



1889

# Travels in India

By  
Jean Baptiste Tavernier

Translated by  
V. Ball

Macmillan  
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## CHAPTER IX

*How the women burn themselves with the bodies of  
their deceased husbands in INDIA.*

IT is also an ancient custom among the idolaters of INDIA that on a man dying his widow can never remarry; as soon, therefore, as he is dead she withdraws to weep for her husband, and some days afterwards her hair is shaved off, and she despoils herself of all the ornaments with which her person was adorned, she removes from her arms and legs the bracelets which her husband had given her, when espousing her, as a sign that she was to be submissive and bound to him, and she remains for the rest of her life without being of any consideration, and worse than a slave, in the place where previously she was mistress. This miserable condition causes her to detest life, and prefer to ascend a funeral pile to be consumed alive with the body of her defunct husband, rather than be regarded for the remainder of her days with opprobrium and infamy by all the world. Joined to which the *Brahmins* induce the women to hope that by dying in this way, with their husbands, they will live again with them in some other part of the world with more glory and more comfort than they have previously enjoyed. These are the two reasons which





make these unhappy women resolve to burn themselves with the bodies of their husbands; to which it should be added that the priests buoy them up with the hope that at the moment when they are in the fire, before they yield up their souls, *Râm* will reveal wonderful things to them, and that after the soul has passed through several bodies it will attain to an exalted degree of glory for all eternity.

But it should be remarked that a woman cannot burn herself with the body of her husband without having received permission from the Governor of the place where she dwells, and those Governors who are Muhammadans, hold this dreadful custom of self-destruction in horror, and do not readily give permission. On the other hand, it is only the women who become widows, without children, who can be reproached for not having loved their husbands if they have not had courage to burn themselves after their death, and to whom this want of courage will be for the remainder of their lives a cause of reproach. For, as for the widows who have children, they are not permitted under any circumstances to burn themselves with the bodies of their husbands; and very far from custom obliging them, it is ordained that they shall live in order to watch over the education of their children. Those whom the Governors peremptorily refuse to grant permission to burn themselves pass the remainder of their lives in severe penances and in doing charitable deeds. There are some who frequent the great highways either to boil water with vegetables, in order to give it as a drink to passers by, or to keep fire always ready to light the pipes of those who desire to smoke tobacco. There are others among them who





make a vow to eat nothing but what they find undigested in the droppings of oxen, cows, and buffaloes,<sup>1</sup> and who do still more absurd things.

The Governor, seeing that all the remonstrances he makes to these women, who are urged to burn themselves even by their relatives and by the *Brahmins*, are ineffectual to turn them from the damnable resolution which they have taken to die in so cruel a fashion, when his secretary indicates by a sign that he has received a bribe, at length allows them to do what they wish, and in a rage tells all the idolaters who accompany them that they may "go to the devil."

Immediately on this permission being obtained, all the music commences to make itself heard, and with the sound of drums, flutes, and other instruments of that kind, all go to the house of the deceased, and from thence, as I have said, accompany the body to the margin of a river or tank, where it is to be burned.

All the relatives and friends of the widow who desires to die after her husband, congratulate her beforehand on the good fortune which she is about to acquire in the other world, and on the glory which all the members of the caste derive from her noble resolution. She dresses herself as for her wedding-day, and is conducted in triumph to the place where she is to be burnt. A great noise is made with the instruments of music and the voices of the women who follow, singing hymns to the glory of the unhappy one who is about to die. The *Brahmins* accompanying her exhort her to show resolution and courage, and many Europeans believe that in order to

<sup>1</sup> This form of penance is, I believe, not extinct.





remove the fear of that death which man naturally abhors, she is given some kind of drink that takes away her senses and removes all apprehension which the preparations for her death might give rise to.<sup>1</sup> It is for the interest of the *Brahmins* that these unhappy women maintain the resolution they have taken to burn themselves, for all the bracelets which they wear, both on arms and legs, with their earrings and rings, belong of right to these *Brahmins*, and they are searched for in the ashes after the women are burnt. According to the station and wealth of the women, the bracelets, earrings, and rings are either of gold or silver; the poorest have them of copper and tin; but as for precious stones, they do not wear them at all when going to be burnt.

I have seen women burnt in three different ways, according to the customs of different countries. In the Kingdom of GUJARÁT, and as far as AGRA and DELHI, this is how it takes place: On the margin of a river or tank, a kind of small hut, about 12 feet square, is built of reeds and all kinds of faggots, with which some pots of oil and other drugs are placed in order to make it burn quickly. The woman being seated in a half-reclining position in the middle of the hut, her head reposing on a kind of pillow of wood, and resting her back against a post, to which she is tied by her waist by one of the *Brahmins*, for fear lest she should escape on feeling the flame. In this position she holds the dead body of her husband on her knees, chewing *betel* all the time; and after having been about half

<sup>1</sup> Preparations of *bháng*, or Indian hemp, used to be given for this purpose, but in many cases the excitement alone, in all probability, produced an insensibility to pain.





an hour in this condition, the *Brahmin* who has been by her side in the hut goes outside, and she calls out to the priests to apply the fire; this the *Brahmins*, and the relatives and friends of the woman who are present, immediately do, throwing into the fire some pots of oil, so that the woman may suffer less by being quickly consumed. After the bodies have been reduced to ashes, the *Brahmins* take whatever is found in the way of melted gold, silver, tin, or copper, derived from the bracelets, earrings, and rings which the woman had on; this belongs to them by right, as I have said.

In the Kingdom of BENGAL women are burnt in another manner. A woman in that country must be very poor if she does not come with the body of her husband to the margin of the GANGES in order to wash it after he is dead, and to bathe herself before being burnt. I have seen them come to the GANGES more than twenty days' journey, the bodies being by that time altogether putrid, and emitting an unbearable odour. There was one of them who, coming from the north, near the frontiers of the Kingdom of BHUTÁN, with the body of her husband which she had conveyed in a carriage, travelled all the way on foot herself, without eating for fifteen or sixteen days, till she arrived at the GANGES, where after having washed the body of her husband, which stank horribly, and having bathed herself also, she had herself burnt with him with a determination which surprised those who saw it. I was there at the time. As throughout the length of the GANGES, and also in all BENGAL, there is but little fuel,<sup>1</sup> these poor women send to beg for wood out of charity to burn themselves

<sup>1</sup> This remark is of interest as showing that the scarcity of fuel, which is now so much felt, had already been experienced in these regions.





with the dead bodies of their husbands. There is prepared for them a funeral pile, which is like a kind of bed, with its pillow of small wood and reeds, in which pots of oil and other drugs are placed in order to consume the body quickly. The woman who intends to burn herself, preceded by some drums, flutes, and hautboys, and dressed in her most beautiful ornaments, comes dancing to the funeral pile, and having ascended it she places herself, half-lying, half-seated. Then the body of her husband is laid across her, and all the relatives and friends bring her, one a letter, another a piece of cloth, this one flowers, that one pieces of silver or copper, saying to her, give this from me to my mother, or to my brother, or to some relative or friend, whoever the dead person may be whom they have most loved while alive. When the woman sees that they bring her nothing more, she asks those present three times whether they have any more commissions for her, and if they do not reply she wraps all they have brought in a *taffeta*, which she places between her lap and the back of the body of her defunct husband, calling upon the priests to apply fire to the funeral pile. This the *Brahmins* and the relatives do simultaneously. As there is, as I have remarked, but little wood in the Kingdom of BENGAL, as soon as these miserable women are dead and half burnt, their bodies are thrown into the GANGES with those of their husbands, where they are eaten by the crocodiles.

I should not forget here an evil custom which is practised among the idolaters of the same Kingdom of BENGAL. When a woman is delivered, and the infant, as often happens, is unwilling to take to its mother's





breast in order to suckle, it is carried outside the village and placed in a cloth, which is tied by the four corners to the branches of a tree, and is thus left from morning to evening. In this way the poor infant is exposed to the crows, which come to torment it, and some have been found whose eyes have been torn out of their heads, which is the reason why many idolaters are seen in BENGAL who have but one eye, and others who have both injured or altogether gone. In the evening the infant is taken to see whether it is willing to suckle during the following night, and should it happen that it still refuses the breast, it is taken back on the following day to the same place; this is done for three days in sequence, after which, if the infant is altogether unwilling to take the breast, in the belief that it is a demon, it is cast into the GANGES, or into some other river or tank which is closer at hand. In the places where there are many monkeys these poor children are not so exposed to the attacks of crows, for this reason, that as soon as a monkey discovers a nest of these birds he climbs the tree, and throws the nest on one side and the eggs on the other. On the other hand, there are among the English, Dutch, and Portuguese charitable persons who, moved to compassion for the misfortune of these infants, remove them when they are thus exposed and hung in a tree, and take care to have them brought up as I have one day seen an example of at HUGLY; this is done in the places near their factories.

Let us see now what is the practice along the coast of COROMANDEL when women are going to be burnt with the bodies of their deceased husbands. A large hole of 9 or 10 feet deep, and 25 or 30 feet square, is





dug, into which an abundance of wood is thrown, with many drugs to make it burn fast. When this hole is well heated, the body of the husband is placed on the edge, and then his wife comes dancing, and chewing *betel*, accompanied by all her relatives and friends, and with the sound of drums and cymbals. The woman then takes three turns round the hole, and at each time she kisses all her relatives and friends. When she completes the third turn the *Brahmins* throw the body of the deceased into the fire, and the woman, having her back turned to the hole, is also pushed by the same *Brahmins*, and falls in backwards. Then all the relatives throw pots of oil and other drugs of that kind, as I have said is elsewhere done, so that the bodies may be the sooner consumed. In the greater part of the same COROMANDEL coast the woman does not burn herself with the body of her deceased husband, but allows herself to be interred, while alive, with him in a hole which the *Brahmins* dig in the ground, about 1 foot deeper than the height of the man or woman. They generally select a sandy spot, and when they have placed the man and woman in this hole, each of those who have accompanied them, having filled a basket of sand, throw it on the bodies until the hole is full and heaped over, half a foot higher than the ground, after which they jump and dance upon it till they conclude that the woman is smothered.<sup>1</sup>

When any of the idolaters of this COROMANDEL

<sup>1</sup> Thevenot alludes to the custom of burying widows alive, but says that when they were covered with clay up to the neck, they were strangled by the *Brahmins* (*Voyage*, p. 253). Numerous other writers also refer to the custom. As is the case with *Suttee*, this practice is now extinct, but were the restraint removed it is most probable that there would be reversion to both in some parts of India.





country are on the point of death, their friends do not act like those elsewhere, who carry them to die at the margin of a river or tank, so that their souls when leaving the body may be cleansed of their impurity. They simply carry them into the vicinity of the fattest cow which they are able to find.<sup>1</sup>

If a cow happens to be sick the owner must convey it to the margin of a tank or river, for should it die in his house the *Brahmins* inflict a fine upon him.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The remainder of this passage has been omitted, as the ceremony described is too disgusting for reproduction.

<sup>2</sup> These fines, as described by Ward, were very heavy, sufficient in some cases to cripple a man's resources for the remainder of his life. (See *History of the Hindoos*.)



## CHAPTER X

*Remarkable histories of several women who have been burnt after the death of their husbands.*

AMONG several examples of this more than barbarous custom of the women of the idolaters of INDIA of burning themselves with the corpses of their husbands, I will relate three remarkable cases, of two of which I was a witness.

The *Raja* of VELLORE, of whom I have spoken in the first book of this account of INDIA,<sup>1</sup> having at the same time lost both this town and his life by the victory which the General of the King of BIJAPUR gained over him, there was great mourning in all his Court. Eleven of the women of his household were keenly affected by his death, and all resolved to burn themselves when his body was burnt. The General of the BIJAPUR army having heard of this resolve, thought that he would be able to dissuade these desperate women by flattering them, and by promising them all kinds of good treatment. But seeing that that was of no effect, and that they wished absolutely to be burnt with the body of the deceased, he directed that they should be kept shut up in a room. He who received this order, on going to execute it, was told by these

<sup>1</sup> Velou in the original (see vol. i, p. 161).





infuriated women that it was in vain, that he might do his best, but that it was useless to keep them prisoners, and that if they were not allowed to do what they wished, they had resolved that in three hours there would not be one of them alive. This threat was jeered at, and it was not believed that it would be carried into effect. But he who had these women in charge, on opening the door of the room at the end of three hours, found the eleven all dead and stretched on the ground, without any indication being apparent that they had hastened their deaths, either by steel, rope, or poison, nor could any one see how they had been able to make away with themselves. It was assuredly the case on this occasion that the evil spirit had played his game. Let us pass to another history.

Two of the most powerful *Rajas* of INDIA, who were brothers, having come to AGRA in the year 1642 to pay their respects to SHÁH JAHÁN, who then reigned, not having properly acquitted themselves therein, in the opinion of the Grand Master of the King's house, he one day said to one of the two *Rajas*, who were together under the gallery of the palace, in the presence of the King, that this was not the sort of demeanour that should be observed towards so great a monarch as the King his master. This *Raja* regarding himself as a King and a great Prince, and having brought 15,000 or 16,000 horse in his suite with the other *Raja*, his brother, was offended by the boldness the Grand Master showed in reprimanding him in that fashion, and drawing his dagger slew him on the spot, in the presence of the King, who witnessed the deed from an elevated position, where, as I have elsewhere said, he generally administers





justice. The Grand Master having fallen at the feet of his brother, who was close to him, the latter immediately set himself to avenge his death, but was anticipated by the brother of the *Raja*, who stabbed him in the breast with his dagger and flung his dead body on that of the Grand Master. The King, who beheld these two murders, one after the other, was frightened and withdrew into his *harem*; but forthwith all the *Omrahs* and other people who were present under the gallery, threw themselves on the two *Rajas* and cut them to pieces. The King, indignant at such an action being committed in his house and in his presence, ordered the bodies of the *Rajas* to be thrown into the river; but as soon as the troops they had left near AGRA heard of the affront which was intended to be done to the memory of their Princes, they threatened to enter the city and pillage it; this caused the King, rather than expose the city to this danger, to order that the bodies should be handed over to them. This was done, and the *Rajputs* were appeased by this means. As they went to burn them they beheld thirteen women of the households of these two *Rajas* approaching, dancing and leaping, who forthwith ascended the funeral pile, which they encircled, holding one another by the hand, and being immediately enveloped by the smoke, which suffocated them, they all fell together into the fire. The *Brahmins* then threw upon them a quantity of wood, pots of oil, and other drugs, according to custom, in order that the bodies should be quickly consumed.

I remember another strange occurrence which happened one day in my presence at PATNA, a town of BENGAL. I was with the Dutch at the house of the





Governor of the town, a venerable noble, nearly eighty years old, who commanded 5000 or 6000 horse, when there entered the reception room where we were seated a young and very beautiful woman, who was scarcely more than twenty-two years of age. This woman, with a firm and resolute voice, came to ask the Governor's permission to burn herself with the body of her deceased husband. This Governor, touched by the youth and beauty of the woman, sought to turn her from her resolution, but seeing that all that he could say was useless, and that she only became more obstinate, asking him with a bold and courageous voice if he believed that she feared fire; he asked if she knew any torment equal to fire, and if it had never happened to her to burn her hand. "No, no," this woman then replied to him with more courage than before; "I do not fear fire in any way, and in order to make you see that it is so, you have only to order a well-lighted torch to be brought here." The Governor, being horrified with the conversation of the woman, did not wish to hear more from her, and dismissing her told her in a rage that she might go to the devil. Some young nobles who were by him asked him to allow them to test the woman and to order a torch to be brought, persuading him that she would not have the courage to burn herself with it. At first he was unwilling to consent, but they continued to urge him with so much pressure that at length, by his order, a torch was brought, which, in India, is nothing else than a cloth twisted and steeped in oil, and put on the end of a stick after the manner of a chafing dish; this, which we call a lamp (*fallot*), serves us at need in the crossways of towns. As soon as the





woman saw the torch, which was well kindled, she ran in front of it, and holding her hand firmly in the flame without the least grimace, and advancing the arm likewise up to the elbow, it was all immediately scorched ; this caused horror to all who witnessed the deed, and the Governor commanded the woman to be removed from his presence.

Since we are at PATNA I shall relate yet another strange thing which happened there one day, and of which I was a witness. A *Brahmin*, coming from outside, entered the town, and summoning all of his own tribe, told them that they must give him 2000 rupees and 27 cubits of cloth, which are, as I have said, the ells of this country. The principal among them having told him that it was impossible, and that they were poor, he persisted in his demand to have what he asked for, and declared that he would remain there without drinking or eating till they had brought the cloth and the 2000 rupees. With this resolution he mounted on a tree which was in the square, and seated himself on a forked branch, remaining in this position without eating or drinking during several days. The report of this extravagance having reached the ears of the Dutch, with whom I then was, they and I gave money to keep men on the watch all the night close to the tree, in order to see if it was true that this man was able to remain for so long a time without eating or drinking, which he did indeed during thirty days, of which, besides the people whom we had engaged for the purpose, there were more than 100 other witnesses whom those of the tribe had sent, and who never moved by day or night from the vicinity of the tree. At length, on the thirty-first day

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of so surprising and extraordinary a fast, the idolaters, fearing that the *Brahmin* would not be able to hold out longer against hunger, and having a scruple about allowing one of their priests to die for want of giving him that which he asked for, taxed themselves all round and took him the 27 ells of cloth and the 2000 rupees.<sup>1</sup> As soon as the *Brahmin* saw the money and cloth he descended from the tree, and after having reproached all those of the tribe who were present at this spectacle with their want of charity to the poor, he distributed to the poorest the whole sum, only reserving 5 or 6 rupees for himself. He did the same with the cloth, which he cut up into many pieces, only keeping for himself what was sufficient to cover the middle of his body, and this distribution having been made he disappeared before all the crowd, who have never since heard what had become of him, notwithstanding all the research that they could make; this ought to show sufficiently that in these matters the work of the devil is manifested.

As there are many Chinese at BATAVIA, I shall give here an account of a custom which I have observed among that kind of idolaters. When a Chinaman is at the point of death, all the relatives and friends who come to see him range themselves about him, and ask him, while crying, where he wishes to go, that if he wants anything he has only to say it and that they will give it to him, be it gold, silver, or women. When dead

<sup>1</sup> This is what is known in India as sitting *dharṇā*—to enforce payment of a demand; it is now an offence under the Indian penal code. As to the possibility of a man remaining for so long a period without food, India furnishes numerous apparently well authenticated instances. Besides which we have Dr. Tanner's case in America, and many in different countries of Europe. (See p. 200).





many ceremonies are performed at their funerals ; these consist principally in displays of fireworks, in which the Chinese excel all the other nations of the world, and a man must be very poor if something is not expended on them at his death. Moreover, some silver is placed in a small box, which is buried near the deceased, and a quantity of food is placed near the grave in the belief that he will come to eat it. As some soldiers of the garrison are sent out of BATAVIA every evening to make the circuit of the town during the night, they on one occasion took it into their heads to go to these graves, where they ate up what had been left ; this they continued to do for some nights consecutively. But the Chinese were no sooner aware of it than, in order to deter them from returning, they on three or four occasions poisoned the food which they placed on the graves of their dead ; this caused a great disturbance in BATAVIA. The Chinese occupy a leading position in commerce, and are more cunning than the Dutch, but not being liked by the people of the town, the latter took the part of the soldiers, and accused the Chinese of having poisoned some of them. But they defended themselves from this accusation very cleverly, saying, that if greed had caused these soldiers to die from eating the food which had been left on the graves of their dead, they were not the cause, as it was not for the soldiers that they had left it, and that till then among the great number whom they had interred not one of the dead persons had ever complained of such a thing ; thus nothing more was said about it, and the soldiers dared not meddle with them any further.





## CHAPTER XI

*Concerning the most celebrated Pagodas of the  
Idolaters of INDIA*

THE idolaters of INDIA have, both in the towns and country parts, a great number of temples, large as well as small, which they call pagodas, where they go to pray to their gods and make offerings; but many of the poor people who dwell in the forests and mountains, far removed from villages, take a stone, and rudely trace a nose and eyes with yellow or red colour upon it, and all the family then worship it.

The four most celebrated pagodas are, JAGANNÁTH, BENARES, MUTTRA, and TIRUPATI (TRIPATTY),<sup>1</sup> of each of which I shall give a separate description.

JAGANNÁTH is the name of one of the mouths of the GANGES,<sup>2</sup> upon which the great pagoda is built, where the Great *Brahmin*, that is to say the High Priest of the idolaters, resides. The form of the choir or interior of this pagoda is as follows; and it is similar, in proportion, in all the others, which are built upon the same model, in the form of a cross. The great idol on

<sup>1</sup> *Jagrenate, Banarous, Matura, and Tripeti* in the original.

<sup>2</sup> The position of Jagannáth is on the sea coast of Orissa, at Puri, which is many miles from the nearest mouth of the Ganges. Bernier, Tavernier's contemporary, was better informed, as in a letter to M. Chapelain he states it was situated on the Gulf of Bengal.





the altar of the choir<sup>1</sup> has two diamonds for his eyes and a pendant from his neck which reaches to the waist, and the smallest of these diamonds weighs about 40 carats; he has bracelets on his arms, some being of pearls and some of rubies, and this magnificent idol is called *Kesora*.<sup>2</sup> The revenues of this great pagoda are sufficient to feed 15,000 or 20,000 pilgrims daily, and these numbers are often to be found there, the pagoda being the object of the highest devotion by the Indians, who visit it from all quarters. It should be remarked that jewellers, who come like others, are not now permitted to enter the pagoda, since one of them, who allowed himself to be shut up during the night, extracted a diamond from one of the eyes of the idol, intending to steal it. As he was about to leave in the morning, when the pagoda was opened, this thief, they say, died at the door, and the idol performed this miracle as a punishment for sacrilege. What makes this pagoda, which is a grand building, the principal one in INDIA, is, that it is situated on the GANGES, the idolaters believing that the waters of that river have a special virtue, which cleanses them from defilement when they bathe in it. That which causes this pagoda to

<sup>1</sup> Of late years no European has been allowed to enter Jagannáth. On the occasion of the late Lord Mayo's last journey, which was cut short by his murder in the Andaman Islands, he had it in contemplation to visit Puri on his return to Calcutta, and a rumour was then abroad that a special concession about entering the temple was to be made in his favour. The temple has been described by Hindus, and in especial detail by Dr. Rajendra, Lál Mitra, in his *Orissa*.

<sup>2</sup> Krishna. The bones of Krishna, who had been killed by a hunter, were placed inside an image, which was never completed owing to the impatience of King Indra, who, however, obtained from Bramha a concession that the idol should become famous as Jagannáth. (Ward, *History of the Hindoos*, vol. i, p. 206.)



be otherwise so rich (for it supports up to 20,000 cows) is the great amount of the offerings made every day by the incredible multitude of people who arrive from all parts. But these alms are not altogether at the discretion of those who give them, as they are fixed by the High Priest, who before granting permission to the pilgrims to shave themselves, to wash themselves in the GANGES, and to do the other things necessary to fulfil their vows, taxes each one according to his means, of which he is very exactly informed. Thus he receives enormous sums, from which he himself derives no profit, all being expended on the feeding of the poor and the support of the pagoda. The Grand *Brahmin*, then, distributes to the pilgrims whatever food is required, each day, as butter, milk, rice, and flour; but to the poor, who are in want of utensils to cook their food with, it is given ready cooked. It is a surprising thing, and well worthy of notice, to observe how the food is distributed to the poor people who have no pots. In the morning the rice is cooked in earthen pots of different sizes, and when the hour has come when these poor pilgrims arrive to ask for food, if, for example, there are five, the Chief *Brahmin* orders another *Brahmin* to take a pot full of cooked rice, which he lets fall, and the pot breaks itself equally into five parts, of which each pilgrim takes one, and likewise in proportion, more or less, according to the number of people who present themselves, to whom the rice is to be distributed. The *Brahmins* never cook twice in the same earthen pot, but use copper pots frequently, and they have for plates certain leaves larger than our walnut leaves,<sup>1</sup> which are stitched

<sup>1</sup> Probably the leaves of the Sál tree, *Shorea robusta* (Roxb.)





together. They have, however, a kind of dish about a foot in diameter, which is used to melt butter, in which they dip the rice with their fingers when eating, and a small ladle for the melted butter, which is drunk as we drink a glass of Spanish wine after a repast.

I come now to a more detailed description of the idol on the altar of the pagoda of JAGANNÁTH. It is covered from the neck to the base with a grand mantle which hangs on the altar, and this mantle is of gold or silver brocade according to the nature of the ceremonies. From the first this idol had neither feet nor hands, and this is how this fact is explained. After one of their prophets was taken up into heaven, when they were all plunged in tears and laments at losing him, God sent to them from heaven an angel who was like the prophet, so they treated him with great honour and respect. But while the angel was afterwards engaged in making the idol, impatience seized upon them, and they removed it to place it in the pagoda, although, as yet, it was unprovided with feet and hands. But as it was too deformed, they made hands for it of the small pearls which we call "pearls by the ounce."<sup>1</sup> As for the feet, they cannot be seen, being concealed under the mantle. There is nothing left uncovered save the hands and face; the head and body are made of sandal wood.<sup>2</sup> Around the elevated dome in which the idol is seated, from the base up to the top, there are numerous niches containing other images, the majority of which represent

<sup>1</sup> Seed pearls, *aljófar* of the Portuguese. (See p. 118.)

<sup>2</sup> Jagannáth was a centre of Buddhism before it fell into Brahminical hands, and it has been suggested that the shapeless idol was some symbol belonging to the former which was adopted by the latter. (See *Anglo-Indian Glossary*, p. 355.)





hideous monsters, and they are made of stone of various colours. On each side of this great pagoda there are other much smaller ones where the pilgrims make their smallest offerings, and those who, on account of sickness or in their business, have made a vow to some god, take there an image or semblance of the object in memory of the benefit which they believe they have received.<sup>1</sup> This idol is anointed every day with scented oils which make him quite black. He has on his right hand his sister who is called *Sotora*, who is also represented standing and clothed; and on his left his brother, also clothed, who is called *Balbader*.<sup>2</sup> In front of the great idol, somewhat to the left, his wife is to be seen, who is called *Kemui*,<sup>3</sup> she is of massive gold, and represented standing, the three others are made of sandal wood.

The two other pagodas are intended for the residence of the chief *Brahmin*, or High Priest, and the other priests who serve in the great pagoda. All these *Brahmins* go about with bare heads, and the majority are shaved, having for sole garment a piece of cloth, a part of which wraps round the body, and the remainder is worn like a scarf. Near the pagoda the tomb of one of their prophets, named *CABIR*,<sup>4</sup> to whom they do great honour, is to be seen. It should be remarked that all these idols are on a kind of altar surrounded by gratings, for no one is allowed to touch

<sup>1</sup> A similar custom is followed in some Catholic countries of Europe.

<sup>2</sup> The names are *Subhadrá* and *Balaráma*.

<sup>3</sup> I don't know who this stands for. *Rukmini* was one of *Krishna's* wives, but her image, according to Ward, was never represented with her spouse, nor indeed were those of any of his lawful wives.

<sup>4</sup> Possibly for Kabir, a Fakir or Saint, who flourished about the close of the fifteenth century. (See Forbes's *Hindustani Dictionary*, s.v. *Kabir*.)





them, with the exception of certain *Brahmins* appointed by the High Priest for that purpose.

I come to the pagoda of BENARES, which, after that of JAGANNÁTH, is the most famous in all INDIA, with which it is even, as it were, on a par, being also built on the margin of the GANGES,<sup>1</sup> and in the town of which it bears the name. The most remarkable thing about it is that from the door of the pagoda to the river there is a descent by stone steps, where there are at intervals platforms and small, rather dark, chambers, some of which serve as dwellings for the *Brahmins*, and others as kitchens where they prepare their food. For after the idolaters have bathed, and have gone to pray and make their offerings in the pagoda, they prepare their food without any one but themselves touching it, through the fear they have lest any one who approached it might be unclean. But above all things, they ardently desire to drink the water of the GANGES, because, as soon as they have drunk it, they believe, as I have said, that they are cleansed from all their sins. Every day large numbers of these *Brahmins* are to be seen going to the clearest part of the river to fill this water into round, small-mouthed, earthen pots, which hold about a bucketful. When they are full they are taken to the chief priest, who directs the mouth to be covered with a very fine cloth of fire-colour, in three or four folds, upon which he applies his seal. The *Brahmins* carry this water at the end of a stick, which is flat like a lath, from which hang six small cords, and to each of them one of these pots is attached. They rest themselves by changing the

<sup>1</sup> Here the mistake about Jagannáth being on the Ganges (see p. 225, *n.*) is repeated, as it is also elsewhere in following pages.





shoulder frequently, and they sometimes travel three or four hundred leagues of country with this load,<sup>1</sup> and then sell it, or make a present of it, but only to the richest persons, from whom they expect a liberal reward. There are some of these Idolaters who, when they celebrate any festival—especially when their children are married—drink this water at a cost of 400 or 500 *écus*. It is only drunk at the end of the repast, as we drink hypocras or muscat in EUROPE, each (guest) receiving a cup, or two, according to the liberality of the host. The principal reason why this water of the GANGES is so highly esteemed, is, that it never becomes bad, and engenders no vermin; but I do not know whether we should believe what is said about this, taking into consideration the number of bodies which are constantly being thrown into the GANGES.<sup>2</sup>

Returning to the pagoda at BENARES.<sup>3</sup> The building is in the figure of a cross, like all the other pagodas, having its four arms equal. In the middle a lofty dome rises like a kind of tower with many sides, which terminates in a point, and at the end of each arm of the

<sup>1</sup> This is what is known as a *banghy* in India. I have seen men accustomed to carrying weights in this way, when on occasion they have only a load for one end, make up an equipoise of a stone or clod of earth for the other. A similar carrying-stick is used in China. Formerly, if not still, troops of these water-carriers were to be seen on the Grand Trunk road, which, when I saw it first in the year 1864, afforded a scene of much animation and interest.

<sup>2</sup> The reader will do well not to believe this story, but rather to conclude that much of the water when drunk is in a very unwholesome condition, and is the cause of disease.

<sup>3</sup> Probably the indications given of this temple may be sufficient to those with local knowledge to identify it. I can only suggest doubtfully that it is either the Bisheswar (or Golden temple of Siva), or the temple of Bhaironáth. See Sherring's *Sacred City of the Hindus*, p. 61.





cross another tower rises, which can be ascended from outside. Before reaching the top you meet several balconies and many niches, which project to intercept the fresh air; and all over the tower there are figures in relief of various kinds of animals, which are rudely executed. Under this great dome, and exactly in the middle of the pagoda, there is an altar like a kind of table, of 7 to 8 feet in length, and 5 to 6 wide, with two steps in front, which serve as a footstool, and this footstool is covered by a beautiful tapestry, sometimes of silk and sometimes of gold and silk, according to the solemnity of the ceremony which is being celebrated. The altar is covered with gold or silver brocade, or some beautiful painted cloth. From outside the pagoda this altar faces you with the idols which are upon it; for the women and girls must salute it from the outside, as they are not allowed to enter the pagoda, save only those of a certain tribe. Among the idols on the great altar there is one standing which is 5 or 6 feet in height; neither the arms, legs, nor trunk are seen, the head and neck only being visible; all the remainder of the body, down to the altar, is covered by a robe which increases in width below. Sometimes on its neck there is to be seen a rich chain of gold, rubies, pearls, or emeralds. This idol has been made in honour and after the likeness of BAINMADOU,<sup>1</sup> who was formerly a great and holy personage among them, whose name they often have on their lips. On the right side of the altar there is also to be seen the figure of an animal, or rather of a chimera, seeing that it represents in part an elephant, in part a horse, and in

<sup>1</sup> This looks like Bhim Mahādeba—a combination of names for Siva.





part a mule. It is of massive gold, and is called *Garou*,<sup>1</sup> no person being allowed to approach it but the *Brahmins*. It is said to be the resemblance of the animal which this holy personage rode upon when he was in the world, and that he made long journeys on it, going about to see if the people were doing their duty and not injuring any one. At the entrance of the pagoda, between the principal door and the great altar, there is to the left a small altar, upon which an idol made of black marble is to be seen, seated, with the legs crossed, and about two feet high. When I was there it had near it, on the left, a small boy, who was son of the chief priest, and all the people who came there threw him pieces of *taffeta*, or brocaded cloth like handkerchiefs, with which he wiped the idol and then returned them to their owners. Others threw him chains made of beads like small nuts, which have a naturally sweet scent, which these idolaters wear on their necks and use to repeat their prayers over each bead. Others also throw chains of coral, others of yellow amber, others fruits and flowers. Finally, with everything which is thrown to the chief *Brahmin's* child he wipes the idol and makes him kiss it, and afterwards, as I have just said, returns it to the people. This idol is called MORLI RAM,<sup>2</sup> that is to say, the God Morli, brother of the idol on the great altar.

Under the principal entrance of the pagoda one of the chief *Brahmins* is to be seen seated, close to whom is a large dish full of yellow pigment mixed with water.

<sup>1</sup> Siva's Bull? The *garou* is possibly *gáo*, a cow, *nar gáo* being a bull. Perhaps, however, the chimera was a representation of the sacred bird *Garuda*.

<sup>2</sup> Morli Ram has not been identified.





All the poor idolaters come one after the other to present themselves to him, and he anoints their foreheads with some of this colour, which is continued down between the eyes and on to the end of the nose, then on the arms and in front of the chest; and it is by these marks that those who have bathed in the GANGES are distinguished. Those who only bathe in their dwellings (for they are all obliged to bathe before eating, and even before cooking), those, I say, who have only bathed in well-water, or in water brought from the river, are not properly purified, and in consequence cannot be anointed with this colour. It may be remarked that the idolaters, according to their castes, are anointed with different colours; and in the Empire of the GREAT MOGUL, those who are anointed with yellow belong to the most important tribe, and are the least impure. For, when attending to the ordinary necessities of nature, the others content themselves with carrying a pot of water to wash themselves with, but these always use a handful of sand, with which having first rubbed themselves, they afterwards wash. So that they can say their bodies are clean, that no impurity remains, and they may then take their food without fear.

Adjoining this great pagoda, on the side which faces the setting sun at midsummer, there is a house which serves as a college, which the *Raja* JAI SINGH,<sup>1</sup> the most powerful of the idolatrous princes, who was then in the Empire of the GREAT MOGUL, has founded for the education of the youth of good families. I saw the children of this Prince, who were being educated there, and had as teachers several *Brahmins*, who

<sup>1</sup> At a later period than this, namely 1693, Jai Singh erected the famous observatory at Benares.



taught them to read and write in a language which is reserved to the priests of the idols,<sup>1</sup> and is very different from that spoken by the people. Having entered the court of this college, being curious to see it, and throwing my eyes upwards, I perceived a double gallery which ran all round it, and in the lower one these two Princes were seated, accompanied by many young nobles and numerous *Brahmins*, who were making different figures, like those of mathematics, on the ground with chalk. As soon as I entered, these Princes sent to inquire who I was, and having learnt that I was a Frenchman they invited me to ascend, when they asked me many things about EUROPE, and especially about FRANCE. One of the *Brahmins* had two globes, which the Dutch had given him, and I pointed out the position of FRANCE upon them. After some conversation of this kind they presented me with *betel*; and before I took leave I asked the *Brahmins* at what hour I should be able to see the pagoda open. Having told me to come on the following morning a little before sunrise, I did not fail to be at the same house by that time, where the *Raja* had caused a pagoda to be built on the left of the entrance. In front of the door there is to be seen, as it were, a gallery sustained by pillars, where many people were already assembled—men, women, and children—awaiting the opening of the door. When the gallery and a part of the court are full of people, eight *Brahmins* approach, four on each side of the door of the pagoda, each carrying a censer; and there are many other *Brahmins* who make a great noise with drums and other instruments. The two oldest of the *Brahmins* chant a canticle, and all the people, after

<sup>1</sup> Sanskrit.





they have intoned it, repeat the same while singing and playing instruments, each one waving a peacock's tail, or other kind of fan, to drive away the flies ; so that when the door of the pagoda is opened the idol may not be inconvenienced by them. All this fanning and music lasted a good half-hour, then the two principal *Brahmins* began to sound two large bells three times, and, with a kind of small mallet, they then knocked at the door. At the same moment it was opened by six *Brahmins*, who were inside the pagoda, and 7 or 8 paces from the door an altar was to be seen with an idol upon it, which is called RAM KAM, who is the sister of MORLI RAM. She has on her right a child in the form of CUPID, who is known as the god LAKSHMI, and on her left arm she carries a small girl called the goddess SITA. As soon as the door of the pagoda was opened, and after a large curtain had been drawn, and the people present had seen the idol, all threw themselves on the ground, placing their hands upon their heads and prostrating themselves three times ; then having risen they threw a quantity of bouquets and chains in form of chaplets, which the *Brahmins* placed in contact with the idol, and then returned to the people. An old *Brahmin* who was in front of the altar, held in his hand a lamp with nine lighted wicks, upon which, from time to time, he threw a kind of incense when approaching the lamp towards the idol. All these ceremonies lasted about an hour, after which the people retired, and the pagoda was closed. The people presented the idol with a quantity of rice, flour, butter, oil, and milk, of which the *Brahmins* let nothing be lost. As this idol has the form of a woman, all the women invoke her, and regard her as their patron ; this is the



reason why (the temple) is always crowded with women and children.

The *Raja*, in order to have this idol in the pagoda of his house and to get it from the great pagoda, has expended in gifts to the *Brahmins* and in alms to the poor more than five *lakhs* (500,000) of rupees, which make 750,000 *livres*<sup>1</sup> of our money.

On the other side of the street in which this College is situated, there is another pagoda called RICHOURDAS, from the name of the idol on the altar inside, and lower down on another small altar is the idol whom they call Goupaldas,<sup>2</sup> brother of this RICHOURDAS. Only the faces of these idols, which are made of stone or wood, are exposed to view. They are black as jet, with the exception of the image of MORLI RAM, which is in the great pagoda and is uncovered. As for the idol RAM KAM, which is in the pagoda of the *Raja*, it has two diamonds in the eyes which this Prince has had placed there, together with a large necklace of pearls, and a canopy sustained by four silver pillars over its head.

At eight days' journey from BENARES, due northwards, a mountainous country<sup>3</sup> is entered, which in the intervals has beautiful plains sometimes 2 to 3 leagues wide. They are very fertile, producing corn, rice, and vegetables, but that which injures and ruins the people of this country is the abundance of elephants<sup>4</sup> which eat a considerable proportion of the vegetables and grain. If a caravan of travellers passes through this country where there are no *cavansarâis*, as they are compelled to camp in the open

<sup>1</sup> £56,250.

<sup>3</sup> The Sivalik ranges.

<sup>2</sup> *Gopala*.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 262.





fields, they have much trouble in defending themselves during the night from the elephants which often come to carry away the food. In order to prevent them the travellers light fires, fire numerous musket-shots, and from time to time some of them cry with all their might, and make a great noise to frighten these animals.

In this country there is another pagoda, well-built and very ancient, and ornamented within and without with many figures, which are representations of girls and women only. Men never go there to worship, and on that account it is called the girls' pagoda. It has an altar in the middle like the other pagodas, and upon this altar there is an idol of massive gold about 4 feet high, which represents a girl, standing, whom they call RAM MARION.<sup>1</sup> She has on her right a child, standing, made of massive silver, and nearly 2 feet in height, and it is said that this girl living a holy life, the infant was taken to her by the *Brahmins* to learn her creed and how to live well; but at the end of three or four years, during which the child had dwelt with the girl, it became so clever and accomplished that all the *Rajas* and Princes of the country wished for it, and, at last, one of them carried it off one night and it has not since been seen. This idol has on her left, at the base of the altar, another idol representing an old man, whom they say had been the servant of RAM MARION and the child, and the *Brahmins* pay great reverence to this idol. They come to it but once a year for worship, and it is necessary for them to arrive on a prescribed day, which is the first day of the moon in November, because the pagoda is only

<sup>1</sup> Marana, goddess of death, a form of Kali.





opened at full moon. During the fifteen days which intervene all the pilgrims, both men and women, must fast from time to time, wash their bodies three times every day, without leaving a single hair in whatever place it may be, all being easily removed by the use of a certain earth with which they rub themselves.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A preparation of lime is sometimes used for this purpose.





## CHAPTER XII

*Continuation of the description of the principal Pagodas  
of the Idolaters of India*

AFTER the pagodas of JAGANNÁTH and BENARES, the most considerable used to be that of MUTTRA,<sup>1</sup> at about 18 *coss* from AGRA, on the road to DELHI. It is one of the most sumptuous buildings in all INDIA, and was the place where there was formerly the greatest con-course of pilgrims; but at present scarcely any are to be seen there, the idolaters having gradually lost the devotion which they had for this pagoda, since the river JUMNA, which used to pass close to it, has changed its course, and now flows half a league away. For when pilgrims have bathed in the river it takes them too much time to return to the pagoda, and during that time they may encounter something which renders them impure and unclean. Although this pagoda, which is very large, is in a hollow, one sees it from more than 5 or 6 *coss* distance, the building being very elevated and very magnificent. The stones which

<sup>1</sup> Matura in the original (see Book I, chap. vii, and Book III, chap. xi.) The Antiquities of Muttra, or, as it is also called, Mathurá, have been very fully described by Mr. Growse. The temple on the platform described by Tavernier was probably what is known as the Idgah or Katra. "It has been identified with the site of the ancient Buddhist monastery of Upagupta, and marks one of the oldest religious spots in India." (*Imperial Gazetteer*, Art. "Muttra," vol. x, p. 53.)

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were used in its construction are of a red colour, and are obtained from a large quarry near AGRA. They split like our slates, and some of them, which are 15 feet long and 9 or 10 feet wide, are not six fingers in thickness, that is to say, they split according to wish, and as may be required; beautiful columns are made of them also. The fortress of AGRA, the walls of JAHANĀBĀD, the house of the King, the two mosques, and some houses of the great nobles are built of the same stone.<sup>1</sup>

Returning to the pagoda, it is seated on a great platform of octagonal shape faced over with cut stone, around which there are two courses of animals, chiefly monkeys, carved in relief. One of the courses is only 2 feet from the ground floor, and the other 2 feet from the level of the platform. It is ascended by two staircases of fifteen or sixteen steps each, the steps being only 2 feet long, so that two persons are unable to ascend side by side. One of these staircases leads to the great gate of the pagoda, and the other behind the choir. But the pagoda occupies scarcely half the platform, the other half serving as a grand area in front. Its form is that of a cross, like those of the other pagodas, and in the middle there rises a lofty dome, with two others a little smaller which are at the sides. On the exterior of the building, from base to summit, numerous figures of animals are to be seen, such as rams, monkeys, and elephants, carved in stone,

<sup>1</sup> For an account of these sandstones, which are derived from the Vindhyan formation, reference may be made to the chapter on Building Stones in the *Economic Geology of India*. Tavernier's statements as to the fissile character and the large size of the pieces which can be obtained, are quite accurate. One of the most remarkable, though not the most successful uses to which they have been put in modern times, is in the manufacture of telegraph-wire posts. Latterly these have, I think, been replaced by metal posts.





and all round are niches where there are different monsters. From the foot of each of the three domes up to the summits, at intervals, there are windows from 5 to 6 feet high, and at each a kind of balcony where four persons can sit. Each balcony is covered by a small canopy, and some are sustained by four columns, others by eight, but then they are in pairs and in contact with one another. Around these domes there are also niches full of figures which represent demons, one having four arms, another four legs; some of them have the heads of men on the bodies of beasts, with horns and long tails which twine round their legs. There are, finally, numerous images of monkeys, and it is a terrible thing to have before the eyes so many ugly representations. The pagoda has but one door, which is very high, and on both sides there are many columns and images of men and monsters. The choir is enclosed by a barricade made of stone columns of 5 to 6 inches in diameter, and no one may enter these except the principal *Brahmins*, who have access by a small secret door which I could not see. When at this pagoda I asked some *Brahmins* who were there if I might see the great RĀM RĀM, that is to say the great idol. They replied that if I gave them something they would go to ask leave of their Superior; this they did as soon as I had placed two rupees in their hands. I had not waited half an hour till the *Brahmins* opened a door which is inside the middle of the barricade (for on the outside there is none, the barricade itself being closed). I saw across it, at about 15 or 16 feet from the door, as it were a square altar covered with an old brocade of gold and silver, and on it the great idol which they call RĀM RĀM. Only the head, which is of



black marble, can be seen, and he has for eyes what appear to be two rubies. All the body from the neck to the feet is covered by a robe of red velvet with some embroidery, and the arms cannot be seen. There are two other idols beside him of 2 feet in height or thereabouts; they are arranged in the same manner, save that they have the faces white, and they are called BECCHOR.<sup>1</sup> I also saw in this pagoda a machine of 15 to 16 feet square and about 12 to 15 feet high, covered with painted calicoes which represent all kinds of demons. This machine was supported on four small wheels, and I was told that it was the portable altar, whereon their great god is placed on the solemn days when he goes to visit the other gods, and is taken to the river by the people on the occasion of their principal festival.

The fourth pagoda is that of TIRUPATI,<sup>2</sup> in the province of CARNATIC, towards the COROMANDEL coast and CAPE COMORIN. I went to see it when going from MASULIPATAM to GANDIKOT<sup>3</sup> to join the *Nawab* MIR JUMLA. It is a large pagoda, surrounded by numerous small ones, and by many dwellings for the *Brahmins*; this makes it appear like a town. It has around it many tanks, and the superstition is so great that a passer-by dare not take water from them unless a *Brahmin* give it to him.

<sup>1</sup> I don't know what this stands for, perhaps *beta*, a son.

<sup>2</sup> *Tripeti* in the original, more correctly it is Tirupati, and is commonly called Tripatty, situated in the District of North Arcot. In some respects it is regarded as the most sacred temple in Madras. The principal temple is at Tirumala, 6 miles distant. From all parts of India pilgrims flock there, bearing large offerings with them.

<sup>3</sup> *Indecote* in the original. In Book I, chap. xviii, p. 272 of vol. i, Tavernier gives his route between Madras and Gandikot, when he saw this temple. There he calls it, however, *Courua*.





## CHAPTER XIII

*Concerning the pilgrimages of the Idolaters to  
their pagodas*

ALL the idolaters who are subjects of the GREAT MOGUL and other Princes on either side of the GANGES, at least once in their lives make a pilgrimage to perform their devotion at one of the four pagodas which I have named, and most commonly to that of JAGANNÁTH, it being the principal and most considerable of all. The *Brahmins* and rich people make this pilgrimage oftener than once, some making it every four years, others every six or every eight years, when, placing the idols of their pagodas in litters they accompany their *Brahmins* in procession to the pagoda for which they have most reverence; but it is most frequently, as I have said, to that of JAGANNÁTH, and also to that of BENARES, because both are on the GANGES, the water of which is held in special veneration by them.

These pilgrimages are not made, as in EUROPE, one by one, or two by two, but the population of a town or of several villages assemble in order to travel together in company. The poor who come from afar, sometimes 300 or 400 leagues, and who, with all the savings which they have accumulated for that purpose during their

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lives are unable to sustain the expenses of the journey, are assisted by the rich, who expend very great sums in such alms. Each one travels according to his station and means, some in *pallankeens* or litters, others in carriages; and the poor, some on foot and others on oxen, the mother carrying her child, and the father the cooking utensils.

The god whom they carry in procession from the place they are leaving, in order that he may visit and pay the respect which he owes to the great RĀM RĀM, reposes at full length in a rich *pallankeen* covered with gold brocade with silver fringes, the mattress and cushion of the same material being under the head, feet, and elbows, as we see in the effigies on our tombs. The *Brahmins* distribute among the most important persons in the troop fans with handles 7 or 8 feet long, and covered with plates of gold and silver, the fan being at the end in the form of a kiln-shovel of 2 to 3 feet in diameter, and covered with the same brocade as the *pallankeens*. It is surrounded with peacock feathers, and makes a great current of air; to it bells are sometimes attached to give a kind of music, and there are generally five or six of these fans for driving away the flies from the face of the idol; those who carry them take turns from time to time, like those who carry the *pallankeens*, so that many may share in this honourable task. This custom should not appear more strange to us than that which I have seen practised in SAXONY, and in many other parts of GERMANY, where, while a funeral oration for a man or a woman is delivered in the church, the body reposes at full length on a bier which is uncovered, and the people on both sides fan it constantly, when it is





summer time, to drive away the flies attracted to the face of the defunct, who has then no more power of feeling than an idol.

In the year 1653, being on the road from GOLCONDA to SURAT with M. d'ARDILLIÈRE, of whom I have elsewhere spoken, we met near DAULATÁBÁD more than 2000 persons, including men, women, and children, who came from the direction of TATTA<sup>1</sup> with their idol, which they carried in a rich *pallankeen*, on their way to visit the great idol of the pagoda at TIRUPATI. This idol was laid on a mattress of red crimson velvet, and the covering and cushions were of the same stuff. The bamboo or stick which served to carry the *pallankeen* was covered with gold and silver brocade, and no one except the *Brahmins* had permission to approach it. We saw this long procession pass, and it was not without feeling much compassion for the blindness of these poor people.

[Here are the figures of the most famous idols, which I had the curiosity to have drawn on the spot.<sup>2</sup>]

<sup>1</sup> M. Joret (*l.c.* p. 131) is I think mistaken in assuming that this occasion of meeting pilgrims is identical with one described in vol. i, p. 296, it having taken place in the year 1652 at *Emelipata*, *i.e.* Vamulpetta, a stage between Gandikot and Golconda. He adds as a further mistake of Tavernier's that M. d'Ardilliére had died before 1653. (See Preface.) As we know that Tavernier went back to Golconda in 1653, and was in Surat in 1654, he may very possibly have met the pilgrims exactly as he says, when on his return towards the end of 1653.

<sup>2</sup> These figures are not given in any of the editions which I have seen. Probably they were never reproduced.





## CHAPTER XIV

*Concerning various customs of the Idolaters of INDIA*

THE *Brahmins* possess much knowledge of astrology, and know how to predict eclipses of the sun and moon for the people. On the 2d of July 1666 at one o'clock P.M. an eclipse of the sun was visible at PATNA, a town of the Kingdom of BENGAL. It was a wonderful thing to see the multitude of people, men, women, and children, who came from all quarters to bathe in the GANGES. But they must begin this bathing three days before they see the eclipse, during which time they remain day and night on the banks of the river in order to prepare all kinds of rice, milk, and sweetmeats to throw to the fishes and crocodiles which are in the river. Immediately on the *Brahmins* giving the word, when they know it is the fortunate hour, whatever kind of eclipse it may be, whether of the sun or moon, the idolaters are accustomed to break all the earthen vessels used in their households, and not to leave one piece whole—this causes a terrible noise in a town.

Every *Brahmin* has his book of magic, in which there are a number of circles and semicircles, of squares and triangles, and many other kinds of figures. They draw divers figures on the ground, and when they perceive that the fortunate hour has arrived they all





unite in crying aloud to the people to throw food into the GANGES. A terrible noise is then made with drums, bells, and large disks made of similar metal to that of our cymbals, which they strike one against the other; and as soon as the food is thrown into the river all the people should enter and continue rubbing themselves, and bathing their bodies until the eclipse is over. As this eclipse appeared at a time when the GANGES is usually very low, after the end of the rains, which last from the month of July to the end of October, for more than 3 leagues above and below the town, and as many as the river extends in width, nothing was to be seen but heads on the water. As for the *Brahmins*, they remain on land to receive the richest and those who give them most, to dry their bodies, and give them dry clothes to cover the middle of their bodies. Then they make them sit in chairs, where the richest of the idolaters have brought an abundance of Indian corn, rice, and all kinds of vegetables, with milk, butter, sugar, flour, and wood. Before each chair the *Brahmin* makes a very clean place of about 5 or 6 feet square, after which he takes cattle droppings steeped in a great dish of yellow pigment, in order to rub over all the place, through fear lest some ant might come there and be burnt. If possible, their ceremonies are conducted without burning wood, and in order to cook their food they generally use cattle droppings. When they are obliged to use wood they take care that it has no maggots nor other insects inside it, through fear, as I have elsewhere remarked, because of their belief in the transmigration of souls into different bodies, that there may be the soul of a relative or friend burnt with this small animal. In this

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place which they have cleaned so well, they trace many kinds of figures, as triangles and half triangles, ovals and half ovals, these they make with powdered chalk. On each figure they place a little cow-dung, with two or three small branches of wood, which they rub well for fear any insect should be contained in them; and on these branches they place on one wheat, another rice, on the others vegetables, and all the kinds of food which they have. Then, having thrown on each heap a quantity of butter, and having set fire to them, according to the appearance of the flames they conclude whether there will be in that year an abundant harvest of corn, rice, and so with the rest.

At the March full moon there is a solemn festival for the idol which has the form of a serpent, of which I have spoken in the first Book of this account of INDIA.<sup>1</sup> This festival lasts nine days, and while it lasts both men and beasts remain idle; the majority of the latter are ornamented with circles of vermillion around the eyes, with which the horns are also painted, and when there is any special love for the animal leaves of tinsel are added. Each morning the idol is worshipped, the girls dancing round it for an hour to the sound of flutes and drums, after which all eat together and enjoy themselves till the evening, when they again worship the idol and dance round it a second time.

Although it is not the usual custom of the idolaters to use any kind of drink, nevertheless during this festival they drink palm wine, and, in villages far removed from the great routes, a spirit made from the same wine, because the Muhammadan governors do not allow them to make it, nor to sell wine brought from

<sup>1</sup> Snake worship. See Book I, chap. iii, p. 42.





PERSIA or elsewhere. The spirit is made in this way—In large earthen vessels, glazed inside, which are called *martabans*,<sup>1</sup> and are of different sizes, and hold as much as 300 PARIS pints of palm wine, they place 50 or 60 pounds of black sugar—which is unrefined, and looks like yellow wax—with about 20 pounds of a thick black bark of a kind of thorn,<sup>2</sup> very like that which our tanners use in Europe to tan their leather. This bark serves to make the palm wine ferment; this it does in four or five days like our new wine, so that the sweetness changes into sourness equal to that of our wild pears. The whole is then distilled, and, according to the flavour which is wished for, there is thrown into a kettleful either a small bag of cloves, or three or four handfuls of aniseed or mace, large chaldrons serving for the distillation. This spirit can be made of whatever strength is desired. One day, having taken the fancy to distil some for myself, I filled ten of those bottles which come from ENGLAND, the glass of which is of the thickness of a white crown (*écu blanc*); they hold about 4 pints, PARIS measure, each, and are used for wines which it is desired to keep. But during the night the spirit having effervesced in the bottles I found them all cracked in the morning by the strength of the liquor.

When I was at AGRA in the year 1642 a somewhat strange thing happened. An idolater called VOLDAS, who was broker to the Dutch, and was about seventy years old, received news that the chief priest of the pagoda of MUTTRA was dead. Immediately he went to

<sup>1</sup> *Martavane* in the original. This name was given to large vessels of glazed pottery, which were made in Martaban, and thence largely exported. A number of examples of its use will be found in the *Anglo-Indian Glossary*, p. 428.

<sup>2</sup> *Kutch?* *Acacia catechu* (Willd.)





see the Chief of the Dutch factory to ask him to examine his accounts and close them, because, as he said, their Chief Priest being dead he also wished to die, to serve that holy man in the other world. As soon as his accounts had been examined he entered his carriage accompanied by some relatives who followed him, and as he had neither eaten nor drunk since he had received the news, he died on the road, having refused to take any food.

The idolaters of INDIA observe this custom, that when any one yawns they crack their fingers, while crying out many times *Ginarami*,<sup>1</sup> that is to say, remember NARAMI, who passes among the idolaters as a great saint. This cracking of the fingers is done, it is said, to prevent any evil spirit entering into the body of the yawner.

When I was at SURAT in the year 1653 one of the soldiers called *Rájputs*, who had upon his horse two or three pieces of cloth, was brought before the Governor to be made pay duty on them. The *Rájput* in a firm tone of voice asked the Governor boldly, if a soldier who had served the King all his life ought to pay duty on two or three miserable pieces of calico which were not worth more than 4 or 5 rupees, and said they were to clothe his wife and children. The Governor, stung by this discourse, called him *bethico*, that is to say, son of a strumpet,<sup>2</sup> adding that

<sup>1</sup> *Jái ! Náráin*, a name of Vishnu, with the exclamatory prefix *Jái !* signifying 'victory to.' Though the custom referred to is well known, its object being, as stated, to prevent evil spirits taking advantage of the involuntarily open mouth in order to obtain an entrance into the body of the yawner, I cannot find any reference to a detailed account of it.

<sup>2</sup> This is not an exact translation of the term, but may be allowed to pass as such here.





even if he were a Prince he would make him pay the King's due. Then the soldier, exasperated by this abuse, made as though to take out the money to pay what was demanded, and advancing towards the Governor gave him seven or eight stabs of his dagger in the stomach, from which he died, and the soldier was at once hacked to pieces by the attendants.

Although these idolaters are in the depths of blindness as to a knowledge of the true God, that does not prevent them from living in many respects, according to nature, morally well. When married they are rarely unfaithful to their wives, adultery is very rare among them, and one never hears unnatural crime spoken of.<sup>1</sup> They marry their children at the age of seven or eight years, through fear lest they should abandon themselves to this crime. And, in a few words, these are the ceremonies which are observed at their marriages. On the eve of the nuptials the bridegroom, accompanied by all his relatives, goes to the house of the bride with a pair of large bracelets two fingers in thickness, but hollow inside, and in two pieces, with a hinge in the middle to open them by. According to the wealth of the bridegroom these bracelets are more or less costly, being of gold, silver, brass or tin,<sup>2</sup> those of the poorest being of lead only. The bridegroom having arrived, places one of these bracelets on each leg of his bride, to indicate that he holds her thenceforward enchained, and that she can never leave him. On the morrow the feast is prepared in the house of the bridegroom, where all the relatives on either side

<sup>1</sup> This testimony is very different from that given by some other writers of the same period as Tavernier.

<sup>2</sup> *Leton* and *estain* in the original.





are present, and at 3 P.M. the bride is brought. Several *Brahmins* are there too, and their Chief, making the head of the bridegroom approach that of the bride, pronounces several words while sprinkling water on both their heads and bodies. Then on plates or on large leaves of the fig tree<sup>1</sup> many kinds of food and pieces of stuff and calico are brought. The *Brahmin* asks the bridegroom if in proportion as God gives to him whether he will share with his wife, and if he will strive to support her by his labour. When he has said yes, all the guests seat themselves at the feast which has been prepared for them, and where each one eats apart. According to the wealth of the bridegroom and the credit he enjoys with great persons, the nuptials are celebrated with pomp and great expenditure. He is seated on an elephant and his bride in a carriage, all who accompany them having torches in their hands. He borrows, moreover, for this ceremony from the Governor of the place and from other great nobles among his friends as many elephants as he can, together with show horses, and they march about thus for a part of the night with fireworks, which are thrown in the streets and open spaces. But one of the principal outlays is in the GANGES water,<sup>2</sup> for those who are sometimes 300 or 400 leagues distant from the river; for as this water is considered sacred, and is drunk from religious motives, it has to be brought from a great distance by the *Brahmins* in earthen vessels glazed inside, which the Grand *Brahmin* of JAGANNÁTH has himself filled with the cleanest water in the river,<sup>3</sup> and has subsequently placed his seal upon it. This

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, the plantain (see vol. i, p. 247, and vol. ii, p. 4).

<sup>2</sup> See p. 231.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 230.





water is not given except at the end of the repast, as I have before said ; for each of the guests three or four cupfuls are poured out, and the more of it the bridegroom gives them to drink so is he esteemed the more generous and magnificent. As this water comes from so far, and the Chief *Brahmin* charges a certain tax on each pot, which is round and holds about as much as one of our buckets, there is sometimes 2000 or 3000 rupees worth of it consumed at a wedding.

On the 8th of April, when I was in *BENGAL* at a town called *MALDAH*,<sup>1</sup> the idolaters made a great feast which is peculiar to the inhabitants of that place. They all leave the town and attach hooks of iron to the branches of trees, to which many of these poor people hook themselves, some by the sides and others by the middle of the back. These hooks enter their bodies, and they remain suspended, some for an hour and others for two, till the weight of the body drags the flesh, when they are compelled to retire.<sup>2</sup> It is a surprising thing not to see a drop of blood come from this cut flesh, and not to see a sign of it even on the hook, and in two days they are entirely cured by the drugs which the *Brahmins* give them. There are others at this festival who make beds for themselves with points of iron and lie upon them ; these points enter

<sup>1</sup> *Malde* in the original. See Book I, chap. viii, p. 134. *Maldah* is a well-known town at the junction of the Kalindri and Mahanadi rivers in the District of the same name in Bengal. Formerly it was a port and centre of manufactures, but is not now important.

<sup>2</sup> This is the so-called *Charak puja* or swinging festival, now forbidden in British India. On one occasion, in the Rájmahal hills, a deputation of Sontháls waited on me to ask for my intercession with the Government to permit its resumption, on the ground that their neglected deities, out of revenge,<sup>a</sup> caused injury to their families and flocks.





very far into the flesh, and while both are doing these penances their relatives and friends bring them presents, as *betel*, money, or pieces of calico. When the penance is accomplished the penitent takes all these presents and distributes them to the poor, not wishing to profit by them himself. I asked some of these people wherefore they made this feast and these penances, and they said it was in memory of the first man, whom they called ADAM like us.

I shall relate also an example of a strange kind of penance which I saw when ascending the GANGES on the 12th of May 1666. A very clean place on the margin of the river had been prepared, in which one of these poor idolaters was condemned to place himself on the ground many times during the day, supported only on two hands and two feet, and kissing the ground three times before rising, without daring to touch it with the rest of his body. When he rose it was necessary for him to do so on the left foot, with the right foot in the air, and every morning during a whole moon, before drinking or eating, he was obliged to place himself in this position fifty times in succession, and consequently to kiss the ground one hundred and fifty times. I was told that the *Brahmins* had inflicted this penance on him for having allowed a cow to die in his house, not having taken it to the margin of the water according to custom, in order that it might be bathed while dying.<sup>1</sup>

Here is yet another somewhat curious custom. When an idolater loses a coin or a sum of gold, be it by mistake or that he has been robbed, he is bound to take as much as he has lost to the Chief *Brahmin*, and

<sup>1</sup> See p. 217.





if he does not do so and it gets known he is driven with ignominy out of his caste, through policy, to make people careful.

Beyond the GANGES, northwards, towards the mountains of NAGARKOT,<sup>1</sup> there are two or three *Rajas* who like their people believe neither in God nor devil. Their *Brahmins* have a certain book which contains their creed, and which is only filled with rubbish for which the author, who is called BAUDOU, gives no reason.<sup>2</sup> These Princes are vassals of the GREAT MOGUL and pay tribute to him.

Finally, for a last remark and to finish this chapter, I may say that the *Malabaris* in general carefully preserve the nails of their left hands, and allow their hair to grow like that of a woman. These nails, which are sometimes half a finger long, serve them as combs, indeed they have no others, and it is with this left hand also that they perform all impure duties, never touching their faces nor that which they eat save only with the right hand.<sup>3</sup> I now come to some remarks which I have made in my journeys regarding kingdoms which lie to the north-east of the territories of the GREAT MOGUL, as those of BHUTÁN, TIPPERAH, ASSAM, and SIAM, of which I believe that we

<sup>1</sup> *Naugrocot* in the original. Nagarkot is to a certain extent synonymous with Kangra, the capital of which is situated on the Ravi Bangangá Torrent. The name occurs in many early travels to indicate the mountainous region of the N.W. Himalayas.

<sup>2</sup> This is rather an uncereemonious way of discussing the tenets of Buddhism. The Buddhists form a comparatively small part of the population of Kangra at present. (See *Imperial Gazetteer*, Art. "Kangra.")

<sup>3</sup> The Nairs of Malabar let their nails grow, according to Linschoten, to show that they are "gentlemen" and do not engage in manual labour. As is well known, the Chinese do so likewise, for the same reason. (See *Voyage of Van Linschoten*, in Hak. Society, vol. i, p. 282.)



Europeans have not much knowledge ; and I would also speak of the Kingdom of TONQUIN, if I did not know that two different authors have filled two volumes with it.

<sup>1</sup> In his third volume Tavernier gives an account of Tonquin, or Tunquin as he calls it. I have not tested it, but in the opinion of some critics it is very inaccurate. Our author's reputation would stand higher if he had limited his descriptions to places of which he had personal knowledge.





## CHAPTER XV

*Concerning the Kingdom of BHUTÁN, from whence  
comes musk, good rhubarb, and some furs*

THE Kingdom of BHUTÁN is of very wide extent, but we have not been able to acquire an exact knowledge of it as yet. This is what I have ascertained during several journeys which I have made in INDIA, from people of the country who come from it to trade; but I was better informed regarding it on the last occasion than I had been previously, as I was at PATNA, the largest town in BENGAL and the most famous for trade—at the time that the merchants of BHUTÁN arrive to sell their musk. During the two months I spent there I bought to the extent of 26,000 rupees worth of musk, an *once* (Fr.) in the capsule costing me 4 *livres* and 4 *sols* of our money, and out of the capsule at the rate of 8 *francs*,<sup>1</sup> and were it not for the custom duties which have to be paid in INDIA, as well as in EUROPE, there would be a great profit to be made on it. The best kind of rhubarb<sup>2</sup> also comes from the Kingdom of BHUTÁN; the same country produces also the seed which yields

<sup>1</sup> See Book II, chap. xxiv, p. 146, for another account of this purchase, and a comparison showing the discrepancy. Here for *francs* we should probably read *livres*.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 260.





worm powder,<sup>1</sup> and other kinds of drugs, and from thence also beautiful furs are brought. But as for rhubarb, you risk much in its carriage, by whatever road you take it; for if you go by the north towards KABUL the damp spoils it, and if you take the southern direction, as the way is long, the rains which may supervene are still more to be feared, so that there is no kind of merchandise which is more subject to be spoilt, and requires more care than it does.

As for musk, during the hot season the merchant does not make any profit by it, because it becomes dry and loses weight. Upon this article 25 per cent duty has generally to be paid at GORAKHPUR,<sup>2</sup> the frontier town of the territories of the GREAT MOGUL in the direction of the Kingdom of BHUTÁN,<sup>3</sup> although they extend 5 or 6 leagues farther. When Indian merchants arrive in that town they call on the customs officer, and tell him that they are going to the Kingdom of BHUTÁN, one to buy musk, another rhubarb, and they make declarations of the sums which they intend to expend, these the customs officer enters in his register with the names of the merchants. Then the merchants,

<sup>1</sup> This is probably a species of *Artemisia*—*A. maritima* (Var)? It is the *Flores cinæ*, or *Semen cinæ*, or *Santonica* of the pharmacopœias. Most of it which reaches Europe comes through Russia, but the drug now to be found in Indian bazaars is similar, consisting of the small unopened flower heads. It is found in great abundance on the steppes of the Kirghiz, in the northern part of Turkestan. (See *Pharmacographia*, by Fluckiger and Hanbury. London, 1874.)

<sup>2</sup> *Goorochepour* in the original. Gorakhpur is the chief town of the District of the same name in the North-West Provinces. It adjoins Nepal on the north, through which territory the merchants travelled to Bhután.

<sup>3</sup> This geographical indication is not correct, as Northern Bengal lies nearer to Bhután; but it is evident from other references that Tavernier's knowledge of the extent and position of Bhután was vague.





instead of 25 per cent, which they ought to pay, agree for 7 or 8 per cent, and take a certificate from the customs officer or the *Kazi*, so that on their return they may not be asked for any more. If it should happen that they are unable to obtain a fair composition from the customs officer, they take a different road, which is both very long and very difficult, on account of the mountains being nearly always covered with snow, and because in the level country there are vast deserts to be traversed. They have to go up to the 60th degree of latitude, and then they turn towards the west to KÁBUL,<sup>1</sup> which is at the 40th, and it is in that town that the caravan divides, one portion going to BALKH,<sup>2</sup> and the other to GREAT TARTARY. It is where those who come from BHUTÁN barter their goods for horses, mules, and camels, for there is little money in these countries. Then these Tartars carry their goods into PERSIA, to ARDABIL,<sup>3</sup> and TABRIZ; this it is which makes Europeans believe that rhubarb and the seeds (*semencine*)<sup>4</sup> come from TARTARY. It is quite true that rhubarb comes from thence, but it is not nearly so good as that which comes from the Kingdom of BHUTÁN, as it is much more tainted, rhubarb being subject to decay at the heart. The Tartars carry away from PERSIA silken stuffs of small value which are made at TABRIZ and ARDABIL, and some English and Dutch cloths

<sup>1</sup> That they travelled so far north as the 60th degree is most improbable. That there was a northern route is well known, however. The true latitude of Kábul (Cabool) is only 34° 30'.

<sup>2</sup> *Balch* in the original. Balkh is an ancient city of Turkestan, south of the Oxus. (See vol. i, pp. 92, *n.*, and 382, *n.*)

<sup>3</sup> *Arduiel* in the original. Ardabil is near the Caspian, in the rugged northern province of Persia called Azerbijaun, wherein Tabriz is also included.

<sup>4</sup> See *ante*, p. 259.



which the Armenians bring from CONSTANTINOPLE and SMYRNA, whither they are brought from EUROPE. Those of the merchants who come from BHUTÁN and KÁBUL go to KANDAHAR and on to ISPAHAN, and they generally take back coral beads, yellow amber, and lapis wrought into beads when they can obtain them. The other merchants, returning from the regions about MULTAN, LAHORE, and AGRA, take calicoes, indigo, and an abundance of carnelian and crystal beads. Finally, those who return by GORAKHPUR, and have an understanding with the customs officer, take from PATNA and DACCÁ coral, yellow amber, tortoise-shell bracelets, and others of sea shells, with numerous round and square pieces of the size of our 15 *sol* coins, which are also of the same tortoise-shell and sea shells. When I was at PATNA four Armenians, who had previously made a journey to the Kingdom of BHUTÁN, came from DANTZIC, where they had had made numerous images of yellow amber, which represented all kinds of animals and monsters, these they were taking to the King of BHUTÁN to place in his pagodas, he being, like his people, exceedingly idolatrous. Wherever the Armenians see that money is to be made they have no scruple about supplying materials for the purposes of idolatry,<sup>1</sup> and they told me that if they had been able to get an idol made which the King had ordered from them they would have been enriched. It was a head in the form of a monster, which had six horns, four ears, and four arms, with six fingers on each hand, the whole to be of yellow amber,<sup>2</sup> but the

<sup>1</sup> Bohemia, it is said, at present sends idols made of cast glass to India, which undersell the marble images of Agra.

<sup>2</sup> Huge pieces of amber were employed in the manufacture of the





Armenians could not find sufficiently large pieces for the purpose. I was inclined to believe that money lacked them, for it did not appear that they had much of it; it is, however, an infamous trade to furnish the instruments of idolatry to these poor people.

Coming now to the road which must be followed from PATNA to the Kingdom of BHUTÁN, upon which the caravan spends three months.<sup>1</sup> It leaves PATNA generally at the end of December and arrives on the eighth day at GORAKHPUR, which, as I have said, is the last town in this direction in the territories of the GREAT MOGUL, where the merchants obtain their supplies for a portion of the journey. From GORAKHPUR to the foot of the high mountains there are still eight or nine days' marching, during which the caravan suffers much, because the whole country is full of forests, where there are numerous wild elephants,<sup>2</sup> and the merchants instead of sleeping at night must remain on the watch, making large fires and firing their muskets to frighten these animals. As the elephant moves without noise, he takes the people by surprise, and is close to the caravan before they are aware of it. It is not that he comes to do injury to man, for he

boxes made in the shape of geese included in the King of Burmah's treasure, which is in the South Kensington Museum.

It has been stated that the largest piece of amber ever known was recently discovered near the Nobis Gate at Altona. It weighed 850 grammes. Dr. Meyer of Dresden (*Nature*, 29th November 1888), commenting on this, says that besides smaller pieces, elsewhere, there are specimens in the Berlin Mineralogical Museum weighing 6.5 and 9.5 *kilogrammes*; they were obtained on the sea-coast of North Germany.

<sup>1</sup> Three months is a long time for the journey to have lasted between Patna and any portion of Bhután territory, as now known.

<sup>2</sup> The Taráí. It was in a part of this region that the Prince of Wales took part in the elephant captures arranged for him by Sir Jang Bahádúr.



contents himself with carrying off whatever food he can seize, as a sack of rice or flour, or a pot of butter, of which there is always a large supply. One can go from PATNA to the foot of these mountains in Indian carriages or *pallankeens*, but oxen, camels, or the horses of the country are generally used. These horses are by nature so small that when a man is upon them his feet nearly touch the ground, but they are otherwise strong, and all go at an amble, doing up to 20 leagues at a stretch, and eating and drinking but little. There are some of them which cost as much as 200 *écus*,<sup>1</sup> and when you enter the mountains you can only use that means of carriage, it being necessary to leave behind all the others, which become useless on account of the numerous passes, which are very narrow. The horses even, though strong and small, often have difficulty in getting through, and it is for this reason, as I shall presently say, that one has recourse to other expedients for traversing these lofty mountains.

At 5 or 6 leagues beyond GORAKHPUR you enter the territories of the *Raja* of NEPAL,<sup>2</sup> which extend to the frontiers of the Kingdom of BHUTÁN. This Prince is a vassal of the GREAT MOGUL, and sends him an elephant every year as tribute.<sup>3</sup> He resides in the town of NEPAL, of which he bears the name, and there is very little trade or money in his country, as it consists of forests and mountains.

The caravan having arrived at the foot of the high mountains, known to-day by the name of NAGAR-

<sup>1</sup> £45, a very high price indeed for a country pony nowadays.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 259 *n*. It is *Nupal* in the original.

<sup>3</sup> The finest elephant I ever saw I met on its way down the Grand Trunk Road to Calcutta from Nepal. It was a gift from Sir Jang Bahádúr to Lord Mayo.





KOT,<sup>1</sup> which one cannot cross in less than nine or ten days, as they are very high and narrow, with great precipices,—numerous people descend from diverse places; the majority being women and girls, who come to strike a bargain with the people of the caravan, to carry the men, goods, and provisions to the other side of the mountains. This is the method by which they carry them. The women have a strap on the shoulders to which a large cushion hanging on the back is attached; upon it the man seats himself.<sup>2</sup> It takes three women, who change in turns, to carry a man; and as for the baggage and provisions, they are loaded on goats which carry up to 150 *livres* weight each. Those who desire to take horses into these mountains are often obliged, in the narrow and difficult passes, to haul them up with ropes; and it is, as I have said, on account of this difficulty that but little use is made of horses in this country. They are fed only in the morning and evening. In the morning a pound of flour, half a pound of black sugar and half a pound of butter, are mixed together with water to give to the horse. In the evening it must be contented with a few horn peas, crushed and steeped in water for half an hour; in this consists all their food during the space of twenty-four hours. The women who carry the men only receive 2 rupees each, for the ten days of traverse, and as much is paid for every *quintal* that the goats or sheep carry, and for every led horse.

After passing these mountains there are to be had, for carriage to BHUTÁN, oxen, camels, and horses, and

<sup>1</sup> See p. 256, *n*.

<sup>2</sup> In some parts of the Himalayas women still offer themselves for carrying travellers on their backs.





even *pallankeens*<sup>1</sup> for those who wish to travel more at their ease. The country is good, and produces corn, rice, vegetables, and wine in abundance. All the people, both men and women, are clad during the summer in coarse cotton or hempen cloth, and during the winter in a thick cloth which is like felt. The headdress for both sexes is a cap made very like those English caps which they call *bouquin-kans*,<sup>2</sup> and it has pigs' teeth around it for ornament, with round and square pieces of tortoiseshell of the size of one of our 15 *sol* coins; the richest persons add to them beads of coral or yellow amber, of which the women also make necklaces. The men, like the women, wear bracelets on the left arms only, and from the wrist to the elbow. Those worn by the women are very narrow, but those worn by the men are two fingers wide. They wear a silken cord on the neck, to which a bead of coral or yellow amber is suspended, or a pig's tooth, which hangs down to the waist; and on their left side they have bands from whence more of these same beads of coral, amber, or pigs' teeth hang in strings. Although they are great idolaters they eat all kinds of meat, except that of the cow, which they worship as the mother and nurse of all men, and they are very fond of spirits. They also observe some of the Chinese ceremonies; for, after having fed their friends, when the repast is finished they burn yellow amber, although they do not worship fire like the Chinese. I have elsewhere given the reason why the Chinese burn

<sup>1</sup> Probably a modified form of *pallankeen*, suitable for hill travelling.

<sup>2</sup> I have not found a full explanation of the term. *Bouquin* means an old book-cover. The caps of felt worn in these regions are somewhat similar to what used to be called "pork pie" hats a few years ago in England.



amber at the conclusion of their feasts;<sup>1</sup> this causes this article to have a good sale in CHINA. In PATNA, even, pieces of yellow amber which are not worked, of the size of a good nut, clear and of good colour, are bought by these BHUTAN merchants at 35 and 40 rupees the *seer*, and the *seer*, both for amber, as also for ambergris, musk, coral, rhubarb, and other drugs, is equal to 9 *onces* (Fr.) of our weight. Saltpetre, corn, rice, sugar, and other articles of food, are also sold by *seers* in BENGAL; but this *seer* is 72 of our *livres* at 16 *onces* to the *livre*, and 40 *seers* make a *maund*, which would amount to 2880 *livres* weight of PARIS.<sup>2</sup> When I left that country the *maund* of rice was selling for 2 rupees.

To return to the yellow amber, for a piece of a *seer* or 9 *onces* (Fr.) weight, according to its colour and beauty, from 250 to 300 rupees is paid, and the other pieces cost the same in proportion to their size and beauty.<sup>3</sup> Coral in the rough or worked into beads is saleable with sufficient profit, but the rough is much preferred, for this reason, that it can be cut according to their own fashion; and most frequently women and girls are employed at this work. They also make beads of crystal and agate, and the men make the bracelets of tortoiseshell and sea shells, as also those small pieces of the same shell, both round and square, of which I have spoken above.<sup>4</sup> All the people of the

<sup>1</sup> See Book II, chap. xxiii, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> This is an extraordinary jumble of figures. A *seer* of 72 *livres*, 40 of which went to the *maund*, making a *maund* of 2880 *livres*, is surely due to a copyist's mistake. It is possible that a Bengal *maund* of 40 *seers* may have been equal to 72 *livres*, or more than double the Surat *maund* of 40 smaller *seers* = 34 *livres* (see vol. i, p. 418), but the statement as it stands is clearly wrong.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 261.



north, men, women, girls, and boys, suspend them from their hair and ears. There are in PATNA and DACCA more than 2000 persons who occupy themselves with these trades, all that is produced by them being exported to the Kingdoms of BHUTÁN, ASSAM, SIAM, and other countries to the north and east of the territories of the GREAT MOGUL.

As for the *semencine*,<sup>1</sup> or worm powder, it cannot be harvested like other grains. It is a herb which grows in the fields, and must be allowed to die, and the evil is that when it approaches maturity the wind causes a great part to fall among the herbage, where it is lost, and this it is which makes it so dear. As it cannot be touched by the hand, because it would thereby be sooner spoilt, and even when making a sample, it is collected in a porringer; when it is wished to gather what remains in the ear, the following is the method adopted: The people who collect it have two baskets with handles, and when walking in the fields they wave one of these baskets from right to left, and the other from left to right, as though they cut the herb, which nevertheless they only touch the upper part of—that is to say, the ear, and all the grain thus falls into the baskets. *Semencine* also grows in the Province of KERMAN,<sup>2</sup> but it is not so good as that of BHUTÁN, and there is not more of it than is required in the country itself. This grain not only serves for driving worms from the bodies of children, but the Persians and all the people who live towards the north, and even the English and Dutch, use it as aniseed to put in comfits.

As for rhubarb, it is known to be a root which is cut

<sup>1</sup> See p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> Kumaon?





in pieces, ten or twelve of them being strung together and then dried.

If the people of BHUTÁN had as much skill as the Muscovites in slaying the martin one might obtain from this country an abundance of rich furs, since there are numbers of these animals. As soon as the animal shows its head outside its hole the Muscovites, who are on the watch, shoot it without fail, generally in the nose or the eyes, for if it is shot in the body the skin will be worth nothing on account of the blood which flows from the wound, and causes the hair moistened by it to fall out.

The King of BHUTÁN always employs 7000 or 8000 men as his guard. These people are armed with the bow and arrow, and the majority also carry the axe and shield, the former having a point on one side like a war mace. It is a long time since the Bhutánese first acquired the use of the musket, iron cannon, and gunpowder,<sup>1</sup> which is of long grain, and is very strong. I have been assured that there is to be seen on their guns figures and letters which are more than

<sup>1</sup> In his paper on *Early Asiatic Fire Weapons* General MacLagan says, "While there appears to be no good evidence in support of the idea that Asia had a knowledge of gunpowder and used firearms before Europe, there are plain indications that the knowledge of the most improved weapons of war, both before and since the introduction of gunpowder, and the skill to make and use them, came from Europe to India and other Asiatic countries." *Jour. Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. xlv, p. 64. He concludes, too, that there is not good evidence of the supposition that the Arabs were the first to use powder. He considers the European nations were the first to discover its most important form and application (p. 70). Were space available, much interesting information might be given here of the huge size of the guns which were used in India. One at Bijapur was 4 feet 8 in. diameter at the muzzle, and had a calibre of 2 feet 4 inches. It was cast at Ahmadnagar in 1549. *Asiatic Jour.* 1827, p. 65.



500 years old.<sup>1</sup> They cannot be taken out of the kingdom without the express permission of the Governor, and no one dare carry away a musket unless his nearest relatives go bail that it will be faithfully returned. Except for this difficulty I would have brought one away with me. By the characters which were on the gun, as those who were able to read assured me, it had been made 180 years. It was very thick, the mouth shaped like a tulip, and the interior polished like a mirror. On two-thirds of the gun there were bands in relief, and some gilt and silvered flowers between two of them, and the ball which it carried was an *once* (Fr.) in weight. The merchant of BHUTÁN being so particular about the return of the musket, no matter what offer I made I could never persuade him to sell it to me, and he even refused to give me a sample of his powder. But I have brought to FRANCE two guns of nearly the same kind, one of which was made in the island of CEYLON, and the other in BENGAL.

There are always fifty elephants about the house of the King of BHUTÁN for his guard, and twenty or twenty-five camels, which carry on the saddle a small piece of artillery, with a ball of about half a pound in weight. There is a man seated on the crupper of the camel, as I have elsewhere described, and he manipulates this piece as he pleases, high or low, to the right or to the left, it being fixed on a fork which is attached to the saddle.

There is no king in the world who is more feared and more respected by his subjects than the King of BHUTÁN, and he is even worshipped by them. When on the seat of justice, or when he gives an audience, all those who present themselves before him have their

<sup>1</sup> This carries back to the year A.D. 1150 or thereabouts. See p. 277.





joined hands elevated to their foreheads, and holding themselves aloof from the throne, prostrate themselves to the ground without daring to raise the head. It is in this humble posture that they make their supplications to the King, and when they withdraw they walk backwards till they are out of his presence. The *Brahmins* make these poor people believe that the King is a god upon earth, and principally those who come from the north.<sup>1</sup> . . .

These people of BHUTÁN are robust men and of fine stature, but have somewhat flat faces and noses. I am informed that the women are taller and more vigorous than the men, but that they are more subject than them to *goitre*, from which few of them escape. They know nothing of war, and have no one to fear but the GREAT MOGUL. But on his side, which lies to the south of them, it is, as I have said, a country of high mountains and narrow passes; on the north there is nothing but forests and almost perpetual snow, and both on the east and west there are vast deserts where one finds nothing but bitter waters; and whatever there is of inhabited country belongs to *Rajas* who have not much power.

There is apparently some mine of silver in the Kingdom of BHUTÁN,<sup>2</sup> for the King coins pieces which

<sup>1</sup> It seems probable that this so-called King of Bhután, who was described to Tavernier, was really the Grand Lama of Thibet, and this is the more likely from the statement as to his sanctity in the passage which is not reproduced, being unsuitable for publication. A similar statement occurs, I am informed, in other early but quite independent accounts of the Grand Lama. The armaments and elephants mentioned above seem, however, to be scarcely compatible with the surroundings of the Grand Lama.

<sup>2</sup> This is extremely probable; but it is inconsistent with our author's own statement on p. 162 that there are no silver mines in Asia except



are of the value of rupees. These pieces are not round but octagonal, and there are characters on them which are neither Indian nor Chinese. Nevertheless, the merchants of BHUTÁN, who told me at PATNA of all these things, could not tell me where the mine was, and as for gold the little they have of it is brought to them by the merchants who come from the east.

This is all that I have been able to learn concerning the Kingdom of BHUTÁN, beyond which the ambassadors passed whom the Duke of MOSCOVIE sent to CHINA in the year 1659. They took their route through the length of GREAT TARTARY to the north of BHUTÁN, and arrived at the court of the King of CHINA with considerable presents. They were some of the most distinguished nobles of MOSCOVIE, and were at first very well received. But when it became necessary for them to salute the King—the custom being to prostrate oneself three times on the ground—they would not consent to do so, saying that they would salute according to their own method, and in the manner that they saluted their own Emperor, who was as great and as powerful as he of CHINA. As they remained firm in this resolution they had no audience, and returned with their presents without having seen the King.<sup>1</sup> It would have answered better if the Grand Duke had

in Japan. Ainslie (*Materia Medica*, vol. i, 563) gives a number of references to authorities on the subject. Silver mines in the Patkái country, between Assam and Upper Burmah, have been recently described by Colonel Woodthorpe. (See *Pro. Geogl. Socy.*, January 1887.) A number of mines where argentiferous ores occur in India will be found enumerated in the chapter on silver in the *Economic Geology of India*.

<sup>1</sup> Envoys to the Emperor of China about the year 713, who refused to *kotow*, were tried and pronounced worthy of death, but were subsequently pardoned. See *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. i, p. lxxxii.





chosen for this embassy some persons of lower rank than these three nobles, who would have shown themselves less scrupulous about formalities, which are often the cause of one's being unable to accomplish great designs. If these Moscovite ambassadors had consented to conform to the customs of CHINA (which they might have done without compromising the honour of their master), we should have, without doubt, at this time, a road opened by land from MOSCOVIE to CHINA, through the north of GREAT TARTARY, and a greater knowledge of the Kingdom of BHUTÁN, which is in its vicinity, and of some others of which we scarce know the names; this would have been a great advantage for all EUROPE.<sup>1</sup>

As I have just spoken of the Moscovites, I remember that in my journeys, and particularly on the road from TABRIZ to ISPAHAN, where you generally meet Moscovite merchants, several of them have assured me that in the year 1654, in one of the towns of MOSCOVIE, a woman aged eighty-two gave birth to a male child, which was taken to the Grand Duke, who wished to see it, and had it brought up at his own court.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This passage is of considerable interest when regarded in connection with the subsequent extension of Russia's influence in this direction, and our own hitherto futile attempts to establish a regular trade route through Thibet.

<sup>2</sup> This tale, thrown in as an extra, may have an interest for the curious. There are undoubtedly cases on authentic record of the ordinary period of child-bearing having been abnormally prolonged, but whether to so advanced an age as eighty-two I cannot say.





## CHAPTER XVI

*Concerning the Kingdom of TIPPERAH*

SOME persons believe up to this hour that the Kingdom of PEGU bounds CHINA, and I myself shared this error until three merchants of the Kingdom of TIPPERAH drew me out of it. They made themselves pass as *Brahmins* in order that they might be treated with special respect, but they were in truth only merchants who came to PATNA and DACCA, where I saw them, to buy coral, yellow amber, tortoise-shell, and sea-shell bracelets, and other toys which, as I have said in the preceding chapter, are made in these two towns of BENGAL. I saw one of them at DACCA, and met the two others at PATNA, and had them to dine with me. They were people who spoke but little, whether because it was their own particular nature, or was the usual custom of their country; one of them knew the Indian language. When they bought anything they made their calculations with small stones resembling agates, and of the size of the finger nail, upon which there were figures. They each had scales made like steelyards. The arms were not of iron, but of a kind of wood as hard as *bresil*,<sup>1</sup> and the ring which

<sup>1</sup> The Brazil wood of commerce is at present derived from *Casalpinia Brasiliensis*, a native of Pernambuco. (See Lindley, *Vegetable Kingdom*,





held the weights, when put in the arm to mark the *livres*, was a strong loop of silk. By this means they weighed from a dram up to ten of our *livres*. If all the inhabitants of the Kingdom of TIPPERAH resemble these two merchants whom I met at PATNA, one might conclude that this nation loves drinking very much; and I experienced a pleasure in giving them sometimes spirits, sometimes Spanish wine, and other kinds of wines, as those of SHIRAZ, RHEIMS, and MANTUA, never having been without a supply in all my journeys, except during the last, in the deserts of ARABIA, which I was unable to traverse in less than sixty-five days, for the reasons I have elsewhere stated. I should have been able to learn many things from these merchants of TIPPERAH in reference to the nature and extent of their country if they had known how to give me as good an account of it as they did of my good wine when I proposed a health. For my interpreter had scarce finished paying them a compliment, on my behalf, before the wine was drunk, and they gazed at one another while smacking their lips, and striking their hands two or three times on their stomachs with a sigh. These merchants had, all three, come by way of the Kingdom of ARAKAN, which lies to the south and west of that of TIPPERAH, which is partly bounded by PEGU in the direction of winter sunset, and they told me that they were about fifteen days in traversing their country, from which one cannot very well estimate its extent, because the

p. 550.) But according to Col. Yule this name was originally applied to a dye-wood obtained from a tree of the same genus indigenous to India, and the name was simply transferred to the American product. (See *Anglo-Indian Glossary*, p. 86.)

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stages are unequal, being sometimes longer and sometimes shorter, according as water is to be found.

For the conveyance of goods they use, as in India, oxen and horses, which are similar to those I have described above, low in stature, but otherwise excellent. As for the King and the great nobles, they travel in *pallankeens*, and have elephants which have been trained for war. The inhabitants of TIPPERAH are not less troubled by goitre than are those of BHUTÁN. I was told that it attacked some of the women on the breasts. Of the three men from TIPPERAH whom I saw in BENGAL, the one who was at DACCA had two goitres, each of the size of the fist; they are caused by the bad water, as in many other countries of ASIA and EUROPE.

Nothing is produced in TIPPERAH which is of use to foreigners. There is, however, a gold mine, which yields gold of very low standard; and silk, which is very coarse.<sup>1</sup> It is from these two articles that the King's revenue is derived. He levies no revenue from his subjects, save that those below the rank, corresponding to that of the nobility of Europe, have to work for him for six days every year either in the gold mine or at the silk. He sends both the gold and silk to be sold in CHINA, and receives silver in return, with which he coins money of the value of 10 *sols*.<sup>2</sup> He also coins small gold money like the *aspres*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tipperah, as now understood, does not produce gold—the gold brought from thence may have been originally obtained elsewhere (see p. 157 *n*). In Assam, I believe, it was once the custom for the *Rajas* to require their subjects to wash for gold for a certain number of days every year. Regular gold washers were taxed.

<sup>2</sup> These coins were therefore worth 9d.

<sup>3</sup> The Turkish *asper* was both a small coin, and a money of account.





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of TURKEY, and has two kinds of them, of one of which it takes four to make an *écu*, and of the other it takes a dozen. This is all I have been able to ascertain concerning a country which has been unknown to us up to the present, but about which we shall hereafter have more information, as also of others which the accounts of travellers have made known to us, all not having been discovered in a day.

Its value varied with that of the *piastre*. It therefore represented about a halfpenny in value, if there were 80 to 100 in a *piastre*. The coins here mentioned by Tavernier were worth 1s. 1½d. and 4½d. respectively.





## CHAPTER XVII

*Concerning the Kingdom of ASSAM*

It was never properly known what the Kingdom of ASSAM was till after that great Captain MIR JUMLA, to whom I have often referred in the history of the Moguls, had assured the Empire to AURANGZEB by the death of all his brothers and the imprisonment of his son. He concluded, that, the war being finished, he would be no longer esteemed at Court as highly as he had been when Commander-in-Chief of the armies of AURANGZEB, and all powerful in the Kingdom where he had a great number of supporters. In order, therefore, to retain for himself the command of the troops, he resolved to undertake the conquest of the Kingdom of ASSAM, where he knew he would not meet with much resistance, the country having had no war for 500 or 600 years, and the people being without experience in arms. It is believed that it is this same people who, in ancient times, first discovered gunpowder and guns, which passed from ASSAM to PEGU, and from PEGU to CHINA; this is the reason why the discovery is generally ascribed to the Chinese. MIR JUMLA brought back from this war numerous iron guns, and the gunpowder made in that country is excellent. Its grain is not long as in the Kingdom





of BHUTÁN, but is round and small like ours, and is much more effective than the other powder.

MIR JUMLÁ left DACCA then with a powerful army for the conquest of the Kingdom of ASSAM.<sup>1</sup> At 5 leagues from DACCA one of the rivers which comes from the lake of CHIAMAY,<sup>2</sup> which like other rivers of INDIA takes different names according to the places it passes, joins an arm of the GANGES, and at the place where these two rivers meet there are forts on each side, both being armed with good pieces of bronze cannon, which shoot at a level with the water. This is where MIR JUMLÁ embarked,<sup>3</sup> his army ascending the river to the 29th or 30th degree, where the frontier of ASSAM is situated, and thence he led it by land through a country abounding with all the necessities of life, and with but little means of defence, especially as the people were taken by surprise. As they are all idolaters, the army, which consisted wholly of Muhammadans, did not spare their pagodas, but destroyed them wherever they met with them, burning and sacking all, up to the 35th degree.<sup>4</sup> MIR JUMLÁ then heard that the King of ASSAM was in the field with a larger number of forces than had been expected ;

<sup>1</sup> An account of Assam at the time of its conquest by Mir Jumlá in 1663, based on the *Alamgir nāmah* of Muhammad Kazim-ibn-Muhammad Amin Munshi, by Kavirāj Syāmal Dās, translated by Bábu Rámá Prasádá, has recently been published in the *Indian Antiquary* for July 1887, pp. 222-226.

<sup>2</sup> Lake Chiamay was a myth believed in by early travellers.

<sup>3</sup> Gorághát on the west bank of the Karatoyá river in the District of Dinájpur, an ancient city now marked by ruins, according to Muhammad Kazim, was the starting point of Mir Jumlá on the 21st November 1662. This was after he had conquered Kuch Bihár.

<sup>4</sup> The Mogul forces can scarcely have gone beyond Garhgáon, or about the 28th degree of latitude, at the farthest.





that he had many guns, and an abundance of fireworks, similar to our grenades or nearly so, which are fixed at the end of a stick of the length of a short pike, as I have elsewhere represented, and carry more than 500 paces.<sup>1</sup> MIR JUMLA, having received this intelligence, did not consider it prudent to advance farther, but the principal cause of his return was that the cold season had commenced, and in order to conquer all that country it would have been necessary to go as far as the 45th degree of latitude; this would have involved the loss of his army. For the Indians are so susceptible to cold, and fear it so much, that it is impossible to make them pass the 30th, or at the most the 35th degree, except at the risk of their lives, and of all the servants whom I took from INDIA to PERSIA, it was a great thing for them to come as far as KASVIN,<sup>2</sup> and I never succeeded in taking any of them to TABRIZ. As soon as they saw the mountains of MEDEA covered with snow I had to allow them to return home.

As MIR JUMLA was unable to go farther north, he resolved to turn to the south-west, and laid siege to a town called Azoo,<sup>3</sup> which he took in a short time, and found great riches there. Many are of opinion that his original design was merely to take this town and to pillage it, and afterwards return, as he in fact did.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rockets (see vol. i, p. 390.)

<sup>2</sup> Casbin in the original.

<sup>3</sup> *Azoo* or Koch Há'jo, a kingdom on the left bank of the Brahmáputrá river, extending up to Kámrup. The town of Há'jo was on the frontier of Assam. A full account of it will be found in the *Pádisháh-námah*. (See Blochmann in *Jour. A. S. Soc. Bengal*, vol. xli, p. 53.)

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Kázim says that Mir Jumla, finding his army tired of the difficulties with which they were surrounded, "Came to terms with the Assamis (on the 17th January 1663), who, besides surrendering two districts, which were added to the crown lands, gave 20,000 *tolas* of