

APPENDIX.

I SHALL now endeavour to fulfil an engagement which I came under,* to make some observations upon the genius, the manners, and institutions of the people of India, as far as they can be traced, from the earliest ages to which our knowledge of them extends. Were I to enter upon this wide field with an intention of surveying its whole extent; were I to view each object which it presents to a philosophical inquirer, under all its different aspects, it would lead me into researches and speculations, not only of immense length, but altogether foreign from the subject of this disquisition. My inquiries and reflections shall therefore be confined to what is intimately connected with the design of this work. I shall collect the facts which the ancients have transmitted to us concerning the institutions peculiar to the natives of India, and by comparing them with what we

* See Page 23.

now know of that country, endeavour to deduce such conclusions as tend to point out the circumstances which have induced the rest of mankind, in every age, to carry on commercial intercourse to so great an extent with that country.

OF this intercourse there are conspicuous proofs in the earliest periods concerning which history affords information. Not only the people contiguous to India, but remote nations, seem to have been acquainted, from time immemorial, with its commodities, and to have valued them so highly, that in order to procure them they undertook fatiguing, expensive, and dangerous journeys. Whenever men give a decided preference to the commodities of any particular country, this must be owing either to its possessing some valuable natural productions peculiar to its soil and climate, or to some superior progress which its inhabitants have made in industry, arts, and elegance. It is not to any peculiar excellence in the natural productions of India that we must ascribe entirely the predilection of ancient nations for its commodities; for, pepper excepted, an article, it must be allowed, of great importance, they are little different from those of other tropical countries; and Ethiopia or Arabia might have fully supplied the Phœnicians, and other trading people of antiquity, with the spices, the perfumes, the precious stones, the gold and silver, which formed the principal articles of their commerce.

WHOEVER, then, wishes to trace the commerce with India to its source, must search for it, not so much in any peculiarity of the natural productions of that country, as in the superior improvement of its inhabitants. Many facts have been transmitted to us, which, if they are examined with proper attention, clearly demonstrate, that the natives of India were not only more early civilized, but had made greater progress in civilization than any other people. These I shall endeavour to enumerate, and to place them in such a point of view as may serve both to throw light upon the institutions, manners, and arts of the Indians, and to account for the eagerness of all nations to obtain the productions of their ingenious industry.

By the ancient Heathen writers, the Indians were reckoned among those races of men which they denominated *Autochthones* or *Aborigines*, whom they considered as natives of the soil, whose origin could not be traced.* By the inspired writers, the wisdom of the East (an expression which is to be understood as a description of their extraordinary progress in science and arts) was early celebrated.† In order to illustrate and confirm these explicit testimonies concerning the ancient and high civilization of the inhabitants of India, I shall take a view of

* Diod. Sic. lib. ii. p. 151.

† 1 Kings, iv. 31.

their rank and condition as individuals; of their civil policy; of their laws and judicial proceedings; of their useful and elegant arts; of their sciences; and of their religious institutions; as far as information can be gathered from the accounts of the Greek and Roman writers, compared with what still remains of their ancient acquirements and institutions.

I. FROM the most ancient accounts of India we learn, that the distinction of ranks and separation of professions were completely established there. This is one of the most undoubted proofs of a society considerably advanced in its progress. Arts in the early stages of social life are so few, and so simple, that each man is sufficiently master of them all, to gratify every demand of his own limited desires. A savage can form his bow, point his arrows, rear his hut, and hollow his canoe, without calling in the aid of any hand more skilful than his own.* But when time has augmented the wants of men, the productions of art become so complicated in their structure, or so curious in their fabric, that a particular course of education is requisite towards forming the artist to ingenuity in contrivance and expertness in execution. In proportion as refinement spreads, the distinction of professions increases, and they branch out into more numerous and minute subdivisions. Prior to the records of authentic his-

* Hist. of Amer. vol. ii. p. 177, &c.

tory, and even before the most remote era to which their own traditions pretend to reach, this separation of professions had not only taken place among the natives of India, but the perpetuity of it was secured by an institution, which must be considered as the fundamental article in the system of their policy. The whole body of the people was divided into four orders or casts. The members of the first, deemed the most sacred, had it for their province to study the principles of religion; to perform its functions; and to cultivate the sciences. They were the priests, the instructors, and philosophers of the nation. The members of the second order were intrusted with the government and defence of the state. In peace, they were its rulers and magistrates; in war, they were the generals who commanded its armies, and the soldiers who fought its battles. The third was composed of husbandmen and merchants; and the fourth of artisans, labourers, and servants. None of these can ever quit his own cast, or be admitted into another.* The station of every individual is unalterably fixed; his destiny is irrevocable; and the walk of life is marked out, from which he must never deviate. This line of separation is not only established by civil authority, but confirmed and sanctioned by religion; and each order or cast is said to have proceeded from the Divinity in such a different manner, that to

* Ayeen Akbery, iii. 81, &c. Sketches relating to the History, &c. of the Hindoos, p. 107, &c.

mingle and confound them would be deemed an act of most daring impiety.* Nor is it between the four different tribes alone that such insuperable barriers are fixed; the members of each cast adhere invariably to the professions of their forefathers. From generation to generation, the same families have followed, and will always continue to follow, one uniform line of life.

SUCH arbitrary arrangements of the various members which compose a community, seem, at first view, to be adverse to improvement either in science or in arts; and by forming around the different orders of men artificial barriers, which it would be impious to pass, tend to circumscribe the operations of the human mind within a narrower sphere than nature has allotted to them. When every man is at full liberty to direct his efforts towards those objects and that end which the impulse of his own mind prompts him to prefer, he may be expected to attain that high degree of eminence to which the uncontrolled exertions of genius and industry naturally conduct. The regulations of Indian policy, with respect to the different orders of men, must necessarily, at some times, check genius in its career, and confine to the functions of an inferior cast talents fitted to shine in an higher sphere. But the arrangements of civil government are made, not for what is extraordinary, but for what is common;

* See NOTE LVIII.

not for the few, but for the many. The object of the first Indian legislators was to employ the most effectual means of providing for the subsistence, the security, and happiness of all the members of the community over which they presided. With this view they set apart certain races of men for each of the various professions and arts necessary in a well ordered society, and appointed the exercise of them to be transmitted from father to son in succession. This system, though extremely repugnant to the ideas which we, by being placed in a very different state of society, have formed, will be found, upon attentive inspection, better adapted to attain the end in view, than a careless observer, at first sight, is apt to imagine. The human mind bends to the law of necessity, and is accustomed not only to accommodate itself to the restraints which the condition of its nature, or the institutions of its country impose, but to acquiesce in them. From his entrance into life, an Indian knows the station allotted to him, and the functions to which he is destined by his birth. The objects which relate to these are the first that present themselves to his view. They occupy his thoughts, or employ his hands; and, from his earliest years, he is trained to the habit of doing with ease and pleasure that which he must continue through life to do. To this may be ascribed that high degree of perfection conspicuous in many of the Indian manufactures; and though veneration for the practices of their ancestors may check the

spirit of invention, yet, by adhering to these, they acquire such an expertness and delicacy of hand, that Europeans, with all the advantages of superior science, and the aid of more complete instruments, have never been able to equal the exquisite execution of their workmanship. While this high improvement of their more curious manufactures excited the admiration, and attracted the commerce of other nations, the separation of professions in India, and the early distribution of the people into classes attached to particular kinds of labour, secured such abundance of the more common and useful commodities, as not only supplied their own wants, but ministered to those of the countries around them.

To this early division of the people into casts, we must likewise ascribe a striking peculiarity in the state of India;—the permanence of its institutions, and the immutability in the manners of its inhabitants. What now is in India always was there, and is likely still to continue: neither the ferocious violence and illiberal fanaticism of its Mahomedan conquerors, nor the power of its European masters, have effected any considerable alteration.* The same distinctions of condition take place, the same arrangements in civil and domestic society remain, the same maxims of religion are held in veneration, and the same sciences and arts are cultivated. Hence, in all ages, the

* See NOTE LIX.

trade with India has been the same ;—gold and silver have uniformly been carried thither in order to purchase the same commodities with which it now supplies all nations ; and from the age of Pliny to the present times, it has been always considered and execrated as a gulf which swallows up the wealth of every other country, that flows incessantly towards it, and from which it never returns.* According to the accounts which I have given of the cargoes anciently imported from India, they appear to have consisted of nearly the same articles with those of the investments in our own times ; and whatever difference we may observe in them seems to have arisen, not so much from any diversity in the nature of the commodities which the Indians prepared for sale, as from a variety in the tastes, or in the wants of the nations which demanded them.

II. ANOTHER proof of the early and high civilization of the people of India, may be deduced from considering their political constitution and form of government. The Indians trace back the history of their own country through an immense succession of ages, and assert, that all Asia, from the mouth of the Indus on the west, to the confines of China on the east, and from the mountains of Thibet on the north, to Cape Comorin on the south, formed a vast empire, subject to one mighty sovereign, under whom

* See NOTE LX.

ruled several hereditary Princes and Rajahs. But their chronology, which measures the life of man in ancient times by thousands of years, and computes the length of the several periods, during which it supposes the world to have existed, by millions, is so wildly extravagant as not to merit any serious discussion. We must rest satisfied, then, until some more certain information is obtained with respect to the ancient history of India, with taking the first accounts of that country, which can be deemed authentic, from the Greeks who served under Alexander the Great. They found kingdoms of considerable magnitude established in that country. The territories of Porus and of Taxiles comprehended a great part of the Panjab, one of the most fertile and best cultivated countries in India. The kingdom of the Prasij, or Gandaridæ, stretched to a great extent on both sides of the Ganges. All the three, as appears from the ancient Greek writers, were powerful and populous.

THIS description of the partition of India into states of such magnitude, is alone a convincing proof of its having advanced far in civilization. In whatever region of the earth there has been an opportunity of observing the progress of men in social life, they appear at first in small independent tribes or communities. Their common wants prompt them to unite; and their mutual jealousies, as well as the necessity of securing subsistence, compel them to drive to a distance

every rival who might encroach on those domains which they consider as their own. Many ages elapse before they coalesce, or acquire sufficient foresight to provide for the wants, or sufficient wisdom to conduct the affairs of a numerous society, even under the genial climate, and in the rich soil of India, more favourable perhaps to the union and increase of the human species than any other part of the globe: the formation of such extensive states as were established in that country when first visited by Europeans, must have been a work of long time; and the members of them must have been long accustomed to exertions of useful industry.

THOUGH monarchical government was established in all the countries of India to which the knowledge of the ancients extended, the sovereigns were far from possessing uncontrolled or despotic power. No trace, indeed, is discovered there, of any assembly, or public body, the members of which, either in their own right or as representatives of their fellow-citizens, could interpose in enacting laws, or in superintending the execution of them. Institutions destined to assert and guard the rights belonging to men in social state, how familiar soever the idea may be to the people of Europe, never formed a part of the political constitution in any great Asiatic kingdom. It was to different principles that the natives of India were indebted for restrictions which limited the exercise of regal power. The

rank of individuals was unalterably fixed, and the privileges of the different casts were deemed inviolable. The monarchs of India, who were all taken from the second of the four classes formerly described, which is intrusted with the functions of government and exercise of war, behold among their subjects an order of men far superior to themselves in dignity, and so conscious of their own pre-eminence, both in rank and in sanctity, that they would deem it degradation and pollution if they were to eat of the same food with their sovereign.* Their persons are sacred, and even for the most heinous crimes they cannot be capitally punished; their blood must never be shed.† To men in this exalted station monarchs must look up with respect, and reverence them as the ministers of religion and the teachers of wisdom. On important occasions, it is the duty of sovereigns to consult them, and to be directed by their advice. Their admonitions, and even their censures, must be received with submissive respect. This right of the Brahmins to offer their opinion with respect to the administration of public affairs was not unknown to the ancients;‡ and in some accounts preserved in India of the events which happened in their own country, princes are mentioned, who, having violated the privileges of the casts,

* Orme's Dissert. vol. i. p. 4. Sketches, &c. p. 113.

† Code of Gentoo Laws, c. xxi. § 10. p. 275. 283, &c.

‡ Strabo, lib. xv. p. 1029. C.

and disregarded the remonstrances of the Brahmins, were deposed by their authority, and put to death.*

WHILE the sacred rights of the Brahmins opposed a barrier against the encroachments of regal power on the one hand, it was circumscribed on the other by the ideas which those who occupied the highest stations in society entertained of their own dignity and privileges. As none but the members of the cast next in rank to that which religion has rendered sacred, could be employed in any function of the state, the sovereigns of the extensive kingdoms anciently established in India, found it necessary to intrust them with the superintendence of the cities and provinces too remote to be under their own immediate inspection. In these stations they often acquired such wealth and influence, that offices, conferred during pleasure, continued hereditarily in their families, and they came gradually to form an intermediate order between the sovereign and his subjects; and, by the vigilant jealousy with which they maintained their own dignity and privileges, they constrained their rulers to respect them, and to govern with moderation and equity.

* Account of the Qualities requisite in a Magistrate, prefixed by the Pundits to the Code of Gentoo Laws, p. cii. and cxvi.

NOR were the benefits of these restraints upon the power of the sovereign confined wholly to the two superior orders in the state; they extended, in some degree, to the third class, employed in agriculture. The labours of that numerous and useful body of men are so essential to the preservation and happiness of society, that the greatest attention was paid to render their condition secure and comfortable. According to the ideas which prevailed among the natives of India, (as we are informed by the first European who visited their country), the sovereign is considered as the sole universal proprietor of all the land in his dominions, and from him is derived every species of tenure by which his subjects can hold it. These lands were let out to the farmers who cultivated them at a stipulated rent, amounting usually to a fourth part of their annual produce paid in kind.* In a country where the price of work is extremely low, and where the labour of cultivation is very inconsiderable, the earth yielding its productions almost spontaneously, where subsistence is amazingly cheap, where few clothes are needed, and houses are built and furnished at little expense, this rate cannot be deemed exorbitant or oppressive. As long as the husbandman continued to pay the established rent, he retained possession of the farm, which descended, like property, from father to son.

* Strabo, lib. xv. p. 1030. A. Dioid. Sic. lib. ii. p. 53.

THESE accounts, given by ancient authors, of the condition and tenure of the renters of land in India, agree so perfectly with what now takes place, that it may be considered almost as a description of the present state of its cultivation. In every part of India where the native Hindoo Princes retain dominion, the *Ryots*, the modern name by which the renters of land are distinguished, hold their possessions by a lease which may be considered as perpetual, and at a rate fixed by ancient surveys and valuations. This arrangement has been so long established, and accords so well with the ideas of the natives, concerning the distinctions of casts, and the functions allotted to each, that it has been inviolably maintained in all the provinces subject either to Mahomedans or Europeans; and, to both, it serves as the basis on which their whole system of finance is founded.* In a more remote period, before the original institutions of India were subverted by foreign invaders, the industry of the husbandman, on which every member of the community depended for subsistence, was as secure as the tenure by which he held his lands was equitable. Even war did not interrupt his labours or endanger his property. It was not uncommon, we are informed, that while two hostile armies were fighting a battle in one field, the peasants were ploughing or reaping in the next field in perfect tranquillity.† These

* See NOTE LXI.

† Strabo, lib. xv. p. 1030. A.

maxims and regulations of the ancient legislators of India have a near resemblance to the system of those ingenious speculators on political economy in modern times, who represent the produce of land as the sole source of wealth in every country; and who consider the discovery of this principle, according to which they contend that the government of nations should be conducted, as one of the greatest efforts of human wisdom. Under a form of government which paid such attention to all the different orders of which the society is composed, particularly the cultivators of the earth, it is not wonderful that the ancients should describe the Indians as a most happy race of men; and that the most intelligent modern observers should celebrate the equity, the humanity, and mildness of Indian policy. A Hindoo Rajah, as I have been informed by persons well acquainted with the state of India, resembles more a father presiding in a numerous family of his own children, than a sovereign ruling over inferiors, subject to his dominion. He endeavours to secure their happiness with vigilant solicitude; they are attached to him with the most tender affection and inviolable fidelity. We can hardly conceive men to be placed in any state more favourable to their acquiring all the advantages derived from social union. It is only when the mind is perfectly at ease, and neither feels nor dreads oppression, that it employs its active powers in forming numerous arrangements of police, for securing its enjoyments and increasing

them. Many arrangements of this nature, the Greeks, though accustomed to their own institutions, the most perfect at that time in Europe, observed and admired among the Indians, and mention them as instances of high civilization and improvement. There were established among the Indians three distinct classes of officers, one of which had it in charge to inspect agriculture, and every kind of country work. They measured the portions of land allotted to each renter. They had the custody of the *Tanks*, or public reservoirs of water, without a regular distribution of which, the fields in a torrid climate cannot be rendered fertile. They marked out the course of the highways, along which, at certain distances, they erected stones, to measure the road and direct travellers.* To officers of a second class was committed the inspection of the police in cities: their functions, of course, were many and various; some of which only I shall specify. They appropriated houses for the reception of strangers; they protected them from injury, provided for their subsistence, and when seized with any disease, they appointed physicians to attend them; and, on the event of their death, they not only buried them with decency, but took charge of their effects, and restored them to their relations. They kept exact registers of births and of deaths. They visited the public markets, and examined weights and measures. The third class of officers

* See NOTE LXII.

superintended the military department; but, as the objects to which their attention was directed are foreign from the subject of my inquiries, it is unnecessary to enter into any detail with respect to them.*

As manners and customs in India descend almost without variation from age to age, many of the peculiar institutions which I have enumerated still subsist there. There is still the same attention to the construction and preservation of tanks, and the distribution of their waters. The direction of roads, and placing stones along them, is still an object of police. *Choultries*, or houses built for the accommodation of travellers, are frequent in every part of the country, and are useful as well as noble monuments of Indian munificence and humanity. It is only among men in the most improved state of society, and under the best forms of government, that we discover institutions similar to those which I have described; and many nations have advanced far in their progress, without establishing arrangements of police equally perfect.

III. IN estimating the progress which any nation has made in civilization, the object that merits the greatest degree of attention, next to its political constitution, is the spirit of the laws and nature of the forms by which its judicial

* Strabo, lib. xv. p. 1034. A. &c. Diod. Sicul. lib. ii. p. 154.

proceedings are regulated. In the early and rude ages of society, the few disputes with respect to property which arise, are terminated by the interposition of the old men, or by the authority of the chiefs, in every small tribe or community; their decisions are dictated by their own discretion, or founded on plain and obvious maxims of equity. But as the controversies multiply, cases similar to such as have been formerly determined must recur, and the awards upon these grow gradually into precedents, which serve to regulate future judgments. Thus, long before the nature of property is defined by positive statutes, or any rules prescribed concerning the mode of acquiring or conveying it, there is gradually formed, in every state, a body of customary or common law, by which judicial proceedings are directed, and every decision conformable to it is submitted to with reverence, as the result of the accumulated wisdom and experience of ages.

IN this state the administration of justice seems to have been in India when first visited by Europeans. Though the Indians, according to their account, had no written laws, but determined every controverted point by recollecting what had been formerly decided,* they assert that justice was dispensed among them with great accuracy, and that crimes were most severely punished.† But in this general observation is con-

* Strabo, lib. xv. 1035. D. † Diod. Sicul. lib. ii. p. 154.

tained all the intelligence which the ancients furnish concerning the nature and forms of judicial proceedings in India. From the time of Megasthenes, no Greek or Roman of any note appears to have resided long enough in the country, or to have been so much acquainted with the customs of the natives, as to be capable of entering into any detail with respect to a point of so great importance in their policy. Fortunately, the defects of their information have been amply supplied by the more accurate and extensive researches of the moderns. During the course of almost three centuries, the number of persons who have resorted from Europe to India has been great. Many of them, who have remained long in the country, and were persons of liberal education and enlarged minds, have lived in such familiar intercourse with the natives, and acquired so competent a knowledge of their languages, as enabled them to observe their institutions with attention, and to describe them with fidelity. Respectable as their authority may be, I shall not, in what I offer for illustrating the judicial proceedings of the Hindoos, rest upon it alone, but shall derive my information from sources higher and more pure.

TOWARDS the middle of the sixteenth century, Akber, the sixth in descent from Tamerlane, mounted the throne of Indostan. He is one of the few sovereigns entitled to the appellation both of Great and Good, and the only one of

Mahomedan race whose mind appears to have risen so far above all the illiberal prejudices of that fanatical religion in which he was educated, as to be capable of forming a plan worthy of a monarch who loved his people, and was solicitous to render them happy. As, in every province of his extensive dominions, the Hindoos formed the great body of his subjects, he laboured to acquire a perfect knowledge of their religion, their sciences, their laws, and institutions; in order that he might conduct every part of his government, particularly the administration of justice, in a manner as much accommodated as possible to their own ideas.* In this generous undertaking he was seconded with zeal by his vizier Abul Fazel, a minister whose understanding was not less enlightened than that of his master. By their assiduous researches, and consultation of learned men,† such information was obtained as enabled Abul Fazel to publish a brief compendium of Hindoo jurisprudence in the *Ayeen Akbery*,‡ which may be considered as the first genuine communication of its principles to persons of a different religion. About two centuries A. D. 1778. afterwards, the illustrious example of Akber was imitated and surpassed by Mr Hastings, the Governor-General of the British settlements in India. By his authority, and under his inspection, the most eminent Pundits, or Brahmins learned

* See NOTE LXIII.

† *Ayeen Akbery*, A. vol. iii. p. 95.

‡ *Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 197, &c.

in the laws of the provinces over which he presided, were assembled at Calcutta; and, in the course of two years, compiled, from their most ancient and approved authors, sentence by sentence, without addition or diminution, a full code of Hindoo laws;* which is, undoubtedly, the most valuable and authentic elucidation of Indian policy and manners that has been hitherto communicated to Europe.

ACCORDING to the Pundits, some of the writers upon whose authority they found the decrees which they have inserted in the Code, lived several millions of years before their time;† and they boast of having a succession of expounders of their laws from that period to the present. Without entering into any examination of what is so extravagant, we may conclude, that the Hindoos have in their possession treatises concerning the laws and jurisprudence of their country, of more remote antiquity than are to be found in any other nation. The truth of this depends not upon their own testimony alone, but it is put beyond doubt by one circumstance, that all these treatises are written in the Sanskreet language, which has not been spoken for many ages in any part of Indostan, and is now understood by none but the most learned Brahmins. That the Hindoos were a people highly civilized at the time when their laws were composed, is most clearly

* Preface to the Code, p. x. † Ibid. p. xxxviii.

established by internal evidence contained in the Code itself. Among nations beginning to emerge from barbarism, the regulations of law are extremely simple, and applicable only to a few obvious cases of daily occurrence. Men must have been long united in a social state, their transactions must have been numerous and complex, and judges must have determined an immense variety of controversies to which these gave rise, before the system of law becomes so voluminous and comprehensive as to direct the judicial proceedings of a nation far advanced in improvement. In that early age of the Roman republic when the laws of the Twelve Tables were promulgated, nothing more was required than the laconic injunctions which they contain for regulating the decisions of courts of justice; but, in a later period, the body of civil law, ample as its contents are, was found hardly sufficient for that purpose. To the jejune brevity of the Twelve Tables, the Hindoo Code has no resemblance; but with respect to the number and variety of points it considers, it will bear a comparison with the celebrated Digest of Justinian, or with the systems of jurisprudence in nations most highly civilized. The articles of which the Hindoo Code is composed, are arranged in natural and luminous order. They are numerous and comprehensive, and investigated with that minute attention and discernment which are natural to a people distinguished for acuteness and subtilty of understanding, who have been long accustomed to the accuracy of judicial

proceedings, and acquainted with all the refinements of legal practice. The decisions concerning every point (with a few exceptions occasioned by local prejudices and peculiar customs) are founded upon the great and immutable principles of justice, which the human mind acknowledges and respects in every age, and in all parts of the earth. Whoever examines the whole work, cannot entertain a doubt of its containing the jurisprudence of an enlightened and commercial people. Whoever looks into any particular title, will be surprised with a minuteness of detail and nicety of distinction, which, in many instances, seem to go beyond the attention of European legislation; and it is remarkable, that some of the regulations which indicate the greatest degree of refinement, were established in periods of the most remote antiquity. "In the first of the sacred law tracts, (as is observed by a person to whom Oriental literature, in all its branches, has been greatly indebted), which the Hindoos suppose to have been revealed by Menu, some millions of years ago, there is a curious passage on the legal interest of money, and the limited rate of it in different cases, with an exception in regard to adventures at sea; an exception which the sense of mankind approves, and which commerce absolutely requires, though it was not before the reign of Charles I. that our English jurisprudence fully admitted it in respect of maritime contracts."* It is like-

* Sir W. Jones's Third Discourse, *Asiat. Research.* p. 428.

wise worthy of notice, that though the natives of India have been distinguished in every age for the humanity and mildness of their disposition, yet such is the solicitude of their lawgivers to preserve the order and tranquillity of society, that the punishments which they inflict on criminals are (agreeably to an observation of the ancients already mentioned) extremely rigorous. "Punishment (according to a striking personification in the Hindoo Code) is the magistrate; punishment is the inspirer of terror; punishment is the nourisher of the subjects; punishment is the defender from calamity; punishment is the guardian of those that sleep; punishment, with a black aspect and a red eye, terrifies the guilty."*

IV. As the condition of the ancient inhabitants of India, whether we consider them as individuals or as members of society, appears from the preceding investigation to have been extremely favourable to the cultivation of useful and elegant arts; we are naturally led to inquire, whether the progress which they actually made in them was such as might have been expected from a people in that situation. In attempting to trace this progress, we have not the benefit of guidance equal to that which conducted our researches concerning the former articles of inquiry. The ancients, from their slender acquaintance with the interior state of India, have been able to communicate

* Code, ch. xxi. § 8.

little information with respect to the arts cultivated there; and though the moderns, during their continued intercourse with India for three centuries, have had access to observe them with great attention, it is of late only, that by studying the languages now and formerly spoken in India, and by consulting and translating their most eminent authors, they have begun to enter into that path of inquiry which leads with certainty to a thorough knowledge of the state of arts cultivated in that country.

ONE of the first arts which human ingenuity aimed at improving, beyond what mere necessity requires, was that of building. In the brief remarks which the subject of my inquiries leads me to make on the progress of this art in India, I shall confine my attention wholly to those of highest antiquity. The most durable monuments of human industry are public buildings. The productions of art, formed for the common purposes of life, waste and perish in using them; but works destined for the benefit of posterity subsist through ages, and it is according to the manner in which these are executed, that we form a judgment with respect to the degree of power, skill, and improvement, to which the people by whom they were erected had attained. In every part of India monuments of high antiquity are found. These are of two kinds, such as were consecrated to the offices of religion, or fortresses built for the security of the country. In the former of these,

to which Europeans, whatever their structure may be, give the general name of *Pagodas*, we may observe a diversity of style, which both marks the gradual progress of architecture, and throws light on the general state of arts and manners in different periods. The most early Pagodas appear to have been nothing more than excavations in mountainous parts of the country, formed probably in imitation of the natural caverns to which the first inhabitants of the earth retired for safety during the night, and where they found shelter from the inclemency of the seasons. The most celebrated, and, as there is reason to believe, the most ancient of all these, is the Pagoda in the island Elephanta, at no great distance from Bombay. It has been hewn by the hands of man out of a solid rock, about half way up a high mountain, and formed into a spacious area, nearly 120 feet square. In order to support the roof, and the weight of the mountain that lies above it, a number of massy pillars, and of a form not inelegant, have been cut out of the same rock, at such regular distances, as on the first entrance presents to the eye of the spectator an appearance both of beauty and of strength. Great part of the inside is covered with human figures in high relief, of gigantic size as well as singular forms, and distinguished by a variety of symbols, representing, it is probable, the attributes of the deities whom they worshipped, or the actions of the heroes whom they admired. In the isle of Salsette, still nearer to Bombay, are excavations in a similar

style, hardly inferior in magnificence, and destined for the same religious purposes.

THESE stupendous works are of such high antiquity, that as the natives cannot, either from history or tradition, give any information concerning the time in which they were executed, they universally ascribe the formation of them to the power of superior beings. From the extent and grandeur of these subterraneous mansions, which intelligent travellers compare to the most celebrated monuments of human power and art in any part of the earth, it is manifest that they could not have been formed in that stage of social life where men continue divided into small tribes, unaccustomed to the efforts of persevering industry. It is only in states of considerable extent, and among people long habituated to subordination, and to act with concert, that the idea of such magnificent works is conceived, or the power of accomplishing them can be found.

THAT some such powerful state was established in India at the time when the excavations in the islands of Elephanta and Salsette were formed, is not the only conclusion to be drawn from a survey of them; the style in which the sculptures with which they are adorned is executed, indicates a considerable improvement in art at that early period. Sculpture is the imitative art in which man seems to have made the first trial of his own talents. But even in those countries

where it has attained to the highest degree of perfection, its progress has been extremely slow. Whoever has attended to the history of this art in Greece, knows how far removed the first rude essay to represent the human form was from any complete delineation of it.* But the different groupes of figures which still remain entire in the Pagoda of Elephanta, however low they must rank if they be compared with the more elegant works of Grecian or even Etruscan artists, are finished in a style considerably superior to the hard inexpressive manner of the Egyptians, or to the figures in the celebrated palace of Persepolis. In this light they have appeared to persons abundantly qualified to appreciate their merit; and from different drawings, particularly those of Niebuhr, a traveller equally accurate in observing and faithful in describing, we must form a favourable opinion of the state of arts in India at that period.

It is worthy of notice, that although several of the figures in the caverns at Elephanta be so different from those now exhibited in the Pagodas as objects of veneration, that some learned Europeans have imagined they represent the rites of a religion more ancient than that now established in Indostan, yet by the Hindoos themselves the caverns are considered as hallow-

* Winkelman's *Hist. de l'Art chez les Anciens*, tom. i. p. 32, &c.

ed places of their own worship, and they still resort thither to perform their devotions, and honour the figures there, in the same manner with those in their own Pagodas. In confirmation of this, I have been informed by an intelligent observer, who visited this subterraneous sanctuary in the year 1782, that he was accompanied by a sagacious Brahmin, a native of Benares, who, though he had never been in it before that time, recognized at once all the figures, was well acquainted with the parentage, education, and life of every deity or human personage there represented, and explained with fluency the meaning of the various symbols by which the images were distinguished. This may be considered as a clear proof that the system of mythology now prevalent in Benares, is not different from that delineated in the caverns of Elephanta. Mr Hunter, who visited Elephanta in the year 1784, seems to consider the figures there as representing deities who are still objects of worship among the Hindoos.* One circumstance serves to confirm the justness of this opinion. Several of the most conspicuous personages in the groupes at Elephanta are decorated with the *Zennar*, the sacred string or cord peculiar to the order of Brahmins, an authentic evidence of the distinction of casts having been established in India at the time when these works were finished.

* Archæologia, vol. vii. p. 286, &c.

2. INSTEAD of caverns, the original places of worship, which could be formed only in particular situations, the devotion of the people soon began to raise temples in honour of their deities in other parts of India. The structure of these was at first extremely simple. They were pyramids of large dimension, and had no light within but what came from a small door. After having been long accustomed to perform all the rites of religion in the gloom of caverns, the Indians were naturally led to consider the solemn darkness of such a mansion as sacred. Some Pagodas in this first style of building still remain in Indostan. Drawings of two of these at Deogur, and of a third near Tanjore in the Carnatic, all fabrics of great antiquity, have been published by Mr Hodges,* and though they are rude structures, they are of such magnitude as must have required the power of some considerable state to rear them.

3. IN proportion to the progress of the different countries of India in opulence and refinement, the structure of their temples gradually improved. From plain buildings they became highly ornamented fabrics, and, both by their extent and magnificence, are monuments of the power and taste of the people by whom they were erected. In this highly finished style there are Pagodas of great antiquity in different parts of

* No. VI.

Indostan, particularly in the southern provinces, which were not exposed to the destructive violence of Mahomedan zeal.* In order to assist my readers in forming such an idea of these buildings as may enable them to judge with respect to the early state of arts in India, I shall briefly describe two, of which we have the most accurate accounts. The entry to the Pagoda of Chillambrum, near Porto Novo, on the Coromandel Coast, held in high veneration on account of its antiquity, is by a stately gate under a pyramid an hundred and twenty-two feet in height, built with large stones above forty feet long, and more than five feet square, and all covered with plates of copper, adorned with an immense variety of figures neatly executed. The whole structure extends one thousand three hundred and thirty-two feet in one direction, and nine hundred and thirty-six in another. Some of the ornamental parts are finished with an elegance entitled to the admiration of the most ingenious artists.† The Pagoda of Seringham, superior in sanctity to that of Chillambrum, surpasses it as much in grandeur; and fortunately I can convey a more perfect idea of it by adopting the words of an elegant and accurate historian.‡ This Pagoda is situated about a mile from the western extremity of the

* See NOTE LXIV.

† Mem. de Literat. tom. xxxii. p. 44, &c. Voy. de M. Sonnerat, tom. i. p. 217.

‡ Orme's Hist. of Milit. Transact. of Indostan, vol. i. p. 178.

island of Seringham, formed by the division of the great river Caveri into two channels. " It is composed of seven square enclosures, one within the other, the walls of which are twenty-five feet high, and four thick. These enclosures are three hundred and fifty feet distant from one another, and each has four large gates, with a high tower; which are placed, one in the middle of each side of the enclosure, and opposite to the four cardinal points. The outward wall is near four miles in circumference, and its gateway to the south is ornamented with pillars, several of which are single stones thirty-three feet long, and nearly five in diameter; and those which form the roof are still larger: in the inmost enclosures are the chapels. About half a mile to the east of Seringham, and nearer to the Caveri than the Coleroon, is another large Pagoda, called Jembikisma; but this has only one enclosure. The extreme veneration in which Seringham is held, arises from a belief that it contains that identical image of the god Wisthnu, which used to be worshipped by the god Brahma. Pilgrims from all parts of the Peninsula come here to obtain absolution, and none come without an offering of money; and a large part of the revenue of the island is allotted for the maintenance of the Brahmins who inhabit the Pagoda; and these, with their families, formerly composed a multitude not less than forty thousand souls, maintained, without labour, by the liberality of superstition. Here, as in all the other great Pagodas of India, the Brahmins live

in a subordination which knows no resistance, and slumber in a voluptuousness which knows no wants."

THE other species of public buildings which I mentioned, were those erected for the defence of the country. From the immense plains of Indostan there arise, in different parts, eminences and rocks formed by nature to be places of strength. Of these the natives early took possession, and, fortifying them with works of various kinds, rendered them almost impregnable stations. There seems to have been, in some distant age, a period of general turbulence and danger in India, when such retreats were deemed essentially necessary to public safety; for among the duties of magistrates prescribed by the Pundits, one is, "that he shall erect a strong fort in the place where he chooses to reside; and shall build a wall on all the four sides of it, with towers and battlements, and shall make a full ditch around it."* Of these fortresses several remain, which, both from the appearance of the buildings, and from the tradition of the natives, must have been constructed in very remote times. Mr Hodges has published views of three of these, one of Chunar Gur, situated upon the river Ganges, about sixteen miles above the city of Benares; † the second, of Gwalior, about eighty miles to the south of Agra; ‡

* Introd. to Code of Gentoo Laws, p. cxi.

† No. I.

‡ No. II.

the third, of Bidjegur, in the territory of Benares.* They are all, particularly Gwallior, works of considerable magnitude and strength. The fortresses in Bengal, however, are not to be compared with several in the Deccan. Asseergur, Burhampour, and Dowlatabad, are deemed by the natives to be impregnable; † and I am assured by a good judge, that Asseergur is indeed a most stupendous work, and so advantageously situated, that it would be extremely difficult to reduce it by force. Adoni, of which Tippoo Sultaun lately rendered himself master, is not inferior to any of them, either in strength or importance. ‡

NOR is it only from surveying their public works that we are justified in asserting the early proficiency of the Indians in elegant and useful arts: we are led to form the same conclusion by a view of those productions of their ingenuity, which were the chief articles of their trade with foreign nations. Of these, the labours of the Indian loom and needle have, in every age, been the most celebrated; and fine linen is conjectured, with some probability, to have been called by the ancients *Sindon*, from the name of the river Indus or Sindus, near which it was wrought in the highest perfection. § The cotton manufactures of India seem anciently to have been as

* No. III.

† Rennell, Mem. p. 133. 139.

‡ Historical and Political View of the Deccan, p. 13.

§ Sir William Jones's Third Discourse, p. 428.

much admired as they are at present, not only for their delicate texture, but for the elegance with which some of them are embroidered, and the beautiful colour of the flowers with which others are adorned. From the earliest period of European intercourse with India, that country has been distinguished for the number and excellence of the substances for dyeing various colours with which it abounded.* The dye of the deep blue colour in highest estimation among the Romans, bore the name of *Indicum*.† From India, too, the substance used in dyeing a bright red colour, seems to have been imported;‡ and it is well known that both in the cotton and silk stuffs which we now receive from India, the blue and the red are the colours of most conspicuous lustre and beauty. But however much the ancients may have admired these productions of Indian art, some circumstances, which I have already mentioned, rendered their demand for the cotton manufactures of India far inferior to that of modern times; and this has occasioned the information concerning them which we receive from the Greek and Roman writers to be very imperfect. We may conclude, however, from the wonderful resemblance of the ancient

* Strabo, lib. xv. p. 1018. A. 1024. B.

† Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. xxxv. c. 6. § 27.

‡ Salmasius Exercit. Plinianæ in Solin. 180, &c. 810. Salmasius de Homonymis Hyles Jatrice, c. 107. See NOTE LXV.

state of India to the modern, that, in every period, the productions of their looms were as various as beautiful. The ingenuity of the Indians in other kinds of workmanship, particularly in metals and in ivory, is mentioned with praise by ancient authors, but without any particular description of their nature.* Of these early productions of Indian artists, there are now some specimens in Europe, from which it appears that they were acquainted with the method of engraving upon the hardest stones and gems; and, both in the elegance of their designs and in neatness of execution, had arrived at a considerable degree of excellence. An ingenious writer maintains, that the art of engraving on gems was probably an Indian invention, and certainly was early improved there; and he supports this opinion by several plausible arguments.† The Indian engraved gems of which he has published descriptions, appear to be the workmanship of a very remote period, as the legends on them are in the Sanskreet language.‡

BUT it is not alone from the improved state of mechanic arts in India, that we conclude its inhabitants to have been highly civilized; a

* Strabo, lib. xv. p. 1044. B. Dionys. Perieges, ver. 1016.

† Raspe's Introd. to Tassie's Descript. Catal. of Engraved Gems, &c. p. xii. &c.

‡ Raspe's Introd. to Tassie's Descript. Catal. of Engraved Gems, vol. i. p. 74. vol. ii. plate xiii.

proof of this, still more convincing, may be deduced from the early and extraordinary productions of their genius in the fine arts. This evidence is rendered more interesting, by being derived from a source of knowledge which the laudable curiosity of our countrymen has opened to the people of Europe within these few years. That all the science and literature possessed by the Brahmins, were contained in books written in a language understood by a few only of the most learned among them, is a fact which has long been known; and all the Europeans settled in India during three centuries, have complained that the Brahmins obstinately refused to instruct any person in this language. But at length, by address, mild treatment, and a persuasion that the earnestness with which instruction was solicited, proceeded not from any intention of turning their religion into derision, but from a desire of acquiring a perfect knowledge of their sciences and literature, the scruples of the Brahmins have been overcome. Several British gentlemen are now completely masters of the Sanskreet language. The mysterious veil, formerly deemed impenetrable, is removed; and in the course of five years, the curiosity of the public has been gratified by two publications as singular as they were unexpected. The one is a translation by Mr Wilkins, of an Episode from the *Mahabarat*, an epic poem in high estimation among the Hindoos, composed according to their account by Kreesna Dwypayen Veias, the most eminent of

all their Brahmins, above three thousand years before the Christian era. The other is *Sacontala*, a dramatic poem, written about a century before the birth of Christ, translated by Sir W. Jones. I shall endeavour to give my readers such a view of the subject and composition of each of these, as may enable them to estimate, in some measure, the degree of merit which they possess.

THE Mahabarat is a voluminous poem, consisting of upwards of four hundred thousand lines. Mr Wilkins has translated more than a third of it; but only a short episode, entitled *Baghvat-Geeta*, is hitherto published, and from this specimen we must form an opinion with respect to the whole. The subject of the poem is a famous civil war between two branches of the royal house of Bhaurat. When the forces on each side were formed in the field, and ready to decide the contest by the sword, Arjoon, the favourite and pupil of the god *Kreeshna*, who accompanied him in this hour of danger, requested of him to cause his chariot to advance between the two hostile armies. He looked at both armies, and beheld on either side, none but grandsires, uncles, cousins, tutors, sons, and brothers, near relations or bosom friends; and when he had gazed for a while, and saw these prepared for the fight, he was seized with extreme pity and compunction, and uttered his sorrow in the following words:—
“ Having beheld, O *Kreeshna!* my kindred thus

waiting anxious for the fight, my members fail me, my countenance withereth, the hair standeth on end upon my body, and all my frame trembleth with horror; even *Gandeev*, my bow, escapeth from my hand, and my skin is parched and dried up.—When I have destroyed my kindred, shall I longer look for happiness? I wish not for victory, *Kreeshna*; I want not dominion; I want not pleasure; for what is dominion and the enjoyments of life, or even life itself, when those for whom dominion, pleasure, and enjoyment were to be coveted, have abandoned life and fortune, and stand here in the field ready for the battle? Tutors, sons and fathers, grandsires and grandsons, uncles, nephews, cousins, kindred, and friends! Although they would kill me, I wish not to fight them; no not even for the dominion of the three regions of the universe, much less for this little earth.”* In order to remove his scruples, *Kreeshna* informs him what was the duty of a prince of the *Chehteree* or military cast, when called to act in such a situation, and incites him to perform it by a variety of moral and philosophical arguments, the nature of which I shall have occasion to consider particularly in another part of this Dissertation. In this dialogue between *Kreeshna* and his pupil, there are several passages which give an high idea of the genius of the poet. The speech of *Arjoon* I have quoted, in which he expresses the anguish

* *Baghvat-Geeta*, p. 30, 31.

of his soul, must have struck every reader as beautiful and pathetic; and I shall afterwards produce a description of the Supreme Being, and of the reverence wherewith he should be worshipped, which is sublime. But while these excite our admiration, and confirm us in the belief of a high degree of civilization in that country where such a work was produced, we are surprised at the defect of taste and of art in the manner of introducing this episode. Two powerful armies are drawn up in battle-array, eager for the fight; a young hero and his instructor are described as standing in a chariot of war between them: that surely was not the moment for teaching him the principles of philosophy, and delivering eighteen lectures of metaphysics and theology.

WITH regard, however, both to the dramatic and epic poetry of the Hindoos, we labour under the disadvantage of being obliged to form an opinion from a single specimen of each, and that of the latter, too, (as it is only a part of a large work), an imperfect one. But if, from such scanty materials, we may venture upon any decision, it must be, that of the two the drama seems to have been conducted with the most correct taste. This will appear from the observations which I now proceed to make upon Sacontala.

IT is only to nations considerably advanced in refinement, that the drama is a favourite enter-

tainment. The Greeks had been for a good time a polished people; Alcæus and Sappho had composed their Odes, and Thales and Anaximander had opened their schools, before tragedy made its first rude essay in the cart of Thespis; and a good time elapsed before it attained to any considerable degree of excellence. From the drama of *Sacotala*, then, we must form an advantageous idea of the state of improvement in that society to whose taste it was suited. In estimating its merit, however, we must not apply to it rules of criticism drawn from the literature and taste of nations with which its author was altogether unacquainted; we must not expect the unities of the Greek theatre; we must not measure it by our own standard of propriety. Allowance must be made for local customs, and singular manners, arising from a state of domestic society, an order of civil policy, and a system of religious opinions, very different from those established in Europe. *Sacotala* is not a regular drama, but, like some of the plays early exhibited on the Spanish and English theatres, is an history in dialogue, unfolding events which happened in different places, and during a series of years. When viewed in this light, the fable is in general well arranged, many of the incidents are happily chosen, and the vicissitudes in the situation of the principal personages are sudden and unexpected. The unravelling of the piece, however, though some of the circumstances preparatory to it be introduced with skill, is at last brought about by the inter-

vention of superior beings, which has always a bad effect, and discovers some want of art. But as Sacontala was descended of a celestial nymph, and under the protection of a holy hermit, this heavenly interposition may appear less marvelous, and is extremely agreeable to the Oriental taste. In many places of this drama it is simple and tender, in some pathetic; in others there is a mixture of comic with what is more serious. Of each examples might be given. I shall select, a few of the first, both because simplicity and tenderness are the characteristic beauties of the piece, and because they so little resemble the extravagant imagery and turgid style conspicuous in almost all the specimens of Oriental poetry which have hitherto been published.

SACONTALA, the heroine of the drama, a princess of high birth, had been educated by an holy hermit in a hallowed grove, and had passed the early part of her life in rural occupations and pastoral innocence. When she was about to quit this beloved retreat, and repair to the court of a great monarch, to whom she had been married, Cana, her foster-father, and her youthful companions, thus bewail their own loss, and express their wishes for her happiness, in a strain of sentiment and language perfectly suited to their pastoral character.

“ HEAR, O ye trees of this hallowed forest, hear and proclaim that Sacontala is going to the

palace of her wedded Lord : she who drank not, though thirsty, before you were watered ; she who cropped not, through affection for you, one of your fresh leaves, though she would have been pleased with such an ornament for her locks ; she, whose chief delight was in the season when your branches are spangled with flowers !

Chorus of Wood Nymphs.—May her way be attended with prosperity ! May propitious breezes sprinkle, for her delight, the odoriferous dust of rich blossoms ! May pools of clear water, green with the leaves of the lotus, refresh her as she walks ! and may shady branches be her defence from the scorching sun-beams !”

SACONTALA, just as she was departing from the grove, turns to Cana : “ Suffer me, venerable father, to address this Madhavi-creeper, whose red blossoms inflame the grove.”—*Cana.* “ My child, I know thy affection for it.”—*Sacont.* “ O most radiant of shining plants, receive my embraces, and return them with thy flexible arms ! From this day, though removed at a fatal distance, I shall for ever be thine.—O beloved father, consider this creeper as myself !” As she advances, she again addresses Cana : “ Father ! when you female antelope, who now moves slowly from the weight of the young ones with which she is pregnant, shall be delivered of them, send me, I beg, a kind message with tidings of her safety. Do not forget.”—*Cana.* “ My beloved, I will not

forget it.”——*Sacontala* [*stopping*] “ Ah ! what is it that clings to the skirts of my robe and detains me !”——*Cana*. “ It is thy adopted child, the little fawn, whose mouth, when the sharp points of Cusa grass had wounded it, has been so often smeared by thee with the healing oil of Ingudi ; who has been so often fed by thee with a handful of Synmaka grains, and now will not leave the footsteps of his protectress.”——*Sacont.* “ Why dost thou weep, tender fawn, for me, who must leave our common dwelling-place ?—As thou wast reared by me when thou hadst lost thy mother, who died soon after thy birth, so will my foster-father attend thee, when we are separated, with anxious care.—Return, poor thing, return——we must part.” [*She bursts into tears.*]——*Cana*. “ Thy tears, my child, ill suit the occasion ; we shall all meet again ; be firm ; see the direct road before thee, and follow it. When the big tear lurks beneath thy beautiful eye-lashes, let thy resolution check its first efforts to disengage itself.—In thy passage over this earth, where the paths are now high, now low, and the true path seldom distinguished, the traces of thy feet must needs be unequal ; but virtue will press thee right onward.”*

FROM this specimen of the Indian drama, every reader of good taste, I should imagine, will be satisfied, that it is only among a people of polished

* Act IV. p. 47, &c.

manners and delicate sentiments that a composition so simple and correct could be produced or relished. I observe one instance in this drama of that wild extravagance so frequent in Oriental poetry. The monarch, in replacing a bracelet which had dropped from the arm of Sacontala, thus addresses her : “ Look, my darling, this is the new moon which left the firmament in honour of superior beauty, and having descended on your enchanting wrist, hath joined both its horns round it in the shape of a bracelet.”* But this is the speech of an enraptured young man to his mistress, and in every age and nation exaggerated praise is expected from the mouth of lovers.— Dramatic exhibitions seem to have been a favourite amusement of the Hindoos as well as of other civilized nations. “ The tragedies, comedies, farces, and musical pieces of the Indian theatre, would fill as many volumes as that of any nation in ancient or modern Europe. They are all in verse where the dialogue is elevated, and in prose where it is familiar ; the men of rank and learning are represented speaking pure Sanskreet, and the women Pracrit, which is little more than the language of the Brahmins melted down by a delicate articulation to the softness of Italian ; while the low persons of the drama speak the vulgar dialects of the several provinces which they are supposed to inhabit.”†

* Act III. p. 36.

† Preface to Sacont. by Sir William Jones, p. ix. See
NOTE LXVI.

V. THE attainments of the Indians in science furnish an additional proof of their early civilization. By every person who has visited India in ancient or modern times, its inhabitants, either in transactions of private business, or in the conduct of political affairs, have been deemed not inferior to the people of any nation in sagacity or in acuteness of understanding. From the application of such talents to the cultivation of science, an extraordinary degree of proficiency might have been expected. The Indians were, accordingly, early celebrated on that account, and some of the most eminent of the Greek philosophers travelled into India, that, by conversing with the sages of that country, they might acquire some portion of the knowledge for which they were distinguished.* The accounts, however, which we receive from the Greeks and Romans of the sciences which attracted the attention of the Indian philosophers, or of the discoveries which they had made in them, are very imperfect. To the researches of a few intelligent persons, who have visited India during the course of the three last centuries, we are indebted for more ample and authentic information. But from the reluctance with which the Brahmins communicate their sciences to strangers, and the inability of Europeans to acquire much knowledge of them, while, like the mysteries of their religion, they were concealed from vulgar eyes in an unknown tongue, this information was acquired

* Brukeri Hist. Philosoph. vol. i. p. 190.

slowly, and with great difficulty. The same observation, however, which I made concerning our knowledge of the state of the fine arts among the people of India, is applicable to that of their progress in science; and the present age is the first furnished with sufficient evidence upon which to found a decisive judgment with respect to either.

SCIENCE, when viewed as disjoined from religion, the consideration of which I reserve for another head, is employed in contemplating either the operations of the understanding, the exercise of our moral powers, or the nature and qualities of external objects. The first is denominated logic; the second ethics; the third physics, or the knowledge of nature. With respect to the early progress in cultivating each of these sciences in India, we are in possession of facts which merit attention.

BUT, prior to the consideration of them, it is proper to examine the ideas of the Brahmins with respect to mind itself; for if these were not just, all their theories concerning its operations must have been erroneous and fanciful. The distinction between matter and spirit appears to have been early known by the philosophers of India; and to the latter they ascribed many powers of which they deemed the former to be incapable: and when we recollect how inadequate our conceptions are of every object that does not fall under the cognizance of the senses, we may affirm

(if allowance be made for a peculiar notion of the Hindoos, which shall be afterwards explained) that no description of the human soul is more suited to the dignity of its nature than that given by the author of the Mahabarat. "Some," says he, "regard the soul as a wonder, others hear of it with astonishment, but no one knoweth it. The weapon divideth it not; the fire burneth it not; the water corrupteth it not; the wind drieth it not away; for it is indivisible, inconsumable, incorruptible; it is eternal, universal, permanent, immoveable; it is invisible, inconceivable, and unalterable."* After this view of the sentiments of the Brahmins concerning mind itself, we may proceed to consider their ideas with respect to each of the sciences, in that tripartite arrangement which I mentioned.

1st, LOGIC and METAPHYSICS. On no subject has the human understanding been more exercised than in analyzing its own operations. The various powers of the mind have been examined and defined. The origin and progress of our ideas have been traced; and proper rules have been prescribed, of proceeding from the observation of facts to the establishment of principles, or from the knowledge of principles to form arrangements of science. The philosophers of ancient Greece were highly celebrated for their proficiency in these abstruse speculations; and,

* Baghvat-Geeta, p. 37.

in their discussions and arrangements, discovered such depth of thought and acuteness of discernment, that their systems of logic, particularly that of the Peripatetic School, have been deemed most distinguished efforts of human reason.

BUT since we became acquainted, in some degree, with the literature and science of the Hindoos, we find that as soon as men arrive at that stage in social life when they can turn their attention to speculative inquiries, the human mind will, in every region of the earth, display nearly the same powers, and proceed in its investigations and discoveries by nearly similar steps. From Abul Fazel's compendium of the philosophy* of the Hindoos, the knowledge of which he acquired, as he informs us, by associating intimately with the most learned men of the nation; from the specimen of their logical discussions contained in that portion of the Shastra published by Colonel Dow,† and from many passages in the Baghvat-Geeta, it appears that the same speculations which occupied the philosophers of Greece had engaged the attention of the Indian Brahmins; and the theories of the former, either concerning the qualities of external objects, or the nature of our own ideas, were not more ingenious than those of the latter. To define with accuracy, to distinguish with acuteness, and to reason

* Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 95, &c.

† Dissertation, p. xxxix. &c.

with subtlety, are characteristics of both ; and in both the same excess of refinement, in attempting to analyze those operations of mind which the faculties of man were not formed to comprehend, led sometimes to the most false and dangerous conclusions. That sceptical philosophy which denies the existence of the material world, and asserts nothing to be real but our own ideas, seems to have been known in India as well as in Europe ;* and the sages of the East, as they were indebted to philosophy for the knowledge of many important truths, were not more exempt than those of the West from its delusions and errors.

2d, ETHICS. This science, which has for its object to ascertain what distinguishes virtue from vice, to investigate what motives should prompt men to act, and to prescribe rules for the conduct of life, as it is of all others the most interesting, seems to have deeply engaged the attention of the Brahmins. Their sentiments with respect to these points were various, and, like the philosophers of Greece, the Brahmins were divided into sects, distinguished by maxims and tenets often diametrically opposite. That sect with whose opinions we are, fortunately, best acquainted, had established a system of morals, founded on principles the most generous and dignified which unassisted reason is capable of discovering. Man, they taught, was formed not for speculation

* Dow's Dissertation, p. lvii. Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 128

or indolence, but for action. He is born, not for himself alone, but for his fellow men. The happiness of the society of which he is a member, the good of mankind, are his ultimate and highest objects. In choosing what to prefer or to reject, the justness and propriety of his own choice are the only considerations to which he should attend. The events which may follow his actions are not in his own power, and whether they be prosperous or adverse, as long as he is satisfied with the purity of the motives which induced him to act, he can enjoy that approbation of his own mind which constitutes genuine happiness, independent of the power of fortune or the opinions of other men. "Man (says the author of the Mahabarat) enjoyeth not freedom from action. Every man is involuntarily urged to act by those principles which are inherent in his nature. He who restraineth his active faculties, and sitteth down with his mind attentive to the objects of his senses, may be called one of an astrayed soul. The man is praised, who, having subdued all his passions, performeth with his active faculties all the functions of life, unconcerned about the event.* Let the motive be in the deed, and not in the event. Be not one whose motive for action is the hope of reward. Let not thy life be spent in inaction. Depend upon application, perform thy duty, abandon all thought of the consequence, and make the event equal, whether it terminate in good or in

* Baghvat-Geeta, p. 44.

evil; for such an equality is called *Yog* [*i. e.* attention to what is spiritual]. Seek an asylum then in wisdom alone; for the miserable and unhappy are so on account of the event of things. Men who are endued with true wisdom are unmindful of good or evil in this world. Study then to obtain this application of thy understanding, for such application in business is a precious art. Wise men who have abandoned all thought of the fruit which is produced from their actions, are freed from the chains of birth, and go to the regions of eternal happiness.”*

FROM these and other passages which I might have quoted, we learn that the distinguishing doctrines of the Stoical school were taught in India many ages before the birth of Zeno, and inculcated with a persuasive earnestness nearly resembling that of Epictetus; and it is not without astonishment that we find the tenets of this manly active philosophy, which seem to be formed only for men of the most vigorous spirit, prescribed as the rule of conduct to a race of people more eminent (as is generally supposed) for the gentleness of their disposition than for the elevation of their minds.

3d, PHYSICS. In all the sciences which contribute towards extending our knowledge of nature, in mathematics, mechanics, and astronomy,

* Baghvat-Geeta, p. 40.

arithmetic is of elementary use. In whatever country, then, we find that such attention has been paid to the improvement of arithmetic as to render its operations most easy and correct, we may presume that the sciences depending upon it have attained a superior degree of perfection. Such improvement of this science we find in India. While, among the Greeks and Romans, the only method used for the notation of numbers was by the letters of the alphabet, which necessarily rendered arithmetical calculation extremely tedious and operose, the Indians had, from time immemorial, employed for the same purpose the ten ciphers, or figures, now universally known, and by means of them performed every operation in arithmetic with the greatest facility and expedition. By the happy invention of giving a different value to each figure according to its change of place, no more than ten figures are needed in calculations the most complex, and of any given extent; and arithmetic is the most perfect of all the sciences. The Arabians, not long after their settlement in Spain, introduced this mode of notation into Europe, and were candid enough to acknowledge that they had derived the knowledge of it from the Indians. Though the advantages of this mode of notation are obvious and great, yet so slowly do mankind adopt new inventions, that the use of it was for some time confined to science; by degrees, however, men of business relinquished the former cumbersome method of computation by letters, and the Indian

arithmetic came into general use throughout Europe.* It is now so familiar and simple, that the ingenuity of the people to whom we are indebted for the invention, is less observed and less celebrated than it merits.

THE astronomy of the Indians is a proof still more conspicuous of their extraordinary progress in science. The attention and success with which they studied the motions of the heavenly bodies were so little known to the Greeks and Romans, that it is hardly mentioned by them but in the most cursory manner.† But as soon as the Mahomedans established an intercourse with the natives of India, they observed and celebrated the superiority of their astronomical knowledge. Of the Europeans who visited India after the communication with it by the Cape of Good Hope was discovered, M. Bernier, an inquisitive and philosophical traveller, was one of the first who learned that the Indians had long applied to the study of astronomy, and had made considerable progress in that science.‡ His information, however, seems to have been very general and imperfect. We are indebted for the first scientific proof of the great proficiency of the Indians in astronomical knowledge, to M. de la Loubere, who, on his return from his embassy to Siam, brought with him an extract from a Siamese

A. D. 1687.

* Montucla, *Hist. des Mathemat.* tom. i. p. 360, &c.

† Strabo, lib. xv. p. 1047. A. Dion. Perieg. v. 1173.

‡ Voyages, tom. ii. p. 145, &c.

manuscript, which contained tables and rules for calculating the places of the sun and moon. The manner in which these tables were constructed rendered the principles on which they were founded extremely obscure, and it required a commentator as conversant in astronomical calculation as the celebrated Cassini, to explain the meaning of this curious fragment. The epoch of the Siamese tables corresponds to the 21st of March A. D. 638. Another set of tables was transmitted from Chrisnabouram, in the Carnatic, the epoch of which answers to the 10th of March A. D. 1491. A third set of tables came from Nar-sapour, and the epoch of them goes no farther back than A. D. 1569. The fourth and most curious set of tables was published by M. le Gentil, to whom they were communicated by a learned Brahmin of Tirvalore, a small town on the Coromandel Coast, about twelve miles west of Negapatam. The epoch of these tables is of high antiquity, and coincides with the beginning of the celebrated era of the Calyougham or Collee Jogue, which commenced, according to the Indian account, three thousand one hundred and two years before the birth of Christ.*

THESE four sets of tables have been examined and compared by M. Bailly, who, with singular felicity of genius, has conjoined an uncommon degree of eloquence with the patient researches

* See NOTE LXVII.

of an astronomer, and the profound investigations of a geometrician. His calculations have been verified, and his reasonings have been illustrated and extended by Mr Playfair, in a very masterly Dissertation, published in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.*

INSTEAD of attempting to follow them in reasonings and calculations, which from their nature are often abstruse and intricate, I shall satisfy myself with giving such a general view of them as is suited to a popular work. This, I hope, may convey a proper idea of what has been published concerning the astronomy of India, a subject too curious and important to be omitted in any account of the state of science in that country; and, without interposing any judgment of my own, I shall leave each of my readers to form his own opinion.

It may be considered as the general result of all the inquiries, reasonings, and calculations, with respect to Indian astronomy, which have hitherto been made public, "That the motion of the heavenly bodies, and more particularly their situation at the commencement of the different epochs to which the four sets of tables refer, are ascertained with great accuracy; and that many of the elements of their calculations, especially for very remote ages, are verified by an astonish-

* Vol. ii. p. 135.

ing coincidence with the tables of the modern astronomy of Europe, when improved by the latest and most nice deductions from the theory of gravitation." These conclusions are rendered peculiarly interesting, by the evidence which they afford of an advancement in science unexampled in the history of rude nations. The Indian Brahmins, who annually circulate a kind of almanack containing astronomical predictions of some of the more remarkable phenomena in the heavens, such as the new and full moons, the eclipses of the sun and moon, are in possession of certain methods of calculation, which, upon examination, are found to involve in them a very extensive system of astronomical knowledge. M. le Gentil, a French astronomer, had an opportunity, while in India, of observing two eclipses of the moon which had been calculated by a Brahmin, and he found the error in either to be very considerable.

THE accuracy of these results is less surprising than the justness and scientific nature of the principles on which the tables, by which they calculate, are constructed; for the method of predicting eclipses which is followed by the Brahmins, is of a kind altogether different from any that has been found in the possession of rude nations in the infancy of astronomy. In Chaldea, and even in Greece, in the early ages, the method of calculating eclipses was founded on the observation of a certain period or cycle, after which the eclipses of

the sun and moon return nearly in the same order ; but there was no attempt to analyze the different circumstances on which the eclipse depends, or to deduce its phenomena from a precise knowledge of the motions of the sun and moon. This last was reserved for a more advanced period, when geometry, as well as arithmetic, were called in to the assistance of astronomy, and, if it was attempted at all, seems not to have been attempted with success before the age of Hipparchus. It is a method of this superior kind, founded on principles and on an analysis of the motions of the sun and moon, which guides the calculations of the Brahmins ; and they never employ any of the grosser estimations, which were the pride of the first astronomers in Egypt and Chaldea.

THE Brahmins of the present times are guided in their calculations by these principles, though they do not now understand them ; they know only the use of the tables which are in their possession, but are unacquainted with the method of their construction. The Brahmin who visited M. le Gentil at Pondicherry, and instructed him in the use of the Indian tables, had no knowledge of the principles of his art, and discovered no curiosity concerning the nature of M. le Gentil's observations, or about the instruments which he employed. He was equally ignorant with respect to the authors of these tables : and whatever is to be learned concerning the time or place of their construction, must be deduced from the tables

themselves. One set of these tables (as was formerly observed) profess to be as old as the beginning of the Calyougham, or to go back to the year 3102 before the Christian era; but as nothing (it may be supposed) is easier than for an astronomer to give to his tables what date he pleases, and by calculating backwards, to establish an epoch of any assigned antiquity, the pretensions of the Indian astronomy to so remote an origin are not to be admitted without examination.

THAT examination has accordingly been instituted by M. Bailly, and the result of his inquiries is asserted to be, that the astronomy of India is founded on observations which cannot be of a much later date than the period above mentioned. For the Indian tables represent the state of the heavens at that period with astonishing exactness; and there is between them and the calculations of our modern astronomy such a conformity with respect to those ages, as could result from nothing, but from the authors of the former having accurately copied from nature, and having delineated truly the face of the heavens, in the age wherein they lived. In order to give some idea of the high degree of accuracy in the Indian tables, I shall select a few instances of it, out of many that might be produced. The place of the sun for the astronomical epoch at the beginning of the Calyougham, as stated in the tables of Tirvalore, is only forty-seven minutes greater than by the tables of M. de la Caille, when corrected by the

calculations of M. de la Grange. The place of the moon, in the same tables, for the same epoch, is only thirty-seven minutes different from the tables of Mayer. The tables of Ptolemy, for that epoch, are erroneous no less than ten degrees with respect to the place of the sun, and eleven degrees with respect to that of the moon. The acceleration of the moon's motion, reckoning from the beginning of the Calyougham to the present time, agrees, in the Indian tables, with those of Mayer to a single minute. The inequality of the sun's motion, and the obliquity of the ecliptic, which were both greater in former ages than they are now, as represented in the tables of Tirvalore, are almost of the precise quantity that the theory of gravitation assigns to them three thousand years before the Christian era. It is accordingly for those very remote ages (about 5000 years distant from the present) that their astronomy is most accurate, and the nearer we come down to our own times, the conformity of its results with ours diminishes. It seems reasonable to suppose, that the time when its rules are most accurate, is the time when the observations were made on which these rules are founded.

IN support of this conclusion, M. Bailly maintains that none of all the astronomical systems of Greece or Persia, or of Tartary, from some of which it might be suspected that the Indian tables were copied, can be made to agree with them, especially when we calculate for very remote ages.

The superior perfection of the Indian tables becomes always more conspicuous as we go farther back into antiquity. This shows, likewise, how difficult it is to construct any astronomical tables which will agree with the state of the heavens for a period so remote from the time when the tables were constructed, as four or five thousand years. It is only from astronomy in its most advanced state, such as it has attained in modern Europe, that such accuracy is to be expected.

WHEN an estimate is endeavoured to be made of the geometrical skill necessary for the construction of the Indian tables and rules, it is found to be very considerable; and, beside the knowledge of elementary geometry, it must have required plain and spherical trigonometry, or something equivalent to them, together with certain methods of approximating to the values of geometrical magnitudes, which seem to rise very far above the elements of any of those sciences. Some of these last mark also very clearly, (although this has not been observed by M. Bailly), that the places to which these tables are adapted must be situated between the Tropics, because they are altogether inapplicable at a greater distance from the Equator.

FROM this long induction, the conclusion which seems obviously to result is, that the Indian astronomy is founded upon observations which were made at a very early period; and when we con-

sider the exact agreement of the places which they assign to the sun and moon, and other heavenly bodies, at that epoch, with those deduced from the tables of De la Caille and Mayer, it strongly confirms the truth of the position which I have been endeavouring to establish concerning the early and high state of civilization in India.

BEFORE I quit this subject, there is one circumstance which merits particular attention. All the knowledge which we have hitherto acquired of the principles and conclusions of Indian astronomy, is derived from the southern part of the Carnatic, and the tables are adapted to places situated between the meridian of Cape Comorin and that which passes through the eastern part of Ceylon.* The Brahmins in the Carnatic acknowledge that their science of astronomy was derived from the north, and that their method of calculation is denominated *Fakiam*, or New, to distinguish it from the *Siddantam*, or ancient method established at Benares, which they allow to be much more perfect; and we learn from Abul Fazel, that all the astronomers of Indostan rely entirely upon the precepts contained in a book called *Soorej Sudhant*, composed in a very remote period.† It is manifestly from this book that the method to which the Brahmins of the south gave the name of *Siddantam* is taken. Benares has been from time immemorial the Athens of India,

* Bailly, Dis. Prelim. p. xvii. † Ayeen Akbery, iii, p. 8.

the residence of the most learned Brahmins, and the seat both of science and literature. There, it is highly probable, whatever remains of the ancient astronomical knowledge and discoveries of the Brahmins is still preserved.* In an enlightened age and nation, and during a reign distinguished by a succession of the most splendid and successful undertakings to extend the knowledge of nature, it is an object worthy of public attention, to take measures for obtaining possession of all that time has spared of the philosophy and inventions of the most early and most highly civilized people of the East. It is with peculiar advantages Great Britain may engage in this laudable undertaking. Benares is subject to its dominion; the confidence of the Brahmins has been so far gained as to render them communicative; some of our countrymen are acquainted with that sacred language in which the mysteries both of religion and of science are recorded; movement and activity has been given to a spirit of inquiry throughout all the British establishments in India; persons who visited that country with other views, though engaged in occupations of a very different kind, are now carrying on scientific and literary researches with ardour and success. Nothing seems now to be wanting, but that those intrusted with the administration of the British

* M. Bernier, in the year 1668, saw a large hall in Benares filled with the works of the Indian philosophers, physicians, and poets. *Voy. ii. p. 148.*

empire in India, should enable some person, capable, by his talents and liberality of sentiment, of investigating and explaining the more abstruse parts of Indian philosophy, to devote his whole time to that important object. Thus Great Britain may have the glory of exploring fully that extensive field of unknown science, which the academicians of France had the merit of first opening to the people of Europe.*

VI. THE last evidence which I shall mention of the early and high civilization of the ancient Indians, is deduced from the consideration of their religious tenets and practices. The institutions of religion, publicly established in all the extensive countries stretching from the banks of the Indus to Cape Comorin, present to view an aspect nearly similar. They form a regular and complete system of superstition, strengthened and upheld by every thing which can excite the reverence and secure the attachment of the people. The temples consecrated to their deities are magnificent, and adorned not only with rich offerings, but with the most exquisite works in painting and sculpture, which the artists highest in estimation among them were capable of executing. The rites and ceremonies of their worship are pompous and splendid, and the performance of them not only mingles in all the more momentous transactions of common life, but constitutes an essen-

* See NOTE LXVIII.

tial part of them. The Brahmins, who, as ministers of religion, preside in all its functions, are elevated above every other order of men, by an origin deemed not only more noble, but acknowledged to be sacred. They have established among themselves a regular hierarchy and gradation of ranks, which, by securing subordination in their own order, adds weight to their authority, and gives them a more absolute dominion over the minds of the people. This dominion they support by the command of the immense revenues with which the liberality of princes, and the zeal of pilgrims and devotees, have enriched their Pagodas.*

It is far from my intention to enter into any minute detail with respect to this vast and complicated system of superstition. An attempt to enumerate the multitude of deities which are the objects of adoration in India; to describe the splendour of worship in their Pagodas, and the immense variety of their rites and ceremonies; to recount the various attributes and functions which the craft of priests, or the credulity of the people, have ascribed to their divinities; especially if I were to accompany all this with the review of the numerous and often fanciful speculations and theories of learned men on this subject, would require a work of great magnitude. I shall, therefore, on this, as on some of the for-

* Roger, *Porte Ouverte*, p. 39. 209, &c.

mer heads, confine myself to the precise point which I have kept uniformly in view; and by considering the state of religion in India, I shall endeavour not only to throw additional light on the state of civilization in that country, but I flatter myself that, at the same time, I shall be able to give what may be considered as a sketch and outline of the history and progress of superstition and false religion in every region of the earth.

I. WE may observe, that, in every country, the received mythology, or system of superstitious belief, with all the rites and ceremonies which it prescribes, is formed in the infancy of society, in rude and barbarous times. True religion is as different from superstition in its origin, as in its nature. The former is the offspring of reason cherished by science, and attains to its highest perfection in ages of light and improvement. Ignorance and fear give birth to the latter, and it is always in the darkest periods that it acquires the greatest vigour. That numerous part of the human species whose lot is labour, whose principal and almost sole occupation is to secure subsistence, has neither leisure nor capacity for entering into that path of intricate and refined speculation, which conducts to the knowledge of the principles of rational religion. When the intellectual powers are just beginning to unfold, and their first feeble exertions are directed towards a few objects of primary necessity and use; when

the faculties of the mind are so limited as not to have formed general and abstract ideas ; when language is so barren as to be destitute of names to distinguish any thing not perceivable by some of the senses ; it is preposterous to expect that men should be capable of tracing the relation between effects and their causes ; or to suppose that they should rise from the contemplation of the former to the discovery of the latter, and form just conceptions of one Supreme Being, as the Creator and Governor of the universe. The idea of creation is so familiar, wherever the mind is enlarged by science, and illuminated by revelation, that we seldom reflect how profound and abstruse the idea is, or consider what progress man must have made in observation and research, before he could arrive at any distinct knowledge of this elementary principle in religion. But even in its rude state, the human mind, formed for religion, opens to the reception of ideas which are destined, when corrected and refined, to be the great source of consolation amidst the calamities of life. These apprehensions, however, are originally indistinct and perplexed, and seem to be suggested rather by the dread of impending evils, than to flow from gratitude for blessings received. While nature holds on her course with uniform and undisturbed regularity, men enjoy the benefits resulting from it, without much inquiry concerning its cause. But every deviation from this regular course rouses and astonishes them. When they behold events to which they are not accus-

tomed, they search for the causes of them with eager curiosity. Their understanding is often unable to discover these, but imagination, a more forward and ardent faculty of the mind, decides without hesitation. It ascribes the extraordinary occurrences in nature to the influence of invisible beings, and supposes the thunder, the hurricane, and the earthquake, to be the immediate effect of their agency. Alarmed by these natural evils, and exposed, at the same time, to many dangers and disasters, which are unavoidable in the early and uncivilized state of society, men have recourse for protection to power superior to what is human, and the first rites or practices which bear any resemblance to acts of religion, have it for their object to avert evils which they suffer or dread.*

II. As superstition and false religion take their rise, in every country, from nearly the same sentiments and apprehensions, the invisible beings who are the first objects of veneration, have everywhere a near resemblance. To conceive an idea of one superintending mind, capable of arranging and directing all the various operations of nature, seems to be an attainment far beyond the powers of man in the more early stages of his progress.

* In the second volume of the History of America, p. 183. of fifth edition, I gave nearly a similar account of the origin of false religion. Instead of labouring to convey the same ideas in different language, I have inserted here some paragraphs in the same words I then used.

His theories, more suited to the limited sphere of his own observation, are not so refined. He supposes that there is a distinct cause of every remarkable effect, and ascribes to a separate power every event which attracts his attention, or excites his terror. He fancies that it is the province of one deity to point the lightning, and, with an awful sound, to hurl the irresistible thunderbolt at the head of the guilty; that another rides in the whirlwind, and, at his pleasure, raises or stills the tempest; that a third rules over the ocean; that a fourth is the god of battles; that while malevolent powers scatter the seeds of animosity and discord, and kindle in the breast those angry passions which give rise to war, and terminate in destruction, others of a nature more benign, by inspiring the hearts of men with kindness and love, strengthen the bonds of social union, augment the happiness, and increase the number of the human race.

WITHOUT descending farther into detail, or attempting to enumerate that infinite multitude of deities to which the fancy or the fears of men have allotted the direction of the several departments in nature, we may recognize a striking uniformity of features in the systems of superstition established throughout every part of the earth. The less men have advanced beyond the state of savage life, and the more slender their acquaintance with the operations of nature, the fewer were their deities in number, and the more com-

pendious was their theological creed; but as their mind gradually opened, and their knowledge continued to extend, the objects of their veneration multiplied, and the articles of their faith became more numerous. This took place remarkably among the Greeks in Europe, and the Indians in Asia, the two people in those great divisions of the earth who were most early civilized, and to whom, for that reason, I shall confine all my observations. They believed, that over every movement in the natural world, and over every function in civil or domestic life, even the most common and trivial, a particular deity presided. The manner in which they arranged the stations of these superintending powers, and the offices which they allotted to each, were in many respects the same. What is supposed to be performed by the power of Jupiter, of Neptune, of Æolus, of Mars, of Venus, according to the mythology of the West, is ascribed in the East to the agency of Agnée, the god of fire; Varoon, the god of oceans; Vayoo, the god of wind;* Cama, the god of love; and a variety of other divinities.

THE ignorance and credulity of men having thus peopled the heavens with imaginary beings, they ascribed to them such qualities and actions as they deemed suitable to their character and functions. It is one of the benefits derived from

* Baghvat-Geeta, p. 94.

true religion, that by setting before men a standard of perfect excellence, which they should have always in their eye, and endeavour to resemble, it may be said to bring down virtue from heaven to earth, and to form the human mind after a divine model. In fabricating systems of false religion, the procedure is directly the reverse. Men ascribe to the beings whom they have deified, such actions as they themselves admire and celebrate. The qualities of the gods who are the objects of adoration, are copied from those of the worshippers who bow down before them; and thus many of the imperfections peculiar to men have found admittance into heaven. By knowing the adventures and attributes of any false deity, we can pronounce, with some degree of certainty, what must have been the state of society and manners when he was elevated to that dignity. The mythology of Greece plainly indicates the character of the age in which it was formed. It must have been in times of the greatest licentiousness, anarchy, and violence, that divinities of the highest rank could be supposed capable of perpetrating actions, or of being influenced by passions, which, in more enlightened periods, would be deemed a disgrace to human nature: It must have been when the earth was still infested with destructive monsters, and mankind, under forms of government too feeble to afford them protection, were exposed to the depredations of lawless robbers, or the cruelty of savage oppressors, that the well known labours of Hercules, by

which he was raised from earth to heaven, could have been necessary, or would have been deemed so highly meritorious. The same observation is applicable to the ancient mythology of India. Many of the adventures and exploits of the Indian deities are suited to the rudest ages of turbulence and rapine. It was to check disorder, to redress wrongs, and to clear the earth of powerful oppressors, that Vishnou, a divinity of the highest order, is said to have become successively incarnate, and to have appeared on earth in various forms.*

III. THE character and functions of those deities which superstition created to itself as objects of its veneration, having every-where a near resemblance, the rites of their worship were every-where extremely similar. Accordingly, as deities were distinguished, either by ferocity of character or licentiousness of conduct, it is obvious what services must have been deemed most acceptable to them. In order to conciliate the favour, or to appease the wrath of the former, fasts, mortifications, and penances, all rigid, and many of them excruciating to an extreme degree, were the means employed. Their altars were always bathed in blood; the most costly victims were offered; whole hecatombs were slaughtered; even human sacrifices were not unknown, and were held to be the most powerful expiations. In

* Voyage de Sonnerat, tom. i. p. 158, &c.

order to gain the good-will of the deities of the latter description, recourse was had to institutions of a very different kind—to splendid ceremonies, gay festivals, heightened by all the pleasures of poetry, music, and dancing, but often terminating in scenes of indulgence too indecent to be described. Of both these, instances occur in the rites of Greek and Roman worship, which I need not mention to my learned readers.* In the East the ceremonial of superstition is nearly the same. The manners of the Indians, though distinguished from the time when they became known to the people of the West for mildness, seem, in a more remote period, to have been in a greater degree similar to those of other nations. Several of their deities were fierce and awful in their nature, and were represented in their temples under the most terrific forms. If we did not know the dominion of superstition over the human mind, we should hardly believe, that a ritual of worship suited to the character of such deities could have been established among a gentle people. Every act of religion performed in honour of some of their gods, seems to have been prescribed by fear. Mortifications and penances so rigorous, so painful, and so long continued, that we read the accounts of them with astonishment and horror, were multiplied. Repugnant as it is to the feelings of an Hindoo to shed the blood of any creature that has life, many different animals, even

* Strabo, lib. viii. p. 581. A. Lib. xii. p. 837. C.

the most useful, the horse and the cow, were offered up as victims upon the altars of some of their gods;* and what is still more strange, the Pagodas of the East were polluted with human sacrifices as well as the temples of the West.† But religious institutions and ceremonies of a less severe kind, were more adapted to the genius of a people formed, by the extreme sensibility both of their mental and corporeal frame, to an immoderate love of pleasure. In no part of the earth was a connexion between the gratification of sensual desire and the rites of public religion, displayed with more avowed indecency than in India. In every Pagoda there was a band of women set apart for the service of the idol honoured there, and devoted from their early years to a life of pleasure; for which the Brahmins prepared them by an education which added so many elegant accomplishments to their natural charms, that what they gained by their profligacy often brought no inconsiderable accession to the revenue of the temple. In every function performed in the Pagodas, as well as in every public procession, it is the office of these women to dance before the idol, and to sing hymns in his praise; and it is difficult to say, whether they trespass most against decency by the gestures they exhibit, or by the verses which they recite. The

* Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 241. Roger, *Porte Ouverte*, p. 251.

† Hecto-Pades, p. 185—322. *Asiat. Recherches*, vol. i. p. 265. *Voyage de Sonnerat*, vol. i. p. 207. Roger, p. 251.

walls of the Pagoda are covered with paintings in a style no less indelicate;* and in the innermost recess of the temple, for it would be profane to call it the sanctuary, is placed the *Lingam*, an emblem of productive power too gross to be explained.†

IV. How absurd soever the articles of faith may be which superstition has adopted, or how unhallowed the rites which it prescribes, the former are received in every age and country with unhesitating assent, by the great body of the people, and the latter observed with scrupulous exactness. In our reasonings concerning religious opinions and practices which differ widely from our own, we are extremely apt to err. Having been instructed ourselves in the principles of a religion, worthy in every respect of that divine wisdom by which they were dictated, we frequently express wonder at the credulity of nations in embracing systems of belief which appear to us so directly repugnant to right reason, and sometimes suspect that tenets so wild and extravagant do not really gain credit with them. But experience may satisfy us, that neither our wonder nor suspicions are well founded. No article of the public religion was called in ques-

* Voyage de Gentil, vol. i. p. 244. 260. Preface to Code of Gentoos Laws, p. lvii.

† Roger, Porte Ouverte, p. 157. Voyage de Sonnerat, vol. i. p. 41. 175. Sketches, vol. i. p. 203. Hamilton's Trav. vol. i. p. 379.

tion by those people of ancient Europe with whose history we are best acquainted, and no practice which it enjoined appeared improper to them. On the other hand, every opinion that tended to diminish the reverence of men for the gods of their country, or to alienate them from their worship, excited among the Greeks and Romans that indignant zeal which is natural to every people attached to their religion by a firm persuasion of its truth. The attachment of the Indians, both in ancient and modern times, to the tenets and rites of their ancestors, has been, if possible, still greater. In no country, of which we have any account, were precautions taken with so much solicitude to place the great body of the people beyond the reach of any temptation to doubt or disbelief. They not only were prevented (as I have already observed the great bulk of mankind must always be, in every country) from entering upon any speculative inquiry, by the various occupations of active and laborious life, but any attempt to extend the sphere of their knowledge was expressly prohibited. If one of the Sooder cast, by far the most numerous of the four into which the whole nation was divided, presumed to read any portion of the sacred books, in which all the science known in India is contained, he was severely punished; if he ventured to get it by heart, he was put to death.* To aspire after any higher degree of

* Code of Gentoo Laws, chap. 21. § 7.

knowledge than the Brahmins have been pleased to teach, would be deemed not only presumption but impiety. Even the higher casts depended entirely for instruction on the Brahmins, and could acquire no portion of science but what they deigned to communicate. By means of this, a devout reverence was universally maintained for those institutions which were considered as sacred; and though the faith of the Hindoos has been often tried by severe persecutions, excited by the bigotry of their Mahomedan conquerors, no people ever adhered with greater fidelity to the tenets and rites of their ancestors.*

V. WE may observe, that when science and philosophy are diffused through any country, the system of superstition is subjected to a scrutiny from which it was formerly exempt, and opinions spread which imperceptibly diminish its influence over the minds of men. A free and full examination is always favourable to truth, but fatal to error. What is received with implicit faith in ages of darkness, will excite contempt or indignation in an enlightened period. The history of religion in Greece and Italy, the only countries of Europe which, in ancient times, were distinguished for their attainments in science, confirms the truth of this observation. As soon as science made such progress in Greece as rendered men capable of discerning the wisdom, the

* Orme's Fragment, p. 102. Sonnerat, vol. i. p. 194.

foresight, and the goodness displayed in creating, preserving, and governing the world; they must have perceived, that the characters of the divinities which were proposed as the objects of adoration in their temples, could not entitle them to be considered as the presiding powers in nature. A poet might address Jupiter as the father of gods and men, who governed both by eternal laws; but to a philosopher, the son of Saturn, the story of whose life is a series of violent and licentious deeds, which would render any man odious or despicable, must have appeared altogether unworthy of that station. The nature of the religious service celebrated in their temples must have been no less offensive to an enlightened mind, than the character of the deities in honour of whom it was performed. Instead of institutions tending to reclaim men from vice, to form or to strengthen habits of virtue, or to elevate the mind to a sense of its proper dignity, superstition either occupied its votaries in frivolous unmeaning ceremonies, or prescribed rites which operated, with fatal influence, in inflaming the passions and corrupting the heart.

It is with timidity, however, and caution, that men venture to attack the established religion of their country, or to impugn opinions which have been long held sacred. At first, some philosophers endeavoured, by allegorical interpretations and refined comments, to explain the popular mythology, as if it had been a description of the

powers of nature, and of the various events and revolutions which take place in the system of the material world, and endeavoured by this expedient to palliate many of its absurdities. By degrees, bolder theories concerning religion were admitted into the schools of science. Philosophers of enlarged views, sensible of the impiety of the popular superstition, formed ideas concerning the perfections of one Supreme Being, the Creator and Ruler of the universe, as just and rational as have ever been attained by the unassisted powers of the human mind.

If from Europe we now turn to Asia, we shall find, that the observation which I have made upon the history of false religion holds equally true there. In India, as well as in Greece, it was by cultivating science that men were first led to examine and to entertain doubts with respect to the established systems of superstition; and when we consider the great difference between the ecclesiastical constitution (if I may use that expression) of the two countries, we are apt to imagine that the established system lay more open to examination in the latter than in the former. In Greece there was not any distinct race or order of men set apart for performing the functions of religion, or to serve as hereditary and interested guardians of its tenets and institutions. But in India the Brahmins were born the ministers of religion, and they had an exclusive right of presiding in all the numerous rites of worship

which superstition prescribed as necessary to avert the wrath of Heaven, or to render it propitious. These distinctions and privileges secured to them a wonderful ascendant over their countrymen; and every consideration that can influence the human mind, the honour, the interest, the power of their order, called upon them to support the tenets, and to maintain the institutions and rites, with which the preservation of this ascendant was so intimately connected.

BUT as the most eminent persons of the Cast devoted their lives to the cultivation of science, the progress which they made in all the branches of it (of which I have given some account) was great, and enabled them to form such a just idea of the system of nature, and of the power, wisdom, and goodness displayed in the formation and government of it, as elevated their minds above the popular superstition, and led them to acknowledge and reverence one Supreme Being, "the Creator of all things, (to use their own expressions), and from whom all things proceed."*

THIS is the idea which Abul Fazel, who examined the opinions of the Brahmins with the greatest attention and candour, gives of their theology. "They all," says he, "believe in the unity of the Godhead, and although they hold images in high veneration, it is only because

* Baghvat-Geeta, p. 84.

they represent celestial beings, and prevent the thoughts of those who worship them from wandering.”* The sentiments of the most intelligent Europeans who have visited India, coincide perfectly with his in respect to this point. The accounts which M. Bernier received from the Pundits of Benares, both of their external worship, and of one Sovereign Lord being the sole object of their devotion, is precisely the same with that given by Abul Fazel.† Mr Wilkins, better qualified perhaps than any European ever was to judge with respect to this subject, represents the learned Brahmins of the present times as Theists, believers in the unity of God.‡ Of the same opinion is M. Sonnerat, who resided in India seven years, in order to inquire into the manners, sciences, and religion of the Hindoos.§ The Pundits who translated the Code of Gentoo Laws declare, “that it was the Supreme Being, who, by his power, formed all creatures of the animal, vegetable, and material world, from the four elements of fire, water, air, and earth, to be an ornament to the magazine of creation; and whose comprehensive benevolence selected man, the centre of knowledge, to have dominion and authority over the rest; and, having bestowed upon this favourite object judgment and understanding, gave him supremacy over the corners of the world.”||

* Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 3. † Voyage, tom. ii. p. 159.

‡ Preface to Baghvat-Geeta, p. 24.

§ Voyage, tom. i. p. 198. || Prelim. Discourse, p. lxxiii.

NOR are these to be regarded as refined sentiments of later times. The Brahmins being considered by the Mahomedan conquerors of India as the guardians of the national religion, have been so studiously depressed by their fanatical zeal, that the modern members of that order are as far inferior to their ancestors in science as in power. It is from the writings of their ancient Pundits that they derive the most liberal sentiments which they entertain at present, and the wisdom for which they are now celebrated has been transmitted to them from ages very remote.

THAT this assertion is well founded we are enabled to pronounce with certainty, as the most profound mysteries of Hindoo theology, concealed with the greatest care from the body of the people, have been unveiled by the translations from the Sanskreet language lately published. The principal design of the Baghvat-Geeta, an episode in the Mahabarat, a poem of the highest antiquity, and of the greatest authority in India, seems to have been to establish the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead, and from a just view of the divine nature to deduce an idea of what worship will be most acceptable to a perfect Being. In it, amidst much obscure metaphysical discussion, some ornaments of fancy unsuited to our taste, and some thoughts elevated to a tract of sublimity into which, from our habits of reasoning and judging, we will find it difficult to follow

them,* we find descriptions of the Supreme Being entitled to equal praise with those of the Greek philosophers which I have celebrated. Of these I shall now produce one to which I formerly alluded, and refer my readers for others to the work itself: "O mighty Being," says Arjoon, "who art the prime Creator, eternal God of Gods, the World's Mansion! Thou art the incorruptible Being, distinct from all things transient. Thou art before all Gods, the ancient *Pooroosh* [i. e. vital soul], and the Supreme Supporter of the universe. Thou knowest all things, and art worthy to be known: Thou art the Supreme Mansion, and by thee, O infinite Form, the universe was spread abroad! Reverence be unto thee before and behind; reverence be unto thee on all sides! O thou who art all in all, infinite is thy power and thy glory.—Thou art the Father of all things, animate and inanimate. Thou art the wise Instructor of the whole, worthy to be adored. There is none like unto thee: where, then, in the three worlds, is there one above thee? Wherefore I bow down; and, with my body prostrate upon the ground, crave thy mercy, Lord! worthy to be adored; for thou shouldst bear with me, even as a father with his son, a friend with his friend, a lover with his beloved."† A description of the Supreme Being is given in one of the sacred books of the Hindoos, from

* Mr Hastings's Letter, prefixed to the *Baghvat-Geeta*, p. 7.

† *Baghvat-Geeta*, p. 94, 95.

which it is evident what were the general sentiments of the learned Brahmins concerning the divine nature and perfections: "As God is immaterial, he is above all conception; as he is invisible, he can have no form; but from what we behold of his works we may conclude, that he is eternal, omnipotent, knowing all things, and present every-where."*

To men capable of forming such ideas of the Deity, the public service in the Pagodas must have appeared to be an idolatrous worship of images, by a superstitious multiplication of frivolous or immoral rites; and they must have seen, that it was only by sanctity of heart, and purity of manners, men could hope to gain the approbation of a Being perfect in goodness. This truth Veias labours to inculcate in the Mahabarat, but with the prudent reserve and artful precautions natural to a Brahmin, studious neither to offend his countrymen, nor to diminish the influence of his own order. His ideas concerning the mode of worshipping the Deity are explained in many striking passages of the poem; but unwilling to multiply quotations, I satisfy myself with referring to them.†

WHEN we recollect how slowly the mind of man opens to abstract ideas, and how difficult (accord-

* Dow's Dissert. p. xl.

† Baghvat-Geeta, p. 55. 67. 75. 97. 119.

ing to an observation in the Mahabarat) an invisible path is to corporeal beings, it is evident that the Hindoos must have attained an high degree of improvement before their sentiments rose so far superior to the popular superstition of their country. The different states of Greece had subsisted long, and had made considerable progress in refinement, before the errors of false religion began to be detected. It was not until the age of Socrates, and in the schools of philosophy established by his disciples, that principles adverse to the tenets of the popular superstition were much propagated.

A LONGER period of time elapsed before the Romans, a nation of warriors and statesmen, were enlightened by science, or ventured upon any free disquisition concerning the objects or the rites of worship authorized by their ancestors. But in India the happy effects of progress in science were much more early conspicuous. Without adopting the wild computations of Indian chronology, according to which, the Mahabarat was composed above four thousand years ago, we must allow, that it is a work of very great antiquity, and the author of it discovers an acquaintance with the principles of theology, of morals, and of metaphysics, more just and rational than seems to have been attained, at that period, by any nation whose history is known.

BUT so unable are the limited powers of the human mind to form an adequate idea of the per-

fections and operations of the Supreme Being, that in all the theories concerning them, of the most eminent philosophers in the most enlightened nations, we find a lamentable mixture of ignorance and error. From these the Brahmins were not more exempt than the sages of other countries. As they held that the system of nature was not only originally arranged by the power and wisdom of God, but that every event which happened was brought about by his immediate interposition; and as they could not comprehend how a being could act in any place unless where it was present, they supposed the Deity to be a vivifying principle diffused through the whole creation, an universal soul that animated each part of it.* Every intelligent nature, particularly the souls of men, they conceived to be portions separated from this great Spirit,† to which, after fulfilling their destiny on earth, and attaining a proper degree of purity, they would be again reunited. In order to efface the stains with which a soul, during its residence on earth, has been defiled, by the indulgence of sensual and corrupt appetites, they taught that it must pass, in a long succession of transmigrations, through the bodies of different animals, until, by what it suffers and what it learns in the various forms of its existence, it shall be so thoroughly refined from all pollution as to be rendered meet

* Baghvat-Geeta, p. 65. 78. 85. Bernier, tom. ii. p. 163.

† Dow's Dissert. p. xliii.

for being absorbed into the divine essence, and returns like a drop into that unbounded ocean from which it originally issued.* These doctrines of the Brahmins concerning the Deity, as the soul which pervades all nature, giving activity and vigour to every part of it, as well as the final reunion of all intelligent creatures to their primeval source, coincide perfectly with the tenets of the Stoical School. It is remarkable, that after having observed a near resemblance in the most sublime sentiments of their moral doctrine, we should likewise discover such a similarity in the errors of their theological speculations.†

THE human mind, however, when destitute of superior guidance, is apt to fall into a practical error with respect to religion, of a tendency still more dangerous. When philosophers, by their attainments in science, began to acquire such just ideas of the nature and perfections of the Supreme Being, as convinced them that the popular system of superstition was not only absurd but impious, they were fully aware of all the danger which might arise from communicating what they had discovered to the people, incapable of comprehending the force of those reasons

* Voy. de Sonnerat, vol. i. p. 192. 200. Baghvat-Geeta, p. 39. 115. Dow's Dissert. p. xliii.

† Lipsij. Physiol. Stoicor. lib. i. dissert. viii. xxi. Seneca, Antoninus, Epictetus, passim.

which had swayed with them, and so zealously attached to established opinions, as to revolt against any attempt to detect their falsehood. Instead, therefore, of allowing any ray of that knowledge which illuminated their own minds to reach them, they formed a theory to justify their own conduct, and to prevent the darkness of that cloud which hung over the minds of their fellow-men from being ever dispelled. The vulgar and unlearned, they contended, had no right to truth. Doomed by their condition to remain in ignorance, they were to be kept in order by delusion, and allured to do what is right, or deterred from venturing upon what is wrong, by the hope of those imaginary rewards which superstition promises, and the dread of those punishments which it threatens. In confirmation of this, I might quote the doctrine of most of the philosophic sects, and produce the words of almost every eminent Greek and Roman writer. It will be sufficient, however, to lay before my readers a remarkable passage in Strabo, to whom I have been so often indebted in the course of my researches, and who was no less qualified to judge with respect to the political opinions of his contemporaries, than to describe the countries which they inhabited. "What is marvellous in fable, is employed," says he, "sometimes to please, and sometimes to inspire terror, and both these are of use, not only with children, but with persons of mature age. To children we propose delightful fictions, in order to encourage them to

act well, and such as are terrible, in order to restrain them from evil. Thus when men are united in society, they are incited to what is laudable, by hearing the poets celebrate the splendid actions of fabulous story, such as the labours of Hercules and Theseus, in reward for which they are now honoured as divinities, or by beholding their illustrious deeds exhibited to public view in painting and sculpture. On the other hand, they are deterred from vice, when the punishments inflicted by the gods upon evil doers are related, and threats are denounced against them in awful words, or represented by frightful figures, and when men believe that these threats have been really executed upon the guilty. For it is impossible to conduct women and the gross multitude, and to render them holy, pious, and upright, by the precepts of reason and philosophy; superstition, or the fear of the gods, must be called in aid, the influence of which is founded on fictions and prodigies. For the thunder of Jupiter, the ægis of Minerva, the trident of Neptune, the torches and snakes of the Furies, the spears of the gods, adorned with ivy, and the whole ancient theology, are all fables, which the legislators who formed the political constitution of states employ as bugbears to overawe the credulous and simple.”*

THESE ideas of the philosophers of Europe were precisely the same which the Brahmins had

adopted in India, and according to which they regulated their conduct with respect to the great body of the people. As their order had an exclusive right to read the sacred books, to cultivate and to teach science, they could more effectually prevent all who were not members of it from acquiring any portion of information beyond what they were pleased to impart. When the free circulation of knowledge is not circumscribed by such restrictions, the whole community derives benefit from every new acquisition in science, the influence of which, both upon sentiment and conduct, extends insensibly from the few to the many, from the learned to the ignorant. But wherever the dominion of false religion is completely established, the body of the people gain nothing by the greatest improvements in knowledge. Their philosophers conceal from them, with the utmost solicitude, the truths which they have discovered, and labour to support that fabric of superstition which it was their duty to have overturned. They not only enjoin others to respect the religious rites prescribed by the laws of their country, but conform to them in their own practice, and, with every external appearance of reverence and devotion, bow down before the altars of deities, who must inwardly be the objects of their contempt. Instead of resembling the teachers of true religion, in the benevolent ardour with which they have always communicated to their fellow-men the knowledge of those important truths with which their own minds were

enlightened and rendered happy, the sages of Greece, and the Brahmins of India, carried on, with studied artifice, a scheme of deceit, and, according to an emphatic expression of an inspired writer, they *detained* the truth in unrighteousness.* They knew and approved what was true, but among the rest of mankind they laboured to support and to perpetuate what is false.

Thus I have gone through all the particulars which I originally proposed to examine, and have endeavoured to discover the state of the inhabitants of India with respect to each of them. If I had aimed at nothing else than to describe the civil policy, the arts, the sciences, the religious institutions of one of the most ancient and most numerous races of men, that alone would have led me into inquiries and discussions both curious and instructive. I own, however, that I have all along kept in view an object more interesting, as well as of greater importance; and entertain hopes, that if the account which I have given of the early and high civilization of India, and of the wonderful progress of its inhabitants in elegant arts and useful science, shall be received as just and well established, it may have some influence upon the behaviour of Europeans towards that people. Unfortunately for the human species, in whatever quarter of the globe the people of Europe have acquired dominion, they have

* Rom. i. 18.

found the inhabitants not only in a state of society and improvement far inferior to their own, but different in their complexion, and in all their habits of life. Men in every stage of their career are so satisfied with the progress made by the community of which they are members, that it becomes to them a standard of perfection, and they are apt to regard people whose condition is not similar, with contempt, and even aversion. In Africa and America, the dissimilitude is so conspicuous, that, in the pride of their superiority, Europeans thought themselves entitled to reduce the natives of the former to slavery, and to exterminate those of the latter. Even in India, though far advanced beyond the two other quarters of the globe in improvement, the colour of the inhabitants, their effeminate appearance, their unwarlike spirit, the wild extravagance of their religious tenets and ceremonies, and many other circumstances, confirmed Europeans in such an opinion of their own pre-eminence, that they have always viewed and treated them as an inferior race of men. Happy would it be if any of the four European nations, who have successively acquired extensive territories and power in India, could altogether vindicate itself from having acted in this manner. Nothing, however, can have a more direct and powerful tendency to inspire Europeans, proud of their own superior attainments in policy, science, and arts, with proper sentiments concerning the people of India, and to teach them a due regard for their natural rights

as men, than their being accustomed, not only to consider the Hindoos of the present times as a knowing and ingenious race of men, but to view them as descended from ancestors who had attained to a very high degree of improvement, many ages before the least step towards civilization had been taken in any part of Europe. It was by an impartial and candid inquiry into their manners, that the Emperor Akber was led to consider the Hindoos as no less entitled to protection and favour than his other subjects, and to govern them with such equity and mildness, as to merit from a grateful people the honourable appellation of "The Guardian of Mankind." It was from a thorough knowledge of their character and acquirements, that his Vizier Abul Fazel, with a liberality of mind unexampled among Mahomedans, pronounces an high encomium on the virtues of the Hindoos, both as individuals and as members of society, and celebrates their attainments in arts and sciences of every kind.* If I might presume to hope that the description which I have given of the manners and institutions of the people of India could contribute in the smallest degree, and with the remotest influence, to render their character more respectable, and their condition more happy, I shall close my literary labours with the satisfaction of thinking, that I have not lived or written in vain.

* Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 2. 81. 95.