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A  
SHORT REVIEW  
OF THE  
BRITISH GOVERNMENT  
IN  
*I N D I A*;  
AND OF  
THE STATE OF THE COUNTRY BEFORE THE  
COMPANY ACQUIRED THE GRANT  
OF THE DEWANNY.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE affairs of the East India Company, and the conduct of their servants in India, have, for many years, engaged the attention of the public, and been the discussion of every private assembly; but the true state of that country, with regard to its laws, customs, and manners; to the characters of its Mahomedan conquerors, and the conduct of the British government, has neither been fairly explained, nor rightly understood: Consequently, the only means by which a just judgment could be formed on this subject, have been wanting. The desire of supplying this defect, induced the Author to make this humble attempt, which he now submits to the candour of the Public.

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A SHORT

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SHORT REVIEW,

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WHEN prejudices have taken deep root in the minds of men, it is an arduous, and often an unsuccessful, attempt to endeavour to eradicate them; and though the motive be laudable and the end useful, yet such is the disposition of mankind, that they are apt to deride the one, and disregard the other. If interest and passion combine to fortify the prejudice, the voice of Reason is either not heard, or little attended to; and it is left to posterity to do that justice which is refused by the present age.

Introduction.

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This

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This is a melancholy and discouraging reflection, and it may, perhaps, be deemed no little presumption in the person who shall undertake a task of such difficulty ; but let it be remembered in excuse, that if difficulties were to deter, no enterprise would be attempted ; that the energies of the mind are best called into action by endeavouring to overcome them, and that it is by exertion only we can ever hope to acquire knowledge, or attain truth. There is, moreover, an encouraging principle which surmounts every objection ; it is the hope of serving the cause of truth, and pointing to the means of dispelling the mists of error. The history of the world is full of instances of great effects produced from trivial causes ; important discoveries have been made from accidental circumstances, and a trifling hint has often led to conclusive experiments. This subject, therefore, on which I am going

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going to treat, though begun by one of inferior talents and inadequate abilities, may, possibly, be pursued hereafter by some person possessed of superior understanding, and endued with talents equal to the task.

The prejudices which it is my wish to subdue, and my purpose to combat, are those which have been entertained against the *British Government in India*. The prevailing opinion is, that it has been a system of tyranny and injustice, and that the servants of the East India Company have been monsters of cruelty and oppression. Whatever may have been the faults of some individuals, (and where is the society without them ?) the reverse of this representation is the truth ; and I hope to make it appear, that it is an erroneous opinion, founded on partial reports, and fostered by fallacious accounts. What has tended chiefly to propagate

Prejudices  
against the  
British  
Govern-  
ment in  
India  
combated.

[ 4 ]

propagate and support this opinion, is, the great pains and talents which have been employed to circulate it, and the unavoidable ignorance of those into whom it has been instilled respecting the country of India, the situation in which we found it, and the nature of its inhabitants ; their laws, religion, and manners. A Review of these will tend to elucidate the subject ; and some knowledge of them is absolutely requisite in order to form a judgment of the conduct of that government which is arraigned, and in what degree its measures have been wise and just, or weak and oppressive.

Causes of these prejudices.

It hath been very unfortunate for the reputation of the British Government in India, that it hath suffered as much by the misrepresentations and exaggerated descriptions of its own members, as by any other set of men. This hath arisen partly

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partly from *the nature of the government*, and partly from *the nature of things*. These I propose to explain : and first, —*The nature of the government*.

It was composed of a Council, consisting of a Governor and thirteen members ; but this number has fluctuated occasionally from fourteen to four, at which it was last fixed by a late act of Parliament in 1784. Every measure of government, relative to peace, war, revenue, or commerce, was debated and deliberated on by this Council. The Governor had no other pre-eminence than that of having the casting vote. But he was the executive magistrate of the resolutions of the Council, and all correspondence, with the native Princes and powers of India, was carried on through him solely, and all the dispatches to them were signed by him singly. The Nabob, the Ambassadors of foreign Princes,

Nature of the British Government explained.

Power of the Governor.

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Cause of jealousy.

Princes, and all men of rank who visited the presidency, were first received by him, and by him introduced to the Counsellors. He was also the military Governor of Fort William, and Commander in Chief in the Presidency. These distinctions, as they gave him some superior power, in fact, to the rest of his Council, and created an opinion of a great deal more in the minds of the natives, rendered his office a station of some degree of envy and jealousy.

It will be easily imagined by those who have seen the proceedings of deliberative assemblies, that there will be difference of opinions amongst the members, whether the number be great or small: accordingly, that happened in this government, which must happen in all governments so constituted, that the members, differing in opinions, ranged them-

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themselves in different parties. The Governor, and such as were of his opinion, composed one side; and those who opposed him formed the other: the consequence of this was, that in the variety of matters which came under their consideration, there were frequent subjects of debate; and as many of these subjects excited both the passions and the interests of the several members, their debates were often carried on with heat and violence. Strife and dissention soon found their way into these Councils, and hence we find the Company's records filled with party-disputes.

As it is a rule of the East India Company's governments, that the opinion of every member shall be delivered in writing, and recorded, and as there were generally two sets of men in Council in opposition to each other, opinions are to be found diametrically opposite on the

Opinions of Counsellors recorded;

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same measure ; and, very frequently, both the measure, and the men who proposed it, are loaded with very heavy abuse. This was one great cause of injury to the reputation of the British government in India ; for when the Ministry at home were inclined to condemn or reprobate any of its acts, they justified themselves by the opinions of the very members who were on the spot at the time these acts were done, and quoted the sentiments of one party as irrefragable arguments against the other. Thus the language of irritated animosity has been frequently appealed to as proof of mal-administration, and mere insinuations and assertions, thrown out in the heat of contentious debate, have been brought forward as so much specific evidence of actual criminality in the persons against whom these insinuations and assertions were levelled.

consequences of it.

But

[ 9 ]

But Ministers are not the only persons who have availed themselves of this system of the Company, which directs all opinions to be recorded ; the principle on which they acted in political discussions, has been adopted in judicial proceedings ; and, in the present impeachment, one of the Managers hath contended for the extraordinary doctrine, that these records are evidence of a fact ; as if an opinion or an insinuation were a jot more true for being recorded.—Let this reasoning be applied to a subject more immediately under our review, and the absurdity of it will be instantly seen : are the resolutions of the House of Commons matters of fact or evidence, because they are recorded on their journals ? If they be, our present Minister ought not to hold his office, and the vote relative to the Middlesex election in 1770, with a thousand others, ought never to have been expunged.—But these

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these records are so far from being either matters of fact, or matters of evidence, that it has been asserted by one of the first writers of the age, the House of Commons went so far in one instance, on the occasion of the Middlesex election, as to declare, in *open defiance of truth and common sense*, that it was not the rule of the House to divide a complicated question at the request of a member\*.

When it is considered, what a variety of subjects came under the discussion of a Council which governed and controlled every department of a great kingdom, that their own private interests, as well as those of the state, were often implicated in the resolutions they were taking, it must be admitted, that a more fruitful source of envy and detraction

\* Junius, vol. ii. p. 95.

can-

[ 11 ]

cannot well be imagined; for almost every thing which can excite the passions of men was comprehended in their debates, and almost every thing which such passions could dictate, has been asserted. That this is no exaggerated description, nor fanciful delineation, I appeal to the facts of Mr. Vansittart's government, from the year 1761 to 1764; to Lord Clive's, from 1765 to 1767; and to Mr. Hastings's, from the year 1774 to 1777\*.

Another cause of injury to the reputation of the British government in

Dissentions in England cause of

\* In the year 1763 one member was so violent as to give another the lie, which occasioned a scuffle at the council board, and a duel the next day.—Lord Clive told General Carnac he ought to have some body near him with a pot of water to throw over him to cool him.—In Mr. Hastings's government two duels were the consequence of the heat of their debates.

India

*injury to  
the British  
govern-  
ment.*

*Parties.*

India from the nature of it, and which flowed from the source of party diffention, was the Court of Directors in England having caught the same infection. They were divided in sentiments; and as different majorities prevailed, different men and measures were supported. The great leaders of these parties were the late Lord Clive and Mr. Sullivan, who, as their influence operated in the Direction, appointed to their governments in India those persons whose interests and opinions they espoused. When men succeed to power and place under such circumstances, their minds are too apt to be heated to allow them to form a cool and sober judgment; nor is it probable they should either investigate with temper, or relate with candour, the acts of those against whom they entertained political prejudices.— Thus it happened, that when a new administration was formed by either party,

party, their first object was, to find occasion to condemn the measures of their predecessors; in doing which they seemed to think, that their own characters would rise in estimation, exactly in the same proportion as they sunk those of their opponents. A striking instance of this principle is afforded in the appointment of Lord Clive in the year 1764. An arduous struggle, between what was called his interest and Mr. Sullivan's, was decided in his Lordship's favour in the month of April of that year; and he was appointed Governor of Bengal in consequence. The Rulers of the former administration were chiefly the men of Mr. Sullivan's choice; the new Direction, therefore, represented the affairs of the East India Company to be in the most deplorable situation, and their very existence tottering on the brink of ruin; from which nothing could save them but the virtues and abilities

*The ob-  
jects of  
them.*

*Lord Clive  
appointed  
Governor.*

[ 14 ]

State of  
Bengal  
when he  
arrived.

lities of a Clive. Clive, on his arrival in Bengal, took care to echo back the same dreadful tale, and to justify his Master's judgment in their choice of him and his Select Committee. He landed in Bengal in May 1765. A dangerous war had just been successfully terminated. The Nabob Jaffier Aly Khan, whom he had first placed on the Masnud, died a few months before his arrival, and a successor had been nominated by the former Council. These were two unexpected events, which, had they happened a little later, or had he not been the unusual length of twelve months on his passage, might have afforded his Lordship a happy opportunity to display those talents which were deservedly held in high estimation by his employers; and he was a little chagrined at the disappointment. In this situation his attention was employed how to supply, by his own means, the loss of those which  
fortune

[ 15 ]

fortune had deprived him of. He could not prevent what had happened; but he might condemn all that had been done; which he failed not to do in terms of the most violent abuse. This, however, did not answer all his Lordship's purposes, and it was not sufficient for him to condemn the acts of the Council alone; his views had a more extensive range, and took in the whole circle of the Company's servants in Bengal. The first dispatches that were transmitted to England by the Select Committee, whose proceedings were concealed by an oath of secrecy, were filled with the coarsest invectives against the whole body of servants\*; and an indiscriminate cen-  
His con-  
duct.

\* The following quotation may serve as a specimen of their temper and style: "We are heartily sick of the fruitless labour of raking in the jakes of corruption."—Sel. Com. Gen. Let. Fort William, 31 Jan. 1766, par. 14.

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ture was passed, in the most unjustifiable manner, on every rank in the service; for they had neither the privilege of knowing, nor, of course, the means of defending themselves from the accusations which were thus secretly preferred to their masters in England.—Lord Clive had certainly great merit, and the nation is highly indebted to his services; but in this instance he departed from the dignity of his own character, and wantonly traduced the reputation of others.

Comment on it.

New government of 1774.

The next remarkable instance which occurs of the same kind, wherein a new Administration commenced its career by condemning the acts of the preceding, happened just ten years after Lord Clive's government. In the year 1774 the affairs of the East India Company were taken under parliamentary consideration, and the Minister of that day, intent on colonial regulation, turned his thoughts to

to the management of the East as well as the West. In the same Session that the memorable Boston Port Bill was passed, an Act was also made to model anew the form of government in Bengal, which was to consist of a Governor-General and four Members of Council. Three of these were sent from England: they were two military officers of high rank, and a gentleman who was employed in the War-office. In the space of three months after their arrival in a country, of which they were utterly ignorant, and where the chief part of their information was derived through the medium of men whose language they did not understand, they took upon them to pronounce decidedly, that it was in a ruinous state, and that there was no species of corruption which had not been practised by the former government. In a word, the same general accusation, preferred without any proof, and asserted

Who they were.

Their conduct

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without any regard to decency, filled their dispatches to England; and thus has the reputation of the *British government in India* sustained repeated injuries, from its own members having indulged themselves in unwarrantable liberties, which men in public life seem to think they are authorized to take, when they speak of the political conduct of others. In our own country, the same sort of accusation and abuse is bestowed on Administration, with very different effect. Opposition rail, condemn, and assert the Minister's wickedness and the nation's ruin, in the most violent language, without the least attention being paid to the alarming representation. But let the same things be said of an Administration in India, they are immediately believed, and the nation is in a flame. The reason of this difference is, at home we know and can judge of the facts; the assertions are made in speeches, which cannot

cenfured.

Remark on the difference of English and Indian Administration.

cannot be recorded, and pass away with the occasion: in India every thing is written and made a matter of record. The written memorial is referred to, years after the event has happened, and the circumstances of it are forgotten; nothing further is known of the nature of the facts asserted, and therefore no judgment can be formed upon any thing extrinsic to the Company's records upon the subject. In the one case, we know it is political clamour; in the other we are utterly ignorant; and not being able to judge of the reality, we necessarily admit the representation.

Having endeavoured to explain the causes of those prejudices which arose from the *nature of the British government in India*; I will proceed to the other causes, which I class under the *nature of things*. Under this head I comprehend, *the situation of the country, and the system*

Other causes of prejudice against British government

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*of the Company's commerce. The situation of the country* may be considered in two points of view, the vast distance of it, and the state in which we found it.

From the remoteness of India our intercourse with it was necessarily confined to a few, and our ignorance so great, that it was in the power of any designing person, either from interest or malice, or both, to create almost any prejudice that might suit his purpose. It was impossible for the Directors, the Ministers, or any part of the nation to whom the tales might be told, to judge of their truth or falsehood, their probability or absurdity. And there were some persons, whom disappointment had soured, and discontent rendered envious, who vented their complaints to their connexions in England, in such unfair representations, as to occasion many unjust prejudices in the minds of those to whom these communications

explained.

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communications were made: they imparted them to others, and private reports, which originated from particular dissatisfaction or malevolence, were circulated to the general injury of a whole community. Even the purposes of ambition have been served by this disingenuous method of publishing artful misrepresentations. I could point out several instances in the Company's records, where the Court of Directors have been misled in their opinions, from the cause to which I have attributed much prejudice, namely, the want of local knowledge, owing to the vast distance of the country; but I will content myself with mentioning a very memorable one regarding Mahommed Reza Cawn: He was a native of rank; and in the year 1765, when Lord Clive accepted the grant of the Dewanny, was appointed first Minister for the execution of the office of Naib Dewan, and Deputy to the Nabob.

Instances given.

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He had filled these eminent stations with general approbation for seven years: but in the year 1772, the Court of Directors ordered him to be dismissed, and brought to a public trial in Calcutta, in consequence of *private information*, which accused him, in *general terms*, of *misdeemeanors in office*, and of having contributed to the calamities of the poor in the famine which happened in 1769.

In consequence of this general accusation, which specified neither time, place, nor persons, Mahommed Reza Cawn was divested of his rank and influence, and brought to Calcutta, where a very strict, and, to the honour of the Administration of Bengal, a very impartial enquiry was made into his conduct; from which it appeared, that the Court of Directors had been grossly deceived by this *private intelligence*, and that he was entirely innocent of the imputed charges

charges which had been thus *clandestinely* preferred against him.

The dreadful famine to which the Directors alluded, was a fruitful source of calumny and misrepresentation; and although it be an undeniable and notorious fact, that the periodical rains failed in that year in an unusual manner, and that without rain it is as impossible to have rice as it is to have wheat without sunshine, yet this cause, which is out of the reach of human power, was absurdly ascribed, and believed to have been occasioned by the British government. And to such a height was the prejudice and credulity carried, that a gentleman, who had been high in station in the Company's service, was most unjustly charged with having contributed to a calamity which proceeded entirely from a physical cause, *which happened when he was actually in England*, and to which, there-

fore, he could not possibly have been accessory, even if human means had been any part of the cause.

An example of more public notoriety, and of more general effect of the same kind, and proceeding from the same cause, is afforded in the malicious publication of Mr. Bolts. This man, who was of a revengeful, turbulent, and seditious temper, had violated his fidelity to the Company, and endeavoured, on various occasions, to disturb the peace of their government in Bengal. After repeated instances of daring misconduct and provocation, the Governor and Council were at length compelled to order him to depart to Europe, and, ultimately, to seize and send him on ship-board, as he had for near two years refused obedience to their orders, and resisted their authority.

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The resentments of a mind, like that of Mr. Bolts, were easily excited; but on this occasion they were raised to a height of fury; and in order to revenge himself on the Company and their servants, he composed this spiteful work, wherein truth is artfully perverted, and facts and falsehoods so speciously interwoven, that the base purpose for which this performance was published, was fully answered, and the vindictive author gratified his private resentments, by exciting and spreading an universal clamour and prejudice against the East India Company and their servants. However the reputation of this publication soon sunk in the opinion of the world; and though it did excite, on its first appearance, great curiosity and clamour against the government in India, yet in a few years the infamy of the author's character and design being fully detected, his book has been deservedly neglected, and

and considered as the effusion of a malignant mind.

But there is a work of a very different kind, wherein the same unhappy prejudice has been entertained by a most respectable author; and the same unfortunate cause, for want of proper information regarding this remote country, has led him into an error, which, coming from such authority, may have an influence on the latest posterity. The work to which I allude, is the celebrated performance of *The Wealth of Nations*, by *Adam Smith*. A performance which will last as long as the English language, and be read and respected as long as good sense, great knowledge, and valuable information shall be esteemed by mankind.

In page 477 of the second volume, Mr. Smith says, speaking of the oppression

tion of monopolies, and comparing their effects in different states, "The English Company have not yet had time to establish in Bengal so perfectly destructive a system. The plan of the government, however, has had exactly the same tendency. *It has not been uncommon, I am well assured, for the Chief, that is, the first clerk of a factory, to order a peasant to plow up a rich field of poppies, and sow it with rice or some other grain. The pretence was to prevent a scarcity of provisions; but the real reason, to give the Chief an opportunity of selling, at a better price, a large quantity of opium which he had upon hand. Upon other occasions the order has been reversed, and a rich field of rice, or other grain: has been plowed up to make room for a plantation of poppies, when the Chief saw that extraordinary profit was likely to be made by opium.*"

This

This is, undoubtedly, a piece of misinformation to which this most respectable gentleman would not have listened, if he had either understood the manner of cultivating these plants, or had been possessed of any local knowledge on the subject. I have made very diligent inquiries, both on the spot and in England, amongst those who must have known the facts which Mr. Smith relates, if they had been, as he asserts he was assured, *no uncommon practice*; and I have been uniformly answered, that they never heard of such instances. But what will put the matter out of all doubt, are the following incontrovertible facts:

The poppy is a plant which requires a peculiar soil, and particular care in the culture of it. The medium price of the land on which it is cultivated, is about eleven or twelve rupees a *begah*, or one-third of an English acre. It is sowed at  
the

the beginning of October, when the season of the periodical rain expires. The plant begins to be fit for incision, in order to extract its juice, of which opium is made, about the end of December, and continues so till March. It requires a dry soil, and can be brought to maturity only in the dry season, when the periodical rains have ceased. Paddy or rice lands let, on a medium, at three rupees a *begah*. Rice is sowed about the end of May, just before the periodical rains commence. One crop is reaped about the end of September; and another, which is the last, and by far the greatest, about the end of December. It requires a soil saturated with water, and lies soaked in it for a considerable time. On this account it is sowed just before the periodical rains commence; and nine-tenths of the quantity of rice, produced in the Company's provinces, grow in the kingdom  
of

of Bengal, which is so low and flat, that the grounds are either overflowed by the rivers Ganges and Burrumporter, with their tributary streams, or soaked with the rain which falls and stagnates in them. It is therefore evident, that the soil and the season, which can alone fructify the paddy or rice, would rot and destroy the poppy; and it is therefore as evident, that it is utterly impossible, from the nature of the two plants, that one should be plowed up to sow the other.

System of the Company's commerce.

I shall reserve what I have to say on the state in which we found the country of India for another place, and proceed to shew how the *system of the Company's commerce* has, from the *nature of the thing*, created prejudices.

Monopolies are regarded in a commercial country with a peculiarly jealous eye.

Every

Every other mercantile adventurer in the State is naturally envious of the persons to whom these exclusive privileges are granted; and thus, by a very large body of the nation, a joint Company and its servants, become the objects of envy. This prepossession gives a bias to the minds of men; and whenever they see or hear of a person who has been fortunate in the service of the East India Company, they conceive a degree of secret prejudice against him; but if any report be whispered to the injury of his reputation, it is eagerly listened to, and readily admitted, without examining either its probability or authenticity. Another cause of prejudice proceeding from the system of the Company's commerce is, the confounding of two very distinct matters, in which the blame of the thing ordered to be done has been unjustly imputed to the person ordered to do it. From a set of mere merchants, the East India Company

Creates prejudices.

became

became the Sovereigns of the country they traded to. Hence arose a very important distinction of the two characters to which they did not attend ; and it has been wisely observed by the celebrated Author of the Wealth of Nations, that after they became Sovereigns, they absurdly regarded that character but as an appendix to that of the monarch, and as something which ought to be made subservient to it. As Sovereigns, their interest is exactly the same with that of the country which they govern. As merchants, their interest is directly opposite. In this situation, when the administration in India did any thing in obedience to the orders of the Directors, which orders, being dictated by the spirit of merchants, were prejudicial to the interests of the country, that injury has been unjustly attributed to their servants, who were only the instruments, and not the authors of the detriment. If, on the other

Servants  
vindicat-  
ed.

hand, the Administration of India were influenced in their councils by the spirit with which a Sovereign would act for the good of his country ; such measures were condemned, sometimes by the Company, who judged as merchants, and sometimes by the Ministry, who made any political acts a plea for their interference ; and, as it served their purpose, raised a clamour, either about the extension of territory, the ambition of conquest, or the insatiable thirst of power and dominion of the servants in India.

In justice, therefore, to the govern- Remark.  
ment of India, this distinction should be always kept in mind ; and whenever the policy of a measure is to be judged, it ought to be well considered how far the effect of that measure, if it has been hurtful to the general interest of the country, is to be attributed to the cause

D of

of the Company acting as merchants, when they ought to have governed as sovereigns. Again, when any measure of the Administration in India is to be decided on, it ought to be considered how far they acted as sovereigns, intent upon the good of the whole, and attended to the general interest of the country, without regarding the narrower views of mercantile profit.

*of*

*Of the State of that Part of India called Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, when it came under the British Government.*

I HAVE purposely reserved what I have to say on this subject for a distinct discussion; because it is not only complicated in its nature, but has been rendered much more so by artful misrepresentations, exaggerated descriptions, and erroneous information. These have made so deep an impression on the minds of men, have infused such strong prejudices, and created such false opinions, that it will be very difficult to persuade them they have been grossly deceived, and formed their judgment on fallacious representations: yet such is really the case, and I hope to be able to evince it.

State of  
India be-  
fore British  
govern-  
ment.

It is well known, that the country of Hindoostan was invaded and conquered by Tamerlane and his successors; and that his descendants sat on the throne of Delhy under the title of Great Mogul. That part of Hindoostan, which comprises the provinces of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, formed a division of the empire, called a *Soubahdarry*, which was governed by a Viceroy called a *Soubahdar*. This appointment was temporary, and at one period so fluctuating, owing to the unsteadiness of the Court at Delhy, that there is a current story of one of these Viceroys, who, as soon as he had received his appointment, left the city of Delhy, and mounted his elephant with his face towards the animal's tail, assigning as a reason for this ludicrous posture, that he was looking for his successor.

Soubahdar  
or Viceroy.

Tempora-  
ry appoint-  
ment.

The Mogul empire had attained its utmost vigour in the reign of Aurungzebe,

zebe, which lasted from the middle of the last to the beginning of the present century; and soon after his death it began to decline. As long, however, as its institutes were enforced, all offices of state, and titles of rank, could only be conferred by the immediate command of the Emperor. There was a particular department\* from which all *funnuds*, or grants, for those purposes were issued, and particular regulations were formed, both to mark the dignity and stamp the authenticity of the grant. Some had nothing but the royal seal; others the seals and signatures of the Ministers and the royal seal; others, again, only the seals and signatures of the Ministers, without the royal seal. The Soubahdar, or Viceroy, had his *funnud* authenticated by the signature of the Ministers

\* Ayeen Akbery, or Institutes of Achbar. English Translation, vol. i. p. 271.

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and the royal seal; and so had every person of the rank of *Munsubdar*, from which he also derived the *title* of *Nawab*. But when the empire declined, and forms and substance both decayed, the *Soubahdars* often appointed Deputies in their provinces (as was done in the *Soubah* of Bengal, at Patna, Poorneah, and other places), who were called *Naibs*. These men, deriving a consequence from their station, assumed a dignity which properly could be conferred only by the Emperor, and stiled themselves *Nawab*, or, as it is better known in Europe, *Nabob*. Hence it has happened, that many of these Deputies of a Deputy have been erroneously called Native Princes of high rank and hereditary dignity; whereas they were only the delegates of a delegated officer, and, like him, mere adventurers from Persia or the adjacent countries, who had nothing to trust to but their sword and their spirit. These are the

men,

Persianad-  
venturers.

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men, as I shall shew immediately, who, in violation of all law and justice, threw off their obedience to the Viceroy, usurped the dominion of these provinces, and were in this illegal possession of them when we first interfered in their government.

In the year 1725, the provinces of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa were governed by Soujah Cawn, as *Soubahdar*; and this title, which had heretofore been temporary, was granted to him and his family, by the Mogul, as a reward for his zeal and fidelity to the crown. Bahar and Orissa he committed to the rule of two deputies, whilst he himself kept his court at Moorshedabad, in the centre of Bengal. His only son, Surfraz Cawn, succeeded him in the year 1739. The unwieldy empire of the Moguls, which had been in its decline for more than half a century, received its downfall

D 4                      about

Soujah  
Cawn,  
1725.

Surfraz  
Cawn,  
1739.

about this period by the invasion of Nadir Shah ; and the Governors of these distant provinces now threw off all allegiance to their vanquished Sovereign.

Hadjee Hamet—  
Aly Verdy Cawn,

Some time before the accession of Soujah Cawn, two Mogul adventurers, named Hadjee Hamet and Aly Verdy Cawn, came into Bengal, strongly recommended by some of the principal Omrahs at the Court of Delhy, and were, in consequence, received into Soujah's service ; the former as an officer of the foot soldiers, and the latter in the menial capacity of his pipe-bearer\*.

Their characters

Hadjee was subtle, fordid, and insinuating. Aly Verdy Cawn was bold, ambitious, and aspiring. Their different talents being thus suited to the purposes

\* Scrofton's Hindoostan, p. 31.

of

of each other, Hadjee determined to render his baser qualifications subservient to the more generous vices of Aly Verdy's disposition. Eager to gratify his own avidity for wealth, and his brother's inordinate desire of power, he made no scruple of taking the most profligate means to accomplish his designs. The ruling passion of his Master, Soujah Cawn, was lust ; and to this the abandoned Hadjee sacrificed the honour and the innocence of his own daughter\*. Having thus basely ingratiated himself with Soujah, he procured the appointment of *Naib*, or *Nawab* of Patna for his brother, Aly Verdy Cawn. In this situation he had an ample opportunity of acquiring that degree of power which he wanted to fulfil his ambitious hopes ; and soon after the death of Soujah Cawn,

and conduct.

\* Scrofton's Hindoostan, p. 32.

this

Surfraz  
Cawn  
killed,  
1742 ;  
Aly Verdy  
Cawn suc-  
ceeds.

this ungrateful rebel took up arms against Surfraz Cawn, the son and successor of his indulgent Master. He was successful in his rebellion, and in the year 1742 defeated and killed Surfraz Cawn in a pitched battle\*.

Emperor  
invites the  
Mahrattas  
to invade  
Bengal.

The Emperor, or Mogul, was at this time an empty name, without power and without dominion ; and being utterly unable to interfere himself in this usurpation of his rebel subject, he proposed to the Mahratta State to dispatch a force against Aly Verdy Cawn, send the heads of the two brothers to Delhy, and re-estate the family of Soujah Cawn †. The Mahrattas invaded Bengal, with immense armies ‡, and gave the usurper great disquiet by their incursions for several years: till, at last,

\* Scrofton's Hindoostan, p. 32.

† Ib. p. 37.

‡ Ib. p. 46.

he

he settled a treaty with them in 1750\*. After various struggles for his ill-gotten power, he died in quiet possession of his usurped dominions in the year 1756, and left them to his nephew, Surajah Dowlah ; that inhuman tyrant, who wantonly attacked the English Factory, and murdered so many of the inhabitants, by putting them into that dreadful dungeon, still remembered with horror by the name of the Black Hole.

Treaty  
made with  
them 1756.

Aly Verdy  
Cawndies,  
1756.

Surajah  
Dowlah  
succeeds.

Whilst Aly Verdy Cawn governed the provinces of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, as Soubahdar, the interior districts were ruled, under him, by the descendants of Hadjee (for he himself had no children), under the titles of *Nabob* † of Patna, *Nabob* ‡ of Dacca, and *Nabob* § of Pur-

Interior  
govern-  
ment of  
Bengal  
under Aly  
Verdy  
Cawn.

Nabobs of  
provinces,  
who.

\* Scrofton's Hindoostan, p. 47.

† Mirza Mahmud Cawn.

‡ Nowagis Mahammed Cawn.

§ Sid Hamet.

neah :

neah\* : and the posterity of these low adventurers, who first usurped their power, and then assumed their titles, are the men who have been dignified in Europe by the name of Princes ; and set forth as persons of great hereditary dignity, and illustrious descent. And this was the case in other provinces in the empire, as well as Bengal ; for, since the reign of Aurungzebe, all the old families of distinction had sunk into insignificance, or were become extinct, and in every succeeding reign almost every man, who rose to promotion and honours, was taken from the middling, and even lowest class of life. The Vizier Monfur Aly Cawn, who kept his Sovereign and his family prisoners at this time, came into Hindoostan, like other Persian adventurers, to seek his fortune ; where he was lucky enough to raise

Vizier,  
who.

\* Scrofton's Hindoostan, p. 48.

himself

himself to this high post, and to leave it to his son Sujah Dowlah, father of the man who, at the present, holds this empty but high-sounding title.

Such being the rulers of this country, amidst the confusion and misery into which so many wars and revolutions had involved it, let us take a cursory view of the native inhabitants, the Hindoos. From the enervating effects of the climate, from the tenets of their religion, and from the combined influence of these causes, the Hindoos are a meek, timid, superstitious race of people ; and became an easy prey to their Mahomedan conquerors. What their system of government was before, or at that time, is unknown to us ; the only vestige of it is in their religious and civil code of laws, which their conquerors permitted them to follow, as far as was consistent with their own despotic plan.

Character  
and situa-  
tion of the  
native in-  
habitants.

Without

[ 46 ]

Title of  
Rajah,

Without entering into the wide field of conjecture about their ancient government, it will be sufficient for my purpose, to shew the state and condition of the Hindoos at the period of the British administration. The title of *Rajah*, in the time of their own government, was certainly that by which the governing power was called; but of the nature of its rights, and how it descended, or was conferred, we are now ignorant. There are many Hindoo families, at this day, who have the title of Rajah; but they have either assumed it themselves, or, what is more absurd, have had it conferred on them by their Mahomedan rulers; for the Great Mogul is just as competent, strictly speaking, to make a Christian Duke as an Hindoo Rajah. And if any Englishman had been silly enough to suffer himself to have been created Duke of Patna, he might have boasted of his nobility and high rank with

how as-  
sumed and  
conferred.

as

[ 47 ]

as much propriety as the Rajah of Benares; who, from being a mere collector of revenue, was made a Zemindar by Shujah Dowlah, the son of that Persian adventurer, Monfur Aly Cawn, who made himself Vizier. The fact is, there is scarcely an old Hindoo family existing; and as to an ancient nobility, which is one of the errors that has been propagated, *there is no such thing.*

Remark.

With regard to the title of *Zemindar*, this appellation is certainly of Mahomedan origin, for it is composed of two Persian words signifying land-holder: it is therefore evidently no rank of Hindoo creation; and whatever respect, dignity, or privileges the persons who hold this rank may have claimed in the decline of the empire, when all orders were confounded, there is great reason to think, that, in its original institution by the Mahomedans, it was only an *office* temporary

Zemin-  
dars, what,

porary

[ 48 ]

Their of-  
fice ex-  
plained.

porary and conditional. The grant of a Zemindar, called Sunnud, bears strong internal evidence of this; for it is there expressly called *the office of Zemindar*. It prescribes certain stipulated duties, orders the performance of certain acts, and the forbearance of others, and (what is very unlike hereditary right) requires a security for the personal appearance of the Zemindar.—He is obliged to attend the Exchequer of the King's chief officer of collection, at the commencement of every year, to make a new settlement of his revenues; and he cannot enter upon the duties of his office for the new year without a special order for this purpose. When a Zemindar dies, the next of kin does not succeed of course as to a legitimate right. Whoever has pretensions to the succession, is obliged to petition the Sovereign to be invested with the office, in which petition he promises to perform all the stipulated conditions, and to pay the

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the customary fees. When his petition is granted, a new Sunnud is issued, but till he obtains this special investiture he cannot act as Zemindar.

It was necessary to confer a considerable degree of power on the Zemindars, in order to enable them to fulfil the duties of their office; and as it is an inherent principle in all despotic governments, that every portion of delegated power is exercised in the same plenary and arbitrary manner, by the person to whom it is granted, as by the despot himself\*, so these Zemindars were the little tyrants of their own jurisdiction. In process of time, and as the supreme power became weak, the encroachments of the Zemin-

Power  
granted  
them

\* Dans le gouvernement despotique, le pouvoir passe tout entier dans les mains de celui à qui on le confie. Le Vizier est le despot lui-même; et chaque officier particulier est le Vizier.

L'Esprit de Loix, ch. xvi. liv. v.

E

dars

abused.

dars were less attended to; and after the irruption of Nadir Shah, when every thing was thrown into confusion, when the Viceroys threw off all obedience to the Emperor, and when their deputies, the Nabobs, threw off all obedience to them, and usurped their power, it is probable the Zemindars, in their turn, assumed rights and privileges which, in their original institution, they were not intitled to. But although it has been permitted them by the Nabobs to claim an hereditary succession to their Zemin-

Treatment of them by Moorshud Kuly Cawn.

dary, yet they were often treated as mere officers of collection, and with a degree of severity unknown in the British government. " Moorshud Kuly Cawn \*, " (in the reign of Aurungzebe) for the " purpose of making a fuller investigation of the capacity of the lands, or-

\* Narrative of the Government of Bengal, translated by Gladwin, p. 43, 44.

" dered

" dered the Zemindars into close confinement, and put the collections into the hands of Bengally Aumils." Some of his successors have since treated them with as little consideration, in this respect; and even at so late a period as Mr. Varelst's government, in the year 1769, they are threatened to be dispossessed if they disobey the orders of the Council, which were, to make the same sort of scrutiny as had been done by Moorshud Kuly Cawn \*.

Sometimes persons became security to government for the payment of the Zemindar's revenue, under the name of Ahdad-arr, or, as they are commonly called, *Woodedars*; and then they had either a joint, or superior power to the Zemindar in the management of the

Woodedars, what.

\* Instructions to Supervisors, Aug. 16, 1769.

E 2

collections.

collections. Sometimes government sent its own officers into their districts with an immediate appointment from itself, which entirely superseded their authority, under the different names of *Aumil, Tab-fildar, Sezawul*: In a word, a Zemindar is, by the nature of his tenure, a vassal who holds of his superior Lord by a grant that is conditional and dependant.

*Aumils, &c.*

*Zemindary not limited in value or extent.*

*Rajeshay and Burdwan.*

A Zemindary is not limited in extent or value. There are in Bengal Zemindaries which yield a revenue of as high a value as three hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling a year; and some that do not pay more than three hundred and fifty pounds. The principal Zemindars of Bengal, in regard to the extent and value of their lands, are those of Rajeshay and Burdwan, whose districts, taken together, make one fifth of the whole province. But they are both of modern date, and comprise a number of

of subordinate landholders, who possess tenures of the same kind as the great Zemindars, called Talookdars.

All the great, and many of the middling Zemindars, having procured for themselves the title of Rajah, affect a great deal of pomp and state in their districts, exact an implicit obedience from their tenants, keep them in as abject subjection, and are just as despotic with their dependants, as their Mahomedan rulers are with them. Some of them are likewise of the tribe of Bramins, which gives them additional influence, and procures them unlimited authority. The reverence which religion inspires, joined to the power which the Sovereign had granted, rendered the Zemindars absolute in their jurisdiction, and gave them an almost uncontrolled liberty of plundering their tenants; in which they were indulged by the Nabobs, from the inter-

*Conduct of Zemindars.*

*Oppression.*

rested motive of plundering them again, when they had so enriched themselves\*. Mr. Scrofton, who resided many years in India, and was well acquainted with the language, customs, and manners of the natives, gives the following description, in his History of Hindoostan, of this sort of conduct in the Mahomedan rulers and their Hindoo subjects:—"Un-  
" happily for the Gentoos [Hindoos],

\* Another considerable source of profit to the Zemindar is, *the levying fines at will*. He likewise raises large sums from duties collected in the market, and assumes an authority over the Ryotts to require their labour gratuitously. He frequently claims a bacte on rupees at an extraordinary valuation, which is an illegal perquisite. *The truth cannot be doubted, that the poor and industrious tenant is taxed by his Zemindar, for every extravagance that avarice, ambition, pride, vanity, or intemperance may lead him into, over and above what is generally deemed the established rent of his lands. If he is to be married, a child born, honours conferred, luxury indulged, and nuzzaronas, or fines, exacted, even for his own misconduct, all must be paid by the Ryott.*

Sel. Com. Consult. 16 Aug. 1769.

" them-

" themselves are made the ministers of  
" oppression over each other; the Moor-  
" men, haughty, lazy, and voluptuous,  
" make them, of whom they have no  
" jealousy, the ministers of their oppres-  
" sion, which further answers the end  
" of dividing them, and prevents their  
" uniting to fling off the yoke; and by  
" the strange intoxication of power,  
" they are found *still more rapacious and*  
" *cruel than their foreign masters*; and,  
" what is more extraordinary, the Bra-  
" mins still exceed the rest in every  
" abuse of power, and seem to think,  
" if they bribe God by bestowing a part  
" of their plunder on cows and Faquirs,  
" their iniquities will be pardoned\*."

This was the situation of the people in India under their native rulers, before

\* Scrofton's Hindoostan, p. 26.

E 4

any

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Conduct  
of British  
govern-  
ment to the  
natives,  
vindicat-  
ed.

any interference of the English; yet nothing has been more industriously propagated than the very unjust and injurious opinion, that the British government hath exercised great and unusual severities in the collection of the revenues, and in its administration of this department. So much pains have been taken, and so much art has been used in disseminating this opinion, that it is generally imagined the English have invented tortures and punishments to extort money from the miserable inhabitants of India; and the ready comparison of Spanish cruelty in America, immediately presenting itself to the minds both of the relators and hearers of these artful tales, the names of Cortez and Pizarro have been bandied about, till it is universally believed, that every English Governor has exceeded them in cruelty and avarice. A more unjust notion, and a more false representation

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sentation was never promoted by malice, nor entertained by credulity.

When the British government inter-  
fered in the rule of the provinces, they  
were found to be in a ruinous state, from  
the ravages of war, the depredations of  
invaders, and the oppressions of usurpers.  
In the most settled state of the country,  
and at the period of its most regular ad-  
ministration, the government was purely  
despotic: the mode of collecting its re-  
venues was even then severely arbitrary;  
the punishments that were permitted to  
be inflicted were cruel, and the whole  
system was such as would shock the  
more liberal minds of Europeans.—  
“The people of Asia,” says President  
Montesquieu\*, “are governed by the  
“cudgel; the people of Tartary by long  
“whips. The spirit of Europe has been

Collection  
of reve-  
nues arbi-  
trary.

\* L'Esprit des Loix, l. xvii. ch. v.

always

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“ always contrary to these manners ;  
 “ and in all times what the people of Asia  
 “ have called punishment, the people of  
 “ Europe have called outrage.” Neither  
 the manners of one nation, nor the spirit  
 of the other are changed. The British  
 government found the cudgel and the  
 whip severely used by the Asiatics, in  
 their mode of collecting the revenue ;  
 they deemed the practice an outrage,  
 and have done all in their power to sup-  
 press it. A very few years only have  
 elapsed since it could interpose with ef-  
 fect ; but in that short time it has hap-  
 pily produced a reformation, which at  
 once confutes the unjust aspersions of cru-  
 elty, and vindicates its claim to mildness  
 and humanity ; nor will the boldest of  
 its adversaries be hardy enough to deny,  
 That the British government has discour-  
 aged, as much as possible, all oppressive  
 measures ; That it has abolished the hor-  
 rid modes of punishment inflicted by the  
 Mahom-

Rendered  
 much  
 milder by  
 the British  
 govern-  
 ment.

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Mahommedans ; That it has afforded  
 much easier means of redress than the  
 Asiatic government ; That it has insti-  
 tuted a more regular plan of justice ;  
 That it has ensured to the natives more  
 ease and security ; and That it has pre-  
 served them in a much superior degree  
 of peace and tranquillity.

I do not advance these general posi-  
 tions from a presumptuous confidence,  
 that a bold assertion, unsupported by facts,  
 either deserves attention, or will procure  
 conviction ; and I claim no credit for  
 what I do advance, but as I may be  
 able to establish the truth, by substan-  
 tial proofs—to which I now proceed.

Proofs of  
 severity in  
 Mahom-  
 medan go-  
 vern-  
 ment.

In the reign of Aurungzebe, the Sou-  
 bahdar, or Viceroy, of Bengal, &c. was  
 Moorshud Kuly Cawn, who was after-  
 wards known by the title of Jaffier Cawn,  
 with which he was honoured as a re-  
 ward

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ward for his eminent services. The revenue was a branch of government in which he was so peculiarly skilful, that the Emperor united in his person two offices, heretofore distinct; namely, Soubahdar and Dewan\*. The manner in which he treated the Zemindars, and conducted the business of the collections, is thus related by a native historian, who wrote a narrative of the transactions in Bengal, during his Soubahdary, and that of several of his successors.

“ For † the purpose of making a fuller  
 “ investigation of the capacity of the  
 “ lands, *he ordered all the Zemindars*  
 “ *into close confinement*, and put the col-  
 “ lections into the hands of Bengally  
 “ Collectors ‡, who executed written ob-

\* Narrative of Transactions in Bengal, translated by Gladwin, p. 42.

† Ibid. p. 43, 44.

‡ *Aumils*.

“ ligations.

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“ ligations\*. The revenues were paid  
 “ immediately into the Exchequer by  
 “ these collectors, the Zemindars being  
 “ deprived of all interference in the re-  
 “ ceipts and disbursements.

“ In † the arrangements of govern-  
 “ ment, he shewed favour to no one,  
 “ but never failed to reward merit  
 “ wherever he found it. He placed not  
 “ entire confidence in his accountants ‡,  
 “ but required a daily account of the  
 “ expenditures and balances, which he  
 “ examined, and then signed with his  
 “ own hand. On the last day of the  
 “ month, he exacted from the Exche-  
 “ quer §, the Custom-house ||, the privy-

\* *Taboods*, Muchulkahs.

† Narrative of Transactions in Bengal, translated by Gladwin, p. 58, 59, 60, 61.

‡ Mutfeddies.

§ Khalfah.

|| Khafneveefee.

“ purse,

“ purse \*, and other offices †, the amount due to the uttermost farthing ‡. Until the monthly instalments were paid into the Royal Treasury *he would not suffer any body to be at rest*. He put strict guards § over the accountants ||, collectors ¶, and their officers \*\*, and confined them in the Revenue-office ††, or in the hall of audience ‡‡ of the Nabob’s palace §§, where they were *refused victuals and drink, and not suffered to perform the other necessary calls of na-*

\* Bhelah.

† Jagheers, Beyootat.

‡ Dam.

§ Mohuffils.

|| Mutfeddies.

¶ Aumils.

\*\* Connongoes.

†† Kutcherry, Kanah.

‡‡ Dewan.

§§ Chehelfetoon.

ture.

“ ture. Spies\* were also employed to discover if the guards were bribed to allow them *even a drop of water*, and they were sometimes kept in this manner *so many days as to be brought to the point of death, and reduced to skin and bone*. If their servants brought them any sustenance with the connivance of the guards, if discovered, they were seized by the spies and severely punished. To these severities were added the cruelties of Nazir Ahmed. *He used to suspend the Zemindars by the heels, and, after rubbing the soles of their feet with a hard brick, bastinado them with a switch*. In the winter he would order them to be stripped naked, and then sprinkled with water; and he also used to have them flogged till they consented to pay the money.”

\* Hircarrahs.

“ Moorshud

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“ Moorshud Kuly Cawn employed  
 “ none but *Bengally Hindoos* in the col-  
 “ lection of the revenues, because they  
 “ are most easily compelled by punish-  
 “ ments to discover their malpractices,  
 “ and nothing is to be apprehended  
 “ from their pusillanimity. When he  
 “ discovered that a Collector or Zemin-  
 “ dar had dissipated the revenues, and  
 “ then falling into balance, was unable to  
 “ make good the deficiency, *he compelled*  
 “ *the offender, his wife and children, to*  
 “ *turn Mahommedans.*”

The same historian who relates these  
 facts, as redounding to the praise of this  
 Soubahdar, also informs us, “ that the  
 “ upright and judicious conduct of  
 “ Moorshud Kuly Cawn was so conspi-  
 “ cuous, that the Emperor was continu-  
 “ ally bestowing favours upon him, till  
 “ at length he obtained the titles of  
 “ *The faithful Servant of the Empire,*  
*The*

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“ *The Glory of the State, Jaffier Cawn*  
 “ *Nuffieree* (a peculiar sect of the Schiites),  
 “ *The Victorious in War*.\*” And he  
 further adds, “ Since the time of  
 “ Shayistah Cawn, there had not ap-  
 “ peared in Bengal, nor indeed in any  
 “ part of Hindoostan, an Aumeer who  
 “ could be compared with Jaffier Cawn,  
 “ for zeal in the propagation of the  
 “ faith; for wisdom in the establishment  
 “ of laws and regulations; for munifi-  
 “ cence and liberality in the encourage-  
 “ ment and support given to men of fa-  
 “ mily and eminence; for rigid and im-  
 “ partial justice in redressing wrongs and  
 “ punishing offenders; in short, whose  
 “ whole administration so much tended  
 “ to the benefit of mankind and the  
 “ glory of the Creator †.”

\* Narrative of Transactions in Bengal, translated  
 by Gladwin, p. 65.

† Ibid. p. 109.

Reflection  
on Jaffier  
Cawn's  
admini-  
stration.

If such a character as Jaffier Cawn were rewarded by his Sovereign with titles and honours, and if such conduct procured him the flattering appellation of the *Faithful Servant of the Empire*, the *Glory of the State*, it is impossible that such a government could be, either in its principles or its practice, a lenient one, or that its subjects could be so easy and happy under that, as they are under the British power, which, instead of "compelling them to turn Mahommedans," hath shewn peculiar tenderness to their religious tenets, and put an end to the horrid severities that were practised both by the Mogul Emperors and their Viceroys.

English  
govern-  
ment su-  
perior.

When the Company first accepted the Dewanny, their servants could not interpose their influence with that effect they have since done; because they thought it expedient, at that time, to permit

permit the office of Dewan to be executed by native ministers, who continued the ancient practice of collecting the revenues. But even at that period, the more enlightened sentiments of British minds had an effect on the manners of their Asiatic delegates; and the British government hath, by degrees, infused a spirit of mildness and forbearance in the mode of collection, which hath, at last, happily exploded Mahommedan severity.

No sooner had the Council of Bengal assumed, openly, the office of Dewan, in the year 1772, and took the immediate control of the collections into their own hands, than they suppressed all those severe punishments which had been inflicted by the Mogul government; and that dreadful instrument, called a Korah, by which Zemindars had been flogged to death, was, from this period, utterly banished

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from their Cutcherries, or courts of Exchequer. Since this time, no Zemindar hath suffered corporal punishment, and the regulations which were then framed for collecting the revenues, forbid every species of cruel treatment; so that by the mild measures which the British government hath adopted, it has eradicated the rigid system established by the Mahomedans; nor does it allow any other compulsory methods of enforcing the collections, than those of personal restraint, and the sale of the lands.

In such an extent of country as the British government superintends, where it must necessarily delegate a considerable portion of authority to the natives, who are prone to arbitrary rule, it is impossible that some enormities should not be committed; but no means that it has been able to devise, have been omitted to prevent such excesses; nor has it ever  
failed

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to shew its repentment and detestation of them, whenever they have been detected. Cruelty to its subjects, and severity in its punishments, form no part of the British character in Asia, any more than in Europe; nor has the British government been guilty of either. On the contrary, it has uniformly exerted itself in introducing a more lenient system of managing the revenues, and administering justice; and it has infused as much of its own mild spirit, in executing its sovereignty, as is consistent with the nature of the government it has to maintain, and of the people it has to govern. If some instances of transgression are to be found, they are exceptions to the general rule of conduct prescribed to, and practised by the collectors; and such instances can never be quoted by any one who pretends to candour, as proofs of a corrupt or careless government; for, in the best governed states, some irregularities

British  
character  
vindicated.

ties will be committed ; but it must be a most malignant and disingenuous mind, that could think of attributing the particular offences of some individuals, to the general depravity of a whole community.

Wretched state of the Bengal provinces, at the acquisition of the Dewanny.

Having endeavoured to give some general notions of the state of that part of Hindoostan which hath come under the British government ; I will now proceed to give, in a summary manner, a more particular account of the wretched situation, and miserable confusion into which these provinces were plunged, when they were granted to the English East India Company by the Mogul.

When Nadir Shah had invaded Hindoostan, and captured Delhy, he put an end to the feeble remains of the Emperor's power in the distant provinces. I have shewn, in a former part, that the  
last

last regular Soubahdar, or Viceroy, of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, Surfraz Cawn, succeeded his father in the year 1739 ; and that, in the year 1742, he was killed in a pitched battle by his rebellious and ungrateful subject, Aly Verdy Cawn, who usurped the power and title of Soubahdar of these provinces. From this period, till the year 1750, he was engaged in continual wars, both with his own disaffected subjects, and the neighbouring states of the Mahrattas, who invaded his dominions with immense armies, and ravaged and destroyed all the country that was subject to their depredations\*. In the year 1756 he died, and was succeeded by the tyrant Surajah Dowlah ; who, in the following year, brought on his own destruction, by the wicked and wanton cruelty he com-

Surfraz Aly Cawn killed in 1742. Aly Verdy Cawn,

died in 1756.

\* Scrofton's Hindoostan, p. 36.

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Jaffier Aly  
Cawn suc-  
ceeded.

mitted on the English. Jaffier Aly Cawn, a foldier of fortune, who married a relation of Surajah Dowlah, and was one of his generals, was elevated to the rank of Nabob upon the death of his mafter; and his family are ftill in poffeffion of the title.

State of the  
country at  
this time.

At this time the country was almoft exhausted, in confequence of foreign invafions and intefine commotions; and its wretched condition is thus defcribed by an hiftorian \*, who had refided long in the country, and was witnefs to many of the calamities he defcribes. “ When  
“ the Governors of the provinces found  
“ the weaknefs of the Mogul, and each  
“ fet up as Sovereign in his own pro-  
“ vince, although they could not break  
“ through thefe immutable laws, *they*

\* Scrofton's Hindooftan, p. 25.

“ *invented*

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“ *invented new taxes under new names,*  
“ *which doubled or trebled the original*  
“ *ones, and which the landholder was*  
“ obliged to levy on his tenants. The  
“ old ftock of wealth for fome time fup-  
“ ported this; but when that failed,  
“ and the tenants were ftill preffed for  
“ more, they borrowed of ufurers at an  
“ exorbitant intereft; and the govern-  
“ ment ftill continuing thefe demands,  
“ the Lords of the lands were obliged to  
“ do the fame: but as all this while the  
“ value of the lands did not increafe, the  
“ confequence was, that, at laft, unable to  
“ pay the intereft of the mortgages, *the rents*  
“ *were feized by rapacious ufurers.* The  
“ government, finding the revenues fall  
“ fhorter every year, at laft *sent collectors*  
“ *and farmers of the revenues into the*  
“ *provinces. Thus the Lord of the land*  
“ *was divested of power over his country,*  
“ *and the tenants exposed to merciless*  
“ *plunderers; till the farmer and manu-  
“* facturer,

“facturer, finding the more they la-  
 “boured, the more they paid, the ma-  
 “nufacturer would work no more, nor  
 “the farmer cultivate no more than was  
 “necessary for the bare subsistence of  
 “his family. *Thus this once flourishing*  
 “*and plentiful country has, in the course*  
 “*of a few years, been reduced to such*  
 “*misery, that many thousands are conti-*  
 “*nually perishing through want.* The  
 “crown lands are still worse off, let out  
 “to the highest bidder; and the jagheer  
 “lands, alone, remain un plundered.  
 “Hence that equal distribution of  
 “wealth that makes the happiness of a  
 “people, and spreads a face of cheerfulness  
 “and plenty through all ranks, has  
 “now ceased; and the riches of the  
 “country are settled, partly in the hands  
 “of a few usurers and greedy courtiers,  
 “*and the rest is carried out of the country*  
 “*by the foreign troops taken into pay to*  
 “*maintain the Governors in their usurpa-*  
 “*tions.*

“tions. This unhappy decay, the India  
 “Company has already experienced in  
 “the decay of their trade, and the rise  
 “and price of their manufactures, and  
 “will, I fear, experience more and more  
 “annually.”

Jaffier Aly Cawn was an excellent  
 foldier, but by no means equal to the  
 task of governing these provinces, of  
 which he became so unexpectedly pos-  
 sessed; and, accordingly, in about the  
 short space of three years, it was abso-  
 lutely necessary to remove him from the  
 administration of affairs; which Gover-  
 nor \* Vanfittart declared, “to be in so  
 “confused and impoverished a state,  
 “that, in all human appearance, another  
 “month could not have run through  
 “before he would have been cut off by

Jaffier Aly  
 Cawn's  
 inability to  
 govern.

\* Holwell's Tracts, 2d edition, p. 63.—3d edi-  
 tion, p. 95.

“ his

“ his own Seapoys from want of pay,  
 “ and the city become a scene of plunder  
 “ and disorder.” In this critical situa-  
 tion, the government of the country  
 was transferred to his son-in-law, Meer  
 Coffim Aly Cawn.

Coffim Aly  
 Cawn suc-  
 ceeds.

Coffim had not been long in this new  
 situation, before he gave umbrage to the  
 English government; and the majority  
 of the Council at that time, being very  
 hostile to him, a *dangerous* war broke  
 out in the year 1763; in which, though  
 Coffim was worsted, and driven out of  
 the country, he massacred a great num-  
 ber of English gentlemen, and murdered  
 the chiefs of some of the most opulent  
 native families of the kingdom; and, it  
 is asserted, robbed the country of near five  
 millions sterling in jewels and specie\*.

War with  
 Coffim,  
 1763.

\* Governor Verelst's Letter, dated at Calcutta,  
 5th April, 1769.

In

In the following year, he prevailed on  
 Shujah Dowlah to invade these distressed  
 and distracted provinces, which were  
 now reduced to a most deplorable situa-  
 tion, by a quick succession of wars and  
 revolutions; in which ancient establish-  
 ments had been overthrown, many opu-  
 lent families had been dispersed or de-  
 stroyed, and all orders of men, as well as  
 all ordinances of government, were dis-  
 turbed and disregarded.

Conse-  
 quences to  
 the coun-  
 try.

Such was the country, and its misera-  
 ble condition, in 1765, when Lord Clive  
 obtained the grant of the Dewanny,  
 which is the office of Minister, who su-  
 perintends the lands and collections.  
 Whether his Lordship did not advert  
 sufficiently to the wretched state of the  
 country, and foresee what care and atten-  
 tion it would require to recover it from  
 its calamities; whether he was not in-  
 formed

Office of  
 Dewanny,  
 1765.

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Lord Clive  
over-rates  
its value.

formed sufficiently of the real value of the revenue he had obtained; or whether a too eager desire of fame in Leadenhall-street had made him over-rate the value of this grant, I will not pretend to determine; certain it is, that he raised the expectations of the people in England beyond what any management of these provinces would enable his successors to fulfil. In a very short time after he left India, the seeds of those evils which had been sown long before the acquisition of the Dewanny, sprung up; and some general consequences, that must have happened in the common course of things, were judged by the Directors at home to be the particular effects of the misconduct of their servants abroad.

Causes of  
the decline  
of the pro-  
vinces.

In consequence of those wars and invasions, before mentioned, many rich streams,

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streams, through which wealth flowed into Bengal, had been dried up. Raw silk, cloths, and other manufactures to a vast amount, used to be dispersed as far as Guzarat, Lahore, and even Ispahan, before the invasion of Nadir Shah: and Mr. Verelst has stated, from the Custom-house books of Moorshedabad, that nearly seventy lacks of rupees were brought into the provinces for the purchase of raw silk alone. To this importation of wealth, must be added full as much from all the European nations, the merchants of Bufforah, and other places; the greatest part of which had been put a total stop to, before the English government existed. It has been computed, that Cossim Aly Cawn robbed the country of near five millions sterling, in jewels and specie. China, Madras, and Bombay were supplied from Bengal, to the amount of more than two millions. The King's tribute, which was remitted

to

to Dehly, and the expence of a brigade at Allahabad, which lies out of the provinces, were also great sums lost to circulation \*. So that a rapid diminution of the riches of the country was the inevitable effect of these and other concurrent causes.

Internal management of the country, defective.

The internal management of the country had been extremely defective. The Zemindars, and other collectors of the revenue, being under very little check or control, acted according to their own arbitrary will in their different districts; and the tenants suffered every species of imposition and exaction, without means of appeal or redress. Coffin Aly Cawn had the character of an able financier; but it should seem, from one of the acts of his government, that he was a severe

\* Governor Verelst's Letter, dated Calcutta, 5th April, 1769.

collector,

collector, rather than a wise statesman; and that he preferred a present increase of revenue to a permanent income. He appointed *Aumils* to the collection of the revenues. These are officers of collection, who derive their authority immediately from the ruler of the country. It is true, that the Soubahdars of Bengal had formerly done the same thing; for they regarded the Zemindars with a jealous eye, and thought they not only oppressed their ryotts, or tenants, but concealed the true value of the lands, and the amount of the revenues. It was upon this principle, that Moorshud Kuly Cawn dispossessed the Zemindars of Bengal, and put the collections into the hands of *Aumils*. Mohabut Jung, and after him Jaffier Aly Cawn, did the same in several places; but certainly these officers, in the end, acquired and exercised an influence which proved very pernicious to the country.

Coffin Aly Cawn's plan for collections,

destructive.

G

When

Lord  
Clive's  
plan for  
collecti-  
ons,

When Lord Clive obtained the grant of the Dewannee, he did not choose to take an ostensible part in the management of the collections; three native ministers, therefore, were appointed, in the Nabob's name, to superintend this department; and one English gentleman resided at the Nabob's court, through whom this business was transacted, and communicated to the Council at Calcutta. Mahommed Reza Cawn was the acting and efficient Minister of this plan. He was a native of Persia, and came into Hindoostan, like others of his countrymen, to seek his fortune. He had been employed in the collection of the revenues by Jaffier Aly Cawn in the province of Dacca; but he was either not so well versed in the knowledge of this branch of government, as to be aware of the defects of the preceding system of Cossim Aly Cawn; or he adopted it, because it afforded him opportunities of providing for

wise.

for his own family and dependants, and of establishing his own interest and authority throughout the country. Be this as it may, it is certain, that in the year 1769, these Aumils (who were also most of them adventurers from Persia) were loudly complained of as the authors of great oppression\*; and the failure of the revenue became a matter of serious consideration.

Mr. Verelst, who was then Governor, having experienced, in his own superintendance of a province, the good effects of such a control, and having found them in other instances in the Company's own lands, first proposed and executed the plan of sending Company's servants into the interior parts of the country, under the title of Supervisors. The gen-

Mr. Verelst's plan for collections.

\* Select Committee Consultation, 16th August, 1769.

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tllemen who were appointed to these important stations did honour to their nomination ; but the evils were too deeply rooted for them to eradicate, and too widely extended for them to correct. In the year 1771, not only the diminution of the revenue, but an increase of expence, had greatly alarmed the Company ; and they were, this year, thrown into the utmost consternation, at finding their government in Bengal had drawn bills upon them to the amount of upwards of twelve hundred thousand pounds.

Mr. Hastings appointed Governor.

Conceiving their affairs in that kingdom to require the exertion of extraordinary talents to retrieve them, all parties joined in opinion, that Mr. Hastings, who was then second in Council at Madras, was the man in whom these talents were to be found : and he was, accordingly, appointed Governor of Bengal,

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gal, to which station he succeeded in April 1772.

Having brought our narrative of the state of India to that period, when the Company's affairs were sunk to their lowest point of depression ; let us pause awhile, and take a short review of the situation of the country, at this important crisis.

Only seven years had elapsed since the acquisition of the Dewanny ; at which time these provinces were reduced, as I have before observed, to a wretched condition, by a quick succession of wars and revolutions ; and whatever rights might have been conceded to the native inhabitants by the more moderate Emperors, they were lost, or confounded, in these disorderly times of war and tumult. The Institutions of Ackbar, which might have been observed whilst he or his successors

Review of the state of the country.

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cessors had power to enforce them, were now no more revered, and scarcely remembered. The Soubahdars had; it is evident from the instance of Moorshud Kuly Cawn, adopted their own plans of managing the revenues. The usurper, Aly Verdy Cawn, had no will to consult but his own; and, therefore, like a true despot, would make every one's conduct subservient to that will. The tyrant Surajah Dowlah was of a violent, cruel, and capricious temper, who respected neither the rights of humanity nor justice. To him succeeded Jaffier Aly Cawn, who had been bred in camps, and knew nothing of civil polity or the science of government. Coffim Aly Cawn, in his short reign, considered chiefly how he should raise the largest revenue; and made his wants the only measure of his demands. The wars and invasions, to which this unhappy country had been subject during three successive govern-

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governments, afforded reciprocal pleas for demands and excuses. The Nabobs demanded money to enable them to repel their enemies: the Zemindars pleaded, that the enemies had already plundered them of all their wealth. Whatever means violence could employ to exact, or art invent to elude, were mutually exerted by the despots and their slaves, for such are all subjects in a despotic state, and the whole *system* of collecting the revenues was a competition of force and fraud\*.

As a proof of the confusion and intricacy which prevailed, I will quote a paragraph of a letter to the Court of Directors, from the government in Bengal, in November 1772, describing the state of the revenue when the Company

Confusion  
and intri-  
cacy of the  
collecti-  
ons.

\* See Mr. Verelst's Instructions to Supervisors, and Sel. Com. Consultation, 1769.

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assumed the management of the Dewanny. " Every Zemindary and every  
 " Talook was left to its own particular  
 " customs. The articles which com-  
 " posed the revenue, the form of keep-  
 " ing the accounts, the computation of  
 " time, even the technical terms, which  
 " ever form the greatest part of the ob-  
 " scurity of every science, differed as  
 " much as the soil and productions of  
 " the province. The Nazims (Nabobs)  
 " exacted what they could from the Ze-  
 " mindars and great farmers of the re-  
 " venue, whom they left at liberty to  
 " plunder all below, reserving to them-  
 " selves the prerogative of plundering  
 " them in their turn, when they were  
 " supposed to have enriched themselves  
 " with the spoils of the country. The  
 " Mutfaddies, who stood between the  
 " Nazim and the Zemindars, or between  
 " them and the people, had each their  
 " shares of the public wealth. These  
 " profits

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" profits were considered as illegal em-  
 " bezzlements, and therefore were taken  
 " with every precaution which could  
 " insure secrecy; and being, conse-  
 " quently, fixed by no rule, depended  
 " on the temper, abilities, or power, of  
 " each individual, for the amount. It  
 " therefore became a duty to every man  
 " to take the most effectual measures to  
 " conceal the value of his property, and  
 " evade every enquiry into his conduct;  
 " while the Zemindars and other land-  
 " holders, who had the advantage of  
 " long possession, availed themselves of  
 " it, by complex divisions of the lands,  
 " and intricate modes of collection, to  
 " perplex the officers of government,  
 " and confine the knowledge of the  
 " rents to themselves. The internal ma-  
 " nagement of each district varied no  
 " less than that of the whole province.  
 " The lands subject to the same col-  
 " lection, and intermixed with each  
 " other,

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“ other, were some held by farm, some  
 “ superintended by Shickdars, or agents  
 “ on the part of the collector, and were  
 “ left to the Zemindars, or Talookdars  
 “ themselves, under various degrees of  
 “ control.”

Company  
 assume the  
 office of  
 Dewan.

During the short time that the Company had acquired the Dewanny, little had been done towards restoring order and regularity in this complex and confused department; for, from a policy which they had judged expedient to observe, they did not choose to act openly as Dewan, but had managed this office through the agency of native ministers, who had conducted the business according to their own plans, which had been found extremely defective. Just as Mr. Hastings succeeded to the government, the Court of Directors had resolved to change this system, and assume openly the management of the Dewanny, without

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without any foreign intervention. Happily for the country and the Company, this determination afforded the Governor an opportunity of displaying those talents which had recommended him to their notice.

The reputation of defending these provinces from the united attacks of powerful enemies, and of preserving them in perfect tranquillity, amidst the horrors of surrounding war, is a more brilliant, though less solid merit, than the superior honour of introducing order, law, and justice. The effects of the one are splendid, immediate, and striking; the others are sober, slow, and quiet. Hence it has happened, that every one sees and acknowledges the desert of Mr. Hastings in his preservation of India, whilst they are unmindful of the credit that is due to him, for those salutary regulations which have

Merit of  
 Mr. Hastings.

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have procured peace, order, and protection to the people.

The rules he framed for collecting the revenues, the mode he established of administering justice, the police he ordained for governing the country, are, with little variation, observed at this day; and on this foundation now rests the ease and happiness of the natives, as well as the prosperity of the Company.

Plan of  
collecti-  
ons.

As soon as the orders of the Company were received at Bengal for their government to enter upon the management of the Dewanny, the Governor and Council took this important subject into immediate consideration: and their first regulations were, to render the accounts of the revenue simple and intelligible; to establish fixed rules for the collections; to make the mode of them  
uniform

[ 93 ]

uniform in all parts of the provinces; and to provide for an equal administration of justice. They defined and explained the demands of the Zemindars on their tenants, and suppressed many of their oppressive exactions: they abolished many vexatious taxes and tolls; they established a new mode of collecting the customs, to the great relief of the merchants. In short, though this was one of the first works of reformation in a new government, and a novel department, yet the plan was so wisely framed, that it has been the model and guide for all future regulations.

The model  
of future  
plans.

It is utterly impossible, in any government, that its measures can be so judiciously taken as not to require alteration and amendment; or that it should arrive at the degree of perfection it may be capable of, in a short space of time. This hath not happened to our own enlightened

lightened nation, with every advantage to aid its progress; much less can it be expected in such a country as India, where so many obstacles concurred to retard it. But if it be candidly considered, under what disadvantages the reformation of its government was undertaken, it must be acknowledged, that a greater improvement can scarcely be exhibited in any nation, in the same space of time.

Improvement of the country.

Government of India ought not to be compared with that of England.

The constitution of our own country is the standard to which an Englishman, generally, tries that of every other state; and designing men have often made their advantage of this honest prejudice. It is, however, not only unreasonable, but absurd, to compare the government of India with that of England; for there is no common point of comparison, nor any thing which bears a resemblance. The constitution of the one can never be adapted

adapted to the other. The religion, laws, customs, and manners of the Hindoos and Mahomedans have fixed such insuperable barriers to all assimilation, that they can never be overcome, if so wild a project should ever be attempted. Since, therefore, no comparison can be fairly drawn between such dissimilar cases, the only candid method of judging of the state of the country, and the merit of the British government, is to compare the condition of the natives under the administration of Britons, and the very best of the Mogul Emperors.

I will not pretend to draw either an exact or a minute parallel, but I will state the manner in which it might be done, and give the sketch of a few leading facts, which, I trust, will serve to convince any candid enquirer, that the

Parallel between British government and Mahomedan.

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the preference is indisputably due to the British government.

Duties of  
a Sovereign.

The duties of a Sovereign to his people, have been laid down by the admirable author of the Wealth of Nations, under three different heads, which I shall adopt.

*“ The first duty of a Sovereign, is that of protecting the society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies.”*

In the Mogul government it appears, from the concurring testimony of every historian, that this duty was very ill performed. In the prefatory history to Major Rennell's excellent Memoir, he observes, “ Akbar was the glory of the house of Timur. Hindoostan properly had never, at any period since  
“ the

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“ the first Mahomedan conquest, experienced so much tranquillity as during the latter part of his reign : but this tranquillity would hardly be deemed such in any other quarter of the world, and must therefore be understood to mean a state short of actual rebellion, or, at least, commotion \*.”  
Let us turn to another page of the same performance, and see the very different and superior situation of this country under the protection of British sovereignty. “ The Bengal provinces, which have been in our actual possession near twenty-three years, have, during that whole period, enjoyed a greater share of tranquillity than any other part of India ; or, indeed, than those provinces had ever experienced since the days of Aurungzebe.” They have also been

\* Page 59.

H

bleffed

bleſſed with an uncommon ſhare of *internal tranquillity*, from the ſingular and felicitous circumſtance of a banditti, who inhabited the hills of Rajemahl, and infeſted all travellers, having been civilized and brought to peaceable ſubjection within theſe few years; and likewiſe from the ſuppreſſion of an itinerant ſet of thieves, called Syniaſſes, who are religious mendicants, and uſed to commit the greateſt enormities.

*“ The ſecond duty of a Sovereign is that of proteſting, as far as poſſible, every member of the ſociety from the injuſtice or oppreſſion of every other member of it, or the duty of an exact adminiſtration of juſtice.”*

Defects of Mahomedan adminiſtration of juſtice.

In deſpotic ſtates there is no law. The judge himſelf, ſays Prefident Montesquieu, is his own rule; conſequently, the performance of this important duty of

of a Sovereign muſt have been greatly neglected by the Mahomedan deſpots: and what aggravated the defects, which are common to all deſpotic ſtates, was, the particular tenets of the conquered people. The Hindoos are liable to the peculiar puniſhment of forfeiting their caſt, or being excommunicated; and as this forfeiture may be incurred from a variety of cauſes, their Mahomedan rulers made it a lucrative ſource of oppreſſion. Unhappily for the Hindoos, ſuperſtition combined with avarice to invent the means of inflicting this dreaded chaſtiſement; and fines, without mercy, were exacted by theſe venal judges. “ It is difficult,” ſays Governor Verelſt, in his Inſtructions to the Superſivors, “ to determine, whether the original cuſtoms or the degenerate manners of the Muſſulmen have moſt contributed to confound the principles of right and wrong in theſe provinces.

H 2

“ Certain

[ 100 ]

“ Certain it is, that almost every decision of theirs is a corrupt bargain with the highest bidder\*.” Commutation, even for capital crimes, was frequently permitted; and the numerous offences compromised by fines, were an intolerable grievance. To such a wretched state was the administration of justice reduced, that the people, so far from supposing justice due from the magistrate, allowed one quarter [chout] of the property in dispute, to the judge, as a reward for his trouble.

Superiority of British government.

*Since the more immediate introduction of the British government, these abuses and oppressions have been entirely abolished.* Both the Hindoos and Mahomedans are left in the free exercise and enjoyment of their religion, laws, customs,

\* Sel. Com. 16th Aug. 1769.

and

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and manners. The Hindoos, particularly, bless the mildness of British toleration as much as they execrate Mahomedan superstition. According to the plan formed in the year 1772, for the administration of justice, the proceedings of the courts, civil and criminal, are entered on record; the first is under the superintendance of English gentlemen, who have a distinct authority, and are rewarded with salaries, to put them above the temptation of any means which would be derogatory to their honour. From their judgment there is an appeal to the Superior Court at Calcutta; and the whole system is conducted with a degree of mildness, order, and regularity, unknown to the natives in any period of Mahomedan government.

“ *The third and last duty of the Sovereign, are such institutions as faci-*

H 3

“ *litate*

“ *liberate the commerce of the society, and  
“ promote the instruction of the people.”*”

Impedi-  
ments to  
commerce

In the Mahommedan government, the internal commerce of the country was impeded by every clog which avaricious power could invent to obstruct it; the number and variety of the imposts collected at the *Gauts*\*, *Chokies* †, and *Hauts* ‡, afford abundant proof of this. In regard to the instruction of the people, some care had been taken by the Emperors, when their sovereignty prevailed in its complete force. They instituted seminaries for the instruction of youth, called *Madriffas*, in all the capital cities. But these had been totally neglected for many years; the buildings

\* Landing-places.

† Watch-houses, and places on the rivers and different parts of the country.

‡ Markets.

had

had fallen into ruin, and their endowments were resumed by government.

Amongst other salutary regulations <sup>removed.</sup> formed in the year 1772, were those which abolished many of these taxes on commerce; and the plan was then laid, which has since been effected, for taking off all the fetters that had, heretofore, shackled the trade of the country. It is owing to the same fostering care, that the ancient establishment of Mahommedan schools has been renewed, of which there did not remain a vestige in all Hindoostan when that at Calcutta was lately built; so that this institution might be considered almost as a new one, or, at least, it testified a regard for this part of the duty of a Sovereign, which had not been attended to for a long period before.

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Compari-  
son of the  
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ments.

In considering the difference between the Mahomedan and the British government of Hindoostan, it must be always remembered, that both these rulers were foreigners with respect to the Hindoos, the indigenous people; each differing from their subjects, in laws, religion, language, and manners; and the question that then arises is, Under which of these foreign rulers have the native inhabitants been most happy, and best protected? From what I have already set forth in the course of this work, I am willing to flatter myself, that I have anticipated the answer to this question in favour of the British government.

It hath, however, been hitherto industriously propagated, by those men who had a view to answer by it (and they have been too successful in their endeavours), that the provinces in India,  
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of which the Company are now possessed, were inhabited by a mild, industrious people, who were governed by their *own native Sovereigns*; and that these Princes had framed such wise laws, and established such useful regulations, that their subjects were easy, happy, and secure, under this judicious administration; that the servants of the East India Company broke into this peaceful state, destroyed this fair fabric, and threw every thing into confusion, from the worst motives, and with the vilest purposes.

How very unjust, and utterly untrue this representation is, I hope I have made sufficiently clear, by shewing that the Mogul Emperors were foreigners, who invaded and conquered Hindoostan, and who ruled it with a cruel and despotic sway; that *their own rebellious subjects* first usurped the government of  
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the provinces of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, and then occasioned that anarchy and oppression which prevailed in them at the time they were granted to the Company.

But let the comparison be made between the situation of the Hindoo inhabitants under the Mahomedan government, at any period of its existence, and their condition now, under the British dominion; and I assert with confidence, that they are more happy, better protected, and more secure under the latter, than they were under the former administration.

As both the governments are foreign ones, and both differ widely from that of their Hindoo subjects, some prejudicial effects must arise from this common cause, which are incident to both. There is not, in general, so tender a  
bond

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bond of union between an alien Sovereign and his subjects, as there is between a Prince and his people, who are natives of the same country, and are united by the same religion, laws, and customs. A partiality for those who are educated in the same sentiments, profess the same faith, and observe the same laws, is unavoidable; and the most equitable Sovereign cannot divest himself of it. But the Mahomedans suffered this partiality to influence their conduct, much more than the British government hath ever done; and they treated their Hindoo subjects with a degree of rigour, both in civil and religious concerns, from which they have been happily relieved by their British rulers.

Another common evil which results to the subjects from a foreign Sovereign, is, when he resides in a foreign capital. This naturally draws a portion of the  
wealth

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wealth from the distant provinces, and drains it, in a degree, of its circulating cash. The Mogul Emperors resided at Dehly, which was a foreign capital, in respect to the provinces of Bengal, Bahar, and Oriffa; and the greatest part of the treasure, which was remitted thither, was so much specie lost to the currency of these provinces. The Emperor's tribute, or portion of the revenues remitted to the royal treasury, amounted, in Aurungzebe's time, to more than three millions sterling, a considerable part of which was specie\*; and since that period it was fixed at one million two hundred and fifty thousand pounds †. To this may be added, the sums of money which the commanders of the mercenary troops, who were all foreigners, carried out of the provinces when they returned from

\* Tavernier.

† Narrative of Transactions in Bengal, translated by Gladwin, p. 81.

them,

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them, and the aggregate will amount to a greater quantity of specie than the English Company or their servants exported, even when they supplied China, and the settlements of Madras and Bombay, if the last war be excepted. I purposely exclude the annual exportation of goods which the Company provide for their European markets, because this provision only prevents the importation of a certain quantity of specie; and because it returns a surplus amount of revenue into circulation, which would otherwise have been locked up in the treasury, or sent out of the provinces, as it had been to Dehly.

These are general effects, proceeding from a common cause; and even from these, the interest of the native inhabitants is not so much injured by the British, as by the Mahomedan government.

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Superior  
advan-  
tages of  
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vernment.

I will now proceed to shew the instances in which the superior advantages of the British over the Mahomedan government are manifest.

The intolerant spirit of the Mahomedan religion inspired its votaries with an antipathy to all others, and particularly to that of idolatry, with which they always reproached the Hindoos. The first Mahomedan invaders displayed this spirit strongly, in their zeal to destroy the Hindoo temples; and a great portion of it was infused into the civil ordinances of the latter Emperors. Until the reign of *Ackbar*, a capitation\* tax was laid upon the Hindoos, which he, indeed, abolished; but, to the last period of the regular Mogul government, an odious distinction was made

\* Institutes of Ackbar. Gladwin's translation, p. 359. vol. i.

between

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between the Mussulman and Hindoo, in the rate of customs and other taxes; the former being charged with only two and an half per cent. whilst double that sum was demanded of the latter. The British government hath, with a becoming liberality, abolished this law, and relieved the Hindoos from this oppressive inequality.

The enthusiastic zeal of a Mussulman, which creates in him a disgust to every other religion, begets also a contempt for their mode of worship: the Hindoos, therefore, did not meet with near so much tenderness for their religious rites and opinions from their Mahomedan as from their British Sovereigns. The former often made these opinions an engine of oppression, whilst the latter hath indulged them with peculiar care; and, in order to favour their civil as well as religious liberties, the British govern-  
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ment had a translation of the Gentoo code of laws made into the English language, for the guidance of the officers in the several courts of justice established throughout the country.

In the reign of Ackbar, an order of nobles\* was created by the title of Munfudars, or Commanders, and their rank was adjusted according to their munfub, which had a regular gradation from ten to ten thousand; but only the king's sons had munfubs of five thousand and upwards. To these munfubs were affixed pecuniary allowances, which were granted by the Emperor; those of the highest order amounted to seventy-two thousand pounds sterling, and those of the lowest were not quite a hundred pounds a year.

\* Institutes of Ackbar, vol. i. p. 242.

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The manner in which these allowances were paid, was by granting assignments on the lands in different provinces; and in the reign of Aurungzebe the greatest part of Bengal was thus appropriated\*. The Munfudars were sent into the provinces in which their assignments were granted, and made their own collections. As these military nobles were a haughty, voluptuous set of men, who came from a foreign country to collect their own pay from a timid people, whom they both disliked and despised, it is evident, that the state of that people must have been wretched, from the multiplied species of oppression to which they were liable; not only from these military despots, but from every retainer that belonged to them, who derived a consequence, and exercised an insolence, in

\* Narrative of Transactions in Bengal, p. 28.

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proportion to the dignity of his commander.

The native inhabitants have not been, merely, freed from this species of oppression under the British government; but they have been benefited by the superior excellence of the plan on which the military establishment of the Company is formed. Their troops are divided into three brigades, which are stationed in cantonments, near the three principal cities of Calcutta, Moorshedabad, and Patna, from which they never depart but on military service; and their officers are not more remarkable for the strictness of their discipline, than for the regularity of their conduct. They are paid every month from the Company's treasury, and neither wish nor want to interfere with any other department; but demean themselves like good citizens, and, by spending their pay for  
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the necessaries of life, contribute to the encouragement of that productive labour, by which the people are best employed, and the country most enriched.

Under the Mahomedan government, many feudal institutions were established, which were all vexatious in a certain degree. Amongst these, the oppression of purveyance was a grievous one; for the Zemindars were not only obliged to furnish provisions, and procure men as carriers of all burdens, when the Prince, or any of his household, or officers of any kind, passed through the country, as was formerly done in Europe; but, by a refinement of Asiatic despotism, they were obliged to provide both men and provisions, without being paid for either. And whether it was the season of sowing, or the season of harvest, the husbandman was alike compelled to quit

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his field for the service of his unfeeling superior.

This, and many other arbitrary and oppressive customs, originating from a pure despotism, have been abolished by the British government; till it may now be affirmed, on the concurrent testimonies of the last Governor-General, Sir John M'Pherson, and the present one, Lord Cornwallis, that the inhabitants of the provinces, under the British government, are the happiest and most contented people on the extensive continent of Hindoostan and Decan.

Unjust representation of the British government.

The unjust notion of the severity of the British government hath been so generally diffused, and so confidently asserted, that the opinion has been entertained without either asking for proofs, or examining the validity of its testimony. Perhaps this is not to be wondered

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at, when we consider the distance of the country, and the difficulty of judging on facts, of which we have so imperfect a knowledge. But it is a matter of no less regret than astonishment, to observe with what facility the most absurd propositions, and the most incongruous arguments are received, when they tend to depreciate the British character, and exalt the Indian fame.

The excellency of the Mogul government, and its great superiority over the British, have been the theme of all our orators. They have drawn an imaginary picture of India, and "painted it in such glowing colours as would almost tempt one to place the suggestions of fancy amidst the materials of history\*;"

False notions of the Mahomedan government.

\* Verelst on the English Government in Bengal.

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and such have been the fascinating charms of this beautiful portrait, that they seem to have suspended the powers of memory and judgment, and made men forget the history of the conquerors, and the depravity of their characters. A more detestable or detested race of people never appeared than the Mahomedan conquerors of India; whether we consider the brutality of their passions, the bigotry of their religion, the corruption of their manners, the barbarity of their education, or the tyranny of their government: In all these respects, they were the terror and abhorrence of the Hindoos, whose country they invaded, and whose dominion they usurped.

Character  
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Their ig-  
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The fanatic ignorance of the savage caliph, which dictated his barbarous reason for destroying the Alexandrian library,

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brary\*, had neither been tutored nor refined by the Tartar education of Timur and his predecessors. The same superstitious bigotry which incited the Arabian caliphs to destroy the monuments of Western learning, likewise impelled the Tartar Cawns to overthrow the religious temples of Eastern worship. At the commencement of the eleventh century, Mahmood † entered Hindoostan, and, in the course of twelve expeditions, he destroyed the famous temples of Nagracut, Tannafar, Matra, and Sumnaut. In the latter end of the next century, Mahmood Gori penetrated as far as the city of Benaris, and committed the same outrage as Mahmood had done before at

\* "If these writings of the Greeks agree with the Book of God, they are useless: if they disagree, they are pernicious, and ought to be destroyed."

† Major Rennell's Memoir, p. 45, 46.

Nagracut and Sumnaut\*. Tamerlane possessed as much of this furious zeal as any of his savage predecessors; and if the enthusiasm of this destructive religion had not occasionally abated amongst some of his successors, they would scarcely have left a Hindoo temple or priest in the country they subdued.

Hated by  
the Hin-  
doos.

Enough, however, had been done to fix an indelible stain on the memory of these intolerant tyrants, and to make a lasting impression on the minds of the Hindoos, who, to the latest period of the Mogul government, were kept in constant dread of doctrines, which, to their apprehensions, seemed to inspire the Mahomedans with sacrilegious cruelty. Idolatry is as great an abomination

\* Major Rennell's Memoir, p. 47.

to

to a Mussulman, as it was to the Jews, when they most strictly revered the divine command which prohibits it; and most of the Hindoo ceremonies being considered by the Mahomedans as acts of idolatry, and all their pagodas as temples of idols, a religious principle excited mutual sentiments of abhorrence and antipathy between the conquerors and their subjects. The rest of the character of the Mahomedans may be summed up in the concise and emphatic words of Mr. Scrafton, who says, "their distinguishing qualities are perfidy and sensuality\*."

But notwithstanding these facts, and that the history of their government is a disgusting repetition of oppression, massacres, and rebellion, yet the fashion

Character  
of Ma-  
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tish rulers  
contrasted.

\* Letter i. p. 18.

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of the times has been to praise it, and to represent the situation of the Hindoos easy and happy under it, till they were disturbed in this peaceful state of repose and security by the English, who have been described, [with unparalleled injustice,] as a set of rapacious task-masters. It surely requires a very small degree of reflection to perceive, that such representations of the two governments must, from the very nature of things, be false.

The Mahomedan conquerors came into Hindoostan from a barbarous region, with minds and manners as uncultivated as the wilds from which they issued. The only notion they had of government, was absolute power in the Sovereign, and abject submission in the subject. The tenets of their religion, so far from softening the ferocity of their nature, served only

only to whet the edge of their persecution towards the suffering Hindoos, whom they harassed without mercy, and destroyed without remorse. The British conquerors came from a country famed for arts and sciences; the generous principles of public liberty had been instilled into their minds from their earliest infancy; the mild tenets of Christianity cherished and commanded every charitable duty; and they had been taught, by precept and example, to rule with equity, and to obey with freedom. Can it be supposed, that under these circumstances, the two nations should have totally changed characters on their coming into India? That the barbarous and ferocious Tartar should become mild and enlightened; that the cultivated and generous Briton should have degenerated into a cruel tyrant; and that the British Governors should have rendered the situation of their Hindoo subjects worse than

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than it was under the Mogul Emperors?  
Reason revolts at the idea, and nothing  
but the rankest prejudice could either  
suggest or adopt it.

F I N I S.