealed the criminal parties was

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<sup>379</sup> Chap. 4 of the Korān is entitled 'Women', and chap. 24 is entitled 'Light'. The story of Ayesha's misadventure is given in Sale's notes to chap. 24.

<sup>380</sup> Muhammad died A.D. 632. Abū Bakr succeeded him, and after a khalīfate of only two years, was succeeded by Omar, who was assassinated in the twelfth year of his reign.

<sup>381</sup> Basrah (Bassorah, Bussorah) in the province of Baghdad, on the Shatt-ul-Arab, or combined stream of the Tigris and Euphrates, was founded by the Khalīf Omar.

flung open by the wind, at the time when they wished it most to remain closed. Three of the four men swore directly to the point. Mughīra was Omar's favourite, and had been appointed to the government by him, Zāid, the brother of one of the three who had sworn to the fact, hesitated to swear to the entire fact.

'I think', said Omar, 'that I see before me a man whom God would not make the means of disgracing one of the companions of the holy prophet.'

Zāid then described circumstantially the most unequivocal position that was, perhaps, ever described in a public court of justice; but, still hesitating to swear to the entire completion of the crime, the criminals were acquitted, and his brother and the two others received the punishment described. This decision of the *Brutus of his age* and country settled the law of evidence in these matters; and no Muhammadan judge would now give a verdict against any person charged with adultery, without the four witnesses to the *entire fact*. No man hopes for a conviction for this crime in our courts; and, as he would have to drag his wife or paramour through no less than three—that of the police officer, the magistrate, and the judge—to seek it, he has recourse to poison, either secretly or with his wife's consent. She will commonly rather die than be turned out into the streets a degraded outcast. The seducer escapes with impunity, while his victim suffers all that human nature is capable of enduring. Where husbands are in the habit of poisoning their guilty wives from the want of *legal* means of redress, they will sometimes

poison those who are suspected upon insufficient grounds. No magistrate ever hopes to get a conviction in the judge's court, if he commits a criminal for trial on this charge (under Regulation 17 of 1817), and, therefore, he never does commit. Regulation 7 of 1819 authorizes a magistrate to punish any person convicted of enticing away a wife or unmarried daughter for another's use; and an indignant functionary may sometimes feel disposed to stretch a point that the guilty man may not altogether escape.<sup>382</sup>

Redress for these wrongs is never sought in our courts, because they can never hope to get it. But it is a great mistake to suppose that the people of India want a heavier punishment for the crime than we are disposed to inflict—all they want is a fair chance of conviction upon such reasonable proof as cases of this nature admit of, and such a measure of punishment as shall make it appear that their rulers think the crime a serious one, and that they are disposed to protect them from it. Sometimes the

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<sup>382</sup> *In the author's time the Muhammadan criminal law was applied to the whole population by Anglo-Indian judges, assisted by Muhammadan legal assessors, who gave rulings called fatwas on legal points. The Penal Code enacted in 1859 swept away the whole jungle of Regulations and fatwas, and established a scientific System of criminal jurisprudence, which has remained substantially unchanged to this day. Adultery is punishable under the Code by the Court of Session, but prosecutions for this offence are very rare. Enticing away a married woman is also defined as an offence, and is punishable by a magistrate. Complaints under this head are extremely numerous, and mostly false. Secret and unpunished murders of women undoubtedly are common, and often reported as deaths from snake-bite or cholera. An aggrieved husband frequently tries to save his honour, and at the same time satisfy his vengeance, by tromping up a false charge of burglary against the suspected paramour, who generally replies by an equally false *alibi*.*

poorest man would refuse pecuniary compensation; but generally husbands of the poorer classes would be glad to get what the heads of their caste or circle of society might consider the expenses of a second marriage. They do not dare to live in adultery, they would be outcasts if they did; they must be married according to the forms of their caste, and it is reasonable that the seducer of the wife should be obliged to defray the coats of the injured husband's second marriage. The rich will, of course, always refuse such a compensation, but a law declaring the man convicted of this crime liable to imprisonment in irons at hard labour for two years, but entitled to his discharge within that time on an application from the injured husband or father, would be extremely popular throughout India. The poor man would make the application when assured of the sum which the elders of his caste consider sufficient; and they would take into consideration the means of the offender to pay. The woman is sufficiently punished by her degraded condition. The *fatwa* of a Muhammadan law officer should be dispensed with in such cases.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> A prosecution under the Penal Code for adultery can be instituted only by the husband, or the guardian representing him, and the woman is not punishable. Although the Muhammadan law of evidence has been got rid of, the Anglo-Indian courts are still unsuitable for the prosecution of adultery cases, especially where Indians are concerned. The English courts, though they do not require any specified number of witnesses, demand strict proof given in open court, and no Indian, whose honour has really been touched, cares to expose his domestic troubles to be wrangled over by lawyers. Many officers, including the editor, would be glad to see the section which renders adultery penal struck out of the Code. The matrimonial delinquencies of

In 1832 the people began to search for other causes [*scilicet*, of bad seasons]. The frequent measurements of the land, with a view to equalize the assessments, were thought of; even the operations of the Trigonometrical Survey,<sup>384</sup> which were then making a great noise in Central India, where their fires were seen every night burning upon the peaks of the highest ranges, were supposed to have had some share in exasperating the Deity; and the services of the most holy Brahmans were put in requisition to exorcise the peaks from which the engineers had taken their angles, the moment their instruments were removed. In many places, to the great annoyance and consternation of the engineers, the landmarks which they had left to enable them to correct their work as they advanced, were found to have been removed during their short intervals of absence, and they were obliged to do their work over again. The priests encouraged the disposition on the part of the peasantry to believe that men who required to do their work by the aid of fires lighted in the dead of the night upon *high places*, and work which no one but themselves seemed able to comprehend, must hold communion with supernatural beings, a communion which they thought might be displeasing to the Deity.

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Indians are better dealt with by the caste organizations, and those of Europeans by civil action.

<sup>384</sup> *The Trigonometrical Survey, originated by Colonel Lambton, was begun at Cape Comōrin in 1800. It is now almost, if not quite, complete, except in Burma. See Markham, A Memoir of the Indian Surveys (2nd ed., 1878). The stations are marked by masonry pillars, for the partial repair of which a small sum is annually allotted.*

At last, in the year 1833, a very holy Brahman, who lived in his cloister near the iron suspension bridge over the Biās river, ten miles from Sāgar, sat down with a determination to *wrestle with the Deity* till he should be compelled to reveal to him the real cause of all these calamities of season under which the people were groaning.<sup>385</sup> After three days and nights of fasting and prayer, he saw a vision which stood before him in a white mantle, and told him that all these calamities arose from the slaughter of cows; and that under former Governments this practice had been strictly prohibited, and the returns of the harvest had, in consequence, been always abundant, and subsistence cheap, in spite of invasion from without, insurrection within, and a good deal of misrule and oppression on the part of the local government. The holy man was enjoined by the vision to make this revelation known to the constituted authorities, and to persuade the people generally throughout the district to join in the petition for the prohibition of *beef-eating* throughout our Nerbudda territories. He got a good many of the most respectable of the landholders around him, and explained the wishes of the vision of the preceding night. A petition was soon drawn up and signed by many hundreds of the most respectable people in the district, and presented to the Governor-General's representative in these parts, Mr. F. C. Smith. Others were presented to the civil authorities of the district, and all stating in the most respectful

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<sup>385</sup> Hindoos believe that holy men, by means of great austerities, can attain power to compel the gods to do their bidding.

terms how sensible the people were of the inestimable benefits of our rule, and how grateful they all felt for the protection to life and property, and to the free employment of all their advantages, which they had under it; and for the frequent and large reduction in the assessments, and remission in the demand, on account of calamities of seasons. These, they stated, were all that Government could do to relieve a suffering people, but they had all proved unavailing; and yet, under this truly paternal rule, the people were suffering more than under any former Government in its worst period of misrule—the hand of an *incensed God* was upon them; and, as they had now, at last after many fruitless attempts, discovered the real cause of this anger of the Deity, they trusted that we would listen to their prayers, and restore plenty and all its blessings to the country by prohibiting the *eating of beef*. All these dreadful evils had, they said, unquestionably originated in the (Sadr Bāzār) great market of the cantonments, where, for the first time, within one hundred miles of the sacred stream of the Nerbudda, men had purchased and eaten cows' flesh.

These people were all much attached to us and to our rule, and were many of them on the most intimate terms of social intercourse with us; and, at the time they signed this petition, were entirely satisfied that they had discovered the real cause of all their sufferings, and impressed with the idea that we should be convinced, and grant their prayers.<sup>386</sup> The day is past. Beef

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<sup>386</sup> For some account of the modern agitation against cow-killing. See note ante,

continued to be eaten with undiminished appetite, the blight, nevertheless, disappeared, and every other sign of vengeance from above; and the people are now, I believe, satisfied that they were mistaken. They still think that the lands do not yield so many returns of the seed under us as under former rulers; that they have lost some of the *barkat* (blessings) which they enjoyed under them—they know not why. The fact is that under us the lands do not enjoy the salutary fallows which frequent invasions and civil wars used to cause under former Governments. Those who survived such civil wars and invasions got better returns for their seed.

During the discussion of the question with the people, I had one day a conversation with the Sadr Amīn, or head native judicial officer, whom I have already mentioned. He told me that 'there could be no doubt of the truth of the conclusion to which the people had at length come. 'There are', he said, 'some countries in which punishments follow crimes after long intervals, and, indeed, do not take place till some future birth; in others, they follow crimes immediately; and such is the country bordering the stream of *Mother Nerbudda*. This', said he, 'is a stream more holy than that of the great Ganges herself, since no man is supposed to derive any benefit from that stream unless he either bathe in it or drink from it; but the sight of the Nerbudda from a distant hill could bless him, and purify him. In other countries, the slaughter of cows and bullocks might

not be punished for ages; and the harvest, in such countries, might continue good through many successive generations under such enormities; indeed, he was not quite sure that there might not be countries in which no punishment at all would inevitably follow; but, so near the Nerbudda, this could not be the case.<sup>387</sup> Providence could never suffer beef to be eaten so near her sacred majesty without visiting the crops with blight, hail, or some other calamity, and the people with cholera morbus, small-pox, and other great pestilences. As for himself, he should never be persuaded that all these afflictions did not arise wholly and solely from this dreadful habit of eating beef. I declare', concluded he, 'that if the Government would but consent to prohibit the eating of beef, it might levy from the lands three times the revenue that they now pay.'

The great festival of the Holī, the Saturnalia of India, terminates on the last day of Phālgun, or 16th of March.<sup>388</sup> On that day the Holī is burned; and on that day the ravages of the monster (for monster they will have it to be) are supposed to cease. Any field that has remained untouched up to that time

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<sup>387</sup> *On the sacredness of the Nerbudda see note ante, Chapter 1, note 13.*

<sup>388</sup> *The Holī festival marks approximately the time of the vernal equinox, ten days before the full moon of the Hindoo month Phālgun. The day of the bonfire does not always fall on the 16th of March. It is not considered lucky to begin harvest till the Holī has been burnt. Mr. Crooke holds that 'on the whole, there seems to be some reason to believe that the intention to promote the fertility of men, animals, and crops, supplies the basis of the rites' ('The Holī, a Vernal Festival of the Hindus', *Folklore*, vol. xxv (1914), p. 83). I agree.*

is considered to be quite secure from the moment the Holī has been committed to the flames. What gave rise to the notion I have never been able to discover, but such is the general belief. I suppose the siliceous epidermis must then have become too hard, and the pores in the stem too much closed up to admit of the further depredation of the fungi.

In the latter end of 1831, while I was at Sāgar, a cowherd in driving his cattle to water at a reach of the Biās river, called the Nardhardhār, near the little village of Jasrathī, was reported to have seen a vision that told him the waters of that reach, taken up and conveyed to the fields in pitchers, would effectually keep off the blight from the wheat, provided the pitchers were not suffered to touch the ground on the way. On reaching the field, a small hole was to be made in the bottom of the pitcher, so as to keep up a small but steady stream, as the bearer carried it round the borders of the field, that the water might fall in a complete ring, except at a small opening—which was to be kept dry, in order that the *monster* or *demon blight* might make his escape through it, not being able to cross over any part watered by the holy stream. The waters Of the Bias river generally are not supposed to have any peculiar virtues. The report of this vision spread rapidly over the country; and the people who had been suffering under so many seasons of great calamity were anxious to try anything that promised the slightest chance of relief. Every cultivator of the district prepared pots for the conveyance of the water, with tripods to support them while they rested on the

road, that they might not touch the ground. The spot pointed out for taking the water was immediately under a fine large pīpal- tree<sup>389</sup> which had fallen into the river, and on each bank was seated a Bairāgī, or priest of Vishnu. The blight began to manifest itself in the alsī (linseed) in January, 1832, but the wheat is never considered to be in danger till late in February, when it is nearly ripe; and during that month and the following the banks of the river were crowded with people in search of the water. Some of the people came more than one hundred miles to fetch it, and all seemed quite sure that the holy water would save them. Each person gave the Bairāgī priest of his own side of the river two half-pence (copper pice), two pice weight of ghī (clarified butter), and two pounds of flour, before he filled his pitcher, to secure his blessings from it. These priests were strangers, and the offerings were entirely voluntary. The roads from this reach of the Bias river, up to the capital of the Orchhā Rājā, more than a hundred miles, were literally lined with these water-carriers; and I estimated the number of persons who passed with the water every day for six weeks at ten thousand a day.<sup>390</sup> After they had ceased to take the water, the banks were long crowded with people who flocked to see the place where priests and waters had worked such miracles, and to try and discover the source whence the water derived its virtues. It

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<sup>389</sup> *The pīpal-tree (Ficus religiosa, Linn.; Urostigma religiosum, Gasp.) is sacred to Vishnu, and universally venerated throughout India.*

<sup>390</sup> About four hundred thousand persons.

was remarked by some that the pīpal-tree, which had fallen from the bank above many years before, had still continued to throw out the richest foliage from the branches above the surface of the water. Others declared that they saw a *monkey* on the bank near the spot, which no sooner perceived it was observed than it plunged into the stream and disappeared. Others again saw some flights of steps under the water, indicating that it had in days of yore been the site of a temple, whose god, no doubt, gave to the waters the wonderful virtues it had been found to possess. The priests would say nothing but that 'it was the work of God, and, like all his works, beyond the reach of man's understanding.' They made their fortunes, and got up the vision and miracle, no doubt, for that especial purpose.<sup>391</sup> As to the effect, I was told by hundreds of farmers who had tried the waters that, though it had not anywhere kept the blight entirely off from the wheat, it was found that the fields which had not the advantages of water were entirely destroyed; and, where the pot had been taken all round the field without leaving any dry opening for the demon to escape through, it was almost as bad; but, when a small opening had been left, and the water carefully dropped around the field elsewhere, the crops had been very little injured; which showed clearly the efficacy of the water, when all the ceremonies and observances prescribed by the vision had been attended to.

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<sup>391</sup> Two pice x 400,000 = 800,000 pice, = 200,000 annas, = 12,500 rupees. Even if the author's estimate of the numbers be much too large, the pecuniary result must have been handsome, not to mention the butter and flour.

I could never find the cowherd who was said to have seen this vision, and, in speaking to my old friend, the Sadr Amīn, learned in the shāstras,<sup>392</sup> on the subject, I told him that we had a short saying that would explain all this: 'A drowning man catches at a straw.'

'Yes,' said he, without any hesitation, 'and we have another just as good for the occasion: "Sheep will follow each other, though it should be into a well".'

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<sup>392</sup> Hindoo sacred books.

# CHAPTER 28

## **Pestle-and-Mortar Sugar-Mills —Washing away of the Soil**

On the 13th [December, 1885] we came to Barwā Sāgar,<sup>393</sup> over a road winding among small ridges and conical hills, none of them much elevated or very steep; the whole being a bed of brown syenite, generally exposed to the surface in a decomposing state, intersected by veins and beds of quartz rocks, and here and there a narrow and shallow bed of dark basalt. One of these beds of basalt was converted into grey syenite by a large granular mixture of white quartz and feldspar with the black hornblende. From this rock the people form their sugar-mills, which are made like a pestle and mortar, the mortar being cut out of the hornblende rock, and the pestle out of wood.<sup>394</sup>

We saw a great many of these mortars during the march that could not have been in use for the last half-dozen centuries, but

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<sup>393</sup> *The lake known as Barwā Sāgar was formed by a Bundēla chief, who constructed an embankment nearly three-quarters of a mile long to retain the waters of the Barwā stream, a tributary of the Betwā. The work was begun in 1705 and completed in 1737. The town is situated at the north-west corner of the lake, on the road from Jhānsī to the cantonment of Nowgong (properly Naugāon, or Nayāgāon), at a distance of twelve miles from Jhānsī (N. W.P. Gazetteer, 1st ed., vol. i, pp. 243 and 387).*

<sup>394</sup> The rude sketch given here in the author's text is not worth reproduction.

they are precisely the same as those still used all over India. The driver sits upon the end of the horizontal beam to which the bullocks are yoked; and in cold mornings it is very common to see him with a pair of good hot embers at his buttocks, resting upon a little projection made behind him to the beam for the purpose of sustaining it [*sic*]. I am disposed to think that the most productive parts of the surface of Bundēlkhand, like that of some of the districts of the Nerbudda territories which repose upon the back of the sandstone of the Vindhya chain, is [*sic*] fast flowing off to the sea through the great rivers, which seem by degrees to extend the channels of their tributary streams into every man's field, to drain away its substance by degrees, for the benefit of those who may in some future age occupy the islands of their delta. I have often seen a valuable estate reduced in value to almost nothing in a few years by some new *antennae*, if I may so call them, thrown out from the tributary streams of great rivers into their richest and deepest soils. Declivities are formed, the soil gets nothing from the cultivator but the mechanical aid of the plough, and the more its surface is ploughed and cross-ploughed, the more of its substance is washed away towards the Bay of Bengal in the Ganges, or the Gulf of Cambay in the Nerbudda. In the districts of the Nerbudda, we often see these black hornblende mortars, in which sugar-canes were once pressed by a happy peasantry, now standing upon a bare and barren surface of sandstone rock, twenty feet above the present surface of the culturable lands of the country. There are evident signs of the surface on which they

now stand having been that on which they were last worked. The people get more juice from their small straw- coloured canes in these pestle-and-mortar mills than they can from those with cylindrical rollers in the present rude state of the mechanical arts all over India; and the straw-coloured cane is the only kind that yields good sugar. The large purple canes yield a watery and very inferior juice; and are generally and almost universally sold in the markets as a fruit. The straw-coloured canes, from being crowded under a very slovenly System, with little manure and less weeding, degenerate into a mere reed. The Otaheite cane, which was introduced into India by me in 1827, has spread over the Nerbudda, and many other territories; but that that will degenerate in the same manner under the same slovenly system of tillage, is too probable.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> The 'pestle-and-mortar' pattern of mill above described is the indigenous model formerly in universal use in India, but, in most parts of the country, where stone is not available, the 'mortar' portion was made of wood. The stone mills are expensive. In the Bānda and Hamīrpur districts of Bundēlkhand sugar-cane is now grown only in the small areas where good loam soil is found. The method of cultivation differs in several respects from that practised in the Gangetic plains, but the editor never observed the slovenliness of which the author complains. He always found the cultivation in sugar-cane villages to be extremely careful and laborious. Ancient stone mills are sometimes found in black soil country, and it is difficult to understand how sugarcane can ever have been grown there. The author was mistaken in supposing that the indigenous pattern of mill is superior to a good roller mill. The indigenous mill has been completely superseded in most parts of the Panjāb, United Provinces, and Bihār, by the roller mill patented by Messrs. Mylne and Thompson of Bihāia in 1869, and largely improved by subsequent modifications. The original patent having expired, thousands of roller mills are annually made by native artisans, with little regard to the rights of the Bihāia firm. The iron rollers, cast in Delhi and other places, are completed on costly

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lathes in many country towns. The mills are generally hired out for the season, and kept in repair by the speculator. The Rājā of Nāhan or Sirmūr in the Panjāb, who has a foundry employing six hundred men, does a large business of this kind, and finds it profitable. Since the first patent was taken out, many improvements in the design have been effected, and the best mills squeeze the cane absolutely dry. Messrs. Mylne and Thompson have been successful in introducing other improved machinery for the manufacture of sugar in villages. The Rosa factory near Shahjahānpur in the United Provinces makes sugar on a large scale by European methods. When the author says that the large canes are sold 'as a fruit' he means that the canes are used for eating, or rather sucking like a sugar-stick. The varieties of sugar-cane are numerous, and the names vary much in different districts. According to Balfour, the Otaheite (Tahiti) cane is 'probably *Saccharum violaceum*'. The ordinary Indian kinds belong to the species *Saccharum officinarum*. The Otaheite cane was introduced into the West Indies about 1794, and came to India from the Mauritius. It is more suitable for the roller mill than for the indigenous mill, the stems being hard (*Cyclopaedia of India*, 3rd ed., 1885, s.v. 'Saccharum'). In a letter dated December 15, 1844, the author refers to his introduction of the Otaheite cane, and mentions that the Indian Agricultural Society awarded him a gold medal for this service. The cane was first planted in the Government Botanical Garden at Calcutta.

# CHAPTER 29

## Interview with the Chiefs of Jhānsī—Disputed Succession

On the 14th<sup>396</sup> we came on fourteen miles to Jhānsī.<sup>397</sup> About five miles from our last ground we crossed the Baitantī river over a bed of syenite. At this river we mounted our elephant to cross, as the water was waist-deep at the ford. My wife returned to her palankeen as soon as we had crossed, but our little boy came on with me on the elephant, to meet the grand procession which I knew was approaching to greet us from the city. The Rājā of Jhānsī, Rām Chandar Rāo, died a few months ago, leaving a young widow and a mother, but no child.<sup>398</sup>

He was a young man of about twenty-eight years of age, timid,

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<sup>396</sup> December, 1835.

<sup>397</sup> Now the head-quarters of the British district of the same name, and also of the Indian Midland Railway. Since the opening of this railway and the restoration of the Gwālior fort to Sindhia in 1886, the importance of Jhānsī, both civil and military, has much increased. The native town was given up by Sindhia in exchange for the Gwālior stronghold.

<sup>398</sup> *This chief is called Rājā Rāo Rāmchand in the N. W. P. Gazetteer*, 1st ed. He died on August 20, 1835. His administration had been weak, and his finances were left in great disorder. Under his successor the disorder of the administration became still greater.

but of good capacity, and most amiable disposition. My duties brought us much into communication; and, though we never met, we had conceived a mutual esteem for each other. He had been long suffering from an affection of the liver, and had latterly persuaded himself that his mother was practising upon his life, with a view to secure the government to the eldest son of her daughter, which would, she thought, ensure the real power to her for life. That she wished him dead with this view, I had no doubt; for she had ruled the state for several years up to 1831, during what she was pleased to consider his minority; and she surrendered the power into his hands with great reluctance, since it enabled her to employ her *paramour* as minister, and enjoy his society as much as she pleased, under the pretence of holding *privy councils* upon affairs of great public interest.<sup>399</sup> He used to communicate his fears to me; and I was not without apprehension that his mother might some day attempt to hasten his death by poison. About a month before his death he wrote to me to say that spears had been found stuck in the ground, under the water where he was accustomed to swim, with their sharp points upwards; and, had he not, contrary to his usual practice, walked into the water, and struck his foot against one of them, he must have been killed. This was, no doubt, a thing got up by some designing person who wanted to ingratiate himself with

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<sup>399</sup> *Dowagers in Indian princely families are frequently involved in such intrigues and plots. The editor could specify instances in his personal experience. Compare Chapter 34, post.*

the young man; for the mother was too shrewd a woman ever to attempt her son's life by such awkward means. About four months before I reached the capital, this amiable young prince died, leaving two paternal uncles, a mother, a widow, and one sister, the wife of one of our Sāgar pensioners, Morīsar Rāo. The mother claimed the inheritance for her grandson by this daughter, a very handsome young lad, then at Jhānsī, on the pretence that her son had adopted him on his death-bed. She had his head shaved, and made him go through all the other ceremonies of mourning, as for the death of his real father. The eldest of his uncles, Raghunāth Rāo, claimed the inheritance as the next heir; and all his party turned the young lad out of caste as a Brahman, for daring to go into mourning for a father who was yet alive; one of the greatest of crimes, according to Hindoo law, for they would not admit that he had been adopted by the deceased prince.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> An adopted son passes completely out of the family of his natural, into that of his adoptive, father, all his rights and duties as a son being at the same time transferred. In this case, the adoption had not really taken place, and the lad's duty to his living natural father remained unaffected.

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